

Example of Using the Interpretive Guide

State Z is gearing up for its annual kickoff meeting with the State SNAP Agency and three SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies to begin preparing its 2017 State SNAP-Ed Plan.

Step 1: Reflect on your SNAP-Ed Plan goals and objectives and state or local needs assessment results.

The prior year's SNAP-Ed State Plan contained four statewide objectives:

- By September 30, increase fruit and vegetable intake among SNAP-Ed participants by 7 percent over the baseline.
- By September 30, increase physical activity behaviors among SNAP-Ed participants by 5 percent over the baseline.
- By September 30, reach at least 400,000 SNAP-Ed participants in evidence-based nutrition education programs.
- By September 30, facilitate at least three new partnerships with non-governmental organizations focused on PSE changes.

The objectives emphasized direct education and individual outcomes, but did not reflect the full scope of objectives for more comprehensive approaches required in SNAP-Ed. The PSE emphasis on partnerships was a good place to start but lacked specificity. What types of PSEs? How will they address your state and local needs assessments results? How will your objectives leverage your partners' existing efforts focused on PSE strategies in communities and other jurisdictions?

Step 2: Review the [framework diagram](#) on page 22 to identify which indicators overlap with your goals and objectives.

The indicators that directly aligned with last year's objectives were: MT1 (Healthy Eating Behaviors) and MT3 (Physical Activity and Reduced Sedentary Behaviors). Indicator R2 (Fruits and Vegetables) and R7 (Physical Activity and Reduced Sedentary Behaviors—Recommendations) may also be useful. When preparing for the meeting, some of the attendees were not entirely clear on the difference between Individual-level indicators and the Population Results, but both seemed important. Indicators ST7 and ST8—both of which focus on partnerships and collaborations—are also relevant in different ways.

Step 3: Familiarize yourself with the terms used in the glossary in [Appendix A](#) to understand the language of the framework.

There is so much alphabet soup in SNAP-Education and unclear terminology. Particularly, the difference between adoption and implementation of a PSE was unclear for several staff members. In the glossary, the staff learned that adoption shows a commitment when at least one change is made in writing or practice. Implementation is full-scale and comprehensive delivery of a PSE intervention as it was intended.

Step 4: Develop a set of criteria for selecting indicators for your state or local project.

The Implementing Agency partners are proposing some exciting new projects focused on school wellness policies and healthful retail initiatives in 2017. Choosing indicators that will determine whether these new initiatives are being delivered fully and as intended is important. Learning if they are effective also matters. The State SNAP Director is also interested in showing SNAP-Education improves the health of SNAP participants. Some of the Implementing Agency staff thought it might be difficult to show that SNAP-Education programs improve health in a single year; this might take more time to show. The agencies set some criteria as follows:

- The indicators should align with state priorities.
- The indicators should focus on priority environmental settings where the SNAP-Education audience learns, works, and shops for food.
- Identify what PSEs at the local, state, territorial, or tribal levels are already occurring that leverage SNAP-Education priorities.
- In order to show progression, it would be important to pick a mixture of indicators—some focused on readiness & capacity (short-term), changes (medium-term), and effectiveness & maintenance (long term).

Step 5: Choose one or more indicators for your monitoring and evaluation plan.

During their first meeting, the agencies reviewed the different criteria for selecting indicators. The implementing agencies also had one additional parameter: They wanted to choose indicators that would be useful for continuous program improvement. Given the state's overall focus on fruits and vegetables, and the priority environmental settings, the agencies chose the following indicators for the 2017 State SNAP-Education Plan:

- Individual: MT1 (Healthy Eating Behaviors), MT2 (Food Resource Management Behaviors)
- Environmental: MT5 (Nutrition Supports Adopted), LT5 (Nutrition Supports Implementation and Effectiveness)

- Sectors of Influence: ST8 (Multi-Sector Partnerships and Planning), MT8 (Agriculture)
- Population Results: R2 (Fruits and Vegetables), R11 (Health-Related Quality of Life)

The agencies chose ST8 (Multi-Sector Partnerships and Planning) rather than ST7 (Organizational Partnerships) because it was important to the state to assess whether its State Nutrition Action Council was working across sectors and large-scale systems to have an impact on nutrition, obesity, and diet-related disease prevention. The agencies also agreed to divide up the responsibilities for monitoring specific indicators based upon their individual State Plan goals, objectives, and capacity. This agreement offered relief so that no one agency was responsible for measuring everything. Each agency appropriately will use its strengths or leverage existing partners' data collection activities.

Step 6: Study the indicator write-ups for your selected indicators.

The evaluation specialists at each Implementing Agency reviewed the indicator write-ups in great detail to understand specific types of surveys and data collection methods that were necessary. They realized that the indicators at the individual and environmental levels would require their staff to collect and input data. They felt optimistic that the Sectors of Influence and Population Results indicators could be tracked using existing data sets that are publically available or through the telephone screener survey that one agency had the capacity to conduct.

Step 7: Select appropriate outcome measures for each indicator.

Similar to the previous step, the evaluation specialists chose at least one specific outcome measure for each indicator. The indicators in MT1 and MT2 allowed for the use of existing surveys that one of the three agencies was using as part of its pre- and post-tests in educational interventions. A second agency chose to focus on using specific measures of reach and adoption to track school wellness policies in the 'learn' domain and corner store makeovers in the 'shop' domain within the Environmental Settings chapter. To measure long-term implementation and effectiveness, the second agency selected a series of environmental assessment tools to measure before and after outcomes of school wellness policies (WellSAT 2.0) and the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey (NEMS). Because the State SNAP-Ed Agency was leading the SNAC, the State SNAP-Ed Coordinator decided to focus on ST8 for a state-level evaluation. Lastly, the third Implementing Agency was working on farmer's market promotion as a member of a food systems collaborative and was part of an existing consortium of community-based research agencies that jointly conduct a telephone screener measuring health and social conditions of households in low-income areas. Thus, this third agency chose to focus on tracking farmers markets accepting SNAP using data from the Agricultural

Marketing Service (MT8), while also asking specific questions identified in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (R2, fruits and vegetables, and R11, health-related quality of life). The telephone screener would be a three-year effort; during the first year, staff would develop and test the survey instrument and identify a representative sample of the SNAP-Ed eligible audience to participate in data collection.

Step 8: Communicate your indicators and outcome measures to senior management and stakeholders, and where applicable, sub-grantees, local providers.

Once the agencies identified specific indicators and outcome measures, they prepared a one-page overview document with their goals and objectives for the following year's State SNAP-Ed plan. This document becomes a useful handout to share with partners and senior leadership on SNAP-Ed activities, sets the goals of the evaluation, and informs how the results will be used in a timely manner. The SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies also communicated how their chosen interventions were evidence-based and associated with improvements in health status. The State SNAP Director was also pleased to learn of the three-year telephone survey project that would determine to what extent the SNAP-Ed eligible population was eating fruits and vegetables and showing overall improvements in health-related quality of life.

Step 9: Implement your training and technical assistance plans.

The Implementing Agencies found print-ready materials that they could use to train local affiliates on data collection. This was most important for local affiliates that were using the WellSAT 2.0 and NEMS; they wanted to ensure that each local affiliate collected data appropriately and consistently to ensure it could be aggregated. The agency also replicated a PSE tracking tool that local agencies could use for measuring reach and adoption. They had learned about this tool at the most recent ASNNA winter conference. There was no need to reinvent the wheel!
