

Prospective provider packet

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Minnesota Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program. This document was created to help inform prospective E&T providers about Minnesota’s SNAP E&T program.

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 gaining the essential skills needed for gainful employment and successfully transition off public assistance. Success is built on the foundation of a strong, collaborative culture among partners.

Vision:

Minnesota envisions a 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 Collaboration:

Collaboration between state agencies, counties, tribes 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.

For more information related to operations of a SNAP E&T program contact Erin White at erin.white@state.mn.us for Tribal Nations contact Ashley Snyder at ashley.snyder@state.mn.us



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What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment 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, successfully transition off public assistance. The program provides employability 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.

Minnesotans can enroll in SNAP E&T if they: receive federal food assistance (SNAP), are age 16 or older and have the intent to work at least part-time. An individual cannot enroll in SNAP E&T if they receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) or other cash assistance under Title IV such as Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Minnesota operates an all-voluntary SNAP E&T program, exempting all work registrants, including time-limited SNAP recipients (TLRs), from mandatory participation in SNAP E&T. TLRs are SNAP recipients are age 18 through 52 years old, do not live with dependent/child age 18, and do not have a mental or physical health condition stopping them from working. TLRs 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 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.

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 monitoring 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 SNAP recipients. These services include, employability 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 allowable percentage of SNAP E&T expenditures to the provider.

Participant eligibility verification is required prior to enrolling an individual in SNAP E&T and before requesting reimbursement for services each month. A participant must be on SNAP at the time the cost was incurred, regardless of when billing for the service took place. It is the responsibility of the provider to verify participant eligibility each month utilizing the MAXIS eligibility system.

Providers must communicate to the county agency or tribe information that may affect a participant's program eligibility or benefit amount, such as employment status changes, or when a time-limited participant meets their minimum monthly work requirement.

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. Providers are required to complete an employability assessment and develop an employment plan for all participants. Each provider may offer one or a variety of activities.

See the [SNAP E&T Activities Guide](#) for more in-depth information on each activity.

Employability assessment

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 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 must record relevant information in a standard location in the case record.

The purpose of an employability assessment is to collect and evaluate information to identify a participant's employment goals, strengths and barriers to employment, and support service needs. The assessment must be completed prior to placement in an activity and as often as necessary throughout the participants engagement in the program.. The assessment should consider:

- The person’s literacy level (see NOTE below)
- Ability to communicate in the English language
- Education and employment histories
- Employment related skills, abilities, strengths
- Barriers to employment

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.

The results of the Employability Assessment are used to develop the Employment Plan (EP). Goals and overall work plans must be achievable and directly relate to participant self-sufficiency. For time-limited participants who wish to meet the work requirement through participation in the program, the plan of services must address the need to work or participate in work activities for at least 80 hours per month in order to earn additional months of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Both provider and participant sign the EP and the participant must receive a copy.

Employment plan

The employment plan is a written plan specifying in detail the services to be provided to a participant, the expectations of the program and any possible consequence of not complying, such as exit from the program, inability to earn additional months of food benefits, or lack of support from the ESP. An EP must be based on the employability assessment conducted with the participant. The participant must sign and receive a copy of the EP. Development of an EP is required only once in any 12 consecutive months but must accurately reflect the activities of the participant at any given time.

Support services

Support services sometimes referred to as participant reimbursements are designed to assist participants in overcoming barriers that prevent them from engaging in employment and training activities. Costs must be reasonable and necessary. A cost is REASONABLE if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which a prudent person would pay under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur this cost. NECESSARY costs are incurred to carry out essential functions, cannot be avoided without adversely affecting program operation, and do not duplicate existing efforts. E&T expenses must be DIRECTLY RELATED to an approved E&T program activity.

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 MN and Federal government which includes having a current business license, valid UEI number, and is your agency 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

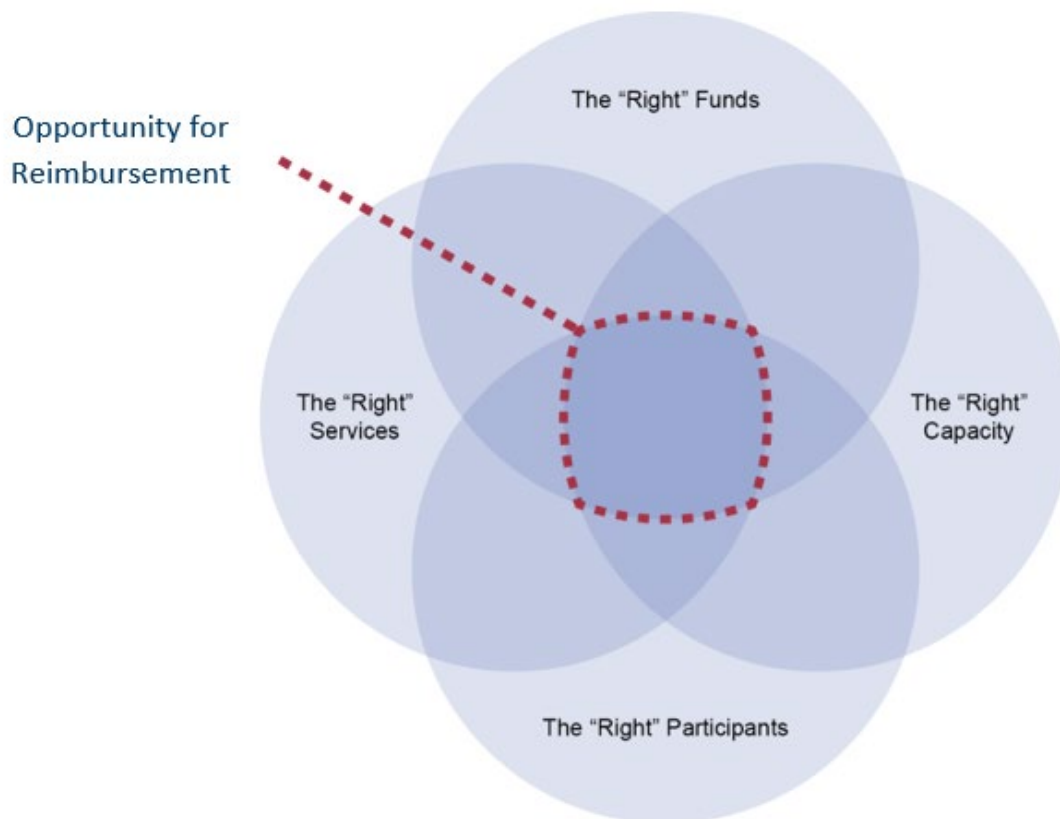
- Does your agency offer appropriate and allowable employment and training activities?
- Is your agency able to recruit and assess its own participants? Service providers may partner with another agency that will provide referrals for support services.
- Does your agency market to specific demographics (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. job retention services)?
- Is your agency able to provide support services to participants?

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 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.

All human services agencies must treat you fairly and equally. If you believe that someone working for a human services agency discriminated against you, you may file a civil rights complaint.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services, Equal Opportunity and Access Division, prohibits discrimination in its programs because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sexual orientation, public assistance status, age, disability or sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity under any health program or activity receiving federal financial assistance). You have one year after the unfair treatment to file a complaint. To ask for a complaint form, contact the Equal Opportunity and Access Division directly:

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Equal Opportunity and Access Division
P.O. Box 64997
St. Paul, MN 55164-0997
651-431-3040 (voice) or use your preferred relay service

