



Policy Brief

CalFresh Employment and Training: A Strategic Partnership for Local Workforce Development Boards

This policy brief, written in partnership with the California Department of Social Services, is intended to inform Local Workforce Development Boards and the broader workforce development community about CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) program elements such as: funding structures, provider networks, service strategies, and outcomes reporting in order to assist individuals receiving CalFresh to gain access to employment and training services.

Introduction

For the first time, individuals receiving CalFresh food benefits and individuals participating in CalFresh Employment & Training (E&T) services have been named as priority populations in the California Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan (State Plan) as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Boards) are encouraged to develop efforts to provide CalFresh E&T services that can lift individuals receiving CalFresh food benefits out of poverty. This presents a unique partnership opportunity for County Welfare Departments (counties) and Local Boards to plan for resource and service coordination to increase the earning capacity of individuals receiving CalFresh, including but not limited to those participating in CalFresh E&T.

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Program Context

CalFresh provides monthly food benefits that stabilize low-income households from the reality of food insecurity facing millions of Californians each day. The program is known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and is a federally funded, state managed, and county-operated program for people in need of assistance. In addition to monthly food benefits, CalFresh offers voluntary E&T services to individuals receiving food benefits in order to build skills and improve opportunities for employment. CalFresh E&T services can boost access to better jobs and wages for individuals and families ultimately resulting in better health and well-being.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides federal oversight of SNAP E&T nationwide. Through SNAP E&T, FNS distributes an amount of federal funding for states to facilitate employment and training programs for individuals receiving SNAP each Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). In order to secure this funding, States must submit an annual SNAP E&T plan to FNS by August 15th that addresses statewide program goals, operations, and fiscal targets.

In California, the SNAP E&T program is referred to as CalFresh E&T. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) manages CalFresh E&T but it is administered locally by the counties on a voluntary basis. Counties that choose to offer the program must submit plans to CDSS by June 15th that reflect allowable E&T components, service strategies, and funding sources that align with the CalFresh E&T program framework. Counties can work with Local Boards and other third party providers to deliver these services.

A CalFresh E&T eligible participant is an individual who is receiving CalFresh food benefits and is not receiving CalWORKs cash assistance. However, households in which the children are receiving the cash assistance grant even though their caretaker is no longer eligible would also still be eligible. Unlike CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work services, participation in CalFresh E&T is voluntary and not time-limited.

CalFresh E&T Program Framework

CalFresh E&T operates within a set framework designed around a clearly defined vision, mission and strategic goals. These principles are outlined below.

Vision

Increase the employment and earning capacity of CalFresh recipients

Mission

Provide more CalFresh recipients with access to CalFresh E&T, supportive services, and skills and credentialing.

Strategic Goals

- Increase job placement, retention and wages;
- Increase CalFresh E&T participation across a dynamic mix of people, communities and cultures;
- Increase employability by removing barriers to employment;
- Increase skills attainment and credentialing; and
- Lead an efficient and effective customer focused E&T program.

The following section will provide an overview of the different funding sources available to counties and partners in support of CalFresh E&T.

Funding Sources

Federal CalFresh E&T funding is often discussed as two funding types: 100% and 50% reimbursement. The opportunity to receive 50% reimbursement for program costs paid for using non-federal funds is a source of growth for the program and for partner agencies, as reimbursements can be reinvested into further service delivery.

Types of E&T Funding

- **100% Federal Funds**
The FNS provides States an allocation of 100% federal funds which CDSS provides primarily to counties for the planning, implementation and operation of the county's CalFresh E&T plan. Program activities funded using 100% federal funds must be reasonable, necessary and directly related to the provision of CalFresh E&T services. In California, operation of the program is optional for counties, so the county share of the federal allocation is distributed amongst participating counties.
- **50% Federal Reimbursement for Additional Services**
The FNS provides States a target allocation of 50% federal reimbursement funds for additional services above and beyond those funded with 100% federal funds. The State, counties, and/or partners that incur costs paid for using non-federal funds may be eligible to receive 50% federal reimbursement. Activities eligible for 50% federal reimbursement include those related to planning, implementation and operation of a county's CalFresh E&T plan. Similar to 100% federal funds, activities eligible for 50% federal reimbursement funds must be reasonable, necessary and directly related to the provision of CalFresh E&T services.
- **50% Federal Reimbursement for Participant Costs**
The FNS provides States a target allocation of 50% federal reimbursement funds for participant reimbursement costs. Participant costs include supportive services, such as transportation, dependent care and other ancillary services, such as books or uniforms that are needed to participate in CalFresh E&T. Counties and/or partners that incur costs for participant reimbursement paid for with non-federal funds may be eligible to receive 50% federal reimbursement. Participant reimbursement costs must be reasonable, necessary and directly related to an individual's participation in a CalFresh E&T component.

The following table provides examples of eligible and ineligible funding sources for 50% federal reimbursement. Costs must be paid for with non-federal funding in order to be eligible for 50% federal reimbursement.

Eligible and Ineligible Funding Sources for 50% Federal Reimbursement

<i>Examples of Eligible Non-Federal Funds</i>	<i>Examples of Ineligible Federal Funds</i>
<p align="center"> State, County or City Funds Philanthropic Grant Investments Donations from Private Firms or Non-Profits Foundation Funds State/Local Reentry Funds Community College Strong Workforce Funds Social Enterprise Funds In-Kind Donations (Government Entities) Other State Training Funds (Ex-Offender, Homeless) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)* </p>	<p align="center"> WIOA Title I WIOA Title II (Adult Education) WIOA Title III (Wagner-Geyser) WIOA Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) </p>

*The CDBG is a federal fund administered at the state or local level and allocated through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Once allocated to the State, the funds lose federal identity and can be used as 50% reimbursement.

The following section will provide information about how individuals receiving CalFresh can benefit from a wide network of workforce development service providers.

Service Provider Networks

In partnership with counties, workforce development service providers can offer a wider array of services intended to increase skills attainment, job placement, and employment retention for diverse populations receiving CalFresh. Local Boards, community based organizations (CBOs), community and technical colleges, employers and WIOA funded providers, are all examples of entities that may partner with counties in the provision of CalFresh E&T services. Counties can decide to offer CalFresh E&T services directly or access the expertise of partners that can act as contracted partners, third party partners or even simply as a source of referrals.



Often local WIOA funded service providers are already engaged with the broader workforce development community and can play a role in adding CalFresh E&T to an overall service strategy. CalFresh E&T services can be provided directly by the county, by a partner paid by the county, known as a contracted partner, and/or as a “third party partner”. A third party partner is typically described as an organization that accesses its own non-federal funds to provide CalFresh E&T services and is then eligible for 50% federal reimbursement. These partners may already be providing workforce services, but when services are provided in partnership with CalFresh E&T, organizations can receive 50% federal reimbursement.

The next section of this policy brief will highlight service strategy considerations for effective CalFresh E&T programs.

CalFresh E&T Service Strategies

A county CalFresh E&T plan can include a spectrum of CalFresh E&T services and supportive services to address the needs of local populations receiving CalFresh. Service strategies that address the challenges of underemployment and unemployment for individuals receiving CalFresh should include appropriate E&T components and varying service levels.

CalFresh E&T Allowable Components

CalFresh E&T is comprised of a range of employment and training opportunities, which may include assessment, development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), component services, supportive services, and retention services. A county or partner implementing CalFresh E&T must offer at least one or more of the allowable CalFresh E&T components listed below.

Allowable E&T Component	Description
Job Search	Requires participants to make a predetermined number of inquiries to prospective employers over a specified period of time.
Job Search Training	Provides instruction in job seeking techniques and increasing motivation and self-confidence.
Workfare	Requires participants to perform work in a public service capacity as a condition of eligibility. In lieu of wages, workfare participants receive compensation in the form of their household's monthly CalFresh benefit allotment.
Work Experience/Internship	Improves the employability of participants through actual work experience and/or training.
Education	Connects participants to programs or activities that improve basic skills or otherwise improve employability.
Self-employment Training	Provides training in establishing and operating a small business or other self-employment venture.
Registered or State Approved Apprenticeship/ Pre-apprenticeship	Provides a combination of on-the-job training (i.e. apprenticeship) and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a skilled occupation. Pre-apprenticeship programs provide individuals with the basic and technical skills necessary to enter an approved apprenticeship program and should be directly linked to an apprenticeship program.
On-the-Job Training	Connects participants to a work placement made through a contract with an employer or registered apprenticeship program sponsor in the public, private non-profit, or private sector. Contract must be limited to the period of time required for a participant to become proficient in the occupation for which the training is being provided.
Job Retention	Services provided to CalFresh E&T participants who have secured employment after participating in another CalFresh E&T component. This component is meant to help achieve satisfactory performance, retain employment, or to increase earnings over time.

Service Levels

CalFresh E&T service strategies should be centered on an individual's needs and reflect demand driven employment opportunities. Conceptually, CalFresh E&T can be offered as a full service program, a "light" service program, and/or as a co-enrollment program.

CalFresh E&T Full Service

This level of service is designed for unemployed CalFresh recipients with significant barriers to employment. This approach may require multiple interventions and access to an array of services, provided over an extended period of time. The key features of this service level may include:

- ✓ Assessment and IEP Development
- ✓ Multiple E&T Components
- ✓ E&T Supportive Services
- ✓ E&T Retention Services

While the goal of CalFresh E&T is to offer participants a prompt path to employment, some component activities may take longer than other activities. For instance, a culinary certification program, under the education component, may require twelve months to complete while, completion of a certificate in automotive mechanic's technology, also under the education component, may only require six months. An on-the-job training program under the work experience/internship component may be nine months.

Full service programs are a critical component of responding to the return of the CalFresh time limit for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD). ABAWDs who do not qualify for an exemption or live in a waived area, must satisfy the work requirement to maintain CalFresh eligibility for more than three months within a 36-month period. An ABAWD can satisfy the work requirement by participating in qualifying CalFresh E&T components such as, workfare, education, and vocational training or any program under WIOA. Collaboration between Local Boards and counties, will prove beneficial to non-exempt ABAWDs who reside in these areas, as they will have access to multiple qualifying activities to maintain CalFresh eligibility.

CalFresh E&T "Light"

This service level may be beneficial to CalFresh recipients with short-term unemployment or those who are underemployed (insufficient wages and/or in jobs that do not take advantage of the individual's skills). For these individuals, finding a good job may only require access to one component while they maintain existing employment.

- ✓ Assessment and IEP Development
- ✓ Single Component or Training Opportunity
- ✓ E&T Supportive Services
- ✓ E&T Retention Services

CalFresh E&T and WIOA (Co-Enrollment)

Individuals may be enrolled in both WIOA funded and CalFresh E&T funded services. This is often referred to as “filling the service gap” because CalFresh E&T may offer additional components and/or supportive services that complement the career services and training services offered through WIOA. For individuals receiving WIOA-funded services, CalFresh E&T can play a role in offering wrap-around or supportive services (i.e. dependent care, transportation, etc.) To ensure that CalFresh E&T services are expanding and integrating into the local/regional career pathway, Local Boards, counties, and other service providers not only have the option to provide services, but could also be a source for referrals.

Target Populations

A wide range of individuals receive CalFresh. CalFresh E&T is designed to allow counties maximum local administrative flexibility to address the specific needs of the various economic and population based characteristics of CalFresh recipients in their area. Administrative flexibility allows partner organizations to connect individuals with CalFresh food benefits and CalFresh E&T services.

Enrollment Methods

A participant must be receiving CalFresh food benefits to be eligible for CalFresh E&T services and is often directly referred to CalFresh E&T by the county at the time of a CalFresh eligibility determination. However, “reverse referrals” also work: through an extended provider network, individuals accessing employment services gain exposure to CalFresh and could be determined eligible for food benefits and, as a result, CalFresh E&T. The following enrollment methods are examples of a participant’s access to CalFresh E&T.

Traditional Enrollment Method:



Reverse Referrals Enrollment Method:



Reporting Program Outcomes

CalFresh E&T's emphasis on facilitating opportunities for participants to build skills and receive job-driven training and necessary supportive services makes CalFresh E&T a critical component of California's workforce system. Further, the CalFresh E&T outcome measures are strongly aligned with WIOA in the following ways:

- States are required to submit unsubsidized employment outcomes in the second and fourth quarter after completion of CalFresh E&T participation; and
- States are required to submit median quarterly wages in the second and fourth quarter after completion of CalFresh E&T participation.

In addition to capturing employment outcomes and median wages, CalFresh E&T also collects data on the completion of components/activities and participant characteristics. The characteristics that must be included in the report are: participant age, number of ABAWDs subject to the time limit, number of individuals who speak English as a second language, the number of males and females; and the number of individuals who received a high school diploma or equivalency prior to participation in CalFresh E&T.

Next Steps

The State Plan includes a unique opportunity to enhance California's workforce system by providing quality employment and training services to CalFresh E&T participants.

Local Boards can meet the needs of this community by partnering with counties to provide access to services, training, and work experience opportunities that afford the skills necessary to overcome their employment challenges and gain self-sustainability. A partnership agreement between the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) and CDSS, specifically CalFresh E&T, combines the respective efforts of each organization to integrate CalFresh recipients into the workforce communities of California. This mutually beneficial agreement encourages the CWDB and Local Boards to serve this priority population and allows CalFresh E&T to further the vision of increased employment and earning capacity for CalFresh recipients, while ensuring that participants receive an optimal employment and training experience.

Local Boards are encouraged to connect with counties in their area to discuss and identify alignment practices and opportunities. Please access the following links to initiate fully integrated service delivery to the CalFresh population in your area:

CalFresh E&T - <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh/Employment-and-Training>

California Welfare Directors Association - <https://www.cwda.org/>

FNS - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/>