

Attachment G. Interested Parties Interview Protocol

[Note: Depending on the structure of a SNAP State agency's E&T program, this interview may not be conducted or may need to be tailored to the partners involved. When scheduling the site visit, determine whether another State-level agency, community partner, or other interested party has a role in implementing, maintaining, and/or monitoring SNAP E&T. This protocol has been purposefully written to encompass a variety of potential interested parties, so interviewers will need to tailor questions to the respondent's role in the SNAP State agency's E&T program.]

My name is *[name]*, and I'm a researcher at Westat. Westat is conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, or FNS. The study will examine the data FNS needs to measure equitable program access and outcomes in State agencies' administration of work requirements and Employment and Training, or E&T, for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

My colleagues and I are currently conducting interviews with SNAP State and local offices, SNAP E&T providers, and other interested parties here and in five other States. Through these interviews, we hope to collect information from a wide range of individuals involved in administering work requirements and SNAP E&T. I want to start by thanking you for taking time to speak with us today. Your perspective on and insights into these processes will be very helpful to the study.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and your responses will be kept private, except as otherwise required by law. We will not share the information you provide with anyone outside the study team. You may refuse to answer any question, and you may stop the interview at any time. There will be no penalties if you choose not to participate in a part or the entirety of this interview.

We will take notes over the course of the interview and would like to audiorecord the conversation to help us remember the information we collect. We will summarize the information you share with us today and combine it with information gathered from other people we interview. Nothing you say will ever be linked to your name. Direct quotes included in our reports will be presented without the speaker's name to protect their identity.

I anticipate our conversation will take up to 1 hour. Do you have any questions for me about the project in general or what we will discuss today?

Do I have your permission to record the conversation? You may stop the recording at any time.

[Confirm permission before recording starts. Do not record without respondent permission.]

[Turn on recorder] For the purpose of the recording, are you willing to participate in this interview? And are you willing to have the interview audiorecorded?

A. Public Burden Statement

- B. This information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service in examining equity in SNAP work requirements and SNAP Employment and Training. This is a voluntary data collection, and FNS will use the information to understand what data are needed to assess equitable program access and outcomes in SNAP and SNAP Employment and Training. This collection does not request any personally identifiable information under the Privacy Act of 1974. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the following address: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-XXXX). Do not return the completed form to this address.

A. Background

I'd like to start by learning about your role and responsibilities at *[organization]*.

1. What is your current job title or position?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. What are your primary responsibilities?

B. Organization Background and Partnerships

[Ask questions in section B of all respondents]

Next, I would like to learn more about your organization.

4. Please describe your organization and its mission.
5. Please describe your organization's role in SNAP E&T. Does your organization offer services to SNAP E&T participants? Do you have a role in program monitoring?
 - a. How long has your organization been working with SNAP E&T?
 - b. How did your organization's relationship with SNAP E&T begin?
 - c. Has this relationship changed over time? If yes, how? Please also describe any forthcoming changes.
6. Do you work with other organizations or agencies to *[support/deliver]* SNAP E&T services?
 - a. *[If yes]* What organizations or agencies do you partner with? How do you collaborate with these partners for SNAP E&T?

C. Internal Hiring and Staffing

[Ask questions in section C of all respondents]

I'd like to learn more about your organization's internal hiring and staffing.

7. Does your organization have explicit hiring targets or goals for frontline staff? *[If yes]* Can you tell us more about these hiring practices? What prompted your organization to implement these?
 - a. What other factors does your organization consider when hiring frontline staff? *[Probe: experience working with clients or a similar population, lived experience, cultural humility]*
8. *[Only ask if management-level staff are participating in the interview]* Does your organization have explicit hiring targets or goals for leadership and/or managerial staff? If yes, can you tell us more about these hiring practices? What prompted your organization to implement these practices?
 - a. What other factors does your organization consider when hiring leadership or managerial staff? *[Probe: experience working with clients or a similar population, lived experience, cultural humility]*
9. Can you tell us more about how *[organization]* recruits staff?

D. SNAP E&T Program Operations

[Ask questions in section D only if the respondent has a role in SNAP E&T program operations, such as a State Department of Labor that helps the SNAP State agency administer the program.]

Next, let's discuss your organization's role in SNAP E&T program operations.

10. The State agency operates a *[mandatory/voluntary/mandatory for some]* SNAP E&T program. Was your organization involved in this decision-making process? If yes, can you provide some background on how the State agency decided to operate this type of SNAP E&T program?
 - a. Has the type of SNAP E&T program changed recently? If yes, please describe why and how.
11. *[If mandatory]* Does your organization have enough SNAP E&T slots for all mandatory participants? *[If no]* How does your State agency determine who must participate in SNAP E&T and who will receive a good cause exemption? Is this information tracked in your eligibility or SNAP E&T system?
12. Is your organization involved in selecting SNAP E&T providers? If yes:
 - a. What factors does *[organization]* consider when selecting SNAP E&T providers?
 - b. Is your organization actively recruiting additional SNAP E&T providers? If yes, why?
 - c. Does your organization provide training to providers on how to best meet the needs of participants and account for each participant's unique circumstances? If yes, please describe.
 - d. What challenges does *[organization]* face selecting and contracting with SNAP E&T providers? *[Probe: funding, presence in underserved areas, administrative capacity, interest, finding providers that offer relevant trainings]*
 - i. What could be done to mitigate these challenges?

13. According to the SNAP E&T State Plan, the State agency offers the following SNAP E&T components: *[list]*. Was your organization involved in this decision-making process? If yes, can you provide some background on how the State agency decided to provide these components?
 - a. *[If some components are not offered statewide]* What factors determine where a SNAP E&T component is offered?
 - b. Are there any components that you think the State should offer but does not? Why do you think they should be offered? Why are they not available?
14. Can you please describe how clients are screened for SNAP E&T?
15. How are clients referred to SNAP E&T? *[Before the interview, add State-specific probes that may be most relevant for groups in the State, such as rural individuals, racial/ethnic groups, or individuals living on Indian Tribal organizations, or ITOs.]*
 - a. Are some groups of people more likely to get a referral? Why?
 - b. Is the referral automatically sent to the SNAP E&T provider, or does the client need to follow up on their own?
 - c. In your opinion, are some groups of referred clients more likely to participate in SNAP E&T than others? Which groups? Why?
 - i. How could the State or your organization increase participation in SNAP E&T from underrepresented groups?
16. What outreach does your organization conduct for SNAP E&T? What materials do you use?
 - a. Has your organization solicited feedback regarding the materials from SNAP E&T participants? If yes, what feedback did participants provide?
17. Does your organization provide case management to SNAP E&T participants? If yes, can you please describe how case management is provided to SNAP E&T participants? *[Probe: who provides the service, how often case managers meet with clients, how case manager assignments are made, goal of case management]*
 - a. How effective do you think case management is in increasing retention and completion of SNAP E&T? How could case management be more helpful? Do any groups require more individualized services? What types of services?
 - b. Do you track any data related to case management? If yes, please describe.
18. According to the fiscal year 2024 SNAP E&T State Plan, your State agency allows the following reimbursable participant expenses: *[list]*. Was your organization involved in this decision-making process? If yes, can you provide some background on how the State agency decided to provide these reimbursements? *[Probe: consultation with providers, participants, other individuals/entities]*
 - a. Does your organization provide reimbursements to SNAP E&T participants? If yes, how are clients informed about reimbursements? *[Probe: at the time of SNAP E&T referral, during screening, by the provider]*

- i. How are participants reimbursed for those costs? Are costs ever paid on behalf of participants?
 - b. We know that transportation and childcare are two of the biggest barriers to SNAP E&T participation. What efforts has your organization taken to address these barriers through its participant reimbursement policies? *[Probe: agreements with childcare agency, looking into rideshare options in areas with limited public transit, priority for childcare for SNAP E&T participants]*
 - c. What other reimbursements, if any, could help mitigate some of the challenges associated with SNAP E&T participation?
- 19. Thinking broadly, are there other ways that SNAP E&T policies may contribute to inequities among SNAP clients? If yes, which groups are more affected by these policies? *[Before the interview, add State-specific probes that may be most relevant for groups in the State, such as rural individuals, racial/ethnic groups, or individuals living on ITOs.]*

E. Available Data and Data Needs

[Ask questions in section E of all respondents. Tailor as needed depending on responses about the types of data collected.]

I'd like to shift to discuss the SNAP E&T data that are collected and reported.

- 20. We know the State agency collects the following data on SNAP E&T participants *[list responses to survey questions 46, 55, and 65]*. What, if any, additional demographic data do you collect on your clients? *[Probe: educational attainment, disability, language]*
 - a. How do your staff collect these data? How often are these data collected or updated?
 - b. Are there challenges related to how these data are collected or updated that may affect the quality of the data?
 - c. Do you share these data with the State agency? *[If no]* Would a data-sharing agreement be possible?
 - d. What factors or considerations should the State agency and FNS keep in mind when using these data?
- 21. What outcome data do you collect on your clients? *[Probe: wages, length of time employed, whether the client found employment, name of the employer, position]*
 - a. How do staff collect these data? How often are these data collected or updated?
 - b. Are there challenges related to how these data are collected or updated? *[Probe: data reliability and validity]*
 - c. Do you share these data with the State agency?
 - i. *[If yes]* Do you use a State system or your own system? Do you need to complete any duplicate entries?

- ii. *[If yes]* Can you please describe the data-sharing agreement your organization has with the State agency? What challenges did you face in setting up the agreement? What worked well?
 - iii. *[If no]* Would a data-sharing agreement be possible? Why or why not?
 - d. What factors or considerations should the State agency and FNS keep in mind when using these data? *[Probe: quality issues, clients not reporting outcomes]*
22. How, if at all, does your organization use these data internally? What are your key performance measures?
- a. Have these measures changed over time? If yes, please describe.
 - b. To what degree does your organization use these data to measure and assess participant access or disparities in outcomes? Please describe.
23. What data would you like to have access to that you do not? What would you be able to do with these data if you had them?
24. What, if any, additional data should the State agency or FNS collect to be better able to determine whether there are disparities in SNAP E&T access, participation, and outcomes?

F. SNAP E&T Access and Outcomes

[Ask questions in section F of all respondents. Before the interview, add State-specific probes that may be most relevant for groups in the State, such as rural individuals, racial/ethnic groups, or individuals living on ITOs.]

Now, let's talk about where disparities could occur when administering SNAP E&T services and your ideas for how FNS could better ensure individuals have the same opportunities to access SNAP E&T and benefit from the program.

25. We already talked about some areas in the work requirement and SNAP E&T screening and referral processes that may contribute to disparities. Could any other administrative processes or procedures affect a client's ability to access SNAP E&T services? If so, please describe.
- a. Do these procedures generally affect anyone who is eligible for SNAP E&T or specific groups? *[If specific groups]* Which groups do these procedures affect and why?
26. What factors may contribute to disparities in clients' outcomes? *[Probe: access to childcare, access to transportation, general readiness, activities that help clients meet their goals]*
- a. Do these factors generally affect anyone who is eligible for SNAP E&T or specific groups? *[If specific groups]* Which groups do these procedures affect and why?
27. How does your organization define successful participation in and completion of SNAP E&T? What steps has your State agency taken to ensure all individuals who participate in SNAP E&T succeed in the program?
28. What needs to be done to ensure all eligible individuals can participate in SNAP E&T? What data can be used to measure whether all eligible individuals can participate?

29. What needs to be done to ensure that all participants who engage in SNAP E&T succeed? What data can be used to measure whether all participants succeed?
30. What should FNS prioritize to make sure everyone has the same access to E&T and the same opportunities to benefit from the program?

G. Wrap-Up

Thank you for answering our questions. Before we wrap up ...

31. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?
32. Is there anything we did not ask about that you think is important for us to know?

Those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much for speaking with us!