

IMPROVING EQUITY AND INCLUSION AT FARMERS MARKETS

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BACKGROUND

- Food insecurity in the United States affects about 10% of households, only increasing since the covid-19 pandemic, and nutrition of low-income households is often less balanced with fruit and vegetable consumption due to financial constraints
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a way of providing aid to food-insecure households. It is now accepted at many farmers markets (FMs) with tokens
- Awareness of SNAP/EBT at farmers markets is minimal, and often goes unused among SNAP recipients
- I sought to promote awareness of resource, and assess the barriers associated with accessing it

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the potential barriers to SNAP recipients attending the farmers market?
- What are the best ways of promoting awareness of SNAP at the farmers market to the community?

INTERNSHIP & METHODS

- As a food access intern at the Carnation Farmers Market (CFM), it was my job to process SNAP transactions, advertise SNAP, and engage with the community.
- I created a flier, seen in figure 1, to distribute to social services within the community and stayed in contact with them throughout my internship.
- I kept track of SNAP transactions and took a short survey to find out how SNAP customers had discovered this resource to be available.



Figure 1. SNAP flier I distributed in this community, and posted at the market

RESULTS

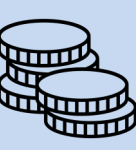
Barriers



- Overall limited knowledge of the resource in community



- Discomfort with using SNAP benefits at FM, as opposed to at a grocery store



- Inconvenient token system



- 5 Total SNAP shoppers 2023 season



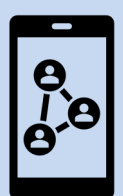
- Significantly lower and less consistent SNAP shopper count in 2023 (See Figure 2)

Tokens Given to SNAP shoppers at CFM Over Time

YEAR	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023
SNAP Tokens Given Out	\$954	\$1106	\$1342	\$708	\$160

Figure 2. Table showing dollar amount of SNAP tokens given out over time at CFM

Solutions to Awareness



- Advertise for SNAP acceptance in advance to promote awareness through physical materials & social media. Most people who shopped with SNAP at CFM in 2023 had used it previously at another FM



- Provide clear instructions to SNAP patrons to avoid confusion and discomfort through signage displaying where to go and how-to use SNAP



- SNAP Market Match & Incentive programs that provide a match to how much you spend at a FM. Market Match would increase visits to FM according to shopper feedback.



- Provide SNAP-Education programs that educate customers on how to make their SNAP dollars stretch & teaches how to cook healthy meals

BROADER SIGNIFICANCE

- The typical demographic of FM attendees being wealthy and white individuals can change to include lower-income families and communities of color with SNAP availability
- Challenges persist, including the transaction process being inconvenient and indiscreet for guests. Understanding the stigma around food stamps/discomfort with the process warrants a change to this system for SNAP shoppers nationwide (See Figure 3)



Figure 3. SNAP tokens used at farmers markets to purchase goods

- Benefits include creating inclusive community spaces, as shown in Figure 4, in which people of all income levels can enjoy fresh and nutritious foods
- Further research at CFM should include continued surveying of SNAP shoppers, providing incentive programs, organizing SNAP-Education programs, and providing clearer instructions
- Further research nationwide should explore viability of SNAP token systems at FMs



Figure 4. Produce vendor at Carnation Farmers Market from 2023 season

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