



What's Involved in Launching a Family Self-Sufficiency Program?

It typically takes approximately 9 months to launch an FSS program, from making the initial decision to offer a program and convening key stakeholders, to filing the action plan with HUD and enrolling the first FSS participants. It can take 12-24 months to reach 30-40% enrollment depending on the property.

Ongoing Staffing Requirements

FSS Coordinator:

Each FSS program will need someone to deliver coaching or case management services to program participants. Every program does this differently. Some owners choose to contract with a local third-party entity, such as a financial coaching or workforce development organization. Others utilize existing staff, such as resident service coordinators or financial coaches. Some will also hire a new staff person to provide FSS coaching on a full-or part-time basis.

A full-time FSS coordinator typically serves at least 25 individual participants. If a coordinator needs to travel to see clients at multiple properties, this might reduce his/her coaching capacity and add travel expenses to the budget. If the coordinator is also expected to complete FSS program management responsibilities (i.e. program outreach, relationship management with other program staff, and submitting performance reports to HUD), that may also reduce his/her coaching capacity.

FSS Program Manager:

The FSS Program Manager may or may not be the same person as the FSS Coordinator, depending on the size of the property and the structure of the organization. An FSS Program Manager can also be an existing staff person, such as a Property Manager or Director of Resident Services. The role of the FSS Program Manager is to ensure a successful program launch and smooth ongoing operations. Responsibilities include program outreach, relationship management with other FSS program staff, and submitting performance reports to HUD.

Property Management and Accounting Staff:

Property management staff's most important role is conducting interim and annual income recertifications, which determine the amount of earned income deposited into participant escrow accounts. They typically spend between 8-16 hours for training in the first year of an FSS launch and one to three hours a month thereafter to carry out other related program activities, such as referring residents to the program and coordinating with the FSS coordinator and accounting staff.

Accounting staff work on monthly Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System (TRACS) voucher processing, which is essential for properly managing escrow funds. They typically spend between 10-20 hours for systems setup and escrow training, and then one to two hours a month per property for ongoing escrow calculations. Regular responsibilities include managing the escrow accounts on behalf of participants, conducting periodic account audits, and issuing escrow funds to participants as needed.

Property Readiness

When owners are selecting one or more properties for an FSS program, they should consider the following:

- **Enrollment Potential:** Owners/agents should consider the potential for enrollment in FSS in determining which properties to prioritize for FSS. While properties of all sizes are eligible to participate, larger properties will likely be better able to absorb the administrative costs associated with starting a new FSS program. While smaller FSS programs may be able to operate with shared staff, a dedicated FSS staff will generally be needed for larger programs. Past experience suggests that, when marketed effectively, enrollment in FSS at a multifamily property can reach a number equal to approximately 30-40 percent of the number of project-based Section 8 households that are neither elderly nor disabled in a development.¹
- **Property Stability:** FSS programs are most successful when property operations are stable. High staff turnover, large capital projects, or other big changes or new initiatives typically disrupt properties in ways that make them poor environments to launch new FSS programs.
- **Relationships with Residents:** Properties where management, resident services, and other staff have healthy, trusting relationships with residents will have an advantage in launching new FSS programs.
- **Commitment to Implement FSS:** Programs are more likely to be successful when owners/agents have a strong commitment at all levels of the organization to implement the program efficiently. This includes buy-in and support early on at the leadership level as well as an understanding from property operations staff of the commitment needed to launch a new FSS program.
- **Potential Community Partners:** Properties will have an advantage in starting an FSS program if they already provide resident programs and other supportive services or if they know about and/or have relationships with potential community service providers who could serve as a referral or program delivery partner.

¹ Note that all households are eligible to participate in FSS, including households headed by people who are elderly or who have a disability.

Now, check your readiness. Is your property ready to launch FSS?

Steps	Ready to Launch?
<p>Step 1. Establish Support for Program Launch</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Buy in from key stakeholders, such as the property owner, property management staff, and potential FSS Coordinators (Stakeholders may vary by property)</p>
<p>Step 2. Secure Ongoing Staff Commitments</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> FSS Coordinator (One full-time equivalent (FTE) position can typically serve at least 25 participants)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> FSS Program Manager (If this is the same person as the FSS Coordinator, this might reduce his/her caseload capacity)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Property management staff (Initial training followed by one to three hours a month throughout the duration of the program)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Accounting staff (Initial systems setup and training, plus one to two hours a month per property)</p>
<p>Step 3. Assess Property Readiness</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Positive cost-benefit decision based on anticipated enrollment rates of 30-40% of property residents</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stable property operations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Positive relationships with residents</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Commitment across the organization to implement FSS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Existing community partnerships and/or knowledge of potential community partners</p>