

Prospective provider packet

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Minnesota Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program. It is an exciting time to be part of SNAP E&T as efforts are underway to expand employment and training opportunities serving a wider range of SNAP recipients.

How do we do this? By utilizing collaborative partnerships. The state and its partners — federal, state, county, tribal, educational and community based organizations, among others — are working together to prepare Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients for the workforce by strengthening their skills, helping them find employment and decreasing their dependency on public assistance. Success is built on the foundation of a strong, collaborative culture among partners.

Information presented in this document will help you understand SNAP E&T and provide more clarity when making the decision to participate.

****While this is a general overview for prospective providers, not all of the information in this packet is applicable to Tribal governments. For more information related to operation of a SNAP E&T program by a Tribal Nation, contact Lynn Dahn at lynn.dahn@state.mn.us.**



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What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training program?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program helps participants improve their employment prospects and wage potential through participation in job search, training, education, workfare or skills development activities. The goal is to assist participants in obtaining a livable wage, leading toward self-sufficiency. The program provides orientation, assessment, development of an employment plan, training, and support services to help participants prepare for, enter, and advance in the workplace.

The federal government requires each state to develop and implement an employment and training program for supplemental nutrition assistance program recipients. States have the flexibility to shape the size and scope of their programs.

In Minnesota, SNAP E&T is administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) in close partnership with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The program requires an annual State Plan be developed reflecting service strategies and coordination of services. SNAP E&T participants and services are tracked by Minnesota's statewide workforce center system, Workforce One (WF1). Eligibility for benefits are determined by counties and tribes using the automated eligibility system, MAXIS.

The state offers employment and training services to all SNAP recipients who are not also receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance. Minnesota operates an all-voluntary SNAP E&T program, exempting all work registrants, including Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), from mandatory participation in SNAP E&T. ABAWDs are SNAP recipients between the ages of 18 to 50, have no dependents under age 18, and are considered mentally and physically fit for work. Some ABAWDs, referred to as time-limited SNAP recipients, are subject to a work and time-limit provision where they are eligible for SNAP benefits for only three months in a thirty-six (36) month period, unless they meet a minimum work requirement.

Impact of the SNAP Employment and Training program

To reach and serve a larger portion of participants, Minnesota has been building the capacity to leverage more and more funds via federal financial participation. This strategy identifies non-federal dollars, including state, local or philanthropic, to provide training and support to SNAP recipients, and seek a 50 percent reimbursement. The [50% reimbursement funding](#) chart gives a summary on the funding requirements and how it works.

**Tribal governments may be reimbursed up to 75% for administrative, program, and support service costs related to SNAP E&T participants who reside on Tribal land; participants do not have to be an enrolled Tribal member. Community based organizations and community colleges, including Tribal Colleges, serving primarily American Indians may also be reimbursed up to 75% for expenses related to SNAP E&T participants who reside on Tribal land. It is the responsibility of the grantee to retain this documentation for audit purposes.

To implement this approach, the state continues to establish partnerships, identifying sources of non-federal funding and developing third party reimbursement processes. This packet provides guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of providers interested in delivering SNAP E&T services.

Provider roles and responsibilities

Providers are responsible for delivering SNAP E&T services directly to recipients. These services include orientation, assessment, employment plan, allowable activities, and support services.

Providers are responsible for tracking costs, maintaining records, and invoicing according to federal and state regulations. In the third-party provider reimbursement model, a provider puts forth the cost of program operations, including assessment, case management, SNAP E&T activities, and support services. Provider funds used to leverage the SNAP E&T program funds cannot originate from a federal source (with the exception of Community Development Block Grant funds) and cannot supplant another funding source. The Minnesota Department of Human Services then reimburses the provider at 50 percent of allowable SNAP E&T expenditures.

Services and activities

SNAP E&T services are designed to help participants prepare for and move into employment. Diversity in educational levels and challenges among SNAP recipients requires a continuum of program and support services to help E&T participants succeed. In the past few years, labor market statistics have prompted a greater focus on skills development training that responds to local employer needs. While providers are not required to offer all of these services, the following is a comprehensive list of Minnesota's SNAP E&T allowable components.

The document, [SNAP E&T Components and Activities](#), will provide more in-depth information on each component.

Orientation

The Employment Services Provider (ESP) must provide an orientation to the SNAP E&T program for all participants; this demonstrates program intentionality. The purpose of the orientation is to explain participation requirements, describe available services, identify the ESP, explain that SNAP E&T can help time-limited SNAP recipients meet their eligibility and work requirements, and encourage the participant to move toward self-sufficiency through employment and training.

Assessment and employment plan

SNAP E&T services may begin as early as the date Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility is approved. SNAP E&T services must include an employability assessment and Employment Plan (EP). The employability assessment and EP must be done in consultation with the participant.

The purpose of an employability assessment is to collect and evaluate information to identify a participant's employment goals, barriers, and support service needs. The information collected from this assessment is the basis for the EP. The assessment must consider:

- Literacy level (see NOTE below)
- Ability to communicate in the English language
- Education and employment histories
- Employment related skills and abilities

- Barriers to employment.

The state does not require that a particular form be used for recording the results of the assessment. Providers may develop and utilize their own forms for this purpose or may record relevant information in a standard location in the case record.

NOTE: Literacy testing may be routinely included as part of the assessment, but is not required. The provider should use available information about the participant (for example, how applications and other forms are completed, the participant's speech, participant disclosure, reports from other sources) to determine the participant's literacy and reading capabilities. The participant's literacy capabilities should be a factor in determining appropriate activities.

Supervised job search

Supervised Job Search is a component in which the participant is primarily engaged in actively applying for work, building connections with prospective employers, and/or attending hiring events and other networking opportunities. Supervised job search activities must have a direct link to increasing the employment opportunities of individuals engaged in the activity. Participants may conduct these activities at any location appropriate to the activity, including, but not limited to their home, job sites, public facilities, or their SNAP E&T provider locations. However, participants must report activities and hours through sign-in sheets, email records, phone, mobile app, or another state-approved method at least once per week. Providers must retain a record of dates and hours of job search activity as well as a summary of job search activities performed (including the date, time, activity type, positions applied for (if any), and any application barriers that may have arisen).

Providers must establish, in consultation with the participant, individual goals for the number of applications or contacts made each month. This standard should take into account the participant's location and barriers. Providers must demonstrate through case notes or other means that they have engaged in regular meaningful communication with the participant about their job search.

Supervised Job Search focuses on searching for and applying for jobs with direct supervision, and is not intended to be a long-term activity.

Job search training

Job Search Training is a component that strives to enhance the job search skills of participants by providing instruction and mentoring in job seeking techniques, increasing motivation and self-confidence for work, and understanding employer needs. Job search training activities are approvable if they directly enhance the employability of the participants. A direct link between the job search training activities and job-readiness must be established. The component may consist of employability assessments, job placement services, one-on-one case management to reduce employment barriers, application assistance, and training in aspects of the job search process including resume writing, interviewing, appropriate dress, social skills, and using job search technology. Job Search Training is not intended to be a long-term activity.

Workfare

Workfare is a work component in which SNAP recipients perform work in a private or public non-profit agency as a condition of eligibility. In lieu of wages, workfare participants receive compensation in the form of their household's monthly benefit allotment. The primary goal of workfare is to improve employability and encourage individuals to move into regular employment while returning something of value to the community. Workfare assignments cannot replace or prevent the employment of regular employees and assignments must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regular employees performing comparable work for comparable hours. The maximum number of hours of work each month is determined by dividing the household's SNAP benefit allotment by the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher (in Minnesota, the higher state minimum wage of large employers must be used). The county agency or Employment Services Provider (ESP) must round the number of hours arrived at through this computation down to the next full hour. For time-limited participants, the work requirement is considered to be met when the maximum number of hours are obtained. This component requires the provider to enter into a worksite agreement which specifies days/hours of work and responsibilities of the participant and supervisor.

Work experience

A work experience program is designed to improve the employability of household members through actual work experience or training, or both, and to enable people employed or trained under such programs to move promptly into regular public or private employment. Work experience assignments may not replace the employment of a regularly employed person and they must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regularly employed people performing comparable work for comparable hours. Work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. Work experience may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate, and consistent with other laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Work experience may be arranged within the private for-profit sector, the non-profit sector, or the public sector. A time-limited participant who is participating in work experience would still need to meet the 80-hour requirement with work, work program participation or a combination of work and work program participation.

Work based learning

Work based learning is a component comprised of structured work activities, including on-the-job training (OJT), pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship, internship, and transitional jobs, that combine in some form education and/or training and work. Unlike regular employment, this requires an additional structured activity (beyond regular work hours).

Educational programs

Educational programs are a component that improves basic skills or otherwise improves employability. Only educational components that establish a direct link to job-readiness will be approved, although programs that involve articulated career pathways or stackable credentials that ultimately lead to employment are encouraged and allowed.

Classroom training and educational activities may be supported, but are limited to a 2-year associate degree or lesser. This may include prerequisite courses (other than a remedial course) that meet the requirements of a career or technical education program.

Self-employment training

Self-Employment Training is a component that improves the employability of participants by providing training in setting up and operating a small business or other self-employment venture. Participants receive technical assistance in developing business plans and in creating financial marketing plans, and also learn how to access small business grants and other business support services.

Job retention services

Job retention services provided to SNAP E&T participants who have secured employment after participating in another E&T component; only individuals who have received other employment and/or training services under the E&T program are eligible for job retention services. Individuals must have received SNAP benefits in the month of or the month prior to starting job retention services. This component is meant to help participants who have secured employment achieve satisfactory performance, retain employment, or to increase earnings over time.

Support services

Support services are designed to assist participants in overcoming barriers that prevent them from engaging in employment and training components. These services can include transportation assistance, safety clothing, temporary housing and utility assistance, personal hygiene and grooming, school supplies, and tools or equipment needed to secure employment.

Potential provider capacity checklist

There are four primary factors the state considers when evaluating the capacity of a potential SNAP E&T provider. The administrative requirements of an E&T program can be strenuous for smaller agencies. Potential providers are evaluated on their capacity to assess and enroll participants in appropriate activities, track and record participant progress, track costs and accurately invoice for reimbursement. They are evaluated on their ability to improve participants' chances for individual success by helping to remove barriers to employment. Potential providers will be evaluated using the following categories (as sovereign nations, the following may not be applicable to Tribal governments):

Business capacity

- Does your agency have the legal right to conduct business with the state of Minnesota or the federal government? (This includes having a current business license, valid DUNS number and not having a prohibition/restriction to contract with government.)
- Has your agency had any lawsuits filed or pending investigations against it in the last 10 years?
- Has your agency failed to complete a contractual obligation, received a termination of contract for default, or been the recipient of a tax lien by either the federal government or state of Minnesota in the past 10 years?
- What partnerships does your agency have with current SNAP E&T providers or agencies that provide related services?

Service capacity

- Does your agency offer appropriate and allowable employment and training activities and/or related support services listed in the “Services and activities a Provider can offer” section, or will it have to create new activities for SNAP E&T participants? If yes, how many years has your agency offered these services?
- Is your agency able to recruit and assess its own participants? Service providers may partner with another agency that will provide referrals for support services.
- Does your agency market to specific demographics (i.e., limited-English speakers, homeless, minorities, etc.)?
- What percent (approximately) of your current and potential clients are SNAP recipients or households with low incomes potentially eligible for SNAP?
- What geographical areas of Minnesota does your agency market to and provide services?
- Is your agency aligned with local labor market and employers needs leading to living-wage employment? (Living-wage typically means not having to rely on public benefits.)
- Does your agency provide (or have the ability to develop) support for newly employed participants such as resolution of on-the-job issues and support services (i.e. retention services)?
- What support services/participant reimbursements (transportation vouchers, clothing and books) can your agency provide?

Data/Information systems capacity

- Does your agency have the capacity to communicate electronically, including using the WorkForce One (WF1) system and secure email?
- Does your agency have the staff resources to regularly enter data into the WF1 system, including monthly case notes that report participant progress?

Financial capacity

- Does your agency have funding available for employment and training services that are:
 - Nonfederal
 - Not committed as a match for other federally funded programs
 - Available throughout the federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30)?
- Does your agency have the cash flow for upfront costs to support a SNAP E&T program? Will your agency be able to handle delays between outlays and reimbursement? Contractors must pay for services first then bill the department for 50 percent reimbursement of incurred expenses.
- As all SNAP E&T funds are federal sub-recipient awards, are you willing to participate in any required federal audits, visits or other mandated reporting requirements?
- Does your agency already allocate costs to other federal, state or local grants?

- Does your agency’s cost allocation plan charge all grants consistently? What is the cost allocation method your agency uses or would use for SNAP E&T?
- Does your agency have the capacity to track and invoice for staff time spent on the SNAP E&T program? (Partner agencies must keep time records in order to bill for staff.)
- Does your agency have the capacity to prepare and submit monthly or quarterly invoices based on SNAP E&T participation and program expenditure data? What procedures/policies are in place for invoicing?

Becoming a SNAP Employment and Training provider

To learn about grants, requests for proposals (RFPs) and requests for information (RFIs) issued by the Department of Human Services, or to receive an email when new opportunities become available, [subscribe to the Grants and RFPs email list](#).

Funding for SNAP E&T is secured by the Minnesota Department of Human Services from the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service, through an annual state SNAP Employment and Training Plan. The state plan is submitted in early August to be approved for the subsequent federal fiscal year, beginning October 1. An approved plan must be in place before the state can implement a SNAP E&T program. After federal approval, the plan could be amended where changes emerge.

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