



¡MÁS FRESCO! PLUS

Nutrition Incentive Program

Program Report, Cohorts 1-3

Updated through December 2024

UC San Diego
CENTER FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

UC San Diego
ALTMAN CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

**Report Developed by the
UC San Diego Center for Community Health**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the face of rising nutrition insecurity and health disparities, the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Nutrition Incentive Program emerged as a critical initiative in early 2022, funded by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and implemented by the Center for Community Health (CCH) within the University of California, San Diego (UC San Diego) Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute (ACTRI). This innovative, community-driven nutrition incentive program aims to increase access to and consumption of healthy foods among San Diego County's most vulnerable populations, providing direct support to those experiencing health disparities and diet-related chronic diseases. Each participating household receives nutrition incentives valued at approximately \$600 via Produce Prescription/General Produce Box or Healthy Foodcard.

¡Más Fresco! Plus has made remarkable strides in addressing the critical issues of food and nutrition insecurity in San Diego County, substantially reducing social and environmental challenges (e.g., high costs, limited transportation) that may prevent healthy eating. Since launching close to 3 years ago, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* has established itself as a **beacon of hope and health while supporting the local economy**, and as a **uniquely scalable and accessible program model compared to traditional nutrition incentive programs** that are restricted to CalFresh-SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) participants.

This report details key findings from evaluation and research activities conducted with program participants and partners through the end of 2024, highlighting the following key impacts at the community, organizational, and cross-sector levels, and outlining promising practices for scalability and replication moving forward.

¡Más Fresco! Plus Program Reach, 2022-2024

- ✓ Enrolled **2,640 community members** experiencing nutrition insecurity and diet-related chronic disease, including 71% from the County's zip codes previously designated as priority areas with limited access to resources, and 60% with at least one chronic health condition
- ✓ Delivered **more than \$1,650,000 in nutrition incentives** to participants

Key Findings: Community Impact

✓ Increasing Fruit & Vegetable Access

- At follow-up, **86% of participants report feeling they have enough fruits/vegetables** for their household since joining the program

✓ Increasing Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

- Participants **increased average fruit consumption from 3-4 to 5-6 times/week**, and **increased average green leafy and other vegetable consumption from 2-3 to 3-4 times per week**
- **Over 90% report increased nutrition knowledge; trying new/more variety of fruits/vegetables; and eating more fruits/vegetables than before**
- **82% report the specific fruits/vegetables from the program** are what their household eats regularly

✓ Providing Social & Emotional Support

- **77% report worrying less** about being able to feed healthy foods to their household
- **85% feel the program helps them access healthy foods with dignity and respect**

✓ Supporting Health & Disease Management

- **99% self-report the program improved their overall health and nutrition**
- 58% report being in good health at follow-up compared to only 33% of the same participants at baseline (**76% increase in self-reported positive health status**)
- **65% report decreased use of unexpected health services**

✓ Achieving High Satisfaction From Community

- **92% report being satisfied/very satisfied** with the program
- **72% highlight the high quality of the produce** they receive or purchase through the program, with many highlighting the superior quality and freshness of the locally grown produce received through the program's produce boxes compared to other food resources

Key Findings: Organizational and Cross-Sector Impact

✓ Providing Benefits to Local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):

- **Over \$65,000 re-granted to local community-based organizations (CBOs)/health clinics** throughout San Diego County
- Program supports **CBO capacity building and partnership building** to advance community health and well-being locally

✓ Stimulating Local Food Economy & Supporting Local Farmers:

- Generated an **economic impact of more than \$3 million in food sector support for local farms and retailers**, including **over \$2.5 million for local farms**
- Contributing to **increased demand and stimulating growth and sales of locally grown produce**
- Leading to **job creation and improved financial security for local farmers**

Promising Practices for Scalability & Replication

By not requiring Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/CalFresh eligibility, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* removes challenges (e.g., high costs, limited transportation) to accessing nutritious foods and provides a scalable, community-led model for improving nutrition security that can be adapted across counties and states. Key opportunities for future expansion and scalability highlight:

- Unique benefits and convenience of produce box/home delivery model
- Potential to further address community needs through program expansion
- Opportunities to maximize Healthy Foodcard utilization through enhanced participant support
- Implications for scalability and local integration

Looking Ahead

Moving forward, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* aims to continue to strengthen partnerships across the food, health, and community sectors, extending program reach and deepening impact across San Diego County communities facing limited access to nutritious foods while continuing to serve as a model program for further replication and scalability. CCH's commitment to addressing social determinants of health, coupled with the continued support of program funders and partners, positions *¡Más Fresco! Plus* to continue making significant strides towards advancing food access and health for all communities across San Diego County.

Based on **initial program success** and with the **support of the American Heart Association and local community partners including the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI) Community Council**, in late 2024 *¡Más Fresco! Plus* **successfully received an additional \$500,000 in funding** to continue services for the community through June 2025.

Ensuring the continuity of this impactful program would support its expanded reach, scalability, and replication to benefit more community members in need.





Photo courtesy of Foodshed Cooperative, Farm Apprenticeship

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our deepest gratitude to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency, Self Sufficiency Services, and all our partners for their ongoing support. Special thanks to our partners involved in the implementation of Mas Fresco Plus, including Alliance Health Clinic, Comité Organizador Latino de City Heights (COLCH), Foodshed Cooperative, Foodsmart, SBCS, Union of Pan Asian Communities, Vista Community Clinic, Yasukochi Family Farms, and other community-based organizations supporting the program across San Diego County. Thank you to the American Heart Association and the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI) Community Council for ongoing support and collaboration. Together, we are not just combating food insecurity; we are nurturing a healthier community for all.

The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program proudly recognizes the **San Diego County Board of Supervisors (BOS)** for their vital funding and support, which has been instrumental in enabling the successful implementation of *¡Más Fresco! Plus's* **innovative and accessible approach** to expanding healthy food access across the region.

In line with the County's San Diego Food Vision 2030 and the region's broader food access efforts – emphasizing community-driven solutions in partnership with local residents, community organizations, and farmers – the County's investment in *¡Más Fresco! Plus* demonstrates a **powerful commitment to advancing nutrition security and promoting community well-being**, and serves as an example for other local governments and organizations seeking innovative solutions to healthy food access.



INTRODUCTION

Background & Community Need

Lack of food and nutrition security^{1,2} – or food/nutrition insecurity – are associated with low intake of fruits and vegetables, higher risk of chronic diseases, and disproportionately affect populations who are low income and/or from varied backgrounds.³ Through multiple complex mechanisms, food and nutrition insecurity have been linked with higher risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, asthma, depression, and mental illness.^{4,5}

Recognizing the importance of healthy nutrition including fruit and vegetable consumption as an integral component of food security, achieving nutrition security plays a crucial role in ensuring overall food security and health.⁶ To support those without sufficient access to nutritious foods, financial incentives for fruits and vegetables are hypothesized to support both nutrition and food security through improving dietary intake and health outcomes, as well as reducing healthcare costs and stimulating local economic growth.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 47.4 million people in the U.S. lived in food-insecure households in 2023, with close to one out of every five households overall (17.9%) and close to one out of 10 households with children (8.9%) experiencing food insecurity.⁷

Food security

Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.¹

Nutrition security

All have access to healthy, safe, affordable foods essential to optimal health and well-being.²

¹ United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (n.d.). Food security in the U.S. Retrieved December 2024, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us>

² United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (n.d.). Food & nutrition security. Retrieved December 2024, from <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-security>

³ Brandt, E. J., Mozaffarian, D., Leung, C. W., Berkowitz, S. A., & Murthy, V. L. (2023). Diet and food and nutrition insecurity and cardiometabolic disease. *Circulation research*, 132(12), 1692-1706.

⁴ Seligman H.K., Laraia B.A., Kushel M.B. Food insecurity is associated with chronic disease among low-income NHANES participants. *J. Nutr.* 2010;140:304-310. doi: 10.3945/jn.109.112573.

⁵ Berkowitz S.A., Baggett T.P., Wexler D.J., Huskey K.W., Wee C.C. Food insecurity and metabolic control among U.S. adults with diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2013;36:3093-3099. doi: 10.2337/dc13-0570.

⁶ Hwalla, N., El Labban, S., & Bahn, R. A. (2016). Nutrition security is an integral component of food security. *Frontiers in Life Science*, 9(3), 167-172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21553769.2016.1209133>

⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Security in the U.S. Available online: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics#insecure>

In the San Diego region, as of late 2024 the San Diego Hunger Coalition reports 1 in 4 San Diegans experience nutrition insecurity, with higher rates amongst specific populations due to challenges related to differences in economic conditions, housing, and service availability that may limit access to healthy foods.⁸

In recent years, food and nutrition insecurity have also been further exacerbated locally and nationally by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as recent cuts in COVID-19 support funding for families, making it harder for residents to access healthy foods.

¡Más Fresco! Plus Program: Goals & Objectives

Starting in 2022, funding was provided by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to the Center for Community Health (CCH) within the University of California, San Diego (UC San Diego) Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute (ACTRI) to partner with community to implement the **¡Más Fresco! Plus program** addressing food and nutrition insecurity locally.

¡Más Fresco! Plus provides nutrition incentives to community members experiencing health disparities, including food/nutrition insecurity as well as community members experiencing diet-related chronic disease, as determined by community-based organizations, including local health clinics, across San Diego County.

¡Más Fresco! Plus evolved from the successful **¡Más Fresco! More Fresh** program that provides nutrition incentives to CalFresh recipients, with the **¡Más Fresco! Plus** program employing a community-based approach to **expand nutrition incentive provision to high-need residents beyond those who qualify for CalFresh**. Originally, **¡Más Fresco! Plus** program funding was set to end at the end of 2024, however in response to ongoing community needs and program impact to-date, the program has now successfully received funding from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to continue for another six months through June 2025.

Key goals and objectives of **¡Más Fresco! Plus** at the community and cross-sector levels include:

- ✓ **Increasing access to and consumption of healthy foods**, including fresh fruits and vegetables, among community members experiencing health disparities, food/nutrition insecurity, and diet related chronic disease
- ✓ **Addressing food/nutrition insecurity** in populations facing limited access to affordable healthy food
- ✓ **Improving nutrition and health status** among participating households
- ✓ **Stimulating economic stability for local community-based organizations and farmers**

In San Diego County, nutrition insecurity is experienced by:⁸

Nearly **1 in 3 children**

Nearly **1 in 4 older adults** (age 60+)

Approximately **1 in 3 residents who self-identify as Black**

Nearly **1 in 3 residents who self-identify as Hispanic/Latino**

Nearly **1 in 4 residents who self-identify as Native American**



⁸ San Diego Hunger Coalition, State of Hunger in San Diego County. Available online: <https://www.sandiegohungercoalition.org/research>



PROGRAM DESIGN & PROCESS

Community-Engaged Approach

¡Más Fresco! Plus employs a **community-engaged, collective impact⁹ approach** bringing together partners from the community, health, and food sectors, including community-based organizations (CBOs), health clinics, local farms, and retailers along with community members on the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI) Community Council to support the health and well-being of community members experiencing food insecurity and health disparities.

Through ongoing engagement and collaboration with local partners throughout the program, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* aims to **leverage community strengths and resources and collaborate with San Diego County community-based organizations** to achieve enhanced food and health sector synergies to address food/nutrition insecurity for community members facing challenges accessing affordable healthy foods. Simultaneously, the program also **supports local farmers (agriculture sector) and grocery stores (retail sector) by prioritizing local sourcing of produce and investment in the community.** As such, the program aims to achieve both enhanced social and economic benefits for San Diego County.



Food Sector Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foodshed Cooperative• Foodsmart• Yasukochi Family Farms
Community/Health Sector Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alliance Health Clinic• Comité Organizador Latino de City Heights (COLCH)• SBCS• Union of Pan Asian Communities• Vista Community Clinic

⁹ Collective Impact Forum. (n.d.). What is collective impact? Retrieved December 2024, from <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-is-collective-impact/>

Multi-sector program partners include **CBOs and health sector partners** such as local health clinics/federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) supporting *¡Más Fresco! Plus* enrollment of community members experiencing food/nutrition insecurity and other health disparities and in need of program services, as well as **food sector partners** including local farmers and food retailers.

The program's approach is also closely aligned with the CCH's **Community-Led Transformation (CLT) principles¹⁰**, grounded in lessons learned for authentically centering community voices in public health initiatives and emphasizing community co-leadership and shared decision-making to improve health and well-being through programming that is:

- Community led
- Co-Designed
- Partnership-based and trust-driven
- Cultural Humility
- Healing-Centered
- Strengths-based learning
- Adaptive and responsive
- Collaborative funding
- Sustainable
- Community ownership

Through these approaches, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* uplifts the voices of community members and partners to co-design programming that is most beneficial to community members, CBOs, and farms, bolstering local impact in alignment with local needs and priorities.

Nutrition Incentives

Participants enrolled in *¡Más Fresco! Plus* receive 1 of 3 nutrition incentives:

1. **Produce Prescription:** Home delivery of locally grown farm fresh produce twice a month for 12 months (Cohorts 1-2, \$50/month value) or weekly for 6 months until receiving 24 deliveries (Cohort 3, \$100/month value), for residents experiencing food/nutrition insecurity and other health disparities referred by partner health clinics and CBOs.
2. **General Produce Box:** Home delivery of locally grown farm fresh produce twice a month for 12 months (\$50/month value), for community residents experiencing food/nutrition insecurity and other health disparities referred by partner CBOs.
3. **Foodsmart Healthy Foodcard:** A Healthy Foodcard loaded with \$50 per month for 12 months for purchasing healthy foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, at over 100 participating grocery stores across San Diego County including Albertson's, Food4Less, Ralph's, Vons, and Walmart locations.



Program Eligibility & Enrollment Process

¡Más Fresco! Plus utilizes a **community-engaged approach to reach San Diego County residents from varied backgrounds who are experiencing food/nutrition insecurity and/or other health disparities and increase their access to fruits and vegetables for better health.** Notably, the program *does not require participants to be enrolled in CalFresh or any other public benefits in order to participate in the program.* This is intended to remove challenges to participation for community residents who could benefit from program services. The program is open to all individuals regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, ability, and/or other protected category, and any eligible individual is encouraged to participate.

¹⁰ Meigs, R., Sheik Mohamed, A., Bearse, A., Vicente, S., Dang, N., Deiranieh, A., ... & Meléndrez, B. (2024). Community-led transformation principles: Transforming public health learning systems by centering authentic collaboration with community-based organizations. *Learning Health Systems*, 8(4), e10451.

¡Más Fresco! Plus Eligibility Criteria

- ✓ Adults age 18 or older
- ✓ Referred by a San Diego County community-based organization that has determined the participant could benefit from increased access to and consumption of healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Live in San Diego County
- ✓ Have an address where their produce box/Healthy Foodcard can be sent
- ✓ One participant per household
- ✓ Each household/community member can only participate once - must not have previously participated in the program

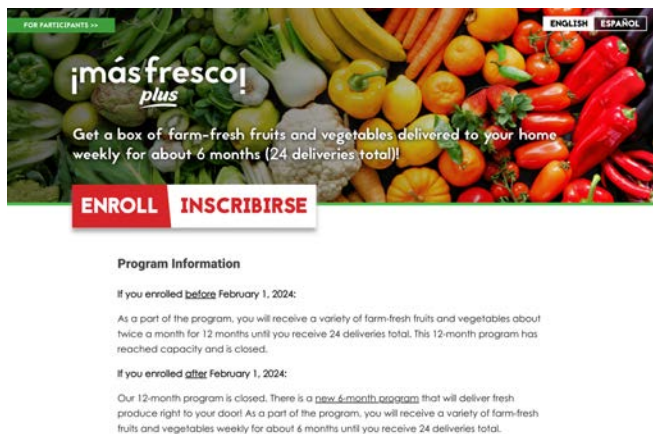
The program **relies on the community relationships, established trust, and community engagement expertise of partners** including CBOs and health clinics to identify program participants, i.e. community residents experiencing health disparities including food/nutrition insecurity, poverty, and diet-related chronic disease (e.g., cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, Type 2 diabetes). CBO and health clinic representatives including Promotoras and Community Health Workers (CHWs) conduct community outreach and recruitment to identify participants, provide program referrals, and facilitate the enrollment process. This includes:

- sharing information on the program (including program flyers);
- directing potential participants to an online web link to register for the program; and
- assisting potential participants with registration/enrollment as needed.

CBOs can also provide eligible community members with the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program contact information and answer questions and to facilitate the enrollment process. All program documents, information, and enrollment processes are available for participants in both English and Spanish to accommodate linguistic needs.

After online enrollment is completed, CCH program staff then conduct additional follow-up with participants as needed, for example to confirm address or contact information to ensure participants will successfully receive their produce boxes or Healthy Foodcard.

¡Más Fresco! Plus Program Enrollment Website



Enroll online at www.masfrescoplusproduce.org

¡Más Fresco! Plus Program Sample Flyer





Photo courtesy of Foodshed Cooperative, Nhkoma family their farm, Hukama Produce

EVALUATION & RESEARCH METHODS

Multiple methods have been employed to evaluate the community- and cross-sector-level impacts of the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program amongst participating community members and organizations.

Program Services & Utilization Tracking. Program output data is tracked across Produce Prescription, General Produce Box and Healthy Foodcard programs, including ongoing participant enrollment and participation numbers, and service delivery information including total funds allocated to participants, produce boxes delivered (Produce Prescription & General Produce Box programs), and grocery spending (Healthy Foodcard participants).

Participant Pre-Post Research Surveys. *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is part of a UC San Diego Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Research Study (UC San Diego IRB #802482) with a goal of learning how nutrition incentives provided through the program affect access to healthy foods, and how they help people consume more fruits and vegetables for better health. During the enrollment process, participants provide their consent to participate. As part of the research component of the program, participants complete 2 surveys: 1) at baseline and 2) at follow-up. All surveys are available in English and Spanish. Survey completion is voluntary and participants may opt out of completing the survey or leave questions blank if they do not feel comfortable answering them.

Participant Baseline Surveys. Following completion of their online enrollment, participants are directed to complete a voluntary baseline survey in UC San Diego's online Qualtrics survey platform. The survey asks questions about their fruit and vegetable consumption, food access, health status, and demographic characteristics. The baseline survey takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, and no additional compensation is offered for baseline survey completion.



As of the end of 2024, a total of **n=2,041 Baseline surveys were collected** across participants upon enrollment into the program (77% response rate).

Participant Follow-Up Surveys. Follow-up surveys are collected from a randomly selected sample of program participants distributed across the three *¡Más Fresco! Plus* programs (General Produce Box, Produce Prescription, and Healthy Foodcard), distributed through UC San Diego's online Qualtrics survey platform to those who completed at least six months in the program (for those receiving 12 months of nutrition incentives), or those who completed at least three months in the program (for those receiving 6 months of nutrition incentives). The follow-up survey takes approximately 20-30 minutes to complete, and includes questions about food and nutrition security, healthy food including fruit and vegetable access and consumption, knowledge of healthy eating, self-reported health status, and participant satisfaction and feedback about the program. Some survey questions are repeated at follow-up from the baseline survey that participants complete upon enrollment to facilitate matched analysis evaluating changes over time following program participation.

As of the end of 2024, a total of **n=377 follow-up surveys were collected** from participants (n=323 General Produce Box/Produce Prescription and n=54 Healthy Foodcard participants). This includes 90 follow-up surveys collected from Cohort 1 participants, 195 collected from Cohort 2 participants, and 92 collected from Cohort 3 participants. Across survey respondents, n=299 provided qualitative feedback to open-ended survey questions regarding their experience in the program. Those who completed a follow-up survey received a \$25 Visa gift card incentive in the mail approximately 30-60 days following survey completion.

Participant Feedback & Testimonials. Qualitative feedback is also collected from participants regarding their experiences in the program, including feedback and testimonials collected throughout program implementation in collaboration with community partners, and upon notifying participants that they have completed their participation on the program. As of the end of 2024, a total of n=404 feedback testimonials were shared by participants upon program completion, including n=345 from General Produce Box/Produce Prescription participants and n=59 from Healthy Foodcard participants. Quotes from participants collected through testimonial feedback and responses to qualitative follow-up survey questions are included throughout this report to illustrate key findings, with additional supplementary quotes and testimonials also included in **Appendix A**.

Community Partner Feedback. Feedback from community, health, and food sector partner organizations regarding the program's organizational and cross-sector impacts is also collected regularly from partner organizations and staff through regular partner meetings and communications. This includes: 1) Facilitated discussion groups held with program partners in March 2023 and May and July 2024, and 2) a survey of n=7 program partners implemented in March 2023.

Analysis Methods. Quantitative analysis of survey data consists of descriptive analysis including frequencies across closed-ended survey questions, and matched analysis for survey questions repeated at baseline and follow-up to assess for changes over time following program participation (**n=340 matched baseline and follow-up survey responses**). Qualitative analyses of open-ended survey questions, participant testimonials submitted, and data collected through partner discussion groups was conducted through thematic analysis including coding by multiple coders until consensus reached to identify key themes across responses, along with identification of quotes illustrative of identified themes.





Photo courtesy of Yasukochi Family Farms

PROGRAM REACH & SERVICES PROVIDED

As of the end of 2024, a total of **2,640 participants** enrolled in the program. Enrollment by program is shown below:

Program	Total Participants Enrolled	Total Produce Boxes Delivered	Value of Funds Allocated to Enrolled Participants
Produce Prescription	1,084 participants	25,009 boxes delivered	\$664,832.03
General Produce Box	1,154 participants	27,832 boxes delivered	\$695,800.00
Foodsmart Healthy Foodcard	402 participants	-	\$289,479.85
Total	2,640 participants	52,841 boxes delivered	\$1,650,111.88

Profile of Enrolled Participants

Community members participating in *¡Más Fresco! Plus* represent a broad cross-section of San Diego County residents from varied backgrounds and demographic profiles, including older adults, those managing chronic health conditions or with long-term health needs, those who speak varied languages, and households with limited incomes.

Participant demographic characteristics based on self-reported baseline surveys completed by a sample of participants (n=2,041) upon enrollment are presented below.

At the end of 2024, over **\$1,650,000 in funds** provided to **2,640 households** participants in *¡Más Fresco! Plus*

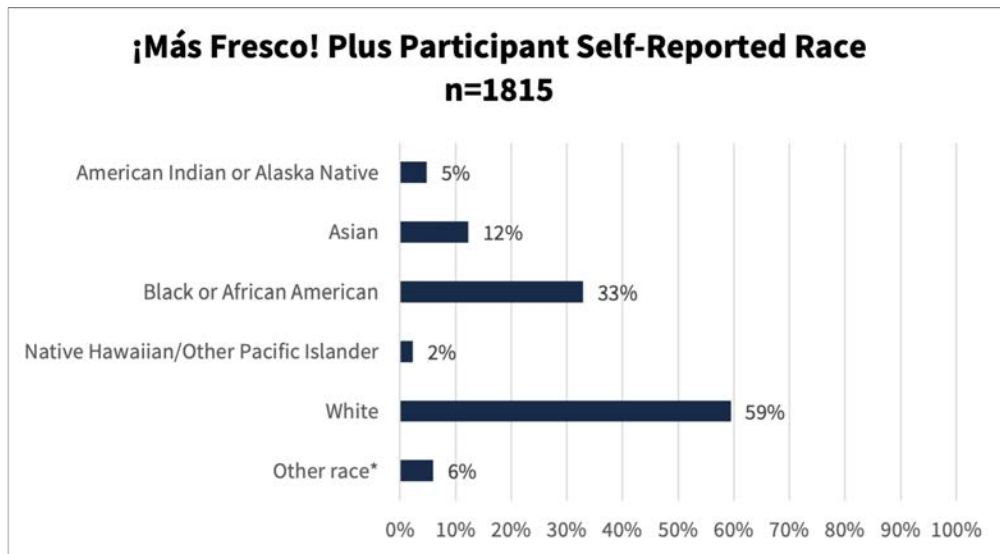
Includes delivery of **52,841 produce boxes** valued at approximately **\$1,360,632** to participants in Produce Prescription and General Produce Box programs

Over 80%
self-identify as female

Average age: 49.7
(range 18-94)

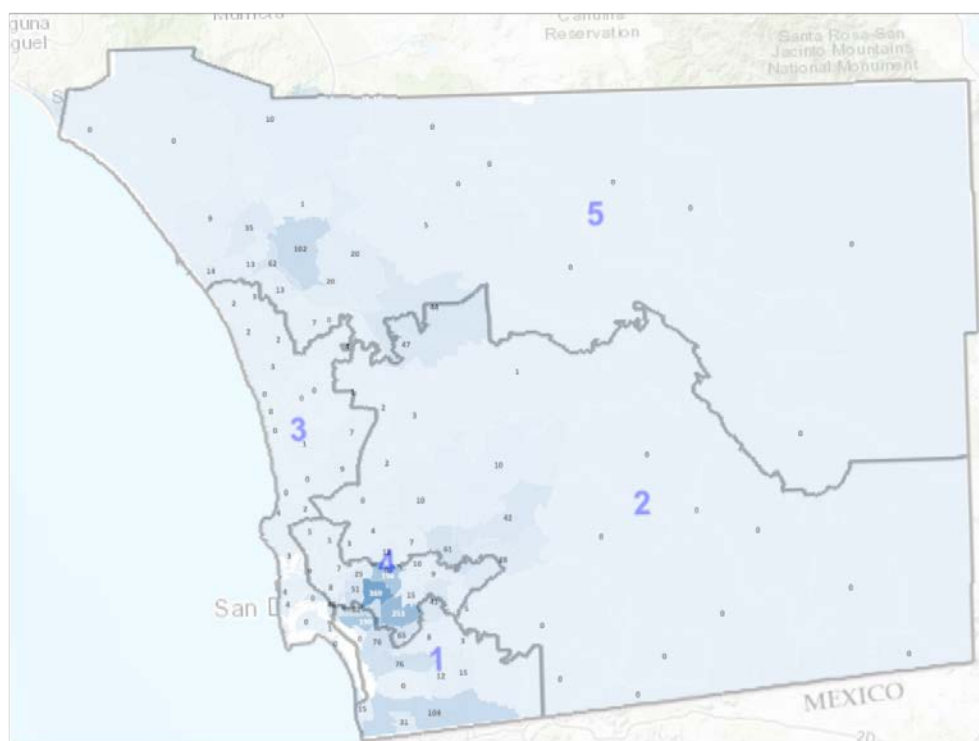
66% self-identify
as Hispanic/Latino

37% selected Spanish
as their preferred language



*Other includes Middle Eastern, Arab, Afghan, Iraqi, Filipino, Mestizo, Mixed

**Map of ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participants by San Diego County
Zip Codes within Board of Supervisor Districts**



**Close to three-fourths
(71%)**

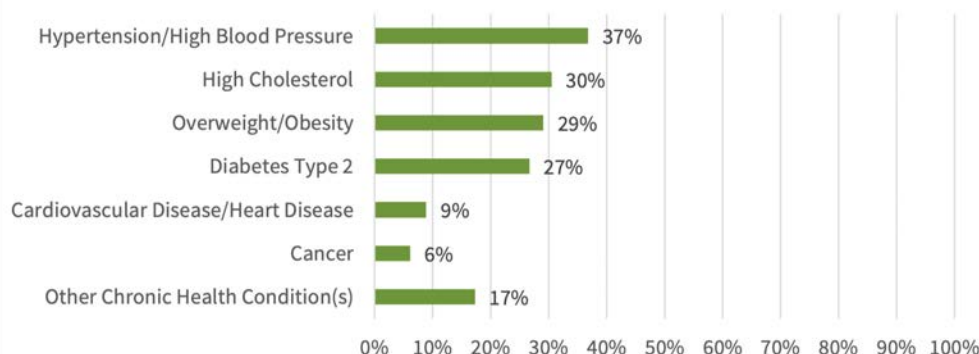
of participating households
(n=1,884 participants) live
in the San Diego County zip
codes previously designated
as priority areas experiencing
limited access to resources¹¹

¹¹ More information on how these zip codes were determined by San Diego County can be found here: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/>

63% of participants

reported not being in good health, including 12% in bad or very bad health, and 60% reported having at least 1 chronic health condition with many reporting multiple chronic conditions.

¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Self-Reported Chronic Health Conditions n=2041



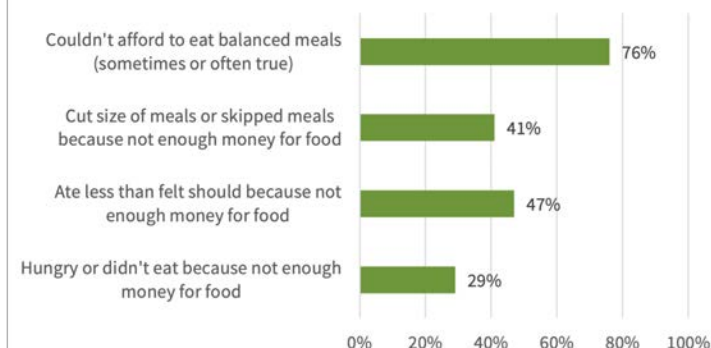
*Most frequent other chronic health conditions include: Respiratory Condition (e.g., Asthma, COPD); Arthritis/Joint Pain; Mental Health Condition (e.g. Anxiety, Depression), Pre-diabetes

Participants reported experiencing various forms of food/nutrition insecurity and challenges limiting healthy eating in the past month before starting the program:

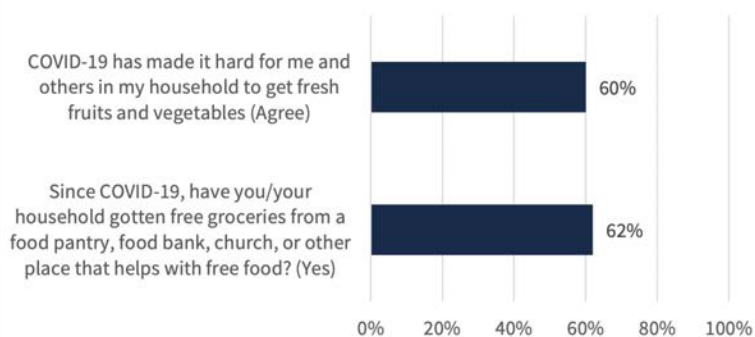
- Over 3 out of 4 reported they couldn't afford to eat balanced meals
- Over 2 out of 5 cut or skipped meals due to not having enough money for food
- Over 1 out of 4 went hungry in the past month due to not having enough money for food

Close to 2 out of 3 participants also reported exacerbated food/nutrition insecurity challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic.

¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Food Insecurity: In the last 30 days... n=2041



¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant COVID-19 & Access to Fresh Fruits & Vegetables n=2041





PROGRAM IMPACT: KEY FINDINGS

Based on program participant data collected to-date including testimonials from program participants, community-based organizations and San Diego farmers, **the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program has achieved significant success both in terms of addressing food/nutrition insecurity as well as providing economic support for local San Diego farmers.**

Key findings demonstrating the program's impacts at the community and cross-sector levels are detailed in the following sections.

Summary of Key Findings

Community Impact

- 1. Increasing Fruit & Vegetable Access:** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is successfully helping participants obtain locally grown, nutritious fruits and vegetables by addressing affordability and transportation challenges.
- 2. Increasing Fruit & Vegetable Consumption:** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is successfully increasing nutrition knowledge and healthy eating behaviors including fruit and vegetable consumption amongst participating households.
- 3. Providing Social & Emotional Support:** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is successfully reducing stressors related to food/nutrition insecurity, helping families obtain healthy foods with dignity and respect.
- 4. Supporting Health & Disease Management:** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is successfully supporting improved health and management of chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.
- 5. Achieving High Satisfaction From Community:** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* participants express high satisfaction with program services, praising the program's quality, convenience, and ease of enrollment.

Organizational and Cross-Sector Impact

- 6. Providing Benefits to Local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* has re-granted close to over \$65,000 to local CBOs/health clinics throughout San Diego County, supporting CBO capacity and partnership development to advance health and well-being in the communities they serve.
- 7. Stimulating Local Food Economy & Supporting Local Farmers:** *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is contributing to increased demand, stimulating growth and sales of locally grown produce, and leading to job creation and improved financial security for local farmers.

Community Impact

Overall, feedback from *¡Más Fresco! Plus* participants and partners highlights that **the healthy food provided by *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is essential for the health and well-being of local families.**

***¡Más Fresco! Plus* is benefiting the community by...**

- **Reducing challenges and increasing access** to locally grown, nutritious fruits and vegetables
- Helping families be able to shop for healthy foods with **dignity and respect**
- Increasing **nutrition knowledge and healthy eating behaviors including fruit and vegetable consumption** amongst participating households
- Encouraging **healthy eating habits/choices** and supporting **maintenance of chronic health conditions** like diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol
- **Helping close the gap in food insecurity**, esp. for families unable to access or impacted by decreases in public assistance programs (Medi-Cal, CalFresh, COVID emergency funds)

Más Fresco! Plus Community Partner Impact Statement

“San Diego’s 4th District Community Residents continue to be plagued with Food Insecurities. Blessed, thankful and overjoyed aptly describe the sentiments of the Fourth District Seniors Resource Center’s [FDSRC] *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Participants.

This Program has been both beneficial and impactful to both the participants and [broader] communities. They receive fresh locally grown produce delivered right to their door. They don’t have to drive or use mass transit to shop for produce. They are able to share recipes in preparing/serving fresh produce. They are able to learn the concepts of composting, eating nutritiously, and starting victory/community gardens. Lastly, growing your own food helps you recognize that our world should be viewed as a ‘salad bowl’ not a ‘melting pot’. **Thank you for helping San Diego’s Seasoned Community Residents live for happier and healthier tomorrows!”**
- Rosemary W. Pope, Executive Director, Fourth District Seniors Resource Center (FDSRC)



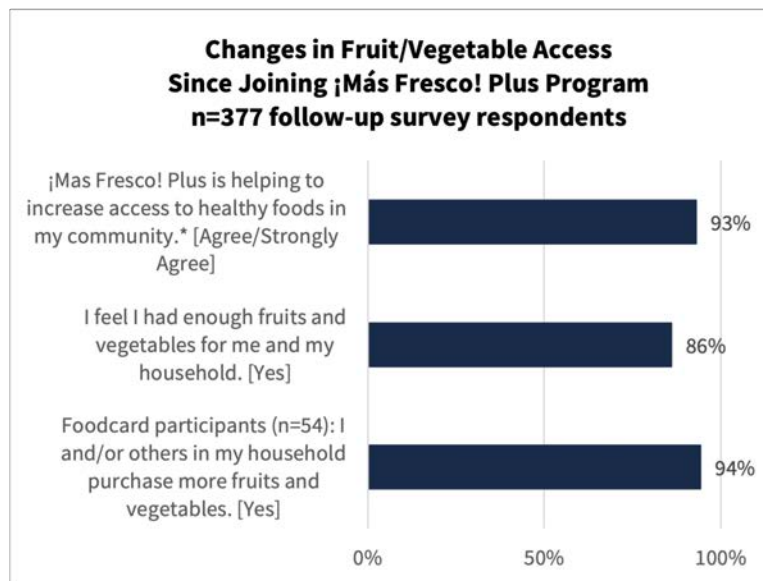
Key Finding #1: Increasing Fruit & Vegetable Access

¡Más Fresco! Plus is successfully helping participants obtain locally grown, nutritious fruits and vegetables by addressing affordability and transportation challenges.

Follow-up survey data collected to-date indicates the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program is successfully **reducing economic challenges** related to the high cost of fruits and vegetables, and **increasing access to healthy foods including fruits and vegetables** for participating households experiencing food insecurity and health disparities.

- **Over nine out of ten** participants report they feel the program is increasing access to healthy foods in their community.
- Over **four out of five** participants report feeling they had **enough fruits and vegetables for themselves and their household** since joining *¡Más Fresco! Plus*.
- Amongst Healthy Foodcard participants, over **nine out of 10 report purchasing more fruits and vegetables** since joining the program.

Qualitative feedback from over **100 responses** to open-ended follow-up survey questions (n=299) and participant testimonials (n=404) also highlighted the **program's impact on increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for participants and their families** (example quotes below and additional quotes also in Appendix A). Participants expressed the program helped **stretch limited food budgets to obtain healthy foods they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford**.



*Indicates new question added with final set of n=92 Cohort 3 survey participants only.

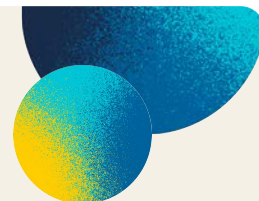
Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

"[The program] has really **helped me feed my family**, with the money we saved on the fruits and vegetables I received, **I could buy other healthy foods for my family. A million thanks for making this program possible** – you cannot imagine how much it has helped my family!"

– *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*

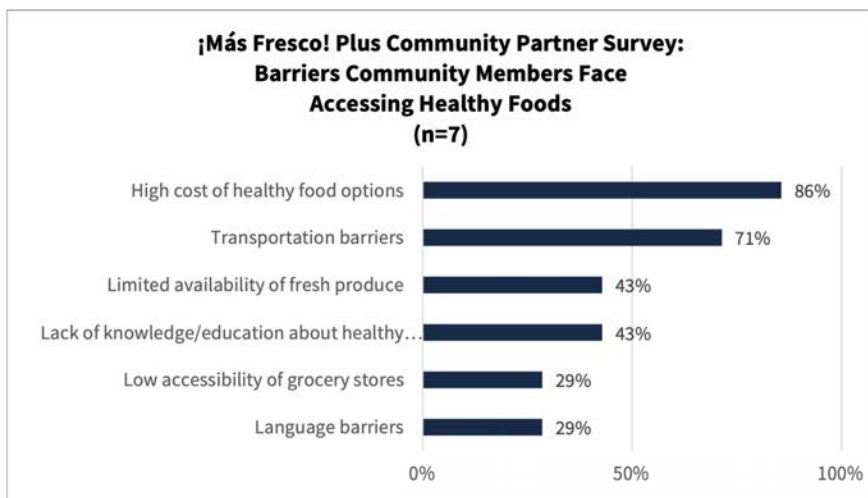
"The fruit and vegetables [¡Más Fresco! Plus] sends me every 2 weeks have benefited me very much...**fruits and vegetables are very expensive now, I am very grateful to the [¡Más Fresco! Plus] program.**"

– *E.L., ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*



Survey (2023) and discussion group (2023 & 2024) feedback from program partners including local CBOs also highlighted the impact of the program on increasing access to fresh, local, and nutritious food, addressing a number of challenges community members face in accessing healthy foods including **high costs and limited transportation**:

- **Produce boxes** delivered through the program are specifically supporting community members experiencing mobility/ transportation challenges limiting accessing healthy foods and those with health conditions requiring a healthier diet, as well as helping families experiencing financial challenges be able to access healthy foods with dignity and respect.
- The **Healthy Foodcard** supports participants in offsetting the high costs of purchasing fruits and vegetables, allowing high-need residents to purchase these foods without concern over insufficient funds.



Más Fresco! Plus Community Partner Impact Statements

“[Our community members] like receiving fresh produce...[they] may **not have transportation** support or their own vehicle, and a lot of stores closest to them don’t have fresh produce, **so receiving [a ¡Más Fresco! Plus produce box] at their door is successful in helping address food insecurity.**”

– Vista Community Clinic, ¡Más Fresco! Plus FQHC Partner

“For some participants, they haven’t had **fresh food** like this before or they are having it for the first time in a long time.”

— ¡Más Fresco! Plus Food Sector Partner



Key Finding #2: Increasing Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

¡Más Fresco! Plus is successfully increasing nutrition knowledge and healthy eating behaviors including fruit and vegetable consumption amongst participating households.

From baseline to follow-up, participants who completed a follow-up survey on average reported **increased consumption of both fruits and vegetables since joining the ¡Más Fresco! Plus program.**

At follow-up, approximately nine of ten or more *¡Más Fresco! Plus* participants also reported:

- **Increased knowledge** of healthy eating
- **Eating more fruits and vegetables** than they did before joining the program
- Trying **new fruits and vegetables**, and consuming an **increased variety** of fruits and vegetables
- Cooking with or eating **the fresh fruits and vegetables received through the program at least weekly**, with over three-quarters of participants reporting that the **specific fruits and vegetables received or purchased through the program** are what their household is eating regularly.

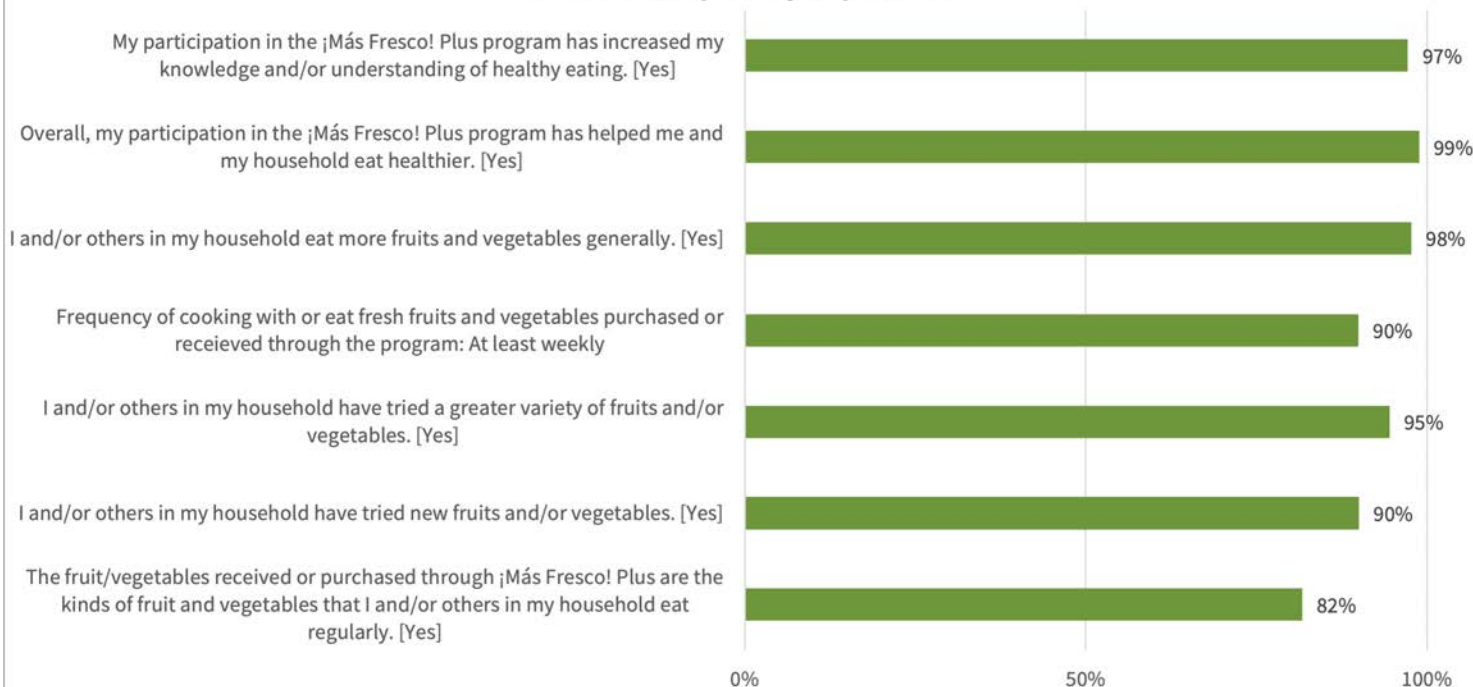


Average fruit consumption increased from 3-4 times per week to 5-6 times per week



Average vegetable consumption including green leafy and other vegetables increased from 2-3 times per week to 3-4 times per week

Changes in Healthy Eating Knowledge/Behaviors & Fruit/Vegetable Consumption Since Joining ¡Más Fresco! Plus Program
n=377 follow-up survey respondents



Participant qualitative feedback from open-ended follow-up survey questions (n=299) and testimonials (n=404) also demonstrate the program's positive impact on healthy eating knowledge, behaviors, and fruit and vegetable consumption amongst participants (example quotes below and additional quotes also in Appendix A):

- When asked what was most helpful about the program, **close to 100** talked specifically about **the program's impact on helping them eat more fruits and vegetables for better health.**
- **Over 70** indicated **trying new or increased variety of fruits/vegetables** through the program.
- **Close to 50** highlighted the program's impact increasing or sustaining **their and their children and family's motivation to eat healthier – impacting not just the individual participants enrolled, but their whole family.**

Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Story

“For the past months, my family has been receiving a box of farm fresh fruits and veggies every other week. Needless to say, it has helped tremendously with our family budgeting, giving us wiggle room to do more with our dollar, but even more so, **it has impacted the way we eat as a family.** With 2 small boys, as a mom I knew that anything green would be a waste of money to purchase, however this program has proven me wrong. Each day we would get a delivery, **my kids were so excited to explore the new veggies in the box,** going as far as biting into strange new things raw. They were interested in what each one was called, if they were spicy, sweet, or sour. It let us talk about the benefits of each one. Can carrots really give you super vision? The answer, yes! Their interest prompted us to purchase kid safe knives and chopping boards. **Each delivery, they would help me chop cucumbers, split asparagus, and peel potatoes, which gave them ownership of the food they ate later that day.** Now, **we add kale to our smoothie,** and most recently, **we chose to snack on steamed artichoke and roasted kale chips rather than Cheetos.** We have a new love for good food in our house now, and it's been fun for me (mom) looking up new ways to use the ingredients in the box. I am so thankful for this program and the healthy habits it has brought to my family. With Gratitude.”
– ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

“We love when the [¡Más Fresco! Plus fruit and vegetable] box arrives because **then we eat a lot of fruits and vegetables in our house!** We have looked up recipes online for vegetables that we wouldn't have otherwise bought.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

“I feel grateful that I've been able to receive the produce. The **quality and variety of the produce** has been amazing. I've **learned a lot more about fruits and vegetables** that I'd never heard of.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

“[The ¡Más Fresco! Plus] program helped me tremendously and **introduced me to vegetables that I usually would not buy and prepare, so I was able to incorporate [different F&V] in my healthy diet journey.**” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

“**My kids got excited to open our [produce] box** each month. Which made it easier to get them to **participate in healthy cooking and eating.** I loved knowing I had veggies to prepare in every meal and **my kids loved trying new fruit.**” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant

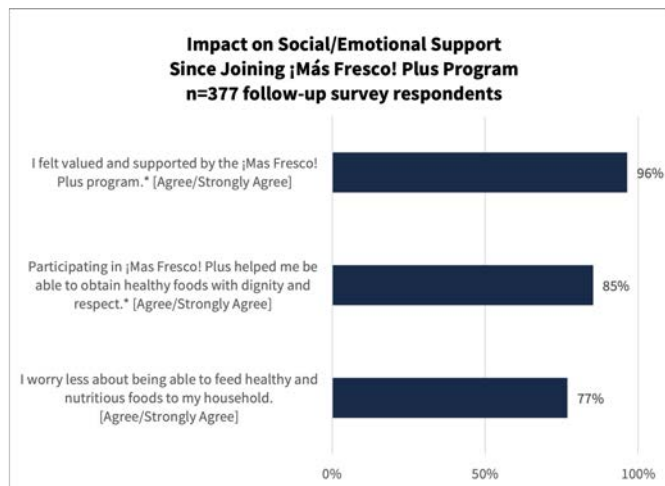
Survey and discussion group feedback from program partners including local CBOs also highlighted seeing the program's impact on fruit and vegetable consumption in the communities they serve, noting how the program **helps participants try new healthy foods they may not have otherwise chosen, transforming their purchasing habits and dietary choices.**

Key Finding #3: Providing Social & Emotional Support

¡Más Fresco! Plus is successfully reducing stressors related to food/nutrition insecurity, helping families obtain healthy foods with dignity and respect.

At follow-up, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* participants report positive social and emotional impacts, including:

- **Decreased stressors related to food access and nutrition security**, with three out of four worrying less about being able to feed healthy and nutritious foods to their household
- **Feeling valued and supported** by their community
- Feeling the program helps them **access healthy foods with dignity and respect** (over four out of five)



Qualitative feedback from participant responses to open-ended follow-up survey questions and participant testimonials also highlighted the program's impact on **reducing stressors associated with food/nutrition insecurity** for participating families, with **over 20 participant comments specifically highlighting feeling supported by their community through the existence of programs like *¡Más Fresco! Plus*.**

Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

"I really appreciated the [¡Más Fresco! Plus] program because **it put less stress on me and my family because we no longer could receive more food stamps.**" –*¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*

"The [¡Más Fresco! Plus] program was excellent with capital letters. The box came with essentials, I would wait on the box every week. **It was a beautiful and incredible experience that really helped me.**" –*¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*

Survey and discussion group feedback from program partners including local CBOs also highlighted examples of the program's impact in their communities, with **multiple partners noting changes in participants' mental health, especially decreased stress levels.**

Más Fresco! Plus Community Partner Impact Statements

"[One participant] is an active community member that has battled with cancer for many years. He was in remission [and recently] found out he has stage 3 breast cancer and has to go through chemotherapy aggressively... **[participant and his wife] have limited funds and getting assistance [through ¡Más Fresco! Plus] has made them very happy that they are able to eat healthy foods especially going through this difficult time with their current health issues. These services have made a big difference in [their] lives.**" – *SBCS CBO Partner*

"A lot of our patients have already expressed for a long time feeling hopeless because their monthly budget is never going to improve without them getting a second job or something else and **this program instilled more hope for them because they could actually get fresh foods...every single patient I've talked to has talked about how much less stressed they are about their monthly budget because [of ¡Más Fresco! Plus].**" – *Health Sector Partner*

Key Finding #4: Supporting Health & Disease Management

¡Más Fresco! Plus is successfully supporting improved self-reported health and management of chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol amongst community members experiencing health disparities.

Regarding program impact on health and well-being, from baseline to follow-up, participants who completed a follow-up survey on average reported **improvements in self-reported health status and management of chronic conditions.**

- There was a **76% increase in self-reported positive health status**, with 58% of participants reporting being in good health at follow up compared to 33% of the same participants at baseline.
- Close to all participants (99%) reported that having participated in the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program **improved their overall health and nutrition.**
- **Approximately two-thirds (65%) of participants also reported decreased use of unexpected health services/ expenses at follow-up** compared to before joining the program.

Qualitative feedback from participant responses to open-ended follow-up survey questions and participant testimonials also highlighted the program's impact on **supporting participant health and well-being**, including supporting **chronic disease management and weight loss goals for better health.**

Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

"The fresh fruits and vegetables delivered to my house [through the *¡Más Fresco! Plus*] program are] a very, very good thing for me...I **lost weight as a result of being a part of the program and I feel wonderful.**" – *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*

"Loved it [*¡Más Fresco! Plus*!] It personally helped me with **lowering my blood sugar and bettering my overall health** by having access to fresh produce." – *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*

"**Healthy eating has always been a difficult task**, mainly because of the hype that healthy means organic and organic means expensive. **With limited money for food, cheap is where I gravitated. I have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and arthritis.** I had been educating myself and building up my courage to make better choices about my diet...I am truly grateful to this program because **my last two cholesterol tests have shown improvement and my blood pressure is not fluctuating as it had been. I find myself going to stores like El Super and Northgate Market in between deliveries and buying more vegetables and fruits.**" – L.W., *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant*

Survey and discussion group feedback from program partners also highlighted examples of the program's impact on supporting participant health and well-being, with CBO and health sector partners in particular noting **the program's impact on helping participants manage chronic conditions, for example lowering their blood pressure or better controlling their diabetes.**

Key Finding #5: Achieving High Satisfaction From Community

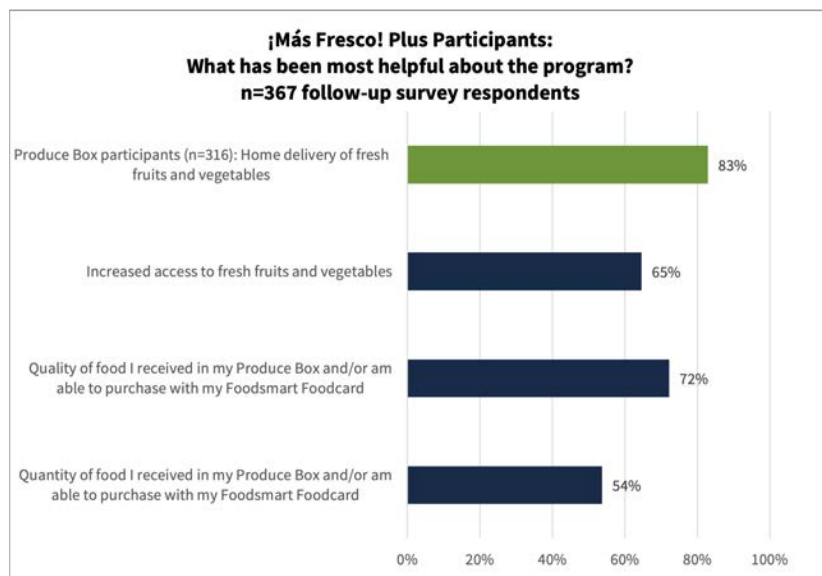
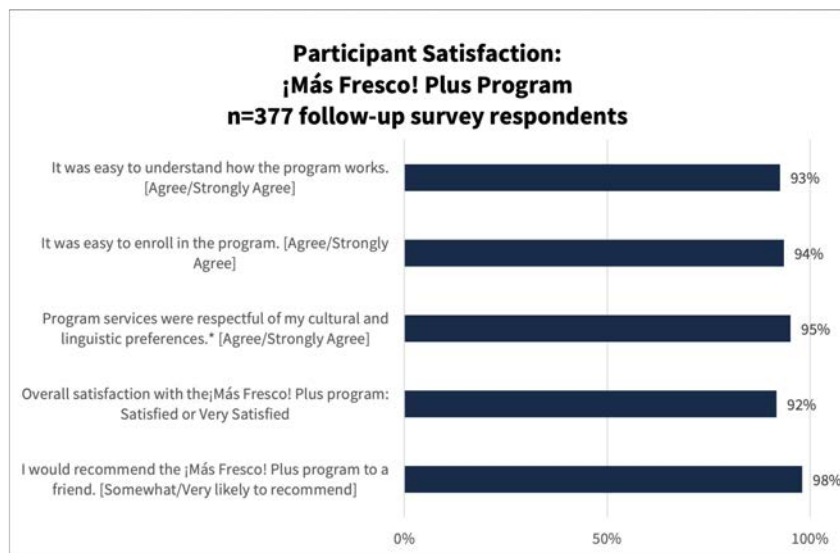
¡Más Fresco! Plus participants express high satisfaction with program services, praising the program's quality, convenience, and ease of enrollment.

At follow-up, participants generally reported **high levels of satisfaction with ¡Más Fresco! Plus.**

- Over nine out of ten participants reported the program was **easy to enroll in and understand.**
- Over **nine out of ten reported being generally satisfied or very satisfied** with the program.
- Close to all participants (95%) felt the program effectively supported their language needs and food traditions.
- Close to all participants (98%) reported being **somewhat or very likely to recommend the program to a friend.**

Regarding specific feedback on the Produce Box/Produce Prescription (n=323 follow-up survey respondents) and Healthy Foodcard (n=54 follow-up survey respondents) components of the program:

- **Over nine out of ten Produce Box/Produce Prescription participants reported high satisfaction** with the **convenience of the produce boxes being delivered to their homes** and the **quality of the fruits and vegetables in their boxes.**
- **Nine out of ten Healthy Foodcard participants reported ease of using their card** when shopping, and over four out of five reported **ease of finding a grocery store** where they could utilize their Healthy Foodcard benefits.



At follow-up, participants were also asked to identify the most helpful aspects of the program.

- Approximately **two-thirds highlighted the increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables they receive through the program**
- **Close to three-quarters highlighted the quality of the food they receive** in their produce boxes or can purchase with their Healthy Foodcard.
- **Over half highlighted the quantity of food they receive** in their produce boxes or can purchase with their Healthy Foodcard.
- Amongst Produce Box and Produce Prescription participants in particular (n=323 follow-up survey respondents), **over four out of five also highlighted the convenience of the home delivery aspect of the program.**

Follow-up survey respondents were also asked a series of open-ended questions including satisfaction-related questions regarding what was most helpful for them about the program and what could be improved. A total of n=299 survey respondents (79%) provided qualitative feedback across open-ended survey questions. Key themes identified based on thematic analysis across qualitative responses included the following:

- Approximately half of survey respondents provided a comment expressing their **general satisfaction** with *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program services. (n=144)
- Multiple respondents commented on the convenience/timeliness of program services (n=61) and the **quality of the fruits and vegetables available through the program** (n=51).

In addition to qualitative feedback obtained through survey responses, over 350 participant testimonials also highlighted participants' general satisfaction with the program, demonstrating high regard and feedback in the community.

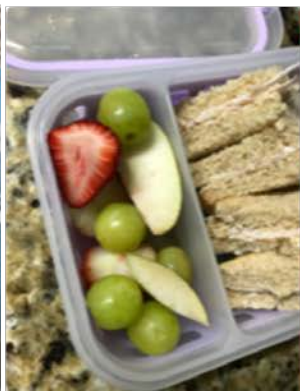
Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

"The fruits and vegetables are very **fresh and looks delicious (and pretty)**! I'm happy knowing that there are **good people out there willing to help others.**" - B., *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant, Chula Vista*

"Honestly, **I wouldn't change anything...** everything arrives in perfect condition, and everything is very delicious." - *¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant*



Did Machaca burritos (used tomato, onion and pepper from the program) 5:28 PM



Daughters lunch (apple, strawberries and grapes from the program) 5:22 PM



Meal prep. Veggies and hummus (carrots and cucumber from program)



Omellet (spinash, onion and avocado from the program)



Green salad (lettuce, radish and carrots from de program\$ 5:20 PM

Photo Credit: SBCS-Resident Leadership Academy (RLA) social media posts from *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Participants

Organizational and Cross-Sector Impact

In addition to supporting local families and community members, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* has also demonstrated great success in **supporting community organizations and stimulating the local food economy**.

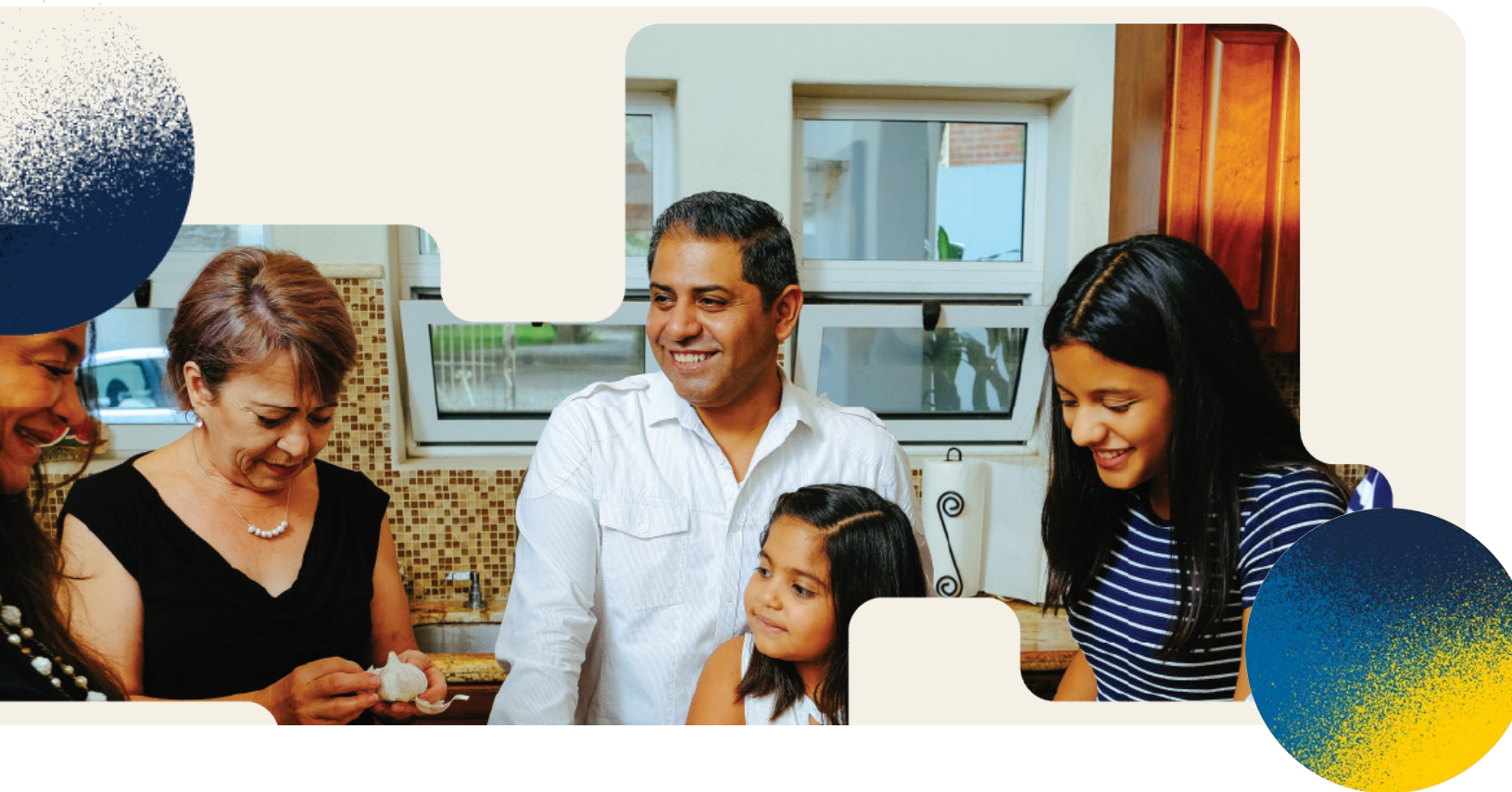
These impacts have been achieved through the program's **community-engaged, collective impact approach** working closely with local food sector, community, and health partners across program implementation.

¡Más Fresco! Plus is benefiting **community organizations** by...

- **Helping local organizations address community needs:** serving as a resource to provide to families in need of food, especially for those with mobility/ transportation challenges or health conditions requiring a healthier diet
- **Building partnerships** that serve the community, including partnership with CCH team
- **Building trust** with the community and supporting **positive relationships between local organizations and families**

¡Más Fresco! Plus is benefiting **local food economy** by...

- Improving **financial security and growth/sales for local farmers**
- Providing a **win-win for farmers and community:** farmers able to grow local produce and help community members experiencing food insecurity
- **Supporting local retailers**/neighborhood stores
- **Reducing food waste**
- Helping **stimulate the local economy** - creating demand for fresh produce, supporting job creation to support demand



Key Finding #6: Providing Benefits to Local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

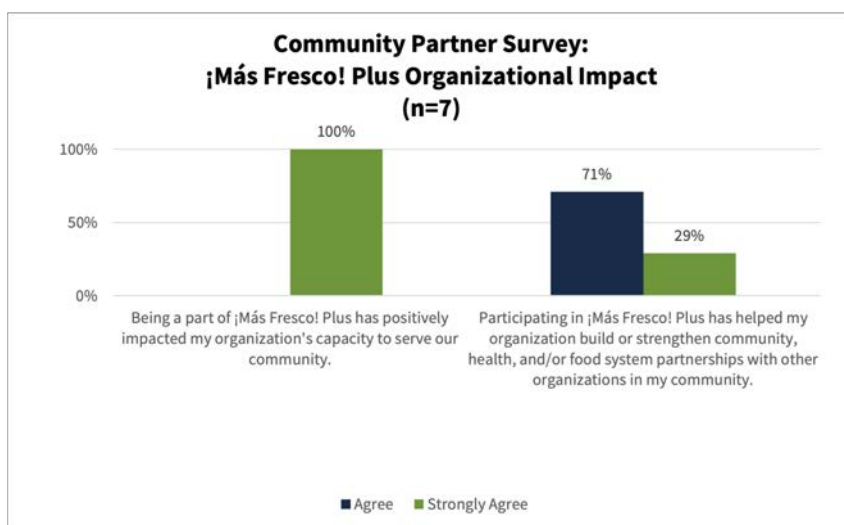
¡Más Fresco! Plus is successfully supporting local community-based organizations through re-granting, partnership development opportunities, and supporting CBO capacity to serve their community.

As of the end of 2024, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* has re-granted over \$65,000 to local CBOs and health clinics throughout San Diego County.

¡Más Fresco! Plus works closely with community-based organizations across San Diego County and leverages the collective strengths and resources of CCH and its program partners to support the health and well-being of community members. This includes **compensating community-based organizations** for every community member that they enroll into *¡Más Fresco! Plus*, and collaborating closely with community representatives on the San Diego Childhood Obesity Initiative Community Council. Based on program evaluation input provided by the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Program partners, the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* food-sector and health-sector collective impact model is providing substantial nutrition security and health promotion and disease prevention support for the community members we collectively serve.

According to survey and discussion group feedback from partner organizations including local CBO, health clinic, and food sector partners collaborating

on the project, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is helping local organizations address community needs. Partner organizations report the **program helps build trust in the community and support positive relationships between local organizations and families. 100% of partner organizations agreed that being a part of the program has positively impacted their organization's capacity to serve their community**, with CBOs highlighting the sense of community they gained through the program.



Más Fresco! Plus Community Partner Impact Statements

“One of our clients cannot attend food distribution events [due to a long-term health condition]. [Instead], the client is receiving a *¡Más Fresco! Plus* produce box. **The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program [helps our organization] ‘close the gap’ in serving our community members.”** – *Vista Community Clinic, ¡Más Fresco! Plus FQHC Partner*

“[The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program] has been instrumental in [helping our organization] continue to build partnerships that serve the community at large.” – *Vista Community Clinic, ¡Más Fresco! Plus FQHC Partner*

“As a community partner, together we have successfully implemented the *¡Mas Fresco! Plus* program providing nutrition incentives for community members experiencing food insecurity and health disparities. Working with CCH has increased our organization and staff’s capacity to improve access to healthy food for the community we serve.” – *Rachel Morineau, [former] Community Engagement Director, SBCS*

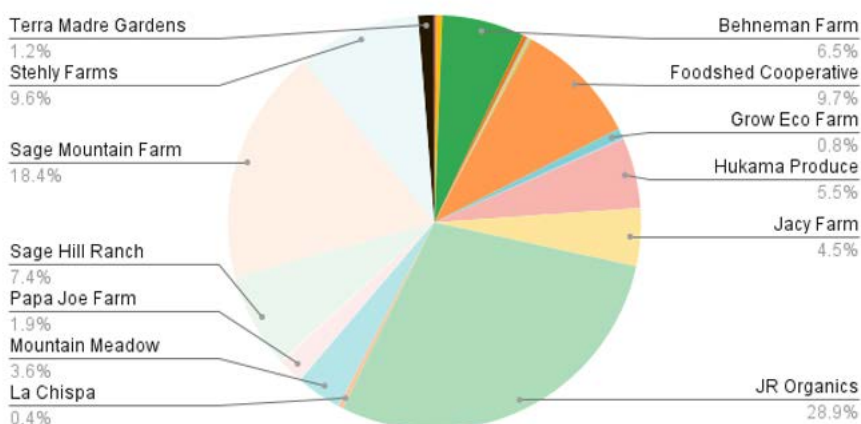
Key Finding #7: Stimulating Local Food Economy & Supporting Local Farmers

The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program model is positively impacting the local food economy and supporting local farmers through creating increased demand, stimulating growth and sales of locally grown produce, and leading to job creation and improved financial security for local farmers.

Working closely with local farmers and food retailers, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is having tangible economic impacts¹² on the local food economy and for local farmers.

According to **Foodshed Cooperative Inc.**, the funding provided by *¡Más Fresco! Plus* has significantly increased the number of customers Foodshed can reach, including serving more community members living in areas with low Healthy Place Index scores (i.e., areas with less healthy conditions). Furthermore, according to Foodshed, the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Program funding is indispensable in supporting the viability of small San Diego farms, helping local farmers sustain and expand their operations.

Foodshed Cooperative Farms Supplying to Más Fresco Plus 2024



¹²Source: Nutrition Incentive Hub Economic Impact Calculator available through the USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (NTAE). An economic multiplier is used to calculate economic impact. It describes the total increase in output within an economy due to a \$1 increase in spending. The estimates used for this calculator are based on 2021 agricultural and food sector data, and represent economic activity at that time. The economic impact represents the amount of money generated in California from the program's nutrition incentives. This was calculated with a 1.7 economic multiplier for brick and mortar and 1.9 for farm direct and utilizes a self-reported amount of incentives redeemed at each site type. To learn more about the methodologies of this calculator, please visit: www.nutritionincentivehub.org/resources/economic-impactcalculator

From the program's launch in May 2022 through December 2024, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* has generated an economic impact¹² of over \$3 million, including over \$2.5 million for local farms and over \$1.6 million in nutrition incentives redeemed.



\$3,077,315

Total Economic Impact

INCENTIVES REDEEMED



\$289,479

At Brick and Mortar Sites



\$1,360,632

At Farm Direct Sites

ECONOMIC IMPACT



\$492,114

At Brick and Mortar Sites



\$2,585,201

At Farm Direct Sites

Yasukochi Family Farms has also shared that *¡Más Fresco! Plus* funding has provided significant help and support since the start of the program, providing needed relief to cover inflation related costs and the ever-increasing cost of water.

Qualitative feedback from local partners also emphasized the impact of the program on strengthening the local food economy and supporting farmers. Key themes included the following:

- By providing a marketplace for **small-scale, socially disadvantaged farmers** to sell their produce, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* **helps support the ongoing need for sustainability of small farms throughout the region.**
- The program's unique model strengthens community-farmer relationships and promotes **fair treatment and respect for farmers.** Many local farmers take great pride in knowing that the food they grow is going to their own community, **building a sense of dignity for both the farmers and recipients of the food.**

Más Fresco! Plus Local Farm Partner Impact Statements

"Overinvestment in the global food supply chain has weakened our local food [economy and infrastructure] and threatens food security. **¡Más Fresco! Plus is a public-private partnership that leverages co-investment in the local food supply chain that can generate economic benefits for years to come.**" – Foodshed Cooperative, *¡Más Fresco! Plus Partner*

"From an economic standpoint – [participating in the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program] does help our farm, and we collaborate with other local farms – **a lot of excess produce is not going to waste, it's going to community members who need it, [and] helping allow our farm be able to keep going and continue to farm.**" – Yasukochi Family Farms, *¡Más Fresco! Plus Partner*

"Being able to help our community is a really big part of who we are and what we do...**San Diego is a huge place, and there is a huge need for food...being able to deliver to different places [throughout the County] and being able to serve those who have food insecurity, that's what it's all about,** that's something we are excited about." – Yasukochi Family Farms, *¡Más Fresco! Plus Partner*

"Investing money in local food has **long-term health benefits** because it **creates jobs that pay a living wage and supports the local economy.**" – *¡Más Fresco! Plus Farm Sector Partner*



"Foodshed has mentored me from the infancy of Papa Joe Farm to a successful operation. They have assisted the farm by transforming dirt to productive soil. In addition, they provide an above average market price for the produce. They don't consider me as a vendor, but as a partner and a veteran"

-Jose Silva (Papa Joe Farm)

Photo Credit: Foodshed Cooperative Inc.

Pictured: Jose from Papa Joe Farm in Jamul.

Jose has been able to expand his farm operations exponentially since Foodshed partnered with CCH for the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Program. Since then, he's built new infrastructure, and gained the Homegrown by Heroes Certification. Papa Joe is actively developing the San Diego Chapter for Farmer Veteran Coalition, to engage more veteran farmers in San Diego County.





PROMISING PRACTICES FOR SCALABILITY & REPLICATION

In addition to highlighting the program's success in addressing food and nutrition insecurity, feedback from participants and partners has also pointed to key opportunities for future expansion and scalability to replicate successful program strategies and reach even more individuals and families in need.

Summary of Promising Practices

- ✓ **Unique Benefits and Convenience of Produce Box Model:** The Produce Box model stands out as a unique and promising approach to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce through convenient home delivery, benefiting both community members and local farmers.
- ✓ **Addressing Community Needs through Program Expansion:** Community members emphasized the need for continued and expanded *¡Más Fresco! Plus* programming, alongside additional resources like healthy recipes, cooking classes, nutrition education, and physical activity opportunities.
- ✓ **Enhanced Participant Support to Maximize Healthy Foodcard Utilization:** Maximizing Healthy Foodcard utilization and benefits requires personalized support and frequent communication to address challenges such as technical issues, awareness of eligible stores and items, and remaining balance tracking.
- ✓ **Implications for Scalability and Local Institutionalization:** The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* model, funded through the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, serves as a leading example of county-level investment in advancing access to healthy foods and nutrition security for all, demonstrating potential for broader adoption and scalability by other local governments or organizations interested in expanding and integrating community-driven nutrition incentive programs that extend beyond federal eligibility requirements.

Promising Practice #1: Unique Benefits and Convenience of Produce Box Model

The Produce Box model stands out as a unique and promising approach to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce through convenient home delivery, benefiting both community members and local farmers.

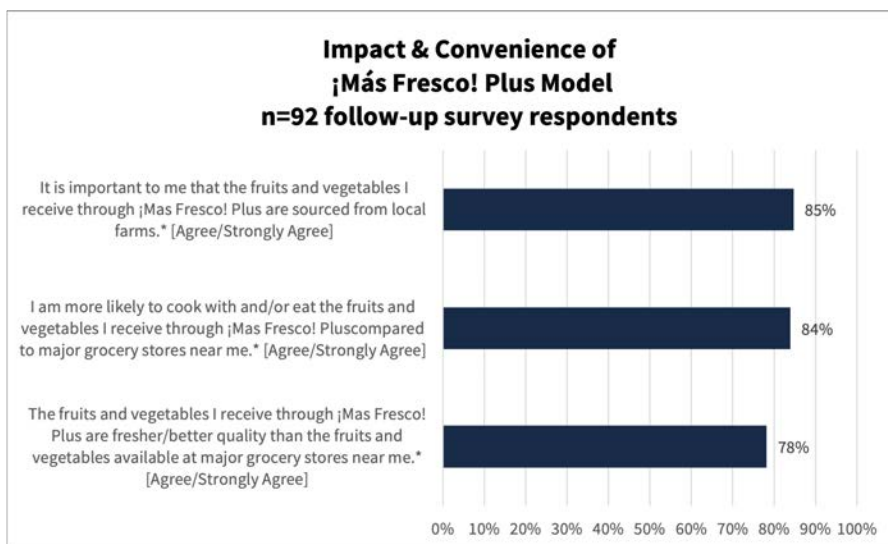
The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* model, in particular the produce box/produce prescription component, has received repeated praise from community members and key stakeholders regarding its **unique benefits and convenience, addressing access challenges and increasing availability of fresh produce** for the local community.

At follow-up, the **majority of participants report high satisfaction with the quality and convenience of the boxes.**

- **Over three-quarters highlight the superior quality and freshness of the produce received in their Produce Box compared to other food resources** (e.g., fruits/vegetables at major grocery stores), and over 8 of 10 report they are more likely to use the produce they obtain through the program specifically.
- Additionally, over **8 of 10 participants report it's important that the produce they receive is sourced from local farms.**

Key themes identified through thematic analysis of qualitative feedback from open-ended follow-up survey responses (n=299) and participant testimonials (n=404) also highlighted the impact of the Produce Box model in particular on increasing access to locally grown produce through convenient home delivery.

- **Close to 150** participant comments praised the **quality of the fruits/vegetables received in their Produce Box**, with some specifically expressing **appreciation that the produce is locally grown.**
- **Over 60** specifically talked about the **convenience and timeliness of their deliveries.**



*Indicates new question added with final set of n=92 Cohort 3 survey participants only.



Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

“I have been a resident of Escondido for 48 years, and I would like to thank [the ¡Más Fresco! Plus Program] for delivering fresh fruits and vegetables to me and my family for a year. **This [program] helped us eat healthier and live a healthier and more nutritious life.** I had a lot of problems bringing [healthy] foods into my household due to [transportation issues with] not being able to carry [my groceries] on the bus...**this program has been a huge help for me and others who don't have the means to bring healthy foods into our homes.**” – E.C., ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant referred by Vista Community Clinic

“**Having the produce delivered to my home has been really helpful.** The variety of fresh produce has made it easier to include them in my menu planning. The produce is **very fresh and the variety is excellent!**” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant

“**[I] know they're local [and] fresh, just observing what's in the box. It's easy to see the quality of fruits and vegetables.** No added glaze to enhance apples or anything else that has a skin. The taste and texture is rich such as the greens, snap peas, broccoli and lettuce. No chemicals.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant

“I loved the [¡Más Fresco! Plus] program so much because it was **delivered straight to my door,** I also got to **try many new organic fruits,** such as [a] peach.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

Survey and discussion group feedback from program partners including local CBOs also highlighted the uniqueness of the program model in addressing access challenges and promoting healthy food consumption, **helping those with limited resources access fruits and vegetables for better health.**

Multiple partners stated that **participants felt that the produce provided through ¡Más Fresco! Plus tastes better than the produce in local stores,** and that the program's convenient home delivery model had particular benefits providing **more access for elderly or home-bound community members.**

Más Fresco! Plus Partner Impact Statements

“[Previously] patients [with health concerns] were forced to stand in food lines, but many elderly patients weren't able to withstand the lines. So, they would practice going without food for a certain time. **For a lot of home-bound patients having food delivered allowed high-quality food to reach many patients who wouldn't have been able to [otherwise access].**” — ¡Más Fresco! Plus Health Sector Partner

“[¡Más Fresco! Plus] helps for people with limited access to healthy foods **[including] those in need but [who] do not qualify for CalFresh.**” — ¡Más Fresco! Plus Partner

Promising Practice #2: Addressing Community Needs through Program Expansion

Community members need ongoing resources to support healthy eating, including continuation and expansion of programs including ¡Más Fresco! Plus and additional community resources such as healthy recipes, cooking classes, nutrition education, and physical activity resources.

Follow-up survey respondents who provided open-ended feedback about the program (n=299) and testimonials collected from participants (n=404) highlighted a desire for program continuation and expansion. Key themes identified based on thematic analysis across qualitative responses included the following:

- Many expressed a desire for **longer participation periods and broader access to services** that support healthy eating and overall well-being.
- **Over 100 participant comments** noted an **ongoing need to continue and expand this impactful program**, either via being able to continue participating in the program for longer than 6 months or 1 year (n=62), and/or expanding program services to more community members (n=23).
- Multiple participants also expressed a need for **additional resources to support healthy eating**, including access to more or more variety of fruits and vegetables (n=53), access to healthy recipes or meal ideas (n=41), access to other types of foods such as meat or dairy products (n=34), access to cooking classes or other nutrition education resources (n=34), and access to physical activity opportunities in their community (n=22).

Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements

“Thank you for helping me this entire year to help me buy fruits and vegetables for my children. You are helping a lot of people and I’m very happy and thankful for this. An apple or any fruit that I was able to buy with the money you provided me helped me a long way. May God bless you and the entire team that makes this possible. There’s a lot of people here in CA that are in need and I was very happy to receive this assistance. Thank you.” - ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

“I saw improvements over time...when the COVID EBT boost ended and inflation was hitting really hard [and put] me in a really hard place...this program and the access it provides is important and it really does make a positive impact [but] having the program end for me in less than a year was disappointing.” - ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

“I would like you to open this program up to more people because people need it.” - ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant

Survey and discussion group feedback from program partners including local CBOs also **highlighted the ¡Más Fresco! Plus program model as a promising practice for expansion**. Partners and collaborators have expressed a collective recognition that **additional funding would be necessary to sustain and expand the program**, noting the **possible benefit for many additional community members unable to participate due to limited funding at this time**.

Promising Practice #3: Enhanced Participant Support to Maximize Healthy Foodcard Utilization

Maximizing Healthy Foodcard utilization and benefits requires personalized support and frequent communication to address challenges such as technical issues, awareness of eligible stores and items, and remaining balance tracking.

As of the end of 2024, a total of **402 participants** enrolled in the Healthy Foodcard program spent a cumulative total of over **\$218,000** to purchase healthy foods with their card.

Impact of Healthy Foodcard Model. Participants who completed a follow up survey shared that they **purchased a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables** and highlighted that **the Healthy Foodcard allowed them to afford healthier foods**. Thematic analysis of qualitative survey feedback and testimonials from participants highlighted the value of the Healthy Foodcard program.

Más Fresco! Plus Participant Impact Statements: Healthy Foodcard

“[Participant] spoke about groceries being expensive, **the Healthy Foodcard provided her with some relief in these tough economic times**. Because of the program, **she was able to provide healthier meals for her family.**” - *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Story from CBO Partner*

“[Participant] was very happy with the program and wanted to extend his gratitude. He stated that **the program helped him and his family prepare healthier meals and pushed them to get educated about the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables.**” - *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Story from CBO Partner*

“[Participant] is very grateful, because when he began to receive his [Healthy Foodcard] he [also] began cancer treatment, what he would receive from unemployment wasn’t enough and his family depended on him. His daughter is in high school, **[their] economic situation was very difficult and thanks to [the Healthy Foodcard] they were able to continue eating fresh fruits and vegetables.**” - *¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Story from CBO Partner*

Identified Strategies for Enhancing Activation and Utilization. In the course of implementing the Healthy Foodcard program, a number of challenges emerged, leading to the identification of key strategies and successful practices to address those challenges and enhance card activation and utilization across participants.

To utilize the Healthy Foodcard in grocery stores, participants needed to first activate their card by calling Foodsmart support. Initially, only 30% of cards were activated as of August 2022, prompting CCH to implement direct participant outreach via phone and email in September to November 2022 as a targeted strategy to increase activation rates. Key strategies included **confirming mailing addresses at enrollment and via follow-up communications; updating program materials to clarify activation processes; and enhancing training for and regular communication with partners** led to a significant increase in activation, with inactivated cards dropping below 10% by mid-2023.

Inconsistent card utilization across participants also emerged as a challenge throughout implementation, with approximately 60% of participants actively using their benefits in any given month, and increased spending trends observed in later compared to earlier enrollment months. Key challenges identified included lack of initial awareness about eligible stores and items, technical issues, and not knowing how to confirm their remaining balance. These challenges were particularly noted during participants’ early months in the program, potentially impacting lower initial spending compared to more balanced spending in later months of enrollment. To boost engagement, CCH implemented a multi-pronged approach, included **direct outreach and education to participants via phone, email, and/or text regarding eligible stores and items; implementation of automated reminders including remaining balance reminders; collaboration with community partners to reach participants with low utilization; and coordination with Foodsmart for issue resolution and card replacements**. Given the initial utilization challenges experienced by some participants, CCH also **extended card expiration dates** for Cohort 2 participants, allowing additional time for maximizing utilization and receiving the full benefit of the program.

Future Opportunities and Recommendations. Based on survey data and participant testimonies, the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* Healthy Foodcard program was successful in achieving the program's goals. Many participants shared they were able to access the food that they needed for better health while limiting the financial strain that may have otherwise prevented healthy food consumption. The challenges experienced through the program and strategies identified to address those challenges also provided a clearer understanding of what the needs of the community are and how to optimize the design of future Healthy Foodcard programs to work for the community.

Maximizing Impact of Future Healthy Foodcard Programs: Recommendations for Successful Implementation

- ✓ Dedicated staff to provide a high level of support including individualized participant support as needed
- ✓ Regular, multi-channel (phone, text, email) communication and follow-up with participants to address challenges and support card utilization
- ✓ Clear, accessible, and adaptable program materials (flyers, websites, enrollment forms, trainings) that are responsive to participants' inquiries and needs
- ✓ Strong collaboration with trusted community partner organizations to reach participants effectively
- ✓ Frequent monitoring of card balances and purchasing patterns coupled with proactive communications to participants regarding their remaining balance
- ✓ Flexible strategies such as sending participants replacement cards or extending card expiration dates if needed

Promising Practice #4: Implications for Scalability and Local Integration

The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* model, funded through the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, serves as a leading example of county-level investment in advancing access to healthy foods and nutrition security for all, demonstrating potential for broader adoption and scalability by other local governments or organizations interested in expanding and integrating community-driven nutrition incentive programs that extend beyond federal eligibility requirements.

Scalability Implications. The success of the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program offers important insights for informing local and state-level initiative development aimed at integrating nutrition incentives into healthcare and advancing food access for all. ***¡Más Fresco! Plus* is uniquely scalable and accessible to all communities, compared to traditional nutrition incentive programs** that are restricted to CalFresh (SNAP) participants. *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is available to anyone experiencing food insecurity and other health disparities, regardless of their eligibility for federal assistance programs. By decoupling produce incentives from federal benefit requirements, ***¡Más Fresco! Plus* can be scaled across all communities, adapting to meet the needs of those who often fall through the cracks of existing safety nets.** This approach addresses gaps in existing federal nutrition incentive models by:

- Removing stigma and social or environmental challenges that may limit participation;
- Expanding access to fresh produce for individuals and families who may not qualify for CalFresh/SNAP or other federal assistance programs but still face food insecurity and nutrition-related health disparities; and
- Leveraging trusted community-based organizations and health clinics to identify and support participants, ensuring the program reaches the most vulnerable populations.

The program's innovative structure, including the Produce Prescription, General Produce Box, and Healthy Foodcard components, demonstrates adaptability to the needs of communities with broad demographic profiles, and can serve as a foundation for efforts that aim to scale similar models across California and beyond.

Opportunities for Local Integration. The *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program, funded by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, serves as a leading example of a county-level investment in advancing access to healthy foods and nutrition security for all. This demonstrates the potential for other local governments to invest in community-driven nutrition incentive programs that extend beyond federal eligibility requirements. The program's alignment with the San Diego Food Vision 2030 and regional food access strategies also highlights how *¡Más Fresco! Plus* supports a broader local framework promoting healthy, sustainable, and fair food access and infrastructure.

Statewide and CalAIM Alignment. *¡Más Fresco! Plus* offers a scalable model that could complement and integrate with state-level initiatives such as **California's California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiative**, which includes provision of Medically Supportive Food/Medically Tailored Meals as a key Community Support for eligible Medicaid (Medi-Cal) beneficiaries.¹³

- Successful aspects of the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program model – such as the program's community-engaged approach to improving food and nutrition security in collaboration with local community organizations and farms – could help inform implementation strategies for CalAIM Community Supports to enhance reach and uptake across eligible Medi-Cal beneficiaries across the state.
- Programs like *¡Más Fresco! Plus* also have the unique benefit of reaching community members experiencing food or nutrition insecurity who may not be eligible for Medi-Cal, serving as a complement to Medi-Cal focused initiatives such as CalAIM and underscoring the importance of continuing flexible funding models that allow for eligibility beyond Medi-Cal. Through aligning with and complementing CalAIM, the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* model can help ensure all individuals experiencing food/nutrition insecurity, regardless of insurance status, can access nutrition incentives critical for supporting health and well-being.

¹³California Department of Health Care Services. (n.d.). California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM). Retrieved [date], from <https://calaim.dhcs.ca.gov/>

Sustainability and Integration. Sustaining and expanding *¡Más Fresco! Plus* requires ongoing investment from local and state agencies, as well as partnerships with healthcare providers and organizations, to integrate nutrition incentive programs as an essential component of community health interventions. Exploring blended funding models that combine public funding (e.g., county health and social services, Medi-Cal) with federal (e.g., Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program-GUSNIP) and private sector and philanthropic contributions can help ensure long-term program sustainability and scalability.

The continued success and expansion of *¡Más Fresco! Plus* can serve as a blueprint for embedding nutrition incentives into community health strategies, ultimately advancing food and nutrition security, reducing health disparities, and strengthening local food access and infrastructure.





LESSONS LEARNED & OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout implementation of the *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program, a number of lessons learned and opportunities were identified based on feedback from participants and in collaboration with program partners. Key challenges and lessons learned have included the following:

- ✓ **Produce box deliveries are well-received and convenient for participants, and help address transportation challenges for residents and families with limited resources.**
 - Potential challenges with participants not receiving their produce boxes or produce boxes being undeliverable or stolen were minimally experienced, with the produce box delivery model ultimately proving successful and convenient to implement.
- ✓ **Many community members need a high level of support to facilitate successful enrollment, utilization of program benefits, and data collection.**
 - Challenges included incomplete participant addresses/information upon enrollment, and difficulty reaching participants to confirm. CCH worked closely with partner CBOs, leveraging their trusted relationships with community members. This included providing additional training for Promotoras/ CHWs at partner CBOs regarding emphasizing to participants importance of entering address/contact information correctly, providing CCH's program contact number, and informing participants that CCH may contact them from an unrecognizable number to confirm their information if needed.
 - Challenges with the Healthy Foodcard included low utilization with some participants either not activating or using their card, and questions regarding which stores and foods are eligible. CCH worked with CBO partners and providers to ensure participants have the information they need regarding their card benefits, and also conducted individual follow-up with those showing low utilization. Efforts also included development of new and updated program materials (e.g., flyers, website) to communicate key information to participants.

- ✓ **Additional resources would be helpful for participants regarding cooking, eating, and storing unfamiliar produce, and regarding ongoing food resources in the community.**
 - Challenges have also included some participants not being familiar with or knowing how to cook or eat the produce they are receiving. CCH is working with partners and sharing additional information and recipes with participants via new and updated program materials (e.g., flyers, website).
 - There is also a need to identify additional food resources for participants once their time in the program ends. CCH and partners are working together to identify additional resources for participants, as well as seek additional funding to support ongoing program operation moving forward.
- ✓ **It is important to work closely with local food sector, community, and health partners on program enrollment and implementation.**
 - Ongoing engagement and collaboration with community, health, and food sector partners has been critical to making this program a success.

Additional strengths, challenges, and opportunities are detailed in **Appendix B**, as identified from a program partner survey and facilitated all-partner meeting discussions in mid-2023 and 2024.

¡Más Fresco! Plus: Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaborative ApproachCommunity-Based Enrollment ProcessEase of Program Accessibility
¡Más Fresco! Plus: Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">High Demand Relative to Limited Program Capacity & FundingHigh Cost of Healthy FoodsSocial and Environmental Challenges Limiting Access to Healthy Foods
¡Más Fresco! Plus: Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand and strengthen partnerships with local CBOs, farmers, and health sector partnersIntegrate nutrition education and additional resource and recipe sharingIncrease and expand program benefitsContinue to include and expand community participation and voiceIdentify, promote, and implement program sustainability options



FUTURE GOALS & RESOURCE NEEDS

¡Más Fresco! Plus represents a scalable nutrition incentive program model integrating community, health, and food sector collaboration to address critical issues of food and nutrition insecurity, reduce economic challenges to healthy eating, and support local partners.

Looking ahead, *¡Más Fresco! Plus* is poised for further growth. In alignment with feedback from program partners and participants, **our vision includes scaling up the successes of *¡Más Fresco! Plus* to expand program services and reach, encompassing more extensive nutrition education efforts, deepening our community, health, and food sector partnerships, and continuing to break down social and environmental challenges to healthy food access for communities of varied backgrounds who face reduced access to fresh produce.**

The continued support of our funders and partners is crucial as we strive to build on our achievements and extend our reach, positioning *¡Más Fresco! Plus* to sustain program successes and continue making significant strides towards a healthier San Diego County for all.

Future Goals for <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i>
Expand Program Services, Partnerships, and Populations Served
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand program resources and reach to serve more families across more regions within San Diego County, including the County's unincorporated/rural areas.Expand program services for current and past participants to include more extensive nutrition education efforts and resources for families.Partner with additional community-based organizations, health clinics, and farms/food sector partners across San Diego County.

Future Goals for *¡Más Fresco! Plus*

Achieve Program Sustainability

- Secure ongoing and integrated funding to support program expansion including ongoing program operations and infrastructure.
- Identify opportunities for program expansion and sustainability including leveraging opportunities for integration with CalAIM Medically Tailored Meals Community Supports benefits available for Medi-Cal enrollees across California.

Advance Science Related to Food/Nutrition Security and Healthy Nutrition

- Expand research studies demonstrating the impact of nutrition incentive programs such as *¡Más Fresco! Plus* and contributing to the advancement of science related to food/nutrition security and healthy nutrition.
- Conduct ongoing dissemination of successful program practices in support of opportunities for replication and integration of best practices across the state or nationally.
- Expand partnerships with regional, statewide, and national organizations to continue to identify opportunities for program expansion, dissemination, and replication.



APPENDIX A. ¡MÁS FRESCO! PLUS: ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANT QUOTES & TESTIMONIALS

The table below highlights illustrative quotes and testimonials from *¡Más Fresco! Plus* participants, collected through testimonial feedback (n=404) and responses to qualitative follow-up survey questions (n=299) highlighting the program's impact across key findings and promising practices.

Key Finding/ Promising Practice	Participant Quote/Testimonial
Key Finding #1: Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Access	"I saved \$32 a month because I got fruits and vegetables [through <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i>]. It gave me extra money in my budget [for other necessities] because I don't have to buy any fruits or vegetables." – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant</i>
	"I have access to vegetables and fruits that I normally wouldn't buy at the supermarket due to the price." – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>
	"[<i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i>] helped stretch the dollars available to us for better, healthier groceries when shopping. It was so great to know that we would be guaranteed fresh fruit and vegetables...sadly there is no way that I could afford a box full of healthy items like that." – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>
	"The [<i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i>] program.... helped me a lot to feed my family. The money I saved with the vegetables they sent me allowed me to buy more healthy food for my family . Thank you so much to those who made this possible; you can't imagine how much you helped my family. Thank you!" – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>
Key Finding #2: Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption	"Thank you <i>¡Más Fresco! [Plus]</i> for allowing my family to be a part of this program. Thanks to this we have been challenging ourselves to cook different vegetables... when we open the box we get, it feels like Christmas every 2 weeks. This program has allowed us to eat more healthy without worrying about our budget! " – <i>C.T. and family, ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant</i>
	"The [produce boxes I received through the program] helped me a lot to eat more balanced meals. " – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant</i>
	"[<i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i>] helped me with me being able to live a happier life and provide healthier meal options for my son and I. We enjoy eating salads together. The variety of fruit is something that I really enjoy." – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>
	"The [<i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i> produce] box helped me a lot to eat balanced. " – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>
	"Now I like vegetables and fruits more [and] my teenage daughter asks for more fruits and vegetables because she always sees them on the table at mealtime." – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>
	"Before being a part of the [<i>¡Más Fresco! Plus</i>] program we did not eat enough fruits and veggies. Now I'm able to implement both [fruits and vegetables] in our daily meals , thank you!" – <i>¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant</i>

Key Finding/ Promising Practice	Participant Quote/Testimonial
Key Finding #2: Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption	“Having access to farm fresh produces inspired me to cook more at home. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“I loved being a part of this program. I was able to try new healthier recipes and try fruits and veggies I’ve never thought to eat before. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“We were more inclined to eat healthy and try new things since we had the access to them.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“I was very happy to be part of this program...I loved cooking with the variety of fresh fruits and vegetables I received.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
	“[A good variety of] produce, I was able to introduce new vegetables into my diet and make new dishes that I had never made before.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
	“The [¡Más Fresco! Plus] program has made such an impact on my day to day life. Through these produce boxes, I was able to feed myself and my grandchildren which significantly means a lot. The produce delivered was always fresh from the farm and I was able to in indulge in new vegetables that I hadn’t tried before Grade: A++!” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
Key Finding #3: Providing Social and Emotional Support	“It was really fun to try new vegetables and look up recipes on how to implement them in our diet. Having access to these fruits and vegetables tremendously improved our diet! ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
	“Thank you for the veggie and fruit boxes. They have really been a blessing. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
Key Finding #4: Supporting Health and Disease Management	“[Participant] is an active community member that has battled with cancer for many years. He was in remission up until late 2023. [Recently he] found out he has stage 3 breast cancer and has to go through chemotherapy aggressively. SBCS staff was able to enroll [him] and his wife into the ¡Más Fresco! Plus program. They receive fruits and vegetables twice a month and are very grateful since they do not have transportation at the time. This couple has limited funds and getting this assistance has made them very happy that they are able to eat healthy foods especially going through this difficult time with their current health issues. These services have made a big difference in [their] lives. They give thanks to all that make this assistance available.” – SBCS ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Success Story
	“We are learning to cook healthier... my children have diabetes and I like [the program] a lot because it helps us live a healthier lifestyle. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
	“I would like to continue receiving the box of fresh fruits and vegetables; it has helped me a lot with my high blood pressure. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“¡Más Fresco! Plus is great! I really appreciate receiving the produce boxes, it really helped my health and my overall personal wellness. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant

Key Finding/ Promising Practice	Participant Quote/Testimonial
Key Finding #5: High Satisfaction from Community	“You’re doing a great job, thanks for your kindness. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
Promising Practice #1: Unique Benefits and Convenience of Produce Box Model	“We have better access to fresh vegetables and fruits. [¡Más Fresco! Plus produce] comes straight to your home and that is helpful when we have no time to go outside to shop or wait in lines since we are working and busy.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“[I enjoyed the home] delivery and tasting that it was from farms - so much better, you can taste the difference in the produce box compared to what you get at a store with CalFresh benefits.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“I appreciated that it was straight from the farm to my doorstep. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“It was convenient [that I] did not have to drive and wait for hours and sometimes leaving without getting anything because they ran out [of produce]!” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“ Home delivery! I do not drive so transportation is always a problem especially when grocery shopping.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
	“The vegetables and fruits are fresher, and they arrive at home. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“Knowing it’s locally [grown is important], and the quantity and quality. You can’t get that in the local stores and churches where they give out free food [and] the quality is usually very poor, either expired [or] molded... by the time you get into it and see, you only have a handful of something that is not spoiled and good to eat.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
Promising Practice #2: Addressing Community Needs through Program Expansion	“The delivery option was very convenient. The box was always fresh and the communication was great.” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Survey Participant
	“I want the program to continue for another year, it’s great. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
Promising Practice #3: Enhanced Participant Support to Maximize Healthy Foodcard Utilization	“ Extend the program for more time for people who need fruits and vegetables. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant
	“[Participant] stated that the card had helped her feed her family, especially during these times where groceries are so expensive, the card has helped filled the gap. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Story from CBO Partner
	“[Participant] expressed her gratitude to the program. She stated that she is on remission from cancer and that she used the card to buy organic fruits and vegetables at Vons. Participant also stated that the staff was very responsive when she had questions. Overall a great program that she would recommend. ” – ¡Más Fresco! Plus Participant Story from CBO Partner

APPENDIX B. ¡MÁS FRESCO! PLUS STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES
COMMUNITY PARTNER FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The following key themes summarize feedback and key themes from a **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)** analysis conducted by CCH staff with *¡Más Fresco! Plus* program partners in March 2023 and Discussion Groups with program partners facilitated by CCH in May and July 2024. Feedback was collected via an online partner survey and facilitated meeting discussion with program partners.

Strengths & Facilitators: What has helped facilitate the successes we have seen to-date? What strengths and resources do our different partners bring to the table?	
Key Themes	Feedback Summary
Collaborative Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Collaboration and Partnership with local CBOs including Promotoras rooted in the community</i> is critical to establishing trust and being able to connect community members in highest need with the program• <i>Collective impact approach incorporating shared mission and goals</i> across partners helps facilitate collaboration• <i>Open, consistent communication between partners</i> is critical to ensuring smooth implementation and addressing challenges as they arise• <i>Participatory approach</i> to obtaining partner input on program materials helps increase understanding in the community• <i>Engaging local farmers to deliver produce creates market demand</i>, supporting farmers and promoting collaboration instead of competition to meet demand• <i>Working with local farmers</i> is critical to ensuring high-quality, good-tasting produce that appeals to participants
Community-Based Enrollment Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>CBO partners and Promotoras dedicating time and resources to program promotion and enrollment</i> at community locations allows for increased accessibility and trust-building to engage community members in need of services• <i>Availability of online enrollment</i> increases access for some community members• <i>Availability of program flyers and enrollment materials in multiple languages</i> increases access for community members from varied backgrounds who are in need of services
Program Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Lack of strict eligibility restrictions removes participation challenges and fills service gaps</i> for those experiencing food insecurity/health disparities (e.g., elderly, families) to be able to participate in the program even if they do not qualify for CalFresh• <i>High number of grocery store locations</i> available for redeeming Healthy Foodcard benefits increases access for participants

Weaknesses & Challenges: What gaps currently exist in the Mas Fresco Plus program? What implementation challenges have we experienced?

Key Themes	Feedback Summary
High Demand Relative to Limited Program Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Current demand is higher than program capacity and can lead to delays in enrollment</i> – in particular following increased program promotion in the community including word of mouth promotion beyond existing CBO partners • <i>Current program capacity would need to be increased to address high level of community need</i> – e.g., allowing enrollment for multiple families who live in the same household, options to enroll those with unstable housing, or options to extend program benefits beyond one year for families experiencing ongoing need • <i>As demand and enrollments increase</i>, increased communication needed with CBO partners regarding program capacity limits and status of enrolled families
High Level of Support needed for Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Many community members need a high level of staff support to address technology, literacy, and language challenges</i> and facilitate successful enrollment, utilization of program benefits, and data collection • <i>More support is needed in other languages including Arabic and Vietnamese</i> to support enrollment of communities with broad demographic profiles who are in need of program services

Threats & Cross-Sector Challenges: What individual, community, and cross-sector challenges get in the way of successfully being able to improve access to healthy foods? How can we work together to address these challenges?

Key Themes	Feedback Summary
Limited Program Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Limited funding currently exists for programs such as ¡Más Fresco! Plus-</i> there is a need for additional funding to support this type of produce prescription programs in high-need communities affected by food insecurity and health disparities
High Cost of Healthy Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Healthy foods continue to be less affordable or accessible than less healthy fast food</i> • <i>Price of local produce increasing with inflation</i> – to scale up, need to build in increased funding to support local farmers in scaling up their businesses • <i>Need for outreach and incentives that support local businesses and stores</i> in implementing affordable pricing of local produce
Social and Environmental Challenges Limiting Healthy Food Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Many participants continue to experience other social and environmental challenges limiting their access to healthy foods</i> – including limited transportation to get to grocery stores

Future Opportunities & Recommendations: What future opportunities exist to improve the Mas Fresco Plus model? How could we help support community members beyond the scope of Mas Fresco Plus? How can we work together to improve food, health sector, and community integration to improve access to healthy foods?

Key Themes	Feedback Summary
Expand and strengthen partnerships with local CBOs, farmers, and health sector partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement additional in-person and/or virtual communications with partners to <i>continue relationship-building across sectors, in line with collective impact approach</i> Explore other <i>resources available for participants through current partner agencies</i> Expand partnerships with additional <i>local CBOs</i> serving the community Increase collaboration and communication with <i>local farmers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase collaboration with local urban farmers Conduct focus groups or interviews with local farmers to incorporate input/feedback Increase collaboration with <i>health sector partners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with additional health clinics/providers to integrate program as part of patient care Collaborate with health partners to collect and monitor participant health outcomes
Integrate nutrition education and additional resource and recipe sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add <i>nutrition education</i> component for program recipients, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with local CBOs/Promotoras to provide cooking classes/home visits focused on promoting healthy eating Provide healthy recipe cards for participants
Increase and expand program benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase program capacity to serve more participants and to provide benefits for a longer period of time Add <i>additional store locations</i> for participants to use Healthy Foodcard benefits, e.g. Farmer's Market locations and grocery stores <i>typically shopped at by local communities like Northgate Market</i>
Provide food resources tailored to needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop <i>customized, tailored produce boxes for participants with different needs</i> (e.g., elderly, working families, "jumbo" boxes for larger families)
Continue to include and expand community participation and voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement additional strategies (e.g., focus groups) to <i>collect participant feedback and increase community member voice/input</i> during program implementation Create <i>opportunities for participants to meet/engage with local farmers</i> – e.g., via educational field trips / Farmer's markets

Future Opportunities & Recommendations: What future opportunities exist to improve the Mas Fresco Plus model? How could we help support community members beyond the scope of Mas Fresco Plus? How can we work together to improve food, health sector, and community integration to improve access to healthy foods?

Key Themes	Feedback Summary
Identify, promote, and implement program sustainability options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Many participating families continue to experience need after their participation in the program ends</i> – important to identify resources and options for sustaining program benefits/providing ongoing food resources for families with continued need<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect participants with local food resources to facilitate ongoing food access• Organize group deliveries to community locations such as community centers, senior citizen facilities, churches, etc. for those in need to pick up food boxes• Implement incentives for participants exiting the program to shop at local farms such as Foodshed or farmer’s markets during their last month of program participation• <i>Promote ongoing sustainability funding and support</i> for participants, partners, and local farmers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct media outreach activities, e.g. sharing media stores including community, farmer, retailer perspectives on program benefits• Collaborate/connect with CalAIM initiative to explore sustainability options – focus on prioritizing local, organic, climate-smart food procurement• Support efforts to increase the availability of healthy prepared foods at affordable prices and in locations that are convenient to our target communities

