



FOOD MATTERS

Nourishing the Body and Soul

2022-2025 Project Summary



COLLEGE of ARTS & SCIENCES

HEALTHY SCHOOLS,
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Cultivating an equitable food system in DC.



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Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities Lab

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FOOD MATTERS

NOURISHING THE BODY AND SOUL
SNAP Ed Nutrition Education Program

  
This program is funded wholly, or in part, by the Government of the District of Columbia, the Department of Health, Community Health Administration. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Executive Summary

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program focused on three main goals:

1. Help people eat more healthy foods and drinks and eat less unhealthy foods and drinks.
2. Improve access to affordable, healthy foods that support good health and prevent disease for everyone.
3. Encourage people to be more physically active and spend less being inactive.

From October 2022 through December 2025, *Food Matters: Nourishing the Body and Soul* used proven, evidence-based strategies that addressed different spheres of influence (individual, community, and environment) and were customized to the needs of Washington, DC communities.

The following components were utilized throughout the project:

- Direct Education: Teaching residents directly (such as classes, workshops, or demonstrations).
- Indirect Education: Sharing information through materials like flyers, videos, or newsletters.
- Social Marketing: Campaigns that promote healthy behaviors through media and messaging.
- Systems Alignment: Collaborating with partners and organizations to support healthy changes in policies or environments.
- Data Collection and Reporting: Tracking participation and assessing program results.

Food Matters sought to reach at least 1,500 different people each year through both direct and indirect education activities, with at least 500 people participating in direct education activities. In FY25, 538 residents participated in direct education and 1,125 residents in indirect education activities.

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FOOD MATTERS

NOURISHING THE BODY AND SOUL
SNAP Ed Nutrition Education Program



DC snap Ed

Program Development

Project Description

Through Funding from DC Health, Food Matters: Nourishing the Body and Soul engaged Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and those eligible for nutrition education programming October 2022–December 2025.

Food Matters worked across the Ward 4, 5, 7 and 8 communities to offer resources and programming that will support healthy dietary patterns and lifestyle changes. Individual, small group, and community education worked toward aligning daily diets with habits that promote a healthy weight and lower risk for diet related diseases, such as obesity, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol.

Food Matters delivered nutrition education across diverse settings to SNAP eligible participants. Utilizing evidence-based curricula in all formats, Food Matters partnered with a variety of community-based organizations, food access sites, and food retail locations to offer weekly direct and indirect education opportunities. Engagement with partners was critical to the marketing, promotion, and success of every program.

Evaluation of impact - process and outcome - was tracked for all education events and informed program changes and systems alignment throughout the project.

Who

Residents of Wards 4, 5, 7 and 8 who are SNAP recipients or SNAP eligible and are ready to start their journey into healthy eating and healthy lifestyle.

What

Free nutrition education events and classes taught by the Food Matters Nutrition Educator and other team members using SNAP-Ed curriculum.

Where

Different community spaces including grocery stores, libraries, recreation centers, food access sites, and senior dining sites across Wards 4, 5, 7 and 8.

Program Development

Formative Research

As the first step of development, an environmental scan, needs assessment and Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat (SWOT) Analysis were conducted to further understand the community and the potential of program success given population needs. This formative research ensured the program was tailored to best fit the priority population. The following SWOT analysis guided program design from the outset and informed how programming could utilize community strengths and assets.

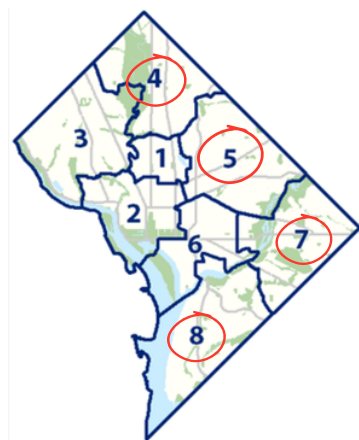
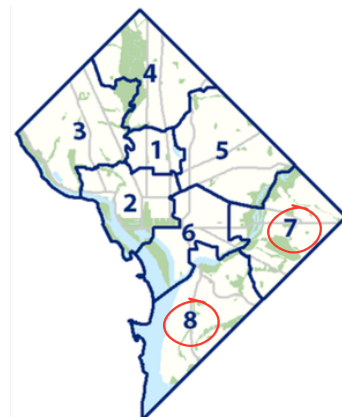
SWOT Analysis

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence-based project based on prior research and experience working with partnerships in Ward 7 to build health and resilience.• Community food assistance already exist.• Lidl opened in Ward 7 as their third grocery store.• Safeway accepted SNAP and WIC cards• SNAP-Ed toolkit and evaluation network offer key curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ward 7 is a “food desert,” only 2 Safeways serve 82,000 residents• DC has disproportionate access to food by Ward, communities, races and socioeconomic status.• Low-income target population - financial barriers to food• Small team: limited team members to conduct Point-of-Purchase (POP) education and are not members of Ward 7 community
Opportunity	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach out to local food programs in Ward 7 to gain insight into the community• Target food skills to support SNAP recipients• Use SNAP-Ed toolkit curriculum to create nutrition education program• Explore the use of community health advocates to build connection with community• Reach out to DC food access sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designing a brief POP education plan that is accessible to community members.• Determining specific goals for outcomes programs.• Food access challenges in low-income neighborhoods (Wards 4, 5, 7, 8).• Evaluation: Identifying how to measure success and effectiveness of the project and class attendees participation.

Program Development

Formative Research

SNAP recipients and those eligible for SNAP (“SNAP eligibles”) in Wards 7 and 8 were the original priority population of this program’s interventions. Wards 7 and 8 reflect an obesity rate of 38.2% and 44.4% respectively,¹ with a higher prevalence of high blood pressure and diabetes, both of which can be linked to diet. In DC, 60% of SNAP participants live in Wards 7 and 8.



The priority population was expanded to include Wards 4 and 5 in year 3 based on local data related to SNAP enrollment, health disparities and food accessibility. Focusing on serving residents in all 4 wards allows us to provide nutrition education to the most vulnerable communities whose consumption habits adversely affect health outcomes.

There are only 7 full-service grocery store in Wards 7 and 8, classifying them as food deserts, limiting resident access to food. SNAP participants also tend to have a less healthy diet compared to other population groups.² We were able to understand the relevance of this national trend to our population by collecting shopper’s receipts during Point-of-Purchase (POP) events at Ward 7 and 8 Safeway store locations and looking at local data.

Ward	Population	Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores (2024)*	Number of Full-Service Grocery Stores (2025)
D.C.	672,079	76	80
1	79,373	12	13
2	78,878	14	13
3	78,404	16	17
4	85,587	11	11
5	88,426	8	9
6	84,004	9	10
7	90,898	3	3
8	86,509	3	4

1. District of Columbia Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS). Updated 1/23/26.

2. Andreyeva T, Tripp AS, Schwartz MB. Dietary Quality of Americans by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Status: A Systematic Review. Am J Prev Med. 2015 Oct;49(4):594-604. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2015.04.035.

Program Development

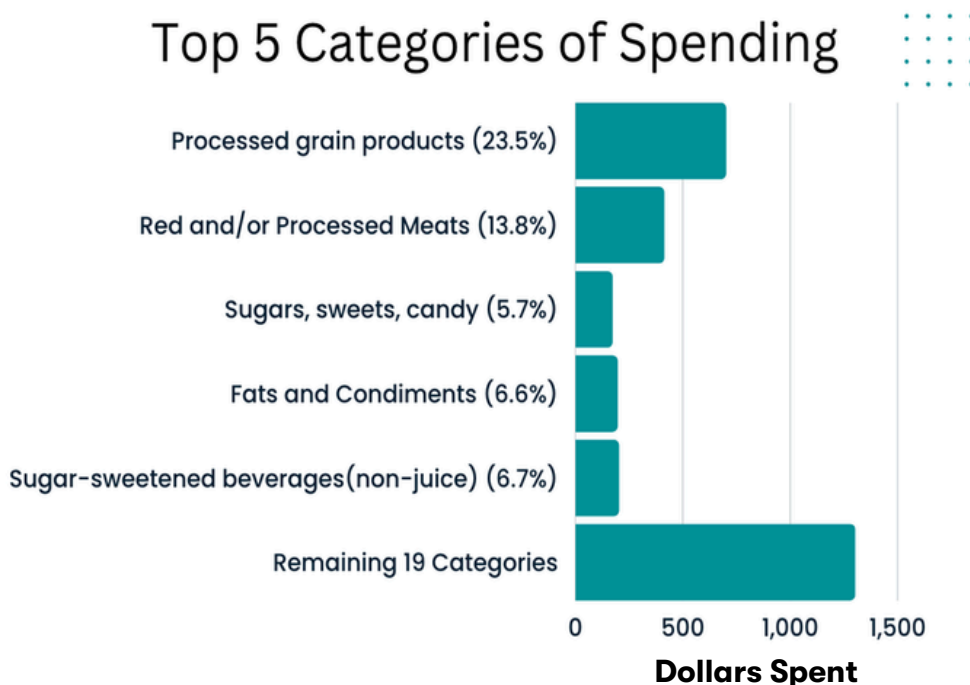
Needs Assessment

In addition to traditional background research and reviews of existing literature, the team collected purchasing data at two Safeway locations in Wards 7 and 8. Store receipts were collected from shoppers to look for trends in purchasing behavior to understand what items were most and least commonly purchased.

The receipts collected summed the amount of money spent on healthy and unhealthy food items (itemized and categorized by food type, based on the 2007 USDA *Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Food Plans*) and calculated the percentage of total spending for each. The data collection (n=95 receipts, a total of \$2,984.53 in purchases) found the following trends:

- Less than 10% of spending on Fruits and Vegetables
- Nearly 24% of grocery purchases were processed Grains, such as cereals, snack foods and baked goods
- 20% of grocery spending was on Beverages, with the majority being sugar-sweetened beverages

Chart 1: Analysis of Total Spending on Healthy and Unhealthy Food from Receipt Data



Program Model

Direct Education Delivery Modalities

Rooted in the social ecological model, programming consisted of multi-level interventions which included both direct and indirect education offered in-person and in a live online format. Our dynamic methods of program delivery offered a range of choices to fit individuals' needs, interests, and availability, as well as preferred level of involvement.

Direct education: Interventions that allow for active engagement for at least 20 minutes per session with an intended reach of 500 people. Taught by our resident nutrition educators who both hold a MS in nutrition education. Registered Dietitian guest instructors collaborate with program staff to teach select nutrition bite sessions. Food Matters offered three different direct education formats.



Nutrition Bites consisted of 20-30 minute classes offered over zoom using a live online format on a weekly basis. Topics and class educators rotated each week to expand the range of programming offered, suitable for participants experiencing transportation and travel barriers.

Nutrition Blasts are one-hour single session classes held in person at different community sites, such as senior dining sites. This mobile format brought our programming to the participants' location for ease and accessibility.



Four-week series consisted of 60-minute classes held in person on a weekly basis at various community locations where participants meet us at the host site for class. Attendees received an ingredient bag, cooking tool, recipe sample and SNAP-Ed recipe to support self efficacy in being able to make healthy, palatable meals at home.

Program Model

SNAP-Ed Tools and Resources



Create Better Health (CBH), an evidence-based SNAP-Ed curriculum, was chosen for the four-week series class. After comparing seven established curricula from the SNAP-Ed Library. Create Better Health was identified as the best fit for achieving the goals of Food Matters in delivering community-based nutrition education. CBH is a direct education intervention designed to improve nutrition knowledge, skills, and self efficacy to lead an active and healthy lifestyle in adults with limited resources.

Slight modifications to curriculum content were made to focus solely nutrition. Evaluation of the series class was conducted using the pre- and post-surveys included in the curriculum. Data collected from series participants assessed the effectiveness and impact of the class with a focus on change in consumption patterns and behavior.



FOOD MATTERS PRE SURVEY

Use in the first class of a series.

Based off of CREATE BETTER HEALTH

First letter of first name: _____ First letter of last name: _____

Birth Month: _____ Birth Day: _____

For example, if you were born on May 1 you would write: Birth Month: 05 Birth Day: 01

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Gender | Age | Ethnicity | Race (select all that apply) |
| <input type="radio"/> Female | <input type="radio"/> 18-59 years | <input type="radio"/> Hispanic | <input type="radio"/> American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| <input type="radio"/> Male | <input type="radio"/> 60-75 years | <input type="radio"/> Non-Hispanic | <input type="radio"/> Asian |
| <input type="radio"/> Non-binary | <input type="radio"/> 76+ years | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to respond | <input type="radio"/> Black/African American |
| <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to respond | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to respond | <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | <input type="radio"/> White |
| | | <input type="radio"/> White | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to respond |

In the past 12 months, how many months did anyone in your household receive benefits from a federal food assistance program? (SNAP, WIC, free and reduced lunch program, or any other federal food assistance program)

- All months Some months Never

The next section has statements people have made about their food situation. Choose the answer that best fits your food situation over the last 30 days.

	Often true	Sometimes true	Never true	Don't know
The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

- Yes No Maybe

How did you hear about the Food Matters Program?

- Social media Friends or family Community organization School
 Flyers or poster Safeway Grocery Store
 Other, please explain: _____

The self reported evaluation data was used to inform continuous program development. For example, some participants expressed that they felt the class was too long. To remedy this, series classes were shortened from 90 to 60 minutes.

Additionally attendees expressed that they wished there were additional classes to continue their nutrition journey once the series was completed, as well as topics of interest they wish had been covered. To address this, another learning opportunity, *Nutrition Bites*, was developed and included lessons about topics that participants wanted to understand more fully.

Program Model

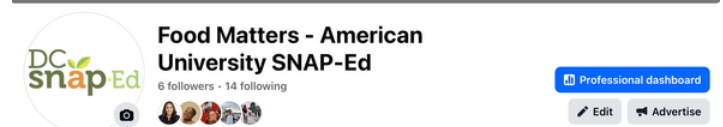
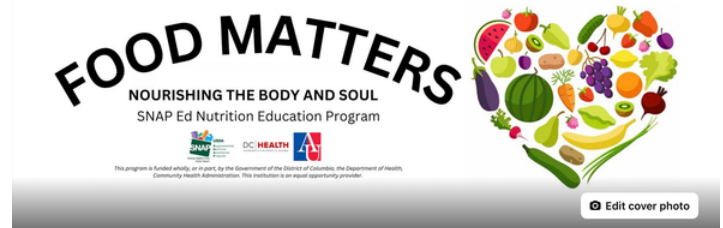
Indirect Education Delivery Modalities

Indirect education: Interventions which display information and resources, including mass communications, public events and material distribution. Indirect is shorter duration and intensity than direct education with an intended reach of 1,000 people. This format explicitly supports direct education programming.

POP (Point-of-Purchase): POP events were a key component and popular format of programming with partners and participants. A varied table display focused on monthly topics alongside a complementary engagement activity. POP events took place at the point-of-purchase where individuals buy groceries in a retail setting, or at the point-of-procurement where individuals access food such as food pantries and nonprofit grocery allocation programs. The program's Facebook page as well as a monthly email newsletter were utilized as opportunities to continue to disseminate nutrition information to program participants and interested individuals outside of traditional educational formats.



Team members host a POP event at Bread for the City's Farms Market Produce Distribution Event



Photos [Add photos/video](#)



The Food Matters Facebook page is used as a vehicle to share nutrition education resources virtually to support dissemination of learning materials

Program Model

Core Learning Content

Regardless of the format, Food Matters nutrition education focused on evidence-based and science-supported information. POP and Nutrition Bite topics were responsive to community members' requests and addressed current topics of interest. Nutrition Blasts and the Series covered the content outlined in the *Create Better Health* curriculum.

Direct Education Nutrition Topics Covered:

Series Class and Nutrition Blasts: Heathy Eating Patterns and MyPlate, Meal Planning, Grocery Shopping, Goal Setting, Nutrition Facts Label and Protein, Fruits, Vegetables and Grains

Nutrition Bites: Eating to Boost Immunity, Nutrition Myths, Reducing Sodium, Meal Planning, Setting Nutrition Goals, Healthy Breakfasts, Conversations with Kids about Nutrition

Indirect Education Nutrition Topics Covered:

POP: Added sugars, Sodium, MyPlate, Nutrition Facts Label, Eating for Heart Health, Healthy Breakfasts, Fruits and Vegetables, Meal Planning and Grocery Shopping



Program Model

Incremental and Progressive Learning

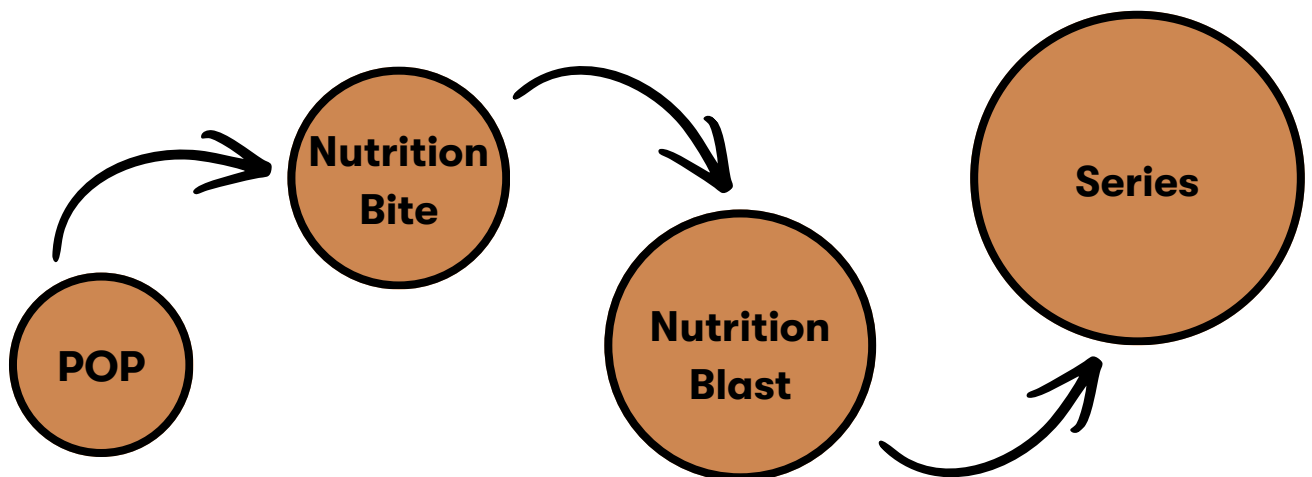
Exposure to one program format frequently led participants to pursue other formats to extend their learning experience. For example, attendees of a single session Nutrition Blast who enjoyed the class would often sign-up for a series class to continue learning. Participants of series classes have connected Food Matters with other organizations they engage with to bring programming to more members of the community at new locations.

POP, Nutrition Bites, Nutrition Blasts, and the Series

The most common format for residents to first engage with Food Matters was typically through indirect education at POP events. From those encounters at community events, residents may choose to attend one or several of our different direct education classes.

- POP programming requires the least commitment on behalf of participants in terms of time and planning. Positive POP interactions often lead to interest in learning more in a traditional setting.
- Nutrition Bite sessions offered quick breakdowns of popular and trending nutrition topics and also served to share new weekly content.
- Nutrition Blasts gave participants a full hour of content and often piqued the interest of attendees in learning even more.
- The Series was a great finale for those who only attended a single Nutrition Blast session class and wanted to continue learning.

Nutrition Bites offered a new opportunity to learn new content each week which allows for the continuation of strengthening Nutrition knowledge.



Program Model

Social Marketing, Outreach and Communication

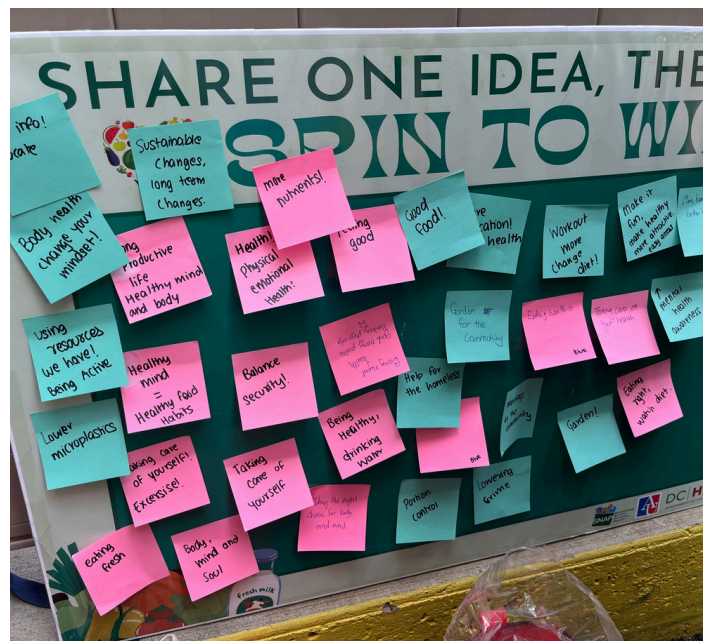
High volume POP events act as a successful channel to promote direct education programming via flyer distribution and conversations.

An email sign-up sheet was displayed on the table as a way for interested individuals to join the newsletter mailing list. The newsletter included nutrition information and event reminders with registration links to Eventbrite for classes.

Business cards were also displayed on the table to provide potential partner organizations with the contact information to keep the communication channels open for future event coordination.

The cards also contained a QR code to the Eventbrite page if they'd like to attend a class prior to hosting a series or scheduling a nutrition blast.

The Facebook page was used to establish a social media presence to advertise events and registration for events, as well as a social marketing tool by being an avenue to share infographics and other nutrition education resources.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Growth of Partnerships

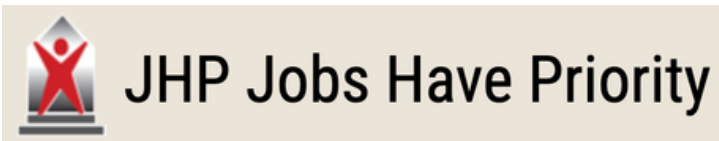
The foundation of the Food Matters program is built on community partnerships. With a variety of programming options to choose from, community organizations could sample nutrition education in a manner that worked best for them. Many organizations invited the Food Matters team to join established events. Food Matters hosted POPs at Bread for the City's Farmer's Markets. The Salvation Army found the Nutrition Blasts useful to their Senior Choice events, which encouraged participation and conversation during their meal distribution.

As community partners implemented Food Matters programming, some organizations embraced a stronger relationship with Food Matters. By starting off small with programming options like POPs and Nutrition Bites, local organizations could see if the Food Matters programming worked for them and their community members. Martha's Table first welcomed Food Matters by hosting the team for POPs. After months of in-depth conversations with community members, Martha's Table then invited Food Matters to host a series class program. Food Matters hosted two series classes in 2024 and two more in 2025 at Martha's Table. Over the years, Food Matters has not only expanded to a variety of organizations, but has also grown enduring relationships with community partners.

As a result of the community-forward work, Food Matters broadened their network to other organizations through in-person events. During a POP event at Martha's Table, Food Matters staff met a representative from Jobs Have Priority. After creating this connection, the Food Matters team hosted a variety of events at this site. The contact list of partners expanded further with the help of our partners. Members of Capital Area Food Bank connected Food Matters to The Salvation Army. With the implementation of community-based programming, organizations recognized how Food Matters could benefit other organizations and outlets.

In addition to creating opportunities to expand organization partnerships, it also allowed the team to create partnerships with likeminded individuals who would later join the Food Matters team to assist in program implementation at different capacities. For example, Food Matters initially established a partnership with Giant to conduct POP events in their stores by working with their on-site nutritionist. The nutritionist would later join the team as a community advocate nutrition educator and teach several Nutrition Bite sessions. While the partnership started as an agreement to conduct programming at the respective store location, it blossomed into team expansion to include an educator who worked with our priority population long before we did, strengthening both our team and programming.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



COMMUNITY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- **Safeway** - Major American supermarket chain
- **Giant** - Major regional supermarket chain primarily in the DMV
- **Martha's Table** - DC nonprofit that fights poverty by means of providing resources such as food access, education and family support
- **Bread for the City (BFC)** - DC nonprofit that provides free food, clothing, and social services to low income residents
- **Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB)** - Largest hunger relief organization in the DC area providing food distribution
- **Jobs Have Priority (JHP)** - DC nonprofit focused on employment assistance, housing support, case management and life skills
- **DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)** - city agency that manages parks and community centers
- **United Planning Organization (UPO)** - nonprofit connecting low income residents to education, jobs, health and housing services
- **The Salvation Army** - charity that focuses on providing social services such as shelters, food pantries, disaster relief and financial services
- **So Others Might Eat (SOME)** - nonprofit focused on emergency services including meals, clothing, housing and healthcare
- **IONA Senior Services** - nonprofit that supports old adults with advocacy, health services and support groups
- **DC Public Library** - library system that provides free access to books, learning tools and community spaces
- **Seabury Resources for Aging** - nonprofit that helps older adults live independently through affordable housing, meals, care management and community programming

RESULTS

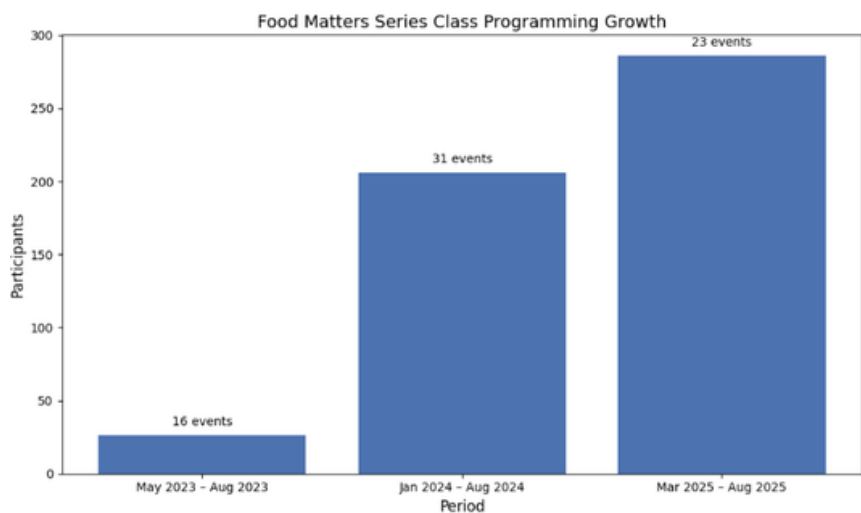
The strong partnerships with community organizations developed and nurtured over three years served as the foundation that enabled the following outcomes.



868

The number of individuals who participated in Food Matters direct education programming. Specifically, those that attended the four-week series class, Nutrition Blast events, and online Nutrition Bites.

Chart 2:



The Food Matters series class programming grew **almost 800%** between May 2023 and August 2024. The series class **continued to develop**, as it grew **nearly 33%** between August 2024 and August 2025.

RESULTS

With the development of Nutrition Blasts in Y3, the Food Matters team reached **over 3 times** more community members through a single hour-long session in FY25.

April 2024- August 2024: **71 participants in 6 events**

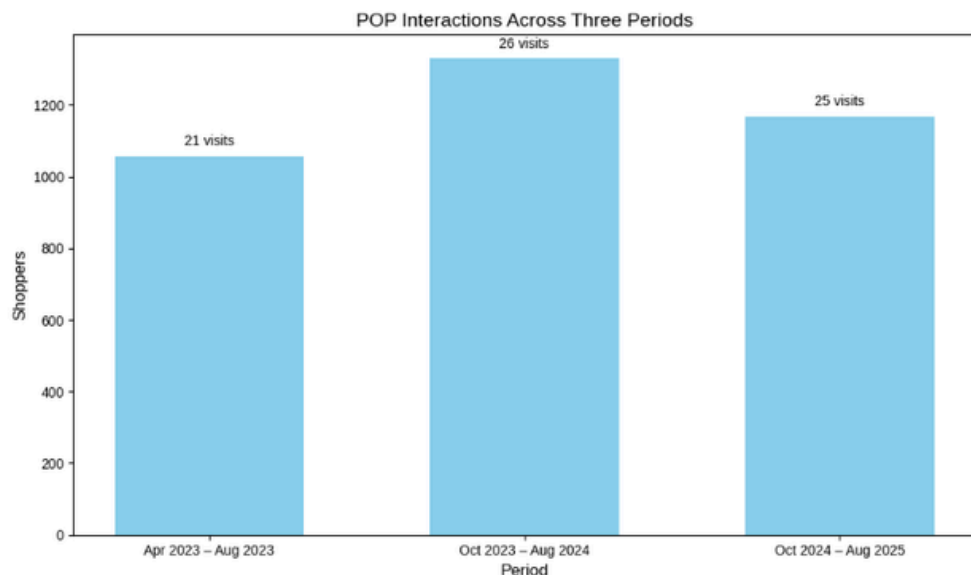
October 2024 - August 2025: **224 participants in 22 events**



3,064

The number of individuals who participated in Food Matters indirect education, also known as our Point-of-Purchase (POP) programming.

Chart 3:



There was a **25% increase** in POP interactions in Year 2 compared to Year 1.

RESULTS

Success Spotlight: Miss Cynthia

One of our participants, Miss Cynthia, attended the series class for the months of May, June and July, rarely missing a class and frequently trying the recipe shares we provided each week. Upon completion of the July series, Miss Cynthia relayed to our nutrition educator that with the knowledge and guidance she's gained from our class related to healthy eating, she was able to lose close to 15 pounds in the past three months.

We were happy to learn that participants were able to apply our teachings to their day-to-day life and make positive lifestyle adjustments. This news was especially exciting for Miss Cynthia because her consistent and healthy weight loss meant that her doctor had withdrawn his recommendation to prescribe a weight loss injection to help her lose weight. She mentioned how this class not only provided her with important information related to nutrition and eating well, but also helped empower her to apply the knowledge in her day-to-day life and make changes which in turn helped improve her overall health.



RESULTS

Recruitment and Outreach

Recruitment and outreach strategies with reach based on years 1 and 2 of the program. These approaches connected residents with programming options as well as organizations interested in creating partnerships to offer nutrition education.

Table 1:

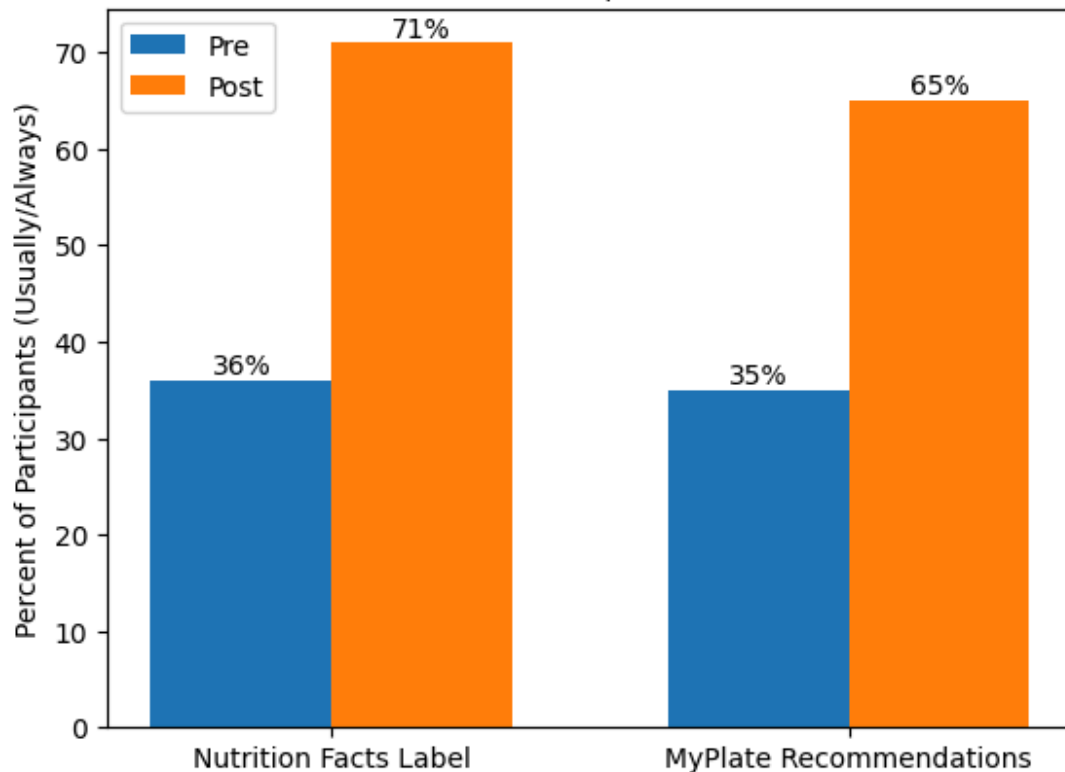
Type of Contact	Reach
Class Attendees	868
Social Media Followers	178
Community-based Partnerships	30
POP encounters with Ward 7&8 Participants	3,064
TOTAL	4,000+

RESULTS

Nutrition Education Tools

Chart 4:

Consistent Use of Nutrition Education Tools
Pre (n=36-37) | Post (n=17)



Pre–post comparisons show meaningful improvements in participants’ use of nutrition education tools.

For both Nutrition Facts label use and adherence to MyPlate recommendations, the proportion of participants reporting that they “Never” use these tools declined substantially from 13.5% to 5.9%, while the number of respondents using them “Usually” or “Always” increased.

- Consistent use (“Usually/Always”) of Nutrition Facts labels increased by **over 30 percentage points**, from 36% to 71%.
- Consistent use of MyPlate recommendations **nearly doubled** from pre- to post-series, from 35% to 65%



RESULTS

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption



Fruit consumption patterns improved following participation in the Food Matters series. The proportion of participants consuming fruit three or more times per day more than doubled, increasing from **15% pre-series to 34% post-series**.

At the same time, the percentage of participants reporting low fruit intake (less than once per day) declined from **29% to 17%**. These shifts indicate a movement toward more regular fruit consumption, suggesting the program was effective in encouraging participants to incorporate healthier daily eating patterns.

Vegetable consumption patterns showed notable improvement following participation in the Food Matters series. The proportion of participants consuming vegetables less than once per day declined substantially from **18% pre-series to 6% post-series**, indicating a meaningful reduction in inadequate intake.

In addition, the share of participants consuming vegetables two or more times per day increased from **61% to 84%**. Together, these changes reflect a shift toward more frequent vegetable consumption and suggest the program was effective in supporting healthier, more consistent dietary behaviors.

Chart 5: Fruit Consumption

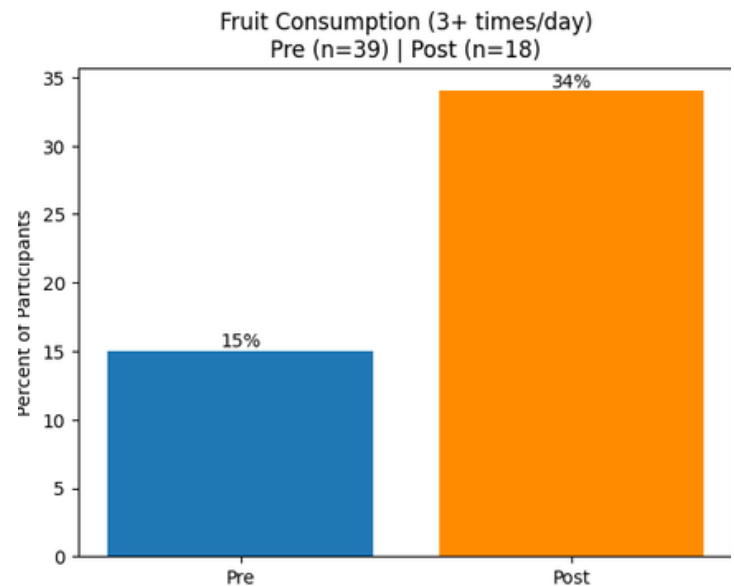
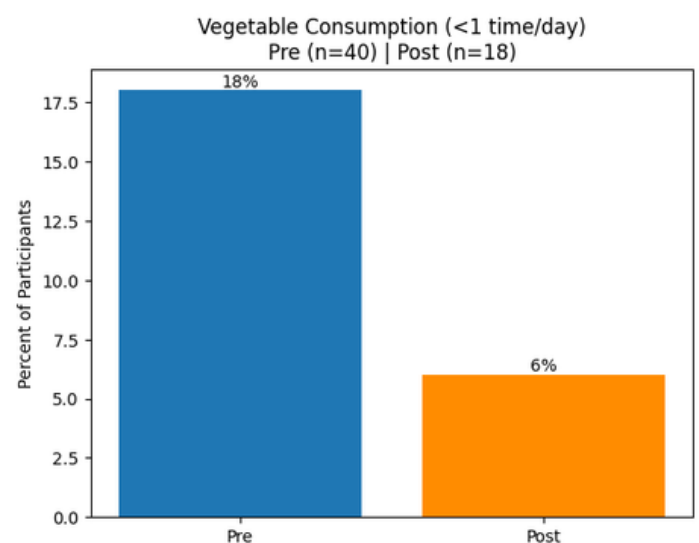


Chart 6: Vegetable Consumption

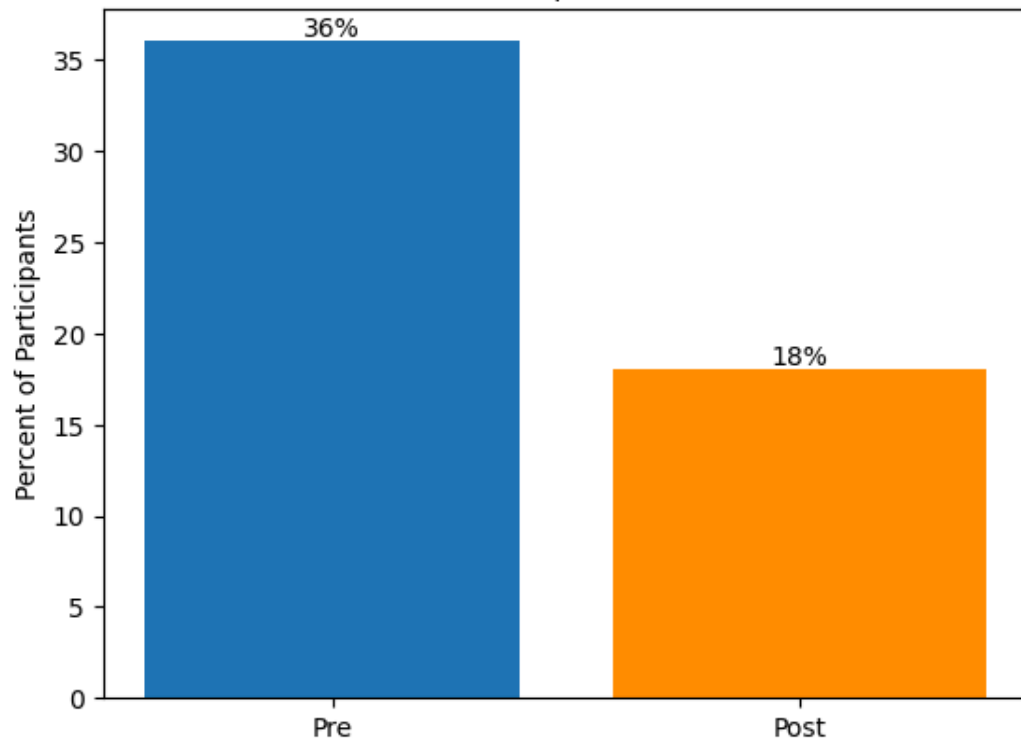


RESULTS

Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption

Chart 7: Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption

Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption (1-3x/week)
Pre (n=39) | Post (n=18)



Sugar-sweetened beverage consumption decreased following program participation. The proportion of participants consuming SSBs 1–3 times per week dropped from **36% pre-series to 18% post-series**. At the same time, the percentage reporting **never consuming SSBs nearly doubled**. These shifts suggest movement toward reduced or eliminating consumption entirely of sugar-sweetened beverages.



Results Summary

Post-series findings indicate meaningful improvements in **dietary behaviors and use of nutrition guidance tools** among Food Matters participants.

Fruit and Vegetable Intake:

- Fruit and vegetable intake patterns improved following program participation.
- Fruit consumption **3+ times per day more** than doubled, while low fruit intake declined
- Vegetable intake improved, with fewer participants consuming vegetables less than once per day and more consuming them **two or more times per day**
- These changes suggest success in nudging participants toward more regular fruit and vegetable consumption, particularly by reducing the lowest intake patterns.

Nutrition Behaviors:

- Participants demonstrated increased adoption of **healthy nutrition behaviors**
- Consistent use of the Nutrition Facts label and MyPlate recommendations increased
- Sugar-sweetened beverage consumption declined, with fewer participants reporting regular intake.

Overall, these results suggest the program effectively supported participants in applying nutrition knowledge to everyday food choices and making positive behavior changes.



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