

Improving WIC FMNP Redemption

For Use by WIC Offices and
Farmers Market Managers

This research delineates suggested strategies for WIC FMNP voucher redemption. The 5 counties with the highest redemption rates for WIC FMNP in Pennsylvania were contacted and successful strategies were recorded. Additional research was conducted on other FMNP participating Farmers Markets, WIC offices, Area Agencies on Aging and organizations around the US to gather additional suggestions and strategies.



Overarching Challenge: Vouchers not being used Proposed Solutions: Overcoming Barriers

Barrier: Participants don't know how or where to use vouchers

Creating trust & developing comprehensive informational materials is important to ensure there is no lack of participation caused by incomplete or unclear understanding about using the program

- **When handing out vouchers, include informational materials with**
 - Date, time, and location of all participating sites
 - What they can and can not buy with the vouchers
 - Seasonal availability
 - How the vouchers work and how to use them, including when voucher redemption closes
 - Link to a promotional video on voucher use
 - This video can also be played in the WIC office waiting room
- **Talk to participants at every WIC appointment, ask if they have or will use the vouchers, and address/clarify any concerns or questions**
- **Ensure farmers market managers and/or vendors know how to use and accept vouchers so participants have a smooth experience at market**
 - Ask farmers to ensure full value of vouchers are being redeemed by making additional purchase suggestions
 - Ensure vendors clearly display that they accept vouchers
 - Ensure market info tent employees/volunteers can clearly direct customers to FMNP vendors



Barrier: Participants are not as familiar with cooking and/or do not have many cooking tools

Some offices found their participants did not want to use the program because they didn't know how to use the produce for meals or felt they lacked the tools to cook/prepare them (please note that it should not be assumed that participants do not know how to cook/use produce, but that it could be an underlying reason why some individuals are not participating)

- **Provide easy/quick, healthy, produce heavy, culturally relevant meal recipes when handing out vouchers and/or throughout the season**
- **Host cooking courses at the WIC office or at farmers markets**
- **Use funds to purchase quality kitchen tools that can be handed out to participants on a first come, first served basis**
 - Ex. Vegetable brushes, vegetable peelers, paring knives, cutting boards



Barrier: Participants Forget About Using Vouchers



- **When handing out vouchers:**
 - Put vouchers in colorful folders that include informational materials about recipes, market locations, and allowable purchases
- **Remind and discuss FMNP program at each WIC appointment**
- **If available, WIC offices should utilize automated calls or text messages to remind participants about using vouchers**
- **Incentivize participation by addressing barriers through solutions listed above and highlighting benefits (see next section)**
 - Activities at market, health benefits, free cooking supplies and recipes, quality time with family, more food on the table, etc.



Barrier: Transportation and Overall Worth of a Trip to the Farmer's Market

Participants may lack the ability to travel to farmers markets if they are not nearby. It has also been found that participants felt the cost and "hassle" of going to the market outweighed the benefit of the vouchers

- **To address this, the value of the vouchers themselves as well as the other added benefits of going to the market should be emphasized to increase perceived worth of participating. Discuss these benefits in WIC meetings in addition to developing a take-home pamphlet**
 - Develop informational materials to highlight when popular fruits and vegetables are in season (berries, tomatoes, carrots)
 - Using the vouchers means more food on the table
 - Discuss the health benefits of fresh, locally grown produce
 - Advertise activities offered by the market such as kids crafts, music, and demonstrations
 - Emphasize the value of shopping at the market with children
 - Teaches them life skills, gets them excited about eating healthy, educates them about food and farmers
 - Is a fun way for the family to spend time together
 - By shopping at the farmer's market they are also supporting their community and local farmers
 - Many local farm stands also accept the checks, so this may be a good option if the market distance and times are inconvenient
- **If serving an area without a market accessible by public transportation or walking:**
 - Have a farmer do a pop-up market at peak season times at the WIC office or other convenient location
 - Have the farmer pre-make \$5 bags and/or have them ensure customers are getting the full voucher's worth of produce



We want to hear from you! What strategies have been successful or unsuccessful for you and why? What other needs or barriers could be addressed? What additional solutions have you developed?

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BFBLGLV is a program of the Nurture Nature Center, a 501(c)3 organization. BFBL chapters across the nation are coordinated by the Farmers Market Coalition, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers markets across the United States so that they can serve as community assets while providing real income opportunities for farmers.