SNAP Outreach within Food Banks: A View From The Ground

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Overview of Feeding America Network

- Nation’s Leading Domestic Hunger-Relief Charity
- 200 Network Member Food Banks
  - 58,000 programs
  - All 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico
  - Serving more than 46 million people
National Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation
SNAP Participation

- Historic High Participation
  - Great Recession
  - Policy and legislation

- Variation in SNAP participation among eligible population, by state and region
  - National average =79%
Economic and Policy Periods (1991-2011)

- **Welfare Reform 1991-2001**
  - Robust economy, federal policy reform PRWOA*, expansion of EITC

- **Bush-Era Modernization 2001-2007**
  - SNAP application process is revamped, reduced income reporting requirements.
  - Expanded eligibility for immigrants under Farm Bill
  - SNAP receipt rebounds

- **The Great Recession 2007-2011**
  - Record high unemployment, mortgage and foreclosure crisis
  - SNAP receipt doubles
  - Eligibility waivers and expansion increase state level participation

Annual National SNAP Participation Average
(Shown in Thousands)

Total Costs for SNAP Estimated at $79 Billion in 2013

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Participation and Costs
REGIONAL AVERAGE SNAP PARTICIPATION RATES AMONG ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS, BY USDA REGIONS

And Food Nutrition Service, Food Distribution Programs Regional Offices
SNAP Outreach at Feeding America Network Member Food Banks
Food Banks Reach Populations in Need

- Feeding America Network Food Banks reach an estimated 1 in 7 Americans.
- People visit food banks and agencies because they are facing temporary or longer term hardship.
- Food banks may offer environments that are more welcoming and familiar than government offices.
- Food bank staff often have their pulse on community level issues and are familiar with constituents, as well as local leaders.
- Food bank staff are involved with community activities, reaching children and adults through outreach and targeted programming.
SNAP Outreach & Application Assistance in Feeding America Network

2009, n=57 food banks
2012, n=115 food banks

2009: 72,656 applications
2010: 103,313 applications
2011: 146,296 applications
2012: 161,290 applications

FA Network SNAP Applications

0 - 10
11 - 100
101 - 1,000
1,001 - 10,000
10,001 - 100,000
Individual Member Food Bank Program Trends

- Annual food bank trends tell a unique story about SNAP outreach program implementation
- Context for outreach matters
- Standardization is not the goal, but evidence-based practices can be beneficial for local program delivery

TRENDS IN ANNUAL SNAP APPLICATION ASSISTANCE
FISCAL YEAR 2009-2013

Source: Feeding America

5 of 9 Food Banks Shown on Chart
Case Study Evaluation of SNAP Outreach at Feeding America
Scope of SNAP Outreach and Application Assistance Multi-Site Case Study

- Nine Member Food Banks in Six States (Multi-Site)
  - Six states within Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Southwest, and West
  - Arizona, California, Illinois, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin

- Examination of State Legislative Policies/Systems
  - State and county SNAP administration

- Monthly Program Reports (April-November 2013/8 Months)
  - 50+ interviews with food bank staff across all levels
  - Outreach workers, program directors, food bank executives

- External Data From Other Sources:
  - USDA, local media reports, state/county websites, external research literature, etc.
A Balance of Internal and External Factors Shape Program Implementation & Outcomes

**Internal Factors**
- Leadership
- Resources
- Program Model
- Community Partner Relationships
- Long-Term Planning
- Use of Performance Measurement and Evaluation

**External Factors**
- Population Density
- Geography
- County & State Administration
- Community Partner Opportunities
- Relationship with SNAP Agency
- Public Awareness and Stigma
Aggregate SNAP Outreach and Application Results during Case Study Period

Short Term Program Outcomes

- Client Applications Assisted and Submitted
  - 8% of total clients reached
  - 24% of total clients prescreened
  - 55% of total clients deemed eligible for benefits

* In total, 8 of 9 food banks reported program data used for this diagram. One food bank did not report monthly program data and therefore it is not represented in this diagram.

** One of eight food banks did not report total outreach counts, thus this food bank was not included in the outreach category of this diagram. However, this food bank reported data for all other categories in the diagram.
Five Key Findings from Case Study Evaluation

1. **Trickle Down Effect**: Local and state political and policy conditions influence SNAP outreach, as conducted by member food banks.

2. **Information Sharing**: County and state agencies are gatekeepers of information that influence program outcomes.

3. **Leadership and Board Buy-In**: Consensus about the value of SNAP outreach, as part of the food bank’s mission, is key to program funding, and long-term planning.

4. **Program Capacity**: Number of staff & level of staff knowledge, volunteers, and funding sources are critical for program sustainability.

5. **Population Density**: Reaching people in need is a key programmatic goal, but geographic location creates opportunities/boundaries.
Key Takeaways

• 57% of Member Food Banks have incorporated SNAP outreach and application assistance as a strategy to best assist clients with accessing economic benefits.

• **Food banks face challenges:**
  – Stigma is still widely held toward SNAP
  – Access to outcome data is limited
  – Changing policy environment for SNAP (2014 Farm Bill)
  – Unique population and geographic challenges (rural outreach)

• **Food banks face opportunities:**
  – Building relationships with clients
  – Multi-service provision and referrals to local partners for other services.
  – Collaboration with state and local governmental agencies.
  – Recent legislation and systems that have made SNAP more accessible
Conclusion: Next Steps

- SNAP Outreach Multi-Site Case Study Evaluation is the *first of its kind* conducted in Feeding America Network

- A Full Evaluation Report, with Comparative Analysis, will be completed in September 2014

- Executive Summary to be released in September 2014
Thank you!

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