MDC

WORKING FAMILIES SUCCESS STRATEGY
COLLEGE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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This implementation guide is designed to be used by community college leaders, faculty and staff who are interested in starting or expanding a Working Families Success effort at their institution. The guide can be read from start to finish or accessed at different points depending how far along your college is.

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Chapter 1: Introducing the Working Families Success Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Community colleges play a unique role in the United States. The training and education they provide offers students a path to careers and educational opportunities at an affordable price. That affordability and flexibility means more low-income individuals and families are served by community colleges than any other type of post-secondary institution.

Because they serve a population that may face financial challenges, community colleges struggle to connect students with the credentials they need to begin their careers. Only 20 percent of incoming community college students graduate within three years, and 54 percent of students never complete a degree at all. While academic issues hinder many students, financial issues are cited most often as the reason students interrupt their postsecondary education. Other frequently noted obstacles, such as lack of child care and lack of reliable transportation, have financial challenges at their core.

Community college students often start without an understanding of how to navigate college processes, such as enrollment and financial aid. Many face immediate, pressing needs—for expensive textbooks, reliable transportation and rent that must be paid. They often have families to support, making their financial burden even greater. Students also rarely begin with a full understanding of their overall financial needs, much less a budget to guide them. They likely are not aware of the full spectrum of student support services that the college offers.

The Working Families Success strategy brings together — or bundles — access to a full range of essential supports to help families build self-sufficiency, stabilize their finances and move ahead. WFS makes it easier for families to tap into all of the services and supports for which they qualify, filling in the gaps and helping them weather unexpected setbacks that can prevent students and their families from meeting their economic and educational goals. This work is especially important given that the average age of a student is 29, and 84 percent of community college students work more than 20 hours a week. In addition, community colleges serve more than half of students of color enrolled in post-secondary institutions and nearly one-fifth of community college students live below the poverty line.[1]

The WFS strategy grew from the Center for Working Families approach developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation eight years ago and has been adopted and implemented by community colleges across the United States.

This implementation guide is designed to be used by community colleges leaders, faculty and staff interested in starting or expanding a Working Families Success strategy at their institution. In addition to the text, the guide includes a wide range of materials provided by colleges already engaged in these efforts.

[1] *Mullin, C. M. (2012, February). Why access matters: The community college student body (Policy Brief 2012-01PBL). Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.*

The WFS strategy is characterized by the following elements:

1. Vision and Leadership

Education and employment training are well-established elements of any community college's mission. The WFS strategy meshes with mission by connecting students to supports that allow them to overcome financial barriers, stay in school and find a career. It represents a new way of thinking about service delivery; the WFS activities are not just add-on's, but fully integrated into the core mission of helping students meet their full potential.

Past experience with WFS demonstrates that getting buy-in from a college's president is absolutely essential. In addition to strong leadership, a team of individuals must be identified who can implement the college's vision.

And then the college must compile and track statistics illuminating the retention benefits of WFS services, assembling the evidence needed to demonstrate that the institution's core mission should include offering these services. The majority of colleges now using WFS report a term-to-term retention rate of more than 80 percent, far exceeding that of general student populations. Specifically, they are finding that through bundling and sequencing services in the three WFS pillars, students are better equipped to define their own educational and financial goals and then create plans to achieve them.

2. The three pillars of the WFS strategy

WFS services can be grouped into three main areas that can be thought of as pillars supporting the entire strategy.

- **Education and employment services:** Services that provide students with the skills needed to enter and retain employment and advance in the career of their choice.

- **Work and income supports:** Services that assist students in accessing public benefits and other income supports in order to increase family economic stability and encourage college retention and completion.

- **Financial and asset building services:** Services that build the financial knowledge of students, increase their access to savings and wealth-retaining financial products and encourage the meeting of both short- and long-term financial goals.

Colleges often implement a combination of "high-touch" services that provide individualized services for students such as financial coaching and "low-touch" services that are less intensive yet reach a wider number of students, such as a financial planning module in a required student success course.

3. Integrated Services

It is critical the three pillars are not thought of as separate activities, but rather as components of bundled delivery. Bundling refers to providing students and their families with access to all three core WFS services in an integrated way. Bundling services, rather than offering stand-alone services, allows more students to achieve their educational and economic goals. One study found that 61 percent of students at Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) who received bundled WFS services were successful in accomplishing their short-term financial goals, such as receiving a scholarship or staying in school. Only 16 percent of students who received just one of the three pillars of WFS services managed to achieve a similar outcome.

Identifying the students who are most in need of bundled services, and figuring out which services they will need, is a crucial aspect of implementing the WFS strategy at a college. Providing students with the right mix of services at the right intensity—often thought of as high- or low-touch services—is the best way to ensure students achieve their goals.

4. Coaching

Bundling is not as effective without one-on-one attention to help students navigate the process. Financial coaching is described in detail later in this guide, but it is not the only type of coaching colleges can provide. Some colleges offer student success coaches who work individually with students on a range of issues related to completion, while others focus more directly on connecting students to career opportunities. The actual form of intervention is less important than the notion of a student's needs being addressed individually through close interaction with college staff.

5. Building Partnerships

As shown later in the guide, developing partnerships with organizations that can offer services is central to the strategy of many WFS colleges. Identifying who might provide services and any turf issues that might arise should be done at the beginning of planning. Community colleges do not need to offer services that can be effectively delivered by a community partner. Some colleges develop partnerships with local financial institutions to offer products such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) that allow students to build assets to reach their educational goals. Other institutions have developed alliances with local workforce agencies to better understand labor market demand and help students find meaningful careers in growing fields.

6. Moving to scale

While a college may want to reach every student from the start with WFS, it takes some time to effectively expand the WFS strategy. Planning for the strategy's sustainability and its eventual growth should happen at the very beginning of WFS implementation. Many colleges that implement the WFS strategy focus on particular cohorts of students before expanding to a larger community.

The concept of scaling is really about effective and continuous improvement. The ways in which WFS services are offered and refined is continually evolving; there must be systems in place for a college to learn from mistakes as well as successes.

✈ Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Information about Los Angeles Harbor's Culture of Poverty class, including link to information about Achieving the Dream's Finish Line game. *Los Angeles Harbor College*

- The Community College of Baltimore County's video, "Behind Classroom Walls," which discusses challenges rooted in poverty among students. http://www.ccbcmd.edu/moneymatters *Community College of Baltimore County*

The success of an initiative at a community college depends on strong buy-in from an engaged college leadership team. Depending on the institutional structure of the college, that usually will be the president. In some institutions, it is the energy and passion of the president that drives initiatives from the beginning. In others, presidents have to be "sold" on the vision of another individual or team. In either case, the institutional leader will need to have confidence that the WFS strategy meets the following criteria:

1) *Is a part of the mission of the college*: How does expanding services through an integrated service delivery system meet the college's goals?

2) *Can be paid at the outset*: How will changes to the college's programs be paid for?

3) *Is sustainable*: If this program is to be part of the institutional mission of the program, how will it be sustained?

4) *Can be measured*: If there is a sustainability plan, how will success be measured?

Establishing a leadership group for the team
Colleges that have successfully implemented WFS programs get buy-in from the leadership and have individuals with direct responsibility for ensuring the strategy's success. The first step in staffing a WFS approach is deciding who will have overall responsibility for implementing the WFS strategy. There are several choices that can be made about what a management structure might look like:

1) *Full-time dedicated staff*: In this case, one individual would have full responsibility for supervising the direction of the program with limited other responsibilities. While perhaps the most desirable in terms of focus, dedicating cost to this person may tie up funds that could be used for service delivery.

2) *Part-time staff*: In this case, an individual's responsibility might be divided between directing the WFS activities and performing other important tasks at the college. Most colleges take this approach, which frees up funding for implementation but can create challenges in focus.

3) *Team of leaders*: In this approach, a group of individuals at the college are charged with running the WFS strategy, each with shared responsibilities. This could include staff who are full-time financial coaches or counselors, deans overseeing student services and individuals from career counseling centers, to name a few. If this option is chosen, colleges must make sure a clear decision-making framework is established, especially regarding resource allocation.

Key Takeaways

- The three most important considerations for a college to discuss before pursuing a WFS strategy are: 1) whether the effort will have strong leadership in the right places to work across departments and divisions; 2) the existing culture related to student success and whether the WFS strategy will support and expand that focus, and 3) whether the goals of the WFS strategy are aligned with the college's goals.

- The most important activities during planning are to: 1) identify the target population most in need of services; 2) develop a mix of low- and high-touch services to meet the identified needs, and 3) engage a range of stakeholders within the college to build buy-in, identify needed culture changes, and lay the groundwork for infusion of the approach throughout the college.

- It is critical the three pillars of the WFS approach are not thought of as separate activities, but rather as components of bundled delivery.

- Bundling is not as effective without some one-on-one attention paid to students to help them navigate the process

- Developing partnerships with organizations that can offer services is critical.

- Planning for the strategy's sustainability and its eventual growth should happen at the very beginning of WFS implementation.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Stakeholder analysis *MDC created tool*

- Message Box *MDC created tool*

- In October of 2012, a group of presidents from schools with WFS initiatives talked about their role in ensuring success. The video can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eMqgVCKyvE. *Multiple WFS institutions*

Chapter 2: Designing and Implementing the WFS Strategy

DESIGN Determining Your Target Population

Colleges that have implemented the Working Families Success strategy have selected many different target populations. Some serve all students, some only serve the students they feel are most in need, some serve students who are part of a specific program, and others open their services to the entire community:

- A few colleges seek to provide services—or emphasize particular elements within the overall bundle—to the entire institution. In some cases, that's true because virtually the entire student population is low-income or from a disadvantaged economic background.

- Other colleges, even with similar demographics, chiefly target all first-year students, whether through information disseminated at orientation sessions for new students or as a component of coursework required of newly entering students.

- Some schools target only the most distressed students, whether through specific remedial programs, through referrals from faculty or through marketing efforts that encourage students to step forward when they encounter difficulties that threaten to undermine their academic progress.

- In still other colleges, the WFS strategy actively engages members of the community at large, even if they are not enrolled in formal certificate or degree-granting programs.

To determine the target population that is appropriate for an institution, begin considering these interrelated questions:

- Who is most in need?

- What kinds of services are needed, and at what intensity?

- Through what programs are students currently being served?

Examples of populations identified as high-need include low-income students, student parents or adult basic education students. Analyzing completion data for the institution can lead to the identification of specific student populations that are not succeeding at the same rates as other students. One option is to disaggregate completion data by enrollment status (full-time or part-time), race and ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status. Another option is to conduct qualitative analysis of your student population to determine why students are not succeeding. If many students are struggling to complete a degree because they are having trouble balancing school, work and family, the college may want to target student parents. If many students drop out after encountering an unexpected crisis, such as a car breakdown or a healthcare situation, the college may want to consider offering an emergency scholarship program that requires students to make use of WFS services after receiving funds.

In terms of the types of services offered, WFS approaches typically offer three levels:

- **Low-touch services** are those services that require less staff time and provide basic information and services to a student, such as financial products. They may reach more students but tend to have less impact than higher touch services.

- **Medium-touch services** generally require some one-on-one interaction with students though not always multiple sessions. While they may reach fewer students than low-intensity services, the more focused interaction often yields more positive student outcomes than low-touch services.

- **High-touch services** require a higher level of staff interaction and resources. These services are generally not offered to all students due to resource constraints. Generally, those students able to take advantage of these services have the best outcomes.

Of course, the students most in need of services also may need the highest touch services. Some institutions choose to begin the Working Families Success strategy with students who need lower touch services.

Offering high-touch services usually means an institution will serve a specific or limited population. Providing high-touch services to the entire college or community would require an immense amount of resources. A college can serve a broader population with limited resources by offering low-touch services. These decisions are interrelated and each institution has a different starting point. Most institutions that have implemented the Working Families Success strategy begin with a specific population and broaden access over time. Alternatively, an institution could begin with lower touch services for a broad population and deepen the level and type of services over time.

Alignment with institutional priorities and existing programs

If a college can serve only a specific or limited population, there are several factors that can help determine which population that should be:

- Is serving a particular population, such as low-income students, best aligned with institutional priorities?

- Are there particular programs or funding sources that can be leveraged? Do they have an identified target population?

If a priority is to provide opportunities for low-income people in the community, then the college may want to target students who are Pell Grant eligible. If a priority is to meet the needs of the local workforce, the college may want to target students in a program that produces graduates for high-demand occupations, such as nursing.

The college may decide to choose its target population based on the complex interrelationship of existing, complementary support services. To leverage an existing program's funding and services, the college may need to select its

student population based on the guidelines that various funders—including federal, state, non-profit foundations and private corporations—have designated for the programs they support. Alternatively, the college may choose to serve students who are not being served by existing programs.

Key Takeaways

- Some colleges serve all students with the WFS strategy; some only serve the students they feel are most in need; some serve students who are part of a specific program, and others open their services to the entire community.

- Analyze completion data for the institution to identify specific student populations that are not succeeding at the same rates as other students.

- Conduct a qualitative analysis of your student population to determine why students are not succeeding.

- Considering overall institutional priorities also can provide some direction for choosing a target population.

- Focus on leveraging existing programs' funding and services—this may have implications for your target population.

Examples

Relationships between **Des Moines Area Community College** and many urban community-based organizations in the area allow the college to reach out and attract first generation and other populations with challenges, becoming an on ramp to the college. Organizations that refer individuals to the college to participate in training and receive other WFS-model services include United Way, the local one-stop workforce center and Urban Dreams, a community-based organization that works with young people looking for a new direction for a better and more productive life. Program leaders describe participants as at-risk populations faced with generational poverty and chronic unemployment.

When students at DMACC apply to participate in the school's Workforce Training Academy, they complete a needs assessment and later receive a follow-up call for financial coaching. In 2012, new regulations required that new students enrolling in this program take part in at least one financial coaching session.

Some colleges link scholarship awards to intensive financial coaching in order to help students make the best use of their education funds. At Skyline College, all Groves Scholarship students must take advantage of one-on-one coaching, which is provided by SparkPoint Center staff and volunteers. Norwalk Community College also requires that scholarship grantees participate in coaching sessions to help them achieve their educational and financial goals.

DESIGN **Determining How to Deliver Services**

There are a wide range of approaches for achieving an integration of available resources and the provision of services. Each college that has implemented a WFS strategy has developed its own pathway to:

1) Build upon its past and ongoing parallel experiences, including other national and regional initiatives that have sought to improve student success;

2) Integrate existing programs that draw upon the resources of multiple funders and community-based service providers, and

3) Identify existing gaps and new opportunities for better addressing the needs of underserved populations.
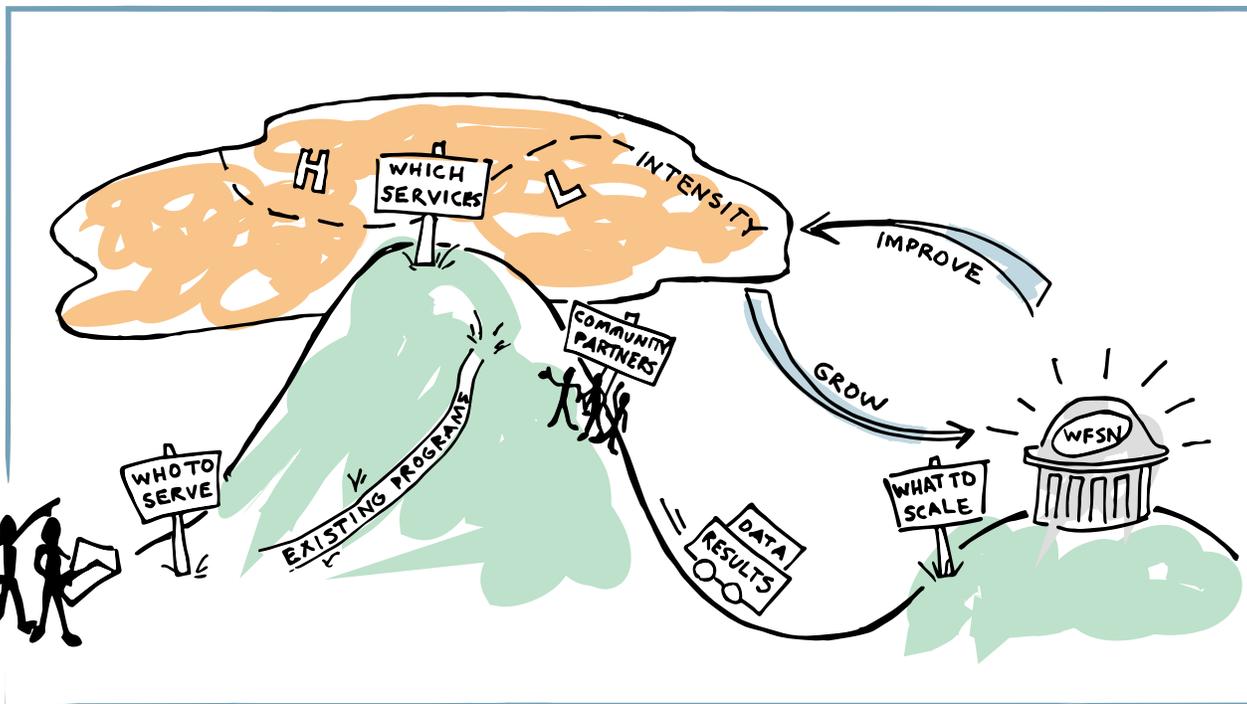
The map above represents a set of strategic choices that colleges consider when implementing the WFS strategy. When starting their journey, college leaders and organizers need to determine who they want to serve. They may continue their path to actual services through existing programs and infrastructure, or they may blaze a new trail by trying something new. The second key decision is to determine which services to provide — high- or low-touch or some combination of both. Choosing community partners to extend services also is important and helps the WFS strategy pick up momentum and deliver greater results. With enough evidence, colleges can generate institutional support and scale up their efforts. Ongoing feedback and adaptations from integrating services will create an improvement loop that will continue to expand reach and efficiency.

Colleges can enhance the effectiveness of their WFS services when they strategically bundle and sequence those services to meet their students'

comprehensive and evolving financial needs. Bundling refers to the combining of services of two or more core WFS areas. Colleges also must sequence those services in a planned, timely way for maximum impact.

Students typically gain access to the full complement of WFS support services when they seek assistance with just one particular problem that is threatening to disrupt their studies. Colleges conduct an intake assessment and then counsel the student about the full range of services available to them. If the student signals interest, a coach can work with the student to design a customized plan of action.

For example, a student might talk with a coach about a credit problem or difficulty in paying for textbooks. The coach may work with the student to set forth a sequential course of action that first addresses the credit problem, then tackles budget management and savings. The coach and student also may lay the groundwork for long-term financial planning.

Many colleges also integrate WFS services into study skills courses, such as the Student Success classes required of all new students entering Phillips Community College in Arkansas (PCCUA).

Strategies for Integrated Service Delivery
While the types of support services offered by Working Families Success colleges are similar, the strategies for delivering these services can be molded to reflect local needs, contexts and resources. There are four main ways that colleges choose to approach integrated service delivery:

- A **physical place**, likely aligned with student services, workforce development and/or a computer lab.

- **Specific people** known on campus as resources to help students identify and achieve their goals.

- A **retention and completion strategy** that aims to remove the systemic barriers that students routinely encounter.

- The **"thread and needle"** that weaves together a set of services that helps move students toward jobs and success.

At some colleges WFS is a **physical place**—a site likely allied with student services, workforce development, computer lab and other resources—that is seen as the home for the delivery of integrated services. For example, at Phillips Community College, there is a WFS computer lab located within the college's Career Pathways Center. Central New Mexico has a prominent office suite near the college's main entrance that houses offices for the school's Achievement Coaches and is the home base for CNM Connect, the college's brand for its WFS activities.

At many schools, students view WFS as **specific people** known on campus as resources to help students identify and achieve their goals. At Guilford Technical Community College in North Carolina, students at the High Point

campus know that "Miss Sybil" and "Miss Stephanie" are individuals they can approach for assistance with their non-academic needs. These individuals are responsible for bundling or integrating the available services.

Another way that WFS fits into colleges is as a **retention and completion strategy** that aims to remove the systemic barriers that students encounter. Central New Mexico has adopted this perspective with a long-term goal of serving all students across five campuses.

The leaders of Des Moines Area Community College's WFS strategy metaphorically describe their approach as the **'thread and needle'** that weave together a set of bundled services that help move students toward success and jobs. The college has used its WFS resources to create a data system, called SuccessNet, to track the specific services within the three WFS pillars that students are receiving and to use that information to improve outcomes.

Location within College
Regardless of the type of strategy, WFS will need an administrative home. Common "homes" include academic affairs, student services, continuing education, adult basic education or a colocation. To select a home for the WFS strategy at your institution, consider these questions:

- Are there existing programs or services that can be leveraged?

- Is there staff capacity or resource availability that can be shared?

- Does the target population have a strong existing relationship with any one administrative area?

- If using a physical location, which administrative area will be able to best manage that center?

- Which administrative areas are best at working cross-functionally?

- Where is the leadership that is driving this strategy located?

To be successful, the WFS strategy requires breaking down silos within the institution. Working across college functions is vital to implementation, especially if staff capacity is limited. In the case of CNM, traditional college functions were reorganized to break down boundaries. Hence, the WFS strategy can be thought of as a conceptual or operational framework rather than a program.

Summary of Core Design Elements
As your college prepares to implement the Working Families Success strategy, the core design elements described earlier will pose a series of design choices. Each of these design choices, in turn, carry a set of considerations that must be addressed to craft the most effective strategy.

The following matrix provides some of the Design Choices and Considerations that must be addressed in launching your WFS initiative.

Core Design Element	Design choices	Considerations
Target Population to be Served	Entire population. All first year students. Cohort of most distressed students. Community outside college.	Who is most in need? What kinds of services are needed, and at what intensity? Through what programs are students currently being served?
Level of Service	Low touch Medium touch High Touch	Resources required to implement including staffing. Size of population to be served. Need to encourage accessing multiple services within each pillar of WFS approach.
Strategies for Integrated Service Delivery	A physical place, likely aligned with student services, workforce development, and/or a computer lab. Specific people known on campus as resources to help students identify and achieve their goals. A retention and completion strategy that aims to remove the systemic barriers that students routinely encounter. The "thread and needle" that weaves together a set of services that helps moves students toward jobs and success.	Needs of target population? Resources required? Mission alignment?
Location within College	Academic affairs. Student services. Continuing education. Adult basic education Colocation.	Can existing programs be leveraged? Can resources be shared? Does the target population have a relationship with one administrative area? Where is leadership driving this strategy located?
Data collection	Add to existing system. Use additional system and create bridge to existing system.	Cost? Convenience?

↻ Key Takeaways

- Colleges should build upon past and ongoing experiences, including other national and regional initiatives that have sought to improve student success; integrate existing programs that draw upon the resources of multiple funders and community-based service providers, and identify existing gaps and new opportunities for better addressing the needs of underserved populations.
- There are four main ways colleges organize their WFS strategy: a physical place, specific people known on campus as resources, a retention and completion strategy and the "thread and needle" that weaves together a set of services.
- The WFS strategy requires breaking down silos within the institution.
- The WFS strategy can be thought of as a conceptual or operational framework rather than a program.

⤬ Examples

The SparkPoint Center at **Skyline College** structures services and resources that students and community residents utilize to improve their educational outcomes, secure better-paying employment and promote long-term individual and family financial stability. It pursues these three goals through the following bundled programs and activities:

- Financial education services delivered through one-on-one engagements provide individuals and families with effective tools to manage household budgets, repair credit, modify mortgages, enroll in IDA-matched savings programs and build the assets that can assure long-term financial stability.

- The Career and Employment Services Center offers a full range of services and activities that include strategies to perform well during job interviews, improve resumes, explore career options and train for high-demand professions.

- The English Language Institute provides personalized guidance to second-language speakers seeking education, careers and financial stability.

- The Grove Scholars Program offers need-based student scholarships—as much as $2,500 a semester for a maximum of two semesters—that enable persons from diverse backgrounds and stages of life to pursue Career and Technical Education programs.

- The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax help for local residents who annually earn $30,000 or less. Students from Skyline's accounting program provide these services.

Other SparkPoint services include opportunities to enroll in public benefits programs, gain access to free and low-cost banking services, learn how to

purchase a first home and qualify for discounted utilities, discounted transit fares, low-cost automobile insurance and a free food pantry. For the students, access to the food pantry for emergency food shortages frees up money for college tuition, fees and books. For low-income community residents, the food pantry may be the magnet that draws them to the Skyline campus for the first time.

Whenever feasible, the Center offers one-to-one coaching to help students and community residents make the best use of their access to these resources. For example, SparkPoint coaches meet regularly with all Grove Scholars to help them learn how best to manage their scholarship awards and other household finances. The coaches also monitor student progress toward accomplishing their self-declared educational goals as well as helping them improve their job-search skills.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Relevant discussion questions on where to locate your WFS program. *Tool developed by MDC*

A staffing plan will depend entirely on how the college plans to deliver services. As the institution determines how to deliver services, it must consider how labor intensive the WFS strategy is and whether it requires skilled services. The planning team will need to clearly define the responsibilities and the availability of qualified people internally or externally. Begin by evaluating current staffing levels, noting any existing positions that could be redeployed or those that will see additional work volume from the implementation of WFS.

A staffing plan will need to include job descriptions for all positions— with details about the essential knowledge, skills and abilities required. There are a number of functional roles that must be covered: intake, data-tracking, counseling or coaching, outreach and management. Depending on the range and intensity of services that will be offered, there may be a need for specialists for specific service delivery. A service such as financial coaching requires a significant time commitment and probably requires dedicated staff, while connecting students with financial resources may require less dedicated staff time.

Creative Staffing

There are a variety of ways to fill those functional roles, and the college may be able to avoid redeploying existing staff or hiring new staff for some aspects of the work. Students who have received services are often willing to volunteer as student liaisons or peer mentors. Similarly, colleges may use students enrolled in work-study programs to serve in some capacity. If there are graduate schools in the area offering counseling degrees, the college may be able to take on as interns some of their students who need work experience. Consider the expertise of the staff of partner organizations—they may cover some functions that don't need dedicated staff at the college. Any time a college works with outside staff, attention should be paid to issues of confidentiality.

Ongoing Staff Development

While a team responsible for day-to-day implementation of a particular program can make a good start on a staffing plan, there are broader institutional considerations that may require support from the administration. Adding or redeploying positions necessitates discussions about a broader human resources strategy; does the institution have the capacity to recruit, train, retain and sustain the requisite expertise?

Of course, once personnel are hired, the institution should see to their continued development and training. A sustainable, scaled solution requires a professional development program that specifically addresses the needs of the staff, as well as clear processes and sufficient resources to ensure quality delivery and improvement.

Key Takeaways

- Consider how labor intensive the WFS strategy is and whether it requires skilled services for particular functions. Identify a staffing plan that fits with the level of services to be offered and determine how to finance the staffing plan.
- Think about the possibility of filling some roles with students or pre-professionals.
- Use the expertise of partner organizations.
- Prioritize continued staff development and training.

Examples

Des Moines Area Community College relies on many people at the college and in the community to support its WFS strategy, but they also have staff with time dedicated to WFS: program leadership and coordination; an achievement coach who oversees intake and orientation for WFS services; an employment specialist who sets up employment training courses and functions as an advisor and liaison between students and instructors; a transition coach who works with students to prepare them for interviews and has connections with employers to help with job placement; an outside contractor who provides financial education services; a dedicated staff person who inputs data on intake, use of services and outcomes into the college's data tracking system; coaches who provide wrap-around support, and community partners who offer additional support to meet specific needs such as substance abuse.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Sample organizational chart for WFS-related staff *Central New Mexico Community College*

- Sample job descriptions for WFS staff *Houston Community College Northeast; Central New Mexico Community College*

- Staffing configurations by type of service delivery *Tool developed by MDC*

Forging effective partnerships is a cost-effective way to broaden the scope of WFS services that can be offered.

There are two kinds of working partnerships:

- **External, with the local community**— these collaborations involve government agencies, nonprofit organizations, civic organizations, community foundations, businesses and individual volunteers.

- **Internal, within the college**— chiefly, among complementary programs aligned with the three WFS pillars. These include partnerships among WFS program leaders, college administrators, faculty, staff and even groups of students.

Both kinds of partnerships can expand the type of services offered and deepen the intensity of service provision.

External Partnerships

Colleges can extend the breadth and depth of available student support services by leveraging external partnerships. These partnerships range from very informal connections to formal memoranda of agreement, depending upon the size and scope of the college's WFS activities and the availability of community resources that are mutually a good fit with students' needs.

Common partners for WFS colleges include public agencies, community based organizations, local funders and employers. These partnerships can expand the services available to students, refer people to WFS or be available to take referrals, provide on-the-job experience, assist with job placement, deliver financial education and financial products or connect to funding.

Strong partnerships often involve one or more of the following: documentation of partnership roles and operating norms, thoughtful and collaborative leadership and robust communication protocols. Those elements can help overcome common partnership pitfalls, which include organizational culture or mission differences, leadership turnover and a lack of clarity about goals.

- **Documenting the partnership**, either through a formal Memorandum of Understanding or through an informal working agreement, is an essential step for a highly functional partnership. This agreement should outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner. It also should clearly state the purpose of the partnership, how that purpose relates to the mission of each partner and the goals established for the partners. Clearly stating operating norms for the partnership, including how to work together, make decisions and communicate, can prevent headaches down the road. This type of document is important to get everyone on the same page, and it also is vital in the case of staff turnover.

- **A data-sharing agreement** should be part of any comprehensive partnership agreement. Such an agreement should outline what data needs to be collected, who will collect it and how it will be used. Partners may need different evidence, so it is important to establish common metrics and outcomes at the start. The evidence of success desired by a community college board of trustees may be different than the evidence needed by a community based organization. See Chapter 2, Section V for more information on data tracking.

- A good partnership has **patient and collaborative leadership** pushing the work forward and keeping partners focused on the big picture. One way to structure this leadership is to establish a steering committee of partners that meets regularly and is focused on making decisions beyond the day-to-day work. Setting standards or protocols for communication between partners is essential, including what type of information should be communicated, at what level of detail and with what frequency. This is especially important because partner organizations and colleges have different cultures, calendars and goals.

These external partnerships can take a variety of forms:

- Some colleges broker **informal working partnerships** through existing contacts that their professional staff already have, for example, with local social service agencies. GTCC and Phillips each draw upon networks of relationships that some of their staff developed when they previously worked with local Departments of Social Services.

- Another prevalent external partnership has been for colleges to **host a resource fair** that invites community-based organizations, public agencies and private firms to participate in what usually is a half-day event held on campus. These resource fairs allow students to learn more about various types of support services available in the broader community.

- In yet another type of external partnership, Skyline College has implemented a **cooperative education program with industry** whereby students can earn college credit for their ongoing work experiences while they are enrolled in school. A benefit of this formal arrangement is that the school's Co-op Education Coordinator maintains regular ongoing contact with the employers, thus allowing the college to stay informed about the changing employment needs of local firms.

- Several of the colleges sustain a regular WFS **presence in workforce development centers** that often are located off-campus in the community. Typically, the college may offer basic skills training, resume development and assistance with job search, especially using computers. This presence also establishes a portal whereby community residents can learn more about the college, its opportunities for earning certificates or associate degrees and the kinds of supportive services provided through the WFS strategy.

- **Financial education** is one area where colleges generally seek strategic alliances with community-based partners. Skyline College has partnered with a local community-based organization to provide training that demonstrates to students and their families how their own financial life unfolds in the larger context of the local, regional and national economies. In this partnership, students learn about "local living economies," the "move your money" campaign, what it means to "vote with your dollar" and pre-paid debit cards.

- In some particularly distressed economic regions, community colleges are partnering with civic organizations to design strategies for **improving economic development**. Improving the local business climate is essential, in part because graduates otherwise may need to relocate in search of better employment. Phillips Community College, for example, participates in the Delta Bridge Project that convenes teams for improving the local area across several dimensions: jobs and economic development, tourism, recreation and quality of life and education.

When forming external partnerships, colleges should be clear about what they offer back to their partners. Some partners may be interested in extending formal educational opportunities to the people to whom they provide service. Other partners might benefit from expanding the population they now serve by connecting with the student body of the college. Understanding how the purpose of the WFS strategy relates to the mission of the college and of each partner organization will make it easier to show mutual interest.

Internal Partnerships
The depth and breadth of internal partnerships often depend upon the size and complexity of the WFS-related activities already underway or being planned at a particular college.

Building buy-in across the college is important for sustaining internal partnerships, especially if you are relying on faculty or staff to refer students to your services, to coordinate service delivery or to coach or provide services themselves. Given the reality of leadership turnover, broad-based support can preserve the WFS strategy at your institution even when a champion leaves. To get that support, the college may need to bring about changes in faculty and staff attitudes about working to enhance the success of students from economically challenged backgrounds. Faculty and staff at some WFS have participated in poverty simulations as well as read and discussed books—both novels and non-fiction—that help instill a deeper sense of empathy and awareness.

Especially at colleges where WFS activities are considerably large in scope, it is important to cultivate wide-ranging networks among faculty and staff to help integrate, coordinate and support the strategy. At Phillips Community College, the multidisciplinary team that steers the WFS continually strives to integrate elements of several complementary initiatives—such as Career Pathways, Achieving the Dream and TRIO—with the WFS strategy. This ongoing coordination requires persistent ongoing dialogue among multiple departments and college administrators.

In order to enhance informal collaboration, some colleges choose to co-locate their WFS-related support services within a suite of offices or on the same floor of a building. Skyline College, for example, houses its SparkPoint Center within a facility that also shelters several other related programs, including a WFS-related community food bank that serves both students and community residents. Think broadly when identifying potential internal partners. Consider parties who will be champions for the work, as well as ones who are likely to resist change. Inviting potential opponents to participate in the planning process early on may prevent them from putting up roadblocks. They also could help identify problem areas, forcing the planning team to confront critical issues in the beginning instead of further along in the implementation process when it is more difficult to make adjustments and corrections. To do this, the college will need to have an individual on the planning team who has the necessary positional authority or networks to convene and invite new allies to participate.

Key Takeaways

- There are two kinds of working partnerships: external, with the local community, and internal, within the college.
- Strong external partnerships often involve one or more of the following: documentation of partnership roles and operating norms, thoughtful and collaborative leadership and robust communication protocols.
- These external partnerships can take a variety of forms: informal working partnerships, hosting a resource fair to allow students to learn more about various types of support services available in the broader community, cooperative education programs with industry, having a presence in workforce development centers, partnering with a local community-based organization or institution to provide information or products and forming coalitions to improve economic development.
- Internal partnerships are all about building buy-in across the college, bringing faculty and staff together to enhance the success of students from economically challenged backgrounds.
- It is important to cultivate wide-ranging networks among faculty and staff to help integrate, coordinate and support WFS activities. This ongoing coordination requires persistent ongoing dialogue among multiple departments and college administrators.
- Inviting potential opponents to participate in the planning process from the start may prevent them from putting up roadblocks. To do this, the college will need to have an individual on the planning team who has the necessary positional authority or networks to convene and invite new allies to participate.

~ Examples

SparkPoint at **Skyline College** has five external partners defined either by Memorandum of Understanding or contract. Extensive referral relationships enhance the SparkPoint network of services and resources. The Bay Area has a rich nonprofit culture, and there appears to be a considerable degree of synergy in that many community partners are interested in "measuring the same things" as the Center.

SparkPoint at Skyline College is an integral part of an emerging regional network of community-based SparkPoint Centers that are supported by the United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA). Skyline is using tools for mapping and analyzing social networks in order to better understand how the entire Bay Area's regional infrastructure of SparkPoint Centers can better serve the community.

The WFS program at **Guilford Technical Community College** works informally to eliminate silos and build bridges within and across the campus. At the beginning of each term, for example, the WFS staff and some of the coaches introduce themselves to new High Point faculty.

Beyond the campus, the WFS program works closely with community-based organizations to leverage assistance to students. In return, community partners refer their own clients to the WFS program at GTCC for certain types of services. The college permits these clients to come onto the campus. Rendering such service is considered community outreach.

◁ Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Materials from resource fairs *Houston Community College System*

- Sample data sharing agreements *Des Moines Area Community College*

- Possible services and roles for external partnerships *Tool developed by MDC*

- Stakeholder analysis *Tool developed by MDC*

Colleges are being asked to demonstrate student success while dealing with budget reductions and significant increases in enrollment. The need to do more with less is confounded by the institutions' efforts to provide supports and services to prepare low-income and non-traditional students for a career that will lead them to economic stability. As colleges look for ways to improve practices while providing a holistic approach to preparing our future workforce, they frequently are asked to provide evidence of the effectiveness of their education and training services. Coupled with an increasing number of state legislatures moving towards performance-based budgeting—which applies a formula to student outcomes (instead of enrollment) in order to allocate funding — institutions need to be able to document student progress towards meeting outcomes. To do so, colleges must develop measures and indicators
for monitoring student progress towards the attainment of a degree or occupational credential.

The design and implementation of a data collection process can be cumbersome for colleges, but data collection is necessary to understand the impact the strategy has on the students and the institution. In addition, data can be the tool used to communicate to external stakeholders, partners and funders on why they should invest additional resources in the institution.

Data collection should be thought of as a two-tiered process:

- **Participant-level data** are necessary to establish a baseline for students and track their progress towards goals.

- **Program-level data** is collected to identify specific interventions and monitor and evaluate institutional and community impacts to identify challenges and improve practices.

Establishing appropriate outcomes for individuals and for colleges
The approach used to implement the core strategies of the network vary by institution and thus, the collection and analysis of data may vary by institution. Participant-level and program-level outcomes are important in designing interventions and determining the practices that work best at the college. The Working Families Success Network has identified a list of outcomes that are important to assessing the impact of the WFS strategy. These are a broad set of outcomes focused on the results a student achieves as they connect to the various pillars of the strategy. The outcomes established by AECF capture results on the individuals who connect to WFS services and data on implementation of the program. The list below shows the outcomes AECF uses to monitor the WFS strategy at community colleges.

Common Outcomes for students receiving Working Families Success services:
- Completion of (or persistence towards) a degree or occupational credential
- Increased Income
- Debt reduction

Common Outcomes for colleges using the Working Families Success strategy:
- Increased retention rate for students receiving WFS services
- Increased completion rate for students receiving WFS services
- Improved employment outcomes for students receiving WFS services
- Efficient and effective service delivery (bundling)

The outcomes identified above are just a starting point. There likely will be other outcomes that are better measures of the impact on WFS participants. As services evolve to fit student needs, colleges may need to revisit the outcomes the institution has chosen to determine if they still fit the goals of the participants and provide enough information to assess the strategy.

While examining the effects of the WFS strategy at the institution, consider additional outcome measures up front and begin to set indicators to monitor progress.

Additional outcomes for consideration include:

Participant Outcomes	College Outcomes
Increase in savings.	Reduction in the lifetime cost of educating a student.
Increase in net worth.	Increased investment in WFS strategy.
Retained employment for at least six months.	Institutionalization of services.

Tracking Progress towards Outcomes
Tracking data for individual begins with the intake process. During intake staff should collect enough information to set a baseline for tracking progress towards meeting the individual outcome measures while providing the staff with enough information to determine the type, and sequence, of services the student will require in the short-term.

The indicators a college collects should be based on the outcomes it decides are most appropriate for the services provided to students and the information needed to monitor and evaluate the WFS strategy. A college needs to decide whether to track every student or a particular cohort of student to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. The table below displays a sample list of indicators and related services that can be used to measure progress towards achieving the chosen outcomes.

	Outcomes	Indicators to track	Services
Participant Level	Completion of degree or credential.	Enrolls in a degree or occupational credential program; Receives an educational award; Enrolls in a transfer program to obtain a 4-year degree.	Education and training instruction.
	Increased Income.	Receives tax refund; receives public benefits; placed in unsubsidized employment; increase in wages.	Benefits screening (SNAP, Emergency cash assistance, Unemployment Insurance); financial aid; EITC/VITA Outreach; tax assistance; job placement services.
	Debt reduction.	Improves credit score; lowers debt-to-income ratio.	Review credit report; budget and loan counseling.
	Increase in savings.	Opens and contributes to savings account; purchases a Certificate of Deposit; Opens and contributes an IDA, retirement, or educational savings account on a regular basis.	Development of savings plan; provide access to financial products.
	Increase in net worth.	Increase in assets (buys a house, adds to a financial account).	Financial education and coaching (i.e. Goal setting, budget workshops).
	Retained employment.	Maintains employment on the same job for at least six months.	career counseling; job readiness training.
College Level	Institutionalization of services.	Number of students served.	N/A
	Increase in student retention.	Fall to spring retention; increase in fall to fall retention.	N/A
	Increase in completion rate.	Number of students that received a degree, credential, or transfer to a four-year degree program.	N/A
	Improved employment outcomes for students.	Number of students placed into unsubsidized employment.	N/A
	Efficient and effective service delivery.	Number of students that receive 2 out of 3 core services; Number of students that receive 3 out of 3 core services.	N/A
	Reduction in the lifetime cost of educating a student.	Average expense of educating a student.	N/A
	Increased investment in WFS strategy.	Amount of leveraged resources increases over time; Grants/funds received for implementation of services.	N/A

Self-reporting of data

In many cases, participant data will be self-reported, meaning that students will need to be educated or at least given clear instruction as to what they are expected to report back to the college. Measures of decreasing debt or increasing income require student's honest and clear reporting of where they stood before and after a WFS intervention. In certain cases it may be possible to track the impact of WFS services after a student has left the institution. Some colleges, for instance, are able to track aggregate wage data for students once they graduate. However, it is unlikely that the data can be ascribed to particular students, meaning this may not be a fruitful exercise for colleges that only serve a small cohort of students through their WFS. Of course, not all data is self-reported; student completion and retention can be tracked by the college

Strategies for data collection

Data collection should be integrated into the service delivery model. Since the WFS strategy can take many forms within a college, the first place to start when designing a data collection process is deciding when a student is considered a participant in your institution's WFS. Taking the time up front to understand when to count a student as a WFS participant will reduce confusion about who is in the "denominator" when assessing the strategy's impact on participant- and college-level outcomes

Deciding how to track data on WFS service delivery is often a function of resources. Some colleges use case management software products, such as Efforts-To-Outcomes (ETO) by Social Solutions. Case management software allows staff to enter in every interaction with a student and results towards meeting intermediate goals and longer-term outcomes. A case management tool allows colleges to provide timely and more accurate reports on the percentage of students receiving the different types of services.

Many software products, like ETO, require a significant investment and may be difficult for colleges to justify when just beginning to implement the WFS strategy. Some colleges use paper and pen to track student services and create either a spreadsheet or database, which uses the same unique identifier to identify each student in a school's data system, to store data on services and analyze progress toward outcomes. Involving the college's IT staff in the design of the data collection process up front will help determine which tool will best fit the college's needs.

Finally, tracking data on services received and outcomes is time-intensive and is not likely to be the role of one person. Design a workflow process that is flexible but still allows for the timely delivery of information. For example, a financial coach may use a paper-based form to record information from their coaching sessions. Then the form is later given to an office assistant to input into ETO or a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or ACCESS database.

One additional item to consider is how external partnerships impact data collection. If some of the service provider staff are not employees of the college, or if data is shared with a community based organization, then the college will need to develop a data-sharing agreement.

Adapting existing data systems

Regardless of the tool used to input, aggregate and analyze the data, the college must put this information into existing student data systems such as Banner, Datatel or Peoplesoft to see how WFS services affect education, employment and economic outcomes for participants. While data from ETO, MS Excel and MS ACCESS can be uploaded to college data systems, some colleges have chosen to integrate tracking of WFS services into their existing data systems. See the case study on Des Moines Area Community College in the Center for Working Families at Community Colleges: Clearing the Financial Barriers to Student Success report.

Determining the audience for data collection

When determining the data to be collected, colleges should carefully consider their audiences and their strategic interests and ensure that the right data points are included. The numbers that resonate most strongly with a student may be different for a funder or community partner. The table below offers some suggestions on the different types of data that should be presented for different parties.

Audience	Examples of Data to Collect
Students	Dollar Amount of financial aid accessed; Amount of public benefits accessed; Qualitative stories of student success; retention; participant level financial outcomes such as debt reduction, achieving personal financial goals.
College staff and leadership	Term-to-term Retention rates; degree or credential completion rates; leverage of additional funds.
Community partners and funders	Retention rates; completion rates; measures on participant level financial outcomes including income, savings, credit score, employment, job retention and advancement; qualitative stories of student success; change in student financial behavior.

↻ Key Takeaways

- Determining the audience for and the purpose of the data is the first step.
- Data collection is necessary to understand the impact the strategy has on the students and the institution.
- Data can be the tool used to communicate to external stakeholders, partners and funders as to why they should invest additional resources in the institution.

- Data collection should be thought of as a two-tiered process: participant-level data and program-level data.
- During intake staff should collect enough information to set a set a baseline for tracking progress towards meeting the individual outcome measures while providing the staff with enough information to determine the type, and sequence, of services the student will require in the short-term.
- Involve the college's IT staff in the design of the data collection process up front to help determine which tool will best fit the college's needs.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Intake forms *Houston-Northeast, Norwalk, Skyline, LAHC, Phillips Community College, Central New Mexico Community College*

- Student success surveys *Houston Community College, Norwalk*

- Sample of data aggregation *Skyline, Central New Mexico Community College*

- Consent of release form *Skyline*

- Sample screen shots of data *Des Moines Area Community College*

- Tool describing pros and cons of different data systems *Tool developed by MDC*

It's not enough for a college to offer services; it has to make sure that students know what's available and how to gain access. Effective outreach and marketing to students is a challenge for many colleges. And it is a related challenge to market the WFS services to an outside community. As a rule, marketing budgets, whether they are for outside audiences or tied to student outreach, are limited. Moreover, it is not a small task to help students understand and navigate the multiple WFS offerings.

Marketing is more than just raising awareness of available services; it's telling the story in a way that will make the value of this work clear to everyone on campus. A compelling message will help all stakeholders understand that the WFS strategy is essential to student success and is worth adopting and supporting.

In order to ensure the necessary participation in WFS, the planning team will need to clearly articulate the rationale, expectations, commitment and process for the service delivery. Figure out how to say it, and then figure out how to share it.

Create an Outreach Strategy

Begin by identifying the specific population(s) you are targeting with the WFSN services and how and where they connect to student services and other areas of the college. Create a specific outreach strategy that identifies the staff, faculty, venues and platforms in which each population engages and how each person or platform will be involved in outreach to students. The outreach strategy should include how you will engage faculty and staff, a timeline and goals for reaching a percentage of students.

Student Marketing Outlets and Formats

Colleges typically broadcast the availability of WFS services through a variety of outlets, including new student orientation sessions and campus calendar announcements as well as through flyers, posters and message boards strategically placed across the campus.

What formats are appropriate for getting your information out to faculty, staff and students? Consider websites and course catalogs as well as program-specific events, newsletters, brochures — both print and online — and other marketing materials. Put processes in place to share up-to-date information with responsible faculty and staff as well as students and all departments and individuals responsible for enrolling, counseling and advising students.

Student Centered Marketing

The best way to market the WFS strategy is to have students spreading the word themselves. Use concrete examples of how WFS has helped students, including student panels and testimonial-like videos that can be shared on social media. Consider ways to give students a feeling of ownership over the WFS strategy, such as forming a student steering committee that acts as ambassadors for the program. Try marketing to students while asking for

feedback at the same time; send out a survey that promotes WFS but also asks students to explain their non-academic concerns.

External Community Marketing
A college may want to market to the external community as well, but the type of marketing will depend on what the goals are for reaching beyond the campus. If WFS services are open to the entire community, then the college should market the services available in ways similar to student-focused marketing. If services are available only to students or to a specific population of students, then community marketing should be targeted at potential partners or funders. Make it clear how they could enhance your WFS offerings. The WFS strategy will get more support if the college is able to demonstrate its importance and effectiveness.

Key Takeaways

- Develop an upfront and ongoing outreach plan that incorporates a variety of outreach and marketing methods.
- Student marketing is more than just raising awareness of available services; it's telling the story in a way that will make the value of this work clear to everyone on campus.
- Put processes in place to share up-to-date information about WFS to responsible faculty and staff as well as students and all departments and individuals responsible for enrolling, counseling and advising students.
- Consider ways to give students a feeling of ownership over the WFS strategy, such as forming a student steering committee that acts as ambassadors for the program.

Examples

Few colleges brand and market their WFS-related support services as being provided through a "Working Families Success strategy." Several colleges, however, have developed and do promote an alternate high-profile brand identity for their bundled WFS support services.

Central New Mexico, for example, actively promotes "CNM Connect" as its overarching, easily identifiable brand identity for a host of bundled, integrated services provided through a variety of formats.

Skyline College provides its WFS activities, including a community food bank, through its well-branded SparkPoint Center, which is one of a network of high-profile "SparkPoint Centers" located in community-based settings throughout the Bay Area surrounding San Francisco.

Norwalk Community College has named its WFS the "Family Economic Security Program."

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Sample Message Box *Tool developed by MDC*

- Sample marketing materials, internal and external *Houston Community College, LAHC, Skyline, Norwalk, Central New Mexico Community College.*

- Sample testimonial media (from students) *Houston Community College, Phillips Community College.*

DESIGN **Funding and Sustainability**

For colleges considering adopting the WFS strategy, budgetary considerations should begin with an examination of what type of approach will be used to bundle and deliver services. As noted in Chapter 2, implementation strategies can vary considerably.

Schools using one-on-one coaching strategies will figure in costs for any relevant training and staff time associated with direct coaching or management of volunteer coaches. Ongoing costs of coaching programs may be minimized if one or more personnel attend 'Train the Trainer' sessions and are able to recruit and train new coaches on site. Schools using campus-wide financial capability fairs may need to account for less staff time and more marketing and printing costs.

The following are sample budget areas for WFS colleges:

Budget Line Item	Sample Applications
Personnel and Associated Benefits	• Student financial coaching. • Staff and/or volunteer training. • Staff and/or volunteer supervision. • Program coordination and management. • Work to integrate financial education into student success courses or other curriculum. • Management of data collection systems. • Informal "audit" of existing student support efforts • Coordination of financial literacy fairs.
Travel	• Local travel to build relationships with CBOs, faith-based organizations and other partner organizations. • Travel to conferences and other learning events.
Professional Training	• Staff coaching preparation. • Train the trainer sessions.
Office Supplies	• Ongoing program implementation. • Set-up for financial literacy fairs.
Equipment and Web-Based Tools	• Laptop computers for assisting students in completing federal and state work support applications. • Efforts to Outcomes or similar case management platform.
Consultants	• Program evaluation services. • Establishment of data collection systems.
Marketing	• Program Publicity.

WFS colleges fund these line items with a mix of external and internal funding. External funding sources may include private foundations and/or local partner agencies willing to share costs for coaching training, publicity fairs or media productions. Internal funding sources often include one or more established departments within a college — financial aid, student services or other areas. In the case of both external and internal funding, the WFS strategy strengthens

what works among existing student services and adds what is missing in order to provide all three of the WFS pillars.

When seeking internal or external partnerships and/or funding, colleges report success when emphasizing the collaborative and integrated nature of the WFS strategy. Among other trends, colleges appear to have greater success justifying institutional funding when:

- Weaving financial services with other related services—e.g., applying for financial aid and accessing financial education through existing student success courses.

- Reaching across college functions and departments to enlist faculty as coaches or to make student referrals.

- Making strategic use of complementary programs that already exist at their institutions, including federally funded programs such as TRIO.

Costs of the WFS
Each college that pursues a WFS strategy will need to make choices about the ways in which their efforts are funded. Most colleges started their WFS efforts with an initial investment from an outside source and then leveraged that investment to add different services. There is no one set "price tag" for establishing a WFS strategy at a college. The cost will depend on the choices you make. Key factors include: 1) the degree to which WFS programs and services are embedded in existing college systems and programs that can absorb the costs; 2) whether outside partners are utilized for services; 3) the intensity and range of services offered, and 4) the number of students served both through low- and high-touch services.

Typically, the costs for operating a WFS strategy are higher at the outset as new infrastructure, services and related activities are implemented. Over time, the cost per person often drops as services and structures are embedded within existing operations.

Sustainability
Since the WFS approaches at these community colleges are still quite young — the oldest began in 2005 — best practices for long-term sustainability still are being explored. The WFS strategy should be designed with sustainability in mind at the start.

One common strategy for making the case for continued internal funding is careful tracking of retention among cohorts exposed to two or more of the WFS pillars. Most colleges receive government funding based at least in part on the number of FTE students enrolled, so documenting the cost savings or increased revenue attained through WFS efforts is a helpful way to advocate for program funding internally. The following are cited as promising initial outcomes:

- At Central New Mexico Community College, from fall 2010 to spring 2011, the retention rate was 84.7% for students who accessed supports through CNM Connect, compared to 70.5% for all first-time students.

- 84% of WFS students at Des Moines Community College in 2010 enrolled in a subsequent term compared to a college wide retention rate of 70%.

- 80% of Skyline's WFS students in 2010 enrolled in a subsequent term, which compares to a 2009 retention level college wide of 66%.[2]

- In 2010, 100% of students in Norwalk Community College's WFS program enrolled in the subsequent term.

One important consideration in any discussion of sustainability is staffing. Understanding sustainability in terms of personnel happens in two main ways:

- Staff members have an understanding of what is needed to continue the WFS effort: when the program staff understand that their future work depends on demonstrating the impact and success of the program, collection of data is a higher priority.

- Staff are hired with sustainability in mind: some colleges hire staff supported through other income streams before shifting support directly to WFS funding streams. Thus the program will be allowed to demonstrate its effectiveness and its ultimate sustainability without financial constraints.

Key Takeaways

- The strategy championed at a particular school affects the construction and ultimate size of a budget or budgets that support the work.
- WFS colleges fund the strategy with a mix of external and internal funding.
- Make the case for continued funding by carefully tracking retention among cohorts exposed to the WFS strategies and documenting the cost savings or increased revenue attained through WFS.

Examples

Los Angeles Harbor College's WFS program has used its initial funding stream to leverage other sources of funding. The college received financial support through a partnership between MDC, Achieving the Dream and the Bank of America Charitable Foundation to launch services aimed at a cohort of former foster youth. As that program has proved successful the college has attracted additional support from such entities as the California-based Career Ladders Program.

The sustainability of **Guilford Community Technical College's** WFS program is based in part on its placement within the college. Salaries for the program leader and a part-time assistant director already have been absorbed within the college's Basic Skills program.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Tool for calculating $ saved or earned by increasing retention
  http://www.deltacostproject.org/resources/pdf/ISS_cost_return_report.pdf
  The Delta Cost Project and Jobs for the Future

- Sample grant application *CCBC, LAHC, Houston Community College System*

- Sustainability planning sheet *Tool developed by MDC*

Scaling up or expanding the WFS strategy is more complicated than simply signing up more participants; it is a part of continuous improvement processes and systems change. The initial design of a WFS strategy should be made with scale in mind: what would the WFS approach look like at full capacity, and is the design for the initial implementation of WFS feasible at that level?

There is no silver bullet or "one best way" to scale. Local context, available resources, target recipients, delivery method and time constraints all drive unique approaches. When designing a WFS strategy for scale, you must consider institutional culture and constraints, institutional objectives and the potential or desire for change within existing systems. You might think of it as designing a landscape plan for a home. You select plants and place them according to how they'll look when they're fully grown; everything might look strange when there's only new growth, but you have to be patient and nurture the plantings.

Changing the Way the College Works
Scaling up is not always associated with securing additional funding support. Magnifying the impact of the WFS strategy requires an institution to change the way it does business. The college must align itself toward the goal of connecting all students with educational and economic success. Building the capacity and will to do that can happen in many ways, including: 1) changing the culture of the institution so that all faculty and staff buy in to the goal of clearing barriers to economic success for students; 2) reorganizing existing staff time so that more people play a role in supporting students; 3) making better use of technology to provide services to students so that face-to-face time with staff is reserved for difficult, individualized coaching and problem-solving, and 4) strengthening community partnerships to become part of a web of services that moves low-income community members along the path to better jobs and brighter futures.

Scope: Breadth and Depth
The scope of the WFS strategy may vary as an institution plans for expansion. A college could go broad, reaching a large number of individuals with the chosen approach; a college also could go deep, increasing the intensity of services in order to increase the positive outcomes for a targeted group of individuals. The approach—a combination of program, practices and policy—depends on the institution's culture and the needs of the individuals.

Categories of Scaling
We have identified four general categories of scaling: person, place, thing and idea, just like the definition of a noun. Obviously there will be overlap in the implementation of any expansion; an institution may employ multiple types of scaling in a single solution. Each one will look different at each institution, depending on the breadth and depth of the chosen strategy.

- **Person**: This is generally the first thing that comes to mind when we talk about scale: expanding the number of individuals with access to integrated services.

- **Place**: This is another approach that fits into a typical definition of expansion: replicating the WFS approach in new locales.

- **Thing**: The WFS practice is replicated not in a new place, but in a new administrative home.

- **Idea**: This approach is focused on the individual delivering the WFS services. To scale an idea, a college can introduce new practices with the intent of changing behavior to improve the quality and increase the positive outcomes of the WFS strategy.

Note: some of the content of this section has been adapted from <u>More to Most</u>*, MDC's guidebook on Scaling Up Effective Practices at Community Colleges.*

⟳ Key Takeaways

- The initial design of a WFS strategy should be made with scale in mind.
- Scaling up is not always associated with securing additional funding support. Magnifying the impact of the WFS strategy requires an institution to change the way it does business, which can mean: 1) changing the culture of the institution, 2) reorganizing existing staff time, 3) making better use of technology, and 4) strengthening community partnerships.

💬 Examples

Central New Mexico plans to scale up by fundamentally reorganizing how the college delivers student services through staff reorganization and re-definition and by better using technology to respond to students' needs. Also underpinning this effort are policy changes on campus to promote retention and completion and engaging college faculty and staff in understanding their roles in student success through CNM Connect.

CNM is in the process of reorganizing its organizational structures, creating crosscutting "generalist" positions where staff will have essential knowledge in advising, financial aid and registration issues. Breaking down knowledge silos between these areas improves efficiency for students. It also frees up time for specialists in these function areas to step in and assist students with particularly thorny issues because they are no longer fielding the easy-to-answer requests.

CNM also is focused on using technology to leverage impact and increase efficiency. The college has a telecommunications call center and an innovative web query system that is set up to answer the most frequently asked questions posed by students and anyone else who contacts the school. They also have the capacity to arrange web cam meetings during coaching sessions so students who need help from a particular student services staff person or faculty member can make an immediate connection to resolve issues. It's quicker and more efficient than setting up an in-person meeting and more personal than a phone conversation, according to CNM coaches.

Phillips Community College at the University of Arkansas, using Career Pathways funds and other resources, has staged mandatory "poverty simulation" exercises with all faculty and staff to help them more fully understand the limitations experienced by students from a poverty background. "One of the most important things for us is that most of the educators have a middle-class background," said Dr. Deborah King. "We may forget how difficult it is for our students to succeed." To scale up their WFS efforts, PCCUA recognizes the need to change the culture of the entire college and the definition of how the college serves students.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- MDC's _More to Most_ — http://www.more2most.org

Chapter 3: Delivering WFS Services

DELIVERY Overview

When services are delivered in an integrated way, community colleges can help students meet their educational goals and find meaningful careers that allow for economic security.

To recap the three main pillars of the Working Families Success approach:

- **Education and employment services**: Services that provide students with the skills needed to enter and retain employment and advance in the career of their choice.

- **Work and income supports**: Services that assist students in accessing public benefits and other income supports to increase family economic stability and encourage college retention and completion.

- **Financial and asset building services**: Services that build the financial knowledge of students, increase their access to savings and wealth-retaining financial products and encourage the meeting of both short-and long-term financial goals.

Many colleges that have tried integrated service delivery begin with low-touch services and move toward high-touch services as their WFS strategy becomes institutionalized. Some other colleges have started first by offering higher touch services, in many cases targeting a smaller cohort of students and then moving to offer lower-touch services to a wider population. For instance, Los Angeles Harbor College is working with former foster youth through more intensive financial counseling as it begins its WFS program. The next step will be to include a financial literacy component in its Personal Development class, which is a lower touch service that can reach many more students.

This section of the guide offers detailed descriptions of each of type of service or activity, including discussing what low-, medium-, and high-touch might mean for the college. Since most colleges have greater experience in education and employment services and can rely on existing programs, more space is given to describing the various components of the other two pillars.

DELIVERY **Employment and Education Services**

One reason funders have looked to community colleges to integrate services using the Working Families Success strategy is the mission of these institutions: to provide educational opportunities for students so they can find meaningful employment and support their families. Whether that occurs immediately after completion or after transfer to a four-year institution, community colleges offer the courses and training needed to prepare students for success in employment.

But the employment and education services offered through the Working Families Success strategy go beyond coursework. These services focus on non-academic preparation and guidance to allow students to attain a credential and living-wage, career-oriented employment.

Unlike the two other pillars of the WFS approach, education and employment services are usually already offered by community colleges. Thus, the opportunity is for colleges to more effectively integrate what they already offer with work and income supports and financial and asset building services.

Broadly speaking the education and employment services can be grouped into three main categories:

Career counseling: Information provided to allow students to make the educational choices needed to find quality jobs that lead to career advancement.

Job readiness training: Services focusing on traditional "soft skills" such as workplace culture, time management and interviewing techniques.

Job placement and career advancement services: Working directly with students to find positions, including assisting in resume preparation and meeting the educational needs of particular industries.

An added element, particularly at the medium- and high-level of intensity, is the introduction of contextualized training focused on a particular industry. Providing information about skills—even of the "soft" variety—that are particular to an industry gives a student a greater chance of finding employment and ultimately career advancement.

This matrix offers more information on the different levels of intensity for employment and training services. It does not cover all possible ways in which students can be reached.

Education and Employment Services: Level of Intensity[3]

	Low-Touch	**Medium-Touch**	**High-Touch**
Career Counseling	Group sessions on career options; referral to resources about potential careers and occupations.	Individualized interest through skills inventories; skilled assessment with personalized follow-on results and plans. Check-ins with students at least once a term.	Students are engaged in similar ways to medium-touch but with regular follow-up to discuss career options and ways in which particular opportunities such as internships fit into career plans.
Job readiness training	One week or less of instruction in general job readiness skills.	Multiple weeks of instruction in job readiness skills with added contextualization for particular industry.	Similar to medium-touch, but with at least 50% of the instruction focused on contextual skills for particular industry.
Job placement and career advancement services	General assistance provided through a career center that includes referrals to job postings, career posting, and some assistance around resume preparation and interview skills.	Limited one-on-one assistance with conducting job searches, building resumes, and practicing interview skills.	One-on-one assistance with students that includes a high level of contextualization around particular industries. High level services may include multiple check-ins, including post-employment, to encourage career advancement.

Examples

Des Moines Area Community College employs a full-time transition coach who works with students to prepare them for interviews and has myriad connections with employers to help with job placement. All students are encouraged to participate in a mock interview with an employer.

Skyline Community College's SparkPoint Center is closely aligned with the Career and Employment Service Center. This Center provides a set of services to students including strategies to perform well during job interviews, improve resumes, explore career options and train for high-demand professions.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- LAHC career mind map

As is often noted, many of the reasons students choose to withdraw from college are financial in nature. A study completed in 2011 by Public Agenda, with funding from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation,[4] found that among 600 young people who dropped out of college, 54 percent said "having to work and make money" was the primary reason for leaving before attaining a credential, and 60 percent described the cost of non-tuition fees as a major barrier to completion. The Working for Families Success strategy offers students the financial capability to make sound financial decisions, but it also can connect students with the financial resources they need to stay in school and receive a credential.

Work and income supports offered through the Working Families Success strategy might require linking with community-based partners and even state and federal entities to access information. The matrix found below offers descriptions of low-, medium-, and high- touch services.

Financial aid navigation: Almost all community colleges have dedicated financial aid offices, which provide some financial aid guidance including helping students apply for financial aid using standard FAFSA forms. More intensive financial aid counseling helps students learn more about other sources of financial aid, such as scholarships and community-based financial support programs. Increasingly, colleges are looking for ways to combat defaults on federally issued loans as funding can be affected if default rates are not kept under control. Making sure that students are given information about sources of loans and an understanding of the impact of these loans is critical.

Emergency financial support: When students drop out, it often is not because of a chronic financial situation but as a result of a sudden financial emergency, including a medical emergency, the loss of transportation or a change in a child care situation. These situations require seemingly small amounts of funds, but they are enough to prevent a student from continuing their education. Colleges that have emergency financial support interventions address these situations either through the provision of funds by the college or by referral to community organizations that can help. In certain cases, conditions on the scholarship require the individual to participate in financial counseling sessions after receiving funds.

Access to public benefits and support services: One important component of income and work supports is public benefits screening. Every year millions of Americans fail to claim public benefits such as food stamps, housing vouchers and other support for which they are eligible. Community colleges can provide information to students about their eligibility and ideally can assist students with filling out applications.

In some settings colleges only help students learn about the availability of such funds, while in others students can apply using online software from a college office. This is dependent on whether the college is in a state with online benefit access or a one-step application process. States such as Arkansas

offer students the ability to apply for state funds via an online system. Access Arkansas, an online service managed by the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), provides anonymous screening of potential eligibility for 20 DHS-managed benefit programs. There also are national tools, such as The Benefit Bank (created by Solutions for Progress, Inc.) or the BEN calculator (created by Single Stop USA), which can be customized to mesh with existing state programs.

Tax services: The most common and easiest work and income support service for colleges to provide is access to tax preparation, which can help students obtain earned income tax credits. Many colleges serve as VITA sites, through which volunteer tax preparers offer guidance to students on how to fill out tax returns and receive refunds. Other colleges provide referral services to link students with community organizations that provide access to the same types of services.

	Low-Touch	Medium-Touch	High-Touch
Financial Aid Navigation	General assistance from financial aid in using the FAFSA form; some limited referral to other sources of financial aid.	Assistance in group settings, possibly over multiple hours, that covers all aspects of financial aid; detailed referrals to other sources of aid.	Individualized assistance to students on financial aid that provides information on risks inherent in certain kinds of aid; college staff working with students to package together funding streams to cover both tuition and other college-related expenses.
Emergency financial support	General information provided through student orientation materials about how to access emergency scholarships.	Targeted information including classroom presentations about available emergency funding to students identified as at risk.	Emergency financial support delivered on campus with mechanisms to follow up; in some cases, recipients of emergency financial support are required to receive financial coaching.

Screen and access for public benefits	General information provided to students about available public benefits.	Targeted information about public benefits given through classroom presentations or group settings.	One-on-one assistance given to students to help access public benefits. Applications for benefits can be done on campus. Follow-up with students after submission of applications to connect with other Working for Family Success products.
Tax services	Offer general information about tax services including referral to outside services.	Targeted information delivery of information about services through classroom or group presentations.	Offering of some tax preparation services on campus.

Examples

At **Skyline College**, students enrolled in the college's accounting program give free tax help for local residents, including students, who annually earn $30,000 or less. This service is part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

Guilford Technical College serves as a Benefit Bank site, allowing students to apply for a host of public benefits in one fell swoop through a single on-line service. **Central New Mexico College** also uses a proprietary system to allow access to systems—SingleStop. Under this screening tool, financial coaches identify government assistance programs for which students are eligible, reducing paperwork and application processing times for students.

The Community College of Baltimore County has introduced a policy to encourage recipients of emergency scholarships to receive financial coaching. Students who receive this service are required to attend at least one meeting with a dedicated financial coach.

Skyline College leverages strategic partnerships in the wider community, especially to facilitate workshops and other services that support asset building. Several important community partners include San Mateo Credit Union, which offers second chance checking accounts, debt counseling services, credit repair and low-cost banking service and the Opportunity Fund, which provides matched-savings plans (IDAs) to help students and community members build savings to invest in education or business.

Financial and asset building services offered through the Working Families Success strategy build on a community college's education mission by teaching students about financial issues and how to manage their financial future. In some cases, these services also provide specific financial products that can help individuals build their wealth.

The services offered through this pillar can be divided into three main groups:

Financial education: Teaching students, usually in a group setting, about a range of financial topics centered on financial literacy.

Financial coaching: A specific and tailored approach in which trained individuals provide one-on-one financial counseling to help students reach their financial goals.

Asset building products and services: Providing students with information and training on how to use suitable financial products that build wealth.

The matrix at the end of this section provides details on low-, medium-, and high-touch services.

Financial education: Colleges generally take two approaches to financial literacy training: 1) embedding financial literacy into established student success classes, and 2) providing dedicated financial literacy education either through specialized workshops or through online curricula. Using student success classes, which are often required of all entering first-year students, provides for the greatest numbers of students that can be reached. Some colleges devote several weeks to the concept of financial literacy, while others might integrate the issue throughout the course. Some sample curriculums are included as part of this tool kit.

Similarly varied approaches are taken in offering financial literacy training through workshops or online curriculum. Some colleges offer workshops on a particular subject matter such as household budgeting or saving for a home, and others offer more comprehensive workshops that cover a range of issues. In some cases, the workshops are offered as part of scheduled campus-wide events such as a Financial Literacy week promotion or a financial literacy fair.

Increasingly, colleges are providing some financial literacy through online materials. This might be through a dedicated website developed by the college or by linking to an already developed source. Links to some websites are provided as part of this tool kit.

Financial coaching: The most intensive type of financial and asset building service is financial coaching. Financial coaching typically involves one-on-one coaching sessions between a trained college staff member (faculty or staff) or community partner and a currently enrolled student. These sessions help students set financial goals and make plans to accomplish them. They work on

budgets, managing or eliminating personal debt and financial accountability. Financial coaching may consist of just one session or recurring sessions.

Asset building and financial products: If there is a criticism of financial education efforts, it is that the real issue facing many students is not information about how to manage their money but rather actual financial tools to build wealth. To provide students with information about these products, some colleges have partnered with local community-based organizations and in some cases, financial institutions. The products that can be offered include flexible checking accounts and alternative check-cashing services, low-cost loans for students who do not have a credit card, savings accounts and first-time homebuyer financing.

Among the most common financial products offered by colleges are emergency savings products that allow students to cope with sudden financial burdens. The Community College of Baltimore County has been exploring combining this type of product with some targeted financial coaching. There have been some efforts aimed at offering products that actually build student's assets. Additionally, initial results from MDRC's "Aid Like a Paycheck," which provides for distributing financial aid over a period of time, are showing promising results in helping students maintain financial stability. An additional product that can be useful in the education context is an Individual Development Account (IDA). IDAs are special savings accounts that match the deposits of qualified individuals as long as those deposits are used towards increasing individual assets. Postsecondary education and job training are often seen as uses for IDAs.

In many cases, the most valuable information is how to avoid predatory lending practices. Unscrupulous check cashers or payday lenders can quickly undermine a student's finances; presenting an affordable alternative to students is an effective way to help students build wealth.

	Low-Touch	**Medium-Touch**	**High-Touch**
Financial Education	Providing financial education services through student success courses; offering referrals to outside organizations or resources for financial ed training.	Workshops or fairs centered on financial literacy issues; college-based website on financial literacy.	Individualized follow-up from group financial literacy sessions. Monitoring financial progress and goals throughout semester.
Financial coaching	Offering information and referrals to partner organizations offering financial coaching.	Financial coaching offered by staff or faculty with other responsibilities; may be limited to one or two sessions with limited follow-up.	Dedicated staff employed as financial coaches with multiple follow-ups throughout enrollment.

Asset building products and services	Providing materials to individuals about available products in local institutions.	Targeted presentations about available resources including avoiding predatory practices.	Active partnerships with local financial institutions to provide asset-building services and products; frequent individualized meetings with students to discuss these products and services.

Examples

The **Community College of Baltimore County** incorporates financial literacy training into its student success classes. An important component of the program is encouraging savings by giving each student their own piggy bank to put away some savings during the semester. Although many students at first dismiss this as a gimmick, by the end of the semester they are excited to report how much they have saved and how setting a little aside each day goes a long way towards building assets.

Houston Community College hosts financial literacy weeks at several of its campuses. These events feature financial literacy workshops including speakers from local financial institutions who can speak about affordable asset building products.

Several colleges require financial coaching for students who receive scholarships. **Norwalk Community College** requires that scholarship grantees participate in coaching sessions to help them achieve their educational and financial goals. At **Des Moines Area Community College** participants in the college's Workforce Training Academy are required to participate in at least one financial coaching session.

Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Student financial assessment: *Houston Community College*, *LAHC*, *Central New Mexico Community College*, *Norwalk*
- Financial resources for students: *Norwalk*, *Pulaski Technical College*
- Class curriculum: *Skyline*, *Houston Community College*, *Phillips Community College*, *Central New Mexico Community College*
- Financial coaching guide: *Skyline*

DELIVERY **Expected Results**

As your college implements its WFS strategy, your investors — both internal and external — naturally will ask "what will be the impact of the effort" and "when can we expect to see these results." As in any initiative, the answers will depend on your college's circumstances and the design choices you have made.

If your program has chosen to work with a small cohort of students and provide a high-intensity of services, it is likely you'll see results in terms of increased retention and completion rates at a faster pace than a more low-intensity effort that reaches more individuals. For instance, Norwalk Community College, which works with a selected group of individuals providing more intensive counseling on an individualized basis, saw increased levels of retention shortly after implementing the service. Other WFS elements such as including financial literacy in a student success class may require more time to see the results of intervention.

In general, the experience of other colleges suggests that the higher intensity level of services will move the needle quicker in terms of results. But the trade-off may be that increasing the intensity may mean you can't reach as many students. What is clear is that whatever your expectations, tracking data must be collected and shared with your investors in a timely manner. The data collection section of the guide provides recommendations on what to measure and when.

DELIVERY **Conclusion**

In the community college setting, the ultimate goal of the WFS effort is to provide students with the resources they need not only to meet their educational goals but to transition into a meaningful career. Thus the expected results from the WFS effort are best measured against that benchmark: students who receive WFS services should complete a post-secondary credential at a higher rate.

As this implementation guide demonstrates, the path your college takes to facilitate that goal can vary greatly. A particular college's mix of services is dependent on the circumstances of its environment, availability of funds and most importantly, the needs of its students. But by embracing the integrated service approach embodied in the WFS strategy, an institution is saying it believes its commitment to students extends beyond the classroom walls.