



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Progress Report - June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020





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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, like the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program itself is a collaborative effort. We are indebted to our many partners who have made this report and the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program possible. Special thanks to the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Northgate Gonzalez Market; California Department of Social Services CalFresh Program and the local CalFresh Programs in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties; Ecology Center; Latino Health Access, Vision y Compromiso; The California Endowment; Univision; California Department of Public Health Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention (NEOP) Branch and the local health departments in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties; our NEOP community-based partners across Southern California; and a very special thanks to the CalFresh recipients who are participating in this study and who are providing us with the key data that comprises this report, with which we will ultimately be able to inform the USDA and others about the impact of financial incentives on the purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

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## INTRODUCTION

During our fourth year of operation, Federal Fiscal Year June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020 (FFY 2019-2020), the Southern California Nutrition Incentive Program, also known as the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program, has continued to implement and evaluate a Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients who shop at 6 participating Northgate González Markets in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties. We applied for and received a no-cost extension to continue the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh FINI program through May 31, 2021, which will give us flexibility to continue to recruit participants and provide incentives as we transition to our ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP). With this new funding, we will expand the program to reach SNAP recipients at all 41 Northgate stores in Southern California and develop a completely automated process for online enrollment, with an estimated launch date of September 2020.

From February 2017 to May 15, 2020 we have enrolled a total of 4,414 SNAP households into ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh. **Figure 1** shows the number of participants enrolled by year, the type of enrollment strategy used (i.e., in person or online), and for in-person enrollment, the number of in-store events. Following guidelines from the CDC, county health departments, and UC San Diego, and to do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among our participants, staff, and partners, we suspended our 2020 in-store enrollment events on March 9, 2020. Prior to that date, we had enrolled 788 new ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh members during FFY 2019-2020 at 18 in-store enrollments events.

**Figure 1: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh participant enrollment by year and enrollment type**

FFY	Cohort Number	Total Number of Participants Enrolled	Enrollment Type	Number of In-Store Events
2016-2017	1	1153	In-person	30
2017-2018	2	1230	In-person	30
2018-2019	3	1093	In-person	30
2019-2020: through 3/9	4	788	In-person	18
2019-2020: from 3/9-5/15	4	113	Online	N/A

To continue to serve our SNAP community members despite restrictions due to COVID-19, we fast-tracked the development and implementation of a modified ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Online Enrollment program, accessible via [www.masfresco.org](http://www.masfresco.org). **Figure 2** shows a screenshot of our program website home page with the online enrollment feature. This enables SNAP recipients who shop at any of our 6 currently participating Northgate Gonzalez Markets to enroll in the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program online at any time, from anywhere. Our modified online enrollment went live on April 1, 2020, and we have enrolled an additional 150 new participants into Cohort 4 as of May 31, 2020.

Figure 2: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program Website ([www.masfresco.org](http://www.masfresco.org))



To date, the majority of new online enrollees are located in San Diego county, where our initial outreach efforts to promote online enrollment have been concentrated. In the coming months, we plan to increase outreach in Orange and Los Angeles counties as our staff and partners adjust to the “new normal” of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., largely working from home, adapting programs to be “touchless,” incorporating technological solutions for remote communication).

Figure 3 shows a promotional postcard developed by our staff to share with partners and conduct targeted outreach to promote this modified online enrollment process. Importantly, to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing requirements, this postcard can be distributed via email or on social media, and includes live hyperlinks to both [www.masfresco.org](http://www.masfresco.org) as well as to our new online enrollment promotional videos in English and Spanish.

Figure 3: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Online Enrollment Promotional Postcard



## PROGRAM EVALUATION

This progress report provides a review of ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh participant survey data for Cohorts 1-3 and point-of-sale (POS) transaction data for Cohorts 1-4 through April 30, 2020. To briefly review the evaluation study design, upon enrollment, participants in Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 were randomized into one of three study groups to be able to earn up to \$10 per month, \$20 per month, or \$40 per month in incentive dollars at a \$1 to \$1 match based on how much of their CalFresh dollars they spent on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating Northgate markets.

Importantly, to reduce the time it took to enroll participants and increase the volume of enrollments, Cohort 4 enrollees (i.e., those enrolled in-store and online in 2020) were not asked to complete baseline or follow up surveys and are only represented in the POS data. They were not randomized and instead were all assigned to the group that could earn up to \$40 per month. This accelerated enrollment process was piloted in Years 2 and 3 with a small number of participants; **Figure 4** summarizes ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program participant longitudinal survey data collection.

During FFY 2019-2020, we collected 244 12-month surveys and 205 18-month post-intervention surveys from our Year 2 (Cohort 2) program participants, as well as 299 6-month surveys and 272 12-month surveys from our Year 3 (Cohort 3) program participants. We do not plan to collect 18-month surveys from Cohort 3 as it goes beyond the evaluation study timeline and will rely on 18-month survey data from Cohorts 1 and 2 only for post-intervention comparisons.

**Figure 4: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Survey Data Collection & Response Rates (RR), Cohorts 1-4**

COHORT	TOTAL ENROLLED	6 MONTH SURVEY	12 MONTH SURVEY	18 MONTH SURVEY
Year 1, 2017	Feb.-Apr. 2017; N=1153 enrolled N=1152 surveys, RR=100%	July-Oct. 2017 N=359, RR=31%	Feb.-Apr. 2018 N=186, RR=16%	Jul.-Oct. 2018 N=166, RR=14%
Year 2, 2018	Feb.-Apr. 2018; N=1230 enrolled N=1114 surveys, RR=91%	Jul.-Oct. 2018 N=267, RR=24%	Feb.-Apr. 2019 N=244, RR=22%	Jul.-Oct. 2019 N=205, RR=18%
Year 3, 2019	Feb.-Apr. 2019; N=1093 enrolled N=1024 surveys, RR=94%	Jul.-Oct. 2019 N=299, RR=29%	Feb.-Apr. 2020 N=272, RR=27%	<i>N/A, beyond evaluation timeline</i>
Year 4, 2020	Jan. 2020- ongoing N=901 as of 5/15 <i>No surveys collected</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>

The increasing follow up survey response rates for Cohorts 2 and 3 represent team efforts to focus data collection efforts on active participants and institute scheduled text, email, and phone call reminders. Since the study or evaluation period was over after Cohort 1 and 2 program evaluation surveys were complete (i.e., 18 months post-enrollment), these participants were no longer randomized to earn \$10, \$20, or \$40 and could simply engage in the program at the \$40 level. Cohort 3 participants will undergo the same transition after their 12-month survey is complete in May 2020, as that concludes their participation in evaluation surveys as we enter the no-cost extension period of funding.

## BASELINE ENROLLMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Baseline survey sociodemographic data (Figure 5) shows that Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 share similar characteristics in terms of gender age, race-ethnicity, marital status, household size and composition, and education. The majority of ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh participants are female, Mexican-American/Latina, and have an average age of 39.7 – 42.5 years. Approximately half are married or living with a partner, and over three quarters have children living with them. The majority have not completed high school.

Figure 5: Program Participant Baseline Survey Characteristics



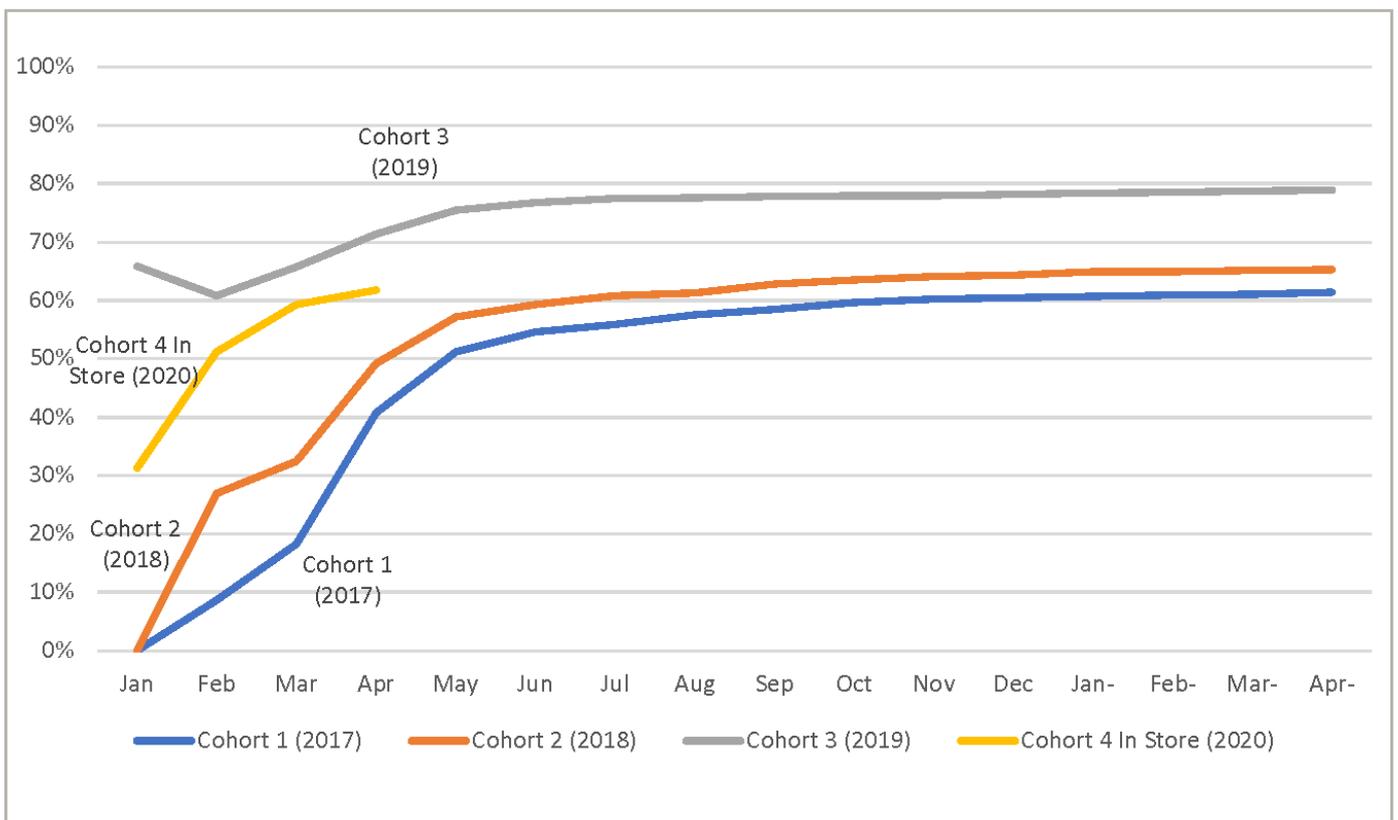
## PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT, UTILIZATION & SATISFACTION

Similar to FFY 2018-2019 (Cohort 3), for FFY 2019-2020 Cohort 4 participants who enrolled in-store received pre-activated ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program Mi Familia cards to enable them to immediately start earning and redeeming financial incentives the same day. Previously, Mi Familia cards were given to Cohort 1 and 2 participants upon enrollment but not pre-activated, resulting in a delay of approximately 10-15 days between enrollment and being able to start earning and redeeming financial incentives. By enabling program participants to immediately start earning and redeeming financial incentives upon enrollment, we have increased engagement, utilization, and overall program satisfaction.

### Program Engagement

Figure 6 shows the monthly program engagement rate by cohort for the first 12 months of program participation; program “engagement rate” is defined as the cumulative number of participants who have used their Mi Familia cards at least one time divided by the cumulative number of participants in each cohort. Cohorts 3 and 4 show higher engagement rates than Cohorts 1 and 2, which is attributed primarily to pre-activated cards.

**Figure 6: Program Engagement Rates by Cohort in the First 12 Months after Enrollment\***

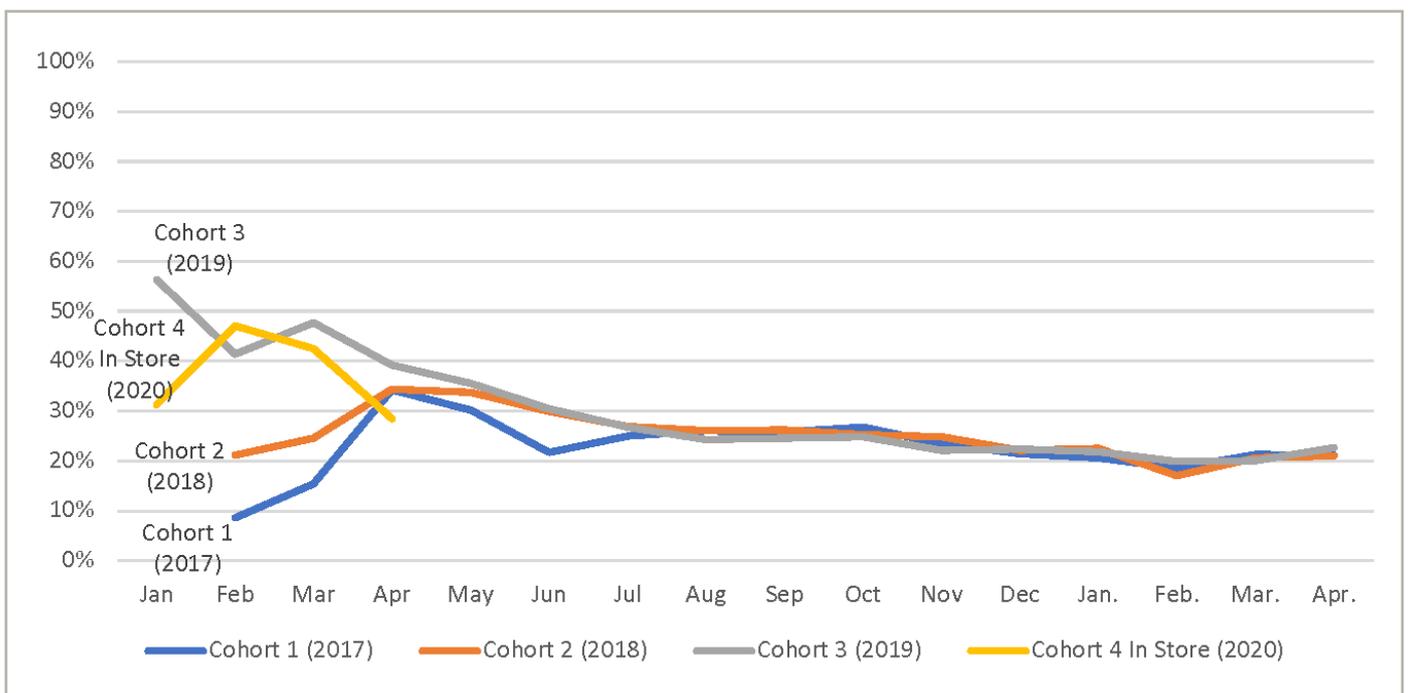


\*Enrollment is staggered over a period running from January-April of each year, which is why the timeline runs until April of the following year.

### Program Utilization

Figure 7 shows monthly program utilization rates, defined as the proportion of participants who used their Mi Familia card each month out of the total number of participants in each cohort, for the first 12 months of the program for each cohort. During the first several months after enrolling in the program, utilization rates were highest for Cohort 3 (2019), then for Cohort 2 (2018), and then Cohort 1 (2017). Cohort 4 (2020) only has 4 months of data to interpret but appeared to have similar utilization rates as Cohort 3 through March, then experienced a decrease in April, which may be due to the early end of in-store enrollment events due to COVID-19. Previous years' cohorts also showed similar declining utilization rates after the conclusion of the in-store enrollment events in April. Eventually, the proportion of participants in each cohort who use their card each month equalizes during July/August of their first year in the program after being enrolled in January-April.

**Figure 7: Program Utilization Rates by Cohort in the First 12 Months after Enrollment\***

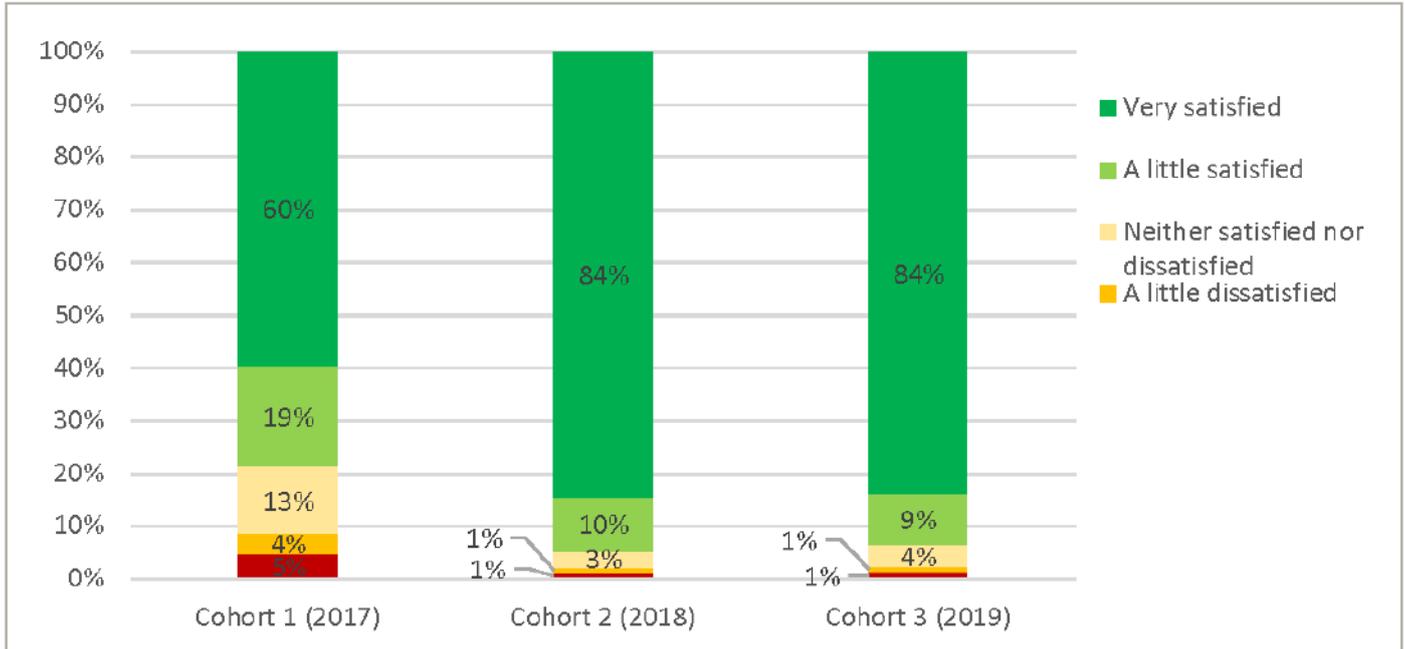


\*Enrollment is staggered over a period running from January-April of each year, which is why the timeline runs until April of the following year.

**Program Satisfaction**

Figure 8 shows how satisfaction rates measured at the 6-month survey improved from Cohort 1 in 2017 to Cohorts 2 and 3 in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The proportion of participants who indicated they were “very satisfied” with the program six months after enrolling increased from 60% for Cohort 1 to 84% for Cohorts 2 and 3.

**Figure 8: Program Satisfaction Reported 6 Months After Enrollment by Cohort**



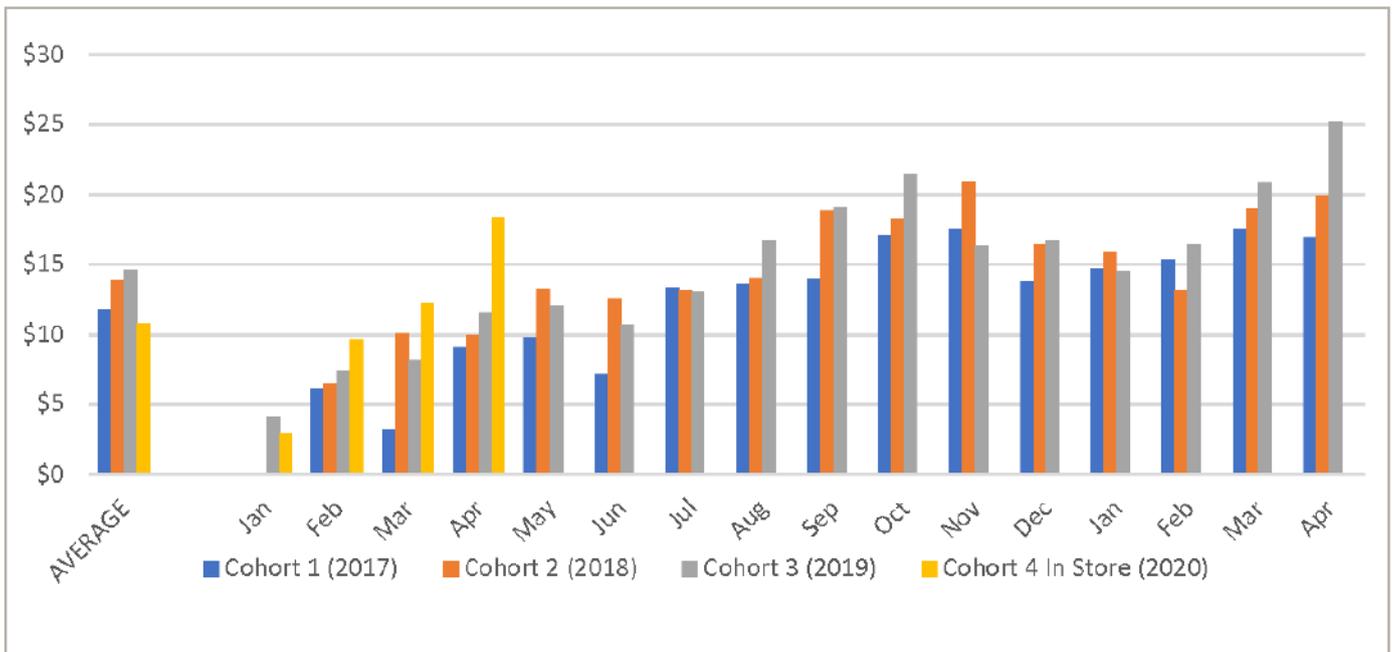
Other factors that have contributed to increased engagement, utilization, and satisfaction over the course of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program include continuous refinement of messaging through the incorporation of feedback from participants and our promotora teams, and the incorporation of monthly reminder texts/emails in 2018.

## POINT OF SALE TRANSACTION DATA

### Incentive Redemption

Figure 9 shows monthly incentive redemption amount per participant by cohort in the first 12 months post-enrollment; on average, this is how much each participant redeemed in financial incentives each month for each cohort. Each subsequent cohort's overall average redemptions per person is higher, with the exception of Cohort 4, for which we have limited data (only 4 months' worth of observations), although the monthly redemption values are on track to exceed Cohort 3.

**Figure 9: Mean Monthly Incentive Redemption Amount per Participant by Cohort in the First 12 Months after Enrollment\***



\*Enrollment is staggered over a period running from January-April of each year, which is why the timeline runs until April of the following year.

**Detailed Transaction Data**

**Figure 10** shows a quarterly summary of ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program transaction data by cohort for Quarter 1 2019 (Jan-Mar) through Quarter 1 of 2020. Reflecting patterns from previous years, we saw that the total amounts of incentives earned and redeemed, total spent, and total CalFresh spent increased in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2019 primarily due to two reasons: 1) new enrollment of Cohort 3, and 2) Cohort 1 participants all being able to earn \$40 after their 18 month survey in November of 2018. These values taper in Quarters 3 and 4 as some participants stop participating (e.g., because they lost CalFresh, moved away, etc.). This was also affected by the suspension of Cohort 2’s ability to earn incentives during Quarter 3 when they completed 12 months of program participation and before being reinstated late in Quarter 4 after their 18 month survey was complete. In Quarter 1 of 2020 we see another surge from new enrollments of Cohort 4 and all of Cohort 2 being able to earn up to \$40 per month.

**Figure 10: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Quarterly Transaction Data Summary by Cohort, Q1 2019-Q1 2020**

COHORT	TRANSACTION	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1
<b>All Cohorts</b>	Incentive Earned	\$29,391.52	\$30,915.64	\$16,217.97	\$16,740.21	\$28,525.78
	Incentive Redeemed	\$29,268.35	\$37,185.78	\$24,465.15	\$33,136.25	\$35,512.21
	Total Spent	\$221,301.29	\$254,237.05	\$159,063.08	\$174,754.53	\$227,296.88
	Total EBT Spent	\$182,648.14	\$204,059.32	\$124,778.47	\$139,561.38	\$176,524.79
	Total Transactions	4835	5797	3392	3915	4436
<b>Cohort 1</b>	Incentive Earned	\$7,310.92	\$7,732.10	\$6,558.65	\$5,873.08	\$4,466.55
	Incentive Redeemed	\$8,904.13	\$8,162.75	\$6,862.09	\$5,834.38	\$4,707.64
	Total Spent	\$53,944.44	\$56,436.07	\$49,170.86	\$44,197.27	\$36,326.33
	Total EBT Spent	\$43,605.11	\$45,252.18	\$37,662.14	\$35,674.25	\$28,070.74
	Total Transactions	1238	1297	1056	1010	809
<b>Cohort 2</b>	Incentive Earned	\$9,619.19	\$7,956.67	\$0.00	\$3,036.39	\$4,662.57
	Incentive Redeemed	\$13,439.66	\$14,828.56	\$3,611.69	\$13,144.61	\$7,018.93
	Total Spent	\$91,796.69	\$80,350.96	\$17,612.35	\$46,236.87	\$43,500.87
	Total EBT Spent	\$75,457.52	\$61,524.07	\$12,928.89	\$37,381.17	\$33,565.33
	Total Transactions	1969	1975	414	1070	916
<b>Cohort 3</b>	Incentive Earned	\$12,461.41	\$15,226.87	\$9,659.32	\$7,830.74	\$7,197.08
	Incentive Redeemed	\$6,924.56	\$14,194.47	\$13,991.37	\$14,157.26	\$11,586.06
	Total Spent	\$75,560.16	\$117,450.02	\$92,279.87	\$84,320.39	\$75,821.00
	Total EBT Spent	\$63,585.51	\$97,283.07	\$74,187.44	\$66,505.96	\$58,912.32
	Total Transactions	1628	2525	1922	1835	1429
<b>Cohort 4 (in-store)</b>	Incentive Earned					\$12,199.58
	Incentive Redeemed					\$6,965.93
	Total Spent					\$71,648.68
	Total EBT Spent					\$55,976.40
	Total Transactions					1282

Figure 11 shows a more detailed monthly summary of ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program transaction data by cohort for the first 4 months of 2020. Despite fewer overall transactions in April 2020 compared to March, incentives redeemed, total sales, and total CalFresh increased substantially. Participants appear to be taking advantage of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program more during the COVID-19 pandemic, and stay at home orders may be causing participants to make fewer shopping trips but spend more during those less frequent trips.

Figure 11: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Monthly Transaction Data by Cohort, January-April 2020

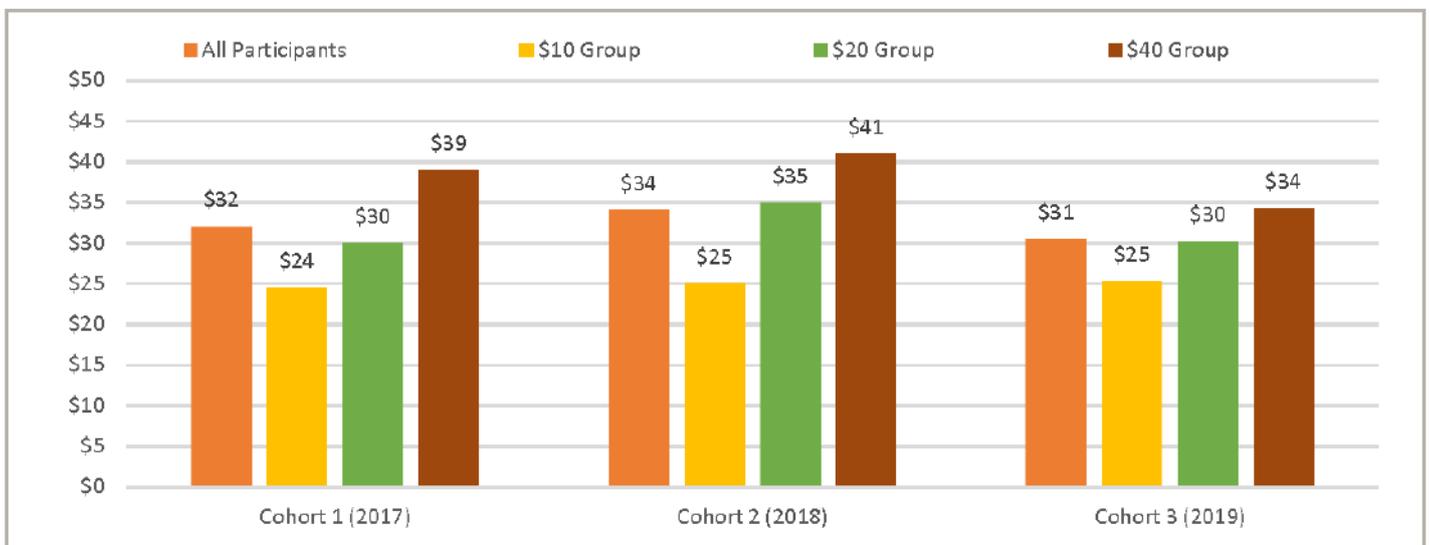
COHORT	TRANSACTION	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20
<b>All Cohorts</b> 4339	Incentive Earned	\$5,585.12	\$11,259.46	\$11,681.20	\$11,621.84
	Incentive Redeemed	\$7,633.80	\$13,206.34	\$14,672.07	\$15,153.06
	Total Spent	\$46,875.15	\$77,209.49	\$103,212.24	\$108,469.33
	Total EBT Spent	\$37,955.07	\$62,901.29	\$75,668.43	\$85,229.66
	Total Transactions	1042	1688	1706	1581
<b>Cohort 1 (2017)</b> 1153	Incentive Earned	\$953.32	\$1,922.29	\$1,590.94	\$2,399.41
	Incentive Redeemed	\$1,181.48	\$1,886.55	\$1,639.61	\$1,967.47
	Total Spent	\$9,379.67	\$12,914.13	\$14,032.53	\$17,846.81
	Total EBT Spent	\$7,842.76	\$10,581.74	\$9,646.24	\$14,436.77
	Total Transactions	221	319	269	257
<b>Cohort 2 (2018)</b> 1230	Incentive Earned	\$948.29	\$1,873.51	\$1,840.77	\$2,300.58
	Incentive Redeemed	\$2,101.44	\$2,716.02	\$2,201.47	\$2,443.52
	Total Spent	\$10,716.89	\$15,214.37	\$17,569.61	\$20,335.24
	Total EBT Spent	\$8,336.42	\$12,458.45	\$12,770.46	\$16,384.81
	Total Transactions	253	348	315	300
<b>Cohort 3 (2019)</b> 1095	Incentive Earned	\$2,819.55	\$2,432.93	\$1,944.60	\$2,362.56
	Incentive Redeemed	\$3,486.92	\$3,573.04	\$4,526.10	\$6,240.99
	Total Spent	\$24,093.41	\$23,388.16	\$28,339.43	\$34,171.38
	Total EBT Spent	\$19,506.13	\$18,836.41	\$20,569.78	\$25,789.94
	Total Transactions	482	476	471	525
<b>Cohort 4 (2020, in-store)</b> 788	Incentive Earned	\$863.96	\$5,030.73	\$6,304.89	\$4,479.02
	Incentive Redeemed	\$192.82	\$2,660.48	\$4,112.63	\$4,137.02
	Total Spent	\$2,685.18	\$25,692.83	\$43,270.67	\$35,759.04
	Total EBT Spent	\$2,269.76	\$21,024.69	\$32,681.95	\$28,289.54
	Total Transactions	86	545	651	495
<b>Cohort 4 (2020, online)</b> 73 (in April 2020)	Incentive Earned				\$80.27
	Incentive Redeemed				\$22.06
	Total Spent				\$356.86
	Total EBT Spent				\$328.60
	Total Transactions				4

## FRUIT & VEGETABLE PURCHASING

### *Fruit and Vegetable Purchasing based on Point-of-Sale Data*

POS transaction data for Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 show a statistically significant difference in the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables among program participants based on study group (**Figure 12**). The data indicate that the higher the financial incentive amount received per month (\$10, \$20, or \$40), the higher the dollar amount of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased each month. For example, across Cohorts 1, 2 and 3, participants randomly assigned to receive up to \$40 per month spent \$4-\$6 more on average per month on fruits and vegetables than those receiving up to \$20 a month, and \$9-\$16 more than those receiving up to \$10 per month.

**Figure 12: Mean Amount Spent/Month on Eligible Fresh Fruits & Vegetables during the First 12 Months of Program Participation among Active Participants (i.e., with >2 transactions)**

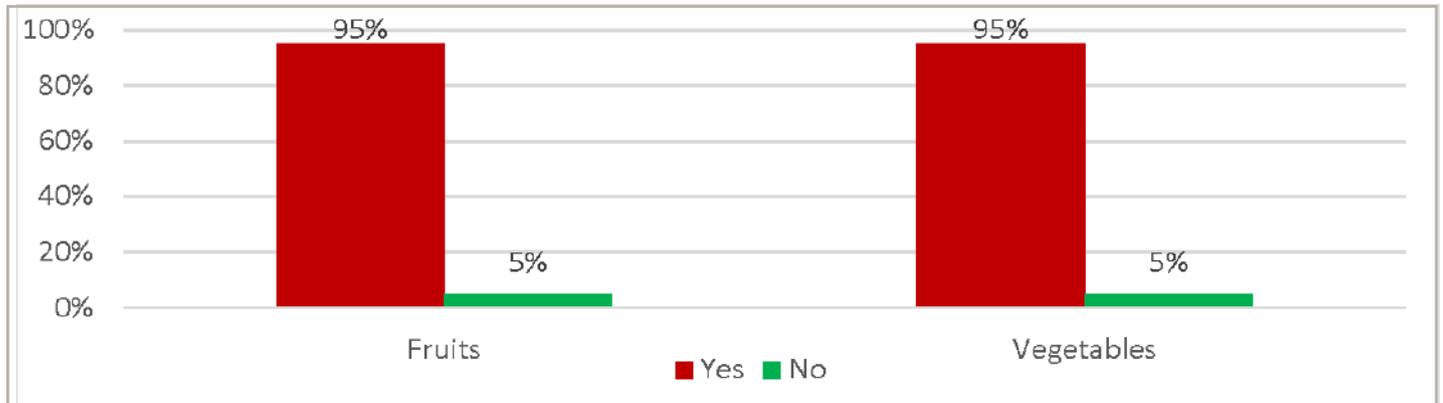


We used linear regression analysis to assess if there was a statistically significant relationship between study group and the mean amount spent per month on fresh fruits and vegetables, controlling for mean total spent per month and cohort and including only active participants, which we defined as those with at least 2 transactions. Compared to participants randomly assigned to earn up to \$10 per month, those who could earn up to \$20 spent approximately \$3.75 more on fresh fruits and vegetables ( $p < 0.0001$ ), and those who could earn up to \$40 per month spent \$8.18 more ( $p < 0.0001$ ), adjusting for mean total spent per month and cohort. Mean total spent per month was also found to be significantly associated with mean spent on fresh fruits and vegetables; for every additional \$1 spent on fresh fruits and vegetables per month, the mean total spent per month was estimated to be \$0.15 higher ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Interestingly, compared to Cohort 1, Cohort 2 spent approximately \$2.28 more per month on fresh fruits and vegetables ( $p = 0.005$ ), but there was no such relationship for Cohorts 3 or 4.

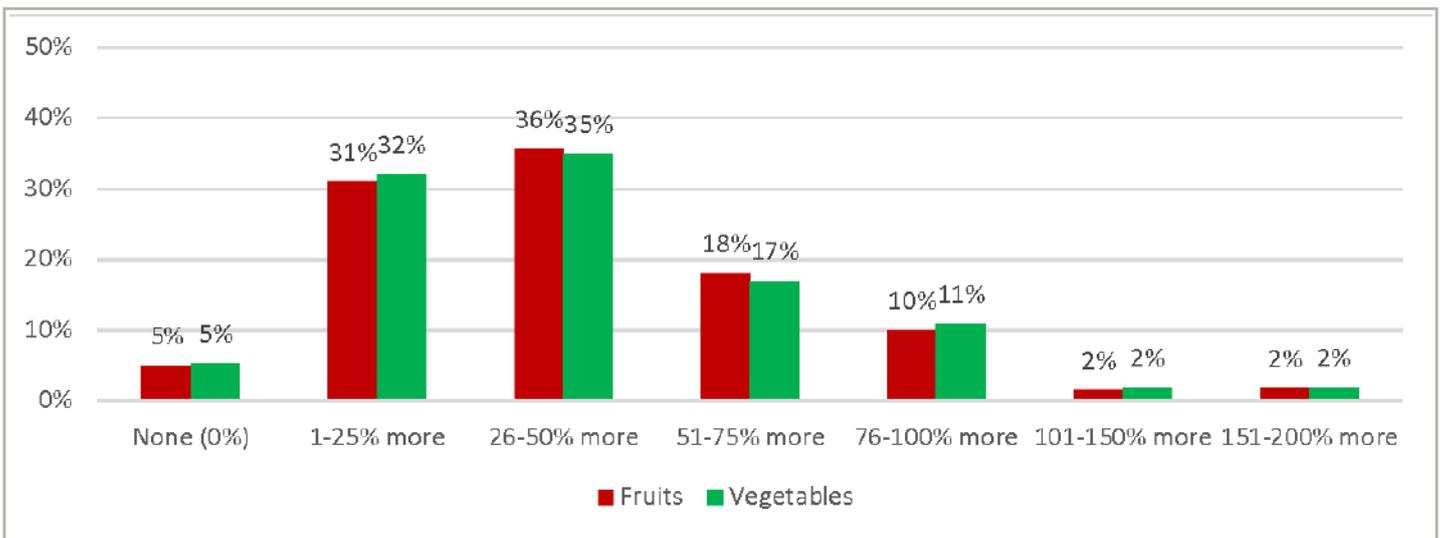
### Retrospective Self-Reported Purchases of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

We also asked participants in their 6 and 12-month follow up surveys if they were buying more fruits and vegetables as a result of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program. As seen in **Figure 13**, nearly all participants (95-96%) indicated that this was the case. **Figure 14** shows that the majority of participants reported purchasing up to 75% more fruits and vegetables as a result of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program. The additional amount of fruits or vegetables purchased were similar between these categories of food, indicating they were not favoring fruits over vegetables, or vice-versa.

**Figure 13: Proportion of Participants Reporting an Increase n Amount of Fruits & Vegetables Purchased, 6- and 12-month Follow Up Survey, Cohorts 1, 2, and 3**



**Figure 14: Additional Amount of Fruits and Vegetables Purchased because of ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh, 6 and 12-Month Follow Up Surveys, Cohorts 1, 2, and 3.**

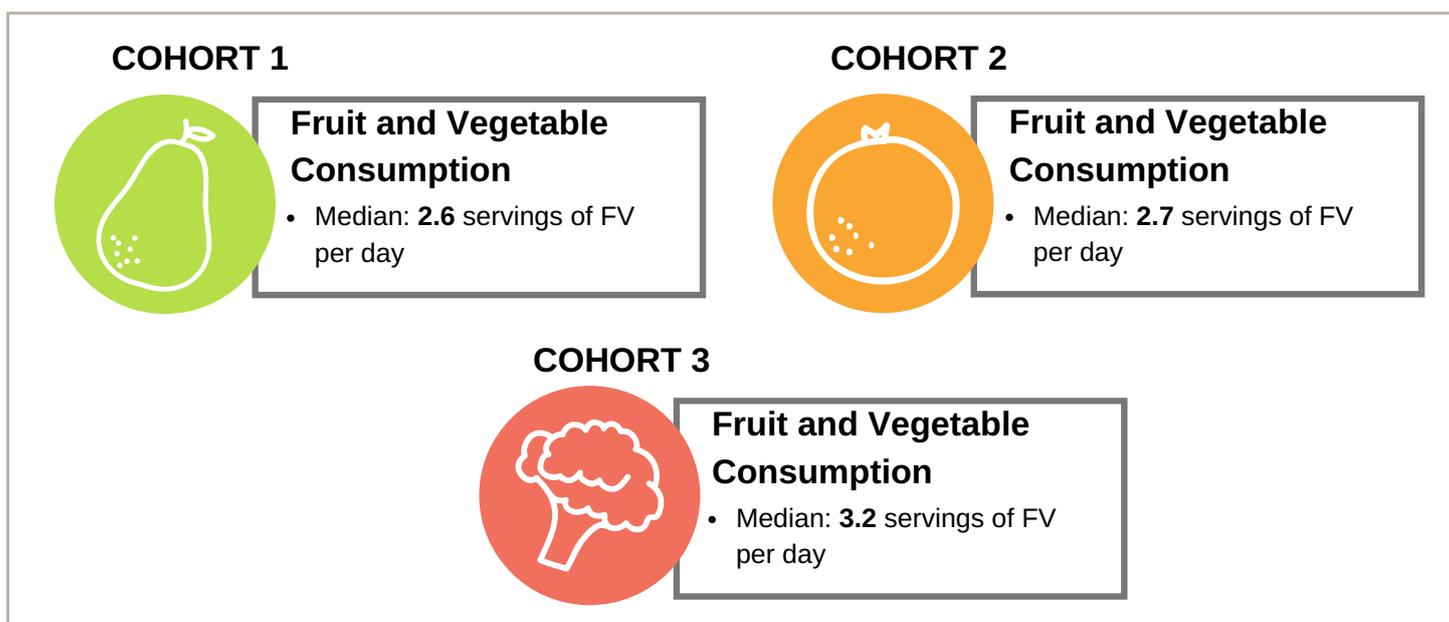


## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

### **Baseline Survey Data on Fruit and Vegetable Consumption**

We used an adapted version of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Eating at America's Table All Day Dietary Screening Tool (EATS) to measure cup-equivalent daily servings of fruits and vegetables (FV) in our participant surveys. Outliers more than 3 times greater than the median absolute deviation have been removed. The self-reported median daily intake of 2.6 to 3.2 FV servings among Cohorts 1-3, shown in **Figure 15**, falls well below the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommended healthy intake of 4.5 servings per day at the referenced 2,000 calories per day level.

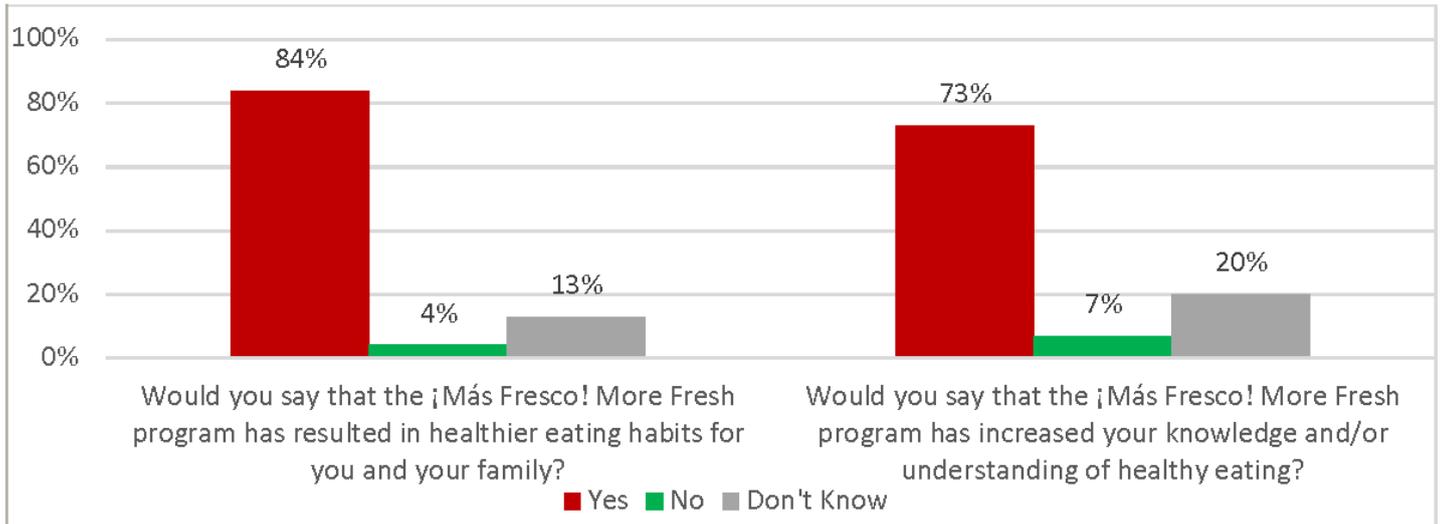
**Figure 15: Median Fruit & Vegetable (FV) Servings of Consumed Per Day, Cohorts 1, 2, and 3**



### Self-Reported Changes in Healthy Eating Habits and Knowledge

Participants were asked at follow up if they and their families had developed healthier eating habits and if they had increased their knowledge about healthy eating as a result of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program, shown in **Figure 16**. These results are combined across 6, 12, and 18 month follow-up surveys for multiple cohorts, but does not include the Cohort 1 six or 12-month survey, as the question was not added until after that point. More than 4 in 5 participants (84% reported healthier eating habits, and 73% reported increased knowledge about healthy eating).

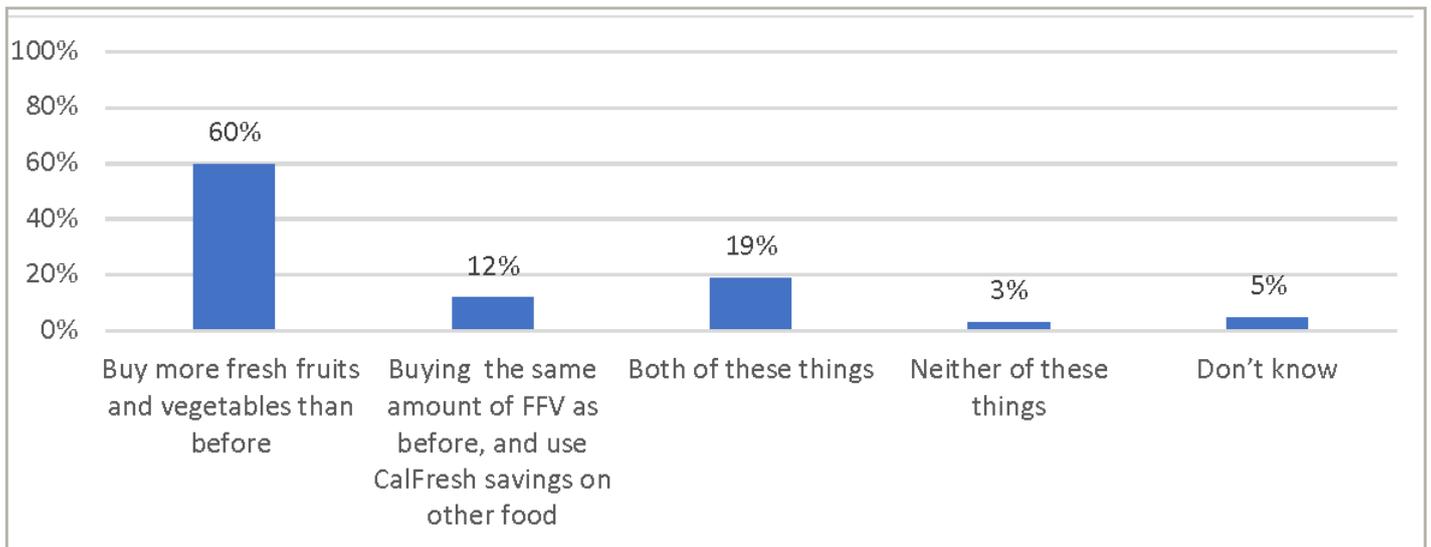
**Figure 16: Retrospective Self-Reported Changes in Healthy Eating Habits and Knowledge**



### Participants' Incentive Behaviors: Fruit and Vegetable Purchasing vs. Food Security

Because the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program is designed to help CalFresh recipients buy and eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, and also to help them save money so that they can buy more food in general with their CalFresh, we asked participants how they were using their incentive dollars at follow up. As shown in **Figure 17**, we found that most participants (60%) were using their incentives just to buy more fresh fruits and vegetables, 12% used the incentives to buy the same amount of fresh fruits and vegetables as before and using the CalFresh savings on other food, 19% reported doing both of these things, and 8% reported that they did neither or didn't know.

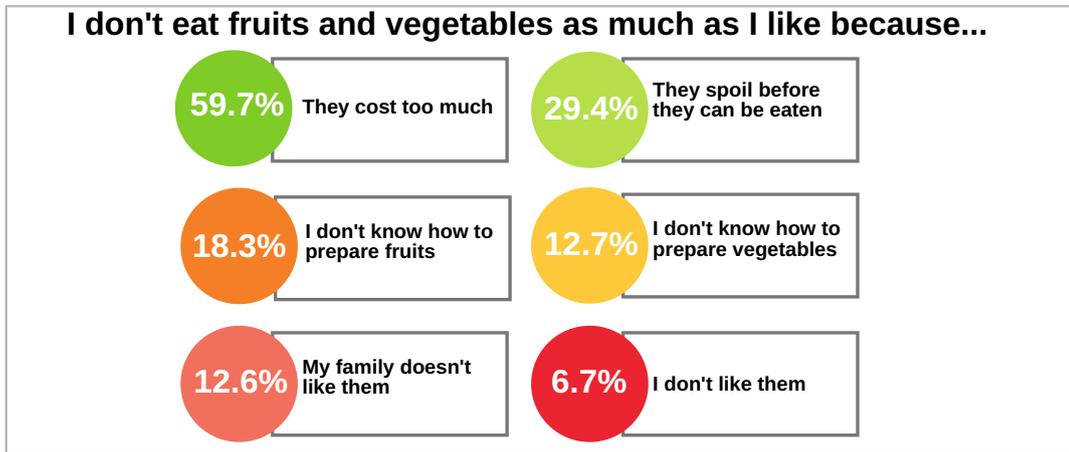
**Figure 17: Ways Participants Report using ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Incentive Dollars**



## HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

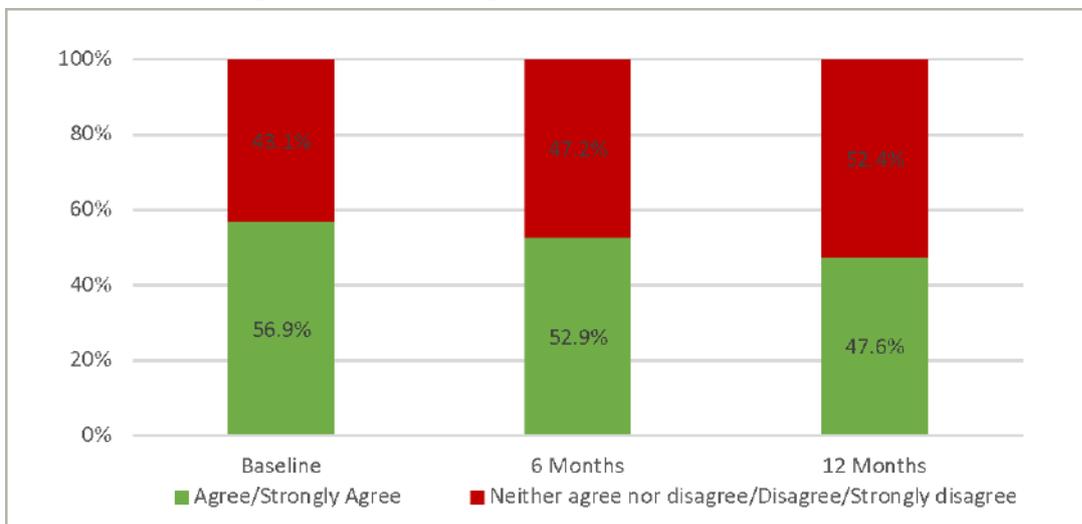
As noted by the USDA, consumer food spending and diet choices are influenced by accessibility and affordability, including travel time, availability of healthy foods, and food prices. People with low income may face greater barriers in accessing healthy and affordable food, which may negatively affect diet and food security. We measured barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption using select measures from the NCI Food Attitudes and Behaviors Survey. As shown in **Figure 18**, cost appears to be the greatest barrier; nearly two-thirds (59.7%) of Cohort 1-3 program participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that cost was a barrier to consuming more fruits and vegetables.

**Figure 18: Barriers to Eating Fruits and Vegetables at Baseline-Proportion of Program Participants who Agree/Strongly Agree (vs. Neither, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree)**



While they received ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh incentives, the proportion of Cohort 1-3 participants who agree/strongly agree that cost is a barrier to eating fruits and vegetables fell significantly from 57% at baseline to 48% at 12 months (**Figure 19**,  $p < 0.0001$ , McNemar’s Chi Squared). Addressing the cost of fruits and vegetables is a key objective of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program, achieved through providing financial incentives to SNAP participants at the point of purchase. To date, we have been able to demonstrate that nutrition incentives to buy more fruits and vegetables increases purchasing behaviors and seems to correlate with changing views on affordability. Continued implementation of similar programs would allow us to evaluate the impact on nutrition and health status of this population.

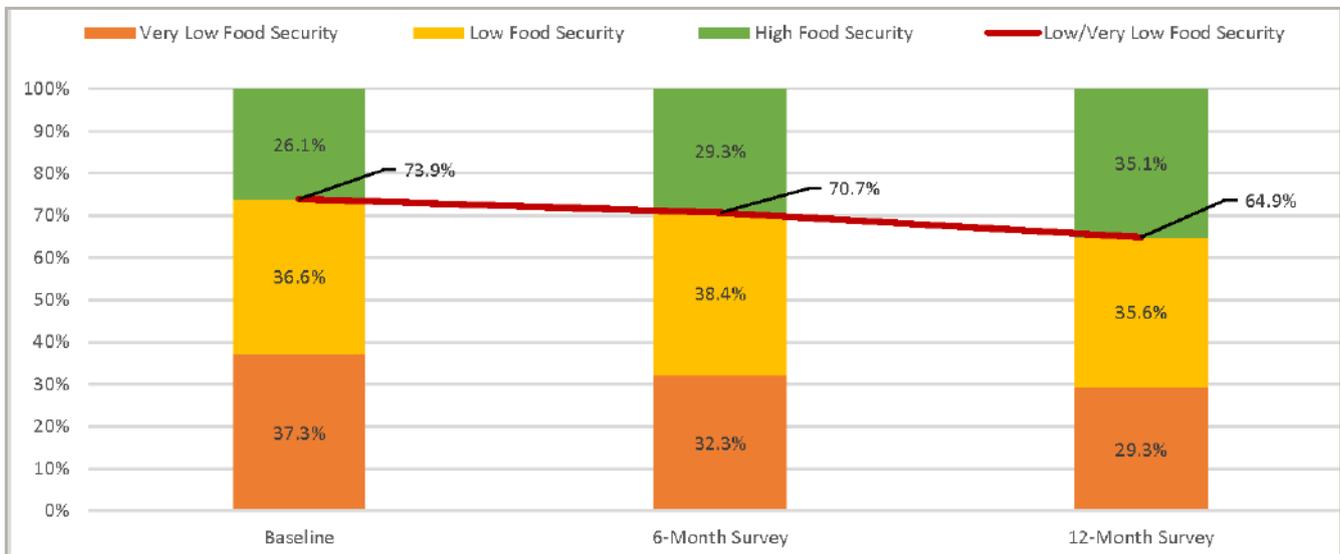
**Figure 19: Changes in the Proportion of Program Participants who Agree/Strongly Agree that Cost is a Barrier to Eating Fruits and Vegetables, Cohorts 1-3**



## FOOD SECURITY

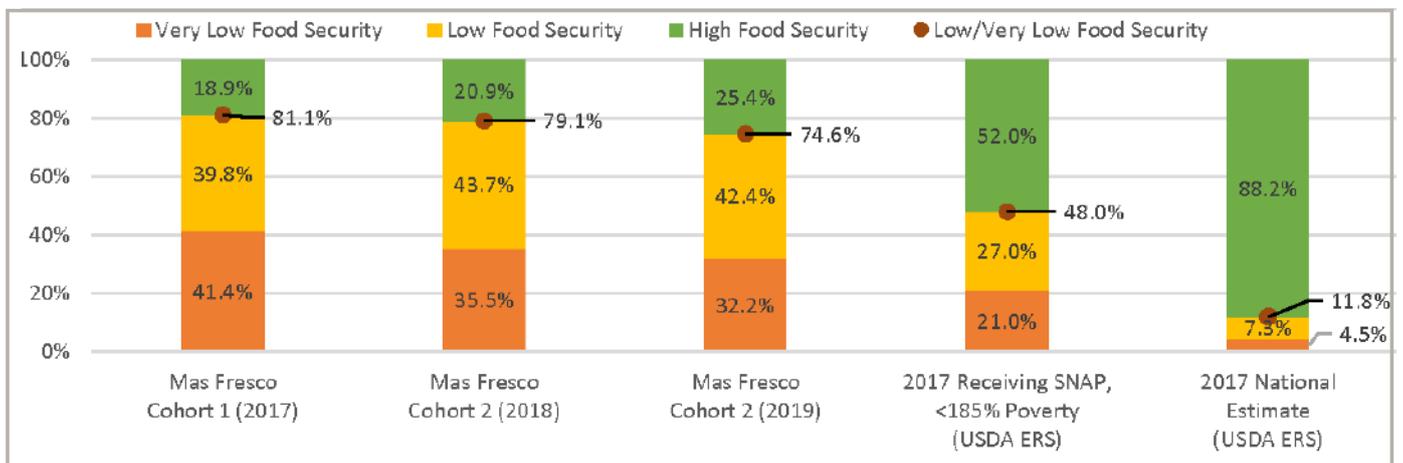
We used the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) “U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form” to measure food security among our participants at baseline and follow up surveys. As can be seen in **Figure 20**, the proportion of program participants in Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 suffering from low or very low food security decreased significantly, from 73.9% at baseline to 64.9% (p=0.0002, McNemar’s Chi-Squared) at 12-months post-enrollment while they were receiving financial incentives from the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh program.

**Figure 20: ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 Changes in Food Security Level at Baseline, 6 months, and 12 months post-enrollment (n=464)**



Importantly, a large proportion of our participants demonstrated very low or low food security at baseline compared to national estimates for SNAP recipients and the general population. As we recruited each new cohort of participants, the food insecurity level improved slightly with each cohort, seen in **Figure 21**. However, these values, which range from 75% to 81%, remain elevated compared to national estimates of 48% of SNAP participants and 11.8% of the general population.

**Figure 21: Percentage of Program Participants Reporting High, Low, and Very Low Food Security compared to National Estimates for SNAP recipients and the General Population**



## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS FFY 2019-2020: ENHANCED PROGRAM OUTREACH, AWARENESS & PARTICIPATION

### ONLINE ENROLLMENT

As previously described, in an effort to support SNAP recipients through COVID-19 and beyond, the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program fast-tracked the development and implementation of a modified enrollment initiative to enable SNAP recipients to enroll in the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program online from anywhere at any time. As part of our new GusNIP funding we are in the process of working with Northgate Gonzalez Market to develop and implement a fully automated, cloud-based benefit redemption system and online enrollment process for all 41 Northgate Gonzalez Markets across California; however, that system and program will not be available until 3rd quarter 2020.

As such, in an effort to support SNAP recipients from April 2020 until the introduction of the new fully automated store-wide system, we implemented a modified online enrollment system as of April 1, 2020. This modified system enables SNAP recipients who live within close proximity to the currently participating 6 Northgate Gonzalez markets to enroll online. They are then mailed a ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Mi Familia card that they can use to receive \$40 a month in financial incentives when they purchase fresh fruits and vegetables with their SNAP benefits at any of those 6 participating Northgate stores. Since initiating online enrollment on April 1, 2020, approximately 150 SNAP recipients have enrolled in the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program as of May 31, 2020. Since we are no longer able to conduct in-store enrollments due to COVID-19, we have transitioned from promoting and conducting in-store enrollments through our promotora and partner networks to promoting online enrollment. As such, we are currently utilizing our ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program video, <https://youtu.be/4zpGzY1keNU>, digital online enrollment post card, and online enrollment outreach letter to increase awareness of and participation in the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program via our new [www.masfresco.org](http://www.masfresco.org) web site and enrollment portal.



## NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS

This past year, the UCSD Center for Community Health and the Ecology Center collaborated on the development of a short video to raise awareness of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh & Market Match Nutrition Incentive Programs across California. Available in English and Spanish, this video is designed to introduce SNAP recipients and other low-income SNAP eligible community members to the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program and the opportunity it represents to increase the affordability, purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables for better health. These videos can be viewed at [www.masfresco.org](http://www.masfresco.org) or accessed at:



English Language Video:

<https://youtu.be/4zpGzY1keNU>



Spanish Language Video:

<https://youtu.be/h6OaoEogC6c>

These videos have been shared with SNAP community members and others across California through diverse channels, including direct marketing outreach by our program partners to SNAP recipients, WIC/Medi-Cal/ CalWORKs participants, and other SNAP-eligible low-income community members. We produced a 3-minute, 2-minute, and 60 second versions of the Spanish and English videos, suitable for sharing via social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. As such, UCSD, the Ecology Center, and our community partners are incorporating our new videos into existing social media outreach platforms. In this way, our videos are being pushed through our community partners to the SNAP recipients and the SNAP-eligible low-income community members that they serve.

## APHA PUBLIC HEALTH FILM FESTIVAL

The UCSD Center for Community Health has submitted our ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh & Market Match Nutrition Incentive Program Video to the American Public Health Association (APHA) for consideration for screening at their 2020 Annual Meeting and Expo to be held in San Francisco, California on October 24 to October 28, 2020. It is our intent that this video will complement and support other GusNIP presentations and abstracts being planned for this event.

### APHA Public Health Film Festival



#### Join Us For the Show!

APHA's Public Health Film Festival aims to be a catalyst in the movement toward a healthier nation by sparking the conversation about health in creative ways. The film festival features public health films of all types and topics, including this year's theme, that explore and highlight public health locally, nationally and globally. Our goal is to show films that demonstrate, educate, inspire and encourage a change for a healthier future.

## CALFRESH HEALTHY LIVING & GUSNIP PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP



The UCSD Center for Community Health is working with our local public health departments and local social services agencies to incorporate promotion of the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program into their CalFresh Healthy Living (SNAP-Ed) programs and classes.

Toward this effort, we have developed the CalFresh Healthy Living & Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Partnership. The goal of this partnership is to create healthier communities by bringing together CalFresh Healthy Living (SNAP-Ed) programs, partners, and resources, and GusNIP programs, partners, and resources to achieve enhanced healthy eating outcomes among CalFresh (SNAP) eligible low-income Californians. The partnership aims to achieve a common USDA and California Department of Public Health objective, which is to further develop and enhance nutrition education strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to facilitate voluntary adoption of healthy food choices and other food and nutrition related behaviors conducive to health and well-being.

This work aims to utilize complementary and integrated community and public health approaches, including nutrition education, nutrition marketing and promotion (including nutrition incentives), and policy, systems, and environmental change to achieve common goals and objectives.

## CALIFORNIA WIC ASSOCIATION NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM WEBINAR

The UCSD Center for Community Health collaborated with the California WIC Association to conduct a Nutrition Incentive Program Webinar on May 27, 2020 for all 83 WIC Agencies across California to raise awareness of California-based Nutrition Incentive Programs (**Figure 22**). For this webinar, in addition to the UCSD Center for Community Health providing an overview of the national Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program and the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program, the UCSD Center for Community Health also arranged for the Ecology Center to provide an overview of their Market Match Program at Farmers' Markets across California and for ALL IN Alameda County to present on their Food as Medicine Initiative, Produce Prescription Program.

**Figure 22: WIC Works Webinar "Local Partnerships Boost Access to Fruits and Vegetables Invitation and Registration Link**



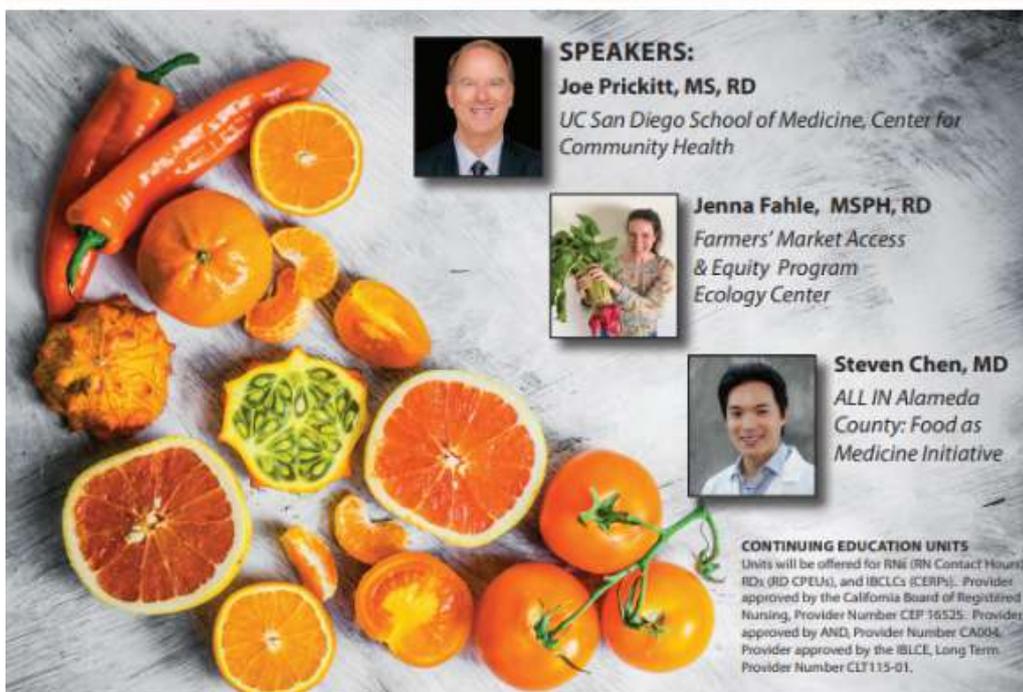
**NUTRITION INCENTIVES WEBINAR**

**Local Partnerships Boost Access to Fruits and Vegetables**

**Wednesday, May 27  
12:30-1:30pm**

The importance of staying healthy and the risks of underlying health conditions, are of renewed importance as we address the pandemic. Fresh fruits and vegetables also play a big role in fighting and preventing chronic disease. We are fortunate in California to have access to an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, but that is not the case for everyone. A growing number of programs are boosting SNAP shoppers' ability to purchase fruits and vegetables and other programs are recognizing food as medicine. Join us to learn about the national Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program including innovative partnerships such as the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program in grocery stores, the Market Match Program at Farmers' Markets and the ALL IN Alameda County: Food as Medicine Initiative, to ensure more families have regular access to the bounty of fruits and vegetables. 1 CE Unit available.

**Registration Link:** [us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ujQW8YJ9RUmLZ\\_XOTUs9jg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ujQW8YJ9RUmLZ_XOTUs9jg)

**SPEAKERS:**

**Joe Prickitt, MS, RD**  
*UC San Diego School of Medicine, Center for Community Health*

**Jenna Fahle, MSPH, RD**  
*Farmers' Market Access & Equity Program  
Ecology Center*

**Steven Chen, MD**  
*ALL IN Alameda County: Food as Medicine Initiative*

**CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS**  
Units will be offered for RNs (RN Contact Hours), RDs (RD CEUs), and IBCLCs (ICERPs). Provider approved by the California Board of Registered Nursing, Provider Number CEP 16525. Provider approved by AND, Provider Number CA004. Provider approved by the IBCLC, Long Term Provider Number CLT115-01.

## DIGITAL ACCESS AND UTILIZATION ASSESSMENT & REPORT

The COVID-19 crisis has significantly impacted our ability to conduct effective community outreach and enrollment, which to date have relied heavily on in-person contact via our in-store ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Nutrition Incentive Program (¡Más Fresco!) enrollment events. As noted previously, due to COVID-19 it was necessary to suspend our 2020 in-store ¡Más Fresco! enrollment events. In an effort to support our community members during COVID-19 and beyond, we have fast-tracked online enrollment, which enables SNAP-eligible community members to enroll in ¡Más Fresco! from anywhere at any time. The transition from in-store enrollments to online enrollment has called our attention to the need to develop more effective digital communication methods for underserved communities. With funding provided by the Nutrition Incentive Hub and working in collaboration with the Gloria Swanson Center for Nutrition, UCSD is in the process of assessing and identifying specific barriers among SNAP recipients to accessing and utilizing online resources, including accessing and utilizing ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh online enrollment. This work consists a two-phases, including a needs-assessment via telephone surveys, followed by the development and implementation of a community informed best practice communication and outreach platform. It is our intent that this work will result in the development of an innovative best practice communication and outreach model that can then be used by other nutrition incentive programs around the country to better understand and address digital inequalities that exist within underserved communities.



## NORTHGATE GONZALEZ MARKET FEATURE STORY

The ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Nutrition Incentive Program was provided the opportunity to develop a feature story on Northgate Gonzalez Market and their leadership and support for community members and their associates during the COVID-19 crisis. This feature story appeared in the May 2020 issue of the Gloria Swanson Center for Nutrition Newsletter.

**Northgate Gonzales Market Feature Story Link:**

<https://mailchi.mp/centerfornutrition/may2020newsletter?e=c5781325e1>

**Figure 23: Gloria Swanson Center for Nutrition Newsletter feature on Northgate Gonzalez Market-May 2020**



## May 2020 Newsletter

**GusNIP Grantee Feature: Northgate Gonzalez Markets, Southern California**

**Victor Gonzalez, Owner, Vice President of Northgate Gonzalez Market, Anaheim, California**

Northgate González Markets (Northgate Market) is a family owned and operated retail grocer. As one of the largest Hispanic retailers in the United States, with 41 markets across Southern California, Northgate serves a population of more than eight million community members.

Northgate Market is committed to creating healthier communities, and as a result, developed Viva la Salud, a comprehensive health and wellness initiative. This program makes it easy for customers to shop and navigate the store and find healthier products and provides the opportunity for community members to receive free on-site health screenings and other health promotion, disease prevention services. Working in conjunction with local health departments in each county as well as local social services agencies and health care providers, Northgate Market conducts approximately 70 on-site health and wellness events per month.

Northgate Market has also partnered with the University of California San Diego School of Medicine, Center for Community Health on the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Nutrition Incentive Program. SNAP recipients who enroll in this program earn one dollar for every SNAP benefit dollar spent on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating Northgate Markets, up to \$40 per month. The money earned can then be used to purchase additional fruits and vegetables.

## MAS FRESCO | KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Nearly one-third of all Northgate Markets are located in underserved communities where 50 percent or more of the community members are living at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition to increasing access to healthy food for residents of underserved communities, Northgate Market is also working to enhance economic development through job creation and inclusive economic development and to enhance racial and social equity by supporting and enhancing equitable access to food and jobs.

Grocers have been on the frontlines of COVID-19 like so many other businesses and healthcare workers. Tell us what you have been doing to keep your customers safe during this time.

The health and safety of our customers and associates is our top priority. We will do everything in our power to reduce the chances of this virus spreading to others and be proactive to maintain a safe shopping environment for all our customers and associates.

Northgate Market has taken extensive action to ensure a safe shopping environment for our community and team members through a number of actions, such as installing thick plexiglass protective sneeze and cough guards at all registers, issuing facemasks, gloves and disposable aprons to associates and implementing industry leading practices with regards to social distancing. We have also assigned dedicated associates to sanitize all shopping carts for customers, suspended all sampling and self-serve open food programs and are enforcing social distancing protocols inside the store.

Northgate Market has also instituted comprehensive safety measures including a thorough disinfection program, focusing on high-touch surfaces like touchpads, door and drawer handles, phones, computers, conveyor belts, order dividers, railings, registers and many other fixtures.

In order to provide more time for extensive cleaning procedures and restocking products on shelves for the next day, Northgate Market has adjusted our store hours to 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. for the general public and from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. for seniors and people with medical disabilities.

We are also following the guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and have implemented additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures in all Northgate Market stores and our Distribution Center/Corporate offices. We will continue to quickly execute any new best practices and learnings as the situation continues to evolve.

### **What have you been doing to support your communities through the pandemic?**

During this pandemic, Northgate Market's resolve to help communities is even stronger. We were one of the first stores to open early to help our seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. Our unwavering commitment goes beyond helping customers who walk through our doors. We are committed to our most vulnerable community members during the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing our partnerships to help people who live and work by our grocery stores.

Northgate Market has committed to \$150,000 in grassroots partnerships to support and sustain community efforts across Southern California. We have committed to donating over 50,000 bags of tortillas to support food distribution efforts across Southern California.

In addition to tortillas, we have also supported our partners efforts by providing:

Northgate gift card/vouchers

In-kind product donations

Bulk sales at cost

Boxed lunch meals for first responders

We have also provided over 5,000 meals for health care providers at local hospitals, prepackaged meals for the Meals on Wheels program and distributed 15,000 coupons to Los Angeles residents receiving the Angeleno cards.

### **What special precautions, protocols or trainings have you implemented with staff members?**

Since the start of this crisis, we have been closely monitoring and preparing for different scenarios and ensuring we have the right plans and resources in place, outlined by the expert guidance provided by the CDC and local public health authorities.

We have continued to encourage associates to follow CDC guidelines: social distancing, proper hand washing, abstaining from touching one's eyes, nose, and mouth, avoiding contact with those that are sick, and covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or inside of their elbows. We have stressed that it is important and crucial that if an associate is ill, that our associate stay home, not come into work and seek medical advice through the different health options available to them. We have also quarantined with pay our associates 65 years and older to protect their health and safety.

### **What are you seeing firsthand in your communities regarding food insecurity during COVID-19?**

Like many communities around Southern California, we have observed panic buying by customers wanting to stock up on paper goods (toilet paper and paper towels), hand sanitizer, canned goods, pasta, and fresh meat products.

### **From a management and leadership standpoint, what decisions did you have to make as the reality of this pandemic was hitting?**

In addition to previously mentioned decisions, we also had to establish protocols in response to an associate potentially testing positive for COVID-19 and for known associates who may have been in contact or worked in close proximity to the infected associate. We also made a management decision to ensure any associates sent home for self-isolation did so with paid leave.

### **Due to so many of your stores being located in underserved neighborhoods, what unique challenges have you had to face?**

Given the communities that Northgate Market serves we have had to ensure that all our outreach regarding enhanced operations under the COVID-19 are executed bi-lingually and are culturally sensitive and relevant. We have worked with a number of local community partners who are providing meals and grocery items for so many families in need.