

MCAN



THE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GROUP

From: The Workforce Solutions Group

Re: Major changes passed by Congress to make FSET able to qualify many more people so that non-profits, community colleges, and cities can get much more federal matching funding back that they can use to train more people. Changes take affect 10/1/08 And our role in helping get these changes passed!! And how you can participate in this now reformed program.

I. What's new on FSET that should be very helpful

There was some good news recently when Congress overrode President Bush's veto of the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill contains a provision we worked on that repeals the "120 hour rule" that had made FSET much less useful to gaining federal matching funds for job training and education. This terrible "120 hour rule" had not allowed the education and training provided to many non-TANF food stamp recipients to qualify for FSET matching funds. It said if a working poor food stamp recipient's combined time in work and training exceeded 120 hours a month than they were ineligible. By definition, working poor people often work more than 30 hours a week already so this rule made most ineligible.

The Workforce Solutions Group played a role in the passage of this provision by Congress. We worked on the national campaign for its passage with the National Workforce Alliance. Their staff person gave us credit for both getting support of Congressman McGovern for these changes and for getting the #2 ranking House Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee to support this. One of the WSG coordinating organizations, Massachusetts Communities Action Network, had a sister organization in this Congressman's district in California who was willing to bring this up to him in a face to face meeting.

This new provision (see text of the amendment below) takes affect on October 1 during the next fiscal year. It will mean that agencies doing job training and education of non-TANF food stamp recipients, community college enrolling them, cities who are funding such training can all apply for more matching funding for the FSET program. It should also provide incentives to these entities to encourage those eligible for food stamps but not using them (about 40% of those eligible have not applied for Food Stamps) to consider applying for them to both help themselves and help increase funding for job training.

II. How the state administers FSET now and who to contact to understand what records have to be kept and the application process for the federal matching funds.

DTA has worked well with us in setting up a plan for organizations to be able to apply for FSET reimbursements and 6 organizations and 1 city did this during this past year. DTA hired a group affiliated with UMass Medical Center to administer the program for them.

The matching funds cover all training and education done between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009 under the new program without the 120 hour rule.

For more information on the guidelines, recordkeeping, and application process for FSET matching federal funds for education and training, please contact;

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III. A Note on history of this issue and persistence

Over 4 years ago, we in the Workforce Solutions Group found out about FSET in a policy paper that mentioned FSET as an "uncapped federal entitlement for matching funds to job training and education".

We organized a meeting with then DTA Commissioner Waggoner and he said they didn't have enough clear legal authority to implement it. We then worked for two years and got provisions for FSET's implementation included in the Economic Stimulus Bill of 2006 passed by the Legislature.

Then when we worked with DTA on implementation of FSET, we found out about this terrible "120 hour rule". We then found a way to work on this nationally through an amendment to the Farm Bill and through our organizing work we added significantly to the successful campaign to repeal that restriction, according to the National Workforce Alliance. We're hopeful now that this program will fulfill more of its promise as a new source of federal funding for job training and education that non-profits, community colleges, and cities will be able to access.

Text of Amendments on FSET in the Farm Bill
SEC. 4108. EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND JOB RETENTION.

Section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C.

2015(d)(4)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) by redesignating clause (vii) as clause (viii); and

(B) by inserting after clause (vi) the following:

“(vii) Programs intended to ensure job retention by providing job retention services, if the job retention services are provided for a period of not more than 90 days after an individual who received employment and training services under this paragraph gains employment.”; and

(2) in subparagraph (F), by adding at the end the following:

“(iii) Any individual voluntarily electing to participate in a program under this paragraph shall not be subject to the limitations described in clauses (i) and (ii).”.

(1)(B)(vii) is the provision that will allow for 90 days post-employment supports for and FSET participant, and (2)(iii) is the provision that waives voluntary FSET participants out of the 120 hours participation limits. The authorized changes would go into effect October 1, 2008 (the start of the next fiscal year).