



March 2019  
In this Issue:

Denver Sets Out to Increase SNAP Enrollment

How Double Up Food Bucks Improves Fresh Food Access



## CO4F METRICS

AS OF DECEMBER 2018

**\$8,300,000**  
Total Capitalization

**\$2,991,307**  
Funds Available

**\$5,308,693**  
Total Funded and Committed

## Denver Sets Out to Increase SNAP Enrollment

Nationwide, one of the most important programs to fight hunger and poverty is the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). Eligible individuals and households struggling to afford nutritious food may receive monthly SNAP



assistance. Unfortunately, SNAP is underutilized. In the City and County of Denver, over a third of eligible people are not receiving SNAP benefits, and according to the USDA, Colorado ranked 43th in access to SNAP for lower-income individuals as of 2017.

To help address this issue in Denver, multiple stakeholders convened to form the Denver SNAP Task Force. The 40+ member group, which included representatives of CO4F-supported retailers and partner organizations, explored barriers to SNAP enrollment, and identified ways to improve and maximize participation. The group recently issued its report, [Closing the SNAP GAP in Denver: Recommendations to Prevent Hunger and Strengthen Communities.](#)

"SNAP is a critical component to improving healthy food access in underserved areas and CO4F requires projects it funds to accept it. We hope this report helps SNAP become fully utilized," said Tim Dolan, task force member and Senior Commercial Loan Officer for CHFA, which administers CO4F.

According to the report, the task force identified several barriers to SNAP enrollment and participation, including:

*Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) improves access to healthy food in underserved Colorado communities by financing grocery stores and other*

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- Lack of information, technology, language access, cultural competency, and community outreach;
- Stigma associated with public assistance;
- Difficulty completing the application process; and
- Misinformation about eligibility.

To help address these barriers and improve SNAP participation and overall impact, several key recommendations were made by the task force. The recommendations take a wide-ranging approach, focusing on SNAP users, partnerships, and business processes. Recommendations include:

- Implement best practices for SNAP application assistance, education, intake, and access;
- Address diverse needs by developing materials inclusive of multiple cultures, languages, and literacy levels;
- Improve methods and clarity of communications; and
- Engage community-based partners, health-sector stakeholders, food retailers, the philanthropic sector, and others.

"In an age where marvelous technology exists to help us solve some of the most complex problems, we've yet to figure how we can bring an abundance of already existing resources to members of our community in the way they can best use them. SNAP and EBT may be the currency and vehicle used in the exchange of food and goods today, but it will be the trust we are able to build with community members who find themselves in some of the most vulnerable positions in their lives that will help us solve this problem tomorrow," said Ricardo Rocha, task force member and CEO of Bondadosa, a grocery delivery service and CO4F-funded project.

Specific to food retailers, the task force recommends increasing acceptance of SNAP benefits at their locations, offering onsite education, and working with the state to use and promote the MyCOBenefits mobile app that helps shoppers use SNAP and stay informed.

*Closing the SNAP GAP* presents a roadmap towards the future and by 2023, the City and County of Denver's goal is to have 80 percent of eligible Denver residents enrolled in SNAP. According to the report, if the goal is reached over this five-year span, Denver could receive an estimated \$15.9 million in additional federal nutrition benefits each year, generating nearly \$28.5 million in economic activity annually.

## How Double Up Food Bucks Improves Fresh Food Access

The Double Up Food Bucks (DUF) program increases access to fruits and vegetables for SNAP recipients by matching SNAP dollars towards Colorado-grown produce, up to \$20 a visit. For example, for every dollar spent towards SNAP-eligible items such as bread, eggs, or milk, the shopper receives one dollar off local produce. DUF can be used at participating stores, and in unique ways at farmers markets, farm stands, and for community food boxes.



CO4F customer, 4th Street Food



Store in Saguache, reports that DUFB has enabled customers to purchase more fresh foods than they would've without the program. They've observed that oftentimes, customers with SNAP benefits previously thought of fresh produce as "back burner" items, due to their budget limitations, but now DUFB allows them to stretch their dollars. The store adds that they help guide their customers on what produce to buy and how to use DUFB.

In Denver, CO4F customer The GrowHaus also accepts DUFB, which can be used to purchase food grown onsite at The GrowHaus' indoor farm.

"Since DUFB applies to any Colorado-grown produce, customers are able to use their DUFB to purchase the lettuces, leafy greens, and mushrooms that we grow," said Nathan Mackenzie, Director of Development for The GrowHaus.

Nathan adds that DUFB has had a positive impact on The Growhaus as well.

"The GrowHaus began accepting DUFB in the summer of 2016, which had a dramatic impact on our SNAP sales where we saw an average increase of over \$400 each month in the first six months of the program. Since the beginning of 2017, SNAP and DUFB sales have been decreasing from year to year, however, sales are still at higher levels than before we started the DUFB program," said Nathan.

In January, representatives from CO4F partner Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), Erin Lyng and Andrea Buglione, attended a symposium on DUFB. At the event, several facts about the program were presented, including:

- While challenges remain in reaching all SNAP participants, 85 percent of those using DUFB said they bought more fruits and vegetables because of their participation in the program;
- DUFB spending has increased 113 percent from 2016 (its inaugural year in Colorado) to 2017;
- DUFB has 91 participating locations in 27 counties throughout Colorado; and
- There are currently 5,755 DUFB customers, 91 percent of which are households with children.

To learn more about Double Up Food Bucks, visit [doubleupcolorado.org](http://doubleupcolorado.org).

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