

INTERNET ACCESS FOR STUDENTS

Guidance for Student Support Programs

During the current environment of online-only education options as a result of COVID-19, many students are facing access issues due to limited technology equipment and broadband connections. In this environment, there is much opportunity for student support programs to increase student access across our system - some options may already be available and there are spaces for creativity as well. Students need computers, internet connections, and even hotspot equipment just to stay connected with college staff, faculty and their peers and remain enrolled and engaged in their courses.

The intention of this initial guidance document is to share information about opportunities to utilize student support program funding to expand student access to online courses. A revised version will be shared as we collect additional information about resources and opportunities. Please share any resources or ideas you may have with [Dylan Jilek \(djilek@sbctc.edu\)](mailto:djilek@sbctc.edu) so they can be added to future versions.

At-A-Glance: Allowable Expenditures by Program

	Equipment and Internet Service Financial Aid	Laptop Loaner Programs	Other Loaner Programs
Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET)	✓	✓	✓
Opportunity Grant (OG)	✓	✓	✗
Student Emergency Assistance Grant Program (SEAG)	✓	✗	✗
Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH)	✗	✓	✓
Worker Retraining (WRT)	✓	✓	✓
WorkFirst	✗	✓	✓

Equipment and Internet Service Financial Aid

The following programs allow colleges to provide financial assistance to students for equipment or internet service expenditures needed to participate in online courses. This may include headphones, video cameras, computers, internet equipment and services, computer and internet cables, USBs and other storage equipment, or other necessary equipment.

Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET)

The purchase of laptops and internet devices as Participant Reimbursements is not allowable under BFET policy. You can provide Participant Reimbursements under your Books, Supplies and Tools budget category for supplies that students need in an effort to assist them with remote access to enable them to participate in their BFET activities. The BFET student must have an open component. Eligible supplies include but are not limited to computer mouse, computer cords/cables, video camera, headphones/earbuds and storage Devices (USB/flash drives).

If you do not have funds allocated in your Books, Supplies and Tools category, a budget revision or funding request may be necessary to move funding.

Opportunity Grant

Individual student support “financial aid” funds can be used to help students get internet access to assist with remote access to courses. For tracking purposes, use Financial Aid Program Code “ØZI OTHER” in Legacy or Item Type “91200000330 OGOTHER” in PeopleSoft.

Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG)

Colleges administering SEAG programs have funds to provide monetary aid to assist students experiencing unforeseen emergencies or circumstances that affect the student’s ability to continue attending classes. SEAG Program funds are meant for direct disbursement to students in the form of emergency assistance grants, which can be used by students to pay for “other goods and services.” In this case, “other goods and services” are interpreted to include any equipment or service necessary to participate in online courses.

Worker Retraining (WRT)

Internet services and equipment that students retain can be awarded through financial aid funds, “Use the WRT Financial Aid funds to pay for college-related expenses for eligible students such as tuition, books, supplies, tools or equipment required for participation in the course of study, transportation, child care, etc.” In this instance, internet services and electronic equipment that is required for students to participate in online courses (page 14 of the [WRT guidelines](#)). As with all local policy decisions for WRT, please consult with your WRT Financial Aid Advisory Committee for local policy guidance and approval. This can be conducted via email.

Loaner Programs

In addition to providing financial aid to students to purchase needed equipment and services, colleges can also consider purchasing equipment and services to loan to students. This means the purchases remain the property of the college, and must be inventoried and managed. Many colleges

are already operating laptop loaner programs through student support programs, such as WorkFirst. In such cases, colleges can replicate or expand on the processes and policies already established to manage these programs. Sample items to loan students to ensure access and engagement in online courses include, but are not limited to, laptops, internet equipment, video cameras, or computer cables.

Any items purchased with FY20 funding must be received and put into inventory (available for use) this fiscal year by June 30, 2020.

Any purchases made with FY20 state funds leveraged for BFET must be received and put into inventory by June 30, 2020. Any purchases made with reutilized BFET funds can be received after June 30.

Please check with your individual college IT department to ensure your college has technical access policies in place to track and maintain acceptable usage of equipment loaned to students who are offsite.

The purchase of equipment or internet services managed by the college through a loaner program for students are permitted in the following programs within the policies identified for each.

Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET)

The purchase and loaning of equipment and services to BFET students in an effort to assist them with remote access to enable them to participate in their BFET activities is an allowable expenditure for BFET reimbursed funds. The BFET student must have an open component. You may bill for 50% reimbursement of this cost to your Client Services budget category. If you do not have funds allocated in your Client Services category, a budget revision or funding request may be necessary to move funding.

Opportunity Grant

Student support “wrap-around” funds can be used to purchase loaner laptops to assist with remote access to courses. These loaners remain property of the college and must be returned. For tracking purposes, use Financial Aid Program Code “ØZI OTHER” in Legacy or Item Type “91200000330 OGOOTHER” in PeopleSoft.

If the laptop is required for the program in which the student is enrolled, then use the Financial Aid Program code “ØZF TOOLS” in Legacy or Item Type “91200000350 OGTTOOLS” in PeopleSoft.

Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG)

The SEAG Program does not include allowances for colleges to purchase equipment and services to be managed by the college and loaned to students because funds are intended to be used for grants to students (see allowances under Equipment and Internet Service Financial Aid above).

Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH)

SSEH Pilot colleges provide accommodations to students experiencing homelessness and students who were in the foster care system when they graduated high school that may include internet access via equipment and services purchased and managed by the college in a loaner program.

Worker Retraining (WRT)

The purchase and loaning of equipment is an allowable use of WRT funds. Loaner equipment should be purchased with enrollment support funds, pending local availability of funds.

WorkFirst

The purchasing and loaning of equipment and services for WorkFirst students as part of a loaner program managed by the college to ensure access to Canvas and online college resources is an allowable expense within the WorkFirst program. A budget revision may be necessary to move funding into budget sub-objectives to purchase equipment and services to access the internet.

External Resources

Distance Learning Infrastructure Development

1. WA State Broadband Office--[Learn more](#)
2. WA State Public Works Board - Broadband Financing--[Learn more](#)
3. USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants--[Learn more](#)
4. E-Rate Program--[Learn more](#)
5. Rural Health Care Program--[Learn more](#)

Emergency Financial Assistance for Students

1. United Way of King County Benefits Hub--[Learn more](#)

Free and Low-Income Internet Access

1. Comcast Xfinity Internet - Internet Essentials Program--[Learn more](#)
2. Charter Spectrum--[Learn more](#)
3. Altice Internet providers Suddenlink and Optimum--[Learn more](#)
4. Cox Connect2Compete--[Learn more](#)
5. Medicom's Connect2Compete--[Learn more](#)
6. Federal Communication Commission Lifeline Program--[Learn more](#)
7. AT&T Access Program--[Learn more](#)
8. NetZero Dial Up Internet--[Learn more](#)
9. Freedom Pop--[Learn more](#)