

# Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP): Year 3 Impact Findings

September 1, 2021 to August 31, 2022

## Executive Summary



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

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National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Executive Summary

## The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive

**Program (GusNIP)** is a competitive grant program funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) with support from USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). **The program aims to increase food and nutrition security while contributing to local economies and improving food systems in the United States (U.S.).** GusNIP supports projects that distribute financial incentives to consumers with low income to increase the purchase of and prescriptions for fruits and vegetables (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** to purchase fresh FVs among individuals with low income and at heightened risk for diet-related chronic disease; and
- **The Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE)** that provides training, technical assistance, reporting and evaluation support to GusNIP grantees and applicants.

The **Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN)** is the primary awardee of the competitively awarded cooperative agreement with **USDA NIFA** to lead the GusNIP NTAE. GSCN, 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.



## GusNIP Y3 Key Findings

**With support from the GusNIP NTAE, grantees collected a robust dataset, showing that:**

1. FV intake increased with NI and PPR participation.
2. Food security improved with NI and PPR participation.
3. \$41.6M in redeemed incentives generated \$85.6M in economic impact.
4. Double the number of food retail outlets and clinics offered incentives through GusNIP from Y2 (1,959) to Y3 (3,608).
5. 1,986 PPR participants enrolled monthly, and an estimated 146,146 NI participants were reached monthly.
6. 73% of grantees' budgets allocated toward direct incentives.
7. More than 14% of the populations living near GusNIP sites earned an income below the federal poverty level.
8. NI and PPR participants reported higher FV intake than the average U.S. adult after participating in GusNIP.
9. NI and PPR participants reported high program satisfaction.



## Overview of GusNIP in Year Three

Substantial growth and expansion occurred during year three (Y3). Existing projects experienced increased demand from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic inflation that continued to strain food budgets among U.S. households. Congress responded to these challenges by providing USDA with additional funding through the GusNIP COVID Relief and Response (GusCRR) grants program mechanism.

For GusNIP Y3 (September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2022):

- USDA NIFA awarded \$34M to GusNIP and \$7M to the GusNIP NTAE.
- Congress approved an additional \$69M via the Coronavirus Response and Relief Act (H.R. 133), for GusCRR, bringing total funding to \$110M.
- 28 new GusNIP (18 NI and 10 PPR) and 35 GusCRR (20 NI and 15 PPR) awards were funded.

Despite challenges, grantees worked tirelessly to administer existing projects, expand to new retail locations, and collect robust data used to assess aggregate impact.

## Summary of Key Findings

**This report presents the national impact of GusNIP- and GusCRR-funded NI and PPR projects based on participant- and site-level results from data collected in Y3.**

- Grantees spent a total of \$41.8M of federal grant funding (\$24.4M by GusNIP and \$17.4M by GusCRR).
- 73% of federal funds (\$30.5M) were distributed as incentives for FVs to people with low income living in the U.S. This proportion was similar to Y2 (75%) and higher than Y1 (68%).
- Using both federal and match<sup>1</sup> funding, participants redeemed \$41.6M worth of incentives in Y3 compared to \$20.9M in Y2 and \$4.1M in Y1.
- The local economic impact (i.e., the amount of money generated for communities surrounding the locations offering incentives) was \$85.6M (67% by GusNIP and 33% by GusCRR). Between Y1 and Y3, the economic impact increased more than tenfold, demonstrating a significant return on investment from federal funding.

- 3,608 food retail outlets and clinics offered incentives in Y3, nearly doubling the Y2 number (1,959). Of these, 3,057 were GusNIP-funded and 1,308 were GusCRR-funded.
- On average, NI sites were in communities where 14.1% of the population earned an income below the federal poverty level. PPR sites were in communities where 14.8% of the population earned an income below the federal poverty level. Both are higher than the national average of 11.4%.
- NI projects, through approaches that typically reach more people with a less intensive intervention (e.g., more participants, lower incentive amount, fewer support services), reached an estimated average of 146,146 participants monthly.
- PPR projects, through approaches that typically reach fewer people with a more intensive intervention (e.g., fewer participants, higher incentive amount, more support services), enrolled an average of 1,986 participants monthly.
- Participation in NI projects for six months or more was associated with higher FV intake and improved food security when compared to first-time participation and participation for less than six months.
- Participation in PPR projects was associated with higher FV intake and improved food security at post assessment when compared to baseline.
- Both NI and PPR project participants reported higher FV intake (NI = 2.78 cups/day, PPR = 2.58 cups/day) than the average U.S. adult (2.53 cups/day) after participation in GusNIP.
- NI and PPR participants reported high program satisfaction (88% of NI participants felt positively about the program and 93% of PPR participants felt positively about the program).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.





- In addition to the participant-level survey, PPR grantees collected other health care-related data:
  - 58% collected biometric and self-reported health outcome measures;
  - 45% tracked health care utilization intended to increase due to PPR (i.e., “positive” utilization such as well visits);
  - 25.8% tracked health care utilization intended to decrease due to PPR (i.e., “negative” utilization such as emergency department visits); and
  - 55% reported access to participants’ electronic health record data.

## GusNIP NTAE Accomplishments

The full report documents the national impact of GusNIP and GusCRR NI and PPR projects, as well as the activities and accomplishments of the GusNIP NTAE. During GusNIP Y3, the GusNIP NTAE continued to provide comprehensive assistance in Reporting and Evaluation (R&E) as well as Technical Assistance and Innovation (TA&I) to a growing number of grantees, which included: GusNIP proposal development, grantee onboarding, survey development and data collection capacity building, intensive support for collecting and reporting PPR health care-related data, broad-reach webinars and convenings, resources to guide grantees throughout their grant lifecycle, peer learning opportunities through communities of practice and an online discussion board, as well as point-of-sale technology consulting.

R&E assistance resulted in 12,618 completed participant surveys across NI and PPR projects and generated a robust site-level dataset collected via the **Nutrition Incentive Hub’s secure web portal**. R&E team members published 10 peer-reviewed manuscripts to disseminate landmark GusNIP research.

The R&E team also secured external, non-federal funding to conduct robust sub-studies for both NI and PPR. TA&I team members continued to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of GusNIP projects by providing project implementation support. The TA&I team responded to 1,000+ help requests, hosted a national convening with 1,000+ virtual attendees, hosted a mini convening, supported a 60% increase in submitted GusNIP applications from FY21 to FY22, and awarded \$1M million to 24 NI and PPR projects through the Capacity Building and Innovation Fund.

## Implications

During Y3, the GusNIP NTAE, GusNIP and GusCRR grantees, partners, and participants demonstrated the continued, collective success of NI and PPR projects. Y3 results can be interpreted in comparison to other federally funded evaluations of incentive initiatives. Similar to the Healthy Incentives Pilot Program (HIP) evaluation published in 2014, the Y3 findings show an increase in FV intake among participants. However, these findings are contrary to the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) evaluation published in 2021, which found no statistically significant change in FV intake. When compared to Y2 results, Y3 results continue to show the value of incentive programs for FV purchases and intake, food security, and local economic impact.

## Next Steps

In Y4, the GusNIP NTAE will build upon the momentum, systems and infrastructure developed during the previous three years and continue to engage grantees and applicants to identify best practices and make iterative improvements. The GusNIP NTAE continues to hone its model to provide wraparound services that help grantees, applicants, and the broader NI and PPR fields learn, sustain and evolve. With the growing number of grantees funded through GusNIP, Y4 will include further expansion and scaling of the GusNIP NTAE’s services in collaboration with USDA NIFA, grantees, applicants, participants, food retail outlets, clinics and other partners. Collectively, all invested parties will continue to support families with low income to purchase and consume more FVs, thereby increasing nutrition security, reducing food insecurity, strengthening local economies, and aiding in diminishing the burden of chronic disease.