Participant Engagement Strategies for SNAP E&T

April 24, 2019
1. Welcome and Agenda Overview
2. Guest Speaker: Mercy Albaran, Fenton (Social Change Communications Agency)
3. Participant Engagement in the Context of SNAP E&T
4. Insights from Applied Behavioral Science
5. Guest Speakers: Ruth Tipton, State of Kansas; Jenny Welch Buller, Center for Public Partnerships and Research, University of Kansas
6. Guest Speaker: Matt Weis, National Able Network
7. Q&A
MEET THE TRAINER

Mercy Albaran

• Messaging, branding, and media specialist at Fenton, a social change agency

• I’m from Oakland, CA

• My family received SNAP benefits when I was growing up
AGENDA

- Why messages matter
- Audiences
- Messaging and brand best practices
- Live poll
WHY MESSAGES MATTER
WHY DO MESSAGES MATTER?

• Messages make people feel something
• Messages are important tools for you and your ambassadors
• Messages frame the conversation
• Messages are sticky
• Messages are a starting place
WHAT IS A MESSAGE?

• Concise, consistent language you will use for many purposes
• Messages can be adapted for specific events, media, and speaking opportunities
• Defining, differentiating, compelling, and memorable
• You don’t need an encyclopedia of messages, just a short suite
AUDIENCES
WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

- Who do you need to be successful?
- What do they value?
- What are their barriers?
- Who do they trust?
- Where do they get their information?
- What do you want them to do?
MESSAGING AND BRAND BEST PRACTICES
FOCUS ON THE WHY

- What
- How
- Why
EXAMPLES

“Paths to employment and economic self-sufficiency for SNAP clients.”

“Helping you find and keep a job.”

—SNAP Path to Work Website
APPEAL TO SHARED VALUES

- Easy access to healthy food
- Children’s health and well-being impacted by the food they eat
- Economic mobility
- Supporting community
EXAMPLES

“...adults are healthy and reach their maximum potential; children are...healthy, ready to learn, and reach their full potential.”

—Rhode Island Department of Human Services Website
MORE BEST PRACTICES

• Focus on *one thing*
• Use positive frames
• Break the jargon habit
• Show, don’t tell
POLL: 
WHAT IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT WHY? 

Please submit your answer via the GoToWebinar chat box.
THANK YOU!

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Outreach and Marketing

• What changes did the 2014 Farm Bill make to allowable and unallowable outreach activities?

• What kind of outreach can you do in E&T?
Allowable Activities

• Sharing factual information so a person can make an informed choice about applying

• Including:
  – Application assistance
  – Eligibility pre-screening
  – Assistance obtaining verification documents
  – Translation services
  – Exhibits at community events
  – Workshops
Unallowable Activities

2014 Farm Bill Changes

– **Non-reimbursable:** *Not allowed to be reimbursed with Federal funds*
  - Recruitment activities designed to persuade
  - Radio, television, and billboard ads that promote SNAP benefits and enrollment
  - Agreements with foreign governments that promote SNAP benefits and enrollment

– **Unpermitted:** *Not allowed if an entity receives Federal funds (even if non-Federal resources fund the unpermitted activity)*
  - Paying workers based on the number of applications they submit
Non-reimbursable Activities

• All recruitment activities designed to persuade

• Persuasive practices are:
  – Coercing or pressuring an individual to apply
  – Providing incentives to fill out an application

• Persuasive practices are NOT:
  – Providing factual information so an individual can make an informed choice about applying
  – Correcting misinformation
Non-reimbursable Activities

- Radio, television, and billboard ads that promote SNAP benefits and enrollment

**NOT** included in the restriction:
- Social media
- Internet sites
- Newspaper ads
- Media interviews
- Signs indicating SNAP EBT is accepted
- D-SNAP ads
Non-reimbursable Activities

• Agreements with foreign governments that promote SNAP benefits and enrollment

• Allowable
  – Hosting a SNAP outreach fair with the YMCA

• Unallowable
  – Hosting a SNAP outreach fair with a foreign consulate
Special Considerations for E&T

• In the final outreach rule preamble:
  – Providing Specialized Services: Outreach targeted to a specific population based on specific needs
  – Providing information about ancillary benefits of applying for SNAP
Engaging Potential SNAP E&T Participants

Stakeholders:

• **SNAP Agency**
  – SNAP eligibility staff level
  – SNAP agency level

• **Third-Party Partners**
  – CBOs
  – Community and technical colleges

• **Current/Potential SNAP Participants: The Audience**
Participant Engagement - SNAP Agency

• Consider developing a Participant Engagement/Marketing Plan
  (1) Vision & goals; (2) Integrated into State SNAP E&T Plan; (3) Key messaging to be utilized; (4) Specific strategies to be utilized; (5) Staffing/resources; (6) Functions of State Agency vs. SNAP eligibility staff vs. third-party partners

• Communicate plan to eligibility staff, partners; regularly update

• Agency brochure and website with SNAP E&T info; provider page and participant page

• Support/train eligibility staff
  (1) Refocused role – from eligibility/compliance to engagement/skills/opportunity
  (2) Easy access to E&T info (requirements/program services/providers)
  (3) Easy access to points of contact (at providers, State agency)
  (4) Messaging on E&T

• Out-station staff: Increase access and connection with E&T options

• Communications: Letters about E&T requirements—choice & opportunity vs. requirement
Participant Engagement – Third-Party Partners

• Integrated into their communities; have existing strategies/methods for engaging participants
• State SNAP Agencies and third-party partners can work together to design and develop tailored participant engagement messaging/materials specific to SNAP E&T

CBOs
• Often serve a population with high levels of SNAP eligibility
  – Justice-involved/Dept. of Corrections
  – Non-custodial parents
  – Housing authorities and homeless assistance programs
  – Youth (foster youth, opportunity youth)

Community and technical colleges
• Benefit to students
  – Increased advising and support services
  – SNAP/SNAP E&T as a part of financial aid package
Examples

SNAP Agency
• Massachusetts SNAP E&T website for clients & video
  https://www.snappathtowork.org/clients

Community and Technical Colleges
• Hawai’i Community College website
  https://hinet.hawaii.org/
• Fresh Success website & video (California)
  https://foundationccc.org/What-We-Do/Student-Services/FreshSuccess
SNAP Participants – the Audience

SNAP Participants

• Seeking food assistance from SNAP agency
  o With reverse referral, seeking employment/training/support

• Experiencing food scarcity; financial stress; other related challenges

• Potential concern about stigma related to receiving "welfare" and/or sharing private/household information

• May be unaware of E&T requirements

• Likely to have barriers such as lack of transportation, childcare, stable housing
SNAP Participants

- Nearly 3/4 of adult SNAP participants either currently work or have worked within the past year

- 82% of SNAP households participate in work, but most work in low-wage jobs

- SNAP participants most commonly work in services, office, and sales jobs, including 4,515,500 in the services industry

- Most common occupations: Cashier, cooks, nursing/home health aides, janitors/cleaners, drivers

- 1/3 of SNAP participants have less than a high school diploma; Limited English common

See https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/SNAPEandTCharacteristics.pdf
Agenda

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Behavioral Science

- A cross-disciplinary field that systematically studies **behavior**—how people behave, how we make decisions, how we form habits, and why
- Provides us with concepts, frameworks, and tools to understand behavior and to change our behavior
- Combines insights and methods from different fields: Social sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology), economics, cognitive science, marketing, consumer behavior
- Can help us create better, more effective communications
Common Issues in Communications

• **Jargon** = confusion; can deter people from taking action
  – “You are an ABAWD living in a non-waived area…”
  – “Review the table that identifies exemptions and exceptions. If you believe you qualify for one of these, please contact your local agency office…”

• Messaging unclear; information **overly complex**

• Language may be **unintentionally daunting** to participants; poverty stigmas

• **Lack of clear action steps** = lack of action

• Behavioral tendencies are not proactively addressed
  • **Present bias**—we value immediate/present time payoffs more than future ones
  • **Status quo bias**—a preference for the current state of affairs
  • **Procrastination**—we sometimes put off difficult or complex actions and decisions
Improving Communications

1. Identify desired response to communication
2. Understand context and recipient(s) – how will recipient(s) see and receive the communication? Does communication need to be tailored? When would be the optimal time to send or show the communication?
3. Use behavioral insights to improve communications
Common Behavioral Techniques to Improve Communications

• **Personalize communication** to capture attention
  – “Dear Janice, this is Brian from the _____ office. We noticed that…”

• Feature **past participants** in recruitment materials

• **Use plain, clear language** to create cognitive ease
  – Add a P.S. (postscript) if letter or email

• **Highlight key information** using bullet points, color, or simple graphics
  – Correct common misperceptions (e.g. who qualifies for a program)

• **Make it simple to take action**
  – Chunking: Break actions down into simple steps
  – Clearly indicate deadlines (salience)
  – Make it easy to take action
    • Postcard to drop in the mail
    • Link to click on
    • Number to call
Redesigned (Behaviorally-Informed) Reminder Email to Submit FAFSA Application

A. Personalized greeting may encourage readers to continue reading email.

B. Increases salience of deadline through bolding and placement at top of email, making it more likely that students will notice it.

C. Corrects common misperceptions about who qualifies for aid in friendly, easily understandable language.

D. Shows widespread use of financial aid so that students feel it is acceptable and normal for them to apply for and receive aid.

E. Makes clear the potential to lose full aid award, increasing motivation to file before deadline.

F. Actionable guidance includes links to necessary information and next steps.

G. Coming from a real person rather than an unidentified entity (e.g., the Financial Aid Office) makes email feel more personal, increasing engagement with contents.

Checklist for Letters and Email (Excerpt)

Letters and Email

Sending people a letter or an email? Use this checklist to make sure your message is being properly understood.

Presenting important details

- Is the information you want people to read first at the top or along the left side of the page?
  - N

- Are pertinent details highlighted in bold and/or color?
  - N

Have you used a post-script (p.s.)?
  - Y

Customization

- Is the message personalized?
  - Y

- Does the communication establish similarities between sender and recipient?
  - Y

- Are any descriptions of behavior specific to the recipient's local context?
  - N

- Does the text contain jargon and/or technical language which may be unfamiliar to the user?
  - N

Sources: Increasing FAFSA Applications (ideas42), Behavioral Evidence Hub
Contact Information

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Strategies for Engaging SNAP E&T Participants in Kansas

Lessons from the GOALS Pilot Project

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

Ruth Tipton and Jenny Welch Buller
Who We Are

• Ruth Tipton
  • Kansas Department for Children and Families
  • Asst. Director E&T Employment Services/Special Projects
  • GOALS pilot project manager 2014-2019

• Jenny Welch Buller
  • University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (kucppr.org)
  • Research Project Coordinator
  • GOALS pilot project support/coordinator
  • SNAP Academy participant, 2017
GOALS Pilot Project

GOALS was a three-year pilot program funded by USDA and administered by the Kansas DCF as part of a national effort to test innovative approaches to SNAP E&T programs.

January 2016 – March 2019
GOALS Pilot Project: Engagement Success

Sample Buildup

Monthly Enrollment
Initial Messaging to Participants

Kansas GOALS Pilot Project: What worked and why

1. Established a clear vision
2. Upfront investment in research and design
3. Staff creativity and passion!
Ongoing Engagement Efforts

**Southwest Kansas News**

Gross sales, Eastman, and Cawood Vocational Center in Leavenworth and Kansas City Community College. Employees learn about job skills and participate in on-the-job training. The program is open to students of all ages.

**Northeast Kansas News**

The new GOALS program is now available in Leavenworth and Kansas City. Three classes are offered, and students can choose their preferred location. The program is designed to help students acquire essential job skills.

**South Central Kansas News**

Wichita Technical Training Center in Lawrence offers courses in machining, welding, and welding processes. The program is open to students of all ages and levels of experience.

Contact: GOALS of South Central Kansas, 316-263-2125.
Reengagement Efforts

A brighter future is within your reach.

Training:

Time(s):

Date(s):

Contact:

Thank you for participating in the GOALS program!

CALL NOW to see if you are still eligible.

1-888-369-4777

Ask for your local GOALS Career Navigator. Don’t miss out!

DEADLINE TO RE-ENGAGE IS OCTOBER 31, 2018
Process To Get To What Worked

- Facilitated client and staff interviews
- Presented initial design concepts
- Incorporated feedback
- Ensured stakeholder involvement at all levels (FNS, DCF, evaluators, designer, staff, etc.)
- Invited continuous input from frontline staff on their region’s unique strengths and needs.
How We Deployed

Initial engagement
- Posters
- Mailers
- Website
- Staff calls, lobbies

Reengagement efforts
- Newsletters
- Postcards
- Folders
- Staff calls
- Staff cell phones/texting
Resources and Recommendations
Behavioral Science and Human-centered Design

Handy evidence-based resources and recommendations for a small budget:

• Resources from:
  • MDRC’s Center for Applied Behavioral Science (CABS)
  • The Administration for Children and Families’ Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE)

Webinar: “Incorporating Behavioral Insights into Everyday Practices to Improve Program Operations”

Report: OPRE’s Creating Solutions Together: Design Thinking, The Office of Family Assistance, and 3 Grantees
Thank You!

A brighter future is within your reach.

Questions?
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- 16-week IT vocational classroom training program focusing on Microsoft and Cisco certifications
- Classes are comprised entirely of unemployed/underemployed individuals
  - Funding in classes is braided depending on participant eligibility: WIOA, SNAP 50/50, Voc Rehab, Veterans Admin
- At the start of training, students are issued a new laptop which they get to keep upon successful program completion
OVERALL PROGRAM STATS

93% Program completion rate

88% Of training participants earned one or more certifications

$18.37/hour Average starting wage for all graduates
SNAP PARTICIPANT STATS

77% Program completion rate

73% Of training participants earned one or more certifications

$18.49/hour Average starting wage for SNAP graduates
DEDICATED RESOURCES

- Participants have a single human point of contact throughout each phase of the program
  - Outreach
  - Enrollment/Training
  - Placement
- Two dedicated individuals are tasked with program outreach and have assigned geographic territories
- Outreach methods and the participant pipelines are tracked and analyzed weekly
HOW WE FIND PARTICIPANTS

- Online (Craigslist, Facebook, other ads)
- Mass transit advertising/print media
- Job fairs
- Partnerships with various public benefit offices (UI/Wagner-Peyser, DHS, American Job Centers)
- Network of other service providers—refugee agencies
- Former participant referrals
- Meet participants where they are—participant surveys

IT Career Lab is a division of National Able Network.
ELIGIBILITY

Outreach Sources

Information Session

SUITABILITY

Students

IT Career Lab is a division of National Able Network.
WHAT WORKS

- Laptop computer promotion
- Free training
- Professional print/online media
- Consistent follow-up is key—we call/text and help participants navigate the required bureaucracies
- Ongoing relationship cultivation with network of referral partners
- Prominently display print media in area resale shops
RECOMMENDATIONS

 Allow third-party providers flexibility to attempt unique and innovative outreach methods
 Encourage them to invest in print/online media
 Solidify agency partnerships—break down silos with various partners/agencies
  ▪ Single point of contact at local benefit offices
  ▪ We prioritize ABAWDs due to benefit loss
 Allow third-party providers to present on-site
 Invest in dedicated outreach staff
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Questions?
Thank you!

https://snaptoskills.fns.usda.gov