



The Wisconsin Community Action Skills Enhancement Program

2013 Overview

The Community Action Skills Enhancement Program (SEP) helps increase the earnings of working poor Wisconsinites by providing training opportunities so participants can acquire the knowledge and skills needed to obtain higher paying jobs that offer health care benefits. SEP emphasizes short-term, demand-driven, job-focused post-secondary training. Participants are helped to overcome barriers to education by receiving financial assistance to help pay tuition & fees, child care & transportation costs to attend classes.

WISCAP and Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in Wisconsin have a long history of effective and innovative programs to help individuals build the skills and capacities to climb out of poverty. Our partnership with state agencies will continue to create opportunities for hard-working Wisconsin residents to obtain training that will benefit them, their families, their employers & communities and the state's economy.

WISCAP manages the overall program and administers funds via subcontracts with 15 CAAs and United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) to provide Skills Enhancement services statewide to eligible low-wage workers. CAAs enroll eligible participants and assist them to develop individualized training plans for in-demand occupations that pay higher wages and offer benefits. Clients receive case management, support services & referral and job search assistance. Clients take coursework primarily at community & technical colleges to obtain certificates or degrees which would take 1-24 months for full-time students to complete. Because Skills Enhancement pays up to 6 credit hours per semester, it typically takes program participants longer to complete a course of study compared to full-time students. Due to staggered enrollment and the variable length of individual training programs, approximately 30% of enrollees graduate from the program annually.

Funding - \$435,000 in annual funding comes from the state of Wisconsin, partially supplemented by local & federal sources.

- \$250,000 in state revenue funds goes to all 16 CAAs
- \$25,000 in agency match funds (10% of state funds) contributed by all 16 CAAs
- \$90,000 in federal FSET funds goes to 3 CAAs serving FSET clients
- \$70,000 in agency match funds to FSET contributed by the 3 CAAs serving FSET clients

At least 35% of agency budgets must be allocated to pay "participant support" costs, such as tuition, fees, books, and training-related child care & transportation.

Eligibility - At the time of enrollment all participants must:

- be age 18 or older
- be employed a minimum of 20 hours per week;
- have income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level; and
- demonstrate the necessary commitment and capacity to complete their training program while successfully managing work and family responsibilities.

Program Activities - WISCAP subcontracts with our member CAP Agencies to provide direct services to eligible low-wage participants. CAP Agencies:

- (1) undertake outreach, screen, and process applications & enroll participants;
- (2) work with clients to establish suitable training goals & assess local market demand and wages to ensure training will result in improved earnings;
- (3) investigate financial aid options and assess amount of participant support costs – tuition, fees, books, child care & transportation to attend classes – to be paid by SEP; FSET clients may additionally receive assistance paying transportation costs during job search and up to the first 3 months of new employment;
- (4) conduct initial case management & referral;
- (5) assist clients to enroll in community or tech colleges or other approved training;
- (6) provide ongoing case management & referral, maintain regular contact, monitor grades & training progress, process payments;
- (7) provide job search support as needed, graduates are successfully exited;
- (8) follow-up with graduates at 6 month intervals to assess wages & income.

A flow chart outlining basic SEP processes and services appears on the last page.

Program Management, Reporting & Monitoring – WISCAP’s Community Action Programs Director is responsible for day-to-day administration of SEP, including preparing subcontracts, providing technical assistance to CAAs, monitoring performance & reviewing monthly reimbursement requests, collecting quarterly reports, analyzing data, and submitting reports to funders. WISCAP also hosts SEP Roundtables for coordinators 2 times/year to share best practices, discuss policy, resolve problems, and provide ongoing learning opportunities with specialists on topics of interest.

CAAs are required to collect and maintain detailed client eligibility records, case management notes, client communications, training status and progress, participant support expenditures paid, as well as wage, income and health insurance data. Agencies submit quarterly reports to WISCAP with detailed client records and outcomes.

Client Demographics & Training Program Details – during the last 3 years.

Client Demographics	
Race	
White	58%
Black	29%
Hispanic	11%
Unmarried	79%
Female	88%
Household includes children	93%
Average age at enrollment	31

Training Program Details	
Length of training program	
Less than 1 year	54%
1 year (for full-time student)	6%
2 year (for full-time student)	32%
Completing last year of 4 year college degree	2%
Number of different "health care" majors	25
Number of different "non-health care" majors	50
% Enrolling in "health care" major	66%
Average time a successful grad is enrolled in Skills	12.3 months
Average time a successful grad is in training	7.7 months
% of grads getting jobs in their field of study (of all grads with new jobs)	87%
Average "Skills" pays in "participant support" per successful grad	\$1,029
Average "Other Sources" pay in "participant support" per successful grad	\$5,080

Challenges arising from the recession – compared to before the onset of the recession, CAAs & clients report the following challenges:

- Waiting lists for classes are more common due to more students returning to school;
- More prospective clients are ineligible due to not working half-time or having recently lost their jobs;
- More clients are losing employment after enrollment;
- It requires a longer job search to find new jobs following the end of training;
- More clients are hired part-time at new jobs (reducing the income increases);
- Fewer jobs are offering employer-sponsored health care;
- Increases in the annual income of graduates have dropped 15% since the onset of the recession.

Program Goals & Outcomes - Despite the sluggish economy Skills Enhancement continues to demonstrate robust outcomes for graduates. Outcome data is based on the last three years of program operations since state funding was secured in July 2010:

Status of all enrollees	Actual	Percent	Goal
Total Enrolled	634	100%	
In training	184	29%	
Completed training & exited Skills	253	40%	
Did not complete training & exited Skills	197	31%	
Training Completion Rate	253 out of 450	56%	70%
Number who completed training and reported new jobs within 9 months	202 out of 253	80%	
Average outcomes of all graduates who report new jobs	Actual	Percent	Goal
Increase in hourly wage	\$2.84/hour	32% increase	\$2.50/hour
Hourly wages at new job	\$11.57/hour		
Increase in hours worked per week	7.8		
Hours worked per week at new job	34	30% increase	
Increase in annual income	\$8,561	72% increase	\$5,000/year
Annual income at new job	\$20,461		
Projected increase in lifetime earnings per grad by retirement age	\$306,838		
Have access to employer provided health care at new job	97 of 202	48%	50%
Had access to employer health care before Skills	21 of 202	10%	

**SEP Services
Flow Chart**
Component Number
in Parentheses

