



# **FREE/REDUCED PRICE MEAL PILOT (2SHB 1559)**

## ***2023-26 PILOT GUIDANCE***

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## Deadlines and Milestones

Milestone	Dates (subject to change)
FY26 Budget Forms and Assurance available	June 6, 2025
FY26 Budget Forms and Assurance due	June 23, 2025
SBCTC Review and Approvals	June 27, 2025
Allocations Available	July 1, 2025
24-25 Program Year Data due	October 27, 2025

## Program and Fiscal Contacts

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# Table of Contents

Deadlines and Milestones .....	2
Program and Fiscal Contacts .....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Overview .....	4
Current Pilot Colleges .....	4
Disclaimer .....	4
Funding.....	4
Strategic Planning.....	5

## Overview

The Washington State Legislature passed into law Second Substitute House Bill 1559 (2023). Sponsored by Representative Debra Entenman, this legislation includes a new three-year pilot to provide free and low-cost meal plans or food vouchers to eligible low-income students. Four community and technical colleges, two on each side of the Cascade mountains, will be selected to participate by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Additionally, the bill includes two public four-year institutions, one of each side of the Cascade mountains, to be selected to participate by the Council of Presidents.

## Current Pilot Colleges

In 2023, the SBCTC conducted a competitive program application and funding process. All community and technical colleges were encouraged to apply for funding. The SBCTC convened a committee to evaluate applications to determine, based on student need and program approach, who was selected to receive funding. The following colleges were selected to pilot the free/reduced price meal program and received funding for FY24-FY26: Columbia Basin College, Everett Community College, Grays Harbor College, and Walla Walla Community College.

## Disclaimer

SBCTC reserves the right to refrain from awarding funds to any or all applicants. Additionally, SBCTC reserves the right to add additional award requirements to applicants meeting minimum criteria to receive funds but that are deemed to be higher risk awardee. Additional requirements may include, but are not limited to, additional reporting requirements or additional monitoring to assess the applicant's ability to adhere to program requirements. Any additional requirements will be outlined for individual applicants prior to applicants accepting any resulting funding.

## Funding and Assurances

Funding is appropriated to the SBCTC at \$960,000 annually for FY24-FY26. Pilot colleges will need to submit a budget form each year to receive their allocation. Budget forms will be made available to the pilot colleges each year. Budget forms should be submitted to [Jennifer Dellinger](#), Policy Associate, Workforce Education by the due date.

Colleges should calculate their budgets by assessing students' needs, evaluating existing available resources, and identifying what additional resources are required to better support students' access to food.

Funding for selected pilots will be allocated to colleges for each fiscal year. FY26 funding becomes available the first allocation after the budget forms are received and approved with a target date of July 1, 2025, and expires June 30, 2026. Funds do not extend beyond the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2026). Allocated funds should be tracked through ctcLink using the assigned appropriate index provided by the SBCTC. Colleges are expected to expend all funds by June 30, 2026. The SBCTC will use year to date expenditure reports to determine colleges quarterly and annual expenditure for future allocation and reporting to the legislature. Colleges unable to expend their full allocation should reach out to SBCTC Policy Associate Jennifer Dellinger.

For the FY26 program year, colleges may request up to \$240,000. Colleges will also need to submit an assurance with their budget form. Selected colleges will have their budgets automatically renewed for FY26 without additional application. Legislation authorized the pilot through FY26. Amounts available for the third year will be based on appropriations and pilot college's ability to expend.

Allowable expenses can include, but are not limited to:

- Free or reduced-price food vouchers, pre-paid meal cards, access to free or reduced-price food or similar
- Staffing for program design and implementation

The intent of this funding is to implement a free and/or low-cost food program for students with low incomes. Staffing salaries and benefits to design and implement these services for students in these populations are an allowable expenditure but capped at 20%.

Indirect costs will not be an allowable expenditure.

## Strategic Planning

FY24 pilot colleges focused on the planning and development of their approved program approach. The SBCTC in collaboration with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WASAC) developed and led the implementation with a cohort of colleges and universities to support their implementation of the meal pilot program.

FY25 pilot colleges focused on full implementation and access to free and/or reduced-price meals for students. The SBCTC in collaboration with WASAC has worked with the cohort of colleges and universities to share and learn from each other in a community of practice and understand the inner workings of the pilot programs, and challenges that students may face with accessing food. Including the first round of student surveys and data collection.

FY26 will be focused on the final year of funding and reporting. The SBCTC in collaboration with WASAC) will work with the cohort of colleges and universities on identifying data elements, developing, and supporting recommendations for the Washington State Legislature.

## Data Collection

The SBCTC and University of Washington team will work with the pilot colleges to collect aggregated data on the pilot program.

For FY26, the pilot colleges will implement, distribute, and collect student data through the collaboratively developed student survey. Each college will have access to the survey to immediately review data, assess trends, and determine program outcomes.

Additionally, pilot colleges will provide the SBCTC with aggregated data on college and program enrollment, retention, and completion for program year 24-25. This data is due October 27, 2025.



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Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges