

Customer-Centered Design Q&A for EcSA

Please send us more questions, and we will add to this Q&A periodically so everyone can see the same answers. Questions about ways to design the program to help more people move out of poverty will be included in this Q&A, and compliance-oriented questions are included in attachments to the CRF and State EcSA WINS.

1. What defines success for EcSA?

This is the definition of success for EcSA: **successfully helping people move from poverty to lasting self-sufficiency, with a focus on equity.**

2. How is EcSA different from our existing programs in WIOA and WorkSource?

EcSA is an enhancement to those programs, intended to make them even better at moving people out of poverty into lasting self-sufficiency. EcSA empowers and requires you to add these enhancements:

- a. All customers are always offered a consistent and large array of programs that can help them stabilize using the bundled services desk aid, because consistency is an equity issue.
- b. Every customer receives a personalized self-sufficiency goal and a personalized career plan to reach that goal with the use of the UW Self-Sufficiency Calculator.
- c. All EcSA customers are automatically income-eligible for 100% financial aid through the Washington College Grant, with no FAFSA/WAFSA required.
- d. All EcSA customers can receive a \$1000 per month incentive payment with no time limit, while continuing to follow their career plan each month.
- e. All EcSA providers recruit with equity in mind, and ESD tracks and reports how much the proportion of BIPOC people and unhoused people served by EcSA is increasing (or not increasing) in each local area.
- f. The elements above are enhancements to the way WIOA and WorkSource programs are currently operated in many areas of the state. By accepting EcSA funding, it is expected that these enhancements are incorporated into the local delivery of EcSA.

3. Give me the elevator speech. What do the new resources from the Community Reinvestment Fund and the Washington College Grant really mean to me as I serve my local community?

You can now provide EcSA participants with \$1000 per month incentive payments and a full-ride scholarship that covers the total cost of community technical college, university, some apprenticeships, and some shorter-term training. As you recruit people who are hesitant to begin their personal journey, you can tell them that most people in EcSA can receive **\$1000 per month, plus the full cost of college or training, plus a customized career plan that will get them all the way to a living wage job.** Then invite them to come talk with you about the details.

4. Given the new resources, what are some key next steps to consider?

A key next step is to consider how to move more people from poverty to lasting self-sufficiency, using these new resources. Each local area has agreed to follow the requirements above. Beyond that, there is great latitude to design what will help the most people in each local area, based on expertise and local knowledge.

5. Does state EcSA have to follow federal WIOA rules?

No. LWDBs are allowed to write their own local policies if desired. In fact, it is encouraged that LWDBs write local policies that promote flexibility and adaptability and don't place constraints on how funds are used to assist those moving from poverty or at risk of poverty. For example, using local policy to adapt definitions of what is considered allowable support services, giving more flexibility to these services, and getting customer needs met more easily and efficiently on their path out of poverty. These policies will need to be approved by ESD.

6. What about compliance issues?

While compliance is important and required, this Q&A is focused on the customer-centered service delivery model at the foundation of EcSA and how to implement the components of EcSA with the fundamental purpose always in mind: helping people to move from poverty to lasting self-sufficiency, with focus on equity. For compliance specific questions, please refer to your contract or the CRF and State EcSA WINS.

7. Should I exit people once they reach self-sufficiency?

No. The purpose of EcSA is to move people from poverty to *lasting* self-sufficiency. Case managers should keep serving people until they believe the participant is likely to stay self-sufficient.

8. Should every EcSA participant receive a \$1000 per month incentive if they are continuing to work on their career plan each month?

Yes. We encourage you to do so for every EcSA participant. Since the \$1000 per month incentive payments are built on the State EcSA infrastructure, every State EcSA participant can and should begin receiving incentive payments now. Federal EcSA participants who aren't already co-enrolled into State EcSA will need to be co-enrolled to receive \$1000 per month incentives, and we encourage you do so promptly.

9. What if we run out of money for \$1000 per month incentive payments?

The leadership for the Community Reinvestment Fund has begun negotiations with ESD and WWA to add \$25 million more into the system, to provide additional funding that can be used locally for incentives or individual development accounts. They have also indicated that if actual results show that LWDBs might not have enough funding for incentives through June 2025, they will discuss that with us and consider adding even more funding. We encourage LWDBs to provide incentive payments to every EcSA participant who is making progress on their career plan, and to enroll new EcSA participants rapidly, with a very strong focus on recruiting more Black, Latino, and Indigenous participants. If an LWDB demonstrates a need for more funding for incentive payments, you will likely receive it. We will work with LWDBs to be sure any action needed is taken well ahead of time, so there is time to contract additional funds to LWDBs before you face a shortfall.

10. Can I co-enroll WIOA Adult, Youth, and DW participants into State EcSA, and thereby make them automatically income-eligible for 100% financial aid through Washington College Grant, with no FAFSA/WAFSA required?

Yes. They must be EcSA-eligible, but many or most are. See your EcSA contract for EcSA eligibility details.

11. Will that mean their training costs are covered by the Washington College Grant, so that WIOA funding and state EcSA funding will not have to pay for it?

Yes. The training costs must be costs that are allowed to be covered by the Washington College Grant, in

order to be covered by that source, but that includes much training that is currently paid for by WIOA ITA's or by state EcSA funding. See the Washington College Grant website and the WIN 0129 for details on what training can be covered by Washington College Grant.

12. What if we run out of money for Washington College Grant to cover our training costs?

Washington College Grant is a state entitlement. There is no cap or financial limit on how much funding your local area can use. Your area cannot run out of money for Washington College Grant; you can use as much as you need.

13. Can I co-enroll WIOA Adult, Youth, and DW participants into State EcSA, and then provide them with \$1000 per month incentive payments?

Yes. They must be EcSA eligible, and you must follow the rules for providing \$1000 per month incentive payments. See your EcSA contracts for those details.

14. Are we allowed to apply the enhancements in #2, above, to all of our WIOA formula funds, in order to simplify things locally and/or use these enhancements more broadly because they are good for our customers?

Yes. That is a local option, and we encourage it. However, it is entirely up to each LWDB to make this decision. We can provide technical assistance to any LWDBs who wish to do so. Please note items 2c and 2d, above, are only available if the WIOA formula participant is also co-enrolled into State EcSA.

15. Should we write local policies that add more limits to what we can do with EcSA funding?

ESD recommends maintaining the flexibility that ESD and Commerce have provided for you. LWDBs are encouraged to write local policies that allow for maximum flexibility/adaptability and that do not complicate or inadvertently limit the availability/accessibility of EcSA funding.

16. Since we are now able to cover all the costs of college, university, or apprenticeship, and pay \$1000 incentives for each month a customer continues to work on their career plan, should we re-think how often we authorize participants to pursue long-term training, 2-year degrees, 4-year degrees, and multi-year apprenticeships?

Yes. This is a significant change in what we can offer customers. Customers for whom a multi-year training or education plan is appropriate can have WCG cover all the costs of education while receiving \$1000 per month incentive payments to help make that long-term approach possible for them.

17. What would potential local implementation of EcSA look like, if we wanted to take full advantage of these new resources to enhance our services to as many of our customers as possible?

One approach to consider, which ESD approves of and encourages, is as follows:

- a. Co-enroll all Federal EcSA participants and every eligible Youth, Adult, and DW participant into State EcSA.
- b. Continue recruiting more new people into State EcSA, with a strong focus on recruiting BIPOC people and unhoused people.
- c. Especially focus on recruiting Indigenous people/tribes, Latino, and Black people, since the Commerce funding has this focus.
- d. Follow the requirements in item #2, above.

- e. Provide every State EcSA participant (including all those you co-enrolled from other programs) a \$1000 per month incentive payment, as long as their case manager indicates in writing that they are continuing to pursue their career plan as expected. (See your EcSA contract for incentive rules, which are written to be flexible for you. Don't tie your own hands with additional local rules that are not required by the state.)
- f. Cover all training for every State EcSA participant (including those you co-enrolled from other programs) with Washington College Grant. This will be many or most of such expenses. Some participants may be ineligible for Washington College Grant due to non-income-related reasons; and some training will not be training that Washington College Grant covers; but the bulk of your current costs may likely be covered by Washington College Grant. Have this be your routine first choice for funding training. For any that is not covered, pay with a WIOA ITA. For any training costs that are not allowed to be covered by Washington College Grant, nor WIOA ITA's, cover the costs with state EcSA funds. State EcSA funds are especially flexible but note that your own local policies need to be written to give you maximum flexibility to pay for training costs with state EcSA funds.
- g. If this creates savings in your WIOA formula funds, use those savings to make the best improvements you see fit to increase your capacity to serve any WIOA customers at all.
- h. Train all provider staff who work directly with customers on this approach.
- i. As part of that training, also train the same staff on trauma-informed care and trauma-informed service provision.
- j. Please feel free to reach out to ESD for technical assistance if you choose to pursue this approach or a similar one.

18. How are CRF business services different from those conducted under state EcSA?

CRF business services funds allow for an even more creative and experimental approach to business engagement. They allow subsidized training, WEX, equipment purchase tied to training needs, and a broad array of other services (see your contract or the CRF WIN). The Community Reinvestment Fund has also provided suggestions as to how to get creative with these funds, including the use of music, art, and culture as tools to foster interest in careers and as strategies for engaging with different and diverse populations. Any idea is worthy of a conversation/discussion to see how the CRF funds can be used to make it happen. ESD approval is required.

19. What does "a strong focus on Black, Latino, and Indigenous people" mean?

It means to focus your recruiting very strongly on those populations, while maintaining access for all people who meet EcSA's basic eligibility requirements. The Community Reinvestment Fund is intended to make a very large impact for Black, Latino, and Indigenous people. When we report back to them, we want to demonstrate that the proportions of our participants in those three categories are growing quickly because we are working hard to find and serve them. We will work with WWA to discuss soft targets for this to make sure we are meeting the intention of the funders.

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