

## Skill Up Tennessee:

# Impacting Tennessee Families and Communities 2021 Program Impacts

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### SNAP Employment and Training

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has been a vital safety net for millions of individuals and families across the United States increasing food security and reducing hunger. In addition to its focus on nutrition assistance, SNAP 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 and Training (SNAP E&T) program represents a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) and individual 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 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. Access to robust postsecondary training and education, individualized case management, assessment, and support combined with participant supportive services help participants in SNAP E&T realize their goals (Food and Nutrition Services, 2022).

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.

In Tennessee, the SNAP E&T program is called Skill Up Tennessee and is operated by University of Tennessee Extension Family and Consumer Sciences. The purpose of this publication is to highlight Skill Up Tennessee's 2021 impacts. 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, local government officials in improving recruitment, planning, delivery, and in implementation of the SNAP E&T program. SNAP E&T research is limited; information presented in this publication helps to grow the SNAP E&T knowledge base (Paprocki, et al., 2022). A similar publication was produced highlighting 2020 impacts of the SNAP E&T program (Upendram et al., 2021). This publication serves as an update to the 2021 publication with data on program enrollment, component participation and program impact.

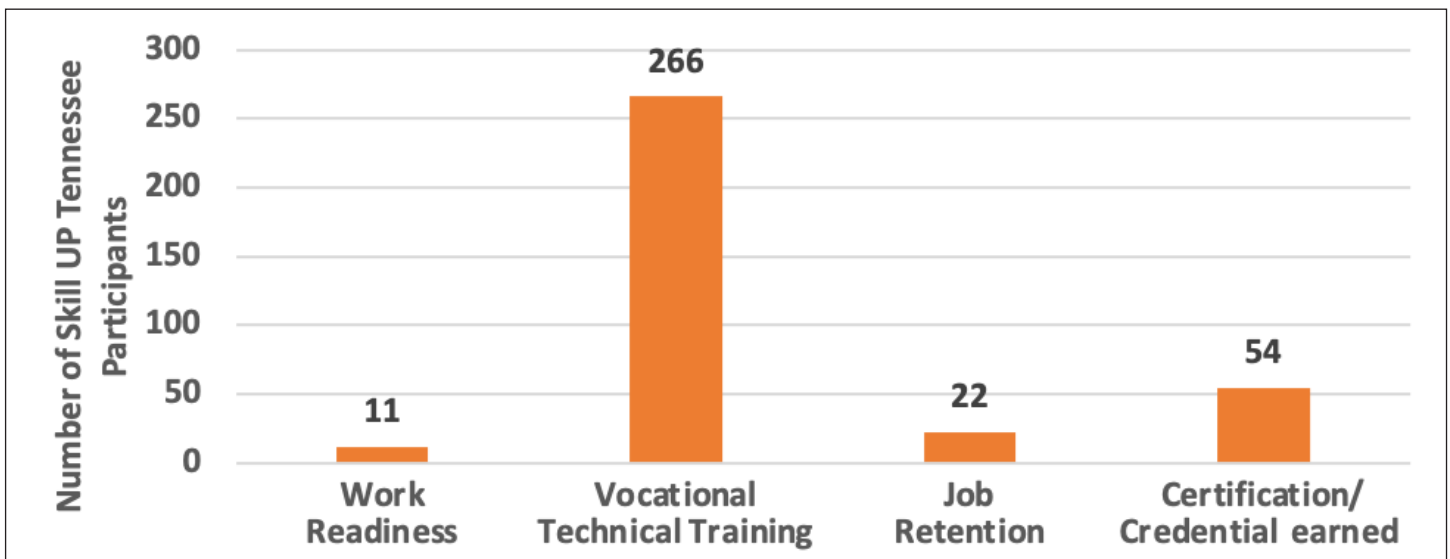
## Skill Up Tennessee Description

In 2017, UT Extension Family and Consumer Sciences 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. 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 is self-sufficiency and sustainability of the program.

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 Tennessee Department of Human Services verifies eligibility for recruited individuals for participation in the program. For those eligible to participate, Extension educators along with regional Skill Up Tennessee career navigators offer a menu of educational services including:

- 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.** 2021 Skill Up Tennessee Participation by Educational Service.



In 2021, 414 individuals participated in the program which included participants already engaged in the program from the previous year. Individuals who pre-registered the SNAP E&T program numbered 458, out of which 329 were verified as eligible to participate. The Skill Up program has grown since 2020, during which 398 individuals participated in the SNAP E&T and 292 were verified as eligible to participate (Upendram et al., 2021).

**414**  
Individuals  
participating in  
Skill Up Tennessee.

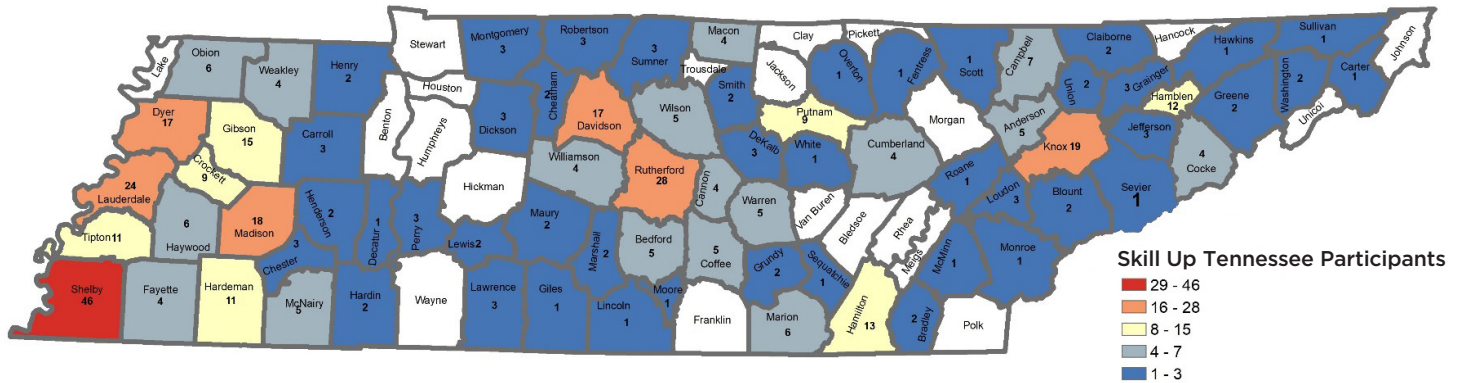
A total of 11 participants availed work readiness training compared to 93 the previous year. The number of participants enrolled in vocational technical training at a Tennessee College of Applied Technology, community college or other training provider increased from 244 to 266 in 2021. For 2021, 22 participants enrolled in job retention services compared to 38 the previous year, and 54 participants earned recognized credentials or received certification in vocational/technical training compared to 61 the previous year.

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.

## Statewide Presence

Across the state, Skill Up Tennessee is working to connect participants with support and resources to help them gain the training and skills needed for employment. Using 2021 data, the Figure 2 below shows the number of Skill Up Tennessee participants by county. It is important to note even in counties with no reported participants, active marketing and promotion of the Skill Up Tennessee program was still conducted by Extension educators and/or the Skill Up Tennessee career navigators.

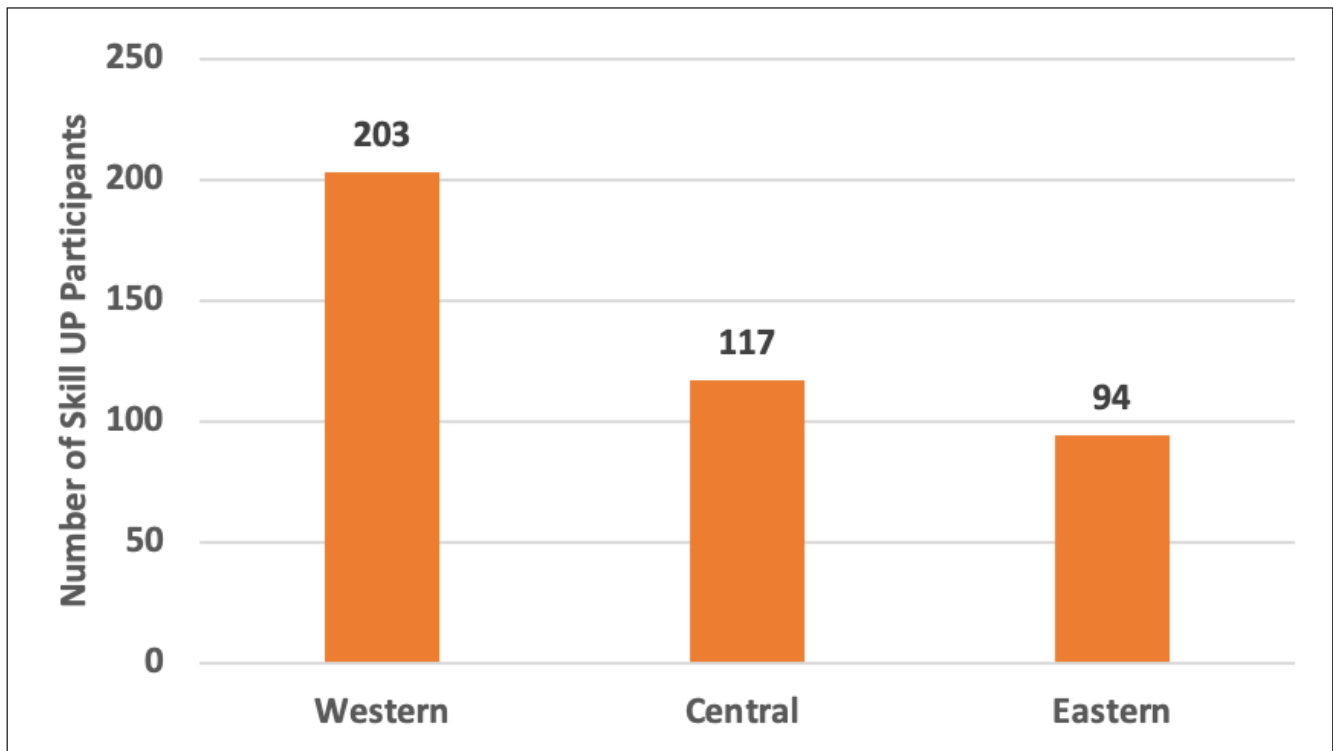
**Figure 2. 2021 Skill Up Tennessee Participants by County.**



In 2021, 414 individuals participated in the Skill Up Tennessee program across 74 counties in the state. This represents an increase of 10 counties and 16 individuals from 2021. Shelby County leads with 46 participants followed by Rutherford (28 participants) and Lauderdale Counties (24 participants). Across UT Extension’s three geographic regions, Skill Up Tennessee had 203 participants from the western region, 94 from the eastern region and 117 participants from the central region (Figure 3). (There was a vacancy in the Eastern region for part of 2021.) Over the last year, while the western region participants increased by one, the central region participants almost doubled and the eastern region participants declined by 40.

It is important to note that participation in SNAP E&T is voluntary for participants and not required to receive SNAP benefits. Recruitment efforts continue to be strengthened in underserved regions of the state. These efforts will improve workforce opportunities for residents in these counties and enhance economic development.

**Figure 3. 2021 Skill Up Tennessee participants by UT Extension regions.**



## Economic Model - IMPLAN

Economic impact analysis using IMPLAN, an economic input-output database and modeling system (IMPLAN Group, LLC), provides descriptive measures including output, employment and value added for up to 546 industrial sectors in the economy. Total industry output is defined as the value of production by industry per year. Employment represents total wage and salary employees plus self-employed jobs in a region, for both full-time and part-time workers. Total value added is defined as all income to worker paid by employers including the value of certain benefits; self-employed net income; interests, rents, royalties, dividends and profit payments; and excise and sales taxes paid by individuals as collected by businesses.

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 external 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.

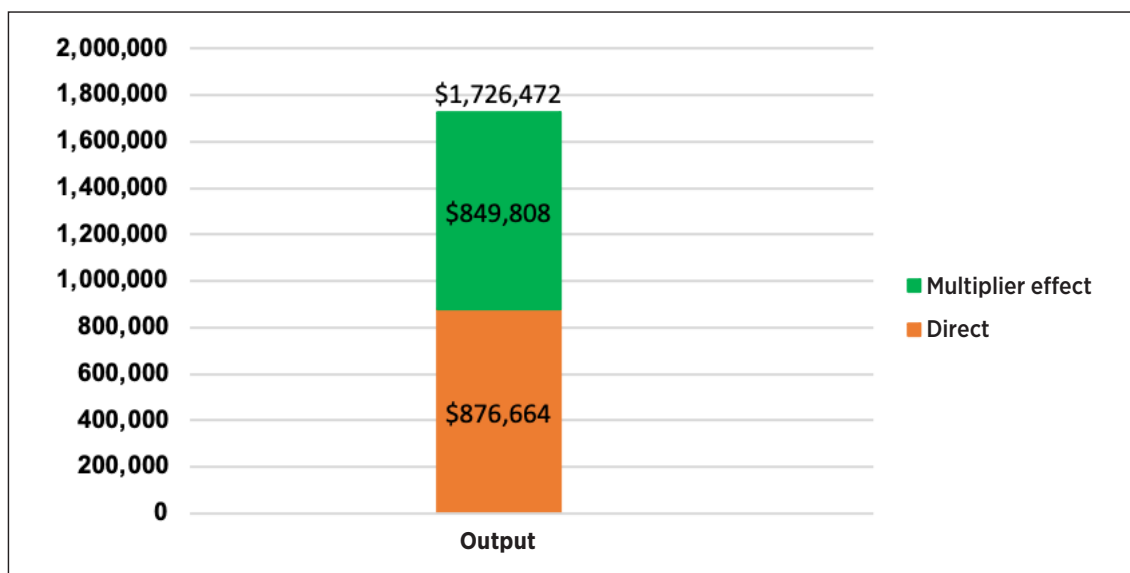
When a particular industry sector is expected to change, increase or decrease, three types of economy-wide impacts are measured: direct, indirect and induced effects. Direct effects are the immediate effects associated with the change in the final demand for a particular industry. The indirect effects are the secondary effects or production changes in backward-linked industries that provide goods and services. The induced effects represent the response by all local industries caused by increased expenditures resulting from 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 2021 output impacts of the Skill Up Tennessee program on the state's economy are presented in Figure 4. In 2021, the program's direct spending (output change) devoted to training participants across Tennessee is estimated at \$876,664, which was attributed to IMPLAN sector 495 (community food, housing and other relief services, including rehabilitation services). With multiplier effects (indirect and induced impacts), the total estimated economic impact of the program is estimated to be \$1,726,472. For every dollar of direct output from Skill Up Tennessee, the total economic impact on the state's economy is \$1.97. The tax collections associated with Skill Up Tennessee are estimated to be \$29,830 from the state and \$11,419 from the local (county) region.

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 the State's Output, 2021.



## Skill Up Tennessee works for Tennessee!

### 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.

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+ year legacy of research-based outreach. This partnership is a model for other states seeking to address the critical needs of low resource individuals 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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