Evaluation of the USDA Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations

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Abstract

Reducing the burden of applying for food stamps or enhancing benefits appears to increase participation of the elderly in the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Historically, low-income seniors ages 60 and older who qualify for FSP benefits participate at low rates because they feel it is not worth the effort to apply. To identify effective strategies for raising participation among this population, USDA designed three models, each using different techniques to reduce the barriers that seniors face in FSP participation. The techniques involve reducing the time and effort of applying for benefits, aiding seniors in navigating the application process, and giving seniors the option of receiving commodity packages instead of getting benefits through electronic benefits transfer cards. The models were tested as county demonstrations in six States between 2002 and 2004. This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the demonstrations. Successful demonstrations increased the number of participating seniors by 20-35 percent after 21 months of operation.

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ACRONYMS

AAA	Area Agency on Aging
ACCSA	The Alamance County Community Service Agency
CAB	Commodity Alternative Benefit
CRT	Community Renewal Team, Inc.
CSFP	Commodity Supplemental Food Program
DCF	Department of Children and Family Services
DES	Department of Economic Security
DSS	The Department of Social Services
EBT	Electronic Benefits Transfer Card
FACES	Food Assistance Connecting Eligible Seniors
FANS	Food Assistance and Nutrition for Seniors
FDA	U.S. Food and Drug Administration
FSP	Food Stamp Program
GAO	Government Accountability Office
MiCAFE	Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly
MOW	Meals on Wheels

MPR	Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TFC	The Food Connection
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
VTA	Vocational Trades of Alamance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview: Historically, low-income seniors age 60 and older who qualify for benefits in the Food Stamp Program (FSP) participate at extremely low rates. To identify effective strategies for increasing participation among this population, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designed three model program changes, with each model employing different techniques for reducing the barriers to FSP participation that seniors face. The three models were tested as county demonstration programs in six states between 2002 and 2004. This report presents the findings from an evaluation of these demonstrations. Some demonstrations resulted in relatively large increases in elderly FSP participation while other demonstrations resulted in little or no impact. Relatively large impacts were observed from demonstrations employing each of the three demonstration models. Successful demonstrations increased the number of participating seniors by between 20 and 35 percent after 21 months of operation. These demonstrations are effective because they make participation in the program worth the burden of applying for benefits, either through reducing those burdens or by enhancing the benefit to the client.

Policymakers have long been concerned that low-income elderly individuals who are eligible for food stamp benefits tend not to participate in the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Historically, only about one out of every three eligible elderly individuals participates in the program, and these rates have fallen in recent years. In fiscal year 2002, only 27.7 percent of those households with elderly that were eligible to receive food stamps participated in the program (Cunnyngham 2004).

Low participation rates for the elderly are especially troublesome because these individuals have unique nutritional needs. Many elderly persons suffer from medical conditions that require special diets. Moreover, low-income elderly individuals with health conditions often face the choice of spending resources on food or on medication, a choice that can harm their health whatever the decision. Without adequate food assistance, the nutritional needs of the low-income elderly may go unmet.

In response to these concerns, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded the Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations—six projects aimed at testing ways to increase FSP participation among eligible elderly individuals. The demonstrations were designed to reduce the barriers to FSP participation that the elderly face by simplifying the application process, increasing eligible elderly individuals' understanding of the program, assisting elderly individuals with the application process, and providing food stamp benefits as commodities rather than as traditional program benefits.

USDA also funded an evaluation to assess each demonstration's ability to increase participation among eligible elderly individuals. Additionally, the evaluation examined which types of seniors were attracted to the FSP under the demonstrations, what seniors liked and disliked about the demonstrations, and which demonstrations were most cost-effective.

This report presents the findings of that evaluation. The results suggest that a variety of approaches can be effective in increasing program participation among the elderly. Many seniors appeared not to participate in the FSP because the burden of applying for food stamps outweighed the typically small program benefits. When the application burden was reduced even by a small amount, a significant number of seniors entered the FSP. In particular, seniors eligible for low levels of benefits, as well as older seniors—two groups for whom small levels of burden can pose large barriers in relation to program benefits—were particularly likely to participate under the demonstrations.

What Are the Three Models for Increasing Elderly FSP Participation?

To test alternative strategies for increasing FSP participation among the elderly, USDA designed three demonstration models: (1) the simplified eligibility model, (2) the application assistance model, and (3) the commodity alternative benefit model. These models take different approaches to reducing the costs of applying for food stamps, increasing knowledge of program availability and benefits, and reducing stigma. In 2002, a total of six states implemented one of the Elderly Nutrition demonstration models in one or two counties (see Table 1).

The **simplified eligibility model** is designed to reduce the time and effort it takes for seniors to apply for food stamps. Under this demonstration, applicants did not have to submit documentation of income and expenses (although proof of citizenship was still required). Additionally, the eligibility interview required of all FSP applicants was waived for elderly clients at the demonstration sites. Florida, the only state to adopt the simplified eligibility demonstration, implemented the demonstration in two counties.

The **application assistance model** seeks to reduce the burden of applying for food stamps by giving seniors one-on-one aid in navigating the application process. Under this demonstration, eligibility rules remained unchanged, but elderly applicants were paired with

Table 1: Six Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations

Demonstration Sites	Start Date	End Date
Simplified Eligibility Model		
Florida: Leon and Gadsden Counties	February 2002	December 2003
Application Assistance Model		
Arizona: Pinal and Yavapai Counties	September 2002	April 2005
Maine: Waldo County	February 2002	February 2004
Michigan: Genesee County	November 2002	January 2005
Commodity Alternative Benefit Model		
Connecticut: Hartford region	November 2002	October 2004
North Carolina: Alamance County	November 2002	September 2005

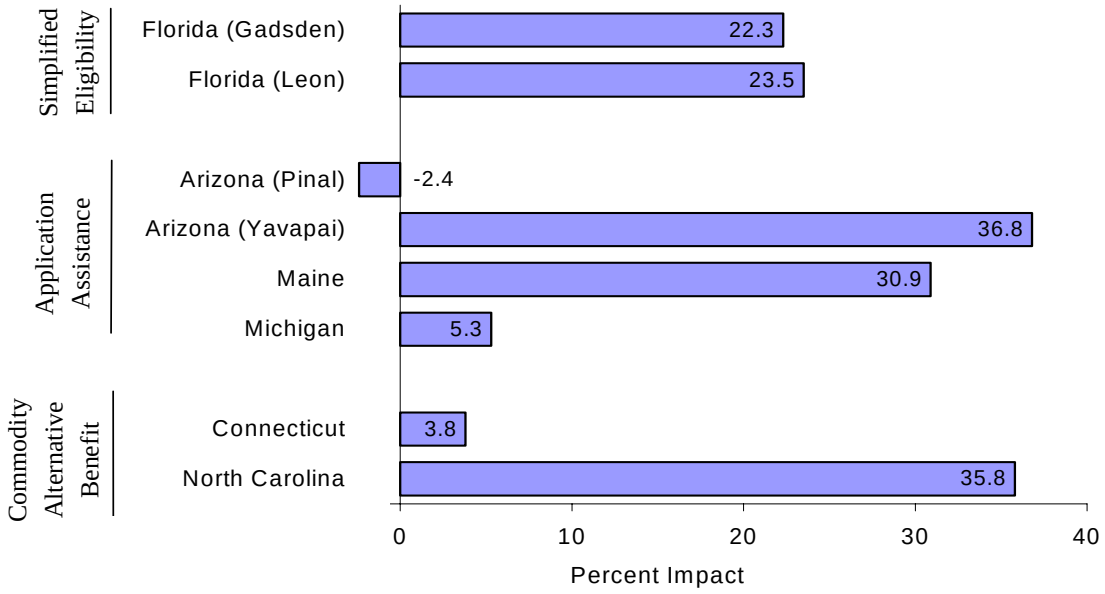
application assistance workers who helped them assemble documents needed to apply for food stamps, explained the application, and often completed the forms on their behalf. Additionally, the eligibility interview required of all FSP applicants was waived for clients served by application assistants. Three states adopted application assistance demonstrations: Arizona, Maine, and Michigan.

The **commodity alternative benefit model** gives FSP households with elderly the option of receiving packages of commodities each month, instead of getting benefits through an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. The packages were intended in large part to reduce the stigma associated with receiving traditional FSP benefits. Because benefits were not used publicly in stores, and because packages were received only once or twice a month, elderly participants were less likely to be viewed as "receiving welfare."

Did the Models Increase Elderly Participation?

Most of the elderly nutrition demonstrations appear to have created relatively large increases in elderly FSP participation after just 21 months (Figure 1). Successful impacts were observed in demonstrations that adopted each of the three demonstration models. For the simplified eligibility model, the demonstration in Florida increased participation among the elderly by more than 20 percent in two separate demonstration counties. For the application assistance model, the demonstration in one of the two Arizona counties increased participation by almost 37 percent and the demonstration in Maine increased

Figure 1: Percent Impact on FSP Participation by the Elderly After 21 Months



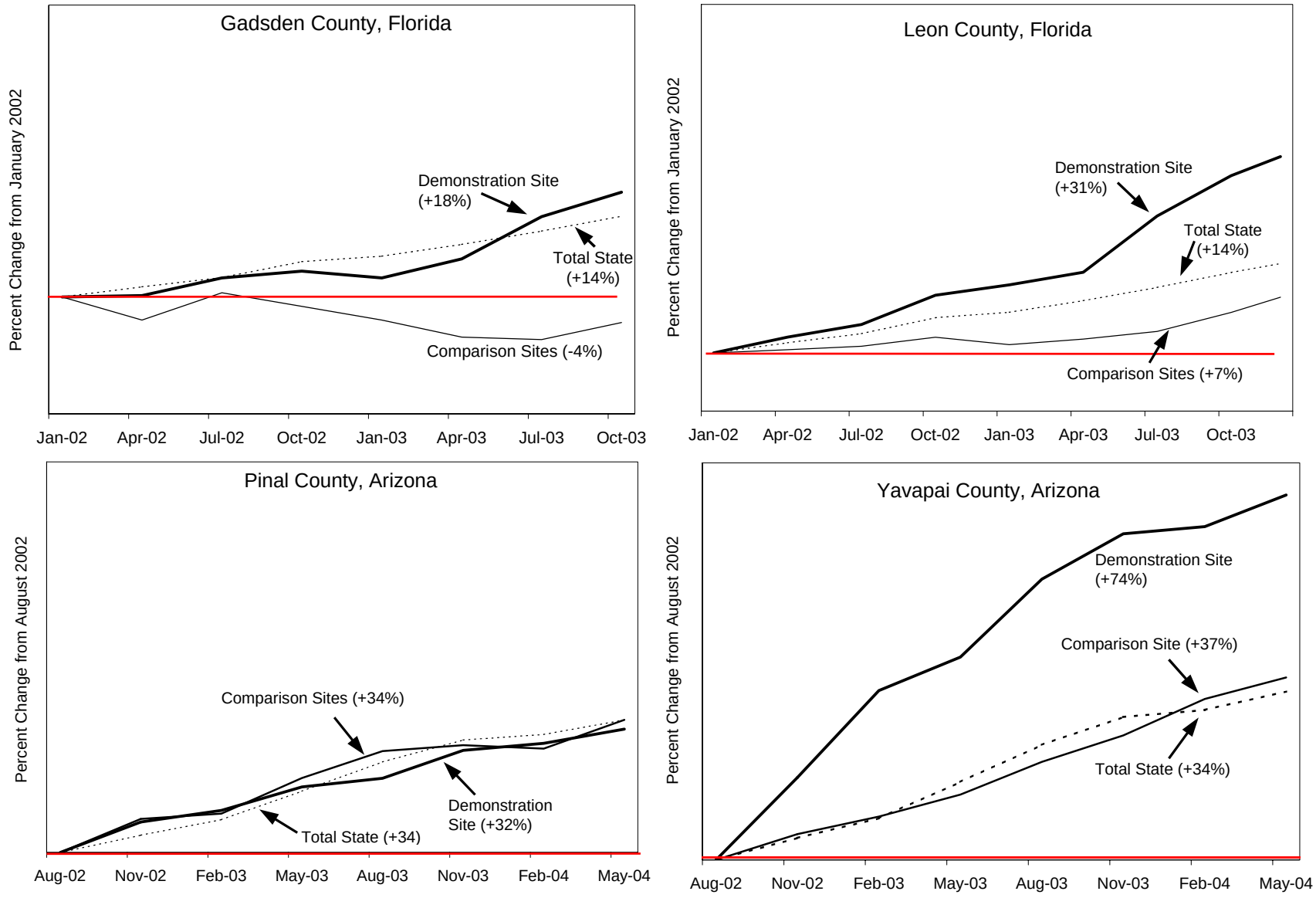
participation by almost 31 percent. For the commodity alternative benefit model, the demonstration in North Carolina increased participation by almost 36 percent.

These impacts suggest that the historically low FSP participation rates among the eligible elderly population can be increased. A 20 percent increase in the number of FSP participants nationwide would raise the national FSP participation rate for the elderly from 28 percent to 33 percent. A 35 percent increase in participation would raise the rate to 37 percent.

For each demonstration, the impact estimates in Figure 1 were derived by comparing participation changes observed in the demonstration sites with participation patterns observed in similar comparison sites that were in the same state but did not have the demonstration. The comparison sites were selected because, prior to the demonstration, they had elderly FSP participation patterns that were similar to those of the demonstration county. As a result, they approximate how elderly participation would have changed in the demonstration sites during the 21-month analysis period if the demonstrations had not been in place. Thus, the difference between the demonstration and comparison site changes (see Figure 2) reflect the impact of the demonstration.

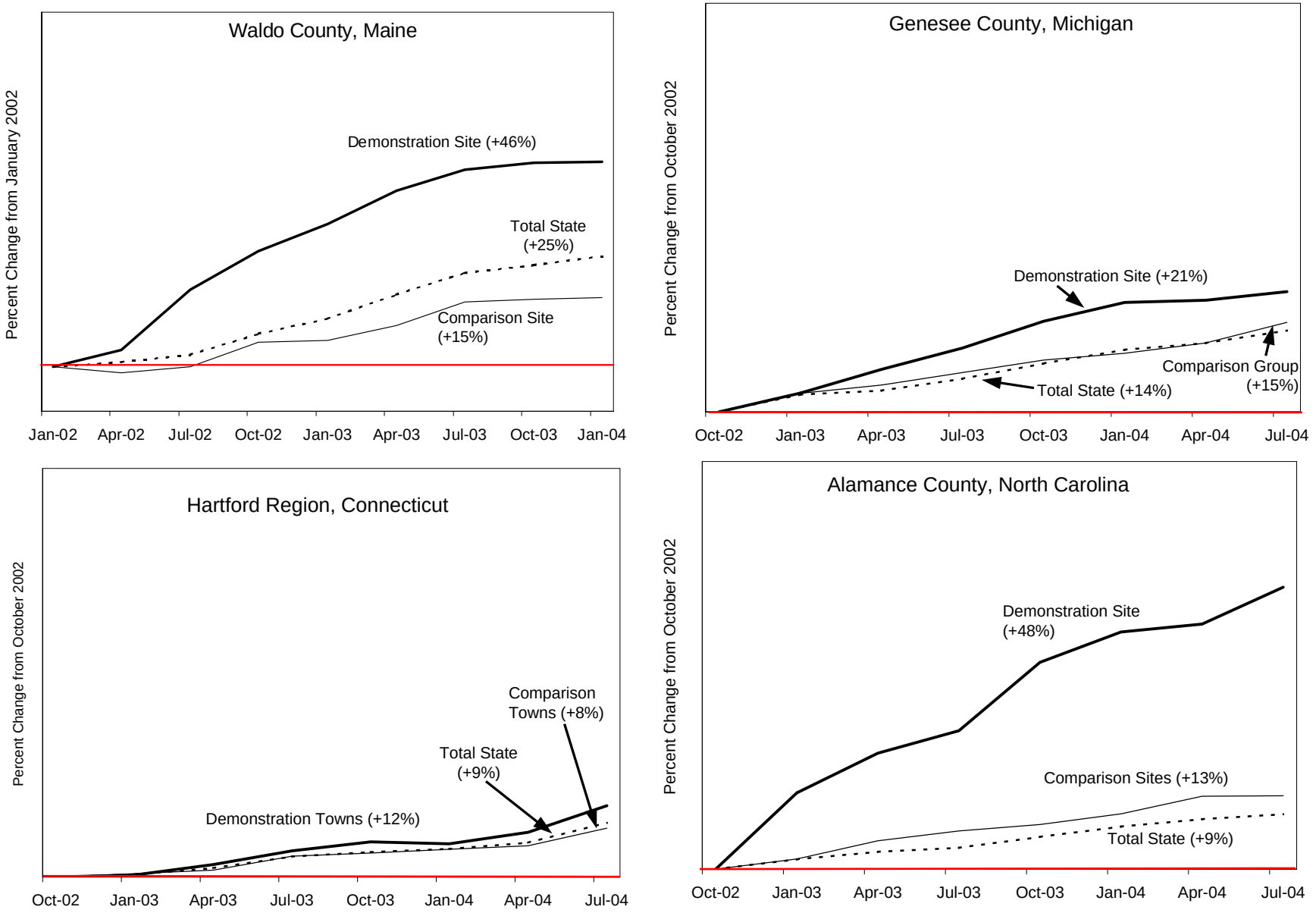
To explore the validity of the impact estimates, other, regression-based estimation methods were employed. While these methods yielded impact estimates that differed somewhat in magnitude, the overall findings were consistent. In particular, the demonstrations in Yavapai County (Arizona), Alamance County (North Carolina), and W aldo County (Maine) had the largest impacts, while the demonstrations in both Florida counties had somewhat smaller but still sizable impacts.

Figure 2: FSP Participation Patterns By Elderly in Demonstration and Comparison Sites



Note: for each demonstration, percent change is computed relative to the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration.

Figure 2 : FSP Participation Patterns By Elderly in Demonstration and Comparison Sites *(continued)*



Note: for each demonstration, percent change is computed relative to the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration.

What Made the Successful Demonstrations Effective?

In deciding whether to apply for food stamps, seniors appear to have weighed the costs of applying against the benefits received by the program. The most effective Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations were those that could either lower the costs of applying or increase the benefits of participating.

> ***"[If I had to go to the Food Stamp Office,] I would have never, never have applied for those food stamps. Never." – An elderly FSP client in Florida***

Seniors who were interviewed and participated in focus groups as part of the evaluation provided substantial evidence that, without the demonstrations, their costs of applying outweighed the program benefits. The costs most important to seniors were the nonfinancial factors, such as the burden of the application process and the stigma of receiving public assistance.

Seniors described many types of application burden. They indicated that, without the demonstrations, the entire application process was confusing. To them, the paperwork requirements were daunting, especially because they perceived much of the paperwork to be unnecessary. Seniors were also particularly vexed by the personal interactions at FSP offices. They indicated that eligibility workers at local offices sometimes did not treat them with respect or dignity. As one client in Arizona explained, "*I've had a lot of seniors tell me they won't sign up because it wasn't worth the problems.*"

Stigma was another cost associated with participating in the FSP. While it is unclear the extent to which stigma alone would prevent an elderly individual from participating in the FSP, stigma was a persistent concern among clients. In particular, seniors were concerned about the way that other shoppers and grocery store staff perceived people using food stamps. Many also said they would be embarrassed if friends and family knew they were receiving benefits. Seniors felt particularly sensitive to stigma because of an elevated sense of pride. As one client said: "*When you've had a good life and you've worked hard all your life and then all of a sudden, boom, you don't have nothing. And it's embarrassing to have to admit.*"

Not only do seniors face costs in applying for food stamps, but also the benefits of participating are often low. Because seniors often receive fixed monthly income from Social Security and sometimes from the Supplemental Security Income program, they tend to qualify for low levels of FSP benefits. Indeed, in 2000, 44 percent of seniors eligible for food stamps qualify for the minimum food stamp benefit of $10 a month (FNS 2002). As a result, the costs associated with application burden and stigma do not need to be very high to outweigh the expected low program benefits.

"I will say...they are very, very helpful.... They went overboard." – An elderly FSP client talking about the demonstration in Arizona

The demonstrations were effective in part because they either lowered the costs of participating or increased the benefits. The simplified eligibility and application assistance demonstration models worked primarily through reducing the application burden. In Florida, where the simplified eligibility model was used, seniors could apply without having to assemble documentation on income and expenses. They did not have to travel to the local FSP office, or even participate in an eligibility interview over the phone. In Arizona and Maine, clients received personal, one-on-one assistance in completing the application. Demonstration staff helped them to identify which documents were needed and to fill out the application forms. As in Florida, applicants did not need to travel to the local FSP office or participate in an eligibility interview with FSP staff.

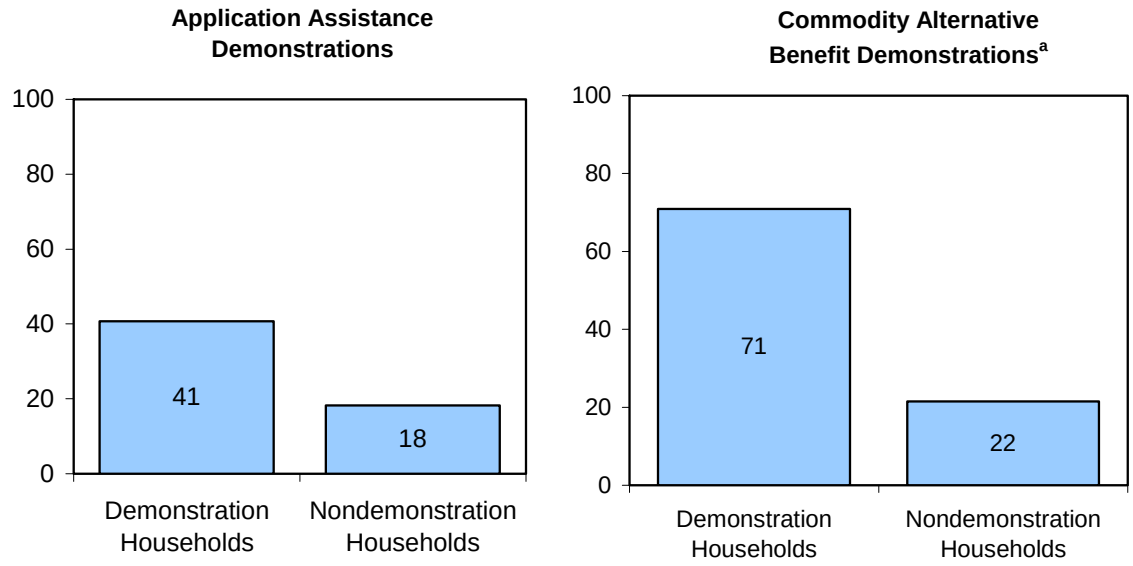
Seniors receiving food stamps in the simplified eligibility and application assistance demonstrations also appreciated the fact that benefits were provided via electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. Because these cards can be used in local stores like debit cards, other shoppers were less aware that the senior was purchasing food with food stamps. This reduced the stigma of receiving food stamps. EBT cards were not a part of the demonstration, but since they were relatively new to the FSP in these sites, many seniors who applied for benefits through the demonstration first became aware of EBT cards when they were enrolled in the program.

Demonstrations using the commodity alternative benefit model raised the value of food stamp benefits for many clients. The contents of the package did not vary by the amount of regular FSP benefits for which households qualified. Thus, in North Carolina, clients who might otherwise have received $10 in food stamps were able to opt for a commodity package with a retail price of between $60 and $70.1

The role of the demonstrations in reducing costs and increasing benefits can be illustrated by which types of seniors participated in the demonstrations. Households with elderly that were enrolled through the application assistance demonstrations were twice as likely as other households with elderly in the same county to be eligible for a $10 benefit (Figure 3). This suggests that the application assistance demonstrations reduced the costs of applying enough to attract more households eligible for the minimum benefit. At the commodity alternative benefit sites, those enrolled in the commodity program were more than three times as likely to be eligible for a $10 benefit as those receiving traditional FSP

1 The cost to the government of the commodity packages was less than the retail price. For each commodity package, the demonstrations could spend up to the average benefit paid to elderly individuals in their demonstration site. In the second year of the demonstration, this was $46 in Connecticut and $39 in North Carolina. These costs to the government included the costs of the commodities as well as the costs of shipping and storage.

Figure 3: Percent of Households Eligible For $10 FSP Benefits: Demonstration Sites Only



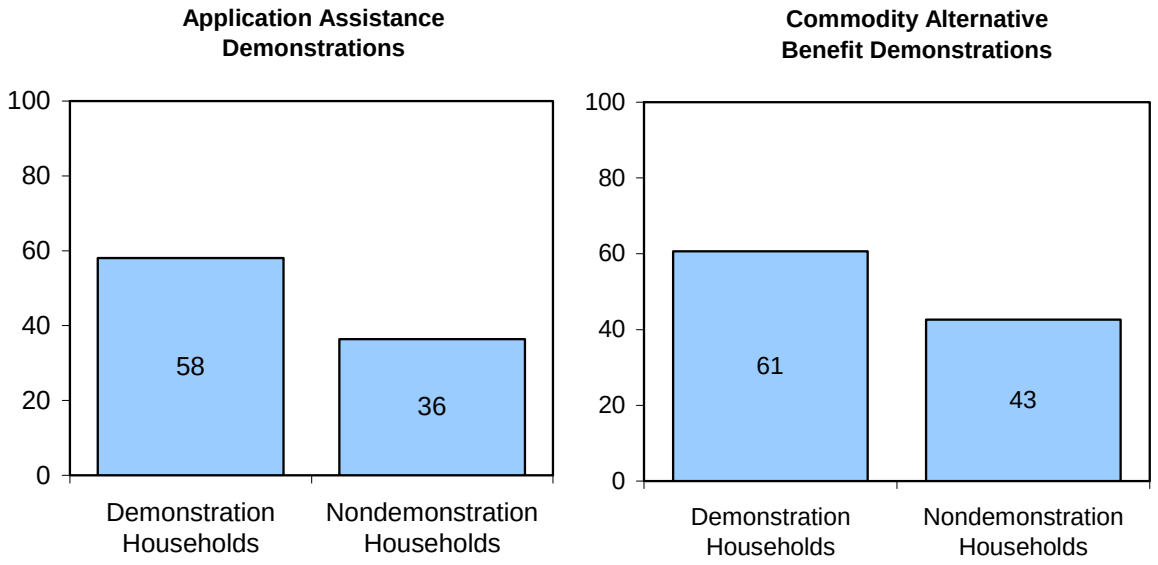
[a]Reflects the level of benefits households would receive if they participated in regular FSP.

benefits.2 As with the application assistance demonstrations, this suggests that the higher benefits (and potentially the reduced stigma) of the demonstration attracted households eligible for $10 in food stamps. The tendency to attract households eligible for a $10 benefit was not apparent in the simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida.

The demonstrations also attracted disproportionate shares of seniors at the older end of the age distribution. Older seniors are more likely to have cognitive or physical limitations that make the burden of applying for benefits more significant. In the application assistance demonstration sites, demonstration households were more likely to have a household member over age 70 (Figure 4). This suggests that the assistance provided in these demonstration sites was enough to reduce the application barriers for older individuals. Similar patterns were observed in the commodity demonstration sites, where those receiving commodity packages were more likely to have a household member over age 70. While the application process for demonstration and nondemonstration households was the same in these commodity sites, older individuals may have preferred the commodity demonstrations

2 While many of the households participating in the commodity demonstration were new to the FSP, some were ongoing food stamp clients who converted to the demonstration. The estimates in Figure 3 reflect the proportion of all demonstration enrollees, including those that had previously been receiving food stamps.

Figure 4: Percent of Households with an Individual Over Age 70



Note: Distribution in application assistance sites computed over all households with elderly; distribution in commodity alternative benefit sites computed over pure elderly households.

because they reduced the burden of shopping. There also was some evidence in the simplified eligibility demonstrations that those households attracted by the demonstrations were more likely to contain individuals over age 70 (not shown).

In addition to changing the costs and benefits of participating, the demonstrations helped increase FSP participation through promotion of the FSP. Many seniors indicated that they did not know they qualified for food stamp benefits and others indicated they did not know the program was available. Each of the demonstrations that had relatively large impacts also had effective strategies to inform clients about the availability of FSP benefits. In Florida, a televised advertisement was used in the demonstration counties to promote the FSP to seniors, and a call center was established where seniors could be "prescreened" for eligibility and told the amount of benefit they likely would receive. In Arizona, application assistants also used prescreening to promote the program to seniors. The demonstrations in Maine and North Carolina often used personal contact with seniors to promote the program.

Seniors interviewed or participating in focus groups as part of the evaluation had extremely positive assessments of the demonstrations. In simplified eligibility and application assistance demonstrations, seniors appreciated having minimal interaction with local FSP offices. Seniors in the application assistance demonstrations also reacted positively to the personal assistance and to the "respect" that they received from the application assistants. In the commodity

demonstrations, seniors were pleased with the amount of food they received, especially those who were eligible for only $10 in food stamp benefits under the traditional program.

Why Were Some Demonstrations Less Effective?

While most of the demonstrations showed signs of success, three demonstrations appeared to have limited impacts. In two of these demonstrations—the application assistance demonstration in Pinal County, Arizona, and the commodity alternative benefit demonstration in the Hartford region in Connecticut—the impact estimates are close to zero. This is consistent with other information about the demonstrations, and there is little reason to believe that the demonstrations had much of an impact on elderly FSP participation. In the third demonstration—the application assistance demonstration in Genesee County, Michigan—alternative estimation techniques yielded impact estimates of between 5 and 10 percent (still considerably smaller than the estimates for other demonstrations). This, combined with other information about the Michigan demonstration, leads to the conclusion that the Michigan demonstration did have some impact on elderly participation, but it was still less effective than most of the other demonstrations.

For the demonstrations in Pinal County and the Hartford region, the limited effectiveness appears to have been caused by site-specific problems rather than by more fundamental issues with the demonstration model. Both demonstrations struggled with an inability to communicate the availability of the demonstration to potential clients. Staff whose responsibility it was to inform low-income seniors about the demonstration services and benefits were unable to spread the word effectively. Moreover, in the Hartford region, the process for distributing commodities was both complicated and inconvenient, leading some clients to become frustrated with the process of picking up their commodity packages.

The experience in Michigan may reflect a variety of factors. The Michigan demonstration provided application assistance at senior centers and other facilities serving the elderly. Due to the closing of key senior centers in the city of Flint, the demonstration was unable to establish a meaningful presence in the largest community in the demonstration site during the initial months of the demonstration. However, this does not appear to be the only explanation for the relatively small impact since participation growth rates among the elderly did not increase once new centers were brought into the demonstration. The limited impact could suggest that the senior center-based approach is not a good way to reach the eligible elderly. While outreach was conducted to encourage seniors to visit these centers to apply, it is likely that the principal source of clients was the seniors already using these services. Additionally, the experience in Michigan may reflect inherent difficulties associated with providing application assistance in an urban environment.

What Are the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Three Models?

One way of assessing the relative strength of each demonstration is by measuring cost-effectiveness. Each of the demonstrations served a relatively large number of elderly clients. However, many were providing services to clients that probably would have participated in the FSP even in the absence of the demonstration. Since the primary objective of these demonstrations was to bring more seniors into the program, it makes sense to examine the dollar cost of success. To determine the cost-effectiveness of the demonstrations in light of the central objective, we divided the total costs of operating each demonstration by its net impact on participation to compute the cost per net new FSP household. 3

Given that the simplified eligibility demonstrations had limited monthly labor costs but still generated a sizeable impact, this model appears to be the most cost-effective. The monthly demonstration costs in Florida amounted to $402 per net new household attracted to the program (Figure 5). Most of the costs in the Florida demonstration were the ongoing costs associated with outreach and other efforts to promote the demonstration.

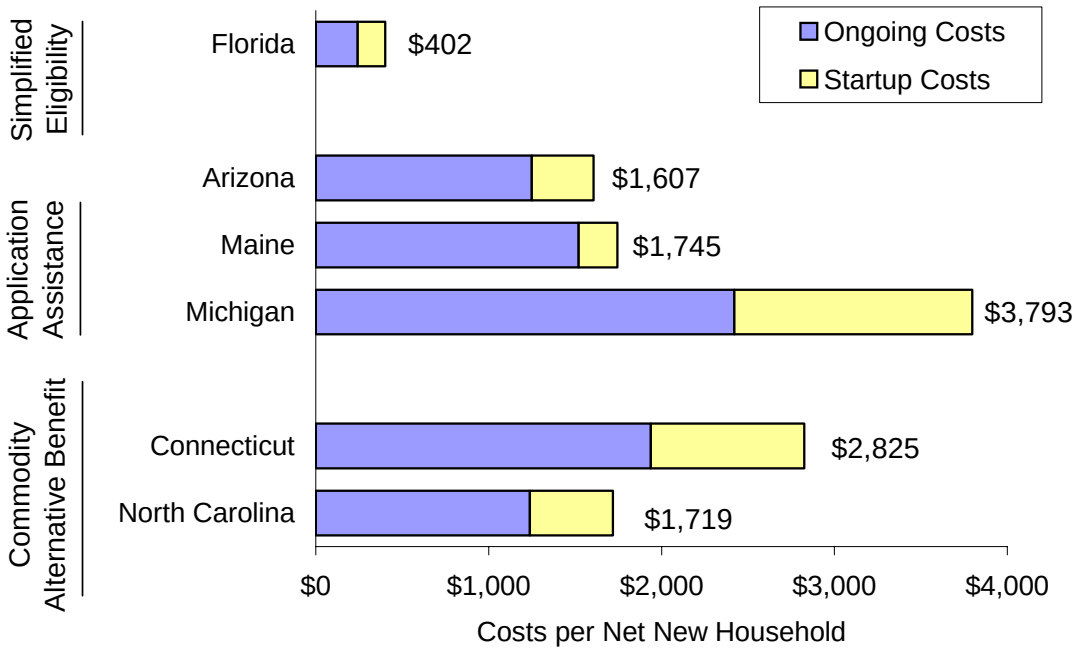
The other demonstrations were more labor-intensive than the Florida demonstration, and as a result, the costs per net new household were higher. The demonstrations in Arizona, Maine and North Carolina, all of which generated relatively large increases in elderly FSP participation, cost between $1,600 and $1,750 per net new household. The remaining demonstrations in Michigan and Connecticut, which generated limited impacts on elderly FSP participation, had the highest costs per net new household ($3,800 in Michigan and $2,800 in Connecticut).

Key demonstration components led some sites to have higher start up costs than other sites. In Arizona and Michigan, a heavy reliance on technology required significant investments at the start of the demonstration. In Connecticut and North Carolina, the costs of equipment for commodity distribution and storage constituted significant start up costs.

Each demonstration model is associated with economies of scale that would likely reduce these per-impact costs were the demonstrations expanded. Whether the demonstration costs are ultimately high enough to argue against replication depends on how policymakers value both the increase in elderly participation and the other benefits of the demonstrations. While the costs per net new household may be high, the benefit of increased elderly participation combined with the benefit of services provided to the elderly caseload in general may justify those costs.

3 The number of net new households participating as a result of the demonstration was derived from the impact estimates presented in Figure 1.

Figure 5: Total Demonstration Costs Per Net New FSP Household With Elderly[a]



[a]Total costs do not include costs of food stamp benefits or commodity benefits provided to demonstration participants.

The strengths and weaknesses of the demonstrations were not judged solely by their cost-effectiveness. The demonstrations also varied in terms of their abilities to serve key types of clients and the ease with which they could be implemented (Table 2). The strengths and weaknesses of each model are summarized below.

Simplified Eligibility Model

The simplified eligibility model was not only the least costly demonstration, it also was the easiest to implement. The start-up costs of the demonstration were low, and once the rule changes were put in place, the only substantial ongoing activities consisted of promoting the FSP to seniors. Another strength of the model was that it helped reduce the workloads of FSP caseworkers, since the eligibility interviews were waived and less work was needed to verify income and expense information.

There are potential weaknesses with this demonstration model. First, while there was little evidence in Florida that clients misused simplified rules, the limited verification creates the potential that applicants may misreport income, assets, and expenses to attain eligibility or increase their benefits. Such actions would lead to higher program costs.

Table 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Elderly Nutrition Demonstration Models

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Simplified Eligibility	· Least costly · Easiest model to implement · Reduces clients' application burdens · Simplifies workload for caseworkers	· Potential errors in benefit determination · May not reach clients with substantial cognitive or physical limitations
Application Assistance	· Reduces clients' application burdens · Can reach clients with substantial cognitive or physical limitations · Simplifies workload for caseworkers · Can provide access to multiple assistance programs	· Labor-intensive · More costly than Simplified Eligibility · Effectiveness is highly sensitive to the abilities of application assistants · May provide services to clients that do not need them
Commodity Alternative Benefit	· Reduces stigma of in-store use of FSP benefits · May be less burdensome than grocery shopping for some seniors	· Most costly demonstration · Commodity distribution process is complicated and can be inconvenient to clients · Reduces clients' flexibility with respect to food choices

Moreover, while the demonstration reduced the application burden for many seniors, it may not have reached those clients who needed the most assistance with the application process. Clients with substantial cognitive or physical limitations may still require some form of assistance in completing the application process, even under the simplified rules.

Application Assistance Model

The application assistance demonstrations reduced clients' burden of applying and helped increase their knowledge of the eligibility process. In some cases, particularly when assistance was provided in the home, the demonstration was able to better serve clients with mobility limitations. Moreover, as with the simplified eligibility demonstration, the waived eligibility interview and reduced paperwork eased the workloads of FSP caseworkers.

However, the application assistance model was significantly more labor-intensive than the simplified eligibility model. As a result, it was also more costly. Additionally, the demonstrations provided services to as many clients as possible, including clients that would have applied for benefits anyway, and may not have needed assistance. Another weakness of the demonstration model is that its effectiveness is contingent on the ability of the demonstration staff to communicate well with seniors and, to some degree, their ability to be persuasive. As a result, successful replication of these demonstrations is not guaranteed.

Commodity Alternative Benefit Model

The commodity alternative benefit model was developed to test whether commodity packages would prove more attractive to seniors than traditional FSP benefits. The results show that the packages do appeal to some seniors. Seniors appear to be attracted to the commodity programs because they received more food than they would have with traditional FSP benefits. In addition, receiving food through the commodity alternative benefit demonstration may be less burdensome for seniors than is grocery shopping While the demonstration may also reduce the stigma associated with using FSP benefits in stores, this did not appear a major factor in seniors' participation decisions.

The weaknesses of the commodity alternative benefit model stem from its costs and complexity. Commodity distribution is an expensive process that involves substantial labor costs as well the costs of equipment for storing and distributing commodities. Moreover, unlike the other demonstration models, which are structured to serve clients at the time of application, the commodity alternative benefit model provides services to clients each month that they are enrolled, and this increases costs. The process of distributing commodities can become extremely complicated and difficult to coordinate, and this, in turn, can affect the level of service given to clients. Finally, while commodity benefits may appeal to some seniors, others would prefer to receive traditional FSP benefits, which allow them to purchase the types and brands of foods they like most.

What Are the Implications for Future FSP Policy?

The success of the three demonstration models leaves policymakers with decisions about how best to address low elderly participation rates in the future. The different demonstration models increased participation in different ways, each with its own set of costs and obstacles to successful replication. There may be interest in expanding some of these demonstration models in the future—or even the combination of certain aspects of the models. Moreover, state FSP agencies and local organizations may seek to replicate some components of the demonstrations, such as providing some form of application assistance, or reducing the need for in-person eligibility interviews among seniors.

The results of this evaluation suggest several key policy implications should be considered in developing future efforts to increase FSP participation among the elderly.

FSP Participation Can Be Increased Among the Elderly

The first implication is that elderly FSP participation *can* be increased. Previous research had identified several barriers to participation for the elderly, and it appears that efforts to reduce those barriers yield more elderly participants. As a result, the historically low participation rates for the elderly can be increased through a variety of effective options. The impacts of the demonstrations suggest that reducing these barriers can potentially attract more seniors who are eligible for low benefits, as well as more seniors who are older and potentially face mobility and cognitive limitations.

The Dollar Cost of Success Can Be Significant

Since the primary objective of these demonstrations was to bring more seniors into the program, it makes sense to examine the dollar cost of success, and, as we discovered, this cost can be significant. For each net new elderly household (that is, households that would not have participated in the absence of the demonstration), the demonstration costs ran from $400 to $4,000. Each demonstration model is associated with economies of scale that would likely reduce these per-impact costs were the demonstrations expanded (although the degree to which they are reduced depends on the demonstration's variable costs such as labor and food distribution equipment). Whether the demonstration costs are ultimately high enough to argue against replication depends on how policymakers value both the increase in elderly participation and the other benefits of the demonstrations. While the costs per net new household may be high, the benefit of increased elderly participation combined with the benefit of services provided to the elderly caseload in general may justify those costs.

Conditions for Effective Replication

The lessons learned from the experiences of the individual Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations suggest that several conditions must be in place for replications of these demonstrations to be successful. As noted above, the basic condition is that the efforts must make the costs of applying less than the benefits of participating. Other conditions for success also exist, however.

First, the results of the various demonstrations underscore the importance of publicity. It is unrealistic to expect any of these demonstration models to have much of an impact on rates of participation unless seniors are made aware of the demonstration services and program benefits. Each of the successful demonstrations included expanded efforts to inform seniors about the availability of food assistance benefits. In several cases efforts to market the program without using the term "food stamps" appeared successful (such as the public service announcement used in Florida, or the multi-program approach used in Maine). Any future initiatives aimed at increasing elderly FSP participation must involve effective approaches for informing seniors about the availability of program benefits and about changes made in the program to better accommodate seniors.

A second factor necessary for successful replication is effective staff. This is most important for efforts that involve direct contact with seniors, but also relates to other activities, such as the development of effective outreach and ongoing commodity distribution. The

disparate outcomes of the two demonstration counties in Arizona show how different staff implementing the same procedures can have very different results. In designing future efforts, consideration should be given to whether the types of staff needed to make the effort effective are available.

For commodity alternative benefit demonstrations, an efficient and user-friendly distribution process also is needed for successful replication. If the process is not user-friendly, clients easily can become frustrated, and the costs of participating may again outweigh the benefits. With respect to replication, there likely is not a one-size-fits-all approach to the efficient distribution of commodities. The process employed in the North Carolina demonstration, which was centralized and well-liked by clients, would probably not have worked well in a large urban area like Hartford, because the number of clients served could potentially overwhelm the simple distribution process. However, the experience in the Connecticut demonstration showed that increasing the complexity of the distribution process can create other problems that frustrate clients. In short, the distribution process must be tailored to the circumstances of the community served.

What Questions Remain?

The results of this evaluation raise additional research questions about effective approaches to increasing elderly participation. These questions could not be answered, given the limited number of demonstrations that were examined. Nevertheless, policymakers should give consideration to these issues in designing efforts to increase elderly participation in the future.

Which seniors were not reached by these demonstrations?

Even the largest impact estimates suggested by the evaluation results—increasing participation by about 35 percent in 21 months—would not bring elderly FSP participation rates in line with those of other FSP-eligible groups. A 35 percent increase in participation would raise the overall participation rate from the current level of 28 percent to about 37 percent, meaning that 63 percent of seniors still were not participating. Thus, there still may be some types of seniors not effectively reachable through simplified eligibility, application assistance, and/or commodity benefits programs. Knowing the characteristics of these nonparticipants could help to develop even more effective efforts in the future. In this evaluation, we were able to examine only the characteristics of those reached by the demonstration, leaving uncertainty about the characteristics of those not reached.

Did differences between urban and rural environments play a significant role in the effectiveness of the demonstrations?

Among all the demonstration sites, only Leon County, Florida, the Hartford region in Connecticut, and Genesee County, Michigan contained relatively large urban areas. Of these sites, the Connecticut demonstration had little or no impact on elderly participation, and the Michigan demonstration had an impact much smaller than those of the successful demonstrations. It is possible that the complications associated with providing services to a large, densely populated area limited the effectiveness of these demonstrations. In Leon County, where large impacts were observed, such complicating factors were minimal, since in-person services were not provided. Moreover, demonstration impacts observed in rural areas might have been partially attributable to what is sometimes perceived as a more friendly culture in rural areas. Unfortunately, without more demonstrations, it is difficult to tell whether these policies are less effective in urban areas, all else being equal.

How much of the impacts can be explained solely by outreach?

Interviews with seniors confirmed previous research findings that many seniors did not know about the FSP program or, more commonly, were unaware that they are eligible for benefits. In some cases, outreach alone may have been sufficient to encourage more seniors to participate. We believe that the bulk of the impacts were due to the demonstration services provided. While outreach can inform more seniors about the availability of the program, it does little to change the relative costs and benefits of participating. However, knowing the degree to which outreach alone would have raised participation in these sites—and whether it would have raised participation at all—would be valuable to state and local officials looking for effective strategies for increasing elderly participation in the FSP.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Policymakers have long been concerned that low-income elderly individuals who are eligible for food stamp benefits tend not to participate in the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Historically, fewer than one out of every three eligible elderly individuals participates in the program, and these rates have only fallen in recent years (Cunnyngham 2004). Such low participation rates generate concerns about the ability of low-income senior citizens to maintain a healthy diet.

In response to these concerns, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded the Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations—six projects aimed at testing ways to increase FSP participation among eligible elderly individuals. The demonstrations were designed to reduce the barriers to FSP participation that the elderly face by simplifying the application process, increasing eligible elderly individuals' understanding of the program, assisting elderly individuals with the application process, and/or providing food stamp benefits as commodities rather than as traditional program benefits.

USDA also funded an evaluation of these demonstrations to assess their ability to increase participation among eligible elderly individuals. The evaluation examined the types of seniors who were attracted to the FSP under the demonstrations, what factors seniors liked and disliked about the demonstrations, and which demonstrations were the most cost-effective.

This report presents the findings of that evaluation. The results suggest that a variety of approaches can be effective in increasing program participation among the elderly. It appears that many seniors choose not to participate in the FSP because the burden of applying for food stamps outweighed the benefits they would have received. When the application burden was reduced even a small amount, a significant number of seniors entered the FSP. In particular, seniors eligible for small benefits, as well as older seniors—two groups for whom small levels of burden can pose large barriers in relation to program benefits—were the more likely to participate under the demonstrations. The demonstrations that were most effective tended to have strong outreach efforts as well as staff who could connect well with seniors.

The remainder of this chapter provides a context for understanding demonstration goals and evaluation objectives. Specifically, it describes:

- The issue of nonparticipation among the elderly and presents several possible reasons for this problem
- The three demonstration models and the six grantees
- The evaluation objectives and approach
- The extent to which the evaluation findings can be generalized to all eligible elderly nonparticipants

THE ISSUE OF LOW FSP ELDERLY PARTICIPATION RATES

Reaching those elderly that are eligible for food stamps has been a persistent problem in the FSP. Each month, millions of eligible, poor elderly individuals go without food stamp benefits. For purposes of determining eligibility, the FSP considers individuals who are age 60 or older to be elderly. In fiscal year 2002, 5.4 million households with elderly were estimated to be eligible for food stamps (Cunnyngham 2004). Of these, fewer than 1.5 million (27.7 percent) participated in the program, leaving 4.5 million eligible elderly individuals without benefits. Historically, fewer than one-third of eligible elderly individuals have participated in the FSP—a participation rate that is far lower than that of any other major demographic group. In 2002, the participation rate for all nonelderly FSP-eligible individuals (59 percent) was more than twice that of the elderly.[1]

Low participation rates for the elderly are especially troublesome because these individuals have unique nutritional needs. Many elderly persons suffer from medical or dental conditions that require special diets. For instance, diabetes and heart disease are common among the elderly, and many elderly individuals are overweight. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of the elderly have multiple medical conditions (Hoffman and Rice 1995). Low-income elderly persons are especially disadvantaged for two reasons. First, rates of chronic health conditions are significantly higher in the low-income population (U.S. DHHS 2000). Second, low-income elderly individuals with health conditions often face choosing between spending resources on food and spending them on medication—a choice that can harm their health whatever they decide. Thus, without food assistance, the nutritional needs of the low-income elderly might go unmet.

[1] Participation rates for households with children (66 percent) are much higher than for households with nonelderly adults (50 percent), but both rates are substantially higher than the participation rate for households with elderly.

This problem is likely to get worse. The number of low-income elderly is expected to rise sharply in the next 10 years as baby boomers begin to turn 60. If participation rates for the elderly remain low, then the number of nonparticipating eligible elderly will only grow.

Recent research has identified five main reasons why elderly individuals do not participate in the FSP (Ponza and McConnell 1996; McConnell and Ponza 1999):

1. ***Perceived Lack of Need***. Despite their low income, many nonparticipating elderly feel that they do not need food stamps, while others perceive their need as being only temporary. Yet evidence suggests that many of those who say they do not need food stamps are still not food secure. When probed about this inconsistency, some of these elderly nonparticipants indicate that they feel they *should* be able to manage without food stamps and are ashamed that they cannot. Thus, some elderly who claim they do not need food stamps might not be participating for other reasons, such as to avoid the stigma associated with the program.

2. ***Lack of Information***. Lack of information is a common reason that the elderly do not participate in the FSP. Some eligible elderly are unaware of the existence of the program, while many more know about the program, but have limited knowledge of program specifics, such as where or how to apply for benefits, or whether they are eligible. Surveys have found that about one-third to one-half of nonparticipants identified as FSP-eligible think that they are ineligible. Many believe that their assets are too great or that they are categorically ineligible because they have no children or because they are elderly. Often, these misconceptions about the FSP are based on inaccurate information from family and friends.

3. ***Low Expected Benefits***. Some poor elderly individuals think that it is not worthwhile to apply for food stamps, given the small amount of benefits they expect receive. Many elderly households are eligible for only $10 in food stamps (the minimum food stamp allotment for one- and two-person households) because of the size of their retirement benefits (such as Social Security). In fiscal year 2000, 44 percent of those households with elderly that were eligible for food stamps were eligible for only $10 in benefits per month (USDA 2002). An additional 20 percent of households were eligible for between $11 and $50 per month. Moreover, the *expectation* among many nonparticipating seniors is that they will receive a low FSP benefit, regardless of they actually would receive if they applied.

4. ***Application Burden***. The cost in both time and money of applying for food stamps is often too high for elderly nonparticipants, especially those eligible for small benefit amounts. Bartlett et al. (1992) estimated that the average applicant (elderly or otherwise) takes nearly five hours to complete the food stamp application and spends more than $10 on transportation and other expenses. In addition to time and money costs, the burden of applying for food stamps can be significant. Due to transportation difficulties and physical

limitations, elderly individuals often find it difficult to get to the local food stamp office. Additionally, elderly people might have trouble completing application forms due to difficulties in recalling information or in reading the small print on the application.

5. ***Stigma***. The stigma of applying for and using food stamps might be a barrier to participation. Feelings of embarrassment, a sense of failure, hurt pride, dislike of receiving government assistance, and the perceived loss of independence in using food stamps are reasons elderly people cite for not participating in the FSP. Moreover, some researchers have suggested that recent welfare reform changes that promote work over welfare might have increased the stigma of receiving "welfare." Conflicting evidence exists on the importance of stigma as a deterrent to FSP participation among the elderly. While more than half (67 percent) of 51 state FSP directors surveyed in a recent study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) indicated that stigma is a major reason for nonparticipation (GAO 2000), surveys of elderly nonparticipants suggest that few elderly cite stigma as the main reason for not participating.

These five reasons are not mutually exclusive; many elderly cite multiple reasons for nonparticipation, and the reasons often are related. For example, some elderly people do not participate because they do not understand how the program works, but in their desire to avoid the embarrassment and stigma associated with being "on welfare," they do not seek information about the program. Similarly, many households that do not participate because they believe their benefits would be low, might participate if they thought it would take minimal effort to apply for benefits.

DEMONSTRATION MODELS

In 2001, USDA issued a request for grant proposals from state FSP agencies to operate a pilot project under the Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations. The objective of the demonstration was to test the feasibility and effectiveness of alternative approaches to making the FSP more accessible to eligible elderly individuals. The demonstration grants were awarded on a competitive basis, and the pilot projects were required to adopt one of the three demonstration models developed by USDA: (1) the simplified eligibility model, (2) the application assistance model, and (3) the commodity alternative benefit model. Each model represented one approach to reducing FSP application burden, increasing awareness about program availability and benefits, and/or reducing the stigma associated with participation. With regard to the second objective, each model included an outreach component to raise awareness of the demonstration procedures in particular and of the FSP in general in the elderly community.

Simplified Eligibility

The simplified eligibility model was designed to reduce the burden associated with applying for food stamps by simplifying the process of determining eligibility. Under federal

rules, households that contain at least one person age 60 years or older are eligible for food stamps if everyone in the household receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or if their combined incomes and assets meet the following two rules:

1. ***The household's gross monthly income less certain deductions (i.e., its net income) is below 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.*** Deductions include a standard deduction of $134 (in most states) for each household; a deduction for monthly medical expenses above $35; a deduction for shelter costs in excess of 50 percent of net income after applying the other deductions; as well as deductions for earnings, dependent care expenses, and child support payments.

2. ***The sum of the household's countable assets is below $3,000***. Countable assets include cash on hand, checking and savings account balances, stocks and bonds, and most retirement accounts. Also, a portion of the value of some vehicles is counted toward assets, as is the equity value of certain recreational property.

For all households that meet the eligibility criteria, benefits are computed as a function of the number of persons in the household, the household's net income, and the maximum benefit levels.[2] Households applying for food stamps must provide adequate documentation to verify the information used to assess eligibility and calculate benefits. For example, they must provide documentation to verify earnings, medical expenses, and asset holdings. Households must also participate in an eligibility interview with program staff.

The intent of the simplified eligibility model was to reduce the time and effort required of seniors to apply for food stamps.[3] In particular, USDA intended this model to minimize the burden associated with documenting income and expenses. Demonstrations were encouraged to change the way that income and benefits are normally computed during the eligibility process in part to reduce the need for verifying documentation. These changes also were intended to reduce the need for personal and intrusive questions during eligibility interviews.

[2]The maximum benefit level is tied to the cost of purchasing a nutritionally adequate low-cost diet as measured by USDA's Thrifty Food Plan. The benefit is calculated by subtracting 30 percent of the household's counted net income—the amount that the household is thought to be able to spend on food from its income—from the maximum benefit level for the household size. Currently, the maximum benefit level for a one-person household is $130. Eligible one- and two-person households are guaranteed a minimum monthly food stamp benefit of $10, while households of three or more have no minimum benefit.

[3] The simplified rules applied only to those food stamp households in which all individuals are age 60 or older.

Application Assistance

The application assistance model sought to reduce the burden of applying for food stamps by giving seniors one-on-one aid in navigating the application process. Under this demonstration model, eligibility rules remained unchanged, but elderly applicants were paired with application assistance workers who helped them assemble documents needed to apply for food stamps, explain the application, and often complete the forms on their behalf. USDA gave the states flexibility to determine where this assistance took place—either in clients' homes or in more public spaces.

USDA encouraged states designing application assistance demonstrations to develop extensive outreach activities to inform potential clients about the FSP in general and about the application assistance services. States also were encouraged to incorporate features such as prescreening potential applicants for eligibility and benefit amounts, reducing the burden of the eligibility interview, building on existing programs, and using technology to make the application easier to access and complete.

Commodity Alternative Benefit

The commodity alternative model was designed to replace the electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card with a monthly commodities package. Federally run commodity distribution efforts have been used since Depression-era programs in which surplus commodities were redistributed to the needy. While traditional FSP benefits are generally believed to be more effective in providing flexible nutrition assistance to a large population, several current federal commodity distribution programs provide food directly to needy individuals. The commodity alternative benefit model was designed in part to test whether commodity packages would be more appealing to seniors than traditional food stamp benefits.

Under the demonstration guidelines, USDA required the contents of the commodities packages to be designed to meet the needs of the elderly. States were encouraged to develop a variety of packages for different target populations (for example, for diabetics or for specific ethnic groups). States were given flexibility in designing procedures for distributing the packages; commodities could be delivered to participants' homes, or participants could pick up packages at local distribution centers. USDA established that the cost to the demonstration of each commodity package (including shipping and storage costs) could not exceed the average benefit for which elderly FSP households in the demonstration site were eligible. The cost of the packages was to be the same for all participants, regardless of the benefit amount for which they were eligible.

Only households in which all members were elderly (known as "pure elderly" households) were allowed to participate in the commodity demonstrations. During the application process, these households were informed of what their FSP benefit would be before they chose between traditional benefits and demonstration benefits. Additionally, pure elderly households already participating in the FSP when the demonstration started were given the option to enroll. With some restrictions, households that selected commodities could switch to traditional benefits after the demonstration began.

SIX GRANTEES

In 2001, USDA encouraged states to apply for demonstration grants to implement one of these three models. States had flexibility in designing their demonstrations, as long as they stayed within the basic framework of a specific demonstration model and did not combine components of different models. Six states were selected to implement a demonstration. One state, Florida, implemented a simplified eligibility demonstration; three states, Arizona, Maine, and Michigan, implemented application assistance demonstrations; and two states, Connecticut and North Carolina, implemented commodity alternative benefit demonstrations.[4] In each state, the demonstrations were implemented in a limited geographic area—typically one or two counties, or in the case of Connecticut, ten towns in the Hartford region.

The demonstrations were funded for two years. Because implementation time varied by demonstration, so did the start dates (Table I.1). Four demonstrations that still had funds after two years were extended by up to 11 months.

Table I.1: Months of Operation for the Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations

Demonstration State	Start Date	End Date
Simplified Eligibility Model		
Florida	February, 2002	December, 2003
Application Assistance Model		
Arizona	September, 2002	April, 2005[a]
Maine	February, 2002	February, 2004[a]
Michigan	November, 2002	January, 2005[a]
Commodity Alternative Benefit Model		
Connecticut	November, 2002	October, 2004
North Carolina	November, 2002	September, 2005[a]

[a]Demonstration period extended beyond two years.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The overall objective of the evaluation was to measure the effectiveness of each demonstration model and to identify the most cost-effective strategies for increasing FSP participation among eligible elderly households. Toward this end, the evaluation had four supporting objectives:

[4]Chapter II describes the operational details of each of the six demonstrations. Additional details can be found in Nogales et al. (2005).

1. ***Estimate the impact of the demonstrations on participation.*** A key function of the evaluation was to measure the extent to which each individual demonstration—as well as the ability of each demonstration model—to increase participation among eligible elderly. A related objective was to examine whether specific subgroups of seniors, such as those eligible for low benefits, participated at higher rates than other seniors.

2. ***Examine clients' levels of satisfaction with the demonstrations.*** Determining client satisfaction with the demonstrations can build a better understanding of why the demonstrations were or were not effective. Client impressions can also help to explain why seniors do not participate in the FSP and whether these demonstrations addressed their concerns.

3. ***Estimate demonstration costs.*** Given that the three demonstration models varied significantly in approach, the costs of the demonstrations differed substantially. Therefore, a third objective of the evaluation was to measure the total demonstration costs from design to ongoing management. A key measure for each demonstration was dollar costs per new elderly participant.

4. ***Understand the process of designing and managing the demonstrations.*** An analysis of demonstration implementation and management would help to identify the most formidable challenges and the most effective strategies associated with these two activities.

A pre-post comparison group design was used to estimate the impact of the demonstrations on elderly FSP participation. We examined how changes in participation patterns in the demonstration sites compared with changes observed in similar, nondemonstration jurisdictions in the same state. Focus groups and surveys with demonstration participants (and some nonparticipants) were used to gauge client satisfaction. To examine costs, we interviewed demonstration staff and reviewed each demonstration's financial reports. The process analysis was based on direct observations of demonstration procedures, interviews with demonstration staff and community organizations that serve the elderly, and reviews of demonstration site progress reports.

GENERALIZING FROM THE EVALUATION FINDINGS

Ideally, the evaluations findings would provide credible, robust evidence on whether and the extent to which each demonstration model can increase elderly FSP participation rates. This information could then be used to answer a broader set of policy questions concerning the best way to increase participation among the elderly in the future. However, the degree to which we can conclude that any of the demonstration models was effective—and should therefore be explored as a future policy solution—depends in part on whether it is reasonable to expect similar impacts if the demonstration policies were implemented in a different setting.

We could be highly confident about expecting similar impacts if the original estimates were based on a large number of demonstrations that used the same model. Otherwise, it is

possible that the impacts are an artifact of site-specific conditions as opposed to a direct effect of the demonstrations. However, because the costs associated with implementing such a large-scale effort are prohibitive, we examined the impacts of a small number of demonstrations that used each model (one to three demonstrations per model). But we also examined these estimates in light of the context in which each demonstrated operated to account for whether site-specific factors may have influenced some or all of the impacts. While this approach does not allow us to conclude with certainty that a given model's impacts can be replicated in a different setting, it deepens our insight into which site-specific factors can affect a demonstration's ability to increase elderly FSP participation. So while caution should therefore be used in generalizing from the impact estimates presented in this report, the information on the local issues that influenced these estimates can be used along with the estimates to make informed decisions about the direction of food stamp policy with respect to elderly participation.

OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

The remainder of this report addresses each evaluation objective. Chapter II describes the operations and community context of each of the demonstration sites. This chapter also presents the results from the process analysis, including the issues challenges faced and effective strategies used by each demonstration site. These details are central to understanding the impacts on participation, satisfaction, and costs. Additional site-by-site details on the demonstration experience are provided in a separate volume (Nogales et al., 2005). Chapter III discusses the impact of the demonstrations on elderly participation and examines the degree to which certain elderly subgroups were more likely than others to participate in the demonstration. Chapter IV presents results of focus groups and surveys aimed at gauging client satisfaction. Chapter V provides cost estimates for each demonstration, and Chapter VI presents conclusions and discusses their implications for future FSP policy.

CHAPTER II

ELDERLY NUTRITION DEMONSTRATIONS

The Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations were designed to test not only the three separate models but also the various operational alternatives within each model. As a result, the six demonstrations differed in their respective approaches to encouraging FSP participation among the elderly, including where clients were served, the types of outreach employed, use of paid staff or volunteers, and whether technology was a key part of the demonstration (Table II.1). The demonstrations also differed in both the types of challenges they faced and their experiences in reaching the elderly population.

In examining the different experiences of the demonstration sites, two characteristics emerge as particularly important in understanding the effectiveness of the demonstrations:

1. ***Outreach.*** Outreach efforts—defined as those activities used to promote the demonstration—varied from site to site but remained an important component of each demonstration. The demonstrations were designed to measure the impact of changes to application procedures and FSP benefits—not the impact of outreach. Nevertheless, for the demonstrations to attract more clients to the FSP, they needed an effective means of communicating the program changes to potential clients.

2. ***Staff effectiveness.*** The extent to which demonstration staff were both dedicated and innovative was reflected in how the demonstrations evolved. Most staff were committed to reaching as many seniors as possible, and they developed creative solutions to problems that arose. In the instances where staff were less effective, the demonstrations were less successful.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the demonstrations individually, explaining the operations of each, and identifying key challenges and successful strategies.[1] The analysis is based

[1] Nogales et al. (2005) provides more details on each of the demonstration sites, including a full description of demonstration procedures, a discussion of the roles of key stakeholders, a summary of the design and development process, and a more complete description of the various challenges and successes.

Table II.1: Comparison of Design Components of the Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations

	Simplified Eligibility	Application Assistance			Commodity Alternative Benefit	
Design Components	Florida	Arizona	Maine	Michigan	Connecticut	N. Carolina
Households eligible for demonstration	Pure elderly households[a] (FSP-only applications)	All households with elderly	All households with elderly	All households with elderly	Pure elderly households	Pure elderly households
Eligibility interviews	Waived	Waived	Waived	Waived	Not waived	Not waived
Key outreach strategies	Public service announcement, brochures, bus posters	Community presentations	Door-to-door canvassing, community presentations	Community presentations, promotional mailings, radio announcements, bus posters	Promotional mailings, community presentations, radio announcements	Caseworker referrals, community presentations
Use of technology	Prescreening at call center	Laptops for on-site eligibility screening	None	Web-based FSP application	None	None
Assistance locations/ commodity distribution sites	Clients apply from home (assistance not provided)	Senior centers, food assistance sites, libraries	Primarily in-home	Senior centers, senior housing, churches	Congregate meal sites (some home delivery)	Central warehouse (some home delivery)
Prescreening of clients	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Type of assistants	n.a.	Paid senior workers (10)	Paid senior workers (3)	Volunteers – mostly seniors (38)	n.a.	n.a.

[a]Pure elderly households are households in which all members are elderly.

n.a. = not applicable for demonstration.

on (1) direct observations of program operations by Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) staff; (2) interviews with demonstration staff, FSP caseworkers, local community organizations, and—in some cases—elderly FSP participants; and (3) reviews of planning documents and progress reports prepared by the demonstrations. Senior MPR staff conducted at least two observation visits to each demonstration site.

FLORIDA: SIMPLIFIED FOOD STAMP ELIGIBILITY FOR ELDERLY

Summary: Florida's Simplified Food Stamp Eligibility for Elderly

Dates of operation	February 2002 through December 2003
Demonstration model	Simplified Eligibility
Grantee	Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF)
Other Major Partners	Florida Impact
Location	Leon County (includes Tallahassee) and Gadsden County
Eligibility	"Pure" elderly households applying for food stamp benefits only

Under this demonstration, program officials implemented several changes to make applying for food stamps easier for the elderly. Applicants did not have to submit documentation of income and expenses (although proof of citizenship was still required). Under demonstration rules, all elderly applicants were exempted from the eligibility interview, and all eligible seniors were granted a year-long certification instead of three or six months. Demonstration outreach referred potential clients to a telephone call center, where they were prescreened for eligibility and informed of the simplified eligibility rules. While not technically part of the demonstration, the agency also implemented a one-page, large-typeface application that collected only data relevant to seniors.

The Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) was the only grantee that designed and implemented a simplified eligibility demonstration. The demonstration was implemented in Leon and Gadsden Counties, both of which are located in the panhandle of the state. Leon County is home to the state capital, Tallahassee, and Gadsden County is a more rural county adjacent to Leon County. The key feature of the Florida demonstration was that elderly residents of these counties did not need to provide documentation for assets, earned income, and expenses. The demonstration included a large outreach effort to promote participation among seniors.

Operational Details

Prior to the demonstration, seniors who applied for food stamps in Leon and Gadsden counties were required to complete a two-page application and conduct an eligibility interview with a DCF caseworker. Seniors were required to provide documentation of income, expenses, vehicle ownership, and financial assets as part of the application process. Typically, seniors made two trips to the local DCF office when applying for food stamps—

once to submit the application and once to participate in the eligibility interview. Three or more trips were required if the client needed to return with supplemental documentation.

The demonstration made several changes to regular FSP procedures for seniors applying for food stamps, including:

- **Most documentation requirements eliminated.** Seniors were not required to submit documentation of income (for example, earnings records and Social Security payments), deductions (for example, medical bills and proof of shelter expense) and assets (for example, ownership of vehicles). DCF verified the applicant's Social Security Number, along with some income amounts, using existing databases. Applicants still had to provide proof of citizenship.

- **No eligibility interview.** DCF waived the interview to determine eligibility for elderly applicants, although caseworkers contacted applicants by telephone or mail if any relevant information was missing from the application, or if clarification was needed.

- **12-month certification.** All participating seniors received a one-year certification, as opposed to three or six months. Face-to-face interviews for recertifying seniors were waived. If necessary, information was clarified by telephone.

- **One-page application.** To facilitate the simplified eligibility demonstration, state officials developed a short, one-page application that only recorded data relevant to the elderly population. This application included large typeface and had more space for entering information. [2]

Under the simplified eligibility rules, caseworkers spent significantly less time processing each application. Caseworkers estimated that, prior to the demonstration, applications from elderly clients took them between 60 to 90 minutes to process, with a significant portion of time consumed by the eligibility interview. Caseworkers estimated that the time needed under the demonstration was reduced to between 15 and 25 minutes per application.

[2] Because the shortened application form was part of the application assistance model and not the simplified eligibility model, USDA requested that the shorter form be used in two comparison counties (Alachua and Jackson counties) to test whether impacts could be attributed in part to the shortened form. The eligibility rules in those counties were not changed. As discussed in Chapter III, there is little evidence that the shortened application influenced participation patterns in Alachua and Jackson counties.

Outreach Activities

The most notable outreach effort was a public service announcement that aired on television for a total of 12 weeks during three separate periods in the second year of the demonstration.[3] The announcement featured the Secretary of the Florida DCF explaining that low income individuals over age 60 could be eligible for food assistance and showed footage of an elderly woman using her EBT card. The Secretary indicated that seniors eligible for the food assistance program would receive a "food security card." The announcement provided a telephone number for information on the demonstration. Elderly Gadsden and Leon County residents who called this number were prescreened over the telephone for eligibility and benefits and, upon request, were sent the one-page FSP application.[4] (Elderly residents from other counties that viewed the announcement and called the information line also were prescreened for eligibility, and then directed to their local DCF if they were interested in applying for benefits.)

The public service announcement generated a significant interest in the FSP. Call center staff as well as DCF caseworkers cited large increases in inquiries from the elderly during each airing period for the announcement. Interviews with other organizations that served the elderly and with seniors participating in the FSP provided further evidence that the public service announcement was viewed by many seniors and that it generated significant interest in the FSP. The program coordinator remarked that the announcement was an effective way to reach seniors who lived in rural regions, and that seniors liked the idea of calling from the privacy of their own homes.

In addition to the public service announcement, demonstration staff distributed more than 14,000 information fliers and almost 300 promotional posters to seniors and to community organizations that served the elderly. These promotional materials encouraged seniors to apply for food assistance and provided the telephone number to the same call center referenced in the public service announcement. In response to calls or as part of promotional events, demonstration staff estimated that they distributed more than 14,000 one-page applications.

The information call center (which was established prior to the demonstration) was managed and staffed by a contracting organization (Florida Impact), not by DCF directly. As a result, seniors could apply for benefits with minimal or no direct contact with DCF.

[3] The announcement was aired on a major network affiliate. The three television airing periods were: (1) March 24 through May 11, 2003, (2) July 28 through August 26, 2003, and (3) October 20 through October 27, 2003.

[4] The prescreening tool was developed by Florida Impact for DCF under a previous contract.

Challenging Issues and Effective Strategies

The demonstration encountered some challenges in implementing the simplified eligibility model. The challenges were surmountable, and the effects on the demonstration seem to have been minimal.

1. ***Simplification applied to FSP-only applicants.*** When income-eligible seniors in the demonstration counties applied for other assistance programs, such as Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), at the same time they applied for food stamps, they needed to apply through the routine procedures for those other programs. Since applicants would need to provide verification documentation and attend in-person interviews, the overall process of applying for social service programs was not simplified for this subgroup. Still, DCF staff believed that only a small percentage of seniors submitted joint applications.

2. ***Communication Problems.*** Communication between the state and other key stakeholders of the demonstration was problematic at times. Some local DCF staff said they were informed of the demonstration at the last minute, and not all staff had a complete understanding of the simplified eligibility rules. Indeed, some officials speculated that the public service announcement—which was not aired until the second year of the demonstration—also helped to raise awareness about the simplified rules among DCF caseworkers. While the impact of these communication gaps probably was minor, it is possible that more seniors would have encountered a streamlined application process if demonstration procedures had been communicated more effectively to front-line staff.

On the whole, stakeholders involved in the demonstration thought that the fundamental structure of the simplified eligibility program was a success, because it directly addressed key participation barriers facing the elderly. Specifically, the demonstration's procedures eliminated much of the paperwork burden, as well as the requirement of traveling to the DCF office for in-person eligibility and recertification interviews (potentially multiple trips). By avoiding the need to see their caseworkers in person, seniors saved time and transportation costs, and could apply for food stamps from the privacy of their homes.

One expected challenge for the demonstration that never actually materialized was the accuracy of information provided by clients. At the start of the demonstration, local DCF staff expressed concerns about possibly miscalculating benefit amounts if seniors misreported income and expense information.[5] By the end of the demonstration, however,

[5]As part of the demonstration, Florida was granted a waiver from USDA that excluded pure elderly FSP households in the demonstration counties from the food stamp Quality Control (QC) process. As a result, any benefit miscalculations were not counted towards the state's payment error rate.

DCF staff were no longer concerned about this issue. Caseworkers reported anecdotally that the income data provided on applications matched the amounts recorded in the agency's databases, and the rents reported generally coincided with market averages. Nevertheless, it is possible that if this model had operated for a longer period of time, or if it had been expanded beyond demonstration status, some clients would have discovered that misreporting information could lead to a larger benefit.

ARIZONA: FOOD ASSISTANCE AND NUTRITION FOR SENIORS (FANS)

Summary: Arizona's Food Assistance and Nutrition for Seniors (FANS)

Dates of operation	September 2002 through April 2005
Demonstration model	Application Assistance
Grantee	Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES)
Location	Pinal and Yavapai Counties
Eligibility	FSP-eligible households with one or more seniors

Application assistants delivered services to seniors predominantly at senior centers and food assistance organizations; other locations included churches, libraries, and health departments. A small percentage of FANS clients received application assistance through home visits. Application assistance typically was conducted by appointment, and clients were informed in advance about which documents they should bring. FANS assistants used a prescreening tool to estimate clients' benefits. They then read the applications verbatim to clients, filling in responses on their behalf. Assistants hand-delivered the printed applications to the local DES office within one business day of their completion. The eligibility interview with a DES caseworker was waived for applicants served by a FANS assistant.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) was one of three grantees that implemented the application assistance demonstration model. The Food Assistance and Nutrition for Seniors (FANS) demonstration was implemented in two counties: Pinal County, located to the south of Phoenix, and Yavapai County, located to the north of Phoenix. Both counties are large and rural. FANS application assistants prescreened interested seniors for potential food stamp eligibility and helped them complete the FSP application.

Operational Details

Under the demonstration, application assistants provided one-on-one aid to seniors interested in applying for food stamps. This program used application assistants that were age 50 or older to facilitate strong connections between the assistant and the client. During an application assistance session, the FANS assistant read through the FSP application and asked the applicant all questions verbatim. The assistant typically completed the application

on behalf of the client. Assistants then photocopied the applicant's documentation, either using copiers located on site, at a nearby store or library, or by taking the paperwork to the DES office. After the food stamps portion of the interview was completed, FANS assistants informed the client about other social services for which they might be eligible, including alternative food assistance programs such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Staff occasionally helped seniors complete these other forms.

Generally, application assistance sessions were conducted by appointment. In a typical scenario, a senior expressed interest in the FANS program, either in person during an outreach event, or by calling program staff. At that point, the FANS assistant prescreened the senior for eligibility and estimated a benefit amount using a laptop equipped with specialized prescreening software. (If there was not enough time to prescreen at that point, the prescreening occurred later, during the interview.) The assistant then scheduled an interview with the senior and informed the senior about any documentation they needed to bring.

Once the application was completed and signed by the client, application assistants hand-delivered the paperwork to the local DES office within one day of completing the application.[6] With a few exceptions, there was usually no further contact between the FANS application assistants and the clients once the paperwork was submitted.[7] DES caseworkers worked directly with clients to resolve any issues and request further information. However, the eligibility interview with a DES caseworker was waived for applicants using the FANS program.

Application assistants held their one-on-one meetings with clients at a range of locations across Pinal and Yavapai counties. Senior centers and food assistance organizations were typical places at which the elderly could access FANS services. Other sites included churches, libraries, health departments, and a firehouse. For a few towns in Yavapai County, service delivery occasionally took place at the local DES office. Some sites offered private spaces that afforded client confidentiality, such as a conference room or office. At other locations, however, application assistants had to improvise, such as using a table at one end of a large common area.

The FANS assistants were hired through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a federal program aimed at finding part-time employment for low-income seniors. The SCSEP screened job applicants, monitored their activities on a quarterly basis, and regularly reviewed their timesheets. DES also helped supervise the assistants, with DES

[6] In cases where the applicant did not bring all required documentation, the FANS assistant completed an Information Request Form that listed which items clients needed to send to DES, explaining that they had 10 business days to submit the documentation.

[7] The FANS application assistants also helped clients who needed to recertify—reminding them of the deadline, helping them fill out the forms if needed, and collecting and submitting the paperwork.

office directors signing their time sheets and caseworkers being available to address any questions or concerns that the assistants had.

For seniors who were not applying for food stamps through FANS, the process began with the senior obtaining an application from a DES office—either in person or having one sent by mail or fax. Arizona uses a combined application through which clients apply for food stamps, general assistance, cash assistance, and the state health insurance program. Seniors submit the completed application via proxy, mail, fax, or in person, and then conduct an eligibility interview with a DES caseworker. If determined eligible for food stamps, seniors are photographed for an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card, select and activate a password, and must be finger-imaged. Staff estimate that once DES receives an application, the eligibility determination process can take 1 to 15 days, depending on the accuracy and completeness of the submitted documentation.

In the initial months of the demonstration, seniors applying through FANS still had to go to the local DES office to be photographed and finger-imaged, and to activate their passwords and EBT cards. This requirement was dropped in 2003 when FANS applicants were granted an exemption for good cause' from the finger-imaging and photograph requirements. After this change, local DES supervisors could activate an EBT card and mail it to the client's home in a sealed envelope.

Outreach Activities

Identifying potential clients was a central challenge of the FANS program. Many residents were geographically isolated, and there were not many public spaces or service providers through which staff could reach seniors. The FANS outreach strategy relied on the application assistants to promote the demonstration in communities. Key outreach efforts included:

- Maintaining a regular presence at various FANS assistance sites (for example, senior centers and CSFP sites) to distribute brochures, explain the demonstration, and prescreen interested seniors for eligibility and benefits
- Making presentations to various community organizations (for example, senior centers, county advisory meetings, hospitals, health fairs, churches, senior housing complexes)
- Staffing promotional tables during community events
- Displaying posters at locations frequented by the elderly (for example, senior centers, grocery stores, post offices, libraries, CSFP distribution sites, and farmers' markets)
- Including brochures in Meals on Wheels packages and county water bills
- Developing press releases and getting local news coverage

Challenging Issues and Effective Strategies

The challenges facing the FANS demonstration existed primarily in Pinal County, and were primarily related to the availability and skills of the application assistants. The FANS program had 10 positions for application assistants, five of which were for Pinal County. Problems in Pinal County were manifested in four ways:

1. ***Hiring Application Assistants.*** The FANS project struggled with hiring application assistants because only a limited number of seniors were willing to take these jobs. The shortage of staff was more problematic in Pinal County, where two of the five positions were never filled for any significant amount of time. In both counties, local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) staff and senior center directors, who were interviewed as part of the evaluation, suggested three reasons for the small pool of potential assistants. First, they suspected that seniors worried that they would lose some or all of their public assistance benefits if they worked. Second, seniors may have been anxious about using the laptop computers. Finally, they speculated that seniors were apprehensive about taking jobs with a lot of responsibility, dealing with paperwork, and interacting with clients.

2. ***Retaining Application Assistants.*** Over the course of the demonstration, there were eight assistants who either left the program or were hired but did not start. Staff left for a variety of reasons, including personal (death in family, illness) and work-related issues (position too stressful, termination for performance).

3. ***Varying Skill Levels of Application Assistants.*** The effectiveness of application assistants varied considerably. Some assistants were effective at promoting the program, making strong connections with clients and building strong relationships with DES caseworkers. Other assistants were more introverted, could not connect well with clients, and did little to promote the program. The staff in Pinal County generally were viewed as less effective than the staff in Yavapai County.

4. ***Outreach.*** Due in part to staffing shortages and staff personalities, outreach efforts were less effective in Pinal County than in Yavapai County. Outreach was never extended into the outlying service areas of Pinal County, and two towns in Pinal County received only minimal outreach efforts. Evidence of these outreach problems included the fact that several local organizations that serve seniors in Pinal County had limited awareness of the FANS program.

These four challenges were interrelated. The lack of available staff, combined with unanticipated high turnover, necessitated the hiring of assistants who were not well-suited for their positions. This, in turn reduced the quality of services provided by the program and led to limited outreach in some areas.

The demonstration faced other challenges as well. The vast scope of the geographic area covered by the demonstration in both counties (approximately 13,500 square miles) made it difficult for application assistants to create a regular presence in remote rural areas, and for the project coordinator to provide extensive oversight of the application assistants. Another challenge was the lack of privacy in some settings where assistance was provided. FANS staff sensed that seniors were sometimes uncomfortable applying for food stamps and sharing personal information in front of friends and acquaintances in senior centers, libraries, and other public locations.

Despite these challenges, the demonstration also experienced several successes. First, FANS applicants seemed to enroll in the FSP faster and receive benefits sooner than if they had applied on their own—most likely because they did not have to wait for the next available eligibility interview appointment.[8] Caseworkers in certain regions estimated that non-demonstration applicants waited three weeks to two months for their food stamp benefits to be activated (even though federal regulations require applications to be process within 30 days). Another successful outcome of the demonstration was that it reduced the workload of DES caseworkers. FANS applications generally were complete and required little follow-up from caseworkers, although this was more often the case in Yavapai County. Additionally, caseworkers did not need to interview clients who submitted applications through FANS, saving additional time. Finally, there is anecdotal evidence that application assistants helped seniors better document their household expenses, and this may have enabled more seniors to qualify for the FSP and receive higher benefit levels.

[8] The implementation of the FANS demonstration coincided with a state hiring freeze and higher caseloads, which led to slower application processing for non-FANS applicants.

MAINE: FOOD ASSISTANCE CONNECTING ELIGIBLE SENIORS (FACES)

Summary: Maine's Food Assistance Connecting Eligible Seniors (FACES)

Dates of operation	February 2002 to February 2004
Demonstration model	Application Assistance
Grantee	Maine Department of Human Services (DHS)
Other Major Partners	Waldo County Committee for Social Action (WCCSA)
Location	Waldo County
Eligibility	FSP-eligible households with one or more seniors

Application assistants worked one-on-one with low-income seniors to enroll them in a host of programs including, but not limited to, the FSP. Potential clients were identified through door-to-door canvassing and referrals. Assistance typically was provided in clients' homes. Assistants explained the various assistance programs available, helped seniors complete the relevant applications, and helped them assemble the correct documentation. Even after applications were submitted, the assistants frequently performed other follow-up activities. The three application assistants were themselves low-income elderly individuals.

The Food Assistance Connecting Eligible Seniors (FACES) program also implemented the application assistance demonstration model. The program was administered by a small number of staff and served the predominantly rural and coastal Waldo County in central Maine. Three application assistants—who were themselves low-income seniors—guided senior clients through the process of applying for food stamps, usually in the privacy of their homes. A defining characteristic of the FACES program was that it provided seniors with access to more than just the FSP; assistants also helped seniors enroll in other programs, such as the state's Medicare buy-in program and the state's pharmaceutical assistance program.

Operational Details

Most application assistance sessions took place in clients' homes. Application assistants began each session by engaging the client in conversation, both as a way of identifying the particular needs of the client and as a means of establishing trust. The assistant then described the various programs for which the senior might be eligible, including, but not limited to, the FSP.[9] The assistant asked basic questions to gauge whether the client was

[9]The full list of programs to which seniors could be referred included Medicaid, Medicare buy-in, Maine Care (pharmaceutical program), the Low Income Home Energy

likely to be eligible for food stamps, although no formal prescreening was conducted, and encouraged the individual to apply for as many of the programs as appeared relevant to their situation.

For purposes of completing the FSP application, the assistant first asked the senior to assemble the necessary supporting documentation, such as utility bills and Social Security payment receipts. Next, the application assistant walked the client through the application and helped the client complete it. The assistants worked from a checklist to ensure that nothing was overlooked; a copy of the checklist was left with the client. This initial visit typically lasted between one and two and a half hours.

After the home visit, the application assistants performed other services, if needed, before submitting the FSP application. For example, they gathered copies of receipts or bills from pharmacies, doctor's offices, or the water company. This helped eliminate the burden to clients of obtaining this paperwork, and it helped accurately document expenses (particularly medical expenses). Once the application was completed and the necessary documentation assembled, the program coordinator conducted a review of each application, checking for accuracy. The coordinator then faxed the application to the local DHS office and mailed the hard copy with supporting documentation. Food stamp benefits were set retroactive to the date when clients signed the application, as opposed to when it arrived at DHS. This policy ensured that clients were not penalized for using application assistants, as opposed to submitting the application in person. Moreover, it gained two to three days of benefits for individuals who would have mailed their applications had they not had the help of the application assistants.

Application assistants often provided other follow-up services as well. For example, the assistants delivered fresh, donated produce; ran errands such as picking up prescriptions; or ensured that seniors could access emergency food assistance until their FSP benefits became activated. During the first year of the demonstration, FACES staff commonly called or visited each senior at least once each month, developing a strong rapport with their clients. In the second year of the demonstration, the amount of follow-up services that assistants could provide diminished as the FACES caseload grew.

The FACES program was intentionally marketed to seniors as a service for accessing more than just the FSP. This approach was based in part on the assumptions that (1) seniors often are more concerned about medical and prescription drug costs than food, and (2) due to stigma, seniors would be less willing to work with a program principally focused on the FSP. The application assistants helped more than 200 clients enroll in the state's Medicare buy-in program, and more than 100 clients enroll in the state's pharmaceutical assistance

(*continued*)
Assistance Program, Meals on Wheels, Farm Share, transportation assistance, Health Watch (medical alert program), the Telephone Lifeline Program (phone bill subsidy), hearing benefits, The Right Information and Direction (or TRIAD, a safety, crime prevention, and victim assistance initiative for seniors), emergency energy assistance, and food pantries.

program. The majority of clients that used FACES applied for food stamps, either alone or in conjunction with other programs. However, in some instances, the application assistants helped clients who were not interested in the FSP (or were already enrolled) to apply for other programs.

Three application assistants were employed as part of the FACES program. All three were low-income seniors hired through the Senior Community Service Employment Program and who worked 20 hours per week for the FACES program. As in Arizona, the use of seniors as application assistants working with other seniors was intended to help applicants feel more comfortable. In fact, the FACES program motto was "Seniors Helping Seniors."

While the design of the FACES application assistance demonstration was similar to that of the FANS demonstration in Arizona, the implementation of the demonstration differed substantially. Key differences were that the FACES program provided in-home assistance, used fewer application assistants, and provided application assistance for a host of programs. Arizona's FANS program, on the other hand, provided assistance primarily in public spaces, provided referrals to other programs (but usually not application assistance). While both programs used broad outreach efforts to identify potential clients, the FACES program in Maine also identified potential clients through door-to-door efforts.

Seniors not using the FACES program would have to take many more steps to apply for food stamps. They can obtain FSP applications from the DHS office (located in a separate county), either in person, or by telephone. Applications also are available at hospitals, doctor's offices, and the local AAA. Over the past few years, Maine has attempted to simplify food stamp application procedures for the elderly (and other groups) by creating a shorter food stamp application with larger print, waiving the face-to-face eligibility interview for seniors, and creating specialized caseworker positions for those applicants seeking multiple benefits (such as Medicare/Medicaid). After the initial processing of the application, caseworkers call the clients to notify them of any outstanding paperwork (for example, prescription receipts) and schedule an eligibility interview. Staff use DHS databases to confirm Social Security and Supplemental Security income, and most interviews last 10 to 15 minutes. About one-fifth of all enrollees apply on a walk-in basis, frequently meeting with a caseworker the same day.

Outreach Activities

A central component of the FACES outreach strategy was door-to-door canvassing. Application assistants conducted what many involved in the demonstration likened to a grassroots political campaign, going door to door and speaking to seniors one at a time. Using names obtained from DHS, initial efforts were focused on contacting seniors who received SSI but not food stamps. The program coordinator also obtained voter lists from the town clerks throughout the county. While some residents would not qualify, these lists provided the most current data by home address and age group.

After the demonstration was operational for several months, word-of-mouth became a critical means of attracting interested seniors. The program coordinator estimated that by the second year of the demonstration, 60 percent of clients came through referrals and 40 percent through canvassing.

To promote the FACES program, the program coordinator also networked extensively with other local agencies serving low-income seniors. Other outreach activities included a public service announcement that aired on local television, numerous presentations to community groups, press releases and media coverage, brochures, and posters. Additionally, a website was developed that contained a copy of the FSP application along with other promotional materials.

During home visits, the assistants emphasized three main themes. First, they introduced the demonstration as "Seniors Helping Seniors." The message was easy to comprehend, and capitalized on the notion that the elderly were more comfortable dealing with peers as opposed to government workers. Second, they underscored the importance of being able to "Stretch Your Food Dollars" by participating in the demonstration. They mentioned food stamps as little as possible due to the stigma that the elderly often attach to DHS and public assistance. Third, they spoke about how good nutrition contributes to good health.

Challenging Issues and Effective Strategies

The FACES program faced few major challenges in providing application assistance. The key difficulties that did arise concerned the management of elderly individuals as application assistants. First, some assistants had trouble retaining information about the various public assistance programs and eligibility rules, so weekly technical assistance sessions and mentoring were employed to help them remember key details. Moreover, because of these issues, the project coordinator felt compelled to carefully review each application before it was submitted to DHS. Second, using elderly application assistants was a challenge because of their frequent absences. In the two-year demonstration, each of the three assistants took extended sick leave at least once, due to personal health reasons. At times, this hampered the demonstration's ability to provide services.

Despite these problems, the success of the FACES demonstration was widely attributed to the skills and dedication of its staff. The coordinator and assistants were cited by community stakeholders and clients as personable and very effective at connecting with seniors. They were clearly invested in the demonstration and willing to develop innovative approaches to reach more potential clients.

Another key to the demonstration's success was the option to provide access to multiple programs. As discussed in Chapter IV, clients were extremely appreciative of access to other types of food assistance, but especially were appreciative of access to medical benefits. Participation levels might have increased less if the FACES program had provided application assistance to the FSP only.

MICHIGAN: MICHIGAN'S COORDINATED ACCESS TO FOOD FOR THE ELDERLY (MiCAFE)

Summary: Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE)

Dates of Operation	November 2002 to January 2005
Demonstration Model	Application Assistance
Grantee	Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA)
Other Major Partners	Elder Law of Michigan, Inc. (ELM)
Location	Genesee County
Eligibility	FSP-eligible households with one or more seniors

MiCAFE application assistants helped seniors apply for food stamps at senior centers and other facilities frequented by the elderly. Sites were equipped with computers and access to an on-line FSP application which was developed for the demonstration. Assistants were volunteers—often senior center staff—who worked scheduled times at the various sites. Assistants reviewed the FSP application with clients and entered their information into the on-line application. The applications were printed and submitted in hard copy to the FIA office on behalf of applicants. A toll-free call center was developed to answer assistants' questions about food stamp policies or the on-line application.

Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE) provided application assistance to seniors at sites such as senior centers or senior housing complexes. The Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA) administered the demonstration, and day-to-day operations were managed under a subcontract to FIA by Elder Law of Michigan, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides legal counseling services over the phone for low-income seniors throughout the state. The demonstration was implemented in Genesee County, which includes the city of Flint. The MiCAFE program featured an electronic FSP application developed as part of the demonstration.

Operational Details

Under the demonstration, MiCAFE volunteers provided application assistance to seniors at locations throughout the county. The MiCAFE sites were places frequented by seniors, including senior centers and senior housing complexes. The number of MiCAFE sites in Genesee County increased during the course of the demonstration from 7 to 22.[10] Available hours for assistance and scheduling strategies varied from site to site; some only

[10] Initially, there were 9 MiCAFE sites, however two sites were closed early in the demonstration.

scheduled appointments, some provided walk-in help and scheduled assistance during certain times of the week, and some provided services whenever the sites normally operated.

During an assistance session, the application assistant worked through the entire application with the client. The application assistant entered the client's information into an on-line application that had been developed as part of the demonstration, and answered any questions the client may have had. Once intake was completed, the assistant then printed out the application for the senior to sign, photocopied the verification documentation, and hand-delivered or mailed the application packet to the FSP office. If the applicant did not bring the necessary documentation to the session, the application assistant gave the senior a personalized verification checklist detailing the items that needed to be sent to the FIA office within 10 business days. (Clients were given a list of documentation requirements when they scheduled their appointments, and most clients brought all necessary documentation to the assistance session.) Because the FSP eligibility interview was waived for MiCAFE applicants, the applicant would only be contacted by an FIA caseworker if there were questions about the application. Fewer than half of all MiCAFE applications required some degree of follow-up by the caseworker, and these usually were resolved with a quick telephone call. The most common reason for an incomplete application was that the client still needed to collect paperwork outlined on the MiCAFE verification checklist.

After the FSP application portion of the assistance session, the application assistant explored whether there were other nutrition and social services besides food stamps for which the senior might be eligible. The computer system included a section that screened seniors as to whether they needed congregate or home-delivered meal programs. Depending on the answers to these questions, the computer automatically displayed a list of nearby congregate meal sites, home-delivered meal programs, service providers who do assessments for nutritional counseling, and other resources.

The application assistance sessions typically occurred in a private setting at the MiCAFE site, such as an office or a computer lab. Completing the electronic application usually took between 20 and 70 minutes, depending on the technical aptitude of the assistant, the speed of the Internet connection, the complexity of the applicant household, and the extent of informal conversations between the application assistant and client. To help reduce delays in processing applications, the demonstration operated a call center that was used by application assistants whenever they had questions about FSP eligibility rules or needed technical assistance with the on-line application. The on-line nature of the application allowed call center staff to view the application in progress as they fielded the assistants' questions.

Unlike the Arizona and Maine demonstrations, which used paid SCSEP workers as application assistants, the MiCAFE application assistants were volunteers. In the second year of the demonstration, 38 volunteers were used, most of whom were already working (as paid staff or volunteers) at the MiCAFE site. As with the other demonstrations, however, many of the MiCAFE assistants were about the same age as many of the seniors they were assisting. These volunteers typically worked two hours per week as application assistants for the MiCAFE project.

Seniors applying for food stamps without MiCAFE request an application from FIA via mail, phone, proxy or in-person (Michigan uses a common application for all state programs). After submitting the application, seniors must complete a face-to-face eligibility interview with an FIA caseworker. Seniors often go to the FIA office in person and complete an application in the waiting room, which makes it easy to ask a clerk or caseworker for help. Those applicants who choose to complete the eligibility interview that same day may wait for one to two hours if staff are particularly busy.

Outreach Activities

Written materials and community presentations were the central components of the MiCAFE outreach strategy. MiCAFE distributed promotional brochures, postcards, and posters to senior centers, food banks, community centers, churches, pharmacies, soup kitchens, grocery stores, county health departments, and public buses. Staff also sent promotional items to seniors enrolled in a Meals on Wheels program, a prescription drug program, and a farmers' market program. MiCAFE staff made numerous presentations about the program to groups of seniors and to community officials throughout the county. Finally, the demonstration used press releases and media coverage to help spread the word about the program.

Challenging Issues and Effective Strategies

The principal challenge facing the MiCAFE demonstration was reaching the city of Flint, where much of the county's low-income elderly population lives. As conceived, the demonstration was to begin operating in nine sites; others would be added within the first two years. Two of the original nine were intended to serve downtown Flint, but they were closed by the city shortly after the start of the demonstration. One of these sites—the Hasselbring Senior Center—provided a host of services and had the potential to expose a large number of seniors to the MiCAFE program.[11] Although a replacement site in downtown Flint was soon identified, the location was less accessible to the elderly community. As a result, limited services were provided in downtown Flint during the first seven months of the demonstration.

After seven months, additional sites were identified. Two were serving downtown Flint, giving that portion of the city three sites by the end of the first year. By the end of the second year, another two sites were established in downtown Flint, bringing the total to five sites. Sites were also added throughout Genesee County so that by the end of the 21-month evaluation period, the MiCAFE demonstration grew from 7 to 22 sites.[12] This achievement notwithstanding, the demonstration's effectiveness might have been different if all 22 sites had been operating from the start.

[11] The Hasselbring site eventually reopened (and became a MiCAFE site), but provided only a limited array of services to seniors.

[12] Seven sites were added three months before the evaluation period ended.

One successful aspect of the demonstration was the accessibility of the interactive, on-line application. Most application assistants found the application easy to use, and this helped streamline the application process. While FIA could not accept FSP applications electronically, the fact that the application was Internet-based was nevertheless advantageous, since it facilitated technical assistance between application assistants and the MiCAFE call center.

FIA caseworkers indicated that the MiCAFE demonstration saved time for them for two reasons. First, the caseworkers did not need to conduct an eligibility interview with MiCAFE applicants, saving about 30 minutes per application. Second, they felt that the MiCAFE applications tended to be more accurate than others, which saved caseworkers time because they did not have to conduct a lot of follow-up communication with seniors to collect additional verification documentation, nor did they need to redo portions of the applications. They also observed that the demonstration did not create a workload burden, nor did it significantly alter their job responsibilities.

As in Maine, many clients indicated that the MiCAFE program staff performed very effectively. Volunteers were reported to be consistently responsive, helpful, and accommodating to applicants. The Elder Law staff were adept at making connections within the community, managing the start-up process for new MiCAFE centers, and anticipating problems. These staffing issues played an important role in limiting the problems encountered by the demonstration.

CONNECTICUT: THE FOOD CONNECTION (TFC)

Summary: Connecticut's 'The Food Connection' (TFC)

Dates of Operation	November 2002 to October 2004
Demonstration Model	Commodity Alternative Benefit
Grantee	Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS)
Other Major Partners	Community Renewal Team, Inc. (CRT)
Location	10 towns in the Hartford Region
Eligibility	Pure elderly households

Under the TFC program, eligible seniors could elect to receive commodity packages in lieu of traditional food stamps. Clients could select from among the regular, Latino, and Meals on Wheels packages that contained a variety of non-perishable items as well as butter and cheese. To reduce the weight of the packages, the monthly commodities were split into two packages that were distributed during two separate weeks (instead of once a month). Clients picked up packages at one of several sites throughout the region. Some clients were eligible for home delivery.

The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) was one of two grantees that selected the commodity alternative benefit model to increase elderly participation in the FSP. Clients electing to participate in The Food Connection (TFC) received commodity packages twice a month in lieu of traditional food stamp benefits. The contents of the packages would have cost between $60 and $70 if clients had purchased them in local stores. DSS contracted with the Community Renewal Team, Inc. (CRT) to coordinate commodity storage and distribution. The demonstration was available to residents of 10 towns in the Hartford region. The demonstration was designed in this way so that the remaining nine towns in the Hartford region could be used as a comparison group.

Operational Details

Under the demonstration, seniors applied for food stamps through the standard procedures—by submitting an application to the DSS and participating in an eligibility interview. If eligible for food stamps, seniors could elect to participate in the demonstration and receive commodities instead of benefits on their EBT card.

Seniors who elected to enroll in TFC could choose among three types of packages: regular, Latino, and Meals on Wheels (MOW).[13] The Latino package was geared to the cooking and eating habits of people with an Hispanic background, while the MOW option was intended to supplement the hot meals received by those clients by providing breakfast items and healthy snacks. Each commodity option had four "food baskets;" one basket was distributed every two weeks, with the complete menu pattern cycling every two months. The packages were designed by a nutritionist to meet USDA guidelines.

Seniors picked up packages on assigned weekdays from mid-morning through early afternoon. They could arrange for a proxy to pick up packages as long as CRT was notified in advance. Each package, or "food basket," was contained in two sturdy canvas bags. Every time clients picked up packages, they returned the empty canvas bags from the previous pickup.

Commodities, stored and assembled daily at CRT's warehouse, were distributed at 16 sites across the Hartford region. On each distribution day, the CRT driver typically went to 2 of the 16 sites, often distributing packages to seniors from the back of the delivery van and leaving at the center any packages not picked up during the distribution time. If necessary, the driver could help seniors load groceries into their cars. The driver then returned to the site later in the day to retrieve any packages that had not been picked up. For TFC clients and those in CRT's Meals on Wheels program, CRT delivered packages along with hot meals twice a month.

[13] Appendix A contains a list of the contents of TFC packages.

The commodities in the bi-weekly distribution weighed close to 50 pounds (each canvas bag weighed 20 to 30 pounds.) The amount of food in the packages was dictated in part by USDA's cost guidelines for the demonstrations. The amount that the demonstration paid for each package—including the costs of food as well as shipping and storage costs—could not exceed the average benefit to seniors of $43 in the first year of the demonstration and $46 in the second year. However, the cost to the demonstration of these commodities was substantially less than the comparable retail price. It would have cost participants over $60 to purchase a month's worth of commodities at the local supermarket.

CRT ordered commodities from USDA three months in advance; one order would typically last approximately six months. Because some commodities might not be available from USDA, there was usually uncertainty as to exactly what commodities would be received by the demonstration, making it difficult to plan future orders.

In addition, CRT had to change its warehouse somewhat in order to accommodate the demonstration. For instance, industrial refrigerators were installed to store perishable foods such as butter and cheese, and a security fence was built to separate the commodities from the remainder of the warehouse.

Outreach Strategies

Program officials envisioned a two-pronged approach for reaching seniors. Intake workers at the regional offices would inform new applicants and seniors up for recertification about the demonstration, while an outreach coordinator would focus on public education efforts. Both approaches, however, had limited effectiveness.

Initially, caseworkers served as the primary vehicle for publicizing the demonstration, because the outreach coordinator needed to assist with food distribution until operations stabilized. Caseworkers, however, did not consistently promote TFC. Caseworkers in the Hartford region generally felt overworked by their existing responsibilities.[14] By their own accounts, the caseworkers did not take steps to promote TFC simply because that would have entailed more work. In particular, they stopped including TFC promotional materials along with food stamp applications when applications were requested by elderly clients. By the second year of the demonstration, they rarely informed clients of the commodities option during the eligibility interview.

The outreach coordinator from CRT launched an active public education campaign by distributing written materials and making community presentations. These efforts began about five months into the demonstration. The impact from these efforts seemed to have been limited. Despite the fact that seniors expressed interest in TFC during community presentations, few seniors followed through and applied for food stamps (or if they did, they did not request TFC in the process).

[14] Statewide caseworker layoffs and cutbacks occurred around the same time that the demonstration started, and this resulted in larger caseloads for remaining caseworkers.

In addition to these efforts, DSS sent a special mailing to active FSP clients announcing the alternative commodity benefit option; this included a sign-up form that seniors could fill out and return. The mailing, which occurred at the start of the demonstration, was sent to approximately 3,600 seniors. This mailing may have been one of the more effective outreach efforts, because many of the 184 clients enrolled in the first month of the demonstration were ongoing FSP clients who converted to TFC benefits.

When describing The Food Connection to potential food stamp applicants, CRT staff usually focused on the higher net gain in benefits that many seniors could expect from commodities as opposed to an EBT card. A common tactic used by caseworkers was to ask seniors who only qualified for the minimum food stamp benefit level, "How many grocery items can you buy for $10?"[15] CRT also emphasized the variety of food items that clients would receive, as well as their choice between the three package types.

Challenges

Connecticut's TFC demonstration faced numerous challenges. First, staff needed to develop a system to order, warehouse, assemble, and distribute the commodity packages. The system was complicated by numerous factors: (1) packages were distributed twice a month at 16 separate sites and to some Meals on Wheels clients, (2) variations such as the "Latino package" were offered, and (3) commodities needed to be ordered well in advance of distribution. Although the CRT developed a system to handle these logistics, the process was labor intensive, time consuming, and in the initial months of the demonstration, required significant oversight to refine.

Partly because of the complex nature of the distribution system, participating in the demonstration proved to be frustrating for some clients. For instance, transporting the two heavy canvas bags was difficult, especially for seniors who walked or used public transportation to the distribution center. The bags typically weighed between 20 and 30 pounds each. Moreover, the narrow window within which commodities could be picked up was inconvenient. Additionally, in the first months of the demonstration, there was confusion over where clients should go to get their commodity packages. Relative to the other commodity alternative benefit demonstration in North Carolina, the TFC demonstration was less service-oriented.

Promoting the TFC program was made difficult by three main challenges. Mass media, the obvious tool for reaching seniors, was rendered useless because any television, radio, or newspaper announcements would, by definition, reach the entire Hartford population, and staff did not want to promote the program among seniors who lived in towns that did not qualify for the demonstration. Additionally, an early promotional mailing from CRT that

[15] Staff did not promote the higher retail value of the commodities (as was done in North Carolina), in part because USDA requested commodity demonstrations not use the higher value as a promotional tool.

included a sign-up form gave no instructions for seniors as to where to return the form. Moreover, as discussed above, eligibility workers in the local DSS offices were reluctant to discuss the demonstration with elderly FSP applicants. Had the eligibility workers promoted the demonstration to applicants more consistently, enrollment may have increased, sowing the seed for word-of-mouth publicity, which often succeeds where other outreach efforts fail.

NORTH CAROLINA: COMMODITY ALTERNATIVE BENEFIT (CAB)

Summary: North Carolina's Commodity Alternative Benefit (CAB)

Dates of Operation	November 2002 to September 2005
Demonstration Model	Commodity Alternative Benefit
Grantee	North Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS)
Other Major Partners	Alamance County Community Services Agency (ACCSA) Vocational Trades of Alamance (VTA)
Location	Alamance County
Eligibility	Pure elderly households

Under the CAB program, eligible seniors could elect to receive commodity packages in lieu of traditional food stamps. The packages contained varying combinations of canned goods, butter, cheese, and frozen meat and poultry. Food distribution occurred monthly, with most clients—or other individuals acting on a client's behalf—picking up the food bags at a community service provider's warehouse. Program staff also delivered packages at home to the approximately one-third of demonstration participants who could not make arrangements for pickup at the central distribution location.

The North Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) was the other grantee implementing the commodity alternative benefit demonstration model. The demonstration served seniors in Alamance County, a rural county including to the town of Burlington and located northwest of Raleigh. The monthly CAB commodity package contained goods that would have cost more than $70 if purchased in a local store. The Alamance County Community Service Agency (ACCSA) managed the demonstration. A second key partner in the demonstration was the Vocational Trades of Alamance (VTA), a nonprofit rehabilitation agency that gives employment opportunities and services to mentally- and physically-challenged adults. VTA housed the commodities and each month, VTA workers (adults with disabilities) packaged the commodities into grocery bags and placed the bags into clients' cars.

Operational Details

Similar to Connecticut, under North Carolina's CAB program, seniors applied for food stamps through the standard procedures in the county—by submitting an application to the DSS and participating in an eligibility interview with a caseworker. If eligible for food stamps, seniors could elect to participate in the demonstration and receive a commodity package each month. During the eligibility interview, seniors were informed of the package contents and were given an estimate of the cost to buy those same items at a grocery store.

CAB participants picked up their commodity packages at VTA's warehouse in downtown Burlington on the third Tuesday and Wednesday of each month.[16] Clients drove to the VTA receiving dock, where VTA workers loaded the food into vehicles. The weight of food bags was not an issue since VTA staff loaded the packages into seniors' cars, and because seniors often had a friend or relative assisting them. If seniors missed a pickup, they could make arrangements with VTA to come on a non-designated food distribution day.

Home delivery was available to those clients who could not easily access the warehouse. While program staff did not advertise this service, they often approved home delivery if a senior inquired about it. ACCSA estimated that approximately one-third of all demonstration clients took advantage of this service. Common delivery locations tended to be in more rural and remote areas, as well as in senior housing complexes. A van was equipped with portable coolers to safely transport frozen food items.

Seniors received one of two food package variations each month. These packages differed slightly in terms of items and/or quantities (for example, two versus three cans of pears, or one can of tuna versus no tuna).[17] Each monthly package consisted of six bags; the larger numbers of bags reduced the weight of any individual bag, and this made carrying the food deliveries easier for the elderly. Five bags contained canned foods and one bag contained butter, cheese, and frozen meat and poultry. Together, the six bags weighed between 72 and 75 pounds. It would have cost participants about $70 to purchase the contents in either of these packages at a local supermarket.[18]

As in Connecticut, the North Carolina demonstration needed a complex system for receiving, sorting, storing, and assembling food at its warehouse. Food orders to USDA were placed two months in advance of delivery. In the initial stages of the demonstration, demonstration staff had USDA commodities delivered every month. However, this required

[16] Program staff estimated that approximately 30 percent of commodity pickups were received by the client alone, 30 percent by the client accompanied by a friend or relative, and 40 percent by a designated representative of the client.

[17] Appendix A contains a list of the contents of CAB commodity packages.

[18] The per-client cost to the demonstration of the commodities—including shipping and storage—could not exceed the average benefit to seniors in Alamance County—$38 in the first year of the demonstration and $39 in the second year.

substantial planning since every item was not available each month, and orders needed to ensure sufficient quantities of each item until that item could be ordered again. Eventually, demonstration staff placed larger food orders, and had them delivered once every other month, reducing the work needed to schedule the orders. Once food was delivered, VTA staff spent several days unloading food, storing it and assembling food packages. A portion of the VTA warehouse was dedicated to the demonstration, and refrigerators and freezers were installed for the perishable food items. Occasionally, demonstration staff needed additional freezer space and used freezer space at a local school to store surplus frozen foods.

Outreach Strategies

Outreach for the CAB demonstration primarily involved presentations to community organizations. Because Alamance County has a small population and yet has a centrally-located town, it was easy to reach a large portion of the low-income elderly by making presentations in various senior centers, church groups, and apartment complexes. During these presentations, demonstration staff explained the CAB procedures and encouraged seniors to enroll in the FSP. Additionally, posters and fliers explaining the demonstration were distributed to many of the same organizations.

To give all seniors enrolled in the FSP the opportunity to participate in the demonstration, DSS mailed letters explaining the demonstration to elderly households already enrolled in the FSP. This led to a large initial enrollment, as many households converted to the CAB program.

Program officials did not find outreach through the media to be particularly effective. Some seniors who lived in the more rural, remote regions of Alamance County did not subscribe to the local newspaper. Moreover, not all seniors subscribed to cable television, the outlet for public service announcements. So, after an initial wave of brochures, television segments, and newspaper articles during the first several months of the demonstration, staff used community presentations as the primary means of educating the public about the demonstration. Most of these presentations were handled by the project coordinator, who appeared to communicate very effectively with elderly clients.

DSS caseworkers also played an important role in promoting the demonstration. During the eligibility interview (either for new applicants or recertifying households), it was the caseworker's responsibility to explain the availability of the CAB program and how it operated. Caseworkers in Alamance County routinely promoted the demonstration when talking with seniors. Caseworkers typically offered the commodity benefit option only to those seniors who qualified for less than $70 in food stamp benefits. Some caseworkers also tried informally to screen out seniors who did not seem to be viable candidates by asking questions about their cooking habits, and screening out households that typically did not prepare their own meals.

The experience with caseworkers promoting the demonstration in Alamance County differed substantially from the experience in Connecticut, where caseworkers often did not inform clients about the demonstration. A key reason for this difference was that staff from the Alamance County DSS office played a central role in designing the demonstration and, as a result, office staff were invested in the outcome. Additionally, the Alamance County DSS office was relatively small, and caseworkers could easily be kept abreast of the demonstration rules and procedures. In Connecticut, on the other hand, the demonstration was designed primarily by state staff, and the large local offices made communication with caseworkers more complicated.

Challenging Issues and Effective Strategies

Few of the challenges faced by the CAB program appeared to affect service delivery to clients.[19] Probably the biggest challenge in that respect was reaching elderly clients in the most rural, outlying areas of the county. Most CAB clients resided in or close to Burlington, the main town in Alamance County, making the program accessible to them. Demonstration staff recognized that the existing outreach efforts were not successfully reaching the seniors in the outlying areas, but were unable to identify an effective alternative. At the project's inception, staff had intended to create distribution outposts outside of Burlington to facilitate package pickup for clients in the most rural areas, but there were never enough CAB clients in these areas.

The commodity distribution process was clearly a successful aspect of the demonstration. Package pickup was simple for clients. Most had little trouble arranging transportation, and those who did easily made adjustments —either picking up on a different day or receiving home delivery. The process of assembling and distributing the packages was well organized and operated smoothly—most likely because the VTA, which managed the process, had experience in product assembly and storage.

As with the other pilot sites, the skills and judgment of demonstration staff was credited with much of the demonstration's success. ACCSA and VTA staff, working with DSS, designed a demonstration process that was user-friendly to clients. Indeed, staff called each new enrollee before their first package pickup to ensure that they were comfortable with the procedures, and sent notices reminding clients about pick up dates. Moreover, the process of picking up packages was well organized, and demonstration staff were pleasant to clients. ACCSA staff also effectively promoted the demonstration through community presentations.

[19] One major challenge of the CAB demonstration occurred prior to initiation of service delivery. The original agency recruited to store and distribute the commodities backed out of the demonstration. This delayed the start of the demonstration and affected its costs. See Nogales et al. (2005) for details.

CHAPTER III

IMPACTS ON ELDERLY PARTICIPATION

A principal impetus for the Elderly Nutrition demonstrations was the persistent low FSP participation rates among low-income elderly individuals. As a result, a key measure of each demonstration's success was the extent to which it increased participation among this population.

To estimate the impact of the demonstrations, we compared elderly FSP participation patterns at the demonstration sites with those of sites in the same state that were similar but did not have demonstrations. The results suggest that most of the Elderly Nutrition demonstrations had sizeable impacts on elderly FSP participation. In addition, the subgroup participation patterns suggest that the demonstrations were successful largely because they attracted households that, absent the demonstration, would have foregone benefits in order to avoid financial and nonfinancial application costs.

The first section of this chapter describes the basic approach used to estimate the demonstrations' impacts on participation. The second section presents the overall participation impacts and discusses participation trends in each demonstration site. The third section examines alternative measures of participation impacts. The fourth section presents participation impacts for key subgroups, including those who received low FSP benefits and those who were at the older end of the age distribution. The last section provides some concluding remarks. All estimates in this chapter are based on case-record data from the demonstration states.

MEASURING DEMONSTRATION IMPACTS

Measuring this impact requires estimates of the counterfactual—how participation would have changed in the absence of the demonstration. In some cases, elderly participation might have increased even without the demonstration, while in other cases, it might have stayed the same or decreased. The difference between the change that happened in the presence of the demonstration and the change that would have happened without it constitutes the impact of the demonstration.

Because the counterfactual cannot be observed directly, we estimated it by comparing changes in the demonstration site with changes in a set of comparison sites. The difference between the two sets of changes is the impact of the demonstration.

Evaluation Design Issues

Ideally, a comparison group is created by randomly assigning people eligible for the intervention to separate treatment and comparison groups. This classical experimental design ensures that no systematic observable or unobservable differences will exist between the treatment and comparison groups. Therefore, any difference in outcomes between the treatment and the comparison group can be attributed with a known degree of statistical confidence to the intervention. Unfortunately, it is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the impacts of a community initiative using an experimental design because these initiatives use a "saturation approach." That is, they are intended to affect a large proportion of the community. It would therefore be impossible to "wall off" the comparison group within the community from at least some, if not all, aspects of the initiative. The resulting "contamination" of the comparison group would deprive us of the counterfactual-based estimates needed to measure demonstration impacts. On the other hand, an experimental design could be used to measure impacts of a community initiative if several communities were *randomly selected* to implement the initiative or not. However, this approach is not always feasible mainly for two reasons: (1) because of how communities decide, or are selected, to implement initiatives may lead to selection bias, and (2) because a large number of communities needed to conduct such an experiment, and the costs of running demonstrations in a large number of communities is prohibitive.

Given that an experimental design may not be feasible for evaluating community initiatives, any of three nonexperimental designs may suffice. In a "pre-post" design, only one community participates in the initiative, and outcomes before the initiative are compared with the outcomes after the initiative. The drawback to this design is that changes in the community that are unrelated to the initiative (e.g., economic changes) may cause changes in the outcomes of interest, thereby diluting confidence in the reliability of the post-intervention observations. A second design—comparing outcomes in the treatment and comparison sites at one point—would avoid this shortcoming, but differences in the outcomes might be caused by unmeasured differences in the characteristics of the communities rather than by the initiative. Indeed, we know the treatment and comparison sites in this evaluation differed in at least one respect before the initiative: the treatment site decided to launch the initiative.

The third approach, called "difference-in-difference" and used in this evaluation, is a combination of the first two designs. It allows us to examine the differences in outcomes in the demonstration and comparison communities over time. The advantage of the design is that it controls not only for changes that occur in the treatment and comparison communities over time but also for differences in the characteristics of both communities that remain constant over time.

The major challenge posed by the difference-in-difference design is selecting comparison sites that are as similar as possible to the demonstration site before implementation in order lend more credibility to the assumption that the demonstration and comparison site would have evolved similarly in the absence of the demonstration. For this reason, we looked for comparison sites that, at the start of the demonstration, were similar to the demonstration sites in terms of factors that influence elderly participation trends. The

comparison sites that were selected matched the demonstration county in terms of both trends in elderly participation and other characteristics that might influence the number of households with elderly entering the FSP.

Selecting Comparison Sites

In each state that hosted demonstration sites, comparison sites (or counties), were identified on the basis of similarity to the demonstration county in six dimensions:[1]

1. Total number of FSP households with elderly before the demonstration
2. Percent of all elderly households that participated in the FSP
3. Historic changes in the percent of all elderly households that participated in the FSP
4. Percent of the county population over age 65
5. Percent of the total county population that was nonwhite
6. County population density

Within a state, each candidate comparison county was assigned a score that indicated its similarity to the demonstration county. In general, counties with scores indicating they were at least 90 percent similar to the demonstration county were included in the comparison group.[2] The number of comparison sites selected for each demonstration site varied according to the number of counties meeting the similarity criteria. In Florida and Arizona, where demonstrations were implemented in two counties, separate comparison groups were selected for each county.

Participation changes in the demonstration and comparison sites were measured from the month immediately before the start of the demonstration to the 21st month of the demonstration.[3] The double-difference impact was computed as follows:

[1] In Connecticut, where the demonstration was implemented in 10 towns instead of one or two counties, the comparison sites also were towns.

[2] When no counties were above the 90 percent threshold, the counties with the highest similarity scores were included in the comparison group. See Appendix B for a full description of the comparison site selection methodology.

[3] The data collection period varied by demonstration, depending on the start date. In Arizona, Michigan, Connecticut, and North Carolina, the data were collected for 21 months; in Florida, data were collected for 23 months; in Maine, data were collected for 24 months. To ensure consistency and to facilitate cross-site comparisons, all impacts were measured relative to 21 months of operation.

$$Y_d = \left[\left(\frac{D^{21} - D^{-1}}{D^{-1}} \right) - \left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} C_i^{21} - \sum_{i=1}^{n} C_i^{-1}}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} C_i^{-1}} \right) \right] \times 100 \qquad (1)$$

where

Y_d = impact of elderly nutrition demonstration for demonstration site *d*
D^{21} = number of elderly FSP participants in the demonstration site in the 21st month of demonstration
D^{-1} = number of elderly FSP participants at the demonstration site in the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration
C_i^{21} = number of elderly FSP participants at comparison site *i* in the 21st month of the demonstration
C_i^{-1} = number of elderly FSP participants at the comparison site *i* in the month immediate prior to start of demonstration
n = total number of comparison sites for demonstration site *d*

The accuracy of the impacts estimated through this approach rests on the validity of the assumption that participation in the demonstration site in the absence of the demonstration would have followed the patterns observed in the comparison sites. To the extent that the demonstration patterns would have been different, impact estimates will be biased. It is likely that the estimates have some error because, even before the demonstrations, participation patterns in the demonstration and comparison sites were not entirely identical.

IMPACTS ON ELDERLY PARTICIPATION

Most of the demonstrations appeared to have sizeable impacts on elderly FSP participation. For each demonstration model, at least one demonstration site had an impact estimate of over 20 percent (Table III.1), a substantial effect especially given that elderly FSP participation rates have historically been low and stable.[4]

Trends in Gadsden County, Florida, illustrate the size of the impact estimates and how they were computed. The number of elderly FSP households rose from 429 in the month before the start of the demonstration to 506 after 21 months of operation, an 18 percent

[4] Appendix C contains quarterly participation data for each demonstration and comparison site.

Table III.1: Participation Impacts of Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations After 21 Months

	Elderly FSP Households[a]							
	Demonstration Counties			Comparison Counties				
	(a) Pre-Demonstration	Demonstration Month 21	(b) Percent Change	Pre-Demonstration	Demonstration Month 21	(c) Percent Change	**(d = b-c) Percent Impact**	(d/100•a) Net New Households
Simplified Eligibility								
Florida								
Gadsden	429	506	17.9	685	655	-4.4	**22.3**	96
Leon	734	958	30.5	10,436	11,166	7.0	**23.5**	172
Application Assistance								
Arizona								
Pinal	715	941	31.6	1,001	1,341	34.0	**-2.4**	-17
Yavapai	548	951	73.5	789	1,079	36.8	**36.8**	202
Maine	459	671	46.2	353	407	15.3	**30.9**	142
Michigan	2,476	2,986	20.6	5,856	6,753	15.3	**5.3**	131
Commodity Alternative Benefit								
Connecticut	3,741	4,199	12.2	2,870	3,111	8.4	**3.8**	142
North Carolina	442	656	48.4	3,322	3,741	12.6	**35.8**	158

[a] Participation counts for the simplified eligibility and commodity alternative benefit demonstrations reflect pure elderly households; participation counties for the application assistance demonstrations reflect all households with elderly. This reflects the differing eligibility rules of the demonstrations (see Chapter II for details).

increase. In the Gadsen comparison counties, however, elderly FSP participation actually decreased by 4 percent during the same period. The difference translates into an impact estimate of 22 percent in Gadsden County. In absolute terms, this suggests that after 21 months, the Gadsden County caseload had 96 more FSP households with elderly than it would have had in the absence of the demonstration.

Sizeable impacts were observed under each of the demonstration models, but the impacts varied within each model. The impact estimates were largest in Yavapai County (Arizona) and in North Carolina, 36.8 percent and 35.8 percent, respectively. Just about 5 percentage points lower was the estimate in Maine, at 30.9 percent. The demonstrations in Florida generated impacts of 22.3 and 23.5 percent in Gadsden and Leon counties, respectively. The remaining demonstrations in Pinal County (Arizona), Connecticut, and Michigan showed relatively little or no impacts after 21 months.

The absolute numbers of elderly FSP households that participate as a result of the demonstration (the "net new households") are less variable than the impact estimates. The number of net new households was derived by multiplying the estimate of the percent impact by the level of participation at the start of the demonstration. In Michigan and Connecticut, two demonstrations with relatively low impacts on participation, the absolute demonstration impacts were similar to those observed in Maine and North Carolina. The Michigan and Connecticut demonstrations (along with the Florida demonstration in Leon County) include urban areas and, as a result, target larger pools of eligible, nonparticipating seniors. Thus, an impact of about 150 new elderly households represents a relatively small percent increase in the caseload, and it is assumed to represent a relatively small increase in the proportion of eligible elderly households that participated in the program. In other words, while the Michigan demonstration may have had a similar impact on the number of elderly households, its impact on the local elderly participation rate is likely much lower than that of the Maine and North Carolina demonstrations.

It was possible to formally test whether the percent impact estimates in the demonstration sites were significantly different from the "typical" change observed over the same period in other counties in the same states.[5] Indeed, the test results for each demonstration site show that the large caseload changes observed in the demonstration counties in Maine and North Carolina, and in Yavapai County (Arizona) were significantly greater than typical caseload changes.[6] In other words, the changes were larger than we would have expected to observe without the demonstration. In Florida, the changes observed in the demonstration counties were not significantly different when compared with changes in all Florida counties, but they were significantly greater than the changes observed

[5] Since changes in participation rates were the most important outcome variable, the relevant unit of analysis was essentially a whole demonstration site. Therefore, the ideal approach for assessing the statistical significance of impacts would be to replicate each demonstration in large numbers in order to observe the presence (or absence) of consistently large impacts. However, this approach was not feasible because of resource constraints.

[6] See Appendix D for regression estimates used to test for significance.

in the comparison sites. While we would have more confidence in the Florida impact estimates if the differences were significant relative to the entire state, the fact that they were significantly different from the comparison counties allows us to conclude that the changes were larger than we would have expected to observe without the demonstration.

In addition to statistical significance, there is the question of whether the impact estimates are meaningful. In other words, is the impact estimate consistent with what else we know about the demonstrations? To provide more insight into this issue, the remainder of this section discusses participation trends for each of the demonstrations separately.

Florida Simplified Eligibility Demonstration

In January 2002, the month immediately prior to the start of the Florida demonstration, there were 429 and 734 elderly FSP participants in Gadsden and Leon Counties, respectively. (Figure III.1 shows the demonstration and comparison counties in Florida.) During the first fifteen months of the demonstration, elderly FSP participation increased in each county at a modest pace (Figure III.2). During the remaining eight months of the demonstration, participation increased substantially. The increase was smaller in rural Gadsden County than in more urban Leon County.[7]

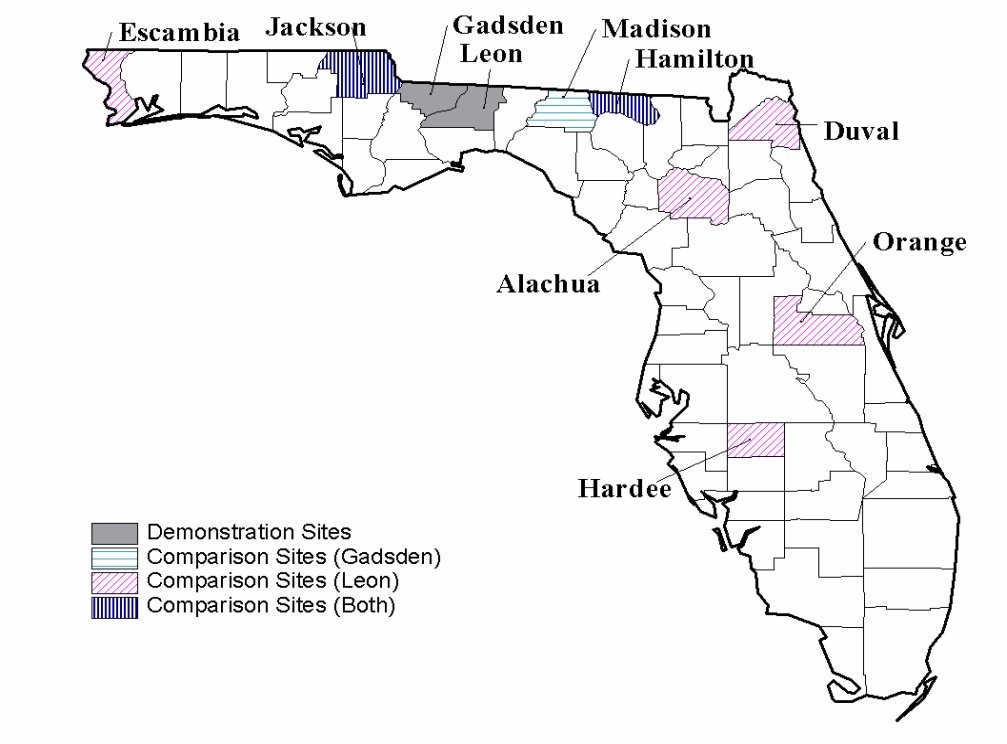
The percent change in elderly FSP participation in Gadsden County is similar to that of the state as a whole, but different from that of the similar comparison sites. Given the rural nature of Gadsden County, and the fact that the three comparison counties also were rural panhandle counties, it is likely that the comparison sites represented a better estimate of the Gadsden County's counterfactual than the state as a whole. The net change in Leon County was larger than that of both the comparison sites for Leon County and the state as a whole.

In both demonstration counties, elderly FSP participation growth rates increased after the first airing of the public service announcement promoting the program to seniors. As discussed in Chapters II and IV, the announcement was viewed by many seniors, and anecdotal evidence suggests that it generated a large number of new FSP applications.

The timing of the increases in elderly participation in the demonstration counties raises questions as to whether the effects on participation were due mainly to the demonstration or to the outreach activity. The evidence suggests that, while the public service announcement generated interest in the FSP, the simplified eligibility rules were needed to increase elderly participation. The announcement was broadcast on a major network affiliate and could be

[7] There is little evidence that the impacts observed in the demonstration counties were driven by the introduction of the simplified application form. This simplified form, which was used in both demonstration counties, was also adopted in Alachua and Jackson Counties. Elderly FSP participation in Alachua and Jackson Counties remained relatively flat, growing at rates slower than the other comparison sites and the rest of the state.

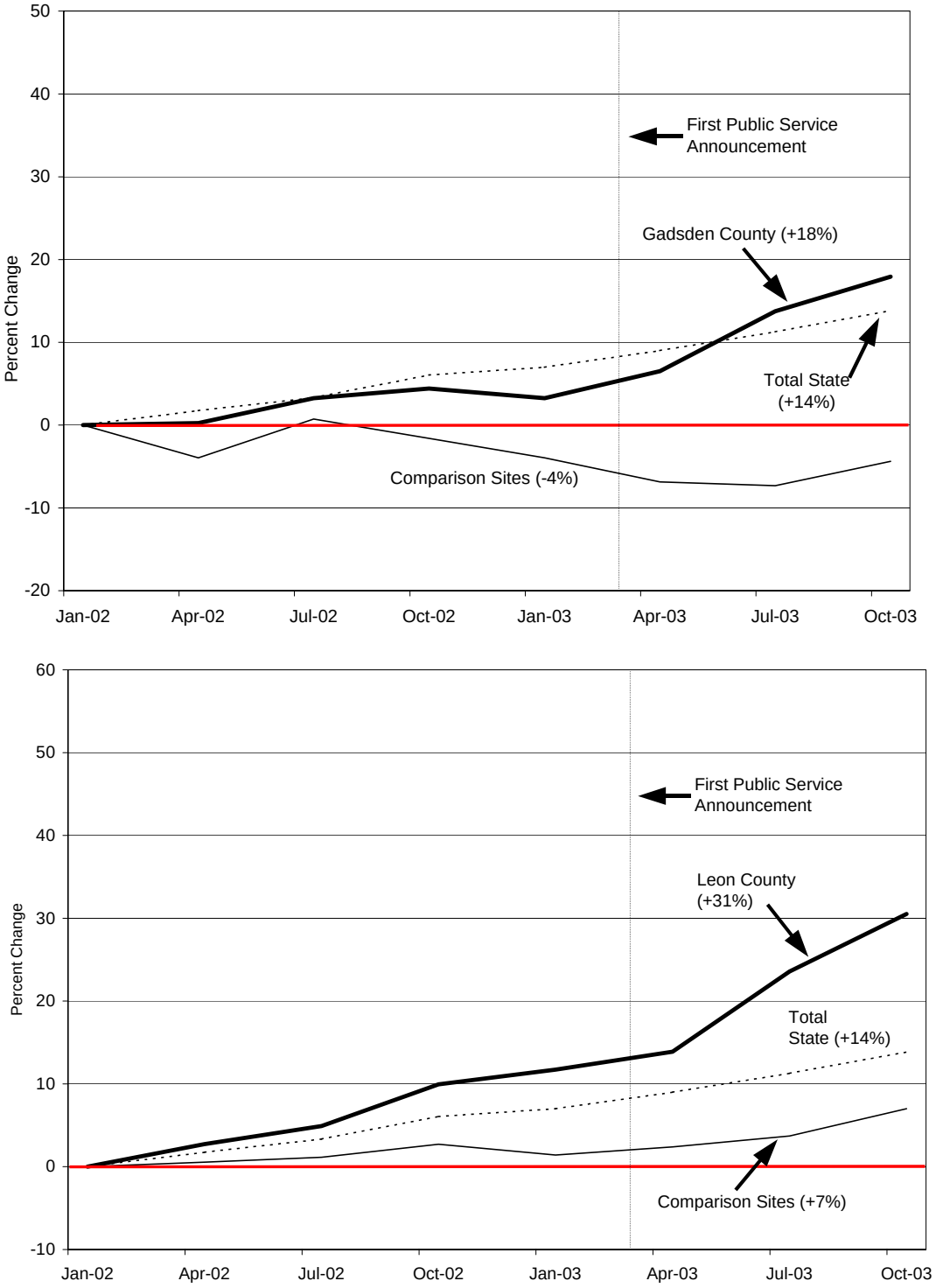
Figure III.1: Florida Demonstration and Comparison Sites



seen in a large number of counties surrounding Tallahassee. Any resident of a nondemonstration county who called the phone number provided in the announcement was still prescreened for food stamp eligibility, and was given an estimated food stamp benefit amount and the phone number of the local DSS office. Elderly FSP participation in most of the nondemonstration counties did not appear to increase after the PSA was broadcast. This could mean that it was the combination of the outreach, the simplified eligibility rules, and the fact that demonstration staff mailed the one-page application to callers that led to increased elderly participation. Residents of nondemonstration counties initially may have been enticed by the PSA outreach, but ultimately were discouraged from participating because they had to call their local DSS office, complete a longer FSP application, and face more cumbersome eligibility rules.

In short, the growth rates in the two Florida demonstration counties appear influenced by demonstration activities and are larger than we would expect given patterns observed in the comparison sites. This increases our confidence that the relatively large participation impact estimates for Gadsden County (22.3 percent) and Leon County (23.5 percent) reflect the effects of the demonstration. These impact estimates, while large, are smaller than those observed in other effective demonstrations. This could suggest that the simplified eligibility model by itself tends to have a smaller impact than the other models. Because Florida is the only state to implement a simplified eligibility demonstration this question cannot be answered. Additional explanations could include the fact that the Florida demonstration

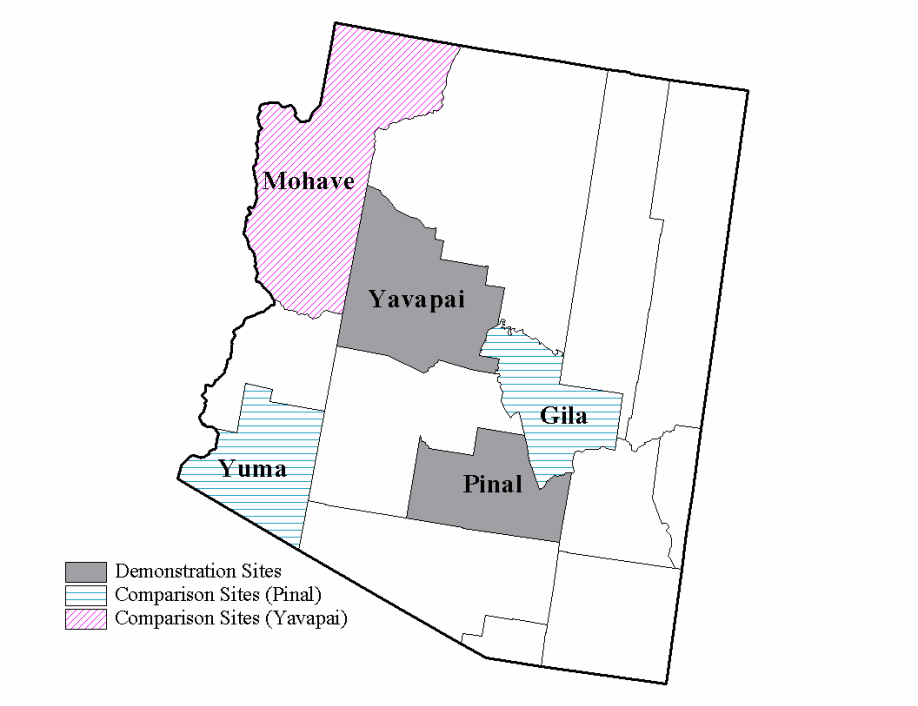
Figure III.2: Elderly FSP Participation Patterns In Florida's Gadsden and Leon Counties



Source: Administrative Data from Florida Department of Children and Families.

Note: Trends reflect pure elderly households.

Figure III.3: Arizona Demonstration and Comparison Counties



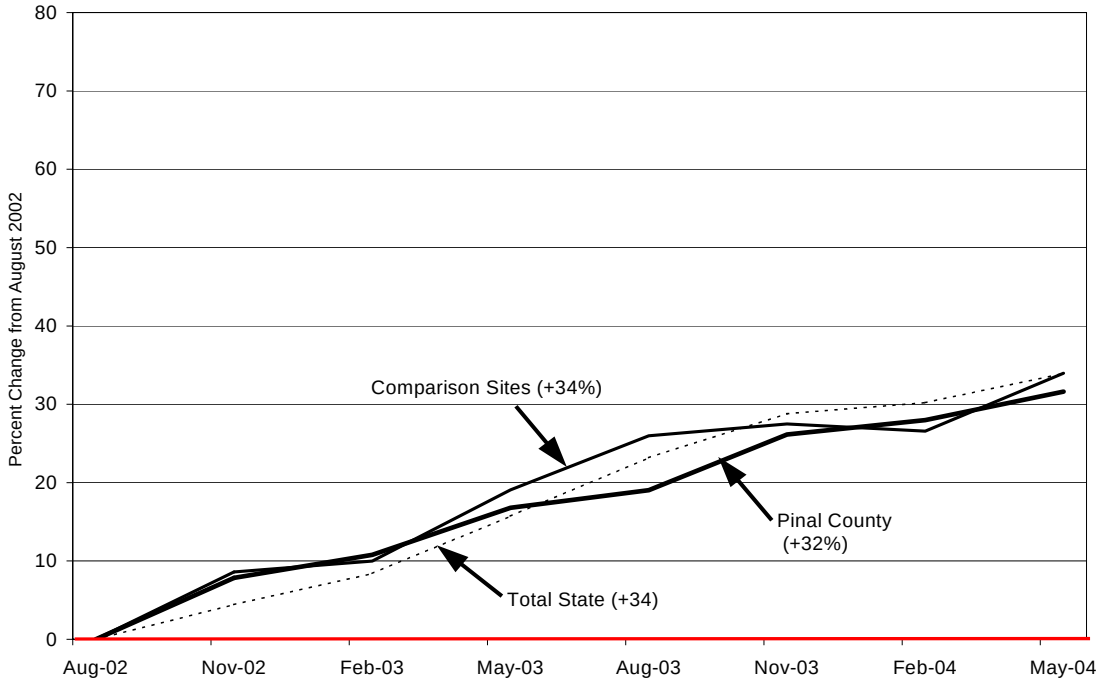
applied only to households applying for food stamps only, since households applying for Medicaid or SSI had to face more complicated eligibility rules (although the incidence of such households is estimated to be small). Additionally, the impacts of the demonstration might have been larger if the public service announcement have been aired sooner than the second year of the demonstration.

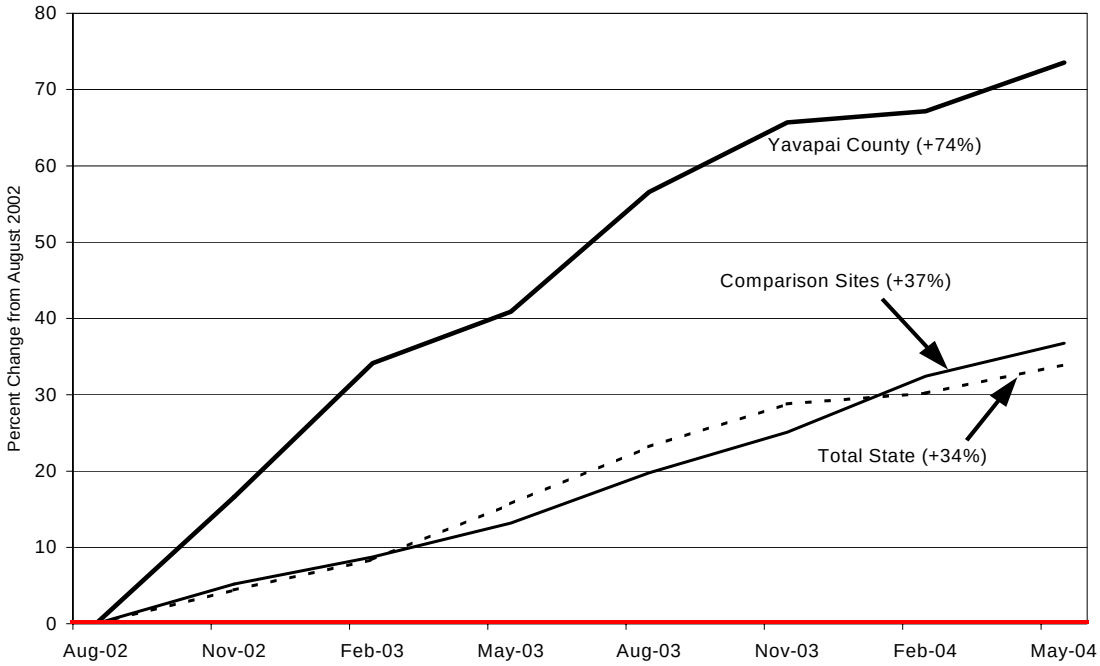
Arizona's Food Assistance and Nutrition for Seniors (FANS)

Both demonstration counties in Arizona experienced growth in elderly food stamp participation during the analysis period, but the growth rate in Yavapai County was twice that of Pinal. (Figure III.3 shows the demonstration and comparison counties.) In August 2002, the month immediately prior to the start of the Arizona demonstration, there were 715 households with elderly in Pinal County. By May 2004, the number of elderly households had increased by 31.6 percent (Figure III.4). In Yavapai County, there were 548 households with elderly in August 2002, and the number increased by 73.5 percent by May 2004.

Participation growth in the comparison counties also was significant. FSP participation by the elderly in the comparison sites for Pinal County (Yuma and Gila Counties) increased by 49.5 percent, while elderly FSP participation in the comparison site for Yavapai County (Mohave County) increased by 53.0 percent. Overall, FSP participation in Arizona has grown at a substantial rate. FSP participation by the elderly increased by 33.9 percent, and total FSP participation increased by 27.9 percent, between February 2002 and May 2004.

Figure III.4: FSP Participation Patterns of Households With Elderly In Arizona's Pinal and Yavapai Counties





Source: Administrative Data from Arizona Department of Economic Services.

Note: Trends reflect all households with elderly.

Table III.2: Change in FSP Participation By The Elderly As Explained By Approved 'FANS' Applications, Arizona

County	August 2002 Households	Percent Change, August 2002 – May 2004	Impact Estimate, May 2004	Cumulative FANS Applications, March 2004		Approved Applications as a Percent of August 2002 Households
				Submitted	Approved	
Pinal County	535	34.8	-2.4	136	88	16.4
Yavapai County	490	74.9	36.8	580	365	74.5

Source: FANS demonstration staff.

The difference in participation patterns between the two counties is reflected in the number of FANS applications submitted and approved in each county (Table III.2). Between September 2002 and March 2004, only 136 FANS applications were submitted in Pinal County, of which 88 were approved. This implies that, at most, the approved FANS applications could have explained a 16.4 percent increase in elderly FSP participation in that county, but it likely explains less, since some individuals would have applied for food stamps even if FANS did not exist. In Yavapai County, however, 580 applications were submitted, of which 365 were approved. These approved applications could explain a 74.5 percent increase in the elderly FSP caseload—far more than the estimated impact of 36.8 percent.

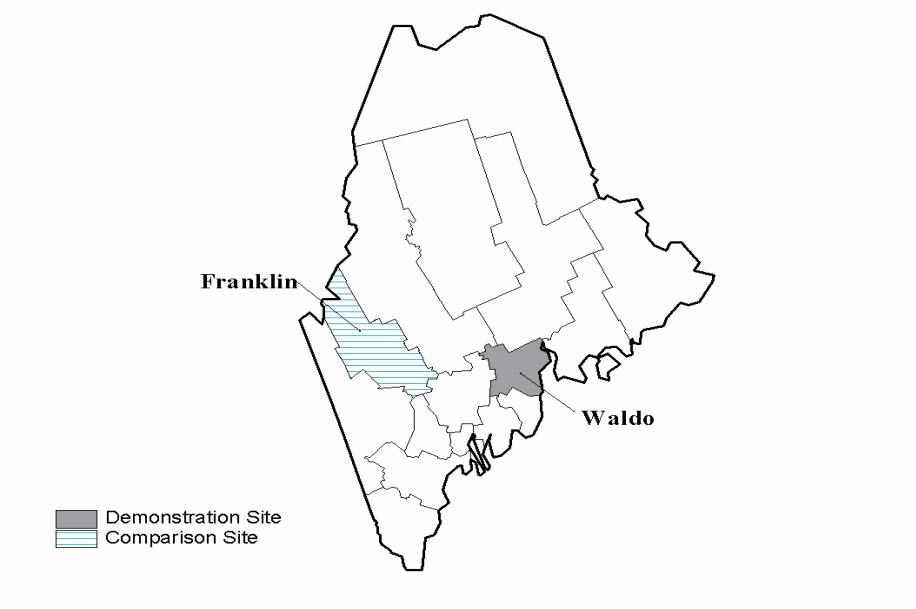
The relatively low number of applications in Pinal County reflected, at least in part, the staffing problems experienced in that county. As discussed in Chapter II, two of the five application assistant positions in Pinal County were vacant for a significant portion of the demonstration period, and some Pinal County staff were uncomfortable with the role of promoting the demonstration. These factors led to substantially fewer FANS applications and, as a result, no apparent demonstration impact in Pinal.

Maine's Food Assistance Connecting Needy Seniors (FACES)

In January 2002, the month immediately prior to the start of the Maine demonstration, there were 459 households containing elderly persons in Waldo County participating in the FSP. (See Figure III.5 for demonstration and comparison sites.) The number of households with elderly increased rapidly before leveling off as the demonstration approached the two-year mark. After 21 months, elderly FSP participation in Waldo County increased by increased by 46.2 percent. Elderly participation in the one comparison county and in the rest of the state also increased during the same period. However, while these increases were generally large, they were much smaller than the increase observed in Waldo County.

In January 2004—after two years of FACES program operations—there were 672 households with elderly enrolled in the FSP, of which 132, or 19.6 percent, had been

Figure III.5: Maine Demonstration and Comparison Counties



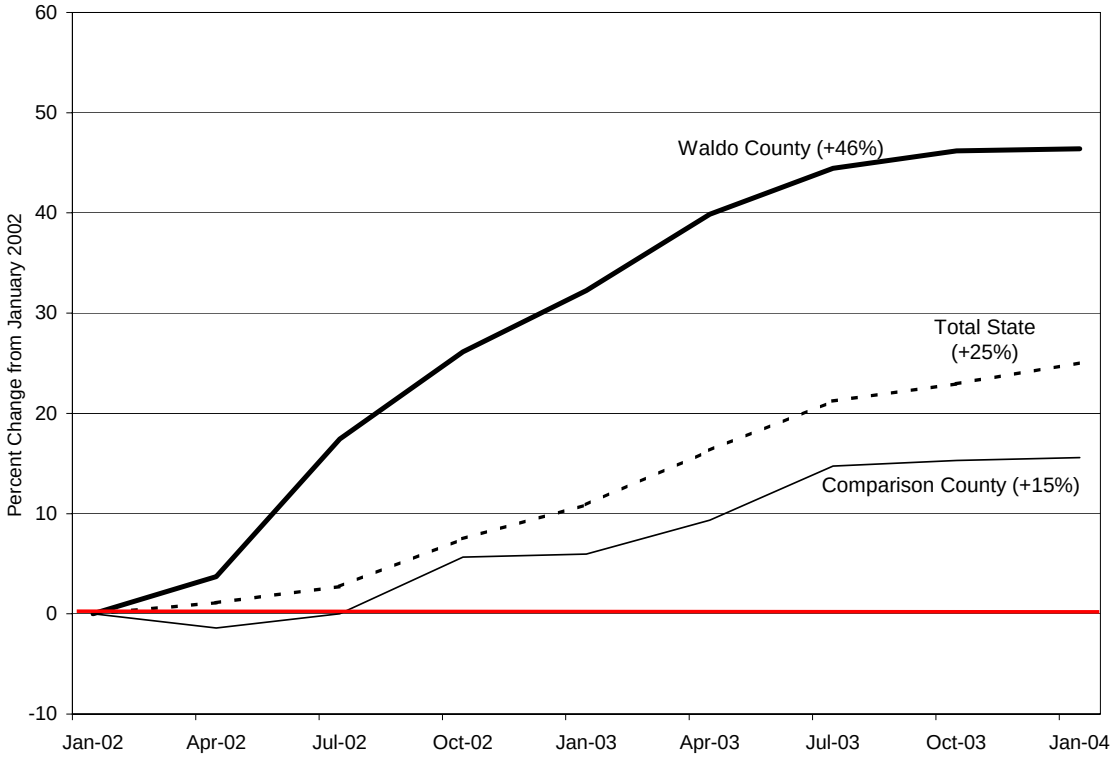
enrolled through FACES. If these 132 clients were the only FSP clients enrolled by the FACES program, then the number of FACES enrollees could not have accounted for the 30.9 percent impact estimate. However, the total number of FSP clients ever enrolled through FACES was likely greater than 132, as some FACES enrollees may have left the FSP during the two-year period.[8] Instead, it is likely that the true impact was possibly more than 19 percent (some of those enrolled through FACES may have enrolled even in the absence of the program) but still less than the impact estimate of 31 percent. The difference between the true impact and the estimated impact might be attributed to the fact that the Maine demonstration had only one comparison county which had some dissimilarities with Waldo County.[9]

The rate of growth in the number of FSP households with elderly in Waldo County leveled off after 15 months. The graph in Figure III.6 reflects an average quarterly growth rate of 7.4 percent in the first year but only 2.5 percent in the second year. One factor

[8] Self-reported estimates from FACES staff indicate that more than 1,000 seniors were provided some form of assistance; the majority submitted FSP applications. These numbers cannot be verified, but if true, they suggest that numerous applications were submitted for ineligible FSP households. Because eligibility workers did not complain about such an inordinate number of ineligible applications, we suspect that the number of FACES applications submitted was less than reported.

[9] See Appendix B for details.

Figure III.6: FSP Participation Patterns of Elderly Households in Maine



Source: Administrative Data from Maine Department of Human Services.

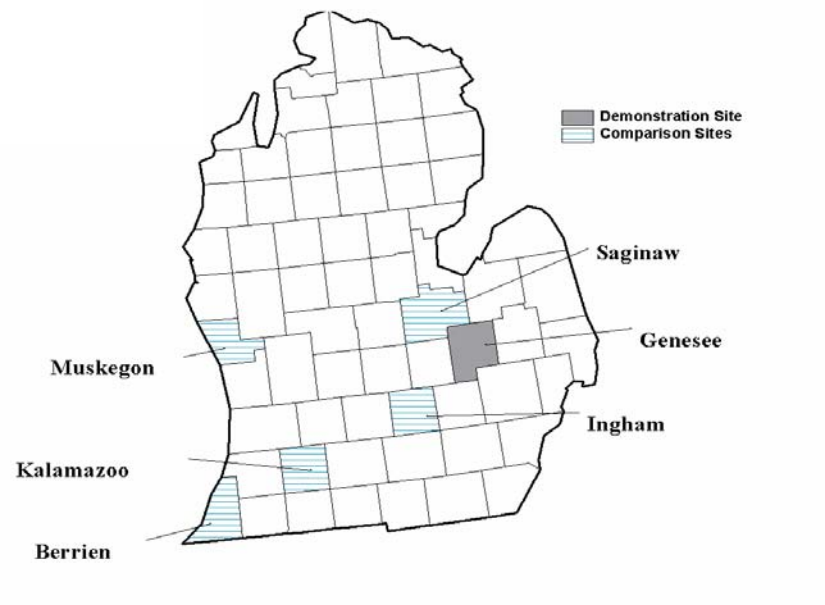
Note: Trends reflect all households with elderly.

contributing to lower demonstration participation in the second year may have been the sporadic sick leave absences taken by staff during the second year of the demonstration. However, this pattern also could suggest a limit to the growth rate for this (and other) demonstrations. It could be that some nonparticipants were easier to attract to the FSP than others; once those individuals entered the FSP, greater efforts would be needed to attract the remaining seniors. This certainly could be the case in a county like Waldo, where the total population is relatively small.

Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE)

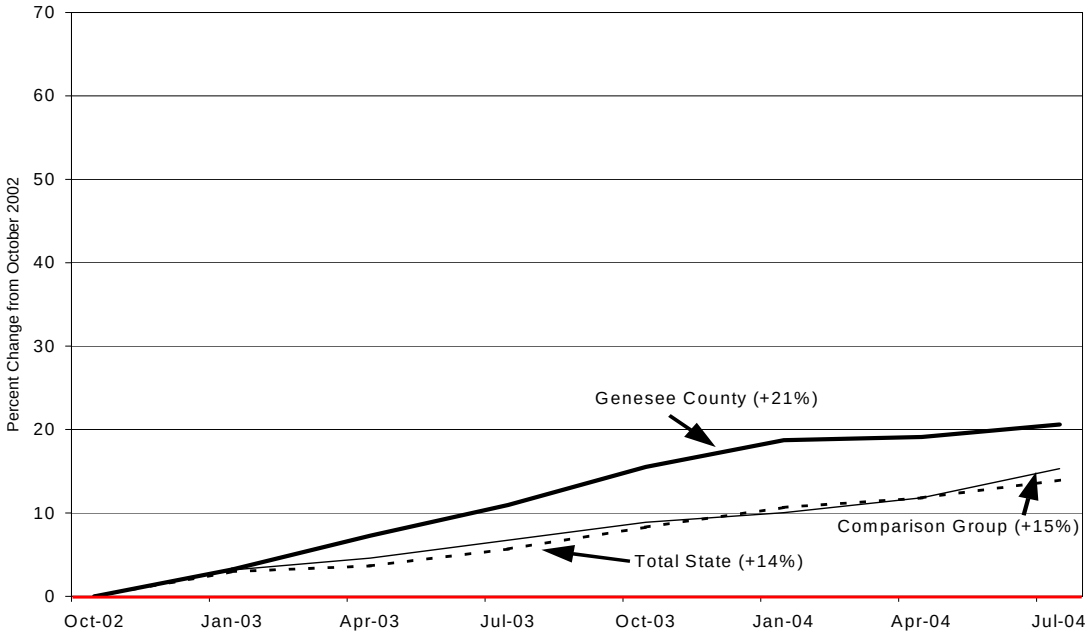
In October 2002, the month immediately prior to the start of the Michigan demonstration, there were 2,476 FSP households with elderly in Genesee County (see Figure III.7 for demonstration and comparison counties). After the demonstration started, there was steady growth in the number of households with elderly (Figure III.8). During the first 15 months of the demonstration, the growth in Genesee County accelerated, while the growth in the comparison counties tapered off.

Figure III.7: Michigan Demonstration and Comparison Counties



Note: No demonstration or comparison counties were in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

Figure III.8: FSP Participation Patterns For Elderly FSP Households in Michigan



Source: Administrative Data from Michigan Family Independence Agency.

Note: Trends reflect all households with elderly.

Table III.3: Comparison of Populations in Application Assistance Demonstration Sites

	Households with Elderly, 2000[a]	Population Density (People per Square Mile), 2000[a]	Reported FSP Applications Submitted by Demonstration, 21 Months[b]	FSP Households with Elderly Participating in 21st Month and Enrolled by Demonstration[c]
Genesee County, MI	47,400	681	600	262
Pinal County, AZ	25,100	34	136	35
Yavapai County, AZ	31,000	21	580	230
Waldo County, ME	4,600	50	824	132

[a]Source: 2000 Decennial Census.
[b]Estimates self-reported by demonstration staff.
[c]Estimates do not reflect the total number of households ever enrolled by the demonstration, since some households may have left the FSP before the 21st month. Estimates also do not reflect the impact of the demonstrations since some households may have participated in the FSP in the absence of the demonstration.

Although the participation trends in Genesee County suggest that the MiCAFE demonstration had some impact on the number of elderly participating in the FSP, the impact was substantially smaller than that of other successful demonstrations. The impact estimate for MiCAFE was only 5.3 percent, while the impacts in Yavapai County and Maine were 36.8 and 30.9 percent, respectively. Not only was the estimated impact smaller in Michigan, but the number of clients served was relatively small as well. Despite having a larger elderly population and higher population density than Yavapai County, Arizona and Waldo County, Maine, the MiCAFE demonstration did not serve substantially more clients than the demonstrations in those counties (Table III.3).[10] After 21 months of demonstration activities, the self-reported number of applications submitted in Genesee County was comparable to that of Yavapai County and less than that of Waldo County.[11] Moreover, after 21 months of the demonstration, the absolute number of FSP households with elderly that were enrolled through the MiCAFE demonstration was comparable to the number in Yavapai County, and only twice that of the much smaller Waldo County.

[10] The best measure for use in comparing the demonstration counties in terms of target population would be the number of low-income households with elderly not participating in the FSP; unfortunately, such estimates are not available.

[11] Given that these are self-reported estimates, they may not be directly comparable. However, it is unlikely that a comparable measure of applications submitted, if available, would show substantially more applications for Michigan than the other sites.

The smaller impact in Michigan could have been the result of several factors. Unfortunately, given the fact that the Michigan demonstration was unique in many ways, it is difficult to disentangle the roles played by these various factors in understanding the impacts in Michigan.

First, the number of MiCAFE centers was limited to just seven sites at the start of the demonstration, and the demonstration had little ability to serve the city of Flint, where most of the county's low-income seniors reside. This may have reduced the effectiveness of the demonstration. However, if this were the only explanation, then we would expect to see participation growth rates among the elderly increase as new MiCAFE centers were brought on line (including in the downtown Flint areas). This was not the case. In fact, relative to the comparison counties and to the rest of the states, participation growth rates tapered off after January 2004.

Second, the MiCAFE demonstration was the most location-based of the three demonstrations. The demonstration was set up primarily to serve clients who frequented certain senior centers or churches, or who resided in certain housing complexes. While outreach was conducted to encourage seniors to visit these centers to apply, it is likely that the principal source of clients was the seniors already using these services. As a result, the demonstration had a limited ability to reach seniors not using these facilities. In Arizona, while the assistance was based in community locations, the application assistants operated out of the local FSP offices, and caseworkers referred potential applicants to the FANS demonstration for assistance. This extended the reach of the demonstration beyond those clients using the services at assistance locations. In Maine, the assistance was not location-based. Rather, clients received services primarily in their homes. It is possible, therefore, that the location-based nature of the MiCAFE demonstration limited its ability to reach significant portions of the non-participating low-income elderly population. This is conjecture, however, as the evaluation was unable to measure the extent to which this population was reached for each site.

Third and finally, the smaller impacts observed in Michigan may reflect inherent difficulties in providing application assistance in an urban environment. The demonstration in Genesee County was the only application assistance demonstration implemented in an urban area. It may be more difficult to identify and contact eligible seniors and to build awareness of the demonstration in a city than in a rural county. Again, this is conjecture as it is difficult to quantify the role played by the urban nature of the demonstration site.

Connecticut's 'The Food Connection' (TFC)

In October 2002, the month immediately prior to the start of the Connecticut demonstration, 3,741 households with elderly were participating in the FSP in the 10 Hartford-region towns that were part of the demonstration (see Figure III.9 for demonstration and comparison towns). After the demonstration started, elderly FSP participation grew at a modest pace; by July 2004, the number of elderly FSP participants was 12.2 percent higher than in April 2002 (Figure III.10). The growth patterns in

Figure III.9: Connecticut Demonstration and Comparison Towns

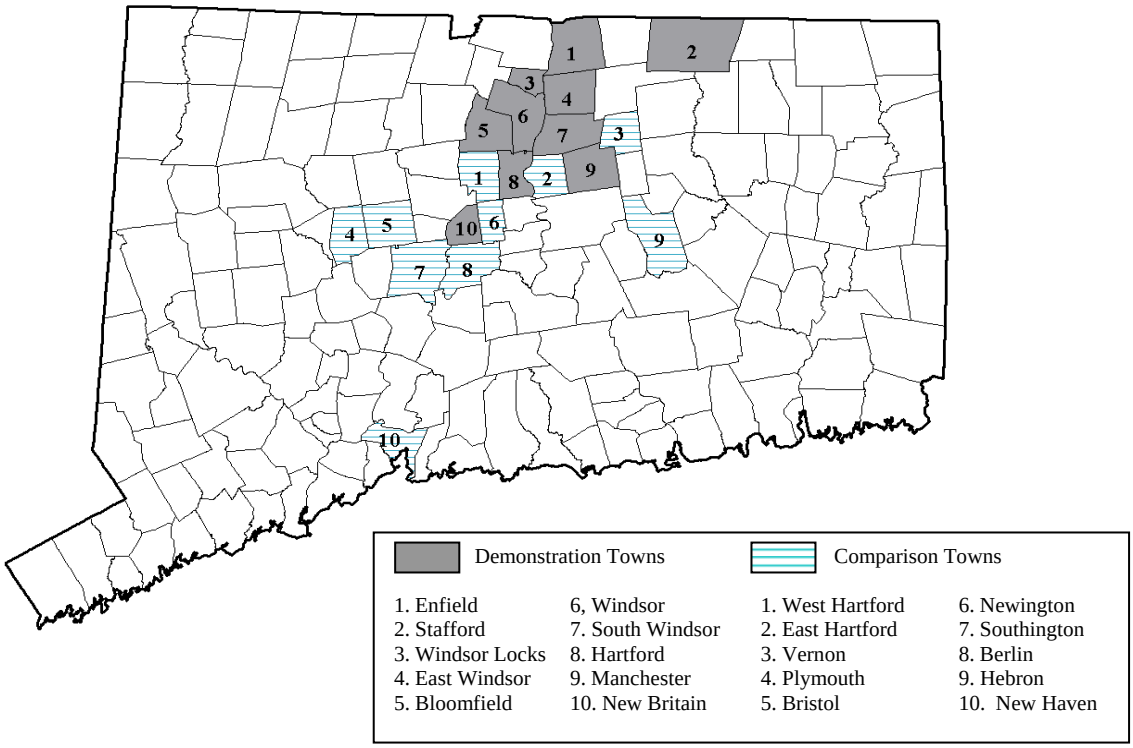
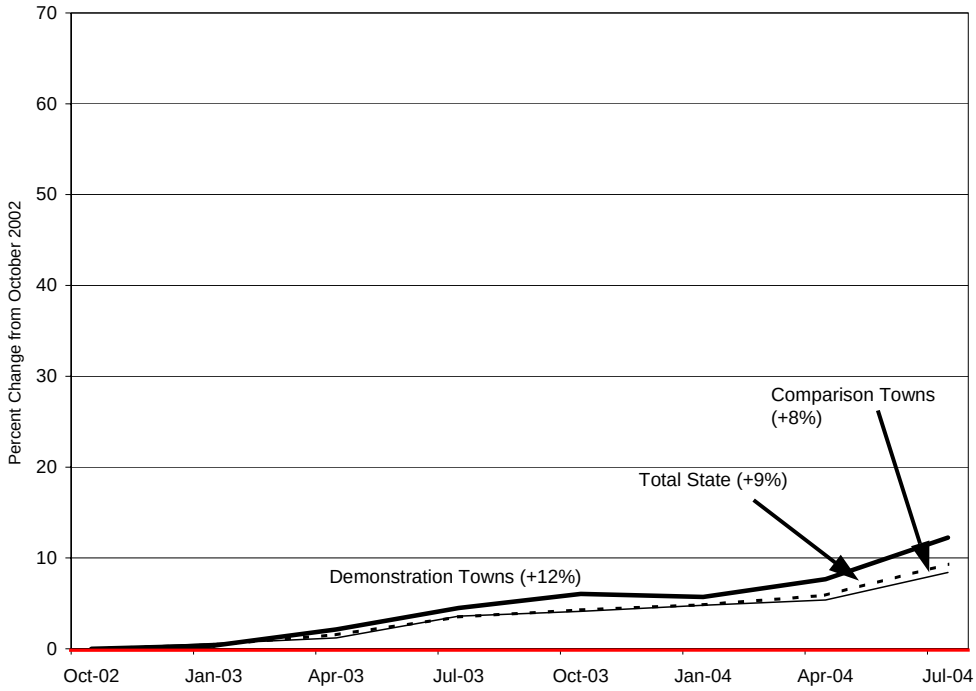


Figure III.10: FSP Participation Patterns of Households with Elderly, Connecticut



Source: Administrative data from the Connecticut Department of Social Services.
Note: Trends reflect pure elderly households.

Table III.4: Demonstration Participation Patterns Connecticut Commodity Demonstration

	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Households Ever Enrolled in Demonstration	293	100.0	100.0
Switched to Regular Food Stamps	113	44.4	44.4
Left the FSP	50	17.0	61.4
Participating in Demonstration, Month 21	130	38.6	100.0
Households that Switched to Regular Food Stamps by Months in Demonstration			
Total	113	100.0	100.0
1 to 3 Months	21	18.6	18.6
4 to 6 Months	25	22.1	40.7
7 to 9 Months	21	18.6	59.3
10 to 12 Months	28	24.8	84.1
13 to 15 Months	18	15.9	100.0

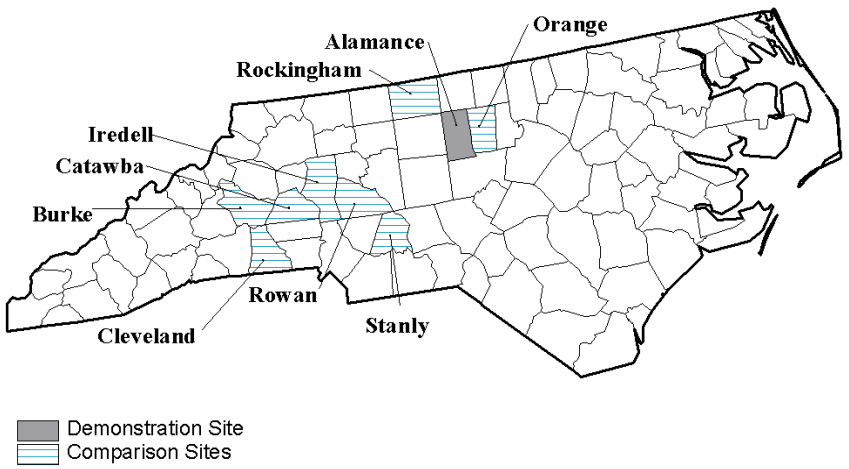
Source: Administrative data from Connecticut Department of Social Services.

demonstration towns mirrored both those of the comparison towns and of the state as a whole.[12]

The small estimated impact for the Connecticut demonstration (5.3 percent) is consistent with demonstration enrollment patterns. At the start of the demonstration, 184 households with elderly participated in The Food Connection. Few of these 184 households were new to the FSP; most were existing FSP households that converted to the demonstration. Enrollment in the demonstration increase slightly but then began to decline. By October 2003, the number of households enrolled in The Food Connection was *lower* than the number enrolled at the start of the demonstration, and by July 2004, the number of elderly households enrolled in The Food Connection had fallen to 130.

[12] As a result of the town-based design of the Connecticut demonstration, the process for selecting comparison sites for Connecticut was fundamentally different from that of the other Elderly Nutrition Demonstration states. However, given the relatively low number of households enrolled in the demonstration in Connecticut, we do not feel that the comparison site selection process affects the conclusion that the Connecticut demonstration had little to no impact on participation. See Appendix B for details.

Figure III.11: North Carolina Demonstration and Comparison Counties



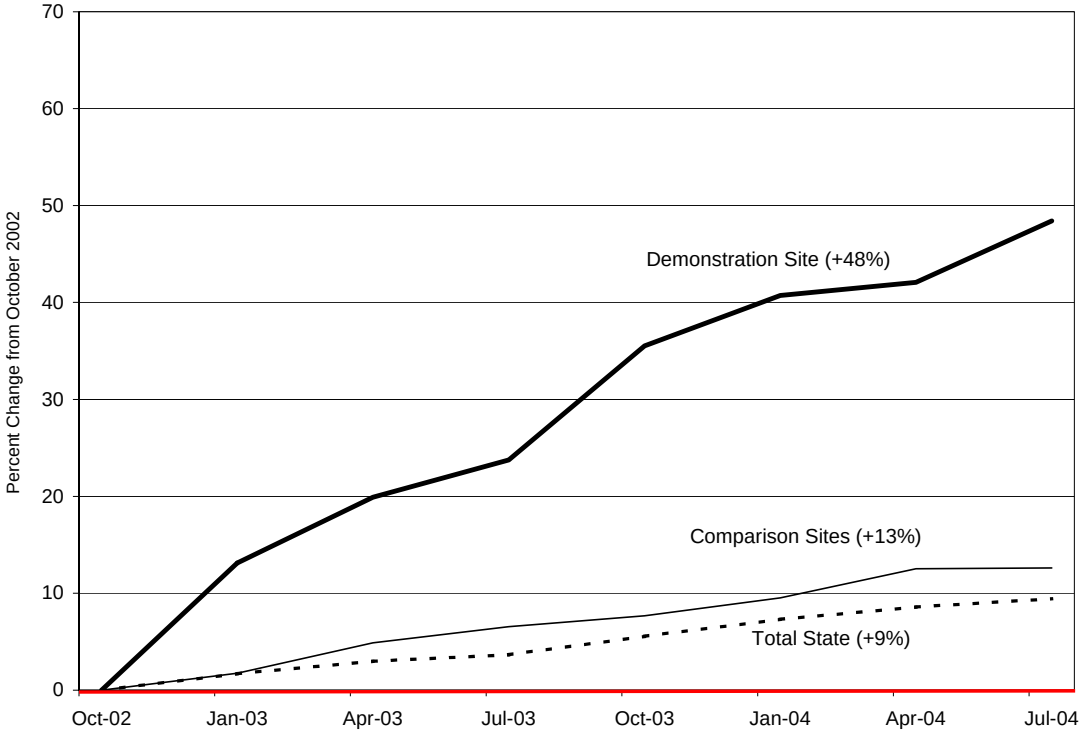
Much of the decline in demonstration enrollment can be attributed to the fact that almost half of the individuals who elected to participate in the demonstration converted back to regular food stamps (Table III.4). Of the 293 households that ever participated in the demonstration, 44.4 percent converted to food stamps and an additional 17.0 percent left the FSP altogether. These rates contrast starkly with North Carolina commodity demonstration, where none of the demonstration participants converted to regular food stamps (although about half left the FSP altogether).

Several challenges faced by the demonstration can help explain the low levels of participation. The problems experienced promoting the demonstration might explain why such a small proportion of elderly FSP clients participated in the demonstration. The demonstration outreach, which was hampered by the noncontiguous demonstration area, did not appear to have a major effect on participation, and unlike the demonstration in North Carolina, eligibility workers in Connecticut did not promote the demonstration to elderly applicants. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter IV, client dissatisfaction with the inconvenient commodity distribution process can help explain why such a large proportion of demonstration participants converted to regular FSP benefits.

North Carolina's Commodity Alternative Benefit (CAB)

In October 2002, the month immediately prior to the start of the North Carolina demonstration, there were 442 elderly households participating in the FSP in Alamance County (see Figure III.11 for demonstration and comparison counties). In the months leading up to the demonstration, increases in FSP participation by the elderly were observed in Alamance County and, to a lesser extent, in the comparison counties (Figure III.12).

Figure III.12: FSP Participation Patterns of Households with Elderly in North Carolina



Source: Administrative Data from North Carolina Department of Social Services.

Note: Trends reflect pure elderly households.

Once the demonstration started, the number of FSP households with elderly in Alamance County increased at a much faster rate than earlier.

The impact estimate for the CAB demonstration (35.8 percent) implies that the demonstration increased participation by 158 households. In July 2004 (the 21st month ofthe demonstration), 341 of the 656 elderly FSP households in Alamance County (48.0 percent) were participating in the CAB program. Despite the high number of households that converted from traditional food stamps to the CAB program (130 in the first month), the majority of households enrolled in the demonstration were new to the FSP. Hence, demonstration enrollment patterns could account for the 35.8 percent impact estimate.

The success of the North Carolina demonstration, which had one of the largest estimated impacts of all of the demonstrations, can be attributed to many of the factors discussed in Chapter II. In particular, the distribution process was smooth and customer-friendly, especially when compared with the demonstration in Connecticut.

REGRESSION-ADJUSTED IMPACT ESTIMATES

The impact estimates presented earlier assume that the aggregate trends in the comparison counties reflect what would have happened in the demonstration county were the demonstration never implemented. To the extent that the comparison counties trends differ from this counterfactual, the impact estimates will have error associated with them. Since we can never observe the counterfactual, we can determine neither the magnitude nor the direction of any error. However, we can build confidence in our estimates if they are similar to estimates derived from alternative estimation strategies.

In this section, we present regression-adjusted impact estimates of the demonstrations. The regression approach compares the demonstration county participation patterns with patterns from all other counties in the state while controlling for those observable county characteristics that may be correlated with changes in elderly FSP participation rates. Fundamentally, the regression approach still uses a comparison group to derive the impact estimate, and as a result, regression-adjusted estimates are still subject to error. Since the magnitude and direction of the error under either approach cannot be determined, it cannot be assumed that the regression-adjusted estimates are more precise estimates of the impact of the demonstration. However, if the regression-adjusted impacts are similar to the unadjusted impacts presented earlier, then our confidence in the conclusions is increased.

Two models were used to derive regression-adjusted impacts. The first model estimates the demonstration impact after 21 months of operation. The second model estimates the impact of the demonstration over shorter intervals, allowing the impacts to vary over time.

Model 1: Impact at 21 Months

The first model estimates the percent change in elderly FSP participation in each county between the month immediately before the start of the demonstration ("month –1") and the 21st month of the demonstration. In this model, which was estimated separately for each state, the changes are controlled for county-varying factors that can influence elderly participation patterns. Two sets of controls were used: (1) trends in nonelderly FSP participation, since they may represent county-specific factors that are influencing FSP participation patterns in general, and (2) the baseline characteristics used to determine similarity in selecting the comparison sites for each demonstration site. These characteristics include the number of elderly FSP participants in each county, the predemonstration trends in elderly participation, the percent of all elderly individuals in the county that participate in the FSP, the percent of all county residents that are elderly, the percent of all individuals in the county that are nonwhite, and the county population density. In addition to these controls, a variable indicating which counties were demonstration counties was included in the model.

The model was estimated as:

$$q_i^{21} = \left[\left(\frac{y_i^{21} - y_i^{-1}}{y_i^{-1}} \right) \times 100 \right] = \alpha + d_i\beta + \left[\left(\frac{x_i^{21} - x_i^{-1}}{x_i^{-1}} \right) \times 100 \right] \gamma + S_i\varphi + e \qquad (2)$$

where,

q_i^{21} = percent change in elderly FSP participation in county *i* between the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration and month 21

y_i^{21} = elderly FSP households in county *i* and month 21

y_i^{-1} = elderly FSP households in county *i* in the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration

d_i = indicator of demonstration status for county *i*

x_i^{21} = nonelderly FSP households in county *i* and the last month of the demonstration

x_i^{-1} = nonelderly FSP households in county *i* in the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration

S_i = an array of six baseline county characteristics associated with elderly FSP participation

In this model, the coefficient β represents the degree to which the percent change in elderly participation is different for demonstration counties, after controlling for other factors. In other words, it reflects the regression-adjusted percent impact of the demonstrations.

Table III.5 presents the results of this model for each state. While the magnitude of the impact estimates varies somewhat from the unadjusted estimates, the general conclusions from both estimation methods remain the same:

- Large and significant impacts were observed in Leon County, Florida; Yavapai County, Arizona; Maine; and North Carolina.
- The largest impacts were observed in Maine and North Carolina.
- No apparent impacts were observed in Pinal County, Arizona, or in Connecticut.
- The impact in Gadsden County is not significantly different from zero.

In Florida, Michigan, and North Carolina, the trend in nonelderly participation had a significant impact on the trend in elderly participation. For instance, in Florida and Michigan, a 10 percentage point increase in nonelderly participation during the 21 month period would translate to about a 3 percentage point increase in elderly FSP participation (and to about a one percentage point increase in North Carolina). This suggests that some county characteristics, such as changes in economic conditions or in FSP accessibility,

Table III.5: Results of 21 Month Impact Model

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**18.3**	**22.0**	**-5.5**	**38.1**	**23.9**	**9.1**	**3.2**	**31.4**
Intercept	-0.962 (7.279)	-7.581 (6.896)	113.334 (52.930)	85.077* (21.849)	13.959 (18.769)	13.235 (8.197)	56.059* (16.519)	9.887 (5.389)
Demo. Flag	18.330 (9.698)	22.041* (8.115)	-5.532 (16.198)	38.111* (6.945)	23.923* (7.618)	9.081 (12.85)	3.199 (15.665)	31.433* (7.683)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.343* (0.067)	0.346* (0.068)	-0.645 (0.869)	-0.420 (0.357)	0.187 (0.213)	0.359* (0.057)	0.026 (0.091)	0.135* (0.060)
Elderly Participants	<0.001 <(0.000)	<0.000 <(0.000)	-0.0149 (0.015)	-0.009 (0.006)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.040 (0.031)	-0.001 (0.003)
Elderly Part. Rate	-1.076 (0.591)	-0.734 (0.587)	-3.203 (2.560)	-1.968 (1.040)	0.028 (1.107)	-0.706 (1.694)	-8.369 (3.543)	-0.979* (0.406)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	0.027 (0.085)	0.043 (0.083)	1.340 (1.079)	0.716 (0.446)	0.090 (0.564)	-0.179 (0.118)	-0.090* (0.082)	0.004 (0.095)
Percent Non-white	0.128 (0.141	0.225 (0.117)	-0.861 (0.422)	-0.594* (0.179)	-2.189 (1.691)	-0.365 (0.281)	0.190 (0.762)	0.116 (0.064)
Percent Elderly	-0.088 (0.210)	0.103 (0.202)	-2.365 (1.890)	-1.693 (0.774)	0.305 (1.048)	-0.092 (0.396)	-2.181* (1.031)	-0.090 (0.254)
Population Density	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.245 (0.265)	0.166 (0.107)	-0.002 (0.031)	0.005 (0.011)	<0.000 (0.005)	0.001 (0.007)
N (Counties)	66	66	15	15	16	80	160	100
R- Square	0.5118	0.5407	0.5497	0.9237	0.7346	0.4090	0.0675	0.3627

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

influence both elderly FSP participation and nonelderly FSP participation. The fact that the regression estimates attempt to control for these factors may explain some of the difference between the regression-adjusted and unadjusted estimates in these states.

Model 2: Quarterly Impacts

The impact of the demonstrations may vary over time. For instance, participation patterns in Maine, where the elderly FSP caseload grew at a quarterly rate of 7.4 percent in the first year but only 2.5 percent in the second year, may reflect an inherent limit in the number of elderly that can be brought into the program. The second regression model estimates the quarterly impact of the demonstration, allowing the impacts to increase or decrease over time. This model assumes that the growth in elderly FSP participation over a given three-month quarter is a function of both whether there is a demonstration in place and how long it has been in place.

The second model uses multiple observations for each county, with each observation representing the county's percent change in elderly participation from one quarter to the next (that is, elderly participation every third month). We looked at either seven or eight quarters—depending on the start date of the demonstration.[13] The basic model estimated for isolating demonstration impacts is:[14]

$$q_{it} = \left[\left(\frac{y_{it} - y_{i(t-3)}}{y_{i(t-3)}}\right) \times 100\right] = \alpha + d_i\beta + (d_i t)\lambda + \left[\left(\frac{x_{it} - x_{i(t-3)}}{x_{i(t-3)}}\right) \times 100\right]\gamma + S_i\varphi + e \qquad (3)$$

where,

q_{it} = percent change in elderly participation from the previous quarter in county *i*
y_{it} = number of elderly FSP households in county *i* and month *t*
d_i = indicator of demonstration status for county *i*
$d_i t$ = interaction of demonstration indicator and post demonstration month (1 through 24)
x_{it} = number of nonelderly FSP households in county *i* and month *t*
S_i = an array of six baseline county characteristics associated with elderly FSP participation

The predicted percent change in elderly participation ($\hat{q}_t$) in month *t* is the compounded effects of the quarterly impacts leading up to that month. The impact of the

[13] For Florida and Maine, eight quarterly observations were used; for all remaining states, seven were used.

[14] Because the individuals observations from each county are not independent of one another, the model was estimated by clustering the observations for each county.

demonstration in month 21 (D_{21}) is computed as the difference in predicted compounded impacts when d_t is assumed to be 1 and when it is assumed to be 0. Thus, the cumulative impact of the demonstration in the 21st months computed as:

$$\hat{D}_{21} = \left[((1+\hat{q}_3^{d=1})(1+\hat{q}_6^{d=1})...(1+\hat{q}_{21}^{d=1}))-1\right]-\left[((1+\hat{q}_3^{d=0})(1+\hat{q}_6^{d=0})...(1+\hat{q}_{21}^{d=0}))-1\right] \quad (4)$$

Table III.6 presents the results of this quarterly model. As in the first model, the regression-adjusted impact estimates are similar to the unadjusted estimates. The demonstration had a significant impact in both Florida demonstration counties, in Yavapai County in Arizona, and in Maine and North Carolina. Additionally, this model allows us to conclude that the demonstration impact in Michigan, which is still smaller than the impacts of other demonstrations, is significantly different from zero.[15]

The quarterly model also provides some evidence that impacts decrease over time. In five sites—Pinal County, Yavapai County, Maine, Michigan and North Carolina—the effect of the demonstration-month interaction was negative and significant. For example, in North Carolina, the impact of the demonstration was reduced by 0.4 percent each month (or 1.2 percent each quarter).

Summary

The regression analysis provides additional support for the conclusion that the difference between participation trends in Gadsden County, Florida; Leon County, Florida; Yavapai County, Arizona; Waldo County, Maine; and Alamance County, North Carolina and their respective comparison sites was largely due to the demonstration. Because all of the estimates are subject to an unknown amount of error, it is difficult to conclude which estimate is the more precise estimate of the impact of the demonstrations. However, the general conclusion remains the same.

The regression analysis also provides additional insight into the impact of the demonstration. In particular:

- There is some evidence from the quarterly model that the impact in Michigan, while still smaller than impacts in other states, is significantly larger than zero.

[15] The significance of the demonstration indicators was tested individually as well as jointly. For the joint test, we examined whether the effect of the linear combination of the demonstration flag and the demonstration flag and month interaction was significantly different from zero.

Table III.6: Results of Quarterly Impact Model

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	Leon	Pinal	Yavapai	Maine	Michigan	Conn.	N. Carolina
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**18.0**	**21.4**	**-3.8**	**37.9**	**24.2**	**9.7**	**3.3**	**34.1**
Constant	-1.042	-1.843	8.631 *	7.046 *	2.076	1.369	10.025 *	1.909 *
	(1.316)	(1.401)	(2.478)	(1.596)	(1.453)	(1.122)	(3.122)	(0.630)
Demo Flag	3.412 *#	3.160 *#	1.149	12.317 *#	7.171 *#	3.088 *#	-2.227	8.953 *#
	(1.561)	(1.010)	(1.05)	(0.878)	(0.397)	(0.366)	(1.522)	(0.256)
Demo Flag * Observation Month	-0.080 #	-0.038 #	-0.131 *	-0.707 *#	-0.369 *#	-0.155 *#	0.221 *	-0.421 *#
	(0.084)	(0.063)	(0.050)	(0.063)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.097)	<(0.001)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.433 *	0.432 *	0.205	0.170	0.173 *	0.448 *	-0.008	0.060
	(0.174)	(0.174)	(0.145)	(0.139)	(0.025)	(0.1924)	(0.048)	(0.034)
Similarity Characteristics								
Total Elderly Participants	<0.001	<0.001	-0.001	-0.001 *	<0.001	-0.001	0.008	<-0.001
	<(0.001)	<(0.001)	(0.001)	<(0.001)	<(0.001)	<(0.001)	(0.004)	<(0.001)
Elderly Participation Rate	-0.102	-0.062	-0.276 *	-0.178 *	0.013	-0.114	-1.508 *	-0.148 *
	(.078)	(0.071)	(0.107)	(0.057)	(0.081)	(0.238)	(0.539)	(0.055)
Prior Changes in Elderly Participation	0.006	0.008	0.100	0.051	0.019	-0.020	-0.011	0.002
	(.011)	(0.011)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.019)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Percent Nonwhite	0.015	0.027	-0.070 *	-0.051 *	-0.228 *	-0.045	0.026	0.015
	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.014)	(0.100)	(0.055)	(0.060)	(0.009)
Percent Elderly	0.001	0.024	-0.177	-0.132	0.006	-0.005	-0.383 *	-0.023
	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.107)	(0.080)	(0.102)	(0.055)	(0.172)	(0.038)
Population Density	<0.001	<0.001	0.014	0.011 *	<0.001	0.001	<-0.001	<0.001
	<(0.001)	<(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
N (County-Months)	528	528	105	105	128	564	1146	700
R-Square	0.3649	0.3664	0.1180	0.2228	0.3709	0.3167	0.0089	0.0624

* Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence

The liner combination of the demonstration flag and the demonstration-month interaction is significant at the 5% level of confidence.

- There is some evidence from the quarterly model that the impact of the demonstrations diminish over time.

- The impact observed in Gadsden County, Florida, was significantly different from zero in some, but not all, specifications.

PARTICIPATION IMPACTS BY SUBGROUP

The Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations appear to have increased FSP participation among seniors by attracting certain types of seniors to the program. Specifically, the demonstration appeared to attract those households for which, without the demonstration, the financial and nonfinancial costs of applying for benefits outweighed the program's benefits. Evidence of this can be seen by looking at participation impacts by subgroup. Two key subgroups for which the costs of participating under regular FSP rules may have outweighed the benefits, included households with low benefits, as well as households with seniors at the older end of the age distribution with possible cognitive and physical impairments. In this section, we examine participation impacts for these subgroups, as well as for subgroups defined by household size and by race/ethnicity.

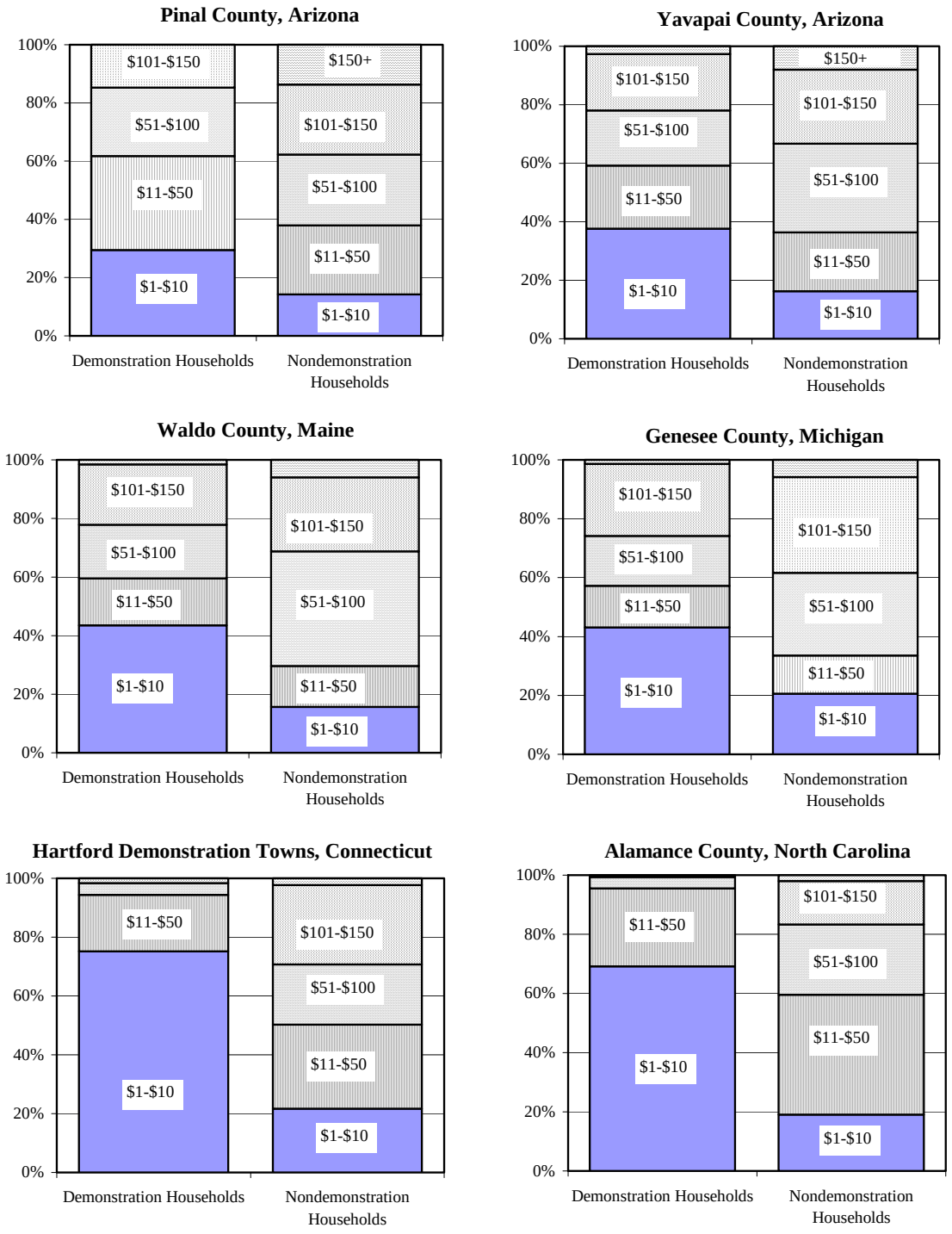
Benefit Level

Demonstration participants were more likely to qualify for low FSP benefits. In every state except Florida, demonstration participants could be compared directly with nondemonstration participants in the same county. In Florida, such comparisons were less informative since all the people who applied after the demonstration began were demonstration participants. In each of those five states, the proportion of demonstration households eligible to receive a $10 benefit was substantially higher than the proportion among nondemonstration households (Figure III.13).[16] At most demonstration sites, about 40 percent or more of demonstration participants received a $10 benefit, while only about 20 percent of nondemonstration participants received a $10 benefit. When aggregating across all five demonstrations, over half of demonstration participants received a $10 benefit, compared with only about 20 percent of nondemonstration participants (Figure III.14).

The proportion of households eligible for a $10 benefit was substantially higher among demonstration participants in the two commodity demonstration states. For these sites, the estimates reflect the benefit these households were eligible to receive, as calculated by the eligibility worker as part of the application process. Once applicants knew the amount of traditional FSP benefits they qualified for, they could choose between receiving traditional benefits and enrolling in the commodity demonstration. Those eligible for $10 in traditional food stamp benefits were significantly more likely to enroll in the demonstration, where the commodity packages had a retail value substantially higher than $10. In both sites, the

[16] $10 was the minimum benefit for any FSP-eligible household containing one or two persons. Households containing more than two persons could receive a benefit below $10. Almost all FSP households with elderly in the demonstration sites had one or two persons.

Figure III.13: Percent Distribution of Households With Elderly, By Benefit Amount, Month 21 of Demonstration



Note: Arizona, Maine, and Michigan graphs reflect all households with elderly; Connecticut and North Carolina graphs reflect pure elderly households. In Connecticut and North Carolina, amounts reflect the benefits that participants were eligible to receive. The Florida demonstration was excluded from this analysis because all pure elderly households entering the FSP participated in the demonstration.

Figure III.14: Percent of Households With Elderly in Demonstration Sites With $10 Benefit, By Demonstration Participation Status

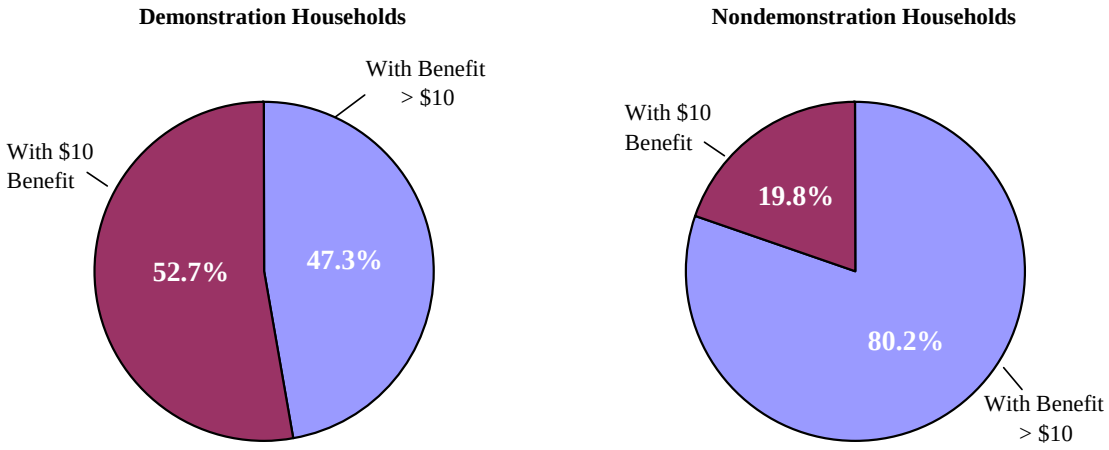
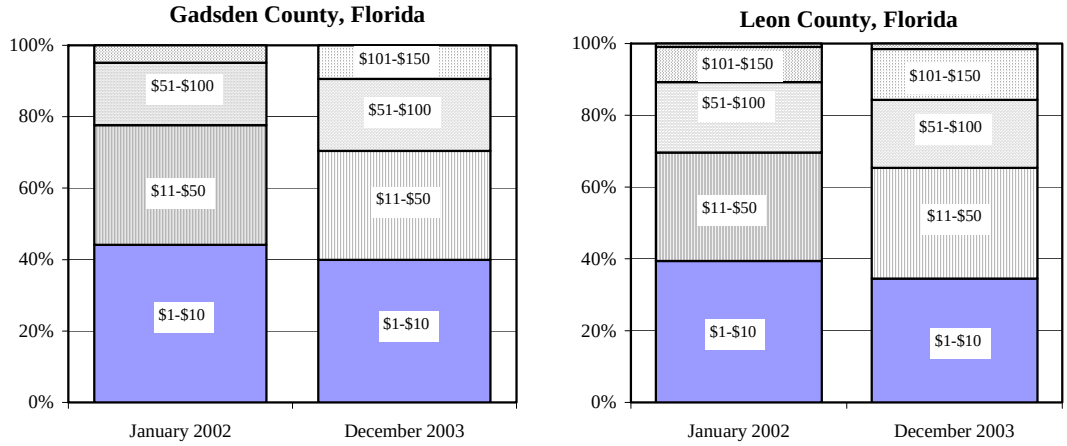


Figure III.15: Change in Distribution of Households, By Benefit Amount Florida Demonstration Counties, January 2002-December 2003



Note: Reflects pure elderly households only.

package contents would have cost between $60 and $70 in a local grocery store.[17] However, while the large proportion of $10 benefit clients in Connecticut and North Carolina might reflect a tendency for the demonstration to attract low-benefit clients into the FSP, it also reflected the fact that ongoing elderly FSP participants—even those who enrolled before the demonstration started—could elect to participate in the demonstration.

[17] See Appendix A for details on the comparable grocery store prices of the commodity packages.

Table III.7: Estimated Participation Impact Among Households With Elderly Receiving $10 Food Stamp Benefits

	All Households with Elderly		Households with Elderly Receiving $10 Benefits	
	Unadjusted Impact	Regression-Adjusted Impact (Model 1)	Unadjusted Impact	Regression-Adjusted Impact (Model 1)
Simplified Eligibility[a]				
Florida				
Gadsden	22.3	18.3	18.0	13.0
Leon	23.5	22.0*	19.0	13.3
Application Assistance[b]				
Arizona				
Pinal	-2.4	-5.5	38.8	72.6
Yavapai	36.8	38.1*	93.2	127.1
Maine	30.9	23.9*	84.7	89.2*
Michigan	5.3	9.1	38.1	40.7
Commodity Alternative Benefit[a]				
Connecticut	3.8	3.2	-7.5	-21.5
North Carolina	35.8	31.4*	74.7	57.7

*Regression-adjusted impact significant at the 5% level of confidence.

[a] Impact estimates refer to pure FSP households with elderly only.

[b] Impact estimates refer to all food stamp households with elderly.

In both states, many ongoing clients who received low benefits did convert to the commodity demonstration.

For Florida, we compared benefit distributions for the month prior to the start of the demonstration and the final month of the demonstration (Figure III.15). The change in the distribution suggested small decreases in the proportion of households receiving benefits worth $10 and worth between $11 and $50. The shift was more pronounced in the more rural Gadsden County, but for both counties this change suggested that any increase in participation was distributed more evenly across benefit levels.

Trends in participation among $10 benefit households in comparison counties could be used to generate impact estimates of how many of these households were attracted by the

demonstrations. Using both unadjusted and regression-adjusted methods (based on the 21 month model), the demonstrations appear to have led to large participation increases for households with $10 benefits, particularly in Yavapai County (Arizona), Maine, and North Carolina (Table III.7). The demonstrations also led to growth in $10 benefit clients in the two Florida demonstration counties, but these impact estimates are comparable to the growth estimates for all elderly participants, suggesting the simplified eligibility demonstrations attracted $10 benefit clients at the same rate it attracted all seniors. The lack of an overall participation impact in Connecticut suggests that the disparity in benefit distributions between demonstration and nondemonstration participants (shown in Figure III.13) was driven by ongoing FSP clients who were eligible for a $10 benefit and switched to participate in the demonstration. On the other hand, the impact estimate for $10 benefit households in North Carolina, which was larger than that for all elderly households, suggests that the demonstration also was attracting clients eligible for a $10 benefit.

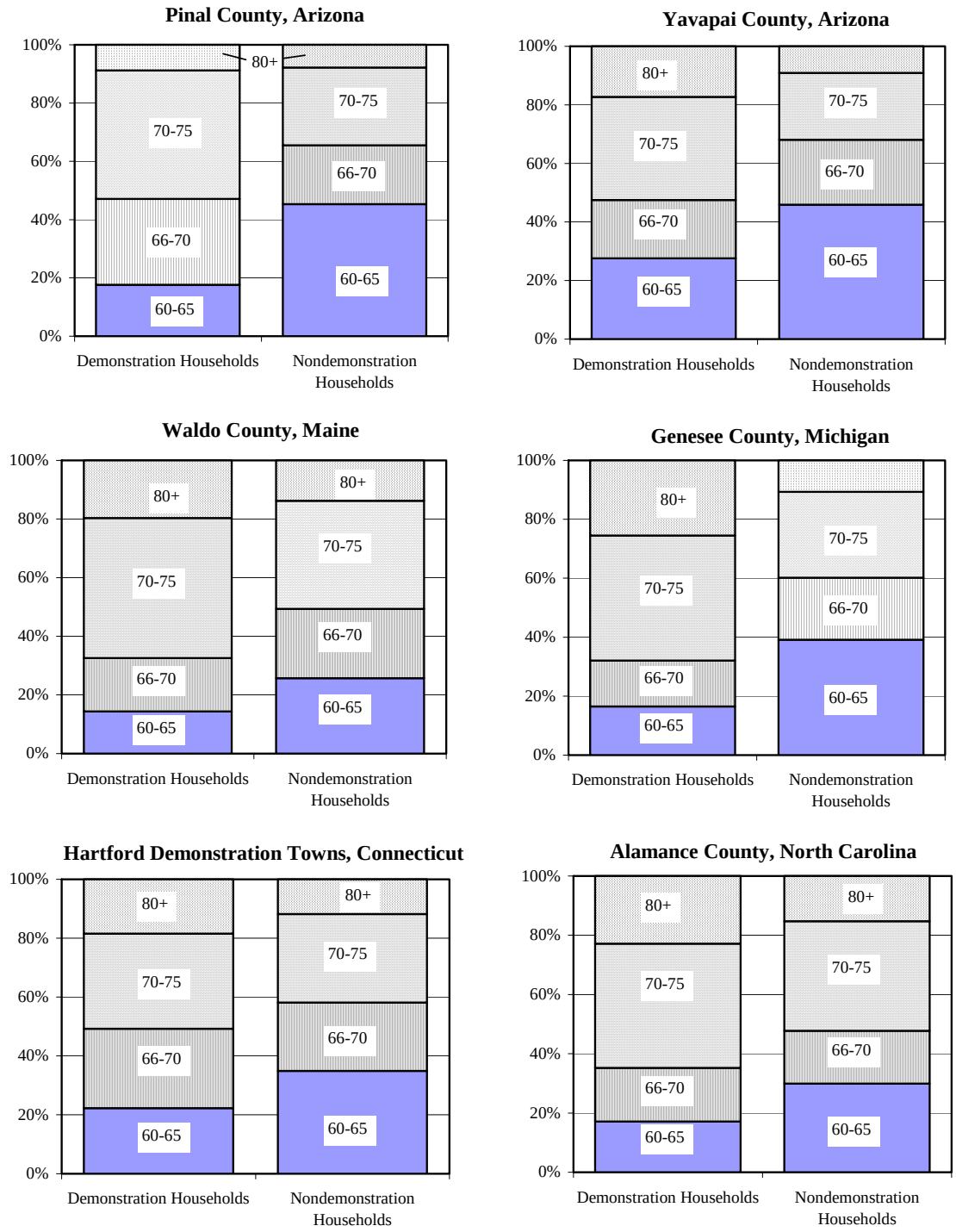
The fact that the application assistance demonstrations attracted a high proportion of clients who were eligible for only a $10 benefit is a significant finding. It suggests that—in the absence of the demonstrations—the barriers to applying for food stamps were an economic disincentive to participating when benefits were low. As those barriers were reduced, even the low $10 benefits appear to have outweighed the costs of applying.

Age

The demonstrations appear to have attracted individuals who were at the older end of the age distribution. Compared with nondemonstration households, households in the application assistance and commodity alternative benefit demonstrations were more likely to have a household member over age 70 (Figure III.16). For the five demonstration sites combined, 54.3 percent of demonstration households had a member over age 70, compared with only 36.2 percent of nondemonstration households (not shown).

Impact estimates also suggest that the demonstrations increased participation among households with members over age 70 (Table III.8). In Florida, Maine, Michigan, and North Carolina, the impact estimate for these households were greater than the impact estimates for all households with elderly. Within the two demonstration counties in Florida, the age distribution among participants over age 60 remained virtually unchanged between the predemonstration period and month 21 of the demonstration (not shown). Thus, the fact that, relative to comparison counties, the impact estimates were higher for the subgroup of people over age 70, as opposed to households comprised of all elderly, suggests that the proportion of FSP households over age 70 declined at the comparison sites. In contrast, while households in the Arizona demonstration counties were more likely than nondemonstration households to include someone over age 70, the fact that the impact estimates for this subgroup were the same as for households with all elderly, suggests that comparison counties in Arizona also experienced growth in the proportion of FSP households with someone over age 70. Finally, the fact that the age distribution in Connecticut showed age differences between demonstration participants and nonparticipants, but that there was no apparent impact on growth rates for the over 70 population, suggests that the individuals who converted from traditional FSP benefits to the demonstration were more likely to be over age 70.

Figure III.16: Percent Distribution of FSP Households With Elderly, By Age of Oldest Household Member, Month 21 Of Demonstration



Note: Arizona, Maine, and Michigan graphs reflect all households with elderly; Connecticut and North Carolina graphs reflect pure elderly households only. The Florida demonstration was excluded from analysis because all pure elderly households entering the FSP were demonstration households.

Table III.8: Estimated Participation Impact Among Households with Elderly with At Least One Member Over Age 70

	All Households with Elderly		Households with Elderly with Someone Over Age 70	
	Unadjusted Impact	Regression-Adjusted Impact (Model 1)	Unadjusted Impact	Regression-Adjusted Impact (Model 1)
Simplified Eligibility[a]				
Florida				
Gadsden	22.3	18.3	34.1	25.2
Leon	23.5	22.0*	32.3	25.0*
Application Assistance[b]				
Arizona				
Pinal	-2.4	-5.5	-2.1	-2.0
Yavapai	36.8	38.1*	35.6	32.6*
Maine	30.9	23.9*	35.2	31.3*
Michigan	5.3	9.1	15.3	21.9
Commodity Alternative Benefit[a]				
Connecticut	3.8	3.2	5.3	0.4
North Carolina	35.8	31.4*	33.3	36.6*

*Regression-adjusted impact significant at the 5% level of confidence.
[a] Impact estimates refer to pure FSP households with elderly only.
[b] Impact estimates refer to all food stamp households with elderly.

The fact that most of the demonstrations appear to have attracted seniors who were at the older end of the age distribution is significant. Application burden may have been more of an issue for seniors who were older, as cognitive issues and limited mobility may have affected their ability to apply for food stamps. There is strong evidence that at least two of the Application Assistance demonstrations attracted more individuals over age 70. There is additional evidence that the Simplified Eligibility demonstration attracted older individuals as well. These demonstrations may have reduced the application burden enough to attract older individuals.

The fact the North Carolina commodity demonstration appears to have attracted new households with individuals over age 70, combined with the fact that the Connecticut commodity demonstration appears to have attracted existing FSP households with

individuals over 70, suggests that the commodity packages appealed to older individuals as well. In these demonstrations, the application burden remained the same under demonstration procedures. Older clients with mobility issues, however, may have preferred the commodity program over shopping at the grocery store.

Other Subgroups

Demonstration participation patterns did not differ substantially for other subgroups (Table III.9). The overwhelming majority of elderly FSP participants resided in single-person households. Nationwide, 80 percent of households with elderly are single-person households (Cunnyngham 2003). Similarly high rates of single-person households were observed in the demonstration sites. In the Application Assistance programs, demonstration households were somewhat more likely to be single-person households. Impact estimates for single-person households were not substantially different from impact estimates for all elderly households (not shown).

Race and ethnicity patterns also were relatively constant across demonstration participation status. In Genesee County, Michigan, demonstration participants were less likely than nondemonstration participants to be black, while in Alamance County, North Carolina, they were slightly more likely to be black. In the Hartford area, where almost half of FSP clients are Hispanic, the proportion of demonstration participants that were Hispanic was smaller than the proportion of nondemonstration participants.

CONCLUSIONS

There is strong evidence that each of the three demonstration models could lead to increased participation among the elderly. After 21 months of demonstration activities, the Simplified Eligibility demonstration, two of the Application Assistance demonstrations, and one of the Commodity Alternative Benefit demonstrations increased elderly FSP participation by about 20 to 35 percent (depending on the demonstration). This suggests that historically low participation rates among the elderly can be increased by efforts to reduce barriers to participation.

Examining which types of elderly clients were brought into the FSP through the demonstrations provides some insight into why these demonstrations were effective. Most demonstration sites showed evidence that clients who were eligible for a low FSP benefit, as well as clients who were over age 70, were more likely to participate under demonstration rules than under nondemonstration rules. These types of clients were more susceptible to barriers to FSP participation either (1) because their expected benefit was too low to outweigh the application costs, or (2) because cognitive or mobility issues limited their ability to apply for benefits. Reducing the burden of applying, increasing the value of the benefit, and potentially removing the need to shop in grocery stores were changes that seem to have attracted these clients.

Table III.9: Distribution of Households By Select Characteristics, Month 21 of Demonstration

	Percent of Households Consisting of One Person		Percent of Households with Black Household Head		Percent of Households with Hispanic Household Head	
	Demonstration Households	Non-Demonstration Households	Demonstration Households	Non-Demonstration Households	Demonstration Households	Non-Demonstration Households
Simplified Eligibility[a]						
Florida[b]						
Gadsden	91.0	n.a.	81.6	n.a.	1.0	n.a.
Leon	93.7	n.a.	56.1	n.a.	2.5	n.a.
Application Assistance[c]						
Arizona						
Pinal	100.0	68.1	2.9	4.7	32.4	36.5
Yavapai	89.8	81.8	0.4	1.4	3.6	6.2
Maine	81.4	78.4	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
Michigan	98.5	85.5	16.0	40.3	0.8	0.7
Commodity Alternative Benefit[a]						
Connecticut	97.7	97.1	32.3	24.6	28.5	46.3
North Carolina	93.3	93.8	45.1	37.8	0.0	0.3

[a] Estimates refer to pure elderly FSP households only.

[b] In the Florida demonstration, all households with elderly entering the FSP were demonstration participants.

[c] Estimates refer to all food stamp households with elderly.

CHAPTER IV

CLIENT SATISFACTION

Client attitudes and perceptions provide valuable insight into the reasons for the success—or lack of success—of each demonstration. A key aspect of the evaluation was documenting these attitudes and perceptions to understand how the demonstrations affected client satisfaction. This was accomplished through a series of focus groups and surveys tailored to each of the demonstrations.

In general, seniors responded favorably to the demonstrations, showing an appreciation for the efforts to make the FSP more accessible. Seniors' levels of satisfaction appeared to be tied to the amount and quality of personal interactions with demonstration staff. Seniors lauded the respect and sense of dignity that they received from staff at some demonstration sites, but expressed frustration with staff interactions at other sites. In describing the barriers to participation, seniors echoed the results of earlier research. In particular, they confirmed that many seniors do not know about the FSP and many others assume they are not eligible. Others find the burden of applying, plus the stigma of participating, to be costs that outweigh the program's frequently small benefits.

In this chapter, we describe the impacts of the demonstrations on client satisfaction. The approach taken to gauging client satisfaction differed depending on the demonstration model. In the simplified eligibility and application assistance sites, focus groups were used to answer the key research questions pertaining to clients' experiences with the demonstration. In the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations, telephone interviews were conducted with demonstration participants—as well as with elderly FSP participants who had not been part of the commodity demonstration—to explore a set of research questions more detailed than were tested in the simplified eligibility and application assistance sites.

SIMPLIFIED ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATIONS

In the four demonstrations that adopted either the simplified eligibility or the application assistance demonstrations, the interventions focused primarily on changing the application process. A principal objective in examining client attitudes at these sites was to

obtain their assessment of a given demonstration's ability to reduce barriers to FSP participation. The core set of research questions included:

1. What are the reasons that eligible elderly individuals do not participate in the FSP (in the absence of the demonstration)?
2. To what extent were elderly FSP applicants aware of the demonstration in their community?
3. Did clients perceive the demonstration's application process to be more convenient, simpler, and less costly than the regular food stamp process?

Two focus groups were conducted at each of these four demonstration sites. Focus group participants included elderly FSP clients who had used the demonstration to apply for food stamps within the previous three months. The focus groups were held between November 2003 and February 2004. Each focus group lasted about two hours and had, on average, seven participants. Respondents were paid $25 for participating. Each focus group was led by a professional moderator following protocols designed expressly for each demonstration.

Five key themes came out of these focus groups. First, the groups affirmed existing research on barriers to FSP participation for seniors. Second, clients' levels of awareness about the demonstrations varied, based on the demonstration outreach. Third, clients were extremely satisfied with the demonstrations, particularly in sites where demonstration staff were skilled at making strong connections with seniors. Fourth, medical costs and access to medical benefits were crucial issues to these seniors and were central to their needs. Finally, despite numerous problems in using the technology, seniors had a favorable view of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards.

It should be noted that the point of the focus groups was to develop insight into key issues rather than to derive precise measures of the frequency of events. Because of a limited number of respondents, and because respondent groups consisted only of demonstration participants, caution should be used when generalizing from the focus group findings. The value of the focus groups was that they provided observers with unfiltered comments from demonstration participants, which helped to clarify key issues.

Reasons for Nonparticipation

The barriers to FSP participation cited by demonstration participants were consistent with those identified through earlier research (see Chapter I). Seniors in each of the demonstration sites commented on a general lack of program awareness among the elderly (a lack of awareness about the program itself for some, and about eligibility criteria for others). The other barriers can be viewed in the framework of the economic decision to apply for food stamps. The focus group participants made it clear that given low program benefits (many were eligible for only $10 per month), the costs of applying need not be too high to discourage participation. Also, the costs that were most frequently discussed were not financial costs, but rather the application burden and the stigma of using food stamp

benefits. Evidence from the focus groups suggests that these costs did not need to be lowered substantially to encourage participation. When applying through the demonstration at a senior center, one client in Michigan put it well, saying seniors had "nothing to lose."

The remainder of this section discusses the comments that focus group participants made concerning the lack of awareness of the FSP and the application burden and stigma.

Lack of Awareness about the FSP

Many of the clients who entered the FSP through these demonstrations had limited prior knowledge of the program. Several clients stated that they did not know they might be eligible for food stamps, in part because they had never given it much thought. Others knew about the program but did not realize it was available for seniors.

> *"I always was under the impression that you had to be broke, out of a job, with children, you know."* [A client in Arizona]

> *"That's the way it was in [my apartment building] until this lady from the [food stamp] office came over and talked to us. A lot of them in the building didn't know that they could get food stamps."* [A client in Florida]

> *"It was scary because I thought this would be helpful but I'm not sure if I was eligible. I didn't know what that was all about, I didn't know what the assets were, or anything, so that was a little scary."* [A client in Maine]

In many of the sites, clients described feelings of relief that resulted from encountering either the demonstration or the FSP itself. They described the benefits as making a significant difference in their ability to make ends meet each month. This made it clear that the clients' prior knowledge of the program had been limited.

Even more common among clients was the perception that, while *they* may have known about the Food Stamp Program before participating, they believed most of the other seniors they knew were not aware of the program. Across all four sites, clients described a widespread lack of awareness about the FSP or other assistance programs.

> *"[Seniors don't apply for food stamps] because they figure they have too many assets. That they wouldn't qualify. And that they're not low income. We don't think of ourselves as being low income."* [A client in Michigan]

> *"There are some people who don't know that they can go somewhere and get their utility bills paid, or go somewhere and collect commodities. They just don't know."* [A client in Maine]

One of the most telling points was that at each of the four sites, clients suggested that one way to improve the demonstration would be to provide more outreach. They consistently

felt that the demonstrations were so helpful, and that knowledge of the FSP was so limited, that more seniors would benefit if they simply knew about the program. This sentiment was expressed at every site, regardless of the level of outreach already conducted by the demonstration. This underscores the fact that, at least among the elderly FSP clients, the perception was that knowledge of the FSP was limited.

Application Burden

Seniors that had prior experience with the FSP typically felt that the entire application process was confusing, and that too often they had been given incomplete or incorrect information about the application process. To them, the paperwork requirements were daunting, especially because they perceived much of the paperwork to be unnecessary (they often felt that the office had most of the information already on file, or that the workers easily could have gotten the information through access to other electronic records). Many seniors expressed frustration that it was never made clear to them what paperwork they needed to submit, and this led to multiple interactions with the caseworkers.

"[If I had to go to the Food Stamp Office,] I would have never, never have applied for those food stamps. Never."

-A client in Florida

> *"And then you got to bring your social security number, rent receipts, phone receipts, cable bill and all that, and then you got to write on every piece of paper how you, if you, how much you get, how much you make, how much the telephone bill is and all that."* [A client in Florida]

Seniors were particularly vexed by the personal interactions at FSP offices. They indicated that eligibility workers at local offices sometimes did not treat them with respect or dignity. As one client in Arizona explained, "I've had a lot of seniors tell me they won't sign up because it wasn't worth the problems." Another client in Florida indicated that the entire process was intimidating because "they ask so many questions."

> *"They take and drill me. I sit there and answer all the questions they ask me."* [A client in Florida]

The added application burden of travel to the FSP office was discussed at two of the demonstration sites—Maine and Florida. At these sites, several clients complained that the costs of traveling to the FSP office were high enough—and the benefits low enough—to discourage them from even applying.

Application burden was most relevant for those who expected low benefits. Among the focus group participants, many were receiving low benefits, and much of the discussion focused on the perception that most seniors get only $10 in benefits. Referring to their experiences prior to the demonstration, clients made statements such as:

"I mean, the attitude [at the food stamp office] is so bad, for $10, you feel like you don't keep your sanity. Just stay at home." [A client in Florida]

"I wasn't going to fill out that monstrous thing just for a lousy $10. No way." [A client in Arizona]

"I don't get enough for the time that I spent [at the food stamp office] for the interview. Time is not worth it." [A client in Florida]

It is noteworthy that these were clients who participated in the demonstration, suggesting that the application burden was still low enough under demonstration rules to make the small benefits worth the trouble of applying.

Stigma

Stigma clearly registered as a major issue for many of the clients. While it is unclear the extent to which stigma alone would prevent an elderly individual from participating in the FSP, stigma was a persistent concern among focus group members. Clients described the perception that various types of people look down on them for using food stamps. Many discussed the shopping experience itself, and how they believed that other shoppers viewed them with contempt. Some described instances where other shoppers made comments about food stamp recipients eating better than others—one respondent felt that other shoppers moved to a different check-out line to avoid being near someone with food stamps.

> ***"When you've had a good life and you've worked hard all you life and then all of a sudden, boom, you don't have nothing. And it's embarrassing to have to admit."***
>
> ***-A client in Arizona***

"I lived in this town all my life and I knew everybody practically who's in the grocery store and it was humiliating." [A client in Arizona]

"I've heard people say, 'people on food stamps eat better than me.'" [A client in Michigan]

"You go into a store and you're going to buy something with food stamps and somebody is standing beside you, they kind of look at you like you're a second class person." [A client in Maine]

"People not only look down on you, they look ***at*** *you."* [A client in Michigan]

Clients at several sites described the perception that store clerks also acted irritated if they used food stamps. In Michigan, focus group participants traded views on which stores were the most accepting of people who use food stamps. In some discussions of shopping experiences, clients clearly were describing experiences with the old paper coupons, not the EBT cards. Nevertheless, it is significant that many clients perceived the use of food stamps as very visible to other shoppers and store clerks.

The stigma during the shopping experience was not the only concern for clients. Many felt embarrassed about what their friends and family thought.

> *"I didn't want anybody to know about it because people would look down on me for using food stamps."* [A client in Maine]

> *"My family would look down on me." "I didn't tell my son for a long time."* [Clients in Michigan]

Part of the perceived stigma seemed to stem from deep-rooted pride among seniors. Many explained that they had worked all their lives and never had to rely on public assistance. They carried negative views of public assistance that they said they had developed early in life. The sentiment expressed by this Michigan client was common across sites:

> *"I just feel terrible to have anyone help me. You're supposed to stand on your own two feet!"*

Some clients in the demonstrations tried to recruit other seniors to participate. Several described resistance related to stigma. A client in Michigan explained that seniors are "very difficult to convince" because "we're stubborn," and applying for food stamps forces a person to admit they need help.

A less common view was that, by receiving food stamps, seniors were taking benefits away from other people who might need them more. (This view has been documented in previous research, as seen in the work of Ponza and McConnell, 1996.) For example, in Maine, one client said she would leave the program once she felt she did not need benefits so that someone else could have them. This view, while not directly related to stigma, reveals the pride that seniors feel in being independent and in not relying on public assistance.

Awareness of Demonstration Varied by the Amount and Type of Outreach

For a demonstration to be successful, seniors must be aware of its services. During the focus groups, clients were encouraged to discuss what they knew about the demonstrations and how they had learned about them.

> ***"A lady came... on my birthday and she knocked on the door and she said, 'Happy Birthday...!' I didn't know what she was doing there. So I asked her in and she explained that she was from this program and that they could help if I needed some help.... Well, I needed a heap!"***
>
> ***–A client in Maine***

For the application assistance sites, where each demonstration was operated under a separate name, name recognition was a useful measure of client awareness. For two of these three demonstrations—the FACES program in Maine and the MiCAFE program in Michigan—name recognition was high. When shown the name of the program, clients could readily describe what the program did, and in the case of the FACES program, could name key staff members. In both cases, clients perceived them as distinct programs operated separately from the FSP (a goal of both demonstrations was to appear to be separate from the FSP). In Arizona, name recognition was low. Even though all of the clients participating in the focus groups had entered the FSP through the FANS program, most did not recognize the program name. Most clients assumed that the assistants who helped them were FSP employees. While these issues of name recognition were not definitive measures of the degree to which seniors were aware of the demonstration, they provided some insight. In particular, in Arizona, if clients who used the FANS program did not recognize the program by name or description, it is likely that many (or most) seniors were unaware that the application assistance services were available.

Clients described how they had heard about the demonstration. These experiences varied by site and reflected the outreach strategies employed by the different demonstrations.

- **Florida.** In Florida, several respondents said they had seen the public service announcement promoting food assistance for seniors. This advertisement, which featured the Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), did not mention the FSP by name (as a way to avoid stigma). Clients seemed to remember the advertisement because of the images of a woman using her EBT card in a store. Other seniors indicated that they learned of the FSP though a letter they received in the mail.

- **Arizona.** In Arizona, most of the focus group participants seemed to have learned about the FANS program by word-of-mouth, or by chance. Some were contacting the Arizona Department of Economic Security for assistance. Others heard of the program through a doctor or a food bank. Only a few clients said that they had been approached by FANS representatives at a senior center—one of the main outreach activities of the demonstration.

- **Maine.** In Maine, several clients had been approached by FACES staff directly, either at their homes or in other community settings. Other clients learned of the program through word-of-mouth. In a few cases, the clients' children learned of the FACES program and encouraged those clients to participate. This also reflects the FACES outreach strategy of in-person and door-to-door promotion of the program.

- **Michigan.** Clients in Michigan learned of the program primarily through their senior center, a reflection of the primary outreach strategy for MiCAFE. The ways in which they heard about MiCAFE at the senior centers were varied. Some heard from center staff, others from print publications (fliers or the centers' newsletters). As was the case with other sites, some clients learned of the program via word-of-mouth.

The finding that focus group participants tended to learn of a demonstration through its outreach efforts should not be surprising. However, this finding underscores the importance of outreach in making these demonstrations successful.

Clients Had High Levels of Satisfaction with Demonstrations

Overall, clients were extremely satisfied with the demonstrations. In many cases, not having to be in the local FSP office and deal with FSP staff was a primary source of satisfaction. At application assistance sites, seniors were grateful for the assistance and were appreciative of the personal interactions with demonstration staff. In most cases, the only negative issues they described pertained to the FSP in general, not to the demonstrations. However, there were some negative comments made concerning some of the demonstrations.

Positive Reactions

Across all sites, clients were glad that they did not need to travel to the local office to apply for food stamps. Clients that had prior experience dealing with the FSP offices directly made it clear that the application assistance process was much easier.

> *"Most people don't like to ask for help. [Application assistance] makes it much easier to accept the help when you don't have to go to the DES and see everybody there."* [A client in Arizona]

> *"When the worker comes to your home to request something, it's right here where you can get it."* [A client in Arizona]

> *"I'm glad that the senior center would do it all."* [A client in Michigan]

> *"I think being able to go to the center is—I would have never gone downtown. I wouldn't even have known about it."* [A client in Michigan]

"If we would have had to travel, well, I don't know how many miles it would be for me but I might have just of said 'forget it.'" [A client in Michigan]

Clients in Florida also appreciated the reduction in the amount of information they needed to provide. As one client said, the process was easier because seniors did not have to "*give them all of our personal business.*" Another client in Florida said:

"Some lady come…from the food stamp office and explained to us about food stamps and we signed a paper and told how much our income was and what our medical bill was…and that's all we had to do."

At the application assistance sites, demonstration staff played a significant role in generating positive experiences. Clients responded well to the personal interactions. They felt that application assistants treated them with respect and they appreciated the care shown by the assistants. Indeed, clients repeatedly used the term "dignity" in describing how they were treated by the application assistants. They felt that the assistants were "courteous," and this helped reduce the stress of the application process. One Michigan client said that the assistants made her feel that it was "acceptable to apply."

"The person comes to your home and they're very comfortable, make you more comfortable." [A client in Maine]

"The lady that interviewed me and took the application was wonderful. She made you feel very, very hopeful, optimistic." [A client in Michigan]

"FANS indicates a dignity. It's a psychological thing with FANS. You don't associate it with food stamps. It leaves you with your dignity." [A client in Arizona]

"I will say… they are very, very helpful for me to get the information. They went overboard." [A client in Arizona]

"[The MiCAFE staff] don't make you feel inferior." [A client in Michigan]

Clients in Michigan found that the tailored list of verification documentation generated through the MiCAFE intake process was extremely helpful in navigating the application process.

Many clients who had not been aware of the program also expressed gratitude for the food stamp benefits themselves. While some said things like "it takes the pressure off a little," other clients showed even more appreciation, saying, "It's a godsend"; and "I was tickled to death."

"[having food stamps] has given me some more freedom so I don't have to scrimp and save the way I was trying to make ends meet. I'm very grateful for it." [A client in Maine]

"I don't have to push as hard… it's been a load off my mind; it was feeling kind of heavy trying to make ends meet." [A client in Maine, speaking about food stamps and other FACES assistance]

It should be noted that, in Maine, another unambiguous source of satisfaction was related to the fact that the FACES program provided seniors with access to more than just food stamps. As discussed in a later section, seniors were extremely grateful for the assistance provided in accessing numerous medical benefits.

"I honestly didn't give a damn about food stamps; I was interested in the medical. Food stamps were immaterial because if it wasn't for the medical, my wife and I would be in the ground."

–A client in Maine

Negative Reactions

Clients also used the focus groups to express frustrations about the FSP in general and about the demonstrations in particular. At most sites, the focus of these frustrations were issues outside of the control of the demonstrations. The most common complaints focused on the perceived inadequacy of the program benefits (especially among those receiving the $10 minimum benefit), and the fact that increases in Social Security payments lead to decreases in food stamp benefits. Clients also complained about the inability to use food stamps for items other than food. As discussed later, they expressed frustrations with using the EBT technology. In Arizona and Michigan, clients complained about the long lag between the time they submitted their applications and when they received their benefits (a lag not attributable to demonstration procedures).

Arizona was the only site at which clients made negative comments about the demonstration itself. Some clients felt that the application assistants were underqualified. They suggested that the assistants needed more training to do their jobs and that there was "room for improvement." This is consistent with other evidence (discussed in Chapter II) that some application assistants in Arizona were not well suited for the demonstration and that these personnel issues may have affected the demonstration's impacts. Clients in Arizona also expressed frustration about the fingerprinting and photographing requirements imposed by the state. Initially, individuals applying through the demonstration in Arizona were required to go to the local DES office to be fingerprinted and photographed. This requirement was eventually dropped for these individuals.

Medical Costs Were a Crucial Issue for Seniors

The experience of the FACES program in Maine serves to underscore the importance of medical benefits to the low-income elderly population. The FACES program essentially marketed access to a wide array of public assistance benefits. The staff often would promote medical benefits as the main aspect of the program. Once they got the client interested in applying for those benefits, they then promoted access to other programs, including food stamps and other food assistance programs, as well as programs such as energy assistance.

By all accounts, the Maine approach worked well. The FACES staff believed that medical expenses, not food, were typically the top concern for low-income seniors, a belief that was corroborated by discussions in the focus groups. The two focus groups in Maine were dominated by discussions of medical costs and how the medical benefits they received through FACES affected their lives.

> *"The convenience of it for me was the medical side of it…The food stamp part of it, that's immaterial. The medical side is what we were concerned with."*

> *"…Insurance was just killing me. I had to drop Blue Shield. I just couldn't afford it. Yes, [FACES] is a very, very convenient program."*

> *"I was paying $60 a month for [each prescription], [for] just one, and now I pay $2.50. That's a heck of a drop from where it was. It's a blessing on top of a blessing, really."*

Clients in Maine indicated that access to the medical benefits was the best part of the FACES program.

Discussions of medical costs were not limited to Maine. Clients in all demonstration sites discussed high medical expenses, often as a constraint on their ability to meet other basic needs. Some saw food stamps as a way to bridge the gap caused by rising medical expenses.

> *"Years ago I didn't think I'd ever, ever have to get food stamps. But you change your mind once your insurance goes up and your medicine goes up…"* [A client in Florida]

Seniors Had Favorable Assessment of EBT

On balance, the seniors participating in the focus groups had a positive view of EBT cards. Clients felt that using the cards substantially reduced the visibility of shopping with food stamps. They liked the fact that other shoppers could not tell they were using food stamps. They also felt that store clerks were more accepting of them when they used the EBT cards.

"*That's the best thing: the card."* [A client in Florida]

"All you do is swipe your card instead of everybody in line knowing, you know, that you were buying by food stamps." [A client in Maine]

"I like everything about [the card] because it's better than the food stamps…. As far as people staring at you, it's like they just don't know." [A client in Michigan]

"You have that card instead of having to pull out food stamps, and you don't feel so stressed out." [A client in Arizona]

In some focus groups, clients suggested that EBT cards should be used to promote the FSP. They felt that if more seniors knew about the cards they would be more willing to participate in the program.

The seniors also had some frustration in using the EBT cards. The most common frustration was difficulty in finding out how much money was left on a card. Several clients described embarrassing situations in which, because they did not know how to find the balances on their cards, they were told at the checkout that they had insufficient funds to pay for their groceries. Clients also complained about difficulties in navigating the telephone information system for EBT-related questions. Finally, they seemed to misunderstand how long the benefits lasted on the card, with some believing benefits would not carry over from month to month.

COMMODITY ALTERNATIVE BENEFIT DEMONSTRATIONS

Because the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations were such a substantial departure from the traditional FSP procedures, clients' experiences with these demonstrations were markedly different from what their experiences might have been in the traditional FSP, and these differences were encountered each month. As a result, clients could be satisfied or dissatisfied with the demonstration for a variety of reasons. To explore these reasons with a large sample of clients, telephone surveys were employed in the two commodity alternative benefit demonstrations. The samples included demonstration participants as well as elderly FSP participants who had not been part of the demonstrations. In general, the research questions explored by the survey included:

1. Why did clients in the areas served by the commodity alternative demonstrations choose to select the commodity option? Which items in the package were most attractive to potential clients?
2. How satisfied were clients with the various aspects of the commodity demonstration?
3. What were the costs to the client of participating in the demonstration?

4. Why did those seniors who received traditional FSP benefits decide not to participate in the commodity demonstration?

These questions had competing implications for the timing of the surveys. Because several questions concerned clients' reasons for selecting (or not selecting) the demonstrations, it was important to interview clients shortly after their participation decisions to minimize problems associated with recall. However, other important questions concerned the clients' experiences with the demonstrations, and this made it important to interview clients after they had received at least a couple of commodity packages. To address these competing issues, respondents were selected randomly from among elderly FSP clients residing in the demonstration site and from among those who had applied or were recertified for food stamps during the previous three months.[1]

Separate samples of clients were selected three times—once every three months over a nine month period from July 2003 through March 2004. In most cases, demonstration participants had between two and four months of participation in the program. Out of a total of 604 sampled individuals, 211 demonstration participants and 259 traditional FSP participants completed interviews, reflecting an overall response rate of 77.8 percent (Table IV.1).[2] The sample in Connecticut was larger than the sample in North Carolina because more individuals applied and recertified during the sample window; however, the response rates were similar for the two demonstration sites. The response rates were much higher for demonstration participants (85.4 percent) than for non-demonstration participants (72.5 percent). This may have reflected more willingness among demonstration participants to talk about a program that was new and different.

Sampling weights were developed for analyzing the survey responses. The weights reflected the sample universe for each demonstration site: *all elderly households that applied for or were recertified for food stamps during the nine months from July 2003 through March 2004.*[3] Based on data available at the time of sampling, some nonresponse bias was apparent. Specifically, among nondemonstration participants (those receiving traditional FSP benefits), seniors over age 80 were much less likely to respond to the survey than those under age 80 (these differences did not exist among demonstration participants). To account for these differences, nonresponse adjustments were included in the sampling weights.

[1] While ongoing FSP clients could opt to participate in the commodity demonstration at any point, it was assumed that most decisions to participate in the demonstration would be made either at the time of application or at recertification.

[2] Respondents received a $15 incentive for participating in the survey.

[3] See Appendix E for details on sampling weights.

Table IV.1: Commodity Alternative Benefit Demonstration Satisfaction Surveys: Sample Sizes and Response Rates

	Sample Size	Respondents	Response Rate (Percent)
Connecticut			
Demonstration Participants	107	92	86.0
Non-Demonstration Participants	206	149	72.3
Total	313	241	77.0
North Carolina			
Demonstration Participants	140	119	85.0
Non-Demonstration Participants	151	110	72.8
Total	291	229	78.7
Total, Demonstration Participants	247	211	85.4
Total, Non-Demonstration Participants	357	259	72.5
Total, Combined	604	470	77.8

To better understand the rationale behind decisions to participate or not participate in the commodity demonstrations, follow-up interviews were conducted with a small subsample of the survey respondents. During this follow-up interview, semistructured were intentionally selected based on their responses to the initial questions: 12 respondents were not participating in the demonstration, 13 respondents were participating in the demonstration and generally were satisfied, and 5 respondents were participating in the demonstration and were not satisfied with some component of the demonstration.[4] The follow-up interviews typically were conducted within four to six weeks of the initial interviews. Quotations cited in this section were obtained through these follow-up interviews.

The remainder of this section discusses the results of these surveys. We begin by describing the reasons clients selected commodities. Next, we present some of the self-reported characteristics of those clients receiving commodities. Finally, we discuss clients' satisfaction with the commodity demonstrations. The results show that clients who selected the commodity demonstration did so in large part because they felt they would get more food than with regular food stamps, and many clients also wanted to try something new. Clients who did not select the demonstration wanted to retain control over their shopping

[4] The low number of dissatisfied clients included in the follow-up interviews reflects the fact that few demonstration participants indicated dissatisfaction with the demonstration.

Table IV.2: Commodity Demonstrations Take-Up Rates

	Number	Percent
Elderly Households that Recently Applied or Recertified		
Total	3,109	100.0
Received Commodities	469	15.1
Never Received Commodities	2,640	84.9
Connecticut		
Total	2,613	100.0
Received Commodities	183	7.0
Never Received Commodities	2,430	93.0
North Carolina		
Total	496	100.0
Received Commodities	286	57.7
Never Received Commodities	210	42.3

Source: Commodity satisfaction surveys in Connecticut and North Carolina.

Note: Households were defined as receiving commodities if they participated in the commodity demonstration for at least one month before the interview.

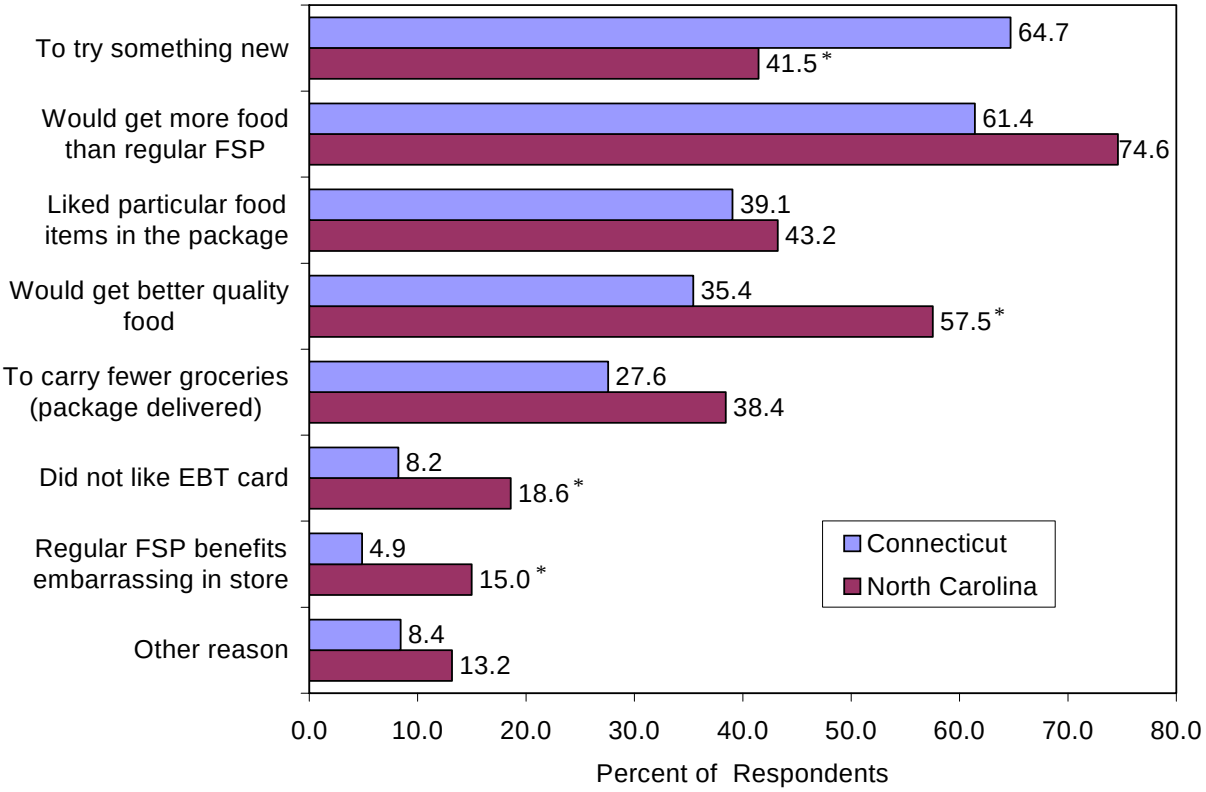
decisions. Clients generally reported that they were satisfied with the demonstrations, but there were differences between the two sites. In Connecticut, clients said they were somewhat satisfied with the program, but most did not intend to continue with it. Their concerns focused on the demonstration staff and the distribution process. In North Carolina, clients were consistently very satisfied with the demonstration and most intended to continue participating.

Reasons for Choosing Commodities

Of the 3,100 elderly households in Connecticut and North Carolina that either entered the FSP or were recertified during the sample window, 15 percent chose to participate in the commodity demonstration (Table IV.2).[5] The take-up rates were substantially higher in North Carolina, where 58 percent of households participated in the demonstration, than in Connecticut, where only 7 percent of households participated in the demonstration.

[5] Households are defined as receiving commodities if they participated in the commodity demonstration for at least one month before the interview.

Figure IV.1: Reasons Given for Selecting Commodities Rather Than EBT Benefits



Note: Clients could provide more than one reason.

*Significantly different from Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).

When asked why they chose to participate in the demonstration, one of the most common responses in both states was that clients felt they would get more food through the demonstration than through traditional FSP benefits (Figure IV.1).[6] Clients also were interested in trying something new, and many felt they would get better quality food from the demonstration than from using food stamps. In both demonstration sites, close to 40 percent of clients said they were attracted to the demonstration by particular food items in the basket. The most common items identified as attractive in both sites included canned fruits, vegetables, and beans. In North Carolina, where frozen meat was provided, frozen meat was viewed as attractive to clients (Table IV.3).

[6] Clients were given a pre-set list of reasons for participating and could choose as many as applied. Among respondents who said there was some other reason for participating, the reason often was a specific recommendation from a caseworker or someone else.

Table IV.3: Commodity Package Items That Were Attractive to Clients

Connecticut		North Carolina	
Item	Percent of Respondents	Item	Percent of Respondents
Canned Fruit	67.6	Canned Fruit	54.7
Canned Vegetables	58.8	Frozen Chicken	54.5
Canned Juices	55.1	Frozen Beef	44.9
Canned Beans	48.5	Canned Vegetables	40.5
Tuna	44.9	Canned Beans	36.8

Note: Items shown were the five most frequently cited by respondents as attractive; most items were identified as attractive by at least some of the respondents.

"The fruit, the tuna fish. The cheese is very good. The butter. It's all good. Soups." [A client in Connecticut]

Among clients not participating in the demonstration, more than 80 percent said that they preferred to do their own shopping and felt they could get better quality food that way (Figure IV.2).[7] During the follow-up interviews, it was evident that these clients preferred to retain control over their shopping experiences:

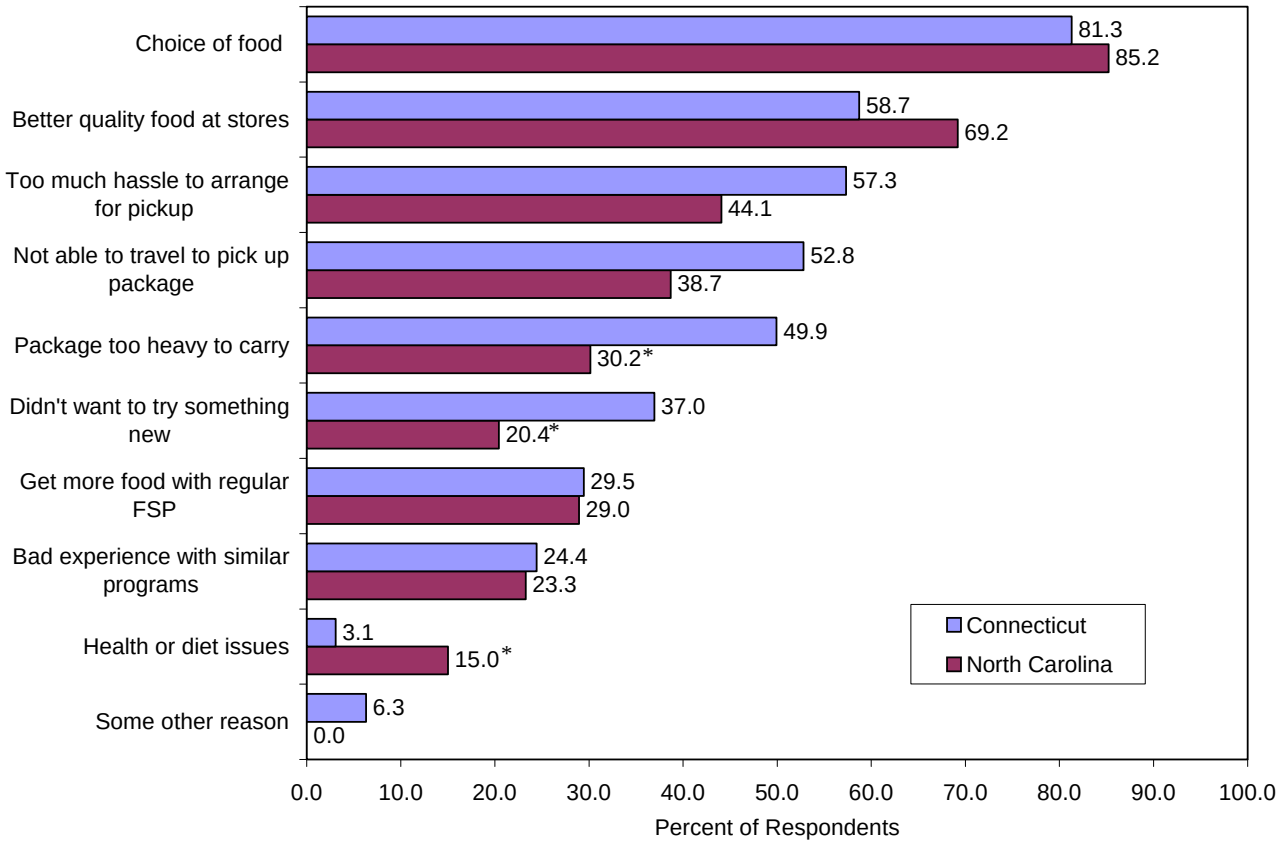
"I can go to the grocery store and… pick out what I want, and eat what I want, you know, get what I want." [A client in North Carolina]

"When I go to the grocery store… I can pick out the best, you know, the vegetables, fresh vegetables, fruit, whatever, whatever…. So I figure why should I get the food package when I have the food stamp?" [A client in Connecticut]

"If I'm going to eat [beans], I'd rather buy the frozen and cook them. The canned ones have too much salt in them and sodium." [A client in North Carolina]

[7] Clients were given a pre-set list of reasons for participating and could choose as many as applied.

Figure IV.2: Reasons Given for Not Selecting Commodities



Note: Clients could provide more than one reason.

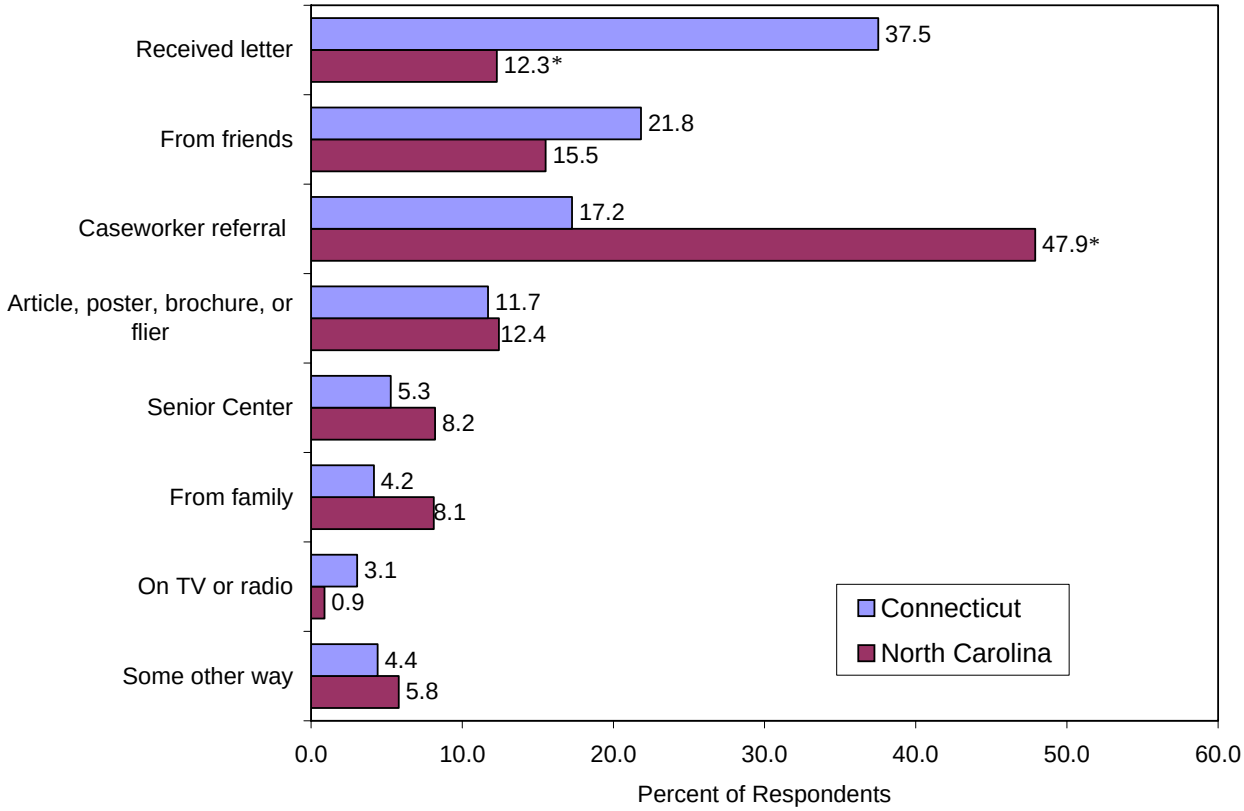
*Significantly different from Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).

Several clients in the follow-up interviews indicated that they preferred to do their own shopping, even though the commodity package benefits were worth more than their food stamp benefits.

> *"I wanted to buy my, get what I… I mean I only get $10, so… just to get what I want for $10." [A client in Connecticut]*

More clients in Connecticut cited the weight of the package as a reason for not participating than did clients in North Carolina. The weight of the package was an issue in Connecticut from the start of the demonstration because many clients did not have cars. (This was in contrast with the North Carolina demonstration, where most clients were able to find transportation.)

Figure IV.3: Sources of Information About the Demonstration



Note: Clients could identify more than one source.

*Significantly different from Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).

The ways that clients learned about the demonstrations differed between the two commodity demonstration sites (Figure IV.3). In Connecticut, most clients learned about it through a letter (37.5 percent) and/or through a friend (21.8 percent). Only 17.2 percent of clients heard about the demonstration from their caseworkers—this is consistent with a finding reported earlier that caseworkers did little to provide information about the demonstration (see Chapter II). Alternatively, in North Carolina, almost half (47.9 percent) of clients were told about the demonstration by their caseworkers. Friends and promotional letters/brochures were less common sources of information about the demonstration in North Carolina.

Table IV.4: Characteristics of Elderly Clients by Demonstration Participation Status

	Percent of Respondents with Characteristic		
	Total	Never Received Commodities	Received Commodities
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender			
Male	27.3	27.8	24.5
Female	72.7	72.2	75.5
Prior Participation in FSP[a]			
Yes	73.2	75.0	61.8*
No	22.9	20.8	35.6*
Don't Know/Refused	3.9	4.2	2.6
Race[b]			
White	59.3	59.9	55.8
Black or African American	33.0	30.4	47.6*
American Indian or Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Asian	2.9	3.3	0.2*
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Hispanic Origin	36.0	39.8	14.2*
Household Members Over Age 60			
One	89.7	88.9	94.2
More than One	10.3	11.1	5.8
Recently Received Free/Reduced Cost Meals	6.2	5.8	8.5
Recently Used Food Bank/Food Pantry	8.4	7.6	12.4
Self-Rated Health Condition (Compared with Other Seniors Their Age)			
Excellent/Very Good	7.3	6.2	13.8
Good	24.7	24.7	25.1
Fair	44.2	46.4	31.8
Poor	23.2	22.1	29.3
Don't Know/Refused	0.6	0.6	0.0
Follows Special Diet	47.0	48.0	41.3
Requires Help with Personal Care Needs	19.0	20.3	12.1*

[a]Individuals were considered to have had prior participation if they responded that they had ever received FSP benefits before August 2002.
[b]Race categories not mutually exclusive.
*Significantly different from those that never received commodities (alpha = 0.05).
n.a.: Unweighted sample size too small to generate reliable estimates.

Table IV.5 Characteristics of Demonstration Participants by Demonstration Site

	Percent of Respondents with Characteristic			
	Connecticut		North Carolina	
	Total	Received Commodities	Total	Received Commodities
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender				
Male	29.2	40.0	17.7	14.5*
Female	70.8	60.0	82.3	85.5*
Prior Participation in FSP[a]				
Yes	73.5	53.5	71.9	67.1
No	22.4	44.7	25.8	29.7
Don't Know/Refused	4.1	1.8	2.3	3.2
Race[b]				
White	60.5	65.6	52.9	49.5
Black or African American	30.3	43.2	47.0	50.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Asian	3.4	n.a.	0.0	n.a.
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Other	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Hispanic Origin	42.7	36.4	0.3	0.0*
Household Members Over Age 60				
One	89.3	92.8	92.0	94.8
More than One	10.7	7.2	8.0	5.2
Recently Received Free/Reduced Cost Meals	5.7	8.3	8.8	8.6
Recently Used Food Bank/Food Pantry	8.1	18.6	9.7	8.5
Self-Rated Health Condition (Compared with Other Seniors Their Age)				
Excellent/Very Good	6.5	10.4	11.6	16.0
Good	24.8	29.2	24.4	22.4
Fair	45.9	25.9	35.2	35.5
Poor	22.2	34.5	28.4	26.0
Don't Know/Refused	0.6	0.0	0.4	0.7
Follows Special Diet	48.5	48.7	39.0	36.6
Requires Help with Personal Care Needs	19.5	8.9	16.4	14.1

[b]Individuals were considered to have had prior participation if they responded that they had ever received FSP benefits before August 2002.
[c]Race categories not mutually exclusive.
*Significantly different from commodity recipients in Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).
n.a.: Unweighted sample size too small to generate reliable estimates.

Characteristics of Commodity Recipients

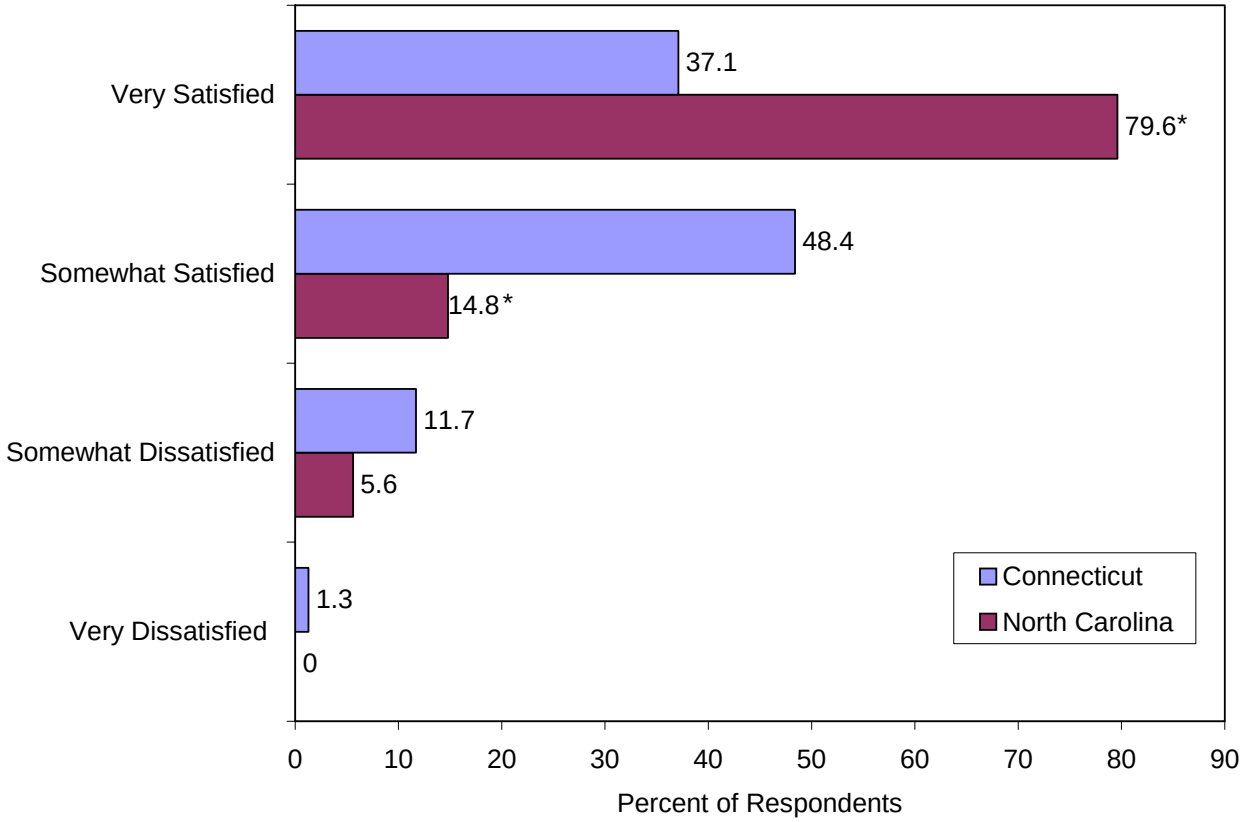
Like most elderly FSP participants, seniors in the commodity demonstrations were predominantly female. In both demonstration sites combined, about 73 percent of the households participating in the survey had a female head of household, and among those households that ever received a commodity package, the percentage was 76 percent (Table IV.4). Differences in gender were apparent, however, when examining the demonstration sites individually. Among survey respondents in Connecticut, 71 percent of household heads were female, and only 60 percent of the heads of households that participated in the commodity demonstration were female (Table IV.5).

Demonstration participants were more likely than non-participants to be new to the FSP. While 23 percent of all respondents had no prior FSP participation experience, 36 percent of respondents that participated in the demonstration were new to the FSP. The proportion demonstration participants with no prior receipt was higher in Connecticut than in North Carolina, but the difference between the Connecticut and North Carolina proportions was not statistically significant.

Black clients participated in the commodity demonstration at a disproportionately high rate. Among all respondents, 48 percent of those that participated in the demonstration were black, compared with only 30 percent of those who never participated in the demonstration. Higher rates of participation among blacks were observed in both Connecticut and North Carolina. In fact, the proportion of demonstration households that had a white household head and the proportion that had a black household head were not significantly different between Connecticut and North Carolina. In Connecticut, over 40 percent of respondents were in households with an Hispanic household head, and 36 percent of households participating in Connecticut's demonstration had an Hispanic household head. In North Carolina, less than 1 percent of respondents were in households with an Hispanic household head.

No significant differences were observed in the percentage of households with only one person over age 60 (94.0 percent among all demonstration participants), the percentage who recently had received free or reduced cost meals (8.5 percent among all demonstration participants), or the percentage who recently had used a food bank or food pantry (12.4 percent among all demonstration participants). Respondents also were asked to rate their health condition compared with other seniors their same ages. Differences in the distribution of responses were not significantly different between those participating in the demonstration and those not participating. However, demonstration participants were significantly less likely than nonparticipants to indicate that they required help with personal care needs.

Figure IV.4: Client Satisfaction With Overall Commodity Package By Demonstration Site



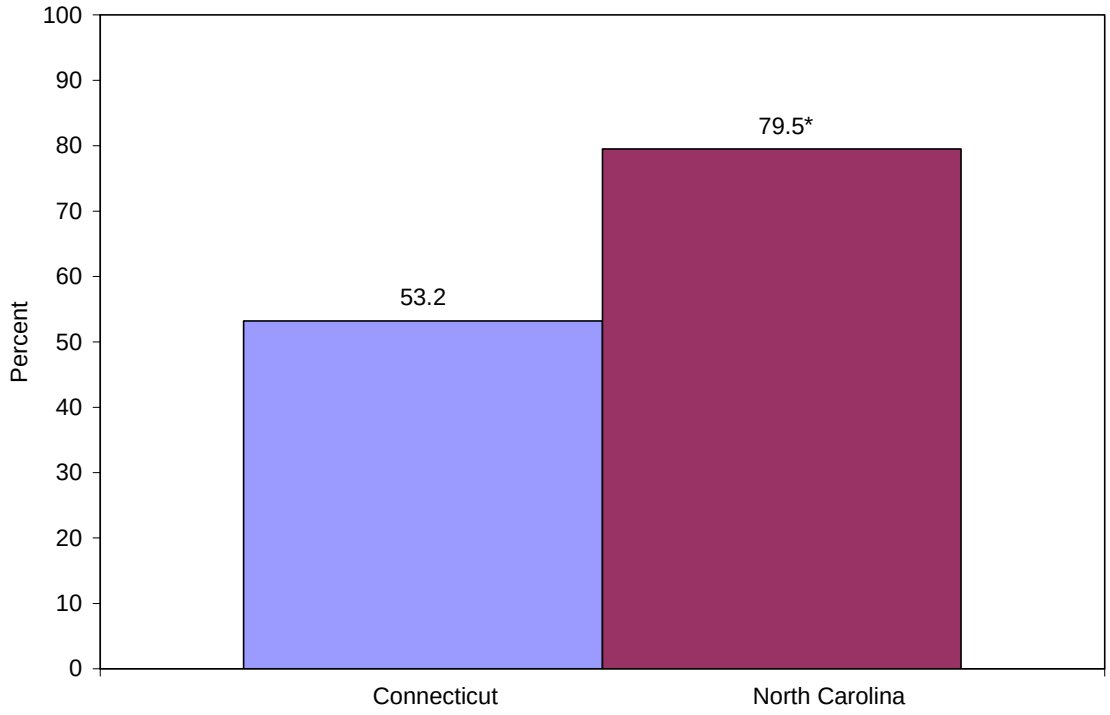
Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because some respondents did not answer question.

*Significantly different from Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).

Satisfaction with Commodity Demonstration

When asked how they rated the overall commodity package they received, clients in North Carolina gave consistently higher ratings than did clients in Connecticut. In both states, the majority of clients were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the package, with a small proportion voicing dissatisfaction (Figure IV.4). However, the fact that—relative to North Carolina—a significantly higher proportion of clients in Connecticut were "somewhat satisfied" instead of "very satisfied" may indeed provide evidence of dissatisfaction. As discussed in Chapter II, of the roughly 300 households that participated in the demonstration in Connecticut, almost half switched back to receiving regular food stamp benefits—an important sign of dissatisfaction. (It is important to note that clients generally switched back after nine months of participation, while they responded to this survey after about three months of participation.)

Figure IV.5: Percent of Respondents That Intended To Continue Participating in the Commodity Demonstration



*Significantly different from Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).

This additional evidence suggests that either a large proportion of clients who said they were "somewhat satisfied" were actually dissatisfied with the demonstration (and were unwilling to tell that to the interviewer), or that they eventually became dissatisfied with the demonstration some time after the interview. There is some evidence that they actually were dissatisfied at the time of the interview. When clients were asked whether they intended to continue participating in the demonstration, only about half of clients in Connecticut said they would, compared with 80 percent of clients in North Carolina (Figure IV.5). In both states, among those who indicated they would not continue participating in the demonstration, about half had already switched back to food stamps at the time of the interview (not shown).

One key source of dissatisfaction among demonstration participants was the loss of control over food selection. When the respondents who indicated they were somewhat or very dissatisfied were asked why they were dissatisfied, most indicated that they did not like the kinds of food in the package and that they preferred to select the foods themselves. This echoes the reasons given by those elderly FSP participants who never participated in the commodity demonstrations, and it appears to be a reason for dissatisfaction and nonparticipation at both demonstration sites. Follow-up interviews with dissatisfied clients

confirmed that control of the shopping experience was a major source of their dissatisfaction:

> *"I'm dissatisfied with the quality and that it's always the same thing, and I'm a variety eater."* [A client in North Carolina]

> *"With the food stamps, you can... go buy exactly what [you] want."* [A client in Connecticut]

> *"I didn't want it because I don't eat no canned goods… I was raised on the farm and we had all green food and stuff like that... I'm a very picky person… I like it best when it is fresh and [I can] cook it my way."* [A client in North Carolina]

Another likely source of dissatisfaction in Connecticut was the staff who distributed packages and with the package distribution process itself. Clients in Connecticut tended to be less satisfied with the demonstration staff that provided the packages than did clients in North Carolina. In North Carolina, 90 percent of respondents indicated they were "very satisfied" with the staff, compared with only 56 percent in Connecticut (Table IV.6). The package pickup process itself received similar ratings: 89 percent of clients in North Carolina were very satisfied with the distribution process, compared with only 58 percent of clients in Connecticut. These differences in satisfaction with the distribution staff and process likely help explain why clients in Connecticut were less satisfied overall with the demonstration than clients in North Carolina.

Again, the frustrations with the staff and the distribution process in Connecticut were emphasized by respondents who participated in the follow-up interview:

> *"When he went down there to ask questions and nobody knew anything, that's what was confusing."*

> *"They put the [commodity packages] in the dining area… Anybody can come in there. The bags are there, you know…I have seen people going in other bags, taking out what they wanted, something specific they wanted out of that bag that evidently their bag didn't have, you know."*

Clients who were relatively new to the FSP (that is, those who had not participated in the program prior to August 2002) were far less satisfied than clients who had prior experience (Figure IV.6). Only half of clients new to the FSP indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the demonstration.

Table IV.6: Percent Distribution of Client Satisfaction Ratings By Demonstration Site

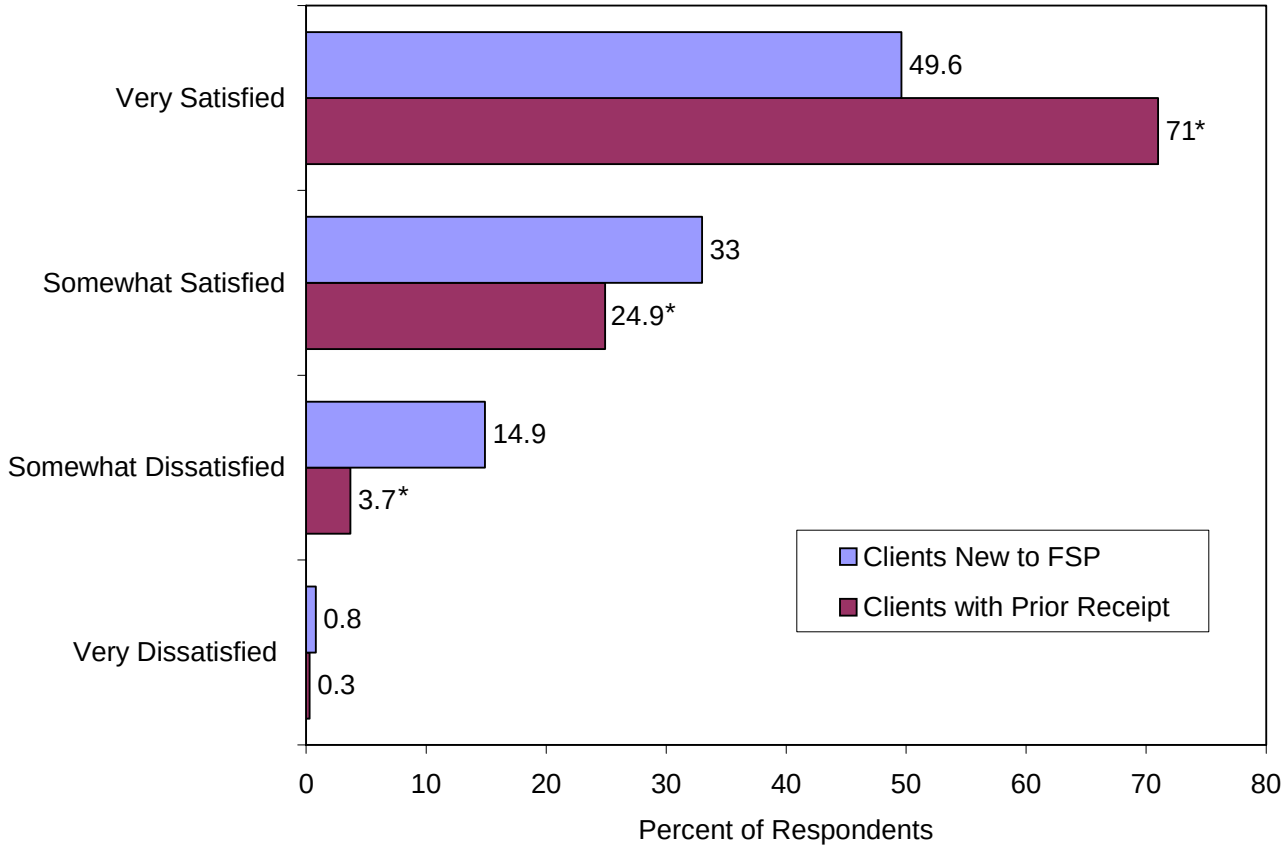
	Connecticut	North Carolina
Satisfaction with Staff that Provided Package		
Very Satisfied	55.6	89.5*
Somewhat Satisfied	41.0	7.6*
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0.0	0.8
Very Dissatisfied	0.7	0.7
Don't Know/Refused	2.7	1.4
Satisfaction with Picking Up Package		
Very Satisfied	57.9	89.2*
Somewhat Satisfied	27.4	9.6*
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0.7	0.0
Very Dissatisfied	14.0	0.0*
Don't Know/Refused	0.0	1.1
Satisfaction with Amount of Food in Package		
Very Satisfied	61.6	79.6
Somewhat Satisfied	24.4	13.1
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2.0	4.4
Very Dissatisfied	10.7	2.9
Don't Know/Refused	1.3	0.0
Typically Use All Food	43.2	70.4*

*Significantly different from Connecticut (alpha = 0.05).

CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, clients were quite satisfied with the Elderly Nutrition demonstrations. The demonstrations were designed to reduce the burden of applying, reduce the stigma of participating, and in the case of the commodity demonstrations, increase the usefulness of the benefit. Clients confirmed that these issues were barriers to participating in the program, and by their own accounts, they concluded that the demonstrations helped reduce these barriers.

Figure IV.6: Client Satisfaction With Commodity Package By Prior Receipt Status



*Significantly different from those new to FSP (alpha = 0.05).
Note: 1.6 percent of clients new to the FSP did not answer the question on satisfaction.

The role of demonstration staff was central to the clients' satisfaction. At the application assistance sites, clients were pleased with the helpful and courteous application assistants. Clients felt that the demonstrations restored dignity to the process of applying. In two sites—one application assistance site (Pinal County Arizona) and one commodity demonstration site (Connecticut)—where the staff-client interactions were not always positive, seniors had less favorable assessments of the demonstration. Indeed, these two sites also were the two that had no apparent impact on participation (see Chapter III).

Among other subgroups of participants, few differences in satisfaction existed. Satisfaction ratings examined by health condition, income, and Hispanic origin are presented in Table IV.7. In each case, the distribution of satisfaction ratings for one subgroup was not significantly different from that of another.

Table IV.7: Percent Distribution of Client Satisfaction Ratings By Subgroup

	Health Condition	
	Good, Very Good or Excellent	Fair or Poor
Satisfaction with Commodity Package		
Very Satisfied	66.9	60.5
Somewhat Satisfied	29.3	27.1
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2.6	11.4
Very Dissatisfied	0.5	0.5
Don't Know/Refused	0.7	0.5
	Monthly Income	
	Income <$750	Income >=$750
Satisfaction with Commodity Package		
Very Satisfied	67.9	54.9
Somewhat Satisfied	26.7	29.3
Somewhat Dissatisfied	4.2	15.8
Very Dissatisfied	0.8	0.0
Don't Know/Refused	0.4	0.0
	Hispanic Origin	
	Hispanic	Not Hispanic
Satisfaction with Commodity Package		
Very Satisfied	38.8	36.0
Somewhat Satisfied	28.2	60.0
Somewhat Dissatisfied	27.4	2.8
Very Dissatisfied	1.5	1.2
Don't Know/Refused	4.1	0.0

*Differences across subgroups significantly different from zero (alpha = 0.05).

Clients also confirmed that explicit outreach efforts were a key component of the demonstrations. At sites with well-defined and effective outreach efforts, clients received the message that the demonstrations were trying to convey. However, in programs with problems related to outreach, clients appeared more likely to learn about the demonstrations through happenstance and were less aware of key demonstration themes.

In the two commodity demonstrations, satisfaction appeared driven by two issues. First, where the commodity distribution process was smooth and staff interactions were positive, clients who participated showed more satisfaction than in programs for which the process and the interactions were problematic. Second, clients who preferred to select their own groceries either did not participate in the demonstration or were dissatisfied with the demonstration if they did participate.

CHAPTER V

DEMONSTRATION COSTS

While all three demonstration models showed evidence of success in increasing elderly participation, the costs incurred by each demonstration varied substantially by model. The simplified eligibility demonstration was relatively inexpensive, since monthly costs consist primarily of outreach. The application assistance demonstrations were more expensive because of the monthly costs of providing services to elderly FSP applicants. The commodity alternative benefit demonstrations were the most expensive because of the cost of distributing packages to clients each month. This chapter documents our analysis of both the total costs incurred by, and the relative-effectiveness of, each demonstration.[1]

The total costs reflect what a community—comparable in size, circumstances, and resources to a given the demonstration community—could expect to spend in implementing a similar demonstration. However, total costs may not be good predictors of the costs that would be incurred if the demonstrations were replicated in communities of different sizes, circumstances, and resources.

The first section of this chapter describes our approach to estimating costs. The second section presents the total costs of each demonstration, separated into start-up costs and ongoing costs. The third section examines the cost-effectiveness of the demonstrations. The fourth section looks at the costs to the federal government of benefits paid. The fifth section discusses specific cost-savings identified by the demonstrations, and the last section discusses the conclusions drawn from the analysis.

[1] Cost-effectiveness is expressed as the dollar costs per net impact (see Chapter III for discussion of net impacts).

APPROACH TO ESTIMATING COSTS

One initial measure of the costs of the demonstrations is the size of the grant that each demonstration received from USDA to implement the demonstrations (Table V.1). The grants reflect the relative level of effort for each demonstration, with the simplified eligibility demonstration having the smallest grant ($100,000) and the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations having the largest grants ($500,000 to $600,000). However, grant size alone does not reflect the total costs of the demonstration, as some costs were incurred by other organizations in the demonstration communities. For example, in Arizona, the salary of the project coordinator was paid by the state Department of Economic Security. In addition, the grants do not reflect the significant time and money spent designing the demonstrations as part of the grant application process.

Table V.1: USDA Grants to Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations

	Total Grant	Amount of Grant Spent[a]
Simplified Eligibility		
Florida	$100,000	$100,000
Application Assistance		
Arizona	310,896	169,896
Maine	344,692	303,124
Michigan	489,650	332,821
Commodity Alternative Benefit		
Connecticut	605,030	377,727
North Carolina	539,846	389,160

[a]Reflects expenditures through month 21 for Arizona, Michigan, Connecticut, and North Carolina, through month 23 for Florida, and through month 24 for Maine. Several demonstrations continued operating beyond this point in order to make full use of their grant.

To obtain a more complete measure of demonstration costs, we examine the costs *incurred by state and local governments of administering the demonstration.* These costs reflect not only the expenses covered by the demonstration grant from USDA, but other demonstration costs as well. These costs include:

- The costs of designing the demonstration, both as part of the grant application to USDA and during project start-up after the grant was awarded

- The costs of training staff, such as FSP caseworkers and demonstration application assistants (where applicable)
- The costs of equipment purchased, including computers, copiers, leases on vehicles, and, in the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations, freezers
- The costs of travel for application assistants and commodity distribution
- Monthly labor costs of demonstration staff

Estimates of the demonstration costs to state and local governments were derived from interviews with staff from all the types of organizations involved in the demonstrations, including the agencies managing day-to-day operations as well as state and local FSP staff. We also reviewed the demonstrations' financial reports submitted to USDA, counting the time staff devoted to various activities, actual salaries and wage information, plus an estimate of fringe benefit costs to estimate labor costs.[2] We also used the costs of purchasing goods and services to approximate what it would cost to design, implement, and run a similar demonstration in a locality serving a population of comparable size. It should be noted that the total costs of administering the demonstrations do not include the costs of program benefits; these costs are discussed later in this chapter.

TOTAL DEMONSTRATION COSTS

The total costs of administering the demonstrations were computed as the sum of the start-up costs and the ongoing costs of the demonstration for 21 months. The former are the one-time costs necessary to begin serving clients, and the latter reflect the recurring expenses needed to keep the demonstration operating.

Start Up Costs

Start-up costs include the cost to design the demonstration (much of which was done as part of the grant application process), the cost to prepare for implementation, the cost to train demonstration staff, and the cost of goods and services needed for the demonstration. Some activities, such as the development of outreach materials and the training of staff, occurred both before the start of the demonstration (i.e., before it started serving clients) and after the demonstration began serving clients. We treated costs for the former as start-up costs and for the latter, as ongoing costs.

[2] In the rare cases in which salary information was not available, salaries of comparable positions were used. Fringe benefits were applied to salaried positions only, using the national fringe benefit rate for state and local government employees in March 2003—43 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 2003). Costs exclude indirect and overhead costs (such as office space) because of difficulties in measuring these costs consistently across sites.

Table V.2: Demonstration Start-Up Costs

	Design, Planning and Equipment				Training				
	Labor Hours	Labor Costs	Other Direct Costs	Total	Labor Hours	Labor Costs	Other Direct Costs	Total	Total Start-Up Costs
Simplified Eligibility									
Florida	950	$26,045	$10,000	$36,045	268	$5,939	$887	$6,826	$42,851
Application Assistance									
Arizona	411	9,979	47,434	57,413	550	8,174	500	8,674	66,087
Maine	523	14,265	4,042	18,307	466	11,976	1,571	13,547	31,845
Michigan[a]	581	25,924	140,166[b]	166,090	1,907	12,983	1,171	14,145	180,244
Commodity Alternative Benefit									
Connecticut	492	21,314	97,737[c]	119,051	202	7,003	0	7,003	126,053
North Carolina	1,940	42,728[d]	33,100	75,828	0	0	0	0	75,828

Note: All labor costs based on time actually spent. Labor costs include fringe benefits. Not all costs were billed to the demonstrations.

[a]Labor hours for Michigan reflected the combined 1,500 hours of training received by 38 volunteer application assistants. If unpaid staff were employed at $7.13 per hour, the costs of training would have increased by more than $15,500, bringing the total start-up costs to almost $196,000.
[b]Includes more than $130,000 for developing an on-line FSP application.
[c]Includes $78,000 for changes made to state's data system to accommodate the demonstration.
[d]Includes costs associated with a change in the demonstration service provider during the development phase.

Start-up costs ranged from a low of $32,000 in Maine to a high of $180,000 in Michigan (Table V.2). Part of the variation in start-up costs is due to factors associated with the demonstration model (some models are more expensive to start than others). *However, even within a given demonstration model, the magnitude of the costs varied—largely because of the variation in local issues.*

- **In Florida**, a substantial portion of the start-up costs reflects the time spent by state staff designing and implementing the new eligibility procedures, and designing the one-page application. The $10,000 in direct costs reflects services performed by the demonstration's subcontractor, which included developing outreach materials and planning telephone center procedures. Some time was devoted to training eligibility workers on the new rules.

- **In Arizona**, the bulk of start-up costs reflects the more than $40,000 in computer hardware and software that was purchased to allow application assistants to prescreen clients for FSP eligibility and to carry out other parts of the application process. Almost $9,000 was spent to train application assistants.

- **In Maine**, start-up costs reflects time spent designing the demonstration, purchasing equipment for the demonstration (including a copier for the application process), and producing promotional brochures. Almost $14,000 was spent to train application assistants.

- **In Michigan**, a subcontractor was paid more than $130,000 to develop the on-line version of Michigan's FSP application. In addition to the subcontractor, demonstration staff devoted a great deal of time to developing an electronic application. A total of 1,500 hours of training for 38 application assistants also contributed to the cost. Because these assistants were volunteers, their time is not reflected in the start-up costs. If these assistants had been paid $7.13 an hour (the average application assistant wage paid in Arizona and Maine), start-up costs would have increased by $15,500.

- **In Connecticut**, a large portion of the start-up costs ($78,000) reflect the approximately 2,000 hours devoted to changing the state's data system so that it would better track demonstration participants in the FSP caseload data. Additional start-up costs cover equipment, such as refrigerators for storing commodities, canvas bags for distributing commodities, promotional materials, a down payment on a lease for a distribution van, and improvements to the storage warehouse. Other costs reflect the time spent designing the demonstration and distribution processes, and time spent training 92 FSP caseworkers on demonstration rules and procedures.

- **In North Carolina,** a significant portion of the start-up costs reflects a change in the community organization used to manage the demonstration and distribute commodities. Before dropping out, the initial organization began

some planning activities and purchased some equipment for the demonstration.[3] While identifying a new demonstration partner, the state redesigned many aspects of the demonstration. Additional start-up costs include money spent on refrigerators and freezers for storing commodities (more than $20,000), a back-up generator, computers, promotional materials, and a down payment on a lease for a distribution van. No formal training was necessary, as the demonstration staff and local FSP staff were directly involved in designing the demonstration.

Ongoing Costs

The ongoing costs of the demonstrations reflect travel, promotional activities, and the salaries and wages of demonstration staff. These costs were computed as the monthly average of the total costs incurred from the month the demonstration began serving clients to the last month that the demonstration was observed for the evaluation. The costs include neither the benefit costs to ongoing cases nor the benefit costs to the FSP for the cases added by the demonstration (these are discussed in a subsequent section).

Average monthly operating costs ranged from a low of $3,000 in Florida to a high of $15,000 in Michigan (Table V.3). As indicated below, the factors affecting these costs varied from state to state.

- **In Florida**, the monthly operating costs primarily reflect the activities of the demonstration's outreach organization. These activities include operating the telephone center and preparing outreach materials. The public service announcement expenditures—almost $7,000 to develop the announcement and air them over three periods—were averaged over the entire demonstration.

- **In Arizona**, the monthly costs primarily reflect the time of the application assistants and the project coordinator. The application assistants were paid $5.25 an hour. Demonstration staff were reimbursed an average of $750 each month for the costs of traveling throughout the demonstration counties to provide application assistance.

- **In Maine**, the time of the application assistants and the project coordinator also account for the primary monthly costs. Application assistants were paid $9.00 an hour.

- **In Michigan**, the monthly costs included two paid staff who worked a combined total of 70 hours per week on the demonstration. Direct costs include a contract with the company that developed the on-line application to provide ongoing assistance (about $55,000 over 24 months). The direct costs also include about

[3] See Nogales et al. (2005) for details.

$200 per month in travel expenses. The monthly labor hours reflect the time spent on 38 application assistants. Because the application assistants were volunteers, the cost of their time is not reflected in the monthly costs. If these assistants had been paid the average application assistant wage in Arizona and Maine ($7.13 per hour), monthly costs would have increased by almost $3,000.

Table V.3: Ongoing Demonstration Costs

	Monthly Costs				
	Labor Hours	Labor Costs	Other Direct Costs	Total Monthly Costs	Annual Costs
Simplified Eligibility					
Florida	8	$193	$2,897	$3,090	$37,080
Application Assistance					
Arizona	967	10,261	750	11,011	132,132
Maine	516	9,883	400	10,283	123,396
Michigan[a]	780	12,096	3,013[b]	15,109	181,308
Commodity Alternative Benefit					
Connecticut	505	11,865	1,233	13,098	157,176
North Carolina	365	7,341	1,980	9,321	111,852

[a]Labor hours for Michigan reflected the 327 hours of volunteered time per month. The value of this volunteered time was not included in computations of the monthly costs of the demonstration. If paid staff had been paid the average application assistant wage in Arizona and Maine ($7.13 per hour), the monthly costs of the demonstration would have increased by almost $3,000 and the annual costs would have increased by $36,000.
[b]Includes costs of support contract for on-line application.

- **In Connecticut**, the monthly costs include the time of the staff who led the demonstration, provided outreach, and ordered, assembled, and distributed the commodities. Other expenses included about $250 in travel costs per month and an $800 monthly payment on the lease for the distribution van.

- **In North Carolina**, the monthly costs included the time of staff who led the demonstration, provided outreach, and organized the distribution process. The demonstration paid the local warehouse (Vocational Trades of Alamance) $5

per package for workers to assemble the packages. Other costs included a $480 monthly payment on the lease for the distribution van.

It is noteworthy that the monthly costs for the two commodity alternative benefit demonstrations reflect a different type of service from that provided by the other demonstrations. The other demonstrations served clients at one point in time—during the application process. In the commodity demonstrations, few expenses were associated with the application process, but services were provided to clients every month that they were enrolled in the demonstration.

Total Costs and Costs of Expansion

The total costs of the demonstrations is the sum of the start-up costs and the ongoing costs. After 21 months of operation, the total demonstration costs ranged from a low of $108,000 in Florida to a high of $498,000 in Michigan (Table V.4). This variation reflects differences in services provided, the number of clients served, the amount invested in technology, and the storage and distribution equipment.

In terms of services, the simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida was the least expensive since the service was the least labor-intensive. Its ongoing costs associated with outreach and the telephone center were minimal, compared with the ongoing costs in the application assistance and commodity alternative benefit demonstrations.

In terms of technology investment, Michigan incurred substantial costs for the development and maintenance of an on-line application, and Connecticut and North Carolina spent a large portion of funds on adapting the state data system so it could be used track demonstration participants. In these cases, however, these technology costs would not increase significantly if the demonstration were expanded within the state. The opposite is true, however, in the Arizona demonstration, which invested in lap top computers for providing application assistance.

In terms of equipment, Connecticut and North Carolina led the group. During the start-up period, both were the only demonstrations that had to buy refrigerators, freezers, and vans for commodity storage and distribution.

In all demonstrations, there were fixed costs that would not increase if the demonstration expanded and variable costs that would. For example, in Michigan, the costs of developing and maintaining the on-line application would not increase substantially if the demonstration expanded into other counties. However, in North Carolina, the costs of storage and distribution equipment would increase as a result of expansion.

Table V.4: Total Demonstration Costs

	Start Up Costs	Ongoing Costs: Per Month	Ongoing Costs: Total, 21 Months	Total Costs
Simplified Eligibility				
Florida	$42,851	$3,090	$64,890	$107,741
Application Assistance				
Arizona	66,087	11,011	231,231	297,318
Maine	31,845	10,283	215,943	247,788
Michigan[a]	180,244	15,109	317,289	497,533
Commodity Alternative Benefit				
Connecticut	126,053	13,098	275,058	401,111
North Carolina	75,828	9,321	195,741	271,569

[a]Labor hours for Michigan reflected the 327 hours of volunteered time per month. The value of this volunteered time was not included in computations of the monthly costs of the demonstration. If paid staff had been paid the average application assistant wage in Arizona and Maine ($7.13 per hour), the monthly costs of the demonstration would have increased by almost $3,000 and the costs after 21 months would have increased by $63,000.

Differences in fixed and variable costs have implications for how costs would increase if the demonstrations were implemented on a larger scale. To examine the role of the fixed and variable costs, we estimated the total costs of expanding each demonstration into one additional, hypothetical site that is assumed to be identical to the existing site.[4] Then we made the following simplified assumptions about which costs would remain fixed and which would rise:

- **In Florida**, we assumed that the additional costs of training more eligibility workers would be similar to the costs observed in the demonstration sites, and

[4] In Florida and Arizona, where the demonstration was implemented in two counties, we assumed that it would be expanded to a third county exhibiting the combined characteristics of the first two; for Connecticut, which implemented the demonstration in 10 towns, we assumed that the demonstration would be expanded to 10 similar towns.

that ongoing costs for outreach to one additional site would increase by one-third.

- **In Arizona**, we assumed that the cost of training, hardware, and ongoing application assistance would be roughly half that incurred in the two demonstration sites together, and that management costs would increase by 25 percent

- **In Maine**, we assumed that the additional costs for training and for application assistance would be similar to those observed in the demonstration site, and that management costs would increase by 25 percent

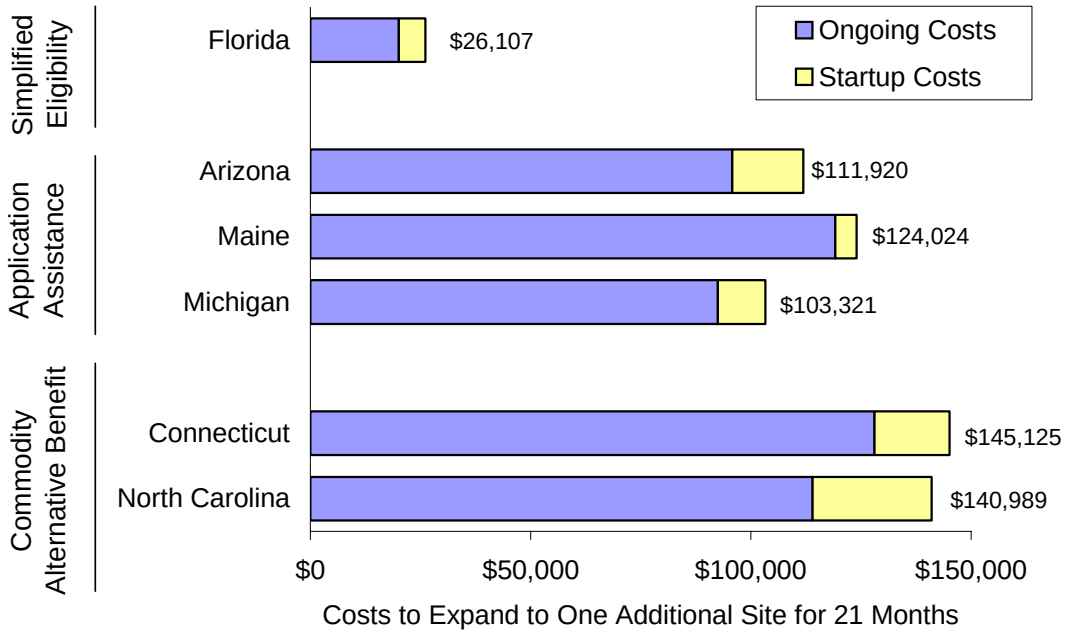
- **In Michigan**, we assumed that the costs of developing and maintaining the on-line application would be fixed, but that equipment costs would increase. We also assumed that the additional application assistance costs would be similar to those in the demonstration site, and that management costs would increase by 25 percent

- **In Connecticut and North Carolina**, we assumed that costs for commodity storage and distribution would rise, and management costs would increase by 25 percent

Figure V.1 presents the estimated costs of expanding each demonstration to one additional site for 21 months. In the simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida, expansion would be the least expensive at $26,000 because of low start-up and ongoing costs. Among the application assistance demonstrations (Arizona, Maine, and Michigan), the one in Michigan would be the least expensive to expand because many of the costs that made it the most expensive application assistance demonstration to develop would not be incurred again. On the other hand, expanding the Maine demonstration would be the most expensive of the three partly because the application assistants in Maine were paid more than those in Arizona or Michigan. Substantial start-up costs would be associated with expanding the Arizona demonstration partly because new lap top computers would be needed for additional application assistants. The commodity alternative benefit demonstrations in Connecticut and North Carolina would cost more to expand than the other demonstrations because of the need to purchase equipment and the costs to assemble and distribute commodities each month.

The hypothetical costs of expanding the demonstrations suggest that expansion costs within a model are similar. In the application assistance demonstrations, expansion costs would range from $100,000 to $125,000, and in the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations, they would range from $140,000 to $145,000. Despite these similarities, however, the actual expansion costs would be influenced by circumstances unique to each new demonstration site, so the actual costs of replicating these demonstrations in a different site may vary substantially.

Figure V.1: Estimated Costs of Expanding the Demonstrations



COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The objective of the demonstrations was to increase elderly participation in the FSP. We define the cost-effectiveness of the demonstrations as the dollars spent by each demonstration to generate a net impact on elderly participation. While the demonstrations provided services to a large number of elderly individuals, many of those individuals would have participated anyway. Thus, to determine the cost-effectiveness of the demonstrations in light of the central objective, we divided the total costs of operating each demonstration by its impact on participation.

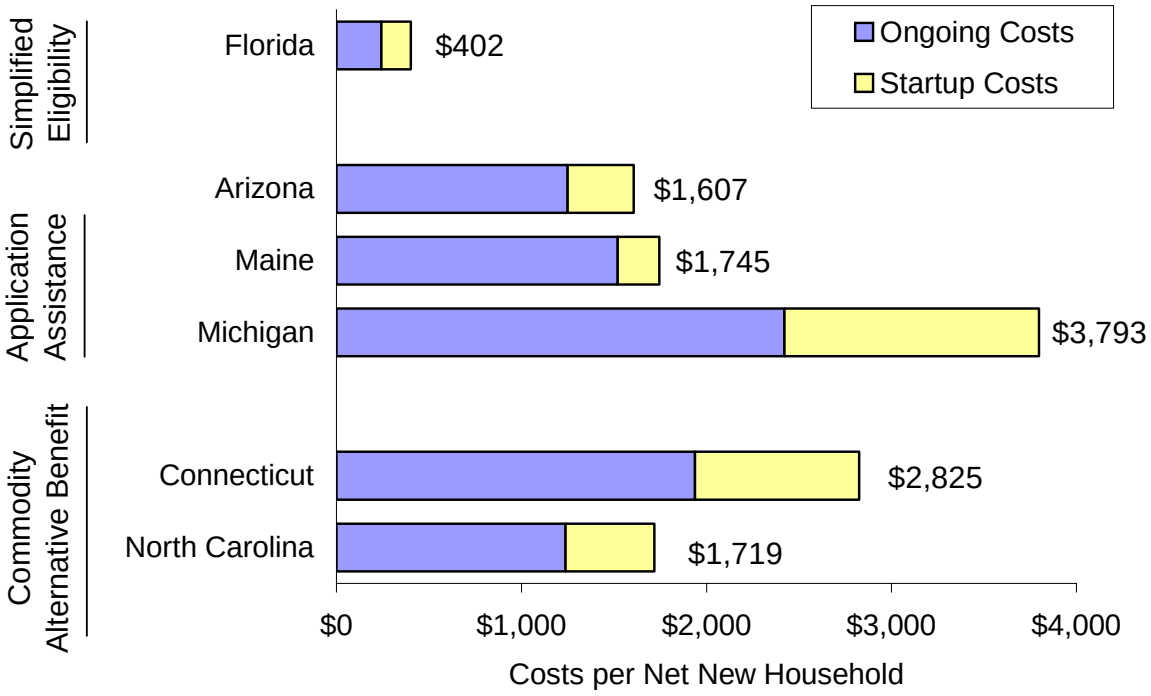
This measure of cost-effectiveness should not be confused with the average costs of providing services to each client. While that measure is informative, as discussed below, it tells only part of the story. It may be inexpensive to provide services to many clients, but if the services do not result in a rise in elderly FSP participation, then they may not be worth the expense. Alternatively, it may be expensive to provide services to many clients, but if these expenses result in a large rise elderly participation, then the money has been well spent.

To compute cost-effectiveness, we divided the total costs by the number of "net new households." The number of net new households was computed by multiplying the impact of the demonstration (presented in Chapter III) by the elderly caseload at the start of the demonstration. For example, in Maine, 459 elderly individuals were enrolled in the FSP before the demonstration. The observed 30.9 percent impact implies that after 21 months, 142 *net new elderly households* were participating that would not have participated in the absence

of the demonstrations. Thus, our measure of cost effectiveness of the Maine demonstration divides the total costs from Table V.4 ($247,788) by the number of net new households to obtain the cost per net new household of $1,745.

Figure V.2 shows the cost-effectiveness of the demonstration. Costs per net new household were lowest in sites that generated relatively large increases in elderly participation. The remainder of this section discusses the cost-effectiveness of each demonstration as well as other meaningful per-client cost estimates for each model.

Figure V.2: Total Demonstration Costs Per Net New FSP Household



Simplified Eligibility

Most costs in the simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida were associated with efforts to simplify the application process and promote FSP participation. According to the impact estimates, a total of 268 net new FSP households per elderly were attracted to the FSP after 21 months of the demonstration (Table V.5). The total demonstration costs—including start-up costs—translated to $402 per net new household.

Table V.5: Costs Per Net New Household: Simplified Eligibility Demonstration

	Florida
Number of Households	
Net New FSP Households with Elderly [a]	268
Demonstration Costs	
Total Costs, 21 Months	$107,741
Total Costs per Net New FSP Household	**$402**

[a]Reflects implied number of households attracted to the FSP using the unadjusted participation impact estimates presented in Chapter III.

Application Assistance

After 21 months, the demonstrations prompted net participation increases of 185 households in Arizona, 142 households in Maine, and 131 households in Michigan. The total demonstration costs per net new household were $1,607 in Arizona, $1,745 in Maine, and $3,798 in Michigan (Table V.6). The Arizona demonstration was more cost-effective than the other application assistance demonstrations partly because that demonstration attracted more new elderly FSP households and partly because assistants in Arizona were paid $5.25 per hour (compared with $9 per hour in Maine). The per-household costs in Michigan tended to be higher than in the other two application assistance demonstrations because, despite using volunteer application assistants, the demonstration spent more than $185,000 to develop and maintain software specifically for the demonstration.

The costs of the application assistance demonstrations depend, in part, on the number of elderly households that receive assistance with their applications, regardless of whether they are eligible. Therefore, another meaningful measure of cost-effectiveness in the application assistance demonstrations is the cost per application submitted to the FSP via the demonstration. The monthly costs per application were: $415 in Arizona, $301 in Maine, and $826 in Michigan.[5] The per-application costs were lowest in Maine partly because of the high reported number of applications submitted through the demonstration.

[5] Application numbers were self-reported by demonstration staff and cannot be fully verified.

Table V.6: Costs Per Net New Household: Application Assistance Demonstrations

	Arizona	Maine	Michigan
Number of Households			
Applications Submitted Via Demonstration	716	824	600
Net New FSP Households with Elderly[a]	185	142	131
Demonstration Costs			
Total Costs, 21 Months	$297,297	$247,788	$495,622
Total Costs per Application	$415	$301	$826
Total Costs per Net New Household	**$1,607**	**$1,745**	**$3,798**

[a]Reflects implied number of households attracted to the FSP using the unadjusted participation impact estimates presented in Chapter III.

Commodity Alternative Benefit Demonstrations

The number of net new FSP households attracted by the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations was 142 in Connecticut and 158 in North Carolina. This translates to almost $2,825 in monthly costs per net new household in Connecticut and $1,719 in North Carolina (Table V.7). We also estimated the number of packages distributed by the programs over the 21-month study period.[6] During that time, an estimated 3,462 packages were distributed in Connecticut and 6,000 were distributed in North Carolina. The total cost of the demonstration (excluding the cost of commodities) per package was $116 in Connecticut and $45 in North Carolina.

COSTS OF PROGRAM BENEFITS

Another key measure of demonstration costs are the additional FSP benefits were provided to newly participating elderly households. Table V.8 presents the distribution of benefits paid in the demonstration sites in the 21st month of the demonstration. The relevant universe for computing the benefit distribution varies by demonstration model.

[6] The number of packages was estimated by examining enrollment spells of commodity demonstration participants. Because enrolment information was available every quarter, some assumptions were needed regarding the number of months each enrolled household participated.

Table V.7: Costs Per Net New Household: Commodity Alternative Benefit Demonstrations

	Connecticut	North Carolina
Number of Households		
Estimated Total Packages	3,462	6,000
Net New FSP Households with Elderly[a]	142	158
Demonstration Costs		
Total Costs, 21 Months	$401,111	$271,569
Total Costs per Distributed Package	$116	$45
Total Costs per Net New Household	**$2,825**	**$1,719**

[a]Reflects implied number of households attracted to the FSP using the unadjusted participation impact estimates presented in Chapter III.

- **In the simplified eligibility** demonstration, most pure elderly households entering the FSP after the demonstration started were enrolled via the demonstration. The distribution of benefits was computed over all pure elderly households participating in the 21st month of the demonstration.[7] The average benefit was $45, and half of the households received a benefit of $28 or less.

- **In the application assistance** demonstrations, the distribution was computed over the households that received application assistance and that were participating in the 21st month. The average benefit ranged from $49 in Maine to $56 in Michigan. In Arizona, half of the demonstration households received a benefit of $39 or less; in Maine and Michigan, half received a benefit of $27 or less.

- **In the commodity alternative benefit** demonstrations, all demonstration households received a fixed-price package ($46 in Connecticut and $39 in North Carolina). However, these households tended to be eligible for

[7] Ideally, we would have liked to examine the distribution of benefits paid to households entering the program after the demonstration started; however, the Florida data did not allow us to determine when households entered the FSP. As a result, we were forced to assume that benefits were distributed similarly for households entering before and after the start of the demonstration. This assumption is supported by evidence presented in Chapter III, which suggests that the benefit distribution did not change substantially after the demonstration started.

substantially less in food stamp benefits. The average FSP benefit that demonstration households would have received in the 21st month was $16 in Connecticut and $18 in North Carolina. The majority of households were eligible for only a $10 benefit.

In the simplified eligibility and application assistance demonstrations, the new costs to the government are the benefits paid to households that would not have participated in the FSP in the absence of the demonstration. But because we cannot determine which households would or would not have participated absent the demonstration, we approximated the new costs by assuming that the net new households in the FSP received the average benefit paid to all households enrolled via the demonstration.

For instance, if we assume that the 268 net new households brought into the FSP in Florida as a result of the demonstration received an average of $45 each, then the demonstration increased the cost of benefits by $12,060 (Table V.9). The three application assistance demonstrations increased the cost of benefits from $7,000 in Maine to $10,000 in Arizona.

The new benefits paid in the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations come from two sources. The first is the cost of benefits paid to net new households. The second is the cost to provide packages to households that would have participated in the FSP even without the demonstration. The cost of benefits paid to net new households, $6,500 in Connecticut and $6,000 in North Carolina, is based on the cost of the commodity packages themselves ($46 in Connecticut and $39 in North Carolina). The new cost to the FSP of providing packages to households that would have participated in the FSP even without the demonstration is the difference between the cost of the commodity packages and the benefit the household would have received in the traditional FSP. Our estimate of the number of households that would have participated even without the demonstration is the difference between the number enrolled in the demonstration and the number of net new households (Table V.10). In Connecticut, the number of net new households was greater than the number enrolled in the 21st month, suggesting that the only costs of the demonstration were the costs of providing packages to net new households.[8] In North Carolina, the number of households enrolled in the demonstration was 157 more than the number of net new households. If these households would have participated in the absence of the demonstration, it is likely that they would have received an average benefit of $18. Thus, giving them packages that cost $39 a month led to an additional $3,000 in program costs (bringing the total costs in North Carolina to over $9,000).

[8] The fact that the number of net new households in Connecticut was greater than the number enrolled in the demonstration may reflect imprecision in the impact estimates. It is likely that some demonstration households would have participated in the FSP absent the demonstration. As a result, the $6,500 in benefits to net new households is an upper-bound estimate of the true cost of the benefits.

Table V.8: Distribution of Benefits Paid to Demonstration Participants in the 21st Month

	Average Benefit	25th Percentile Benefit	Median Benefit	75th Percentile Benefit	99th Percentile Benefit
Simplified Eligibility[a]					
Florida	$45	$10	$28	$70	$167
Application Assistance[b]					
Arizona	54	10	39	80	259
Maine	49	10	27	78	141
Michigan	56	10	27	102	209
Commodity Alternative Benefit[c]					
Connecticut[a]	16	10	10	10	116
North Carolina[a]	18	10	10	19	83

[a]Reflects benefits paid to all pure elderly households in demonstration counties participating in Month 21.
[b]Reflects benefits paid to elderly households that received application assistance at time of application and that were participating in Month 21
[c]Reflects the FSP benefit amount that demonstration households were eligible to receive in Month 21 (elderly individuals received commodity packages that cost $46 in Connecticut and $39 in North Carolina).

LEVERAGED COSTS AND COST SAVINGS

Each demonstration benefited from cost-savings to one degree or another. In particular, the demonstrations were able to leverage costs by using existing programs and resources to provide services. Some of these leveraged costs are not captured in the cost estimates of the demonstrations:

- **In Florida**, the demonstration subcontracted with Florida Impact, an organization already providing outreach services for the FSP. Demonstration staff used Florida Impact's telephone center to contact elderly individuals who were potential FSP clients. Developing a similar facility from scratch would have raised start-up costs substantially.

- **In Maine**, the demonstration partnered with a large number of other programs that provide assistance to elderly individuals. The demonstration therefore had a large outreach and referral network at its disposal at virtually no cost.

Table V.9: Costs of One Month of Benefits to Net New Households In Month 21

	Average Benefit	Month 21 Net New Households	Month 21 Benefits
Simplified Eligibility			
Florida	$45	268	$12,060
Application Assistance			
Arizona	54	185	9,990
Maine	49	142	6,958
Michigan	56	131	7,336
Commodity Alternative Benefit			
Connecticut[a]	46	142	6,532
North Carolina[a]	39	158	6,162

[a]Reflects the costs to the FSP of the commodity packages.

Table V.10: Costs of Giving Commodity Packages to Households That Would Have Participated Without the Demonstration

	Connecticut	North Carolina
Total Enrolled in Demonstration, Month 21	130	315
Net New Households	142	158
Difference (Households that Would Participate without Demonstration)	-12	157
Commodity Package Cost	46	39
Average Eligible Benefit	16	18
Difference	30	21
Cost of Package to Households that Would Participate without Demonstration	n.a.	3,297

[a]Reflects the costs to the FSP of the commodity packages.

- **In Michigan**, staff at local senior centers promoted the demonstration, resulting in a no-cost a referral network. The fact that the application assistants were volunteers also reduced the demonstration costs.

- **In Connecticut and North Carolina**, the demonstrations partnered with organizations that had ample warehouse space for storing commodities. Had the demonstrations been forced to lease additional space, their costs would have increased.

Anyone interested in achieving the same results in other communities would need to consider whether they could reduce their costs through similar partnerships.[9]

Another example of leveraged costs is payment of application assistants' wages in Arizona and Maine by the SCSEP program. While these wages are captured in our total cost estimates for these two states, it is important to recognize that these administrative services were provided by an existing government program other than the FSP.

Another source of cost savings was the time saved by FSP eligibility workers in processing applications. In the simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida, the new rules applied to all pure elderly FSP households applying for food stamps in the demonstration counties. In part because caseworkers did not need to conduct an eligibility interview, the simplified eligibility rules saved between 15 and 25 minutes per application. In the early months of the demonstration, there was a combined total of about 60 applications from pure elderly households received per month in the demonstration counties. If we assume an average of 20 minutes saved per interview, this translates to 20 hours saved per month. Similar time-savings per application were observed in the application assistance demonstrations where caseworkers did not conduct an eligibility interview. In these sites, the time saved applied to demonstration applicants only.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Demonstration costs varied substantially by model. The least costly demonstration was the simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida. It was the least labor-intensive because clients were contacted primarily through a telephone center, and as a result, it would be the least expensive to expand. While the demonstration incurred expenses in outreach, it did not incur the high costs of technological investment observed in other demonstrations. Moreover, by subcontracting with an organization that had a telephone center, the demonstration avoided otherwise substantial start-up costs. As a result of low demonstration costs and a relatively large impact, the Florida demonstration was the most cost-effective one.

[9] For more details on the partnerships developed in the demonstrations, see Nogales et al. (2005).

The application assistance demonstrations accrued significant labor costs, both in terms of the time logged by the application assistants themselves and the time needed to manage their activities. As a result, the application assistance demonstrations would not benefit substantially from economies of scale if they were expanded. The Arizona and Michigan demonstrations made significant investments in technology. For Arizona, these costs would rise if the demonstration was expanded, but in Michigan, the costs are fixed and would not therefore increase substantially if the demonstration was expanded. Two of the demonstrations, Arizona and Maine, had relatively large impacts on participation and, as a result, were more cost-effective than the Michigan demonstration and than either of the commodity alternative benefit demonstrations.

The commodity alternative benefit demonstrations were the most costly. However, the cost-effectiveness of the North Carolina demonstration is similar to that of the Arizona and Maine demonstrations. While the North Carolina demonstration resulted in relatively large impacts on elderly participation, the costs of labor as well as storage and distribution facilities were significant. These costs would increase if the demonstrations were expanded.

These general conclusions about the cost-effectiveness of the demonstration models may serve policymakers well in their search to bring eligible elderly individuals into the FSP. However, they would also be well-advised to consider the fact that, in any community, the costs to replicate one of these demonstrations may or may not be similar to the costs we observed, as site-specific issues can lead to significant costs or cost-savings in any of the demonstration models.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations showed that it is possible to increase FSP participation among the elderly. In four of the six demonstrations, there was strong evidence that, after 21 months of operation, the demonstrations were able to bring approximately 20 to 35 percent more low-income households with elderly into the program. As a result, these participants received benefits that could help them meet their nutritional needs.

The success of the demonstrations indicates that policymakers have various choices to make regarding the best way or ways to address low elderly participation rates in the future. Each model increased participation in different ways, each with its own set of costs and obstacles involved to successful replication. There may be interest in expanding some of these demonstration models—even combining the aspects of one with those of another. Moreover, state FSP agencies and local organizations may want to replicate only some components of the demonstrations, such as providing some form of application assistance or reducing the need for in-person eligibility interviews among seniors.

In discussing the major conclusions and policy implications drawn from the evaluation findings, this chapter is intended to shed some light on the issues central to the design of future policies that would increase FSP participation among the elderly. Specifically, we explain how the demonstrations reduced the costs of applying for food stamps or increased the benefits of participation so that seniors were more willing to enroll in the program. We discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the demonstrations and the factors needed for successful replication. We conclude with a summary of research questions that were not fully answered by this study, but that could have implications for future efforts to increase participation of the elderly in FSP.

It should be noted that the conclusions presented here are based on a relatively small number of demonstrations. That is, for each model designed to increase elderly participation, the number of demonstrations tested ranged from one to three. While the findings would be more robust if they were based on more observations, we nevertheless

feel that important conclusions can be drawn from these demonstrations. By examining the impact estimates in the context in which each demonstration was operated, we can better understand why we observed the results we did. And while we cannot conclude that a given demonstration model will be successful under all circumstances, we can identify the circumstances that affect demonstration success.

MAJOR EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

FSP Participation Can Be Increased Among the Elderly

The Elderly Nutrition Demonstrations have shown that steps can be taken to increase the historically low FSP participation rates among the eligible elderly population. While the exact impact estimates are subject to some level of uncertainty, there is strong evidence that the various demonstrations increased FSP participation by 20 to 35 percent after just 21 months of operation. If a similar increase were observed nationwide, the participation rate for elderly would increase from 28 percent to between 33 and 37 percent (Table VI.1).

Table VI.1. National FSP Participation Rates for the Elderly

	2002 (Actual)[a]	With 20 Percent Participation Increase	With 35 Percent Participation Increase
Eligible Households with Elderly	5,426,610	5,426,610	5,426,610
Participating Households with Elderly	1,502,654	1,803,185	2,028,583
Change		+300,531	+525,929
Participation Rate	27.7	33.2	37.4
Change		+5.5	+9.7

[a]Source: Cunnyngham 2004

The analysis of all three of the demonstration models showed evidence of large increases in elderly participation, suggesting that multiple approaches can be used. The simplified eligibility demonstration in Florida resulted in relatively large participation impacts in two counties. The burden of the application process was reduced substantially because clients were not required to travel to the local FSP office for an interview or to provide documentation of income and expenses. The application assistance demonstrations in Arizona and Maine also showed the potential for large increases in elderly participation, as seniors found the assistants to be extremely helpful in navigating the application process. The commodity alternative benefit demonstration in North Carolina was popular both among new applicants and among existing FSP participants. Clients eligible for low FSP benefits were more likely to get the commodity packages, which had a retail value substantially greater than their FSP benefits.

The Dollar Cost of Success Can Be Significant

Each of the demonstrations served a relatively large number of elderly clients. However, many were providing services to clients that probably would have participated in the FSP even in the absence of the demonstration. Since the primary objective of these demonstrations was to bring more seniors into the program, it makes sense to examine the dollar cost of success, and, as we discovered, this cost can be significant.

For each net new elderly household (that is, households that would not have participated in the absence of the demonstration), the demonstration costs ran from $400 to $4,000. Each demonstration model is associated with economies of scale that would likely reduce these per-impact costs were the demonstrations expanded (although the degree to which they are reduced depends on the demonstration's variable costs such as labor and food distribution equipment). Whether the demonstration costs are ultimately high enough to argue against replication depends on how policymakers value both the increase in elderly participation and the other benefits of the demonstrations. While the costs per net new household may be high, the benefit of increased elderly participation combined with the benefit of services provided to the elderly caseload in general may justify those costs.

Application Burden Is a Barrier to Seniors

The evaluation results suggest that the burden of applying for benefits posed a significant barrier to participation. The tasks of completing the application form and assembling the necessary supporting documentation constituted some of this application burden. Additional burden came from the interactions with FSP staff. Seniors were leery of having to go to the local FSP office, in part because of the treatment they anticipated from office staff. Moreover, they found the eligibility interviews intrusive, even if they were conducted over the phone. All of these factors combined posed a barrier that many seniors appeared unwilling to cross. Indeed, the fact that the two demonstration models designed in part to reduce application burden—simplified eligibility and application assistance—both showed impacts on participation supports the conclusion that application burden was a true barrier.

Stigma may also play a role in deterring seniors from the FSP. The focus groups suggested that substantial numbers of seniors reacted strongly to the stigma associated with FSP participation. In particular, seniors described the anxiety of using FSP benefits in stores, where they felt shoppers and store clerks looked down on them. While the degree to which these issues preclude seniors from participation is unknown, the concern among seniors is common.

Combined, the burden of applying for benefits and the stigma of participating created both financial and nonfinancial costs associated with applying to the FSP. Seniors were aware of these costs, and for many of these seniors, these costs were substantial relative to the size of the FSP benefit they expected.

Participation Impacts Come from Changing Clients' Costs and/or Benefits of FSP Participation

The demonstrations increased elderly FSP participation by changing the economic cost-benefit equation seniors faced. In focus groups, many seniors indicated that, prior to the demonstrations they were unwilling to apply for food stamps because the benefits they would receive were not worth the burden of applying. Either through reducing the costs of applying (in simplified eligibility and application assistance demonstrations) or through increasing the benefits of participating (in commodity alternative benefit demonstrations), the demonstrations changed the equation so that the benefits of participating outweighed the costs of applying.

This relationship is shown in part by the fact that efforts to lower these costs attracted the most cost-sensitive populations to the FSP. For households that were eligible only for a $10 benefit, the costs of applying for food stamps—including the burdens of completing the application paperwork, assembling documentation, and dealing with the local FSP office—did not need to be very high to outweigh the $10 in assistance per month. The application assistance demonstrations reduced those costs, however and, as a result, led to a large in crease in clients eligible for $10 in FSP benefits.

Likewise, the demonstrations attracted disproportionate shares of seniors at the older end of the age distribution. These seniors were more likely to have cognitive or physical limitations that made the burden of applying for benefits more significant. Again, the Application Assistance—and potentially the Simplified Eligibility—demonstrations were able to reduce these barriers enough so that more seniors from this category entered the FSP.

The commodity alternative benefit demonstration worked, in part, by affecting the other side of the equation: program benefits. The demonstrations attracted a particularly large share of clients eligible for the $10 benefit because the retail value of the commodity packages were worth $60 to $70.

The implication of these results is that more seniors can be encouraged to participate in the FSP if the benefits outweigh the costs. The findings underscore the fact that the cost-benefit equation for seniors is different than that of other populations eligible for food stamps. Seniors face more costs in part because of cognitive and physical limitations, as well as a potentially higher sensitivity to stigma. Seniors also tend to face lower benefits because income from other sources, such as Social Security, often leaves them eligible for as little as $10 a month.

The Demonstration Models Have Different Strengths and Weaknesses

While the demonstration models all showed the capacity to attract more seniors to the FSP, the models operated very differently nevertheless. These differences account for the differences in strengths and weakness from one model to the next (Table VI.2). These differences are also important considerations for policymakers as they design programs to increase elderly FSP participation in the future.

Table VI.2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Elderly Nutrition Demonstration Models

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Simplified Eligibility	• Least costly • Easiest model to implement • Reduces clients' application burdens • Simplifies workload for caseworkers	• Potential errors in benefit determination • May not reach clients with substantial cognitive or physical limitations
Application Assistance	• Reduces clients' application burdens • Can reach clients with substantial cognitive or physical limitations • Simplifies workload for caseworkers • Can provide access to multiple assistance programs	• Labor-intensive • More costly than Simplified Eligibility • Effectiveness is highly sensitive to the abilities of application assistants • May provide services to clients that do not need them
Commodity Alternative Benefit	• Reduces stigma of in-store use of FSP benefits • May be less burdensome than grocery shopping for some seniors	• Most costly demonstration • Commodity distribution process is complicated and can be inconvenient to clients • Reduces clients' flexibility with respect to food choices

Simplified Eligibility Model

The simplified eligibility demonstration model in Florida appeared to be the most cost-effective of the three models. It attracted a relatively large number of new FSP clients through a change in eligibility rules and basic outreach activities. As a result, the start-up and ongoing costs of the demonstration were relatively low. The model also helped to reduce the workload of FSP caseworkers, since the eligibility interviews were waived, diminishing the among of work needed to verify income and expense information.

This model was not, however, without its weaknesses. First, while there was little evidence that clients misused the simplified rules, there was a potential for applicants to misreport income, assets, and expenses to become eligible or increase their benefits. Such actions would raise program costs and erode its integrity. Moreover, while the demonstration reduced the application burden for many seniors, it might not have reached the clients who need the most assistance with the application process. Indeed, clients with

substantial cognitive or physical limitations may still require some form of assistance in completing the application process even under the simplified rules.

Because this demonstration model was implemented in one site only, questions inevitably remain about whether the impacts observed in Florida could be expected in other locations. That the other demonstration models were tested in a very small number of sites notwithstanding, the fact that multiple sites were used made it easier to identify idiosyncrasies and increased confidence in the conclusions. Anyone interested in replicating the simplified eligibility model should bear in mind that the results are based on the experience of one demonstration only.

Application Assistance Model

The application assistance demonstrations reduced the burden of applying and improved the clients' understanding of the eligibility process. In some cases, particularly when assistance was provided in the home, the demonstration was able to better serve clients with cognitive or physical limitations. Moreover, like the simplified eligibility demonstration, the waived eligibility interview and reduced paperwork eased the FSP caseworkers' workload.

However, the application assistance model is significantly more labor-intensive than the simplified eligibility model. As a result, it also is more costly. While two of the application assistance demonstrations effected large increases in FSP participation, the costs amounted to several hundreds of dollars per application and upwards of $2,000 for each net new household that would not have participated otherwise. Another weakness of this approach may be that expensive services were, in some cases, provided to clients that would have applied for benefits anyway despite the fact that they did not qualify for assistance. Also, its effectiveness is contingent on the ability of demonstration staff to communicate well with seniors and, to some degree, on their ability to be persuasive. As a result, the successful replication of these demonstrations means hiring effective, and hence possibly expensive, staff.

Compared to the demonstrations in Arizona and Maine, the demonstration in Michigan adopted a somewhat different approach to application assistance by basing it in community centers. Unfortunately, the circumstances in Michigan, most notably the closing of key senior centers involved in the demonstration, limit our ability to draw conclusions about the efficacy of this approach, since those closures likely hampered the demonstration's effectiveness from the start. However, even after accounting for these closings, we would have expected to see larger impacts from the Michigan demonstration if it were as effective as the other application assistance demonstrations. The other factors limiting the effectiveness of the Michigan demonstration are not clear. The limited impact could suggest that the senior center-based approach is not a good way to reach the eligible elderly, or that providing application assistance in an urban area is inherently more difficult than an rural area. More testing of the Michigan approach would improve our understanding of its effectiveness.

Commodity Alternative Benefit Model

The commodity alternative benefit model was developed to test whether commodity packages would prove more attractive to seniors than traditional FSP benefits, in part because the commodity demonstrations may carry less stigma than participating in the FSP. The packages did appeal to many seniors. Seniors appear to be attracted to the commodity programs because they received more food than they would have with traditional FSP benefits. In addition, receiving food through the commodity alternative benefit demonstration may be less burdensome for seniors than grocery shopping is. While the demonstration may also reduce the stigma associated with using FSP benefits in stores, this did not appear a major factor in seniors' participation decisions.

The weaknesses of the commodity alternative benefit model stem from its costs and complexity. Unlike the other demonstration models, which are structured to serve clients at the time of application, the commodity alternative benefit model provides services to clients each month that they are enrolled. Moreover, the process of distributing commodities can become extremely complicated and difficult to coordinate. Finally, while the commodity packages can increase the quantity of food available to seniors, it obviously reduces their flexibility to choose the foods they want. This issue helps to explain why many seniors did not participate in the demonstration and suggests that any future efforts to replicate the commodity demonstrations should, like the demonstrations, continue to make traditional FSP benefits an option.

Several lessons emerge from the commodity demonstrations. First, the quality of the service provided appears to affect success. The North Carolina demonstration operated in a customer-friendly environment defined largely by effective communication with clients and a relatively smooth distribution process. The Connecticut demonstration, on the other hand, was arguably less customer-friendly, leaving some clients confused and frustrated with the process. Part of this difference may reflect the difficulties inherent in providing customer-friendly service in a large urban area.

The second lesson of the commodity demonstrations, evident in both programs, is that commodity distribution is an expensive process that involves substantial labor costs as well the fixed costs of storing and distributing commodities.

The third and final lesson is that while commodity benefits may appeal to some seniors, others would prefer to receive traditional FSP benefits, which allow them to purchase the types and brands of foods they like most.

Conditions for Effective Replication

The lessons learned from the experiences of the individual Elderly Nutrition Demonstrationss suggest that several conditions must be in place for replications of these demonstrations to be successful. As noted above, the basic condition is that the efforts must make the costs of applying less than the benefits of participating. Other conditions for success also exist, however.

First, the results of the various demonstrations underscore the importance of outreach. It is unrealistic to expect any of these demonstration models to have much of an impact on rates of participation unless seniors are made aware of the demonstration services and program benefits. Each of the successful demonstrations included expanded efforts to inform seniors about the availability of food assistance benefits (although some did not mention the FSP specifically). In several cases efforts to market the program without using the term "food stamps" appeared successful (such as the public service announcement used in Florida, or the multi-program approach used in Maine). Future initiatives aimed at increasing elderly FSP participation must involve effective approaches for informing seniors about the availability of program benefits and about changes made in the program to better accommodate seniors.

A second factor necessary for successful replication is effective staff. This is most important for efforts that involve direct contact with seniors, but also relates to other activities, such as the development of effective outreach and ongoing commodity distribution. The disparate outcomes of the two demonstration counties in Arizona show how different staff implementing the same procedures can have very different results. In designing future efforts, consideration should be given to whether the types of staff needed to make the effort effective are available.

For Commodity Alternative Benefit demonstrations, an efficient and user-friendly distribution process also is needed for successful replication. If the process is not user-friendly, clients easily can become frustrated, and the costs of participating may again outweigh the benefits. With respect to replication, there likely is not a one-size-fits-all approach to the efficient distribution of commodities. The process employed in the North Carolina demonstration, which was centralized and well-liked by clients, would probably not have worked well in a large urban area like Hartford, because the number of clients served could potentially overwhelm the simple distribution process. However, the experience in the Connecticut demonstration showed that increasing the complexity of the distribution process can create other problems that frustrate clients. In short, the distribution process must be tailored to the circumstances of the community served.

EBT May Reduce Stigma for Seniors

A common perception among FSP staff is that seniors find EBT cards frustrating because of difficulties in identifying how much in benefits is available, because using the cards requires seniors to memorize their personal identification numbers, and because seniors must use the EBT technology at the check-out line in grocery stores. While discussions with seniors as part of this evaluation confirmed that EBT was a source of frustration because of these issues, an important finding from these discussions was that most seniors still appear to prefer the EBT cards over traditional FSP benefits.

A major factor that makes EBT cards appealing to seniors is that the cards reduce the stigma of participating in the program. The fact that using public assistance benefits is almost indistinguishable from using debit or credit cards is well received by seniors. When using EBT cards, seniors are less concerned about what other shoppers or even grocery

store clerks think. Indeed, many seniors suggested that more of their peers might participate in the FSP if they simply knew that benefits could be used in this discreet way. In fact, in Florida, the successful televised promotional announcement that was created for the demonstration prominently featured the EBT card. This suggests that future outreach efforts to seniors should consider promoting the fact that benefits are provided via EBT. It may also imply that using commodity packages or other efforts to reduce the stigma of receiving food stamps may not be necessary if EBT cards achieve the same goal.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of this evaluation raised additional research questions about effective approaches for increasing elderly participation. These questions could not be answered, given the limited number of demonstrations that were examined. Nevertheless, policymakers should consider these issues in designing efforts to increase elderly participation in the future.

Which Seniors Are Not Reached by These Demonstrations?

Even the largest impact estimates suggested by the evaluation results—increasing participation by 35 percent in 21 months—did not bring elderly FSP participation rates in line with those of other FSP-eligible groups. A 35 percent increase in participation would raise the participation rate from the current estimate of about 28 percent to 37 percent, meaning that 63 percent of seniors would still not be participating. It is likely that participation rates would continue to rise as the successful demonstrations continued to operate. However, there may still be types of seniors not effectively reachable through simplified eligibility, application assistance and/or commodity benefits. Knowing the characteristics of these nonparticipants could help to develop even more effective efforts in the future. In this evaluation, we were able to examine only the characteristics of those reached by the demonstration, leaving uncertainty about the characteristics of those not reached.

Do Differences Between Urban and Rural Environments Play a Significant Role in the Effectiveness of the Demonstrations?

Among all the demonstration sites, only Leon County, Florida, Hartford, Connecticut, and Genesee County, Michigan contained relatively large urban areas. Of these, the impact of the demonstration in Michigan is substantially smaller than those of other demonstrations, and the demonstration in Connecticut had little or no impact on elderly participation. It is possible that the complications associated with providing services to a large, densely populated area limited the effectiveness of these demonstrations. In Leon County, where large impacts were observed, such complicating factors were minimal, since in-person services were not provided. Moreover, demonstration impacts observed in rural areas might have been partially attributable to what is sometimes perceived as a more friendly culture in rural areas. Unfortunately, without more demonstrations, it is difficult to tell whether these policies are less effective in urban areas, all else being equal.

To What Degree Can Outreach Alone Explain Some of the Observed Impacts?

Focus groups with seniors confirmed previous research findings that many seniors either did not know about the FSP program, or more commonly, were unaware that they were eligible. In some cases, outreach alone may have been sufficient to encourage more seniors to participate, but we believe that the bulk of the impacts were due to the demonstration services provided. While outreach can inform more seniors about the availability of the program, it does little to change the relative costs and benefits of participating. However, knowing the degree to which outreach alone would have raised participation in these sites—and whether it would have raised participation at all—would be valuable to state and local officials looking for effective strategies for increasing elderly participation in the FSP.

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APPENDIX A

COMMODITY PACKAGE CONTENTS AND COMPARABLE PRICES

In the two Commodity Alternative Benefit demonstrations, the commodity packages were designed to provide a nutritious diet and meet the needs and preferences of the elderly. This appendix presents examples of the various commodity packages and provides estimates of the prices clients would pay in a local grocery store were they to purchase all of the items in a package. (This is the "comparable price" of the commodity package.)

In Connecticut, clients could choose from among three package options: (1) the regular commodity package, (2) the Latino commodity package, and (3) the Meals on Wheels (MOW) commodity package. The Latino commodity package was tailored to the preferences of Hispanic clients, and the MOW package was designed to supplement the food seniors received through the Meals on Wheels program. For each of these options, demonstration staff developed two packages (package I and package II) and alternated between packages from month to month. The regular and Latino packages were split into two "food baskets." One food basket was distributed in the first half of the month, and the other in the second half. The MOW package was distributed once a month.

In North Carolina, all clients received a standard package (no optional packages were developed). As in Connecticut, two versions of the package were developed and staff alternated between packages from month to month. The packages were distributed once a month.

The amount of food that could be included in the food packages was determined in part by the USDA guidelines for the demonstration. Demonstrations were not allowed to let the average cost to the demonstration of each package—including costs of the commodities, shipping, and storage—exceed the average benefit for which elderly FSP clients at the demonstration site had been eligible in the previous 12 months. In Connecticut, this limit was $43 in the first year of the demonstration, and $46 in the second year; in North Carolina, the limit was $38 in the first year of the demonstration and $39 in the second year. USDA also required that the package contents be consistent with the Food Guide Pyramid.

For each demonstration, comparable prices for all commodity package contents were collected from a grocery store located within the area covered by that demonstration site. For most items, the prices reflected the lowest cost option for a particular good. However, when the brand and size of a package item could be matched exactly in the local grocery store, the price of that brand item was used to compute a comparable price. Prices listed in the following tables reflect packages distributed in the first year of the demonstrations.

Table B.1 presents the comparable prices for the various commodity packages in Connecticut and North Carolina. In Connecticut, the average package would have cost clients about $58 if they had purchased all of the contents in a local grocery store. The packages differed in comparable price between the two monthly alternatives, with the package in one month having a comparable price substantially higher than the other. In North Carolina, the comparable price of the package contents was about $70 per month.

Tables B.2 through B.7 present the contents of typical commodity packages in Connecticut, and Tables B.8 and B.9 present the contents of typical commodity packages in North Carolina. For each item in a package, the tables show the comparable prices obtained from local grocery stores. Note: throughout the demonstration, changes were made to the items included in the package as different items became available from USDA.

Table A.1: Summary of Commodity Package Comparable Prices Connecticut and North Carolina

	Comparable Price
Connecticut	
Regular Package I	$68.78
Regular Package II	49.23
Average	59.00
Latino Package I	67.76
Latino Package II	47.18
Average	57.47
MOW Package I	61.85
MOW Package II	54.03
Average	57.94
Average Across Options	58.14
North Carolina	
Package I	68.55
Package II	71.70
Average	70.13

Source: Price data collected at local grocery stores.

Table A.2: Contents and Comparable Prices, Connecticut Regular Package I

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Food Basket A				
Canned Vegetables				
Green Beans	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Kernel Corn	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Mixed vegetables (A)	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Spinach	15.5 oz. can		0.79	
Mixed vegetables (B)	15.5 oz. can	5 Cans	0.73	
Carrots	15.5 oz. can	(Total)	0.73	
Sweet potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Tomatoes	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.73	3.50
Canned Juices				
Orange	46 oz. can	2 Cans	3.49	
Pineapple	46 oz. can	(Total)	2.09	5.58
Prunes	1 lb. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Tomato soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	0.79	0.79
Vegetable soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	1.19	1.19
Egg mix	6 oz. package	1 package	5.99	5.99
Canned stew	24 oz. can	2 cans	2.49	4.98
Canned tuna	12 oz. can	1 can	3.29	9.87
Macaroni and cheese	26 oz. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Unsalted crackers	16 oz. package	1 package	0.59	0.59
Evaporated milk	12 fl. oz. can	1 can	0.50	0.50
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET A				*36.99*
Food Basket B				
Canned Fruits				
Applesauce	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Fruit cocktail	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Peaches	15.5 oz. can	5 Cans	1.59	
Pears	15.5 oz. can	(Total)	1.29	
Pineapple	15.5 oz. can		1.98	
Apricots	15.5 oz. can		1.29	7.28
Corn Squares Cereal	16 oz. box	1 box	3.29	3.29
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can	2 cans	0.99	1.98
Canned vegetarian beans	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.89	0.89
Egg noodles	1 lb. package	1 package	1.99	1.99
Spaghetti	2 lb. package	1 package	0.99	0.99
Farina	14 oz. package	1 package	1.39	1.39
American cheese	2 lb. block	1 block	6.58	6.58
Bakery mix	5 lb. package	1 package	4.23	4.23
Peanut butter	18 oz. jar (1 lb.)	2 jars	1.59	3.18
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET A				*31.79*
TOTAL				68.78

Table A.3: Contents and Comparable Prices, Connecticut Regular Package II

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Food Basket A				
Canned Vegetables				
Green beans	15.5 oz. can	5 Cans (Total)	0.25	
Kernel corn	15.5 oz.. can		0.25	
Mixed vegetables (A)	15.5 oz can		0.25	
Spinach	15.5 oz. can		0.79	
Mixed vegetables (B)	15.5 oz. can		0.73	
Carrots	15.5 oz. can		0.73	
Sweet potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Tomatoes	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.73	3.50
Canned Juices				
Grape	46 oz. can	1 can	1.79	1.79
Raisins	15 oz. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Dehydrated potatoes	1 lb. package	1 package	3.69	3.69
Tomato soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Vegetable soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	1.19	1.19
Canned refried beans	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Egg mix	6 oz. package	1 package	5.99	5.99
Canned stew	24 oz. can	1 can	2.49	2.49
Canned tuna	12 oz. can	1 can	3.29	6.58
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET A				*29.21*
Food Basket B				
Canned Fruits				
Applesauce	15.5 oz can	5 Cans (Total)	1.29	
Fruit cocktail	15.5 oz can		1.29	
Peaches	15.5 oz can		1.59	
Pears	15.5 oz can		1.29	
Pineapple	15.5 oz can		1.98	
Apricots	15.5 oz can		1.29	7.28
Dried beans				
Great Northern	2 lb. bag	1 bag	1.58	1.58
Cold cereal				
Bran Flakes	17.3 oz. box	1 box	3.99	3.99
Macaroni	1 lb. package	1 package	0.80	0.80
Rice	2 lb. package	1 package	0.89	0.89
Evaporated milk	12 fl. oz. can	1 can	0.50	0.50
Butter	1 lb. carton	1 carton	1.99	1.99
Roasted peanuts	18 oz. bag	1 bag	2.99	2.99
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET B				*20.02*
TOTAL				**49.23**

Table A.4: Contents and Comparable Prices, Connecticut Latino Package I

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Food Basket A				
Canned Vegetables				
Green beans	15.5 oz. can	5 Cans (Total)	0.25	
Kernel corn	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Mixed vegetables (A)	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Spinach	15.5 oz. can		0.79	
Mixed vegetables (B)	15.5 oz. can		0.73	
Carrots	15.5 oz. can		0.73	
Sweet potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Tomatoes	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.73	3.50
Canned Juices				
Orange	46 oz. can	2 Cans (Total)	3.49	
Pineapple	46 oz. can		2.09	5.58
Prunes	1 lb. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Tomato soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Vegetable soup	10.5 oz. can	2 cans	1.19	2.38
Egg mix	15.5 oz. can	2 cans	5.99	11.98
Canned tuna	6 oz. package	3 packages	2.39	7.17
Unsalted crackers	24 oz. can	1 can	0.59	0.59
Evaporated milk	12 oz. can	1 can	0.50	0.50
Beef stew		1 can	2.49	2.49
Cornmeal	5 lbs bag	1 bag	1.99	1.99
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET A				*39.17*
Food Basket B				
Canned Fruits				
Applesauce	15.5 oz. can	5 Cans (Total)	1.29	
Fruit cocktail	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Peaches	15.5 oz. can		1.59	
Pears	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Pineapple	15.5 oz. can		1.98	
Apricots	15.5 oz. can		1.29	7.28
Dried beans				
Pinto	2 lbs. bag	One Bag	1.30	
Great Northern			1.58	
Kidney			1.18	
Lima			1.58	1.41
Corn Squares Cereal	16 oz. box	1 box	3.29	3.29
Dehydrated potatoes	1 lb. package	1 package	3.69	3.69
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can	2 cans	0.99	1.98
Canned vegetarian beans	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.89	0.89
Canned refried beans	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Rice	2 lb. package	1 can	0.89	0.89
Peanut butter	18 oz. jar	1 jar	1.59	1.59
American cheese	2 lb. block	1 block	6.58	6.58
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET B				*28.59*
TOTAL				**67.76**

Table A.5: Contents and Comparable Prices, Connecticut Latino Package II

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Food Basket A				
Canned Vegetables				
Mixed vegetables (A)	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Kernel corn	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Peas	15.5 oz. can		0.25	
Spinach	15.5 oz. can		0.79	
Mixed vegetables (B)	15.5 oz. can	4 Cans	0.73	
Carrots	15.5 oz. can	(Total)	0.73	
Sweet potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Tomatoes	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can		0.99	
Potatoes	15.5 oz. can		0.73	2.80
Canned Juices				
Grapefruit	46 oz. can	1 can	3.49	3.49
Tomato soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Vegetable soup	10.5 oz. can	1 can	1.19	1.19
Egg mix	6 oz. package	1 package	5.99	5.99
Canned tuna	12 oz. can	2 cans	3.29	6.58
Macaroni and cheese	26 oz. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Peanut Butter		1 jar	1.59	1.59
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET A				*24.63*
Food Basket B				
Canned Fruits				
Applesauce	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Fruit cocktail	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Peaches	15.5 oz. can	6 Cans	1.59	
Pears	15.5 oz. can	(Total)	1.29	
Pineapple	15.5 oz. can		1.98	
Apricots	15.5 oz. can		1.29	8.73
Dried beans				
Great Northern	2 lbs. Bag	1 bag	1.58	1.58
Cold Cereal				
Bran Flakes	17.3 oz. box	1 box	3.99	3.99
Raisins	15 oz. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Canned vegetarian beans	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.89	0.89
Canned refried beans	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Rice	2 lb. package	1 package	0.89	0.89
Evaporated milk	12 fl. oz. can	1 can	0.50	0.50
Butter	1 lb. carton	1 carton	1.99	1.99
SUBTOTAL, FOOD BASKET B				*22.55*
TOTAL				**47.18**

Table A.6: Contents and Comparable Prices, Connecticut Meals-on-Wheels Package I

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Canned Vegetables				
Mixed vegetables	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.73	0.73
Canned Fruits				
Applesauce	15.5 oz. can	6 Cans (Total)	1.29	
Fruit cocktail	15.5 oz. can		1.59	
Peaches	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Pears	15.5 oz. can		1.98	
Pineapple	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Apricots	15.5 oz. can		1.29	8.73
Canned Juices				
Apple	46 oz. can	3 Cans (Total)	1.79	
Pineapple	46 oz. can		2.09	
Orange	46 oz. can		3.49	7.37
Cold Cereal				
Bran Flakes	17.3 oz. box	2 Boxes (Total)	3.99	
Corn Squares	16 oz. box		3.29	7.28
Prunes	1 lb. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Tomato sauce	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.99	0.99
Tomato soup	10.5 oz. can	2 cans	0.99	1.98
Vegetable soup	10.5 oz. can	3 cans	1.19	3.57
Egg mix	6 oz. package	1 package	5.99	5.99
Canned tuna	12 oz. can	3 cans	3.29	9.87
Unsalted crackers	16 oz. package	1 package	0.59	0.59
Evaporated milk	12 fl. oz. can	1 can	0.50	0.50
American cheese	2 lb. block	1 block	6.58	6.58
Beef stew	24 oz. can	1 can	2.49	2.49
Peanut butter	18 oz. jar	3 jars	1.59	3.18
TOTAL				**61.85**

Table A.7: Contents and Comparable Prices, Connecticut Meals on-Wheels Package II

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Canned Vegetables				
Mixed vegetables	15.5 oz. can	1 can	0.73	0.73
Canned Fruits				
Applesauce	15.5 oz. can	6 Cans (Total)	1.29	
Fruit cocktail	15.5 oz. can		1.59	
Peaches	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Pears	15.5 oz. can		1.98	
Pineapple	15.5 oz. can		1.29	
Apricots	15.5 oz. can		1.29	8.73
Canned Juices				
Apple	46 oz. can	3 Cans (Total)	1.79	
Orange	46 oz. can		3.49	
Grape	46 oz. can		1.79	7.07
Cold Cereal				
Bran Flakes	17.3 oz. box	2 Boxes (Total)	3.99	
Corn Squares	16 oz. box		3.29	7.28
Raisins	15 oz. package	1 package	2.00	2.00
Tomato soup	10.5 oz. can	3 cans	0.99	2.97
Vegetable soup	10.5 oz. can	2 cans	1.19	2.38
Egg mix	6 oz. package	1 package	5.99	5.99
Canned tuna	12 oz. can	2 cans	3.29	6.58
Unsalted crackers	16 oz. package	1 package	0.59	0.59
Evaporated milk	12 fl. oz. can	1 can	0.50	0.50
Butter	1 lb. carton	1 carton	1.99	1.99
Bakery mix	5 lb. package	1 package	4.23	4.23
Roasted Peanuts	18 oz package	1 package	2.99	2.99
TOTAL				**54.03**

Table A.8: Contents and Comparable Price, North Carolina Regular Package I

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Vegetables				
Green Beans	14.5 oz.	3 cans	0.69	2.07
Carrots	14.5 oz.	1 can	0.59	0.59
Kernel Corn	15.25 oz.	2 cans	0.59	1.18
Mixed Vegetables	15 oz.	2 cans	0.75	1.50
Spaghetti Sauce	15 oz.	2 cans	1.29	2.58
Potatoes/Sliced	14.5 oz.	2 cans	0.69	1.38
Sweet Potatoes	15 oz.	1 can	0.82	0.82
Tomatoes	14.5 oz.	1 can	1.05	1.05
Soup-Vegetable Low Salt	10.5 oz.	2 cans	0.99	1.98
Canned Juices				
Orange	46 oz. can	2 Cans	1.89	
Grape	46 oz. can	(Total)	1.99	3.88
Fruits				
Applesauce	15 oz. can	2 cans	0.64	1.27
Peaches	15 oz. can	2 cans	1.19	2.38
Pears	15 oz. can	2 cans	1.19	2.38
Pineapple	20 oz. can	1 can	0.85	0.85
Raisins	15 oz. can	1 can	0.89	0.89
Meat				
Beef, frozen ground	16 oz.	2 packages	1.89	3.78
Chicken, frozen	Approx. 4 lbs	1 package	3.96	3.96
Beef Stew, canned	24 oz.	1 can	1.49	1.49
Dry Beans				
Pinto	36 oz.	1 package	1.55	
Peanut butter	18 oz.	1 package	2.09	
Peanuts, roasted	12 oz.	1 package	1.96	5.60
Cheese, Processed	36 oz.	1 block	4.47	4.47
Evaporated Milk	12 oz.	1 can	1.39	1.39
Instant Nonfat Dry Milk	25.6 oz.	1 box	4.10	4.10
Crackers, unsalted	16 oz.	1 box	1.99	1.99
Egg Noodles	16 oz.	1 package	1.09	1.09
Quick Oats	42 oz.	1 package	2.39	2.39
Bakery Mix	5 lbs.	1 package	3.44	3.44
Spaghetti	32 oz.	1 package	1.99	1.99
Cereal, Corn Flakes	18 oz.	1 box	2.89	2.89
Vegetable Oil	2.9 lbs.	1 bottle	2.29	2.29
Butter	16 oz.	1 block	2.99	2.99
TOTAL				**68.55**

Table A.9: Contents and Comparable Price, North Carolina Regular Package II

	Size	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
Vegetables				
Green Beans	14.5 oz.	2 cans	0.69	1.38
Carrots	14.5 oz.	2 cans	0.59	1.18
Kernel Corn	15.25 oz.	1 can	0.59	0.59
Mixed Vegetables	15 oz.	1 can	0.75	0.75
Peas	15 oz.	2 cans	0.59	1.17
Spaghetti Sauce	15 oz.	1 can	1.29	1.29
Potatoes (dehydrated)	16 oz.	1 can	1.99	1.99
Sweet Potatoes	15 oz.	2 cans	0.82	1.64
Tomato Sauce	15 oz.	2 cans	0.49	0.98
Soup-Vegetable Low Salt	10.5 oz.	2 cans	0.99	1.98
Cream Style Corn	15 oz.	1 can	0.69	0.69
Canned Juices				
Cran-Apple	46 oz. can	2 cans	1.99	3.98
Pineapple	46 oz. can	1 can	1.79	1.79
Fruits				
Fruit Cocktail	15 oz. can	2 cans	0.89	1.78
Prunes	16 oz. can	1 can	2.29	2.29
Pears	15 oz. can	3 cans	1.19	3.57
Raisins	15 oz. can	1 can	0.89	0.89
Meat				
Beef, frozen	16 oz.	1 package	1.39	1.39
Chicken, frozen	Approx. 4 lbs	1 package	5.16	5.16
Beef, canned	29 oz.	1 can	3.38	3.38
Tuna, canned	12 oz.	1 can	1.49	1.49
Dry Beans				
Great Northern	32 oz.	1 can	1.58	1.58
Cheese, Processed	36 oz.	1 block	4.47	4.47
Evaporated Milk	12 oz.	1 can	0.89	0.89
Egg Noodles	16 oz.	1 package	1.09	1.09
Bakery Mix	5 lbs.	1 package	3.44	3.44
Macaroni and Cheese	26 oz.	1 package	2.37	2.37
Spaghetti	32 oz.	1 package	1.99	1.99
Rice	32 oz.	1 package	0.96	0.96
Cereal, Oat Circles	15 oz.	1 box	3.29	3.29
Cereal, Rice Crisps	15 oz.	1 box	3.99	3.99
Shortening	3 lbs.	1 package	3.69	3.69
Butter	16 oz.	1 block	2.99	2.99
Corn Syrup	24 oz.	1 bottle	1.59	1.59
TOTAL				**71.70**

APPENDIX B

SELECTION OF COMPARISON SITES

The ideal comparison sites for each demonstration are those locations that would experience the same trends in elderly FSP participation as the demonstration site, all else being equal (that is, they would reflect the trends of the demonstration site if the demonstration was never implemented). In designing this evaluation, we identified for each demonstration up to 10 comparison sites in the same state that we expected would experience similar participation patterns.

The process of identifying comparison sites involved two steps. The first step was to use a "similarity index" (defined below) to identify preliminary comparison sites—sites that were most similar to the pilot site based on key observable characteristics. The second step was to discuss with state officials the preliminary comparison sites to determine whether these sites differ from the pilot sites in terms of characteristics not easily measured by the similarity index.

To construct the similarity index for each possible comparison site, we selected six key characteristics that are correlated with changes in elderly FSP participation:

1. The number of elderly FSP participants at the site in a specific month of 2001[1]
2. The percentage change in elderly FSP participation from 2000 to 2001[2]
3. The percentage of all elderly individuals at the site that participate in the FSP[3]
4. The percentage of all individuals at the site that are elderly[4]

[1]Measures of elderly FSP participation were obtained from the state food stamp programs. The counts typically referred to one month in the fall of 2001.

[2]Measures of the change in elderly FSP participation were calculated by using elderly participation counts from the same months of 2000 and 2001. Elderly participation counts were obtained from the state food stamp programs.

[3]The percent of elderly that participate in the FSP was calculated using administrative counts of the number of elderly participants divided by the total number of elderly individuals in the site (obtained from the 2000 decennial Census).

5. The percentage of all individuals at the site that are nonwhite[5]

6. The population density of the site[6]

Sites that are similar along these six characteristics are more likely to have similar changes in the elderly FSP caseload over time.

The similarity index was designed to rank all sites in each state based on how similar they are to the pilot site. The index accounted for differences across sites in the size and range of values for each characteristic. The differences were calculated as absolute values, so that a difference in one direction for one characteristic did not compensate for a difference in the reverse direction on another item.

Additionally, the differences in the characteristic values were measured in relative terms. Specifically, we divided each absolute difference by the total range in values (computed over the potential comparison sites and the demonstration site). The advantage of this process was that if the pilot site had the maximum (minimum) value on the characteristic, a comparison site with the minimum (maximum) value would receive a relative difference value of 1.0 (representing a 100 percent deviation from the demonstration site). Similarly, if the demonstration site had a middle value on the characteristic, a comparison site with a minimum or maximum value would receive a difference value of .50 (representing a 50 percent departure from the demonstration site). Hence, with this approach, the relative differences ranged from 0 to 1 and could be interpreted like a percentage that reflects the relative departure of the comparison site from the demonstration site in question. The contribution of each characteristic to the overall index was determined using a set of weights. The comparison site(s) with the lowest score on the index were estimated to be the comparison site(s) that most closely matched the demonstration site with respect to the considered factors.

Formally, this type of metric was computed as in equation (1) below.

$$(1) \qquad Index = \sum_i w_i \left[\frac{\left| X_{C,i} - X_{D,i} \right|}{X_{MAX,i} - X_{MIN,i}} \right]$$

(*continued*)

[4]The percent of the population that is elderly was calculated using data from the 2000 decennial Census. Elderly individuals are defined in the Census as people age 65 and over.

[5]The percent of the population that is nonwhite was calculated using data from the 2000 decennial Census.

[6]The population density, which is equal to the number of people per square mile, was calculated using data from the 2000 decennial census.

In equation (1), $X_{C,i}$ denotes the value for a specific characteristic (e.g., the number of elderly FSP participants), indexed by i, for a prospective comparison site. Likewise $X_{D,i}$ denotes the corresponding value from the demonstration site, and $X_{MAX,i}$ and $X_{MIN,i}$ denote the maximum and minimum values of this characteristic among all potential comparison sites (and the demonstration sites). Finally, w_i is the weight that each characteristic is given in computing the index.

The weights used in the similarity index reflected the relative amount of influence that a change in each characteristic was estimated to have in affecting elderly FSP participation. Using site-level data from the demonstration states, we estimated a regression equation to determine the relationship that each similarity index component characteristic had on changes in FSP participation. The coefficients from the regression equation were used to construct the weights for the similarity index. Formally, we estimated the following regression equation:

$$(2) \qquad \Delta P_i = \alpha X1_i + \delta X2_i + \phi X3_i + \gamma X4_i + \eta X5_i + \varpi X6_i + \varepsilon$$

where,

ΔPi = the change in elderly FSP participation from 2000 to 2001 at site *i*
$X1_i$ = the number of elderly FSP participants in 2000 at site *i*
$X2_i$ = the percent of all elderly that participated in the FSP in 2000 at site *i*
$X3_i$ = the percent change in elderly FSP participation from 1999 to 2000 at site *i*
$X4_i$ = the percent of the population that was nonwhite in 2000 at site *i*
$X5_i$ = the percent of the population that was elderly in 2000 at site *i*
$X6_i$ = the population density in 2000 at site *i*

Table B.1: Final Weights for Similarity Index

Characteristic	Weights for County Sites	Weights for Town Sites
Number of elderly FSP participants	0.10	0.18
Percent of all elderly that participated	0.26	0.34
Percent change in elderly FSP participation	0.16	0.21
Percent of the population that was nonwhite	0.27	0.10
Percent of the population that was elderly	0.14	0.12
Population density	0.07	0.05
N	210	156
R^2	0.1359	0.0950

Because these relationships could be affected by whether the pilot site is a county or a town, this regression was estimated twice: once to create weights for the five states that had county pilot sites (Arizona, Florida, Maine, Michigan, and North Carolina) and once to create weights for the state that had town pilot sites (Connecticut). The county-level

equation was estimated using data from all counties in Arizona, Florida, Maine, and North Carolina. (Michigan data were not available when these weights were created.) The town-level equation was estimated using data from all towns in Connecticut. Table B.1 presents the final weights developed through these equations.

In states with county pilot sites, the similarity index gave the most weight to the percent of the population that was nonwhite and the percent of all elderly that participated when identifying similar sites. In Connecticut, which had town pilot sites, the similarity index gave the most weight to three factors: the percent of all elderly that participated, the percent change in elderly participation, and the number of elderly participants.

To identify preliminary comparison sites for each pilot site, we selected those sites with the lowest similarity index score. When possible, we selected all counties with a similarity score lower than 10.0 (implying that the county's characteristics are 90 percent similar to those of the demonstration county). In two cases (Pinal County in Arizona and Waldo County in Maine), no counties had index scores below 10.0. For those counties, the comparison groups consisted of those counties with the lowest index scores.

We sent the list of preliminary comparison sites to the demonstration staff in each state. We then asked the staff to respond to questions such as:

- Do any of the preliminary comparison sites have different FSP service environments for the elderly? For example, are there any currently with elderly application procedures that differ from the procedures in the pilot site?

- Do any of the preliminary comparison sites have substantially different food stamp usage circumstances? For example, if the pilot site has an adequate number of grocery stores, are there any sites on the list with so few grocery stores as to be markedly different?

- Do any of the preliminary comparison sites have unique FSP outreach efforts that differ from outreach at the pilot site? For example, are there any sites with unique efforts to increase knowledge of FSP eligibility?

- Are any of the preliminary comparison sites significantly different from the pilot site in terms of complements and alternatives to the FSP? For example, is there any site with substantially more or fewer food pantries, congregate meal sites, Meals on Wheels, etc.?

- Is transportation to the FSP office for the elderly significantly easier or more complicated in any of the preliminary comparison sites than it is for elderly at the pilot site?

- Do any of the preliminary comparison sites not make a good comparison with the pilot site for some other reason?

- Are there any other sites in the state that are a good match with the pilot site?

- In general, state representatives identified few problems with the initial comparison site lists. One county in Michigan and one in Florida were removed as sites from the preliminary comparison group and the final comparison group was created for each pilot site. We did not add any sites based on comments from state staff. Table B.2 presents the similarity indexes of selected comparison sites for Arizona, Florida, Maine, Michigan, and North Carolina.

- In some cases, these original comparison sites were selected using data that was more than one year old. After the start of the demonstrations, the similarity index was reconstructed using updated data. In particular, county FSP participation data was used from the month immediately prior to the demonstration, and other county characteristics were updated using 2002 Census Bureau projections. In most cases, this led to little or no changes to the comparison group for each demonstration. In those instances where the comparison group was different under the revised criteria, using the revised group of comparison sites did not substantially alter the estimated participation impacts. In this report, findings are presented relative to the original comparison groups presented in Table B.2.

The process to select comparison sites for Connecticut's commodity alternative demonstration involved more steps than the process in other states because Connecticut's pilot was implemented in multiple towns, as opposed to one or two counties. The Community Resource Team (CRT) in Hartford distributed commodities for the demonstration. The CRT runs local Meals on Wheels (MOW) and congregate meal programs, and the demonstration built upon these existing programs. There are 19 towns in the Hartford region—including the city of Hartford—that have both MOW and congregate meal programs operated by the CRT. The Connecticut commodity alternative demonstration was designed to be implemented in 10 of these towns.

MPR worked with the demonstration staff to select the 10 pilot sites from the 19 potential sites. First, the city of Hartford was assigned to the pilot group, due to its size. The town of New Haven was selected as the comparison site for Hartford because no other Hartford area town could serve as a reasonable comparison site in terms of size and other characteristics. (For instance, New Haven has both congregate meals and MOW services.) Nine of the remaining 18 towns were then randomly selected to be pilot sites. Because the pool of potential pilot sites was small, and because comparisons were to be made between the nine pilot towns (excluding Hartford) and the nine Hartford-region comparison towns, we wanted to ensure that the pilot towns resembled the comparison towns. To do this, we

Table B.2: Similarity Index Scores and Comparison Groups

County	Similarity Index	Similarity Index Components: Elderly FSP Participants: Total	Elderly FSP Participants: Participation Rate	Elderly FSP Participants: Percent Change in Participation	Nonwhite Population (Percent)	Age 65+ Population (Percent)	Population Density
Arizona - Pinal County							
Pilot County							
Pinal County	0.0	638	2.0	11.1	29.6	16.2	34
Comparison Group							
Yuma County	5.5	756	2.9	5.9	31.7	16.5	29
Gila County	9.4	207	2.0	5.1	22.2	19.8	11
Mean	7.5	482	2.4	5.5	26.9	18.2	20
Arizona - Yavapai County							
Pilot County							
Yavapai County	0.0	449	1.2	14.8	8.1	22.0	21
Comparison Group							
Mohave County	4.8	663	2.1	13.3	9.9	20.5	12
Florida - Gadsden County							
Pilot County							
Gadsden County	0.0	594	6.1	-9.5	61.3	12.2	471
Comparison Group							
Jackson County	21.9	463	4.1	-5.9	29.8	14.6	404
Hamilton County	15.2	93	3.8	-7.9	41.2	11.2	87
Madison County	15.4	224	5.2	-2.6	42.5	14.6	191
Florida - Leon County							
Pilot County							
Leon County	0.0	877	2.9	-4.6	33.6	8.3	815
Comparison Group							
Alachua County	6.6	1,209	3.8	-3.0	26.5	9.6	971
Duval County	4.8	3,420	2.5	-0.4	34.2	10.5	2,946
Jackson County	8.0	463	4.1	-5.9	29.8	14.6	404
Escambia County	8.0	1,583	2.6	-0.7	27.6	13.3	1,347
Orange County	8.4	5,395	3.8	3.0	31.4	10.0	4,236
Hamilton County	8.7	93	3.8	-7.9	41.2	11.2	87
Hardee County	10.0	314	5.4	-5.1	29.3	13.9	214
Maine							
Pilot County							
Waldo County	0.0	511	10.4	-2.9	2.1	13.6	50
Comparison Group							
Franklin County	15.3	369	8.8	2.5	2.0	14.2	17
Michigan							
Pilot County							
Genesee	0.0	2,506	2.9	8.6	24.7	11.6	681
Comparison Group							
Saginaw	5.7	1,284	2.6	5.2	24.7	13.5	260
Ingham	6.1	1,334	2.9	6.3	20.5	9.4	500
Muskegon	8.4	1,182	3.0	13.2	18.7	12.9	334
Berrien	9.5	1,067	2.5	5.3	20.3	14.4	285
Kalamazoo	9.9	1,066	2.4	7.5	15.4	11.4	425
North Carolina							
Pilot County							
Alamance County	0.0	484	1.6	2.1	24.4	14.1	303
Comparison Group							
Rowan County	5.0	601	1.9	-1.3	20.0	14.0	255
Iredell County	7.6	326	1.4	-2.1	17.8	12.4	214
Stanly County	8.2	275	1.9	6.2	15.3	14.2	147
Cleveland County	8.2	755	3.5	1.6	23.2	13.5	208
Burke County	8.9	395	2.1	-1.5	14.0	13.4	176
Orange County	9.5	323	2.1	-2.1	22.0	8.4	296
Catawba County	9.7	657	2.4	4.8	15.0	12.3	354
Rockingham County	10.0	739	3.2	-3.3	22.7	14.8	162

constructed nine pairs of towns where each pair contained two towns that were similar to each other (similarity was measured using the similarity index). We then randomly selected one town from each pair to be a pilot site and the other to be a Hartford-region comparison site. Table B.3 shows the 10 pilot and 10 corresponding Hartford-region comparison sites.

In this report, the results for Connecticut were presented by pooling the demonstration towns and comparing the participation trends with the pooled comparison towns. Because so few elderly households enrolled in the commodity demonstration in Connecticut, there was little information gained by examining demonstration participation patterns by individual pairings.

Elderly participation trends in the comparison sites selected for each demonstration site are used to compute the impact estimates presented in Chapter III. While prior participation trends were not the only factor used to select comparison sites, they were a primary factor. In most cases, the participation patterns in these sites were similar to the patterns observed in the demonstration sites in the 9 months leading up to the demonstration (Figure B.1).[7] In particular, trends in comparison sites in Arizona (both counties), Florida (Gadsden County), Michigan and Connecticut were similar prior to the demonstration.

Table B.3: Matched Comparisons for Connecticut

Pair Number	Town	Group	Similarity Index[a]	Elderly FSP Participants			Nonwhite Population (Percent)	Age 65+ Population (Percent)	Population Density
				Total	Participation Rate	Percent Change in Participation			
1	Hartford	Pilot	33.9	2,695	21.1	0.3	78.3	9.8	7553
1	New Haven	Comparison	17.7	1,902	13.1	0.0	57.8	11.8	6529
2	Hebron	Comparison	99.8	3	0.6	-50.0	3.1	6.0	220
2	Stafford	Pilot	79.1	35	2.4	2.9	4.3	12.2	203
3	South Windsor	Pilot	78.5	28	1.2	7.7	8.9	10.4	809
3	Southington	Comparison	78.3	81	1.6	-4.7	3.9	13.4	1067
4	Enfield	Pilot	78.1	68	1.3	-5.6	7.7	12.8	1271
4	Plymouth	Comparison	76.0	22	1.4	15.8	2.3	12.8	556
5	Berlin	Comparison	75.7	20	0.7	0.0	4.2	16.8	655
5	East Windsor	Pilot	74.7	29	2.2	11.5	8.8	13.5	379
6	Bristol	Comparison	73.4	200	2.4	-8.7	7.6	14.3	2234
6	Windsor	Pilot	70.7	100	2.5	-2.0	27.2	14.7	930
7	Manchester	Pilot	70.2	197	2.5	1.0	11.0	15.1	1882
7	Vernon	Comparison	69.8	101	2.6	18.8	8.7	12.8	1675
8	Windsor Locks	Pilot	68.5	29	1.5	20.8	6.7	16.3	1325
8	Newington	Comparison	67.4	67	1.3	6.3	7.2	18.8	2138
9	East Hartford	Comparison	62.4	341	4.4	0.9	22.3	16.5	2630
9	Bloomfield	Pilot	59.7	111	2.9	0.0	49.6	20.3	731
10	West Hartford	Comparison	57.0	537	4.3	3.7	11.7	22.4	2548
10	New Britain	Pilot	48.8	781	6.7	3.3	32.9	16.6	5273

[a]Similarity determined relative to the distribution of characteristics across all sites, not relative to any particular site.

[7] Trends in Figure B.1 are based on participation levels measured in 3 month intervals.

Figure B.1: Pre-Demonstration Elderly Participation Trends In Demonstration and Comparison Sites

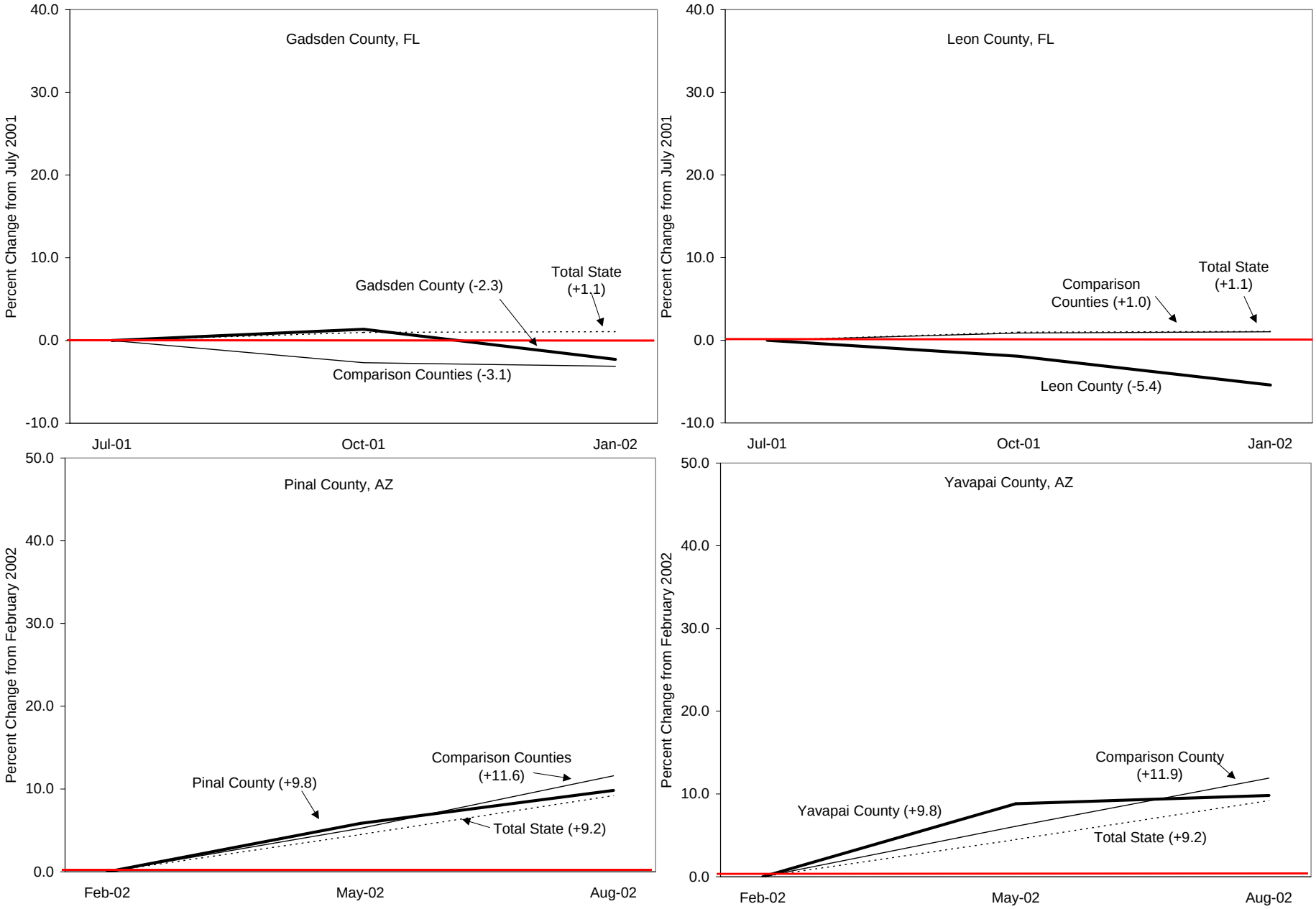
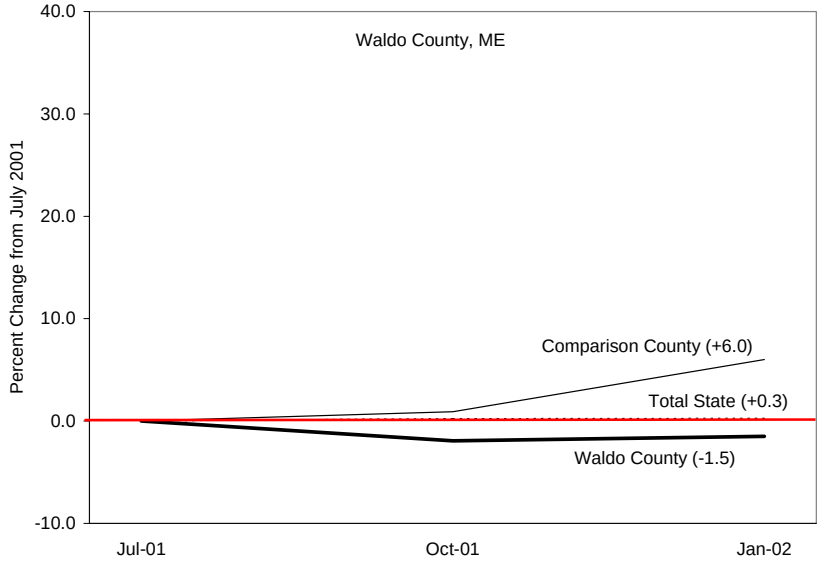
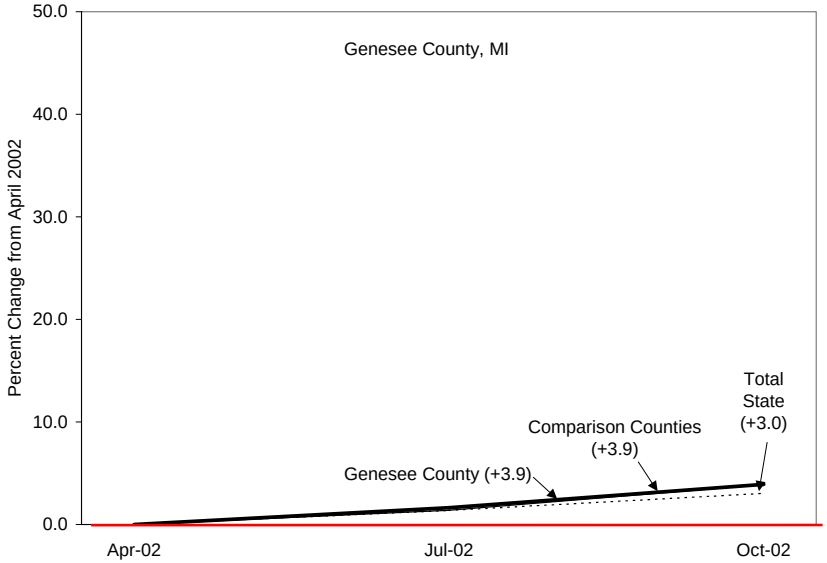
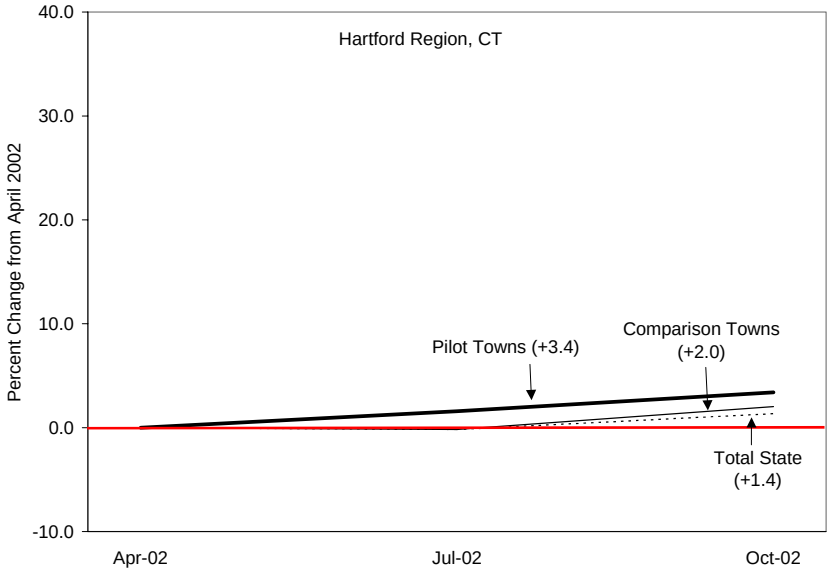
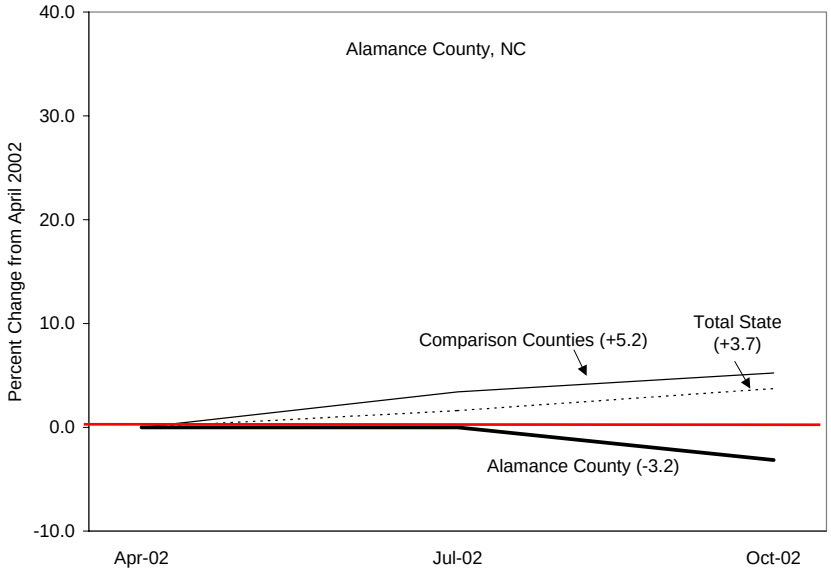


Figure B.1 *(continued)*









APPENDIX C

ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION TRENDS IN DEMONSTRATION AND COMPARISON SITES

Table C.1: Florida: Trends In Pure Elderly FSP Households, July 2001 – December 2003

	Pre-Demonstration			Demonstration							
	Jul-01	Oct-01	Jan-02	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Dec-03
Gadsden County	436	445	429	430	443	448	443	457	488	506	511
Comparison Counties											
Jackson	414	401	396	383	399	393	382	372	369	390	382
Hamilton	82	79	82	78	78	72	73	74	72	77	78
Madison	211	208	207	197	213	209	203	192	194	188	196
AVERAGE	236	229	228	219	230	225	219	213	212	218	219
TOTAL	707	688	685	658	690	674	658	638	635	655	656
Leon County	776	761	734	754	770	807	820	836	907	958	982
Comparison Counties											
Alachua	978	1,007	999	996	992	1,003	1,009	1,024	1,022	1,029	1,022
Duval	2,843	2,869	2,912	2,891	2,886	2,985	3,009	2,992	2,978	3,082	3,173
Jackson	414	401	396	383	399	393	382	372	369	390	382
Escambia	1,275	1,299	1,283	1,282	1,283	1,264	1,261	1,256	1,270	1,267	1,268
Orange	4,518	4,535	4,545	4,647	4,692	4,778	4,616	4,726	4,875	5,082	5,272
Hamilton	82	79	82	78	78	72	73	74	72	77	78
Hardee	220	230	219	217	225	223	234	241	237	239	243
AVERAGE	1,476	1,489	1,491	1,499	1,508	1,531	1,512	1,526	1,546	1,595	1,634
TOTAL	10,330	10,420	10,436	10,494	10,555	10,718	10,584	10,685	10,823	11,166	11,438
Florida											
TOTAL STATE	124,388	125,607	125,715	127,913	129,900	133,334	134,514	137,023	139,883	143,120	145,085

Table C.2: Florida: Percent Change in Pure Elderly FSP Households from January 2002

	Demonstration								
	Jan-02	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Dec-03
Gadsden County	0.0	0.2	3.3	4.4	3.3	6.5	13.8	17.9	19.1
Comparison Counties									
Jackson	0.0	-3.3	0.8	-0.8	-3.5	-6.1	-6.8	-1.5	-3.5
Hamilton	0.0	-4.9	-4.9	-12.2	-11.0	-9.8	-12.2	-6.1	-4.9
Madison	0.0	-4.8	2.9	1.0	-1.9	-7.2	-6.3	-9.2	-5.3
AVERAGE	0.0	-3.9	0.7	-1.6	-3.9	-6.9	-7.3	-4.4	-4.2
Leon County	0.0	2.7	4.9	9.9	11.7	13.9	23.6	30.5	33.8
Comparison Counties									
Alachua	0.0	-0.3	-0.7	0.4	1.0	2.5	2.3	3.0	2.3
Duval	0.0	-0.7	-0.9	2.5	3.3	2.7	2.3	5.8	9.0
Jackson	0.0	-3.3	0.8	-0.8	-3.5	-6.1	-6.8	-1.5	-3.5
Escambia	0.0	-0.1	0.0	-1.5	-1.7	-2.1	-1.0	-1.2	-1.2
Orange	0.0	2.2	3.2	5.1	1.6	4.0	7.3	11.8	16.0
Hamilton	0.0	-4.9	-4.9	-12.2	-11.0	-9.8	-12.2	-6.1	-4.9
Hardee	0.0	-0.9	2.7	1.8	6.8	10.0	8.2	9.1	11.0
AVERAGE	0.0	0.6	1.1	2.7	1.4	2.4	3.7	7.0	9.6
Florida									
TOTAL STATE	0.0	1.7	3.3	6.1	7.0	9.0	11.3	13.8	15.4

Table C.3: Arizona: Trends in All Elderly FSP Households, February 2002 – May 2004

	Pre-Demonstration			Demonstration						
	Feb-02	May-02	Aug-02	Nov-02	Feb-03	May-03	Aug-03	Nov-03	Feb-04	May-04
Pinal County	651	689	715	771	792	835	851	902	915	941
Comparison Counties										
Yuma	688	727	769	838	845	916	977	994	977	1,052
Gila	209	217	232	249	256	276	284	282	290	289
AVERAGE	449	472	501	544	551	596	631	638	634	671
TOTAL	897	944	1,001	1,087	1,101	1,192	1,261	1,276	1,267	1,341
Yavapai County	499	543	548	639	735	772	858	908	916	951
Comparison County										
Mohave	705	748	789	830	858	893	945	987	1,045	1,079
Arizona										
TOTAL STATE	14,725	15,387	16,081	16,792	17,431	18,608	19,809	20,711	20,939	21,539

Table C.4: Arizona: Percent Change in All Elderly FSP Households From August 2002

	Demonstration							
	Aug-02	Nov-02	Feb-03	May-03	Aug-03	Nov-03	Feb-04	May-04
Pinal County	0.0	7.8	10.8	16.8	19.0	26.2	28.0	31.6
Comparison Counties								
Yuma	0.0	9.0	9.9	19.1	27.0	29.3	27.0	36.8
Gila	0.0	7.3	10.3	19.0	22.4	21.6	25.0	24.6
AVERAGE	0.0	8.6	10.0	19.1	26.0	27.5	26.6	34.0
Yavapai County	0.0	16.6	34.1	40.9	56.6	65.7	67.2	73.5
Comparison County								
Mohave	0.0	5.2	8.7	13.2	19.8	25.1	32.4	36.8
Arizona								
TOTAL STATE	0.0	4.4	8.4	15.7	23.2	28.8	30.2	33.9

Table C.5: Maine: Trends in All Elderly FSP Households, July 2001 – January 2004

	Pre-Demonstration			Demonstration							
	Jul-01	Oct-01	Jan-02	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04
Waldo County	466	457	459	476	539	579	607	642	663	671	672
Comparison County											
Franklin	333	336	353	348	353	373	374	386	405	407	408
State Total	13,160	13,190	13,193	13,339	13,553	14,182	14,628	15,345	15,992	16,221	16,494

Table C.6: Maine: Percent Change in All Elderly FSP Households From January 2002

		Demonstration							
	Jan-02	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04
Waldo County	0.0	3.7	17.4	26.1	32.2	39.9	44.4	46.2	46.4
Comparison County									
Franklin	0.0	-1.4	0.0	5.7	5.9	9.3	14.7	15.3	15.6
State Total	0.0	1.1	2.7	7.5	10.9	16.3	21.2	23.0	25.0

Table C.7: Michigan: Trends in All Elderly FSP Households, April 2002 – July 2004

	Pre-Demonstration			Demonstration						
	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04	Apr-04	Jul-04
Genesee County	2,018	2,051	2,097	2,138	2,164	2,223	2,302	2,369	2,411	2,450
Comparison County										
Saginaw	1,031	1,048	1,074	1,095	1,105	1,118	1,139	1,160	1,168	1,196
Ingham	1,030	1,033	1,069	1,097	1,125	1,154	1,182	1,210	1,229	1,269
Muskegon	940	962	988	1,018	1,037	1,048	1,092	1,135	1,150	1,189
Berrien	841	853	874	884	892	923	938	950	951	996
Kalamazoo	878	889	898	945	950	971	1,010	1,008	1,044	1,057
AVERAGE	944	957	981	1,008	1,022	1,043	1,072	1,093	1,108	1,141
TOTAL	4,720	4,785	4,903	5,039	5,109	5,214	5,361	5,463	5,542	5,707
Michigan										
STATE TOTAL	44,670	45,281	46,028	47,295	47,642	48,580	49,815	51,098	51,688	52,830

Table C.8: Michigan: Percent Change in All Elderly FSP Households From October 2002

	Demonstration							
	Oct-2002	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04	Apr-04	Jul-04
Genesee County	0.0	2.0	3.2	6.0	9.8	13.0	15.0	16.8
Comparison County								
Saginaw	0.0	2.0	2.9	4.1	6.1	8.0	8.8	11.4
Ingham	0.0	2.6	5.2	8.0	10.6	13.2	15.0	18.7
Muskegon	0.0	3.0	5.0	6.1	10.5	14.9	16.4	20.3
Berrien	0.0	1.1	2.1	5.6	7.3	8.7	8.8	14.0
Kalamazoo	0.0	5.2	5.8	8.1	12.5	12.2	16.3	17.7
AVERAGE	0.0	2.8	4.2	6.3	9.3	11.4	12.9	16.3
Michigan								
STATE TOTAL	0.0	2.8	3.5	5.5	8.2	11.0	12.3	14.8

Table C.9: Connecticut: Trends In Pure Elderly FSP Households, April 2002 – July 2004

	Pre-Demonstration			Demonstration						
	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04	Apr-04	Jul-04
Pilot Towns										
Bloomfield	112	110	111	116	115	117	119	122	122	136
East Windsor	29	30	30	29	26	29	29	29	30	35
Enfield	73	71	70	70	74	82	76	80	82	83
Hartford	2,368	2,413	2,449	2,458	2,499	2548	2605	2569	2615	2705
Manchester	165	168	173	168	173	186	191	189	200	206
New Britian	697	709	731	735	751	761	765	785	791	836
South Windsor	29	30	29	28	29	28	26	27	28	29
Stafford	29	29	29	28	25	25	27	28	30	29
Windsor	92	91	94	95	100	104	101	100	103	112
Windsor Locks	24	24	25	27	29	29	28	25	27	28
TOTAL	3,618	3,675	3,741	3,754	3,821	3,909	3,967	3,954	4,028	4,199
Comparison Towns										
Berlin	19	20	20	20	23	24	24	29	32	31
Bristol	194	196	207	206	208	208	213	215	214	218
East Hartford	299	302	314	314	321	325	328	344	360	373
Hebron	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	4	4
New Haven	1,655	1,644	1,676	1,677	1,679	1,717	1,716	1,697	1,697	1,727
Newington	60	61	65	63	65	68	75	75	77	82
Plymouth	14	16	21	23	24	25	23	26	26	26
Southington	78	75	76	83	80	90	89	87	86	88
Vernon	87	87	86	90	91	99	98	104	108	114
West Hartford	406	406	404	410	412	416	420	427	420	448
TOTAL	2,813	2,808	2,870	2,887	2,904	2,973	2,988	3,007	3,024	3,111
Michigan										
STATE TOTAL	15,153	15,125	15,358	15,426	15,594	15,898	16,015	16,101	16,263	16,790

Table C.10: Connecticut: Percent Change in Pure Elderly FSP Households From October 2002

	Demonstration							
	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04	Apr-04	Jul-04
Pilot Towns								
Bloomfield	0.0	4.5	3.6	5.4	7.2	9.9	9.9	22.5
East Windsor	0.0	-3.3	-13.3	-3.3	-3.3	-3.3	0.0	16.7
Enfield	0.0	0.0	5.7	17.1	8.6	14.3	17.1	18.6
Hartford	0.0	0.4	2.0	4.0	6.4	4.9	6.8	10.5
Manchester	0.0	-2.9	0.0	7.5	10.4	9.2	15.6	19.1
New Britian	0.0	0.5	2.7	4.1	4.7	7.4	8.2	14.4
South Windsor	0.0	-3.4	0.0	-3.4	-10.3	-6.9	-3.4	0.0
Stafford	0.0	-3.4	-13.8	-13.8	-6.9	-3.4	3.4	0.0
Windsor	0.0	1.1	6.4	10.6	7.4	6.4	9.6	19.1
Windsor Locks	0.0	8.0	16.0	16.0	12.0	0.0	8.0	12.0
TOTAL	0.0	0.3	2.1	4.5	6.0	5.7	7.7	12.2
Comparison Towns								
Berlin	0.0	0.0	15.0	20.0	20.0	45.0	60.0	55.0
Bristol	0.0	-0.5	0.5	0.5	2.9	3.9	3.4	5.3
East Hartford	0.0	0.0	2.2	3.5	4.5	9.6	14.6	18.8
Hebron	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	200.0	300.0	300.0
New Haven	0.0	0.1	0.2	2.4	2.4	1.3	1.3	3.0
Newington	0.0	-3.1	0.0	4.6	15.4	15.4	18.5	26.2
Plymouth	0.0	9.5	14.3	19.0	9.5	23.8	23.8	23.8
Southington	0.0	9.2	5.3	18.4	17.1	14.5	13.2	15.8
Vernon	0.0	4.7	5.8	15.1	14.0	20.9	25.6	32.6
West Hartford	0.0	1.5	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.7	4.0	10.9
TOTAL	0.0	0.6	1.2	3.6	4.1	4.8	5.4	8.4
Michigan								
STATE TOTAL	0.0	0.4	1.5	3.5	4.3	4.8	5.9	9.3

Table C.11: North Carolina: Trends in Pure Elderly FSP Households, April 2002 – July 2004

	Pre-Demonstration			Demonstration						
	Apr-02	Jul-02	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04	Apr-04	Jul-04
Alamance County	95	95	92	112	124	124	139	158	154	156
Comparison Counties										
Burke County	83	94	103	104	112	114	113	120	118	115
Catawba County	133	135	142	158	163	167	174	186	195	186
Cleveland County	146	153	154	164	176	178	175	170	180	186
Iredell County	61	67	72	73	86	86	86	96	108	111
Orange County	71	71	75	85	90	104	98	92	100	97
Rockingham County	127	124	124	131	135	144	154	151	160	163
Rowan County	140	144	143	153	158	165	169	171	185	184
Stanly County	59	60	50	55	60	57	58	66	68	72
AVERAGE	103	106	108	115	123	127	128	132	139	139
TOTAL	820	848	863	923	980	1,015	1,027	1,052	1,114	1,114
North Carolina										
STATE TOTAL	10,239	10,403	10,622	11,017	11,301	11,509	11,947	12,263	12,598	12,765

Table C.12: North Carolina: Percent Change in Pure Elderly FSP Households From October 2002

	Demonstration							
	Oct-02	Jan-03	Apr-03	Jul-03	Oct-03	Jan-04	Apr-04	Jul-04
Alamance County	0.0	21.7	34.8	34.8	51.1	71.7	67.4	69.6
Comparison Counties								
Burke County	0.0	1.0	8.7	10.7	9.7	16.5	14.6	11.7
Catawba County	0.0	11.3	14.8	17.6	22.5	31.0	37.3	31.0
Cleveland County	0.0	6.5	14.3	15.6	13.6	10.4	16.9	20.8
Iredell County	0.0	1.4	19.4	19.4	19.4	33.3	50.0	54.2
Orange County	0.0	13.3	20.0	38.7	30.7	22.7	33.3	29.3
Rockingham County	0.0	5.6	8.9	16.1	24.2	21.8	29.0	31.5
Rowan County	0.0	7.0	10.5	15.4	18.2	19.6	29.4	28.7
Stanly County	0.0	10.0	20.0	14.0	16.0	32.0	36.0	44.0
AVERAGE	0.0	7.0	13.6	17.6	19.0	21.9	29.1	29.1
North Carolina								
STATE TOTAL	0.0	3.7	6.4	8.4	12.5	15.4	18.6	20.2

APPENDIX D

REGRESSION RESULTS

Regression modeling was used to estimate the impact of the six elderly nutrition demonstrations including models to test the significance of unadjusted impact estimates and models to estimate regression-adjusted impacts for households with elderly and for subgroups of that population. This appendix presents results of the various regression models.

TESTING SIGNIFICANCE OF UNADJUSTED IMPACT ESTIMATES

To test whether the changes in elderly participation in the demonstration counties between the month prior to the start of a demonstration and month 21 were significantly different from the "typical" change observed in other counties in the same state, the following regression was estimated:

$$\left(\frac{y_i^{21} - y_i^{-1}}{y_i^{-1}} \right) = \alpha + d_i\beta + e \qquad (1)$$

where,

y_i^{21} = elderly FSP households in month 21 in county *i*

y_i^{-1} = elderly FSP households in county *i* in the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration

d_i = indicator of demonstration status for county *i*

The results, presented in Table D.1, show that the changes in elderly participation observed in Yavapai County (Arizona), Waldo County (Maine), and Alamance County North Carolina were significantly greater than the typical changes observed in other counties in the same state. For Gadsden and Leon Counties in Florida, the changes observed were not significantly different when compared with changes in all Florida counties, but they were significantly greater than the changes observed in the comparison sites. While our

confidence in the Florida impact estimates would be greater if the differences were significant relative to the entire state, the fact that they are significantly different from the counties most similar in terms of elderly FSP participation patterns still allows us to conclude that the changes are larger than we would have expected to observe without the demonstration.

SUBGROUP ANALYSIS

One of the two regression models presented in Chapter III is the 21 month impact model. This model estimates the percent change in elderly FSP participation in each county between the month immediately before the start of the demonstration ("month –1") and the 21st month of the demonstration. Formally, this model is estimated as:

$$q_i^{21} = \left[\left(\frac{y_i^{21} - y_i^{-1}}{y_i^{-1}} \right) \times 100 \right] = \alpha + d_i\beta + \left[\left(\frac{x_i^{21} - x_i^{-1}}{x_i^{-1}} \right) \times 100 \right] \gamma + S_i\varphi + e \quad (2)$$

where,

- q_i^{21} = percent change in elderly FSP participation in county *i* between the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration and month 21
- y_i^{21} = elderly FSP households in county *i* and month 21
- y_i^{-1} = elderly FSP households in county *i* in the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration
- d_i = indicator of demonstration status for county *i*
- x_i^{21} = nonelderly FSP households in county *i* and the last month of the demonstration
- x_i^{-1} = nonelderly FSP households in county *i* in the month immediately prior to the start of the demonstration
- S_i = an array of six baseline county characteristics associated with elderly FSP participation

The 21 month impact model was estimated for a variety subgroups of elderly FSP households in each state. The results from the estimation over subgroups are summarized in Table D.2. Table D.3 presents the results for all elderly households (these are the same results presented in Chapter III); Table D.4 presents the results for households eligible for a $10 benefit; Table D.5 presents the results for elderly FSP households with an individual over age 70; Table D.6 presents the results for elderly FSP households consisting of only one person; Table D.7 presents the results for elderly FSP households with a black head of household; and Table D.8 presents the results for elderly FSP households with an Hispanic head of household.

Table D.1: Significance Test for Unadjusted Impacts[a]

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	Leon	Pinal	Yavapai	Maine	Michigan	Connecticut	North Carolina
ESTIMATED USING ALL COUNTIES IN EACH STATE								
Intercept	6.56*	6.38*	26.56*	23.76*	21.94*	18.09*	17.08*	8.71*
	(1.94)	(1.91)	(5.78)	(4.74)	(1.27)	(1.68)	(3.68)	(0.79)
Demonstration Flag	11.38	24.14	5.05	49.78*	24.25*	2.51	-3.80	39.7*
	(16.00)	(15.79)	(23.13)	(18.96)	(5.09)	(15.05)	(14.77)	(7.91)
N	67	67	15	15	15	79	160	99
R- Square	0.0076	0.0342	0.0034	0.3298	0.6188	0.0004	0.0004	0.2046
ESTIMATED USING DEMONSTRATION AND COMPARISON COUNTIES ONLY								
Intercept	-5.60	2.99	30.69	n.a.	n.a.	15.35*	49.14*	14.52*
	(2.23)	(2.41)	(6.12)	n.a.	n.a.	(1.08)	(20.07)	(3.24)
Demonstration Flag	23.55*	27.53*	0.92	n.a.	n.a.	5.25	-35.85	33.89*
	(4.45)	(6.83)	(10.59)	n.a.	n.a.	(2.65)	(28.38)	(9.74)
N	3	7	15	n.a.	n.a.	5	19	8
R- Square	0.93	0.7306	0.0075	n.a.	n.a.	0.4954	0.0814	0.6339

[a]Models for Florida, Connecticut, and North Carolina demonstrations were estimated for pure elderly households only. Models for Arizona, Maine, and Michigan were estimated for all households with elderly. The Connecticut model was estimated over towns instead of counties.

n.a. Too few comparison counties to estimate model.

Table D.2: Summary of Regression-Adjusted Impacts, All Subgroups[a]

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	Leon	Pinal	Yavapai	Maine	Michigan	Connecticut	North Carolina
All Elderly Households	18.3	22.0	-5.5	38.1	23.9	9.1	3.2	31.4
Households Eligible for $10 Benefit	13.0	13.3	72.6	127.1	89.2	40.7	-21.5	57.7
Households with Member Over 70	25.2	25.0	-2.0	32.6	31.3	21.9	0.4	36.6
Single-Person Households	21.1	20.4	-8.8	40.7	24.4	9.4	4.9	31.7
Households with Black Household Head	20.9	20.3	-34.6	100.6	3.9	7.8	3.3	33.5
Households with Hispanic Household Head	0.5	28.6	-25.9	25.6	n.a.	-62.6	5.1	-10.6

[a]Models for Florida, Connecticut, and North Carolina demonstrations were estimated for pure elderly households only. Models for Arizona, Maine, and Michigan were estimated for all households with elderly.

Table D.3: Results of 21 Month Impact Model for All Households

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**18.3**	**22.0**	**-5.5**	**38.1**	**23.9**	**9.1**	**3.2**	**31.4**
Intercept	-0.962 (7.279)	-7.581 (6.896)	113.334 (52.930)	85.077* (21.849)	13.959 (18.769)	13.235 (8.197)	56.059* (16.519)	9.887 (5.389)
Demo. Flag	18.330 (9.698)	22.041* (8.115)	-5.532 (16.198)	38.111* (6.945)	23.923* (7.618)	9.081 (12.85)	3.199 (15.665)	31.433* (7.683)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.343* (0.067)	0.346* (0.068)	-0.645 (0.869)	-0.420 (0.357)	0.187 (0.213)	0.359* (0.057)	0.026 (0.091)	0.135* (0.060)
Elderly Participants	<0.001 <(0.000)	<0.000 <(0.000)	-0.0149 (0.015)	-0.009 (0.006)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.040 (0.031)	-0.001 (0.003)
Elderly Part. Rate	-1.076 (0.591)	-0.734 (0.587)	-3.203 (2.560)	-1.968 (1.040)	0.028 (1.107)	-0.706 (1.694)	-8.369 (3.543)	-0.979* (0.406)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	0.027 (0.085)	0.043 (0.083)	1.340 (1.079)	0.716 (0.446)	0.090 (0.564)	-0.179 (0.118)	-0.090* (0.082)	0.004 (0.095)
Percent Non-white	0.128 (0.141)	0.225 (0.117)	-0.861 (0.422)	-0.594* (0.179)	-2.189 (1.691)	-0.365 (0.281)	0.190 (0.762)	0.116 (0.064)
Percent Elderly	-0.088 (0.210)	0.103 (0.202)	-2.365 (1.890)	-1.693 (0.774)	0.305 (1.048)	-0.092 (0.396)	-2.181* (1.031)	-0.090 (0.254)
Population Density	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.245 (0.265)	0.166 (0.107)	-0.002 (0.031)	0.005 (0.011)	<0.000 (0.005)	0.001 (0.007)
N	66	66	15	15	16	80	160	100
R- Square	0.5118	0.5407	0.5497	0.9237	0.7346	0.4090	0.0675	0.3627

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

Table D.4: Results of 21 Month Impact Model, Households Eligible for a $10 Benefit

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**13.0**	**13.3**	**72.6**	**127.1**	**89.2**	**40.7**	**-21.5**	**57.7**
Intercept	1.095 (9.8985)	-3.136 (9.4010)	-135.668 (403.42)	-146.292 (378.47)	-53.799 (31.312)	46.409* (16.007)	24.031 (19.759)	10.368 (18.442)
Demo. Flag	12.990 (15.177)	13.334 (13.016)	72.615 (143.35)	127.111 (139.54)	89.160* (13.986)	40.673 (26.034)	-21.466 (16.866)	57.702 (29.387)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.045 (0.0418)	0.043 (0.0415)	0.704 (1.6815)	0.596 (1.5700)	0.142 (0.2779)	0.218* (0.0838)	0.027 (0.0638)	0.066 (0.0707)
Elderly Participants	0.000 (0.0003)	0.000 (0.0003)	0.012 (0.1136)	0.007 (0.1049)	0.011 (0.0099)	0.004 (0.0049)	0.019 (0.0343)	0.000 (0.0134)
Elderly Part. Rate	-1.286 (0.8600)	-1.091 (0.8749)	-1.319 (23.436)	-0.133 (22.471)	-0.948 (1.9314)	-3.772 (3.4352)	-2.921 (4.0313)	0.713 (1.5558)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	0.070 (0.1349)	0.078 (0.1351)	-20.391 (11.029)	-20.696 (10.342)	-0.182 (1.0115)	0.247 (0.2405)	-0.091 (0.1080)	0.632 (0.3711)
Percent Non-white	0.099 (0.2198)	0.172 (0.1887)	0.123 (3.5011)	0.659 (3.4275)	-2.405 (2.7031)	-0.293 (0.5701)	-0.580 (0.8278)	-0.040 (0.2524)
Percent Elderly	0.003 (0.3287)	0.125 (0.3249)	18.894 (20.009)	18.376 (18.675)	4.180 (1.9152)	-0.392 (0.7997)	-1.867 (1.2561)	2.758* (0.9886)
Population Density	0.000 (0.0037)	0.000 (0.0037)	0.153 (2.0078)	0.278 (1.8750)	0.024 (0.0576)	-0.015 (0.0222)	0.003 (0.0059)	-0.024 (0.0279)
N	66	66	15	15	16	80	123	100
R- Square	0.1120	0.1169	0.5774	0.6129	0.9015	0.1502	0.0609	0.2362

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

Table D.5: Results of 21 Month Impact Model, Households With an Individual Over Age 70

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**25.2**	**25.0**	**-2.0**	**32.6**	**31.3**	**21.9**	**0.4**	**36.6**
Intercept	-0.891 (10.164)	-9.268 (9.8268)	113.793 (49.257)	91.341* (26.398)	8.247 (23.568)	15.239 (9.2679)	0.316 (18.710)	-1.859 (6.0421)
Demo. Flag	25.152 (13.541)	25.006* (11.564)	-2.009 (15.074)	32.583* (8.3905)	31.264* (9.5664)	21.941 (14.530)	0.381 (15.267)	36.616* (8.6152)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.239* (0.0975)	0.240* (0.0965)	-1.027 (0.8086)	-0.850 (0.4317)	0.070 (0.2669)	0.328* (0.0639)	-0.030 (0.1182)	0.048 (0.0671)
Elderly Participants	0.000 (0.0003)	0.000 (0.0003)	-0.020 (0.0136)	-0.015 (0.0071)	0.003 (0.0057)	0.001 (0.0028)	0.020 (0.0304)	0.003 (0.0038)
Elderly Part. Rate	-1.017 (0.8256)	-0.626 (0.8360)	-3.489 (2.3824)	-2.536 (1.2561)	-0.045 (1.3897)	-0.829 (1.9152)	-4.193 (3.5420)	-1.030* (0.4554)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	-0.023 (0.1189)	-0.007 (0.1182)	1.630 (1.0043)	1.133 (0.5388)	-0.090 (0.7080)	-0.068 (0.1336)	0.140 (0.0837)	-0.002 (0.1060)
Percent Non-white	0.130 (0.1962)	0.272 (0.1672)	-0.795 (0.3922)	-0.572* (0.2165)	-3.053 (2.1234)	-0.386 (0.3178)	0.394 (0.7441)	0.181* (0.0721)
Percent Elderly	-0.153 (0.2937)	0.085 (0.2885)	-2.641 (1.7588)	-2.120 (0.9349)	0.932 (1.3158)	-0.451 (0.4477)	1.149 (1.1326)	0.334 (0.2852)
Population Density	0.002 (0.0033)	0.002 (0.0032)	0.322 (0.2467)	0.264 (0.1288)	0.009 (0.0384)	-0.003 (0.0124)	-0.002 (0.0052)	-0.002 (0.0079)
N	66	66	15	15	16	80	147	100
R- Square	0.2714	0.2859	0.5334	0.8668	0.7418	0.3253	0.0402	0.2790

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

Table D.6: Results of 21 Month Impact Model, Households Consisting of Only One Person

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**21.1**	**20.4**	**-8.8**	**40.7**	**24.4**	**9.4**	**4.9**	**31.7**
Intercept	-0.760 (7.2882)	-7.504 (7.0488)	141.225* (51.328)	86.172* (33.554)	16.854 (18.013)	17.231* (7.9342)	47.213* (16.275)	14.557* (5.0895)
Demo. Flag	21.093* (9.7159)	20.422* (8.2748)	-8.824 (17.369)	40.726* (11.950)	24.407* (6.9489)	9.367 (12.882)	4.935 (15.464)	31.748* (7.7724)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.193* (0.0406)	0.191* (0.0401)	-0.374 (0.5474)	0.182 (0.3613)	0.041 (0.1969)	0.189* (0.0452)	0.064 (0.0594)	0.102* (0.0433)
Elderly Participants	0.000* (0.0002)	0.000 (0.0002)	-0.023 (0.0163)	-0.009 (0.0100)	0.002 (0.0041)	0.000 -0.002	0.040 (0.0303)	0.001 (0.0035)
Elderly Part. Rate	-1.469* (0.5626)	-1.159* (0.5688)	-6.279 (2.6966)	-4.510* (1.6211)	-0.359 (0.9279)	-0.026 (1.6862)	-8.152* (3.4992)	-1.074* (0.4111)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	0.068 (0.0849)	0.082 (0.0843)	1.596 (1.2107)	0.442 (0.7703)	-0.066 (0.4820)	-0.177 (0.1182)	-0.097 (0.0827)	0.052 (0.0968)
Percent Non-white	0.070 (0.1415)	0.191 (0.1202)	-0.583 (0.3722)	-0.318 (0.2346)	-1.580 (1.5275)	-0.574* (0.2818)	0.170 (0.7528)	0.097 (0.0664)
Percent Elderly	-0.077 (0.2107)	0.118 (0.2069)	-3.830 (2.0696)	-2.409 (1.2730)	0.391 (0.9392)	-0.256 (0.3956)	-1.762 (1.0180)	-0.214 (0.2603)
Population Density	0.003 (0.0024)	0.003 (0.0023)	0.321 (0.2809)	0.132 (0.1698)	0.003 (0.0275)	0.004 (0.0110)	0.000 (0.0052)	-0.003 (0.0073)
N	66	66	15	15	16	80	160	100
R- Square	0.5042	0.5150	0.5556	0.8421	0.7613	0.2559	0.0674	0.3469

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

Table D.7: Results of 21 Month Impact Model, Households With a Black Household Head

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**20.9**	**20.3**	**-34.6**	**100.6**	**3.9**	**7.8**	**3.3**	**33.5**
Intercept	10.075 (8.2446)	3.560 (7.8289)	137.428 (258.62)	-38.988 (227.30)	249.486 (181.57)	83.642* (39.719)	-7.412 (53.758)	-5.379 (17.100)
Demo. Flag	20.881 (12.444)	20.288 (10.622)	-34.604 (75.650)	100.603 (74.940)	3.911 (55.437)	7.809 (49.159)	3.335 (24.988)	33.483 (26.358)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.120 (0.0937)	0.107 (0.0927)	0.566 (2.4696)	1.371 (1.9717)	1.221 (0.4026)	-0.097 (0.1350)	0.069 (0.2046)	0.118 (0.1049)
Elderly Participants	0.001* (0.0002)	0.001* (0.0002)	0.014 (0.0637)	0.030 (0.0475)	-0.044 (0.0330)	0.001 (0.0097)	-0.017 (0.0466)	0.008 (0.0120)
Elderly Part. Rate	-2.521* (0.7038)	-2.228* (0.7125)	-17.113 (30.625)	-2.577 (23.897)	34.325 (10.989)	-0.286 (9.1630)	6.705 (6.1091)	-1.553 (1.5199)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	0.076 (0.1094)	0.091 (0.1092)	3.185 (9.3571)	-0.755 (7.5597)	1.338 (4.3335)	-0.336 (0.6757)	-2.182* (0.8981)	-0.324 (0.3427)
Percent Non-white	0.269 (0.1802)	0.388* (0.1540)	-0.300 (2.9509)	1.749 (2.7575)	33.369 (15.778)	-1.914 (1.7775)	-0.671 (1.1659)	-0.136 (0.2567)
Percent Elderly	-0.270 (0.2686)	-0.077 (0.2640)	-5.156 (13.575)	0.303 (10.765)	-49.192 (18.061)	-2.968 (2.5789)	2.091 (3.0872)	1.589 (0.9127)
Population Density	0.000 (0.0031)	0.000 (0.0030)	-0.428 (1.1349)	-0.593 (0.8578)	0.390 (0.1795)	0.007 (0.0437)	-0.006 (0.0085)	-0.006 (0.0253)
N	66	66	11	11	10	43	50	94
R- Square	0.3788	0.3873	0.2262	0.5504	0.9607	0.1039	0.1753	0.1317

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

Table D.8: Results of 21 Month Impact Model, Households With an Hispanic Household Head

	Simplified Eligibility		Application Assistance				Commodity Alternative Benefit	
	Gadsden	**Leon**	**Pinal**	**Yavapai**	**Maine[a]**	**Michigan**	**Connecticut**	**North Carolina**
Unadjusted Impact	**22.3**	**23.5**	**-2.4**	**36.8**	**30.9**	**5.3**	**3.8**	**35.8**
Regression Adjusted Impact	**0.5**	**28.6**	**-25.9**	**25.6**		**-62.6**	**5.1**	**-10.6**
Intercept	42.458	35.346	152.359*	125.026*		95.735	5.012	-0.579
	(32.508)	(29.708)	(41.584)	(41.819)		(48.054)	(38.489)	(107.43)
Demo. Flag	0.470	28.567	-25.888	25.617		-62.577	5.053	-10.647
	(37.681)	(30.134)	(17.459)	(18.079)		(50.728)	(25.465)	(56.942)
Nonelderly Participation Trends	0.058	0.087	0.182	0.379		0.079	0.163	-0.644
	(0.1455)	(0.1461)	(0.4803)	(0.4771)		(0.1286)	(0.1046)	(0.7295)
Elderly Participants	0.000	0.000	-0.018	-0.011		0.011	-0.008	-0.036
	(0.0009)	(0.0009)	(0.0135)	(0.0134)		(0.0106)	(0.0443)	(0.0354)
Elderly Part. Rate	0.990	1.771	-8.109*	-7.261		17.864	1.521	-0.383
	(2.9591)	(2.9755)	(2.9318)	(2.9683)		(10.298)	(5.5755)	(7.3322)
Prior Changes in Participation of Elderly	0.097	0.148	2.477	1.644		1.285	-0.323	3.500*
	(0.3261)	(0.3273)	(1.2221)	(1.2237)		(0.7833)	(0.2229)	(1.5989)
Percent Non-white	-0.665	-0.697	-1.003	-0.783		-1.697	-0.770	0.216
	(0.6219)	(0.4970)	(0.4106)	(0.4275)		(1.8747)	(1.1005)	(1.2995)
Percent Elderly	-0.529	-0.305	-4.732*	-3.911		-8.716*	0.986	-1.033
	(0.9292)	(0.8899)	(1.9095)	(1.9145)		(3.4293)	(2.4439)	(5.0105)
Population Density	0.001	0.002	0.197	0.110		-0.037	0.005	-0.016
	(0.0085)	(0.0084)	(0.2447)	(0.2433)		(0.0454)	(0.0085)	(0.0741)
N	54	54	15	15		47	63	29
R- Square	0.0617	0.0801	0.7595	0.7538		0.2165	0.0838	0.3242

*Coefficient significant at the 5% level of confidence.

[a]The number of counties with FSP households headed by Hispanic individuals is too small to estimate the model.

APPENDIX E

WEIGHTING: CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY IN COMMODITY DEMONSTRATIONS

This appendix describes construction of the analysis weights for the survey of FSP clients in the two commodity alternative benefit demonstration sites, Connecticut and North Carolina.

The purpose of the survey was to develop representative estimates of the decisions and satisfaction levels of two separate groups: those seniors participating in the commodity demonstration and those not participating in the demonstration but residing in the demonstration area and participating in the FSP. The stratification and the accompanying sample allocation plans were designed to ensure that a sufficient sample size is obtained for each of these two groups. Using lists of demonstration and nondemonstration participants, separate samples were selected for the Connecticut and North Carolina demonstration sites. Sample selection occurred in three waves—once every three months. For each wave, the sample lists included all elderly FSP participants who were either enrolled in the demonstration or enrolled in the regular FSP and who had applied or recertified within the previous three months.

Separately for each commodity demonstration state, the quarterly list frames were stratified into demonstration participants and nondemonstration participants. Within each statum, individuals were sampled at a rate designed to achieve equal sized samples from both strata in each state. To ensure that each sampled case receives a similar level of contact effort, we selected a larger initial sample and then released one large random subsample. We released one or more smaller random subsamples only after the contact efforts for the first subsample were exhausted. Table E.1 shows the number of sampled individuals released and respondents from each state, wave and stratum.

TABLE E.1: NUMBER OF SAMPLED HOUSEHOLDS BY STATE, WAVE AND STRATUM

	Stratum					
	Demonstration Households			Nondemonstration Households		
	Sample Released	Survey Respondents	Percent	Sample Released	Survey Respondents	Percent
Connecticut						
Wave 1 (July–September 2003)	55	50	90.9	66	48	72.7
Wave 2 (October-December 2003)	36	29	80.1	70	48	68.6
Wave 3 (January-March 2004)	16	13	81.3	70	53	75.7
TOTAL	107	92	86.0	206	149	72.3
North Carolina						
Wave 1 (July–September 2003)	41	34	82.9	44	32	72.7
Wave 2 (October-December 2003)	59	49	83.1	66	48	72.7
Wave 3 (January-March 2004)	40	31	90.0	41	30	73.2
Total	146	114	85.0	145	110	72.8
TOTAL	253	206	85.4	361	259	72.5

For each state, the basic weight was computed as:

$BW_h =$ (Total number of participants in stratum *h*) / (Number of sampled cases released in stratum *h*).

For example, in the first wave for North Carolina, there were 148 food stamp cases in the list, and 63 of them participated in the commodity demonstration, and 85 did not participate in the commodity demonstration. An initial sample of 44 households was selected within each commodity and non-commodity stratum. At that point, the *initial sampling weight* at the time of sampling was calculated as 63/44 for the cases in commodity stratum, and 85/44 for the cases in non-commodity stratum. During the data collection only 41 sampled households were released in the commodity stratum, and all 44 sampled households were released in the non-commodity stratum. Hence, the basic sampling weights for the cases in the commodity stratum became 63/41, which is similar to (63/44) * (44/41). Similarly, the basic sampling weights for the cases in the non-commodity stratum became 85/44.

Nonresponse adjustments were made to the basic sampling weights. These adjustments accounted for differences observed between those participating in the demonstration and those not participating in the demonstration. Specifically, among nondemonstration households, respondents tended to be younger than nonrespondents (Table E.2). Additionally, among demonstration households, all households eligible for large FSP benefits responded to the survey.

The final nonresponse adjustments were made using the weighting cell method. This method groups individuals into cells such that samples are as homogeneous as possible within cells. Under this assumption, the nonrespondents are then represented by respondents through weighting adjustment.

Statistical properties of the final analysis weights are presented in Table E.3.

TABLE E.2: COMPARISON OF RESOPNDENTS AND NONRESPONDENTS BY DEMONSTRATION PARTICIPATION STATUS

Characteristic		Demonstration Households					Nondemonstration Households				
		Proportion of Frame	Weighted Proportion of Respondents	Weighted Proportion of Nonrespondents	Significantly Different* (alpha=0.1)	p-Value*	Proportion of Frame	Weighted Proportion of Respondents	Weighted Proportion of Nonrespondents	Significantly Different* (alpha=0.1)	p-Value*
Benefit Group:	$25 or less	76.70%	76.79%	77.74%	N	0.90	35.72%	36.69%	33.90%	N	0.69
	$26 - $50	17.33%	16.84%	15.82%	N	0.88	13.69%	12.05%	17.39%	N	0.27
	$51 - $75	4.83%	4.53%	6.44%	N	0.64	10.36%	8.55%	13.96%	N	0.21
	$76 - $100	0.28%	0.56%	0.00%	Y	0.00	9.43%	9.61%	8.45%	N	0.78
	> $100	0.85%	1.29%	0.00%	Y	0.00	30.81%	33.10%	26.30%	N	0.33
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	N	
Age Group:	< 70	40.06%	39.70%	37.81%	N	0.83	56.27%	64.72%	32.44%	Y	0.00
	70 - 80	44.89%	44.31%	49.58%	N	0.57	33.15%	29.85%	42.33%	Y	0.07
	> 80	15.06%	15.99%	12.60%	N	0.61	10.58%	5.43%	25.22%	Y	0.00
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%		
Race/Ethnicity:	Caucasian	11.65%	11.81%	9.75%	N	0.68	23.40%	25.34%	23.72%	N	0.80
	Black	40.63%	39.78%	49.90%	N	0.27	26.62%	26.46%	18.58%	N	0.20
	Hispanic	9.94%	9.79%	11.70%	N	0.69	40.52%	39.29%	46.03%	N	0.35
	Other	37.78%	38.62%	28.64%	N	0.29	9.46%	8.90%	11.67%	N	0.43
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%		

* Testing of proportion between respondent and nonrespondent groups

TABLE E.3: CHARACTERISTICS OF FINAL ANALYSIS WEIGHTS

	Mean	Median	St. Dev	Minimum	Maximum
All Respondents	6.6	2.1	7.5	1	27.3
Connecticut	10.8	10.1	8.6	1	27.3
Demonstration Households	2	1.1	3.9	1	23
Nondemonstration Households	16.4	15.4	5.5	1	27.3
North Carolina	2.2	2.1	0.4	1.5	3.1
Demonstration Households	2.1	2	0.2	1.6	3.1
Nondemonstration Households	2.3	2.3	0.5	1.5	3.1