



SNAP to SKILLS PROJECT

FFY 2022-23 Webinar Series

Integrating Effective Workforce Development
Services into E&T Programs

March 2, 2022



Agenda

❖ Welcome and Agenda Overview

❖ Elements of Quality Workforce Programs and Services

❖ Strategies for Integrating Quality Services into SNAP E&T Programs

❖ **Panel:** Anastasia Polda, [Minnesota DHS](#); Donna Claxton, [National Able Network](#); JoAnn Bowditch, [FareStart](#).

❖ Q&A

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Quality Programs = Meeting SNAP Participant Needs

- **SNAP participants often do not have right skills to compete for well-paying jobs***
 - Low educational attainment rates among SNAP work registrants
 - 31% education past high school (59% US); 27% below high school (12% US)
 - Geographic mismatch
 - Limited job experience/spotty work history
 - Majority of SNAP work registrants unemployed (70%) but have worked in the past two years (93%)
 - Jobs held are typically low-skill/low-pay/unstable (22% jobs held in retail and food service)
- **Multiple, significant personal barriers such as transportation, childcare, and housing needs, personal or family health issues**
- **Additional barriers to success in training programs such as limited English, low basic skills that can prevent access to/lengthen training**
- **Balancing competing needs**
 - Need for more skills and education vs. need to earn NOW
 - Need to complete education/training programs vs. current job and family demands



***SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Characteristics Study: Final Report**

Available at USDA, FNS website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap-employment-and-training-characteristics-study>

Workforce Strategies – What Doesn't Work

- “Low-Touch” activities, such as stand-alone Job Search Assistance or Basic Skills training, have been shown to not to work well (except for those most “job-ready”)
- These activities may lead to rapid employment and short-term earnings gains - long-term gains in family income are minimal, if any
- This is true for intensive Job Search Activities, including where “soft skills” training is added

“Job search training has been shown to be effective with groups that are already job ready; however, when provided separately from other services and without supervision, it falls short of helping low-income participants achieve lasting gains in employment and wages.”

– SNAP E&T Best Practices Study 2016-2020

Workforce Strategies – Overview of What Works

Programs that help participants build skills that are locally in-demand

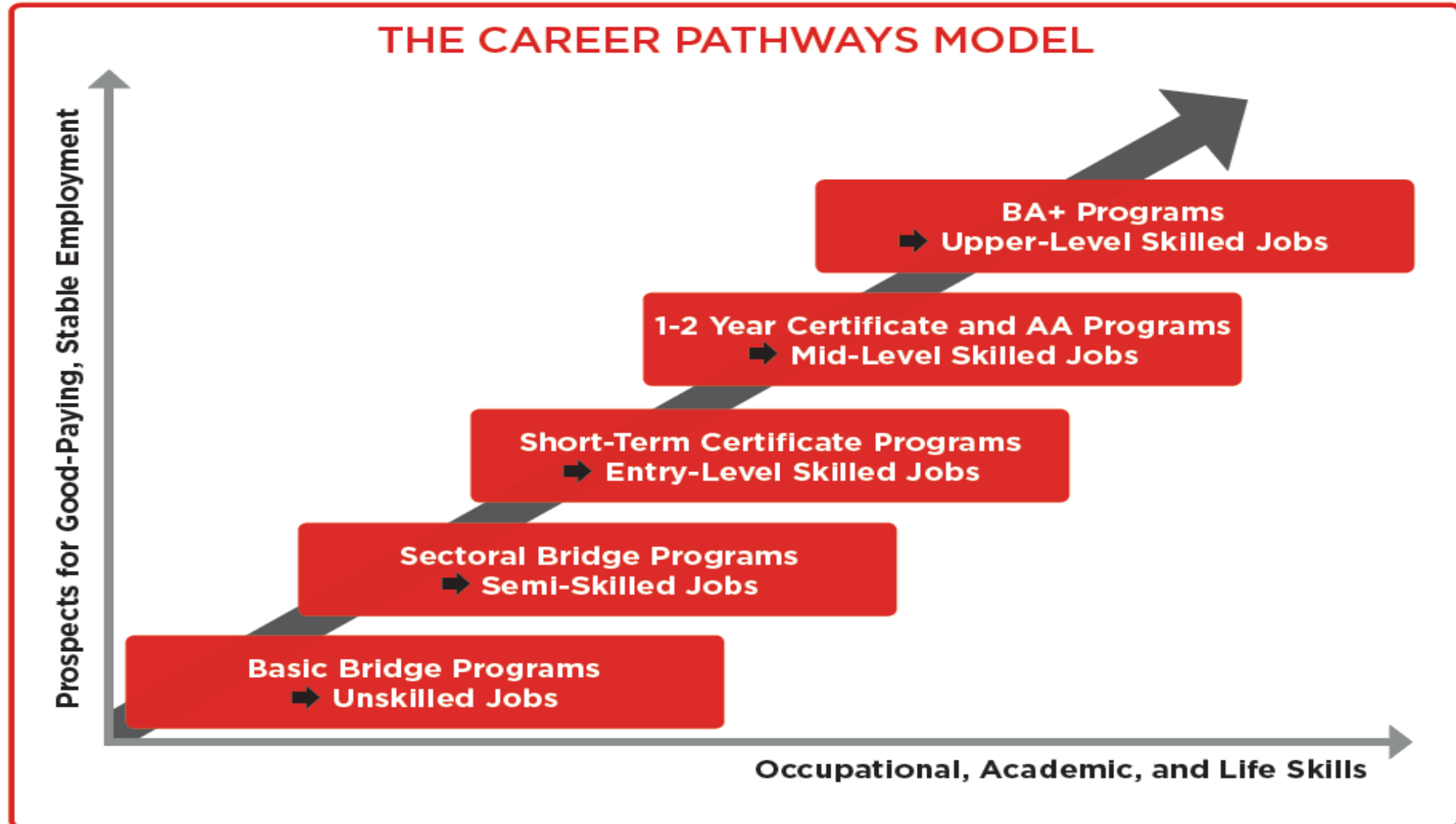
And...

- Are based on assessment of the workforce related strengths/weakness of SNAP participants
- Comprehensively address individuals' needs for skills training, basic education, and overcoming barriers to employment (e.g., strong case management, supportive services)
- Help participants earn credentials valued by employers in their chosen industry sector
- Develop skills closely linked to labor market demands in local area
- Provide more intensive services that combine several components simultaneously or sequentially
- Designed and adapted around participant needs, feedback, outcomes
- Minimize participant drop offs (e.g., delays between enrollment – orientation - start)

Effective Workforce Program Models

- **Career Pathways**
- **Sectoral Training Strategies**
- **Employer-Based Training Strategies**
- **Contextualized/Integrated Basic Education**
- **Structured Educational Pathways**

Career Pathways



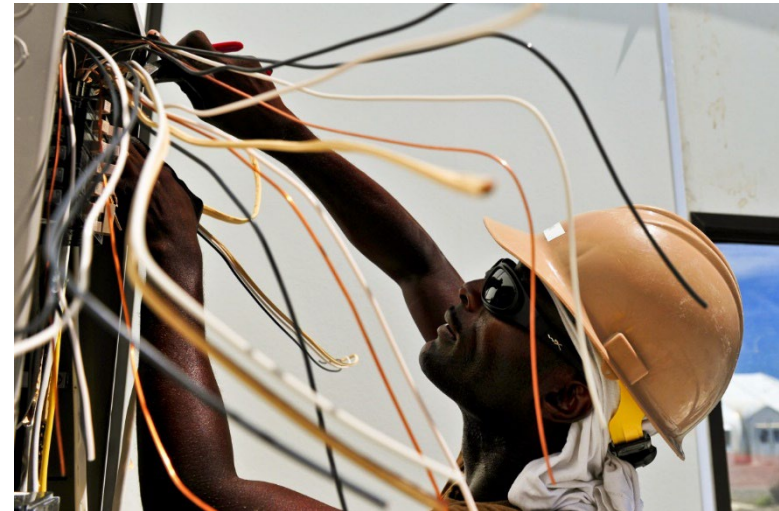
Sectoral Training Strategies

- **Programs based on partnerships between local employers within a specific industry and employment and training providers to meet the workforce needs of that industry/those employers**
 - Training is designed with input/involvement of employers, helping ensure the right skills are provided to secure employment
 - Ideally, employer partners hire many of those who complete the program
- **Challenge: creating access for lowest-skill participants, as programs designed to meet specific industry needs may require higher starting skills/education levels**
 - As with Career Pathways, solution may include customized bridge programs; integrated education and training strategies



Employer-Based Training Strategies

- **Programs that build workers' skills at the workplace in partnership with local employers. Also known as "work-based learning" typical models include:**
 - **On-the-Job Training**
 - **Apprenticeship**
- **Key Advantage: earn while you learn**
- **Key Challenge: limited programs/slots**
- **Key Challenge: creating access for lower-skill participants, as programs may require higher starting skills/education levels for participants to do the required tasks**
 - **One solution is pre-apprenticeship**

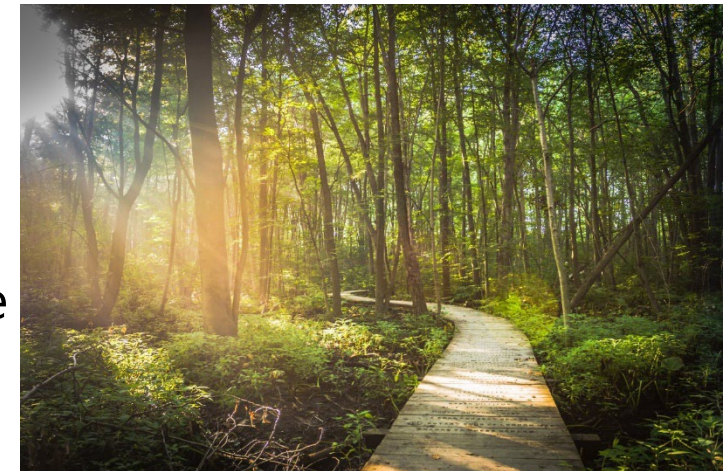


Contextualized/Integrated Basic Education

- **Basic education and occupational skills instruction are combined vs. traditional model of first having to achieve certain level of basic skills prior to enrolling in skills training**
 - Can shorten the training pathway
 - Improved retention (shorter pathway; students can see relevance of program to future employment prospects)
 - Improved learning (utilizing job skills training as way to learn basic skills, English)
- **Various models, such as two instructors in single classroom; separate classes that are co-designed so content is integrated; etc.**
- **Model most often found at community colleges/other adult education providers**

Structured Educational Pathways

- **Program strategy typically utilized by community colleges to address two key challenges faced by students:**
 - Overwhelming number of course choices. If the correct ones are not taken or taken in correct order, can significantly delay or prevent achievement of credential
 - Under-resourced advising support within most colleges to help navigate choices
- **Structured Educational Pathways (“Guided Pathways”) limit choices based on student career goals**
 - Specifically prescribed courses to complete the pathway/ achieve a credential/job
 - Courses taken in a prescribed order
 - Groups of students (e.g., with similar skills levels) start the program together at specific enrollment periods (also creates cohort model of student support network)



Quality Case Management

- **All E&T participants must receive case management (2018 Farm Bill change)**
- **Intensive and high-quality case management is often needed by E&T participants to succeed in programs**
 - Research has shown a positive correlation of quality case management with employment and earnings gains (SNAP E&T Best Practices Report: 2016-2020)
- **Quality case management includes:**
 - Dedicated (focused on case management vs. multiple competing tasks)/trained staff
 - Case managers with flexibility to provide individualized support, including connecting people to outside resources and supportive services they require
 - Caseloads that allow for sufficient time spent with each participant
 - When participants are served by more than one agency, a coordinated, team-based approach to case management
 - Participant-centered: giving participants agency
- **Best practice: Career Navigation**

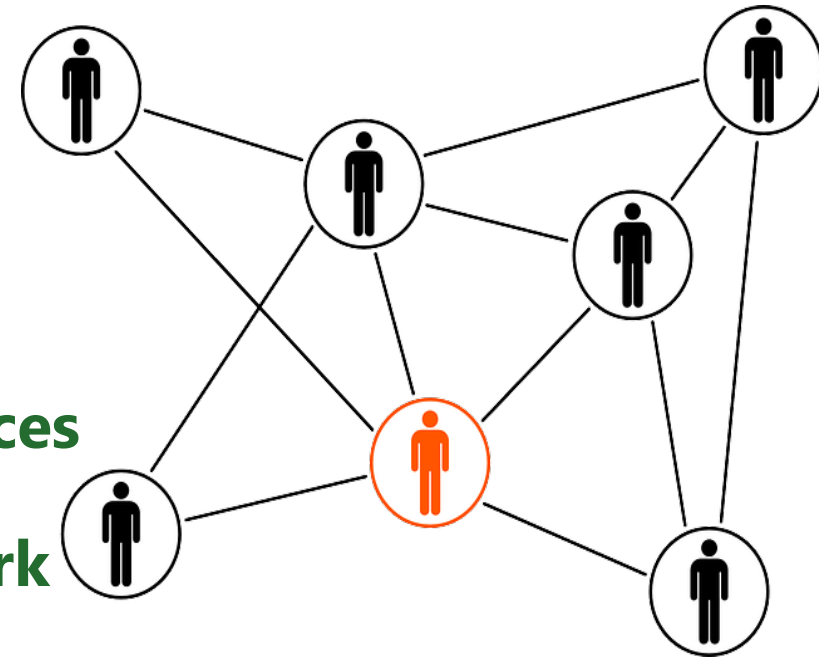
Assessment: Matching People to Right Services

- **Assessment is a key part of quality case management that may include developing an Individual Employment Plan (IEP)**
- **More than just “checking the boxes”**
- **Beyond *job skills* assessment – explores strengths, learning barriers, special needs, living situation – the whole person**
- **When done right by trained interviewer can help ensure continued participation and engagement (avoid drop offs) as well as correct referrals and the right career path fit**
- **Assessments are not a “one and done” step. Should be an ongoing part of the individual case management. Regular check-ins will reveal new information and update situation**
- **Quality workforce programs cross-refer participants based on assessment**



Robust Supportive Services

- Both SNAP E&T Best Practices and E&T Pilot research found that Supportive Services are critical to the success of E&T participants
- Transportation and housing were most needed supports
- Flexibility and robustness of supportive services are key – ideally, programs have trained staff (e.g., case managers, navigators) that can work with each individual participant to provide a wide range of customized supports at the level required to address barriers



Other Characteristics of Quality Programs/Services

- **Use of Labor Market Information (LMI)**
- **Use of data for Continuous Quality Improvement**
- **Understanding of targeted population(s) – research/“participant-centered design”**
- **Tailored to meet needs of specific populations served (e.g., ELLs, returning citizens, homeless or unstably housed)**
- **Nimbleness – responding to changes in labor market, population needs**
- **Strong partnerships**
- **Track record of impact/outcomes**

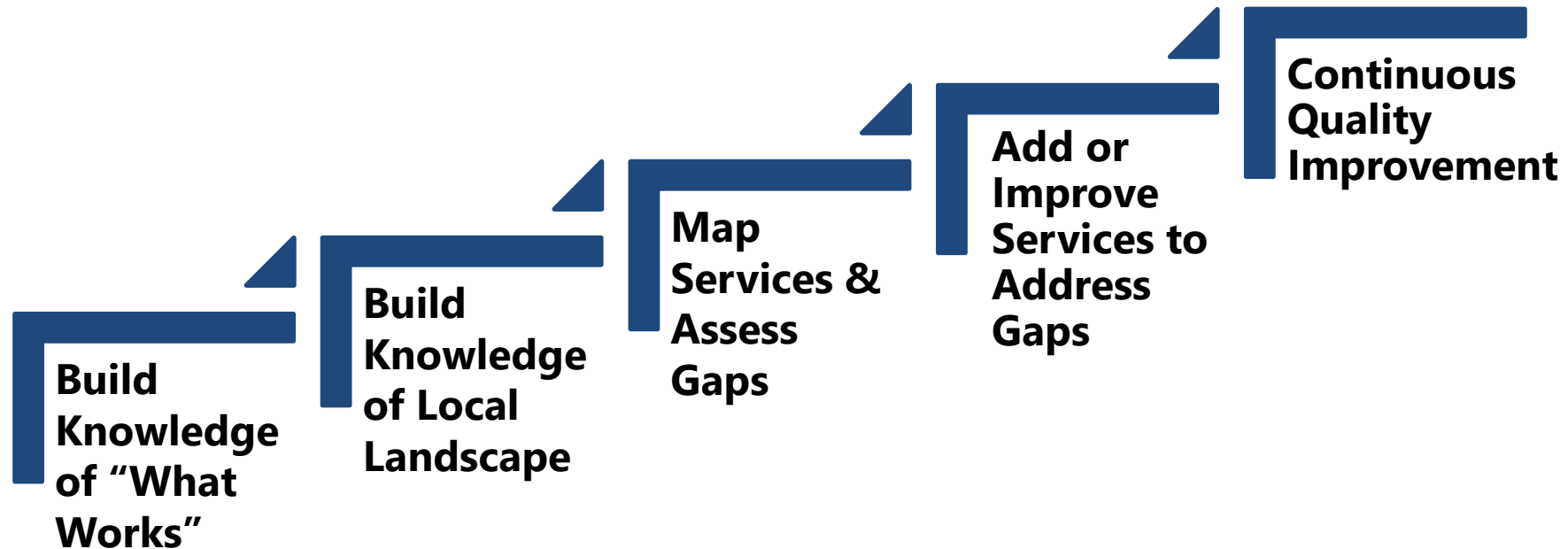


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Integrating Quality Workforce Services into E&T

Strategies for State/County SNAP Agencies



Build Knowledge of “What Works”

- **Learn more about effective workforce strategies**
- **Access/use data to better understand which existing programs and services in your State or locality are effective for SNAP and similar populations**
 - From your current SNAP E&T program
 - From your State workforce and college systems
- **Consult with your State/local workforce agency**



Build Knowledge of State/Local “Landscape”

- **Learn more about your State/local SNAP population (work registrants/potential E&T participants)**
 - Data on demographics, skill attainment, employment, barriers
 - Direct engagement – surveys, focus groups
- **Learn more about State/local market opportunities**
 - Growing sectors/occupations (with accessible, stable, livable-wage jobs)
 - Consult with State/local workforce agency
- **Learn more about State/local workforce initiatives (e.g., career pathways, sectoral training initiatives, etc.)**
 - What’s working, who is involved, is there a role for E&T?

Map Current E&T Services/Assess Gaps



Add/Improve E&T Services to Address Gaps

- **Prioritize the gaps you wish to address to improve the quality, impact (and equity) of your E&T program**
- **Identify and start with low-hanging fruit**
 - As found in the Pilot Study, new E&T services can take a significant amount of time/effort to get off the ground
 - Ideally add provider partners with existing programs that meet targeted gaps in program quality
- **Consider how SNAP E&T funds can incent new high-quality services where they don't yet exist**
 - Identify willing and quality partners (workforce system, colleges, CBOs) to help design and implement services
 - 100% funds could be used to help pilot new services



Continuous Quality Improvement

- **Continually assess your SNAP E&T program for quality of workforce services being provided**
 - Keep apprised of workforce best practices and promising programs in your local area
 - Keep apprised of the evolving employment/training needs of your local SNAP population as well as the local labor market
 - Regularly assess your current E&T services (data analysis, qualitative analysis such as participant/provider feedback)
- **Plan for and take action to improve service quality based on assessment**

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DHS Strategic Plan: Better health, fuller life and lower cost for Minnesotans working to achieve their highest potential.

MN SNAP E&T Mission: Through strong partnerships, our mission is to help recipients fully utilize their SNAP benefits, gain the essential skills needed for gainful employment and successfully transition off public assistance.

- Supporting diverse partnerships and culturally-specific providers through collaboration.
- Emphasis on participant-driven, employer-informed services.
- Integration with career pathways infrastructure, and full participation in state workforce system.
- Engagement in research and evaluation to identify strategies that can lead to significant, long-term impacts in SNAP recipients' lives.

2022 strategic planning underway: Focusing on COVID response/recovery and equitable service delivery

National Able Network & SNAP Intermediary Program

National Able Network is a non-profit workforce development organization located in the Midwest who serves roughly 75,000 job seekers annually across all programs

- Established our IT vocational training program (IT Career Lab) in 2012 and began utilizing SNAP 50/50 funding to support training participants in 2018
- In 2020 Able was chosen to pilot the SNAP Intermediary function within the Chicagoland area
 - Year 1 - 6 providers
 - Year 2 - 12 providers (on pace)
 - Year 3 - 20 providers (goal)

Intermediary Benefits

- Insulates providers from State bureaucracy, can onboard new providers quickly and execute contracts
- Provides smaller, less sophisticated providers with an avenue to utilize SNAP funding
- Handles all quality assurance, reporting, compliance monitoring and other services on behalf of providers
- Responsible for processing all program vouchers and reimbursements payments
 - Limited fiscal liability for subcontracted providers

We are interested in working with agencies and providers who share our vision and want to expand programs and services to SNAP recipients. For more information, please contact:

Donna Claxton, SNAP Director, dclaxton@nationalable.org





FareStart is a nonprofit organization that serves individuals who are furthest from opportunity and most affected by poverty, homelessness and food insecurity.

We provide social services while managing mission-driven businesses to deliver on-the-job training opportunities for students and to feed the community. Our holistic approach provides pathways toward personal stability, economic mobility and food security while advancing equity.

Questions?

Resources

Best Practices Studies:

[Best Practices in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance \(SNAP\) Employment and Training \(E&T\) Programs 2016–2020](#)

[SNAP E&T Best Practices Study: Final Report 2016](#)

Pilot Studies:

[Implementing the SNAP E&T Pilots: Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned:](#)

[Provision of Support Services to Reduce Barriers in the 10 SNAP E&T Pilots:](#)

[Diversity in Case Management Approaches in the SNAP E&T Pilots:](#)

[Issue Briefs on Early Implementation Lessons \(Summary\):](#)

E&T Population Study:

[SNAP Employment and Training \(E&T\) Characteristics Study: Final Report](#)

Thank you!

<https://snaptoskills.fns.usda.gov>

