

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Innovative delivery expands Eat Smart Idaho's reach and reduces cost

### AT A GLANCE

Creative thinking with hiring contractors helps the Eat Smart Idaho program achieve better outreach and reduces costs throughout the Kootenai County area.

### The Situation

Eat Smart Idaho (ESI) continues to be a highly sought-after program across Kootenai County, recognized for its high-quality, research-based nutrition education and its proven ability to inspire lasting behavior change among youth and families. Last year marked a turning point when the northern district ESI program successfully expanded its delivery capacity through trained contractors. These contractors quickly became an integral part of the team, helping ESI meet their growing demand for education by offering 40 six-part series.

In 2025, the program built on this momentum, with contractors providing impactful education in classrooms, afterschool programs, and summer meal sites. The popularity of ESI curriculum — centered on MyPlate principles, food group importance, and healthy lifestyle behaviors — has made it a coveted program among teachers and administrators. Schools in both the Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls districts have expressed ongoing interest, recognizing that the lessons not only teach nutrition concepts but also influence daily choices and lifelong habits.

The increasing demand for positive, practical nutrition education demonstrates a clear community need.



Eat Smart Idaho students enjoy learning about Go, Glow and Grow food from their contracted Eat Smart Idaho instructor.

Families, educators and youth-serving organizations continue to look to ESI for credible guidance and engaging lessons that make healthy eating and physical activity accessible, enjoyable and achievable for all.

### Our Response

The northern district Eat Smart Idaho administrator actively coordinates six-part nutrition education series by organizing school sites, establishing contacts and managing program schedules. The northern district coordinator prepares all necessary classroom materials to ensure contractors are fully equipped for successful delivery. Together, the administrator, coordinator and contractors collaborate to select recipes that best meet the needs and interests of each school and its students. In 2025, a total of 37 six-part series were taught by

contractors across the Coeur d’Alene and Post Falls school districts, providing consistent, high-quality nutrition education to hundreds of youth.

### Program Outcomes

Contractors have helped reduce costs for the northern district’s Eat Smart Idaho budget, as contractors complete the scope of work at a set pay rate which does not include additional fringe benefits. During FY 2025, the ~\$22,000 spent on the 37 contracts avoided the need to spend ~\$8,800 on fringe benefits for the district.

Table: Outcomes of the program, contractors

Described change	Kindergarten to second grade	Third to fifth grade
Youth improved knowledge and/or adopted and practiced one or more food selection behavior consistent with dietary guidelines	67%	83%
Youth improved knowledge and/or adopted and practiced one or more behavior necessary to handle food safety	38%	52%
Youth improved knowledge and/or adopted and practiced one or more behavior related to physical activity	21%	66%

### The Future

UI Extension is actively pursuing alternative funding sources to sustain ESI’s critical work. The program remains deeply committed to supporting obesity prevention, improving nutrition knowledge, and fostering lifelong healthy behaviors among Idaho’s youth and families. Efforts are underway to strengthen partnerships, explore grant opportunities and identify innovative ways to continue delivering high-quality nutrition education where it is needed most.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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