



Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP): Year 4 Impact Findings

September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023

Executive Summary



Developed by the Center for Nutrition and Health Impact in collaboration with Fair Food Network and U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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Executive Summary

Food insecurity affects 17 million households in the United States (U.S.).¹ At the same time, many people living in the U.S., especially those with low income or in historically underserved communities, lack access to nutritious foods² such as fruits and vegetables (FVs). Furthermore, people with low income generally report lower FV intake compared to the U.S. average.³ This can be attributed to a variety of factors including structural inequalities to access, among other barriers that affect affordability and availability of FVs. Through various initiatives, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)** supports research, education, outreach, and innovation to help tackle food and nutrition insecurity and promote access to FVs among individuals and families in the U.S. with low income or living in historically underserved communities.

One such initiative, **The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) portfolio**, is a collection of three competitive grant programs funded by USDA, NIFA with support from USDA, **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)**, which administers a suite of 16 federal nutrition assistance programs. **The GusNIP portfolio aims to increase food and nutrition security, contribute to local economies, and improve food and healthcare system connections in the U.S.** Generally, GusNIP supports projects that distribute incentives to individuals with low income or in historically underserved communities to increase access to FVs.

Specifically, GusNIP supports:



Nutrition Incentive (NI) Projects that provide incentives to purchase FVs among individuals using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) benefits.



Produce Prescription (PPR) Projects that provide incentives in the form of prescriptions for fresh FVs among individuals with low income and at heightened risk for diet-related chronic disease.



The Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (NTAE) that provides training, technical assistance, reporting, and evaluation support to GusNIP grantees and applicants.

The Center for Nutrition and Health Impact (CNHI), formerly the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, is the primary grantee of the competitively awarded cooperative agreement with NIFA to lead the GusNIP NTAE. CNHI, a national nonprofit research center, partnered with **Fair Food Network** to assemble a coalition of national partners (referred to as the Nutrition Incentive Hub) to provide comprehensive training, technical assistance, reporting, and evaluation support to all GusNIP grantees and applicants. In this report, the GusNIP NTAE and the Nutrition Incentive Hub are referred to collectively as “the NTAE.”

¹ Rabbitt MP, Hales LJ, Burke MP, Coleman-Jensen A. *Household food security in the United States in 2022*, ERR-325, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; 2023. Accessed February 23, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.32747/2023.8134351.ers>

² Rhone A Williams R, Dicken C. *Low-Income and Low-Foodstore-Access Census Tracts, 2015–19*, EIB-236, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; 2022.

³ Lee SH. Adults Meeting Fruit and Vegetable Intake Recommendations — United States, 2019. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2022;71. doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm7101a1

Overview of GusNIP in Year Four

Substantial growth and expansion occurred during year four (Y4) of GusNIP. Existing projects encountered increased demand among communities that experience food insecurity, especially due to economic inflation which continued to strain food budgets among U.S. households. Although the direct impact of COVID-19 has waned, the end of pandemic era assistance such as Pandemic-EBT, which provided additional funds for SNAP participants, has resulted in an even greater need for programs like GusNIP for families with low income. Congress responded to these challenges by providing USDA with additional funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (P.L. 117-2).

During GusNIP Y4 (September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023):

- USDA NIFA invested a total of \$82.1M in GusNIP projects.
- USDA NIFA awarded \$38.7M to NI through standard GusNIP appropriations.
- USDA NIFA awarded \$9M to the NTAE (\$7M through standard GusNIP appropriations and \$2M through ARPA funding).
- ARPA funding increased the support for PPR projects to \$34.4M.
- 8 new NI and 72 new PPR awards were funded.
- In total, 185 awards were active in Y4, including awards funded through the 2021 Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program COVID Relief and Response (GusCRR) grants program.

GusNIP grantees demonstrated unwavering dedication to overseeing ongoing projects, expanding to additional retail sites, and gathering data essential for evaluating collective outcomes.

Summary of Y4 Key Findings

This report presents the national impact of GusNIP-, GusCRR-, and ARPA-funded NI and PPR projects based on participant- and site-level results from data collected during Y4. Key findings from Y4 data include:

- NI and PPR grantees spent **\$43.6M** with GusNIP funds to carry out projects in Y4.
- Participants redeemed **\$52.1M worth of incentives** in Y4 using both federal and match⁴ funding. This demonstrates continued growth when compared to \$41.6M in Y3, \$20.9M in Y2, and \$4.1M in Y1.
- The total annual **redemption rate for incentives across all projects increased from 60.6% in Y3 to 69.2% in Y4**. This is an important increase after experiencing a decline from Y1 to Y2 and from Y2 to Y3.
- The local **economic impact** (i.e., the amount of money generated for communities surrounding the locations offering incentives) was **\$107.4M** (\$43.4M for farm direct (FD); \$62.8M for brick-and-mortar (B&M); \$1.2M for clinics). This was a 25% increase from Y3's economic impact (\$85.6M), demonstrating a significant return on investment from federal funding.
- **4,612 food retail outlets and clinics** offered incentives in Y4 (NI = 3,660 and PPR = 1,425).⁵
- NI projects reached an estimated average of **234,571 participants monthly**. This metric was first tracked in Y3, wherein an average of 146,146 participants were reached monthly. NI projects typically reach more people with a less intensive intervention (e.g., more participants, lower incentive amount, fewer support services) when compared to PPR projects.

⁴ Dollar-for-dollar match funding is required for all GusNIP funded NI projects. Grantees may meet their match requirement through cash and/or in-kind contributions, including third-party in-kind contributions fairly evaluated, including facilities, equipment, or services.

⁵ Some food retail outlets and clinics operated both NI and PPR projects.



- PPR projects enrolled an average of **1,881 participants monthly** which is similar to the Y3 average of 1,986 participants enrolled monthly. PPR projects typically reach fewer people with a more intensive intervention (e.g., fewer participants, higher incentive amount, more support services) when compared to NI projects.
- Participation in NI projects for six months or more was associated with **higher FV intake and improved food security** when compared to participation for the first time or less than six months.
- Participation in PPR projects was associated with **higher FV intake and improved food security** at follow-up assessment when compared to baseline.
- After participating in GusNIP, both NI and PPR project participants reported **higher FV intake** (NI = 2.83 cups/day; PPR = 2.79 cups/day) than the average U.S. adult (2.53 cups/day).
- NI and PPR participants reported **high program satisfaction** (88% of NI participants felt satisfied and 94% of PPR participants felt satisfied).
- The NTAE piloted new self-reported **healthcare utilization** survey items with five grantees and collected baseline data from 211 participants.

NTAE Accomplishments

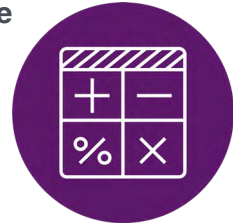
During Y4, the NTAE continued to provide comprehensive assistance for implementation, reporting, and evaluation to a growing number of GusNIP grantees. Assistance included: GusNIP proposal development, grantee onboarding, survey development and data collection capacity building, intensive support for collecting and reporting PPR healthcare-related data, webinars and convenings, resources to guide grantees throughout their grant lifecycle, in-person and online peer learning opportunities, as well as point-of-sale technology consulting.

The wide-ranging and in-depth assistance provided by the NTAE empowered grantees to reach more families who benefit from GusNIP services and to showcase GusNIP's positive impacts on both individuals and communities.

For example, the NTAE responded to more than 1,500 requests and provided 1,200+ hours of implementation and evaluation support to approximately 400 NI and PPR practitioners. Technical assistance resulted in 18,586 completed participant surveys and generated a robust site-level dataset collected via the **Nutrition Incentive Hub's secure web portal**.

In addition, the NTAE launched the **NI Economic Impact Calculator**

on the Nutrition Incentive Hub website. This tool allows users to estimate the economic impact of their NI project and provides a customized infographic to easily share impact results. The NTAE further supported the field by hosting a national convening with 600 attendees, holding two mini-convenings, providing application assistance to prospective GusNIP grantees, and awarding \$900,000 to 41 organizations via the Capacity Building and Innovation Fund. Finally, the NTAE continued to leverage external funding to conduct robust sub-studies that dive deeper into NI and PPR research questions.



The NTAE continuously strives to support GusNIP grantees and to equip them with the resources needed to improve and sustain programming. Collectively, these and other innovative initiatives will not only benefit the GusNIP community of practitioners but also the wider community of NI and PPR researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The NTAE, GusNIP, GusCRR, and ARPA grantees, partners, and participants demonstrated the continued, collective success of NI and PPR projects. This GusNIP Y4 report emphasizes the value of incentive programs for increasing FV purchases and intake, improving food and nutrition security, positively impacting local economies, and supporting food systems. The findings continue to demonstrate why GusNIP is a vital federally funded initiative that can help address disparities in the U.S., where access to nutritious food is especially difficult among families with low income.

Results from Y4 can be interpreted and understood in comparison to other federally funded evaluations of incentive initiatives. Similar to the Healthy Incentives Pilot Program (HIP) evaluation⁶ as well as **Y2** and **Y3** GusNIP impact results, **the Y4 findings demonstrate an increase in FV intake among participants.** The growing body of evidence generated from NI and PPR projects demonstrates that GusNIP is achieving its goals. It emphasizes the importance of continued investment and future expansion of these integral programs that serve communities with low income. In the years to come, the NTAE will build on the momentum, systems, and infrastructure developed during the first four years of GusNIP to engage grantees, applicants, and the NI and PPR fields more broadly to identify best practices and make continuous improvements along the way. Identifying the most impactful program models and implementation characteristics will enable the NTAE to better support grantees and further advance program goals.

The NTAE will support grantees and advance program goals by exploring a number of interconnected questions:

1. How does the incentive amount, frequency, and type impact GusNIP outcomes?
2. What is/are the most cost-effective route(s) to widescale implementation?
3. In what ways does GusNIP help to address complex social (e.g., culturally relevant programming and measurement) and environmental (e.g., food supply chain disruptions, food loss and waste, climate change) issues?
4. How can GusNIP better reach and serve currently underrepresented communities and geographies?

⁶ Olsho LE, Klerman JA, Wilde PE, Bartlett S. Financial incentives increase fruit and vegetable intake among Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants: a randomized controlled trial of the USDA Healthy Incentives Pilot. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2016;104(2):423-435. doi:10.3945/ajcn.115.129320

As GusNIP evolves further, the NTAE's vision will remain unchanged – all invested partners will continue to support families within low income and historically underserved communities to purchase and consume more FVs, thereby increasing food and nutrition security, diminishing the burden of diet-related chronic diseases and disparities, and strengthening local economies.



[Read the Full Year 4 Impact Findings](#)