

SNAP E&T: Incorporating Participant Voice in Continuous Improvement for Program Design

October 12th, 2022

Housekeeping

- Update your name: First Name, Last Name & Organization
- Mute mics when not speaking (feel free to use the chat box to comment or ask questions)
- Recording and slides will be sent in a follow-up email and available online

Agenda

- Welcome and Housekeeping, NAWB
- Why and How You Should Engage Participants, Third Sector Capital Partners
 - With guest speaker Samra Haider, President of Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)
- Q&A
- Closing & Announcements



Network Session 2

Incorporating Participant Voice In Continuous Improvement for Program Design

October 2022

Third Sector Team

Background: Third Sector is a national nonprofit technical assistance organization that helps government agencies to reshape their programs, systems, and services toward better outcomes for all people regardless of their race, background, or circumstance.

TEAM

Team Member(s)



Chelsea Haley
Manager

chaley@thirdsectorcap.org

"This work is important to me, because I have used CalFresh (SNAP) while studying and working part-time in graduate school. These benefits were critical in helping me focus on graduating and securing a great job (at Third Sector)."



Debra Solomon
Director

dsolomon@thirdsectorcap.org

When I worked in San Francisco local government, some of our strongest employees came through job training programs connected to SNAP and TANF. Everyone deserves a chance at a good job.

Agenda

- ***Why and how should you talk to participants in SNAP E&T and other workforce programs***
- Guest speaker: Samra Haider, President of Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)
- Community engagement steps & examples

Now is the time to think deeply about expanding access to and improving quality of SNAP E&T programs



Not everyone who is eligible for SNAP E&T is enrolled. In 2017, 1 in 4 of the participants eligible for SNAP E&T were enrolled (which a higher concentration in mandatory states)- (*Mathematica, 2017*)

The current need

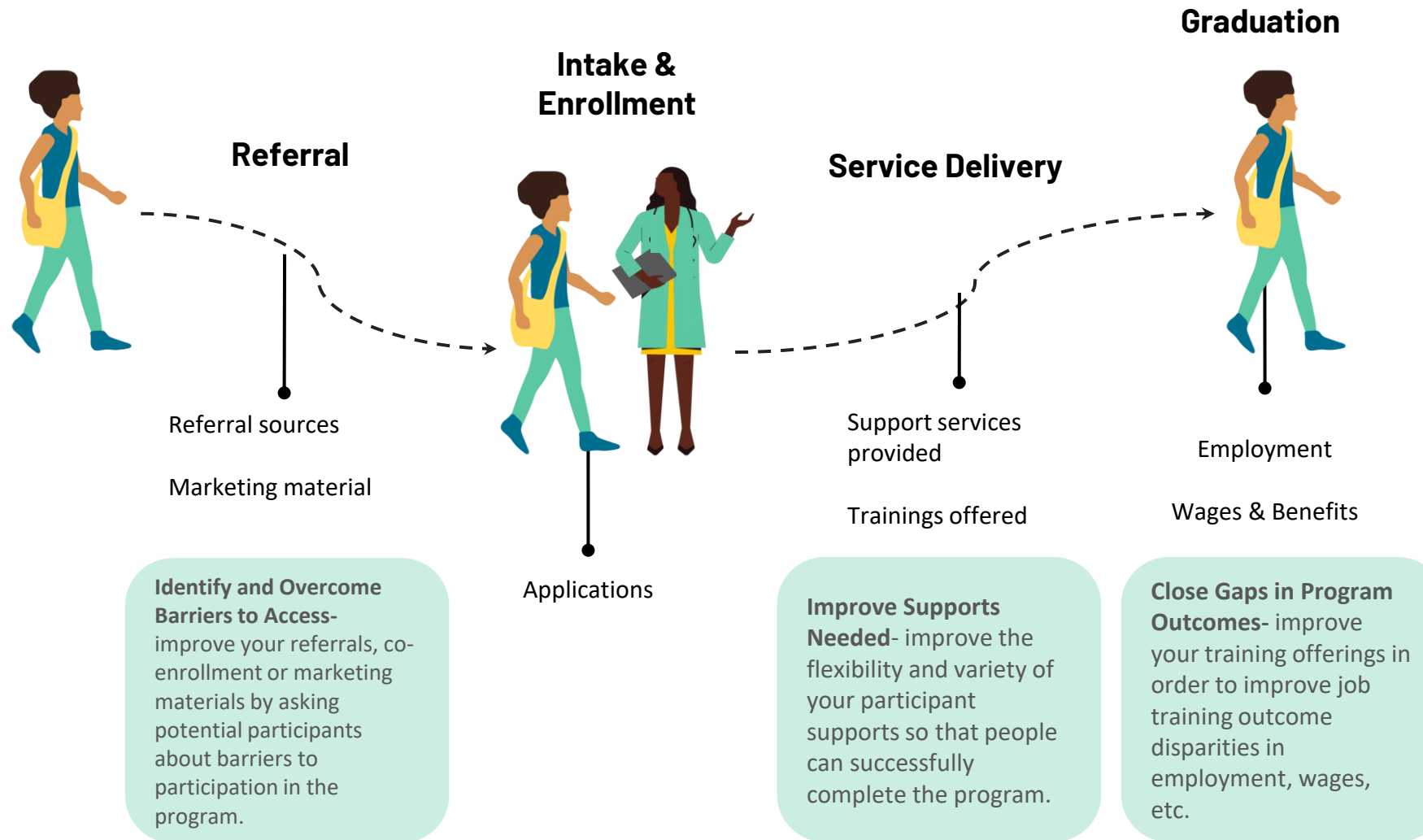
The Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are working with states to develop, improve, and expand SNAP E&T programs. They have increased their national and regional SNAP E&T staff in the last two years.

Since Covid and its economic effects- people are looking for high quality jobs that pay well and provide benefits like health insurance.



Now is the time to think about expanding and improving programs! SNAP E&T states with mandated work requirements are about to end their COVID waivers and will experience a surge in participants- putting pressure on them to produce a high quality training. State with **voluntary SNAP E&T programs** that have lower participation rates may be thinking about expanding access to the program or improving it to attract new populations.

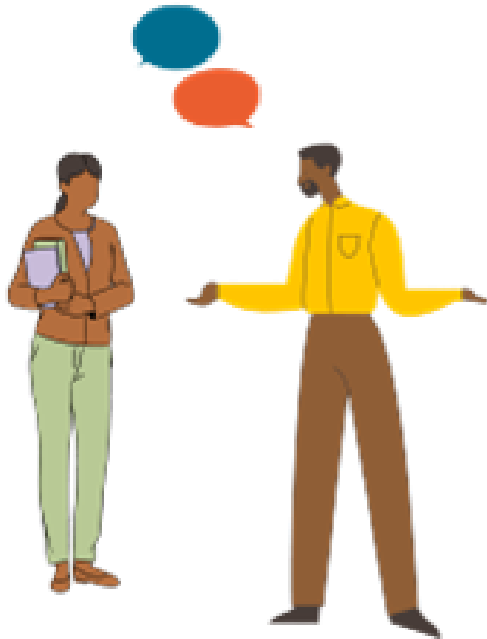
Every step in the participant or potential participant experience is an opportunity to improve



Engaging potential, current and former customers not only provides an opportunity for WDBs to learn but also to support the building of participant's workforce skills

“When input from the population who will be most impacted is considered during policy/program design and implementation, the outcome is much more likely to be successful”

- (*Center for Science of Public Interest*)



Customer-informed service design shifts power into the hands of customers and through customer engagement you can further build their ability to advocate for themselves, articulate needs, and engage strategic thinking about what is needed to move forward professionally, all of which better prepares them for the workforce.

Agenda

- Why talk to SNAP E&T potential customers
- ***Guest speaker: Samra Haider, President of Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)***
- Community engagement steps & examples



Center for
Employment
Opportunities



Guest Speaker:
President of Center for Employment
Opportunities (CEO)

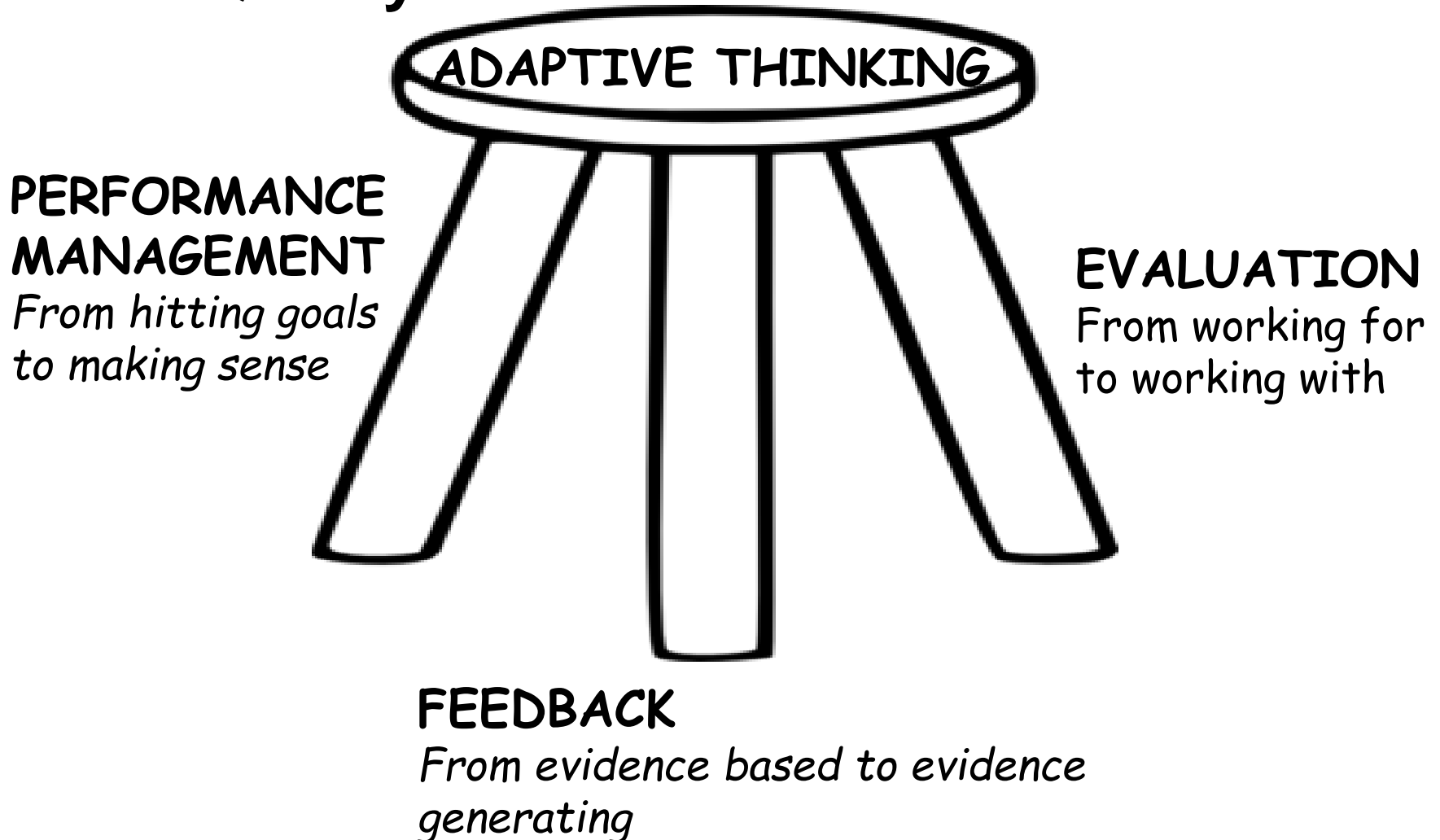
Samra Haider



ceo

CEO's Participant Feedback Work

How does CEO Ensure Program Quality?





CEO's TOC on Feedback

IF CEO:

- ❑ **Collects high quality feedback** from participants consistently, and
- ❑ **Closes feedback loops** through routine dialogue and inquiry, and
- ❑ **Responds to feedback** in a timely, flexible, and appropriate manner.

THEN:

- ❑ Participants will **feel heard** and levels of trust in CEO will increase,
- ❑ Participant levels of **program engagement** will rise,
- ❑ Participant **vocational outcomes** will improve.

Feedback Channels at CEO



SMS Text
Surveys



Feedback
Groups



1 on 1
#feedback



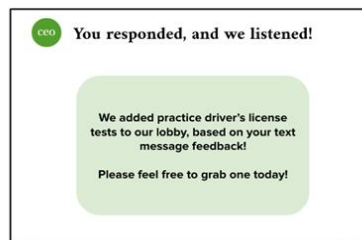
Anonymous
Tablet Survey



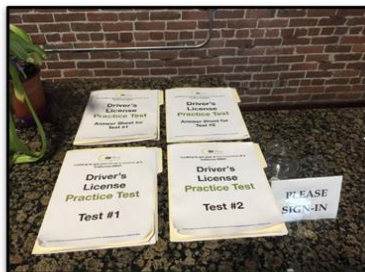
Digital PTS
App



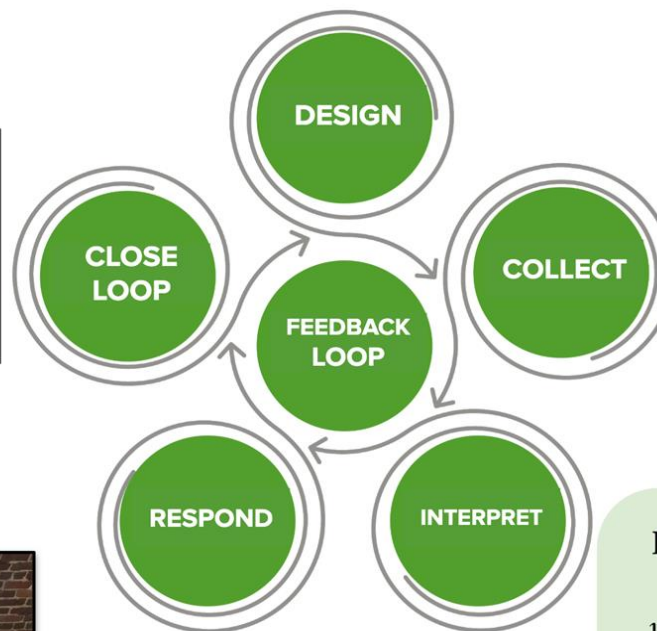
Participant Voice Process at CEO



Lobby TV slideshow



Practice DL tests



Participant SMS feedback:

"Another thing that I believe would be a tremendous asset to both CEO and your clients would be a program/class or something of the sort that would help clients obtain their license."

22



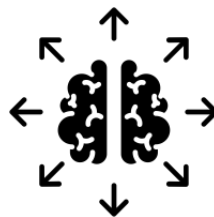
Key Considerations



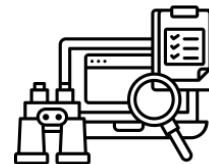
Sequencing
your questions
and the
“moment of
truth”



Anonymity &
“Courtesy
Bias”



Question
format



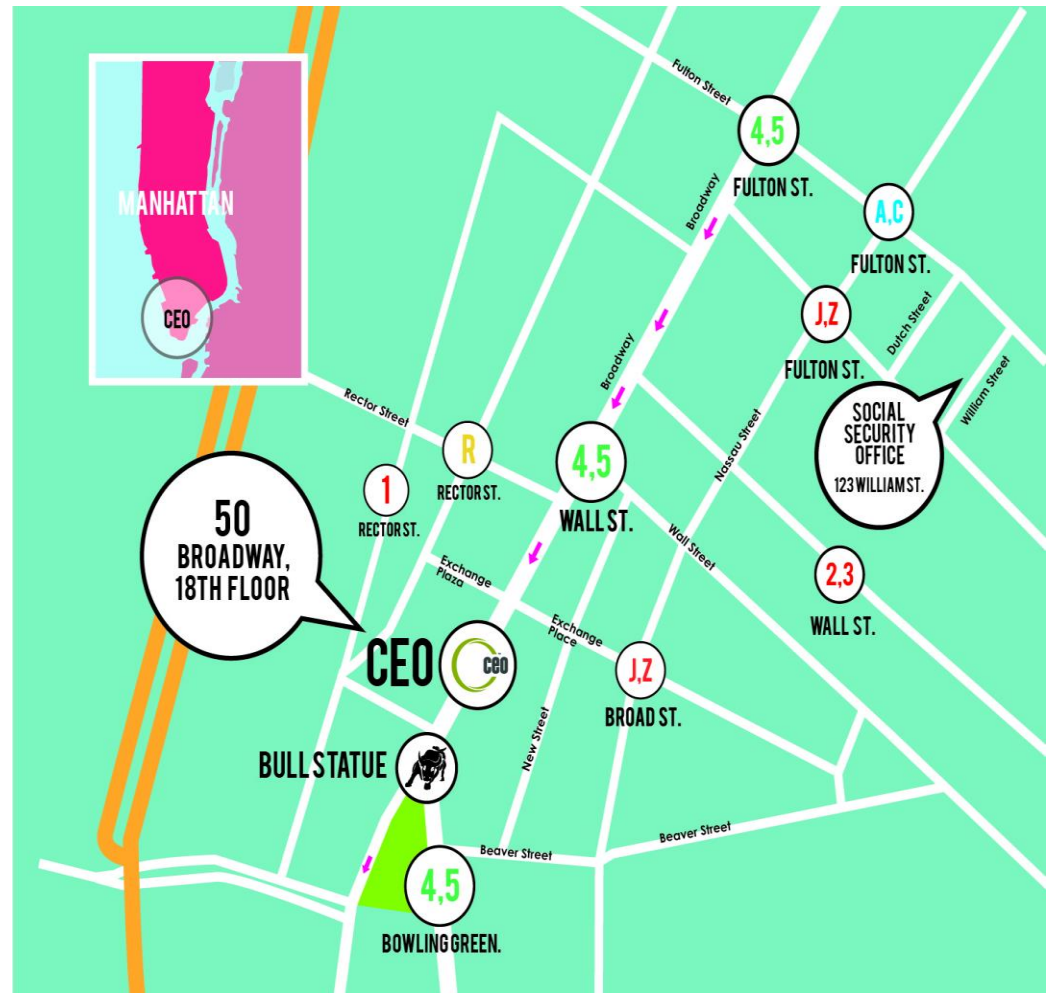
Structuring
answers to
make analysis
easy



Asking with
the intention of
acting

Making Changes Based on Feedback

It can be hard to find CEO if you're new to the program, so we made a **map** to give out at parole with local landmarks and subway stops.



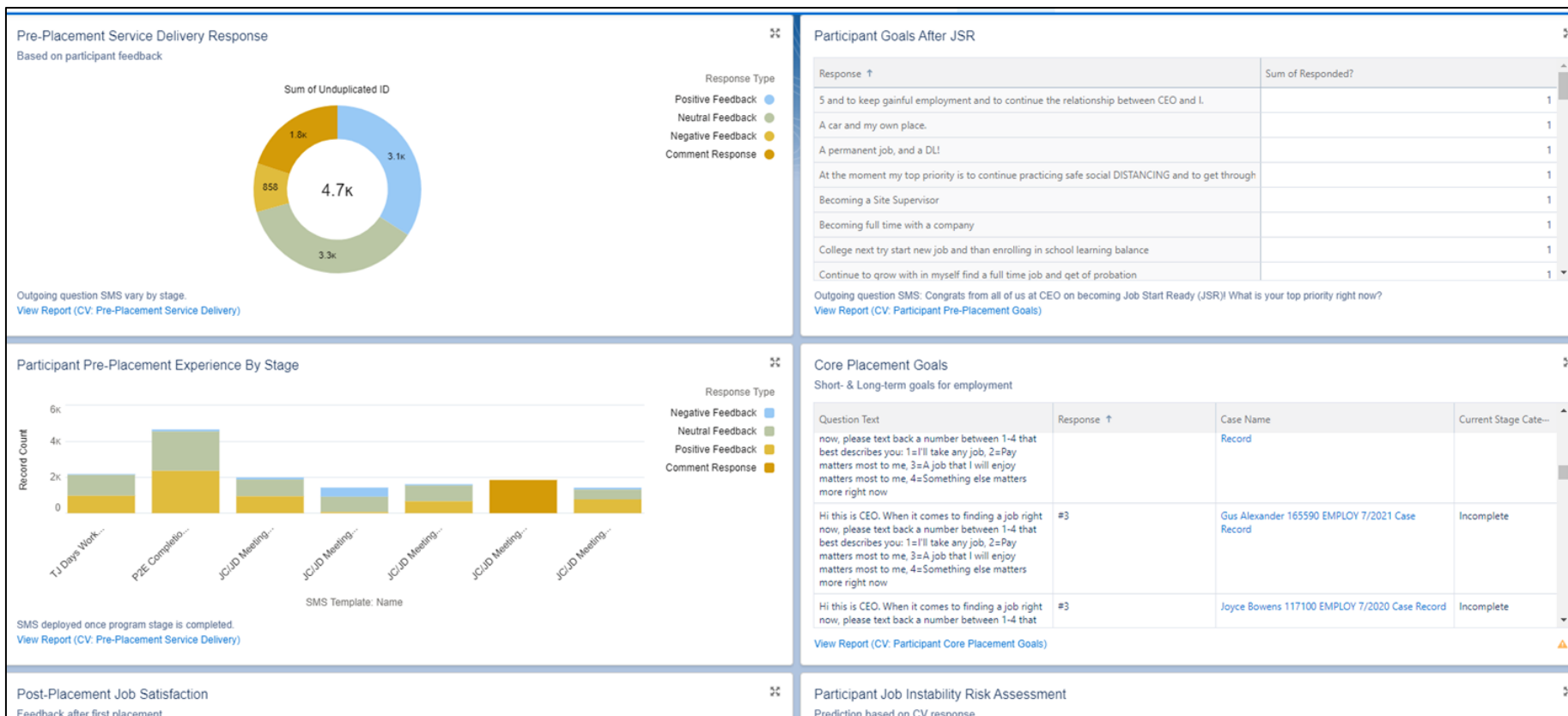
Making Changes Based on Feedback

Getting up on
Fridays to be at
CEO at **7am** can
be difficult, so we
moved the start
time of
Orientation to
8am





Monitoring Feedback



SNAP Advocacy Story Highlights

E&T for CEO

Participants

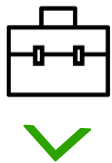
CEO is a SNAP E&T 50% partner in all 12 states we operate in. Voluntary SNAP E&T is a critical resource for those returning home from incarceration, providing:

FOOD



Food security during reentry is a basic need

EMPLOYMENT



Access to job training through SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Third-Party Partners like CEO

SUPPORT



Additional support via 50% reimbursement for transportation costs, licenses, and certifications



Christopher Oaks
Former CEO OKC
Participant

“SNAP gave me the freedom to focus on my future.”

For individuals returning from incarceration, financial support is needed immediately. Without my SNAP benefits, I hate to imagine what life would have been like for me coming home. I never want to be in that position of desperation.



Participant-Driven SNAP/E&T Advocacy

CEO centers participants in advocacy via advocacy councils, roundtables, 1v1 meetings, and direct lawmaker engagement

Eligibility

- Remove drug conviction ban in remaining states
- Allow SNAP access while living in a halfway house



Transitional Job Wages

- Disregard TJ wages from SNAP countable income



Access

- Assist with Application
- Assist with recertification and reporting



CEO advocates for SNAP policy change so individuals may successfully achieve employment and access to economic mobility.

SNAP Advocacy by Isaac, Detroit

Isaac completed commercial driver license training while enrolled in CEO Detroit. This training allowed him access to a higher-earning career fitting of his skills.



"If it weren't for CEO paying me daily, I wouldn't have had any money to eat," he says. "I was very blessed to have the funds to take care of myself; it helped tremendously."

Isaac feels that SNAP benefits should be provided throughout reentry, as you live in transitional housing, and as you find your permanent home and earn a temporary wage with a SNAP Employment & Training partner, like CEO.



SNAP Advocacy by Christopher, OKC

Christopher led a roundtable when Representative Stephanie Bice came to CEO-OKC. Now he works for a CBO assisting individuals with housing.



“Coming out of prison and immediately receiving SNAP benefits, in addition to my daily income from CEO; that was a game-changer for me. I don’t know what I would’ve done without it.”

Christopher insists that having SNAP, along with fundamental job skills training through CEO, a SNAP Employment & Training partner in Oklahoma, ultimately allowed him to advance to permanent, full-time employment, and accordingly higher earned wages.

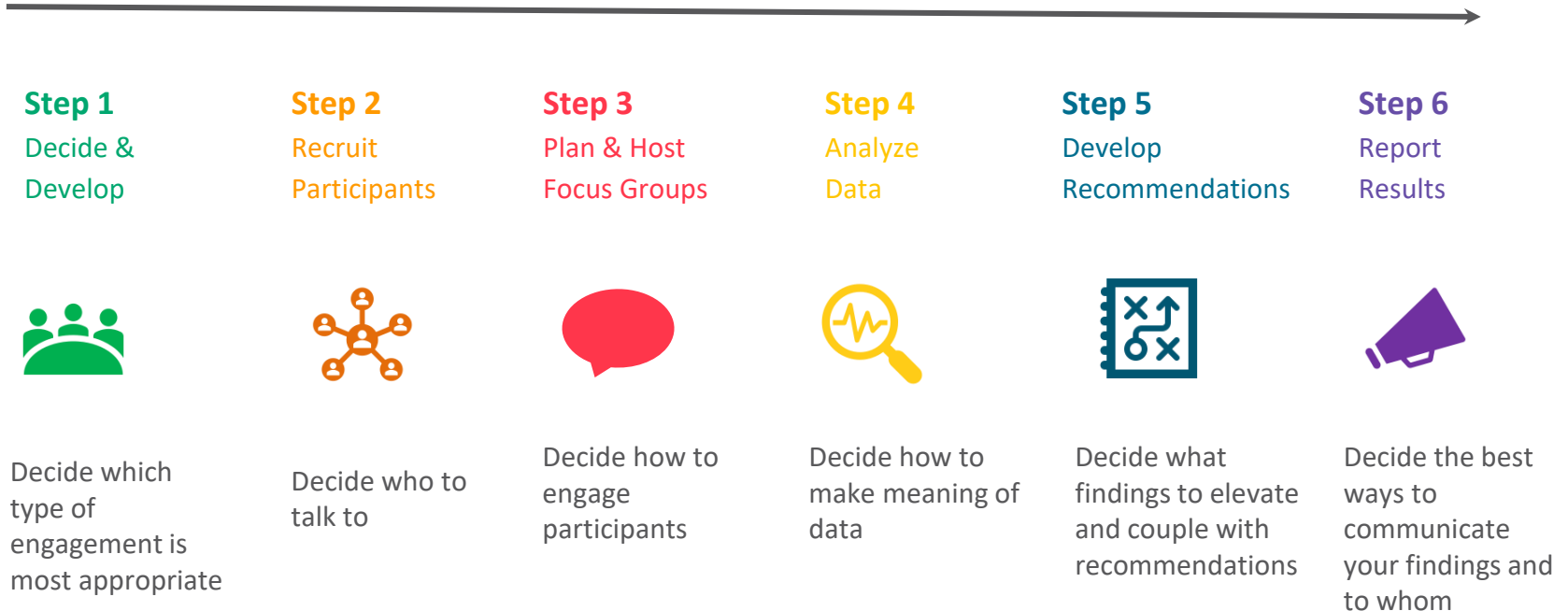
Agenda

- Why talk to SNAP E&T potential customers
- Guest speaker: Samra Haider, President of Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)
- ***Community engagement steps & examples***

Conducting participant engagement requires a series of steps

Stakeholder engagement steps

Approach: The process of engaging stakeholders can leave participants feeling well compensated for their expertise, better self-confidence that their opinions are valuable and truly made a difference, and that they gained new leadership and skill development opportunities that will better prepare them for the workforce.



Decide & Develop: Decide which type of engagement is most appropriate

Step 1



Types of engagement

In-Depth Interviews

Pros:

- ✓ More accurate view of a person's goals and experiences
- ✓ More likely to reveal insights into sensitive topics or controversial feelings

Cons:

- ✗ More costly and time consuming to engage more people
- ✗ More likely to need to cancel due to no-shows

Focus Groups

Pros:

- ✓ Takes advantages of group dynamics (spontaneous communication, inspiration, or musing between participants) to reveal conflicting views or new themes
- ✓ Less costly way to confirm ideas

Cons:

- ✗ Offers participants less time to speak
- ✗ Time speaking is typically unbalanced
- ✗ May reinforce social hierarchies and deter certain speakers / topics from coming forward

Note: The appendix includes resources if your organization wants to start with observing rather than engaging customers and potential customers.

Decide & Develop: Example of a questionnaire

Step 1



CASE



Questionnaire sample

Duration: 1.5-2 hours

Focus Group Facilitator Questions

Theme: Young Parent Definition of Success

Rationale: To understand the young parent's vision of success

Question 1: As a parent, what do you see as a successful life for you and your family? What is your vision or how do you picture this?

Follow-up Questions:

- Parent(s):
 - What types of careers or dream jobs are you working towards?
 - What level of income would be comfortable for your family?
 - What skills, training or education will help with your goals?

Recruit Participants: Decide who to talk to

Step 2



Steps for participation selection

	Description	Example
Set inclusion/ exclusion criteria	Who do you want to speak to generally?	<i>people who participated in our workforce training program in the last 3 years</i>
Set stratification categories	What variables might be correlated with disparate outcomes? What characteristics lend to different types of experiences and barriers?	<i>differences in geographic area, length of time in program, completion, race/ethnicity, education level, etc.</i>
Decide number of invitees	Invite 2-4x the number of people you intend to interview to account for attrition	<i>For a focus group of 6, invite 12 people - and consider clustering by identity/ key characteristics</i>

Note: Compensation is key to participation. Giving cash may conflict with funding stipulations or SNAP recipients may fear it will interfere with benefits eligibility- consider gift cards. FNS has issued guidance around providing gift cards for SNAP participants ([link](#)).

Recruitment: Example of a recruitment matrix

Step 2



CASE



Recruitment Matrix Sample

Geographic criteria

		North	South
Program participation criteria	High	Clients with a zip code in northern Santa Cruz who were enrolled in STEP or TEMP for 2/3rd or more of the expected weeks 20 clients	Clients with a zip code in southern Santa Cruz who were enrolled in STEP or TEMP for 2/3rd or more of the expected weeks 20 clients
	Medium/low	Clients with a zip code in northern Santa Cruz who were enrolled in STEP or TEMP for less than 2/3rd of the expected weeks 20 clients	Clients with a zip code in southern Santa Cruz who were enrolled in STEP or TEMP for less than 2/3rd of the expected weeks 20 clients
	Not enrolled	Clients who opted out of enrollment	

Plan & Host Focus Groups: Decide *how* to engage participants

Step 3



Best Practices for Engaging SNAP Participants

Embed empowerment

Be clear what expertise customers bring and how their views and words have the power to change the status quo (informing marketing, program improvement, etc) so that they may offer relevant expertise.

Build up peer facilitators

Train former participants to lead and contribute focus groups for more open and authentic conversation- as well as to build up their resumes and skills for future job prospects

Embrace remote

There are people who will not be able to interact remotely but for those who can, it may be their first time using zoom or other video services- training people on how to use these technologies can help prepare them for interviews and/or future jobs

Protect privacy

All SNAP populations face stigma and it is important to assure them that you will protect their privacy

Note: if you are engaging potential customers be sure to refer them to resources based on the needs that they name- providing a warm hand off.

Host Focus Groups: Example of ice breaker

Step 3



Focus Group Facilitation Samples

Introduction & Icebreaker

Tell us

- your **name**
- how **old you were** when you had your first child

Then, make up a **caption or meme** for this little boy



Can I have a bite of that snack bae?

CASE



Analyze Data: Decide how to make meaning of data

Step 4



Considerations For Data Analysis

Create an analysis plan

Create a plan to analyze each theme and question on the questionnaire

Increase team diversity

Analyze data in teams of people with diverse backgrounds to reduce bias and to identify more patterns

Analyze periodically

Analyze data periodically (e.g. 2-4 times **during** your research) to change the questions to understand emerging themes more clearly, as needed

Look for trends (and lack of)

Establish trends and differences across groups (e.g. identify racial inequities)- noting important things that were only said once or things that went unsaid as areas to dive deeper into.

Analyze the process

Ask people how the focus groups went so the team can improve their engagement skills

Note: Always keep your main research question in mind so not to drift off course. Flag any areas that remain unclear for future exploration.

Analyze Data: Project Example of a data analysis plan

Step 4



CASE



Analysis Plan Sample

Question 1 - Analysis:

- *Frequency of categories of dream jobs most mentioned (Program Components)*
 - *Ex: highest frequencies were construction, service-industry, etc.*
 - *Young mothers were most interested in....*
 - *Black fathers were most interested in....*
 - *Former young parents (over age 30) were most interested in....*
- *Frequency of categories/types of skills, training or education that enable success with examples (Program Components)*
 - *Ex: top skill/class mentioned was financial training such taxes, budgeting, etc.*

Analysis results

Several young parents noted prior interest in the military (possibly due to the prevalence of military bases in South Carolina) but that interest has waned. Currently, most young fathers are focused on the construction sector (e.g., electrician, laborer, or related roles), while young mothers are interested in the medical or education sector (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant, Registered Nurse, or school teacher).

Recommendations: Decide what findings to elevate and couple with recommendations

Step 5



Writing recommendations

Center participant as experts

Local people know what works best in their own community so ground recommendations in solutions offered by focus group participants

Host follow-up sessions

Before finalizing recommendations host follow up sessions to gut check your proposals and to build out recommendations further as needed.

Clear and actionable

Not only should recommendations have a direction connect to findings, they should be actionable and practical

Identify gaps

Identify areas in which more exploration or research is needed.

Note: Make sure to let participants know what changes they informed and how valuable their participation was

Recommendations: Example of recommendations

Step 5



CASE



Recommendations Powerpoint Sample

What we heard from young parents – their vision of success and key challenges to achieving that vision



Vision of Success

- It is 2-generational and whole family
- Jobs that provide quality of life beyond basic needs and help families thrive
- Children meet or exceed social-emotional and cognitive milestones
- Healthy relationships with other caregivers or co-parents
- Parents intrinsically motivated by their children
- Skills such as hopefulness, resilience, and good work ethic are critical
- Support networks (e.g., family members) help with work-life balance



Factors Driving Success

Main findings and recommendations for STEP UP design and implementation

Findings and Recommendations



Childcare

Parents may need childcare in order to pursue employment, education, and training opportunities but they generally don't trust childcare providers. If/when parent are looking to providers, they are looking for those familiar to them, family members, or friends.

Build parents' trust in childcare services by implementing strategies such as: an 'open door policy', more detailed and engaging orientations, education on and adherence to QIRS standards/regulations. **Only refer families to the highest quality providers** – based on QIRS and recommendations from other parents



Healthcare

Young parents, especially those without supportive family members to turn to, are in search of helpful and empathetic maternal, pediatric, and psychiatric health care professionals to support them be the best parent they can be.

Ask parents what medical professionals they would recommend in order to develop a trusted referral list – and help them navigate access to insurance and quality care.

Reporting: Decide the best ways to communicate your findings and to whom

Step 6



Reporting your findings

Connect to overarching vision

The framing of the report should ultimately support the goal of the project (e.g., to design/strengthen programming for SNAP E&T participants).

List your recommendations

Be sure that recommendations are clear, concise, easy to find and tailored to your audience

Highlight quotes

Pick the quotes that reimagine a better way of doing things, highlights the issue or proposes possible solutions

Note: be sure to share findings with participants in a language that is accessible, and being sure to highlight how their expertise helped your understanding and how your organization will do things differently as a result of this engagement.

Reporting: Example of data findings report

Step 6



Recommendations Report Sample

Young Parent Engagement

South Carolina Findings & Recommendations Report | March 2021

Healthcare

Young parents look to medical professionals for advice and support to be the best parent they can be. Young fathers noted the need for **mental health** services for depression, anger management, and help with their partner's postpartum-depression. Young parents - especially those not close to older more experienced family members - often look to **maternal health** professionals and **pediatricians** for health and parenting advice. Parents are looking for reputable and knowledgeable healthcare professionals who welcome questions. Young parents remarked that **parenting and birthing classes** are helpful resources (particularly for first-time parents) for advice on soothing children and responding to their needs while also practicing parental self-care.

Quotes

- *I was in deep depression and considering suicide. Then I got a call that I had a child visitation coming up. So, I changed my mind and threw the gun in the river.*
- *I used to go to counseling for anger management. At the time, I didn't know it helped because when you're young you're prideful and don't want to listen, but in retrospect it helps.*
- *I would want someone [medical professional] who is compassionate and cares about their work. They should be knowledgeable and honest, even if it hurts.*
- *Classes that focused primarily on the woman and parenting skills like swaddling the kids and soothing, I think this would be helpful for young parents. I also think young fathers need it to get their minds ready for this change [parenthood].*

Childcare

In order to work and/or attend school, young parents need childcare (and transportation). Most **young parents do not trust childcare providers**. Parents need to be assured that services are safe and can be trusted. Parents are concerned about the sanitation levels of facilities and whether staff genuinely care about child development and education. As a result of their distrust, parents have a preference for childcare providers that are familiar to them, family members, or friends. In the absence of safe and trusted child care services, parents (namely mothers) are inclined to stay at home to take care of their children- sometimes for years.

Quotes

- *We want it [child care facilities] to be safe and clean. The location or teachers may make you skeptical - there should be background checks on employees.*
- *My cousin runs a daycare, and I would trust her with my child because she is family. Plus, the daycare is in the neighborhood I grew up in.*
- *I want more than daycare, we want somewhere where they can work on improving their motor skills, ABCs, numbers, colors, etc.*

CASE



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Appendix

Decide & Develop: Consider the best format(s) for observation

Step 1



Observing people in a natural context can clarify processes and fill in knowledge gaps

Strategy	Description	Example
Shadowing	Observe a real activity performed by one or more users (e.g. intake, service, data entry)	<i>Watch a clerk manage data or information requests for a couple hours</i>
Service Trial	Experience a simulated activity, ideally guided by an expert who understands some of the nuances around how people experience it in real life	<i>A caseworker leads you through the intake process as if you are a participant</i>
Participation	Go through an activity as if you are a regular participant	<i>Experience a job search workshop along with other participants</i>
Transect Walk	Walk through a community, joined by an expert, experiential guide or community member to learn about issues, behaviors, needs, and opportunity areas	<i>Explore social and environmental conditions in a neighborhood with a community leader as a guide</i>
Public Forum	Attend a listening session where people are discussing their priorities and needs	<i>Sit in on a town hall meeting about housing needs</i>

Questions: exploring barriers to accessing SNAP E&T

Step 1



Why haven't you joined a SNAP E&T training?

Barriers to accessing services:

- lack of awareness of program
- lack of awareness that they are eligible
- the application process will be too difficult, time-consuming, or not in the appropriate language
- misinformation and distrust of government programs
- *something else entirely*

★ **Next step:** Discuss what would make services more accessible

How could we make it easier?

Supports for accessing services:

- increase awareness by marketing the program at local churches, community colleges, etc. rather than waiting for people to find services
- make applying easier by hiring former benefits recipients to help
- update marketing material to address community concerns (immigrant status, etc.)
- *other cool innovative ideas*

Questions: navigating barriers to completing job training

Step 1



Why were you unable to complete the E&T training program?

Barriers to completion:

- inconsistent childcare
- unreliable car
- spotty internet access
- conflicts with unpredictable and varying job schedule
- ***something else entirely***



Next step: Discuss what would make training easier to complete?

How could we make it easier for you to complete this training successfully?

Supports for completing training:

- childcare stipends to use with TRUSTED and QUALITY providers
- car repairs
- accessible internet at job center
- flexible training hours
- ***other cool innovative ideas***

Questions: setting up program graduates for employment success

Step 1



What made it hard for you to enter/re-enter the workforce?

Barriers to gainful employment:

- Benefits cliff
- Lack of training in field of interest/experience
- Lack of qualifications or skills for desired position/field
- Lack of interest in the training
- Childcare
- Drug testing
- *something else entirely*



Next step: Discuss what would make customers more prepared for gainful employment?

How could our training services better prepare you for the workforce?

Supports for:

- trainings in high-demand high-paying fields
- training mismatch or lack of vocational options
- pay for childcare during interviews
- substance use referrals & employer information
- *other cool innovative ideas*

Questions

Resources & Next Steps



SNAP E&T FEASIBILITY COACHING CALLS

FOR WORKFORCE BOARDS

Take advantage of a 30-60 minute coaching call with one of our SNAP E&T Community of Practice coaches to determine if SNAP E&T is a good fit for your workforce development board and what you can do to get started.



WORKFORCE + SNAP E&T COMMUNITY *of* PRACTICE

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