



# Iowa Department of Human Services

Kim Reynolds  
Governor

Adam Gregg  
Lt. Governor

Jerry R. Foxhoven  
Director

December 11, 2018

Charles Smithson  
Secretary of Senate  
State Capitol Building  
LOCAL

Carmine Boal  
Chief Clerk of the House  
State Capitol Building  
LOCAL

Dear Ms. Boal and Mr. Smithson,

Enclosed please find a copy of a report to the General Assembly relative to the Food Assistance Employment and Training Workgroup.

This report was prepared pursuant to directive contained in 2017 Iowa Acts, Chapter 174, section 46, as amended by 2018 Iowa Acts chapter 1165, section 12.

Sincerely,

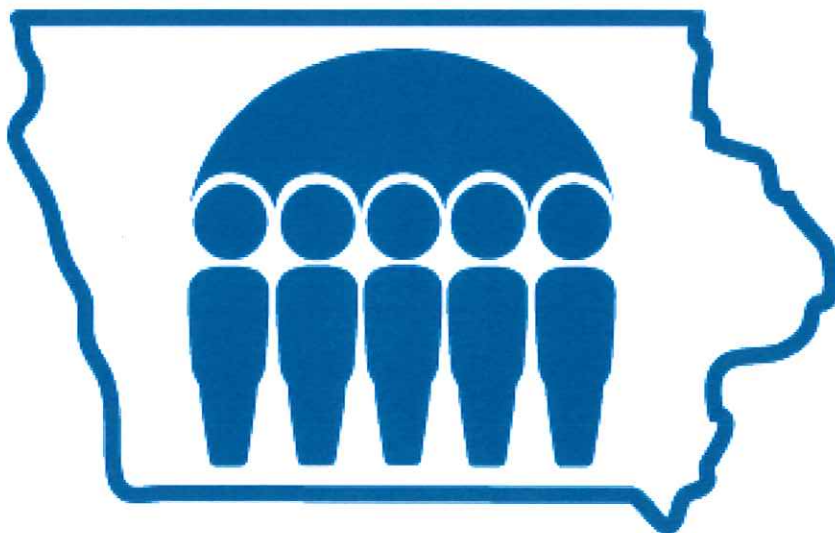
Mikki Stier  
Deputy Director

MS: mm

Enclosure

Kim Reynolds, Governor  
Senator Amanda Ragan  
Senator Mark Costello  
Representative David Heaton  
Representative Lisa Heddens  
Legislative Service Agency  
Kris Bell, Senate Democrat Caucus  
Josh Bronsink, Senate Republican Caucus  
Natalie Ginty, House Republican Caucus  
Kelsey Thien, House Democrat Caucus

# Iowa Department of Human Services



## *Food Assistance Employment and Training Workgroup Report*

**December 2018**

## Executive Summary

The Department convened a workgroup<sup>1</sup> to discuss the feasibility of expanding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (known as Food Assistance in Iowa) Employment and Training (E&T) program. The workgroup determined the feasibility of expansion is available, however additional research and action should occur to enhance expansion opportunities.

## Introduction

This report is prepared for the governor and the Iowa General Assembly pursuant to the requirements of 2017 Iowa Acts, Chapter 174, section 46, as amended by 2018 Iowa Acts chapter 1165, section 12. The Department of Human Services was required to organize a workgroup to determine the feasibility of expanding E&T statewide. The voluntary program currently operates in 64 of Iowa's 99 counties through partnerships with eight community colleges.

While states are required to offer a Food Assistance E&T program, there is considerable flexibility in the administration of the program, including which Food Assistance participants to serve. The purpose of E&T is for Food Assistance participants to gain skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to obtain regular employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

Food Assistance E&T programs utilize a 50/50 reimbursement model for funding. With the 50/50 funding model, the program reimburses agencies who have invested their non-federal funds to provide E&T services to Food Assistance participants using United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds.

## Workgroup Planning and Development

Trained facilitators with the Department's Quality Improvement Bureau facilitated a two-day workgroup in October 2018.

First, the workgroup, as a whole, reviewed the current state of E&T in Iowa, as well as, opportunities for expansion. Once that review was complete, the larger group divided into smaller, balanced teams to brainstorm potential expansion opportunities. Members of each team then rated ideas to develop priorities, while being cognizant of political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) factors. Finally, necessary action steps were identified to move forward with expansion.

There was immediate consensus by the workgroup that opportunities to expand E&T are limited only by funding constraints. The workgroup provided recommendations for expansion and prioritization. Requirements of expansion focus were divided into four areas:

## **Research**

- Review and identify Department administrative structure and needs based on expansion of services.
- Identify an existing advisory board that the E&T program can join as a partner.
  - This advisory board should develop a strategic plan for the E&T program to include mission, vision, goals, and outcomes.
- Explore resources statewide including community-based organizations, business, state agencies, and their available program offerings that increase employability.
- Determine the optimal capacity of service providers.
- Research potential providers to create agency partnerships that instill ownership and develop diverse integrated resource teams.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a mandatory E&T pilot.

## **Enhancement of Funding Options**

- Explore using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other funding sources for extended job assistance and wrap-around services. This exploration should include opportunities:
  - During E&T program participation and
  - After E&T services are no longer available.
- Increase the Iowa Department of Education's Iowa Skilled Worker Fund to add the remaining seven community colleges by 2020.
- Utilize community-based organization partnerships with philanthropic organizations to leverage public and private funding to increase capacity of E&T program.

## **Data Management System**

- Implement a new data management system
  - Currently the E&T program is administered and monitored through a completely manual process.
  - The Department has entered into a contract with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for an E&T system.
  - IWD has provided a roll-out date of April 2019.
- Identify electronic enhancement opportunities to expand access to participants and agencies.

## **Execution**

- Increase program awareness through a strategic marketing campaign.
- Partner with trade associations and registered apprenticeship sponsors.
- Expand the program to include community-based organizations, in a managed approach, to include a seamless referral process.
- Expand service areas of current community colleges
  - The program is currently available in 64 counties; however, E&T services are often limited to counties that house each college's main campus.
  -

## **Conclusion/Recommendations**

To fully expand, the E&T program should partner with an existing state workforce board to develop a specific strategic plan which includes a mission and vision for the program, as well as explore opportunities with Future Ready Iowa.

Expansion should be completed in a staged, managed approach which addresses both regional participant and employer needs.

The opportunities of the 50/50 reimbursement model allows agencies, both public and private, to expand services.

Expanding the E&T program statewide in Iowa should be completed with a thoughtful approach. To complete this expansion, additional research will be completed to ensure expansion is effective and sustainable for participants and providers. This additional research, including a fiscal analysis, will be completed by July 1, 2019.

## **Workgroup Members**

Cindy O'Brien, Iowa Department of Human Services  
Carrie Ross-Stanley, Iowa Department of Human Services  
Andrew Schramm, Kirkwood Community College  
Andrea Jensen, Des Moines Area Community College  
Dave Stone, United Way of Central Iowa  
Denise Shippers, Iowa Workforce Development  
Julie Fugenschuh, Project Iowa  
Linda Gorkow, Iowa Food Bank Association  
Matt Bear, Meskwaki Tribe  
Roberta Montoya, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service  
Sam Adolphsen, Foundation for Government Accountability  
Traci Zoffka, Meskwaki Tribe