

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) Program Outcomes Federal Fiscal Year 2024

As required by RCW 74.04.535

November 1, 2024

Economic Services Administration
Community Services Division
PO Box 45470
Olympia, WA 98504-5470
360-485-2858

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
II.	PROGRAM OVERVIEW.....	3
	Program Background	3
	Coordination with Other Employment Programs.....	4
III.	PROGRAM FUNDING	5
IV.	PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS	8
	Program Reach.....	8
	Participant Information	9
	Employment Information	10
V.	OTHER HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENT POINTS	10
	Process Updates	10
	Provider Updates	10
	Outreach and Support	11
	Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs).....	11
VI.	APPENDIX A.....	12

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington state Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program provides supervised job search, job search training, educational services, skills training, and other employment opportunities to Basic Food¹ Assistance recipients. To be eligible to receive federally funded BFET services, Basic Food recipients cannot be active recipients of the following programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) WorkFirst program, Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) or state funded Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants. Services are provided through community or technical colleges and community-based organizations (CBOs). Washington's BFET program is considered one of the top national models for SNAP employment and training (E&T) services.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required by [RCW 74.04.535 \(3\)](#), to track and report outcomes annually through performance-based contracts including federal funding received, number of participants served, achievement points, number of participants who enter employment during or after participation in BFET, and average wage of jobs attained.

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Background

BFET started in Seattle as a pilot in October 2005 with four CBOs and one community college. It is now a statewide program with 28 CBOs, nine ORIA CBOs, three Workforce Development Councils, two Tribal partners, 11 Employment Security Department (ESD) WorkSource CBO locations, and all 34 community and technical colleges offering services (some colleges carry the BFET caseload for more than their own school). BFET provides E&T services along with critical supports to Basic Food recipients. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) holds federal authority for the BFET program. The program is a partner in the state's comprehensive workforce development system, which serves low-income individuals and employers by encouraging skill enhancement and financial independence through gainful employment.

BFET leverages collaborative partnerships using each partner's particular strength; community and technical colleges provide education and training to increase an individual's employability, while ESD and CBOs assist job-ready individuals in entering the job market. Many participants are co-enrolled in BFET services through multiple agencies to provide wraparound services and maximize outcomes.

BFET is a nationally recognized model of a successful E&T program due to several factors. The program emphasizes skill building and post-secondary certificate attainment as a key to long-term self-sufficiency. BFET provides wraparound services that work in tandem with skill building strategies to prevent or mitigate barriers from disrupting participant's progress. Labor market information determines which local economic areas are in-demand and programs are designed to help establish pathways to fill vacancies.

The BFET program provides innovative use of technology to conduct case management communication between DSHS and providers as well as facilitating bi-lateral communication amongst providers on shared cases, contributing to the program's national recognition as a leader in the E&T field. FNS

¹ The U.S. Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP and called Basic Food in Washington state, helps people with low incomes by providing monthly benefits to buy food.

regularly invites Washington state to share best practices to assist in the development and strengthening of SNAP E&T programs in other states. State agencies, CBOs and educational institutions from other states visit Washington state to learn about our BFET program, including our service delivery model, strategic planning group and technology interface.

BFET provides employability assessments in addition to a menu of services through local CBOs including:

- Case management
- Job readiness training
- Basic skills/English Language Acquisition (ELA) training (e.g. literacy, math, vocational ELA, high school equivalency preparation)
- Vocational training
- Supervised job search
- Work based learning
- Support services (e.g. transportation, internet services, childcare, hygiene, clothing, etc.)
- Job retention services

Typical services a BFET participant could receive at local community and technical colleges include:

- Assessment and career planning
- Tuition assistance applied to a vocational certificate or non-transfer associate degree
- Adult education
- GED preparation
- High school 21+
- Case management
- Supervised job search
- Support services

Coordination with Other Employment Programs

The BFET program works in collaboration with the workforce development system which is a collaborative partnership between state agencies and communities including: ESD, Department of Commerce, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (serving K-12), businesses, labor, job-seeker constituents, local elected officials, community based partners and the 12 local Workforce Development Councils (each serving as a Workforce Development area/region).

BFET activities are structured to be provided in partnership with Title 1 programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)². In FFY 2023 there were 17 BFET providers who are also WIOA service providers, where the likelihood of collaboration increases for the benefit of the participant. WIOA service providers coordinate referrals of BFET clients to WIOA programs, as “priority of service” customers, and employment and training activities. SNAP eligibility is an element of automatic WIOA eligibility, allowing opportunities to structure and integrate services to provide comprehensive supports and services, helping customers move more effectively through education, training and employment pathways. These activities can include supervised job search, job readiness, basic education, support services, job retention, and wage progression. Alignment within the partnerships varies in local regions and per contractors situated in the respective regions. There may be some duplication in services

² “State Workforce Plan – Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP)” 2022, Page 53, Core Programs. https://wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/TAP-Washington_PYs_2022-2023_Mod-for-Website.pdf, accessed August 29, 2023.

between the partner programs, primarily due to each program having its own participant eligibility criteria. Several BFET partners receive WIOA Title 1 funding, giving them the ability to braid those funds to provide additional resources and fill gaps where BFET funds are not available.

The Washington state BFET program also works with a number of other E&T programs:

- **Employment Pipeline** is a DSHS administered navigation model available for individuals seeking immediate employment. Employment Pipeline assists DSHS clients with navigating employment and training programs and resources, assesses employment needs, completes referrals, and provides retention services. BFET and Employment Pipeline collaborate at community events to provide client access to E&T resources.
- **Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)** focuses on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate E&T services to refugees and immigrants in Washington state. ORIA BFET offers the same E&T services statewide as the mainstream BFET program. ORIA’s goal is for refugee and immigrant families and individuals to succeed and thrive in Washington state.
 - **The Limited English Proficient Pathway program** provides employment services and vocationally focused English language training to: adults who receive TANF or State Family Assistance and are English language learners, people receiving RCA, and people who have lived in the United States for less than five years and have an initial U.S. immigration status of refugee³. ORIA administers this program by contracting with CBOs, refugee resettlement agencies, colleges, and other state agencies to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
 - **Career Ladder for Educated and Vocationally Experienced Refugees (CLEVER)** assists highly educated and vocationally skilled people who meet federal eligibility as refugees with re-entering their profession in the United States. The CLEVER program provides career orientation and planning, international transcript evaluation, licensing and recertification assistance, vocational mentoring, targeted job placement and job retention, and support services.
- **Tribal Relationships**
DSHS has a history of working with local tribal councils and programs, such as the Tribal TANF program. The BFET program continues to build upon these existing relationships with the assistance of DSHS Tribal Liaison staff. The BFET program currently has two Tribes providing E&T services to Basic Food clients in rural areas. DSHS is always interested in partnering with additional tribes.

III. PROGRAM FUNDING

FNS supports the state’s SNAP E&T program through several different funding streams. Washington’s BFET program uses the 50/50 reimbursement model to fund the majority of BFET services. The 100 percent funds are insufficient to support the program on a statewide scale. The use of the 50/50 reimbursement model supports program growth based on each community’s capacity to provide match

³ For eligibility purposes, “refugee” encompasses people who resettle in the U.S. as refugees, as well as people granted asylum, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, victims of human trafficking, special immigrant visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan and individuals paroled as refugees or asylees.

funding. The BFET program leverages state, local, and private funds to provide services. This funding model creates a new funding stream for colleges and CBOs to provide much needed services, while increasing partnerships to invest in the program.

100 Percent Grant Funding:

The federal government distributes roughly \$100 million annually to states to assist in the administration of SNAP E&T programs. Washington primarily uses these funds to administer the statewide program. A small portion is reserved to start services in underserved geographic areas and help underserved populations. This funding does not require third party match. It fluctuates annually based on the federal formula related to the number of work registrants⁴ in the state. After initial issuance and approval, states may request additional 100 percent federal funds (that are left unspent by other states) through the carryover funds process. Washington state regularly requests carryover funds to provide additional support to the BFET program.

100 Percent Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) Pledge Funding:

The Food and Nutrition Act provides \$20 million each fiscal year for state agencies that pledge to offer a qualifying SNAP E&T component to all at-risk Able Bodied Adults without Dependents, or ABAWDs. At-risk ABAWDs are those who are in their third countable month and at risk of losing their SNAP eligibility due to the three-month time limit. Washington filed for an ABAWD time limit waiver based on the state's extended unemployment benefits eligibility. Given the waiver, pledge funding was not requested in 2024.

50/50 Reimbursement Funding:

In addition to 100 percent federal funds allocation, states are offered 50/50 reimbursement funding for SNAP E&T programs to cover administrative costs and support services. This funding is distinguished from 100 percent funds because the federal portion is a reimbursement, not a grant. BFET providers must initially cover the cost of program operations then receive reimbursement for 50 percent of the cost after providing services and incurring a cost. The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance leverages approximately \$614,000 in GF-S each year to provide matching funds to serve refugees and immigrants through the BFET program.

75/25 Tribal Funding:

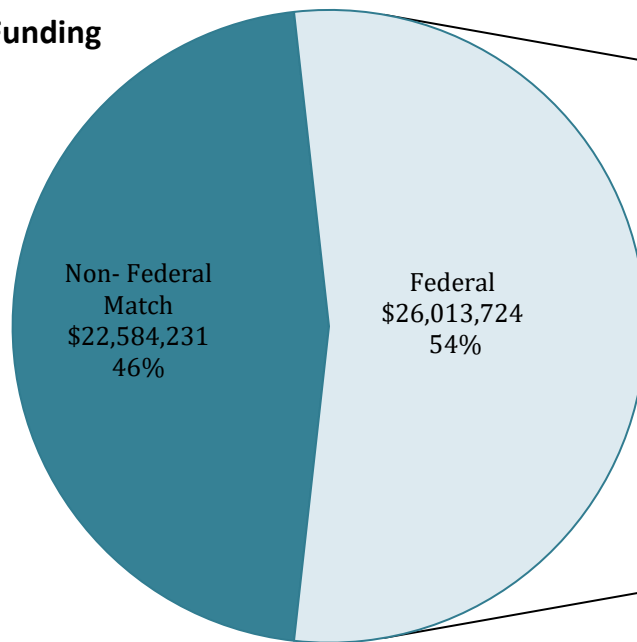
Tribal funding has a unique model. FNS supports strengthening tribal relations and programming and recognizes the importance of E&T activities with tribal entities. The funding model is still a reimbursement model, but tribal programs are reimbursed at 75 percent to cover administrative costs and support services for their BFET program. Tribal programs are required to match 25 percent of funds.

⁴ [WAC 388-444-0005](#)

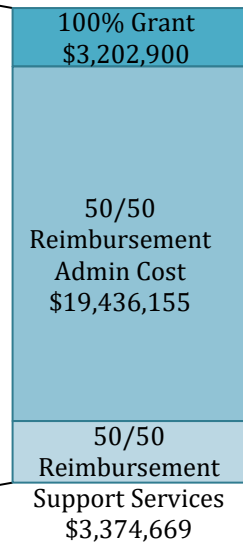
BFET Funding (FFY 2023- FFY 2024)

Funding Category	FFY2023	FFY2024
1. 100 Percent Federal E&T Grant:	\$ 2,806,609	\$ 3,202,900
2. Share of \$20 Million ABAWD Grant (if applicable)	\$ -	\$ -
2a. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for E&T	\$ 499,998	\$ -
3. Additional E&T Administrative Expenditures	\$ 34,666,195	\$ 38,688,643
a. 50% Federal	\$ 17,465,923	\$ 19,436,155
b. 50% State	\$ 17,200,272	\$ 19,252,489
4. Participant Expenses:	\$ 7,320,788	\$ 6,706,411
a. Transportation/Other	\$ 7,041,894	\$ 6,553,761
50% Federal	\$ 3,636,671	\$ 3,297,994
50% State	\$ 3,405,223	\$ 3,255,767
b. Dependent Care	\$ 278,894	\$ 152,650
50% Federal	\$ 160,797	\$ 76,675
50% State	\$ 118,097	\$ 75,975
5. Total E&T Program Costs (= 1+2+2a+3a+3b+4a+4b)	\$ 45,293,590	\$ 48,597,954
6. 100% State Agency Cost for Dependent Care Services	\$ -	\$ -
7. Total Planned Federal FY Costs	\$ 45,293,590	\$ 48,597,954

FFY 2024 Funding



Breakdown⁵



⁵ The total budget for FFY 2024 is 7.3 percent higher than FFY 2023.

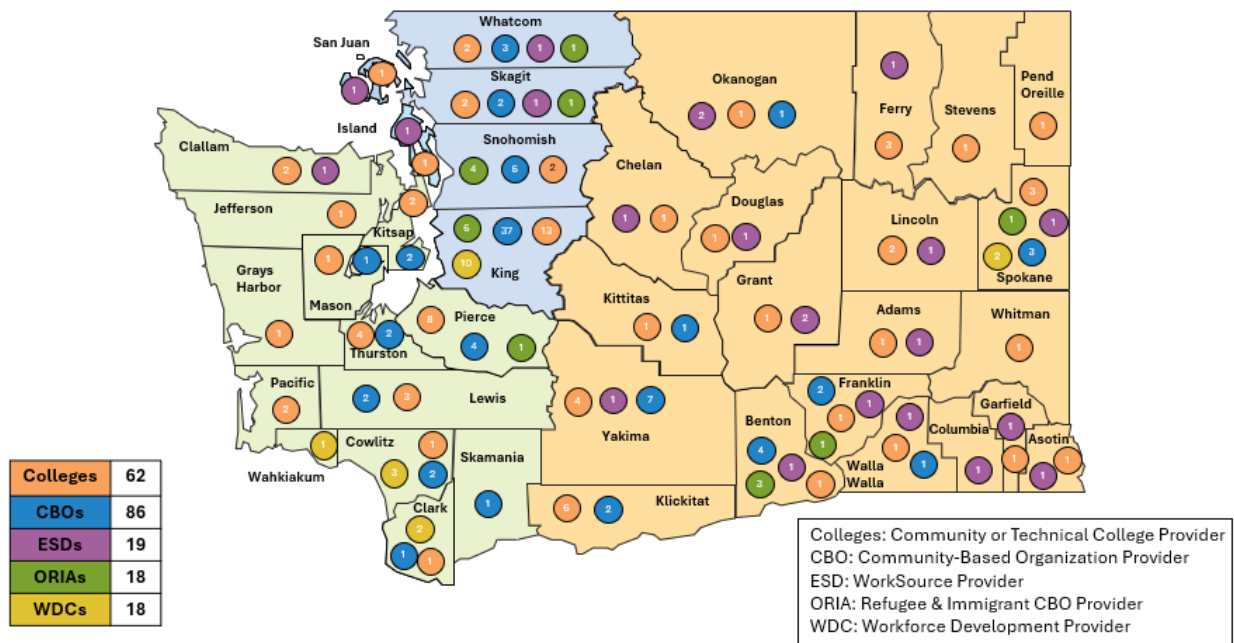
IV. PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS

Program Reach

BFET contracts with providers in 32 counties. However, some providers offer services beyond their county, extending the reach of the program to all Washington counties. BFET partnered with 43 CBOs in FFY 2024 (with multiple service locations) along with 34 Community and Technical Colleges. ORIA contracted with 11 CBOs (overlapping with some mainstream BFET contracted CBOs) across the state to increase access to E&T services for refugees and immigrants.

The following map represents the number of colleges, CBOs, ESDs, ORIA CBOs, and Workforce Development Council sites serving each county, as of May 2024. See **Appendix A** for detailed list of BFET partners and contractors throughout the state.

BFET Provider Sites Serving each County by Type



Future BFET service expansion depends on several factors: the availability of partners with necessary local funds for third party match to draw down federal funds, program and service needs in an area, and the overall BFET strategic plan. DSHS continues efforts to recruit CBOs and tribal nations in unserved and underserved parts of the state to reduce poverty statewide.

Washington Counties with Largest Number of BFET Participants (June 2024)*

County	Number of Participants	Percent of Total
King County	1,548	29.8%
Pierce County	744	14.3%
Spokane	358	6.9%
Snohomish	344	6.6%
Whatcom	277	5.3%

Clark	254	4.9%
Lewis	154	3.0%
Kitsap	146	2.8%
Benton	137	2.6%
Clallam	132	2.5%
Thurston	132	2.5%

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189

*Snapshot data: June 2024

Participant Information

The following tables show the average number of BFET participants served on a monthly basis and related demographic data.⁶

Average Monthly Participants (October 2023 – June 2024)

Time Period*	Average Monthly Participants	Total Percent of Change
October 2022 - June 2023	4,413	N/A
October 2023 - June 2024	4,883	+11%

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189

Participant Demographics (October 2023 – June 2024)

Demographic Category	Demographic Type	Percentage of Avg. Monthly Caseload*
Gender	Female	65%
	Male	35%
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic/ Latino	17%
	White	47%
	Black/African American	17%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
	American Indian/Alaska Native	4%
	Multi-racial	3%
	Unreported	5%
Age Category	Under 18 Years Old	< 1%
	18 - 24 Years Old	16%
	25 - 34 Years Old	33%
	35 - 44 Years Old	28%
	45 - 54 Years Old	14%
	55 - 64 Years Old	7%
	65+ Years Old	2%
Education Level**	Did Not Complete High School	10%
	Completed High School or GED	37%
	Post-Secondary Education	52%

⁶ In SFY 2023, a total of 11,860⁶ unduplicated clients were served by the Washington state BFET program: [ESA Briefing Book: SFY 2023 \(Basic Food Chapter\)](#)

	Not Reported/Unidentifiable	1%
Employed***	Yes	33%
	No	67%

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189

*Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

**Education level is captured during initial eligibility determination and may not be updated to reflect timely changes after initial intake.

***Based on earned income reported in ACES.

Employment Information

A significant number of BFET participants work while receiving E&T services. Employment opportunities range from survival jobs, which help prevent unemployment and cover living expenses, to career-oriented positions resulting from participation in the BFET program.

Characteristics of Employed BFET Participants

FFY	Avg. # of Women Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.	Avg. # of Men Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.
2023	991	34	\$1,697	389	36	\$1,802
2024	1,137	34	\$1,722	457	36	\$1,765

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4248

V. OTHER HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

Process Updates

On July 1, 2024, an updated direct BFET referral process was launched. This process enables eligibility staff to directly refer clients to providers based on their specific needs, as identified through screening questions. Clients can receive up to three referrals if they prefer multiple options or have varied needs. Additionally, a new provider determination process allows providers to explain why they cannot serve a client and enables DSHS to offer referrals to alternate providers if the client is interested.

Provider Updates

BFET contracted with Cell-Ed in September 2023. Cell-Ed provides a mobile learning platform for BFET clients to utilize as a means to supplement their BFET activities with their current providers. This is a unique contract as Cell-Ed is not a direct provider, but they work with BFET providers to enhance client opportunities. By utilizing Cell-Ed and their Skills 4 Life program, BFET participants have access to a full catalog of mobile device lessons that will help them achieve their goals.

In February 2024, BFET welcomed two new providers: WorkSource Central Basin, which expands BFET to Grant and Adams counties where only SBCTC was a provider; and WorkSource Clallam, which expands BFET to Jefferson and Clallam counties which were underserved areas. Both providers are working with SNAP recipients to obtain living wage employment by offering 1:1 job counseling, supervised job search assistance, soft skills education, training, education, and practical experience in the form of mock interviews, referrals to internal WorkSource Strategies For Success classes and more.

Outreach and Support

1. In 2024, BFET hosted regional in-person provider training meetings hosted by BFET staff. This gives providers and the BFET team opportunities to collaborate in-person and build relationships.
2. Quarterly BFET provider meetings are offered virtually by the BFET team which provides information, training and FNS updates.
3. BFET Operations meets with each provider monthly to discuss any audit findings and offer trainings, if requested.
4. BFET Policy meets with each provider quarterly to review their performance goals and discuss any needs for contract modifications.
5. The [BFET Provider Handbook](#) is updated each year. The BFET Handbook provides program requirements and guidance, and is digital to ensure ease of access and navigation.

Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs)

ABAWDs are individuals receiving Basic Food assistance between the ages of 18 and 52⁷, without dependent children living with them, and are determined able to work. These individuals are required to participate in work-like activities each month to maintain their Basic Food eligibility. Non-exempt ABAWDs who fail to meet work participation requirements for three months in a 36-month period (currently Jan. 2024 – Dec. 2026) will not receive more than three months of Basic Food benefits unless they become exempt or requalify by verifying participation. The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 provided new exceptions from participation for veterans, homeless individuals, and foster care alumni ages 18 through 24 who were in foster care when they turned 18.

Based on county unemployment rates, DSHS requests a federal waiver to the three-month time limit annually. The current waiver, in effect February 1, 2024 - January 31, 2025, waives time limits in all counties with the exception of King County.

⁷ As a result of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, this age requirement is incrementally increasing from 49 to 54 over federal fiscal years 2023 - 2025. The upper age limit of 54 begins 10/1/2024.

APPENDIX A

FFY 2024 BFET PROGRAM PARTNERS AND CONTRACTORS

Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)

ORIA operates within DSHS' Economic Services Administration's Community Services Division. The BFET program administered by ORIA offers the same services statewide as the general or mainstream BFET program with a focus on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate employment and training (E&T) services to refugees and immigrants. Current contractors through ORIA BFET include:

Asian Counseling and Referral (ACRS)	Career Path Services
Partner in Employment	TRAC Associates King
Partners In Careers	TRAC Associates Pierce
Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)	TRAC Associates Snohomish
Refugee Federation Service Center (RFSC)	World Relief Spokane
Refugee Immigrant Services Northwest (RISNW)	

Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

DSHS contracts with over 50 CBOs, including some with multiple service locations. Current CBOs include:

Adonai (King, Thurston/Mason, Benton, and Pierce Counties)	Orion Industries
Apprenticeship & Nontraditional Employment for Women (ANEW)	People for People
Asian Counseling and Referral Services (ACRS)	Port Jobs
Career Path Services	Puget Sound Training Center
Cares of Washington	Refugee Federation Service Center
Code Fellows	Rod's House
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Seattle Job's Initiative*
Columbia Ability Alliance	Seattle King County Workforce Development Council*
Evergreen Goodwill NW	Workforce Southwest Washington*
Farestart	Spokane Area Workforce Development Council*
Goodwill of the Olympics & Rainier Regions	TRAC Associates
Housing Hope	Uplift NW
Lower Columbia Community Action Council	Valeo Vocation
Multi Service Center	Weld Seattle
Neighborhood House Inc.	WorkSource (Columbia Basin, Colville, Okanogan, Skagit, Spokane, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Yakima, Clallam, and Central Basin)
Northwest Indian College	Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of King and Snohomish County
Opportunity Council	

*Four CBOs subcontract a portion of their BFET services. These providers include:

1. Seattle Jobs Initiative
 - Pacific Associates

- Congolese Integration Network
- 2. Spokane Area Workforce Development Council
 - Career Path Services
 - Goodwill of the Inland NW
 - Northeast Washington Educational Services District 101 (NEWESD 101)
- 3. Workforce Southwest Washington
 - Equus Workforce Solutions
- 4. Seattle Workforce Development Council
 - Asian Counseling and Referral Services (ACRS)
 - TRAC Associates
 - Pacific Associates

Community and Technical Colleges

The role of the BFET program within community and technical colleges is to provide educational opportunities and increase skill level and knowledge. All 34 colleges provide BFET services through an umbrella contract managed by State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Some colleges carry the BFET caseload and provide case management for other schools. The colleges provide services designed to help students attain skills necessary for employment, such as: vocational education, Adult Basic Education, English Language Acquisition, High School Equivalency and participant support services. Some colleges also offer case management, supervised job search, job readiness training and Integrated Education and Training. Colleges providing BFET services are:

Bates Technical College	Bellevue College
Bellingham Technical College	Big Bend Community College
Cascadia Community College	Centralia College
Clark College	Clover Park Technical College
Columbia Basin College	Edmonds Community College
Everett Community College	Grays Harbor College
Green River Community College	Highline Community College
Lake Washington Institute of Technology	Lower Columbia College
North Seattle College	Olympic College
Peninsula College	Pierce College Fort Steilacoom
Pierce College Puyallup	Renton Technical College
Seattle Central College	Shoreline Community College
Skagit Valley College	South Puget Sound Community College
South Seattle College	Spokane Community College
Spokane Falls Community College	Tacoma Community College
Walla Walla Community College	Wenatchee Valley College
Whatcom Community College	Yakima Valley Community College

As the lead contractor, SBCTC takes an active role in facilitating program planning and the future growth of the BFET program. SBCTC participates in and supports program strategic planning and the annual BFET training forum.