Sustaining the Good Life:

SNAP in Nebraska

open sky

POLICY INSTITUTE

About OpenSky Policy Institute

OpenSky is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that analyzes tax and budget policy in the state of Nebraska. We use data to help lawmakers and citizens adopt sound policy, because everyone deserves a chance at the Good Life.

Our mission is to use research, strategic communications and coalition-building to advance evidence-based policies that improve economic opportunity for all Nebraskans.

Acknowledgements

OpenSky Policy Institute would like to acknowledge staff whose work was instrumental in the development of this report, led by Sarah Sperry, OpenSky's Intern.

Colleagues providing essential technical assistance included Eric Savaiano, Economic Justice Program Manager, Food and Nutrition Access, at Nebraska Appleseed, Craig Beck, OpenSky's Senior Fiscal Policy Analyst; and Tiffany Friesen Milone, OpenSky's Deputy Director.

OpenSky Policy Institute
1327 H Street, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
www.openskypolicy.org

To download a copy of this primer, go to www.OpenSkyPolicy.org.

Sustaining the Good Life

SNAP in Nebraska

OpenSky Policy Institute

January 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an important anti-hunger program, helping more than 75,000 Nebraska households afford quality food in August 2024 (see Figure 1) (Office of Economic Assistance, 2024). SNAP is one of the most effective forms of stimulus targeted to households during an economic downturn and each dollar of benefits redeemed has the potential to multiply through the supply chain, strengthening the state's businesses (Hoynes & Schanzenbach, 2019). Furthermore, studies have shown that childhood engagement with SNAP leads to increased economic self-sufficiency in adulthood and less reliance on similar government programs (Hoynes et al., 2016).

Figure 1.

QUICK FACTS

HOUSEHOLDS
75,935 households participated in August of 2024.

LOCATION
42% of SNAP households live in Nebraska's rural areas.

CHILDREN
48% of SNAP households have children (30,065).

WORKERS
86% of SNAP households had at least one worker.

ELDERLY
8% of SNAP households had at least one member over 60.

DISABLED
54% of SNAP households had a member with a disability.

Note: Percentage estimates from the American Community Survey, 2023 One-Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023) and Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services Performance Metrics Report in August of 2024 (Office of Economic Assistance, 2024).

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 One Year Estimates)

What is SNAP?

SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps, is a program providing important nutritional support for low-wage working families, low-income seniors and families with disabilities living on fixed incomes, and to other low-income families and individuals. The federal government pays the full cost of SNAP benefits and splits the cost of administering the programs with states (Food and Nutrition Services [FNS], 2024i).

Food Stamps began during the Great Depression and ran from 1939 to 1943, reemerging in 1961 with President John F. Kennedy's first executive order. The program has since been run in various forms with multiple expansions and adjustments that led to the current program that is now known as SNAP. See Appendix A for a more detailed history of Food Stamps and SNAP.

Several of the changes made over the years were largely aimed at streamlining processes, reducing the potential for fraud and encouraging participants to work or find higher paying jobs. One major change was the adoption of the Electronic Benefits System (EBT), a system allowing recipients to authorize a transfer of their government benefits to a retail account to pay for groceries, which began as a pilot program in 1984 and spread to all 50 states by 2004. This system is more efficient administratively and creates an electronic record of transactions, thereby reducing fraud and making violations easier to identify (FNS, 2024b).

The total dollar amount provided to SNAP participants is calculated through the USDA Thrifty Food Plan (FNS, 2024k). This plan and other Food Plans are based on the average cost of a "healthy" diet and use the cost of approved foods to calculate an appropriate monthly allotment. (See Appendix B for more information about USDA Food Plans).

Figure 2. Overview of SNAP Benefits in 2024

$350.78

Average SNAP benefit per household per month

$186.73

Average SNAP benefit per person per month

$2.00

Average SNAP benefit per person per meal

Note: A snapshot of average SNAP benefits reported by the Food and Nutrition Service in 2024 (FNS, 2024g). Calculation made assuming three meals per day for a 31 day month, from Urban Institute, 2021.

As part of the 2018 Farm Bill, the USDA reevaluated the Thrifty Food Plan to reflect the rise of grocery prices and the latest dietary guidelines (Hoynes & Schanzenbach, 2019) effectively increasing the dollar amount of SNAP benefits allotted each month (FNS, 2024d) (Appendix B includes more details about the 2021 Thrifty Food Plan). Figure 2 provides an overview of SNAP benefits in 2024.

SNAP is reauthorized by the Farm Bill roughly every five years and is administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2019). The 2018 Farm Bill expired without reauthorization in 2023 although Congress granted extensions through the end of 2024 (CRS, 2024) (Coalition on Human Needs, 2024)

How does SNAP Work?

SNAP is intended to fill the gaps between the cash a household has available to buy food and the cost of a thrifty food budget (Hoynes & Schanzenbach, 2019).

A household with no income would receive the full cost of a thrifty food budget, known as the "maximum allotment." As household income increases, the household is expected to contribute more of its own resources – about 30%, per the USDA – to food and SNAP benefits decrease accordingly.

This means a family of four with a net monthly household income of $800 (after deductions) would receive $735 per month in SNAP benefits in fiscal year 2024, which comes to under $3 per meal (assuming a 30-day month and three meals a day) (see Figure 3) (FNS, 2024e) (Urban Institute, 2021).

Figure 3. SNAP Calculation for a Family of Four With $800 Net Monthly Income

TWO ADULTS AND TWO TEENAGED CHILDREN

Maximum Monthly Allotment	−	30% of Net Monthly Income	=	**SNAP Monthly Benefit**
$945	−	(.30 x $800)=240	=	**$735**

Note: Calculations made with the formula from the Food and Nutrition Service (2024e) "SNAP Eligibility; Frequently Asked Questions." U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Figure 4. What SNAP Buys

Note: From "Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)". Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2022.

https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

Nebraska's benefits are distributed via an EBT system managed by the vendor Fidelity Information Services. EBT cards function like a debit card and can be used at authorized retailers to purchase approved food items (Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services [NE DHHS], 2024a).

Approved food items include fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products, breads, snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages, as well as seeds and plants to grow food. Non approved items include alcohol, cigarettes, and nutritional supplements (see Figure 4) (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [CBPP], 2022). If a household doesn't use all its monthly benefits, they can roll them over to the next month for up to a year (NE DHHS, 2024a).

Who is Eligible?

SNAP benefits are broadly available to those with low incomes. Eligibility rules and benefit levels are generally set at the federal level, although states have some flexibility in tailoring the program (Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2024).

There are two pathways for eligibility: traditional eligibility, under which a household must meet program specific eligibility rules; and categorical eligibility, under which a household becomes automatically, or "categorically" eligible by being eligible for or receiving benefits from another safety net program (CRS, 2023).

Traditional eligibility uses income and asset tests to determine if a household qualifies. Households with a member over 60 or who is disabled must have a gross monthly income (see Figure 5) at or below 165% of the federal poverty level (FPL), or $4,290 for a family of 4 in 2024, and have less than $4,250 in liquid assets, such as cash on hand or anything that could be readily sold for cash (see Figure 6) (Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NE DHHS), 2024b, Title 475, Chapter 3, section 002.01).

Households without a elderly or disabled member must not only meet the net income test, but also have a gross monthly income at or below 130% of the FPL, or $3,380 for a family of 4 in 2024, and have less than $2,750 in liquid assets, excluding the value of their home, and retirement or educational savings and a portion of a vehicle's value (see Figure 6) (CBPP, 2024).

Categorical eligibility allows households that have already been found eligible for a different low-income program such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (see Appendix C) to be automatically eligible for SNAP. For example, TANF participants who have higher income and assets than typical SNAP eligibility rules can be eligible for SNAP through categorical eligibility.

Under a policy known as "broad based categorical eligibility" (BBCE), states are given the choice of expanding categorical SNAP eligibility to households with incomes up to 200% of the FPL, or $5,000 a month for a family of four in 2024, which is the maximum threshold for any TANF benefit. With BBCE, the federal government continues to pay the full cost of the benefits provided (CRS, 2023).

Figure 5. Gross Income Versus Net Income

GROSS INCOME

The amount of money a household takes home before deductions.

NET INCOME

Gross income minus:

- 20% earned income deduction
- $160 standard deduction
- Dependent car deduction
- Medical expenses for elderly/disabled
- Excess shelter costs (more than 50% of net income)

Note: From "SNAP Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions", Food and Nutrition Services, USDA. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility (FNS, 2024e).

In Nebraska, BBCE is used to raise the asset test threshold for households referred to SNAP through a state program called the Expanded Resource Program (ERP). Households referred by the ERP must still have a gross income at or below 130% FPL, or $40,560 annual income for a family of 4, but can have up to $25,000 in liquid assets and still be eligible (NE DHHS, 2024b, Title 475, Chapter 3, section 002.01(A)(ii)).

In 2021, Nebraska also used BBCE to raise the gross income limit from 130% of the FPL to 165%, although households must still have net income less than 130% of the FPL and meet the other asset tests (L.B. 108, 2021). Following an extension in 2023, this increase is set to expire September 30, 2025 (L.B. 227, 2023).

There are some categories of people that won't be eligible for SNAP regardless of their income or assets, including those convicted of certain drug-related felonies, employees on strike, most college students, all undocumented immigrants and some immigrants with legal status (CBPP, 2024). In 2018, the Farm Bill expanded eligibility to people convicted of drug-related felonies and individuals returning to the community after prison (Bergh, 2024).

Length of Enrollment

There are no limits on the length of SNAP enrollment for most participants: the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant women and those with dependent children (7 U.S.C. § 2015) (Caswell & Yaktine, 2013). All households must reapply for benefits every six months and report any income changes that would affect their eligibility (NE DHHS, 2024b, Title 475, Chapter 2, section 002.05).

Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) aged 18-49 are limited to three months in any 36-month period when they aren't employed or participating in a workforce or job training program for at least 20 hours a week (Bolen & Dean, 2018).

During periods of high unemployment when qualifying jobs may be hard to find, states may apply for a waiver of the three-month time limit for specific areas (Bolen & Dean, 2018). States must demonstrate that the target location has an insufficient number of jobs or an unemployment rate over 10%

Figure 6. Monthly Income Thresholds for a Family of Four

130% of FPL **$3,380**	All households must have net income below 130% FPL
Households with an elderly or disabled member can have a net income up to 165% FPL	165% of FPL **$4,290**

Note: These figures were calculated by dividing the Federal Poverty Line annual income by 12 months. Federal Poverty Guidelines to determine eligibility for programs can be found at https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines (Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2024).

(FNS, 2024j). If granted, the three month limit is suspended until the waiver ends, usually a year later, although it could be two years in areas of chronic high unemployment or job insufficiency. The federal government continues to pay the full cost of benefits provided during the waiver period (Office of Inspector General, 2019).

During the Great Recession, the federal government suspended the three-month time limit for part of 2009 and 2010, allowing states to keep the limit if they also provided workforce or job training to anyone affected. States did not have to request a waiver, so most states, including Nebraska, operated under waivers during the recession and its aftermath (Bolen & Dean, 2018). Similarly, in response to the 2020 pandemic, the federal government enacted the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which waived the three-month limit from April 2020 until the end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE)(FNS, 2020). Nebraska kept the waiver until June 30, 2023, over one month after the COVID-19 PHE declaration had been lifted (NE DHHS, 2023a).

As part of the FFCRA, the USDA created a new program called Pandemic EBT. This benefit was created to maintain food assistance for children who had previously relied on school meals for their main source of food and was administered to families whose children qualified for free/reduced-price school meals. In Nebraska, families received $139 per month per child from August 2022 to April 2023 and $74 for May 2023 due to the Public Health Emergency (PHE) ending on May 11 (NE DHHS, 2023a) (NE DHHS, 2023b).

In December 2022, Congress authorized a permanent Summer EBT (S-EBT) program – a modification of a 10-year pilot program and the Pandemic EBT – to begin in 2024 (Bauer et al., 2023) (Gonzalez, 2024a). Nebraska's S-EBT program served nearly 200,000 children and distributed $24 million in grocery benefits as of October 2024 (Gonzalez, 2024b).

Disaster Relief

The federal government also offers what's called the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) to expand eligibility to individuals and communities impacted by a major disaster (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency [US FEMA], 2024).

The President can issue a Major Disaster Declaration after any event that stresses local government resources to the point where federal intervention is necessary, including tornadoes, severe storms, flooding and pandemics. After the declaration is made, states can apply to the USDA for D-SNAP (US FEMA, 2024).

If granted, D-SNAP expands income eligibility beyond that of the traditional SNAP program, allowing an entire month of food assistance to reach impacted families who wouldn't otherwise be eligible. The D-SNAP benefit amount equals the maximum allotment determined under traditional SNAP guidelines and is standardized to provide equal amounts to those families qualifying under D-SNAP and those who were receiving SNAP prior to the declaration (FNS, 2012).

Since 2017, the USDA has approved D-SNAP issuance to at least 13 states, including Nebraska (FNS, 2023b). In March 2019, a Major Disaster Declaration was issued in the wake of flooding caused by a severe winter storm, making D-SNAP available in 27 counties (FNS, 2023a). Around $3.5 million of benefits were issued throughout the affected areas (NE DHHS, 2019), producing an estimated $5.95 million in economic activity (Hanson, 2010).

Safeguards

SNAP has a rigorous upfront eligibility determination system to ensure program efficiency and integrity. To apply, households report income and other information that is verified by a state eligibility worker through interviews with a household member, data matches and documentation provided by the household or another party, such as an employer or landlord (NE DHHS, 2024b, Title 475, Chapter 3, section 002.03).

Policymakers at both the state and federal levels have long been focused on reducing fraud and improving payment accuracy (CRS, 2018). These efforts generally target five types of inaccuracy or misconduct:

- Trafficking, which is the illicit sale of benefits and can involve retailers and participants;
- Retailer application fraud, which involves an illicit attempt by an ineligible retailer to participate in the program;
- Errors and fraud by applying households, with errors considered unintentional and fraud considered intentional;
- Errors and fraud by state agencies, which result in improper payments and involve state quality control systems (CRS, 2018); and
- Skimming, which is done by attaching a device to a card reader that will record card numbers and related information from both EBT and debit and credit cards (FNS, 2024a).

To prevent fraud and over- or underpayment, states are required to conduct a monthly audit of their programs through a SNAP quality control system. This involves independent state reviewers checking the eligibility and benefits decisions made in a representative sample of SNAP cases.
Federal officials then re-review a subsample of the reviewed cases and release payment error rates based on the reviews. States may be penalized if their error rates are repeatedly above the national average (FNS, 2024h).

SNAP as a Long-Term Investment

A recent comprehensive study (Hoynes & Schanzenbach, 2019) found that childhood engagement with SNAP benefits "reduces the likelihood that individuals receive income from public programs in adulthood." The implication, therefore, is "that the social safety net for families with young children may, in part, 'pay for itself' by reducing reliance on government support in the long-term" (Bailey et al., 2020).

> “The social safety net for families with young children may, in part, ‘pay for itself’ by reducing reliance on government in the long-term.”

Researchers looked at data on 43 million Americans to track the long-term impacts of childhood engagement with Food Stamps and SNAP on adult economic productivity and well-being. They linked Census data to data from the Social Security Administration to track children from SNAP-enrolled families through adulthood and found that those exposed in utero through age five were more likely to live longer, be economically self-sufficient and own their own home and less likely to be incarcerated (Bailey et al., 2020).

This study confirmed prior research showing access to nutritional support programs early in life improves economic self-sufficiency in later life, especially for women. SNAP “is the opposite of ‘welfare trap’ ” in households with young children, the study’s authors found. “Providing critical benefits to children at pivotal developmental stages apparently allows them to invest in the skills that, in turn, will enable them to escape poverty when they grow up” (Nutrition Programs: Perspective for the 2018 Farm Bill, 2017).

SNAP and Businesses

SNAP also is a critical public-private partnership (CBPP, 2019). In addition to helping families afford a basic diet, it generates business for retailers and boosts local economies. To participate, retailers must stock a prescribed variety of foods and have applied for and received authorization from the USDA. There are 1,290 authorized retailers in Nebraska, ranging from farmer’s markets and butchers to national chain superstores, that redeemed roughly $222 million in benefits in 2019 (CBPP, 2019).

According to Moody’s Analytics, $1 in SNAP spending generates about $1.54 in economic activity during a weak economy (Canning & Morrison, 2019). This means the $222 million received by retailers in 2019 would have generated $342 million in overall economic activity for Nebraska were the state in an economic downturn. This is called a “multiplier effect” (Hanson, 2010).

How does the multiplier effect work? In an economic downturn, many households have less money to spend, causing business at local stores and restaurants to slow. These businesses then also have less money to spend, furthering the downturn. To weather the downturn, some households may enroll in SNAP, which gives them more money to spend at the local grocery store. Every dollar spent there helps the store recover. More revenue means the store can hire back staff, make improvements and purchase more food from farmers and distributors to meet increased demand. As the increased spending from SNAP flows through the economy, each sector receiving a share of that additional money is able to spend more money (see Figure 7) (Canning & Morrison, 2019).

Because households are able to redeem their monthly SNAP benefits quickly, the program is a highly effective form of stimulus during an economic downturn (Zandi, 2008). In fact, a May 2019 study by the USDA looked at the impact of SNAP redemptions on county-level employment and found that, during the Great Recession, one job was created for every $10,000 in SNAP benefits redeemed within rural counties (the impact was smaller in metropolitan counties) (Pender et al., 2019). Further, because SNAP benefits can only be spent on food, money may be freed up for these households to spend on other goods and services at local businesses, helping them recover and raising sales tax revenue for state and local government entities (Bolen & Wolkomir, 2020).

SNAP and Workers

Each state is required to administer a SNAP Employment & Training Program, with the federal government matching 50% of the program's cost (FNS, 2024j). Nebraska has the Next Step Employment & Training (E&T), which is a collaboration between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Labor (DOL). It offers job search and resume assistance, interview training, vouchers to buy interview clothing and childcare and other services. The program is available to SNAP households with: no more than four people; a worker or someone recently unemployed (within 90 days); and at least one work eligible member (a legal permanent resident or citizen) (NE DHHS, 2024c). The program is voluntary and available to participants in 41 Nebraska counties (NE DHHS, 2024c) (Stoddard, 2023).

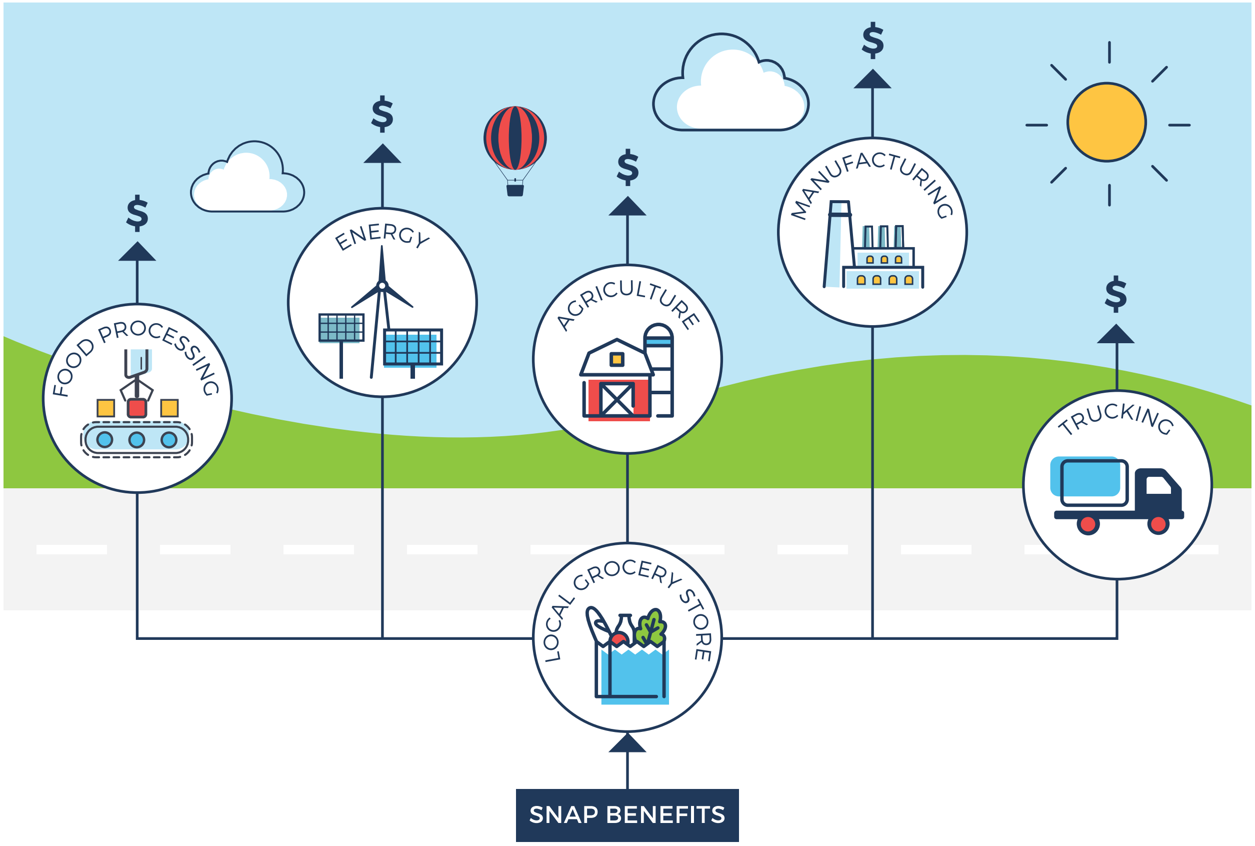
In Nebraska, efforts have been made to make the program mandatory as recently as 2024 (L.B. 1381, 2024). However, support for the effectiveness of such work requirements is lacking. A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) literature review found no empirical increase in overall employment of SNAP participants enrolled in the E&T programs and that most SNAP participants who are able to already work (CBO, 2022) (see also Gray et al., 2021).

This is the case in Nebraska, where 49% of SNAP households had at least one member working and 36.8% had at least two members working in 2022 (Census Bureau, 2023). A significant share of workers participating in SNAP work in service industries such as retail, hospitality and home health (see Tables in Appendix D). These types of jobs are likely to have low wages, few benefits and unpredictable or seasonal hours (Llobrera & Hall, 2024). SNAP can supplement low and fluctuating pay and help workers get by during periods of unemployment or limited hours (CBPP, 2022).

SNAP is structured – and funded – as an entitlement program, meaning that anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can participate. This allows most workers with fluctuating incomes to regain access to benefits quickly during downswings. Other programs, such as child care or housing assistance, are often subject to funding limitations that lead to long wait times. A worker may therefore be reluctant to accept a raise or additional hours that could render them ineligible because they may not be able to re-enroll quickly in those programs if circumstances change. SNAP is structured to avoid this dilemma (Wolkomir & Cai, 2019).

The program also gives workers preferential treatment, allowing a deduction from the net income calculation for earned income (money earned by working for wages, salary or self-employment), but not for unearned income (money earned without working). This means a household with workers will receive a larger SNAP benefit than a same-sized household with income from unearned sources, such as Social Security payments, pensions, and trust-fund distributions (NE DHHS, 2024b, Title 475, Chapter 3, section 002.02). Benefits also phase out slowly as incomes rise, so most households will see an increase in their total income – earnings plus SNAP benefits – when their earnings go up modestly (Wolkomir & Cai, 2019).

Figure 7. The Multiplier Effect



Note: SNAP benefits have been shown to decrease the harmful effects of economic downturn by stimulating the economy through various industries (Canning & Morrison, 2019).

Some households, however, may face a benefit "cliff" if an increase in earnings puts them over the income limit. Once earnings exceed the limit, even by a little bit, a household loses eligibility in the program. If the increase was less than what the household was receiving in benefits, their total income will decrease and the household becomes worse off despite the added income (Wolkomir & Cai, 2019).

In an attempt to counteract the "cliff effect," more than 40 states use categorical eligibility to smooth the transition for these households by raising the income limit, allowing them to accept higher paying work or increased hours without losing their eligibility (Wolkomir & Cai, 2019). Nebraska has used BBCE to raise asset limits and, more recently, to increase the gross income limit to 165% of the FPL through September 30, 2025 (FNS, 2024c).

Conclusion

The benefits of SNAP participation for low-income families are extensive and well documented, as is the program's potential to help communities recover during economic downturns. These make the program a sensible, long-term investment for the state and its residents. It is important that policymakers understand how SNAP is funded and administered in Nebraska in order to make decisions that will maximize the benefits for the state's low-income families. Future opportunities to participate in additional funding such as the Summer-EBT program will provide Nebraska with the resources necessary to lift people out of poverty, increase individuals' economic self-sufficiency, and support the state's economy.

References

Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2024). Poverty Guidelines. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines

Bailey, M.J., Hoynes, H.W., Rossin-Slater, M., and Walker, R. (2020). Is The Social Safety Net a Long-Term Investment? Large-Scale Evidence From the Food Stamps Program (Working Paper 26942). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/papers/w26942

Bauer, L., Ruffini, K., Whitmore Schanzenbech, D., & Tomeh, N. (2022). Food security shouldn't take a summer vacation. The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/food-security-shouldnt-take-a-summer-vacation/

Bauer, L., Ruffini, K., & Whitmore Schanzenbach, D. (2023). The Case for and Challenges of Delivering In-Kind Nutrition Assistance to Children. The Hamilton Project. https://www.hamiltonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/20230301_ES_THP_Nutrition.pdf

Bergh, K., Llobrera, J., Rosenbaum, D. (2024). House Committee Farm Bill's $30 Billion SNAP Cut, Other Harmful Proposals Outweigh Improvements. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-committee-farm-bills-30-billion-snap-cut-other-harmful-proposals

Bolen, E. & Dean, S. (2018). Waivers Add Key State Flexibility to SNAP's Three-Month Time Limit. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/waivers-add-key-state-flexibility-to-snaps-three-month-time-limit

Bolen, E. & Wolkomir, E., (2020). SNAP Boosts Retailers and Local Economies. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/snap-boosts-retailers-and-local-economies

Canning, P., & Morrison, R.M. (2019). Quantifying the Impact of SNAP Benefits on the U.S. Economy and Jobs. U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20during%20an%20economic,agriculture%20industries%20by%20$32%20million

Caswell, J. A., & Yaktine, A. L. (Eds.). (2013). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Examining the Evidence to Define Benefit Adequacy. National Academies Press (US). https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK206907/

Center for Nutrition Policy and Priorities. (2007). The Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Food Plans, 2007. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/low-moderate-liberal-food-plans-2007

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). (2019). SNAP Is an Important Public-Private Partnership [Fact Sheet]. https://www.cbpp.org/snap-retailers-fact-sheets

CBPP. (2022). Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

CBPP. (2024). A Quick Guide to SNAP Eligibility and Benefits https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-quick-guide-to-snap-eligibility-and-benefits

Coalition on Human Needs. (2024). CHN's Human Needs Watch: Tracking Hardship. https://www.chn.org/voices/human-needs-watch-may-20-2024/

Congressional Budget Office (CBO). (2022). Work Requirements and Work Supports for Recipients of Means-Tested Benefits. https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2022-06/57702-Work-Requirements.pdf

Congressional Research Service (CRS). (2018). Errors and Fraud in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20180928_R45147_5e64ffb1200ac2d1af10a24d8848a629e5249407.pdf

CRS. (2023). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R42505

CRS. (2024). Expiration of the 2018 Farm Bill and extension for 2024. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47659

Dean, S., Hall, L., Kenneth-Jennings, B., & Rosenbaum, D. (2020). SNAP Benefit Boost Would Get Needed Food Aid to the Poorest Participants, Who Have Been Left Out. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-benefit-boost-would-get-needed-food-aid-to-the-poorest-participants

Fidelity National Information Services. (n.d.) ebtEDGE. https://www.ebtedge.com/gov/portal/PortalHome.do

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). (2012). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Disaster SNAP Guidance. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://njcdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/d-snap_handbook.pdf

FNS. (2020) SNAP – Families First Coronavirus Response Act and Impact on Time Limit for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). State Guidance Memo. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ffcra-impact-time-limit-abawds

FNS. (2021). USDA Modernizes the Thrifty Food Plan, Updates SNAP Benefits. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/news-item/usda-0179.21#:~:text=Thrifty%20Food%20Plan.-,As%20a%20result%2C%20the%20average%20SNAP%20benefit%20%E2%80%93%20excluding%20additional%20funds,1%2C%202021

FNS. (2023a). Nebraska Disaster Nutrition Assistance. U.S.Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/nebraska-disaster-nutrition-assistance

FNS. (2023b). State by State FNS Disaster Assistance. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/state-by-state

FNS. (2024a). Addressing Stolen SNAP Benefits. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/stolen-benefits

FNS. (2024b). A Short History of SNAP. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/history

FNS. (2024c). Nebraska. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap-directory-entry/nebraska

FNS. (2024d). SNAP and the Thrifty Food Plan. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/thriftyfoodplan

FNS. (2024e). SNAP Eligibility; Frequently Asked Questions. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility

FNS. (2024f). SNAP Employment and Training. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap-et

FNS. (2024g). SNAP: Monthly Participation, Households, Benefits. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-4fymonthly-10.pdf

FNS. (2024h). SNAP Quality Control. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/qc

FNS. (2024i). SNAP State Activity Reports. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snap-state-activity-reports

FNS. (2024j). State Options Report: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-16th-state-options-report-june24.pdf#page=9

FNS. (2024k). USDA Food Plans. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/cnpp/usda-food-plans

Food Research and Action Center. (2023). Summer and Pandemic EBT Provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-and-Summer-Pandemic-EBT-and-Electronic-Benefits-Transfer-Program-Provisions-in-the-Omnibus-1.pdf

Gonzalez, C. (2024a). Once-controversial Summer EBT food program for low-income NE kids set for rollout. Nebraska Examiner. https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2024/05/06/once-controversial-summer-ebt-food-program-for-low-income-ne-kids-set-for-rollout/

Gonzalez, C. (2024b). Summer food aid program Gov. Jim Pillen at first snubbed is deemed a 'success'. Nebraska Examiner. https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2024/10/17/summer-food-aid-program-gov-jim-pillen-at-first-snubbed-is-deemed-a-success/

Gray, C., Leive, A., Prager, E., Pukelis, K. B., & Zaki, M. (2021). Employed in a SNAP? The Impact of Work Requirements on Program Participation and Labor Supply (Working Paper 28877). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w28877

Grinvalds, J. (2023). Time running out for Nebraska to opt into child nutrition program. KOLN. https://www.1011now.com/2023/12/30/time-running-out-nebraska-opt-into-child-nutrition-program/

Hanson, K. (2010). The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Services Report Number 103. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/44748/7996_err103_1_.pdf

Hoynes, H., & Schanzenbach, D. W. (2019). Strengthening SNAP as an Automatic Stabilizer. The Hamilton Project. https://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/HoynesSchanzenbach_web_20190506.pdf

Hoynes, H., Schanzenbach, D. W., & Almond, D. (2016). Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net. American Economic Review, 106(4), 903–934. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20130375

Jones, J. (2024). SNAP Spending Rose and Fell with Pandemic Era Changes to Benefits Amounts. USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2024/june/snap-spending-rose-and-fell-with-pandemic-era-changes-to-benefit-amounts/

L.B. 108. 107th Legislature, First Session. (Nebraska 2021) (enacted). https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/107/PDF/Slip/LB108.pdf

L.B. 1381. 108th Legislature, Second Session. (Nebraska 2024). https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/108/PDF/Intro/LB1381.pdf

L.B. 227. 108th Legislature, First Session. (Nebraska 2023) (enacted). https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/108/PDF/Intro/LB84.pdf

Llobrera, J. & Hall, L. (2024). SNAP Helps Millions of Workers in Low-Paying Jobs. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-helps-millions-of-workers-in-low-paying-jobs

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NE DHHS). (2019). D-SNAP Response Called 'Miraculous'. Connections 19(4), 5. https://dhhs.ne.gov/Connections%20Newsletters/May%202019.pdf

NE DHHS. (2023a). End of the Public Health Emergency SNAP Information. https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/End-of-the-Public-Health-Emergency-SNAP-Information.aspx

NE DHHS. (2023b). Pandemic Electronics Benefits Transfer (P-EBT). https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/PEBT.aspx

NE DHHS. (2024a). EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer). https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/EBT.aspx

NE DHHS. (2024b). Rule and Regulations. https://rules.nebraska.gov/browse-rules

NE DHHS. (2024c). SNAP Next Step and Employment & Training(E&T). https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/SNAP-Next-Step.aspx

Office of Economic Assistance. (2024). ACCESSNebraska Performance Metrics. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/ACCESSNebraska-Performance-Measures.aspx

Office of Family Assistance. (2024). About TANF. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf/about

Office of Inspector General. (2019). FAV - FNS Controls Over SNAP Benefits for Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents. U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/27026-0001-41.pdf

Pender, J., Young, Y., Tood, J. E., & Miller, C. (2019). The Impacts of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Redemptions on County-Level Employment. Economic Research Report, Article 289135. https://ideas.repec.org//p/ags/uersrr/289135.html

Nutrition Programs: Perspectives for the 2018 Farm Bill: A Hearing Before The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. Senate, 115th Cong. (2017). (testimony of Diane Whitmore Schanzenback) https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony_Schanzenbach.pdf

Stoddard, M. (2023). Ricketts promoting Nebraska program that helps some food aid recipients find better jobs. Omaha World Herald. https://omaha.com/news/state-regional/government-politics/ricketts-promoting-nebraska-program-that-helps-some-food-aid-recipients-find-better-jobs/article_525ce522-25a2-11ee-81c9-8b93d6018752.html

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 7 U.S.C. ch. § 2015. https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:7%20section:2015%20edition:prelim)

Urban Institute. (2021). The Gap between SNAP Benefits and Meal Costs, 2020–2021 [Data Tool]. https://www.urban.org/data-tools/gap-between-snap-benefits-and-meal-costs-2020-2021#:~:text=Because%20we%20are%20interested%20in,to%20determine%20the%20benefit%20amount

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). May 2023 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, Nebraska. https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ne.htm

U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). S2201: Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S2201?q=nebraska%20snap

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (US FEMA). (2024) How a Disaster Gets Declared. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. https://www.fema.gov/disaster/how-declared

U.S. Social Security Administration. (n.d.). Supplemental Security Income (SSI). https://www.ssa.gov/ssi

Wolkomir, E. & Cai, L. (2019). The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Includes Earnings Incentives. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-includes-earnings-incentives

Zandi, M. (2008). The Economic Impact of a $600 Billion Fiscal Stimulus Package. Moody's Economy.com. https://www.economy.com/mark-zandi/documents/The_Economic_Impact_of_a_600_Billion_Fiscal_Stimulus_Package.pdf

Appendix A. History of SNAP

Food Stamps began during the Great Depression, when the federal government offered orange stamps for sale, pricing them roughly equal to what families would spend on food (Food and Nutrition Service [FNS], 2024a). For every dollar of orange stamps bought, $0.50 of "bonus" blue stamps were also received. Orange stamps could buy any type of food while blue stamps were limited to "surplus" foods, as identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program ran from 1939 to 1943, when it was determined that "the conditions that brought the program into being – unmarketable food surpluses and widespread unemployment – no longer existed." (FNS, 2024a).

The program in its current form began in 1961 with President John F. Kennedy's first executive order, which created pilot programs in eight counties with the stated intention of "increasing the consumption of perishables." (FNS, 2024b). The program was expanded significantly by President Lyndon B. Johnson, who gave all counties the authority to launch their own Food Stamps programs in 1964. Participation was optional until 1974, although by then 90 percent of the U.S. population were already living in participating counties. In 1977, the requirement that participants make a purchase in order to receive a benefit (the so-called "purchase requirement") was eliminated (Caswell & Yaktine, 2013). From that point on, participants received the formerly free portion of their benefit in coupons but were expected to continue buying healthy food by supplementing those coupons with cash. This led to the current formula, which assumes a household can spend 30% of its net income on food (FNS, 2024b).

Appendix B. USDA Food Plans

USDA Food Plans have been used since 1894 to calculate how much money is needed weekly to purchase the food needed for a healthy diet. There are four Food Plans, the Thrifty Food Plan, and the Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Food Plans. Each plan contains a "market basket" and a "cost level". The market basket is a list of food items that reflect the average amount of food needed for a healthy diet, including appropriate calories needed for an active lifestyle and the food items that fall within healthy dietary recommendations. The dollar amount of the Food Plan is determined through the "cost level" by calculating how much each market basket might cost. The USDA regularly updates the cost level calculations based on monthly changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) (FNS, 2024k).

The Thrifty Food Plan is calculated based on the dietary needs of a family of four (a male adult and a female adult ages 25-50, and two children ages 9-11 and 6-8) (FNS, 2024k). The dollar amount of the Thrifty Food Plans market basket is the standard federal maximum allotment for all SNAP participants and is updated every five years. The Thrifty Food Plan's reevaluation in 2021 included new information about dietary recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2020). The 2021 update also added new information from SNAP participant feedback to reflect current food consumption patterns, as well as recent increases in food prices. The Thrifty Food Plan 2021 update was part of the 2018 Farm Bill and an Executive Order by President Joseph R. Biden. It was intended to not only improve the diets of low-income households, but also to help prevent disease. The 2021 update was the first change in the calculations since the Thrifty Food Plan was created in 1975 (FNS, 2021) (Jones, 2024).

The other three USDA Food Plans, Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost and Liberal Food Plans are used outside of the context of SNAP by the courts and the Department of Defense to calculate alimony payments, child support and foster care payments, and allowance rates for U.S. Military servicemembers (Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, 2007).

Appendix C. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

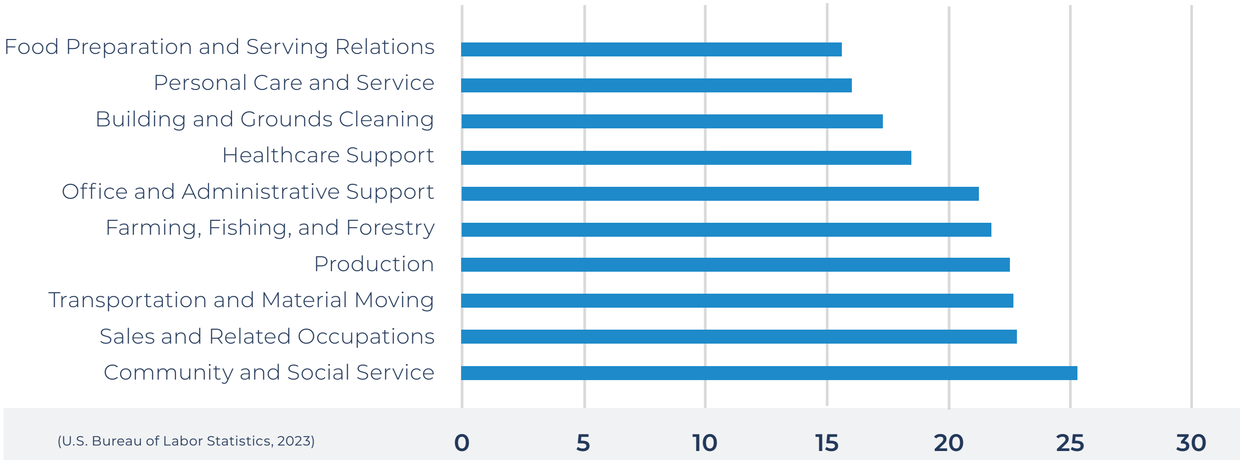
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a federal income supplement program that pays monthly benefits to help aged, blind and disabled people with little to no income meet basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter (U.S. Social Security Administration, n.d.).

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a time-limited program intended to assist families with children when the parents or others cannot provide for the family’s basic needs. It is funded through grants from the federal government to states. Each state has broad flexibility in structuring the programs, including the type and amount of assistance payments, the range of other services to be provided and the rules for eligibility (Office of Family Assistance, 2024).

Appendix D. USDA Food Plans

Table D1

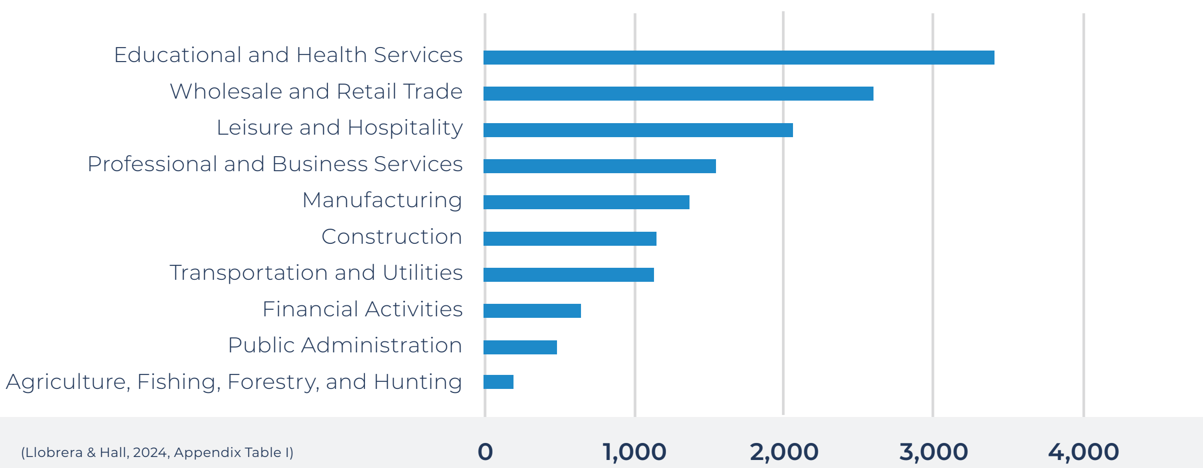
SAMPLE WAGES BY OCCUPATION May 2023 · Mean Hourly Wage



(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023)

Table D2

NUMBER OF WORKERS IN SNAP (IN 000s) VS. INDUSTRY



(Llobrera & Hall, 2024, Appendix Table I)

OpenSky Policy Institute

OpenSky Policy Institute
1327 H Street, Suite 200 | Lincoln, NE 68508
402.438.0382 | openskypolicy.org

January 2025