

SNAP Participation Grants

Funding Integrated Service Delivery

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation Grant program makes grants to state agencies and their private nonprofit partners to improve access to SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) and simplify application and eligibility determination systems. While SNAP is only one piece of income enhancements and work supports, such grants can be critical sources of funding for the development of online screening and application systems, enabling nonprofits to work with states to submit electronic applications for their clients.

Elements of Integrated Service Delivery

Infrastructure		Core 1: Employment and Career Advancement		Core 2: Income Enhancements and Work Supports		Core 3: Financial and Asset Building	
Case Management		Job Training		Tax Preparation		Financial Coaching	
Research & Evaluation		Case Management (for employment)		Income Supports	●	Savings and Asset Building Programs	
Technology	●	Job Retention Support		Supportive Services/ Human Services Referrals			
				Financial Aid			

State and Nonprofit Examples

Ohio SNAP Online: In FY 2009, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, in partnership with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks and the Ohio Benefits Bank, received funding for the Ohio SNAP Online web-based application and change reporting system. The project expands the existing counselor-assisted electronic system offered to clients and county staff while streamlining processes by allowing clients to apply for benefits or submit changes to their current cases online. Because Ohio has a unified application for SNAP, Medicaid and TANF cash assistance, the online system provides access to all three programs. This system went live in November 2010 at <https://odjfsbenefits.ohio.gov/SelfServiceSplash.jsf>.

End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!) Hartford, Connecticut: EHC!, a non-profit anti-hunger organization, in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), received in FY 2010 a grant of \$91,279 to expand use of e-Fax (technology that provides for the secure transmission of data over telephone lines) to all DSS offices and to some other smaller nonprofits. When EHC! staff assist clients in applying for SNAP benefits, they may submit their documentation via e-Fax at the same time. This builds off a pilot project where EHC! worked with the Hartford, CT office to demonstrate the feasibility and value of the e-Fax process. During the pilot period, EHC! documented a 45 percent reduction in the number of cases denied for lack of required paperwork. The grant funds licenses for 15 e-Fax lines for DSS offices, the purchase of fax equipment for smaller partner organizations, and staff time for training users and evaluating the impact of the innovation.

Common Point of Access to Social Services Improvement, Georgia: In FY 2009, the Georgia Department of Human Resources received funding to improve access to SNAP benefits for eligible clients by enhancing the Common Point of Access to Social Services (COMPASS), Georgia’s online application system. COMPASS allows clients to screen for all benefits and to apply for SNAP and child care subsidies. With the funding from the SNAP participation grant, the state aims to allow clients to recertify online by April 2011. The state also hopes to bring TANF and Medicaid applications online at the time. Georgia is also using the grant to support back-end processes to improve its efficiency. By the end of 2011, the state plans to have document imaging capabilities and all files online. This will allow a caseworker in any office to start processing the next applicant in line through COMPASS, regardless of the client’s county of residence, which will make better use of extra capacity in rural, low-volume offices and improve the speed at which applications are processed in high-volume offices.

Eligibility and Targeting

Eligible grantees are state agencies that administer SNAP, state or local governments, agencies providing health or welfare services, public health or educational entities, and private non-profit entities such as community-based or faith-based organizations, food banks, or other emergency feeding operations. If a grant application comes from an entity other than a State agency, it must include state endorsement of the project.

SNAP Participation Grants are meant to encourage participation in the SNAP program. SNAP benefits are available to low-income individuals and families. They are among the few income and work supports available to workers without children. In general, eligibility is limited to those with a gross monthly household income of 130 percent or less of the federal poverty line and net monthly income of 100 percent or less of the federal poverty line. However, many states have adopted categorical eligibility, which allows them to waive gross income and asset limits for some or all recipients.¹

Federal Funding: \$5 million a year. Typically, 5-7 grants are awarded each year to state agencies who administer SNAP; state or local governments; public health or educational entities or private non-profit entities.

Type of Program: Competitive grant program.

Agency with Jurisdiction: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

Services/Program Support

This grant program supports projects that simplify SNAP application and eligibility determination systems and improve access to SNAP benefits by eligible applicants. Projects must be concerned with improving the quality and efficiency of operations, and could include (but are not limited to): web-based application systems, online benefit tools, telephone or call centers or remote enrollment sites. Projects must be new and innovative to the specific state or county office where they are implemented. While this funding may not directly provide support to organizations providing integrated services, it can make their benefit access services simpler and more effective.

In FY2010, FNS gave priority to grant applications that a) included “process improvement procedures” (PIPs) to make the work of one or more local offices more efficient and effective, or b) supported partnerships between state SNAP agencies and private non-profit organizations.

No more than 25 percent of the costs of a project can support outreach activities, such as advertising, application assistance, screening or pre-qualifying applicants or out-stationing eligibility workers to attract or recruit SNAP participants. In past years, FNS has provided separate funding for outreach grants. Outreach costs are also eligible for funding as part of SNAP administrative costs.

Grants may be for project periods of up to three years.

Program Limitations

These grants are specifically aimed at improving participation in the SNAP program and applicants must show that all proposed activities will improve access to SNAP. However, as in the Ohio example, when a state uses a combined application, SNAP Participation Grants can improve processes that benefit other programs.

Grantees and Application Process

The most recent RFP under this program can be found at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/grants/2010-RFA.pdf>

Lists of grantees and future funding announcements can be found under “Grants” at

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/program-improvement.htm>

¹ “Frequently Asked Questions, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, November 02, 2010, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/faqs.htm>.