



SNAP/EBT *at your*
FARMERS MARKET:
SEVEN STEPS *to* **SUCCESS**



SNAP/EBT at Your Farmers
Market: Seven Steps to Success

Published by
Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
and
Wholesome Wave

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and Wholesome Wave
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Written by **NORA OWENS**
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The growth of SNAP benefit redemption projects at farmers markets across the United States is exciting and in no small part due to the work and dedication of a number of individuals, many of whom helped us put this handbook together. Several people deserve particular credit for their input including Alexandra Ashbrook of DC Hunger Solutions, Suzanne Briggs of collaboration, Diane Eggert of the Farmers' Market Federation of New York, Stacy Miller of the Farmers Market Coalition, Callie Rubbins-Breen formerly of marketumbrella.org, Leslie Schaller of Appalachian Center for Economic Networks and Gus Schumacher of Wholesome Wave. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the many farmers markets who shared their SNAP project stories which enrich this handbook so that other markets can benefit from best practices and lessons learned. And finally, a special thank you to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agriculture and Marketing Service (AMS) and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for their support to farmers markets across the country, especially in their efforts to expand SNAP.

NORA OWENS *and* **KELLY VEREL**

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

ABOUT PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

Founded in 1975, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. PPS's Public Market Program aims to foster the role of public markets in reconnecting local economies and communities and to support the pivotal role that markets play in supporting public health and local food systems. For 25 years, PPS has provided assistance to market sponsors, managers, and community development officials in more than 200 cities and towns in both the U.S. and internationally, helping public markets become economically sustainable centers of community life. Through training programs, conferences, research and projects, the Public Markets Program promotes new models and innovative practices for public markets that achieve broad benefits for communities. With support from the Ford Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, PPS completed a \$3 million, 3-year grant program in 2008 to enhance the positive impacts of public markets on communities. Through this program, grants were awarded to over 40 markets in 22 states. PPS is based in New York City.

ABOUT WHOLESOME WAVE

The mission of Wholesome Wave is to nourish neighborhoods by supporting increased production and access to healthy, fresh, and affordable locally grown food for the well-being of all. Wholesome Wave, a nationally recognized nonprofit organization, develops partnership-based programs to serve food deserts of historically excluded urban and rural communities by:

- Nourishing family farmers that produce healthy, sustainable, locally grown foods with meaningful and sustainable business opportunities;
- Nourishing communities by building stronger relationships between local family farmers and the needy they serve;
- Nourishing the health of America by slowing the explosive rise in healthcare costs by improving access to healthy, fresh, and affordable locally grown foods.

Nourishing Neighborhoods, the umbrella campaign for Wholesome Wave's programs, benefits vulnerable consumers and our nation's struggling small-scale farmers. Wholesome Wave aims to positively impact the health and wellness of historically excluded communities through direct economic links to support America's small farmers. The core program in Wholesome Wave's Nourishing Neighborhoods campaign is the highly successful Double Value Coupon Program, which doubles the value of SNAP, when used at participating farmers markets nationwide. From the launch of the program in 2008 at farmers markets in Fairfield County, Connecticut; San Diego, California; Boston and Holyoke, Massachusetts, our Double Value Coupon Program has expanded to more than 150 markets in over 15 states and the District of Columbia.

FOREWORD

Wholesome Wave and PPS are proud to jointly present this important publication to help increase the number of farmers markets accepting SNAP benefits. The country is at an exciting time in the fight against food insecurity. Through collaborative efforts, such as this Handbook, and the expansion of incentive programs like the Double Value Coupon Program, PPS and Wholesome Wave hope to be a catalyst for improving not only the economic viability of farming, but also to improve nutrition in America's food deserts, strengthen diverse communities, and reduce health care costs. The resulting outcome will mean that underserved communities and the farmers markets that serve them will have played a significant role in making local, sustainable food systems a reality.

MICHEL NISCHAN

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2000, the number of farmers markets across the United States has increased 80% to reach over 5,000 by 2010. Farmers markets seem to be popping up everywhere: they can be found in neighborhood parking lots, at bus and train stops, and even in front of hospitals. Their popularity is testament to the multiple benefits they bring to customers, vendors, and communities: stimulating economic growth and job opportunity, revitalizing downtowns, creating active spaces, and helping to preserve farmland and minimize sprawl. Farmers markets are not only great community places and excellent shopping destinations; they are also key ingredients in our country's fight to combat diet-related illness such as diabetes and heart disease, and are increasingly being developed to reach lower-income customers. Indeed, the power of markets to bring together diverse types of people and to serve all income levels makes them ideal venues to promote public health.

To help ensure that customers from all economic backgrounds are able to afford to shop at their local market, many market operators are taking advantage of federal nutrition assistance programs that help customers purchase healthy, fresh food. These programs include the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for Women Infant and Children (WIC) and Seniors (SFMNP), as well as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. For over a decade, FMNP coupons have been redeemed in markets and have proven to be widely successful in attracting lower income customers to markets. Today, a growing number of farmers markets are redeeming SNAP benefits providing beneficiaries increased access to fresh, local food (see Appendix A for a list of eligible food items).



Fort Greene Greenmarket, Brooklyn, New York

In 2008, over 28 million people in the U.S. were enrolled in SNAP for a total of \$35 billion dollars in benefits.¹ New York City alone authorizes over \$1.3 billion in SNAP benefits every year, and over 1.1 million city residents received food stamps in 2006.² Being able to tap into this vast resource, which can only be spent on food items, clearly has great potential for farmers markets.

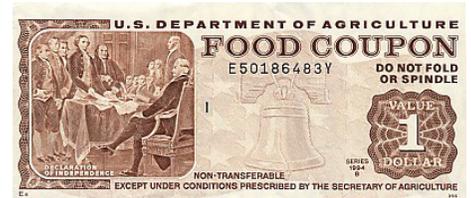
By accepting alternative forms of payment—including SNAP, WIC FMNP and SFMNP coupons—farmers markets are creating welcoming environments where everyone, regardless of budget constraints, can feel welcome and shop. SNAP not only allows low-income families greater access to fresh nutritional foods, but also increases farmer/vendor revenue. Like FMNP, SNAP is an alternative revenue stream which can help make a market serving a predominately low-income community viable for farmers/vendors to attend.

1. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/SNAPsummary.htm> and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/15SNAPpartPP.htm>

2. "Nutritional Programs." NYC Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services. 2008. NYC Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services. 7 Apr 2008.
http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/family_independence/serv_nutritional_program.shtml

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Food Stamp Act of 1964 created the federally-funded nutrition program which quickly became known as “food stamps” because they were distributed through paper denominational stamps or coupons. This program, which is managed by the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), assists qualified low income people living in the United States to purchase food and food-related products. Since 2004, SNAP benefits have been distributed to recipients in all fifty states through a specialized debit card system known as Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). Renamed SNAP in 2008, the move from paper currency to EBT cards was a great step forward in reducing the stigma for those receiving these nutrition assistance program benefits, but it came at a price for farmers markets that typically lack electricity, telephone lines and point of sale (POS) terminals required to accept EBT cards. After the shift to EBT, most farmers markets that previously accepted Food Stamp coupons were then unable to accept SNAP/EBT cards because they lacked the necessary technology infrastructure.



paper food stamps



New York state EBT card

Not to be deterred, farmers market operators began focusing on the use of wireless technology to provide vendors and markets with the infrastructure to accept SNAP benefits. Over time, the Central POS System and the Individual POS System have emerged as the two most popular and widely used systems.

Who receives SNAP?

In January 2010, one in eight people in the U.S. were receiving SNAP benefits; that’s more than 38 million people, and the number is growing daily, fueled by the weak economy and high unemployment rate. In early 2009, enrollment rose in 46 of the 50 states. SNAP serves not only the working poor, but also people temporarily unemployed, the elderly and those with disabilities.

Here are a few quick facts:

- Benefits are extended to U.S. citizens, legal residents and legal immigrant children
- 49% of recipients are children; 9% are elderly; 29% are working women, and 9% are working men
- 30% of recipients are working and 41% are from households where someone works
- Fewer than 13% of recipients earned income above the poverty line and 39% live below that line, with 15% having no income at all
- Most SNAP households are small: 2.2 persons, however, SNAP households with children averaged 3.3, and SNAP households with seniors averaged 1.3 persons
- The majority of SNAP recipients do not receive welfare benefits
- In 1990, 42% of recipients also received welfare benefits. In 2007, 12% received welfare and 30% had an income
- The average benefit is \$112.82 per person/month

The Central POS System that uses scrip enables a farmers market to have one FNS permit and to operate a central POS terminal for all participating vendors. Customers redeeming SNAP benefits swipe their EBT card at a central location at the market and receive tokens or paper scrip which they spend like cash for eligible food at the market. Payment is electronically transferred directly into the market's bank account. Market management distributes payments to vendors and assumes responsibility for accounting and reporting requirements. This is the most common method for redeeming SNAP benefits.

The Individual POS System allows individual farmers/vendors to manage their own SNAP redemption by obtaining their own FNS permit; purchase/lease their own POS terminal; and independently accept SNAP benefits at their stalls. In this system, a customer swipes his/her card at the vendor's stall and the sale is completed without the need for tokens or scrip. Payments are directly deposited in the vendor's bank account and there is a very limited reporting requirement.

While these two systems are often used with a wireless POS terminal, markets and/or individual vendors with access to electricity and telephone landlines can instead operate one of these systems using a wired POS terminal. It is also possible to accept SNAP benefits using only a telephone and paper vouchers (see *Step 7: Set up a SNAP Redemption System*). For more information, visit the FNS website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm>.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK



Creating a successful SNAP redemption program at your farmers market is more than acquiring the terminals, tokens and signage. It's about creating a strong infrastructure for the program; developing a sustainable funding strategy; understanding and meeting the needs of a diverse customer base; and creating community partnerships to extend the reach of the program through marketing, promotions and incentives. This handbook addresses the steps needed to set up SNAP, and is designed to provide a comprehensive description of the elements necessary to make it successful. In addition, this handbook includes case studies of farmers markets from across the U.S. representing a variety of locations and experiences—rural and urban, big and small, new and established—to serve as an example of how to creatively and successfully operate a SNAP project. And finally, this handbook provides additional resources, such as recordkeeping templates, a sample customer survey, and links to organizational resources and other SNAP/EBT guides, to help you launch a successful SNAP project at your farmers market.

STEP 1: ASSESS *your* MARKET'S CAPACITY and COMMITTEMENT

Accepting SNAP at your farmers market benefits vendors and the larger community but it does require smart planning and on-going organization and support. Markets that operate successful SNAP projects all embody two important components to achieving on-going sustainability of the project: commitment and staff capacity.

COMMITMENT

At the start of setting up the market's SNAP project, be sure that the market and all of its stakeholders are committed to its success. The market's board or advisory group, market manager, vendors, additional staff, and even volunteers need to understand what the market is trying to accomplish and how it will benefit everyone involved. On a day-to-day basis, one or a few people will ultimately be responsible for the program; however, the entire market stakeholder team needs to be committed to its success.

Farmers Market Mission Statement

One way to determine the possible level of commitment to SNAP by your market's stakeholders is to evaluate your market's mission statement. A one or two sentence mission statement can help a market operator prioritize which projects to pursue in a quest to meet the market's goals. A mission statement which stresses the importance of public health and/or food access for the entire community is directly in line with implementing a SNAP project at your farmers market.

Farmer/Vendor Interest

The market's vendors are important stakeholders in successfully setting up SNAP benefit redemption at a farmers market, and need to be involved at every stage, from the planning process through implementation. They need to understand what SNAP is; how they will benefit; and what will be required of them. It's not unusual for vendors to initially express reticence about accepting a new form of payment, and some may not want to participate. Keeping vendors informed and engaged in the process is essential, especially so the market can gain valuable insight about a vendor's interest in expanding their crop plan to accommodate new product demand and their willingness to participate in promotional activities. Remember, vendors who may have been reluctant to participate will reduce their resistance if they see the market operator managing the SNAP project well, and if they experience or witness increased sales for other vendors.



Flint Farmers' Market, Flint Michigan

STAFF CAPACITY

The most successful SNAP projects have at least one “champion” who is committed to ensuring the success of the project and the champion’s efforts are supported on a day-to-day basis by the work of staff members or volunteers who carry out the day-to-day operations. If your market is considering using a Central POS System to redeem SNAP, identifying staff responsibilities is especially important because this system requires more tasks. The market will need someone to staff the EBT terminal on market days, handle the record keeping, and manage the bookkeeping so vendors are reimbursed accurately and efficiently.

Both a Central POS System and an Individual POS System, operated by each of your eligible farmer/vendors, require staff members or volunteers to develop and manage the market’s relationships with partners who will build support for your SNAP project. All markets also need a staff member who will create and maintain promotional efforts.

Depending on the size of your market, one person might be able to manage all of the tasks required to operate a SNAP project, but it is wise to assess your market’s staffing needs and plan accordingly. This is especially important in the first few seasons when more time and labor will be necessary to establish the project.

Should you hire a SNAP coordinator?

Because SNAP requires consistent administration, accurate accounting and recordkeeping, promotion, and partnership development, your market may want to hire or designate a current employee as the SNAP coordinator/manager. Markets that have invested in a SNAP coordinator (such as Greenmarket in New York City) have seen increased sales and decreased frustration because they have a dedicated employee who not only understands the complexities of the program, but is professionally invested in its success. Relying only on volunteers is not recommended, nor is simply adding this responsibility onto the market manager’s already pressing duties. Remember to include additional resources for a paid SNAP Coordinator when you are fundraising; it will be well worth the effort.



STEP 2: KNOW *your* CUSTOMER/POTENTIAL CUSTOMER

A farmers market that is dedicated to creating a welcoming, inclusive environment that reflects the needs of all its customers is going to be well positioned to create a successful SNAP project. To create this environment, a market needs to be flexible and consider all of its customers' needs. Market organizers should know the demographics of their community, including how many residents are currently participating in SNAP, information which your State's SNAP director can provide (visit <http://foodstamp.aphsa.org/Directors.html> for a directory of State SNAP directors). Knowledge of the cultural and socio-economic diversity of the community will be important in order to understand the needs of the customer base and to identify potential barriers to shopping at the market, such as language differences, transportation needs, physical accessibility for the elderly, handicapped and families; even product variety.

In the planning stage, market stakeholders should evaluate the market to see how well it serves all members of the community and how well the current customer base represents the entire community. Look at the market's sales originating from WIC FMNP and SFMNP. Consider the market's proximity to public transportation and how accessible it is for the elderly and handicapped. Evaluating these issues and others will help the market operator determine where the market needs to improve or adjust to meet the needs of new customers.

One of the best methods for understanding your customer base or potential base is to administer a survey. A customer survey, administered by market staff or volunteers during peak market season, will help you get a snapshot of your customer base and the ways they utilize the market. If you would like to survey potential customers, ask your market partners to distribute a survey to their clientele or survey residents near the market, perhaps at a nearby shopping center. This will help you to better understand potential customer needs and the issues that may keep them from shopping at the market. An example of a customer survey can be found in Appendix B.

Finally, engage your market's partners to help you better understand the community. *Step 5: Create Partnerships*, will delve further into this topic, but organizations such as local social service agencies, food pantries, and senior centers can introduce their clientele to the market, and help market operators determine how the market can successfully reach out to a wider customer base.



Milwaukee, Wisconsin



East New York Farmers Market, Brooklyn, New York

STEP 3: *create* A FUNDING STRATEGY

Setting up SNAP benefit redemption at your market is similar to starting a farmers market: it takes time, energy and resources. And, while accepting SNAP benefits greatly enhance business for your vendors and food access for the community, the market organization is not likely to see all of its start-up, operating and labor costs covered with a SNAP-only program. As with all start-ups, it will take time and resources to develop the infrastructure (equipment, staff time), the outreach and promotion program (signage, promotional materials), community education about SNAP's availability, and to establish new partnerships. It may take a few years for redemption levels to rise so vendors should have realistic expectations about how quickly they will see increased revenues.

It is important to carefully estimate the actual cost of the program from its inception until it becomes more financially self-sustaining, and also determine whether market stakeholders are committed to financially supporting SNAP redemption for a defined period of time. And, remember that there will be costs associated with running the program after the initial start-up, because monthly wireless network service, transaction fees and labor expenses will exist for the life of the program. This section describes funding sources to assist with start-up costs and ways to create a funding strategy for your program, through grant funds, sponsorships, cost sharing and the use of debit card service fees.

GRANTS

Grants are the most popular method of funding SNAP, especially to cover start-up costs when establishing a new program, and there are a number of grant opportunities available at the local, state and federal levels. For example, grant programs that have funded SNAP projects have ranged from the USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) at the national level to state grants such as, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture's "Grower's Grant" for SNAP equipment and Washington State's Wireless EBT Technology Pilot Project for the purchase of wireless POS terminals, scrip, and technical assistance. The number of private foundations that are partnering with markets to assist with infrastructure costs or are funding incentive programs, like Wholesome Wave, is also growing (see *Step 6: Consider Incentive Programs*).

To learn more about funding strategies, talk to market managers that already accept SNAP benefits, your state's farmers market association, a FNS field representative, and your state's EBT agency to see what funding opportunities exist. These connections will also help you identify other methods that have been used to defray the costs of starting up and managing SNAP benefits redemption at other farmers markets. A long-term plan for funding SNAP at your market is necessary for its success. Given that grant programs typically last only 12-18 months your market will need to plan ahead if its funding source is not on-going. Have a reasonable sense of what the market's on-going costs will be to operate SNAP, including staff time for marketing, partnerships and bookkeeping, and determine how your market can budget to cover those costs.

SPONSORSHIPS

Creating and nurturing diverse community partnerships with organizations and local and state governments, especially those whose missions are to increase food access, may contribute to your program's long term funding and sustainability. Consider requesting sponsorships from these partners.

MARKET GENERATED REVENUE

When developing your market's SNAP funding strategy you can think "outside the box," particularly for the ongoing operating costs. It's frequently assumed that the market organization will bear the entire cost of starting-up and maintaining SNAP, but if the program is successful and vendor revenues rise, the market operator should consider sharing the operating costs among the vendors. This can be done by:

- Asking participating vendors to pay for a portion of the start-up infrastructure costs (POS terminal, phone landline installation, scrip, etc.).
- Charging participating vendors a small fee that they will pay on a weekly/monthly basis, evenly dividing the costs of operating the program between all participants. This amount will be relatively small for each vendor since it is spread out among the group. For example, if a market has 20 participating vendors using one wireless terminal its monthly operating expenses for SNAP may include: a \$50 wireless network fee, 100 transactions at \$.25/per transaction (\$25), and \$200 in labor costs, totaling \$275 per month. If the market's 20 participating vendors divided the expenses evenly between them it would result in a fee of \$13.75 per vendor per month, or just over \$3.00 per vendor per week.

Your market may not be able to fund the entire program this way, but it will alleviate some of the financial burden on the market.

DEBIT AND CREDIT

EBT technology not only allows markets to accept SNAP, it provides the opportunity for markets, generally considered cash-only destinations, to also accept debit and credit cards via a wireless terminal, in most cases. Since all three card programs can expand vendor sales, SNAP offered in combination with debit and/or credit cards offers the opportunity to provide additional revenue streams to offset SNAP operating costs. It also requires that the market engage a third party processor to provide the equipment and process payments. Accepting debit and credit cards come with their own issues, complications, and fees structure, which your market should be aware of before choosing a third party processor (to learn more about third party processors, see *Step 7: Set up a Redemption System*). The chart on the next page identifies the pros and cons of each option for farmers markets.

You may want to run a cost analysis to determine which type of card service best suits your market's infrastructure and staff capacity. For example, markets selling higher priced products, such as meat, poultry, cheese and specialty food items, may decide that the potential in increased sales justifies the added expense and effort to accept credit cards, while a market selling primarily fruits and vegetables with lower price points may only want to offer SNAP or SNAP and debit.

If you are just starting to plan for a SNAP project and are not sure whether your market should also accept debit and/or credit cards, keep in mind that card service providers usually offer the option of adding debit and/or credit cards at any time, but check with your third party processor for more details. Also, remember that state-provided wired machines will only accept SNAP.

For further information on wireless card services refer to the report, *Wireless Card Services: Supporting SNAP (Food Stamp), WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs* found on the Farmers Market Coalition website: www.farmersmarketcoalition.org.

PROS AND CONS OF COMBINING SNAP WITH CREDIT AND DEBIT CARDS

	SNAP-only	SNAP and Debit	SNAP, Debit and Credit
Pros	<p>States provide wired POS terminals to markets and vendors for free for SNAP-only projects.</p> <p>Wired POS Terminals don't incur transaction fees for SNAP.</p> <p>Wireless POS Terminal fixed costs (\$27-45/month) and transaction fees for SNAP (\$.25/transaction) are predictable and inexpensive.³</p>	<p>All customers have the convenience of an additional payment option.</p> <p>Debit transaction fees (\$.40-.55/transaction) are predictable and relatively low.</p> <p>“Convenience fees” can be added to debit transactions.</p> <p>Having debit card customers using the same POS terminal similar scrip, but in different colors, helps reduce stigma for SNAP customers.</p>	<p>All customers have the convenience of an additional payment option.</p> <p>“Convenience fees” can be added to debit transactions.</p> <p>Having debit and credit card customers using the same POS terminal and similar scrip, but in different colors, helps reduce stigma for SNAP customers.</p>
Cons	<p>Vendor sales can be limited.</p> <p>“Convenience fees” cannot be added to SNAP transactions.</p> <p>SNAP customers might feel singled out if they are the only ones using the POS terminal and scrip.</p>	<p>Terminals can be wired or wireless, but state-provided terminals cannot process debit transactions.</p> <p>Tracking and allocating debit transaction fees to vendors modestly increases book-keeping requirements.</p>	<p>Terminals can be wired or wireless, but state-provided terminals cannot process debit and credit transactions.</p> <p>“Convenience fees” cannot be added to credit card transactions.</p> <p>Credit transaction fees are unpredictable because they include a flat fee, plus a percentage charge of the sale.</p> <p>The percentage charged from the sale varies depending on the type of credit card used (bank card versus mileage/award credit cards).</p> <p>Tracking and allocating credit transaction fees to vendors is complex and increases book-keeping requirements due to the unpredictability of fees.</p>



New York City Greenmarket information tent

3. Briggs, Krumbhaar, Schumacher. “Wireless Card Services: Supporting SNAP (Food Stamp), WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs,” 2009.

STEP 4: MARKET *and* PROMOTE SNAP

Farmers market organizers know that marketing and promotion are important to a market's success, and these efforts are even more vital when developing a SNAP project. In 2009, PPS received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to survey customers and nearby residents of eight farmers markets across the country. Preliminary findings indicate that a main reason people didn't shop at their neighborhood farmers market was because they didn't think it accepted SNAP, even though all eight markets did. Many farmers markets have limited budgets for advertising and promotional materials so managers need to be creative about how they promote their market and SNAP project.

It is vital that the market staff spends time promoting SNAP to not only new customers, but to current customers, as well. Some of your loyal customers may receive SNAP benefits and not be aware that they can redeem them at the farmers market. If they already redeem FMNP coupons they might be eligible for SNAP and would possibly use it at the market, too.

As with all good marketing and promotional campaigns, knowing your target audience is the most important first step in reaching out to SNAP customers. As noted in *Step 2: Know Your Customer*, SNAP customers may live in different neighborhoods, speak different languages, and read and listen to different media outlets than your current customer base. What may work for your current customer base may need to be adapted with new marketing strategies for a broader audience.

And finally, marketing and promotional tools and events are opportunities to highlight the benefits of your market to the community and the importance of healthy eating for all. Therefore, remember that a good marketing/promotions campaign for your SNAP project will do two things: 1) let people know that your market accepts SNAP and 2) educate them on the importance of healthy and fresh food.

STRATEGIES FOR REACHING THE SNAP CUSTOMER

Customers regularly cite "word of mouth" as the number one way they found out about a market. Happy customers will always "sell" the market to their friends and family better than any advertisement, newsletter or flyer. However, there are strategies that can be put in place to specifically attract new SNAP customers or to let your current customers who receive SNAP benefits know that it is being redeemed at the market.

Printed Materials

When designing promotional materials keep in mind that all printed materials should be clear, simple, and concise; and all of your market's banners and in-market signage should say that SNAP is accepted. Photos of your state's EBT card, some fresh produce and/or the market's

HOW TO USE YOUR FOOD STAMP/EBT CARD AT THE FARMERS MARKET

- 1** **Market Information**
Go to the information tent and look for the Market Manager. They will be wearing a shirt that says Greenmarket.
- 2** There use your Food Stamp/EBT card to purchase as many \$1 or \$5 wooden tokens as you'd like. These tokens will act as cash at the market.
- 3** Use your tokens at any farm stand that displays a sign stating "Food Stamp/EBT tokens accepted here."

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFT OVER TOKENS?
Tokens don't have an expiration date! Keep unused tokens and use them the next time you shop at any Greenmarket that accepts EBT.
Unused tokens may also be exchanged for a refund back onto your EBT card.

New York City Greenmarket promotional postcard

logo, plus vital information about the market is all you need to get your point across. Printed materials should not be too busy so that they distract and interfere with the message you want to convey.

If your state has a state-specific name for SNAP, such as Michigan's "Bridge Card," make sure it is present on all materials. And, if your customer base refers to SNAP as food stamps then make sure all printed materials say SNAP/ food stamps. Every vendor that accepts SNAP should display at least one sign promoting the program which indicates that they accept it. Take every opportunity to remind people that the market accepts SNAP benefits, on market-wide banners and on all advertising/public service announcement materials.

If SNAP customers in your community speak languages other than English, translate all flyers, signage, advertisements, recipes, and brochures into those languages.

Market Staff

It's important that market staff fully understand SNAP since they are the face of the market and can educate customers and potential customers about the program. You can consider recruiting someone who uses SNAP or is from the community where your SNAP customers live in order to coordinate and manage your program. They may be best prepared to reach out to new customers; know where to advertise; what to communicate through your promotional materials, and more. Also, if the market is frequented by community members who do not speak English, make sure that someone on your staff and/or a volunteer speaks the other predominate languages. Customers will feel more welcome if they can communicate in their own language and will be better able to understand the details of the program.

EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING & MEDIA RELATIONS

When thinking about how to target your advertising, consider what newspapers your SNAP customers read, and the radio stations they listen to. If they use public transportation, what bus or train lines do they frequent? Are there church bulletins or neighborhood newsletters where you could advertise SNAP at your farmers market? A targeted effort, rather than an advertising campaign for the entire town or city, will cost less and will be more effective in reaching the intended audience.

The best advertising is free advertising in the form of news stories about the market or calendar listings in the local paper. Get to know your local reporters and pitch stories about your SNAP project, new and interesting products at the market, and upcoming events. Submit press releases because many local newspapers will simply re-print them. After you have developed a relationship with several reporters they will look to you for stories.



City Heights Farmers Market, San Diego, CA

These days, a lot of people are interested in healthy, nutritious foods, including many local politicians. A SNAP project at the market is a feel-good story that most politicians will support. Invite them to a special event welcoming SNAP customers to your market and invite the local press to cover the story.

SPECIAL EVENTS

At the market

Special events focused on SNAP at the market will draw customer and media attention to your program. Cooking demonstrations, health fairs and cultural festivals, designed to draw new people to the market, should promote your market's acceptance of SNAP. These events are also great tools for educating customers about the benefits of fresh, healthy foods; how to store and cook market products; and how SNAP is redeemed at the market. Some market operators use these events as an opportunity to invite local organizations into the market to help screen customers on their eligibility to participate in SNAP. But remember that events at the market are most effective when they support the market's mission and purpose.

Off-site

A great way to reach out to new customers is to promote your market's acceptance of SNAP by participating at local health fairs, school events, and community festivals. Ask your local utility companies if they would add to their monthly bill a flyer promoting SNAP at the farmers market. Visit nearby community, WIC, or senior centers to introduce clients to your market and SNAP, and bring some market products to share. Also, you can provide signage and flyers about the market's acceptance of SNAP to your local SNAP and WIC offices, senior centers, hospitals, clinics, food pantries, schools, churches and relevant community centers.

LEARNING HOW TO USE SNAP AT THE MARKET

Most farmers market transactions are easy—you pick up some corn or tomatoes, pay the farmer in cash, and enjoy your purchase. With SNAP, the transaction is simple but involves a couple more steps. Whether you use a Central POS System or Individual POS System, using SNAP benefits at the market is a bit more complicated than cash for customers and vendors. Educating your customers on how SNAP at the market works will increase the program's success and acceptance. Make sure that the market staff and/or volunteers are visible and accessible, and know how the program works. Have a designated table or information booth for SNAP, even if vendors have their own POS terminal, where customers can get information about the program and possibly find out if they qualify for SNAP. This table can be an education and marketing tool for SNAP and is a good place to display healthy recipes, flyers promoting SNAP at the market, and other educational material that customers can take and share with their neighbors.

Throughout the season, you may want to host a "SNAP at the Market" day where market staff orient new customers to the market with a tour, host a cooking demonstration, and provide a lesson on how to use your market's SNAP system. Make it as easy as possible to use SNAP!



12 Kansas Farmers Markets are now equipped to accept your Vision card, giving you access to high quality foods at affordable prices, all grown right here in Kansas by local farmers.

Swipe your Vision card for market tokens

- 1 Go to the market information booth.
- 2 Swipe your Vision card for market tokens.
- 3 Exchange your tokens for approved items throughout the market.

Eligible Items
Fruits, vegetables or herbs; meat, fish or poultry; baked goods; dairy, honey; processed foods like pickles, jam or salad dressings; cider or non-alcoholic beverages; and seeds or plants for a home garden.

Garnett Farmers' Market

COUNTY Anderson
WHEN Thursday, 4:30 - 7:00 pm
WHERE 4th Avenue & Main Street

Atchison Farmers Market

COUNTY Atchison
WHEN Saturday, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm
WHEN Wednesday, 2:30 - 5:30 pm
WHERE Between 4th & 6th on Main Street

Kansas Farmers Market informational card

SUCCESS WITH SIMPLE SIGNAGE: EASTERN MARKET, DETROIT MI

www.detroiteasternmarket.com

- Operating since 1891
- 7 days a week, 5am-5pm, Year-round
- Fruit, vegetables, plants, flowers, value-added products
- Over 125 vendors
- 20,000-40,000 customers per week
- SNAP project started in 2007
- Over 65 vendors participate in SNAP
- Over 100 SNAP customers per week
- \$1,500 in SNAP revenue per week, on average
- No debit or credit, but there are ATMs located around property
- “Mo’ Bucks” Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: Doubled each year
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: 14 in 2007, to over 65 in 2009



Detroit’s historic Eastern Market is the country’s largest market district. Every Saturday, the market district hosts a public market featuring regional farmers and vendors attracting over 25,000 customers. Eastern Market Corporation, which manages the district, sees the market as a multi-faceted anchor benefiting the greater Detroit area by supplying food access, economic development opportunities and serving as a safe, lively gathering space for the public. In addition, market operators believe that Eastern Market should be accessible to everybody, and SNAP acceptance is just one way to achieve that goal.

Since 2007, the Saturday market has been accepting SNAP, known in Michigan as the “Bridge Card.” In just two years the number of vendors participating has grown from 14 to over 65, with average SNAP sales reaching \$1,500/week. In the beginning, market operators used traditional marketing tools to attract SNAP customers, including advertisements on the city’s public buses. They found, however, that these were expensive and not very effective. Instead they focused their attention on SNAP signs which hang on participating vendors’ stands. They are simple and only have a photo of the state’s EBT card and “Tokens Accepted Here” underneath the photo. In addition, the market, which uses a Central POS System, where customers swipe their SNAP card and receive market tokens, installed a second SNAP booth so customers can be accommodated faster. Both of their SNAP booths are located near the market’s entrances where customers can easily find them.

Eastern Market touts “word of mouth” as another effective method for promoting SNAP at the market and the market’s leadership is deeply involved in the city’s food policy issues. Working with other community groups and agencies the market is able to get the word out about SNAP at the market and increase outside support for their program.

MARKETING VIA ONSITE COMMUNITY EVENTS: FLINT FARMERS' MARKET, FLINT MI

www.flintfarmersmarket.com

- Operating since 1905
- Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 8am- 5pm, Year-round
- Complete range of food items sold
- Over 80 vendors in the summer (inside and outside), 30 vendors in the winter (inside)
- Over 7,000 customers per week - summer, 2,000 customers per week - winter
- Market revenue: On average \$150,000 per week in the summer, \$20,000 per week in the winter
- SNAP project started in 2002
- Over 20 vendors participating in SNAP
- Over \$60,000 in SNAP revenue in 2008
- Debit and credit card services
- No Incentive Program
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: 3 in 2002, to over 20 in 2009

The Flint Farmers' Market is a year-round market that has been accepting SNAP since 2002. Vendors use individually-operated wired terminals which they either own or share. The market's management uses a variety of marketing methods to get the word out about SNAP, including: radio announcements, church bulletins advertisements and promoting the market's acceptance of SNAP to local community groups and organizations. While these have all proven to be important tools for getting the word out about their program to potential customers, the most effective way to increase SNAP usage has been through "word of mouth." SNAP usage increases when friends and family members encourage each other to shop at the market.

One very effective way the Flint Farmers' Market attracts and keeps their customer base happy is by hosting a weekly health fair every Tuesday throughout the summer. The market, together with local health and community organizations, host on-site health screenings and inoculations for kids, as well as WIC FMNP and SFMNP orientations and on-site sign-ups for Head Start, WIC, and most importantly, SNAP. Because of the summer health fairs, the Flint Farmers Market has expanded from being a place where people gain access to fresh, local food to a community gathering space where they can learn more about health, nutrition and Federal assistance programs.



Plus, the Flint Farmers' Market health fairs are fun community events which help market customers feel welcome. This is very important to the market manager who believes, "dignity is very important in all we do for our customers."

STEP 5: *Create* PARTNERSHIPS

Launching and maintaining a successful SNAP project requires a variety of partners, representing diverse groups from your community that can work to get the word out to potential SNAP customers, promote your SNAP project, and possibly assist with funding efforts. Farmers markets partner with a wide range of groups, including agriculture organizations, “buy local” initiatives, food access and poverty focused groups, as well as government and non-governmental civic groups.

Most likely, your market is already working with some partners to build community, reach out to a new audience, and create cross-promotions, but you may want to explore new partnerships that will specifically support your SNAP project. Think “outside the box” about who might be able to support your efforts. Not all partners need to be associated with agricultural issues or nutrition education to be a good fit. The key to good partnerships is that both partners benefit from the relationship.

- City, state and federal government agencies
- Local public health department
- SNAP administrative agency
- Local transportation department
- WIC office
- Senior Centers
- Schools
- Hospitals, clinics and healthcare agencies
- Tenant Associations
- Food Pantries
- Anti-hunger and anti-poverty organizations
- Places of worship
- Economic development entities
- Neighboring farmers markets
- State farmers market associations
- And many more...

While some of your market’s partners will be central to the success of the SNAP project, others may just play a small but useful role, such as purchasing new banners for the market that promotes SNAP. Here are some of the ways partners of farmers markets are already supporting SNAP projects:

- Funding a portion of the SNAP project
- Hosting cooking demonstrations at the market
- Re-routing public transportation to the market
- Promoting the market to SNAP clientele
- Creating and distributing promotional materials
- Funding an incentive program
- Screening market customers for SNAP eligibility at the market
- Hosting a nutrition education table at the market
- Translating marketing materials or funding that effort
- Hosting a market representative to introduce clients to the program and explaining how it works
- And much more...

Ideally, partnership-building should begin during your early planning for SNAP. It is vital that your key partners are in place at the beginning of your program to help you create a strategy for success, and additional partnerships can be developed as you progress. It is also useful to have a clear understanding of each partners’ commitments. For example, the WIC office may, at a minimum, agree to hang your market’s promotional SNAP signage in their waiting room. In return, your market should agree to display WIC program information at the market’s information table.

FUNDING SNAP THROUGH SMART PARTNERSHIPS: GREENMARKET, NEW YORK, NY

www.grownyc.org/greenmarket

- Operating since 1976
- Network includes 50 farmers markets, 28 of which accept SNAP
- 7 days/week, 8am-6pm, Seasonal & Year-round
- Fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, dairy, cheese, baked goods, honey, maple syrup, plants, herbs, flowers, etc.
- 195 Vendors
- Approximately 400,000 people visit one of the 50 markets per week
- SNAP project started in 2005
- 82 vendors participate in SNAP
- 350 SNAP customers per week, on average
- \$9,150 in SNAP revenue per week in July 2009
- Debit and credit card services
- \$700 in credit card revenue per week in July 2009
- “Health Bucks” Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: \$1,000 in 2005 to over \$225,000 in 2009
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: 14 in 2005, to 82 in 2009

Greenmarket operates 50 producer-only farmers markets throughout all five of New York City’s boroughs. Since 2005, Greenmarket has been accepting SNAP at several of their farmers markets, but for the first several market seasons the program suffered from a lack of exposure and customers. However, Greenmarket has not only increased the number of markets that accept SNAP from three in 2005 to 28 in 2010, they have also increased the number of partners they work with to make this program one of the most successful in the country.



Working with a variety of partners at all levels of the government and community, Greenmarket has been better able to fund their SNAP project and reach more potential customers. Greenmarket was successful in showing the New York City Council that accepting SNAP benefits at their markets would be vital to improving the health of New York City residents, and was able to secure public support and funding for promotions and staffing. In partnership with New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the market was able to tap into the agency’s “Health Bucks” incentive program. Through this partnership, Greenmarket customers who redeem at least \$5 in SNAP were given \$2 “Health Bucks” to use towards fruits and vegetables at the market. Greenmarket also partnered with the Human Resources Administration, which administers SNAP for the city, to help promote the project, by sending out mailings to their clients about the acceptance of

SNAP at Greenmarkets. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Greenmarket has partnered with a number of community groups and organizations including food stamp offices, churches, soup kitchens, and food pantries to help spread the word face-to-face with potential customers that SNAP is accepted at many Greenmarkets.

This multi-level support has not only helped Greenmarket fund their SNAP project, allowing them to increase the number of markets that accept SNAP benefits, but it has also given them the opportunity to interact with potential SNAP customers and dispel any misconceptions they might have that Greenmarket is too expensive, thereby growing and diversifying the markets’ customer base. These partnerships have taken time to cultivate, but they have proven to be one of the most effective ways Greenmarket has reached more SNAP customers and increased sales for their farmers.

REACHING A NEW CUSTOMER BASE THROUGH YOUR PARTNERSHIPS: CRESCENT CITY FARMERS MARKET: NEW ORLEANS, LA

www.crescentcityfarmersmarket.org

- Operating since 1995
- Saturdays and Tuesdays, Year-round
- Fruit, vegetables, seafood, baked goods, plants, etc.
- 27 Vendors
- 2,000 customers per week, on average
- \$62,000 in market revenue per week, on average
- SNAP project started in 2005
- All applicable vendors participate in SNAP
- 35 SNAP customers per month, on average
- \$250-1,000 in SNAP revenue per month, on average
- Debit and credit card services
- \$22,500 in debit/credit revenue per month, on average
- “Marketmatch” Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: 980% increase
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: all applicable vendors have always participated.

The Crescent City Farmers Market, a project of marketumbrella.org, was one of the first markets in the U.S. to accept SNAP after the introduction of the EBT card. They have been a model of the Central POS System for many markets who are interested in using a central POS terminal and wooden token system. The market works tirelessly to attract new customers, especially low-income customers, to their markets. Along with radio and public transportation advertisements, the farmers market organizers work with a multitude of partners who can help them connect one-on-one with potential customers.

One way they are engaging potential customers is through their Farmers Market Bingo game. Crescent City Farmers Market staff go to senior centers around the city and play bingo with their clients using specially made bingo cards, which have photos of fresh market items on them. Seniors not only enjoy a fun game of bingo, but they also learn about nutrition, what’s available and seasonal at the market, and how to use their SNAP and Sr.FMNP coupons at the market. Seniors are then invited to visit the market for a “Meet Me at the Market” guided tour and a chance to buy fresh market products. This face-to-face time with potential customers is important for breaking down the perception that the market is expensive or not welcoming.



PARTNERSHIPS AS THE FOUNDATION OF A FARMERS MARKET SUCCESS: CITY HEIGHTS FARMERS MARKET, SAN DIEGO, CA

www.cityheightsfarmersmarket.com

- Operating since 2008
- Saturdays, 9am-1pm, year-round
- Variety of vegetables and fruit, duck eggs, honey and more
- 13 Vendors
- 1,000 customers per week, on average
- \$3,000 in market revenue per week, on average
- SNAP project started in 2008
- 5 vendors participate in SNAP
- 77 SNAP customers per week, on average
- \$400 in SNAP revenue per week, on average
- No debit/credit card services
- “Fresh Fund” Incentive Program
- In May 2009, SNAP sales were 6% of total vendor sales, but by February 2010 SNAP sales grew to 17% of total sales
- SNAP and the Fresh Fund has been accepted since the market’s inception and are integral to supporting core vendors.

Strong partnerships are at the core of the **City Heights Farmers Market**, the first farmers market to be held in this diverse and economically challenged neighborhood in San Diego County. The market began through a partnership between the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Farm Bureau, in which the two organizations agreed that the best way to support the market was for each organization to work with their strengths and support their core missions. To help ensure that the market’s farmers/vendors would have adequate sales, the operators organized to accept SNAP benefits and established an incentive program, called “Fresh Fund,” which provides supplemental funds for customers who purchase market products with SNAP benefits, WIC coupons or who are receiving SSI income. Redemption of these benefits and the Fresh Fund program also provides community members, who value and want to support local farmers, access to healthy, local food. IRC, which focuses on food access issues in the neighborhood, agreed to manage the market’s SNAP and Fresh Fund project, while the Farm Bureau agreed to manage the day-to-day operations and vendor relations of the market. From the beginning, this partnership worked not only for the customers, who line up as early as 5am to receive Fresh Funds and redeem benefits, but also for farmers and vendors who have sales which keep them coming back every week.



In July, 2009, the San Diego Hunger Coalition (SDHC), which was already working with the IRC prior to the market’s opening to help them develop their SNAP redemption project and served on the market’s Advisory Group, became a weekly presence at the market helping with SNAP outreach efforts. SDHC offers

voluntary SNAP eligibility screening and assistance in completing the application. In addition, they offer follow-up services associated with the application process including ensuring that necessary documentation is submitted and that the applicant takes the next steps toward receiving their EBT cards. SNAP eligible customers are also supplied with a temporary Fresh Fund card, while they wait for their SNAP application to be processed, which immediately allows them to use the Fresh Fund card at the market (once they are granted their SNAP benefits they are given a permanent card).

To assist in the SNAP pre-screening and application process, as well as help promote SNAP and the Fresh Fund program to the broader City Heights community, a “Promotora” program was developed, which hires people from the communities they are intended to serve. The Promotora’s unique understanding of cultural issues, language and values allow them to be “culture brokers” who are able to connect otherwise marginalized communities to important resources, such as SNAP. In City Heights, the market’s Promotoras speak the prevalent languages of the neighborhood: Vietnamese, Spanish, Burmese, and Somali. On average, the SDHC screens 18-20 customers and processes 8-10 SNAP applications per week.

The City Heights Farmers Market, through this partnership between the IRC, Farm Bureau, SDHC, as well as several other community organizations, has become the community’s source for healthy food and an entry point into the SNAP program while also providing regional farmers a profitable direct marketing outlet in a community often thought of as unable to support a sustainable farmers market.



STEP 6: Consider INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

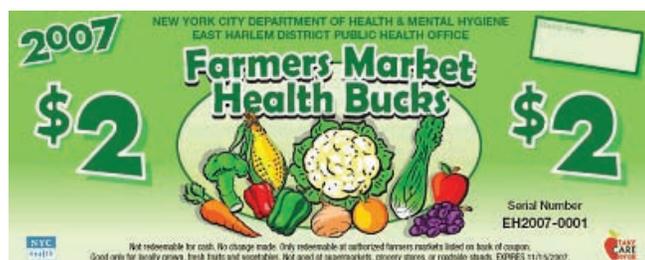
In addition to marketing, education and outreach efforts to attract SNAP customers to the market, some markets are turning to incentive programs to grow their SNAP customer base. SNAP is relatively new to farmers markets and many SNAP customers fear that prices may be too high for their limited budgets. An incentive program, providing bonus or matching funds for SNAP usage at markets, can be a great way to entice new customers while also providing more sales for the farmers/vendors and helping to dispel the notion that farmers markets are too expensive.

Until recently, the USDA required that farmers markets submit a waiver to operate incentive programs. Beginning in the 2010 market season, however, markets must only notify FNS through the FNS Field Office so that the agency has a record of all incentive projects in operation across the U.S. While no other reporting is currently required by FNS, market operators may want to keep track of the following items:

- The total value of scrip purchased with SNAP
- The total value of incentive coupons distributed
- The total value of scrip redeemed
- The total value of incentive coupons redeemed
- The total value of scrip purchased, but returned unused by SNAP customers

While additional recordkeeping takes more time, it is an extremely useful method for evaluating your incentive program and measuring SNAP usage at your market.

Many farmers markets across the country, including Greenmarket in New York City, the Holyoke Farmers Market in Holyoke, MA, and the City Heights Market in San Diego, CA, have launched incentive programs and early analysis shows that they appear to increase SNAP usage at markets and help SNAP customers get into the routine of shopping at farmers markets, and these SNAP shoppers continue as farmers market customers after the incentive program ends. The incentive program at the City Heights Market was so successful it had to set a limit of \$1,000 in incentive coupons given out each week (enough for 200 customers).⁴ Wholesome Wave, which works with markets to offer Double Value Coupon Programs (DVCP), reports that their market partners saw increases of SNAP sales by as much as 700% after offering incentive coupons, and of the farmers who participated in the DVCP, 66% indicated that DVCP increased their sales. While there are some hurdles to overcome, such as identifying funding sources and targeting and reaching your intended audiences, early observations seem to show that incentive programs offer an excellent opportunity to maximize the success of a market's SNAP project.



New York City Health Bucks incentive coupon

To implement an incentive program, a market must have the resources to pay for the matching or bonus dollars, this is where partnerships can play an important role. The pilot incentive programs in operation across the U.S. are funded by a variety of organizations, including foundations, local partners and governments. If you are interested in organizing an incentive program, consider local partners too, such as the

4. Winch, Rachel, "Nutrition Incentives at Farmers' Markets: Bringing Fresh, Healthy, Local Foods within Reach", October 2008.

department of health, a health and wellness center, health clinic or hospital, elder healthy and advocacy groups, food access organizations and faith-based groups, for the financial support required to match or offer bonus dollars to SNAP customers.

It doesn't take a lot of money to start an incentive program; \$500 could be enough depending on your market's size and customer base. In fact, running out of funding or only having funding which covers a portion of your market season can be a good way to evaluate whether the incentive program has not only brought more SNAP customers to your market, but has turned them into repeat customers. If SNAP usage stays steady or increases after your incentive program ends, you will know that it was successful. An incentive program should be a tool, not a crutch, for increasing SNAP benefit redemption by making program participants more aware and more comfortable shopping at your farmers market.

Widely promoting the farmers market incentive program will increase its popularity and likelihood of success. Successful promotional materials clearly explain how the incentive program works and acknowledges all of the incentive program's sponsors. Display signage at your market so that current as well as new customers are aware of the program. Encourage all of your partners to display signage and promote the incentive program to their clients and stakeholders. Your market could host a "kick-off" event attended by local notables (chefs, politicians, etc.) and the program's sponsors, to celebrate the new program which would likely attract local media coverage.

Farmers markets with incentive programs are reporting high redemption rates and are attributing increased SNAP sales directly to this effort. Some markets, such as the City Heights Farmers Market, already attract a large number of their neighborhood's SNAP recipients, but they continue to operate an incentive program because it helps increase the amount of healthy, fresh produce customers can purchase and consume. With funding and strong promotions, incentive programs are proving to be a powerful tool for growing your SNAP project and for sustained redemption rates.

HOW TO USE YOUR FOOD STAMP (EBT) CARD AT THE FARMERS MARKET:

- 1) Head to the table with the banner "Use Your Food Stamp (EBT) Card Here!"
- 2) There, use your Food Stamp (EBT) Card to purchase as many \$1 wooden tokens as you'd like. *These tokens will act as "cash" at the market where you purchased them.*
- 3) Use your \$1 tokens at any market booth that displays a sign stating "Food Stamp (EBT) Tokens Accepted Here."

WHAT YOU CAN BUY WITH YOUR FOOD STAMP (EBT) TOKENS

- Fruits and vegetables
- Breads
- Meat, fish, poultry
- Dairy products
- Maple and honey products
- Seeds and plants that produce foods
- Baked goods: wrapped, labeled and intended for home consumption
- Jams, sauces, soups, etc.

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFTOVER TOKENS

- Unused tokens may be exchanged at the token booth for a refund back onto your Food Stamp (EBT) Card.
- You may also keep unused tokens and use them next time you shop the farmers market. Tokens do not have an expiration date!

YOUR BENEFITS GO FURTHER AT THE FARMERS MARKET!

When you shop at your local farmers market, you benefit from food that's fresher, and more flavorful.

It's the best food you can bring home to your family. Not to mention, local market farmers and vendors offer free recipes and prep tips. And now, your Food Stamp (EBT) Card is welcome at many NY Farmers Markets.

TO FIND THE NY FARMERS MARKET NEAREST YOU, VISIT WWW.NYFARMERSMARKET.COM/REGIONS

THE SUCCESS OF HEALTH BUCKS: GREENMARKET, NEW YORK, NY

www.grownyc.org/greenmarket

- Operating since 1976
- Network includes 50 farmers markets, 28 of which accept SNAP
- 7 days/week, 8am-6pm, Seasonal & Year-round
- Fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, dairy, cheese, baked goods, honey, maple syrup, plants, herbs, flowers, etc.
- 195 Vendors
- Approximately 400,000 people visit one of the 50 markets per week
- SNAP project started in 2005
- 82 vendors participate in SNAP
- 350 SNAP customers per week, on average
- \$9,150 in SNAP revenue per week in July 2009
- Debit and credit card services
- \$700 in credit card revenue per week in July 2009
- “Health Bucks” Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: \$1,000 in 2005 to over \$225,000 in 2009
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: 14 in 2005, to 82 in 2009

Greenmarket’s management is convinced that “Health Bucks,” their SNAP incentive program, is one of the most important reasons why their network of 50 farmers markets has dramatically increased not just the number of markets accepting SNAP, but also the number of customers using the program, as well as vendor sales from SNAP. In 2007, two years after Greenmarket started accepting SNAP at some of their markets, Health Bucks was created in partnership with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). DOHMH made available \$15,000 for residents of three city communities whose obesity, heart disease and diabetes rates were exceptionally high (Central Brooklyn, East Harlem, and South Bronx) to receive \$2 Health Bucks, to be spent only on fruits and vegetables, for every \$5 in SNAP scrip they redeemed at Greenmarket. Due in large part to this program, Greenmarket saw SNAP sales increase from \$14,097 in 2006 to \$40,661 in 2007. This success led the DOHMH to increase funding for Health Bucks and in 2008 over \$80,000 in Health Bucks were distributed at Greenmarkets and SNAP sales reached \$100,772.

Seen as a “win-win” by both Greenmarket and the DOHMH, Health Bucks has helped to make several of New York City’s farmers markets more accessible for those residents who desperately need access to fresh, local foods, while also increasing revenue for vendors. With a 95-100% redemption rate, the Health Bucks incentive program clearly meets the needs of its target audience, the SNAP customers who want to buy healthy food for themselves and their families. Although the DOHMH was able to increase funding for Health Bucks, Greenmarket believes that it doesn’t take a lot of money to produce great results; smaller markets could operate successful incentive programs on much less. The strength of Health Bucks lies not only in its funding, but in the time and energy that both partners, Greenmarket and DOHMH, have contributed towards improving community health and helping support small, family farmers.



STEADY, MEASURABLE GROWTH USING INCENTIVES: LYNN FARMERS' MARKET, LYNN MA

www.thefoodproject.org

- Operating since 1990
- Thursdays, 11am-3pm, July-October
- Fruits, vegetables, honey, baked goods, Peruvian crafts
- 6 Vendors, on average. 5 food vendors and 1 craft vendor
- 850 customers per week, on average
- \$4,100 market revenue per week, on average
- SNAP project started in 2005
- 5 vendors participate in SNAP
- 50 SNAP customers per week, on average
- \$126 in SNAP revenue per week, on average
- Debit card services (\$10 minimum per transaction)
- \$20 in debit revenue per week, on average
- Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: 2005: \$763, 2006 (incentive program began): \$1,012, 2007: \$1,769, 2008: \$2,266, 2009: \$4,100
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: Since 2005, two more farmers are participating

The Lynn Farmers' Market is operated by The Food Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to youth and community development and the creation of sustainable food systems. The organization manages and has a stall at the market where they sell produce grown in their nearby urban garden and suburban farms. In an effort to meet the fresh food needs of this struggling city, the Lynn Farmers' Market has expanded to include not only the Food Project's produce stand, but also several regional farmers and vendors. The market has been accepting SNAP since 2005, but towards the end of the 2006 market season they received a small grant of \$500 from Project Bread, a local non-profit, to create an incentive program, through which customers would receive an additional \$5 in produce for every \$5 they redeem in SNAP. Although the first year of the incentive program saw modest gains: (\$1,012 in sales in 2006 versus \$762 in 2005), the Food Project was able to see that just a small amount of incentive funding was enough to bring SNAP customers to their market and help them purchase healthy food for their families.



In an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the incentive program, the Food Project offered the incentive program during only the first half of the 2007 market season. By keeping careful records, the Food Project was able to compare market days with the incentive to days without the incentive and they saw that most of their SNAP customers continued to shop at the market and SNAP sales did not go down significantly when the incentive had run out. While the incentive brought SNAP customers to the market and got them in the habit of shopping it was the actual experience of the market and quality of the produce that kept them coming back. This evaluation is vital for cultivating relationships with current

and potential funders who want to know that their investment is paying off in terms of increased SNAP customers gaining access to fresh food and vendors increasing their revenue. Since the incentive program began, Project Bread has continued to provide the Food Project with \$500-800 per market season for the incentive program, and SNAP sales have steadily climbed to \$4,100 in 2009. While funding for this program is modest and often isn't enough to last the entire 17-week market season, it shows that even small markets can start their own incentive programs and boost SNAP sales.

CASE STUDY

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPANDING OUTREACH EFFORTS THROUGH INCENTIVES: FARM FRESH RHODE ISLAND

www.farmfreshri.org

- 8 markets and 2 market CSAs
- Operating since 2004
- 7 markets operating from July-November, 1 market operating from November-May
- 65 vendors throughout the network
- Fruits, vegetables, cheese, eggs, honey, maple syrup, bread, and prepared foods
- 150 to 2,500 customers per week, on average, depending on the market
- Average weekly market revenue: Unavailable
- SNAP project started in 2007
- All eligible vendors participate in SNAP
- \$14,500 in SNAP sales in 2009
- 60 SNAP customers per week, on average
- The market accepts debit/credit
- A range of \$20 - \$3,500 in debit/credit per week, on average, depending on the market
- “Bonus Bucks” Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: increased by 800%
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: all applicable vendors have always participated – it is required.

Farm Fresh Rhode Island is committed to developing a local food system that supports a healthy environment, a healthy farm economy and healthy eaters. The organization began operating farmers markets in 2004 in an effort to increase urban access to locally grown products. With an emphasis on serving low-income residents, Farm Fresh accepts WIC FMNP and SFMNP coupons, and began accepting SNAP in 2007 using a Central POS System.

Despite traditional outreach efforts and high concentrations of SNAP-eligible residents in neighborhoods where Farm Fresh operate their markets, SNAP participation did not immediately flourish. Potential partners, such as local anti-hunger and social service organizations, were difficult to engage because they feared that their clients wouldn't be able to afford to shop at the farmers markets. So, starting in 2008, Farm Fresh initiated several innovative outreach strategies to bring more SNAP and SNAP-eligible customers to their markets, including implementing a Double Value Coupon Program, in partnership with Wholesome Wave. Their incentive program, entitled “Bonus Bucks,” matches SNAP purchases by up to \$10. Farm Fresh's outreach coordinator, said that “Bonus Bucks helped to activate our community partners to spread the word that our markets accepted SNAP.”



The incentive program made these agencies more enthusiastic about SNAP redemption at Farm Fresh markets because they felt that the markets were offering their clients greater access to fresh, healthy food.

The Bonus Bucks program also helped Farm Fresh build relationships with new partners and activate new SNAP-related programming at the market, including nutrition education and on-site cooking demonstrations. Farm Fresh now partners with the Department of Human Services, frontline advocates who speak directly with their clients about Bonus Bucks and distribute fliers directing participants to the Farm Fresh markets in their neighborhoods. The Rhode Island SNAP Outreach Center provides on-site outreach and pre-screening to market shoppers, and reached more than 450 customers in 2009. And in 2009, Farm Fresh partnered with a local food pantry which bought \$6,000 of market tokens from Farm Fresh which they distributed to 300 of their clients to help provide them with fresh produce and encourage them to shop at the farmers markets.



In addition to creating many exciting outreach strategies with their partners, Farm Fresh has also expanded their Bonus Bucks program outside of their markets. The organization manages a market-based Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program which includes both full-paying participants as well as several half-price shares for lower-income participants. Shares which are paid with SNAP qualify for Bonus Bucks, which can then be used to help subsidize participation in the CSA or can be spent at one of the markets.

As a result of the Bonus Bucks program and successful partnerships, Farm Fresh saw an 800% increase in SNAP sales between 2008 and 2009. In 2010, they plan to replicate these strategies, including adding SNAP to new markets, expanding word-of-mouth outreach, building on an already strong Internet presence, and continuing to offer Bonus Bucks to SNAP customers. While Farm Fresh still receives funding from Wholesome Wave for their Bonus Bucks program, they are also seeking other funding support to expand the reach of this incentive program.



STEP 7: *Set up* A SNAP REDEMPTION SYSTEM

This step will walk you through the process of setting up SNAP at your farmers market.

WHO'S WHO IN THE WORLD OF SNAP

USDA/FNS: USDA agency which manages and administers SNAP

- For further information, and to complete an online application, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap>
- FNS Regional Offices, located throughout the US, act as the information bridge between the FNS Federal office and the Field Offices, providing SNAP-farmers market relevant program information to the FNS Field Offices who communicate it to the farmers markets.

FNS Field Office: located in each state or group of states, The FNS Field Office is the primary contact for a farmers market and is responsible for providing all relevant information regarding scrip and incentive projects, and to communicate all the rules and responsibilities associated with SNAP projects. The FNS permit application is submitted to the Field Office. For a list of Field Offices visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/Contacts/FieldOffices>.

State EBT Prime Contractor: Each state contracts for EBT services with an EBT Prime Contractor; the contractor processes and distributes reimbursements for SNAP benefits.

- The EBT Prime Contractors work with markets and/or individual vendors to determine the POS terminal equipment that will be needed; provide the equipment and training for those using it. The Prime Contractors subcontract these services out, and will provide that information to markets when a FNS permit is issued.
- Any planned changes in banking information should be reported to your EBT Prime Contractor two weeks in advance of the change to ensure uninterrupted transfer of funds.

2010 Changes to FNS Requirements

Beginning in the 2010 market season, state SNAP agencies will no longer be directly involved with farmers market SNAP programs. They will no longer be required to approve farmers market scrip currency proposals or collect data about farmers market SNAP projects.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Individual vendors or a farmers market as a single entity representing all participating vendors can apply to become an authorized FNS retailer to sell SNAP-eligible food items (see the FNS website for details: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/retailers/store-eligibility.htm>). A FNS permit and designated bank account are required to get started.

Your Responsibilities when applying for an FNS Permit

As an **individual vendor**, you agree to comply with all of the FNS guidelines when you sign the application, submit your social security number and photo identification.

The farmers market, applying for a permit on behalf of participating farmers, is considered the “**sponsoring organization**” and a member of that organization, whether it be a board president or market manager, is identified on the FNS application as the “responsible person.” By signing the application, submitting their social security number and photo identification, the “responsible party” agrees to comply with all of the FNS guidelines.

SNAP REDEMPTION SYSTEM TOOLS

Below is a description of each of the tools you will use to accept SNAP benefits, including terminals, paper vouchers, and scrip, as well as the pros and cons for each.

POS TERMINALS & VOUCHERS

Wired POS Terminal: A hand-held machine for SNAP only, requiring access to electricity and a telephone landline (but can be used off-site, with transactions entered after the market).

Pros

- Terminals are reliable
- States provide these terminals free with no service charges if you have \$100 or more in sales of eligible food per month for the entire market
- Terminals have no transaction fees

Cons

- Requires a telephone line (most telephone companies will install an interface box at market locations if there is a nearby telephone pole or building)
 - Requires an electrical outlet (a portable generator or car battery will also work)
 - Free terminals provided by states do not have the capability to accept debit/credit cards
-

Wireless POS Terminal: A hand-held machine requiring wireless network coverage and a battery. Most machines also include an AC adaptor, and many service providers include an extra battery or have them available for purchase.

Pros

- Terminals can be used at any market at which there is reliable cell phone/wireless network coverage.
- Accepts debit/credit if your market sets up that capability with your third party processor.
- Terminals are convenient and reliable
- A market network with multiple markets and one FNS permit can utilize the terminal at multiple locations

Cons

- Terminals may be expensive to purchase (averaging between \$800-1,000/terminal)
 - Involves fees and service charges on all transactions (SNAP, debit and credit)
-

Paper Voucher: when a wired or wireless POS terminal is not feasible, a market can accept SNAP by using a paper voucher and a cell phone.

Pros

- No equipment is required except a telephone, either landline or cell phone
- Less expensive than other methods

Cons

- Transaction process takes a few minutes longer to complete
 - More paperwork and time required during and after the market in order to get reimbursed
-

SCRIP

Scrip is market currency, either paper or tokens, given to SNAP customers after their transaction has been approved and is used like cash with participating vendors. Markets design and pay for their own scrip. All scrip should display the currency denomination and the market's name and/or logo. Dates should not be printed on scrip unless you plan to design and buy new scrip every year. Markets typically need 1,000 – 5,000 pieces of scrip.

Markets that accept both SNAP and debit/credit need to have scrip designated for each payment type. For example, SNAP tokens may be red and the debit/credit tokens may be blue. This is important because vendors must be able to distinguish between the two currencies so that they sell only eligible items to SNAP customers and don't give SNAP customers cash back.

Paper: “Kant Kopy” paper or similar paper which cannot be photocopied and is often laminated to increase its longevity; can also include a raised, embossed watermark.

Pros

- Easy to make and reproduce
- Physically light and easy to handle

Cons

- More easily counterfeited

Tokens: Wood, plastic or metal

Pros

- Companies that produce promotional and advertising items such as pens, magnets, calendars with a company logo, etc., can also produce tokens
- Not easy to counterfeit
- Metal tokens can be counted by a machine (popular at some markets with very high SNAP sales volumes)

Cons

- Tokens become cumbersome and bulky in large quantities
- May be slightly more expensive than paper



Marketumbrella.org debit/credit and SNAP tokens.

SNAP REDEMPTION SYSTEMS

When determining which redemption system to use, you should meet with the market's stakeholders, including the vendors, to discuss which system will best serve the vendors, customers, and the market organizer. The Redemption System Comparison chart on the next page describes the two most common and successful redemption systems being used at farmers markets.

While this chart highlights the two most common methods for redeeming SNAP benefits at farmers markets, a paper voucher system is another viable option. This system is attractive to markets and vendors that do not have access to both electricity and a telephone landline at the market, and who do not choose to own/lease a wireless terminal. Paper vouchers allow a market or vendor to phone in all SNAP transactions at the market and enter the transactions into an off-site, wired POS terminal or submit the vouchers by mail after the market. In order to utilize this system, either a landline or cell phone reception is required at the market. Using paper vouchers is the least expensive method of offering SNAP, but each transaction takes a few more minutes because it requires a phone call, the completion of a voucher receipt and additional paperwork at the end of the day. This system appears to work best for markets where the volume of SNAP transactions is anticipated to be consistently low.

Paper Vouchers— Market with one FNS Permit

(Note: If you are using paper vouchers you can use either the scrip or receipt method.)

Market staff calls a customer's EBT card number in for transaction approval; a hold is placed on the customer's SNAP account for the amount of the transaction; and staff records the transaction on a manual voucher that the customer signs. At the end of the market, the manual vouchers are entered into a wired POS terminal at an off-site location and funds are transferred into the designated account within the next two days. If the market does not have an off-site POS terminal, they mail the manual vouchers to the state's EBT Prime Contractor. Payment is transferred into the designated account within 15 days.

Paper Vouchers—Individual Vendor with FNS Permit

At the market, a vendor calls a customer's card number in for approval; records the transaction on a paper voucher and a hold is placed on the customer's SNAP account for the amount of the transaction. After the market, the vendor enters all SNAP transactions using an off-site wired POS terminal and funds are transferred into their account within the next two days. If a vendor does not use a POS terminal, he/she sends the vouchers into the state's EBT Prime Contractor. Payment is transferred into their account within 15 days.



Redemption System Comparison

	Central POS terminal system using scrip	Individual vendor using an on-site POS terminal
What it is	A market has one FNS permit and one central POS terminal, wired or wireless, for SNAP benefits redemption	The vendor has their own FNS permit and POS terminal, wired or wireless, for redeeming SNAP benefits.
How it works	<p>POS Terminal – Using Scrip A SNAP customer swipes their EBT card at the central POS terminal; enters their personal identification number (PIN) and staff enters the amount of scrip requested. Once the transaction is approved, the SNAP customer is given their transaction receipt and scrip. The SNAP customer then uses scrip at any participating vendor’s stand to purchase eligible items.</p> <p>POS Terminal – Using Receipts A customer shops at a vendor’s stand; receives a receipt from the vendor for their purchase amount; goes to the central POS terminal; swipes their SNAP card; enters their PIN; the market staff person then enters the receipt’s total. Once approval is granted, the staff person gives the customer their transaction receipt, which the customer brings to the vendor in return for their purchase.</p>	<p>POS Terminal A SNAP customer purchases an eligible item by swiping their SNAP card in the POS terminal at the vendor’s booth; enters their PIN and waits for approval. Once the transaction is approved, the shopper is given their purchase and a transaction receipt.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  <p><i>Wireless POS Terminal</i></p> </div>
How vendors get paid	An electronic deposit is made directly into the market’s account within two business days and the market follows its procedures for reimbursing vendors.	An electronic deposit is made directly into the vendor’s account.

SETTING UP A SNAP REDEMPTION SYSTEM

Below are the steps an individual vendor or market will follow to receive an FNS permit and to further set up their redemption system. The FNS application can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm> or by requesting a paper application from FNS by phone at (877) 823-4369. For help filling out the FNS application please refer to the Michigan Farmers Market Association’s “Frequently Asked Questions” found in Appendix C.

	Central POS terminal system using scrip	Individual vendor using an on-site POS terminal
step one	Complete FNS application and send it with all supporting documentation to FNS Field Office.	Same
step two	Receive FNS permit within 45 days.	Same
step three	State EBT Prime Contractor contacts applicant regarding EBT equipment. Free wired POS terminal that requires phone landline and electricity is available for SNAP-only. If wireless and/or debit/credit services are needed, a third party processor must be engaged and the prime contractor can provide contact information for equipment and service providers.	Same
step four	Set up system and get approval from your FNS Field Office for the market’s use of scrip as alternative currency.	Set up is complete.
step five	Design and purchase scrip currency.	
step six	Purchase wireless terminal (if you are not using free, wired terminal).	
step seven	Create FNS Field Office-required recordkeeping forms, vendor agreements, signage and promotional materials.	
step eight	Train vendors and market staff.	
step nine	Determine staffing and management for SNAP, including who will staff the POS terminal, keep track of the records, promote the program and work with partners.	



SNAP MARKET PROCEDURES

Your market will need to develop and follow a set of procedures to ensure that SNAP redemption runs smoothly at your market.

Recordkeeping

Recordkeeping is an important tool for measuring and evaluating your SNAP project's success, but it does not have to be a complicated process. Some sample recordkeeping forms can be found in Appendix D, which can be adapted for your own market.

If your market is going to be using a Central POS Terminal system, you may be required to keep records of SNAP sales and your FNS Field Office representative will inform you of those requirements. Recent changes in FNS' SNAP Farmers Market program guidelines indicate that reporting requirements are changing. At this time, recordkeeping includes:

- Accounting for the amount of SNAP 'dollars' spent by customers on scrip (deducted from SNAP customers' accounts)
- Scrip returned and credited back to the customer's SNAP account
- Scrip turned in for reimbursement by every vendor on each market day (very important in order to accurately reimburse vendors)
- Monthly and year-end reports that include all of the above information
- Some states may request information about your program's highlights, challenges, and if applicable, what initiatives you implemented to help the program succeed.

Markets that have incentive programs in the form of matching or supplemental dollar coupons may be required by your state and/or the program's sponsors to keep an additional set of records evaluating the incentive program.

Sales Tax

Some states charge sales tax on all food purchases (not only on prepared foods) and in those states, market vendors traditionally fold the tax into the listed price of the food item. However, **SNAP purchases cannot be taxed**, regardless of the state or local food tax rules. Some markets provide tax tables for vendors in order to make SNAP sales more convenient and seamless. Remember, each state, and, in some cases, counties within states, tax at different rates so tax tables need to accurately reflect a given area.

Vendor Training and Agreements

Plan a training session for vendors when the market is ready to launch SNAP. If you are adding this service at the beginning of the season, plan to have training prior to opening day, and have all of the equipment, scrip, receipts, recordkeeping forms and signage on hand and carefully explain every step of the process. For some vendors, this will be their first introduction and their buy-in will be critical, so be thorough, patient and leave plenty of time for questions. Provide the vendors with a printed description of the program that fully describes all of the rules, regulations and accounting responsibilities to which vendors can refer throughout the season.

Many markets also use vendor agreements that spell out all of the requirements of their participation such as what can and cannot be sold; recordkeeping they will be responsible for in order to be reimbursed; when they will be reimbursed; signage they should display; and redemption rules, such as not giving change or charging sales tax. A sample agreement can be found in Appendix E.

A WIRED, INDIVIDUALLY-OPERATED POS TERMINAL SYSTEM: FLINT FARMERS' MARKET, FLINT MI

www.flintfarmersmarket.org

- Operating since 1905
- Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 8am-5pm, Year-round
- Complete range of food items sold
- Over 80 vendors in the summer (inside and outside), 30 vendors in the winter (inside)
- Over 7,000 customers per week - summer, 2,000 customers per week - winter
- Market revenue: On average \$150,000 per week in the summer, \$20,000 per week in the winter
- SNAP project started in 2002
- Over 20 vendors participating in SNAP
- Over \$60,000 in SNAP revenue in 2008
- Debit and credit card services
- No Incentive Program
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: 3 in 2002, to over 20 in 2009

The Flint Farmers' Market has been using individual wired POS terminals since the program's inception. The year-round market, which has both an indoor facility and an outdoor shed for the seasonal farmers market, provides vendors with access to power and phone landlines with which to operate the wired terminals. In some cases, two to three vendors share one centrally-located terminal. This system completely removes market management from the business of dispensing, counting and accounting for tokens as with a Central POS System, which would be labor intensive for this large market. Because of the permanent shed facility, market operators say it is inexpensive to add another phone line; lines cost about \$30/month, and the machines are free from the state. Vendors are happy with the system because they are in control of SNAP transactions and money is deposited directly into their accounts immediately. In 2009, the Flint Farmers' Market redeemed over \$60,000 in SNAP benefits and expects to double that amount in 2010, with increased vendor participation and a much larger SNAP eligible population in the Flint area.



CENTRAL POS SYSTEM: EASTERN MARKET, DETROIT MI

www.detroiteasternmarket.com

- Operating since 1891
- 7 days a week, 5am-5pm, Year-round
- Fruit, vegetables, plants, flowers, value-added products
- Over 125 vendors
- 20,000-40,000 customers per week
- SNAP project started in 2007
- Over 65 vendors participate in SNAP
- Over 100 SNAP customers per week
- \$1,500 in SNAP revenue per week, on average
- No debit or credit, but there are ATMs located around property
- “Mo’ Bucks” Incentive Program
- SNAP sales over time: Doubled each year
- Number of participating SNAP vendors over time: 14 in 2007, to over 65 in 2009

In 2007, the nation’s largest market district, **Eastern Market**, began accepting SNAP benefits through a Central POS System. In the beginning, customers could redeem SNAP benefits at one booth within the market, and wooden tokens were used for scrip. SNAP usage quickly grew and vendors who initially did not participate signed on. To accommodate the program’s success Eastern Market opened a second booth where customers could redeem SNAP benefits and switched from wooden to metal tokens which could be counted using a coin counter. This switch decreased the amount of staff time required for counting tokens and has helped to keep the cost of their project low.



CENTRAL POS TERMINAL/RECEIPT SYSTEM: VERMILLION FARMERS' MARKET, VERMILLION, SD

www.vafm.wordpress.com

- Operating for decades, Board organized in 2003
- Thursdays, 3pm-7pm, May-October
- Fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs, soap, crafts, jams and jellies, baked goods
- 12 vendors, on average
- 75 customers per week, on average
- SNAP project started in 2009
- All approved vendors participate in SNAP (9-10)
- 2-3 SNAP customers per week, on average
- \$20 in SNAP revenue per week, on average
- Debit card services
- No Incentive Program

Located in southeastern South Dakota, the **Vermillion Farmers' Market** is a mid-sized market for this region. In the spring of 2009, the market started the state's first SNAP/debit redemption project and has already seen sales of over \$1,000, \$700 of which were in debit transactions and \$300 in SNAP. The market uses a receipt system, which resembles a check-out line system in a grocery store. Customers using SNAP or debit pick up a single receipt from the market manager at the beginning of their shopping excursion and take it around to the various vendors who fill out a line on the receipt with the type of eligible items purchased and the purchase amount in either the "tax included" price or "tax-excluded" price column. When the customer is done shopping, they bring the single receipt back to the market manager, who computes the total amount of the purchases and enters it into the wireless POS terminal where they swipe their card, enter their PIN, and have the total amount deducted from their SNAP or debit account.

This system works in Vermillion, SD, where shoppers have so far been reliable about paying for their groceries. As the market board president said, "in this community, everyone knows almost everybody, so this system has worked very well. Only one person has walked off without paying but quickly returned when she realized her mistake, and was quite embarrassed." In addition to a slightly unusual redemption system, the Vermillion Farmers' Market has been creative in planning for the sustainability of their SNAP project. Before the market began accepting SNAP benefits, management consulted with several vendors, and asked if they would be willing to double their stall fees (from \$5.00/week or \$75/season to \$10/week or \$150/season) in order to support the SNAP/debit project. Vendors were happy to pay more and participate since it was clear to them how they and their customers would benefit.



THE ROLE OF STATE FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATIONS: THE FARMERS' MARKET FEDERATION OF NEW YORK & THE MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION

A growing number of state farmers market associations across the U.S. are working with market managers to create SNAP redemption programs at their farmers markets. Two associations that are leaders in the development and support of SNAP projects are the Farmers' Market Federation of New York (FMF-NY) and the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA).

FMF-NY has championed SNAP redemption at farmers markets since the early 2000's when FMF-NY first administered a pilot project that provided every participating vendor in the state with their own POS terminal. Over time, FMF-NY has focused on the development of an Alternative Redemption System, using a Central POS terminal and scrip, and now administers a statewide SNAP project, funded by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, which all New York farmers markets can opt into. Participating markets have access to branded, promotional materials and media kits, which are relatively uniform and easily recognizable for customers, including signage; banners; and templates for press releases, print advertisements, and a consumer brochure. In addition, FMF-NY provides a fee reimbursement to all participating markets to cover the expense of the EBT wireless terminal, as well as spreadsheets for tracking sales and redemptions. Market managers have access to training materials, meetings and on-going assistance from FMF-NY. On-going tracking and evaluation of the statewide program helps them identify room for improvement. Some of these tools can be found on their website at www.nyfarmersmarket.com/ebt.htm.

FMF-NY bridges the gap between the state's markets and the various agencies and foundations working to support SNAP. FMF-NY's engagement with state agencies, private foundations and the federal government through a variety of activities has helped to expand and gain support for increased SNAP use at farmers markets. In 2008, FMF-NY received a grant from Wholesome Wave and the Humpty Dumpty Institute to implement an incentive program in upstate NY, building off of New York City's successful "Health Bucks" program. FMF-NY's dedication and leadership has led to the acceptance of SNAP benefits at 135 urban and rural farmers markets in the 2009 market season, and efforts are underway to bring the program to farm stands so a wider vendor and customer base can participate and benefit.

MIFMA, established in 2007, assists Michigan farmers markets in their effort to set up successful SNAP projects through hands-on training for market managers and partnerships with key state agencies and organizations. This focus has helped increase the number of MI farmers markets that operate SNAP projects from three in 2006 to over 30 by the end of 2009. From the start, MIFMA recognized the importance of walking market managers through all aspects of setting up SNAP, providing technical assistance and support as they developed their projects. MIFMA held training sessions and regular conference calls for market managers, and developed a resource handbook that has been widely distributed throughout the state. In addition, MIFMA has strong working relationships with the Michigan Food Policy Council, Michigan Department of Human Services, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Agriculture, and USDA/FNS resulting in the formation of the MI Farmers Market Food Assistance Partnership which focuses on increasing access to fresh foods.

MIFMA's first objective was to create a solid, low-stress process for markets to create their own SNAP projects. Once the association accomplished this goal they were able to focus attention on developing strong outreach strategies which could be jointly launched by all partners. The collaborative approach for increasing SNAP use at farmers markets and healthy food access for all of MI's residents has been the key to this young state farmers market association's success.

CONCLUSION

You now have the tools to create a successful SNAP benefits redemption project at your farmers market. While it will require time and energy, the market will be rewarded with new partnerships, a wider and more diverse customer base and increased revenue for vendors. At the same time, operators must set realistic expectations for the market's success.

The number of SNAP sales depends on a variety of factors, including the community's demographics, the number of vendors at the market, and types of products available. In the first few seasons, the market may not see many SNAP transactions. Even some of the strongest projects in the country reported low SNAP sales in their first few seasons; New York City's Greenmarket had only \$1,000 in total SNAP sales in 2005, the first season they accepted the program, but by 2009 SNAP sales were over \$225,000. Even smaller markets, such as the Lynn Farmers' Market, which saw total SNAP sales grow from \$762 to \$4,100 over the course of five seasons, are making gains through strong outreach efforts, partnerships and incentive programs. Dedication to the market's SNAP project's success should result in increased transactions and sales from year to year.

Markets define the success of their SNAP project in other ways than just sales. Some want to reach the largest number of SNAP recipients, others are more interested in increasing the number of SNAP transactions or the amount of SNAP benefits redeemed at the market, while others hope that in time all eligible vendors participate in the project. Each market should determine what "success" means.

There are a number of established markets with SNAP projects, as well as many farmers markets across the country just starting to implement SNAP. All of these markets are potential sources of support and guidance. You can also contact your state farmers market association for more information and support. States such as Michigan, New York, California and Oregon have tools and resources for markets interested in accepting SNAP. Also you should keep in mind that some individual markets have their own sets of tools and resources which may be valuable for markets setting up a SNAP project, so reach out for additional information and advice as you move forward.



ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some other sources of information on SNAP at farmers markets.

USDA/AMS: USDA agency which supports public markets through funding opportunities, etc.
www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

USDA/FNS: USDA agency that administers SNAP. SNAP assistance for farmers markets can be found at
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm

USDA/Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food: USDA-wide effort to create new economic opportunities by better connecting consumers with local producers. The initiative's website includes information on federal grant programs available for farmers markets and farmers. www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer

Farmers Market Coalition: non-profit organization dedicated to providing resources for farmers markets. Their website hosts a list of resources to help you accept SNAP, as well as a list of state farmers market associations. www.farmersmarketcoalition.org

Project for Public Spaces: non-profit organization which operates a public markets program dedicated to re-connecting communities and local economies through markets. Their website hosts resources for farmers markets interested in becoming more accessible for low-income communities, including a report on the W. K. Kellogg Foundation-funded Diversifying Markets Grant Program. www.pps.org/markets

Wholesome Wave: national nonprofit organization whose mission is to nourish neighborhoods by supporting increased production and access to healthy, fresh, and affordable locally grown food for the well-being of all. www.wholesomewave.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE GUIDES

There are several guidebooks that can offer helpful information:

SNAP at Farmers Markets: A How-To Handbook
www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

Lawrence Farmers Market SNAP Guide
www.mass.gov/agr/markets/farmersmarkets/docs/utilizing_ebt.pdf

Michigan Farmers Market Association SNAP Handbook
www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu/Portals/farmmarkets/SNAP%20Resource%20Binder.pdf

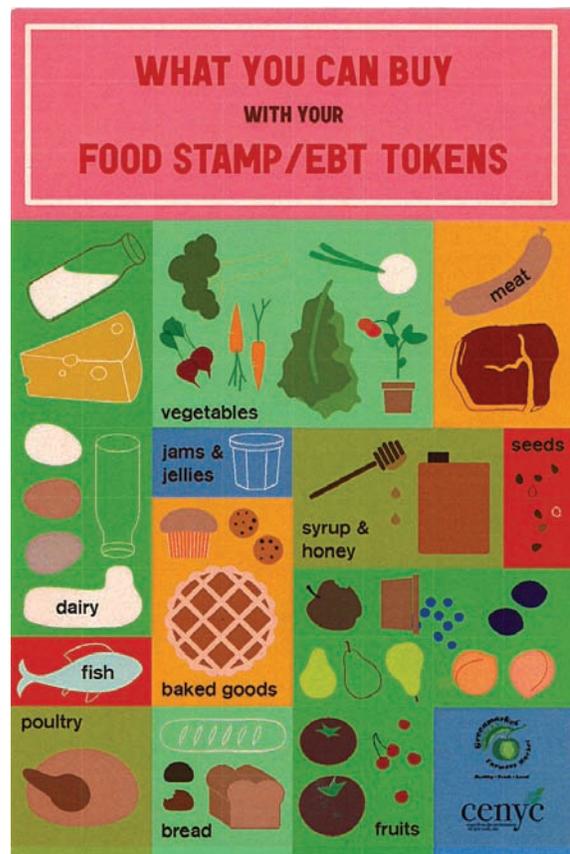
The Ecology Center SNAP Handbook www.ecologycenter.org/ebt/pdf/SimpleGuide2008.pdf

Farmers' Market Federation of New York Wireless EBT Project Information
www.nyfarmersmarket.com/ebt.htm

Oregon Farmers' Market Association SNAP Merchant Services
www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/EBT/ebt.html

APPENDIX A

WHAT ITEMS CAN AND CAN'T BE BOUGHT WITH SNAP BENEFITS?



Households **CAN** use SNAP benefits to buy foods for the household to eat, such as:

- Breads and cereals;
- Fruits and vegetables;
- Meats, fish and poultry;
- Dairy products;
- Seeds and plants which produce food for the household to eat.

Households **CANNOT** use SNAP benefits to buy:

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco; or
- Any nonfood items, such as pet foods;
- Soaps, paper products;
- Household supplies;
- Vitamins and medicines;
- Food that will be eaten in the market;
- Hot foods.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE FARMERS MARKET CUSTOMER SURVEY

Time of Survey _____

1. In the past year, how often have you shopped at the market? (CHECK ONE)

- (1) Weekly (3) Never
(2) Monthly (4) Other _____ (specify)

2. With whom did you come to market? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- (1) on my own (2) with family (3) with friends

3. What do you generally buy at the market?

- (1) Produce (5) Prepared foods (ready to eat)
(2) Poultry/meat (6) Plants/flowers
(3) Eggs (7) Crafts
(4) Baked goods (8) Other _____

4. How much do expect to spend at the market today?

- (1) \$1-10 (2) \$11-20 (3) \$21-30 (4) \$31-50 (5) \$50+

5. Approximately how many vendors did you or will you visit today?

- (1) Only 1 (2) 2-4 (3) 5-7 (4) 8-10 (5) 10+

6. What is your primary form of payment at the market?

- (1) Cash (2) WIC FMNP (3) Senior FMNP

7. What is your primary form of payment for food at stores besides the market?

- (1) Cash (2) Debit/Credit (3) WIC (4) SNAP

8. How did you travel to the market today? (CHECK ONE)

- (1) walk (4) bus
(2) bike (5) drive
(3) train (6) other (describe) _____

9. How many minutes did it take you to get here?

- (1) 1-5 minutes (4) 16-20 minutes
(2) 6-10 minutes (5) 21-25 minutes
(3) 11-15 minutes (6) 26-30 minutes

10. What is your home zip code? _____

11. Age

- Less than 18 50-65
 18 -35 65+
 36-49

12. Gender _____

APPENDIX C

HOW DO I FILL OUT THE SNAP BENEFITS RETAILER APPLICATION?

Below are some typical questions asked regarding completion of the application.

Question #10: Type of ownership.

How do markets that are nonprofits, or sponsored by municipalities answer this question?

Select either Publicly Owned Corporation or Cooperative as ownership type. If not publicly owned, documentation of non-profit status must be submitted with the application; i.e. IRS exemption letter, or Articles of Incorporation for a Domestic Non-Profit Corporation.

Question #11: Contact info for Parent Corporation:

How might this apply to farmers markets?

This question has no application for farmers markets and can be left blank—this question pertains to multi store chains or franchises.

Question #12: Primary owners or major shareholders or cooperative officers.

If there is a governing board of some sort, is it sufficient to provide information about its officers rather than about each board member? What about markets that are operated by a municipality? Is someone required to provide identification?

Whether they are an officer, board member or a market master, photo identification and documentation of social security number must be received for an individual responsible for the operation of the SNAP benefits Program at the farmers market.

Question #17: Estimate your annual RETAIL sales:

How do I estimate my annual sales?

For a farmers market with multiple vendors, ask each vendor to estimate a dollar amount of what they think they may sell in a month, then multiply that by the number of months you are open.

Copy of current license required to operate:

What should I attach?

Some municipalities will issue a license to operate a market while others do not; there is no required license by the Michigan Department of Agriculture to operate a farmers market. If you have a local business operator's/seller's/or vendor's license you may submit that with your application.

From the Michigan Farmers Market Association "Accepting SNAP Benefits at Michigan Farmers Markets: Resource Binder"

<http://www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu/Portals/farmmarkets/SNAP%20Resource%20Binder.pdf>

APPENDIX D

FARMERS' MARKET FEDERATION OF NEW YORK EBT TRANSACTION LOG

Time of Transaction	Issuance – \$ Tokens	Balance – \$ Tokens
Opening Balance		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
Total	\$	
Customer Returns		
Farmer Redemptions		

From the Farmers' Market Federation of New York
<http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/ebt.htm>

APPENDIX E

FOOD STAMP EBT PROGRAM VENDOR AGREEMENT

[ASSOCIATION NAME], [MARKET NAME]

This agreement is between _____, an association of eligible food vendors (herein referred to as “ASSOCIATION”) organized within [MARKET NAME] and _____, an authorized food vendor (herein referred to as “VENDOR”).

This agreement allows the above-mentioned VENDOR to participate in the Food Stamp Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Card Program at the [MARKET NAME].

VENDOR is bound by this agreement to follow all guidelines, as set forth by federal and state authorities and ASSOCIATION.

ASSOCIATION reserves the right to immediately suspend or terminate VENDOR from the program if ASSOCIATION observes, or receives evidence of, failure to abide by any of the agreements below.

VENDOR may voluntarily quit participating in the EBT program at any time, but must notify ASSOCIATION of such action.

The EBT Card Program will operate in the following manner:

Patrons who have been issued an authorized EBT card may purchase scrip in the form of wooden tokens, up to the amount authorized, from designated ASSOCIATION staff. The patron’s EBT card will be debited for the value of the tokens purchased. Patrons will use the tokens only for purchase of eligible foods from authorized vendors at the ASSOCIATION. Patrons have no time limit on the use of purchased tokens at the ASSOCIATION. Patrons may return unused tokens to ASSOCIATION staff for credit only on the same day as purchase. Credit for the value of these tokens will be returned to the patron’s EBT Card. No patron will be credited for tokens returned above the amount of that day’s purchase by that patron. ASSOCIATION staff will exchange tokens for cash, each market day, only with the designated agent of each authorized vendor, and only when the designated agent presents the appropriate written permit.

The only tokens used will be wooden tokens with the unique imprint of ASSOCIATION on each side, with the currency amount also imprinted on each side. The only tokens used will be in 50¢ and \$1 denominations.

The EBT Program will be strictly and carefully monitored at all times by ASSOCIATION.

VENDOR Agreements:

- VENDOR agrees to designate a specific person to be an agent for this program. The designated agent shall be responsible for the vendor’s participation in the program. The designated agent will be the only individual that may conduct EBT token redemptions with ASSOCIATION staff. The designated agent will be provided with a written permit from ASSOCIATION, and must always present it to ASSOCIATION staff when redeeming EBT tokens or otherwise representing the vendor in EBT business.
 - The designated agent for this vendor is: _____. Any change in designated agent must be made by the authorized vendor, in writing, before a different authorized agent will be allowed to redeem tokens.
- VENDOR agrees to accept only ASSOCIATION wooden tokens, and will not accept any other market’s tokens and/or printed scrip.
- VENDOR agrees to accept tokens only for the purchase of food stamp program eligible foods, including: bread products, produce, meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, seeds, and plants which produce food to eat.
- VENDOR agrees that no U.S. currency will be returned to the customer as change, if payment for product is solely by tokens. The value of the tokens received by VENDOR will not exceed the posted value of the product purchased by the customer. (The customer will receive full value for his or her tokens.)
- VENDOR agrees to not exchange any tokens for U.S. currency with any person except authorized ASSOCIATION staff.
- VENDOR agrees to post a sign (to be provided by ASSOCIATION) identifying VENDOR’s stall as an authorized EBT vendor.

EBT Program VENDOR Agent

Space Number

Date

ASSOCIATION Representative
[MARKET NAME]

Title

Date



FARMERS MARKET
EBT
PROGRAM
EAT FRESH • HEALTHY • LOCAL

12 Kansas Farmers Markets are now equipped to accept your Vision card, giving you access to high quality foods at affordable prices, all grown right here in Kansas by local farmers.

