

¡MÁS FRESCO! MORE FRESH

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# NUTRITION INCENTIVE HUB INNOVATION FUND: COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE GRANT REPORT

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UC San Diego  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **INTRODUCTION | 2**

## **KEY FINDINGS | 3**

### **PHASE 1-Needs Assessment | 3**

Digital Access | 3

Digital Utilization | 4

Communication | 5

### **PHASE 2-Development and Implementation of Outreach & Communication Platform | 6**

Email/SMS/Phone Call | 6

Social Media | 7

## **CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS | 9**

## **APPENDICES | 10**



# INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to better support SNAP recipients through COVID-19 and beyond, UC San Diego Health Center for Community Health applied for and received a \$10,000 Innovation Fund Mini-Grant for Rapid Response to the COVID-19 Crisis from the Fair Food Network and the Nutrition Incentive Hub, a national resource for nutrition incentive programs. The purpose of this funding was to innovate, build capacity, and address specific programmatic and operational challenges faced by SNAP incentive and produce prescription (PPR) programs that were brought on by the COVID-19 crisis. With this funding, the UC San Diego Health team implemented a two-phased project, consisting of a needs-assessment administered to nearly 600 existing ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh participants followed by the development and implementation of a community-informed best practice communication and outreach platform. Overall, internet access and text message use was relatively high among all program participants. However, there were some differences in internet use between those who preferred to communicate via text/email versus by phone; the text/email group spent more time on the internet and was more interested in using this medium. Nevertheless, there was still high utilization of social media platforms across both groups. The results of this survey helped to inform the type of communication and outreach platform that was chosen for the next stage of our program delivery.



# KEY FINDINGS

## PHASE 1- NEEDS ASSESSMENT

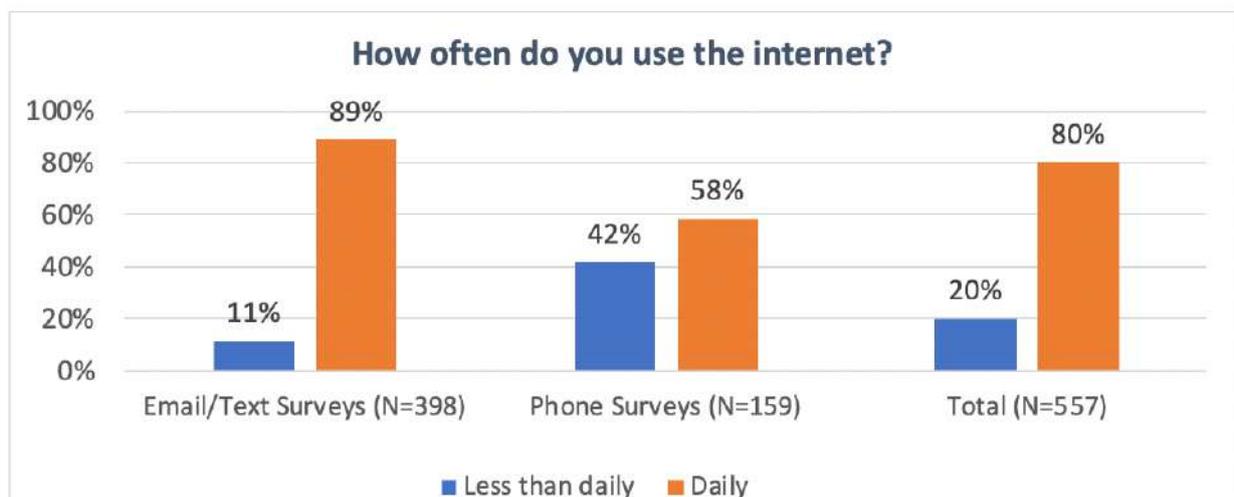
The ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program (¡Más Fresco!) conducted a Digital Access and Utilization Survey from June to July 2020 among 591 ¡Más Fresco! Program participants who enrolled between 2017 and 2020. The majority (n=427) completed self-administered surveys distributed via email and text message invitation and 164 completed interviewer-assisted surveys conducted over the telephone. The method of survey distribution was based on participant preference, which they had indicated at enrollment. Participants who chose to complete surveys via telephone were hypothesized to have lower digital access and utilization, which was confirmed by the survey results. Phone respondents tended to be older, Spanish-speaking, with no children living at home. The key findings of these surveys are as follows:

### DIGITAL ACCESS

Almost all survey participants reported using a smart phone (88%), with 98% of survey participants having an internet/data plan on their smart phone. Additionally, 47% of all survey participants report using a desktop computer, laptop or tablet, with 83% of these users having an internet/data plan for these devices. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of all participants reported home internet access. Across all survey participants, 80% indicated that they use the internet on a daily basis.

Significantly more email/text survey participants reported daily use of the internet compared to phone survey participants (89% email/text vs. 58% phone,  $p=0.0001$ ; see Figure 1). Further, 15% of phone survey participants reported never using the internet (see Appendix Table 1).

**Figure 1. Internet Use Frequency**

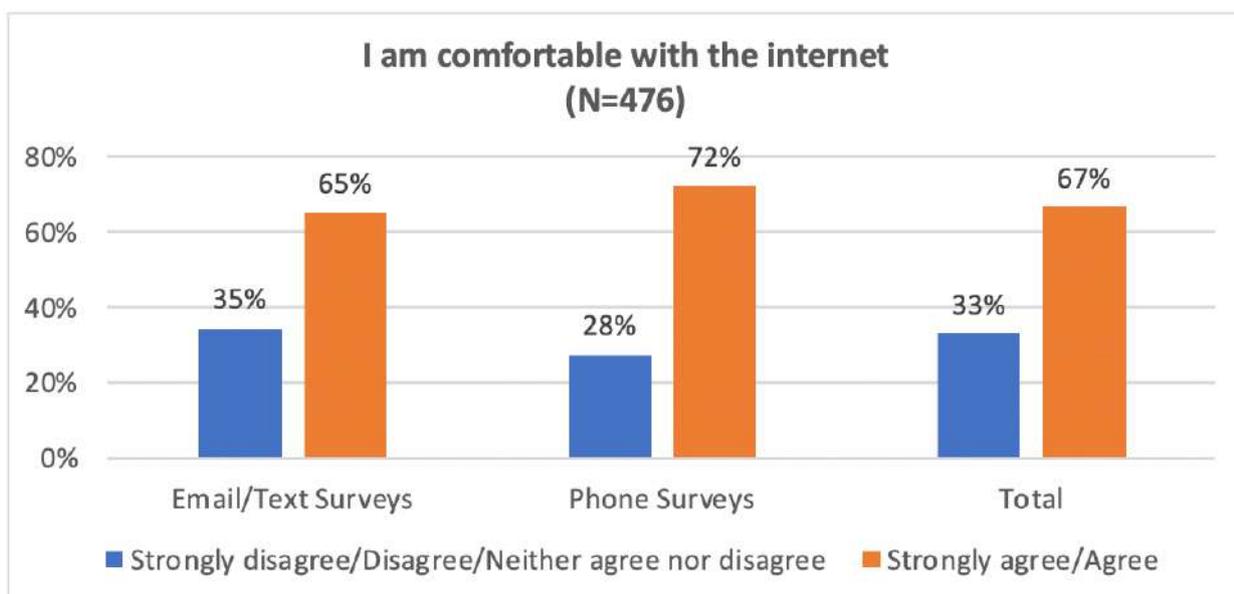


Approximately 20% of all survey participants reported less-than-daily internet access. The primary reason for not using the internet more often amongst this group was the cost of an internet/data plan (see Appendix Table 2). The second most common reason for not using the internet more frequently was lack of comfort. However, when examining responses between groups, more phone respondents did not feel comfortable using the internet than text/email respondents (48% vs. 8%,  $p=0.000$ ; see Appendix Table 2).

## DIGITAL UTILIZATION

Two-thirds (67%) of all program participants reported being comfortable using the internet (see Figure 2). Among all survey participants, sending/receiving text messages on their smartphone was the most selected reason for internet use (95%), followed by checking email (87%) and using their smartphone for things other than phone calls or text messaging (e.g. social media, apps, websites, 85%; see Appendix Table 3). However, email/text respondents were significantly more likely to engage in these activities than phone survey respondents. They were also more likely to make online purchases or order groceries online than the phone survey group. The top three social media sites that all participants reported using the most in order of highest reporting were Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp (see Appendix Table 4). Despite significantly lower utilization of digital communication platforms overall compared to email/text respondents, a large proportion of phone survey respondents who used the internet still reported engaging in text messaging (86%) and using social media, particularly Facebook (56%; see Appendix Tables 3 and 4).

**Figure 2. Comfort with the Internet**



## COMMUNICATION

All survey respondents were asked a series of questions about the best outreach and communication strategies for current participants and new prospective ¡Más Fresco! Members. In terms of outreach to prospective *new* ¡Más Fresco! Members, survey respondents thought that the best methods would be informational flyers distributed by Northgate Gonzalez Markets or at Northgate Gonzalez Markets, social media advertising, flyers/postcards distributed through food banks, community centers, and other community-based organizations' direct mail campaigns and word-of-mouth from current ¡Más Fresco! members (see Appendix Table 5).



# PHASE 2- DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

## EMAIL/SMS/PHONE CALL

Based on the information provided to us by the Digital Access and Utilization Survey, the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program was interested in securing the services of a telephone, text messaging and email communication platform to best support the needs of our program participants. In consultation with our program partners, including the Orange County Health Care Agency and the California WIC Association, we identified TeleTask as a potential communication platform. Key TeleTask services include the capability of sending automated telephone, email, and text messages, including features that would allow our team to:

- Customize voice, text and email messages to specific groups or sub-groups in multiple languages. This is important for communicating information that is specific to participants in a single cohort, county, or who usually shop at a specific store.
- Easily create/send immediate messages for important news (store system down, etc).
- Send reminder text messages at the beginning of the month with available balances to encourage consistent program utilization.
- Future use of short code capability for outreach materials. For example, disseminating the message “Text ‘MasFresco’ to 12-211 to enroll in the program” whereby the system will be automatically prompted to reply with link to enroll.
- Track engagement and program utilization with text message links and two-way texting with clients and text auto-replies to participant responses.
- Receive and respond to participants’ responses to automated messages as needed to answer questions and resolve issues.



# Teletask



## SOCIAL MEDIA

As indicated by our program participants who participated in the Digital Access and Utilization survey, social media was a communication tool utilized by 88% of survey respondents, and was one of the top outreach methods suggested for prospective new ¡Más Fresco! members. As such, the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program team, working in conjunction with the Fair Food Network and other program partners, conducted a national search for a social media partner to support the development and implementation of our own social media outreach and communication platform. While some large agencies were identified, we found that our needs were on a smaller scale than they were used to working with and there were many services that were not needed. Therefore, we determined that it would be beneficial to work with an agency that is used to working with similar programs in scale and audience.

Our search efforts resulted in retaining Blueprint Interactive ([www.blueprintinteractive.com](http://www.blueprintinteractive.com)) to help us develop our Digital Marketing Plan. Blueprint Interactive is a full-service digital agency that also works with other nutrition incentive programs on their digital marketing. Working in partnership with Blueprint Interactive we developed a digital marketing plan based on the results of our Digital Access and Utilization Survey which will utilize our existing digital infrastructure (e.g., our website, social media, email list/platform, communications platform). The goal of this work will be to increase brand awareness and reach SNAP recipients to both enroll in and share the opportunity of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program with other community members. It will also be important to increase traffic on our website, convert traffic to our website to ¡Más Fresco! enrollments, and increase comments, likes, and shares on social media.

As recommended by BluePrint Interactive, key digital marketing activities will include, but not be limited to:

- Enhancement of the ¡Más Fresco! website, with particular emphasis on the mobile experience, because that is likely how most program participants will enroll.
- Increased social media engagement, specifically through Facebook.
  - Development of a social media strategy to engage current and prospective program participants.
  - Working with community partners to cross-post, share content, and eventually, host livestreams to connect with the community in real-time.
- Paid Digital Advertisements
  - Facebook Advertisements
    - Targeting by affinity group (e.g., people who are interested in CalFresh, SNAP, EBT, Food Stamps, etc.)
    - Remarketing, which involves using a Facebook “pixel” on our website to market to similar profiles.
    - Using Custom Audiences features, which develops lookalike audiences based on Facebook pixel or participant email lists.
  - Google AdWords- targeted ads based on specific keywords that we purchase on a cost-per-click model where we only pay for the ad when someone clicks on it.
  - Geofencing to target advertisements on mobile phones around physical addresses. For ¡Más Fresco!, we would geofence places like: Northgate Gonzalez markets, high-SNAP-density areas, and free and income-based health clinics.



## GRANT EXPENDITURES

See Appendix Table 6 for grant expenditures.

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS



This funding has laid a foundation for UC San Diego's ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program to increase program participation from 4,500 SNAP households to over 20,000 SNAP households by 2023. This increased program capacity, reach and impact will be achieved through the continued development and implementation of an innovative communication and outreach model that will enable us to identify best practices, maximize online enrollment, and increase program utilization. Furthermore, this funding provided the opportunity to identify specific barriers to accessing and utilizing digital resources, including the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Nutrition Incentive Program online enrollment platform.

Phase 2 outlines a plan with technological solutions that will likely still reach many of our current/potential participants who are less digitally literate. However, there is still a significant portion of the eligible population that will not be reached. We intend to apply for additional funding to continue to enhance and expand our community engagement capacity, which will further support SNAP recipients' access to programs like ¡Más Fresco! across Southern California. We will also strengthen the sustainability of the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program as we continue to build our team's capacity for digital marketing and communication, a necessary asset in modern, large scale health promotion programs. Moving forward, we will continue to build upon the key learnings from the COVID-19 Digital Access and Utilization Survey to identify and develop specialized/innovative outreach strategies to promote inclusion among vulnerable populations who lack access to or comfort with internet technology. Furthermore, this additional funding will facilitate increased outreach to and engagement/support of SNAP recipients prior-to, during and after they enroll in the ¡Más Fresco! More Fresh Program.

# APPENDICES

**Table 1. Internet Use Frequency (detail)**

	All Participants (N=591)	Email/Text Surveys (N=427)	Phone Surveys (N=164)
<b>How often do you use the internet?</b>			
Daily	75%	83%	57%
Weekly	11%	8%	18%
Monthly	2%	1%	4%
Less than once a month	2%	1%	3%
Never	5%	0%	15%
Don't know/refused/missing	6%	7%	3%

**Table 2. Main Barriers to Using the Internet More Often**

Asked if Internet Use was less than 'Daily'

	All Participants (N=135)	Email/Text Surveys (N=271)	Phone Surveys (N=64)	p-value
<b>What are your main barriers to using the internet more often? Select all that apply.</b>				
It costs too much	29%	28%	30%	0.846
I don't have internet in my home	20%	17%	23%	0.343
I don't have time to use the internet	19%	17%	22%	0.464
I don't have a computer/smartphone	14%	10%	19%	0.138
I don't have an interest in using the internet	12%	4%	20%	0.004
I don't feel comfortable using the internet	27%	8%	48%	0.000
I would use the internet if someone would show me how to use it	21%	11%	33%	0.002
Other	7%	3%	13%	0.033
None of these things	4%	6%	3%	0.391
Don't know/refuse to answer	10%	18%	2%	0.001

**Table 3. Internet Engagement**

	All Participants	Email/Text Surveys	Phone Surveys	p-value
<b>Here are some things you can do on the internet. How often do you...</b> (weekly vs. daily vs. monthly, less than once a month, or never.				
...check your email (N=479)	87%	94%	59%	0.000
...send/receive text messages on your smartphone? (N=413)	95%	98%	86%	0.000
...use your smartphone for things other than phone calls and text messaging? (like social media, apps, websites) (N=400)	85%	91%	62%	0.000
...make purchases online? (N=390)	19%	23%	7%	0.001
...order groceries online? (N=382)	8%	11%	1%	0.004
...order restaurant meals online? (pizza, etc.) (N=389)	9%	11%	2%	0.003

**Table 4. Social Media Sites Used**

	All Participants (N=569)	Email/Text Surveys (N=405)	Phone Surveys (N=164)	p-value
<b>What social media do you use? (if any)(Select all that apply)</b>				
Facebook	70%	76%	56%	0.000
Twitter	4%	5%	1%	0.019
Instagram	31%	37%	15%	0.000
YouTube	53%	61%	34%	0.000
Snapchat	15%	20%	5%	0.000
WhatsApp	40%	44%	29%	0.000
TikTok	12%	16%	2%	0.000
Other	2%	1%	2%	0.318
I don't use social media	12%	7%	26%	0.000

**Table 5. Best Outreach Strategies for New Participants**

	All Participants	Email/Text Surveys	Phone Surveys	p-value
<b>What do you think are the best ways for us to share information about ¡Más Fresco! with other CalFresh recipients? Select all that apply.</b>				
Social Media advertising on Facebook, Twitter, etc.	47%	52%	33%	0.000
Flyers/Postcards distributed through food banks, community centers, and other community-based organizations	38%	42%	29%	0.007
<b>Direct Mail Campaign</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Word-of-mouth from current ¡Más Fresco! members	30%	30%	30%	0.964
Informational flyers distributed by Northgate or at Northgate	56%	58%	50%	0.068
Other	7%	4%	16%	0.000

**Table 6. Grant Expenditures**

<b>¡MÁS FRESCO! MORE FRESH RAPID RESPONSE GRANT BUDGET-May 4, 2020 – July 31, 2020</b>			
<b>PROPOSED BUDGET</b>		<b>ACTUAL BUDGET</b>	
<b>PHASE 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT</b>			
<b>Staffing</b>	\$832.00	<b>Staffing</b>	\$832.00
<b>Supplies: Cell phones and service (2 phones with 2 months service)</b>	\$300.00	<b>Supplies: Cell phones and service (2 phones with 2 months service)</b>	\$322.62
		<b>Shipping</b>	\$52.41
<b>Community Stipend</b>	\$1000.00	<b>Community Stipend</b>	\$647.40
<b>PHASE 2: OUTREACH &amp; COMMUNICATION PLATFORM</b>			
<b>Text Messaging Platform</b>	\$2250.00	<b>Teletask Communication Platform</b>	\$3250.00
<b>Social Media Platform</b>	\$2700.00	<b>Blueprint Digital Marketing Campaign Design</b>	\$4120.00
<b>Digital Design &amp; Other Digital Solutions</b>	\$2918.00	<b>Key Personnel Training On Digital Marketing</b>	\$595.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$9819.43</b>