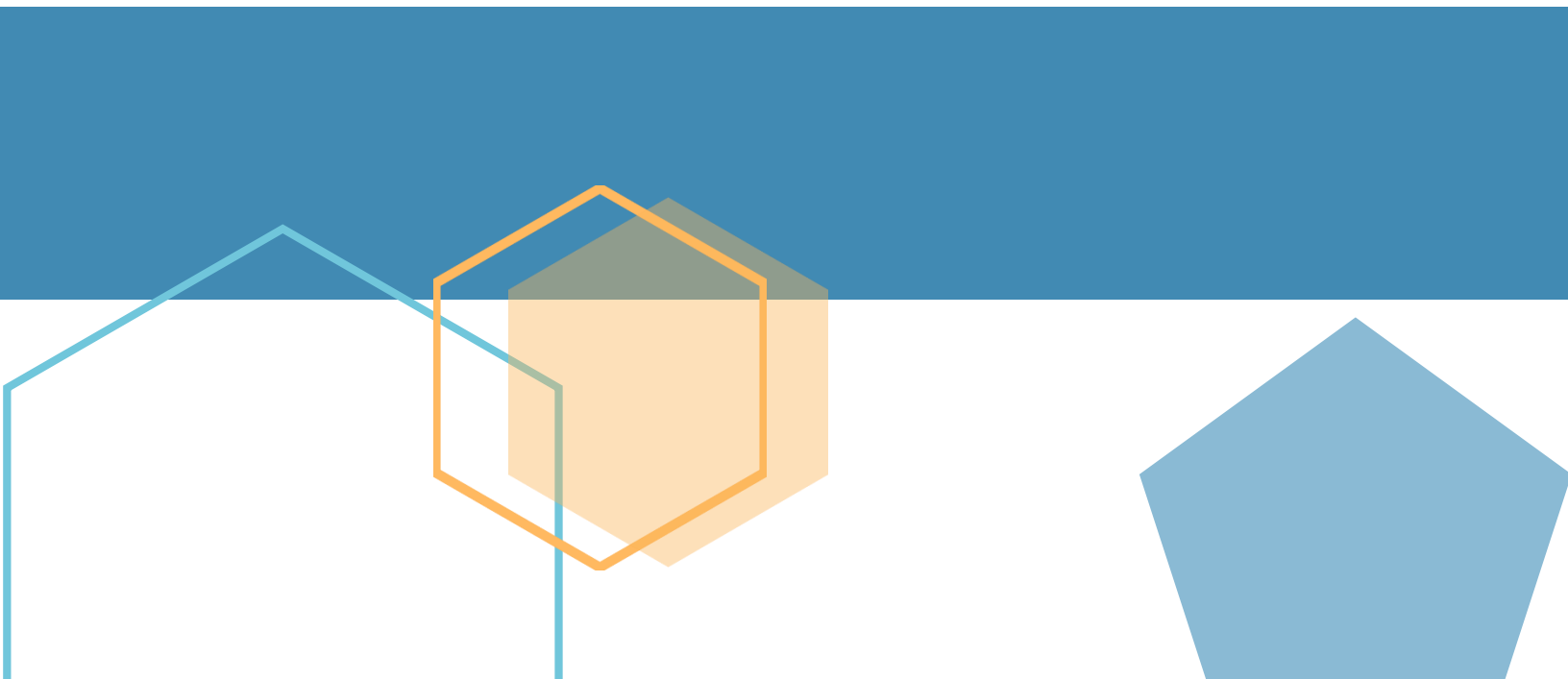




# STATE NUTRITION ACTION COUNCIL (SNAC) TOOLKIT

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A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING STATE-  
LEVEL, CROSS-PROGRAM  
PARTNERSHIPS TO REDUCE OBESITY.





# STATE NUTRITION ACTION COUNCIL TOOLKIT

## **Authors:**

MaryAnn Mills, MPH  
Intern  
Public Health Institute, Center for Wellness and Nutrition  
[maryann.mills@wellness.phi.org](mailto:maryann.mills@wellness.phi.org)

Amy DeLisio, MPH, RD  
Director  
Public Health Institute, Center for Wellness and Nutrition  
[amy.delisio@wellness.phi.org](mailto:amy.delisio@wellness.phi.org)

Susan Vitulli  
Communications Specialist II  
Public Health Institute, Center for Wellness and Nutrition  
[susan.vitulli@wellness.phi.org](mailto:susan.vitulli@wellness.phi.org)

## **Contributors:**

Karen Bertram, MPH, RD  
Consultant

Joi Hatch, MPH, RD  
Regional Nutritionist  
USDA FNS South Eastern Regional Office

Heidi LeBlanc, MS  
Food \$ense Director, Extension Professor  
Utah State University

Michael Miller  
President  
Brown Miller Communications, Inc.



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# PREFACE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The United States has one of the highest obesity rates in the world and over one third of adults living in the U.S. are classified as obese. Obesity-related conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and certain types of cancer are some of the leading causes of death. The estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the U.S. was \$147 billion in 2008, and costs are on the rise.

To address these issues, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is supporting the implementation of state and local initiatives to transform communities to make healthy eating and active living accessible to everyone. Reducing and preventing obesity in the U.S. through partnerships and collaboration are an essential part of the solution. As such, FNS has prioritized the formation of State Nutrition Action Councils (SNAC) to identify solutions to the most pressing issues in their state. SNACs serve as a model for coalescing state programs around nutrition education and obesity prevention efforts.

USDA has included this work in the FNS Agency Priority to "Help America Eat Smart and Maintain a Healthy Weight" under the goal to work toward improving the health of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients by providing SNAP nutrition education and obesity prevention strategies as defined in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.

The Public Health Institute Center for Wellness and Nutrition developed this toolkit to guide SNAC through the process of establishing partnerships to successfully implement obesity-prevention initiatives and improve the health of the most at-risk communities.

### STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION

Convening state-level agencies to identify and implement programs to reduce obesity is a key strategy in improving the health of communities. Various state-level agencies receive funding to do similar work that can lead to duplication of efforts and an inefficient use of resources. Collaboration allows organizations to work jointly to accomplish a united vision and mission using shared resources.

**Collaboration Definition:** Exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of one another for mutual benefit to achieve common purpose.

**Benefits of State-Level Collaboration:**

- Better use of scarce resources conserves limited capital
- Cost and effort are not duplicated. Fragmentation among services, programs, and initiatives is reduced
- An agency can create something in collaboration that it could not create on its own

- Higher-quality, more integrated outcomes for priority population
- Integration of diverse perspectives to create a better understanding of the situation
- Improved communication among agencies, and between agencies and their constituents
- Increased trust and understanding among individuals and organizations
- Potential for organizational and individual learning
- Better ability to achieve important outcomes

### The Collaboration Continuum

Not all partnerships are created equal. Just being at the table is not enough to create collaboration among participants. Establishing partnerships that are truly collaborative requires time, effort, and commitment from everyone involved. Below is a visual based on Himmelman's model of partnership<sup>1</sup> outlining the four levels of commitment on the continuum. Collaboration is best achieved when all these characteristics are in place. You can use the continuum to determine what elements are missing from your partnerships and help guide you towards establishing more collaborative meetings and programs.

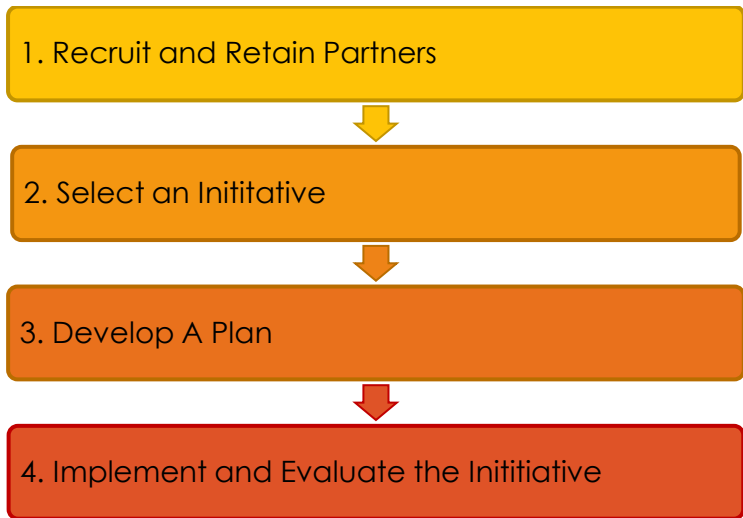
Networking	Coordinating	Cooperating	Collaborating
Exchanging information for mutual benefit	Exchanging information for mutual benefit	Exchanging information for mutual benefit	Exchanging information for mutual benefit
Low or no level of trust required	Some altering of activities to achieve shared purpose	Increase altering of activities	Altering activities- may include modifying and/or adding positions
Limited time commitment	Slight increase in organizational involvement	Additional increase in organizational involvement	Substantial increase in organizational involvement
No sharing of turf	Some degree of trust required	Some sharing of resources	Commitment to sharing resources
		Increasingly formal organizational commitment	Formalized organizational commitment
		Substantial time commitment	Substantial time commitment
		High level of trust	Very high level of trust
		Significant sharing of turf	Written agreements
		May involve written agreements	Sharing of risks, responsibilities, resources, and rewards
			Equal commitment to partners' success
			Commitment to learning from each other

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.teaglefoundation.org/Teagle/media/GlobalMediaLibrary/documents/resources/People\\_Tools\\_and\\_Processes.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.teaglefoundation.org/Teagle/media/GlobalMediaLibrary/documents/resources/People_Tools_and_Processes.pdf?ext=.pdf)



## THE 4 STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT A SNAC INITIATIVE

This toolkit is a framework to help state-level organizations work together to successfully implement obesity-prevention initiatives and improve the health of the most at-risk communities by walking them through the four steps of developing and implementing a SNAC initiative. It contains recommendations, activities, and success stories to make long-term change through collaborative efforts with SNAC partners. The SNAC Toolkit's four steps include:



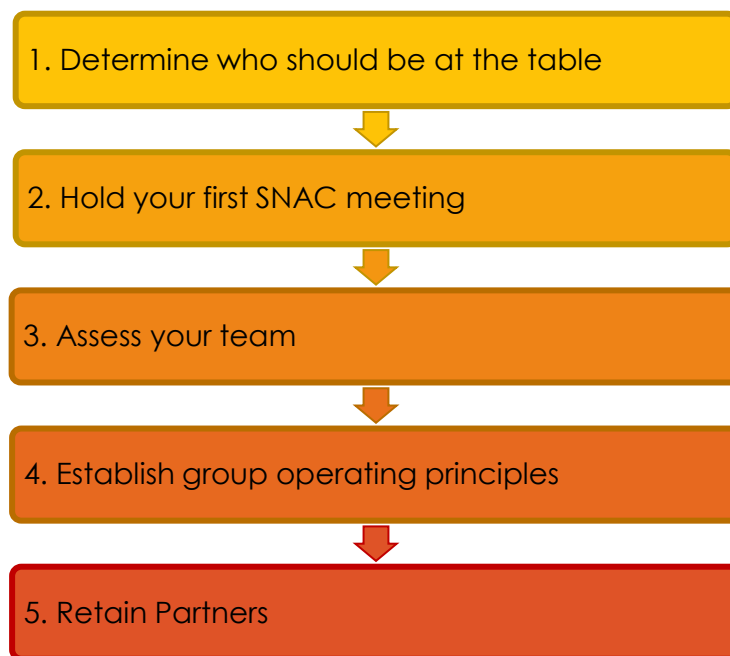




# SECTION 1: RECRUITING AND RETAINING PARTNERS

## STEPS IN RECRUITING AND RETAINING PARTNERS

Before beginning your SNAC work, it is important to identify who will be a part of the SNAC and how they can contribute to the work of the group. Here are the five steps for successfully recruiting and retaining partners for your SNAC:



## STEP 1: DETERMINE WHO SHOULD BE AT THE SNAC “TABLE”

### **DETERMINE WHO WILL BE LEADING THE GROUP AND FACILITATING MEETINGS**

Most successful state-level collaboratives have a leader who facilitates meetings and ensures the group is moving forward collectively. While it is not always necessary, it is beneficial to hire an external facilitator to ensure the SNAC is making progress and stays on track. When selecting a facilitator, consider the following leadership characteristics:

- Can commit time (approximately 3 to 5 hours monthly in addition to regular meetings)
- Represent different perspectives among the group
- Is a collaborative leader and facilitator, fostering an inclusive culture rather than serving as the decider

- Is willing and able to perform key tasks (e.g., facilitate meetings, take notes, write meeting synopses, plan meeting agendas, etc.)
- Are not simply symbolic leaders
- Are both task- and relationship-oriented

**TIP:** Leverage existing moneys to fund an external facilitator- this will eliminate bias and assist in ensuring all voices are heard.

**IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

An important step in the SNAC process is identifying the right people to be involved. While it is helpful to include people from various organizations with different perspectives, it is important to ensure you are starting small with the most essential people at the table in the beginning. Because SNAC is a USDA recommendation, consider starting by identifying partners from other FNS-funded programs including:

Food Distribution Programs	Child Nutrition Programs	Women, Infants and Children	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commodity Supplemental Food Program</li> <li>• Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations</li> <li>• The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child and Adult Care Food Program</li> <li>• Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program</li> <li>• National School Lunch Program</li> <li>• School Breakfast Program</li> <li>• Special Milk Program</li> <li>• Summer Food Service Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers' Market Nutrition Program</li> <li>• Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAP-Ed</li> </ul>

While it varies from state to state, the following programs generally receive and administer FNS Funds:

- State Department of Education
- Extension Offices
- State Department of Agriculture
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- State Department of Public Health
- State Department of Health and Human Services

After you determine which agencies in your state receive FNS funding, do some research about each agency to determine if they would be interested in participating in SNAC. Consider the following questions when doing your research:

- What is the philosophy of top-level leaders regarding nutrition education and obesity prevention?
- Does the leadership of the agency support SNAC?
- Is SNAC a priority for the agency?
- What other state-level collaboratives is the agency part of?
- What are the agencies' main priorities?

**TIP:** Start with a small group of partners and focus on people from FNS-funded agencies. As the SNAC progresses, build upon your base and invite partners from external agencies to participate.

## SELECT PARTNERS

After identifying which agencies should be involved in the SNAC, select your partners. When selecting partners, it is important to ensure the people chosen are committed to the work and the mission of the SNAC. High levels of turnover can result in slower work. When selecting partners look for people whom:

- Have firsthand experience with obesity prevention, food access and/or nutrition education work
- Are genuinely interested in affecting the issue
- Are committed to reducing health inequity in your state
- Model collaborative behavior
- Are action-oriented “doers”
- Can commit to attending meetings, reviewing materials, and supporting SNAC initiative implementation
- Have the authority and trust to represent and influence their organization
- Bring diverse work experience and perspectives to the SNAC

## INVITE PARTNERS TO PARTICIPATE

Once you have identified potential partners to invite to the SNAC, contact each person individually to assess their interest in participating. This can ensure you are inviting the right people to the SNAC table. Taking the time to contact each person can help establish strong relationships with new partners and assist you in identifying “selling points” for SNAC participation.

Based on the information you gathered through your discussions with potential partners, draft a personalized invitation to participate in the SNAC. When drafting your invitation, consider the following:

- Explain what a SNAC is
- Provide an overview of the purpose of a SNAC
- Describe what is required/expected if they decide to participate:

- Attendance and participation at in-person meetings (include an estimated monthly time commitment)
- Support implementation of the selected initiative
- Make the case for participating in a SNAC:
  - Explain why they should join the SNAC. Include information about how the SNAC will benefit them and tie it back to their personal and professional interests.
  - Remember to stress what you are offering to participants in exchange for their expertise, be it an opportunity for professional development, new content knowledge, new connections for their organization, etc.
  - Sell it! Leverage data to show the problem the SNAC would address.

## STEP 2: HOLD THE FIRST SNAC MEETING

After your partners have agreed to participate, schedule your first meeting. The first meeting will set the tone for the SNAC. Take the time to ensure the meeting will be engaging and meaningful for all SNAC members.

### **Before the Meeting:**

- Find a time and location that is convenient for all partners to ensure that everyone can attend.
- Communicate in advance and circulate reminders about when and where the meeting will be held. It can be helpful for a first meeting to also send a list of invited participants so that everyone knows who and what to expect.
- Develop an interactive agenda that enables people to engage and isn't just full of presentations where participants are "talked at". Be sure the agenda is clear about the objectives of each session.
- Ensure someone is responsible for taking notes
- Develop a sign-in sheet and name tags and/or name tents for each member

### **During the Meeting:**

- Start the meeting with introductions and an icebreaker. This will allow members to get to know one another and set a tone of engagement for the meeting
- Engage the participants throughout the meeting, allow plenty of time for discussion and interaction with each other and the SNAC leader
- Ensure you start and end the meeting on time
- Schedule the next meeting

### **After the Meeting:**

- Circulate meeting notes soon after the meeting so people are clear about any follow up tasks.
- Post meeting information and resources where everyone can access them.

## STEP 3: ASSESS YOUR SNAC TEAM

After hosting the first meeting, take time at a subsequent meeting to assess the SNAC team. Completing a group assessment will help you uncover knowledge, skills and resources available within your team, identify gaps, and build linkages among the SNAC members. Various tools exist to conduct group assessments, but one of the most popular is the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The SWOT Analysis will allow your team to identify opportunities that are well-placed to pursue, understand weaknesses of the group, and manage and eliminate potential threats.

### ACTIVITY: CONDUCT A STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Conduct a SWOT Analysis using the SWOT worksheet below with your SNAC. Create a larger version of the worksheet on a flipchart paper.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Use the flipchart to record the group's answers. Ask the following questions:

#### Strengths:

- What do the members of your SNAC team do well, especially in regards to nutrition education and obesity prevention?
- What work is currently happening that is addressing the problem at hand?

- What knowledge, skills, and resources do you bring to the table?

**Weaknesses:**

- What gaps currently exist in addressing obesity in your state?
- What gaps currently exist in addressing obesity within this group?
- Where do other organizations/people have an advantage over you?

**Opportunities:**

- What are the existing internal and external resources?
- What opportunities you can leverage to succeed?

**Threats:**

- What could cause problems for you?
- What internal and external circumstances might affect your ability to succeed?

**TIP:** Write the prompting questions for the SWOT analysis on a flipchart so that everyone can see them.

**STEP 4: ESTABLISH GROUP OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

**DEVELOP SHARED EXPECTATIONS**

Establishing universally agreed upon expectations is an important element in working collaboratively and effectively. Often, groups establish ground rules to guide meeting behavior. However, ground rules are often prohibitive (e.g. no phone use during meeting). Instead, try developing shared expectations that hold the group to a higher, more positive standard of engagement. Shared expectations can provide transparency on acceptable behaviors and attitudes during meetings. Some examples of shared expectations include:

- Discuss un-discussable issues
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Explain the reasoning and intent behind your statements, questions, and actions
- Balance advocacy with inquiry
- Keep the discussion focused
- Make decisions by consensus

**ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING SHARED EXPECTATIONS**

Explain what expectations are to the group and provide them with a couple of examples (see above). Develop shared expectations based on the roles of the SNAC members. This is important because the expectations of the group facilitator/leader will be quite different from the expectations of the participating partners.

**Expectations of the SNAC Leader(s):**

1. Ask the SNAC members to take a few minutes to silently think about what they want from the facilitator. Have them write down their expectations on post-it notes.



2. When they are finished, post their ideas on a flipchart paper or white board. Organize them into "themes" based on areas of overlap.
3. Read the expectations aloud and determine if the group and the leader agree with the expectations set forth.
4. Write out a list of expectations for the SNAC leader
5. After the meeting, type up the list and share it out with the entire SNAC group.

#### **Expectations of the SNAC Members:**

1. Ask the group to take a few minutes to silently think about what they want from the rest of the SNAC members.
2. When they are finished, post their ideas on a flipchart paper or white board. Organize them into "themes" based on areas of overlap.
3. Read the expectations aloud and determine if the group agrees with the expectations set forth.
4. Write out the list of expectations for the SNAC members
5. After the meeting, type up the list and share it out with the entire SNAC group.

### **STATE SPOTLIGHT: CALIFORNIA'S OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

California established SNAC Operating Principles to ensure all members were working with a shared understanding of achieving the group's vision. Below are the operating principles they established.

#### **California Operating Principles**

To fulfill the vision of helping Californians reach their fullest potential across the lifespan through improved nutrition and quality of life, SNAC will operate under these principles:

#### **General Guidelines:**

- Each SNAC organization will consistently be represented by a person with decision making authority
- Promote cooperation, collaboration and planning, while respecting others' work priorities
- Acknowledge each other's viewpoints and differences
- Speak to each other with honesty and consideration
- Recognize that it is okay to agree to disagree
- Seek common ground
- Come to meetings prepared

#### **Communication**

- Keep members apprised of SNAC initiatives and activities
- Regularly communicate with SNAC members regarding decisions and how they are made
- Commit to meet in person quarterly in October, January, April and July and other times through committees and other communication channels

## Teamwork

- Work toward consensus as a means of reaching agreement
- Routinely evaluate our work and identify methods to improve our work together
- Share and support others' opportunities and resources for growth and participation
- Agree to share information and implement agreed-upon strategies
- Appreciate the contributions of our colleagues
- Respect the confidentiality of our discussions
- Communicate with one voice

## ESTABLISH THE SNAC DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

As a group, it is important to have a conversation about who will make the decisions, and how. SNAC may have to make multiple important, and sometimes challenging, decisions. Establishing a defined decision-making process with which the entire group agrees is essential to ensure the SNAC is moving forward collectively, and that all members feel heard. During one of the first meetings, take the time to establish the decision-making process for your SNAC.

There are a variety of options to consider when determining how to decide. Below are four types of decision-making processes with a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of each<sup>2</sup>:

Type	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><b><u>Decision by Authority:</u></b> One person (usually the group leader/ facilitator) decides based on group feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful when group lacks knowledge or skills</li> <li>• Works well when decisions are routine or when commitment to implementation is not a concern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't work well with more complex decisions</li> <li>• Group might not support the final decision</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Minority Control:</u></b> Small group made up of experts on the issue or a delegated subgroup that has the necessary information to make a decision. Uses the skills and resources of a small number of group members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful if whole group cannot meet</li> <li>• Appropriate when overall commitment to the decision is not necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't use the resources of the whole group</li> <li>• Doesn't build group support for the decision</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Majority Control:</u></b> Decisions are made by voting which is mandated by rules or by-laws. Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes all group members in the process</li> <li>• Most democratic method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone wins and someone loses in the voting process</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Table adapted from University of Minnesota Extension "What's the best decision-making method?" <http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/civic-engagement/tip-sheets/decision-making-method/>

adopts the idea that wins the majority of the votes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective when there is no time to build consensus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could result in a disgruntled minority</li> <li>• Can cut out the option of finding a compromise</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consensus:</b> All group members come together and reach an agreement. Everyone is involved, understands the decision, and is prepared to support it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can produce a high-quality decision with a strong commitment to implementation</li> <li>• Problem solving is enhanced</li> <li>• Useful for serious, important, and complex decisions that affect a lot of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes a lot of time and energy</li> <li>• Difficult to achieve in a large group</li> <li>• Requires rich exchange of ideas and information</li> </ul>

**ACTIVITY: ESTABLISH THE GROUP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Review the different decision-making methods table with the group. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each method and determine which method will work best for your SNAC. After you decide which decision-making method you will use, establish the criteria you will use to reach your decision. Consider the following: effectiveness, feasibility, capability, cost, time required, support or enthusiasm (of team and of others).

**STATE SPOTLIGHT: THE CALIFORNIA CONSENSUS SCALE**

At one of California's first SNAC meetings, the leadership led the group in determining their decision-making process. They established specific criteria using a consensus scale to ensure the decision-making process was efficient and that each member's voice was heard. Each member of the SNAC would vote on a decision using the consensus scale below. If the group did not all vote with a three or higher, they would continue discussing the issue at hand until they could come to consensus. Below is the California Consensus Scale:

1	2	3	4	5
<b>I HATE IT!</b>	<b>I DON'T LIKE IT</b>	<b>I CAN LIVE WITH AND SUPPORT IT</b>	<b>I LIKE IT</b>	<b>I LOVE IT!</b>

**STEP 5: RETAIN PARTNERS**

One of the biggest challenges collaboratives face is maintaining partner engagement and SNAC are no different. Ensure SNAC continue to actively participate in the group and in meetings by doing the following:

**Make the Work Meaningful.** Take the time to identify group priorities and align your meeting agendas with work the group is passionate about.

**Ensure the Meetings are Action-Oriented.** We have all participated in meetings where it feels like we are just meeting for the sake of meeting, and not getting anything accomplished. To ensure that your meetings are actionable, assign specific roles/action items to partners, and hold people accountable to the tasks they are assigned.

**Celebrate Successes, Even the Small Ones.** Often, we get caught up in the process, and only celebrate when an initiative is finished. Take the time to celebrate successes throughout the SNAC process, and acknowledge the great work of the group often. Express your appreciation and gratitude to members for participating in the SNAC, and ensure they feel valued.

**Make the Meetings Convenient for Everyone.** Work with SNAC members to identify a consistent time that works for everyone. Try to keep the meetings "short and sweet" while ensuring you have enough time to get through the agenda. Host the meetings at a convenient location.

**Build on Existing Relationships.** Given how important trust is to successful collaboration, forming teams that capitalize on preexisting relationships, increases the chances of a project's success. Research shows that new teams, particularly those with a high proportion of members who were strangers at the time of formation, find it more difficult to collaborate than those with established relationships

**TIP:** For continuity, encourage partners to avoid sending substitutes to meetings.



## SECTION 2: SELECTING AN INITIATIVE

### STEPS IN SELECTING AN INITIATIVE

SNAC are tasked with identifying state initiatives to combat food insecurity, diet-related disease, and obesity. While the task can sound daunting, selecting an initiative can be simplified by breaking it down into smaller steps. Here are the four steps you can take to successfully select your SNAC initiative:



### STEP 1: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

#### EXPLORE AND IDENTIFY THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO OBESITY IN YOUR STATE

The first step in identifying an initiative is to define the problem the SNAC is trying to address. To do this, examine the factors that contribute to obesity in your state. Utilize the Socio-Ecologic Model (SEM) to identify the educational, policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) factors that influence behavior at each level of the SEM. While most agencies have likely done this individually and have a deep understanding of the issue, it is important to ensure all members of the SNAC agree on the factors that contribute to obesity before you can begin to identify strategies to address it.

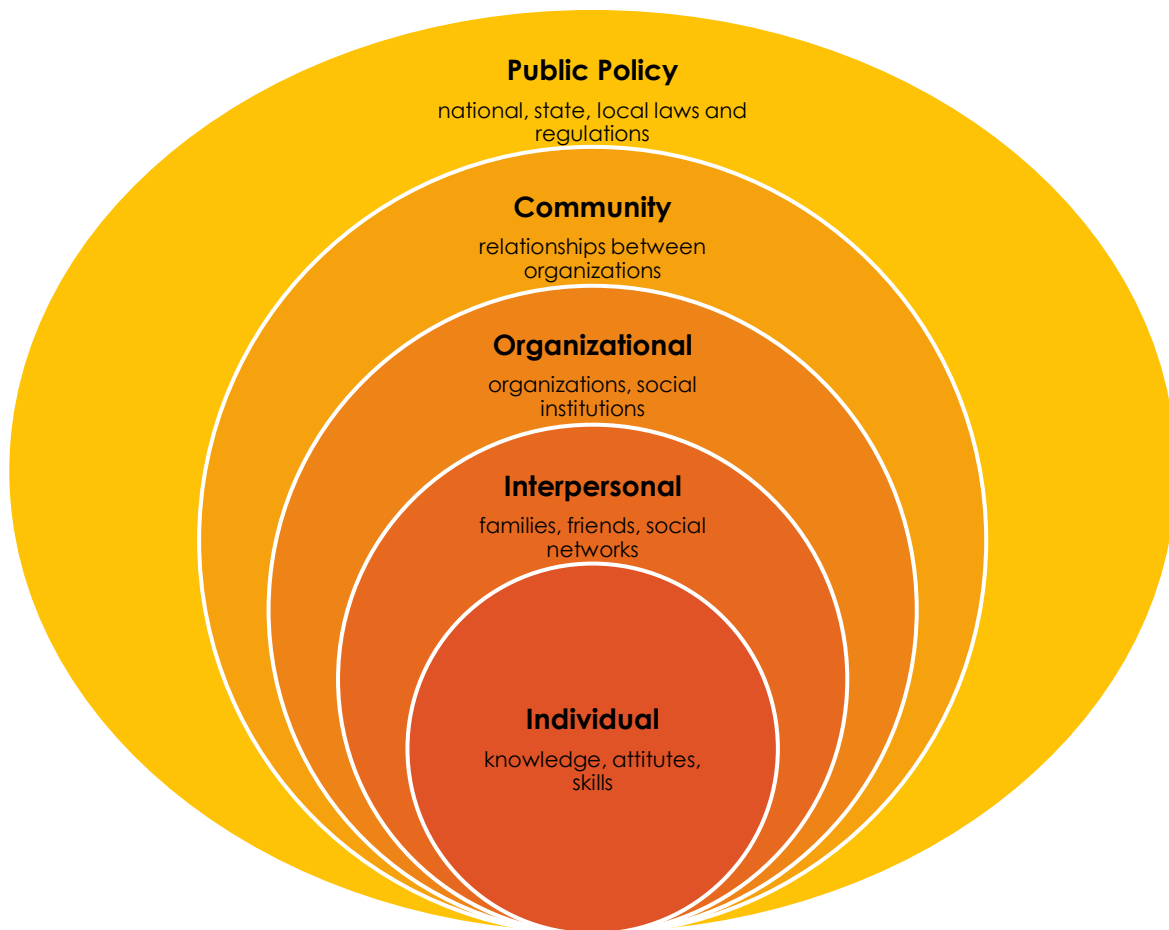
Once you identify the myriad factors that contribute to obesity in your state, identify data to support the issues you've discovered. Quantifying the factors that contribute to obesity can help reinforce the issues you've uncovered and narrow down your approach for selecting

an initiative. Work together to leverage the data each agency already has collected to support the factors you've identified. This can help bring in different perspective on the issue, while efficiently utilizing each agencies' expertise and resources.

While thinking about the factors that contribute to obesity, it is also important to think about the populations who are most affected by obesity. Identifying your priority population will help you narrow down your approach, while reaching the most vulnerable people in your state.

**ACTIVITY: MAP THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO OBESITY**

Create a flip-chart paper with the SEM on it. Ask group members to identify the factors that contribute to obesity at each level and have them write their ideas on post-it notes. Start at the individual level and work your way up. Group common factors together under one "theme".



## STEP 2: EXPLORE AND IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

### EXPLORE AND IDENTIFY EVIDENCE-BASED INITIATIVES TO REDUCE OBESITY

In the first step, you identified the factors that contribute to obesity. Now, it is time to identify solutions to those factors. During this step, the SNAC will explore and identify evidence-based programs and initiatives to reduce obesity. Utilize the SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance and other research-based resources to find effective strategies to address obesity at each level of the SEM. Countless strategies exist to reduce obesity, now is the time to identify the initiatives and programs that have been proven to be effective and meet the needs of the priority population.

### IDENTIFY CURRENT STRATEGIES IN YOUR STATE

Exploring the SNAP-Ed Guidance and additional research-based strategies is an important step in identifying solutions to obesity in your state. An equally, if not more important step, is identifying the work that the agencies participating in the SNAC are already doing to address the issues that contribute to obesity. Take the time to map current initiatives and programs that each agency is implementing. This will help you discover areas of overlap in your work and identify mutually reinforcing strategies. Often, this step reveals important and impactful strategies agencies are implementing, of which others may be unaware. Successful SNAC often identify their initiative during this step because it allows the agencies to see practical solutions that can be expanded by building on existing momentum. It can also identify where the SNAC can have the greatest impact.

#### ACTIVITY: MAP THE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS OBESITY

1. Write out the categories the SNAC identified in flip 1 on flip-chart paper. Have the group brainstorm solutions to each category using the SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance and other evidence-based resources. Ask members to write down their solutions on post-it notes and add them to the flip chart paper under each category.
2. Have the group identify solutions currently being implemented by each agency. Again, have the group write them down and add them to the flip chart under the appropriate category.
3. Note areas of overlap, and mutually reinforcing activities. Also note solutions that have been written down by most of the group.

## STEP 3: IDENTIFY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR WORK

The primary resources needed to support SNAC initiatives include funding and human capital. Because FNS does not fund SNAC initiatives directly, it is essential to identify new resources. There are two different approaches to identify resources that support SNAC work including:

- Identifying and leveraging existing resources
- Seeking grant funding

## IDENTIFY AND LEVERAGE EXISTING RESOURCES

While FNS does not directly fund SNAC work, FNS-funded agencies have resources at their disposal that they can leverage to support the initiative. Identifying internal funding and human resources will help the SNAC determine where to focus their efforts. To successfully identify existing resources, ask the following questions:

- What knowledge, skills, and materials do SNAC members bring to the group?
- Is funding available within the current agencies' budget(s) to allocate to a SNAC initiative? If so, how much funding is available?
- Are SNAC members willing to donate their time to support the initiative?

Answering these questions will help the SNAC narrow down their initiative options and assist in determining whether seeking additional funding is necessary.

## SEEK GRANT FUNDING

FNS awards both competitive and noncompetitive discretionary grants, which allow an agency to select recipients through a competitive process. Some of the discretionary grants available through FNS can be used to support SNAC work. You can find an up-to-date listing of FNS grant opportunities by visiting <https://www.fns.usda.gov/grant-opportunities>. While many FNS grants can be utilized to support SNAC, specific grants including Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grants and School Breakfast Program Expansion grants have been used by states like California and Utah to implement SNAC initiatives.

## STEP 4: ESTABLISH CRITERIA AND SELECT YOUR INITIATIVE

### ESTABLISH CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE INITIATIVE

Defining the problem, identifying solutions, and securing funding resources to support the SNAC initiative are all important steps to take prior to officially selecting the initiative. After outlining all the potential initiatives, it is time to select one initiative for SNAC to implement. Selecting an initiative that everyone agrees with can be the most challenging step in your SNAC work. Many states who have done SNAC work have stated that selecting an initiative took the most time.

Establishing specific criteria to select an initiative is essential to make the decision as efficient as possible, while ensuring everyone's voice is heard. There is no "hard-and-fast" rule for selecting your criteria. As a group, identify criteria that speaks to everyone, and will be most beneficial in narrowing down which initiative the SNAC will select. Below are some specific examples of criteria other states established to assist during initiative selection:

- Draws on collective strengths of all partners
- Actionable and realistic
- Invites participation by all partners
- Has a positive impact on the priority population
- Is responsive to emerging threats and opportunities



- Is measurable and evaluable
- Is achievable within available timeframe
- Is achievable with the budget and resources at hand

## **SELECT YOUR INITIATIVE**

After prioritizing initiatives based on your criteria, it is finally time to select your initiative. Ensure you are using the decision-making process you established to make the final decision.

**TIP:** When selecting the SNAC initiative, choose something relatively simple and easily achievable. After successfully implementing the first initiative, build upon that momentum and select something more challenging.

## **STATE SPOTLIGHT: UTAH SELECTS A SNAC INITIATIVE**

The Utah SNAC is a well-established state-level team that has been collaborating since 2005. In the early stages of the SNAC development, the team determined the goal of the SNAC was to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among the SNAP eligible population. While identifying a common goal was relatively simple, selecting a joint initiative took time. The team worked together to identify the most pressing problems in their state and identified the state's consistently low participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Utah is ranked last in the nation for SBP participation. In 2014, the SNAC applied for and was awarded a grant through Extension to fund the Utah Breakfast Expansion Program. After receiving the funding, the team worked together to develop resources to increase SBP participation.





## SECTION 3: DEVELOPING A PLAN

### STEPS IN DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN

After you select your SNAC initiative, it is time to develop your plan for implementation. While strategic planning can take a lot of time and effort, developing a strong plan will ensure successful implementation of your initiative. Your strategic plan is the blueprint for your initiative. Make sure you take enough time to go through each of the steps below to develop a strong, actionable plan which will guide you through communicating, implementing, and evaluating your initiative.



### STEP 1: DEVELOP YOUR VISION AND MISSION

#### DEVELOP YOUR VISION

Developing a vision for the SNAC is the first step in establishing your plan. Coming up with a concise vision is essential to creating a strong plan with clear direction. As you likely already know, a vision is a clear and inspirational hope for the future. When developing the vision for your SNAC, think about it as your big picture goal. Your SNAC vision should be short, direct, and memorable. It is your way of communicating your long-term goal to yourselves, other organizations, and the public.

#### ACTIVITY: DEVELOP YOUR SNAC VISION

1. **Brainstorm:** To develop your vision, lead the group through a brainstorming activity. Ask the group to imagine they have successfully implemented their initiative and what impact it will have on the community. Give them some time to think about how

these outcomes could be driven by the SNAC vision and have them write down their ideas of what that could be. Remind the group that the purpose of the exercise is to brainstorm. Encourage them to write down all their ideas without judgement. Develop questions that are specific to the initiative you selected to guide them through the visioning process. Include questions about educational and PSE changes in the priority population. Overarching questions can include:

- What is the long-term change that you are hoping will happen because of your SNAC work?
  - If your SNAC initiative is implemented exactly as you envision it, what will the result be?
2. **Clarify:** Once the group has written down all of their ideas, shift through all of the ideas, and determine which are most important to the group. Think about the following:
    - What are some general statements that express your most important ideas?
    - Are there powerful or compelling phrases or words that emulate your vision?
  3. **Select:** Group the phrases and words together to form your vision. Make sure to keep your vision concise. Remember to utilize your group decision-making process to finalize the vision.

**TIP:** Get feedback on your vision. Share your vision with people within your priority population to determine if it resonates with them. Listen to their feedback and make changes to your vision as needed.

## DEVELOP YOUR MISSION

After you have developed your vision, it is time to create your mission statement. A mission statement describes what the SNAC is going to do and why you are going to do it. The SNAC mission statement will be similar to your vision, but it is a more concrete, action-oriented goal. Generally, mission statements are:

- **Concise.** While not as short as vision statements, mission statements generally still get their point across in one sentence.
- **Outcome-oriented.** Mission statements explain the fundamental outcomes your SNAC is working to achieve.
- **Inclusive.** While mission statements do make statements about your SNAC key goals, it's important that they do so very broadly. Good mission statements are not limiting in the strategies or sectors of the community that may become involved in the project.

### ACTIVITY: DEVELOP YOUR MISSION STATEMENT

1. **Brainstorm:** Utilize the same brainstorming process you used for your vision to develop the mission statement.
2. **Clarify:** Unlike the vision, the mission statement is more specific. Having brainstormed potential statements, ask the following questions:

- Does it describe what the SNAC will do and why it will do it?
  - Is it concise?
  - Is it outcome-oriented?
  - Is it inclusive of the goals and people the initiative will address?
3. **Select:** Chose the mission statement that meets the criteria outlined above. Again, ensure you are using your group decision-making process to select your mission statement.

## STATE SPOTLIGHT: WASHINGTON STATE VISION

The Washington State Food Systems Roundtable developed a 25-year vision for their coalition. The vision was comprised of four key action areas: people, environment, economy and equity.

- **Promotes the health of people.** Where the health of farmers, workers, and consumers is fully supported by addressing the health impacts in food production, processing, packaging, labeling, distribution, marketing, consumption and disposal. We eliminate food insecurity and hunger.
- **Fosters a sustainable, resilient environment.** Where our land, soil, air, water and biodiversity are conserved, protected and restored. Our food and nutrition needs are met without compromising future generations. We address challenges such as climate change and limited water supply while maintaining our commitment to the environment.
- **Is economically vibrant.** Where our food system maintains and strengthens community assets and local economic development. It supports diversity in size and scale of food system operations. It builds the economic viability of local and regional food systems. Our farmers and food system workers earn a living wage.
- **Creates a more equitable and just society.** Where all farmers, workers and consumers are treated with fairness and respect. A diversity of cultures is appreciated and supported.

## STEP 2: ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Developing goals and objectives allow your SNAC to develop criteria to measure the success of your initiative. While goals and objectives are similar, in that they help guide the implementation of your initiative, it is important to understand the difference between the two:

- **Goal.** A goal is a broad statement about the long-term expectation of what should happen as a result of your initiative. The goal serves as the foundation for developing your objectives.
- **Objectives.** Statements that describe how the results will be achieved. Usually multiple objectives are needed to address a single goal.

## ESTABLISH SNAC GOALS

When determining your SNAC goals, they should clarify the intentions of your initiative and direct the activities implemented to support the initiative. To determine your goals, consider the following:

- Focus on the priority population and services to be provided.
- Base the goals on prioritized needs and available resources.
- Differentiate between short-term and long-term goals.

## ESTABLISH SMART OBJECTIVES

To develop SNAC objectives, follow the SMART objective development technique:

- **Specific.** Use specific language. Clearly state the issue, priority population, time, and place of your initiative. Use only one action verb to avoid issues with measuring success.
- **Measurable.** Focuses on “how much” change is expected.
- **Achievable.** Realistic given SNAC resources and planned implementation.
- **Relevant.** Relates directly to SNAC goals.
- **Time-bound.** Focuses on “when” the objective will be achieved.

## TOOL: SMART OBJECTIVE TEMPLATE

<b>Goal 1:</b>	
<b>Key Component</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>Specific-</b> what is the specific task?	
<b>Measurable-</b> what are the standards or parameters?	
<b>Achievable-</b> is the task feasible?	
<b>Relevant-</b> does the task relate to your SNAC goal?	
<b>Time-bound-</b> what are the start and end dates?	
<b>SMART Objective 1:</b>	

## STEP 3: CREATE YOUR ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

### CREATE YOUR ACTION PLAN

After you develop your goals and SMART objectives, take the time to develop an action plan. The action plan builds upon the vision, mission, goals, and objectives you have already established. Creating an action plan that identifies the tasks or actions necessary to achieve your goals and objectives, provides an actionable roadmap that can ensure each objective is effectively accomplished. An action plan identifies who is responsible for completing a task, and a date/time by which they are required to complete it. In addition to identifying the *who* and the *when* for each objective, the action plan provides a clear schedule which can help you track progress during your implementation.

Various action plan templates exist, and it is important to find one that works for your group, and makes it clear who is responsible for what. Below is an example of a template you can use, but if it does not meet your needs, a simple internet search can help you find something more appropriate for your SNAC.

#### TOOL: ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

<b>Goal 1:</b>			
<b>Objective 1:</b>			
Activity	Person Responsible	Date to Begin	Date Due

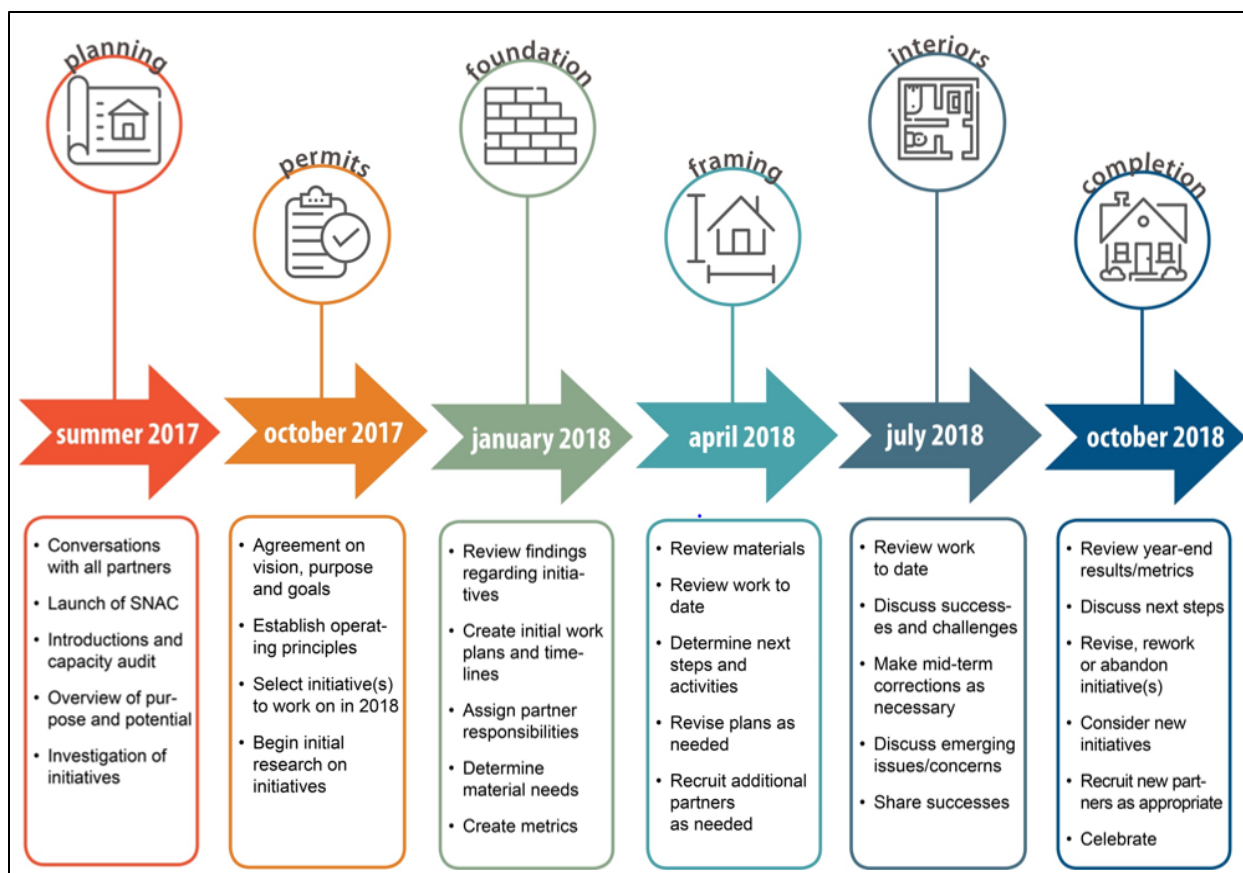
## CREATE YOUR TIMELINE

Utilize the action plan you developed to establish a timeline for implementing your SNAC initiative. Identifying when you will implement your initiative will help you identify when you need to complete your other tasks. It also provides a visual map which shows you when each task will be accomplished.

**TIP:** When developing your timeline, be realistic! Generally, SNAC initiatives take a long period of time to implement.

## STATE SPOTLIGHT: CALIFORNIA'S TIMELINE

California developed a timeline as a guide for implementation. It provides a nice visual with concrete dates for accomplishing each task. Consider developing something similar with your SNAC.





## STEP 4: DEVELOP YOUR EVALUATION PLAN

Developing an evaluation plan is the final step in your SNAC initiative planning process. The purpose of the evaluation plan is to determine whether you successfully accomplished the goals and objectives outlined in your action plan. Here are a few reasons it is helpful to develop an evaluation plan:

- It guides you through each step of the planning process
- It helps you decide what sort of information you need to gather
- It helps you identify the best possible methods and strategies for gathering the needed information
- It helps you come up with a reasonable and realistic timeline for evaluation
- It will help you improve your initiative
- It allows you to examine the SNAC partnership and identify opportunities to improve the collaborative

Evaluation plans should consist of two overarching questions. The first question should examine the success of the initiative. The second question should examine the effectiveness of the SNAC partnership.

### CREATE AN EVALUATION PLAN

#### Develop Evaluation Questions to Assess the Effectiveness of the Initiative

Generally, the questions you develop to evaluate your initiative evaluation will fall into three categories: planning and implementation, assessing attainment of objectives, and impact on priority population. Below is a table that provides an outline for each category including questions you can ask.

Question Type	Possible Questions
<b>Planning and Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How well was the initiative planned?</li><li>- How well was the plan put into practice?</li></ul>
<b>Assessing Attainment of Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How well has the initiative met the objectives?</li><li>- How many people were reached?</li><li>- How many hours were participants involved?</li></ul>
<b>Impact on Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How has behavior changed as a result of participation in the initiative?</li><li>- Are participants satisfied with the experience?</li></ul>

#### Develop Evaluation Questions to Assess the Effectiveness of the Partnership

Most collaboratives focus their efforts on evaluating their effectiveness of the initiative, but overlook the importance of evaluating the partnership. However, evaluating the

effectiveness of the partnership is equally important. Some potential uses of partnership evaluation include:

- Identifying the strengths and areas of improvement for the partnership
- Improving and guiding partnership activities
- Promoting the public image of the partnership
- Building capacity for evaluation within the partnership
- Providing accountability to partners and/or funders

**IDENTIFY EVALUATION METHODS**

Once you develop the questions you want to answer in your evaluation, the next step is to determine which evaluation methods best address those questions. Utilize [the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework](#) when determining your evaluation methods. The framework provides specific indicators for each level of the Socio-Ecological Model. For each indicator, the Evaluation Framework and Interpretive Guide provides details, background, research and measurement instructions. The SNAP-Ed evaluation framework can be found on the next page.

**TOOL: EVALUATION PLAN TEMPLATE**

<b>Activity:</b>							
<b>Stakeholders:</b>							
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Indicators/ Measures</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>Communicate Results</b>	<b>Lead</b>

# SNAP-ED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Indicators



APRIL 2016





## SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING YOUR INITIATIVE

### STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATION YOUR INITIATIVE

Because you developed a detailed plan with clear goals and objectives, specific actions to complete, and evaluation methods for measuring success, you have ensured your SNAC can successfully implement your selected initiative. Now is the time to finally put your extensive planning into action! Here are the steps you will take to implement your SNAC initiative:



### STEP 1: ENGAGE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN IMPLEMENTATION

SNAC initiatives are rarely implemented by SNAC members alone. Usually, local stakeholders and champions are the “boots on the ground” people who actually implement your identified initiative. As such, it is important to engage your key stakeholders in the implementation process.

#### IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS WHO WILL SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

Before you implement your initiative, identify the key stakeholders at the local level who will support implementation. Work with the SNAC agencies to identify champions through their local organizations who can assist in implementation. Your key stakeholders are important partners in this process. Ensure you are selecting people who are passionate about the initiative and have strong relationships with community members.

## PREPARE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Ensuring that your key stakeholders are adequately prepared to implement the initiative is one of the most important steps in the implementation process. Take the time to assess the knowledge and skills of your key stakeholders and identify resources to support them. To build capacity at the local level, consider providing the following:

- Training to successfully implement the initiative
- Technical assistance
- Unified branding of materials
- Additional funding, if needed

**TIP:** If your stakeholders are the primary implementers, share your action plan with them and ask for feedback. This is important to help you determine if your plan is realistic. Make edits to the plan to meet the needs of your key stakeholders.

## STEP 3: IMPLEMENT YOUR INITIATIVE

It is finally time to implement your initiative! Use your action plan and timeline as a guide for implementation. Ensure that each member of the SNAC team has specific tasks for which they are responsible and hold them accountable. During meetings, discuss progress made and challenges faced during implementation. Ensure you are providing ongoing technical assistance and support to your implementers throughout the initiative.

## STEP 4: MONITOR AND EVALUATE PROGRESS

Even though you developed a sound plan for implementation, it is important to continually monitor and evaluate your progress throughout the implementation process. Utilizing your evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of your implementation will help you adapt to ensure it is meeting the needs of the priority population. Monitoring should be a continuous process throughout implementation to ensure the best outcomes. There are two different types of monitoring and evaluation:

- **Self-monitoring and evaluation:** involves “self” reflection to assess how your implementation is going, as a way of learning and improving. To do this successfully, the SNAC needs to be both self-reflective and honest.
- **Participatory monitoring and evaluation:** draws on stakeholder experience and participation. The intention is to involve as many people with a direct stake in your initiative as possible.

Utilizing both strategies is the most effective way to ensure your initiative is being implemented correctly and reaching the desired outcomes.

## STEP 5: CELEBRATE AND SHARE YOUR SUCCESS!

After implementing your initiative, take the time to celebrate your success. Ensure you acknowledge everyone involved in the implementation process. Writing a success story to highlight your important work is an important step. Work with your key stakeholders and SNAC members to share your story. Sharing your story will help other state-level agencies learn from you and provide inspiration for aspiring SNAC.

### SUCCESS STORY SUGGESTIONS FOR SNAP-ED CONNECTION<sup>3</sup>

#### Tips to Decrease Edits:

- Write the story at a reading level below 10<sup>th</sup> grade, preferably 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
- Use grammar and spell-check to avoid typos
- Write short paragraphs
- Use bulleted lists whenever possible
- Succinct writing, preferably <350 words

**Include Images:** Images make an excellent story! When possible, include:

- 3-5 images of programming - make sure you have photo releases on file
- Program logo
- Agency logo

**Write for someone who has never heard of SNAP-Ed:** Write your success story for a non-technical person who has never heard of your program. Use the following guidelines:

- Tell people how your program changes the lives of people in the first 1-2 sentences
- Tell an anecdote next! Draw people in with a moving story
- Communicate success in simple terms
- Use short sentences
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Present the best side of your program

### TOOL: SUCCESS STORY TEMPLATE

<b>Title of Success Story:</b>	
<b>Initiative Identification</b>	
<b>Name of the Organization:</b>	
<b>Name of the Initiative:</b>	
<b>Location of the Initiative:</b>	

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from the SNAP-Ed Connection Success Stories- <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/success-stories>

<b>Population Served:</b>	
<b>Issue Overview</b>	
<b>Description of the Issue:</b>	<i>What was prompted the initiative?          What was the problem that needed to be addressed?</i>
<b>Initiative Summary</b>	
<b>Intended Outcomes:</b>	<i>What did you expect to achieve through this project?</i>
<b>Description of Implementation:</b>	<i>What did you do?          What individuals/organizations collaborated on the initiative?          How did you reach your target audience?          How long did it take?</i>
<b>Results</b>	
<b>Outcomes:</b>	<i>What did you achieve?          How many people were reached?  <b>Tip:</b> Include quotes and pictures!</i>
<b>Evaluation:</b>	<i>How did you assess the effectiveness of your initiative?</i>
<b>Success Factors:</b>	<i>What were the critical components that contributed to your success?</i>
<b>Contact Information</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Organization:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	



# APPENDIX

## SNAC EXAMPLES

### UTAH STATE NUTRITION ACTION COALITION

**MISSION:** Unite Utah agencies to improve food security, nutrition, and health for Utahans.

**COLLABORATING AGENCIES:**

- Department of Workforce Services Food Stamp SNAP Programs
- Utah State University Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program
- Utah Department of Health
- SNAP-Ed
- Utahans Against Hunger
- WIC
- Utah State Office of Education
- International Rescue Committee
- Utah Food Bank

**SNAC INITIATIVES:**

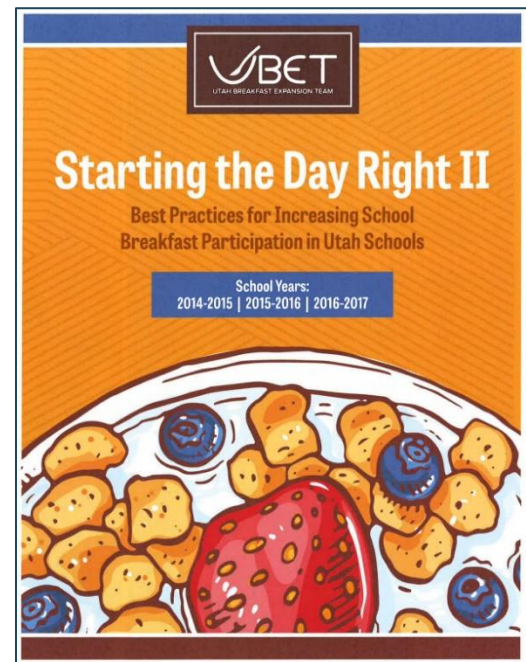
**Utah Breakfast Expansion Team (UBET):** formed in 2014 in response to Utah's Consistently low participation in the School Breakfast Program. Developed a best practices report for increasing school breakfast participation in Utah schools. You can find the report here:

[https://www.uah.org/images/Starting\\_the\\_Day\\_Right\\_2018.pdf](https://www.uah.org/images/Starting_the_Day_Right_2018.pdf)

**Farmer's Market Outreach:** promotion of the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) program to SNAP recipients.

**Intergenerational Poverty:** implementation and expansion of the *Create Family Meals* nutrition education program to families who have been on government assistance for multiple generations.

For more information on Utah SNAC, read their 2015-2016 SNAC Report, which can be found here: [https://extension.usu.edu/fscreate/ou-files/2017-18\\_staff/2016\\_SNAC\\_Report.pdf](https://extension.usu.edu/fscreate/ou-files/2017-18_staff/2016_SNAC_Report.pdf)



## CALIFORNIA STATE NUTRITION ACTION COMMITTEE

**VISION:** Helping Californians reach their fullest potential across the lifespan through improved nutrition and quality of life

### **COLLABORATING AGENCIES:**

- California Department of Education
- California Department of Food and Agriculture
- California Department of Health Care Services
- California Department of Public Health
- California Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- University of California CalFresh Nutrition Education Program
- California Department of Social Services
- California Department of Aging
- Catholic Charities of California

### **SNAC INITIATIVE**

**Introduction:** In California, SNAP nutrition incentive work at farmer's markets is carried out through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP) combines federal and state requirements and funding with the goal of increasing purchase and consumption of California grown fruits and vegetables by CalFresh shoppers at farmers markets. The majority of these markets are managed by the Ecology Center to carry out their Market Match Program. CNIP work also includes outreach to farmers markets and CalFresh-eligible populations, as well as program evaluation work.

**Evaluation:** CDFA will be evaluating their work on this project with both quantitative and qualitative data collection and submitting for both federal and state reporting requirements.

#### *Indicators:*

- Quantitative sales data from the markets
- Changes in grower revenue
- Changes in CalFresh transactions (overall spending and number of transactions)
- Amount of funds distributed in incentives
- How incentives are used/how they are redeemed
- Market locations
- Changes in shopping habits
- Consumption of fruits and vegetables

#### *Data Collection Methods*

- Quantitative data from the markets
- Qualitative interviews conducted by Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI) with shoppers, market managers and possibly farmers

## **Where SNAC Can Help**

### *1. Participant Outreach*

One barrier CDFA faces is CNIP participation. Many CalFresh participants don't shop at farmers markets and/or haven't heard of the incentive program.

To address these barriers, SNAC partners can get the message out to CalFresh participants that this program is available and encourage them to shop at participating farmers markets and use their benefits there. This is the most helpful place for SNAC to assist CDFA's work according to CDFA.

*Evaluation:* Possible inclusion of survey questions in Nutrition Policy Institute's survey evaluation of market shoppers (see above).

### *2. Market Applications*

Another barrier for CNIP is that not all markets in areas of high CalFresh eligibility participate in the program.

A solution would be for SNAC members to identify areas of high CalFresh participation, using geomapping put together by SNAC team, and reach out to local farmers markets to encourage them to apply to the Ecology Center for inclusion in the Market Match program. This strategy only works if the market already has the capacity to carry out the program. It is not feasible to build market capacity before the end of the RFP application process.

*Evaluation:* Map any newly participating Market Match markets onto existing geomapping of high CalFresh participation areas and compare with previous map before RFP process.

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