



NH FOOD ALLIANCE



Nutrition Incentives: A win-win-win for families, farms, and communities in NH

- Nutrition incentives are a powerful way to increase the amount of healthy foods available to low-income families and individuals in NH while also providing an economic boost to our local farms and food businesses.
- By supporting and expanding existing nutrition incentive programs in NH through new policies, funding streams, and collaborative efforts, we can improve health outcomes for vulnerable children and families and strengthen markets for NH grown food.

What are Nutrition Incentives?

1 in 10 families in the United States benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a federally funded nutrition program that helps millions of low-income individuals and families buy groceries.

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP, formerly FINI) supports projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase.

Nutrition incentives double the value of fresh produce purchased by SNAP shoppers, dollar for dollar. For example, when SNAP shoppers spend \$10, they get \$20 worth of healthy, locally grown produce.

Nutrition Incentives in NH

SNAP incentives in NH have been supported since 2015 by a combination of federal grants and private philanthropic matching funds.

Granite State Market Match (coordinated by the NH Food Bank) offers SNAP incentives at 33 farmers' markets, benefitting 326 farms, and reaching (on average) 5000 SNAP customers in 2019.

Double up Food Bucks (DUFb), an initiative led by national non-profit Fair Food Network, coordinates SNAP incentives at 14 retail stores in NH and plans to expand to at least one more in 2020. DUFb has reached about 6,680 SNAP shoppers in 2019.



Sustainability Institute

Why should we support and expand these programs in NH?

Healthy children and families

- SNAP incentives benefit some of our most vulnerable populations in the state, helping to reduce food insecurity for nearly 1 in 10 people in NH. Nearly two-thirds of all SNAP participants are children, elderly, and people with disabilities. (7)
- Nutrition incentives mean SNAP participants spend more dollars on healthy foods, encouraging healthy life-long eating habits. Children whose families participate in SNAP incentive programs are less likely to be in poor health or underweight and families are less likely to trade off paying for health care and paying for other basic needs like food, housing, heating, and electricity

Thriving local farms and food businesses

- New Hampshire farmers sell \$234 million of food products per year (1989-2017 average), spending \$242 million to raise them, for an average loss of \$8 million each year.
- Meanwhile, consumers in NH spend \$4.4 billion on food each year (\$2.6 billion for home use), the majority of it produced outside the state.
- SNAP benefits totaled \$124 million in the state in 2017. If more NH residents eligible to receive SNAP benefits used those benefits to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables, we'd see positive health impacts for our lower income communities and an economic boost for farms and rural communities.

Strong communities and local economies

- SNAP and nutrition incentives act as an economic engine for the state and local economy. Every \$5 spent using SNAP generates as much as \$9 in economic activity for the community.(1)
- Farmers, grocery store owners, farmer's market vendors and small retail stores all reap the benefit from higher sales of produce.
- There is room for growth! Large swaths of the state have few or no retail options available, especially for those who rely on SNAP and other federal nutrition programs.

How do we support and expand nutrition incentive programs in

NH?

The following recommendations were developed by the NH Food Alliance Food Access Policy Team from September - February 2020. These recommendations are intended to guide NH Food Alliance network partners in their collaborative efforts to ensure equitable food access for all and to support local farms and food businesses. The recommendations can also inform policy makers and planners at the municipal and state levels interested in promoting food security and a strong local food economy.

Recommendations

1. Secure sustainable funding for GSMM & DUFB

Expansion of these successful programs is limited by funding. Neighboring states support nutrition incentive programs with millions in state funding. In 2020, MA included \$8Million in their state budget to support SNAP incentive programming. While NH DHHS supports these programs administratively, there is currently no line-item funding for the programs in the annual budget.

- Stabilize annual incentive funding through state budget and institutional support
- Assess gap in SNAP utilization bi-annually, and increase SNAP incentive budget to match this need
- Increase collaboration between GSMM and DUFB on fundraising, program implementation and program outreach and marketing.

2. Expand the number of retail outlets and markets that participate in GSMM &

~~DUFB~~ SNAP benefits are spent in grocery retail settings. To reach more participants, it's critical that more outlets participate in the program.

- Expand SNAP incentive participation to large retail chains.
- Expand SNAP incentive participation to independent corner stores (ex. Healthy Corner Store Initiative)
- Provide all markets, retail chains, and corner stores with training, technical assistance, technology, funding, and monitoring support, to initiate and maintain SNAP incentive programs.

3. Address transportation barriers by bringing food to where people are

In all parts of the state, low-income people often have difficulty accessing transportation to grocery stores and farmers markets to purchase fresh and healthy foods and take advantage of nutrition incentive programs. (Carsey Institute study, NHFA research)

- Support and expand Mobile Produce Markets and farm stands across the state that offer nutrition incentive programs. Seacoast Eat Local and Fresh Start Farms now have mobile markets that successfully bring local produce and SNAP incentives to places where people often have difficulty getting to farmers markets and other retail locations: elderly care facilities, workplaces, urban areas, etc.
- Identify funding for and pilot flexible models such as online ordering, pre-ordering, and delivery service options.

4. Expand education and outreach efforts to support program utilization

Lack of information about nutrition incentive programs, both for state and social service agencies as well as SNAP program participants, is a barrier to utilization. (NHFA Research 2019)

- Facilitate community listening sessions to assess utilization and education gaps.
- Provide information and outreach materials to state agencies (DHHS, WIC, Medicaid Offices), community partners and social service agencies about how to access SNAP and SNAP incentive programs, including mobile markets and where they are.
- Ensure all outreach and educational materials are accessible for ADA and multilingual.
- Continue to support education and training around cooking and eating fresh fruits and vegetables (for example, Cooking Matters courses and partnerships with Extension)

5. Explore opportunities to expand nutrition programs that make locally grown food available to people in need who may not participate in SNAP

There are other nutrition programs in NH (Summer Food Program, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, Farm to School, etc.) that could be expanded to benefit both local farmers and low-income residents.

- Explore current utilization of USDA's Summer Food Program and support efforts that promote and expand the program where there is demonstrated need, underuse, and where there are opportunities to co-locate Summer Food Programs.
- Promote the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) to all eligible seniors in the state. This program provides seniors enrolled in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) with a \$22 bundle of local fresh fruits and vegetables from July-Sept.
- Re-start the Farmers Market Nutrition Program for WIC participants in NH, utilizing the new E-WIC capability. Explore utilizing available federal funds, with minimal state investment.
- Explore partnerships with health-care institutions to expand Fruit and Vegetable Prescription programming and Food is Medicine programs across NH.
- Support funding for and expansion of Farm to School programs across the state.
- Utilize NH Gleans for all areas of the state or find funds to support farmers up front for their distribution to low-income, in need agencies.
- Marketing to promote school meal participation, senior meal sites, and community dinner locations.

6. Streamline and expand enrollment for SNAP and other food assistance programs

Applying (and re-applying) for SNAP and other nutrition assistance benefits can be a burden and barrier to families participating in these programs.

- Advocate for automatic enrollment options whereby people who are enrolled in SNAP are automatically enrolled in other federally funded nutrition programs (WIC, school lunch & breakfast, etc.) through coordinated Department data sharing agreements.
- Explore use of a common application portal for other federal and state benefit programs including the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Income Eligible Child Care; housing assistance benefits; and Cash Assistance benefits to ensure families seeking these benefits are offered simultaneous applications for SNAP and health care programs.
- Encourage inter-agency referrals under existing programs as an interim measure until a new and improved system is in place.
- Educate social workers about food assistance programs available so that they can help their families understand what they qualify for and assist them with applying.
- Maximize usage of USDA school food programs, including National School Food Lunch, School Breakfast, and Fruit and Vegetable Programs.
- Encourage school districts to adopt the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

7. Expand - don't limit - SNAP eligibility requirements so that working families can participate!

In almost every recent legislative cycle, there has been an effort to limit eligibility for the SNAP program based on household income and assets. Unfortunately, these efforts would end up impacting working families - those who are working, sometimes multiple jobs, while struggling to make ends meet. SNAP provides a much needed boost for many families who otherwise need to choose between paying for rent, transportation, childcare, food and healthcare.

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