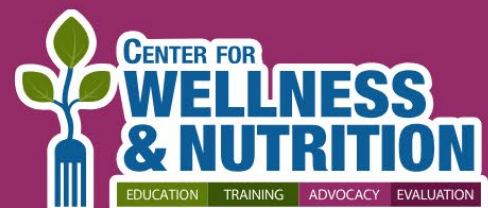




Southeast Region Tri-State Health and Racial Equity Workforce Assessment

Final Report

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Center for Wellness and
Nutrition
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Evaluation Working Group: Participating Implementing Agencies

State	Implementing Agency
Georgia	Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH)
	Hand Heart + Soul Project
	HealthMPowers
	Open Hand Atlanta
	The University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences
North Carolina	Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education
	Down East Partnership for Children
	Durham County Health Department
	East Carolina University
	North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University
	North Carolina State University
	Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina
	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
	University of North Carolina at Greensboro
South Carolina	Clemson University, Youth Learning Institute (CYLI)
	Lowcountry Food Bank (LCFB)
	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)
	South Carolina State University (SCSU)
	University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health

Background

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education ([SNAP-Ed](#)) administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is the largest federal nutrition education program. SNAP-Ed supports evidence-based initiatives that provide nutrition and physical activity education to people using or eligible for [SNAP](#). SNAP-Ed initiatives also include public health approaches to improve policies, systems, and environments (PSEs) in communities and social marketing campaigns to increase awareness and nudge behavior change.

Since Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022, Public Health Institute's Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN) has been conducting evaluation activities to explore equity in several FNS Southeast Region (SER) states. In FFY2022, PHI CWN conducted a formative evaluation adding a racial equity lens to the [SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework](#). In FFY2023, the evaluation efforts expanded to explore racial equity among SNAP-Ed eligible adults.

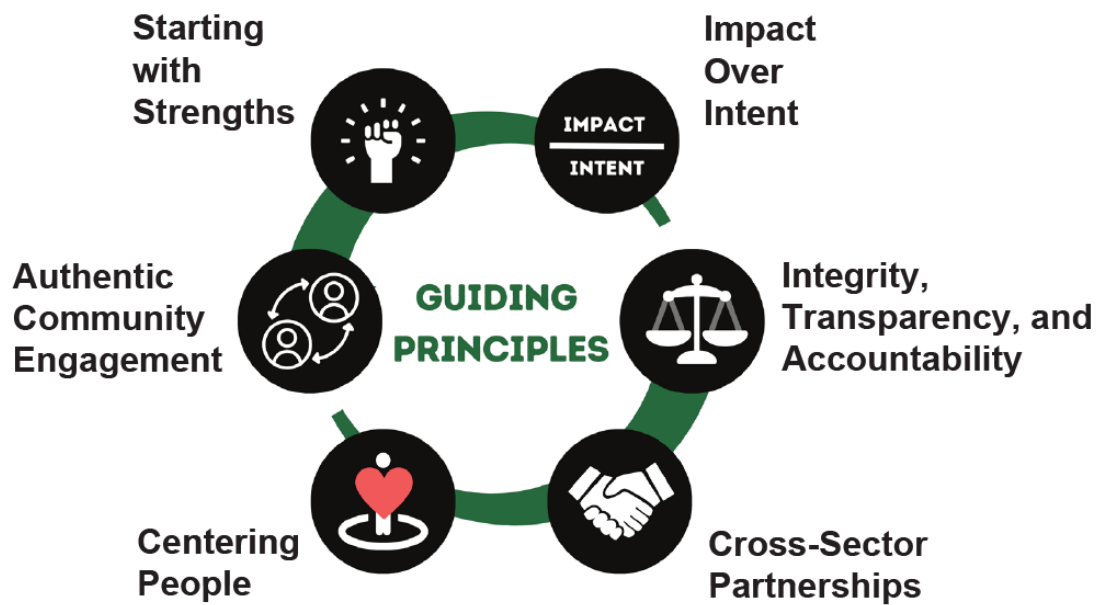
Building off the work started in FFY2022, the FFY2024 evaluation gained the perspective of implementing agency (IA) staff through a health and racial equity workforce assessment. In partnership with North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, PHI CWN conducted a workforce assessment of racial equity across IAs in the three states. The purpose was to better understand IA's strengths and opportunities to center social justice and equity in SNAP-Ed. As a result of the health and racial equity workforce assessment, PHI CWN and its partners aim to establish a baseline for training and professional development to strengthen health equity implementation across SNAP-Ed IAs in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Methods

PHI CWN utilized a mixed-methods approach to gauge IAs strengths and opportunities to center equity in SNAP-Ed. The evaluation activities included an electronic survey sent to all IA staff, including administrators, nutrition educators and evaluators, and key informant interviews with staff across the IAs at varying levels to gain additional insight about the policies, practices, and perceptions of equity in the workplace. Building upon the results of the evaluation activities, monthly Community of Practice (CoP) sessions with community-level and administrative IA staff were facilitated to reflect on existing systems, share best practices, discuss ideas, and explore opportunities for improving racial equity in SNAP-Ed.

Survey and key informant interview questions were created based on the [PRAXIS Standard of Equity](#) and Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrator's (ASNNA) [Guiding Principles to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed](#) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: ASNNA Guiding Principles to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed



Survey respondents were asked to indicate how often their organization participated in various activities for each guiding principle using a 5-point Likert scale from “never” to “always” and were asked to rate their organizations adherence to each guiding principle on a scale from 1 to 10. The key informant interviews were then conducted to gain a deeper perspective using questions that aligned with the guiding principles. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the survey outcomes and interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis. For additional information about the methods, see Appendix 1.

The health and racial equity workforce assessment was reviewed and determined to be exempt research by the Public Health Institute Institutional Review Board.

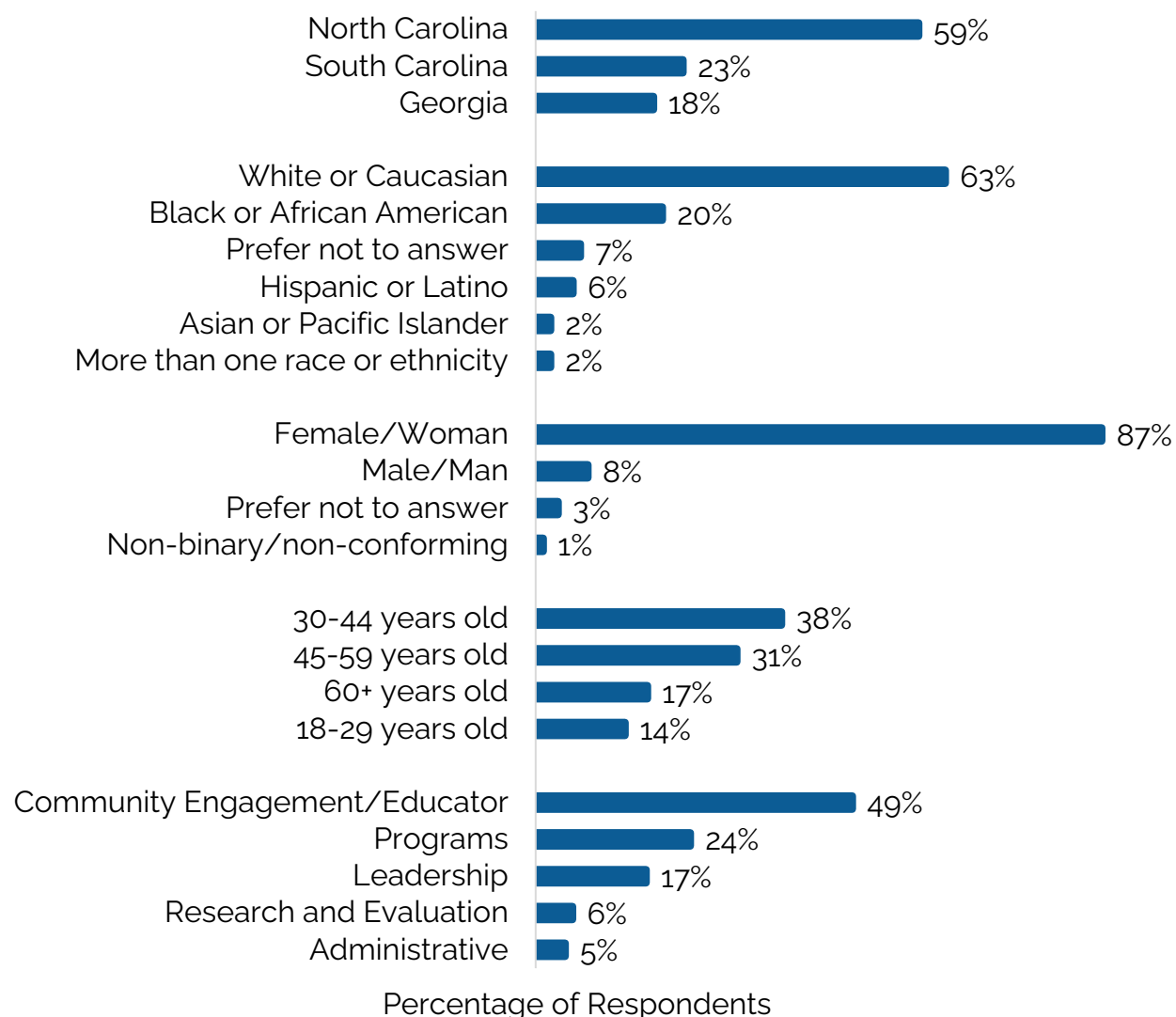
Results of the Workforce Assessment

Demographics

Survey

There were 88 SNAP-Ed implementers who responded to the workforce assessment survey across North Carolina (n = 52, 59%), South Carolina (n = 20, 23%), and Georgia (n = 16, 18%). Almost all IAs were represented across the SER states (n = 18, 95%). Figure 2 shows the demographics of survey respondents.

Figure 2. Description of SNAP-Ed Implementer Survey Respondents (n=88)



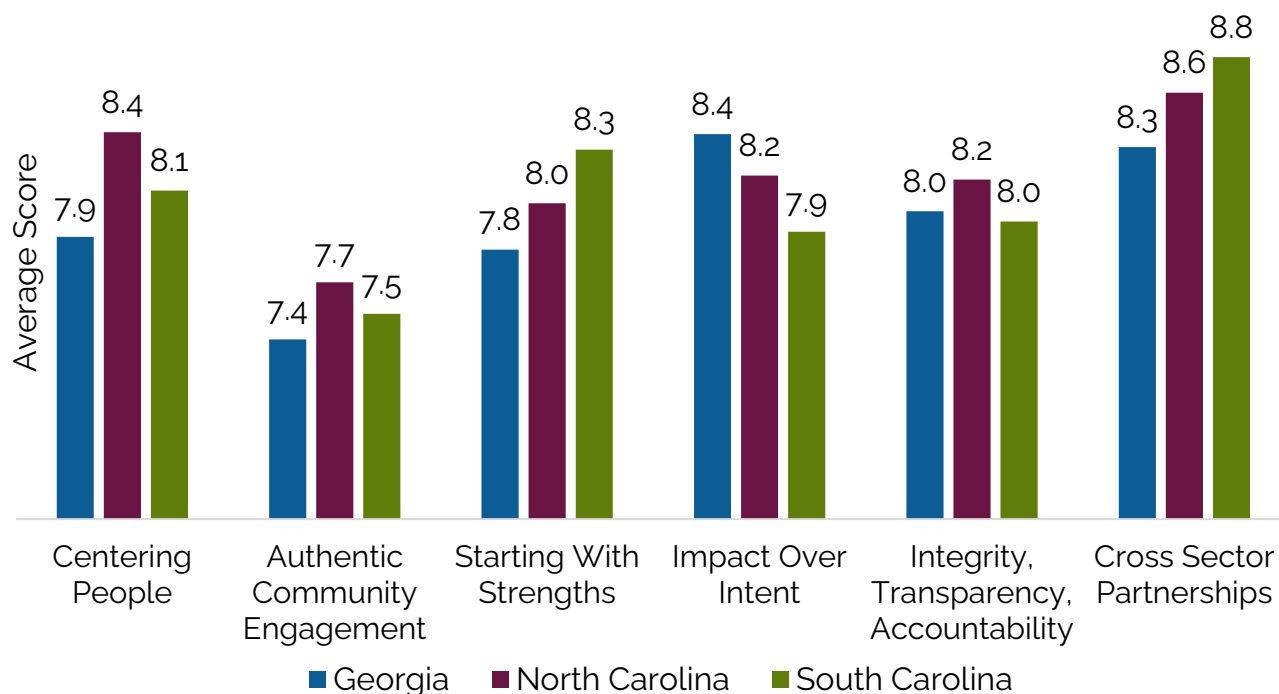
Key Informant Interviews

A total of 15 key informant interviews were conducted in North Carolina (n = 5), South Carolina (n = 6) and Georgia (n = 4). The majority of interviewees represented staff in program and leadership roles (n = 13, 87%), while 13% (n = 2) represented staff in community roles.

Overview of Findings

Online survey respondents were asked to rate how well their organization was working towards each of the guiding principles to center equity in SNAP-Ed, using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Figure 3 shows survey respondents' average perceptions of workforce equity for each state.

Figure 3. Perceptions of Workforce Equity Among Staff (n=88), average score on a scale from 1-10



Establishing cross-sector partnerships to expand reach and impact in the SNAP-Ed eligible community was the highest rated activity for both North Carolina (an average of 8.6 out of 10) and South Carolina (an average of 8.8 out of 10). In Georgia, prioritizing impact over intent was the highest rated activity among survey respondents (an average of 8.4 out of 10). Across all states, authentic community engagement was the activity with the most room for improvement among IA survey respondents.

Findings Related to the Guiding Principles

The following sections present the results of the health and racial equity workforce assessment by each of the guiding principles to embed equity in SNAP-Ed. Survey results were not disaggregated by race and ethnicity due to a lack of diverse representation in responses. Throughout the tables in the report, statements highlighted in green have the highest score and statements highlighted in pink have the lowest score for each of the ASNNA Guiding Principles to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed.

Centering People

Centering-people means recognizing the various identities of SNAP-Ed individuals and prioritizing the value, knowledge, and expertise of SNAP-Ed eligible individuals in the community.

Across all states, at least half of the survey respondents reported that their organization often or always conducts each of the activities shown in Table 1 related to Centering People. Respondents reported most frequently that their organizations often or always have a clear understanding of who they serve (90% to 98%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents Who Always and Often Agreed with Centering People in SNAP-Ed

Activities Related to Centering People in SNAP-Ed	Georgia (n = 16)	South Carolina (n = 20)	North Carolina (n = 52)
Our program has a clear understanding of who we serve.	94%	90%	98%
Our program actively supports the development of community members capacity to lead decision-making processes.	81%	80%	83%
We tailor our PSE change solutions to accommodate the priorities of the communities we are working with.	88%	85%	92%
We provide opportunities for the community to take part in activities that are culturally relevant to them.	56%	68%*	85%
We intentionally assess and remove barriers for people to participate in our program activities.	75%	80%	88%

*n = 19

Survey respondents mentioned meeting people where they are to provide nutrition education classes, utilizing community-led programming, and tailoring their programming to the needs of the community. Examples included using a strengths-based approach to develop PSE initiatives in North Carolina, adapting curricula to increase meaningful participation for community members with intellectual and developmental disabilities in South Carolina, and moving class locations so more people can participate in nutrition education programming in Georgia.

“We continuously evaluate the needs, wants, and concerns of our community. We are constantly soliciting conversations on how to better serve the community's ever-changing needs with their help—removing barriers in whatever form they may appear.” -Georgia SNAP-Ed Staff

While the least frequently reported activity related to Centering People varied across states (Table 1), limited staff capacity, time, funding limitations and a lack of

reliable transportation were mentioned as the main barriers to center the needs of SNAP-Ed eligible community members. Interviewees discussed that nutrition educators who represent the diverse cultures of the SNAP-Ed eligible community are limited across all states. Respondents also noted how the current SNAP-Ed guidance restricts the ability to fully compensate community members for their time, therefore limiting community-led decision making.

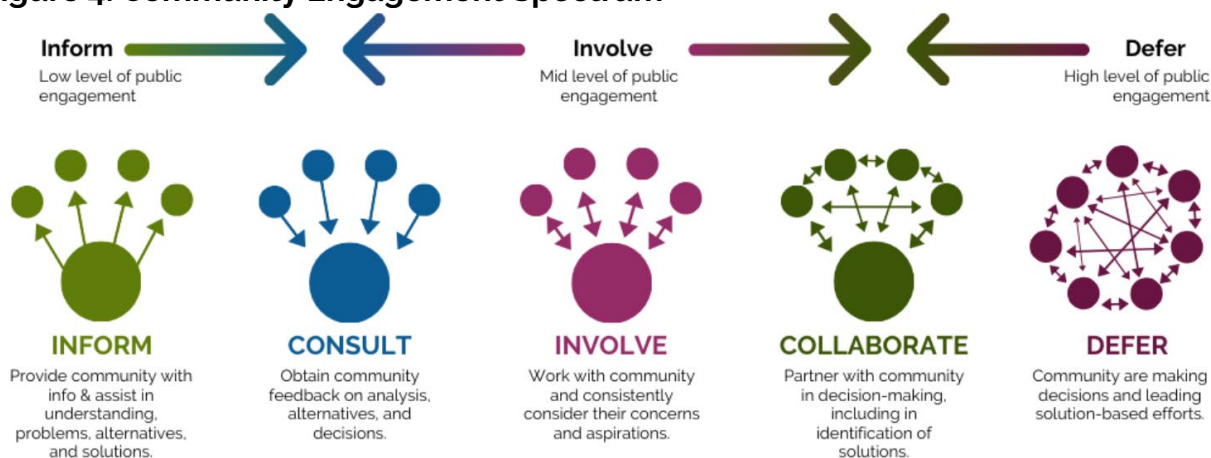
“[Centering People] is what [we] think is fundamental to SNAP-Ed programming and everything else we do. However, it's much easier said than done. We don't always end up following through with this especially due to limited staffing/time/funding to pay community members to be involved.”
-South Carolina SNAP-Ed Staff

Authentic Community Engagement

Authentic Community Engagement is consistently and persistently engaging with the community to establish a foundation of friendship, trust, and power building.

Community engagement activities can be organized in a spectrum starting with inform, which is a low level of engagement that can include handing out newsletters, brochures, or community presentations, and working towards defer, which is a high level of engagement that can include participatory action research and community driven planning (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Community Engagement Spectrum



Across all states, Authentic Community Engagement had the most room for improvement among the guiding principles (Figure 3). SNAP-Ed implementers want to increase community engagement efforts; but with funding limitations, activities are limited to include a low level of public engagement such as providing information to the community about programs through social media, webinars, or public events. For Authentic Community Engagement respondents in North Carolina and Georgia, most frequently reported that their organization often or always have accessible channels for feedback from community members, while in South Carolina the most frequently reported activity was involving members of the community in planning of programs (60% to 77%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents Who Always and Often Agreed with Authentic Community Engagement in SNAP-Ed

Activities Related to Authentic Community Engagement in SNAP-Ed	Georgia (n = 16)	South Carolina (n = 20)	North Carolina (n = 52)
Members of the community are involved in the planning of programs.	38%	60%	54%
Members of the community are involved in evaluating our programs.	50%	55%	69%
Members of the community are involved in the implementation of programs.	56%	50%	54%
Members of the community are leading decision-making processes of PSEs that directly affect their community.	63%	55%	58%
We have established accessible channels for feedback from community residents.	75%	55%	77%
We provide fair financial compensation or stipends for all community resident participation.	50%	15%	25%
Residents of the community are meaningfully represented in all levels of our organization through institutionalized policies.	50%	40%	42%

Most community engagement activities involved conducting surveys, focus groups and soliciting community feedback to consult with the community about SNAP-Ed programming. Interviewees in North Carolina discussed additional collaborative activities within the community including the formation of community coalitions led by community members and participatory grant making activities involving community members.

Providing fair financial compensation for community resident participation was the least frequently reported activity for North and South Carolina. Respondents from all states indicated that SNAP-Ed funding limitations are the main barrier to authentic community engagement.

"I think within budget and capacity constraints, we do the best we can to embed community engagement practices in each of our projects across stages of implementation. More support/resources from SNAP-Ed would allow for us to more often compensate community members for their time/expertise and encourage us to more frequently involve them in each step of our projects."-Georgia SNAP-Ed staff

Across all states, SNAP-Ed implementers want to see more community engagement during the planning of programs to ensure community voices are centered when planning SNAP-Ed programs.

Starting with Strengths

Starting with Strengths means defining SNAP-Ed eligible communities by their strengths, assets and aspirations before their challenges and deficits.

Related to starting with strengths, across all states, respondents most frequently reported that their organization often or always prioritizes collaborating with organizations that have a positive relationship with their target population (81% to 100%), while they least frequently reported that their organization dedicates funding to asset-based programs (Table 3).

Table 3. Respondents Who Always and Often Agreed with Starting with Strengths in SNAP-Ed

Activities Related to Starting with Strengths in SNAP-Ed	Georgia (n = 16)	South Carolina (n = 20)	North Carolina (n = 52)
We provide opportunities for the community to describe and identify their existing strengths for use in program planning	69%	65%	65%
The majority of our funding is dedicated to asset-based programming	53%*	65%	56%
We use person-centered language focused on individuals and their life experience in all formal and informal communication	75%	95%	81%
Our organization prioritizes collaborating with organizations who have a positive, relationship with our target population	81%	100%	98%^

*n = 15; ^n = 51

SNAP-Ed implementers in South Carolina and North Carolina reported prioritizing an asset-based approach in their SNAP-Ed programming by valuing and listening to community needs as an organizational priority. Further supported by interviews, using community-identified strengths and assets was a method used by IAs to inform PSE programming.

“We always really try to take an asset-based approach or an appreciative inquiry approach where we're constantly looking at what's going well, what are the resources in the community, and what other partners are available that we can partner with instead of recreating the wheel. I think we're constantly looking at what's good and what can we do more of. If we're starting a new project, we are always looking at who are the folks in the community doing similar work that we can partner with.” -North Carolina SNAP-Ed Staff

Across all states, reported barriers to Starting with Strengths included a lack of time and capacity from the community as well as for SNAP-Ed implementers. Interviewees noted how having smaller teams and big grant deliverables limit their

ability to focus on activities related to Starting with Strengths. Additionally, community members are working and taking care of families, and without reliable transportation, do not have an incentive to participate in SNAP-Ed activities. While many implementers mentioned that their organizations focus on Starting with Strengths, it was noted in North Carolina that it is not a requirement from the state which can be a barrier to implementation across an entire workforce.

Impact Over Intent

Prioritizing Impact Over Intent means regularly engaging in exploratory dialogue to assess the impact, as well as unintended impact, of nutrition education programs and PSE initiatives.

At least half of the respondents in all states reported that their organizations conduct activities related to Impact Over Intent with the most frequently reported activities varying by state. In Georgia, all respondents believed their community programs prioritize Impact Over Intent by evaluating impact, not intentions. In South Carolina, the most frequently reported was identifying the impact of policies on different communities and individuals (85%) and in North Carolina, the most frequent was utilizing feedback to adapt programming (92%). (Table 4).

Table 4. Respondents Who Always and Often Agreed with Impact Over Intent in SNAP-Ed

Impact Over Intent	Georgia (n = 16)	South Carolina (n = 20)	North Carolina (n = 52)
We intentionally identify the impact that policies have on different communities and individuals due to varying experiences of oppression	56%	85%	71%
We actively consider and explore unintended adverse and positive impacts that could result from a policy, system, or environmental change	56%	70%	75%
Our community programs are evaluated by their impact, not their intentions	100%	80%	81%
We utilize feedback to adapt programming, ensuring interventions align with desired results	94%	80%	92%
Our organization implements policies and programs that are in response to the priorities set by neighborhood and community groups	56%	65%	73%
When we receive feedback, we discuss it and make appropriate programmatic changes in response in advance	94%	80%	90%

Using feedback to continuously improve and adapt SNAP-Ed programs ensures that organizations are meeting the needs of the community. Across all states, interviewees mentioned the importance of building trust with partners and

community members to better understand the wants and needs of the community. Taking time to build trust with the community gives community members the opportunity to provide more honest and consistent feedback about the impact of SNAP-Ed programming.

"I am proud of the relationships that our instructors and community workers build with community members over time throughout the class series...I think we create really open and safe channels for feedback and a lot of the qualitative feedback that I get from participants comes from my instructors. We've been able to adapt several of our programs based on some of that feedback that we've gotten through those participant instructor relationships and channels." -Georgia SNAP-Ed Staff

Interviewees mentioned how they are using pre-post surveys, word-of-mouth, and informal discussions with partners or SNAP-Ed participants to collect feedback about their programming. However, respondents from all states mentioned that there is no formalized approach or requirement to collect feedback from the SNAP-Ed participants to address strategies that prioritize the impact of programs. When asked about additional ways participants would like to see feedback collected from community members, interviewees across all states responded similarly. They reported the need to collect more qualitative feedback and to have a more formalized process in place to better assess the unintended outcomes of SNAP-Ed programming in the community.

Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability

Integrity is when words, behaviors, and actions are aligned with a set of moral and ethical standards of excellence. Transparency involves promoting information disclosure and shared, yet confidential, access to information in ways that empower all partners to be informed and involved. Accountability involves holding individuals and organizations responsible for executing their power properly.

The majority of respondents in all states felt that their organization conducts multiple activities related to Integrity, Transparency and Accountability. Respondents in Georgia and North Carolina most frequently reported that within their organizations training in equity and social justice is ongoing and mandatory for all staff (94% and 83%, respectively). While in South Carolina, respondents were most likely to report that their organizations have programming specifically supporting community infrastructure (95%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Respondents Who Always and Often Agreed with Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability in SNAP-Ed

Activities Related to Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability in SNAP-Ed	Georgia (n = 16)	South Carolina (n = 20)	North Carolina (n = 52)
Employee backgrounds focused on experience in health equity and social justice is prioritized in our hiring practices	63%	70%	65%
Our organization develops equitable paths for leadership opportunities for all staff regardless of one's race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, or educational attainment	81%	85%	75%
Training in equity and social justice is ongoing and mandatory for all staff	94%	80%	83%
We regularly assess our organizational operations and processes for power dynamics, health equity and racial justice.	75%	50%	58%
Our programing specifically supports community infrastructure instead of unsustainable initiatives that require community reliance on our agency	67%*	95%	81%
Our program intentionally establishes timelines that give us enough time to build relationships and trust with community residents	75%	85%	77%
We invite current and former participants to share their perspectives and recommendations based on their lived experience regarding our programs	63%	70%	69%

*n = 15

Some respondents noted that they are intentional in providing training and activities that are specific to health equity, inclusiveness, and trust building. Across all states, survey respondents shared the importance of creating relationships with communities by building trust and capacity.

“At the core of integrity, transparency and accountability is community trust. [We] are trusted by our community [but the challenge is to] continue to maintain trust and hear the voice of the community in decision making.” -North Carolina SNAP-Ed Staff

Most interviewees were not aware of specific policies or procedures in their organizations related to equity. Others cited following the SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance, which included displaying the “And Justice for All” poster. When equity trainings were in place, interviewees from university settings mentioned the training was

tailored to professors and not SNAP-Ed implementers. Another interviewee mentioned that the training is outdated, and it feels like their organization is just checking a box. SNAP-Ed implementers pointed out the number of equity trainings that are not mandatory. While some progress has been made in this area, there is room for improvement.

Despite not having policies in place, interviewees in each state cited procedures promoting the principles of Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability within their organization. Georgia engages with peer mentors who encourage sustained participation from SNAP-Ed community members. In South Carolina, self-paced onboarding training is in place for new staff with support from leadership. In North Carolina, one agency mentioned using an equity rubric to evaluate internal and external SNAP-Ed programming.

Cross-Sector Partnerships

Cross-Sector Partnerships are the coordination and collaboration with a variety of partners using their collective expertise and resources to enhance strengths and address barriers as identified and prioritized by the SNAP-Ed eligible community.

Maintaining partnerships with organizations across different sectors and recognizing and respecting partners identities were frequently reported across all states. Across all states, having channels for feedback from community partners was the least frequently reported Cross-Sector Partnership activity (Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents Who Always and Often Agreed with Cross-Sector Partnerships in SNAP-Ed

Activities Related to Cross-Sector Partnerships in SNAP-Ed	Georgia (n = 16)	South Carolina (n = 20)	North Carolina (n = 52)
We have established accessible channels for feedback from community partners	50%	80%	83%
Our program intentionally establishes timelines that enable us to build relationships and trust with community partners	73%*	95%	90%
We recognize and respect community partners' identities regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, immigration status or educational attainment	100%	90%	96%
We have implemented a process for transparency and communication with our community partners	75%	80%	87%
Our organization has developed partnerships with organizations across different sectors	69%	95%	87%
Our organization has maintained partnerships with organizations across different sectors	88%	100%	90%

*n = 15

Across each state, respondents discussed the importance of establishing and maintaining partnerships in SNAP-Education to reach more people who need services. Interviewees mentioned organizing community meetings or events and convening coalitions and committees to create and sustain partnerships with organizations working to improve food access and nutrition support.

Some respondents mentioned a lack of an official feedback process with partners, while others found challenges in building trust with partners due to competing priorities.

"I do sometimes feel rushed in establishing partnerships and limited on the time I [spend to] develop those relationships because my main job responsibility is to reach as many SNAP eligible people through education. I spend most of my time preparing for teaching and teaching. I would love to focus less on the numbers and more on the relationships with my community members and partners." -South Carolina SNAP-Education Staff

Establishing and maintaining cross-sector partnerships is beneficial to IAs, partners, and the community they serve. Collaborating with partners outside of SNAP-Education can improve access to foods and healthy eating behaviors, in addition to other social determinants of health.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to consider when reviewing the findings from the Health and Racial Equity Workforce Assessment. While the survey was open to all staff at IAs in collaborating states, participation was voluntary. As indicated throughout the report, SNAP-Education implementers are busy and have multiple competing priorities. As such, response rates were lower than anticipated across Georgia and South Carolina. Therefore, these findings should not be considered to be generalizable across all SNAP-Education sites. Due to the unequal distribution of sample sizes across states, readers should be cautious of comparing the results between each state. Requiring participation among all staff would lead to more accurate results.

In addition, findings from the health and racial equity workforce assessment survey also showed that there is a disproportionate amount of white or Caucasian SNAP-Education implementers compared to all other races and ethnicities. Due to the unequal distribution of races and ethnicities across respondents, findings could not be disaggregated by race.

The health and racial equity workforce assessment relied on voluntary, self-reported data from SNAP-Education staff. Self-reported responses to the surveys and interviews may be unintentionally biased to make the respondents' organizations look more favorable among their SNAP-Education peers.

Community of Practice for Administrators and Community Connectors

PHI CWN convened two Communities of Practice (CoP), one for Administrators and one for community-facing staff or Community Connectors, in efforts to support opportunities for implementing agencies to center social justice and equity in SNAP-Ed. A CoP is an organized group of people with a common interest in a specific domain that often focuses on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. The Administrator's CoP was a gathering of administrative leadership from SNAP-Ed implementing agencies from across the three states, while the Community Connectors CoP brought together educators, community outreach coordinators, and other community connectors.

Recruitment was coordinated through each state, with 17 people registering for the Administrators CoP and 14 people registering for the Community Connectors CoP. Monthly meetings were held virtually on Zoom from April through September 2024. Each group reviewed the results of the workforce assessment and decided on a goal for creating new knowledge to advance professional practice related to best practices of embedding equity into SNAP-Ed.

Administrators CoP

The Administrators CoP chose to co-develop a case study resource that illustrated best practices from across the country that aligned with each of the six domains outlined in "ASNNA's Guiding Principles to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed". The concept was discussed in the monthly meetings and CoP members worked collaboratively in a shared online document, adding case studies and editing the content until final. On average, four participants attended each meeting; however, the recording was made available when members missed a meeting. The final resource is titled "Actionable Approaches to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed" available at this link.

Community Connectors CoP

The Community Connectors CoP selected a goal of co-developing a resource of case studies that demonstrated successful strategies for engaging diverse audiences. Similar to the Administrators CoP, monthly meetings were structured to work through the concept development as a group and a Google document was made available for collaborative input. However, engagement for this group was more difficult to maintain. On average, three participants attended each meeting, with two people joining consistently. While this group was not able to complete the goal, participants who joined the September meeting participated in a reflection activity of what could be improved about this process.

Feedback and Lessons Learned

PHI CWN collected feedback on the CoPs throughout the facilitation and at the conclusion of each group. Each meeting concluded with a post-meeting assessment for participants to provide immediate feedback on the monthly virtual facilitation. In September, participants completed a feedback survey on the entire experience.

Additionally, the Community Connectors group participated in a live reflection activity during the last meeting to address unique challenges with their group. Wishing they had more participation in the group, CoP members recommended shifting the timing of the group to not coincide with the end of the fiscal year, having shorter and more frequent meetings, and having the opportunity to meet in-person. Since community connectors often have multiple jobs and are often in lower paying positions than administrative staff, CoP members recommended providing a stipend for participation.

Conclusions

The results indicate that SNAP-Ed implementers know, respect and trust their communities and partners and prioritize program impact. Areas for growth include more dedicated resources for compensating and authentically engaging with community members, and funding strengths-based approaches. Additional growth opportunities include establishing policies to ensure all staff are regularly trained and receive ongoing professional development on power dynamics, equity and racial justice. A full summary of the health and racial equity workforce assessment can be found here: [Southeast Region Tri-State SNAP-Ed Workforce Assessment Infographic](#).

Recommended Actions to Improve Health and Racial Equity in the SNAP-Ed Workforce

To center equity throughout the stages of program implementation, several recommendations are proposed:

- **Meaningfully involve community members in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs:** In [FFY2025](#), SNAP-Ed introduced more flexibility in compensating community members for their time. States should take advantage of this change and provide fair financial compensation to community members for their input into SNAP-Ed programming.
- **Create opportunities for qualitative feedback from community members:** While many SNAP-Ed programs offer pre- and post-surveys for nutrition education, they lack formal qualitative feedback from community members. SNAP-Ed should consider allocating funding for ongoing collection of feedback to ensure programs are centering community voices and meeting the needs of the SNAP-Ed eligible population.
- **Prioritize trust building with community members:** Community trust is the core of equitable SNAP-Ed implementation. SNAP-Ed should shift its grant priorities to focus less on reach and more on trust-building activities with community members and partners.
- **Prioritize recruiting nutrition educators with racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds:** White or Caucasian SNAP-Ed implementers accounted for more than half of survey respondents. A SNAP-Ed workforce that is more reflective of the communities they are serving should be a priority. In the

FFY23 Expand Community Voice project, community members discussed wanting nutrition educators that looked like them or came from their communities. Prioritizing hiring from the community and hiring individuals with experience in health equity and social justice can help to build trust and sustainable SNAP-Education participation. Consider a community champion, promotor, or community health worker model where a trusted member of the community empowers their peers through nutrition education and connection to health and wellness services.

- **Provide community engagement activities that share decision making with the community:** SNAP-Education implementers have a clear understanding that community members are the experts on the assets and barriers to healthy eating in the community. Through community engagement activities, SNAP-Education should encourage community ownership to ensure community members have input regarding what is needed to thrive. SNAP-Education should consider establishing Community Advisory Boards responsible for making programmatic decisions for SNAP-Education activities taking place in their community.
- **Continue fostering cross-sector relationships to reach more people:** SNAP-Education implementers in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina are using cross-sector partnerships to expand the reach of SNAP-Education services across each state. As cross-sector partnerships are an integral part of SNAP-Education programming, taking time to get to know partners and establishing a relationship on trust can lead to more meaningful and sustainable partnerships. Consider establishing a coalition of multisector partners, such as a State Nutrition Action Council, to work collectively toward a common goal, maximize existing resources, knowledge and activities to reach more SNAP-Education eligible individuals.
- **Engage with IAs throughout the region to share resources and problem-solve together:** The Southeast Region is a large area with diverse demographics across its states. While this workforce assessment has illuminated the positive work being done across three states in the Southeast Region, IAs, especially those in rural areas, are limited in funding, time, and staff capacity. Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina SNAP-Education should consider forming a region-wide Community of Practice to allow implementers to share resources. A collaborative approach in practices, such as equitable hiring and recruitment onboarding, can garner an environment to problem-solve together, so community members across the states are equitably engaged in SNAP-Education.

Recommended Trainings and Professional Development Opportunities

Based on the above results, the following suggestions are possible training and professional development opportunities that could help to improve health and racial equity among the SNAP-Ed workforce in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina:

- Power dynamics, health equity, and racial justice (annual, required training)
- Authentic community engagement overview & approaches
- Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)
- Approaches to collecting and using continuous feedback data for decision-making and program improvement
- Asset-based community development
- Facilitating and mobilizing Community Advisory Boards
- Ethical storytelling and asset framing
- Assessing unintended impacts of PSEs through evaluation methods (e.g., ripple effect mapping, outcome harvesting)

Appendix I: Methods

Health and Racial Equity Workforce Assessment Survey

Sample.

All staff at Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina implementing agencies were eligible to participate in the health and racial equity workforce assessment survey.

Measures.

Survey questions were included to better understand staff perceptions of their organization's adherence to the ASNNA's Guiding Principles to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed. The following measures were included in the online survey:

- **Demographics:** Information about survey participants including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and role.
- **Centering People:** Activities related to prioritizing the value, knowledge, and expertise of SNAP-Ed eligible individuals in the community including perceptions of an organization's effectiveness to center the needs of the SNAP-Ed eligible community.
- **Authentic Community Engagement:** Activities related to engaging with the community to establish a foundation of friendship, trust, and power building including perceptions of an organization's effectiveness to engage the SNAP-Ed eligible community.
- **Starting with Strengths:** Activities related to defining communities by their strengths, assets, and aspirations before their challenges and deficits including perceptions of an organization's effectiveness at prioritizing community strengths.
- **Impact Over Intent:** Activities related to assessing the impact of SNAP-Ed programming on the community to ensure the impacts are not replicating harmful practices including perceptions of an organization's effectiveness to prioritize the impact of its programming on the community over its intentions.
- **Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability:** Activities related to building and maintaining a foundation of trust with SNAP-Ed eligible individuals and communities including perceptions of an organization's effectiveness to maintain integrity, transparency, and accountability with the SNAP-Ed eligible community and partners.
- **Cross-sector partnerships:** Activities related to the coordination and collaboration with a variety of partners to enhance strengths and address barriers as identified and prioritized by the SNAP-Ed eligible community including perceptions of an organization's effectiveness to meaningfully partner with cross-sectors partners.

Survey Data Collection and Analysis.

SurveyMonkey was used to administer the survey to SNAP-Ed implementers in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Survey data were examined for completeness and missing data were excluded from analyses. Descriptive statistics were produced for all variables overall and by state. Data cleaning and analyses were completed using Microsoft Excel.

For additional information about the survey tool used, please see Appendix 2.

Key Informant Interviews and Community of Practice

Sample and Recruitment.

Participation in the Key Informant Interviews and CoP was voluntary. Upon completion of the Workforce Assessment Survey, respondents had the option to self-select if they would like to participate in key informant interviews and/or the CoP. SNAP-Ed state leads also helped recruit interview participants in Georgia and North Carolina. Due to administrative and leadership role interest in the CoP, CoPs were placed into two groups, one for Community Connectors and one for Administrative staff.

Measures.

In collaboration with the Southeast Region Evaluation Working Group (EWG) members, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to understand more about SNAP-Ed implementers experience and perceptions of equity in SNAP-Ed, including the same measures used for the survey.

Interviews Data Collection and Analysis.

The interviews were conducted virtually, recorded, and transcribed using Zoom. Transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy by the PHI CWN research team. All transcripts were de-identified to ensure participant confidentiality. Once cleaned, transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose for coding. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the key informant interview data. A priori codes were developed and tested by the PHI CWN research team to ensure intercoder reliability. The themes and subthemes that guided the code development from the feedback groups are listed below.

Qualitative Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-theme
Centering People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiences centering community residents• Experiences centering partner organizations• Limitations to centering people in SNAP-Ed
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiences engaging with community residents• Experiences engaging with partner organizations• Community engagement spectrum (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)• Future ideas to improve community engagement

Theme	Sub-theme
Starting with Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods used to identify community strengths • Future ideas to improve strengths focused SNAP-Ed programing
Impact Over Intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods used to assess program impact • Future ideas for how to better assess program impact
Integrity, Transparency, Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with organizational policies to center equity • Experience with organizational procedures to center equity
Cross-sector Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with cross-sector partners to advance nutrition and food security

Interview data were disaggregated by state to show similarities and differences across the sample of SNAP-Ed implementers in the Southeast Region.

For additional information about the interview guide used, please see Appendix 3.

Appendix II: FFY24 SER Health and Racial Equity Workforce Assessment Survey

The Public Health Institute Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN) in collaboration with Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina are conducting a workforce assessment of racial equity across the implementing agencies (IAs) to better gauge IA's strengths and opportunities for improvement to center social justice and equity in SNAP-Ed. There are 6 sections in this survey aligned with the ASNNA Guiding Principles to Embed Equity in SNAP-Ed. As you complete each section, think about how effectively your agency adheres to the identified guiding principle. This process is meant to establish a baseline for training and professional development to improve health equity implementation locally. The results will be shared with participating IAs and will highlight areas for strength and include suggestions for actionable steps that IAs can take to address areas for growth.

We anticipate this survey to take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Your participation in this assessment is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Although we recognize discussing racial equity may be a sensitive topic, we do not anticipate any risks associated with participating in this assessment. PHI CWN will not collect any personal identifying information (e.g., name, contact information) that can link back to your survey responses. All data are securely stored and will be kept in a secure data file by PHI CWN to protect privacy and confidentiality. If you have any questions about the survey, you can call Amanda Tyler at (916) 265-4042, ext. 101 or email evaluation@wellness.phi.org. You can also call Robert McLaughlin, Administrator of the PHI Institutional Review Board (the committee that oversees PHI research involving human subjects) during regular business hours at (510) 285-5500.

- Do you agree to take the survey?
 - Yes
 - No
- State? (drop down of SER states)
- Which Implementing Agency do you represent? (drop down of IAs)
- What is your current position / role? (Check all that apply)
 - Administrative Associate
 - Community Engagement Specialist
 - Evaluation Coordinator
 - Evaluation Specialist
 - Health Educator
 - Professor
 - Program Assistant
 - Program Coordinator
 - Program Manager
 - Project Director
 - Recruitment Coordinator
 - Registered Dietitian
 - Research Professional
 - Site Coordinator
 - a. Social Marketing Coordinator
 - b. Other (please specify)

For the purpose of this assessment, when we say “community” we mean those closest and most deeply affected to the barriers or issues your agency is working to overcome.

Centering-People

Centering-people means recognizing the various identities of SNAP-Ed individuals and prioritizing the value, knowledge, and expertise of SNAP-Ed eligible individuals in the community. This could look like creating processes within your agency that prioritizes community members to guide program planning and implementation (i.e., townhalls, workgroups/committees, feedback loops).

Please indicate how often your agency takes part in the following activities to center people:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Our program has a clear understanding of who we serve.						
Members of the community are supported in developing their capacity to lead the decision-making process						
We tailor our policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change solutions to accommodate the priorities of the communities we are working with						
We provide opportunities for the community to take part in activities that are culturally relevant to them						
We intentionally assess and remove barriers to participation in our program activities						

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong do you think your organization is at centering the needs of SNAP-Ed qualifying community members?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Provide any additional context for the questions above. For example, strengths, challenges, solutions, or barriers. (open-ended)

Authentic Community Engagement

Authentic community engagement is consistently and persistently engaging with the community to establish a foundation of friendship, trust, and power building. This could look like creating space for the community to participate in decision making and capacity building activities (i.e., townhall meetings, listening sessions,

etc.), being transparent about the use of all data collected, and prioritizing sensemaking with the community.

Please indicate how often your agency takes part in the following activities to engage the community:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Members of the community are involved in the planning of programs .						
Members of the community are involved in the design of evaluation methods for our program .						
Members of the community are involved in the implementation of programs .						
Members of the community are leading the decision-making process of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change issues that directly affect their community.						
We have established accessible channels for feedback from community residents .						
We provide fair financial compensation or stipends for all community resident participation.						
Residents of the community are meaningfully represented in all levels of our organization through institutionalized policies (i.e., inclusive recruitment, interview, hiring, promotion, and retention processes).						

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong do you think your organization is at engaging SNAP-Ed qualifying community members?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Provide any additional context for the questions above. For example, strengths, challenges, solutions, or barriers. (open-ended)

Starting with Strengths

Starting with strengths means defining SNAP-Ed eligible communities by their strengths, assets and aspirations BEFORE their challenges and deficits. This could look like building in process during 'needs assessments' for collecting community strengths and mapping out the community landscape to know where the strengths and opportunities lie.

Please indicate how often your agency takes part in the following activities to define the community by their strengths:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
We provide opportunities for the community to describe and identify their existing strengths for use in program planning.						
The majority of our funding is dedicated to asset-based programming (i.e., doing more of what is already working in the community)						
We use person-centered language focused on individuals and their life experience in all formal and informal communication						
Our organization prioritizes collaborating with organizations who have a positive, relationship with our target population.						

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong do you think your organization is at defining the SNAP-Ed eligible community by their assets and aspirations before their challenges and deficits?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Provide any additional context for the questions above. For example, strengths, challenges, solutions, or barriers. (open-ended)

Impact Over Intent

Prioritizing impact over intent means regularly engaging in exploratory dialogue to assess the impact of nutrition education programs and PSE initiatives on the SNAP-Ed eligible community to ensure any unintended impacts are not replicating harmful practices. This could look like co-creating a process or feedback loop WITH AND FOR internal staff and community members as a safe place to voice their concerns about the programs implemented in their communities.

Please indicate how often your agency takes part in the following activities to prioritize the impact of the work on the SNAP-Ed eligible community over your agency's intentions:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
We intentionally identify the impact that policies have on different communities and individuals due to varying experiences of oppression (i.e., inadequacies of community services)						
We actively consider and explore unintended adverse and positive impacts that could result from a policy, system, or environmental change.						
Our community programs are evaluated by their impact, not their intentions.						
We utilize feedback to adapt programming, ensuring interventions align with desired results.						
Our organization implements policies and programs that are in response to the priorities set by neighborhood and community groups.						
When we receive feedback, we discuss it and make appropriate programmatic changes in response						

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong do you think your organization is at prioritizing the impact of its programs on the SNAP-Ed eligible community over the intentions set by your organization?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Provide any additional context for the questions above. For example, strengths, challenges, solutions, barriers, or differences between PSE initiatives and direct education programs. (open-ended)

Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability

Integrity is when words, behaviors, and actions are aligned with a set of moral and ethical standards of excellence. **Transparency** involves promoting information disclosure and shared, yet confidential, access to information in ways that empower all stakeholders to be informed and involved. **Accountability** involves holding individuals and organizations responsible for executing their power properly. This

could look like establishing shared values and measures of success that honor culture and context and elevate community voice and/or clarifying organizational charts and process so everyone involved knows how decisions are made.

Please indicate how often your agency takes part in the following activities to builds and maintain a foundation of trust with SNAP-Ed eligible individuals and communities:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Employee backgrounds focused on experience in health equity and social justice is prioritized in our hiring practices.						
Our organization develops equitable paths for leadership opportunities for all staff regardless of one's race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, or educational attainment.						
Training in equity and social justice is ongoing and mandatory for all staff.						
We regularly assess our organizational operations and processes for power dynamics, health equity and racial justice.						
The majority of our programing specifically develops and supports community infrastructure (supporting community capacity for sustainability, building community Champions, etc.).						
Our program intentionally establishes timelines that give us enough time to build relationships and trust with community residents .						
We invite current and former participants to share their perspectives and recommendations based on their lived experience regarding our programs.						

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong do you think your organization is at building and maintaining a foundation of trust with SNAP-Ed eligible individuals and communities?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Provide any additional context for the questions above. For example, strengths, challenges, solutions, or barriers. (open-ended)

Cross sector partnerships

Cross sector partnerships are the coordination and collaboration with a variety of partners using their collective expertise and resources to enhance strengths and address barriers as identified and prioritized by the SNAP-Ed eligible community. This could look like building relationships with institutions across the spectrum of the food system (i.e., farmers, restaurant owners, grocery stores) and/or institutions that influence the built environment (i.e., transportation, housing, etc.).

Please indicate how often your agency takes part in the following activities to meaningfully partner with organizations to expand your agency's reach and impact in the SNAP-Ed eligible community:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
We have established accessible channels for feedback from community partners .						
Our program intentionally establishes timelines that enable us to build relationships and trust with community partners .						
We recognize and respect community partners' identities regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, immigration status or educational attainment.						
We have implemented a process for transparency and communication with our community partners.						
Our organization has developed partnerships with organizations across different sectors (e.g., transportation, healthcare, education).						
Our organization has maintained partnerships with organizations across different sectors.						

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong do you think your organization is at meaningfully partnering with other organizations to expand its reach and impact in the SNAP-Ed eligible community?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Provide any additional context for the questions above. For example, strengths, challenges, solutions, or barriers. (open-ended)

Demographics

- What is your age
 - 18 - 29
 - 30 - 44
 - 45 - 59
 - 60+
- Which race best describes you? (Select all that apply)
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian / Pacific Islander
 - Black or African American
 - White / Caucasian
 - Additional Race or Ethnicity (Please specify): _____
 - Prefer not to answer
- Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino (Select one)
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to answer
- Gender: How do you identify? (Select one)
 - Female/Woman
 - Male/Man
 - Non-binary/non-conforming
 - Prefer to self-describe: _____
 - Prefer not to answer

Opt-in for Key Informant Interviews and Community of Practice

Thank you for taking time to complete the Health and Racial Equity Workforce Assessment Survey. In addition to the survey, we aim to conduct key informant interviews with staff across implementing agencies and form a community of practice to discuss existing systems and explore opportunities for improving racial equity in SNAP-Ed. After you submit your survey below, you will be redirected to a page where you can opt-in to provide additional information about your experience as a SNAP-Ed implementer. Please consider being a part of one or both of the follow-up activities. Thank you again! We appreciate your feedback.

Appendix III: FFY24 SER Workforce Assessment Interview Guide

Good morning/afternoon. My name is *[moderator name]* and I want to first thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am a *[role]* with the Public Health Institute Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN) and we have partnered with *[State]* SNAP-Ed to conduct a workforce assessment of racial equity across the implementing agencies. The purpose of the workforce assessment is to better understand IA's strengths and opportunities for improvement to center social justice and equity in SNAP-Ed. This process is meant to establish a baseline for training and professional development to improve health equity implementation across SNAP-Ed IA in *[State]*.

During today's conversation, I will be asking you questions about how you and *[Insert IA]* center equity in your work. My goal is to create a safe space for open dialogue, but I recognize that there can be discomfort when discussing equity in the workplace. You do not have to answer every question. Your participation in this discussion is voluntary and you can decide to stop at any time. Please speak from your own experience. There are no right or wrong answers. We want you to be as honest as possible about your experiences without feeling pressure to be positive for the sake of the interview. Again, the purpose of our conversation today is to improve health equity implementation for SNAP-Ed IAs in *[State]*.

I expect our discussion to take up to 45 minutes. The information gained today will be securely stored and kept in a secure data file by Public Health Institute to protect privacy and confidentiality. We expect to delete and destroy this information within 18 months of completing our final reports.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Background

1. As we get started today, I would like to know more about you and your experience with *[Insert IA]*. Can you please describe your role at *[Insert IA]* including an overview of your main duties and how long you have been in that role?
2. In your own words, how would you define equity?
3. Do you think your definition of equity aligns with your agency's definition of equity?
 - a. If yes, please describe/how so?
 - b. If not, how do they differ?

Equity in the workplace

The next few questions we will be discussing ways in which your agency has centered equity in its efforts to serve the SNAP-Ed eligible community in *[State]*. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge as the findings will be used to support IAs working to center equity in their work.

4. **[Centering People]** To us centering people means recognizing the various identities of SNAP-Ed individuals, respecting, and valuing differences, and creating spaces of belonging. In what ways, if any, has your agency centered the voices of the SNAP-Ed eligible community in [State]?
5. **[Community Engagement]** Could you describe any activities your organization has participated in to include and/or engage the SNAP-Ed eligible community in its program and evaluation activities?
 - a. **[IF COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE INCLUDED]:** To what extent has the community been involved? (*Facilitator Note: Think about the community engagement spectrum and what stage they are describing.*)
 - b. **[IF COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE NOT INCLUDED]:** What could your organization do to engage the SNAP-Ed eligible community in program activities?
6. **[Starting with Strengths]** In what ways, if any, has your agency allowed the community to describe or identify their existing strengths (i.e., needs/strength assessment, listening sessions)?
 - a. Are program activities designed with these strengths in mind?
 - b. If not, what are some ways the community could share their strengths?
7. **[Impact Over Intent]** Could you describe how your organization collects feedback from community members (for example on satisfaction of programs like direct education classes or PSE interventions)?
 - a. How has your organization used community feedback to improve or adjust SNAP-Ed programming?
 - b. If feedback is not collection, what are some ways your organization could collect feedback from community members?
8. **[Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability]** Could you describe any policies or procedures you are aware of at your organization that incorporate equity?
 - a. How is this reflected in programs serving the SNAP-Ed eligible community?
9. **[Cross-sector Partnerships]** In what ways, if any, has your organization developed partnerships with organizations outside of SNAP-Ed that aim to better serve the SNAP-Ed eligible community?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to share about workforce equity in SNAP-Ed in [State]?

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