

## **Supplement: Collaboration Readiness Tool**

### **Background**

The SNAP-Ed program is in the process of adopting the Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) change strategies to begin to collaborate more closely with community partners to enact these strategies. The readiness of SNAP-Ed and communities to implement PSE changes became part of the SNAP-Ed evaluation framework. A collaboration readiness assessment tool was needed as a method to evaluate, plan, and work with community partners to implement policy, systems, and environment (PSE) changes in SNAP-Ed.

### **Readiness**

Community partners' willingness and ability to make changes has direct impact on whether strategies are implemented and accepted by the community (Bebe et al, 2001; Collins, Phields, & Duncan, 2007). Assessing the willingness and ability of community partners to work together to implement change is important to determine which strategies are feasible to implement, help identify capacity building needs, and ensure that strategies fit the community (Goodman et al, 1996; Simpson, 2002; Oetting et al, 2001).

Organizational and community models of readiness for change exist with variations emphasizing different components of readiness (Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, Pierce, & Van Egeren, 2007). Organizational readiness has been defined as: being mentally prepared, capable of implementing change, and having committed leaders to the change (Holt et al, 2007; Weiner, Amick, & Lee, 2008). The definition for community readiness can be: the degree which a community believes that change is feasible and is needed (Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, Pierce, & Van Egeren, 2007). Combining these two definitions; readiness basically means the willingness and ability to change. Important to increasing community building efforts and overall civic engagement, the level of readiness and capacity to change needs to be considered, as well as, identifying which components to target based on readiness (Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, Pierce, & Van Egeren, 2007).

### **Theories**

A systematic literature review of community and organizational readiness assessments found four domains to consider prior to planning intervention strategies: 1) a climate that facilitates changes; 2) attitudes and current efforts; 3) commitment; and 4) capacity to implement change. It was recommended that these four domains be assessed to determine how to tailor interventions to different communities (Castañeda et al, 2012). The five antecedent variables (social bonding, social bridging, social leveraging, empowerment and civic engagement) of collective efficacy address these four domains in the following ways: a climate that facilitates changes can be assessed by looking at the connections found in social bonding and bridging; attitudes and current

efforts can be assessed by looking at empowerment and social bridging; commitment can be assessed social bonding and bridging; and capacity to implement change by assessing social leveraging and civic engagement.

An organizational readiness assessment focusing on the collective efficacy of a single organization has been developed (Weiner, 2009). As well, a collective efficacy based readiness assessment to collaborate for a single organization has been developed (DeMarco et al, 2011). Additionally, Foster-Fisherman (2007) developed a community readiness assessment based on collective efficacy. However, what is not well understood is how to measure the readiness of multiple organizations intending to work together.

## **Tool development**

The tool is designed for survey respondents to score their readiness to collaborate. The tool looks at four areas of readiness based on collective efficacy and change efficacy (Sampson, Radenbush, & Earl, 1997; Weiner, 2009). The five areas being: 1) strength of connection between similar programs (social bonding); 2) Leveraging resources between groups (social leveraging); 3) Engagement in political action and/or community change (civic engagement); and 4) Connections with other diverse groups (social bridging). Embedded within each of the four areas above is group empowerment.

Each of the readiness areas has 5 statements that show a progression in readiness using the concepts of the transtheoretical model (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). The statements are similar to the responses used in the Children's Healthy Living (CHL) readiness survey (Children's Healthy Living Program, 2012). The respondents self-scored statements are used to obtain a collaboration readiness level for each of the four areas.

## **Tool validation**

The purpose of the validation was to find appropriate language and format for a Collaboration Readiness Tool. The Tool underwent five rounds of iterative cognitive testing, exhausting all modifications to the survey. SNAP-Ed agencies and community partners representing a variety of ethnic, social, and geographical populations participated in the validation process to ensure clear understanding in various geographical regions and cultures.

The development and implementation of an collaboration readiness assessment tool for PSE collaboration aims to assist SNAP-Ed coordinators, educators, and community partners to implement more comprehensive and effective interventions increasing the potential impact of the SNAP-Ed program in low-income communities.

## **Survey**

How to use: The survey can be administered face-to-face, over the telephone, or by email depending on: location (i.e. telephone might be best option for groups where face-to-face meetings are not feasible); and reason for administration (i.e. email could be used to track progress on readiness).

When to use: The survey can be used for a variety of purposes. For example, it can be used to aid the development of a strategic plan; be a starting point for discussion between collaborators on ways to work together; or it can be used to track progress on collaboration readiness.

How often: The frequency of administering the survey is determined upon why it is being used. For example, it could be used annually to determine progress or assist with planning efforts; a one-time use could be done to stimulate discussion and identify collaborators; or it could be used after a milestone to help determine next steps; it could be used when there is a large change in people and/or groups involved in the collaborative.

### **Survey statements**

Clarifications: Survey statements provide an anchor statement to assist participants determine where they are at in the continuum of readiness. The validation of the tool aimed to make the survey clear and understandable. However, some statements may need slight changes to be applicable to a certain group.

Setting Based: The last area on the survey breaks down the linkages or partnerships to the different settings identified by the SNAP-Ed framework. This was done account for the variations in partnerships between settings and to identify ways to increase partnerships in the different settings.

Scoring: There is no “score” for the collaboration readiness survey. Letters were purposefully used to eliminate judgement and to promote the concept of working with groups where they are ready and willing. There is not an overall “level of readiness” as groups may be at different levels for each area of readiness. This allows for a collaborative to focus on what they are willing and able to due in one or more areas and to identify strengths and challenges within the group.

### **Tool Example**

Aim: The aims are provided to show how the tools can be used to move groups along the continuum of readiness. This is not necessarily a linear process. It is hoped that groups progress along the readiness spectrum but there may be times when groups do not progress or times when they digress. For example: when funding for the group has been cut and there are fewer people to participate; or when there is a change in management or strategy for the group.

Each block in the table has an aim that correlates to the stage of readiness. The aims are based on the Transtheoretical model of behavior change stages: Precontemplation

(Yet to consider); Contemplation (Considering); Preparation (Developing); Action (Acting On); and Maintenance (Established).

*Yet to consider* aims look to provide information and awareness to groups who may not be aware of PSE or have not been involved in the different readiness areas.

*Considering* aims focus on the understanding and identifying barriers and opportunities so groups can think about ways to collaborate.

*Developing* aims bring attention to the benefits and look to develop skills and find resources to help ensure success.

*Acting On* aims look to ensure that there are elements in place for success.

*Established* aims focuses on building on what is working and looks to see how efforts can be expanded and/or streamlined.

Example tool: Tools listed in the table are meant to be a guide for how to address the stated aim. Other tools or methods may be used as well in as much as they follow the intent of the aim.

## **Resources**

There are many resources that are not listed in this tool, in order to keep the tool manageable and not overwhelming. Resources and tools were selected based on: being user friendly; at no or low-cost; and expected applicability. They are not comprehensive nor prescriptive. They are meant to assist practitioners. If other tools are identified, and/or have been used before, their use is encouraged so long as they follow the intent of the aim and readiness area.

Interpretative guide: The SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework and Interpretive Guide was the primary resource used to obtain tools and other resources for this tool. The interpretative guide contains indicators for PSE change. The resources in the guide were developed with experts and there are ongoing efforts to ensure the resources in the guide are current.

Other tools and resources: Some of the resources listed were not found in the interpretative guide. These resources and links were active at the time of development.

This collaboration readiness tool was developed by the Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence – Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Center’s readiness workgroup to assist SNAP-Ed and EFNEP networks to effectively implement PSE approaches and build collaborative networks in low-income communities.

References: Butel, J., Banna, J., Novotny, R., Franck, K., Parker, S., and Stephenson, L.(2017).Validation of a Collaboration Readiness Assessment Tool for Use by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) Agencies and Partners. Unpublished draft.