Attachment E: SNAP E&T Data Needs Assessment

Why this project?

Under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), States are required to operate an Employment and Training (E&T) program to help participants gain skills, education, training, and experience that lead to employment and greater economic self-sufficiency. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) uses several methods to collect information on State SNAP E&T programs: annual State SNAP E&T Plans, quarterly FNS-583 data forms, and annual outcome reporting measures. However, the data is often inconsistent, incomplete, and inaccurate. This makes it challenging for FNS to analyze these data to determine the outcomes of SNAP E&T participants and to provide program improvement assistance to States.

FNS has contracted with Mathematica to (1) identify and describe the current State and Federal systems that collect, validate, and analyze E&T data; (2) assess the current and future E&T data needs of Federal, Regional, and State staff; and (3) recommend a plan to improve how Federal, Regional, and State staff collect and use data for E&T program improvement and reporting.

How will the project be completed?

The project involves several key tasks that will inform the findings, including:

- Conducting 10 in-person meetings with a range of staff from national and regional offices. The project team will develop a better understanding of the systems for collecting and analyzing SNAP E&T data, assess the current and future data needs of SNAP E&T stakeholders, and identify options to improve the collection and analysis of data. They will also identify systems and processes from other federal programs that FNS may want to consider when implementing changes to data systems, business processes, or individual data elements.
- Conducting site visits in seven States to observe their SNAP E&T business, data collection, and analysis processes. The project team will also assess the current and future data needs from the perspective of a range of State and local staff.
- Creating process maps showing how SNAP E&T data flow through State, regional, and national offices to identity the various stakeholders and roadblocks to collecting and reporting needed data.

When will the project happen?

The project began in July 2019 and will continue through at least January 2022.

What will the project produce?

The project team will develop a comprehensive final report of recommendations for FNS to meet its current and future data needs for the SNAP E&T program. The report will describe the current State, regional, and national data systems and processes; the current and future data needs and goals of SNAP E&T; and the gaps between the current systems and data needs. The team will recommend methods to address these gaps through changes to data systems and information technology solutions, improved business processes, and expanded technical assistance.

How do I find out more?

Contact the Mathematica project director, Gretchen Rowe, at growe@mathematica-mpr.com. Contact the FNS project officer, Loretta Robertson, at loretta.robertson@usda.gov.

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