

Why Host a SNAP Challenge?

The SNAP Challenge (“Challenge”) gives participants a view of the struggle to obtain adequate food that is faced by millions of low-income Americans. By living on the average SNAP benefit, Challenge participants find themselves forced to make food shopping choices on a limited budget, and learn how difficult it is to avoid hunger, afford nutritious foods, and stay healthy without adequate resources.

By hosting a Challenge, you can help raise awareness of hunger in your community and the need to keep SNAP strong. While living on a SNAP budget for just a week cannot come close to the struggles encountered by low-income families week after week and month after month, it does provide those who take the Challenge with a new perspective and greater understanding, plus the ability to advocate better for the program.

Start a Challenge

Decisions to Make Before the Challenge

- **How long will the Challenge last?**
Most participants take the Challenge for one week, though some organizations have hosted ones ranging from just one day to an entire month.

- **How much will participants spend on food?** Most Challenge takers use their state’s average monthly SNAP benefit per person, adjusted for the length of the Challenge. The national average benefit in fiscal year 2019 was \$128.60 per person per month, or about \$4.20 per day. Find your state’s average SNAP benefit on U.S. Department of Agriculture’s website.

Challenge Guidelines

- Each person should spend up to \$(X) for food and beverages during the Challenge week, which is the average benefit for a SNAP recipient. All food purchased and eaten during the Challenge week, including dining out, must be included in the total spending.
- During the Challenge, only eat food that you purchase for the project. If you eat food that you already have at home or that is given to you by friends, family, or work, account for it in your SNAP budget.
- Keep track of receipts on food spending and take notes of your experiences throughout the week.
- Share your experiences and invite others to join you, including family, friends, coworkers, reporters, chefs, and elected officials.

Set up Registration

- Make it easy to participate by allowing people to sign up online. You’ll want to create a page that explains the basics of the Challenge, provides guidelines, allows people to register for the Challenge, and encourages them to share their experiences. Make sure to collect zip codes during registration to match participants with congressional districts.

■ Sample website text:

The SNAP Challenge gives participants a glimpse into some of the struggles faced by millions of low-income Americans who are trying to put food on their tables. Participants use the average SNAP benefit as their budget for food for one week. The Challenge provides an opportunity for participants to experience how difficult it is for families living on SNAP to simultaneously avoid hunger, afford nutritious foods, and stay healthy with limited resources.

Over the years, hundreds of Members of Congress, governors, state officials, journalists, and other community leaders have taken the Challenge and have learned first-hand what it is like to try to make ends meet on the average SNAP benefit.

Promote the Challenge

- Use avenues such as mailings, flyers, social media, email blasts, and word-of-mouth to promote your SNAP Challenge to as many people as possible.

During Challenge Week

Host Events

- Many organizations host events during their Challenges to raise awareness of hunger and solutions to end it.
- Kickoff events, such as a grocery shopping trip, can provide media opportunities to promote the Challenge. Other events, such as a panel discussion with local experts, provide a space for participants to share their Challenge experiences. Other event ideas include: a brown bag/pot luck discussion, a press conference, and a letter writing/paper plate campaign party.

Get Media Involved

- To maximize the Challenge's impact, promote it through local media. Here are some things to consider:
 - Television and newspaper reporters have early afternoon

deadlines for the evening news, so schedule kick-off events early in the day;

- Alert the media at least three days in advance of an event. Contact community newspapers, local television network affiliates, cable access channels, and radio stations as they are likely to cover the event;
- Assemble media kits for reporters. The kit should include your press release, fact sheets, and brochures. List the names of staff contacts and other organizations involved in the event, along with telephone and email information; and
- Identify a Challenge participant who is comfortable with speaking to reporters about SNAP, and why he or she is participating in the Challenge.

Use Social Media for the Challenge

- Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs provide easy ways for your organization to communicate about the Challenge. Use these platforms to build interest beforehand, to keep up excitement during, and to thank participants after the Challenge. Encourage your Challenge

participants to use social media tools to share their stories using a consistent hashtag (#).

Social Media Examples:

- Representative Marcia Fudge (D-Ohio) used YouTube to share her interview about the Challenge with CNN, in which she advocated for SNAP and spoke about her Challenge experience;
- Sample Tweet: "We are grateful to have XX participants join us in our #SNAPChallenge this year. It's not too late to join. Learn more here: XXX."

After the Challenge

- Thank everyone who participated. If you joined with other organizations to host the Challenge, thank them as well. You should compile some of the pictures and receipts from the week and let media and legislators know.

Use FRAC as a Resource

- FRAC staff can provide advice, planning assistance, and can help you reach out to your Members of Congress to participate. Contact Ellen Vollinger at evollinger@frac.org if you would like assistance.