

# OPPORTUNITY GRANTS

*“The Opportunity Grant provided me with the tools and books that I needed to start welding class. It has allowed me to really get into the basics of welding and has afforded me with the foundation to be the best welder I can be — T. Ray Woolridge, Everett Community College*

*“Port Jobs offered me an internship that led into a full-time position in the company and I no longer had to work multiple jobs to provide for my daughter.” — Denise Johnson, a Highline College graduate and Opportunity Grant recipient. Highline partners with Port Jobs, a nonprofit organization, to prepare people for Port of Seattle careers.*



## Raising lives, raising the workforce

Washington businesses are desperate for highly trained employees so they can compete and grow.<sup>1</sup> Residents need skills to succeed in the job market and earn a good living. The Opportunity Grant program answers both needs by helping low-income students train for high-wage, high-demand careers.

The grant covers up to 45 credits of tuition (a year's worth) to be used within three years and up to \$1,000 a year for books and supplies. Students also benefit from tutoring, career advising, emergency child care, emergency transportation and college success classes.

One point of contact at each college coordinates the student's financial and overall services from start to finish.

## Targeted eligibility

To qualify for an Opportunity Grant, a student must be a Washington resident, enrolled in a career pathway approved by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and have an income below 200 percent of the poverty level. The student must also demonstrate financial need based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and maintain a 2.0 grade point average.

SBCTC approves only high-demand career pathways that lead to minimum starting wages of \$13 per hour. For King County, the minimum starting wage is \$15 per hour.

## A program that works

In the 2015-16 school year, 4,282 students received Opportunity Grants. Forty-five percent were students of color. An impressive number — 84 percent — who enrolled in the fall either completed a certificate, degree or apprenticeship, or stayed in college.<sup>2</sup>

---

## Approved career pathways

The term “career pathway” refers to interconnected education and training programs that equip people to get jobs in specific industries and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and work in that industry.

Below are examples of popular pathways for the Opportunity Grant program.

- Accounting
- Office/Administration/Business Management
- Allied Health/Nursing/Medical Assistant
- Automotive/Maintenance Mechanic
- Commercial Truck Driving
- Computer Technology
- Construction/Carpentry
- Criminal Justice/Corrections
- Early Childhood Education
- Aviation/Aerospace/Manufacturing
- Welding

## Opportunity Grants and I-BEST

Students can also use Opportunity Grants on professional-technical I-BEST programs.<sup>3</sup> Using a team-teaching approach, these programs teach basic skills — like reading, writing and math — to students who lack a high school-level education. Students learn these basic skills within the context of job-training; they “learn by doing.”

By learning basic academic skills and job skills at the same time, I-BEST students move faster through certificates and degrees and into living-wage careers.

### Sources:

1. Examples include: “Washington Roundtable and the Boston Consulting Group report: Washington Kids for Washington Jobs” (Oct. 5, 2016) and “A Skilled and Educated Workforce, 2015 Update” (see below).
2. SBCTC data warehouse, verified by Research Department Feb. 21, 2017.
3. I-BEST stands for Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training.



*Note: All material licensed under Creative Commons except iStock photo on front page.*

