

Long Live Idaho!: Lessons Learned from a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Social Marketing Campaign

Social marketing in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) programs may enhance circulation of evidence-based guidelines and has potential to change communities and promote healthy living. Idaho's SNAP-Ed program worked with the Idaho Healthy Eating Active Living Network and 43 community partners to promote "Long Live Idaho!," a campaign targeting parents and caregivers of young children. The 5-2-1-Almost None messages were delivered through print posters, social media, radio ads, and billboards. Lessons learned about development, implementation, evaluation, and efficacy of a social media campaign provide insight into best practices and recommendations for future campaigns.

BEST PRACTICES

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has defined health marketing as “creating, communicating, and delivering health information and interventions using consumer-centered and science-based strategies to protect and promote the health of diverse populations” (Bernhardt, 2006). Marketing can be used to improve the environment of our communities in evidence-based ways. Using social marketing techniques to improve targeted distribution of evidence-based guidelines may contribute to positive environmental changes and facilitate healthy behaviors among a specific target audience (Maibach et al., 2006). The Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) has the capacity to use social marketing to reinforce health messages and provide widespread exposure through SNAP-Ed community partner networks.

Idaho’s Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Network assembled a taskforce in 2015 to develop standardized health messages to reach low-income parents and caregivers of young children across Idaho and promote healthy diet and physical activity behaviors. This group was led by Eat Smart Idaho, a University of Idaho Extension program funded in part by the USDA SNAP-Ed. SNAP-Ed uses evidence-based

programming to teach audiences with low-resources the importance of a healthy diet and physical activity. Eat Smart Idaho’s overall programming has been reviewed and determined exempt by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (IRB#14-322). Eat Smart Idaho contracted with third party marketing agencies to develop and evaluate the Long Live Idaho campaign and received de-identified or summary data only. All human subject protections for the data reported in this manuscript were maintained by the marketing agencies. The results of this campaign were previously shared with Idaho stakeholders internally through a University of Idaho Extension Impact Statement (Morrisroe-Aman et al., 2019).

PURPOSE

The objective of this article is to impart lessons learned and experiences gained in developing and evaluating a social marketing campaign for SNAP-Ed audiences. The results from the Long Live Idaho! campaign will be discussed to provide insight into best practices for development, implementation, and evaluation of a SNAP-Ed social marketing campaign.

BACKGROUND

Campaign development began with focus groups to develop evidence-based health and wellness messages, designed, and tested for SNAP-Ed audiences. Health behaviors, awareness of the “5-2-1-0 guidelines,” and perceptions and responses to previous social marketing health campaigns were determined via focus groups conducted in 2015 by a third-party marketing agency. Adult participants were recruited from a Head Start center that serves rural migrant families and a Boys and Girls

Club in an urban setting. One focus group was conducted at the Community Council of Idaho among Spanish-speaking participants (n=9). A second focus group was conducted with English-speaking participants (n=9) at a Boys and Girls Club.

The Healthy Lifestyles Messaging committee of the Idaho HEAL Network selected a brand identity and logo, developed by social impact branding agency Idaho, for the campaign. The “Long Live Idaho!” logo was selected and the finalized messaging concepts were based on the “5-2-1-Almost None nutrition and physical activity guidelines for children” (Rogers & Motyka, 2009). The Idaho HEAL committee and Eat Smart Idaho worked together to draft short and long messages to go along with the “5-2-1-Almost None guidelines,” with USDA’s Food and Nutrition Services making small edits and approving the final messages: (5) “Feed your kids a rainbow – Serve 5 fruits and veggies a day;” (2) “Playtime, not screen time – Cut screen time to 2 hours or less a day;” (1) “Kids grow best in motion – Encourage 1 hour of physical activity a day;” (Almost None) “Water is just fine, thanks – Serve water or low-fat milk instead of soda.” Both English and Spanish marketing materials were created, including digital and print artwork, social media posts, roadside billboards (English), and public service announcements (shared on both Tribal and Spanish radio stations). The official launch of the campaign occurred in May 2016 at the “Idaho Public Health, Collaborating for Health Conference.”

Eat Smart Idaho as well as other organizations and agencies who serve SNAP eligible audiences targeted SNAP eligible families and communities, with adults being the primary target and children and community secondary. Sub-groups of the target audience included low-income Hispanic and Native American adults, children, and communities. Federal poverty statistics and census tract data were used to identify counties and neighborhoods with high percentages of poverty. Messages were also placed at categorically eligible sites such as WIC, Head Start, schools with 50% or greater free and reduced lunch participation rates, low-income health clinics, community centers, and retail sites that accept SNAP and WIC benefits.

Community organizations and agencies were contacted through the Idaho HEAL network and invited to participate in the campaign by downloading the campaign toolkit and marketing materials available on the Long Live Idaho! website. When downloading the materials, partners agreed to follow the campaign

toolkit protocol. This involved a schedule for the roll-out of each message along with a request for reach data to be provided for each message. Several organizations partnered with Eat Smart Idaho to promote the campaign materials, including the Idaho Department of Education, the Idaho WIC office, Idaho Head Start, local Community Action Partnership agencies, Idaho Farmers Market Association, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Boys and Girls Clubs, community centers, hospitals, and emergency food pantries.

FINDINGS

Partners reported estimated reach numbers quarterly, by responding to an electronic survey administered through Survey Monkey (Survey Monkey Inc., San Mateo, California, USA). No personally identifying information was collected on the survey. Reach was reported by 43 partnering organizations. The first two messages were promoted in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016. Through print posters, social media and billboards, message 1 (“Feed your kids a rainbow”) reached an estimated 388,141 individuals in FFY2016 quarter three. In FFY2016 quarter four, message 2 (“Play time, not screen time”) reached an estimated 386,596 individuals. Messages 1 and 2 remained displayed in FFY2017, with messages 3 (“Kids grow best in motion”) and 4 (“Water is just fine, thanks”) added and promoted during this period. An estimated 215,717 SNAP-Ed participants were reached by the Long Live Idaho! messages in quarters one and two of FFY2017. The difference in reach between the four messages was attributed to partners not reporting reach on all messages equally. The majority of partners (85%) reported sharing the messages primarily in early childcare facilities and food assistance sites through use of printed materials, including posters, flyers, fact sheets, pamphlets, activity books, banners, postcards, recipe cards, and newsletters.

At the end of the campaign, a third-party marketing firm was contracted to administer online surveys (via Survey Monkey) to partners (n=20) and the target audience (n=55), as well as conduct an in-person focus group (n=5) to evaluate effectiveness of the campaign, participation by partners, and to identify areas of improvement for the next round of the campaign. Additionally, the strength of the HEAL Messaging committee was evaluated using the Levels of Collaboration Scale (1=Networking, 2=Cooperation, 3=Coordination, 4=Coalition, 5=Collaboration) (Frey et

al., 2006).

Target audience recognition of the campaign is shown in Table 1. About 40% of the target audience who responded to the survey recognized the campaign images and messages. Of those who recognized the messages, most viewed them on posters at schools, daycares, or health care facilities. Table 2 summarizes the effectiveness of the campaign in reaching the target audience. On average, 52% of respondents agreed that the messages improved their awareness of healthy eating and active living habits for young children. The target audience found the campaign designs attractive (average 52%) and engaging (average 57%). Only about 7% of respondents did not think the campaign designs were effective. One common critique by both partners and the target audience was that the font was difficult to read, and a few respondents had negative responses to the image used in the English “Water is Just Fine, Thanks” and “Play Time, Not Screen Time” posters. Respondents thought the image of a child drinking out of the faucet was messy and did not reinforce lessons about using a cup that were being taught in childcare settings. Respondents felt that the play time image was too affluent and did not resonate well with the target audience. Overall, respondents commented on a need for more diversity in the campaign. However, most respondents said a campaign like this does influence their shopping and nutrition choices, with 95% stating campaigns like this are important.

Personnel capability and time, awareness, and not feeling connected with Eat Smart Idaho were all reasons given by partners who originally signed up for the campaign, but then did not participate. Those who did participate primarily promoted the messages via posters, followed by verbal promotion, social media, and email. When partners were asked how they posted the messages (posters and digital), 46% indicated that they followed the toolkit guidelines and posted one message at a time, 36% hung them all at once, and 9% added messages to the display one at a time, ending with all four displayed.

The partner survey showed that 55% of respondents recalled viewing the campaign billboards and 18% remembered hearing the campaign messages on Spanish radio. Most partners estimated that less than 10% of their clientele saw the campaign and only 10% reported to have observed a reaction to the campaign from their clientele. Partners reported that the “Kids Grow Best in Motion” poster was the most impactful to clientele, with 90% reporting a positive impact, and the

“Water is Just Fine, Thanks” poster the least impactful, with 78% reporting a positive impact.

All levels of collaboration were reported among partners, with the average rating falling between cooperation and coordination, indicating partners provided and shared information and resources with one another, had somewhat defined to defined roles, partook in formal and frequent communication, and made independent as well as shared decisions.

DISCUSSION

Lessons learned from the Long Live Idaho! campaign can be divided into four areas: media outlets, partnership relationships and protocol, messaging reception, and assessment needs. These lessons learned can then be applied to provide insights into best practices for developing social marketing campaigns for SNAP-Ed audiences.

MEDIA OUTLETS

A marketing assessment conducted prior to development of the campaign identified billboards, posters, and (Spanish) radio as key outlets for reaching our identified target audience. Informal positive feedback was received on the billboards. This was a costly endeavor and challenging to evaluate the impact on the target audience. It was also challenging to identify a Spanish radio station that met the criteria for targeting the SNAP-eligible audience. Evaluation of the billboards and radio spots was not included in the formal evaluation of the campaign.

PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS AND PROTOCOL

One of the strengths identified in this campaign was the inclusion of multi-sector partnerships. This was identified as one way that strengthened dissemination and increased reach of the messages. However, in surveying partners to identify challenges and successes with displaying the messages, it became clear that the protocol for dissemination and timelines for data gathering had not been communicated clearly. While the protocol was presented up-front, once partners signed up to join the campaign, they were left to implement the project on their own. The project may have benefited from an on-going communication plan to connect regularly with partners and offer technical assistance and support.

MESSAGING RECEPTION

Based on partner and target audience feedback, specific strategies to strengthen the Long Live Idaho! campaign included minor design adjustments, a targeted landing page or website, digital advertising, marketing on Facebook and Instagram, a robust social media and online marketing plan, sharing prompts to facilitate organic social media content, and more options for printed materials. Eat Smart Idaho worked with the Idaho HEAL Messaging Committee to identify three areas (design modifications, website/landing page, and more printed materials) to address with the relaunch of the campaign in Federal Fiscal Year 2019 (FFY19). New graphics were chosen to replace the images that were not well received by the target audience and partners in the FFY17-18 evaluation, a non-cursive font was chosen to improve legibility, and a website was added to posters where the audience can go for more information. Posters were formatted in several different sizes, per feedback from partners.

ASSESSMENT NEEDS

The first round of the Long Live Idaho! campaign achieved the goal of increasing awareness. However, the campaign did not include a call to action, or a landing page for the target audience to go to for more information on how to apply the healthy eating and active living messages. In addition, while reach of the campaign was assessed quarterly, the evaluation of the efficacy of the campaign was not evaluated until well after the campaign ended. Future campaigns should include ongoing assessment of the target audience.

BEST PRACTICES

This article describes one method that other SNAP-Ed implementing agencies can put into practice when developing social marketing campaigns for SNAP-Ed audiences. First, the campaign committee needs to be organized, and the general message topics determined. That topic can be further defined using focus groups and other evaluation methods drawn out of the targeted audience. While focus groups with the target audience were used to develop the Long Live Idaho! campaign, others have found it valuable to also include interviews (Parker et al., 2011) and focus groups with Cooperative Extension Agents (Hagues et al., 2018).

As is best practice for all SNAP-Ed programming, when developing a social marketing campaign, it is important to have evidenced-based messages, designed and

tested for a specific audience. Conducting focus groups with the target audience can help to ensure that the types of images and messaging text will resonate with the audience. In contrast to other social marketing campaigns, which utilized shock value and negative messaging (Puhl et al., 2013), it was important to USDA Food and Nutrition Services and to our Idaho HEAL Committee to focus this campaign on positive messages and images. This was also the driving factor behind changing the 5-2-1-0 previously used to 5-2-1-Almost None. It is important for SNAP-Ed programs and researchers to consider using positive messages and images in their programming and research.

During the campaign development period, a specific protocol should be developed for partners to follow, to ensure the messaging given out through partners aligns with the specific message language as defined by the campaign. This includes a plan to clearly communicate the protocol with the partners at the launch of the campaign as well as a plan for ongoing communication with partners throughout the implementation and evaluation of the messages. Gaining partner buy-in at the beginning to understand the importance of following protocol and committing to the evaluation of the campaign is key in being able to provide feedback on efficacy and cost effectiveness to the funding agency.

Once the partner protocol and messages have been developed, the implementation of message dissemination can begin. Throughout the implementation period, continued and frequent communication with the partners can help to ensure protocol is being followed and program fidelity is maintained. Regular communication can also be used to facilitate continual evaluation of the messaging campaign. Continual evaluation should include assessing reach and perceptions of the target audience as well to assess behavior change or application of the messages by the target audience, such as intercept interviews. Others have had success in utilizing telephone interviews to assess behavior change of SNAP recipients in response to a multilevel media intervention promoting low-fat milk (Finnell & John, 2018). To improve chances of positive behavior change, implementing agencies should consider layering messaging campaigns with other educational programming (Dunneram & Jeewon, 2015) as well as having a website/landing page where participants can go for more tips on applying the social marketing messages. After a pre-determined time, messages should be re-evaluated to determine if they are meeting

the desired needs, modify as needed, and re-implement the new modifications.

The integration of a social marketing campaign into SNAP-Ed programming is an effective way to reach SNAP eligible audiences as it allows extensive exposure to healthy messages and reinforces those behaviors to promote positive behavior changes. Lessons learned about the development, implementation, evaluation, and efficacy of Long Live Idaho! may assist in the future development of social marketing campaigns designed to reach SNAP-Ed audiences. The strength of multi sector partnerships as well as an open and ready mindset to adjust campaign visuals for better reception were identified. Protocol for dissemination and evaluation, a clear timeline to enhance reception, and an ongoing communication plan have been cited as lessons learned. These lessons learned may point to emerging practices to overcome barriers and increase SNAP-Ed program effectiveness to optimize impact.



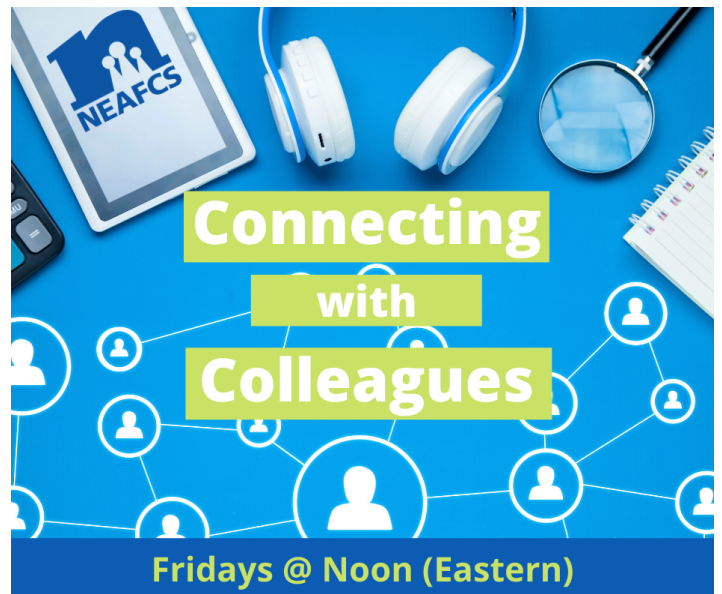
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Table 1*Target Audience Campaign Recognition*

Frequency % of respondents ¹	“Water is just fine, thanks”	“Feed your kids a rainbow”	“Kids grow best in motion”	“Play time, not screen time”	Overall Campaign Average
Recognized the campaign message	42%	37%	40%	40%	40%
Viewed message on social media	52%	60%	55%	59%	57%
Viewed message on roadside billboards	17%	25%	14%	14%	18%
Viewed message on posters ²	52%	70%	73%	68%	66%

1. Total sample size = 55; respondents who recognized the campaign message were then asked where they saw the message.

2. Posters were placed in schools, daycare facilities, and health care facilities

Table 2*Target Audience Opinions on Campaign Effectiveness*

Frequency % of respondents ¹	“Water is just fine, thanks”	“Feed your kids a rainbow”	“Kids grow best in motion”	“Play time, not screen time”	Overall Campaign Average
Message improved awareness of healthy eating and active living habits for young children	50%	52%	52%	54%	52%
Considered the message material informative	49%	42%	51%	47%	47%
Considered the message material attractive	40%	62%	55%	51%	52%
Considered the message material engaging	45%	62%	58%	62%	57%
Considered the message material helpful	35%	29%	27%	36%	32%
Considered the message material motivating	38%	44%	49%	56%	47%
Did not consider the message material effective	7%	5%	13%	4%	7%

1. N=55