

Planning and Implementation of Your Project

Are you ready to enlist CHWs in your program's community outreach efforts? If so, read through the following 10-step guide on developing a SNAP outreach project.

Step 1 Describe your project.

Take time to decide what activities will take place. You can start by expanding existing activities. You can also include new activities such as SNAP prescreening.

If you plan to obtain funding, you should include local data to show the need for this project. It is important to present your business case to potential funders.

As you meet with others, your project description will probably change.



Tools & Tips

The time required to develop your project will depend on the complexity of your activities and funding sources. For example, if you need to obtain funding for stipends, travel, or other expenses, develop your timeline with this in mind.

Step 2 Meet with SNAP offices.

Once you have a general idea of your project, contact your local SNAP representatives to schedule a meeting. To find your local SNAP office, please visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm>. Be prepared to discuss your plans and answer questions. You may wish to include other partners involved with your project in this meeting. If they are not able to join you, you may want to present letters of support.

Below are some questions that you may wish to ask your local or State SNAP office, depending on the nature of your project:

- Has your office participated in the development of a community needs assessment? If yes, can I obtain a copy or speak with someone who worked on the needs assessment?
- Are there any organizations receiving funding through your State outreach or nutrition education plans? If yes, what services are they performing and do you have contact information?
- How could our project complement current SNAP outreach activities conducted by your office or other outreach organizations?
- Have other organizations or volunteer networks contacted your office? Are you currently working with other organizations? If yes, how does their project fit in with what my organization is proposing? Can you share your experiences working with organizations like mine – what worked or didn't work on these projects?
- Are you aware of any organizations that might be interested in helping us with this project?
- What challenges do you face when working with our community?
- Can you provide data that highlight the greatest areas of need in the community? Can you identify areas that need additional outreach efforts?
- Would a SNAP representative be willing to be a primary contact for our program's outreach efforts?
- Would you be able to provide training to our outreach workers on SNAP requirements and procedures?



Tools & Tips

Maintain a close partnership with your local SNAP office. Your SNAP office is a key partner to the success of your project. Assure your SNAP contact that you will keep him or her posted and updated during the development and implementation of your project and training. Exchange contact information.

- Will you be able to provide training materials/modules/lesson plans for our use in training outreach workers (such as those you use for your own workers)?
- What local materials do you have that my organization can use? Can you provide us with a quantity of these materials or, if not, do you have a sample we might use to create our own materials?
- Do you maintain a list of volunteers or know of any organizations that use volunteers?
- Can you identify trusted spokespersons in the community that may be able to help with our project?
- Can your office help collect data to use for evaluation by tracking number of calls after an event, number of applications filed, number approved, or number denied?



Tools & Tips

Resolving project issues is important to the success of any partnership. Make sure to have steps in place to identify and correct problems, such as if a CHW is not correctly filling out a SNAP application form. Let your SNAP contact know how the problem was resolved. As projects evolve, problems often occur and procedures may need to be revised.

Communication

Keep each other informed of project changes, SNAP events that may increase calls or visits to the local office, and lessons learned. Flexibility is a must!

Step 3 Establish a staffing base.

Contact nonprofit organizations in your local community to identify CHWs who can be recruited and trained for SNAP outreach. Here are some community action areas where you might find a diversified group of CHWs:

- Education (preschools, English Language Learners programs, school boards)
- Health (community clinics, hospitals, school nurses)
- Leadership (community-based organizations and labor groups)
- Housing (neighborhood associations)
- Area Agencies on Aging (community-based organizations)



Tools & Tips

Many national organizations have local chapters throughout the country. Contact these national organizations to find their local chapter to ask about their local volunteer networks. A sample list of national organizations can be found on page 11 of this chapter.

Step 4 Materials and meetings.

Materials designed to capture the attention of potential CHWs can be distributed at various offices, meetings, or conferences. Be sure to provide contact information and explain the need for your project ([business case](#)), and various roles individuals and groups can play.

After any meeting, follow up with a letter thanking those who participated and explain next steps. A next step may be to schedule one-on-one meetings with interested CHWs.

Step 5 Training and approvals.

After you have prepared your curriculum, develop your training materials based on the activities that CHWs will be performing. Make sure you develop them around local and State policies. States differ in how they run their programs and these differences can affect how eligibility is calculated. SNAP offices may also be willing to share training materials or prescreening tools used to train their own employees and may be willing to participate in your training sessions.

Your training materials should include written project procedures, such as:

- How to submit signed and dated applications to the SNAP office
- How to obtain SNAP policy clarifications
- How to communicate lessons learned on what is working and not working
- What data must be collected and reported for the project evaluation

Before you begin training, ask your local SNAP office to look over your curriculum and SNAP materials. Other participating partners may also want an opportunity to provide feedback on materials. If your local office makes any changes to your materials, make sure you understand why the changes were made.

Step 6 Conduct training sessions.

Train CHWs to become qualified SNAP outreach providers. Since not all CHWs will speak English, some training will need to occur in their native language. To help them, make sure bilingual partners who understand the material are present at your training sessions. It is also important to have your local SNAP contact present for SNAP eligibility discussions. That way, the contact can respond to technical questions about eligibility requirements and the application process.

Your training sessions might include:

- Basic information about SNAP
- Clarifying the myths surrounding SNAP benefits and the process
- Emphasizing nutrition benefits of SNAP
- Basic interviewing strategies
- Information and practice on conducting an eligibility prescreening
- How to fill out the SNAP application form; practice sessions to understand what questions mean
- Verification documents required for application
- Outreach strategies that work
- Outlining specific procedures to submit completed (signed and dated by applicant) SNAP application forms
- Discussion of who will handle policy and procedural questions
- Reporting requirements, including information and data that need to be reported for project evaluation



Tools & Tips

If you want your project to be successful, adequate training must be provided to outreach providers. Because of the complexity of SNAP regulations, miscalculating a benefit amount during a prescreening can make the certification interview more challenging for the eligibility worker who must explain the discrepancy to the client who trusted you to provide correct information.

When possible, use State/local SNAP information and training materials because they are more precise. This means less development and preparation time, which can cut project costs.

You may wish to work with your local office and partners to establish a formalized training program for CHWs. Some States, like Texas, offer a certification program through colleges.



Tools & Tips

Remember CHWs know their communities. Focus on getting their feedback about community outreach ideas that are practical, acceptable to their audience, simple, and meaningful.

Refine and modify the curriculum as needed after the train-the-trainer sessions. Lessons learned can strengthen your presentation and better prepare your audience.

Providing on-the-job training will strengthen and add credibility to your project. Assign a mentor to work with CHWs for a certain number of hours before awarding the certificate. This will demonstrate to your local office that your CHWs have the skills required to do the job.

Participants attending training should receive a packet of information to reinforce what they learned. The packet might include:

- A binder or folder containing the curriculum, PowerPoint presentation(s), procedures, and reporting materials
- Blank SNAP application forms for training purposes, if available
- Web site locations; this is especially important if applications are filed electronically
- An electronic disk containing the PowerPoint presentation and curriculum

Step 7 Award training certificates.

Upon successful completion of the training program, CHWs should receive a certificate.

Tools & Tips

Establish a database of trained volunteers.
This enables local SNAP workers to contact CHWs when applicants need their assistance.

Partnerships benefit everyone.
Local SNAP workers benefit from the assistance provided by CHWs, CHWs benefit because their clients are receiving nutrition assistance, and applicants benefit by receiving excellent customer service.

Step 8 Provide resources.

When CHWs successfully complete training, provide them with appropriate resources and tools for SNAP community outreach. Some items you may wish to provide are:

- Presentation cards/name tags to identify them as CHWs from your organization
- Office supplies such as clips, staplers, staples, pens, clip boards, etc.
- A binder with contact information, PowerPoint presentation, SNAP application form or Web site location for an online application; supporting information on how to fill out the application form; reporting forms; and instructions for filing or following up on submitted applications.
- "Release of Information" documents. CHWs will provide this document to local SNAP offices showing that the client authorizes the worker to disclose such information as case status and reasons for processing delays or denials.
- [Verification envelopes](#). Verification envelopes list the documents applicants need to obtain in order to get certified for SNAP benefits. Since some documents like rent receipts can easily get lost, the envelope is a good place to store materials and keep them organized.
- Resources available for the project such as flip charts, handouts, or chalk or white boards. Will laptop computers be loaned out? If yes, CHWs may need to sign them out.

Step 9 Publicize the project.

People in your community need to know who you are, what you plan to do, and how to contact you. Can these individuals be directed to a toll-free number or Web site address? Ask partners if you can obtain copies of their materials to which you might add a sticker with additional information on your project. Use your community contacts such as radio or television celebrities. Check out the media section of this toolkit for other ideas.

Step 10 Evaluate the Project.

Find out what is effective in your project. Your budget and activities will determine what evaluation techniques might be needed. See the evaluation section of this toolkit for ideas on how to measure success.