



Building State Capacity to Support Expanded SNAP E&T Programs

POLICY BRIEF 4
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Introduction

A growing number of States are realizing the potential of the SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program to help meet the urgent need of their SNAP participants for higher skills and better jobs. While States can turn to proven strategies to jumpstart their programs, some may be understandably hesitant to do so without knowing more about the staffing and infrastructure required. States may be especially uncertain about what it takes to develop and support a more robust SNAP E&T program that expands the use of 50 percent reimbursement (50-50) funds through third-party partnerships.

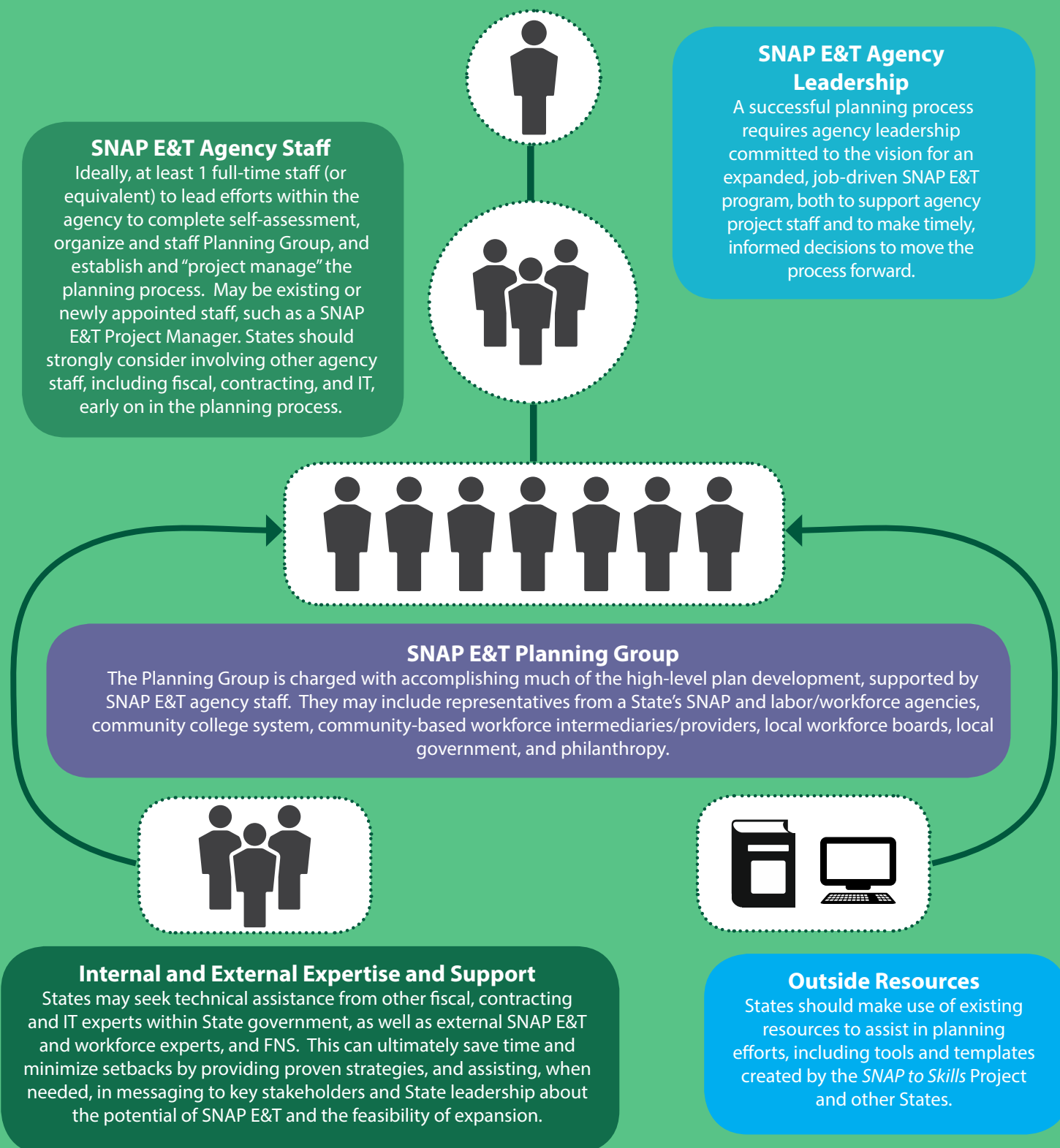
This brief seeks to reduce this uncertainty for States in two ways. First, it provides them with a detailed picture of what staffing functions and infrastructure may be required both to plan for and administer an expanded SNAP E&T program utilizing primarily 50-50 funds. What are the key tasks and roles and who will perform these? What systems need to be in place? Second, the brief will offer States some recommendations for identifying and accessing the resources they may need to support this added capacity.

Staffing and Infrastructure for Planning for an Expanded SNAP E&T Program

To expand their SNAP E&T programs States must first develop a solid plan for achieving this objective. The *SNAP to Skills* Project has identified different levels of planning depending on the timeframe for and scope of program growth: short-term Implementation Plans that support initial program expansion; and longer-term Strategic Plans that support eventual statewide expansion. Ultimately all plans need to describe what the expanded program will entail at the level of detail required by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in an annual or amended State E&T Plan. State agencies administering SNAP E&T should create an internal team ("State Agency SNAP E&T Project Team") to lead planning efforts. The Project Team can then invite a broader group of stakeholders ("SNAP E&T Planning Group") to help inform the planning process. The table below lists some of the key planning functions of these groups.

State Agency SNAP E&T Project Team	<p>Conduct a Self-Assessment. States should develop a clear picture of where their programs are currently, plans for the program moving forward, key drivers (economic, social, political) of change, and the opportunities and challenges that may present as they move forward.</p>
	<p>Establish a Planning Group. States should identify internal and external stakeholders to involve in the planning process: individuals, organizations or agencies that have needed expertise, are key decision-makers or will be impacted by decisions made. They must determine each stakeholder's appropriate level of involvement in the planning process (e.g., who will drive plan development; who must make decisions or provide input at key points in the process; who simply needs to be informed).</p>
	<p>Establish Processes for Planning and Tracking Progress. States should determine the structure and timeframe for the planning process itself, and milestones that will let them know if they are on track to meet planning goals and deadlines. States should establish processes for keeping detailed records of the progress they have made toward their planning goals that will help rebuild momentum if faced with staffing changes, delays or other obstacles.</p>
SNAP E&T Planning Group	<p>Develop a Vision Statement. A vision for an expanded SNAP E&T program should inspire, bring people together around a common goal for the future, build support and draw in new partners. Determine the broad goals for the expanded program to meet its vision, and describe how these fit within broader agency or State workforce development goals.</p>
	<p>Identify the Target Geography and/or Population of focus for the expanded SNAP E&T program (including, if known, how these might be expanded over time).</p>
	<p>Identify the E&T Services to be Offered in the expanded program.</p>
	<p>Identify and Secure Third-Party Partners for the SNAP E&T program, if this is the State's strategy, which can be accomplished through a resource map or other means such as a potential partner survey/assessment.</p>
	<p>Assess Administrative Capacity and Needs. Determine what staffing, resources and infrastructure the State currently possesses that can be utilized to administer the expanded SNAP E&T program, what additional capacity might be needed, and how this additional capacity will be supported. (The following section of this brief will provide some guidance in this area).</p>

WHAT RESOURCES MIGHT STATES NEED TO COMPLETE THE PLANNING PROCESS?



Staffing and Infrastructure to Administer an Expanded SNAP E&T Program

State SNAP E&T agencies typically fulfill a set of core functions in administering an expanded SNAP E&T program that utilizes third-party partnerships. These are listed in the table below. For each core function, the table shows key responsibilities and the staffing and resources that may be required.

Core Function	Key Responsibilities	Staff/Resources (Ideas)
Strategic Oversight - Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term Strategic Planning Ongoing Review of Program Data and Monitoring of Outcomes to Build Results-Driven Program Continuous Improvement and Program Adjustments Strategic Program Expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State agency central staff (e.g., 1-2 FTE, such as SNAP E&T Project Manager(s) supported by other agency staff, including leadership) SNAP E&T Planning Group or newly-constituted volunteer group (including third-party partners) can help periodically review program strategy, improvement ideas See Staff/Resources for “Data Collection, Reporting and Evaluation” Core Function, below.
Strategic Oversight - Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State SNAP E&T Plan Development Working with FNS Staying Current on/Applying Federal Policy Cultivating State Leadership Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State agency central staff (SNAP E&T Project Manager(s), supported by existing staff, including leadership) Consider strategic help from partners to assist with cultivating State leaders
Third-Party Partner Outreach and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying/Assessing New Partners On-Boarding New Partners Organizing Partner Training/Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State agency central and/or local staff (e.g., SNAP E&T Project Manager(s) lead; local office staff can be trained to help identify/work with partners in their areas) Current partners can be asked to volunteer to help train peers Use pre-existing partner assessment tools (see <i>SNAP to Skills</i> website)
Contract Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing Scope of Work (SOW) with New Partners Developing Contracts with New Partners that include SOW and Budgets System for Compiling Multiple Contracts/Budgets into State SNAP E&T Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State agency central staff (e.g., SNAP E&T Project Manager(s) working with State agency contract/finance staff) Develop SOW and contract templates

Contract Monitoring & Mgmt. Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring Partners Meet Contract Obligations and any Performance Outcomes • Conducting Contract Monitoring Visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency central staff and/or local staff (e.g., central contract staffing as lead, supported by local office staff for the partners in their areas)
Management Information System (MIS) Development and Updating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing/Adapting MIS to Utilize for Participant Enrollment, Tracking, Outcomes Monitoring and Reporting • Potentially Updating MIS to Allow Partner Access and to Improve Functionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency central staff (e.g., IT staff working with SNAP E&T Project Manager(s)) • Utilize input from partners for improvement ideas • Consider adapting existing MIS systems (e.g., for WIOA or TANF) for SNAP E&T
Participant Referral, Eligibility & Invoicing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Overall Processes • Assess and Refer Appropriate Individuals to SNAP E&T Services • Ensure All Individuals Enrolled in E&T are Eligible for Services Provided • Process and Review Invoices to Ensure Only Costs for Allowable Services to Eligible Individuals are Submitted for Reimbursement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency central staff and/or local staff can provide referrals AND third-party partners can also refer (“reverse referral”), with agency staff approving • Utilize existing referral points, such as WIOA one-stops, TANF and SNAP frontline staff, community agencies • In third-party partnership models, States might allow partners direct access to MIS to confirm eligibility for SNAP E&T and enroll participants, saving the State resources • In third-party partnership models, confirming eligibility for both enrollment and invoicing can take significant resources as program grows; States may need considerable central or local staff support (possibly a local “call center”) for this function • State agency contract/fiscal staff process reimbursements
Participant Marketing and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Third-Party Partners, Others to Develop Marketing Plan • Educate Potential Participants about SNAP E&T and Program Options; Promote Participation • Coordinate Efforts of Multiple Partners • Create Marketing Tools, Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency central staff (SNAP E&T Project Manager(s), supported by agency communications staff) • SNAP E&T Planning Group or newly-constituted volunteer group (including partners) can support marketing plan • Utilize partners’ existing tools and materials, adapted for SNAP E&T • Trained local office staff can market to prospective participants in their areas

Data Collection, Reporting, Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull and Report Data to Meet FNS Reporting Requirements • Collect, Analyze Data for Continuous Improvement, Return on Investment Analyses, Evaluating Program and Partner Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State agency central staff (e.g., existing IT staff working with SNAP E&T Project Manager(s)) • Request data from third-party partners • Consider MOUs with other State agencies that have relevant data, such as UI wage match, college completion and credential attainment data • Consider adapting existing MIS systems to use for E&T
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Strategies for Supporting State Staffing Functions/Infrastructure

Given that States must augment their capacity to operate an expanded SNAP E&T program, they may need to utilize creative strategies to support this growth. Some strategies for States to consider include the following:

- **Use to the extent possible existing staff and resources, especially at first.** With a smaller SNAP E&T program, some duties might be handled by existing staff who have additional capacity, particularly some key administrative roles such as contracting, finance and IT support at the agency central office, and participant outreach at local offices. Further, States can consider utilizing or adapting existing resources, such as their MIS, to support SNAP E&T. They should access tools and resources already created by other States and the *SNAP to Skills* Project. States should also make use of available partner resources. Non-contracted partners such as American Job Centers can serve as referral points, and Labor or Employment Security agencies can provide access to employment and wage data needed to track outcomes. At the same time, third-party SNAP E&T partners can play a significant role in everything from strategic planning support and providing peer training for new partners, to recruiting, referring and enrolling new participants.
- **Allocate some of the 100 percent SNAP E&T grant to fund new staffing and infrastructure capacity to support SNAP E&T growth.** Maryland, as described below, shifted some 100 percent funds away from supporting partner contracts—which could transition to 50-50 funding—and toward the new staffing and infrastructure costs of administering a larger program. Others, such as Missouri, Tennessee, and San Francisco County, utilized SNAP E&T technology grants or 100 percent grants to build MIS systems for SNAP E&T. In some cases, States may need to pursue legislative approval for new staffing or infrastructure needs, whether they are being funded by SNAP E&T 100 percent funds or State funds.
- **Create efficiencies by centralizing functions to support expanded SNAP E&T programs.** For example, Washington State’s SNAP E&T program has most of its staff located within a local “call center” in King County. This center handles all of the participant enrollment and invoicing functions with dozens of third-party partners, as well as some other duties such providing on-site services at third-party partner facilities. States can also use umbrella or intermediary contracts that can remove some of the State agency’s responsibilities around contracting and contract monitoring of third-party partners. Washington’s SNAP E&T agency, for example, has a single SNAP E&T contract with its State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, which in turn is charged with SNAP E&T contracting functions for all 34 of the State’s colleges.

Maryland

Supporting New Infrastructure for SNAP E&T Program Expansion

As Maryland sought to expand its SNAP E&T program through the development of third-party partnerships and the use of 50 percent reimbursement funds, it became clear that it would need to put in place new staffing and resources to increase its capacity to administer the program. With all of its 100 percent funds spread very thin among more than twenty different jurisdictions providing only limited E&T services, Maryland determined that a more effective use of a portion of these funds would be to support a more robust, centralized infrastructure. It began to pull back some 100 percent funds for this purpose. The State developed two new staff positions to support a larger SNAP E&T program: a data manager tasked with working with third-party partners to monitor the participant eligibility, enrollment, and tracking process; and a contract manager charged with developing and monitoring contracts with partners. These new positions report to a SNAP E&T program manager, an existing FTE but one whose job duties were changed to focus fully on SNAP E&T.

Maryland's SNAP E&T program is overseen by the State's Director of Workforce Development within its Department of Human Resources, who has taken on the role of developing strategy, serving as the "face" of the program, and providing oversight. Maryland also plans to utilize 100 percent funds to support the development of a customized SNAP E&T module for its MIS system, which is being modernized for WIOA, to allow it to track SNAP E&T participants and outcomes. Finally, Maryland is being more strategic about using its 100 percent funds to seed new partners, supporting them as they get up and running and transition to being supported by 50-50 funds. In addition to strategically reallocating funds to support the infrastructure needed for program growth, Maryland has also been smart about finding and adapting existing SNAP E&T tools and resources – such as staff job descriptions and partner assessment tools – from other States like California, Tennessee and Washington – to reduce the time and effort required to build its program infrastructure.



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