

Minnesota



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Program

Annual Local Area Plan For FFY-2016

October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016

Submitted By:

Cathy Skogen, MN Prairie County Alliance

Local Area County/Counties Include:

Dodge, Steele, and Waseca Counties

Date of Issuance: August 7, 2015

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Background and Guidelines

Food and Nutrition Services is directing states to increase third party or matching fund sources to develop more coordinated programs. Over the next year or so we will be headed in that direction and will enlist your ideas and support as we move forward. Our request to include post-secondary education focusing on career/technical training has been approved by Food and Nutrition Services. More information will be forthcoming as the plan is developed.

Based on our experience with ABAWDs the past two years we know that only 8% of them statewide actually made it to orientation. We are asking counties and providers to work together to increase this percentage. Creating some type of joint handout at SNAP application or recertification may boost enrollment in SNAP E&T.

In an effort to support counties and providers in increasing ABAWD show rates, DHS and DEED are jointly developing a DVD type orientation presentation for use in county offices, provider locations and workforce centers. Once developed, it will be distributed to local areas for their use. Our goal is to create this production in three languages: English, Spanish and Somali.

Six items to consider again when developing a SNAP E&T plan for this next federal fiscal year:

- Participants must be enrolled in WF1 and participation hours must be recorded in WF1 and reported to county financial workers monthly to prevent complying participants from losing benefits.
- A minimum of 80 hours of activity participation or work each month is required for participants to continue to earn additional months of benefits.
- Job Search and Job Club hours do not count towards the 80 hour requirement unless they make up no more than 49% of the 80 hour monthly requirement. (An attachment to this plan describes the allowable activities which count towards the required monthly hours for ABAWDs.)
- A participant may meet the monthly hour requirement by working in an unpaid work experience for no more than 27 hours per month. Worksite agreement, supervision and timesheets are required for this activity. The amount of effort in this activity is determined by dividing the participant's monthly SNAP benefit by federal minimum wage.
- A participant may meet the monthly requirements if they are engaged in a dislocated worker program funded by state or federal funds or participating in intensive or training services in a WIA program. Participants may be co-enrolled.
- If support services are required for participation and are not available a client cannot be required to participate and cannot be sanctioned for failure to comply.

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Minnesota Statute §256D.051, states that the county agency shall provide to SNAP recipients an employment and training program which includes specific guidelines and components. It requires county agencies to prepare an annual plan for the operation of the SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Program. The plans must be submitted to and approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

The limited resources available to carry out a mandatory program require the state to seek alternative approaches to serving ABAWDs. We are looking to entertain requests from counties or consortium of counties.

- 1) Our first priority is to fund areas (single counties and multi-county areas) that made attempts to expend funds this year. We have increased our 100% grant amount available to the field in this year's solicitation. We are seeking to increase the SNAP E&T service area to statewide minus two counties that are exempt at this time: Clearwater and Kanabec. More may be exempt once we get a confirmation from FNS.
- 2) Funds will be allocated in a manner that allows a local area flexibility to deliver services where needed.
- 3) In multi-county areas, we require one county to be the host for the region. The allocation would be funneled through that county to the area provider. The host county would be responsible for submitting this plan along with the provider and be responsible for sending abstracts to the state for reimbursement.
- 4) In single county service area there would be no changes providing they had expenditures this current year.
- 5) We have roughly **\$ 1,411,000** to allocate for FFY 2016. Areas interested in submitting a plan are asked to be reasonable and objective in their request. We are asking that you tell us how much money you believe you need and the anticipated number of clients you expect to serve in your service area whether it is one county or a multi-county.
- 6) SNAP E&T support service allocation for SFY 2016 will be issued in two separate parcels. The first parcel will be effective from July 1 through September 30th through current providers. That parcel will be terminated effective 9/30/15 and the remaining unspent funds restructured to conform to newly selected local areas. If your area will continue operating SNAP E&T after September 30th, the unspent remainder of your July through September allocation will be added to your allocation commencing October 1, 2015.

To be approved, the plan must include **all** of the following:

- ◆ A description of services/activities to be offered by the local area.
- ◆ Provisions to ensure that the county agency's Employment Service Provider (ESP) provides each participant with an orientation, employability assessment and employment plan.
- ◆ A description of the factors that will be taken into consideration when developing a client's Employability Plan (EP).

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- ◆ A plan to coordinate activities of all public entities providing employment related services in order to reduce or eliminate duplication of services and to provide services more efficiently.
- ◆ Signature pages for the host county submitting this plan and a signature page for the associated Workforce Investment Board for the Employment Service Provider's area.
- ◆ A description of how providers and counties will work together to generate referrals so that funds can be expended according to the plan.

Instructions

SNAP E&T Annual Local Area Plans and electronic attachments must be completed and returned by August 7, 2015. Counties/providers are to submit their plan by electronic mail to: Andrea McConnell at:

Email: andrea.mcconnell@state.mn.us

In addition, please submit one hard copy, containing the original required signatures, of the host-county and WIB signature page within 45 days of issuance to: (Additional non-electronic documentation or attachments should also be included.)

Andrea McConnell
MN Department of Employment and Economic Development
Workforce Development Division – Location #036
1st National Bank Building
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1351

All local areas submitting plans will be notified of their acceptance and funded amounts. Should the amount of funds requested by local areas exceed the total amount available, staff will recommend changes and work with local areas to determine if the plan can still go forward with a revised budget.

Counties must notify the Commissioner of Employment and Economic Development, in writing, 30 days in advance of initiating any changes to the plan. That said, we welcome changes that include partnering with other agencies and the acquisition of private/nonprofit funds to enhance services to clients. We will work with local areas to use these funds as match for federal financial participation which will be returned to the area from which it originates.

If you have questions, require additional information or technical assistance regarding the plan, contact:

Steve Erbes (DEED)
Phone: 651-259-7539
or
E-mail: Steve.Erbes@state.mn.us

Part A

Contact Information

Please provide updated contact information for the individuals who are involved with the SNAP E&T program for both the County and Employment Service Provider. *(Copy and paste additional contact information lines as necessary.)*

Name: Cathy Skogen
Title: Manager, MN Prairie County Alliance
Phone: (507) 923-2928
E-mail: Cathy.skogen@mnprairie.org

Name: _____
Title: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Employment Service Provider: *(include Director)*

Name: Randy Johnson, WDI
Title: Executive Director
Phone: (507) 292-5189
E-mail: rjohnson@wfdi.ws

Name: Marcia Highum, MRCI WorkSource
Title: Vice President of Public Support Programs
Phone: (507) 386-5751
E-mail: mhighum@beces.org

Name: Nancy Haag
Title: MN Valley Action Council Community Service Director
Phone: (507) 345-2405
E-mail: nancyh@mnavac.org

Part B

County Agency Duties

1. Each county agency is responsible for providing SNAP E&T services directly or contracting with one or more Employment Service Providers (ESPs) to deliver them.

What SNAP E&T services, if any, will be provided by the county agency?

The County determines SNAP program eligibility and work requirements. The County is responsible for determining which SNAP participants must be registered for work and which are exempt from work registration. The County determines which SNAP participants are required to participate in SNAP E&T and which are exempt or deferred from mandatory participation. The county is responsible for documenting information on MAXIS.

The County provides SNAP participants information on the SNAP program and on SNAP E&T services.

The County refers mandatory participants to the ESP for orientation and services as soon as eligibility is approved. When SNAP benefits are approved in MAXIS, a referral to the ESP will be done automatically through the Workforce One (WF1) system.

The County notifies the ESP of referrals and any changes in status. The County implements sanctions on participants who fail without good cause to cooperate or follow through on their employment plan. The County and ESP communicate back and forth on referrals as needed to assure that referrals are coded properly.

What SNAP E&T services/activities will be provided by ESP(s)?

Workforce Development Inc. (WDI) is the Employment Service Provider (ESP) in Dodge County. MRCI WorkSource is the ESP in Steele County and MN Valley Action County is the ESP in Waseca County. The ESP will provide orientation and assessment at regularly scheduled days and time in each county or by appointment. The ESP is responsible for sending out orientation notices. **Orientation and Assessment** will include:

- Overview of services available through SNAP E&T program and ESP contact information.
- Assessment of the participant's literacy level and referral to ABE, when appropriate.
- Career counseling and completion of an individual assessment.
- Identification of the need for support services.
- Information and referral to community resources.
- Identification of ABAWDs who have time limited SNAP benefits to

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quickly develop work or work program activities to help them earn additional months of SNAP benefits.

Development and implementation of the **employment plan** through direct services. The ESP will provide **job search assistance**, encouragement, monitor participant progress and participation (including documentation of participation hours on Workforce One), provide **support services** as appropriate/available and modify the plan as needed.

When appropriate individuals may be co-enrolled in WIOA for **Career/Technical Training** to provide additional skills and credentials to gain employment. Training will be based on the availability of jobs and the participant's ability to succeed in completion of the course work.

The ESP may provide **work experience/workfare** opportunities to enhance the participant's employability and self-sufficiency, and to provide meaningful, productive work activities for participants who need to "earn" additional months of SNAP eligibility. The ESP will develop a worksite agreement, track hours through timesheets and monitor progress.

The ESP will provide notification to the County and participant when the participant has failed to participate or comply with SNAP E&T program requirements, when the participant's employment status has changed, or when the ESP becomes aware of circumstances that may change a participant's exemption status.

The ESP will coordinate with the County and maintain required program records including participant file and documentation on Workforce One.

Please provide a copy of all service contracts between the county and the Employment Service Provider(s).

2. Federal law and State statute require that contracted employment services be provided through a statewide workforce development system (WorkForce Center), unless they are not locally available through such a system.

What program services will be provided by a Workforce Center System?

Participants may access core services at one of the area WorkForce Centers. These services include Creative Job Search and Resume Writing workshops and use of the resource room facilities. Each resource room provides computer access to job opportunities and a variety of employment resources. In addition, the ESP has computers available for participant use that provides access to MinnesotaWorks (WF Center database of job openings).

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The ESP will provide/refer participants to WIOA services when training services are appropriate.

3. Given the diversity of economic, cultural and geographic factors throughout the state, what factors, unique to your area, are taken into consideration in developing your plan?

Dodge, Steele and Waseca counties are rural counties. According to census data, poverty rates for each county are: 7.4% in Dodge County, 10.3% in Steele County, and 9.4% in Waseca County.

Unemployment rates for the counties as of June 2015 are: 3.7% in Dodge County, 3.7% in Steele County, and 4.4% in Waseca County.

Each of the counties are becoming more culturally diverse than previous years: Dodge County is 93% white/non-Hispanic, Steele County is 87.9% white/non-Hispanic, and Waseca County is 89.4% white/non-Hispanic. The Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest growing ethnicity in the three counties: 4.7% Hispanic/Latino in Dodge County, 7.2% in Steele County and 5.85% in Waseca County. There is also a growing non-English speaking Somalia population in the three counties as well.

Interpreters are secured or bilingual agency staff are utilized as needed when language barriers exist to ensure a clear delivery of program services and requirements.

All three counties have limited rural public transportation opportunities. Transportation is one of the greatest barriers faced by SNAP recipients. Every attempt is made to provide access to services and jobs by utilizing support services, community resources, helping to arrange rides and meeting participants at other community locations when necessary.

Two other populations served by SNAP E&T that are increasing and experience significant barriers to employment are felons and homeless individuals. These two populations present unique challenges which will be addressed by the ESP who is knowledgeable of community resources, including housing resources, Workforce Center and ABE services, and a knowledge of employers who are willing to hire ex-offenders.

4. SNAP E&T statutory requirements. All forms, notices and written materials provided to program participants must be written at or below the 7th grade reading level and contain language block information for non-English speaking people. How will you ensure that this requirement is met?

The ESP will utilize State provided forms that meet requirements. Any forms or notices created locally will meet requirements by utilizing computer software and language block provided by DHS.

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5. The ADA requires government agencies to ensure that services are accessible and that communications with people with disabilities are as effective as with others. How is this accomplished by the county and service provider?

All County and ESP offices have been evaluated for ADA requirements and are accessible. Through local Workforce Centers ESP staff have access to assistive technology equipment including JAWS, Zoom Text, TTY machines and the UBI DUO communication system. Referrals are made to organizations serving individuals with disabilities including Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind and MRCI WorkSource to ensure that if specialized services are needed, those services are available. Any reasonable accommodations that are necessary will be provided.

Do you require technical assistance in this area?

Not at this time.

Part C

Employment Service Provider Duties

Participant Recruitment

1. What strategies will you and the county use to increase the number of ABAWDs receiving services this fiscal year?

Currently, services to ABAWDs in the three counties exceeds the state average (8%). Workforce One reports reveal that over 23% of those referred are enrolled in the three counties.

Strategies to increase participation include:

- A one-page hand-out that promotes the benefits of participating in SNAP employment & training services distributed to SNAP participants by Eligibility Workers.
- Eligibility Workers are key to promoting enrollment and the benefits of participating in SNAP employment and training services so it is important they are aware of the services available. All Eligibility Workers will be provided an informational session with their ESP to ensure they are aware of the multitude of services that are available to SNAP participants. As new Eligibility Workers are hired an informational session will be scheduled.
- The ESP will provide “reminder calls” a day or two before their scheduled orientation session.
- Once the DVD orientation presentation has been developed by DHS and DEED it will be utilized to help promote and increase participation.

Orientation

2. What does it include, how often and where?

The County provides mandatory participants a SNAP E&T Orientation Notice from the MAXIS system that includes: the requirement to attend orientation; date, time and place of orientation; name and contact information of the ESP; and consequences of failure to comply without good cause.

The orientation is provided by the ESP and includes:

- an overview of the SNAP E&T program, including requirements of the program (work or work program activities to earn additional SNAP benefits, mandatory program activities and services, consequences for failing to participate without good cause).
- Name, address and telephone number of the ESP.
- WorkForce Center services including: job bank (MinnesotaWorks), job search and resume writing workshops available.
- Information on job search resources.

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- Referral to community resources and support services available.
- Information on Data Privacy, Complaint Procedure and releases of information when appropriate.
- Encouragement to seek employment and view public assistance as temporary assistance as the participant moves towards self-sufficiency through employment.

Orientations are provided on a regularly scheduled weekly/bi-weekly/monthly basis or by appointment when necessary. Orientation sessions are held at the ESP office or other community locations when appropriate.

Employability Assessment

1. Describe your SNAP E&T assessment process.

What methods and assessment tools do you use to help determine a participant's strengths and barriers to employment?

The ESP meets one-on-one, through an interview process, with the participant to conduct a thorough SNAP E&T assessment. The ESP conducts an individual assessment to identify strengths and barriers to employment for each participant as well as a summary of their work experience, skills, training and education. If further assessment is appropriate, other assessment tools may be used including: TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education), COPS (Career Occupational Preference System), National Career Readiness Certificate, Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, and World of Work Interest Inventory. In addition, there may be times when the counselor may refer the participant to County Mental Health or other providers for specialized assessments if necessary.

Who does the assessment?

The ESP Counselor conducts the assessments.

When is it done?

The Individual Assessment is typically completed at the first visit, after the orientation, and prior to the development of the Employment Plan.

More in-depth assessments are individualized and completed as needed.

What areas are assessed?

The following information is collected through the assessment process: contact and demographic information, employment history, educational attainment, career interests, skills, employment goals, barriers to employment (including family support, financial situation, housing, language, legal, literacy, medical/disability, safety, transportation issues), and support service needs to obtain and retain employment.

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2. How do you ensure that the assessment is individualized and completed in an interactive face-to-face meeting with the participant?

The ESP reviews assessments with participants one-on-one, in an interview style, to allow for open discussion and relationship building. This allows the participant to feel more comfortable and open to sharing personal and sensitive information.

Part D

The Employment Plan

All counties/employment service providers are required to complete an assessment and develop an Employment Plan (EP) with SNAP E&T participants.

1. How does the information gathered in the assessment process become the basis for the EP?

The Employment Plan is developed individually with the participant within 30 days of referral and is based on information gathered during the assessment (strengths, need/barriers, goals). Together the ESP and participant develop the employment plan based on the strengths and barriers identified in the assessment process. It begins with an employment goal building on the strengths of the participant and includes detailed steps the participant has agreed to take to overcome barriers to employment, community resources that will be used to meet unmet needs and the methods that will be used to conduct a job search. Steps often will include attendance at workshops, job search activities, resume development, career exploration, training if appropriate, and job retention strategies.

The plan identifies potential support that may be provided by the program to help the participant carry out the employment plan.

The plan also outlines the hours of activity required each week, dates/times/location of services, job acceptance/retention requirements, consequences of failing to comply and ESP contact information.

The participant signs the employment plan and is provided a copy.

2. The EP must include individual, client specific components as they pertain to the participant.

Describe, the methods, resources and support services you will use to ensure that this is accomplished.

Every employment plan is completed one-on-one with the participant and is individualized based on their needs. The employment plan will detail the steps and resources needed to reach the participant's employment goal based on their assessment results. As participants work through their employment plan staff are available to provide one-on-one assistance with their job search and to identify any support service or community referral needs.

The employment plan is a living document outlining the agreement between

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the participant and the ESP counselor and may be revised at any time that circumstances change for the participant.

When appropriate, individuals may be co-enrolled/referred to workforce programs including the WIOA Adult program or FastTRAC Career Pathway programs for training services.

The ESP have professionally trained and experienced staff that have strong connections to community resources in each county that allows staff to provide local access and appropriate referrals to needed services.

3. What resources will be available to participants for job search and job club activities?

SNAP E&T participants will have access to job seeking skill workshops currently held by ESP and/or the WorkForce Center. The ESP will provide individual and group skill development in the areas of: job search basics, skill identification, job applications, resumes, cover letters, thank you notes, reference sheets, interviewing, communication on the job, attitude, job retention, and budgeting. Participants will also be given instruction on how to register and use MinnesotaWorks and will also have access to computers that can assist them with their job search. WorkForce Center core services and equipment such as copiers, fax machines and telephones are also available to all SNAP participants. In addition, referrals to other community resources, such as temporary employment agencies are made.

If self directed job search activities are included in the EP, what methods will be used to document and verify the participation hours?

Participants will track self-directed job search on a job search log that is provided at their first appointment (orientation and assessment). This activity log will provide documentation of their efforts as well as provide the participant valuable records of applications/follow up. The participant will submit their log to their ESP at each appointment. The ESP will monitor and record participation hours on WF1 based on information provided on the job search log. Workshop attendance will be tracked through sign-in sheet. All documentation of hours will be kept in the participant's file.

4. Support services must be available and accessible to enable participants to meet the requirements of the EP. However, recipients need not participate in SNAP E&T services if support services necessary for participation are not available. Please see Attachment 1 for details on allowable support services.

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Please list the types of support services will you provide to participants pre and post-employment.

The types of support services provided pre and post-employment through SNAP E&T include: gas vouchers, bus tokens, cab fare, clothing for interviews or work, tools required for work, child care, and other allowable costs within the SNAP Support Service guidelines. Referrals are made to other community resources when appropriate and available.

Do you have any policies that limit or restrict support services?

No _____ Yes X

If yes, please describe the restrictions.

Due to limited funding, support services will be provided to mandatory SNAP E&T participants only. The ESP provides support services based on needs and in compliance with DHS rules and regulations. Guidelines have been developed on appropriate levels of support services, such as mileage rates, requirements to have a valid driver's license and insurance, and limits on providing gas vouchers on Fridays (only if the participant works week-ends).

Priority funding is given to support services that assist in obtaining and retaining employment, typically for transportation and clothing/uniforms.

Part E

Coordination of Services

State statute requires that the activities of all public entities, providing employment related services, must be coordinated in order to provide services more efficiently and to avoid duplication of effort. (*Minnesota Statute §256D.051*)

1. How are employment related public sector services coordinated in your local service area? Which agencies do you coordinate with?

Employment related public sector services are coordinated through the one-stop, WorkForce Center system which includes Job Service, Rehabilitation Services, Veterans Services and State Services for the Blind. All the partners work to coordinate services and provide additional assistance to customers.

Community partners are a vital resource to the success of shared customers. The ESP coordinates with County Human Services, Public Health, U of M Extension, community action agencies, private employers, work experience sites, employment agencies, mental health providers, Salvation Army, Adult Basic Education, post-secondary education, and other community resources to meet specific needs of the participants (for example: child care, counseling, food shelves, thrift stores, transportation assistance, housing assistance, migrant/refugee services, etc.)

2. Are there private/non-profit agencies that provide services in your area that could enhance your program offered participants? Please identify those below and tell us what type of services they offer.

The Salvation Army is a national non-profit that has services available in each county. The Salvation Army is a referral source for supportive assistance to individuals in an emergency situation. Services offered may include help with food, clothing, household furnishings, temporary shelter/overnight lodging, transportation, and financial assistance for medical, rent and utility bills.

Community action agencies (MVAC and SEMCAC) are non-profits that provides services in the three counties. They provide services that are local, state and federally funded including: energy and housing assistance programs, homeless prevention services, food programs, Head Start programming for low income families, transportation and employment programs. Services available differ between MVAC and SEMCAC.

Finally, most individuals served under SNAP E&T are referred to local non-profit food shelves and thrift stores.

Part F

Eligible SNAP Recipients to be Served

SNAP E&T Services

Do you plan to offer SNAP E&T services to non-ABAWD recipients? If so, will you prioritize your funds?

Due to limited funding, SNAP support and program dollars will be prioritized to serve mandatory ABAWD participants. Voluntary participants will be referred to WorkForce Centers for core services, such as Creative Job Search workshops, Resume Writing workshops, and access to computers/resources. Voluntary participants may receive limited staff assistance, referrals and one time "quick fix" services that would allow them to accept a job and become self-sufficient.

What activities do you plan to offer mandatory and voluntary recipients?

Mandatory participants will receive the full complement of services outlined in this plan, including: orientation, assessment, career counseling, employment plan, access to training, job search assistance, and access to support services and other community resources.

Voluntary participants will be referred to WorkForce Centers for core services including job search workshops and access to resource room computers/resources.

LOCAL AREA BUDGET

Requested Local Area Allocation Amount: \$ 90,000

Requested Support Service Allocation Amount: \$ 15,000

Anticipated Number of Participants to be Served: 300

Signature Page

County

Host County Name: Minnesota Prairie County Alliance

Address: 22 6th Street East, Dept. 401
Mantorville, MN 55955

Contact Person: Cathy Skogen

Title: Manager

Phone: (507) 923-2928

Fax: (507) 635-6186

E-mail: Cathy.skogen@mnprairie.org

CERTIFICATION and SIGNATURE

For The Local Area:

I hereby certify that this Local Plan has been prepared as required under the provision of Minnesota Statute, Chapters §256D and §256D.0521.

Name: Cathy Skogen

Title: Manager

Authorized Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature Page

Workforce Investment Board (WIB)

WIB Name: South Central WorkForce Council

Address: 706 N. Victory Drive

Mankato, MN 56001

Contact Person: Diane Halvorson

Title: Executive Director

Phone: (507) 345-2408

Fax: (507) 345-2414

E-mail: diane@workforcecouncil.org

CERTIFICATION and SIGNATURE

For The Workforce Investment Board (WIB):

I hereby certify that the Workforce Investment Board named above has consulted with the County on the development or arrangements and contracts for the SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program. I also certify that staff have identified and provided advice on the types of jobs available or likely to become available within the local Workforce Service Area (WSA).

Name: Diane Halvorson

Title: Executive Director

Authorized Signature: 

Date: August 3, 2015

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Workforce Investment Board (WIB)

WIB Name: SE MN Workforce Development Board
Address: 2070 College View Road East
Rochester, MNH 55904

Contact Person: Wanda Jensen
Title: Operations Director
Phone: (507) 292-5166
Fax: (507) 292-5173
E-mail: Wanda.jensen@workforcedevelopmentinc.org

CERTIFICATION and SIGNATURE
For The Workforce Investment Board (WIB):

I hereby certify that the Workforce Investment Board named above has consulted with the County on the development or arrangements and contracts for the SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program. I also certify that staff have identified and provided advice on the types of jobs available or likely to become available within the local Workforce Service Area (WSA).

Name: Randy Johnson
Title: Executive Director

Authorized Signature: 
Date: 8/4/15



Issued Jointly By:

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Workforce Development Division
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