

# Collaborative Efforts to Increase IL Holistic Student Supports

Presentation to the Illinois Education and Career Success Network  
February 26, 2026

**A collaborative effort to identify and advance policy solutions** that center students, bridge systems, and increase equitable access to resources in order to:

- Boost student success & economic mobility
- Meet employer workforce needs
- Advance state priorities

# The Collaboration



# Work Strands



WORKFORCE EMPOWERMENT  
INITIATIVE LINKED TO IL SNAP TO  
SUCCESS



GUARANTEED INCOME/DIRECT  
CASH PROGRAM THAT  
SUPPORTS STUDENTS



ENHANCING SUPPORTS  
PROVIDED BY BENEFITS  
NAVIGATORS

# Workforce Empowerment Initiative

Collaborations Supporting Student Success

Dawn Koeltzow, Senior Director, WEI Statewide Consortium



# Lead Partners



Illinois  
Legislators



# 20 WEI Participating Colleges

- Black Hawk College
- Harold Washington College
- Heartland Community College
- Illinois Central College
- Joliet Junior College
- Kaskaskia College
- Kennedy King College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- Malcolm X College
- Oakton College
- Olive-Harvey College
- Parkland College
- Prairie State College
- Richard J. Daley College
- Richland Community College
- Rock Valley College
- South Suburban College
- Southwestern Illinois College
- Triton College
- Wilbur Wright College

# Established Goals and Requirements

Reduce the time for individuals of poverty to earn postsecondary credentials and become employed in high skilled, high wage occupations that pay 30% above the regional living wage or on an educational pathway leading to the target wage. Colleges focus on expanding training opportunities, removing barriers, and providing comprehensive wraparound services.



# Statewide Outcomes – Recent Results

<b>WEI Performance Measures (Results at Time of Closeout Report)</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>	<b>FY25</b>
<b>Enrolled Students</b>	<b>2,957</b>	<b>3,187</b>	<b>3,269</b>
<b>Enrollment Percentage of Goal</b>	<b>124%</b>	<b>121%</b>	<b>123%</b>
<b>Percentage Underrepresented Students</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>91%</b>
<b>Completion Rate (Target is 60%)</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Employed Rate (Target is 70%)</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Outcomes Rate (Employed or Cont. Ed.)</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>Average Starting Hourly Wage</b>	<b>\$21.99</b>	<b>\$23.27</b>	<b>\$24.59</b>

# Collaborations Supporting Success

## WEI Colleges

- Outreach Partners
- Campus Wide Partnerships
- Equity and Cultural Awareness Partners
- Community-Based Organizations
- Referral Services
- Employer Partners

## WEI Statewide Initiative

- ICCB and State Agency Partners
- Community of Practice & Coaches
- Lumina Foundation – ECP and FutureReady States
- U of I, OCCRL
- NIU – CGS
- Burning Glass Institute

## To Learn More...

WEI Consortium Website Has  
Student Spotlight Videos and  
Program Information for 20  
Participating Colleges

<https://www.illinoiswei.org>

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# Illinois SNAP to Success Expansion

## What is SNAP 50/50?

- A federal reimbursement model that allows organizations to receive 50% reimbursement for eligible, non-federal SNAP Employment & Training E&T expenditures
- How It Works:
  - Providers deliver qualifying employment and training services to SNAP participants using non-federal funds
  - State/Intermediary reimburses providers for 50% of their costs spent on services
  - Reinvested funds can expand services and provider capacity
- Why It Matters:
  - Expands existing workforce and education services for SNAP recipients without requiring new funding
  - Leverages existing state, philanthropic, and other non-federal investments
  - Incentivizes partnerships with community-based organizations and colleges
  - Creates a scalable funding model for employment pathways

## SNAP E&T Intermediary Timeline

- **2020:** With assistance from several private foundations and IDHS, National Able piloted the Intermediary function with 5 subrecipient organizations
  - Intermediary structure, processes, and functions were based off national best-practices for SNAP 50/50 programming and services
  - Pilot year yielded \$600,000 in reimbursable SNAP funding passed through to subrecipients
- **2025:** Subrecipient network has grown to 15 organizations throughout the State including the Chicago-Metro Region, Champaign, Peoria, and Bloomington
  - Annual SNAP reimbursable passthrough funding to subrecipients has increased to \$2.7M for 2025
- **Between 2020-2025, the SNAP Intermediary has reimbursed a total of \$8.18M**

# SNAP E&T Intermediary Expansion

- Goal:

- Expand National Able's role as SNAP E&T intermediary to increase access, quality, and impact of workforce services for SNAP participants

- Why It Matters:

- SNAP participants face barriers to employment and career advancement
- Community providers need infrastructure, funding access, and compliance support
- States benefit from coordinated, accountable, high-quality E&T networks

- Our Vision:

- Build a Statewide model that strengthens providers, expands participant access, and improves employment outcomes

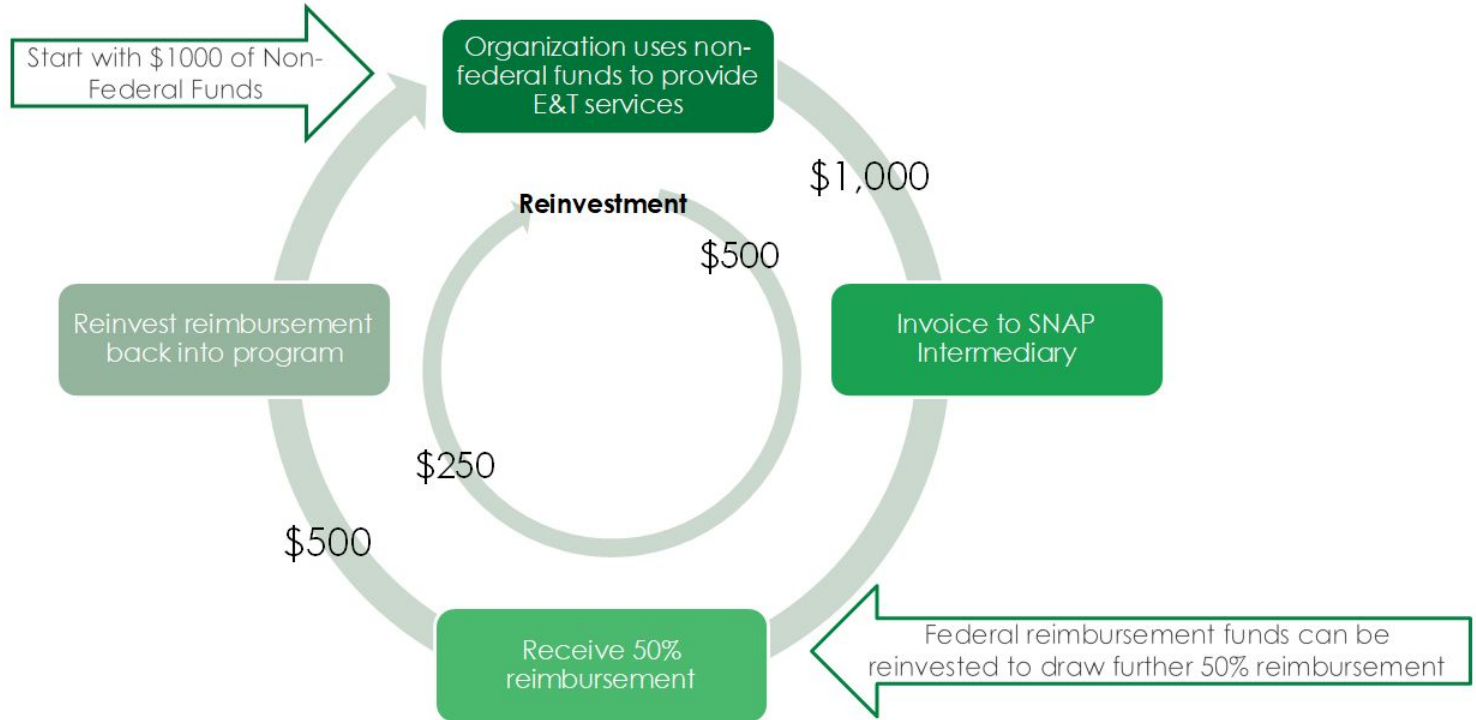
# What Expansion Means in Practice

- Grow Network of SNAP providers Statewide
  - Recruit and onboard high-quality community-based and college partners
- Strengthen Service Infrastructure and Accountability
  - Provide ongoing training and technical assistance
  - Build a SNAP-centric workforce ecosystem leveraging existing efforts, programs, and resources
- Increase Participant Impact
  - Expand geographic reach and capacity to serve more SNAP recipients
  - Improve employment placement and retention outcomes for SNAP recipients

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## 50/50 Reimbursement – How it works



## SNAP E&T Program Service Priorities

- SNAP E&T Programs must offer the following three services
  - Integrated Case Management
  - Participant Reimbursements
  - Supportive Services
- Components of SNAP E&T
  - Education
  - Work Experience
  - Non-education, non-work

# Benefits for Students and Colleges

- For Students:
  - SNAP E&T can support students' basic needs while they are in college
  - SNAP can provide assistance with items such as books, tools, clothing, internet, childcare, tuition, and more
  - It can provide case management for students struggling to navigate college systems
- For Colleges:
  - Reimbursement (up to 50%, Tribal Colleges up to 75%) of non-federal funds already being spent on students and staffing to serve the students that qualify
  - Colleges must cover 100% of costs upfront



# **Student Success Begins with Support**



# Student Success Begins with Support



- **Public Act 102-1045**
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2023: Every public IHE designates a Benefits Navigator
- Participate in a statewide consortium
- Training by individual institution

# Higher Education Benefits Navigators

- Assist with eligibility for local, state, and federal benefit programs
  - Snap
  - TANF
- Identify community resources
  - Childcare
  - Transportation
- Identify campuswide resources
  - Food pantries
  - Financial aid
- Coordinate and provide culturally specific resources
  - Culturally familiar foods
  - Emergency grant applications in students' primary languages



# Community College Benefits Navigator 2025 Survey Results

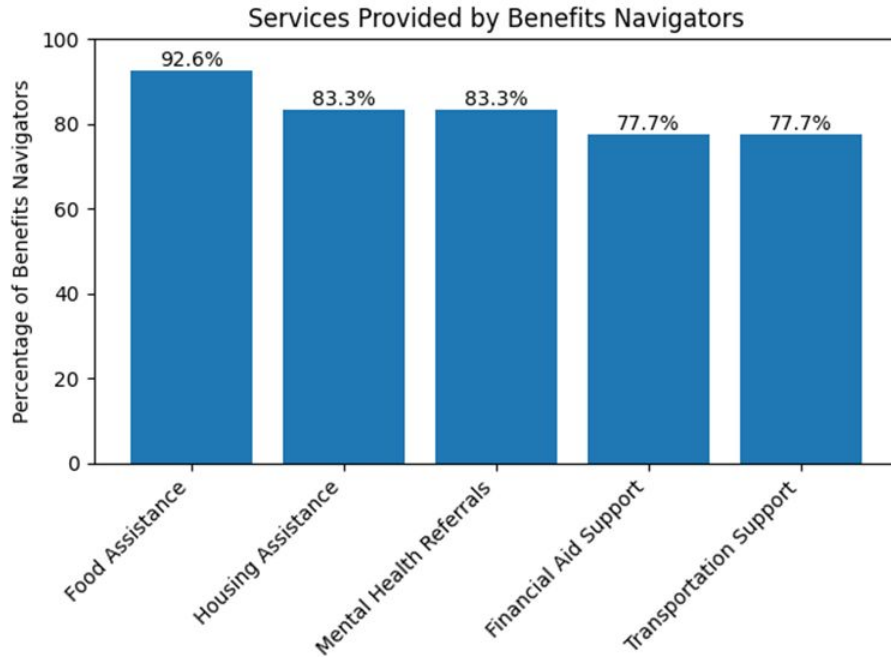


Chart created using ChatGPT

- **Other frequently identified needs:**
  - Technology assistance
  - Clothing
  - Utilities
  - Personal necessities/hygiene
  - Navigating state and federal benefits

# IL College Student Basic Needs Task Force

The Task Force is a project funded by An Action Grant

- Administered by the Urban Institute
- Funded by the Joyce Foundation, Kresge Foundation, and ECMC Foundation

## Goals of the Task Force

- Assess existing state and institutional policies related to food, housing, childcare, transportation, and emergency aid
- Identify and promote evidence-based strategies that can be scaled across IL campuses
- Produce actionable recommendations for state leaders and higher education decision-makers

**Seeking Direct  
Cash Assistance  
Opportunities for  
College Students**

# Questions, Comments, Things to Think About

## Additional Resources



# Presenters

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