

MAKING AMERICA STRONGER

2004 Food Stamp Outreach Planning Guide



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MAKING AMERICA STRONGER

2004 Food Stamp Outreach Planning Guide

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Dear friends,

While using this guide, please bear in mind two points. First, outreach is only *one*—albeit major—component of a successful plan for increasing participation in the Food Stamp Program. Program access issues such as office hours and application complexity are significant factors in food stamp participation rates. Although these crucial issues remain unaddressed in the guide, they are not to be overlooked.

Second, this document is not an exhaustive source of information necessary to successfully formulate and implement outreach. It is merely a guide to assist outreach coordinators at federal, state, and community levels begin the outreach planning process.

Political leanings aside, the basic human need to eat is a sentiment common to everyone. Remember—each outreach initiative you plan helps another person or family eat. Each outreach initiative you plan makes America stronger.

I sincerely hope this guide proves to be a valuable resource in your work.

Peter J. Kim

PART ONE: WHY OUTREACH?

More than one in eight households in America is food insecure and has inadequate or unreliable access to food.¹ Thirty-five million people—including more than 13 million children—are unable to afford nutritious meals or are forced to skip meals entirely, and often live without knowing if they will have food to put on the table tomorrow.

The Food Stamp Program plays a vital role in preventing hunger by providing nutrition assistance to needy families and individuals.

Program participation peaked at 28 million in March 1994, but had fallen sharply to 17 million by September 2000.

Fact: Food Stamp participation dropped by 25 percent between 1994 and 2003.² Program

participation peaked at 28 million recipients in March 1994, but had fallen sharply to 17 million by September 2000.

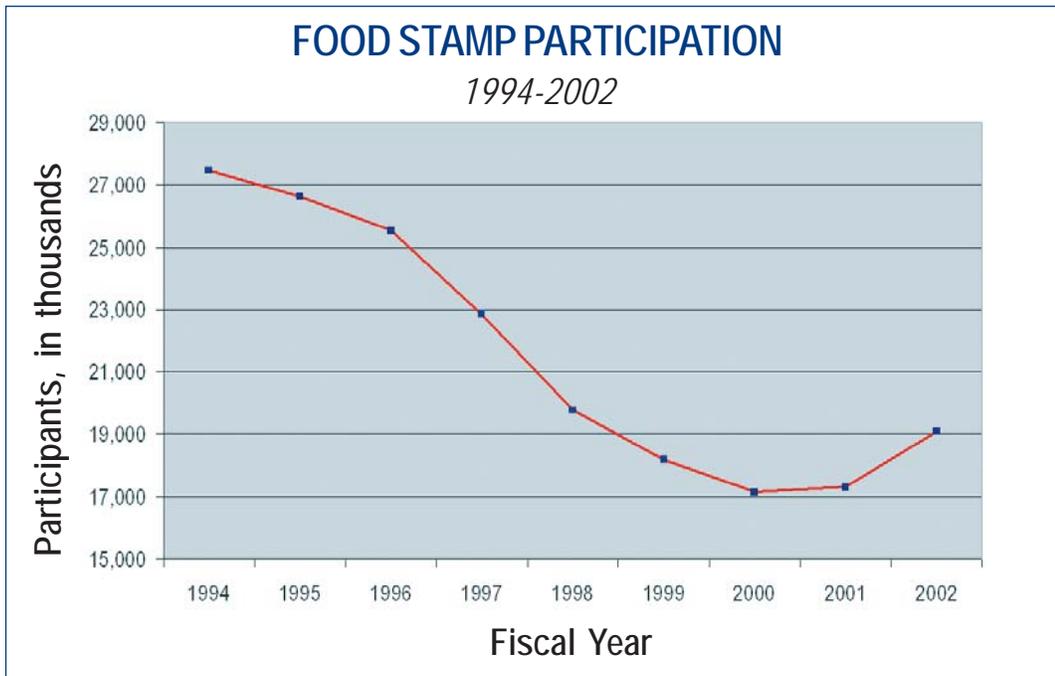
Participation has since increased to 23.3 million recipients in December 2003, the highest level of participation since 1997. The Food Stamp Program reaches approximately 62 percent of the eligible population.

Fact: The way in which welfare reform was implemented likely played a role on the fall in food stamp participation among eligibles. Less than half of the decline resulted from improved economic conditions. Fully 56 percent of the drop in participation occurred because fewer eligible individuals participated in the program.⁴

Many would-be clients were deterred by numerous participation barriers, such as misinformation about the program and a demanding application process.

Welfare reform implementation figured heavily into the fall in participation due to confusion over eligibility rules. Studies have shown that families leaving the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) often were incorrectly denied food stamp benefits despite low monthly earnings that qualified them for benefits.⁵ Rule changes from the 2002 Farm Bill also caused confusion over the eligibility of non-citizens.

Fact: Hunger is still prevalent. About 11.1 percent of all American households were food insecure some time during the year



◀ Fig. 1: Food Stamp Participation. Source: Food Stamp Program Annual Summary, 23 Dec. 2002. USDA FNS. <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/pdf/fssummar.htm>>

ending in December 2002, meaning they did not always have access to enough food for active, healthy lives for all household members because they did not have enough money or other resources for food. In 3.5 percent of all households, one or more household members were hungry at least some time during the year. In 2001, 12.1 percent of all individuals in America were food insecure. Children fared even worse, with 18.1 percent living without regular access to food.

At the same time, the emergency food network has experienced an escalation in demand. America's Second Harvest—the nation's largest network of food providers—reports serving 23.3 million people. Moreover, only about 30% of the network's clients receive food stamps.⁷

Many providers report they are struggling with swelling caseloads. Glenn Bailey, executive director of Crossroads Food Bank in Utah, said, "People can't make

ends meet. Anyone in private charity will tell you we're overwhelmed." Food pantries across Utah have been saddled with a 114 percent increase in demand since 1995.

BENEFITS OF OUTREACH

Considering that the Food Stamp Program is the most pervasive nutrition assistance program today, promoting it through outreach is one of the best strategies for fighting hunger in America.

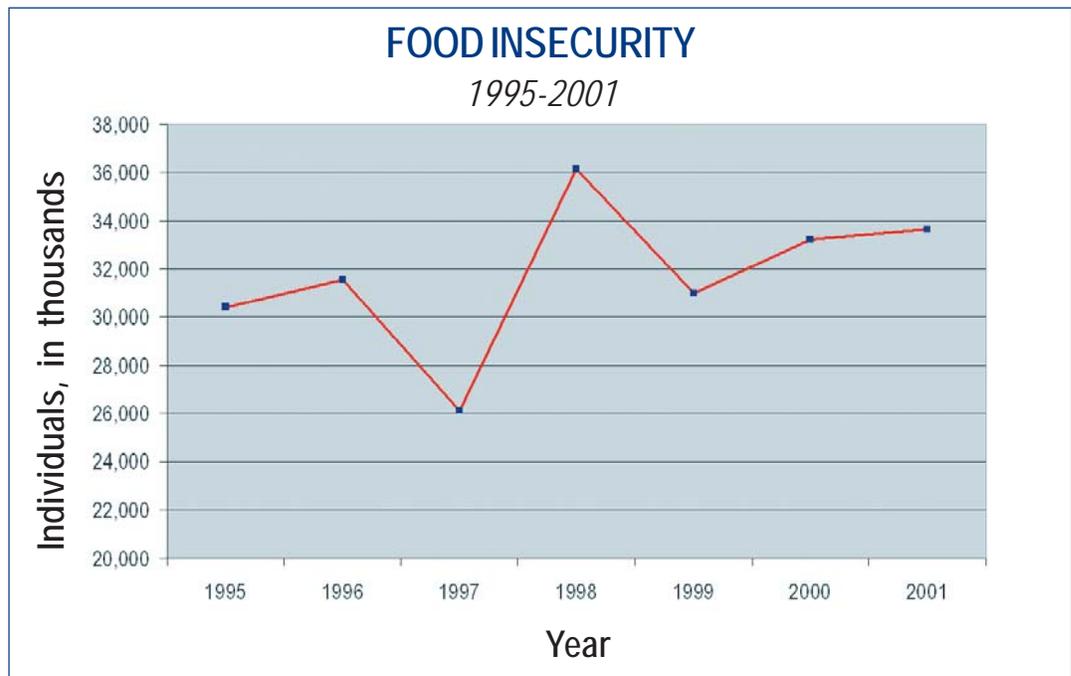
Major cities averaged a 19 percent increase in demand for emergency food assistance during the past year.

Outreach can be defined as any activity that disseminates information to a target population with the goal of increased participation.

Food Stamp Program outreach makes America stronger. The primary benefit realized by increased participation in the program is stemming the tide of hunger. But there are numerous other benefits as well.

► **Fig. 2: Food Insecurity.**
 Source: Andrews, Margaret, Steven Carlson, and Mark Nord. USDA Economic Research Service. Household Food Security in the United States, 2001. Oct. 2002.

NOTE: Data collected in 1995-1997 are not directly comparable to data collected in 1998-2001.



A 10 percent increase in program participation nationwide in FY 2002 would:

- Provide an average of \$40 in monthly nutrition assistance to over 1.9 million newly participating households.
- Inject more than \$920 million annually into local economies, helping to provide a boost during sluggish economic periods.⁸
- Trigger an increase in economic activity by as much as \$1.9 billion and create over 15,000 jobs.⁹

Expanded participation would also:

- Bolster an overburdened emergency food network.
- Improve the nutritional health of disadvantaged children, ensuring hunger does not impede their educational development.
- Save money by preventing health problems that are more prevalent among food insecure and hungry individuals.

Ensuring nutritional health for all is not only the *right* thing to do, but it is also sound economic policy. An important point to note is that food stamp issuance essentially *must* be spent by the recipient which, in turn, benefits local economies. This creates a multiplier effect that significantly magnifies the effect of increased food stamp participation—every \$5 issued in benefits generates \$9.20 in economic activity.

TAKE ACTION

This *Food Stamp Outreach Planning Guide* was designed to assist with the formulation and implementation of food stamp outreach initiatives. It is meant to serve as a guidepost for anyone planning outreach. For state agency outreach coordinators, this document also provides guidance for drafting a formal outreach plan.

The need is clear; food stamp outreach remains a powerful tool in the fight against hunger and undernutrition. Open this guide and start planning today.

PART TWO: FORMULATING OUTREACH

PLANNING

It may be beneficial to form a steering committee to oversee outreach efforts composed of people affiliated with state agencies, advocacy organizations, emergency food providers, faith-based organizations, schools, chambers of commerce, and other relevant entities. This collaboration ensures sustainability and draws diverse resources together.

RESEARCH

General research on potential target communities will prove useful during the planning process. To implement the most effective outreach, it is critical to have a full understanding of the population characteristics.

The Census website (<http://www.census.gov>) is a good source of detailed county-level statistics. Potential issues to follow up on include:

Demography

This includes racial and age distributions. Are there significant elderly, children,

limited English proficiency, or immigrant populations?

Economy

County-level statistics such as the employment rate and median income can suggest potential geographic target areas for outreach.

Food Security

What are the levels of food insecurity and hunger? Anecdotal information from community-level advocates can suffice if quantitative statistics are unavailable.

The USDA Economic Research Services (ERS) offers an excellent Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02013/. Another available resource is USDA FNS' "National Nutrition Safety Net" toolkit at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsec/Resources.htm>.

Circumstances

Have there been any recent extenuating economic circumstances, such as industry or plant closings?

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This information can serve numerous purposes, including identifying areas of greatest need and for supporting a case for outreach when seeking funding or new partnerships.

DESIGNATE A TARGET GROUP

An assessment of the community's needs should be performed, specifying who may be best targeted with food stamp outreach initiatives. Like nearly any marketing activity, it's absolutely necessary to have target populations in mind – "general" outreach is typically not feasible or cost-effective.

Using information gathered from research and through dialogue with other interested parties, select a number of proposed target populations. Explore the target populations' characteristics with an eye for what may be the most effective outreach strategy. You may want to work with community partners to schedule local focus groups that involve members of the target population.

Focus groups and individual interviews can be used to formulate and evaluate effective outreach messages. It is also possible to obtain feedback from mail or telephone surveys. Special care must be taken with mail surveys to ensure an adequate response rate.

Also, an independent research organization may be able to do an in-depth analysis of the factors causing food stamp nonparticipation, with recommendations for outreach initiatives.

For each target population, questions to pursue include:

SAMPLE TARGET POPULATIONS

- Elderly
- Working poor
- Homeless
- Children
- Families
- Immigrants
- Emergency food recipients
- Rural residents
- Unemployed
- Limited English proficient
- Leaving TANF
- Disabled

RUNNING A FOCUS GROUP

1. Identify the major objective of the meeting.
2. Carefully develop five to six questions, asking yourself what problem or need will be addressed by the information gathered.
3. Plan out the meeting:
 - Schedule about an hour or an hour and a half for the meeting. Lunchtime often works as a good period to schedule.
 - You may want to offer participants a small stipend, such as a gift certificate from a grocery store.
 - Provide refreshments, childcare, and translators when appropriate.
 - Set up some ground rules for the meeting.
 - Draft an agenda. Here is a sample: welcome, introductions, review of agenda, review of goals, review of ground rules, questions and answers, and conclusion.
 - Select the people you want to invite. Focus groups are usually conducted with 6-10 members.
 - Plan to record the session with an audio recorder. Don't rely on your memory. At the very least, include a co-facilitator who can take notes.
4. Call the potential members and invite them to the meeting with a proposed agenda.
5. As the session nears, call each member to remind them to attend.
6. Facilitate the meeting:
 - Introduce yourself and any co-facilitators.
 - Explain the means being used to record the session.
 - Carry out the agenda that you planned.
 - After each question, allow the group a few minutes to carefully record their answers.
 - Ensure even participation; you may want to go in one direction around the room, giving each person a chance to answer the question.
 - After each round of answers, summarize the responses.
 - Tell them they will receive a copy of the focus group report.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FOOD STAMPS

These are some sample misconceptions of the Food Stamp Program that effective outreach could resolve. These may not apply to your target populations.

“The Food Stamp Program is welfare.”

Truth: It is an entitlement program designed to improve the nutritional health of low-income families and individuals.

“It will take months before receiving benefits.”

Truth: In cases of extreme need, benefits can be received in seven days or sooner. Otherwise, benefits are received within 30 days from the application date.

“Legal immigrants are not eligible.”

Truth: The recent Farm Bill implementation has made many legal immigrants eligible.

“Most people receive ten dollars.”

Truth: The average monthly benefit is \$200 per family. Even

\$10 can purchase a significant amount of nutritious food.

“Recipients can’t own a house or a car.”

Truth: The value of an applicant’s home is not counted and many states have implemented a vehicle exemption.

“It’s a sign of failure to use food stamps.”

Truth: Absolutely not; if anything, food stamps will help recipients get back on their feet.

“Recipients must have children.”

Truth: Many childless adults are also eligible for food stamps, although the eligibility rules vary from state to state.

- What are the most significant barriers to participation in the program?
- What are some common misconceptions of the Food Stamp Program?
- How could the program be made easier for them to use?
- What are some of the cultural or ideological nuances that may interact with their decision to apply?
- What message statements are most powerful for influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the target audience?
- What is the most effective medium for communication with the target population?

sist with this process, this section provides a list of potential outreach activities to consider.

Mailings

Some organizations that serve low-income clients may have mailing lists that can be used for direct mailings.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has partnered with the Missoula Food Bank, for example, to send outreach materials to income-eligible food bank clients.

Some organizations in the New York Nutrition Education and Outreach Program (NOEP) have had success publicizing the Food Stamp Program on a coupon sent with Val-Pak mailings. These mailings are not expensive and can be targeted to specific zip codes or neighborhoods.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Postage; printing; labor to prepare both materials and mailings.

OUTREACH INITIATIVES

With information gathered and target populations designated, it is possible to begin formulating outreach initiatives. To as-

PROS: Mailings can be more effective in rural areas where TV or print media are not very accessible; message can be tailored specifically for the target audience, and there is a strong chance the message will be delivered.

CONS: Postage costs can be prohibitive; difficult to evaluate the success of a mailing.

Prescreening

The prescreening tool is a popular and effective outreach strategy. A substantial number of people who are prescreened and referred to the program successfully apply for and receive food stamps.

USDA has developed and released a web-based prescreening tool, accessible on the Food Stamp Program website: <http://www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov>. The tool provides both eligibility status and estimated benefit information, adjusting for some state-specific rules. It also provides links to existing state web-based prescreening tools.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Code licensing; consulting fees; staff training; maintenance.

PROS: Increases participation by encouraging potentially eligible nonparticipants and saves work by discouraging clearly ineligible applicants; can be published online to be used by any person or organization with internet access.

CONS: If web-based, some smaller community organizations may not be able to access it; can be very expensive to produce and license the code; must be updated regularly.

Informational hotlines

Most states have toll-free or collect-call food stamp information numbers. However, some have developed more comprehensive hotlines than others.

For example, the Oregon SafeNet toll-free hotline (1-800-SAFENET) offers callers full personal assistance

with food stamps, child nutrition programs, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and the Or-

gon Health Plan. The hotline offers limited prescreening services and can direct callers to the nearest office for assistance. Operators also gather information about how the caller learned about the hotline; this produces data on the effectiveness of various outreach initiatives.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Salaries of operators; setup costs for the hotline.

PROS: Accessible to anyone who has a phone; operators can also survey the callers on the effectiveness of current outreach initiatives; possible to provide personalized service to each caller.

CONS: Requires additional employees to receive calls; the hotline's effectiveness is limited by how well it is advertised.

Informational training

Many community-based organizations serve the same clientele as the Food Stamp

The Atlanta Community Food Bank reported approximately 50 percent of people determined eligible by prescreening applied for Food Stamps.

WEB-BASED PRESCREENING TOOLS

Some states have web-based prescreening tools:

Title: Jobs-Plus Income Calculator

Organization: Environmental Health and Social Policy Center

URL: <http://www.workpays.org>

Title: Texas Stars

Organization: Texas Department of Human Services

URL: <http://www.txstars.net>

Title: My Florida

Organization: Florida Department of Children and Families

URL: <http://www5.myflorida.com>

Title: Los Angeles County Screening Tool

Organization: Los Angeles County

URL: <http://www.foodstampsonline.org>

Title: Massachusetts Food Stamp Calculator

Organization: Project Bread

URL: <http://www.gettingfoodstamps.org>

Title: Food Stamp Calculator

Organization: Michigan Food Stamp Network

URL: <http://www.foodstamphelp.org>

Title: Pennsylvania Compass

Organization: Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

URL: <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/general/fpwhfw.asp>

Title: Food Stamp Benefit Calculator

Organization: North Dakota Department of Human Services

URL: <http://www.health.state.nd.us/dhs/foodstampcalculator.asp>

Title: Trial Eligibility Calculator

Organization: Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

URL: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/TEC>

Title: Oregon Helps!

Organization: Various

URL: <http://www.oregonhelps.org>

Title: Arizona Self Help

Organization: Arizona Community Action Association

URL: <http://www.arizonaselfhelp.org>

Program – low-income families and individuals. However, many people who work in those organizations do not know enough about the program to provide accurate information about food stamps to clients.

The latest data from the ERS indicate only 17 percent of food pantries report informing their clients about food stamps. As such, training conducted by state agency employees or others who have experience with food stamp outreach can be an excellent strategy. The training can cover basic eligibility guidelines and address some common concerns or questions about the program.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Travel; materials; staff time to attend or conduct training.

PROS: Targets organizations that serve clients who are potentially eligible for food stamps; relatively low cost; can result in referrals to the program; encourages beneficial partnerships between agencies.

CONS: If training is necessary, must convince employees to attend; care must be taken to ensure information retention.

Print materials

Pamphlets, brochures, and posters are effective outreach tools. In 2002, the USDA unveiled an array of exceptional outreach print materials with the theme “Food Stamps Make America Stronger.” All state agencies and community-based organizations are encouraged to order them at no cost on the website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/info.htm>. The mate-

DESIGNING OUTREACH MATERIALS

Believe it or not, design *does* matter. The aesthetics and organization are absolutely as important as the content. When creating materials, these are a few design principles to keep in mind:

- **Keep it simple.** Try to edit down the content to only your most important material. Succinct content improves the chances of message delivery. Remember, having “white space” (empty areas) is not necessarily a bad thing.
- **Have a dominant element.** Have one element on the outreach material that is *clearly* the starting point for the viewer. This can be a large photograph, graphic or phrase.
- **Don’t overdo it.** Over-the-top graphics and font selection is not a good strategy and can be distracting. Pick two or three fonts *at most* and opt for design that is professional, not sensational.

As an exercise, pick a magazine ad that catches your eye and ask yourself, “Why do I like this ad?”

materials are also available on CD-ROM for organizations to print out on their own.

Rudimentary alterations can be made to the USDA materials with Adobe Acrobat, while more substantial changes—adding a logo, for example—require Quark Xpress (standard software for printing businesses).

Here are some ideas for distribution of print materials:

- **Public libraries:** Many libraries have community bulletin boards that are ideal for posters.
- **Retailers:** Be sure to follow up with the retailers to ensure materials are displayed in a prominent place.
- **Public transportation:** Many low-income individuals use public transportation and it may be possible to display posters inside buses and subways; TalTran in Tallahassee, Fla., worked with Florida Impact—an anti-hunger advocacy organization—to display food stamp advertising on the inside of buses.

Be creative; try to think of any public areas that are frequented by your target population.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Design; printing; distribution.

PROS: Cost per item is generally low; USDA materials are available at no charge; good strategy to raise general awareness even beyond the target population.

CONS: Difficult to evaluate; can be ineffective if not properly displayed or distributed.

Newspaper advertisements

Newspaper advertisements can be a particularly good way to reach older audiences. Otherwise, you may want to confirm that your target audience reads newspapers. Community newspapers are also excellent publications for low-cost food stamp outreach ads. With effective publicity efforts, newspapers may also write stories on the outreach initiatives.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Fees; design.

PROS: Distribution and readership can be high,

especially among elderly; newspapers can provide reasonable estimates of the reach.

CONS: Major newspapers' fees are high; low-income populations are not typically avid newspaper readers.

TV and radio advertisements

This is one of the most formidable outreach strategies. Unfortunately, paying normal advertisement rates is only a possibility for outreach programs with sizable budgets. Public service announcements (PSAs), however, are often available free-of-charge or at reduced rates. These are used to fill unsold advertising slots that occur during the less popular viewing times.

POSSIBLE COSTS: Fees; production; design.

PROS: Both TV and radio are widely used; PSAs may offer low costs; can be the most effective outreach strategy.

CONS: PSA time slots are often placed late at night and may not reach the target audience; production of ads can be expensive and time-consuming.

PARTNERSHIP IDEAS

This is a limited list of suggested partners. In truth, there are many possibilities for partnerships with agencies and organizations that serve low-income clients. Talk with others in the community who have done outreach with programs like the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Nutrition Education Staff

Contacting the state's food stamp nutrition education staff is strongly recommended. Their activities involve many of the same people targeted by food stamp outreach.

Schools

Schools serving many families that qualify for free or reduced-price lunch populations can be particularly effective outreach partners. For instance, MANNA, a community-based organization in Tennessee, partnered with public schools and sent outreach materials home with grade reports. They initiated the partnership by contacting the mayor's office.

Many superintendents may not make the connection between education and nutrition. If they can be persuaded, some possible activities include:

- Distributing fliers to children to take home to their parents.
- Including outreach materials in school mailings.
- Distributing materials at school lunch or summer food sites.
- Including outreach materials in back to school packets.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- Distributing information about food stamps with monthly rent statements or in newsletters.
- Displaying food stamp posters in public areas.
- Training housing site social service coordinators to refer people to food stamps and keep

applications on hand, where allowable.

- Inviting eligibility workers to perform eligibility determination onsite.

Social Security Administration (SSA)

In December 2002, the USDA and the SSA agreed to work on expanding the number of state agencies operating the Combined Application Project (CAP). CAP is a demonstration project that streamlines providing food stamp benefits to one-person households eligible for both food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Some states that are operating this project include South Carolina, Mississippi and Washington. A variation of CAP is also operating in Texas. For more information about this exciting new initiative, contact your regional FNS office (contact information in back).

Emergency Food

The emergency food network is far-reaching, serving millions of low-income food-insecure families and individuals. Partnership between food stamp outreach and emergency food providers is a strong, mutually beneficial arrangement. Here are some potential initiatives:

- Prescreening food pantry or soup kitchen clients for food stamp benefits.
- Training emergency food workers to be food stamp application assistants.
- Displaying outreach materials in public areas.

EVALUATION

The oft-overlooked component of outreach planning is evalu-

ation. However, it is imperative to build evaluation into any initiative for two reasons.

First, evaluation can assist in providing feedback to support continuing improvement of activities. Second, evaluation can help to establish the effectiveness and accountability of the program.

Without evaluation, it is simply not possible to establish the extent to which an initiative was successful, if at all. Lacking that information,

subsequent outreach activities will not be any more informed than previous efforts.

Evaluation, however, is no easy task. Some outreach initiatives, such as a poster campaign, are difficult to assess. This section will provide some information to help you build evaluation into your outreach plans.

There are three major types of evaluation: formative, process, and impact.

FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Formative evaluation provides feedback from the target audience about proposed activities and materials to help develop an outreach effort. It is used to test and modify messages and modes of communication in the planning stages of projects. The first section of this chapter (pages 8-10) provides general guidance for the formative stage of planning.

PROCESS EVALUATION

Process evaluation is the use of empirical data to assess the delivery of outreach. Process evaluation is used to assess the fit of the initiative with the program goals during

Lacking evaluation, subsequent outreach activities will be no more informed than previous efforts.

implementation. It helps answer questions like, “What was actually delivered?” and “Was the program delivered as intended?” It assesses the implementation of an outreach initiative and investigates how well and with what intensity messages are delivered to the target audience.

Information from process evaluation can identify ways of improving the implementation process. There are numerous strategies for process evaluation, including assessing the development of partnerships, assessing the leverage of resources, and tracking the dissemination of messages.

DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS

Important indicators of success are the number, type, and strength of partnerships involved in your outreach efforts. There is significant evidence that networks with deeper degrees of partnership mounted more extensive programs than those with less developed partnerships.

You can measure your progress over time in terms of the number and type of partners, the depth of the partnerships, and the types of contributions the partners make toward food stamp outreach.

USE OF RESOURCES

This is a measure of the total value of resources used in your outreach efforts. The outreach budget will be a reasonable indicator for this process measurement.

However, it may be possible to include the value of in-kind resources used in the outreach effort. For example, adding the estimated value of donated broadcast time to the assessment can provide a fuller picture.

MESSAGE DISSEMINATION

Tracking message dissemination is a particularly critical process evaluation measurement. It is necessary for the message to *reach* the intended target audience to produce outcomes, such as increased participation in the Food Stamp Program.

Evaluation of the dissemination of materials can provide useful feedback about the cost-effectiveness of various channels of communication.

Media contacts

With any broadcast media outreach initiatives, such as paid ads or public service announcements (PSAs), it is important to monitor information on the estimated number of people reached.

Television viewership and radio listening varies dramatically according to the timing and placement of ads. For instance, Nielsen data indicate that viewership varies from 10 percent of the total viewing audience in the morning to 15 percent in the afternoon, and up to nearly half by prime time. In contrast with radio, listening is highest in the morning.

Stations can often provide estimates of the size and characteristics of the audience reached by an ad, including its income distribution. It may be possible to report both the total number of people reached *and* the proportion that comprises the target audience (low-income, rural, etc.).

Print distribution

Newspapers can typically provide an estimate of their readership for the purposes of assessing the reach of an ad. Other print

materials, such as pamphlets, brochures, and posters, are significantly more difficult to evaluate because it is nearly impossible to ascertain how many people have read and understood the materials.

It may be beneficial to track the distribution of materials, counting the number of posters displayed or number of pamphlets handed out. However, displaying 1,000 posters is by no means a guarantee that all 1,000 were seen.

Direct contacts

This includes personal interaction with the target audience to deliver the outreach message. The best source of this information is likely to be records kept by those involved in the actual process. For example, local food pantry volunteers trained to promote food stamps to their clients can approximate the number of people reached.

Other possible sources of direct contact information include information session attendance and total number of calls to a toll-free hotline.

Assessing general dissemination

Depending on the resources available, it may be possible to use a random-digit-dialing telephone survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach campaign. These surveys can estimate how many people in the targeted group have seen the outreach message, and the extent to which it was effective.

IMPACT EVALUATION

For the purposes of food stamp outreach, impact evaluation will nearly always

measure the increase in participation directly caused by a specific outreach initiative. This is the most important form of evaluation. Unfortunately, while measuring participation in food stamps is easy, establishing causality is not. Impact evaluation of food stamp outreach is a relatively unprecedented issue, but some strategies do exist:

Compare participation before, during, and after outreach

This is a fairly simple matter, but it is not particularly useful. If participation has increased, it is not necessarily due to outreach—perhaps a recessive economy spurred people to apply—and a participation decrease doesn't necessarily equate to an outreach failure, either.

There are ways to refine this measure to provide more insight into the relationship between the outreach initiative and participation. If the outreach was targeted at particular counties, compare the participation change in outreach counties to demographically similar non-outreach counties. If there is a significant difference in the change in participation between the two, it may indicate that the outreach had some impact.

Likewise, if the outreach was targeted at specific age groups or ethnicities, they can be compared against other groups with similar characteristics that were not targeted.

PROS: Uses readily available data; provides a broad picture.

Impact evaluation will nearly always measure the increase in participation directly caused by a specific outreach initiative. This is the most important form of evaluation.

CONS: Cannot establish causality—the direct effect of outreach initiatives on participation in food stamps.

PROS: Can establish causality; provides more detailed data.

Track applications

If the outreach initiative involves application assistance or directly distributing food stamp applications to potential clients, it is possible to track the applications with a distinctive number or marking. Different markers may be used to distinguish between distribution locations or recipient characteristics. These applications, if turned into food stamp offices, can be tallied.

PROS: Establishes causality; provides specific numbers for evaluative purposes; low cost.

CONS: Usefulness limited to initiatives that involve dissemination of applications; may underestimate the impact if the target population submits a different application; caseworkers must be trained to look for the tracking marker.

Surveys

If there are enough resources available, one of the most effective evaluative tools is the survey. This entails contacting a random sample from either the target population or the general population and obtaining data (Did they successfully apply for food stamps? Was the outreach effective?).

There are several ways to conduct surveys: by mail, telephone, in-person and e-mail. Establishing a proper research design is a complicated matter; consult with a statistician or a guide to research design before planning a survey.

CONS: High cost; requires expertise in research design.

Survey on the application

A simple addition—“Why did you apply for food stamps?”—to the application can provide some feedback for evaluative purposes. Rather than leaving the question open-ended, respondents should be given a set number of options so the data can be easily categorized.

PROS: Low cost once applications have been altered; easily measured.

CONS: Low response rate can be misleading; applications must be redesigned.

Anecdotal information

This will not suffice without accompanying quantitative data. However, quotes from community-level advocates or from members of the target population can help support a claim that the outreach is either succeeding or failing.

PROS: Easy to acquire; can strengthen evaluative argument; details can provide insight into possible ways to improve the outreach initiatives.

CONS: Nearly useless on its own.

PART THREE: PUBLICIZING OUTREACH

Strong relationships with the local news media are invaluable assets for publicizing outreach initiatives. It is crucial to keep people in the community informed about the Food Stamp Program. Furthermore, positive coverage is essentially free outreach, often to large audiences. Fortunately, it is not difficult to develop rapport with news outlets.

MAKE A MEDIA LIST

Compile a list of print media outlets, including newspapers, community newsletters, free shopper papers, and other local publications. Check if the local library has a copy of *Editor and Publisher*, which contains extensive lists of magazines and newspapers. Gather the following information:

- Who should receive press releases and stories.
- Names of editors of relevant sections, such as Health, Food, or City Desk.
- Names of reporters who cover these beats.

Radio and Television

Your library may also carry a copy of *Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook*. This document lists network affiliates, Spanish

television, cable-access channels, and radio programming. Contact each station and gather the following information:

- Who should receive news and story ideas.
- Names of the public service director and health reporter.
- Formatting preferences for public service announcements.

From the first phone call, use every opportunity to begin developing relationships with the media.

It may be possible to invite them to visit food stamp outreach events, activities, or eligibility offices.

From the first phone call, use every opportunity to begin developing relationships with the media.

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS

As relationships with the media strengthen, you will learn what they consider news, what their deadlines are, and how much lead time they need to feature events. This is useful information to keep in mind when working with the media in the future. They, in turn, will learn to trust you as a good news resource.

MEDIA RELATIONS ETIQUETTE

In working with the media, here are some strategies for building a good relationship:

- Establish a reputation for being reliable and accurate
- Never miss a deadline.
- Never say “no comment” or “off the record.”
- Gracefully take “no” for an answer.
- Use first names unless they are older or well-known.
- Don’t favor one outlet over others. Send your press releases to all appropriate media outlets.
- Respect exclusive stories. If a reporter comes to you, work exclusively and don’t leak information to the competition.
- Designate a well-informed and articulate contact person in your organization to deal with media inquiries.
- Overlook unimportant errors in their story. Nit-picking will damage your relationship.
- Rarely ask a reporter to let you check a story before it’s published unless you’ve agreed to review it for technical accuracy.
- Don’t be a pest. Leave the media alone until you have a solid, newsworthy story.

If possible, make some appointments to meet briefly with media contacts on the list. This provides a chance to introduce yourself, give them fact sheets, and answer questions. Be sure to leave contact information with the best time to reach you. Take the opportunity to pitch a few story ideas and tell them you’re available as a news resource for food stamps.

If they have ongoing community news programs or weekly community calendars, it may be possible to get a notice printed week after week about food stamps.

FACT SHEETS AND MEDIA KITS

Fact sheets should be sent to the local media along with press releases and public service announcements. These documents should present succinct, relevant information that is not already covered elsewhere, including:

- Your office address, telephone number, hours of operation, and contact information for specific people in the office.
- Information that supports the press release. For example, you may want to elaborate on the importance of the Food Stamp Program by

providing some issuance numbers, the amount of money a 10 percent increase in participation might bring into local economies, and so on. Be sure to provide state and national figures as well.

- A statement of need. Why is food stamp outreach necessary?

Media kits should be given to reporters at an actual press event or whenever you want them to cover a story or air a public service announcement. To make a media kit, use a 9”x12” pocket folder. Keep all of the materials very professional and use letter-head for all cover sheets. Put the following items in the folder:

- A fact sheet.
- A press release.
- The spokesperson’s brief bio, if there is a spokesperson.
- Your business card.
- Copies of newspaper articles published about the Food Stamp Program or food stamp outreach. This helps confirm that your story is newsworthy.

PRESS RELEASES

The press release is the tool most often used to share information with newspapers

when the story is not breaking news. It is a concise, informative and straightforward piece of writing that describes what you want the public to know. It may be a description of an upcoming news event, a timely report of an event that has just occurred, or a pitch for potential stories for editors.

A well-presented press release should be typewritten on 8 ½" by 11" paper and observe the following technical guidelines:

FORMAT: Print the words "NEWS RELEASE" in boldface near the upper left corner. If the release is longer than one page, type "more" at the bottom of the first page and identify the following pages with either the title of the release or the name of your organization. Type "#" at the bottom of the last page.

TITLE: Give the news release a concise title.

DATE: Date the release and specify if you want this published at a later date. Otherwise, print "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" above the title.

INVERTED PYRAMID: You have to command attention and interest within a couple lines. Put the most indispensable information at the beginning of the story, the most expendable at the end. Address the who, what, when, where, and why in the first two paragraphs.

LENGTH: Make every word count and keep it tight, no longer than two pages, double-spaced.

CONTACT: Identify the organization or individual sending the release and include the name, daytime and evening phone numbers, and email address of someone the reporter can contact with

questions. This information should appear under the label "FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION."

SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSION: If you send the release to more than one section, attach a note telling them you are doing so.

SOLICIT COVERAGE

When you're ready to push for some coverage, send the news release and fact sheet or a media kit to the media list that you have compiled. It is best to submit these by fax or e-mail to ensure timely delivery. Address the materials to the appropriate editor or reporter; if you're not sure who that is, call and ask.

After allowing some time, make follow-up calls to the editors and reporters and, referring to the press release, pitch the news to them. Focus on the relevance of the news to their readers. If you end up getting coverage, write a short, handwritten thank-you note to the reporter.

If the press comes and visits your site, let your staff know the media is visiting. They should act naturally and cooperatively. Don't steer the reporters; escort them, answer questions, and have fact sheets and other handouts readily available. Be sure to have experts and clients available for interviews and photographs.

You may want to set up an area for the interviews and arrange photo opportunities; you can reinforce your intended message with a good backdrop, too.

A final note: USDA FNS regional Public Affairs staff are available to help. They are familiar with media and can provide substantial guidance for publicity efforts.

PART FOUR: WRITING AN OUTREACH PLAN

Contents	
Guidance	22
Reporting and Records	28
Fiscal Policy	28

The Food Stamp Act of 1977 provides that State agencies administering the Food Stamp Program may receive Federal matching funds for outreach activities. These activities can include informing low-income households about the availability, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and benefits of food stamps.

To receive federal matching funds for outreach, the State agency must submit a plan to the regional office for approval. The plans may be submitted anytime during the year. In addition, the state must file a budget projection using the FNS-366A Budget Projection form and submit quarterly SF-269 Financial Status Report forms reporting expenditures.

Upon the regional office’s approval of the state plan and budget projection, funds are made available. It is also possible to submit state plan amendments to FNS for approval at any time during the year to reflect changes in scope and design of outreach efforts, including funding changes.

This section provides guidance for writing and submitting a food stamp outreach plan. It is based on a Microsoft Word docu-

ment template that is available upon request. This is only a *suggested* model for a plan and it may be modified to suit particular needs. Even if the template is not used, this section provides relevant information for outreach planning generally.

SECTION ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

Primary Contacts

List at least one person as a contact for the State agency administering the outreach plan, including name, title, phone number, and e-mail address.

Statement of Need

A strong statement of need is an important part of the outreach plan. Whether you are trying to develop new partnerships to supplement your plan or request increased funding for outreach, a convincing statement of need will prove to be advantageous.

It’s best to opt for concise, high-impact information over a lengthy argument about the need for increased outreach. Here are some points that may be included, if they support the case for outreach:

Section 1: General Information

1a. State:

1b. Fiscal Year:

1c. Agency:

1d. Primary Contacts

- Name: Position: Phone: E-mail:
- Name: Position: Phone: E-mail:
- Name: Position: Phone: E-mail:

1e. Statement of Need

1f. Goals and Objectives

1g. Evaluation

1h. Sustainability

1i. Timeline

Activity	Lead	Date

Section 2: Budget Summary

Agency / Contractor	Category	State Share	Private Share	Federal Share	Projected Budget
Agency / Contractor A	Category A				
	Category B				
	Category C				
	Category D				
	TOTAL				
Agency / Contractor B	Category A				
	Category B				
	Category C				
	TOTAL				
TOTAL PRIVATE AND STATE SHARE					
TOTAL FEDERAL SHARE REQUESTED					
TOTAL OUTREACH BUDGET					\$x

• What is the incidence of hunger and food insecurity in your state? How has it changed in recent years? These data can be acquired on the ERS Food Security website: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Topics/view.asp?T=102612>. There are a number of non-government websites that provide excellent food security data:

- The Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University publishes extensive state-level data: <http://www.centeronhunger.org/states/fsistate.html>.

- The Food Research and Action Council has additional research: http://www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/hunger_index.html.

• What is the food stamp participation rate in your state? How has it changed in recent years? You can view the Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation's participation reports on its website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/FSP/Participation.htm>.

• Have emergency food providers (food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, etc.) in your state experienced increased demand? The Center on Hunger and Poverty offers some state-level data regarding emergency food: <http://www.centeronhunger.org/indexnonfscm.html>.

- Do you have any anecdotal evidence or quotes from leading anti-hunger advocates?
- How much money would a 10 or 20 percent increase in participation bring annually into your state? You can use the issuance figures on the FNS website to calculate this at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/fspmmain.htm>.
- Include findings from research, focus groups, or taskforces on the barriers to food stamp participation in your state.

Goals and Objectives

It is recommended for the plan to cite participation increase as the primary goal, given that fundamentally, outreach is the pursuit of increased participation. It may be possible to include goal participation rates for target populations as well. Objectives can include more specific activities that contribute to the achievement of the goal.

Evaluation

Describe how the outreach plan will be evaluated. Refer to ‘Evaluation’ on pages 15-18 of this guide for more information on evaluation.

Sustainability

The outreach plan should include brief information on the sustainability of the initiatives. For instance, has a steering committee been formed to oversee the evaluation and continuation of the outreach initiatives outlined in the plan?

Timeline

The timeline should address the following questions: When will these activities be implemented? Who will take the lead on each deadline? When will they be evaluated?

SECTION TWO: BUDGET SUMMARY

This is a budgetary overview of the entire outreach plan, including state-conducted and contracted outreach initiatives. In the suggested format used in the plan template, the budget is broken down by agency and contractor, expense categories, and federal/state/private shares. Private shares include money provided by third-party donors as well as expenses paid out by non-governmental contractors.

The total Federal share requested cannot exceed the total eligible private and State share. Refer to ‘Fiscal Policy’ on page 28 for further information about eligible expenditures and match sources.

Agency / Contractor – List the state agencies or contractors that have funds allocated for food stamp outreach.

Category – The categories will vary, depending on the nature of the outreach projects. Some suggested categories that may be used:

- Salary and Benefits
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Materials
- Travel
- Postage
- Administrative

Section 3: Funding Summary

Source	Funding
State / Private source A	
State / Private source B	
State / Private source C	
State / Private source D	
TOTAL STATE AND THIRD-PARTY	
FEDERAL MATCH REQUESTED	
TOTAL OUTREACH FUNDS	

Section 4: Non-Contracted Outreach Budget

4a. Budget

Activity	Category	Projected Budget
ACTIVITY X	CATEGORY A	\$x
	CATEGORY B	\$x
	CATEGORY C	\$x
	CATEGORY D	\$x
	CATEGORY E	\$x
	TOTAL	\$x
ACTIVITY Y	CATEGORY A	\$x
	CATEGORY B	\$x
	TOTAL	\$x
TOTAL		\$x

- Building / Space
- Maintenance
- Indirect costs

2) Identify and total all of the direct costs of programs served by the indirect costs.

Indirect Costs – The indirect cost computation is based on policy prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Indirect costs are defined as those that benefit more than one program but are not easily identified to a specific program. If a cost can be readily attributed to a specific program, it is a direct cost. One method of calculating indirect cost is to:

- 3) Divide the total indirect costs by the total direct costs, which results in an indirect cost rate.
- 4) Apply this rate to the direct costs of each program (in this case, outreach) to calculate the program's proportion of the indirect costs.

1) Identify and total the indirect costs, which may include expenses such as payroll or personnel.

Salary and Benefits – Identify the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs or staff years) and position of staff that will be conducting outreach. A staff year or FTE is based on 2080 hours per year. Include

SECTIONS FOUR, FIVE, SIX AND SEVEN

These sections document the outreach activities that will be implemented. Sections four and five pertain to outreach that is conducted “in-house” by the state agency. Section four is an overview of the budget of all state-implemented outreach. Section five should be completed for each individual outreach activity – thus, if a state is implementing three outreach initiatives, the plan would have to include three of these pages.

Section six, similarly, should be completed for each contractor that is implementing outreach. Section seven is identical to section five, except that it is used for contracted outreach initiatives.

For example, if an outreach plan includes three state-conducted initiatives and three contractors that are each implementing two initiatives these sections would be organized as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Section 4: Agency Budget | Section 6: Contractor Budget B |
| • Section 5: Outreach initiative A | • Section 7: Outreach initiative F |
| • Section 5: Outreach initiative B | • Section 7: Outreach initiative G |
| • Section 5: Outreach initiative C | |
| Section 6: Contractor Budget A | Section 6: Contractor Budget C |
| • Section 7: Outreach initiative D | • Section 7: Outreach initiative H |
| • Section 7: Outreach initiative E | • Section 7: Outreach initiative I |

Section 5: State-Implemented Outreach Initiatives

5a. Objective / Project Title:

5b. Target Populations

5c. Description of Activity

5d. Goal

5e. Budget

Category	Projected Budget
TOTAL	

5f. Evaluation

5g. Notes

only paid workers. You may want to indicate here or elsewhere if volunteer workers will be used.

SECTION THREE: FUNDING SUMMARY

This chart summarizes the sources that will fund the activities outlined in the plan. Record all of the sources, whether they are State funds or private funds. If the private funds are eligible for federal matching funds (see ‘Fiscal Policy’ on page 28), include them in the total eligible funds line.

SECTION FOUR: NON-CONTRACTED OUTREACH BUDGET

Section four summarizes the budget for

outreach initiatives conducted in-house. Under the ‘Activity’ column, list all of the projects that are to be implemented by the state agency. If all outreach activities are contracted out, sections four and five should be omitted.

SECTION FIVE: NON-CONTRACTED OUTREACH INITIATIVES

The outreach plan should include one copy of this section for each outreach initiative implemented directly by the State agency. Each section includes a project title and an overview and summary of the target population. The activity description should include information about the content and

Section 6: Contractor Information and Budget

6a. Contractor Name:

6b. Brief Description of Contractor:

6c. Address

6d. Contacts

- Name: Position: Phone: E-mail:
- Name: Position: Phone: E-mail:
- Name: Position: Phone: E-mail:

6e. Subcontractors:

6f. Budget

Activity	Category	Projected Budget
ACTIVITY X	CATEGORY A	\$x
	CATEGORY B	\$x
	CATEGORY C	\$x
	CATEGORY D	\$x
	CATEGORY E	\$x
	TOTAL	\$x
ACTIVITY Y	CATEGORY A	\$x
	CATEGORY B	\$x
	TOTAL	\$x
TOTAL		\$x

Section 7: Contracted Outreach Initiatives

7a. Objective / Project Title:

7b. Contractor / Subcontractor:

7c. Target Populations

7d. Description of Activity

7e. Goal

7f. Budget

Category	Projected Budget
TOTAL	

7g. Evaluation

dissemination plan of the outreach message. per additional participant figure should supplement the budget.

Goal

This can include impact objectives such as an increase in participation, or process objectives such as number of direct contacts and indirect contacts, or behavioral changes. Direct contacts include the number of people participating in informational sessions, group discussions, or one-on-one outreach. Indirect contacts count the number of exposures made through print materials, TV and radio advertisements, and so on.

Budget

If appropriate, a cost per contact or cost

SECTION SIX: CONTRACTOR INFORMATION AND BUDGET

One copy of this section should be completed for each private organization performing contracted outreach initiatives. This includes a budget that encompasses all costs included in the contract.

SECTION SEVEN: CONTRACTED OUTREACH INITIATIVES

Section seven is similar to section five in that it documents outreach activities under contract.

REPORTING AND RECORDS

366A

In addition to submitting the outreach plan, state agencies must submit a FNS-366A, Budget Projection Statement, for FNS approval. State agencies must report their projected outreach federal funding request on FNS-366A, line 16. This report is due August 15 in the regional office for the upcoming fiscal year.

SF-269

State agencies must report outreach expenditures on SF-269, column 16. This report is to be submitted quarterly, within 30 days of the end of each quarter. A final report is due 90 days following the end of the Federal fiscal year.

Record Retention

Food Stamp Program regulations require that all records be retained for three years from fiscal closure. This requirement applies to fiscal records, reports, and client information.

FISCAL POLICY

FNS reimburses 50 percent of the state agency's total allowable outreach expenditures for FSP outreach activities. For example, if the agency has \$100 in costs, it would draw \$50 in state or eligible private funds and \$50 in federal funds—every allowable dollar spent for food stamp outreach may be matched with a federal dollar. This federal match is subject to a number of regulations regard-

ing funding sources and expenditures. These regulations are outlined below.

FUNDING

The state portion of the match must be one or a combination of the following:

- **State cash**
- **Contributions (cash and in-kind) from other governmental state or local agencies and institutions.**
- **Outreach expenses paid out by an approved non-governmental contractor:** See 'Contractors' for more information.

• **Private, third party cash donations, with a waiver:** Technically, federal regulations prohibit consideration of private cash donations for the state match. However, states may request a FNS waiver to allow matching funds for private cash donations.

Note that third-party contracting and third-party private donations are separate and distinct issues. Non-governmental organizations that are contracted to conduct outreach by the state agency are not considered third-party donors.

Third-party cash donation waiver requests offering justification should be submitted with the plan. The waiver must have the following assurances:

- The funds must be under the state agency's control. While the funds may be donated or contracted out for food stamp outreach activity, the funds may not revert back to the donor.

- The donations are to be received without any limitation or restriction imposed by the donor.
- The donations must not result in endorsement of a particular brand or firm over another, or an advertising tie-in.
- State law and state accounting procedures must allow for internal accounting procedures to identify and access the donated funds.

• **Certain non-cash sources** may qualify for federal match, such as depreciation and use allowance charges. For example, it may be possible for a contracted organization to claim depreciation as a non-cash outlay eligible for matching funds. These are not to be confused with in-kind donations, which are unallowable. Contact the regional FNS food stamp outreach coordinator for more information.

INELIGIBLE FUNDING

The following resources are **not eligible** for federal matching funds:

- **Private, third party cash donations, without a waiver**
- **Private, third party in-kind donations:** These include non-cash resources such as office space, equipment, supplies and volunteer time.
- **Other federal funds:** Funds paid under another federal assistance agreement are not allowable unless authorized by the federal legislation. Indian tribal organizations have federal funds that are generally eligible

for a federal match. The plan must specify whether other federal funds will be used and with citation of the law.

CONTRACTORS

Private organizations that perform approved outreach activities under contract can, with state and federal approval, receive 50 percent matching funds for their allowable expenses.

If a private organization wishes to perform food stamp outreach and receive federal matching funds, it must collaborate with the state agency to develop an outreach plan. The state or local agency and the contractor must draft a legal agreement.

To receive 50 percent federal matching reimbursement, the contract must meet the following conditions:

- The organization cannot be using other federal funds, such as federal grant money, to perform the outreach.
- All expenses must be allowable expenses for federal match (see 'Expenditures').
- Time records must be kept for all staffing expenses.
- As per the record retention policy, all receipts must be retained for three years.

EXPENDITURES

State agencies must follow the cost principles in OMB Circular A-87. Non-profit organizations must follow the cost principles in OMB Circular A-122. Universities must follow the cost principles in OMB Circular A-21.

Allowable Expenditure Examples:

- Staffing booths at fairs to provide information about food stamps or to answer questions.
- Visiting senior centers to explain food stamp rules.
- Distributing information at places where target populations are known to gather, such as housing developments, WIC clinics, schools in low-income areas, English as a second language classes, soup kitchens, and community service providers.
- Pre-screening individuals.
- Assisting individuals with the application process.
- Conducting workshops for members of community organizations serving low-income people.
- Reimbursing mileage costs incurred for training.
- Placing paid ads in the local newspaper to educate about food stamps and its requirements.
- Producing and distributing educational posters and brochures.
- Producing radio and television spots for public service announcements to educate potential applicants about food stamps.

- Placing media spots on television, radio, and print media.
- Monitoring local agencies' or contractors' outreach performance.

Unallowable Expenditure Examples:

- Acting as an authorized representative for applying, receiving food stamps at issuance, or food purchasing.
- Intervening with local food stamp offices, at the certification interview or other times, to advocate on behalf of specific applicants or recipients.
- Recruiting individuals to receive food stamps. Recruitment activities are designed to persuade individuals who have made an informed choice not to apply for food stamps to change his or her decision and apply.
- The state agency cannot receive federal match reimbursement for volunteer work. The state agency can plan, manage, facilitate, and oversee volunteer work and may claim those costs. The state agency may reimburse volunteers for their actual expenses necessary to conduct FSP informational activities. Expenses for state, local, or contractor staff engaged in training of volunteers are ineligible for a federal match.

USDA FNS Regional Offices

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Virginia, Virgin Islands, West Virginia
(609) 259-5124

Mercer Corporate Park
300 Corporate Blvd.
Robbinsville, NJ 08691-1598

Midwest Regional Office

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin
(312) 353-6272

77 West Jackson Blvd., 20th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-3507

Mountain Plains Regional Office

Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming
(303) 844-0338

1244 Speer Blvd., Suite 903
Denver, CO 80204-3581

Northeast Regional Office

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
(617) 565-6397

10 Causeway Street, Room 501
Boston, MA 02222-1069

Southeast Regional Office

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
(404) 562-7031

61 Forsyth Street SW, Room 8T36
Atlanta, GA 30303-3415

Southwest Regional Office

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
(214) 290-9804

1100 Commerce Street, Room 5-A-6
Dallas, TX 75242-9980

Western Regional Office

Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Guam Trust Territories, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa
(415) 705-2333

550 Kearny Street, Room 400
San Francisco, CA 94108-2518

SAMPLE

*This plan was submitted and approved by
the Mountain Plains Regional Office*

**FOOD STAMP PROGRAM
Montana Outreach Plan**

Fiscal Year: 2003

State Agency: Department of Public Health and Human Services

Date Submitted: February 3rd, 2003

Section 1: General Information

1a. State: Montana

1b. Fiscal Year: 2003

1c. Agency: Department of Public Health and Human Services

1d. Primary Contacts

- Name: Jill Nelson Position: Food Stamp Unit Supervisor Phone: 406-444-5685 E-mail: jilln@state.mt.us
- Name: Yvette Barnier Position: Programs Officer Phone: 406-444-7483 E-mail: ybarnier@state.mt.us
- Name: Brenda Falconer Position: Budget Officer Phone: 406-444-7056 E-mail: bfalconer@state.mt.us

1e. Statement of Need

There is a clear need for expanded participation in Montana's food assistance programs. According to a 2002 Food Security Institute report, Montana had the ninth highest food insecurity rate in the nation in the 1998-2000 period. But further, Montana had the second largest increase in the incidence of hunger in the country, moving up 19 rankings between 1996-1998 and 1998-2000.

Based on participation numbers in FY 2002, a 10 percent increase in statewide Food Stamp Program participation would provide nutrition assistance to over 6,000 people; a 20 percent increase would aid nearly 13,000. This increase would translate into approximately \$6,000,000 and \$12,000,000, respectively, injected annually into Montana's neediest areas.

The outreach initiatives detailed in this plan are meant as a pilot project targeting Missoula County. If the activities succeed, the plan may be expanded to a statewide project in the following years.

1f. Goals and Objectives

To increase the Food Stamp Program participation rate in Missoula County by 10 percent through:

- Application assistance training at local food pantries.
- Targeted mailings to approximately 3,000 income-eligible non-participants.
- Informational posters in retail stores, community agencies, and other visible sites in low-income areas outlining food stamp and application assistance information.

There are approximately 7,400 food stamp recipients in Missoula County. A 10 percent increase would increase participation by about 750, annually generating approximately \$706,493 in issuance.

1g. Evaluation

The Missoula Food Bank will evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach initiatives, and will submit a report of their findings by September 30th, 2003.

1h. Sustainability

An outreach steering committee will be created to ensure the sustainability of the outreach initiatives. It will be responsible for evaluation and possible future expansion of Montana’s outreach plan. The committee will be composed of DPHHS staff, local community organizations’ staff, and other local advocates.

1i. Timeline

Activity	Lead	Date
Application assistance training development and implementation	Montana DPHHS	2/1/03 – 3/31/03
Application assistance training finished	Montana DPHHS	3/31/03
Mailings and posters developed and printed	Missoula Food Bank	3/1/03 – 4/15/03
Mailings completed	Missoula Food Bank	4/15/03
Application assistants ready to serve clients	Missoula Food Bank	4/15/03
Posters disseminated and displayed	Missoula Food Bank	4/1/03 – 5/1/03
Poster campaign completed	Missoula Food Bank	5/1/03
Evaluation of outreach initiatives	Missoula Food Bank	8/1/03
Final report submitted to Montana DPHHS	Missoula Food Bank	9/30/03

Section 2: Budget Roll-up

Agency / Contractor	Category	State Share	Private Share	Federal Share	Projected Budget
Department of Health and Human Services	Salary and Benefits	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Travel	\$0	\$156	\$156	\$312
	Materials	\$0	\$25	\$25	\$50
	Indirect Costs	\$0	\$105	\$105	\$210
	TOTAL	\$0	\$286	\$286	\$572
Missoula Food Bank	Salary and Benefits	\$0	\$2,392	\$2,392	\$4,784
	Printing	\$0	\$1,145	\$1,145	\$2,290
	Postage	\$0	\$925	\$925	\$1,850
	TOTAL	\$0	\$4,462	\$4,462	\$8,924
TOTAL PRIVATE AND STATE SHARE					\$4,748
TOTAL FEDERAL SHARE REQUESTED					\$4,748
TOTAL OUTREACH BUDGET					\$9,496

Section 3: Funding Summary

Source	Funding
State Funds	\$0
Missoula Food Bank	\$4,748
TOTAL STATE AND THIRD-PARTY	\$4,748
FEDERAL MATCH REQUESTED	\$4,748
TOTAL OUTREACH FUNDS	\$9,496

Note: In compliance with federal matching fund eligibility clauses, the Missoula Food Bank is not using federal grant money to fund the private match.

Section 4: Non-Contracted Outreach Budget

4a. Budget

Activity	Category	Projected Budget
Training application assistants	Salary and Benefits	\$0
	Travel	\$312
	Materials	\$50
	Indirect Costs	\$210
	TOTAL	\$572
TOTAL BUDGET		\$572

Section 5: Non-Contracted Outreach Initiatives

5a. Objective / Project Title: Train application assistance volunteers

5b. Target Populations

Clients of the Missoula Food Bank identified as eligible for Food Stamp program participation, as well as low-income Missoula residents targeted by poster campaigns.

5c. Description of Activity

Jill Nelson and Yvette Barnier of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services will travel to Missoula on two occasions to train application assistance volunteers at Missoula Food Bank. This service will be publicized through both targeted mailings and posters around Missoula. Section 7 details those initiatives.

This will not include eligibility training. It will include the following training topics:

- How to complete the application form.
- Verification requirements.
- How to obtain verification.
- What applicants can expect when they arrive at the Office of Public Assistance.
- How long the interview process will take.
- Under what circumstances a face-to-face interview can be waived.
- What is meant by expedited services.
- What can be purchased with food stamps.
- Overview of client rights and responsibilities.
- Information about available interpreter services, transportation, and childcare in the area.
- How to use the Electronic Benefit Transfer system.
- Broad overview of reporting requirements.
- Availability of free employment and training services.
- Availability of handouts and information (possible use of OPA video) with overview of all programs available.

5d. Goal

To test an innovative plan to pre-screen potential Food Stamp participants using the client population income records of a community food bank. Specifically, the application assistance training component will produce volunteers competent to inform potential participants of the nature of the application process, and to aid them in completing its paperwork. In compliance with USDA Food Stamp Outreach program

regulations, these volunteers will not act as advocates on behalf of those they assist, nor will they attempt to persuade those who have made an informed decision not to apply to do so.

5e. Budget

Category	Cost
Travel	\$312
Indirect Costs	\$210
Materials	\$50
Total	\$572

5f. Evaluation

The volunteers at the food bank will be trained to tally:

- The number of people who received information about the Food Stamp Program.
- The number of people who received application assistance.
- The number of people who successfully applied for Food Stamps as a result of this service.

Using this information, the Outreach Steering Committee will make an assessment about the possible expansion of this initiative statewide.

5g. Notes

The confidentiality of all clients using the application assistance service is assured. Information related to income, financial status, household size, etc. will not be shared or released.

Section 6: Contractor Information and Budget

6a. Contractor Name: Missoula Food Bank

6b. Brief Description of Contractor: An America's Second Harvest affiliate, the Missoula Food Bank distributes approximately 250 tons of food annually to Missoula residents.

6c. Address:

219 South Third West
Missoula, MT 59801

6d. Contact

Name: Cynthia Lotty Position: Executive Director Phone: 406-549-0543 E-mail: Cynthia@missoulafoodbank.org

6e. Subcontractors: n/a

6f. Budget

Activity	Category	Projected Budget
Distribution of posters	Printing	\$379
	Postage	\$50
	TOTAL	\$429
Targeted mailings	Printing	\$1,911
	Postage	\$1,800
	TOTAL	\$3,711
Staff	Salary and Benefits (.20 x \$23,920)	\$4,784
TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT		\$8,924

6g. Staffing: Robert Wales, Missoula Food Bank's Outreach Coordinator, will spend 20 percent of his time on the execution of these projects. He will keep a weekly timesheet documenting hours spent and submit quarterly reports. Robert will assemble a final report summarizing the results of the outreach initiatives before the end of the fiscal year. His activities will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Facilitating the volunteer training days
- Overseeing the steering committee

- Overseeing postering efforts across Missoula: selecting locations and recruiting and overseeing volunteers
- Coordinating the mailing process
- Completing surveys and all other evaluation activities
- Devising and implementing new outreach initiatives based on project progress
- Improving quality and quantity of collaborative partnerships for food stamp outreach in Montana, with food banks and pantries as well as other community organizations in Missoula and elsewhere.

Section 7: Contracted Outreach Initiatives

7a. Objective: Send targeted mailings to some 3,000 income-eligible nonparticipants.

7b. Contractor / Subcontractor: Missoula Food Bank

7c. Target Populations

Clients of the Missoula Food Bank in the Missoula County area.

7d. Description of Activity:

The Missoula Food Bank collects self-reported financial information from their clients. Using this data, they have assembled a mailing list of individuals who are ostensibly not participants while also income-eligible for Food Stamps.

They will mail a 9 x 12 envelope with the following information printed on it:

- Checklist of items to bring to the Food Stamp Office (i.e. forms of ID, proof of income, etc.)
- Outreach message to dispel common misconceptions about the program and destigmatize Food Stamps
- Brief overview of eligibility rules and possible benefits
- Map and directions to the local Food Stamp Offices
- Map and directions to the Missoula Food Bank to receive application assistance
- Directory of emergency food providers in the county

Additionally, the following will be inside the envelope:

- Flyer: "What can \$10 buy?"
- Flyer with general Food Stamp information

7e. Goals:

- To test an effort to increase Food Stamp enrollment by prescreening eligible Food Stamp Program participants as identified by the client data of the Missoula Food Bank.
- To directly cause an increase of at least 1,500 applications and 750 participants. This would roughly equate to a 10% increase in participation.

7f. Budget:

Category	Cost
Envelope printing	\$288
Postage (3000 x \$.60)	\$1,800
8 ½ x 11 insert printing	\$173

Application printing	\$1,450
Labor	\$0
Total	\$3,711

7g. Evaluation Method: They will do follow-up calls on 144 recipients of the mailing and ascertain, at a 90% confidence level, the total number of people who applied for and received food stamps due to this initiative. Using this data we can assess the effectiveness of the mailing. If the goal of 750 additional participants is met, we will consider expanding this outreach activity statewide.

Section 7: Contracted Outreach Initiatives

7a. Objective: Encourage increased Food Stamp participation and advertise availability of application assistance services by displaying 250 large full-color posters around Missoula County.

7b. Contractor / Subcontractor: Missoula Food Bank

7c. Target Populations

Residents of the Missoula County area. The posters will be displayed chiefly in low-income areas and in retail stores.

7d. Description of Activity:

They will design an 24"x12" full-color poster with outreach information. The poster will contain the following information:

- General outreach message
- Directions to Food Stamp offices
- Income eligibility guidelines
- Issuance estimates, based on household size
- Directions to the Missoula Food Bank for application assistance
- Directory of emergency food providers in the area

7e. Goals:

To establish a mutually beneficial partnership with local retailers and encourage low-income Missoula residents to apply for Food Stamps and utilize application assistance at the Missoula Food Bank.

7f. Budget:

Category	Projected Budget
Printing	\$379
Labor	\$0
Postage	\$50
Total	\$429

The poster will be printed at Gateway Printing in Missoula, MT.

Sources

Part One: Why Outreach?

¹ Andrews, Margaret, Steven Carlson, and Mark Nord. USDA Economic Research Service. Household Food Security in the United States, 2002. Oct. 2003.

² Food Stamp Program Annual Summary. 23 Dec. 2002. USDA FNS. <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/fssummar.htm>>

³ Castner, Laura A., and Allen L. Schirm. USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2001. 2003.

⁴ USDA Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. The Decline in Food Stamp Participation: A Report to Congress. July 2001.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Andrews, Margaret, Steven Carlson, and Mark Nord. USDA Economic Research Service. Household Food Security in the United States, 2001. Oct. 2002.

⁷ The United States Conference of Mayors. A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities. December 2002.

⁸ Data from: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/fsfybft.htm> and ERS report, Effects of Changes in FSP expenditures Across the US Economy. Aug. 2002.

⁹ Hanson, Kenneth and Elise Golan. USDA Economic Research Service. Effects of Changes in Food Stamp Expenditures Across the U.S. Economy. Aug. 2002. **Note:** The figures used in part one are only estimates based on figures provided in this document. Food Stamp Program expenditures must be emergency funding in order to fully realize the economic benefits of increased food stamp issuance.

Sidebar: Food Insecurity and Health

Compiled from the following sources:

- Frongillo, Edward A., Christine M. Olson, Barbara S. Rauschenbach, and Anne Kendall. Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University. Nutritional Consequences of Food Insecurity in a Rural New York State County. Jan. 1997.
- Frongillo, Edward A. and Jung Sun Lee. Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University. Nutritional and Health Consequences are Associated with Food Insecurity Among U.S. Elderly Persons. Feb. 2001.
- Rose, Donald. Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University. Economic Determinants and Dietary Consequences of Food Insecurity in the United States. 1999.
- Health Consequences of Hunger. Food Research and Action Council. <http://www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us.html>

Part Two: Formulating Outreach

This section was informed by the following sources:

- Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force. Food Stamp Outreach: A "How To" Guide for Oregon Communities. Nov. 2001.
- Nutrition Consortium of New York State, Inc., Nutrition Outreach and Education Program. A food stamp outreach manual. The "Formative Evaluation" and "Process Evaluation" sections included summaries from:
 - Hersey, James, Ph.D and Sarah Daugherty, M.P.H. Health Systems Research, Inc, for USDA Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation. Evaluating Social Marketing in Nutrition. Dec. 1999.

Sidebar: Running a Focus Group

- McNamara, Carter. Management Assistance Program for Non-profits. Basics of Conducting Focus Groups. 1999.

Part Three: Publicizing Outreach

- USDA FNS Mountain Plains Regional Public Affairs Office. Working with the News Media: A Guide for Summer Food Service Program Outreach.
- Federal Communicators Network. Communicators Guide. Dec. 2001.
- Guidelines for Submitting Press Releases to Newspapers. Media Relations Central. <<http://www.mrcentral.com>>

The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program

The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program, sponsored by the Congressional Hunger Center, is a yearlong fellowship that trains leaders in the fight against hunger. Each year it provides over twenty emerging leaders with a broad understanding of the problem of hunger, the skills necessary to contribute to solutions, and the personal experience that puts faces and names to these issues.

Emerson Fellows spend the first six months of the program working with community-based organizations throughout the country to learn about hunger and poverty at the grassroots level. The following six months are spent in Washington, D.C. at national nonprofit organizations working on hunger and poverty policy.

During their year, Emerson Fellows strengthen the national movement to fight hunger in the United States. Through the relationships they build and the experiences they gain, Emerson Fellows help to bridge the gap that often exists between local anti-hunger efforts and national policy advocacy.

For more information about applying to host an Emerson Fellow, please call 202-547-7022, or e-mail fellows@hungercenter.org.