



SNAP-Ed + GusNIP: Combining Nutrition Education and Incentives for Greater Impact

Tips for Finding Partners, Coordinating Programming, and Evaluating Impact

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Contents

Introduction	3
Why Combine Nutrition Education and Incentives	3
How to Combine Nutrition Education and Incentives	4
Examples of Successful Nutrition Education + Nutrition Incentives Collaborations	7
How to Evaluate Impact	.11
How to Connect with Others around Nutrition Education and Nutrition Incentives (NE+NI)	.12
About the Authors	.12
Terminology	.13

Introduction

This resource grew out of the <u>Nutrition Incentive Hub</u>'s <u>Nutrition Education + Nutrition Incentives</u> community of practice, a group of practitioners who meet to share ideas and best practices around combining nutrition education and incentives to increase the impact of their programs and improve participant outcomes. The information and models provided are intended to help guide practitioners in developing and strengthening these cross-program collaborations. The focus is on coordination between nutrition education programs supported by SNAP-Ed and nutrition incentive programs supported by the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), but many of the strategies shared could be applied to other types of nutrition education and incentive programs as well. Background information is provided about both types of programs, followed by suggestions for finding potential partners and examples of successful partnerships from around the country. The resource can be read straight through or by skipping directly to a topic of interest listed in the table of contents above.

About GusNIP: The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program is authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill to provide grant funding to projects offering incentives to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers. These include SNAP-based nutrition incentive projects, which provide consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with fruit and vegetable incentives at the point of purchase, and produce prescription projects, through which patients receive "prescriptions" from healthcare providers for free fresh fruits and vegetables.

About SNAP-Ed: SNAP-Ed is a federally funded, evidence-based program that helps people lead healthy, active lives through a combination of educational strategies, social marketing, and interventions to improve policies, systems, and environments (PSE). On the education side, SNAP-Ed teaches participants how to make their SNAP dollars stretch, how to shop for and cook healthy meals, and how to stay physically active. On the PSE side, SNAP-Ed works with state and local partners to support multi-level community and public health interventions that facilitate healthy eating and physical activity for SNAP-eligible individuals and communities with a significant low-income population.

Explanations of key terminology can be found at the end of this resource.

Why Combine Nutrition Education and Incentives

Combining nutrition education and nutrition incentives creates an opportunity for greater impact than either type of programming can produce alone by providing both the information and the means needed to purchase and prepare healthy foods (specifically fruits and vegetables under the GusNIP program). Nutrition incentives give nutrition education participants funds to purchase the healthy foods highlighted in lessons, reduce the risk associated with trying unfamiliar foods, and make buying healthy foods more approachable and appealing. Nutrition education can provide nutrition incentive

participants with information about selecting, storing, and preparing healthy foods, as well as the benefits of those foods, and can supply recipes and cooking tools for preparing those foods at home.

SNAP-Ed and other nutrition educators are often trusted community members who have built relationships with retailers and nutrition education participants, and are therefore valuable partners in firm recruitment and incentive program design, marketing, education, and outreach. These activities fall under educators' work to provide nutrition education, social marketing, and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) approaches to make healthy foods and behaviors more appealing and accessible. Lastly, the 2019 GAO Nutrition Education Report: USDA Actions Needed to Assess Effectiveness, Coordinate Programs, and Leverage Expertise calls for coordination among federal food and nutrition programs to maximize their collective impact.

How to Combine Nutrition Education and Incentives

Nutrition education and nutrition incentives can be provided within the same organization or through partnerships between organizations. Below are strategies for finding and building these partnerships and for adding this programming within an organization that is already doing one piece or the other.

Finding a Partner Who Provides Nutrition Education

SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education)

SNAP-Ed is the educational component of SNAP that aims to teach individuals who are eligible for SNAP to shop for and cook healthy meals and make their SNAP dollars stretch. The program is implemented in all 50 states by 160-plus organizations, including health departments, nonprofits, and universities. SNAP-Ed interventions include a combination of direct education (DE); social marketing (SM); and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) approaches.

A few examples of what SNAP-Ed partners do to support nutrition incentive programs are:

- DE Provide nutrition education and cooking demonstrations at participating farmers markets and stores, including on-site tours
- SM Promote SNAP incentives through nutrition education lessons and social marketing
- SM Promote healthy options in a variety of retail settings
- PSE Develop relationships with potential retail partners
- PSE Provide technical assistance to retail partners to increase and promote healthy options
- PSE Work with the community to establish a farmers market

A few tips for finding a SNAP-Ed partner:

^{*} GusNIP refers to partner locations as "firms" and SNAP-Ed as "sites" (e.g., a partner farmers market could be both a SNAP-Ed site and a GusNIP firm).

- Visit <u>snaped.fns.usda.gov/state-snap-ed-programs</u> and click on your state to find a list of implementing agencies
- In some states, smaller organizations are contracted by the implementing agency to deliver programming; these are typically listed on the implementing agency's website, or the implementing agency can provide this information
- Internet searches can also identify local partners that have SNAP-Ed funding but are not state implementing agencies (e.g., "SNAP-Ed" + "municipality name")

Other Federally Funded Nutrition Education Programs

While this resource focuses on partnerships with SNAP-Ed, nutrition incentive practitioners can also explore partnerships with these other federally funded nutrition education programs:

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

- Uses a "community-based, relationship-driven, hands-on educational approach" to "promote healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors of low-income families, particularly those with young children"
- Visit the <u>EFNEP Partner Websites</u> page for links to the public universities implementing this program in each state

WIC Nutrition Education

- Focuses on the nutritional needs of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding participants; infants; and children under 5 years of age
- Aims to assist individuals who are at nutritional risk in achieving positive changes in dietary and physical activity habits, resulting in improved nutritional status and in the prevention of nutrition-related problems
- Search "WIC" plus the name of your municipality or county to find nearby WIC offices

Other Nutrition Education

Many organizations provide nutrition education without federal funding. Check with community centers, local health departments, libraries, schools, etc., or try searching for your municipality's name plus "nutrition education," "cooking demos," "cooking class," or "healthy eating."

Finding a Partner who Provides Nutrition Incentives

GusNIP (Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program)

<u>GusNIP</u> is a program authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill to provide grant funding to projects offering incentives to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers. GusNIP grants bring together partners from various parts of the food and healthcare systems to help improve

the health and nutrition status of participating households, facilitate growth in states with low SNAP participation, as well as collect and aggregate data to identify and improve best practices on a broad scale. GusNIP projects fall into two basic categories—nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions:

- Nutrition incentive projects (also known as NI or SNAP incentives) aim to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase. Incentives are provided to shoppers in a variety of ways, and models vary across program type and redemption location (i.e., grocery store, farmers market, corner store, etc.). Shoppers paying with SNAP may receive an immediate discount on produce, earn incentive tokens to use at the farmers market, or earn coupons redeemable for free produce during a future visit. Incentives can operate at farmers markets and mobile markets, supermarkets and corner stores, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and other SNAP-authorized retail locations.
- Produce prescription projects (abbreviated as PPR) allow healthcare providers to "prescribe" fruits and vegetables to patients experiencing food insecurity and/or a diet-related chronic illness, such as hypertension. Produce prescription projects aim to increase procurement and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, reduce individual and household food insecurity, and reduce healthcare usage and associated costs. These prescriptions are often redeemable at local farmers markets and grocery stores.

A few examples of what GusNIP partners may be able to do to support SNAP-Ed:

- Share retail locations where nutrition incentives are offered and information about the program
- Provide materials promoting nutrition incentives
- Promote nutrition education resources and events to nutrition incentive and produce prescription participants
- Implement nutrition incentives at farm direct and brick and mortar firms (i.e., at farmers markets or stores)
- Suggest healthcare sites that may be good locations for nutrition education based on produce prescription distribution

A few times for finding a GusNIP partner:

- Visit <u>nutritionincentivehub.org/grantee-projects</u> and click on your state on the map or scroll down to use the state drop-down menu (note: some projects cross state borders, so you may want to check neighboring states as well)
- Click "View Grant Summary" in the "Project Title" column to learn about the project and click on the hyperlinked grantee name to visit their website

Other Nutrition Incentives

Organizations and health systems across the country are also implementing nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs without GusNIP funding, so the absence of a suitable partner on the GusNIP map does not mean that no incentives are happening in your area. Many farmers markets offer some type of SNAP matching, often with state or local funding, and may also match WIC and

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks (FMNP). Nutrition education providers can also fundraise to enable distribution of financial incentives that give participants an opportunity to purchase healthy foods featured in lessons. For example, private foundations, health departments, or community organizations may be willing to provide financial support for incentives that are not tied to SNAP purchases. On the produce prescription side, there are even more possibilities, as the majority of these programs are not federally funded. Check with local farmers markets and health systems, or try searching your municipality's name plus "Food Bucks," "SNAP match," "Double Up," "FVRx," "Fresh Rx," "produce prescription," or "market match."

Examples of Successful Nutrition Education + Nutrition Incentives Collaborations

Below are examples showing four different types of collaborations that are successfully combining nutrition education and nutrition incentive programming to improve healthy food access and consumption.

Colorado (nonprofit + nonprofit)

Partnership Overview

Cooking Matters Colorado (CMCO) provides SNAP-Ed nutrition education and PSE activities serving participants in **Nourish Colorado**'s Double Up Food Bucks SNAP incentive program and **Valley Food Partnership**'s Farmacy Buck\$ produce prescription program. This example highlights partnerships between nonprofit organizations.

Partner Roles

Cooking Matters Colorado, a campaign of Share Our Strength

- Provides in-person and online SNAP-Ed nutrition and food skills education through one-time
 and series-based lessons; lessons include strategies for saving time, saving money, and
 feeding young kids, and feature menu planning, recipe preparation, shopping on a budget,
 food storage, and other solutions for purchasing and consuming healthy foods
- Promotes Double Up Food Bucks in lessons and through other Cooking Matters Colorado channels
- Offers educational tours at stores and farmers markets participating in Double Up Food Bucks SNAP incentives and/or Farmacy Buck\$ produce prescriptions; tours focus on food skills education and include information on how to use the incentive at the store or market

- Utilizes social media, texting, blog posts, and printed resource materials to provide nutrition and food skills education and connects participants with additional and ongoing informational resources
- Participates in the Double Up Food Bucks Advisory Council, convened by Nourish Colorado Nourish Colorado
 - Administers GusNIP-funded Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) SNAP incentives at farmers markets: for every SNAP dollar spent, the purchaser earns a \$1 credit toward buying local produce, up to \$20/day
 - Maintains relationships with farmers markets, retail outlets, and other collaborators for the success of the statewide DUFB program
 - Implements program evaluation and shares results
 - Engages an Advisory Council that includes the Colorado Department of Human Services, producers, market managers, and other key stakeholders for the planning and administration of the GusNIP program in Colorado
 - Features Cooking Matters recipes and other nutrition education materials on their website and promotes these resources to SNAP incentive participants

Valley Food Partnership (VFP)

- Provides Local Food Farmacy Buck\$ produce prescription stipend to families experiencing food insecurity; Farmacy Buck\$ are redeemable for local fruits and vegetables at nearby farmers markets
- Combines the produce prescription stipend with food skills education provided by VFP staff through Cooking Matters' train-the-trainer partnership model
- Conducts data collection and evaluation and shares outcomes

Florida (state agency + nonprofit)

Partnership Overview

University of Florida Extension Family Nutrition Program provides SNAP-Ed nutrition education and PSE activities serving participants in **Feeding Florida**'s Fresh Access Bucks SNAP incentive program. This example highlights a partnership between a state agency and a nonprofit organization.

Partner Roles

University of Florida Extension Family Nutrition Program

- Provides nutrition education at farmers markets, farms, produce stands, and mobile markets offering Fresh Access Bucks
- Combines virtual direct education with farmers market field trips in response to the pandemic
- Purchases promotional materials for Fresh Access Bucks retail sites that act as nudges to encourage shoppers to utilize the program and increase their purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables

- Provides information about Fresh Access Bucks to SNAP recipients
- Also partners with the American Heart Association to support PSE work

Feeding Florida

- Provides Fresh Access Bucks SNAP incentives for Florida-grown fresh produce at farmers markets, produce stands, CSAs, mobile markets, and community grocery outlets
- Requires that firms participating in Fresh Access Bucks host nutrition education activities and connects those firms with the Family Nutrition Program
- Created a <u>Nutrition Education Guide</u> that helps firms with ideas for providing nutrition education depending on their firm type and capacity
- Connects participating farm-direct firms with the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

Pennsylvania (within one non-profit)

Partnership Overview

The Food Trust provides SNAP-Ed nutrition education and PSE activities serving participants in **The Food Trust**'s Food Bucks SNAP incentive and Food Bucks Rx produce prescription programs. This example highlights collaboration between two teams within a single nonprofit organization.

Partner Roles

Nutrition Education Team

- Provides nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, and PSE efforts at farmers markets, corner stores, and supermarkets that offer Food Bucks SNAP incentives and/or redeem Food Bucks Rx produce prescriptions
- Offers an online nutrition education portal through which SNAP incentive and produce prescription participants can access lessons featuring healthy recipes; strategies to stretch food dollars; and tips for selecting, storing, and preparing fresh produce
- Works with Nutrition Incentives team to provide technical assistance and support to corner stores to increase availability of healthy foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, and make these items more appealing
- Provides information about Food Bucks SNAP incentives to SNAP-Ed participants
- Includes questions about SNAP incentives in SNAP-Ed participant surveys and in community conversations

Nutrition Incentives Team

- Provides Food Bucks SNAP incentives to shoppers paying with SNAP at farmers markets, corner stores, and supermarkets
- Works with healthcare partners to provide Food Bucks Rx (FBRx) produce prescriptions that patients can redeem at farmers markets, corners stores, and supermarkets

- Connects Food Bucks and FBRx participants with virtual and in-person nutrition education opportunities
- Works with Nutrition Education team to create outreach materials promoting the Food Bucks SNAP incentive program
- Includes questions about nutrition education in GusNIP participant-level surveys

Washington State (state agency + state agency)

Partnership Overview

The Washington State **Department of Social and Health Services** (WA DSHS) provides SNAP-Ed nutrition education and PSE activities serving participants in Washington State **Department of Health**'s (WA DOH) SNAP Match programs. This example highlights a partnership between two state agencies.

Partner Roles

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

- Contracts with Implementing Agencies that subcontract with extension offices, local health agencies, nonprofits, and health care organizations to offer SNAP-Ed statewide
- SNAP-Ed staff promote the incentives to the eligible audience and work closely with retailers, including farmers markets, participating in SNAP Match programs to provide technical assistance and troubleshoot coupons
- Works with WA DOH to design, fund, and issue mailers promoting the SNAP Match programs to SNAP shoppers
- Provides funding to WA DOH to support the Community Advisory Network (details below)
- Develops SNAP-Ed questions for inclusion on GusNIP participant-level surveys

Washington State Department of Health

- Provides SNAP Market Match at farmers markets and farm stands and SNAP Produce Match at grocery stores
- Creates a toolkit for SNAP-Ed educators interested in supporting the incentive program, including staff training materials, in-store signage, coupon troubleshooting, and approaching the stores to offer assistance
- Works with WA DSHS to design and issue mailer promoting the SNAP Match programs to SNAP shoppers
- Contracts with a nonprofit organization to coordinate the Community Advisory Network, a
 group of individuals who use SNAP benefits and provide strategic guidance on implementing,
 evaluating, promoting, and sustaining SNAP Match programs and SNAP-Ed programming in
 Washington State
- Includes SNAP-Ed questions on GusNIP participant-level surveys and shares participant-level survey responses and statewide SNAP Match usage data with SNAP-Ed evaluators

How to Evaluate Impact

Developing a coordinated evaluation plan for combined nutrition education and nutrition incentive programming offers the strongest opportunity to evaluate impact. See below for opportunities to incorporate nutrition incentives into existing SNAP-Ed evaluation and nutrition education into existing GusNIP evaluation.

SNAP-Ed

SNAP-Ed evaluation varies by state and project but often uses participant surveys to evaluate direct education and PEARS (Program Evaluation And Reporting System), or other organizational assessments and tracking, for PSE activities. At SNAP-Ed sites where nutrition incentives operate, or operate nearby, surveys can be expanded to include questions about participation in nutrition incentives. Survey responses at these locations can be compared to sites where nutrition incentives are not available to evaluate the combined impact of both programs. For example, nutrition education participants can be asked whether, or for how long, they have used nutrition incentives; where they use them; what impact they have had on their ability to purchase fresh produce; and/or what impact nutrition incentives have had on their consumption of fresh produce. This is also an opportunity to gather open-ended program feedback.

Activities to recruit and develop relationships with retail firms, to provide technical assistance and support in improving fresh produce inventory and appeal, and to make SNAP-eligible shoppers aware of where and how to earn and spend nutrition incentives are all potential PSE efforts that could be reported via PEARS or other assessment/tracking tools. The SNAP-Ed Guidance and/or Implementing Agencies can be consulted to determine the extent to which collaboration with and promotion of nutrition incentive programs are eligible activities and how these should be reported. SNAP nutrition incentives align with <u>SNAP-Ed Priority Outcome Indicators</u> MT1 (Healthy Eating), MT2 (Food Resource Management), MT5 (Nutrition Supports), ST7 (Organizational Partnerships), and ST8 (Multi-sector Partnerships and Planning).

GusNIP

<u>GusNIP evaluation</u> is based on firm-level and participant-level metrics developed by the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition as part of the GusNIP Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE Center). The <u>firm-level</u> and <u>participant-level</u> metrics for produce prescription projects already include the availability of and participation in nutrition education, and metrics related to nutrition education can be added to GusNIP evaluation of the existing <u>participant-level</u> and <u>firm-level</u> metrics used to evaluate nutrition incentive projects.

For example, participant-level surveys administered at firms participating in nutrition incentives can include questions about whether, how often, and where respondents have participated in nutrition education, and which types of education they have accessed (cooking demonstrations, healthy

recipes, market tours, etc.). Responses gathered at firms that offer nutrition education, or from respondents who report participating, can then be compared to responses from firms without nutrition education or respondents who did not participate. Participant-level surveys also offer an opportunity to gather open-ended program feedback.

How to Connect with Others around Nutrition Education and Nutrition Incentives (NE+NI)

NE+NI Community of Practice

Join the Nutrition Incentive Hub's **Nutrition Education + Nutrition Incentives Community of Practice** (CooP) for bi-monthly calls. The NE+NI CooP aims to bring together practitioners who are connecting nutrition incentives with nutrition education and create opportunities for learning and benefiting from one another's experiences. Visit the Nutrition Incentive Hub's <u>Join Our Community</u> page and scroll down to view the communities of practice.

NE+NI Online Discussion Group

The <u>Nutrition Incentive Hub</u> hosts online discussion groups for nutrition incentive practitioners and their partners, including a dedicated forum for Nutrition Education + Nutrition Incentives. To join the discussion, click "<u>Join Our Community</u>" to create a Nutrition Incentive Hub account, and then navigate to the Discussion Forums under "Portal" on the left-hand side of the page and select "Community of Practice – Nutrition Education."

NE+NI Technical Assistance

Looking for help combining nutrition education and nutrition incentives? Email ta@nutritionincentivehub.org with a description of your request and "Nutrition Ed + Incentives TA" in the subject line, and a member of the Nutrition Incentive Hub's technical assistance team will reach out.

About the Authors

Nutrition Incentive Hub

The <u>Nutrition Incentive Hub</u> is a coalition of partners, created by the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE Center), that supports nutrition incentive projects, including SNAP incentives and produce prescription projects. The GusNIP NTAE Center is led by Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. In partnership with Fair Food Network, they assembled the Nutrition Incentive Hub, a coalition of evaluators,

researchers, practitioners, and grocery and farmers market experts from across the country dedicated to strengthening and uniting the best thinking in the field to increase access to affordable, healthy food to those who need it most. The GusNIP NTAE Center is funded through a cooperative agreement and is supported by Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program grant no. 2019-70030-30415/project accession no. 1020863 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The Food Trust

The Food Trust is a nationally recognized nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. Headquartered in Philadelphia, The Food Trust works with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers, and policymakers in the city and across the country to develop a comprehensive approach to improved food access that combines nutrition education and greater availability of affordable, healthy food.

Additional Contributors

Special thanks to the following organizations for their contributions to this resource:

- Cooking Matters Colorado
- Feeding Florida
- Nourish Colorado
- University of Florida Extension Family Nutrition Program
- Valley Food Partnership
- Washington State Department of Health
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Terminology

Direct Nutrition Education: individual or group-based lessons, health promotion, and intervention strategies; one of three core components of SNAP-Ed

EFNEP: Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program; a USDA NIFA-funded Federal Extension (community outreach) program that operates through the 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Universities and uses education to support participants' efforts toward self-sufficiency, nutritional health, and well-being

Firm: the term GusNIP uses for a partner site, such as a farmers market, supermarket, or medical clinic

FNS: Food and Nutrition Service; USDA agency with a mission to increase food security and reduce hunger by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education; administers 15 federal nutrition assistance programs including WIC and SNAP

GusNIP: Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program; a USDA NIFA program authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill to provide funding opportunities for projects providing incentives to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers; known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program (FINI) under the previous funding mechanism

GusNIP NTAE Center: GusNIP Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center; led by Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition

NIFA: National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA agency that provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences; administers GusNIP

Nutrition Incentive Hub: a coalition of partners brought together by the GusNIP NTAE Center to provide training, technical assistance, reporting, and evaluation support to help strengthen nutrition incentive and produce prescription projects

Nutrition Incentives: discounts, digital credits, tokens, or coupons for healthy foods; one of two types of incentives funded by GusNIP, which specifies that the incentives are earned on SNAP purchases and only redeemable for fruits and vegetables

Produce Prescriptions: "prescriptions" for fresh fruits and vegetables from healthcare providers; may take the form of direct produce distributions or cards/vouchers redeemable at retail locations including stores and farmers markets; one of two types of incentives funded by GusNIP

PSE: policy, systems, and environmental changes, such as multi-level interventions and community and public health approaches; one of three core components of SNAP-Ed

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps; a USDA FNS program that provides nutrition benefits to low-income individuals and families that are used at stores and other retail locations to purchase food

SNAP-Ed: SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Services; a USDA program that provides a combination of educational strategies, accompanied by supporting PSE interventions, demonstrated to facilitate adoption of food and physical activity choices and other nutrition-related behaviors conducive to the health and well-being of SNAP participants and low-income individuals eligible to receive benefits under SNAP or other means tested programs and individuals residing in communities with a significant low-income population

Social Marketing: described by the CDC as "the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of society"; one of three core components of SNAP-Ed

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; a USDA FNS program that provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum individuals, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk