

Oasis Insight (Oasis) is a technology partner providing client management and reporting solutions for food banks and food distribution programs of all shapes and sizes. Oasis was developed in 2011 from the existing program, CharityTracker, to meet the very specific needs of food banks and their partner agencies. Currently, there are 20 food bank networks using Oasis and another 40 using Oasis for their SNAP outreach programs.

Thank you to the following food bank SNAP outreach partners for participating in this report:

[Harvesters- The Community Food Network](#)

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SNAP Outreach Team Lead

[Feeding Missouri- Missouri Food Bank Association](#)

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OASIS INSIGHT CASE STUDY

Streamlining SNAP/CalFresh Outreach with Technology

Ever since Ms. Mabel McFiggin, an unemployed factory worker in New York, made the first food stamp purchase for butter, eggs and prunes in 1939, the United States has provided food programs for families needing extra assistance.¹ Even though supplemental nutrition assistance programs have been in existence for over 75 years, many families facing food insecurity remain unaware of eligibility requirements or the application process. Feeding America reports that only 41 percent of the households receiving support from food banks receive SNAP benefits, while an estimated 88 percent could be. To bridge this gap, many food banks and community benefit organizations participate in SNAP outreach programs.²

This report features interviews with current SNAP outreach program leaders utilizing the cloud-based tool, Oasis Insight, to strengthen collaboration among SNAP programs, application tracking, reporting and event management.

¹ A Brief History: Food Stamps, By Randy James, Time Magazine, Monday, Sept. 14, 2009. Accessed on October 12, 2015. <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1921992,00.html>

² Pictured above: The USDA is working hard to expand access to farmers' markets for those participating in the SNAP. Photo By USDAgov [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Setting Ambitious SNAP Goals

Shelley Mann has ambitious goals for the three-year old SNAP outreach program she leads for Harvesters Community Food Network in Kansas City. "Last year our goal was to do 2.5 million meals just in food stamp outreach alone. This year it is 4.1 million and the next 6.1 million," says Mann. How will the program reach their goals? Through a variety of ways, including SNAP outreach events, a robust call center, and distribution of SNAP educational materials.

Though Mann feels they are still getting their feet wet, Harvester's growth in SNAP Outreach is undeniable. What started as a one-person endeavor is now a team including Mann, a coordinator and four AmeriCorps volunteers serving potential SNAP clients daily.



Harvesters Community Food Network in Kansas City has a goal to reach 6.1 million meals in SNAP Outreach in 2016. Outreach events, like the one pictured here, is one way they hope to reach their goal.

Photo compliments of Harvesters Community Food Network.

Finding a Way to Track Progress

To meet their goals, Mann knew early on that she would need a strong case management system serving as a backbone for measuring progress. "I found Oasis Insight while googling to find a tracking system for what I was doing in SNAP outreach. I showed it to my supervisor and she thought it was something we would want to look into later," she says.

As it turned out, Mann would be looking at Oasis sooner than later. Harvesters in Kansas City is in a unique position to be serving families across state lines. On the Missouri side of the city, Harvester's is part of the Missouri Food Bank Association, called Feeding Missouri. "A month after that google search, I was at the Missouri Food Bank Association where they were showing interest in using Oasis state-wide," says Mann.

Good News Travels

Melanie Hickcox serves as SNAP Outreach Director for the Missouri Food Bank Association where she equips and tracks SNAP outreach programs with the five food banks across the state, including Harvesters. Hickcox explains, "We were using excel spreadsheets and it was a bit of a nightmare trying to email back and forth. It was very difficult to accurately track information and have everyone on the same page. I really wanted to have a system where every food bank could log on and track case information in real-time and decrease errors. I also wanted to be able to pull statewide food bank SNAP reports."

Like Mann, Hickcox had come across Oasis Insight as a possible solution. "I heard about Oasis from another food bank employee in our network who had previously worked in a Texas food bank that was using it. He connected me to his contact at Oasis," says Hickcox. Implementing Oasis at Harvesters Community Food Network was unique, though. Mann shares, "I still needed a way to track my Kansas applications. We could not put them in the Missouri database. Because of our situation, Oasis was able to create a Kansas-only database. In a perfect world, I would have one system, but I have to track the states separately."

Oasis Benefit: Application Tracking

One of the biggest benefits both Mann and Hickcox say Oasis affords them is tracking and reporting. Mann shares, “The big things we track are applications and the number of people we have informed about the SNAP services. We track the number of people prescreened for SNAP and folks we have talked to and whether they are eligible or not. We track potential applicants, people who are over income, and people already enrolled in program.”

The Missouri Food Bank Association works with the Department of Social Services for SNAP outreach. “We have an agreement with them where they reimburse us for 50% for the costs for SNAP outreach,” says Hickcox. This makes accurate tracking and reporting vital. Oasis has the ability to help her track on a number of data points, including:

- Number of cases submitted, pending, approved or denied
- Benefit amount
- Eligibility and follow up
- Notes and alerts about cases
- Applicant demographics
- Full application history



Oasis Benefit: Event Management

A big part of any SNAP outreach program includes participating in events where families can receive education about food support. Events might include back to school fairs, health and wellness events, or visits to local food pantries.

Melanie Hickcox, SNAP Outreach Director for Feeding Missouri- the Missouri Food Bank Association- finds Oasis a time-saver, allowing her to do more SNAP outreach events and relationship building.

Photo compliments of Feeding Missouri.

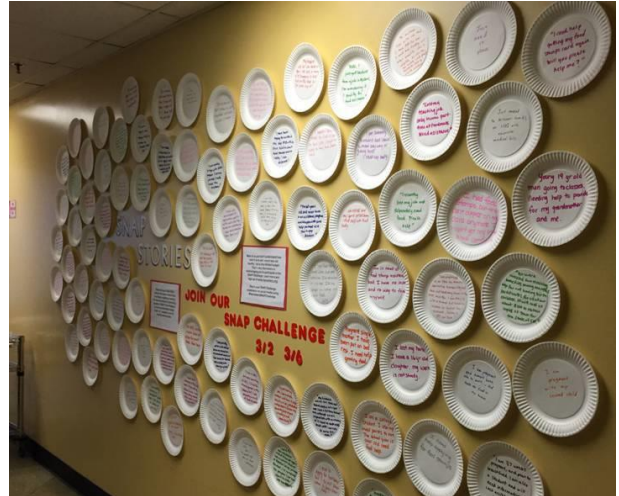
At events, information is distributed about SNAP eligibility, sometimes pre-screenings take place and occasionally those manning events can take SNAP applications. Oasis helps both Mann and Hickcox track all of that information, including the number of SNAP informational handouts distributed. Mann says, “I track locations and events so we can keep a running database of where we have been and where we are going. If we go to an event and get invited back a year later, we can look back and see if it was beneficial or if it was not worth our time.”

Hickcox admits that since implementing Oasis, she is free to do more outreach, rather than spending time aggregating the data from excel spreadsheets. “I’ve been able to do a lot more on-the-ground SNAP outreach as well as take time to develop connections and contacts throughout the state to further the program,” she says.

Oasis Benefit: Analyzing Reports & Sharing Ideas

The members of the Missouri Food Bank Association meet monthly via webinar and two times a year face-to-face. Continued training and customization of Oasis is a common topic of conversation. "We will go over things such entering into the system correctly or have discussion on items we could or should add to our system," says Hickcox.

At these meetings, ideas are shared from the reports. "Because all the food banks track the same information, we can exchange ideas a lot. It is interesting for me to sit at a table with someone from a different location. For example, I could look at reports and see that 30% of another food bank's outreach is touching homeless people, while my data might show only 8%. I can then ask them to teach me how they do that. I think being able to track our data and share it help us paint a picture of our programs and improve together," says Mann. While the food banks share reports, the Missouri Food Bank Association members do not share client information across their network. "We just share the numeric data not the specific information about the client," says Hickcox.



Harvesters Community Food Bank has a wall of SNAP stories, written on paper plates. One reads, "Young 19 year-old man going to classes and needing help to provide for my grandmother and me."

Photo compliments of Harvesters Community Food Network.

Sustaining Oasis: Funding, Training & Improvements

SNAP outreach programs are often funded, in part, by Department of Social Services or grants from the USDA. Sometimes those monies are used to help support the case management infrastructure provided by Oasis.

At Harvesters Community Food Network, their SNAP outreach program has grown to include a call center, which has four AmeriCorps workers servicing calls from their area as well as four other food banks. AmeriCorps are generally assigned for a one-year commitment, thus, training new users happens frequently. Mann shares, "Our AmeriCorps are in Oasis all day, every day doing applications and taking calls. I have had a really good user experience and while I wish I could make it just a little more customizable for our call center specifically, I find Oasis to be pretty intuitive."

Oasis has customized a variety of things for the Missouri Food Bank Association such as adding various ethnicity, education and employment categories. "Every small modification has been pretty quick and easy for the team at Oasis to make," says Hickcox.

Mann serves as a mentor for Feeding America and is frequently paired with new food banks to launch SNAP outreach programs. She says, "Introducing Oasis Insight is one of my first steps with them. I don't know if we could do what we do without a tracking system that is this efficient."

Appendix: Oasis Insight User Profile



Photos compliments of Alameda County Community Food Bank

Q & A with Liz Gomez, Outreach Programs Manager Alameda County Community Food Bank of California

We interviewed Liz Gomez, Outreach Programs Manager of Alameda County Community Food Bank about her implementation Oasis Insight to track CalFresh (California's SNAP program). The Alameda Food Bank provides CalFresh prescreening and application assistance in five different languages. They also offer free training for community agencies to help identify potentially eligible CalFresh recipients. Their CalFresh 101 for beginners gives the basics on program eligibility, including prescreening. CalFresh 102 for advanced learners gives an in-depth look at eligibility for special populations such as seniors, disabled, immigrants, felons and homeless. They have been using Oasis Insight to track their progress for three years.

Oasis: Can you describe how you and your team use Oasis Insight?

Liz: Oasis is our client management tool for CalFresh outreach work. We use Oasis to collect the information of the households we assist and to track our activities and events. Currently, we have 15 staff on our team and everyone is a user. We are also in the testing phase of utilizing Oasis to work with our subcontractors for CalFresh outreach as well. Our subcontractors include a health clinic, call centers, nonprofits, and one hospital.

Oasis: Tell us more about the relationship with subcontractors. What data will you share across your network?

Liz: Our subcontractors can view their own clients, but not ours. Using Oasis with them will be helpful because we need to collect monthly reports on our CalFresh outreach. Oasis allows us to keep all the client data in one place so we will no longer need to pick up tracking logs. We, at the food bank, are able to do reports and activities ourselves. We have already launched this with one of our subcontractors, a childcare referral agency hotline. In all, we will have five to six subcontractors with 20 users (in addition to existing team).

Oasis: Can you share about your Oasis user experience?

Liz: Yes, our team finds Oasis user-friendly. We usually spend five to six hours training new users on the system and once they start using it, people really get the hang of it. For us, Oasis is really working.

Oasis: Did you do any customized work within Oasis, such as tracking or forms?

Liz: We have made numerous customizations with the Oasis team for our tracking and reporting needs. We are currently customizing tracking methods for our subcontractors with Oasis. We track events, activities and have subcategories, such as whether or not we did a presentation or if we were talking with people one-on-one at a booth. We also created a fillable Release of Information form that auto-populates. We have this form in three different languages.

Oasis: What were you using before Oasis and why did you switch systems?

Liz: Before Oasis, we used a customized Access database and excel reports. I attended the Feeding America conference and Oasis representatives were tabling there. I brought back a brochure and set up a demo. It was such good timing, as we were looking for a new system. We run monthly reports as well as periodically, if needed, and the reporting was what really sold me on Oasis Insight as well as the security that it provides.

Oasis: What process did you go through to bring Oasis to your food bank?

Liz: I needed buy-in from the leadership here and from our IT department. They needed to know that it was a platform that could be used in a secure manner. It is our client data and where information is stored is very important to us. I invited our IT team to explore Oasis with me. After our questions were answered IT felt like it offered what we needed. We also felt like ongoing maintenance was important. We needed good response turnaround time and it has been.

Oasis: How is your Oasis network funded?

Liz: We receive a SNAP grant and our subcontractors will be covered by that as well for their Oasis implementation process.

Oasis: What is one Oasis feature you are looking forward to exploring in the future?

Liz: I am definitely looking forward to using Oasis in communications with subcontractors. When I first used Oasis, I was thrilled about bulletin feature. My internal team does not currently use it much because we are regularly on outlook, or can just walk over to each other and interact that way. I can see the bulletin feature of more benefit if we are not in the same location or with our subcontractors.

To learn more about Oasis Insight, visit www.oasisinsight.net.