

# SNAP Employment and Training

## Five-Year Strategic Plan (FFY 2023-2028)

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### Vision

Minnesota envisions a SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Program where Minnesotans with low incomes have clear pathways in developing marketable and in-demand skills, leading to career advancement and self-sufficiency.

### Mission

Through strong partnerships, our mission is to help Minnesotans fully utilize their SNAP benefits, gain the essential skills needed for gainful employment and successfully transition off public assistance.

### Strategic Partners

Collaboration between state agencies, counties, and providers can produce the best services. All partners will have a role in supporting the priority strategies identified in this strategic plan.

### Equity

Minnesota’s SNAP program serves a disproportionate number of black and indigenous people of color, women, and people with a disability. Minnesota is committed to equity in the SNAP E&T program through service delivery, outcomes, data collection and strategic goal setting.

### Priorities

1. Increase active participation in the SNAP Employment and Training Program.
2. Increase non-federal funding sources that are well-matched to SNAP E&T reimbursement.
3. Ensure that SNAP recipients are connected to “best fit” workforce services
4. Improve services through data-driven improvements and inclusion of SNAP recipients in program design.



## Priorities

### Priority 1: Increase Active Participation in the SNAP Employment and Training Program

**Need:** People who access SNAP play a valuable role in Minnesota’s economy as both workers and consumers. They need and want to build a more secure financial future and increased earned income is an important element of that goal. Yet, we can reach and serve more people in SNAP Employment and Training programs. Increasing participation in SNAP Employment and Training will increase the long-term well-being and labor force attachment of the people served. This goal will prioritize understanding and addressing what people receiving SNAP want and need in employment services, developing outreach and marketing strategies, improving providers’ relationship with county and tribal eligibility units, and reducing barriers to participation.

**Strategies:** DHS/DEED and partners will:

- Develop and maintain a marketing “tool kit” for providers, counties and tribes.
- Improve and maintain the SNAP E&T website to make it more participant-friendly.
- Facilitate relationships and improve communication processes between county/tribal eligibility workers and all SNAP E&T providers in their area.
- Reduce barriers to program access by offering support services early and often.
- Seek the advice and input of culturally-specific providers and cultural communities in determining appropriate targeted outreach efforts.
- Better understand the SNAP E&T target population through research and share that understanding broadly.
- Work with partners to support college students receiving SNAP and pursuing 2-year degrees in technical and high-demand fields.
- Support prospective participants by providing accessible participant-facing materials and ensuring materials recognize the value of all potential SNAP E&T participants.
- Be trustworthy partners to racial and ethnic minority communities through transparency, openness to critique, and commitment to supporting their success.
- Provide opportunities for knowledge-building about workforce services among SNAP eligibility workers, SNAP Outreach providers, and other organizations who work closely with people receiving SNAP.

**Measures of success:**

- Increase the number of people enrolled in a component of SNAP E&T.
- Increase the number of people receiving a county or tribal referral for SNAP E&T services.
- Develop specific, measurable, equity goals for participation and report publicly on progress toward those goals.

### KEY PROGRAM FEATURES

- Works in collaboration, encouraging co-enrollment and sharing of resources.
- Addresses the general characteristics of the SNAP population: Many are in working families; they are diverse; have low income; face multiple challenges; many are homeless and nearly half reside in the Metro area.
- Participants have clear onramps to entering and advancing in Minnesota’s strong workforce.

## Goal 2: Increase non-federal funding sources that are well-matched to SNAP E&T reimbursement

**Need:** The funding for SNAP E&T restricts providers in what services they can offer. State policy maximizes federally allowable support services. But without non-federal funds to pay for these services, many providers are unable to provide the support services they know are critical to success. SNAP E&T providers report a significant need for non-federal funding in order to operate successful programs. Where possible, this funding should be flexible, or aligned with best practices in SNAP E&T and able to be used for innovation. There is a significant specific need for funds that can be used to provide support services such as gas, bus passes, clothing and equipment, books, fees, and emergency housing and utility assistance. Pursuing this goal will also support efforts to increase participation in SNAP E&T.

### Strategies:

DHS/DEED and partners will:

- Develop and share documentation that providers can use with prospective funders to advocate for non-federal funding.
- Propose and advocate for dedicated state funding for SNAP E&T program, administrative, support service costs.
- Examine and share data on the impact of SNAP E&T funding including contributing and collecting participant success stories.
- Support “recycling” of reimbursement funds to create sustainably funded programming.
- Work within DHS/other state agencies to identify existing state funding that can be used to support SNAP E&T.
- Support tribal nations in accessing SNAP E&T reimbursement funding by advocating for additional sources of allowable “match” and supporting funding requests by tribal nations.
- Identify potential sources of funding for population-specific services such as services for women, specific racial/ethnic minorities, adults over age 50, rural communities, and individuals exiting the prison system.
- Better understand and share the connection between workforce services and racial equity.



### Measures of success:

- Increase in number of support services issued per participant.
- Increase in value of support services issued per participant who received supports.
- Increase amount of federal funding drawn down and reimbursed to providers annually.
- Increase in reimbursement funds distributed among culturally-specific providers.

### Goal 3: Ensure that the people served are connected to “best fit” workforce services

**Need:** The people turning to SNAP are a diverse group and are unlikely to benefit from a single approach to employment services. Many are working in low-wage or inconsistent employment, while others tend to have high barriers to employment. People benefit when they have easy access to a wide array of workforce services, including but not limited to SNAP Employment and Training. DHS/DEED will work collaboratively to identify ways to ensure all the people served by SNAP E&T are matched with the services and program design that is the most likely to help them succeed. We will work together to build a screening and referral tool that is easy to access, regularly updated, and provides a bridge for those becoming SNAP eligible or losing SNAP eligibility. In addition, we will identify opportunities for the people we serve to benefit from other workforce programs through co-enrollment, aligning funding, and advocating for the needs of people turning to SNAP within the larger state workforce system.



#### Strategies:

DHS/DEED and partners will:

- Develop referral tools and processes that will match people with the best provider and services for their needs.
  - Explore data sharing opportunities to better evaluate outcomes for people accessing SNAP in workforce programs, ensure this data is disaggregated by race, gender, disability status, and age.
  - Work with the Governor’s Workforce Development Board, Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partner program staff to identify ways more the people turning to SNAP can benefit from workforce services beyond SNAP E&T.
  - Collect and use outcomes data to identify programs that perform well with specific demographic groups.
- Build wider geographic access to culturally specific services by integrating virtual services into existing programming.
  - Work with DEED to identify any groups of people receiving SNAP who are not currently being well-served by existing workforce programming. Identify opportunities to better serve them.
  - Work with partners to advocate for services for disproportionately represented groups who access SNAP across the workforce system.
  - Share best practices for building and maintaining relationships with large and small employers.
  - Encourage co-enrollment even where there is not a financial incentive to do so.

#### Measures of success:

- Increase number of participants co-enrolled in other workforce programs.
- Increase number of individuals referred to SNAP E&T who enroll in a qualifying component.
- Increase the number of individuals who participate in SNAP E&T and “successfully” exit the program.
- Maintain a rate of provider determinations below 5% of all referred participants.

## Goal 4: Improve services through data-driven improvements and inclusion of the people served in program design.

**Need:** As a workforce program serving a diverse and high-barrier population, SNAP E&T programs must continue to exhibit the flexibility and innovation that is required to build evidence-based best practices and improve outcomes. Frequent federal program changes, a limited existing body of evidence, and shifting Minnesota workforce needs in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic require the state, counties, tribes, and contracted providers to operate nimble and change-ready programs. In addition, both the people served and providers benefit when processes and systems are lean and targeted at high-value data collection and program design elements. Minnesota will work collaboratively with providers to develop state systems that are open to design innovation, measure success without over-burdening the people served or providers, analyze data at regular intervals and share that data with stakeholders, identify improvements to existing processes, and put process controls in place. In addition, DHS/DEED will support providers in developing their own internal process improvements. Throughout this continuous improvement culture, improvements will be guided by needs, wants, experiences, and feedback of the people we serve.

### Strategies:

DHS/DEED and partners will:

- Identify and share evidence-based practices leading to positive outcomes for specific groups of people being served.
- Ensure that all research and proposed improvements are attentive to equity.
- Explicitly attend to issues of race, gender, age, and disability status in our program design and policy decisions. Account for regional variation in the SNAP population.
- Provide opportunities for training and other learning in continuous improvement practices for providers, counties, and tribes.
- Support and advance process improvement work under the SNAP E&T DATA grant and share information about progress and process with providers regularly.
- Identify additional opportunities for continuous improvement projects that can benefit providers or participants.
- Identify standardized ways to solicit meaningful feedback from the people we serve and measure changes that result from this feedback.
- Identify processes in need of improvements to enable providers and the state to rapidly evaluate participation and outcomes.



### Measures of success:

- Develop specific equity outcomes goals for SNAP E&T statewide and at the provider level.
- Increase in the number of staff trained in continuous improvement processes.
- Decrease (from baseline) in data-system errors.
- Increase in the number of useful SNAP E&T-specific reports available to providers in WF1.

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