



Skills-Based SNAP Employment and Training Policy

TOOLKIT SUMMARY

PART OF NSC'S SKILLS EQUITY AGENDA



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Skills-Based SNAP Employment and Training

WHY STATES SHOULD ADOPT A SKILLS-BASED SNAP E&T POLICY

In order to move out of poverty, many SNAP participants need better access to training and the services that support it, like transportation, child care, and books and supplies. Seventy percent of long-term SNAP recipients have no education beyond high school and half have less than a high school education.¹ Skills-based SNAP E&T programs can expand low-income people's access to credentials that lead to family supporting careers by combining education, occupational training, and key support services.

States must operate a SNAP E&T program, but can choose to offer a range of SNAP E&T activities, from job search and workfare to vocational training and postsecondary education. Few states offer a skills-based program. To utilize the program's full potential, states should establish a policy directing their SNAP E&T agency to adopt a skills-based approach.

By adopting state policies that promote skills-based SNAP E&T programs, states policy leaders can:

- Expand SNAP participants' access to skills, credentials, and family supporting careers;
- Help state agencies develop the infrastructure necessary to pivot to a skills-based approach to SNAP E&T;
- Use the unique funding structure of the SNAP E&T program to leverage federal, state, and community resources to provide high-quality services to more people;
- Help employers find qualified workers by training SNAP participants for skilled jobs; and
- Demonstrate national policy leadership by advancing a skills-based approach to SNAP E&T emphasized by WIOA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

COMPONENTS OF A MODEL SKILLS-BASED SNAP E&T POLICY

Model skills-based SNAP E&T policies should:

- Establish skill building as an integral part of the SNAP E&T program's vision;
- Make participation in SNAP E&T voluntary so the program can focus on providing services to participants who are ready to build their skills;
- Require the state SNAP E&T agency to create a strategic plan and timeline for developing a skills-based SNAP E&T program, starting with a pilot program. The plan should be guided by a planning group comprising public agencies and community organizations with expertise in education, training, and other services for low-income people;
- Assign a staff person to manage the strategic planning process and pilot program; and
- Set a deadline for pilot program launch and inclusion in the state SNAP E&T plan.

WHAT IS A SKILLS-BASED SNAP E&T PROGRAM?

SNAP E&T

agencies can partner with community colleges, community-based organizations, and others to provide a combination of education, training, and support services that put participants on a pathway to a career.



In this "third-party partnership model," SNAP E&T agencies contract with partners who use eligible non-federal funds to provide education, training, and certain support services. Partners then receive federal reimbursements for up to 50 percent of these costs.

ENDNOTES

¹ USDA SNAP to Skills. Why Now is the Time for States to Build Their SNAP E&T Programs. April 2016, available at www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/snap/S2SBrief1_NowIsTheTimeforBuildingSNAPETPrograms.pdf

EXAMPLES FROM THE STATES

WASHINGTON's Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) Program provides the nation's premiere example of skills-based SNAP E&T. Through third-party partnerships with each of the state's thirty-four community colleges and more than thirty community-based organizations, BFET provides postsecondary education, training, and support services to SNAP participants who volunteer for the E&T program. Washington used a pilot program to launch BFET in the Seattle area with guidance from a planning group made up of state and local agency staff, community-based organizations, and the local community college. The pilot program resulted in a strategic plan that provided the foundation for BFET's statewide expansion.

Examples of steps other states are taking toward skills-based SNAP E&T:

- **MARYLAND's** Department of Human Resources recently adopted a vision for its SNAP E&T program that focuses on skill building. To support this vision, the state shifted from a mandatory program to an all-voluntary program. It is now reorganizing agency resources and activities to pilot skills-based partnerships.



- **CONNECTICUT's** Department of Social Services developed the capacity to create new third-party partnerships by dedicating 90 percent of two staff members' time to further expanding its skills-based program.

- Hennepin and Ramsey Counties in **MINNESOTA** created a SNAP E&T resource map for their area that will serve as a basis for identifying potential third-party providers and funding sources eligible for 50 percent reimbursement grants.



ABOUT NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION'S SKILLS EQUITY AGENDA

National Skills Coalition is advocating for states to adopt a set of policies that expand equitable access to middle-skill training, credentials, and careers – particularly for those who have faced barriers to economic opportunity.

This effort includes scans of all fifty states to ascertain whether states have the policies in place to expand access to skills. NSC has also developed toolkits that provide resources, including model legislation, for policymakers and advocates to advance a skills equity agenda in their state. NSC's skills equity agenda includes state policies on Job-Driven Financial Aid, SNAP E&T, Stackable Credentials, Alignment, Integrated Education and Training, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Employment and Training.

Read more about NSC's Skills Equity Agenda and download the full toolkit at nationalskillscoalition.org/skillsequity



Skills-Based SNAP Employment and Training Policy LEGISLATIVE TEMPLATE

This template can be used to develop legislation that promotes a skills-based SNAP E&T program. It can also be used to inform an executive order or administrative policy instead of legislation.

SEC. 1: INTENT

The legislature intends that building the skills of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients shall be a central mission of the state's SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program. The purposes of this Act are to:

- Establish a skills-based SNAP E&T program that helps SNAP E&T participants develop their skills so they can enter and maintain self- and family-supporting employment.
- Leverage eligible state, local, and philanthropic resources to obtain federal 50 percent reimbursement grants for skills-based SNAP E&T.

To these ends, this Act establishes the SNAP E&T pilot program with the intent to expand the program statewide.

SEC. 2: DEFINITIONS

As used in this Act:

- a. Department means the [name of the state agency that administers SNAP E&T];
- b. Third-party partnership means an agreement between the Department and another organization to provide education, training, or support services for SNAP E&T participants.

SEC. 3: SNAP E&T PILOT PROGRAM

The Department shall convene a skills-based SNAP E&T planning committee. The committee shall include representatives of [the state board with oversight of community colleges], the Workforce Administrative Agency, local workforce development boards, community colleges, and non-profit organizations that provide employment and training services for low-income individuals, and may include representatives of other organizations. In consultation with the advisory committee the Department shall:

- a. Identify workforce development programs and resources that could serve as potential providers of education, training, and support services for SNAP E&T participants, including resources that could be reimbursed by funds from the United States Department of Agriculture;
- b. Identify administrative tools required for establishing third-party partnerships that may include common assessments for third-party partners; templates for participant tracking, invoices, and reimbursement; and case management data systems; and
- c. Create a plan for developing the skills-based SNAP E&T pilot program. The plan shall include:

- i. A vision supported by goals, objectives, and action steps for the creation of the pilot program;
 - ii. A description of the pilot program, including the targeted geography and population; the education, training, and support services to be delivered; and the number of participants to be served;
 - iii. A list of planned third-party partnership providers and their proposed roles;
 - iv. A description of staff functions, including roles and responsibilities;
 - v. The process to provide reimbursements to participants for support services related to education or training, including child care, transportation, books, and equipment;
 - vi. A system for tracking participants eligibility and enrollment, continued participation, outcomes, and other data;
 - vii. Performance milestones; and
 - viii. A program budget, including sources and amounts of non-federal funds to be used to request matching funds from the United States Department of Agriculture.
- d. The Department shall complete the plan for the pilot program by ____ and incorporate the plan into the annual state SNAP E&T plan submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture.
 - e. Subject to the state plan's approval by the United States Department of Agriculture, the Department shall establish the skills-based SNAP E&T pilot program by ____.
 - f. Individual participation in the skills-based SNAP E&T pilot program shall be voluntary. An individual's receipt of SNAP benefits shall not be contingent upon the individual's participation in the pilot program.

SEC. 4: PROGRAM EXPANSION

The Department shall use the experience of the pilot program, in consultation with the planning committee, to develop a plan for the statewide expansion of skills-based SNAP E&T. The plan shall include recommendations for any statutory changes that will facilitate statewide expansion. The Department shall submit the plan for statewide expansion to the Governor and the [appropriate committees of the state legislature] by ____.

SEC. 5: FUNDING

The Department shall use federal funds received for SNAP E&T to carry out the Department's duties under this Act.

