

Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive

Overview

The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive, or FINI, is a competitive grant program whose goal is to increase fruit and vegetable purchasing among low-income shoppers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It is operated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The 2018 farm bill significantly expanded the FINI program and provided additional funding for produce prescription programs as well as training, technical assistance, and evaluation center(s).

BACKGROUND

The FINI program was created in the 2014 farm bill. Since 2015, USDA has awarded \$85.6 million in four rounds of grants to more than 100 nonprofit organizations and public agencies around the country supporting produce purchasing incentives for SNAP beneficiaries.

The 2018 farm bill more than doubled funding for SNAP incentives, created a produce prescription program, and authorized the creation of new training and technical center(s) based on practitioner feedback. Finally, the program was renamed the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program in honor of the former undersecretary for agriculture who helped establish SNAP incentives nationwide. The strong bipartisan and bicameral support incentives garnered during the farm bill debate is testament to the success of FINI-funded SNAP incentive programs around the country from 2015-2018.

OVERVIEW

The expanded FINI program in the 2018 farm bill has three main components:

- **Incentives:** Competitive grants for SNAP fruit and vegetable incentives with total funding of up to \$187 million through FY 2023. These grants can go to public or nonprofit organizations and require a one-to-one match, either monetary (non-federal dollars) or in-kind.
- **NEW Produce Prescriptions:** Competitive grants for programs that provide “prescriptions” that encourage produce consumption through financial, educational, or other incentives. There is a maximum of \$25 million over five years available for this program. Produce prescription programs requires coordination with healthcare providers as well as data collection to assess whether the approach can reduce healthcare spending.
- **NEW Technical Assistance & Evaluation:** Funding to establish training, technical assistance, information, and evaluation center or centers. Funding for this work will be awarded through a competitive process and will not require a match. Its goal is to support:
 - The development and dissemination of best practices
 - Intensive help for programs in high-need areas
 - Coordination among incentive practitioners, point-of-sale and electronic payment companies, grocers and farm direct retailers, and federal and state SNAP agencies on the development and sharing of improved and cost-effective SNAP and incentive transaction systems
 - The reporting of standardized program data, which will be used for annual reporting to Congress and USDA and be publicly searchable to facilitate connections between programs and further research in the field.

FINE PRINT

SNAP incentives and produce prescriptions may be implemented in grocery stores, mobile markets, or various kinds of farm direct retail (e.g., farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, etc.).

Incentive programs must have the support of the state's SNAP agency. Projects that feature local produce, demonstrate the ability reach underserved communities, coordinate with stakeholders, offer supplemental services such as online ordering, or maximize funds for incentives will be prioritized in the grant process.

Incentive grants will continue to be implemented by USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) with support from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The new produce prescription grant program will be implemented by the USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Funding for the support and reporting center(s) will be awarded through a competitive process and will not require a match.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture: <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>
- Information on FINI programs: https://portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/project_details
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/FINI-Grant-Program>
- FINI Program 2015 results: https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Consolidated-2015-Report_finaldigital-.pdf
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentives/>
- Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018: <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CRPT-115hrpt1072.pdf>