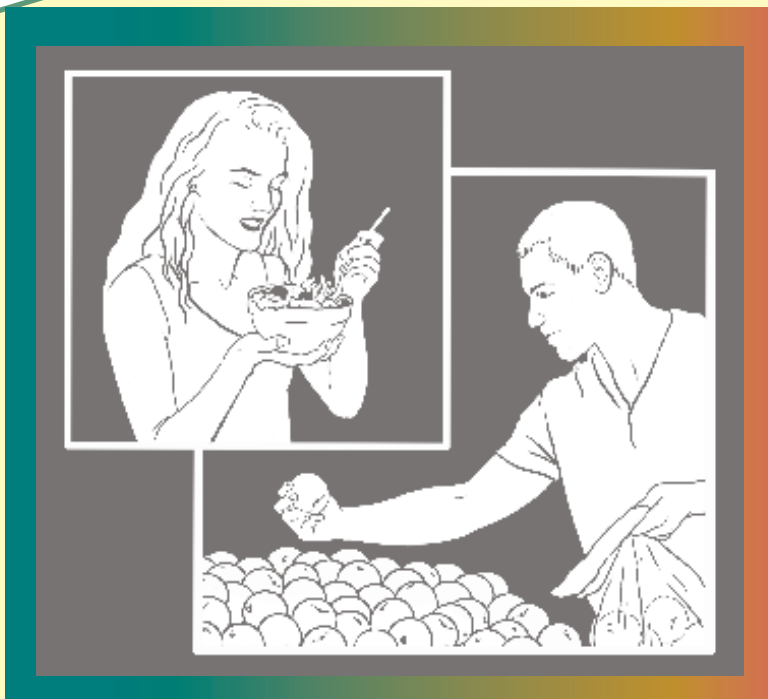


# 2021 IMPACTS: EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM (EFNEP)



## Improving nutritional security through education



National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[www.nifa.usda.gov/efnep](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/efnep)

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# A MESSAGE FROM EFNEP

Nutrition insecurity is especially seen among historically underserved populations, such as those with limited financial resources. Fiscal year 2021 was especially difficult for individuals, families, and communities across the nation as they experienced personal loss, social isolation, employment uncertainty, and lack of access to food and other resources. Fiscal year 2021 was also difficult for community-based programs as they experienced temporary closures and pivoted to develop and adapt social distancing protocols in a changing and challenging COVID-19 pandemic environment. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) experienced these challenges, with loss of staff, partners, and participants, hiring challenges, and lack of face-to-face interactions that tested staff morale.

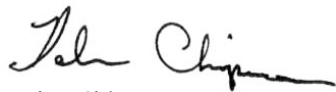
Faced with such difficulties, EFNEP remained resilient and experienced continued programmatic success. New partnerships were formed, resources were adapted, and remote approaches were utilized to expand program reach. Universities gave increased attention to training paraprofessional staff (peer educators) to help them feel less isolated. EFNEP leadership across the country developed and shared program content and teaching methods that allowed them to adapt quickly to a virtual teaching environment that supported participant success. Federal partners increased communications and provided technical assistance to university leadership to recognize and support local efforts.

Through these collective efforts, EFNEP experienced similar program results as in previous years. More than 90% of adult EFNEP participants reported improved behaviors following program involvement. Of particular note, program adaptations led to parents/caregivers and children learning together, and applying insights they gained as families, as shown in examples given in this report.

EFNEP contributes to nutrition security as program families and youth gain knowledge and skills for healthier food and physical activity choices, increased food resource management (shopping and food preparation), food safety, and food security practices to keep healthy in challenging times. EFNEP – the nation’s first federal nutrition education program for low-income populations – has reached more than 34 million low-income families and youth since 1969, and remains at the forefront of nutrition education efforts to reduce nutrition insecurity of low-income families and youth today.

Funded by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and conducted by Cooperative Extension through land-grant institutions in all U.S. states and territories and the District of Columbia, EFNEP uses education to support program participants’ efforts toward self-sufficiency and nutritional health and well-being. This report reflects how EFNEP continues to make a difference in the lives of low-income families and youth, even, and especially in times of adversity.

signed,

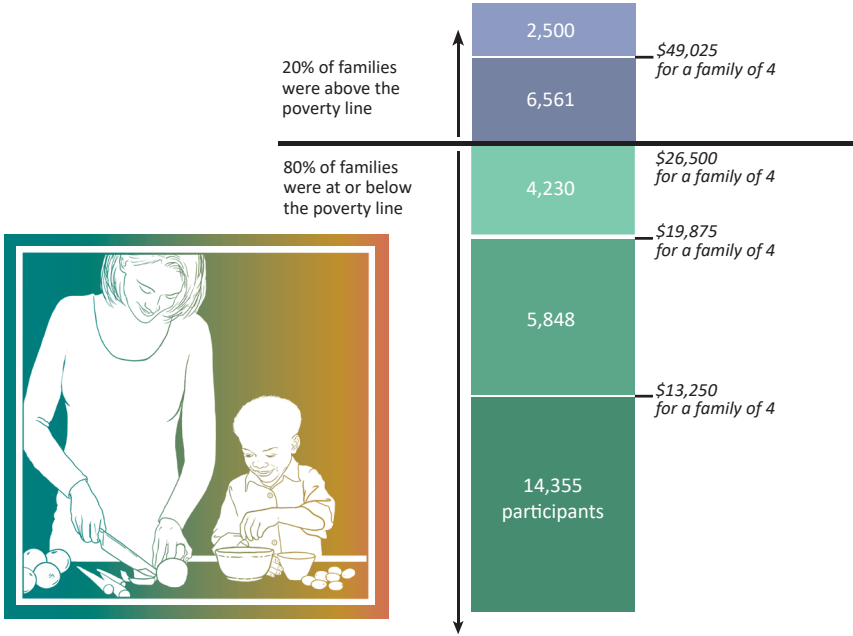


Helen Chipman  
National Program Leader,  
Food and Nutrition Education

# IMPROVING LIVES

## REACHING LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

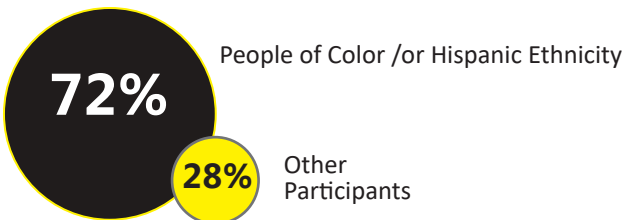
80% of EFNEP participants who reported income are at or below 100% of the poverty line, earning \$26,500 a year or less for a family of four.



In 2021, NIFA received \$69.4 million for land-grant university Cooperative Extension partners to conduct EFNEP in all 50 states, six U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. EFNEP employed 1,363 educators who are members of the communities they serve. In turn, EFNEP educators worked directly with 38,852 adults and 142,566 youth. These educators tailored lessons on diet quality and physical activity, food resource management, food safety, and food security to meet the specific needs of their respective program participants. Total participation decreased as universities and communities were adapting to their changing environment as the nation addressed the challenges from the pandemic throughout the year.

## REACHING DIVERSE POPULATIONS

The majority of EFNEP adults are from historically underserved populations; an increasing trend is programming to refugee and immigrant populations.



# SHARED STORIES

The COVID-19 pandemic presented new opportunities to extend EFNEP's reach and increase impact. Through remote learning, EFNEP staff in Connecticut teaching youth participants were able to also access parents, siblings, friends and other relatives. As the classes grew and families participated together each week, the youth would proudly show their food creations and comment "This is sooo good", " This was so much fun!" At the end of the class, participants and staff created a cookbook that included family recipe contributions. Having a sense of success was very reassuring during the very trying pandemic.

- University of Connecticut

A mother in northern Puerto Rico spoke of the difficulty of trying to choose healthy foods for her family with higher food costs during the COVID-19 pandemic. After completing EFNEP, she reported that she was able to utilize the food resource management strategies learned in the class and save \$125 dollars a month in food costs. She expressed gratitude for the positive changes her family had made, including creating menus before shopping, reading food labels, keeping foods safe, and increasing their physical activity.

- University of Puerto Rico

In partnership with a Cooking Matters grant, which provided food to families, EFNEP staff in Lancaster County, Nebraska taught virtual nutrition classes via Zoom technology. Families learned how to prepare meals together. A private Facebook group was created, through which participants shared how to cook low-cost, healthy meals for their families with each other. The power the community built through this virtual class led to kids trying healthy foods they were unwilling to try previously, increased balanced meals prepared including fruits and vegetables, and increased at-home cooking. When asked what would most improve the quality of life of families, one participant responded, "Educational cooking classes like these make such a huge difference.... Education is so important."

-University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Mississippi's Warren County, EFNEP partnered with an afterschool learning center to provide youth with nutrition education. Many of the participants were familiar with the fruit and vegetable groups, but not the protein and, grains, or dairy groups. After the program was completed, participants were able to name all five food groups and give examples for each group. One participant's grandfather observed several classes and is now interested in learning more about nutrition and health.

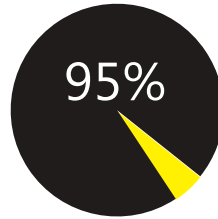
- Alcorn State University

# SAVING MONEY

EFNEP graduates reported a collective food cost savings of:

**\$469,698.80**

# IMPROVING DIETS





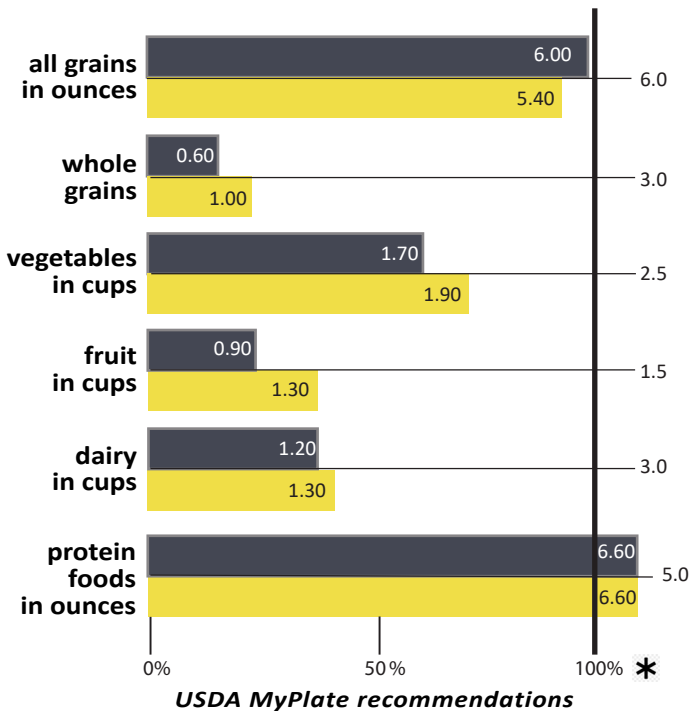
95% of adults improved their diet, including consuming additional fruits and vegetables.

5.

## DEMONSTRATING RESULTS

Data reported through diet recalls shows that EFNEP graduates eat more closely to MyPlate.gov recommendations. The data also shows there is still a need for nutrition education.

-  Amount consumed before EFNEP
-  Amount consumed after participation in EFNEP



\* This graphic shows recommendations for females ages 19-30 who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond their normal activities. Recommendations for males, other age groups, and other activity levels vary (see MyPlate.gov).

## SHARED STORIES

In the small town of Vinton, Louisiana, community gardens and farmer's markets were destroyed by two hurricanes. School COVID guidelines required new ways of delivering EFNEP. Despite such challenges, schools reported how EFNEP staff provided verbal and hands on instructional experiments that were vital to help students grasp the importance of handwashing, maintaining 6 feet personal space, and wearing masks that kept students safe during the pandemic. The presence of the program nurtured a school culture that benefited students by increasing their in-school /out-of-school physical fitness minutes, recognizing healthy eating habits, home food safety, and emotional health awareness. Students shared their knowledge with friends and family to multiply EFNEP's impact.

- Louisiana State University

Partnerships with community organizations and other Extension programming is essential for the EFNEP's success in Idaho. In Jerome County, EFNEP programming was enhanced by a Juntos grant, which resulted in an opportunity for EFNEP personnel to work with historically underserved Latinx students in the local middle and high school. The students and their parents were able to learn and work together. Not only did participants report making healthier meals; they also conducted a healthy food drive to provide food donations to the Jerome School District food pantry.

- University of Idaho

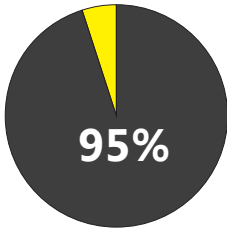
A native of West Africa enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes at the Worcester Adult Learning Center in Massachusetts. Through a partnership with EFNEP, she was also able to take classes which incorporated cultural foods and reinforced English language skills. Prior to EFNEP, the family's main meal consisted mainly of basic staple foods, such as bread, rice, eggs, and chicken. Little or no produce and whole grains were included. After completing EFNEP, the mother planned balanced meals for her family that included fresh green salads, berries, fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. Her overall fiber intake increased and her total fat intake decreased by 21%. She also increased her buying power, as she learned about accessing SNAP benefits.

- University of Massachusetts

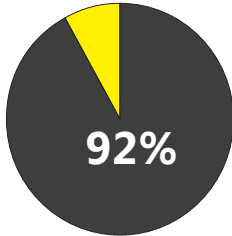
A father who participated in Head Start, was quiet and seemed uncomfortable when he came to his first EFNEP class, which was filled mostly with women. As he continued participating in EFNEP, he shared that he was a stay-at-home dad due to losing his job and that he had limited cooking skills. By the end of the EFNEP classes, he shared how he had become more physically active by walking to each class, and that he was making healthier choices by including more fruits and vegetables in meals and snacks for his family. He was excited that he could surprise his wife with his cooking skills. He was able to take the concepts from the classes and apply little changes to improve his and his family's overall health.

- University of Hawaii at Manoa

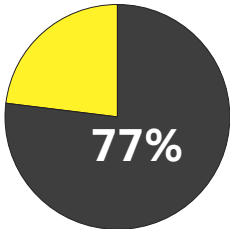
## CHANGING ADULT BEHAVIOR\*



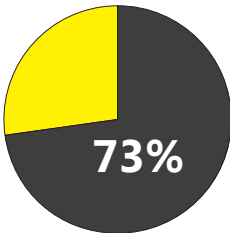
Percentage of adults improving diet quality practices



Percentage of adults improving food resource management practices

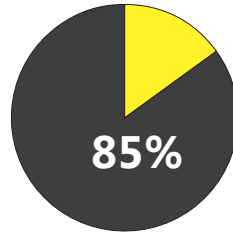


Percentage of adults improving food safety practices

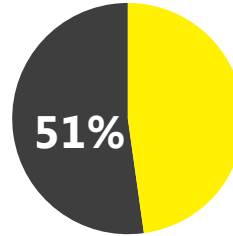


Percentage of adults improving physical activity practices

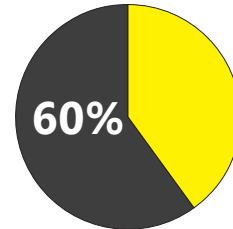
## INFLUENCING YOUTH



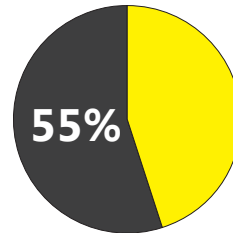
Percentage of youth increasing knowledge or ability to choose healthy foods



Percentage of youth increasing knowledge or ability to prepare low-cost, nutritious foods



Percentage of youth improving food safety and preparation knowledge or practices



Percentage of youth improving physical activity knowledge or practices

\* The new research tested adult questionnaire, measuring reported food and physical activity behaviors was further updated in 2020. Previous data cannot be compared.

# STRONG HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

EFNEP has made a difference in the lives of American families and children since 1969. It began as a pilot project in Alabama as USDA sought solutions to concerns of poverty and hunger. President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized \$10 million for the EFNEP program in 1968, and in 1969 Congress authorized \$30 million under the Smith-Lever Act. Originally EFNEP was delivered by 1862 Land-grant Universities. In 2006 EFNEP expanded to include 1890 Land-grant Universities. Today, 76 institutions work with community partners nationwide.

# MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE

Successful programs require constant attention. Changing demographics of nutrition-insecure families, an increasing number of Americans at or below the poverty line, and burgeoning educational technologies present new challenges and opportunities for nutrition education programs. Ongoing EFNEP initiatives are underway to:



- Receive periodic feedback to ensure program quality, integrity, and fidelity and meet the changing needs of participants.
- Confirm that adult and youth program indicators are scientifically valid and reliable.
- Strengthen science-based learning methods and enhance teaching techniques with appropriate new technologies, social media, and social-ecological approaches.

**A** third-grade student from Tippecanoe County, Indiana, shared what he was learning in EFNEP with his mother as they went grocery shopping together. They noticed the colorful produce and read labels for added fats, salts, and sugars. When they arrived home and emptied the grocery bags, they categorized their purchases as either “GO” or “WHOA” foods. He was pleased to share that carrots, apples, grapes, broccoli, and bananas were placed in the GO pile.

- Purdue University

For more information, visit [www.nifa.usda.gov/efnep](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/efnep) or contact [Carinthia.Cherry@usda.gov](mailto:Carinthia.Cherry@usda.gov); or [Helen.Chipman@usda.gov](mailto:Helen.Chipman@usda.gov)

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