

# FRESH SUCCESS: HELPING COMMUNITY COLLEGES ACCESS FEDERAL FUNDS

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

*By guiding community colleges and other organizations through the CalFresh Employment and Training process, the Foundation for California Community Colleges' Fresh Success program helps these institutions access and utilize federal funds to support California's low-income students.*

The Foundation for California Community Colleges' Fresh Success program helps community colleges and organizations start CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) programs in partnership with their counties. CalFresh E&T is a sustainable federal funding source from the United States Department of Agriculture designed to help low-income students and community members gain the skills they need to become more employable.

The program allows community colleges to draw down federal reimbursement for a portion of their qualifying expenditures. Participation in Fresh Success helps community colleges diversify their funding, expand capacity and support students more efficiently.

As a statewide intermediary agency for CalFresh E&T, the Foundation for California Community Colleges engages potential new Fresh Success providers and offers templates, training, technical assistance, a handbook to ease the start-up process, and ongoing support. These tools improve efficiency and effectiveness by providing a standardized approach to complying with federal requirements, while still allowing flexibility in program design. The foundation uses lessons learned at one site to strengthen approaches at other sites.

The foundation also develops a consolidated annual plan to obtain funding approval and has a standardized tool and process for submitting required data, which has improved efficiency for participating colleges and their county partners. These economies of scale benefit the CalFresh E&T program statewide.

Fresh Success currently partners with Cosumnes River College, Gavilan College and Southwestern College, and will be adding five to 10 new community colleges in the coming months. Fresh Success services for students vary within each program site and may include career counseling, interview training, job-search training, development of educational plans, academic monitoring, tutoring, workshops and case management. Participants also receive help with costs for transportation, textbooks and supplies.

To date, the three participating community colleges have received more than \$560,000 in federal funding to expand their services for students. The colleges have steadily increased both their participation numbers and federal reimbursement dollars as their programs become more established.

The next phase of Fresh Success will focus on expansion, bringing the model to scale in many more counties around the state, ensuring high-quality, sustainable, result-oriented employment and training services for Cal Fresh recipients.

## MILESTONES

Feb-Sep  
2015

- The Foundation for California Community Colleges is awarded program development grants to establish the Fresh Success model for CalFresh Employment & Training

April  
2016

- The Foundation for California Community Colleges receives a contract from the California Department of Social Services to act as a statewide intermediary agency for Fresh Success

2016

- A handbook, templates, and other tools are developed to support Fresh Success partners

May  
2016

- The first Fresh Success pilot is launched at Gavilan College in Santa Clara County

2017

- Training curriculum for new Fresh Success partners is developed

January  
2017

- Fresh Success pilot is launched at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento County

February  
2017

- Fresh Success pilot is launched with two community-based organizations in Contra Costa County

October  
2017

- Fresh Success is launched at Southwestern College in San Diego County

April  
2018

- Commitment is received from Foothill-De Anza Community College District Occupational Training Institute in Santa Clara County to start a Fresh Success program

May  
2018

- Commitment is received from Contra Costa Community College District in Contra Costa County to bring Fresh Success to its three community colleges

## QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Overall, the program has generated more than \$1.8 million in federal funding for California.

The established programs continue to grow as student participation increases, additional qualifying activities and funding streams are identified, and efficiencies are attained. For example, the first pilot program at Gavilan College doubled the amount of federal reimbursements it received from its first full year of implementation to its second.

As the program expands to additional colleges, more of California's low-income students will be supported in reaching their educational and career goals.

The three participating colleges have served 343 low-income students to date. In addition to receiving academic and career counseling, case management, and workshop opportunities, each student has received an average of more than \$700 in financial support for textbooks, transportation and other costs of attending college.

## IMPACT AND BENEFIT

- Fresh Success has allowed three community colleges to establish the necessary infrastructure to participate in the federally funded CalFresh Employment & Training program on an ongoing basis.
- Fresh Success has created the tools, templates, guidance and processes to expand the program to community colleges across the state. As a result, students who receive CalFresh benefits (food stamps) will have greater opportunity to achieve their educational goals, enter middle-skills career paths and obtain family-supporting jobs. In the shorter term, these students will have greater access to food benefits and supportive services that reduce barriers to community college success.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1

The funding model that allows CalFresh Employment & Training programs to receive federal dollars differs from other student success programs and requires significant upfront education for college administrators about CalFresh E&T.

2

Colleges may shy away from the opportunity due to the perceived complexities; however, Fresh Success provides training and ongoing technical assistance to colleges to educate them about the funding opportunity and assist them in operationalizing the program on their campuses.

3

The pilot process was essential. By piloting the program in a limited number of sites, Fresh Success has been able to test and refine tools and processes, advocate for changes at the state level, and identify new sources of non-federal funding that qualify for federal reimbursement.

## FURTHER REFERENCES

- Foundation for California Community Colleges Fresh Success website: <https://foundationccc.org/What-We-Do/Student-Services/FreshSuccess>
- Cosumnes River College Fresh Success website: <https://www.crc.losrios.edu/services/support/fresh-success>
- Gavilan College Fresh Success website: <https://www.gavilan.edu/student/eops/calworks/freshsuccess.php>

## PROJECT TEAM

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