



SNAP E&T

Maximizing Impact Through Meaningful Partnerships

By Brandy Whisman

The past two years have highlighted an important lesson: together is better. The adage “necessity is the mother of invention” has proven true in the way states and organizations have adapted to serving participants of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during the COVID-19 pandemic. SNAP has proven to be one of the most impactful resources during the pandemic for poverty prevention and family stabilization. As we move toward economic recovery, one valuable lesson learned is the importance of partnerships in moving SNAP participants forward on a path to economic mobility through SNAP Employment and Training (E&T).

What is SNAP E&T?

SNAP E&T is a federally funded program that aims to help eligible SNAP participants develop skills to advance economically by putting them on a path to a career. SNAP E&T provides a package of services, including assessments, component activities, participant reimbursements, and participant follow-up. In an effort to reduce barriers to employment, SNAP E&T also provides supportive services, including transportation and child care assistance to help participants gain and maintain employment.

Through the SNAP E&T National Partnerships project, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), in partnership with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP), is leveraging SNAP E&T subject-matter experts to provide technical assistance to community colleges and Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to increase understanding, improve coordination with state and local agencies, and scale SNAP E&T partnerships.¹

The Right Partners

Partnering in SNAP E&T creates opportunities for participants to engage in skill building and training to move forward into quality jobs. Organizations like CAAs and community colleges are integral to the system of employment and training



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Partnering for Success

Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC)

partners with the Nevada Department of Welfare and Supportive Services to assist students in skills-based learning and education. The TMCC SNAP E&T program provides support to students working to complete a CTE (career and technical education) certificate or degree at TMCC, including help paying for classes, navigating the community college process, and assistance in procuring school supplies like textbooks for classes or equipment for lab classes. This support helps alleviate barriers that frequently derail student success. In 2017, TMCC received Workforce Innovations for a New Nevada funding to provide career development opportunities to people receiving SNAP, seeking access to skilled career opportunities in advanced manufacturing.⁵ More than half of the program graduates attained employment in the first 12 months of the pilot.



Delaware Opportunities, Inc., a CAA in Delaware

County, NY, is a SNAP E&T third-party provider. Delaware Opportunities, Inc. partners with the Delaware County Department of Social Services to provide transportation, job search classes, child-care referrals and post-employment services to SNAP recipients. Because they are anchored in the community, Delaware Opportunities, Inc. is an expert in the needs of the community. In addition to providing extensive SNAP E&T services, Delaware Opportunities, Inc. is also a SNAP Outreach provider, giving them a full view of the SNAP program and the participants that are served.



and supportive services that provides opportunities for career pathways that increase economic mobility for families and individuals with low income. State and local agencies can leverage community colleges and CAAs to strengthen current provider partnerships and explore new partnerships to enhance services provided through their E&T programs.

Community colleges serve as the nation's leading providers of affordable workforce education, with nearly 10 million students enrolled at a community college at some point during the 2017–2018 academic year.² Community colleges are often thought of as barometers of the local labor market, reflecting the labor needs of the local economy, making them excellent partners for workforce development initiatives. A new report published by ACCT, *The Value of Community College Short-Term Credentials*,³ demonstrates that

completing short-term credentials can lead to a higher wage and a better quality of life for students. The report further outlines recommendations to help bolster student success by addressing basic needs.

More than one-third of college students lack food and/or stable housing.⁴ Recognizing this can heavily affect student success, many community colleges support students' basic needs through SNAP Outreach, food pantries, and emergency financial assistance. Community colleges also serve a significant role as an access point to human services programs, including SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and child-care/early education. Wrap-around support is essential to student success. Because of their strong workforce ties and unique perspective into student needs, community colleges are well equipped to partner with health and human services agencies

to provide in-demand, high-quality education and training resulting in a career pathway.

Similar to community colleges, CAAs are entrenched in the communities they serve. Working alongside families, CAAs operate in 99 percent of U.S. counties, providing services that create pathways for economic mobility for families. CAAs use evidence-based, whole-family approaches to service provisions specifically related to workforce development, job training and placement, and early childhood education.⁶ Whole-family approaches promote family well-being by providing families with the tools and support to set and accomplish goals; CAAs are experts in this method.

Created as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964,⁷ the Community Action Network connects millions of children and families to greater opportunity. As the local administrators of the Community Services Block Grant, they offer a range of services, including quality early education programs, workforce development, housing, and utility assistance. CAAs routinely partner with local social services, school districts, health care systems, local governments and neighborhoods, and can leverage this reach to promote SNAP E&T services to their customers and communities, as well as develop referral partners to provide wrap-around services to customers.

Maximizing Impact Through Supportive Partnerships

Picking the right partners is only part of the equation to maximizing impact through partnerships. Health and human services leaders have an opportunity to maximize the impact of those partnerships by establishing policies and practices that cultivate a strong partnership network.

The most successful third-party partnerships build on a shared goal and mission with the SNAP program to meet the immediate needs of community members while maximizing positive outcomes for participants in SNAP E&T. Establishing concise messaging of program goals, values, and expectations, integrated into

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procurement processes, regular provider trainings, and partnership check-ins can make sure that partners are rowing their boats in the same direction. Recognizing the importance of regular communication, the Kentucky SNAP E&T program staff created a SNAP E&T Steering Committee comprised of third-party providers that include CAAs and community colleges. The Steering Committee meets quarterly to discuss program goals, address challenges, and share progress. This allows the partners to find the most effective ways to work together and stimulate program growth, ultimately creating a network of integrated services to assist SNAP participants in gaining the skills to move forward on a career pathway.

State agencies also have the opportunity to request technical assistance through the SNAP to Skills (S2S) program. S2S, a project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, is providing technical assistance on a rolling basis to support specific, short-term projects to advance their SNAP E&T programs. S2S is managed by the Seattle Jobs Initiative in partnership with MDRC and Insight Policy Research.

The need for reskilling displaced workers in industries with slow or no growth and labor markets demanding higher-skilled employees, creates a need for strong workforce development partnerships to ensure that Americans are not left behind as the country moves toward equitable economic recovery. By partnering with community colleges and CAAs, states can capitalize on

their community-based knowledge and expertise, expand their service offerings, and positively impact SNAP participants, moving them forward on a path to economic mobility. 

Reference Notes

1. Funding for this project was provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.
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