

GROWING AND STRENGTHENING SNAP E&T PROGRAMS



Overview

This resource provides a roadmap for State agencies as they consider growing or strengthening their SNAP E&T programs. It is an overview of the process and will be accompanied by a series of tools to support agencies.

To help you evaluate and grow your Employment and Training (E&T) program, FNS is developing a series of tools that together will help you determine if your Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) E&T program is meeting your goals and what changes are needed to operate an effective program. The following sections discuss the four parts of the series. As we develop additional tools to support you in understanding best practices and approaches for operationalizing each part of the series, we will post them on the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) website.



Part 1: Understanding your program

Each year, it is important to assess a variety of factors about your current program to determine if you are meeting your goals and the needs of both participants and the labor market. You may want to include this as part of the planning and development of your annual State SNAP E&T Plan, so any needed program changes are included in the plan for approval.

The process for understanding your program includes:

- 1. Assessing your current E&T program.** Review program data to understand the components and services that each provider has given (not just offered) and to how many participants. Also, look at the characteristics and locations of those participants to understand who your program is actually serving and how far (geographically) your program is reaching. If you are surprised by these data or do not feel your program is having the intended reach, you may need to investigate further as to why and make changes to your program.
- 2. Determining the interests and needs of your target population.** Although your program may offer robust services, you could find that many individuals are not participating or even enrolling in the program. This may be due to those you are targeting having different interests or goals from what is offered. A best practice is to use feedback from SNAP participants to inform your program design and offerings. Program participants can discuss what they liked, what drew them to the program, what did not work well, and what could be improved. Those who are eligible and do not participate can also provide valuable insights about why someone does not access the program at all and what could be changed to attract more people. Finding out what components and services are of interest to these groups and what their needs are will help you better design programs that are engaging and meet participants' needs.
- 3. Consulting with the workforce board and employers to understand labor markets.** Although participants' interests and needs are important factors in the E&T program's design, considerations of the labor market and employers' needs must also be reflected. The first step in this process should be to consult

with the local workforce board to better understand the current and future labor market. The workforce board can share data on high-demand and emerging industries by area within the State and has a deep understanding of the education and training landscape that support these industries. In addition, holding discussions directly with major employers and those who are in emerging industries can also help you better understand what skills they are looking for in an employee and how they may be able to partner with your program in training and hiring participants. These conversations will help you assess if there are gaps between the jobs your program is preparing participants for and where the labor market has the most need.



Part 2: Designing your program

Taking everything you learned about your program in Part 1, assess if you are meeting the mission and goals of your program. If your answer is “no,” then you should be making design changes to your program. This could be related to refining your vision for the program; expanding or eliminating certain components and services; selecting different or additional providers; or revising business processes. Tools such as the [Road to Engagement](#) can help you understand how to approach redesigning your program to meet the needs of participants.



Part 3: Selecting providers to meet your program's needs

The quality of your SNAP E&T providers is a major factor in the success of your program. As you assess your program, you should periodically review the mix of providers to ensure they offer a variety of services. For existing and new providers, you should be considering if they are the right provider for your specific program. Not all providers will be a good match for SNAP E&T or for your program's needs. Identifying providers that are a good fit takes time and a clear understanding of your program's mission and participants' needs.



Part 4: Monitoring programs and analyzing data

Data are essential for you to assess if your program is meeting its goals and to make decisions about improvements and program changes. Having access to individual-level data in real or near-real time will allow you to know if providers are operating programs as intended and effectively serving participants. Data can also be used to determine if your providers are meeting the outcomes you expect.

Additionally, effective analysis of your data gives you the tools to make immediate program changes and to identify gaps where longer-term program improvements are needed to meet participant and employer needs. Reviewing and analyzing data should be a continuous process and underlies the other parts of the process discussed above.

Next steps

The intent of this series is to provide practical tools and resources for State agencies to use in growing and strengthening their SNAP E&T programs. This will be an ongoing series and we will be developing and releasing new targeted tools to help you implement the four parts of this approach. If you have ideas for tools that you would find helpful, please share your feedback with your Regional Office contact.

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Revised July 2025

Produced by Mathematica for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and revised from its original version published March 2023 for compliance with EO 14151. This document does not provide official policy guidance. FNS has published other materials on these topics that are available on the FNS website. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.