

Provider Readiness Roadmap for Higher Education Institutions

Part 3



This guide is the final portion of a three-part series designed to help community colleges better understand their alignment and readiness to become third-party providers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program.

The Provider Readiness Roadmap: Part 3 is designed for higher education institutions that have been operating SNAP E&T for at least one year and are now ready to take steps to assess how to enhance or enlarge their SNAP E&T programs. [Read Part 1 Here](#) | [Read Part 2 Here](#)

Re-Assess External Factors

STATE AND COUNTY POLICY CHANGES

Has the SNAP E&T program in your state or county changed? Determine if new initiatives, priorities, or SNAP E&T components are being offered. Has the SNAP E&T agency changed in capacity? Has there been turnover of staff and leadership? Are new policies or processes in place such as referral and screening processes, changes in time limits for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, mandatory SNAP E&T participation requirements, or in SNAP eligibility requirements? These changes in policy can have an impact on participant eligibility as well as on demand for services. Becoming aware of how best to support participants whose SNAP benefits are conditional on participation or work requirements can help to ensure they stay in compliance, keep their food benefits, and remain eligible for SNAP E&T. Some agencies have a particular focus on specific populations.

Understanding local demographics, in addition to those within your SNAP program, can help you tailor services to meet participants' particular needs.

Colleges might face capacity constraints if they wish to offer a higher level of support. When considering the best response to external program changes, explore possible community partnerships connecting students to the appropriate level of support to help them succeed.

FEDERAL POLICY CHANGES

Are there any changes to the Farm Bill (Food and Nutrition Act of 2008), federal rules, or guidance that will change SNAP E&T policy? The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, often referred to as the Farm Bill, contains laws that govern SNAP E&T at the federal level. The Farm Bill is typically reauthorized every five years. It is

important to stay aware of what changes might occur as a result of such reauthorizations. For example, the 2018 Farm Bill established new requirements to include case management with every SNAP E&T component. Consider SNAP E&T policies and how they affect students. Be sure to engage your policy advocates and consult with them about how current policies potentially benefit or impede the success of students participating in SNAP E&T. Along with the Farm Bill, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) also has the authority to establish federal rules and guidance on the administration of SNAP E&T, in addition to reviewing and approving each state's State Plan. Communicate closely with your state or local human services agency SNAP E&T contacts to receive direct guidance on the impact of policy changes.

Re-Assess Your Internal Feasibility

When thinking about what is next for your program, recall your original areas of alignment with SNAP E&T. Within these areas, it can be helpful to re-assess, based on new internal factors such as changes in staffing, nonfederal funding streams, or a more realistic sense of the number of eligible participants, based on performance over the past year or longer. Even if you lack the resources needed to make all potential changes to your SNAP E&T program, you can use what you learn through this re-assessment to inform the direction of strategic plans for growth.

FUNDING

SNAP E&T Budgeting: Re-assess your budget to determine if any allowable expenses have been omitted. New SNAP E&T providers are often encouraged to start small. Identify one specific area of programming to start your SNAP E&T contract. As time goes on, other program elements may emerge as opportunities for SNAP E&T, or further analysis of expenses can identify new, eligible, costs that can be added to the budget.

Funding Opportunities: Consider if there are funding opportunities that could support your programming better and whether your status as a SNAP E&T partner might be a compelling part of a funding proposal. When you make your case to funders, point out that their investment goes further because you leverage those funds to bring in federal reimbursement.

Reimbursement Dollars: Remember that once reimbursed, 50/50 funds lose their federal identity and become unrestricted, which means they can be used in a variety of ways to enhance your services. Your state, county, or intermediary, however, might place requirements or expectations about how reimbursement dollars are used. It is always important to refer to your contract and local program guidelines to inform your strategy for using reimbursement dollars. For example, in Washington State, new providers must wait one year before they can reinvest reimbursement dollars in their program and reclaim SNAP E&T reimbursement. Furthermore, the college SNAP E&T intermediary, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, has additional parameters on how colleges use reimbursement funds.

Colleges often use reimbursement dollars to increase support services for students participating in SNAP E&T, to fund programming for students who do not qualify under other funding streams (including SNAP E&T) or to add staffing capacity to accommodate program needs or program growth.

SERVICES

Are there additional services that could better support students participating in SNAP E&T? Are there existing pathways to services that your college can offer students participating in SNAP E&T? Consider where there might be opportunities in this area.

It is also important to assess whether the support services you have been offering are meeting student needs and removing barriers effectively. You can assess the impact of program services by measuring outcomes or soliciting direct feedback from students. When making this assessment, consider the capacity of your college to tailor services to better meet students' needs. If you lack the capacity to expand in this way, consider what services are being offered by community partners and the best way to connect students to those services.

Capacity

Staffing: Is your current staffing structure able to support your SNAP E&T operations now and for any planned growth? Do you need to add staff or reassign roles? Consider whether you are on track to use reimbursement dollars to help support staff capacity. Even if you partner with other community services providers, it is still essential to ensure that you have adequate staff capacity to support SNAP E&T operations on campus.

Data and Reporting: Are your tracking systems operating effectively to track SNAP E&T participation? Consider whether you have been able to provide accurate and thorough reports to the SNAP E&T agency. Consider also if you are able to track and communicate student progress effectively across departments. Measuring impact and tracking outcomes leads to improved decision making and can also be helpful for communicating to potential funders.

Participants

Are there eligible students on your campus who are not getting connected to SNAP and SNAP E&T? Research indicates that only a small percentage of eligible students actually get connected to SNAP.¹ This statistic would suggest that it is likely that some students on your campus are eligible for SNAP and SNAP E&T but are unaware of the program or do not feel confident or comfortable with the application process. Furthermore, once eligible students are enrolled, is SNAP E&T meeting their needs?

Once you have established relationships with your SNAP agency, inquire about the possibility of connecting with [SNAP Outreach](#) providers to establish on-campus resources for students to enroll in SNAP, which will eliminate time and transportation barriers. Some community colleges also contract as SNAP Outreach Providers. If the college staff includes Benefits Navigators or Student Navigators, make sure they are educated about SNAP and SNAP E&T resources. **Note that helping students sign up for SNAP is not a reimbursable SNAP E&T activity but it can still be a worthwhile enhancement that has a direct, positive impact on your students in general as well as on your SNAP E&T program.**

Establishing a Process for Assessment and Continuous Improvement

USE DATA TO INFORM PROGRAM

A system to track student needs, their progress while in employment and training, use of supportive services, other referrals, and program outcomes allow you to assess what investments are the most effective for supporting student success.

Assess whether you spent more or less than projected on any specific service, such as transportation or digital support. You will have an opportunity to correct your course in your next SNAP E&T budget. Plan for investments that make the most sense for student success, keeping in mind with potential expansion.

Consider comparing SNAP E&T participant information and successes with broader college statistics by noting any significant issues. It may be beneficial, where possible, to disaggregate data by student demographics to assess and address potential disproportions in service delivery and outcomes.

DEVELOP CHANNELS FOR STUDENT FEEDBACK

In assessing all of these factors and when considering how best to enhance your SNAP E&T program, student voices should be a part of your assessment process and can inform what specific changes you can make to your services to better meet student needs. This student feedback channels one-page guide provides key steps and considerations for colleges to establish student feedback channels to help inform program enhancements.

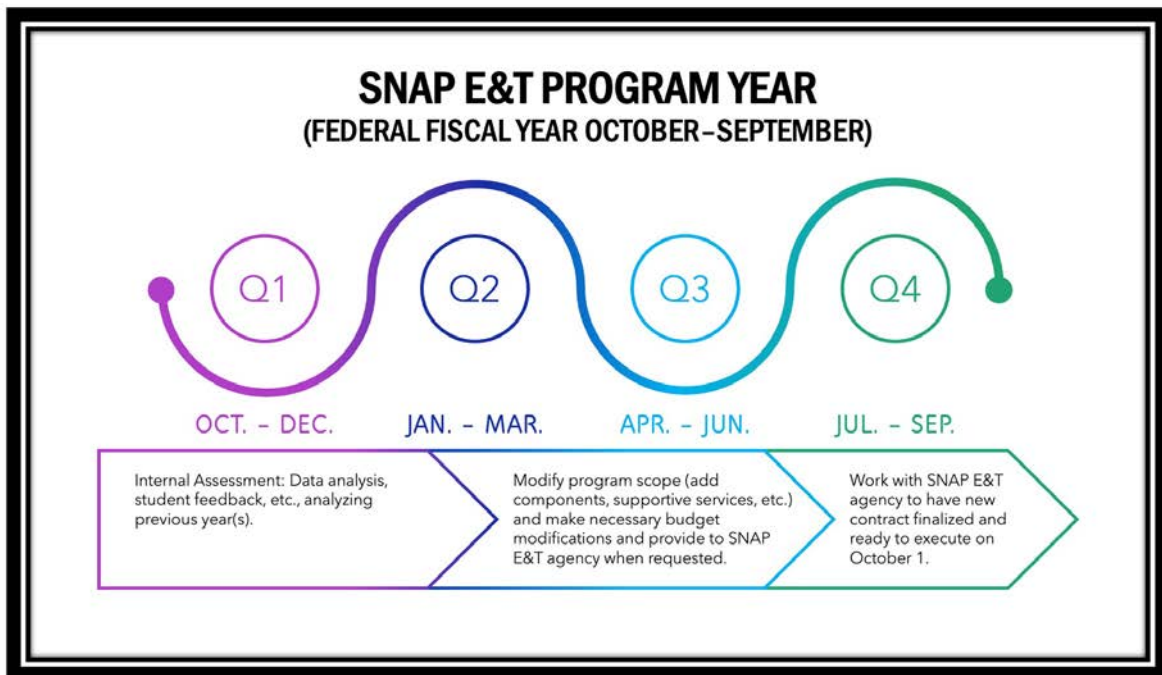
¹ Hope Center Webinar Best Kept Secrets: State Outreach to College Students for Expanded SNAP Eligibility is Falling Short. July 18, 2022
<https://hope4college.com/webinar/>

CONSIDER TIMING

State SNAP Agencies and their intermediaries begin planning for their upcoming SNAP E&T State Plan in June, but perhaps as early as March, to be ready to submit to FNS by August 15. It is important to note this planning cycle when conducting your internal assessments. Begin to identify areas for modification in the scope and budgets of your SNAP E&T contracts so you can be ready to request those changes when SNAP E&T agencies are requesting information. When requesting changes to your budget and scope, be ready to share justification for the changes and share your process for continuous analysis and improvement with your SNAP E&T agency. The ability to make changes throughout the year is dependent on state or local policies; some states are more tolerant of changes outside the State Plan cycle, while others place strict limitations.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TIMELINE

(For programs/contracts operating on the Federal Fiscal Year)



For more information and resources on SNAP E&T, please visit the [SNAP E&T Third-Party Partnerships Resource Clearinghouse](#).

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