

Produce prescription partnership improves fruit and vegetable consumption

AT A GLANCE

Food-insecure individuals participating in a produce prescription program increased their fruit and vegetable consumption and lowered risk and symptoms of chronic disease.

The Situation

The Idaho Food Bank lists obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes as the most common chronic diseases in Idaho that are diet related. Unfortunately, fruits and vegetables can be the most expensive items at the grocery store. Food insecure adults often suffer from chronic disease due to lack of access to nutritious food. Stable access to nutritious foods can help adults lower their risk of chronic disease and improve current disease symptoms.

Our Response

Salmon Valley Stewardship (SVS) was invited to apply to the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) and replicate a similar produce prescription program (PRX) occurring in nearby Montana. They gathered other groups to aid in the implementation of the program including Steele Memorial Medical Center, Mountain Harvest Market, local nutritionists and the University of Idaho Extension office in Lemhi County. Unfortunately, the GusNIP funding was frozen in 2025. The group decided to move forward with a pilot project and after securing private funding and re-allocating some of SVS budget they recruited participants. A local doctor referred patients with chronic diet-related diseases that were in food insecure



Produce prescription box ready to be delivered to program participants. Photo by Maggie Seaberg.

households to the program. Six participants registered. A pre and postsurvey was conducted with participants, and they received a twice monthly food box with fresh fruits and vegetables. The fruit and vegetable boxes were filled by a local grocery store, Mountain Harvest Market, at a discounted rate. Participants with families received larger boxes of produce to share with the household. The program lasted for six months.

Program Outcomes

A survey based on the GusNIP data collection tool was distributed to participants. All six participants completed the written presurvey, and four participants completed the postsurvey. The survey asked three questions about fruit and vegetable consumption. Question one asked how often in the last month did

participants eat fruit. Question two asked how often in the last month participants ate green leafy vegetables. Questions three asked participants how many times in the last month they ate vegetables. As shown in the following graph, some participants saw an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption. Before the program participants reported only having budget to purchase one to two fruits and vegetables each month. Participants reported having diabetes and high blood pressure and were also asked to rate their health. All participants rated their health as poor to fair. After the program the four that reported their health rated it as fair, two staying fair and two moving from poor to fair. Only one participant reported a pre and post weight but reported losing 12lbs.

The largest challenge to the program was collecting data from participants. Most participants were only there long enough to collect their boxes and did not want to complete the surveys, and towards the end of the program, some participants even stopped picking up the boxes and they had to be delivered to their homes. According to the National Library of Medicine, increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is a scientifically viable way to reduce the burden of chronic disease in our society. Even without post reported health data, the assumption can be made that participants benefited from increasing their fruit and vegetable intake during the program.

Table 1. Pre-program Responses

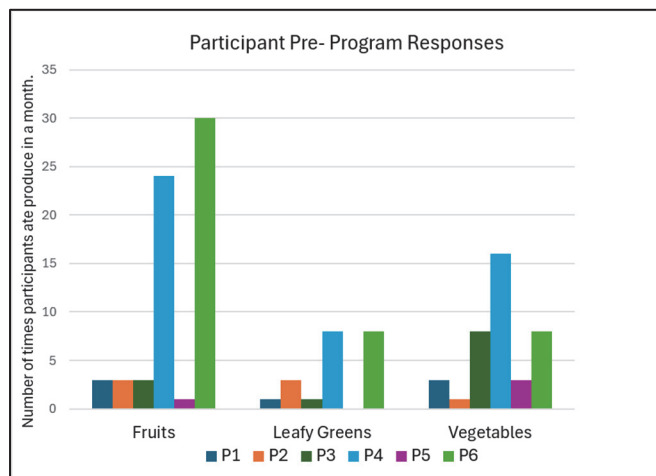
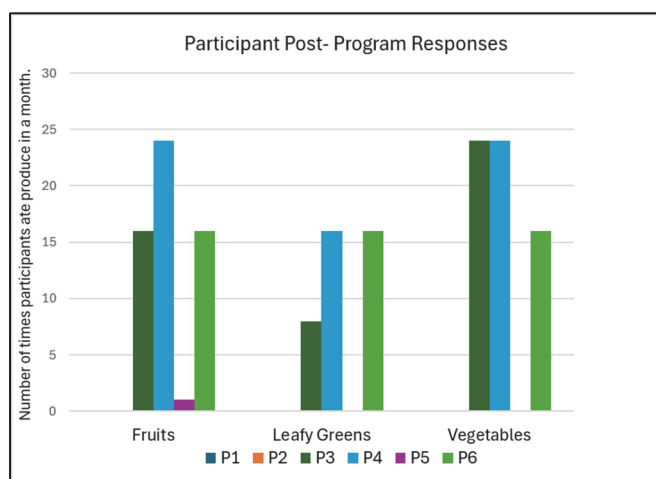


Table 2. Post-program Responses



The Future

The group has applied for GUSNIP funding and is awaiting an award response.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Salmon Valley Stewardship
- Mountain Harvest Market
- Steele Memorial Medical Center.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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