



BASIC NEEDS ACT: BENEFITS NAVIGATOR AND CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLANS (2SHB 1559)

2023-24 GUIDANCE

Student Services Department

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The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges reserves the right to make changes to this document due to, but not limited to, federal, state, or local legislation or policy changes.

Deadlines and Milestones

Milestone	Dates (subject to change)
Allocations for Benefits Navigator Available	July 2023
Campus Hunger-Free & Basic Needs Strategic Plan Development	April 2024
Legislative Report Due	December 1, 2025

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Overview

The Washington State Legislature passed into law [Second Substitute House Bill 1559 \(2023\)](#). Sponsored by Representative Debra Entenman, this legislation requires, by law, all Community and Technical Colleges to implement a Benefits Navigator position at a minimum of .75 FTE not to be divided between two or more staff. The Benefits Navigator creates a single point of contact for students to access resources such as public benefits (working connections childcare, basic food enrollment), emergency assistance grants, housing supports, and Basic Food Employment and Training. Additionally, the legislation requires colleges to develop a Hunger-Free & Basic Needs Strategic Campus Plan by April 2024.

Student basic needs consist of food, water, shelter, clothing, physical health, mental health, childcare, or similar needs that students enrolled at an institution of higher education, tribal college, or community or technical college may face difficulty with, and that hinders their ability to begin or continue their enrollment.

Background

In 2022, students at 39 colleges and 5 universities across Washington state participated in a survey about basic needs insecurities, including access to food, housing, child care, and more. The survey found that nearly half of all students in all regions of the state experienced some type of basic needs insecurity. One in every three students experienced either food insecurity or housing insecurity. One in every 10 students had also experienced homelessness in the previous 12 months. Some students experienced these insecurities at higher rates than others, and former foster youth had the highest rates of basic needs insecurities with 75 percent experiencing either food or housing insecurity.

Addressing basic needs challenges for students contributes to their ability to remain enrolled and pursue their educational goals as evidenced by data from the two student support programs the legislature previously enacted, the student emergency assistance grant program and the supporting students experiencing homelessness pilot program. When students received this assistance, an average of 88 percent of them were able to persist in their programs. Therefore, the legislature intends to continue to support students and help students meet their basic needs by increasing access to resources and support services.

Disclaimer

SBCTC reserves the right to refrain from awarding funds to any or all applicants. Additionally, SBCTC reserves the right to add additional award requirements to applicants meeting minimum criteria to receive funds but that are deemed to be higher risk awardee. Additional requirements may include, but are not limited to, additional reporting requirements or additional monitoring to assess the applicant's ability to adhere to program requirements. Any additional requirements will be outlined for individual applicants prior to applicants accepting any resulting funding.

Funding

Funding is appropriated to the SBCTC at \$1,658,000 per year for all 34 Community and Technical Colleges.

Funding will be allocated to colleges for each fiscal year as long as the legislature appropriates funding for this specific purpose.

For FY24, colleges will receive an annual allocation from the SBCTC of \$48,764 for salary and benefits of the Benefits Navigator position. Colleges may choose to provide additional funding to support moving the position to a full FTE.

For FY24, funding becomes available in July 2023, and expires June 30, 2024. Funds do not extend beyond the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2024). Allocated funds should be tracked through ctcLink using the assigned appropriate index. Colleges are expected to expend all funds by June 30, 2024. The SBCTC will use year to date expenditure reports to determine colleges quarterly and annual expenditure for future allocation and reporting to the legislature.

Indirect costs, travel, and goods and services will not be an allowable expenditure.

Benefits Navigator Design Model

- .75 FTE available for each college (state legislative funds)
- Statewide Benefits Navigator Cohort
- Support Development of Hunger-Free & Basic Needs Strategic Plan
- Predefined scope of work and position description template
- Opportunities for organizational alignment with BFET to support additional funding
- Increase leveraging opportunities for colleges to holistically support students

Scope of Work

Benefits Navigator		
<p style="text-align: center;">Student Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st point of contact • Intake/Assessment • Outreach/Recruitment for programs and supports • Direct Referrals (CBO, college or partner resources) • Supports Access and Completion of Financial Aid, Foundation, Emergency Aid Application • Conduct follow-ups with students 	<p style="text-align: center;">Collaboration Enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Resources (Housing, Utilities, Food Banks, etc.) • Public Assistance Programs (WCCC, SNAP, TANF etc.) • All College Supports (Foundation, BFET, Worker Retraining, Food Pantries, etc.) • Guided Pathways • WIOA 	<p style="text-align: center;">Resource Expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional community resources for participants • Apprenticeship Pathways • Leveraging college resources • Non-federal resources for all BFET providers

Benefits Navigator Position Description

The intent of the position description is to support the college's ability to hire a Benefits Navigator through a predefined scope of work in alignment with legislation requirements that can be applied to a current Navigator position and/or assist in the creation of a new position.

Principle Activities:

Benefits Navigation Design –

- Actively participate as a member of the statewide Benefits Navigator Cohort, including attending trainings and meetings
- Contribute to the development of the statewide and campus specific Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Strategic Plan development and implementation
- Participate in ongoing evaluation and revision efforts to ensure appropriate and effective supports for prioritizing student basic needs
- In collaboration with WSAC and the SBCTC support the implementation of a student survey that assess food and housing security and access to basic economic supports

Supporting Students -

- Provide a low barrier intake process for students that includes appropriate assessment and presentation of the colleges and community resources available
- Support all students' access to Basic Food assistance and the Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program, and support the reduction of student food insecurity
- Provide students with referrals for supportive services within the college and with community partners that help meet their basic needs
- Conduct a follow-ups as needed to ensure students needs are met and provide additional referrals if needed

Enhancing Community Collaboration –

- Facilitate local or regional discussions and generate recommendations amongst community stakeholders on the basic needs of their respective colleges' students
- Assist efforts to strengthen transition supports, which may include assistance with FAFSA/WASFA, Opportunity Grant, WA College Grant, etc.
- Participate in the Guided Pathways initiative at the college
- Work with other Benefit Navigators and the SBCTC to enhance community partnerships to support students and increase options for individuals to meet their basic needs

Expanding Resource Availability –

- Conduct outreach and recruitment that targets low-income and food-insecure students
- Ensure a full menu of college and community resources is available and communicated
- Support the development of new community partnerships to increase resources for students
- Support efforts to integrate student support programs at the college and enhance leveraging of college resources to holistically support students

Qualifications:

The successful candidate will have:

- Superior technical skills including proficiency with Microsoft Office and database programs
- Demonstrated experience facilitating meetings
- Availability for in-state travel for trainings and meetings

- Excellent customer service, communication and teamwork skills
- Demonstrated flexibility and ability to accommodate multiple stakeholders with various interests and needs
- Demonstrated problem-solving and analytical abilities
- Strong planning and project management ability
- Excellent written, verbal, presentation and interpersonal communication skills
- Demonstrated experience in interpreting, reviewing and applying program specific policies, procedures and regulations

Compensation:

This is a full-time, exempt position. [College Specific Info]

Supervision/Reporting:

This position is a member of [Insert program/department team] and reports to the [Insert College Admin]. This position has no supervisory responsibilities.

Application Process:

[Insert College Processes]

Legislative Reporting

Outcomes from the Benefits Navigators and findings and activities from each Hunger-Free & Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan must be reported to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter.

Colleges will work with the SBCTC to coordinate a joint legislative report.

Hunger-Free & Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan

Each campus must develop a Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan by April 2024.

The intent of a Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan is to formulate a plan of action that has significant impacts on the lives of students. By addressing food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs, students are able to stay focused on their education and achieve their full potential. Strategic plans should have a comprehensive and holistic approach, including utilization of a variety of strategies to meet the unique needs of diverse student populations. Additionally, plans should define and support the building of partnerships with community organizations, increased resources and support services, and a campus-wide culture of caring, to ensure college students have access to supports that meet their most basic of needs while they are engaged in classes.

Each strategic plan must:

1. Identify campus food pantry policies that, in practice, create barriers to access and reduce or remove those barriers in the implementation;
2. Review and update methods to identify likely low-income and food-insecure students and conduct communications and outreach methods by the institution to promote opportunities

for benefits assistance (such as basic food enrollment, working connections child care enrollment, referrals to the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children, affordable housing assistance) and emergency financial resources;

3. Assess the needs and advantages of the benefits navigators;
4. Identify opportunities for the institution and partnerships with community-based organizations to holistically support students' basic needs, access to benefits and community resources;
5. Facilitate discussions and generate recommendations amongst community stakeholders on the basic needs of the institution's geographic postsecondary student population; and
6. Assess the distribution of state funds for basic needs support provided to institutions of higher education and the tribal college.

Please refer to Appendix A for a strategic plan template.

Student Basic Needs Survey Assessment

By the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) must collect and disseminate results of a student survey developed by the student achievement council, in collaboration with the SBCTC and an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education, to assess food security, housing security, and access to basic economic supports. Results from the survey may be used by the institutions of higher education and the tribal college.

Existing survey tools may be used for this purpose. In effort to ensure the system is collecting common and consistent census level data for reporting to the legislature, the SBCTC will follow up with colleges on what tools are already in use and the survey elements being collected.

APPENDIX A

[College Name] Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan Outline

Introduction

Derived from realized need, HB 1559 was passed in 2023 to provide legislative investment to support college specific Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plans. This plan is a comprehensive framework designed to assist students in accessing public benefits, existing emergency assistance programs, and other community resources at [College Name]. This plan aims to create a supportive campus environment where every student has access to nutritious food, stable housing, and essential resources needed for their well-being and academic success. By implementing this strategic plan, we demonstrate our commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable campus community.

In recent years, the issue of food insecurity and basic needs insecurity has gained significant attention across college campuses nationwide. Many students face barriers that hinder their ability to access regular meals, secure housing, and meet their essential needs. Recognizing the impact of these challenges on student success, [College Name] has embarked on a mission to proactively address hunger and basic needs insecurity within our community.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide a clear vision, mission, and actionable steps that will guide our efforts to create a hunger-free and basic needs secure campus environment. We believe that by prioritizing the well-being of our students and implementing evidence-based strategies, we can significantly reduce the barriers students face and enhance their overall academic experience.

This strategic plan is a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, administrators, the benefits navigator, community partners, and other relevant entities. By working together, we can leverage our collective resources, expertise, and passion to make a tangible difference in the lives of our students.

Throughout this strategic plan, we will explore the current state of hunger and basic needs insecurity on our campus, identify specific challenges and barriers, and outline goals, objectives, and strategies to address these issues. Moreover, we will emphasize the importance of partnerships, resource allocation, evaluation, and sustained communication to ensure the effectiveness and long-term impact of our initiatives.

The Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan reflects our college's unwavering commitment to the success and well-being of our students. By creating an environment where no student has to worry about their next meal or basic needs, we can foster a supportive and empowering community that nurtures the full potential of every student. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of our students and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive campus for all.

Vision and Mission

Clearly state the vision for a hunger-free and basic needs secure campus.

Define the mission of the strategic plan, outlining its objectives and desired outcomes.

Needs Assessment

Conduct a campus-based needs assessment to gather data on hunger and basic needs issues.
Identify the specific challenges and barriers faced by students regarding food security and basic needs.
Analyze existing resources, programs, and services available on campus.

Goals and Objectives

Establish measurable goals that align with the vision and mission of the plan.
Set specific objectives to address hunger, food insecurity, and basic needs challenges.
Ensure that the goals are realistic, achievable, and time bound.

Strategies and Action Steps

Develop strategies to achieve the established goals and objectives.
Outline specific action steps for each strategy, including responsible parties and timelines.
Address areas such as food access, nutrition education, emergency aid, housing support, and more.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Identify potential partners, both internal and external, who can support the plan's implementation.
Speak to established partnerships with local food banks, community organizations, and other relevant entities.
Foster collaboration among campus departments, student organizations, and community stakeholders.

Resource Allocation and Sustainability

Determine the financial and human resources required to implement the plan effectively.
Explore supplemental grant opportunities, fundraising efforts, and budget allocation strategies.
Develop a sustainability plan to ensure the longevity and continued impact of the initiatives.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Establish practical metrics and evaluation methods to assess the effectiveness of the plan.
Regularly monitor progress toward goals and make adjustments as necessary.
Seek feedback from students, staff, and other stakeholders to continuously improve the plan.

Communication and Outreach

Develop a communication strategy to raise awareness about the plan.
Engage with the campus community through workshops, events, and awareness campaigns.
Utilize various communication channels to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.

Conclusion

The implementation of a Hunger-Free and Basic Needs Campus Strategic Plan will have a significant impact on the lives of students at our college. By addressing food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs, we can help our students stay focused on their education and achieve their full potential. Our plan takes a comprehensive and holistic approach, utilizing a variety of strategies to meet the unique needs of our diverse student population. Through partnerships with community organizations, increased resources and support services, and a campus-wide culture of caring, we can work together to ensure that no student has to go hungry or without basic necessities while pursuing their academic goals. This plan is a call to action for all members of our campus community, and we look forward to working together to make it a reality. Let us stand together to create a campus where every student can thrive.



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