Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers

SNAP E&T Program Administration and Strategic Expansion

Planning Guide #11

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ACCT
1101 17th St NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 775-4667
acctinfo@acct.org
www.acct.org

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

This planning guide is one of a series of documents produced by ACCT with the following project partners:

American Public Human Services Association

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Opening Doors to Living-Wage Careers

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USDA Food & Nutrition Service

The United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service funded this project under FRPS Program FY22 SNAP E&T National Partnership federal grant agreement number SNAP-ETNP-22-DC. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the U.S.D.A. Food and Nutrition Service, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

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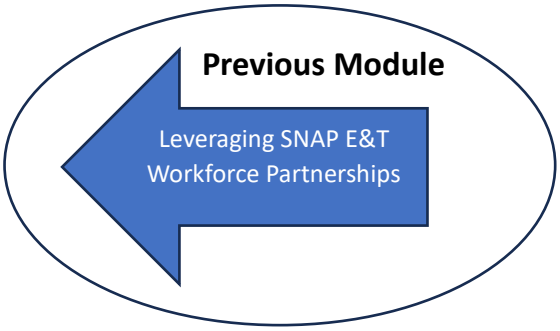
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SNAP E&T Program Administration and Strategic Expansion

Summary



Program administration is a critical element of SNAP E&T allowing third-party providers to identify what's working effectively and where there are potential areas for improvement and opportunities for scaling what works. Both quantitative and qualitative data can and should be used to assess the impact of SNAP E&T programs. Highlighting successes, identifying what can be modified or enhanced to improve outcomes for participants and determining the short- and long-term impact of SNAP E&T programs, partnerships, and fiscal processes and investments can all be important elements of SNAP E&T administration. This program assessment may be part of a formal monitoring process with the human service agency or intermediary, and is an overall aspect of the ongoing internal continuous improvement cycle that evaluates progress and identifies areas for improvement.

FNS is in the process of developing a new framework for assessing the effectiveness of SNAP E&T programs. Many states have also developed robust assessment and monitoring processes. Generally, effective assessment includes analysis and reflection of:

- **Program Design** – How well do the components serve your students? Is there a fluid pathway that's clear, while also making the most of the program's flexibility? Does the program align and reinforce the college's student success and economic development mission and value?
- **Enrollment —** How does the student outreach and enrollment process work for students? Are they connected to the resources they need? How is equity centered?
- **Student Support —** How effective is the case management? Is the process for determining and distributing support services equitable, student centered, and furthering students' goals and success?

Who to Invite to the Table (college internal planning)

- SNAP E&T college lead
- College executive sponsor
- Institutional research office
- College lead for related academic programs as needed:
  - Workforce Development
  - Career Technical Education
  - Non-credit workforce training
  - Adult Education
- College lead for student success initiatives including:
  - College food pantry
  - Clothes closet
  - Student Resource Centers
  - Other similar support services
- Grants office staff

Planning Goals

1) Understand different ways of assessing SNAP E&T programs to improve outcomes and strategically expand the program in the future
2) Examine how the SNAP E&T program assessment aligns with other college student success initiative program assessments across the institution in formal and informal ways
3) Explore how human service agency monitoring process for SNAP E&T informs the overall assessment process

- **Operations** – How are the overall grant processes working—from program eligibility to recordkeeping to fiscal management? Are they balancing the need to meet students where they are at while ensuring grant compliance?
- **Outcomes** – Beyond the federally required employment outcomes, how is the program benefitting students? What is the program measuring when it comes to barrier removal, credential attainment, skill gains, employment, job quality, equity and student satisfaction?

Program administration should help drive the strategic expansion of SNAP E&T as it illuminates what is working and additional needs of SNAP E&T students. It can highlight additional services that could better assist students, shed light on existing services that could be expanded, and point to which academic programs can guide students in gaining the skills and credentials that lead to careers with economic mobility. The program assessment helps colleges determine how best to scale efforts to serve more students through SNAP E&T and align the respective budget and support services to do so.

SNAP E&T Program Administration & Strategic Expansion



This visual demonstrates a simple continuous improvement cycle that can be applied to SNAP E&T programs. Colleges should be reflecting throughout the cycle and establish a more thorough monitoring, assessment and evaluation process in the 'Check' stage through quantitative and qualitative data that will drive program improvements and position the college third-party provider for strategic expansion.

Guiding Questions

1) How does the college assess other student success initiatives across the institution in formal and informal ways?
    a. What quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed?
    b. How can the SNAP E&T program assessment align or integrate with these efforts?
2) How can the human service agency formal monitoring process inform or align with the college's SNAP E&T continuous improvement plan and strategic expansion efforts?
3) What additional quantitative and qualitative data would be helpful to examine in assessing your SNAP E&T program?
    a. How can you gather these data?
4) Based on the data gathered and analyzed, what improvements (and/or expansion) could be made for your SNAP E&T program in terms of expanding college programs, increasing participant numbers and student support services and the overall respective program budget?
5) How can you solicit more feedback from current or past SNAP E&T participants to shape continuous improvement and strategic expansion of the SNAP E&T program?

Additional questions regarding program administration and strategic expansion:

6) What are anticipated concerns about SNAP E&T program assessment?
    a. What are some strategies to address these concerns?
7) What are anticipated concerns about SNAP E&T strategic expansion?
    a. What are some strategies to address these concerns?
8) What are potential next steps in strategic expansion planning for SNAP E&T programs and students?

Meeting Agenda Template

- Check-in regarding prior meeting action items
- Review and discuss responses to guiding questions
- Review and discuss the potential challenges
- Develop written responses for each guiding question
- Identify areas that need further research/understanding – develop specific descriptions of information still needed
- Create a detailed list of questions for technical assistance
- Clarify next steps, who is responsible, and a timeframe for reporting back to team

Potential Challenges

1) There may be limitations in gathering and analyzing data for SNAP E&T programs the first few years when the program is small in size and scope.

2) At times it may be difficult to identify and demonstrate the longitudinal impact of SNAP E&T programs due to existing state data systems and ways that students go on and off of benefits. Colleges can and should capture qualitative data and the voice of participants to illustrate this impact through alternative means.

3) There may also be limitations or parameters imposed by leaders at colleges or human service agencies that are more restrictive than what is actually allowable and within federal policy. For example, human service agencies may limit educational components or activities or colleges may set arbitrary caps on student support services.

Planning Checklist

- ❒ 1) Determine the best approach to assessing the college's SNAP E&T program that builds on institutional student success initiative assessment processes and the human service agency SNAP E&T monitoring process, expanding to add more meaningful quantitative and qualitative data
- ❒ 2) Identify what data needs to be collected and how it will be gathered
- ❒ 3) Analyze data to identify areas of improvement and expansion for SNAP E&T program in terms of student supports, workforce/CTE programs, students served and enhanced systems and processes
- ❒ 4) Create an actionable plan and timeline to implement any changes identified as a result of the assessment, being cognizant of SNAP E&T program parameters (grant cycle, federal fiscal year, state plan)
- ❒ 5) Continue to evaluate progress, gather and analyze data, identify areas for improvement, implement these changes and repeat the cycle

Tools/Organizational Aids for this Module

- FNS SNAP E&T Toolkit
- FNS SNAP E&T Operations Handbook
- Oregon STEP (SNAP Training and Employment Program) Third-Party Provider Review Template
- Oregon STEP (SNAP Training and Employment Program) Fiscal Review Template

Resources

- USDA FNS Growing and Strengthening SNAP E&T Programs
- SNAP E&T 2014 Farm Bill Pilot Projects – evaluation and related briefs
- Webinar - SNAP E&T Pilots: Lessons Learned from Offering Innovative SNAP E&T Services under Pilot Projects
- SNAP to Skills Resources

FAQ's

1) Is the SNAP E&T program assessment the same thing as the human service SNAP E&T monitoring process?

   The program assessment should incorporate documentation, analysis, evaluation and recommendations from the human service monitoring process but should be more expansive and not limited to the structures of a formal monitoring process. The program assessment can include more qualitative data that integrates SNAP E&T participant voices. It can also guide the strategic expansion of SNAP E&T in different ways from the monitoring process.

2) What is the best approach for colleges to expand their SNAP E&T program?

   There is not one approach or formula for SNAP E&T expansion. It should be based on student needs, opportunities to develop new or enhanced programs and services through SNAP E&T and effectively leverage strengths across the college to create better access to quality programs, increase college completion and a clear path to careers with economic mobility.

Case Study

College XYZ is in their second year as a SNAP E&T third-party provider. The SNAP E&T coach has heard repeatedly from students that they need more assistance covering utility costs and testing fees. The college has also identified through an institutional program review process that a number of students in the adult education GED/HSE and ESOL programs receive SNAP benefits. Adult education students have also indicated a need and requested more support and resources. These service gaps and student requests were documented in the program assessment. When looking at recommendations and actionable steps forward the college noted the context and history, and the opportunity to expand services. While these programs were not part of SNAP E&T in the first two years, the college determined now is the right time to add GED/HS and ESOL programs, as well as an integrated education and training program that combines these foundational skills with a welding credential in an accelerated program model. Knowing the welding program has additional student costs such as welding gear and industry certification tests, the program is increasing funding for these supportive services as well as for GED testing fees.

The college has also connected with another SNAP E&T third party provider that offers complementary student supports such as funding to cover utility costs. They would like to establish strong referrals between providers so SNAP E&T participants can access education and training through the college and certain support services while the CBO partner can offer other supports and resources.