

# Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers Request for Applications – Rural Institutions

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Association of Community College Trustees

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## REVIEW OF COHORT TWO APPLICATIONS WILL BEGIN:

**11:59 p.m. EST Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

You are invited to review and respond to this Request for Applications (RFA) for the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers. In submitting your proposal, you must fully comply with these instructions.

Review of proposals will begin on:

**Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (11:59 PM EST)**

### Questions:

Linda Rhoads

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ACCT reserves the right to:

- Modify the RFA as described in this solicitation.
- Reject any proposal if it is conditional, incomplete, deviates from the specifications, or for any other reason at ACCT's discretion.
- Withdraw or modify this solicitation at any time before or after submission of proposals, without prior notice and without liability or obligation of any kind or amount.
- Decide not to award any contract to any respondent responding to this solicitation.

### Eligibility Checklist

- ACCT member
- Designated as a rural or rural-serving institution based on an existing federal government definition.
- Not a current SNAP E&T third-party provider.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) is a program designed to connect SNAP participants with skills training programs to help them enter or advance in the workforce to improve their economic independence. As part of a larger commitment to advance equity and improve access to SNAP E&T programs nationwide, the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) is expanding its support through an additional \$3 million dollars in National Partnership grants specific to the community college sector. Community colleges have been identified by FNS as a critical stakeholder in SNAP E&T engagement. Through these grants, community colleges will be able to not only provide the technical training but also provide support services such as transportation, childcare, case management, and other assistance that will help reduce barriers and improve success.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) recognizes the important and unique role that community colleges play in helping individuals move toward economic self-sufficiency through education. Through the SNAP E&T National Partnership Grant project, ACCT's goal is to increase the number of community colleges that are SNAP E&T third-party providers using three key approaches: building the capacity of state/regional systems or associations, targeting rural institutions, and disseminating SNAP E&T resources to a broad network. This approach will be applied in two separate cohorts consisting of both state systems and rural institutions. Focusing on state systems and rural institutions allows for targeted technical assistance and development of training materials and resources. The combination of these strands will maximize the reach to multiple populations. Joining ACCT will be [Seattle Jobs Initiative \(SJI\)](#), [American Public Human Services Association \(APHSA\)](#), and Skills Strategy Consulting to deliver customized technical assistance for a diverse set of state or regional systems and institutions, leading to more third-party providers and lessons learned for the field. The ability to tackle this goal derives from ACCT's diverse national membership, SJI's deep knowledge of SNAP E&T, APHSA's experience navigating the necessary partnerships in this work, and the first-hand experience with SNAP E&T program development of Skills Strategy Consulting.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

This project has three major objectives:

1. Building the capacity of state or regional systems: This will capitalize on economies of scale for an efficient and effective model that reaches more institutions than would be possible individually. College intermediary models can grow the scale of a State's SNAP E&T program without requiring the State to add proportionate capacity to manage multiple contracts, can create access for individual institutions who lack capacity or resources to administer SNAP E&T on their own, and can expand reach for a broader impact in multiple geographies.
2. Targeting rural institutions: These institutions, which are traditionally under resourced, will provide avenues of supports for the students to access SNAP E&T, leading to better outcomes for more individuals. Community colleges are already an important resource in rural

communities, where employment and training options can be harder to find and represent a quality E&T option. The project will seek avenues to use braided funding and fill in the necessary gaps to strengthen partnerships with American Job Centers (AJCs) and other workforce providers.

3. Disseminate SNAP E&T knowledge and resources to a broad network: The resources developed through working with systems and rural institutions can then be disseminated throughout the larger community college network to be used as a roadmap for other institutions. Organizations that represent registrars, bursars' offices, and financial aid officers are critical to engage to bring awareness and improve expertise and understanding around SNAP E&T as their offices are a critical piece of the process.

## **EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS**

This project will focus on the key areas through targeted direct delivery via two cohorts. Each cohort will consist of two systems and up to 5 rural institutions. The goal is to bring on 10 new rural institutions and 4 state or regional systems, each recruiting initial pilot institutions, as third-party providers.

### **Expectations**

#### **Tentative Cohort Two Schedule:**

- May 2024 – Kick off meeting
- June 2024 – August 2025 – Cohort activities to prepare SNAP E&T third-party provider application
- June 2024 – September 2025 – Ongoing as needed TA

Institutions will be expected to participate in activities such as:

1. Develop and independently lead an internal SNAP E&T planning team to carry out project activities. Institutional team members may be from departments such as, but not limited to, workforce development, student support services, financial aid, registration/enrollment, marketing, and technical/academic program areas.
2. Participate in 14, one-hour pre-scheduled monthly topic orientations and peer learning sessions together with representatives from the other cohort two institutions.
3. Schedule and facilitate monthly institutional planning meetings during which the SNAP E&T planning team will develop a topic-specific mini action plan for each monthly topic. The culmination of this work will result in a compilation of mini action plans ultimately constituting an institutional SNAP E&T standard operating manual.
4. With guidance and support from the ACCT project team, establish and/or strengthen existing relationships with employer partners, local workforce boards, local CBOs, state SNAP agency,

and/or their community college system to collaboratively develop SNAP E&T implementation processes.

5. Create student feedback channels to help inform program design.
6. Prioritize identifying where there might be unintended barriers for students to access services and engage with the SNAP E&T program.
7. Using program data, assess areas of unmet need or disparities in access for specific student populations.
8. Participate in two-day, on-site team visit consisting of ACCT, SJI, a third entity or mentor, and the institutional team.
9. (Institutional team leader) participate in monthly check-in call with ACCT project manager.
10. Engage in continued TA throughout the project.

## **Supports**

To achieve these objectives, the participating colleges will have meaningful spaces to learn and receive support from national experts and their peers. Throughout the grant period, participating institutions will receive a suite of services such as pre-scheduled virtual educational curriculum, facilitated peer learning sessions and institution-specific technical assistance including the following:

1. A small stipend for each participating institution.
2. Monthly topic-specific orientations, about an hour in length, providing an overview, guidance, and technical insight for development of institutional processes relevant to the monthly topic.
3. Topic-specific planning guides containing guidance for institutional process design including: topic summary, planning goals, who to invite to the table, guiding questions, potential challenges, program development checklist, tools and organizational aids, resources, FAQ's and case studies.
4. Action plan template for developing institutional standard operating manual with the following sections to fill in: institutional roles and relevant positions, approaches used, tasks, workflows, procedural processes, forms and documents.
5. Two-day, custom-designed, in-person (on site at each institution), facilitated working session for collaborative planning, trouble-shooting, and process design in conjunction with the SNAP agency.

6. Institution-specific coaching, tools, and technical assistance as needed including access to national experts bringing extensive experience with SNAP E&T programs at community colleges.
7. Continued coaching throughout project to troubleshoot any issues that arise.
8. Information and resources ranging from the core components of SNAP E&T, webinars, best practices on processes, operations, and other toolkits.
9. The opportunity to collaborate and share resources, tools, and information through peer learning networks.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

The purpose of this Request for Application (RFA) is to invite prospective rural community colleges to participate in the Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers initiative. Through this competitive RFA process, ACCT will recruit a cohort of rural community colleges to participate in this initiative. Grants of \$7,500 per institution will be offered to offset costs.

### **RFA Timeline**

The following is a tentative schedule that will apply to this RFA but may change in accordance with ACCT's needs or unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be communicated by e-mail to all invited respondents.

Launch Timeline :

- Issuance of RFA – March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- Question Period – March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- Review of applications begins 11:59 PM EDT – April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- Final Award Notification – May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024
- MOU's and stipend instructions distributed to cohort two institutions – May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### **Determining Readiness**

To ensure that participants fully understand the process, requirements, and commitment of the SNAP E&T cohort and the process of becoming a SNAP E&T partner, we strongly encourage all applicants to view the resources listed below and view the pre-recorded informational session. We also encourage applicants to consider the institutional readiness assessment questions below.

- SNAP E&T Overview Briefs
- SNAP E&T Foundational Series Webinars

Follow [this link](#) to view these resources.

### Institutional Readiness Assessment

1. Can your institution commit to attending all of the topic orientations, peer learning sessions, monthly one-on-one team lead check-ins, and other meetings throughout the project?
2. Can your institution commit to building a team of staff that will, as appropriate, participate in the monthly topic orientations, peer learning sessions, monthly institutional planning meetings, and a two-day in-person, on-site working session to help ensure you achieve your SNAP E&T goals?
3. Based on your institution's current capacity, strategic goals, and leadership commitment, as well as your current understanding of SNAP E&T, do you believe your goal(s) for SNAP E&T are achievable?

### Respondent's Understanding of the RFA

In responding to this RFA, the respondent accepts full responsibility to understand the RFA in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to ACCT as necessary to gain such understanding. ACCT reserves the right to disqualify any respondent who demonstrates less than such understanding. Further, ACCT reserves the right to determine, at their discretion, whether the respondent has demonstrated such understanding. That right extends to cancellation of award if award has been made. Such disqualification and/or cancellation shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to ACCT.

### Good Faith Statement

All information provided by ACCT in this RFA is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time. ACCT makes no certification that any item is without error. ACCT is not responsible or liable for any use of the information or for any claims asserted therefrom.

### Communication

Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by an authorized representative from ACCT. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communication, including email.

### Respondents' Inquiries

Applicable terms and conditions herein shall govern communications and inquiries between ACCT and respondents as they relate to this RFA. Inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification related to this RFA are to be directed in writing via email to:

Linda Rhoads  
Senior Project Associate, Center for Policy and Practice, ACCT  
lrhoads@acct.org

Questions must be received on or before April 5, 2024 (5:00 PM EST)

Respondents shall recommend to ACCT any discrepancies, errors, or omissions that may exist within this RFA. Respondents shall also recommend to ACCT any enhancements, which might be in ACCT's best interests. These must be submitted via email and can be included in the proposal.

### **Addenda**

ACCT will make a good-faith effort to provide an email response to each question or request for clarification that requires addenda within three (3) business days.

### **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Please use the following link to complete the project application:

**[LINK TO ONLINE APPLICATION PAGE](#)**

### **Other Submission Requirements**

**Please attach the following document at the end of the application where indicated.**

Letter of Support

To assess organizational commitment, we ask that you submit a letter of support from your institution's CEO speaking to the institution's commitment, capacity and readiness for becoming a SNAP E&T third party provider and participating in the project. Please ensure that the letter is on letterhead and in PDF format.

### **Review of Application Materials Begins:**

**[11:59 p.m. EST Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024](#)**

### **ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION**

ACCT invites institutions that are interested in and dedicated to becoming a SNAP E&T third-party provider. The institutions that are eligible to participate will be based on the following criteria:

1. ACCT member

2. Designated as a rural or rural-serving institution based on an existing federal government definition.
3. Are not a current SNAP E&T third-party provider.

### **Criteria for Selection**

The evaluation of each response to this RFA will be based around the goal of securing a diverse and representative cohort of institutions to participate in the SNAP E&T National Partnership Grant initiative.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

1. Demonstration of commitment, capacity, and readiness to take concrete steps toward becoming a SNAP E&T third-party provider.
2. Internal support and capacity for administrative responsibilities of SNAP E&T.
3. Demonstrated commitment to quality and equity through program services, strategic plans/initiatives, and continuous improvement processes.
4. Ability to articulate the goals of participation and the impact to the students.

### **ADDITIONAL TERMS & CONDITIONS**

The following additional terms and conditions apply to this RFA:

1. ACCT reserves the right to require any respondent to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.
2. The RFA does not obligate ACCT to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever that may be incurred by a respondent or any third parties, in connection with the completion of the application.
3. The respondent should not use any intellectual property of ACCT including, but not limited to, all logos, registered trademarks, or trade names of ACCT at any time without the prior written approval of ACCT as appropriate.
4. ACCT shall not be liable to any respondent, person, or entity for any losses, expenses, costs, claims, or damages of any kind:
  - Arising out of, by reason of, or attributable to, the respondent responding to this RFA; or As a result of the use of any information, error, or omission contained in this RFA document or provided during the RFA process.
5. This RFA, any addenda to it, and any attached schedules, constitute the entire RFA.



## Application Questions

To better facilitate multiple individuals at your institution contributing to the application, please see the list below of some of the questions that will be asked. This is not a comprehensive list but is provided for your convenience to review and discuss prior to logging into the application portal.

1. Is your institution an ACCT member?
2. Is your institution designated as Rural or Rural Serving based on a federal definition?
3. Is your institution currently a SNAP E&T Third-Party Provider?
4. Are you aware of any colleges in your state who are SNAP E&T providers contracting with the State or County SNAP agency and drawing down reimbursement dollars?
5. Describe why your institution would like to participate in this project and what you hope to accomplish. (1200 words)
6. How will the participation of your institution in this project benefit the students at your institution? (500 words)
7. Are there specific target populations you are hoping to reach? (300 words)
8. Describe how your college assesses students or prospective students for education barriers and financial need. (500 words)
9. Please highlight your college's employer and industry partnerships. (300 words)
10. Please describe your college's experience with allocating program expenses to multiple funding streams. (300 words)
11. Does your college have experience with matching funds for federally funded programs? If yes, please describe. (300 words)

To be considered for this project,

**YOU MUST COMPLETE THE ONLINE APPLICATION!**