

Questions and Answers from N-PEARS All-user Trainings
 June 6, 2023 and June 8, 2023
Updated as of July 13, 2023

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General

Question	Answer
What is N-PEARS?	<p>N-PEARS provides all State and implementing agencies with a single, streamlined, web-based tool for submitting annual SNAP-Ed State plans and consolidated annual reports. N-PEARS replaces previous SNAP-Ed planning and annual reporting processes beginning with FY 2024 State plans and FY 2023 annual reports.</p> <p>https://national.pears.io/</p>
Would FY24 State Plan and budget be automatically in this N-PEARS or once approve needs to be enter here?	<p>State plans, including budgets, are submitted to FNS via N-PEARS. State and implementing agencies enter the information in the modules, including budget information.</p>
<p>What is the difference between N-PEARS and PEARS?</p> <p>This new National PEARS is only for Annual State Plan and Budget reporting correct? so all project activities (implementation) is enter in old PEARS?</p>	<p>N-PEARS replaces previous SNAP-Ed State plan submission processes beginning with FY 2024 Plans.</p> <p>N-PEARS is a system for submitting State SNAP-Ed plans and annual reports to FNS. PEARS is an optional, independently licensed system for States’ ongoing data management. Data entered into PEARS are not automatically linked to N-PEARS. State and implementing agencies may continue to use their existing systems to track and manage data throughout the year prior to submission in N-PEARS. The SNAP-Ed Data Collection Template is an optional resource available to agencies to aid in data collection and</p>

Question	Answer
	<p>tracking that aligns with N-PEARS.</p> <p>States must submit FY 2024 SNAP-Ed State plans through N-PEARS by August 15, 2023.</p>
<p>Is N-PEARS submission able to be updated interactively before the final date or is each submission a "final" document.</p>	<p>You are able to edit each module as needed until you complete your final review and submit it.</p> <p>State agencies can submit their State plans before August 15. This will include all plans in the State agency and implementing agency.</p>
<p>Will there be an import from PEARS to N-PEARS? If we don't use PEARS, can the excel files shared be imported to N-PEARS?</p>	<p>All users may use the optional budget template. The budget template (Excel file) can be uploaded in N-PEARS to import your budget data.</p> <p>FNS directed Canopy to prioritize up-loadable templates for the annual report that all users will be able to use. Following the development of universal templates, Canopy will explore direct linkages between PEARS and N-PEARS.</p>
<p>What are the word limits for each field?</p>	<p>Word limits depend on the field and are displayed in each free-text entry section in the modules. The FY24 SNAP-Ed Guidance includes screenshots from the system and includes word counts.</p>
<p>Will SAs be able to make small edits to IA information before submitting or will IAs need to make all edits needed?</p>	<p>State agencies may request changes from implementing agency plans but cannot directly edit another agency's plan.</p>
<p>Will N-PEARS have the capacity to generate any kind of report based on the data entered for the SA and the IA?</p>	<p>A PDF report can be generated, and we are planning more visual/data analysis tools in the future.</p>
<p>Can PDFs be uploaded?</p>	<p>There are a few places that allow PDF uploads, but for the most part data will be entered directly into N-PEARS. There are a few pages for which we will be developing up-loadable Excel templates. That is an option for the budget portion of the plan, which we will cover in this training.</p>
<p>Can adjustments be made later on [once a section is marked as complete]?</p>	<p>Yes, but changes can't be made once an implementing agency submits the plan to the State agency or the State agency submits the plan to the Regional Coordinator.</p> <p>Changes after the final submission require the approving agency to "unsubmit" the plan for editing (for implementing agencies this would be State agencies; for State agencies this would be FNS Regional Coordinators)</p>
<p>Can the State agency edit the needs assessment</p>	<p>Yes, but if the implementing agency adds projects</p>

Question	Answer
and goals and objectives once they mark as complete?	they will need to be updated to ensure they are linking to the correct goals and objectives.
When do local implementing agencies need to complete their portion?	State plans must be submitted to FNS through N-PEARS by August 15. Each State determines their own internal deadlines for implementing agencies. Generally local implementers (subcontractors from an implementing agency) will not enter plan information in N-PEARS.
If we are in the 2nd year of a multi-year plan - is there a way for us to indicate progression from year 1 within the system?	After the first year of submitting N-PEARS, certain modules will transfer from year to year for multi-year plans.
What template is being used to prepopulate FY23 Annual Report projects/other organizational info if FY24 is the first Annual Plan being entered in N-PEARS?	We will provide more information and guidance to States about how to complete FY23 reports in N-PEARS when we are closer to releasing that part of the system.

User Access and Support

Question	Answer
Where will recording be posted?	https://support.national.pears.io/annual-plan-training-videos/
What are the plans for ongoing support? What is the capacity given all the states and timing? Will we have opportunities for best practices, regional discussions?	<p>Pre-recorded videos provide a basic overview of N-PEARS.</p> <p>Written materials, workflow visuals, and assistance by phone or email will be available to all users.</p> <p>State and implementing agencies can request technical assistance appointments through FNS SNAP-Ed Regional Coordinators.</p> <p>The Canopy Client Success Team will be the point of contact for system user support.</p> <p>Phone: 785-789-3199; Email: support@pears.io</p> <p>The N-PEARS Support page has more information for State agencies, implementing agencies, and SNAP-Ed Regional Coordinators.</p> <p>https://support.national.pears.io/</p>
How do we create an account in N-PEARS to enter our information?	Canopy created initial State agency user profiles. To update State agency users, contact Canopy support and copy your Regional Coordinator(s).

Question	Answer
	State agencies manage IA users, so if you haven't been added, please contact your State agency. https://support.national.pears.io/account-setup-and-login/
Is there a limit to how many user accounts can be created for one implementing agency?	No, but generally the staff who submit the annual plans need access to N-PEARS. We don't anticipate that an IA or State will need several users. If you are with an IA, you should contact your State Agency.
Can two users work in the same project but different sections at the same time, or is there a risk of information being overridden by both parties?	Two users can work on the same project at once, but not on the same page. There is a data overwrite warning for the second user if two are on the same page: https://support.national.pears.io/data-overwrite-warning/
Where do we get the state map again?	https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/state-snap-ed-programs
Will there be a function that allows states and implementing agencies to create a flowchart that give a visual of the ties of all their plan components to their goals & objectives?	N-PEARS does not offer this feature at this time.
Is there a completed example of an IA's N-PEARS application we could click through?	No, there isn't a completed plan for users to access.

Module 3: Planned Projects and Activities

Question	Answer
Does the state agency have to complete those sections [modules 1+2] before we have access, or will they be accessible for viewing while they're in progress?	For this first year (FY24 plans), implementing agencies can work on the planned effort modules at the same time the State agency completes the prerequisites sections. In future years, State agencies will need to complete the first two modules (needs assessment + SNAP-Ed Action Plan) before planned efforts are added.
So the IAs enter their planned project and activities but as a State Agency, I also need to add in the planned projects that they are doing as well?	No, each agency should only enter the projects it will implement. If a State agency implements a project, which may be less common, they must enter their own projects. For example, some State agencies may manage a social marketing campaign with a contractor that does not function as an implementing agency.
Does a list of other previously developed interventions exist in the system for us, or would we need to first enter the intervention and its information in order for it to appear in the	This is a pre-populated list from some commonly used interventions from the SNAP-Ed Library. If you have an intervention that isn't in the Toolkit or in that dropdown list, you can enter it as a new

Question	Answer
dropdown menu?	intervention.
What is a Non Project activity?	"Nonproject activities are all efforts funded by SNAP-Ed other than projects that are designed to accomplish State priority goals and objectives. Examples include comprehensive needs assessments, general staff training (e.g., civil rights training), technical assistance, and peer-to-peer learning that benefit staff across multiple projects. Other examples include convening of coalitions, contracted services such as evaluation and formative research, and other activities not tied to a specific project. Administrative activities, such as procurement, are neither project nor nonproject activities." - FY 24 Guidance
Do non-project activities have to link to SMART objectives?	Yes.
Can the SA edit or change the State Objectives after IAs enter their info? We might tweak the way our Objectives are written but the IAs have access to start entering already.	<p>The State agency can change the objectives, but this may require updating the Projects associated with the updated goal/objective. We recommend that State agencies inform implementing agencies if changes are made to the Objectives.</p> <p>You can add or edit the State Objectives without impacting the project links. The IAs will see your updated text for the objectives.</p>
Can you add project-specific goals and SMART objectives that are not pulled from the state level goals and SMART objectives?	Goals and objectives are State level, so all project goals and objectives should be added to the State level.
Do state agencies enter goals as well as objectives? Or do the state agencies just enter the goals and then the IAs enter their objectives under each goal (previously entered by the state)?	State agencies enter goals in the Target Audience and Needs Assessment module and objectives and indicators in the SNAP-Ed Action Plan modules. Implementing agencies can link their planned projects to the State goals and objectives.
Year of implementation - our program has been implemented since the 1990's, but we're currently in year 2 of the newest 5-year period. What year should we enter in that field?	This is similar to the implementation year field in the EARS form. It may depend on the specific project/intervention, but it might be appropriate in the case you described to report year 2. We recommend reaching out to your Regional Coordinator if you have more specific questions.
Will we be able to select 'year of implementation' for non-project activities as well? (in case for example we want to add one to year 2)	The year of implementation will be for projects. Generally non-project activities wouldn't have an implementation year.
In terms of planned sites, can you enter zero for planned tribal, etc. sites, but identify any sites as tribal during Annual Reporting?	Yes. In the plan, you are noting the number of sites you plan to work with by type, and in the report you'll be able to add more detailed

Question	Answer
	information about the specific sites you worked with during the year.
If you have more than one Social Marketing Campaign included in a project how do you add both? In N-PEARS I could only add one.	As of July 13, 2023, users can only add one social marketing campaign, but Canopy is working to update these pages to allow more than one campaign per project.
Why is projected reach only associated with social marketing and not direct education and PSE?	Detailed reach information for different intervention types (i.e., direct education, policy systems and environmental change, or social marketing) will be entered in the annual report. Projected reach is only required for social marketing campaigns to give Regional Coordinators a better sense of the campaign scale to determine if the associated costs are reasonable and necessary.
is a "project" considered an IA or are we listing projects under IA?	We recommend using the definition of project in the SNAP-Ed Guidance . "Project is defined as an intervention or a cluster of interventions or activities executed by a single agency (State agency, implementing agency, or subcontractor) with common goals, intended outcomes, target audiences (e.g., youth), and implementation setting types (e.g., school). Project activities include planning and reporting." from the FY24 Guidance .
if you use the same planned interventions with multiple projects can you indicate that or do you have to enter them again for each project?	You'd need to enter the interventions to each project, but you might consider requesting a TA session through the Regional Coordinator to discuss how you are organizing projects to prevent duplicated interventions.
Is this module (Planned Projects and Activities) just for IAs or also for SAs?	Module 3 (Planned Projects and Activities) may be applicable to some State agencies, but State agencies may not have projects. State agencies must use the planned staffing (if they have staff paid with SNAP-Ed funds) and budget for their SNAP-Ed costs even if they don't have planned projects and activities.

Module 4: Planned Evaluations

Question	Answer
Can you upload more than one document to each evaluation?	You can upload multiple files in the logic model files section for evaluations.
Will every planned project need a corresponding planned evaluation?	No, you are not required to add a planned evaluation for each project.
Will the objectives listed in the evaluation page	The objectives will link to the State objectives,

Question	Answer
match with the indicators listed in the framework?	and States are encouraged to align those with the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework indicators.
<p>Outside evaluators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an outside evaluator, can I just skip all of the project sections? What if the State Agency evaluates the IAs' projects? We do one overall state evaluation with all IAs <p>Does that also apply for multi-agency projects?</p>	<p>Re: evaluations, if you have State-specific questions, we suggest reaching out to your Regional Coordinator so we can provide case-by-case TA. In general, the planned evaluation should be linked to the corresponding project (an evaluation plan can include more than one project but not agency). Even for multi-agency projects, the agency can only enter evaluation.</p> <p>Generally we recommend that the State agency include general evaluation summary as a non-project activity in its plan. The evaluator can provide relevant details for Implementing agencies to include in the corresponding projects. We recommend reaching out for more specific TA.</p>
It looks like planned evaluations cannot be completed until the SA completes module 2, is this correct?	After FY24 Plans, SAs will need to complete modules 1 and 2 before IAs start entering information into modules 3-6. For FY24 Plans, FNS is making an exception so States have sufficient time to enter their plan data.
Can you select multiple projects for one evaluation?	Yes, multiple projects may be selected for one evaluation.
Will the "Projects Evaluated" field have a "select all" option if we evaluate the projects as a whole?	There isn't a "select all" option, but you can manually select all the projects.

Module 5: Coordination and Collaboration

Question	Answer
SNAC was used as an example of a non project activity. It was also in the instructions for the multisector partnerships. Would this mean that it should be entered in both places? In other words, are multisector partnerships to be described as non project activities?	SNACs should be entered in both places.
If an MSI is an IA, do we need to include them in the partnership section?	No, other SNAP-Ed funded agencies do not need to be added.
I see that the USDA federal programs are automatically added, does that mean that at least all USDA programs will be automatically added every year or will have to add them.	Each year users should update the Federal Nutrition, Obesity Prevention, and Health Programs section in the Coordination and Collaboration module. The same programs will be included each year.
Can you share how the data entered in Multi-	This section will be used by Regional Coordinators

Question	Answer
sector coalitions section will be used? How it translates to the annual report template?	<p>in reviewing plans to understand how partnerships can support SNAP-Ed planned activities.</p> <p>This section includes the same data entry fields in both the State plan and annual report. The partnerships and coalitions entered in your plan will automatically copy forward to the corresponding report. You'll be able to edit, remove, or add partnerships and coalitions within the report.</p>
I thought the tribes and tribal organization was part of the SA, is there are expectation for IA to do the Tribes and Tribal Organizations?	State agencies are required to consult with Tribes as part of the plan of operations. State agencies can enter results of consultations in module 5. Implementing agencies may also have partnerships with Tribes and Tribal organizations.

Module 6: Planned Staffing and Budget

Question	Answer
<p>How do you have a budget tied to nonprojects? There are multiple expenses that my agency pays for, for example, on behalf of all SNAP-Ed agencies in the state that would in this new system be considered a nonproject. I need to understand how to be able to input a budget for these items that are not tied to one specific project (e.g., hosting a statewide training conference, PEARS license for all users in the state, state-wide formative evaluations, state-wide evaluation activities, etc.). Thanks!</p> <p>Where are Nonproject Activity budgets reported?</p>	<p>Budgets tied to nonprojects should be entered as non-project expenses in "Other SNAP-Ed Expenditures".</p>
Does each IA enter their respective budgets?	State agencies and each implementing agency must complete Module 6, which includes Project Budget(s), Other SNAP-Ed Expenditures (nonproject activities and administrative costs), and Non-SNAP-Ed Funding. State agencies should have their own budgets.
<p>Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you need to list each individual in-state travel? That is A LOT of detail. it also changes some based on opportunities and progress of work across 2 years. Follow-up: So could it be broken by project, farmers market PSE work - \$#### , MyPlate 	<p>Some travel may be bundled, but it should be aligned with a project or intervention. All travel associated with a Project may not be appropriate to bundle, but you might split up local travel related to Direct Education, and separately report PSE-focused travel to a regional coalition meeting(s). All travel should be captured in this</p>

Question	Answer
<p>DE - \$####, etc? Or more specific?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about routine program related daily mileage? • mileage calculation, parking and toll breakdown for general travel will be available? • Will the fields related to city/state in the Travel section have a specific requirement? 	<p>section, including routine program travel, but it can be bundled.</p> <p>The Trip Name and Trip Purpose/Benefits to SNAP-Ed are open text entry fields in the travel section of the Planned Staffing and Budget Module.</p> <p>Travel Location (City/State) and Staff positions traveling are open text entry fields and are required to be completed when adding travel.</p>
<p>How do we submit a budget for two year plans?</p>	<p>Budgets should include annual costs for the fiscal year of the plan.</p>
<p>Can we get an excel template for budgets that will easily be downloaded?</p>	<p>You can download it in N-PEARS. You can find it under “Planned Staffing and Budget > Budget Import.”</p> <p>You can also download the template from the N-PEARS Support Documentation: https://support.national.pears.io/annual-plan-budget-import/</p>
<p>Are job description uploads required for the staffing module?</p>	<p>Yes, the staffing page in the budget module should include brief job descriptions for the position titles listed.</p>
<p>It looks like the budget screens are looking to collect data on "in-kind" costs that are not charged to SNAP-Ed. Is that an accurate assessment? We only charge subcontractors who actually implement the programs in the field to our SNAP-Ed grant. But, it looks like the budget screens require State Ops positions to be listed even if \$0 is charged to the SNAP-Ed budget...</p>	<p>States may enter non-SNAP-Ed costs to demonstrate how they are leveraging other funds to extend projects or pay for expenses that are not allowed with SNAP-Ed funds, such as infrastructure. Only positions that are paid (partially or fully) with SNAP-Ed funds must be listed on the planned staffing page.</p>
<p>Do any of these budget fields auto-calculate?</p>	<p>Some of the totals will auto-calculate, which you'll see in the budget template, too. Learn more here: https://support.national.pears.io/annual-plan-budget-example/</p>
<p>Can you enter each position or do you have to group positions?</p>	<p>Canopy is updating the system to allow for more than one FTE per line, so if there are multiple positions, they can be entered on one line.</p>
<p>For planned staffing, what should we enter for SNAP-Ed Salary, Benefits, and Wages if there is more than one FTE for a position title?</p> <p>How does reporting the average salary translate into our actual budget?</p>	<p>Enter the average salary for that position title. On the review pages, the system will calculate a subtotal for each position title, and a total staffing budget.</p> <p>The total budget for the agency sums salary and benefits across the “project budget(s)” and</p>

Question	Answer
<p>if individual people within a category (i.e. nutrition assistants) each have a salary within a range, does that mean we have to enter them all separately because the autocalculation would not be correct?</p> <p>For the salary and fringe on planned staffing - do you use average or actual salary?</p> <p>Which fields within the Planned Staffing and Budget are "formulas" which will add up to a "total" budget?</p>	<p>"other SNAP-Ed expenditures" salary/benefits total. These amounts are the total of all staffing by project budget. That number should match the total staffing budget on planned staffing.</p>
<p>The budget template only allows one position per line, with a max of 1.0 FTE. Did you just say that has been fixed?</p>	<p>Yes, the budget template now allows more than 1.0 FTE per line.</p>
<p>Would all IA staff need to be included in the Planned Staffing budget, then?</p>	<p>Yes, all positions that are funded, even in part, by SNAP-Ed funds. Each agency should fill out the planned staffing page for their agency.</p>
<p>Other planned funding costs don't get included in the SNAP-Ed budget amount, correct?</p>	<p>Other planned funding costs should be included in the SNAP-Ed budget amount. Other SNAP-Ed expenditures include nonproject activities and administrative costs.</p>
<p>Where does carryover/forward funds go? What if an IA isn't privy to their carryforward because it returns back to the SA? Is this a required field for IAs?</p>	<p>Carryover/forward is entered as the unobligated balance (tab F in the budget template). If you don't have carryover funds in your budget, you can enter "0" in this field.</p>
<p>To clarify the Planned Staffing and Budget is optional or only certain sections within the budget?</p>	<p>Planned staffing and budget are required. The sections in this module may be done in the excel template and uploaded or entered directly into N-PEARS.</p>
<p>If you upload the file can you review the budget file to make sure it was transferred correctly?</p>	<p>Yes, once you upload the file you can view the uploaded data within each data entry section.</p>
<p>Can you lock down budget side to financial staff only? Salary is confidential.</p>	<p>We don't have the functionality right now. No staff names should be added to the staffing plan, only position titles. However, we suggest IAs only grant N-PEARS access to staff who are normally part of the IA plan submission process for reasons like this.</p>
<p>The template says "direct cost" - here do you mean full cost or will there be a place to add the indirect costs as well?</p>	<p>There is another place for indirect costs. Here is an example: https://support.national.pears.io/annual-plan-budget-example/</p>
<p>We have not broken down costs/budget by individual project. since staff may work across many projects? Is that a requirement?</p>	<p>Yes, this is a new requirement. Each project has a budget associated with it.</p>

Question	Answer
<p>Is the budget for the Implementing Agency (hopefully) and not for each individual project that the implementing agency proposes?</p> <p>So if we have 10 people in 10 locations that each work on 3 projects, we have to estimate their effort and allocate their salary among the three projects, correct?</p>	<p>Yes, if you have 10 people in 10 locations that each work on 3 projects, you should estimate their effort and allocate their salary among the three projects.</p>