

FFY 22 Planning

Strategic Vision Session

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What would it look like to be successful at equity in SNAP E&T? How can SNAP E&T better align with similar efforts in other workforce programs? What resources can we capitalize on to improve our equity work?

SNAP recipients are a large and diverse group. There is no one-size-fits-all model that will suit all populations or even that will produce equity. Equity approaches should be customized to local communities and conversations need to continue and be intentional around equity goals for local areas. Populations of particular concern include: ABAWDs, students, housing-insecure but these may vary by community. One statewide equity goal may not be the right approach.

Participation

Equity looks like improving ease of access and improving participation in the program.

- Identify and utilize alternative forms of marketing (cookbooks,
- Access to SNAP itself is a barrier to equity in participation. What role should we play in helping support SNAP access more broadly?
- Stigma around receiving SNAP can be a significant barrier. Does this affect some populations more than others?
- Those not receiving referrals are often those who might most benefit from services (Homeless, single older adults, African Americans, Refugees, etc)
- It is challenging to find "right fit" services when SNAP recipients are such a broad population representing different skill levels and work experience.
- A better link to mental health and housing supports will support a broader group of individuals.

- "it's not that we aren't recruiting correctly, it's that the covid impact has hit our population really hard."

Equity and ABAWDs

ABAWDs remain a population of significant concern with the likely end of the statewide ABAWD waiver in November 2022.

- How can we provide enough services to ensure that these individuals don't lose benefits? (this is directly related to challenges with funding)
- One barrier to serving this population is lack of training programs (where the match funding is coming from or otherwise) with limited or no pre-requisite testing scores or requirements which are difficult for ABAWDs to meet.
- Work requirements are not realistic

Contracting and Equity

- Can we issue an RFP targeting specific providers serving target populations? ABAWDs, People of Color, Individuals with significant barriers, etc
- Identify areas of state with the most need for services, target RFPs to those providers
- Identify and support providers in hiring staff from backgrounds that resemble those they are trying to serve.
- Use existing tools to evaluate equity in the program and ensure that equity is a part of the contracting process.
- Support providers with accessing additional resources to support specific populations (eg, the rural Minnesota Mathematica partnership)

Services and Equity

- How do we get participants to providers (esp. in rural areas)?
- Can we build partnerships at different life stages/transitions? graduating students, families, moving into higher ed, etc.
- We might attract a more diverse population by being more clear about what support services are available
- Equity could be found by seeking a wider base of funding particularly for support services.
- The people we serve are often those most excluded from other existing supports. SNAP E&T is itself a response to a need for greater equity in access to supports among workforce programs. But without funding for those supports it cannot live up to that promise.
- Improve alignment with other wrap around support funding opportunities.
- Better alignment with street outreach programs. Homeless population should be a priority.

Equity Principles

- Nothing about us without us. Include those we want to serve in decision-making about the program.
- Build on work being done across agencies and funding opportunities in the broader non-profit world

How might the current labor market constrain SNAP E&T/SNAP recipients in coming years? How might the current labor market provide opportunities for SNAP E&T/SNAP recipients in coming years?

The current labor market is largely unprecedented. This poses both opportunities and constraints for SNAP recipients. Wages are up but many may be falling off the benefits cliff. Work and employers are more flexible and motivated to find and train staff but structural limits remain such as childcare and transportation access. There are lots of opportunities but they concentrated in industries that SNAP recipients may disproportionately not want to work in due to Covid impacts (such as healthcare).

Wage Growth

- Tight labor market means an increase in wages. We may start to see fewer people eligible for SNAP due to income.
- Higher wage jobs are more available but SNAP participants lack information about what wage they would need in order to avoid the benefits cliff. Seeing people taking better jobs but ending up worse off.
- Higher pay at gas station than job from short term training.

Increased Job Mobility

- Pandemic labor market has made it easier to move jobs and move from field to field.
- With so many jobs available, people need less help finding employment
- Employers are more willing to hire those with previously disqualifying work/life history
- Employers are more willing to offer flexible shifts, remote work, and other more flexible arrangements

Service Delivery

- During the pandemic many providers offered virtual services.
- Some providers had more success than others at offering virtual services
- Ability to provide laptops as a support service is a strength.
- Significant need for digital literacy skills which are now an even bigger barrier to employment
- Can we be offering more services to those already employed but at a low wage.
- Building an earn and learn model.
- Providing training on virtual interviewing, educating job seekers on vaccination requirements, what is a hybrid environment, how do you work from home but you don't have the space to work from home.

Employer Engagement

- Tight labor market has meant more employers are actively seeking training for workers (both existing workers and potential future workers)
- We may have a great opportunity now to build employer connections while employers are actively seeking workers and more willing to be flexible.
- Make better use of MAWB resources such as the Business Services Committee.
- Can the state be a convener for employers and service providers? What would that look like?

Barriers to Rejoining Workforce

- Employers report real barriers to getting willing staff back to work, particularly around childcare housing and transportation. Quicktrip, Marvin Windows, and Fastneal are good examples of positive work being done. Even where employers are trying their best to support there are limits.
- Concern about Covid exposure remains a huge barrier for SNAP recipients.

Principles

- "We get stuck in the routine of things won't work and not being willing to change things as that is how they have always been done."
- Traditional recruitment strategies aren't working "Things are different and we need different approaches"

What work (both successful and still in progress) should continue from the current strategic plan? What priority areas or practices would your group recommend SNAP E&T pursue? How would your priority recommendations increase equity in SNAP E&T and/or respond to Covid impacts?

Overall, two priority areas emerged. 1) Access and Funding for support services (and funding more broadly) and 2) Increased efforts to boost participation through marketing, outreach, and any other approaches that might be effective.

1. Develop a continuum of evidence-based employment and training services through our partnerships.

- Develop more targeted partnerships, connect providers together for a continuum of services

One upvote – ANASTASIAPOLDA

2. Make available services that are responsive to participants' needs, motivation, culture and abilities.

- Shift emphasis to making services Known and Accessible but still responsive.
- Develop specific strategies related to pathways and ABAWD-specific programming

One upvote – ANASTASIAPOLDA

3. Build a range of support services to help participants succeed.

- Assist providers in building a "bank" to provide more robust support services
- Assist providers with better understanding how to best utilize the reimbursed funds.
- This is essential but impossible given current funding
- Childcare is a particular barrier
- Support service funding is a barrier regardless of contracting path

All groups highlighted this as a continued priority – ANASTASIAPOLDA

4. Work inclusively with our diverse partners and employers.

- How do we explicitly plan to build a program that is "participant driven" but "employer engaged"?
- More emphasis on supporting and establishing local connections.
- Be explicit about what we expect providers to do in relation to employers and what the state will do in relation to employers.
- Engage more with DEED WF Strategy Consultants and the Workforce data side of DEED
- Strengthen relationships with libraries
- How do we assess employers for suitability? Better understanding the difference between the experience of training for a position and the experience of actually working in that field

Two upvotes – ANASTASIAPOLDA

5. Share progress publicly as we work aggressively, but thoughtfully, to grow SNAP E&T to serve recipients.

- Annual reports are fine but how will it actually be used to improve the program?
- Measures used by Hennepin: number served, education skill gain, credential gain,

increased in earned income, number of counted ABAWD months earned/uncounted, post-waiver reimbursement funds drawn down

New Priorities

- Add marketing priority
- Add more employer engagement, could there be a statewide push to engage employers?
- Sector based employment programming
- Clearer connection to SNAP Outreach
- Innovation, creativity
- More Funding

Parking Lot

Parking lot issues are relevant to SNAP E&T but not necessarily work we are able to have sufficient voice in taking on fully.

Afghan/Refugee Services

What opportunities exist to support Afghan refugees or refugees more broadly? How might we align better? Many refugees are not SNAP eligible, but some are, how can we serve this population better?

Labor Force Participation

Some individuals have chosen to take themselves out of the labor market. Will this be sustainable?

Retention Services

Can we do more with retention services?
