

Appendix E. Updated National Scan Memorandum

Memorandum



Date: August 5, 2022

To: Andrew Burns

From: Carla Bozzolo, Chrissy, Steigelman, and Nina Page

Subject: Task 12.1: Updated National Scan of States' Use of Mobile Communication Strategies (MCS) To Enhance SNAP Participant Experiences

This memorandum summarizes States' use of mobile communication strategies (MCS) in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for a study being conducted for the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).¹ During the first phase of data collection in 2018, Insight collected information on each State's MCS to build an understanding of how States were using mobile technologies to enhance SNAP participant experiences. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused many State and local SNAP offices to close their physical locations. Closures resulted in the need for SNAP participants to conduct much of their SNAP-related business remotely (either electronically or via mail) which increased reliance on MCS. In 2022, Insight updated the national scan to understand the progress in MCS implementation that had occurred since the previous scan in 2018.

Section A of this memorandum provides background information on MCS. Section B gives an overview of the methodological approach and data sources used to inform the national scan. Section C summarizes the findings from the national scan and presents additional context for MCS. Section D offers high level conclusions and key takeaways.

A. Overview of the Use of MCS in SNAP

This section provides a brief overview of the use of MCS in SNAP and the definition of MCS used for this project.

1. Background on the Modernization of SNAP Communication Channels

In recent years, many State SNAP agencies have enhanced their use of MCS to enable SNAP clients (applicants and participants) to access information about SNAP, receive alerts and notifications, and perform certain case management functions. Given the proliferation of mobile devices and advancements in mobile technology, these MCS offer users an alternative means of interacting with SNAP agencies—from their current locations and on their own time. If designed and executed well, these tools and their supporting processes could improve client access and increase client satisfaction. States' use of MCS could also streamline case management activities by decreasing the amount of paperwork and follow-up with participants, reducing the administrative burden on State SNAP agencies.

¹ For the purposes of this memorandum, "States" refers to all States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

2. Definition of MCS

For the purposes of this project, MCS include (1) mobile apps, (2) text messaging, and/or (3) mobile-optimized websites that facilitate communication between clients and SNAP agencies.

- ▶ **Mobile apps.** Mobile apps are software applications that can be downloaded for use on a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet. These apps enable users to upload documents (e.g., recertification information); review benefit/case information (e.g., balance inquiry, case status, recent transactions); communicate with the SNAP agency (e.g., submit questions to the SNAP agency); apply or recertify for SNAP; and receive push notifications from SNAP.
- ▶ **Text messaging.** Text messaging can include sending participants notifications (e.g., appointment alerts, verification due dates); sharing program information with participants (e.g., announcements, resources, an office's location and business hours); and communicating with participants in real time (e.g., the participant's number in a queue).
- ▶ **Mobile-optimized websites.** Mobile-optimized websites are designed specifically to be used on a mobile device. These websites are designed to make it easier for a user to view the website information on a smaller screen (e.g., larger buttons, reformatted images, drop-down menus).

For the purposes of this study, the definition of MCS does not include online portals or internet-based applications that are not mobile optimized.

B. Methodological Approach

This section describes the data collection and analysis approach for updating the national scan information that was collected in 2018. A description of each phase of data collection follows.

1. Data Collection

Phase 1: Conduct national scan of MCS (2018)

Insight surveyed State SNAP agencies to determine whether they were using (1) mobile app(s), (2) text messaging, and/or (3) a mobile-optimized website or were planning to use them within the next two years. The following sources were used to determine the status of each.

- ▶ FNS SNAP State Options report on mobile technology
- ▶ FNS SNAP Process and Technology Improvement Grants (PTIGs)
- ▶ Google's Mobile-Friendly Test tool
- ▶ Interviews with FNS staff at national and regional offices
- ▶ Interviews with the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA)
- ▶ E-notice waivers
- ▶ State SNAP websites and available publications about States' MCS

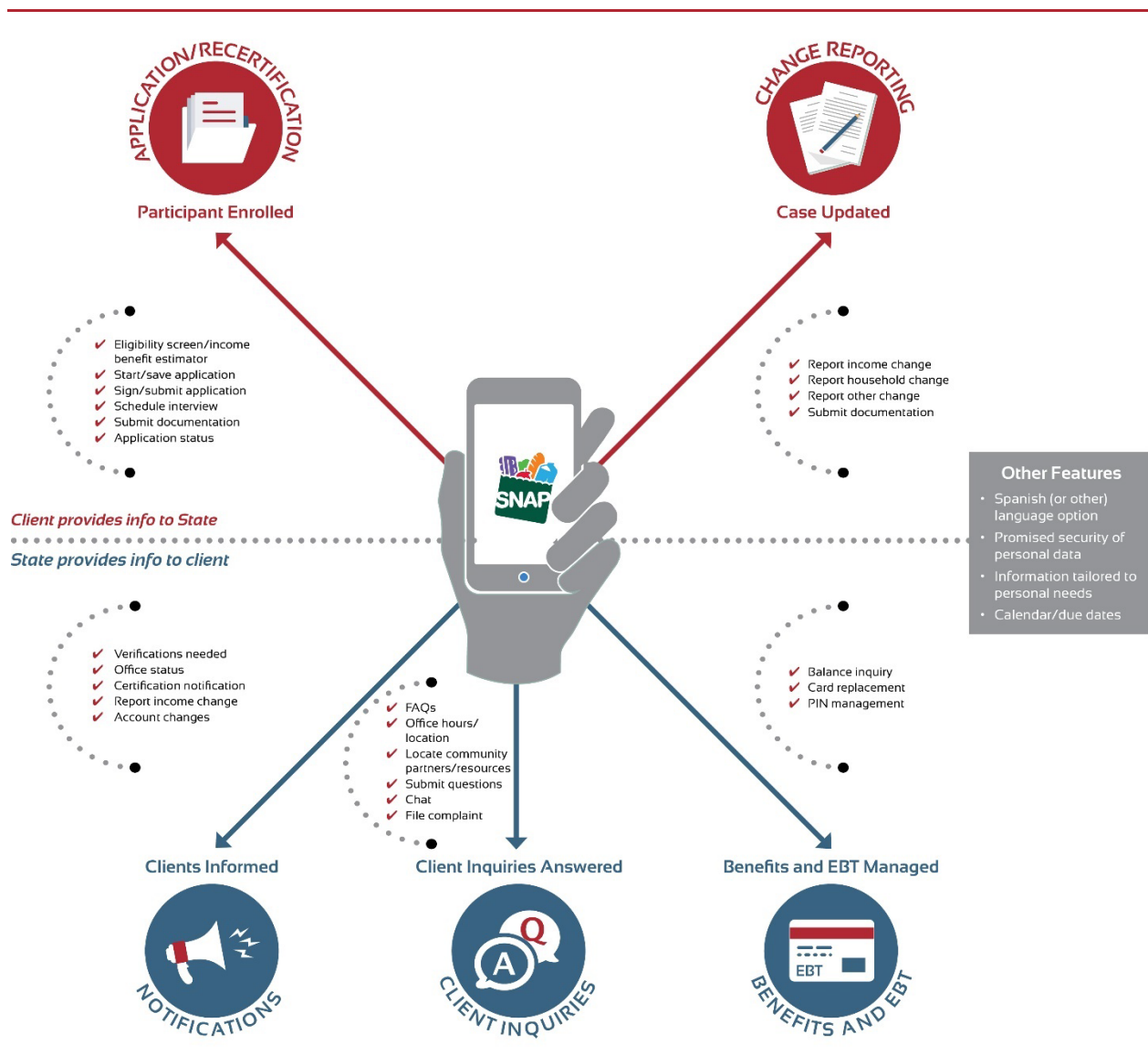
Insight then sought to review and understand the range of functionalities each State's MCS offered and determined that State SNAP MCS fell within one of the following domains: (1) application/recertification, (2) benefits and electronic benefits transfer (EBT), (3) change reporting, (4) client

inquiries, and (5) notifications (see figure 1). When available, Insight identified the functionalities and components of each State’s MCS based on information provided by FNS regional offices and publicly available information from following sources:

- ▶ State documentation provided by FNS regional offices
- ▶ Mobile app stores
- ▶ AppAdvice.com
- ▶ Publicly available secondary data sources on MCS and other mobile technologies in States (such as reports from APHSA)

For more details related to these data sources and how they were used please refer to appendix E.1.

Figure 1. List of MCS Design and Functionality Features



Phase 2: Update national scan of MCS and identify States' MCS progress (2022)

To understand States' MCS progress since 2018, Insight relied on two sources of information. First, Insight reviewed publicly available information and information provided by FNS. Second, Insight conducted case studies of five sites, which provided detailed information for Kentucky, Texas, Mississippi, Massachusetts, and New York City in Summer and Fall 2021. Insight used this information to update the MCS type and functionalities for these five State agencies. Insight's process for updating the remaining State MCS types and functionalities is described below.

- ▶ **Updating MCS type.** To update which MCS types States made available to their clients, Insight reviewed State SNAP agency websites, PTIGs awarded from 2019 to 2021 (descriptions provided by FNS), Google Mobile-Friendly Test tool, and published literature from 2019 to early 2022. Insight also emailed FNS regional offices to verify types of MCS.
- ▶ **Updating functionalities.** To update information on features available to SNAP clients via MCS, Insight scanned State SNAP agency websites and reviewed mobile app stores and AppAdvice.com.

2. Limitations

Insight encountered several limitations with the methodology employed for the national scan and national scan update:

- ▶ **Reliance on secondary data sources.** A primary limitation to this study is the reliance on secondary sources of information. During the initial stage of the project, Insight was unable to follow-up with each State to confirm its use of MCS. Additionally, some of the data sources Insight relied may not have accurately reflected the current status of each State's MCS. For example, there has been no update to the State Options report since October 1, 2018.
- ▶ **Missing or incomplete data.** Insight was unable to identify certain types of status and functionality. Because Insight did not conduct in-depth interviews with Regional Offices during the national scan update, details about the full functionality updates are limited. There may be features currently available via SNAP MCS – that were not available in 2018 – that are not reflected in this national scan update. This is also reflected in our collection of MCS status, particularly which MCS were under development. Insight reached out to all FNS Regional Offices and to State SNAP agencies to verify information. Some did not reply to our requests. Accordingly, some information reported as “not available” may reflect underreporting (i.e., there may be some MCS that are reported as “not available” that were under development as of May 2022).

C. National Scan of States' Use of MCS

This section provides an overview from the national scan of States' use of MCS; it includes key findings from an assessment of how States' use of MCS progressed from 2018 to 2022 and a discussion of the variations in how States have deployed MCS.

1. Key Findings From National Scan Pre- and Post-COVID

State use of MCS varied substantially across the Nation (see figure 2), with some progress across all three MCS types; for example—

- ▶ **Few States had fully implemented a comprehensive MCS.** While only eight States had all three types of MCS components, this was a more than two-and-a-half-fold increase from 2018 (from three States to eight States). These States include California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York City, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Texas. Four additional States with apps under development will have all three MCS types once they are implemented.
- ▶ **About half of all States made progress in at least one MCS type. Since the initial scan in 2018,** 26 States made progress in at least one MCS type. Ten States added texting, four States added an app, and 12 States optimized their website.
- ▶ **Few States had implemented mobile apps, and several had apps under development.** Only 11 States had implemented a mobile app (an increase from eight States in 2018), but six other States were in the process of developing apps.
- ▶ **Some States had implemented text messaging, and a few had plans to implement text messaging in the future.** 25 States were actively using text messaging to connect with SNAP participants (an increase of 10 States from 2018), and five more were working to develop such capabilities.
- ▶ **Most States had optimized their websites for mobile devices.** 49 States had at least portions of their SNAP websites optimized for mobile devices (an increase from 37 States in 2018). Eight of these were partially optimized with part of the website mobile-optimized such as the homepage, and part not optimized such as the account page.

Figure 2 shows the States that had (1) any active or under development MCS (mobile app, text messaging capability, and/or mobile-optimized website), (2) an active or under development mobile app, (3) active or under development text messaging capability, and (4) an active or under development mobile-optimized website.

The most common functionalities across MCS types were receiving information tailored to personal needs, certification notifications, and account changes. However, the functions offered by a State largely depended on whether their MCS included a mobile app, text messaging, or mobile-optimized website. States with mobile apps allowed SNAP participants to conduct a broad range of activities such as checking application status (10 of 11 States), submitting documentation (6 of 11 States), and receiving information tailored to personal needs (9 of 11 States). States with text messaging capability used it to send clients tailored information (13 of 25 States), account change information (17 of 25 States), and certification notifications (12 of 25 States). States with mobile-optimized websites allowed SNAP participants to sign/submit applications (42 of 49 States); start/save an applications (42 of 49 States); and checking application status (32 of 49 States).

Figure 2. Summary of MCS Status by State and Type

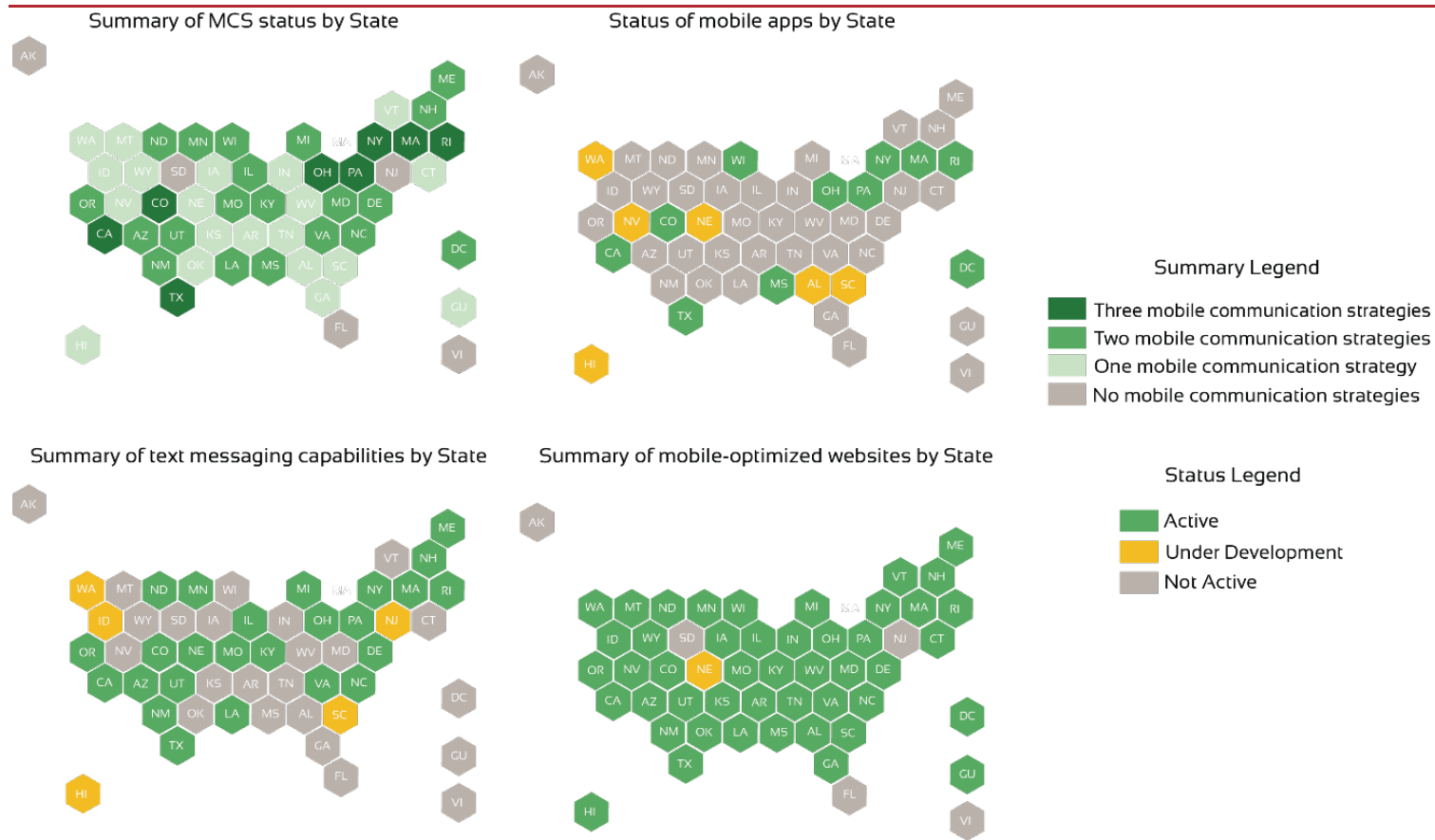


Table 1 summarize the identified functionalities in each State by MCS and indicates which features have been implemented since 2018. Several functionalities were very limited or nonexistent based on the information found during the national scan update. Due to the limitations of this national scan update (e.g., not interviewing Regional Offices), we were unable to identify which features were under development, therefore table 1 only displays whether the function was identified as available or not. Of the features we were able to identify, the most progress occurred with promised security of personal data, signing and submitting an application, starting and saving an application, submitting documentation, updates on office hours and locations, and language options other than English.

A table with summary information on MCS across all States is provided in appendix E.2. The table includes information on the status of each MCS component and whether the State received a PTIG for developing MCS. Appendix E.3 presents a table with the counts shown in table 1. Appendix F provides individual MCS profiles for each State, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The profiles contain detailed information on whether the State had an MCS, the functionalities of the MCS, and additional information on SNAP and mobile communications in the State.

Table 1. Summary of Functionality of MCS Across States in 2022 Compared to 2018

Category	Functionality	Text (25 States)		Mobile app (11 States)		Website (49 States)	
		% of States offering	States adding since 2018	% of States offering	States adding since 2018	% of States offering	States adding since 2018
Application/ Recertification	Benefit estimator	0%	0	18%	1	41%	5
	Check application status	0%	0	91%	1	65%	13
	Schedule interview	0%	0	0%	0	2%	1
	Sign/submit application	0%	0	27%	3	86%	14
	Start/save application	0%	0	27%	3	86%	14
	Submit documentation	0%	0	55%	6	71%	14
Benefits and EBT	Balance inquiry	0%	0	64%	1	22%	3
	Card replacement	0%	0	9%	1	10%	2
	PIN management	0%	0	0%	0	4%	0
Change reporting	Report household change	0%	0	36%	1	61%	10
	Report income change	0%	0	36%	1	61%	11
	Report other change	0%	0	55%	1	61%	11
	Submit documentation	0%	0	73%	1	55%	9
Client inquiries	Chat	0%	0	0%	0	20%	6
	FAQs	0%	0	36%	1	47%	13
	File complaint	0%	0	0%	0	29%	3
	Locate community partners/resources	4%	1	45%	1	31%	10
	Office hours/locations	0%	0	36%	1	43%	15
	Submit questions	8%	2	0%	0	16%	2
Notifications	Account changes	68%	5	55%	3	24%	10
	Certification notification	48%	3	64%	0	14%	5
	Office status	0%	0	9%	1	4%	2
	Report income change	20%	0	9%	1	8%	3
	Verifications needed	40%	4	55%	3	16%	6

Category	Functionality	Text (25 States)		Mobile app (11 States)		Website (49 States)	
		% of States offering	States adding since 2018	% of States offering	States adding since 2018	% of States offering	States adding since 2018
Other features	Calendar/due date	32%	3	64%	2	16%	6
	Information tailored to personal needs	52%	1	82%	0	49%	5
	Promised security of personal data	4%	1	55%	1	39%	15
	Spanish (or other) language option	8%	1	45%	1	67%	15

2. Variation in the Implementation of MCS Across States

The implementation of MCS by State varied by (1) funding source for the MCS, (2) data collected about the MCS, and (3) the use of third-party mobile apps.

Funding sources

During the national scan, Insight identified multiple ways in which States funded the development and implementation of MCS. Although Insight was unable to identify the funding source for every State's MCS, it was clear that States employed a range of funding options to implement the technology; some examples follow.

- ▶ **State funds.** States can use State funds to develop and deploy MCS. For example, Texas, which fully deployed all three types of MCS components, used such funds to develop its MCS.
- ▶ **A-87 waivers.** State SNAP agencies were able to take advantage of the A-87 cost allocation waiver to fund MCS for SNAP. The A-87 waivers were issued in August 2011 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow human services programs to benefit from enhancements to Medicaid eligibility systems without sharing the costs of developing such systems.² Systems enhancements included the development of mobile-optimized websites with client portals as well as mobile apps for SNAP clients. These waivers expired on December 31, 2018. As of December 2018, some States were still in the process of updating their integrated eligibility systems (IES), which could influence the timing and deployment of MCS. For example, District of Columbia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Vermont were all in the process of updating their IES and may have MCS deployed within the next few years.

² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2015). *State innovations in horizontal integration: Leveraging technology for health and human services*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-23-15fa.pdf>

- ▶ **PTIGs.** Each year, FNS awards Process and Technology Improvement Grants (PTIG) to State and local agencies that seek to use technology to enhance the quality of SNAP services and streamline program operations.³ Several States received PTIG funding in FY19 and FY20 to create and launch MCS. Rhode Island and New Jersey collected grant funding in FY20 to implement text messaging programs that send case updates and reminders to clients. Massachusetts' FY19 PTIG award supported a pilot of a similar text messaging campaign for the State's simplified reporting clients. Louisiana leveraged FY20 funding to develop a system that "nudges" clients to complete SNAP case actions based each client's individual characteristics and program history.

In FY20, San Diego County in California and the State of Alabama received PTIG funding to launch mobile optimization initiatives for each State's SNAP portal. San Diego County's PTIG award facilitated the addition of CalFresh, California's SNAP client portal, to the existing mobile-friendly application administered by Info Line of San Diego, a county-operated telephone line that connects residents to social programs and other county services. Alabama's PTIG award supported a series of improvements to update the technology that supports the State's client portal and optimize the portal for mobile use. PTIG award amounts for the aforementioned FY19 and FY20 MCS projects ranged from \$161,421 for the San Diego County's project to \$1,071,643 for the redesign of Alabama's client portal.

Monitoring and evaluation of MCS

Few States published evaluations of their MCS since 2018. However, researchers conducted randomized control trials of autodialer and text messaging programs used to communicate with Hennepin County, Minnesota's SNAP clients.⁴ The study found that the county's text messaging program improved SNAP recertification rates by 5 percent, when compared to the control group, which received the county's standard suite of recertification communications. The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is leading a randomized evaluation of Massachusetts' text messaging program, but results are not currently available.⁵

Third-party mobile apps

As States' use of MCS evolves, the technology industry is helping to modernize social programs, enabling both private and nonprofit sectors to play a role in improving civic technology. Insight was able to identify several third-party mobile apps for SNAP participants across States. However, because these apps were not regulated by FNS, Insight was unable to complete a comprehensive assessment of the prevalence of third-party mobile apps across the country. Descriptions of these mobile apps and mobile-friendly web applications, which were in use across several States and were developed by nongovernmental entities, follow. It is important to note that organizations should reach out to State agencies prior to launching their work in the State to ensure compliance with SNAP policies and for better coordination with the State agency.

- ▶ **Providers.** Formerly called FreshEBT, this app was designed by Propel, a for-profit company building software for "low-income Americans who are often overlooked by traditional tech

³ Food and Nutrition Service. Process and Technology Improvement Grants Program. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/process-and-technology-improvement-grants-program>

⁴ Lopoo, L. M., Heflin, C., & Boskovski, J. Testing behavioral interventions designed to improve on-time SNAP recertification. *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*, 3(2), 1-8. <https://journal-bpa.org/index.php/jbpa/article/view/183>

⁵ The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. The impact of text message nudges on churn in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the United States. Retrieved from <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/impact-text-message-nudges-churn-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-united-states>

innovation.”⁶ The app is available to SNAP participants in several States and offered many services that ranged from checking one’s account balance to searching for a job. As of June 2022, the Providers app had more than 10 million downloads (an increase of over 9 million downloads from 2018).⁷ Although many of the FNS Regional Offices Insight spoke with in 2018 were aware of the app, they were unaware of the extent to which SNAP participants were using Providers in each State.

- ▶ **mRelief.** This web application, which was launched in 2016, allows California residents to determine their SNAP eligibility. The company, mRelief, partnered with the CalFresh consortium of California counties to launch the web application.⁸ In January 2018, the web application was expanded from eligibility screening to providing SNAP application assistance in the participating counties. In 2021, through coalitions that included local food banks, pantries, and social service organizations, the web application expanded beyond California into 12 States, with plans to cover 20 States by the end of 2022. The States that were added included: Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas⁹.
- ▶ **ConnectEBT.** This app, developed by EBT vendor Conduent,¹⁰ allows SNAP participants to check their balances, track spending, and change their EBT personal identification number (PIN). The app is available in English and Spanish and to SNAP participants 14 States (an increase from 4 States in 2018)¹¹. According to Google Play, the app was downloaded more than 50,000 times as of June 2022.¹²
- ▶ **ebtEDGE.** This app, developed by EBT vendor FIS, allows SNAP participants to check their EBT balances and recent transactions.¹³ The app is available in English and Spanish. During the 2018 national scan, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office and Midwest Regional Office indicated that participants in the District of Columbia, Minnesota, West Virginia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands were using the mobile app. During the national scan update in 2022, we were unable to verify if these States still had access to this app and/or if additional States were added. At the time of data collection for this study, none of these States had an active mobile app developed by the State, with the exception of the District of Columbia which added an app in 2019. According to Google Play, the ebtEDGE app was downloaded more than 500,000 times as of June 2022.

Several other third-party apps exist. For example, some SNAP agencies use a range of third-party developed apps to scan and upload verification documents. Other mobile apps allowed users to identify businesses that accept SNAP (EzEBT) or calculate potential benefits (SNAP Benefits Calculator); these apps did not appear to be in widespread use as of 2018 data collection. As of June 2022, Google Play showed a total of only “5,000+” downloads for both apps.¹⁴

⁶ Propel. (n.d.). Propel. Retrieved from <https://www.joinpropel.com/>

⁷ Google. (n.d.). Google Play. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.propel.ebenefits&hl=en>

⁸ Dickey, M. (2018, January 8). mRelief launched end-to-end food stamp enrollment service. *Tech Crunch*. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2018/01/08/mrelief-launches-end-to-end-food-stamp-enrollment-service/>

⁹ See <https://www.mrelief.com/>

¹⁰ See <https://uat.connectebt.com/>

¹¹ States that operate ConnectEBT as of June 2022 include: Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia.

¹² Google Play. (n.d.). Information on ConnectEBT app. Retrieved from https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.conduent.ebt&hl=en_US&gl=US

¹³ See <https://www.ebtedge.com>

¹⁴ Google Play (n.d.). Information on EzEBT app. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ezebt> and <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nordicdev.snapcalculator>

D. Conclusions and Next Steps

This section summarizes the conclusions from the updated national scan and summarizes progress made after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Conclusions

The national scan update identified key themes that will provide FNS with an understanding of the landscape of MCS nationwide:

- ▶ **Progress was made, but few States comprehensively implemented MCS.** Since the first national scan, more States are offering all MCS-types to their SNAP participants. While the number of States offering all MCS-types more than doubled, this includes only eight of the 53 States and territories that offer SNAP, with four more on their way to full implementation.
- ▶ **SNAP participants across nearly every State can conduct SNAP related business from a mobile device.** With improved access to mobile-optimized websites, SNAP participants across nearly every State (49) were able to conduct some SNAP-related business safely during the COVID-19 pandemic from their mobile device.
- ▶ **State-run mobile apps have been the slowest to progress.** Of the three types of MCS, mobile apps are the most resource intensive to develop and implement, which is likely why they are the least common across each type of MCS. The time it takes to secure funding, develop, and successfully implement a mobile app helps to explain why minimal progress has been made since 2018. Unless the State was in the process of developing an app, COVID-19 did not appear to facilitate or accelerate plans to do so. Texting and website optimization were the most prolific and likely to be accelerated by COVID-19 because implementation is less time and resource intensive.

2. Next Steps for the Project

The next stage in this project is to prepare a Final Report that includes a summary of findings across the five case studies, a summary of lessons learned from State development and implementation of MCS, and a summary of findings from this second national scan. In addition, the research products produced as a result of this study will be shared with study participants (e.g., FNS Regional Offices, case study sites).

Appendix E.1. Phase 1 Data Sources

This appendix details the data sources used during the national scan conducted in 2018.

Data to determine which MCS States offered

- ▶ **FNS SNAP State Options report section on mobile technology.** Insight conducted a detailed review of the section on mobile technology in the 2018 State Options report to better understand which of the three MCS types States had implemented or were planning to implement.¹⁵ The report described the technology options in effect as of October 1, 2017. Insight also used the raw data from the report to inform its understanding of States' MCS.¹⁶ If there were inconsistencies in the raw data compared with the published report (e.g., if the raw data but not the report showed a State had a mobile app), Insight documented that the State had an MCS and then attempted to confirm the assumption with the regional office.¹⁷
- ▶ **FNS SNAP Process and Technology Improvement Grants (PTIGs).** PTIGs are FNS-funded grants that are awarded annually. State agencies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to submit proposals on ways to improve the quality and efficiency of SNAP operations. Insight reviewed the PTIGs awarded between fiscal year (FY) 2003 and FY 2018 to identify which States and regions received funding to develop or enhance their MCS.¹⁸ If both the 2018 State Options report and the raw data for the report indicated the MCS was not active in a State that received a PTIG, Insight documented the MCS as “under development” for that State. However, Insight documented the MCS as “active” if the regional office or another source of information could confirm the MCS had been implemented by the State or region.
- ▶ **Google's Mobile-Friendly Test tool.**¹⁹ Insight tested each State SNAP agency website (Home page and Create Account page) with the Google Mobile-Friendly Test tool to assess whether the website was mobile optimized. A State was considered to have a mobile-optimized website if at least one of these two pages was optimized. The Google tool returns an image of the website as it would be displayed on a mobile device and provides an explanation for why a website is or is not mobile optimized according to its score on a set of predetermined criteria. A website failed the mobile optimization test if the test detected one or more of the following problems:²⁰
 - Incompatible plugins
 - Viewport not set or not set to the device width to render the website on a mobile device
 - Content wider than device width to force user to scroll
 - Unreadable text without enhancing text size on mobile device
 - Buttons and links too small or too close to other clickable elements

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Development Division. (2018). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program State Options Report* (14th ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/State-options-report>

¹⁶ On October 15, 2018, FNS provided Insight with the raw data from the State Options report on States' MCS.

¹⁷ For a small number of States, the regional offices were uncertain whether MCS were active. In those cases, Insight relied on a different data source and listed the States' MCS as either under development or active.

¹⁸ On October 15, 2018, FNS provided Insight with a list of PTIG grantees from FY 2003 through FY 2017. Information on the FY 2018 grantees is available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/FY18-PTIG-Award-Summaries.pdf>

¹⁹ See <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>

²⁰ See <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6352293>

- ▶ **Interviews with FNS staff at national and regional offices.**²¹ After conducting the initial review of the 2018 State Options report and the PTIG projects and testing the State SNAP agency websites, Insight conducted telephone interviews with FNS staff at the national and regional levels to further understand States' past experiences and their MCS-related plans for the near future. Insight spoke with FNS staff from each of the seven FNS regional offices between December 2018 and February 2019. For States with MCS, Insight explored the functionalities of each MCS.

These interviews added more detail to Insight's understanding of each State's MCS and clarified any nuances or contradictions identified in the publicly available data sources. The interviews helped Insight learn about new developments that may not have been included in the State Options report or the PTIG. The list of interview questions Insight used for the conversations with the FNS regional offices is provided in appendix E.1.

- ▶ **Interviews with the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA).** Insight contacted individuals from two APHSA associations to gain further insight on States' MCS for SNAP: three members from the American Association of SNAP Directors (AASD) and one member from IT Solutions Management for Human Services (ISM). Insight met with two additional individuals from ISM on February 4, 2019.
- ▶ **E-notice waivers.** Electronic notice waivers (e-notice waivers) allow states to provide designated notices to households through an online account on a secure website or portal instead of mailing paper notices to physical addresses. To assess whether States had implemented or planned to implement e-notice waivers to send alerts via text message, Insight worked with FNS to obtain a list of States with such waivers in place. As of October 15, 2018, the States with waivers in place were Arizona, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia.²² The Mid-Atlantic Regional Office and Western Regional Office, however, were unsure whether text messaging had been deployed in Virginia and Arizona, respectively.

Data to determine which functionalities each State's MCS offered

- ▶ **Information collected in phase 1.** Insight used the information obtained from each of the data sources consulted in phase 1 of the national scan to inform phase 2. The functionalities were collected based on the information provided by the 2018 State Options report and related raw data, the PTIGs, the e-notice waivers, and the interviews with the FNS regional offices.
- ▶ **State documentation provided by the FNS regional offices.** Several of the regional offices provided presentations and reports from the States about their MCS. For example, the Midwest Regional Office shared a PowerPoint presentation from 2018 on Ohio's Oh SNAP! mobile app, and an operations memorandum from October 31, 2018 on Wisconsin's MyACCESS mobile app.²³ The Northeast Regional Office shared a PowerPoint presentation that was presented at the SNAP Leadership Conference in July 2017 on Massachusetts' DTA Connect mobile app.²⁴ The Southeast Regional Office shared a document that listed responses from each State agency regarding the status of the State's MCS as well as the contact person for the State's MCS.²⁵ The Mountain Plains Regional Office sent Insight a follow-up email after the interview to confirm

²¹ Insight met with staff from the FNS National Office on December 7, 2018. Insight met with the Northeast Regional Office on December 6, 2018; the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest Regional Offices on December 7, 2018; the Mountain Plains Regional Office on December 11, 2018; the Southeast Regional Office on December 12, 2018; the Southwest Regional Office on December 18, 2018; and the Western Regional Office on February 6, 2019.

²² Information provided by FNS via email

²³ Information received by Insight on December 7, 2018

²⁴ Information received by Insight on December 7, 2018

²⁵ Information received by Insight on December 12, 2018

information about the MCS status for several of the States in the region.²⁶ Insight summarized and documented this information.

- ▶ **Mobile app stores.** For States employing mobile apps, Insight reviewed descriptions available on mobile application stores (e.g., the Apple App Store, the Google Play Store, manufacturer-specific stores). These data provided information on the different capabilities of and the number of downloads for each application.
- ▶ **AppAdvice.com.** This website provides descriptions and screenshots of mobile apps.²⁷ Insight gained an understanding of existing applications' capabilities through this source. The website indicates the release date of each known mobile app as well as the ratings for the app.
- ▶ **Publicly available secondary data sources on MCS and other mobile technologies in States,** such as reports from APHSA²⁸ and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.²⁹ Insight reviewed such reports to better understand the use of MCS in SNAP and other benefit programs, as well as MCS functionality

Data on State characteristics

- ▶ **Publicly available data on mobile wireless service availability.** Insight reviewed reports and data that analyzed the availability of mobile wireless service across the United States. For example, one data source, Broadband NOW, provides information on the percentage of the population with mobile broadband coverage as well as the number of cellular providers in each State allowing for comparisons across States.³⁰ This information was last updated in September 2018.
- ▶ **Publicly available secondary data sources on participant characteristics.** Insight reviewed FNS administrative data at the State level to assess each State's SNAP caseload.
- ▶ **FNS SNAP State Options report sections on online applications and online case management.** Insight conducted a detailed review of the sections on online applications and online case management in the 2018 State Options report to better understand which States allowed SNAP participants to apply or recertify online and/or manage their cases online.³¹

²⁶ Information received by Insight on December 13, 2018

²⁷ See <https://appadvice.com>

²⁸ American Public Human Services Association (2018). The A-87 cost allocation exception: have states made effective use of it? Retrieved from: https://aphsa.org/NC/NC/Guidance_and_Resources_Sub/a87-exception.aspx

²⁹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2015). *State innovations in horizontal integration: Leveraging technology for health and human services*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-23-15fa.pdf>

³⁰ See <https://broadbandnow.com>

³¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Development Division. (2018). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program State Options Report* (14th ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/State-options-report>

Appendix E.2. Overview of State MCS

Table E.2.a. Overview of State MCS, PTIG Status, and SNAP Household Demographics

Region	State	MCS Functionality			FY PTIG Received	Demographics SNAP Households
		Mobile App	Text Messaging	Mobile- Optimized Website		
Mid-Atlantic	Delaware	⊘	⊘	✓	2018	58,345
	District of Columbia	✓	⊘	✓		91,993
	Maryland	⊘	⊘	✓		490,039
	New Jersey	⊘	@	✓	2017, 2020	467,575
	Pennsylvania	✓	✓	✓		987,280
	Virginia	⊘	✓	✓		403,352
	West Virginia	⊘	⊘	✓		167,583
Midwestern	Illinois	⊘	✓	✓	2017	1,083,730
	Indiana	⊘	⊘	✓		292,997
	Iowa	⊘	⊘	✓		140,403
	Michigan	⊘	✓	✓		708,613
	Minnesota	⊘	✓	✓		224,840
	Ohio	✓	✓	✓		757,921
	Wisconsin	✓	⊘	✓		366,621
Mountain Plains	Colorado	✓	✓	✓	2018	275,851
	Kansas	⊘	⊘	✓		96,232
	Missouri	⊘	✓	✓		324,224
	Montana	⊘	⊘	✓	2016	45,515
	Nebraska	@	✓	@		75,142
	North Dakota	⊘	✓	✓		23,845
	South Dakota	⊘	⊘	⊘		33,717
	Wyoming	⊘	⊘	✓		14,451

Region	State	MCS Functionality			FY PTIG Received	Demographics
		Mobile App	Text Messaging	Mobile- Optimized Website		SNAP Households
Northeastern	Connecticut	⊘	⊘	✓		218,334
	Maine	⊘	✓	✓		95,026
	Massachusetts	✓	✓	✓	2019	615,784
	New Hampshire	⊘	✓	✓		35,823
	New York	✓	✓	✓	2015, 2017	1,663,105
	Rhode Island	✓	✓	✓	2020	84,931
	Vermont	⊘	✓	✓		40,047
	U.S. Virgin Islands	⊘	⊘	⊘		11,238
Southeastern	Alabama	@	⊘	✓	2019	373,834
	Florida	⊘	⊘	✓		1,542,040
	Georgia	⊘	⊘	✓		799,486
	Kentucky	⊘	✓	✓		250,789
	Mississippi	✓	⊘	✓	2017	205,225
	North Carolina	⊘	✓	✓	2018	817,152
	South Carolina	@	@	✓	2015	304,226
	Tennessee	⊘	⊘	✓		426,380
Southwestern	Arizona	⊘	✓	✓		383,770
	Arkansas	⊘	⊘	✓		152,749
	Louisiana	⊘	✓	✓	2020	379,561
	New Mexico	⊘	✓	✓		271,538
	Oklahoma	⊘	⊘	✓	2014	301,484
	Texas	✓	✓	✓		1,532,754
	Utah	⊘	✓	✓		74,545
Western	Alaska	⊘	⊘	⊘		44,352
	California	✓	✓	✓	2011, 2015(2), 2017, 2020	2,592,917
	Guam	⊘	⊘	⊘		13,675
	Hawaii	⊘	@	✓		96,178
	Idaho	⊘	@	✓		61,094
	Nevada	@	⊘	✓		238,611

Region	State	MCS Functionality			FY PTIG Received	Demographics
		Mobile App	Text Messaging	Mobile- Optimized Website		SNAP Households
	Oregon	⊘	✓	✓		426,807
	Washington	@	@	⊘	2016	500,593

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). State Level Participation & Benefits for June 2022 [Datasets]. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

Details about the specific projects that PTIGs funded in FY2019 to FY2021, see section 2 of this memorandum. Details about the specific projects that PTIGs funded prior to 2019 can be found under “Grant Awards to Date” at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/process-and-technology-improvement-grants-program>, and in the February 15, 2019 Task 2.1 National Scan of States’ Use of Mobile Communications Strategies (MCS) to Enhance SNAP Participant Experiences memorandum.

Appendix E.3. Number of States by MCS Functionality

Table E.3.a. Number of States by MCS Functionality

⊘ = MCS not available; ✓ = MCS available

Category	Functionality	Mobile App (11 States)		Text Messaging (25 States)		Mobile- Optimized Website (49 States)	
		✓	⊘	✓	⊘	✓	⊘
Application/ Recertification	Benefit estimator	2	9	0	25	21	28
	Check application status	10	1	0	25	34	17
	Schedule interview	0	11	0	25	2	47
	Sign/submit application	3	8	0	25	43	6
	Start/save application	3	8	0	25	43	6
	Submit documentation	6	5	0	25	37	12
Benefits and EBT	Balance inquiry	7	4	0	25	11	38
	Card replacement	1	10	0	25	5	44
	PIN management	0	11	0	25	2	47
Change reporting	Report household change	4	7	0	25	32	17
	Report income change	4	7	0	25	32	17
	Report other change	6	5	0	25	31	18
	Submit documentation	8	3	0	25	29	2
Client inquiries	Chat	0	11	0	25	10	39
	FAQs	4	7	0	25	23	26
	File complaint	0	11	0	25	14	35
	Locate community partners/resources	5	6	1	24	15	34
	Office hours/locations	4	7	0	25	22	27
	Submit questions	0	11	2	23	8	41

Category	Functionality	Mobile App (11 States)		Text Messaging (25 States)		Mobile- Optimized Website (49 States)	
		✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Notifications	Account changes	6	5	18	7	12	37
	Certification notification	7	4	12	13	7	42
	Office status	1	10	0	25	2	40
	Report income change	1	10	5	20	4	45
	Verifications needed	6	5	10	15	8	41
Other features	Calendar/due date	7	4	8	16	8	41
	Information tailored to personal needs	9	2	14	11	24	25
	Promised security of personal data	6	5	1	24	19	30
	Spanish (or other) language option	5	6	2	23	33	16