



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 6-2 2020

Dear State Commissioner:

There is life-transforming dignity in work.

On numerous occasions, I have witnessed how Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) transforms lives by helping recipients transition to work. I recently met a gentleman I'll call "Ken" who showed up wearing a three-piece suit at the local non-profit where he graduated from an E&T program. Ken's goal that day? To make sure we knew that he is a "hope dealer" for his friends and anyone who will listen. Upon completing his E&T program, Ken landed a job in the hospitality field at a local senior living facility, and that work has provided him hope about his future, which he now feels inspired to share.

Stories such as this should inspire you to ensure that your State is committing appropriate resources to help more Americans enter the workforce. In fact, Congress has mandated that State agencies design and implement an E&T program "for the purpose of assisting members of households participating in SNAP in gaining skills, training, work, or experience..."<sup>1</sup> There are millions of SNAP participants across the country who have not yet been reached and could benefit from effective E&T programs.

Our team at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been relentless in notifying, educating, and equipping you to engage more SNAP participants as they transition to work. Some of you have been proactive leaders in improving your E&T program. However, not all States have taken action. Today, I call on you to leverage the opportunity afforded to us by the longest economic expansion in U.S. history to get to work on getting people to work.

As a reminder, Congress has emphasized its belief in the value of E&T by providing that every State receive Federal funds to operate an E&T program. Additionally, Congress has provided unlimited funds to match, dollar for dollar, any reimbursable spending on E&T by States or their providers. This includes not only certain administrative and programmatic expenses, but also spending on transportation, childcare, and other support services that are necessary to participate in E&T.

Expanding E&T opportunities for SNAP recipients in your State must be a top priority. The best way to immediately increase your capacity in your State is to leverage the funding and expertise of existing providers, who are already effectively connecting SNAP recipients to employment. Our team at USDA is ready to assist you in expanding your programs to meet the needs of your SNAP recipients. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any of my colleagues at the Food and Nutrition Service.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act.

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Everyone should have the opportunity to experience the dignity of work and become a hope dealer, like Ken.

Regards,



Brandon Lipps

Deputy Under Secretary

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services