



WIOA Reauthorization – Community College Priorities

Congress can and should enact Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization legislation this fall. WIOA was last reauthorized over 10 years ago and must be updated to keep up with a rapidly evolving economy that requires new skillsets from its workforce. Community colleges already play a prominent role in the workforce system but are eager to do even more. To that end, WIOA must increase its emphasis on providing training to more workers and facilitate and support increased community college partnerships with the system.

With final legislation potentially being negotiated and acted upon before the end of the 118th Congress, community colleges strongly recommend that it include two key elements:

- Authorization of the Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG) program, as is done in the House’s A Stronger Workforce for America Act (H.R. 6655, SWAA).
- Automatic inclusion and maintenance of community college programs on the eligible trainer provider list (ETPL), as is done in the Senate draft reauthorization bill.

Authorize the SCCTG Program

The SCCTG program is now in its fifth year but needs the authorization that will help it grow over time. SCCTG provides direct support for expanded workforce training capacity at our institutions, so they can meet the demand for skilled workers in industries nationwide. This program has already supported dozens of successful partnerships between community colleges, local businesses, and other partners. The program is a successor to two previous efforts to expand community college capacity to deliver workforce education: the Community-Based Job Training Grants originated by the George W. Bush administration and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant program that occurred during the Obama administration.

AACC supports SWAA’s authorization language, which dubs the program the Strengthening Community College Workforce Development Grants. As authorized in that bill, the program places an emphasis on community college-led partnerships with businesses and other key partners that are aligned with state and local workforce initiatives, including Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state plans. Additionally, the program focuses on the attainment of industry-recognized credentials and employment and earnings outcomes, regardless of whether the college programs are credit or non-credit. The program also allows a percentage of grant funds to be used for tuition support for program enrollees.

Automatically Include Community College Programs on the ETPL

The Senate draft WIOA Reauthorization bill includes a provision long sought by community colleges: automatic inclusion and maintenance of their workforce education programs on the WIOA ETPL. Currently, WIOA automatically includes registered apprenticeship programs, which are

subject to rigorous standards and oversight, on the ETPL. Similarly, programs offered by community colleges are subject to institutional and (often) state approval requirements and are overseen by accreditors as well as relevant governmental bodies. Significant public resources have been expended to create and operate these programs, and the WIOA system should prioritize their use to best leverage this investment. While the SWAA does not include automatic ETPL placement for all community college programs, it does include automatic eligibility for programs that qualify for workforce Pell Grants (at such time as legislation creating them is enacted).