

Project Goals

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is an evaluation tool used to better understand the intended and unintended impacts of a project. It is particularly helpful when evaluating complex initiatives that both influence, and are impacted by, the community. REM is a facilitated discussion with project staff and local stakeholders that creates a visual “mind map” during the discussion that shows the linkages between program activities and resulting changes in the community.

This approach was used in FY 2019 with 37 SNAP-Ed funded organizations and their community partners to help understand the holistic effect SNAP-Ed programs have in communities.

Evaluation Design

Participants

Eight regional REM sessions were held between June and August 2019. Sessions included representatives from all subrecipient organizations (n=78) and invited community stakeholders (n=42).

Assignment to groups

Participants were split into eight groups based on geographic region. The southwest Detroit area had two groups, based on the number of subrecipient organizations operating in the area. Each region completed a REM session and a regional-level report was created. A statewide report compiling findings across regions was also developed. Participant feedback on REM sessions was collected via online survey was not grouped by region.

Outcome and Impact Measures

During REM sessions, local SNAP-Ed subrecipient program staff and their community partners gathered to discuss the impacts of their SNAP-Ed programs. The discussion not only provided attendees a chance to consider how successful the program has been in achieving its intended goals, such as changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors among participants or the implementation of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change strategies, but also to identify the indirect or unexpected project impacts.

REM sessions are exploratory in nature and use guided questions in small and large group settings to understand unexpected outcomes.

Setting	Guiding Questions
Small Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is one important change that you’ve seen or that you’ve experienced personally that has come out of the work of SNAP-Ed?• What new or deepened connections have you made with others as a result of SNAP-Ed?• How are organizations or individuals working together differently as a result of SNAP-Ed?

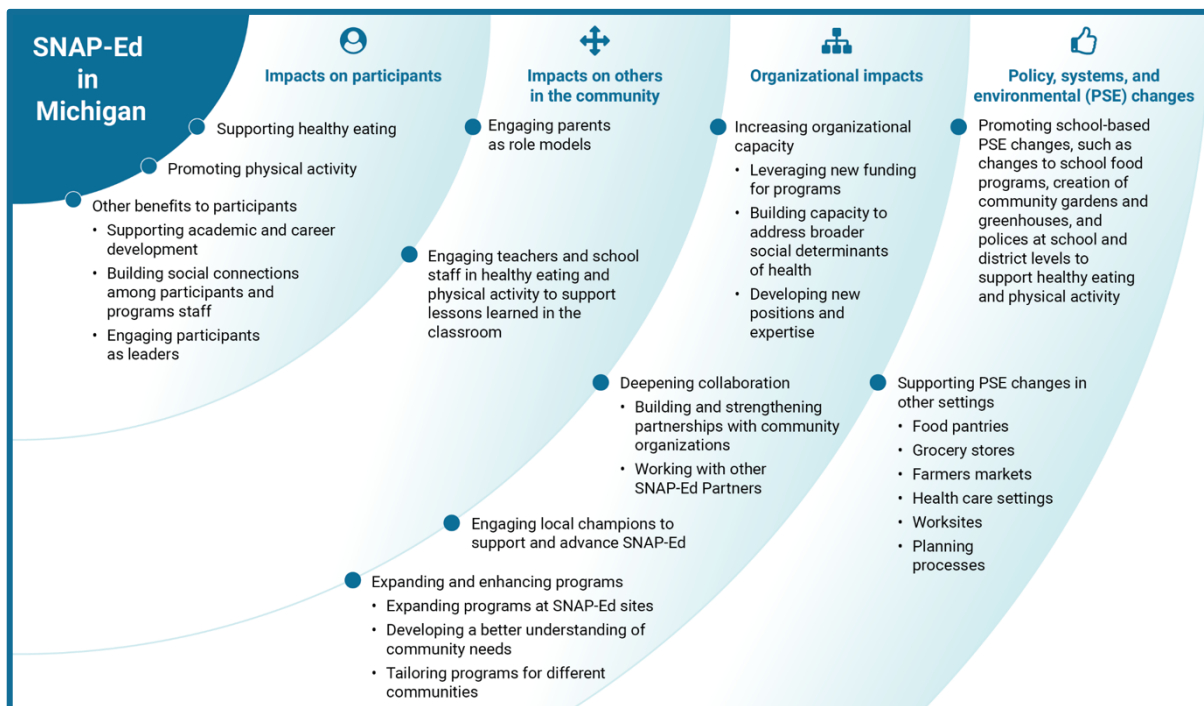
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- Large Group
- How has SNAP-Ed impacted participants' knowledge, skills, or awareness related to health? What changes in health behaviors have you observed among participants as a result of SNAP-Ed?
 - How has SNAP-Ed influenced *how* participants are engaged in efforts to improve health?
 - What efforts have been made to engage participants as leaders as a result of SNAP-Ed?
 - What relationships have you seen formed or strengthened as a result of SNAP-Ed?
 - How has SNAP-Ed shifted organizations' understanding of or capacity to address health or health equity?
 - In what ways has SNAP-Ed impacted organizations' knowledge of or capacity to address the needs and interests of participants?
 - What changes in policies or practices have happened as a result of SNAP-Ed?
 - How is the policy change leading to changes in practices used by organizations or institutions?
 - Some programs can also change how large or powerful systems, like school systems or city councils, function. This can also happen informally within systems (collaboration, connections, informal influence). What, if any, types of system changes have happened that you feel are related to SNAP-Ed?
 - What changes in your community's physical or food environment have you seen as a result of SNAP-Ed - such as the types of food-related resources that are available, how people get to or use these resources, or where people feel welcome?
 - What financial or economic impacts have you seen as a result of SNAP-Ed work?
 - Are there any other unexpected things that have happened as a result of your involvement with SNAP-Ed?
 - What challenges were encountered along the way in this work? Are there things that happened as a ripple of the program that you wish hadn't happened?
 - Other factors, such as community's economy, the current political climate, or other programs in the community can also have an impact on community development. From your perspective, are there other factors in the community that have either contributed to positive impacts or creating negative impacts?
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Data Collection

REM sessions are two to three hours in length. Discussion topics included current and prior year SNAP-Ed programming. Each session was co-facilitated by trained evaluators from the Wilder Foundation and MFF, had two note takers, and was audio recorded, with participant consent. Discussion themes were inputted in real time into XMind software and displayed for participants throughout the large group discussion. Themes are then later organized and built out using notes and audio recordings.

Results

This graphic shows the themes that emerged from eight regional Ripple Effects Mapping discussions across the state of Michigan. Attendees described impacts for SNAP-Ed participants, residents in surrounding communities, organizations, and broader systems and the built environment.



Through an anonymous online feedback survey, participants (n=50) reported their REM sessions were well-facilitated (96%); worth the time and effort to attend (78%); and helped them think about their program in a new way (76%).

Conclusions

Although each region represented a unique context based on the SNAP-Ed partners and community organizations included, the populations served, and the landscape of food access and related resources, common themes emerged across programs. Across the discussions, attendees described ways their direct education programs impacted participants' openness to trying new foods and physical activities, as well as changes in health behaviors. Engaging parents, teachers, and others further supported these changes in participants' lives as role models, ensured greater sustainability of these impacts.

Attendees discussed commonalities regarding the infrastructure needed to offer direct education and to support PSE change work and provided examples of how SNAP-Ed had helped them build their capacity by supporting new positions, training, and positioning them for other funding opportunities. Collaboration was also central to their work, and SNAP-Ed Partners discussed how these partnerships led to better coordination of efforts to address community needs and new opportunities to work together. Through this work, SNAP-Ed Partners were able to develop programs that better reflected the needs, interests, and values of the communities they served. SNAP-Ed partners' increased capacity and network of community partners laid the groundwork for

PSE changes across a number of settings including schools, food pantries, grocery stores, farmers markets, health care settings, worksites, and planning processes.

Findings from REM sessions, both by region and aggregated for the state, will be reviewed by MFF program and evaluation staff in FY20 to understand how to best use them to guide future work. SNAP-Ed funded organizations and their local partners who attended REM sessions will receive tailored questions they may consider in guiding their future work. Questions that apply broadly to the statewide findings are:

- What opportunities exist to systematically engage parents, teachers, and other individuals in children’s lives to support healthy eating and physical activity?
- How can SNAP-Ed funded organizations continue to build buy-in at schools and other community sites, especially through their relationships with local champions, and how can MFF support these efforts?
- How can SNAP-Ed funded organizations leverage their networks and resources to advance PSE changes?
- What additional training or support do program staff need to help build on their current PSE change work?
- How can SNAP-Ed funded organizations deepen their understanding of equity and community needs? How can they center equity in their work moving forward? How can MFF support these efforts?
- How can SNAP-Ed Partners explore program materials that can better meet the needs of local communities?
- How can SNAP-Ed Partners continue to capture and tell the story of the broader ripples of their work?

Point of Contact

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Relevant Journal References

There are no current publications related to this data; however, this project is conducted with IRB approval and could be published in the future.