

PROGRAM BRIEF

OCTOBER 14, 2024

“Without the WA CDL grant, I wouldn’t have been able to afford CDL training. Since obtaining my CDL, it has helped me grow my career and gain stable employment that allows me to provide for my family. This wouldn’t have been possible without the WA CDL grant.”

Trey Brown, WA CDL grant recipient fiscal year 2024

COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE & RELATED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Washington is committed to strengthening workforce development in key industries such as trucking, supply chains, and school bus driving. To support this, the state has established two grant programs: the WA CDL (commercial drivers license) Fund and the WA CDL Grant, both funded by the Washington state Legislature to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in the state’s commercial transportation and supply chain sectors.

The WA CDL Fund expands educational and training capacity at public community and technical colleges, creating more opportunities for individuals pursuing careers in these industries. The WA CDL Grant provides financial support to licensed private career schools and public K-12 school districts to enhance training for commercial truck and school bus drivers. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) administers both grant programs.

This report summarizes the investments for fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025 (FY23, FY24, FY25) and presents outcomes and student support levels for FY23 and FY24.

Funding Overview

Funds were awarded through competitive grant applications submitted by community and technical colleges and private career schools. A review committee from the Washington Department of Licensing and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board evaluated proposals and made recommendations to SBCTC.

Community and technical colleges: In FY23, \$1,867,037 was awarded to eight colleges, increasing slightly to \$1,874,521 in FY24 with two more colleges added. The funding leveled off at \$1,875,000 in FY25. These funds supported student financial aid, determined by each college’s financial aid policies, and instructional resources to stabilize and expand enrollment capacity.

Private career schools: In FY23, \$500,000 was awarded to four private career schools exclusively for student financial aid. In FY24, the funding doubled to \$997,750, awarded to six schools, with the addition of resources for expanding enrollment capacity. In FY25, \$1 million was awarded to eight schools for a mix of student aid and instructional resources.

Community or Technical College	FY23	FY24	FY25
Bates Technical College	419,187	142,548	133,464
Centralia College	419,187	242,548	122,203
Columbia Basin College	106,695	266,170	199,163
Grays Harbor College	198,100	196,350	247,610
Lower Columbia College	116,609	105,901	97,951
Peninsula College	129,121	331,570	422,409
Spokane Community College	330,000	209,790	221,051
Walla Walla Community College	148,138	280,124	206,342
Olympic College	N/A	39,520	89,005
Big Bend Community College	N/A	60,000	135,802
Total	1,867,037	1,874,521	1,875,000

Private Career School or College	FY23	FY24	FY25
Columbia Basin Truck Driving School	N/A	87,000	108,000
Commercial Driver School	100,000	129,000	85,000
Drive509	120,000	176,000	180,000
Perry Technical Institute	72,000	139,719	172,000
Sunnyside CDL School, LLC	N/A	174,031	245,000
T Enterprises, Inc. Truck Driving School	208,000	292,000	85,000
Taylor Made TDS, Inc.	N/A	N/A	75,000
Washington Trucking School	N/A	N/A	50,000
Total	500,000	997,750	1,000,000

Geographical reach

The WA CDL Fund and WA CDL Grant have enabled community and technical colleges and private career schools to expand the availability of instructional programs and student financial assistance, enhancing access to training programs across a diverse array of locations and contributing to workforce development in both urban and rural communities.

Locations served by community and technical colleges through the WA CDL Fund: Adams, Asotin, Clallam, Cowlitz, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Lincoln, Mason, Pierce, and Spokane counties.

Locations served by private schools through the WA CDL Grant: Benton, Franklin, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Spokane, Thurston, and Yakima counties.

Student financial assistance

CDL and other short-term programs less than 15 weeks or 600 clock hours long are ineligible for state or federal financial aid, making the financial assistance provided by the WA CDL Fund and WA CDL Grant crucial in removing barriers for students, particularly those from underserved communities. The grants give schools flexibility to use financial and student support strategies that work best for the communities they serve. Community and technical colleges are authorized to determine financial assistance levels based on local policies and available institutional resources. Private career schools are authorized to award up to \$2,000 per student annually and were required to leverage other public funds (if available) to reduce students' out-of-pocket costs.

Access was further supported by schools covering expenses such as medical exams, permits, and drug tests. Some students also received childcare assistance. This comprehensive support boosted both enrollment and retention, as students could pursue their educations without the strain of excessive financial burdens.

Number of students assisted financially

- **Community and technical colleges:** The WA CDL Fund helped 122 students in FY23, rising to 261 students in FY24.
- **Private career schools:** The WA CDL Grant supported 311 students in FY23, increasing to 546 students in FY24.

Enrollment capacity expansion

Community and technical colleges expanded CDL Class A enrollment capacity by 194 students per year by FY24 thanks to the WA CDL Fund. This includes four new or revived Class A programs at Columbia Basin College, Olympic College, Spokane Community College, and Walla Walla Community College that, but for the WA CDL Fund, would not exist.

Both grant programs fund “expansion resources,” which represent an array of essential equipment, space, materials, instructors, and curricula necessary to expand student enrollment capacity in Class A CDL and related supply chain programs. These resources provided more hands-on opportunities, ensuring students could train with modernized vehicles like those used in the industry. Expanding classroom spaces and securing stable locations allowed schools to increase enrollment and accept more students each week. Offering training across multiple locations and flexible hours made it easier for students to attend classes that fit their schedules, further boosting enrollment opportunities. The following table includes examples of key investments for enrollment expansion.

<p>Equipment and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased a new truck, a new trailer, two box trucks, a tractor truck with a semi-automated transmission, two semi-trucks, a flatbed trailer, and a 28 ft. swing door dry van trailer. • Fixed a broken truck and added classroom space, allowing school to accept more students weekly. • Purchased simulators for both CDL and forklift training. • Acquired two electric pallet jacks. • Purchased electronic driving log systems as a training aid for students. • Added a small shed for students and storage of program equipment. 	<p>Curriculum and program expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added Class B CDL program. • Developed curriculum for powered industrial truck. • Added hazmat certification classes and classroom space • Initiated a CDL student interest form that generated 563 submissions since it first opened. • Offered training at four locations, five days/week, allowing students to attend at times and locations that best fit their schedules and family needs. • Initiated a contractual partnership with a training provider. • Established relationships with three employers in Mason County to keep employee CDL training within the county. • Offered a second cohort in winter due to a move to a larger space that allows students to witness the workings of a weigh station firsthand.
<p>Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired a part-time CDL coordinator, a full-time instructor, and a full-time instructional tech. • Hired a new instructor to teach the theory portion of Class A CDL. • Rehired laid off instructors and enrolled students from waitlist. • Added forklift instructor to expand by 3 cohorts. • Added Class A instructor to expand by 3 cohorts. • Added summer instructor. 	<p>Training space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established new training grounds, creating more enrollment capacity for students. • Opened a new location creating access in an underserved area. • Entered into a new lease agreement and made site improvements. • Rented a 1.35-acre parking lot to provide space for practice driving.

Testimonials

The CDL Fund has been transformative for our program, allowing us to significantly expand our enrollment capacity and increase CDL completions. Before receiving this grant, many students faced financial barriers that prevented them from participating.... This year, we successfully hosted our first summer CDL class, enrolling 14 students, 13 of whom received partial CDL Fund grants. This financial assistance was pivotal in enabling their participation. Furthermore, our fall quarter saw the largest cohort ever, with 25 students, 23 of whom were supported by partial grants.

We are grateful for the CDL Fund, which has allowed us to award 58 partial grant scholarships totaling \$267,528. In an economically depressed county, this support is vital, as 64.4% of students applying for the grant stated they would not have funding, and therefore would not be able to attend, without the grant. This year, 89.23% of our students received some level of funding, showcasing the tangible difference CDL funding makes in the lives of our students and the success of our program.

Camilla Rico, Director of Community Education, Peninsula College, Port Angeles

Being an educator for over 19 years, 17 of which were conducted in public K-12 schools, I have always firmly believed that everyone should have equal access to education and training. Regardless of our backgrounds, everyone should have a chance to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in life. Commercial drivers are in demand across the US. It is also one of the few jobs people can attend short-term training, one to two months on average, and leave with the skills necessary to obtain a job that will fully support their families. In most cases, CDL training is too short and will not qualify for traditional student federal financial support, creating an economic barrier to CDL training. The WA CDL Grant helped break this financial barrier and allowed many people to access the training needed to obtain their CDL!

Specifically, the WA CDL Grant supported 101 students' access to the training programs offered at DRIVE509 in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, helping to fill critical employment gaps for commercial drivers in our area. In addition, the WA CDL Grant funds increased our enrollment, allowing us to rehire two additional instructors who were laid off due to a decrease in enrollment created by student financial barriers, which prevented them from accessing training. We are beyond grateful for the WA CDL Grant.

Angela Boudreau, President, DRIVE509 CDL School, Spokane