

Nurture Nature Center

USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant
Years 1 & 2 SNAP Double Bucks Customer Survey

March 2017

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**United Way of the
Greater Lehigh Valley**

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Project Overview & Survey Design

In 2015, the “USDA awarded \$31.5 million in funding to local, state and national organizations to support programs that help participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) increase their purchase of fruits and vegetables. Recognizing that all Americans fall well short of the servings of fruits and vegetables recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the grants will test incentive strategies to help SNAP participants better afford fruits and vegetables. These grants were made through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.”¹ The Nurture Nature Center, located in Easton, Pa., received a Pilot Projects grant to increase fruit and vegetable purchases by SNAP participants in Northampton County. This grant helped provide food forums to discuss barriers to fresh food access in these neighborhoods and worked to increase SNAP participation at new and existing programs that deliver fresh, local produce.

As The Nurture Nature Center/ Buy Fresh Buy Local Greater Lehigh Valley’s evaluation partner for the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program grant, United Way completed a preliminary assessment of the communities included in the proposal, researched into previous surveys regarding best practices for collecting data on the outcomes, created a survey for distribution, and completed analysis.

Data mapping by census tract was done prior to the creation of the customer survey for a better understanding of the program’s customers. The following census tracts were included: South Side Easton: 146, 147 Downtown Easton: 143, 144 West Ward Easton: 142, 172 South Side Bethlehem: 112, 113 Central Bethlehem: 106, 107, 108 Pen Argyl: 156 Bath: 166 and Bangor: 152. A data map was created using online mapping tool, Community Commons and the overlaid data points included Households Receiving SNAP Benefits (American Community Survey 2009-2013), Food-At-Home Expenditures (Nielsen 2014), Fruit and Vegetable Expenditures (Nielsen 2014), Population with No High School Diploma (American Community Survey 2009-2013) and Population of Hispanic Origin, Percent by Tract (American Community Survey 2009-2013). The analysis of this cross-sectional data led to creating the survey in English and Spanish versions

¹ USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

and ensuring accessibility via readability. The survey tested with 0% passive voice, Flesch Reading Ease of 71.0, and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 6.4.

United Way conducted a review of available reports regarding the overall goals of the FINI grants, and evaluations of similar programs. This included the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Policy Support in the Food and Nutrition Service Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) Final Report through Abt Associates, and the Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP): Data Collection Instruments used by Westat. The final report and survey questions used in the HIP evaluation informed United Way's finalized customer survey.

The survey was designed to answer: Had this customer ever used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farm stand, farmers' market or farm share before? Is the purchaser buying the fruits and vegetables because they can purchase more food using the SNAP Double Bucks program? How many times did this individual frequent a location throughout the season? How many people would be consuming the purchased food? How often are fruits and vegetables consumed during the week? Did the consumption of fruits and vegetables per week increase with more visits to the vendor? Does the purchaser believe they are consuming enough fruits and vegetables? Is this consistent with their selected weekly consumption? Is the purchaser encouraging family and friends to eat fruits and vegetables? Is preparation a barrier to consumption?

In addition to the narrative summary contained in this report, the complete survey, along with frequency counts, is included in Appendix I.

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Survey Participants

“I buy more because of this benefit. Thank you!”

- SNAP Double Bucks Customer, Easton Farmers’ Market.

Population: SNAP Double Bucks Customers who completed a survey

From Year 1 to Year 2 the number of surveys collected increased by 138% from 65 surveys in 2015 to 155 surveys in 2016. The expansion of the program to more locations also allowed for a more geographically diverse respondent base.

Location	2015 # Completed Surveys	2016 ² # Completed Surveys
Bath Farmers’ Market	25	1
Bethlehem Farmers’ Market	4	2
Easton Farmers’ Market	30	39
Hispanic Center Farm Stand	6	0
Marvine	- ³	18
South Bethlehem	-	23
Bangor High-Rise	-	13
Boys and Girls Club Easton	-	6
Slate Belt YMCA	-	2
Moravian House	-	14
Easton Area Community Center	-	15
Lutheran Manor	-	7
Northampton Community College	-	1
Episcopal Apartments	-	3

Households with one or two individuals consuming the produce were the most common in both 2015 and 2016.

In both years one and two, close to 60% of the respondents were household of one or two individuals. In year two was a 10% increase (28% to 38%) in one person households with the majority of respondents in new locations that serve/house the elderly.

***Observation & Recommendation:** Continue expansion of locations to include varied demographics of individuals and families with low income and low access to fresh fruits and vegetables. To expand the number of individuals consuming the purchased produce, consider partnering/advertising with local schools and/or organizations that serve families.*

² The 11 surveys that did not list a location are not included in this chart.

³ ‘-’ denotes locations not included in 2015

Customers in year two were more likely to have previously used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farmers' market or farm stand.

In year two only 35%, compared to 55% in year one, of the surveyed transactions noted this was the first time they used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farm stand, farmers' market or farm share. Being a first time user of SNAP benefits to purchase the produce did not necessarily mean this was the first time the customer purchased produce from this location during the season. Thirteen percent of first time SNAP benefit users at the farmers' market had bought produce from the same location earlier in the season but had not used SNAP benefits.

Observation and Recommendation: There has been work done to expand the number of vendors who accept SNAP, which has likely influenced the decrease in the number of people who selected this as their first time using SNAP benefits at a farmers' market. Continue outreach to SNAP beneficiaries who may not be familiar with the farmers' markets and the SNAP Double Bucks program.

Customers purchased the fruits and vegetables because they could buy more food using the SNAP Double Bucks program.

Eighty-two percent of customers stated they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' to the question "I am purchasing these fruits and vegetables because I can buy more food using the SNAP Double Bucks program" with over two-thirds choosing 'strongly agree'.

Observation and Recommendation: The program as an incentive to purchases fruits and vegetables is working. The ability to purchase more food with the same amount of SNAP dollars is providing more produce to households without an additional cost.

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

“I used to buy produce at Walmart, but it always rotted so quickly. Now that I’m buying vegetables at the farmers’ market, they last all week and we have time to eat them all.”

- SNAP Double Bucks Customer, Easton Farmers’ Market.

Populations: First time SNAP Double Bucks Customers & Recurrent SNAP Double Bucks Customers

Two separate groups of survey respondents (*First time* and *Recurrent*) were compared to calculate the difference in fruit and vegetable consumption between customers who are eligible and interested in the SNAP Double Bucks program, but have not yet used it at the time of survey completion (*First time*) to customers who had used SNAP Double Bucks multiple times throughout the season (*Recurrent*).

First time SNAP Double Bucks Customers (n=34) at the time of survey completion had never used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farm stand, farmers’ market or farm share and had not purchased produce from the survey location during the season.

Recurrent SNAP Double Bucks Customers (n=62) at the time of survey completion had previously used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farm stand, farmers’ market or farm share before and purchased produce from the survey location during the season at least twice.

Customers who used SNAP Double Bucks throughout the season consumed more fruits and vegetables.

Recurrent SNAP Double Bucks Customers consume more fruits and vegetables than *First time SNAP Double Bucks Customers*. They were 3% more likely to consume non-fried vegetables, 14% more likely to eats fruits, 11% more likely to eat non-fried potatoes, and 19% more likely to consume a green salad more than once a week.

Percent of customers who consumed the listed produce more than once a week.

	Fruit	Vegetables (non-fried)	Potatoes (non-fried)	Green Salad
<i>First time SNAP Double Bucks Customers</i>	79%	80%	44%	68%
<i>Recurrent SNAP Double Bucks Customers</i>	90%	82%	49%	81%

Customers who consumed more fruits and vegetables were more likely to respond that they did not eat enough fruits and vegetables

First time SNAP Double Bucks Customers were 8% more likely than the *Recurrent SNAP Double Bucks Customers* to say they eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep them healthy. However, the *Recurrent* group reported consuming more fruits and vegetables in all four categories of fruit, vegetables (non-fried), potatoes (non-fried), and green salad. There could be a difference in perception between the two groups of how much fruits and vegetables should be consumed as part of a healthy diet.

Customers who responded that they eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep them healthy, were more likely to encourage friends and family to eat fruits and vegetables.

The customers who responded 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to 'I eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep me healthy.' also responded 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to 'I often encourage my family and friends to eat fruits and vegetables.' Overall 90% of respondent who stated they ate enough fruits and vegetables to keep them healthy, also encouraged their friends and family to eat fruits and vegetables, compared to 43% of respondents who stated they did not eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep me healthy.

Appendix I. Survey Frequencies

At the point of transaction, customers using SNAP benefits, as part of the SNAP Double Bucks program, were asked to complete a survey. Surveying dates varied by location and survey respondents may be duplicated.

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Question	2015	2016
1. Before today have you ever used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farm stand, farmers' market, or farm share before?		
Yes	45%	65%
No	55%	35%
2. How many times have you purchase produce from this location this season?		
Once	48%	44%
Twice	12%	13%
Three to five times	23%	32%
Six or more times	18%	11%
3. How many people in your household will be eating this food?		
One	28%	38%
Two	31%	20%
Three	26%	21%
Four or more	15%	21%
4. How often do you typically eat fruit like apples, berries, melon or other fruit?		
Not at all	0%	1%
Once a week	17%	14%
More than once a week	38%	28%
Once a day	20%	28%
More than once a day	23%	29%
5. How often do you typically eat a green salad?		
Not at all	0%	6%
Once a week	21%	18%
More than once a week	46%	39%
Once a day	22%	29%
More than once a day	11%	8%
6. How often do you typically eat any kind of potatoes that aren't fried?		
Not at all	11%	16%
Once a week	27%	36%
More than once a week	50%	40%
Once a day	6%	7%
More than once a day	6%	2%

7. How often do you typically eat non-fried vegetables like carrots, broccoli, green beans, or other vegetables?		
Not at all	0%	6%
Once a week	11%	12%
More than once a week	40%	31%
Once a day	29%	27%
More than once a day	20%	23%
8. I am purchasing these fruits and vegetables because I can buy more food using the SNAP Double Bucks program.		
Strongly disagree	7%	8%
Disagree	0%	3%
Neither disagree not agree	14%	8%
Agree	39%	25%
Strongly agree	39%	57%
9. I eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep me healthy.		
Strongly disagree	6%	6%
Disagree	12%	4%
Neither disagree not agree	14%	10%
Agree	38%	43%
Strongly agree	29%	37%
10. I often encourage my family and friends to eat fruits and vegetables.		
Strongly disagree	5%	5%
Disagree	5%	2%
Neither disagree not agree	11%	10%
Agree	45%	36%
Strongly agree	34%	46%
11. It's hard for me to eat more vegetables because I don't know how to prepare them.		
Strongly disagree	46%	46%
Disagree	26%	28%
Neither disagree not agree	9%	10%
Agree	14%	9%
Strongly agree	5%	6%

Appendix 2. Codebook for Excel Spreadsheet

Question and Variable Documentation

Variables: 13

Variable Name/ Column	Values
Q1/A	Survey completion date mm/dd/yyyy
Q2/B	Before today have you ever used SNAP benefits to purchase produce from a farm stand, farmers' market, or farm share before? 1 = yes 2 = no 99 = missing
Q3/C	How many times have you purchase produce from this location this season? n = number of times purchased produce from location during the season
Q4/D	How many people in your household will be eating this food? n= number of people in the household eating the purchased food
Q5/E	How often do you typically eat fruit like apples, berries, melon or other fruit? 1 = not at all 2 = once a week 3 = more than once a week 4= once a day 5= more than once a day 99= missing
Q6/F	How often do you typically eat a green salad? 1 = not at all 2 = once a week 3 = more than once a week 4= once a day 5= more than once a day 99= missing
Q7/G	How often do you typically eat any kind of potatoes that aren't fried? 1 = not at all 2 = once a week 3 = more than once a week 4= once a day 5= more than once a day 99= missing
Q8/H	How often do you typically eat non-fried vegetables like carrots, 1 = not at all 2 = once a week 3 = more than once a week

	broccoli, green beans, or other vegetables?	4= once a day 5= more than once a day 99= missing
Q9/I	I am purchasing these fruits and vegetables because I can buy more food using the SNAP Double Bucks program.	1 = strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree 4= agree 5= strongly agree 6= question not included in version of survey 99= missing
Q10/J	I eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep me healthy.	1 = strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree 4= agree 5= strongly agree 99= missing
Q11/K	I often encourage my family and friends to eat fruits and vegetables.	1 = strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree 4= agree 5= strongly agree 99= missing
Q12/L	It's hard for me to eat more vegetables because I don't know how to prepare them.	1 = strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree 4= agree 5= strongly agree 99= missing
Q13/M	Location	1 = Easton Farmers' Market 2= Bath Farmers' Market 3= Bethlehem Farmers' Market 4= Hispanic Center Farm Stand 5= Marvine 6= South Bethlehem 7= Bangor High-Rise 8= Boys and Girls Club Easton 9= Slate Belt YMCA 10= Moravian House 11= Easton Area Community Center 12= Lutheran Manor 13= Northampton Community College 14= Episcopal Apartments 99= missing

