

The Economic Impact of the University of Tennessee Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)

Karen Franck, Associate Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
 Sreedhar Upendram, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
 Jennifer Ward, Extension Specialist III, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food assistance for individuals and families who meet federally defined income guidelines. In 2024, more than 41 million people or 12.3 percent of U.S. residents received SNAP benefits as shown in Figure 1. In Tennessee, almost 10 percent of the state's population received SNAP benefits in 2024.

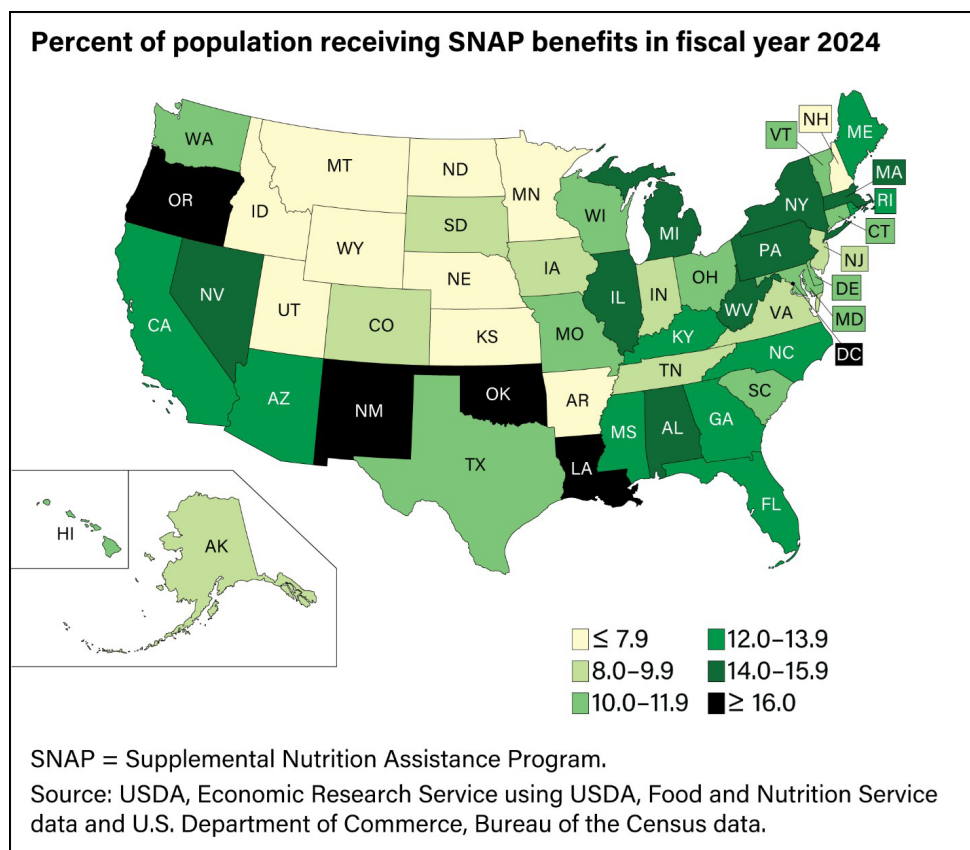


Figure 1. Percent of population receiving SNAP benefits across United States

had a yearly contract with the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) to implement SNAP-Ed in Tennessee's 95 counties. UT SNAP-Ed programs include direct nutrition education classes, social marketing campaigns that include social and traditional media messages and posters and other materials placed in community settings, and environmental change interventions that promote gardening, walking opportunities and other changes that encourage healthy choices (Figure 2).

SNAP-Education Program

The SNAP-Education program (SNAP-Ed) is a federally funded nutrition education program associated with SNAP. SNAP-Ed has historically been funded annually through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and these funds are allocated to states to distribute to implementing agencies that carry out SNAP-Ed activities. The objectives of SNAP-Ed are (1) to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, (2) decrease sugar sweetened beverage consumption, and (3) increase access to healthy food and physical activity among low-income SNAP eligible families. Participants do not need to receive SNAP benefits to attend SNAP-Ed programs.

Since 1996, University of Tennessee (UT) Extension has

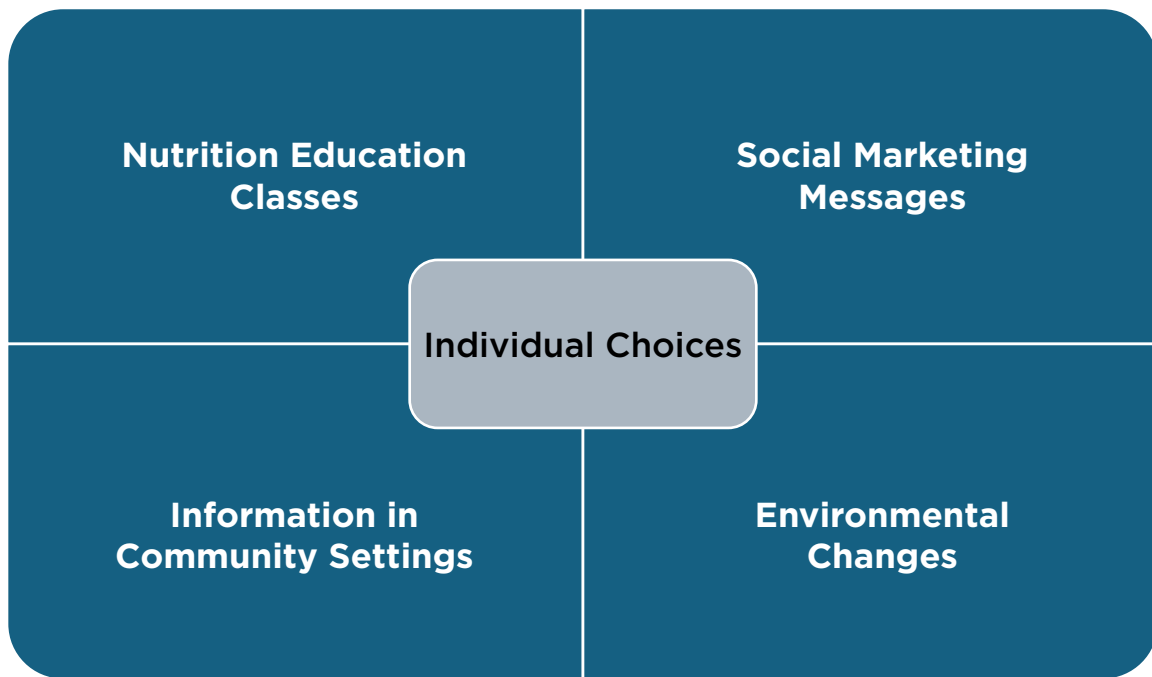


Figure 2. How UT SNAP-Ed works to help individuals improve healthy behaviors

UT SNAP-Ed interventions are conducted throughout the state to motivate health behavior change and increase participants' ability to access healthy food and opportunities for physical activity. UT SNAP-Ed county-based educators partner with a variety of community-based agencies to provide these programs. In 2024, UT SNAP-Ed implemented programs in 482 community sites across the state, including 146 schools, 34 substance use disorder treatment centers, 28 early childcare centers, 25 public housing sites and 23 emergency food assistance sites as well as libraries, community centers, churches and more.

In 2024, the UT SNAP-Ed program reached a total of 41,913 participants in 75 counties throughout the state (Figure 3). It is important to note that SNAP-Ed participation is voluntary and is not required to receive SNAP benefits.

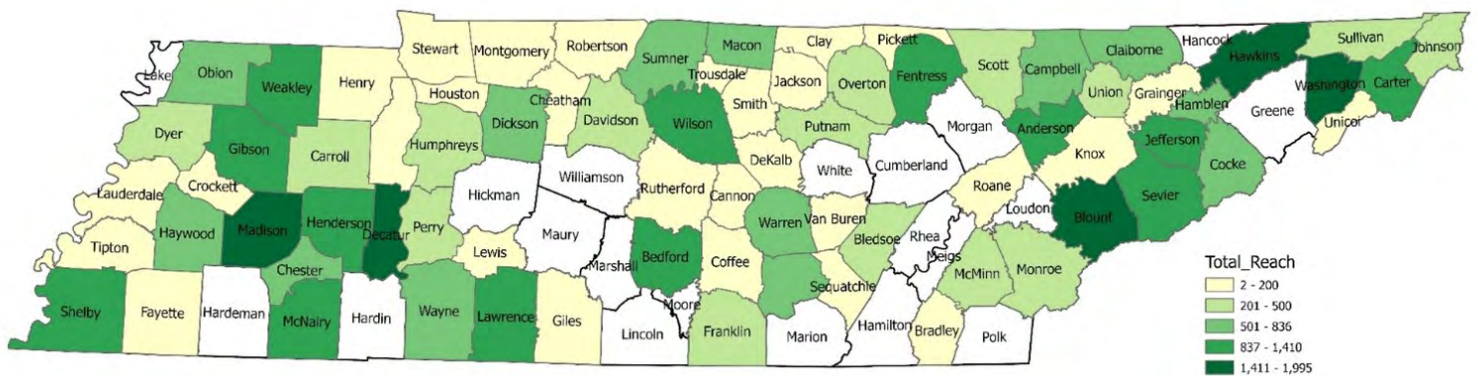


Figure 3. 2024 Total Reach for SNAP-Ed participants across counties in Tennessee

The Economic Impact of UT SNAP-Ed

SNAP-Ed is designed to prevent chronic disease and improve nutrition security among low-income participants through individual changes in diet quality and behavior as well as systems level changes in healthy food access. However, these are not the only impacts that can be measured. SNAP-Ed also contributes economically to the locations in which these grant funds have been invested. To show this impact for Tennessee, the grant funds awarded and spent on salaries, supplies and activities were analyzed to show economic impact beyond typically reported outcomes such as reach and health cost savings.

This study is aimed at evaluating the economic impact of SNAP-Ed program on the local economy as well as individuals' diet quality, the associated health outcomes and enhancing the overall food supply chain.

Through the University of Tennessee, SNAP-Ed funds support more than 70 staff positions located in county Extension offices and at the state office located at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

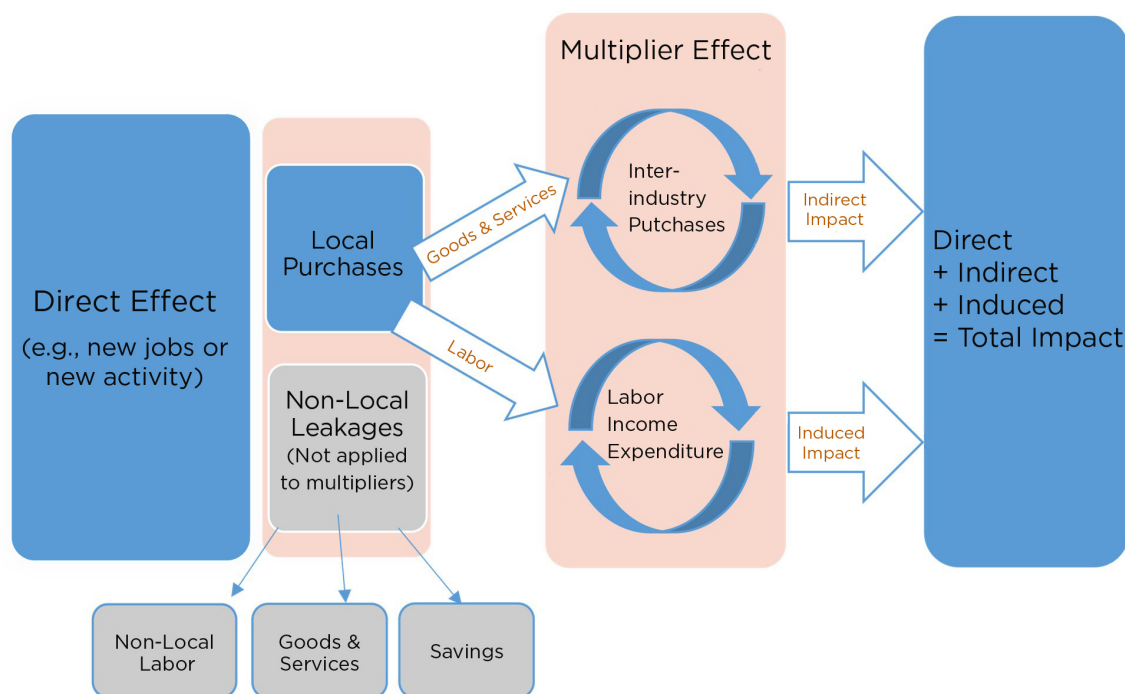


Figure 4. Economic impacts – Conceptual model

Economic impact analysis using IMPLAN, an economic input-output database and modeling system (IMPLAN Group, LLC), provides descriptive measures including output, employment and value-added for up to 546 industrial sectors in the economy. Total industry output is defined as the value of production by industry per year. Employment represents the total wage and salary of employees plus self-employed jobs in a region for both full-time and part-time workers. Total value added is defined as all income to workers paid by employers, including the value of certain benefits; self-employed net income; interests, rents, royalties, dividends and profit payments; and excise and sales taxes paid by individuals as collected by businesses.

Multipliers measure the response of the economy to a change in demand or production. A multiplier measures how dollars are re-invested and circulated in a local economy, leading to additional economic activity (Hughes, 2018). Multiplier analysis generally focuses on the effects of external changes on: a) the output of the sectors in the economy, b) the income earned by households because of the new outputs and c) the employment (in physical terms) that is expected to be generated because of the new outputs.

When a particular industry sector is expected to change, increase or decrease, three types of impacts economy-wide are measured: Direct, indirect and induced effects (Figure 4):

- Direct effects are the immediate effects associated with a change in the final demand for a particular industry. For example, in this analysis the direct effect is the nutritional educational programs conducted as part of the SNAP-Ed programs across the counties in Tennessee.
- The indirect effects are the secondary effects, or production changes in backward-linked industries that provide goods and services. For example, the indirect effects are the raw materials, goods and services purchased to conduct SNAP-Ed nutritional program across the counties in Tennessee.
- The induced effects represent the response by all local industries caused by increased expenditures resulting from new household income and inter-institutional transfers generated from the direct and indirect effects of the change in final demand for a specific industry. For example, the induced effects are a result of household expenditures of workers who conduct SNAP-Ed nutritional programs in the regional economy.

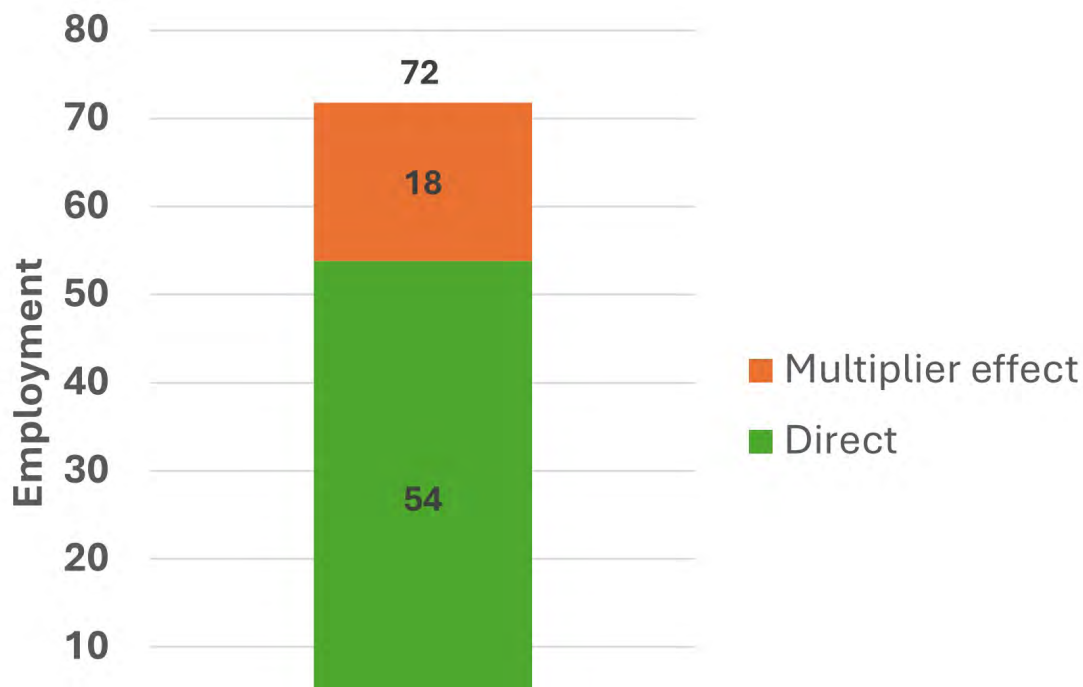


Figure 5. 2024 SNAP-Ed program's employment impact on State's Economy

In 2024, 54 workers were directly employed in SNAP-Ed programs to conduct nutritional programs in Tennessee (Figure 5). With multiplier effects (indirect i.e. raw materials goods and services purchased to conduct SNAP-Ed nutritional programs and induced impacts i.e. household expenditures of workers conducting SNAP-ED nutritional programs), an estimated 72 jobs are supported by SNAP-Ed programs, or one direct SNAP-Ed job leads to 1.33 jobs (i.e., the job plus the 0.33 multiplier). The 2024 program's direct spending (output change) devoted to training participants across Tennessee is estimated at \$4,729,429, which was attributed to IMPLAN Sector 463 (junior colleges, colleges and universities). With multiplier effects (indirect and induced impacts), the total estimated economic impact of the SNAP-Ed program is estimated to be \$8,326,813 (Figure 6). For every dollar of direct output from UT SNAP-Ed, the total economic impact on the state's economy is \$1.76 (i.e., the dollar plus the \$0.76 multiplier effect). Figure 6 displays changes in economic impact per dollar that are not adjusted for inflation because we are comparing the level of economic impact over time.

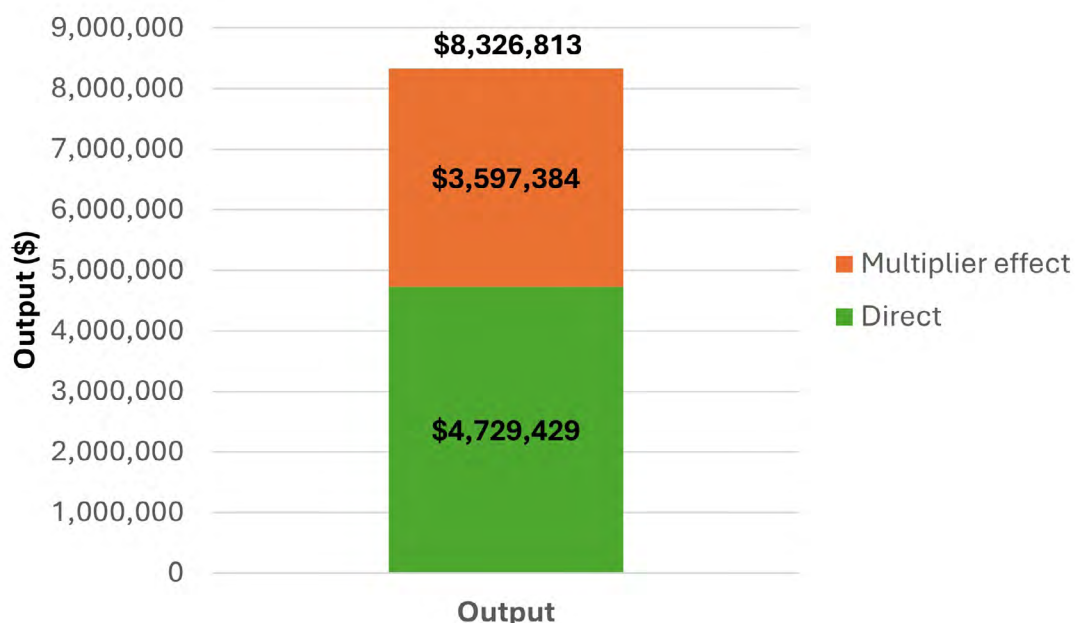


Figure 6. 2024 SNAP-Ed program output impact on State's Economy

Summary and Conclusions

The SNAP-Ed program has historically been designed to impact the ability of low-income families throughout Tennessee to choose and prepare healthy food, increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and increasing community ability to provide access to nutritious food. These impacts are well documented in annual impact reports for Tennessee and at the national level for the program as it is implemented in all 50 states. SNAP-Ed program enrollment in Tennessee has steadily increased over the years, owing to strong outreach and impactful programming supported by Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agents, volunteers, Family and Consumer Science educators and other community stakeholders across Tennessee. Additionally, the program has had a significant economic impact on the state in terms of job creation and spending. For every dollar that is invested in the SNAP-Ed program, the total economic impact on the state's economy is \$1.76, indicating strong local linkages and the tremendous benefit to participants across Tennessee. Conversely, the loss of SNAP-Ed funding in Tennessee also will affect the economy if not replaced in some manner.

References

Hughes, D. (2018). A Primer in Economic Multipliers and Impact Analysis Using Input-Output Models. University of Tennessee Extension Publication W644 Available at: tiny.utk.edu/W644.

IMPLAN Group, LLC, IMPLAN System (2023 Data online version), 16905 Northcross Drive, Suite 120, Huntersville, NC 28078. Available at: <http://www.implan.com>

Jones, J. (2025). Participation in SNAP varies across States, reflecting differences in need and program policies. Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=113053>



UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU

Real. Life. Solutions.™