



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

February 7, 2024

THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Boozman:

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is the extramural scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is committed to investing in and advancing agricultural research, education, and extension to solve societal challenges.

Under 7 USC 7517 (e)(2) (B)(iii), which accompanied the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, USDA is directed to submit an annual report to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate on grant outcomes including: 1) the results of the project; 2) the amount of grant funds used for the project; and 3) creates and maintains a publicly accessible online site that makes annual reports and incentive program information available in an anonymized format that protects confidential, personal, or other sensitive data.

In response to this request, USDA is providing the Committee with a report. The Annual GusNIP Impact Findings will also be shared on this website: <https://nutritionincentivehub.org>.

If you have any further questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

Enclosure



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

February 7, 2024

THE HONORABLE DAVID SCOTT
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
House of Representatives
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Scott:

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Washington, DC 20250

February 7, 2024

THE HONORABLE DEBBIE STABENOW
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow:

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Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

February 7, 2024

THE HONORABLE GLENN "GT" THOMPSON
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

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Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
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Enclosure

Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE): Progress Report to Congress

Year 4: September 1, 2022 - August 31, 2023

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) increases healthy eating and food security while also supporting farmers and stimulating local economies. During the previous four years, GusNIP has made it possible for families with low income in nearly every state to purchase more fruits and vegetables (FVs) while simultaneously generating more than \$200M in local economic impact. A lifeline for households throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, GusNIP has continued to make FVs more accessible to families with low income forced to make tough shopping decisions amid inflation. As a key grant portfolio funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), GusNIP supports three competitive grant programs: the Nutrition Incentive (NI) Program, the Produce Prescription (PPR) Program, and the Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (NTAE). GusNIP continues to positively impact communities across the country by providing grant opportunities to community-based organizations, health clinics, Tribes, and others. Grant recipients implement and evaluate projects that distribute financial incentives for FVs. These include nutrition incentives at the point of purchase and produce prescriptions from clinic settings.

The [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#) (GSCN), a nonprofit research and evaluation center, leads the competitively awarded GusNIP NTAE cooperative agreement with USDA NIFA. GSCN partners with [Fair Food Network \(FFN\)](#) and a coalition of national partners, referred to as the [Nutrition Incentive Hub](#), to provide comprehensive reporting, evaluation, technical assistance, and information support to GusNIP applicants and grantees. This coalition of experts provides tailored guidance for successful project implementation while measuring the impact of GusNIP using a set of shared measures across GusNIP NI and PPR projects.

This report highlights the national impact of GusNIP-funded NI and PPR projects, as well as accomplishments from the fourth year (September 2022 – August 2023) of the NTAE and Nutrition Incentive Hub. In GusNIP Year 4 (Y4), the USDA NIFA funded eight NI awards across 8 states totaling \$38.7M. Through an additional investment via USDA's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), NIFA funded 72 PPR awards across 34 states totaling \$34.4M.¹ ARPA PPR awards included three types: 1) PPR Meritorious (highly ranked, unfunded applications from FY21), 2) PPR Enhancement (additional funding to existing PPR awards), and 3) PPR Standard (funded applications from FY22). The GusNIP NTAE received \$9M from NIFA in Y4, including almost \$2M in ARPA funding to support PPR grantees. The NTAE onboarded new grantees and continued to support 105 active awards from Y1-Y3, including awards funded through the GusNIP COVID Relief and Response (GusCRR) grants program. **Table 1** (p.5) displays the count of awards by program year, award type (PPR vs. NI), and award mechanism.

Notable Results from GusNIP Year 4

USDA NIFA's investment in GusNIP Y4 created positive outcomes for families with low income who rely on NI and/or PPR incentives to help make FVs more affordable. The NTAE and Nutrition Incentive Hub team continued to provide reporting, evaluation, technical assistance, and information support to help grantees achieve the greatest possible economic and health-related impacts among participants and

¹ One PPR grantee returned their funding prior to implementing their award and did not submit data for this report.

communities. The results from Y4 are built upon the previous three years’ foundation and demonstrate continued positive impact. Therefore, we are delighted to share notable results from Y4.

GusNIP Participant Testimonial:

“The [NI] program expands my family's food budget. Having this extra spending power helps me afford food I wouldn't otherwise buy. It allows me to experiment, to try something new, without worrying. It feels like such a gift to be able to support farmers that I care about in a context where I know the food is good. This program multiplies the good, for my family's health, for our budget, and for our community.”

Economic Impact:

Thanks to GusNIP, participating **families brought home more than \$52.1M in FVs, which generated an estimated \$107,412,909 in local economic impact.** See **Figure 1** for the total incentives/produce prescriptions redeemed using GusNIP, GusCRR, and ARPA PPR funds as well as the corresponding economic impact by funding mechanism. Between Y1 and Y4, the generated **economic impact increased more than 13-fold,**² demonstrating a significant return on investment from federal funds.

Figure 1. GusNIP’s Local Economic Impact in Year 4

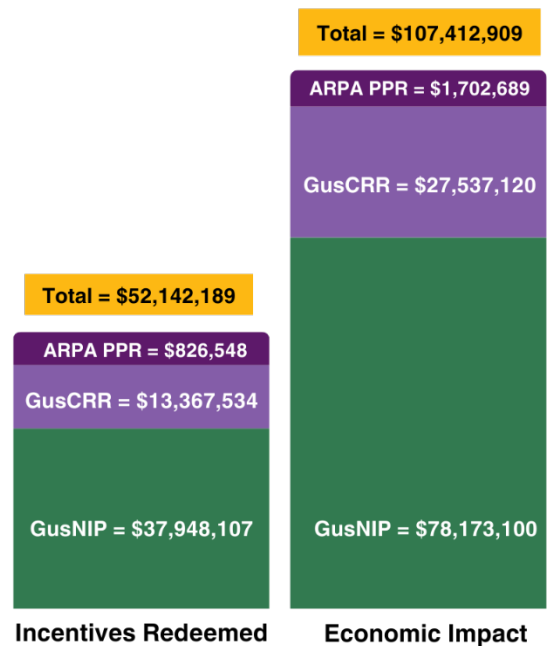


Figure 2. Both Fruit and Vegetable Intake and Food Security Increased after Participation in GusNIP



Health-Related Impacts:

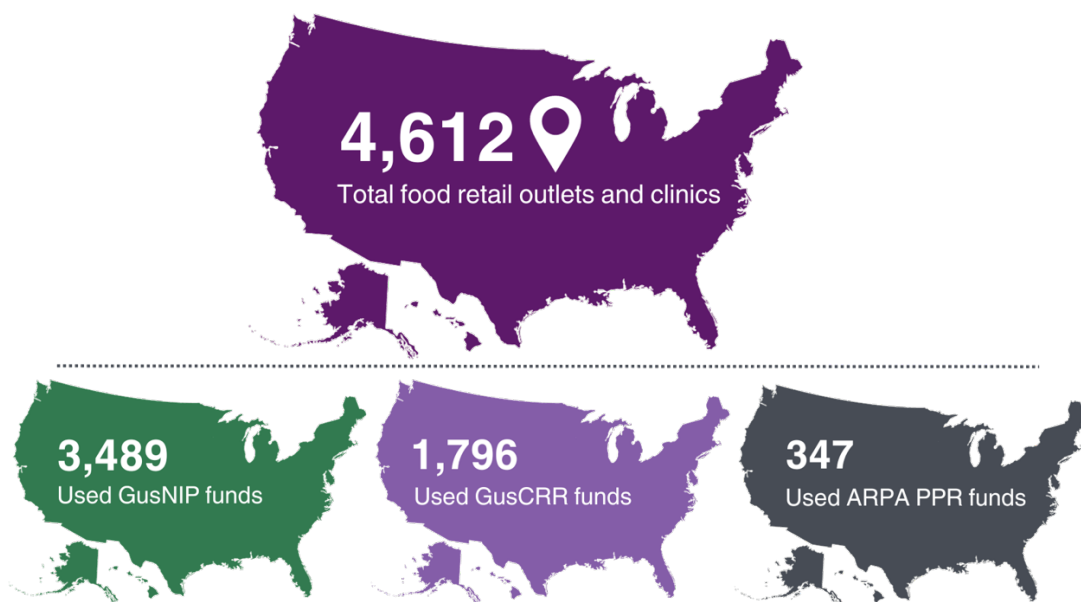
For the third year in a row, **NI project participants reported higher FV intake and food security** the longer they participated in GusNIP (**Figure 2**). Similarly, **PPR participants reported higher FV intake and food security after participating in GusNIP** (i.e., baseline to post assessment).³ Additionally, PPR projects further refined assessment of decreased healthcare use and costs, an added goal for this award type.

² Y1 economic impact = \$7,966,290 across 19 grantees vs. Y4 economic impact = \$107,412,909 across 185 grantees
³ Note: NI project survey data collection is cross-sectional and utilizes length of program participation as a “proxy” for dose (e.g., exposure to program components), while PPR project survey data collection includes baseline and post-program assessments.

GusNIP Reach:

In addition to favorable impacts on families, the reach of GusNIP-funded projects expanded to include **4,612 food retail outlets and clinics (also known as firms⁴) offering incentives in their communities.** This represents an increase of **1,000 additional locations compared to Y3** (N = 3,608), more than twice the number of locations compared to Y2 (N = 1,959), and six times the number of locations compared to Y1 (N = 773). **Figure 3** displays the total count of food retail outlets and clinics as well as the count by award mechanism (GusNIP, GusCRR, and ARPA PPR).⁵

Figure 3. Total Food Retail Outlets and Clinics by Award Mechanism in Year 4



Incentive Spending and Redemption Rate:

As of August 31, 2023, the total amount of federal grant dollars spent across all active, non-pilot grantees was \$43,587,519, with 59% of funds (\$25,740,779) distributed as incentives for FVs to Americans with low income.⁶ Funds spent and percentage of funds distributed as incentives by award mechanism were as follows:

- GusNIP = \$20,479,655 (58% as incentives)
- GusCRR = \$18,714,904 (71% as incentives)
- ARPA PPR = \$4,392,960 (11% as incentives)

It is important to note that the percentage of funds distributed as incentives was lower in Y4 than in Y3 (73%) and was particularly modest among the 72 ARPA PPR grantees (11%). This is likely because ARPA PPR grantees were in the first year of their awards during GusNIP Y4. During the first year of an award,

⁴ GusNIP defines firms as those sites administering GusNIP projects. Nutrition incentive project firms include the following food retail outlet types: grocery stores, supermarkets, corner stores, wholesale, farmers market, farm stands, community supported agriculture, and mobile markets. Produce prescription project firms include all food retail outlets and health clinics.

⁵ Many firms operate using more than one funding mechanism (GusNIP, GusCRR, ARPA PPR). In addition, some firms operate multiple projects and multiple project types (i.e., NI and PPR projects). Thus, there is overlap in the counts of firms attributed to distinct fundings sources.

⁶ \$43,587,519 is the total amount of federal grant dollars only and does not include nutrition incentive project match funding.

PPR grantees typically spend most of their funds setting up and launching their projects rather than on providing incentives to participants.

Another measure of GusNIP implementation success is the total incentive redemption rate (i.e., the sum of incentives redeemed divided by the sum of incentives distributed across all grantees). **Across all NI projects, the total redemption rate improved from 61% in Y3 to 69% in Y4. Across all PPR projects, the total redemption rate improved from 53% in Y3 to 75% in Y4.**

NTAE and Nutrition Incentive Hub Year 4 Overview

The NTAE structure is unique to GusNIP and brings together both technical and evaluation support as a quality improvement effort. The NTAE has demonstrated the national impact of GusNIP on participant health and local economies, while also providing real-time support, tools, templates, and resources to applicants and grantees to maximize efficiency in implementation and evaluation. During Y4, the NTAE supported 185 active awards (see **Table 1**), resolved 1,500+ requests for assistance, and provided 600+ hours of support to 400+ NI and PPR practitioners (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Technical Assistance Provided by the NTAE and Nutrition Incentive Hub in Year 4



Furthermore, the NTAE has identified and is working to resolve systemic barriers (e.g., point-of-sale technology in grocery retail, data sharing in healthcare settings, pathways to increasing local sourcing) that prevent GusNIP projects from expanding. The following section details some of the many examples of support and training provided by the NTAE during Y4:

Demonstrating GusNIP Effectiveness:

- During the previous four years, the NTAE has built an evidence base that indicates GusNIP participants increase their consumption of FVs. It is important to note that as FV intake increases, so too does food security. Healthier diets for families with low income advance national nutrition security – consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods that promote well-being and prevent or treat disease.⁷
- Participants who redeem FV incentives contribute multiplying positive impacts on their local economies. In Y4, the NTAE commissioned the development of the [GusNIP NTAE Nutrition Incentive Economic Impact Calculator](#) to help showcase these impacts. This tool is freely available to grantees and practitioners on the Nutrition Incentive Hub website.
- The NTAE launched a centralized firm-level help desk to streamline requests and responses. Comprehensive and tailored advising resulted in high compliance with reporting requirements and a large sample of both participant surveys (N = 18,586) and firm-level reports (N = 44,450).

⁷ Food and Nutrition Security. Accessed November 9, 2023. <https://www.usda.gov/nutrition-security>

Supporting Current and Potential GusNIP Grantees through the Nutrition Incentive Hub (created by the NTAE):

- To support the development of new business opportunities for rural farmers and communities, the Nutrition Incentive Hub facilitated a six-week training about local sourcing and supply chain development. As part of the training, grantees identified potential partners and mapped processes to facilitate local sourcing from farmers and local suppliers to stores.
- Partners at the Nutrition Incentive Hub facilitated a workgroup of PPR grantees and practitioners to address the challenge of expanding into grocery retail. The workgroup catalogued existing technology-based solutions for operating PPRs in grocery stores and developed recommendations for future improvement.
- During the fifth round of the Capacity Building and Innovation Fund, the Nutrition Incentive Hub awarded \$900k to 45 organizations. The funding focused on building organizational capacity to apply for, implement, and/or evaluate a GusNIP funded project in FY24.
- The Nutrition Incentive Hub fostered peer learning opportunities by facilitating seven communities of practice (e.g., evaluation, produce prescriptions, operating in corner stores), two in-person mini convenings with 70+ attendees, and a three-day hybrid Nutrition Incentive Hub National Convening in Arlington, VA with 600+ participants.

Building Evaluation Capacity among Produce Prescription Projects:

- To more effectively engage the growing number of grantees, the NTAE revised the advising model. Specifically, new PPR grantees are now advised in peer groups in an effort to provide more opportunities for peer learning.
- The NTAE further bolstered grantee infrastructure and capacity to collect and report PPR health-related data. As a result, 22 PPR grantees reported having access to participants' electronic health record (EHR) data, 21 PPR grantees established data use agreements with the NTAE for sharing clinical data, and three grantees shared clinical data with the NTAE through a new secure data transfer system created by the NTAE.
- The NTAE piloted survey items to measure participants' self-reported healthcare utilization, including clinic visits, overnight hospitalization, and Emergency Room (ER) visits.⁸ During Y4, five grantees collected baseline data from 254 participants.

Table 1. Number of New and Active GusNIP Awards in Year 4 by Award Mechanism

Award Mechanism	New Awards in Y4	Active awards from Y1 Y3	Total Active Awards in Y4
GusNIP NI	8	43	51
GusNIP PPR	0	26	26
GusCRR NI	--	19	19
GusCRR PPR	--	17	17
ARPA PPR Meritorious	17	--	17
ARPA PPR Enhancement	12	--	12
ARPA PPR Standard	43	--	43
Total	80	105	185

⁸ NHANES 2017-2018 Questionnaire Instruments. Hospital Utilization and Access to Care. Accessed November 9, 2023. <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes/continuousnhanes/questionnaires.aspx?BeginYear=2017>