

Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series
The Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation

Food Stamp Program

**EVALUATION OF FOOD STAMP RESEARCH GRANTS
TO IMPROVE ACCESS THROUGH
NEW TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS**



United States
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September 2005

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This study was conducted under Contract number 53-3K06-0-100 with the Food and Nutrition Service.

This report is available on the Food and Nutrition Service web site: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane>.

Suggested Citation:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation, *Evaluation of Food Stamp Research Grants to Improve Access Through New Technology and Partnerships*, by Sheila Zedlewski, David Wittenburg, Carolyn O'Brien, Robin Koralek, Sandra Nelson, and Gretchen Rowe. Project Officer, Rosemarie Downer, Alexandria VA: 2005.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank local outreach project staff and their local evaluators for their superb cooperation and assistance throughout the project. Staff at the Food and Nutrition Service provided guidance throughout the project and insightful, careful edits to earlier drafts of this report. Also, other staff at the Urban Institute including Simone Schaner, Fiona Blackshaw, and Theresa Plummer helped with the final production of the report. Nonetheless, the authors take full responsibility for any errors in the report. It must also be noted that the findings expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect those of the Urban Institute, its board, or its sponsors.

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FNS Contract Number:	K3-3K06-0-100

September 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002, the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded grants to 19 local outreach projects to investigate how to increase participation in the Food Stamp Program, or FSP. The projects, which were implemented in different locations across 15 states, included a technological component and/or partnerships with other organizations to expand the scope of outreach. This report summarizes the findings of these projects.

These grants represent one of several recent initiatives the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has undertaken to increase FSP participation. The Agency launched a national public education campaign in 1999 to increase awareness of the program. FNS also funded two previous sets of grants for community organizations to experiment with FSP outreach (USDA 2004; LTG Associates 1999). In 2004, FNS completed an Internet-based prescreening tool that individuals or local groups can use to estimate eligibility.

Low participation rates among people eligible for food stamp benefits have prompted these outreach efforts. Many low-income individuals fail to receive a monthly benefit that could substantially increase their total family resources. (The maximum monthly food stamp benefit, \$393 for a family of three in 2005, increases household resources by about 30 percent of the poverty threshold.) Official estimates indicate that about 56 percent of eligible individuals participated in the program in 2003 (Cunnyngham 2005). According to recent research, a lack of knowledge, expectations of small benefits, stigma associated with using government assistance, a desire for independence, and complicated application procedures all reduce participation (Ponza et al. 1999; McConnell and Ponza 1999; Bartlett, Burstein, and Hamilton 2004).

The 2002 outreach projects addressed factors that limit participation. All grantees attempted to educate their target populations about food stamp benefits through various media outlets, flyers, and presentations. Grantees also experimented with various mechanisms to induce more food stamp applications by providing

- prescreening assistance to show clients whether they were eligible for benefits and, if so, how large a benefit; and
- application assistance that ranged from giving clients the food stamp application form to more intensive hands-on services to helping clients complete the application process.

This report synthesizes quantitative and qualitative data collected from the outreach projects. Data quantifying the grantees' activities and client outcomes were collected through a web-based reporting system. Data describing the grantees' progress and processes were collected through three rounds of phone interviews and six site visits to projects that represented a range of partnerships and strategies. A synthesis of project evaluation reports supplements the quantitative and qualitative findings.

The findings provide important lessons about outreach strategies and FSP participation. None of the projects used an experimental approach that can conclusively identify outreach activity impacts. Also, concurrent changes in some FSP policies and a softening economy make it especially difficult to assess whether the interventions were the primary factor affecting food stamp participation at the project sites. But the projects offer insight into establishing effective partnerships with other community groups and local food offices, using technology to reach low-income people, and the effectiveness of different types of outreach strategies.

General Findings

In total, the USDA spent about \$5.0 million on the 19 outreach projects – although one of these discontinued outreach services due to staffing problems. Grantees provided some form of application assistance—from a simple referral to actual help in filling out and filing the form at the local food stamp office—to at least 14,000 people. Outreach project staff estimate there were more than 11,500 applications filed and more than 7,000 FSP certifications. These estimates likely represent lower bounds of the outreach efforts because of data losses. Further, such results do not account for longer-term effects from the outreach projects that continued beyond this evaluation’s time frame.

The grantees’ projects lead to five major findings:

1. *Partnerships with community groups serving low-income families contribute to successful outreach.*

Partnerships with other established community groups, including service delivery agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, and employers, were critical to the success of these projects. Partners that were trusted organizations within the community provided access to potential clients, opened doors to other groups in the community serving low-income populations, and helped implement outreach strategies.

2. *Cooperation and buy-in from the local food stamp offices are critical to successful outreach.*

Successful grantees used staff from local food stamp offices to help plan and monitor their projects. Food stamp office staff not only provided outcome data, but also often participated in training and information sessions. Some local offices designated a point person to work with the grantee to facilitate the outreach project. Other local offices sent their staff to outreach venues. In the few sites where grantees were unable to establish productive relationships with the local food stamp offices, the project’s ability to track outcomes was stymied.

3. *Technology that facilitates FSP eligibility prescreening and applications, while challenging, can pay off.*

New Internet tools require trained personnel to develop the software, maintain it, and adjust it to changing requirements. Partners and outreach project staff must be trained to use the software. Some clients, especially the elderly, may find the new technology harder to use. However, multiple projects showed that web-based systems that included

in-person and software-driven application assistance could facilitate the process, especially for broader target populations. Web-based prescreening and application assistance can also simplify the application process for rural populations that live long distances from a food stamp office. Four projects eventually were able to submit web-based application forms electronically to local food stamp offices. Grantees expect these tools will be used to facilitate applications beyond the project time frames.

4. *Successful outreach requires more than basic education and information dissemination.*

All grantees reported that general mass marketing activities alone had little effect on getting a person to apply for benefits. Most potential applicants required more intensive activities that helped them understand their benefit eligibility and the requirements for benefit approval. Nine grantees suggested that effective outreach (leading to an application submission) often requires going beyond prescreening. Many also reported that requirements for more intensive assistance depended on the target population. While prescreening and benefits counseling were sufficient to induce some people to apply at the food stamp office, others found the application too difficult to complete on their own. Some grantees provided more intensive help by submitting clients' application forms, accompanying them to the food stamp office, and/or making frequent follow-up calls to monitor and to facilitate the process.

5. *The groups with the lowest food stamp participation rates—immigrants, the elderly, and the working poor—proved the most difficult to reach.*

Grantees found that seniors and immigrants tend to distrust the application process. Many value their privacy and independence more than a food stamp benefit. Good translators and outreach workers with backgrounds similar to the target group were important for reaching these groups. Grantees also found that connecting with low-income working families was challenging because these families often did not frequent places where outreach was occurring (e.g., food banks, local health clinics, even local school events).

Overview of Outreach Projects

The 18 grantees represented a wide range of organizations (*Exhibit E.1*). Most grantees were nonprofit organizations, but three were governmental organizations. Eight grantees were food banks or established anti-hunger organizations. Some organizations had worked on FSP outreach previously while others had conducted outreach for other services, often Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program. A few sites had no previous experience with outreach. Some projects focused on rural areas, while others focused on larger metropolitan areas or broader state populations. Target populations also varied across grantees. Half the projects targeted broad populations (usually including families with children, the elderly, immigrants, and working poor and/or disabled adults) and the other half focused more intensely on one or two of these subpopulations.

Exhibit E.1: Organizational Characteristics of the 18 Grantee Projects

Organization: location	Target populations ^a	Major partners
ACORN: Jersey City, NJ	Broad	Grocery stores, schools
City of Atlantic City: Atlantic City, NJ	Hispanics and elderly	Hispanic center, housing authority
Food Bank of Central New York: Cayuga, Cortland, and Oswego counties, NY	Broad	Department of Aging, service providers, food banks, university
Connecticut Association for Human Services: Bridgeport, CT	Broad	Child advocates, workforce training centers, businesses, supermarkets, day care centers, senior centers
Food Bank of Delaware: DE	Broad	“One-stop” employment centers, food member agencies, WIC offices
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (GPCAH): Philadelphia, PA	Broad	Interfaith hunger groups, one-stop employment centers, grocery stores, universities
Illinois Hunger Coalition: Chicago, IL	Families with children	Chicago public schools and related agencies
Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana: nine counties in northeast IN	Broad	Grocery stores, aging councils, hunger relief programs
Community Action Program (CAP): Madison County, NY	Working poor and elderly	Office for Aging, Department of Health, WIC offices, libraries, food banks
Maternity Care Coalition (MCC): Philadelphia, PA	Young families	Interfaith groups, hospitals, Head Start centers
Human Service Coalition of Dade County: Miami-Dade, FL	Low-wage workers	Employers, workforce development centers
Muskegon Community Health Project: Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties, MI	Broad	WIC, workforce development centers, Head Start agencies, service providers.
NC Division of Aging: south central NC	Elderly, minorities, rural residents	Council on Aging, senior centers, Goodwill, churches
Project Bread: Athol, Orleans, Boston, and Worcester, MA	Broad	Public schools, health centers, social service agencies
Salem-Keizer School District: Salem, OR	Families with children	Elementary schools, WIC centers
Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB): Santa Cruz, CA	Immigrants.	Latino service agencies (food, employment, and health)
Community Action Project (CAP): Tulsa, OK	Working poor	One-stop employment centers, Head Start centers, homeless shelters
Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger: VT	Broad	Service providers, Head Start centers, employment offices, senior centers, libraries, university

^a Grantees targeting “Broad” populations generally included low-income immigrants, the elderly, low-income families with children and the working poor.

Project Organization

Grantees used different strategies for partnering with other community groups, staffing, training, selecting venues for outreach services, and working with their local food stamp offices.

Partnerships. Some grantees partnered with several organizations, while others limited their partnerships to reach select populations (*Exhibit E.1*). Atlantic City targeted Hispanics and seniors and partnered with the Spanish Community Center and the Atlantic City Housing Authority. Two projects, Illinois and Salem-Keizer, focused on low-income parents and partnered with local elementary schools. Miami-Dade focused on low-wage workers and partnered with local businesses. In contrast, Delaware and Vermont partnered with more than 90 organizations to reach a broad target population of potential applicants. Two grantees (GPCAH and North Carolina) had specific partnerships with faith-based organizations, and others (such as MCC) made periodic presentations to similar groups.

Staffing. On average, sites employed five to six workers, usually a combination of full- and part-time workers. Ten sites also used volunteers to help with outreach. Some grantees used volunteers to conduct the full range of outreach services, while others limited volunteers' participation to information dissemination.

Training. Grantees used different strategies for training outreach workers and volunteers. Some relied on local food stamp office personnel to provide all the training, but in most cases local office personnel trained the primary outreach workers, who in turn trained other project staff. Because of volunteer turnover, projects that used many volunteers generally faced a continual training process. This led one grantee (GPCAH) to focus on smaller teams of more dedicated volunteers (students in work-study programs) who had strong incentives to remain attached to the project.

Venues. Outreach venues varied considerably across the sites. These venues often coincided with locations used by local partners and/or target populations. Grantees conducted outreach at food distribution sites, local community service offices, community events, schools, grocery stores, Head Start centers, WIC centers, senior centers, one-stop employment centers, health centers, public housing complexes, and tax preparation sites. Some grantees incorporated numerous venues into their projects, while others focused on one type of venue.

Relationships with the food stamp office. The degree of interaction and partnership with the local food stamp offices varied across the sites. Partnerships ranged from agreements to track basic outcomes (e.g., applications submitted and approvals) to more in-depth activities, including training, establishment of key contacts or liaisons to process the project's applications, and, sometimes, participation in outreach services. Half the grantees had worked with the food stamp office in the past and the others established new relationships. Local FSP office staff provided and/or participated in training project staff in 15 of the projects.

Outreach Services

Projects also differed in their emphasis on different kinds of outreach activities (*Exhibit E.2*). While all projects disseminated information, conducted some prescreenings, and assisted with applications, they varied in the types and intensity of services offered.

Information dissemination. Every grantee implemented some type of FSP information-sharing strategy and publicity campaign that included distribution of printed outreach material, such as brochures, flyers, posters, magnets and postcards. Most grantees produced their own materials containing explanations of monthly income levels and maximum benefit amounts, as well as contact information. Others distributed the USDA flyers and posters, while adding their agency's logo and contact information. Eight projects also presented basic information about the FSP through their websites. Six grantees advertised and maintained hotlines that provided information about the FSP and the application process.

Exhibit E.2: Outreach Activities of the 18 Grantee Projects

	Information Dissemination					Prescreening and Application Assistance Tools				Application Assistance					
	Targeted dissemination of information (e.g., presentations, flyers)	Multimedia (e.g., television, radio, newspaper)	Web site	Hotlines	Paper forms	Computer/Software	Password-protected web-based tool	Public access web-based tool	Information/help with verification documents	In-person help completing application forms	Delivering and/or sub-mitting applications to FSP office	Transportation	Eliminated initial food stamp office visit	Follow-up	
ACORN	✓				P				✓					✓	
Atlantic City	✓					A				✓		✓	✓	✓	
Central NY	✓	✓	✓	✓	B	P		B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Connecticut	✓				B				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Delaware	✓	✓	✓		P	P			✓					✓	
GPCAH	✓		✓	✓	B			B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Illinois	✓			✓			B		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Indiana	✓	✓	✓		B	B			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Madison	✓	✓	✓		B			B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
MCC	✓				B			B	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Miami	✓			✓	B		B		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Muskegon	✓	✓	✓		B			B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
North Carolina	✓				P				✓				✓	✓	
Project Bread	✓	✓	✓	✓				A B	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Salem-Keizer	✓				B				✓	✓	✓				
SHFB	✓	✓		✓	B	P			✓	✓	✓			✓	
Tulsa	✓						B		✓	✓	✓				
Vermont	✓	✓	✓					B	✓						

P = grantee used a tool for prescreening only; A=grantee used a tool for application assistance only; B=grantee used a tool for both prescreening and application assistance.

Prescreening. All grantees offered formal or informal prescreening to determine the potential eligibility of their clients. The prescreening questions ranged from basic information about income to in-depth questions about the client's income, assets, and household information. Seventeen grantees used a formal prescreening tool that included one or more calculators (varying from paper and pencil to Excel spreadsheets and sophisticated web-based software programs) to estimate clients' eligibility for the FSP. Nine grantees offered a combination of screening mechanisms that adapted to the skills and expertise of service providers, the technology available at the service sites, and the desires of their clients. For example, some partner sites did not have Internet access, and some clients distrusted the computerized prescreenings. In these cases grantees used paper prescreening forms.

Application assistance. All sites provided some form of application assistance that ranged from the minimal service of providing information about the application process to the maximum service of going with a client to the local food stamp office to complete the application process. Fourteen sites provided at least some in-person help with completing the food stamp application form, and all these sites delivered some applications to the local food stamp offices. Staff often delivered or faxed application forms for clients, and four sites eventually were able to send the form electronically to the food stamp office. Seven grantees worked with the FSP to simplify the application process by eliminating initial food stamp office visits. Two sites provided assistance with transportation to the food stamp office. Fifteen grantees reported following up with at least some clients by phone to find out whether clients were proceeding with the application process and how it was going.

Findings from the Outcome Data

Half of the grantees successfully recorded the number of applications, approvals, and denials for their projects (*Exhibit E.3*). Another six captured some, but not all of these data and three grantees were unable to set up a process to track either most or all of their clients' applications at their local food stamp office.

The large range of outcomes across grantees underscores the differences in project scope, the experience of the grantee, and the nature of the project activities and target populations. Grant amounts and months of outreach shown in *Exhibit E.3* provide some context for variation in project scope.

Applications submitted. The number of applications (forms submitted to local food stamp offices) ranged from 133 to 3,300 across the 15 projects reporting outcomes. No single characteristic distinguishes the projects with large or small numbers of applications. For example, three of the four grantees with over 1,000 applications (GPCAH, Indiana, and SHFB) conducted outreach for 21 months or longer, but Vermont was active for only 13 months. Also, three of these four grantees (GPCAH, SHFB, and Vermont) had prior experience with their local food stamp offices (in various capacities),

but Indiana’s partnership with the local food stamp office was new. On the other hand, these grantees have several common characteristics: they all worked with several partner agencies and/or had extensive networks of volunteers, none reported difficulty tracking outcomes for their clients, and all had relatively high grant amounts.

Exhibit E.3: Quantitative Outcome Data

Location	Grant amount	Total months of outreach	Number of applications	Number of approvals	% approved	% denied	% pending/unknown
ACORN ^a	\$262,000	22	341	230	67%	11%	22%
Atlantic City	\$179,911	12	174	129	74%	26%	0
Central NY ^a	\$217,827	16	403	315	78%	22%	0
Connecticut ^b	\$195,000	17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Delaware	\$349,592	22	935	780	83%	17%	0
GPCAH	\$310,822	21	3,300	2,470	75%	20%	5%
Illinois ^a	\$300,000	17	765	504	66%	33%	1%
Indiana	\$285,766	23	1,307	603	46%	49%	5%
Madison	\$171,300	12	264	90	34%	10%	56%
MCC	\$325,352	20	133	70	53%	22%	25%
Miami-Dade ^a	\$350,000	13	595	116	19%	10%	71%
Muskegon ^b	\$209,934	24	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
North Carolina ^a	\$217,218	19	354	280	79%	21%	0
Project Bread	\$344,500	10	460	85	18%	29%	53%
Salem-Keizer ^b	\$121,638	21	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SHFB	\$287,680	21	1,398	457	33%	34%	33%
Tulsa ^a	\$336,093	12	136	108	79%	17%	4%
Vermont	\$294,297	13	1,008	814	81%	19%	0

NA= site had difficulty tracking outcomes.

^a An unknown number of applications and/or approvals are not included in figures for this grantee.

^b Grantee data are not shown because of significant problems tracking applications and outcomes.

Application outcomes. The share of applications approved (certified for benefits) ranged from 18 to 83 percent. In nine projects, two-thirds or more of the applications submitted were approved within the projects’ time horizons. This group includes a diverse set of projects. Several (Delaware, GPCAH, Tulsa, and Vermont) trained relatively large networks of volunteers, but two others (Atlantic City and Illinois) did not use volunteers in their projects. The projects differed in their emphasis on technology. ACORN (67 percent approved), for example, used only paper prescreening and application forms, but Vermont (81 percent approved) relied on a public-access web tool for prescreening and application assistance.

Some projects provided information about reasons for application denials. At four sites, the income and asset limits were the primary reasons for denial. High denial rates can reflect client characteristics or the prescreening activity. Two of these sites (Atlantic City and North Carolina) targeted the elderly, and these grantees reported that elderly clients were more likely to be denied food stamps because of assets. In other sites, applicants’ failure to complete the interview process or provide all the required verification information caused the high denial rates. For several sites, outcomes for over half the applications were pending or unknown at the end of the outreach period.

Costs. A common theme across all grantees was that conducting outreach proved costly because it was very labor intensive. While cost information on specific activities is not available, the cost per benefit certification can be calculated. Based on these calculations, the cost per certification varied significantly, from approximately \$126 in GPCAH to over \$1,000 in multiple locations.

It is important not to draw definitive conclusions about the “success” of projects based on these outcomes, for three reasons. First, several sites had missing data on applications filed, resulting in undercounts. Second, some grantees targeted harder-to-reach populations with historically lower FSP participation rates, such as the elderly and immigrants. Third, many projects will reap rewards from their outreach activities beyond the timeline of these projects. Grantees and their partners will continue to use prescreening and application assistance tools and their greater knowledge of the FSP should help assist their clients in the future.

Lessons about Outreach Project Implementation

Grantees’ strategies for implementing their projects and delivering services provide further context for the findings and offer insights into future outreach activities. The summary below provides lessons related to staffing, use of volunteers, partnerships, new technology, training, and venues.

Staffing. Several grantees noted that the skills, expertise, and background of key staff were critical to a project’s success. The project director in one site attributed much of their success to the lead outreach worker’s strong leadership skills and marketing abilities. Another site benefited from the experience of a project coordinator who had worked on a prior FSP outreach project and had also been employed by the local FSP office. Some grantees that worked with populations with limited English language skills pointed to the need for culturally appropriate outreach workers who understood the concerns of their community and “spoke their language.”

Volunteers. Grantees found that committed volunteers could provide outreach services effectively when they established rapport and trust through in-person contact (particularly with members of similar demographic or ethnic groups). Volunteers varied in their comfort level with outreach assignments. Some preferred providing general information about the FSP and referring applicants to hotlines or outreach staff because they were reluctant to ask individuals for personal information or were afraid of making benefit computation errors. In one site, student volunteers participating through university work-study programs proved particularly committed and effective. While most grantees were generally positive about using volunteers, one grantee (Muskegon) argued that paid staff provided the most effective outreach workers because they were trained to fully understand FSP rules.

Partnerships. Grantees reported that partnerships with well-established, trusted community organizations substantially enhanced their outreach activities. These partnerships provided direct links to target populations and venues for presentations and/or prescreening and application assistance. Grantees also faced challenges with partners, such as difficulties keeping them trained and committed, especially when they reported to different managers.

Some grantees found that their partners' staff was overcommitted and could not devote sufficient time to FSP outreach activities.

Training. Training for grantee and partner staff and volunteers required a significant time and labor commitment, particularly for grantees with extensive partnering or volunteer arrangements. Some grantees modified and adjusted training sessions based on early program experiences. Others needed to repeat training sessions to address frequent staff turnover. Some sites found it important to include FSP staff in the training because they could answer questions about program rules and regulations. FSP staff participation also validated the food stamp office's commitment to the outreach efforts.

New technology. Ten grantees implemented new technology or adapted existing technologies to assist with prescreening for eligibility and, in some cases, with application assistance. Overall, grantees found these activities proved challenging and labor intensive, in many cases more than anticipated. Grantees often experienced implementation delays from technical challenges, contractor scheduling, and, in many cases, necessary modifications to original designs. New technology often required the availability of computers and Internet access not always available at partner sites. Technology also placed extra demands on partner and volunteer training. Factors that seemed to contribute to successful web development included clear up-front specifications; minimally designed sites that are easily navigated; and project staff who know the FSP and could communicate with the web developer. One site (Vermont) attributed part of its success to a minimal web site design that was easy for clients to use. Another site (Madison) noted the importance of having staff with knowledge of the FSP who could also speak the language of the web site developer.

Venues. Grantees reported two primary lessons about venues. First, clients need privacy when learning about the FSP. Clients did not want to learn about the FSP in locations, such as grocery stores in small towns, where a neighbor or friend would see them. Second, venues with changing audiences were more effective for reaching larger numbers of potential eligibles. One site that used school events to identify eligible parents found the same parents tended to go to all the events during the school year. In contrast, projects conducting outreach at health centers and career centers reported they frequently saw new faces.

Lessons about Collaborating with the Food Stamp Office

Grantees learned the importance of ongoing communication with the local FSP agencies and the value of having FSP staff participate in project training. Two grantees found having specific liaisons to their projects helped ensure communication. Other sites found communications were enhanced when food stamp office staff were integrated into outreach activities. FSP offices also benefited from the outreach projects because clients came to their eligibility interviews better prepared.

In a few cases, grantees failed to set up a partnership or the local food stamp office staff faced work overloads or budget cuts that made it difficult to serve the outreach grantee's needs. These problems made it difficult to assess the number of application approvals achieved by the

outreach project. Failures related to difficulties establishing smooth systems to track outcomes for clients referred by the grantee.

Lessons about Outreach Approaches

According to the grantees, some outreach activities work better than others. While these results represent the impressions of project coordinators, local evaluators, partners, and volunteers rather than hard evidence that connects specific food stamp application approval rates to particular outreach inputs, a large number of grantees can identify strategies that seem more fruitful than others.

Information dissemination. Some grantees found that information flyers were more effective when they included eligibility information, including potential benefit amounts and required verification documents. Some emphasized the importance of using local contact information over toll-free numbers in media campaigns because clients preferred talking with a person knowledgeable about their local community. Several sites traced clients' interest to public service announcements on TV and radio, but did not find that billboards encouraged the same interest. Several grantees found that personal interactions with clients were more effective than impersonal information distribution.

Prescreening. Many grantees reported that prescreening encouraged applications for some clients. Prescreening showed reluctant clients whether they were eligible and their potential benefit amount.

Projects varied in whether they used paper, computer-assisted, or web-based prescreening forms. According to the grantees, some forms of prescreening worked better than others with particular client populations. For example, seniors in Madison and North Carolina preferred paper-based prescreening forms because they distrusted the new technologies. Grantees with technology-based prescreeners also used paper forms when PCs or the Internet was not accessible.

Some projects provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of prescreening for increasing food stamp applications. Five projects (ACORN, Delaware, GPCAH, Indiana, and Vermont) stopped their initial outreach process at prescreening and left it up to eligible clients to apply for benefits. (Most of these projects did, however, later follow up with clients who did not apply.) Two of these projects reported that about half of those prescreened as eligible submitted applications. (The other three sites did not report the share of those prescreened as eligible that applied.) Three additional sites (Connecticut, MCC, and North Carolina) specifically tested the effectiveness of prescreening and concluded that more intensive "case management" services were required for achieving applications and approvals. The remaining 10 projects moved directly from prescreening to application assistance.

Application assistance. Nine grantees (ACORN, Connecticut, Delaware, GPCAH, Indiana, Madison, MCC, Project Bread, and SHFB) reported that successful completion of the FSP application process often required intensive assistance, including help submitting the applications to the food stamp office and multiple follow-up calls to encourage clients to complete their interviews and submit all required documents. MCC reported that 70 percent of

submitted applications received extensive application assistance and support. Some clients required as many as three or four calls. Delaware reported that an initial round of follow-up calls induced only 30 percent of their prescreened clients to apply for the FSP. Some clients (especially seniors and individuals living in rural areas) needed transportation to the food stamp office (although transportation was not an integral part of most projects).

Despite the general assessment that clients often require intensive assistance to complete the food stamp benefit application process, some types of application assistance did facilitate the process. For example, four grantees (Madison, Project Bread, and the two Pennsylvania sites, GPCAH and MCC) successfully submitted clients' applications to the food stamp office electronically. Eligibility workers visited another site's (North Carolina) outreach location to complete the first application stage with clients. These forms of assistance saved clients one visit to the food stamp office.

Lessons about Special Populations

Grantees also learned more about barriers to food stamp participation among non-English speakers, the elderly, and the working poor. These lessons corroborate and strengthen previous research findings about food stamp participation.

Non-English speakers. Like previous outreach projects, these grantees documented that immigrants feared risking their status in the United States if they received food stamp benefits. They resisted giving personal information to outreach workers and food stamp offices. Others believed that their sponsors would be required to repay the food stamp benefits. Also, non-English speaking populations often misunderstood FSP rules and were not aware of their eligibility. Immigrant parents that were ineligible for benefits did not understand their children born in this country could receive food stamp benefits. Grantees also reported that some immigrants were discouraged because translation services were not always available at local food stamp offices. Several grantees reported that their information dissemination helped dispel myths about the food stamp program, and prescreenings showed families whether they were eligible for benefits. One site (Muskegon) conducted outreach activities in families' homes, thereby eliminating barriers related to a lack of child care and transportation.

Elderly. Senior citizens, in particular, expressed concerns about the stigma of receiving food stamp benefits. Sometimes their younger family members shared this feeling and refused to help their elderly parents apply for the benefits. California and New York's applications required photo identification and fingerprinting, and New York noted that seniors feared the intrusiveness of these requirements. Grantees focusing on outreach to elderly persons fostered trust by partnering with community groups that routinely serve seniors and using older people as outreach workers. Some extended their information activities to seniors' families by developing specialized packets for adult children of eligible senior citizens.

Low-wage workers. Similar to earlier outreach studies, these grantees found it difficult to locate low-wage workers because they often were not connected to other community service programs. Projects focused on schools for outreach noted that the lowest-income parents, especially single parents, came to school events less often than more affluent, ineligible

parents. One site (Miami) successfully conducted outreach at employers of low-wage workers (one employer helped with application assistance), but employer interest was difficult to sustain. Sites that packaged food stamp benefits with other public benefits, such as health insurance, reported some success. Several projects found that low-wage workers could also be identified at tax preparation sites. Also, getting working families with children to the local FSP office could be difficult because parents had many other obligations. One site arranged early morning interviews for eligible working individuals. Finally, the working poor often expressed feelings of stigma about getting food stamp benefits and many did not want to visit a welfare office.

Conclusions and Implications for Food Stamp Participation

These 18 food stamp outreach projects represent an important USDA initiative to improve participation in the Food Stamp Program. Projects occurred in local areas across the country and varied in their approaches and their target populations. Some projects aimed to reach broad low-income populations in their communities, while others targeted specific groups such as immigrants, seniors, and the working poor.

Grantees' projects demonstrate some important strategies for increasing FSP participation. Grass-roots efforts that educate service providers, community leaders, businesses, and low-income populations about the FSP help demystify what is perceived as a complex application process. Using outreach workers with similar cultural and demographic characteristics to approach potential clients increases the likelihood of engaging them in the process. New technologies that automate the application process also can facilitate participation, but they require time and technical resources. With the new technologies, clients can see whether they are eligible in a private, familiar setting. Eligible clients can be encouraged to move forward with an application.

Clients often fail to follow through with the process at the food stamp office, suggesting that increasing program participation requires more than education and initial help filling out the application. The labor-intensive application assistance that some grantees provided is not feasible nationwide. Reducing the verification documents required for eligibility and waiving more in-person interviews would help, although the effects of such changes on payment accuracy have not been assessed. Recent changes in food stamp regulations and legislation that allow states to simplify the application process should move the program toward a more user-friendly benefit system for those that need and want food assistance. States should be encouraged to implement simplified systems, train "pro-participation" eligibility workers, and provide basic follow-up services for eligible applicants who drop out of the process.

Improving state and local food stamp office procedures likely will require additional staff and increase administrative costs. These investments should pay off, however, by enhancing the image of the program and improving food security among America's poorest citizens.

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I. Introduction

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) is the Nation's largest nutrition assistance program. The program served about 24 million low-income people in an average month and its benefits totaled over \$24.6 billion in fiscal year 2004. Food stamps are a significant source of food assistance for families with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level. The average participating household received roughly \$200 a month in benefits during fiscal year 2004 (Food and Nutrition Service 2005). Despite the value of the benefit, many eligible persons do not enroll in the FSP. According to official estimates, only about 56 percent of eligible individuals participated in the program in 2003 (Cunningham 2005).

The relatively low rates of participation reflect, at least partly, a lack of knowledge of the program (see, for example, Ponza et al. 1999). In response, the federal government made several attempts to improve awareness and understanding of the FSP. The Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched national public education campaigns to inform potentially eligible people about the program, developed a web-based prescreening tool to help determine potential eligibility, and funded numerous grants for community organizations to conduct outreach experiments .

This report summarizes the findings from 18 local outreach projects the USDA funded in 2002 to test outreach strategies.¹ The projects, which were implemented at different locations across 15 states, included a technological component and/or partnerships with other organizations to expand the scope of outreach. All projects aimed to increase awareness of the FSP and increase the number of food stamp participants.

Despite these common goals, the organizations involved, resources available, target populations, and outreach strategies varied significantly across the 18 projects (*Exhibit I.1*). The grant amounts ranged from about \$122,000 to \$350,000. Some projects focused on rural areas, while others focused on larger metropolitan areas or broader state populations. Some sites relied primarily on web-based applications, such as prescreening tools. Some sites included numerous venues and target populations, while others focused on a primary set of venues to reach a certain population. Projects varied in duration, providing outreach from 10 to 24 months.

This report documents the activities implemented by all 18 grantees, including their objectives, target populations, methods, key partners, relationships with the local food stamp offices, and implementation challenges. It summarizes the general outcomes across the sites, and provides detailed lessons about outreach implementation and strategies that take account of the different organizational structures and project activities across grantees. Appendix A lists the acronyms used in this report. Appendix B provides detailed descriptions of the major activities and accomplishments on a site-by-site basis. Appendix C provides more background on previous literature and recent FSP policy changes relevant during the period of the outreach grants. Appendix D describes the national evaluator activities and methods in detail.

¹ There were 19 grantees originally, but one (Kentucky) stopped providing outreach services because of insurmountable staffing problems.

While none of the projects used an experimental approach to identify “true impacts” from the outreach activities, the summary of these outreach projects should nonetheless provide policymakers important information to guide future outreach activities. Some general themes about conducting outreach include these five points:

1. Local partners with strong ties to low-income populations can enhance the effectiveness of outreach services.
2. Partnering with the local food stamp office to obtain their support with outreach services is an important ingredient for success.
3. Computer-assisted and web-based technologies require substantial lead time and resources.
4. Many eligible individuals need more than information and prescreening before they apply for food stamps; some need help throughout the application process.
5. Certain target populations (especially the elderly, immigrants, and the working poor) require specialized services and partners to establish their interest and trust.

These broad conclusions represent a general summary of the weight of evidence from the 18 projects. Individual project findings reflect each grantee’s specific goals and project activities, as well as other factors outside the grantee’s control (such as the local economy or changes at the local food stamp office).

Exhibit I.1: Description of the 18 Grantee Project Activities and Target Populations

Organization: location (grant amount)	Project activities	Primary target population
ACORN: Jersey City, NJ (\$262,000)	Information dissemination, paper prescreening and application assistance (limited) at supermarkets, schools, housing projects, door-to-door in high-poverty areas, and other community sites.	Low-income Latinos, African Americans, immigrants
Atlantic City: Atlantic City, NJ (\$179,911)	Information dissemination, prescreening (limited) and computer-assisted application assistance (completes applications for food stamp office) at senior housing sites and the Spanish Community Center.	Low-income elderly and Spanish-speaking minorities
Central New York Food Bank: Cayuga, Cortland, and Oswego counties, NY (\$217,827)	Information dissemination, multimedia campaigns, prescreening and application assistance using paper forms, software, and web site at community-based programs in each county.	Low-income families, elderly, immigrants
Connecticut Association for Human Services: Bridgeport, CT (\$195,000)	Information dissemination, outreach presentations, paper prescreening and application assistance at community-based locations, such as hospitals, schools, workforce training programs, local businesses that employ low-income workers, supermarkets, and senior centers.	Low-income families, elderly
Delaware Food Bank: DE (\$349,592)	Information dissemination through food bank member agencies and community partners, multimedia campaign (buses, movie theaters), computer-assisted prescreening and application assistance (limited).	Low-income populations, elderly, immigrants
Greater Philadelphia Coalition against Hunger (GPCAH): Philadelphia, PA (\$310,822)	Information dissemination, mostly paper prescreening and application assistance at libraries, schools, soup kitchens, food banks, community school centers, and supermarkets by student and faith-based/community volunteers. (Project eventually moved to a web-based tool for prescreening and application assistance.)	Unemployed and working poor families with children, immigrants, elderly
Illinois Hunger Coalition: Chicago, IL (\$300,000)	Information dissemination, a web-based tool accessible at Chicago Public Schools and related activities (such as after-school care) that prescreens and generates completed applications, primarily targeted to families of children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.	Low-income families
Indiana Community Harvest Food Bank: nine counties in northeast IN (\$285,766)	Information dissemination through nonprofit member organizations, multimedia campaign, computer-assisted prescreening and application assistance at direct service programs, nonprofit member agencies, food pantries, and supermarkets.	Low-income families, working poor, newly unemployed, elderly, Hispanics, veterans
Madison Community Action Program (CAP): Madison County, NY (\$171,300)	Information dissemination, multimedia campaign, prescreening and application assistance through public access web site that allows electronic submission of applications to food stamp office.	Working poor and elderly

Exhibit I.1: Description of the 18 Grantee Project Activities and Target Populations

Organization: location (grant amount)	Project activities	Primary target population
Maternity Care Coalition (MCC): Philadelphia, PA, targeting sites in Montgomery and Delaware counties (\$325,352)	Information dissemination and presentations at food banks, senior centers and health clinics, mostly paper prescreening and application assistance at community sites. (Moved to a web-based tool for prescreening and application assistance late in the project.)	Low-income pregnant women, families with young children, other low-income families
Human Service Coalition of Dade County: Miami-Dade County, FL (\$350,000)	Information dissemination, presentations, prescreening and application assistance using web-based tool that generates completed application forms at welfare-to-work agencies, job retraining agencies, and employers of low-wage workers.	Working poor families, immigrants
Muskegon Community Health Project: Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties, MI (\$209,934)	Information dissemination, multimedia campaign (billboards, radio ads), web-based prescreening and application assistance.	Low-income population, working poor families, veterans, Hispanics, migrant workers
North Carolina Division of Aging: south central NC (\$217,218)	Information dissemination, presentations, paper prescreening and application assistance (limited) at churches, nutrition sites, and senior centers.	Low-income elderly, minorities, rural residents
Project Bread: Athol, Orleans, Boston, and Worcester, MA (\$344,500)	Information dissemination, multimedia campaign, prescreening and application assistance using password-protected online tool that allows electronic submission of applications to local food stamp office.	Unemployed, working poor, veterans
Salem-Keizer School District: Salem, OR (\$121,638)	Information dissemination, presentations, paper prescreening and application assistance provided at targeted elementary schools and a WIC store.	Working poor, Hispanics, low-income families
Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB) of Santa Cruz & San Benito counties: Santa Cruz, CA (\$287,680)	Information dissemination, multimedia campaign, presentations, computer-assisted prescreening and application assistance conducted at various agencies and food distribution sites.	Working poor families, Latinos, other immigrants
Tulsa Community Action Project: Tulsa, OK (\$336,093)	Information dissemination, prescreening and application assistance using a web-based tool by a variety of partners providing Earned Income Tax Credit and tax preparation assistance; later expanded to Head Start programs.	Working poor
Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger: VT (\$294,297)	Information dissemination, multimedia campaign, prescreening and application assistance through new informational web site with downloadable applications.	Low-income families in high unemployment counties

II. Background

This section provides background information to contextualize the findings from the national evaluation. It first reviews lessons learned from previous FSP outreach projects. It then outlines how the Food Stamp Program changed over the four years of the evaluation period, noting factors that might have influenced grantee outreach efforts. Appendix C provides additional information by summarizing findings from the recent literature on factors that influence FSP participation decisions, as well as recent FSP changes.

Previous Findings and Outreach Efforts

Literature review. A review of relevant literature identified several factors that might affect FSP participation across the general population of eligibles, as well as certain subpopulations, including the elderly, Hispanics, and welfare recipients (McConnell and Ponza 1999; Wilde and Dagata 2002; Cunnyngham 2005; Gabor et al. 2001; Government Accountability Office [GAO] 2004; Zedlewski and Nelson 2003; Zedlewski and Rader 2005). The precise effects of specific factors are unknown, though several studies have suggested that individual characteristics, lack of knowledge about the program, negative attitudes about the program, and the complexity of the application process likely influence participation decisions. (See appendix C for more details.)

Outreach grants, 1993–96. An evaluation of 23 local outreach projects conducted between 1993 and 1996 offered early lessons on outreach (LTG Associates 1999). The 23 projects tested outreach ranging from basic information dissemination to intensive client assistance. The evaluation found that grantees who worked closely with food stamp office staff served the clients' needs most successfully. Also, interventions that contacted potentially eligible clients where they were already seeking food or other aid (i.e., supermarkets or food banks) were more successful than other interventions. The evaluation also reported that the most effective media campaigns delivered messages in local, community-focused electronic or print media.

LTG's evaluation also found that the interventions were not uniformly successful. Providing assistance to the most vulnerable or the more difficult-to-reach members of the grantees' targeted populations (the elderly, immigrants) was challenging, even with the combined efforts of public/private partnerships. Interventions were most successful with individuals who needed minimal assistance and those who needed significant, ongoing assistance but did not have complex needs (i.e., severe problems in negotiating daily life) or strong beliefs that were inconsistent with food stamp participation (i.e., beliefs about social stigma or need to retain sense of self-sufficiency).

Outreach grants, 2001. In 2001, the FNS awarded 14 two-year research grants in 11 states to improve food stamp access (USDA 2004). The grants included traditional outreach projects (public education about rules and direct application assistance) and new technologies (targeted advertising, Internet web sites, and computer-based eligibility prescreening programs) to make the application process faster and more efficient. They also included diverse target locations (urban and rural) and different hard-to-reach groups (e.g., the elderly, immigrants,

and the working poor). Grants were awarded to an array of organizations, similar to the 18 grantees in this project.

According to the USDA, the success of the projects awarded in 2001 was mixed. While all projects generated new applications, the number of approvals that could be attributed to the interventions was relatively small. Nonetheless, the projects provided some lessons for successful outreach. They demonstrated that strong collaborative partnerships with state and local food stamp offices were critical to success because they provide training and links to outcome data. The projects also showed that lack of knowledge about the FSP remains a major reason for nonparticipation. Some subgroups, especially the elderly, immigrants, and the working poor, either resisted offers of assistance or were difficult to reach. The elderly generally were reluctant to pursue what they viewed as a small benefit; noncitizens were concerned about the implications of participation for their immigration status; and the working poor were hard to identify and locate. Customer service problems in local offices, such as delays in application processing and overly intrusive paperwork requirements, also contributed to participation resistance.

National public education campaign. In response to low participation rates, the USDA also has implemented several national initiatives to improve awareness and knowledge about the FSP. In 1999, the USDA launched a public education campaign to inform low-income people about the availability of food stamp benefits. The campaign included a toll-free telephone hotline that now provides information in English and Spanish (USDA 2004). The Department subsequently launched a national public education campaign with the theme “Food Stamps Make America Stronger,” reinforcing the message that food stamp benefits provide important nutrition assistance and work support. The USDA also electronically posted documents about food stamp benefits in 35 languages that individuals and organizations can download. In 2003, the USDA launched a web-based prescreening tool for partner organizations to help their clients determine potential eligibility and estimate monthly benefits.

USDA matching grants. These national activities have been supplemented by numerous state and local activities. Many states now use the federal match for administrative costs to support outreach, and some local projects have received FNS grants to test new outreach approaches. Twenty-one states were using the federal match for outreach in 2002 (USDA 2002b). Bartlett, Burstein, and Hamilton (2004) reported that three-quarters of the local food stamp offices surveyed in 2000 were engaged in some type of outreach.

Policy and Caseload Trends, 2001–04

Rule changes. Food stamp legislation, regulations, and practices have changed significantly in recent years, facilitating participation in different ways. Changes to participation requirements have made more people in certain groups, like immigrants, eligible for benefits. Changes have also simplified paperwork requirements for applications and made reporting requirements less burdensome (see appendix C for more details).

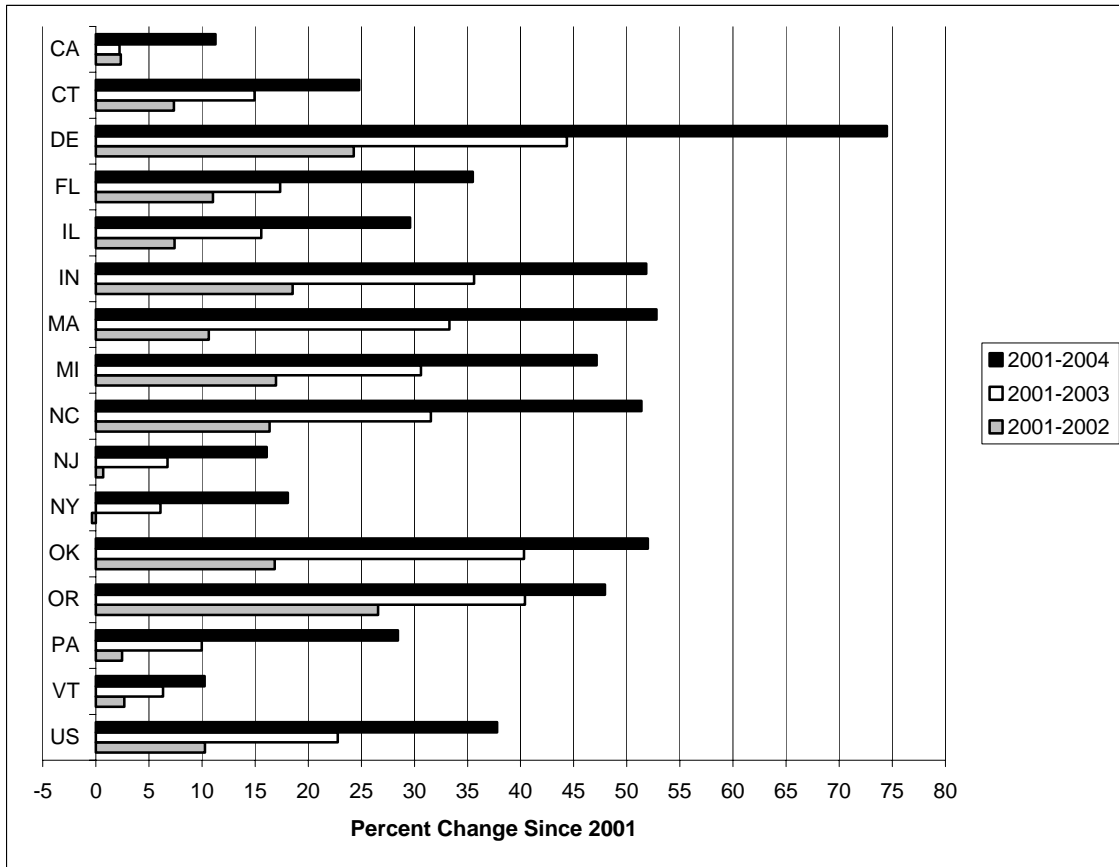
Caseload trends. While grantees were conducting their outreach activities in 2002–04, the food stamp caseload increased by 38 percent, from 17.3 million people in an average month

in 2001 to 23.9 million people in 2004 (*Exhibit I.2*). This increase represents a major reversal of previous participation trends. Between 1994 and 2000 the number of people receiving food stamp benefits declined 37 percent, from about 27.5 million in an average month in 1994 to about 17.2 million in 2000. General caseload growth was especially large in 2003 and 2004 when most outreach projects were in full swing. While the recession, which started in March 2001, was shallow and only lasted eight months, job growth was minimal at best through 2003 (Council of Economic Advisers 2004). Additionally, as noted above, FSP policy and regulation changes encouraged participation.

Participation rates. Research suggests that the policy changes affected the caseload growth and participation rates. For example, Cunnyngham (2005) estimated that the participation rate increased by about 2 percentage points between 2002 and 2003. She also estimated that the number of eligible noncitizens increased by 0.7 million in 2003 as a result of the restoration of eligibility to legal noncitizens in the United States for five years or more, and participation among noncitizens increased by around 170,000. Cunnyngham also describes increased eligibility as a result of states' increases in vehicle limits over the 2001 to 2003 period and generally indicates some associated increase in program participation. Recent changes in policy may continue to affect future participation when more families fully understand the new program rules (and, caseloads in fact grew substantially through 2004, as noted in *Exhibit I.2*).

Caseload growth. The rate of growth in state FSP caseloads from 2001 to 2004 varied considerably, including among the states with outreach projects. Some outreach states (California, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont) had lower-than-average caseload growth, and several (Delaware, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, and Oklahoma) had higher-than-average growth. While these caseload changes are an imperfect measure of conditions at each site (many grantees operated within very specific communities that might have differed from the state caseload), the caseload growth does suggest that the climate for conducting outreach varied significantly across many areas of the country. States with rapid caseload growth could experience serious competing demands on caseworkers' time, for example, that could interfere with their ability to facilitate local outreach project activities. Also, areas with rapidly growing caseloads due to expanding eligibility may appear to have greater effects from their outreach strategies than areas not experiencing the same level of caseload growth. It is also possible that participation rates increased during the period because of new FSP program rules and changes in states' procedures. State-specific participation rates, however, are not available for the relevant period.

Exhibit I.2: Grantee States and National FSP Program Caseloads: Change from 2001



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from FNS (2005).

III. Overview of the National Evaluation

The national evaluation incorporates quantitative and qualitative data collected during the course of the outreach projects from the 18 grantee projects. The quantitative analysis summarizes project processes and outcomes to highlight promising outreach strategies and innovative practices. The qualitative analysis looks in-depth at implementation experiences and lessons. It also offers context to help explain the project outcomes. In addition, each project was evaluated locally. The local evaluation reports are synthesized to provide further insight on outreach implementation and outcomes. Appendix D provides a detailed description of the methodological approach for the evaluation.

Quantitative Data Collection

The national evaluator collected quantitative data on grantee processes and outcomes throughout the project using a web-based data collection system. The web-based system tracked outreach activities reported by the grantee and outreach client outcomes from FSP administrative data. The grantee data summarized the general scope and characteristics of the outreach activities at each site, including information on the number of total contacts and follow-up contacts, the frequency of application prescreening, and the number of persons assisted with the application process (including counts of specific application assistance activities). The administrative data report the number of food stamp applications filed, approved, and denied, along with the reasons for denials.²

The national evaluator provided technical assistance to improve the web-based data collection. Phone calls with all grantees at the start of the project identified technical difficulties and addressed questions relating to specific data elements. Throughout the project, experts provided assistance, monitored the data entries, and verified all entries against the local evaluation reports.

Qualitative Data Collection

The national evaluator also conducted three rounds of phone discussions to assess the status of each grantee's progress at the start, midpoint, and end of their project. During the first round, the evaluator verified basic project activities, procedures for tracking outreach activities, and the grantees' systems for tracking applications submitted to the food stamp office. The second round of phone calls reviewed the implementation activities with project coordinators, augmenting the description from the grantees' proposals and progress reports. Discussions focused on grantees' operations, any start-up problems and early challenges, and efforts to resolve these early issues. Separate calls to each of the local evaluators reviewed their plans for submitting a final evaluation report and provided technical feedback on proposed evaluation approaches. The final round of phone calls obtained general impressions of the project

² Demographic information was also collected to describe the characteristics of persons receiving and affected by outreach.

implementation experiences and outcomes. Discussions focused on the perceived successes and challenges of the project, important outcomes, and lessons for future outreach activities.

The findings from the telephone discussions were augmented with six site visits (to GPCAH, Illinois, Madison, Miami, SHFB, and Tulsa) that provided further detail on the implementation activities and outcomes. The national evaluator consulted with FNS to select six sites with approaches that promised wide applicability, as well as likely experience with specific outreach methods or target populations.³ The site visits provided a more complete picture of the processes required for implementing various types of outreach initiatives and the factors that influence their effectiveness. These visits also offered insight into the complexities of coordinating with different organizations or partners and reaching out to various populations.

Synthesis of Local Evaluations

A synthesis of local evaluations submitted by each grantee also provided data central to the national evaluation. The scope and focus of the evaluation reports varied, though all included a general description of the major processes and a summary of key outcomes related to applications submitted, awarded, and denied. Several evaluators supplemented this information with a review of implementation lessons during the project (e.g., experiences in creating partnerships, hiring volunteers), suggestions for future outreach projects, and formal surveys and/or small group interviews of clients to assess participation barriers. Central NY even provided a manual for setting up an outreach activity.

The local evaluation reports were used to verify the national summary of the projects' quantitative and qualitative findings and to identify information not obtained during the data collection efforts. If verification led to questions, the national evaluator followed up with the local evaluator or project director. This report incorporates all the local evaluators' summaries of the major outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned.

³ See appendix D for a more complete descriptions of specific characteristics of the six selected sites.

IV. Details of Grantee Activities

The grantees were a mix of organizations that provided assorted services to different target populations and that relied on partner organizations and volunteer networks to varying extents. Some grantees centered their efforts on the general population of people eligible for food stamp benefits, while others focused on specific subpopulations, such as the elderly, Hispanics, or low-income parents. Some grantees spent more time investing in an infrastructure to develop new technology for conducting long-term FSP outreach, whereas others focused more on training a large network of partners and volunteers for more intensive “one-on-one” outreach.

The organizational characteristics and outreach activities are expected to have important implications for outcomes across sites. For example, grantees that invested more in developing large partner and volunteer networks could obtain FSP applications more quickly than grantees that invested more up-front time in developing a specific technological innovation. Or, grantees that target broader populations of food stamp eligibles would likely have more applications submitted in their locality than grantees that focused on smaller or harder-to-reach populations.

The remainder of this section describes the grantees’ organizational characteristics, their relationships with local food stamp offices, and their outreach activities to frame the discussion of project accomplishments and lessons learned.

Organizational Characteristics and Project Development

The organizational characteristics of the 18 projects (*Exhibit IV.1*) describe the delivery structures used to provide outreach services. The discussion below examines the initial project start-up activities, key partners, staffing plans, training, planned use of technology, and venues for delivering services.

Outreach experience. The majority (15) of grantees had some experience conducting outreach activities before receiving this grant, often focused on other services for low-income populations. They used this experience to establish partnerships with other organizations and the local food stamp offices, recruit volunteers, and disseminate information. Nine of these grantees indicated that their organizations had conducted FSP outreach activities before this grant, including three that received previous food stamp outreach grants from FNS (Illinois, Miami, and Project Bread).

Type of agency. Most (15) grantees were nonprofit organizations that offered various community-focused services, generally targeted to low-income families and individuals, including direct service provision, education, service referral, outreach, research, and advocacy. Four grantees were traditional food banks that collected and distributed food to

Exhibit IV.1: Organizational Characteristics of the 18 Grantees Projects

Grantee name	Type of agency	Volunteers^a	Major partners
ACORN	Community action program	Yes (40)	Grocery stores, schools
Atlantic City	City	No	Hispanic center, housing authority
Central NY	Food bank	Yes (60)	Department of Aging, service groups, food banks, University
Connecticut	Human services association	No	Child advocates, workforce training agencies, businesses, grocery stores, day care centers, senior centers
Delaware	Food bank	Yes	Food distribution agencies, WIC offices, Department of Labor offices
GPCAH	Hunger coalition	Yes (119)	Universities, interfaith hunger groups, food distribution agencies, grocery stores, one-stop employment centers
Illinois	Hunger coalition	No	Chicago public schools and related agencies
Indiana	Food bank	No	Grocery stores, aging councils, hunger relief programs
Madison	Community action program	Yes	Office for Aging, Department of Health, WIC offices, libraries, food cupboards
MCC	Maternity care coalition	Yes	Interfaith groups, hospitals, senior centers, Head Start centers
Miami	Human service coalition	No	Employers, workforce development centers, human service groups
Muskegon	Community health project	No	WIC, workforce development centers, human service groups
North Carolina	Division of Aging	Yes (5)	Council on Aging, senior centers, Goodwill, churches
Project Bread	Anti-hunger group	No	Public schools, health access groups, Red Cross
Salem-Keizer	School district	No	Elementary schools, WIC offices
SHFB	Food bank	Yes (12)	Latino service agencies (food, employment, and health)
Tulsa	Community action project	Yes (50)	One-stop employment centers, Head Start centers, homeless shelters
Vermont	Hunger campaign	Yes	Head Start centers, employment offices, senior centers, libraries, universities

^a Indicates whether grantee used volunteers to help with outreach. The numbers indicate the number of volunteers for sites that provided this information.

partner agencies such as soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, and the like, and, in some cases, delivered food directly to those in need. Four grantees were hunger coalitions that bring together policymakers, emergency food providers, service professionals, and other concerned individuals to address hunger and food insecurity in the community. At least one of these hunger coalitions (GPCAH) distributed food at local shelters, in addition to other outreach and nutrition education activities. Three grantees were anti-poverty community action agencies that provided services similar to the hunger coalitions but also addressed other needs, such as housing and health care. The other four nonprofit organizations focused on community health services or community awareness and development for various target populations.

The remaining three grantees were public agencies that provided services compatible with FSP outreach efforts. These grantees included a local city government agency (Atlantic City), a state agency (North Carolina), and a local school district (Salem-Keizer).

Project start-up. Grantees generally identified target populations and developed activities based on previous experiences providing outreach services and/or familiarity with the needs of underserved local populations. For example, MCC targeted low-income families with young children because it had experience providing a comprehensive health promotion program for this population. SHFB targeted Latinos because their numbers had increased in California and the organization recognized their unmet needs. Project Bread selected their target populations (the unemployed, the working poor, and veterans) because staff concluded from prior food assistance work that these groups experienced the greatest barriers to food stamp participation.

Key partners. All grantees developed partnerships to help reach their target populations and leverage their resources. Partner agencies provided access to target populations, either by identifying effective locations for presentations and other activities or by “introducing” outreach workers as people to be trusted. The partners included local schools, universities, community service organizations, neighborhood grocery stores, Goodwill offices, churches, Head Start agencies, health access organizations, employers, and one-stop employment centers. As noted above, most (15) grantees built on existing relationships established through previous partnerships on other community efforts.

Two grantees (GPCAH and North Carolina) had partnerships with faith-based organizations, and others (e.g., MCC) made periodic presentations to similar groups. GPCAH had the most extensive partnership, which included working with an interfaith hunger group to recruit faith-based volunteers from long-standing agency partners.⁴ North Carolina attempted to work through local churches, though they reported considerable resistance from clergy who often felt their congregants did not need food stamp benefits.

The number of partnerships varied across projects, and several grantees added partners as their projects evolved. Delaware reported one of the most extensive lists of partners. Partners included 90 nonprofit member agencies, WIC offices and one-stop employment centers, and the University of Delaware. However, only 20 to 25 of these agencies became active partners in their project. In contrast, Salem-Keizer focused on a specific set of elementary school partners and later WIC clinics to conduct outreach to families with children.

Partner organizations provided activities from information dissemination about the FSP and referral services to intensive prescreening and application assistance. In large part, a partner’s ability to provide more intensive outreach services depended on its available time, skills, and training resources. For example, Central NY recruited partner agencies and conducted extensive training sessions for staff and volunteers on project goals, prescreening,

⁴ GPCAH hired a faith-based volunteer coordinator to oversee recruitment, data collection, and other activities related to the faith-based volunteers.

and application procedures. Some of their partners provided a limited menu of services, while others provided a full range of outreach activities.

In most cases, partner organizations were not paid for their participation in food stamp outreach activities, except partners that were under contract to develop and/or enhance software or to provide expertise in a specialized area, such as media strategies. For example, Madison and Tulsa paid organizations to develop web-based prescreening and application tools, and Vermont hired university staff to develop their web-based prescreening tool. In general, most “non-technology” partners integrated FSP outreach activities into the bundle of services they were already delivering. However, one grantee (SHFB) used grant funds to pay for a portion of the salaries of partner agency outreach workers for their food stamp outreach activities. Another grantee (Madison) paid the salary of an outreach worker employed by the Department of Social Services.

Staffing. A small staff, usually a combination of full- and part-time workers, implemented most initiatives. On average, sites employed five to six workers, though staffing ranged anywhere from two (Central NY) to 12 (Illinois).

Ten grantees included volunteers in their outreach projects. The number of volunteers ranged from only a few in some sites to 119 for GPCAH.⁵ Volunteers provided activities ranging from basic information dissemination (e.g., handing out flyers) to more intensive prescreening and application assistance. ACORN, for example, relied heavily on the services of neighborhood volunteers, many of whom had worked on previous ACORN efforts, to disseminate food stamp information at local supermarkets. Similarly, in Vermont, local United Way volunteers assisted with bulk mailings of food stamp information to partner agencies throughout the state. In contrast, Central NY and GPCAH provided extensive training to student and community volunteers to conduct more intensive prescreening and application assistance.

Training. Training was a major development activity for several grantees, especially those with extensive partner or volunteer arrangements and those implementing technology applications. Strategies for conducting training varied among sites. As discussed in more detail below, some sites used food stamp office staff to train project staff, and used their training materials to educate volunteers and partners (e.g., ACORN and SHFB).

All grantees that had partners or volunteers conduct prescreening or application assistance provided training. The length of training sessions for partners and volunteers varied among grantees, from 20 to 45 minutes in Madison to three or four hours in other sites (Illinois, Central NY, and GPCAH).⁶ Content of the training sessions also varied among sites. Central NY’s training sessions covered three components: information about the FSP and the outreach

⁵ GPCAH had 150 students and 191 community faith-based volunteers complete a training session, which typically lasted up to four hours. Of this total, 70 students and 49 community faith based volunteers screened at least two clients each.

⁶ Full information about training activities at all sites was not included in the qualitative data protocols. Nonetheless, the topic of training came up in some phone calls and some local evaluation reports discussed it.

project; instruction on the use of the software technology for prescreening; and instruction on customer service skills, including mock interviews and role playing. Staff also developed county-specific training manuals that presented simplified FSP information in a user-friendly format. GPCAH's training included instruction on prescreening for food stamp eligibility, benefit estimation, application completion assistance, as well as the logging and tracking procedures required for both follow-up and evaluation requirements. A guide was also developed with instructions for organizing a grocery store food stamp prescreening "fair."

Grantees that relied on partner organizations and volunteers to provide prescreening and application assistance through technology conducted more in-depth training sessions. For example, Central NY conducted three-hour training sessions on the FSP and prescreening and application procedures for staff and volunteers from more than a dozen diverse community partner agencies. Tulsa trained about 50 volunteer screeners to work with individuals seeking assistance at their tax centers, while GPCAH launched an extensive effort to recruit and train both student and faith-based/community volunteers to provide prescreening services throughout the city.

Use of technology. Twelve grantees (Atlantic City, Central NY, GPCAH, Illinois, Madison, MCC, Miami, Muskegon, Project Bread, SHFB, Tulsa, and Vermont) implemented some type of technology to deliver prescreening and application assistance to potential applicants.⁷ Seven of these grantees developed publicly accessible web sites that included capabilities for prescreening and application assistance. Four sites developed password-protected web-based prescreening and application tools, while one grantee had both a publicly accessible and password-protected web site. Finally, another site purchased new laptops and loaded a program containing the application software used by the local food stamp office, signature pads and a mini-scanner for required documentation. The specific use of these technologies in the outreach activities is described below.

Most of these 12 grantees used or extended existing technology applications, although five grantees developed their technologies fully under this project. Among the latter group, four grantees developed entirely new systems. The fifth built on a previously developed web site to create a password-protected, web-based tool that allowed trained partner staff to help applicants submit applications directly to the local food stamp office. Two grantees from Pennsylvania originally intended to use their state's food stamp application system, but operational system difficulties, a lack of technological capabilities in partner sites, and a lack of expertise and comfort with technology among some staff forced both sites to rely on paper forms for most of the intervention period.

By the end of the grant period, four grantees had access to technology that allowed individuals to electronically submit applications directly to the food stamp office: Madison, Project Bread, and the two Pennsylvania sites (GPCAH and MCC).

⁷ Delaware had an automated Excel form for prescreening but because of the lack of technological capabilities and, in some cases, laptops, most prescreening was done on paper forms. Indiana outreach workers used laptops in the field. Although these two sites did use computers or software, they are not collected in this category.

Venue: Grantees conducted outreach at their own program sites, at partner locations, and other sites frequented by potential target populations, including the Internet (*Exhibit IV.2*). The most frequently used venues across grantees included food distribution sites (12 grantees), schools (10 grantees), community-based service organizations (9 grantees), community events (9 grantees), and senior centers (8 grantees). Other common venues included grocery stores (6 grantees), one-stop employment centers (7 grantees), and Head Start and child care centers (7 grantees). While specific data that link venues to the number of application approvals are not available, one site (GPCAH) did find that venues with high client turnover (such as career links and health centers) generated more applications than venues that tended to serve the same clients over time.

All grantees used multiple venues to conduct outreach, though some grantees focused more specifically on a select number of venues to reach a target population. For example, some grantees focused their outreach activities at senior centers to reach the elderly, schools to reach families with children, and businesses to reach the working poor. One grantee, targeting a very broad population of eligibles, used over 13 different types of venues.

Relationships with the FSP Offices

All grantees worked with the food stamp office but the history of their relationship varied. Nine sites had worked with FSP program staff on previous projects. For example, Vermont had worked with the state food stamp agency as part of a work group designed to bring together community service providers and advocates to discuss issues of mutual interest. Madison had worked with the county food stamp office on a prior study of welfare leavers. For other sites, including ACORN, Delaware, and MCC, the collaboration with the food stamp office was new.

Most grantees worked with one or more local food stamp offices but in some cases, these relationships initiated at the regional (e.g., Salem-Keizer) and state levels (e.g., Delaware and Vermont). At a minimum, grantees relied on the local food stamp office to provide outcome data for applicants referred through their projects.

The local food stamp offices also participated in assorted other activities across sites. Their involvement included training, serving as a project liaison (see discussion below), or providing outreach services (*Exhibit IV.3*). Fifteen grantees reported that staff from state, regional, or local offices trained or participated in training sessions with grantees and/or partner agencies on FSP policy and/or application procedures. Training sessions ranged from four hours to four days. In addition to training on application procedures, some local food stamp office staff provided grantees technical assistance in the development of prescreening tools.

Exhibit IV.2: Venues for Outreach Activities among the 18 Grantee Projects

Organization	Grantee offices	Food distribution sites ^a	Soup kitchens	Community-based organizations/local service providers	Community events ^b	Schools	Grocery stores	Community centers	Churches	Head Start/child care centers	Senior centers	Individual homes/door-to-door	Public housing	Health centers	One-stop/employment centers	WIC clinics	Employers	Tax filing locations	Hotlines	Mass media ^c	Other ^d
ACORN		✓			✓	✓	✓					✓	✓							✓	
Atlantic City	✓							✓			✓		✓							✓	
Central NY		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓						✓			✓	✓
Connecticut		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Delaware		✓	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓				✓	✓
GPCAH		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Illinois				✓		✓													✓	✓	✓
Indiana	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓							✓	✓	✓
Madison	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
MCC	✓	✓								✓	✓			✓						✓	✓
Miami				✓	✓	✓									✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Muskegon	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓	✓
North Carolina				✓					✓		✓									✓	✓
Project Bread				✓		✓				✓				✓					✓	✓	✓
Salem-Keizer					✓	✓	✓									✓				✓	✓
SHFB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓					✓	✓	✓
Tulsa ^e							✓			✓					✓			✓		✓	✓
Vermont		✓		✓			✓			✓	✓				✓			✓		✓	✓

^a Includes food pantries/cupboards, and food commodities distribution sites.

^b Includes health fairs.

^c Includes Internet, newspaper, television, and radio.

^d Includes homeless drop-in centers and shelters, laundromats, check-cashing stores, libraries, post offices, Goodwill stores, and public beaches.

^e Tulsa conducted outreach at eight different sites offering tax preparation services, including two banks, a credit union, four community centers, and two churches, all of which are indicated under “EITC sites.” They expanded outreach to Head Start centers later in the project.

Exhibit IV.3: Characteristics of the Relationship between the 18 Grantee Projects and the FSP Offices

Organization	Worked with FSP office staff previously	FSP office staff provided and/or participated in training	Liaison/key contact in FSP office	FSP staff part of the outreach team
ACORN		✓	✓	
Atlantic City		✓		
Central NY	✓	✓	✓	
Connecticut		✓		
Delaware		✓		
GPCAH	✓	✓	✓	
Illinois	✓		✓	
Indiana		✓		
Madison	✓	✓	✓	✓
MCC		✓	✓	
Miami	✓	✓	✓	
Muskegon				
North Carolina		✓		✓
Project Bread	✓	✓		
Salem-Keizer	✓	✓		✓
SHFB	✓	✓		
Tulsa				
Vermont	✓	✓		

Seven grantees had specific individuals at the local food stamp offices designated as key contacts or liaisons for this outreach intervention. The general responsibilities of these liaisons were to ensure the proper processing and tracking of applications from grantees. For example, ACORN’s local food stamp office identified one staff person responsible for dealing with all prescreened referrals that came through ACORN’s initiative. Alternatively, Illinois had more extensive relationships with “liaisons” in each local FSP office who acted as the designated contact person for all issues related to applications forwarded by the grantee. The Illinois liaisons tracked grantee applications and met regularly with project staff to resolve issues related to the outreach activities.

In three sites, food stamp office workers were project team members for certain outreach tasks. Madison had a dedicated food stamp office outreach worker, while Salem-Keizer assigned FSP workers to monthly school and community events. Finally, North Carolina reported that local food stamp office staff attended various outreach sessions and traveled to a senior housing unit to conduct eligibility interviews and enroll residents for whom transportation was a problem.

Outreach Activities

Exhibit IV.4 summarizes three broad categories of grantees’ outreach activities: information dissemination, prescreening, and application assistance. Information dissemination included activities to publicize the project and inform the target population about the FSP. Prescreening

Exhibit IV.4: Outreach Activities of the 18 Grantees Projects

	Information Dissemination				Pre-screening and Application Assistance Tools			Application Assistance					
	Targeted dissemination of information (e.g., presentations, fliers)	Multimedia (e.g., television, radio, newspaper)	Web site	Hotlines	Paper forms	Computer/software Password-protected web-based tool	Public access web-based tool	Information/help with verification documents	In-person help completing application form	Delivering and/or submitting applications to FSP office	Transportation	Simplified application processing	Other follow-up
ACORN	✓				P			✓					✓
Atlantic City	✓					A		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Central NY	✓	✓	✓	✓	B	P	B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Connecticut	✓				B			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Delaware	✓	✓	✓		P	P		✓					✓
GPCAH ^a	✓		✓	✓	B		B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Illinois	✓			✓			B	✓	✓	✓			✓
Indiana	✓	✓	✓		B	B		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Madison	✓	✓	✓		B		B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MCC ^a	✓				B		B	✓	✓	✓			✓
Miami	✓			✓	B	B		✓	✓	✓			✓
Muskegon ^b	✓	✓	✓		B		B	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
North Carolina	✓				P			✓				✓	✓
Project Bread	✓	✓	✓	✓		A	B	✓	✓	✓			✓
Salem-Keizer	✓				B			✓	✓	✓			
SHFB	✓	✓		✓	B	P		✓	✓	✓			✓
Tulsa	✓					B		✓	✓	✓			
Vermont	✓	✓	✓				B	✓					

P = grantee used a tool for prescreening purposes only.

A = grantee used a tool for application assistance purposes only.

B = grantee used a tool for both prescreening and application assistance.

^a GPCAH and MCC both had access to Pennsylvania’s online application system, COMPASS, but neither used it regularly until very late in the project.

^b Muskegon used two prescreening tools available on the Internet over the course of the project: the Michigan Food Stamp Network’s tool developed under a previous grant and the USDA prescreening tool.

included providing preliminary information on food stamp eligibility and/or amounts of potential FSP benefits. Application assistance included a broad range of activities from helping an individual or family fill out an application form to accompanying clients to the food stamp office to make sure required appointments and verification documents were completed. Almost all grantees offered some form of outreach service in each of the three categories, but the emphasis on specific activities and the intensity of services varied.

Information Dissemination

Every grantee implemented some FSP information-sharing strategy and publicity campaign around project start-up and throughout the project to advertise the outreach projects.

Media campaigns. Eight grantees implemented comprehensive multimedia campaigns that included billboards, newspaper, radio and television advertisements and public service announcements, press releases, and broadcast interviews. For example, Indiana displayed eight billboards at different locations and the executive director was interviewed for three radio shows about the outreach project. Delaware displayed FSP posters and banners on city transit buses and ran a public service announcement about food stamp benefits in a local movie theater. Muskegon produced spots for cable TV by combining USDA-produced radio segments with USDA print advertisements.

Presentations. Grantees conducted outreach presentations at community events, such as health fairs. These presentations helped build credibility among specific target populations. For example, Miami presented information on “economic benefit packages” to employees at local businesses that included outreach for the EITC and Florida’s KidCare as well as the FSP. North Carolina and Madison made several presentations in senior centers, and SHFB made presentations in Hispanic community centers.

Printed material. Most grantees produced their own FSP materials containing explanations of monthly income levels and maximum benefit amounts, as well as contact information. Others distributed the USDA flyers and posters, marked with their agency’s logo and contact information.⁸ These included distribution of printed outreach material such as brochures, flyers, posters, magnets, and postcards. In many cases, grantees produced materials in Spanish and English.

Grantees used different approaches to distribute these written materials. For example, Muskegon sent informational brochures to families in the Head Start program, while Illinois worked with the Chicago public schools to distribute information to families with children enrolled in the free and reduced-price lunch program. North Carolina placed ads in church bulletins and community agency newsletters. Central NY integrated their materials with food purchasing by including FSP information with “ValPak” coupon mailings and printing FSP information on the back of grocery store receipts. Similarly, Indiana included material about

⁸ Several sites noted that they found it useful to add information about income levels and benefit amounts to the USDA informational materials.

the FSP in SeniorPAK grocery bags delivered to low-income, homebound older adults. Finally, ACORN community outreach workers distributed FSP information door to door in targeted neighborhoods.

Telecommunications. Some information dissemination occurred over the Internet and telephone hotlines. Eight grantees used web sites to provide information about their outreach activities, FSP policies, eligibility guidelines, benefit amounts, and/or application procedures. Five sites posted information on existing web sites. The other three developed new web sites as part of their grant activities.

Six grantees operated and advertised FSP information hotlines as part of their overall menu of services. Hotlines provided answers to specific FSP questions and in some projects offered prescreening and application assistance.

Prescreening

All grantees offered formal or informal prescreening to assess their clients' eligibility to receive food stamp benefits. The prescreening questions ranged from basic income items to in-depth questions about the client's income, assets, and other household information. Indiana developed a comprehensive prescreening form that some county food stamp offices accepted as an application. Seventeen of the grantees asked these questions using a formal prescreening tool before providing any application assistance, while one grantee offered to review general income guidelines. However, some sites did not formally prescreen potential applicants when they had sufficient evidence supporting eligibility and/or they did not have enough time to prescreen.

Grantees provided prescreening assistance in four formats: paper forms, software loaded on laptops, password-protected web-based tools, and publicly accessible web sites. Grantees used a combination of formats to provide prescreening assistance depending on the situation. Grantees limited some of their prescreening to a simple review of the FSP income guidelines with clients to assess their potential benefit eligibility.

Paper forms. Six grantees relied primarily on paper forms for prescreening. The major advantage of the paper forms was that they provided flexibility to conduct prescreening in a variety of locations.

Software packages. Four grantees supplemented paper forms with software packages loaded on laptops, providing a choice for the person conducting the prescreening. For example, Central NY developed and implemented non-web-based software loaded on a CD for staff and volunteers in partner agencies who were comfortable with and had access to computers. Similarly, Delaware staff used both paper forms and Excel spreadsheets on laptops to tabulate prescreening information. SHFB used a software prescreening package (developed by the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank under a previous grant from USDA) as a tool to illustrate potential benefit amounts. Specifically, if the outreach worker sensed the potential benefit might impress the applicant and encourage an application, he or she would conduct a prescreening.

Web-based tools. Four grantees used web-based, password-protected tools to prescreen at numerous locations. Illinois and Miami used the RealBenefits web-based tool, which prescreened applicants and calculated probable benefits for food stamps and other assistance programs.⁹ Project Bread's web-based prescreening and application program allowed applicants to submit an application directly to the food stamp office. Tulsa's web-based system enabled staff to screen individuals for FSP eligibility, as well as eligibility for several other programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Medicaid; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program.¹⁰

Public web sites. Three grantees developed publicly accessible web sites for use by partners, volunteers, or potential applicants. These web sites included prescreening tools and benefit calculators, as well as detailed program information, eligibility requirements, comprehensive instructions for applying for food stamp benefits, contact information for local food stamp offices, lists of required verification documents, downloadable application forms, and, on Madison's web site, the ability to apply online directly to the local food stamp office. Central NY's web site also included a toll-free number for individuals who required in-person assistance.

Adaptable prescreening. Ten grantees offered a variety of prescreening mechanisms to adapt to the skills and expertise of service providers and the technology available at the service sites. Central NY had one of the most flexible prescreening services, which varied depending on the user's comfort level with either a paper prescreening form, non-web-based software on a CD, or a public access web site.

Application Assistance

Application assistance activities ranged from minimal, such as listing information about verification documents required for application, to helping clients through the entire application process. The intensive assistance included help filling out the application, help filing the application (in-person or via e-mail, mail, or fax), establishing processes so local grantee sites could make initial eligibility determinations, operating hotlines for technical support, providing transportation to the food stamp office, and calling clients sometimes multiple times after prescreening or application submission to help them follow through with paperwork requirements and appointments.

Information or help with verification documents. All grantees provided some type of information about and/or help with providing the required verification documents. Grantees viewed this information as the minimum level of knowledge required to begin a FSP

⁹ Miami used the RealBenefits tool to screen for FSP benefits only. Illinois launched RealBenefits for the first time as part of this project; Miami developed it with a previous outreach grant.

¹⁰ Outreach grant funds were earmarked for FSP eligibility assessment only. Sites that provided assessment for multiple programs had other resources supporting this part of the tool development.

application. Fifteen grantees used the information from the prescreening forms to provide this assistance, and to identify other avenues of application assistance.

In-person assistance. Fourteen grantees offered some in-person, one-on-one help in completing food stamp applications for some of or all their clients who wished to continue after prescreening. Five sites varied the assistance depending on the preference of the applicant and/or the decisions made by the staff member. MCC staff let applicants choose between filling out and submitting applications on their own or having the staff help complete the paperwork and submit applications. Muskegon staff mailed applications with a checklist of required verification documents to clients, offered further assistance to some applicants, and provided help filling out applications for others who needed more intensive help (e.g., limited English speakers). Miami also noted that some completed applications generated by RealBenefits were mailed to applicants who were then responsible for their delivery to the food stamp office. Others were completed in face-to-face meetings and then faxed directly to the food stamp office by grantee staff. Provision of in-person help varied by volunteer worker at GPCAH; in Connecticut, the decision of whether they wanted help with the applications was left up to the applicants. In SHFB and Tulsa, the grantees worked with clients to complete the first two pages of the application form, but applicants had to go to the food stamp office to finish filling out the rest of the application. Several grantees noted that applicants in need of immediate assistance (e.g., homeless, no food) were referred to the food stamp office for expedited service and, in some cases, to other community resources, such as a food pantry.

Application delivery. Fourteen grantees provided assistance in delivering and/or submitting applications to food stamp offices. The methods and the frequency of delivery varied widely among and within sites. Grantees used several mechanisms for delivering applications, including in-person delivery, mail, electronic formats, and fax. In some sites these practices varied among the counties served. For example, Central NY faxed or mailed applications in one county, but was required to hand-deliver applications in two others. Application delivery also sometimes varied by volunteer preference. For example, one GPCAH volunteer hand-delivered all applications he assisted with and waited for a receipt; other GPCAH volunteers required that the applicant deliver the form to the food stamp office. Muskegon staff made in-person deliveries of applications to the food stamp office daily. While Illinois generally faxed or e-mailed applications to food stamp offices, they noted that they had one person deliver a group of applications after a large outreach event. Madison mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered applications and could also submit them electronically. SHFB staff hand-delivered applications to food stamp offices and instituted a log-in procedure in response to lost applications early in the program.

All grantees set up some type of system to track the outcomes for applications attributable to their outreach activities. All of the tracking systems were developed in consultation with the local food stamp offices. Some processes worked better than others, and some grantees modified their tracking system during the course of their projects. For example, some grantees tried special color-coded or project-overlay forms, but found that these types of connectors were less reliable than unique personal identifiers. Many projects used Social security numbers for identifiers, but these were not perfect because not all clients had SSNs. One site (Delaware) was given on-line access to the state's data base so they could track their clients' (identified by their SSNs) progress through the application process. Often systems to

identify applications were backed up by a point person in the local office with responsibility for tracking the outcomes of the grantees' applications.

Transportation. Two grantees provided transportation assistance to the local food stamp office. Atlantic City was able to provide rides to the office through a city-funded program. Indiana staff reported that they occasionally provided rides to the food stamp office to senior applicants living in rural areas.

Simplified processing. Seven grantees worked with the FSP to simplify the application process by eliminating initial food stamp office visits. For example, Atlantic City's local food stamp office waived the in-person eligibility requirement for seniors and Spanish-speakers who completed the application process with the grantee; these applicants had to go to the food stamp office only to pick up their program identification and electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. Madison's project included the services of a dedicated food stamp office outreach worker who met applicants at community sites to complete certain components of the application with a portable workstation. In GPCAH, applicants who were unable to go to the food stamp office were able to complete the process through phone interviews with eligibility workers.

Follow-up. Fifteen grantees provided some type of follow-up service, usually calling clients they prescreened and/or assisted with the application process. Tulsa and SHFB made follow-up calls to all families they had referred to the food stamp office. MCC made similar follow-up calls, but found it took several calls to each client to make sure the process was proceeding. Delaware project staff called prescreened individuals to encourage them to apply for food stamp benefits.

Other assistance. Four sites did not provide in-person application assistance, but provided other forms of help with the application process. ACORN sent completed prescreening forms to the local food stamp office, gave prescreened applicants a list of required verification documents, and informed them that FSP staff would contact them to arrange an eligibility determination interview. Vermont's publicly accessible FSP web site provided information on application procedures, a downloadable application form, a list of required verification documents, and contact information for and directions to local food stamp offices.

V. Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

This section summarizes the major program accomplishments and lessons learned across the 18 grantee projects. It begins with a general description of the scope and major outcomes across all sites. It then highlights the outcomes from each site, which indicate the reach of the projects. It proceeds with a detailed discussion of specific implementation lessons, taking into account the diversity across the outreach projects.

General Findings

In total, the USDA spent approximately \$4.8 million on the 18 outreach projects.¹¹ Grantees made over 380,000 contacts through their food stamp outreach activities. While contacts ranged from getting a flyer or attending an informational event to intensive activities such as completing and submitting food stamp applications, more than two-thirds were made by distributing fliers.¹² If web page visits or public service announcements were counted, the grantees' total contacts would increase to the millions. Grantees provided application assistance, which varied from a simple referral to actual help filling out and filing the form at the local food stamp office, to at least 14,000 of the people who were contacted.¹³ In terms of food stamp participation outcomes, grantees reported that more than 11,500 food stamp applications were filed and 7,000 approved during the outreach projects.

Note that these estimates do not account for longer-term effects of outreach services that extend beyond the timeframe of this evaluation. Grantees that invested heavily in developing software for prescreening and application assistance in particular will be able to benefit from these technologies and relevant training beyond the time of their outreach project.

Despite the variety of project goals and approaches, the following common themes arise across grantees:

Partnerships with community groups serving low-income families contribute to successful outreach efforts. Partnerships with other established community groups, including service delivery agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, and employers, were critical to the success of these projects. Partners that were trusted organizations within the community provided access to potential clients, opened doors to other groups in the community serving low-income populations, and helped implement outreach strategies.

¹¹This dollar estimate excludes one grantee in Kentucky that did not implement an outreach initiative. Kentucky received an initial grant amount of \$287,985.

¹² See appendix B for site-specific numbers on grantee processes from the grantee reports. The 380,000 estimate is a lower bound because Atlantic City was unable to report contact information. Approximately two-thirds of the contact estimates represents fliers, most of which were counted by Illinois in their intervention.

¹³ This estimate is a lower bound because application assistance estimates were not available at four sites (Atlantic City, Delaware, North Carolina, and Vermont).

Cooperation and buy-in from the local food stamp offices are critical to successful outreach. While no single type of relationship guaranteed a success, grantees reported that FSP management and front-line staff needed to understand and support outreach activities from the beginning and they needed regular updates about project activities. Food stamp office staff trained outreach staff in many projects, and they sometimes participated directly in outreach activities. Food stamp office staff also provided the critical link to project outcomes—data on applications filed and approved. In a few cases, grantees’ failure to establish productive relationships with the local food stamp offices stymied their project’s success.

Technology that facilitates FSP eligibility prescreening and applications, while challenging, can pay off. New Internet tools require trained personnel to develop the software, maintain it, and adjust it to changing requirements. Partners and outreach project staff must be trained to use the software. Some food stamp clients, especially the elderly, may find the new technology challenging to use. However, multiple projects showed that implementation of web-based systems that included either in-person or software-driven application assistance could facilitate the process, especially for broader target populations. Four projects eventually were able to submit application forms electronically to local food stamp offices. Also, grantees expected that these tools will be used to facilitate applications beyond the project time frames.

Successful outreach requires more than basic education and information dissemination. All grantees reported that general mass marketing alone had little effect on getting a person to apply for benefits. Most potential applicants required more intensive efforts that helped them understand their benefit eligibility and the requirements for benefit approval. Grantees also found that specific requirements for more intensive assistance depend on the target population. While prescreening and benefits counseling were sufficient to induce some people to apply at the food stamp office, others found the application too difficult to complete on their own. Some grantees provided more intensive help by submitting their clients’ application forms, accompanying them to the food stamp office, and/or making frequent follow-up calls to monitor and to facilitate the process.

The groups with the lowest food stamp participation rates—immigrants, seniors, and the working poor—proved the most difficult to reach. Certain target populations, especially Hispanics and the elderly, often required assistance tailored to their needs. Grantees repeatedly reported the importance of involving culturally sensitive workers, partners, and volunteers to build trust among these populations. These target groups also needed information that eliminated misinformation about the FSP. Some target populations, especially the working poor, proved difficult to locate because they were less likely to visit the outreach sites than nonworking clients.

Summary of Data Collection Activities

About half the grantees successfully reported outcomes and, to a lesser extent, project activities via the national evaluator’s Internet-based system. The other half collected outcome data for most individuals reached in their projects, though they generally ran into difficulties tracking referrals from certain activities (especially information dissemination), obtaining data on outcomes for the full project period, and/or collecting data on all applications referred to the

food stamp office.¹⁴ Three sites could not track individual client applications and approvals at the food stamp office because they were unable to set up a good tracking system.

Quantifying grantee activity, especially total contacts and application assistance, proved difficult because of the diverse outreach approaches and local tracking systems. As definitions of data elements from these reports varied across sites, it would be misleading to make comparisons across grantees. For example, some projects had difficulties defining exactly what a contact was, particularly when presenting FSP information to large audiences. Similarly, comparing application assistance totals might be misleading because they do not reflect the intensity of the assistance (e.g., a simple referral versus actual help in filling out and filing the form at the local food stamp office).

Outcome Data

Exhibit V.1 summarizes the major outcome data submitted through the national evaluator's web site, along with notes about the difficulties some sites experienced collecting outcome data. The outcome data, summarized at the household level, include the number of applications filed and approved from grantee referrals based on FSP administrative data.¹⁵ The table shows the share of applications approved and denied. The percent pending/unknown reflects the difference between the known outcomes (approvals and denials) and total applications. The target group, grant amounts, and project durations are also reported in *Exhibit V.1* to provide some context on grantee characteristics. Of course, outcomes for individual sites must be assessed in the context of their specific project characteristics. Appendix B discusses individual site outcomes.

The large range of outcomes across grantees underscores the differences in project scope and ability to reach specific target populations. The number of applications ranged from 133 to 3,300. Approvals ranged from 18 to 83 percent of total applications.

Approval Rates

As noted in *Exhibit V.1*, the reported approvals likely undercount the actual number at several sites. Some sites reported difficulties tracking applications. For example, Tulsa reported being unable to track around 65 percent of their referrals at the food stamp office, suggesting their project approvals might be closer to 300 than 108 when adjusting for the undercount. Two sites provided estimates of outreach effects by comparing outcomes at outreach sites with similar characteristics

¹⁴ In some grantee locations, the food stamp office was unable to track outcomes for some applications submitted by the grantees. However, grantees could not verify if application forms were lost, if the applicants never submitted their applications, or if the applications were not appropriately tracked after being filed.

¹⁵ See appendix *Exhibit D.3* for specific definitions.

Exhibit V.1: Project Outcomes based on Administrative Data Reported to National Evaluators

Grantee (target population)	Applications	Approvals	% approved	% denied	% pending/unknown	Grant amount	Total months of outreach^a	Notes
ACORN (broad)	341	230	67%	11%	22%	\$262,000	22	According to the evaluation report, the number of approvals was higher because the grantee could not track individuals who received benefits in the past and were returning, since the data system retained the ID assigned to them from the prior period.
Atlantic City (seniors and Hispanics)	174	129	74%	26%	0	\$179,911	12	
Central NY (broad)	403	315	78%	22%	0	\$217,827	16	These data do not include the 599 prescreened individuals who downloaded applications forms via the web site. Grantee was unable to determine whether these applications were submitted to the food stamp office.
Connecticut (broad)	--	--	--	--	--	\$195,000	17	This grantee submitted some outcome data, but it is not shown because of significant problems in tracking outcomes for its applications.
Delaware (broad)	935	780	83%	17%	0%	\$349,592	22	
GPCAH (broad)	3,300	2,470	75%	20%	5%	\$310,822	21	
Illinois (families with school-age children)	765	504	66%	33%	1%	\$300,000	17	The local evaluation report noted that an unknown number of FSP applications referred by the grantee were not tracked by the food stamp office.
Indiana (broad)	1,307	603	46%	49%	5%	\$285,766	23	
Madison (working poor and elderly)	264	90	34%	10%	56%	\$171,300	12	According to evaluation report estimates, 277 households that had been approved in the county could be attributed to outreach (and policy changes, especially the simplified application form). The smaller estimate here reflects those applications the grantee could track.
MCC (young families)	133	70	53%	22%	25%	\$325,352	20	
Miami (low-wage workers)	595	116	19%	10%	71%	\$350,000	13	According to evaluation report estimates, 2,100 application forms were submitted and 750 were approved (denials were not reported). These claims could not be verified.

Exhibit V.1 (continued): Project Outcomes based on Administrative Data Reported to National Evaluators

Grantee (target population)	Applications	Approvals	% approved	% denied	% pending/ unknown	Grant amount	Total months of outreach^a	Notes
Muskegon (broad)	--	--	--	--	--	\$209,934	24	Grantee provided estimates by comparing outcomes across comparisons sites. However, it could not precisely estimate the number of outcomes due to outreach activities because of economic and policy changes implemented during the period. As noted in appendix B, the grantee did report 575 prescreening cases.
North Carolina (elderly, minorities, rural)	354	280	79%	21%	0	\$217,218	19	According to the evaluation report, approximately 275 clients (45 percent) did not provide social security numbers used to track applications at the food stamp office. These clients are not included in the totals.
Project Bread (broad)	460	85	18%	29%	53%	\$344,500	10	
Salem-Keizer (families with school-age children)	--	--	--	--	--	\$121,638	21	The evaluation report focused primarily on information dissemination activities at schools. Grantee's analysis of caseloads suggested the intervention did not significantly affect caseloads overall.
SHFB (Immigrants)	1,398	457	33%	34%	33%	\$287,680	21	
Tulsa (working poor)	136	108	79%	17%	4%	\$336,093	12	In the evaluation report, grantee noted it did not have outcome data for 73 percent of the referrals made to the food stamp office (511 of the 699 total referrals).
Vermont (broad)	1,008	814	81%	19%	0	\$294,297	13	

-- = not available

^a Represents the number of months included in the data collection activity. For specific start and end dates, see Site Profiles.

The grantees with larger numbers of applications and approvals were successful in leveraging partners and volunteers in conducting their outreach activities. For example, GPCAH worked with several partner agencies and had volunteers (especially college students) who devoted considerable time and effort to outreach assistance. Vermont trained staff at 95 partner agencies to use their web site and to assist visitors with the web site's prescreening process. Delaware included 90 trained partner agencies (20–25 who were very active). All three of these sites also targeted broad target populations.

Some sites had fewer applications than expected because they had difficulties locating their target populations and/or experienced unanticipated changes in the project or FSP staff. For example, Atlantic City focused on hard-to-reach seniors and Hispanics and had start-up issues. These issues included delays in hiring a project coordinator and receiving approval to purchase laptops for field workers.

Sometimes the relatively low number of applications was influenced heavily by large technological investments and relatively short time frames for conducting the actual outreach. Because of the time it took to develop these innovations, several sites had only a year or less to conduct their outreach activities. While some grantees anticipated shorter time frames for conducting actual outreach, others had unexpected delays in software development or hardware access.

Denial rates: The relatively high denial and pending/unknown outcome rates in some sites reflect several factors, many of which were raised in the local evaluation reports.¹⁶ These factors include less intensive prescreening processes that referred ineligible people to the food stamp offices, applicants' difficulties in completing the application process, and difficulties tracking project outcomes.

Exhibit V.2 summarizes common reasons for application denials among sites that reported data for at least 30 cases.¹⁷ At four sites, the income and asset limits were the primary reasons for denial. High denial rates can reflect client characteristics or the prescreening activity. Two of these sites (Atlantic City and North Carolina) targeted the elderly, and these grantees reported that elderly clients were more likely to be denied food stamps because of assets. Other grantees noted that the income information provided by clients during prescreening did not always match what they eventually submitted to the food stamp office. This tended to occur more often for seniors who had family members taking care of their finances.

In other sites, applicants' failure to complete the interview process or provide accurate information caused the high denial rates. Many clients who completed the prescreening and application processes, especially immigrants, found it difficult to provide all the required verification documents and follow through with in-person eligibility interviews. Several

¹⁶ National rates of approval and denial are not readily available.

¹⁷ While most sites were able to provide this information, some sites did not have information on all denied cases. So in some cases, the number of denials in *Exhibit V.2* may not match the number reported in *Exhibit V.1*.

evaluation reports noted the importance of following up on applications. In Delaware, the grantee attempted to follow up directly with prescreened applicants who had not completed the application process, though the grantee was only able to locate and encourage a small number of those individuals to reapply.

Cost information: A common theme across all grantees was that outreach proved costly because it was very labor intensive. While cost information on specific activities is not available, rough estimates of the cost per approval can be generated by dividing grant amounts by the number of approvals.¹⁸ Based on these calculations, the cost per approved application certification varied from approximately \$126 in GPCAH to over \$1,000 in multiple locations.¹⁹ Costs per approval were generally lower in sites with a large number of denied applications,

Exhibit V.2: Reasons for Denial among Applications Submitted at Grantee Sites (minimum of 30 cases)

Grantee	Number of denials	Reason for Denials (%)			
		Income/assets too high	Citizenship status/ does not live within the FSP jurisdiction	Failure to complete interview process, incomplete/inaccurate information	Other
ACORN	--	--	--	--	--
Atlantic City	45	53%	0%	31%	16%
Central NY	88	51%	0%	48%	1%
Connecticut	--	--	--	--	--
Delaware	154	26%	0%	42%	32%
GPCAH	660	26%	1%	39%	34%
Illinois	237	33%	1%	59%	7%
Indiana	645	21%	0%	54%	25%
Madison	--	--	--	--	--
MCC	--	--	--	--	--
Miami	--	--	--	--	--
Muskegon	--	--	--	--	--
North Carolina	74	47%	3%	30%	20%
Project Bread	116	8%	5%	46%	41%
Salem-Keizer	--	--	--	--	--
SHFB	473	32%	6%	49%	13%
Tulsa	--	--	--	--	--
Vermont	194	51%	4%	36%	9%

Notes: Four sites (Acorn, Madison, MCC, and Tulsa) that provided denial data had relatively low denial rates, and their denials did not exceed 30. One site (Miami) did not obtain denial information from its state. The remaining 3 sites were unable to provide outcome data representative of their project.

¹⁸ Note, however, that these costs represent an upper bound given the data issues noted above. Nonetheless, they represent reasonable approximations for their costs, which can be adjusted using the information in the notes for *Exhibit V.1*.

¹⁹ It is difficult to estimate precise costs for some grantees with very low award numbers because of data collection issues.

possibly suggesting that more careful prescreening of applicants and/or more intensive outreach assistance leads to higher costs but lower denial rates. Sites with low denial rates, such as ACORN (11 percent) and Madison (10 percent), had higher application costs. These comparisons are simply suggestive, however; it is not possible to attribute success directly to a specific strategy.

Detailed Implementation Lessons

Grantees' strategies for implementing their projects and delivering services provide further context for the findings summarized above and provide insights for future outreach activities. Project development and organization, along with relationships with partners and the food stamp offices, all played key roles in the relative success of the projects. The description below summarizes the lessons learned about project implementation. Text boxes provide in-depth examples of specific lessons.²⁰

Organizational Characteristics and Project Development

While no single “best” approach to organizational structure and project development can be identified, grantees learned several important lessons.

Staffing: Staff skills and characteristics were a critical component of program implementation and operation. Grantees with particularly dynamic project coordinators felt this person was an important ingredient for success. For example, Central NY benefited from the vision and expertise of an experienced project coordinator who had been involved in a similar FSP education and outreach effort and was a former employee of the state FSP agency. She used her expertise to develop county-specific training manuals for partner staff volunteers. Staff in Tulsa noted the need for dynamic and committed staff and the importance of a program manager who can see the “big picture,” along with a clearly defined project team. Several partner agencies attributed much of Tulsa’s success to the project manager’s efforts to promote and market the outreach activities. Similarly, the director of SHFB’s outreach activities attributed many of their accomplishments to their lead outreach worker’s strong leadership and marketing abilities.

Grantees that targeted immigrant and limited English speaking populations emphasized the importance of having culturally compatible outreach workers who related to the unique concerns of this population. SHFB attributed some of its success to outreach workers who “spoke the language of the community.” Not surprisingly, grantees that targeted non-English speaking populations also found it essential to have at least one bilingual worker assist with outreach activities. Muskegon’s bilingual outreach worker, for example, traveled to the outlying areas of two remote counties to reach out to migrant workers.

²⁰ The text box lessons are taken primarily from the site visit notes and the local evaluation reports.

Not surprisingly, another lesson was that staff turnover and hiring delays adversely affected outreach activities. Several sites experienced staff turnover over the course of the project, though only a few grantees reported these changes had major consequences for their outreach efforts. In Salem, the grantee director lost outside funding for her position. The grantee's local evaluator took on managerial responsibilities for the duration of the grant, and the original project director offered some assistance as a consultant. Other grantees (e.g., ACORN and Tulsa) reported that turnover among key staff slowed implementation of outreach.

Use of volunteers: Several grantees, especially ACORN, Central NY, GPCAH, SHFB, and Tulsa, found that volunteers provided an invaluable, low-cost source of outreach workers. These grantees relied on volunteers' assorted activities, from basic information dissemination (e.g., handing out fliers) to more intensive prescreening and application assistance. Grantees reported that extensive networks of volunteers successfully put a "face" on outreach activities. ACORN's evaluation report noted that volunteers effectively interacted with individuals in supermarkets about the benefits of participating in the FSP. These personal interactions led to more immediate application completions on site, rather than postponements. Some grantees also found that recruiting volunteers from the same general demographic group (and who spoke the same language) as the targeted populations increased trust and acceptance.

Training represented a major cost of incorporating volunteers into outreach activities. These costs were especially high in areas with more intensive training activities and high turnover. Central NY reported that turnover was especially costly because it had to consistently train new volunteers in prescreening.

Another important lesson was that volunteers had to be comfortable providing different outreach services. In Central NY volunteers were reluctant to conduct prescreenings because they were uncomfortable asking individuals to divulge personal information or afraid of making a calculation error. SHFB limited the role of their volunteer "promotores" to case referrals after local food stamp office raised concerns about errors attributable to volunteers.

GPCAH (see GPCAH text box), the largest user of volunteers across the projects, found that focusing on a smaller group of very committed volunteers was more productive than supervising a much larger group of volunteers. Not surprisingly, the volunteers who devoted the most time to the project were generally more productive. The GPCAH local evaluation report found that the student volunteer team screened and enrolled over twice as many clients as the community/faith-based volunteer team. However, many of the students had strong incentives to perform exceptionally because the outreach activities qualified as a work-study activity or helped to satisfy a course requirement.

Greater Philadelphia Coalition against Hunger (GPCAH) Use of Volunteers

GPCAH relied heavily on volunteers to conduct outreach activities. Student volunteers were recruited from 11 colleges and universities and included work-study students (paid through university funds) and students enrolled in service learning courses and programs that required community service work as part of their course requirements. Community and faith-based volunteers were recruited through GPCAH's longstanding partnership with the Interfaith Hunger Group and the GPCAH newsletter.

GPCAH-trained student and community/faith-based volunteers disseminated information about the FSP and provided prescreening and application assistance at assigned sites throughout the community. GPCAH developed and provided a four-hour training session for volunteers that included an overview of the FSP and instructions on performing outreach, prescreening, and application assistance. Volunteers also received training on collecting and logging data from each contact with potential applicants for evaluation purposes.

GPCAH found that volunteers varied in their level of comfort conducting the activities needed for this project. Student volunteers were more comfortable than other volunteers with the math skills needed to calculate potential eligibility and benefit levels, although they were not as comfortable approaching people and promoting the program. Community and faith-based volunteers were often more experienced in working with low-income populations and often incorporated FSP outreach into services they were already providing (e.g., working at a food pantry).

GPCAH found that recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers was very time consuming. It also found that only a limited number of volunteers could dedicate the needed time and energy to this project. The GPCAH local evaluation report noted that their student volunteer team screened and enrolled over twice as many clients as the community/faith-based volunteer team and their top five volunteers each enrolled more than 45 people for the program. The grantee concluded that selective recruitment that identifies volunteers with the time, energy, and interest in working with the target population is most effective. Many student volunteers also had an extra incentive to perform because they received pay and credit hours for the work.

When asked about future use of volunteers, GPCAH staff responded: "We decided that we wanted to continue with this because it's been rewarding. We feel like sometimes the training takes a lot of time, and it takes people some time to pick up on how to do screenings and stuff like that, but in the end it's worthwhile. Hearing students...say...they've grown from the experience. They've never...been exposed to working in the city before, or listened to what was going on in the lives of people who are low income. That hasn't been a reality that they've had to deal with before, and it's been very rewarding."

Partnerships: All grantees generally reported that active community partners helped them leverage their resources, enhance their outreach activities, and reach their various target populations. ACORN paired up with an immigrant social services organization to provide further access to immigrant populations. GPCAH developed new partnerships with one-stop employment centers and workforce agencies where new clients were accessing the system (as opposed to food banks and pantries where GPCAH saw the same individuals on multiple visits).

Grantees cited several important components of developing successful partnerships (see text box). First, it was important to identify partners with longstanding roots and established relationships with the target population. Second, a successful partnership required buy-in from the partner organization, particularly at the management level. Specifically, partners needed to understand the project and be willing to commit staff to it. Third, the partner operated most efficiently when it clearly understood its role throughout the outreach activity. Fourth, the ideal partner must understand the FSP or be willing to learn about the program (and changing policies). Finally, staff from partner organizations must be comfortable performing outreach activities, including more challenging prescreening and application assistance activities.

Most partnership concerns stemmed from the grantee's limited management control over staff who reported to another agency and a loss of interest or commitment over time. The biggest problem reported in two sites—Illinois and Salem-Keizer—was that partner staff was not able to dedicate adequate time to FSP outreach activities. In both sites, school staff added FSP outreach to their other job duties, with no additional compensation or reduction in other duties. Also, while Illinois completed a successful partnership, it reported that outreach activities were not a top priority of school administrators or staff. In other projects, such as Central NY, partners' staff performance was inconsistent, attributed in part to staff turnover. Some grantees reported difficulties maintaining their partnerships and keeping them active. For example, Delaware's local evaluation report estimated that while many member agencies agreed to participate, only one-third were actively involved throughout the project. In many cases, partners that were inactive either did not fully understand their roles or did not buy in to the process. Another challenge was that some partners could not implement all aspects of the grantee's outreach activities or data collection efforts. In some cases, this was due to a lack of experience or understanding of the need for data tracking. In others, it was a result of lack of technological expertise.

At least two grantees felt they had to overcome the attitudes of some community leaders about the FSP. For example, church leaders in North Carolina mentioned their families did not need assistance from the FSP because other private services already took care of these families. Muskegon had difficulties engaging the Veterans Affairs Office because the office did not fully understand (or believe in) the benefits of the FSP for its clientele.

New technology: As noted in section IV, the use of technology for prescreening, application assistance, and sometimes application submission was an essential component of project development in most sites. However, designing and implementing new technology, or adapting existing technologies, proved challenging and labor intensive.

Seven grantees with technology applications ran into project start-up delays. Delays resulted from technical challenges and bureaucratic approval processes. For example, project activities in Atlantic City were delayed for several months while staff awaited final approval for the purchase of new laptop computers. Project Bread had to readjust timelines to accommodate the schedules of multiple contractors and had to continually readjust specifications for a new web site. Tulsa changed software vendors because it needed a more flexible prescreening program. Even grantees that originally planned to use the USDA prescreening software faced delays and made other arrangements when the release of this tool was delayed.

Creating Successful Partnerships—SHFB and Illinois Grantee Experiences

The experiences of the grantees highlight several key ingredients for a successful partnership. Here are the partnership strategies successfully employed by two grantees:

Identify and cultivate partners who have established relationships with the target population.

SHFB chose as its key partners three community social service agencies whose service populations included large numbers of low-income Hispanic families and individuals. The three partner agencies were the Familia Center (a food distribution agency and family resource center with “one-stop shopping” for the low-income population), La Manzana Community Resources Center (a one-stop, multipurpose family resource center), and Salud Para la Gente (a community agency that provides health services to the Latino population). Each community partner provided a dedicated part-time outreach worker who assisted applicants with the prescreening and application process and provided case management and follow-up for clients he or she assisted. SHFB found that partnering with staff who were already providing other social services/nutrition education and who had established personal connections and rapport with members of the community proved successful. Social service agency partners provide broader reach in the community and a sense of teamwork. These partnerships also extended outreach to a more diverse geographical and cultural population base.

Obtain project buy-in from the partner organization, particularly at the management level.

Illinois developed a new partnership with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to increase enrollment in the FSP among families with children in the school system. Illinois worked with KidCare coordinators (KCCs), CPS staff who conducted outreach and completed applications for Illinois’ Children’s Health Insurance Program, KidCare. Project staff helped KCCs use a web-based prescreening and application assistance tool, which allowed them to add food stamp outreach to their existing activities. Illinois found that securing the investment of administrators at the top levels of the system, including members of the board of education, the Superintendent of the schools, directors of the finance department, and local school administrators, was crucial to the success of their project. The number of applications generated for CPS families increased after a meeting with top-level school officials in the fall of 2004. Parent attendance was high at outreach events conducted by Illinois and KCCs at schools whose principal was interested in the project’s activities and made sure parents and staff understood the importance of the work.

One important lesson in rolling out new technology was the need to accommodate the different technological skills of partners, volunteers, and applicants. Tulsa staff noted a challenge in “creating a web site that would be helpful and useful to folks who did not have access to the Internet in their homes or who lacked experience using computers.”

Once implemented, grantees continually monitored and updated their electronic prescreening and application tools. A few grantees interacted with users to improve their web site throughout the project. Central NY and Project Bread staff modified their web site based on user suggestions, new data requirements, and changes in food stamp guidelines. Similarly, Vermont staff used focus groups to formally solicit feedback and update their web site.

Five grantees reported the software developed for their projects would be used after their grants ended (including Project Bread, Tulsa, Madison, Vermont, and Central NY).

Atlantic City, a site that used software developed by the local food stamp office, said that their local food stamp offices encouraged them to continue using the tool.

Training: Training was a major development activity for several grantees, especially those with extensive partnerships or volunteer arrangements and those implementing technology applications. Training sessions varied significantly across projects, often in response to the sophistication of the outreach activities. Because of frequent turnover among partner staff and volunteers, training continued after initial project start-up.

Venue: Despite diverse outreach settings, grantees frequently identified two characteristics of promising venues. First, clients needed some privacy. Staff in Indiana and Madison reported that clients resisted outreach in very public spaces where they feared a friend or neighbor would see them. GPCAH, Illinois, Muskegon, and SHFB found their hotlines were effective because clients could seek assistance from knowledgeable staff on their own terms (in the privacy of their homes, at a convenient time, etc.). Second, some grantees noted that access to a changing audience proved very important in expanding the scope of outreach services. For example, staff in GPCAH and Muskegon found that outreach at health centers and career centers, where they regularly saw new faces, was more productive than at food banks and pantries, which generally served a consistent clientele. Similarly, the Salem-Keizer evaluation report questioned the effectiveness of repeated outreach efforts through school events because the same families attended each event.

Some grantees reported different experiences at the same types of venues, suggesting that the type of setting did not matter as much as its specific characteristics and the mode of outreach services (see text box). For example, Muskegon found schools an ineffective avenue for reaching potential applicants, noting the schools inconsistently distributed materials to parents. In contrast, Illinois found it could effectively target information dissemination to families with children in school lunch programs, but found schools a poor setting for prescreening and application assistance because busy parents did not have the time to focus on this assistance at school events.

Partnerships with Food Stamp Offices

Grantees implemented a variety of successful approaches to foster communication with the FSP agency. For example, SHFB staff held regularly scheduled meetings to discuss challenges at all levels and resolve operational issues. GPCAH worked extensively with FSP staff at the regional and local levels to develop protocols for processing their cases. Liaisons were appointed at each local office to work with project staff and ensure careful tracking of project outcomes. Illinois (see text box) formalized a similar effort—Community Quality Councils—to improve communication across the food stamp offices, community groups, and outreach staff.

Effective Outreach at Select Venues

Schools: Grantees had mixed views on the effectiveness of outreach in school settings, suggesting schools may be best suited for increasing awareness about the FSP, rather than helping families with prescreening or applications. Outreach workers in Illinois found school-based events were good opportunities for outreach and disseminating information, but not good for completing applications. The local evaluation report concluded that piggybacking on other events (health fairs, report card pickup, and other multiservice events) was not the most effective strategy. While multiservice events provide an opportunity to advertise the FSP and other services, and school employees are available for application assistance, parents became distracted at events where several services were offered and did not have the time or the patience to complete applications. Events dedicated to educating parents about their rights and eligibility along with completing applications on their behalf proved far more effective than cosponsoring events with other agencies.

Alternatively, staff in Muskegon found schools an ineffective avenue for reaching potential applicants because schools inconsistently distributed materials to parents. They suggested that targeting families with children in free and reduced-price lunch programs may be more effective. Salem-Keizer staff found that they reached the same core group of parents that frequently attended school events, never reaching the working poor (especially single parents) who did not attend these events. In contrast to Illinois, staff at Project Bread and Miami found that trying to catch parents before and after school was not a good strategy because parents were often too hurried to stop and discuss food stamp benefits.

Grocery Stores: Grantees had varied thoughts on the success of conducting outreach in grocery stores. ACORN and GPCAH, for example, found it a very successful way to “get the word out” about food stamp benefits. However, staff in Indiana and Madison found grocery stores were good outlets for distributing information about the FSP, but not for conducting prescreening because of stigma concerns (i.e., clients were concerned about being seen by their neighbors).

Other Program/Tax Filing Centers: Project Bread found that settings where clients were already applying for a public benefit were a more natural fit: clients are already prepared to provide the necessary application information and have allocated time to apply for assistance. Similarly, Tulsa was able to capitalize on the documentation that EITC clients had with them when seeking assistance with tax preparation: much of the same information was required for tax services and applying for the FSP.

Group Presentations: Staff in North Carolina found that many potential applicants were not comfortable approaching staff to be prescreened after group presentations. The grantee responded by asking seniors who were interested in being prescreened to write down their names and phone numbers as well as a convenient time for a more private prescreening. Similarly, staff in Connecticut found many clients were not comfortable with prescreening in a group setting. Connecticut also began accepting individual appointments.

While communicating with FSP management staff was important, Tulsa staff also stressed the importance of communicating with front-line staff. One respondent noted, “It’s not only that you’ve got to manage relationships with the local level, and even down to the level of the receptionist that is at each [food stamp] office where you’re referring to clients.... You need

to think of who are the gatekeepers...and how you need to build that relationship and make sure that they feel part of the process.”

Some grantees found it most effective to designate point persons at the food stamp office to handle all the grantees’ applications. In California, SHFB and the food stamp office established a formal communication protocol that worked well over the course of the project. The lead outreach worker directed case management questions to food stamp supervisors at the two food stamp offices, and directed more complex questions about regulations to the senior analyst overseeing the project at the welfare office.

Illinois Hunger Coalition: Developing Relationships with the Food Stamp Office

The Illinois Hunger Coalition had a longstanding, close working relationship with Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) staff going into this project. Throughout, they worked with the food stamp office to improve services. RealBenefits liaisons were designated in each local food stamp office to improve how applications submitted by the grantee were handled. These liaisons received all applications generated by the grantee and acted as designated contacts for all questions regarding applications completed using RealBenefits (the grantee’s online prescreening tool).

Illinois staff worked with IDHS to develop Community Quality Councils. Established in six local welfare offices, these councils were designed to build relationships among community groups and staff and increase the understanding of FSP policies and procedures. Typically, Illinois staff and their outreach workers met with and case managers and administrators from the welfare office to discuss issues that arose. Through these meetings, staff worked together to decrease barriers and generally improve outreach. The councils, according to the local evaluator, were “instrumental in empowering” outreach workers and helping them provide better services for their families by giving them personal contacts at the welfare office. The councils also created a forum for educating local food stamp office staff about the outreach effort.

Grantee staff felt the councils engaged food stamp eligibility workers in the outreach effort, noting “one of the benefits has been [providing real connections] to kids at school and I think it made [eligibility workers] want to work a little harder and try to...make...coming to the local office a little easier. They felt like they could be part of a solution.”

Some sites incorporated food stamp office staff in their training exercises, creating important direct links between partners and food stamp staff. Other grantees noted the benefits of involving FSP staff in more phases of outreach. In Madison a food stamp worker conducted eligibility determination activities in the field and eliminated the need for some applicants to visit the food stamp office. Food stamp staff workers in North Carolina frequently accompanied outreach workers to presentations and distributed information to potential applicants.

Sometimes circumstances at local food stamp offices limited the quality of relationships with outreach grantees. Connecticut noted that high turnover among staff and administrators at the food stamp office made it difficult to sustain consistent relationships during the planning and early implementation of project. Two sites (Illinois and Connecticut) reported that high work volumes made it difficult or impossible for food stamp staff to track outcomes for large numbers of applications submitted through the outreach initiatives.

Connecticut addressed the problem, though not completely, by submitting all applications to a central location and creating a detailed record keeping system.

Some grantees had difficulties getting local food stamp office staff to buy in to the outreach activities. For example, while the food stamp office regularly sent staff to outreach activities in Salem, the local FSP staff were not always proactive in engaging and enrolling event participants. They also resisted providing necessary tracking information for those families that they did engage.

Outreach Strategies

Grantees provide numerous lessons about how to disseminate information, the most effective prescreening processes, and the importance of application assistance.

Information dissemination: Outreach grantees spent considerable effort disseminating information about food stamp benefits, and changing public perception of food stamps as a welfare benefit. For example, GPCAH staff presented the FSP as a “food assistance” program rather than a welfare program. Consistent with existing studies, most grantees reported misinformation and misperceptions about the FSP among potential applicants. Grantees reported a general lack of understanding about who is eligible to receive food stamps. Also, some people did not know which stores accepted food stamps or that paper food stamp coupons were eliminated. Other potential applicants thought there was a “catch” to receiving benefits such as immigrants believing that the benefits would have to be paid back. Stigma and privacy issues were also identified as major barriers to FSP participation.

Grantees found some approaches to information dissemination worked better than others. At least one grantee found informational flyers were generally more effective when they included eligibility information, such as maximum income levels, potential benefit amounts, and a list of required verification documents. Illinois’ staff found that detailed flyers helped applicants come to outreach events better prepared. As one staff member noted, “I think that really helped a lot because we had people coming in a little more educated, a little more familiar with what the [process would be].”

While it was difficult to track the effectiveness of broad information dissemination approaches, SHFB found television and, to a lesser extent, radio ads were more effective than billboards in conveying information about the FSP program (see text box). Similarly, Muskegon staff found radio advertisements more effective than billboards (based on the number of phone calls they received to their hotline) in educating the public and reducing stigma associated with food stamp receipt.

While broad information dissemination was effective in generating publicity at several sites, some grantees preferred personal interactions because they were the most effective way to communicate the benefits of FSP participation. For example, ACORN’s evaluation reported that face-to-face outreach was more effective than “paper” dissemination because it gave

Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB): Information Dissemination Strategies

SHFB outreach workers handed out 60,859 flyers, brochures, and posters (including the USDA-issued materials stamped with the SHFB logo) in English and Spanish at community agencies and organizations, food pantries, health fairs, and soup kitchens. SHFB outreach workers made 865 outreach/screening/assistance/presentations at more than 100 sites, speaking with 31,663 potential food stamp clients. SHFB felt these contacts were very successful and attributed much of their success to the cultural appropriateness of their outreach workers—they felt that they were successful because they “spoke the language of the community.”

SHFB also developed and ran on major broadcast television stations two 30-second English/Spanish public service announcements designed to increase awareness of food stamp eligibility and present the FSP as a nutrition program for low-income workers. Those ads increased calls to the local community food hotline by 68 percent and made 3,196,000 “gross impressions”, a rough estimate of the number of people that heard these announcements.

In addition, SHFB developed a 5-minute English-Spanish video loop dispelling 12 common FSP myths that featured a bilingual California Assembly member as narrator. The myths included a fear that FSP participation would have negative effects on immigration status, an assumption that if parents were not eligible no one in the family was eligible, and a belief that the benefits would have to be paid back by their sponsors. Finally, SHFB worked with the LA Regional Food Bank to develop an outreach web site with a prescreening tool.

SHFB tracked the number of outreach materials distributed and the media impact of the PSAs by asking applicants how they heard about their services. This information was recorded on the applicant’s waiver form granting permission for SHFB workers to act as liaisons with the food stamp office for them and tracked on spreadsheets by outreach workers. The hotline staff also tracked the number of calls about food stamp benefits after the PSAs aired and which television stations generated the calls. SHFB also informally tracked reasons why some who met with an outreach worker decided not to complete the application process. Besides immigration fears, SHFB found that clients dropped out because of the time and complexity involved in the application process. This information allowed the project to “make mid-stream course corrections” and to “adjust outreach efforts for greater success.” This information was also used as the basis for the short video aimed at breaking down barriers to food stamp participation.

At the end of the grant period, SHFB staff felt that they had “built up trust in the FSP program among the community members.” In the word of one staff member, “I think it’s mainly in that area of having many more people in the community aware of their potential eligibility, understanding the role of the FSP, and the amount of trust and interaction between the outreach workers and people in the community around food stamps.” Staff also felt their successful demystifying of the FSP had resulted in increased participation.

applicants an opportunity to discuss their concerns. On the other hand, several grantees viewed hotlines as an especially effective part of their information dissemination campaign because grantees could directly address FSP participation concerns in an anonymous venue that put most potential applicants at ease.

Prescreening: In addition to identifying an eligible pool of applicants, many grantees reported that prescreening encouraged participation in the FSP. Prescreens showed reluctant individuals if they were eligible and their potential benefit amounts.

In most cases, grantees used a mixture of prescreening formats (paper, computer, and web-based), which they changed based on the technology access at the prescreening venues (see text box). The prescreening tool also varied depending on the client in some sites. For example, elderly clients in Madison preferred paper prescreening forms because they worried about entering their personal information in a computer. Most grantees emphasized that flexibility in using these tools was essential for getting different populations started.

While these projects do not provide a definitive assessment of the effectiveness of prescreening alone, some do provide some insights. Ten projects moved directly from prescreening to helping eligible clients fill out an application form, making it impossible to assess whether the prescreenings alone would have encouraged clients to fill out applications. Five projects (ACORN, Delaware, GPCAH, Indiana, and Vermont) stopped their initial outreach step with a prescreening and left it up to the clients to fill out and take their applications to the food stamp office. (Most of these projects did, however, follow up with clients who did not submit applications.) Two projects reported that about half of those prescreened as eligible submitted applications, and two other sites had lower ratios of submissions to prescreenings (based on their outcome data). One site, Indiana seemed to have greater success. Based on their outcome data, about two-thirds of their prescreened clients submitted applications. While it is not clear why Indiana had greater success with prescreening than the others, one factor may have been that they did not include non-English-speaking groups who generally have a more difficult time understanding the whole application process in their target population. Three other sites (Connecticut, MCC, and North Carolina) attempted to test the effectiveness of different outreach strategies, including prescreening alone. All three sites concluded that more intensive “case management” services were more effective.

Application assistance: Despite the variety in their target populations and outreach processes, nine grantees concluded that successful completion of an FSP application process required intensive assistance. Many clients prescreened as eligible did not submit applications to the food stamp office on their own. Further, clients for whom application forms were submitted to the food stamp office often missed their certification appointments or failed to provide all the necessary verification documents. Some grantees intensified their application assistance once they recognized these issues.

Grantees found they had to follow-up with applicants multiple times. MCC staff often followed up with clients as many as three or four times. They reported that of the 133 households that submitted applications, 70 percent did so only after extensive application assistance and support. Delaware’s local evaluator noted staff found many prescreened individuals “did not understand they would need to go to a service center and apply for benefits.” They also reported “several clients had a change in their personal situation that affected their eligibility, but some clients just lost interest.”

Community Action Program for Madison County (Madison): Use of Prescreening

The Community Action Program for Madison County (Madison) was the only grantee to develop a publicly accessible web site that allows a user to not only prescreen and complete an application form online but also submit an application directly to the food stamp office. Madison's web site (www.madisoncountyfoodstamps.org), created specifically for this grant, was launched on October 1, 2003. A consultant was hired to develop the web site, ensure the online application mirrored the statewide application, and make modifications as needed. Staff felt the development and early implementation of the web site was extremely successful, particularly in terms of the good cooperation between the technical consultant, the FSP staff, and the Madison outreach coordinator

Madison's web site includes a six-question prescreening tool (based on the USDA prescreening tool) to determine likelihood of eligibility for the FSP and the maximum monthly benefit. If it appears to the person conducting the prescreening that the applicant will be eligible, the client can continue on to the application. Applications can be completed and submitted online directly to the local food stamp office, where they are printed and assigned to the FSP outreach worker for processing and eligibility determination. Applications can also be downloaded, filled out, and mailed or hand-delivered to the local office. Once the application has been processed, the food stamp office sends a letter stating the application has been received and approval is pending provision of required documentation. If the applicant is not required to come to the food stamp office, an interview can be conducted by phone, documentation can be mailed, and the FSP outreach worker can meet with the applicant off-site to complete the photo ID and finger imaging components.

Individuals can access and use this site on their own or with the assistance of Madison's outreach worker, the FSP outreach worker, or trained staff at various sites throughout the community. Extensive training on the web site (and promotion of its use) was conducted by the Madison Outreach Coordinator.

Staff considered the web site development and their success in "getting the word out to the people" about the new tool major victories. In the words of one staff member, "I think we've made the whole FSP more visible to the community, emphasizing that it is an agricultural program instead of a welfare program, because we have had that message, we've put forth that message over and over again." They also reported the community was receptive to the web site, noting they continued to field calls from individuals who had heard about the web site and wanted to know how to sign on.

Even grantees that sent complete application forms electronically to the food stamp office reported that clients needed follow-up with appointments and verification requirements. For example, Madison's local evaluation report noted that the biggest reason for denial for their clients was incomplete documentation. Their clients reported the following reasons for not following up: not aware of the extent of the documentation required, unable to get to the food stamp office (lived over an hour away), did not receive return phone calls from a food stamp office worker, felt the process violated their privacy, and did not want to go to the DSS office.

The three sites that conducted their application assistance in conjunction with other public programs found this was an efficient way to assist families with their food stamp

applications. These grantees reported they needed to market the FSP with some other program to make it more appealing. For example, Muskegon packaged FSP benefits with health insurance, and engaged more people in their outreach activities as a result. Miami marketed their information dissemination activities and subsequent assistance as part of an economic benefits package. They discussed the EITC and the state’s SCHIP program along with the FSP. Tulsa (see text box) invited people to prescreening for several services while they were waiting for free tax preparation services. The outreach project took advantage of the fact that the documents required for tax filing also provided good information about eligibility for other low-income programs.

**Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAPTC):
Partnership with Tax Preparation Sites**

CAPTC provided food stamp prescreening and application assistance using its web-based prescreening tool in conjunction with its annual Earned Income Tax Credit outreach and free tax preparation services. Screenings were conducted at the nine tax preparation sites in and around Tulsa. Clients waiting to have their taxes prepared were asked if they would like to check their eligibility for various programs in their community, rather than if they wanted to be screened for food stamp benefits. CAPTC’s flyers promoting the prescreening tool also avoided mentioning the FSP by name. Instead, the flyer said: “Answer a few simple questions to see if you qualify for FREE assistance with: food, education, job training, housing, child care, utilities, health services, prescription assistance, financial assistance.” Staff found it highly effective to pitch this as a broader screening of “programs to take advantage of.” This also helped them work around the stigma attached to the FSP.

Clients that agreed to participate in the screening could be screened immediately at the tax preparation center or schedule a time to return for a prescreening. If clients were called in to have their taxes prepared before finishing the food stamp screening, they could resume the screening after doing their taxes or could make an appointment to complete it over the phone or at a CAPTC office.

Grantees also reported on obstacles their clients faced in getting the food stamp office. Over half the sites reported that transportation was a major barrier, particularly in rural areas. In Madison, some applicants reported traveling up to 75 miles round-trip to reach a food stamp office. In some sites, these issues were compounded by offices that were only open during regular business hours.

Lessons Learned about Target Populations’ Participation Barriers

The outreach projects provided lessons about barriers among specific target populations, including non-English speakers, the elderly, and low-wage workers, as well as grantees’ strategies to reach these populations.

Non-English Speakers

Grantees that served noncitizen and limited English-speaking populations found these groups had difficulties because of language issues and a mistrust or misunderstanding of FSP rules.

Illinois staff noted a myth circulating in one immigrant community that if families applied for FSP benefits, their family members would be drafted into the Armed Services. Illinois successfully educated Hispanic and Indian/Pakistani populations through their information dissemination in the Chicago public school system. Other grantees felt their outreach activities erased misperceptions among immigrant parents that did not understand that citizen children could receive food stamp benefits even when parents were ineligible.

Many grantees reported that immigrants' fears over jeopardizing their immigration status prevented many potentially-eligible immigrants from applying for benefits. The SHFB employed several strategies to dispel this myth, including a flyer explaining that food stamp benefits are not a public charge issue and contact information for a regional immigration information hotline. SHFB also distributed a policy letter generated by the U.S. Citizen Information Service (formerly the INS) to allay these fears. SHFB also switched the focus for outreach workers during the course of their projects. Reacting to the large number of denials among immigrants that submitted applications—often because of failure to complete their interviews or provide information—the grantee conducted more follow-up services. Several other grantees that worked with immigrants noted the challenge of assuring immigrants that their SSNs and other personal data would not be turned over to immigration authorities.

Grantees also noted the importance of having translation services both as part of the outreach services and at local food stamp offices. Some immigrants reported that translation services were not always available at local offices. Grantees that worked with these populations generally reported that immigrants needed more intensive outreach services, including follow-up to help them through what is perceived as a complex application process. A few grantees sent volunteers to immigrants' homes to help them with verification documents.

Elderly

Several grantees reported unique challenges in serving elderly clients, who often noted the stigma of welfare receipt and did not believe the benefits of FSP participation outweighed the hassles of applying for benefits. Grantees working with elderly clients reported that the elderly did not want their friends or neighbors to know that they were interested in food stamps. Other projects noted that the elderly found the application process complex and were unwilling and/or unable to wait for long times at the local food stamp office.

Seniors also did not want to provide personal information to outreach workers. These barriers were especially difficult at sites, such as Madison, where applicants had to share personal information over the Internet and at sites in states requiring fingerprinting and photo identification.

Staff in Connecticut and Delaware reported that the elderly often received incorrect information or misunderstood the information, making the application process confusing. One worker noted “the challenge with [the elderly] is, again, to get them to listen and to make them believe there's something different than what they heard. You know, they've heard time and

time again that there's only \$10 they qualify for, which, in some case, is the truth, then you're not going to get them to be receptive."

Grantees pursued various strategies to build trust with the elderly community. North Carolina, which conducted one of the most extensive outreach efforts to seniors, found outreach that included local leaders and/or family members was an effective mechanism in building trust with the elderly (see text box). Madison staff attempted to build trust by using paper prescreening tools to calm fears of senior citizens wary of electronic forms. Connecticut suggested using senior volunteers to reach out to seniors because the elderly seemed to distrust young outreach workers.

North Carolina: Reaching Out to Seniors

North Carolina disseminated information about food stamp benefits to numerous seniors and used a paper prescreening tool to determine seniors' benefit eligibility at partner sites. In some counties, outreach workers conducted follow-up calls to seniors who were prescreened and eligible to determine whether they applied and what happened. North Carolina worked with a broad group of aging organizations as advisers and as outreach participants, and developed a strong relationship with the regional food stamp office, which helped with presentations and the development of the paper prescreening tool.

North Carolina found that privacy and confidentiality issues presented barriers, especially for those living in rural areas. The grantee recognized that many seniors were not comfortable coming up to be prescreened after the presentation, "They did not want their neighbors...to know that they might need and want this." Outreach staff responded by asking seniors who were interested to write down their names and phone numbers and later called them to set up an appointment for a more private prescreening.

North Carolina also found that seniors responded best to known individuals and family members. For example, seniors distrusted outreach workers who were basically strangers. The grantee subsequently brought individuals from community agencies who were known to these seniors to help with the presentations and tried to identify "peer leaders" who could talk to seniors about food stamp benefits. Family members also exerted a tremendous influence on seniors and whether they followed through with their benefit applications. Some family members handled their finances and had the documentation required to file an application. North Carolina developed a special information packet and sent letters to seniors' family members.

North Carolina also found that getting to the food stamp office and waiting at the office for their appointment could be difficult for the seniors. The project was able to "bring the food stamp office to the elderly" in one county. Caseworkers came to a low-income housing unit and assisted seniors with their application forms and documentation.

Low-Wage Workers

Working poor populations presented several challenges to grantees, including overcoming stigma, facilitating accessing the food stamp office, and identifying this population at typical outreach venues. Many working poor individuals did not want charity and especially did not want to go to a welfare office for help. One grantee (Connecticut) noted that working poor

families turn to the FSP as a “last resort,” only in a crisis. Many grantees avoided using the term “food stamps” in their dissemination literature and referred to benefits as “food assistance” instead.

Access to the local food stamp office was a consistently reported barrier among families with children and working poor families. Participants had competing obligations, including work and child care, that made getting to the food stamp office very difficult, especially in rural locations where the drive to the food stamp office was lengthy. Working poor families also found it difficult to get to the food stamp office during their regular business hours. One site (ACRON) arranged for 7:30 a.m. eligibility interviews for their employed referrals at the local food stamp office. Some grantees also reported barriers in finding the working poor, especially those who were not connected to a community or government program.

Miami specifically targeted the working poor by reaching out to employers (see text box). A key element of Miami’s strategy was packaging services, such as health insurance, with food stamp benefits to increase the incentive for potential applicants to apply. Miami was able to enlist some interest from employers, although it was difficult to sustain.

Human Services Coalition of Miami: Employers as Partners

During presentations at local businesses, HSC staff presented the FSP as one component of an “economic benefits package” to help working families. The grantee believed that food stamp benefits alone would not be attractive to most employers, and instead promoted a package of benefits available to low-income families. Interested individuals were provided information about the FSP along with the EITC and Florida’s Kid Care Health Insurance. Employees were given a phone number to call for a prescreening. A web-based tool was used to prescreen potential applicants (often over the phone) and estimate benefits. If individuals appeared eligible, the tool was used to complete and generate applications for submission to the food stamp office.

The grantee reached out to employers by distributing information and conducting presentations at local businesses (for workers and human resource departments); it set up tables at local health fairs, and included information about benefits with the pay stubs of low-wage workers.

On a limited basis, some local businesses used the software to prescreen their employees for food stamp eligibility. After screening employees and/or their family members, human resources staff at a local hotel faxed the completed applications to the food stamp office.

Future Plans

At the end of the projects, 10 grantees said that their outreach activities would continue in some form after their projects ended. In most cases, the grantees claimed their projects heightened the awareness of the FSP in their communities and created interest by various entities, especially their partners, in continuing some form of the original outreach. Additionally, all the grantees that implemented public access web sites (Central NY, Madison,

and Vermont) claimed they would continue to maintain their web sites and; in Madison, the state has indicated interest in reproducing the grantee's online web site throughout the state. Even grantees expecting some continuation of outreach services, however, expected the activities to be more limited.

Five sites (Illinois, Muskegon, Project Bread, SHFB, and Tulsa) stated they had received additional public or private funding to extend their outreach efforts. Illinois will use regular administrative matching funds from USDA to continue a similar effort focused on some Chicago public schools. Muskegon received new funding to work with other partners on their state FSP Outreach Plan, which would allow staff to continue providing similar outreach activities. Project Bread received private funding to continue their web-based system, as well as other activities with partner organizations. SHFB expects to continue its FSP outreach work, in part relying on grant funding from various areas. Finally, Tulsa received a grant from USDA for a three-year partnership with the state Department of Human Services to incorporate BESO into their service delivery package.

Three grantees (MCC, North Carolina, and Salem-Keizer) said they would not continue any of their outreach efforts. MCC and Salem-Keizer cited a lack of funding for discontinuing efforts. North Carolina, which has the project operating under its Department of Health and Human Services Division of Aging, did not have a plan to continue the project, and suggested moving the project under the purview of the local food stamp office.

In summary, the plans for continued outreach activities across the majority of sites suggest the sustainability of most of the funded projects. While it is impossible to quantify the effects of these future plans, the plans provide some additional context for interpreting the outcomes across sites.

VI. Summary and Implications.

The features, experiences, and outcomes associated with the 18 food stamp outreach projects embody an important USDA initiative to improve participation in the FSP Projects occurred in local areas across the country and varied in their approaches and their target populations. Some projects aimed to reach broad low-income populations in their communities, while others targeted specific groups, such as immigrants, seniors, and the working poor.

Together, the projects provide lessons about and suggest strategies that could improve FSP participation. Grass-roots efforts that educate service providers, community leaders, businesses, and low-income populations about food stamp benefits help demystify an application process perceived as complex. Using outreach workers with similar cultural and demographic characteristics to approach potential clients increases the likelihood of engaging clients in the process. New technologies that automate the application process also can facilitate participation. Clients can see whether they are eligible in a private, familiar setting. Eligible clients can be encouraged to move forward with an application.

However, since members of the most vulnerable populations often fail to follow through with the process at the food stamp office, increasing program participation requires more than education and initial help filling out an application. The labor-intensive application assistance that some grantees provided is not cost-effective or feasible nationwide. Simplifying the verification documents required for eligibility and greater use of telephone eligibility interviews could help. Recent changes in food stamp regulations and legislation that allow states to simplify the application process should move the program toward a more user-friendly system for those that need and want food assistance. States should be encouraged to simplify the application process, train “pro-participation” eligibility workers, and provide basic follow-up services for eligible applicants who drop out of the process.

Improvements in state office procedures that require additional caseworkers, of course, likely will entail additional administrative costs for state and federal governments. Investments should pay off, however, by enhancing the image of the program and improving food security among America’s poorest citizens. States also must balance new procedures that simplify the application and approval process against a goal of minimizing program errors.

Materials for Operating a FSP Outreach Project

Readers interested in developing their own FSP outreach projects might be interested in the materials provided by grantees under this project. Three projects (Central NY, Madison, and Vermont) have public access web sites that might be of interest for the development of future web sites (see text box). Additionally, two projects, Central NY and Illinois, provided an extensive list of supporting materials relevant to operating a FSP outreach project. Central NY developed a comprehensive document that outlines the steps for starting and maintaining a FSP outreach project, including suggestions for planning a project, setting up partnerships, training,

expenses, and ongoing maintenance activities. Illinois sent in a list of flyers, photos, and other supporting materials that are relevant to the day-to-day operations of conducting FSP outreach. Readers interested in obtaining additional materials from these sites, as well as additional information from the local evaluation reports, should contact FNS or the grantees.²¹

Grantee Public Access Web Sites with Prescreeners

Central New York: www.foodstampshelp.org

Madison: www.madisoncountyfoodstamps.org

Vermont: www.vermontfoodhelp.com

²¹ A reference list of grantee project reports is included in appendix *Exhibit C.6*.

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APPENDIX A
SUMMARY LIST OF ACRONYMS

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APPENDIX A: SUMMARY LIST OF ACRONYMS

Summary List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AAA	Area Agency on Aging
ABAWD	Able bodied adult without dependents
ABCD	Action for Boston Community Development
ACORN	ACORN/ Jersey City, NJ
Atlantic City	City of Atlantic City/ Atlantic City, NJ
BESO	Benefits Eligibility System for Oklahomans
CAO	Community Assistance Offices
CAP	Community Action Programs
Central NY	Food Bank of Central New York/ Cayuga, Cortland, and Oswego Counties in NY
CHI	Community Health Initiative
CIS	Citizenship and Immigration Services
COMPASS	Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Application for Social Services
Connecticut	Connecticut Association for Human Services/ Bridgeport, CT
CPS	Chicago Public Schools
CQCs	Community Quality Councils
CSOCs	Community School Outreach Coordinators
DCF	Department of Children and Families
Delaware	Food Bank of Delaware/ Delaware
DSS	Department of Social Services
DTA	Department of Transitional Assistance
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer
EITC	Earned Income Tax Credit
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FSP	Food Stamp Program
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GPCAH	Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger/ Philadelphia, PA
HRA	Human Resources Agency
IDA	Individual Development Account
IDHS	Illinois Department of Human Services
Illinois	Illinois Hunger Coalition/ Chicago, IL
Indiana	Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana/ Nine counties in Northeast IN
IT	Information Technology
KCC	KidCare Coordinators
LIGHTS	Learning by Inviting Grown ups and Hope To School

Summary List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
Madison	Community Action Program (CAP) for Madison County, Inc/Madison County, NY
MCC	Maternity Care Coalition/ Philadelphia, PA
Miami	Human Service Coalition of Dade County/ Miami Dade County, FL
MIS	Management Information System
Muskegon	Muskegon Community Health Project/ Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties in MI
North Carolina	NC Division of Aging/ South Central NC
PHEND	Philadelphia Higher Education Neighborhood for Network Development
Project Bread	Project Bread/ Athol, Orleans, Boston and Worcester, MA
Salem-Keizer	Salem-Keizer School District/ Salem, OR
SHFB	Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties/ Santa Cruz, CA
SNACK	Senior Nutrition and Community Kitchen
SSNs	Social Security Numbers
TAA	Trade Adjustment Act
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Tulsa	Community Action Project of Tulsa County/ Tulsa, OK
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
Vermont	Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger/ Vermont
WIC	Women, Infants and Children Program

APPENDIX B
SITE PROFILES FOR ALL 18 PROJECTS

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APPENDIX B: SITE PROFILES FOR ALL 18 PROJECTS

The ACORN Institute (ACORN)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Jersey City, New Jersey

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: December 2002- September 2004

Grant Amount: \$262,000

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of the project was to substantially increase food stamp enrollment in Hudson County's low-income and immigrant communities using grassroots outreach techniques. Grantee activities included 1) dissemination of FSP information in various community sites located in high-poverty areas and 2) prescreening and application assistance at local schools, supermarkets, and community events, in homes, and by telephone.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: The ACORN Institute, the grant recipient, is a national nonprofit organization created to "help grassroots community organizations increase their capacity to enact social change." New Jersey ACORN, the organization conducting the outreach initiative, is a separate 20-year-old community-based organization that aims to unite and inform members of the low-income population of what they can do to help themselves and what others can do for them.

Staffing: Ten to twelve staff (mostly part-time) worked on this project. A project director oversaw all aspects of the project, including supervision of the field staff. A project coordinator was responsible for conducting outreach activities, training and supervising volunteers, networking with the local food stamp office, and maintaining the project database. There was significant turnover in this position over the course of the project – four different individuals acted as project coordinator during the two-year period. Two part-time ACORN outreach workers conducted targeted door-to-door food stamp outreach activities as part of their other daily outreach efforts in the low-income community in Hudson County. In addition, six to eight outreach workers conducted food stamp outreach activities one day a week.

Volunteers: Approximately 40 volunteers, recruited from the community, disseminated FSP information at three to four local supermarkets.

Key Partners: Local supermarkets in the Hudson County municipalities of Union City and Jersey City and elementary schools in Jersey City, Union City, Bayonne and Kearny.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The local food stamp office was involved throughout the project. They consulted on project design and implementation and trained two ACORN project staff who in turn were the primary trainers of outreach project staff and volunteers. FSP staff worked with ACORN staff when problems with application forms arose (such as illegible or clearly inaccurate information). FSP office staff sent copies of appointment letters to ACORN for clients referred by the project. The project contacted FSP office staff a few times per quarter to discuss problems and “make sure things were going smoothly.” This was ACORN’s first collaboration with the FPS office and they commented that the FSP office staff was cooperative throughout the course of the project.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: ACORN outreach staff and volunteers disseminated FSP information (e.g., flyers) in supermarkets, 24 local elementary schools, housing projects, food pantries, door-to-door in high poverty areas (where tenant organizing activities were underway) and at community meetings in Hudson County, New Jersey. Group outreach sessions were held one day per week at various sites, including the local food stamp office. Over time, outreach staff determined the best locations for identifying potentially- eligible participants and narrowed their focus to five or six sites that worked well.

Staff originally thought that residents of low-income housing projects would already be connected to the social services system and already be enrolled in the FSP but they found that many were not. Outreach in these neighborhoods did prove successful, because most qualified for FSP. Staff also noted that immigrant neighborhoods were good sources of eligible participants. Initially, staff felt that dissemination of information and outreach activities in the schools had the greatest impact in terms of the number of inquiry calls received. However, the final evaluation report indicates that opinions about the success of specific outreach strategies changed over time and by the end of the project, staff felt that the direct outreach in the grocery stores was the most successful.

Prescreening: ACORN staff also provided prescreening services at local schools, supermarkets, and community events, by telephone and in person, and by going door-to-door. A one-page, paper prescreening form (developed in consultation with the local food stamp office) was completed and was used to determine potential eligibility; if it appeared that the individual might be eligible for benefits, he or she was told that they would receive a letter with an appointment date and time and a list of required documents from the local food stamp office.

Application Assistance: Initially, prescreened applicants were given a tear-off sheet from the prequalification/prescreening form with the address of the local food stamp office, but ACORN discontinued that practice after the first several months at the request of the

local food stamp office because prescreened applicants were going to the office prior to the appointment. ACORN staff faxed a copy of the prescreening form to the food stamp office (keeping one copy at ACORN) and one dedicated FSP staff member (arrangements were made to have one FSP staff person handle these pre-screened referrals) checked to see if these individuals were in their system. If they were currently receiving FS, ACORN was notified; if they were in the system but currently inactive, they were sent back to their original caseworker. If the applicant was new, the FSP office sent an appointment letter to the potential client for an eligibility interview. A copy of the appointment letter was sent to ACORN staff so they could follow-up with the client to remind them of the interview date and time. ACORN outreach workers did not provide application assistance in the classic sense (i.e., they did not help individuals fill out FSP applications). The initial grant application called for electronic submission of applications but no applications were filed electronically and no applications were filed anywhere other than at the FSP office. See below.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. The ACORN evaluation report noted that the number of awards were higher because they could not track those individuals who previously received food stamps. The report estimated that the number of awards attributed to the website could be underestimated by 50 percent because of this issue. Hence, we note a range of estimates below for this category.

Exhibit B.1: Summary of Data Elements from The ACORN Institute

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	1,329	3,353	397	214	1,060	531	415
Follow-up contacts	18	43	2	5	11	6	1
Pre-screened	2,354	3,717	416	250	1,147	579	430
Application assistance	2,049	3,491	416	250	1,147	579	430
Applications submitted	341	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications approved	230/460	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications denied	39	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete inform	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

The initial goal of using a voter turnout model to reach FSP participants underestimated the intensity of providing outreach activities. The total number of first-time

enrollees over the life of the project was estimated at 460 new awardees (230 awards reported to the system). The grantee underestimated the time intensive nature of filing applications and the difficulty in locating potential eligibles. It became clear that the work of engaging people in applying for food stamps was very different from voter registration. Nonetheless, they still reported pre-screening 2,354 cases. A major issue was that ACORN could not file electronic applications because the online technology was not available during the grant period. The lack of technology created delays in processing applications and likely discouraged some potential applicants from applying. These problems were further compounded by burdensome paperwork requirements and some potential applicants' fear of providing a SSN.

The grantee found that face-to-face contact definitely was the most effective mechanism employed and that the flyers sent to school were generally less effective. These mechanisms allowed their clients to voice concerns and receive feedback that would assuage any negative perceptions. The grantee was also effective in working with the FSP office to eliminate several barriers to participation. Their work with the FSP office resulted in a number of important efficiencies that made pre-screening easier (e.g., making social security numbers optional on the pre-screening instrument, having a dedicated FSP office member to process applications from pre-screening, and providing early appointment (7:30 am) referral options.

Future Plans

ACORN staff noted that they would use their newly gained understanding of the FSP process to continue outreach and prescreening efforts as part of their regular outreach work with the low-income population. "We work with low-income people who need this benefit. We have the relationship with the local Food Stamp Office, so we'll absolutely keep enrolling people. I mean, we probably won't do the kind of focused Friday outreach days where the whole staff is dedicated to it. But, as staff work door to door in low-income neighborhoods, we'll certainly keep asking people if they qualify and referring people and following up with glitches for our members."

City of Atlantic City, Atlantic City Senior Citizens (Atlantic City)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Atlantic City, New Jersey

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: September 2003- September 2004

Grant Amount: \$179,911

Project Objectives and Activities

This project's primary goal was to target elderly and Spanish-speaking minorities in an effort to increase their utilization of the FSP in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Their

primary activity was the provision of application assistance to senior citizens and members of the Hispanic community using an electronic application tool.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: This grant was administered by the Atlantic City Senior Citizens program, an agency of the Atlantic City government. Housed in the city's Department of Health and Human Services, this program provides a variety of services to the elderly (e.g., transportation, nutrition, home energy, pharmaceutical assistance).

Staffing: Four staff worked on this grant. The project director (part-time) provided overall fiscal management and established relationships with partners. The project coordinator (full-time) oversaw day-to-day operations of the grant and also conducted outreach activities. A staff member from the Atlantic City Housing Authority Agency (a partner on this grant) and a bilingual staffer from Atlantic City also conducted outreach.

Volunteers: There were no volunteers involved with this project.

Key Partners: Key partner agencies were the Atlantic City Housing Authority and the Spanish Community Center. Senior Satellite Centers, where the elderly could learn about the FSP and receive assistance in completing applications, were established at four senior citizen housing complexes operated by the Atlantic City Housing Authority and two neighborhood centers operated by Atlantic Human Resources, Inc. Similar services were available at the Spanish Community Center and at City Hall. Atlantic County Department of Family and Community Development, the agency that administers the FSP, was also a key partner.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: Food stamp office staff worked with the project throughout the grant. The project coordinator delivered applications to the food stamp office weekly, and the food stamp office generated a quarterly report showing outcomes for clients referred through the project. Food stamp office staff was helpful in clarifying information on the application form and providing the project coordinator with "tips" for the application process (e.g., making sure that women's maiden names were included on the application). They were very cooperative and asked the grantee to continue outreach after the grant ended.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Prior to accepting applications, grantee staff began placing FSP advertisements in local newspapers and posting flyers in senior citizen buildings and community centers. Staff felt that the newspaper ads "definitely increased awareness" and were effective with the elderly population (based on feedback from FSP inquiry calls taken by staff).

Prescreening: No formal prescreening activities were provided, although staff did review monthly income guidelines with potential applicants.

Application Assistance: This grant focused on providing application assistance to senior citizens and the Hispanic community. The project coordinator and other outreach workers offered “one-stop shopping” at the Spanish Community Center and the six Senior Satellite Centers established at Housing Authority sites. Staff set up a table at each site where people could approach them for information about food stamps. Staff visited the senior centers weekly and the Spanish Community Center monthly. They helped residents complete applications on laptops loaded with a CD containing the Omni Form application software (used by the local food stamp office), signature pads, and a mini-scanner. They informed clients of the income guidelines and if the client was interested, they helped him or her fill out an application immediately. CDs containing completed applications and scanned documentation were physically brought to the food stamp office weekly. Staff also set up appointments with potential applicants and provided assistance in their homes.

In addition, when staff from the local food stamp office requested additional information from the project coordinator on the applicants, Atlantic City staff delivered the missing information. Applicants did not have to go to the food stamp office as part of the application process—the local food stamp office waived the in-person eligibility interview (for both seniors and Spanish-speakers). Although face-to-face contact with the food stamp office was waived, all clients still needed to visit the office to pick up their identification and Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. They were also required to watch a video on using the EBT cards; however, Atlantic City staff had a copy of the video on their laptops so applicants could view it at home, instead of sitting at the food stamp office. The grantee also provided transportation assistance to the food stamp office, which was funded through the city’s Transportation Program.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. Atlantic City submitted data to the UI website throughout the project period; however, the grantee data do not agree with the numbers presented in their local evaluation report. We were unable to reconcile the numbers, and the numbers presented below are those submitted to the national evaluator’s website.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Project implementation was delayed considerably due to a number of program implementation challenges. The project coordinator did not join the team until January 2004 (the grant started in September 2003). Approval to purchase laptops for use in the field was delayed; consequently, the computers were not acquired until July 2004 and Internet access for Atlantic City staff was not in place until August 2004. Due, in part, to these delays, Atlantic City fell short of their project goals by about 90 percent. They had intended to contact 3750 seniors and 2610 Hispanics, pre-screen and obtain applications for 30 percent of the contacts, and receive benefit approval for 90 percent of these applications (about 1,700 applications). They contacted and prescreened about 174 households and 129 of those received benefits.

Exhibit B.2: Summary of Data Elements from Atlantic City

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Follow-up contacts	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Pre-screened	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Application assistance	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications submitted	174	252	7	138	22	23	14
Applications approved	129	135	2	93	9	5	8
Applications denied	45	66	1	27	10	14	5
Reasons for Denial							
Income too high	24	34	1	17	4	8	D
Assets too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	6	6	0	0	0	0	3
Incomplete inform	8	2	0	5	2	1	0
Other reason	7	3	0	3	3	3	2

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

* The data submitted to the UI website differ from those reported by the grantee in their local evaluation report. Although we were not able to reconcile the differences, the total number of applications assisted was likely between 166 and 192.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Grantee staff felt that the newspapers ads “definitely increased awareness” and were particularly effective with the elderly population, based on feedback from FSP inquiry calls taken by staff. Senior citizens were very receptive to the outreach effort – according to the project coordinator they were happy they did not have to deal with the local food stamp office. Their approach, using electronic applications with imaging and signature technology, allowed workers to gather everything needed to submit a complete application (without having to take any of the applicants’ original documents from them) and allowed outreach workers to work with applicants one-on-one in their surroundings where they were more comfortable.

The grantee did, however, have less participation in the Hispanic community than anticipated. The project coordinator attributed this to two things: 1) “the word didn’t seem to get out” (not spreading by word of mouth) to this community; and 2) this population is very private and does not like to share private personal information, in part because many are living here illegally and fear that they will be reported to Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) (formerly Immigration and Naturalization Services). Despite having a bilingual outreach worker (through the Hispanic community center), they were not able to get the word out to the Spanish-speaking community.

Future Plans

Local food stamp office staff asked the Atlantic City to continue their outreach efforts after the grant period. Even though they have not received additional funding, Atlantic City will incorporate project activities as an additional function of their office.

Food Bank Of Central New York (Central NY)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: East Syracuse, New York. This grant provides services to Cayuga, Cortland and Oswego counties.

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: June 2003-September 2004

Grant Amount: \$217,827

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goals of the project were to: 1) to develop partnerships with at least three community-based programs in each of the three counties in the project target area; 2) to provide software technology and training for partner staff/volunteers; 3) to prescreen potentially eligible individuals for food stamp benefits; 4) to conduct outreach/publicity activities in each county; and; 5) to make this a transferable project. Activities included information dissemination, a multi-media campaign using a variety of methods, and prescreening and application assistance using either a paper prescreening tool, an electronic prescreening tool, or the grantee's public access website developed for this project.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Central New York, an affiliate of Second Harvest, is a nonprofit agency that provides services aimed at eliminating hunger in an 11 county areas in northern upstate New York. The outreach grant provided services to only three of these counties (Cayuga, Cortland and Oswego). The organization accepts food donations and USDA commodities and purchases food for distribution to over 600 partners, including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, summer camps, youth programs, etc. They also assist member programs by providing training and assistance to volunteers and professionals working with those in need (e.g., advocacy training, nutrition education, volunteer recruitment, community organizing and information and referral). Central New York also operates a nutrition outreach and education program in two neighboring counties (Onondaga and Oneida – counties not covered by this grant) that promotes participation in the FSP. Staff also conducted outreach and facilitated enrollment in the Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus programs.

Staffing: Two full-time staff worked on this project. The project director was responsible for day-to-day management of the project and also directed and conducted

outreach services. She recruited community partner agencies and trained and supervised staff and volunteers from partner agencies, developed county-specific training manuals (Resource Guides), coordinated activities and data collection with the three local county food stamp offices and attended monthly state FSP workgroup meetings. A new outreach worker was hired in October 2003 to assist with the training of volunteers and to conduct prescreening and application assistance activities.

Volunteers: Approximately 60 volunteers from local partner agencies also conducted prescreening and application assistance.

Key Partners: Key partners included about 14 partner agencies, including the Office of Aging, Catholic Charities, the Cornell Co-Op Extension Program and other local community partner agencies (e.g., food pantries and soup kitchens). Partner agencies provided staff and volunteers who participated in 3-hour training sessions to learn how to provide prescreening and application assistance. The level of participation varied among partners; some who were not comfortable with the screening process limited their participation to dissemination of information about the FSP. Central New York continued its efforts to recruit new partner agencies over the life of the project, including one-stop employment centers near the end of the project. They also began outreach and prescreening at senior housing sites.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: This project fostered good relationships with the local food stamp offices and got their "buy in" early in the project. Central New York staff facilitated interactions between volunteers and FSP office staff to form cooperative relationships that worked well. FSP staff attended all training sessions in each county. The grantee noted that food stamp office staff "embraced the project as a way to increase food stamp participation in their county." They also noted that local staff became more involved when they saw that project clients' application forms were complete and accurate. However, project staff also noted that food stamp agencies suffered staffing cuts during the course of their project and were short-handed, particularly after the closing of one of two offices in the county. While the local food stamp offices tried to be supportive, they were limited in their ability to help the grantee with the process.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Central New York's information dissemination and multimedia campaign activities included distribution of USDA brochures and other flyers with FSP messages at community partner sites and through other means (e.g., church bulletins, agency newsletter, Val Pak mailings), FSP information printed on the back of grocery store receipts in two of the counties (Census data was used to target stores with pharmacies in high need areas in an effort to reach the elderly and disabled), two TV informational interviews, two radio announcements, weekly advertisements over a period of six months in a newspaper distributed throughout the three-county area and press releases to all other local media outlets. Staff felt that these efforts helped dispel many myths about food stamps, particularly in terms of educating the public about the

elimination of paper coupons. Staff also noted that their website providing information on the FSP and how to apply for benefits averaged over 77,000 hits a month. The website usage evolved from a three-county to a statewide focus.

Prescreening: Central New York staff and partner agency staff (and volunteers) provided prescreening services to individuals over the phone or in person using one of three methods: (1) a paper prescreening form; (2) non web-based software on a CD (completed using a laptop); and (3) the public access website, which offers prescreening, budget calculation and a downloadable application. Staff decided to provide prescreening and application assistance tools in these three formats to fit the varying capabilities/skills of all partner agencies: those who had no computer access could use the paper form; those who had computers but no internet access could use the CD prescreener; and those with internet access could use the website. Central New York staff recruited partner sites and then conducted extensive training sessions on prescreening procedures.

Application Assistance: Once a client was prescreened and appeared to be eligible, staff or volunteers could assist with completion of the application and collection of the required documentation. Procedures for delivering the application forms to the local FSP offices varied by county; in one county, application forms could be faxed or mailed to the office directly but the other two counties required that application forms be hand-delivered by partner agency staff/volunteers or the applicants. Requirements for in-person visits to the local FSP offices also varied by county. New York state regulations in effect during this project required food stamp applications to be filed at the food stamp office. Unless exempt, applicants usually were required to attend face-to-face interviews and complete finger imaging. However, some DSS offices allowed community partners to conduct the initial face-to-face interviews to complete the applications at their site and guide their clients in gathering verification documents. They faxed the application forms to the local food stamp offices. Applications completed by partners were tracked via a spreadsheet that was sent to the local food stamp office with release of information requests. The local food stamp office informed Central New York if the applications were approved, open, closed, denied, or pending. Central New York requested the reasons for pending applications (e.g., missing documents) and tried to help clients complete their applications.

Central New York's public access website (www.foodstampshelp.org) also provided application assistance. Individuals could access the website on their own or receive help from a volunteer at a partner agency. The website provided a comprehensive set of instructions for applying for food stamps, including a drop-down box with contact information for all county offices in the state and a listing of required verification documents. An 800 number was also included so that potential applicants could contact Central New York directly for assistance. Initially the website only provided a downloadable application form; applicants printed it out, filled out the paper form, and delivered it to the food stamp office. In response to comments received by visitors to the website, upgrades were implemented that supported on-line application completion. Despite requests from users, the local food stamp offices were not able to accept applications electronically; application forms had to be printed and taken to the FSP office. (At the end of the grant period, some county offices indicated interest in exploring the

possibility of the on-line application submission.) Their website counted the number of application forms that were downloaded, but these applications were never tracked as project outcomes at the local food stamp offices.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below.¹ All of the data represent grantee and administrative data for Central NY’s community partnerships’ outreach efforts. Central NY was not able to track the applications submitted via their website, although they did collect the following grantee data for their website: 947,058 website “hits” between December 2003 and September 2004; 6,034 prescreenings conducted during that same time period. The demographic breakdown of those prescreens are as follows:

- 11,500 persons in food stamp households
- 1,768 households with non-citizens
- 519 households with elderly/disabled
- 2,456 households with children
- 2,799 households with earnings
- 620 households with ABAWDs

Exhibit B.3: Summary of Data Elements from the Food Bank of Central New York’s Community Partnerships

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	907	1,848	247	110	386	414	103
Follow-up contacts	6	6	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	905	1,837	247	109	383	409	97
Application assistance	408	1,089	37	92	232	256	81
Applications submitted	403	1,068	37	87	229	253	98
Applications approved	315	837	35	67	183	189	50
Applications denied	88	231	2	19	47	67	24
Reasons for Denial							
Income too high	30	78	1	4	20	25	6
Assets too high	15	40	1	7	6	10	5
Citizenship status	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Does not live in juris	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete interview	26	68	0	4	12	24	8
Incomplete information	16	44	0	4	8	7	4
Other reason	1	1	0	0	0	1	1

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A – The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

¹ There are a few data inconsistencies to note. The reasons for denial for households with children add to one less than the total number denied in that category.

Central NY reported in their evaluation report that 599 prescreened applicants downloaded applications from their website, but they were unable to determine whether these applications were filed at the food stamp office and whether they resulted in benefits being approved.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Central New York's website was considered by staff to be its greatest success. The project's website was accessed by over one million people in one year (October 2003 through September 2004). While the exact nature of the web hits (by whom and from where) could not be ascertained, the project concluded that it did spread knowledge about the FSP. Their data do show, however, that 6,034 began to fill out the eligibility form on line, 2,134 of these were deemed eligible, and 599 application forms were downloaded. Local partners also prescreened 905 households, assisted 408 of these with the application, and the grantee was able to track that 315 applications were eventually approved. The information they collected through the on-line surveys indicated that the website was used across the state.

The project fostered many important partnerships across a diverse group that should continue to benefit the community over the long run. In addition, the project built trust between the FSP offices and local community groups interested in food stamp outreach. In addition, many more individuals who work in the local partner organizations now understand the FSP.

Staff noted a few challenges related to their decision to work with volunteers to conduct outreach. They found that working with volunteers was often problematic because of their concerns about asking for personal information, their fears about "making the wrong determinations," and, in some cases, their lack of comfort with computer technology. Frequent turnover of volunteers also led to more training requirements and requirements for greater contact with partners. Getting paperwork and data from the FSP office and partners was also a challenge at times.

Future Plans

Central New York staff feel that their outreach activities are "a worthwhile venture, and we're going to continue to do it." They plan to keep the website operating and to have regular meetings with the community partner agencies to keep them abreast of any changes to FSP. To date, they have received no new funding for outreach activities. Two of the county DSS offices are interested in pursuing efforts to enable applicants to apply on-line through the website.

Connecticut Association for Human Services (Connecticut)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Bridgeport, Connecticut

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: April 2003 – September 2004

Grant Amount: \$195,000

Project Objectives and Activities

The goals of the project were: 1) to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the FSP in Bridgeport, Connecticut by facilitating new food stamp applications through community-based partnerships and linkages; 2) increase awareness of the nutritional benefits of the FSP and the eligibility requirements and application process through targeted outreach; to identify and quantify reasons for non-participation among potential eligibles and identify strategies to overcome barriers; and 3) to develop, test, document, and compare the feasibility, efficiency and effectiveness of two community-based FSP outreach interventions designed to:

- Increase FSP awareness among non-eligible participants
- Increase the number of applications filled out correctly before submission to the food stamp office, thereby increasing enrollment and decreasing application error rates.
- Increase FSP enrollment specifically among the subpopulations of elderly, low-income families, current and former TANF recipients, and immigrants and non-English speaking minorities, through targeted efforts
- Their activities included: 1) presentations about the FSP at a variety of locations, including schools, senior centers, daycare centers, food pantries, health fairs, and health centers; and 2) prescreening and application assistance.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Founded in 1910, the Connecticut Association for Human Services is a not-for-profit organization that promotes public policy solutions and brings resources to bear to strengthen needy children, families, and communities through education, outreach, advocacy, research, and evaluation. A key strength of Connecticut is their ability to work with many other organizations. They bring together diverse interests - concerned citizens, policy makers, human services providers, corporate leaders, labor leaders, academics, state and municipal agencies, and religious organizations - to help ensure that all state residents have the opportunity to lead healthy, productive lives.

Staffing: Four staff worked on this grant. The project coordinator was responsible for the day-to-day project management of the grant and for supervising the outreach workers. Two outreach workers disseminated information, prescreen clients for eligibility, and assisted with applications. An in-house evaluator was also involved in the grant. She

conducted the evaluation, but was also responsible for the intervention design and in resolving issues as they arose. The site also had an advisory council that met quarterly to provide guidance to outreach workers.

Volunteers: None used.

Key Partners: Key partners included the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, which referred many clients to Connecticut. They also worked closely with the SCHIP outreach worker at the organization. Many partners also hosted outreach events for Connecticut to conduct their presentations, prescreenings, and application assistance. The sites included area hospitals, schools, workforce-training programs, local businesses that employ low-income workers, supermarkets, day care centers, and senior centers.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The grantee initially had buy-in from the local food stamp office for this project. However, shortly after this grant was awarded, the FSP office experienced significant cutbacks and layoffs, especially in the Bridgeport office. Although the grantee continued to receive support from food stamp administrators, eligibility workers were often unaware of the outreach effort or the need for them to track applications submitted by the grantee. Grantee staff spent considerable time at the local food stamp office informing staff about the process for tracking application forms. Also, the project coordinator called the local food stamp office monthly to learn about the status of submitted application forms.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Outreach workers conducted presentations at a variety of locations in the City of Bridgeport— schools, senior centers, daycare centers, community health centers, health fairs, soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless drop-in centers. Connecticut also created flyers that were posted at community health centers, library information boards, and other low-income focused community organizations, letting clients know that one-on-one prescreening assistance was available. Outreach staff worked predominately at partner agencies, but as the workers began networking, they received referrals from members of the advisory council, state Medicaid providers, community health organizations, and the local Department of Social Services (DSS) office.

Prescreening: All clients attending presentations received information through the presentation and were prescreened if they so chose. Prescreening was available on-site after the presentations, or potential applicants could schedule a private appointment for a later date or time.

Application Assistance: Due to the study design, only half of the prescreened clients were offered direct assistance with applications, while the other half were simply given the application forms and told to fill them out and submit them on their own. (Direct assistance was offered at half of the sites where presentations were made.) Within the sites where application assistance was offered, it was left up to the individual applicants to decide whether or not they wanted assistance. For those applicants who received application assistance, Connecticut staff accompanied them to their face-to-face eligibility

interview at DSS. Outreach workers and clients kept in touch throughout the application process until eligibility was determined.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. Connecticut had difficulty tracking their applications through the DSS office. They found that the local food stamp office was not using the tracking system they had created, and in many cases, the application forms from project clients’ could not be tracked to the outreach activities. Because they were able to track so few applications, the outcomes reported to the UI website are underestimates and not reported here.

Exhibit B.4: Summary of Data Elements from the Connecticut Association for Human Services

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	1262	3873	161	309	784	901	107
Follow-up contacts	163	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	401	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Application assistance	168	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications submitted	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications approved	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications denied	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Reasons for Denial							
Income too high	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Assets too high	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Citizenship status	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Does not live in juris	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete interview	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete inform	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other reason	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

* The site did submit data to the UI website; however, they were not able to report on specific outcomes because of the high volume of application forms that could not be traced to the project. The local evaluation report claimed that the local FSP office was only able to identify 42 application forms (of which 34 were approved) of the 168 pre-screened eligible cases that this grantee referred to the FSP office.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

The grantee encountered significant problems tracking applications through the local food stamp offices. Because the welfare offices oversaw multiple programs and were stressed in a cost-cutting environment (with office closures, staff departures, high caseloads), Connecticut was never able to establish a consistent and reliable way to track their clients’ application forms. The site contacted over 1,200 clients and pre-screened 401; however, they were only able to identify 42 applications from their clients at the food

stamp offices. Because they were unable to track the actual number of client applications submitted to the food stamp office, the grantee was unable to empirically test the effect of their two outreach strategies.

The grantee found an intensive “case management” approach for helping potentially eligible households to be an effective way of increasing participation especially among difficult to reach populations. They felt they were most successful with applications they handled “from start to finish.”

The grantee’s evaluation report concluded that a project focused on FSP outreach can build new and important relationships with other local service providers, food stamp office staff, and the community. They also noted these relationships could have further benefits down the road.

Future Plans

Connecticut will continue to provide food stamp outreach and application assistance in conjunction with other activities. However, they will not have the funding to support the same level of hands-on application assistance. While they will not turn people away if they ask for assistance, they do not plan to publicize their services to the same extent as they did under this grant.

Food Bank of Delaware (Delaware)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Newark, Delaware

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: October 2002- September 2004

Grant Amount: \$349,352

Project Objectives and Activities

The goals of this project were to: 1) make full and effective use of partnering organizations to increase food stamp participation; 2) encourage and lead to the development of replicable models that can be effectively and efficiently used nationwide; 3) improve client knowledge and overall perception of the food stamp program through Internet technology; 4) identify current obstacles to FSP participation in Delaware and propose effective solutions; and 5) develop, plan, and design evaluation tools that test project process and report outcomes. The project targeted low-income individuals and families statewide. Their activities included information dissemination through flyers, posters on buses, PSAs in a local movie theater, and prescreening and limited application assistance.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: The Food Bank of Delaware is a non-profit agency distributing food to people through nearly 240 non-profit member agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, churches, children’s feeding programs, and USDA food distribution programs. The grantee is the only food bank in Delaware and also serves parts of Maryland and Pennsylvania. It has been operating for more than 20 years.

Staffing: Four staff worked on this grant. The project coordinator was responsible for monitoring and marketing the FSP, recruiting agencies to become partners, working directly with the Department of Social Services (DSS), developing and maintaining the data collection system with the evaluator, and strengthening relationships with the state legislature. The outreach coordinator was responsible for training the partnering agencies and performing on-site prescreening. Two additional staff also worked on the project.

Volunteers: Many partner agencies relied on volunteers to perform outreach activities.

Key Partners: Key partners included 90 trained member agencies—20 - 25 of whom were actively participating in outreach (i.e., provided continuous prescreening data to Delaware). All participating agencies (e.g., Goodwill Industries and local food pantries) either conducted food stamp outreach themselves or allowed outreach to be conducted at their locations. In addition, pre-screening was conducted at a variety of non-member agency sites including WIC clinics, Department of Labor offices, State Service Centers, and community events. Staff from the University of Delaware conducted the evaluation and participated in prescreening activities (some students conducted prescreening).

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The grantee forged a new partnership with the local food stamp office that opened communications between the two groups. The local food stamp office attended regularly scheduled project meetings and provided grantee staff with pre- and post-data. The project also had access to the local food stamp office’s data system that allowed them to track their applicants’ progress through various stages of the application process.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Delaware disseminated flyers through mobile pantries, posters and flyers at partner agencies, and leaflets in grocery stores. Literature was in both Spanish and English. They also had a media “blitz” through the local transportation authority (DART) with posters on the sides and insides of buses to inform people about the FSP. In addition, they had a PSA for the FSP through local movie theaters.

Prescreening: Outreach workers prescreened clients at partner agencies. The agencies helped with prescreening (using an automated Excel form), and they told clients exactly what they needed to take to the food stamp offices for the application process. The majority of prescreening was done on paper forms – the grantee created a paper form for

those sites that were not technologically savvy and for out-stationed workers who did not have laptops. Applicants had to go to the local food stamp office to initiate their applications. The prescreening form did not count towards the application process.

Application Assistance: Although grantee staff did not provide application assistance in the classic sense (i.e., they did not help individuals fill out FSP applications), they did have access to the local food stamp office’s data system, which allowed them to see applicants’ progress through the various stages of the application process. As follow-up, individuals who were prescreened, but did not apply for assistance or did not complete the application process received a phone call from project staff (both the grantee and University of Delaware; other partner agencies did not make follow-up calls) to encourage them to go to the food stamp office and apply for assistance (they used the contact number on the prescreening form).

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below.

Exhibit B.5: Summary of Data Elements from the Food Bank of Delaware

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	1901	4651	22	344	562	385	548
Follow-up contacts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-screened	1901	3609	19	212	351	233	308
Application assistance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications submitted	935	1983	12	114	210	128	244
Applications approved	780	1586	10	98	175	100	214
Applications denied	154	397	2	16	35	29	34
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	40	145	0	7	13	10	4
Assets too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Does not live in juris	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete interview	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete inform	63	180	1	7	18	14	13
Other reason	43	72	1	2	5	5	17

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

The project was successful in developing an accurate pre-screening tool that was available in electronic and paper formats. Paper format was also required because not every location could accommodate an electronic pre-screening tool. More than half of the pre-

screenings were conducted using the paper version. The evaluation report found, however, that the electronic version was slightly more accurate, which resulted in a higher number of approvals.

Delaware pre-screened 1,901 households. Of that number 780 were approved for benefits, 154 were denied, 1 was pending, 126 were already receiving food stamp benefits, and 840 did not apply for benefits. They conducted follow-up on cases that had not applied for benefits, which eventually resulted in 220 contacts, 59 new applications and 47 new approvals.

The grantee's evaluation report noted that they were able to continuously build ongoing partnerships within their statewide network and developed 90 collaborative partners for this project. The grantee found that obtaining "buy-in" from partner agencies was essential in developing active partnerships. They also successfully launched a statewide multi-media campaign. The grantee noted that they forged a new partnership with the local food stamp office, which served to open communication between the two agencies.

Future Plans

Staff noted they no longer have the resources to support this effort, but are encouraging their partner agencies to continue prescreening and assisting clients with the food stamp application process.

Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (GPCAH)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Philadelphia, PA

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: October 2002-June 2004

Grant Amount: \$310,822

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of this project was to determine whether university students and community/faith-based volunteers engaged in a food stamp outreach campaign, based on pre-screening for food stamp eligibility and estimating benefit levels, could effectively increase food stamp enrollment among eligible populations, especially low-income (unemployed and working) families with children. Activities included FSP information dissemination in various community sites and prescreening and application assistance, with a heavy reliance on volunteers for service delivery.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: GPCAH is a non-profit agency and is an affiliate of the Share Food Program. GPCAH brings together policy makers, community-based emergency food providers, public health and social service professionals, faith-based volunteers, students, and other concerned individuals to address hunger and food insecurity in Southeastern Pennsylvania. GPCAH provides education and advocacy programs designed to empower emergency food providers, to inform and mobilize concerned citizens, and to help shape public policy. They also distribute USDA commodities food from trucks and at food shelters. In addition to food stamp outreach work, GPCAH participates in a Food Stamp Task Force and a Food Security Research Working Group. They also operate a food stamp information hotline.

Staffing: Four GPCAH staff participated in this project in some capacity. The outreach coordinator's responsibilities included the day-to-day management of the grant activities, preparation of the GPCAH volunteer newsletter and oversight of the volunteer coordinator, who worked full time on this outreach project. (Initially, the project had both a student volunteer coordinator and a community/faith-based volunteer coordinator. Both of those people left their positions over the course of the project and only one volunteer coordinator replaced them (in 4/2004)). The outreach coordinator also participated in volunteer training and prescreenings. Additionally, the grant paid a portion of the salary of the prescener for the food stamp information hotline. A small percentage of the GPCAH Executive Director's salary was also paid for by the grant.

Volunteers: Roughly 300 volunteers (both community and student) were recruited and trained, with about 120 volunteers actively conducting at least two prescreenings as of Summer 2004. Many of the trainees who did not do pre-screening, participated in other ways, such as making referrals to GPCAH's food stamp hotline. GPCAH developed and provided a four-hour training session for volunteers that included an overview of the FSP and instructions on the outreach, prescreening, and application processes. Student volunteers recruited from 11 colleges and universities included both work-study students (paid through university funds) and students enrolled in service learning courses and programs that required community service work as part of their course requirements. Community and faith-based volunteers were recruited through GPCAH's longstanding partnership with the Interfaith Hunger Group and through the GPCAH newsletter. Volunteers were assigned specific sites throughout the city where they could meet with potential applicants.

Key Partners: Key partners were developed with several organizations to assist in recruiting volunteers as well as in identifying potential FSP applicants. These included the Fox Leadership program at the University of Pennsylvania, which provided the student volunteers from service-learning courses, Philadelphia Higher Education Neighborhood for Network Development (PHEND), a consortium of universities in the area that recruited both work-study and service-learning student volunteers, the Campaign for Working Families which provides tax-filing and EITC assistance at community sites and cooperated with GPCAH to offer FSP prescreening, the Interfaith Hunger Group, which helped recruit faith-based and community volunteers, and the Pathmark supermarket chain, which

provided sites for food stamp outreach “fairs”. GPCAH’s partnerships also provided access to eligible families from other organizations or agencies such as the Freedom Development Corporation, the Presbyterian Church, Pennsylvania’s Career Link 1-stop centers, various food pantries, cupboards and shelters, and community health centers throughout the city.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: GPCAH staff worked closely with staff at the Philadelphia District Office as well as the 18 Community Assistance Offices (CAOs) that administer the FSP throughout the city. GPCAH did report some initial concerns from local food stamp office workers that outreach either would increase their workloads or eliminate some of their jobs (if community members were filling out applications). After meetings with local staff to clear these concerns, GPCAH was able to obtain the appointment of food stamp liaisons in each of the 18 offices. The liaisons served as key contacts for any questions and concerns regarding the application process that were raised by GPCAH staff. Training on FSP policies and procedures was provided for GPCAH by an FSP trainer. Initial plans to track project outcomes at the local food stamp offices through unique identifying codes proved difficult, and the local offices moved to a system that tracked applicants through their SSNs. GPCAH concluded that outcomes for applicants unwilling to provide their SSNs to project staff were not tracked to the project.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: GPCAH’s information dissemination activities included press releases and paid ads about this project and the FSP in local newspapers and community newsletters. In addition, GPCAH-trained student and community/faith-based volunteers disseminated flyers, posters, brochures, magnets with information about the food stamp program and about GPCAH’s outreach initiative at libraries, schools, EITC sites, soup kitchens, food cupboards, community school centers, check-cashing outlets, health centers, supermarkets (where they conducted “food stamp fairs”), Career Links one-stop centers, and community-based organizations (e.g., Freedom Development Center). In addition, GPCAH operated a food stamp information hotline (paid for in part by a state mini-grant) through which individuals could receive FSP information and prescreening/application assistance. Funding through the state mini-grant also paid for FSP outreach ads posted on community transit buses.

Prescreening: Prescreening was provided by GPCAH staff (through in-person contact or through the FSP hotline) and trained student and community/faith-based volunteers at public and private institutions throughout the city. Although the original intent was to train volunteers to use laptops for prescreening, some volunteers were not comfortable with laptops and some sites had no internet access. In addition, staff felt that COMPASS, the state’s online application system, was slow and difficult to operate. Consequently, for most of the project period, volunteers were trained to use a paper prescreening form. At the end of the grant period, there was another shift and volunteers were trained on and encouraged to use COMPASS. Volunteers were assigned specific sites throughout the city where they could meet with potential applicants. Volunteers were trained to collect and log data from each of their contacts for tracking purposes and for the evaluation.

Application Assistance: If a client appeared to be eligible after prescreening, the GPCAH worker reviewed the list of required documentation with the client and directed the individual to the appropriate local food stamp office. (By the end of the project, state regulations were changed such that an applicant could apply at any of the city FSP offices, rather than one site assigned to them based on their place of residence.) The amount of application assistance given applicants varied among volunteers. Some volunteers simply gave clients the application forms; others reviewed the application forms with applicants; and still others filled the forms. In nearly all cases, the client was then sent off to the local food stamp office. However, one volunteer that assisted clients with application completions hand-delivered the forms to the food stamp office and obtained a receipt for the delivered applications. Over the course of the project, regulations were also eased to allow applicants unable to visit the FSP office to complete the eligibility process through a phone interview. Staff noted that follow-up on individual applicants was difficult as they found it hard to reach the applicants via telephone; this was an issue GPCAH staff struggled with throughout the project.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. GPCAH’s total contacts represent the clients they prescreened as well as outreach materials they distributed. The number prescreened represents clients prescreened by volunteers in the community as well as those who were prescreened over the hotline. By the end of the grant period, 90 applications were still pending at the local food stamp office, and 80 clients failed to complete the application process.

Exhibit B.6: Summary of Data Elements from the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	20,401	*	*	*	*	*	*
Follow-up contacts	728	*	*	*	*	*	*
Pre-screened	6,239	11,774	55	1,147	1,413	1,760	175
Application assistance	4,697	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications submitted	3,300	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications approved	2,470	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications denied	660	*	*	*	*	*	*
Reasons for denial:							
Income too high	155	*	*	*	*	*	*
Assets too high	14	*	*	*	*	*	*
Citizenship status	4	*	*	*	*	*	*
Does not live in juris	0	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete interview	80	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete information	178	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other reason	229	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

* GPCAH was not able to provide final demographic data for any of their data elements except those they prescreened.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Ultimately, GPCAH screened 6,239 clients for food stamps, 4,697 (75 percent) were deemed eligible, and 3,300 applications were submitted to the food stamp office. Of those 3,300 applications submitted, 2,470 (75 percent) were approved within the time frame covered by the grant. About three out of ten of the denials (178) were attributed to applicants failing to complete the necessary paperwork, and one-quarter (155) was attributed to applicants having income too high for eligibility.

One concern by the local evaluator was the low-rate of application by the number of eligibles from the pre-screening process. They note, “At best only about 50 percent of those clients found eligible upon pre-screening applied for food stamps. In the post-grant period GPCAH is seeking to determine whether a rigorous effort to help potentially eligible clients fill out food stamp applications results in a higher rate of successful enrollment.” This finding underscores the potential labor-intensive process that might be necessary to enroll a higher proportion of FSP eligibles.

GPCAH’s program provides many useful lessons for using volunteers for these types of outreach and prescreening activities. For example, they determined that volunteers who are willing to make a significant time and energy commitment were the most effective. GPCAH shifted to working with fewer volunteers, focusing especially on motivated work-study and service-learning students. GPCAH also found that volunteers varied in their level of comfort in the types of activities they would participate in, and therefore, in the types of outreach activities they provided. For example, student volunteers tended to be comfortable with the math skills needed to calculate eligibility and estimated benefits, while community volunteers often had more experience and comfort working with the low-income population and often incorporated their outreach activities into services they were already providing (i.e., work at a food pantry).

GPCAH concluded that outreach and prescreening efforts at food banks and pantries (where the customers tended to be the same people) were not as successful as that done at Health Centers and Career Links (where the population changed regularly). In addition they found that key elements for a successful outreach site include a high traffic of low-income customers at a site where they are accustomed to seeking services and staff who are supportive of volunteers and the FSP.

GPCAH also felt that the establishment of a widely advertised food stamp hotline that clients can call for pre-screening and information greatly enhances the effectiveness of an outreach campaign. Social service agencies with supportive staff can be an especially productive source of referrals to a hotline.

GPCAH also emphasized a side benefit of the outreach- they put a face on poverty for many college students. Hence, in addition to the outreach activities, it was also an excellent learning opportunity.

Future Plans

Although GPCAH staff indicated that they do not have adequate funding to continue with all activities associated with this project, they will continue providing limited services. They will continue using volunteers for prescreenings because “we decided that we wanted to continue with this because it’s been rewarding. We feel like sometimes the training takes a lot of time, and it takes people some time to pick up on how to do screenings, but in the end it’s worthwhile.” Staff will also continue to emphasize the use of COMPASS, the on-line application program, to increase the number of those who actually follow-through with applications.

Illinois Hunger Coalition (Illinois)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Chicago, Illinois

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: June 2003- November 2004

Grant Amount: \$300,000

Project Objectives and Activities

This project’s primary goal was to increase enrollment in the FSP among families with students in Chicago Public Schools. This was accomplished through the education of parents and school staff about the FSP. Web-based prescreening and application assistance was provided in school settings. Their target population was low-income, potentially-eligible families with children in the Chicago Public School system, with a particular focus on working poor and immigrant families. Most families in their target population were enrolled in the school lunch program.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Established in 1989, the Illinois Hunger Coalition is a non-profit, statewide member organization that uses education, advocacy, and outreach to end hunger and its underlying causes throughout the state. Illinois focuses its efforts on community organizing, educating policymakers and potential recipients about nutrition programs and advocating for progressive public policy. As the lead advocacy organization on nutrition programs, Illinois works closely with the Illinois Department of Human Service (IDHS) food pantries, shelters, faith-based programs and other CBOs and is involved in efforts to lobby and educate legislators about food-related legislation. Illinois also identifies and develops strategies to overcome barriers of other programs such as SCHIP, KidCare, Family Care, Medicaid, and cash assistance. Illinois also operates a statewide Hunger Hotline, staffed by bilingual staff who make referrals to food pantries, soup kitchens, etc. but also screen and assist with applications for WIC, school breakfast, KidCare, cash assistance, and other programs, in addition to FSP. Illinois received a Round

1 USDA/FSP grant, under which they developed the FSP portion of their RealBenefits tool, a web-based prescreening and application tool that screens for FSP, KidCare, FamilyCare, Medicaid, TANF, LIHEAP, and other programs. Over 400 agencies in Illinois have been trained to use RealBenefits.

Staffing: Approximately 12 staff worked on this grant. The project coordinator (full-time) was responsible for the day-to-day project management of the grant and for supervising the outreach. The Illinois director (part-time on the project) was involved in all aspects of the outreach project as needed. Nine KidCare Coordinators (KCCs) who were employed by the CPS were trained by IHC staff in 3 to 4 hour sessions. After training, the KCCs subsequently organized and attended outreach events in the community, disseminated information, prescreened clients for eligibility, and assisted with applications using the RealBenefits prescreening tool. (The KCCs served 600 schools in six regions.) Illinois did not pay for the KCCs; they were employed by the school district. In addition to the KCC training, IHC staff trained over 100 CPS staff about FSP policy and eligibility requirements and on the use of the Real Benefits System. Other Illinois staff (e.g., the Hunger Hotline Coordinator and the community organizer) contributed to the project indirectly, but were not paid with grant funds.

Volunteers: None used.

Key Partners: Key partners included the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), which was a new partnership formed for this project, local school councils, Designs for Change (a non-profit that supports local school councils), and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Illinois' member organizations also contributed to the project by allowing Illinois to conduct outreach at their facilities.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: Although the IDHS was not involved in the design of the project, the grantee had regular contact with the department throughout the intervention, both at the Regional and Local Office levels. It was noted that the grantee had a longstanding, close working relationship with IDHS staff, and they had worked together to improve service at the local food stamp offices. RealBenefits Liaisons were designated in each local office. These individuals were responsible for receiving all RealBenefits applications and acting as the designated contact person for all RealBenefits contacts. Also Community Quality Councils (CQCs) were developed by the grantee in six local IDHS offices to build relationships among community groups and local food stamp office staff and increase understanding of FSP policies and procedures. In general, grantee staff, KCCs, case managers, and local office administrators met to discuss issues that arose related to the project. During the initial stages of the project the local offices had difficulty tracking all of the applications the project sent to their offices. In fact project staff noted that some of their applications were not accepted as valid during the early stages. The establishment of the RealBenefit Liaisons corrected these problems.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: This initiative focused on educating parents and staff in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) about their rights and responsibilities and eligibility

for food stamps through several methods. They began with a direct mailing to 9,500 homes of families with children. The KCCs attended parent meetings at schools and community locations, distributed English/Spanish flyers (which contained specific information about maximum income levels, potential benefit levels and hotline information). Illinois also operated a Hunger Hotline, which clients could call for education, screening/application, and case-management/follow-up services. Illinois sent flyers to households with children who were identified by the CPS as enrolled in the free or reduced-price school meal program.

Prescreening: The families identified by the CPS as enrolled in the free or reduced price school meal program were asked to visit pre-arranged sites in the community (generally schools) where they were prescreened for potential eligibility for food stamps and medical assistance using the RealBenefits Quickscreen prescreening tool. The tool asks questions about household size, monthly income, expenses and assets. Quickscreen also provides an estimate of potential food stamp benefit amount but does not take into account certain factors that make some households ineligible (e.g., immigration status). Consequently, Quickscreen was not used for households of mixed immigration status. Kid Care Coordinators prescreened families for food stamps at the same time that they screened them for the Kid Care program.

Application Assistance: If prescreening determined that a family was potentially eligible for food stamps, a KCC helped them complete an application using the RealBenefits tool. The application was stamped with the Project's logo and then usually faxed or e-mailed to the local food stamp office liaison. After large events someone usually delivered all of the applications to the food stamp offices that same evening. KCCs and Illinois staff provided follow-up and case management for applicants (this type of assistance increased over the course of the project) after applications were submitted.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator's website is presented below. Illinois' total contacts included a large mailing (9,500) and flyer distribution (about 200,000). Illinois also indicated that this number of contacts is likely an underestimate; they had a difficult time training some of their outreach workers to track information.

The Illinois evaluation report noted that several FSP applications, which they delivered or faxed to the local food stamp offices, were not traceable back to the project. (They did not record the exact number that could not be traced.) Also, Illinois received an extension of their project through November of 2004. During the two-month extension period, they completed about 300 new applications; however, they did not receive outcome data for those applications. Below we have included the grantee data through November, 2004, although the administrative data reflects the period ending September 30, 2004.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Illinois found that outreach involved several intensive activities. First, the RealBenefits Quickscreen training required intensive technical support and case management to ensure that applications were processed appropriately. Second, they invested considerable upfront time in developing a partnership with the school administration. Third, they found educating potential recipients in their native language was especially beneficial. Fourth, the local food stamp offices were instrumental in the effort in clarifying policy and processing applications. Finally, Illinois found that more intensive application assistance was required to increase participation. Even with the electronic completion of applications, staff concluded that clients required personal attention, especially help with document review and follow-up to ensure that all aspects of the application process were completed.

Exhibit B.7: Summary of Data Elements from the Illinois Hunger Coalition

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	215,116	11,209	193	93	9,408	431	61
Follow-up contacts	376	1,267	79	31	339	245	19
Pre-screened	1,809	4,656	367	194	1,257	776	145
Application assistance	1,573	3,856	312	181	1,045	613	136
Applications submitted	765	2,230	174	101	598	293	90
Applications approved	504	1,408	109	60	382	159	69
Applications denied	253	804	62	39	209	130	21
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	67	236	19	11	58	37	3
Assets too high	11	37	5	0	11	7	0
Citizenship status	3	12	2	3	3	2	0
Does not live in juris	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete interview	56	153	10	12	42	30	10
Incomplete information	83	254	24	11	73	41	4
Other reason	17	41	2	2	12	6	3

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

The grantee section includes data from June 2002 through November 2004, whereas the administrative section only includes data through September 2004. The site was unable to obtain the administrative data for their outreach efforts during their extension period (October through November).

The site was successful in developing a relationship with the Chicago Public School system. They also felt they were quite successful in reaching and educating immigrant communities (particularly Hispanics and the Indian/Pakistani population). Other accomplishments noted by grantee staff include linking the KCCs with the RealBenefits

screening tool, which enabled them to automate their work and screen families for more services than they could previously. Through September 2004, the KCCs assisted 1,229 households with applications using RB². Of those, 765 or 62 percent were received by IDHS, and of those 504 or 66 percent of the received applications were approved.

The development of Community Quality Councils was also seen as a major accomplishment. As noted above, these Councils brought together local food stamp office staff with grantee staff, and the KCCs to discuss issues that arose related to the project and build relationships between the community and local food stamp office staff. Both project and food stamp office staff concluded that these meetings were helpful.

These accomplishments were not achieved without challenges. The grantee experienced some resistance on the part of the KCCs to prescreen for food stamps and to use the automated prescreening tool. The level of complication in the food stamp application process required training the liaisons, which created additional work.

Additionally, some of the KCCs were resistant to the new technology. Previously, they used paper forms to prescreen and the new web-based computerized tool caused some stress. However, once they used the tool they were able to prescreen large numbers of families more quickly and efficiently. The grantee staff also encountered problems related to relying on a third-party to complete intake forms and collect information needed for tracking applications. Grantee staff also noted that the lack of resources and initial project “buy-in” from CPS presented major challenges to project implementation.

Future Plans

The grantee obtained matching funds from USDA to continue a similar effort focusing on the city’s Community Schools program. There are also efforts to obtain additional funds from foundations. The KCCs will continue prescreening families with children enrolled in Chicago Public Schools as part of their ongoing responsibilities. However, the grantee will not be directly involved with the KCCs’ efforts.

Community Harvest Food Bank Of Northeast Indiana (Indiana)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Nine counties in Northeastern Indiana

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: November 2002 – September 2004

Grant Amount: \$285,766

² Illinois received and extension and continued their outreach through the end of November. The total number of applications generated by the project through November 2004 is 1,573. Administrative data from IDHS was not available for October and November, and is not reported.

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goals of this project were to: 1) increase awareness of the FSP as a nutrition program, 2) increase the rate of food stamp participation in a nine-county service area among the newly unemployed, working poor, and low-income people of all ages, including homebound senior citizens, and 3) improve community services for families and adults who are food stamp eligible by providing a one-stop network of information and support. Activities included dissemination of FSP information through a multi-media campaign, flyers and posters and prescreening and application assistance in a variety of locations, including social service agencies, grocery stores, and homes.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Indiana is an independent, nonprofit agency that serves nine counties in northeastern Indiana and has partnerships with hundreds of member agencies that serve the poor (e.g., soup kitchens, emergency food pantries, shelters, senior citizen programs, day care centers, etc.). They are also affiliated with America's Second Harvest, the national hunger relief organization. The outreach initiative operated in all nine counties.

Staffing: Five staff worked on this grant. The Executive Director of Indiana was responsible for overall fiscal and administrative project oversight. There were four full-time dedicated outreach workers who were responsible for disseminating information, prescreening and application assistance.

Volunteers: None

Key Partners: Key partners included the Indiana member agencies (including churches, emergency food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, etc), the county Councils on Aging, Catholic Charities, the local township trustees and the Unemployment Insurance/Job Works Offices.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: Indiana worked with nine county FSP offices on this project and their experiences with staff varied across the offices. While grantee staff was sympathetic to the workload issues faced by FSP staff, they were clearly some challenges with these relationships. Project staff worked on "winning over" staff at the local offices and creating a positive attitude towards the outreach project. At the end of the grant period, they felt that all but one of the nine county offices became "if not truly supportive, at least agreeable and worked with us." Training on FSP application procedures was provided to the outreach workers by staff from only one county FSP office.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Indiana staff disseminated information through a variety of methods. Their multi-media campaign included a series of eight billboards, radio talk shows, and newspaper coverage. (They were able to seize opportunities to publish, free of charge, in numerous local newspapers.) They also distributed over 20,000 flyers through

partner agencies, grantee member agencies, grocery stores, churches and other community sites, ran articles in the Indiana newsletter, and conducted direct mailings. Staff also distributed information about the FSP (including prescreening questionnaires which they could fill out and return to the delivery person) in the SeniorPAK grocery bags delivered to homebound seniors on a periodic basis. If a potentially eligible senior filled out the prescreening survey and asked for more information, an outreach worker would travel to the individual's home and help them complete the application. Community Harvest also worked with Unemployment Insurance/Jobs Works Offices to reach the newly unemployed by distributing over 14,000 flyers to promote the fact that individuals can apply for food stamps at places other than the food stamp office.

Prescreening: Grantee outreach staff provided prescreening services at targeted locations including the agency's four direct service program sites (e.g., Community Harvest's food distribution partners, including food pantries, Kids Cafes, and Farm Wagons that distribute fresh produce, juices, and dairy products to low-income individuals at various community sites), community partner agencies, in grocery stores, and in individuals' homes. They also followed-up on the returned pre-screening questionnaires from the SeniorPaks described above. Staff reported that local FSP staff would not allow outreach staff to complete applications for applicants. Indiana staff initially used a prescreening tool developed jointly with the food stamp office to prescreen individuals, and gave them an application form if they appeared eligible (but they did not fill out the form for them). As time went on, they created their own prescreener that included all of the questions taken verbatim from the official application form. This provided all of the information needed by the FSP office but technically was not an application form. (As noted below, some local offices eventually accepted these as application forms.)

Application Assistance: Following prescreening, potential applicants were given an application to fill out and take to the food stamp office. As noted above, outreach workers went to some seniors' homes to deliver and explain the application form. While most FSP offices would not allow Indiana staff to fill out applications for clients, staff did note that some counties would actually accept these prescreening/ application forms as applications; others were steadfast in their refusal. This form was either sent to the food stamp office by the outreach worker or the applicant would take it there themselves. Most applicants were still required to visit the FSP office as part of the application process. Workers also informed individuals about the documents required for the application process. Some follow-up on those who had submitted applications was provided (e.g., if an applicant had special needs).

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator's website is presented below. Indiana's total contacts represent all clients prescreened as well as persons receiving outreach materials and information about the FSP through presentations or a brochure. Their number of follow-up contacts represents the number of FSP applicants

with whom Indiana successfully followed-up to see where they were in the application process. The follow-up process was very labor-intensive, so the grantee did not provide this service during the entire grant period. The majority of the follow-up contacts (143) were calls initiated by the applicant asking for assistance with the FSP office regarding their case.

By the end of the grant period, there were 59 applications submitted as a result of Indiana’s outreach efforts for which they did not know the outcome. Most of these applications were still pending, although outcomes for about 10-15 applications could not be identified by the food stamp office.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Indiana’s outreach efforts resulted in more than 1,300 individuals applying for food stamps, although less than half of those applications (603 or 46 percent) resulted in families being approved for food stamp benefits. Almost half of denials were due to clients not following through with interviews. Regardless, grantee staff members were very proud of their work with the elderly in terms of “de-stigmatizing” the FSP and convincing them to apply, although it often took repeated efforts. Staff also reported the importance of enthusiastic and concerned outreach workers, who were not government employees “behind an FSP office door” and able to guide applicants through the food stamp application process. Finally, staff noted taking pride in all of the presentations they had made about their efforts; they felt like they had spread the word about the importance of this type of outreach work.

Exhibit B.8: Summary of Data Elements from the Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	15,850	*	*	*	*	*	*
Follow-up contacts	253	468	9	200	49	38	41
Pre-screened	1,931	4,205	249	622	705	735	663
Application assistance	1,496	3,068	179	445	475	465	552
Applications submitted	1,307	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications approved	603	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications denied	645	*	*	*	*	*	*
Reasons for denial:							
Income too high	113	*	*	*	*	*	*
Assets too high	0	*	*	*	*	*	*
Citizenship status	22	*	*	*	*	*	*
Does not live in juris	0	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete interview	304	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete information	42	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other reason	164	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

*Indiana was not able to provide final demographic data for all of their data elements except those they prescreened, followed-up with, and assisted with the application process.

Indiana also felt their efforts to recruit, educate, and build collaborations with large numbers of community partners were particularly successful. According to the local evaluation, the majority of applicants learned about the FSP through Indiana's partnerships, particularly their member partners. Few applicants reported learning about FSP directly from their mass media advertisements, although word of mouth contributed to awareness of the program.

Future Plans

While Indiana has not received any additional funding to continue this work, staff at many of the partner agencies who participated in information sessions and training were interested in continuing to share FSP information with potential applicants. They also indicated that they would maintain a stock of informational pamphlets at each of those locations. For example, Catholic Charities will continue to keep applications on hand and give application assistance. At the end of the project, Indiana sent their toll free number and their website information to partner agencies, hoping that they would continue to promote these resources. The local evaluator concluded that "the value of the relationships that have been built through this grant in the nine county area will have lasting impact that will positively improve the process for clients for years to come."

Community Action Program For Madison County (Madison)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Madison County, New York
Intervention Start Date and End Dates: May 2003 – September 2004
Grant Amount: \$171,300

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of this project was to increase the number of new households participating in the Food Stamp Program in Madison County by approximately 25 percent in the year following implementation of the project. Activities included a multi-media campaign with more general dissemination of information (e.g., flyers, posters, and brochures) and outreach presentations. Prescreening and application assistance was provided at various community sites and a public access website with a prescreening tool and online application was created.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: The Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. (CAP) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency that provides

information and referral, direct assistance, and support services leading to economic self-sufficiency to families who live or work in Madison County. CAP coordinates and supports the activities of all eleven food pantries in the county, works with local churches to organize food distribution, operates the Early Head Start program, the home visiting program (Starting Together), provides emergency assistance and transportation assistance (assistance in repairing or buying a car-through a DOL grant), and provides services (including transitional housing) to the homeless population. CAP also conducts outreach and enrollment for Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus, and Medicaid.

Staffing: Seven staff worked on this outreach initiative. The project director devoted 10-15 percent of her time to general project oversight and management. The food stamp outreach coordinator worked full time on this project and was responsible for coordinating all outreach efforts, training staff at partner agencies (e.g, food pantries, libraries) and outreach and application assistance at four public sites. The grant funded the salary of a traveling food stamp outreach worker from DSS who participated in project outreach activities for one year. She accompanied the outreach coordinator on visits to sites to meet with applicants and used a portable work station (with a laptop and photo and finger-imaging capability) to process applications on a limited basis. Four frontline family support advocates at the CAP also spent 5-10 percent of their time on food stamp outreach, referral, prescreening and application assistance activities for this project.

Volunteers: A few senior volunteers worked on project activities at food pantries.

Key Partners: Partners included a variety of community service providers including food cupboards and other food distribution sites, libraries, WIC sites, and senior living centers. The Madison County Office for the Aging and the New York State Department of Health were also partners in this initiative. Staff at both agencies were provided with laptops and dial-up accounts and were trained to provide both paper and on-line prescreening and application assistance. The intent was that workers would provide this assistance in their local offices, at other sites in the community and in individuals' homes with their target populations as part of their other outreach efforts. However, due to both technical glitches and the reluctance of their clients to use the website, only paper FSP applications were submitted to DSS (which they had been doing prior to this project).

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The local DSS office was a major partner on this project from the outset, providing a dedicated outreach worker as well as monitoring and oversight of all applications resulting from this initiative. This site worked with only one local office with which they had a long history of collaboration. The DSS office was very involved in all phases of the project from the beginning; in fact, the three key partners, the CAP, the evaluator, and DSS, had all worked together on a prior study of welfare leavers in Madison County. All partners were involved in the grant writing and all continued to play a major role in this intervention. Grantee staff felt that DSS's willingness to dedicate one worker to this project who would go out in the community to conduct activities (photo IDs, copying verification information, etc) that would otherwise require a trip to the DSS office was a very positive change. "That was much more of a customer focused kind of process than what is standard at DSS."

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: This grantee conducted a multi-media campaign and the more general dissemination of information. This consisted of numerous press releases in local newspapers, radio PSAs, and distribution of customized USDA flyers, posters, brochures (including a tear-sheet with the website address) and other FSP informational materials in supermarkets, laundromats, post offices, churches, food pantries, day care providers, doctors' offices, libraries and many other community sites. Staff also made outreach presentations, set up informational kiosks and provided information on the application process and the new website (see below) at various community events (e.g, Eat Well Play Hard event; Living Well with Diabetes forum, flu shot clinics).

Outreach staff also conducted similar outreach efforts at Food Sense Distribution sites, food cupboards, libraries, and WIC sites. CAP made a special effort to target the elderly population and made numerous visits to SNACK (Senior Nutrition and Community Kitchen) sites where seniors often gathered (staff noted that this is a "vital prospect to any outreach effort targeting seniors") and to senior living centers and other senior community meetings. Direct FSP mailings were targeted to households that applied for free or reduced lunch through the schools, school nurses and guidance counselors (to inform them of the website and the link between obesity and poverty), and to homes in targeted zip codes with an underserved populations. CAP front-line family support advocates also provided FSP information to families they worked with as needed.

Prescreening: Madison's public access website, (www.madisoncountyfoodstamps.org), developed specifically for this grant, was launched on October 1, 2003. Individuals can access and utilize this site on their own or with the assistance of the Madison Outreach coordinator, the DSS Outreach Worker or trained staff at various sites throughout the community. Extensive training on the use of the website (and promotion of its use) was conducted by the CAP Outreach Coordinator for the CAP Family Support Advocates, librarians, staff at Office for Aging and Department of Health (described above) and other community service providers.

The website includes a six-question prescreening tool (based on the USDA prescreening tool) to determine likely eligibility and the potential FSP benefit. If it appears from the prescreener that the applicant will be eligible, they can then continue with the application process. Throughout this project, the outreach coordinator and the DSS outreach worker conducted outreach, prescreening and application assistance at the CAP office and other community sites and/or events described above during both business and extended hours. Prior to the launching of the new website, prescreening was provided using paper forms. After the website was launched, this assistance was provided using laptops to access the new website, if internet access was available at a particular site. If internet access was not available, this assistance was still provided using paper forms.

Application Assistance: As with the prescreening process, the Outreach Coordinator and the DSS outreach worker were available to provide application assistance at various sites. Applications could be completed and submitted online directly to the local

DSS where they were printed and assigned to the DSS outreach worker for processing and determination of eligibility. Applications could also be downloaded, filled out and faxed, mailed or hand-delivered to the local office. Once the application was processed, DSS sent a letter stating that the application has been received and outlining documentation requirements. The DSS outreach worker also had a portable workstation that enabled her to conduct other identification components of the application process (e.g., the photo ID and finger-imaging processes) at community sites, under certain circumstances. Required documentation could be faxed directly to the DSS office. Madison County also implemented use of a shortened, two-page application during this program that simplified this step considerably.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of Madison's grantee and administrative data is presented below. Madison's grantee data represent clients prescreened either through Madison's website tool or by the community partners. Note that Madison's number of applications assisted is an undercount of the total due to a change in their method for reporting this data element mid-grant.

Throughout the grant period, Madison reported caseload data for their entire county to the national evaluator's website (which the local evaluator analyzed using a pre-post model in the grantee's evaluation report). The DSS food stamp outreach worker tracked the applications filed directly as a result of Madison's outreach efforts (either through the use of the website or through community partners). The administrative data presented below represent the outcomes for these specific applications. The food stamp outreach worker was not, however, able to collect data on the reasons for denial or the demographic information on the applications submitted, approved and denied. Three (3) of the applications submitted to the food stamp office were voluntarily withdrawn by the client. Ten percent (27) of the applications submitted were denied. Outcomes are unknown for 79 applications either because the application was pending by the end of the grant or because the application was submitted prior to March 2004, the period for which they do not have pending or denial information.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

The local evaluation report's pre-post analysis of county caseload data suggests that Madison achieved their project goal by increasing the number of new food stamp cases opened from 1,072 in the year prior to the intervention to 1,349 cases in the intervention year (277 households). Their caseload and outreach specific administrative data do suggest that their intervention did have an important effect. Unexpectedly, they also found an increase in the number of denials in their caseload analysis (155 denials in the base year and 322 denials during the intervention year). They reported few denials in their administrative data (27 of the 264 submitted), although over half (55 percent) of the applications they submitted to the food stamp office were either pending or the outcome was unknown to the food stamp outreach worker by the end of the grant period.

**Exhibit B.9: Summary of Data Elements from the
Community Action Program for Madison County**

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	840	2,776	15	183	548	789	149
Follow-up contacts	66	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	840	2,776	15	183	548	789	149
Application assistance	402	703	6	56	108	223	58
Applications submitted	264	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications approved	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications denied	27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for denial:							
Income too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete information	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Further analysis of their county caseload data pointed to the lack of follow-through on applications. The most common reason for denial of applications was incomplete documentation. Madison noted a number of reasons for incomplete documentation, including: lack of awareness of the extent of the documentation required when they applied, difficulty getting to the DSS office, no follow-up from DSS workers, etc. Staff also noted specific difficulties in targeting subgroups, especially the elderly, who were generally opposed to participating in the FSP because they viewed it as welfare.

Madison made great strides in simplifying the process (including their implementation of the shortened application form), though, like many other grantees, they had many cases that required labor-intensive efforts. They noted that they would like to pursue efforts to change the FSP culture. They found that finger printing, photos, and significant documentation represented important barriers to participation, though they believed they could be overcome with further outreach.

Future Plans

The website will continue to operate after the grant ends with some sharing of the minimal costs for the license between the grantee and the FSP office. The FSP outreach worker will likely still be responsible for handling all of the online applications received through the website. However, the presentations, media ads and similar outreach activities

will not continue because the outreach coordinator position (which had been funded by this grant) was eliminated and no other funds were available for those activities. The grantee organization's in-house family resource advocates will still field calls about food stamps as a part of their regular work and will continue to assist clients with FSP applications on the website.

In addition, staff from the state agency (ODTA) responsible for administering the FSP have indicated interest in reproducing the grantee's on-line web access throughout New York State.

Maternity Care Coalition (MCC)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, targeting two sites each in Montgomery and Delaware Counties

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: February 2003-September 2004

Grant Amount: \$325,352

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of this project was to educate non-participating pregnant women and families with young children about the benefits of the FSP, facilitate the application process, and increase enrollment among eligible families. Grantee activities included: 1) information dissemination to food insecure pregnant women and families with young children; and 2) prescreening and application assistance in a variety of settings (some using the state's online application tool, COMPASS).

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: MCC is a non-profit comprehensive health promotion program that offers extensive family health education, self-sufficiency counseling, and linkage to critical human services for identified families. MCC's MOMobile Program provides outreach, health promotion education, and family support to more than 3,000 families each year in neighborhoods with high rates of infant mortality, child abuse, and poverty. In collaboration with the Philadelphia Food Bank, MCC provided emergency food to 1,532 participating families in FY02, distributing over 2,359 cans of infant formula. Using MCC's brightly colored minivans (MOMobiles), MCC's community health workers (advocates) make regular home visits to families, offering health education and providing links to public benefits and critical human services.

Staffing: Seven staff worked on this outreach project. The project manager (part-time) oversaw the project coordinator (full-time), while the project coordinator managed the day-to-day project activities, which included setting up community partnerships and

educating them about the FSP, and recruiting, training and overseeing four site outreach workers (one at each project site). The project coordinator also provided direct (fill-in-the-gap) outreach education, as well as participated in pre-screening and application assistance activities. The project coordinator also worked directly with a food stamp office in each county to track their outreach applications. MCC had an in-house research director (part-time) who conducted the evaluation of MCC's outreach initiative.

MCC faced some initial staffing challenges; they were not able to hire their project coordinator until 6 months after the start of the grant (February 2003), which delayed the recruitment and training of the outreach advocates. Additionally, MCC experienced significant turnover among the outreach advocates, and they found it particularly difficult to hire bilingual staff.

Volunteers: Having volunteers was not part of the original project proposal, but MCC did take advantage of opportunities as they arose. For example, a rabbinical student studying hunger and a high school student doing a school project gave volunteer assistance to the project.

Key Partners: MCC collaborated with a broad range of local faith-based and community-based organizations, including food cupboards, hospitals, low-income health clinics, senior centers, childcare centers, churches and other social service agencies. Specifically, MCC collaborated with agencies such as the Bernadine Center (a food pantry), the Ardmore Senior Center, and the Montgomery County Early Head Start and Early Learning Centers.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: MCC partnered with two local County Assistance Offices (CAOs, the local food stamp entity), one each in Montgomery and Delaware Counties. The project director worked extensively with liaisons in the CAOs to track applications for their referred clients. The grantee reported that developing and maintaining these relationships with staff at the local food stamp offices took "a great deal of time and attention...more than most people would anticipate." The project coordinator met with CAO supervisors multiple times, took applications to key point people in the local offices herself, and followed up with the local office contacts to determine the status of referred applications.

Outreach of Activities

MCC used a three-tiered intervention where the outreach advocates provided: 1) education for non-participants about the FSP and its nutritional benefits; 2) pre-screening; and 3) direct assistance completing and submitting applications. Staff found that few clients submitted applications on their own and began offering the three tiers of intervention on an as-needed basis, rather than in a phased-in sequence.

Information Dissemination: Initially, through their MOMobile services, MCC offered food insecure pregnant women and families with very young children educational information about the benefits, eligibility rules, and application procedures for the FSP. They later expanded their target audience by partnering with local faith-based and

community-based organizations to include senior citizens, immigrants, and other individuals at risk of food insecurity. The outreach advocates were based in local offices in each of the four community sites, but also went out into the community to conduct outreach activities at partnering agencies' sites, such as food banks, senior centers, and health clinics.

From the outset, MCC distributed flyers and gave presentations to partner agencies and to potential food stamp eligible groups to educate them about the FSP and its nutritional benefits, as well as to dispel common misconceptions about the FSP. MCC also devoted time to educating the medical community (such as nurses and midwives) about the FSP. They found that there was a great deal of misunderstanding about the FSP and felt it was crucial to educate service providers.

Prescreening: Staff prescreened potential applicants for food stamp benefits using a paper prescreening tool.

Application Assistance: Outreach staff gave clients the choice of filling out and submitting applications on their own or with assistance from MCC. If clients submitted applications on their own and informed MCC staff during follow-up calls, MCC would track those applications and provide necessary advocacy at the CAO. Applications submitted by MCC staff members were also tracked and by the project coordinator who followed-up with clients. The grantee reported that clients “generally needed three or four follow up calls before they fully completed the application process and picked up their EBT cards.”

Focus Groups: MCC conducted three focus groups that were designed to understand barriers to food stamp participation. MCC recruited participants (46 overall) from their food stamp outreach project and invited them to have lunch and receive a \$25 food gift certificate. The focus groups were held in three different communities with different demographic compositions: a Spanish speaking community, a blue-collar neighborhood, and a low-income community bordering an affluent area. They heard about extensive feelings of stigma about the use of food stamps, either because of first-hand prior experiences in applying or perceived stigma. They also documented the complexity of the application process and the need for dispelling myths about the FSP, such as the perception that food stamp benefits would need to be paid back when their incomes increased. Among the non-English speakers, barriers included a lack of interpreters at the CAOs and fear of an impact on their immigration status.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator's website is presented below.³ MCC's number of total contacts represents all contacts with persons educated about the FSP, prescreened or assisted with applications. The local evaluation notes that 491 unique households were educated about the FSP, which averages to 2.3

³ There are data inconsistencies to note. The reasons for denial for households with ABAWDs and households with elderly/disabled persons sum to one less than the total number of denied applications in these categories.

contacts per household. Of the 296 prescreened, 11 households were screened more than once. (MCC reported that 285 unique households were prescreened.)

Not included in the number of total contacts, but reported to the national evaluator’s system in the notes field, is the number of outreach materials distributed (i.e., persons educated about the FSP but for whom no contact information was obtained). MCC distributed over 5,000 brochures, flyers and food stamp packets at presentations and events at their community partners.

Exhibit B.10: Summary of Data Elements from the Maternity Care Coalition

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	1,121	3,209	437	274	743	666	113
Follow-up contacts	630	1,908	307	149	462	423	47
Pre-screened	296	849	85	83	180	155	38
Application assistance	270	765	77	79	167	137	33
Applications submitted	133	392	48	36	89	76	15
Applications approved	70	199	24	21	46	36	8
Applications denied	29	107	14	8	24	20	2
Reasons for denial:							
Income too high	7	27	2	2	5	5	0
Assets too high	4	13	2	0	3	3	1
Citizenship status	1	8	0	1	1	1	0
Does not live in juris	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete interview	8	31	5	1	7	6	0
Incomplete information	3	10	2	0	3	3	0
Other reason	6	18	3	3	5	2	0

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Initially, MCC staff planned to offer education about the food stamp program to clients and then follow-up within a month to see if clients would like to be prescreened for benefits and receive assistance with the application process (a phase-in strategy for the three tiers of intervention). Staff found that few clients were submitting applications on their own when just provided with education about the FSP, or even after being prescreened. Staff began offering the three tiers of intervention on an as needed basis, rather than in a phased in sequence. MCC staff found it took three to four follow-up calls to each client to make sure that the application process was proceeding, more follow-up than they had initially anticipated. This may, in part, reflect their target groups – non-English speaking individuals and the working poor. They reported that 70 percent of the 133 households who submitted applications “required extensive assistance and support.” MCC’s outreach efforts led to only 70 approvals by the end of the grant period (out of 133 applications submitted).

The grantee originally planned to provide application assistance using the state’s online application (COMPASS). However, due to a lack of technical capacity early on and problems with the online tool, the grantee used a paper application tool instead. Toward the

end of the project, when computers and Internet access were upgraded at local offices and staff members were more familiar with the online tool, outreach advocates began using the web-based application tool.

The grantee noted that developing and maintaining relationships with the local food stamp office took a considerable amount of time and effort. They also noted that it was crucial to educate both service providers and clients about the FSP to dispel their misconceptions.

Future Plans

MCC will not continue their outreach activities due to a lack of funding. However, grantee staff felt the legacy of the project—staff awareness of the FSP—would permeate the other service delivery areas of the MCC.

Human Services Coalition of Dade County (Miami-Dade)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Miami, Florida

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: June 2003- July 2004

Grant Amount: \$350,000

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of this project was to enroll low-income employees through outreach to businesses, welfare to work agencies, and job retraining agencies using roving Fringe Benefits Specialists and RealBenefits, an internet-based toolset that allows calculation of food stamp eligibility and awards amounts. Grantee outreach activities included presentations about “economic benefit packages” to local businesses with low-wage workers as well as prescreening and application assistance using an online screening tool.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Founded in 1996, the Human Services Coalition of Dade County is a non-profit organization with a membership coalition of over 6,000 members that includes representatives of service providers, faith-based groups, labor, consumers, grass roots organizations and citizens associations. Miami-Dade staff act as advocates to the poor and low-income families and are part of a community team of advocates and a similar chain working throughout the state. In addition to delivering FSP outreach activities by conducting web-based prescreening and application assistance as part of a Round One FSP Outreach grant, Miami-Dade has also conducted outreach activities for Florida KidCare (Florida’s SCHIP) and the EITC.

Staffing: Six staff worked on this project. The project director was responsible for oversight, monitoring and coordination with partner agencies. The project coordinator conducted outreach activities and supervised the work of the outreach workers. As of July 2004, there were four outreach workers who devoted part of their time to these efforts. These workers conducted outreach and prescreening activities and recruited and trained staff at partner agencies on the FSP prescreening/application assistance process, in addition to performing other community outreach activities not covered by this grant.

Volunteers: None used.

Key Partners: Primary partners for this grant included businesses and the South Florida Workforce (SFW). Miami-Dade worked with local businesses as well as SFW to inform and prescreen potentially eligible individuals for the FSP program. Some small businesses actually conducted the prescreening themselves. Another partner, Community Catalyst, furnished and provided support for the web-based prescreening, eligibility, and benefits calculator, RealBenefits. They also trained agency staff in the use of the tool. The Alliance for Human Services, an organization that provides funding and support for local community based organizations was also a partner.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The Department of Children and Families (DCF, the state food stamp agency) also was a key partner in the initiative, participating in regular meetings and ongoing discussions on various FSP issues (e.g., customer service). They also provided policy updates and general information about the FSP to grantee staff. A regional DCF staff member served as liaison to the project and attended monthly grantee meetings. She also worked with the grantee project coordinator to resolve issues related to individual applications. The local food stamp office logged in HSC client applications assigning them unique case numbers, the same way that all applications were treated. The only identifier was a fax cover sheet from HSC. This led to problems tracking project outcomes. The outcome data was obtained from the state by asking them to match outcome data with their clients' SSN's.

Types of Activities

Information Dissemination: The project coordinator and other outreach workers conducted FSP outreach through presentations to local businesses with low wage employees. During presentations at local businesses, the FSP was included as one component of an "economic benefit package" that included the EITC and Florida's Kid Care Health Insurance.

In addition to their stand-alone presentations, Miami-Dade staff joined staff from South Florida Workforce (the local Workforce Investment Board) as part of their rapid response efforts with dislocated workers. They made joint presentations to employees who were being laid off and were covered under the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA). Employees were generally not screened for FSP eligibility during these presentations, but were given information on getting in touch with Miami-Dade to complete an application. Even if Miami-Dade staff could not participate in a presentation, information about their services was included in the packets given to participants.

FSP information was also disseminated through outreach and presentations at local businesses, community organizations and at health fairs and other community events. Some employers included the information in paychecks, etc. A flyer summarizing new eligibility criteria for legal immigrants was developed and distributed throughout the community and placed in a newsletter with over 600 readers.

Prescreening: During presentations, interested individuals were provided information about the FSP and the eligibility requirements and a Miami-Dade phone number to call for a prescreening. (This “hotline” was actually a referral line for a range of issues and benefits programs.) The RealBenefits web-based tool was used to prescreen potential applicants (often over the phone) and to calculate probable benefits. Other Miami-Dade outreach educators used the RealBenefits tool to prescreen families for food stamps. For example, one was assigned to conduct outreach to families with children enrolled in a particular middle school. He worked out of the school and targeted parents when they came to the school. He also visited families in their homes.

Other community-based organizations and local businesses signed agreements with Miami-Dade to be trained to use the RealBenefits web-based tool for prescreening and to produce completed applications. A local Marriott resort, for example, used the software to prescreen employees for food stamp eligibility. After screening employees and/or their family members, they faxed the completed application to the food stamp office.

Application Assistance: If individuals appeared eligible, RealBenefits was also used to complete and generate applications, which were then mailed to clients with a list of documents to bring to the food stamp office. It was the applicant’s responsibility to take the completed application to the office. In some cases, outreach workers completed applications face-to-face and faxed them directly to the food stamp office, thus eliminating one visit for applicants. (Miami-Dade kept copies of the applications for follow-up purposes.) Appointment notices were generated by the food stamp office and mailed to applicants who then needed to bring their verification documents to an eligibility interview to complete the application process. The outreach workers and project coordinator also followed up with applicants, intervened on issues that arose between applicants and food stamp workers, and advocated on behalf of applicants.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. Miami-Dade’s local evaluation report included data for a subset of the elements on the website. (The numbers included in the local evaluation report are much higher and could not be verified despite requests for explanations from the national evaluator.) As noted above, the grantee had difficulty establishing a tracking system for their applications. Since the state only reported final outcomes that could be traced to their clients that supplied SSNs, the total number of approvals may be an underestimate. Also, the state was not able to provide data on reasons for denials.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Through this project and the “Greater Miami Prosperity Campaign” the grantee built solid relationships with the business community. They created more than 30 partnerships with employers to provide FSP information and prescreening. Staff found that it was difficult to promote food stamp benefits on their own – people were more receptive to learning about a comprehensive “economic benefits” package that included the EITC, health care, etc.

The grantee solidified their working relationships with the food stamp office. The project coordinator, for example, fostered relationships with the site manager at each of the approximately 20 local offices (called “service centers”) in their region.

Exhibit B.11: Summary of Data Elements from the Human Services Coalition of Dade County

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	707	1,868	247	54	335	257	N/A
Follow-up contacts	16	34	3	2	8	4	N/A
Pre-screened	694	1,814	243	53	322	252	N/A
Application assistance	385	906	78	26	156	126	N/A
Applications submitted	595	1,596	209	49	273	210	N/A
Applications approved	116	358	0	0	71	31	N/A
Applications denied	61	131	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete inform	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

The grantee encountered some barriers working with RealBenefits – many business and community-based organizations trained to use the software did not stay motivated to use the system. In addition, many sites were not Internet-ready, requiring outreach staff to complete paper applications and enter the information into the computer in the grantee’s office.

Future Plans

The grantee will continue their business outreach through the “Greater Miami Prosperity Campaign”, an initiative designed to “put more money in people’s hands through government assistance.” Food stamps will be part of their bundled benefits package.

Muskegon Community Health Project (Muskegon)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Muskegon, Michigan – Muskegon, Newago and Oceana counties

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: January 2003- November 2004

Grant Amount: \$209,934

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goals of the project were to: (1) develop a secure computer subsystem for project data collection and maintenance; (2) educate 4,000 persons about the benefits, eligibility rules, and application procedures of the FSP; (3) assist 2,000 persons to participate in the FSP; (4) identify barriers to participation in the FSP process; and (5) develop strategies to overcome barriers to participation in the FSP, and evaluate project outcomes. Activities included: (1) dissemination of FSP information and a multimedia campaign and (2) prescreening and application assistance using both a paper form and web-based prescreening tools at various community sites.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: The Muskegon Community Health Project is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to develop health care systems and policy reform initiatives through community-based decision-making. Among other projects, Muskegon implemented a community-wide outreach and enrollment program for Medicaid and MICHild (SCHIP) and developed an internet-based information-sharing system for multi-agency case management of the indigent population in Muskegon County.

Staffing: Five staff worked on this project. The project coordinator was responsible for the day-to-day project management of the grant and for supervising three outreach specialists (including a Latino specialist) who conducted FSP outreach and information dissemination and prescreening and application assistance at food pantries, health fairs, commodities trucks and other community sites. A financial coordinator and a financial clerical person were also partially covered through this grant.

Volunteers: None

Key Partners: Key partners included the WIC offices, Workforce Development Centers, local Head Start agencies, and a number of other community service providers.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: Muskegon staff worked with three county FSP offices on this outreach initiative. Staff felt that relationships improved over the course of the project with some of the offices (e.g., a new director in one of the offices “seemed to grasp the outreach effort a lot more” which led to staff seeming “a lot more

accommodating.”) One FSP supervisor who was “a tremendous help” came to the project steering committee meetings. However, staff also noted that they faced a number of challenges working with the FSP offices both in terms of processing applications and in providing data on outcomes. They attributed these challenges to staff cuts, turnover, and unmanageable caseloads.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Muskegon’s outreach efforts included billboards, radio ads, print ads in local newspapers, FSP articles in local newspapers, and distribution of posters, flyers, brochures, and other FSP information through a variety of methods. For example, information was distributed at commodities trucks where food is distributed, sent home in packets with Head Start families, and distributed in community organizations such as food pantries, senior meal sites, schools, churches, and learning centers for migrant and bilingual programs. Muskegon distributed USDA materials labeled with local contact information as part of their outreach presentations. They noted that “branding” of USDA materials was important - they would place their brochures with the posters so people could read about the program and then contact someone at a partner agency about FSP. Radio ads ran every other week for five weeks. Grantee staff found that they had to skip a week with the ads to accommodate all the people who came to the office to complete applications after they were aired. Muskegon used the USDA-produced radio ads as a voice-over for the USDA print ads and made a 30 second ad to run on cable TV.

Prescreening: Muskegon provided prescreening services using both a paper prescreening form and web-based prescreening tools which could be used by outreach specialists to prescreen individuals and calculate benefits at their offices, at partnering agencies, at community events (e.g., health fairs, church events) and in clients’ homes. Initially, Muskegon used the prescreening tool which the Center for Social Justice developed under a Round One FNS access grant and which was accessed through the Michigan Food Stamp Network. This tool was revised and not available for about six months (and discontinued in April of 2004) so staff used either the USDA prescreener or other sites available on the Internet. If no on-line prescreening site was available, staff used a paper prescreening form.

Application Assistance: After prescreening, applications were mailed or given to those who appeared eligible, along with a checklist of required verification documents and the offer of further assistance from outreach staff. If an individual appeared to be in need of immediate assistance (e.g., homeless; no food in the house), they would be sent directly to a food pantry to address those needs and then on to the FSP office for expedited services. If an individual needed additional help (particularly the case for Hispanic families) they made an appointment with grantee staff and, at that time, they received help filling out the application.

Grantee staff could also provide assistance with locating and collecting all of verification documents, if necessary. Applications were then dated, stamped, and delivered to the food stamp office every day. At one point during the grant period, a grantee staff member who was a former FSP worker was allowed to do the in-person eligibility

interview (thus eliminating a trip to the FSO office) but that person left and all applicants were then required to go the FSP office to complete the process. The bilingual outreach worker also provided outreach and prescreening and application assistance offsite on a regular basis in the outlying areas of two of the more remote counties, in order to better meet the needs of the migrant workers.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. Muskegon was not able to establish a system for tracking applications through the local food stamp offices. Therefore, their evaluation relied on caseload information to estimate the effects of their outreach. Those data are not included below.

Exhibit B.12: Summary of Data Elements from Muskegon Community Health Project

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	11,780	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Follow-up contacts	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	575	543	0	0	70	30	39
Application assistance	193	217	0	0	53	13	2
Applications submitted	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications approved	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Applications denied	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Assets too high	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Citizenship status	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Does not live in juris	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete interview	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Incomplete inform	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other reason	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

* The site did submit data to the UI website; however, the data represented total caseload numbers for the counties. The site was unable to track the outcomes of their contacts. N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Muskegon used a combination of broad information dissemination efforts coupled with more intensive pre-screening and application assistance. Their major grantee activities included 575 pre-screenings and 425 direct referrals, and multiple information dissemination activities, which they estimated reached about 30,000 people directly or indirectly (e.g., through radio ads). They had difficulties setting up a system at FSP offices to track outcomes, and hence, relied on caseload information to estimate the effects of outreach. Their descriptive paired site analysis suggested that 4,229 more eligible households enrolled in the FSP in outreach counties relative to comparison counties with

similar characteristics, though they did not attempt to adjust the results using a multivariate analysis. They broadly attributed caseload increases to the economy, local policy changes and outreach activities. The actual number of awards directly due to the outreach project is unknown, but the data presented above show that relatively few clients were directly prescreened or assisted.

While staff felt that their efforts to educate the population about the FSP through media campaigns in the form of televised commercials on local cable channels and radio advertisements were successful in terms of increasing awareness (especially relative to billboard ads), they felt it was difficult to meet their enrollment goals without more intensive assistance. They also found that prescreening for other programs such as Medicaid and SCHIP provided a good opportunity to prescreen for the FSP program.

The choice of venue had important implications for reaching their target populations. Fostering relationships with different community groups, churches, and schools proved to be the single most effective means to access different populations, especially Hispanics. Additionally, they had some success in working with other programs, especially Head Start, WIC, and the Migrant Health Center. However, they encountered difficulties in enrolling migrant workers on farms and incorporating the Veterans Affairs Office.

Future Plans

Muskegon plans to continue similar outreach work. According to staff, “We’re going to continue with this because we think it’s so important.” The grantee and the state FSP agency received new funding to work with other partners on their state Food Stamp Outreach Plan, which would fund staff and allow them to continue outreach activities. They also have an appropriation through their county for their outreach work and they will continue to pursue other funding opportunities.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging (North Carolina)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Stanly, Rowan, Mecklenburg, Gaston, and Cabarras counties in North Carolina

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: March 2003-September 2004

Grant Amount: \$217,218

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of this project was to examine four different approaches to increasing food stamp participation among adult aged 60 and older in south central North

Carolina through a six-phase intervention (described below). Their main activities involved targeted dissemination of information as well as prescreening and follow-up.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging (DoA) is a state agency that promotes independence of the State's elderly population. DoA was the grant recipient and provided project oversight and grant administration. The Centralina Council of Government's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is a quasi-governmental agency that addresses various needs of the elderly on a regional basis including advocacy, planning, program and resource development, information brokerage, funds administration, and quality assurance. They contract with other agencies to provide a variety of home and community services to older adults. AAA staff conducted the daily outreach activities under this grant.

Staffing: Three staff members worked on this grant. The project coordinator is in charge of the day-to-day responsibilities in each of the six counties. Two full-time AAA outreach workers assisted in presentations, statistical reports, follow-up calls, prescreening, and preparing the packaging of materials. In addition, the DoA project director monitored the project. On occasion, the county senior service department helped "get the word out" to their clients. They also escorted outreach workers to the sites, especially in the rural areas.

Volunteers: AAA used five volunteers from a local senior center to help with bulk mailings.

Key Partners: Key partners included the project's Advisory Committee that consists of representatives from the Council on Aging, DoA, Nutrition Program, Clergy Association, Division of Social Services (DSS, the agency that administers the FSP), and food stamp representatives from each county. The Advisory Committee provided guidance throughout the project (especially in the beginning), but did not provide direct help with the intervention. The grantee indicated that the Committee existed primarily to assist and advise the staff to make sure everything was addressed. Other partners involved in the intervention include local service providers, senior centers, Goodwill, and churches (the AAA outreach workers contacted the elderly through these sites).

Food Stamp Office Partnership: In addition to participating in the project's Advisory Committee, food stamp staff played a direct role on many occasions. The Regional Coordinator from the North Carolina DSS food stamp office trained outreach staff on food stamp eligibility. On occasion, when DSS staff members were available, they accompanied outreach staff to their presentations to ensure that information being presented was correct and to answer questions that came up during the presentation. DSS staff also prepared the paper prescreening tool used by outreach workers. On at least one occasion, food stamp eligibility workers accepted applications on-site so elderly applicants would not have to travel to the food stamp office.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: AAA distributed thousands of mailings to elderly households in six counties. The mailings included the USDA flyers describing the Food Stamp Program and included the DSS phone number for each of the six counties in the intervention. AAA also sent the “North Carolina Food Stamp Fact Sheets” (developed for this effort), which included a checklist specifying materials and documents needed to apply for food stamps. The site used the DoA database to find the mailing addresses. Flyers were sent to every elderly person in the DoA database (in the six counties) regardless of their financial situation. The grantee also conducted several presentations at various nutrition sites, churches, and senior centers where the elderly organized.

Prescreening: AAA also prescreened the elderly, using a paper pre-screener developed by the NC Department of Social Services Food Stamp Office for AAA. They had originally planned to use the USDA electronic prescreener on laptops, but the prescreener was not developed in time for the site to use it. The site also conducted follow-up calls for those clients who they prescreened. They asked them if they applied and if they did, what was the result.

Application Assistance: The grantee did not provide formal application assistance. They did, however, conduct follow-up calls to clients who did not apply for food stamps after being prescreened in two counties.

The outreach activities described above were not available to all clients. AAA introduced the intervention in phases by county. The study included six counties. An additional service was provided in each county. The following outlines the intervention:

- Phase I: Flyers only. The grantee sent USDA flyers describing the Food Stamp Program. The flyers also included the DSS phone number for each of the six counties in the intervention. (Gaston County)
- Phase II: Flyers and Checklists. The grantee mailed the flyers and the “North Carolina Food Stamp Fact Sheets”, which included a checklist specifying materials and documents needed to apply for food stamps in North Carolina. (Cabarrus County)
- Phase III: Flyers, Checklists, and Presentations. In addition to the mailings, the grantee held presentation on the food stamp program at low-income nutrition sites for the elderly. (Stanly County)
- Phase IV: Flyers, Checklists, Presentations, and Pre-screenings. In addition to the mailings and presentations, the grantee prescreened clients using a paper tool. (Rowan County)
- Phase V: Flyers, Checklists, Presentations, Pre-screenings, and Follow-up. In addition to the mailings, presentations, and prescreenings, AAA also conducted

follow-up calls for those clients who did not apply for assistance after they were prescreened. (Iredell County)

- Phase VI: Flyers, Checklists, Presentations, Pre-screenings, and Follow-up. In addition to the mailings, presentations, and prescreenings, AAA also conducted follow-up calls for those clients who did not apply for assistance after they were prescreened. (Mecklenburg County)

The difference between phases V and VI is that Iredell County is very rural while Mecklenburg County is predominantly urban. AAA conducted their outreach in each county and then decided to go back to do a second round of outreach. Staff conducted the second round of outreach in each of the counties, except Iredell (because their partner felt that they had reached all of the eligible seniors during the first round). During the second pass in Mecklenburg County they expanded their efforts to encompass places like Goodwill and other places where seniors might gather.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through our website is presented below. North Carolina noted that the total number of applications submitted (and therefore awards and denials) is likely underestimated. They estimate that about 45 percent (159) of their clients did not provide a social security number, which the site used to track applications at the FSP office. The site was unable to track these applications.

North Carolina’s total contacts include the total number of persons the grantee had face-to-face contact with, as well as the flyers (8,533) and the checklists (7,600) sent across the six counties.

Exhibit B.13: Summary of Data Elements from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	17,610	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Follow-up contacts	62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	195	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Application assistance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications submitted	354/513	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications approved	280	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications denied	74	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	26	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete inform	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

While North Carolina did not increase FSP applications to the extent projected in their grant application, this project did increase food stamp applications among their target population. They contacted thousands of elderly clients through mass mailings and presentations, and were able to track 280 awards. The project's local evaluation found that the increase in food stamp participation in the treatment sites was actually lower than the increase in the external comparison counties. However, they also reported that the comparison counties with the greatest increase in program participation had higher than average rates of poverty. In addition, when the comparison was restricted to one county with the most similar characteristics, the treatment county had higher rates of increase in participation.

The grantee concluded they were effective at disseminating information to and informing seniors about the FSP. They also established good partnerships, worked closely with local food stamp offices, and tried to present a different image of the food stamp office to the elderly. The grantee attributed some of their success to the local partnerships they developed. These partnerships facilitated their access to the elderly in communities where they were not well known.

This site learned a considerable amount about barriers to food stamp participation among the elderly, including: issues of privacy and confidentiality, stigma and the perception of food stamps as "welfare," issues of trust, a negative perception of the food stamp agency, the complexity of the application process, and lack of transportation. They also found that family members have a tremendous influence on seniors and whether or not they follow through with their food stamp applications.

Future Plans

There are no plans to continue this project. However, the state food stamp office was researching future outreach options. The project coordinator hoped that outreach would be sustained by the food stamp office. The coordinator also was encouraging others to pick up the program such as the Area Agencies on Aging.

Project Bread

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Boston, Massachusetts, four sites (Athol, Orleans, Boston, and Worcester)

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: January 2004- November 2004

Grant Amount: \$344,500

Project Objectives and Activities

The grantee's primary goals were to develop and launch an Internet-based program through which low-income families could screen themselves for eligibility and submit application information directly to the Department of Transitional Assistance's (the state welfare agency) centralized computer system. Secondary goals were: 1) to partner with four pre-selected community agencies serving three distinct populations (low-income working and unemployed parents, elders, and veterans) and launch the online tool in local settings where target groups already seek services and routinely spend time; and 2) to provide ongoing technical assistance to produce a steady flow of completed food stamp applications, totaling a minimum of 1000 applications across the four partner sites throughout the project period.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Project Bread is a private, non-profit organization that has served as Massachusetts' leading anti-hunger agency for 30 years. The organization reaches out to low-income families, the elderly, and veterans and has a statewide focus on outreach and legislative change. They currently operate a statewide toll-free hunger hotline and engage in many other anti-hunger activities. Under a Round One FSP Access grant, they developed a website (www.gettingfoodstamps.org) which provides information about the FSP and prescreens for benefits.

Staffing: Five staff worked on this grant. The project coordinator was responsible for the day-to-day project management of the grant and coordinated the partnerships and provided general oversight for the partner agencies, ensuring agreements were in order and proper training was administered. The in-house evaluator developed the evaluation plan, maintained contact with partners, and was responsible for the baseline evaluation. The project manager coordinated the partnerships and provided general oversight for the partner agencies, ensuring agreements are in order and proper training is administered. A webmaster was responsible for developing the website. An application assistant worked in the field and served as the contact on-site to work with the clients and explain the online application.

Volunteers: None used.

Key Partners: Project Bread partnered with schools, health centers, and social service agencies in four communities across the state. Key pilot partners initially included two elementary schools in the Boston Public School System (later replaced with the Family Resource Center in the BPS system); Massachusetts Veterans, Inc.'s Computer Academy program in Worcester; and two Healthy Connections programs (a health insurance and health access initiative) in Athol and in Orleans. Several partners were added later in the project, including the Boston Chapter of the American Red Cross, Quincy Community Action Program, eight groups within the ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development), the Chelsea Health Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Brockton Health Center. Community Catalyst was the primary technology partner in the development of the website.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: Project Bread had a longstanding relationship with the state food stamp office -- the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) prior to this grant. The grantee received support from the DTA Commissioner; the launch of this project was featured in the Commissioner's monthly newsletter -- clearly indicating his support of the project. DTA also participated in a project called the Virtual Gateway that provides another avenue for online applications. The local food stamp offices were involved in many aspects of this project. Local food stamp office staff participated in most partner trainings. This was done to foster personal connections and allow them to see how the partners were being trained on submitting applications and to make them aware that these applications would be coming through. State office staff members were very involved in the technology aspects of this project and were key to facilitating the transmission of electronic applications and generating letters of receipt.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: The grantee worked with their partners to promote the online application through flyers, postcards, signs, and advertisements in local publications. They placed ads in the Cape Cod Parent and Child Magazine.

Prescreening: Project Bread developed a password-protected, online prescreening tool and food stamp application program that allowed applicants to directly submit an application to the food stamp agency. The website is available in both Spanish and English (the application is only available in English). Clients accessed the tool at one of the partner agencies involved in the intervention. Staff at the partner agencies were trained to use the tool and helped clients determine if they were eligible for benefits.

Application Assistance: Using the tool described during prescreening, staff at partner agencies helped clients complete FSP applications. Clients were not required to complete a prescreening before filling out an application. Once applications were completed, clients could electronically submit them to the food stamp office (DTA). The website allowed applicants to track their applications and provided them with a verification checklist. After submission, a letter from DTA was automatically generated and sent to clients advising them that DTA staff would contact them directly to complete the application process. Some partner sites also made copies of all of the clients' verification materials and faxed them to the local DTA office.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through our website is presented below. Note that by the end of the project, the awards and denials did not account for 241 of the applications. Of those applications, 175 were still pending, 21 were withdrawn, and 45 had no result.

Exhibit B.14: Summary of Data Elements from Project Bread

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	#HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	460	946	57	116	200	154	128
Follow-up contacts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	230	438	30	60	89	59	63
Application assistance	460	946	57	116	200	154	128
Applications submitted	460	995	65	106	202	173	141
Applications approved	85	234	7	29	52	40	58
Applications denied	134	253	17	28	57	42	44
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	9	17	1	1	3	5	1
Assets too high	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Citizenship status	2	3	2	2	0	0	0
Does not live in juris	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete interview	11	27	2	0	6	2	5
Incomplete inform	42	91	4	9	20	19	15
Other reason	48	110	8	12	22	14	17

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

While Project Bread was able to build a successful on-line application tool and partner with several agencies, they only assisted with 460 applications (far below their goal), of which approximately 85 were approved by the end of the project period. The vast majority of applications were either pending (38 percent) or denied (30 percent). The high denial rate occurred because clients did not complete the application process. For example, 47.8 percent of the denials could be attributed to clients’ failure to follow through, such as not turning in all required documentation (verifications), not completing the interview, or not returning the application summary signature page. The grantee reported that submission of verifications and the interview/signature steps of the process were their “biggest stumbling blocks” When online applicants were helped via follow-up, they were more likely to be approved. They reported that the pilot partners that had the best results were those that sent over (by fax or mail) at least some of the applicant’s verifications at the same time as the application was submitted on line. They also concluded that clients must be made aware of the “benefits clock” – the 30 days for completion of the application process.

Grantee staff and the local evaluation report noted that follow-up with applicants is key. As their evaluation report noted, “the biggest stumbling blocks were the submission of verifications and the interview/signature steps of the process. When online applicants were helped with follow-up, they tended to be approved.” The pilot partners suggested that regular site-specific results reports would be helpful to them in following up with their clients and further investigating the surprising rate of denials. In response, Project Bread did begin to provide this feedback to partners.

Grantee staff noted that providing people with an alternative to the welfare office for applying for food stamps was also a major accomplishment. It created a friendlier environment for the application process.

Project Bread noted that they did not meet their goals due to unrealistic expectations, setbacks in the development schedule, challenges in incorporating the online application into the flow of some of our partner's work, and some unsuccessful application sites. This project experienced a number of delays associated with the technological challenges of creating a new website. The local evaluator noted that when they initiated the project, staff did not fully understand the partners' technological capabilities. The contracted entity served as a strategic partner and sub-contracted actual web development work to a third party. This intermediary relationship added a level of complexity and detracted from the grantee's ability to influence the prioritization of the work of the third party. Staff noted the difficulties presented in coordinating the work of several key partners and the need to readjust timelines and schedules to accommodate partner staff time commitments, workloads and priorities. In addition, staff had initially planned to have the benefit calculator information transmit directly to the application (to eliminate duplication of effort) but this proved technologically unfeasible.

Future Plans

The grantee has private funding to continue their efforts to maintain the system. They did note that some of their partners were able to assist them because Project Bread paid their staff to continue with application assistance. At the end of the grant period, the grantee was still pursuing additional sources of funding to allow them to continue to support this activity. In addition, they would like to expand the website to broader public use (possibly by adding the tool to the gettingfoodstamps.org website), while maintaining a section for their partners. Project Bread also has funding to provide technology grants to organizations for the purchase of computer equipment so they can access the online application from their agencies.

Salem-Keizer School District (Salem-Keizer)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Salem, OR, specifically three public elementary schools within the Salem-Keizer School District.

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: January 2003-September 2004

Grant Amount: \$121,638

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of the project was to improve access to food stamps for families with elementary school age children in three of Salem's highest need neighborhoods by bringing food stamp outreach directly to families as they interacted with their child's

school. Grantee activities included 1) dissemination of FSP information through the distribution of flyers, posters, and newsletters to students and families in the three targeted schools; and 2) prescreening and application assistance by DHS workers at community and school based events.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Salem-Keizer is a public school district with approximately 40,000 students and 52 schools. This outreach effort was initially designed to focus on four elementary schools (Bush, Richmond, Grant, and Highland Elementary Schools) within three of Salem's highest need neighborhoods. Highland Elementary School withdrew from the project due to a change in principal. Bush and Richmond schools were traditional elementary schools with children in grades K-5, while Grant was a combined elementary/ middle school serving K-8th graders. Enrollment at the time of the grant for the three schools was 540 at Grant, 365 at Richmond, and 320 at Bush. They estimate that the 1,225 children represented between 650-800 families (since multiple children from the same family sometimes attended the same school). Between 50 and 60 percent of the students attending these schools was Hispanic.

Staffing: Initially, six staff members were assigned to work on this project (although grant funds were not allocated for staff salaries, with the exception of the evaluator). Four pre-assigned staff, one at each of the four schools, who provided referrals for families in need of services such as food, housing, or medical assistance, were trained in food stamp eligibility and application procedures so that they could incorporate food stamps into the array of referrals they provided to their families. The pre-assigned staff members were Family Health Coordinators at the Bush and Richmond Schools, and initially, Community Health Initiative (CHI) staffers at Grant and Highland schools.

The project director and the project evaluator (a professor from Willamette University) were the other two staff originally assigned to this grant. The project director, who conceived of and applied for this grant, was an employee of the school district and director of a state grant funded program (LIGHTS) that was designed to bring family social service outreach and education and after-school enrichment to the four schools. The grant established the Learning by Inviting Grown-Ups and Hope to School (LIGHTS) consortium of Community Learning Centers. LIGHTS provided the funding for the Family Health Coordinators at the Bush and Richmond Schools.

By the Fall of 2002, Highland was no longer participating in the project and funding for the CHI at the Grant School ended so they assigned their Community School Outreach Coordinators (CSOCs) to participate in the grant. The CSOC's role was to coordinate the relationship between the school and the community for the purposes of social service delivery. In May 2003, funding for the LIGHTS program ended and the project director and Family Health Coordinators were laid off. The principals at Bush and Richmond schools assigned their CSOCs to the grant project and the evaluator reallocated money from the grant budget to hire the former project director as a part-time consultant for the

remainder of the grant or until she found full-time employment elsewhere. The principal of the Grant School agreed to take over the project coordination position for the grant, although the evaluator and the consultant, primarily the evaluator, handled the day-to-day management of the project.

Department of Health Services' (DHS) outreach workers participated in monthly family events at each school and at various community events such as health fairs, car seat clinics, and block parties.

Volunteers: No volunteers were used in Salem-Keizer's outreach efforts.

Key Partners: This project was designed to partner school district personnel with DHS staffers and to promote food stamp participation in the four schools. DHS also provided training to Salem-Keizer staff on food stamp policies and provided ongoing monthly updates on policy changes affecting the FSP. Additionally, Jenni's Food Store, a WIC-only food store that provided food and nutrition education to women and children in the Highland/Grant neighborhoods hosted events such as car seat clinics and nutrition education classes where they included a DHS worker who conducted food stamp outreach. Jenni's Food Store also displayed the flyers and brochures from the grant that advertised the FSP.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: DHS staff participated in all of the school and community events and provided information about the FSP and prescreening and application assistance services to families. Families developed a "comfort level" with repeated exposure to the same the DHS representative at school events; DHS representatives were bilingual and knew the community. However, the grantee did report a lack of enthusiasm in promoting the FSP on the part of the DHS representatives. The grantee attributed some of this to the requirement that DHS representative had to attend events outside of normal work hours (they received comp time for this work). The DHS office was not able to track outcomes for individuals reached by the project.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Salem Keizer's multimedia campaign included dissemination of FSP information (e.g. posters and flyers) to children in the three targeted elementary schools, dissemination of information in both English and Spanish in the monthly school newsletters that go home with children, and dissemination of information in a newsletter in one of the targeted neighborhoods (with a circulation of 2,500 households). DHS staff attending monthly school and community events provided information about the Food Stamp Program to families attending the events. Additionally, employees in Jenni's Store handed out flyers and brochures and displayed FSP posters.

Prescreening/Application Assistance: Prescreening services and application assistance were available once a month at each school during an informational event where DHS staff members were present. Salem-Keizer provided in-person outreach at 29 different school and community events over a 21 month period. As originally designed, the outreach

for this grant had two components: the in-school staff members were to incorporate food stamp outreach as part of their service delivery and they were to coordinate with DHS workers to attend the school and community family events where they would provide information about food stamps and prescreening and application assistance.

The DHS staff faithfully attended monthly events at each school (“family night” that included dinner and a program) where bilingual staff provided an introduction to the Food Stamp Program, including information on eligibility, and offered one-on-one prescreening and application assistance for families that approached the food stamp assistance table. For eligible families, applications were filled out on paper and mailed in to the DHS office. About 75 families attended each event. DHS workers also participated in outreach events sponsored by Jenni’s Food Store. The same DHS representative attended repeated events at the same venue, thereby generating a personal comfort level among parents.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. Salem-Keizer’s contacts represent the total number of families that attended the outreach events held at their schools (or at the WIC-only store), as well as the total number of flyers or newsletters distributed either through handouts to children at the three schools or to families at outreach events. Since there were often multiple children per family and multiple flyers distributed at different times to the children in the schools, the total number of contacts does not represent the impact of their outreach, but it does represent a level of effort. The numbers prescreened and assisted with applications is an undercount of the true numbers prescreened and assisted since DHS workers were not consistent in their tracking of contacts and activities with families at the outreach events.

Salem-Keizer was not able to obtain outcome data for the applications submitted via their outreach efforts, despite repeated attempts to establish a tracking system with the DHS workers attending the school and community events. The evaluator was able to obtain caseload data and via a multivariate-paired site analysis in their local evaluation report (comparing caseload data in the three targeted school districts to caseload data in five non-targeted school districts), suggested that the intervention did not have an overall significant effect on caseloads.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Salem-Keizer did a significant amount of outreach at the school and community events despite serious staffing challenges. They were successful in reaching their target population, although their targeted population, families attending school events, may have been a very select population – a group more engaged in their child’s school, and therefore, more “together” than other families who may need food stamps. Additionally, since

Exhibit B.15: Summary of Data Elements from the Salem-Keizer School District

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	9,478	N/A	5,281	N/A	8,299	779	N/A
Follow-up contacts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	59	N/A	53	N/A	32	2	N/A
Application assistance	54	N/A	50	N/A	27	2	N/A
Applications submitted	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications approved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications denied	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for Denial:							
Income too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete information	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

families that are likely to attend any school event are likely to attend more than one event, they felt that they were able to build a level of comfort and familiarity with DHS staff and the FSP. However, given the nature of the outreach (school and community family events) there was a sense of preaching to a saturated population (and a select population) and in some cases to a population that was already linked up with the food stamp program (e.g., the WIC-only store clients). The evaluator pointed out in several places that they felt that multiple outreach attempts at the same schools may have been overkill – after a few outreach events, they felt that most of the parents knew what they had to say.

The project suffered from a lack of core paid staff and was seriously constrained by the lack of funding and differing priorities (and philosophies) of the tightly strapped school districts. School staff time was not budgeted into this grant (the grant covered the evaluation and the cost of producing and distributing outreach materials such as brochures, flyers and newsletters). As a result, school staff did not have clearly defined job responsibilities related to this project – these activities were really never a part of anyone’s job description. Even the school principals were never fully vested in the process. The project experienced considerable turnover in key positions, most significantly with the project coordinator’s loss of funding and her shifting to part-time consultant status. While it would appear that schools would be the ideal place to catch parents, school staff members were terribly overburdened and budgets were very tight. The grantee indicated that a staff person who was paid to coordinate school related activities would have significantly facilitated Salem-Keizer’s outreach efforts.

Additionally staff felt constrained by the lack of control of the “corporate culture” in which outreach workers operate. Staff felt that, “if we actually had some arrangement

where we had an employee on the grant who was the outreach worker, that was enthusiastic about it...that we had been able to sort of hire and train, that would have been a different environment than what we had.”

Future Plans

There are no plans to continue with the specific outreach activities in the three participating elementary schools. Staff noted, however, to the extent that the CSOCs are now aware of the food stamp program and have gained an understanding of the application process, they could add that to their repertoire of referral services they provide to families.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties (SHFB)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Santa Cruz County, California

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: October 2002-September 2004

Grant Amount: \$287,680

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of this project was to: 1) educate legal immigrant and low-income families on the nutritional value of food stamps and improvements in the Food Stamp Program; 2) increase food stamp participation among legal immigrants and low-income families and individuals in Santa Cruz County; and 3) assess the effectiveness of a multi-level social marketing campaign, including information dissemination. Activities included information dissemination and a multimedia campaign targeting Hispanic and other immigrant families and prescreening and application assistance in a variety of settings, including food distribution sites.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB) is an independent, nonprofit, community organization that provides food to approximately 42,000 individuals per month through a network of 120 agencies and programs throughout their service area. SHFB is a founding member of America’s Second Harvest. About 80 percent of SHFB’s work is physically moving food to people (they serve 1,500 households at their peak in winter through their USDA food distribution site), while 20 percent of their resources are focused on education and outreach, including nutrition outreach. The organization also operates a hotline (funded through a state grant) through which SHFB staff can provide FSP information, determine whether or not a caller may be eligible for food stamps and then transfer callers via a Centrex line to the county FSP office, if desired

Staffing: Five staff, a project manager and four outreach workers worked on this project. The lead outreach worker was a staff member at SHFB; half of his time was funded through this outreach grant while the other half was funded through their Nutrition Network Outreach grant. The other three outreach workers (paid part-time through this grant) were employees of (and continued to be supervised by) three local community-based partner agencies. The project manager provided overall project management (including coordination of the efforts of partner agencies and the local FSP), conducted training on the FSP, developed FSP outreach materials, managed the data collection, tracking and reporting, and oversaw the work of the lead outreach worker. The lead outreach worker oversaw the activities of the other three outreach workers, conducted outreach presentations throughout the community, talked about the FSP at food distribution sites and oversaw the work of the hotline workers. The lead outreach worker also conducted prescreenings and provided application assistance at outreach sites and presentation sessions, and provided case management and advocacy services. The other outreach workers were responsible for the day-to-day FSP outreach and prescreening and application assistance, including case management for those applications they assisted with.

Volunteers: Twelve volunteers (or “Promoters”) were trained to be community FSP educators and to direct food stamp applicants to outreach workers and two half-time volunteers were trained to work on the hotline, and help with applications if the lead outreach worker were not available. (Originally, Promoters were to help fill out applications but the county FSP office was wary of having too many people working on applications and too many applications being submitted for individuals who were not eligible.) SHFB staff felt that the volunteers were a more “credible voice because they were part of the community.”

Key Partners: SHFB collaborated with three key partner agencies with whom they had previously-established relationships. They were: the Familia Center (a food distribution agency for the low-income population), La Manzana Community Resources Center (a one-stop, multi-purpose family resource center), and Salud Para la Gente (a community agency that provides health services to the Latino population). Each of these partners provided a designated part-time outreach worker who assisted applicants with the prescreening and application process.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The county Human Resources Agency (HRA) office in Santa Cruz County that administered the FSP was a key partner on this project. The SHFB project director had a longstanding relationship with the local HRA office because of prior collaborative efforts (e.g., immediate transfer of hotline callers to the HRA caseworkers via the Centrex line) and work on the local hunger coalition so this project was able to build on those relationships. Early on they held regular joint meetings to discuss challenges at all levels and felt that these were successful in solving operational issues. HRA also provided a 1-day training on eligibility procedures for the outreach workers and promoters. SHFB and HRA also established a formal communication protocol clearly defining roles that worked well over the course of the project.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: SHFB disseminated FSP information and conducted a multi-media campaign throughout their service area. SHFB distributed flyers, brochures and posters (all in English and Spanish) at community agencies and organizations, food pantries, health fairs and soup kitchens. Outreach workers also updated and modified a Power Point presentation about food stamps and electronic benefits transfer (EBT) in particular and made in-person outreach visits and presentations to community sites (e.g., food distribution lines). Over the course of the project, SHFB developed and ran two 30-second English/Spanish public service announcements on 3 major broadcast television stations that were designed to increase awareness of food stamp eligibility. The message focused on food stamps as a nutrition program and a program for low-income workers. In addition, SHFB developed a 5-minute English-Spanish video loop dispelling 12 common FSP myths designed to run in community agencies and worked with the LA Regional Food Bank to develop an outreach website with a prescreening tool.

Prescreening: The SHFB lead outreach worker and the outreach workers from the three partnering agencies provided FSP information and prescreening and application assistance at their own sites, food pantries, USDA distribution sites, and other community organizations that reach people with food needs. Staff used a software prescreening tool developed by the LA Regional Food Bank under a Round 1 grant to determine if a person might be eligible and if so, the potential amount of benefits. Staff viewed this prescreening process as a sales tool or a “hook” for potential applicants, displaying their likely eligibility and potential benefits. In many cases, this step was skipped if the applicant appeared willing to apply. Staff noted that the prescreening process was not always useful for applicants who appeared to be in the “gray “ area – if it showed them eligible for only \$10, they might be less likely to move forward with the process. The new technology was challenging for some outreach workers at partner agencies.

Application Assistance: All application assistance was completed using paper forms. Outreach workers either assisted families with filing out the first two pages of the standard application form on site, or the outreach worker got a signature on an HRA release form, collected the applicant’s telephone number, and followed-up to complete the application by phone. Additionally, outreach workers could refer people to SHFB’s hotline for assistance. The outreach workers collected all non-expedited applications and hand delivered them directly to HRA for processing; expedited applications were taken to HRA directly by the applicant. SHFB instituted a log-in procedure for delivery of applications after some hand-delivered applications were lost at HRA. Outreach workers followed-up by phone with many applicants to confirm that HRA contacted them to set up an interview. Applicants were also given a list of required documentation to take to the eligibility appointment. Other follow-up, client assistance and case management was provided by outreach workers as needed.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. SHFB’s total contacts represent a count of the number of persons with whom they had face-to-face contact (or hotline contact) regarding food stamps, as well as the number of flyers and outreach materials distributed during the first three months of the grant. (Prior to the outreach workers being hired and trained, SHFB reported the number of outreach materials distributed as their grantee data contacts).

By the end of the grant period, SHFB reported a significant number of applications with unknown status (478 applications, or 1/3 of the applications submitted to the food stamp office). Seventy of these unknown applications were actually voluntarily withdrawn by the applicant, whereas the SHFB did not know the outcomes for the remaining 408 applications.

Exhibit B.16: Summary of Data Elements from the Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	40,843	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Follow-up contacts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	742	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Application assistance	1,651	3,920	566	156	859	687	N/A
Applications submitted	1,398	N/A	180	32	329	217	15
Applications approved	457	784	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications denied	473	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for denial:							
Income too high	134	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	189	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete information	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Overall, outreach workers assisted 1,656 food stamp applications, 1,398 of which were received by the Santa Cruz County Human Resources Agency (HRA). Of the submitted applications, 457 were approved, 533 denied and 135 expedited. The project generated 13.1 percent of all food stamp applications received by HRA during the project period, including 20 percent of the Latino and 28.3 percent of the Spanish language applications.

This site reported an increase in notoriety from the public ads based on calls to their hotline. Specifically, they noted that a 30-second television PSA on food stamps was produced by the project (in English and Spanish), played on area TV stations making 3,196,000 gross impressions and increasing calls to the local Community Food Hotline by 68 percent.

A major finding was that the SHFB felt that they had to switch the focus for outreach workers from education to more intensive application assistance for their clients. The large number of denials supported their case. Specifically, they found that while they could get people into the food stamp office, follow through was an important task. Many clients did not complete their applications without additional encouragement and help. The grantee noted that the biggest challenge to getting clients to apply for food stamps was their belief that the application process was too long and complicated. Consequently, SHFB began modifying its goals to focus on more follow-up services, which were intensive and time-consuming. They attempted to train their team to be more proactive for FSP participation, rather than simply disseminating information for educating the public about the FSP.

A key barrier noted was the fear among the Latino population of the effect of receipt of food stamp benefits on immigration status. SHFB employed a number of strategies to dispel some of these myths, including a flyer explaining that food stamps and other non-cash benefits are not a public charge issue. The flier also contained contact information for a regional immigration information hotline. They also distributed a policy letter generated by USCIS (previously INS) to allay these fears.

SHFB staff felt that their relationship with the FSP office evolved and matured over the course of the project. Initially, the project was seen as “just one more headache for the local HRA offices” that were suffering budget and staffing cuts, a new multi-eligibility software system, the implementation of EBT, a shift to quarterly reporting, and increased FSP caseloads. The grantee reported that some of the program changes, such as elimination of the vehicle asset test, easing the requirements for face-to-face interviews, and moving to quarterly reporting, actually made applying for food stamp benefits more attractive.

SHFB also attributed their success to the cultural appropriateness of their outreach partners and workers; they felt that they were successful because they “spoke the language of the community.” SHFB also felt that they had “built up trust in the FSP program among the community members”; they believed that their success in de-mystifying the FSP had resulted in success in increased participation.

Future Plans

SHFB expects to continue their food stamp outreach work, in part relying on other grant funding. They will also continue collaborations with the LA Regional Food Bank on the website. Staff at the three partner organizations will continue to provide FSP outreach and application assistance will be a part of their regular menu of client services. Staff was

hopeful that HRA will continue to allow them to help with FSP applications and deliver them to the offices but they were less certain that HRA would continue to track the outcomes of those applications.

Community Action Project Of Tulsa County (Tulsa)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: Tulsa, OK

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: January 2004-December 2004

Grant Amount: \$336,093

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goal of the project was to develop a web-based screening and application assistance tool for use within Tulsa's Earned Income Tax Credit outreach and free tax preparation sites to screen clients for eligibility for food stamps and other state and federal benefit programs, with the primary goal of increasing access to food stamps. Additionally, Tulsa made their web-based system (Benefits Eligibility System for Oklahomans, or BESO) available to other community organizations, such as Head Start and Workforce Oklahoma, to increase access to food stamps for their clients. Tulsa's outreach activities included 1) development of the BESO software system; 2) prescreening and application assistance at nine tax preparation sites during the 2004 tax season; and 3) marketing of BESO to community based organizations and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) for use in connecting potentially eligible Tulsans to the Food Stamp Program.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: The Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAPTC) is a nonprofit, anti-poverty community action agency funded by the Tulsa Area United Way. Their mission is to help individuals and families in economic need achieve self-sufficiency through emergency aid, medical care, housing, community development, education and advocacy delivered in an atmosphere of respect. They provide an array of federal, state and privately funded programs in support of this mission. Many of their programs are designed to assist low-income individuals in meeting basic needs, such as food, health care, and housing. CAPTC provides Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) outreach, free tax preparation, Head Start, Early Head Start, social services and emergency aid, medical clinics, housing programs, and Individual Development Account (IDA) savings programs.

Staffing: Nine paid staff worked on this grant: one project coordinator (full-time) and eight part-time workers. The part time workers included three Management

Information System (MIS)/Information Technology (IT) staff, two screeners, one staff person from the public policy department, the Executive Director, and the local evaluator. The MIS/IT staff researched and acquired the necessary software for the Internet-based screening tool (BESO) and provided technical support to users throughout the grant. One of the two screeners was employed for 2 months during the tax season and screened clients at CAPTC's tax centers; the other screener was stationed at one of CAPTC's social services sites. Additional staff supporting the project (but not paid by the grant) included volunteer screeners (about 50) at the tax centers and CAPTC outreach workers stationed at CAP-owned housing developments who incorporated BESO into the array of services they offered to the residents of the housing developments. In addition, staff at partner agencies used BESO to screen their clients.

The project coordinator was responsible for the day-to-day project management and for meeting with and promoting their outreach initiative to other non-profit agencies in Oklahoma. The project coordinator worked with caseworkers and management at OKDHS to gain support for their outreach initiative and to encourage OKDHS to incorporate BESO into their service delivery system. The project coordinator was also responsible for recruiting and training volunteers to use and maintain the BESO tool and database.

Volunteers: About 50 volunteers screened clients at tax centers using BESO.

Key Partners: Tulsa hired ACS, Inc. to design BESO, the Internet-based tool used to prescreen and generate applications for food stamps and other benefits. During the 2004 tax season, Tulsa used BESO to screen clients attending one of their 9 Earned Income Tax Credit outreach and free tax preparation sites. The nine sites included:

- Bank of Oklahoma
- Tulsa Federal Employees Credit Union
- Houston Center
- Church Assembly of God in West Tulsa
- South Peoria Neighborhood House
- Owasso Senior Citizen Community Center
- Broken Arrow Community Center
- Claremore, RCB Bank
- St. Francis Xavier Church (bilingual site)

After the 2004 tax season Tulsa pursued partnerships with a variety of community based organizations. Three organizations successfully introduced BESO into their packages of service delivery during the grant period. These agencies included the one-stop employment centers (Workforce Oklahoma), Head Start and Early Head Start centers (Family and Children's Services), and a homeless shelter and service provider for the homeless, near-homeless, and at risk individuals (John 3:16 Mission). Tulsa recruited numerous other community organizations that had not begun using BESO by the end of the grant period, but were in the preparation stage.

These included agencies such as Catholic Charities, Legal Aid, senior centers, several food banks, housing authorities, and many other community based groups. Note that Tulsa only held 10 licenses for BESO. A license costs \$1,000 for the first year and \$100 after for maintenance (the evaluator reported that they were able to negotiate a discounted price of \$607.50 for the first year). Tulsa could roll out BESO to anyone who was part of the grant under their license, but would have to supply licenses (or negotiate for licenses with ACS Inc.,) to partners outside of the original grant once they distributed the 10 that they purchased.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: Tulsa’s project included minimal involvement from the local food stamp office. They did work with representatives at the state and local levels to promote the benefits of their system and they worked with the state about functional issues related to their system’s implementation. While DHS staff did not provide formal training on the food stamp application process, information was provided informally. Initially the DHS was not able to track outcomes due to the lack of a unique identifier, and the project later modified their reports to include clients’ SSNs.

Outreach Activities

Prescreening Tool Development: During the first year and a half of the grant, Tulsa designed and completed the BESO tool. Originally, they considered using Real Benefits software, but decided against it because it did not allow for in-house management of the tool. In August 2003, they hired a software developer, and in September they began adapting the contractor’s Help Works software to the Oklahoma eligibility rules for food stamps and other benefit programs to create their BESO tool.⁴ BESO was fully functional at the beginning of the 2004 tax season and could prescreen for food stamps and numerous other benefit programs, including TANF, Medicaid, eye and dental clinic services, summer food program, WIC, EITC, case management, housing assistance, etc. By mid summer, the BESO tool had been programmed to screen for 31 different benefit programs.

During the testing phase of BESO, they found that the estimate of food stamp benefits was often within \$1 of what OKDHS would award an eligible family. Given that the targeted population (individuals waiting for tax services) had all of the documentation necessary for filing their taxes and applying for food stamps, the applications submitted to OKDHS via Tulsa’s outreach tended to be extremely accurate and complete.

Prescreening/Application Assistance: Tulsa provided prescreening and application assistance using BESO in conjunction with their annual Earned Income Tax Credit outreach and free tax preparation services. Screenings happened at the nine tax preparation sites in and around Tulsa (including one Hispanic, bilingual site). Clients at the tax preparation sites waiting to have their taxes prepared were approached and asked if they would like to see if they could take advantage of various programs in their community (rather than if they wanted to be screened for food stamps – staff felt that this approach was effective given the public arena and the stigma surrounding food stamps as “welfare”). Clients who agreed to participate in the screening had the option of being screened by

⁴ The grantee supplemented their FNS grant with other CAP funds to expand software functions.

volunteers immediately at the tax preparation center or of scheduling a time to come back for a prescreening. If a client was called in to have their taxes prepared before they finished the BESO screening, they could resume the screening after doing their taxes or they could make an appointment to do it over the phone or at a CAP office.

Once a client went through the prescreening and was found to be eligible, the software calculated an estimated benefit level. The clients were then asked if they would like to submit an initial application and if they agreed, a 2-page initial application was populated with the information collected from the prescreening and mailed to the food stamp office. The actual application for food stamps was a 13-page application that includes applications for various other social programs (TANF, Medicaid, Child Care subsidies, and food stamps). The 2-page application that Tulsa's software produced was the portion of the 13-page application that was pertinent to food stamps. By the end of the tax season, Tulsa was able to batch submit each day's applications by site to the food stamp office (although they were working toward automatic submission at the time that the application was generated – see below – this did not happen until after the end of the grant). This submission automatically generated a case number and file at the food stamp office. The caseworker then called the applicant to set up a time for them to come in to fill out the 13-page application. Tulsa provided applicants with a checklist of verification documents they needed to bring with them to the appointment with the food stamp office caseworker. Tulsa did not provide assistance beyond the screening and generating of the initial application and list of verification documents. Although Tulsa would submit the initial application to OKDHS, it was up to the client to follow through with the remainder of the application process.

Tulsa worked with OKDHS to allow electronic submission of the completed applications via email, but this did not happen during the tax season outreach (they had difficulties routing applications to the correct office because they did not have the list of zip codes to map to the correct office). During the tax season, Tulsa screeners printed the completed applications and mailed them to the appropriate DHS office. After the end of the grant (January 2005) electronic submission of completed applications was functional in four counties. Tulsa staff talked about ultimately sending all verification documents electronically as well (via scanned copies) and they are working with OKDHS to make this happen. Staff felt that if there was no need to see an IRS agent to submit your taxes, the same philosophy should be applied to applying for food stamp benefits. (Note: Tulsa received a second USDA grant to continue work with OKDHS to incorporate BESO into their service delivery system.)

Post Tax Season Outreach Activities: After the tax season and once BESO was fully functional, the project coordinator dedicated his time to recruiting other local non-profits and introducing them to BESO through a Power Point presentation. Additionally, he worked with OKDHS to continue to garner buy-in on incorporating BESO and allowing for electronic submission of applications and verification documents.

Tulsa developed a web-based tool www.public.captc.org that was not publicly available by the end of the grant period. They found that they needed to develop a new questionnaire for the website that asked simpler questions yet got at the same type of

information needed for the formal application. After completing this public access screening, individuals still need to come in to CAP or a partner agency for a full screening.

Tulsa did follow-up calls with the families they referred to OKDHS. They made initial calls to all families they had referred, and 50 had responded (although only 40 provided usable responses). They asked clients whether they applied for benefits and if so, were they eligible? They found, for some who were not eligible, they had not disclosed wages from tips. More than half had actually applied for benefits (23).

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator’s website is presented below. Tulsa’s contact information represents the total number of clients prescreened with the BESO system and highlights the number that filled out an initial application through BESO. Tulsa was not able to obtain outcome data for all of the 699 applications that they assisted with and for which they submitted initial applications to the food stamp office. The majority of their applications were obtained during the 2004 tax season, however, OKDHS was only able to provide outcomes for 188 referrals made by Tulsa between May 1, 2004 and September 30, 2004 (representing 27 percent of all referrals). Of the 188 referrals, 49 had not applied for food stamps by the end of September. The outcomes for the 136 submitting full applications are listed in the table below. Note that demographic information was not available for the 108 applications OKDHS provided outcome data for.

Exhibit B.17: Summary of Data Elements from the Community Action Project of Tulsa County

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non-Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	1,430	4,497	185	294	1,120	1,079	314
Follow-up contacts	20	64	4	4	16	8	1
Pre-screened	1,430	4,497	185	294	1,120	1,079	314
Application assistance	699	2,083	61	100	467	383	172
Applications submitted	136	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications approved	108	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications denied	23	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reasons for denial							
Income too high	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Assets too high	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Citizenship status	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Does not live in juris	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete interview	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incomplete information	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other reason	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: The total column may include households for which demographic information was not available.

N/A: The grantee never collected information on these data elements.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Despite significant implementation challenges including having the original project manager leave after 6 months with little accomplished on the project, changing software vendors almost a year into the grant, and struggling with OKDHS to allow electronic submission of the pre-application form and to track the applications Tulsa referred, Tulsa successfully built a sustainable web-based screening tool that they used to refer significant numbers of Tulsans to the FSP. Over the course of the project, Tulsa prescreened over 1,400 individuals and referred almost 700 to OKDHS for food stamps. Well-trained and committed project staff, including skilled MIS/IT staff, were the keys to the success of Tulsa's efforts. Tulsa was also successful in promoting their BESO system to other partners in the community and expanded their reach beyond clients at their tax preparation sites to include families in the Head Start program and clients at Workforce Oklahoma, as well as individuals at food banks and shelters throughout the city.

Throughout the grant Tulsa struggled with various technical issues (and buy-in issues at OKDHS) including the electronic submission of applications directly to OKDHS and the tracking of applications referred to OKDHS via Tulsa's outreach. They worked unsuccessfully during the grant period (but successfully shortly after the grant ended) to allow BESO to submit completed food stamp pre-applications directly to OKDHS via email. A technical issue with BESO during early implementation prevented Tulsa from submitting tracking information to OKDHS on referred clients. OKDHS also had tracking problems on their end, and as a result of these issues, Tulsa was not able to provide outcome data for all of the clients that they referred to the food stamp office. They obtained outcomes for clients referred May through September 2004.

Future Plans

This project has become institutionalized and is seen as an ongoing part of Tulsa's activities. They received a second grant from USDA for a three-year partnership with the state Department of Human Services to incorporate BESO into their service delivery package. Tulsa staff hoped that this would lead DHS to "put some of their resources and really their personnel ...in place and take some ownership, or at least sponsorship, of this project." Tulsa also received additional funding from private foundations to support work with BESO including an award from The Center for Financial Services Innovation to use their BESO system to work with employers to encourage low-income Oklahomans to link government benefits to savings products at area banks and credit unions. Additionally, Tulsa's staff planned to continue work on their public access website.

Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger (Vermont)

Characteristics

Location/Number of Sites: State of Vermont; targeting two local jurisdictions with high unemployment rates (Newport and Springfield)

Intervention Start Date and End Dates: September 2003- November 2004

Grant Amount: \$294,297

Project Objectives and Activities

The primary goals of the project were to 1) develop a Vermont food stamp website with a prescreening tool and online barrier survey and 2) create a food stamp marketing campaign with a target audience component. Their activities included a multi-media campaign with radio spots and advertisements in newspapers in targeted areas, more general dissemination of information about the FSP and their website and distribution of brochures, small cards, and posters statewide. Web-based prescreening and benefit calculation was available through their website developed for this project.

Organizational Information

Type of Organization/Agency: Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger (VTCECH) is a stand-alone non-profit hunger coalition created in 1992 to address hunger among children in the state. Vermont works with a variety of other partner organizations throughout the state to provide access to information about food stamps and to provide outreach to those who may be eligible but are not receiving food stamps. VTCECH currently has an FSP outreach grant from the state and also facilitates a food stamp work group convened to address barriers to participation in the FSP. The organization also works with the public schools on efforts to expand participation in the school meals programs, offers nutrition education programs, and trains staff at other community organizations about FSP policies and benefits.

Staffing: Five staff members were paid through this grant to work on the outreach project. The project manager oversaw the work of the project coordinator, met with partners and communicated with the state food stamp office. The project coordinator was responsible for day-to-day project management, coordinated the work of the contractors and partners, and recruited and trained new partner organizations about the FSP and the grantee's website. A staff member from the University of Vermont was responsible for oversight of website development and ongoing operations; another part-time worker from UVM assisted that person. In addition, a media consultant was hired early on during the project to oversee the multimedia campaign; she in turn subcontracted with a graphic design firm.

Volunteers: Volunteers were used only occasionally to assist with mass mailings.

Key Partners: Key partners included community service providers and non-profit agencies that work with the low-income population (e.g., Community Action Agencies,

Head Start Centers, employment offices, senior centers) and provide access to computers and the Internet at their locations. The project coordinator made presentations about the FSP, the website and the Internet at 95 organizations throughout the state over the two-year project period, training 425 community service providers and advocates to enable them to help low-income individuals use the website's prescreening tool. Staff at these organizations also distributed and made available all of the project outreach materials. The University of Vermont, whose staff oversaw web operations and conducted the evaluation, was also a key partner.

Food Stamp Office Partnership: The state agency administering the FSP, the Vermont Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition and Health Access (PATH), was also a key partner on this project.⁵ The grantee has a longstanding relationship with PATH, collaborating on a food stamp work group whose purpose is to bring community service providers and advocates together discussing issues of mutual interest. PATH was very involved in this project from its beginning, assisting in all phases of design and implementation. PATH staff worked closely with all project partners to modify their computer system to collect data for this project. They also collaborated with the grantee to train PATH field staff on the use of the website.

Outreach Activities

Information Dissemination: Vermont developed a public access website, www.vermontfoodhelp.com, which provides information on how the FSP works, who is eligible, how to apply for benefits and the economic and nutritional advantages of participation. The grantee also conducted a statewide food stamp outreach campaign providing general FSP information and promoting use of their website by distributing flyers, brochures, small information cards, and posters to state agencies, community organizations, libraries, food stamp retailers, food banks, town halls, and other venues throughout the state. Vermont also conducted a multimedia campaign, which focused on two target areas (Newport and Springfield) and included ads in six newspapers and radio PSAs on six radio stations in those areas.

Prescreening: Vermont's website, launched on September 26, 2003, includes a prescreening tool which determines potential eligibility and calculates probable benefits. It also provides general information about the FSP, directions on how to apply, a listing of documents required at the time of application, contact information and maps/directions to PATH offices. Website visitors can request an FSP application by three methods: email, a downloadable PDF file, or via an 800 number. A contact box is also available so that individuals' concerns and/or comments can be addressed. As noted above, trained staff at partner agencies provided access to computers and the internet and were available to help website visitors navigate the website and complete the prescreening tool. Accommodations for visitors with visual impairments are available and information is presented in four

⁵ The name of the agency administering the FSP was changed to the Agency of Human Services Department for Children and Families during the project.

languages. Specific information pertaining to immigrants' concerns is also included. The site also included a barriers survey that asked participants about their experiences regarding barriers to participation.

Application Assistance: Although no face-to-face assistance in filling out FSP applications was provided, applications could either be downloaded from the website, filled out, and taken to the food stamp office, or visitors could request that an application be sent to them by mail. Applications could not be filled out and submitted electronically. With some exceptions, applicants had to visit the PATH office to complete the application process. PATH staff collected data regarding applicants' use of the website.

Grantee and Administrative Data

A summary of the data submitted through the national evaluator's website is presented below.⁶ Vermont's grantee data were limited to total contacts (or web "hits") and the number pre-screened (or those that followed through with the prescreening part of their web tool). Vermont's data cover the period September 2003 through November 2004, although there is one month excluded (July 2004) because of lost data at the web host due to a change in their server.

Program Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

Vermont staff felt that the greatest accomplishments of the intervention were (1) the success in terms of crafting a closer relationship with the PATH offices through collaboration on development of the website, and (2) the increase in participation in the FSP. By the end of the initiative, 814 households received food stamps, representing almost 2,000 people.

Vermont found that providing training for community service providers was a key addition to their original program design. Initially, training sessions were intended to provide an overview of the website so that service providers working with low income individuals would be able help applicants complete the prescreening tool. However, it became clear that many providers needed basic information about using the Internet as well. These training sessions were seen as an important means of reaching the target population, and providing them with access to the site.

Although their online barriers survey was somewhat limited due to some technological glitches, the grantee found that the largest barrier was reluctance to accept charity and the stigma associated with food stamp receipt.

⁶ There are a few data inconsistencies to note. The total number of applications approved and denied adds to one more (1,008) than the total number of applications submitted via Vermont's outreach efforts (1,007, as reported into our system and in the local evaluation report). Also, the total number of households with ABAWDs that submitted food stamp applications is not available because Vermont was not able to report the number of households with ABAWDs who were denied food stamps. Finally, the total number of persons in food stamp households that were denied benefits reported into our system is higher than the sum of that category's reasons for denials (498 versus 488 for the sum of the reasons for denial).

**Exhibit B.18: Summary of Data Elements from the
Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger**

	Total	# in HH	# HHs with Non- Citizens	# HHs with Elderly or Disabled	# HHs with Children	# HHs with Earnings	# HHs with ABAWD
Total contacts	33,260	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Follow-up contacts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pre-screened	3,679	10,644	197	344	2,027	2,213	448
Application assistance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Applications submitted	1,007	2,443	40	218	682	455	N/A
Applications approved	814	1,945	33	196	579	370	184
Applications denied	194	498	7	22	103	85	N/A
Reasons for denial:							
Income too high	91	268	4	12	59	82	N/A
Assets too high	7	17	4	2	4	3	N/A
Citizenship status	3	8	0	3	1	0	N/A
Does not live in juris	4	8	3	3	2	0	N/A
Incomplete interview	62	123	0	5	22	0	N/A
Incomplete information	8	16	0	2	5	0	N/A

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APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND ON PREVIOUS LITERATURE AND RECENT FSP POLICY CHANGES

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APPENDIX C: BACKGROUND ON PREVIOUS LITERATURE AND RECENT FSP POLICY CHANGES

Appendix C provides additional contextual information initially described in Section II on the previous literature and policy changes that likely influenced the goals and results of the 18 outreach projects. This review highlights some of the individual and institutional factors that hinder participation in FSP. It also describes policy changes that occurred throughout the course of the projects, roughly defined as the period between 2001 and 2004, which might influence grantee activities and/or outcomes were in full swing between 2002 and 2003.

Previous Findings on Factors Affecting Participation

Many people eligible for food stamps do not participate in the program. The official estimates indicate that about 56 percent of eligible individuals participated in the FSP in 2003 (Cunnyngham 2005). While the current rate represents a significant decline from the high of 75 percent in 1995, it shows an increase from the recent low of 53 percent reached in 2001.

Participation rates have been changing recently for various reasons. Changes in welfare enacted by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 moved many families off the welfare rolls and discouraged cash welfare participation. Consequently, the number of food stamp eligible families on welfare (with a strong link to FSP participation) declined, and the number of working poor eligible families (with relatively low rates of participation) increased (See, for example, Wilde et al 2002). The strong economy during the mid- to late-1990s also played a role in reducing participation. During 2000 and 2001, Cunnyngham (2005) reports that changes in FSP rules (especially for families that own vehicles) and the downturn in the national economy increased the number eligible for benefits and reduced participation rates. She also reports that increased FSP outreach, increased poverty, and restoration of eligibility for noncitizens in the U.S. for five years or more have increased participation rates since 2001.

Official estimates also show that some groups have higher or lower participation rates than others (Cunnyngham 2005). For example, 42.9 percent of eligible employed families and 27.5 percent of persons age 60 and older participated in the program in 2003. Also, eligible noncitizens have low rates of participation (39 percent in 2002). In contrast, about 70 percent of children eligible for benefits participate in the program.

Participation Patterns

Previous research provides some insights into these participation patterns. McConnell and Ponza (1999), for example, identified five reasons why the elderly and the working poor do not participate in the FSP: a lack of information, a perception that they do not need the assistance, low expected benefits, the hassle involved in the application and recertification process, and stigma. Wilde and Dagata (2002) found that elderly on participants were more likely to be non-Hispanic whites than members of other race/ethnic

groups using data from the 2001 Current Population Survey (CPS). They showed nonparticipating elderly individuals were healthier and more food secure than elderly participants (despite being older), leading these authors to suggest that elders who face the most severe hardships are more likely to take steps to apply for food stamp benefits than others. They also highlight the important connection between the FSP and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, as approximately 40 percent of elderly food stamp participants also participated in SSI in comparison to only 7 percent of nonparticipants.⁷ During focus groups with older Americans in Washington State, Gabor, Schreiber, Bellamy, and Hardison (2001) found that pride and perceived stigma of program participation act as factors that discourage participation.

Participation Likelihood

A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO 2004) study, based on 2000 data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), reported that working families' participation in the FSP increased with higher potential benefit amounts, the presence of young children, and participation in other assistance programs (including Medicaid, school meals, the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC), and job training). The study also showed that home ownership and the lack of citizenship decrease the likelihood of participation. Using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Farrell et al. (2003) showed that nonparticipating working households are more likely than participating households to have income that exceeded 100 percent of the federal poverty level in the past two years. Their finding suggested that those with short-term needs were less likely to participate than those with longer-term needs. Similarly, Zedlewski and Rader (2005), using three years of the National Survey of America's Families, found that families with higher incomes in the year preceding eligibility were less likely to participate.

Low Participation

Zedlewski and Nelson (2003) found that participation in the FSP program was surprisingly low among very low-income nonelderly families who reported no current earnings or cash government assistance. The study, which was based on qualitative interviews conducted in 2002, found that only about half of these families participated in the FSP despite their obvious eligibility. Nonparticipating families fell into two general groups: (1) families that reported a prior bad experience with the program, and (2) those that refused help from the government on principle or because they did not want to comply with program rules, such as the child support establishment system.

Lack of Knowledge

In general, lack of knowledge explains why some eligible individuals do not pursue food stamp benefits. Ponza, Ohls, Moreno, Zambrowski and Cohen (1999) reported that about three-quarters of eligible non-participating households were unaware of their eligibility. Some believed that some aspect of their family's situation makes them ineligible

⁷ This finding is not surprising given that the two programs are generally linked. In most states, elderly SSI participants are automatically eligible for food stamp benefits.

(such as their car's value, work, or some other government assistance), and others think they are eligible for such a small benefit that is not worth the effort to obtain (McConnell and Ponza 1999). Bartlett, Bursetin, and Hamilton (2004) found that over half of eligible nonparticipant households either believed that they were ineligible or were not sure they were eligible. Those that believed themselves ineligible were more likely to have above-poverty incomes and bank accounts and less likely to have received food stamps in the past. (Demographic characteristics such as age, race, and ethnicity were not associated with whether households believed they were eligible). Some had significant misperceptions about program rules such as believing that workers (55 percent) and those that received other government assistance (19 percent) could not get benefits.

Individual Attitudes

Other studies have found that individual attitudes affect food stamp participation. Some potential eligible participants do not want government help, while others do not want to face what they believe is a demeaning and cumbersome process (either based on past experience or some other secondary knowledge). For example, 31 percent of the sample of eligible nonparticipants in the Bartlett et al (2004) survey said they would not apply for benefits even if they knew they were eligible. All of those unwilling to participate mentioned personal reasons – including a desire for personal independence (91 percent). Also, nearly 75 percent reported at least one reason related to policies, including the cost of applying (64 percent), a previous “bad experience” (24 percent), and confusion about how to apply (12 percent).

Some studies have found that eligible participants have had difficulties in accessing benefits because of procedures at the FSP office or the length of the application. Bartlett et al (2004) found that common local office practices can discourage participation based on a survey of administrative practices in a nationally-representative sample of FSP offices. For example, they reported that over one quarter of food stamp applicants decided not to pursue their application because of some aspect of the application process, including verification requirements, length of time to wait before receiving benefits, long waits in the food stamp office, missing work, paying for someone to care for a child or elderly dependent, and general confusion about the process.

Office Accessibility

Office accessibility, especially availability during non-working hours, also appears to influence participation decisions. Bartlett et al (2004) reported that households with earnings are significantly less likely to complete the application process in offices open only Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. They also found that “pro-participation” attitudes expressed by supervisors and child friendliness is positively associated with the likelihood that applicants complete the application process. McKernan and Ratcliffe (2003) showed that families working nontraditional hours were less likely to participate in the FSP than other workers, suggesting that daytime food stamp office hours can limit participation among working families.

Summary

In summary, individual characteristics, lack of knowledge about the program, attitudes and the complexity of the application process can affect FSP participation. As described later, the outreach projects aimed to overcome these factors by improving knowledge about the program and facilitating the application process using technology, partnerships, and other techniques.

Detailed Review of Policy Changes

There have been significant changes in food stamp legislation and regulations in recent years, and some of these changes likely have enhanced outreach efforts in several areas to varying degrees by expanding eligibility requirements for certain groups, and simplifying the application process (*Exhibit C.1*). Changes include the restoration of food stamp eligibility for some immigrants, restoration of benefit levels, simplified paperwork requirements, and liberalized vehicle ownership restrictions.

While some of the changes were implemented nationwide, others were offered to states as options to simplify procedures and improve access to the FSP. States can loosen financial restrictions by increasing vehicle asset limits, excluding child support and other types of income, and simplifying the Standard Utility Allowance rules. States can also improve access to the FSP by increasing certification periods, reducing reporting requirements for certain households, and implementing procedures that improve access or simplify the application process.

States have embraced many of the new options, especially those that simplify families' reporting requirements and allow participant families to own a vehicle of greater value than is specified in the federal default rules. Almost all states adopted one or more options to reduce payment errors, ease program administration, and/or simplify client paperwork requirements by October 2001 (U.S. GAO 2002). For example, 35 states use the simplified (or semiannual) reporting option. By September 2001, 33 states used available options to exempt some or all vehicles when determining food stamp eligibility, and the number of states exempting some or all vehicles increased to 39 by February 2002 (Dean and Horng 2002).

Exhibit C.1: Summary of Relevant FSP Policy Changes 1999-2002

<i>Immigrant eligibility</i>	In 2002 the Farm Bill (U.S. Public Law 107-171) restored benefit eligibility to most legal noncitizens in the U.S. before August 1996 and for a large share of those who entered after that time. ⁸ Legal noncitizens with disabilities became eligible for food stamps on October 1, 2002; legal noncitizens in the U.S. for five years became eligible for food stamps on April 1, 2003; and all legal noncitizen children under age 18 became eligible for benefits on October 1, 2003 (Kaplan 2003).
<i>Benefit levels</i>	In agricultural appropriations for 2001 (U.S. Public Law 106-387), Congress reversed reductions in the shelter and standard deductions originally passed during welfare reform in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill increased the standard deduction for larger households (more than 6 persons).
<i>Paperwork requirements</i>	States now have numerous options for reducing paperwork requirements that should make it easier for families to obtain and maintain eligibility. In 1999, the Clinton administration issued new guidance allowing states to require families with earnings to file reports every 3 months or only when a change (such as a new job, a change in pay or hours) occurs (Rosenbaum 2000). The new guidance also specified that states only had to require families to complete face-to-face interviews once a year. The federal government further eased reporting requirements in late 2000 (CFR 273.12 (a) (vii)), allowing states to use semiannual reporting for families with earnings, with a requirement that families report changes in income if their income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level. States are held responsible only for errors resulting from miscalculating benefits at certification, or in cases where income exceeds 130 percent of the poverty level and the change is not reported. The 2002 Farm Bill allowed states to use the semiannual reporting requirement for all nonelderly families (not just families with earnings). States also can adopt simplified income and resource tests to provide more uniform definitions with those used in TANF and Medicaid. States can increase the transitional food stamp benefit timeframe for families leaving welfare from three to five months.
<i>Vehicle restrictions</i>	States also can adopt options to allow eligible families to own vehicles of a greater value than specified by Federal law. The federal law counts the fair market value of a vehicle in excess of \$4,650 towards a household's \$2,000 asset limit. ⁹ Rules codified in 2000 gave states the option to extend eligibility to households that receive benefits funded at least in part by TANF funds even if that means they are exempt from the vehicle asset test (65 Fed. Reg. 70198). In agricultural appropriations for 2001 (U.S. Public Law 106-387), Congress broadened this flexibility by allowing states to value vehicles by any method used in another low-income support program.
<i>Error Rates</i>	The 2002 Farm Bill revamped error and thresholds for sanctions of states' food stamp error rates by focusing sanctions on states with serious, persistent problems rather than annual sanctioning of all states with errors above the national average rate. The change should encourage states to adopt some of the new reporting options for families with incomes that tend to vary frequently, because penalties for overpayments and underpayments will be less of a consideration than before.

⁸ Most legal noncitizens lost eligibility for food stamp benefits with the 1996 PRWORA legislation. Later, in 1997, the federal government allowed states to purchase food stamps for issuance to legal noncitizens (U.S. Public Law 105-18), and 1998 legislation (U.S. Public Law 105-185) reinstated eligibility for elderly, disabled, and child noncitizens residing in the U.S. at the time the 1996 welfare reform law was passed.

⁹ The FSP has rules covering multiple vehicles and the federal test of \$4,650 applies to all vehicles owned by members of the household. Some states (15) now exclude the value of all vehicles; others (7) exclude the value of one per household and then apply the federal standard to subsequent vehicles. See the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2005) for a detailed description of the food stamp vehicle test, including the current rules in the states.

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APPENDIX D:

NATIONAL EVALUATOR ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGY

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APPENDIX D: NATIONAL EVALUATOR ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGY

This appendix describes the major national evaluation data collection and analysis activities. The combination of findings from these activities was used to describe each project's objectives, activities, outcomes, and lessons learned.

- **Quantitative Data Collection:** The quantitative analysis included a summary of the findings on processes and outcomes that are used to highlight effective outreach strategies and innovative practices. Included data collected on processes (e.g., number of contacts made) and outcomes (e.g., number of applications submitted) from all 18 sites using a web-based data collection system.
- **Qualitative Data Collection:** The qualitative analysis provides an in-depth understanding of outreach implementation experiences and lessons. It also provided contextual information for the quantitative analysis and insights on the factors that influenced these outcomes. Included three rounds of phone calls to all 18 grantees and site visits to six grantees to gain insights into each site's outreach activities, implementation status, successes and challenges, and outcomes.
- **Local Evaluation Report Synthesis:** The synthesis of local evaluation reports provided additional insights on the implementation activities and outcomes, which were used to supplement the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Quantitative Data Description

The national evaluator's goal was to collect comparable information on major processes and outcomes across all sites. While their outreach activities and target populations varied significantly, all sites shared the same general goal of increasing food stamp participation.

A web-based data collection system was developed early in the project following an initial kickoff meeting with all of the grantees and FNS, though this meeting occurred after some of the grantee projects had already started. The web-based data collection protocols were revised following several beta tests at each of the project sites. These tests improved the quality of the data collected, and ensured that each of the project coordinators (and their evaluators) understood the nature of the data collection.

The website included two reporting systems: a Grantee Report and an Administrative Report (*Exhibits D.1-D.3*). Grantees submitted data for their reports on a monthly or quarterly basis depending on their ability to obtain and transmit data. The Grantee Report summarized the general scope and characteristics of the outreach activities at each site, including information on the number of total contacts, follow-up contacts,

prescreens, and the number of persons assisted with the application process (including counts of specific application assistance activities). The Administrative Report summarized the major outcomes from each project, including data on the number of applications filed, the number of applications approved, the number of applications denied, and the reasons for denials. For all data elements in both reports, demographic characteristic information for the grantee activities and outcomes were collected, including the total number of households that included non-citizens, elderly/disabled persons, children, earnings, and able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). Information was also collected on the number of persons in food stamp households for the various data elements.

Data Quality Monitoring

The timing of the implementation of the web-based system created some initial data collection issues that influenced the amount of information that could be entered in the web-based system. Specifically, the Urban Institute received the national evaluator's contract after all the outreach projects were awarded. Hence, the data collection began after some projects had already fully implemented their outreach activities and had their own tracking systems in place. Some grantees were asked to provide retrospective information and others attempted to modify their current data systems. While the grantees were flexible with these requests, it was difficult to collect full information on some of the information included in the data collection efforts. Also, some grantees had some initial technical difficulties accessing the website (e.g. slow modem speed). In these cases, the Urban Institute worked with the grantees to ensure that the data collection efforts did not impose new costs in conducting their intervention. Ultimately, some grantees decided that they could not provide certain non-essential data elements, such as demographic characteristics of the clients that they served. As the project progressed, all grantees became comfortable using the system, and the general quality of the data collection improved. Nonetheless, as discussed body of the report and in the site profiles in Appendix A, some grantees encountered problems reporting full information on all activities and outcomes.

The national evaluator implemented a number of data quality assessment activities to improve the data collection. Phone calls with all grantees at the start of the project identified technical difficulties and addressed questions relating to specific data elements. More importantly, throughout the project, two data experts provided technical assistance and monitored the Grantee and Administrative Reports. As issues related to codifying data elements arose, the data experts clarified the definitions of those data elements. They also followed up with individual sites about data issues (e.g., missing data elements, late reports, inconsistencies) and worked to resolve any outstanding problems. Finally, at the end of the project, the data experts followed-up on any reported differences between the local evaluation reports and the data submitted to the website. When applicable, the data experts asked local evaluators and project directors to rectify the differences between the data in the local evaluation reports and the national evaluator's data collection site to finalize the data for this report.

Exhibit D.1: Monthly Grantee Report Data Guide

Year:							
Month:							
Grantee Name							
Grantee Reporting Information (Nature of the Intervention)							
	Total Households	Total Number of Persons in All Food Stamp Households	Number of Households with Non-citizens	Number of Households with Elderly/Disabled	Number of Households with Children	Number of Households with Earnings	Number of Households with ABAWDS
How many contacts did you make this month?							
How many of these were follow-up contacts?							
How many were pre-screened for potential eligibility?							
How many were assisted with the application process?							
Of those who were assisted with the application process, how many were assisted with the following activities: Code all that apply							
Filling out an application form							
Reviewing verification documents							
Submitting an application form							
Translation services							
Accompanied to the Food Stamp Office							
Transportation							
Application follow-up/advocating on behalf of client/encouragement							
Some other type of assistance (please specify)							
Describe Other assistance provided:							
Clarifications/Explanations:							

Exhibit D.2: Monthly/Quarterly Administrative Report Data Guide

Quarter:							
Starting Month of Quarter:	Choose starting month						
Ending Month of Quarter:	Choose ending month						
Reporting Month	Choose reporting Month						
Grantee Name							
FSP Office Reports (Outcomes)							
	Total Households	Total Number of Persons in All Food Stamp Households	Number of Households with Non-citizens	Number of Households with Elderly/Disabled	Number of Households with Children	Number of Households with Earnings	Number of Households with ABAWDS
Total applicants							
Number approved (do not include recertifications)							
Number denied							
Of those project participants denied benefits, how many were denied for the following reasons: <i>Code one per applicant</i>							
Income too high							
Assets too high							
Citizenship status							
Does not live within the FSP jurisdiction							
Failure to complete interview process							
Incomplete/inaccurate information							
Other							
Clarifications/Explanations:							

Exhibit D3: Description of Data Elements from Administrative and Grantee Reports

Data Elements Included in Grantee and Administrative Reports
<p>Total Households: Total number of households. Please only count one person per household. For example, if you contact a husband and a wife please record this as one household.</p> <p>Total Number of Persons in All Food Stamp Households: Includes the number of individuals in each food stamp household. For example, if you contacted three households and each of those households had three people in the household, then you would record 9 people.</p> <p>Number of Households with Non-Citizens: Number of households with at least one person who does not have U.S. citizenship.</p> <p>Number of Households with Elderly/Disabled: Number of households with at least one person age 60 and above or with at least person who has a disability.</p> <p>Number of Households with Children: Number of households with at least one person under age 18.</p> <p>Number of Households with Earnings: Number of households with at least one person who has income from employment in the last month.</p> <p>Number of Households with ABAWDS: Number of households with at least one person who is an able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD). Individuals with the following characteristics are ABAWDS: those age 18-50 who are not exempt from work (due to a medical condition, responsibility for a dependent child, or pregnancy).</p>
Data Elements Included the Grantee Report
<p>Contacts: A contact includes all direct contact with a household. The purpose of this variable is to record all interactions that a grantee has with potential applicants. For example, a contact can include a phone call, mail flyer, face-to-face contact, email, or other web-based contact. Mass media contacts such as radio and TV ads are not included in contacts (special media events should be noted in the comments field in the quarter in which they occurred).¹⁰</p> <p>Follow-up contacts: A follow-up contact includes any repeated or subsequent contact with the same household beyond an initial contact. For example, if your agency initially contacts a household at a supermarket and that household comes to your office for a pre-screening, please count this meeting/activity as a follow-up contact. All follow-up contacts should also be recorded in the contact category.</p> <p>Pre-screened: Any household for whom you estimated food stamp eligibility either formally (e.g. website pre-screening or a pre-screening calculator/form) or informally (e.g. verbal estimate without formal pre-screening tool) is considered a pre-screen activity.</p> <p>Assisted with the application process: Any household or individual assisted with any of the activities: Filling out an application form; Reviewing verification documents; Submitting an application form; Translation services; Accompanied to food stamp office; Transportation; Application follow-up/Encouragement/Advocating on behalf of client; Other type of assistance.</p> <p>Filling out an application form: Any assistance filling out an electronic or paper application. This activity can occur at any location including the local food stamp office, your agency, another site (e.g. supermarket), or on-line.</p> <p>Reviewing verification documents: Any assistance with gathering the necessary verification materials needed for the application process as well as any assistance reviewing verification documents.</p> <p>Submitting an application form: Any assistance in <i>submitting</i> an electronic or paper application. This activity can occur at any location including the local food stamp office, your agency, or on-line.</p> <p>Translation services: Any verbal or written translation assistance. For example, translation of written application materials at a food stamp office counts as a translation service. Alternatively, verbal assistance in communicating with food stamp staff also counts as a translation service.</p> <p>Accompanied to food stamp office: Accompanying an applicant to the food stamp office. For example, this may include walking the applicant to the office.</p> <p>Transportation: Any assistance in transporting applicants to and from the food stamp office as well as to and from your agency. Transportation may include an actual car ride or simply providing bus or taxi fare.</p>

¹⁰ Each outreach “contact” as described above should be counted as a contact even if it is with the same household at different points within the month or previous months. For example, if a grantee contacted two people from the same household (e.g., husband and wife), this interaction would count as one contact. However, if the grantee contacted different members of the household at different times, record each contact separately. Multiple contacts within the same day are not counted.

Application follow-up/Encouragement/Advocating on behalf of client: This category includes a broad range of activities, including any follow-up activity with an applicant household, a food stamp office, or a stakeholder (e.g. family members). For example, this activity might include bringing forms to potential applicants, encouragement, or any other types of follow-up activity.

Other type of assistance: Any type of assistance not included in the categories above. Please define this activity in the text box as well as the demographic group targeted.

Clarification/Explanations: Please describe any problems you had with data collection this month including any missing data items.

Data Elements for the Administrative Report

Total applicants: Total number of households who filed an application (either complete or incomplete) for food stamp benefits. Total number of applicants does not need to sum to total recipients plus total denied benefits. For example, a pending case would neither be recorded as a recipient nor a denial, but would be included in total applicants.

Number approved: Total number of households who were approved for food stamp benefits. Note: this does not include recertifications.

Number denied: Total number of households who were denied food stamp benefits. Note: this does not include pending or withdrawn cases.

Income too high: Total number of households denied food stamp benefits due to income exceeding the eligibility threshold.

Assets too high: Total number of households denied food stamp benefits due to the total amount of assets exceeding the eligibility threshold.

Citizenship status: Total number of households denied food stamp benefits due to the entire household being a non-eligible non-citizen.

Does not live within FSP jurisdiction: Total number of households denied food stamp benefits due to living outside of the county in which they applied.

Failure to complete interview process: Total number of households denied food stamp benefits due to failing to complete the in-person or phone interview (e.g. did not appear in the food stamp office or call back for scheduled interview).

Incomplete or inaccurate information: Total number of households denied food stamp benefits due to failing to provide all required information or providing inaccurate information (e.g. not providing all verification documents, not completing all sections of the application, or providing false information on the application).

Other: Other reasons for denial including drug felony, ABAWDS whose 3 months expired, failure to comply with employment and training requirements, etc.

Clarification/Explanation: Please describe any problems you had with data collection this month including any missing data items.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative data collection aimed to collect comparable information about the actual design and implementation of the outreach projects and the context within which each initiative was implemented. The project collected qualitative information in the following five general areas throughout the project (*Exhibit D.4*):

- **Program Activities**—including the project design, activities, and operation;
- **Organization Information**—including characteristics of the organizations;
- **Interaction with FS Office/Local Economic Conditions**—including descriptions of the relationship with the local FSP office and any economic or policy changes that influenced the outreach activities;

Exhibit D.4: Summary of Research Questions for Qualitative Analysis

Program Activities
<p>What were the main features of the(se) outreach initiative(s)?</p> <p>What types of outreach methods were implemented?</p> <p>What populations (if any) were targeted?</p>
Organization Information
<p>What types of staff was used to implement the outreach initiative (e.g., in-house staff, volunteers, staff from other agencies/organizations)?</p> <p>What training was provided to staff involved in the outreach efforts?</p> <p>What was the nature and extent of interagency interaction in providing this outreach effort? What agency or agencies were involved? What were their responsibilities?</p>
Interaction with FS Office/Local Economic Conditions
<p>How involved was the food stamp office in this intervention? At what point did they become involved in the intervention? What role did they eventually play in the intervention?</p> <p>Were there any other changes/events at the state or local level that might have had an effect on the success of this project (e.g., changes in the local economy, state or local administrative or policy changes that could have had an effect on the food stamp participation rates)?</p>
Implementation Experiences
<p>Which aspects of the design were the most difficult to implement and why?</p> <p>What factors facilitated project implementation?</p> <p>What implementation barriers were encountered? How were barriers overcome? What effect did problems and resolutions have on overall implementation?</p> <p>Were any aspects of the design not implemented or only partially implemented?</p>
Outcomes
<p>What were the major accomplishments of this intervention? How successful were they in reaching target populations; in setting up partnerships that facilitate access; in implementing new technology; and in completing the goals originally defined?</p> <p>What were the greatest challenges faced by this site? How were they addressed?</p> <p>What are the major barriers to food stamp participation?</p> <p>What are the most important lessons learned to pass on to others who may want to engage in similar outreach efforts?</p> <p>Were there any future plans to continue this project?</p>

- **Implementation Experiences**—including similarities and differences in implementation experiences, challenges, and successes (across sites, as well as by type of outreach method and target group(s)); and
- **Outcomes**—including contextual information necessary for synthesizing (rather than simply consolidating) local evaluation findings and informing the interpretation of results regarding our quantitative data collection activities (described above).

The primary methods used to collect this information included periodic telephone discussions with individuals involved in the each of the outreach projects, site visits to six selected grantee projects, and a document review of grantee proposals and quarterly progress reports sent to FNS.

Telephone Discussions

The national evaluator conducted three rounds of phone discussions to assess the status of each grantee's progress at the start, mid-point, and end of their project. During the first round, conducted between June and July 2003, the evaluator verified the intervention and data collection start dates, procedures for tracking outreach efforts, the system for tracking applications submitted by the grantee through the food stamp office, and whether any problems or issues with data collection existed.

The second round of phone calls, conducted between October 2003 and December 2003, reviewed the implementation activities with the project coordinator at each site. These discussions augmented the descriptive project information obtained from the grantees' proposals and progress reports. Discussions focused on grantees' operations, any start-up problems and early challenges, and grantees' efforts to resolve these early implementation issues.

Follow-up calls to each of the local evaluators augmented the second round calls to the project coordinators. These calls reviewed the local evaluators' plans for submitting a final evaluation report and provided technical feedback on proposed evaluation approaches.

The final round of phone calls, conducted with project coordinators between September 2004 and November 2004, assessed the full set of outreach activities and outcomes. These discussions provided general impressions of the project implementation experiences and outcomes. Discussions focused on the perceived successes and challenges of the project, important outcomes, and lessons for future outreach activities.

Site Visits

The national evaluator conducted six site visits (GPCAH, Illinois, Madison, Miami, SHFB, and Tulsa) between June 2004 and August 2004 to provide further contextual information on the implementation activities and outcomes at different sites (*Exhibit D.5*). The site visits aimed to provide outreach lessons with wide applicability, as well as insights and considerations associated with implementing specific outreach methods or targeting specific populations. For example, GPCAH provides an example of an outreach project that relied heavily on volunteers from multiple partners to reach out to unemployed and working poor families and immigrants, Illinois used a school-based outreach to focus on working poor families, and Tulsa connected its food stamp outreach activities to centers helping low-income families apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

The open-ended character and the face-to-face approach of in-person discussions provided a more complete picture of the factors that influence the effectiveness of various types of outreach initiatives, the processes required for their implementation, and the complexities involved in coordinating with different organizations/partners and reaching

Exhibit D.5: Grantee Project Characteristics of the Six Grantees Included in the Site Visits¹¹

Grantee	Grant Amount	Activities			Organization Characteristics		Target Populations
	Low = <\$200,000 Medium = \$200,000 – 299,000 High = >\$300,000	Multi-media Campaign	Public Access Website	Web-Based application	Volunteers	Primary Partners	
Madison	Low	✓	✓	✓	✓ (limited)	Community service providers, government agencies	Working poor and elderly
GPCAH	High				✓	Multiple (Faith-based, Universities, Advocacy Groups)	Unemployed and working poor families with children, immigrants, elderly
Miami-Dade	High			✓		Employers, government agencies	Working poor families, immigrants
Illinois	High			✓		Schools	Working poor families and immigrants – specifically, focused on families with children in the Chicago public schools
SHFB	Medium	✓	✓*		✓	Community service providers and other agencies that distribute food	Working poor families, Latinos, other immigrants
Tulsa	High		✓*	✓	✓	EITC sites (banks, community centers, churches), One-Stop Centers, Head Start	Working poor families – specifically, focused on those who visit tax centers and participate in EITC eligibility screening

*SHFB and Tulsa began work on public access websites during the grant period but they were not fully functional by the end of the grant period. FNS staff conducted site visits in Indiana and Philadelphia (MCC) that are not represented in this Exhibit.

¹¹ FNS researchers also conducted site visits to Indiana and MCC. They shared a brief summary of their findings, which we have incorporated into the Site Profiles in Appendix B.

out to various populations. In later sections, details from these site visits provide further insights about a range of outreach activities.

Two-person research teams comprised of one implementation expert and one data expert conducted two-day visits to each site. Teams spoke with a variety of respondents in each site, including the lead person responsible for implementing and overseeing outreach activities, other relevant key management-level staff within the lead agency, front-line outreach workers (paid and volunteers), partner organization staff (e.g., schools, other public agencies, other community based organizations), and the local evaluator. The teams also held discussions with local FSP staff in outreach-targeted areas to better understand their role in the outreach initiative, the way FSP applications are normally processed in that site, any in-house efforts to simplify applications and increase enrollments, and perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the outreach efforts under examination.

FNS representatives also conducted site visits at two additional sites (Indiana and MCC). FNS used the national evaluator's discussion guides and forwarded a written summary of their findings. This report also incorporates their findings.

Document Review

A review of the initial proposals and on-going quarterly progress reports from each grantee supplemented the qualitative analysis. These documents detailed the grantees' project design and goals, and allowed the national evaluator to track the projects' implementation progress. These documents helped to customize the phone and site visit discussions around specific project activities and outcomes.

Local Evaluation Synthesis

The final set of activities included a synthesis of local evaluations submitted by each of the grantee projects. The local evaluators were charged with producing performance reports documenting the implementation of the outreach activities, general outcomes, and important lessons learned. Thirteen of the grantees hired an independent evaluator affiliated with a local university or consulting firm and five grantees (Connecticut, Illinois, MCC, North Carolina and Project Bread) used an in-house evaluator.¹²

The scope and focus of the evaluation reports varied, though all of the evaluations included a general description of the major processes and summary of major outcomes related to applications submitted, approved, and denied. Several evaluators supplemented this information with a review of implementation lessons during the project (e.g., experiences in creating partnerships, hiring volunteers), suggestions for future outreach projects, and formal surveys and/or small group interviews of clients to assess participation barriers.¹³ Additionally, some evaluators made detailed comparisons of outcomes across target populations, multimedia campaign activities (e.g., billboards, radio ads), and various

¹² Salem-Keizer's also employed an independent evaluator who eventually took over duties of project director after a staffing change.

¹³ In one case, Central NY even provided a manual for setting up an outreach activity.

outreach approaches (e.g., comparisons across types of outreach locations and volunteers). Finally, some examined overall FSP caseload changes where the outreach had been implemented.

The local evaluation reports were used to verify the national summary of the project's quantitative and qualitative findings and to identify information not obtained in the quantitative or qualitative data collection efforts. If verification led to questions, the national evaluator followed up with the local evaluator or project director to clarify differences. The report incorporates reflections from all of the local evaluators' summaries of the major outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned. *Exhibit D.6* provides a reference list for all the local evaluation reports for readers interested in further information.

Exhibit D6: Summary of Citations for Local Evaluation Reports

- ACORN Institute, *Food Stamp Outreach Research Project*. Final Report Submitted to FNS, January 2005.
- Central North Carolina, Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS): *Final Report: The Intervention*. Submitted to FNS, January 4, 2005.
- Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana, Inc., *USDA Food Stamp Program Research Grant to Improve Access Through the Use of New Technology and Partnerships Final Report*. Submitted to FNS, October 1, 2005
- Connecticut Association for Human Services, *Final Performance Report*. Submitted to FNS, September 2004
- Curtis, Karen A., Abena Aidoo, M.S., Joy Oliver, M.A. *Evaluation of the Food Bank of Delaware's Food Stamp Outreach Project, (Year 1 and 2), Evaluation Period October 1, 2002 through September 30, 2004*. Submitted to FNS, December 15, 2004.
- Food Bank of Central New York, *Research Project Final Report*. Submitted to FNS, November 2004
- Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, *Final Evaluation: Using Volunteer Outreach to Improve Access to the Food Stamp Program*. Submitted to FNS, January 24, 2005.
- Harrison, Kenneth, and Jennifer Kyke, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychology. *Atlantic City Food Stamp Report*. Submitted to FNS, December 20, 2004
- Human Services Coalition of Dade County: *Food Stamp Outreach to Working Families Final Report*. Submitted to FNS, December 30, 2004.
- Lionberger, Annie and Mary Froehle, Chicago Public Schools Food Stamp Outreach Project, *Illinois Hunger Coalition Final Performance Report*. October 1, 2002 to November 30, 2004. Submitted to FNS, November 2004 (Edited by Diane Doherty, MSW).
- Maternity Care Coalition. *MOMobile: Food Stamp Participation Project Final Report*. Evaluation Period September 2002 – August 2004. Submitted to FNS, December 2004.
- Polverento, Gerry, Lynn Breer, Amanda Carpenter, and Molly Smeltzer. Center for Collaborative Research in Health Outcomes and Policy at the Michigan Public Health Institute. Muskegon Community Health Project: *The Muskegon GET FED Final Evaluation Report*. Submitted to FNS, February 2005.
- Ryan, Diane, Mike Fitzgerald; and Jill Tiefenthaler. *Final Report and Evaluation Community Action Program of Madison County*. Submitted to FNS, December 1, 2004.
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties (SHFB). *From Outreach to Advocacy: Final Report*. Submitted to FNS, December 2004.
- Slobodow, Elisa and Stephanie Ettinger De Cuba. Massachusetts Food Stamps Online Pilot Project; *Project Bread the Walk for Hunger Final Report*. Submitted to FNS, December 2004.
- Tulsa County Community Action Project in partnership with ACS, Inc.: *Help Works Final Performance Report*. Submitted to FNS, January 22, 2004.
- Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger: *"Draft" Final Performance Report, to Improve Access through the Use of Technology and Partnerships*. Submitted to FNS, December 30, 2004.