

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T)

Short Summary of Provisions Under 2014 Farm Bill

February 2014

The SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program was created in 1985 to help families exit SNAP by become self-sufficient through work. Each state is required to administer a SNAP E&T program—which may include such services as job search assistance, work experience, and job training—but have broad flexibility to decide who can or must participate, and may opt to administer an all-volunteer program. However, states must provide supportive services such as child care and transportation assistance if SNAP recipients are required to participate in an E&T program.

Skills are a critical component of economic success, particularly in today's economy—two in three jobs created in the next decade are expected to require at least some postsecondary education or training. Yet in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, four out of five SNAP households did not include anyone with education beyond high school, while an estimated one-third of households did not even include a high school graduate. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that limited education and work histories make it hard for SNAP E&T participants to obtain employment.

Although SNAP E&T has the potential to provide extremely robust services and supports to a population that is often difficult to serve through other workforce development programs, historically the program has been significantly underutilized by most states. Recently, though, there has been growing interest in SNAP E&T at both the state and federal level as policymakers acknowledge the importance of job training in helping SNAP recipients move into stable employment and, ultimately, off of SNAP.

As states and local communities have begun expanding SNAP E&T programs, it has become clear that more can be done at the federal level to promote and support these efforts. The 2014 Farm Bill makes a number of important changes to SNAP E&T that should ultimately strengthen and improve the program, including:

- Ensuring that federal funds are allocated quickly and efficiently to states expanding and improving their E&T programs;
- Increasing state and federal performance monitoring, to establish a baseline policymakers can use to inform funding and programmatic decisions and training providers can use to continuously strengthen programs; and
- Piloting projects to expand understanding of the most effective ways to improve the employability and wages of SNAP participants.



Employment and Training (Section 4022, effective upon enactment, with a timeline for the Secretary to select pilots within one year and issue guidance on E&T monitoring within 18 months.)

States are required to operate E&T programs for SNAP participants who are not working or are underemployed. States receive federal funding for such activities as well as federal matching funds for state-funded expenditures. Within federal rules, states have flexibility to design their SNAP E&T programs — for example, what services the programs offer, whether the program is voluntary or mandatory, and how the state sanctions participants for noncompliance. Federal funding for SNAP E&T equaled \$386 million in FY 2012, consisting of \$79 million in grants allocated to all states, \$20 million in grants to states that provide E&T services to all individuals who otherwise would be subject to SNAP’s three-month time-limit, and \$287 million matched by states for E&T expenditures, including additional work programs and assistance with child care and transportation costs that some recipients must incur in order to work or to participate in a work program.

The 2014 Farm Bill strengthens SNAP E&T through several changes that represent a significant reform of the program. The bill makes three major modifications to the SNAP E&T program.

1. **Pilot Projects to Test Innovative Strategies.** The Farm Bill allows up to ten states to receive additional funding to test E&T strategies designed to enable more SNAP participants to obtain unsubsidized employment, raise SNAP participants’ earnings, and reduce their reliance on public assistance. The types of E&T programs states could operate includes any existing SNAP E&T components and services, as well as work and education and training programs allowed under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The Secretary of Agriculture will select a variety of projects from among the states that apply. For example, the Secretary is instructed to select projects that are in different geographic areas, test a variety of education and training services, target a range of types of SNAP participants (those with low skills, working individuals, and those subject to the three-month time limit), and are both mandatory and optional for participants. The projects are to last no more than three years and will include a rigorous, independent evaluation of the impact on participants’ employment, earnings, and other measures of well-being.

The pilot projects would operate within the structure of current SNAP E&T rules (except that some additional TANF-authorized activities will be permitted), including which SNAP participants would be exempt from requirements and states’ options to sanction participants for noncompliance. The bill makes \$200 million available for the pilot projects, the independent evaluation, and related administrative costs.



2. **E&T Reporting and Monitoring.** The Farm Bill requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to expand efforts to monitor state E&T programs and assess their effectiveness. USDA, in collaboration with the Department of Labor, is instructed to develop reporting measures for states to help identify which programs improve participants' skills, employment, and earnings. The measures must reflect the challenges facing SNAP E&T participants, who tend to have lower education and skills than participants in other existing workforce training programs. Also, states and USDA will more regularly report on the effectiveness of E&T programs. Finally, USDA is now required to evaluate states' employment and training programs on a regular basis.
3. **Additional Funding for E&T.** The Farm Bill restores 100 percent funding to \$90 million a year (up from the current \$79 million). The agreement also would allocate these funds more efficiently by allowing them to remain available for two years (rather than 15 months) and requiring USDA to reallocate the money from states that are not spending it quickly to those that can make use of it to enhance their E&T programs. The current funding structure for SNAP E&T—including the 50-50 funds—is retained under the bill.