

Cybersecurity Student Loan Repayment Grant Regulations

8 VAC 40-170-10 Definitions

"Active-duty military" means full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. Such term includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance, while in the active military service, at a school designated as a service school by law or by the secretary of the military department concerned. Such term includes the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, and National Guard members operating under Title 10 of the United States Code but does not include full-time National Guard duty operating under Title 32 of the United States Code. [This definition is only applicable if the applicant attempts to qualify under the "separation from active duty service" provision under 8VAC 40-170- 20 B.2.]

"Award year" means the Commonwealth of Virginia's fiscal budget year, July 1 through June 30 of the following year.

"Contract" shall refer to the document detailing the program and employer contributions for a specific employee, including annual grant amounts and duration, in conformance with these regulations.

"Full-time employment" means an employee is assigned to non-restricted, classified, or other salaried positions that work the equivalent of 40 hours per week for 12 months per year.

"IT" refers to the field of Information Technology.

"Program" refers to the Cybersecurity Student Loan Repayment Grant Program.

"Private institution of higher education" includes each in-state nonprofit and proprietary private institution of higher education in the Commonwealth.

"Public institution of higher education" includes the System as a whole and each associate-degree granting and baccalaureate public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth.

"Qualified employment" refers to an employment position meeting the requirements of these regulations.

"Reside within Virginia" means an individual has secured physical housing located within the geographical boundaries of the Commonwealth of Virginia during the period of qualified employment under the contract.

"Staff" refers to employees of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia assigned to the administration of this program.

“Student loan” refers to any qualified education loan obtained specifically to finance education or other school-related expenses. “Qualified education loan” does not include credit card debt, home equity loan, or revolving debt.

“Veteran” means an individual who has served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States and who was discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable.

8 VAC 40-170-20 Award details

From such funds as are available through appropriations and subject to matching employer funds, recipients will be eligible for up to \$20,000 total from a combination of program funds and employer match.

1. The employer match must be equal to or greater than the program match.
2. The actual award may be reduced based on available program funds and employer match.
3. Awards may be renewed for up to two times, for a maximum total of three years, subject to employer commitments upon initial awarding, available funds, number of applications, and prioritization of employer and position.

8 VAC 40-170-30 Recipient criteria

- A. Reside within Virginia during the period of employment in which the contract is in force.
- B. Begin full-time employment within one year of:
 1. Graduation from a public institution of higher education or regionally accredited private institution of higher education with an undergraduate or graduate degree in computer science or another academic program recognized by the Council to prepare an individual for a career in cybersecurity, or
 2. Separation from active duty service in the Armed Forces of the United States; was discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable, and gained experience or received training in computer science during such service.
- C. Accept an offer of qualified employment from a qualified employer located within the Commonwealth of Virginia.
 1. Qualified employers:
 - a. A state agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia
 - b. A federal agency of the US federal government
 - c. A federal or state military or defense organization
 - d. Any private organization that contractually provides cybersecurity services for any of the above organizations
 2. Qualified positions:
 - a. Positions tagged with “#COVAcyberjobs” on jobs.virginia.gov are eligible.
 - b. Positions with role titles such as “Information Technology Specialist I-IV” and “Information Technology Manager I-III” are eligible.
 - c. Positions having a “cybersecurity” component or demonstrating a career-path that leads into cybersecurity responsibilities will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- d. Positions whose job descriptions include the following key words or combination of words may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - i. Cyber, cyber security, cyber-security, security, secure, securing, compliance, threat, detection, vulnerability, audit, compliance, protect, firewall, risk, incident
 - ii. Analyze, Collect and Operate, Investigate, Operate and Maintain, Oversight and Development, Protect and Defend, Securely Provision

8 VAC 40-170-40 Award prioritization

- A. Once funding for an award year has been fully committed, no further applications will be considered.
- B. Merit criteria may be considered for individual eligibility and may be utilized for any individual application not yet reviewed. The criteria may include, but is not limited to:
 - 1. Qualifying veteran status
 - 2. Cumulative grade point average for degree program
 - 3. Cumulative grade point average within major
 - 4. Amount of outstanding student loans
 - 5. Prior IT experience
- C. Employment position priority order:
 - 1. Positions explicitly supporting cybersecurity
 - 2. Positions with the title of Information Technology Management
 - 3. Positions with the title of Information Technology Specialist
 - 4. Positions with current cybersecurity responsibilities
 - 5. Positions whose career path leads directly into cybersecurity responsibilities
- D. Employer priority order:
 - 1. State agencies
 - 2. Private employers contracting with state agencies
 - 3. Military or defense organizations
 - 4. Federal agencies
 - 5. Private employers contracting with federal or military agencies

8 VAC 40-170-50 Participation process

- A. Individual certification of eligibility:
 - 1. The individual may submit an application for eligibility at any time within one year of either degree completion or separation from military.
 - 2. In the application, the individual must verify:
 - a. Physical residence within the Commonwealth
 - b. Is within one year of either:
 - i. graduation from a qualifying institution
 - ii. separation from active duty service from the US military
 - c. Amount of student loan debt
 - 3. Individuals meeting the requirements will be issued a certification of eligibility with an expiration date. Such certification does not convey any commitment by the individual to seek qualifying employment nor assurance that grant funds will be available.

- B. Employer certification and contract submission:
1. Prior to advertisement or selection of applicants, the employer may seek confirmation that an open position is eligible under this program. Such verification does not convey any commitment by the employer to fill the position nor any assurance that grant funds will be available.
 2. To submit a contract proposal, the employer must certify:
 - a. The eligible individual has been or will be offered a qualifying position.
 - b. The individual meets all federal and state employment requirements, including having secured necessary security clearances required for the performance of the position.
 - c. The individual's education and/or training meet the requirements for the position being offered.
 - d. The eligible individual's has provided a Virginia home address.
 - e. The description of the position offered meets program requirements.
 - f. The employers offer on the amount and duration of the employer match.
 - g. If a private employer, provide verification of a current valid contract with the Commonwealth of Virginia or a Virginia state agency, federal agency, or qualifying military organization including how the position relates to that contract.
 3. SCHEV verification and contract approval:
 - a. Using information provided, SCHEV will verify whether the individual, the employer, and the position are each eligible under the program.
 - b. SCHEV will determine the amount and duration of the state matching commitment from the grant and that the employer match is in conformance with these regulations.
 - c. There is no program commitment or reservation of funds until SCHEV has confirmed individual eligibility and has signed the contract identifying the state and employer program match and duration of agreement.

8 VAC 40-170-60 Grant administration

- A. Fund Disbursement:
1. Every six months, the employee will receive half of the annual award (half of employer match and half of the grant match) after the employer certifies that
 - a. The employee remains employed full-time in the approved position and
 - b. The employer has completed payment of the employer matching requirement.
 2. Disbursements from the grant will be made directly to the employee.
- B. Grant Conditions:
1. Employment service time cannot be used to simultaneously satisfy the requirements of this program as well as:
 - a. Federal CyberCorp® Scholarship for Service,
 - b. Virginia Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship, or
 - c. any other Commonwealth of Virginia employment incentive bonus.
 2. The contract is null and void and no further grant disbursements will take place, if:
 - a. The applicant does not accept the offer of employment, inclusive of a program contract as part of the compensation package.

- b. The applicant fails to secure and maintain initial or subsequent security clearances required for the approved position.
 - c. The employee leaves employment or is fired for cause.
 - d. The employee ceases to be employed full-time in a qualifying position.
 - e. The employer fails to fulfill the contract. In addition, the employer may be disqualified from future consideration for any contracts under this program.
 - f. The employee defaults on any student loan during the time of employment.
3. If the employee is subject to a layoff or other reduction in force, the employee may be considered for a pro-rata award based on the length of service if the employer certifies satisfactory performance during the time of eligible employment.
- C. Eligibility for multiple grants:
1. Individuals may have no more than one contract in force at one time.
 2. There are two paths to eligibility – via degree completion or separation from military service – therefore it is possible for an individual to meet the initial eligibility criteria multiple times. An employee may be considered for an additional grant under this program if the employee meets the recipient criteria under section 20 of this chapter and
 - a. Is offered a qualifying position of increased responsibility level within the organization, or
 - b. Is offered a qualifying position of increased responsibility at another eligible employer.
 3. No employee may receive a second grant contract for the same employment position or equivalent level of employment, either with the initial employer or any other eligible employer.