

Growing Health: A Cross Extension Team Collaborative Program

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Background

- South Carolina (SC) has high rates of obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and chronic disease, with 6 in 10 adults having at least one chronic disease.¹
- These conditions can be combated through healthy lifestyle change, including a healthy diet, of which vegetables are an essential part, physical activity, and stress management.
 - 20.3 percent of adults in SC eat less than 1 serving of vegetables per day¹
 - 26 percent of adults in SC are considered inactive¹

Program Overview

Goal

To increase the number of SC residents gardening for physical activity, growing their own vegetables, and following a healthy diet.

Objectives

- Understand how to grow their own vegetables, no matter where they live.
- Increase confidence in growing vegetables at home.
- Understand how to cook the vegetables they grow in a healthy, tasty way.
- Identify the health benefits the vegetables they grow can provide.
- Increase confidence in using vegetables grown in their diet.
- Increase motivation to engage in healthy behaviors.
- Understand the proper care of the plant.

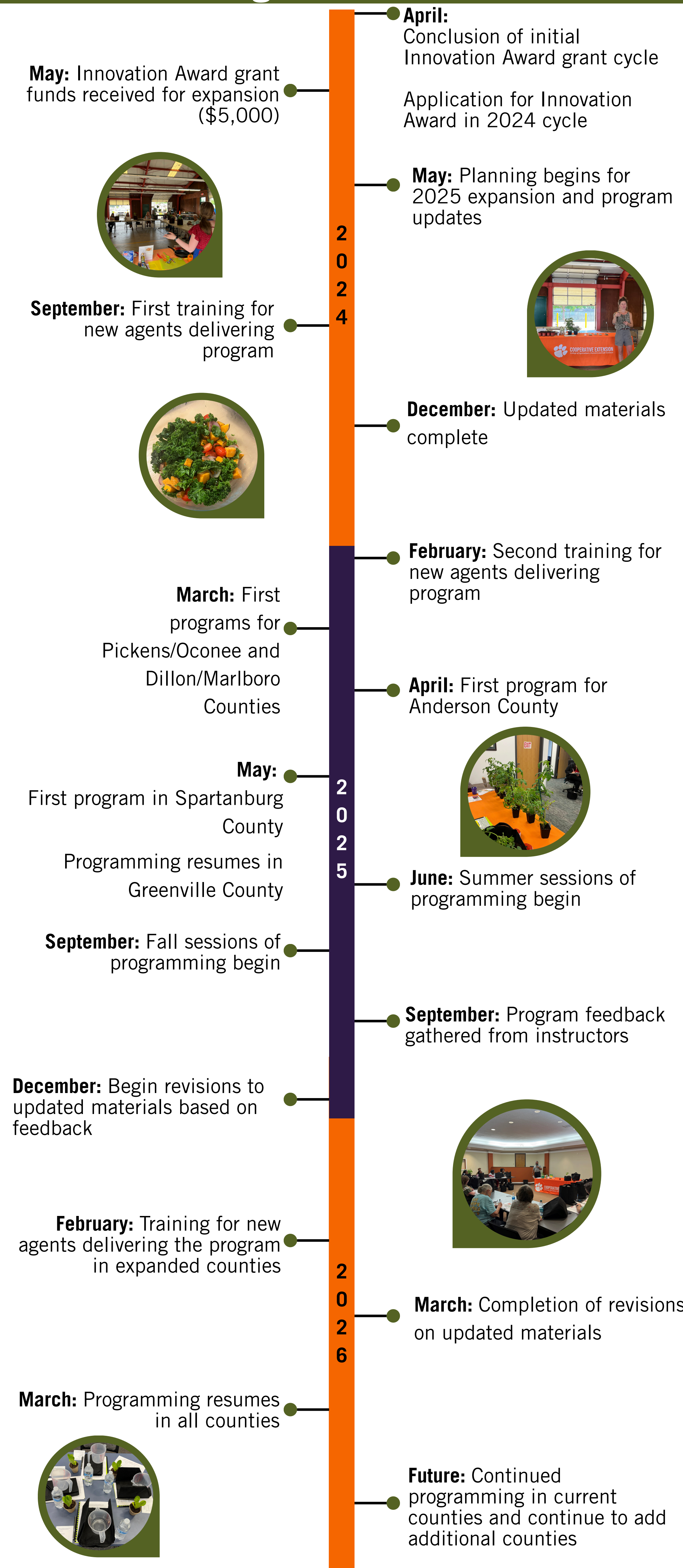
Description

- 1-hour hands on in-person classes
- Combines gardening and cooking to learn how the vegetables grown can benefit all aspects of their health
- Focused on nutrition and chronic disease prevention and management

Development

- The Rural Health and Nutrition (RHN) Team and the Horticulture Team at Clemson Extension have historically worked separately.
- Program was designed as a collaborative effort from the start and take participants from food to fork.
- Research shows a strong link between health and horticulture.
- Uses the strengths of each program team to engage a variety of stakeholders in at-home gardening and health behaviors.
- Internal Extension grant (Innovation Award) made program development possible in 2022.

Growing Health Timeline



Results

The second pilot resulted in:

- **25** classes held across 10 counties
- **8** program sites established
- **163** total participants



Program success and impact was measured using participant change in knowledge and confidence from pre- to post-program surveys.

- their **knowledge of gardening principles and nutritional guidelines** from **40%** responding to the correct answer to **60%** responding to the correct answer.
- their **confidence in growing their own vegetables in containers** from **6.32** to **8.17** (on a scale of 1-10, where 1=not confident at all and 10=totally confident).
- their **confidence in creating healthy, tasty recipes with food grown in their gardens** from **7.33** to **8.63** (on a scale of 1-10, where 1=not confident at all and 10=totally confident).

"I love this program. I was taught so much and my confidence has grown. Cannot wait to start gardening and growing things."
 - Growing Health Participant

Conclusions

After the program, participants reported plans to grow more vegetables, eat healthier, and spend more time in the garden.

Participants' knowledge increased by 20% as a result of attending the program. Their confidence in growing their own vegetables increased by 1.85 points. Their confidence in using the food grown in their own gardens increased by 1.3 points.

Participants enjoyed the program, and many reported they would attend another program in the future. Participants also reported that they would seek out further extension programming and resources.

References:
 1. South Carolina Department of Public Health (2024). *Chronic Disease in South Carolina* [Report]. <https://dph.sc.gov/sites/scdph/files/Library/00100-ENG-CR.pdf>

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