

Join Our Coalition to Improve Access to Regular Employment and Economic Mobility for SNAP Participants



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COMMUNITY COLLEGES HAVE A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO LIFT PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY AND SET THEM ON A SUCCESSFUL CAREER PATHWAY THROUGH GOVERNMENT-FUNDED EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS LIKE SNAP E&T.

More than 34 million Americans are suffering from food insecurity. With such profound immediacy, the crisis of not having enough to eat can become an entrenched and self-perpetuating problem. Strategic solutions to poverty such as education and training can seem like luxuries. In other words, the challenge of putting food on the table can prevent students from taking on all the other challenges that come with being an adult learner. This is why the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP), whose core mission is providing access to food for low-income people, includes an [employment and training program](#) (SNAP E&T). SNAP E&T adds complementary support through access to work experience and training critical to leading people not only out of poverty but into prosperity.

All 50 states are required to offer SNAP E&T programs, which are eligible for about \$300 million in annual funding. However, underutilization has been a concern. Because SNAP E&T is implemented differently in each state, it can be a challenge for institutions to find a turnkey resource to connect students to SNAP E&T benefits or even becoming a SNAP E&T provider themselves. That's why I'm so excited about the U.S. Department of Agriculture SNAP Employment and Training National Partnership Grant announced late last year. The grant is funding CAEL's [Adult Learner Centered & Equity Framework for Community Colleges in a SNAP Network](#) (ALCEF).

ALCEF is dedicated to increasing awareness of and participation in SNAP E&T. Ultimately, that involves the adult learners who are SNAP E&T's end users, but it also means increasing the number and effectiveness of community colleges that serve them. And ALCEF is committed to increasing the number of community colleges that are third-party SNAP E&T providers, but it is just as committed to supporting colleges at all levels of participation. ALCEF will focus on increasing expertise and capacity to serve SNAP E&T learners at community college SNAP E&T providers, while improving referral systems among community colleges and other third-party providers within their local SNAP E&T ecosystems.

ALCEF is building a community of promising practices, a framework that is the hallmark of many of CAEL's initiatives. Recent examples include the [Inclusive Development Network](#) and our [Adult Student Success Academy](#). From those experiences, we know that mission-aligned group endeavors empower individual success. In ALCEF's case, collaboration will focus on making community colleges the site of flourishing connections between adult learners and SNAP E&T benefits. And while the SNAP E&T National Partnership is open to any community college in the country, I am delighted to let you know that we are prioritizing CAEL members as we fill cohorts throughout the three-year grant period.

To get started, simply complete this [four-question survey](#). You'll notice that the survey asks about current knowledge levels and whether your institution is a designated third-party SNAP E&T provider. We will use the responses to place ALCEF participants within parallel cohorts. One is for institutions interested in learning more about how they might become involved in SNAP E&T. The other one will be comprised of established SNAP E&T providers. The first of several online information and exploration sessions is later this month, so there is still time to complete the survey and join our first group of community colleges.

From our perspective, whether directly from a community college or via a seamless intermediary, improving SNAP E&T access for adult learners will be a measure of success for ALCEF. But ALCEF encourages participants to become third-party SNAP E&T providers if they aren't already. As community colleges graduate from aspirational to actualization cohorts, they will benefit from assessment, implementation, planning and execution workshops; capacity-building strategy sessions; regional conferences (in person); and site visits. As I alluded to earlier, the process will vary by location, but by tapping into the diverse network of regional SNAP E&T stakeholders, we'll cover all areas that drive success in your region, from determining your ideal niche in the SNAP E&T ecosystem to crafting effective RFP responses, student engagement and enrollment strategies, and complying with federal funding guidelines.

Partnering with CAEL in ALCEF are Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI), Grant Associates, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and Strada Collaborative. SJI is a national expert on SNAP E&T and a longtime partner of the Food and Nutrition Service, operating SNAP to Skills, a national initiative featuring direct technical assistance to state SNAP agencies to build and advance effective SNAP E&T programs. Grant Associates was founded to connect Fortune 500 companies to a pipeline of skilled workers under the Welfare to Work programs of the late 1990s. It has helped more than 1 million people advance their careers and more than 50,000 businesses connect to skilled workers and other vital resources. APHSA is a bipartisan, nonprofit association representing

state and local health and human services agencies. It has direct access to state and local SNAP and SNAP E&T administrators through its affinity group, the American Association for SNAP Directors and related workgroups, serving as the primary national convener for SNAP directors conferences through its annual SNAP/TANF conference. Strada Collaborative is a nonprofit comprised of several organizations, including CAEL, that develop and advance promising practices driven by research and evidence to better link education and careers.

As a CAEL member, you already care deeply about adult learners. If excellence in adult learning is all about meeting learners where they are, ALCEF is the opportunity to not only do that but to help them get to a much better place. Consider that eligibility for SNAP benefits requires a family of four to be below an annual household income of \$36,084¹. By definition, SNAP E&T learners are struggling. But within that struggle, there is an outsize opportunity. Access to work-relevant upskilling and reskilling resources can be a powerful differentiator that determines whether SNAP recipients progress into rewarding career pathways or remain limited by food insecurity and the other existential threats posed by poverty. Positive outcomes not only lift individuals but also reverberate throughout entire communities, strengthening programs like SNAP and empowering equitable economic mobility.

If you have questions about ALCEF, please contact me at lguy@cael.org, and feel free to share this with your colleagues.

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¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>



A culturally diverse educator and learner who is passionate about developing educated communities and programs in fast-paced work environments, Guy focuses on directing the work of CAEL's SNAP Education & Training grant initiative, and she is instrumental in coordinating CAEL's member benefits with growth strategy, development, and delivery.

Learn more at cael.org



Link Learning and Work

Recognizing that adult learners are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers; postsecondary educators; employers and industry groups; and foundations and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, CAEL fosters a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals and their communities thrive. A national membership organization established in 1974, CAEL is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workplace™ certified and is a part of Strada Collaborative, a mission-driven nonprofit. Learn more at cael.org and stradacollaborative.org.