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Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG): A Program of Growing Importance

The federal grant program has awarded \$135 million to expand community college workforce development programs.

BY CARRIE WARICK-SMITH WITH GUEST AUTHOR ROSARIO DURÁN

CONGRESS ESTABLISHED THE STRENGTHENING Community College Training Grants (SCCTG) in the fiscal year (FY) 2020 appropriations bill to enhance the capacity of community colleges to address workforce development needs within in-demand industries and career pathways.

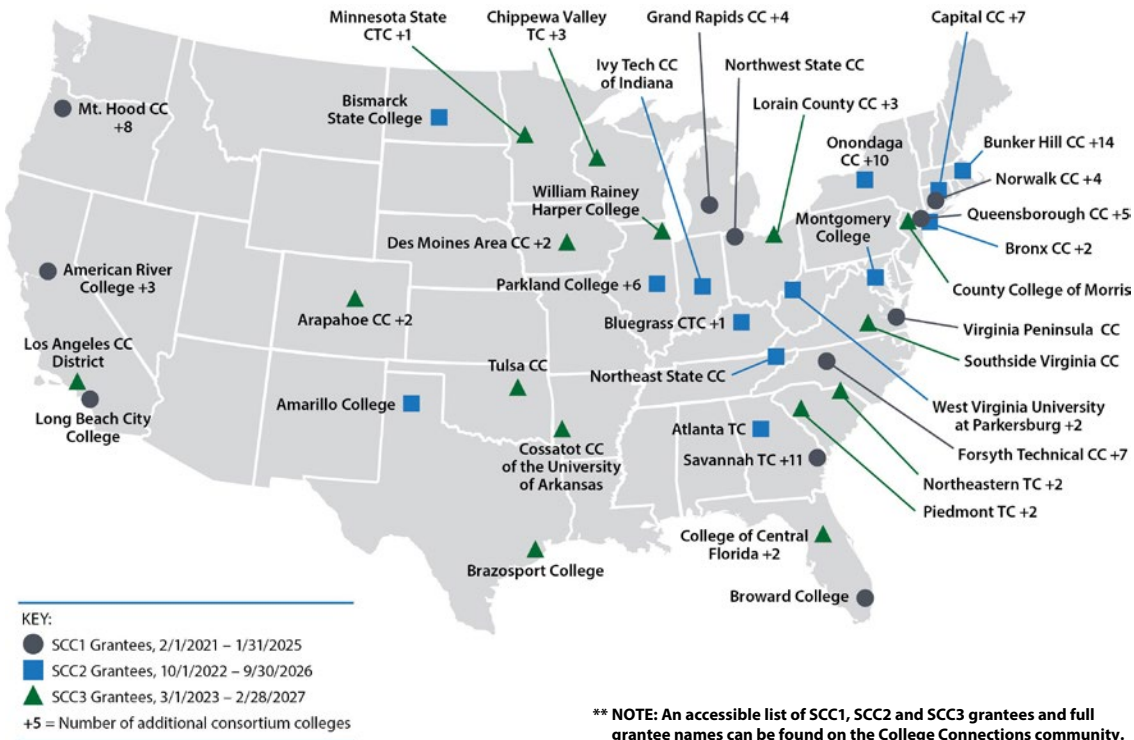
SCCTG follows in the footsteps of previous programs, including the Community-Based Job Training Grants and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grants, which helped colleges expand their workforce development capacity on a much larger scale. This competitive program enables individual colleges to apply for an individual grant or to join forces with other institutions for a consortia award.

Since its initial funding of \$40 million, SCCTG remains a top federal funding priority for community colleges, offering vital resources for community college-led job training programs. Over the course of three funding rounds – SCC1, SCC2, and SCC3 – \$135 million has been jointly awarded to 39 colleges and consortia across 27 states. These awards have played a pivotal role in elevating the skills of students in areas such as allied health occupations, information technology, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, cybersecurity, construction, clean energy, and more. The award amounts range from \$1.6 million to \$6.4 million, with an average award of \$3.47 million.

Current Funding Opportunity

The Department of Labor announced the fourth round of the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant (SCC4) on August 17, 2023. This round of funding will be the largest to date, with approximately \$65 million available. To qualify, applicants must be a public community college, as defined in Section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act. They may apply as a single institution or as part of a

SCC1, SCC2 & SCC3 GRANTEES ACROSS THE NATION



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consortium of two or more colleges in a common labor market area. Individual institutions are eligible for grants up to \$1.75 million, whereas consortium grants can be as large as \$5.75 million.

According to the grant posting, this round of funding will focus on “the capacity of community colleges to address identified equity gaps to increase access to educational and economic opportunities for dislocated workers and new entrants to the workforce, as well as employed workers seeking to advance in their careers, particularly for individuals from historically underserved communities.”

Additionally, this round of SCCTG funding will include a national impact evaluation. Those colleges selected to participate from the subset of colleges awarded funding will receive additional financial support for their participation in the evaluation. The goal for the national impact work will be to assess employment outcomes.

The map of current grantees, an overview of grantees from the first three rounds of funding, the grant application, and other general information can all be found at www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-training-grants/scc.

Long-Term Viability and Importance

Though significantly smaller in scale compared to its predecessors — by comparison, TAACCCT received \$2 billion over four years and reached all 50 states through formula grants — we are optimistic about SCCTG’s potential for growth and expansion. This program has bipartisan support and has already made impressive strides, with funding increased by over 50% in just three award cycles. The FY 2023

appropriations bill allocated \$65 million for SCC4, marking the largest allocation to date.

Nevertheless, the fiscal landscape of FY 2024 may not be as promising, with potential spending cuts looming as outlined in the ACCT NOW article on p. 8 of this issue. We anticipate the program will either maintain its current funding level or experience a slight reduction during this appropriation cycle.

In the long term, ACCT maintains the policy position that SCCTG should become an authorized program, better protecting it from the perils of being a program funded solely through the appropriations process and not written into law. Representative Bobby Scott (D-Va.), ranking member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, included it in his Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization bill during the last Congress. We remain committed to advocating for the program, urging Congress to authorize the program and sustain investment in this critical initiative that facilitates much-needed workforce pipelines nationwide.



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