Policy, Systems, & Environmental (PSE) Definitions and Examples

BLT's focus is on promoting positive, nutrition-related behavior changes in those with whom we work. Our annual budget is over seven million dollars; therefore, documenting the impacts we are having on the people and communities where we work is important in demonstrating that we are a viable, cost-effective program. FNS has adopted standards to evaluate the impact of strategies and interventions related to SNAP Education. Among those standards are policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE). We are required to have twenty-five percent of our activities fall under the PSE category (note, this twenty-five percent does not have to be equally distributed amongst the categories and all categories do not have to be used). This document is being submitted in order to assist you in properly categorizing your BLT activities.

Definitions (according to USDA):

Policy: A written statement of an organizational position, decision or course of action. Ideally policies describe actions, resources, implementation, evaluation, and enforcement. Policies are made in the public, non-profit, and business sectors. In the public sector, policies may be determined by the legislative, executive or judicial branches of government at the city, county, district or state levels. In the non-profit and business sectors, organizational policies may be established by boards of directors, executive officers, managers or supervisors. Because they are written, policies are the easiest type of PSE change to characterize.

Systems: Systems changes are *unwritten, ongoing, often qualitative* organizational decisions/changes that result in new activities reaching large proportions of people the organization serves. An organization may adopt a new intervention, assign its people, reallocate other resources, or in significant ways modify its direction to benefit low-income consumers in qualifying sites and communities. Systems changes may occur in all three sectors (public, non-profit, and business). They may precede or follow a written policy.

Environmental: Includes the *built or physical environments*, which are visual/observable, but may include *economic, social, normative* or *message* environments.

Examples:

Policy:
1. A school district requires nutrition education classes are offered in Title 1 schools to increase physical activity and promote healthy eating to students. A written policy is drafted which requires classes are offered by SNAP-Ed qualified educators.
2. After consulting with SNAP Educators, a local Boys & Girls Club amends a contract with its vendor so that healthier options are offered in vending machines.
3. Schools in low-resource areas/districts agree to allow use of their recreation, sports, and/or cooking facilities by community residents outside of school hours for SNAP-Education and/or approved activities aimed at improving the health of area of residents.

Systems:
1. A store manager agrees to allow employees who qualify for SNAP to attend SNAP-Ed classes on company time in a breakroom on company property.
2. Local farmers and grocery stores agree to collaborate in efforts to sell "ugly fruits" to consumers at discounted prices.

3. SNAP educators, food banks, representatives from Title 1 schools, and directors of senior centers agree to meet regularly to focus on ways to increase participation in SNAP-Ed among SNAP eligible persons in the community.

Environmental:
1. A grocery store places Lone Star card signs near healthier beverage and food options to encourage SNAP participants to purchase those foods.
2. A housing authority agrees to allow SNAP participants to set up a raised garden bed to grow fresh fruits and vegetables with the assistance of SNAP-Educators.
3. A community makes improvements to a walking trail in a low-income area to encourage more physical activity among residents.

In most cases, our activities (A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!, Walk N Talk, LGEG – classroom instruction) are going to fall under the category of Systems because systems are basically what you're doing to impact the client base.

LGEG activities that involve constructing and maintaining an actual garden will fall under Environment as will any activity that results in a change in the physical environment. Policy will always involve written changes to bylaws, MOUs, or other documentation based on BLT programming/activity.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Better Living for Texans, as you are aware, has several curriculum options available for use—1) A Fresh Start to a Healthier You; 2) Walk and Talk/Walk Across Texas; 3) Learn, Go, Eat, & Grow (LGEG); 4) Eat Smart, Live Strong (for elderly participants), etc.

To simplify the PSE reporting process, please use this guide as a reference:

- A Fresh Start to a Healthier You = Systems

- Walk and Talk/Walk Across Texas =Systems

- LGEG (educational component/teaching) = Systems

- LGEG (gardening projects or related activities) = Environmental

- Eat Smart, Live Strong = Systems

Activities that result in a written change (policy) should be reported as such.

Note: Some activity may not fall under any of these changes which would be *None.*

Please do not hesitate to contact your BLT Regional Program Manager or the BLT State Office if you have questions.