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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach Program

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EMPA 396
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ABSTRACT

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, is a government program that provided/provides nutritious food to low-income families and individuals. Unfortunately, there are various barriers that prevent certain groups, such as veterans, college students, and seniors discouraged from participating due to the stigma attached to the program (US Department of Agriculture, 2019). 1) The lack of social media outreach needs studying. 2) SNAP eligibility criteria (specifically for college students) need reviewing and propose expansion. 3) The eligibility criteria are unknown or need clarification, targeted education campaign needs implementing. Aside from this, the program policies needed review to ensure it aligned with the latest legislation. The research used articles, journals, and blogs written by experts and scholars. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative design methods. The data collected was used to identify some of the gaps in the program that can be filled. As part of my research, I have interviewed key informants and analyzed data regarding perceptions of the program. The research shown that SNAP outreach implementation deemed necessary. The research proved the importance of social media outlets, targeted education education/campaign and SNAP eligibility criteria for college students should expand availability. Results and findings found in Chapter 4 and Conclusion, Recommendations and Further study discussed on Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

SNAP formerly known as the Food Stamp Act (FSP), was passed by Congress in 1964. Its purpose was to strengthen the agricultural economy and provide levels of nutrition among low-income household; however, the practical purpose was to bring the pilot FSP under Congressional control and to enact the regulations into law. Millions more participated in the SNAP program each month and two-thirds of those participants are working people whose income still fall below the SNAP income threshold. SNAP has served on average more than 45 million Americans per month and provided more than \$71 billion annually (US Department of Agriculture, 2019).

An article by the American Journal of Public Health (2019), stated that, despite the evident value of SNAP to public health and to the economy, it is the target of critics across the political spectrum. Antihunger and public health supporters of SNAP want the program to do more and better: to increase enrollments and benefits and improve diet quality. But opponents of government-supported welfare want SNAP to do less. They viewed the program as too bloated and expensive, and they charged that it encourages idleness, dependency, and fraud.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There three key issues that I focused on to try to solve the outreach problem. Listed as follows:

- 1) The lack of social media outreach and, needs studying

2) College Students Food security and access to SNAP: Currently, “if a student enrolled at least half-time in an institution or higher education, shall be ineligible to participate in SNAP unless they qualify for one of the exemptions below.” (eCFR7, Title 7, Section 273.5).

1. Be age 17 or younger or age 50 or older
2. Be physically or mentally unfit
3. Receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families under Title IV of the Social Security Act
4. Be enrolled as a result of, participating in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program under Title IV of the Social Security Act or its successor program
5. Be employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week and be paid for such employment or, self-employment 20 hours per week and receiving weekly earnings at least equal to the federal minimum wage.

3) The eligibility criteria are often unknown or need clarification, therefore a targeted education campaign needs implementing.

This research study has taken the steps to evaluate and investigate current regulations and policies regarding eligibility and criteria for SNAP participation. It provided related information to Social Media outreach, eligibility for college students, and targeted education campaigns that have proven to work for other organizations and may work for SNAP. I have conducted interviews of Key Informants and/or Subject Matter Experts (SME's) of six professionals from USDA and one from National Office via email. Additionally, I created a survey using Microsoft 365 Forms instead of survey monkey to cut costs and fees for responses.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The paper discussed what SNAP benefits are and who can be eligible to participate in it. It proposed outreach implementation for SNAP and expansion to the

current policy eligibility regarding college students. The examples used in this research such as the use of social media outreach programs and targeted education campaign, provided valuable information that may or may not work for SNAP Benefits. This is not to discredit any prior research regarding SNAP Outreach Program.

SIGNIFACANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study provided information and clarification to seniors, Veterans, and college students about SNAP benefit eligibility and criteria. The study showed that there is a need for implementing different methods of engagement to gain more SNAP participants. Social media outreach and targeted education campaign can help promote program information. Implementing policy expansion/change of eligibility for college students may increase SNAP participation. The study helped fill in some but not all the gaps within SNAP Program. It may have alleviated current and future issues in participation.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS/SUB QUESTIONS

The main objective of this study determined the eligibility criteria for the SNAP. Through social media outreach, can the program reach more participants to include Veterans and college students? Also, can a targeted education campaign help decrease barriers and stigma associated with the program? The study investigated the possibility of expanding the program's eligibility criteria to include college students. Can the expansion of eligibility criteria for students gain more student participants? Although the program is known to be beneficial to underserved communities, it is still not widely known to everyone. This study aimed to identify the social media outlets that can help

people access the benefits of the program. It will also explore the various interventions that can be implemented in different regions to encourage people to participate.

THEORY OF CHANGE AND ASSUMPTIONS

The Theory of Change of this paper is: If implemented an outreach program advertised in social media platforms, SNAP policies expanded its eligibility to college students, and a targeted education campaign to the public, then SNAP benefits would be more accessible and there would be increased participation by seniors, veterans, and college students, thus reducing barriers and stigmas within the program.

Assumption 1: If implemented an outreach program advertised in social media platforms (Twitter, You Tube, Facebook, Instagram, other).

Assumption 2: If SNAP policies expanded its eligibility to college students.

Assumption 3: If SNAP implemented a targeted education or information campaign
Then: barriers and stigma within the program decreases and seniors, veterans, and college students SNAP participation increase.

LIMITATIONS

This paper aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current eligibility of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for college students. It does not provide a deep dive into the policy, however it discussed the current eligibility and proposed to expand it. The paper does not discuss the various dietary guidelines and food intake requirements of individuals.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Stigma - a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something.

Barriers - a law, rule, problem, etc., that makes something difficult or impossible.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The expected impact of this research has the possibility to gain more SNAP participants, bring knowledge and valued information to underserved communities. It has the potential to identify gaps in the way the SNAP Outreach Program can offer to current and future SNAP participants.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

What is SNAP and who is eligible? SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. It is food benefits provided monthly to low-income/non-income families. There are two basic pathways to gain financial eligibility for SNAP: (1) having income and resources below specified levels set out in federal SNAP law; and (2) being “categorically,” or automatically, eligible based on receiving benefits from other specified low-income assistance programs according to Congressional Digest, 2020. Other eligibility rules apply with households that include elderly, disabled or a college student. (US Department of Agriculture, 2019).

Despite the revisions made to the program over the years, there are still unseen gaps in the program that needed to be filled to improve its effectiveness. This paper aims to provide an overview of the various interventions that have tried and found to be

successful in closing these gaps. The paper also explores the various outreach programs and aims to analyze the effectiveness of these types of interventions and whether they can be utilized for the SNAP Program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Can social media outreach bring SNAP benefits to Seniors, Veterans, and College students?

Social Media Outreach for Beginners, a blog written by Dominique Jackson (2016), is an example that aligned with my first assumption. He described what social media outreach can do for anyone who is not aware of what social media does. For people who are not aware, social media outreach is the process of using social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and other APPs, to raise awareness for your program, brand, content, or to build new relationships. "Social media outreach is one of the best ways to form new relationships, increase engagement and get more eyes on your content. Executing a successful outreach campaign can be difficult, tedious, and even frustrating sometimes. But the results you can get from it make your efforts more than worth it" (Jackson, 2016).

A study conducted by Wisk, L.E. & Buhr, R.G. (2021), regarding educational trial via social media, given social distancing and the precipitous evolution of the pandemic, Internet-enabled recruitment was deemed the best method to engage a community-based sample. As a result, among social media platforms, Facebook was the highest yield recruitment source (85% of website traffic originating from social media). Website traffic was from California but still geographically diffuse, suggesting substantial national

reach of recruitment efforts, and was highly correlated to place of residence reported by respondents, indicating similar response rates across geography.

The article, “*Social Media as A Vital Engagement Platform for Government Outreach*” written by Matt Anthes (2017), described the rise of social media has become the preferred method of reaching out to the masses. Celebrities, businesses, and individuals have all harnessed its power. However, the government has been slow to implement it as an outreach tool. Instead of being an e-government initiative, the government is now viewing social media as a tool that can be used to enhance its services. Homeland Security Foundation of America Chairman Eric Brown reported “to bridge the gap between the government and the public, the government must use all fronts. Shifting our thinking to an 'all devices' approach is more than just a good idea.”

According to the article, “*What is social media?*” by Michael Royce (2021) and an article entitled “*Social Media and the Army Implications for Outreach and Recruiting*” written by Jennie W. Wenger, Heather Krull, Baron Bodine, Larson V. Larson, Joshua Mendelsohn, Tepring Piquado and Christine A. Vaughan (2019), discuss traditional marketing and social media which aligns with my first assumption.

The two articles discuss common traditional marketing and advertisements for recruiting and general outreach. These have included television and radio ads, as well as recruiter-led activities, such as setting up booths at career fairs and sporting events, visiting high schools and other places where youth spend their time, and cold calling. However, “ninety percent of all U.S. adults had used the internet, a figure that grew by more than 50 percent since 2000. Three-fourths of U.S. adults had broadband internet

at home, and around the same percentage owned a smartphone. For this reason, the Army has turned to social media for potential recruits” (Wenger et al, 2019).

Can an expansion of eligibility policy for college student increase SNAP participants?

Ashley Burside, Parker Gilkesson, and Patricia Barker (2021), *Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc. (CLASP)*; Connection college students to SNAP. Why college students are at risk – pre-COVID, in a national survey from the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, over half of student parents reported facing food insecurity in the prior 30 days. Further, 70 percent of student parents were housing insecure in the previous year, and about one in five reported facing homelessness. Older students reported higher rates of basic needs insecurity, including 74 percent of student respondents, ages 26 to 30. None of this should be surprising, given the ever-rising cost.

A research paper entitled, *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Work Policy and its Influence on College Students’ Academic Success* by A. Clark, (2020), suggests that the increasing number of disqualified students for the SNAP program, the government needs to review the student work policy. The research study has shown, most students do not qualify through any of the exemptions and working 20 hours a week as a full-time student can be challenging for first-generation, low-income students within their first and second year of college (Mamiseishvili, 2010; Richardson et al., 2014). I find this article relevant to my assumption that student eligibility requirement needs to be reviewed, as previously stated, students are only eligible for SNAP if they

qualify for the following exemptions and meet at least one of the criteria (see Apex) per CFR 7, section 273.5).

Can targeted education campaign increase the SNAP participation and decrease barriers/stigma?

According to The Food Stamp: *History, Nutrition Educations and Impact-Science Direct:*

Participation rates are low among groups. Less than one third of the elderly persons who qualify receive food stamps. Only about 25% of eligible individuals who live in households where income is greater than the poverty level receives benefits. In 2005, 35% of eligible individuals chose not to receive food stamps. The most common reasons that people who could receive benefits do not apply include not knowing they are eligible, believing they do not need the benefit, or being unhappy about the amount they would receive. Eligible people find the application too complex or think there is a stigma attached to receiving food stamps.

According to an article authored by Bo Xie, Neil Charness, Karen Fingerman, Jeffrey Kaye, Miyong T. Kim & Anjum Khurshid (2020), "*When Going Digital Becomes a Necessity: Ensuring Older Adults' Needs for Information, Services, and Social Inclusion During COVID-19, Journal of Aging & Social Policy*," this hybrid outreach worked well for Medicare and Medicaid. On March 17, 2020, the Centers for Medicare, and Medicaid Services (CMS) has broadened the coverage of telehealth, enabling Medicare beneficiaries to receive a broader range of healthcare services at home.

This policy change may not ensure prompt telehealth adoption given that telehealth has not mainstreamed in routine health systems (Smith et al., 2020). However, in just over two months health systems that have not had large volumes of telehealth encounters have seen extraordinary (>300%) increases in telehealth visits (Garrity, 2020). At one of the author's affiliated health systems (OHSU Health Care), 69% of outpatient visits conducted as remote digital visits during April 2020. These recent developments are encouraging; still, training and resources are important to ensure the least tech-savvy adult population have the necessary hardware, software, Internet connectivity, or eHealth literacy, to be able to use the broadened range of telehealth services.

A study of by Carolyn L. Bird and Jacquelyn W. McClelland (2018), aligns with my assumptions about targeted education campaign. The article examined the effectiveness of an intervention in reducing the five most common barriers to SNAP, one example is awareness of inaccurate beliefs and information about SNAP. This intervention was based on the Experiential Learning Model that involves participants in the learning process and follow-up goal setting and the Adult Learning Theory that promotes experience and knowledge sharing among participants. County-based Cooperative Extension agents and campus-based staff delivered the program. The current study used a cross-sectional design.

By addressing the barriers, the intervention facilitated not only an increase in SNAP awareness and acceptability but also corrected any misunderstanding and

misinformation. It included all processes and information needed to bring the participants to decision-making concerning application. This curriculum is applicable in other states and suitable for delivery through Cooperative Extension (Bird et al, 2018).

My third assumption which correlated with the article "*Beyond Service: New Outreach Strategies to Reach Student Veterans*" written by Sarah Lemire, (2015), about the increasing number of outreach programs aimed at student veterans is that education campaign strategies can also reach this demographic. Universities and academic libraries have started to develop programs and outreach aimed at this demographic. They have provided suggestions on how other libraries can also target this unique population.

CONCLUSION

A review of the literature has shown that social media can be used to increase the awareness of a program or improve the level of acceptance of the program. It can also help improve the misunderstandings about the program and increase the engagement of the public (Jackson, 2016). A study conducted in 2021 revealed that 85% of the website traffic originating from social media, Facebook was the most effective recruitment tool for a program (Wisk et al, 2021). Finally, targeted education campaigns have started to address what can help lift the barriers that prevent people from participating in the program (Lemire, 2015).

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The data collected will be qualitative and quantitative. The survey conducted used a semi-structured/mixed method approach that involved the use of Microsoft Forms Survey. The survey was distributed through various methods such as email to personal contacts, colleagues, and various social media outlets. The demographics portion of the survey was conducted to identify the reasons people do/do not participate in the program. The qualitative approach involved interviews with key informants to collect data on various aspects of the program. The participants included representatives from USDA's own Western Regional Office (WRO), Branch Chief SNAP Managers (Integrity and Operations), Policy Analyst, Public Affairs Officer, Public and Partnership Liaison. In addition, two California County Employees, one from Contra County and another from San Bernardino County.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SUBQUESTIONS

The main objective of this study is to determine the eligibility criteria for the SNAP. Through social media outreach, can the program reach more participants to include Veterans and college students? Also, can a targeted education campaign help decrease barriers and stigma associated with the program? The study investigated the possibility of expanding the program's eligibility criteria to include college students. Another question asked, can the expansion of eligibility criteria for students gain more student participants? Although the program is known to be beneficial to underserved communities, it is still not widely known to everyone. This study will should help identify

social media outlets that can assist people access the benefits of the program. It explores various interventions that can be implemented to encourage people to participate.

THEORY OF CHANGE AND ASSUMPTIONS

The theory of change of this paper is: If implemented an outreach program advertised in social media platforms, SNAP policies expanded its eligibility to college students, and implemented a targeted education or information campaign then SNAP benefits would be more accessible and there would be an increase in participation by seniors, veterans, and college students, thus reduce barriers and stigmas within the program.

Assumption 1: If implemented an outreach program advertised in social media platforms (Twitter, You Tube, Facebook, Instagram, other).

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

SNAP - for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Outreach- is the activity of providing services to any population that might not otherwise have access to those services.

Outreach Program - aims to help, uplift, and support those who are deprived of certain services and rights. It involves giving learning, social planning, health support, and other projects for their welfare.

Social Media - websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram used for purpose of this study.

Targeted - directed at a particular group or activity

Educational Campaign – an Educational Campaign is an effortless way to teach your followers something valuable and to use your expertise to educate them on something related to the issue or subject.

Education vs. Campaign - Campaigning lowers the barriers against action and increases the incentives to take action. Education, in contrast, is a broadening exercise. It uses examples to reveal layers of complexity, leading to lower certainty but higher understanding.

College Student – a student enrolled in community college, state college, or universities. You are a student if you enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education. If you are enrolled less than half-time, you may be SNAP-eligible if you meet all other SNAP eligibility requirements. The number of hours considered as half-time enrollment is determined by the institution of higher education.

Institution of higher education - A regular curriculum at a college or university degree program; or A business, technical, trade, or vocational school that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalent (GED).

Senior – 55 years old and older; an elderly person and older, especially one who is retired and living on a pension

Veteran - Under federal law, a veteran is any person who served honorably on active duty in the armed forces of the United States. Discharges marked “general and under honorable conditions” also qualify. They would be considered a veteran no matter how long they served.

Expanded eligibility to college students – changing work requirement policy such as lowering hours required to work from 20 hours to 10 hours or have all college students qualify for SNAP Benefits if they are full time students and work at least 10 hours per week.

Increase in participation by seniors: for purpose of this study, an increase in participation by seniors will represent a 2% or greater increase compared to 2019 participation rates.

Increase in participation by veterans: will represent a 2% or greater increase compared to 2019 participation rates.

Increase in participation by college students: will represent a 2% or greater increase compared to 2019 participation rates.

POULATION SAMPLING AND PROCEDURES

In this research I used eight to ten semi-structured design for interview questions; qualitative data collected and analyzed. Eight Key Informants interviewed, and they were as follows: SNAP Integrity Manager, SNAP Operations Manager, SNAP Policy Analyst, SNAP Public Affairs, Public and Partnership Liaison, USDA, National Office Employee, USDA, and two California County employees. Unfortunately, I was unable to interview the SNAP Division Manager due to conflicting schedules and meetings. I deployed an eight-question survey using Microsoft Forms. I was unable to deliver the paper surveys to local community colleges due to limited students on campus, instead I distributed the survey through various social media outlets, personal contacts, and co-workers. The goal was to collect at least 70 to 100 responses from the survey; 145 responses returned by end of business day on June 15, 2022. The Key Informant Interviews conducted via email received responses from the eight representatives. Quantitative and qualitative data analyzed, and interview questions transcribed to determine trends and patterns and recorded in Chapter 4 Results and Findings.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to collect and analyze the internal validity of the survey questions used in the SNAP outreach program. Currently, there are no threats to the internal validity of this research. The external validity of this research has potential to reach more SNAP participants and the outcome may or may not be used to generalize certain groups or situations.

LIMITATIONS

The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed most establishments and organizations to return to their normal activities. There were limitations due to time constraints involved in conducting the survey and scheduled Key Informant interviewees replaced with other interviewees. The Key Informants chose to remain anonymous and did not want their names and position title published in the paper. One Key Informant did not want to comment on any questions relating to SNAP policy or the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Key Informants answered various questions with one- or two-word responses or less than a paragraph.

SUMMARY

This proposal involved conducting interviews with local government officials and other sources to gather information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Quantitative data results from the survey demonstrated numerical data, charts, and graphs. Qualitative data results from the interviews transcribed to record trends and patterns from the report and found in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The Results and Findings of the research analysis concluded from a semi-structured and mixed method design that included quantitative data from the survey questions and qualitative data from the key informant interviews. Results of data presented with charts, graphs, and key findings in order of assumptions and theory of change.

From the survey, the goal was to achieve one hundred responses from the local community and targeted audience (seniors, veterans, and college students), however it reached 145 responses. The survey link posted on various social media platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, personal contacts and college students, and USDA employees. The date of collection was between 4 to 15 of June 2022.

The Key Informants that interviewed included: two FNS Branch Chief Managers (Operations and Integrity Manager), SNAP Policy Analyst, SNAP Public Affairs Officer, USDA employee from the National Office, and USDA Liaison. A total of six key informant from USDA completed via email communication and two employee personnel interviewed from two different California Counties.

The graphs used in figure 1 and 2 demonstrated the demographics between age groups and the type of audience that has taken the survey. Demographics is important in this research because it was necessary to reach certain targeted audience to support the research questions and assumptions. The survey reached 145 responses which ended with the percentages as follows: Boomers at 10.49%, Gen-X 55.24%, and Millennials at 34.27%. A very surprising turnout of this demographic is that zero percent of Gen-Z group took the survey. Out of the 145 responses, the majority that took the survey were designated as “others.” An estimated total of 24% for Veterans, 7% were Senior Citizens/Veterans, and 6% of students took the survey. The majority of the votes came from “others” (meaning residents that are not seniors, veterans, or college students). See figures 1 and 2 below:

1. Demographics

● Silent / 1928-1945	0
● Boomer / 1946 - 1964	15
● Gen X / 1965 - 1980	79
● Millennials / 1981 - 2000	49
● Gen Z / 2001 - 2020	0



Figure 1

2. Are you

● Senior Citizen	10
● Senior Citizen / Veteran	2
● Veteran	35
● College Student	8
● Student Veteran	0
● other	86
● Other	2

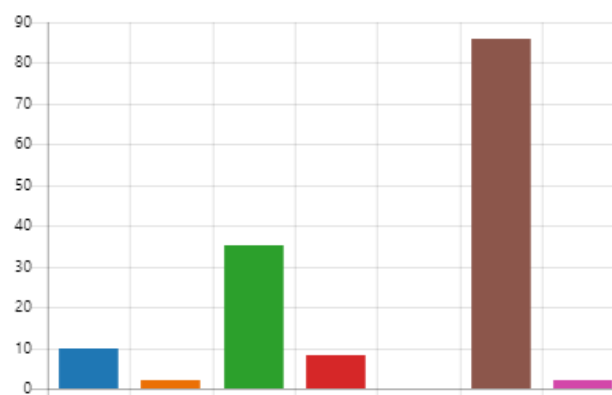


Figure 2

Assumption/TOC1: Can social media outreach bring SNAP benefits to Seniors, Veterans, and College students?

Quantitative Results:

The results of the survey shown in figure 3, indicated that “word of mouth” was the most preferred method of recruitment, with 41%, followed by “other” at 30% and social media

at 15%. This could mean that the program may not have been utilizing social media to its advantage or limited to what the program can do with regards to social media.

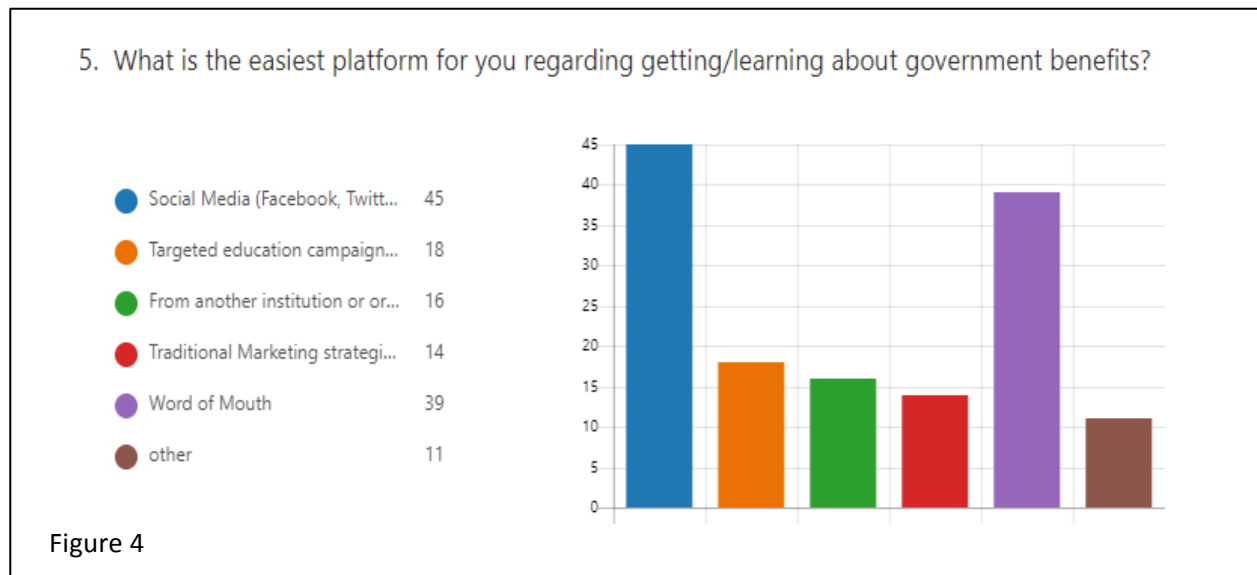
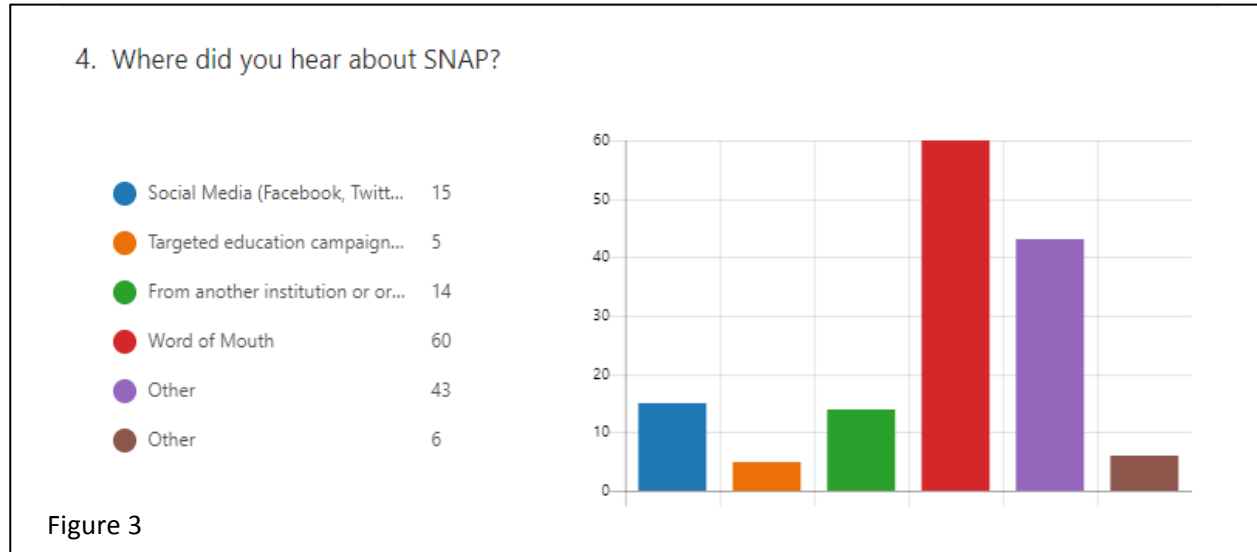


Figure 4, survey question 5, delivered a much different outcome. The results show that 31% of the respondents said that social media is the easiest way to learn about government benefits, followed by “word of mouth” with 27%.

Qualitative results:

Interview Question 2: What are the greatest challenges/strengths of social media outreach?

“Social media is a great tool for delivering information. You cannot assume, however, that people that need to see your message, will see it. About 70% of Americans have some sort of social media presence, but often the very people that need to see the messaging are the ones that either have no access to the internet or a device, or they are too busy to check social media on a regular basis, thus missing the messaging. Consistent messaging across a variety of platforms is often the best plan. Having information that is easy to read and find on a webpage is vital” (Public Affairs Officer, FNS, WRO).

“One of the biggest strengths of social media outreach is its ability to reach a substantial number (edited amount) of individuals. It can be a challenge however if households do not have access to the internet because they live in remote locations, or for the elderly population who may not be as tech savvy as the younger generation” (Policy Analyst, FNS, WRO).

Another responded with “social media allows more people to learn about the program and reach more of those who may need the program. I do not see any challenges with social media outreach. I do know that advertising the program not allowed” (USDA employee, National Office).

Interview Question 4: If social media outreach advertised on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Podcast, would more people participate in SNAP benefits?

“I believe so, I at least think a larger part of the younger generations who are eligible would participate or would learn more about it and help family members or friends who may be eligible to apply. I also think the more information that gets out about SNAP benefits, the less stigmatized it becomes, and more eligible individuals would apply” (Policy Analyst, FNS, WRO).

“If used correctly, social media has the potential to expand upon existing outreach efforts” (SNAP Operations Manager, FNS, WRO).

“The agency has a presence on various social media platforms. However, it is against regulations and statutes to promote programs” (USDA employee, National Office).

A study conducted by Wisk, L.E. & Buhr, R.G. (2021), regarding educational trial via social media aligned with the results from survey question 5, interview question 2 and 4. Therefore validates arguments in Theory 1: that internet-enabled recruitment was deemed the best method to engage a community-based sample. As a result, among social media platforms, Facebook was the highest yield recruitment source (85% of website traffic originating from social media).

Assumption/TOC2: Can an expansion of eligibility policy for college student increase SNAP participants?

Quantitative Results:

7. Do you think the current SNAP Policy should expand availability to college students? Please describe briefly (Comments box).	
✓ Yes, with comments = 72%	Figure 5
✓ No, NA, unknown = 28%	

Figure 5 page 5, indicated 72% of the respondents said SNAP Policy should expand availability to college students by responding with “yes” and 28% who disagreed responded with “No, NA, or unknown.”

Notable comments from supporters

Respondent 16: “Yes. College students could really benefit from this program, but they may not know about it or may be unsure about how to apply. Also, if the program was made easily accessible to them, more of them would probably apply.”

Respondent 67: “Yes, any form of financial aid that college students are able to apply for, depend on the parents’ income but at college ages, many students are already independent and paying for their own stuff so it should be based on the individual’s income.”

Respondent 106: “Yes! Students do not have the financial assistance to care for their nutritional wellbeing.”

Respondent 125: “Yes, there is a high rate of food insecurity among college students.”

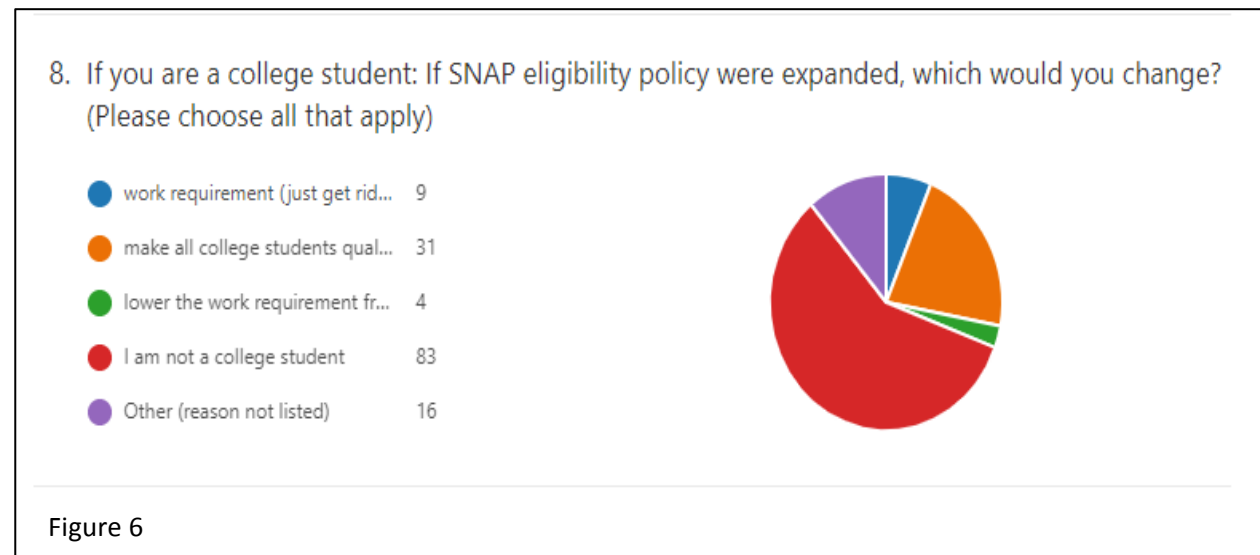
Notable comments from the opposition

Respondent 66: “No, only if needed because of a disability. College kids need to be productive members of society.”

Respondent 93: “No, because college students are not actively seeking full-time employment.”

Respondent 145: “I do not know enough about the program to comment.”

Figure 6 below demonstrated, 58% of the respondents were not students, however, 30.77% who were students said they would want to see change in SNAP eligibility policy regarding students.



Qualitative Results:

Interview Question 5: Do you see a need for SNAP policy to be expanded to include eligibility for all college students experiencing food insecurity?

“Yes, this is one of the largest underserved populations. We all know of the term “starving students”, many students have to use all of their income for living expenses and tuition. Its not fair that students often have to choose between eating or buying a book. Many students may have to drop out of school because they have to get a job because they can’t afford to eat. We should be supporting individuals who are going to school to get an education to better themselves and become productive members of society. Without a college degree many individuals are stuck getting low paying

minimum wage jobs and then end up having to get SNAP benefits to supplement their income. If they were able to stay in school, receive SNAP benefits so they could eat they could concentrate on getting their education without the stress of worrying about where their next meal will come from” (Policy Analyst, FNS, WRO).

“Yes, with inflation and the recent pandemic I think college students should automatically be eligible for benefits” (Public and Partnership, Liaison, USDA).

“I do feel there needs to be some parameters around college students. For example, a student signed up for three units should be able to also work. I would like to see it expanded to include more students and this would help reduce food insecurity among college students” (Integrity Manager, FNS, WRO)

Another answered “We cannot provide an opinion on specific policies or needs. We implement policy promulgated by the National agency, who in turn is in the ongoing process of considering the community’s needs through the legislative and policy-making process” (Operation Manager, FNS, WRO).

Finally, USDA employee, National Office replied, “Absolutely!”

I found that the results of the interview question 5 aligns with arguments of Theme 2, Chapter 2 Literature Review, scholar paper entitled, *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Work Policy and its Influence on College Students’ Academic Success* by A. Clark, (2020). Except for one Key Informant that would not comment on the policy. Survey questions 7 and 8 supported the idea that food insecurity is a common issue among college students and those who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Assumption/TOC3: Can targeted education/information campaign increase the SNAP participation and decrease barriers/stigma?

Quantitative Results:

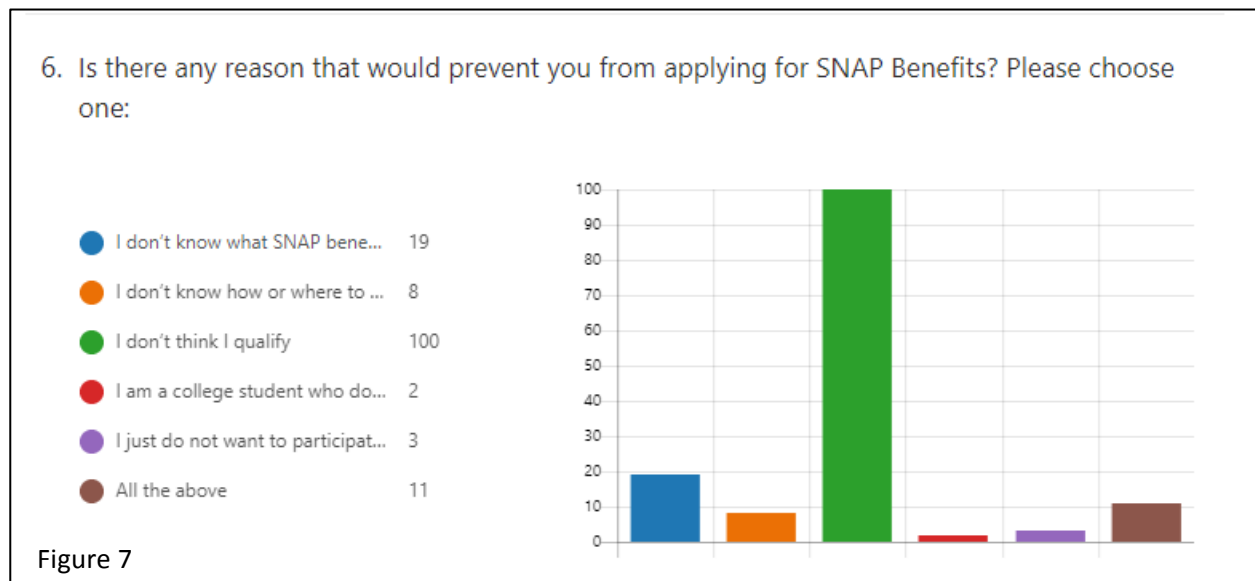


Figure 7 revealed that about 70% of the respondents did not think they could qualify for SNAP. This suggests that there are various barriers and stigmas that prevent people from accessing the program. This also proves that the stigma surrounding the program is likely due to the automatic assumption that people cannot qualify. Thirty percent of the respondents either did not know where to apply or could not provide sufficient information.

Qualitative results:

Interview question 3: If targeted education information/campaign were implemented, do you think more people would participate in SNAP benefits?

“Yes, I think targeted outreach would be more effective in reaching in certain groups” (Public and Partnership Liaison, USDA).

“If the targeted campaign was for specific populations yes. Debunking myths around receipt of benefits for children of undocumented immigrants would be a helpful campaign as would focusing on how the program could help seniors on fixed income stretch their grocery bill” (USDA employee, National Office).

“Yes, even though SNAP has become more widely known and accepted, I think there is still a large population who may have misconceptions about who is eligible, or about how to use, or even apply for SNAP benefits” (Policy Analyst, FNS, WRO).

“Yes, it has the potential to expand participation” (SNAP Operations Manager, FNS, WRO).

“I think a target education campaign, which targets the appropriate audience could have an impact on participation in SNAP. Of note is the fact that many immigrant families are reluctant to enroll in SNAP because they are fearful of it impacting their immigrations status. An education to this population could be quite impactful” (SNAP Integrity Manager, FNS, WRO).

The findings of interview question 3, Theme 3 scholars/practitioners in Chapter 2 Literature Review aligned with survey question 6 and therefore validated assumption three (3).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The results of the study supported by the data collected from the various surveys and interviews. The findings of the study aligned with the findings of the previous

chapters. The three assumptions of the study validated. The first two assumptions validated due to the strong similarities between the survey and interview questions. However, the results of the interview question 5 had mixed outcome which indicated further research may be necessary.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research demonstrated key findings from the survey and interview questions answered by local community, targeted audience, key informants, and literature review from scholars/practitioners. The conclusion and recommendations will be based on the findings and results from Chapter 4.

CONCLUSIONS

The study showed that the most popular community engagement is through social media, Facebook being the number one choice. Majority of the key informants stated that if implemented targeted education/information campaign is for specific a population (e.g., seniors, Veterans, and college students) it can have an impact in the SNAP program. “Of note, an education to the immigrant population can be quite impactful” (SNAP Integrity Manager, FNS, WRO). Survey question 8 indicated that expanding the policy coverage of college students can educate a targeted audience. On that same survey, only 31% of the respondents were students, and this figure suggested that changes should be made in the program's policy. The study and the results of the analysis validated my three assumptions. The next step is to implement changes in the outreach program to increase the effectiveness of the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since key informant responses and survey questions aligned with Chapter Two's Literature Reviews from scholars/practitioners, my recommendations will be based on those key findings.

Recommendation 1: Educating vs. Advertising

One FNS Integrity Manager explained that "state agencies are not allowed to promote SNAP (i.e., encourage people to sign up for benefits)" in social media but can educate the public about its availability. The improvement should then focus on educating the community about the program through social media. Besides being able to provide information, the improvement can also involve creating videos and sharing experiences from the community. My recommendation is to implement an outreach creating video content SNAP targeting underserved communities (i.e., seniors, veterans, college students). Surveys continually deployed after video content then analyzed and recorded. Timeframe should be no more than one year to 18 months to get a reasonable response

Recommendation 2: Policy changes regarding college students

According to survey results, over 70% of respondents said that the policy should expand availability to allow students to receive benefits without meeting certain exceptions. Additionally, Key Informants agreed that there is absolute need for policy expansion regarding college students to include food insecurity.

The national office has a training team that focuses on policy changes each year. This team focuses on editing, adding, and extracting from the policy and are given six to eight months to be completed by the end of FY. I would suggest that they also create a separate focus group to discussing various aspects of student eligibility. This group should be able to do so by having the same approach when it comes to conducting the policy change. Recommendations taken from State agencies and Federal reviewers, can complete within six to eight months. However, changes made will need approval from the National Office.

Recommendation 3: Education campaign that targets the appropriate audience

According to one key informant, Seniors, Veterans, and students are underserved. Therefore, an education campaign that targets the appropriate audience can be impactful. For instance, presenting education programs that are related to SNAP can utilized by military personnel who are transitioning out of the service. I learned about SNAP and Vocational Rehabilitation and Education (VR/E) program through my local county. This has helped me transition into my new life after serving.

The Navy, Army, and other services should work together with the local counties to provide the best possible service to the members who are planning on retiring. Six months prior to their separation or retirement, service members can connect with their local officials and learn about various programs and services. The education campaign provided by representatives scheduled weekly through the county. These programs can help break down barriers and help individuals get back on track.

Further Research

I believe the area that policy officials need to further study is the regulations and rules surrounding the use of social media platforms for the program. The government has a program that allows employees to volunteer for missions that last for 120 days. I would suggest that they start studying social media to gain a deeper understanding of how it works and what trends are happening in the industry. This way, they can then produce a way to make use of the data collected in social media to present the benefits of SNAP. I would say at least four representatives doing four increments of 120 days to collect enough data and then conduct a test run of four increments of 120 days to see what works and what does not.

The complexity of the program's policy on college students is also a subject that policymakers need to study further. This section of the CFR needs further analyzation to see what changes would be best for students. For example, a representative from Food Nutrition Service can conduct a one-to-two-year observation on how college students are living. They can continue to deploy surveys asking students how the hours they could really work with a full-time class schedule or how much do they spend on food per quarter/semester. The surveys collected throughout the year discussed and analyzed.

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APPENDIX A. Gantt Chart

GGU EMPA 301/396 PROJECT SCHEDULE - JEMELLE MANAOAT								
TASK	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
Ongoing reading								
Final Survey Questions								
Survey Questions Sent								
Survey Questions Received								
Survey Analysis								
Final Interview Questions								
Interview SMEs								
Interview Analysis								
Write Survey & Interview Analysis								
TASK	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
Edit EMPA Final 301 Paper								
Add Literature Review								
Draft CH 4-6								
Completion of Draft: CH 4-6								
Edit Completed Draft								
Final Submission								

B. Key Informants Interviewed (KII)

- 1- SNAP Integrity Manager, FNS, WRO
- 1- SNAP Operations Manager, FNS, WRO
- 1- SNAP Policy Analyst, FNS, WRO
- 1 -SNAP Public Affairs Officer, FNS, WRO
- 1- Public and Partnership Liaison, USDA
- 1- National Office Employee, USDA
- 2 - California County Employees: Contra Costa County and San Bernardino County

Key Informant Interview Questions

INFORMED CONSENT: My name is Jemellee Manaoat, and I am an Executive Master of Public Administration student at Golden Gate University. My capstone project is a Case Study on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach and participation. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your responses are secure, confidential, anonymous. You have the option to answer 1, 2, or all the questions. Additionally, you have the option to OPT out of this interview at any time during the interview. You may also ask to exclude your name from the research. If you have further questions, please email at: jmanaoat@my.ggu.edu.

1. What are the greatest challenges/strength of SNAP Benefits?
2. What are the greatest challenges/strength of social media outreach?
3. If targeted education campaign implemented, do you think more people would participate in SNAP benefits?
4. If social media outreach advertised on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Podcast, would more people participate in SNAP benefits?
5. Do you see a need for SNAP policy expanded to include eligibility for all college students experiencing food insecurity?

Currently, "if a student enrolled at least half-time in an institution or higher education, shall be ineligible to participate in SNAP unless they qualify for one of the exemptions below." (eCFR7, Title 7, Section 273.5).

1. Be age 17 or younger or age 50 or older
 2. Be physically or mentally unfit
 3. Receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families under Title IV of the Social Security Act
 4. Be enrolled as a result of, participating in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program under Title IV of the Social Security Act or its successor program
 5. Be employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week and be paid for such employment or, self-employment 20 hours per week and receiving weekly earnings at least equal to the federal minimum wage.
6. What are your thoughts about the number of hours required for college students changing from 20 hours to 10 hours?
 7. If any, what would you change about the current policy regarding college students? If any, what would you change about the current policy regarding college students?
 8. Are Seniors, Veterans, and college students underserved? Please explain.
 9. What type of outreach program or education campaign currently exist in SNAP? Is it effective? Why or why not?
 10. Would outreach/education programs in your state/county work for another state/county or vice versa? Why or why not?

Referral: If you know a colleague who will be able to help me, kindly provide the contact name and email information in the space below or forward to them this questionnaire. Thank you very much for your kind support.

C. Survey Questionnaire

Rapid Survey: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach

INFORMED CONSENT: My name is Jemellee Manaoat, and I am an Executive Master of Public Administration student at Golden Gate University. My capstone project is a Case Study on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach and participation. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your responses are secure, confidential, anonymous. You have the option to OPT out of this survey at any time. Lastly, the survey is unanimous. If you have further questions, please email at: jmanaoat@my.ggu.edu.

Risks or discomforts:

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study altogether. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the questionnaire, your answers will NOT be recorded.

Confidentiality

Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The researcher will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the online survey. Only the researcher will see your individual survey responses and the results of the content analysis of your responses. The list of e-mail addresses of the participants will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder; a hard copy will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After the data collection has been completed, the researcher will destroy the list of participants' e-mail addresses after 12 months.

Additional Information: What is SNAP? SNAP is Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, is a government program that provides nutritious food to low-income families and individuals.

1. Demographics

- a. Silent / 1928-1945
- b. Boomer / 1946 - 1964
- c. Gen X / 1965 - 1980
- d. Millennials / 1981-2000
- e. Gen Z / 2001 - 2020

2. Are you:

- a. Senior Citizen
- b. Senior Citizen / Veteran
- c. Veteran
- d. College Student
- e. Student / Veteran
- f. Other

3. Have you or anyone in your household ever applied for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)? If so, why, or why not?

4. Where did you hear about SNAP?

- a. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, other). If other, please indicate _____.
- b. Targeted education campaign/outreach? If so, what was the name of the Campaign/Outreach? _____.
- c. From another institution or organization? Name _____.
- d. Word of Mouth
- e. Other _____.

5. What is the easiest platform for you regarding getting/learning about government benefits?

- a. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, other).
If other, please indicate _____.
- b. Targeted education campaign/outreach
- c. From another institution or organization
- d. Traditional Marketing strategies: face-to-face office visits, career fairs, recruiters, etc.
- e. Word of Mouth
- f. Other _____.

6. Is there any reason that would prevent you from applying for SNAP Benefits? Please choose one:

- a. I don't know what SNAP benefits are.
- b. I don't know how or where to apply.
- c. I don't think I qualify
- d. I am a college student who does not qualify per SNAP eligibility requirements.
- e. I just do not want to participate because the process is too long.
- f. All the above

7. Do you think the current SNAP Policy should expand availability to college students?
Please describe briefly

8. If you are a college student, If SNAP eligibility policy expanded, which would you change? Please choose one:

- a. work requirement (just get rid of it)
- b. make all college students qualified for SNAP if they are full time students
- c. lower the work requirement from 20 hours to 10 hours
- d. I am not a college student
- e. Other (reason not listed)