

## The Food Stamp Employment and Training Program

### What is FSET?

The Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), helps food stamp recipients gain skills, obtain training, and secure a job. Every State is required to operate an FSET program, but they have discretion about the services they provide and the individuals they serve. Eligible services include job search, job search training, workfare, work experience, education, and self-employment training. Homeless people and people who are mentally or physically unfit for employment typically are exempt from FSET participation, but States can choose to allow their voluntary participation.

### Why Is FSET Important for Homeless People and the Agencies That Serve Them?

The FSET program is designed for individuals who are not receiving welfare benefits, especially able-bodied adults without dependents, or ABAWDs. This group of individuals includes many single, homeless adults, who often face significant employment barriers, including limited education and work experience, undiagnosed mental and physical illnesses, and substance abuse. Many of these individuals are exempt from the food stamp work requirements, but those who are not are limited to 3 months of food stamps in a 36-month period unless they participate in a qualifying work activity. States and community providers that pledge to serve all ABAWDs who are at risk of losing their food stamp benefits for lack of a qualifying work activity can receive funds over and above their FSET State grant. In addition, States and providers may leverage Federal matching funds (see below).

### What Type of Funds Are Available?

USDA provides three basic types of funding for the FSET program:

- 100 percent Federal administration grants, awarded by formula; for fiscal years 2002-2007, \$90 million was authorized for these grants
- 100 percent Federal funds for programs that serve all ABAWDs; for fiscal years 2002-2007, \$20 million was authorized for these grants
- A 50 percent Federal match for administrative costs (above the 100 percent grant), participant expenses (e.g., transportation), and dependent care costs; in 2005, States received \$183.3 million in matching funds

### How Can My Organization Participate?

Community providers can participate in FSET in one of several ways:

- Enter into a referral relationship with the agency providing FSET services (in many cases, this will be the State agency that administers food stamp benefits)
- Contract with the State agency that receives Federal matching funds
- Receive a 50 percent match for your own non-Federal expenditures on employment and training activities for food stamp recipients; King County, WA, was the first to create a "third-party match" program in which an organization other than a food stamp agency or workforce system provider receives the matching funds.

### Where Can I Get More Information?

For more information on FSET, see the following:

- The USDA Food and Nutrition Service Food Stamp page at [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp); click on "Employment & Training" on the left hand menu
- The Workforce Alliance Web site at [www.workforcealliance.org](http://www.workforcealliance.org); click on FSET under "Federal Policies"
- *Food Stamp Employment & Training: Lessons from Massachusetts, Texas, San Francisco, and Wisconsin* at [www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/policy/publications/index.html](http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/policy/publications/index.html)
- *The Food Stamp Employment & Training Program: A Resource to Increase the Self-Sufficiency of Homeless Job Seekers* at [www.csh.org/cheta](http://www.csh.org/cheta); click on "Publications" under "Resources"