

ADVANCING EQUITY IN THE GUS SCHUMACHER NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Opportunities in the 2024 Farm Bill

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“There are many families who need this kind of help... it would be nice for more people to qualify for this program.”

– California Participant

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“I save my [nutrition incentives] so I can buy more [food] when I’m having a week when I am short on money.”

—Pennsylvania Participant

Eating fruits and vegetables (FVs) is associated with improved health, yet few Americans consume the recommended amounts of FVs.

People with low incomes consume less fruits and vegetables (FVs) relative to those with more resources. The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) addresses these issues by providing financial incentives (subsidies) for the purchase of FVs to people participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). While GusNIP is an important tool for increasing equity in FV access and intake, the 2024 Farm Bill offers opportunities to make the program even more equitable.

To advance equity in the GusNIP program, the 2024 Farm Bill should:

🍌 **Increase total GusNIP funding to expand participation**

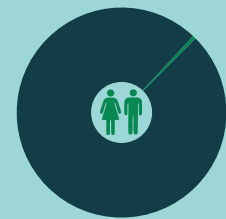
GusNIP increases access to FVs but current funding benefits only a small fraction of people enrolled in SNAP – less than one percent. Increased funding will expand reach to more SNAP participants and fund additional program strategies to advance equity.

🍌 **Increase funding and support to lower-resourced organizations and communities disproportionately impacted by poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, or diseases associated with poor nutrition**

GusNIP is a competitive grant program that structurally favors applications from well-resourced organizations with the capacity and experience to submit successful proposals. Increased funding for small-scale pilot projects and capacity building grants along with enhanced technical assistance to smaller, community-based organizations will allow a more diverse and representative set of organizations to participate in GusNIP.

🍌 **Eliminate grantee match requirement**

GusNIP grantees must match federal funds dollar-for-dollar. Removing the match requirement will lower a significant barrier to securing GusNIP grants, especially for organizations with limited funding, thus facilitating wider participation from a more diverse and representative set of organizations and communities.



LESS THAN 1%
(3.5 OUT OF 1,000)

OF

SNAP
PARTICIPANTS
RECEIVE GusNIP BENEFITS

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Nutrition incentives “give people with SNAP benefits access—or increased access—to these healthier foods [and the revenue] goes to the farmers and people who are growing this food locally... That’s really important to me”

—Iowa Participant

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“I did not have a lot of money to buy fruits and vegetables and we were not healthy. But now that I get the [nutrition incentives], I can do this for my kids.”

—California Participant

🍌 Support statewide expansion

GusNIP currently funds only local-level programs. Statewide programs reach more SNAP participants across diverse communities. They provide a platform for integration of GusNIP incentives into the established SNAP EBT card technology, which allows shoppers to seamlessly earn and redeem incentives as they spend their SNAP benefits.

🍌 Expand and diversify retailer participation

Increasing participation by community-owned food retailers will improve geographic accessibility for shoppers and increase the availability of culturally desirable foods. Eliminating time and resource barriers to GusNIP participation and providing technical and financial support for implementing electronic nutrition incentive issuance and redemption technology will increase participation.

🍌 Expand program marketing

Awareness of GusNIP is low among people who participate in SNAP. Expanding federally supported national, local, and culturally and linguistically tailored promotions using digital platforms and community outreach will increase awareness among people most in need. Implementing these recommendations will result in a more equitable GusNIP program that increases access to affordable fruits and vegetables for many more people participating in SNAP. These recommendations will also include more diverse, under-resourced communities and organizations in the program, moving us closer to a nation where equitable access to nutritious food is a reality for all.



In Spring 2021, a group of nutrition incentive experts came together to describe approaches to enhance equity in GusNIP. Our group consisted of people who work in national non-profit organizations, agriculture outreach centers, and academia. After preparing an initial set of recommendations, we sought feedback from interested parties including FV producers, food retailers, academic experts, Tribal representatives, successful and unsuccessful GusNIP grant applicants, and community members who use nutrition incentives.

The group included the following individuals. (*Organizations listed for identification purposes only.*)

- Adefunke Ajenikoko, MPH, American Heart Association
- Kristy Anderson, MPP, American Heart Association
- Sara John, PhD, Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Jim Krieger, MD MPH, Healthy Food America and University of Washington School of Public Health
- Emily M. Broad Leib, JD, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic
- Kirsten H. Leng, MPH RD, Healthy Food America
- Blanca Melendrez, MA, UC San Diego, Center for Community Health
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*at time of publication