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Performance Measurement for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Modernization Initiatives: Integrated Report

Final Report

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Authors:
Laura Castner
Amy Wodarek O'Reilly
Kevin Conway
Maura Bardos
Emily Sama-Miller

Submitted by:

Mathematica Policy Research
1100 1st Street, NE, 12th Floor
Washington, DC 20002-4221
Telephone: (202) 484-9220
Facsimile: (202) 863-1763

Submitted to:

Office of Research and Analysis
Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302-1500

Project Director:
Laura Castner

Project Officer:
Rosemarie Downer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last decade, several factors have come together and substantially affected the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For example, the number of participants rose from 17 million people in fiscal year 2000 to 40 million in fiscal year 2010. At the same time, state budget crises led to staff cuts and federal agencies have emphasized increasing access to SNAP and participation among eligible individuals, while also increasing accuracy, and have provided incentives for states who achieve this. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), with responsibility for overall administration of SNAP, has supported the states in these efforts by providing them with several policy options to better tailor the program to the states' specific needs. At the same time, substantial growth has occurred in the acceptance and use of technology for accessing a wide range of services.

States have responded to these factors by seeking out ways to improve the efficiency of their service delivery with fewer staff and without affecting accuracy—collectively referred to as *modernization*. Modernization initiatives can include the following types of activities: policy simplification, restructuring organizational and administrative functions, partnering with other organizations, and the use of technology.

Major changes to any program do not always go smoothly, however. Without methodical introduction of the changes and careful monitoring of how well the initiatives are working to achieve the states' goals, service delivery can be affected negatively.

This report is an exploratory study intended to add to the growing body of knowledge about how states are modernizing their programs by focusing specifically on how they monitor and measure the success of discrete aspects of their initiatives. For example, when SNAP offices institute call centers to handle inquiries from participants, eliminating the need for participants to talk to a specific person who may not be available when they call, how does the state know if participants' calls are getting through to the call center? Does the state know how many participants hang up because they were on hold for too long? Does it know if a participant has to call back repeatedly because the person who answered the phone could not answer a question?

In this report, we present our findings on how states are measuring the performance of a specific set of modernization initiatives, which we selected in consultation with FNS. We discuss the range of measures, identify those most commonly used across sites, compare and contrast how the measures are defined across sites, and discuss standards and incentives associated with the measures. We also suggest a standard set of measures for each initiative that FNS and states could consider using to systematically track the performance of each initiative.

Methods

To conduct the study, we used a two-phase approach. In the first phase, we interviewed a broad group of stakeholders (including SNAP staff at the national, regional, and state levels, and advocates) to obtain their perspectives on state performance measurement activities, identified the key modernization initiatives to include in the study, and developed the data collection instruments. During the second phase, we collected data from 44 states and the District of Columbia, more than 100 local agencies within those states, and more than 50 community and business partners who work with the states and local agencies. Data collection with the state and local agencies included an electronic survey through which we gathered information about their modernization initiatives and requested the names and definitions of each performance measure they collect for each initiative. We followed up on the information they provided through in-depth telephone interviews. We also conducted telephone interviews with staff from the community and business partners about the performance measures states ask them to collect and those they collect for their own purposes.

Background

The primary reason states have given for choosing to modernize the delivery of SNAP was increased staff caseloads (Rowe et al. 2010). A survey, conducted in 2008, also identified the economic downturn, state legislation, and staff turnover at the local level as influencing their modernization decisions.

Modernizing because of increased caseloads can be categorized as striving to achieve efficiency—one of four goals FNS typically uses to categorize modernization efforts. The others are program access, accuracy and integrity, and customer service, all of which are described here:

- **Efficiency**. Efficiency relates to delivering the program at the lowest cost possible without sacrificing the other goals.
- **Program Access**. The goal is to ensure that benefits can be accessed by individuals eligible to receive them and that equal program access is available for protected classes of clients. It is affected by the location and operating hours of local SNAP offices, the modes through which applications can be submitted, the level of effort needed to complete the application process, and other factors.
- **Accuracy and Integrity**. Maintaining the integrity of SNAP requires that staff accurately determine both eligibility and the benefit amount for households as well as minimize fraud. Ensuring accuracy can include policies about reporting and verifying information. Any change to the responsibilities of and expectations for program staff could inadvertently lead to changes in program integrity.
- **Customer Service**. Improving customer service involves ensuring the quality of staff interactions, minimizing the length of time needed to complete the application process, and improving the ease and clarity of that process. However, steps taken to ensure payment accuracy and efficiency can reduce customer satisfaction. New technologies and other major changes to the traditional client services approach also can affect customer satisfaction.

Many types of modernization activities fit with these goals. In this study, however, we focus on eight key initiatives: call centers, online systems, document imaging, kiosks, partnering, waiver of face-to-face interviews, shortened interviews, and online expedited applications. We also discuss measurement associated with tracking application submissions, approvals/denials, and accuracy.

Key Study Findings

Across the initiatives, we identified the measures the states have in place; examined how they align with FNS's goals for modernization; and verified the states' purposes for collecting the measures, how commonly they were used across states, and how often they set an expected level of performance. The key findings are as follows:

States and local offices are collecting a large number of measures. Across the eight modernization initiatives we examined, states and local offices reported using 89 different performance measures to assess their activities. We asked the SNAP offices to identify the modernization goals that the measures address. We then categorized the measures within each goal according to their use. For example, among measures that states and local offices identified as assessing progress toward program access, we found that they fit into several categories based on their use: monitoring SNAP as a whole; monitoring the initiative; improving access to SNAP by maximizing staff time and program costs or by having effective procedures; ensuring correct use of procedures; and ensuring that customers are able to make effective use of the initiative.

In Table 1, we show the number of different measures associated with each goal, further categorized by each measure's use (note that some measures may be included under more than one goal). The number of measures for each theme yields insights into which areas state and local offices focus their measurement activities:

- For Program Access, states seek to monitor overall access (rather than just at the initiative level) and improve program access through efficiencies and correct use of procedures.
- With Accuracy and Integrity as a goal, states determine staff training needs and ensure that staff use correct procedures, in addition to tracking overall accuracy.
- For Efficiency, states track the initiative usage, seek to improve the customer experience, reduce staff time, and ensure that staff are following correct procedures.
- For Customer Service, states track initiative-specific efficiency and customer experiences, determine staffing needs, and ensure that staff are following correct procedures.

Standards are less common and benchmarks and incentives are rare. Performance measurement typically includes the use of standards, benchmarks, and incentives to assess performance of the selected measures. Standards and benchmarks establish the criteria against which performance is measured. A standard is the desired outcome of an activity—for example, answering a call within three minutes—while a benchmark is the desired rate of success—for example, answering at least 80 percent of calls within three minutes. An incentive is a motivator for performance and either can be rewards and public recognition for the highest performers and/or some combination of sanctions and technical assistance for the lowest performers. If no standards exist, there is no way of knowing if an activity is meeting its goals.

Table 1. Types of Measures States Are Collecting to Assess Progress Toward Modernization Goals

FNS's Modernization Goal	Purpose of Measure	Number of Measures[a]	Number of States Collecting Measures
Program Access	• Monitor combined result of initiatives to increase program access	43	27
	• Improve program access through maximizing staff time and agency cost efficiencies	37	20
	• Ensure correct procedures are being used by staff	34	17
	• Monitor use of initiative	30	12
	• Improve program access through establishing effective procedures	21	14
	• Determine if customers are able to use the initiative	5	3
Accuracy and Integrity	• Track accuracy related to the program as a whole as opposed to a specific initiative	84	32
	• Assess general accuracy used in eligibility determinations as part of FNS quality reviews	24	20
	• Determine staff training needs and ensure correct procedures are used by staff	17	16
	• Reduce overall errors or improve overall accuracy	12	10
	• Identify overall error rate or trends, not related to a specific initiative	9	11
	• Identify error rate or trends for a specific initiative	5	8
	• Reduce errors or improve accuracy for a specific initiative	3	2
Efficiency	• Track usage or system load	73	26
	• Reduce staff time and agency costs	47	21
	• Improve customer experience	46	20
	• Determine staffing needs and ensure that correct procedures are used by staff	30	19
	• Assess initiative-specific accuracy used in eligibility determinations as part of FNS quality reviews	20	12
Customer Service	• Assess general customer service	61	26
	• Increase efficiency/improve customer experience for a specific initiative	52	24
	• Identify barriers to program access for specific initiative	40	12
	• Determine staffing needs and ensure that correct procedures are used by staff	32	17
	• Assess general accuracy used in eligibility determinations as part of FNS quality reviews	27	13
	• Eliminate or reduce barriers to program access for customers	8	6

Note: Totals are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Each respondent indicated its own purpose for collecting the measure, and those can differ across the state and local offices within a state. The measures in this table include those reported by both offices, so a measure may be captured more than once.

[a] Numbers in this column include performance measures reported for each initiative and application tracking.

Of the 89 measures being collected, states reported developing performance standards for 39 measures and, of those, a few are assigned benchmarks and incentives to gauge their success. In Table 2, we present, by initiative, the number of measures with standards or benchmarks and summarize how states use them.

Table 2. Use of Standards, Benchmarks, and Incentives

Initiative (Number of Measures Using Standards or Benchmarks)	Use of Standards, Benchmarks, and Incentives
Call Center (20)	**Incoming Calls** • **Standards**: Evaluate performance of individual call center agent or a group of agents • **Benchmarks**: Assess volume of calls through specifying waiting and call duration times • **Incentives**: Determine high or low staff performance review; penalize vendor poor performance (when contracting with a vendor) **Phone System** • **Standards**: Track incoming call handling • **Benchmarks**: Resolve maximum number of calls within phone system or via agent • **Incentives**: Not reported[a] Change Reporting • **Standards**: Track processing of all changes and their processing time • **Benchmarks**: Not provided • **Incentive**: Determine high staff performance review rating
Online System (3)	**Online Application** • **Standards**: Track portion of applications received online • **Benchmarks**: Increase usage of application option • **Incentives**: Not used **Online Screening and Online Account Access** Not used
Document Imaging (6)	• **Standards**: Assess quantity of documents scanned, by document type, within specified timeframe • **Benchmarks**: Scan all documents within a certain timeframe • **Incentives**: Satisfaction of achieving mandate; penalize vendor poor performance (when contracting with a vendor)
Kiosks (0)	Not used
Partnering—Application Assistance (2)	• **Standards**: Monitor partners providing application assistance • **Benchmarks**: Ensure that all partners provide assistance • **Incentives**: Pay partners for approved applications for which they provided assistance
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interviews (6)	• **Standards**: Monitor the proportion of interviews conducted face-to-face and telephonically to track utilization • **Benchmarks**: Ensure that the percentage of telephone interviews does not exceed waiver requirement • **Incentives**: Not reported[a]
Shortened Interviews (0)	Not used
Expedited Applications (2)	• **Standards**: Process expedited applications • **Benchmarks**: Process expedited applications within 7-day timeframe required by FNS • **Incentives**: Not reported[a]

Note: Totals are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

[a] "Not reported" indicates that the respondent identified the use of an incentive but did not describe the specific incentive utilized.

Measures most commonly are used for technology-related initiatives. The most common measures are those for call centers and online systems (see Table 3). The technology built into these systems makes it easier to collect and report performance measures. Thus, states with more technology-driven initiatives have many more performance measures than states without those initiatives.

Table 3. Number and Use of Measures States Are Collecting, by Initiative

Initiative	Number of States with Initiative	Number of Different Measures for Initiative	Use of Measure
Call Center	28	34	• Identify staffing needs • Identify need to train staff • Assess efficiencies and inefficiencies of operations • Assess customer service
Online System	33	27	• Demonstrate program access and increased participation • Track utilization of online application feature, including making comparisons with paper applications
Document Imaging	24	8	• Track system operations • Manage staff workload
Kiosks	14	1	• None reported
Partnering	34	3	• Track approvals • Track partners providing assistance • Track partner assistance provided—from monitoring to evaluating effectiveness and reimbursing them for assistance provided • Enhance program access
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview	40	12	• Show effectiveness of interview option • Determine accuracy, including making comparison with face-to-face interviews • Comply with federal waiver requirement for performance measure calculations
Shortened Interviews	12	2	• None reported
Online Expedited Applications	20	2	• Increase program access • Track approvals

Note: Totals are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

In most states, staff are driven by federal accuracy and timeliness requirements. Staff at all levels of SNAP agencies indicated that states are not meeting their mission if they do not provide benefits to those eligible, get the beneficiaries the right benefit amount, or achieve these goals in a timely fashion. At times, states may sacrifice the result for certain operational measures of individual initiatives so they can ensure that other, more critical goals, such as FNS timeliness standards, are achieved. If FNS were to require additional measures, states likely would divert resources to meet those requirements. When incentives are available, such as for high accuracy and timeliness rates, states are motivated to outperform other states so as to receive the incentive.

Use of measures changes over time: first to assess whether the initiative is working as designed; then to monitor trends; and finally, to allocate resources in real time. In the early stages of implementation, reports can indicate that each piece of the initiative is performing its particular function as planned. The measures provide proof of success to stakeholders and can help secure funding for continued operations. As initiatives mature, performance measurement allows for monitoring. Once staff are confident that the initiative is working as designed, they can analyze trends and identify potential problems through periodic reviews of reports. However, too much monitoring can create unnecessary work for staff if they need to perform additional tasks purely for tracking purposes. As measurement matures, real-time and daily reports help to allocate limited staff resources. Frequent and timely measurement of operations allows managers to assign more workers to the area most in need at a particular moment, such as assigning more agents to answer phones during periods of high call volume, or assigning more eligibility workers to process applications if too many are in danger of failing to meet the timeliness standard.

Limitations

While many states are collecting performance measures, several factors related to modernization and performance measures affect cross-state comparisons. Two particular aspects are contextual limitations (related to the context and environment in which the initiatives operate and their functions) and data limitations (related to the ability to calculate accurate, valid, and reliable measures).

Contextual Limitations. State and local offices operate and implement modernization initiatives in different contexts, which influence their choice of performance measures and standards and their observable outcomes. Common contextual limitations include the following:

- **Initiative Scope and Features**. The size and breadth of an initiative, especially whether it serves the entire state or just a region, and what services are provided through that initiative.
- **System Limitations**. The inability of eligibility and reporting systems to capture and report measures of interest to each state.
- **Terminology Differences**. The variations in how measures are worded and defined across states show that states are measuring different performance aspects.
- **Varying Measurement Motivations**. Motivations for using measures and standards vary across states, with some choosing measures to manage staff workloads and others setting standards to comply with legislative or other mandates.

Data Limitations. While contextual limitations impact cross-state analysis of measures, the data used to calculate the measures also set limits to performance evaluations and can jeopardize interpretations of individual measures. Performance measures are subject to three main types of data limitations: accuracy, validity, and reliability.

- **Accuracy**. When data are used to calculate performance measures, how they are entered impacts the quality of the measure. Data entered automatically are likely subject to fewer errors and less subjectivity. In many cases, however, staff must manually track data for measures, such as the time spent on a call or the number of documents scanned in a day. Manual entries and calculations are more subject to error.

- **Validity**. This refers to whether or not states actually are measuring what they intend to measure, or if their measure includes data they do not intend to capture. Respondents sometimes indicated validity concerns regarding the measures they reported, but did not elaborate.
- **Reliability**. Data reliability addresses the consistency of how measures are calculated over time and across localities or states. To be reliable, a measure must not have changed recently—either in how it is defined or calculated. In addition, the definition must reflect the same concept regardless of where it is being collected. For example, hold time in one call center must reflect the same period of time in another, which we did not always find to be the case.

Setting Measurement Requirements: Recommendations and Limitations

Measurement improves the chances that an initiative will succeed, both at implementation and during ongoing operations. It also improves the chances even more when measures are built into initiatives during the design stage. Developing measures helps states clearly articulate the purpose of the initiative and set a preliminary expected level of performance. Developing measures and stating goals also can help ensure that the initiative is helping them achieve their mission of providing accurate benefits in a timely fashion.

With many states developing and launching broadly similar initiatives, sharing lessons learned and discussing expectations for performance can help later-adopting states avoid the pitfalls faced by the early-adopting states. However, each state operates SNAP within its own set of circumstances. States differ in the computer capabilities supporting their eligibility systems, assistance programs included in those systems, combinations of modernization initiatives, functionalities for the modernization initiatives, and abilities to calculate measures. Given the unique environment in which each state operates, FNS and state staff must be cautious in setting expectations for a modernization initiative based on the performance achieved by other states.

Based on our research, we make the following recommendations for FNS and states when launching new initiatives:

1. Performance of initiatives should be measured—states acknowledge that where measurement occurs, performance improves.
2. Performance measurement should be built into the initiative during the design stage.
3. States should have an expected level of performance (standard) for each measure.
4. The performance measures and standards should be tied to improving overall program outcomes.

However, because of the limitations noted above, and because of the exploratory nature of this study, we did not develop a detailed understanding of every measure in every state; therefore, we do not recommend a set of performance measures for each initiative for use across all states in all situations. Instead, we present (see Table 4) a limited set of measures that appears to be useful within a broad range of state operational contexts. States implementing new initiatives could review this list for suggested measures. Although we hope that most will be appropriate for the states, some measures may not fit within a particular state's context, while others may be a close fit, but need slight modification to be appropriate. States will need to make these decisions based on their specific goals for implementation, the functionality of their initiative, the other initiatives they have in place, the unique features the initiative may entail, and the integration of SNAP with other assistance programs.

Table 4. Recommended Measures

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments
		Application Tracking	
Percent of Applications Submitted by Source	Number of applications submitted through each mode (mail/fax, in-person, online/kiosk, call center, through a partner), divided by total number of applications. (Maximum of five measures, depending on activities in a state.)	Helps the state to track the means by which applicants are applying.	Even states that can track whether an application was submitted online often cannot track when it was delivered by mail separately from those dropped off at the office. These two may need to be combined.
Percent of Applications from Each Source that Are Approved	Number of applications submitted through each mode and subsequently approved, divided by number of applications submitted by mode. (Maximum of five measures, depending on activities in a state.)	Helps the state to understand whether one mode of application tends to be used by more people who are not eligible or do not complete the process.	Excludes from both the numerator and denominator the number of applications in process during the period data are collected.
		Call Center	
Calls Received per Active Case	Number of calls, divided by number of active cases.	Demonstrates volume of calls in relation to caseload size, making the measure more comparable across states and regions.	Include in the numerator and denominator only the cases in the area covered by the call center. States with online account access may have much lower call volume; states with more functionality may have higher call volume. High numbers of calls from nonparticipants would not be reflected in the denominator.
Average Number of Calls Handled per Agent	Number of calls handled by agents, divided by number of agents.	Demonstrates load on individual agent	Need to set standards based on functionality of systems—those with automated systems likely will see lengthier calls and thus have a lower expectation for number of calls possible per agent.
Percent of Calls Abandoned	Number of calls abandoned before reaching automated system or agent.	Potentially demonstrates dissatisfaction of callers with amount of time required to wait for service.	If recorded information is played during hold time, it may answer the caller's question and not truly be an abandoned call, even though it would be recorded as such.
Average Time to Answer by Automated	Total time callers wait to access automated system, divided by total number	Potentially demonstrates dissatisfaction of callers with amount of time	Will not apply to call centers with no automated response unit.

Table 4 *(continued)*

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments
Response Unit	of calls into system.	required to wait for service.	
Average Waiting Time to Speak to Agent	Total time callers wait before talking to an agent, divided by total number of calls into system.	Potentially demonstrates dissatisfaction of callers with amount of time required to wait for service.	Should not include time spent being directed by automated unit; clock should not stop if an agent answers only to place caller on hold.
		Online System	
Percent of Applications Received Online	Number of applications submitted online, divided by the total number of applications received.	Demonstrates use of online system in relation to other modes of application.	States may differ in how they count unsigned applications that must be printed and sent to the applicant for approval because an unsigned application does not constitute a completed application.
Percent of SNAP Caseload with an Online Account	Number of active SNAP accounts, divided by size of SNAP caseload.	Demonstrates use of system by entire caseload.	Defining “active” as accounts associated with ongoing cases.
Average Number of Logins per Account	Number of logins, divided by number of active accounts.	Demonstrates use of system by those who have accounts.	Defining “active” as accounts associated with ongoing cases.
Average Number of Changes Submitted per Account	Number of changes submitted, divided by number of active accounts.	Potentially demonstrates that system is difficult to use or not meeting clients’ needs.	Defining “active” as accounts associated with ongoing cases.
		Document Imaging	
Percent of Documents Scanned within 24 Hours	Number of documents successfully scanned within 24 hours of receipt, divided by total number of documents to be scanned received in the same 24-hour period.	Demonstrates ability of system to process documents efficiently. All documents should be included—even those that are damaged—to track percent requiring manual scanning.	Some states are not attempting to achieve scanning within 24 hours, so a longer timeframe may be preferable for them.
Percent of Documents Attached to Case within One Business Day of Being Scanned	Number of documents attached to case record by close of business on the business day following imaging of the document, divided by number of documents imaged the previous day.	Documents need to be accessible to case workers quickly for the system to work well. They are not accessible until they are attached to the file.	Not all documents may have enough information in them to attach to a case immediately. Low attachment rate could reflect errors by the person submitting the document, as well as lack of ability of staff to attach documents to cases. Does not reflect how many documents never get attached to a case.
Percent of Orphaned Documents	Number of documents scanned exactly four weeks prior but that are still not attached to a case, divided by daily average of scanned documents.	Tracks extent to which scanned documents could not be tied to a specific case and thus are unusable for purposes of eligibility determination and/or recertification.	Difficult to set the time period over which to measure—a worker may be able to attach the document days or weeks later if the sender provides information that can assist the worker in identifying the case.

Table 4 *(continued)*

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments
		Partnering	
Number of Partners Providing Application Assistance	Number of partners who have formally declared they are working with the state, even though there may be no formal agreement on how they conduct this activity or how many people they are trying to serve.	Helps the state to track the organizations, eases communication of changes in procedures.	Definitions of application assistance may differ across states, making this more of a gauge for internal purposes than for comparison across states.
Number of Clients Assisted by Partners	Report from partners of number of clients they assisted with the application.	Helps the state understand the use of the partners by their residents and how much need there is for providing continued training to partner staff.	Not all those receiving assistance ultimately will submit their applications.
		Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview	
Percent of Application Interviews Conducted by Telephone	Number of application interviews conducted by telephone, divided by number of application interviews.	Demonstrates the use of the waiver at application.	
Percent of Recertification Interviews Conducted by Telephone	Number of recertification interviews conducted by telephone, divided by number of recertification interviews.	Demonstrates the use of the waiver at recertification.	
Error Rate for Cases with Telephone Interviews	Number of cases in error that included a telephone interview, divided by number of cases in error.	Demonstrates the ability of the eligibility worker and applicant to communicate all necessary information over the phone rather than through an in-person meeting.	Error rates generally are calculated through formal quality control reviews, and some states can separate the error rate based on the interview type. For this measure to be accurate and unbiased, it likely would require a change in the QC review process—the sampling would need to account for both types of interviews.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, states have initiated a wide range of enhancements to their administration and operation of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These enhancements, generally captured through the term "modernization," can include increasing the use of technology and the Internet, specializing staff roles, expanding office hours, aligning eligibility policies across multiple assistance programs, partnering with community-based organizations, and other initiatives.

Recently, modernization activities have received substantial attention from stakeholders: state legislators and administrators are interested in ways to reduce costs, advocacy agencies watch for potential negative impacts on service delivery, community partners seek to link clients with all services for which they are eligible, and the federal government must ensure the accuracy and timeliness of benefit delivery. The underlying question for the stakeholders, then, is "How well are the initiatives working?"

In this report, we examine how states are determining the performance of their initiatives. We identify the measures states have in place for each initiative and how these measures compare across states. However, it is helpful to first review certain factors that have led to and influenced modernization initiatives in the states, which include the following:

- **Number of SNAP participants rose sharply.** The number of participants in SNAP more than doubled over the last 10 years. In fiscal year 2000, more than 17 million people participated in an average month; in fiscal year 2010, more than 40 million did.
- **State budget crises led to staff cuts and smaller operating budgets.** Almost all states have experienced budget shortfalls, and because states generally cannot run a budget deficit, they must find ways to balance their budgets. At least 44 states and the District of Columbia have achieved this in part by making cuts in their workforce—eliminating or not filling jobs, imposing furloughs, or through other means (Johnson et al. 2011). In addition, states pay approximately 50 percent of the costs to administer SNAP, so they look beyond staff cuts to find ways to reduce the SNAP operating budget.
- **States are attempting to integrate multiple assistance programs.** States can find additional cost savings in integrating programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Medicaid. This sort of integration may allow them to use one computer system to determine eligibility for all programs rather than maintaining different systems for each program. Similarly, providing one phone number through which clients can access all programs and having a computer direct the calls to the right department can reduce the number of state staff needed to answer phones.
- **Federal performance efforts led to national SNAP participation goals.** In July 2002, the Office of Management and Budget required the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other federal agencies to complete the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART). Using the PART, agencies had to establish specific goals and show progress over time in meeting them. One of the goals of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the USDA agency responsible for SNAP, is to improve program participation rates.

- **FNS increased pressure on states to raise their participation rates without decreasing accuracy.** Because they administer their own programs, FNS relies on states to increase their participation. In 2003, FNS established monetary rewards to encourage states to increase participation. In 2009, it split $12 million dollars among the eight states with the most improved and highest rates of participation. However, FNS also must ensure that states are not providing benefits to people who are not eligible, so it also established both sanctions for those with high rates of error and rewards for those with low rates of error, with the highs and lows being determined in relation to other states.
- **FNS provided several policy options for states to tailor programs to their particular needs.** FNS has had a long-standing policy allowing states to apply for waivers regarding certain policies. In addition, in the early 2000s, FNS began to give states increased flexibility in setting policies. For example, states may align their asset rules with other assistance programs to make applying for multiple programs easier for residents, simplify the conditions under which SNAP participants report changes in their income, and provide support for those leaving cash assistance by allowing their SNAP benefits to remain constant for a period of time.
- **Technology is more widespread and its improvements have increased its use.** The past decade has seen remarkable growth in the use of the Internet, both in the amount of general information available and the ability of individuals to access or submit information unique to them, such as through online banking or online benefit account access.
- **States increasingly accept electronic or telephonic signatures.** Several states now allow electronic or telephonic signatures when residents submit required information by phone or Internet.

Increased need among residents, decreased availability of staff, smaller state budgets, and monetary incentives related to quality have led states to find ways to improve the efficiency of their service delivery without affecting accuracy. Monetary incentives to increase participation have led them to improve their customer service and access. Flexibility in setting policy, paired with technological improvements, has given states many options for exactly how they achieve the improvements.

Major changes to programs do not always happen smoothly, however. Without a methodical introduction of the changes and careful monitoring of how well they are achieving the states' goals, service delivery can be severely and negatively affected.

This report is an exploratory study intended to add to the growing body of knowledge on how states are modernizing their programs by focusing specifically on how they are monitoring and measuring the success of discrete aspects of their efforts. For example, when SNAP offices initiate call centers to handle inquiries from participants, eliminating the need for callers to talk to a specific person who may not be available when they call, how does the state know if the people were able to get through to the call center? Does the state know how many participants hang up because they were on hold for too long? Does it have information on whether a participant has to call back repeatedly because the person who answered the phone was not able to answer a question?

We present our findings on how states are measuring performance of a specific set of modernization initiatives, which we selected in consultation with FNS. The findings are based on data obtained through surveys, telephone interviews, and in-person interviews with state and local

SNAP administrators and organizations that work for or partner with SNAP agencies. We discuss the range of measures, identify those most commonly used across states, compare and contrast how the measures are defined across states, and discuss standards and incentives associated with the measures. We also suggest a standard set of measures for each initiative that FNS and states could consider using to systematically track the performance of each.

In the remainder of this chapter, we first review how we define modernization for the purpose of this report and why states develop modernization initiatives. We then discuss how both the federal government and states use performance measurement of initiatives. Finally, we review how we will assess measures and discuss the objectives and research questions for the study.

In Chapter II, we discuss the methods and sources of data. We provide a summary of the measures in Chapter III—tying them to FNS's goals for modernization and the states' purposes for measurement, and discuss limitations in cross-state comparison in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, we present a set of measures for each initiative for FNS and the states for consideration when implementing the initiatives. Finally, in Chapter VI, we summarize our findings and the use of performance measurement in the states.

Additionally, we provide a glossary of terms used throughout the study—including descriptions of modernization initiatives and their functionalities. In Appendix A, we provide a list of all of the measures states are collecting, by initiative (using the word "measure" in its broadest sense—a wide range of data collected to assess performance).

A. What Is Modernization?

The term "modernization" refers to more than just using technology to accept SNAP applications or convey information to applicants and participants. Rather, modernization refers to a broad set of changes that can be adopted to improve efficiency and access to the program and/or enhance customer service. In some states, modernization refers to a sweeping set of changes—essentially a reconfiguration of the business model for administering SNAP. In other states, it refers to a handful of changes but not a fundamental shift in the state's business model.

Modernization changes are not always adopted statewide. Some states pilot test modernization changes in parts of a state. Additionally, in about one-fifth of the states, SNAP is administered by counties. In those states, some counties have instituted their own modernization initiatives.

B. Why Modernize?

The primary reason states have given as to why they chose to modernize the delivery of SNAP was increased caseloads for their staff (Rowe et al. 2010). The survey conducted by Rowe et al. in 2008, also identified that the economic downturn, state legislation, and staff turnover at the local level influenced their modernization decisions.

Modernizing SNAP because of increased caseloads can be viewed as an effort to achieve efficiency—one of four primary FNS goals. For example, Florida completely redesigned its business model in 2004 to improve efficiency in response to a need to cut costs drastically in a very short period of time. The other goals are to improve program access, increase accuracy and integrity, and improve customer service. Utah, for example, rolled out an integrated software management system in 2003 that improved access to several assistance programs, including SNAP, by automatically assessing a person's eligibility for all related programs at one time.

FNS Categorization of Goals for Modernization

Program Access. The goal is to ensure that benefits can be accessed by individuals who are eligible to receive them. It is affected by the location and operating hours of local SNAP offices, the modes through which applications can be submitted, the level of effort needed to complete the application process, and other factors.

Accuracy and Integrity. Continued support for SNAP requires that staff accurately determine both eligibility and the benefit amount for households. Ensuring accuracy can include policies about reporting and verifying information; ensuring integrity may include minimizing fraud and providing equal program access for protected classes of clients. Any change to the responsibilities of and expectations for program staff could inadvertently lead to changes in program integrity.

Efficiency. Efficiency relates to delivering the program at the lowest cost possible without sacrificing the other goals.

Customer Service. Improving customer service involves ensuring the quality of staff interactions, minimizing the length of time needed to complete the application process, and improving the ease and clarity of that process. Steps taken to ensure payment accuracy and efficiency can reduce customer satisfaction. New technologies and other major changes to the traditional client services approach also can affect customer satisfaction.

C. What Modernization Initiatives Have States Put in Place?

Along with classifying the goals for modernization into four categories, we also can classify the components of modernization into four categories:

- **Policy Simplification.** Policy simplification can improve operational efficiency by reducing the time needed for staff to collect and process information. It also can increase program access and customer service by reducing the burden of applying and participating. Examples include combining applications across programs, reducing the need for documentation to verify information, increasing the use of telephone and/or shortened interviews at application and recertification, and simplifying income reporting policies.

- **Restructuring of Organizational and Administrative Functions.** Streamlining organizational and administrative functions can improve operational efficiency. Examples include specializing staff roles and eliminating the caseworker model, centralizing functions, closing local offices, and expanding or reducing office hours.

- **Partnering with Other Organizations.** States can reduce administrative costs and increase program access by partnering with commercial businesses and nonprofit community-based partners. Business partners often take over specific support activities, such as sorting and mailing or developing computer systems, saving the agency from having to employ staff with these specialized roles. Community-based partners typically provide access to computers and/or application assistance. They often have a strong presence within a certain geographic area or with a specific demographic.

- **Technology.** Many states are including technology as part of their modernization efforts. States can use technology to improve operating efficiency, increase program access, and increase customer service for clients who prefer to use the technology. Examples include online systems, automated eligibility systems, automated response units (phone systems), telephone call centers and change centers, electronic signatures, data matching, document imaging, and electronic learning.

From their 2008 survey, Rowe et al. (2010) found that almost every state either had implemented or piloted some type of initiative related to improving customer access, implemented a technological change, or initiated an information-sharing process. They found that half of the states had initiated organizational changes, online applications, electronic record-keeping, and call centers.

D. Why Is Performance Measurement Important?

Major changes to systems and policies, especially when they are implemented quickly due to an immediate need or affect a large group of people, often are accompanied by unexpected challenges that can lead to problems or delays in service delivery. If the problems are not caught early, states may face a number of consequences: problems causing high error rates have led to sanctions by FNS, and issues with timeliness have led to lawsuits and increased oversight and scrutiny by state legislators.

Partly in reaction to the issues some states have faced in modernizing the administration of SNAP, the 2008 Farm Bill requires that the USDA "identify standards for major changes in operations…and collect data that can be used to identify and correct problems relating to integrity and access, particularly by certain vulnerable households." In its proposed rule to meet this requirement, FNS has identified several measures that could be collected if a state were to implement a major change. For example, for states implementing online applications, FNS' reporting requirements may include the number of applications submitted, approved, and denied online; the processing time for approved applications; and demographic information on the households using online applications. For states requiring reporting through change centers, requirements may include the number of changes received; the average time to process changes; and/or the number of changes processed (Federal Register, 2011).

Measuring individual aspects of modernization efforts may not ensure that every state initiative will work exactly as planned as soon as it is implemented, but building in automated checks on the system will help state officials to identify issues sooner and may prevent any issues that arise from having substantial negative consequences for the already at-risk population.

E. How Are Measures Currently Used for Federal Oversight?

For decades, FNS has required states to collect several performance measures. States are expected to process applications within 30 days of receipt of a signed application, and applications identified for expedited processing must be completed within 7 days. The states with the best timeliness rates receive financial rewards. FNS measures the accuracy of benefit issuance and eligibility determination through the SNAP Quality Control data and provides financial rewards to states with the best or most improved accuracy rates. States with accuracy rates that consistently perform worse than other states may be subject to sanctions. FNS also measures program participation among the low-income population through the Program Access Index and financially rewards states with the highest and most improved indices.

FNS has contracted with Mathematica to look at outcome measures in several states. In 2006–2007, we studied Florida's Automated Community Connection to Economic Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS Florida) and examined how caseload size, administrative costs, client access to benefits, and program accuracy changed with its introduction (Cody et al. 2008). We currently are conducting a study to look at similar measures in Florida and four additional states: Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington.

However, FNS generally has not required that states meet specific performance standards on individual initiatives, instead leaving it to the states. States conduct measurements at the initiative level to determine if each specific activity is working in the way intended. Once they are satisfied the initiative is performing at an acceptable level, they often stop measuring and focus only on the broader outcome measures.

In requiring states to achieve a certain level of performance on the broader outcome measures, FNS has been acting as a monitor—that is, consistently reviewing the measures to be sure states are meeting a certain level and implementing consequences when they do not meet these levels. In conducting an exploratory study such as this one and providing a wealth of information about the range of measures, FNS is acting in a facilitating role. It is providing information to the states with the goal of helping them plan better systems and avoid some of the pitfalls other states have experienced. If FNS chooses to put a set of standards in place for individual initiatives, it will be moving to the monitoring role at the individual initiative level as well.

F. How Have States Used Performance Measures?

States use performance measurement differently at different stages of implementation. In the early stages, states measure an initiative to determine whether it is working as designed and meeting initial expectations. Later, states review reports to monitor the performance and ensure that acceptable levels of operations are sustained over time. The intensity of the monitoring will vary over time, however. When states are confident that the initiative is working as desired, they generally shift their attention and resources to other issues. If, while monitoring the reports, they identify issues that need to be addressed, their attention will return to the initiative and they generally will review the measures more frequently until these issues are resolved.

On the other hand, when individual initiatives need less monitoring, managers—particularly local managers—tend to want more immediate access to results of measures. They become less interested in reports about what has happened in the past and instead want to have reports that tell them the state of activities at that exact moment: instead of wanting to know, for example, the average wait time for callers over the past week or month, they want more real-time data from these measures. For example, they may want data on how many people are waiting on hold at the present moment and how long they have been waiting. If the numbers are too high, the managers can reassign staff. Once the measures return to more desirable levels, those staff can return to their previous activities.

> Arizona staff reported that after their implementation of document imaging, they needed to prove they were saving staff time. To do so, they developed a staffing efficiency model to measure the work times on document imaging tasks (as well as those they replaced, such as filing). The state then provided the governor's office with quarterly reports documenting that the imaging system not only worked effectively but also showed clear cost savings resulting from the staff time savings.

1. Early Stages of Implementation

Emerging from discussions with states, particularly during our site visits, is the fact that early on in the life of an initiative, SNAP state and local managers face pressure to justify the changes being made—whether they be policy changes, such as a waiver of face-to-face interviews; technology changes, such as online applications, a call center, or document imaging; or partnerships with community organizations or businesses. Given that significant resources are needed to implement these changes and that numerous internal and external stakeholders have an interest in the outcome of the initiatives, the pressure to demonstrate success is often quite strong.

Much of the pressure derives from the fact that states need to show they actually have achieved their key objective—for example, reducing overall costs, reducing staff workloads, improving service delivery to clients, or some combination of these. Measurement, then, often is the tool by which states can establish "proof of concept." In other words, measurement helps answer the question of whether an initiative is doing what it is intended to do. For example, states that have implemented a document imaging system want proof that the scanners can effectively image a document that is readable, that the imaged document can be indexed or coded properly, and that it will be attached to the correct case file. It is also important for the state to show that the centralization of document imaging services actually achieved cost savings by requiring fewer workers to handle the same or increasing levels of imaging.

"We benchmark against ourselves in terms of what's possible, where we can push the envelope."

—State SNAP Director

In addition to proving the concept of the initiative, measurement during this early stage of implementation helps states to demonstrate its success, making it easier for funders to continue its funding. It also may make it easier for them to introduce other initiatives in the future. Equally important is that measurement helps states ensure that they are not creating unintended consequences for clients or other processes.

2. Maintenance Stage of Implementation

Once proof of concept is confirmed, the focus of states and managers shifts to monitoring the modernization initiatives. During this maintenance stage, managers routinely review static reports—weekly, monthly, or quarterly—to track performance during that period, as well as compare results over time. The purpose of these reviews is to assess how well the initiative is working and ensure that the results the state has achieved initially can be maintained. Analysis of static reports also can help states establish standards for the future. In this respect, states will review past reports and ask: "How did we do last month? Last quarter? Or last year?" Then they will ask if they can do better. These standards, however, are usually informal and not rigorously defined or tracked; they act mainly as guides by which managers judge progress.

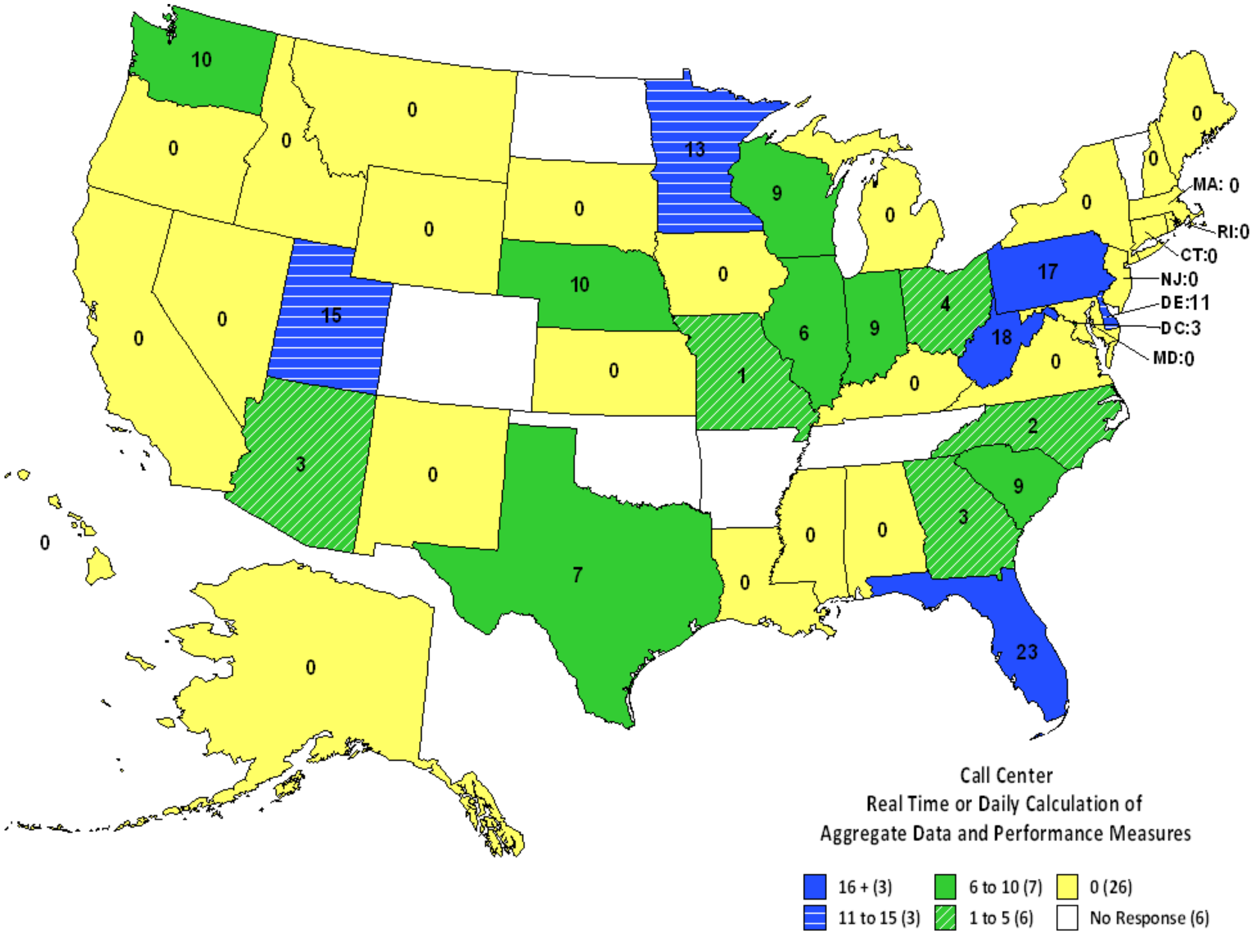
However, managers and staff eventually face time or resource constraints, forcing them to make choices about how frequently and intensely they will continue to monitor the static reports. When most initiatives tend to operate at a satisfactory level, the act of reviewing reports becomes less revealing—and compelling—over time. So, while managers continue to produce the reports, their focus tends to shift to reviewing them only to identify red flags that would cause them concern about the initiative's operations. Furthermore, the red flags that seem to concern the managers most involved with the initiatives are those that could directly affect quality; for example, the ability to correctly determine eligibility or deliver the right benefit amount, or timeliness, such as the ability to meet the 30-day deadline for eligibility determination.

3. Real Time / Daily Measures

As static reports become less revealing, the trend is for states to want real-time data. The desire for more frequent data may seem at odds with many states' views that they do not have the time or resources to review static reports. However, daily and real-time measures provide state staff, particularly local office managers, with information that they can act on immediately. Having information on a daily or real-time basis allows managers to focus on the "now," which enables them to track staff workloads most effectively, identify obstacles to effective flow as they occur, and quickly identify potential problems with cases that are most time-sensitive or those considered as highest risk. Most important, having access to this frequency of data enables managers and staff to take immediate action in response to conditions as they currently exist and not how things were last week, last month, or last quarter.

In this study, we find that 30 states have at least one performance measure or aggregate data calculated on a real-time or daily basis. Overall, the 30 states average 13 performance measures and aggregate data calculated based on these immediate timeframes. The initiatives that have the greatest number of real-time and daily measures are focused primarily in two areas—of the 381 (non-unique) performance measures and aggregate data calculated at this frequency, 173 are related to the call center (Figure I.1) and another 113 are related to application tracking (Figure I.2).

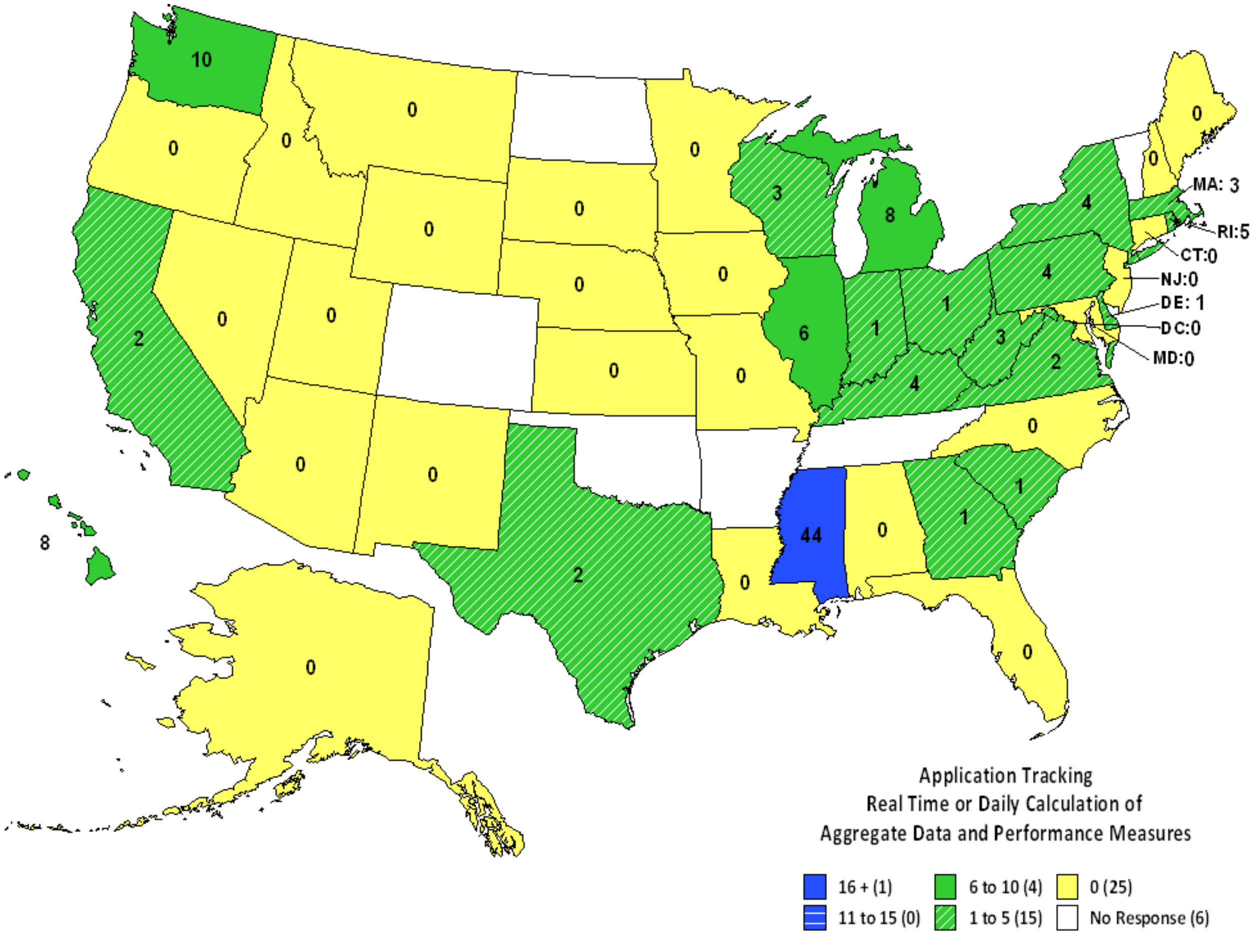
Figure I.1. Number of Real-Time and Daily Call Center Measures Calculated by States



Note: Of the 45 responding states, 28 had call centers, 19 (shown in blue and green) calculate real-time or daily measures and 9 do not (shown in yellow, along with those who do not have call centers). Of the 9 states, 4 calculate longer-term measures, another 3 states calculate measures but did not report the period of time, and 2 states did not report calculating any measures.

Counts are based on reported frequencies. Most states had one or more measures for which they did not report a frequency.

Figure I.2. Number of Real-Time and Daily Application Tracking Measures Calculated by States



Note: Of the 45 responding states, 20 (shown in blue and green) identified application tracking measures that they calculated real-time or daily. Of those 20, 15 states identified 1 to 5 measures, 4 states identified 6 to 10 measures, and 1 state identified more than 16 measures.

Counts are based on reported frequencies. Most states had one or more measures for which they did not report a frequency.

4. Focus on Quality and Timeliness

States also made clear that their primary concern is to ensure quality and timeliness. Staff at all levels of SNAP agencies indicated that states are not meeting their mission if they do not provide benefits to those who are eligible, get the beneficiaries the right benefit amount, or achieve these goals in a timely fashion. At times, then, states may allow performance to drop for certain operational measures so they can ensure that other, more critical goals are achieved. For example, one state noted that it made the strategic decision not to shift resources to call centers when it noticed that the average answer speed was declining. Instead, the state kept its resources in areas that best ensured benefits were being provided to eligible clients in a timely manner.

G. How Are Measures Assessed?

> **Performance Measurement Terminology**
>
> 1. *Data Element* is a field in a database that stores an instance of an activity or characteristic and is the basis of aggregate data and performance measure calculations.
> 2. *Aggregate Data* are counts of data elements, such as the number of observations.
> 3. *Performance Measures* are calculations using related pieces of aggregate data to assess an activity and typically are displayed as percentages and averages.
> 4. *Performance Standard* includes a *standard* and a *benchmark*. A standard is the desired outcome of an activity—for example, answering a call within three minutes, while a benchmark is the desired rate of success—for example, answering at least 80 percent of calls within three minutes.

Until now, we have used the word "measure" in its broadest sense; that is, as the wide range of data that can be collected to assess an initiative's or program's performance. In fact, in performance measurement terminology, there are three key types of measures used to assess performance: data elements, aggregate data, and performance measures. A *data element* is the lowest level of measure and refers to a field that can track a specific instance of an activity. For instance, if the state tracks whether an application comes to it through an online system or through traditional means (fax, mail), the field in which it would store the information is the data element. The next level is *aggregate data*, or counts of data elements. Using the same example, the total number of applications that come through the online system and the total that come through traditional means are both aggregate data. Finally, *performance measures* are calculations using related data elements, such as the percentage of all applications that come to the state through its online system and the percentage that come through traditional means. A performance measure, used in this very strict sense, is normalized in such a way to make it comparable with other measures. For example, the normalization makes it comparable with other measures of the initiative in the same state or with the same measure in another state.

Not all measures are equally appropriate for assessing performance. The measures themselves need to be assessed, which we have done according to the following six dimensions:

1. **Validity**: Does the measure accurately reflect performance toward a given goal? The connection between the measure and the goal needs to be clear.
2. **Level of Detail**: What are the measure's unit of analysis and frequency? How often it needs to be measured will depend on its use—measures that help allocate staff need to be available at high levels of frequency. Measures for trend analysis may be reported less often.
3. **Reliability and Comparability**: Are the data elements accurate, as well as the aggregate data used to construct the measure? A measure may appear to reflect the desired information, but if the means by which the data are captured is subject to error, it may not be a valid measure. The data also need to be collected similarly across states for comparisons to be valid.
4. **Efficiency**: How much time, effort, and money are needed to construct the measure? A measure that requires manual reporting or substantial post-processing of data elements is not likely to be sustainable.
5. **Performance Standards**: Is it reasonable to set an expectation for performance? Some measures may be used simply to track trends, but measures used to assess performance typically are paired with an expected result.

6. **Performance Initiatives**: Is it reasonable to attach incentives or disincentives to the measure? Will staff performance reviews be tied to their ability to meet the standards? Will offices be rewarded if they meet the standard for a given period of time or penalized if they fail to meet it?

Answers to these questions may differ across states, even for measures that appear to be the same. A complete understanding of measures, and the ability to compare across states, requires an assessment at this level.

H. Study Objectives and Research Questions

In this report, we seek to discuss the range of performance measures states have in place for specific initiatives—assessing them according to the dimensions described above and comparing and contrasting their definitions and the level of performance that states meet. We also propose a small set of measures for each initiative that (1) aims not to be overly burdensome for the states to collect, (2) consists of reliable and valid measures, and (3) assists FNS and the states in assessing the likely success of the initiative. We also identify the gaps in this set of measures. In a separate report prepared as part of this study (Keefe et al. 2012), we provide a profile of initiatives and measures by state.

Specifically, we address the following objectives and questions:

a. Describe Each State's SNAP Performance Measures and Standards in Detail:

- Which SNAP modernization performance measures do states have in place?
- What gaps exist in the performance measures currently used?
- Which standards are in place to gauge performance?
- What gaps exist in state performance standards?
- What is the rationale for the performance standards states use, and has the rationale changed over time?
- How were the performance measures developed?
- Have performance measures changed over time?
- What similarities and differences in performance measures and performance standards exist across states?
- What alternatives are there for states in measuring performance?

b. Provide a Detailed Description of How Performance Measures Are Implemented, What Results Are Observed, and How the Results Are Used in Each State

- Are states using performance measures that are reliable and valid?
- How are performance measures operationalized across states?
- To what extent are different performance measures used?
- Using these performance measures, what results are observed?

- Does performance vary? If so, on what basis?
- Are performance data used to gauge performance and make decisions? If so, how?
- What opinions do stakeholders offer about measures in place and potential additions?
- What similarities and differences occur across states?

c. Assess the Pros and Cons of Applying Alternative Performance Measures and Standards Across States

- Which criteria should be considered in choosing to implement individual performance measures and standards?
- How well do the alternative measures and standards meet these criteria?
- Which measures appear to be more burdensome or require sophisticated technology to collect?
- Is there a best set of performance measures for program access, payment accuracy, efficiency, and customer service?
- Do these measures provide added value to the existing SNAP measures?
- Is there a set of measures and standards that are generally applicable? Under what circumstances?

II. METHODS

To answer the research questions, we used a two-phased approach. During Phase 1, we interviewed a broad group of stakeholders to obtain their perspective on state performance measurement activities, identified the key modernization initiatives to include in the study, and developed the data collection instruments. During Phase 2, we developed a process to select the respondents and conducted data collection from state and local SNAP offices and organizations partnering with them. In this chapter, we describe the activities that occurred in these two phases.

A. Phase 1: Preliminary Assessment and Instrument Development

1. Introduction

Because of the exploratory nature of the study, Phase 1 involved developing insights on the performance measures and standards states use to assess their modernization initiatives. Based on our interviews with a broad group of SNAP stakeholders, we worked with FNS to refine the data collection objectives, identified the key modernization initiatives to include in the study, and developed a framework for assessing modernization initiatives for use in developing the data collection instruments. This section describes our approach to these activities.

2. Who We Interviewed

We interviewed stakeholders with a wide perspective on state modernization and measurement activities, as well as those with insight on a specific aspect. They fell into four main groups: FNS, national human services organizations, state SNAP agencies, and community-based organizations and business partners. Questions for these stakeholder groups targeted their particular experience and perspective in the following areas:

- **National and Regional FNS Office Staff**. We interviewed staff members in the national office and all seven regional offices. We obtained an understanding of FNS's goals for the project and learned more about state modernization initiatives and efforts to measure them.
- **National Human Service Organizations**. We solicited input from organizations researching and/or working with states as they modernize. We identified their concerns about state modernization initiatives and what they would like to see from the study. They also discussed their insights on state and partner measurement activities.
- **State SNAP Offices**. We had in-depth discussions with state agencies that focused on the scope, functionalities, and measurement activities (including standards and benchmarks) of their modernization initiatives.
- **Community-Based Organizations and Business Partners**. We discussed these organizations' concerns and knowledge of state-based measurement activities, state measurement of partnering activities, and their internal measurement capabilities.

In addition to interviewing these groups, we reviewed related documents to supplement the feedback we received. These documents included call center statistics, online application utilization rates, applicant surveys, and SNAP reports, which we obtained from stakeholders and state websites.

They provided an account of modernization initiatives and descriptions of specific performance measurement activities, including calculation methodologies and performance standards and incentives for selected measures. Also, we reviewed preliminary data collected for the study "Enhancing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification: SNAP Modernization Efforts" (Rowe et al. 2010) to extract information that states reported on these activities.

3. What We Learned

Using the findings from the interviews and document analysis, we drafted a preliminary inventory of state performance measurement activities. This inventory helped us assess the extent of measurement activities for specific modernization initiatives. Four themes emerged about how states were developing their approach to measuring performance:

- **Official SNAP measures motivate existing performance measurement activities.** States emphasize measurement of four SNAP measures: the payment error rate (the percentage of approved households with benefits calculated incorrectly), the negative error rate (the percentage of applying households incorrectly denied benefits), timeliness (the percentage of applications processed within 30 days), and the program access index (the percentage of the low-income population receiving benefits). FNS reporting requirements and performance bonuses motivate states to pay close attention to their performance in these areas. Some states developed corollary performance measures to identify the sources of errors or delays to improve their performance.
- **States collect performance measures and data but may not use the information to their full advantage.** Although computer systems retain a large volume of information, not all states are using the data to assess the initiatives' overall impact on SNAP administration. State financial and technical resource and time constraints hinder the development of measures to assess progress in meeting program goals. Even in states with performance measures, we uncovered few performance standards against which they are benchmarking their efforts.
- **Technology-related modernization initiatives facilitate current and future performance measurement.** Building performance measures and tracking results is easier for technology-related modernization initiatives, as compared to others. We saw more performance measures with technology-related initiatives because systems are designed to track key indicators to ensure their functioning. Some states used this to their advantage to develop program performance measures. Other states simply may need to determine how to extract the data according to concrete measure specifications and leverage them for their performance needs.
- **States make limited use of performance measures to assess modernization initiatives' impacts on program access.** For some stakeholders, it is vital to track where applicants are falling out of the system and their characteristics. (For example, do elderly individuals abandon online applications more often or at earlier stages than applicants of other ages?) States appear to be doing this only on a very limited basis. States have been tracking application and recertification approvals and denials and identifying errors, but preliminary research did not find that they tracked individuals' characteristics, such as age, along with the approval, denial, and error rates.

4. A Limited Set of Initiatives to Examine

The objective of the study is to build a comprehensive inventory of the performance measurement activities used by states and local offices to monitor the performance of SNAP modernization initiatives. The comprehensive inventory includes specific measures and associated performance standards to enhance FNS' understanding of how agencies collect, analyze, and use performance data to monitor their modernization activities.

While our preliminary inventory included all initiatives FNS includes in its definition of modernization, we identified a subset of eight initiatives, in consultation with FNS, based on their wide use across states and their importance to FNS. To request states to submit detailed accounts of performance measures used for all initiatives would have been too difficult and time-consuming for agencies with limited staff resources, especially those already overwhelmed with growing caseloads. Limiting the number of initiatives was important to balance the time required and give staff the opportunity to provide well thought-out and thorough answers to questions.

Below we list the eight selected initiatives, which fall into three categories—technology, partnering with other organizations, and policy simplification:

- Technology
  - **Call centers**, including computer phone system, change center, interviews, and application processing
  - **Online systems**, including the online screening tool, online application, and online account
  - **Document imaging**
  - **Kiosks** used for application access and submission
- **Partnering** with other organizations for application assistance
- Policy simplification
  - The **waiver of face-to-face interviews**
  - A **shortened interview** process
  - The capacity for clients to complete **expedited applications online**

The 12 initiatives included in the preliminary but not the comprehensive assessment includes the following:

1. Automatic case management
2. Data matching
3. Telecommuting
4. Staff e-training
5. Allowing clients 60 instead of 30 days to complete applications
6. Improving computer system characteristics using upgrades and modifications
7. Expanding use of electronic benefit transfer

8. Outreach activities
9. Office changes
10. Organizational changes: transferring and sharing functions
11. Organizational changes: staff functions
12. Training

Also, due to the emphasis that states place on existing FNS measures and the centrality of application processing to SNAP operations, we developed a performance measures module focused on the receipt and processing of applications and recertifications. This module, referred to as "application tracking," expanded on the FNS-required performance measures regarding application approvals and denials by including performance measures related to the source of the application or recertification.

5. Data Collection Instruments

The data collection plan involved a combined methods approach, using surveys, phone interviews, and in-person interviews and observations to collect detailed information for the inventory and provide states with an interactive response approach to describe and demonstrate their use of performance measures. We designed an electronic survey for state and local SNAP agencies that provided us with information about the presence and functionality of initiatives in the state and basic information about the performance measures the state collects. We then followed up with phone interviews to clarify survey responses and obtain more details about their select performance measures. For partner organizations, we developed an interview protocol focusing on their partnering activities with the state or local SNAP agencies as well as their performance measurement activities. After completing surveys and interviews in the state, we visited 10 states to conduct in-person interviews and observe their use of the performance measures. Below, we describe the content of the survey, interview, and site visit data collection instruments.

- **Electronic Survey**. We designed an electronic survey to collect details on the performance measures used for the modernization initiatives. For each of the eight initiatives, we provided states and local agencies with a list of known performance measures, aggregate data, and data elements collected during Phase 1. Respondents identified which of the eight modernization initiatives they had in place and their characteristics. Then, based on their responses, the survey revealed only the portion of the performance measures list relevant to their initiative.

  To augment this list and allow us to identify other areas of measurement, we gave states the opportunity to include additional performance measures. This option allowed us to build a more comprehensive inventory.

  For each performance measure and aggregate data, respondents answered questions on (1) how (and how frequently) they calculate the measure or element, (2) their purpose for collecting it and how it relates to FNS's SNAP program goals, (3) their assessment of the accuracy and uses of the measure or element, and (4) the performance incentives or standards the respondent's organization uses with respect to the measure.

  The survey also included a section for all respondents about application tracking, separated into six key steps in the applications process: (1) receipt, (2) processing and case characteristics, (3) approvals, (4) denials, (5) accuracy, and (6) processing time.

Respondents also had the opportunity to add additional application tracking measures not on the preliminary list.

- **Interview with State and Local SNAP Agencies.** The interview protocol includes a series of questions to better understand the characteristics of the modernization initiative and to follow-up on the survey responses to obtain further detail about the performance measure calculations for a subset of the performance measures being calculated.

  These questions assess the six areas of the measure framework we developed: (1) validity, (2) level of detail, (3) reliability and comparability, (4) efficiency, (5) performance standards, and (6) performance incentives.

- **Interview with Partner Organizations.** The partner-only interview protocol focused on both the measures partners report to the state or local office and internal measures they use to assess their own performance. The interview questions on the measures assessed the same six qualities as those in the SNAP agency interview.

- **Site Visits with Select States.** The site visits to states included interviews with staff and tours of the state SNAP office, a local SNAP office, and a partner office to better understand the usage of performance measures for daily SNAP operations. We developed a semi-structured protocol for the interviews, which was tailored to each state after reviewing findings from the surveys and interviews.

We also requested that the states send us 12 months' worth of actual performance data for the performance measures they reported tracking, if possible.

B. Phase 2: Respondent Selection and Data Collection

With the data collection instruments developed, we identified and selected respondents and conducted the data collection. In this section, we describe the process, the modes of data collection by respondent type, the response rate, and our approach to following through with respondents.

1. Selecting Respondents

Collecting information from every state and the District of Columbia provides FNS with the broadest view of the use of SNAP performance measures and standards across the country. All state SNAP agencies received an invitation to participate in the study and, in most states, a subset of their county and local SNAP offices and partner organizations also received one. Responses collected from the sample of county and local SNAP offices supplemented the state-level picture by determining the extent to which local-level offices are conducting additional performance measurement activity, as well as giving a front-line perspective on performance data generation and usage. All state, county, and local SNAP office respondents also received a request to submit 12 months' worth of performance data for each measure their office calculates. The process we used to identify individuals to contact varied by the respondent type.

- **State SNAP Offices Selection**. All states SNAP offices and the District of Columbia received a survey, request for interview, and request for performance data.
- **Local Office Selection**. Initially, we planned to survey, interview, and request performance data from 150 local offices from the 19 states identified as having a relatively high number of the key initiatives and that together covered the range of

initiative functionalities and regions of the country. We also factored in the performance on the outcome measures for which FNS provides financial incentives (timeliness, accuracy, and participation levels). In county-administered/state-supervised states, we requested from the state contact information for 13 local offices and in state-administered states we requested it for 7. (When necessary, we randomly sampled from among the county and local offices.)

During data collection, we often found little variation within state-administered states regarding their measurement of modernization initiatives because they primarily followed direction from the state. As a result, to enhance the data collection effort, we modified our approach and requested contact information for local offices in all states as opposed to only the subset of states. The target numbers changed to five for county-administered states and two for state-administered states. When contacting the states to obtain the local office contact information, we suggested offices based on a random selection (to simplify the process for states), but states also had the opportunity to identify specific local offices they wanted as part of this study. Switching the approach to local office selection allowed us to obtain wider understanding of the modernization initiatives and their measurement activities within more states. It also increased the opportunity for the discussions of modernization initiatives not utilized at the state-level.

- **Partner Organization Selection**. We targeted three types of partner organizations—national businesses, local businesses, and community-based organizations. During the interview with the office, we obtained further details on these partnering activities and requested the contact information. In selecting the partners for the interviews, we focused on those that were doing a wide variety of measurement activities or had unique partnering arrangements.

- **Site Visit State Selection**. We selected states for site visits in two stages. Before beginning data collection, seven states stood out in terms of their implementation of modernization initiatives and likelihood of having developed a wide range of performance measures. During data collection, after conducting numerous interviews and becoming more informed about the types and prevalence of performance measures across states, we identified three additional states. Deferring the decision for the remaining states allowed us to identify modernization activities that states had undertaken but were not known by the regions or well publicized. It also allowed us to uncover innovative approaches to performance measurement and particularly interesting lessons learned by states.

Table II.1 lists the three respondent types and the modes through which each responded to the study.

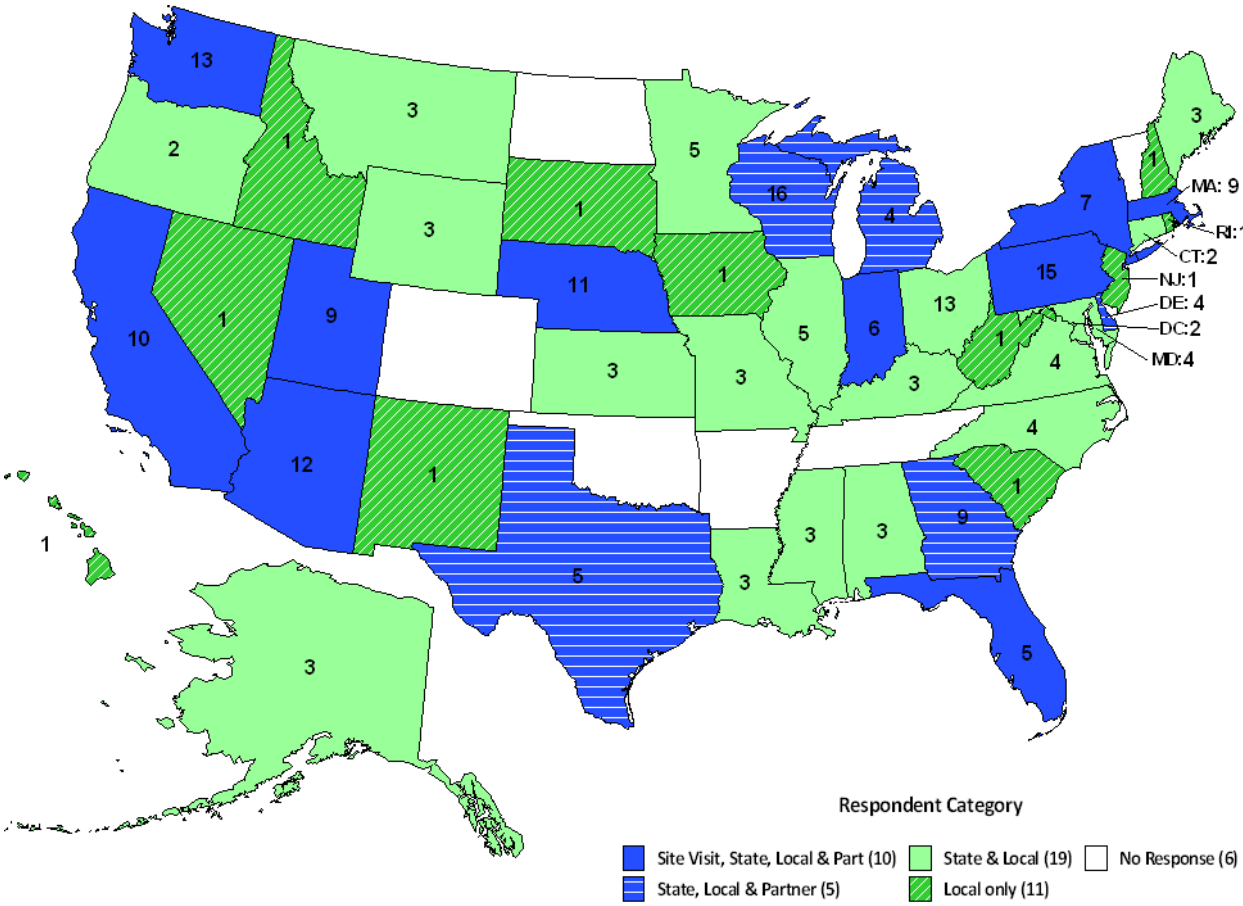
Table II.1. Modes of Data Collection for Each Respondent Type

Respondent Type	Electronic Survey	Telephone Interview	Performance Data	Site Visit
State SNAP Offices	X	X	X	X
County/Local SNAP Offices	X	X	X	X
Partner Organizations		X	X	X

2. Responses Received

During the nine-month data collection period from August 2010 to April 2011, we received feedback from 217 respondents representing 44 of the states and the District of Columbia. Figure II.1 depicts the states that contributed to the study and the total number of respondents within each. There were 15 states where respondents included the state and local SNAP offices and partner organizations. Of these 15, 10 also participated in the site visits. There were 19 states where both the state and local offices responded, and 11 where the state was the only respondent.

Figure II.1. Number and Combination of Respondents, by State



3. Level of Response

The number of solicited respondents differed from our planned approach. We sought participation from all 50 states and the District of Columbia as originally planned. However, 6 did not have time available to contribute, resulting in a total of 45 states participating in the study. We accommodated the schedules of respondents to make the request as minimally burdensome as possible, which included both allowing states to complete an interview only and extending the data collection period. Despite our best attempts, some state and local office respondents still were unable to participate due to their administrative responsibilities.

When we changed our approach to selecting local office respondents during data collection, most state offices we interviewed provided the contact information upon request. We did not request this information from the six state offices that chose not to respond to the initial survey. We completed a survey, telephone interview, or both a survey and interview with 117 offices, out of 137 originally contacted.

Although we collected contact information for numerous partner organizations, it would not have been fruitful to interview all of them. Many partner activities involved conducting SNAP outreach and providing application assistance. After conducting a substantial number of interviews with these types of partners and identifying the typical measurement activities, we chose to continue interviewing organizations with activities beyond outreach and application assistance. We sent participation requests to 71 and interviewed 55.

III. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES ACROSS INITIATIVES

Across the eight modernization initiatives included in our comprehensive inventory, states reported using 89 different performance measures to assess their activities. Of these 89 measures, states reported developing performance standards for 39 and, of those, assigning benchmarks and incentives to gauge the success of the standard to only a few. A wide variety of factors influence states as they develop performance measures for their modernization initiatives, including FNS's goals for modernization and operational considerations, such as staffing and understanding utilization of the initiative. Barriers to additional measure development include insufficient resources (financial and time) and the technical incapacity of some legacy eligibility systems to track and store data related to modernization initiatives.

In this chapter, we describe the purpose of measures according to FNS's modernization goals; key state performance measures for each initiative; general gaps in performance measurement; states' use of standards, benchmarks, and incentives; and how the measures relate to the SNAP lifecycle of application processing. Appendix A lists all measures and aggregate data that were identified by the states for each of the initiatives.

A. Purpose of Measures by Modernization Goal

Using FNS's four goals for modernization—program access, accuracy and integrity, efficiency, and customer service—we asked states and local offices to identify the modernization goal that a measure addressed. We then categorized the measures within each goal according to the measure's use. For example, among measures that states and local offices identified as assessing progress toward program access, we found that they fit into several categories based on their use: monitoring SNAP as a whole, monitoring the initiative, improving access to SNAP by maximizing staff time and program costs or having effective procedures, ensuring correct use of procedures, and ensuring that customers can make effective use of the initiative.

In Table III.1, we show the number of different measures associated with each goal, further categorized by the measure's use (note that some measures may be included under more than one goal). The number of measures for each of these themes yields insight into the focus areas state and local offices choose for their measurement activities. The list below highlights the themes for each goal:

- **Program Access**. Monitoring overall program access (rather than just at the initiative level) and improving it through efficiencies and correct use of procedures, have a large number of measures, but customer use of the initiative has fewer.
- **Accuracy and Integrity**. Aside from tracking overall accuracy, determining staff training needs and ensuring that staff use the correct procedures are the primary areas in which state and local offices focus their measurement activities.
- **Efficiency**. Tracking initiative usage, improving customer experience, reducing staff time, and following correct procedures are the areas in which the most measurement occurs.

Table III.1. Types of Measures States Are Collecting to Assess Progress Toward Modernization Goals

FNS's Modernization Goal	Purpose of Measure	Number of Measures[a]	Number of States Collecting Measures
Program Access	• Monitor combined result of initiatives to increase program access	43	27
	• Improve program access through maximizing staff time and agency cost efficiencies	37	20
	• Ensure correct procedures are being used by staff	34	17
	• Monitor use of initiative	30	12
	• Improve program access through establishing effective procedures	21	14
	• Determine if customers are able to use the initiative	5	3
Accuracy and Integrity	• Track accuracy related to the program as a whole as opposed to a specific initiative	84	32
	• Assess general accuracy used in eligibility determinations as part of FNS quality reviews	24	20
	• Determine staff training needs and ensure correct procedures are used by staff	17	16
	• Reduce overall errors or improve overall accuracy	12	10
	• Identify overall error rate or trends, not related to a specific initiative	9	11
	• Identify error rate or trends for a specific initiative	5	8
	• Reduce errors or improve accuracy for a specific initiative	3	2
Efficiency	• Track usage or system load	73	26
	• Reduce staff time and agency costs	47	21
	• Improve customer experience	46	20
	• Determine staffing needs and ensure that correct procedures are used by staff	30	19
	• Assess initiative-specific accuracy used in eligibility determinations as part of FNS quality reviews	20	12
Customer Service	• Assess general customer service	61	26
	• Increase efficiency/improve customer experience for a specific initiative	52	24
	• Identify barriers to program access for specific initiative	40	12
	• Determine staffing needs and ensure that correct procedures are used by staff	32	17
	• Assess general accuracy used in eligibility determinations as part of FNS quality reviews	27	13
	• Eliminate or reduce barriers to program access for customers	8	6

Note: Totals are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Each respondent indicated its own purpose for collecting the measure, and those can differ across the state and local offices within a state. The measures in this table include those reported by both offices, so a measure may be captured more than once.

[a] Numbers in this column include performance measures reported for each initiative and application tracking.

- **Customer Service**. Tracking initiative-specific efficiency and customer experience, as well as determining staffing needs and following correct procedures, are the areas in which states concentrate their measurement activities.

In Table III.2, we present similar information about the use and purpose of the measure, but focusing on each initiative. In the 28 states with a call center, for example, we find 34 different measures that states and local offices are using to identify training needs, assess operations efficiency, and assess customer service. Within the online systems, they are tracking how much a system is being used and making comparisons of its use with other ways of submitting applications.

In Table III.2, we also show how states and local offices viewed these measures in relation to FNS's modernization goals. In most cases, respondents matched a measure with more than one goal. They selected the goal of Accuracy and Integrity least often but identified the remaining three goals about equally. The respondents cited goals for all of the measures used for these initiatives: online account access, waiver of face-to-face interviews, and expedited online applications. For call centers, they cited all goals equally except for Accuracy and Integrity, which they cited least frequently. The state with the single kiosk measure used it for program access

B. Key Performance Measures and Gaps, by Initiative

State and local offices are using a large number of measures to oversee their modernization initiatives. Many of these measures exist within most states implementing an initiative. Some state and local offices supplement the common measures with others less common to enhance the set of measures used. States also described gaps in their measurement activities and their desire to calculate additional performance measures and aggregate data.

Using measures is practical for states—they need the information the measures provide to make operational decisions. For example, they may ask these questions:

- How many staff do they need for a given shift?
- Are potential applicants using the available options to learn about and apply to the program?

They also may ask the following questions but not necessarily be in a position to use the measures to address them:

- How is this initiative impacting the broader picture of program access?
- How does the work under one initiative impact the operations of another for improving application processing?

In this section, we describe the types and numbers of measures that states use for each initiative, their purposes in using them, and gaps in measurement activities.

1. Call Center

The call center is a point of access whereby individuals call to obtain information or some other service by listening to a recording, talking to a person, and/or interacting with a computer. There are three functionalities that states might choose to implement: call center, computer phone system, or change reporting. The general **call center** has agents available to answer caller questions.

Table III.2. Number of Measures States Are Collecting to Assess Progress Toward Modernization Goals

				Number of Measures Collected for Each Goal			
Initiative	Number of States with Initiative	Number of Different Measures of Initiative	Reported Use of Measure	Program Access	Accuracy and Integrity	Efficiency	Customer Service
Call Center	28	34	• Identify staffing needs • Identify need to train staff • Assess efficiencies and inefficiencies of operations • Assess customer service	19	12	18	20
Online System	33	27	• Demonstrate program access and increased participation • Track utilization of online application feature, including making comparisons with paper applications	20	17	16	19
Document Imaging	24	8	• Track system operations • Manage staff workload	5	3	7	4
Kiosks	14	1	• None reported	1	0	0	0
Partnering	35	3	• Track approvals • Track partners providing assistance • Track partner assistance provided—from monitoring to evaluating effectiveness and reimbursing them for assistance provided • Enhance program access	3	2	2	3
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview	40	12	• Show effectiveness of interview option • Determine accuracy, including making comparison with face-to-face interviews • Comply with federal waiver requirement for performance measure calculations	8	8	8	9
Shortened Interviews	12	2	• None reported	0	0	0	0
Expedited Applications	20	2	• Increase program access • Track approvals	2	2	2	2

Note: Totals are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Throughout this report, we describe the performance measures associated with the overall call center as applying to incoming calls. The **computer phone system** facilitates clients interacting with a computer through an integrated voice recognition system or similar technology to get answers to questions, access account information, or report account changes. It also may route callers to a call center agent. States can choose to implement a computer phone system with the abilities to complete all transactions electronically (and not transfer the caller to an agent), transfer the caller to an agent, and/or accept change reporting, allowing the caller to report changes to his/her case. Last, the call center might have the ability to accept **change reporting** from the SNAP client. In Table III.3, we list the most frequently calculated performance measures for the call center initiative.

States report that they use these measures to identify staffing and training needs and assess the efficiency of operations. For example, call center supervisors rely on the information these measures provide to identify when they need to add staff to answer calls due to high call volume. If high call volume is not an issue, supervisors might want to assess whether their call center agents have adequate skills to handle the calls and provide training where appropriate.

Because states tend to emphasize their immediate staffing needs at daily and hourly frequencies, they did not report looking at the measures over the longer term. Also, the results of these measures fluctuate at peak times in the week and month, so averaging them across longer time periods hides the fluctuation.

Table III.3. Top Performance Measures: Call Center

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
28	• Percent Calls Abandoned	22
	• Average Calls Handled	22
	• Average Hold Time	21
	• Average Call Duration	21
	• Percent of Total Calls Handled	18
	• Average Waiting (to Speak to Agent)	17
	• Average Answer Speed	17
	• Average Queue Time	16
	• Average Staff on Phones	15
	• Average Time Prior to Abandonment	15

Note: Some states reported collecting multiple related measures that they defined in the same way (such as Average Hold Time, Average Queue Time, and Average Answer Speed). Using their definitions and details about the functionality of the call center, we retained only one measure out of those defined the same way, choosing the measure name most consistent with the way we and other states were defining it.

Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

2. Online System

An online system is a website an individual may use to submit information. Like the call center, the online system has three basic functionalities from which states can choose to implement. These are the screening tool, the online application, and online accounts. The state either creates the **screening tool** (internally or under contract) or provides a link through which a client can enter household information and assess eligibility for SNAP benefits. Through the **online application** functionality, the client can access, complete, and submit the application online, either with or without an electronic signature, depending on the state-selected method. Finally, **online accounts** provide individuals with the option to check account history or benefit status or submit change reporting. In Table III.4, we show the most frequently calculated performance measures for the online system initiative.

Table III.4. Top Performance Measures: Online System

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
33	• Percentage of Applications Received	15
	• Average Number Submitted per Month	12
	• Average Number of Screenings Completed: Online	9
	• Average Number of Screenings Started: Online	8
	• Average Number Started per Month	8

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

State and local offices report using these measures to monitor system utilization. Also, these measures allow them to determine whether individuals are electing to use the online venue to access the program, with an increase in this number demonstrating the online system's usefulness for increasing program access. However, the measures focus on general utilization; most states do not have additional measures to identify the characteristics of individuals electing to use the system features. For example, the measures do not track the use of individuals over 65 in comparison to those under 65 and cannot demonstrate whether the initiative is increasing program access for a particular demographic. State and local offices also reported a gap in their measurement activities related to tracking the proportion of applications received online versus in paper format. Some states would like to compare the percentage of applications submitted online and on paper, including approval and denial rates, but the previously mentioned system limitations do not make this possible for many of them.

3. Document Imaging

A state implementing document imaging is operating a system or a process in which it receives documents in either paper or electronic form, scans the paper documents, and stores all documents electronically for future access. State might store these images in an independent directory not linked to another system or as part of an electronic case record. In Table III.5, we list the most frequently calculated performance measures and aggregate data for the document imaging initiative.

The most frequently calculated performance measures are the percentage of documents scanned and the average processing time. Nine states collect these measures, which indicates that only a third of states with this initiative have performance measures (as opposed to aggregate data). As a result, we also chose to include in the table the aggregate data calculated for this initiative. States reported that they track the numbers of documents scanned, received, and processed, and the completion of tasks associated with processing the document. Even though some states track these activities, they do not have a performance measure to assess how using the information stored in the document imaging system affects the accuracy of the application decision or processing time.

Table III.5. Top Performance Measures: Document Imaging

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
24	**Performance Measures**	
	• Percentage of Documents Scanned	9
	• Average Processing Time	9
	Aggregate Data	
	• Number of Documents Scanned	18
	• Number of Documents Received	12
	• Number of Documents Processed	11
	• Number of Tasks Complete	11

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

4. Kiosks

Kiosks are computer terminals in a community location or SNAP office at which an individual may access a SNAP application or change reporting function. Kiosks are public or semi-public terminals, so clients' personal computers are not included in this definition. We list in Table III.6 the most frequently calculated kiosk performance measures. About a quarter of states are implementing this initiative, and one state calculates the applications submitted after the applicant completes a screening. A few states are tracking the measures listed in this table for changes, account access, and screenings completed.

Table III.6. Top Performance Measures: Kiosks

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
14	**Performance Measure**	
	• Percentage of Screenings Resulting in Application Submission: Kiosk	1
	Aggregate Data	
	• Number of Uses to Submit Changes	3
	• Number of Uses to Access Online Account	2
	• Number of Screenings Completed: Kiosk	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

5. Partnering (for Application Assistance)

Partnering for application assistance occurs when organizations or agencies other than the SNAP office provide access or services to SNAP clients under a formal or informal agreement with that office. The agreement may be in the form of a contract, memorandum of understanding, or another type of request. In Table III.7, we list the most frequently calculated performance measures and aggregate data for the partnering initiative.

States did not report tracking performance measures for their partnering activities other than the percentage of partners providing application assistance. They use this measure to assess their outreach activities with target populations. The aggregate data that states most often track include their number of partners, the number providing application assistance, the number accepting applications, and the number of applications received per partner. They generally use this information to reimburse partners as a part of their statewide outreach plan. In some states, the application approval status also affects the amount of payments to the partner.

Because so few states closely monitor partner activities, they cannot use measures to demonstrate broader impact on program access. States also do not use the aggregate data and application determinations to track program access for underserved or specific populations.

Table III.7. Top Performance Measures: Partnering

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
35	**Performance Measure**	
	• Percentage of Partners Providing Application	10
	Aggregate Data	
	• Number of Partners	20
	• Number Providing Application Assistance	18
	• Number Accepting Applications	17
	• Number of Applications Received per Partner	15

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

6. Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview

The waiver of the face-to-face interview is a formal approval received from the FNS national office to perform interviews by telephone. We list the most frequently calculated performance measures and aggregate data for the waiver of this interview in Table III.8.

Those state and local offices reporting that they calculate this set of measures said they do so to assess the accuracy of the eligibility determination as part of FNS's quality control process. Calculating the error rate of the face-to-face interview often is challenging for them. The information for the interview type (either telephone or face-to-face) typically is stored in the case file notes and so does not lend itself to creating automated reports for calculating these measures efficiently.

Table III.8. Top Performance Measures: Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
40	**Performance Measures**	
	• Error Rate for Cases with Telephone Interviews	16
	• Error Rate for Cases with Face to Face Interviews	14
	• Percentage of Interviews Conducted by Telephone	13
	• Percentage of Interviews Conducted Face-to-Face	13
	Aggregate Data	
	• Total Number of Interviews	20
	• Number of Redetermination Interviews	19

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

7. Shortened Interviews

Some clients are eligible to participate in SNAP eligibility interviews, consisting of a shorter list of questions than the regular interview. In Table III.9, we list the most frequently calculated

Table III.9. Top Performance Measures: Shortened Interviews

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
12	**Performance Measures**	
	• Percentage of Clients Electing Shortened Interview	2
	• Percentage of Total Interviews that Are Shortened	2
	Aggregate Data	
	• Number of Shortened Interviews	3
	• Number of Clients with Shortened Interviews	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

performance measures for the shortened interviews. The measures for this initiative are not used broadly across states.

8. Expedited Applications—Submitted Online

Some states provide the capacity for clients to complete expedited applications online. In Table III.10, we list the most frequently calculated performance measures for this initiative.

Table III.10. Top Performance Measures: Expedited Applications—Submitted Online

Number of States Implementing Initiative	Top Measures	Number of States with Measure
20	**Performance Measures**	
	• Percentage of Applications Approved: Online All	10
	• Percentage of Applications Approved: Online Expedited	9
	Aggregate Data	
	• Number of Expedited Applications Received Online	9
	• Number of Applications Approved: Online Expedited	9
	• Number of Applications Approved: Online All	5

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

C. General Gaps in Performance Measurement

Within each initiative above, we address very specific gaps in performance measurement—areas in which states do not use specific measures broadly or lack measures for specific activities occurring in an initiative. In addition, some gaps we have identified are not as tied to individual initiatives. Some states expressed a desire for more aggregate data. Also, states provided feedback on the utility and feasibility of additional national-level performance measures for reporting on SNAP activities. Apart from desiring additional performance data, states reported that they would like to enhance their ability to analyze the data within their state systems and the time, financial, and technological barriers to developing additional performance measures.

Aggregate Data Gaps. Some state and local offices expressed a desire for more aggregate data so they can learn more about client experience with SNAP and better understand the client decision making process around completing the application and recertification processes. For example, some states and partners expressed the desire to better understand SNAP churning (when households exit

SNAP for a short time, such as one to four months, and then reapply for benefits). Identifying patterns in disenrollment and re-enrollment would facilitate program efforts to reduce the occurrence of churning; some aggregate data the states identified for this purpose include information on the source of the application (mail, fax, online, partner), interview completion mode (phone or face-to-face), reasons for failing to complete the interview, and benefit denial reasons. Respondents also discussed tracking such data as the number of telephone interview attempts, customer experience with interviews, and the time lapse between interview completion and the date the application was processed.

Partner Organizations Desire Application Determination Information. Partner organizations would like to have information on the application determination for individuals they assist with applying. To assist them in targeting their outreach efforts, partners would like to know the amount and approval date for approved applications and the denial reason and denial date for denied applications. Some states are unable to provide partners with this information, while those that are able to do so vary in the information they provide.

Some SNAP offices do not track partner-assisted applications. This means that to determine the impact of outreach efforts on increasing SNAP enrollment, partners must call applicants to ask if they received approval notification and their monthly benefit amount. This process is time consuming, and it is challenging to reach all of those they assisted. When an applicant grants the partner written permission to discuss his or her case with the SNAP office, partners can call the office to obtain this information.

Some SNAP offices have been able to develop a formal process through which they track all partner-assisted applications. This process most frequently occurs when the partner receives reimbursement from the state for each application with which the partner provides assistance. In this process, the SNAP office provides the determination information to the partner at a specified interval so that the latter can assess its outreach efforts. However, SNAP offices vary in the specific information they provide. Some states only indicate the final determination of either approval or denial. Others provide the amount of benefits approved; few states provide details on the reason for denial.

National-Level Performance Measures. Some states would like to have additional national-level performance measures to gauge their activities against other states (as opposed to establishing new national standards for these activities), while others feel the current national-level measures are sufficient and that they do not have the resources to generate additional reports.

Those states that would like to gauge their activities against others expressed a desire to see the proportion of applications processed online and on paper as well as the average number of days to process applications (rather than the percentage processed within 30 days, as required by FNS). Initiative-specific national measures they requested also include the percentage of applications received online versus in paper to assess utilization patterns. For the call center, respondents were most interested in two measures: average wait time and average call duration. Seeing these results nationally would allow states to look at their operations compared to the states they identify as their peers—taking into consideration the characteristics of the state—to assess their own performance and the reasonableness of their results.

Those states that did not see the need for additional nationally reported performance measures said that the current FNS national measures are sufficient. Also, the current reporting effort consists of many measures, and increasing the number would overwhelm them with reporting activities.

Moreover, states reported that it would be challenging to use additional measures to make comparisons across states because of variations in initiative scope, capacity, operations, and the nature of state demographics.

Analytical Capabilities Desired. Apart from more performance measures and aggregate data, state and local offices reported a desire for increased analytical capabilities for the measures they already are calculating. Some aggregate reports are available only at the state level, so staff do not have the ability to drill down to the local or individual levels. Increasing such analytical capabilities would help with training and monitoring staff. For example, with such data, a supervisor could try to identify performance challenges according to application disposition and processing timeframe; alternatively, a program manager could view the state's overall application processing time to ascertain how this number varies by county and local office to identify variations in processing time, which in turn could help identify outliers. Also, program managers could look at application denials according to the applicants' demographics to assess in more detail subpopulations' access to the program. To a lesser extent, some state and local officials said that reports, once produced, often are not available or distributed in a timely way across the state.

> A local office director reported an interest in seeing improvements in the technology and computer system that they currently have to generate better data and better use the data that is already captured in the system. For example, for the waiver of the face to face interview, this is only recorded in documentation. Reports cannot be run on this initiative, even though the data is recorded.

For existing performance measures, states would like their analytical abilities enhanced in two primary areas. The first includes automating manual reports. Some measures require time-consuming manual calculations at the local office; such data are more susceptible to error than automated data because of this manual process. Also, the reporting burden resulting from aggregating and submitting these data to the state or other reporting entity increases because the paper documents must be totaled manually.

Barriers to Measure Development. Despite the desire to have more measures, track more aggregate data, and increase the number of measures reported nationally, states encounter barriers—time, financial, and technological constraints—to identifying, specifying, and developing new measures from data they currently collect. Respondents reported that it is challenging to devote time to assessing critically their performance measurement gaps so as to identify how calculating an additional measure could help them operate their modernization initiatives.

Respondents also reported that technical challenges pose a barrier to increasing their measure development, specifically when tracking applications received and disposition by application source. In Table III.11, we describe the current state capabilities.

More states have the capacity to track applications that were submitted either online or directly to the SNAP office (mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered) than applications submitted through a kiosk, call center, or community partner. However, the ability to track approval and denial determinations is more limited than the ability to track the application source. More states are able to track the source because mode- or initiative-specific tracking efforts exist for this information. However, source information is less often stored in the eligibility system, where it could be used to assess the mode in relationship to the final determination.

Table III.11. Number of States Able to Track Application Status, by Application Source

	Submitted Application	Complete Application	
		Approved	Denied
All Applicants	**34**	**34**	**33**
Source of Application			
Delivered to office (mail, fax, in person)	26	20	17
Submitted through kiosk	3	1	1
Submitted online	25	14	10
Submitted to call center	4	4	3
Submitted by community partner	11	11	9

Note: This table includes both state-reported performance measures and aggregate data to generate the total numbers in these categories.

Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Each respondent indicated its own purpose for collecting the measure, and those can differ across the state and local offices within a state. The measures in this table include those reported by both offices, so a measure may be captured more than once.

Specifically, respondents said that their eligibility systems do not store this information in a discrete field(s). Although it is possible to access individual records within the eligibility system to see the final disposition, without storing the application source these calculations cannot be made in the same system. For example, many states reported that their online systems operate separately from their eligibility systems, and these cannot be linked easily or at all for reporting purposes. Even though one system records the online applications received, it does not store the application disposition data as well. Each system retains a portion of the information to perform this calculation, but these are not connected for reporting purposes. Likewise, for partner-submitted applications, few states have created a new eligibility system field or other discrete method to identify them. Some states with document imaging systems reported that it is possible to look at the scanned image of an online application or partner-assisted application to determine from which of these sources the application was processed.

D. Use of Standards, Benchmarks, and Incentives

Performance measurement typically includes the use of standards, benchmarks, and incentives for the selected measures. Standards and benchmarks establish the criteria against which performance is measured. A standard is the desired outcome of an activity—for example, answering a call within three minutes—while a benchmark is the desired rate of success—for example, answering at least 80 percent of calls within three minutes. An incentive is a motivator for performance and can encompass rewards and public recognition of the highest performers and/or some combination of sanctions and technical assistance to the lowest performers. If no standards exist, there is no way of knowing if an activity is meeting its goals.

States' use of standards, benchmarks, and incentives varies across their modernization initiatives, measurement purposes, and initiative operations. We found five initiatives with standards, benchmarks, and incentives; one initiative with standards and benchmarks, but no incentives; and two initiatives without any of these. Call centers and online systems each have three functionalities; states vary in their application of standards, benchmarks, and incentives to these initiatives. In

Table III.12, we present the number of measures with standards or benchmarks, by initiative, and summarize how states use them.

Table III.12. Use of Standards, Benchmarks, and Incentives

Initiative (Number of Measures Using Standards or Benchmarks)	Use of Standards, Benchmarks, and Incentives
Call Center (20)	**<u>Incoming Calls</u>** • **Standards**: Evaluate performance of individual call center agent or a group of agents • **Benchmarks**: Assess volume of calls through specifying waiting and call duration times • **Incentives**: Determine high or low staff performance review; penalize vendor poor performance (when contracting with a vendor) **<u>Phone System</u>** • **Standards**: Track incoming call handling • **Benchmarks**: Resolve maximum number of calls within phone system or via agent • **Incentives**: Not reported[a] **<u>Change Reporting</u>** • **Standards**: Track processing of all changes and their processing time • **Benchmarks**: Not provided • **Incentive**: Determine high staff performance review rating
Online System (3)	**<u>Online Application</u>** • **Standards**: Track portion of applications received online • **Benchmarks**: Increase usage of application option • **Incentives**: Not used **<u>Online Screening and Online Account Access</u>** Not used
Document Imaging (6)	• **Standards**: Assess quantity of documents scanned, by document type, within specified timeframe • **Benchmarks**: Scan all documents within a certain timeframe • **Incentives**: Satisfaction of achieving mandate; penalize vendor poor performance (when contracting with a vendor)
Kiosks (0)	Not used
Partnering—Application Assistance (2)	• **Standards**: Monitor partners providing application assistance • **Benchmarks**: Ensure that all partners provide assistance • **Incentives**: Pay partners for approved applications for which they provided assistance
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interviews (6)	• **Standards**: Monitor the proportion of interviews conducted face-to-face and telephonically to track utilization • **Benchmarks**: Ensure that the percentage of telephone interviews does not exceed waiver requirement • **Incentives**: Not reported[a]
Shortened Interviews (0)	Not used
Expedited Applications (2)	• **Standards**: Process expedited applications • **Benchmarks**: Process expedited applications within 7-day timeframe required by FNS • **Incentives**: Not reported[a]

[a] "Not reported" indicates that the respondent identified the use of an incentive but did not describe the specific incentive utilized.

Use of Standards. States vary in their use of performance standards. We found more performance standards for many of the unique performance measures associated with the call center, document imaging, waiver of the face-to-face interview, expedited applications, and partnering initiatives. States do not use standards for the performance measures associated with certain online system functionalities (online screening and account access), kiosks, and shortened interviews.

Use of Benchmarks and Incentives. States use benchmarks to monitor SNAP office operations, such as supervising staff activities and initiative operations and tracking partner activities, including vendors contracted to operate an initiative and community-based organizations providing application assistance. For the online application, some states reported wanting to increase the use of this application mode and identify the proportion of the total applications received by each mode. Call center supervisors evaluate agent activities and track incoming call handling and processing changes, as well as the computer phone system's handling of calls. For the waiver of face-to-face interviews, staff monitor the proportion of interviews they conduct on the phone to limit them to the 50 percent balance required for the FNS waiver of face-to-face interviews. As to online expedited applications, standards focus on state staff approving applications within the seven-day timeframe mandated by FNS.

States use both positive and negative incentives. For the call center functionality incoming calls and document imaging, vendors contracted to operate the call center on the state's behalf are held accountable to benchmarks established in the contracts and penalized for poor performance, which is a negative incentive. Similarly, call center agents working for a state-operated initiative have benchmarks to ensure that the calls they handle meet the intended goal. This incentive is both positive and negative because the achievement of or failure to meet the benchmark affects their performance review rating. For some state staff working in document imaging centers, the incentive may not be quantified in a performance review but rather by the general satisfaction of achieving the state mandate. Partner organizations receive positive incentives for achieving their benchmarks in the form of payment for the assistance they provide.

E. Relationship of Measures to SNAP Lifecycle

In attempting to meet FNS's standards or additional state requirements, such as lowering the budget, states may pursue one or more changes to their program's administration. Generally speaking, these initiatives are tied to one or more steps in the application, maintenance, and recertification process—that is, the "SNAP lifecycle." This lifecycle has seven general stages: (1) learn about SNAP, (2) acquire application, (3) application, (4) interview, (5) eligibility determination, (6) case maintenance, and (7) recertification.

We mapped the modernization initiative and application tracking measures provided on the survey onto one or two of the stages. We then analyzed how respondents reported their measurement activity and purpose for measurement in each stage. We list the number of measures collected for each stage of the lifecycle in Table III.13. Within each stage, we categorize the purpose that states cited for collecting these measures and present the number of different measures calculated for the particular stage and purpose, the number of states with the measures, and the number of measures with a standard.

States calculate most of the measures in each stage of the lifecycle, with most measures found in the application stage. They also calculate many measures within the eligibility determination, case

Table III.13. Measures and Reported Purpose by Stages of the Lifecycle

Stage in Lifecycle	Purpose of Measure[a]	Number of Respondents Stating a Purpose for Collection	Number of Different Measures Calculated	Number of States with Measures	Number Having Standards
Learn about SNAP		**6**	**4**	**6**	**0**
	Monitor use	4	3	4	0
	Monitor customer service	1	3	1	0
	Maximize program access	4	2	4	0
	Determine applicant interest	1	1	1	0
Acquire Application		**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Application		**61**	**52**	**32**	**26**
	Monitor system use	34	44	24	14
	Minimize client time required	26	37	22	12
	Maximize program access	21	32	18	10
	Distribute staff load	29	24	19	9
	Monitor accuracy and integrity	11	13	9	4
	Monitor partners	13	6	8	2
Interview		**38**	**8**	**22**	**5**
	Increase efficiency	5	3	5	0
	Monitor accuracy and integrity	24	6	17	4
	Maximize program access	22	8	11	2
	Monitor system use	6	6	6	0
	Decrease staff workload	4	5	4	0
	Monitor customer service	5	2	5	0
Eligibility Determination		**66**	**24**	**40**	**18**
	Monitor accuracy and integrity	48	21	37	17
	Monitor system use	42	21	28	13
	Maximize program access	14	18	13	12
	Monitor customer service	16	17	15	15
	Monitor staff load and training	17	14	15	8
	Monitor partners	6	2	6	1
Case Maintenance		**56**	**22**	**33**	**15**
	Monitor program management	24	21	18	15
	Minimize client time required and create efficient process	18	18	16	10
	Monitor accuracy and integrity	35	15	30	3
	Monitor staff load and training	24	14	15	7
Recertification		**33**	**18**	**27**	**8**
	Maximize program access	12	12	12	6
	Monitor accuracy and integrity	13	12	13	5
	Monitor system load	9	10	9	1
	Minimize client time required and create efficient process	13	8	13	5
	Monitor program management	16	7	14	5
	Monitor staff load and training	12	7	9	3

Note: Each respondent indicated its own purpose for collecting the measure, and these can differ across the state and local offices within a state. For example, of the 94 measures collected on the survey (excluding measures respondents wrote-in), we identified 56 (not shown) as being associated with the application stage (individual measures were categorized into up to two stages). For those 56 measures, 61 respondents provided a purpose for collecting at least one of the measures. After placing the various purposes reported into the categories listed, we found that, for 34 of the measures, one or more respondents collected the measure to monitor the use of the application system; for 26, one or more respondents collected the measure to help work toward minimizing client time required to apply.

Totals are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

maintenance, and recertification stages. The high concentration of measures in these four stages demonstrates that states focus their measurement on program administration as opposed to how individuals learn about SNAP or acquire the application; no state currently tracks the latter. Although states calculate many measures within the lifecycle stages, a smaller percentage of measures for application and recertification have associated standards than for some of the other measures (excluding the acquire application stage, for which no state calculates a measure).

Across the lifecycle stages, states focus most frequently on system use and staff load. They also calculate many measures in these stages to maximize program access and monitor accuracy and integrity. In the application and eligibility determination stages, states calculate measures related to monitoring partners the least frequently; this is important to note, because FNS does not calculate national measures or require the reporting of information related to these partnering activities. However, FNS does work with states on an individual basis to monitor some partner reimbursement for application assistance activities.

IV. LIMITATIONS TO USE OF MEASURES AND STANDARDS FOR CROSS-STATE COMPARISONS

While many states are collecting performance measures for initiatives that have the same name, these measures cannot be compared across states. Several factors related to modernization and performance measures affect cross-state comparisons. In this chapter, we focus on two aspects: contextual limitations (related to the context and environment in which the initiatives operate and the functions of the initiatives) and data limitations (related to the ability to calculate accurate, valid, and reliable measures).

Because this is an exploratory study, we face limitations in assessing how well the particular performance measures identified by the states can be compared. We asked states for basic information about all performance measures they collect related to their initiatives, but to avoid placing an excessive burden on them, we limited the number of measures for which we requested clarifying information and further details. This means that we often received incomplete information about performance measures. Also, six states did not have time available to participate, so this study does not include an analysis of their performance measurement activities.

A. Contextual Limitations

State and local offices operate and implement modernization initiatives in different contexts, which influence their choice of performance measures and standards and the observable outcomes, as well as complicating cross-state comparisons. Common contextual limitations include:

- **Initiative Scope and Features.** Initiatives differ in their size and breadth, especially whether they serve the entire state or just a region, and what services are provided through them.
- **System Limitations**. Eligibility and reporting systems are limited in their ability to capture and report measures of interest to each state.
- **Terminology Differences.** Variations in measure wording and definitions across states mean that states are measuring different performance aspects.
- **Varying Measurement Motivations.** Motivations for using measures and standards also vary across states, with some choosing measures to manage staff workloads and others setting standards to comply with legislative or other mandates.

1. Initiative Scope and Features

An initiative's scope and its features or functionalities all play a role in determining performance measures and their associated outcomes, and likewise affect the performance standards guiding an initiative. Factors that can influence the measures, and examples of them, include the following:

- **Geographic Reach**. It may be misleading to compare two states' initiatives if one serves an entire state and the other serves only a local area. For instance, states that run statewide call centers may set different standards for average number of calls handled than those running local centers.

- **Complexity of Initiative Design**. Some call centers share a phone line that rings at multiple desks, while others use software to queue and assign calls to agents. These features impact how many people can be served, regardless of the number of staff available. Outcomes for measures such as average answer speed also can differ.
- **Complexity of Technology Supporting Initiative**. For document imaging, some states put barcodes on the documents they provide to households so that when the documents are returned, they can be scanned and linked automatically to a case file. Documents clearly will be processed more quickly in these states than in those in which staff manually attach documents to cases. Also, both types of states will achieve much faster imaging speeds than those in which workers send the documents through scanners manually.
- **Presence of Complementary Initiatives**. Whether a state or locality has a waiver of face-to-face interviews and a call center to handle those interviews impacts data that feed into call center performance measures. The average wait time, answer speed, and call duration measures may achieve different levels in states that conduct phone interviews than in areas with a more limited number of services available by phone.
- **Functions of the Initiative**. States with online screening tools may have fewer applications submitted per month online if, before submitting their applications, people realize they are not eligible or would receive only a small benefit amount. Similarly, the ability to submit applications online and to print applications and mail them in could affect average number of applications submitted through the mail and online, or could increase the average number of duplicate applications if people choose to apply via both modes.
- **Community Characteristics**. States with a waiver of the face-to-face interview may encourage telephone interviews for all applicants, but individuals for whom transportation to the SNAP office is difficult may take advantage of this option more often than those with easy access. States with few urban centers may have higher take-up rates.

2. System Limitations

The efficacy of comparing performance measures across states also is affected by the eligibility and reporting systems the states use. Respondents reported three main limitations to these systems: reporting capacity, system reliability, and system capability. Each affects states differently and may present more problems for some states than others.

Some states' systems do not have the capacity to report aggregate data or generate reports that can be manipulated by users. They often combine measures across programs, such as Medicaid, SNAP, and cash welfare. Alternatively, data may be aggregated to the state level and not be available by county or local office. Other measures may be available at a point in time but not be aggregated systematically to show trends or longer-term performance; for example, hourly or real-time reports captured throughout the day may need to be aggregated manually to days and then weeks or months. Reports also may capture only one piece of a broader measure. For instance, in some cases, a state can track only clients *approved* for SNAP benefits through their food bank partners, not those that applied and were rejected.

State systems may be unreliable or face periodic outages. States reported times when they have had to enter data manually that should have been entered automatically, introducing the possibility of errors in the data.

The systems also may be limited in what they can collect or measure. Some states rely on systems that have been in place for 30 years and are limited as to the amount of data they can record or process; these may not be updated easily. Other states with newer systems might find that their use of multiple assistance programs makes it more complicated to make system modifications.

Some call centers have queues with limited capacity, which may have been set at what seemed an appropriate level when the initiative was launched but may no longer be adequate, given record-breaking participation levels. Callers trying to access such a system while the queue is full will not be counted in measures monitoring call center usage.

3. Terminology Differences

A lack of standardized terminology limits cross-state performance comparisons across all initiatives. For example, many states measure call duration as the total number of minutes a worker spends on the phone with the caller, but another state includes the time a worker spends working on the case after the caller hangs up. Another state, which has multiple call centers working independently, calculates the measure of average calls handled differently across call centers. In yet another variation, one state excludes hang-ups and wrong numbers from its calculation altogether, while other states count them as handled calls.

4. Varying Measurement Motivations

Although some states may calculate the same performance measures and standards, their motivations for doing so may vary. A performance measure designed to meet a legislative mandate in one state could be calculated differently from one used primarily for staffing purposes, and any performance standards associated with those measures likely will differ as well. For example, a state interested in ensuring that all calls are being answered may calculate the percentage of total calls handled by counting all calls that come into the call center, while a state interested in monitoring individual staff performance may include only calls that are not abandoned. This is not problematic in and of itself but can complicate comparisons of multiple states because motivations can affect how a state office prioritizes and uses its measures.

B. Data Limitations

While contextual limitations impact cross-state analysis of measures, the data used to calculate the measures also pose limits to performance evaluations and can jeopardize interpretations of individual measures. Performance measures are subject to three main types of data limitations: (1) accuracy, meaning whether data are entered and measures are calculated correctly; (2) validity, or whether states actually measure what they intend to measure; and (3) reliability, defined as the consistency in the calculation of performance measures over time and across sites. Limitations to the accuracy, validity, or reliability of measures hinder cross-state comparability and performance analyses.

1. Accuracy

When states use data to calculate performance measures, how they enter the data impacts the quality of the measure. Procedures to ensure that data are entered correctly also influence the measures' dependability. Data entered automatically likely have fewer errors and less subjectivity (assuming the systems automatically generating those data were programmed correctly). Overall, state and local offices often reported using automatic data entry performance measures, leading to a higher degree of accuracy. However, this more often tends to be true at the state than the local level, where staff typically have less control over generating reports.

2. Validity

Validity refers to whether or not states actually are measuring what they intend to measure, or if their measure includes data they do not intend to capture. Numerous respondents indicated in the survey that they had validity concerns about their measures, although few specified the reason for their concern, and it would have been too burdensome to request this information from each respondent.

3. Reliability

Data reliability addresses the consistency of how measures are calculated over time and across localities or states. To be reliable, a measure must not have changed recently—either in how it is defined or calculated. Such changes are not inherently bad but may indicate that a measure was not calculated optimally prior to the change, which thus impairs comparability over time. Changes to software or computer systems or purchases of new systems can bring about new calculations. Other changes occur because of alterations in business practices—for example, staff reductions have led to some states reducing their call center queue capacity.

In addition, a measure's definition must reflect the same concept, regardless of where it is being collected. For example, a call center in one state or locality might assume that people hanging up within 15 seconds have dialed the wrong number and so not count them as having abandoned the call. Another center in a different state using a different definition would not count a call unless it stays in the system for at least 60 seconds. For this reason, the measure must allow for a concise definition and calculation that can be compared across sites.

V. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR UNIFORMLY MEASURING INITIATIVES

FNS currently focuses its assessment of states' SNAP activities through measures of timeliness, accuracy, and participation. It requires states to meet a set percentage of applications processed within a 30-day period and maintain high levels of accuracy in eligibility and benefit determination in relation to other states. It also measures the percentage of low-income individuals participating in SNAP in each state. In 2003, FNS began to provide financial incentives to states that achieved high performance in these areas relative to other states. For those not achieving such high performance, FNS has imposed penalties and/or facilitated communication across the states so that those performing at a high level can share best practices and lessons learned with those performing at a lower level.

The timeliness, accuracy, and participation measures assess total program outcomes—they do not focus directly on how well individual initiatives are working in aid of or against the outcomes. The mix of initiatives, as well as how a particular state uses that mix, allows for different levels of performance on individual initiatives and similar results on overall program outcomes. For example, a state could achieve high levels of accuracy and also process nearly all its applications within 30 days, yet not image documents until a week after receipt or keep clients on hold for 30 minutes or more. In this situation, individual initiatives are working at subpar levels, but the efficiencies and services offered through other initiatives and processes compensate. Poor performance in some initiatives may not show up in the overarching measures unless the performance becomes so deficient that other activities no longer are able to offset them. On the other hand, a state's modernization initiatives all could be working at a desirable level of performance yet not result in desirable program outcome measures. In other words, a state could have online applications that could be seamlessly entered into the eligibility system, all client documents imaged and attached to the case within a day, and all calls to the call center answered within a few minutes, yet not meet the 30-day timeliness requirement.

In this chapter, we explore defining a compact set of measures for each initiative that states or FNS could use to assess their initiatives individually. Such a set of measures could be useful under a variety of circumstances:

- **States not meeting timeliness, accuracy, and participation measures.** If states are having difficulty in meeting the overarching outcome measures, they or FNS may want to assess their performance at the initiative level.
- **States implementing a major change to their SNAP administration.** When states first launch one or more initiatives, having a set of measures with which to assess the performance could help them identify and resolve problems quickly. In fact, FNS recently proposed a rule related to major changes in SNAP procedures that requires states to "provide descriptive information regarding the major change together with an analysis of its projected impacts on program operations" (Federal Register, v76, no 85, Tuesday, May 3, 2011, p. 24823). As part of the rule change, FNS may require the states to measure and report on specific aspects of a change. Once an initiative's success is demonstrated, measurement could cease.

- **General requirements.** FNS could require that all states implementing an initiative meet a basic set of standards, so that performance across states could be compared more easily.

However, imposing a set of standards for each initiative has both limitations and dangers. If FNS were to set requirements for specific initiatives, states would do their best to comply so as not to face penalties. If financial incentives were included for high performance, states would work hard to receive the incentive. Also, they might improve performance on the individual initiatives in general, yet not improve access, accuracy, efficiency, or customer service. Examples of limitations and dangers inherent in setting standards for each initiative include the following:

- **State administrative procedures are very different, resulting in substantially diverse performance expectations for individual initiatives across states**. For example, the functionality of some initiatives varies across states: call centers simply may direct a person to the appropriate agent or may be able to immediately address a variety of customer questions. Even though a set of measures could be applied differently based on functionality, a state able to address a wide range of questions through automated responses will achieve a different level of performance on measures such as the average call duration or average waiting time to speak to an agent than an automated response unit providing limited information, such as office hours or assistance in locating the nearest office.

- **States have different combinations of initiatives, which can affect performance on individual initiatives**. A state that has both a call center and an online system to handle account inquiries, for example, will have different call center and online account usage than a state that has only one of these. This can affect wait time for the call center and lower the likelihood of abandoned calls or callers receiving a busy signal.

- **States have limited additional resources for modernization**. If states are required to build measures into their systems retroactively, they may need to expend resources to improve existing procedures or develop new initiatives. Building measurement into a new initiative could be expensive enough to prevent a state from implementing it. For example, some states conduct much of their document imaging manually and across numerous offices. For these states, tracking the number of documents scanned and the timeframe in which they were imaged could require a process that takes more time than the imaging itself.

- **Requiring a certain level of performance could reduce creative approaches and access**. In partnering with community-based organizations, for example, requiring a certain level of performance from partners could be counterproductive. If partners must meet a certain quota for application submissions, they may submit applications for individuals they really do not expect to be eligible. This would help them to reach their quota but create unnecessary work for the state's eligibility workers. If partners must maintain a certain approval percentage for their submitted applications, they may limit the applications they submit only to those individuals of whose eligibility they are confident, denying assistance to those on the border of eligibility. Similarly, a state may try to increase the percentage of calls handled by the automated response unit and reduce the percentage needing to be transferred to agents. Navigating through the menus needed to achieve these results could become so difficult that calls stop coming into the system.

- **Several initiatives are not limited to SNAP**. Call centers and online systems, for example, usually are set up for all programs administered by an agency; these generally include both medical assistance and cash welfare, but vary by state. The use of call centers and online systems, expected duration of calls, and number of available staff all will vary for these different programs.

Based on our discussions with FNS and state, local, and community partner staff, we make the following recommendations for FNS and states when launching new initiatives:

- Performance of initiatives should be measured—states acknowledge that where measurement occurs, performance improves.
- Performance measurement should be built into the initiative during the design stage.
- States should have an expected level of performance (standard) for each measure.
- The performance measures and standards should be tied to improving overall program outcomes.

However, because of the limitations described above and in Chapter IV, and because the exploratory nature of this study did not allow us to develop a detailed understanding of every measure in every state, we are not recommending a set of performance measures for each initiative for use across all states in all situations. Instead, we present below a selected set of measures that appears useful within a broad range of state operational contexts. States implementing new initiatives could review this list for suggested measures. Although we hope most of these measures will be appropriate for the states, some may not fit within the context of a state, while others may be a close fit, but need slight modification. States will need to make these decisions based on their specific goals for implementation, the functionality of their initiative, other initiatives already in place, the unique features the initiative may entail, and the integration of SNAP with other assistance programs.

Before presenting the measures for each initiative, we describe the criteria we used in their selection. After discussing the measures, we discuss several advantages and limitations.

A. Criteria for Inclusion in the Proposed Set of Measures

We considered a variety of criteria in selecting measures. We sought measures that are both in line with FNS' four goals for modernization and can be measured reliably and without placing excessive burdens on states. In general, we preferred to choose measures that at least some states, and ideally many, already have in place. In some cases, however, we suggest measures that states are not collecting but appear feasible based on what we know about their existing measures.

1. Addressing Goals for Modernization

As discussed in Chapter I, FNS has delineated four goals for modernization: accuracy and integrity, efficiency, customer service, and program access. Many modernization initiatives achieve several of the goals. All measures in our set, either by themselves or in combination with others, also address at least one of these goals.

Ideally, the set of measures for each initiative will fully address the goals achieved by the modernization initiative. In other words, if an initiative relates to three of FNS's goals, then the full set of measures calculated also should cover each of these three goals.

2. Feasibility as a Reporting Requirement

The measures must be applicable across a range of functionalities and not impose an unnecessary burden on states. To ensure this, we assessed each measure based on the following dimensions:

- **Validity and Reliability**: Is a measure an accurate reflection of performance toward a goal? Are the required data available? Can it be measured similarly across states? Can it be measured consistently over time?
- **Efficiency**: Is it reasonable to ask the state to collect the information? How much effort will it take? Is it an automated process or something the state would track manually?

To identify our suggested set of measures, for each initiative we reviewed the full set of measures the states used, their frequency, the purposes states had for collecting them, states' sense of their accuracy, and the ability of all states to collect them.

B. Proposed Set of Measures

For each initiative, we provide the name of the measure, along with a very specific definition, a rationale, and its limitations. At times, we suggest measures not currently collected by states, although these usually are minor modifications to measures they already do collect. For this reason, where possible, we indicate the number of states currently collecting the measure. The definition we provide for the measure may not match exactly what some states are reporting—because of slight differences in how states define measures, we chose the measure we thought most appropriate for a broad range of states.

1. Application Tracking

In Chapter III, we talked about measures in relation to the SNAP life cycle. One key aspect is the application process. Without making it through the process, applicants will not become participants. It thus is important to have some sense of the stage at which applicants may fall out of the process. Because this process crosses many of the initiatives, we look separately at broad measures for tracking applications.

For application tracking, we sought measures to address the following questions:

- By what mode do applicants submit applications (mail, in-person, online, through a partner)?
- Do approval and denial rates vary by the application mode?
- How do the application modes and approval and denial rates vary by characteristics of the applicants?

In Table V.1, we present our suggested measures for application tracking. States that collect these measures often do so on a monthly basis.

The set of ten measures simply addresses the first two questions above—helping states understand the usage of the various application portals and identify any consistent differences in approval and denial rates. We recognize that the third question, related to understanding whether certain individuals have a more difficult time with the process than others, is vital to improving the application process. However, even some of the states with the most advanced computer systems and reporting ability cannot track applications at this level of detail. At this time, to suggest that states collect such measures would impose a substantial burden on them.

Table V.1. Recommended Application Tracking Measures

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments	Number of States Collecting Measure[a]
Percent of Applications Submitted by Source	Number of applications submitted through each mode (mail/fax, in-person, online/kiosk, call center, through a partner), divided by total number of applications. (Maximum of five measures, depending on activities in a state.)	Helps the state to track the means by which applicants are applying.	Even states that can track whether an application was submitted online often cannot track when it was delivered by mail separately from those dropped off at the office. These two may need to be combined.	Mail: 10 Fax: 7 Paper: 14 Online: 13 Kiosk: 2 Call center: 4 Community Partner: 8
Percent of Applications from Each Source that Are Approved	Number of applications submitted through each mode and subsequently approved, divided by number of applications submitted by mode. (Maximum of five measures, depending on activities in a state.)	Helps the state to understand whether one mode of application tends to be used by more people who are not eligible or do not complete the process.	Excludes from both the numerator and denominator the number of applications in process during the period data are collected.	Mail: 9 Fax: 0 Paper: 14 Online: 8 Kiosk: 1 Call Center: 3 Community Partner: 10

[a] Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

2. Call Centers

Because the functionality of the 28 states' call centers in the 45 responding states varies substantially, the data available and the appropriateness of each measure also vary. Some call centers are as basic as a shared phone line that rings at multiple desks. Other initiatives use software that queues calls and assigns them to agents not currently on a call. Some are solely voice response systems, while others pair automated voice responses with a function that routes harder questions to available agents. The technology supporting the phone system, purpose of the call center, and division of functions between call agents and an automated system all influence decisions about what to measure and, when measures are the same, what outcomes the state can strive to achieve.

For the proposed set of measures, we sought to answer the following three questions:

- How busy is the call center?
- Is the call center able to handle the volume?
- How long do clients wait for service?

Table V.2 provides our suggested set of measures. States may prefer to collect these at least on a daily basis.

Table V.2. Recommended Call Center Measures

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments	Number of States Collecting Measure[a]
Calls Received per Active Case	Number of calls, divided by number of active cases.	Demonstrates volume of calls in relation to caseload size, making the measure more comparable across states and regions.	Include in the numerator and denominator only the cases in the area covered by the call center. States with online account access may have much lower call volume; states with more functionality may have higher call volume. High numbers of calls from nonparticipants would not be reflected in the denominator.	Average Number of Calls per Case: 2 Number of calls received: 19
Average Number of Calls Handled per Agent	Number of calls handled by agents, divided by number of agents.	Demonstrates load on individual agent	Need to set standards based on functionality of systems—those with automated systems likely will see lengthier calls and thus have a lower expectation for number of calls possible per agent.	Number of Calls Answered/ Handled: 21
Percent of Calls Abandoned	Number of calls abandoned before reaching automated system or agent.	Potentially demonstrates dissatisfaction of callers with amount of time required to wait for service.	If recorded information is played during hold time, it may answer the caller's question and not truly be an abandoned call, even though it would be recorded as such.	22
Average Time to Answer by Automated Response Unit	Total time callers wait to access automated system, divided by total number of calls into system.	Potentially demonstrates dissatisfaction of callers with amount of time required to wait for service.	Will not apply to call centers with no automated response unit.	Average Answer Speed (not restricted to calls being answered by automated unit): 17
Average Waiting Time to Speak to Agent	Total time callers wait before talking to an agent, divided by total number of calls into system.	Potentially demonstrates dissatisfaction of callers with amount of time required to wait for service.	Should not include time spent being directed by automated unit; clock should not stop if an agent answers only to place caller on hold.	17

[a] Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Most states with call centers collect either these measures or some closely resembling them. For example, many states collect information about the number of calls they receive. By dividing the number of calls received by the size of the caseload covered by the call center, states will have a sense of whether the call volume is larger than expected based on its functionality. A call center that routes calls to agents would not expect to see more calls per case than caseworkers expected to receive for their cases before the call center was implemented. A higher average load could indicate that inefficiencies in the design of the call center exist. States also often collect the number of calls queued. By relating this figure to the number of agents taking calls, the state can learn whether the number of calls queued is too high and possibly make more staff available to take calls.

Most states with call centers also collect the remaining three measures defined here. These provide an indirect measure of client satisfaction—whether clients hang up often and whether client wait times are seen as appropriate for the types of calls the call center generally handles. Wait times are especially important to callers using cell phones, who must pay for each minute they remain on the phone even if they are receiving no services.

Not all states' call centers should be subject to these measures. For example, a call center used solely to make outgoing calls for interviews would not experience callers abandoning their calls or waiting in queues.

Also, these measures do not address the accuracy of the data provided by the call center, nor do they directly address customer satisfaction. The automated responses may provide wrong or outdated information (related to office hours or office closings, for example). Agents may act rudely or not answer the callers' questions properly. Measuring this level of customer service generally requires developing a survey for callers, which can be cost prohibitive for the states. In effect, the states would have to develop a new initiative to measure the success of the call center.

3. Online Systems

Online systems are common among states, with 33 of the 45 responding states providing the opportunity for applicants at least to fill out an application online, and some allowing them to submit the application over the Internet. Additional capabilities include online accounts that individuals can use to check the status of their application or access benefit information and systems that can accept changes to the income, expenses, or household composition reported by participants.

For the proposed set of measures, we sought to answer the following questions:

- How often is the online system used for submitting applications? For accessing account information? For submitting changes?
- Are online application submissions of comparable quality to paper submissions?
- Are customers using the online system satisfied with access and ease of use?

Table V.3 provides our suggested set of measures. It may be sufficient to calculate these measures on a monthly basis, but some may prefer a shorter time period.

About half of the states with online applications track the percentage of all applications submitted online. Few states track measures associated with their online accounts. For online

Table V.3. Recommended Online System Measures

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments	Number of States Collecting Measure[a]
Percent of Applications Received Online	Number of applications submitted online, divided by the total number of applications received.	Demonstrates use of online system in relation to other modes of application.	States may differ in how they count unsigned applications that must be printed and sent to the applicant for approval because an unsigned application does not constitute a completed application.	15
Percent of SNAP Caseload with an Online Account	Number of active SNAP accounts, divided by size of SNAP caseload.	Demonstrates use of system by entire caseload.	Defining "active" as accounts associated with ongoing cases.	0
Average Number of Logins per Account	Number of logins, divided by number of active accounts.	Demonstrates use of system by those who have accounts.	Defining "active" as accounts associated with ongoing cases.	Number of log-ins: 4
Average Number of Changes Submitted per Account	Number of changes submitted, divided by number of active accounts.	Potentially demonstrates that system is difficult to use or not meeting clients' needs.	Defining "active" as accounts associated with ongoing cases.	Number of changes submitted: 8

[a] Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

accounts, we suggest tracking the usage by looking at the percentage of participating households that have online accounts and the average number of logins the account holders make each month. We also suggest tracking the use of change reporting when that is available through the online system. If only a small percentage of its caseload is establishing accounts, a state may want to review the procedures for creating accounts. If usage remains low once accounts are established, it may be that the system is too difficult to use or does not have capabilities important to the users.

As with the call center measures, the suggested measures for online systems do not address accuracy or customer service. Online applications may be more prone to error simply because the ease of submission may allow people to work faster and forget to report some income or expenses. Online systems also may process changes incorrectly or users may be more prone to enter information incorrectly if they do not understand how the system works. Customer service can be tracked through these measures only indirectly. Given the wide general use of online technologies, lack of client use likely indicates dissatisfaction with the system for one or more reasons. Identifying those reasons could require the development of a survey.

4. Document Imaging

Document imaging currently is in place in about half of the states (24 of the 45 we interviewed). Nineteen of them did at least some measurement of their system. Several states have large document imaging centers, to which all hard copy documents are sent. Workers load stacks of these papers through large scanners that can scan thousands of documents within seconds. Clerical staff then process the scanned images by identifying the type of document and attaching it to the electronic case file. In other states, clerical staff or case workers scan those documents related to their cases. Some states are moving in the direction of allowing clients to scan their own documents and attach them to their case record. Other systems can automatically process faxes of documents that include a barcode to identify the case to which the document belongs.

For the proposed set of measures, we sought to answer the following questions:

- How quickly are documents imaged?
- How accurate is the imaging and association with a case file?

In Table V.4, we present the proposed set of measures. These measures likely will be useful only for states with document imaging systems or dedicated staff, not for states whose workers image only the documents for their own cases. States with less automated systems would need to track this data manually—a time-consuming effort.

Table V.4. Recommended Document Imaging Measures

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments	Number of States Collecting Measure[a]
Percent of Documents Scanned within 24 Hours	Number of documents successfully scanned within 24 hours of receipt, divided by total number of documents to be scanned received in the same 24-hour period.	Demonstrates ability of system to process documents efficiently. All documents should be included—even those that are damaged—to track percent requiring manual scanning.	Some states are not attempting to achieve scanning within 24 hours, so a longer timeframe may be preferable for them.	9
Percent of Documents Attached to Case within One Business Day of Being Scanned	Number of documents attached to case record by close of business on the business day following imaging of the document, divided by number of documents imaged the previous day.	Documents need to be accessible to case workers quickly for the system to work well. They are not accessible until they are attached to the file.	Not all documents may have enough information in them to attach to a case immediately. Low attachment rate could reflect errors by the person submitting the document, as well as lack of ability of staff to attach documents to cases. Does not reflect how many documents never get attached to a case.	0
Percent of Orphaned Documents	Number of documents scanned exactly four weeks prior but that are still not attached to a case, divided by daily average of scanned documents.	Tracks extent to which scanned documents could not be tied to a specific case and thus are unusable for purposes of eligibility determination and/or recertification.	Difficult to set the time period over which to measure—a worker may be able to attach the document days or weeks later if the sender provides information that can assist the worker in identifying the case.	0

[a] Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

5. Partnering (Application Assistance)

Partnering is a very common initiative. States make both formal and informal arrangements with partners and rely on them to conduct a variety of activities, including developing software systems, running call centers, and providing application assistance. In this section, we consider only partners providing application assistance, because the other types of partnerships are usually formal, entailing exhaustive sets of measures, and may be covered by the measures discussed previously for online systems and call centers.

Of the 45 responding states, 34 have partners conducting application assistance. In some states, partners are reimbursed for their expenditures or paid by the number of applications submitted, the number of approved applications submitted, or a flat fee. In Table V.5, we present our suggested measures for states partnering with organizations without paid arrangements, under the assumption that those states with paid arrangements already are tracking a sufficient amount of information. For those partners not being paid, we suggest just two measures: the number of partners providing application assistance and the number of applications submitted through the partner. The two are, in fact, examples of aggregate data that can be used to gauge and track partnering activities, rather than performance measures that imply the existence of a desired level of performance. Some states track the number of submissions of online applications that originate at a partner site. This measure is limited because organizations can assist an applicant without using the agency's dedicated online account number.

Table V.5. Recommended Partnering Measures

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments	Number of States Collecting Measure[a]
Number of Partners Providing Application Assistance	Number of partners who have formally declared they are working with the state, even though there may be no formal agreement on how they conduct this activity or how many people they are trying to serve.	Helps the state to track the organizations, eases communication of changes in procedures.	Definitions of application assistance may differ across states, making this more of a gauge for internal purposes than for comparison across states.	18
Number of Clients Assisted by Partners	Report from partners of number of clients they assisted with the application.	Helps the state understand the use of the partners by their residents and how much need there is for providing continued training to partner staff.	Not all those receiving assistance ultimately will submit their applications.	9

Note: The two items listed here are both examples of aggregate data, rather than true performance measures. We continue to use the term "measure" in reference to them for consistency with other initiatives.

[a] Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

6. Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview

Almost all states (40 of the 45 we interviewed) provided for a waiver of face-to-face interviews or conducted many interviews over the phone because of hardships faced by the client. Almost two-thirds of them were tracking some information about the waiver's success, often related to accuracy as stipulated by a given waiver.

For the proposed set of measures, we sought to answer the following questions:

- How prevalent is the use of telephone interviews? At application? At recertification?
- How accurate is the application or recertification when the interview is conducted by phone, compared to a face-to-face interview?

We present our suggested measures in Table V.6, anticipating that most states would collect them monthly.

Many states may find it difficult to calculate these measures. Although all case workers indicate whether the interview was conducted by phone or in person in the narrative associated with the case or in a field in an online system, the information is not always retained in the eligibility systems in an easily reportable way. Thus, at present, tracking the percentage of applications and recertifications for which interviews are conducted by phone could require changes to computer systems. Some states began tracking error rates based on the interview type but quickly became satisfied with the accuracy of the phone interview and stopped reviewing the data.

Table V.6. Recommended Measures for Waiver of the Face-to-Face Interview

Measure Name	Definition	Rationale	Comments	Number of States Collecting Measure[a]
Percent of Application Interviews Conducted by Telephone	Number of application interviews conducted by telephone, divided by number of application interviews.	Demonstrates the use of the waiver at application.		Percent of (all) Interviews Conducted by Phone:[b] 13
Percent of Recertification Interviews Conducted by Telephone	Number of recertification interviews conducted by telephone, divided by number of recertification interviews.	Demonstrates the use of the waiver at recertification.		Percent of (all) Interviews Conducted by Phone:[b] 13
Error Rate for Cases with Telephone Interviews	Number of cases in error that included a telephone interview, divided by number of cases in error.	Demonstrates the ability of the eligibility worker and applicant to communicate all necessary information over the phone rather than through an in-person meeting.	Error rates generally are calculated through formal quality control reviews, and some states can separate the error rate based on the interview type. For this measure to be accurate and unbiased, it likely would require a change in the QC review process—the sampling would need to account for both types of interviews.	16

[a] Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

[b] Measure combines both application and recertification interviews.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Summary of Study Findings

The primary goal of this study was to identify and describe the range of measures states and local offices are using to measure the performance of their SNAP modernization initiatives. We gathered information from 44 states and the District of Columbia, more than 100 local offices, and more than 50 community and business partners. Because it was the first study of its kind, we aimed to collect basic information about all measures the respondents were collecting and detailed information about select measures. The key findings are as follows:

- **States and local offices are collecting a large number of measures**. Across the eight modernization initiatives we examined, states and local offices reported using 89 different performance measures to assess their activities.
- **Standards are less common and benchmarks and incentives are rare**. Of these 89 measures, states reported developing performance standards for 39 measures; of those, only a few standards are assigned benchmarks and incentives to gauge their success. So states are setting a desired level of staff achievement for about half of their measures. In a few cases, they also identify a rate or percentage of time within which they can reasonably hope to reach that level; in a few cases, they provide some type of reward if the benchmark is met or a penalty if it is not.
- **Measures are most commonly used for technology-related initiatives**. The most common measures are those for call centers and online systems. The technology built into the systems make it easier to collect and report performance measures. Thus, states with more technology-driven initiatives have many more performance measures than states without such initiatives.
- **In most states, staff are driven by federal accuracy and timeliness requirements**. States are very focused on meeting FNS requirements for accuracy and timeliness. When necessary, they will allow performance on individual initiatives to fall below ideal levels (such as call center wait time) to focus staff resources on meeting these federal benchmarks.
- **If FNS requires a measure, states will most likely comply**. States will divert resources to meet federal requirements. When incentives are available, such as for high accuracy and timeliness rates, they are motivated to outperform other states to receive the incentive.
- **When an initiative is launched, performance measurement can assess whether it is working as designed**. In the early stages of implementation, reports can indicate that each piece of the initiative is performing its particular function as planned. Along with providing proof of success to stakeholders, this can help secure funding for continued operations.
- **As initiatives mature, performance measurement allows for monitoring**. Once staff are confident that the initiative is working as designed, they can analyze trends and identify potential problems through periodic reviews of reports. However, excessive monitoring can create unnecessary work for staff if they need to perform additional tasks purely for tracking purposes.

- **As a measurement matures, real-time and daily reports help allocate limited staff resources**. When initiatives are operating as planned, managers desire improvements in measures that allow them to track operations daily or in real time. Measures calculated at such short intervals can help managers assign staff to the highest priority tasks at each point in time.

B. Setting Measurement Requirements: Recommendations and Limitations

Measuring the performance of initiatives plays a key role in ensuring their success. When launching an initiative, states already should have considered and built in measures to assess its performance. They should have set some level of expected performance, which should be tied to meeting the overarching goals of providing accurate benefits in a timely fashion.

With many states developing and launching broadly similar initiatives, sharing their lessons learned and discussing expectations for performance can help later-adopting states avoid the pitfalls faced by the early adopters. However, each state must operate SNAP within its own unique environment. They differ in the computer capabilities supporting their eligibility systems, assistance programs included in those systems, combinations of modernization initiatives, functionalities of their modernization initiatives, and abilities to calculate measures. Given each state's unique operational environment, FNS and state staff must be cautious in setting expectations for a modernization initiative based on the performance achieved by other states.

In this report, we provide a set of measures that each state could consider in light of their goals, technology, and circumstances for assessing a new initiative's performance. This set of measures is intended to provide a comprehensive view of the initiative's performance without being overly burdensome to collect.

C. Next Steps

In collecting the data for this study, we sought to identify the broad range of measures that states are using in implementing a fairly large set of initiatives. We then sought detailed information on a limited set of measures within each state and local agency. Collecting this level of detail for each measure would have placed an extraordinary burden on most of these organizations.

In identifying the measures on which to follow up for additional details, we focused on those measures that states indicated were most important to them. Thus, the measures for which we sought more detail varied accordingly across states and local agencies. Although multiple states and local agencies may have collected a measure with the same name, we do not have the same level of detail on the measures from each of the states collecting it. This approach makes it difficult to identify the precise differences in the definitions and accurately compare results for the measures across states. Differences in results, even in states with the same set of initiatives and functionalities, may be due to the difference in the definition, rather than their performance.

Given this basic understanding of the measures that states are collecting for each initiative, follow-up studies could focus on a key set of measures for each. The details could be gathered from each state collecting the measure to identify the differences more precisely and allow for better cross-state comparison (although it still will be limited by the variation in functionalities and accompanying initiatives).

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GLOSSARY

Modernization Initiatives

Call Centers: A point of access whereby individuals dial a telephone number to obtain information or some other service, by listening to a recording, talking to a person, and/or interacting with a computer. Within a state, call centers may operate statewide or regionally, and may place calls, receive calls, or both. Each call center may have a different combination of functions, including: answering basic questions about a program or a specific case, change reporting, screening for potential eligibility, and taking applications. Caseworkers at call centers may also process information they receive including faxes or reported changes.

Online Systems: An internet site that an individual may access and interact with in order to submit or receive information about their potential eligibility or existing SNAP case (not a website that only provides general information about a program). Online systems may allow users to screen for potential eligibility, submit applications online, or check the status of/report changes to an existing case. Some online applications integrate directly with state eligibility determination software, while others are separate tools. In some states, partners (see below) have special levels of access to the online system to enable them to serve the applicants they assist.

Document Imaging: A system or a process whereby paper documents are scanned and an electronic version is created and stored for future access.

Kiosks: A computer terminal located in the community or an office (but not in a home) where an individual may access one or more functions of an online system.

Partnering: Formal relationships or services that the SNAP agency solicits from non-governmental groups. The solicitation may be in the form of a contract, memorandum of understanding, or another type of request.

Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview: Formal approval received from FNS to perform interviews by telephone rather than in person and application, recertification, or both.

Shortened Interview: Use of an abbreviated interview protocol for certain types of households based on their characteristics.

Measurement Terminology

Data Element: An instance of an activity or characteristic that is the basis of aggregate data and performance measure calculations.

Aggregate Data: Counts of data elements, such as the number of observations.

Performance Measure: Calculation used to assess an activity and is typically displayed as percentages and averages.

Performance Standards: Include both *standards* and *benchmarks*. A standard is the desired outcome of an activity—for example answering a call within three minutes, while a benchmark is the desired rate of success—for example answering at least 80 percent of calls within three minutes.

APPENDIX A

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND AGGREGATE DATA

Table A.1. Measures and Aggregate Data for Call Centers

Number of States with Call Center: 28

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent Calls Abandoned	22
Average Calls Handled	22
Average Hold Time	21
Average Call Duration	21
Percent of Total Calls Handled	18
Average Waiting Time (to Speak to Agent)	17
Average Answer Speed	17
Average Queue Time	16
Average Staff on Phones	15
Average Time Prior to Abandonment	15
Average After-Call Work Time by Staff	13
Percent of Queued Calls Handled	13
Percent of Calls Completed in the Computer Phone System	12
Percent of Changes Processed	10
Average Time to Process Change	10
Average Time to De-Queue	7
Percent of Calls Requesting Agent	4
Average Number of Calls per Case	2
Percent of Screened Individuals Potentially Eligible: Call Center	1
Percent of Screenings Resulting in Applicant Receiving Benefits: Call Center	1
Percent of Screenings Resulting in Application Submission: Call Center	1
Average Calls by Reason for the Call	1
Average Completion Length	1
Average Customer Satisfaction Rating	1
Average Time to Process Changes and Documents	1
Call Response	1
Percent of Agents Assigned to Phones Available to Take Calls	1
Percent of Calls Busy	1
Percent of Documents Processed within 30 Days	1
Percent of Needs Met through Service Referral or Actions Taken	1
Percent of Voicemail Calls	1
Percentage Answered in Less than Three Minutes	1
Percentage of Calls Within Their Categories of Time Intervals	1
Standard of Promptness for Applications and Recertifications	1
Aggregate Data	
Number of Calls Abandoned	23
Number of Calls Answered/Handled	21
Number of Calls (In Flow)	20
Number of Calls Queued	20
Number of Calls Received	19
Number of Agents Assigned to Phones	17
Number of Changes Received	14
Number of Changes Processed	13

Table A.1 (*continued*)

Number of Calls Receiving Busy Signal/Unable to Connect with Phone System	12
Number of Hang-ups	10
Number of Calls Transferred to Agent	10
Number of Calls Completed in Computer Phone System	9
Number of Clients Accessing Computer Phone System Data	8
Number of Calls Not Completed in Computer Phone System	6
Number of Applications Processed: Call Center	6
Number of Cases Pending Benefit Decision: Call Center	5
Number of Client Calls Returned	4
Maximum Time to Abandon	1
Maximum Time to Answer	1
Number of Calls Answered in English (In Service Area)	1
Number of Calls Answered in English (Outside Service Area)	1
Number of Calls Answered in English (Total)	1
Number of Calls Offered	1
Number of Clients Reporting Case Change	1
Number of Clients Reporting Verifications Turned In	1
Number pf Clients Requesting Case Status	1
Number of LEP (Language) Calls	1
Number of Referrals Made	1
Number of Transactions	1
Number of Trips Scheduled	1
Total Calls Receiving a Queue Full Message	1
Total Number of Calls Unanswered	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.2. Measures and Aggregate Data for Online Systems

Number of States with Online System: 33

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent of Applications Received	15
Average Number Submitted per Month	12
Average Number of Screenings Completed: Online	9
Average Number of Screenings Started: Online	8
Average Number Started per Month	8
Average Number of Changes Submitted per Month	7
Percent of Users Selecting Spanish Language	6
Percent of Screened Individuals Potentially Eligible: Online	6
Average Level of Benefits	6
Average Number of Accounts Created per Month	6
Percent of Applicants Who Received Help to Apply Online	5
Percent of Screenings Resulting in Application Submission: Online	4
Percent of Applicants with Hardship Reason for Requesting Phone Interviews	4
Average Number of Log-ins per Month	3
Percent Reporting Easy Experience to Complete Application	2
Percent Who Would Use Again	2
Percent of Multiple Applications	2
Average Time to Complete Screening	1
Percent of Screenings Resulting in Applicant Receiving Benefits: Online	1
Average Number of Online Applications	1
Average Time to Complete Online Application	1
Average Time to Complete Online Screening	1
Percent of applications received outside business hours	1
Percent of applications started online that were submitted	1
Percent of First-Time Applications Approved	1
Percent of First-Time Applications Denied	1
Percent of Multiple Applications: Online	1
Aggregate Data	
Number of Online Screenings Completed: Online	13
Number of Applications Started	12
Number of Online Screenings Started: Online	9
Number of Changes Submitted	8
Number of Abandoned Applications	7
Number of Online Accounts Created	7
Number of Applicants who Received Help to Apply Online	6
Number of Log-ins	4
Number of Applications Downloaded	3
Number of One-page/Requests for Assistance Submitted	3
Number of First-Time Applications Approved	3
Number of Clients Requesting Help to Apply Online	3
Number of Applications Submitted With All Application Questions Answered	3

Table A.2 (*continued*)

Number of Applicants who did not Receive Help to Apply Online	3
Number of Changes Started	3
Number of Online Applications Submitted	3
Total Number of Applications Submitted per Month	2
Number of First-Time Applications Denied	2
Number of Applications Submitted	2
How Long Users Spent on Each Page of the Online Application	1
Number of Accounts Created	1
Number of Applicants Screened as Potentially Eligible	1
Number of Applications in Progress	1
Number of Applications Received	1
Number of Applications Submitted and Transferred	1
Number of Applications Submitted for Each Type of Program	1
Number of Multiple Applications	1
Number of One-Page Requests for Assistance Submitted	1
Number of Online Applications Submitted per Month	1
Number of Online Instant Messaging/Chats	1
Number of Referrals From 311 Online	1
Number of Users Accessing a Specific Page	1
Number Submitted per Day	1
Percent Completed After Hours	1
Total Number of Website Hits per Month	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.3. Measures and Aggregate Data for Document Imaging

Number of States with Document Imaging: 24

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent of Documents Scanned	9
Average Processing Time	9
Percent of Documents Received by Fax	5
Percent of Documents Received by Mail	4
Percent of Documents Imaged by Next Business Day	1
Percent of Documents Imaged Same-Day	1
Percent of Documents Scanned within Standard of Promptness	1
Ratio of Staff to Documents Scanned	1
Aggregate Data	
Number of Documents Scanned	18
Number of Documents Received	12
Number of Documents Processed	11
Number of Tasks Completed	11
Number of Documents Received: Mail	7
Number of Documents Received: Other Electronic	6
Number of Alerts Processed	6
Number of Documents Received: Fax	5
Amount of days in queue to be indexed	1
Number Indexed for a Document Type	1
number of barcode errors	1
Number of documents attached	1
Number of documents in Error Queue	1
Number of documents pending indexing	1
Number of Documents Per Case	1
Number of documents scanned but not attached	1
Number of Documents Tagged to a Case	1
Number of Queues with Over 1,000 Documents	1
Number of staff assigned to scanning	1
Percent of documents attached in a timely manner	1
Time Between Scanning and Indexing	1
Time Between Scanning and Tagging	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.4. Measures and Aggregate Data for Kiosks

Number of States with Kiosks: 14

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent of Screenings Resulting in Application Submission: Kiosk	1
Aggregate Data	
Number of Uses to Submit Changes	3
Number of Uses to Access Online Account	2
Number of Screenings Completed: Kiosk	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.5. Measures and Aggregate Data for Partnering

Number of States with Partners: 34

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent of Partners Providing Application Assistance	10
Average Cost of Partner Arrangement	5
Percent of Partners Providing Access to Terminals/Kiosks	2
Aggregate Data	
Number of Partners	20
Number Providing Application Assistance	18
Number Accepting Applications	17
Number of Applications Received per Partner	15
Number Clients Assisted per Partner	9
Number with Terminals/Kiosks to Submit Application	7
Number of Clients Assisted	2
Number of Applications Completed	1
Number of Applications Submitted per Month	1
Number of Clients Educated	1
Number of Clients served	1
Number of Days Applications are Pending	1
Number of Outreach Events	1
Number of Screenings per Partner	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.6. Measures and Aggregate Data for Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview

Number of States with Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview: 40

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Error Rate for Cases with Telephone Interviews	16
Error Rate for Cases with Face to Face Interviews	14
Percent of Interviews Conducted by Telephone	13
Percent of Interviews Conducted Face to Face	13
Percent that are Missed and have Notice Mailed	11
Percent of Telephone Interview Requests Honored	5
Average Length of Interview	2
Average Total Interviews Per Worker	1
Percent of Closures Related to Telephone Interview	1
Percent of Interviews Conducted by Telephone for Redeterminations	1
Percent of Interviews that are automated	1
Percentage of Interviews Conducted by Phone without Documented Hardship Reason	1
Aggregate Data	
Total Number of Interviews	20
Number of Redetermination Interviews	19
Number of Face To Face Interviews	13
Number of Telephone Interviews	13
Number of Applicants Requesting a Phone Interview	12
Number of Missed Interviews	11
Notice of Missed Interview Mailed	11
Number of Applicants Requesting an In-Person Interview	8
Number of Home Visit Interviews	6
Number of Applicants who Did Not Answer to Type of Interview Requested	4
Number of Times Unable to Schedule Interview with Applicant	3

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.7. Measures and Aggregate Data for Shortened Interview

Number of States with Waiver of Shortened Interview: 12

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent of Clients Electing Shortened Interview	2
Percent of Total Interviews that Are Shortened	2
Aggregate Data	
Number of Shortened Interviews	3
Number of Clients with Shortened Interviews	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.8. Measures and Aggregate Data for Complete Expedited Applications Online

Number of States with Ability to Complete Expedited Applications Online: 20

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent of Applications Approved: Online All	10
Percent of Applications Approved: Online Expedited	9
Aggregate Data	
Number of Expedited Applications Received Online	9
Number of Applications Approved: Online Expedited	9
Number of Applications Approved: Online All	5

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Table A.9. Measures and Aggregate Data for Application Tracking

Number of States with Application Tracking: 45

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Performance Measures	
Percent Agency Caused Errors	41
Percent Client Caused Errors	41
Percent Errors with Reported Information Disregarded	40
Percent Errors where Information was Incorrect	40
Percent Errors where Policy was Incorrectly Applied	39
Percent Errors where Staff Failed to Follow-up on Inconsistent Data	39
Percent Errors where Information was Not Reported	39
Percent All Other Errors	38
Error Rate by Source	36
Percent of Total Applications Approved	33
Average Benefit Amount (for those eligible)	29
Percent of Complete Applications Denied	28
Percent of Total Recertifications Approved	28
Average Processing Time of Application Decision	27
Percent of Applicants that Appear Eligible for Expedited Benefits	21
Percent of Complete Recertifications Denied	20
Percent of Initial Applications Denied	19
Average Processing Time of Recertification Decision	19
Percent of Recertifications Denied	18
Percent of Applications Approved After Paper Submission to Local Office	14
Percent of Applications Not Completed	14
Percent of Applications: Paper Submission to Local Office	14
Percent of Recertifications Approved After Paper Submission to Local Office	13
Percent of Applications: Online	13
Percent of Recertifications: Paper Submission to Local Office	12
Percent of Community Partner Applications Approved	10
Percent of Mailed Recertifications Approved	10
Percent of Applications: Mailed	10
Percent of Mailed Applications Approved	9
Percent of Online Applications Approved	8
Percent of Applications: Community Partner	8
Percent of Applications with Incomplete Information	8
Percent of Applications: Faxed	7
Percent of Recertifications: Mailed	7
Percent of Online Recertifications Denied for Failure to Submit Documentation	6
Percent of One-page/Requests for Assistance Denied	6
Percent of Recertifications with Incomplete Information	6
Percent of Community Partner Recertifications Approved	5
Percent of Recertifications: Online	5
Percent of Recertifications: Faxed	5
Percent of Online Applications Denied for Failure to Submit Documentation	5

Table A.9 *(continued)*

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Percent of Applications: Call Center	4
Percent of Online Applications Denied for Failure to Complete Interview	4
Percent of Online Recertifications Approved	3
Percent of Call Center Applications Approved	3
Percent of Call Center Recertifications Approved	3
Percent of Recertifications: Community Partner	3
Percent of Recertifications: Call Center	3
Timeliness Rate	3
Percent of Applications: Kiosk	2
Average Timeliness Rate: Approvals	2
Average Timeliness Rate: Recertifications	2
Payment Accuracy Rate	2
Percent of Applications Approved Timely	2
Percent of Kiosk Applications Approved	1
Percent of Online Recertifications Denied for Failure to Complete Interview	1
Case Error Rate	1
Negative Error Rates by County	1
Percent of Accurate Cases	1
Percent of Cases Reviewed that Are Accurate	1
Percent of Negative Errors	1
QA Requirements Associated to Denial Decisions	1
QC / Case Review Timeliness Measure	1
QC Error Rate	1
QC Timeliness Measures	1
Timeliness Portion Of Case Review and QC Process	1
Percent of Applications Denied	1
Percent of Applications Pending	1
Percent Change in Applications Received by County	1
Percent of Applications Received Online	1
Percent of Applications: Expedited	1
Percent of Applications: In-Office	1
Percent of Total Recertifications Completed	1
Application Currency	1
Application Processing Time for Approvals for Initial Applications	1
Average Days to Process Approved Applications	1
Average Processing Time of Approvals (Application And Recertifications Combined)	1
Claims Processing Currency	1
Expedited Currency	1
Expedited Standard of Promptness Rate (County/Worker Only)	1
Percent of Applications Processed Timely	1
Percent of Approved Applications Processed within 7, 15, 30, And 45 Days	1
Percent of Documents Processed Within 30 Days	1
Percent of Recertifications Approved Timely	1
Percent of Unexcused Applications Overdue at End of Month	1

Table A.9 *(continued)*

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Unexpedited Standard of Promptness Rate (County/Worker Only)	1
Aggregate Data	
Number of Agency Caused Errors	40
Number of Errors where Policy was Incorrectly Applied	39
Number of Errors with Reported Information Disregarded	39
Number of Client Caused Errors	37
Number of Errors where Information was Incorrect	36
Number of Errors where Information was Not Reported	36
Number of Errors where Staff Failed to Follow-up on Inconsistent Data	35
Number of All Other Errors	35
Total Number of Applications Completed	30
Total Number of Recertifications Completed	27
Number of Applications: Paper Submission to Local Office	21
Total Number of Applications Started	19
Number of Applications Approved: Paper Submission to Local Office	17
Number of Recertifications Approved: Paper Submission to Local Office	17
Number of Applications: Online	17
Number of Applications Denied: Paper Submissions to Local Office	17
Number of Recertifications Denied: Paper Submissions to Local Office	16
Total Number of Recertifications Started	15
Number of Cases with Complete Verification Submitted	15
Number of Applications Approved: Face to Face Interviewed	14
Number of Recertifications Approved: Face to Face Interviewed	14
Number of Applications Approved: Phone Interviewed	14
Number of Recertifications: Paper Submission to Local Office	14
Number of Recertifications Approved: Phone Interviewed	13
Number of Applications: Mailed	13
Number of Recertifications: Mailed	11
Number of Recertifications Approved: Mailed	10
Number of Applications Approved: Community Partner	9
Number of Applications Approved: Mailed	9
Number of Applications: Community Partner	9
Number of Requests for Assistance/One-page Applications	9
Number of Applications Denied: Community Partner	9
Number of Applications Approved: Online	7
Number of Recertifications: Online	7
Number of Applications: Faxed	7
Number of Applications Denied: Mailed	7
Number of Recertifications Denied: Mailed	7
Number of Recertifications: Community Partner	6
Number of Applications Denied: Online	6
Number of Recertifications Approved: Community Partner	5
Number of Applications Approved: Faxed	5
Number of Recertifications: Faxed	5
Number of Recertifications Denied: Online	5

Table A.9 *(continued)*

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Number of Applications Denied: Faxed	5
Number of Recertifications Denied: Faxed	5
Number of Recertifications Approved: Faxed	4
Number of Recertifications Denied: Community Partner	4
Number of Applications Approved: Call Center	3
Number of Recertifications Approved: Call Center	3
Number of Applications: Kiosk	3
Number of Applications: Call Center	3
Number of Recertifications: Call Center	3
Number of Applications Denied: Call Center	3
Total Number of Applications Approved	3
Total Number of Recertifications Approved	3
Number of Applications Denied	3
Number of Recertifications Approved: Online	2
Number of Recertifications Denied: Call Center	2
Number of Applications Approved	2
Number of Applications Approved: Kiosk	1
Number of Applications Denied: Kiosk	1
Contributing Causes of Errors	1
Number of Applications Approved: Total	1
Number of Expedited Applications Approved	1
Number of Initial Applications Approved Over 30 Days	1
Number of Second Party Reviews	1
Number of Total Applications and Recertifications Approved	1
Denials for Expedited Applications by Reason	1
Number of Applications Denied by Denial Reason	1
Number of Applications Denied: Total	1
Number of Expedited Applications Denied	1
Number of Recertifications Denied	1
Number of SNAP Cases Closed by Closure Reason	1
Total Number of Applications Denied	1
Total Number of Recertifications Denied	1
Number of Applicants that Appear Eligible for Expedited Benefits	1
Number of Applications Not Submitted	1
Number of Applications Submitted Outside Business Hours	1
Number of Applications that Appear Eligible for Expedited Benefits	1
Number of Applications with Incomplete Information	1
Number of Applications Withdrawn by Applicant	1
Number of Applications Withdrawn by System	1
Number of Cases Pending	1
Number of Cases Withdrawn	1
Number of Registered Applications	1
Number of Applications Online	1
Number of Applications Pending Decision	1
Number of Applications Processed: Paper Submission to Local Office	1

Table A.9 *(continued)*

Name of Performance Measure or Aggregate Data	Number of States with Measure or Aggregate Data
Number of Applications Received	1
Number of Expedited Applications Pending	1
Number of Pending Applications	1
Number of Recertifications Approved Over 30 Days	1
Number of Recertifications Processed: Paper Submission to Local Office	1
Number of Resurrected Applications	1
Total Calls Busy	1
Total Number of Applications	1
Total Number of Applications To Be Processed	1
Total Number of Recertifications	1
Applications in Intake Mode over 30 days	1
Applications Not Timely	1
Applications Process Time 0-7 Days	1
Applications Process Time 8-29 Days	1
Number of Applicants Pre-Screened, by Worker	1
Number of Applications that Are Not Processed Timely	1
Number of Cases Ready To Go in <25 Days, by Worker	1
Number of Cases Ready To Go in >24 Days/Resurrected, by Worker	1
Number of Cases Ready To Go, by Worker	1
Number of Days Application Pending	1
Number of Expedited Applications Approved in 5 Days or Less	1
Number of Expedited Applications Approved or Rejected in More than 5 Days	1
Number of Expedited Applications Pended in 5 Days or More	1
Number of Overdue Applications	1
Pending Applications by Days in Process	1
Pending Cases >30 Days, by Worker	1
Processing Time Report	1
Total Number of Pending Cases, by Worker	1

Note: Counts are based on responses from the 45 states that participated in the study.

Although all states collect measures for the purposes of quality control, we did not require states to report these measures when they did not do so for purposes outside of the federal requirements. The totals of the quality control-based measures reflect a combination of those who collect them for federal reviews and those who collect them for their own purposes.

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