

DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE PARTICIPANT-FOCUSED SNAP E&T PROGRAM



What is SNAP E&T?

The SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program helps SNAP participants gain skills, training, and/or work experience to increase their ability to obtain employment for economic self-sufficiency. States are required to operate SNAP E&T programs and are given considerable flexibility to determine which specific supportive services or components to offer.

Third-party providers must submit their budgets to state agencies once a year, thus presenting a unique opportunity to embed feedback loops from SNAP E&T participants to ensure that program elements are working towards helping low-income participants gain the necessary employment skills to achieve self-sufficiency.



Whether you are an established third-party E&T provider or launching a new program, it's crucial to prioritize the insights and preferences of SNAP E&T participants.

Human-Centered Design

One way to gather participant insights and preferences is through a human-centered design approach. Human-centered design prioritizes the needs, behaviors, and preferences of individuals who will use a program or benefit from its outcomes. This approach involves engaging participants in the program design process and adapting based on their feedback to develop effective and user-friendly solutions.



As a result, barriers to access can be removed and processes, policies and communication materials can be simplified for participants. Program staff and administrators should engage in regular feedback loops with SNAP E&T participants to continuously improve their program and ensure that the needs of participants are met.

Applying a human-centered approach offers numerous advantages for SNAP E&T programs:

- Clearly informing participants about program components and guiding participant outreach
- Increasing your SNAP E&T enrollment and engagement rates
- Informing where to invest your limited staff capacity and program resources
- Advancing equity goals within the program
- Spotting engagement drop-off points and eliminating process bottlenecks
- Identifying and addressing engagement obstacles
- Eliminating biases and barriers in program design

The checklist provided aims to assist third-party providers in implementing human-centered design methods in two key program areas:

1. **Communications and outreach**
2. **SNAP E&T program design** - it is not an exhaustive list but provides a starting point to help center your program around participants



Is your writing clear and easy to read?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it jargon-free? | <input type="checkbox"/> Check for plain language usage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are acronyms spelled out? | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider using readability tests (e.g., Gunning-Fog, Flesh Reading Ease) typically offered free online |

Do your outreach materials highlight key information?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>What</i> services/supports are provided? | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Where and how</i> to access services/supports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>When</i> are they available? | <input type="checkbox"/> What information to bring (e.g, valid driver's license, social security number, income verification documents) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Who</i> is eligible? | <input type="checkbox"/> After signing up/taking action, what is the process and timing? |

Does the content capture participant attention?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it clear why the action must be taken? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the messaging relevant to the participant? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Will the participant recognize the sender of this communication? It should be someone easily identifiable like a career navigator or case manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Does the messaging dispel misconceptions? (e.g., "by accessing this benefit, you are not taking away resources from other people. This program is designed to meet the needs of all who qualify.") |

Does the communication make it easy for participants to take action?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight or bold key details | <input type="checkbox"/> Pay careful attention to the timing of the communication to ensure it considers the participant's life circumstances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight action steps | |

Have you personalized the communication for the participant?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who is the recipient and what do you know about them? | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider adding content your participants can personally relate to such as success stories from people with similar backgrounds. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Include specific calls to action: (e.g., expect a call, or invite them to attend an orientation) | |



PROGRAM DESIGN



Do your services align with participants' schedules and needs?

- Offer services at times convenient for participants, including working parents
For example, a participant is a single parent who works full-time and attends your program part time. Case management is offered once a week in person at the agency. How could the program offer more convenient meeting options to meet the needs of this working parent?
- Align support services with participant needs, adjusting offerings as necessary
For example, adding different support services or changing the amount or level of support services offered

Establish seamless referrals between agencies providing support services (e.g., childcare, mental health)

- Develop an intentional and clear process for warm handoffs
- Provide participants with the contact information for the right person
- Who should participants expect to reach out to or hear from?



By centering programs around participant needs and interests, SNAP E&T providers can effectively meet individuals where they are and foster meaningful pathways to self-sufficiency



This resource was developed with the expertise of Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI), which helps organizations to build, grow, and optimize workforce, education, and public benefit programs. This includes working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), more than 40 states, counties, and providers to implement and grow high-quality SNAP E&T programs. Learn more about how SJI can help you with SNAP E&T at <https://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/consulting/>.

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