

**Written Testimony of David Stillman, Assistant Secretary of Economic Services  
Administration  
Washington State Department of Social & Health Services**

**House Agricultural Committee  
Subcommittee on Nutrition  
“The Past, Present, Future of SNAP: Evaluating Effectiveness and Outcomes in Nutrition  
Education”**

**September 13, 2016**

**SNAP E&T, Washington’s Basic Food Employment and Training Program and SNAP  
E&T Pilot, Resources to Initiate Successful Employment**

**Program Success Stories**

***BFET Success Story I***

Taylor enrolled into the Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program at Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) and Highline College in fall of 2012. Taylor’s pay as a Licensed Practical Nurse was barely enough to make ends meet for her and her two children. SJI provided Taylor with education, career navigation, and help with transportation, required school related items, and utility assistance. Taylor completed her program with a 4.0 GPA in June of 2013.

Taylor stepped away from the BFET program for 7 months to care for her ailing mother and then reengaged with SJI in December 2013. SJI assisted Taylor with resume’ revision, mock interviews and employer follow ups. She also attended SJI’s job seekers club to complete online applications. Taylor was hired in February 2014 as a registered nurse at Kindred Healthcare in Shoreline. She is working 32 hours per week and is earning \$26 per hour + full benefits.

***BFET Success Story II***

Alvin, a new Washington resident, was couch surfing and looking for work. He attended a resource fair in October 2013 where he enrolled in the BFET program at Neighborhood House of Washington (NHWA). Alvin expressed a desire to work as a Forklift Operator since he had warehouse work experience, but needed certification. NHWA connected him with Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC), another BFET partner, to obtain the necessary training.

NHWA and PSTC coordinated their employment and training services to assist Alvin find employment. While Alvin was completing Forklift Operator training at PSTC, NHWA assisted him with resume writing, mock interview and online applications. In addition, NHWA leveraged their Working for Housing Stability program to secure permanent, affordable housing for Alvin. In December 2013, Alvin was hired by Randstad Staffing as a Forklift Operator full time earning \$12.75 per hour. Alvin is now self-sufficient paying for his own rent.

***RISE Success Story***

JP entered RISE with high barriers; homelessness, chemical dependency, mental health, criminal record, and lack of driver’s license just to name a few. The case manager outlined a plan to

assist with housing, engage the client in mental health services, work on self-empowerment, and connect the client with the Division of Child Support's (DCS) Alternative Solutions program, to assist with driver's license reinstatement, obtaining a reasonable child support order, and a reduction of outstanding debt.

As a result of the assistance from DCS, JP was able to obtain regular visits with his son, who he had not contact with for over five years. JP secured sobriety housing and reduced significant barriers allowing him to engage and complete Strategies for Success (SFS) training. During his attendance in SFS training, JP developed an interest in using his story to give back to others. Following SFS training, JP began working towards earning Chemical Dependency Professional certification and has engaged in an internship program.

These stories represent the majority of Washington's E&T participants. Currently, over 60 percent of BFET participants enter employment upon completion and will receive a ten percent wage increase within a year.

### ***Basic Food Employment & Training Overview***

The Washington State Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program<sup>1</sup> is an important part of Washington State's comprehensive workforce development system serving the needs of low-income individuals, indigent workers, and employers. The vision of the BFET program is to assist Basic Food (SNAP) recipients in obtaining livable wage employment and to achieve self-sufficiency.

BFET offers job search, training, education, and workfare activities to improve BFET participant's employment prospects and wage earning potential. The program serves Basic Food recipients, age 16 and older, who are not participating in the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Participants volunteer to take part in these services to improve skills and self-sufficiency.

### ***History of BFET***

While the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has had a requirement to include an employment and training component since 1998, most states programs have consisted of a referral to a job search program. This was the case in Washington until our BFET program started as a pilot in October 2005 in one community in Seattle. In this pilot, Washington leveraged the little used 50/50 funding option by leveraging community resources to match federal SNAP E&T funds in order to develop a comprehensive job's-driven program. It began with one community college and four community based organizations (CBOs). Knowing that these organizations are already serving low income populations, the plan was to leverage each agency's current work and strengths to maximize the resources available to the Basic Food recipient; this would empower the client to achieve financial independence from public assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> The Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program is Washington State's name for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) program.

Starting small gave Washington the time to prove the concept and develop the required plan and tools needed to effectively deliver the BFET services. The partnership held strategic planning meetings to intentionally and thoughtfully scale what had become a successful model into a statewide program gradually, as to make the service delivery and administration sustainable. Each time the program expanded to a new area of the state, infrastructure was built for support.

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009, the BFET partnership included twelve community and technical colleges and six CBOs in four counties. The program grew to encompass all 34 community and technical colleges throughout Washington State within five years. As of FFY 14 BFET not only included the community and technical colleges, but also twenty CBOs in eighteen counties. Today, the BFET program includes all 34 community and technical colleges and 46 CBOs in 30 of the 39 counties within Washington State.

### ***BFET Service Delivery Model***

BFET leverages collaborative partnerships with state, educational and community agencies to provide services. These partnerships are formed under contracts between the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and numerous agencies including the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), Employment Security Department (ESD), and several community based organizations (CBOs). This collaborative partnership leverages each partner's particular strength. Community and technical colleges provide education and training to increase an individual's employability while ESD and CBOs assist the job ready individual in entering the job market. Many BFET Participants are co-enrolled with multiple agencies to maximize simultaneous BFET services.

The BFET program uses the fifty percent reimbursement model to fund BFET services. This reimbursement model helps ensure sustainability because the program is not vulnerable to limited 100 % and allows for growth based on each community's capacity to provide match funding. Since it leverages state, local and private funds, it increases existing capacity for colleges and CBOs. Finally, this funding model creates new funding streams for colleges and CBOs to pay for much needed support services while ensuring partnership because everyone has invested in the program.

Each partner agency is a BFET ambassador to the community, recruiting, assessing and placing Basic Food recipients in BFET activities. For example, we have many CBO partners who already work with vulnerable populations or homeless individuals and families. These agencies are able to use BFET 50% funds to bolster the programs they are already using to serve this population; therefore increasing the scope of services and number of participants they can reach and positively impact. This increases the presence of the BFET program and makes the program more accessible to all Basic Food recipients.

### ***Program Highlights for FFY 2013 – 2015***

#### ***Program growth over last three FFY***

As more colleges and CBOs partnered with BFET, the number of participants served increase.

Year	Number of Participants
<b>FFY 2013</b>	16,246
<b>FFY 2014</b>	19,115
<b>FFY 2015</b>	20,583

### ***Employment Outcomes***

Washington State tracks the percentage of BFET participants who enter employment after participating in the BFET program.

Year	% Employed
<b>FFY 2013</b>	58%
<b>FFY 2014</b>	61%
<b>FFY 2015</b>	61%

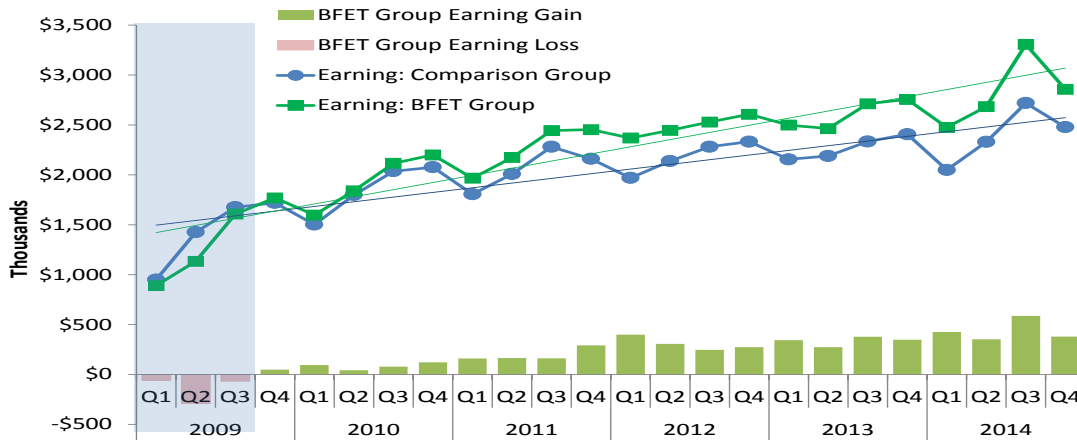
### ***Wages***

Washington State tracks the average median wage of participants employed after participating in the BFET program. Also tracked is the wage progression 1 year after participating in the BFET program.

Year	Starting Median Wage	Median Wage after 1 year	% of Wage increase
<b>FFY 2013</b>	\$11.00	\$11.97	9%
<b>FFY 2014</b>	\$11.28	\$12.37	10%
<b>FFY 2015</b>	\$11.63	\$12.97	12%

### ***Comparative Study***

Washington State completed a comparative study of 1,165 BFET participants who enrolled into the BFET between January and March 2009. This group was compared to a similar group of Basic Food recipients eligible for, but not participating in BFET. The study evaluated the earnings gain and loss of each group for 5 years. The study demonstrated that BFET participants increase their earning potential year over year in comparison to the Basic Food only group.



### *Coordinating with Other Employment and Training Programs*

BFET is part of Washington State’s comprehensive workforce development program. As such, BFET services are integrated with other employment and training programs throughout the state, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Employment Pipeline, Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA), Limited English Proficiency Pathway (LEP), and Refugee Special Employment Needs (RSEN).

#### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

The BFET program is a partner in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined state plan. At the local level providers integrate our services with those they are already providing as both WIOA and BFET service sites. BFET is recognized as a WIOA partner due to its increased services provided to Basic Food recipients not participating in the state’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. These services include: job search, self-directed job search, job search training, educational services, skills training, and post-employment support services. BFET collaborates with the Workforce Training Board, ESD, and SBCTC to identify target and emerging industries, develop career pathways and credentials that will be available to participants.

#### **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

DSHS has developed streamlined pathways for TANF recipients to transition to BFET to assist low-income families move toward long-term self-sufficiency.

#### **Employment Pipeline**

Employment Pipeline is a DSHS administered program available for individuals looking to find immediate employment. Employment Pipeline assists DSHS clients navigate the various employment and training programs and resources, assess employment need, complete referrals, and provide retention services. BFET and Employment Pipeline collaborate at the same community events to access resources.

### **Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)**

BFET partners with ORIA to assist refugees and immigrants transition into Washington State's workforce. ORIA works in partnership with the BFET program to ensure that refugees access available employment and training services.

ORIA BFET program helps people receiving Basic Food benefits get jobs through voluntary participation in job search, training, education, or workfare activities that promote self-sufficiency.

### **Limited English Proficient Pathway (LEP)**

LEP program helps refugees and parents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits to become employed.

### **Refugee Special Employment Needs (RSEN)**

The RSEN program helps refugees with substantial barriers to employment receive intensive case management, social adjustment counseling, and employment placement services.

### **Local Integration**

BFET's reimbursement model provides program flexibility to adapt BFET services into local employment and training initiatives. BFET partners are integrating their BFET services with stable housing initiatives and special population needs.

### *Sharing Best Practices*

Washington State has had the opportunity to assist other states in developing and strengthening their SNAP E&T programs. Other state agencies, non-profit agencies, and educational institutions have visited Washington State to learn how we started our BFET program, our service delivery model, our strategic planning group, and technology interface. We continue to be happy to provide this technical assistance to our peers nationally.

The BFET program hosts an annual training forum for our BFET partners. This venue allows for the sharing of best practices with partners, strengthening our coordination of services, and develops local partnerships. The training forum provides an opportunity for other state agencies to learn best practices from our local partners.

Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) through their Center of Excellence (a grant awarded recently) is directly assisting state agencies develop their SNAP E&T programs. SJI was one of the original four CBOs when Washington State started the BFET program. They have learned first-hand the best practices used in the BFET program and therefore well equipped to introduce BFET best practices.

### *Washington's SNAP E&T Pilot*

Washington was one of ten states awarded a grant under the recent Farm Bill, and will be testing innovative approaches for work Registrants receiving SNAP. Washington's pilot, Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE) will use a rigorous evaluation and randomization process

to test effectiveness. The goal of the pilot's is to increase engagement of Basic Food work registrants in unsubsidized employment opportunities; increasing participant earnings; and reducing reliance on public assistance.

Washington's BFET program is an effective program, bolstering 70% employment outcomes. The pilot was created to focus on the 30% gap experienced by BFET clients who were not successful, due to the multiple barriers impeding their ability to obtain employment resulting in self-sufficiency.

Through the RISE program, we have contracted with 24 Community Based Organizations (CBOs), the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, the Work Force Development Council) in each pilot county, the Division of Child Support, and the Employment Security Department. The CBOs and SBCTC will be providing direct services to RISE participants. The WDCs role is to create work based learning opportunities. Lastly, ESD has been contracted to deliver a required training, Strategies for Success, which was created by DSHS, CBOs, the colleges and employers identifying various skills needed to be successful in employment and maintain self-sufficiency.

### ***RISE Program Overview***

The goal of RISE is to enhance Washington's current BFET program by adding a standardized approach to comprehensive case management (CCM), ability to attend training in soft/work skills referred to as Strategies for Success (SFS), and the opportunity to engage participants in Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities.

Comprehensive case management includes coaching, navigation and providing or referring participants to other services as needed. SFS trainings are instructor-led discussions, which include topics such as balancing work and life stress management, problem solving, and critical thinking, which assist with enabling individual's to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Case Managers conduct Assessments and create Individual Employment Plans to ensure for a successful pathway for participants. These additional services will assist clients in barrier resolution and gaining experience needed to become self-sufficient. RISE partners with the Division of Child Support, Alternative Solutions Program to ensure non-custodial parents are not arbitrarily penalized as they participate, and to reduce child support challenges.

Work based learning can include unsubsidized and subsidized employment, pre-apprenticeships, work-study, internships, career exploration and development of a career pathway, and the integration of vocational skills and employability skills with on-the-job-training, community jobs, transitional jobs, and employer engagement.

The pilot operates in four counties: King, Pierce, Spokane, and Yakima and is available to SNAP work registrants who identify three or more barriers to employment and meet the target populations identified for the pilot, which are: homeless, veteran, limited English proficiency, the long term unemployed, and non-custodial parents owing arrears.

Washington anticipates providing pilot services to 14,000 participants over the three-year grant period. Participants are randomly assigned to receive either RISE (treatment group) or BFET (the comparison group) services on a 50/50 ratio, with youth assigned at a 70/30 ratio. RISE is funded 100% for the pilot term, with the requirement that all providers work towards identifying a 50% non-federal match yearly, to ensure sustainability of these services and a smooth transition to operating a BFET program.

### ***RISE Pathway***

The RISE pathway begins with comprehensive case management focusing on barrier reduction. As participants move towards the ability to engage in activities, assessments are completed and participant are registered in SFS training. Comprehensive case management (CCM) plays an integral role in supporting the client as they engage on their pathway to success. Once SFS is completed, case managers complete an Individual Employment Plan and progress to training, education or work based learning and/or job search activities and co-enrollment in BFET.

The core services of the program are comprehensive case management, strategies for success, and work-based learning services. Secondary services include BFET services, to include: service coordination, navigation of financial and academic resources, job readiness training, job search, vocational education, and retention and career advancement services.

### ***RISE Today***

Providers continue to conduct outreach and marketing activities to engage potential participants. The RISE pilot has faced challenges in working with providers identifying potential eligible work registrants, initially due to DSHS's limitations in sharing client contact information. Recently, DSHS obtained approval to share a list of potential RISE participants.

With the first year coming to a close, the program has reflected on the importance of the CCM throughout the RISE pathway. Preliminary results have shown the effectiveness of the model in providing a solid foundation to assist on the path of self-sufficiency.

As we enter into year two of the RISE pilot, DSHS expects enrollments to increase, based on continued and more direct outreach by providers. We anticipate an increase in participants moving through the RISE Pathway and co-enrolling with the BFET program to obtain sustainable living wage.