

Department of Family Services

LOB #119:

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Purpose

Comprised of several discrete programs, the purpose of this LOB is to be in compliance with federal mandates (the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAPET), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as well as to maintain safe and caring communities/healthy economies, in line with the Board of Supervisors' priorities.

These programs are summarized below:

- Two federally mandated programs that serve able to work recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW). These two programs are operated by DFS and are delivered as part of a local network of integrated employment services under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Several grant-funded programs, one of which, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), is a federal mandate.
- Three optional programs, Day Laborer Site, Link-Up Fairfax Homeless Employment Pilot and the Virginia Income Tax Assistance (VITA) offered by the County to maintain safe and caring communities and healthy economies.

Description

Mandated Programs:

This LOB provides federally mandated employment and training services to certain unemployed or underemployed adults participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and/or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program. It also provides employment services through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which is addressed in the grant funded section below. The following are mandated programs:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAPET)
Provision of employment and training services to adult recipients of SNAP (also known as food stamps) who are not exempt from working due to their age, disability, or the need to care for a dependent. SNAP recipients required to work as a condition of eligibility for benefits beyond the first 90 days, must demonstrate compliance with the employment requirement or lose benefits. In FY 2015, 302 individuals participated in this program.
- Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW)
The mandatory employment component of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program for parents of children over 12 months of age who are able to work. Required to work individuals must participate in the VIEW employment services to receive cash assistance benefits. In FY 2015, 1,082 parents received employment services from the VIEW program.

VIEW and SNAPET are relatively small programs, and funding for them is limited. These two programs are operated by DFS and are delivered as part of a local network of integrated employment services under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It would be almost impossible to provide good quality, comprehensive employment and training services for SNAPET and VIEW participants if it were not for DFS's ability to leverage other resources through the grant-funded and federally mandated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs.

Department of Family Services

DFS is the designated service delivery partner for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs (WIOA) in the Northern Virginia Workforce Development Area (see Grant Section below). The Northern Virginia Workforce Development Board (NVWDB) oversees the public workforce system across a consortium of seven (7) jurisdictions, including three counties (Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William) and 4 cities (Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park). The role of Fairfax as the regional provider of WIOA services, an employment and training program which is much larger than SNAPET and VIEW, enables the department to offer a wide variety of employment services for people who are unemployed, underemployed, or are considering entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to traditional employment. WIOA services are delivered through a priority of services policy, with preference given to welfare-to-work participants (VIEW), public assistance recipients (including SNAPET), low-income adults, youth, laid-off workers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and ex-offenders who are about to be released from correctional facilities.

A combination of mandatory and voluntary partners (under WIOA) enable SNAPET and VIEW clients to access a wide array of employment and supportive services under one roof, which could not be provided if these two programs (VIEW/SNAPET) were stand-alone. The department operates three of the five WIOA *SkillSource* Centers in Northern Virginia. These three centers are in Fairfax County, in Alexandria (South County), Reston and Annandale. Employment services may be accessed by visiting any of DFS' *SkillSource* Centers, plus the VIEW Job Center which is located in Fairfax (Pennino Building), as well as online via www.myskillsource.org.

Non Mandated Programs:

- Virginia Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

VITA is a national initiative sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The purpose of the program is to provide free tax preparation assistance to low-income individuals and families, and to ensure they access all of the tax credits for which they are eligible (including the Earned Income Tax Credit). In Northern Virginia, DFS convenes a community-based coalition of non-profits, local governments, and libraries which deploys hundreds of volunteers to approximately 20 free tax preparation sites throughout the region. In FY 2015, the coalition prepared 6,046 tax returns.

- Management of Day Laborer Site

Funding for this program is in DFS, but the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) administers the laborer sites through a contract with the Poverty Law Center (PLC), a private non-for-profit organization, to provide oversight for two day laborer gathering sites in Fairfax County. The PLC assists in making the areas where day laborers currently gather safe and orderly for day laborers, employers, residents, and local businesses. Day laborers include workers that gather at street corners, parking lots, strip malls, or official hiring sites seeking daily or hourly employment from employers and private citizens. These sites are in the Annandale and Culmore areas of the County.

- The Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH), Link-Up Fairfax Homeless Employment Pilot

The funding for this program is in the DFS budget, but the program is administered by OPEH. Link-Up Fairfax, the homeless employment pilot, was established in response to the need for employment services that are specific to residents who are homeless, many of them have jobs but still cannot escape homelessness. The program model leverages the successful Bridging Affordability collaborative and contracts with Northern VA Family Service and Cornerstones and five other collaborative nonprofit partners (New Hope Housing, FACETS, Shelter House, UCM, Homestretch) to establish a continuum of employment option for employable County residents who have a range of employment barriers, as well as for clients who need minimal skills in order to enter, re-enter or upgrade skills for the job market. LinkUp uses a two-pronged approach: Finding employment for clients and connecting with area businesses. In 2015 over 200 families were assessed for the program and 25 were enrolled and received services through this new pilot.

Department of Family Services

Benefits

For the mandated programs (SNAPET, VIEW and the WIOA grant), services are provided to be in compliance with federal requirements and to assist participants attain the highest possible level of self-sufficiency, to reduce dependence on government supports. For the optional programs, services are also provided to increase the level of self-sufficiency of the families and individuals receiving community organization and/or employment services with the goal of reducing their level of dependency on local supports. Collectively, the department leverages a comprehensive network of employment services and training resources for the benefit of the community.

Values to the Community:

- To be in compliance with §63.2-608. Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW), §63.2-801. Food stamp program (also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and §2.2-2472. Powers and duties of the Board; Virginia Workforce System created (WIOA).
- To maintain *safe and caring communities* in line with the County's Vision Elements
- To support County's core purpose to *maintain healthy economies by helping individuals meet their needs and having access to economic opportunities*

Mandates

As indicated above, three of the services in this LOB are mandated (SNAPET, VIEW and WIOA), and the rest are local options. WIOA is a mandated service, but DFS is not required to be the operator of the services.

Source of the mandate/code citation:

- §63.2-608. Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW)
- §63.2-801. Food stamp program (also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- §2.2-2472. Powers and duties of the Board; Virginia Workforce System created.

Source of Optional Programs/Code Citation:

- §63.2-314. Funds received from public or private sources; authority of local governing bodies to make grants;

Trends and Challenges

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Employment and Training (SNAPET) Program

Historically, unemployed/underemployed SNAP recipients deemed "Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents" (ABAWD) and were required to find employment through participation in SNAPET to receive continued SNAP benefits. On or about 2008, as part of the temporary measures taken by the federal government during the recession several years ago, some of these requirements were waived. During this waiver period, the program served only individuals who voluntarily signed up for employment and training services. As a result, there was a drastic decline in the number of individuals served and a significant improvement in outcomes, mainly because case managers were able to provide more intensive case management to fewer clients who were highly motivated to become employed.

Department of Family Services

However, with the reinstatement of the work requirement rule in October 2013, SNAP recipients (in particular those in the ABAWD group) can only receive up to three months of SNAP benefits (food stamps) unless they participate in SNAPET or other qualifying employment and training activities. SNAPET is also available to SNAP recipients on a voluntary basis to individuals who are exempt from the mandatory work requirement. This policy change and continued demand for intensive employment services did not result in additional program funding.

Despite these challenges, the program continues to leverage multiple partnerships and all available resources to improve clients' ability to become economically self-sufficient. For example, the department's partnership with a community-based non-profit called Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources (OAR) helps to serve individuals with criminal backgrounds, while the partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools-Adult and Community Education provides English language services for those with limited English proficiency. DFS' SNAPET also partners with Northern Virginia Community College and private training institutions to prepare job seekers for industries and careers which are considered "high demand," and leverage services through the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), one-stop *SkillSource* employment centers, and public assistance programs.

In FY 2015, 302 participants were served through the SNAPET program.

Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW)

The VIEW program provides intensive employment and training services to recipients of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds. Despite the fact that there is some improvement in regional economic conditions, many VIEW clients are not well equipped to take advantage of the economic opportunities. This is because they often face multiple barriers to employment, including mental health issues, lack of critical work supports (such as transportation and child care), substance abuse, criminal records, and domestic violence. As a result, case managers actively work with participants to provide both employment services and related supportive services which will enable them to become "job ready."

Employment case managers use multiple strategies to help VIEW participants overcome these barriers and attain economic self-sufficiency. First, participants are assessed based on their educational attainment, work history, and personal interest, to determine a viable career path. Second, job seekers are connected to specialized occupational skills training and job leads which align with their interests, aptitude, and experience. Once participants are employed, case managers continue to provide support to promote job retention and career advancement.

A restricting factor of the VIEW program is its focus on state and federal policies which emphasize process measures (for example, timeliness) rather than outcome measures (such as entering and retaining employment at a living wage). Currently, state and federal policymakers are reviewing these issues within the context of upcoming TANF reauthorization.

In FY 2015, 1082 individuals were served through the VIEW program, a level which has been fairly consistently over the past several years.

Virginia Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

With the help of 290 dedicated and trained volunteers staffing 18 sites, in Tax Year 2014 (FY 2015) 6,046 low-income families saved more than \$1 M. in professional filing tax preparation fees, and prepared and filed their tax returns receiving more than \$9.5 million in refunds. The average VITA client received \$1,629 in federal tax refunds and over \$1.5 million was awarded back to those families who qualified for the Child Tax Credit (CTC). The average Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) recipients received \$1,990 for a combined total of \$3.1 million. VITA participation has continued to increase every year since program inception. In Tax Year 2013 (FY 2014), 5,841 returns were filed. In Tax Year 2014 (FY 2015), 6,046 tax returns were filed. The program is projecting completing 6,500 tax returns for the 2015 Tax Year.

Department of Family Services

Link-Up Fairfax Homeless Employment Pilot

A necessary adjustment of the assumptions made in the pilot has been implemented regarding the skill level of target clients. Initially, it was assumed that the target clients would possess a higher level skill set than has been found to be the case. Thus, the staff has had to spend more time developing the skill level and work readiness factors in clients before employment goals can be met. Nevertheless, 60 percent of clients served, have improved their employment status, either by attaining a new job or a promotion in their current job and increasing their wages.

Management of Day Laborer Site

The Culmore site is located at the intersection of Route 7 and Glen Carlyn Drive (3300 block) and includes other groupings of day laborers in the Bailey's Crossroads area. This informal site has been in existence for over 20 years and the majority of the workers reside in the neighboring apartment complexes.

The Annandale site is located along the Little River Turnpike corridor between Hummer Road and the 7400 block of Little River Turnpike. This site has been in existence for over nine years with workers congregating at this location.

Although the numbers vary throughout the year, on average, there is daily attendance of approximately 100 day laborers at each of the sites. Ongoing challenges for the day laborers that Legal Aid Justice Center assists with include immigration, health care access, food security, and housing conditions.

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #119: Employment Services			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$2,464,554	\$2,365,571	\$2,488,611
Operating Expenses	1,660,120	1,654,669	1,870,424
Total Expenditures	\$4,124,674	\$4,020,240	\$4,359,035
General Fund Revenue	\$1,821,202	\$1,948,915	\$1,673,848
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$2,303,472	\$2,071,325	\$2,685,187
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	37 / 37	37 / 37	37 / 37
Total Positions	37 / 37	37 / 37	37 / 37

Department of Family Services

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Clients served in VIEW (Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare)	1,375	1,215	1,082	1,075	1,075
Percent of VIEW intakes processed timely	97%	96%	97%	97%	97%
Percent of clients placed in a work activity	86%	86%	87%	85%	85%
Percent of VIEW participants who retain unsubsidized employment for a minimum of 90 days	77%	74%	77%	75%	75%
Percent of SNAPET participants who retain unsubsidized employment for a minimum of 90 days	87%	88%	74%	75%	75%

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Employment and Training (SNAPET)**
 Historically, unemployed/underemployed SNAP recipients deemed “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents” (ABAWD) were required to participate in SNAPET, the employment and training program for SNAP recipients to receive SNAP benefits beyond the initial three months. As part of the temporary measures taken by the federal government during the recent economic recession and in response to high unemployment rates, some of these requirements were waived. During this waiver period, SNAPET served only individuals who voluntarily signed up for employment and training services. As a result, there was a drastic decline in the number of individuals served and a significant improvement in outcomes, mainly because case managers were able to provide more intensive case management to fewer clients who were highly motivated to seek services.

However, with the reinstatement of the work requirement rule in October 2013, SNAP recipients in the ABAWD group can only receive up to three months of benefits without participating in SNAPET or other qualifying employment and training activities. Concurrently, SNAPET was also made available on a voluntary basis to SNAP recipients who were exempt from the work requirement rule, but wanted assistance with employment services. This policy change and the increased demand for employment services did not result in additional program funding.

Despite these challenges, the program continues to leverage multiple partnerships and all available resources to improve clients’ ability to become economically self-sufficient. For example, the department’s partnership with a community-based non-profit called Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources (OAR) helps to serve individuals with criminal backgrounds, while the partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools-Adult and Community Education provides English language services for those with limited English proficiency. We also partner with Northern Virginia Community College and private training institutions to prepare job seekers for industries and careers which are considered “high demand,” and leverage services through the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), One-Stop *SkillSource* employment centers, and public assistance programs.

Department of Family Services

- Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW)

The VIEW program provides intensive employment and training services to recipients of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds. Both the number of clients and the specific nature of their employment challenges have remained consistent for the past several years. Despite the fact that there is some improvement in economic conditions in the region, many VIEW clients do not have the capability to take advantage of the improvement in the labor market. This is because they often face multiple barriers to employment, including low skills levels, literacy issues, lack of critical work supports (such as transportation and child care), mental health issues, substance abuse, criminal records, and domestic violence. As a result, case managers actively work with participants to provide both employment services and related supportive services which will enable them to become “job ready” and employable.

Employment case managers use multiple strategies to help VIEW participants overcome these barriers and attain economic self-sufficiency. First, participants are assessed based on their educational attainment, work history, and personal interest, to determine a viable career path. Second, job seekers are connected to specialized occupational skills training and job leads which align with their interests, aptitude, and experience. Once participants are employed, case managers continue to provide support to promote job retention and career advancement.

A restricting factor of the VIEW program is its focus on state and federal policies which emphasize process measures (for example, timeliness) rather than outcome measures (such as entering and retaining employment at a living wage). Currently, state and federal policymakers are reviewing these issues within the context of upcoming TANF program reauthorization.

Grant Support

FY 2016 Workforce Investment Act Grant Total Projected Funding: Federal/state funding of \$3,543,761 will support 33/33.0 FTE grant positions. There is no Local Cash Match associated with these awards.

As of July 1, 2015, the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) replaced the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as the programs which support and guide the national public workforce system. The Fairfax County Department of Family Services is the contracted WIOA service delivery provider for the Youth component and the designated WIOA service delivery provider for the Northern Virginia Workforce Development Board (NVWDB). WIOA offers a variety of services to those who are unemployed, underemployed, or are considering entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to traditional employment. Target populations include welfare-to-work participants, public assistance recipients, low-income adults, youth, laid-off workers, veterans, people with disabilities, and ex-offenders who are about to be released from correctional facilities.

Services offered include intensive case management, occupational skills training, employer networking events, small business development counseling, connection to supportive services, and job readiness assistance (including workshops and webinars on resumes, interviewing, and social media). These employment services can be accessed through One-Stop employment centers (known in the Northern Virginia region as *SkillSource* Centers) which are operated by DFS in Reston, Annandale, and Alexandria. Job seekers can also visit www.myskillsource.org to learn about various programs and participate in online orientations.

Participation in WIOA programs is voluntary. Individuals are assessed for services based on their specific employment interests and needs, work history, and educational background, as well as eligibility for additional supports such as skills training (which may require additional categorical and/or means tested evaluation). All WIOA programs are outcome-driven, focused on “better off” measures which support placing individuals in long term employment at a living wage, and completing training with an industry-recognized certification or credential.

Department of Family Services

FY 2016 VASAVOR Grant Total Projected Funding: Federal/state funding of \$124,835 will support 1/1.0 FTE grant position. There is no Local Cash Match associated with this award.

The VASAVOR initiative provides for creation, at intake, of an individual Re-entry Plan for each offender based on their risk and needs assessments. A Transition Team comprised of local service providers and the supervising probation officer reviews the plan periodically to coordinate services. The unique feature of the VASAVOR Initiative is that offenders are transferred from state institutions back to the local jail shortly before release so that they can connect with the Transition Team and their probation officer. They begin receiving services while in the jail to learn what is expected, what is available, and to be connected to services within the community at the time of their release. Services include transitional housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and vocational training and job services.

The program was created in February 2003 with initial funding from the U.S. Department of Justice. The program is a partnership among the Virginia Department of Corrections, Fairfax County Sheriff's Office, Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources of Fairfax County, the SkillSource Group, and the Department of Family Services. Funding comes from the Virginia Department of Corrections.

FY 2016 Employment Advancement for TANF Grant Total Actual Funding: Federal/state funding of \$340,000 will support 3/3.0 FTE grant positions. There is no Local Cash Match associated with this award.

The Employment Advancement for TANF grant provides enhanced employment services to TANF/VIEW participants with hidden disabilities. Participants are screened at initial assessment for eligibility, and can be re-screened at any time after participation begins. Participants receive a comprehensive neuropsychological report which identifies barriers and opportunities for successful employment outcomes. This report guides a team of service providers from the Fairfax County Public Schools Adult and Community Education, Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services, mental health professionals, and the Department of Family Services, who meet periodically with the participant to coordinate services. Services include intensive case management, vocational training, and job services (including job coaching).

The program was created in 2001 and is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Virginia Department of Social Services. This program combines the former TANF Hard-to-Serve and the TANF Job Retention/Wage Advancement grants into a single award.