

FSET: Funding Opportunity for Employment and Training in Your Community

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What is FSET?

- A federal program administered by FNS
- Funds employment, training and support services for Basic Food recipients
- Allows states to increase access to, improve and diversify employment and training
- FSET provides three streams of funding
 - 100% federal funds for program administration
 - Federal matching dollars to assist Basic Food recipients
 - Local and state funds to serve Basic Food recipients

FSET 50/50 Federal Match

- Available to both state programs and third-party programs
- Non-federal matching funds may include state and local funds, foundation grants, employer-paid costs, state allocation to community colleges and private tuition payments

Who is eligible for FSET?

- In WA, clients must have incomes below 200% FPL and be eligible for food stamps
- Food stamp recipients must not be receiving TANF
- Food stamp recipients can volunteer to be involved in more than 120 hours/month of FSET activities, including employment
- Nationwide, about 35% of those eligible for food stamps are not enrolled

Allowable Costs

- Educational programs to improve employability (includes, ABE, ESL and GED)
- Job search, training and case management
- Vocational training
- Work experience
- Intake, assessment and evaluation
- Community service
- Support services for clients (transportation, uniforms, supplies etc.)
- Administrative costs

FSET National Landscape

- All states have FSET programs
- Washington utilizes a third-party match model. A few states are planning third-party match models
- The FSET program is underutilized... originally conceived as a work requirement to remain on food stamps, it has proven its potential to be much more

FSET Program Options

Who provides services?

- Government
- Community providers (e.g., community colleges, adult schools, community-based organizations)
- Some combination of the above

How can community providers be included?

- Referral relationship (community providers receive no FSET dollars)
- Contract model
- Third-party match model

WA Program Overview

- King County pilot began Oct. 05 as first FSET third-party match program in US
- Administered by WA DSHS, which contracts with nonprofits and colleges to provide services
 - 5 contractors in first year of pilot
 - 17 contractors for current year
- Nonprofits/colleges match with their own non-federal funding
 - Providers invoice DSHS showing total allowable costs spent, FSET components, roster of eligible clients
 - DSHS reimburses providers 50% of total allowable costs

WA Program Results

In the three years of the FSET pilot:

- More than 5,200 clients served
 - More than 3,212 currently active clients
- The initial placement rate was 23%. Washington is implementing an employment tracking system to collect employment data
- Average starting wage of \$11.29/hour
- More than \$5 million in new federal dollars for low-income job seekers
- The FSET pilot has expanded services to Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom Counties.

FSET Successes

- WA's FSET program received the Governor's Workforce Best Practice Award for 2006.
- In the first 3 years, WA's FSET pilot has brought in \$5 million new dollars to local non-profits and colleges for services
- WA's FSET program has provided a new tuition funding source for low-income students, recruited many more low-income students to colleges and expanded colleges' continuum of services
- Provided services to a new population of students
- Enhanced the relationship between community colleges and community based organizations to provide comprehensive services

WA Prog: How Colleges Benefit

- 10 community colleges now in WA FSET program
- Third-party match program draws in additional populations of students (FSET students come through outreach, campus referral and general student population)
- WA uses match to cover tuition, books, etc.
- About 6.3% of student body (310) at Edmonds CC are enrolled in FSET-funded programs for Fall Quarter 2008
- FSET students can be co-enrolled with CBO(s) for case management and support services to ensure training retention and placement

WA Prog: Challenges

- General Challenges
 - Ambiguity on how the regulations are interpreted
 - At first, confusion on what were allowable, matchable expenses
 - High amount of administrative work
 - Monthly food stamp roster fluctuations
- Specific Third-Party Match Program Challenges
 - There has been no roadmap
 - Cost reimbursement – organization must have adequate cash flow to manage the reimbursement process
 - Match funds are committed to serving FSET clients

WA Prog: Opportunities

- DSHS is responding to providers' requests to improve reporting/invoicing system, which is easing administrative burden
- DSHS has created an FSET oversight group to improve program design, service delivery and expansion
- DSHS and WA State Board for Community & Technical Colleges adding FSET staffing, creating infrastructure for continued expansion
- WA is developing an evaluation plan to measure the outcomes of the FSET program
- Opportunity for further collaboration between training providers (colleges) and case management providers (CBOs)

Starting an FSET Third-Party Program: Considerations

- Do you have a champion?
- Does your organization have adequate match of non-federal resources?
- Program administration delivery model?
- Does your agency have client tracking system needed to identify, maintain and report participant data?
- Demographics – do you serve many food stamp recipients and can you target them?

Potential Hurdles from Experiences with Other States

- Lack of political will for government to put up the match in a contract or government-run model
- Government fears about giving up control to community partners for program quality, continuity, and accountability
- Return on investment concerns
- Lack of awareness of or interest in FSET's potential
- For community partners, concern about putting up the match
- Possible need to coordinate with existing legislation to support program access

Advocacy Options

- Expand on the benefits of FSET utilization statewide
- Pilot model to build confidence, then spread the word
- Bring advocates and community partners to the table
- Community colleges have been very influential in many states
- Community based organizations play a strong role in developing support
- Evaluate your state's FSET program
- Work with advocates throughout US to improve FSET regulations

Questions?

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