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USDA nutrition incentives improve access to healthy food

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing more than \$52 million to improve dietary health and access to fresh fruits and vegetables for eligible families.

The funds support efforts across three National Institute of Food and Agriculture competitive grant programs that make up the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program. The program is named in honor of the former USDA Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (1997 to 2001).

“USDA is delivering on its promise to bolster food and nutrition security for underserved communities,” said USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics Chavonda Jacobs-Young. “Investments like this enable people to afford and eat healthy fresh fruits and vegetables so they don’t have to make a choice between healthy eating and cheaper less healthier options.”

Nineteen awardees are receiving GusNIP Nutrition Incentive funding totaling \$41.8 million. NI projects increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by providing incentives at the point of purchase among income-eligible households participating in the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Produce Prescription awards account for \$5.2 million to 11 awardees. These projects demonstrate and evaluate the impact of fresh fruit and vegetable prescriptions. The goals of the program are to increase procurement and consumption of fruits and vegetables, reduce individual and household food insecurity and reduce health care use and associated costs.

One awardee is receiving \$7 million through the NTAE Center program. NTAE projects offer training, technical assistance, evaluation and informational support services.

“GusNIP has provided over \$270 million in funding to nearly 200 projects throughout the U.S. since its 2019 launch and participants are consistently reporting increased fruit and vegetable intake as a result,” said NIFA Director Manjit Misra. “This latest round of funding only strengthens the impacts these programs are having nationwide.”

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