

5 Steps to Improve SNAP E&T Participation and Engagement



STEP 2 OBJECTIVE:

In Step 1, you selected one engagement problem area to focus on for your SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program (Recruitment/Referral, Enrollment, or Participation) and drafted a problem statement. In Step 2, you will gather and integrate information from SNAP participants’ lived experiences to deepen your understanding of the engagement problem area and later develop right-sized solutions that address reasons for participant drop-off.

Understanding the Issues:

A

Take a Walk in a Participant’s Shoes

Consider the engagement problem area from the perspective of a SNAP participant, not just from the perspective of the program staff members or regarding program participation goals. Why might participants drop off at the site of the engagement problem?

Activity

Describe what participants may be thinking and feeling during recruitment, enrollment, or E&T program participation. Participants’ positive or negative experiences with or perception of the program can determine whether they engage or drop off. What thoughts do participants have at this step? What feelings do they have? What questions do they wonder about the program and do these questions get answered? What else is on their mind? For this brainstorm exercise, write down your answers. Then, compare answers with your team members.

B

Check Your Assumptions with Available Data

What existing data or feedback does your agency have that you could review to learn more? If you are not sure, who in your agency or department may be able to answer your questions? Look for patterns – data and feedback do not come neatly organized.

Activity

Learn more about participant experiences and participation drop-off by exploring patterns in program data. What can you find out about participants existing data? Look for:

- Attendance and participation records
- Participant data or statuses in the MIS system (such as “applied” or “enrolled”)
- Comment cards or suggestion box entries
- Public comments or reviews on social media pages or websites
- Notes from prior meetings with participants

C

Create Feedback Loops for Participants

Feedback from active and inactive participants can help elevate the needs of the people for whom the services are designed. This feedback can be used to confirm or revise your understanding of the engagement problem.

Activity

Learn more about participant experiences and participation drop-off by exploring patterns in new data. Common feedback methods include:

- Phone or in-person interviews with participants
- Phone or in-person focus groups with participants
- Observations of in-person or virtual participant meetings

Lastly, use both the existing data and new feedback to assess your engagement problem. For example:

- Do the attendance and participation records align with the engagement problem?
- Does the data show where participants are exiting the process?
- During interviews or focus groups, do participants report negative feelings at the point of your engagement problem?

After assessing both new and existing data, confirm or revise your problem statement based on what you learn from participants.

Activity