



# News Release

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## **Nutrition wins with new \$5.86 million grant for SNAP participants in WA**

**OLYMPIA** — Washington nutrition assistance clients will be better able to afford healthy fruits and vegetables thanks to a federal grant of nearly \$6 million. The grant is part of \$31 million in awards by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to local, state, and national organizations to support programs that use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The Washington State Department of Health and 60 multi-sector partners were awarded a \$5.86 million competitive USDA grant to promote purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP clients. The money will be used for the Washington's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) Project, which aims to improve the nutrition status of low-income households participating in SNAP by increasing their purchases of fruits and vegetables. The program provides cash incentives at the point of purchase in farmers markets and grocery stores.

Washington is one of eight states to get the four-year large-scale FINI grant, for which the state Department of Health serves as the lead agency. The state health grant proposal was backed by Gov. Jay Inslee and Seattle Mayor Ed Murray. It directly aligns with major initiatives and strategic plans in Washington, including the [Gov. Inslee's Healthiest Next Generation Initiative](#), [Department of Health's State Plan for Healthy Communities](#), and [City of Seattle's Local Food Action Initiative](#).

“One of the goals of the Healthiest Next Generation Initiative is to help our children eat well. I want every family to have access to affordable, healthy food like fruits and vegetables,” Gov. Inslee said. “Washington's FINI Project will test new strategies and provide necessary resources to increase the ability of low-income families who struggle with food insecurity to buy the healthiest food possible.”

Secretary of Health John Wiesman added, “We are very pleased to help our most vulnerable kids and families from across the state get fresh, healthy food this summer. This partnership with our

local farmers markets, Safeway stores, health care providers, and federal government demonstrates how we make a difference in Washington state.”

Washington’s FINI Project rolls out statewide in the next couple of months, focusing on areas of the state where the burdens of poverty, food insecurity, and poor nutrition are highest. The project uses three main approaches to providing SNAP shoppers with cash incentives to buy fruits and vegetables. Farmers markets will give bonus funds to SNAP shoppers when they buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Often called “Fresh Bucks,” this incentive program was pioneered in Seattle in 2012, and similar pilot programs quickly expanded to Tacoma and Spokane as well as to Clark and Kitsap counties. The new FINI Project funding expands programs like “Fresh Bucks” to more than 80 farmers markets in 18 counties statewide.

In addition to farmers markets, Safeway supermarkets throughout Washington will increase purchasing power for SNAP customers in the checkout aisle by providing discounts at these stores so a larger variety of fresh, canned, or frozen fruits and vegetables with no added fats, sugars, or salt can be added to their grocery list.

Health care providers at partner community-based clinics and hospitals will “prescribe” fruits and vegetables during office visits and nutrition education classes. Patients will be able to redeem their prescriptions for fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets and Safeway supermarkets when they make a qualifying purchase.

Washington’s FINI Project was developed through a collaboration of state agencies, grocery and produce retailers, health care systems, community-based organizations, and universities. Partners include the Department of Social and Health Services; City of Seattle’s Office of Sustainability and Environment; Safeway Foundation and Safeway Inc.; Washington State Farmers Market Association; Catholic Charities of Spokane; MultiCare; UnitedHealthcare; Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital ;University of Washington; and Washington State University Extension.

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