

LA PLATA COUNTY

FOOD PLAN

FOOD ACCESS & NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

Nutrition Assistance Programs in the United States work to combat food insecurity and provide individuals and families access to food. Food banks and pantries assist in distributing food directly to individuals and families. Additional programs exist to enhance access to nutritious food, support public health, and alleviate poverty. Programs include: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): provides financial aid for purchasing food; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): offers nutrition education and resources to pregnant women, new mothers, and young children; Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb): provides opportunities to double SNAP dollars in certain retail establishments; National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP): ensures children receive nutritious meals during the school day.



BENEFITS

- Provide access to nutritious food for low-income families
- Ensure families have essential nutrients needed for a healthy lifestyle
- Reduce food insecurity by offering consistent and reliable sources of food
- Improve academic performance in children through providing meals that support their cognitive and physical development
- Stimulate the economy by purchasing local food and agricultural products
- Reduce healthcare costs by providing nutritious food that helps prevent diet-related illnesses and promotes overall health



CHALLENGES

- Addressing insufficient funding that limits the reach and effectiveness of nutrition assistance programs
- Coping with limited availability and quality of food assistance
- Navigating difficult application processes that can deter eligible individuals
- Meeting strict eligibility criteria that can exclude vulnerable populations
- Combating budget restraints and competing interests
- Providing nutrition education to participants for healthy food choices

Food pantries have been identified as a target setting for policy, system, and environmental (PSE) interventions to promote healthy eating among households who rely on pantries to supplement their food needs (Yamoah et al., 2023).

Food assistance programs are designed to support sustainable agricultural practices and reduce food waste. The integration of environmental considerations into nutrition assistance programs addresses immediate food security and contributes to the long-term sustainability of food systems.

Proper storage and distribution facilities are essential for preventing food loss and transporting food to those in need. Robust infrastructure supports the effective delivery of nutrition by ensuring proper storage and distribution of food, providing training and employment services, improving healthcare facilities, and supporting school-based nutrition initiatives.



Nutrition assistance programs actively work to recognize the importance of culturally appropriate food options. This approach ensures that the food provided aligns with the dietary preferences and cultural practices of different individuals, families and communities. Incorporating cultural relevance and wellness into nutrition assistance programs can help support the diverse needs of communities. **This also relates to focus group discussions in regard to “increasing options for culturally relevant food and bridging the gap between production and culinary practices.”**

Economy and finance of nutrition assistance programs play a critical role in addressing food insecurity and supporting low-income households (Olsho et al., 2016). These programs help to stabilize household economies by enabling families to allocate more of their limited resources to other essential needs, such as housing and healthcare. Every dollar spent on SNAP generates economic activity, as recipients spend their benefits on food, thus supporting local businesses and economies.



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to www.extension.iastate.edu/legal.

VEA ESTE PÓSTER
EN ESPAÑOL

bit.ly/LPCespañol

