

## ESTABLISH A PROGRAM, ESTABLISH A PARTNERSHIP

For-profit grocers aren't eligible to apply directly for funding under the GusNIP program. However, by partnering with a grantee organization they can increase produce sales, increase customer loyalty, and benefit their customers and communities. To know better when and how to partner with a grantee, it's helpful to understand the overall grant cycle that is followed each year under the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program.

There are typically two points at which grocers engage with grantees. Grocers can begin working with a prospective grantee before an application is submitted and collaborate on a proposal. Or, more commonly, grantees are eager to identify grocery partners after they have already received funding. Below is a rough process and timeline of the GusNIP funding cycle. The exact dates are subject to change during each application cycle; however, each year, the following phases are followed.



**Request for applications released:** USDA releases a request for application (RFA) and applicants generally have 90 days to submit a proposal. Only non-profits and government agencies are eligible to apply. Therefore, if a grocer is interested in being a food retail site, they must partner with a non-profit or government agency.

**Awardees announced:** Roughly 4 months after applications are submitted, USDA NIFA notifies all awardees who must then confirm budget and budget narrative. Prospective grantees often also hear from USDA NIFA to clarify SNAP/ NAP policy questions in their application. Once finalized, USDA publicly announces recipients.

**Partnerships formed and onboarding:** Typically, in the six months following award announcement, grantees seek out retail and community partners and establish details of the project, collect relevant data, conduct staff training, prepare outreach materials, and ensure compliance with all project guidelines. In this phase, they are looking for food retail site partners, such as grocery stores, corner stores and farmers markets. For most nutrition incentive projects, a grocer serving as the food retail site must be authorized to accept SNAP by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) or NAP by ADSEF in



Puerto Rico. Grantees will ask this information of grocer partners, including name, address, owner and SNAP/ NAP authorization number. Also, all retailers must execute a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with their grantee partner.

**Project begins:** Food retail sites begin distributing incentives. In grocery, this can happen in a variety of ways. Some stores opt for a soft launch to work out the kinks before beginning promotion. Grocers begin supplying their grantee with monthly data for project evaluation. Grantees reimburse grocers for incentives redeemed on a regular, mutually agreed upon schedule.

**Year end:** In addition to regular check-ins, grantees and retailers will conduct a year-end review to assess the project's success. They can revise and/or continue their relationship for the following fiscal year. Depending on the grant's size and scope, the program's longevity may be variable. GusNIP grants range from 1 to 4 years in duration.