

NEW FOOD INSECURITY NUTRITION INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM FINDINGS  
New report informs Farm Bill reauthorization

**OMAHA, Neb., October 3, 2018** – In early 2018, the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition conducted a series of interviews with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2015 and 2016 Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program grantees and stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding of policy implications and to inform the future of healthy food incentive programs. FINI aims to increase fruit and vegetable purchasing among Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) consumers by providing incentives that often stretch the food dollar. This program is supported through the Agricultural Act of 2014, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is due for reauthorization in 2018, making preservation of food security and associated programs among the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. both timely and imperative.

Supporting FINI is largely considered to have broad appeal and positive benefits across multiple stakeholders, as it is a program that can improve food access, reduce food insecurity, decrease health care costs, support local food systems and stimulate local economies. As legislative components of the Farm Bill continue to be delineated and debated, it is imperative that SNAP policy and the integration of FINI are strongly considered. In particular, preserving SNAP eligibility and funding are vital for the future of food insecure populations. Both the current Senate and House versions of the 2018 Farm Bill substantially increase mandatory funding for FINI and establish permanent baseline for the program, and include components of technical assistance to strengthen the impact that these projects have.

**Overarching findings from interviews with grantees and stakeholders representing policy advocates, academicians, federal employees and technical assistance providers include:**

**Benefits of FINI Program**

Interviewees noted the diversity in how the projects operate in terms of the types of participating retail outlets (farmers' markets, grocery stores, corner stores, etc.), the geographic focus (city, state, regional), methods for redemption (tokens, loyalty cards, coupons or vouchers, automatic discounts, etc.), and the monetary amounts with which the incentives are matched (dollar-for-dollar or ratio). It is critical to consider the range of settings and how this diversity can help reach those who may benefit most from expanded purchasing power for fruits and vegetables.

Stakeholders and FINI grantees emphasized the overwhelming positive impacts of these funded projects, typically describing the potential for “a trifecta of benefits” that impact **farmers** through an increase in sales and expansion of their customer base, **grocery store owners** through an increase in sales and expansion of locally sourced produce, and **consumers** through improvements in diet, food security and better health as a result of utilizing FINI incentives. In addition, supporting local farmers is vital in promoting sustainable food systems and community food security.

## **Opportunities**

The current qualitative findings underscore the vitality of the FINI program and also extends an exciting opportunity to advance the purchasing and intake of fruits and vegetables among low-income populations across the U.S. The proposed Senate version of the Farm Bill requires the USDA to establish one or more FINI program training and technical assistance centers to assist in sharing best practices, as well as evaluation. These additions to support FINI grantees would facilitate program delivery in a resourceful manner and answer the call for coordination, sharing of best practices and measurement alignment.

Read the full [FINI evaluation report](#) for more information.

**About:** The Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, founded in 1973, is a national nonprofit research institute, based in Omaha, providing expertise in public health nutrition. The Center's primary focus is measurement and evaluation across the content areas of childhood obesity prevention, food insecurity and local food systems.

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*If you would like more information about these findings, please contact Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition's Marketing Associate Amanda Schneider, M.S., at [aschneider@centerfornutrition.org](mailto:aschneider@centerfornutrition.org) or (402) 559-5500.*