

Success Story Evaluation Pilot Summary Report

FFY2024 | Washington State SNAP-Ed Evaluation



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BACKGROUND

Most Significant Change Theory

Most Significant Change (MSC) Theory is a participatory evaluation method developed by Jess Dart and Rick Davies to be used in program evaluation and improvement. Originally used in an international setting in 1994 (Davies, 1996), this method utilizes cycles of storytelling and story selection to foster transparent conversations around significance and values within an organization. The method is especially useful for assessing complex programs with many different approaches, goals, and perspectives, (MOMENTUM Knowledge Accelerator, 2020) which makes it fitting for a complex program like SNAP-Ed. It is also well suited for community-based interventions because stories are collected from people with first-hand experience in the field to demonstrate program outcomes and success.

Figure 1: Core steps of the MSC Technique. “Most Significant Change (MSC)”, Jess Dart (2022).



The basic steps of MSC are: planning and ideation, collecting stories, reviewing and selecting stories, providing feedback to participants and program members, and analysis. The review and selection process is a key component of MSC as it has the potential to bring to the surface underlying values that may not have been previously voiced or acknowledged. In this way, MSC helps to identify the most significant and impactful aspects of a program as well as areas for improvement.

In collaboration with an advisory group made up of representatives from Washington State SNAP-Ed (WA SNAP-Ed) leadership team members, the evaluation team adapted the original MSC process to best fit WA SNAP-Ed’s priorities. Instead of selecting one “most significant” story, the team collected twelve stories from SNAP-Ed providers. The stories were categorized into WA SNAP-Ed’s three intervention groups and were reviewed by different SNAP-Ed providers and leadership team members. All stories were considered significant in the adapted model, and discussions

focused on common themes of impact and significance that emerged from the stories. Because MSC is not intended to be a stand-alone project, findings from this pilot were considered alongside other evaluation projects, such as the state needs assessment.

Goals for WA SNAP-Ed Pilot

The main goal for this pilot was to help identify the most impactful aspects of the WA SNAP-Ed program. Additionally, this pilot made space for providers to discuss their SNAP-Ed work to improve understanding of and inspire changes in their communities. By identifying successful components of SNAP-Ed programming, we can work on reproducing or scaling up interventions in different settings.

The discussion component of this pilot helped identify values held by providers and implementing agency teams. Probing deeper into story backgrounds gave a clearer picture of what values WA SNAP-Ed prioritizes. Highlighting values held by different members of the SNAP-Ed program has the potential to improve teamwork, cohesive programming, and comradery among providers and staff in WA SNAP-Ed.

This pilot informed Washington SNAP-Ed evaluation methods. Success stories, while a crucial component of federal and state reporting, can be improved in how effectively they are used. This project helped identify challenges providers have with crafting success stories with the goal of making the process more streamlined and promoting information sharing and collaboration among providers. As a qualitative method, this pilot project, paired with other evaluation projects, can help determine future activities and methods that may be used to evaluate the Washington SNAP-Ed program.

Deliverables

There were several deliverables expected from this pilot. The stories collected as part of this project were submitted to N-PEARS as success stories. They will also be posted on the SNAP-Ed provider website so that providers and staff can easily access them. In addition to stories, this written summary and a one-pager highlighting pilot takeaways will be published to the providers website.

Findings were disseminated through three separate presentations: to the WA SNAP-Ed leadership team, the Office of Nutrition Services at DOH, and SNAP-Ed providers. Additionally, an abstract was submitted and approved for an oral presentation at the Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators conference in February 2025.

METHODS

Process

The Washington SNAP-Ed Evaluation team planned and implemented this pilot project. Conceptualization and planning began in October 2023, with a presentation of the proposal and methods to evaluation advisory group members to get buy-in as well as ensure the pilot aligned

with the Washington State SNAP-Ed program. Regular check-ins with the advisory group helped identify methods adjustments and recruitment strategies. Materials and tools ([Appendix 2](#)), including the interview guide and discussion rubric, were reviewed by the advisory group before use.

Providers were recruited through announcements at contractor calls, electronic newsletters, and word of mouth, with a link to an online form to enter contact information. The Evaluation team scheduled one-on-one interviews with providers who signed up. Verbal consent was obtained at the time of the interview to record interviews. The interview guide was loosely based on the template provided by Dart and Davies (2003) and consisted of open-ended questions and prompts about a specific story about their SNAP-Ed work, including the situation before and after the change, the difference it made on people involved, and the significance and impact of the change ([Appendix 2](#)). The interview notes, recordings, and transcripts were used to write a success story that reflected as many details as possible. Stories were sent to storytellers to edit and review until all storytellers were satisfied with the final result. Finalized stories were grouped into one of three categories based on Washington SNAP-Ed's intervention categories: Community Spaces, Retail and Food Access, and Schools and Childcare.

For the second phase, providers and SNAP-Ed staff were recruited as discussion participants. In addition to newsletters and word of mouth, providers that had been interviewed as storytellers were invited to participate as discussion participants. Leadership team members from implementing agencies and statewide support were also invited to participate. Participants were assigned to one of the three groups, ensuring that storytellers were not placed in a group that would read their story. Each participant was provided with four stories for a single intervention group along with review sheets for each story. The review sheet, developed by the evaluation team, consisted of seven open-ended questions designed to help discussion participants think critically and organize their thoughts as they read stories ([Appendix 2](#)). Reviewers were asked to identify Washington SNAP-Ed goals and principles for FFY 2024 as well as PSE implementation stages were in the stories.

Each discussion group consisted of 4-5 participants. The discussions took place online, facilitated by two evaluation team members, and lasted roughly 60-90 minutes. An interview guide was developed for the discussions, that consisted of five open-ended questions with several probes that allowed for a deeper conversation ([Appendix 2](#)). Questions on the interview guide mirrored the review sheet, touching on initial responses to the stories, alignment with SNAP-Ed goals and principles, possibilities for replication, and debriefing on the process itself. For one group, more than half of the participants had a scheduling conflict, necessitating individual interviews instead of the group discussion. Notes and copies of completed review sheets from all discussion group participants were used for additional qualitative analysis.

Adaptations for WA SNAP-Ed

While the MSC evaluation method was used to guide this pilot project, the process was modified to better fit the needs of Washington SNAP-Ed. An advisory group, consisting of representatives from implementing agencies, statewide support, and the leadership team, was consulted throughout the pilot to identify where the process needed to be adapted and why.

The selection process described by Dart and Davies results in a single story selected from a large group (Dart and Davies, 2003). Because the stories in this pilot project were created and submitted as success stories, this was adapted so that all stories were equally highlighted to showcase WA SNAP-Ed successes. The ranking or voting step that is usually part of the selection process was replaced with a general discussion about all stories, including what was most impactful and inspiring to readers and why. This allowed for analyses of discussion transcripts to identify provider values and successful components of SNAP-Ed without calling out specific stories.

Another difference was in the composition of the discussion groups. In the original MSC methodology, story reviews happen in a hierarchy. The advisory group suggested incorporating leadership and providers into a single discussion group to get the most dynamic and impactful results, and reducing to a single round of story review discussions. The advisory group also suggested that categorizing stories by intervention group would be most helpful for applying results to the program. Therefore, providers were given an open prompt for story interviews and stories were later categorized into the intervention group that best fit the story.

Analysis

Individual stories were analyzed for common themes and characteristics. Group discussions and interviews with story readers were transcribed and used for additional thematic analysis. Notes from reviewers were scanned to ensure all themes were captured in discussion transcripts. All qualitative analysis was done using Atlas.ti 24.1.0 for Windows.

PILOT RESULTS

Success Stories

Through this pilot project, 12 stories were collected from 12 SNAP-Ed providers and statewide support team members and were categorized into Washington State’s intervention groups (Community Spaces, Schools and Childcare, Retail and Food Access), with four stories in each group (Table 1). While many projects were established before FFY 2024, the stories often focused on recent developments. More than 80% of stories were about work in an implementation stage, while two were in the planning stages.

Stories in the Community Spaces group took place in community gardens and hospitals. Changes included a health screening and referral to a food pantry at a clinic (“Food is Medicine”), a hospital-based lactation program (“MultiCare Lactation Services”), a decision tree rubric for curriculum planning (“Curriculum Rubric”), and the development of a community garden (“Community Garden Produce Sharing”). Stories in the Schools and Childcare took place at schools or involved youth-aged participants. These changes included implementing the Harvest of the Month program (“Harvest of the Month”), building and maintaining a school garden (“School Garden in Benton County”), and food truck programs that visit multiple schools (“Mobile Food Access” and “Food Truck Summer Meals”). Stories in the Retail and Food Access group related to improving access to food, particularly in retail spaces and community settings. These changes included a Farmers

Market Ambassador program (“Farmers Market Tour and Ambassador Program”), programming at food banks and food pantries (“Food Banks in Snohomish” and “Thurston County Food Bank”), and developing a debit card program for community residents to purchase locally grown foods (“Island Grown Food Access Card”).

Table 1: Story Characteristics

Story Title	Intervention Group	Time Period	County	Implementation Stage
Food is Medicine	Community Spaces	FFY2022-Current	King	Continued to implement changes
Community Garden Produce Sharing	Community Spaces	FFY2018-Current	Cowlitz	Continued to implement changes
MultiCare Lactation Services	Community Spaces	Currently planning	Pierce	Planning and preparation for implementation
Curriculum Rubric	Community Spaces	FFY2022-23	Statewide	Worked to maintain changes
Harvest of the Month	Schools and Childcare	FFY2018-Current	Island	Continued to implement changes
School Garden in Benton County	Schools and Childcare	FFY2023-Current	Benton	Planning and preparation for implementation
Mobile Food Access	Schools and Childcare	FFY2022-Current	Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan	Started implementation of changes
Food Truck Summer Meals	Schools and Childcare	FFY2023	Whatcom	Started implementation of changes
Farmers Market Tour and Ambassador Program	Retail and Food Access	FFY2018-Current	Clark	Continued to implement changes
Food Banks in Snohomish	Retail and Food Access	FFY2023-24	Snohomish	Continued to implement changes
Island Grown Food Access Card	Retail and Food Access	FFY2020-Current	San Juan	Continued to implement changes
Thurston County Food Bank	Retail and Food Access	FFY2023-Current	Thurston	Started implementation of changes

While the stories described a variety of activities, they shared a few common elements. Partnerships played critical roles in planning these projects and ensuring their success. In some stories, an existing partnership was elevated. For example, with Food Banks in Snohomish: *“It’s a partnership that’s been going for several years, but there have been some significant things that happened in the last fiscal year.”* In others, projects started soon after SNAP-Ed providers identified potential partners, (School Garden in Benton County). The relationships between SNAP-Ed and its

partners took center-stage in many of these stories, whether a partner took a new role or a new partnership was developed with specific work in mind.

Stories demonstrated how SNAP-Ed participant perspectives were prioritized in planning and implementation. Considerations were given towards increasing reach in communities that had low participation rates and prioritizing interventions that reduced barriers in daily life. For example, the Farmers Market Tour and Ambassador Program “[hired] ambassadors that are multilingual and typically share lived experiences or backgrounds similar to our target clientele” in order to engage with people previously too cautious to engage with farmers markets in the area. Knowing the geographical landscape, Food Truck Summer Meals decided that “the mobility of a food truck made the most sense in lieu of brick and mortar sites.” Awareness of the gaps in services was also important in defining these projects. For example, in the MultiCare Lactation Services story, “several lactation centers [in the city] recently closed... [leaving] a huge gap in outpatient lactation services... [and] made it so that lactation is no longer an equitable resource.” Providers used strategies to reduce stigma; at the Thurston County Food Bank, “the new model [of the food bank] really functions like a true grocery store- you aren’t required to go to every station, you’re free to revisit a station, you don’t have to wait behind anyone.... [you’re] free to take as much as [you] need.” Most stories worked towards a common goal of food access and increasing relevant programming across Washington State.

Story Review and Discussion

While thirteen participants were initially recruited for discussion groups, scheduling conflicts with three of them resulted in a total of ten discussion participants: two implementing agency members, one statewide support staff, and seven providers. Six of the providers also participated in the first phase of story collection. Discussions for the Community Spaces group were switched to one-on-one interviews when a meeting time could not be identified.

Overall, reviewers shared positive feedback around the opportunity to read stories and learn about what providers were doing. Reviewers noted that stories were very interesting to read and inspiring in the impact they were able to make in their communities. Reviewers also noted that stories were participant-centered, engaging to read, and framed around an identified need and SNAP-Ed’s impact.

Success stories written in this pilot were considerably longer than stories written using the traditional SNAP-Ed success story template (FNS, 2023). At two pages long, stories offered rich detail and specificity that wasn’t included before. Not only was this an effective way to share information about SNAP-Ed programming, but reviewers noted that it more accurately captured the complexity of PSE work. With the additional space, stories described the challenges that providers faced and the work involved in maintaining relationships: “I was learning so much more from these stories than typical success stories because it captures that long-term piece.” Stories had the space to highlight the considerable time that PSE projects take, the perseverance, thoughtfulness, collaboration that went into planning, and the ebb and flow nature of PSE work. Reviewers noted that nuanced aspects of PSE work may not be included in reporting because activities may not reach participants, but the work still may be crucial for maintaining progress behind-the-scenes. One reviewer noted this as having to “get coffee with a CBO and staff and spend time doing that

relationship building or volunteering at events". Reviewers appreciated the variety of stories, noting that they felt excited, inspired, and motivated to take away specific strategies or overarching concepts and apply them to their own work. Reviewers enjoyed learning about projects across the state, gained new perspective on their own work, and felt less alone in the struggles they faced.

Reviewers called out ways that stories could be improved, including times when more detail would have been helpful. For example, some funding sources were not fully explained, or it was unclear how a partnership developed. This led to some confusion, which distracted from the story content. Reviewers also noted that the review guide itself could be improved by making questions broader and more open-ended to encourage notetaking.

Feedback on the Pilot Process

As part of the discussion, reviewers were asked about their thoughts on being part of the pilot project to assess whether the adapted MSC process was a good fit for Washington SNAP-Ed Evaluation. It was particularly helpful to have providers who took part in both phases of the pilot as they had a holistic perspective of the project and were able to offer suggestions for future iterations that could result in a more streamlined methodology.

Storytellers noted that they appreciated the interview process, especially being asked for specific details as they shared their stories. Because the Evaluation Team interviewers were unfamiliar with each individual project, they could probe for details effectively. This outside perspective likely influenced how detailed the stories were. Providers also showed appreciation for the chance to review and edit their stories.

Discussion group reviewers provided feedback about the second phase of the pilot. They thought the process and review sheets were well structured and allowed them to organize their thoughts and focus on the main points of the stories. Reviewers noted that the review sheet was a helpful tool with clear instructions that helped organize their thoughts as they read stories. Reviewers particularly liked the questions about goals, objectives, and principles. They noted that it was a good reminder of the state goals and *"to include these components in [their] work."* They also liked *"seeing them in the context of looking for them in a real-life example"* and thinking through how situations could be replicated in different environments.

DISCUSSION

Impact

The findings from this pilot project showed the potential of using success stories for qualitative evaluation in SNAP-Ed. Incorporating success stories into Washington SNAP-Ed evaluation may be a welcome change due to the positive response to the interview and discussion components of this pilot. Qualitative methods, which have had limited usage in WA SNAP-Ed, can be used to uplift provider voices in a meaningful way. Although this pilot deviated from traditional MSC, key takeaways from this pilot indicate alignment with values held by SNAP-Ed providers.

In MSC, story selection plays a critical role in identifying values. Similarly, in this pilot project, discussions revealed key components of SNAP-Ed programming. Common themes identified in stories included partnership, centering participant and community voices, and a focus on relevance. Discussion group participants identified common themes without being probed which shows their value to SNAP-Ed providers. Of Washington State SNAP-Ed's five goals, all stories addressed Goal 1: Increase availability and promotion of nourishing foods and beverages for people that are eligible for SNAP-Ed. While it is a general statement that likely aligns with the majority of PSE work in the SNAP-Ed program, this suggests a level of importance and high value. Of note, providers were not overly familiar with goals, which adds to the value of this goal being highlighted in all stories.

The finding that partnerships were present in so many stories and discussed often by the reviewers points to the value of partnership in SNAP-Ed programming. This finding was strongly aligned with those of a needs assessment conducted earlier in the year (WA DOH, 2024), further highlighting its role in successful SNAP-Ed and PSE work. One reviewer summarized the role of partnerships in SNAP-Ed: *"With our work, you have to do that well or you don't get very far, that has to be the number one guiding principle, and all these stories were leveraging partnerships very robustly."*

One goal of this project was to identify aspects of SNAP-Ed programming that could be replicated or scaled up. These findings suggest that, contrary to our initial hypothesis, these success stories were better at exemplifying how changes are unique to their context. For example, reviewers noted that external funding played a critical role in some stories, which is a resource that is not available to all providers. Additionally, changes were dependent on the types of partnerships that were developed, the roles that partners played in the project, and the communities where these stories took place.

The success story evaluation pilot has potential, but should be improved for future implementation. Suggestions for improvement included procedural and conceptual changes. Related to the structure of the pilot process, providers who served as both storytellers and reviewers noted that it would be helpful to have all materials, including the discussion review sheet, available at the beginning of phase one. They also suggested having an additional tool, like a checklist, to help with organization. Feedback on the review sheet questions highlighted duplication and that some questions needed to be reframed to encourage more note-taking and critical thinking. For improving data collection, pilot participants suggested adding an interview question about partnerships to help clarify the number of partners involved. Similarly, reviewers suggested adding information about the storyteller and their role to improve comprehension. They also suggested including a contact person who could address further questions related to each story.

With the positive response to the storytelling methodology and the rich data obtained from the discussions, it is clear that qualitative evaluation methods are feasible and effective for this program. A routine process for conducting interviews or reviewing stories can be established that carries elements of this pilot forward, including having an outsider's perspective during the interview, and stimulating conversations between providers and implementing agencies. Paired with findings from a needs assessment, this pilot project shows that providers are eager to share stories and successes with others across the state. Avenues for sharing work could be developed or

expanded, such as creating an online repository of stories, utilizing newsletters and the provider website, and adapting current success story reporting templates. The tools from this pilot, including the review sheet and interview guides, can be revised and disseminated as resources to help with success story writing to help streamline guidance around success story reporting and address challenges that providers face when sharing their successes.

Limitations

Because of the time constraint of this project, recruitment and data collection was limited to February through April 2024. There is a possibility that extending the time spent recruiting and reaching out to providers would have resulted in more stories from a greater geographical distribution across Washington.

As with most other qualitative methods, the interview process and analysis in this project are subject to interviewer and analyst bias. To decrease burden on providers, the Evaluation team wrote the first draft of the stories based on interview transcripts. While reasonable attempts were made to standardize the process, this additional step could have introduced further potential bias. Additionally, the different knowledge and experience levels that team members have with SNAP-Ed could have played a role in the type and number of details included in the stories.

There was not as much standardization in the methods as planned. One discussion group had to be converted to one-on-one interviews due to scheduling conflicts. This resulted in the Evaluation team meeting with only two of the four original participants of this group, which could have resulted in some data loss and inconsistency due to variable data collection methods.

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Appendix 1. Success Stories

Community Spaces Stories

Curriculum Rubric – Eileen’s Story

Storyteller: Eileen Grigsby

Date: April 24, 2024

Local agency or provider: CTW/ WSU Extension

Time period of story: FFY 22-23

Domain (intervention): Community Spaces

Implementation stage: Worked to maintain changes

Our team, CTW, has created a curriculum rubric decision tree. The rubric that was being used before was more focused on the content of each curriculum. It didn’t take into account community needs or what participants were looking for. It was a one size fits all type rubric. It also didn’t provide a place for providers to give feedback about how their curriculum was working in their communities. Its purpose was more just to select a curriculum and teach it; and that was the end of the conversation.

The idea for developing a new one came from the equity strategic plan, when it became apparent that the old rubric wasn’t aligning with our equity-lens. It didn’t incorporate participant voices at all about what they were looking for and what would be important for them in direct education. That was the catalyst. Then we worked with Leah’s pantry to organize focus groups on both the East and West side of Washington. They also held key informant interviews with providers and leadership about the rubric and direct education. They facilitated the focus group with participants or potential participants and got interesting information about what people would be looking for. They then helped us create the new rubric using that information they gathered. Leah’s Pantry is skilled in this area, but we also needed a third party to take the lead with that process so that the feedback we got was honest and accurate. Another reason we partnered with them is because they were also interested in a way to select and update curricula.

This new rubric provides a decision-making tree for providers to decide what curricula to use in their communities. It also helps Washington SNAP-Ed select curricula that are more aligned with our values. The new rubric provides a better opportunity for providers to give feedback, such as: how is the curriculum working, what are the challenges, what modifications worked well? It also lets them speak specifically about the community they’re working with, so other providers can see how to apply it to their community.

The new rubric was released around January 2023 and we’ve been working on getting providers to use it. We try to encourage people to fill out the rubric and submit to us. We haven’t gotten any submissions yet, but we’re curious how the rubric worked for them and how helpful it was in

assessing the curricula they use. But I do think it better informed our approved curricula list, allowing us to better tailor that list to curricula that would benefit participants and providers.

This has been a significant change because it serves as a constant reminder to look through the lens of participants' lived experience and having that as a consideration in everything we do. And all the activities leading up to this change, like developing the equity strategic plan, has helped pivot Washington SNAP-Ed into a direction that better serves participants across the state. For Leah's Pantry, it gave them some perspective. They got lots of surprising and unexpected feedback that helped redirect their work. For example, thinking about how kids are selective in what they want to eat. They learned that it's not just a choice and that there's more than goes into making food decisions, like allergies or things you can't eat. We uncovered a lot of assumptions we had about participants that were just off-base. The most surprising aspect of this project is having other states reaching out to us ask if they could use the updated rubric, or adapt it to make their own.

Community Garden Produce Sharing – Elizabeth's Story

Storyteller: Elizabeth Roberts

Date: April 25, 2024

Local agency or provider: Western Regional, Cowlitz County

Time period of story: FFY18-current

Domain (intervention): Community Spaces

Implementation Stage: Continued to implement changes stage.

A low-income neighborhood with a high population density located in Longview has created a new community garden initiative. The project began when a local resident identified a need for healthier food options and started a community garden. SNAP-Ed partnered with her to support this effort, leading to the establishment of a vibrant garden and several related projects.

In fiscal year 2022, SNAP-Ed helped secure a grant to hire a neighborhood resident as the garden manager. Although the grant only funded her position for one year, she continued to manage the garden on a volunteer basis, even recruiting and training additional volunteers independently. This summer WSU Extension was able to pay her with SNAP-Ed funds, with hopes of securing additional grant funding in the future.

A key outcome of the garden's success is the development of a produce sharing pantry. This pantry not only distributes produce from the garden but also educates residents on growing their own food. The initiative has partnered with the Lower Columbia School Gardens program, which contributes produce throughout the summer, further enhancing the pantry's offerings. Collectively, these efforts have provided thousands of pounds of produce to residents, who often face significant distances to the nearest grocery store.

The community garden and pantry have become integral to the neighborhood, creating a healthier environment and a stable resource for residents. The project has grown into a well-known community hub, where children can access fresh snacks and participate in gardening activities.

What began as a simple partnership has evolved into a sustainable and impactful community asset, supported by SNAP-Ed's programs and activities.

MultiCare – Samantha’s Story

Storyteller: Samantha Cooper

Date: April 25, 2024

Local agency or provider: MultiCare

Time period of story: currently planning

Domain (intervention): Community Spaces

Implementation Stage: Planning and preparation for implementation

As one of the few agencies in the state with both WIC and SNAP-Ed, we’re trying to find ways to bridge the two, which is best done in the PSE space. One of the bigger projects we’ve been working on is getting a lactation center opened at Tacoma General (TG) Hospital in Pierce County. We’ve gotten a lot of feedback, got the go-ahead from WIC and SNAP-Ed, and now just working on getting MultiCare buy-in.

Unfortunately, in Tacoma, we’ve had several outpatient lactation centers recently close- MultiCare virtual, Good Samaritan, Puyallup, and Tacoma outpatient lactation, all closed. It left a huge gap in outpatient lactation services. Outside of private practice lactation and St. Joseph’s, there are no other lactation resources in the Tacoma area. Virtual closing was really heartbreaking because it was really low barrier, free to WIC participants and low-income parents. It really made it so that lactation is no longer an equitable resource in our area. We’re really hoping to get buy-in from MultiCare so that we can address this gap by opening up this new lactation center at TG.

I’m personally very excited and invested in this project. I used to work in Austin, Texas and did some of my training in the WIC outpatient lactation center, called Mom’s Place. It was connected to our WIC clinic, was free for WIC and non-WIC participants, and was funded by a Maternal and Child Health grant as well as WIC. It was beautiful, we could bring parents right away if they had lactation problems, they could work with an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) right away. They had RN IBCLCs, standard IBCLCs, and peer counselors. They had a call center and five different locations across the state. In contrast to this well-organized system for supporting lactation, I noticed right away when I started working at MultiCare that there wasn’t a peer counselor program or lactation services. So as one of my first PSE projects, I helped set up the peer counselor program at MultiCare. From there, my team and I started thinking about lactation services on a broader scale, and even though it felt like a reach with all these closures, the idea kept coming back in conversations and trainings.

One of the first steps we took in this project was to reach out to the director of WIC in Austin, because they have Mom’s Place and they are one of the biggest WIC agencies in Texas. We talked about how they got all these factors worked out, like how the funding was figured out and what the planning for it had been. We also talked to the director of the Houston WIC clinic which operates a

little differently from Mom's Place. We learned a lot about the facilitators and barriers to this type of work and their perspective on the day-to-day running requirements.

Now that we've had these conversations with other organizations doing this work well and have planned out how this could work in Washington, we've moved to the next stage of the project. We just need to identify the key players at MultiCare so they can contribute to the funding. The plan is, instead of just reopening the outpatient lactation, we want WIC to take over and be the main site. We want it to be free to everyone. We also want to make it a training site, so that we're helping to make the lactation community a more diverse space.

One of the things that happens if you're an IBCLC but not an RN is you usually can't get hired into hospital settings. There's a very limited area of where you can work if you're not an RN IBCLC. Another factor is that the majority of lactation counselors tend to be female, white, middle-aged. Credentialing is a rigorous process. You have to have 1000 hours of supervised hands-on lactation time as part of the credentialing, as well as 13 college courses, and 95 hours of lactation-specific education. A lot of people can get the last two, but then don't have anyone to mentor them. So, a training site like this would help create a more equitable space and community of IBCLCs.

There are quite a few outcomes we're hoping to achieve with this project. One would be increased initiation and duration of breastfeeding rates. It's one of the Healthy People 2030 goals, which is trying to increase nationally, both the breastfeeding initiation and exclusivity rate at six months of age. We're also hoping to decrease some of the health disparities around breastfeeding. People in BIPOC communities, specifically in the Native Alaskan, Native American subgroup, and African American and Black subgroups, have lower breastfeeding rates, partly due to the IBCLC community being mostly White. We hope to address this by bringing in and training a more diverse group, as well as making it free for WIC and non-WIC people.

This whole work is significant because breastfeeding is the first thing we can do to level out chances for everyone. That's on so many levels, because we know that if a child is breastfed, they have improved IQ rates, less health issues like obesity and type II diabetes, less food insecurity, which was felt very much during the formula shortage. For parents, they're less likely to have cervical cancer, breast cancer, diabetes and there's a weight loss component. It's a huge leveler in food security and health disparities in every community. We know that babies need to eat, but it can be healing too. A lot of parents have experienced traumatic things and sometimes being able to take their bodies and use it in a way where they are bonding with their child is such a beautiful thing.

I am very passionate about this project and moving it forward. I was a WIC and SNAP baby growing up, and I have my degree now precisely because I had access to those services. I have an appreciation and perspective that services like this really do take some burden off the shoulders of a parent so they can focus on other things. So many people think these services are not for them, and I just hope we can get the message out that these services are so that everyone can thrive.

Food is Medicine – Kate's Story

Storyteller: Kate Ortiz

Date: April 16, 2024

Local agency or provider: Public Healthy Seattle King County (PHSKC)

Time period of story: FFY22-current

Domain (intervention): Community Spaces

Implementation Stage: Continued to implement changes

Public Health - Seattle & King County is working with Sea Mar Community Health Centers in King County to implement food insecurity screenings. SNAP-Ed's role in this work has been asking clinic staff and their leadership "how can I support your clinics in doing this work?" We've been able to support the ongoing growth and success of food insecurity screenings in a variety of ways. We're involved in bi-weekly community of practice meetings that center on food insecurity screenings and referrals. We've assisted in grant writing to supplement food and gift card purchasing and we've connected clinics to local food pantries. However, our level of involvement is more as consultant; the clinics have really taken on the responsibility of this PSE work.

Food insecurity screenings gained momentum after Sea Mar's White Center clinic started implementing the screenings regularly in FFY20-21. At the time, though there were no requirements to measure food insecurity, White Center health educators knew having consistent access to nutritious foods is important to overall well-being. But screening alone would not solve food access for patients. Once someone screened positively (meaning, they do have a level of food insecurity) what could clinic staff do? This is where SNAP-Ed came in and helped connect a local food pantry with clinic staff to establish an onsite food pantry. It was important to clinic staff that patients would not have to go somewhere else to access foods, and that food was available at the clinic. However, maintaining regular food delivery and stock takes a lot of communication and time. SNAP-Ed was able to provide funding for staff time to address this. After gathering feedback from clinic staff, we realized that what they needed was not necessarily funding of someone's time, but funding that would allow purchasing of pre-paid gift cards or funds to directly buy food. Sea Mar staff identified private funding sources that had less requirements on funding use and SNAP-Ed helped write grants to receive these supplemental funds.

Sea Mar leadership was able to see the successes of the White Center clinic's pilot and recognized the importance of this work. When Sea Mar underwent a recent accreditation process, they wrote in food insecurity screenings as the mechanism for measuring and addressing health disparities amongst their patients. This was a huge shift because now all King County clinics were required to implement screenings. As of today, all seven clinics are implementing screenings to varying degrees and SNAP-Ed is working with them to help navigate their specific needs or barriers to implementation; with the goal of consistent screenings and post-screening workflows at all locations. Additionally, five of the seven locations have an established partnership with a local food pantry.

So that's where we are now, scaling up the project and making sure it's meeting the needs of all patients and clinic staff in King County. And there have been hurdles along the way, but what strikes me is the level of engagement and passion clinic staff have. They're genuinely excited about this process and the prioritization of food as medicine. We originally only had health educators doing screenings. Now more and more staff from different Sea Mar departments are being pulled into

both screening and referral work. For example, once someone positively screens for food insecurity, they're not only providing food from the onsite pantry and/or provided a gift card for purchasing foods – they're also connected to a Sea Mar Community Service Representative who then provides patients information on additional qualifying resources like SNAP benefits. While SNAP-Ed helped establish this project and is now helping with expanding it, Sea Mar will eventually be able to sustainably continue this work with or without us present.

Retail and Food Access Stories

Farmers Market Tour and Ambassador Program – Angela's Story

Storyteller: Angela Shields

Date: April 22, 2024

Local agency or provider: WSU Extension, Clark County

Time period of story: FFY18-current

Domain (intervention): Retail and Food Access

Implementation Stage: Continued to implement changes

Back in 2018, SNAP-Ed had a general presence at Clark County Farmers Markets. We had a booth handing out resource materials, and doing tastings but we felt like we couldn't identify if we were truly reaching our clients. Additionally, SNAP-Ed recognized the significant barriers for underserved populations that prevented them from attending and shopping at the market. These barriers include, but are not limited to, the costs of fruits and vegetables, transportation access, navigating the vendor currency exchange, and the various market and state benefits programs. The goal of this work, outside of increasing access to nourishing foods, has been to shift this accessibility paradigm by addressing equity and creating a market community that's representative of our local population. While I wasn't present for the original conversations, I believe the reason this project has been so successful is the passionate Farmers Market Programs and Partnerships Director, Stephanie. It's been her priority to infuse equity at the market, and we're fortunate to have a strong partnership and aligned values.

In the first iteration of the market tour program, SNAP-Ed educators focused their efforts on recruiting SNAP clients for market tours using Eventbrite. During the tours, educators would inform clients on how to navigate the market and the complicated currency exchange system. This was to teach clients how to leverage the Market Match program to increase their fruit and vegetable budget. During this most recent market season (FFY23), we improved farmers market tours by developing a Farmers Market Ambassador program. The role of the ambassador(s) is to improve recruitment and participation in market tours and Market Match programs. A key aspect of the ambassador program is hiring ambassadors that are multilingual and typically share lived experiences or backgrounds similar to our target clientele. With these specific connections, ambassadors can recruit, access spaces, and develop trust in an authentic way. For example, Russian and Ukrainian refugees this past year were very cautious to engage with us or other government organizations. Once we connected them, and other ESL participants, with an

ambassador that spoke their language, almost instantaneously they saw our ambassadors as people they could trust. With the combined efforts of our ambassadors and SNAP-Ed educators, tour participants were able to learn about many resources and start to develop meaningful connections.

This participatory approach is ultimately focused on community building. While it's harder to measure the impact of this type of work, we've been able to gather some data through post-tour surveys, end of season surveys, and anecdotally that this program has been successful in a variety of ways. Surveys have shown that tour participation overwhelmingly increased the number of fruits and vegetables that folks were buying and consuming. Participants also note shopping at the market more frequently after learning how to supplement their budget with the market match program. Overall, we have found that tour participants were returning to the market to purchase nourishing foods and our markets started to feel more inclusive and accessible to a wider audience.

The challenging part of this project was identifying how to leverage social media to increase tour marketing. Some of the more common social media sites known to us, like Facebook or Instagram, didn't make sense for our target populations. In fact, there were social media websites we were learning about for the first time from our ambassadors and clientele that we're more culturally relevant. On the other hand, it's not surprising that our local refugee populations either don't have social media at all or don't interact with location specific content for safety reasons. We also recognized that technology is inaccessible for some eligible people. With all this in mind, a lot of our recruitment is happening either through flyers that are thoughtfully placed throughout the community, by word of mouth by our ambassadors or those who have participated in tours before. These types of marketing considerations are critical to the success of farmers market tours. We're doing all we can to recruit participation by learning from our audience.

In all, this work clearly aligns with our purpose and goals of reducing health disparities. We're taking this academic concept of policy, systems, and environmental change and turning it into tangible implementation and impact. We continue to prioritize and center equity in our work by bringing on ambassadors who either have lived experience or skills working in community services. By hiring folks who speak Russian, Spanish, or Dari, we're able to communicate with priority populations about the resources we're able to share and connect them to additional resources that can help their families live more healthily. Farmers market ambassador tours have been fun, successful, and rewarding. This work has expanded our ability to build a more equitable and representative market environment and reduce barriers to healthy eating.

Food Banks in Snohomish County – Jill's Story

Storyteller: Jill Farrant

Date: April 24, 2024

Local agency or provider: WSU Extension in Snohomish and Skagit

Time period of story: FFY23-24

Domain (intervention): Retail and food access

Implementation Stage: Continued to implement changes

The project I wanted to talk about today is our partnerships with two food banks- the Edmonds Food Bank and the Lynnwood Food Bank. We work closely with many food banks in the county- but these two are located in the most populated urban center of Snohomish County. It's a partnership that's been going for several years, but there have been some significant things that happened in the last fiscal year.

With the Edmonds food bank, the partnership developed in the year after the COVID-19 pandemic started. With the food banks having to shift their distribution model, the Edmonds food bank wanted to find ways to continue providing the same services. We developed a relationship with them, providing recipes for their website so people could still have access to recipe ideas even if they couldn't attend demonstrations. Prior to this, we had been limited in the services we had provided at Edmonds food bank to just an occasional cooking demonstration.

We had been working with The Lynnwood food bank for several years to help support them in providing more culturally relevant food options and the hope was that they could transition to a shopping model. . Lynnwood area was also seeing a large number of Russian and Ukrainian shoppers and it was identified as a need for SNAP-Ed to hire aa Russian speaking educator, who could provide translation services for us and other programs outside the county.

This is when several opportunities met up. The Edmonds Food bank operates several satellite locations, one of them being a distribution at the Latino Educational Training Institute (LETI) in Lynnwood. The Educator we hired for the Russian and Ukrainian position also had worked with LETI in the past and had close ties with that organization. Partnership with LETI was a great fit and with the assistance and educational support of Mariah, the Statewide Latinx coordinator, we've been working with them to provide cooking demonstrations, taught several classes, and most recently, creating a podcast for their nutrition-g geared website that they're building. We were fortunate that Brigitte, with our Skagit program, was available as a native Spanish Speaker to participate in that live broadcast.

The needs that have been building and adapting over the years, we mainly identified through our educator, who has been going to all three food banks regularly for the past three years. Lots of conversation and relationship building happened just by being present so frequently. Edmonds food bank had also began the Leah's Pantry nutrition program with us. They allowed us to come in and do an assessment of their food bank and identify additional needs they may have. This positioned us as someone they could turn to when they had questions related to food access within the broader community or when other opportunities arose.

They also wanted to provide cooking classes but didn't have the facility space for it, so they reached out to a senior center and secured space for us to do cooking demonstrations for their senior clientele. We have monthly cooking demonstrations, which has shown to be a valuable resource. They get a full hour of cooking classes, which is longer than a cooking demonstration, and can learn how to cook with foods available at the food banks.

The biggest systems change we saw was with the local Edmonds Farmers market. There is just one Farmers market in the region and it is run by a non-profit historical society as a fundraiser.

Community members and the food bank had been putting a lot of emphasis on wanting that market to accept EBT. So, we connected them to WFSMA, and met with local stakeholders and the farmers market to brainstorm ways to support the historical society. The Edmonds food bank lead the charge and agreed that they would serve as the location that takes the benefit, provide the manpower, apply for the EBT Reader, and the farmers market would allow them to be there and distribute the benefits. It got approved and went into effect last summer (2023), so the market can accept benefits this year. That then allows us to do tours so we can connect participants to the market and help improve access.

With all these changes, we're able to shift some of our focus and staffing hours towards expanding the food bank/food access role. This year (2024), we've been able to lean more into a community wide food banking PSE approach. We did a presentation for the Snohomish County Food Bank Coalition, and are now on their monthly calls as a partner where we can promote PSE for the whole county food bank system. It's been a great expansion and had really good results. For example, the food bank in Darrington took many of our recipes that we presented at the meetings and created a new page on their website dedicated to cooking tips and recipes. And of course, this summer, we'll be able to work at the farmers market and provide nutrition education services and reinforce the changes made there. We weren't sure if people would come to the market, but they had high redemption numbers, so there truly was a need for them to be accepting EBT SNAP benefits at the market.

The added impact has been on multiple levels. Talking with Irina the educator, and having her be there, representing our clients' culture, has been helpful in developing relationships and making people feel comfortable in those spaces. Having a variety of recipes available in different languages, from different cultures, expands everyone's ability to deal with mundane foods. Getting the same food every time from the food bank can become really tedious. It's been wonderful to see people get excited for new recipes each week and for the new foods they get to taste. It's also just having people feel safe and supported regardless of their situation, and we expanded that to the community. When the farmers market wasn't accepting EBT, it was a signaling that low-income people were not wanted. So being able to offer that, it's a way to open that door, and say that you really are wanted here and we really do accept everyone and want everyone to access nutritious fresh produce. It's amazing to see people using the benefit there. They're really excited for us to be there this summer with the tours, and help people figure out they can go there with WIC and EBT. It's a benefit to the community overall becoming a more inclusive environment for everyone. It's been a shift for us; we've done PSE at food banks for years, and it's been focused on system changes at one place, but we realized the need is not as centered on an organizational level anymore. It's the process we're in right now, figuring out the most effective interventions and how we can make the most out of our limited time.

Thurston County Food Bank – Claudia's Story

Storyteller: Claudia Abramson

Date: 4/9/2024

Local agency or provider: Thurston County Food Bank

Time period of story: April 2023 onwards

Domain (intervention): Retail and food access

Implementation Stage: Started implementation of changes

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to use a drive-up model to distribute food to clients. Coming out of the pandemic, we were faced with the decision of how to distribute food once people started coming back inside the building. We had a model before that was stressful, congested, and not conducive to our clients' desire to make their own choices. Although it was considered more dignifying than the previous model where people receive prepared bags, the volume increased rapidly to where it became necessary to have several lines. It got congested, which then created a lot of tension, and felt authoritarian at times because it needed a lot more volunteers to monitor each line and keep things moving. We saw this period of time, coming out of the pandemic, as an opportunity to completely reshape the shopping experience at the food bank.

On the days we didn't have food distribution service, the volunteer coordinator, a couple of client services people, and I would have lunch together. We started talking about our lives, what we're doing, and how we're serving people. We discussed whether we should even go back inside, since we had perfected the drive-up model so much and become so efficient. However, we realized the drive-up method is really not a choice model. We started exploring different ideas to allow for more choice and decision-making for clients. We did walk-throughs where we staged the items and looked for where our eyes were immediately drawn to. We looked at where the windows are that would let more light in and shine on the food nearby, compared to the dark areas that might get neglected. We thought about what the best place for different items would be. For example, we decided to put the baby items that are highly desirable in a niche area close to the entrance so that they could be easily found by a client walking in the door, but not compromise the attention towards the main produce section. A lot of it boiled down to practicality, like where the outlets are, but shaped through the lens of making it the best shopping experience for our clients. We all individually drew out our visions and ideas and saw how similar they were, and then voted on which ideas to implement. We had to determine which stations needed more volunteers, like the freezer section where we couldn't have the doors being opened constantly, or the canned goods section which would get bogged down with people searching through the goods. Our top considerations were how to get people to take home the healthiest food we have and use it.

To our surprise, there was considerable pushback from upper management who had the expectation that we would just go back to the way it was before where we would bring in 60 people, have clients zig-zag through a que, until they got to the front. Clients had limited choices and the set up made it so they couldn't go back if they wanted to grab something else. It created tension and frustration. People were jammed together, and we experienced so many escalations. It meant we needed lots of volunteers to operate. So to make changes, we really had to fight for it. We finally got permission to try this new model for six weeks. If it wasn't a huge success, we would have to go back to the old model. We didn't know what to expect, because it was so incredibly different. But thankfully, clients really appreciated the changes.

The new model really functions like a true grocery store- you aren't required to go to every station, you're free to revisit a station, you don't have to wait behind anyone. The shopping floor is designed

in a circle to highlight produce, whole grains, and dairy. Clients are brought inside in groups of 5-6 people so they don't feel rushed. We encourage clients to take enough produce for a week, but they're free to take as much as they need. We've only had to make minor revisions to that policy due to limited supply of desirable items, for example. In this model, the only limitation is that you get two full visits and four supplemental visits a month, where the supplemental doesn't include dry goods or protein.

We're also able to do a lot more now. We finally got back to doing food demos, but with its own area. Before, we didn't have a designated space and it would interrupt the shopping process. We work with local growers to provide specific kinds of produce that are popular or unusual to showcase. We have an agricultural department at the food bank, and we work with the committee to help them market these things. We have identification sheets to help clients learn about new items and how to incorporate them.

After this new model was implemented, the most visible thing about it is how different the building felt and how comfortable everyone felt. It really impacts the choices people make when they're shopping. Shoppers that shop rushed and stressed also eat rushed and stressed, so they're grabbing convenience items instead of taking raw ingredients and doing scratch cooking at home. Anything we can do to turn down the tension levels will be supportive of our clients making better choices and feeling like they have time to shop and cook. What's been particularly unexpected is the kids' reaction to these changes. Now they can experience shopping along with their parents in a stress-free environment, try new food, and ask questions about the produce. Anytime we're able to change a child's perception towards food and reduce their chance of developing trauma related to food, it's a good day.

This change has really allowed the SNAP-Ed staff to interact with clients and offer indirect education without feeling intrusive and like an afterthought. We get to know the folks that come in and have great relationships with so many of them. The staff and volunteers also feel safe and comfortable and respected, and they can do their job more successfully. So, at the end of the six weeks and up through today, we can say, yes, this change was a success.

Island Grown Food Access Card – Allie & Kristen's Story

Storyteller: Allie Moore (storyteller), Kristen Razabek (editor)

Date: April 17, 2024 / Updated September 13, 2024

Local agency or provider: San Juan County Health and Community Services implemented - WSU/Statewide Retail Support

Time period of story: Implemented 2020

Domain (intervention): Retail and Food Access

Implementation stage: Continued to implement changes

Two programs that have been impactful in SNAP-Ed-supported Retail and Food Access work have been the food access debit card programs. There's one from WSU Whatcom Extension SNAP-Ed called Whatcom Grown Local Foods Card and one with San Juan Health & Community Services

SNAP-Ed called Island Grown Food Access Card. The two programs utilize community funds to support low-income people receiving additional food dollars to buy locally grown and produced foods and stretch their food budget. Whatcom Grown is in its first pilot phase, so I'll focus on Island Grown for this story. The Island Grown Card, which was started in 2020 and has been running for four years now, has increased the purchasing and consumption of local seasonal food for disadvantaged clients, and provided economic opportunities for local farmers.

The San Juan Islands have unique barriers being geographically isolated and dependent on unreliable ferry service for inter-island and mainland transportation. The desire was to support food access and keep more dollars invested in our local economy with our local agricultural producers, many of them low-income clients. The Island Grown project was developed to extend food access dollars to SNAP-eligible families, in addition to the SNAP Produce match program which is only now beginning to be offered on the island (SNAP Market Match has been offered for a number of years now on Orcas and San Juan Island used to offer but with changes in their market manager they lost the program and are struggling to get their EBT sales up to requalify). The partners involved in making this work were the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild, San Juan County Health and Community Services SNAP-Ed, San Juan Island Food Hub, Peace Health, Soroptimists of Friday Harbor, and the different farm stands/farm vendors.

The food access card program was targeted at those 200% or below the FPL and outreach was done with the Health Department, Food Banks, and local Resource Centers to connect with clients. You sign up using a Google form, where you sign an affidavit of eligibility, that income was below 200% of the poverty level. Local donors have money to go through the agricultural guild, which is the fiscal sponsor. To start, the program used a Stripe debit card preloaded with \$150. Unfortunately due to changes within Stripe's user agreements Island Grown had to pivot to a new gift card platform called Yiftee and the program was relaunched in August 2024 with now three options allowing clients to receive either a \$150 Yiftee gift card to spend at 12 local Farm stands, \$150 Food Hub gift certificate, or a \$150 CSA style good food bag that clients picked up weekly in September with locally grown produce, dairy, and meat products.

One major accomplishment is that there was a significant amount of money invested back into the community. Waldron Island which is not served by the ferry system and requires people to shop via private boat now has two farm stands accepting the Island Grown Food card which made a big difference in expanding food access in a very local and focused approach for their low-income population.

As of September 2024, in San Juan County over 170 households with 348 individuals have been served by the Island Grown program. Over \$28K has been spent thus far using the hybrid debit at over 36 vendors in the County. The most impactful thing that came out of this program is the time saved for people, especially stretching already limited resources. It decreased logistical stress for participants, which made it possible for them to enjoy and participate in their local food economy and community more. And for both the participants and retailers, being able to contribute to building their economy is a win-win. Island Grown Food Access Card program participants surveyed reported increased consumption of produce, ease of use with the card to purchase products, and more client choice on where to shop and spend the benefits. Vendors reported increased efficiencies with the utilization of the card and less administrative burden.

Island Grown serves as a model of how to streamline food access program funding, provide clients choices on where to shop and foods to buy, support local farms, and keep more dollars invested in our local economy.

Schools and Childcare Stories

School Garden in Benton County – Meike’s Story

Storyteller: Meike VanDonge

Date: April 24, 2024

Local agency or provider: WSU Extension for Asotin, Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla

Time period of story: started March 2023 and ongoing

Domain (intervention): Schools and Childcare

Implementation stage: Planning and preparation for implementation

A PSE project I’m really excited about is the one we started in the spring of FFY23 in Prosser (Benton County) where we are working with a group of community members to get a garden established and farm to school programming. In Benton and Franklin counties, we’ve noticed that rural communities are extra excited and appreciative to work with us, but on top of that, there’s also a great need. The school district is 91% free and reduced meals and other than Second Harvest, there aren’t other providers in that area. This project is a result of all the partnerships we’ve built in that area. But it’s unique because we’re going into it with the community fully guiding the vision and goals.

To get started, I contacted the Prosser School District food service director to see if they’d be interested in general PSE work in cafeterias or school gardens. She immediately said they’d love the support with school garden work and local procurement. She already had ideas and plans for the work they were interested in and had buy-in with school partners and community. She was excited about all her ideas, but didn’t have the time to pause her work, get partners together, write grants, etc. From there, it grew very fast because some of the puzzle pieces were already figured out.

Once things got started, the food service director invited the FFA teachers, maintenance, and the Boys and Girls Club to join. There were also questions about wellness, so the school nurse got involved. We, SNAP-Ed, were willing to support with grant writing, which got even more partners interested, like the assistant superintendent and individual schools. We set up an informal walk through of a new garden site for all these partners and talked about their dreams for the space and how much they could contribute. Those kinds of discussions led to more partners getting involved, collaborating, and having ownership. With so many people now involved, we established a garden committee who clearly defined goals.

This PSE work involves multiple gardens at different sites, and the garden at Prosser is a unique situation. For example, the Boys and Girls Club has a garden space already and we helped them expand a little. We brought kids in to do garden club activities where we teach them about composting, about good bugs to have in the garden, and how to plant and harvest. The kids can

explore what changes throughout the garden, and then we work on brainstorming ways to solve problems and prioritize things they want to do. Eventually, we will break ground on a new garden site which the Boys and Girls Club received a grant to build and maintain. The FFA teachers will do activities with students in the garden and use food from the garden for summer meals and for families to take home.

There have already been so many benefits from this garden and partnerships work. We're giving kids ownership of the space, getting their hands in the dirt. It gets them excited about gardening and learning where their food comes from. They're learning about the complexity of foods, getting to try new produce items, which you see more when kids are involved in it. These garden activities can also help kids foster connections that help with their social-emotional wellbeing. Not to mention it's a benefit to have access to local fresh produce for their meals.

Down the road, we all hope to expand this work and have it opened up as a community space, for families to have their walks or go to after work and school. Extra produce can go to food banks, which will be meaningful to provide for the rest of the community that may not have kids, seniors, and others experiencing food insecurity.

While we've already helped with grant writing, garden activities and partnership work, moving forward we'll be helping this group apply for other grants, local procurement, so now we can help with scratch cooking. We'll also be helping with training the site coordinator on harvesting from the garden to help with the sustainability of this work. We've gotten things into their district that they didn't have capacity for before. It's fostering a closer community, helping each other write grants and letters of support.

This work will lead very easily and naturally to doing garden-related projects in other areas. This is our first time doing something like this, so we can use it as a blueprint for future projects. Sometimes PSE work can be hard to get started, especially at this scale. I've had some trouble getting PSE work going, but this one has been really exciting to see it unfold. It's also exciting to see how it can be applied to other areas, even if it's virtually.

Mobile Food Access – Margaret's Story

Storyteller: Margaret Viebrock

Date: April 18, 2024

Local agency or provider: WSU Extension – Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan

Time period of story: FFY22-current

Domain (intervention): Retail and Food Access & Schools and Childcare

Implementation stage: Started implementation of changes

We've developed a wonderful partnership with Community Action. They're the agency with the mobile market and they take it to a variety of locations. When we connected with them, they shared that it can be difficult to get people to come to the market because they didn't have the relationships or "in's" that we have. For example, we have established relationships with schools that have a high free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) rate. Community Action was excited to partner

with us because they had not yet been able to connect with local schools. However, we wanted to ensure the partnership is mutually beneficial. While Community Action was trying to reach the populations we work with, we also needed to ensure that the foods and recipes that were being shared were healthy. And as a result, after the first mobile market event they called us up and asked when we'd be able to do another one.

So over the past year we carried out five mobile market days last year at three different schools. There were many ways we, SNAP-Ed, promoted the days the mobile market would be at the schools. We were able to coordinate with the school(s), as their able to send out messages to families electronically for specific students. We also sent out paper flyers we hoped would get into parents' hands and had teachers promote via word of mouth. All materials or messaging we had was translated in English and Spanish as there is a large Hispanic population in these schools.

Before the mobile market events, we would choose seasonally appropriate recipes like hearty soups in the fall and salads in the spring to share. We would then provide those recipes with Community Action and ask them to have the recipe ingredients available at the market; and even have them bundled if possible. As folks would line up, they'd stop at our table first and we offered samples of that day's recipe, provide them a recipe card (again, in English and Spanish) and we'd share a copy of ChopChop magazine that has kids cooking activities. It was also a great opportunity for us to share with families the SNAP-Ed activities we were doing with students at the school – either direct education or PSE work.

After connecting with us, folks would go into the mobile market where they have the choice of either picking up the ingredients for the recipe we're highlighting that day and/or additional foods for their families. One thing we've noticed is how generous Community Action's Mobile Market is. Just from observation, families could probably cook four to five meals with the foods that they were receiving from the mobile market. They provided frozen meats, breads, canned goods, and a large variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, the nature of this being a mobile market, we're providing food access in places where these individuals were already going to, familiar with, and comfortable at.

Turn out of these mobile market days was fairly large. Attendance was upwards of 60-80 individuals and families. One of the days it was snowing and we still had 60 or more people come. We also noticed that just because it was promoted at the school and for student's families, it wasn't uncommon for grandma to tag along and get food as well, meaning we were reaching other eligible individuals that we didn't anticipate.

We do plan on continuing this work and partnerships, and what's exciting is how scalable this model is. We've got many schools in our counties that qualify and could benefit from the mobile market. One of the current barriers we face is just staff time since it is a lot of work to coordinate with the schools, Community Action, and prepare materials. However, between initial attendance, repeated attendance, student comments to SNAP-Ed educators and the enthusiasm of Community Action and school staff members, we'd call this a successful partnership and project.

Harvest of the Month – Tricia's Story

Storyteller: Tricia Heimer

Date: April 23,2024

Local agency or provider: WSU Extension, Island County

Time period of story: FFY18-current (story focus on revitalization of project in FFY23)

Domain (intervention): Schools and Childcare

Implementation Stage: Continued to implement Changes

The impetus for this work starts many years ago with SNAP-Ed, but it really has been pushed forward by the current food service director, Melissa. Before COVID we were doing monthly community steering committee meetings and had a partnership with a local health department that also had SNAP-Ed funding. Then with COVID, partnerships were lost, and those meetings stopped. However, sort of by fate, the staff member at the health department was already doing harvest of the month work in Oak Harbor schools and had built relationships with the food services personnel. For a variety of reasons, the health department had to take a step back and say, ‘we can’t manage this grant anymore.’ Over the next few years, the district food service director changed (to Melissa) and she took it upon herself to try continuing the harvest of the month work. During the 2022-23 academic year, she had less bandwidth and couldn’t continue. However, she made it a goal for this work to happen in this academic year (2023-24).

At the end of 2023, we had already had a partnership formed between us (SNAP-Ed) and the Whidbey Island Conservation District and together we approached Melissa and said, ‘hey, can we assist and/or support some of these activities you’re doing? Can we meet?’ Ultimately, in that process of reaching out and renewing communication, SNAP-Ed was able to provide kitchen equipment and training focused on scratch cooking at the local low-income schools in the district through some extra SNAP-Ed funding availability at the state level.

Prior to Melissa, the food service was contracted through a different company, and while we got lots of smiles and nods from them, it felt like they just didn’t want to cooperate or work with us. When Melissa came on, there was only one elementary school with a full-service kitchen, and in working with us she’s been able to gradually expand equipment. She’s also been able to train her staff on how to use new equipment and has them participate in taste testing of local food and recipes as well. She really takes the guidelines of USDA funds and makes it a palatable, fun, and enjoyable experience for her students. Her motivation and dedication to food sourcing and capacity building is the biggest change and surprising result of this work. She’s investing in relationships and infrastructure. She’s taken it upon herself to source food in the neighboring county as well, since the island itself does not produce enough food to support it’s nearly 6,000 students.

The impact of Harvest of the Month goes beyond just low-income qualifying schools. If foods and recipes get positive taste testing feedback from the elementary students, they get added to the district menu. A great menu example is roasted chickpeas. Back when we were helping with Harvest of the Month (pre-COVID), roasted chickpeas garnered good feedback and were added as a menu item. Now I’ve seen chickpeas being incorporated into afterschool activities and salad bars. So not only do they get added to the menu at the qualifying elementary schools, but the foods get incorporated district wide. This outcome is significant because the impact goes beyond just schools that are SNAP-Ed eligible. It’s increasing student’s palates by providing a wider range of

foods they can try and choose to eat while at school. Overall, this work has been successful because of the renewed lines of communication with the Oak Harbor School District food service personnel, who are very motivated and dedicated to local foods sourcing. It feels like there's lots of opportunity on the horizon that we, SNAP-Ed, can help bring to fruition.

Food Truck Summer Meals – Carly's Story

Storyteller: Carly Simpson

Date: May 28, 2024

Local agency or provider: Common Threads, Whatcom County

Time period of story: FFY23 (Summer)

Domain (intervention): Retail and Food Access

Implementation stage: Started implementation of changes

Last year was the first year providing summer meals from our food truck through the USDAs summer food service program. We provided meals at 6 rural sites in Whatcom County. For a variety of staffing and funding reasons, the public school district was unable to provide summer meals for a few years in a row, so we saw a gap in food access for these parts of the county. The primary purpose of the food truck is to provide free and nourishing meals to kids in hard-to-reach times and places. While the meals themselves are not SNAP-Ed funded or eligible we're working a lot with SNAP-Ed eligible communities and kids when we're serving from the food truck. In the summer of 2023, we were able to provide roughly 1,500 meals to these rural communities from the food truck.

Because Whatcom is so large and has many rural areas, the mobility of a food truck made the most sense in lieu of brick and mortar sites. We did some additional informal needs assessment work to gather information from local non-profits, families, and schools to identify sites to work at. Some of these sites that we ended up at, were familiar to us because we were already running cooking and gardening camps and activities. Other sites were a bit more challenging to identify as we wanted to make sure they were accessible and where children and families were already at during the summer months.

The most successful sites were those at public libraries and a housing community center. The community center location at Glenhaven Lakes made it so kids could walk right on over from where they live to access the food truck. Similarly, we coordinated with story time at the library, when it was most common for families to already be in attendance and easily access the food truck. Another consideration that was helpful for the success of summer meals last summer was coordinating with other services. For example, we parked at a site with a book mobile so families could access books and free meals. Another example was coordinating a time to be somewhere at the same time as the youth mobile vaccination program. In the future we also hope to partner and promote even more services like summer EBT and match programs.

In terms of eligibility and how we operated the food truck, anyone under 18 was eligible for the free summer meals, but adults were not covered. However, kids come with adults and their families. It became clear and important to us to include everyone in receiving meals; especially because the

community and families act as role models. We had to be a bit creative and pull in additional funding to be able to provide meals to adults and ask for donations (that would support future food purchasing).

The most tangible difference made through implementation of the food truck was the amount of meals we were able to provide. Beyond that, it was really important that we could provide these meals in a way that was fun, yet felt normal. We attempted to destigmatize free meals by having a customized truck that looks like any other one; something bright, colorful, and inviting. In fact, we had some folks who just showed up at the truck not realizing it's intended purpose and provided meals to those community members through suggested donations. Kids that visited were able to choose from familiar and unfamiliar foods, to ultimately encourage adventurous eating and choice.

This summer, 2024, there's been some changes to the USDAs regulations where we can now provide non-congregate meals. Meaning, that families can take several meals home from the food truck. Because of these changes, moving forward the food truck is slated to become more of a tasting mobile with the idea that kids will have the opportunity to taste a variety of fresh local ingredients and recipes and take home meals to enjoy with their families.

Appendix 2. Success Story Evaluation Tools

Story Collection: Interview Guide

Name of Interviewer:

Date:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. In a few minutes I will start recording this interview. The SNAP-Ed evaluation team will use the recording to transcribe this interview for analysis and reporting out. If you would not like to be recorded, please let me know now.

[gain consent for recording and start recording if allowed]

Our aim for conducting these interviews is to highlight and evaluate PSE changes that occurred in the past year. We are interested in your perspectives as unique insight into the wins and challenges of PSE interventions in Washington SNAP-Ed. In this interview, I will ask you six specific questions. I will be taking notes in addition to the recording that will be transcribed. Your story will be shared with you to review and ensure you are happy with the end result. Quotes from your story may be used in reports and communication materials. You may skip any of the questions or opt out at any time.

Do I have your consent to proceed? Yes No

We will begin with some quick points for record keeping. Please state your name and local implementing agency.

[some of this can be pre-filled, or filled in after the interview]

Name of Storyteller:

Local agency or provider:

Time period of story:

Domain (intervention):

1. **Please tell me a little about yourself and your role with Washington SNAP-Ed.**
2. **Looking back over the last year (FFY 2023), what do you think are some of the most impactful parts of your PSE work or partnerships?** [make note of the domain or each point]

*Thank you for sharing all those examples. Now that we have a short list, can you identify **one** implemented change that you think was the most impactful and that you would like to expand on? The following questions will ask about the change or body of work you choose. Feel free to provide as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable. So far, you've touched on [read from list]...*

3. **Could you describe the situation before you implemented any changes?**
 - Describe the background, context, reasons, and/or priorities to make changes.

4. **What was the change that happened?**
 - Whose idea was it? Why was this change chosen over others? How was it implemented?

5. **What difference did it make?**
 - Describe the situation after the change happened. Did the change have an expected result? Any unexpected results?

6. **Why is this significant?**
 - What was the added value from the change? Or what were the most impactful outcomes. What was the impact on the storyteller, their work, and/or participants served?

7. **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

This concludes our interview today. I will send you copy of your story so you can review and edit any of your responses. Thank you so much for your time today.

Story Review: Review Sheet

MSC Story Review Sheet

Story name: _____

Thank you for volunteering your time to read and review the Most Significant Change stories collected this year. This review sheet is intended to help you organize your thoughts and will be used to guide our discussion. The review sheet and discussion may be used to craft a tool that will help with writing success stories in the future.

As you read, consider how well the story encapsulates SNAP-Ed PSE work, including SNAP-Ed goals and principles, intervention categories, replicability, impact, and implementation. For reference, SNAP-Ed goals, guiding principles, and interventions are listed at the end of this document.

For each question below, describe how well the example response is true for the story you are reading. Make note of what elements of the story match the questions and any other thoughts and comments for each question. There is also a space for general thoughts and considerations below. Please fill out one review sheet per story.

If you have any questions while reviewing these stories, please email us at SNAPedEvaluation@doh.wa.gov

1. **What are your initial thoughts about this story?** *What stood out to you?*

2. **Can the change described be implemented in other parts of Washington?** *The story is generalizable and is described with enough detail and accuracy to be replicable in other settings.*

3. **Is the current or future impact on SNAP-Ed participants easily identified?** *The impact, either intentional, unintentional, or anticipated, is clearly explained and easily identified in the story.*
4. **Does the progress match the implementation stage?** *The details supporting progress suggest this project is moving to the next implementation stage.*
5. **Does the story address SNAP-Ed goals? (See goals and objectives listed below)** *The story addresses and contributes to progress in more than one SNAP-Ed goal.*
6. **Does the story exemplify SNAP-Ed's guiding principles? (See guiding principles below)** *Several SNAP-Ed principles are demonstrated through the planning and implementation described in the story.*
7. **General Thoughts and Comments:**

SNAP-Ed Goals:

1. Increase availability and promotion of nourishing foods and beverages for people that are eligible for SNAP-Ed.
2. Increase opportunities for people who are eligible for SNAP-Ed to include physical activity and movement in their lives.
3. Increase the impact of healthy eating and physical activities by facilitating collaboration.
4. Strengthen community representation to expand community-led initiatives and elevate community voice in decision-making.
5. SNAP-Ed structures and systems center and reflect the lived experiences and values of local communities supported by SNAP-Ed.

SNAP-Ed Guiding Principles:

1. **Partnership** - Build collaborative relationships with diverse and representative partners across all levels of Washington SNAP-Ed
2. **Authentic Engagement** - Focus on asset-based approaches that build trust by engaging and valuing the lived experience within each community.
3. **Impact** - Adapt evaluation and measurement tools to reflect the work and encourage capacity and relationship building.
4. **Innovation** - Programs focus on impact by being creative, innovative, adaptable, and flexible in both planning and implementation.
5. **Purpose** - Projects are relevant, value driven, address the root causes of nutrition insecurity, and align with community needs and wants.
6. **Community-Centered** - Recognize and amplify heart-centered (compassionate, caring, genuine, trauma-informed), client-centered and culturally relevant multi-level approaches that prioritize partnerships and community.

7. **Statewide Collaboration** - The Statewide Coordination Team carries forward the voice of local implementing agencies, and therefore local community members, so that planning and implementation is collaborative and represents multiple perspectives.

SNAP-Ed Implementation Stages:

1. Sites contacted and agreed to participate
2. Planning and preparation for implementation (i.e. Assessment, training, etc.)
3. Started implementation of changes
4. Continued to implement changes
5. Worked to maintain changes
6. Conducted follow-up assessments and evaluation and/or monitoring

Story Review: Discussion Group Guide

Facilitator 1 (F1): *Hi everyone! For those of you who don't know me, my name is _____.*
Welcome to the [Intervention type] Discussion Group for the MSC Success Story Evaluation Pilot project. Thank you for volunteering your time to read and review these success stories and be a part of our pilot project. I am joined today by _____ and we will be facilitating this discussion together. The evaluation team is very grateful for all your help this year as we piloted the project.

F1: *If you're here, you probably have heard this all before but I wanted to briefly provide some context and go over our plan for today and then we can dive in. MSC, or most significant change, has two parts to it, collecting stories, which are similar to success stories we use in NPEARS, and then reading and reviewing them. We sent you four stories, and hopefully you've had a chance to take a look at them and use the review guide to jot down some notes. Today, we just wanted to talk a little about what you learned from the stories, any interesting or helpful tips you may have gained, and whether you see yourself applying these changes or strategies in your own program. We prepared a few questions, but we purposely kept the bulk of our time unstructured, so please feel free to share anything that's on your mind.*

Facilitator 2 (F2): *Yes, hi everyone. As you know, we are planning on recording this discussion as it will be part of the analysis for this project. The recording for this meeting is saved in a protected file that only certain folks have access to. Also, no names of discussion group members will be included in any reports or presentations. By staying on the call, we'll take that as consent to be a part of the recording. If you're not interested in being part of the recording, we just ask that you send us your completed review sheets to our team email (paste in chat) and hop off the call.*

Also, you may leave or step away from the conversation at any time if you need. You can also use the chat for any questions or comments. In this conversation, you're free to talk about all four stories as a group or just one that spoke to you, but you don't have to specify which one. We are interested in elements of success stories that resonated with you and how well you feel the stories capture SNAP-Ed goals and objectives. With that, let me hit record...

F2: *Ok, Great! To get us warmed up, could we go around and introduce ourselves briefly- your name, your role, and how long you've been involved with Washington SNAP-Ed.*

1. **F2:** *Let's get into the stories. How did you feel when you were reading these stories? Is there anything that stood out to you?*
 - *Learning about programming, motivation, SNAP-Ed, anything else?*
 - *Is there something that you found inspiring?*

2. **F1:** *Let's talk a little more about the review process. How was the process of using the review sheet?*
 - *Did you find it helpful? Time consuming?*
 - *Did you take any notes? If so, what sorts of things did you write? Examples or content?*
 - *Would you have rather not used a guide sheet?*

3. **F2:** *Now, let's think about the SNAP-Ed goals and values. How do these stories fit in the SNAP-Ed goals?*
 - *Is there a goal that was common between the four stories?*
 - *Were you already familiar with SNAP-Ed goals and values before reviewing these stories? Did the review process help with that?*
 - *Are these success stories similar to stories you've read in the past or written to be entered into NPEARS?*
 - *Is there anything that would make these stories stronger in their alignment with statewide goals?*

4. **F1:** *I'm curious about how relatable you found these stories to be. Is there something new and useful you learned from these stories?*
 - *Is there something you can apply to your own program/work?*
 - *Do you see changes like these happening in other parts of the state? In your own program/agency/county?*

5. **F2:** *We're almost at the end of our discussion group time. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about that we haven't already? Or is there anything you want to revisit?*

F2: *With that, we can wrap up this discussion. Thank you again for participating in this discussion and pilot project. Our team will be doing further analyses on the stories and the three group discussions and plan to report findings a few different ways in the coming months. As a reminder, please email us your review sheet notes when you get a chance. Please reach out with any questions or feedback to our team's email. We'll stay on the call for a few minutes in case anyone wants to linger and chat, but otherwise I hope you have a great rest of your day!*

Story Review: Interview Guide

Hi _____, Thanks for participating in the MSC Success Story Evaluation Pilot and volunteering your time to read and review success spaces stories.

MSC, or most significant change, has two parts to it, collecting stories, which are similar to success stories we use in NPEARS, and then reading and reviewing them. We sent you four stories, and hopefully

you've had a chance to take a look at them and use the review guide to jot down some notes. Today, we just wanted to talk a little about what you learned from the stories, any interesting or helpful tips you may have gained, and whether you see yourself applying these changes or strategies in your own program.

We are planning on recording this chat as it will be part of the analysis for this project. The recording for this meeting is saved in a protected file that only certain folks have access to. No reviewer names will be included in any reports or presentations. With that, let me hit record...

1. *Ok, Great! Let's get into the stories. How did you feel when you were reading these stories? Is there anything that stood out to you?*
 - *Learning about programming, motivation, SNAP-Ed, anything else?*
 - *Is there something that you found inspiring?*

2. *Let's talk a little more about the review process. How was the process of using the review sheet?*
 - *Did you find it helpful? Time consuming?*
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3. *Now, let's think about the SNAP-Ed goals and values. How do these stories fit in the SNAP-Ed goals?*
 - *Is there a goal that was common between the four stories?*
 - *Were you already familiar with SNAP-Ed goals and values before reviewing these stories? Did the review process help with that?*
 - *Are these success stories similar to stories you've read in the past or written to be entered into NPEARS?*
 - *Is there anything that would make these stories stronger in their alignment with statewide goals?*

4. *I'm curious about how relatable you found these stories to be. Is there something you can implement to your own program, work or community?*

5. *Is there anything else you'd like to talk about that we haven't already? Or is there anything you want to revisit?*

*With that, we're done. Our team will be doing further analyses on the stories and the three group discussions and plan to report findings a few different ways in the coming months. **As a reminder, please email us your review sheet notes when you get a chance.** Please reach out with any questions or feedback to our team's email.*