

COORDINATING SNAP AND NUTRITION SUPPORTS TO REDUCE CHILD HUNGER

Request for Proposals

OVERVIEW

Share Our Strength seeks to fund state SNAP agencies interested in advancing efforts to coordinate SNAP benefits and services with other child nutrition supports to reduce childhood hunger. Projects should be focused on infrastructure investments that will result in sustained, improved coordination between SNAP and related nutrition programs that support the health and well-being of children.

Selected states will receive funding to hire staff and/or contracted services to lead project implementation in conjunction with flexible operating funds that may be used to invest in technology, materials, services, and other costs associated with the project. Share Our Strength anticipates awarding grants to three (3) – five (5) states in amounts ranging from \$200,000 to \$350,000 over an 18-month planning and implementation period. Participating states will be expected to work with Share Our Strength and its contracted grant administrator, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), to document project implementation, outcomes, and lessons learned. Additionally, selected states will participate in cohort learning with other project grant recipients to share best practices and opportunities for federal and state policy change to reduce childhood hunger through increased coordination between SNAP and child nutrition programs.

About Share Our Strength

No Kid Hungry is a national campaign run by Share Our Strength, a nonprofit working to solve problems of hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world. After 25 years of successfully investing in local nonprofits and helping find the best approaches to eradicating

KEY DATES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Proposal Submission Deadline

Friday, January 29, 2021 at 5PM EST

Informational Webinar

Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 3PM EST

Optional applicant webinar. Registration is required [through this link](#) in order to receive a recording and copy of the materials.

RFP Contact

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poverty and hunger, Share Our Strength launched No Kid Hungry in 2010. As a child hunger organization, ending childhood hunger is our primary focus, though Share Our Strength continues to invest in and develop other campaigns.

About American Public Human Services Association

Direction and technical assistance for this program are being provided by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA). APHSA is a bipartisan, nonprofit membership organization representing state and local health and human service agencies through their top-level leadership. APHSA seeks to *influence* modern policies and practices that support the health and well-being of all children and families, *connect* its members to national policymakers and human-serving organizations, and *build* more capacity for their teams. APHSA will use their expertise in facilitation of peer-to-peer learning with state agencies to provide the direction and technical assistance for this project. APHSA will work directly with the cohort as they create project plans, hire new staff, implement the program, and identify best practices for cross-agency nutrition work going forward.

BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as of 2019, 13.6% of households with children in the United States – nearly 11 million children – live in households that are food insecure.ⁱ Since that time, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically increased the amount and severity of food insecurity in our country, with nearly one in four parents reporting food insecurity as of September 2020.ⁱⁱ Furthermore, Black and Latinx families have experienced food insecurity at rates twice that of their white peers, with Native and Indigenous communities experiencing similar negative financial effectsⁱⁱⁱ.

Federal food programs and the state agencies that administer them play an essential role in ensuring families with children have the nutritional supports they need to thrive. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the largest federal nutrition program in the country, provides near universal access to eligible households with children, with over 95% of such households receiving benefits.^{iv} Other nutrition programs that support the needs of children have seen mixed recent trends in program participation. Between 2009 and 2019, the number of children participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) declined by about 2 million students while participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) increased by about 3.5 million students.^v Within the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), participation has consistently declined since 2010, with the largest single year decrease occurring in 2019.^{vi} And federal programs to address children's nutritional needs in the summer, such as the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) have shown promise to meet increased

nutritional needs when school is not in session, though participation in these initiatives remains low in comparison to the number of eligible households.

Even when receiving assistance, more than half of SNAP recipients remain food insecure.^{vii} Furthermore, recent research has shown that co-enrollment in SNAP with other federal food programs, such as WIC, can have a significant effect in reducing food insecurity.^{viii} Current federal policy offers states several tools to leverage SNAP to support co-enrollment in related nutrition supports. Through direct certification, school-aged children in SNAP are automatically deemed eligible for NSLP and SBP. While no such mechanism exists for WIC, state agencies are permitted to use SNAP participation to establish proof of income as a means to streamline WIC eligibility. However, at the local level, SNAP and WIC are often administered by different agencies. Recent literature has shown promising practices states have taken through use of technology enhancements, process changes, and commitments to cross-agency partnerships to tap these flexibilities to further align SNAP with related nutrition programs and remove barriers to accessing multiple benefits.^{ix}

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced states to accelerate innovative strategies that present opportunities to build sustained coordination between SNAP and other nutrition supports beyond the public health crisis. In response to school closures and modifications, SNAP agencies have rapidly scaled the newly created Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program, coordinating data matches with state education agencies and schools to issue supplemental benefits to students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Over the summer, nearly every state joined the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot, providing beneficiaries access to nutritious food while mitigating public health concerns and overcoming transportation barriers; similar efforts are now underway to onboard WIC agencies to pilot online ordering. More broadly, innovations in online applications and client outreach offer potential opportunities to create synergies in program access and referral networks between SNAP agencies and their partner agencies. While states remain focused on meeting the urgent needs at hand for children and families, Share Our Strength is committed to helping state agencies and their partners leverage lessons learned from the current crisis to continue advancing a shared vision to end childhood hunger.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

The goal of the *Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports to Reduce Childhood Hunger Demonstration Project* (hereafter referred to as “Demonstration Project”) is to invest in state systems that leverage SNAP and related programs to increase access to nutrition supports for sustained impact in reducing childhood hunger. We encourage responses from state agencies at different points of progress in building connections between SNAP and related nutrition supports – from agencies just beginning to align systems or integrate functions across programs to those with on-going points of connection they seek to build upon. Initiatives may seek to

coordinate SNAP with one or multiple other food programs that benefit children, including federal, state, and community-based programs. Proposals may build on opportunities created during the COVID-19 crisis, such as the implementation of P-EBT or other waivers, or upon cross-systems work that was paused in response to the pandemic. Of most importance, initiatives should result in sustainable, systemic changes in how families with children interact with nutrition support programs, increasing overall access and the ability to seamlessly engage in the multiple services and benefits they qualify for. With Black, Indigenous, and communities of color disproportionately experiencing food insecurity, we encourage respondents to prioritize in their proposals strategies that work toward more race equitable nutrition support programs. This includes, but is not limited to, addressing how communities of color will be prioritized in outreach strategies from the start, how to address systemic bias in data collection or communication with program staff and community members, and added considerations and flexibility to meet communities where they are in accessing nutrition support.

Demonstration Site Project Design

Each selected grantee will receive funds for staffing and infrastructure investments needed to implement the proposed project. Staff support may be in the form of contracted services (e.g. procuring a vendor to perform key duties needed for the project) or through hiring of contractual staff (e.g. hiring a temporary staff person as the project manager for the grant initiative). Respondents should describe in their proposals how they plan to hire the necessary staffing resources by July of 2021 (assuming a February 2021 award notification) for project implementation.

Infrastructure investments should be specific to the needs of the proposed project and may be refined post-award during the grant planning period. However, the proposal should clearly describe what infrastructure investments are expected to be needed, and what the state will rely on the Demonstration Project to fund and what will be covered through other agency funding sources. Examples of potential infrastructure investments could include, but are not limited to, information technology enhancements, training activities, client outreach tools, etc. The proposal should also identify any barriers the state anticipates encountering but cannot directly address, and how they will mitigate or work with the issues. If a proposal requires a waiver from FNS, the application should describe the waiver and its purpose, and any alternatives.

Because funded initiatives will require sponsorship from senior leadership overseeing SNAP and the related nutrition supports the project seeks to align, grantees should demonstrate their organizational commitment to the project and its alignment with broader organizational priorities to ensure both viability and sustainability. Although the project may be directly staffed by consultants, management staff within SNAP and partner agencies are expected to lead the planning phase and support the implementation period of the Demonstration Project.

Cohort Learning and Cross-Site Evaluation

Share Our Strength is interested in distilling the federal and state policy and implementation levers that can inhibit or accelerate alignment of SNAP with related nutrition supports and how insights from Demonstration Projects may have broader implications for the field. Selected grantees will be expected to have hired and/or current staff participate in cohort learning with other funded sites to exchange ideas, best practices, and lessons learned during project implementation. As part of this cohort learning, sites will also have access to national researchers and thought leaders on topics that will support their project implementation.

Selected grantees will also be expected to participate in a national Child Hunger Summit in August 2021 that brings together SNAP and child nutrition state agency leaders to discuss state and federal strategies to advance a child nutrition framework that aligns the constellation of nutrition programs together to reduce child hunger. During project implementation, grantees may also be asked to share findings from their work through webinars and presentations.

As the grant administrator, APHSA will be responsible for convening learning activities and events for grantees. Furthermore, APHSA will work with grantees to document Demonstration Projects through iterative case studies, a final report, and other methods as needed.

Project Timeline

The Demonstration Project will be implemented over two phases – a planning and implementation period.

Planning Phase

In the planning phase, selected grant recipients will work with APHSA to translate their proposal into a detailed workplan. During this time, management sponsors within SNAP and peer participating agencies will have the opportunity to finetune their approach to implementing the project, prepare a detailed budget, and onboard the staff and resources needed to carry out the work. While projects that aim to have more immediate impact to current service delivery may require a condensed planning periods, all grantees are expected to be able to complete their planning by June 2021.

Implementation Period

In the implementation period, selected grant recipients will execute the project as outlined in their workplan. Onboarded staff will take a lead role with support from management sponsors to oversee day-to-day implementation and interface with APHSA and Share Our Strength staff.

Examples of Potential Demonstration Projects

We welcome a wide range of proposals that build upon the work states have already started to remove barriers to access nutrition supports. The following are examples of potential projects that are consistent with the goals of the grant program. This list is not exhaustive but is intended

to be illustrative of examples states may consider when assessing possibilities for their own proposal.

- *Building off P-EBT* – States may consider strategies to enhance and sustain the impact of their P-EBT programs during and beyond the 2020 – 2021 school year. For example, states could propose using grant funds to hire a liaison that would work to assess and mitigate data, communication, and/or process barriers between SNAP and child nutrition agencies during P-EBT implementation and recommend a path forward for improved information sharing for long term implementation. Infrastructure funds could then be used to support business process redesign that would improve data sharing and coordination after P-EBT expires.
- *SNAP – WIC Referrals* – States may consider strategies to improve enrollment rates for SNAP recipients referred to WIC or vice versa. For example, states could use infrastructure funds to establish an interface between SNAP and WIC to send referrals with case information and hire a staff person to develop procedures and training for case workers and outreach vendors to improve referral processes.
- *Nutrition Data Analytics* – States may consider strategies to compare administrative data across SNAP and related nutrition programs to better understand trends in co-enrollment across programs and identify marginalized communities that may have high rates of food insecurity but low rates of accessing multiple eligible programs. Funding could then be deployed towards strategies that seek to reduce barriers in access for impacted communities through outreach, technical assistance, and/or business process changes.
- *Improving Direct Certification* – States may consider strategies to increase the direct certification rate of SNAP participants for free school meals. For example, states could propose using funds for a project manager to support the transition from a local-level to state-level match process and use infrastructure funds to support system changes needed to facilitate this transition.

Total Awards/Award Amounts

Share Our Strength anticipates awarding grants to three (3) – five (5) states in amounts ranging from \$200,000 to \$350,000 each.

PROPOSAL CONTENT

Interested state agencies responsible for administering SNAP are invited to submit a proposal to be considered for this grant opportunity. The proposal must include the following:

Cover Sheet

The cover sheet should identify the SNAP agency and core partner(s) for the demonstration project and include contact information for the grant respondent (name, organization, title, mailing address, telephone number, and email address).

Project Narrative (Not to exceed 5 pages)

The project narrative should provide a detailed overview of the state's plan for this grant opportunity.

- *Project Summary* – The project summary must provide an overview of the state's proposal, describing the proposed concept, the problem it is addressing, and what impacts it will have.
- *Problem Identification* – The problem identification should describe why increased alignment between SNAP and related nutrition programs in the state are needed and the current state of coordination between systems. What does the state agency believe are the most substantial issues for clients? The applicant should address how the issues were identified (data, employees, client feedback, etc.) and possible methods to overcome the barriers. This section should also address food security disparities by race or population in the state to begin the process of identifying how to create equitable systems changes. Data and evidence to represent the problem are encouraged.
- *Proposed Approach* – The proposed approach should clearly articulate what your proposed solution is to the problem and include your state's plans for how to execute this project. Context and examples of prior work that the project will build upon are encouraged. Applicants should include how the pandemic has informed their proposed approach to serving families and children, specifically those who have been historically marginalized. Additionally, the proposed approach should summarize potential challenges anticipated and how the grantee anticipates overcoming them.
- *Anticipated Outcomes* – The anticipated outcomes should describe what you hope to achieve through the project and address how changes made through the project will have longevity beyond the implementation period. If applicable, respondents may provide quantitative estimates of outcomes; however, qualitative descriptions of the systems changes that may occur are also requested. Respondents should additionally think about unanticipated outcomes that may result from the proposed systems changes. Applications should describe how they will track progress and share findings, including those representing population disparities in food security, with Share Our Strength and APHSA.

- *Project Team* – Given this project connects SNAP with other child nutrition programs, the ability to collaborate and work together across systems will be essential to the success of the project. The project team section should clearly identify the project sponsor(s) overseeing SNAP and other child nutrition programs being coordinated through the project and how they will ensure healthy collaboration. This section should also identify who the incoming staff will report to and address the supervisor’s capacity to support the new staff through the duration of the project. Furthermore, this section should articulate how the organization will ensure project staff will be empowered to work effectively with other internal and external stakeholders that will need to be involved in aspects of project implementation.
- *Timeline* – Your timeline should address how your project will be completed in accordance with the deadlines set in the Grant Opportunity section.

Budget Narrative (Not to exceed 2 pages)

The budget narrative should summarize and provide justification for your total project costs, including direct and indirect costs. The narrative should address all areas that you expect to need funding for; however, selected grantees will have the opportunity to modify their budget if needed after grant award during the planning phase. In this section, respondents should also describe their agency’s ability to directly hire the staff resources needed; respondents able to do so directly without the need for Share Our Strength to serve as an intermediary are highly preferred.

Letter(s) of Commitment

SNAP agencies must provide a letter of commitment from the agency overseeing the nutrition support programs included in the project. The letter should clearly affirm the agencies commitment to supporting the project. If applicable, we also encourage letters of commitment from other partner organizations that will be involved in or are impacted by the proposed project.

ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Applying organizations must be a state agency overseeing SNAP. Preference will be given to proposals that clearly demonstrate the following:

- Ability of the state agency to execute the work plan over the duration of the project
- Sustained impact of the project beyond completion of the grant period
- Capacity of the state agency to hire, onboard, support, and embed staffing resources needed for the project

- Capacity of the state agency to accept grant funds and spend down within the grant implementation time period
- Interest of the state agency in actively participating in cohort learning with their peers and engage in broader policy discussions to reduce child hunger
- Impact of the project to support communities that disproportionately face hunger including, but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities, as well as displaced, homeless, and migrant children.

Commitment to Racial Equity

Communities of color disproportionately face hunger in this country, with Black and Latinx populations currently experiencing twice the rates of food insecurity as their white counterparts during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Asian and Indigenous communities facing similar economic hardships. We encourage respondents to prioritize in their proposals strategies that work toward more race equitable nutrition support programs. This means addressing the inequitable systems, such as access to transportation and technology and racial bias, that have created disparities in food access across racial and ethnic identities and actively countering them throughout the planning and implementation processes. Share Our Strength and APHSA are dedicated to promoting diversity, racial equity, multiculturalism, and inclusion, and are committed to reflecting this in our work.

PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please combine all components of the proposal into one PDF document and send it with the subject line “Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports Proposal: [State name]” to Chloe Green at cgreen@aphsa.org by January 29, 2021 at 5PM EST.

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- ⁱ Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2019*. USDA ERS. Sept 2020. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99282/err-275.pdf?v=6202.3>
- ⁱⁱ Elaine Waxman, Poonam Gupta, and Dulce Gonzales. *Food Insecurity Edged Back up after COVID-19 Relief Expired*. Urban Institute. Oct 2020. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103117/food-insecurity-edged-back-up-after-covid-19-relief-expired.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and T.H. Chan. “Poll: Majorities of Latino, Black, and Native American households across the U.S. report facing serious financial problems during the coronavirus outbreak.” Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Sept 16, 2020. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/poll-majorities-of-latino-black-and-native-american-households-across-the-u-s-report-facing-serious-financial-problems-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>
- ^{iv} Alma Vigil. *Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2010 to Fiscal Year 2017*. USDA FNS. Sept 2019. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/Trends2010-2017.pdf>
- ^v “ERS Charts of Note: Child Nutrition Programs.” USDA ERS. Dec 23, 2019. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/charts-of-note/?topicid=14873>
- ^{vi} Tiehen, Lauren. “The Food Assistance Landscape: Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report.” USDA ERS. July 2020. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99026/eib-218.pdf?v=9012.1>
- ^{vii} Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2019*. USDA ERS. Sept 2020. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99282/err-275.pdf?v=6202.3>
- ^{viii} Helen H. Jensen, Brent Kreider, and Oleksandr Zhylyevskyy. *Investigating Treatment Effects of Participating Jointly in SNAP and WIC when the Treatment is Validated Only for SNAP*. Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. March 11, 2018. https://aysps.gsu.edu/files/2018/10/Kreider_paper_for_Dec_2_talk.pdf
- ^{ix} For examples, please see the following:
- Zoë Neuberger. *Streamlining and Modernizing WIC Enrollment*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Feb 20, 2020. <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/8-30-19fa.pdf>
 - *Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program*. USDA FNS. Nov 7, 2018. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/direct-certification-national-school-lunch-program-report-congress-state-implementation-progress-1>
 - Julia B. Isaacs, Michael Katz, and David Kassabian. *Changing Policies to Streamline Access to Medicaid, SNAP, and Child Care Assistance*. Urban Institute. March 2016. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/78846/2000668-Changing-Policies-to-Streamline-Access-to-Medicaid-SNAP-and-Child-Care-Assistance-Findings-from-the-Work-Support-Strategies-Evaluation.pdf>
 - *Summary of WIC State Agency Strategies for Increasing Child Retention*. USDA FNS. July 2014. <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/ChildRetentionStrategiesReport.pdf>