Workshop Report

Lynchburg, Virginia

November 2025



Accomplishments, Impacts, and Recommendations from SNAP-Ed Agents in Virginia

Eat Smart • Move More
Virginia Cooperative Extension • Family Nutrition Program

Virginia Cooperative Extension
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BACKGROUND

SNAP-Ed was a state-administered, federally funded, evidence-based nutrition education and obesity prevention program. In Virginia, SNAP-Ed was implemented by the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Family Nutrition Program (FNP). Throughout its 30-year history, SNAP-Ed demonstrated improvements in food resource management, food security, and nutrition and health outcomes among individuals and families with low incomes nationally, and in Virginia. SNAP-Ed used a variety of approaches, including nutrition education programs for adults and youth and food access and health initiatives (referred to as policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes by the SNAP-Ed program) to promote and achieve improved food, nutrition, and health outcomes.[1-3]

On July 4, 2025, the 2025 Budget Reconciliation One Big Beautiful Bill Act in the United States (U.S.) was signed into federal law.[4] The Act included an amendment effectively defunding the SNAP-Ed program altogether as of October 1, 2026.

To capture the broad accomplishments of SNAP-Ed in Virginia, in November 2025, nine Virginia SNAP-Ed Agents completed a Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) exercise in an in-person three-hour workshop. SNAP-Ed Agents were specifically responsible for: development and implementation of food access and health initiatives and training and support of volunteers to deliver evidence-based nutrition and physical activity programming in schools. **The purpose of the workshop was to assess and document the accomplishments and impacts of their SNAP-Ed programming, from their perspectives.** The REM workshop was conducted in a three-part facilitated process:

- **Part 1:** Defining and Reflecting on Roles
- **Part 2:** Connecting Roles and Efforts to Outcomes
- **Part 3:** Sharing Long-term Impacts from these Efforts

REM is a participatory, qualitative, systems-science, and rapid evaluation method used to document the intended and unintended impacts of a program or project.[5,6] The REM workshop involved facilitated discussion using appreciative inquiry and mind mapping to visually capture the “ripples” or impacts that flowed from initial program inputs from SNAP-Ed Agents into a map. The REM method has been found to be useful for evaluating complex initiatives and systems change where traditional evaluations may miss important results.[5-7] This report is a summary of the REM workshop, including subsequent input and revisions provided by participants.

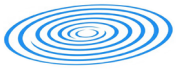
WORKSHOP RESULTS

Workshop Participants

Workshop participants implemented SNAP-Ed programming statewide across Virginia. Workshop participants represented a wide range of educational backgrounds, including social work, organizational development, nutrition, and communications.

Part 1: Defining and Reflecting on Roles

In part 1 of the workshop, participants described their roles, or functions, as resource providers, process facilitators, change agents, connectors, and educators. Participants noted that small steps contributed to a larger picture. In carrying out their roles, they described using the train-the-trainer model,[8] an approach promoted broadly within Cooperative Extension to train volunteers in classrooms to deliver and increase the reach of evidence-based nutrition and physical activity education. Participants provided a detailed range of descriptions and specific examples to characterize their roles (See Table 1).



SNAP-Ed was a "collaborator in a non-collaborative world."

Table 1. Summary of SNAP-Ed Agents' Roles

Roles	Description	Examples
Resource Provider	• Internship Leader • Nutrition Guides • Resources & Supports Provider • Consultant Strategist • Evidence-Based Information • Resource Creator for Partners	• Serving in administrative function in statewide Virginia farmers market association • Advising Virginia Fresh Match food, farm, and market network that doubles SNAP food assistance value on fruits and vegetables
Process Facilitator	• Researcher • Coach • Storyteller • Evaluator	• Answering questions and putting out fires • Staying on top of policy changes and adapting • Ensuring paperwork and administration gets completed • Communicating SNAP-Ed impacts (e.g., at conferences) • Testing/piloting online programs

Roles	Description	Examples
Change Agent	• Community Organizer • Advocate • Training Agents	• Community garden coalition leader and network organizer • Project Leader
Connector	• Collaborator • Partner • Liaison	• Supporting PSE initiatives at various settings including farmers markets, food banks and pantries, food retail • Offering PSE physical activity breaks (e.g., StoryWalks) for youth with partners • Guiding development of and overseeing mini-grant awards to partners
Educator	• Educator of volunteer teachers to deliver evidence-based nutrition education curricula in schools to youth (e.g., Pick a Better Snack™, Learn, Grow, Eat, Go!)	• Training volunteers to deliver curriculum and promote healthy eating (e.g., Literacy, Eating, Activity for Preschoolers (LEAP), or cooking demonstrations using recipes with nutritious, delicious, available, low-cost foods at Virginia farmers markets and with grocery retailers)

Note: Some text edited for clarity.

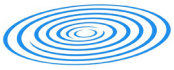
Image 1: Photograph of the Ripple Effects Map from the Participant Discussion



Part 2: Connecting Roles and Efforts to Outcomes

The second part of the workshop involved small group discussions and reflections on the events and processes that led from their various roles as SNAP-Ed Agents to outcomes of their work. The outcomes included processes developed, tasks performed, reach increased, and evidence-based awareness and knowledge gained by SNAP-Ed participants. Virginia SNAP-Ed Agents highlighted the crucial (and unseen) functions of SNAP-Ed working with partners to identify gaps in other programs and partnerships statewide that SNAP-Ed could fill that otherwise may not have been addressed. They emphasized that program efforts were based on local needs. They described how Virginia SNAP-Ed:

- Engaged with community partners through a variety of partnerships that were established over time.
- Provided sustained technical and administrative support and evidence-based resources to partners "until it [a project] blooms" allowing community partners to focus their time on other [their internal] priorities, and leverage and do more with their resources, thereby extending program reach, quality, and impacts.
- Developed and shared evidence-based tools and resources for partners that were free of cost, based on community needs.
- Created processes and sets of standards that established quality benchmarks, formalized implementation, and expanded food access and health initiatives.
- Expanded VCE's broader reach through trainings, partnerships, and "connecting silos."



SNAP-Ed Agents shared program design processes of "bringing community into the fold by looking inside first before looking out" to identify and address priorities based on local needs (e.g., linking fresh local food into a hospital-based nutrition education course for persons with chronic diseases).

Part 3: Sharing Long-term Impacts from these Efforts

Participants identified the impacts of their SNAP-Ed efforts and reflected on the longer-term results from their work. The impacts were summarized into three main categories:

- Improvements food environment changes and food security, nutrition, and other health behaviors;
- Enhanced sustainability processes and networks that extend beyond the funding of SNAP-Ed; and
- Contributed to longer-term impacts at the community and population levels.

Examples of Virginia SNAP-Ed impacts raised at the REM workshop follow.

Improved food environment changes and food security, nutrition, and other health behaviors:

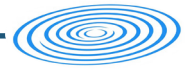
- Equipped families with low incomes to navigate their nutrition needs through facilitated food access and health initiatives and nutrition education
- Increased access to and availability of fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious foods in communities with low incomes
- Strengthened food systems and improved local food economy (e.g., SNAP at farmer's markets and support of statewide food security programs expansion)
- Increased opportunities for physical activity, especially in schools
- More retailers accepted SNAP (e.g., because of technical assistance provided to farmers markets and food retail to set-up and promote SNAP to reach more customers)
- Increased visibility of VCE programs resulted in increased participation

Enhanced sustainability processes and networks that extend beyond the funding of SNAP-Ed:

- A strong network of farmers markets that value food access and health was created from Virginia SNAP-Ed that will continue to work together
- Many coalitions that were initially facilitated and supported by SNAP-Ed have indicated they will continue their efforts
- Food pantry staff and volunteers as part of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks will continue to be trained using the courses co-developed by SNAP-Ed and community partners
- School and community partners who have been trained by Virginia SNAP-Ed will continue to use Virginia SNAP-Ed evidence-based curricula
- The rigorous assessment, reporting, and training approaches used by SNAP-Ed can be adapted by VCE and other implementing organizations

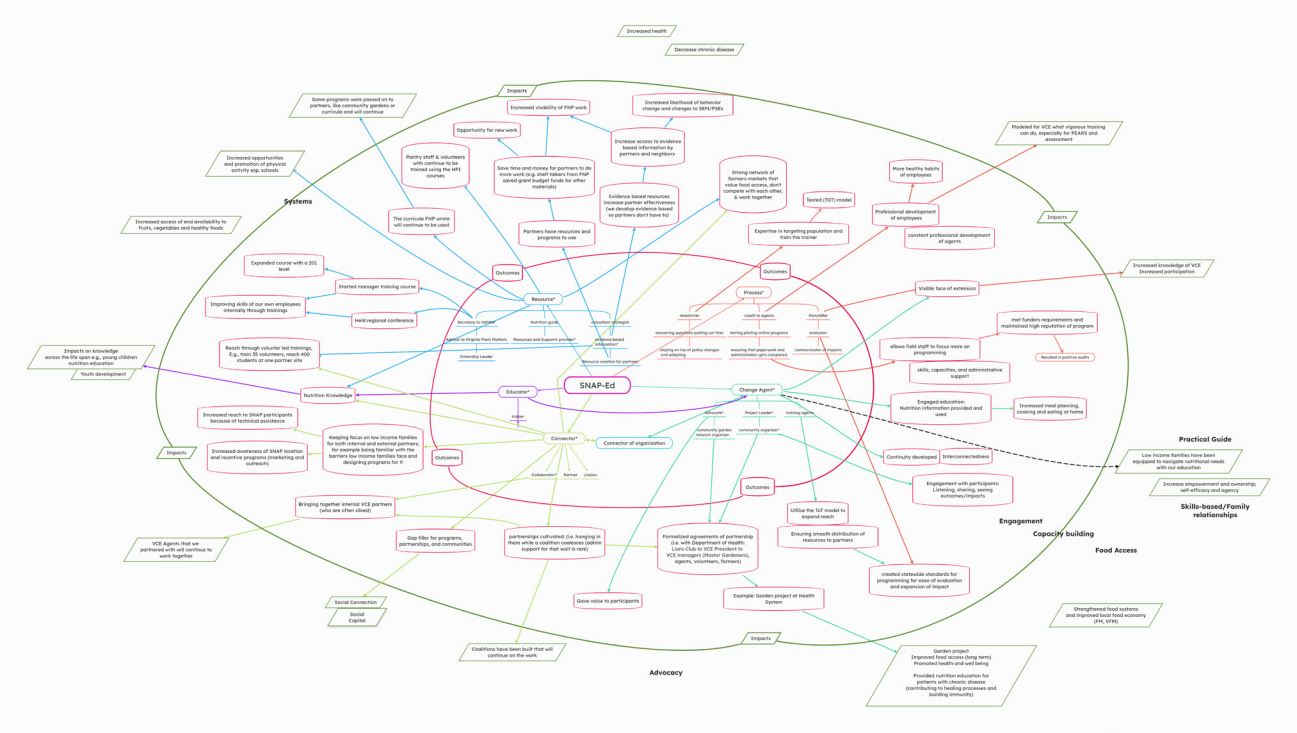
Contributed to longer-term impacts at the community and population levels:

- Increased social capital by bringing participants and people together
- Built social connections
- Improved health status
- Lowered chronic disease risk



SNAP-Ed facilitated a sense of information empowerment leading to increased self-efficacy for individuals, partners, and communities.

Image 2: Digital version Ripple Effects Map December 18, 2025 (Mindamo Collaborative Mind Map Software, version 11.1.4, Timișoara, Romania, 2025)



IMPLICATIONS OF SNAP-ED DEFUNDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SNAP-Ed Agents demonstrated diverse knowledge and skill sets. This breadth of expertise aligned with multiple competencies required for food access and health initiatives, such as conducting a needs assessment, community organizing, coalition building, training and resource mobilization, and program delivery.[9]

Throughout the workshop, the participants noted potential risks and concerns related to the defunding and sunsetting of SNAP-Ed. The defunding of SNAP-Ed posed a loss to institutional knowledge and expertise for training volunteers, facilitating food access and health initiatives, and working with individuals and families with low incomes for improved food and nutrition. Participants worried defunding SNAP-Ed disrupted the continuity of administrative support, skills, and capacities available to partners and created losses in ongoing representation and presence of food access and health initiatives in Virginia.

Participants emphasized the importance of sustaining a focus on populations with low income in program design, implementation, and evaluation, who have unique needs and additional barriers to consider in program design and delivery.[10,11] Since Virginia SNAP-Ed was implemented through VCE, defunding may result in overall decreased participation from this segment of the population in the future, unless adaptations and specific efforts are made to continue outreach and recruitment efforts. For example, concerns were raised that participation fees could be introduced in the future under VCE programming, which would pose a barrier for families with low income.

Without SNAP-Ed, participants noted that a vital source of accessible community level nutrition expertise would be lost. SNAP-Ed, through FNP, had substantial demand, capacity, and statewide systems for developing tailored food, nutrition, physical activity, and health resources—such as healthy recipes, food resource management supports, food demonstrations, and culturally representative materials—that workshop participants wanted to see sustained. Additionally, SNAP-Ed procedures allowed more time for assessment, evaluation, and partnership-building—processes that may be difficult to replicate in VCE and other organizations.

SNAP-Ed Agents made the following recommendations for future VCE practitioners and other implementers as appropriate to absorb the scope of work of Virginia SNAP-Ed:

- Monitor requests for SNAP-Ed services to determine the perceived ongoing need
- Ensure perspectives from a variety of populations, including those with low incomes, in program design, implementation, and evaluation
- Transfer existing SNAP-Ed projects and partnerships to VCE Agents who currently work with low-income audiences
- Use the Train-the-Trainer model to substantially increase reach of direct education programs
- Build capacities of VCE and partners to facilitate food access and health initiative changes
- Redefine VCE Family and Consumer Science priorities with explicit goals for the inclusion of populations with low incomes

SNAP-Ed sunsetting does not eliminate the need for food, nutrition, and health education and food access changes. Participants stressed that work must be done to ensure that the accomplishments and impacts of Virginia SNAP-Ed continue and are transferred to VCE and other partner organizations. Recommendations made by SNAP-Ed Agents at this November 2025 REM workshop can be used to inform the transition of volunteer-led nutrition education and food access and health initiative changes to other program implementation platforms in Virginia.

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