

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) Program Outcomes Federal Fiscal Year 2025

RCW 74.04.535

November 2025

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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 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.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Background

BFET started in Seattle as a pilot in October 2005 with four Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and one community college. It is now a statewide program with 25 CBOs, nine Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) CBOs, three Workforce Development Councils, one Tribal partner, 11 Employment Security Department (ESD) WorkSource CBO locations, and all 34 community and technical colleges offering services.² 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 strengths; 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

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.

² Some colleges carry the BFET caseload for more than their own school.

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 with providers on shared cases, contributing 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, CBOs and educational institutions from other states visit Washington 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, businesses, labor, job-seeker

constituents, local elected officials, community-based partners and the 12 local Workforce Development Councils.

BFET activities are structured to be provided in partnership with Title 1 programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)³. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2025 there were 19 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 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 BFET program also works with a number of other E&T programs:

- **Employment Pipeline⁴** is a DSHS administered navigation model 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 refugee⁵. ORIA administers this program by contracting with CBOs, refugee

³ See: [State Workforce Plan – Talent and Prosperity for All \(TAP\)](#).

⁴ The Employment Pipeline program sunsetted on September 1, 2025, due to state budget cuts.

⁵ 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.

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. CLEVER 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 long history of working with local tribal councils and programs, such as the Tribal TANF program. BFET continues to build upon these existing relationships with the assistance of DSHS Tribal Liaison staff. The BFET program currently works with Northwest Indian College and Lummi Nation, providing E&T services to Basic Food clients. DSHS is always interested in partnering with additional tribes.

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 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 \$103.9 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 registrants⁶ in the state. After initial issuance and approval, states may request additional 100% 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.

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

⁶ [WAC 388-444-0005](#)

federal portion is a reimbursement, not a grant. BFET providers must initially cover the cost of program operations then receive reimbursement for 50% of the cost after providing services and incurring a cost. The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance leverages approximately \$517,529 in GF-S each year to provide matching funds to serve refugees and immigrants through the BFET program.

75/25 Tribal Funding:

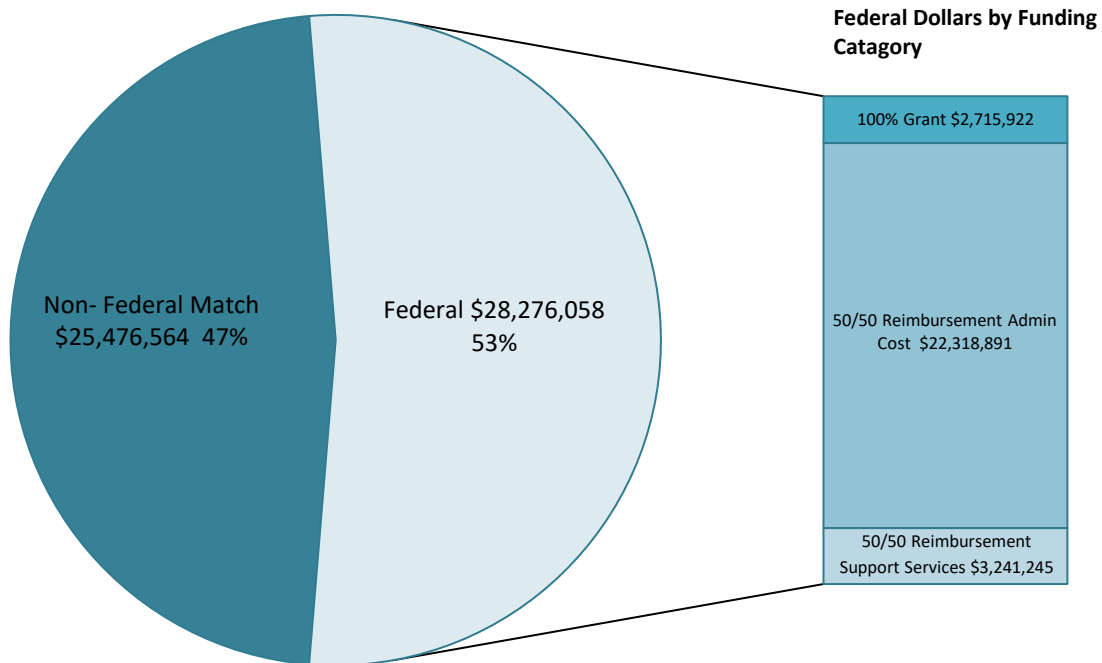
FNS supports strengthening tribal relations and programming and recognizes the importance of E&T activities with tribal entities. Tribal programs are reimbursed at 75% to cover administrative costs and support services for their BFET program. Tribal programs are required to match 25% of funds.

BFET Funding (FFY 2024 - FFY 2025)⁷

Funding Category	FFY2024	FFY2025
1. 100 Percent Federal E&T Grant:	\$ 1,849,164	\$ 2,615,422
2. 100 Percent Federal - Additional Funds	\$ 653,982	\$ 100,500
2a. ABAWD Pledge Grant, (if applicable)	\$ -	\$ -
3. Additional E&T Administrative Expenditures	\$ 36,420,150	\$ 44,575,706
a. 50% Federal	\$ 18,248,622	\$ 22,318,891
b. 50% State	\$ 18,171,528	\$ 22,256,815
4. Participant Expenses:	\$ 2,594,671	\$ 6,460,992
a. Transportation/Other	\$ 2,590,060	\$ 6,379,517
50% Federal	\$ 1,299,477	\$ 3,199,982
50% State	\$ 1,290,583	\$ 3,179,536
b. Dependent Care	\$ 4,611	\$ 81,475
50% Federal	\$ 2,305	\$ 41,263
50% State	\$ 2,305	\$ 40,213
5. Total E&T Program Costs (= 1+2+2a+3+4)	\$ 41,517,967	\$ 53,752,620
6. 100% State Agency Cost for Dependent Care Services	\$ -	\$ -
7. Total Planned Federal FY Costs (Must agree with Tab B—Operating Budget	\$ 41,517,967	\$ 53,752,620

⁷ FFY 2024 amounts are actual expenditures updated from the previous report, which represented approved state plan numbers. FFY 2025 amounts represent approved state plan numbers, and will be based on actual expenditures next year.

FFY 2025 Funding Breakdown



PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS

Program Reach

The BFET Program is available across Washington state, and is offered in every county. In FFY 2025, DSHS partnered with 52 agencies including the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and 11 ORIA providers. Many BFET providers have multiple service locations, some spanning more than one county.

See **Appendix A** for a list of BFET partners and contractors throughout the state.

Future BFET 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.

Counties with Largest Number of BFET Participants (October 2024-June 2025)

County	Average Monthly Participants	Percent of Total
King	1,635	30%
Pierce	741	13%
Snohomish	415	8%

Whatcom	360	7%
Spokane	345	6%
Clark	289	5%
Lewis	181	3%
Walla Walla	164	3%
Thurston	157	3%
Yakima	150	3%
Kitsap	120	2%
Benton	109	2%
Clallam	109	2%

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189

Participant Information

The following tables show the average number of BFET participants served on a monthly basis and related demographic data.⁸

Average Monthly Participants (October 2023 – June 2025)

Time Period	Average Monthly Participants	Total Percent of Change
October 2023 - June 2024	4,883	+11%
October 2024 - June 2025	5,520	+13%

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189

Participant Demographics (October 2024 – June 2025)

Demographic Category	Demographic Type	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload*
Gender	Female	65%
	Male	35%
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	17%
	White	47%
	Black/African American	16%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
	American Indian/Alaska Native	3%
	Multiracial	4%
	Unreported	6%
Age Category	Under 18 Years Old	< 1%
	18 - 24 Years Old	17%
	25 - 34 Years Old	32%
	35 - 44 Years Old	28%
	45 - 54 Years Old	14%

⁸ In SFY 2024, 11,754 unduplicated clients were served by the BFET program: [ESA Briefing Book: SFY 2024 \(Basic Food Chapter\)](#)

	55 - 64 Years Old	7%
	65+ Years Old	2%
Education Level**	Did Not Complete High School	9%
	Completed High School or GED	38%
	Post-Secondary Education	52%
	Not Reported/Unidentifiable	1%
Employed***	Yes	32%
	No	68%

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 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 (October 2024 – June 2025)

FFY	Avg. # of Women Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.	Avg. # of Men Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.
2024	1,137	34	\$1,722	457	36	\$1,765
2025	1,245	34	\$1,697	519	35	\$1,531

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4248

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

Provider Highlights

During the period of October 2024 - June 2025, the BFET program received 39 inquiries and applications from CBOs showing interest in becoming a BFET provider. In FFY 2025, the BFET program presented to four interested WDCs, and will onboard the following three new WDCs for FFY 2026:

- Workforce Central
- Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council
- Snohomish Workforce Development Council

Outreach and Support

1. In FFY 2025, BFET continued training sessions in a virtual capacity, to provide opportunities to adapt as the program enhances data collection and adheres to federal and state requirements.

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 offer program support, discuss case review observations and offer trainings, if requested.
4. BFET Policy meets with each provider quarterly to review their performance goals and spending, and discuss any needs for contract modifications.
5. The [BFET Provider Handbook](#) is updated each year. It outlines program requirements and provides related guidance.

Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs)

ABAWDs are individuals receiving Basic Food assistance between the ages of 18 and 54⁹, 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 (FRA) 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, 2025 - January 31, 2026, waives time limits in the Muckleshoot Reservation and all counties with the exception of King County.

In July 2025, congress passed H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21) making substantial changes to ABAWD eligibility. A high-level summary includes:

- Age range for ABAWDs expanded to include individuals age 18 through 64.
- Definition of “dependent” changes from a child under age 18 to a child under age 14.
- Participation exceptions provided by the FRA are removed, requiring veterans, homeless individuals, and young adults, under age 24 who were in foster care when they turned 18, to participate in ABAWD activities unless they qualify for a different exemption.
- Waivers for participation may only be granted by FNS if the unemployment rate is 10% or greater¹⁰.

⁹ As a result of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, this age requirement increased incrementally from 49 to 54 over FFY 2023-2025. The upper age limit of 54 changed effective 10/1/2024.

¹⁰ No counties in Washington currently have an unemployment rate above 10%.

APPENDIX A FFY 2025 BFET PROGRAM PARTNERS AND CONTRACTORS

Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)

ORIA operates within DSHS' Economic Services Administration. 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 Partner in Employment	Career Path Services TRAC Associates King
Partners In Careers	TRAC Associates Pierce
Refugee Women's Alliance	TRAC Associates Snohomish
Refugee Federation Service Center	International Rescue Committee of Spokane
Refugee Immigrant Services Northwest	

Other Statewide Partners

DSHS contracts with the following partners, including some with multiple service locations.

Adonai (King, Thurston/Mason, Benton, and Pierce Counties)	Orion Industries
Apprenticeship & Nontraditional Employment for Women	People for People
Asian Counseling and Referral Services	Port Jobs
Career Path Services	Puget Sound Training Center
Cares of Washington	Refugee Federation Service Center
Cell-Ed	Rod's House
Columbia Ability Alliance	Seattle Job's Initiative*
Evergreen Goodwill NW	TRAC Associates
FareStart	Uplift NW
Goodwill of the Olympics & Rainier Regions	Valeo Vocation
Housing Hope	Weld
Multi Service Center	Workforce Development Councils: Seattle King*, Southwest Washington*, Spokane*
Neighborhood House Inc.	WorkSource Sites (Columbia Basin, Colville, Okanogan, Skagit, Spokane, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Yakima, Clallam, Central Basin)
Northwest Indian College	YWCA of King and Snohomish County

Opportunity Council

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

1. Seattle Jobs Initiative
 - The Machinists Institute
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
 - Career Path Services
4. Seattle King Workforce Development Council
 - Asian Counseling and Referral Services
 - TRAC Associates
 - Pacific Associates
 - Neighborhood House
 - YWCA

Community and Technical Colleges

All 34 colleges provide BFET services through an umbrella contract managed by State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. 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.