

Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers Request for Applications – Rural Institutions

Association of Community College Trustees

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 11:59 p.m. EST Friday, January 27, 2023

You are invited to review and respond to this Request for Applications (RFA) for the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers. In submitting your proposal, you must fully comply with these instructions.

All proposal submittals must be received on or before:

Friday, January 27th, 2023 (11:59 PM EST)

Questions:

Steve Jurch

Director, Center for Policy and Practice, ACCT

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ACCT reserves the right to:

- Modify the RFA as described in this solicitation.
- Reject any proposal if it is conditional, incomplete, deviates from the specifications, or for any other reason at ACCT's discretion.
- Withdraw or modify this solicitation at any time before or after submission of proposals, without prior notice and without liability or obligation of any kind or amount.
- Decide not to award any contract to any respondent responding to this solicitation.

Eligibility Checklist

- ACCT member
- Designated as a rural or rural-serving institution based on an existing federal government definition.
- Are not a current SNAP E&T third-party provider.
- Are in states that would value the opportunity to engage community colleges to contract as SNAP E&T third-party providers.

BACKGROUND

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) is a program designed to connect SNAP participants with skills training programs to help them enter or advance in

the workforce to improve their economic independence. As part of a larger commitment to advance equity and improve access to SNAP E&T programs nationwide, the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) is expanding its support through an additional \$3 million dollars in National Partnership grants specific to the community college sector. Community colleges have been identified by FNS as a critical stakeholder in SNAP E&T engagement. Through these grants, community colleges will be able to not only provide the technical training but also provide support services such as transportation, childcare, case management, and other assistance that will help reduce barriers and improve success.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) recognizes the important and unique role that community colleges play in helping individuals move toward economic self-sufficiency through education. Through the SNAP E&T National Partnership Grant project, ACCT's goal is to increase the number of community colleges that are SNAP E&T third-party providers using three key approaches: building the capacity of state systems, targeting rural institutions, and disseminating SNAP E&T resources to a broad network. This approach will be applied in two separate cohorts consisting of both state systems and rural institutions. Focusing on state systems and rural institutions allows for targeted technical assistance and development of training materials and resources. The combination of these strands will maximize the reach to multiple populations. Joining ACCT will be [Seattle Jobs Initiative \(SJI\)](#) and the [American Public Human Services Association \(APHSA\)](#) to deliver customized technical assistance for a diverse set of state systems and institutions, leading to more third-party providers and lessons learned for the field. The ability to tackle this goal derives from ACCT's diverse national membership, SJI's deep knowledge of SNAP E&T, and APHSA's experience navigating the necessary partnerships in this work.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project has three major objectives:

1. Building the capacity of state systems: This will capitalize on economies of scale for an efficient and effective model that reaches more institutions than would be possible individually. College intermediary models can grow the scale of a State's SNAP E&T program without requiring the State to add proportionate capacity to manage multiple contracts, can create access for individual institutions who lack capacity or resources to administer SNAP E&T on their own, and can expand reach for a broader impact in multiple geographies.
2. Targeting rural institutions: These institutions, which are traditionally under resourced, will provide avenues of supports for the students to access SNAP E&T, leading to better outcomes for more individuals. Community colleges are already an important resource in rural communities, where employment and training options can be harder to find and represent a quality E&T option. The project will seek avenues to use braided funding and fill in the necessary gaps to strengthen partnerships with American Job Centers (AJCs) and other workforce providers.

3. Disseminate SNAP E&T knowledge and resources to a broad network: The resources developed through working with states and rural institutions can then be disseminated throughout the larger community college network to be used as a roadmap for other institutions. Organizations that represent registrars, bursars' offices, and financial aid officers are critical to engage to bring awareness and improve expertise and understanding around SNAP E&T as their offices are a critical piece of the process.

EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

This project will focus on the key areas through targeted direct delivery via two cohorts. Each cohort will consist of two state systems and up to 5 rural institutions. The goal would be to bring on 10 new rural institutions and 4 state systems, each recruiting initial pilot institutions, as third-party providers.

Expectations

Tentative Cohort Schedule:

- February 2023 – Kick off meeting
- February 2023 – March 2024 – Cohort activities to prepare for provider application
- March 2024 – September 2025 – Ongoing as needed TA

❖ RFA for cohort two will occur in Fall 2023

Institutions will be expected to participate in activities such as:

1. Complete an institutional self-assessment to determine institutional readiness and components such as the institutional team members from departments such as, but not limited to, institutional and workforce development leadership, student support services, financial aid, registration, marketing, and technical program areas.
2. Determine existing relationships and identified areas of need with employer partners, local workforce boards, local CBOs, state SNAP agency, community college system.
3. Develop action plan for each cohort member based on current infrastructure and identified needs.
4. Review existing webinars and printed resources to understand baseline information on SNAP E&T, college-specific operational processes and what is required to become a third-party provider.
5. Create student feedback channels to help inform program improvement.
6. Work to identify where there might be unintended barriers for students to access services and engage with the program.

7. Using program data to reveal areas of unmet need or disparities in access for specific student populations.
8. Participate in at least 3 individual working sessions with teams using the individualized action plan as a roadmap during the first year of the cohort.
9. Participate in two-day, on-site team visit consisting of ACCT, SJI, a third entity or mentor, and the institutional team.
10. Engage in continued TA throughout the project.

Supports

To achieve these objectives, the participating colleges will have meaningful spaces to learn and receive support from their peers and national experts. Throughout the grant period, participating institutions will receive a suite of technical assistance supports tailored based on specific needs. This assistance will include:

1. A small stipend for each participating institution.
2. Expert assistance in the development of a customized workplan to become a SNAP E&T third-party provider.
3. Coaching, tools, technical assistance, and resources to facilitate implementation of the workplan.
4. On-site project team visit to finalize workplan development and implementation.
5. Access to national experts to facilitate critical partnerships.
6. Continued coaching throughout project to troubleshoot any issues that arise.
7. Information and resources ranging from the core components of SNAP E&T, webinars, best practices on processes, operations, and other toolkits.
8. The opportunity to collaborate and share resources, tools, and information through peer learning networks.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The purpose of this Request for Application (RFA) is to invite prospective rural community colleges to participate in the Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers initiative. Through this competitive RFA process, ACCT will recruit a cohort of up to five rural community colleges to participate in this initiative. Grants of \$7,500 per institution will be offered to offset costs.

RFA Timeline

The following is a tentative schedule that will apply to this RFA but may change in accordance with ACCT's needs or unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be communicated by e-mail to all invited respondents. Information on the pre-recorded informational session is to clarify goals, program design, expectations, and supports.

Launch Timeline :

- Issuance of RFA – November 8th, 2022
- Information Session – January 10th, 2023
- RFA Closes 11:59 PM EDT – January 27th, 2023
- Final Award Notification – February 3rd, 2023

Determining Readiness

To ensure that participants fully understand the process, requirements, and commitment of the SNAP E&T cohort and the process of becoming a SNAP E&T partner, we strongly encourage all applicants to view the resources listed below. We also encourage applicants to review the institutional readiness assessment.

[SNAP E&T Foundational Series](#)

[SNAP E&T FAQ](#)

[SNAP E&T Community College Provider Readiness Roadmap](#)

Institutional Readiness Assessment

1. Can your institution commit to attending all the technical assistance sessions, webinars, and other meetings throughout the project?
2. Can your institution commit to building a team of staff that will, as appropriate, participate in group and coaching sessions and/or will work to help meet your goals for SNAP E&T?
3. Based on your institution's current capacity, strategic goals, and leadership commitment, as well as your current understanding of SNAP E&T, do you believe your goal(s) for SNAP E&T are achievable?
4. Based on your institution's current capacity, strategic goals, and leadership commitment, as well as your current understanding of SNAP E&T, do you believe you will be able to complete one or more concrete steps toward your SNAP E&T goal(s) as a result of your participation in this cohort?

Respondent's Understanding of the RFA

In responding to this RFA, the respondent accepts full responsibility to understand the RFA in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to ACCT as necessary to gain such understanding. ACCT reserves the right to disqualify any respondent who demonstrates less than such understanding. Further, ACCT reserves the right to determine, at their discretion, whether the respondent has demonstrated such understanding. That right extends to cancellation of award if award has been made. Such disqualification and/or cancellation shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to ACCT.

Good Faith Statement

All information provided by ACCT in this RFA is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time. ACCT makes no certification that any item is without error. ACCT is not responsible or liable for any use of the information or for any claims asserted therefrom.

Communication

Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by an authorized representative from ACCT. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communication, including email.

Respondents' Inquiries

Applicable terms and conditions herein shall govern communications and inquiries between ACCT and respondents as they relate to this RFA. Inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification related to this RFA are to be directed in writing via email to:

Steve Jurch
Director, Center for Policy and Practice, ACCT
sjurch@acct.org

Respondents shall recommend to ACCT any discrepancies, errors, or omissions that may exist within this RFA. Respondents shall also recommend to ACCT any enhancements, which might be in ACCT's best interests. These must be submitted via email and can be included in the proposal.

Addenda

ACCT will make a good-faith effort to provide an email response to each question or request for clarification that requires addenda within three (3) business days. All questions, answers, and addenda will be shared with all respondents.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Please use the following link to complete the project application:

[**LINK TO ONLINE APPLICATION**](#)

Other Submission Requirements

Please attach these documents at the end of the application where indicated.

Letter of Support

To assess organizational commitment, we ask that you submit a letter of support from your institution's CEO speaking to the institution's commitment, capacity and readiness for becoming a SNAP E&T third party provider and participating in the project. Please ensure that the letter is on letterhead and in PDF format.

Respondent Certification

Please submit the signed copy of the [Respondent Certification](#).

All Application Materials Due:

11:59 p.m. EST Friday, January 27th, 2023

ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

ACCT invites institutions that are interested in and dedicated to becoming a SNAP E&T third-party provider. The institutions that are eligible to participate will be based on the following criteria:

1. ACCT member
2. Designated as a rural or rural-serving institution based on an existing federal government definition.
3. Are not a current SNAP E&T third-party provider.
4. Are in states that would value the opportunity to engage community colleges to contract as SNAP E&T third-party providers.

Criteria for Selection

The evaluation of each response to this RFA will be based around the goal of securing a diverse and representative cohort of institutions to participate in the SNAP E&T National Partnership Grant initiative.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Demonstration of commitment, capacity, and readiness towards taking concrete steps toward becoming a SNAP E&T third-party provider.
2. Internal support and capacity for administrative responsibilities of SNAP E&T.
3. Demonstrated commitment to quality and equity through program services, strategic plans/initiatives, and continuous improvement processes.
4. Ability to articulate the goals of participation and the impact to the students.

ADDITIONAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

The following additional terms and conditions apply to this RFA:

1. ACCT reserves the right to require any respondent to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.
2. The RFA does not obligate ACCT to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever that may be incurred by a respondent or any third parties, in connection with the completion of the application.
3. The respondent should not use any intellectual property of ACCT including, but not limited to, all logos, registered trademarks, or trade names of ACCT at any time without the prior written approval of ACCT as appropriate.
4. This RFA and the respondent's proposal shall be governed by the laws of the District of Columbia.
5. ACCT shall not be liable to any respondent, person, or entity for any losses, expenses, costs, claims, or damages of any kind:
 - Arising out of, by reason of, or attributable to, the respondent responding to this RFA; or
 - As a result of the use of any information, error, or omission contained in this RFA document or provided during the RFA process.
6. This RFA, any addenda to it, and any attached schedules, constitute the entire RFA.