

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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

As required by RCW 74.04.535

November 1, 2023

Economic Services Administration
Community Services Division
PO Box 45470
Olympia, WA 98504-5470
(360) 725-4888

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
II.	PROGRAM OVERVIEW	3
	Program Background.....	3
	Program Funding.....	8
	Coordination with Other Employment Programs	11
III.	PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS FOR FFY 2022 - 2023	13
	Participants and Services.....	13
	Participant Demographics	13
	Employment Information	14
IV.	PROGRAM SERVICES	14
	Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)	14
	Community Based Organizations (CBOs)	15
	Community and Technical Colleges.....	16
V.	PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FFY 2022-2023	17
	New Providers - FFY 2023.....	17
	Outreach and Support - FFY 2023.....	17
	Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs).....	17
VI.	PROGRAM FUNDING FFY 2022 AND FFY 2023.....	18

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington state Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program provides job search, job search training, educational services, skills training, and other employment opportunities to Basic Food Assistance recipients (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP 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 services, helping recipients reach their full potential.

The Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security Department and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges work in partnership, as required by RCW 74.04.535, to expand the BFET program. This statute also requires DSHS 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 45 CBOs, 11 ORIA CBOs, three Tribal partners, nine Employment Security Department 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 employment and training 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 employment and training program due to several factors. The program emphasizes skill building and post-secondary certificate attainment as the 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 employment and training field. FNS regularly invites Washington state to share best practices to assist in the development and strengthening of SNAP Employment and Training (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.

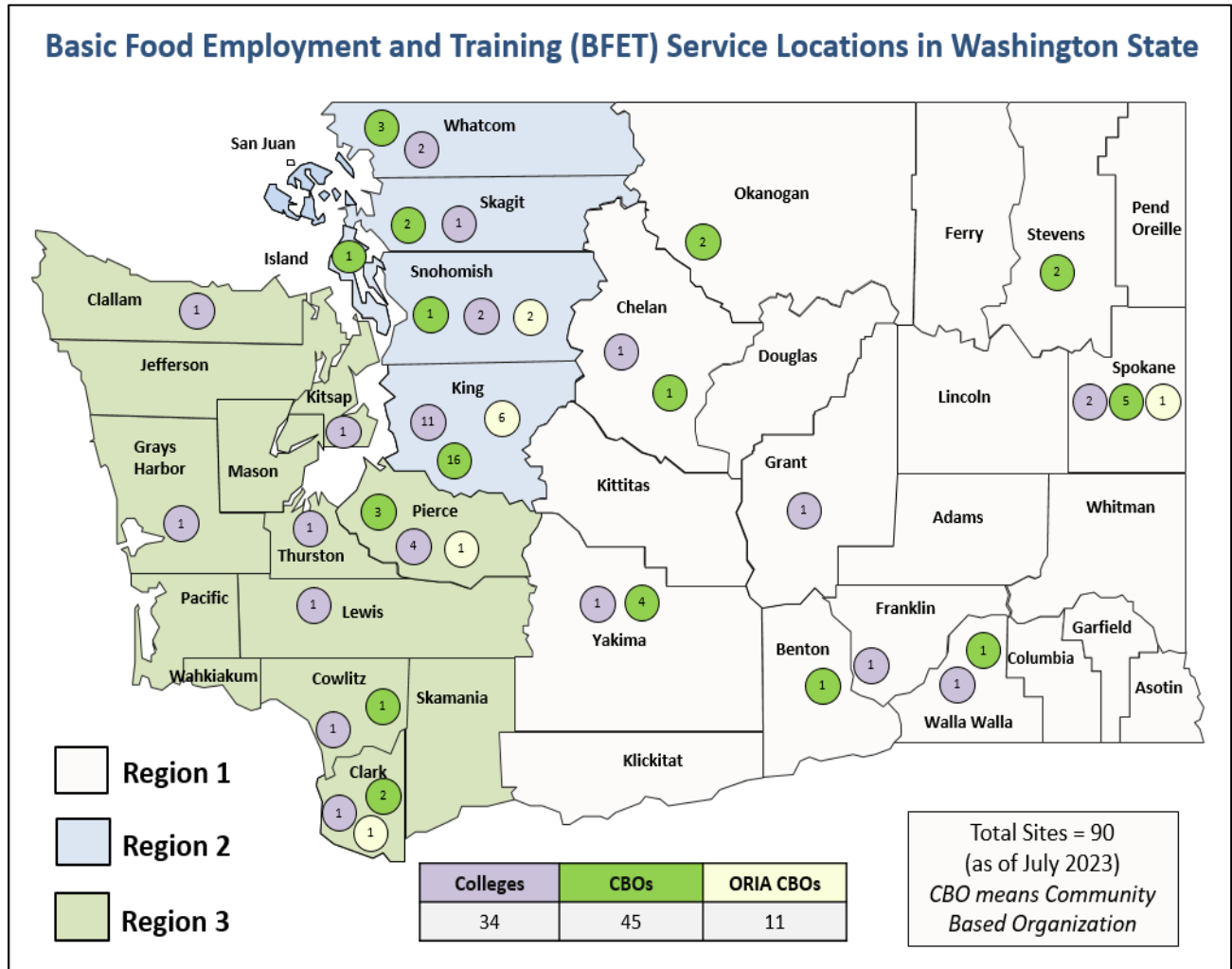
BFET provides employability assessments, in addition to a menu of services, through local CBOs including:

- Case management
- Life skills
- 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
- 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
- Supervised job search
- Support services

The map below represents BFET sites providing services at colleges, CBOs and ESD offices, as of July 2023.

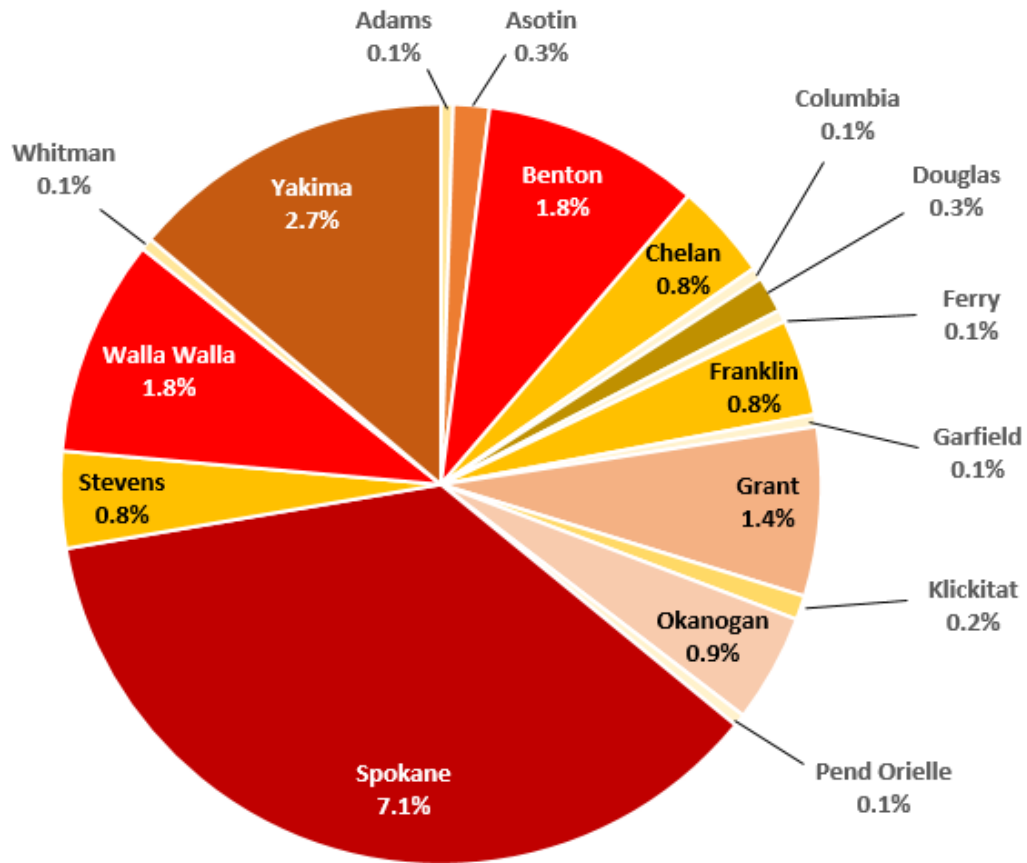


Data from recent years suggests that the BFET partners that have chosen to end their contracts have seen significant increases in their caseloads from FFY21 to FFY22. These caseload increases have caused these providers to exceed their capacity to afford to serve the number of clients in their respective BFET programs.

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. The Department continues efforts to recruit CBOs and tribal nations in unserved and underserved parts of the state to reduce poverty statewide.

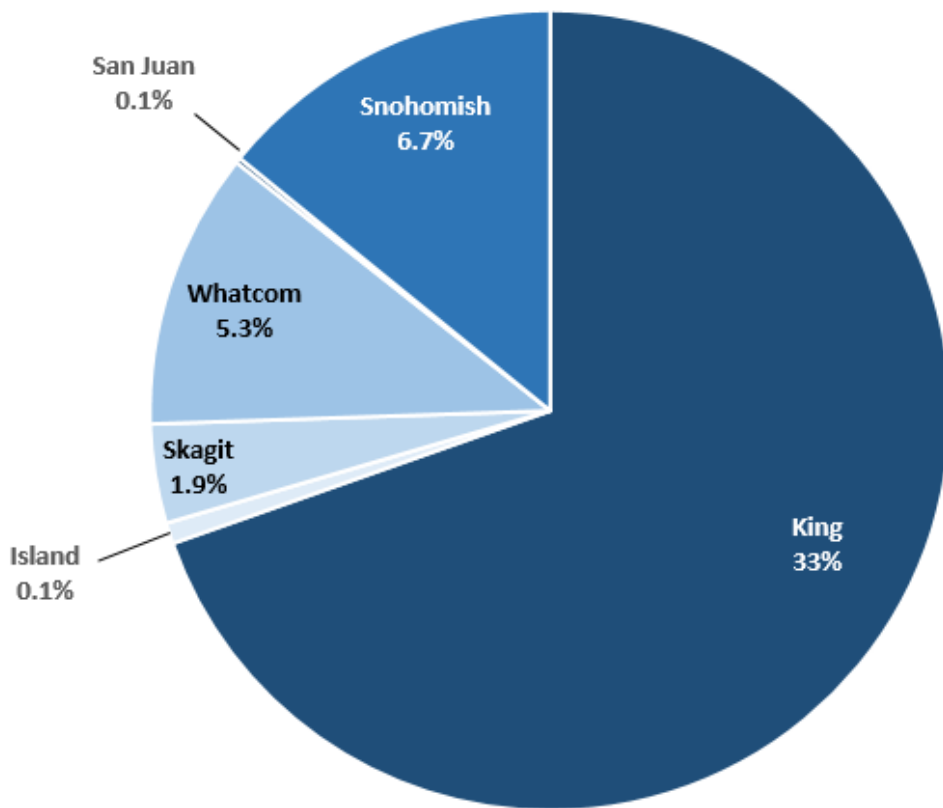
July 2022 – June 2023
Regional distribution of BFET participants by residential address (monthly average)¹

Region 1

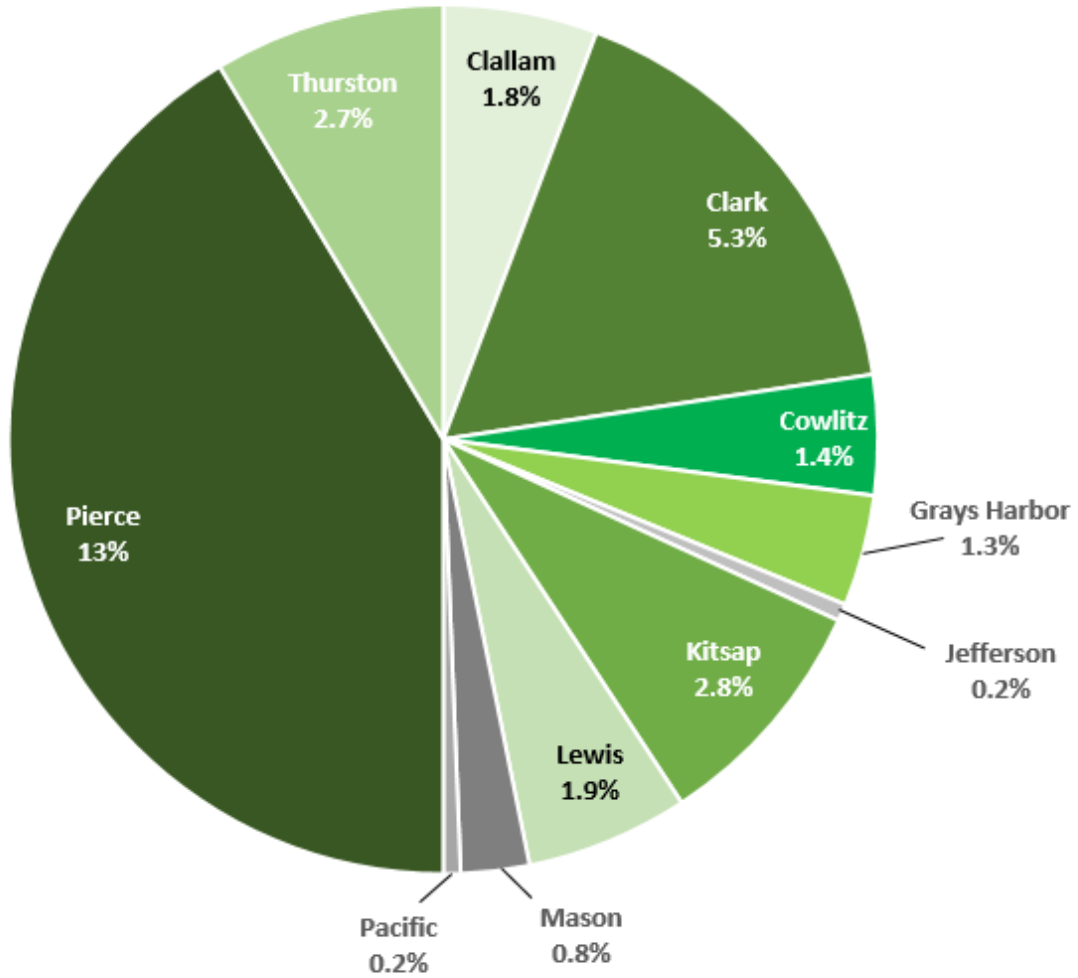


¹ Data from DSHS EMAPS report 4189

Region 2



Region 3



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 \$100 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 registrants² 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 2021 or 2022.

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. The 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 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:

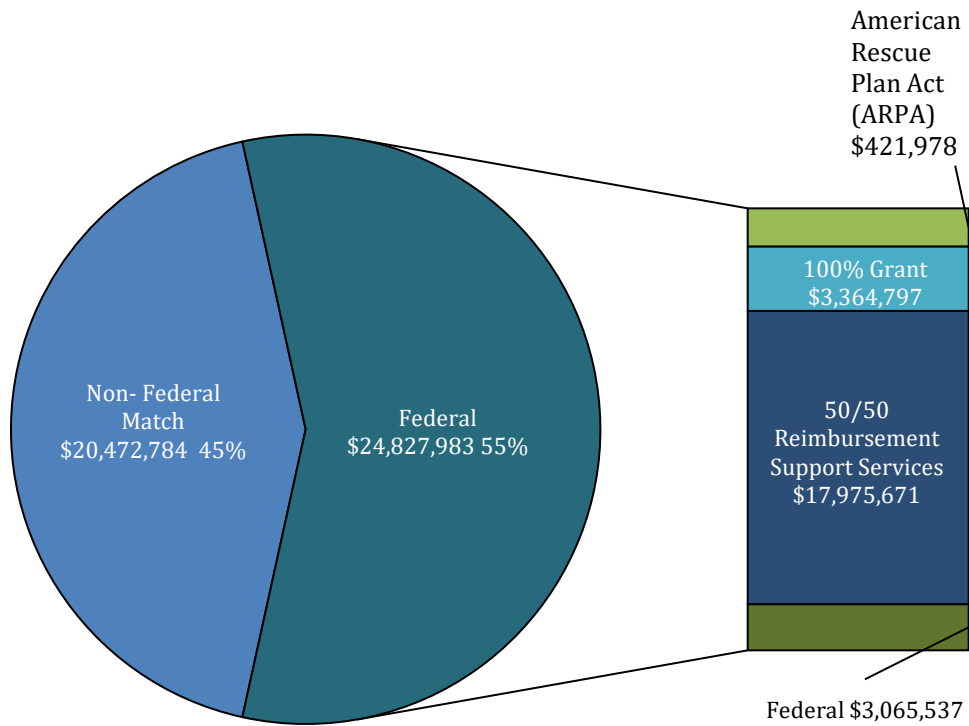
Tribal funding has a unique model. FNS values and supports strengthening tribal relations and programming, and recognizes the importance of employment and training activities with tribal entities. The funding model is still a reimbursement model, but tribal programs are reimbursed at 75 percent to cover 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

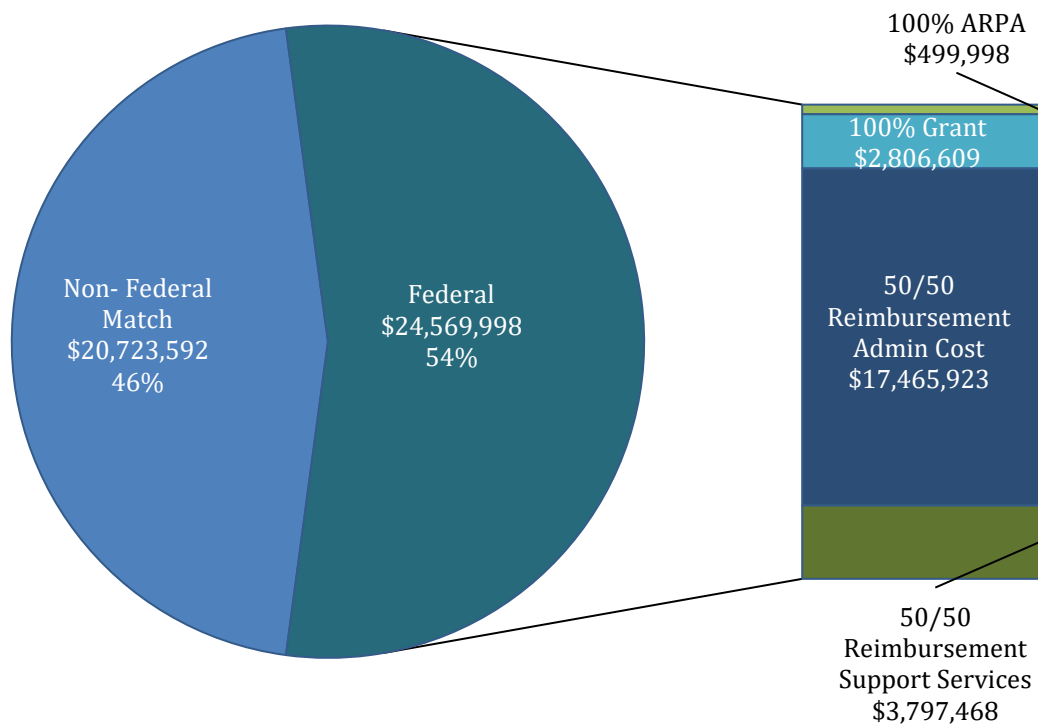
² [WAC 388-444-0005](#)

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 2022 Funding Breakdown



FFY 2023 Funding Breakdown



The total budget for FFY 2023 is 0.02 percent lower than FFY22.

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 and communities including: the Employment Security Department, Department of Commerce, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (serving K-12), Department of Social and Health Services, 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 Act³. In FFY23 there are 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

³ “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.

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 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 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, Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan and individuals paroled as refugees or asylees. 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 vocationally skilled people who meet federal eligibility as refugees with re-entering 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**
The Department 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. Washington state's BFET program currently has three Tribes providing E&T services to Basic Food clients in our rural areas. DSHS is always interested in partnering with additional tribes.

III. PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS FOR FFY 2023 (Oct – Jun)

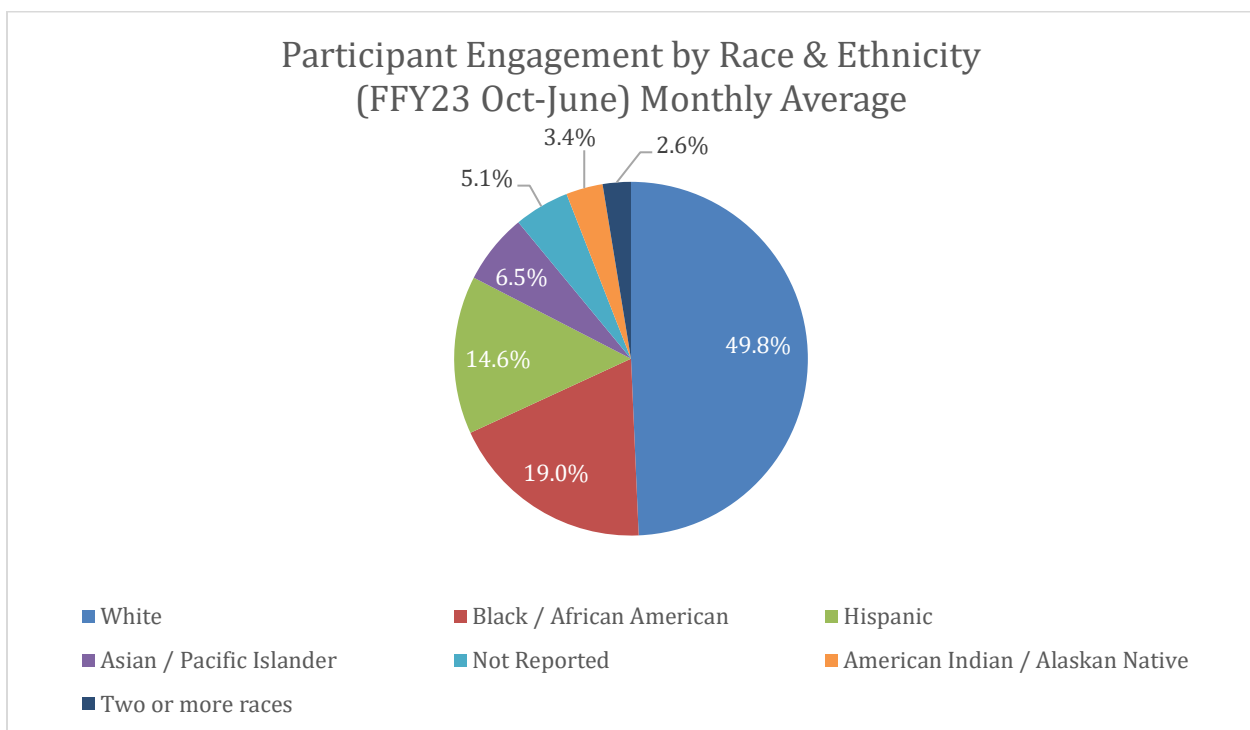
Participants and Services

BFET contracts with providers in 34 counties. However, some providers offer services beyond the county they are located in, allowing BFET to reach beyond these 34 counties. BFET partnered with over 45 CBOs in FFY 23 (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.

Participant Demographics

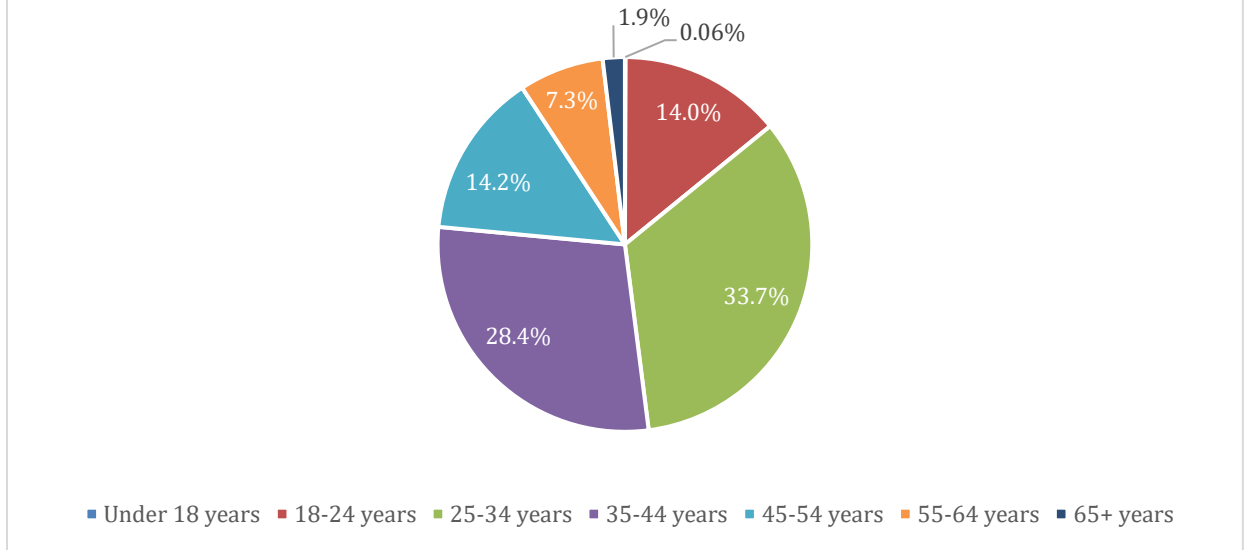
FFY	Average Monthly Participants	Average Women Per Month	Average Men Per Month
2022	4,154	2,866	1,288
2023	4,413	2,902	1,511

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189



Source: DSHS EMAPS #4189

Average Participant Age FFY23 (Oct - June)



Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4189

Employment Information

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 being completely unemployed, along with career employment resulting from BFET participation.

FFY	Avg. # of Women Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.	Avg. # of Men Working per Month	Avg. Age	Avg. Wage/Mo.
2022	892	34.2	\$1,552.65	318	35.9	\$1,807.86
2023	1,055	34	\$1,695.80	404	36	\$1,792.40

Source: DSHS EMAPS Report #4248

IV. PROGRAM SERVICES

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

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

Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

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

Adonai – King, Thurston/Mason 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 – Pierce and Spokane Counties	Puget Sound Training Center
Cares of Washington	Refugee Federation Service Center (RFSC)
Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council	Rod’s House
Code Fellows	Seattle Jobs Initiative
Confederated Tribes of Colville-Omak and Nespelem	Seattle Workforce Development Council
Columbia Industries	Spokane Workforce Development Council
Evergreen Goodwill	TRAC Associates
Entrust-Klickitat, Kittitas, Benton, Franklin, Grant, Yakima Counties	Uplift NW
FareStart	Valeo Vocation
Goodwill of the Olympic & Rainier Regions	Washington Beauty School
Housing Hope	Weld Seattle
Lower Columbia Community Action Program	WorkSource – Columbian Basin, Colville, Okanogan, Skagit, Spokane, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Whatcom and Yakima counties (nine separate contracts)
Multi-Service Center	Workforce Southwest Washington, Workforce Development Council
Neighborhood House of Washington	Yakama Nation
Northwest Indian College	Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of King and Snohomish County
Opportunity Council	Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of King and Snohomish County

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 the community and technical colleges is to provide educational opportunities and increase skill level and knowledge, helping participants reach their full potential. All 34 colleges provide BFET services through an umbrella contract managed by State Board of 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, 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.

V. PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FFY 2022-2023

In January 2023, new federal oral script requirements were implemented as part of the SNAP eligibility interview. Eligibility staff are now mandated to read and discuss work registration requirements with applicants and recipients that meet the SNAP program definition of a work registrant. An additional script explaining Able Bodied Adult without Dependents (ABAWD)⁴ rules is subsequently read to individuals that also meet ABAWD criteria. Staff must then discuss the BFET program and offer referrals to clients interested in employment and training activities during the oral script conversation.

This policy change has significantly increased BFET referrals. CSD averaged approximately 588 referrals each month October 2022 through June 2023. During the same time period, the total number of referrals climbed to 5,295, resulting in a 154-percent increase, up from the 2,084 in the prior Federal Fiscal Year.

New Providers - FFY 2023

The FFY23 program year did not include any new providers. The program continues to provide technical assistance and support to the new providers of the last two federal fiscal years.

Outreach and Support - FFY 2023

1. CSD hosted its annual BFET forum virtually in June 2022 for the purposes of providing SNAP E&T updates from FNS and also provided program training to BFET providers. Approximately 300 participants attended at the three day conference.
2. The BFET Provider Handbook was enhanced and updated. The BFET Handbook is digital to ensure ease of access, navigation, and the ability to update.

Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)

ABAWDs are individuals receiving Basic Food assistance between the ages of 18 and 49⁵, 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

⁴ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawds>

⁵ 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.

unable to meet work participation for three months in a 36-month period (currently Jan. 2020 – Dec. 2023) will not receive more than three months of Basic Food benefits.

Washington state had a statewide time limit waiver for ABAWD rules between June 2021 and January 31, 2023 due to the economic impacts of the pandemic. The new waiver covering all counties with the exception of King and Snohomish counties is effective February 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024. However due to the flexibilities allowed by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, ABAWD time limits did not need to be enforced until the end of the Public Health Emergency. All states were required to begin enforcing the time limits of their non-waived areas as of July 1, 2023. Information about these changes can be found at www.dshs.wa.gov/abawd.

VI. PROGRAM FUNDING FFY2022 and FFY2023

Funding Category	FFY2022	FFY2023
1. 100 Percent Federal E&T Grant:	\$ 3,364,797	\$2,806,609
2. Share of \$20 Million ABAWD Grant (if applicable)	\$ -	\$ -
2a. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for E&T	\$ 421,978	\$499,998
3. Additional E&T Administrative Expenditures	\$ 35,646,129	\$ 34,666,195.34
a. 50% Federal	\$ 17,975,671	\$ 17,465,922.92
b. 50% State	\$ 17,670,457	\$ 17,200,272.42
4. Participant Expenses:	\$ 5,867,863	\$ 7,320,788.00
a. Transportation/Other	\$ 5,490,837	\$ 7,041,894.00
50% Federal	\$ 2,856,024	\$3,636,671.00
50% State	\$ 2,634,814	\$3,405,223.00
b. Dependent Care	\$ 377,026	\$ 278,894.00
50% Federal	\$ 209,513	\$ 160,797.00
50% State	\$ 167,513	\$ 118,097.00
5. Total E&T Program Costs (= 1+2+2a+3a+3b+4a+4b)	\$ 45,300,767	\$ 45,293,590.34
6. 100% State Agency Cost for Dependent Care Services	\$ -	\$ -
7. Total Planned Federal FY Costs (Must agree with Part H—Operating Budget	\$ 45,300,768	\$ 45,293,590