

FFY 2020

Vermont ICAN Provider Handbook



Revised October 2019

Individual Career Advancement Network

ICAN

Provider Handbook

Introduction

The Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) has a commitment to bettering the lives of Vermonters. AHS, working with many others, helps people meet their basic needs so they can live in dignity and achieve their highest potential. AHS administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Program through the Economic Services Division. Vermont's SNAP E&T program is known as the Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN). Our success is built on the foundation of a strong collaborative culture amongst partners.

The Provider Handbook includes guidelines for roles and responsibilities of third-party or community-based organizations that have agreements with AHS-Economic Services. AHS-Economic Services will update the Provider Handbook periodically with ICAN provider and stakeholder input and will provide any updates to this Handbook to our partnering organizations. The Handbook will also be available on Vermont's ICAN partner page. (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/partners/ican>)

VISION

Vermont envisions a SNAP Employment and Training Program where Vermonters with low incomes have clear pathways to overcome barriers and develop marketable and in-demand skills, leading to career advancement.

MISSION

Through strong partnerships, our mission is to help 3SquaresVT recipients utilize their benefits, gain the essential skills needed for gainful employment and successfully transition off public assistance.



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND POLICY

Basics of 3SquaresVT

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp program, and known now in Vermont as 3SquaresVT helps Vermonters with low incomes get the food they need for nutritious and well-balanced meals. The program provides support to help stretch the household food budget. It is not intended to meet all of the food needs of the household; it is a supplement.

The amount of benefits a person gets is based on income, expenses, and the number of people in the household. If approved for the program, a person is issued an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. It is like a debit card. Each month of eligibility, benefits will be credited to the EBT account.

During the month, the card can be used to purchase food at stores that display a poster or sign that reads: "We Accept EBT." Grocery stores and convenience stores must sell a variety of foods to be approved to accept EBT. Many farmers markets also accept EBT.

Applying for 3SquaresVT

Household Income, Expenses, and Assets

3SquaresVT eligibility depends on household income after deductions of allowable expenses. An ESD eligibility worker at the economic services office or call center can provide more information on income limits and deductions.

Screening Tool

The 3SquaresVT calculator is located on the ICAN partner page and asks a few questions to help a person find out if he or she may qualify for 3SquaresVT. The screening tool is only an estimate of eligibility. The only way to know for sure if a person qualifies is to complete the application process.

Expedited 3SquaresVT

A person may receive food benefits within seven days of application if the household meets one of the following criteria:

- Households with monthly gross income less than \$150 and liquid assets less than \$100
- Migrant or seasonal farmworker households that have low income and \$100 or less in liquid assets
- Households in which the combined monthly gross income and liquid assets are less than their monthly housing costs and the applicable standard utility deduction, if applicable.

Application

A person can apply:

- **Online** at <https://mybenefits.ahs.state.vt.us/>
- **On paper** using the ESD 202 Application

Once the application is received an in person or phone interview must be completed with an ESD eligibility worker.

Basics of SNAP Employment and Training ICAN

The ICAN program helps 3SquaresVT recipients improve their employment prospects and wage potential through participation in job search, training, education or work activities. The goal is to assist recipients in obtaining a livable wage, leading toward self-sufficiency. The federal government requires each state to develop and implement an [employment and training program](#) for SNAP recipients. States have the flexibility to shape the size and scope of their programs.



In Vermont, the 3SquaresVT E&T program is administered by the AHS in close partnership ESD. The program requires annual plans which reflect service strategies and coordination of services. 3SquaresVT ICAN recipients and services provided are tracked by Vermont’s Joblink system maintained at the Vermont Department of Labor.

Vermont operates a voluntary SNAP E&T program. In some cases, 3SquaresVT benefits are limited to three months in three years unless a work requirement is met. Individuals with 3SquaresVT time-limited benefits have a monthly work requirement that they must meet to maintain their benefits beyond three months. The weekly work requirement is 20 hours per week. ICAN provides supports and services to help meet the requirement. Recipients are considered time-limited if they are 3SquaresVT recipients between the ages of 18 to 50, have no dependents under age 18 in their household, and are considered mentally and physically fit for work.

Vermont also offers employment and training services to 3SquaresVT recipients who are not time-limited. ICAN is available for all 3SquaresVT recipients who are not receiving Reach Up.

The program provides orientation, assessment, development of an employment plan, as well as support services to program participants along with a range of activities.

ICAN Eligibility

An individual can receive ICAN services if they:

- Receives federal food assistance

An individual cannot receive ICAN services if they:

- Receives Reach Up assistance

Time-limited 3SquaresVT Benefits

Time-limited Definition

Someone is considered time-limited when they are between the ages of 18 to 50, have no dependents under age 18 in the household, and are considered mentally and physically fit for work. For individuals with time limited benefits they are limited to three months of eligibility in a 36-month period (considered the 3-month time limit) unless the individual meets the work requirements (defined below). The 3-month time limit does not apply to individuals who are:

- Under 18 or 50 years of age or over
- Medically certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment
- Responsible for a dependent child or residing in a 3SquaresVT household where a member is under age 18
- Exempt from 3SquaresVT work requirements
- Pregnant

All other 3SquaresVT recipients are considered time-limited.

Work Requirement

The work requirement can be met by:

- Working 20 or more hours per week in paid employment, averaged monthly (80 hours per month);
- Participating in and complying with the requirements of a work program for 20 or more hours per week; or
- Participating in and complying with the requirements of a work for benefits program.
- Participating in the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) training program.

Individuals who exhaust their three countable months of benefits and do not comply with the work requirement lose their 3SquaresVT benefit until they comply with the work requirement. An individual who has lost 3SquaresVT eligibility by exhausting their initial three months out of 36 months may qualify for a second 3-month period (or “the cure”) if they have worked or participated in work activities for 80 hours during any 30 calendar day period. If the person’s job or work activity ends, or if the hours are reduced below 80 hours per month, the person qualifies for the additional 3-month period of eligibility. This provision does not apply if the person voluntarily quit the job without good cause.

The work requirement does not apply to individuals who reside in geographic areas of the State that are granted a waiver from the 3-month time limit.

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) E&T Toolkit

The Provider Handbook covers all required policies in the FNS E&T Toolkit. Please refer to the [FNS E&T Toolkit](#) for more detailed information regarding employment and training.

PROVIDER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Provider agencies are responsible for delivering ICAN services directly to 3SquaresVT recipients. These services include a participant assessment to determine necessary ICAN activities and case management. The assessment is an in-depth evaluation of employment goals, employability skills, barriers and hurdles to participation in skills development, training and employment. Based on this assessment, the services and supports needed to successfully complete training and job placement will be developed. The assessment is the basis for the employability plan that will guide the coordination and services for each participant. Each of the individual participants will be placed in the appropriate ICAN activities to move them toward employment. Verification of receipt of the 3SquaresVT benefit must be completed monthly for ICAN participants.

Provider agencies are responsible for tracking costs, maintaining records, and invoicing according to federal and state regulations. In the third-party reimbursement model, a provider agency puts forth the cost of program operations, including assessment, case management, ICAN activities, and support services in order to receive reimbursement. Provider funds used to leverage the ICAN program funds cannot originate from a federal source and cannot supplant another funding source. ESD reimburses the provider at 50 percent of allowable ICAN expenditures. The program is intended to increase the capacity of a provider's service delivery.

Options for Becoming a Provider

1. Providers that are currently receiving 100 percent funding can apply for the 50 percent reimbursement option.
 - a. Providers will provide services to ICAN participants and be reimbursed for half of the allowable expenditures paid for by all eligible funding sources written in to their budget.
 - b. Reimbursement will be requested through a Quarterly Cost Report submitted to ESD just as reimbursement is requested for the 100 percent funding. ESD will make payment.
 - c. Expenditures and verification of funding source must be tracked and maintained at the provider level.
2. Organizations can apply for the 50 percent reimbursement option by April 10th annually.
 - a. Organizations will provide services and supports to ICAN participants and are reimbursed for half of the allowable expenditures paid for by all eligible funding sources written into their budget.
 - b. Reimbursement will be requested through a Reimbursement Payment Request form submitted to ESD and ESD will reimburse the organization directly.
 - c. Expenditures and verification of funding source must be tracked and maintained at the organization.

Screening

Prior to referral to ICAN, a 3SquaresVT participant is screened by the ESD Benefit Programs Specialist to determine whether they are exempt from work requirements, however, even exempt individuals may be referred to ICAN. Screening is not an allowable E&T expense. Services may begin the date

3SquaresVT eligibility is approved. A referral must be made to the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) for enrollment in ICAN.

Request for Referral or Reverse Referral

Some participants in 50% reimbursement models will come through the doors of service providers first. Providers will assess participants to ensure the appropriateness of referral into their own ICAN services. If a potential participant is not currently receiving 3SquaresVT, an application may be completed. Once the person begins receiving 3SquaresVT a request for referral may be made. Screening must also include checking for Reach Up services. If someone is receiving Reach Up they are not eligible for ICAN.

Case Maintenance

Participant Files

Providers must document all activities and services provided to a participant in the VT Joblink system. Files must be kept for all ICAN participants for three years following case closure. The files may be kept in paper or electronic formats and are reviewed as part of the monitoring visit. Files should be organized according to the provider's standards, but at a minimum must contain information about the assessment, release of information/consent form (if applicable), eligibility verification, employment plan, participant progress, and participant reimbursements.

Assessment

A 3SquaresVT recipient must be assessed prior to placement in ICAN components. Assessments include an in-depth evaluation of employability skills coupled with support on how and where to search for employment as well as opportunities for other services to move them toward employment. The initial assessment will be completed by the Employment Coordinator at VDOL. Please note that the assessment is to evaluate the employment skills of an ICAN participant, not to determine whether the participant is subject to the 3SquaresVT work requirements. The latter is part of the 3SquaresVT certification process. The assessment is an allowable E&T expense, but it is not an ICAN component.

VDOL Employment Coordinators must assess a participant's skill level, aptitude, interests and supportive service needs in order to determine what, if any, will be the most effective ICAN component for that participant. ICAN components are meant to assist members of a 3SquaresVT household in obtaining relevant training, education and/or skills that will increase the likelihood of securing employment.

An assessment can be completed in a variety of ways; providers may use existing assessment tools. Regardless of how the assessment is given, the following is a list of skills and knowledge that could be examined with suggested assessment tools:

- **Literacy Level** - Standardized tests, one-on-one interview/observations (i.e. participant's ability to read and complete forms in the case file).
- **Communication Skills (including English proficiency)** - Standardized test, one-on-one interview.
- **Education** - Questionnaire, resume or one-on-one interview.
- **Employment History** - Questionnaire, resume or one-on-one interview.
- **Employment Related Skills, Abilities, and Interests** - Questionnaire, one-on-one interview, or

online assessment.

- **Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers** - Questionnaire or one-on-one interview.

Referrals

Employment Counselor – Invest Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

During the initial assessment at VDOL it may become clear that additional barrier reduction supports would be helpful. In these cases, the VDOL Employment Coordinator will let the participant know that the next step will be an appointment with the local Employment Counselor at EAP. The Employment Coordinator from VDOL will use the EAP scheduler to book the appointment and upload all supporting documents (Release of Information (ROI), EAP Screening tool if applicable and any other referral documents) into VT Joblink. Employment Counselor at EAP will provide in-depth evaluation and connects participants with needed treatment, services and resources that reduce barriers to employment. Employment Counselors provide ongoing short-term support employing a positive, participant-centered Motivational Interviewing approach. Employment Counselors work in regional teams with staff from the Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation, VABIR, housing organizations, mental health treatment staff, and other ICAN providers to coordinate service delivery. The Employment Counselor at EAP will be responsible for VT Joblink data entry.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):

VR offers **free, flexible services** when a disability that affects employment is identified. VR supports people with disabilities to achieve their full potential. During the course of the EAP work, it may become clear that a referral to VR would help the participant achieve their employment goals. EAP Counselors will work to support the participant engaging with the VR program in a number of ways including but not limited to providing a warm handoff to VR or a team meeting. The EAP counselor will share the critical information gathered through their evaluation with VR staff to help facilitate enrollment into these services. VR staff will then join the employment team and support the participant through all of their services and supports. Some of these supports would qualify as a component in ICAN. VR counselors will partner with VDOL staff to ensure that the participant is entered into the correct qualifying component to support the participant's engagement in ICAN.

VABIR:

VABIR provides pragmatic, real-world information to both employers and job-seekers. By providing work experiences, on the job training opportunities (OJT), temp to hire and other resources, they are able to identify the most qualified applicants for employers. During the course of the EAP work, it may become clear that a referral to VABIR would help the participant achieve their employment goals. The EAP counselor will provide a warm handoff referral to VABIR as well as share the goals and plan for that participant.

All providers that support the participants to move toward their employment goals are considered that participant's employment team. All of the ICAN partners will make themselves available as workload allows to join team meetings connected to these individual participants. These meetings are the strength of the ICAN program.

Referral to ICAN Provider Agencies:

VDOL will refer participants to partner agency services based on their employment goals.

- Vermont Adult Learning
 - High School Completion
 - Adult Basic Education
- Department of Corrections
 - Re-entry employment
- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)
 - Community Kitchen Academy
- Capstone Community Action
 - Self-Employment Training
 - Community Kitchen Academy
- Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)
 - Self-Employment Training
 - Ready to Work
- Vermont Technical College (VTC)
 - Certificate programs
 - 2-year degree programs

Eligibility Verification

Participant eligibility verification is required prior to requesting reimbursement for services. A participant must receive 3SquaresVT and not be receiving Reach Up services at the time the cost is incurred, regardless of when billing for the service takes place. The VT Joblink system has current eligibility. If a case has not yet been enrolled in VT Joblink contact ESD for verification.

Employment Plan (EP)

VDOL Employment Coordinators must complete an employment plan (EP) for each ICAN participant. The EP shall be the result of assessing each individual's career goals, skills, abilities, family obligations, any other job-relatable assets, barriers and include incremental steps that will help participants overcome all identified career barriers while supporting the participant's strengths and goals. The EP must be updated and revised as the participant's circumstances change, but not less than once per year. If the participant refused to participate with VDOL the provider must create and maintain the EP in VT Joblink.

At a minimum, EPs must contain:

- Date the EP was created
- Proposed ICAN activities
- Assessed employment barriers
- Employment goal(s)
- Referrals made to other service providers
- Participant reimbursements requested/given
- 218FS with determination of time-limited or not time-limited benefits
- Participant signature and date
- Other information relevant to employment and training

Participant Progress

Participant files must contain progress information, which includes the activity the participant is engaged in, the dates of participation in that activity, regular program progress notes, credential and certificate attainment, employment, wages and retention information. Component services must be updated in VT Joblink each month.

Collaboration

Co-Enrollment

In some situations, participants can be shared with other providers. For example, an agency can work with a college to help the same participant achieve his or her individual employment plan goals. Both providers can work with the participant at the same time, but each agency is responsible to enter the service activity in the VT Joblink system.

In most cases VDOL Employment Coordinators will be responsible to coordinate services for co-enrolled participants to prevent duplication of service. Duplication of service means the participant receives the same component or the same support service from multiple providers even if the component is different. If the participant has refused to participate with the services offered at VDOL the provider will be responsible for the coordination of services.

ESD encourages ICAN providers to collaborate and make referrals for services that are not available through the current provider. For example, when a participant nears the end of their vocational training goals, the organization may refer to another organization to provide job search if the organization does not have adequate job search assistance available. Each partner serving that participant can receive 50% reimbursement for allowable expenditures.

Release of Information (ROI)

ICAN uses the ESD approved ICAN Release of Information. The release is signed at the VDOL orientation and uploaded into VT Joblink. It is the responsibility of all ICAN providers to make sure the ROI is up to date and on file.

Limited-English Proficiency

All forms and services to the participant must be communicated in their preferred language.

OPERATIONS

Components

ICAN services are designed to help 3SquaresVT recipients move promptly into employment. Providers are not required to deliver all of these services; this is a comprehensive list of Vermont's ICAN components. Eligible individuals can participate in one or more of the following components:

1. Supported Job Search: A component that provides participants with the support that they need to seek employment. It may include inquiries to prospective employers, telephone calls, walk-in contacts,

completion of applications, or interviews. The component is designed so that the participant conducts his/her job search supported by ICAN staff.

NOTE: For time-limited individuals, participation in Job Search is not a countable activity unless it makes up less than 50% of the required 80 hours per month, or the time-limited individual is co-enrolled in another component or the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

2. Job Search Training: A component that strives to enhance the job search skills of participants by providing instruction in job seeking techniques and increasing motivation and self-confidence. The component may consist of job skills assessments, job finding clubs, job placement services, or other direct training or support activities. Other activities may include resume writing workshops and learning how to use online job search tools.

NOTE: For time-limited individuals, participation in Job Search is not a countable activity unless it makes up less than 50% of the required 80 hours per month, or the time-limited individual is co-enrolled in another component or the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

3. Work for Benefits (WFB): A work component in which 3SquaresVT recipients perform work in a private or public non-profit agency as a condition of eligibility. In lieu of wages, WFB participants receive compensation in the form of their household's monthly benefit allotment. The primary goal of workfare is to improve employability and encourage individuals to move into regular employment while returning something of value to the community. WFB assignments cannot replace or prevent the employment of regular employees and assignments must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regular employees performing comparable work for comparable hours. The maximum number of hours of work required of a household each month is determined by dividing the household's 3SquaresVT benefit allotment by the Vermont minimum wage rounded down. This component requires the Provider to enter into a worksite agreement which specifies days/hours of work, responsibilities of the participant and supervisor, as well as timecard submission.

4. Work Experience: A work component designed to improve the employability of participants through actual work experience and/or training and to enable them to move into regular employment. Work experience assignments may not replace the employment of a regularly employed individual, and they must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regularly employed individuals performing comparable work for comparable hours. It is permissible to place ICAN participants in work experience positions with private sector entities. However, households that include work experience participants must not be required to work more hours monthly than the total obtained by dividing the household's monthly 3SquaresVT allotment by the Vermont minimum wage. Depending on the amount of the household's monthly 3SquaresVT allotment, individual work component participants can be required to work up to 30 hours per week, and the individual's total hours of participation in both work and non-work components is limited to 120 hours per month. Regardless of whether an individual is a mandatory or voluntary participant, labor standards apply in any work experience setting where an employee/employer relationship, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act, exists. For example:

- **On-the-job Training** –A work placement made through a contract with an employer or registered apprenticeship program sponsor in the public, private non-profit, or private sector. An OJT contract must be limited to the period of time required for a participant to become proficient in the occupation for which the training is being provided. In determining the appropriate length

of the contract, consideration should be given to the skill requirements of the occupation, the academic and occupational skill level of the participant, prior work experience, and the participant's individual employment plan.

- **Pre-Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship** —A combination of on-the-job training and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a skilled occupation. Apprenticeship programs can be sponsored by individual employers, joint employer and labor groups, and/or employer associations. Pre-Apprenticeship Programs provide individuals with the basic and technical skills necessary to enter an apprenticeship program and should be directly linked to an apprenticeship program.
- **Internship or Work Experience** —A planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time.

5. Educational Programs: Programs and activities that improve basic skills or otherwise improve employability by expanding job search abilities. Only educational components that establish a direct link to job-readiness will be approved, although programs that involve articulated career pathways or stackable credentials that ultimately lead to employment are encouraged and allowed. Allowable educational programs may include:

- **Basic/Foundational Skills Instruction (includes High School Equivalency)** —Programs that offer academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increase an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; transition to postsecondary education and training; and obtain employment. Such programs include Adult Basic Education (ABE), basic literacy, and high school equivalency (GED).
- **Career/Technical Education Programs or Other Vocational Training** —Organized activities at the post-secondary level that provide individuals with the academic and technical knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for further education and for careers in current or emerging employment sectors. Programs are primarily designed for those who are beyond the age of compulsory high school attendance. Ideally, such programs should be employer-driven and lead to industry-recognized certificates or credentials.
- **English Language Acquisition** —Designed to help English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language.
- **Integrated Education and Training** —Programs that provide adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or group of occupations for the purpose of educational and career advancement.
- **Work Readiness Training** —Intensive programs that include skill assessment and educational remediation services that prepare individuals for the workforce. Work readiness skills may include both foundational cognitive skills such as reading for information, applied mathematics, locating information, problem-solving, and critical thinking and non-cognitive skills, or soft skills, which are defined as personal characteristics and behavioral skills that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects such as adaptability, integrity, cooperation, and workplace discipline.

6. Self-Employment Training: A component that improves the employability of participants by

providing training in setting up and operating a small business or other self-employment venture. The community action agencies in each region provide self-employment training. **Please see list of contacts.**

7. Job Retention: Services provided to ICAN participants who have secured employment after participating in an ICAN component for at least 30 days and up to 90 days even if the individual is no longer receiving 3SquaresVT. Only individuals who have received other employment and/or training services under the ICAN program are eligible for job retention services. This component is meant to help achieve satisfactory performance, retain employment, or to increase earnings over time. Such services and reimbursable participant costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Case management
- Life skill classes
- Referrals to other services
- Dependent care assistance
- Transportation assistance
- Clothing required for the job
- Equipment or tools required for the job
- Test fees
- Union dues
- Licensing and bonding fees

Individual circumstances may warrant job retention services that begin at various times, such as on the day a job offer is accepted, the day the individual reports the information to his or her ICAN case manager, the first day of the job, or other time based on the availability and type of services. Therefore, the provider may identify when the 90 days of job retention services start, however, the household must have been receiving 3SquaresVT in the month of or the month prior to beginning job retention services.

Other Activities:

Orientation: Vermont Department of Labor provides orientation to the ICAN program for each participant referred to the program. The purpose of orientation is to explain participation requirements, describe available services, explain how ICAN can help individuals with time limits meet their eligibility and work requirements, and encourage the participant to acquire the skills they need to achieve successful employment.

Orientation must inform the participant of:

- The work or work program activities that may enable participants subject to the time limits to receive more than 3 months of benefits in a 36-month period
- The opportunity to participate in ICAN program activities and services
- The name and phone numbers of the ICAN service provider
- The services, including support services, available through ICAN
- The date, time, and location to report for ICAN services
- The consequences for failing, without good cause, to meet work requirements
- Exemptions for the work requirement

Orientations may be provided either individually or in a group setting. It may be provided through audio-visual methods as long as the participant has the opportunity for face-to-face interaction with program staff.

Assessment and Employment Plan: Individualized assessments are mandatory for all participants. providers must consider the following when preparing an assessment: the person's literacy; ability to communicate English; educational and employment histories; occupational and employment assets; and barriers to employment. Assessments are completed in person with participant input.

The results of individual assessments are used to develop Employment Plans (EPs). Goals and overall work plans must be achievable and directly relate to the participant self-sufficiency. For time-limited individuals, EPs must contain specific information about how these participants can attain their monthly minimum work requirement. Employment plans are completed in an interactive, face to face meeting with participants. Both the provider and participant sign the document and participants must receive a copy. EPs must be written at or below 7th-grade reading level.

Social Services: Social services consist of referrals to agencies or programs designed to assist participants with overcoming personal or familial barriers which impede successful transition to work. ICAN case managers may use other specialized providers to assist participants as part of meeting the goals of their employment plans, however, providers should first consider whether the individual would otherwise be determined unfit for ICAN participation due to either their mental or physical barriers for which the referral is being made.

Activity to Component

The previously described components correspond to a specific activity listed in VJL and are shown in the following table.

Component	VJL Activity
Supported Job Search	Supported Job Search
Job Search Training	Job Readiness
Work for Benefits	Worksite placement in non-profit
Work Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-job Training • Pre-Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship • Internship or Work Experience 	Work Experience – Regular Apprenticeships
Educational Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic/Foundational Skills Instruction • Career/Technical Education Programs or Other Vocational Training • English Language Acquisition • Integrated Education Training • Work Readiness Training 	Adult Diploma Program Basic Skills Training Classroom Training – Other ESL Training GED Training Post-secondary Remedial Training Certificate programs Community Kitchen Academy

Self-Employment Training	Community Action Micro Business programming
Job Retention	Only after participation in a component

Participation Records

Participation must be tracked in VJL system by component.

- Each component must be opened and closed on the first of every month

For the educational component, determine the number of activity hours based on the number of hours the participant is expected to participate, not on credit hours. For example, if a participant attends vocational training for six hours per week and has an estimated ten hours of homework or study time per week, the vocational training should account for 16 hours per week.

Job retention component hours are the number of hours the participant participates in actual retention activities with the organization, not the number of hours the participant works. For example, if the participant has a 2-hour weekly meeting with the organization to discuss the participant’s new job and to pick up a gas voucher, the retention component is 2 hours. Job retention is only allowable for participants who have participated in a component prior to gaining employment.

Monitoring

ESD monitors the grantees for the following purposes: to comply with the Vermont Office of Grants Management policies and procedures, to determine contract compliance, and to ensure that providers maintain and follow federal rules and regulations.

ICAN grantees can expect:

- Monitoring that follows guiding principles of mutual respect, open communication, joint problem solving, valuing diversity and an ethical code of conduct.
- An on-site visit determined at a mutually beneficial time with a minimum of two weeks’ notice.
- On-site visits will review the organization’s work plan, budget, goals and outcomes. A review of participant eligibility and a fiscal reconciliation will occur. A sample size of the caseload will be reviewed to determine participant eligibility for 3SquaresVT and subsequent ICAN services will be reviewed. Fiscal reconciliation will also use a sample size of a random pull of one to two months of invoices to determine allowability of costs and reimbursements requested.
- Forms will be shared in advance of the visit for preparation purposes.
- A report following the visit will occur detailing any findings and a timeline for any follow up needed.

Secure E-Mail

Email containing sensitive or private information must be sent via a secure email portal. Vermont agencies will use [secure] in the subject line of the e-mail to encrypt the e-mail. Community based organizations must use their encryption systems.

VT Joblink

VT Joblink is the primary tool used to collect and manage participants' employment plans, participation hours, support services, and activities. Having accurate and timely participant information within the management information system is critical in evaluating outcomes and providing services to participants.

Training

VT JOBLINK SYSTEM Training will be provided during the onboarding meeting and as needed throughout the program year.

ACCESS

ACCESS is the computer system used by state to determine eligibility for public assistance for cash assistance and food programs, ACCESS also determines the appropriate benefit level and issues benefits. Access to ACCESS will be granted to VDOL Employment Coordinators.

Gaining ACCESS Inquiry Access

Access to the ACCESS eligibility system allows Employment Service providers to verify participants 3SquaresVT eligibility each month. Before a worker can access the ACCESS system, the following steps need to be completed: **See attachment for access to ACCESS instructions.**

FISCAL Budgets

Budgets must be submitted with each organization's partner agency work plan with specific line items and calculations. Funds cannot be moved from administration to participant reimbursement or vice versa. Budgets are only approved after FNS approves AHS' written State ICAN Plan and budget.

Budget Tips

- Funds are from different pools and may not be moved from Administration to Participant Reimbursement or from Participant Reimbursement to Administration.
- Include a projected one-year budget for the services that will be provided.
- The ICAN program requires up-front funding from non-federal, eligible sources, in order to receive 50% reimbursement for ICAN eligible expenditures. Further, ICAN Programs can leverage non-federal funds currently used for existing employment and training services.
- Budgets should include the total dollar amounts that will be expended on ICAN. Partner agencies will be reimbursed 50% of the total cost.
- Funds for this must be claimed on a reimbursement basis. No payments in advance of or in anticipation of services or goods provided under this partnership shall be requested or paid.
- Federal regulations under OMB Super Circular A-21 (Cost Principles for Education Institutions) or A-122 (Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations) require that employees whose salaries are charged to a federal grant must keep time or effort reports to substantiate the charges.

Funding

Vermont relies on two types of ICAN funding.

ICAN Program Grants (100 percent funding)

FNS provides State agencies with grant money to fund the administrative costs of an ICAN program. The 100 percent federal funding and must be used on the planning, implementation and operation of the ICAN program. 100 percent money cannot be used for participant reimbursements, such as transportation, uniforms, or childcare.

A State agency is not obligated to spend all of its ICAN grant money. If these funds have not been spent by the end of the Federal fiscal year, FNS can reallocate the unobligated, unexpended funds to State agencies that request additional 100 percent grant money. Additional allocation is subject to availability.

50 Percent Reimbursements

There are two kinds of 50 percent reimbursement that a State agency can claim. The first kind is a 50 percent reimbursement for administrative costs for the planning, implementing and operating of an ICAN program. A State agency does not have to spend the entirety of its 100 percent ICAN grant before claiming a 50 percent reimbursement for additional administrative expenses.

The second kind of 50 percent reimbursement that a State agency can claim is for participant reimbursements. The State agencies are required to reimburse ICAN participants for expenses that are reasonable, necessary and directly related to participation in an ICAN component. The Federal government will reimburse 50 percent of state agency payments for allowable expenses.

The State's 50% reimbursement program uses a third-party reimbursement model to fund the program. AHS will reimburse 50% of all allowable ICAN expenses. The cost of all program operations, ICAN services, and participant reimbursements must be expended up front, and then billed to AHS for 50% of all eligible costs.

Funds received from reimbursement of ICAN expenditures can be used as "local" match in future ICAN invoices. This is known as reutilizing ICAN funds. These funds must be received, spent on valid ICAN costs, and invoiced through the regular invoicing process to reutilize ICAN funds. There is no restriction on how reimbursed funds must be spent.

Invoicing

Submit the Reimbursement Payment Request form quarterly to Patricia Hendee and Tracy Collier according to the terms of the contract.

Participant Reimbursements

ICAN expenses must be directly related to an approved ICAN component. Costs must also be reasonable and necessary. A cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which a prudent person would pay under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur this cost. Necessary costs are incurred to carry out essential functions, cannot be avoided without

adversely affecting program operation, and do not duplicate existing efforts.

See [Spending Guidelines](#) for a list of covered services.

Non-covered Services:

- Legal Fees
- Medical Fees
- Fines
- Vehicle Purchase
- Transfer degrees
- On the job training wages
- Stipends or Incentives

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Funding

100 percent funding—A fixed amount of federal dollars allocated to states and territories for the administration of a SNAP E&T program based on the number of work registrants in the state.

50% Reimbursement—An uncapped federal ICAN reimbursement funding stream. The federal government reimburses 50% of non-federal funds used to serve 3SquaresVT recipients who are not receiving Reach-Up. Non-federal funds must not already be used as a match for other programs.

Fiscal Year—The state fiscal year (SFY) cycle begins July 1st and ends June 30th. The federal fiscal year (FFY) cycle begins October 1st and ends September 30th.

Quarterly Financial Report—Used as an invoice mechanism for primary providers claiming reimbursements for the 100 percent funding, 50 percent reimbursement funds, and support service dollars.

Participant Reimbursement— Support service expenditures are budgeted for and reported separately to FNS. Participant reimbursements are eligible for 50% reimbursement.

People

Time-limited Benefits —Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents. Based on current statute, individuals with time-limited 3SquaresVT benefits are limited to receiving up to three months of 3SquaresVT food benefits within a three-year period, unless the individual meets his or her work requirement, earning additional months of eligibility. Time-limited individuals are still voluntary participants.

Geographic Waiver—A waiver request sent annually to FNS to waive the time limit for a group of individuals in the state if it is determined that the area in which the individuals reside: (i) Has an unemployment rate of over 10 percent; or (ii) Does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals. Under (i), data must show a recent 12 month average unemployment rate over 10 percent; a recent three month average unemployment rate over 10 percent; or a historical seasonal unemployment rate over 10 percent; or under (ii) evidence that show an area is designated as a Labor Surplus Area (LSA), qualifying for extended unemployment benefits; has a low and declining



employment-to-population ratio; has a lack of jobs in declining occupations or industries; has 24-month average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average for the same 24-month period.

Even if an area receives a waiver from the work requirement, individuals with time-limited benefits can still volunteer to participate in the ICAN program.

Participant—A 3SquaresVT recipient participating in ICAN.

Recipient— A person receiving 3SquaresVT food benefits.

Systems

ACCESS—Computer system used by state workers to determine eligibility for public assistance and health care programs.

VT JOBLINK —An information management system used by the State of Vermont housed at Department of Labor.