Increasing Fresh Food Access and Farmers' Market Success

**FMNP Voucher Use in the Greater Lehigh Valley**

*The Pennsylvania Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) distributes checks to eligible seniors and Women, Infants & Children (WIC). These checks can be used at participating farm markets and roadside stands to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables which are grown (or are growable) in Pennsylvania.*

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**2018 Redemption**

$155,550 in unused food dollars and uncaptured revenue for farmers

$118,885 in food dollars and revenue for farmers

The Success!

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**Identified Barriers**

*Seniors must get vouchers on distribution days at specified locations
*Qualifying WIC moms receive vouchers at quarterly meetings

**Barriers for WIC Moms**

- Knowledge of program/how to use vouchers
- Transportation
- Understanding value of fresh, local foods and attending market
- Navigating markets and knowing who accepts vouchers
- Knowing location and hours of participating markets
- Remembering to use vouchers
- Having the tools and knowing how to utilize and prepare produce

**Barriers for Seniors**

- Knowledge of program/how to use vouchers
- Knowing distribution days and frequency of distribution
- Transportation
- Understanding value of fresh, local foods and attending market
- Navigating markets and knowing who accepts vouchers
- Knowing location and hours of participating markets
- Remembering to use vouchers
The Data

- Overall downward trend in FMNP distribution and redemption across all categories
- Large gap between vouchers issued and vouchers redeemed for Seniors and WIC vouchers
- WIC redemption significantly lower than Senior redemption despite more checks being distributed - this trend is seen across the state
Data Highlights

Avg. Redemption Rate 2018

WIC 35%
Senior 78%

Lehigh Valley WIC Clinic Had

$65,290 worth of unredeemed checks in 2018

Easton WIC Clinic has had a 10% drop in redemption since 2015

There were only 2 instances of increase in redemption, both of which were under 5.1%
Overarching Goal: Improve FMNP distribution and redemption rates to increase fresh, local food access and farmer income in the GLV

Priority Actions

- Develop strategic community partnerships for outreach efforts: introduce, encourage, and remind eligible individuals to utilize the program.
- Develop strategic community partnerships for reducing barriers: ex. farmers/mobile markets for pop-up stands, van trips to market, cooking demos, increased signage and information at market.
- Meet with WIC and AAA offices to discuss their current efforts, introduce potential strategies, and offer services to improve distribution and redemption.
- Develop relevant outreach materials: Brochure with distribution days, participating locations, eligible products, seasonal foods, market activities.

Needs

- Organizations to encourage use and "advertise" program that are serving low-income seniors and mothers - from FPC, other ideas?
- Personal contacts/connections with WIC offices or AAA? (to help facilitate buy-in and partnership)
- Specific, targeted outreach locations that will be effective and receptive
- FPC lobbying for a change in regulations that authorizes other organizations to distribute Senior FMNP checks?
- Other ideas?

Buy Fresh Buy Local has developed an improvement strategies suggestions list to address these barriers and improve redemption rates for use by WIC offices, Agencies on Aging, Farmers' Markets, and supporting organizations. Access this guide on our resources page: Buylocalglv.org/resources