



INCREASING ACCESS TO FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FOR SNAP RECIPIENTS THROUGH NEBRASKA DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS PROGRAM

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Program Overview

The Nebraska Double Up Food Bucks (NE Double Up) program was piloted in summer 2017 and is an incentive based program intended to increase the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV) by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients in participating locations. NE Double Up is modeled after the Fair Food Network's successful Double Up Food Bucks program. The NE Double Up program provides a dollar for dollar match on FFV at the point-of-purchase in retail stores and farmers markets in Lincoln, Nebraska. NE Double Up is a policy, system, and environmental approach utilizing multi-level interventions, including direct nutrition education in combination with food demonstrations/samples, promotion, marketing, signage, and incentives to purchase FFV.

Program Description

In 2017, the NE Double Up pilot ran for 29 weeks across four sites (3 Farmer's Markets and 1 grocery store) with 24 different vendors and reached a total of 150 households. As a part of the NE Double Up program, nutrition education and food demonstrations utilizing local, in-season fruits and vegetables were provided for every market. Recipes were provided by Nebraska Extension SNAP-Ed to ensure they were simple, tested, affordable, and culturally appropriate. To provide the most appropriate information for our audience, informational handouts were created on fresh produce safety, storage, and preparation. Marketing efforts for an incentive program are integral to the program's success. NE Double Up has been marketed through a newsletter article in the Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Additionally, a local news segment was aired. Information on NE Double Up was put into SNAP direct mailings, fliers were distributed, and Facebook posts about nutrition education events were posted each week. Materials provided by the Fair Food Network were used to distribute flyers and posters to participating sites and partner agencies.

Pilot Program Evaluation

Evaluation of the NE Double Up program included survey responses from a subset of total customers (n=28) and vendors (n=17).

Customers:



- 29% of respondents indicated that without NE Double Up, they would not have shopped at the farmers market that day.
- Almost 80% indicated it was easy to tell which fresh produce items they could buy with NE Double Up at the farmers market. The same number of respondents also indicated it was easy to buy fruits and vegetables using NE Double Up checks at the farmers market.
- Roughly 30% of survey respondents indicated they used NE Double Up at other farmers markets or the grocery store, showing they were taking full advantage of the program.
- 94% reported they were shopping for children, demonstrating the potential impact this program will have on the young Nebraska SNAP population.

Vendors:



- Approximately 70% indicated selling at their designated farmers market for 5 or more years.
- When asked what was primarily sold at their designated farmers market, about 70% reported fruits and vegetables, 12% reported prepared foods, 12% reported other, and 6% reported dairy.
- For those that participated in NE Double Up in 2017, 89% indicated planning to participate in 2018.

As a result of the program, vendors reported the following:

- 44% agreed they have made more money
- 22% agreed they have a new customer base
- 11% agreed they sell more fruits and vegetables
- 56% agreed their market is stronger.
- 11% of vendors reported they are very likely to increase the variety of crops grown and put more land into production.

Double Up check distribution and redemption tracking:



- The overall average redemption rate across sites for NE Double Up checks was 82%. Other incentive programs in Nebraska have redemption rates at about 55%-80%.
- The independent grocery store that provides NE Double Up in Lincoln had a 100% redemption rate, while each farmers market varied between 64% and 94%.
- Each participating site also had an increase in SNAP sales between 27% and 47% during the program. SNAP participation at these sites also increased, with over 100 new customers between the four sites.
- On average, SNAP participants spent \$21.21 each visit at a Lincoln farmers market in 2016. In 2017, that number increased by 41% to \$29.94.

Highlights of Results

The pilot program was successful at engaging an established network of varied partners, implementing new technologies, and evaluating the impact of the program. The NE Double Up program made it easier for low-income Nebraskans to eat fresh fruits and vegetables while supporting family farmers and growing local economies. During the pilot year, open-ended responses on customer surveys overwhelmingly praised and recommended the program (e.g. "I think it's awesome. I have to eat well due to health issues and fruits and veggies are pricey"; "love it and it helps stretch food; Great program!"). Average redemption rate of NE Double Up checks were 82%, higher than other incentive programs in NE. SNAP sales and participation increased at each participating site.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

- Plans to expand the program in 2018, from four sites in Lincoln to 11 sites across 3 different communities.

NE Double Up – Opportunities for Local Action

- Currently, NE Double Up works with 3 Farmer's Markets and 1 Grocery store to increase FFV purchases for SNAP participants.
- For more information or to bring NE Double Up to your community contact Vanessa Wielenga at vwielenga2@unl.edu or Morgan Hartline at morgan.hartline@unl.edu.

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Program Partners

