



SNAP E&T Pilots Summary of Key Findings and Considerations July 2023

Background

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) authorized \$200 million for 10 pilot projects to test innovative strategies to increase employment and reduce the need for SNAP among SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program participants. California, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Mississippi, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington began implementing pilots in early 2016 and concluded by mid-2019. [A rigorous evaluation](#) included an analysis of the pilots' design and implementation, services received, effectiveness on improving participant outcomes, and costs and benefits.

Key Findings and Lessons

All pilots increased participation in employment or training-related activities. The pilots increased participation by 8 to 38 percentage points, but individuals participated in job search or job readiness programs more often than occupational skills training, basic education, or work-based learning in most pilots. Pilot participants completed activities at higher rates, from 7 to 26 percentage points.

Service design likely affected rates of take-up and completion. After [implementing pilot services](#), several sites realized their model was not working as planned and affected how individuals engaged in activities. For example, some pilots had multiple “hand-offs” or up-front requirements before individuals could enter employment, education, and training activities; participants faced lengthy waiting periods before they could start education or training activities due to a mismatch in participant flow and available services; or the program provided only one pathway for everyone, which did not allow for individual needs or interests. As a result, take up rates of some activities were lower than expected, and some individuals did not progress through the program or left before completing.

Earnings and employment increased for some pilots. The pilot services led to an increase in earnings by about \$2,000 to \$4,000 in 3 pilots (California, Mississippi, and Virginia). In four pilots (Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, and Vermont), the pilot services increased employment by 4 to 6 percentage points.

Work-based learning (WBL) led to longer engagement in SNAP E&T and higher employment and earnings. Across the four pilots that implemented robust WBL activities, 23% of individuals started [WBL](#). These participants stayed in the pilot an average of two months longer than those not in WBL and were more likely to participate in and complete other activities, such as occupational skills training. They also had long-term increases in employment and earnings—WBL led to a 5 percentage point increase in employment three years after enrolling in the pilot and increased earnings by \$1,399.

In mandatory programs, about 19 to 24% of individuals were sanctioned and had lower earnings, employment, and SNAP participation than those who were not sanctioned. Most [sanctions](#) happened in the first six months and those who were sanctioned were less likely to be employed (5 to 6 percentage point lower), earned about \$1,300 to \$2,100 less, and were less likely to be enrolled in SNAP (17 percentage points lower) than those who were not sanctioned after the second year of the pilot.

Pilot Considerations for Improving SNAP E&T

The pilots offered several planning and implementation lessons that provide considerations for improving SNAP E&T programs in the future.

SNAP agencies must “own” the E&T program. Although SNAP agencies can obtain help in operating their programs through partnerships with providers, the SNAP agency is ultimately responsible for

[administering and overseeing the E&T program](#). In the pilots, State agency oversight varied: some were very involved, while others were more hands off and felt that providers knew best how to deliver services. Eventually, most grantees agreed that even when working with highly experienced providers, States had to take more ownership of their programs and became more involved in the day to day operations, including developing policy and procedures for providers; clearly communicating the overall vision for the program; holding frequent meetings with and providing technical assistance to providers; and overseeing and monitoring providers' performance through onsite visits and data reports. The pilots that hired dedicated staff to manage E&T operations were most successful in accomplishing this.

Engagement in SNAP E&T requires direct recruitment. Because of the robust services offered through the pilots, many grantees initially thought no direct recruitment would be needed. However, the grantees faced the same challenges that many SNAP E&T programs face in attracting SNAP participants to their programs. Relying on referrals from SNAP certification interviews, word of mouth, or reverse referrals from providers was not sufficient. In particular, although eligibility staff must screen and refer SNAP participants to E&T programs, relying primarily on them to recruit for SNAP E&T was not found to be a best practice. Eligibility staff have limited time during interviews and generally did not have the training needed to effectively recruit participants. In addition, eligibility staff are not clear on eligibility for SNAP E&T and frequently believe E&T is only for ABAWDs to meet work requirements. As a result, they may not target the program widely and might discuss it as a requirement instead of an opportunity. Given this, the pilots revised their [approaches for recruitment](#), including dedicating pilot resources and staff for this purpose. However, under the regular program, States cannot use E&T funding for staff to recruit and make referrals; E&T funding can be used only once a person is in the E&T program.

Fewer funding constraints under the pilots allowed for more flexibility. The grantees could use the pilot grants to fully fund most of their service providers' costs, which eliminated the need for providers to identify a 50% funding match with non-Federal dollars. Due to limited 100% grant funding, providers that do not have access to non-Federal funds or have limited non-Federal funds, such as small providers that serve underserved populations or rural areas, may find it challenging to become an E&T provider.

Pilots were also able to fully fund a robust set of [participant reimbursements](#), rather than relying on 50% reimbursement funds. This was key to attracting individuals to the programs and keeping them engaged. Those eligible for SNAP E&T face extensive and multiple barriers to engagement and employment. Participant reimbursements are a way to address and mitigate those material barriers, such as transportation, housing, childcare, clothing, or eyeglasses.

Reducing hand-off points may increase engagement. Some of the pilots operated models that extended the intake processes, including requiring orientations with many steps and visits to multiple organizations or locations. Significant drop-off occurred between each additional required activity. Reducing the number of hand-offs between organizations and not sending people to multiple locations helps develop consistency and builds trust with participants, which can result in fewer people exiting the program early.

WBL can be used as a tool to keep participants engaged and continuing to build critical job skills. WBL was a useful strategy to help individuals secure immediate employment while keeping them engaged and building the skills needed to progress to higher paying jobs. Under the pilots, E&T participants' earnings from WBL were not counted as income for SNAP benefits while participating in E&T. Current regulations do not allow for this and would make it difficult for States to implement similar efforts as effectively.

SNAP E&T Pilots Links

[Pilot announcement](#)

[Interim Reports](#)

[Final Reports](#)

Issue Briefs

- [Implementing the SNAP E&T Pilots: Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned](#)
- [Provision of Support Services to Reduce Barriers in the 10 SNAP E&T Pilots](#)
- [Diversity of Case Management Approaches in the SNAP E&T Pilots](#)
- [Considerations for Administering SNAP E&T Programs](#)
- [Effective Recruitment Strategies for the SNAP E&T Programs](#)
- [Considerations for Providing SNAP E&T through Community Colleges](#)
- [Effectiveness of Work-based Learning for SNAP E&T](#)
- [Sanctions in SNAP E&T Mandatory Programs](#)
- [Finding Work after Occupational Skills Training](#)
- [Drivers of Participation in Selected SNAP E&T Activities](#)