

Skill Up Tennessee: Job Training That Makes A Difference

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SNAP Employment and Training

The United States has a long tradition of policy-focused employment and job training programs. Starting in the 1930s and continuing today, US policy makers have viewed employment and job training programs as justified means to correct market failures and counterbalance inequitable access to employment especially among low income populations (Moffitt, 2016). Employment and training services offered through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) continue in this tradition.

SNAP has been a vital safety net for millions of individuals and families across the United States in increasing food security and reducing hunger. In addition to its focus on nutrition assistance, SNAP also includes employment and job training components designed to improve the self-sufficiency of SNAP participants, thereby reducing their need for SNAP benefits (Rowe, et al., 2017).

The SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program represents a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) and states to provide training and employment services to eligible SNAP participants (USDA-FNS, 2018). Established in 1985 by Congress, the SNAP E&T program is administered by the states and territories through local service providers. The ultimate goal of SNAP E&T is to help SNAP participants gain skills, training, work or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment, thus leading to self-sufficiency.

Eligibility for SNAP E&T participation is clearly defined by USDA FNS guidelines (USDA-FNS, 2018). To be eligible for SNAP E&T, individuals must:

1. Currently receive SNAP benefits;
2. Not be receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefits; and
3. Be willing and able to work upon completion of the program.

The purpose of this publication is to improve understanding of Skill Up Tennessee, University of Tennessee Extension's (UT Extension) SNAP E&T program. Skill Up Tennessee Program participation, regional differences for participants across Tennessee, and estimates of the economic impacts of the program on the state economy are presented. The findings from this study should be useful to Extension educators, planners and local government officials in improving recruitment, planning, delivery and implementation of the SNAP E&T program.

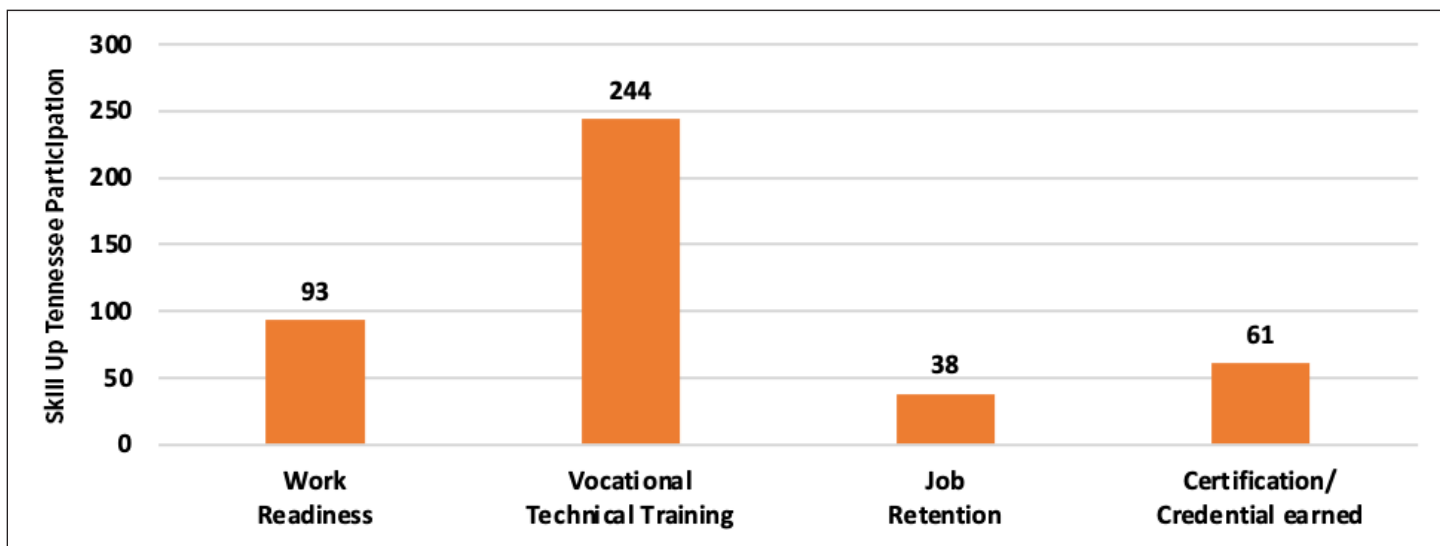
Skill Up Tennessee Description

In 2017, UT Extension became a third-party partner for the delivery of SNAP E&T services. Skill Up Tennessee is UT Extension's SNAP E&T program that is conducted in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. This program is funded under an agreement with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The purpose of the program is to assist eligible SNAP participants in gaining skills, training, work or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment. The ultimate goal of the program is self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension educators work within their assigned counties to reach and recruit potential SNAP E&T participants who are interested in furthering their employment opportunities. The Department of Human Services verifies eligibility for recruited individuals to participate in the program. For those eligible to participate, FCS Extension educators along with regional Skill Up Tennessee Career Navigators offer a menu of educational services including (2020 Skill Up Tennessee Impact report):

- Individual assessment to help an individual set and achieve employment goals;
- Access to services such as vocational technical training and job retention to prepare for success;
- Multi-session work readiness training to gain knowledge and skills to prepare for work;
- Career navigation to help in pursuing training, finding the right job and obtaining any needed support; and
- Supportive services to help pay for training and starting a job.

Figure 1. 2020 Skill Up Tennessee Participation by Educational Service.



In 2020, 398 individuals participated in the program which included participants already engaged in the program from 2019. Three hundred sixty individuals pre-registered for SNAP E&T program, out of which 292 were verified as eligible to participate. A total of 93 participants availed work readiness training while 244 enrolled in vocational technical training at a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT), community college or other training provider (Figure 1). For the program, 38 participants enrolled in job retention services and 61 participants earned recognized credentials or received certification in vocational/technical training. It is important to note that many participants often participate in multiple educational services offered through the Skill Up Tennessee program as they work toward their career goals. Skill Up Tennessee walks with participants, sometimes for years, on their journey toward employment.

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Multipliers measure the response of the economy to a change in demand or production. A multiplier measures how dollars are re-invested and circulated in a local economy leading to additional economic activity (Hughes, 2018). Multiplier analysis generally focuses on the effects of exogenous changes on: a) output of the sectors in the economy, b) income earned by households because of the new outputs, and c) employment (in physical terms) that is expected to be generated because of the new outputs.

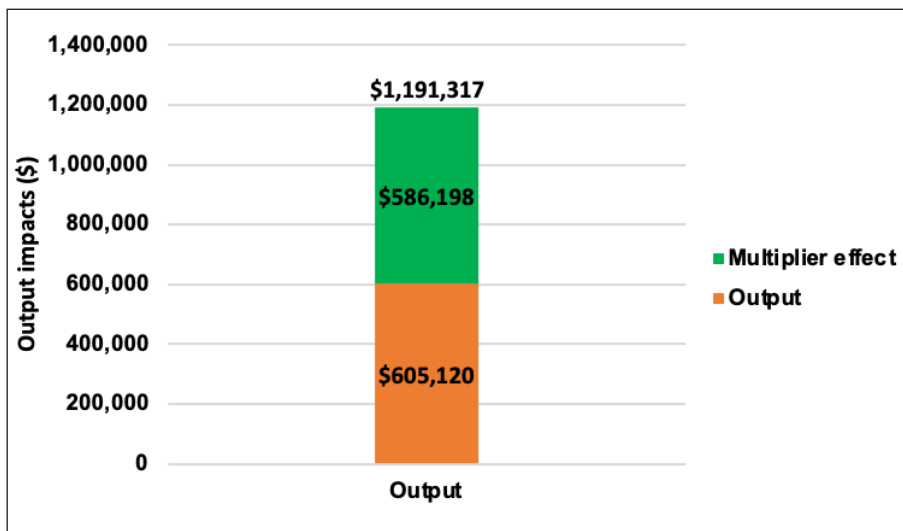
When a particular industry sector is expected to change, increase or decrease, three types of impacts economy-wide are measured: direct, indirect and induced effects.

- Direct effects are the immediate effects associated with the change in the final demand for a particular industry.
- Indirect effects are the secondary effects or production changes in backward-linked industries that provide goods and services.
- Induced effects represent the response by all local industries caused by increased expenditures of new household income and inter-institutional transfers generated from the direct and indirect effects of the change in final demand for a specific industry.

Economic Impact

The 2020 output impacts¹ of Skill Up Tennessee program on the state’s economy are presented in Figure 4. In 2020, the program’s direct output in training participants across Tennessee is estimated at \$605,120, which was attributed to sector 495 in IMPLAN (Community food, housing and other relief services, including rehabilitation services). With multiplier effects (indirect and induced impacts), the total estimated economic impact of Skill Up Tennessee program is estimated to be \$1,191,317. For every dollar of direct output from Skill Up Tennessee, the total economic impact on the state’s economy is \$1.97.

Figure 4. Skill Up Tennessee Program Economic Impact on State’s Output, 2020.



For every **dollar** of direct output from Skill Up Tennessee the total economic impact on the state’s economy is **\$1.97**.

Summary and Conclusions

Across the state, Skill Up Tennessee, UT Extension’s SNAP E&T program, is making a difference in the lives of Tennessee families with limited-resources. Through career coaching, technical training leading to industry-recognized credentials, work readiness training, supportive services and more, individuals and families are realizing their career dreams thanks to the outreach and work of Extension’s educators and Skill Up Tennessee Career Navigators.

¹The state benefits from reduction in government spending on income support programs and increased employment pool due to the Skill Up Tennessee program, these impacts are not assessed and are not included in the economic impacts.

The impacts of the Skill Up Tennessee program would not be possible without the support of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Tennessee Department of Human Services. This partnership demonstrates the synergistic impact that occurs when state agencies work together to address critical challenges. Through this partnership, UT Extension has successfully increased its reach and impact across the state continuing a 100-plus year legacy of research-based outreach. This partnership is a model for other states seeking to address the critical needs of individuals with limited resources with the implementation of SNAP E&T services through the Cooperative Extension framework.

Skill Up Tennessee's impact is not limited to the participants who are served. The economy of the state is positively impacted as well. Every dollar of direct output from Skill Up Tennessee leads to \$1.97 in state-level output – an almost dollar-for-dollar impact.

Indeed, Skill Up Tennessee works for Tennessee!

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