Nutrition Education Programming in America

NIFA is committed to improving health and reducing hunger and poverty in America through nutrition education programming. Low-income families develop healthy habits in eating, physical activity, food handling, and food storage through peer educator-led training using credible, research-based nutrition information. NIFA and its predecessor agencies have provided nearly 50 years of federal leadership in nutrition education programming through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). We need to ensure that such programming is commensurate with demographic, social, and technological change.

EFNEP by the numbers

33M
The total number of participants reached since inception

$67.9M
The funding level in 2016

1,600+
The number of peer educators trained annually

EFNEP Success

More than 95% of graduates improve diets and consume an additional cup of fruits and vegetables daily

$9.52 benefit to society for every dollar invested in EFNEP*

Nearly 2 in 5 graduates increase their physical activity by at least 30 minutes daily

By training and supervising peer educators, EFNEP increases the employability of individuals and self-reliance of families and communities.

The 6 Keys to Success

1. Interactive, hands-on learning adapted to the context of each participant’s life

2. Evidence-based approaches to extend knowledge and improve diets and food-related behaviors

3. Complementing peer educator-led training with online technologies to accommodate changes in how individuals learn and access information

4. Strategic local partnerships that integrate programming into the community

5. State autonomy to target programming in areas of greatest need

6. Ongoing training and supervision of peer educators who implement programming in their local communities

EFNEP is a program conducted within the Cooperative Extension System.

Congressional funding 
Administration of federal funds by NIFA
Land-grant universities use federal plus state and local funds to manage extension programs
Extension professionals translate knowledge to meet the unique needs of communities across America

Extension professionals are integrated within more than 3,000 counties and county equivalents across all U.S. states, districts, and territories. These professionals translate science into opportunities to help improve people’s lives.

*FOOTNOTE: This statistic was obtained by averaging the findings across the following series of studies, which collectively show the benefit to be $9.52 (range $8.34 to $10.64).


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