

CENTERING
Community Voice
in Food Access

THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INCENTIVES PROGRAM'S
COMMUNITY ADVISORY NETWORK
2022 ANNUAL REPORT





Introduction

Nutrition assistance programs keep Washington’s overall rates of food insecurity in check, stimulate the economy, and help people with limited income purchase food and pay bills.

Addressing issues like systemic racism, the continued impacts of historic redlining, and limited access to nutrient dense foods in lower-income communities has better prepared Washington to offer resources to households that need help.

In Washington, the Department of Health’s [Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program](#) (FVIP) and Department of Social and Health Services’ (DSHS) [SNAP-Ed Program](#) support people who are eligible for, or use, SNAP in accessing healthy foods and being physically active.

Community Advisory Network

The Community Advisory Network (CAN) is made up of Washingtonians who use SNAP benefits. They provide input and share first-person expertise that shapes FVIP and SNAP-Ed’s program development. The network began in 2021 through a partnership with Northwest Harvest and the Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program. The early success of the network resulted in an opportunity for CAN to provide community input to SNAP-Ed, another state program.

The SNAP-Ed program is administered by DSHS to increase the likelihood that people who are eligible for SNAP make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and federal food guidance. In 2022, SNAP-Ed joined FVIP in contracting with Northwest Harvest to coordinate the Community Advisory Network (CAN).

You can read more about the network’s history, founding principles, and values in the [2021 inaugural report](#). This 2022 Annual Report shares:

- CAN activities during 2022,
- demographic representation of our members,
- a summary of our major activities, and
- recommendations.

CAN’s Demographic Representation

in 2022, CAN membership consisted of 12 people throughout Washington state.
(Members live in King County, Snohomish County, Stevens County, Ferry County, Yakima County, Whatcom County, and Cowlitz County.)

In a self-identified survey:

- Four members identify as male and eight members identify as female
- 25% of members identify as a Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC)
- Two members live with seniors
- Seven members live with children under the age of 18



Major Activities for 2022

Advised the SNAP-Ed Program on development of a new contracting and implementation structure.

SNAP-Ed began reimagining its model for implementing programming across the state in 2022. DSHS provided two presentations to CAN about SNAP-Ed's current implementation model, and the strengths and weaknesses within it. CAN members provided guidance on how best to contract with statewide and local agencies to implement programming. Members recommended DSHS reduce the number of direct contracts it holds

with SNAP-Ed providers, and contract with a small number of Implementing Agencies to oversee work across the state.

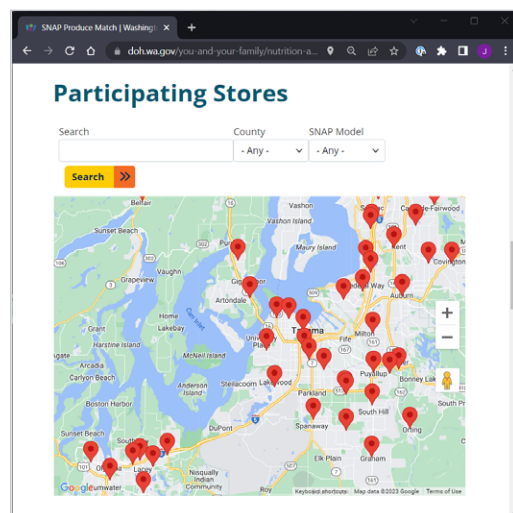
They emphasized the importance that SNAP-Ed Implementing Agencies prioritize strengthening relationships with and understanding of local communities. Several network members also sat on a procurement evaluation committee to select a contractor for a SNAP-Ed social marketing campaign.

CAN provided feedback for a website update and a paid media campaign for SNAP Produce Match and SNAP Market Match.

The Community Advisory Network reviewed and provided suggestions for a statewide marketing campaign during the summer of 2022. This kicked off the largest campaign for SNAP Produce Match and SNAP Market Match to-date. It included:

- direct mailers to SNAP households,
- social media and online advertisements, and
- radio and newspaper advertisements in priority communities.

CAN members provided feedback on how to design program websites to best explain how the program works at different locations. Their input led to the creation of a searchable map and webpage restructuring.



CAN informed the expansion of SNAP Market Match to food hubs and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs.

FVIP began planning for program expansion to include in an upcoming federal grant application in 2022. FVIP already works with most farmers markets that accept SNAP benefits to also offer SNAP Market Match, so further expansion of the program through farmers markets is limited.

One way to increase the availability of SNAP Market Match is to work with more direct-to-consumer

outlets like through food hubs and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. Members believed that offering SNAP Market Match through these programs would especially benefit Eastern Washington residents, as fewer farmers markets and farm stands are available to use SNAP Market Match in this region.

CAN supported planning for the Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Accessibility Pilot Project.

The Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Accessibility Pilot Project is a joint effort between DOH and DSHS to pilot putting incentives for SNAP participants onto the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. This will ideally make using incentive programs easier to use, more equitable, improve program efficiency, and

maximize the amount of funding going directly to SNAP participant benefits. Three CAN members participated in a steering committee for the pilot project. Steering committee members supported the program model that will be piloted in 2023 with select grocery stores and farmers market vendors.

CAN members shared first-person experiences about food participation.

All advocacy participation is funded by Northwest Harvest. No state funding is used to compensate participation in advocacy.

One CAN member participated in the Farm Bill House Agriculture Committee Listening Session in Carnation, WA. Washington Congresswoman Kim Schrier co-hosted the event, to provide an opportunity for the Committee to learn more about Washington's needs and ideas for policy changes

in the Farm Bill. The CAN member shared their personal story to illustrate how the minimum SNAP benefit, which is most often paid to low-income seniors and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes from Social Security, is too low to afford basic, adequate nutrition. ▼

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I know how crucial it is for people who are actively experiencing food insecurity to provide input with legislators and policymakers. The work itself motivates me. I contribute my experience and have started to see small changes in the system.

– CAN Member

Another CAN member traveled to Washington D.C. to March in the Poor People's Campaign as part of a nationwide movement for change. This member described the event as life changing. They gathered with advocates from across the state and participated in storytelling events to share the challenges people in poverty face every day.

Another member participated in a listening session with Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Kim Schrier in preparation for the White House Conference on Hunger, Health, and Nutrition. Community members shared innovative solutions for creating structural change to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases in this listening session. ►

With input from CAN members, Northwest Harvest made comments during the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Some concerns highlighted in the comments were immediate changes versus long-term structural changes in food systems. Also of concern was food access in rural areas. Geographically isolated communities are significantly impacted by availability and accessibility of food. One CAN member lives 54 miles to the nearest grocery store, through a mountain pass that can be unexpectedly closed during the winter months. This limits their ability to find and buy fresh produce, access sale items, and buy food in bulk. This is one of many factors illustrating that nutrition is influenced much more by affordability and access of food, rather than the common narrative of personal choice.



[This experience] gives me the chance to argue or debate with compassion. With the Community Advisory Network, I feel like I'm given a spot at a table where people will actually listen to me and not blow me off. It's easy to feel like my ideas or opinions aren't being considered in other spaces. Each time we meet, at least one of us will say something that will help make a difference.

— CAN Member

Looking Ahead

Over the next year, CAN members commit to sharing their lived experience and expertise with FVIP and SNAP-Ed. Future plans include:

- » Providing input on FVIP's plan to recruit more grocery stores to offer SNAP Produce Match.
- » Continuing to share feedback on the SNAP-Ed model of statewide implementation.
- » Participating in the formation of the SNAP-Ed federal fiscal year 2024–26 three-year-plan.



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