



County of Fresno

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Legislation Text

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DATE: July 10, 2018

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Sal Quintero, Chairperson, District 3, County of Fresno

SUBJECT: Receive presentation from Congressman Jim Costa regarding the Bridge Academy and provide direction to staff in regards to the 2019 "base" Cal fresh Employment and Training Plan (CFET)

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive a presentation from Congressman Jim Costa and supporters regarding the anticipated impacts in the event of termination of the Fresno Bridge Academy and provide direction to staff regarding the Cal fresh Employment and Training Plan (CFET) submitted to the State of California for 2019.

Authorize the County Administrative Officer to provide direction to the Fresno County Department of Social Services to amend the current CFET Plan submission for the 2019 year to continue to include the Fresno Bridge Academy and its programs within the plan.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

1. The Board could choose to amend the action item.
2. The Board could choose not to approve the Action item.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no increase in Net County Cost associated with the Recommended Action as the Fresno County CFET and the Fresno Bridge Academy funding is from the Federal Snap Program, USDA Pilot Funds, UMP funding, and prospectively from Rockefeller/Chan Zuckerberg Grant Funding, and other Private Sector and Philanthropy.

DISCUSSION:

Since Fresno County started participation in 2012, Reading and Beyond (RAB), through its Fresno Bridge Academy has been assigned responsibility for delivery of all CFET services in Fresno County. No County General Fund moneys are allocated to any of the programs listed below, but the program does take some County administrative staff time. None of the programs outlined below can proceed if they are not included in the Fresno County "base" CFET plan submitted to the California Department of Social Services. The "base" plan, submitted on June 15, 2018 must be amended prior to August 15, 2018, the date on which the California Department of Social Services must submit its state plan to the federal government.

Without inclusion in the County of Fresno's 2019 CFET Plan, the Fresno Bridge Academy will cease to exist. The impacts would be tremendous to those individuals and families that are served at nine (9) sites throughout Fresno County, not to mention the loss of full and part time jobs of the service providers.

In 2015, the Fresno County and the Fresno Bridge Academy were selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as one of ten national pilots to conduct a randomized control test (RCT) to measure the effectiveness of innovative public private programs to help individuals and families reduce their dependence on food stamps. Provisions in the USDA grant prohibit us from publicly discussing results until the program evaluator, Mathematica, has reported its findings to Congress. However since the Fresno Bridge Academy has operated since 2010 and is currently operating its traditional program alongside the pilot, the following comments are based on that program.

There is broad bipartisan support for the notion that everyone who can work, should work. Our experience in Fresno County has shown that a high percentage of able bodied adults on SNAP benefits would like sustained employment that improves the lives of their families but do not have the necessary soft and hard skills. The SNAP program has historically devoted little attention and funding to help people acquire the necessary skills. This is reflected in the fact that funding of the SNAP Employment and Training program accounts for just a fraction of one percent of the budget of the Food and Nutrition Services Agency.

Our experience also shows that able-bodied SNAP beneficiaries often have very challenging family circumstances that make it difficult for them to focus on training and employment and have trouble navigating their way through the myriad government programs and charities that can help address these challenges.

The Bridge Academy is a voluntary program. Clients are not obligated to enroll and they are not obligated to remain enrolled for the 18-month duration of the program, but 77% of those who enroll do just that. There clearly is no shortage of people who wish to improve their circumstances. Most of them just do not know how, or they have not developed the self-confidence to try, or they have daunting family issues that impede their efforts.

That understanding is at the heart of the Bridge Academy Model. While it's the clients who will have to do the hard work to achieve self reliance. The mission of the Bridge Academy is to enable them. The Academy does not just enroll individuals, it enrolls complete families. It does not just provide education, training and job placement assistance to the primary wage earner in the household; it provides wrap-around services to all members of the family. The pay-off comes when clients graduate from the program with solid footing on a path to self-reliance.

All this is made possible by Career and Family Navigators who virtually adopt their families for the 18-month duration of the program. They act as mentors, coaches, facilitators and service integrators. What makes the Bridge Academy model so cost-effective is that it does not duplicate what already exists. In 2016, The Fresno Bridge Academy referred clients to 118 different organizations that had existing funding to serve client's needs.

The success of the Fresno Bridge Academy has encouraged four other California counties to adopt the model, with three more counties planning to launch the program this year. More than 3,000 families, representing almost 10,000 SNAP beneficiaries, are currently enrolled in the program across the State.

1. Background

Fresno County has one of the highest concentrations of SNAP (called Cal Fresh in California) beneficiaries in the U.S. While Fresno County accounts for 2.5% of California's population, it accounts for 5% the of Cal-Fresh beneficiaries. The majority of these beneficiaries are seniors, disabled people and children, but best estimate is that there are at least 30,000 able-bodied adults who are able to become self-reliant and would like to do so.

2. Definitions

- **Fresno County CFET (Cal Fresh Employment and Training).** Provides SNAP employment and training services to Cal Fresh beneficiaries in Fresno County. Since Fresno County started participation in 2012, Reading and Beyond (RAB), through its Fresno Bridge Academy, has been assigned responsibility for delivery of all CFET services in Fresno County. Since inception, the Fresno Bridge Academy has enrolled 3,322 families (or 9,966 individuals). The 18 month program offers comprehensive case management and leverages available community resources to provide a holistic array of services to all family members, including education, training and job placement assistance to the primary wage earner, life skills training for all family members, and educational support for children. The nationally recognized program has been honored by the James Irvine Foundation as a Leadership Award Winner, Top 10% in MacArthur 100 and Change competition (an international competition of over 2,000 submissions), and as “one of eleven best bets for meaningful social change” by the Center for High Impact Philanthropy.
- **USDA Employment and Training Pilot.** In 2015, Fresno County, using the Bridge Model, was selected by the USDA and awarded a \$12.3 million grant to serve as one of ten nationwide pilots to conduct randomized controlled tests to help inform national public policy on how to lift SNAP beneficiaries to self-reliance. The Pilot allows for some non-traditional interventions and currently runs in parallel with the traditional CFET program. The Pilot is currently authorized to run from January 15, 2016 through December 30, 2018, with evaluation of outcomes to continue through December 2021. The ten pilots are viewed by many Washington policy makers, on both sides of the aisle, as the most outcomes-based E&T programs in the country.
- **Upward Mobility Pathways (UMP).** A partnership between the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and the California Bridge Academies to raise community college enrollment rates for Cal Fresh beneficiaries and to target “completions” (Associate degrees, CTE certificates or industry recognized credentials) by at least 70% of enrolled participants, measured two years from enrollment date (for perspective, current completion rate for Latinos is 31% measured over six years). Community Colleges will provide comprehensive “on campus” services and Bridge Academy will assist with recruitment and provide comprehensive “off-campus” services. Three of the four participating community colleges (Fresno City College, Reedley Community College and West Hills Community College) will serve Fresno County Cal Fresh beneficiaries.

3. 2018 19 Funding Sources:

- **Fresno County CFET Funds:** The federal SNAP program allocates what is called “100% funding” to participating states and counties. Allocations are based on number of work registrants in the County. Since 2012, Fresno County’s allocation has totaled approximately \$2,574,357, all of which went to Reading and Beyond for delivery of services.
- **USDA Pilot funds:** the \$12.3 million grant (approximately \$4 million/year) expires on 12/31/18 unless extended by FNS, which will likely require action on the 2018 Farm Bill or an extension of the current pilots through the Congress.
- **2018 Farm Bill:** The House version of the 2018 Farm bill proposes a 10-fold increase in 100% CFET funding from \$90 million to \$1 Billion per year. The Senate version contains no such increase. Efforts are being made by congressional legislators, including Congressman Jim Costa, to include substantial additional funding in the final version of the bill, but only for outcomes-based programs like the Fresno Bridge Academy.
- **UMP Funding:** The UMP project is to be funded by the California Community College Chancellor's Office and through 50/50 matching funds obtained from the SNAP program. Total funding of the program is expected to be approximately \$2 Million, of which just over \$1 million will be for services delivered in Fresno County.
- **Rockefeller/Chan Zuckerberg Grant Funding.** The Bridge Academy and the UMP Community

Colleges have applied for a \$1 million grant, which would generate an additional \$1.5 million in matching funds to increase enrolment in the UMP program and Clovis Community College to the participating colleges. Since this grant will not be awarded until the Fall of this year, a plan amendment would be required at that time.

- **Private Sector and Philanthropy.** Since 2012, RAB has obtained more than \$1.2MM from foundations (e.g. James Irvine Foundation and California Endowment) and private sector companies (e.g. Wells Fargo, Bank of America, AT&T) to support the Bridge Academy program.
- No County General Fund moneys are allocated to any of the preceding, but the program does take some administrative staff time.
- None of the preceding programs can proceed if they are not included in the Fresno County “base” CFET plan submitted to the California Department of Social Services. The “base” plan can be amended 60 days after its submission date of June 15, 2018.

4. Site Closures if the Fresno Bridge Academy were to cease operations.

The Bridge Academy operates nine sites throughout Fresno County. These sites are community-based sites that exist in areas of concentrated poverty and provide a safe, productive place in a familiar area that communicates to our participants that we are a positive presence to help transform neighborhoods and the lives of the participants served.

Three sites are in Rural Fresno County:

- Selma
- Reedley
- Kerman

Six sites are in Metro Fresno:

- El Dorado Neighborhood, co-located with Stone Soup Fresno
- Sunnyside Neighborhood, based at the Mosqueda Community Center
- West Fresno
- Central Fresno
- Lowell/Van Ness neighborhood/93701 Zip Code
- Pinedale Neighborhood

All nine of these sites depend on CFET and UMP funding. If the 2018-19 CFET program submitted to the California Department of Services does not include these programs, all nine sites would close and stop providing Bridge services.

5. County loss of funds if Fresno Bridge Academy were to be discontinued

Fresno County would still receive its allocation of CFET funds (anticipated to be between \$400,000-\$500,000) and could apply those funds to a different use; however:

- The more than \$1MM in UMP funding for Fresno services would be foregone;
- The application for the \$1MM grant from Rockefeller/Chan Zuckerberg would have to be withdrawn;
- Unless there is a seamless extension of the Pilot program approved by the Congress before the September 30, 2018 expiration of the current Farm Bill, Fresno County would likely forego funding from a possible later extension of the program (about \$4 million/year) because of the need to have to re-start a terminated program;
- If the Farm Bill approves a major increase in SNAP funding for outcomes-based programs, Fresno County would have to try to re-start a program that would have been terminated. The potentially foregone opportunity could be millions of dollars per year.

- Current sources of matching funds from foundations and the private sector would be discontinued.

6. Participants not served

Even if the Pilot is not extended beyond December 2018, more than 2,700 Cal Fresh beneficiaries (approximately 900 families) will lose the services of the Fresno Bridge Academy if the program is discontinued. This is the number of residents the Bridge Academy expects to serve in Fresno County under the CFET and UMP programs only. If the Pilots are extended and the Bridge Academy is discontinued, the number of residents losing services could be three or four times higher.

7. Staff Losses

The Fresno Bridge Academy currently employs over 32 full time staff providing direct services, and an additional 6 FTE's delivering indirect services. If the CFET and UMP programs activities are not included in the Fresno County CFET Plan, this staff would all need to be let go.

8. Outcome Measures

We are precluded by USDA Pilot guidelines from discussing outcomes under the Pilot until results have been reported to the Congress; however, outcomes are expected to be consistent with those that have been obtained through the traditional program, since the Fresno County E&T program started in 2012:

- Since inception in 2012, the Fresno Bridge Academy has enrolled approximately 10,000 Cal Fresh beneficiaries (3,322 families).
- At least 80% of individuals obtain employment or material income gains if already employed at enrollment.
- At least 80% retain employment obtained during the course of the program for at least 1 year.
- At least 27% of program participants are already completely off public assistance by the time they complete the 18-month program; the balance are on pathways to self-reliance but will take more time to get there.
- The cost per family for the 18-month traditional program is approximately \$1,700.
- For every taxpayer dollar expended on the traditional program, the return to taxpayers is more than \$5.00, mostly in the form of reduced outlays for public assistance and income taxes generated by people who had been tax consumers.