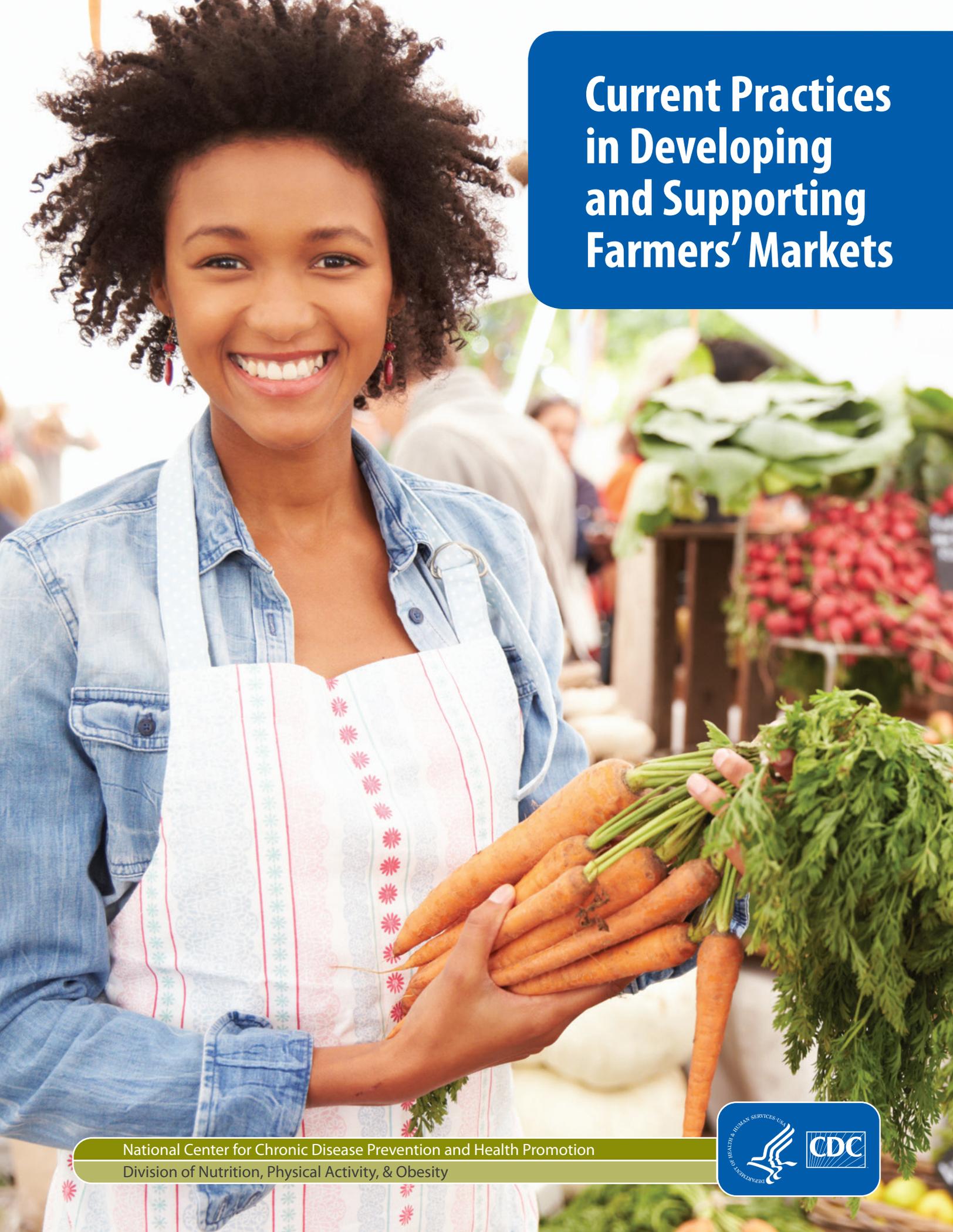


Current Practices in Developing and Supporting Farmers' Markets



National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, & Obesity



Overview

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supports efforts nationwide to reduce the risk factors associated with childhood and adult obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke through its State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health (State Public Health Actions) program. Through a federal grant, all 50 states and the District of Columbia receive funds to help prevent these chronic diseases.

This program focuses on healthy environments in workplaces, schools, early childhood education facilities, and the community. It also focuses on working through health systems and communities to reduce complications from multiple chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The goal is to make healthy living easier for all Americans.

Grantees of the State Public Health Actions program serve on the frontlines of public health prevention efforts, exploring and testing new and innovative approaches that can provide critical insight and lessons learned to others. The goal of this document is to summarize and share information on current approaches to help other grantees working in these same areas. This document highlights efforts by five state health departments to increase access to healthy foods through farmers' markets.

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Current Practices in Developing and Supporting Farmers' Markets

A farmers' market is an ongoing gathering of farmers selling their food products directly to consumers. It can be held in community settings, health clinics, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. These food retailers can offer direct and indirect economic benefits to a community by providing access to locally grown fruits and vegetables and space for farmers to sell their harvests and by cultivating a sense of community connectedness and shared space.¹

Farmers' markets can also serve as an effective way to offer healthier food options, including traditional and culturally appropriate foods and fresh fruits and vegetables, in underserved areas. Access can be further improved when farmers' markets are able to accept federal nutrition assistance program benefits.



Food Stamps in Idaho Farmers' Markets

Idaho public health and the state's farmers' market association teamed up to provide tools and resources that allow low-income people to purchase healthy produce and foods at local farmers markets using their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, also known as Food Stamps.

The Idaho Farmers Market Association (IFMA) worked with two programs from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW), the SNAP program and Idaho Public Health's Physical Activity and Nutrition Program. The two IDHW programs work closely to expand access to nutritional foods.

A statewide IFMA survey examined market managers' attitudes about becoming SNAP vendors, with results indicating a need for tools to support the use of these benefits and help reduce stigma. To increase buy-in, IFMA worked with IDHW to convene a meeting with several partners. This included farmers' market managers, local chambers of commerce, and representatives from the University of Idaho's Nutrition Education Program.

Through this meeting, IDHW and IFMA found that reframing SNAP benefits as an economic incentive was an effective way to bring in markets that were hesitant to participate. They then met with individual markets to promote the benefits for market sellers and their communities.

IFMA developed a tool kit to help managers learn how to accept SNAP benefits, "[Food Stamps in Your Idaho Farmers Market](#)." It provides instructions on how to apply to the state's food stamp program, as well as information on food stamp myths and nutrition education.

The Physical Activity and Nutrition program created and provided geographic information system mapping data to IFMA to identify areas with high SNAP enrollment and high numbers of low-income families to prioritize markets when distributing the tool kit. The program is currently expanding its efforts to encourage rural markets to become SNAP vendors and to increase public education to promote SNAP redemption at farmers markets'.

The effort is paying off by helping sustain local farmers' markets while also increasing access to nutrition for low-income people. Since 2013, the number of Idaho farmers' markets accepting SNAP benefits has grown from 10 to 21.

Lessons Learned

IDHW identified two lessons learned that public health practitioners may consider when they seek to put similar initiatives into place.

- ◆ **Strategic partnerships can help overcome barriers.** Collaboration between IDHW and community organizations gives both entities immediate access to other state and local organizations. This collaboration can be used to reframe the use of SNAP benefits at farmers' markets as a health issue and economic stimulator. It also can be used to provide in-kind resources, such as nutrition education classes or access to statistics on the use of SNAP benefits.
- ◆ **Mentorship opportunities for new SNAP vendors can support SNAP use.** Volunteers from IFMA's board of directors provided markets new to accepting SNAP benefits with one-on-one support and mentorship. This relationship allowed new vendors to work with and learn from successful market managers.

Role of the State Health Department

Convener: IDHW identifies new strategic partnerships and brings together organizations with shared goals.

Distributor: IDHW shares information resources, such as geographic information system data, with partners and presents on national webinars.

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Marketing the Indiana Fresh Bucks Program

Fresh Bucks is the product of a collaboration between the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Indy Hunger Network, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), and Indiana State Department of Agriculture. Fresh Bucks double the buying power (up to \$20) on Indiana-grown crops for SNAP recipients in the form of Fresh Bucks tokens.

Individual vendors at farmers' markets accept tokens and return them to a market manager for reimbursement. Once a month, the market manager reports the number of Fresh Bucks tokens collected to the Indy Hunger Network for compensation. The Indiana Fresh Bucks program began in 2013 in one market and has now expanded to eight sites across the state.

ISDH and its partners saw marketing as the key strategy to expand Fresh Bucks, increase the number of shoppers, and promote shopping at farmers' markets as a fun experience. Indy Hunger Network worked with a design firm to market and brand the program and pilot test its materials. Fresh Bucks marketing materials were used for educational and promotional purposes to reach market vendors, partners, and consumers. These materials included "SNAP accepted here" signs, Fresh Bucks tokens, posters, printed materials, IndyGo bus ads, and billboards.

To increase the reach of Fresh Bucks, post cards and posters were distributed to community organizations, direct mailings were sent to SNAP recipients through FSSA, and materials were placed at the offices of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and other relevant public spaces.

Lessons Learned

ISDH identified two lessons learned that public health practitioners may consider when they seek to put similar initiatives into place:

- ◆ **Use SNAP market managers as key champions and recruiters.** ISDH partnered with the Indiana Cooperative Development Center to integrate Fresh Bucks workshops led by market managers into regional 1-day boot camps to discuss SNAP acceptance and marketing strategies. Market managers then visited markets one-on-one to increase SNAP enrollment.
- ◆ **Seek diverse partners to help with farmers' market activities.** ISDH sought diverse partners to support multiple activities, such as providing funding, developing tools, recruiting volunteers, identifying communities to focus on, and suggesting innovative strategies or ideas from a community perspective. Some of ISDH's partners included Wholesome Wave, Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative, Indy Food Council, and Butler University.

Role of the State Health Department

Convener: To pool and leverage resources, ISDH convenes partners to promote meaningful connections and recruits other state agencies to contribute to the use of Fresh Bucks. ISDH also hosts a workshop to bring all participating partners together to discuss the direction of this effort.

Technical Assistance Provider: ISDH provides markets with technical assistance (TA) to apply to become SNAP vendors. It also helps markets identify resources within their communities and shares resources across markets to help them promote the Fresh Bucks program.

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Kansas Farmers' Market Conference and Workshops

In 2014, with help from the Kansas Rural Center, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) hosted the first statewide Farmers' Market Conference to strengthen farmers' markets across the state. This 2-day conference brought together market organizers, farmers, vendors, local decision makers, and local food advocates for continuing education opportunities, collaboration, and networking. Well-known professionals specializing in areas such as community economic development and public health policies were keynote speakers. They shared information about nutrition programs, new federal and state initiatives available to farmers' markets, and how policy changes in communities can help encourage the growth of farmers' markets.

Breakout sessions included the following topics: market liability insurance, social media marketing, weights and measures, the Kansas Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (KFSMNP), conflict resolution, by-law development, food safety, promoting fruit and vegetable consumption, MarketLink electronic benefit transfer (EBT) and SNAP benefits, farm bill updates, year-round farmers' markets, incubator kitchens, and cooking demonstration and food sampling best practices.

In 2015, KDHE expanded its efforts by offering four Regional Farmers' Market Workshops in addition to the annual conference. The 1-day workshops were held in various locations throughout the state. Speaker topics were determined by a regional planning committee and included food safety; implementation of KFSMNP, SNAP benefits, and EBT; market promotion through traditional and electronic methods; product labeling; effective farmers' market booth presentation; and community engagement.

Lessons Learned

KDHE identified several lessons learned that public health practitioners may consider when they seek to put similar initiatives into place:

- ◆ **Establish strong partnerships.** In addition to its work with KDA, KDHE has partnered with Kansas State University Research and Extension (KSRE) and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). KSRE is a member of the planning committee and helps to determine locations for the conference and workshops. It also promotes the events, recruits participants, provides content expertise on food safety, and serves as the eyes and ears of farmers' market activity in rural areas of the state. DCF provides content expertise on SNAP and EBT implementation and connections to resources like MarketLink and the Farmers Market Coalition.
- ◆ **Create a dedicated staff position focused on farmers' markets.** KDHE created this position to provide leadership to the conference and workshops and to bring a public health perspective to the farmers' market agenda.

Role of State Health Department

Funder: KDHE is the primary funder of the annual conference and the regional workshops. Participants are charged nominal fees to cover the cost of food (\$20 for regional workshops, \$35-\$80 for the annual conference depending on number of days attended and student discount eligibility).

Technical Leader: KDHE serves on the planning committee for the conference and regional workshops, helping to determine topics and speakers. The department also helps develop evaluations for the conference and workshops, analyze and summarize evaluation results, and, based on results, develop recommendations for future changes.

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- ◆ **Conduct regional workshops in addition to the annual conference.** Conference topics tend to be broad in focus, and participants usually cannot attend all sessions of interest. Workshop presentations can be tailored to the needs of each region. Recruiting local experts to speak on regional topics also gives attendees a point of contact in their community.
- ◆ **Do not overlook marketing and promotion of events.** The most well-attended events were the ones that were most promoted. Marketing and promotion activities included statewide and local press releases and website promotion.



Kentucky's Farmers' Market Support Program

Many Kentucky communities see farmers' markets and agriculture as tools to promote economic stability to buffer the economic decline seen in rural areas. Research has shown that local food systems may help support efforts to prevent chronic diseases like diabetes and have a sustainable effect on a state's economy.² Although the number of Kentucky farmers' markets has grown rapidly over the last decade, rural and poor areas have a limited ability to get funding to support such markets. Seven counties in rural eastern Kentucky did not have a farmers' market as of 2012. The Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) serves as a champion for health equity in the state and promotes farmers' markets as an option for healthy foods.

KDPH set up a farmers' market committee that consist of representatives from the Community Farm Alliance (CFA), Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Farmers' Market Program and Senior Nutrition Farmers' Market Program, KDPH's WIC Program and Food Safety Program, University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension, and Kentucky Youth Advocates.

The committee's purpose is to promote and support farmers' markets by seeking to understand the needs, barriers, and facilitators of Kentucky farmers' markets and their customers. To provide support to farmers' markets, the committee agreed to award competitive \$5,000 minigrants to four local health departments.

KDPH also funded CFA to support farmers' markets with TA and training. In partnership, KDPH and CFA organized training led by members of the farmers' market committee and successful farmers' market managers. They also facilitated a discussion between the trainers and the four communities that received minigrants. TA is provided through CFA's Farmers' Market Support Program (FMSP), which includes three components:

- ◆ Business development and information on how to become incorporated.
- ◆ Engagement with customers to increase access to healthy foods through the [Double Dollars](#) Program, which allows customers to double the value of their federal nutrition benefits when they buy fresh, local produce.
- ◆ Access to a cost-share program that allows farmers' markets to hire market managers to help initiate acceptance of SNAP benefits.

The FMSP used a list of proven strategies to help local communities choose an approach that could best meet their needs. Before FMSP, none of the markets accepted SNAP or WIC benefits or funded market managers with regular hours. By the end of the 2014 season, all of the participating markets were accepting these benefits and had hired a manager to work 20 hours for 24 weeks at \$11 an hour. Overall, farmers' market sales increase by 125% from 2013 to 2014.

Role of the State Health Department

Convener: KDPH identifies and works with other state and local partners, including stakeholders in food safety, to ensure consistent messaging about program efforts.

Technical Assistance Provider: KDPH provides TA by assessing the needs, barriers, and facilitators of Kentucky farmers' markets and their customers.

Disseminator: CFA's contract requires it to provide reports to KDPH, which KDPH then shares with partners and other relevant stakeholders.

Funder: KDPH provides funding to CFA.



Lessons Learned

KDPH identified several lessons learned that public health practitioners may consider when they seek to put similar initiatives into place:

- ◆ **Build on similar past work and successes.** Building on the partnerships and successes of its Communities Putting Prevention to Work efforts, KDPH created a farm-to-school task force focused on healthy food access.
- ◆ **Learn from markets that have already experienced success.** KDPH was able to draw on the experience and lessons learned from farmers' markets that were operating successfully, as well as on the infrastructure built by CFA.
- ◆ **Provide opportunities for markets to learn from each another.** With funding from CDC, CFA hosted a 1-day farmers' market training and networking event. This event was attended by representatives of the farmers' markets in the FMSP, as well as other markets in the area. Participants were able to ask questions, share lessons learned, and build relationships that will allow them to use each other as resources.

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Michigan Market Manager Mentorship Program

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has partnered with the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) to offer the Market Manager Mentorship Program (Mentorship Program). The program recruits and links mentors and mentees for peer-to-peer learning to help managers of farmers' markets that have just begun to accept SNAP benefits.

Mentors are experienced farmers' market managers who are certified as professionally trained through MIFMA's Market Manager Certificate Program. The Mentorship Program runs from March through November each year, but most mentors and mentees continue their relationships beyond the life of the program.

The Mentorship Program

- ◆ Offers training and TA to both mentees and mentors on how to accept SNAP benefits at farmers' markets.
- ◆ Hosts monthly conference calls to discuss common issues and concerns and share best practices.
- ◆ Hosts mentorship "meet-and-greets" at its annual conference as a way to introduce mentors and mentees in person.
- ◆ Asks each mentor to visit each mentee's market, observe how SNAP benefits are being implemented and received by customers, and offer constructive feedback to market manager (e.g., ideas for improvement, new strategies for implementation).

In 2014, 10 mentors and 14 mentees participated in the program. In 2015, 10 mentors and 12 mentees participated. As a result of this program, the number of farmers' markets in Michigan that accept SNAP benefits increased from 128 in 2013 to more than 150 in 2015. Now, 50% of farmers' markets in the state accept SNAP benefits.

Lessons Learned

MDHHS and MIFMA identified several lessons learned that public health practitioners may consider when they seek to put similar initiatives into place:

- ◆ **Find the right partner to lead the work.** MDHHS recognized MIFMA as an exceptional leader and for "having their finger on the pulse" when working with farmers' markets to accept SNAP benefits.
- ◆ **Link farmers' market programs together.** Michigan links farmers' markets through the state's SNAP incentive program, which helps increase visibility and interest in markets that accept SNAP benefits. This year, over 150 farmers' markets in Michigan are participating in the program.
- ◆ **"Face time" for mentors and mentees is important.** An early lesson learned by the Mentorship Program is that face-to-face time is invaluable in creating a strong mentoring relationship from the start. Based on this knowledge, MIFMA hosts a meet-and-greet at its annual conference as a way to introduce mentors and mentees in person and kick off the Mentorship Program each year.

Role of the State Health Department

Funder: MDHHS is the primary funder of the Mentorship Program.

Promoter: MDHHS highlights the value and importance of farmers' markets to Medicaid recipients by increasing awareness of their locations and identifying where SNAP benefits are accepted.

Communicator: MDHHS shares information about Mentorship Program events and other relevant MIFMA activities.

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Resources and References

Resources for More Information

CDC publication: [Healthier Food Retail: An Action Guide for Public Health Practitioners](#)

CDC publication: [Healthier Food Retail: Beginning the Assessment Process in Your State or Community](#)

Idaho Farmers Market Association online tool kit: [Food Stamps in Your Idaho Farmers Market](#)

Michigan Farmers Market Association website: [Market Manager Mentorship Program](#)

Michigan Farmers Market Association website: [Market Manager Certificate Program](#)



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