

OVERVIEW

Farmers markets are a community resource for fresh and healthy fruits and vegetables; they also help local farmers generate revenue. Farmers markets represent an especially important resource for consumers in low-income communities.

Accepting SNAP at your farmers market is a win-win situation. The program gives the retailer direct access to new customers and gives SNAP recipients access to healthy, locally-grown produce. The USDA has made it a priority to increase access to fresh produce for low-income Americans by helping farmers markets and direct-marketing farmers become SNAP authorized.¹ Thousands of farmers markets across the United States operate nutrition incentive programs, which exhibit diverse and innovative approaches to ensuring access to healthy, local, and affordable food for underserved consumers.

¹ United States Department of Agriculture, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 2016. Accessed at <http://www.wholesomewave.org/sites/default/files/network/resources/files/SNAP-Farmers-Market-FAQs.pdf>

HOW IT WORKS

How to Run a Nutrition Incentive Program is designed for market administrators who are just beginning to implement nutrition incentives. It provides key information around planning, goal setting, budgeting, and determining the various components of your program before you get started.

- 1) Track data at market to determine how to best approach SNAP/ EBT customer benefits
- 2) Register and purchase equipment
- 3) Decide which federal nutrition benefits to incentivize (i.e. SNAP, WIC, Senior FMNP, allowable purchases, incentive match levels, and types of alternative currency)
- 4) Build a budget to determine your incentive match level:
 - a. Whether you decide to do a percentage discount or Cap (e.g., unlimited, daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal) will have a significant impact on your incentive program budget

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Develop a network of farmers markets, food access, and affordability based groups and organizations (e.g., Wholesome Wave) to convince more markets and farmers to accept EBT**
- **Host forums with farmers to learn about SNAP incentive programs and how they can benefit from this program**
- **Get your organization involved in making healthy food accessible and affordable at local farmers markets**

HOW IT WORKS (CONT'D)

b. To project how much your market will need to operate an effective incentive program, start by estimating how much money should be available to match the funds

5) Choose how to operate the program at designated farmers market:

a. Incentive first – Customer will come to market information booth and show his/her WIC voucher or swipe his/her EBT card after being asked how much they intend on spending during their trip and obtain their tokens. The customer will shop and pay for items using tokens at vendor station. The vendor will return the tokens to the market info booth and receive their money.¹

OR

b. Purchase first – Customer shops with vendor, showing his/her EBT or WIC voucher to the vendor. The vendor will fill out a slip with the total for the items selected and the customer will then take the slip to the market info booth to be calculated with discount and incentive. The customer will take the receipt from the market info booth, back to the vendor and will pick up items purchased from vendor. Once the receipts are all processed, the vendors will be paid.

6) Track data at market

¹ How to Run a Nutrition Incentive Program, 2014. Accessed at http://www.wholesomewave.org/sites/default/files/network/resources/files/How-to-Run-a-Nutrition-Incentive-Program-Toolkit_FINAL-8.11.15.pdf

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **How to Run a Nutrition Incentive Program:**
<http://bit.ly/2G4v64n>

IMPACTS IN N.C. TO DATE

As discussed above, North Carolina’s population has high incidence of obesity, poor health, and chronic health conditions.¹ Accessible and affordable fruits and vegetables can assist in preventing or alleviating some of these chronic conditions, with SNAP programs at farmers markets promoting healthier eating and lifestyles in low-income communities with produce coming from local farmers, giving farmers a new range of customers.

¹ North Carolina Resident Population Health Data by Race and Ethnicity, 2015. Accessed at <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/pdf/NCPopHealthDataByRaceEthJan2017.pdf>