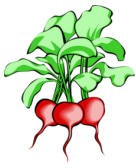


Washington State  
Farmers Market Access Evaluation  
University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition

*Peer-to-peer Promotion of Farmers Markets for  
Low-Income Shoppers Programs:  
A Review of Current Programming Nationwide*

December 2016

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## Background:

From 2015-2017, University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition conducted the *Washington State SNAP-Ed Farmers Market Evaluation* in partnership with the Washington State Department of Health and with stakeholders comprising the evaluation's Advisory Group. The evaluation was designed to improve understanding of the range of policy, system, and environmental changes underway within the state to increase access to fruits and vegetables for low-income populations as they relate to farmers markets. Evaluation findings highlighted peer-to-peer advocacy and outreach as one particularly promising strategy. To our knowledge, at least 3-4 such programs currently exist in Washington and rely on SNAP-Ed support. Despite the emerging popularity of these models in Washington State, little exists in the peer reviewed or gray literature to inform such programs.

## Purpose:

The primary purpose of this project was to identify and summarize key elements of existing peer-to-peer advocacy and outreach programs working to increase access to fruits and vegetables for low-income populations through farmers markets. The intent is that this product will support stakeholders in better understanding how peer-to-peer programs are structured and lessons learned from these efforts to date. We also hope that the product will help to connect individuals who are interested in operating such programs with those who have valuable experiences to share.

## Methods:

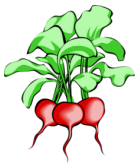
We identified programs from July through August of 2016. We contacted individuals and/or organizations who appeared to be currently or recently engaged in work related to farmers markets and peer outreach to low-income populations. Programs included in this study were first identified through an internet search using a combination of the following terms:

- Peer-to-peer, peer ambassadors, peer outreach, peer educators, community health workers, community advocates, community champions, promotoras
- SNAP, SNAP incentives, SNAP-Ed, low-income communities
- Promotion of farmers markets, farmers market access

As the study progressed, additional programs were referred during the interviews and through relevant stakeholders, such as SNAP-Ed and farmers market stakeholders comprising the evaluation Advisory Group. Through telephone interviews and/or written correspondence, we asked program contacts to respond to the following categories of questions:

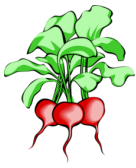
- The role of key stakeholders in the development and operation of peer-to-peer programs
- The type of peer-to-peer model used and how it works
- Successes and challenges of the peer-to-peer program
- Suggestions for other organizations/stakeholders interested in conducting peer-to-peer programs

For the purpose of this investigation, we defined a formal peer-to-peer program as a program that trained and utilized members of low-income communities to interact with other members of their community to promote the use of farmers markets. Although not all identified organizations included in this report are "formal" peer-to-peer programs, all are engaged in community outreach and provide valuable information related to increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income populations.



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## Summary of Findings



### Number of Programs Identified

Based on the search, we identified 3 programs within Washington State and 11 more across the country. Of the 11 programs across the state, 8 programs participated in interviews; 3 more opted to send written materials in lieu of an interview.

### Program Characteristics

Identified programs were diverse in their location, size, goals, and means of recruiting, training, and compensating their peer educators/ambassadors. Of the 11 programs identified across the country, slightly more than half identified a goal of increasing use of nutrition benefits and incentives at farmers markets among those they served. A majority of the programs also included educational elements in their mission or programmatic objectives. Nearly all programs used specified criteria to recruit their peer educators/ambassadors. Most also trained and paid their peer educators/ambassadors, though the rate of compensation varied widely. Two of the programs cited SNAP-Ed as one of their funders. Just two of the 11 identified programs had yet evaluated their program, and four had plans to evaluate their program in the near future.



### Perceived Impact and Successes of Peer-to-peer Programs

- In several cases, peer-to-peer outreach has led to increased demand for farmers market incentives, which in turn has increased farmers market patronage and, in some cases, has led to the creation of new farmers markets.
- Peer advocates have helped programs become more connected with their targeted audience. They provide organizations the expertise required to meet the needs of their community in a way that is both accessible and acceptable, as well as to reach previously hard-to-reach populations.
- Peer advocates have become leaders within their communities. Through learning opportunities and skills-building they become champions for food justice, take ownership of their positions, provide input for programmatic decisions, and take pride in their work, often going beyond the position description. Programs have found that the peer-to-peer model is mutually beneficial to both the peer advocates and to the organization.

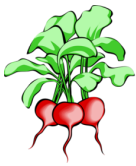
### Overcoming Challenges

- Many of the organizations included in this analysis have faced funding cuts, while a few have met resistance to their efforts to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Peer advocates' advocacy efforts have helped to prevent farmers market incentive cuts and to defeat opposition to the development of new farmers markets in low-income communities.
- Applying for SNAP can be a confusing process. If SNAP eligible participants are not receiving benefits, then they cannot take advantage of farmers markets incentive programs. An evaluation of the CalFresh Promotion Project demonstrated that by partnering with SNAP outreach workers and inviting them to peer-outreach events, the two programs could work together to facilitate the SNAP application process.
- Community members may already know about the farmers market and incentive programs, but do not feel welcome. Events, such as an annual farmers market opening kick-off, that engage peer advocates to ensure that community members are celebrated and feel part of the farmers market, can provide an opportunity to familiarize community members to what the farmers market may offer.

### Key Suggestions

- Prior to the development of a peer-to-peer program, consider forming an advisory group. Not only will this help inform elements of the program, it may also help to identify potential peer advocates who are truly engaged and passionate about food access. Programs have found that actively reaching out to prospective peer advocates is more effective than blind advertising for the position.
- Invest a substantial amount of time in training peer advocates, and provide them with a comprehensive background of the program as well as the components of food access.
- Treat your peer advocates as true partners and allow them to contribute to programmatic development or revisions.

In the pages that follow, and the attached Table, additional details and contact information are presented by program.



## **Brownsville Wellness Coalition (BWC) and the University of Texas School of Public Health Brownsville, Texas**

### **Program Basics**

Organizational Partners' Missions: Efforts to increase physical activity and healthy eating in the city of Brownsville has been a collaborative effort of many partners, and the separate programs work together to improve the wellbeing of the community members. The BWC was established by the Community Advisory Board (CAB), described below, to help work towards a future where more community members grow their own food; people in all neighborhoods have access to fresh, healthy food; and everyone has the freedom and the opportunity to work towards greater food sovereignty and self-sufficiency. BWC works towards this goal through five programs: the Brownsville Farmers Market; Community Gardens; The Happy Kitchen; FRESCO Mobile Market; and the Walking Club. Partners include The University of Texas School of Public Health, Brownsville, which houses the BWC office, runs the Community Health Workers (CHWs) program, and conducts community-based health research; and the City of Brownsville, which keeps the Brownsville farmers market open year-round.

Why the program was developed: Brownsville, Texas is home to many low-income Latino families with high rates of diabetes and obesity. To find ways to improve the health of the community, in 2008 the University of Texas School of Public Health formed a Community Advisory Board (CAB) that was comprised of faculty from the University of Texas School of Public Health, physicians, public officials and community organizers. The CAB utilized promotoras, or Community Health Workers (CHWs), to engage the community and, through discussion with community members and information gathered from the CHWs, the CAB decided that a farmers market was one way to improve physical activity and healthy food choice.

### **Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a CHW: All CHWs must be residents of the state of Texas and are certified through the state Community Health Worker Training and Certification Program.

Compensation: The Brownsville Community Advisory Board created salaried academic appointments at the University of Texas School of Public Health, with benefits, for the Brownsville community health workers.

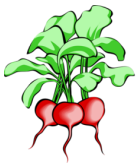
Training: Approximately 120 hours of training through certified training programs approved by the Texas Department of State Health Services; much of the material is developed by the University of Texas School of Public Health, Brownsville.

Key role(s): CHWs engage and educate residents who lack access to health care, as well as connect them to community resources. Activities include:

- Educating mothers on healthy nutrition and cooking, including farmers market tours
- Informing community members of upcoming events and free wellness classes
- Providing referrals to health resources (including the farmers market and incentive program)

### **Lessons Learned**

Key to the success of the Brownsville Farmers Market is its collaboration with community partners, the integration of health and wellness programs, and the cross-promotion of these programs. As a result of these collaborations, not only does the farmers market bring fresh fruits and vegetables to the community, but it also serves as a venue for free fitness classes and educational activities; this strategy exposes community members to a variety of wellness activities in one setting.



**California Department of Public Health, California Project Lean –  
CalFresh Promotion Project (CFPP)**  
*Alameda, Fresno and Tulare counties, California*

**Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To increase opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity in communities across California to reduce the prevalence of obesity and chronic disease.

Why the program was developed: California's Food Stamp (CalFresh) participation rates are the lowest in the nation and nearly three million people are eligible but not enrolled. To promote increased fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and participation in the CalFresh Program, California Project Lean developed the community-based strategy CalFresh Promotion Project. Although successful, this program did not continue past the pilot intervention.

**Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a peer educator: Peer educators did not need to be CalFresh recipients themselves, but they were required to be a resident of the respective communities. Experience as a promotoras was preferred, or a demonstrated passion to teach others.

Recruitment: Pilot program organizational partners in each county were responsible for recruiting the peer educators (i.e. through the Alameda County Health Living Champions for Change Councils).

Compensation: In addition to recruiting the peer educators, lead organizational partners were required to have a mechanism and plan in place to compensate the peer educators. CFPP funds helped to support this effort.

Training: One all-day training, in Spanish, at each of the four community sites that included information on:

- How to lead the curriculum with community participants
- How to use the evaluation tools

Key role(s): Peer educators delivered a three-session curriculum to community members, including:

- An overview of CalFresh and the benefits of participation, including common misconceptions about CalFresh
- Promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption for families and strategies for shopping within a budget
- Discussion of sugary beverages and healthy alternatives

Evaluation: An external evaluation of CFPP was conducted after the second year of the pilot program.

- Outcome evaluation: assessed the extent to which community participants experience a change in key indicators (perceived benefits, knowledge, self-efficacy, intention, and behavior) to eat healthier, be more physically active, and participate in CalFresh
- Process evaluation: assessed community participants' satisfaction with the implementation process and the fidelity of the implementation by the peer educators

**Lessons Learned**

Success of the program was largely dependent on the partnership with local agencies and peer educators. As such, to support implementation efforts, both the organizations and peer educators involved should participate in a capacity inventory to identify existing strengths, as well as areas for additional training and technical assistance.



**Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) of Missoula County –  
Double SNAP Street Team**  
[Missoula, Montana](#)

**Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To develop and strengthen Missoula County’s food system and that of the surrounding region by promoting sustainable agriculture; building regional self-reliance; assuring that all have equal access to nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food; and advocating for local, state and national policies that promote the local food system.

Why the program was developed: Farmers market surveys of SNAP participants overwhelmingly revealed that SNAP incentive programs would make farmers markets more accessible. These surveys provided evidence in support of a grant to implement a farmers market incentive program, called Double SNAP Dollars, in Missoula. At the same time, a focus group discussion for another study revealed that community members needed a space to share their ideas. Both these findings contributed to the development of the Double SNAP Street Team program in two cities, Missoula and Polson.

**Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a “Double SNAP Street Team” member: Must be SNAP participants.

Recruitment: In Missoula, CFAC recruited Double SNAP users who were previously involved in a focus group discussion about the first season of Double SNAP and who were particularly engaged and enthusiastic. In Polson, a partner of CFAC advertised the position at the tribal college and CFAC interviewed interested applicants.

Compensation: \$10/hr for up to 10 hours, 5 months a year (June – October). Compensation was limited by SNAP reporting requirements. CFAC wanted to pay their Street Team members, but did not want their income to have an impact on their SNAP benefits.

Training: CFAC has an orientation meeting for their Street Team members that includes introductions; information on Street Team logistics; information on the Double SNAP Dollars Program; outreach ideas; and outreach rules of engagement.

Key role(s):

- *Double SNAP promotion and outreach:* Street Team members each have their own unique network of community members and methods of promotion; there is no prescribed method of outreach.
- *Double SNAP programmatic feedback:* Street Team members informally gather information on the Double SNAP incentive program (through observation, personal experience, and comments from the community members they reach), and relay this information to CFAC.

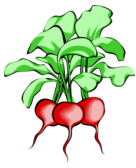
Evaluation: CFAC plans to evaluate Double SNAP Street Team through a number of methods, including:

- Analysis of Street Team member activity sheets, which indicate the type of outreach activity and the number of people reached
- End-of-season discussion with the Street Team members to discuss challenges and successes
- Independent evaluation of the program in Autumn, 2017 that will utilize interviews of the Street Team members to solicit feedback

**Lessons Learned**

In-person recruitment, as opposed to blind advertising, for the Street Team Member position was integral to finding dedicated and enthusiastic team members.





## DC Greens – “Community Champions” Washington, District of Columbia

### Program Basics

Organizational Mission: To use the power of partnership to support food education, food access, and food policy in the nation’s capital.

Why the program was developed: Part of the work of DC Greens in conducting outreach for Produce Plus, a program of the D.C. Department of Health that provides recipients of federal benefit programs with \$10 vouchers to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables at D.C. farmers markets. Soon after the creation of an Outreach position, DC Greens realized that there were already individuals who were taking Produce Plus pamphlets from the farmers markets and distributing them to members of their community. With funding available, DC Greens decided to compensate these advocates.

### Peer-to-peer Program Specifics

Criteria to become a “Community Champion”: Prospective Community Champions must be Produce Plus users who are connected with the community and who have demonstrated a passion to share information about the program.

Recruitment: Community Champions are identified through individual recommendations from the DC Farmers Market Collaborative and community organizations. Staff members of DC Greens also recruit at the farmers markets by approaching individuals who are using Produce Plus and who seem passionate about the program.

Compensation: \$144/month for 10 months of the year (averaging \$12/hr for 12 hours per week) plus apparel and outreach supplies.

Training: Prior to the farmers market season, DC Greens hosts a kick-off meeting to make introductions and to provide a comprehensive overview of the Produce Plus program and the role of the Community Champions. Content includes information on the goals of the program, programmatic funding, key players (i.e. DOH), budget, timeline, upcoming changes/visioning of the program, and how farmers and farmers markets benefit from the program. At the end of the season there is a feedback session that Community Champions, as well as the community members they engage with, are invited to provide their input on the Produce Plus program.

Key role(s) of “Community Champions”:

- *Promotion of farmers markets and Produce Plus*: Community Champions may use any style they wish to distribute pamphlets and to inform community members about the economics of supporting their community farmers markets and the availability of Produce Plus vouchers.
- *Programmatic feedback*: Community Champions are the experts on the target audience and DC Greens relies on their expertise and suggestions to continuously improve Produce Plus.
- *Advocacy*: During the off-season, Community Champions engage in food access advocacy.

### Lessons Learned

The role of the Community Champions naturally expanded to more than promotion of the farmers markets and Produce Plus. The Community Champions are true advocates for the program and, when the Produce Plus program was cut out of the DOH 2017 budget, they helped to mobilize the community to sign petitions and to testify in support of funding. As a result, Produce Plus received full funding for the fiscal year.



## **Everyone's Harvest**

### East Salinas Market – Marina, California

#### **Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To provide access to healthy, affordable fruits and vegetables through certified farmers markets and community food programs.

Why the program was developed: Everyone's Harvest runs the East Salinas Market, which has a low SNAP redemption rate but is in an area with a high concentration of poverty. To increase SNAP redemption, Everyone's Harvest received an USDA Farmers Market SNAP-Support (FMSS) grant. The goal of the FMSS grant is to double the annual SNAP redemptions and grow the SNAP customer base by 70% by using a customer relationship management database and outreach to SNAP market shoppers.

#### **Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a peer educator: Everyone's Harvest currently has one peer educator who grew up in East Salinas and who is a native Spanish speaker. The program does not yet have specific criteria for their peer educators, but would prefer Spanish-speaking members of the community. Additionally, because the area surrounding the East Salinas Market is densely populated with families and young mothers and is close to a WIC office, a female is preferred.

Recruitment: There is no formal process in place, as the current peer educator was already connected with Everyone's Harvest before the development of a peer educator role. The current peer educator also works at the local grocery store and has been able to communicate with community members about the local food system. Based on this experience, Everyone's Harvest recommends recruiting from customer service venues in the community, especially ones connected with the local food system.

Compensation: The current peer educator is a volunteer, but as the program develops, Everyone's Harvest may consider providing compensation to their peer educators.

Training: No formal process in place.

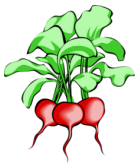
Key role(s): The planned role of the peer educator is to:

- Promote the farmers' market
- Discuss the possibility of being eligible for SNAP and reduce the stigma of using SNAP
- Inform community members that SNAP is accepted at the farmers market
- Educate community members on the differences between industrial agriculture and small-scale family farmers, and why it is beneficial for a community to support local farmers

Evaluation: Everyone's Harvest developed a farmers market sales database that it will use to measure the change in SNAP redemption rates at the farmers market. Everyone's Harvest will also identify repeat customers by using redemption information and analyze customer shopping habits to inform the development of outreach materials.

#### **Lessons Learned**

Coordination with other food access programs enables greater impact. Everyone's Harvest also runs a cooking workshop at the farmers market. Customers who engage in the program receive a \$10 farmers market voucher, incentivizing customers to come back to the farmers market. In combination with the Market Match incentive program, this provides families with an additional \$80 a month to spend on fresh produce at the farmers market.



## **New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA) – COCINA! Training** New Mexico

### **Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To educate New Mexicans about the importance of purchasing and eating healthy, locally grown and produced food.

Why the program was developed: The Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) program targets SNAP recipients in the state. The New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association promotes the DUFB program and encourages SNAP recipients to shop at participating farmers markets, as well as other outlets. It does so by training their partner organizations, who work in close collaboration with the targeted communities, to educate their customers on healthy eating and the DUFB program.

### **Program Specifics**

Criteria to become an educator: The NMFMA trains educators through their COCINA! Training. Educators are invited to attend the training and are staff from key partners of NMFMA. Partners include community health workers and public health educators, such as WIC representatives and Cooperative Extension Service personnel.

Recruitment: NMFMA reaches out to their partner organizations and requests staff from their partners to attend a COCINA! Training.

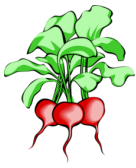
Compensation: Training and outreach materials (posters, pins, workbooks, training scripts, and PowerPoint presentations).

Training: The COCINA! Training is a one time, four-hour training that is broken into two sections:

- Section One - For your Customers: Includes information on how partners may communicate the health benefits of consuming a variety of fruits and vegetables; cooking and eating healthy on a budget; and shopping wisely at the farmers' market.
- Section Two – For you/your Organization: Includes information on how partner organizations may effectively partner with the local farmers' market; how to conduct engaging cooking demonstrations; engaging activities for WIC, SNAP and other customers; and SNAP and WIC incentive programs.

Key role(s): To promote farmers' markets, seasonal/local eating, and the DUFB program among their clients.

Evaluation: The program is in its first year of a four-year evaluation and is currently collecting data. A white paper for Year 1 will be available in early 2016.



## **New Roots – Fresh Stop Markets** Kentucky

### **Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: Uniting communities to end food justice.

Why the program was developed: The founder of New Roots developed this program in response to the absence of farmers markets in food insecure neighborhoods of Kentucky and the failed attempts to establish them. While this program does not promote farmers markets through formal peer-to-peer outreach, it is a grassroots movement driven by the community to establish Fresh Stop Markets in their neighborhoods. Fresh Stop Markets are farm-fresh food markets that pop up at local community centers on a bi-weekly basis to supply produce that has been paid for in advance by the community shareholders.

### **Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a “Fresh Stop Market”: New Roots requires a commitment of at least 12 leaders from the community to help create, operate and sustain the Fresh Stop Market. Each site must become SNAP certified, offer shares on a sliding scale, and offer some form of food justice classes.

Recruitment: Neighborhoods that are interested in forming a Fresh Stop Market approach New Roots to act as a consultant in the training and logistics of start-up.

Training: The Fresh Stop Training Institute (FSTI), which is organized by New Roots, occurs during the off-season and is a pay-it-forward coaching program focused on developing neighborhood leaders who create, implement, and sustain their own solutions for increasing food security in their communities. It includes:

- Lessons on food injustice
- Programmatic logistics: price negotiation, ordering, forecasting, community organizing, computer skills, SNAP certification
- Set-up of a mock Fresh Stop Market
- Collaboration with established Fresh Stop Markets

Key role(s): While New Roots helps to co-create the Fresh Stop Markets and continues to provide logistical support and leadership development, community members drive and sustain the operation.

Roles of the community members are many and varied, and include:

- Real-time knowledge sharing with other Fresh Stop Markets
- Forecasting and ordering: Communicating with farmers what produce the community will want, in advance of the planting season
- Gathering shares from the community and continuous outreach to shareholders (existing and prospective)
- Leadership roles: communication leaders; farm leaders; site leaders; chef leaders; check-in leaders

### **Lessons Learned**

Fresh Stop Markets were originally modeled after the City Fresh program of Cleveland, Ohio. However, City Fresh was more focused on distribution of produce, a model that failed in Kentucky. It was not until New Roots shifted its focus to leadership development that communities came together and Fresh Stop Markets began to succeed. There are now 13 Fresh Stop Markets with approximately 1200 shareholders and 50 farmers.



## **Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) – FreshLink Ambassadors** Cleveland, Ohio

### **Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To foster partnerships within Cleveland’s urban neighborhoods for developing, testing, and implementing strategies to prevent and reduce the burden of chronic disease.

Why the program was developed: Although nearly all Cleveland farmers markets are adjacent to or within high SNAP census tracts, accept SNAP, and offer a healthy food incentive program for SNAP customers, there is still low utilization of the farmers markets by SNAP participants. The PRCHN hypothesized that the low utilization of farmers markets and the incentive program may be results of insufficient social connections to the markets.

### **Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a “FreshLink Ambassadors”: Ambassadors are not required to be a SNAP participant, but they must live in or have close ties to the targeted community; they must have a demonstrated passion for healthy food access; and they are required to have some experience with community work.

Recruitment: PRCHN distributed a position description through community partners and advisory board members, and received hiring recommendations from the farmers market manager.

Compensation: \$350 for 8 weeks (an average of 4 hours per week)

Training: Training consisted of four weekly two-hour training sessions. Material covered consisted of background information; expected roles of the FreshLink Ambassadors; crafting messaging; role playing; problem solving; how to use the provided forms; conflict management; and leadership. PRCHN expressed that more time may be required for training in future years.

Key role(s): The purpose of the FreshLink Ambassador program is to increase demand for and use of farmers markets and the Double-Value Produce Perks program among SNAP recipients in low-income neighborhoods. Each ambassador is requested to:

- Make 50 referrals over a 4-week period by engaging in: (1) one-on-one interaction; (2) outreach at an established group event; (3) at least one event created by the ambassador
- Complete a log of type of outreach and referral information
- Check-in weekly with the whole team

Evaluation: An evaluation had not yet been completed, but PRCHN plans to conduct an evaluation to learn what components of the program worked best. The evaluation will measure the number of referrals made vs. the number of referred individuals who went to the market. The evaluation will collect information through ambassador activity logs, an extensive exit interview, and a farmers market tracking app. The FreshLink Ambassadors hand out referral cards that, when turned in at the farmers market, are captured by the tracking app. The tracking app also records transactions at the farmers market and is able to track trends of both referrals and SNAP usage at the farmers market.

### **Lessons Learned**

PRCHN originally proposed training 150 volunteer community members. However, after discussions with key stakeholders and former CHWs in the city of Cleveland, the program learned that the norm was to pay CHWs. Staff then revised the program to train fewer ambassadors but to invest in them with both time and funding.



## **Sustainable Food Center (SFC) – The Happy Kitchen / La Cocina Alegre®** Austin, Texas

### **Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To cultivate a healthy community by strengthening the local food system and improving access to nutritious, affordable food.

Why the program was developed: The Happy Kitchen offers a community cooking class series that is offered free to participants in communities facing health disparities. The program was initially chef-led but, because the program is aimed at home cooks, peer facilitators now deliver the cooking classes in the community. The model is based on the “Promotora” model and is a nationally recognized cooking and nutrition education program that programs across the country are trained to implement (including Brownsville Wellness Coalition).

### **Peer-to-peer Program Specifics**

Criteria to become a peer facilitator: The majority of the Happy Kitchen peer facilitators are past participants who wanted to become more involved with the program. Applicants from the communities where the classes are held are preferred; facilitators must be comfortable with public speaking, and they must be able to commit to teaching at least two series per year.

Recruitment: When trainings are being offered, SFC will reach out to individuals who have expressed interest in being a facilitator or who were recommended by a current facilitator.

Compensation: \$350 per six week series (averaging \$13/hour)

Training: A 10-12 hour training is held on an as-needed basis, approximately once every 2 years.

Key role(s): Peer facilitators lead a six-week cooking class series in teams of three, in alternating roles:

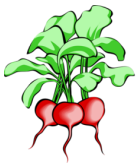
- Cook: grocery shopping and recipe demo
- Educator: delivers nutrition information
- Observer: assists and manages paperwork

Facilitators also help with outreach and registration for the classes. In line with the mission of SFC, classes may feature produce from the farmers market, and explain why eating local is important. Classes also provide market and garden information, including information on what to expect at the farmers market.

Evaluation: SFC administers a post-only survey to their class series participants that addresses individual behavior change and systems change. The University of Texas School of Public Health has conducted two larger evaluations of The Happy Kitchen in 2009 and 2012. The first evaluation analyzed both pre and post data collected from a sample group of Happy Kitchen Participants and concluded that the program was effective in changing diet-related behaviors of Latino families as part of a systems-wide initiative in low-income communities. The second evaluation was a secondary data analysis that measured participants’ maintenance of dietary change and showed significant dietary changes among the participants.

### **Lessons Learned**

By having Happy Kitchen facilitators purchase produce at the farmers market for the classes, the facilitators are familiar with the local farmers markets and are better able to answer participant questions about them.



## **The Farmers Market.co (TFM.co)**

[Virginia \(Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, King George, Dale City\)](#)

### **Program Basics**

The Farmers Market Co. operates SNAP EBT and nutrition incentive programs at six farmers markets in central Virginia. A hired Market Token Operator at each farmers market operates both. For the 2016 farmers market season, TFM.co sought out a candidate who was a SNAP participant, but was not able to find an appropriate fit. Although TFM.co does not have an official peer-to-peer program in place, the Healthy Food Incentive Program Director was able to share barriers related to farmers market access and strategies for outreach among low-income populations.

### **Position Specifics**

Criteria to become a Market Token Operator: Customer service, bookkeeping and language skills; SNAP recipient who could serve as a “farmers market ambassador” is preferred.

Recruitment: The position was advertised on The Farmers Market.co website. Those who were interested in the position were required to fill out an application and interview for the position.

Compensation: \$12/hr for 6.5 hours a week (37-week position)

Key role(s): Market Token Operators are responsible for on-site operations of SNAP EBT, controlling the token bank, recording and reconciling redemptions, coordinating with the Market Manager to support food education programs, and performing market outreach.

### **Barriers and solutions to farmers market access among low-income populations**

**Problem:** Loss of face-to-face interaction: The Healthy Food Incentive Program Director of TFM.co noted that discussions regarding farmers markets and incentive programs are more often taking place on the phone or online. Because many other issues arise when individuals are first applying for SNAP, SNAP recipients do not initially understand the value of farmers markets and incentive programs, and it takes multiple interactions and explanations to appropriately explain farmers market incentive programs.

**Solution:** Word of mouth is integral: Outreach is not just about getting the word out. It is about who it is coming from and how information is being managed and explained. It requires a very hands-on approach and TFM.co has found that after DSS and DOH, word of mouth is the best way to get individuals to use farmers market incentives.

**Solution:** Incentivize repeat visits through coordination with, and outreach by, multiple programs: In VA, farmers markets are not able to accept WIC benefits. To address this gap, a local program called Produce Pack, funded by CDC and the VA State DOH, was piloted. This program provides WIC clients with free reusable totes that are filled with fresh produce and information about the importance of fruits and vegetables. Recipients may bring the tote to the farmers market up to three times for a free refill. The hope is that repeat exposure will help to demonstrate the value of farmers markets, as well a cross-promote the acceptance of SNAP benefits at farmers markets.

**Problem:** Funders increasingly want to know how the target population is being included in programmatic decision-making.

**Solution:** TFM.co utilized a hunger heat map to identify hidden pockets of poverty, not just food deserts. Their work was modeled after a hunger heat map that had previously been produced by the DC Capital Area Foodbank.



**University of California, San Diego, Center for Community Health (CFCH) –  
City Heights Farmers Market**  
[San Diego, California](#)

**Program Basics**

Organizational Mission: To cultivate a food system that actively considers the environment, economy, equity and education by engaging with community partners in schools, grocery stores, faith-based organizations, and worksites. CFCH helps to promote universal access to EBT at farmers markets and advocates for Market Match, California’s farmers market incentive program, to support low-income shoppers’ ability to afford fresh, healthy, and locally grown foods.

Why the program was developed: Prior to 2008, there were no San Diego County farmers markets located in low-income communities that accepted SNAP. When CFCH received funds to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in low-income communities, their first step was to survey the communities to determine if there was demand for a farmers market.

**Development of a Farmers Market – A Community Effort**

The City Height Farmers Market is not promoted through formal peer-to-peer outreach, but CFCH engaged the community to advocate for the development of the farmers market.

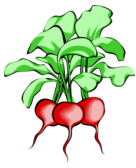
Pre-analysis: Before opening a farmers market, CFCH found that it was essential to survey the community to determine if it both needed and wanted a farmers market. CFCH believes that decisions and changes must be made by the targeted community. Although there were farmers markets in the county that did accept SNAP benefits and incentives, these farmers markets were not utilized by SNAP recipients and eligible individuals. Pre-analysis demonstrated that the low utilization of SNAP benefits at farmers markets was an issue of access, not demand. Survey findings indicated that individuals from City Heights could not get to farmers markets in the city because of transportation, or because they did not know which farmers markets accepted incentives. The survey also provided data to illustrate a community demand for farmers markets. Businesses, community partners, and farmers were concerned that a farmers market in City Heights would not be successful. The engagement of the community to advocate for a farmers market helped move the process forward.

Partnerships: Although CFCH spearheaded this effort, it was a true collaboration that involved the San Diego County Local Health Department, the International Rescue Committee, universities, and other community and grassroots organizations. While CFCH, in collaboration with community organizations, engaged and helped to build the capacity of the community to advocate for food justice, the actual opening of the farmers market was a project under the Regional Network Collaborative.

Promotion of the farmers market: The community was engaged to help develop a campaign to promote the opening of the City Heights Farmers Market. Strategies included: a press conference; media coverage; mailers; flyers; interviews; outreach through partner organizations that work with SNAP beneficiaries; and a day-of celebration. Key successes include:

- On opening day there was a line forming at 6:30 am for a 9:00 am opening, and all produce was sold by 10:30 am
- City Heights now has one of the highest EBT redemption rates in the country
- The City Heights Farmers Market has since been used as a model to advocate for funds to open farmers markets in other low-income communities
- In addition to access, the farmers market addresses food security and hunger





## Spokane Regional Health District – Community Health Advocates Spokane, Washington

### Program Basics

Organizational Mission: The mission of the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) is to serve as the region's public health leader and partner to protect and improve the community's health.

Why the program was developed: SRHD's SNAP-Ed program is based on the power of positive peer influence. In partnership with low-income housing partners, the program supports the 'natural helpers' at eight low-income housing properties. These tenants, Community Health Advocates (CHA), share information on healthy eating and active living with members of their communities. CHAs provide on-going support for fellow tenants in working towards reaching their health goals. Using the USDA approved curriculum, 'Plan, Shop, Save & Cook', CHAs engage their peers in learning about nutrition, including label reading, meal planning and shopping with coupons. In their nutrition education work, CHAs share information with peers about farmers markets, and the benefits of shopping at them.

### Position Specifics

Criteria to become a Community Health Advocate: Tenant living at one of the partnered low-income housing properties that met eligibility criteria.

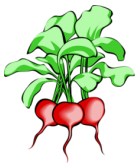
Recruitment: SRHD partnered with two low-income housing providers to create a structure with CHAs. SRHD staff invited low-income housing tenants at eligible properties to attend a meeting about the program at on-site community rooms. Promotional flyers were posted throughout common spaces at their properties. The Foundation for Healthy Generations provided healthy snacks, welcoming attendees. After the program overview, persons interested signed up for follow up interviews. Property management staff and the SNAP-Ed team approved final candidates.

Compensation: CHAs contribute 16-20 hours each month, earning a \$175 monthly stipend.

Training: CHAs all take the Washington State Department of Health Community Health Worker Core Competency Training. Following that training, they participate in multiple 'Health Specific Modules' (HSM) offered through that training system. CHAs also learn how to share with peers where and how to access fresh fruits and vegetables (including at farmers markets). They are trained in HIPPA, obtain a WA Food Handlers Card, and Civil Rights training. CHAs also participate in monthly meetings as a large CHA team, fostering authentic collaborative learning and implementing quality improvement strategies.

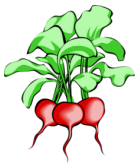
Key role(s): CHAs serve as leaders, educators, and a resource for their community. CHAs also support the work of SRHD and community partners by providing their 'end user' feedback on services and programs offered to them and their peers. Specific examples of CHA work includes:

- Leading the Plan, Shop, Save and Cook nutrition education courses
- Holding office hours to help answer nutrition questions, or help neighbors apply for benefits such as the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Sharing farmers market information with neighbors and peers through flyers and brochures
- Staffing CHA booth at markets one week to distribute health resources and answer questions on how to use EBT at farmers markets, fresh bucks, SMFNP, WIC Checks, etc. and also give market tours



- Working with SRHD staff to provide input and feedback to farmers market managers on marketing and outreach strategies
- Identifying community needs to support increased physical activity and consumption of fruits and vegetables, and work with SRHD staff to address those needs

Evaluation: CHAs implement multiple evaluation strategies. First they track reach. Documenting when fellow tenants reach out to them for help and for what. They ensure participants at events sign in and track on-going participation. CHAs assist with They collect success stories based on changes amongst their peers. And engage in on-going quality improvement cycles at each event.



## City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment Seattle, Washington

### Program Basics

The City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) is partnering/contracting with four community-based organizations to do peer-to-peer outreach for the Fresh Bucks Program (a SNAP/EBT farmers market incentive program). The four organizations include: the Latino Community Fund, Somali Health Board, Horn of Africa Services, and Got Green. Peer outreach activities differ across each organization. Each organization has integrated Fresh Bucks outreach into their existing organizational activities, as well as implemented targeted Fresh Bucks activities that may be new to their organization.

Why the program was developed: To increase awareness about the farmers market Fresh Bucks program, to support community leaders, and to provide an opportunity for organizations, such as OSE, to engage more deeply with community members who struggle to afford healthy foods. OSE sees this program as a way for community members to learn about the Fresh Bucks Program from trusted members of their own communities.

### Position Specifics

Criteria to become a peer facilitator: A member of/leader within the target community.

Recruitment: Some peer educators were already engaged in the organization before this Fresh Bucks peer outreach model began, and some organizations recruited new peer educators.

Compensation: Yes, all peer educators receive a stipend. The stipend varies across organization. Program participants were also provided an incentive for participating in peer educator's activities.

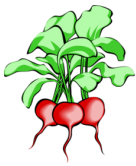
Training: Community based organization staff orient the peer leaders to the Fresh Bucks program. Training is tailored to support peer outreach activities that vary between the four organizations, including:

- Bringing in a health practitioner from the community to train peer educators on a health topic
- Receiving SNAP eligibility and enrollment referral training
- Healthy eating trainings where peer educators learn different healthy recipes that use FM foods

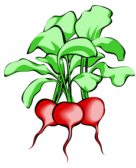
Key role(s): Peer educators' roles vary across the four organizations. However, in each role and activity, peer educators promote and spread the word about Fresh Bucks. Key roles include:

- Sharing Fresh Bucks fliers with and posting Fresh Bucks posters at organizations, businesses and community gathering places serving low income community members.
- Tabling at community events and health fairs to share assistance resources (e.g., Fresh Bucks, SNAP/EBT enrollment information, etc.)
- Leading farmers market tours, and orienting new farmers market EBT shoppers through Fresh Bucks transactions
- Hosting health education and cooking classes and support groups (e.g., for individuals with diabetes, or pregnant mothers) where Fresh Bucks information is shared
- Recruiting for and leading peer health education workshops where Fresh Bucks information is shared

Evaluation: The four organizations report peer outreach activities to OSE quarterly. Additionally, the peer educators in each program are distributing uniquely marked Fresh Bucks in their community. This marking system allows OSE to see how many Fresh Bucks are redeemed at the farmers markets, a proxy



measure to assess the impact of Fresh Bucks peer outreach efforts by each organization. OSE is also tracking farmers market EBT sales, Fresh Bucks redemption, Fresh Bucks distribution, and the number of unique EBT farmers market shoppers.



## Tacoma Farmers Markets – SNAP Ambassadors Tacoma, Washington

### Program Basics

The SNAP Ambassador program is designed to increase awareness about EBT acceptance and incentive programs at the four Tacoma Farmers Markets (TFMs). Ambassadors are empowered community stakeholders who are invited to have advisory and leadership roles in how the SNAP/EBT and farmers market outreach efforts work.

Why the program was developed: The program was developed to help educate and inform SNAP/EBT users about EBT and EBT incentive programs (Fresh Bucks) at the TFM. The TFM believes the best people to design and implement a program focused on EBT/SNAP users are EBT/SNAP users themselves. The goal of the peer-to-peer model is to empower community members, help make farmers markets more welcoming, and help alleviate fears of first time EBT users at the markets.

### Position Specifics

Criteria to become a SNAP Ambassador: Currently SNAP Ambassadors are required to be SNAP/EBT recipients and farmers market shoppers.

Recruitment: Ambassadors are recruited from current market shoppers and outreach through the Tacoma Peirce County Health Department.

Compensation: Ambassadors receive market tokens to spend at the farmers market.

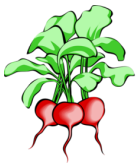
Training: Tacoma Farmers Market hosts a workshop for all SNAP Ambassadors to share resources and information with them about how the market operates, and how SNAP/EBT and incentive programs at the market work. This is also a listening session for market staff where SNAP/EBT users are encouraged to suggest best methods of communicating with peers and designing the program and strategies for outreach.

Key role(s): Ambassadors are encouraged to identify outreach strategies that work for them and their communities. Examples of Ambassador activities include:

- Leading farmers market tours,
- Social media posts,
- Data gathering and surveys,
- Providing translation at the farmers market,
- SNAP Ambassador drivers who pick up shoppers from low income housing units and provide navigation at the market,
- Providing programmatic feedback to the Tacoma Farmers Markets (for example on signage and advertising campaigns)
- Join in advocacy efforts to educate local leaders and member of Congress about the benefits of SNAP and incentive programs at farmers markets, and
- Giving feedback and suggestions about how to make the program better.

### Lessons Learned

It takes dedicated time from a staff person to fully organize and solidify a strong peer-to-peer program. It is important to empower SNAP Ambassadors, and invite them to have an advisory and leadership role in the organization and food access efforts at the farmers market.



### **Acknowledgements:**

I would like to especially thank all of the individuals who took the time to explain their organizations' work. Without their time and invaluable input this project would not have been possible. Thank you also to the Washington State SNAP-Ed Evaluation Advisory Committee for their guidance on the key questions and potential use of this project.