

Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports (CSNS) Impact Report:

Hawai'i

September 2023



Background & Context

Hawai'i's Coordinating SNAP & Nutrition Supports (CSNS) project team was composed of members from the Department of Human Services (DHS) in partnership with the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), and the Children's Healthy Living Center of Excellence (CHL Center) at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Their project team executed the foundational work needed to generate productive and sustainable cross-agency collaboration. Over the duration of this project, Hawai'i DHS and DOH collaborated to build the state's capacity for data sharing and analysis between the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), to facilitate streamlined eligibility and enrollment processes between the two programs.



Project Description

Hawai'i's project enhanced interagency collaboration to enable data matching capabilities between SNAP and WIC so that collaborating agencies can streamline outreach and cross-enrollment processes. Hawai'i convened representatives from DOH and DHS to execute data-sharing agreements and create other project governance documents. The team also developed a data dictionary and project glossary outlining both common and unique program terminology to equip eligibility workers with shared knowledge about the available nutrition programs. As the agencies work to finalize data matches, the long-term vision of this project is for Hawai'i DOH and DHS to deliver nutrition benefits more efficiently to Hawai'i's families with young children and provide services that are easier for clients to access and navigate.

Logic Model

<p>Objectives</p> <p>Improve access to SNAP and WIC for families with children through cross-program data analysis and matching</p>			
<p>Inputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siloed administration of nutrition support programs • Documentation of formal referral processes between SNAP and WIC • Establishment of a Cross-Enrollment Coordinator role 	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workgroup formation • Regular cross-agency collaboration meetings, led by project manager focused • Performing test data extracts to ensure data matching quality and capacity 	<p>Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated data match between SNAP and WIC • Information about families who are enrolled in either SNAP or WIC, and eligible for, but currently unenrolled in the other program • Data sharing agreement completed between DOH and DHS • Data dictionary • Governance framework • Project glossary • Presentations and training on SNAP and WIC for eligibility workers at both DOH and DHS 	<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced interagency collaboration • Expanded knowledge of both SNAP and WIC programs for eligibility workers • DHS and DOH ability to share, compare, and analyze participant data
<p>Impact</p> <p>Increased cross-agency coordination and collaboration will lead to more eligible families with children being cross-enrolled in SNAP and WIC</p>			



Project Approach

The planning phase of this CSNS project involved onboarding a Project Manager and establishing a workgroup that collaborated to develop a tailored project governance framework and data dictionary. The work of this group was essential for successfully executing a cross-agency data-sharing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

- **Project Management** – The dedicated Project Manager for this initiative was responsible for convening key program staff to share their agency’s application and eligibility determination processes in cross-agency meetings. The project team devoted significant time to developing a shared vision and understanding the current processes of both departments to come up with the MOA. The group also co-created a project glossary that defined 142 terms and acronyms between SNAP and WIC.
- **Project Governance Framework** – This framework was created to identify data extract criteria for matching purposes to allow the data to be extracted consistently. Protocols for data and summary requests, dataset formats, and dataset delivery, as well as rules governing data usage, were also documented.
- **Data Dictionary** – The data dictionary defining 41 database fields and their usages across SNAP and WIC administering agencies.
- **Data-Sharing Memorandum of Agreement** – An MOA enabling WIC and SNAP agencies to share participant data across programs was signed in May 2022. The agencies also now have a process to develop future MOAs between other programs.

During the *implementation phase* of the project, the project team assessed DHS and vendor’s ability to extract SNAP data that could be used by WIC by aligning data formatting and conducting test data exchanges across agencies. By the end of 2022, DHS was able to generate a file of test data extracts from the SNAP caseload that was transferred to the WIC IT Specialist to determine compatibility, capabilities, the time needed for imports and report generations, and any necessary updates to the system.

In *closing* the grant performance period, the Hawai’i cross-agency teams worked to establish plans for WIC outreach message development and testing.

Results

The Hawai'i team was successful in achieving a core objective: enhancing interagency collaboration. Agency staff worked to secure executive leadership buy-in from the beginning and established trusting relationships between team members through consistent communication over the project period. Enhanced interagency collaboration has laid the groundwork for future projects and initiatives between agencies and is contributing to the ongoing work and success of this project.

Over the course of the grant period, the team also made significant progress towards achieving the primary objective of the initiative: improving access to SNAP and WIC for families with children through cross-program data analysis and matching. The base framework for matching participant data is now established, and both agencies have tested data pulls for matching. The agencies continued collaborating since the grant period concluded to finalize data matching logistics.

Although participant cross-enrollment data had not yet been shared across agencies at the grant period close, it is anticipated that once data is shared and used to target outreach, agencies will observe an increase in both SNAP and WIC participation. Preparations are underway for direct outreach to WIC-eligible families based on the data match of SNAP-enrolled families. Agencies also intend to leverage DHS and DOH websites and social channels to direct families to other programs for which they may be eligible. The project team developed plans to track metrics that will be analyzed to measure the impact of these data-driven customer engagement initiatives. In addition, the team used the project period to develop a referral process between SNAP and WIC, which is still in progress.



Lessons Learned

- ✓ **Establishing an MOA to share data across programs requires time and a high level of interagency collaboration.**

Successful execution of the data-sharing MOA in this project resulted from enhanced collaboration across both agencies and alongside legal teams. The cross-agency workgroup convened regularly by the HI CSNS project manager provided a dedicated space for conversations and decision-making across SNAP and WIC agency staff.

- ✓ **Cross-sector relationships and leadership buy-in are key drivers for interagency work.**

This initiative benefited from a wide network of collaborators: not only human services agency staff but also partners from local universities, as well as a national network of partners through the APHSA-administered CSNS cohort. Collaboration across programs, agencies, states, and levels of government enabled staff at Hawai'i SNAP and WIC agencies to innovate and improve upon existing initiatives to better serve children and families.

- ✓ **Providing learning opportunities for staff across agencies and creating clear project governance documents can benefit all collaborators.**

Interdepartmental staff trainings paired with tools such as data dictionaries and project glossaries ensured agency staff had a common understanding of project scope and programmatic terminology. This shared understanding increased staff buy-in, promoted collaboration, and increased readiness to make services more accessible.



Sustainability & Improvement

Hawai'i DHS and DOH will sustain the progress made through the CSNS project by:

- **De-siloing agency operations:** continuing regular cross-agency collaboration;
- **Coordinating customer service:** establishing and documenting a cross-agency referral process between SNAP and WIC;
- **Leveraging data & measuring impact:** sharing client data across programs, conducting ongoing data comparisons, and tracking trends and metrics related to cross-enrollment.

De-siloing agency operations. Hawai'i DOH and DHS will continue collaboration and training efforts to ensure that all staff have a shared understanding and are able to provide a more comprehensive approach to administering benefits and services to families. In February 2023, DOH staff presented WIC information to the DHS SNAP and TANF eligibility workers, and a WIC representative from DOH will participate in DHS' new hire training as part of the standard onboarding process. DOH and DHS will continue to embed cross-training opportunities into staff onboarding and professional development. In order to create processes that are easier for clients to access and navigate, Hawai'i DHS and DOH will continue to reinforce learning opportunities for eligibility workers to provide accurate SNAP and WIC program information and develop prompting questions that are key to engagement and increasing earlier cross-enrollment. Agencies are also creating a streamlined referral process for WIC-eligible families and children.

Coordinating customer service. While this project focused exclusively on cross-agency coordination between SNAP and WIC, many of these project activities and practices could be replicated in the future to align other services as well. In 2022, the DHS Director's Office formally established a Cross-Enrollment Coordinator position dedicated to these responsibilities, a role inspired by the success of Michigan's Cross-Enrollment Coordinator, another member of the first CSNS cohort. In line with DHS' 'Ohana Nui multigenerational framework to end poverty, the team's long-term vision is for eligibility workers across programs to seamlessly connect applicants to other nutrition programs if their responses to pre-screening questions or provided information meet the minimum eligibility.

Leveraging data & measuring impact. DHS and DOH will examine trends of cross-enrollment to inform the next steps from a data-driven lens. The project team developed initial metrics and anticipates modifying the metrics used to measure impact based on trends reflected in data. Relevant agency staff will continue to participate in regular meetings to work through technical issues that arise and identify opportunities for improvement.

Key Takeaways

- Staffed and resourced cross-agency collaboration is necessary for creating the tools to modernize systems, and for sharing and analyze data between nutrition programs.
- Inter-agency training equips eligibility workers with the knowledge and skills to confidently navigate multiple benefits systems, and help clients do the same.
- Engaging University of Hawai'i nutrition experts and researchers provided a broader perspective of systems-level work and research approaches to addressing the nutrition of the population.

Project Library

- [Hawai'i Case Study: Building a Data-Driven Foundation to Help End Hunger in Hawai'i](#)
- [Hawai'i Coordinating SNAP & Nutrition Supports Demonstration Project: Thriving Children Strong Families Project White Paper](#)
- [Project Framework for Data Sharing](#)
- [Project Glossary](#)
- [Data Sharing Agreement](#)

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