Process to Develop a Shared Measurement System for Maine State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC)

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Objective: To demonstrate how a shared measurement system can be utilized to track data and measure progress toward achieving mutual goals of a SNAC.

Use of Theory or Research: U.S. federal nutrition programs are required to coordinate efforts across a variety of public health sectors by convening SNACs. Evaluation of state-level collaborations is encouraged; however, most SNACs do not have an established framework. To align efforts, track progress, and share successes, Maine SNAC developed a shared measurement system based on tenets of collective impact.

Target Audience: Maine SNAC members and partners.

Program Description: Maine SNAC meets quarterly to support strategies on obesity prevention, nutrition, and food security. Two subcommittees collaborated on goals to promote participation in school meals and increase use of federal nutrition benefits among program recipients.

Evaluation Methods: Altarum, the external evaluator, worked with Maine SNAC leaders to develop logic models and an evaluation framework based on the mission and workplans of SNAC subcommittees. A shared measurement system was then developed to aggregate data from multiple sources using common process and outcome measures aligned with the framework. A template was distributed to SNAC members to compile data on these measures. Altarum reviewed and summarized collected data to prepare an infographic on the SNAC’s success in reaching goals.

Results: In 2021-2022, the shared measurement system captured data from 14 Maine SNAC members representing 5 different sectors. Contributed data included surveys (3 sources), federal assistance program participation (3 sources), social marketing analytics (5 sources), and nutrition incentive program sales and redemption (2 sources). Two infographics were produced and distributed to more than 50 state and federal public health partners.

Conclusion: Maintaining a shared measurement system allows the systematic compilation of data from multiple partners to demonstrate the progress of mutual goals. Presenting tabulated data in an infographic provides a compelling way to showcase collective impact. This process can be replicated in the future by other SNACs or coalitions.

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Ripple Effects of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program: A Participatory Evaluation of a Nutrition Program

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Objective: The objective of this study was to evaluate the impacts of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Washington state, using a participatory evaluation called Ripple Effects Mapping (REM).

Use of Theory or Research: EFNEP is a direct education program grounded in social cognitive theory and adult and youth learning principles.

Target Audience: Nine EFNEP Educators in Washington participated in the REM evaluation during an in-person group meeting. These paraprofessional educators deliver EFNEP classes to youth and adults in three urban counties in Washington.

Program Description: EFNEP is a federally-funded nutrition education program that helps participants with low incomes achieve greater health and well-being.

Evaluation Methods: Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory evaluation tool that uses an appreciative inquiry approach to promote reflection, gather stories and impact from a group of participants. An external facilitator conducted the REM discussion in a group setting while two notetakers documented the impacts shared by creating a mind map. The REM session was recorded and transcribed. One notetaker deductively coded the qualitative data using two data sets in Atlas.Ti using the five behavior change focus areas of EFNEP: diet quality, physical activity, food resource management, food safety, and food security.

Results: Of the five focus areas of EFNEP, impacts describing diet quality and food resource management in EFNEP participant lives were mentioned most often. Themes that emerged for diet quality included labeling, sugar, whole grains, and reducing sugar and fat. Themes for food resource management included cooking, shopping, and saving money. In addition, EFNEP Educators reported being proud of how EFNEP builds community in and outside of their classes.

Conclusion: REM is an effective evaluation tool to collect and document impact stories about EFNEP educator and participant experiences.

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Rural Online Shopping Assistant (ROSA): Mixed Methods Formative Evaluation With Low-Income Rural Shoppers

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Background: Online grocery purchasing opportunities are rapidly growing in rural areas. There is a need to ensure...