

FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

50/50 MATCH FUNDING

Overview

Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSE&T) 50/50 match funding is a generous, user-friendly, and readily available source of funds for state and local agencies, community colleges, non-profit community organizations and other education and training entities. When state FSE&T plans include access to these Department of Agriculture funds, states can receive millions of dollars of additional support for education and employment activities that serve all Food Stamp recipients.

There are approximately twenty-four million food stamp recipients in the US. However, unlike welfare recipients, less than one quarter of them must participate in a work or training activity as a condition of receiving benefits. Nevertheless, state Food Stamp Employment & Training Plans focus efforts and funds on providing services to these “mandatory” work program participants and ignore the majority of food stamp recipients who receive the supplement without condition of work participation. The majority of these “exempt” recipients often have low levels of educational attainment, are unemployed, or trying to survive on a low-paying full or part-time job with few opportunities for advancement, or further training and education to help promote economic self-sufficiency.

The good news is that the Department of Agriculture guidelines for FSE&T programs includes the provision for states to use any non-federal funds to draw an equal amount of matching FSE&T funds in order to provide services to ALL food stamp recipients. Importantly, this match funding is in addition to states’ annual food stamp funds federal grant allocation

Program Highlights

FSE&T provides dollar-for-dollar matching funds for the majority of non-federal workforce development dollars spent on any food stamp recipients.

FSE&T 50/50 match funding is uncapped and separate from the 100% Food Stamp formula allocation that all states receive. The match funding is administered as a cost reimbursement program.

The funds are paid in support of allowable expenses – defined by the states themselves under some broad federal guidelines – for services provided to food stamp recipients. Customarily, states administer the program thru their designated FSE&T administrative agency. State plans must describe what services will be provided and how they will be delivered in order to draw down the matching funds.

Non-federal matching funds may include but are not limited to cash from state budgets, foundation grants, employer contributions, and tuition payments.

Allowable costs under FSE&T include (but are not limited to) direct and indirect costs for education, training, job placement, case management and career coaching as well as for the administrative costs of managing the program.

States that include FSE&T programs in their plans do not forfeit their ability to use waivers and exemptions for ABAWDs, or other populations.

States do not need to significantly increase their FTE. Like many other education, employment and training services, they may devolve much of the administrative and reporting responsibilities to the service providers. Customarily, the states retain an oversight function.

States that choose to “test” the efficacy of the 50/50 match funding provision may structure their service delivery and exercise their waivers and exemptions in such a way to create a program “pilot”.

In the past, most states did not avail themselves fully of the 50/50 match funding in order to offer services to non-mandatory work registrants. Often it was because they had large TANF surpluses and did not “need” additional funds for workforce development services, or they took a minimalist view of service delivery providing it only to those people who they had to serve. More recently however, states are seeking ways to adjust to budget gaps caused by cutbacks in workforce development funding by reducing services; overlooking the fact that the FSE&T funds are an uncapped source of revenue that can offset some of these reductions. In addition, FSE&T funds can be used in place of TANF funding, thus freeing the TANF funds to be used in other ways. Furthermore, FSE&T funds can be used to provide childcare services at the same rate of reimbursement as the Childcare Block Grant.

Implementing FSE&T 50/50 Match Funding programs

The critical first step is to achieve acceptance and agreement at the appropriate levels of state and local government. Seek consensus for the underlying strategy to maximize the use of FSE&T 50/50 match funding to support education, training and employment services for low income adults. A practical next step is to design a pilot project, and assign implementation responsibilities.

For state and local government a pilot program serves as the context to;

- review the state’s plan for compatibility, flexibility and expansion;
- identify any new procurement and administrative challenges, costs, and policy issues that might constrain implementation and expansion later;
- devise solutions for overcoming these constraints.

For client services a pilot program design should include;

- a manageable number of service providers that have the fiscal, administrative, and programmatic capacity to deliver services in compliance with an FSE&T program;
- a process to identify and confirm their “matchable” funds;
- a service model that meets the current and anticipated needs of the clients and the expected outcomes of the administering agency.

Examples of Allowable Services and Supports

The Food Stamp Employment and Training (FS E&T) program allows non-TANF Basic Food recipients to participate in specific employment and training programs and to access child care in support of their participation. Childcare is provided while parents are in approved activities only.

Services:

Recipients can participate in the following activities:

- **Job Search-** This activity can be stand alone or combined with education, training or employment.
- **English as a Second Language-** This activity can be stand alone or combined with education, training or employment
- **Adult Basic Education-** This activity can be stand alone or combined with education, training or employment.
- **GED-** This activity can be stand alone or combined with education, training or employment.
- **Vocational Training-** Includes occupational assessment, remedial and entry level job skills training, customized and institutional skill training, and upgrade training.
- **Work Experience-** Work in a public or private non-profit entity in order to gain skills necessary to enhance their chances for employability or required for job placement.
- **Unsubsidized Employment-** Can be combined with education or training activities.

Supports:

Transportation costs are paid by the Food Stamp Employment & Training program.

Transportation support services which are reasonably needed to participate in the program. These support services can be issued by the provider directly to the participant and are 50% reimbursable up to the prescribed limits for each category. Transportation assistance may include: transit tickets, passes; and fuel for participant-owned vehicles

Transportation support services are approved for training, job search or other approved non -employment FS E&T activity. This support service may be issued as long as it is reasonably needed by the participant to meet the requirements of an approved Food Stamp Employment & Training program.

General clothing assistance costs are paid by the Food Stamp Employment & Training program.

General clothing support services which are reasonably needed to participate in the program. These support services can be issued by the provider directly to the participant and are reimbursable up to the prescribed limits for each category.

Clothing may be purchased by participants or provided to participants by providers. General clothing support services are intended for use when appropriate interview clothing or attire is needed to participate in an approved FS E&T activity.

Providers may provide the clothing directly to the participant and submit the cost for reimbursement in their billing. Contractors must provide verification of the cost and reasonable need for the clothing.

Housing assistance may include awards for rental assistance when housing stability is reasonable and directly related to helping FS E&T participants prepare for self-sufficiency through training or other approved FS E&T activity.

Housing assistance may also cover awards to prevent the shut off of essential utilities such as electricity, water and heating/ cooling.

**FNS recommends that shut off awards should not be an on-going assistance but be limited to a one time or two time maximum per program year. **

Participants may receive assistance with limited personal hygiene products and services (including hair cuts) necessary to meet an employer's appearance standards to secure employment.

Participants may receive assistance with the cost of eye examinations, vision correction and purchase of eyeglasses. Costs associated with emergency dental work and treatment is also allowed

Participants may receive assistance with the cost of testing and/or securing permits needed for training or to support job search activities. If an individual needs such items in order to start employment it is essential they receive them during training since *these same costs are disallowed when they are related to starting or retaining employment.

Participants may receive assistance with tools, uniforms, protective clothing required for training. If an individual needs such items in order to start employment it is essential they receive them during training since *these same costs are disallowed when they are related to starting or retaining employment.

** Example: A participant is training to become a carpenter. The employer requires the new hires have their own tools (and/or a drivers license). The participant must receive the tools (and/or license) as part of their training and be able to keep them. These would qualify as allowable costs. On the other hand, if the participant completed the training and subsequently was offered a job but needed to have their own tools and did not, and the program provided a set, the cost of the set of tools would not be reimbursable.*

Participants with disabilities may receive assistance with the reasonable purchases of goods or services (including testing) that accommodate the individual's disability.

Participants may receive assistance with textbooks, training materials and reasonable school supplies necessary for training. Participants may receive assistance with tuition, lab fees and other education related costs necessary for training connected to an FS E&T activity.

JFF-FSET project 11-28-06
Jeffrey Jablow
President
Social Venture Solutions
jjablowusa@hotmail.com
512-388-7995 (office)
917- 446-0963 (cell)