

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Eat Smart Idaho contractors help northern district program achieve more outreach

AT A GLANCE

Creative thinking with hiring contractors helps the University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho program achieve more outreach with their important youth partners.

The Situation

Eat Smart Idaho offers educational outreach to help individuals, families and youth with limited resources gain knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve their diet and physical activity habits. The program's outcomes contribute to personal growth and enhance overall family and individual health. In Kootenai County, the current administrator and coordinator of the northern district Eat Smart Idaho program have spent over 25 years building strong community partnerships to deliver direct education to their target audience.

Eat Smart Idaho's partners are essential to the program's success, with widespread popularity among at-risk youth in the Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene school districts, two Boys and Girls Clubs locations, Head Start agencies, CDA4Kids afterschool program serving McKinney Vento youth, summer feeding locations, Canopy Village and other sites serving low-income youth. However, following COVID-19 and economic shifts, the Eat Smart Idaho program faced challenges in hiring enough staff to meet demand for healthy habits education at all partnering sites.



Eat Smart Idaho Contractor Christy shares "Grow" foods at Bryan Elementary after learning they help you jump high.

Our Response

To address this need, UI Extension educator and Eat Smart Idaho (ESI) administrator of the northern district program along with ESI coordinator, launched a contractor initiative to expand outreach education. The Eat Smart Idaho administrator created opportunities to launch this new idea to former U of I dietetics students who interned in the program, retired teachers, current educators and health role models to teach six-part class series using Eat Smart Idaho approved curricula, funded through SNAP-Ed. Initially, the goal was to complete 15 six-part series classes with youth partners, however, within two months, all 15 contracts

were fulfilled with additional partners requesting classes. By the end of FY2024, the ESI program completed 40 six-part series contracts.

Program Outcomes

Table 1. Outcomes of the Program, Contractors

Described change	K-2nd	3rd-5th	6th-12th
Youth improved knowledge and/or adopted and practiced one or more food selection behavior consistent with Dietary Guidelines	76%	93%	82%
Youth improved knowledge and/or adopted and practiced one or more behavior necessary to handle food safety	47%	60%	59%
Youth improved knowledge and/or adopted and practiced one or more behavior related to physical activity	21%	71%	61%

Additionally, contractors appreciate the opportunity to engage with youth and share their expertise on a flexible schedule that accommodates other work and family commitments.

One contractor expressed, "Giving back to my community is really important to me, and I love working with elementary-age youth. I have expertise in fitness and health and working with Eat Smart Idaho's contracts helps me do something meaningful that aligns with my other life commitments."

Additionally, contractors have helped reduce costs for the northern district's Eat Smart Idaho budget, as contractors complete the scope of work at a set pay rate which does not include additional fringe benefits. During FY 2024, the ~\$24,000 spent on the 40 contracts avoided the need to spend ~\$9,800 in fringe benefits.

The Future

The northern district Eat Smart Idaho program will continue to pursue contractors for Eat Smart Idaho direct education work as well as providing numerous teaching opportunities for their current staff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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