Accepting SNAP at Farmers’ Markets

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• What is Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)?
• Why accept EBT?
• What is needed to accept EBT?
  • Legal Structure*
  • Bank Account
  • Management Capabilities
  • Marketing Capabilities
  • Are your vendors ready?
  • Best Practices

*Not required, but is good business practice
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Formerly known as federal food stamps

Transitioned from paper coupons to electronic “debit-like” card

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)

In Ohio, the Ohio Direction Card
So, why accept EBT?

• In 2013 SNAP redemption at farmers’ markets nationwide rose to $21.1 million.
• In 2013, 116 Ohio farmers’ markets and direct marketing farmers redeemed $224,213 in SNAP benefits.
• Georgia had the great redemption of SNAP benefits which totaled $3.3 million in 2013.

http://wholesomewave.org/snapgrowth20112013/
What is Needed to Accept EBT at farmers’ markets?

• Is your farmers’ market a legal entity (non-profit, LLC, etc.)?
• Are you affiliated with an “umbrella” organization (local chamber, visitors bureau, etc.)?
• Who is responsible? (SSN#)
Why be legally organized?

Pros:
• Legal separation from liability
• Potential funding opportunities
• Self-managed

Cons:
• Reporting & recordkeeping requirements (i.e. tax returns)
• Self-managed
Does your farmers’ market have a bank account?

• EBT funds electronically deposited
• Separation of farmers’ market funds from individuals
• Accountability of funds received
Do you have the management capabilities to accept EBT?

- Person to process transactions at the market
- Person to account for tokens/ scrip
- Person to reimburse vendors for token/ scrip
- Person to train vendors
Do you have the management capabilities to accept EBT? (cont.)

- Funds to cover associated costs (transaction fees, equipment fees, telephone line charges, token purchase, etc.)
- Financial resources to carry out the plan
Do you have the marketing capabilities?

- Person to plan and implement an effective marketing plan
- Person & process to manage matching program if available
- Funds to effectively market to EBT consumers (flyers, signs, advertisements, etc.)
Are your vendors ready?

- Do they recognize the benefits? (increased sales/revenues)
- Do they understand what are eligible food items and what are not?
- Do they understand they cannot provide change?

Are your vendors ready? (cont.)

• Do they understand the reimbursement process?
• Do they have the proper marketing and promotional materials (recipes, information on how to store & prepare)?
Best Practices

• Develop relationship with organizations who serve this consumer to help “get the word out”.
• Access to transportation to/from the farmers’ market (local transit, etc.)
• Cooking demonstrations – easy to prepare meals, etc.
Best Practices (cont..)

• Education about seasonality.
• Education about value of local foods.
• Nutrition education (OSUE Food & Nutrition Education Program).
• Matching programs – Wholesome Wave, local foundations, etc.
Review

• Consider legal structure
• Consider management abilities (including costs)
• Consider marketing abilities (including costs)
• Consider vendor training
• Review & implement best practices
Where to get help?

Ohio Department of Job & Family Services
Melissa Wolfe melissa.wolfe@jfs.ohio.gov

OSU South Centers
Christie Welch, welch.183@osu.edu

The Farmers’ Market Management Network
www.fmmmn.org

The Farmers’ Market Coalition
www.farmersmarketcoaltion.org
To learn more:


http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5085298

http://jfs.ohio.gov/ofam/EBT%20Farmers%20Market.stm

http://southcenters.osu.edu/farmersmarkets

Market Link – Markets new to accepting SNAP may qualify for no-cost equipment.
http://marketlink.org/
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