National Program Evaluation and Reporting System (N-PEARS) Frequently Asked Questions

N-PEARS Overview and System Access

Question: What is N-PEARS?

- ***Answer:*** The National Program Evaluation and Reporting System (N-PEARS) is a robust electronic online reporting system developed under the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ("2018 Farm Bill," PL 115–334). This system enables State agencies to submit their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) Annual Nutrition Education Plan, known as the SNAP-Ed State Plan, and a new, consolidated annual report. N-PEARS Plans and annual reports provide the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) with data that are consistent across State programs and, thus, facilitate data aggregation and evaluation of SNAP-Ed grants. N-PEARS also streamlines the SNAP-Ed State Plan and annual report submission and review process for State agencies and FNS. Submission deadlines did not change, and the State Plan and annual report modules housed in N-PEARS ease tracking and submission by walking users through the State Plan and annual report writing process step by step, using autofill to avoid reentering repeated data, and automatically skipping sections not needed for a particular State or implementing agency's Plan or annual report. The order and phrasing of the questions were carefully reviewed for clarity and ease of use based on feedback from FNS and State staff.

Question: When will SNAP-Ed Plans and Annual Reports be submitted through N-PEARS?

- ***Answer:*** State plans are submitted through N-PEARS starting with the FY 2024 SNAP-Ed State Plan, and annual reports are submitted through N-PEARS starting with the FY 2023 Annual Report. State plans are due August 15 and annual reports are due January 31. For more information about, see: SNAP-Ed Plan and Annual Report Process Changes | SNAP-Ed (usda.gov)

Question: Who has access to N-PEARS?

- ***Answer:*** State and implementing agencies can access N-PEARS to enter information in the plan and Annual Report. State agencies manage implementing agency access to N-PEARS. Note that implementing agency accounts cannot be further subdivided into subcontractor accounts; implementing agencies should enter information for projects conducted by their subcontractors. FNS Regional Coordinators and the Nutrition Education Branch can review submitted State Plans and annual reports.

Question: How do I gain access to N-PEARS?

- ***Answer:*** State agency user access is managed through N-PEARS support. State agencies may request updates to their users by contacting Canopy at support@pears.io and copying their Regional Coordinator(s). State agency users manage implementing agency users.

Writing and Submitting State Plans and Annual Reports in N-PEARS

Question: What if the implementing agency works closely with the State agency to write the State Plan?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies are expected to complete the prerequisite modules: Module 1 (Identify the Target Audience and Needs Assessment) and Module 2 (State SNAP-Ed Action Plan). State agencies may work with implementing agencies to conduct the statewide needs assessment, but State agencies enter the data into N-PEARS.

Question: Will implementing agencies enter their own Plan information into N-PEARS?

- ***Answer:*** Implementing agencies will have access to N-PEARS and can create an agency-level Plan, which will then roll up into the State-level Plan.

Question: Can State agencies submit Plan details on behalf of implementing agencies?

- ***Answer:*** No. State agencies should complete the prerequisite modules for the whole State. Implementing agencies should enter information about planned activities they will implement directly into N-PEARS. In unique cases, the State agency may provide additional support to implementing agencies; State agencies should contact their FNS Regional Coordinator(s) for more information.

Question: Can several collaborators within an agency work on a State Plan or Annual Report at the same time?

- ***Answer:*** Yes, each agency can have accounts for more than one person, but users should coordinate to avoid editing the same data simultaneously and overwriting each other's changes. You will see a warning if another user is editing the same page. For more information, see: Data Overwrite Warning – National PEARS Support Documentation

Question: Are all parts of the State Plan and Annual Report in N-PEARS required?

- ***Answer:*** The only optional module is the evaluation module; it must be completed only when a formal evaluation is conducted by dedicated evaluation staff (internal or contracted). All other modules are required, with State agencies being the only agencies with access to Modules 1 and 2 in the SNAP-Ed State Plan. Within each module, unless explicitly marked as optional, all fields should be assumed to be required.

Question: Can State agencies export from N-PEARS to share with Tribal communities for internal review processes and other data reporting needs?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies can print the entire State Plan and annual report to a PDF, which can then be shared outside the system.

Question: How will the approval process work for Regional Coordinators to sign off on State Plans and State agencies to sign off on implementing agencies' Plans?

- ***Answer:*** The State agency reviews each implementing agency plan separately in the system. Once all are reviewed and approved, the State agency submits the entire State Plan through N-PEARS to the Regional Coordinator, who can review, ask for changes, or approve the State Plan.

Question: Can data be imported?

- ***Answer:*** Several optional Excel templates are available for users to import data into N-PEARS. Templates are available for the Planned Staffing and Budget module in the State plan and the Project and Activities Results module in the annual report. The templates are available for download in the system. Otherwise, agencies need to enter State plan and annual report data manually.

Question: For State agencies that use PEARS currently to report day-to-day program activities, do the two systems talk to each other?

- ***Answer:*** At this time, N-PEARS does not directly link to PEARS. However, PEARS can generate an N-PEARS annual report export that aligns with the optional Excel template for importing data into N-PEARS. More information about the PEARS export is available on the support page: Mapping PEARS Data to N-PEARS – PEARS Support Documentation. Non-PEARS users may use an optional Excel template to support data uploads.

N-PEARS Data

Question: How will N-PEARS data be used?

- ***Answer:*** FNS uses SNAP-Ed data to understand SNAP-Ed program outputs, such as (1) numbers and demographics of people the program serves, (2) methods used to reach the SNAP-Ed target audience, (3) types of partners engaged, and (4) outcomes achieved. Regional Offices, State agencies, and implementing agencies should also use their data for these purposes, highlighting what is most important and relevant for the diverse parties interested in SNAP-Ed (e.g., elected officials, community members, partners).

Question: Will national-level SNAP-Ed data be publicly available?

- ***Answer:*** Select data will be presented publicly through dashboards and maps on SNAP-Ed Connection.

Question: Does FNS have a plan to use geographical information system (GIS) maps for data visualization and reporting?

- ***Answer:*** Yes, we plan to track location data with sites, which will facilitate map visualizations and other geospatial reports.

Question: Does this system explicitly link the intervention's process indicators to the outcomes in any way?

- ***Answer:*** All data about a project are linked (e.g., reach and outcomes), including any data on process indicators and outcomes summarized in open text fields or in a separate document uploaded to the online annual report. However, the system does not track data at the intervention level. If a project contains more than one intervention of a given strategy (e.g., two direct education interventions), results would be aggregated across the interventions.

SNAP-Ed State Plan Content

Prerequisites: Module 1. Identify the Target Audiences and Their Needs and Module 2. State SNAP-Ed Action Plan

Question: Can implementing agencies fill out the prerequisite modules?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies must complete the prerequisite modules before implementing agencies enter plan information. State agencies are encouraged to involve implementing agencies in the needs assessment and statewide goal-setting processes. Once the needs assessment is complete, the State agency enters the information into the modules in N-PEARS.

Question: What is the role of the State agency in the needs assessment?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies should coordinate the needs assessment, including the input from SNAP-Ed participants, SNAP-Ed-eligible nonparticipants, community-based organizations, community advisory groups, coalition members, implementing agencies, and others. For more resources on the needs assessment, see: [SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment Toolkit | SNAP-Ed (usda.gov)].

Question: Will the State-level needs assessment also include implementing agencies' specific needs assessments to ensure FNS understands the needs each implementing agency identifies and addresses?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies are required to conduct a Statewide needs assessment every three years. More localized needs assessments may be helpful for planning programming. The State agency can include additional information and files in the needs assessment module to show localized needs.

Question: If you are required to submit a one-year State Plan, are you required to do a needs assessment each year?

- ***Answer:*** All agencies are expected to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment every three years and update the needs assessment in the other years, as needed.

Question: How can agencies honor the privacy and ownership of Tribal data?

- ***Answer:*** Tribal engagement is a high priority for FNS. It is important to balance maintaining privacy and honoring of Tribal data ownership with the ability to equitably address the nutrition needs of Tribal communities. Agencies should defer to and learn from Tribal Nations on this topic. In some States, Tribal Nations have submitted their own needs assessments, which enable Tribes to decide what information to provide to the State agency.

Question: If we have identified gaps in service or gaps in data necessary to serve specific populations, such as rural States, how do we get those data?

- ***Answer:*** Agencies should leverage their stakeholder networks to identify all relevant data sources.
    - Agencies can overlay ZIP Codes and census tracts where at least 50 percent of the population has an income at or below 185 percent (or the State's categorical eligibility limit, if higher) of the Federal Poverty Guidelines with the sites where SNAP-Ed programming currently occurs. Agencies can then identify areas with a large eligible population without local SNAP-Ed projects. Agencies can refer to work presented through the Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators (ASNNA) on mapping ([2023 Conference slides - ASNNA].) Agencies can also examine participant data to inform programming (e.g., requests at the State level for Spanish translation). State offices are an important source of data.
    - Agencies can also consider primary data collection to fill important gaps in existing data sources.

Question: Collecting new data from participants/nonparticipants is challenging when we are restricted in the type and the amount of incentive we can provide. Is there any consideration of providing funding for incentives?

- ***Answer:*** SNAP-Ed allows reimbursement for participation (e.g., transportation, childcare) but not incentives to participate. Refer to the SNAP-Ed Guidance for further details about payments to individuals.

Question: For State-specific data on target population related to nutrition and physical activity, can we include statewide data, or does it have to be broken down by age group?

- ***Answer:*** Agencies should fill in the age ranges. Few data sources provide a single statistic on an outcome for everyone in the State; more often, it will be for infants, children, adults, or other categories. Breaking the data down by age group whenever possible can help agencies better understand population needs and plan their interventions accordingly. If a certain statistic truly covers all ages and cannot be broken down, set the age range to 0–100.

Question: What indicators should be used to measure program access or appropriateness success?

- ***Answer:*** For access, agencies can measure availability of transportation, broadband access, and accommodations for people with disabilities. Agencies should also determine if the languages offered for their interventions match the primary languages of the SNAP-Ed-eligible population. Agencies should also consider current outreach and recruitment strategies, the location of SNAP-Ed efforts, the time and mode of SNAP-Ed efforts (e.g., in person, virtual), and the availability of programming or translation services for people with limited English proficiency.

  For appropriateness, agencies can measure whether and how the delivery methods, materials, and messages adequately account for the target audiences' financial resources, food access, and diverse cultural food preferences. Agencies should also consider the target audiences' comfort with program sites and the types of implementing agencies and partners engaged in program development and implementation.

Question: How should priority goals be established for a multiyear plan?

- ***Answer:*** State priority goals are established every three years as a part of the comprehensive needs assessment. In the second and third years of this cycle, the SNAP-Ed State Plan, whether single-year or multiyear, must demonstrate a progression and/or flow of program activities in a logical and sequential manner, with each year building upon the preceding one. For example, Year 1 can be conducting a needs assessment and performing baseline programming and/or piloting; Year 2 can be program implementation and evaluation; and Year 3 can be a continuation of program expansion and further evaluation. Some priority goals can be evaluated annually, while others can only be evaluated every two or three years. Agencies are not expected to report outcomes for priority goals until they have completed the activities designed to accomplish those goals.

Question: Do we have to keep all goals and/or SMART objectives for the entire three-year needs assessment cycle? How do we indicate changes?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies can update their needs assessments each year. As needs change, it may be appropriate to also change goals and/or SMART objectives.

Question: When should we use performance indicators not found in the SNAP-Ed evaluation framework?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies should use performance indicators from the SNAP-Ed evaluation framework whenever possible. They may use other indicators for SMART objectives on outcomes not found in the SNAP-Ed evaluation framework. For example, the State agency may track the number of projects with interventions offered in multiple languages to measure progress toward an access-related objective or the number of hours of diversity training provided to State and implementing agency staff to measure progress toward a workforce capacity-building objective.

Question: When we link indicators to our SMART objectives, should we link the indicators we plan to measure or the indicators we plan to affect through our work?

- ***Answer:*** Link objectives to the indicators you intend to affect. Some SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework indicators have corresponding pages in N-PEARS where you can enter data on measured indicators directly. For other indicators, you can report them in the other results section. If you measured indicators as part as an evaluation, you can add evaluation report details in the evaluation module.

Module 3. Planned Projects and Activities

Question: What is a SNAP-Ed project?

- ***Answer:*** A SNAP-Ed project is an intervention or a cluster of interventions or activities executed by a single agency (State agency, implementing agency, or subcontractor) with common goals, intended outcomes, target audiences (e.g., youth), and implementation setting types (e.g., school). Project activities include planning and reporting.

Question: Can a single SNAP-Ed project use multiple intervention types?

- ***Answer:*** A project may have multiple interventions or components—including direct education; social marketing; and PSE—separately or in combination. State agencies are encouraged to implement multilevel projects.

Question: What is a SNAP-Ed intervention?

- ***Answer:*** A SNAP-Ed intervention is a specific set of evidence-based, behaviorally focused activities and/or actions implemented to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles.

  To help agencies consistently report on their interventions, N-PEARS allows users to select from a list of SNAP-Ed Toolkit interventions and search through a list of other previously developed interventions.

  If your agency is using an intervention not found in either of these lists, create a descriptive name for your intervention that you can use consistently year after year. Consistent intervention naming helps FNS understand intervention implementation, reach, and outcomes across agencies and over time. Before coming up with a new name for an intervention, check previous SNAP-Ed State Plans and annual reports to confirm the intervention has not already been named in N-PEARS. When creating intervention names, consider including the date of intervention development, setting, audience, and/or intervention strategy (e.g., “2023 Statewide social marketing—families with young children”).

Question: Where is indirect education captured?

- ***Answer:*** Indirect education does not have a dedicated space in the Plan, but you can describe it in the project description on the "Basic Information" page.

Question: What is a multiagency project?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies can set up multiagency projects to enable more than one implementing agency to include information about contributions to the project.

Question: Our State agency has us write 1-year workplans. In the State Plan, do we say all projects are entering Year 1 of implementation?

- ***Answer:*** Please consider the total amount of time the project has been in place.

  Example 1: This is the first year you are doing a particular project and have included it in your SNAP-Ed State Plan. Report the project as entering Year 1 of implementation.

  Example 2: You have successfully implemented the same project for the past 4 years. Report the project as entering Year 5 of implementation.

  Example 3: You are developing a project you expect to implement and evaluate the following fiscal year. Report the project as entering Year 1 of implementation.

Question: How will we know how to designate a site as rural, suburban, frontier, or urban?

- ***Answer:*** In the annual report, N-PEARS will automatically categorize sites as urban, suburban, rural, or frontier based on their ZIP Code using a combination of rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) coding and frontier and remote area (FAR) codes. At the Plan stage, site locations may not yet be finalized, so the goal is simply to give a general sense of how planned work will cover these types of geographies. As such, the State Plan does not have a formal definition for these area types.

Question: For potential reach by market segment, how should market segments be reported when they overlap?

- ***Answer:*** When market segments relevant to a given social marketing campaign overlap, simply report the appropriate numbers; do not worry about the overlap.

Question: How should agencies describe projects that will use part of an established intervention or combine parts from different established interventions?

- ***Answer:*** If an agency is using only a part of an existing intervention, check the box for adaptation and use the open text field to explain what part(s) the agency is retaining. For a mixed intervention, choose the one intervention that makes the biggest contribution to what the agency plans to implement, check off that it will be adapted, and explain in the open text field that the adaptation involves bringing in elements of other interventions. If no single intervention makes up the bulk of the new intervention, it may truly be a new intervention and should be included as such in the State Plan.

Question: If an intervention was included in an approved State Plan in the past, would it be considered "approved by FNS?"

- ***Answer:*** Yes. However, if substantial changes are made to an intervention, the changed intervention should be approved in consultation with Regional Coordinators.

Question: Per the FY 2024 Guidance, to qualify as an *emerging intervention*, an intervention must have a "foundational evidence base" that will be grown or developed. To expand that evidence base over time, is a formal evaluation required?

- ***Answer:*** Project monitoring is required for all SNAP-Ed projects. It includes the collection and analysis of data on how the project was implemented (e.g., attendance at nutrition education sessions) and the outcomes the project was anticipated to affect (e.g., fruit and vegetable consumption). If the project monitoring results indicate the project is working as expected, that is sufficient evidence to support continued implementation of the project. If the project monitoring results indicate the project is not working as expected, agencies should consider making changes to the project to address weaknesses. As needed, agencies could gather more detailed information on the project to understand why it is not working as expected. Alternatively, agencies can simply discontinue the use of a new intervention if project monitoring results indicate it is not working as expected.

  Formal evaluations are led by dedicated evaluation staff. They include more rigorous data collection and analysis than project monitoring. FNS encourages agencies to do formal evaluations when that work will benefit SNAP-Ed more broadly. For example, if a new project serves a population or targets an outcome not prioritized by any interventions that already have a robust evidence base, it would be valuable to establish a stronger evidence base for the new project. If a rigorous evaluation of that new project supports its effectiveness, it can be disseminated more broadly so others in SNAP-Ed can use it to benefit participants who otherwise might be left unserved. In other cases, a rigorous evaluation is not justified because the results will not help establish a resource for an unmet need in SNAP-Ed. SNAP-Ed funds should not be used for research, so conducting an evaluation primarily for the purpose of publishing the results in a peer-reviewed journal is not appropriate.

Module 4. Planned Evaluations

Question: Is each project required to have a planned evaluation?

- ***Answer:*** No. Agencies should only fill out the evaluation section when they have a formal evaluation led by dedicated evaluation staff (internal or contracted). Note that this is different from standard program monitoring, which is required for agencies to collect the data requested in the project and activity results section of the annual report.

Question: Who should enter information about planned evaluations into N-PEARS?

- ***Answer:*** Currently, agencies can add evaluation plans only for projects they entered into N-PEARS. Many external evaluators do not enter projects into the system. External evaluators should provide the information needed for the evaluation plan module to the agency that enters the project(s) into N-PEARS. That agency can then input the planned evaluation details.

Question: Is it possible to evaluate a nonproject activity?

- ***Answer:*** Yes, an evaluation plan and report may include nonproject activities.

Question: Can there be more than one evaluation for a single project?

- ***Answer:*** Yes, separate evaluation plans can be set up for different parts of a project.

Question: Does an evaluation have to cover the entirety of a project?

- ***Answer:*** No. An evaluation can focus on only a part of a project.

Question: Can an evaluation cover work done by multiple implementing agencies?

- ***Answer:*** Yes. State agencies can set up multi-agency projects, which allows more than one implementing agency to add project details and evaluation reports.

Module 5. Coordination and Collaboration

Question: How do we know which sector a member of a multisector partnership or coalition will fall under?

- ***Answer:*** You should choose the sector that best describes the contribution each member makes to the partnership/coalition. Consider a coalition that includes the Departments of Education, Transportation, and Agriculture at the State level working together. Even though all three are government agencies, the best way to categorize them would be as representatives of education, transportation, and agriculture. Each member should only be categorized once to avoid inflating the number of partners in the coalition.

  If unable to categorize a member under an existing sector, choose "Other" and fill in the sector name. Please limit the use of the "Other" category because most partnerships should fit within one of the defined sectors.

Question: How should we report partnerships with associations that are groups of individuals, such as a professional organization? What about associations that are groups of organizations, such as a school district?

- ***Answer:*** For associations of individuals, such as a chefs' association or local dietetic association that provides volunteers for interventions, report the association as a single partner under the most appropriate sector. For the examples above, you would use "Food industry" and "Public health and healthcare," respectively. Use the "Other" option and specify the association if none of the sector options describe the group.

  For associations of organizations, such as a school district or healthcare organization with several clinics where interventions are held, consider each organization as a separate partner contributing to the partnership/coalition. Choose the sectors that best reflect the group. School district partners would fall under "Education," while healthcare organizations may go under "Public health and healthcare."

Question: Is a State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) only to be included in the Plan by the State agency even though implementing agencies are active members?

- ***Answer:*** All agencies planning to dedicate SNAP-Ed funding to participation in a SNAC should include it in their Plans. Agencies should be consistent in how they name the SNAC or other Statewide coalitions in their Plans.

Question: What is the definition of a "Tribal organization," and is there an official Tribal jurisdiction definition we should use?

- ***Answer:*** State and implementing agencies should use the following definition when undertaking activities to meet Federal requirements for Tribal engagement:

  Section 3(v) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, states: "'Tribal organization' means the recognized governing body of an Indian tribe (including the tribally recognized intertribal organization of such tribes), as the term 'Indian tribe' is defined in the Indian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 450b(b)), as well as any Indian tribe, band, or community holding a treaty with a State government." For more details, see https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/memorandum-on-tribal-consultation-requirements.pdf.

  State and implementing agencies may use a broader definition of "Tribal" or "Tribal jurisdiction" when discussing work with non-Federally recognized Tribes, other Tribal organizations, or organizations that work with Tribes.

Module 6. Planned Staffing and Budget

Question: How should we separate project and nonproject costs?

- ***Answer:*** State and implementing agencies must submit one budget per project and a separate budget for other SNAP-Ed expenditures. Other SNAP-Ed expenditures include nonproject activities and administrative activities.

  Nonproject activities are all efforts funded by SNAP-Ed, other than projects, designed to accomplish State priority goals and objectives. Examples include comprehensive needs assessments, general staff training (e.g., civil rights training), technical assistance, and peer-to-peer learning that benefits staff across multiple projects. Other examples include convening of coalitions, contracted services such as evaluation and formative research, and other activities not tied to a specific project. Note that administrative activities, such as procurement, are neither project nor nonproject activities. State agencies can budget general support for implementing agencies as a nonproject activity.

Question: What are "other SNAP-Ed expenditures," and how do we justify them?

- ***Answer:*** Other SNAP-Ed expenditures capture two types of costs: (1) nonproject activities and (2) administrative activities. There is not a separate space in N-PEARS to provide justification for other expenditures, but agencies can add those other expenditure justifications in the space provided. For instance, if an agency will spend $100 on salary/benefits for other expenditures and $100 on salary/benefits for a project, it should explain how each source of salary/benefits contributes to the total of $200.

Question: When should travel be included in the "other SNAP-Ed expenditures" versus project budget costs?

- ***Answer:*** If the travel is for a specific project, include it as part of the project budget. Otherwise, it can go under "other SNAP-Ed expenditures."

Question: Can we bundle trips for a related purpose (e.g., a single project)?

- ***Answer:*** Yes. Provide as much detail as possible about the number of trips, length of trips, and other relevant information to enable your Regional Coordinator to determine if the amount you have budgeted is appropriate. It could be helpful to cite travel expenses from previous years on similar types of trips in your budget narrative as justification.

Question: How do we include budgets for local implementing agency that contract for services?

- ***Answer:*** Subcontracts within a project are a single line item in N-PEARS. Agencies should still retain full details for contracting purposes. If a subrecipient is implementing a whole project, the details of its budget will be included in the budget for that project.

Question: How do we enter indirect costs?

- ***Answer:*** In cases where a single indirect rate is charged, you can enter that percentage, and the explanation field is optional. When multiple indirect cost rates are at play, you should enter the total calculated indirect cost from the more detailed budget workbooks you manage for contracts, leave indirect cost rate blank, and add an explanation of the total. For example:
  - 20% charged on direct costs, 2% passthrough on contracts;
  - $1,000 charged per FTE; OR
  - 21% charged, capped after the first $10,000 on subcontracts.

Question: What is non-SNAP-Ed funding?

- ***Answer:*** If part of a project or intervention is funded by SNAP-Ed and the rest has another funding source, you can report the other funding source on the "Non-SNAP-Ed Funding" page.

SNAP-Ed Annual Report Content

Module 1. Project and Activity Results

Question: If several agencies implement a project or intervention, who should report it?

- ***Answer:*** State agencies can enter multiagency projects in cases where more than one implementing agency is involved in project implementation. Implementing agencies should describe which aspects of the project they plan to implement in the State Plan and should report the results on the parts of the project they implemented in the annual report. The same activities should not be reported by more than one agency in N-PEARS.

Question: Do we need to do any reporting at the intervention level, or just at the project level?

- ***Answer:*** The "Project Results" section is organized by project, with pages to report outcomes for direct education, PSE, and/or social marketing interventions. Within each project, all direct education outcomes are reported together, even if there is more than one curriculum. The PSE pages capture site-level changes for the project. States report on each social marketing campaign within a project.

Question: How do we report qualitative data or data that otherwise do not align with framework indicators?

- ***Answer:*** Module 4 provides space to include other results. The evaluation results, success stories, and executive summary modules are also places to report qualitative and other data.

Question: How do we report results for nonproject activities?

- ***Answer:*** Results for nonproject activities can be included in the success stories and/or executive summary modules.

Project sites

Question: If more than one project is operating at a site, how do we remedy duplication of sites?

- ***Answer:*** Enter the site for all relevant projects. Any needed deduplication for the purposes of mapping sites or other analyses of sites will be handled on the back end.

Question: How does N-PEARS determine if a site is urban, suburban, rural, or frontier?

- ***Answer:*** N-PEARS uses Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes (RUCA) and Frontier and Remote Area Codes (FAR) coding of ZIP Codes. The Area Types in N-PEARS are automatically determined by a mapping algorithm in N-PEARS and are specific to SNAP-Ed use in N-PEARS. Read more here: Mapping Sites to an Area Type – National PEARS Support Documentation.

Question: How should we report sites for virtual direct education classes?

- ***Answer:*** If the direct education is delivered by recruiting participants from a specific site, such as a food bank, enter the site details of the recruitment site. If participation is broad and not linked to a specific site, you do not need to enter site details. Report the rest of the intervention details on the applicable pages.

Direct education reach and demographics

Question: If someone participates in one direct education intervention and then participates in another, separate direct education intervention, such as another class series, how are they counted for direct education reach?

- ***Answer:*** A participant should be counted once for each *different* direct education series in which they participated. A person is counted once, regardless of the number of sessions within a series in which they participated.

  Example: Billy attended four out of six sessions in a direct education series at his school. Billy counts as one participant for this first intervention. Billy later participated in a separate direct education series at a community center, where he and his mother, Maria, attended 10 out of 12 sessions. For this intervention, Billy counts as one participant, and Maria counts as one participant. Billy is counted in the reach of the two direct education interventions.

Question: How is the total direct education reach calculated?

- ***Answer:*** When data are entered, the total for each category reflects the sum of the actual and estimated columns for that row. Use the “actual count” column to enter data self-reported by participants. Use the “estimated count” if demographic data are not collected from participants (including if any participants decline to provide demographic data). The total number of persons your implementing agency reached through all direct education interventions that are part of a given project is reflected as the sum of the actual and estimated counts columns. Note that because an individual can select more than one race, the total for race may be higher than the total number of individuals.

  Example: An implementing agency held a class with 15 adults: 9 participants reported they were female, 5 reported they were male, and 1 person did not wish to indicate their gender. Fourteen individuals are recorded in the actual count column for gender. The person who did not provide information about their gender is reported in the estimated column. The total will reflect 15 participants.

Question: For train-the-trainer curricula, how is total reach reported?

- ***Answer:*** If an evidence-based train-the-trainer intervention is delivered with fidelity and the number of individuals who received the education from trained individuals can be confirmed, the total number of individuals reached can include individuals reached by train-the-trainer session attendees.

  Example: A SNAP-Ed educator trained 10 teachers in an elementary school. These 10 teachers then educate a total of 300 students. The total reach for this intervention would be 310.

Question: If we have actual counts of the total number of individuals in a direct education intervention but estimate their age, gender, ethnicity, and/or race, would that be considered actual or estimated counts?

- ***Answer:*** These would be considered an estimated count because you are estimating the demographic data. Only self-reported demographic data can be used for actual counts.

  Example 1: A series of hour-long classes is held with adults. At the start of the series, each adult completes a survey in which they indicate their gender, race, and ethnicity. This would be considered an *actual count*.

  Example 2: A series of 30-minute classes is held at a Summer Food Service Program site in a park where any child in the community can attend. Educators use American Community Survey data to estimate the race, ethnicity, and sex of attendees. This is considered an *estimated count*.

Question: What methods for estimation can we use when it is not appropriate to ask participants to report their race and ethnicity (e.g., young children) or when participants choose not to identify their race and ethnicity?

- ***Answer:*** If possible, please use existing data about the population you are serving—such as Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participation; free and reduced-price lunch enrollment; American Community Survey; or census data. Please note that it is never appropriate to change or challenge a participant's self-reported demographic information.

Question: What if a State only provides estimates for participant demographics?

- ***Answer:*** Please report the information a State provides, even if it is only estimates. Ensure estimation methods for the number of participants by age and sex are described in the open text field.

Question: How should an individual who identifies as multiple races report their race?

- ***Answer:*** Both ethnicity and race should be reported for all direct education participants. Count persons identifying as multiple races in all racial categories they select. For instance, if a person reports both American Indian/Alaska Native and White identity, count them in both of these racial categories.

Question: We work with many Arab American/Yemeni/Chaldean populations. Are they considered White or Asian in the race/ethnicity portion?

- ***Answer:*** Yemen is a country in the Middle East. The U.S. Census Bureau provides definitions of race, and based on this information, individuals from Yemen would be classified as White.

  Click the link below for additional information, including detailed explanations of how to determine racial categorization for persons from a variety of nations: http://census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html

  Note that participants are free to describe their racial identity in any way they deem appropriate. SNAP-Ed implementers may explain, "The U.S. Census Bureau considers people from [country] to be [race]; you can follow this convention, or you can describe your racial identity in a different way if you think something else is more appropriate."

Direct education mode of delivery

Question: For the types of direct education series delivered, should the number of sessions originally *planned* or *actually delivered* be counted? For example, if a six-lesson class series is canceled after the second lesson as a result of low attendance, should the series be reported as "series of 5–9 sessions" or "series of 2–4 sessions?"

- ***Answer:*** Only report the classes actually delivered. In the above scenario, the series should be reported as "series of 2–4 sessions."

Question: A 6-week series of class sessions crosses fiscal years, with two sessions occurring in one fiscal year and four in the next fiscal year. How should this be reported?

- ***Answer:*** FNS discourages States from scheduling class series that crossover between fiscal years. In cases when it cannot be avoided, report the series as though it is two separate interventions, with one occurring in each fiscal year. All individuals who participated in the program up to the end of the first fiscal year will be reported in Year 1 with the number of sessions completed in that year only. All individuals who participated in the intervention in the following year will be reported in Year 2 with the number of sessions completed in Year 2. Be sure to use the same name for the intervention in each year for clarity.

  Example: In a six-week series of sessions, two sessions occurred in FY 2017, and four sessions occurred in FY 2018. Ten participants attended the first two sessions; 12 participants, including the 10 from the first two sessions, completed the four sessions in FY 2018. Report 10 participants and 2 sessions in FY 2017 and 12 participants and four sessions in FY 2018.

Question: How do we report the total estimated time participants engaged in the direct education series?

- ***Answer:*** For live sessions (in person and online), use session attendance and session duration to estimate the amount of time. For example, if participants attended an average of three sessions in a series of four 60-minute sessions, the total time engaged would be three sessions * 60 minutes = 180 minutes.

  For virtual interactive multimedia, agencies may be able to directly measure the amount of time participants spend engaged in content (e.g., online tracking, a survey asking participants how long they spent with the interactive multimedia). If direct measurement of time engaged is not possible, agencies should measure the proportion of participants who complete the interactive multimedia activity. Agencies should then use the completion rate in conjunction with an estimate of the time required to complete the activity to estimate total time engaged. For example, if 75 percent of participants complete the activity, and the activity is estimated to take 60 minutes, the average time engaged would be .75 * 60 minutes = 45 minutes.

If a single project has more than one direct education intervention, report the average time engaged across all direct education interventions. For example, if participants spend 180 minutes in one of the interventions and 240 in the other, report the time engaged as (180 + 240)/2 = 210 minutes.

Question: If a session is not part of a series and is very short, is it direct education or indirect education?

- ***Answer:*** Single sessions not part of a series must be at least 20 minutes long or have demonstrated successful outcomes to be considered a direct education intervention. Check with your Regional Coordinator to determine whether your intervention is considered direct education if it is a single session lasting less than 20 minutes.

Question: Is a community event with an educator present considered indirect education?

- ***Answer:*** If participants in the community event have a face-to-face interaction with the educator and are actively engaged in learning for 20 minutes or more or as otherwise approved by the Regional Coordinator, it is considered direct education. If participants are not actively engaged in face-to-face learning with the educator, it would be considered education through an indirect intervention channel. When determining if your event is considered direct education or education within another intervention strategy, such as PSE, consider how the intervention is defined in your SNAP-Ed State Plan. Please remember all events need to be part of an evidence-based intervention.

Question: How do you categorize a newsletter that targets parents of children who received school-based nutrition education for whom you have complete demographic information and will count under direct education?

- ***Answer:*** The parents would be considered additional participants and would be included in the total reach count.

Question: What does interactive media mean?

- ***Answer:*** The SNAP-Ed Guidance defines interactive media as a mode of delivery of SNAP-Ed direct education that includes active participant interaction and engagement, is considered virtual in nature, and may be self-paced and/or self-directed. Instructors and participants are not in the same virtual space at the same time.

Individual behavior change (MT1, MT2, and MT3)

Question: What behavior change outcomes should we measure?

- ***Answer:*** Only measure the outcomes your intervention(s) are expected to affect. The SNAP-Ed Guidance describes how to report common behavior outcomes associated with healthy eating (MT1), food resource management (MT2), and physical activity (MT3).

Question: We collect matched data. How should we report our outcomes?

- ***Answer:*** Agencies are encouraged to collect matched data if they have the resources to do so. In the Project and Activities Results module, agencies should simply report their preintervention data separately from their postintervention data. Agencies may include results from any analysis of matched data in their annual report by uploading them on the "Other Results" page or describing them in an Evaluation Report, if appliable.

Question: Where should I report indirect education?

- ***Answer:*** Distribution of educational materials alone is not an evidence-based activity. Your interventions should be reported to reflect they are part of an evidence-based direct education, social marketing, or PSE intervention. Recruitment efforts are not counted as part of reach—only individuals reached through implementation efforts. Note that by naming and implementing toolkit interventions that have indirect education components with fidelity, indirect education components are included without the need to call them out separately.

  You can report outcomes from your indirect education on the "Other Results" page, the "Success Stories" module, and/or the "Key Successes" module if the indirect education is aligned with a SMART objective.

Policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives

Question: What is the difference between adopted and maintained?

- ***Answer:*** The adopted stage of PSE work begins in the FY when at least one PSE change occurs at the project site and the change was not present at the start of the FY. Adoption does not mean full-scale implementation has occurred. The maintained stage of PSE work occurs when the project site adopts a PSE change before the start of the FY that SNAP-Ed funding or staff supported during the FY.

Question: PSE reach is almost always going to be an estimate. Should estimation methods be provided for SNAP-Ed reach in PSE projects?

- ***Answer:*** Agencies may include a description of the estimation methods in the optional notes field for the site where the estimated reach is reported. For more information, see: Document PSE Reach – National PEARS Support Documentation.

Question: Are there more specific guidelines on calculating reach for specific settings?

- ***Answer:*** FNS developed the SNAP-Ed PSE Change Initiative Data Toolkit to support agencies in using data when selecting their PSE changes, reporting on their PSE changes, and communicating findings. Chapter 2 of the Toolkit includes suggestions on how to calculate reach for specific PSE types and settings. Access the Toolkit here: Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Initiative Data Toolkit | SNAP-Ed (usda.gov)

Question: Should we only report the number of SNAP-Ed eligible reached by a PSE or social marketing intervention, or should we report all people reached?

- ***Answer:*** State and implementing agencies may report all people, regardless of their income, reached by SNAP-Ed activities. It is understood that interventions that reach broad audiences, such as social marketing and PSE, will also reach some persons who are not low income.

Question: What is the definition of an active partner?

- ***Answer:*** Active partners contribute significantly to the PSE change work at any stage. Active partners include individuals or organizations that regularly met, exchanged information, and identified and implemented mutually reinforcing activities with SNAP-Ed to contribute to the adoption of one or more PSE changes. Only providing space for SNAP-Ed programming or distributing SNAP-Ed materials would **not** be considered significant coordination or collaboration.

Question: How do we select the appropriate partner type for our active partners?

- ***Answer:*** You should choose the partner type that best describes the active partner's contribution. If you truly cannot place a partnership under an existing partner type, choose "Other" and fill in the partner type. Please limit the use of the "Other" category because most partnerships should fit within one of the defined partner types.

  Example: A project collaborates with early childcare education centers within YMCA locations across the State to help providers offer healthier foods. Because the early childcare education centers are central to the work being done, classify the active partner as "early care and education facilities."

Social marketing

Question: What is the difference between "reach" and "impressions?"

- ***Answer:*** Reach is defined as the number of unduplicated individuals who experience the intervention and are assumed to be influenced by it. Agencies are encouraged to report reach for social marketing campaigns, but it is not required. Note that reach is reported separately for direct education, PSE, and social marketing. For example, a single person reached by direct education and social marketing will be counted in the reach for direct education and in the reach for social marketing.

  Impressions represent the total number of times content is displayed to an audience during a given period. This metric is commonly used and readily available for most channels.

Module 5. Coordination and Collaboration

See State Plan Module 5 for questions about coordination and collaboration.

Module 6. SNAP-Ed Financial Reporting

Question: Should expenditures only include the current award or also include carry-in regardless of funding year?

- ***Answer:*** Agencies will enter the portion of their agency's total expenditures in the reporting year that were carry-over funds from the previous Federal fiscal year. The reporting year is the fiscal year associated with the annual report. Carry-over funds from the previous FY are funds allocated the year prior to the reporting year that are in their second and final year of the obligation period during the reporting year.
  Note: Unobligated funds remaining at the end of the reporting year should be included in the optional Unobligated Funds Report, which is provided by Regional Coordinators and completed outside of N-PEARS.