

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local travel to build relationships with CBOs, faith-based organizations and other partner organizations.• Travel to conferences and other learning events.
Professional Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff coaching preparation.• Train the trainer sessions.
Office Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing program implementation.• Set-up for financial literacy fairs.
Equipment and Web-Based Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laptop computers for assisting students in completing federal and state work support applications.• Efforts to Outcomes or similar case management platform.
Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program evaluation services.• Establishment of data collection systems.
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

*Working Families Success Strategy
This work was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions are those of MDC alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Foundation.
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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.

² Self-reported data by colleges to MDC

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*