

SNAP E&T: Starting Conditions Checklist

During the launch of an improvement initiative, it could be helpful to take stock of your state's current conditions. The Policy Academy experience showed that states can make meaningful progress even when barriers are present; what often helped sustain momentum was having - or intentionally building - key enabling conditions along the way. The checklists below are intended as a guide, rather than an audit or prerequisite for action. They help states identify existing strengths, consider areas that may benefit from additional attention, and anticipate opportunities to strengthen implementation. Note that you don't *need* to have all of these in place before you begin an initiative, but strengthening these components can increase odds of success.

Leadership Alignment and Team Composition

Potential Gap	In Place	Partially in Place	Not Yet in Place	What to do about it
A designated Governor's office lead for SNAP E&T coordination				Identify a policy advisor or liaison who touches human services and workforce. Formalize their role with respect to SNAP E&T before work begins. Share the project goals and timeline and confirm their availability before scheduling sessions.
A senior leader in each agency who is accountable for the work				Name specific individuals, not just organizations, and confirm their authority to make decisions throughout this work. This will unlock the team's ability to make decisions as the work progresses.
A shared understanding of the initiative's goals and why the work is important				Schedule an alignment meeting before any tool or intervention is selected (See Defining the "Minimum Viable Product.")
Representatives from human services, workforce agencies, and/or higher education agencies				Review your current team roster before the first session and identify which agency representatives are missing. Reach out to agency leads to designate a representative before work begins.
Frontline staff or program managers with direct process knowledge				Add at least one staff member who works directly with the process being mapped. If they cannot attend all sessions, schedule a dedicated input session with them before the mapping activity begins.
A designated project lead with clear accountability				Identify and confirm a project lead before the first session. Document their role and share it with all team members so expectations are clear from the start.

Shared Goals

Potential Gap	In Place	Partially in Place	Not Yet in Place	What to do about it
A specific, agreed-upon barrier to address				Clearly define the problem that the effort seeks to solve. Use the State Experience Directory in Section 2 to identify which challenge category fits your situation before convening the team.
A shared definition of what success looks like				Define this before selecting a tool. "Improved coordination" is not specific enough to guide decisions or measure progress.
A realistic scope given staff and program capacity				Identify one process to improve, one partnership to strengthen, or one challenge to address within your system. Starting small ensures teams can pilot systems improvements and the required change management effectively and intentionally.
Knowledge of how other states have approached similar challenges				Review the relevant state narratives in Part 2, Section 10 before your first work session.

Operational Readiness

Potential Gap	In Place	Partially in Place	Not Yet in Place	What to do about it
Dedicated time in team members' schedules				Build sessions into calendars as standing commitments before work begins.
A realistic timeline that accounts for peak workload periods				Map the team's existing commitments before setting a timeline.
Basic documentation of existing processes				If documentation does not exist, host a pre-mapping session call with relevant staff to gain a foundational understanding of the process and to begin mapping the steps of the process.
A continuity plan if a key team member changes roles				Identify a backup contact for each agency at the start, not after a transition disrupts momentum.

Relationships & Information

Potential Gap	In Place	Partially in Place	Not Yet in Place	What to do about it
Basic mutual understanding of each other's programs and constraints				Schedule a dedicated orientation session before substantive work begins.
Basic data on current participation, referral rates, and outcomes				Gather what exists before the first session. Even imperfect data is more useful than none.
Data sharing agreements between participating agencies (<i>if applicable</i>)				Identify whether agreements exist or need to be established before co-enrollment or outcome tracking work begins.
A plan for tracking progress over the course of the initiative				Decide at the outset how the team will document and communicate progress to each other, to leadership, and to partners.