



FARMERS MARKET AND FAITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A Guide For Market Managers

First Edition



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It is He Who has brought into being gardens, the cultivated and the wild, and date-palms, and fields with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and variegated. Eat of their fruit in season, but give (the poor) their due on harvest day. And do not waste, for God does not love the wasteful.

- Quran 6:141

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat... hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good...

- Isaiah 55:1-2, Tanakh, Jewish Publication Society

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

- Matthew 25:34 – 40, Bible, New Revised Standard Version



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This guide is for farmers market managers, board members, and volunteers interested in fostering relationships between their market and local faith communities. Meaningful relationships between farmers markets and faith communities can connect farmers to new customers and to the community in general, while increasing consumers' access to fresh healthy food and creating a closer connection to where that food comes from. This guide offers advice, resources, and tools for market managers who want to build such relationships.

Faith communities are central to the life of many people, offering vital spiritual support and social connections. Many faith communities have programs focused specifically on addressing food insecurity, supporting families facing poverty, fostering a deeper relationship with creation, and caring for the health and wellness of a congregation. Faith communities have the trust and infrastructure to connect their members with resources in the community, including farmers markets.



This guide will both address faith/farmers market partnerships generally, and take a deeper look at one particular type of partnership: programs that connect faith communities and farmers markets to improve food access through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.¹ SNAP allows recipients to spend food assistance money at participating farmers markets as well as grocery stores and other retailers. The program can take some effort and funding for a farmers market to implement, but it offers deep benefits, including a new customer base, wider community connections, and an opportunity for the market to learn how to be more accessible to low-income shoppers. Faith communities can be important sources of financial, technical, and social support for SNAP programs at farmers markets, and such programs can tie smoothly into common ministries, such as food pantries. Together, we can all realize the benefits of supporting farmers, helping neighbors access fresh fruits and vegetables, and creating a healthier landscape for our children.



This guide begins with a look at what makes partnerships successful and how to begin building partnerships, followed by steps for planning and implementing a program. The third section specifically addresses SNAP programs at farmers markets, and the fourth section includes case studies of three different faith/farmers market partnerships. The appendix includes some additional resources and tools.

We intend that this guide will get a conversation started. It is a work in progress that will adapt over time. We hope that you will share your experiences with us and help us improve this guide as you undertake your own partnerships with people of faith in your community. Please get in touch with RAFI's Come to the Table program at admin@rafiusa.org with any feedback you would like to share!

¹ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a federal food assistance program, formerly known as food stamps. Benefits are now given on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that works like a debit card and can be used to buy food at grocery stores, co-ops, farmers markets, and convenience stores. Learn more about SNAP at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap.



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Ingredients For Successful Partnerships With Faith Communities



What does a successful partnership look like?

Across the country, faith communities and farmers markets partner on diverse projects. When partnering with an established, community-rooted partner such as a community of faith, a new program will need to be grounded in the goals, strengths, and needs of both the congregation and the farmers market.

Good partnerships are based on relationships of trust, built over time. In an equitable partnership, both partners are contributing, both partners are benefitting, and decision-making power is shared. As you begin building partnerships, see if you can name the ways in which you and your partners are contributing, benefitting, and making decisions together.

Successful programs are built around their local context, so each one looks a little different. Some faith communities collect donations to support incentive programs and accessible food at farmers markets. Some faith communities host farmers markets or mobile markets; others provide kitchen space or volunteer support to market programs or vendors. Three examples of strong partnerships are highlighted in the Case Study section at the end of this guide. Where all partners involved have built trust and have good communication and goals in common, partnerships and programs can thrive.



Forming the Idea

Rule one for community organizing: If you have a good idea and no one else thinks it's a good idea, it's not a good idea.

- Scott Marlow, RAFI-USA

As a market manager or leader, you know what your farmers market needs and what it has to offer. However, you may not know what others need or have to offer. One of the benefits of partnership is helping you find the blind spots where your life experiences may diverge from the experiences of others. Building a partnership is a great opportunity to learn about your potential partners, yourself, your program, and your market. As you consider beginning a new program, be prepared to begin some ongoing conversations.

1. First, before getting started, **you should know what your goals are** in wanting to partner with faith communities; whether you want to tap into new customer bases, help relieve food insecurity in your community, or gain more visibility for your market. You should have an initial list of people, organizations, and categories of partners that you want to get involved, knowing that this list will grow and adapt as your program matures. Your goals may grow and adapt as well.

2. **Get initial buy-in from your market's board of directors and your vendors.** Know what your market can offer, what limitations you are working with, and whether your vendors are excited about participating in a program and welcoming new customers to your market. If your vendors are not on board with the project, it will likely have a negative impact on customer experience.

3. Approach your first partners before your ideas are set in stone. Most importantly, set up meetings with potential partners and **simply listen**. Find out what programs or ministries potential partner faith communities already have going on, who has responsibility for making those programs successful, and where the community and its leaders would like to see growth.

Theological Resources on Food and Creation Care

- *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* by Norman Wirzba
- *Scripture, Culture, Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* by Ellen Davis
- *Soil and Sacrament: A Spiritual Memoir of Food and Faith* by Fred Bahnson

When approaching a community of faith, it helps to have ideas for possible partnership projects and know how those ideas would help meet your goals. It is also vital to keep an open mind and allow yourself to be surprised by what a faith community may need or have to offer in return. A truly successful partnership will tap into the strengths and core principles of both the market and the congregation and will further the mission of both.

Some faith communities talk about local food through the lens of creation care, or stewardship of the environment. Others emphasize the health of their members, or economic justice. Some combine the three. Some may not have considered the question yet. If you understand where your potential partners are coming from before you get too deep into program design, you will have a better chance of developing a program that will win buy-in from your faith partners as well as market leadership.

Look for faith communities that are actively interested in participating rather than trying to convince leaders who say they simply cannot partner at the moment. Circle back with people who cannot partner now to see if they are willing to be partners in the future.

The potential and the challenge within each faith community may not be evident to an outsider. For instance, a small congregation with many busy volunteers may be too overstretched to start a new volunteer-led lunch program but more than happy



to contribute monetarily to a double bucks incentive program. A congregation with deep pockets might also have a directive from their board to find a good use for the acre of land next to the church and be interested in hosting a small satellite market there after services. A church with a great food pantry may have a board of elders that is worried about liability issues and may be more interested in sharing market coupons through the pantry than in providing fresh food onsite.

Once you have an interested faith community, be transparent about the market's goals. Be willing to answer questions and do some education about the benefits of farmers markets. You cannot meet every need or idea that a faith community may have. Honesty about what the market has to gain from a program and what it has to offer will allow you and your community partner to be creative in finding mutually beneficial solutions.

Identifying Potential Partners

The number of faith communities in your area may far outstrip your ability to reach out thoughtfully to each of them; and remember that it will be the quality, rather than the quantity, of your relationships and partnerships that results in meaningful and effective work. Start with the lowest-hanging fruit — the churches, temples or synagogues, mosques, or other faith communities that are most likely to respond favorably. Start with congregations where you have personal relationships, or who serve high-priority populations, and then move on to congregations that you know are involved in connected ministries.

- Find out which market vendors are active in a faith community, and ask them to personally introduce you to leadership.
- Congregations who are involved in supporting the local food bank or who run their own food ministry, like a food pantry or community meal, may be interested in the food security aspect of your project. Check the website of your local food bank or ask staff there.
- Community gardens are a great indicator that a congregation has a commitment to connecting faith and local food. Check with your local garden network or your horticultural agent at your county extension office.
- If your area has a local food council, it may be worth reaching out to them to see if any of the people involved are members of faith communities who would be interested in partnership.
- Faith communities who are actively involved in



environmental advocacy in your community may be interested in the creation care aspect of connecting more people to sustainable local food. If you have relationships with staff at any local environmental organizations, ask them for ideas.

- Churches often host health fairs and other health ministries connect directly with the health benefits of local produce and healthy meats and dairy. Watch for advertisements for these events.
- Ecumenical organizations can be an excellent resource. Most Christian denominations have a statewide office, and many states have statewide interdenominational or interfaith conferences, such as a council of churches. Check with the staff at these offices to see if they have recommendations on which congregations might be interested. Be prepared to explain a bit about your program and what



information you hope to gain from a first meeting with a congregation. Ask if you can say that you were referred by the state leadership.

- Some congregations are simply more outward-facing than others. Look for congregations that host events or meetings for local nonprofits, that participate in social justice advocacy, or that give away presents to children at the holidays. Reach out to the contacts for these events and ask who you should talk to in the congregation.

- Sometimes a simple internet search can be a powerful tool. Look for congregations with the above ministries, and make a cold contact. In a small community, it may be worth it to reach out to

almost every congregation, or if you have a specific goal of having an interfaith ministry, you may want to make a point of reaching out to congregations of all faiths in your community.

Keep in mind that making contacts using your existing relationships and the relationships of farmers at your market is the best way to form strong partnerships quickly. However, working within existing networks means your future customers will look a lot like your current farmers market community. If your market does not have members or volunteers from the communities you are hoping to work with, you will need to use some of the strategies above to step outside your comfort zone and cast a wider net.

Making Initial Contact

Each congregation will have its own structure depending on faith, denomination, and size. In some congregations, clergy, such as priests, ministers, rabbis, and imams, will have considerable say over what programs are implemented. In others, associate clergy, members of the board of elders, heads of various committees, or even the clergy's spouse may be the key decision-makers you need to speak to. Some congregations, such as Quaker meetings, have no clergy at all, but have leadership positions such as clerks or committee members.

When you make initial contact with the front-desk staff or minister at a congregation, ask who the best person is for you to speak to. It may make sense to start with clergy and have them refer you to a member. If you are contacting the church because of a specific program they host, ask to speak with the person leading that program. Even when you have identified your key contact, be aware that the person may have limited power to make final decisions. Often heads of committees need approval from a central governing body before implementing a new program, for example. Be persistent but patient.

A handwritten note can go a long way towards building a relationship. Often letters like this are read at church services or church council meetings, and they can be a powerful way of getting the congregation



interested in the project. Explain briefly what you hope to talk about and what about their congregation made you want to reach out, and ask to be referred to the person who can help you explore next steps.

Once you have made contact, ask for a face-to-face meeting. Personal relationships drive partnerships, and face-to-face is the best way to establish those. Bring some brief materials about your market and about your ideas for what a new program could



bring. If the meeting is at a home or church office, bring some food from your market to share. Do some research on the cultural norms of the faith community before you go (see “What To Know Before Visiting” in the appendix for more resources). Be prepared to ask more questions than you answer.

- What ways is the congregation looking to grow or to change? Could you help them meet these goals with your program?
- What are the programs that the congregation is proudest of? Is there potential overlap between those and your program?
- Has your contact ever been to your farmers market? What was their experience? Do they have feedback on how your market could be more welcoming to their members or the people they serve?
- Where do your priorities and values overlap? For instance, if you are talking to the head of the wellness committee, do they think access to fresh local food might be something their committee is interested in?
- What resources does the congregation have that they could offer to your program? Do they have a kitchen, a bus, a meeting hall, or other physical resources that might support your ideas?
- What is the congregation not interested in doing at this time? Is there any conflict with your goals?

Be prepared to offer some simple next steps. **Small successes, early and often, set the groundwork for a long-lasting partnership that is strong enough to tackle bigger challenges.** Completing some small steps together initially helps partners trust each other to follow through on tasks, and learn enough about each other to feel comfortable that the partnership is a good fit. Next steps might include:

- Do a presentation at a study group, fellowship meal, youth group, or committee meeting. Bring food that is culturally appropriate. For instance, make sure what you bring is halal if you are speaking at a mosque or kosher if you are speaking at a synagogue. Vegetarian food is usually a safe bet. Something as simple as berries to taste can make your presentation more vivid and memorable.



- Offer a cooking demonstration or tasting during a church gathering using food the farmers market has to offer.
- Develop a half-page flyer that could fit in a service bulletin promoting the market and its connection with the congregation’s ministries.
- Organize a tour of the farmers market for interested members, a youth group, or for a specific committee.
- Write up a specific proposal for the congregation’s decision-makers based on your conversation.
- Where appropriate, invite congregational leaders to your market board meeting to share opportunities for collaboration or talk about your new program.
- Be creative! You could ask members to offer seasonal recipes to be distributed at the market, ask the congregation to host a cook-off, or raffle off bags of market goodies at an upcoming congregational event. Wherever you find a shared sense of enthusiasm with your contact, look for a next step that will set a baseline of success.

Once you start your relationship with a faith community by identifying the right contact, building personal relationships, and doing some initial outreach to get buy-in from the congregation, you can start planning more complicated programs together.

Implementing a Program



Once you have identified the people and organizations you want to work with and gotten a good understanding of their resources, needs, and goals, you can move into designing a program that is tailored for your market and community.

Setting Goals

Start by laying out your goals with your partners. Sound goals make planning, implementing and evaluating your work easier. Set no more than five goals for your project at the beginning. SMART is a widely-used acronym that helps set goals that are as useful as possible. SMART stands for:

- **S – Specific:** What is the exact thing you are hoping to affect?
- **M – Measurable:** How will you track your progress?
- **A – Attainable:** Is this a reasonable goal that stretches, but does not exceed, your capacity?
- **R – Results-based:** What do you want to change? Make sure you are measuring outcomes, not activities.
- **T – Time-bound:** What is the timeframe within which you hope to see change?

Tailor your goals to your overarching purpose. Each goal gives you a way to measure the success of your vision.



For example, if you are partnering to support your market's SNAP program, some SMART goals could be:

- Have 50% of SNAP customers report that they feel more comfortable at the market at the end of the two-year project.
- Serve at least 200 people through the market's double bucks incentive program in the next year.
- Increase SNAP transactions at the Saturday market by 25% in 12 months.

- Have a redemption rate this season of over 30% on coupons distributed off-site that promote the SNAP program.

- Raise \$2,000 in one year to support the market's double bucks incentive program.

- Collect feedback from at least 40 SNAP shoppers in the next 6 months.

Take time setting your goals with your partners, and make sure all the major participants in the project agree that the goals are meaningful and reasonable.

Identifying Activities

Once you set your goals, the next step is laying out the concrete activities that will enable you to achieve them. As a general guide, you will want to identify two to four activities for every goal you have established. Describe specific tactics that you can track as your project goes forward. Be realistic. Think about the activities that will energize the people you are working with and be accessible and useful for the people you are hoping to serve.

For instance, if your goal is to collect feedback from at least 40 SNAP shoppers in the next six months, you may want to list out activities like those below.

- Set up two or three focus group dinners

in partnership with local community-based organizations. Offer childcare and interpretation, and hold them at a convenient time in a place that is accessible by public transportation.

- Offer a \$5 bonus incentive for SNAP shoppers who take a survey (available in multiple languages) at the market. Ask in the survey what the market could do to improve its SNAP program, and collect demographic data. Let people know how they can find out about the results.

- Summarize the results of your evaluation and make the final product available to SNAP shoppers in all relevant languages.





Determining a Budget

Work out a basic budget with the cost of each of your activities. If necessary, adjust or prioritize your list of activities or brainstorm new sources of funding. Do not forget to add costs such as staff time, community members' time, translation/interpretation, and evaluation. The closer you can get to the full cost of your budget, the better you will be able to fundraise for your project.

Income should also be part of your budget. If your project requires a substantial amount of staff time or other resources, you may want to do fundraising specifically to support it.

The appendix has a simple sample budget sheet for a project; for more in-depth resources on nonprofit budgeting, check out the resource box to the right.

Nonprofit Budgeting Resources

- Nonprofit budget-maker from the Wallace Foundation: <http://bit.ly/nbbwallace>
- A budgeting resource list from the National Council for Nonprofits: www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/budgeting-nonprofits
- Tools to help assess your project's financial strengths and weaknesses and strengthen your financial plan from the Nonprofit Finance Fund: www.nonprofitfinancefund.org/learn/fundamentals-nonprofits

Fundraising

Donations from faith communities and individuals are less time-consuming than income from grants and build important bonds between your project and its supporters. **Crowd-funding** may be a useful tool to raise start-up costs. Like other individual donor fundraising, crowd-funding requires you to draw on existing relationships to find donors and get them to tell others about your project.

Consider asking for **in-kind donations** of materials or time from your market leaders and your partners. For instance, a local copy shop may be willing to print flyers. Faith community members may be willing to provide rides to the market. A local grocery store might donate refreshments to your community meeting.

Be sure to plan how you will thank financial and in-kind donors and contributing faith communities. Signs at events, website acknowledgments, written thank-you notes, and updates on progress are all appreciated and help you build on-going relationships with donors.

Government grants have the most difficult

Volunteerism

Keep in mind that while volunteerism can be a powerful way to support your program and a meaningful way for people to get involved, you do not want to take exploit someone's community spirit or sense of responsibility in order to avoid paying them for their time. For example, a local community leader with deep connections in a marginalized and hard-to-reach group may consistently be asked to recruit their community members for meetings, surveys, etc., and they may feel compelled to do so for the good of their community, but never be paid for their time. Translators and interpreters may face a similar dynamic. Ultimately, you can show the most respect by offering to pay someone for their time, and letting them decide whether they want to be paid, or to volunteer.



applications and the most rigorous reporting process. However, some are designed specifically for farmers markets and SNAP outreach.²

Private foundation grants may also be an option. Check with local and community foundations in your area. Check out similar projects and see who their funders are. Look for funders who have an interest in the kind of work you are doing, such as public health, food systems, or hunger relief. It is usually a good idea to approach a grants officer at a foundation to tell them a bit about your idea and see if it is a good fit before you apply. See the “Funder Introduction Handout Outline” in the appendix for guidance on what kind of information to have prepared.

Decide which sources of funds are the best fit, and then design an income budget that estimates as realistically as possible what funds are likely to come in at what times. You may decide to divide funds into

Resources for Grant Seekers

- Introduction to finding grants: <http://grantspace.org/tools/knowledge-base/Funding-Resources/Foundations/finding-grants>

“committed,” “likely,” and “stretch,” or assign a percent probability to each source of income. Have a plan for what you will do if you only receive the most likely sources of funding – and for what you will do if your stretch funds come through. Be sure to develop a funding model that is as sustainable as possible. For instance, if you start with a large two-year grant, be sure your program either has new funds identified or is prepared to restructure and thrive with less funding at the end of those two years.

² While not an exhaustive list, the following are federal grants that may be a fit for your farmers market project:

- Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) - <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>
- Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) Grant Program - <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>
- Community Food Security (CFP) Competitive Grant Program - <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/community-food-projects-competitive-grant-program-cfpcgp>

Timelines

Next, lay out a timeline with start and end dates for each activity in your project plan. Some activities may continue for the length of the project. Some may only last one day. Be generous. Try to anticipate what activities will require action on the part of others, and be even more generous with your time estimates for those. Many of the most successful programs take multiple years to get off the ground. Keep in mind what else might be going on at specific times of the year. For instance, depending on the growing season

in your area, winter might be the best time to ask farmers to come to an informational meeting, and late spring or early summer might be the best time to plan on giving market tours for new shoppers.

Also include benchmarks for your progress. For instance, if one of your goals is increasing SNAP usage by 25 percent, mark on your timeline when you would like to see a 10 percent increase.

Assigning Responsibilities

Assign specific people from the market or faith partner to take responsibility for each task. For tasks with a large number of people involved, choose one person who has ultimate responsibility for each piece of work, and indicate who would like to be consulted, who helps out, and who approves decisions.

Assigning Responsibilities

- Using the Manager, Owner, Consulted, Helper, Approver (MOCHA) Model: www.managementcenter.org/resources/assigning-responsibilities/

Evaluation

Decide how you will evaluate your program. Evaluation should be designed before your program starts and happen continuously as you go along so that you can adjust course as needed. For instance, if your goal is to increase SNAP participation by 25 percent in six months, you will want to be tracking SNAP participation each week. If participation is not increasing, you can adjust course quickly instead of waiting until the full six months have passed to make improvements. Each goal in your project plan should have an evaluation plan, even if it is something simple.

Be sure to involve your partners and members of faith communities in your evaluation design so you can be sure you are evaluating the right things. They can help design evaluation questions that will be useful to them as well as to you. Neglecting to share the results of evaluation with the people who provide the data is a common mistake and disempowers evaluation participants, so create a plan for how you will share evaluation results with participants.

Evaluation methods can be complex and resource-intensive, such as qualitative focus groups and one-

on-one interviews with customers and vendors. You may choose to look at quantitative data, such as the number of transactions and the number of dollars spent, or the number of congregations who report to you that their members have begun shopping at the market. Evaluation can also be simple. For instance, a dot survey at a congregation or at your market involves putting up a sheet of paper with questions and answers on it and asking people to put a sticker beside their answer. When picking your evaluation methods, think about the skills of the people involved in the project, your budget, and – most importantly – what is easy for the people whose experience you are hoping to understand.

For instance, if you decide to use a survey to evaluate your program, you will want to think carefully about where and how to conduct it. If you want to know why people do not come to the market, don't do your survey at the market. Or if you are surveying low-income elders, consider using paper surveys in person instead of online tools. If your customers have trouble reading English, ask volunteers to do surveys out loud; or if your customers do not speak English, provide an





interpreter or surveys in their first language.

Evaluation can sometimes be a good fit for a volunteer project. If you are near a university, public health, sociology, social work, and other programs usually have students looking for community placements who can look at your project plan and design, and sometimes carry out, an evaluation plan for you.

Remember that if you change your evaluation plan or questions every year, you will have a hard time tracking progress or changes over the course of multiple years. Though some amount of change in your evaluation strategy is inevitable, for this reason it is worth putting a lot of thought into your evaluation strategy at the very beginning of your project.

Transition Planning

Because programs often take years to get up to full strength and often continue for years after that, planning for transitions among staff and volunteers is critical. Make a packet or shared online folder that contains core information and materials for the project. These may include:

- Names, contact information, and roles for all staff, volunteers, and key community partners
- Names, contact information, and relationship or communication history/status for prospective community partners
- Editable outreach materials, including flyers,

graphics files for a logo, or photos and videos of the project

- Passwords for all websites and social media pages
- Editable versions of all grants, grant reports and grant timelines associated with the project
- Evaluation activities, tools, and results

Keep the folder updated consistently in case project team members leave suddenly. If possible, ask departing team members to write a page or two of notes on the status of their area of work and what they think a new person should know.

Reassessing

Revisit your project plan at least once a year. Inevitably, you will learn new things about your community and your market as the program moves forward. Check to see if your goals still seem relevant, if your timeline needs adjusting, or if you would like your evaluation process to use new measures of success. Successful projects will balance a well-thought-out, strategic program plan with the flexibility to learn and adapt.





SNAP and Farmers Markets

One type of program this guide addresses is a faith-farmers market partnership to support a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program at the market.³ We address this kind of partnership specifically because the original impetus for this guide came from our work with SNAP programs at farmers markets.

Typically, we see SNAP programs experience the greatest success when the market has a strong network of community partners who are supporting the program and helping with outreach; thus the attention to building partnerships with faith communities. However, even with a strong network of partners and a lot of effort put into marketing and outreach, it takes time to build a program and market managers may become frustrated. Managers may ask, “Why aren’t SNAP shoppers coming to the market?” or may come to conclusions such as “Low-income people in my area just aren’t interested in eating healthy.”

If these thoughts are familiar to you, we invite you to re-frame your questions from “How do we get THEM to come to the market?” to “What can WE do as a market to break down the barriers that are preventing people from coming to the market?” This gives you the opportunity to learn more about potential SNAP shoppers and more about your own market, and to build relationships based on two-way communication, rather than one-

³ SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits - known more commonly to recipients as “EBT” - can be used to buy foods such as breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products; as well as seeds and plants which produce food.



way marketing. As a starting point we have included in this section a number of barriers to attending market that people in your community may face. Every community is unique, so these barriers may or may not reflect yours, and it is important to understand what is happening for people in your area.

If your faith partner has relationships with low-income community members, the partnership may be an opportunity to explore and understand the barriers that are present in your own community. Seeking to understand rather than to convince is a principle that will serve you both in your market's SNAP program, and in your relationship-building with communities of faith.

Implementing SNAP at Farmers Markets

Markets all over the country participate in SNAP successfully. Implementing SNAP at your market can take substantial time, effort, and funding, depending on your state, and keeping the program running has ongoing costs. This section of the guide is primarily for markets with existing SNAP programs, and is not a guide to implementing SNAP at your market. Several helpful guides already exist for getting SNAP started at your market.

- *Should You Offer SNAP/EBT at Your Market?* Farmers Market Coalition. farmersmarketcoalition.org/education/snap/should-you-offer-snap-ebt-at-your-market/
- *A Guide to SNAP/EBT at North Carolina Farmers' Markets: Steps, Best Practices and Resources.* Kat Bawden. 2013. <http://bit.ly/SNAPatNCMarkets>
- *SNAP Guide for Farmers Markets.* Farmers Market Coalition. <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/education/snap/>

Barriers for SNAP Participants

Getting to a farmers market, selecting food, and preparing it may be difficult for SNAP recipients for a variety of reasons. Addressing one or more of these challenges can help increase SNAP participation at your market.

- Transportation is a major challenge for many low-income households and for seniors, especially in rural areas. If your market is not accessible by public transportation, a customer needs a working car, a driver's license, and enough money for gas in order to attend your market. Other shopping choices may be more easily accessed, especially if those outlets are walking distance from someone's home.

- Convenience is another driver of shopping choices. Supermarkets and corner stores are often open 24 hours and offer one-stop shopping. For people working long or unusual hours or parenting small children, these choices

may be more practical than a farmers market.

- Perceived higher prices discourage shoppers as well. SNAP is intended to supplement the food budgets for its recipients, however for many SNAP is the main way to provide food for their households. Being frugal with the benefits and stretching them to reach until the beginning of the next allotment is often an overriding concern. While farmers markets offer some premium products at high prices, studies show that, on average, produce prices are as low or lower than grocery store prices.⁴ However, most customers believe farmers markets are the more expensive option.

- Cultural barriers can make people experiencing poverty, immigrants, and people of color feel unwelcome. When most vendors and shoppers are similar in race or class, new customers can feel out of their element. Some shoppers report feeling watched, and that their children

4 Pirog, R., McCann, N. Is Local Food More Expensive? (2009). A Consumer Price Perspective on Local and Non-local Foods Purchased in Iowa. Leopold Center Pubs and Papers, 63. Retrieved from http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/leopold_pubs/papers/63

Flaccavento, A. Is Local Food Affordable for Ordinary Folks? (2011). A Comparison of Farmers Markets and Supermarkets in Nineteen Communities in the Southeast. Retrieved from <http://www.ruralscale.com/resources/downloads/farmers-market-study.pdf>

are not welcome at farmers markets.

- The absence of culturally appropriate foods adds to the impression that certain customers are not valued and makes meal planning and preparation more daunting for potential customers.

- Language barriers can make it difficult to select and pay for food, and these barriers prevent customers from talking to vendors about preparation and recipes for unfamiliar foods. Farmers markets depend on a sense of community, and shopping in a place where nothing is in the customer's first language disrupts that bond. Over-reliance on using English-speaking children to translate can cause tension for immigrant families where the adults are not fluent English speakers.

- Lack of awareness keeps many customers away simply because they do not know markets exist, what their hours are, and what days they operate. Advertising for markets that targets higher-income communities can exacerbate this information gap.

- Disability access can be a literal barrier to potential shoppers. Missing wheelchair ramps, high curbs, aisles with no space to turn around in a chair, signage that is too small for vision-impaired customers, lack of handicapped restrooms and more can all keep customers from being able to access the market.

- Rural settings magnify many of the above challenges. Driving long distances to a market is time-consuming and expensive. Getting rides to the market is harder. Rural markets are often smaller, so it is more difficult for customers to do all their shopping at the farmers market. Getting the word out requires more networking, because there are fewer places to put up signs or hand out flyers. Yet rural communities often

Communicating Across Culture and Making Your Market More Inclusive

- *Engaging Special Populations: Cultural Competency*, USDA SNAP <http://bit.ly/usdacc>
- *Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Bridging the Gap Between Farmers Markets and Low-Income Shoppers*, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project <http://asapconnections.org/downloads/asap-farmers-market-access-guide.pdf>
- *Foster a Sense of Inclusivity at Your Market*, National Nutrition Incentive Network <http://bit.ly/csuinclusive>

have higher rates of poverty and food insecurity, and therefore stand to benefit just as much or more from a SNAP program as urban residents.

The challenges your potential customers face will vary from community to community. Talking to community leaders, faith communities, and new customers can help you assess which challenges you want to take on. At their root, many of the above challenges are about a disconnect between the culture of your market and the needs of the people you are hoping to serve. Because of this disconnection, checking your assumptions, asking for advice, assessing needs, and evaluating your programs are vital steps to success. Faith communities can be valuable partners in this work.

Assuming a Welcoming Mindset

Welcoming new customers to your market means developing a set of skills among market vendors and leadership that allows people to feel as comfortable as possible. Communicating effectively and appropriately with people from cultures different from one's own takes effort, empathy, humility, and self-awareness.

Your willingness to ask questions of community leaders and





new customers, do research, watch and listen, learn, and practice will make it easier for you to work effectively with new customer bases, no matter who you are reaching out to. Strengthening these skills is a lifelong process. Be aware of ways that your market can continue to improve over its lifespan as well.

Some practices can be especially relevant to your market. Customers may be looking for specific produce or ingredients for their favorite recipes, and your market has an opportunity to meet their need.

You can learn these aspects of one's culture through asking questions, observing, or doing research. "What should I know to make your members feel welcome?" is a simple question for faith leaders that can go a long way towards building your skills in this area.

Empathy builds relationships across communities just as much as knowledge does. Set aside your assumptions and interact with new partners and customers as full human beings.

Finally, awareness of your own goals, culture and biases allows you to approach communication with

others in a more effective way. Others' cultural practices can feel uncomfortable when they conflict with yours. Being aware of your own culture's practices can help you navigate situations where you need to communicate effectively across cultures. To take a simple example, Southerners normally start conversations with "How are you doing?," while people from some other parts of the country jump straight into the meat of a conversation. Understanding that someone is just starting a conversation in their own way, and that it is different from yours, can prevent frustration on both sides.

Forging partnerships with local faith communities is a helpful way to foster deeper connections within your local community. This guide has explored what successful partnerships can look like, how to implement a program with a partner organization, and some of the dynamics of SNAP programs at farmers markets. The following section is made up of case studies from organizations that have successfully partnered together to increase access to fresh food in their communities.



Case Studies



Faith /farmers market partnerships can take many forms, and faith communities can play different roles in those partnerships. The following case studies detail three different success stories of partnerships. In the first example, local churches raise funds and promote Food Roots' SNAP match program at local farmers markets. In the second example, a church responded to a need expressed by SNAP shoppers at Crossroads Community Food Networks' farmers market for a kitchen space to make food entrepreneurship possible. In the final example, the faith-based organization Faith in Place supports churches around Illinois in hosting one-time pop-up winter farmers markets.



Food Roots: SNAP at Market with Faith Community Partnerships in Oregon

The Oregon nonprofit Food Roots exists to grow a more robust food system on the north Oregon coast by engaging the community, supporting farmers and entrepreneurs, and improving access to local food.

By Allyson Gardner, Access to Local Foods Coordinator, Food Roots

Food Roots works with our local faith community to support our SNAP at Market program at our four county farmer's markets. When a customer who has a supplemental food benefits card uses it at one of our markets, they receive up to 10 dollars in match money to be spent at the market. This program helps low income families purchase more local produce. It boosts our local economy through supporting local food producers, and it provides an avenue for greater community connections.

This has been a great partnership. There are four churches who raise funds within each of their congregations during the spring. These churches also help us with SNAP at Market program outreach and promotions through posting flyers and sharing their knowledge. We have been working for six years with these churches.

At first our Match program was funded strictly through local dollars and small grants. In 2015 we became part of the nationwide Double Up Food Bucks program. The Farmer's Market Fund, an Oregon non-profit, received a federal grant to support match programs across the state. Food Roots facilitates this program for our county. With the federal funding, we have been able to see the scale of the need within our community: historically Food Roots' match program assisted the first ten SNAP customers who came to market with a five to ten dollar match (which varied according to our funding each year). The federal grant we received increased our capacity, and with it we were able to serve all SNAP customers. It has been an eye-opening experience. We've brought all that we have learned back to the faith communities we've worked with. It has been amazing to have the data to show our community members how this program has grown and just how many families it supports. In 2012 our county



had \$1,766 in SNAP sales at market. The first year the we were able to match with federal funding through Double Up Food Bucks was 2015. In 2015 our county had \$5,934 in SNAP Sales at Market. In that three year period, Food Roots and our community partners were able to help two more markets start offering SNAP and include them in the matching program. Each year this is a huge community effort to fundraise, outreach, and gather data. Food Roots could not do it alone.

To start building a relationship with your faith-based community I would start with a one-on-one meeting with the pastor or church leader. From there I would set up a time to talk with a larger portion of the church during a potluck or tea. Find out if there is an ecumenical council in your area and go to their meetings. These events are great opportunities to network with the community and share what your program is about. I attended three to four of these each spring. The hardest part of this is working in the weekend hours to show up to church events. It can be a challenge, but community collaboration that comes from these connections creates change.



Crossroads Community Food Network:

A Community Kitchen for an Immigrant Community

Based on interviews with Christie Balch, Executive Director, Crossroads Community Food Network

Crossroads Community Food Network's farmers market, located in a low-income immigrant neighborhood in Takoma Park, Maryland, was the first farmers market in the nation to implement a SNAP Double Bucks program. Their partnership with a church was outside of the realm of their SNAP program, but it offers valuable lessons in how to assess needs, adapt programs to fit what the community wants, and partner successfully with a faith community.

Members of Crossroads staff have close relationships with their shoppers. They talk at the market and field phone calls during the week. The market manager has personal relationships with community residents. The organization also runs healthy eating programs for a Latino parent's group at a local school. Every year, the organization hosts a World Café, a structured conversation with 30 to 40 shoppers and vendors, to talk about issues at the market.

These conversations play a significant role in the planning for the next year. One year, the World Café helped the market realize they needed to do cultural competency training to help make the market a safe space for vendors and customers. The staff also learned to be flexible to meet the expectations of their community. For instance, they reserve booth space for community services like health screenings, service organizations, tax preparation, and even a DJ. They allow prepared food, which provides the opportunity for workers to come get lunch at the market.

A few years ago, staff started to see a common thread running through their conversations. Customers loved the Double Bucks program, but they were also interested in getting off food stamps. People wanted entrepreneurial opportunities, and they wanted to start food businesses. The market conducted a simple survey of 15 people. The survey confirmed what they had heard already.



Crossroads Farmers Market in Takoma Park, Maryland



The staff started calling restaurants about allowing people to use their kitchens at night, but they had no luck. Another local organization had launched a shared-use kitchen and food business incubator, but the scale was too large and the fees were too high for the farmers market's community.

Meanwhile, a nearby church completed a strategic plan. They determined that they wanted their congregation to be more involved in social justice work. They did not have much money, but they did have a large, under-used kitchen. The church was already tied to the market in several ways. Church members shopped at the market and were aware of some of the community needs.

The market and the church teamed up. They gathered a small core of steady partners. The committee included members of the church governing body, staff and board members from Crossroads, and a few more volunteers. Most people had flexible jobs that allowed them to dedicate large amounts of time to the project. Committee members spent 15 or more hours a week raising money, hosting public meetings, doing grant applications and reports, working on necessary permits and zoning and more. The congregation got involved by donating and hosting open houses, but it was this small core of dedicated volunteers who kept the energy and the work going.

The group realized fairly quickly that they needed some kind of formal agreement. They got a pro-bono lawyer to help them draw up an agreement. The document outlines the church's responsibilities, what Crossroads is responsible for, management fee (which is \$1 a year), users fees, when and how the church will use the kitchen for events, and more. This agreement was key to allowing the project to move forward smoothly.

Crossroads also engaged community partners in the kitchen project. Together with partners such as Empowered Women International, Latino Economic



Development Center, and Life Asset, Crossroads provides business training, microloans, food safety and other important training and resources through their Microenterprise Training Program. Graduation from this program is required for businesses who seek to use the kitchen.

The kitchen is on the verge of opening. Once it does, users will be able to buy food from the market, prepare it in a certified kitchen, and sell it back. Some of the businesses lined up to use the kitchen include catering companies, a cake baker, an ice cream maker featuring Central American fruit flavors, and more. While SNAP does not cover hot prepared foods, the community served will be the same, and Double Bucks brought many of the people who will become food entrepreneurs to the market in the first place.

Crossroads' Executive Director Christie Balch has some advice for anyone looking to launch a project in partnership with a faith community. "Go for it. Be really clear on your objectives and who's going to do what. A farmers market can be for everyone. People come here, and they think 'this is different,' but that's what the community wants. People will tell you what they want. You just have to listen."



Faith in Place: Faith Communities as Market Hosts in Illinois

By Carly Persson, Winter Farmers Market Coordinator, Faith in Place

Faith in Place empowers people of all faiths in Illinois to be leaders in caring for the earth and providing resources to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities. We do this through our four program areas: Energy & Climate, Sustainable Food & Land Use, Water Preservation, and Advocacy.

Each winter, from November through March, Faith in Place partners with faith communities to host a series of 15-16 indoor farmers markets on Saturdays and Sundays. The farmers markets provide an additional source of income for local vendors during the off-season; promote sustainable farming methods and economic justice for regional farm families; encourage healthy, wholesome eating; and support the building of relationships between producers and consumers. An additional benefit for many host faith communities is that the markets bring new individuals through their doors and allow houses of worship to strengthen their presence in the community. Illinois Link Cards/SNAP Benefits are accepted at all of our markets. The program will implement a Double

Value Coupon incentive program for SNAP shoppers beginning during the 2017-2018 market season.

Faith in Place's Winter Farmers Market partners, which we refer to as Winter Farmers Market Host Sites, are identified through Faith in Place's database of over 275 faith communities throughout the state of Illinois. Our Outreach Staff members reside in different regions of the state and come to Faith in Place with personal networks and insights.

At all Faith in Place events, attendees are asked to fill out sign-in sheets. In addition to providing basic contact information, they are encouraged to check a series of boxes that apply to our menu of program offerings depending on personal interests. Those who have joined the Winter Farmers Market network receive updates on the program and are the first to know when Vendor and Host Site applications become available each year. Staff members throughout Chicagoland also encourage vendors and faith communities to apply.

We have used Green Teams as the core volunteers





for these programs. Green Teams are groups of three or more people from a house of worship who provide cooperative leadership to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities. Teams meet regularly in order to set goals for their house of worship geared towards creating a more environmentally conscious community. This includes educating and connect the community at large with about earth care and how to advocate for it, planning activities and encouraging behaviors that support care of the earth and responsible use of its resources, measuring benchmarks, and celebrating accomplishments. Each Green Team is assigned a Faith in Place staff member as a coach, and coaches advise houses of worship to participate in various programs including the Winter Farmers Market Program.

To become a Host Site, faith communities must fill out a Host Site Application. They must have a dedicated group of volunteers, a strong publicity plan, a large fellowship hall or similar space in their building, and a willingness to abide by Faith in Place and local health department regulations.

A strong Winter Farmers Market Host Site has teams dedicated to publicity, setting up tables the week before the market, helping vendors unload before and after the market, and breaking down tables after the event.

Host Sites ideally have a large fellowship hall or similar space and are able to provide 15-20 six-foot and eight-foot tables and chairs. They also have ample parking, are accessible via public transit, have an elevator if accessing the market space requires stairs, and have electrical outlets available for vendors that require them. Strong Host Sites generally host their Winter Farmers Market on the same day as worship services take place to encourage worship attendees to visit the market. This way an abundance of market



attendees is guaranteed.

The SNAP program has seen a steady increase in popularity since its inception in 2012. Since that time, we have seen a 75% increase in SNAP sales, from \$634.94 in 2012/2013 to \$1,108.68 in the 2016/2017 season. Host Sites are asked to promote the SNAP program in their publicity materials and at local food pantries and Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) branches, but doing so is often neglected. Frequent reminders for faith communities to reach out to these places would be helpful, as much of the neglected publicity work gets placed on the Winter Farmers Market team. In my experience, I have also found that the nature of our traveling market model does not lend itself to eliciting as many SNAP shoppers as weekly farmers markets do. This is likely because people do not generally count on one-time events to stock their refrigerators and pantries for the week. Additionally, it is important to remember that SNAP/EBT allotments are loaded at the beginning of each month. Markets happening at the end of the month will see significantly fewer SNAP shoppers.

Conclusion

These case studies provide valuable real-life examples of the ways that faith communities and farmers markets can partner together to increase food access in their community. This section is not exhaustive, as these models are just a few of the ways

that partnerships can take place. We hope that these examples spark your imagination for what is possible within your own neighborhood and encourage you to reach out to others who are interested in pursuing food justice.



Appendix

Resources and Worksheets

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Sample Letter of Introduction

Dear [Title] [Last Name],

[Our town farmers market] is launching an initiative to make fresh local food affordable and accessible to low-income families in our community. I'm reaching out in hopes that your congregation might be interested in helping make the program a reality.

We've just begun accepting SNAP benefits at the market, and our new program is designed to make sure families who receive SNAP find our new system useful and welcoming. It links food and faith by making it easier for families to care for their bodies by eating healthy, building stronger community ties through face-to-face relationships, and supporting agriculture that cares for creation and people.

We are still in the early stages of designing the program. I'd love to learn more about your congregation and its ministries, receive any guidance you might have, and see if there are opportunities for our new program to benefit your congregation and its work.

Please let me know if you are able to take some time to talk. You can reach me [contact info].

Best wishes,

[Name, Title]



What to Know Before Visiting

Each faith community you work with will have its own set of practices, some of which you are familiar with, and some of which you will want to learn. For example, members of many Christian denominations will not attend meetings or events that take place on Sunday. Many Muslim men do not touch women who are not related to them, so shaking hands or hugging in greeting can be disrespectful. Many communities place a high value on referring to people, especially elders, with their titles, such as Ms., Mr., or Reverend.

Each faith community will have its own etiquette and structure. Below are some general sources of information about some faiths that may be helpful preparation if you are unfamiliar with these faith traditions, such as the role of clergy and what to expect when visiting. This list is far from exhaustive. In general, it is polite to dress modestly and professionally when visiting a congregation or a member of the clergy. If the congregation has a website, you may find more information there about committees and decision-makers, dress code, and other useful information.

- **Catholic Church**

Ten Things You Should Know about Catholic Mass

Etiquette: bit.ly/visitcathmass

- **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)**

How the Church is Organized: bit.ly/howldsorg

What to Expect at a Mormon Church Service:

bit.ly/mormonwor

- **Conservative Judaism**

Background and Overview: bit.ly/consjbo

Customs and Etiquette: bit.ly/consjce

- **Eastern Orthodox Christian Church**

First Visit to an Orthodox Church: bit.ly/visitorth

- **Jehovah's Witnesses**

Introduction to Meetings and Clergy:

bit.ly/jwitmeeting

- **Hinduism**

How Hindus Worship: bit.ly/hafworship

Hinduism Q&A: bit.ly/hinduismqa

- **Islam**

Visiting a Mosque: bit.ly/2VisitingMosque

Role of an Imam: bit.ly/roleimam

- **Protestant Christian Churches**

Protestantism – Leadership: bit.ly/protlead

- **Reform Judaism**

Reform Sanctuary Customs: bit.ly/rjsanctuary

- **Seventh Day Adventist Church**

General Information: bit.ly/press7thday

- **Society of Friends (Quakers)**

A Brief Introduction to Quakerism:

bit.ly/quakerinfo

Quaker Worship: bit.ly/quakerworsh

- **Unitarian Universalist Church**

What to Expect when Visiting on a Sunday:

bit.ly/uuexpect



Project Design Worksheet

MAIN GOAL: _____

Goal I: _____

Activity 1: _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity 3: _____

Evaluation Method: _____

Goal II: _____

Activity 1: _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity 3: _____

Evaluation Method: _____

Goal III: _____

Activity 1: _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity 3: _____

Evaluation Method: _____



Project Expense Budget Worksheet (Sample)

Category	Description	Amount
PERSONNEL		
Staff	Percentage of staff person's time	
Contractors or Interns	Evaluators, consultants, etc.	
TOTAL PERSONNEL		
MATERIALS		
Signage	Signs for market	
Printing	Handouts for congregations and market customers	
Office supplies	Stickers, paper and pens for surveys, notebooks, etc.	
TOTAL MATERIALS		
TRANSPORTATION		
Mileage reimbursement	Mileage for visits to congregations and partners at current federal reimbursement rate	
TOTAL TRANSPORTATION		
OTHER		
Miscellaneous	Food and supplies for tastings, prizes for giveaways, tents and tables, etc.	
TOTAL OTHER		
TOTAL EXPENSES		



Project Expense Budget Worksheet

Category	Description	Amount
PERSONNEL		
Staff		
Contractors or Interns		
TOTAL PERSONNEL		
MATERIALS		
Signage		
Printing		
Office supplies		
TOTAL MATERIALS		
TRANSPORTATION		
Mileage reimbursement		
TOTAL TRANSPORTATION		
OTHER		
Miscellaneous		
TOTAL OTHER		
TOTAL EXPENSES		



Funder Introduction Handout Outline

When first meeting with a prospective funder, whether it is a faith community, an individual, or a foundation program officer, it is helpful to have a short document (one to two pages) that outlines your project and its funding needs. If you have them, include pictures and quotes from customers, farmers, or partners about the value of your work. Include the following information.

Who are you?

- What is your market's mission?
- What is its history?
- What is its track record of success?

What is your proposed project?

- What is the need you are meeting?
- What are your goals?
- What are your proposed activities?
- What is the general timeframe for your work?

Who is involved?

- Who are your partners who have committed to the project?
- Who else is funding the project?

What is your budget?

- What is your total budget for the project?
- What is the budget summary?



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