

FINI: Incentivizing Healthful Options at Your Store



September 28, 2016

FNS

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is an Agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture that works to reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition through its programs (e.g., SNAP and WIC).

SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities.

SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.

RPMD

The Retailer Policy and Management Division (RPMD) is responsible for the national oversight of SNAP retailer and issuance policy, system contracts, and process activities associated with retailer sanctions.

This includes overseeing the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system and clarifying what is eligible for purchase with SNAP benefits.

HIP

The 2008 Farm Bill mandated that a Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) be conducted.

HIP was intended to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables (without added sugar, salt, or fat) among SNAP clients by incentivizing these healthful food products at the point of sale (POS).

The SNAP State Agency (SA) of Massachusetts received funding to incentivize the consumption of fruits and vegetables by SNAP clients in Hampden County.

HIP

HIP launched November 1, 2011 and ended on December 31, 2012 and HIP involved 7,500 SNAP clients.

It was determined that the intervention in HIP increased participants' fruit and vegetable consumption by an average of one-fifth cup a day.

This is 25% higher than the study's control group and brought participants 17% closer to the USDA's dietary recommendations.

FINI and the 2014 Farm Bill

Building on the successes of HIP, the 2014 Farm Bill established the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program.

The purpose of the FINI grant program is to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables (without added salt, sugar, or fat) by incentivizing these products at the POS.

NIFA, FNS, and FINI

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is an Agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences.

Working collaboratively NIFA and FNS administer the FINI grant program.

FINI Overview I

FINI was authorized for four grant years (FY15, FY16, FY17, and FY18).

FINI was authorized with a budget of about \$100 million.

There are three types of FINI grants:

- FINI pilots: \leq \$100,000 over \leq 1 year
- FINI projects: \leq \$500,000 over \leq 4 years
- FINI large scale projects: \geq \$500,000 over \leq 4 years

FINI Overview II

FINI requires that grantees provide a 1-to-1 match for grant funding (\$1 grantee match per \$1 Federal funding).

Non-profit entities, local and State governmental entities, and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) are eligible to apply for FINI grants.

FINI grantees partner with SNAP authorized retail food stores as part of their grant projects; this can include anything from farmers' markets to supermarkets.

FINI grantees and their partners must participate in the grant program evaluation.

How does FINI work?

A customer uses their EBT card to purchase qualifying fruits or vegetables using SNAP benefits at a FINI retailer partner outlet (i.e., retail food store participating in a FINI grant project).

Then, for example, every \$1 of SNAP benefits spent on fruits or vegetables the customer receives an incentive good for \$1 of additional fruits or vegetables.

FINI Awards in FY15

In Fiscal Year 2015 the USDA provided \$31.5 million in Federal funding to 31 projects:

Pilot projects (up to \$100,000, not to exceed 1 year):

- Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services, Woodland, Calif., \$100,000
- Heritage Ranch, Inc., Honaunau, Hawaii, \$100,000
- Backyard Harvest, Inc., Moscow, Idaho, \$10,695
- City of Aurora, Aurora, Ill., \$30,000
- Forsyth Farmers' Market, Inc., Savannah, Ga., \$50,000
- Blue Grass Community Foundation, Lexington, Ky., \$47,250
- Lower Phalen Creek Project, Saint Paul, Minn., \$45,230
- Vermont Farm-to-School, Inc., Newport, V.T., \$93,750
- New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association, Santa Fe, N.M., \$99,999
- Santa Fe Community Foundation, Santa Fe, N.M., \$100,000
- Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Greensboro, N.C., \$99,987
- Chester County Food Bank, Exton, Pa., \$76,543
- Nurture Nature Center, Easton, Pa., \$56,918
- Rodale Institute, Kutztown, Pa., \$46,442
- Rhode Island Public Health Institute, Providence, R.I., \$100,000
- San Antonio Food Bank, San Antonio, Texas, \$100,000

Multi-year community-based projects (up to \$500,000, not to exceed 4 years):

- Mandela Marketplace, Inc., Oakland, Calif., \$422,500
- Market Umbrella, New Orleans, La., \$378,326
- Maine Farmland Trust, Belfast, Maine, \$249,816
- Farmers Market Fund, Portland, Ore., \$499,172
- The Food Trust, Philadelphia, Pa., \$500,000
- Utahns Against Hunger, Salt Lake City, Utah, \$247,038
- Opportunity Council, Bellingham, Wash., \$301,658

Multi-year large-scale projects (\$500,000 or greater, not to exceed 4 years):

- Ecology Center, Berkeley, Calif., \$3,704,287
- Wholesome Wave Foundation Charitable Ventures, Inc., Bridgeport, Conn., \$3,775,700
- AARP Foundation, Washington, D.C., \$3,306,224
- Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Gainesville, Fla., \$1,937,179
- Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, Boston, Mass., \$3,401,384
- Fair Food Network, Ann Arbor, Mich., \$5,171,779
- International Rescue Committee, Inc., New York, N.Y., \$564,231
- Washington State Department of Health, Tumwater, Wash., \$5,859,307

FINI Awards in FY16

In Fiscal Year 2015 the USDA provided \$16.8 million in Federal funding to 27 projects :

Pilot projects (up to \$100,000, not to exceed 1 year):

- Community Food Bank, Inc., Tucson, Ariz., \$62,923
- Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Little Rock, Ark., \$94,000
- Chicago Horticultural Society, Chicago, Ill., \$99,973
- The Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind., \$100,000
- Mountain Comprehensive Health Corp., Whitesburg, Ky., \$72,360
- Michigan Physical Fitness, Health and Sports Foundation, Lansing, Mich., \$29,809
- The Fortune Society, Inc., Long Island, N.Y., \$100,000
- Mid-Ohio Foodbank, Grove City, Ohio, \$100,000
- South Central Community Action Programs, Inc., Gettysburg, Pa., \$26,242
- Vermont Department of Health, Burlington, Vt., \$100,000
- City of Madison, Madison, Wis., \$93,055
- Hunger Task Force, Inc., Milwaukee, Wis., \$100,000

Multi-year community-based projects (up to \$500,000, not to exceed 4 years):

- Pinnacle Prevention Corp., Gilbert, Ariz., \$400,000
- Youth Policy Institute, Los Angeles, Calif., \$499,923
- Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative, Oakland, Calif., \$155,200
- San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, San Francisco, Calif., \$308,131
- LiveWell Colorado, Denver, Colo., \$497,806
- Wholesome Wave, Bridgeport, Conn., \$499,720
- Experimental Station, Chicago, Ill., \$313,499
- Community Food & Agriculture Coalition Inc., Missoula, Mont., \$94,312
- Harvest Home Farmer's Market, New York, N.Y., \$499,992
- Field & Fork Network Inc., Williamsville, N.Y., \$393,813
- Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, Inc., Tulsa, Okla., \$481,191

Multi-year large-scale projects (\$500,000 or greater, not to exceed 4 years):

- University of California-San Diego, San Diego, Calif., \$3,384,909
- Mid-America Regional Council Community Services Corporation, Kansas City, Mo., \$2,888,979
- New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, Santa Fe, N.M., \$2,001,198
- Fund for Public Health in New York, Inc., New York, N.Y., \$3,378,965

Flexibility in FINI

The FINI grant program is intended to experiment and evaluate different innovative technologies, methods, and models so long as they increase the purchase of qualifying fruits and vegetables among SNAP clients by using SNAP authorized retail food stores.

This means that FINI grant projects vary widely in many ways such as the following:

- incentive trigger
- incentive mechanism
- subset of V/F incentivized
- populations targeted
- additional interventions

Example: AARP Foundation

The AARP Foundation was awarded a large scale FINI project in FY15 for \$3.1 million.

The AARP Foundation's project, called Fresh Savings, involves farmers' markets and Kroger supermarkets in the States of Mississippi and Tennessee.

Example: AARP Foundation

Whenever SNAP clients use their EBT cards to buy at least \$10 of qualifying fruits or vegetables at participating Kroger stores, a coupon is printed out.

This incentive coupon is good for 50% off the next purchase of qualifying fruits or vegetables, with a maximum coupon value of \$10 and limit of two coupons (\$20) per client per month.

Example: AARP Foundation

At FMs, when SNAP customers use their SNAP benefits to make purchases of qualifying fruits or vegetables they will receive incentive tokens equal to the amount purchased (up to \$10 per person per day).

These tokens may only be used to purchase qualifying fruits or vegetables.

AARP Foundation to Support Affordable Access to Healthy Food



4/8/2015

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MURFREESBORO, TENN. – The Rutherford County Farmers' Market (RCFM), operated by UT/TSU Extension in Rutherford County, is one of a select number of markets that will receive funding from the United States Department of Agriculture through its Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program for the next four years, starting in September 2015.

The USDA awarded AARP Foundation a grant of \$3.3 million, with an additional \$1 million coming from UnitedHealthcare, to implement a multi-year \$6.6 million incentive program in Tennessee and Mississippi to increase the purchase and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients using EBT (electronic benefit transfer) payments. The goal of this program is to increase the purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables and to improve nutrition and health outcomes for low-income consumers.

"We are thrilled to be a part of this tremendous opportunity to expand the availability of fresh produce in Rutherford County while also connecting more customers with our local farm producers," said Extension Agent and RCFM Coordinator Janie Becker. "This grant will increase the shopping power of SNAP households by providing incentives for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables in 31 Tennessee farmers markets, including ours right here in Rutherford County."

Since 2012, the RCFM has provided an opportunity for those individuals living with limited or fixed incomes to shop at the market. Over \$20,000 in EBT benefits have been used to shop directly from local farm producers at the RCFM since the market's program began. This has served both to invest these funds in our local economy and also to make consumption of local, fresh foods an option for everyone in

The Rutherford County Farmers' Market will open for the 2015 season on May 8 at 7 a.m. CDT. Photo courtesy UTIA.

the community.

"We are very pleased to receive this generous grant from USDA that underscores AARP Foundation's important work to ensure all Americans can afford nutritious food and lead productive, healthful lives," said AARP Foundation President Lisa Marsh Ryerson. "I would also like to thank our friends at UnitedHealthcare, Kroger Co., the Tennessee and Mississippi Departments of Human Services and Departments of Agriculture for their support, because collaboration of this magnitude is crucial in finding a solution to end senior hunger."

Encouraging more nutritious diets is a focus in the health care industry, which recognizes better nutrition as a disease prevention and health promotion measure. AARP Foundation agrees with this view and believes making fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible is particularly important for older adults and individuals living with limited or fixed incomes.

"Food insecurity is an issue that affects 45 million people in the United States, so UnitedHealthcare is grateful for the opportunity to work with AARP Foundation and support programs that give people access to healthy and affordable food," said Austin Pittman, CEO of UnitedHealthcare's Medicaid business.

Beginning in September 2015, area SNAP recipients will be able to take advantage of this incentive program at the Rutherford County Farmers Market along with a handful of other Tennessee farmers' markets and several Kroger stores in Mississippi and Tennessee. Through each year of the grant funding, more Tennessee markets will be entered in to the incentive program.

Becker says, "Our goal, beyond this generous grant, is to make this sustainable by seeking out local and regional partners that can help sponsor this program. Researchers from Vanderbilt and Tennessee State University will be looking at the effects this program may have on the nutrition of SNAP recipients and their overall wellness. By creating incentives, marketing, and collecting data on a statewide level, we hope to show the tremendous values of encouraging healthy food decisions and increasing produce availability."

AARP Foundation is contracting with Wholesome Wave, a non-profit organization with a track record of establishing incentive programs, to provide training and technical assistance to farmers markets and to assist with implementation of the outreach plan.

The Rutherford County Farmers Market is located in the Lane Agri-Park Community Center at 315 John R. Rice Blvd. in Murfreesboro. Opening Day for the RCFM is Friday, May 8, and the market will be open from 7a.m. to 12 noon. Regular market hours after that are each Tuesday and Friday from 7a.m. to 12 noon through the month of October.

FINI: Why should my store join?

There are three main reasons to have your retail food store participate in a FINI grant project.

1. FINI grantees advertise their grant projects, including the addresses of participating retailers. This positive press exposure may bring new customers to your store and can help expand your customer base.

FINI: Why should my store join?

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2. Retail food stores participating in FINI grant projects generally increase their overall sales in fruits and vegetables, especially fresh produce. One participating independent grocer went from produce deliveries three times a week to six times a week since joining FINI.

FINI: Why should my store join?

There are three main reasons to have your retail food store participate in a FINI grant project.

3. By participating in a FINI grant project you will help improve the overall health of your customers and your community.

FINI: How can my store join?

To participate in a FINI grant project, retail food stores must be SNAP authorized and must partner with a FINI grantee.

This could mean partnering with an existing grantee (i.e., awarded in FY15 or FY16) that is looking for additional retail partner outlets to work with. Many such grantees are always looking to find new, enthusiastic partner stores.

FNS can tell you which FINI grantees are active in your area.

FINI: How can my store join?

In addition, NIFA expects to publish the FY17 Request for Applications (RFA) by the end of October 2016.

This means that a new round of grants will be available and any eligible entity may apply for such grants.

If you know a local, State, regional, or national non-profit or governmental entity that may be interested in FINI, you can work directly with such entities and encourage them to apply for a grant.

FNS and NIFA can direct and advise any entities interested in applying for FINI FY17.



But FINI is not the only way
to offer incentives for healthful
foods at your store!

Offering incentives in your store

Generally SNAP regulations require that SNAP clients receive treatment equal to that received by other customers at all retail food stores participating in the Program.

This provision prohibits both negative treatment (such as discriminatory practices) as well as preferential treatment (such as incentive programs).

Offering incentives in your store

FNS does, however, issue waivers of these regulations to retail food stores when it furthers the purposes of the Program.

Under such waivers a retail food store may offer incentives on healthful items, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, only to SNAP clients.

Offering incentives in your store

Please note that not all requests for waivers are approved. Additionally, FNS may require conditions of waiver approval (e.g., an evaluation component).

That being said, FMs, supermarkets, and other types of retail food stores currently offer incentives under waivers.

If you are interested in offering incentives to SNAP clients at your retail food store, please contact Vicky.Robinson@fns.usda.gov.

Thank you for your time.

Any questions?

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