Washington Farmers Market Access Partnership

Convening statewide and regional partners to streamline information, coordinate efforts, and inform policy that support low income shoppers, local farms, and farmers markets in WA State.

In an era of reduced public resources, rapidly changing technology, and increasing opportunities for farmers markets to promote healthy foods and direct marketing farms to food insecure shoppers, coordination has never been more important.

In 2013, the Farmers Market Access Partnership formalized a group of partners with expertise working together for over 12 years to expand the use of federal food benefits at farmers markets so that WA State can more effectively:

a) streamline information and resources for markets and community partners participating in FMNP, SNAP, and other programs; and

b) participate in policy and implementation discussions regarding technology and food benefit redemptions.

* local public health departments, churches, food banks, local non-profits, anti-hunger and nutrition organizations, etc.
Partnership members bring together three critical arenas of expertise: farmers markets, small farms, and healthy foods/food security partners.

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**Founding members:** partners from Department of Social and Health Services-SNAP; Department of Health- WIC and FMNP; WithinReach; Nutrition First; NW Harvest-statewide food bank; our statewide Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition; 35 farmers markets; Catholic Charities of Spokane; WA State Dept of Ag; WSU Small Farms Program; local public health depts, clinics and agencies.

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**Regional Market Manager Leads Program:**

In 2013 WSFMA, started the **Regional Market Manager Leads** Program to help expand the use of federal food assistance benefits at farmers markets by strengthening relationships among market managers and community partners.

This work builds on the experience and research that shows that farmers markets are best able to serve low income communities using federal food assistance benefits when they are well connected with local government agencies and community nonprofits that work with the same groups. This project pilots a strategy to identify “lead regional managers” that will serve as liaisons between community partners, county (or in some cases regional) agencies and farmers markets.

**2014 Priorities for Regional Farmers Market Leads:**

- Coordinate regional outreach, marketing, partnerships and training
- Implement and evaluate healthy incentives farmers market programs
- Support state SNAP EBT program for farmers market and farmers

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