

Fight for Food Security with Community-Based SNAP Enrollment

In New Mexico food and community are integral to our identity. However, we face some of the highest food insecurity rates in the nation. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides federal benefits for food purchases. Still, some New Mexicans who qualify for SNAP are unenrolled due to application barriers. SNAP Outreach Programs offer matching federal funds for SNAP enrollment that can help bridge this gap.

Current Challenges:

- **High Hunger Rates:** 1 in 7 New Mexicans and 1 in 5 children face food insecurity.
- **Enrollment Barriers:** Some New Mexicans including those in rural New Mexico, non-English speakers, older adults, and individuals with disabilities, face significant obstacles. In New Mexico, just 38% of adults age 50 and older that qualify actually participate in SNAP. Community based enrollment can address these barriers.
- **Administrative Delays:** Staffing shortages and high volumes at the New Mexico Health Care Authority have caused delays.

SNAP Outreach Program Benefits:

- **Community-Based Enrollment:** Reduces state administrative burden and directly assists families in their communities to enroll in federal SNAP benefits.
- **Economic Impact:** Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in local economic activity.
- **2023 Success in NM:** New Mexico used \$59,879 in federal funds to match funds provided by Roadrunner Food Bank to help enroll many New Mexicans.
- **Other states:** Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Minnesota have successfully institutionalized SNAP Outreach Programs.

New Mexico Should Implement a Permanent SNAP Outreach Program

- **Legislation Requiring an Annual Outreach Plan:** Require the Health Care Authority to complete an annual SNAP outreach plan so programs can proceed, knowing their funds will continue to be matched in future administrations.
- **\$150,000 Investment for an Effective and Equitable Program:**
 - Dedicated staff member to manage the application process and program.
 - Application portal for SNAP outreach workers and read only access to the State's system to see the status of SNAP applications.
 - Interpretation services for outreach workers.
 - Provide grants to reach underserved communities.

