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 these 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 label reading, sugary drinks, 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 Continued on page S88
that this approach won’t exacerbate rural health disparities. The literature has not explored the use of interactive human-like virtual avatars as health-promoting online grocery shopping assistants.

**Objective:** Conduct a mixed-methods formative evaluation to understand the perceptions of an interactive Rural Online Shopping Assistant (ROSA, a virtual human-like avatar) among low-income rural shoppers.

**Study Design, Settings, Participants:** We recruited WIC participants (n=12) (aged 18+, fluent in English, and able to shop online) in a rural North Carolina WIC clinic. Participants completed a single structured online shopping simulation on an actual grocery website that included pop-up video messages from ROSA throughout the shopping experience (front page, select items, checkout cart), with questions after each interaction to assess the helpfulness and potential impact. An in-depth qualitative interview followed to understand perceptions of ROSA, its potential impact on dietary behaviors, and suggested revisions. Participants then completed a choice experiment to understand preferences for avatar appearance.

**Measurable Outcome/Analysis:** Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the structured shopping experience and the choice experiment data. In-depth interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, transcripts were independently coded using qualitative software, and a content analysis was conducted to identify themes and salient quotes.

**Results:** Most participants (88%) enjoyed using the program, found it helpful, and wanted to use it in the future. Most participants described it as “cool”, “helpful”, and “beneficial” to shopping more healthily. The instrumental social support provided by the avatar (reminders and suggestions) could break less healthy shopping habits, add healthy items, and diversify foods purchased. Most participants preferred a cartoon-like, clinically-dressed avatar. Participants discussed that the avatar should be “approachable” and half mentioned being racially inclusive.

**Conclusion:** This formative study suggests that ROSA could be a beneficial tool for facilitating healthy online grocery shopping among low-income rural shoppers. Future research should further investigate the impact of ROSA on dietary behaviors in this population.

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**Stay Independent: Promoting Healthy Aging in Iowa and Louisiana**

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**Objective:** This evaluation study assessed the impact of Stay Independent (SI) participation on topic familiarity and likelihood to make a recommended behavior change.

**Use of Theory or Research:** SI was developed using Social Marketing Theory and is centered on Whole Person Wellness.

**Target Audience:** Community-dwelling adults ages 60 years and older in Iowa and Louisiana.

Continued on page S89