

Workforce & SNAP E&T: Serving Clients Effectively and Reaching Under-Served Populations

September 27, 2021

Housekeeping

- Mute your mics when not speaking
- Q&A sessions included - feel free to use the chat box to participate)
- Recording and slides will be shared in a follow-up email

THIRD SECTOR

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Serving Clients Effectively

Reaching Underserved Populations with SNAP E&T

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Purpose

- Explain how SNAP E&T can be a useful tool for Workforce Development Boards to serve clients that they otherwise might not reach
- Discuss how qualitative data and community engagement can improve existing programs

Agenda

- **Serving Clients Effectively: Applying an Equity Lens (10 mins)**
- Guest Speaker: Teleworks USA (Workforce Agency) (25 mins)
- Integrating SNAP E&T and WIOA (10 mins)
- Break (~5 mins)
- Guest Speaker: Minnesota SNAP E&T (State Agency)(25 mins)
- Designing Effective Programs (15 mins)

Equity is different from equality

Defining Equity



Visualizing Health Equity: One Size Does Not Fit All, infographic by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

What does it mean to focus on equity?

Equity is defined as “the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, **including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.**”

Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities calls on agencies to:

- systematically advance equity in decision making processes
- redress inequities in our policies and programs
- address how programs and policies perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for people of color (POC) and other underserved groups

Can SNAP E&T be a bridge to support populations left out by other workforce programs?

Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

Data and Equity

Section 9. “Many Federal datasets are not disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, income, veteran status, or other key demographic variables. This lack of data has cascading effects and impedes efforts to measure and advance equity. A first step to promoting equity in Government action is to gather the data necessary to inform that effort.”

To build an equitable program, you need to be data-informed.

Selecting appropriate metrics to build a data-informed program (and understand how you are serving clients)

Inputs

Seed & watering can
Staff / resources used to administer program



Outputs

Seeds are “watered”
participants enrolled



Short-term outcomes

Something is definitely sprouting
participants who completed an educational or work experience, or a training certificate



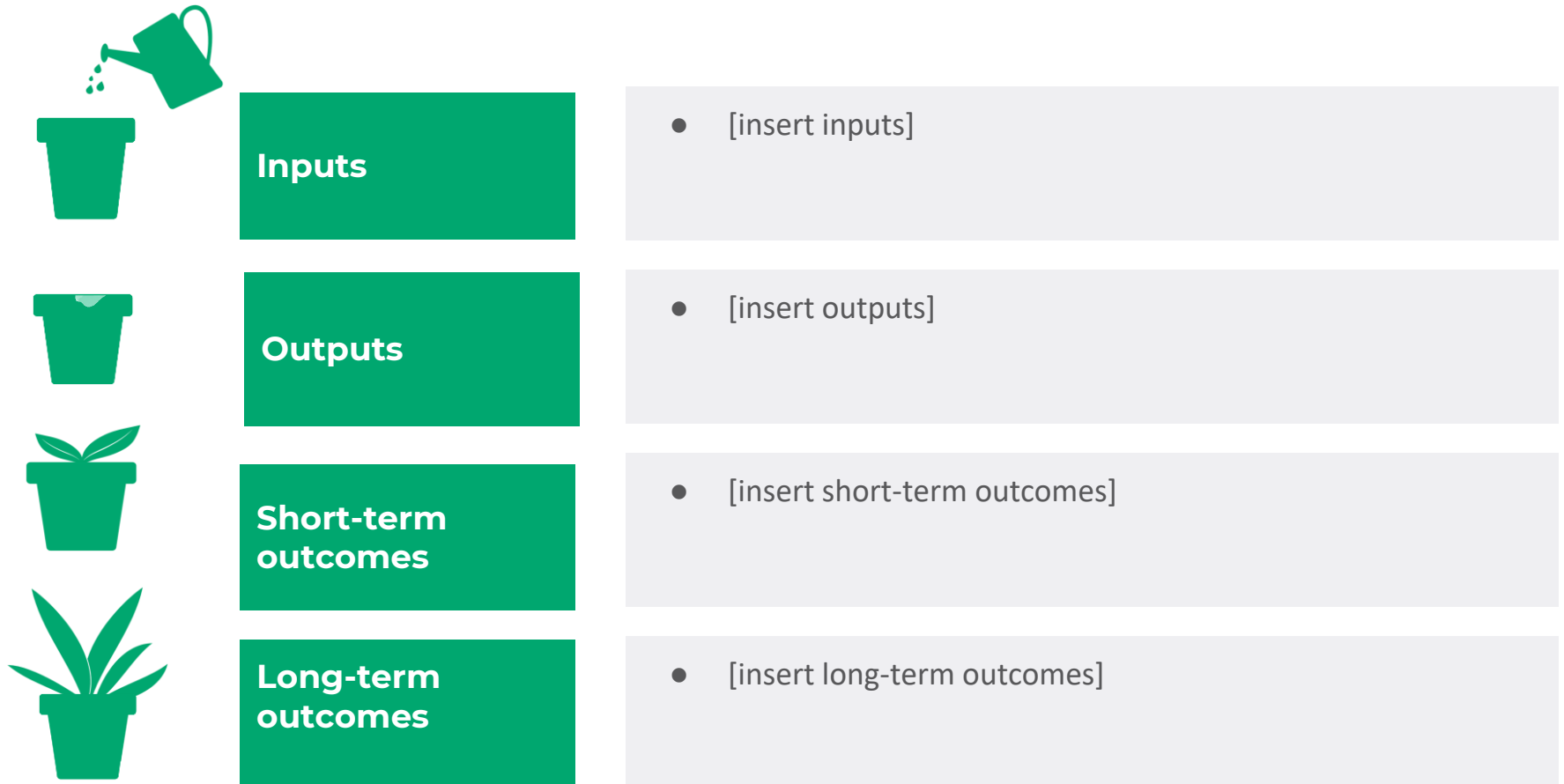
Long-term outcomes

Healthy, thriving plant
participants in unsubsidized employment during the 4th quarter after exit, living wages, benefits, etc.



Tip! Remember to disaggregate your data by race, gender, age, etc.

Which metrics match your vision of a 'successful' program?



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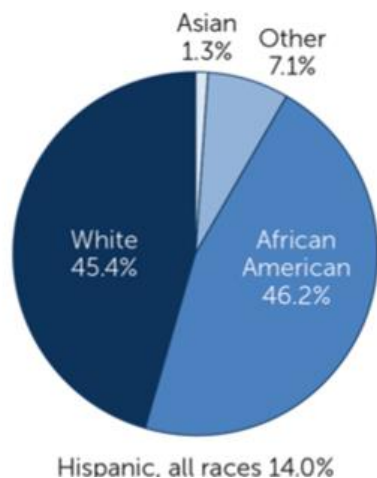
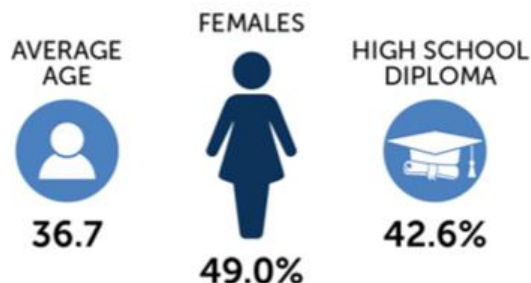
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SNAP E&T Participation and Expansion

E&T PARTICIPANTS



Not everyone who is eligible for SNAP E&T is enrolled. Of the 47 million people who received SNAP benefits in FY 2013, about 629,000 participated in E&T programs.

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has increased their national and regional SNAP E&T staff in the last two years, and they are working with states to develop, improve, and expand SNAP E&T programs.

Source: SNAP State administrative data (December 2014 to June 2015) that Mathematica collected on age, gender, and race/ethnicity; SNAP Employment and Training Registrant and Participant Survey (R/P Survey) data collected from September 2015 to March 2016 for education level.

(Mathematica, 2017)

Opportunity to support clients with both WIOA, SNAP E&T

Opportunities

- Workforce Boards, American Job Centers, and other organizations are already interacting with SNAP E&T participants, who might not yet qualify for WIOA
- SNAP E&T participants face many of the same barriers to employment as the priority populations in WIOA
- Reporting requirements are similar across WIOA and SNAP E&T
- SNAP E&T is meant to “meet participants where they are at” -- you will not be penalized for serving harder to reach populations

(Mathematica, 2017; US Department of Labor, 2017)

WIOA priority populations & inclusion

WIOA focuses on “individuals with barriers to employment” and includes a performance accountability system to reward states for serving people with the most need, including:

- Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Displaced homemakers
- Low-income individuals
- Individuals with disabilities
- Older individuals
- Ex-offenders
- Homeless individuals
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system
- Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- Single parents
- Long-term unemployed individuals ; and
- Individuals who are:
 - English language learners
 - Individuals who have low levels of literacy
 - Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers

(US Department of Labor, 2017)

Some shared metrics across SNAP E&T and WIOA

Reported Data

Metric(s)	WIOA	SNAP E&T
# and % of current/former participants in unsubsidized employment after participation in program	✓	✓
Median average quarterly earnings of current/former participants in unsubsidized employment	✓	✓
The # and % of participants that completed an educational, training work experience or an OJT training component	✗	✓

Not collected in SNAP

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Criminal record
- Household type

Collected in Both

- Gender
- Language
- Age
- Credentials

(US Department of Labor, 2017)

WIOA has tensions between outcomes and inclusion

Balancing outcomes and inclusion

Research has shown that requiring organizations to meet specific performance metrics within the public workforce system can lead to adverse incentives.

Agencies are incentivized to prioritize, or “cream,” participants who are more likely to be employed with or without services.

On the other hand, this happens at the expense of serving groups of workers who need and are more likely to benefit from more employment and training support.

(Center for American Progress, 2020)

SNAP E&T is an opportunity for workforce boards to serve harder-to-reach clients and try new approaches

Continuous Improvement

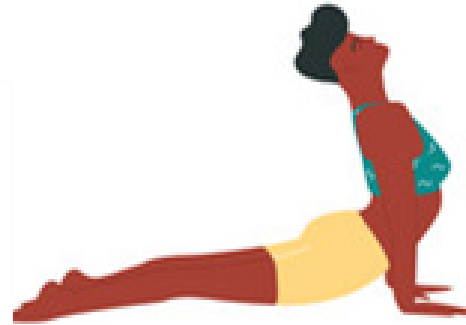
- FNS does not “penalize” States who do not meet their targeted outcomes, this way programs can better “meet participants where they are at”
- FNS uses SNAP E&T data to identify areas where FNS can offer technical assistance to improve the program- reflecting a continuous improvement mindset.
- FNS may review and modify a State’s budget request for 50-50 funds (typically the following FFY) to ensure it aligns with reality of potential outcomes
- FNS provides data grants for states to better understand their coverage and who is underserved

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Take a break!

Pick a yoga posture and stretch it out for 3 mins



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Why talk to workforce participants to build/improve programs?

- 1 Understand problems more fully:** Staff at workforce boards, CBOs and community colleges may be aware of participant barriers in navigating workforce systems but engaging participants with lived experiences can ***challenge assumptions*** and ***reveal gaps in programming and services***.
- 2 Design better programs:** Programs and services are often designed without the input of the individuals who are most impacted, leading to systems and structures that do not work and can create new barriers. Involving participants in both the design and continuous improvement of a program **allows workforce agencies to tailor programming to each population's needs -meeting participants where they are at.**
- 3 Quantitative data is useful but limited:** Aggregate data is useful for providing a broad evaluation snapshot, but it is incomplete on its own. Qualitative data offers a level of nuanced, narrative context to help ***interpret quantitative data*** and ***design solutions***.

Engaging SNAP E&T participants specifically for design/improvement

SNAP E&T does not have a formal process that allows recipients to participate in designing, implementing, and evaluating the program to ensure that what will work best for them and their communities remains at the forefront.

Program participation can be an issue due to:

- lack of awareness that they are eligible
- the application process will be too difficult or time-consuming
- stigmatization for participating
- distrust of government programs
- something else entirely

Many of these barriers can be addressed if **engagement and outreach are conducted by trusted members of the community or local staff who are former SNAP E&T participants and reflect the racial/ ethnic background of their neighborhoods.**

(Bread for the World Institute, 2019)

What to ask workforce participants?

Design Questions

What do participants see as a “successful” work program?

What are the barriers to that vision of “success”?

How can we remove those barriers and better support that vision?

Principles for engaging customers and community members

- ✓ **Go broad:** Use open-ended questions that start with “what and how” rather than why-avoid close-ended or leading questions
- ✓ **Be accessible:** Use activities, visuals, an open attitude (e.g. non-judgmental tone and body language), well-framed questions, and accessible language to help customers reflect on their experiences, needs, and potential solutions; use interviewee’s word choice when possible
- ✓ **Build trust:** Use natural settings (e.g. a neutral space in customers’ own community) and immerse yourself in the context so customers feel most comfortable
- ✓ **Build empathy:** Foster a genuine understanding by asking about the diverse experiences and needs of people in the community
- ✓ **Consider representation:** Engage enough people and a diverse opinions to get a full view of the narrative; capture cultural differences and frame perspectives authentically
- ✓ **Reflect on potential for bias:** Consider how your identities shape your opinions and affect customer responses; use diverse teams to collect or interpret data

Resource: Team self-reflection before customer engagement

Questions to Build Humility

- What are we trying to achieve by engaging participants, what is their expertise?
- What assumptions are we bringing to this discussion?
- Do we have assumptions about what participants need or what they look like?
- Are you imagining the community as one homogenous body or culture, instead of a complex organization of different people?
- How can we defer to and elevate the expertise in the room?

Questions to Build Empathy

- What power dynamics will exist in this space? What assumptions do participants have about us?
- What lived experiences are people bringing?
- What are participants' fears, and how can we facilitate with empathy?
- Why are participants attending? What are their expectations?
- What does it mean for participants to attend? What are they giving up?
- Are the individuals willing to participate different than those who do not? Do they represent the community, or do they have more privilege?

Formats for engaging customers

Consider which method, or mixture of methods, will help you meet your goals

Strategy	Benefits	Trade Offs
In-Depth Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More accurate view of a person's goals and experiences• More likely to reveal insights into sensitive topics or controversial feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More costly and time consuming to engage more people• More likely to need to cancel due to no-shows
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes advantages of group dynamics (spontaneous communication, inspiration, or musing between participants) to reveal conflicting views or new themes• Less costly way to confirm ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers participants less time to speak• Time speaking is typically unbalanced• May reinforce social hierarchies and deter certain speakers / topics from coming forward

Formats for observation

Observing people in a natural context can clarify processes and fill in knowledge gaps

Strategy	Description	Example
Shadowing	Observe a real activity performed by one or more users (e.g. intake, service, data entry)	Watch a clerk manage data or information requests for a couple hours
Service Trial	Experience a simulated activity, ideally guided by an expert who understands some of the nuances around how people experience it in real life	A caseworker leads you through the intake process as if you are a participant
Participation	Go through an activity as if you are a regular participant	Experience a job search workshop along with other participants
Transect Walk	Walk through a community, joined by an expert, experiential guide or community member to learn about issues, behaviors, needs, and opportunity areas	Explore social and environmental conditions in a neighborhood with a community leader as a guide
Public Forum	Attend a listening session where people are discussing their priorities and needs	Sit in on a town hall meeting about housing needs

Compensating customers for their time

- **Why it matters:** Compensation allows individuals with higher barriers (e.g. no transportation, economic hardship, small children to care for) to participate- reaching a broader range of current or potential customers
- **Determining the amount:** Compensation should be a fair and compelling value based on:
 - # of hours participants are spending travelling to the location (if applicable)
 - The cost of living in that location
 - The value of participants' personal experiences
 - Sensitivity of the topic and amount of emotional labor required
 - Any part-time work they must miss to participate in the conversation
- **Other considerations:**
 - Consider providing a meal so participants can better focus and working caregivers can still feed their families
 - Meet participants in their neighborhood or reimburse transportation costs to enable attendance
 - Consider providing on-site childcare or allowing participants to bring their children. If reimbursing childcare, try to offer cash based on a written receipt, since people may rely on friends or families to watch their children
- **Method of compensation:** Consider giving cash if this does not conflict with benefits eligibility or funding stipulations. If it does, poll participants to determine which gift cards are valuable and how they prefer to receive them (e.g. Target gift cards can be delivered to a phone number via text).

A step-by-step community engagement resource for SNAP E&T

USDA:FNS (2021). “The Road to Engagement: A Toolkit for SNAP E&T Programs”. <https://snaptoskills.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/SNAP%20to%20Skills%20Toolkit%20-%20Final%20-%20Sept%2023.pdf>

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Resources and Links

- Recordings and slides will be shared in follow up email
- SNAP E&T Events Email List: <https://forms.gle/eEu8f9posUUy6mVcA>
- Previous recordings and other program information can be found at:
<https://www.nawb.org/initiatives/snapet/resources>

WORKFORCE + SNAP E&T COMMUNITY *of* PRACTICE

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