Appendix C2. SNAP-Ed Data Improvement Action Plan 2.0

SNAP-Ed Data Improvement

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Executive Summary

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the country's largest food assistance program, providing more than $6.2 billion in supplemental benefits to over 42 million people with low incomes to purchase groceries each month. The SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Services grant program (SNAP-Ed) equips people eligible for SNAP with resources and information to make healthy choices.

In July 2019, U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) launched a strategic initiative to improve SNAP-Ed data collection and reporting. Specifically, FNS contracted with Insight Policy Research (Insight) in 2019 to develop the SNAP-Ed Data Improvement Agenda and Action Plan (Action Plan 1.0) (Gleason et al., 2020) and again in 2020 to implement and update the action plan. A key objective of this work was to update the SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms to better support FNS's vision of high-quality, accessible national program data that support continuous program improvement and better outcomes for individuals with low incomes. To meet this objective, the Insight team formed a Steering Committee and six technical working groups (TWGs), conducted an environmental scan and in-depth interviews, drafted and pretested revised forms, and synthesized information across sources to identify next steps.

This document (Action Plan 2.0) summarizes progress made toward four reframed broad SNAP-Ed data improvement priorities set in Action Plan 1.0 and recommends near-term (i.e., 6 to 12 months) and longer term (i.e., 1 to 5 years) steps FNS should consider taking to fully implement the plan.

Priority 1. Update SNAP-Ed Plan and Annual Report Forms to Better Support the Agency's Vision

To address recommendations in Action Plan 1.0, on behalf of FNS, the Insight team updated and pretested the SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms. In addition to adhering to statutory and regulatory requirements for SNAP-Ed data collection and reporting, the forms were designed to collect more consistent information, increase continuity across the plan and annual report, and, ultimately, reduce agency burden. When the final forms are approved, they will be integrated into an online system. Additional actions required to fully implement the new forms and online system follow.

Near Term	Longer Term
▪ Develop a workflow that supports timely submission, review, and approval of SNAP-Ed plans and annual reports in the online system.	▪ Collect feedback on the summative reports from all user groups.
▪ Develop and pilot test the online system.	
▪ Develop and implement a rollout plan for the online system.	
▪ Design summative reports for all users to facilitate the review of information entered in the online system.	

Priority 2. Promote Data- and Equity-Driven Needs Assessment and Planning

Consistent with recommendations in Action Plan 1.0, the updated forms require a comprehensive needs assessment every 3 years, guide agencies toward secondary data resources, and generally support the use of data across the SNAP-Ed life cycle. These process and form improvements will help promote data- and equity-driven needs assessment and planning. As outlined below, FNS should consider offering additional

supports to ensure agencies conduct comprehensive needs assessments and use needs assessment findings to design responsive SNAP-Ed interventions.

Near Term	Longer Term
▪ Develop guidance and technical assistance resources and provide training to help agencies conduct comprehensive needs assessments and use the findings to create SNAP-Ed objectives and interventions accordingly.	▪ Develop a broad equity framework that defines goals, measures, and best practices to achieve equity in all aspects of SNAP-Ed. ▪ Identify and promote stellar examples of State agency needs assessments developed using the updated SNAP-Ed plan form via SNAP-Ed Connection. ▪ Automate the analysis of secondary data. ▪ Automate mapping to support the identification of areas with limited access to SNAP-Ed.

Priority 3. Improve Data on SNAP-Ed Implementation, Outcomes, and Impacts

To ensure quality program data at the national level, project experts recommended that data collected for national aggregation be limited to a small set of measures. Action Plan 1.0 documented substantial progress toward identifying measures for national reporting. Insight incorporated these measures into the updated annual report form and worked with the TWGs to refine and identify additional measures aligned with SNAP-Ed's mission to help individuals and families with low incomes make healthy choices, collaborate with partners to implement sustainable changes, and equitably deliver evidence-based programming. To ensure the forms yield reliable, valid data, FNS should consider offering additional supports and resources to agencies responsible for compiling the requested information.

Near Term	Longer Term
▪ Develop clear measure definitions, examples, and other supporting documentation. ▪ Set criteria for behavior change questions. ▪ Develop a bank of approved questions aligned to the behavior change indicators prioritized in the updated forms. ▪ Develop guidance for the use of other behavior change questions.	▪ Monitor data to identify areas requiring enhanced guidance, training, and/or technical support. ▪ Create a behavior change survey builder tool that can interface with the SNAP-Ed plan. ▪ Periodically reassess the selected national indicators to ensure SNAP-Ed data continue to illuminate the most important program elements.

Priority 4. Increase Access to SNAP-Ed Data and Results

Action Plan 1.0 documented the importance of making SNAP-Ed data directly available to funders, partners, broader networks of community-based organizations and advocates, and the general public. To promote consistent plain-language messaging about SNAP-Ed, the Insight team and its partner, FHI 360, developed an infographic to serve as a resource for FNS and key SNAP-Ed stakeholder groups. The team added an executive summary to the annual report form to facilitate broad dissemination of short narratives about SNAP-Ed agency projects and accomplishments that could be housed and accessed on SNAP-Ed Connection. The team also incorporated success stories on national priority areas into the annual report to ensure FNS has rich information and specific examples of SNAP-Ed's positive influence on people's lives or the places where they live, work, shop, play, eat, and learn. With its commitment to making all SNAP-Ed data publicly

available, FNS should consider taking additional steps in the coming months and years to ensure open access and the appropriate use of SNAP-Ed data.

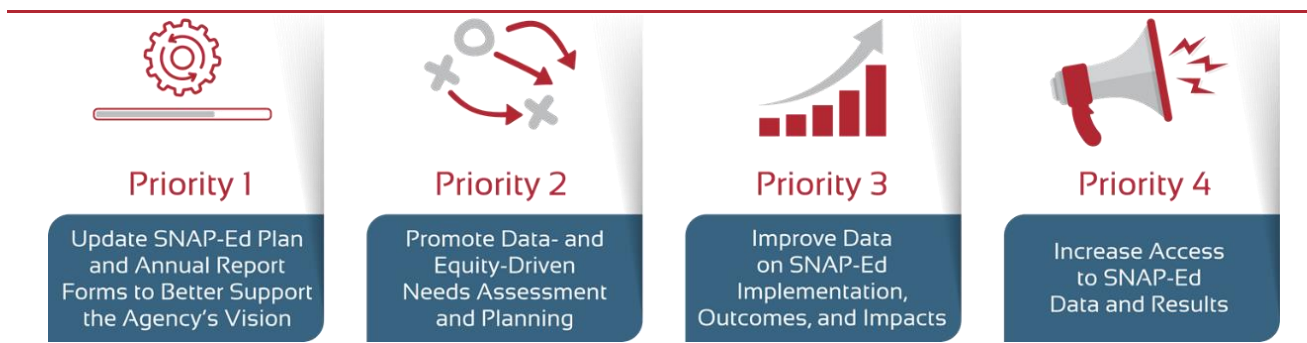| Near Term	Longer Term
▪ Convene an expert panel to guide the development of a public-use data file and documentation. ▪ Develop protocols and tools to support appropriate use of the public-use data file.	▪ Post State-level summative reports on SNAP-Ed Connection as searchable PDFs. ▪ Publish a national SNAP-Ed data file and documentation. ▪ Publish a national SNAP-Ed impact report annually on SNAP-Ed Connection. ▪ Develop a data dashboard (i.e., a centralized, interactive means of querying, analyzing, and extracting relevant SNAP-Ed data).

Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the country's largest food assistance program, providing more than $6.2 billion in supplemental benefits to over 42 million people with low incomes to purchase groceries each month.[1] The SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Services grant program (SNAP-Ed) complements SNAP by equipping people eligible for the program with tools and information to make healthy choices that align with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) guidance and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 (USDA & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).[2] SNAP-Ed interventions focus on good nutrition, stretching food dollars, living physically active lifestyles, and engaging all types of partners to build healthier communities to ensure the healthy choice is the easiest choice for people to make where they live, work, shop, play, eat, and learn.

Despite SNAP-Ed's stature as the country's largest nutrition education and obesity prevention program, quality national data on program outcomes and impacts remain elusive. SNAP-Ed tailors interventions for communities to meet target audience needs. While this flexibility and diversity are essential, they make it difficult to collect uniform data that can be aggregated to demonstrate SNAP-Ed's accomplishments and effectiveness on a national scale. To address this challenge, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) launched a strategic initiative to improve SNAP-Ed data collection and reporting.

▶ In 2019, FNS contracted with Insight Policy Research (Insight) to develop the SNAP-Ed Data Improvement Agenda and Action Plan (Action Plan 1.0) (Gleason et al., 2020). Action Plan 1.0 was developed with input from more than 100 SNAP-Ed stakeholders and experts and serves as a roadmap for achieving FNS's vision of high-quality, accessible national program data that support continuous program improvement and better outcomes for individuals with low incomes.

▶ In 2020, FNS contracted with Insight to implement and update Action Plan 1.0. A key objective of this work was to update the SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms to better support FNS's vision of improved data. To meet this objective, the team formed a Steering Committee and 6 technical working groups (TWGs), convened each group 1 to 3 times (for a total of 11 meetings), conducted an environmental scan and in-depth interviews, pretested the forms with 9 SNAP-Ed agencies, and synthesized information across sources.

This document (Action Plan 2.0) summarizes progress made toward four reframed broad SNAP-Ed data improvement priorities set in Action Plan 1.0 (see figure 1) and recommends steps FNS should consider taking to implement the plan. Subsequent sections of Action Plan 2.0 are organized by priority areas.

Figure 1. SNAP-Ed Data Improvement Priorities

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Update SNAP-Ed Plan and Annual Report Forms to Better Support the Agency's Vision	Promote Data- and Equity-Driven Needs Assessment and Planning	Improve Data on SNAP-Ed Implementation, Outcomes, and Impacts	Increase Access to SNAP-Ed Data and Results

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[1] Fiscal year 2020 data retrieved May 20, 2021, from https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

[2] The most recent edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans is based on an analysis of the latest research to help Americans make smart choices about food and physical activity so they can live healthier lives. These guidelines provide recommendations by life stage, from birth through older adulthood.

Priority 1. Update SNAP-Ed Plan and Annual Report Forms to Better Support the Agency's Vision

The primary purpose of data and documents provided throughout the SNAP-Ed program life cycle is to assess program effectiveness, ensure accountability, communicate SNAP-Ed results, and identify opportunities for program improvement. Currently, the SNAP-Ed plan describes needs assessment findings and planned projects to demonstrate how SNAP-Ed funding will be used, whereas the annual report and Education and Administration Reporting System (EARS) data describe SNAP-Ed activities and accomplishments in a given fiscal year. The templates for these documents—particularly State plans and annual reports—were not designed to collect data that would be valid when aggregated to the national level. Data submitted through EARS can be aggregated. However, challenges related to data consistency and concerns about data validity still exist, especially when certain outputs are aggregated across multilevel interventions.

> **Priority 1 Action Items**
>
> **Near term**
> - Develop a workflow that supports timely submission, review, and approval of SNAP-Ed plans and annual reports in the online system
> - Develop and pilot test the online system
> - Develop and implement a rollout plan for the new online system
> - Design summative reports for all users to facilitate the review of information entered in the online system
>
> **Longer term**
> - Collect feedback on the summative reports from all user groups

Not only should data collected at the end of each fiscal year be valid when aggregated to the national level, they should also enable State agencies and FNS to evaluate whether State-level goals and objectives were met and, in turn, inform program planning and related improvements in subsequent fiscal years. The *Analysis of SNAP-Ed Data for All States Study Final Report* documented how the current SNAP-Ed planning and reporting forms can hinder the use of SNAP-Ed data for program monitoring and continuous improvement purposes (Gleason et al., 2020). For example, project summaries in SNAP-Ed plans are often lengthy narratives, while annual reports offer limited information about the implementation and accomplishments of specific projects. Uniform data on interventions are reported through EARS; however, interventions do not easily track back to projects described in State plans. The lengthy narrative format of these documents and lack of standardization when reporting on indicators from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework also limit the use of SNAP-Ed data at the national level and hinder the meaningful use of SNAP-Ed data across the life cycle.

Action Plan 1.0 documented these issues and recommended that FNS develop revised forms and a new system for collecting more standardized data to support timely data review and aggregation. The remainder of this section describes progress made toward these recommendations from Action Plan 1.0 and provides additional action items for FNS to effectively complete the form development work.

Progress

To address recommendations from Action Plan 1.0, on behalf of FNS, the Insight team developed and pretested updated SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms. Five core principles guided form development (see text box on next page). The updated forms, which will replace the previous plan and report templates and the EARS, reflect suggestions and recommendations offered by—

- ▶ FNS National and Regional Offices
- ▶ Steering Committee and TWGs (see appendix A)

- ▶ Leaders in regional aggregation efforts (e.g., evaluation contractor, State agencies)
- ▶ The Association for SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators (ASNNA)
- ▶ Experts in social marketing development and evaluation
- ▶ Pretesters representing State agencies and diverse SNAP-Ed implementing agencies and local subcontractors

Core Principles of Approach to Updating the SNAP-Ed Plan and Annual Report Forms

- Adhere to statutory and regulatory requirements for SNAP-Ed data collection and reporting
- Align content and format of both forms to the extent practicable to promote consistency and comparability
- Use structured formats to simplify data entry, reduce replication and document length, and facilitate searches of documents to compile information from across agencies
- Minimize respondent burden
- Increase the usability and utility of the plans and reports for FNS and the agencies that produce them

Over the course of 9 months, Insight gathered feedback on several drafts of the updated forms and revised them accordingly. As a final step in the development process, Insight pretested the draft forms with nine State agencies, implementing agencies, and subcontractors engaged in SNAP-Ed implementation. Pretest agencies were selected to ensure diversity in perspectives. Factors considered when selecting agencies included FNS Region, agency type (e.g., food bank, university, health department, school district, Indian Tribal Organization), geographic reach (statewide or local), type of SNAP-Ed interventions employed (direct education; policy, system, and environmental [PSE] change; social marketing), experience with Kansas State University's Program Evaluation and Reporting System (PEARS), and total number of implementing agencies in the State. To ensure representation from agencies with limited SNAP-Ed resources, pretest agencies were primarily selected from States with an annual SNAP-Ed allocation of less than $5 million.

Modernized forms and standardized data to support timely review and aggregation

The updated forms will be integrated into an online system in fiscal year (FY) 2022, with rollout scheduled for FY 2023. FNS has purchased a national license to use PEARS for SNAP-Ed reporting going forward. SNAP-Ed agencies will use this online system to prepare and submit their SNAP-Ed plans and annual reports. As a result, the updated forms incorporate functionality that will be available in an online environment. For instance, to reduce burden and improve data quality, the forms include dropdown menus for closed-ended responses. Because the online system will be able to aggregate data to larger units of analysis (e.g., from sites to projects, from projects to implementing agencies), users will enter data at the smaller unit of analysis to facilitate more analytic possibilities (e.g., reporting site-level data to enable mapping). Narrative sections of the forms have also been designed to better support quick queries and qualitative analysis. Whenever possible, open-ended responses are parsed and use prompts to solicit specific information, enabling individuals who review the forms (e.g., SNAP-Ed Coordinators from the FNS Regional Offices) to readily find qualitative data on a given topic. Additional substantial improvements to the forms that support the collection and analysis of data on SNAP-Ed results are discussed under Priority 3.

Increased continuity across the plan and annual report

Form updates will also enable better tracking of SNAP-Ed projects across the SNAP-Ed life cycle, including their evolution (i.e., differences between how they were planned and actually implemented) and accomplishments. Agencies will describe planned projects in their SNAP-Ed plan using a standardized template. Then, in the updated annual report, agencies will revise the project descriptions they provided in the plan to reflect accurate details about the project as implemented (e.g., intervention types, languages, settings). Agencies will also provide standardized output and outcome data for each project. In subsequent

years, agencies can reference annual report data in their needs assessment and use the data to improve programming, thereby completing the data life cycle and supporting continuous improvement. To further enhance continuity across the SNAP-Ed life cycle, substantial changes were made to the needs assessment section of the SNAP-Ed plan form; these changes are discussed under Priority 2.

Action Items

FNS made substantial progress in FY 2021 toward recommendations outlined in Action Plan 1.0 by developing an updated State plan form and an updated annual report form to replace both the previous form and EARS (i.e., EARS will be discontinued). In addition to adhering to statutory and regulatory requirements for SNAP-Ed data collection and reporting, the updated SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms were modernized and redesigned to collect more standardized information, increase continuity across the plan and annual report, and, ultimately, reduce agency burden. Additional actions required to fully implement the new forms follow.

Near Term

Before rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

▶ **Develop a workflow that supports timely submission, review, and approval of SNAP-Ed plans and annual reports in the online system**. FNS will need to work closely with the system developers, Regional Offices, State agencies, and implementing agencies to determine the most efficient process. At a minimum, the online system should allow for comments during Regional Office plan reviews. It would also be helpful for the system to include templates for letters of approval that Regional Offices provide to State agencies.

▶ **Develop and pilot test the online system.** FNS needs to develop the online planning and reporting system and rigorously pilot test the new online forms. The pretest conducted this year was with an interim draft of the updated forms, focused on comprehension and feasibility, and did not require agencies to complete the forms. A robust pilot test of the final online forms would ensure the system meets the needs of implementing agencies, State agencies, Regional Offices, and the National Office before the full rollout. Ideally, State and implementing agencies participating in the rigorous pilot test should complete all sections of the plan and report to fully evaluate the system. To minimize burden on pilot test agencies, their completed forms could be considered by FNS to meet the planning and reporting requirements for the year. FNS Regional and National Office staff should examine the pilot test data and adjust the system appropriately before national rollout. If the pilot test must be conducted on an expedited timeline, FNS should consider having pilot test agencies use their most recent SNAP-Ed plan and annual report to populate the new forms to the extent possible. Similar to the pretest, the pilot test group should represent diverse perspectives. Because the pilot test will focus on form functionality and usability, not content, it will be most important for the group to include a range of agency types (e.g., small nonprofit organizations, tribal entities, minority-serving institutions and universities, State agencies). The agencies should also be diverse in terms of the number and types of SNAP-Ed interventions and approaches they implement (to ensure all aspects of the forms are tested) and their level of experience with data collection and reporting in online systems such as PEARS.

▶ **Develop and implement a rollout plan for the online system.** State and implementing agencies should be given a clear description of how reporting requirements will change. To ensure a smooth transition, they should be informed of the supports available to them, including training and technical assistance. FNS should consider clarifying its expectations for any part of the plan and annual report not explicitly described in the updated forms. For instance, FNS should consider

emphasizing that while a limited number of program outcomes have been prioritized for national aggregation, the agency recognizes that other outcomes are important to the SNAP-Ed mission. State and implementing agencies are encouraged to continue to track and report these outcomes. State agencies should also know in advance that FNS may ask for additional details on their plans or reports if any information is unclear or questionable.

When developing a rollout plan, FNS may benefit from discussions with other Federal agencies that have undergone similar efforts to learn from their experiences communicating and implementing substantial reporting and system changes. For example, FNS consulted with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and Community Services Block Grant administrators in FY 2020. Now that FNS is closer to implementing the new forms and system, it may be advisable to meet with these agencies again to discuss in more detail the communication strategies they used when implementing similar program changes. It may also be useful to meet with other important Federal partner agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, and confer with other programs within FNS, such as the SNAP Employment and Training and Team Nutrition programs, that have developed new annual reporting forms and performance metrics for their grantees.

▶ **Design summative reports for all users to facilitate the review of information entered in the online system**. The online plan and report forms were designed to minimize the burden for the State and implementing agencies completing them, not to minimize the burden of reviewing the completed forms. FNS should confer with Regional Offices (e.g., SNAP-Ed Coordinators, individuals responsible for fiscal management), State agencies, and implementing agencies to understand how they use completed plans and annual reports. Then, FNS will need to coordinate with the system developers to create summative reports designed for different audiences to capture the information most relevant to them (e.g., State agencies, Regional Offices). For example, a summative report produced for State agencies could aggregate some and collate other information reported by all agencies responsible for administering and implementing SNAP-Ed within that State. This State-level summative report should also be made publicly available (see related Priority 4 action item). A summative report produced to support Regional Office reviews might compare State budget line items (e.g., salaries) from one fiscal year to the next or planned versus actual project activities within a given fiscal year.

Longer Term

After rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

▶ **Collect feedback on the summative reports from all user groups**. The above-described summative reports will be designed to meet the needs of various SNAP-Ed stakeholders engaged in the preparation, review, and approval of SNAP-Ed plans and annual reports. After rolling out the new online planning and reporting system, FNS should collect feedback from stakeholders to ensure the summative reports meet their needs. If not, or if additional reports would be useful, FNS should adjust accordingly.

Priority 2. Promote Data- and Equity-Driven Needs Assessment and Planning

FY 2021 SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance identifies needs assessment as a crucial component of the SNAP-Ed planning process. For their State plans, State agencies are asked to assess the nutrition and physical activity needs of the State's SNAP-Ed target audience,[3] discuss the implications of these findings, and describe how the findings informed planned programming and related activities. Action Plan 1.0 documented some of the barriers State agencies face in carrying out data-driven needs assessments and planning and recommended that FNS enhance related guidance and support. Because equity is at the core of SNAP-Ed's mission, an important aspect of the needs assessment documented in Action Plan 1.0 is the identification of barriers to program access for any SNAP-Ed-eligible subgroups.

This section summarizes progress made through the Improved SNAP-Ed Data project to promote data- and equity-driven needs assessment and planning and outlines additional related recommendations.

Priority 2 Action Items

Near term
- Develop guidance and technical assistance resources and provide training to help agencies conduct comprehensive needs assessments and use the findings to create SNAP-Ed objectives and interventions accordingly

Longer term
- Develop a broad equity framework that defines goals, measures, and best practices to achieve equity in all aspects of SNAP-Ed
- Identify and promote stellar examples of State agency needs assessments developed using the updated SNAP-Ed plan form
- Automate the analysis of secondary data
- Automate mapping to support the identification of areas with limited access to SNAP-Ed

Progress

Revised the needs assessment from an annual to a 3-year cycle

Consistent with the Affordable Care Act's Community Health Needs Assessment and needs assessment requirements for recipients of Federal program funding (e.g., Title V State Maternal and Child Health Block Grant), comprehensive needs assessments will be conducted every 3 years rather than annually. This change was made because most data sources used in State agency needs assessments are updated every 2 to 3 years. SNAP-Ed projects that employ multilevel interventions and public health approaches take several years to accomplish and yield results that could potentially illuminate updated needs of the SNAP-Ed-eligible population. Comprehensive needs assessments also require substantial time and effort; they entail systematically compiling data and engaging diverse stakeholders to determine how well the program is addressing the nutrition and related health needs of the SNAP-Ed-eligible population, identifying priority needs and goals, and planning interventions to meet these needs and goals. Therefore, revising the SNAP-Ed needs assessment to a 3-year cycle will reduce agency burden while having minimal impact on the ability to identify new needs and develop SNAP-Ed projects accordingly. Importantly, State agencies will still have the option to submit annual or multiyear plans. Needs assessment findings submitted during the first year of the 3-year needs assessment cycle can be updated annually if new trends or challenges emerge.

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[3] The SNAP-Ed target audience refers to SNAP-Ed-eligible individuals, specifically SNAP participants and other individuals with low incomes who qualify to receive SNAP benefits or other means-tested Federal assistance programs. It also includes individuals residing in communities with a significant (50 percent or greater) population with low income.

Updated the needs assessment section of the SNAP-Ed plan to facilitate a comprehensive needs assessment and data-driven program planning

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Needs Assessment Topics

- State-level nutrition and physical activity data
- Demographic characteristics of the SNAP-Ed-eligible population
- Program access and tailoring to meet the needs of diverse target audiences
- Coordination and partnerships with other nutrition and obesity prevention programs and exploration of multisector partnership opportunities
- State and implementing agency workforce capacity

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Comprehensive needs assessments should use primary and secondary data sources, engage diverse stakeholders, and support data-driven program planning. The updated SNAP-Ed plan form includes a revised needs assessment section with enhanced instructions, prompts for short narratives, closed-ended questions, and data entry templates. The changes are intended to clarify expectations and guide agencies through a comprehensive needs assessment process, from identifying data sources to setting priority goals responsive to the needs assessment findings. The updated form also standardizes the needs assessment information agencies include in their plan (see text box) and promotes brevity.

Added an "Action Plan" section to the SNAP-Ed plan form to promote data-driven programming

The SNAP-Ed guidance directs agencies to make an "explicit connection [in the SNAP-Ed plan] between needs assessment findings, plan objectives, and a description of where and to whom activities are focused" (USDA FNS, n.d.). To support this requirement and promote data-driven programming, the updated SNAP-Ed plan includes a new section titled "State SNAP-Ed Action Plan." In this section, for each State priority goal set during the needs assessment, agencies will identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives to accomplish over the 3-year needs assessment period. Again, State agencies will still have the option to submit annual or multiyear plans, but their goals and objectives would be set for a 3-year period regardless. For each SMART objective, agencies will identify performance indicators, including those from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, that will be used to track progress. Last, States will identify projects and indicate the SMART objective(s) each project will address.

Action Items

The updated needs assessment and new action plan sections of the SNAP-Ed plan will help promote data- and equity-driven needs assessment and planning. Consistent with recommendations in Action Plan 1.0, the forms call for a comprehensive needs assessment only every 3 years, guide agencies toward secondary data resources, and generally support the use of data across the SNAP-Ed life cycle. Additional actions required to support agencies in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and using needs assessment findings to design responsive SNAP-Ed interventions follow.

Near Term

Before rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

- ▸ **Develop guidance and technical assistance resources and provide training to help agencies conduct comprehensive needs assessments and use the findings to create SNAP-Ed objectives and interventions accordingly**. The updated needs assessment section of the SNAP-Ed plan provides a robust framework for conducting a thorough needs assessment and translating it into effective SNAP-Ed programming. Agencies would benefit from training and guidance on completing this updated section. For example, FNS could develop a checklist (e.g., data sources, approaches, key considerations) that corresponds with each section of the updated needs assessment. In particular, support is needed for primary data collection, analysis of secondary data, stakeholder engagement,

assessment of gaps in access, assessment of the appropriateness of interventions for the target audience, identification of priority goals based on needs assessment findings, translation of priority goals into SMART objectives, and confirmation of alignment of planned projects to the objectives. To ensure trainings are robust, interesting, and relatable, FNS should engage and highlight State agencies and implementing agencies with strong skills and experience (1) leading comprehensive data- and equity-driven needs assessment processes, (2) setting goals and objectives based on needs assessment findings, and (3) designing interventions to achieve those objectives, thereby addressing the needs identified.

Longer Term

After rolling out the new online planning and reporting systems—

▶ **Develop a broad equity framework that defines goals, measures, and best practices to achieve equity in all aspects of SNAP-Ed**. Although outside the scope of Action Plan 2.0, which focuses on improved SNAP-Ed data and data use, the needs assessment is a critical stage in the program life cycle to assess inequities in SNAP-Ed access and plan accordingly to provide more equitable delivery. Equity considerations must then be carried through to all other stages of the program life cycle. Experts engaged in the project suggested FNS develop a broad equity framework to support agencies with designing and implementing equity-driven programming. Generally, the equity framework would define goals, measures, and best practices to help SNAP-Ed leaders habitually identify and navigate equity challenges. Specifically, the framework would encompass a wide range of tools and approaches, such as developing staff training and similar capacity-building resources; establishing an equity position for the program; and developing a guide that identifies equity issues throughout the SNAP-Ed program life cycle, with suggestions for how FNS staff, State agencies, and implementing agencies can address them. To develop a SNAP-Ed equity framework, FNS could leverage equity initiatives and associated tools developed by other organizations and networks focused on food and nutrition issues (e.g., Bread for the World, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy People 2030, ASNNA).

▶ **Identify and promote stellar examples of State agency needs assessments developed using the updated SNAP-Ed plan form via SNAP-Ed Connection**. FNS should also consider facilitating or offering a training series or learning collaborative to promote the sharing of best practices.

▶ **Automate the analysis of secondary data.** Population demographic and health behavior information should be prepopulated in the needs assessment from national surveys (e.g., American Community Survey, Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey). FNS may want to consult with other Federal agencies, such as the USDA Economic Research Service, or the SNAP-Ed Engagement Network about automating this step at no cost to the State agencies. This automation would eliminate analytic efforts that are replicated across agencies and reduce agency burden. FNS should also consider automating data analysis that can highlight the populations most seldom reached by SNAP-Ed. Specifically, the system could compare the age, race and ethnicity, and geographic location of SNAP-Ed participants (based on SNAP-Ed annual report data) with SNAP participants (using State SNAP data) and the SNAP-Ed-eligible population (using Census and American Community Survey data) to help State and implementing agencies identify groups less likely to participate in SNAP-Ed.

▶ **Automate mapping to support the identification of areas with limited access to SNAP-Ed.** These maps should include SNAP-Ed site locations (i.e., sites where direct education is delivered and PSE initiatives are underway or were implemented), areas reached through SNAP-Ed social marketing campaigns, and area-level demographic data from sources such as the American Community Survey. To be most useful, maps should convey information such as the number of projects and types of interventions implemented at each site.

Priority 3. Improve Data on SNAP-Ed Implementation, Outcomes, and Impacts

National SNAP-Ed data should help FNS and program stakeholders assess and share program accomplishments. As documented in Action Plan 1.0, FNS and program stakeholders want data that demonstrate how SNAP-Ed—

- ▶ Helps individuals and families with low incomes make healthy choices

- ▶ Collaborates with partners and leverages their resources to implement sustainable changes

- ▶ Equitably delivers evidence-based programming in diverse settings and to audiences that reflect the characteristics of the eligible population

Action Plan 1.0 also noted data on these topics must be collected uniformly to facilitate aggregation across State and implementing agencies nationally. The remainder of this section describes the progress made toward improved uniform data on SNAP-Ed implementation, outcomes, and impacts and provides recommendations for FNS to successfully collect these data.

Priority 3 Action Items
Near term
▪ Develop clear measure definitions, examples, and other supporting documentation
▪ Set criteria for behavior change questions
▪ Develop a bank of approved questions aligned to the behavior change indicators prioritized in the updated forms
▪ Develop guidance for the use of other behavior change questions
Longer term
▪ Monitor data to identify areas requiring enhanced guidance, training, and/or technical support
▪ Create a behavior change survey builder tool that can interface with the SNAP-Ed plan
▪ Periodically reassess the selected national indicators to ensure SNAP-Ed data continue to illuminate the most important program elements

Progress

Experts engaged in developing Action Plan 1.0 agreed that required reporting should focus only on data used or useful for program monitoring, improvement, and communication about program effectiveness. To ensure quality program data at the national level, they also recommended data collected for national aggregation be limited to a small set of measures. Action Plan 1.0 reflected the substantial progress made toward identifying measures for national reporting. It also outlined recommendations to ensure SNAP-Ed data are reliable and statistically valid when aggregated to the national level. Insight incorporated these measures and recommendations into the updated annual report form and worked with a small number of TWGs to refine and identify additional measures; additional methods were employed to inform measures of social marketing reach (see appendix B). Selected measures are described below based on their alignment with SNAP-Ed mission area.

Selected national measures aligned with SNAP-Ed's mission to help individuals and families with low incomes make healthy choices

To help individuals and families with low incomes make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles, SNAP-Ed must reach these populations; reliable data on program reach is critically important and commonly requested. Consistent with

Program reach is defined as the audience that experiences the intervention or encounters an improved environment on a regular (typical) basis and is assumed to be influenced by it.

recommendations in Action Plan 1.0, the updated forms will require State and implementing agencies to report several measures of reach by intervention type (i.e., direct education, PSE change, social marketing) (see table 1). Although these data will not provide a single national estimate of unduplicated reach, approach-specific reach estimates are more feasible and reliable for many multiapproach SNAP-Ed projects and can be communicated meaningfully using plain language. Reach indicators were selected based on TWG and social marketing expert input (see appendices A and B).

Table 1. Measures of How SNAP-Ed Helps Individuals and Families With Low Incomes Make Healthy Food Choices Within a Limited Budget and Choose Physically Active Lifestyles

Data Category	Selected Measures	Reporting Specifications[1]
Program reach	**Direct education reach:** number of individuals who receive any SNAP-Ed direct education	- Reported by age, sex, race, and ethnicity - Required
	PSE reach: total potential number of persons who encounter the improved environment or are affected by the policy change on a regular (typical) basis and are assumed to be influenced by it	- Estimated for each site within a range specific to the site's setting - Required
	Social marketing campaign scale: geographic area covered by the campaign	Required
	Social marketing potential reach: number of individuals in market segments targeted by the campaign potentially reached	- Reported by market segment (e.g., age group, language group) - Required
	Social marketing campaign impressions: total number of times content is displayed to an audience during a given period	- Reported by channel - Required
	Social marketing reach: total number of unique individuals exposed, at least once, to social marketing campaign materials during a given period	- Reported by channel - Encouraged, not required
Program outcomes	**Behavior change:** measures of health and related behaviors taken before and after participation in a SNAP-Ed program Priority indicators include healthy eating (MT1), which relates directly to SNAP-Ed's goal, food resource management (MT2), and physical activity and reduced sedentary behavior (MT3); other indicators can be tracked and reported	- Pre- and postintervention data not matched at the individual level - Reported by age group - Continuous measures reported as mean and standard deviation - Categorical measures reported by dichotomizing according to guidelines (e.g., recommended fruit consumption) - Required for projects targeting MT1, MT2, and/or MT3[1]
	PSE change adoption: type of change adopted described with closed- and open-ended data	- Reported by site - Required
	Social marketing campaign engagement: total number of actions taken by the audience, such as comments, likes, clicks, and shares on digital platforms	- Reported by channel - Encouraged, not required

PSE = policy, system, and environmental
[1] FNS may consider providing a grace period for any required reporting components.

Although program reach is important, it is not enough to just reach the target population. SNAP-Ed aims to improve the lives of populations with low incomes and ensure the healthy choice is the easiest choice for them to make where they live, work, shop, play, eat, and learn. To assess program outcomes, agencies will track behavior changes and PSE changes.

▶ For behavior change, the updated annual report form has dedicated space for agencies to enter data on select measures from three priority indicators from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework: healthy eating, food resource management, and physical activity and reduced sedentary behavior (appendix C). Agencies can upload files with results for other SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework behavior change indicators and outcome measures. Similar to the approach used by Ryan-Ibarra et al. (2020) to pool data collected with different instruments, continuous measures will be reported as a mean and standard deviation, while all other measures will be reported as the proportion of people meeting the recommendation for that healthy behavior. Also similar to the approach of Ryan-Ibarra et al. (2020), pretest data will not be matched at the individual level to posttest data. Retaining such data with the required level of data security would be overly burdensome for State and implementing agencies. Instead, for each project, agencies will report outcomes in aggregate for all participants measured at pretest and all participants measured at posttest.

▶ For PSE change adoption, the updated annual report form will capture quantitative and qualitative data. To facilitate analysis of the large volume of PSE data to be collected nationally, State and implementing agencies will categorize PSE changes adopted using a list of 108 options developed for PEARS. This list has been refined over the years with input from many State and implementing agencies that use PEARS. Collecting data on the specific types of adopted PSE changes will facilitate meaningful, plain-language communication of SNAP-Ed results. Example PSE change options include "initiated or expanded farm-to-table/use of fresh or local produce" and "increased or improved opportunities for structured physical activity." Space is provided for agencies to include a brief qualitative description of PSE changes. PSE changes will be reported at the site level to facilitate mapping of the adopted changes. Table 1 summarizes the measures selected for program reach and program outcomes.

State and implementing agencies can continue and are encouraged to track all outcomes not otherwise captured in the updated report form. They are provided space in the updated form to upload their results.

Selected national measures aligned with SNAP-Ed's mission to collaborate with partners and leverage partner resources to implement sustainable changes

SNAP-Ed engages all types of partners across the SNAP-Ed life cycle to build healthier communities. To help document and understand the vital role diverse SNAP-Ed partners play in planning and implementing healthy community changes (i.e., PSE changes), all State agencies and implementing agencies will report on their overall (i.e., across all projects) coordination and collaboration with nutrition education, obesity prevention, and health programs; Indian Tribal Organizations; and minority-serving institutions. For each SNAP-Ed project that includes PSE work, agencies will also describe "active partners," defined in the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework as two or more individuals who regularly meet, exchange information, and identify and implement mutually reinforcing activities that will contribute to the adoption of one or more organizational changes or policies. The updated form provides closed-ended response options to facilitate analysis of the amount and type of coordination, collaboration, and active partnership (i.e., the purpose of the coordination, the contributions of the active partners) in which SNAP-Ed engaged. Agencies can also provide open-ended qualitative descriptions of these activities to supplement the closed-ended information captured through the updated forms. Table 2 summarizes these measures.

Table 2. Measures of How SNAP-Ed Collaborates With Partners and Leverages Their Resources to Implement Sustainable Changes

Data Category	Selected Measures	Reporting Specifications
Consultation, coordination, and collaboration	**Coordination and collaboration with nutrition education, obesity prevention, and health programs:** whether (yes/no) and why SNAP-Ed coordinated and collaborated with each of 25+ programs	▪ Required
	Consultation, coordination, and collaboration with Indian Tribal Organizations: whether (yes/no) SNAP-Ed coordinated with Indian Tribal Organizations; nature of collaboration (check all that apply) with option to list the SNAP-Ed funding amount or number of FTEs dedicated to the collaboration; and a qualitative description of the work done	▪ Required
	Consultation, coordination, and collaboration with minority-serving institutions: whether (yes/no) SNAP-Ed coordinated with minority-serving institutions; nature of collaboration (check all that apply) with option to list the SNAP-Ed funding amount; and a qualitative description of the work done	▪ Required
PSE active partners	**PSE active partners:** the number of partners and a categorical measure of their contributions	▪ Reported by partner type (e.g., agricultural organizations, worksites) ▪ Required

FTE = full-time equivalent; PSE = policy, system, and environmental

Selected national measures aligned with SNAP-Ed's mission to equitably deliver evidence-based programming

Although TWG discussions did not focus on measures of program equity, many of the required elements of the updated plan and annual report forms have the potential to illuminate some aspects of program equity. For example, through the updated SNAP-Ed plan form, States will be required to categorize the goals they set, with at least one State goal focusing on improving SNAP-Ed access or appropriateness. In the annual report, data on the funding and other resources distributed to diverse implementing agencies and subcontractors, including minority-serving institutions and Indian Tribal Organizations, can help illuminate efforts to ensure SNAP-Ed interventions are implemented by agencies that reflect the characteristics of SNAP-Ed participants. States will also be required to provide data about each site, which can be analyzed to examine the diversity of SNAP-Ed sites and settings. The reach data in the annual report can be used to describe the population SNAP-Ed reached and identify the extent to which participants reflect the characteristics of the eligible population (e.g., in terms of age, race, ethnicity). Priority 2 provides additional discussion of program equity. Table 3 summarizes data that are related to but do not directly measure equity.

Table 3. Data Related to How SNAP-Ed Equitably Delivers Evidence-Based Programming

Data Category	Data	Reporting Specifications
Funding and other resources dedicated to diverse implementing agencies	**Implementing agency contract amounts**: can be stratified by implementing agency characteristics (e.g., ITO, MSI) **Funding granted to MSI and ITO subcontractors:** whether (yes/no) MSI received SNAP-Ed funding, whether ITO received SNAP-Ed funding; dollar amount of funding provided to MSI and/or ITO **SNAP-Ed staff time dedicated to ITOs:** number of FTEs	▪ Required
Program delivery sites and settings	**Project sites**: site address, location within tribal jurisdiction (yes/no), and area type (urban, suburban, rural, frontier) **Project settings**: a list of setting categories modified from EARS	▪ Reported by site ▪ Required
SNAP-Ed participant characteristics	**Direct education participants**: number of participants	▪ Reported by age, gender, race, and ethnicity ▪ Required
Intervention types implemented through SNAP-Ed projects	**SNAP-Ed intervention types:** use of one or more of the four intervention types (direct education, PSE, social marketing campaigns, indirect education)	▪ Reported for each project ▪ Required
SNAP-Ed Toolkit interventions	**Intervention evidence base:** use and modification of interventions named in the SNAP-Ed Toolkit; use and evidence base of other interventions	▪ Reported for each project ▪ Required

EARS = Education and Administration Reporting System; FTE = full-time equivalent; ITO = Indian Tribal Organization; MSI = minority-serving institution; PSE = policy, system, and environmental

TWG discussions did not focus on measures of evidence in support of SNAP-Ed interventions, but a section of the plan form was dedicated to this topic because it will help FNS and SNAP-Ed stakeholders to know more about the level of evidence for the specific interventions SNAP-Ed agencies implement. This information is important because under the final rule, SNAP: Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program,[4] States are required to implement two or more complementary approaches (i.e., individual or group-based nutrition education, health promotion, and intervention strategies; comprehensive, multilevel interventions; and/or community and public health approaches) to deliver evidence-based nutrition education and obesity prevention activities based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (USDA FNS, n.d.). For nearly 10 years, to support agencies with implementation, FNS has invested in developing and maintaining the SNAP-Ed Toolkit, a compendium of evidence-based interventions, each designated as research-tested, practice-tested, or emerging interventions.[5] The updated SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms capture information on the interventions employed through each SNAP-Ed project, including the use of interventions from the SNAP-Ed Toolkit.

Action Items

The updated SNAP-Ed plan and annual report have the potential to substantially improve SNAP-Ed data. Consistent with recommendations in Action Plan 1.0, the forms are closely aligned across the life cycle, promote consistency and brevity, and capture data that will be useful to internal and external audiences. To ensure agencies enter quality data and information into the forms, FNS may need to offer additional supports and resources.

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[4] The final rule adopts the amended interim rule published April 5, 2013, to implement the SNAP-Ed provisions of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.
[5] The SNAP-Ed Toolkit includes SNAP-Ed Strategies & Interventions Toolkit: An Obesity Prevention Toolkit for States, which was developed by FNS, ASNNA, and the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research.

Near Term

Before rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

▶ **Develop clear measure definitions, examples, and other supporting documentation**. Notable areas for guidance include how to categorize adopted PSE changes, how to measure and report social marketing reach, and how to report behavior change data. Throughout the updated forms, FNS should consider integrating definitions of key terms using hover text; this format will provide agencies with quick access to the information without adding length and complexity to form instructions. A glossary of key terms and exemplar plan and report forms may also be useful resources.

▶ **Set criteria for behavior change questions.** Just as SNAP-Ed interventions can have different levels of empirical support, behavior change questions can have varying degrees of evidence supporting their validity. For instance, some questions may not have undergone a formal evaluation but have a history of widespread use and are generally considered to yield valid data. Other questions may have been formally evaluated but perhaps in a different context from how they are commonly used in SNAP-Ed (e.g., with a different population, as part of a larger scale or set of questions than is typically used in SNAP-Ed). Still other questions may have strong evidence from peer-reviewed studies in support of their validity in the precise ways they are typically used in SNAP-Ed. These examples illustrate possible levels of evidence that may be used to classify behavior change questions. While there are benefits to using questions with the highest levels of empirical support, there are also limitations. A formal evaluation of survey items is a lengthy and resource-intensive process. As such, there may not be formally evaluated survey items appropriate for all of SNAP-Ed's diverse populations and contexts. Questions lacking the highest levels of formal evaluation are not necessarily worse; they are often just yet to be evaluated. As such, it would be valuable for FNS to identify levels of evidence for behavior change questions. Agencies could then be encouraged to choose questions with more evidence from the list of questions appropriate for their particular projects. For behavior change questions without established evidence, FNS could consider defining a minimum set of requirements (e.g., the appropriate number of response options for ordinal data). While different questions will be used to measure a given healthy behavior in different populations, ensuring the questions adhere to best practices will improve the validity of the data. Related efforts are currently underway. Through a contract with FNS, the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina is documenting preferred evaluation tools for priority indicators within the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework that are feasible and valid for use in SNAP-Ed programs. However, to date, these efforts have not focused on the behavior change indicators.

▶ **Develop a bank of approved questions aligned to the behavior change indicators prioritized in the updated forms.** To circumvent the need for all State and implementing agencies to check their behavior change questions against the aforementioned criteria, FNS could consider providing agencies with (1) approved questions that are reliable and valid when used with SNAP-Ed-eligible populations of different ages and (2) clear instructions for reporting the data collected with each approved question (e.g., how to dichotomize categorical data). This question bank would be an ongoing effort; it would need to be updated as new questions are developed and new studies are conducted. Focused effort would be required to ensure the bank includes questions appropriate for all of SNAP-Ed's diverse participants. This effort should be informed by a diverse group of experts, including SNAP-Ed evaluators from the 1890 Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Tribal Colleges and Universities, and minority-serving institutions. To ensure a question bank is ready for the online system rollout, FNS could consider compiling survey instruments commonly used in SNAP-Ed and other health surveys, assessing the level of evidence supporting their validity, and creating an initial bank consisting of only the highest quality questions. FNS could then ensure data collected

with these questions can be readily aggregated across SNAP-Ed projects (i.e., establishing data processing rules such as those used by Ryan-Ibarra et al. (2020) to aggregate SNAP-Ed behavior change data).

▶ **Develop guidance for the use of other behavior change questions.** The guidance should encourage—but not require—the use of approved questions. State and implementing agencies should still be allowed to develop or tailor data collection instruments to ensure their appropriateness for the communities served and the projects implemented. The guidance should describe when it is appropriate to use new or modified questions and any recommendations or requirements for such questions (e.g., best practices for modifying existing tools).

Longer Term

After rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

▶ **Monitor data to identify areas requiring enhanced guidance, training, and/or technical support.** For instance, FNS could compare the closed- and open-ended data on PSE changes to evaluate their concordance. FNS could then take steps to help State and implementing agencies reduce misclassification of PSE changes adopted. Across all the measures included in the forms, FNS should consider monitoring open-ended data entries to identify any changes that could be made to the closed-ended sections. For example, PSE changes categorized as "other" could be reviewed to identify the need to add categories.

▶ **Create a behavior change survey builder tool that can interface with the SNAP-Ed plan.** In the SNAP-Ed plan, State and implementing agencies choose the behavior change(s) theoretically related to their planned interventions. This information should feed into a survey builder tool that would prepopulate a survey instrument with a section for each outcome and guide users through selecting the best questions for their target population(s) from the bank of approved questions. Such a tool could make it easier for agencies to use the approved questions, thereby increasing their use and improving behavior change data. The survey builder tool could be hosted on the SNAP-Ed Connection or another public-facing website to enable even those without access to PEARS (e.g., SNAP-Ed subcontractors) to use it to create high-quality instruments for public health interventions.

▶ **Periodically reassess the selected national indicators to ensure SNAP-Ed data continue to illuminate the most important program elements**. For example, FNS should consider developing an equity framework (see Priority 2 action items), which may lead to the identification of national priority indicators of equity. FNS could then integrate reporting on these equity indicators in the plan and annual report forms. As appropriate, this reporting could be prompted throughout the program life cycle to provide real-time support for prioritizing equity in SNAP-Ed (e.g., during the planning and awarding of subcontracts, implementation, evaluation).

Priority 4. Increase Access to SNAP-Ed Data and Results

The enactment of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 resulted in a growing trend across Federal agencies toward increased program data accessibility and transparency. Consistent with this broader trend, Action Plan 1.0 documented the importance of making SNAP-Ed data directly available to funders, partners, broader networks of community-based organizations and advocates, and the general public. As such, it recommended FNS develop a communication plan, create an annual SNAP-Ed impact report, and incorporate SNAP-Ed data into SNAP-Ed Connection. This section summarizes progress made through the Improved SNAP-Ed Data project toward these recommendations and outlines an updated set of actions FNS should consider taking to increase access to information about SNAP-Ed and its results.

Priority 4 Recommendations
Near term
▪ Convene an expert panel to guide the development of a public-use data file and documentation
▪ Develop protocols and tools to support appropriate data use
Longer term
▪ Post State-level summative reports on SNAP-Ed Connection as searchable PDFs
▪ Publish a national SNAP-Ed data file and documentation
▪ Publish a national SNAP-Ed impact report annually on SNAP-Ed Connection
▪ Develop a data dashboard

Progress

Developed an infographic to support plain-language communication about SNAP-Ed

Through the Improved SNAP-Ed Data project, the team developed an infographic that will serve as a resource for FNS staff, State agencies, and implementing agencies to concisely explain the program to diverse audiences; it will also help promote consistent plain-language messaging about SNAP-Ed. Potential uses of the infographic include presentations to funders such as elected officials, meetings with community partners, and efforts to raise awareness about the program among the general public.

The team developed two related infographics. The first infographic is titled "What is SNAP-Ed?" and provides an overview of SNAP-Ed, including its overarching goal, intended outcomes, and approaches (see figure 2). The second complementary infographic is titled "How does SNAP-Ed work?" and provides additional information about the program's scale and process for continuous improvement (see figure 3). Through select images and icons, the infographics also relay important information about the SNAP-Ed audience, locations, and types of organizations engaged in delivering SNAP-Ed in diverse communities.

Figure 2. What Is SNAP-Ed?

What is the SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed) Program?

USDA

SNAP-Ed, a component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), works to improve the health of individuals and families with low incomes by combining two powerful approaches:

1 helping people make healthier food and lifestyle choices and

2 supporting communities to achieve healthier lifestyles

SNAP-Ed helps individuals and families by

providing nutrition education

conducting communication and outreach initiatives

supporting health and wellness initiatives

SNAP-Ed works with diverse stakeholders to improve community health by

increasing access to healthy choices

supporting policy, systems, and environmental change

Figure 3. How Does SNAP-Ed Work?

How Does the SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed) Program Work?

USDA

While national in scope, each State and its communities tailor SNAP-Ed efforts to their specific environments and population needs.

All SNAP-Ed efforts are designed with equity at the center through a continuous improvement process.

States implement SNAP-Ed in collaboration with a range of partners, including other federal programs, to ensure maximum reach and effectiveness.

Assess to determine SNAP-Ed target populations and their needs

Plan new or improve existing strategies to best meet the needs of target populations

Implement evidence-based strategies

Evaluate the impact of the program on individuals and the community

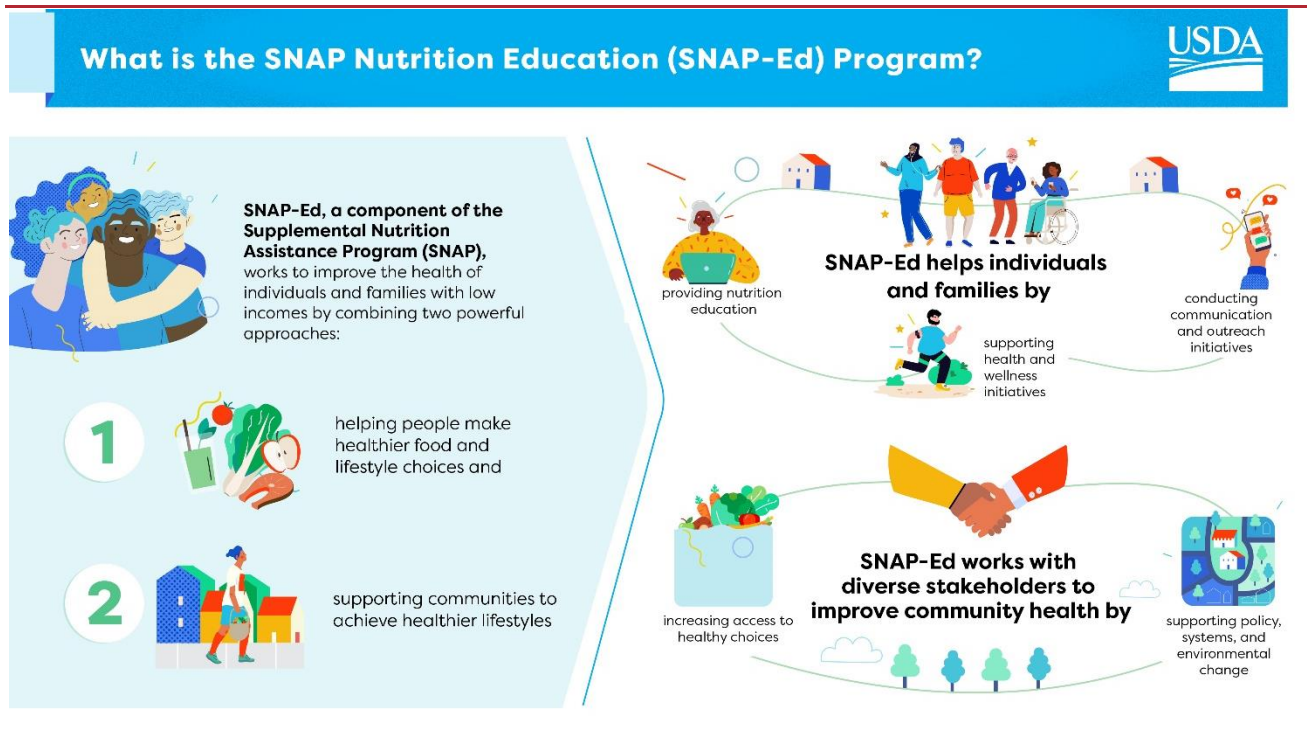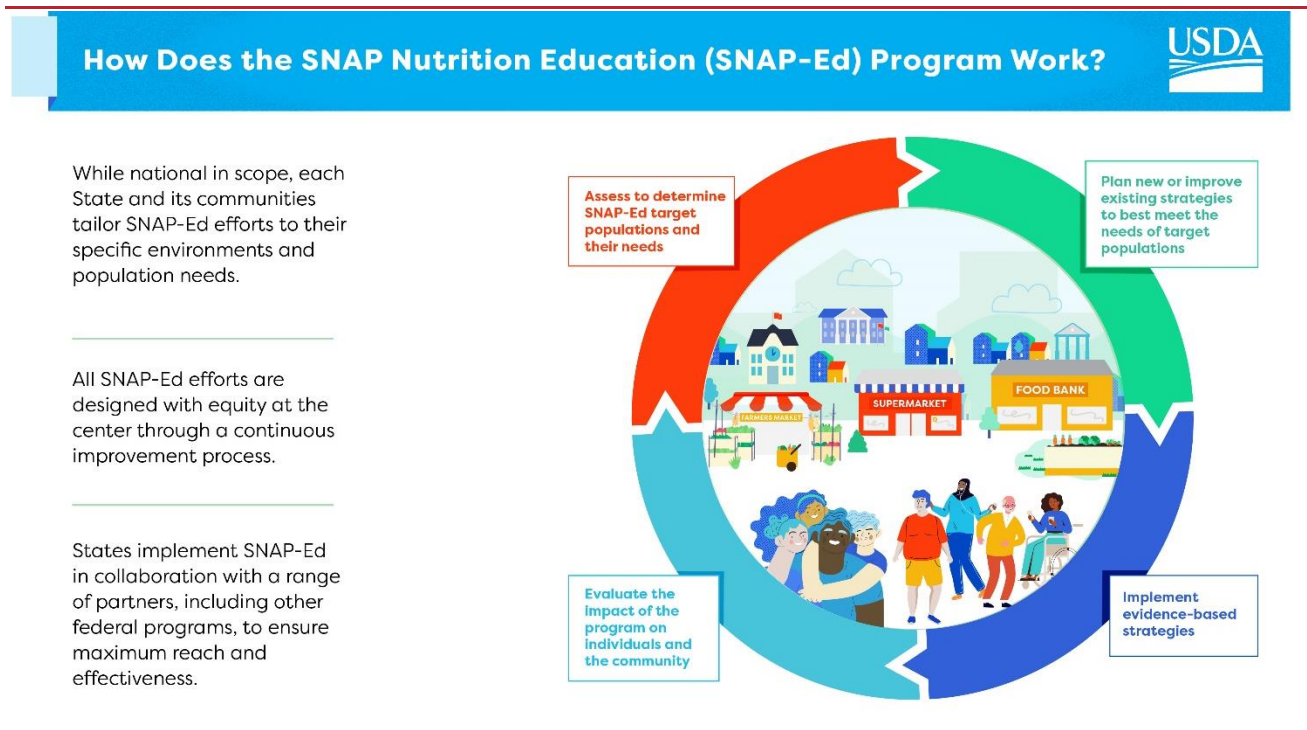*Developed a structured annual report executive summary for State and implementing agencies*

The updated annual report form requires each State and implementing agency to provide a narrative summary of its work during the reporting year. These qualitative data will add depth to the quantitative data collected in other sections of the updated annual report and enable FNS to share a fuller picture of SNAP-Ed. Specifically, the executive summary highlights for each agency—

▸ The programming and approaches implemented

▸ Demographic and geographic reach

▸ Progress toward achieving State priority goals and objectives

▸ Successful coordination with Federal nutrition and obesity prevention programs

▸ Key accomplishments of organizational and multisector partnerships

Incorporated annual reporting of success stories on national priority areas into updated forms to provide rich quantitative data

The updated annual report form also requires each State and implementing agency to provide one or two success stories on national priority areas. The stories include a narrative description of the activity and its impact on participants or the community, including quotes or testimonials from participants and staff. With success stories from each State and implementing agency, FNS will have rich information and specific examples of SNAP-Ed's positive influence on people's lives or the places where they live, work, shop, play, eat, and learn.

Action Items

In FY 2021, FNS committed to making all SNAP-Ed data publicly available. Although it is an important and substantial step toward increased SNAP-Ed data access, FNS should consider taking several additional actions in the coming months and years to ensure open access to and responsible use of SNAP-Ed data. Moreover, while a public-use data file will be an excellent resource for some audiences, such as researchers, many other stakeholders do not have the time, resources, capacity, or interest to analyze SNAP-Ed data and would instead prefer access to SNAP-Ed summaries and results. FNS should consider analyzing and packaging SNAP-Ed results in a number of ways to meet diverse stakeholder needs, as outlined below. FNS could consider coordinating these efforts with other data publications, such as published SNAP data and data published by the USDA Economic Research Service.

Near Term

Before rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

▸ **Convene an expert panel to guide the development of a public-use data file and documentation**. As noted in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular M-19-15, the 2002 Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies (the Guidelines) stress three core responsibilities of Federal agencies in the collection and sharing of data: (1) Agencies must embrace a basic standard of quality and consider quality in their information dissemination practices; (2) agencies must develop information quality assurance procedures that are applied before disseminating information; and (3) agencies must develop an administrative mechanism for affected parties to request that agencies correct information of inadequate quality, with an appeal process and annual reports to OMB (OMB, 2002).

FNS should consider convening an expert panel to guide the development of a public-use data file and documentation that meet the Guidelines. This work needs to be informed by a multistakeholder group that includes, at a minimum, statisticians with expertise in the theory and application of data aggregating; data scientists with expertise in the development and management of Federal databases; Federal agency personnel with expertise in the development and dissemination of technical guidelines around the use of Federal data; SNAP-Ed evaluators; and professional researchers and citizen scientists with expertise in the retrieval and use of Federal data for research and evaluation purposes.

▸ **Develop protocols and tools to support appropriate use of public-use file.** In consultation with statisticians and methodologists, FNS should consider developing and regularly updating documentation on the appropriate use of SNAP-Ed data. FNS could use as an example the documentation that accompanies national data sets available for public use by other agencies (e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System). In the documentation, FNS could consider and describe the appropriate unit(s) of analysis (e.g., site, project, implementing agency) for each variable. Clear instructions should be given on the appropriate methods for aggregating data, the impact of these methods on the usability of the data, and any limitations on data use. For example, FNS could provide a set of rules to explicitly guide how data on behavior change can and should be used according to recognized principles for aggregating data across different projects.

Longer Term

After rolling out the new online planning and reporting system—

▸ **Post State-level summative reports on SNAP-Ed Connection as searchable PDFs.** Doing so will provide interested stakeholders with timely access to all SNAP-Ed data across the program life cycle. Summations are discussed under Priority 1.

▸ **Publish a national SNAP-Ed data file and documentation.** Each year, FNS should consider publishing a national SNAP-Ed data file and documentation consistent with the recommendations of the above-referenced expert panel. FNS will need to consider the level of effort required to review, clean, process, and produce a national data file and the potential timeframe for data release (i.e., the time between FNS receipt of data from all agencies and release of the public-use data file). Ideally, this timeframe will remain consistent to help stakeholders intending to use the data plan accordingly. FNS should also consider how it will respond timely to inquiries about the data, data files, and documentation.

▸ **Publish a national SNAP-Ed impact report annually on SNAP-Ed Connection.** Consistent with the recommendation in Action Plan 1.0, FNS should consider developing and posting on SNAP-Ed Connection an annual impact report intended for diverse stakeholders. The report would use nationally aggregated data to inform the public about SNAP-Ed programs and activities, with an emphasis on program successes that would be most meaningful to policymakers. Quantitative data could be supplemented by success stories captured through the updated annual report form to provide compelling examples of SNAP-Ed's impact on the communities it serves. The impact report and complementary executive summary or one-pager could also serve as a resource for State and implementing agencies to use in outreach and other communication efforts. Although data for the impact report will not be readily available until the updated forms and new system are fully implemented, FNS could begin developing the template for the national impact report in the near term. FNS could also consider developing audience-specific (e.g., policymakers) templates for State and regional reports that can be generated by the system. Existing reports, such as the Cross

Regional Report produced by the Mountain Plains Regional Office and Southwest Regional Office, may be used as examples.

▶ **Develop a data dashboard**. To improve data accessibility for all types of audiences, FNS should consider developing a data dashboard—that is, a central place for stakeholders to analyze, query, and access summary SNAP-Ed data in an interactive, intuitive, and visual way.

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Appendix A. Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups

To inform updates to the SNAP-Ed plan and annual report forms and Action Plan 2.0, the Insight team formed a project Steering Committee and six technical working groups (TWG). The TWGs were organized around six high-priority data categories—four data categories were examined previously and discussed in Action Plan 1.0 (program reach, active partnerships, behavior change, and PSE change adoption), while two data categories were not (social marketing outcomes and program access). Steering Committee and TWG volunteers were recruited via email in November 2020.

▶ **Steering Committee.** All 13 members who served on the Steering Committee previously were invited to return and agreed to do so. One additional person, a previous TWG member with social marketing expertise, was invited to the Steering Committee and agreed to participate. The Steering Committee met three times between November 2020 and July 2021 and fostered the ultimate success of the project.

▶ **TWGs.** The 6 TWGs were composed of 62 experts. The team considered volunteers' interests and areas of expertise and aimed to create groups that reflected diversity in SNAP-Ed roles and perspectives. Each volunteer was selected to serve on one TWG. Four TWGs were convened for one meeting, and the other two met twice between January and April 2021.

Table A.1 provides each TWG member's name, affiliation, and stakeholder group.

Table A.1. TWG Volunteers

Name	Affiliation
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) National Office	
Anita Singh	Office of Policy Support
Donna Johnson-Bailey	Office of Policy Support
Doris Chin	SNAP-Ed
Lisa Mays	SNAP-Ed
Mehreen Ismail	Office of Policy Support
Michael Burke*	Office of Policy Support
Usha Kalro	SNAP-Ed
USDA FNS Regional Offices	
Brittany Souvenir*	FNS Southeast Regional Office
Dregory Jones	FNS Southwest Regional Office
Ellen Mei	FNS Northeast Regional Office
La'Kisha Strong	FNS Western Regional Office
Lori Kelly	FNS Southwest Regional Office
Megan Stupi	FNS Western Regional Office
Star Morrison	FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office
Zachary Roth	FNS Northeast Regional Office
Zora Cobb	FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office

Name	Affiliation
Other Federal Agencies	
Christopher Dykton*	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of State and Community Health
Helen Chipman*	USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Division of Nutrition
Joanne Guthrie*	USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Assistance Research Branch, Food Economics Division
Laura Kettel Khan*	HHS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity
State SNAP Agencies	
Angela Amico	Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Connie Dixon	North Carolina Department of Human Services
Jessica Rochester	Minnesota Department of Human Services
Latresh Davenport*	Georgia Department of Children and Families
Marianne Kerzman	Wyoming Department of Family Services
Max Young	Colorado Department of Human Services
Penny McGuire	Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies	
Amy Branham	University of Massachusetts Extension, SNAP-Ed
Angela Abbott*	Purdue University, College of Health and Human Services Extension
Carrie Draper*	University of South Carolina
Daniel Perales	Catholic Charities of California
Dawn Earnesty	Michigan State University Extension
Denise Holston	Louisiana State University, AgCenter
Gina Crist	University of Delaware
Heidi LeBlanc	Utah State University Create Better Health
Jason Forney	Michigan Fitness Foundation
Justine Hoover	Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
Kali McCrackin Goodenough	University of Wyoming
Kate Balestracci	University of Rhode Island
Katie Funderburk	Auburn University, Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Katie Sorrell	Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
Kerri Vasold	Michigan Fitness Foundation
Laurel Jacobs	University of Arizona
Lauren Tobey	Oregon State University Extension
Lila Gutuskey*	Michigan Fitness Foundation
Lindsey Haynes-Maslow	North Carolina State University
Mary Marczak	University of Minnesota Extension, Center for Family Development
Matt Greene	Louisiana State University Agriculture Center
Nicole Walker	University of Maryland Extension SNAP-Ed
Pamela Bruno	University of New England
Renda Nelson	Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Sarah Misyak	Virginia Cooperative Extension/Virginia Family Nutrition Program
Sarah Panken	Michigan Fitness Foundation

Name	Affiliation
Stephany Parker*	Oklahoma Tribal Engagement Partners LLC
Sue Sing Lim	Kansas State Research and Extension
Suzy Wilson	Iowa Department of Public Health
Theresa LeGros	University of Arizona (Nutritional Sciences)/Arizona Health Zone
Nutrition Researchers/Evaluators	
Brenda Wolford	Altarum
Diane Woloshin	Altarum
Other Nonprofits or Business Partners	
Aaron Schroeder	Kansas State University, Office of Educational Innovation and Education (Program Evaluation and Reporting System Team)
Andrew Naja-Riese*	Agricultural Institute of Marin
Sandy Sherman*	The Food Trust
Susan Foerster	Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators

* Steering Committee member

Appendix B. Identification of Best Practices for Measuring Social Marketing Reach

To identify current and promising practices for estimating the number of individuals reached through social marketing channels, Insight conducted an environmental scan and key informant interviews.

▸ For the environmental scan, Insight examined peer-reviewed literature, research posters, and impact reports. As part of the scan, Insight also conducted a teleconference with the cochairs of the Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators (ASNNA) Social Marketing Committee.

▸ For the interviews, Insight worked with its subcontractor, FHI 360, and the ASNNA Social Marketing Committee to identify a variety of key informants. The Insight team recruited and conducted virtual key informant interviews with four marketing agencies, two Federal agencies, three SNAP-Ed implementing agencies, one independent evaluator, and one technology officer; interviews were conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. Prior to the interviews, the team provided key informants with a list of interview topics and a brief document summarizing findings from the environmental scan. The interviews focused on identifying practices and assessing the feasibility of measuring reach by channel, total reach, and other metrics used to describe social marketing campaigns.

Throughout the key informant interview process, the Insight team met regularly to discuss findings and areas for further investigation. On a rolling basis, the team reviewed interview notes to identify emerging themes. Once all interviews were completed, the team used NVivo to conduct a thorough qualitative analysis.

Table B.1. Key Informant Interview Participants

Organization	Perspective
Marketing for Change	Marketing agencies with experience working on SNAP-Ed or similar social marketing campaigns (these agencies also helped inform the Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators Social Marketing Committee's work on estimating reach)
Rescue Agency	
PMG Media	
Ethos Marketing	
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Federal agencies with experience working on social marketing campaigns[a]
USDA FNS Centers for Nutrition Policy and Promotion	
University of Wyoming	Implementing agencies with social marketing campaigns of various sizes at various stages
Cornell Cooperative Extension	
Utah State University Extension	
Kansas State University	Technology officer who helped build and now supports the Program Evaluation and Reporting System
Altarum	Independent evaluators with experience evaluating numerous SNAP-Ed social marketing campaigns

[a] Interviews with Federal agencies do not count toward the nine allowable interviews per the Paperwork Reduction Act regulations.

Appendix C. Priority Indicators for Individual Behavior Change

Indicator	Metric
Healthy Eating Outcomes (MT1)	
Eat more than one kind of fruit (MT1c)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Eat more than one kind of vegetable (MT1d)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Cups of fruit (MT1l)	Mean cups (SD)
Cups of vegetables (MT1m)	Mean cups (SD)
Times per day fruits were consumed	Mean times per day (SD)
Times per day vegetables were consumed	Mean times per day (SD)
Drink fewer sugar-sweetened beverages (MT1h)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Food Resource Management Behavior Changes (MT2)	
Choose healthy foods for my family on a budget (MT2a)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Read nutrition facts labels or ingredients lists (MT2b)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Not run out of food before month's end (MT2g)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Compare prices before buying foods (MT2h)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Identify foods on sale or use coupons to save money (MT2i)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Shop with a list (MT2j)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines
Physical Activity and Reduced Sedentary Behavior Changes (MT3)	
Moderate-vigorous physical activity (MT3b)	Number of individuals meeting guidelines