

## PILOT PROJECTS TO REDUCE DEPENDENCY AND INCREASE WORK REQUIREMENTS AND WORK EFFORT UNDER SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### Selection Criteria and Monitoring

*The Secretary shall carry out pilot projects under which State agencies shall enter into cooperative agreements with the Secretary to develop and test methods, including operating work programs with certain features comparable to the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families, for employment and training programs and services to raise the number of work registrants obtain unsubsidized employment, increase the earned income of the registrants, and reduce the reliance of the registrants on public assistance, so as to reduce the need for supplemental nutrition assistance benefits.*

**PROCESS FOR SELECTING PILOT PROGRAMS**—(A) Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of the Act **August 7 2014**, the Secretary shall develop and publish the process for selecting pilot projects and issue such request for proposals for the independent evaluation as is determined appropriate by the Secretary. (B) **APPLICATION**.—The Secretary shall begin considering proposals not earlier than 90 days after the date on which the Secretary completes the actions **November 7, 2014** **SELECTION**—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the Secretary completes the actions described in subparagraph the Secretary shall select pilot projects from the applications submitted in response to the request for proposals. **February 7, 2015**

**QUALIFYING CRITERIA**— to be eligible to participate in a pilot project, a State agency must:

- Agree to participate in the evaluation described in clause(vii), including providing evidence that the State has a robust data collection system for program administration and cooperating to make available State data on the employment activities and post-participation employment, earnings, and public benefit receipt of participants to ensure proper and timely evaluation;
- Commit to collaborate with the State workforce board and other job training programs in the State and local area; and
- Commit to maintain at least the amount of State funding for employment and training programs and services under paragraphs (2) and (3) and under section 20 as the State expended for fiscal year 2013.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**—In selecting pilot projects, the Secretary shall—

“(aa) consider the degree to which the pilot project would enhance existing employment and training programs in the State;

“(bb) consider the degree to which the pilot project would enhance the employment and earnings of program participants;

“(cc) consider whether there is evidence that the pilot project could be replicated easily by other States or political subdivisions;

“(dd) consider whether the State agency has a demonstrated capacity to operate high quality employment and training programs; and

“(ee) ensure the pilot projects, when considered as a group, test a range of strategies, including strategies that—

“(AA) target individuals with low skills or limited work experience, individuals subject to the requirements under section 6(o), and individuals who are working;

“(BB) are located in a range of geographic areas and States, including rural and urban areas;

“(CC) emphasize education and training, rehabilitative services for individuals with barriers to employment, rapid attachment to employment, and mixed strategies; and

“(DD) test programs that assign work registrants to mandatory and voluntary participation in employment and training activities.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** — The Secretary shall establish and implement a process to terminate a pilot project for which the State has failed to meet the criteria described in clause (ii) or other criteria established by the Secretary. The Secretary shall monitor the employment and training programs carried out by State agencies and assess the effectiveness of the programs (i) preparing members of households participating in the supplemental nutrition assistance program for employment, including the acquisition of basic skills necessary for employment; and “(ii) increasing the number of household members who obtain and retain employment subsequent to participation in the employment and training programs.

**REPORTING MEASURES**— The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, shall develop State reporting measures that identify improvements in the skills, training, education, or work experience of members of households participating in the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

**STATE REQUIREMENTS**—The Secretary shall require that each State employment and training plan identifies appropriate reporting measures for each proposed component that serves a threshold number of participants determined by the Secretary of at least 100 people a year. Reporting measures include—

- the percentage and number of program participants who received employment and training services and are in unsubsidized employment subsequent to the receipt of those services;
- the percentage and number of program participants who obtain a recognized credential, including a registered apprenticeship, or a regular secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, while participating in, or within 1 year after receiving, employment and training services;
- the percentage and number of program participants who are in an education or training program that is intended to lead to a recognized credential, including a registered apprenticeship or on-the-job training program, a regular secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or unsubsidized employment;
- subject to terms and conditions established by the Secretary, measures developed by each State agency to assess the skills acquisition of employment and training program participants that reflect the goals of the specific employment and training program components of the State agency, which may include, at a minimum—
- the percentage and number of program participants who are meeting program requirements in each component of the education and training program of the State agency;
- the percentage and number of program participants who are gaining skills likely to lead to employment as measured through testing, quantitative or qualitative assessment, or other method; and
- the percentage and number of program participants who do not comply with employment and training requirements and who are ineligible under section 6(b); and

**OVERSIGHT OF STATE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES**—The Secretary shall assess State employment and training programs on a periodic basis to ensure compliance with Federal employment and training program rules and regulations; that program activities are appropriate to meet the needs of the individuals referred by the State agency to an employment and training program component.

**EVALUATION AND REPORTING**—The Secretary shall conduct for each State agency that enters into a cooperative agreement an independent longitudinal evaluation of each pilot project of the State agency under this subparagraph, with results reported not less frequently than in consecutive 12-month increments

The purpose of the independent evaluation shall be to measure the impact of employment and training programs and services provided by each State agency under the pilot projects on the ability of adults in each pilot project target population to find and retain employment that leads to increased household income and reduced reliance on public assistance, as well as other measures of household well-being, compared to what would have occurred in the absence of the pilot project.

**REPORTING**—Not later than December 31, 2015, and each December 31 thereafter until the completion of the last evaluation, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate and share broadly, including by posting on the Internet website of the Department of Agriculture, a report that includes a description of—

“(aa) the status of each pilot project carried out under this subparagraph; “(bb) the results of the evaluation completed during the previous fiscal year; “(cc) to the maximum extent practicable, baseline information relevant to the stated goals and desired outcomes of the pilot project; “(dd) the employment and training programs and services each State tested under the pilot, including— “(AA) the system of the State for assessing the ability of work registrants to participate in and meet the requirements of employment and training activities and assigning work registrants to appropriate activities; and “(BB) the employment and training activities and services provided under the pilot; “(ee) the impact of the employment and training programs and services on appropriate employment, income, and public benefit receipt as well as other outcomes among households participating in the pilot project, relative to households not participating; and “(ff) the steps and funding necessary to incorporate into State employment and training programs and services the components of the pilot projects that demonstrate increased employment and earnings.

Reporting measures are appropriate to identify improvements in skills, training, work and experience for participants in an employment and training program component.

**STATE REPORT**—Each State agency shall annually prepare and submit to the Secretary a report on the State employment and training program that includes the numbers of supplemental nutrition assistance program participants who have gained skills, training, work, or experience that will increase the ability of the participants to obtain regular employment.

**MODIFICATIONS TO THE STATE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PLAN**— If the Secretary determines that the performance of a State agency with respect to employment and training outcomes is inadequate, the Secretary may require the State agency to make modifications to the State employment and training plan to improve the outcome

**PERIODIC EVALUATION**—Not later than October 1, 2016, and not less frequently than once every 5 years thereafter, the Secretary shall conduct a study to review existing practice and research to identify employment and training program components and practices that (i) effectively assist members of households participating in the supplemental nutrition assistance program in gaining skills, training, work, or experience that will increase the ability of the participants to obtain regular employment; and “(ii) are best integrated with statewide workforce development systems.”.

**SOURCE: Bill Text *Agricultural Act of 2014. (HR 2642) Section 4022***