

## Prospective provider packet

### Welcome

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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.

**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.



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## What is SNAP Employment & Training?

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SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) 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 and 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 workforce.

The federal government requires each state to develop and implement an employment and training program for SNAP 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 Children, Youth, and Family Services (DCYF) 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 providers track participants and services in Minnesota's statewide workforce center system, Workforce One (WF1). Eligibility for SNAP benefits are determined by counties and Tribal Nation using the automated eligibility system, MAXIS. Providers check for SNAP eligibility through the MAXIS eligibility system.

Minnesotans can enroll in SNAP E&T if they: receive SNAP, are age 16 or older, are referred by SNAP eligibility, 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's SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program is completely voluntary. This means no one is required to participate, including people who have time limits on their SNAP benefits.

SNAP recipients with time-limited benefits, called Time-limited Recipients (TLRs), are adults ages 18 through 64 who do not live with a child under 14 and do not have a mental or physical health condition that prevents them from working. These individuals can get SNAP for only three months in a fixed 36-month period unless they are working or meeting certain work activity requirements.

## Funding a SNAP Employment and Training program

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The United States Department of Agriculture, through DCYF, will reimburse 50% of allowable SNAP E&T expenses. Expenditures related to SNAP E&T operations, services, and participant reimbursements must be expended up front from a non-federal funding source (with the exception of Community Development Block Grant funds) and cannot supplant another funding source. DCYF then reimburses the allowable percentage of SNAP E&T expenditures to the provider. To access these funds, providers use non-federal dollars, including state, local or philanthropic, to provide training and support to SNAP recipients. They then can seek reimbursement for 50% of costs from the State.

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.

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

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Providers are responsible for delivering SNAP E&T services directly to SNAP recipients. These services include employability assessment, development of an employment plan, case management, SNAP E&T activities, and support services.

Providers are responsible for tracking costs, maintaining records, and invoicing according to federal and state regulations. It is the responsibility of the provider to retain this documentation for monitoring purposes.

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

Providers must communicate to the county agency or Tribal Nation 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

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SNAP E&T services support participants preparing for and transitioning into employment. Given the varied educational backgrounds and barriers many SNAP recipients face, a broad spectrum of programs and support services are essential. Recent labor market data has emphasized the importance of skills development training aligned with local employer needs. Providers complete an employability assessment and develop an individualized employment plan with each participant, offering one or a variety of activities to support their goals. See the [SNAP E&T Activities Guide](#) for more in-depth information on each activity.

### Employability assessment

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, 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 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.

Goals and overall work plans must be achievable and directly relate to participant self-sufficiency. The results of the Employability Assessment are used to develop the Employment Plan (EP).

## 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.

For time-limited participants who wish to meet the work requirement through participation in the program, the plan must address the need to work or participate in work activities for at least 80 hours per month 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.

## Support services

Support services, sometimes referred to as participant reimbursements are designed to help 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

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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?
- 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 could 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 (e.g., transportation, work clothing, tools, etc.) to help participants engage in and sustain participation in E&T activities? If not, can you partner with another agency to receive participant referrals and/or provide support services?

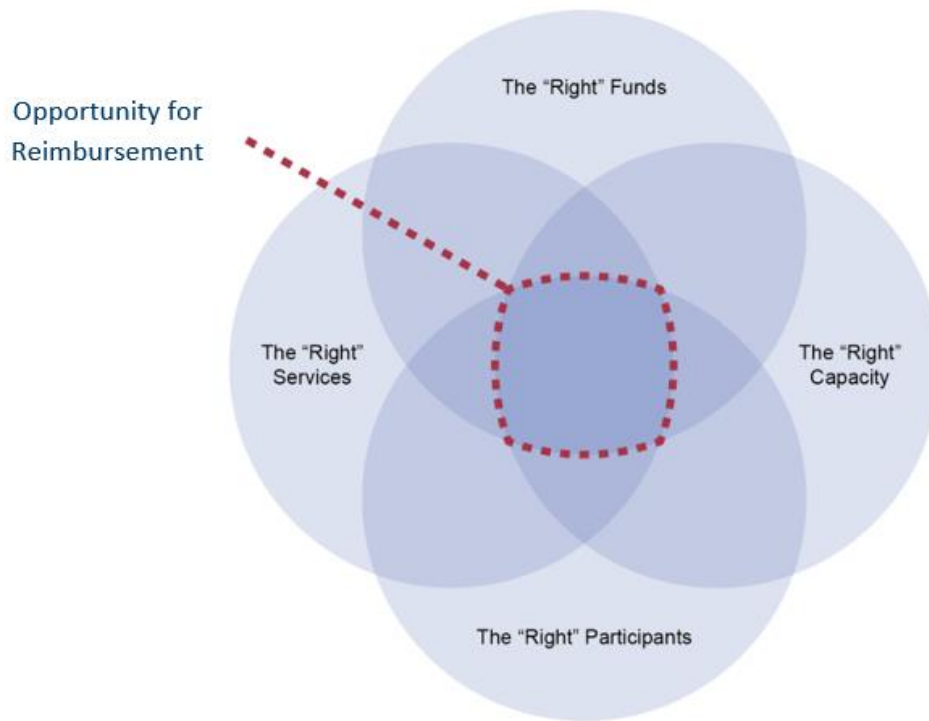
## Data/Information systems capacity

- Does your agency have the ability to learn technology platforms such as Workforce One (WF1) MAXIS and secure email with training from DCYF?
- Does your agency have the staff resources to regularly enter data into the WF1 system, including monthly case notes that report participant progress?
- Does your agency have the staffing capacity to maintain data privacy trainings?
- Does your agency have the staff resources to regularly maintain access to MAXIS and do monthly eligibility checks?

## Financial capacity

- Does your agency have funding available for SNAP E&T 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? Providers 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 have a cost allocation method in place? 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 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

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DCYF partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) including nonprofit service providers, Community Action Agencies, workforce development partners, social service agencies, and culturally specific organizations as well as colleges, counties, and Tribal Nations across the state to deliver services under SNAP E&T. These partnerships support SNAP participants in gaining the education, skills, and work experience necessary to achieve and maintain employment. DCYF releases an RFP for SNAP E&T providers during the second quarter of even-numbered years to create ongoing program development and expansion.

## Funding Opportunities

Organizations interested in becoming a SNAP E&T provider are encouraged to review funding announcements and partnership opportunities issued by DCYF. These opportunities may be offered through grants, Requests for Proposals (RFPs), or Requests for Information (RFIs).

To receive notifications of new opportunities, please subscribe to the [Grants and RFPs email list](#).

Funding for SNAP E&T is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) through DCYF's annual State SNAP E&T Plan. This plan is submitted each August for approval for the upcoming federal fiscal year. An approved state plan must be in place before SNAP E&T services can be implemented. Amendments to the plan may occur throughout the year as new opportunities are identified.

## Contact Information

Prospective providers are encouraged to review this informational packet, along with the SNAP E&T Handbook and other resources on the [SNAP E&T website](#), to gain a clear understanding of program requirements. Once familiar with these materials, organizations are welcome to contact DCYF staff to request a meeting to discuss program operations, funding processes, or potential partnerships.

For inquiries or to request a meeting, please contact the appropriate DCYF staff member:

- Colleges: Margot Howard, [margot.howard@state.mn.us](mailto:margot.howard@state.mn.us)
- Community based organizations: Erin White, [erin.white@state.mn.us](mailto:erin.white@state.mn.us)
- Counties: Andrea McConnell, [andrea.mcconnell@state.mn.us](mailto:andrea.mcconnell@state.mn.us)
- Tribal Nations: Ashley Snyder, [ashley.snyder@state.mn.us](mailto:ashley.snyder@state.mn.us)

The DCYF 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:

Department of Children, Youth, and Family 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