

# IMPACT REPORT

2021

[www.vouchers4veggies.org](http://www.vouchers4veggies.org)

# VOUCHERS 4 VEGGIES

**Nutritious food is essential for health and wellbeing, yet one in nine households in the United States struggles to put food on the table.**<sup>1</sup> It costs more than \$500 billion each year to treat chronic disease in the United States, much of which are preventable with a healthy diet and moderate exercise.<sup>2</sup> For many individuals and households, healthy food is simply too expensive.

Vouchers 4 Veggies (V4V) is a healthy food supplement program proven to increase **access** to and **affordability** of healthy foods in the most vulnerable communities, in San Francisco and beyond.

## HOW IT WORKS

- **V4V partners with diverse organizations, from clinics to low-income housing sites,** that enroll and distribute vouchers to eligible participants
- Participants receive **\$20 or \$40 per month in fruit and vegetable vouchers,** based on household size
- Participants receive vouchers for **at least 6 months**
- Participants redeem vouchers at **local food retailers in their own neighborhoods** including large and small grocery stores, corner stores, and farmers markets
- V4V is flexible and replicable, **targeting those most in need in the community**



## WITH VOUCHERS 4 VEGGIES, EVERYONE WINS

### Our triple win.

**1** Participants develop long-term eating habits, leading to better health



**2** Participants improve their food security



**3** Stores in low-income communities increase produce sales, driving money into the local economy

## SAN FRANCISCO, CA SNAPSHOT

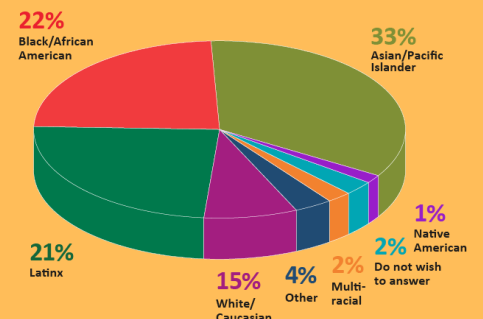
**21,000+**

households served to date

### Target Populations:

- Low-income
- Food insecure
- Seniors
- Families with children
- Pregnant people
- Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)
- Individuals with diet-related chronic diseases

### RACE/ETHNICITY OF PARTICIPANTS SERVED



*Food as Medicine &*

## PRODUCE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAMS

Produce prescription (produce Rx) programs include health interventions where health care providers distribute vouchers for free or reduced-price fruits and vegetables to patients who are eligible due to a diet-related health risk or condition, like diabetes or hypertension, or food insecurity. Growing evidence suggests produce prescription programs can improve patient health and reduce long-term health costs.<sup>13</sup>

As one of the largest produce prescription programs in the country, **V4V is at the forefront of a growing movement to expand access to and coverage of these programs within the health care system.**

## VOUCHERS 4 VEGGIES IN HEALTHCARE

The V4V program has successfully partnered with healthcare providers. Both patients and providers report high rates of satisfaction with our program. Providers offer V4V vouchers to patients at risk of or diagnosed with a diet-related chronic disease, providing them with healthy food support.



*"You can tell people about eating well, but it's another thing to provide them with an actual resource to improve their health. It's tangible. We don't often find that."*  
- Primary Care Physician

*Program*

## REPLICATION

The V4V model has been successfully replicated across the nation in both urban and rural settings. Consistently, we see increased food security and fruit and vegetable consumption, as well as high rates of program satisfaction. The model is being rapidly replicated, with current plans for expansion into 3 new locations by the end of 2021.



**The V4V program has been replicated in multiple locations across the nation** including San Francisco - CA, Boulder - CO, Los Angeles - CA, and Cumberland - VA (rural)

**TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT US AT:**

eatsf@ucsf.edu | 1(833) VEG4YOU



*Vouchers 4 Veggies*

# IMPACT

“[V4V] helped me to realize that veggies and fruits are really good for you, and the more you eat, the better you feel.”

– Program participant

Vouchers 4 Veggies is a rigorously tested model with proven impact. Since 2015, more than 4000 San Francisco participants have completed pre-and post-surveys using validated screening tools to assess food security and fruit and vegetable intake.

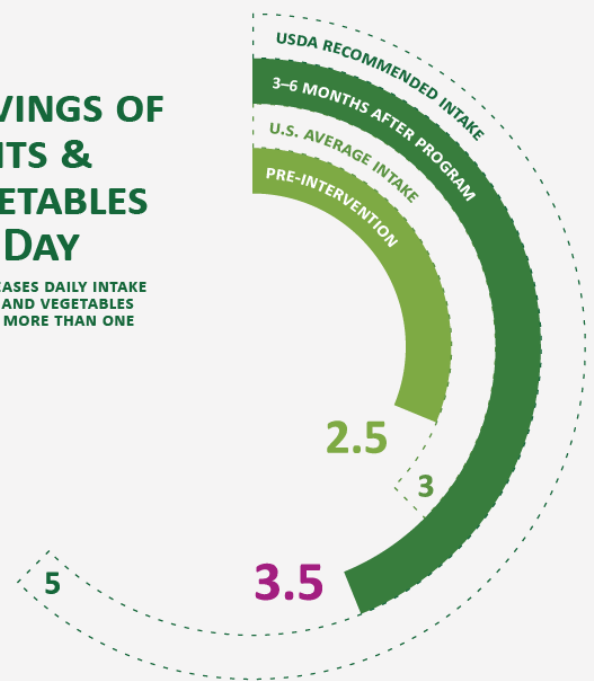
## HEALTHIER DIETS

Our evaluation demonstrates that on average **participants increase their daily fruit and vegetable consumption by more than one serving per day.**

For those who do not meet the U.S. dietary recommendations, increasing fruits and vegetables by just **one serving per day** can decrease mortality and could save the US up to \$5 billion in medical costs annually.<sup>3</sup>

### SERVINGS OF FRUITS & VEGETABLES PER DAY

V4V INCREASES DAILY INTAKE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES INTAKE BY MORE THAN ONE SERVING

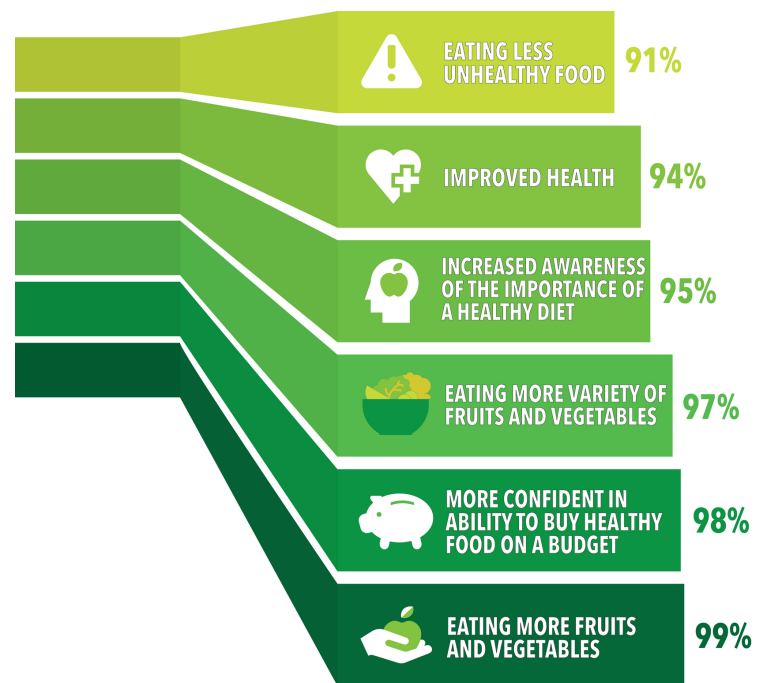


## HEALTHY EATING HABITS

The V4V program supports healthy eating habits. Over 90 percent of participants reported positive food purchasing and dietary habits and improved health.

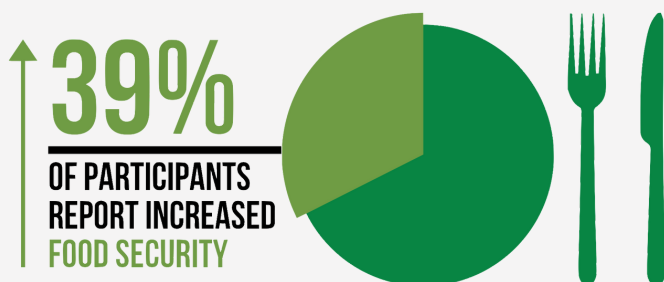
**Vouchers 4 Veggies is also effective in building long-term healthy eating habits.**

Six to twelve months after participation in the program, **more than half of participants reported they continued to eat more fruits and vegetables every day, even without the support of vouchers.**<sup>4</sup> By reinforcing the health benefits, V4V helped participants prioritize the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables in their budget.



## FOOD SECURITY & BETTER HEALTH

In addition to cultivating long-term dietary changes, V4V helps ensure that more people are food secure, which the USDA defines as access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. **Almost 40 percent of survey respondents reported increased food security while enrolled in the program and more than 25 percent were able to stretch their monthly food budget.**



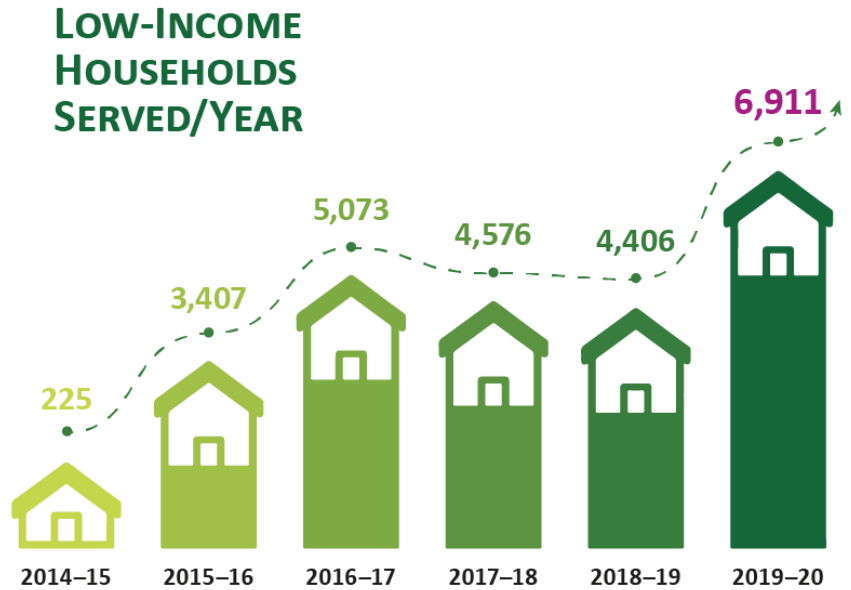
**Improved nutrition and food security also made people feel better.** Participants self-report positive health outcomes including weight loss, a decreased need for prescription medications, and more energy. Additionally, a study of pregnant people receiving V4V vouchers suggested a statistically significant decrease in preterm births.<sup>5</sup>



*Helping People,*

## HELPING ECONOMIES

Since its launch in 2015, the V4V Program in San Francisco, in partnership with and funded by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and other funders, has experienced steady program growth. The program is among the top 5 largest programs of its kind in the U.S. and anticipates continued growth and expansion in the coming years. As the program grows, it continues to not only impact individuals and households, but also their communities.



## ECONOMIC IMPACT

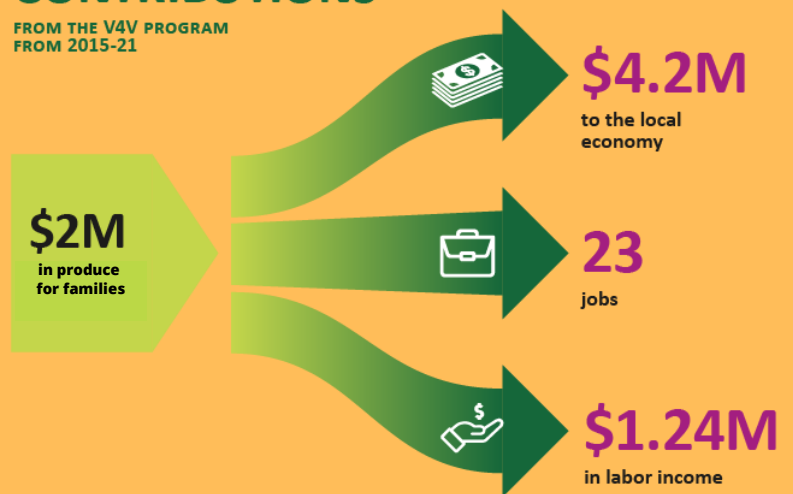
The V4V program supports the economies of low-income neighborhoods. Since 2015, the program has **infused over \$2 million in fruit and vegetable purchases** into the community.

A recently published study estimates that \$1 spent through our program contributes approximately \$2.10 to the local economy. This leads to jobs in the agricultural sector and stimulates labor income, as well. This means that, over the life of the program, V4V has contributed approximately \$4.2 million to the local economy, created 23 jobs, and generated \$1.24 million in labor income.<sup>6</sup>

\*Numbers and graphic adapted from the methodology and analysis conducted by a team of economists at Colorado State University, led by Dr. Dawn Thilmany, in partnership with SPUR, Fair Food Network, and a coalition of ten additional implementing partners across nine states in the US, including Ecology Center, Vouchers for Veggies, and UC San Diego. For full details of methodology and findings see: [fairfoodnetwork.org/incentivesimpact](http://fairfoodnetwork.org/incentivesimpact)

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

FROM THE V4V PROGRAM  
FROM 2015-21



Low Cost,

# BIG IMPACT

**V4V is a cost-effective, efficient, and scalable intervention that improves the health of low-income individuals and families.**

It supports long-term dietary and behavioral changes; increases food security; improves management of chronic diseases; and reduces medical care costs. This offers significant savings to society while helping participants feel physically, emotionally, and financially better.

The program's administrative costs are low and will decrease further thanks to economies of scale as the program expands. The savings to society are enormous; participants feel better, improve management of chronic diseases, and reduce the need for costly medical care.

While the mean cost of hospitalization for someone with diabetes who experiences low blood sugar is more than \$3,500, it cost \$240 for a year of vouchers.<sup>7</sup>

## RESEARCH IN ACTION: SUPPORTING HEALTH DURING PREGNANCY<sup>5, 8-12</sup>

Poor nutrition and food insecurity during pregnancy are associated with poor health outcomes for mom and baby. Black & Latinx pregnant people are two times more likely to experience food insecurity than Whites.

### Produce Prescriptions

Pregnant clients of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) received



**\$40 per month**

in produce vouchers for 9 months

### Our Results

↑ Improved food security  
Increased fruit & vegetable intake

↓ Decreased odds  
of preterm birth

### Downstream Effects



#### Likely Health Outcomes

- Decreased pregnancy complications
- Decreased birth defects
- Positive impacts on infant development



**~\$65,000**

in potential health care cost savings per preterm birth

For a modest investment, V4V delivers huge benefits to vulnerable populations, local communities, and the health care system. Our goals are to help thousands more low-income individuals and families access nutritious food and to replicate our successful model across the country.

**WE INVITE YOU TO PARTNER WITH US IN THIS EFFORT!**

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UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations  
Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital



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