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BUDGET BITE: SNAP, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
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SNAP EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAM COULD DO MORE FOR OHIOANS

Ohio could bring in millions of federal dollars to expand quality education and training and help people who need food assistance prepare for better jobs by expanding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program’s 50/50 reimbursement program (SNAP 50/50).

SNAP 50/50 E&T

Organizations can seek federal reimbursement for:

<p style="text-align: center;">Eligible services</p>  <p>Expenditures can pay for job search, education and training; work supports like transportation, child care or housing assistance</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eligible participants</p>  <p>People enrolled in SNAP during the month they receive services who do not receive TANF</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Organizational capacity</p>  <p>Building organizational capacity to track participation and outcomes; and manage cash flow prior to reimbursement</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eligible funds</p>  <p>Funding source cannot be federal (state, local, philanthropic, private donors) and not used to match with other federal programs</p>

Source: The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis

SNAP 50/50 expansion is part of the federal Food Nutrition Service’s [SNAP to Skills](#) initiative to help states build more effective and job-driven SNAP Employment & Training programs. The program recognizes that many people who need help affording food already work. SNAP to Skills refocuses SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) services on quality education and

training to help workers secure better-paying jobs so they no longer need assistance. The program expands use of federal SNAP reimbursement grants for training providers – public entities, employers, or nonprofits – for half of what they spend on supportive services to SNAP recipients. This includes essential wrap-around supports like child care, transportation, and intensive case management or counseling. This reimbursement can expand services and help more SNAP recipients access quality education and training.

Ohio requires many adult participants meet work requirements to get help buying food. The federal government puts an additional time limit on benefits for so-called able-bodied adults, between the ages of 18 and 55, who do not have children. Those Ohioans must participate in employment and training for at least 20 hours per week or are limited to three months of food assistance. Last budget cycle, the majority of [SNAP E&T participants](#) met their work requirement through the “work experience program” (WEP). In practice, WEP placements offer little that actually builds skills to move participants out of poverty and into better jobs. WEP work includes janitorial duties, grounds keeping, maintenance—the kinds of low-paying

jobs many SNAP recipients already have. Compounding the problem, WEP partners struggle to find hosts for placements. The SNAP to Skills initiative could help transform this program.

WORK REQUIREMENTS DON'T WORK

Helping SNAP participants attain an education and forge a career path are better ways to reduce need for food assistance. A [new report](#) confirms what nearly all studies have found: time limits and work requirements do not help people find and keep jobs that lift them out of poverty. This is not surprising given that [six of Ohio's 10 most common occupations](#) pay so little that a family of three is still eligible for assistance, even if working full-time, year-round. More effective ways to help participants gain a foothold in the labor market include providing time and resources to support stability and reframing the program to empower participants.

Wrap-around supports like child care, transportation and mentoring helps participants overcome barriers to work, as demonstrated by the [Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\)](#) piloted at three Ohio Community Colleges (Cincinnati State, Cuyahoga and Lorain). The programs show that so-called nontraditional students (older, working, parents, who are low-income) succeed with these supports. ASAP more than doubled graduation rates after two years. Ohio should use federal reimbursement grants to support programs like ASAP. By drawing down the federal reimbursement, the schools can reinvest the money and expand capacity over time.

[Washington state's](#) Basic Food Employment and Training Program (BFET) did just that. The \$30 million program uses 50/50 reimbursements to serve 28,000 people a year, at all state community colleges, and at 30 community partners. The program provides supports to students in career-tech, basic education, GED, ESL classes, and includes career counseling. Students in this voluntary program have better persistence, completion and employment outcomes than peers who are not. Voluntary programs like BFET have better returns for all stakeholders. Punitive programs may temporarily cut assistance numbers, but people who could lose access to food can't achieve long-term economic security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SNAP E&T should look more like ASAP and BFET, and less like WEP. Two changes can make that happen: Ohio must expand the [SNAP 50/50 reimbursement program](#) and make participation in SNAP E&T voluntary. Key steps include:

- Convene the SNAP planning committee created in the last budget bill. The Committee, led by ODJFS and the Department of Higher Education should issue guidance on how partners, including community colleges, technical schools, nonprofits and community based organizations, can participate in the reimbursement grants. The guidelines should specify that recipient participation in 50/50 funded programs is voluntary.
- Allocate \$4 million in General Revenue Funds per year to encourage development and implementation of local SNAP education and training partnerships between counties, training providers, workforce development agencies, nonprofits, and employers that can develop training programs that include wrap-around supportive services.

Ohio policymakers have shown a strong interest in improving employment and training programs for SNAP participants. They can and should do so in the 2020-2021 budget.