

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Expansion of the Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) Program

As required by RCW 74.04.535

November 1, 2021

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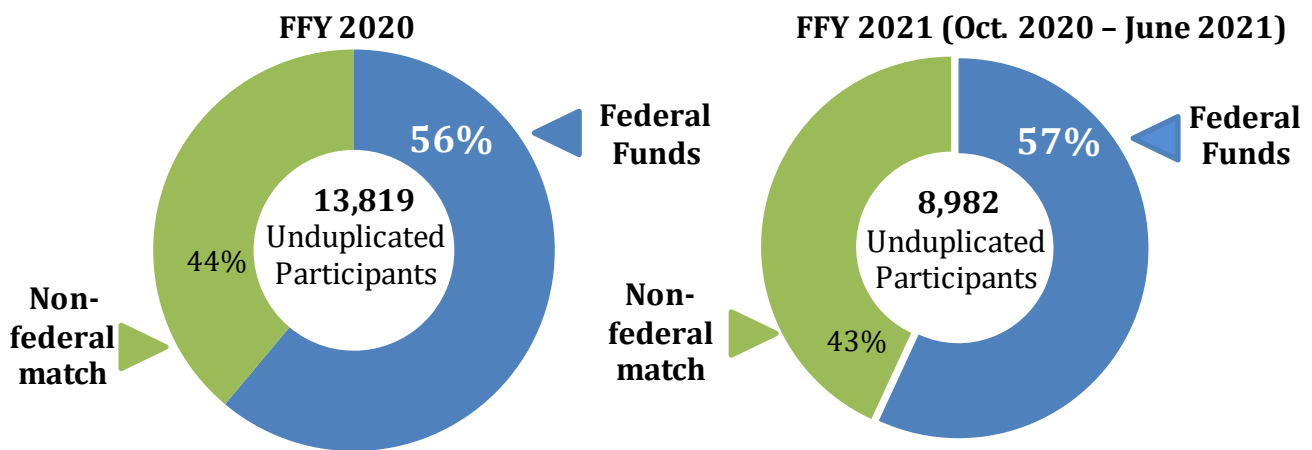
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington state Basic Food Employment and Training, or BFET, program provides job search, job search training, educational services, skills training, and other employment opportunities to Basic Food (also called Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP) recipients. To receive BFET services, Basic Food recipients cannot be an active recipient of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, WorkFirst program; Refugee Cash Assistance, or RCA; or the state funded Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants. Services are provided through community or technical colleges and community based organizations, or CBOs. Washington’s BFET program is considered one of the top national models for SNAP employment and training, or E&T, services to help recipients reach their full potential.

RCW [74.04.535](#) requires the Department of Social and Health Services, or DSHS; the Employment Security Department, or ESD; and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, or SBCTC, to work in partnership to expand the BFET (formerly known as food stamp employment and training) program. This statute also requires DSHS to track and report outcomes annually, including those achieved through performance-based contracts as follows: federal funding received, the number of participants served, achievement points, the number of participants who enter employment during or after participation in BFET, and the average wage of jobs attained. This report covers FFY 2020 and three quarters of FFY 2021 (October 2020 – June 2021).

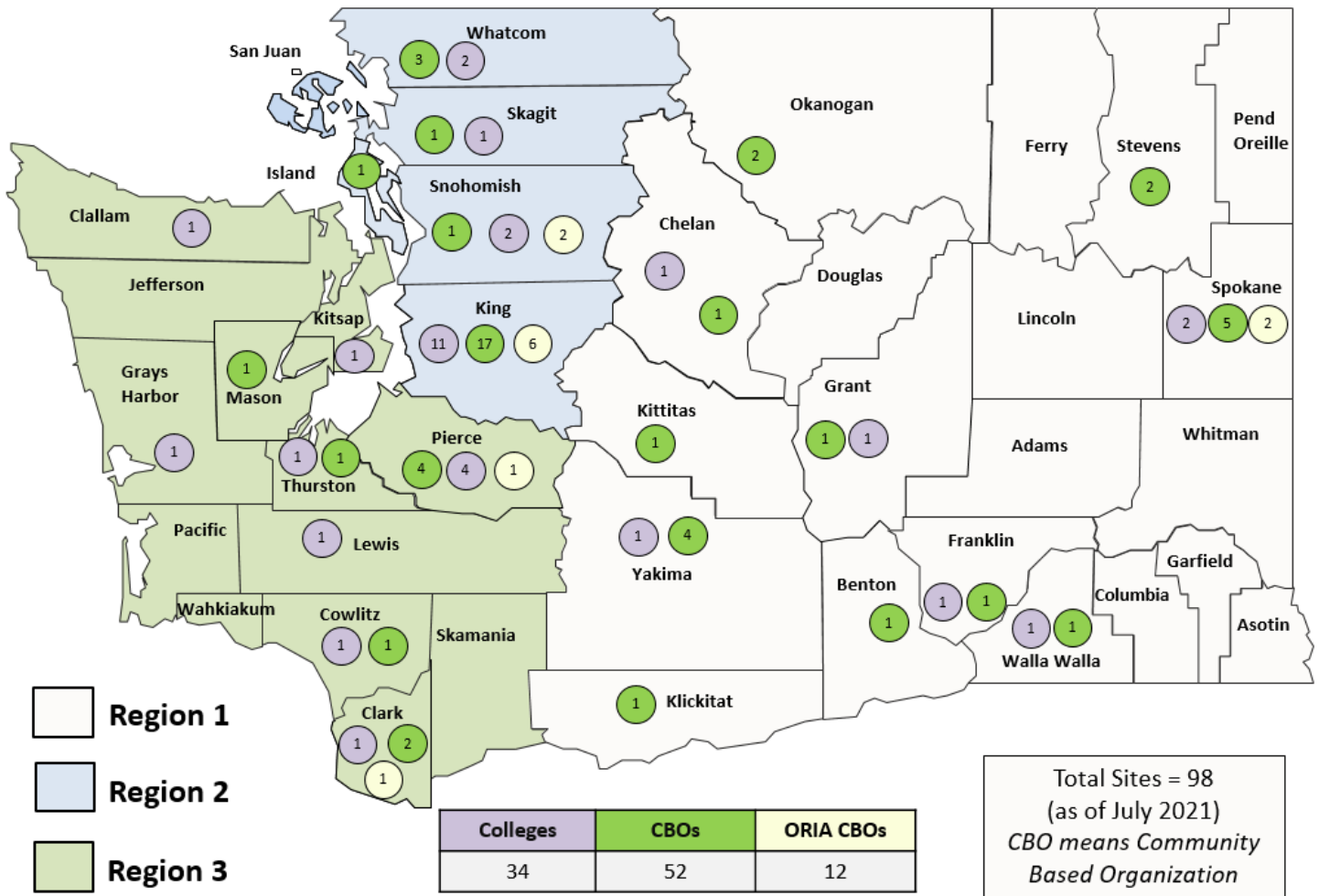
The chart below represents the number of unduplicated clients served in FFY20 and FFY21.¹ Also noted is the percentage of match federal funding.



¹ Source: EMAPs report #3751 BFET Participation

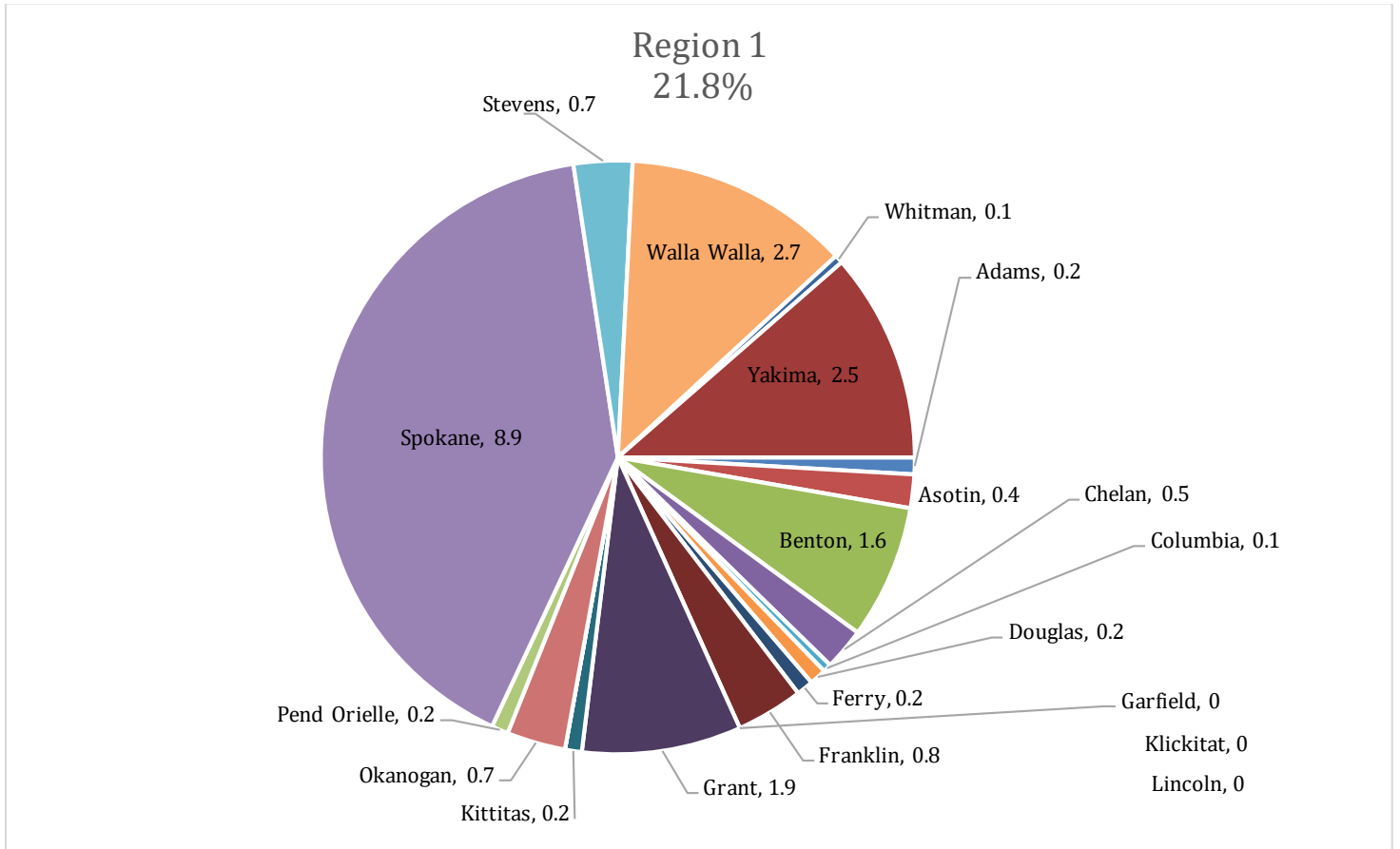
The map below represents BFET sites providing services at colleges, CBOs and ESD offices, as of July 2021.

Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) Service Locations in Washington State



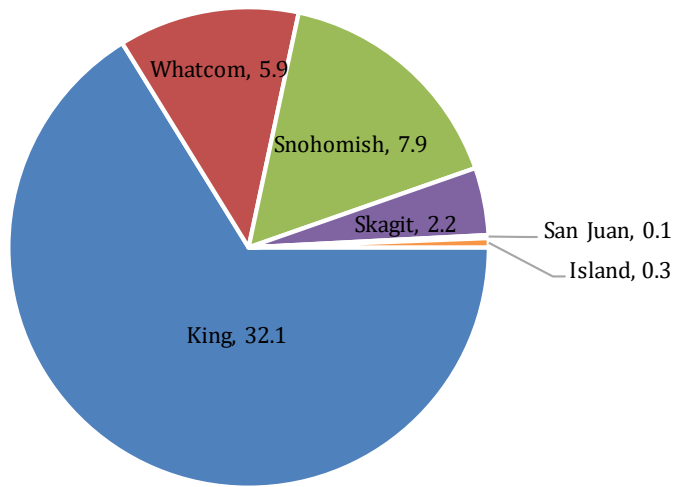
Future BFET service expansion depends on the availability of partners with necessary local funds for third party match to draw down federal funds, program and service needs in an area, and the overall BFET strategic plan. DSHS continues efforts to recruit CBOs and tribal nations in unserved or underserved parts of the state to provide wraparound services supporting participant success.

July 2020 - June 2021
Regional distribution of BFET participants by residential address (monthly average)²

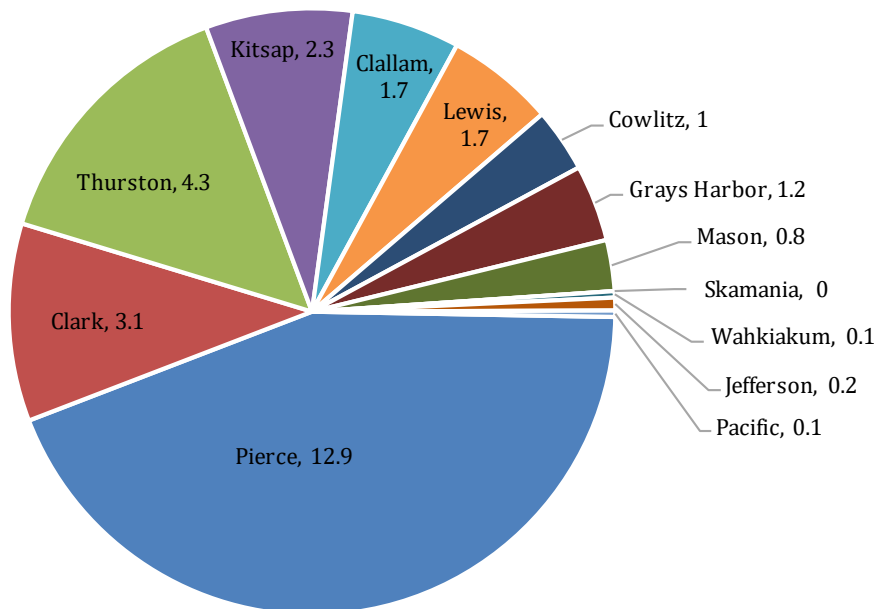


² Data from DSHS EMAPS report 4189

Region 2
48.4%



Region 3
29.3%



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 over 40 CBOs, 12 ESD WorkSource 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, Food and Nutrition Service, or FNS, has federal authority for the BFET program. The program is a partner in the state's comprehensive workforce development system, which serves low-income individuals, indigent workers, 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 employment and training 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 the skill building strategy to prevent or mitigate barriers from derailing a 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's innovative use of technology to conduct case management communication between DSHS and providers, and facilitate bi-lateral communication amongst providers on shared cases, increases the program's success and has contributed to the program's national recognition as a leader in the E&T field.

FNS 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, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions from other states visit Washington to learn about our BFET program, 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
- Life skills
- Job readiness training
- Basic skills and education such as: English as a second language training, literacy, math, high school equivalency preparation, etc.
- Vocational training
- Job search assistance and job placement
- 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
- Job search assistance
- Support services

Program Funding

FNS supports the state's SNAP E&T program through several different funding streams:

100 Percent Grant Funding:

The federal government distributes roughly \$90 million annually to states in 100 percent federal funds 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 registrants³ in the state. After initial issuance and approval, states may request additional 100 percent federal funds, 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. ABAWD pledge funds allow program staff to collaborate with local employers, colleges, and community partners for job fairs, educational opportunities, drug and mental health counseling, mentorships, and job search activities. Washington is committed to offering qualifying education, training, or workfare opportunities to every ABAWD applicant or recipient who is in the last month of the three-month period of eligibility. Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, Washington filed for an ABAWD time limit waiver based on the state's extended unemployment benefits eligibility, and FNS approved Washington's ABAWD waiver as of June 2021. The waiver runs through May 2022. All ABAWDs are exempt from ABAWD rules during this time. However, DSHS continues to encourage all underemployed SNAP eligible clients to participate in BFET programming voluntarily.

50/50 Reimbursement Funding:

In addition to the 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 a 50 percent reimbursement after providing services and incurring a cost. The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, or ORIA, within DSHS leverages approximately \$400,000 in GF-S each year to provide matching funds to serve refugees and immigrants through the BFET program.

75/25 Tribal Funding:

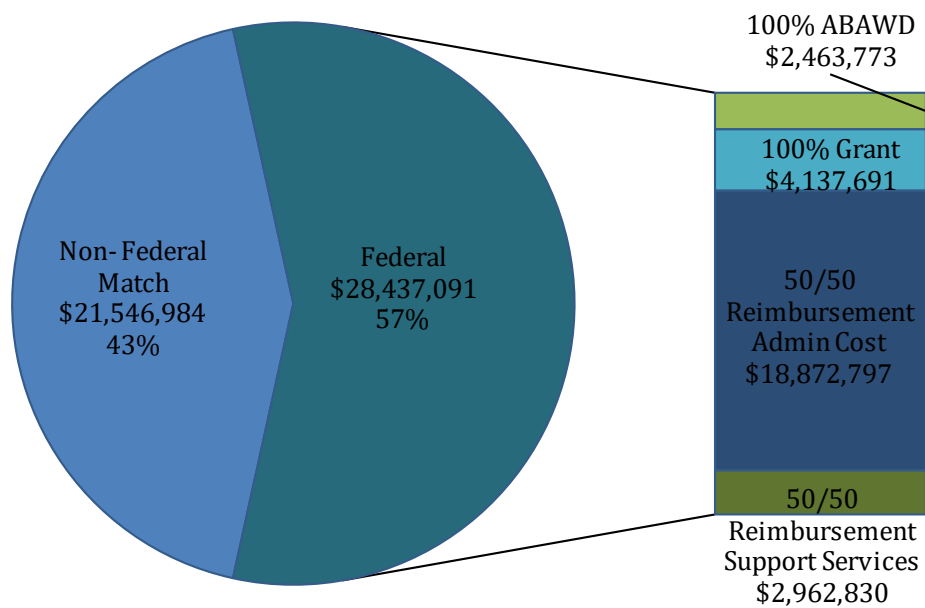
FNS values and supports strengthening tribal relations and programming and recognizes the importance of employment and training activities with tribal entities. The funding model is still a reimbursement model, but

³ [WAC 388-444-0005](#)

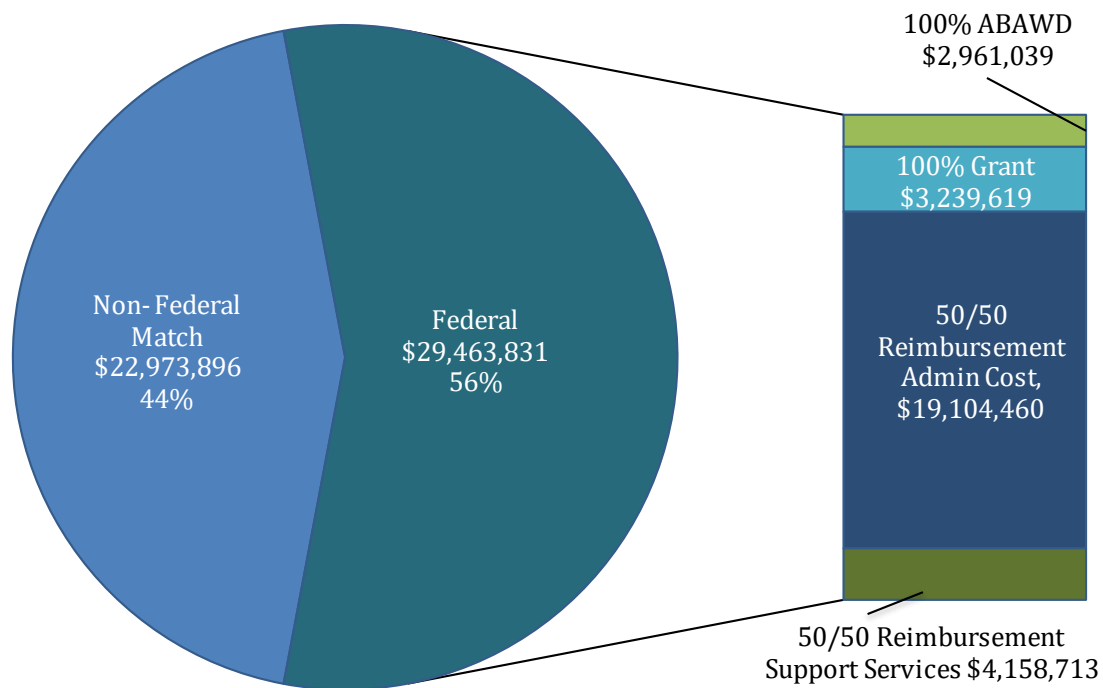
tribal programs are reimbursed at 75 percent to cover administrative costs and support services for their BFET program. Tribal programs are required to match 25 percent of funds.

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 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.

FFY 2021 Funding Breakdown



FFY 2020 Funding Breakdown



The total budget for FFY 2021 is 4.7% lower than FFY20.

Coordination with Other Employment Programs

The BFET program works in collaboration with the workforce development system. The Washington state workforce development system is a collaborative partnership between state agencies such as ESD, Department of Commerce, SBCTC, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI, serving K-12), businesses, labor, job-seeker constituents, local elected officials, community based partners, and the twelve local Workforce Development Councils, or WDCs, 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)⁴. Many BFET providers 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 for opportunities to structure and integrate services to provide comprehensive supports and services to help customers move more effectively through education, training, and employment pathways. These activities can include: job search, job readiness, basic education, support services and/or job retention and wage progression. Alignment within partnerships varies in local regions and per contractors situated in the respective regions. There may be some duplication in services between the partner programs; however, that is primarily due to each program having its own eligibility criteria, which must be met by the participants. Several BFET partners receive WIOA

⁴ "State Workforce Plan – Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP)." 2020, Page 57, Core Programs. <https://www.wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/TAP-Update-2020-030420.pdf> Accessed June 3, 2021

Title 1 funding in which they have the ability to braid those funds, 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 program available for individuals looking for immediate employment. Employment Pipeline helps DSHS clients navigate E&T 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 employment and training resources.
- **Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance** focuses on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate employment and training services to refugees and immigrants in Washington State. The BFET program through ORIA offers the same employment and training 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 refugee. For eligibility purposes, the term "refugee" encompasses people who resettle in the U.S. as refugees as well as people granted asylum, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, Victims of Human Trafficking, and Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan. 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**, or CLEVER, is a program that assists highly educated and/or vocationally skilled people who meet the federal eligibility as refugees to re-enter their profession in the United States. The CLEVER program provides the following services: career orientation and planning, international transcript evaluation, licensing and recertification assistance, vocational mentoring, targeted job placement and job retention, and support services.
- **Tribal Relationships**

Washington State 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 the DSHS Tribal Liaison currently located within the Community Services Division, or CSD. Washington State's BFET program currently has two Tribes providing E&T services to SNAP clients in our rural areas. Currently, BFET is working with another Tribe, which the contract for BFET services is scheduled to begin in FFY22.

III. PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FFY 2020 - 2021

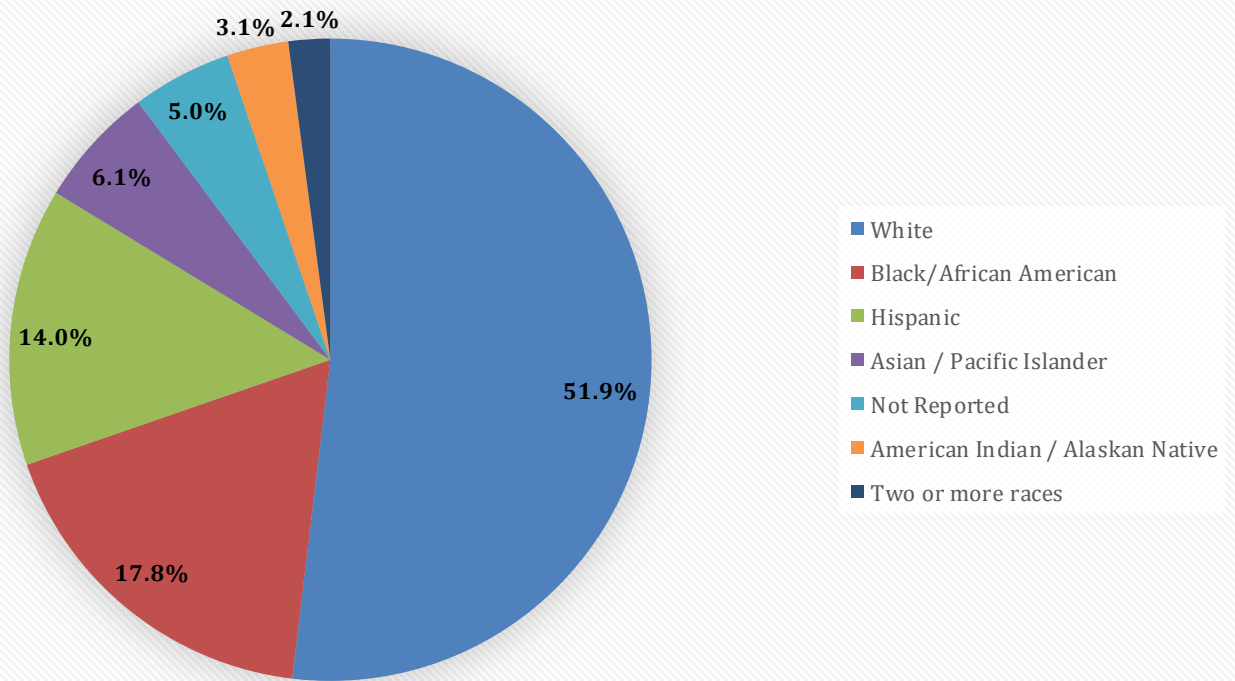
Participants and Services

BFET contracts with providers in 34 counties. However, some providers offer services beyond the county they are located in, giving BFET a bigger reach beyond these counties. BFET partners with over 40 CBOs in FFY21 (with multiple service locations) along with 34 Community and Technical Colleges. ORIA contracted with 12 CBOs (overlapping with some mainstream BFET contracted CBOs) across the state to administer services to increase access to E&T services for refugees and immigrants.

Participant Demographics⁵

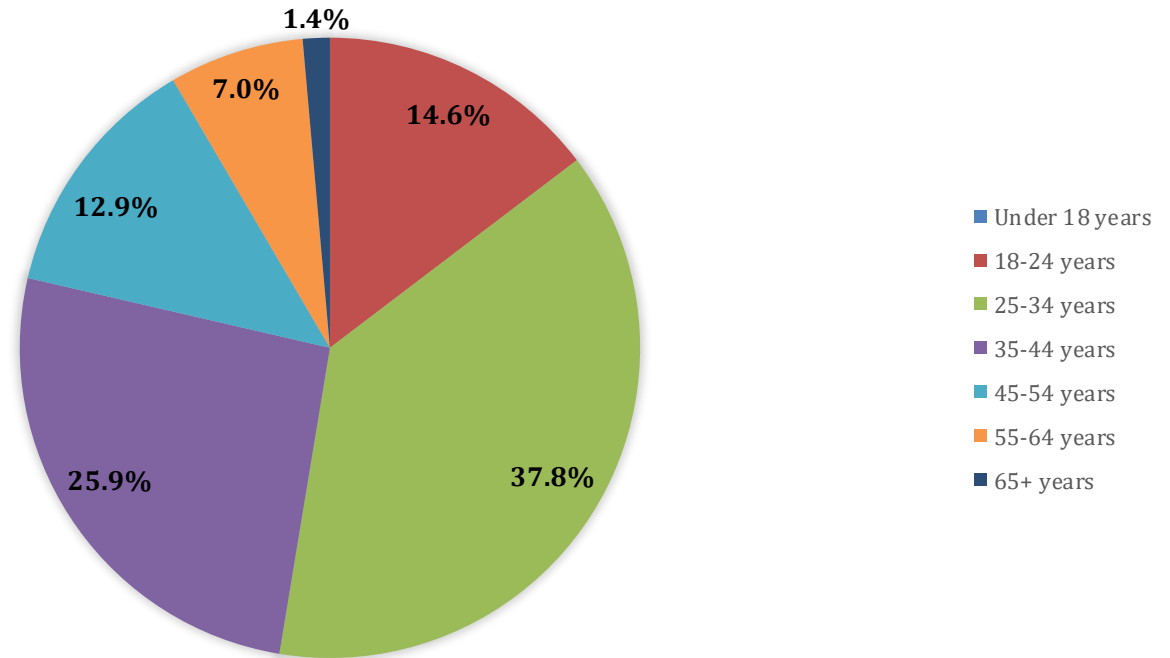
FFY	Average Monthly Participants	Average Women Per Month	Average Men Per Month
2020	5,566	3,613	1,953
2021	4,551	3,108	1,443

Participant Engagement by Race and Ethnicity FFY20- FFY21 (Monthly Average through June 2021)

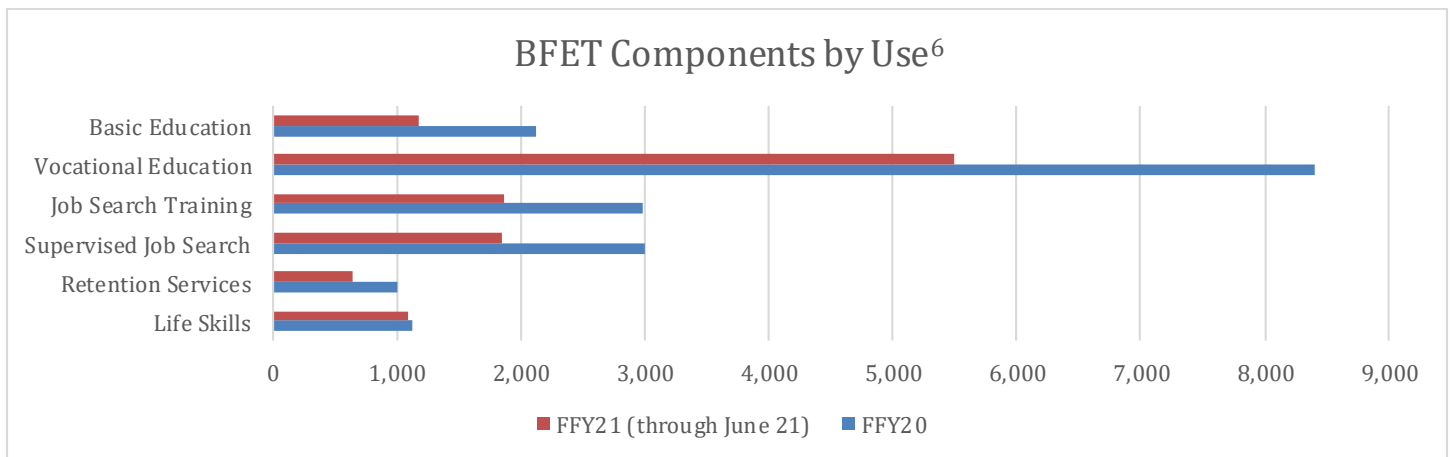


⁵Data from DSHS EMAPs report 4189

AGE FFY20 - FFY21 (MONTHLY AVERAGE THROUGH JUNE 2021)



This graph shows the activity use of components by BFET participants by year:



⁶ Data from DSHS EMAPS report 3751

Employment Outcomes ⁷

A significant number of BFET participants are working while receiving E&T services. These employment opportunities include survival jobs, which help pay the bills and saves a person from completely being unemployed, along with career employment.

FFY	Avg. # of Women Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.	Avg. # of Men Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.
2020	1218	33	\$1,202.58	527	35	\$1,324.38
2021 ⁸	913	33	\$1,410.77	337	35	\$1,538.727

IV. PROGRAM SERVICES

Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance

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 services to refugees and immigrants. Current contractors through ORIA BFET include:

Asian Counseling and Referral (ACRS)	TRAC Associates King
Neighborhood House	TRAC Associates Pierce
Partners In Careers	TRAC Associates Snohomish
Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)	WorkSource, Spokane
Refugee Federation Service Center (RFSC)	World Relief Seattle
Refugee Immigrant Services Northwest (RISNW)	World Relief Spokane

Community Based Organizations

DSHS contracts directly with over 40 CBOs, including some with multiple service locations. A list of current CBOs include:

Apprenticeship & Nontraditional Employment for Women (ANEW)	Northwest Indian College
Asian Counseling and Referral Services (ACRS)	Opportunity Council – Island County
Adonai	Opportunity Council – Whatcom
Career Path Services – Pierce and Spokane County	Partner In Employment
Cares of Washington	People for People
Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council	Port Jobs
Confederated Tribes of Colville-Omak and Nespalem	Puget Sound Training Center
Community Action of Skagit County	Refugee Federation Service Center (RFSC)
Entrust-Klickitat, Kittitas / Grant County, Moses Lake, Yakima and Sunnyside	Rod's House
FareStart	Seattle Jobs Initiative
Goodwill Industries Inland Northwest	Spokane Area Workforce Development Council

⁷ Data from DSHS EMAPs report #4248

⁸ Partial FFY 2021: October 2020 – June 2021

Goodwill of the Olympics and Rainier Region	Spokane Tribe
Goodwill of Seattle	TRAC Associates - King County
Housing Hope	Valeo Vocation
King County Jobs Initiative	WorkSource – Columbian Basin, Colville, Okanogan, Skagit, Spokane, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Whatcom and Yakima counties
Orion Industries	Washington Beauty School
Lower Columbia Community Action Program	Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Seattle King and Snohomish County
Multi-Service Center	YWCA of Spokane
Neighborhood House of Washington- Seattle and Kent	Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council
Workforce Southwest Washington, Workforce Development Council	

Four CBOs subcontract a portion of their BFET services, these providers include:

1. King County Jobs Initiatives(KCJI)
 - Friends of Youth
 - TRAC Associates
 - Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) of Seattle
 - Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) OF Seattle, King and Snohomish County
2. Seattle Jobs Initiative
 - Partner in Employment
 - Pacific Associates
3. Spokane Area Workforce Development Council
 - Career Path Services
 - North East Washington Education Services District 101
 - Goodwill Inland Northwest
4. Workforce Southwest Washington
 - Equus Workforce Solutions

Community and Technical Colleges

The role of the BFET program within the community & technical colleges is to provide educational opportunities and increase the skill level and knowledge helping participants reach their full potential.

All 34 colleges provide BFET services through an umbrella contract managed by SBCTC. Some colleges carry the BFET caseload and provide case management for other schools. Colleges provide services designed to help students attain skills necessary for employment to include vocational education, Adult Basic Education, ESL, High School Equivalency and support services. Some colleges also offer case management, job search and job readiness 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.

V. PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FFY 2021

While the global health crisis significantly impacted the participation rate of clients, as well as the way BFET providers delivered services, this time provided an opportunity for creative solutions that were accepted by our federal partners.

New Providers - FFY 2021

1. **Orion Industries** provides valuable job skills training, in both technical and soft skills, vocational counseling, case management, job placement services and job retention supports. These individualized services are provided through transitional employment in Aerospace Manufacturing Businesses, within Administrative Department, and in classroom-based Office Skills & Customer Service Training Programs.
2. **Pacific Mountain WDC (PacMtn)** is the recognized convener of the region's workforce development efforts. The PacMtn Board of Directors, PacMtn Elected Official Consortium, and staff are dedicated to a workforce system that supports businesses, regional industry sectors, and all level of employers and job seekers.
3. **Washington Beauty School** provides vocational education to students 17 years old and older in the following fields: Barber, Esthetician, Cosmetology, and Nail Technician.
4. **Workforce Southwest Washington** leads the public workforce system in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. Their mission is to lead a regional workforce development system where every individual has access to high-quality employment and every business has access to a highly-skilled workforce.

Outreach and Support - FFY 2021

1. In preparation for new SNAP E&T rules released by the USDA, Washington continued to make partnerships with WDCs a priority. This year BFET welcomed Workforce Southwest Washington and Pacific Mountain as providers and additional voices to add to the development of the future of BFET.
2. Partnering directly with vocational education institutes such as the Washington Beauty School allows the BFET program to continue to support specific high demand fields.
3. During FFY 21, BFET enhanced the referral tool for CSD eligibility staff to use when referring SNAP clients to employment and training. This new referral system has ramped up to an average 300 referrals a month to BFET providers statewide.
4. BFET enrollment and participant reimbursement decreased as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. Despite providers shifting to operate in virtual environments, BFET client needs increased as they faced additional barriers. The digital divide became a critical issue, as participants struggled with ready access to computers and reliable internet. BFET worked with our federal partners to add internet services as a utility participant reimbursement and also received approval to use administrative funding for the purchase of portable digital devices participants may access on loan.
5. The BFET program has hosted an annual in-person forum for the enrichment and cohesiveness of the program for the last ten years. The FFY 2020 BFET Forum was cancelled given the health crisis, however a virtual event was created in FFY 2021 to bring back the spirit of teamwork, resilience, and addressing the digital divide through innovation. Approximately 300 individuals attended the two day forum.

Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)

ABAWDs⁹ are individuals receiving Basic Food assistance who are between the ages of 18 and 49, 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. ABAWDs who are unable to meet work participation for three months in a 36-month period (currently January 2020 through December 2023) will not receive more than three months of Basic Food benefits. For the calendar year 2020, King County was the only county considered mandatory for ABAWD rules, with the exception of those residing on the Muckleshoot Reservation.

To support ABAWDs, DSHS contracted with SBCTC to provide navigation services. Navigators were located at all 34 SBCTC sites to provide all ABAWDs the following services:

- An intake that includes an assessment of client skills and goals
- Referrals to local resources to assist client in meeting goals
- Referrals to state approved community employment and training programs
- Assistance in understanding the ABAWD work requirements and how to report participation to DSHS
- Ongoing support for engagement

⁹ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawds>

In response to COVID-19, FNS allowed “good cause” exemptions for ABAWDs unable to participate in work activities due to the pandemic. Despite anticipated temporary impacts to participation, DSHS implemented the Navigator program in March 2020. Navigators provided virtual services to identify the individual’s needs and pair them with available local education and retraining resources.

Each year, FNS provides approximately \$20 million nationwide to states that pledge to provide job training supports to mandatory ABAWDs in their state. FNS approved Washington for \$2.4 million in pledge funding to support ABAWDs in FFY 21. DSHS used the funding to support the contracted Navigator services as well as a number of system upgrades and changes to support ABAWD case record accuracy. In March 2021, FNS notified the department of its disagreement with the states use of “Good Cause” to exempt ABAWD during the public health emergency and disqualified the use of pledge funding. DSHS has filed a formal appeal, which is pending a hearing in fall 2021.

While awaiting the appeals process, DSHS shutdown the ABAWD Navigator program in April 2021 and filed for a statewide ABAWD time-limit waiver based on the state’s extended unemployment benefits. FNS approved the waiver exempting all ABAWD’s from participation requirements June 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022.

DSHS continues to encourage all underemployed SNAP eligible clients to participate in BFET programing voluntarily, as these services aid in the overall recovery of Washington’s economy and support the department’s mission to transform lives.

VI. PROGRAM FUNDING FFY 2020 AND FFY 2021¹⁰

Funding Category	FFY 2020	FFY 2021
1. 100 Percent Federal E&T Grant	\$ 3,239,619	\$ 4,137,691
2. Reimbursement Administrative Cost	\$ 38,014,623	\$ 37,531,126
Federal	\$ 19,104,460	\$ 18,872,797
State	\$ 18,910,163	\$ 18,658,329
3. Reimbursement Support Services		
a. Transportation/Other	\$ 8,172,546	\$ 5,746,785
Federal	\$ 4,131,913	\$ 2,908,855
State	\$ 4,040,633	\$ 2,837,930
b. Dependent Care	\$ 49,900	\$ 104,700
Federal	\$ 26,800	\$ 53,975
State	\$ 23,100	\$ 50,725
Total Reimbursement Support Services (a +b)	\$ 8,222,446	\$ 5,851,485
Federal	\$ 4,158,713	\$ 2,962,830
State	\$ 4,063,733	\$ 2,888,655
4. ABAWD 100% Federal	\$ 2,961,039	\$ 2,463,773
TOTAL FEDERAL (1+2+3+4)	\$ 29,463,831	\$ 28,437,091
TOTAL NON-FEDERAL (2+3)	\$ 22,973,896	\$ 21,546,984
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 52,437,727	\$ 49,984,075

¹⁰ FNS revoked ABAWD funding for FFY21 and part of FFY 20. (Refer to Funding Category #4.)