



Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition • New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service FY2020 Impact Report

Summary

Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition (ICAN) is a New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU CES) program funded by Federal grants to provide nutrition education to SNAP-eligible audiences in New Mexico. Our mission is to inspire New Mexico's families to make healthy food and lifestyle choices and to make those choices possible by creating health-friendly communities.

ICAN is the largest implementing agency for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) grant in New Mexico, and the only agency for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) grant. Both grants are reauthorized every five years by legislation commonly referred to as the "Farm Bill," and are administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

ICAN improves quality of life statewide by:

- Teaching practical skills including cooking, food safety, and food resource management
- Providing evidence-based nutrition education
- Developing healthy public spaces such as school and community gardens
- Engaging clients with the most effective approaches, including virtual classrooms and social media
- Connecting clients with community partners that provide healthy living resources
- Evaluating and improving programming to adapt with the communities we serve

Economic Impact

ICAN operates in 22 counties across New Mexico, providing **55+ job opportunities** to local residents and contributing **\$1.8 million** to the state's economy in salary and benefits.

By reducing obesity and creating healthier living environments, nutrition education programs in New Mexico can **decrease healthcare costs** and **increase productivity**. Teaching New Mexicans how to stretch their food dollars means they have more funds to spend on other critical needs.

Going Online & Moving Forward

Prior to the end of in-person programming in March 2020, ICAN had already met with over 50,000 New Mexicans at 159 community sites around the state. ICAN serves diverse SNAP-eligible audiences, with 58% of clients being Hispanic, and another 22% Native American. Most ICAN families live on \$237 or less total income per week for a family of four.

After participating in ICAN series classes:

- **95%** of adults improve **diet practices** such as eating more fruits and vegetables and drinking fewer sugary beverages
- Families **save** an average of **\$30** on their month-to-month **grocery budget**
- **78%** of adults increase their **physical activity** behaviors such as exercising for at least 30 minutes and doing workouts that build and strengthen muscles
- **75%** of adults and **56%** of youth improve their **food safety** practices such as washing hands before preparing food
- **91%** of youth improve their ability to choose foods according to the Federal Dietary Recommendations and are better prepared to **learn more**

On March 13, 2020, ICAN suspended in-person classes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We immediately began re-tooling the program to continue reaching our audience in a safe virtual environment. Changes made to the ICAN program in 2020—such as the **vast expansion of our social media presence** and an extensive new **network of virtual classrooms, video recipes, and self-paced online courses**—will serve our clients for years to come.

ICAN added another **2,000+ virtual clients** to our nutrition education programs before the end of our fiscal year in September 2020. In addition, **2020 saw the introduction of the virtual food gardening course ICAN Seed to Supper Online** with 1,817 participating clients.

“The live sessions were great. We get to see people from other parts of New Mexico talk about their challenges. I feel so isolated out here, but this program gave me something to look forward to. It saved my life.”

—ICAN Seed to Supper participant

Beyond live education in virtual classrooms, ICAN educators created videos, guides, and interactive Q&As delivered across popular social media formats such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. **Over 100,000 viewers were reached by ICAN content on social media in 2020.**

Although we may no longer be meeting face-to-face, ICAN has not forgotten our commitment to developing healthy communities. In 2020 we made **over 160 partnerships** with community leaders, schools, and non-profits. We continue to lay groundwork for school and community gardens, making our goal of healthy lifestyles for New Mexico’s families achievable by **creating environments where being healthy is the easy choice.**