

Best Practices for Creating a Federally Reimbursable SNAP Outreach Plan

NOVEMBER 2016

SCOPE | State

PROGRAM | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

PRACTICE | State agencies and their community nonprofit and local government partners can receive matching federal funds to create and implement Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach plans. The federal funds cover up to 50 percent of the cost of approved outreach activities and application assistance. State SNAP agencies must submit outreach plans for U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service's (USDA-FNS) approval.

WHY | Building outreach partnerships with state SNAP agencies is one of the most effective ways to close the SNAP participation gap, reduce hunger, strengthen SNAP services, maximize federal reimbursement, and access a wealth of information on outreach. Many eligible SNAP households are unaware of the program, their possible eligibility, and rules that would remove barriers to their applying. Together, you can:

- ✓ target unserved households and groups by combining: education, prescreening, application assistance, and follow-up;
- ✓ provide special attention to groups (e.g., seniors, working families, Hispanics with low participation rates);
- ✓ identify and advance critical outreach activities in partnership with state agencies and community partners;
- ✓ promote networking and partnership building for more extensive and effective outreach; and
- ✓ generate much-needed economic activity in neglected communities.

Outreach plans can include mid-certification and recertification assistance for current SNAP recipients and unserved, eligible households.

Anti-hunger advocates and others also can form valuable partnerships with a range of new groups (such as those serving the elderly, working families, or immigrant groups), thus expanding their reach into other communities.

KEY STEPS | To learn how your state can submit an outreach plan for approval, check out the [*USDA-FNS SNAP State Outreach Plan Guide*](#).¹ It offers application templates and timetables, and clarifies policies about allowable activities, funding, and more.

Examples of federally reimbursable SNAP outreach activities include:

- developing and distributing SNAP information;
- conducting eligibility pre-screenings;
- providing application support; and
- training others on permissible outreach activities.

TIPS |

- States have until August 15 to submit annual plans to USDA-FNS for the upcoming fiscal year lasting from October 1 to September 30, but can amend during the year; and
- Community partner application deadlines fall earlier in the year than the August 15 deadline, so check with your state agency.

To leverage the 50/50 federal reimbursement, state agencies and community partners can seek matching funds from a variety of private and public sources, e.g., private foundation funds, food retailers, business or labor partners, private donations, and local or state government funds.

SPOTLIGHT | As part of the state SNAP outreach plan, Hunger-Free Minnesota was able to leverage a \$200,000 contribution from the General Mills Foundation, with 50/50 federal reimbursement, and launch a statewide SNAP outreach and awareness campaign to reach seniors and recently unemployed persons.

CHALLENGE | Not all state agencies have developed SNAP outreach plans, leaving anti-hunger advocates in those states without access to available federal funding and outreach resources. Only state agencies have standing to submit a plan that can be a source of federal matching funds for outreach in the state.

LESSONS | Advocates can work with the governor's office and state SNAP agency leadership to encourage the state to develop a SNAP outreach plan. Another strategy that has proven successful is seeking legislation to require a state to implement an outreach plan that meets USDA-FNS criteria.

EXAMPLES | Advocates in Colorado and Nebraska were successful in securing passage of state outreach plan legislation. In Nebraska, two legislative features garnered support: a required submission deadline for the outreach plan, and a "break-even" provision that tied implementation to the receipt of matching funds to cover the state agency's costs. Nebraska advocates also strengthened their partnership with the state's Department of Health and Human Services. This bond resulted in the advocates gaining access to the department's data system and let them use the state's printing resources for approved outreach materials.

MORE RESOURCES

Sample Legislation:

- **Nebraska SNAP Outreach Statute:** [Nebraska Revised Statute 68-1017.02 2 \(a\)\(b\)\(c\)\(d\)²](#)
- **Colorado SNAP Outreach Statute:** [Colorado. 26-2-301\(4 Food Stamps³](#)

Resources to Make Your Case:

- FRAC's [SNAP webpage](#);
- FRAC's [Combating Food Insecurity: Tools for Helping Older Adults Access SNAP](#);
- [Hunger Solutions New York and the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program's joint effort to increase SNAP outreach statewide⁴](#); and
- Maryland Hunger Solutions' [Sample Application Template for Community Partners](#) (This includes instructions on how to design outreach plans and receive federal funding; [general Food Supplement Program information](#) is also available).

For technical assistance, contact:

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
1200 18th Street, NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
202.986.2200
<http://frac.org/>

For more on ending hunger, read FRAC's [A Plan of Action to End Hunger in America](#).

SPOTLIGHT | New York invests \$3 million annually in the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP). Hunger Solutions New York manages NOEP and has significantly increased SNAP outreach across the state. According to NOEP estimates, the state's investment in SNAP outreach, which is matched with federal SNAP outreach funds, helped connect an estimated 30,400 households to SNAP. This drew down over \$69.5 million in SNAP benefits by the end of the program year in June 2015.

ENDNOTES

¹U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2014). *SNAP State Outreach Plan Guide*. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/state-outreach-plan-guidance>. Accessed on March 4, 2016.

²Nebraska Legislature. (n.d.). *Nebraska Revised Statute 68-1017.02 2 (a)(b)(c)(d)*. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/RHkKX5>. Accessed on March 4, 2016.

³Colorado Legislature. (n.d.). *Colorado SNAP Outreach Statute*. Available at: [http://tornado.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/2013TitlePrintouts/CRS%20Title%2026%20\(2013\).pdf](http://tornado.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/2013TitlePrintouts/CRS%20Title%2026%20(2013).pdf). Accessed on March 4, 2016.

⁴Hunger Solutions New York. (2012). *Hunger Solutions New York Applauds State Budget: Governor Cuomo's Initiative to Help Hungry New Yorkers Included in Final Agreement*. Available at: <http://nutritionco.blogspot.com/2012/03/hunger-solutions-new-york-applauds.html>. Accessed on March 4, 2016.