



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Rapid Cycle Evaluation: Minnesota, Rural Counties

Final Report

November 2024

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Executive Summary

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits to eligible individuals with low incomes. For some, it also provides employment and training (E&T) services to improve participants' economic self-sufficiency. This report describes the Food and Nutrition Services' use of rapid cycle evaluation to test new, low-cost, small-scale interventions in SNAP E&T operations in Minnesota.

Minnesota operates a voluntary, county-administered SNAP E&T program statewide. The county Departments of Human Services (county DHSs) have the primary responsibility for administering SNAP and SNAP E&T. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (Minnesota DHS), county DHSs, or both, contract directly with SNAP E&T providers that deliver services to SNAP E&T participants.

Intervention

Minnesota sought to strengthen recruitment and outreach for its SNAP E&T program. Minnesota DHS, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and nine providers serving rural counties developed an intervention that consisted of sending work registrants in the counties served by those providers a series of three text messages with behavioral nudges to encourage them to contact a SNAP E&T provider and enroll in the program. From September 2023 to January 2024, Mathematica conducted an evaluation that included a randomized controlled trial to estimate the intervention's impact on SNAP E&T enrollment, and an assessment of how the intervention was implemented, the challenges encountered and solutions to address them, and participants' experiences.

Outcomes

Individuals who received the text messages were almost twice as likely to enroll in SNAP E&T as those who did not receive them. Among White non-Hispanic individuals, those who received the three text messages were five times as likely to enroll in SNAP E&T as those who did not receive them.

Factors that facilitated or hindered implementation

Providers reported that participating in the rapid cycle evaluation (RCE) process created a space to build relationships with each other and with Minnesota DHS and DEED. Providers reported that a lack of awareness about SNAP E&T among SNAP participants may have hindered implementation. Several providers reported that the SNAP E&T components were too limited and did not meet the needs of all individuals interested in SNAP E&T.

Lessons learned

Several lessons learned from the intervention will be helpful when considering scaling or replicating the efforts in Minnesota. Working together on the intervention gave providers the opportunity to collaborate and gain experience with other providers' services, which everyone valued and which helped shape their relationships moving forward. While most providers agreed that using texting was an innovative way to reach people who may be eligible for the services they offer and they appreciated the awareness the intervention brought to those in the community, they also identified areas for improvement. These included the need for greater knowledge about SNAP E&T among provider staff and the community, more accurate and current data to best target outreach, and the staff and technology resources to carry out these efforts.

I. Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the nation’s nutrition safety net and provides food benefits to eligible individuals with low incomes who are experiencing economic hardship. In addition to providing food assistance, SNAP provides work supports through employment and training (E&T) programs that help SNAP participants gain skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to obtain regular employment. State agencies are required to operate an E&T program and have considerable flexibility to determine the services they offer and populations they serve. SNAP participants use these programs to meet work requirements, if applicable, and retain their benefits.

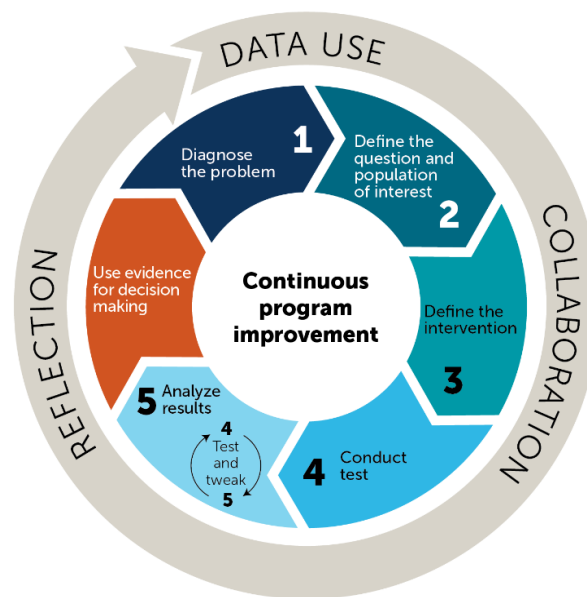
One of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) strategic goals and priorities is to ensure the quality of the services and activities offered through SNAP E&T programs by investing resources and providing technical assistance to help States build capacity, create more robust services, and increase engagement in their programs. Over the last 10 years, FNS has invested considerable resources and provided technical assistance to States; however, a typical State has limited time and resources to make substantial changes to its business process, service delivery approach, or service options given their existing responsibilities of Federal compliance operations, running the program, monitoring providers, and growing the program.

FNS contracted with Mathematica to provide States the opportunity to test low-cost, small-scale interventions in SNAP E&T operations or service delivery using rapid cycle evaluation (RCE). RCE is a powerful method for improving programs’ efficiency and effectiveness. It follows a series of steps to identify challenges and define and test potential solutions (Exhibit I.1).

Study objectives

1. Describe how RCEs can be used to improve SNAP E&T operations, service delivery, and program outcomes
2. Design and implement RCEs to obtain impact estimates of small-scale changes on SNAP E&T outcomes for each intervention
3. Conduct an implementation evaluation of the small-scale changes and RCEs in each intervention
4. Assess the scalability of the small-scale changes to SNAP E&T operations and service delivery to other local, State, or national policies and programs
5. Determine and document the costs associated with implementing and maintaining the small-scale changes ▲

Exhibit I.1. Rapid cycle evaluation



FNS selected Minnesota, four other States, and the District of Columbia to operate interventions, with the aim of improving SNAP E&T programs and identifying how to strengthen the technical assistance provided to States.¹ From 2021 to 2024, Mathematica collaborated with the intervention sites to identify the major challenges their SNAP E&T programs faced, which generally involved recruitment and outreach or participant engagement and receipt of services, and to create and test solutions to them.

RCE addressed five main objectives (see Study objectives box). This report describes the RCE process, intervention design and implementation, and findings from the small-scale changes Minnesota made and tested in its SNAP E&T program in rural counties.²

II. Minnesota SNAP E&T Program

Minnesota operates a statewide, county-administered SNAP E&T program that serves all SNAP participants 16 years and older who volunteer to participate in SNAP E&T. This includes work registrants, who are SNAP participants who have not met any Federal exemptions from SNAP work requirements and are therefore required to register for work and meet general work requirements.



Minnesota SNAP E&T program

- **Area served:** Statewide
- **Target population:** SNAP participants
- **Number served by E&T:** 1,658 in fiscal year 2023
- **Referral type:** Direct and reverse referrals
- **Providers:** WIOA agencies, community colleges, community-based organizations, and others ▲

The county Departments of Human Services (county DHSs) have the primary responsibility for administering SNAP and SNAP E&T. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (Minnesota DHS), county DHSs, or both contract directly with SNAP E&T providers. Due to budget constraints at the county level, Minnesota DHS has in recent years contracted with and offered more support to SNAP E&T providers. The providers offer a range of SNAP E&T components, including job search training, supervised job search, and educational programs. Every individual participating in SNAP E&T receives case management from the providers; however, no standard case management model is used. Minnesota DHS expressed interest in the RCE project for a group of providers that serves counties in rural communities across the State.³

Nine providers serving 42 rural counties (out of 87 total counties in the State) participated in the project. In some of these counties, multiple providers offer SNAP E&T and access to a range of other social services organizations, while many counties have a single SNAP E&T provider and limited access to social services organizations. Eight of the nine providers operate in multiple counties through satellite offices or staff who travel between counties. On average, SNAP participants in these counties have to travel over 17 miles to reach a SNAP E&T provider.

¹ Minnesota tested two interventions. This report presents findings from the intervention in rural counties. A separate report presents findings from the Hennepin County intervention.

² Reports for the other sites in the project are available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis>.

³ DHS defined which communities were considered rural, which were mainly counties not located in the large metropolitan areas of the State such as Hennepin, Ramsey, and Olmstead counties.

For the nine providers participating in the study, individuals typically enroll in SNAP E&T through a reverse referral process. To make a reverse referral, providers identify individuals interested in their program and assess if they are already receiving SNAP. The providers then work with the county DHS eligibility workers, who screen and refer the SNAP participants to SNAP E&T. The nine providers offer individuals participating in SNAP E&T different support services and a variety of SNAP E&T components, such as job search training or career and technical education programs.

In 2023, the counties served by participating providers had around 50 total individuals receiving SNAP E&T services in any given month. Minnesota DHS staff and providers reported that many individuals participating in SNAP E&T experience barriers to work such as lack of access to reliable transportation, housing instability, mental health challenges, substance use, limited education or work history, or criminal history.

III. Overview of Intervention

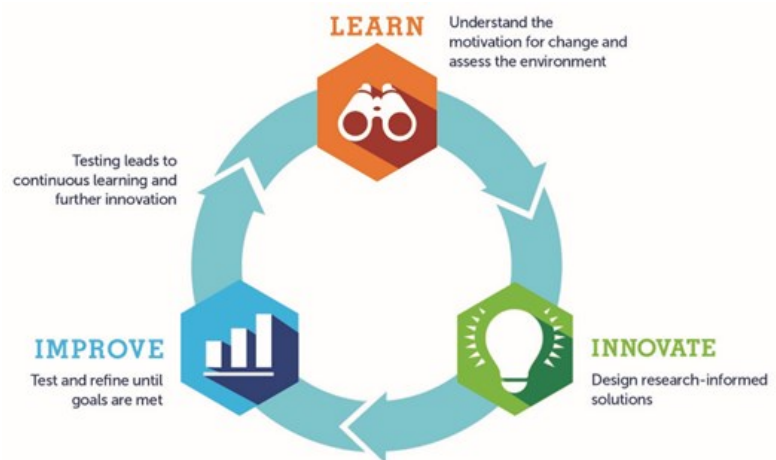
A. Intervention development

In July 2021, Mathematica began working with RCE participating providers to understand their SNAP E&T operations, identify challenges facing their programs, and develop potential solutions to test. The Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI²) model was used to guide providers through this process (Exhibit III.1). This was a collaborative, co-creative partnership between the Mathematica team and provider staff, in consultation with the SNAP E&T team from Minnesota DHS and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

During the Learn phase, Mathematica focused on assessing the needs of providers, the major challenges they faced, and the underlying causes of these challenges. Between July and September 2021, the Learn phase involved a series of brainstorming sessions and interactive activities that relied on human-centered design principles. The activities included rose-bud-thorn (having individuals name aspects of the program that were positive, areas for growth, or challenges), affinity clustering (sorting named aspects into categories), and problem tree analysis (working through the root causes and effects of challenges). Through this process, providers determined that the main challenge for their programs was the lack of engaging and persuasive messaging strategies for SNAP E&T recruitment.

The Innovate phase took place from September 2021 to January 2022. Mathematica worked with providers to identify and develop potential solutions to the primary challenges identified in the Learn

Exhibit III.1. Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI²) model



phase. Providers developed a detailed description of the changes needed to address recruitment challenges and generated a list of possible solutions. Proposed solutions were evaluated based on their estimated impact and the effort required to implement them. Providers then selected a text message intervention as the solution to test. Mathematica, the providers, and Minnesota DHS co-designed the text message intervention and the evaluation plan, which included a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to measure impact and an implementation study that assessed the intervention's design, operations, staff and participants' experiences, and replicability.

In the Improve phase, the proposed intervention was tested to identify any necessary changes. In August 2023, Minnesota DHS conducted a road test to assess if the intervention process worked as planned, which resulted in several small adjustments (described in section B) to the process after discussion with Minnesota DHS staff, provider staff, and SNAP participants. Minnesota launched the intervention in September 2023 and concluded it in January 2024.

B. Intervention overview

Minnesota identified recruitment and outreach as the highest-priority challenges to address through the RCE. These challenges primarily centered around the need to provide persuasive outreach messaging to individuals who are eligible for SNAP E&T services because existing outreach was limited to flyers, word of mouth, and other provider partner referrals. The intervention called for sending work registrants who resided in the counties served by participating providers a series of three text messages with behavioral nudges (small changes to a program, policy, system, or practice that are meant to influence the choices individuals make). The text messages were designed to encourage individuals to contact a SNAP E&T provider and enroll in the program. The primary goal of the evaluation was to assess the feasibility, effectiveness, and sustainability of this outreach strategy.

Before the road test, Minnesota DHS made two changes to the intervention design: excluding able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs)⁴ from the intervention and reducing the time interval between the texts. Although ABAWDs were initially included in the intervention, Minnesota DHS decided

Behavioral nudge concept

- **Mere exposure strategy:** Sending an initial message to increase the awareness of an offer before sending information about a formal offer
- **Endowed progress effect:** Encouraging the individual to reach a goal that they have already made progress towards
- **Endowment effect:** Highlighting an individual's ownership of something, which may increase the value placed on it and the likelihood of a positive response

Intervention groups

1. **Control group:** A SNAP work registrant, who is not an ABAWD, may learn about SNAP E&T through each provider's typical recruitment efforts, which may include word of mouth, flyers, or community partner referrals that are not specifically targeted to SNAP participants
2. **Treatment group:** A SNAP work registrant, who is not an ABAWD, receives a series of three text messages with behavioral nudges about enrolling in SNAP E&T ▲

⁴ ABAWDs are work registrants who are ages 18 to 52, able to work, and do not have any dependents. ABAWDs must meet both the general work requirement and an additional work requirement to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in three years. The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 temporarily increased the age limit from 49 to 52 in October 2023 and to 54 again on October 1, 2024; these changes end on October 1, 2030.

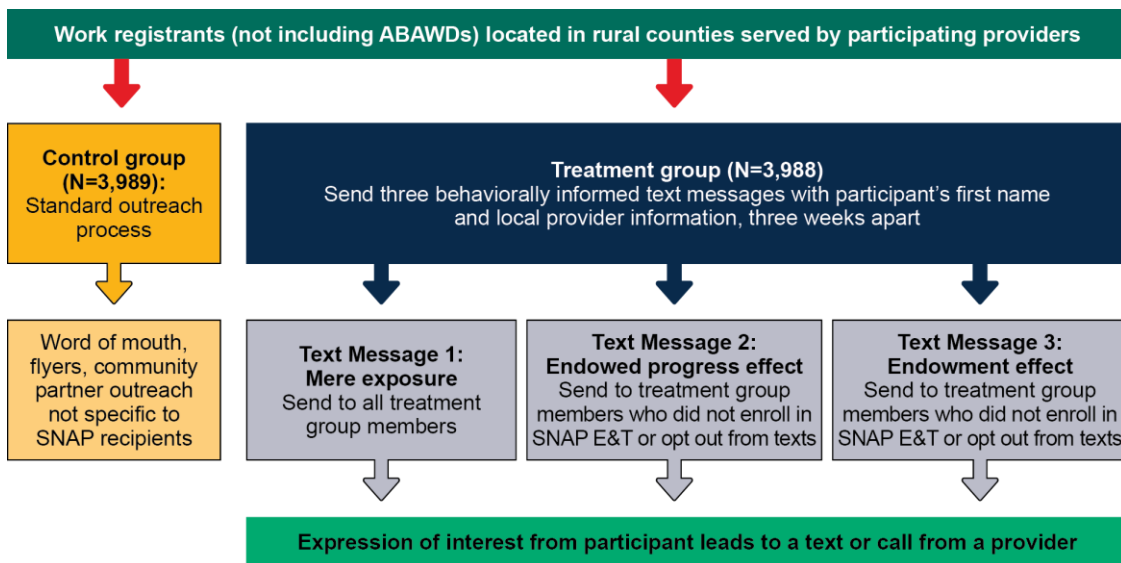
to exclude them given the reinstatement of ABAWD time limits at the end of the public health emergency in May 2023. (DHS conducted its own outreach to ABAWDs who were subject to the time limit using text messages, letters, and robocalls during the same period as the intervention.) In addition, Minnesota DHS changed the interval between texts from one month to three weeks. Due to the timing of other State policy changes and the messaging plan for ABAWDs, Minnesota DHS expressed concern that providers would be inundated with ABAWDs seeking SNAP E&T services at the same time as the intervention. To avoid this, Minnesota DHS modified the timing of the texts to fit the intervention into a window that worked around the ABAWD communication campaign. After the road test, Minnesota DHS also refined the process for how the State would send the text messages in the texting platform.

When the intervention began, individuals in the treatment group received three sequential text messages, each three weeks apart (see box on behavioral nudge concepts and intervention groups). The text message language (Appendix A) included behavioral nudges, was personalized with the work registrant’s first name, and shared the contact information for a local SNAP E&T provider based on the individual’s county of residence. The control group received existing outreach.

Individuals’ names, phone numbers, and counties of residence were uploaded into the texting platform to send the text messages. Minnesota DHS sent the text messages through the texting platform. Each provider had a unique log-in and could see lists of individuals receiving the intervention texts in their counties. The treatment group received the first text message on September 13, 2023, the second on October 4, 2023, and the third on October 25, 2023. If an individual enrolled in SNAP E&T or declined to be contacted again, they did not receive any subsequent text messages.

For individuals who responded via text to the intervention messages, providers could reply with a text message in the texting platform or by calling the individual. When an individual responded to an intervention text message or called a provider directly, provider staff determined the best approach for following up. Exhibit III.2 provides an overview of the intervention process.

Exhibit III.2. Intervention flow diagram



Note: Red arrows indicate points of random assignment.

C. Evaluation design

Mathematica conducted an RCT to estimate the impact of the intervention components on outcomes related to enrollment in SNAP E&T. The experimental design answers the following research questions:

- Which approach (the existing recruiting and outreach model or the text messaging intervention) yields the most enrollments in SNAP E&T within a 90-day observation window from when the final text was sent?
- Are there differential impacts for subgroups?

The evaluation also included an implementation study that assessed the intervention’s design and administration, the challenges encountered and solutions to address them, and participants’ experience with the intervention.

Mathematica collected and analyzed several types of data to support the intervention evaluation analyses:

1. **SNAP administrative data** describes demographic and economic characteristics of individuals at the time of or just prior to random assignment.
2. **SNAP E&T outcome data** and intervention tracking data measure SNAP E&T enrollment and responses to text outreach.
3. **Implementation data** describes staff and participant experiences with the intervention, lessons learned, and factors that facilitated or hindered successful implementation. Mathematica collected these data through staff interviews and participant focus groups.

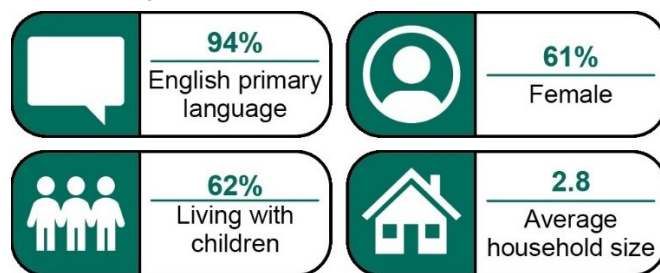
Additional detail on the data collected and evaluation methodology is available in the Technical Supplement to the SNAP E&T RCE final reports.

D. Characteristics of individuals in the analysis

Exhibit III.3 shows the key characteristics of the 7,989 treatment and control group members in the Minnesota rural counties analysis.

Most of the individuals’ primary language was English, with 1 percent reporting Spanish as their primary language and 5 percent reporting another language as their primary language. The average household size was 2.8, and about 62 percent of individuals in the analysis lived in a household with children.

Exhibit III.3. Baseline characteristics of individuals in the analysis



Source: SNAP administrative data.

Note: See Technical Supplement for additional characteristics.

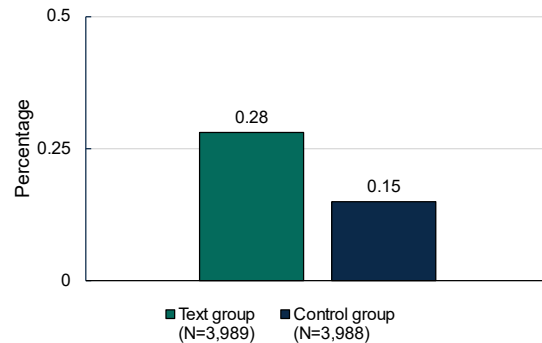
IV. Findings

A. Impact evaluation

Text messages increased the percentage of individuals who enrolled in SNAP E&T. Treatment group members, who received up to three text messages, enrolled in SNAP E&T at almost double the rate compared to control group members (0.28 versus 0.15 percent, respectively; Exhibit IV.1). This impact is promising despite not being statistically significant due to a very low enrollment rate in the control group.⁵

Impacts on SNAP E&T enrollment differed statistically across subgroups defined by race and ethnicity. Among individuals who were White, non-Hispanic, treatment group members were five times more likely than control group members to enroll in SNAP E&T (0.35 versus 0.07 percent; Appendix Table B.1). Furthermore, those who identified as a race or ethnicity other than Hispanic, White, or Black were almost twice as likely to enroll although the difference was not statistically significant.

Exhibit IV.1. Percentage of individuals who enrolled in SNAP E&T, by research group



Source: SNAP administrative data.

Note: Impacts not statistically significant from zero at the 0.10 level.

B. Implementation evaluation

The implementation evaluation assessed the intervention’s design and administration, the challenges encountered and solutions to address them, and SNAP participants’ experience.

1. Factors that facilitated or hindered successful implementation

Collaboration between Minnesota DHS, DEED, and providers contributed to successful implementation of the intervention. Providers reported that participating in the RCE process created a space to build their relationships with each other and with Minnesota DHS and DEED. Before the intervention, providers reported that they did not have a sense of connection with each other, and they appreciated the opportunity to collaborate and address shared challenges. Minnesota DHS and DEED staff were mindful of limiting burden on providers, which

“I thought the sessions where we worked with providers to come up with messages and talk through what would work and what wouldn't... were really good and really a nice way to build buy-in and hear from providers...I think that was a big advantage.”

— State staff member

⁵ The intervention design assumed an enrollment rate in the control group of around 30 percent without having access to county enrollment data. Because the actual enrollment rate was less than 1 percent, the intervention design was substantially underpowered or limited in its ability to detect statistically significant effects.

helped maintain provider buy-in throughout implementation. For example, Minnesota DHS coordinated and sent the intervention text messages, while Minnesota DEED and the study team regularly checked in with SNAP E&T providers about capacity concerns throughout the intervention.

Staff were concerned about provider capacity to respond to a large volume of messages or calls from individuals interested in SNAP E&T services and put strategies in place such as weekly check-ins with providers to assess capacity throughout the intervention. Most providers had a single staff member responsible for coordinating with individuals who expressed interest in SNAP E&T through the intervention, and these staff members were often able to dedicate only a portion of their time to SNAP E&T. Given the limited number of responses to the text messages, staff said that it was not a concern during the intervention but would have been had the response been stronger.

One of the challenges Minnesota faced in implementing the intervention was a general lack of awareness about SNAP E&T among SNAP participants. This was especially true because the intervention focused on non-ABAWD work registrants and providers thought that this population received little information about the program compared to ABAWDs who were automatically referred. Some providers reported that ABAWDs should have been included in the intervention and thought it would have improved the response since they were already being referred to the SNAP E&T program during this time.

Several providers reported that the limited SNAP E&T program component offerings in rural counties could not meet the needs of all individuals interested in SNAP E&T services. This created an additional challenge in increasing enrollments in SNAP E&T because the components offered did not meet individuals' needs. For example, one provider said that many SNAP participants were looking for trainings that would allow them to work remotely due to transportation barriers. That provider did not offer any trainings geared toward remote work opportunities. Another provider said that they offered classes on a set schedule and individuals in SNAP E&T would frequently lose interest or get a job while waiting for the classes to begin. Often, providers dual-enrolled individuals or referred them to other programs to address these service gaps, but options to address individuals' diverse needs in rural counties were limited.

2. Participant experience

Individuals in the treatment group shared their experiences of the intervention through two focus groups. The first focus group—referred to below as “non-engaged”—included individuals who received a text message, did not respond to the text, and were not enrolled in SNAP E&T. The second focus group—referred to below as “engaged”—included those who had engaged with the text messages either by responding to the text or by enrolling in SNAP E&T. Individuals in both focus groups shared a number of similar impressions of the intervention messaging and SNAP E&T.

Members of both focus groups expressed a general lack of understanding about what services SNAP E&T programs could offer. Most members in the non-engaged focus group had not heard about SNAP E&T before receiving the intervention text. Even among individuals who had heard about the program, many were unsure what participation entailed. For example, one individual who had initially heard about SNAP E&T in a brochure said, “They talked about what they could do for you and everything else, but they never explained really in plain terms or English how to go about it.” Whether individuals had never heard of SNAP E&T before or were familiar with the name only, they were generally unsure what

services were available, what participation would involve, and who would be providing services. For example, some members in the non-engaged focus group were unsure what the text message meant by “training.” Another focus group member asked if SNAP E&T was the same thing as the provider in their county.

Members of both focus groups shared an initial concern that intervention texts were spam. In the non-engaged focus group, thinking that the text was spam dissuaded some individuals from fully reading the message. Others in the focus group reported that they read the message but decided not to call the provider’s phone number or otherwise respond to the text. Although some members of the engaged focus group shared similar concerns, receiving the second or third text encouraged them to reach out to the contact information the text provided.

Focus group members had mixed opinions on getting information about SNAP E&T through text messages. About half of the focus group members said texting was effective and preferred to communicate via text. Those who preferred texting said that it was a modern and convenient method of communication. The remainder preferred to receive information about SNAP E&T via email, phone, or in-person. A few individuals were strongly opposed to receiving information about SNAP E&T via text, sharing that it felt impersonal or conveyed a lack of effort.

Focus group members emphasized the importance of support services and employers who could hire them. Members of the engaged focus group shared that SNAP E&T could be more helpful if it

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“The fact that it did say training, that told me that there’s further education, further information, further resources, and maybe some of them or one of them would apply to me online, so to speak. I mean, it’s not like I can drive every day 30 miles one way to the nearest town, and then that town doesn’t offer it. You have to go to larger communities, which is an hour and a half away from me.”

— Focus group member

//////
“...I first heard about [SNAP E&T] also in a text message. To be honest, the very first time I received the text message I thought it was just spam, but after you [sent a text message] a second time, I think I actually read the whole message and it made me call Tri-CAP in order to get more information, which actually led to me being signed up for a bunch more programs. ”

— Focus group member

offered more help with child care and transportation. An individual with a criminal history said that they were struggling to find a job because potential employers would reject them after running a background check and thought that strategies for addressing this with potential employers would be helpful. Members of the non-engaged focus group felt that SNAP E&T would be more helpful to them if the program had connections to employers and could actively help them get a job, especially if it were a job they wanted to work. Many focus group members reported that it was easy to find a “throwaway job,” but hard to find a “career job.”

V. Lessons Learned

The goal of the evaluation was to assess the feasibility, effectiveness, and sustainability of a text message outreach strategy with behavioral nudges targeting work registrants in rural Minnesota counties. Minnesota designed this outreach strategy to address the central challenges providers face with recruitment of SNAP participants to the SNAP E&T program. Although overall SNAP E&T enrollment rates remained low, enrollment nearly doubled as a result of the intervention and Minnesota DHS, DEED, and provider staff reported on several successful aspects of the intervention. Lessons learned from the evaluation include strengths that can be built upon, changes that would be required to scale or replicate the intervention, and resources needed to continue implementation.

A. What worked and can be built upon?

Several aspects of the intervention worked well and could be expanded. Most providers shared that texting was an exciting, innovative way to reach people who may be eligible for the services they offer. Providers also reported that they heard directly from individuals in their programs that text messages with positive language are a more impactful way to communicate with SNAP participants than texts that rely on punitive messaging. Providers agreed that the texting platform was easy to navigate and that the ability to respond to individuals via text message was helpful.

Providers also appreciated the intervention's ability to increase awareness of the SNAP E&T program through text messages, even if individuals did not end up enrolling in SNAP E&T. Providers suggested that even if an individual did not enroll in E&T immediately, if they know about the program, they may seek it out later when their circumstances change. Focus group members said that the intervention text message was often the first time many of them had heard about SNAP E&T and the services available to them. Some focus group members who received the text and did not engage with SNAP E&T reported that they appreciated knowing about the program and may come back to it later when the timing was better for them. Outreach for SNAP E&T is vital, and providers and focus group participants agreed that it would be more effective if SNAP participants learned about SNAP E&T during the SNAP application and recertification processes. When conducting outreach to these individuals, messages should be especially clear about what SNAP E&T is and how it can benefit SNAP participants.

The level of effort required from providers was appropriate for the scale of the intervention and their role in it. Providers appreciated that Minnesota DHS identified SNAP participants and sent the text messages, which allowed them to use their time to check incoming texts and respond directly to individuals in the intervention. Providers worried that had they received a great number of calls or individuals coming in for services, they would not have had sufficient staff, time, or resources to engage with individuals who expressed interest and enrolled in SNAP E&T.

The project also was a successful collaboration between State agencies and SNAP E&T providers. With a county-administered SNAP E&T program, communication between providers in different counties and State agencies was essential to design and implement a cohesive strategy for SNAP E&T outreach. Providers reported that prior to the RCE project, they did not have the opportunity or platform to meet consistently and share ongoing challenges. The RCE project gave providers the opportunity to collaborate and gain experience with other providers' services.

B. Changes needed for replicating the intervention and expanding its scale

Several lessons learned from the intervention will be helpful when considering how to implement similar efforts in the future. States need accurate and current data to best target SNAP E&T outreach to those who will benefit most from the program. The pool of work registrants, as defined by the Minnesota SNAP administrative data, included individuals that may have reasons for exemptions from work requirements. Throughout the intervention, work registrants in the treatment group responded to the text message or called providers and shared reasons that may qualify them for an exemption from work requirements. Providers reported that they would refer these SNAP participants to the county DHSs so that eligibility workers could update their exemption status. Some providers noted that a lack of in-person interaction between county eligibility workers and SNAP participants throughout the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to increased incorrect statuses as work registrants at eligibility and changes in circumstances that would have caused them to be exempt were not documented.

Not all provider staff had a strong enough understanding of SNAP E&T to communicate with individuals seeking information. Holding trainings and information sessions with staff across the organization about SNAP E&T basics or ensuring knowledgeable people are available to speak to clients is key for effective communication about the program. It is also important for the program leaders to understand how to tailor the text messages about the SNAP E&T program for rural areas, focusing on support and components that meet their needs.

C. Resources participating counties would need to continue the changes made through the intervention

Additional resources and staff capacity would be necessary for providers and the State to continue the intervention. To continue sending outreach text messages on a larger scale, monitoring text message responses, and managing any subsequent increase in SNAP E&T enrollment, providers suggested that they would need a current staff member to be dedicated full-time to SNAP E&T or they would need to hire one additional staff member to focus on SNAP E&T. Minnesota DHS also dedicated staff time to implement and manage the intervention during the study period. Any large-scale texting outreach would require up to one full-time staff member at each provider to manage it depending on the level of response, as well as time spent on coordination between Minnesota DHS, providers, and potentially county DHSs.

The texting platform would cost about \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year for ongoing use. The State would need to support any costs for maintenance or changes if they chose to continue using the platform; however, Minnesota DHS recently implemented its own texting platform, which will likely be used to send text messages in the future.

Appendix A.

SNAP E&T RCE Intervention Text Message Content

Exhibit A.1. Text messages

Purpose of the message	Message	Timing	Behavioral nudge concept
Introduce individuals to the SNAP E&T program and emphasize its potential to help them achieve their goals	This is the Department of Human Services. Hi [NAME], because you're on SNAP, [PROVIDER] can help you reach your employment and training goals. Call XXX-XXX-XXXX today to learn about SNAP E&T. If you do not want to receive messages, please reply with STOP	September 13, 2023	Mere exposure
Emphasize that SNAP E&T staff want to support individuals without the need for them to take many additional steps to enroll	Hi [NAME] - Since you're on SNAP, you're one step away from employment and training support from our team! Call XXX-XXX-XXXX today to learn about SNAP E&T services	October 4, 2023	Endowed progress effect
Increase the feeling of entitlement or ownership of the SNAP E&T program and reiterate that staff want to support them in getting employment or training support	Hi [NAME], your spot in our highly rated SNAP E&T program is waiting for you! Call XXX-XXX-XXXX to get employment and training support from [PROVIDER]	October 25, 2023	Endowment effect

Appendix B.

Supplemental Table

Table B.1. Impacts of behaviorally informed text messages on the percentage of individuals enrolled in SNAP E&T, overall and for key subgroups

	Treatment group (% enrolled)	Control group (% enrolled)	Difference
Full sample	0.28	0.15	0.13
Subgroup effects			
Gender			
Female	0.40	0.16	0.23
Not female	0.13	0.13	0.00
Race and ethnicity			
Hispanic	0.00	0.41	-0.42 [^]
Black, non-Hispanic	0.00	0.44	-0.45
White, non-Hispanic	0.35	0.07	0.28 ^{**}
Another race, non-Hispanic	0.39	0.20	0.19
Number of observations	3,989	3,988	

Source: SNAP administrative and SNAP E&T outcome data.

^{***}/^{**}/^{*} Difference between treatment and control group significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

^{^^^}/^{^^}/[^] Difference across subgroups significantly different at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

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