Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative

Request for Proposals

2016

Award opportunity:
Senior SNAP Enrollment Center $50,000

Webinars for Potential Applicants:
June 22, 2016, 11:00am ET
June 30, 2016, 3:00pm ET

Letter of Intent Due:
July 6, 2016

Proposals Due:
August 3, 2016

Award Period:
October 1, 2016 – April 30, 2018

Please direct questions to:
HungerInitiatives@ncoa.org
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Program Overview

The National Council on Aging’s (NCOA) Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative is a national program that supports efforts by community-based organizations and agencies to assist older adults (i.e., age 60 and over) in applying for and enrolling in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This program is supported by a generous grant from the Walmart Foundation.

In Phases 1 & 2 of the Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative, with support from the Walmart Foundation, NCOA provided $2.15 million in grant funds to a national network of community-based organizations to help older adults apply for and enroll in SNAP. To date, our local partners have helped 58,218 older adults apply for SNAP, many of them in the poorest, most isolated and food insecure areas of the country.

Phase 3 of NCOA’s Senior SNAP Initiative will expand and build upon our earlier efforts by engaging new community-based organizations, targeting high-need states, and increasing the utilization of NCOA’s BenefitsCheckUp® screening and enrollment tools by community-based organizations as an integral part of applying for SNAP.

Only 2 in 5 eligible seniors currently participate in SNAP, leaving nearly 5.2 million elders without the nutrition assistance for which they are eligible.¹ At the same time, senior hunger—America’s “hidden hunger”—is on the rise and adding to the strain on charity food providers. SNAP, provides an average of $1,320 in benefits each year to low-income seniors living alone.² For these seniors, the $110/month average SNAP benefit can be a lifeline to food security, health, and economic stability.

One aspect of this initiative (Award Areas A & B) will award sustainability funds to organizations who are current high-performing partners in NCOA’s Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative. These funds will be awarded through a separate invitation-only RFP.

This competitive national RFP (Award Area C) has been issued because NCOA seeks to make awards of $50,000 each to new partner organizations. These new partners should have already demonstrated their capacity to enroll eligible individuals in SNAP through other initiatives, and have a strong interest in increasing SNAP participation among older adults in their communities.

Applicants must be a public or nonprofit organization, faith-based organization or coalition, state or local government entity, or a consumer and community advocacy organization or coalition, with a focus on serving older adults and/or providing nutrition programs.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- Release of RFP: June 15, 2016
- Online application available for proposal submission: June 15, 2016
- Letter of Intent due: July 6, 2016
- SNAP RFP Due: August 3, 2016
- Notification of awards: Late September 2016
- Award performance period: October 1, 2016 – April 30, 2018 (18 months)

How to Apply

NCOA is using an online application for this initiative. The online application will be available at www.ncoa.org/SNAPawards on or around June 15, 2016.

NCOA will host two optional webinars to answer questions about the RFP process on June 22, 2016 and June 30, 2016. You are welcome to register for the webinars at the links below. We will record the webinars and make them available at www.ncoa.org/SNAPawards for those who are unable to attend the webinar.

Webinar date and registration details:

- June 22, 2016, 11:00am ET
  - Registration Link
- June 30, 2016, 3:00pm ET
  - Registration Link

Background

Senior hunger is on the rise in America, with nearly 5 million adults aged 60+ considered food insecure or very food insecure, according to the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement. Food banks report increasing numbers of elderly becoming repeat clients each month.

Yet senior hunger does not exist independent of economic insecurity. In stark terms, this means that for a senior pushing a half-empty grocery cart at the checkout, the choices go beyond clipping coupons and counting pennies. She may ask herself, can I cut my pills in half to make my prescription last an extra month? Can I leave my health conditions untreated just a little bit longer, until I can afford that Medicare copayment? Should I turn off the air-conditioning during this heat wave to keep my costs down? Given these pressures, sufficient food intake and a healthy diet can be difficult, even impossible, to maintain.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that only 2 in 5 eligible older adults is enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, the backbone of America's federal anti-hunger programs. As a result, an estimated 5.2 million low-income elders are missing
out on this vital program, which provides an average annual benefit of $1,320 to elderly participants.

Multiple studies have documented the reasons why older adults tend not to participate in SNAP. Key among these are the stigma of “welfare” programs; lack of knowledge about programs and eligibility, when compared to other population groups; and misconceptions about the value of the benefit. In recent years, government agencies, aging service providers, and anti-hunger organizations have stepped up efforts to reach seniors and enroll them in SNAP.

Through NCOA’s work on SNAP enrollment, we have found that the barriers to increasing senior participation fall under five general categories:

- **Awareness**: Senior hunger is often called America's "hidden hunger." The public awareness of senior hunger is low, and seniors may not self-identify as needing, or being eligible for, SNAP. The public face of hunger in America is that of a child, not a retiree.

- **Misconceptions about the SNAP program and benefit**: Many seniors believe that they would only be eligible for the minimum benefit of $15, while the average benefit for a senior living alone is $110/month. In addition, many elders still equate SNAP with paper Food Stamps, and do not realize that the benefit is loaded onto inconspicuous debit cards.

- **Stigma**: The stigma low-income older adults feel when applying for benefits is one of the largest barriers to participation. Stigma is best understood as a negative reputation that creates real costs—emotional, social, physical, time, and financial—or the perception that costs will be incurred.

- **Points of access**: Many older adults live in isolation from centralized services, whether due to geography, physical or cognitive disability, or language-cultural barriers. They may be unlikely to travel beyond the doctor’s office, place of worship, grocery store, and local senior center. Traveling to a “welfare” office to apply for SNAP is unappealing at best, and impossible at worst, for many eligible seniors.

- **Policy/program silos**: Traditionally, many aging services providers, while experts in Medicare and senior programs, may know very little about SNAP, while SNAP agencies may not work at all with the statewide aging network. Without an integrated approach to policy and practice across the aging and hunger fields, huge gaps in service remain. For example, even seniors who participate in nutrition programs like home-delivered meals or congregate dining may not be aware of their eligibility for SNAP, the value of the benefit, or how to apply.

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The Program

The Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative is a national program of the National Council on Aging. The goals of the initiative include:

- Significantly increasing the participation of older adults in SNAP through community-based outreach and enrollment initiatives.
- Identifying, analyzing, and disseminating replicable, cost-effective, and scalable strategies for senior SNAP enrollment.
- Increasing public awareness of senior hunger as an issue of national and local importance, and of SNAP as an effective strategy for reducing food insecurity among older adults.

NCOA aims to award $2 million to up to 30 community-based organizations and/or agencies to engage in SNAP outreach and application assistance. These organizations will be expected to submit at least 50,000 new SNAP applications overall.

*Application completion and submission is the chief goal*

NCOA recognizes that outreach and education, as well as application assistance, are needed to achieve the goal of maximizing the number of seniors enrolled in SNAP. However, the primary success metric for this program is the number of people who actually complete and submit applications for SNAP. Proposals that focus solely on outreach and/or education and that do not have a strong focus on application completion and submission will not be considered.

In addition, we recognize that while the use of effective online tools to screen, track, and assist individuals applying for benefits is critical to developing an efficient system of benefits enrollment, some geographic areas will lack broadband or other capabilities to use technology in these ways. Where the capabilities do exist, we would expect technological solutions to play an integral role in proposals. However, it is not the intent of this award to fund major purchases of technology or equipment.

New partners will be selected through a competitive RFP for funding as follows:

**New Partner Area C:**

- Awards: Up to 8 awards of $50,000 each
- SNAP enrollment goal: Submission of at least 1,250 new senior SNAP applications
- Eligibility requirements: Applicants must be a public or nonprofit organization, faith-based organization or coalition, state or local government entity, or a consumer and community advocacy organization or coalition. These awards will be targeted for organizations already engaged in SNAP outreach and enrollment work and looking to expand to seniors; or organizations who are already engaged in benefits outreach and enrollment work with seniors and want to expand their program to include SNAP.
Selection Criteria

Key selection criteria include:

- Strong commitment and demonstrated capacity of the applicant to meet or exceed the designated SNAP application and enrollment goals.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and/or expand partnerships with other community organizations and local government agencies to effectively implement SNAP outreach and enrollment work.
- Performance in other NCOA benefits enrollment initiatives, including Benefits Enrollment Center grants.
- Community factors, such as: rates of risk for senior hunger, rates of senior economic insecurity, rates of isolation, and low statewide senior participation rates for SNAP. Data on these measures have been compiled by NCOA for your use in writing your proposal:
  - County-level data on enrollment in core benefits for low-income Medicare beneficiaries can be found here.
  - State-level data on senior SNAP participation date can be found here.
  - County-level data on self-reported difficulties and disabilities in the low-income Medicare population can be found here.
  - County-level data on limited English proficiency in the low-income Medicare population can be found here.
- Specific commitments to:
  - Meet or exceed SNAP application goals set forth in this RFP.
  - Engage in coordinated SNAP outreach campaign and messaging efforts, including use of materials developed by NCOA.
  - Help disseminate findings and best practices among other organizations and broader networks of partners.
  - Adhere to NCOA’s proposed donor recognition plan.
  - Participate in monthly telephone calls or webinars.
  - Use BenefitsCheckUp® for screening and data collection for all clients served through this initiative. If your organization already uses another online benefit screening tool, you will be asked to provide relevant information about the tool and how it is used.
  - Collect and track quantitative and qualitative outcomes data, including compelling stories, using NCOA’s online reporting system.
  - Participate in regular trainings, via webinar or in person, on topics such as: screening and data collection with BenefitsCheckUp®, best practices for enrolling seniors in SNAP, partnerships between aging and anti-hunger organizations, etc.
  - Appropriateness of proposed budget.
Evaluation and Monitoring

NCOA will evaluate this program to determine performance, to identify and assess the cost-effectiveness of organizations and various strategies, and to develop knowledge that will facilitate further scaling of senior SNAP outreach and enrollment efforts nationwide.

Awardees will be required to provide information on a timely and periodic basis to assist in the evaluation process, monitor performance, and aid in program management. This information includes, but is not limited to:

- Screening, application, and enrollment data.
- Narratives spotlighting effective practices or compelling client stories.
- Financial reports.

This information may be provided to a private evaluation consultant, in addition to NCOA staff.

Other NCOA Resources

- Access to customized BenefitsCheckUp® tools that collect your screening performance data automatically.
- Customized online data collection and performance tracking tools.
- Training and technical assistance from experts at NCOA and other organizations.
- Access to NCOA’s six-part senior nutrition education video and materials, developed with the Walmart Foundation.
- Customizable templates for SNAP outreach materials targeted to older adults.
- Data on the needs of seniors in your community and state, and your impact on senior hunger and economic insecurity.

Use of Funds

Organizations must use the full amount of the award for the purposes set forth in their proposal. These funds may not be used for the following purposes:

- To influence any member of Congress, State, or local legislator to favor or oppose any legislation or appropriation with respect to this agreement.
- For publicity or propaganda purposes, for the preparation, distribution, or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, radio, television, or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress or state and local legislatures.
• To pay the salary or expenses of any grant or contract recipient, or agent acting for such recipient, related to any activity designed to influence legislation or appropriation pending before the Congress or state and local legislatures.

**How to Apply**

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Proposals will include:

• An executive summary;
• Description of community factors and population focus;
• Description of current and proposed efforts, including timeline;
• Description of obstacles or barriers to enrolling seniors in SNAP, including experiences overcoming stigma around SNAP in your community;
• An example of your organization’s success in a similar effort that indicates the likelihood that you can succeed in this initiative;
• Description of your organization’s case management tools;
• Budget and budget narrative;
• Resume of project lead and other key staff; and,
• Letters of commitment from partner organizations who will be involved in your proposed efforts.

**Online Reach**

- **Website**
  - Number of unique website visitors per month
  - Are you willing/able to post NCOA SNAP-related content to your website?

- **Email**
  - Number of email addresses of older adults / caregivers
  - Frequency of emails to this audience (weekly, monthly, etc.)
  - Are you willing/able to include NCOA SNAP-related content in your emails to this audience?

- **Social Media**
  - Facebook - Number of followers
  - Twitter – Number of followers
  - Other - Number of followers
  - Frequency of social media posting (daily, weekly, etc.)
  - Are you willing/able to post NCOA SNAP-related content on your social media?
We strongly encourage all potential applicants to submit the Letter of Intent (LOI) at www.ncoa.org/SNAPawards by July 6, 2016, in order to make the proposal review and awards process more efficient. The LOI form will be posted with the online application form on or around June 15, 2016.

Proposals and Letters of Interest submitted via email will not be considered.

Application Timetable

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About NCOA

The National Council on Aging (NCOA), founded in 1950, is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCOA is also one of the nation’s most highly rated charities. Our mission is to empower millions of older adults to be healthy, independent, and financially secure. NCOA has committed to making significant improvements in the lives of 10 million older adults, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, by 2020.

NCOA works with thousands of organizations across the country to help seniors find jobs and benefits, improve their health, live independently, and remain active in their communities. NCOA is the national leader in developing innovative programs that meet important needs of
older Americans and taking them to “scale” nationwide. For example, NCOA developed the first pilot project for the Foster Grandparent Program and conducted the first federal evaluation of Meals on Wheels. In both of these examples, NCOA was instrumental in making these programs part of the fabric of every community in the United States.

BenefitsCheckUp®

Since 2001, NCOA has provided a free service to the general public called BenefitsCheckUp® that enables older adults, their families, and caregivers to learn about and apply for more than 2,000 different public and private benefits. Since its inception, BenefitsCheckUp® has helped more than 5.1 million people find over $16.8 billion in annual benefits. For more, go to www.benefitscheckup.org.

Center for Benefits Access

NCOA’s current efforts to increase senior participation in SNAP have built on our expertise in benefits enrollment for seniors and our long relationship with the national aging network. Since 2008, NCOA has operated as the Center for Benefits Access (formally the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment). The Center is the national “hub” to inform and coordinate federal, state, and local efforts to enroll vulnerable seniors and younger adults with disabilities into benefits using a person-centered, cost-efficient approach. For more, go to www.centerforbenefits.org.