

ATTRACTING TARGET POPULATIONS TO FARMERS MARKETS A RESOURCE SHEET

There are both large and small farmers markets, in townships, reservations, and cities. You can eat breakfast and buy a week's groceries at larger markets, and perhaps only locally produced veggies at others. With the range of shapes, sizes and settings and the diverse customer bases, there is no single successful method for attracting target populations to your market. In every case, however, success is based upon understanding the context of your market and the people you want to attract.

As a first step, it's important to be clear on what farmers markets are good at: creating opportunities to bring together local producers—farmers, food artisans, craftspeople—with area consumers. Remember, more often than not, the market is organized by volunteers. Those volunteers may be the market vendors themselves. Occasionally there is a part-time or seasonal staff person. In a few instances, the market might even have a fulltime manager. Usually markets do not have the capacity or competence to perform most of the tasks needed to undertake successful outreach campaigns. Because of their seasonal nature, farmers markets often aren't set up to execute successful, sustained and coordinated outreach efforts.

How can a local public health entity help?

- Establish a relationship with the market, with vendors, board members, or manager,
- Work with these market stakeholders to develop a common understanding and approach to meeting everyone's needs. This support is crucial.
- Identify key influencers in your target communities, their natural gathering places, and barriers that prevent them from attending the market.

Barriers	Anytown, MN Influencers	Natural gathering places – "town centers"
1. transportation	1. leaders of faith-based organizations	1. barbershops
2. language	2. teachers	2. senior centers
3. perception that farmers markets are too expensive	3. elders	3. churches, childcare centers, schools
4. market is too unfamiliar	4. nutrition educators, WIC/SNAP benefits providers	4. Walmart
5. market is not a good fit for target populations		5. social service agencies
		6. food shelves or commodity food pick-up sites
		7. senior housing & elders meal programs
		8. community clinics

9. fast food restaurant

Once the landscape is clear, it is possible to identify the best route for achieving your goals:

Barriers	Influencers	Natural gathering places – " town centers "
transportation schedule stops at the market with the senior center activity van. offer ride sharing. deliver the market produce. ask a market vendor or two to spend an hour after their main market in front of a social services agency or in front of a senior housing complex before returning home.	leaders of faith-based organizations invite leaders of faith-based organizations to a roundtable featuring snacks made from market produce. open a conversation about what role the market can play improving the health and self-reliance of parishioners. invite suggestions for partnership between the market, the faith-based community and the health department	barbershops hang posters, distribute brochures
language translate market signs and promotional materials into multiple languages using culturally relevant messaging	teachers take the market to the classroom. pass out scavenger hunt cards for the kids to use at the market. ask older kids what they think about about the role of vibrant local food system in advancing economic justice, environmental sustainability, screwing the establishment	senior centers create a once weekly veggie bingo.
perception include	community create	churches ask to

that farmers markets are too expensive	coupons for use at the market in WIC packets or distribute "veggie prescriptions" at local clinics	elders	opportunities at or around the market for inter-generational sharing – storytelling, meal sharing, exchanging foodways traditions		include promotional messages in bulletins .
market is too unfamiliar	invite key groups on tours of the market to help them ease into their first market experience. partner with extension services to offer cooking classes,	community newspapers	talk to the editor about allowing the market to supply articles. invite the media to market for a discussion of current issues upon which the market can have a positive impact.	Walmart	ask Walmart if the market can be located in their parking lot (many markets are staged in the parking lots of grocery stores and strip malls)
market is not a good fit for target populations	encourage vendors to offer a diverse range of products. consider selling bananas. ask vendors to sell veggies in a smaller "senior portion". encourage the market to support a range of products AND price points.			social service agencies, foods shelves, senior housing, community clinics, fast food restaurant	make sure there are flyers with market locations and hours available at these locations ! and can we put a small market or a vendor or two here after (or before) the main market?

No matter what your strategy, keep one thing in mind: your best chance to make farmers markets a community shopping destination for target populations is to establish trust relationships within those communities. Use those relationships to understand and bridge the distances between the market and your target communities in a contextually appropriate way. Your investment will be repaid as the benefits of shopping at the market begin to travel through the target communities by word of mouth.

Insights from the Experts

"I personally think that SNAP beneficiaries who have never been to a farmers market are a little intimidated by the thought of going to an unfamiliar place to shop: the grocery is a "known" and the

process for using their EBT cards is clear to them. Perhaps an initiative that set the ball rolling for "mini farmers markets" at various community agencies would complement the outreach work already being done in the community. In a workshop setting, SNAP beneficiaries would have the opportunity to see a sampling of the products available at Saturday market, meet a few of the vendors from the bigger market, and be able to practice using their EBT cards by making small purchases of produce and other allowed items." –*Kari Dunn, manager Rochester Downtown Farmers Market*

"The advertising I did was primarily in the local newspapers and from phoning in live to the radio station every Saturday morning. I also wrote several articles for the papers and tried to get into all the events calendars. We had events many weeks that gave me something to promote and try to get into the papers. There are also several banners around town and we'd put up road signs during market hours. And I mailed out post cards that people could use to sign up for door prizes each week. We did get a few very elderly people from the assisted living center across the street, but I'd say not more than a handful each week. We rarely got any people from the tribal communities. We also accept SNAP cards, and I publicized it in every piece of advertising, but surprisingly only used the machine one time the entire season. I even put up posters in the social services offices promoting the fact we accepted SNAP, but there may be a stigma attached to using it. My own aunt would come and buy things at the market, but not use her SNAP card. I couldn't figure it out. So I'm still trying out ways to get people in. I don't know if I could say for sure one thing works over another yet." *Quinn Olson, manager, Fosston Farmers Market*

"The elderly seem to come to the market a lot. A special market day for the elderly helps, with some kind of incentives, like 5% off; however, all vendors might not agree to this. Maybe on senior citizen day more volunteer staff is available to carry things to the car. The real question is what can you do to make them feel special?" *Terrance Nennich, vendor, Bemidji Area Farmers Market*

"If you have a high native population then all the vendors in the market should be taught some basics of their culture. If you can get a Native American to do this it is better. Don't approach the reservation as if the market wants to sell more stuff; approach it as a win-win situation, where both the market and the people will benefit. Consider making out a special brochure to hand out at the reservations that invites the tribal members to the market. Meeting with the tribal officials to talk about the market and explain details really helps. Most reservations have their own newspapers or radio stations." *Terrance Nennich, vendor, Bemidji Area Farmers Market*

"When I started, I couldn't find one Indian farmer in a 5000 mile boundary. The USDA couldn't find one either, especially a produce vendor. So we had to build the vendor community for our market, teach them how to farm. I use the idea of food sovereignty to teach people about the importance of supporting local food—no local food, no food sovereignty. Now we have vendors that grow in their backyards up to few acres." *Vicky Karhu, Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative, Okmulgee Farmer's Market*

"The best advertising is word of mouth. And a big thing for us is keeping the prices down. We advertise prices. Also we make sure to have cultural favorites like Indian pumpkins and purple-hulled peas—things that are hard to find at the stores. Making a cultural connection, using the market to help revitalize cultural traditions, is important in engaging tribal communities." *Vicky Karhu, Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative, Okmulgee Farmer's Market*

Helpful Online Resources

Community Food Security Coalition

<http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html>

Farmers Market Coalition

<http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/>

http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Farmers-Market-Manager-FAQs_2010.pdf

Project for Public Spaces

<http://www.pps.org/markets/>

<http://www.pps.org/store/featured-items/snapebt-at-your-farmers-market-seven-steps-to-success/>

Minnesota Farmers Market Association

<https://www.mfma.org/>