

A LOOK FROM THE INSIDE: MARKET PERSPECTIVES ON THE EXPANSION OF FOOD  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS

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## ABSTRACT

### A LOOK FROM THE INSIDE: MARKET PERSPECTIVES ON THE EXPANSION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS

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Recently there has been a strong push to offer more food assistance programs at farmers markets. The U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as regional non-profits argue that expanding the redemption of food assistance benefits at farmers market will improve access to healthy foods by low-income populations and support the livelihoods of small-scale farmers who sell at farmers market. Yet, as more programs are developed or adapted for delivery in farmers markets, little input has been sought from those who are ultimately responsible for their implementation.

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the experience of farmers markets that have been on the leading edge of adopting food assistance programs. Participant observation and in-depth interviews were conducted in six urban farmers markets to understand staff perspectives on the challenges and benefits of administering multiple new and evolving food assistance programs.

The results show that even farmers markets with high organizational capacity experienced significant administrative burdens operating food assistance programs. In addition, most worried about the sustainability of these programs due to the high levels of labor that are needed for their support. The findings suggest that recent calls to expand food assistance programs to all farmers markets are not likely to be successful, as many will not have the capacity needed to operate such programs. Instead, targeting farmers markets that exhibit strong organizational capacity may increase the probability of successful adoption.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAA- community action agency

CDC- community development corporation

DUFB- Double Up Food Bucks

EBT- electronic benefits transfer

FMNP- Farmers Market Nutrition Program

FNS- Food and Nutrition Services

MDCH- Michigan Department of Community Health

MIFMA- Michigan Farmers Market Association

POSD- point of sale device

SFMNP- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

SNAP- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

USDA- United States Department of Agriculture

WIC- Women, Infants, and Children

## I. Introduction

Despite an abundant supply of food in the United States 14.5% of U.S. households struggled to provide their families with the food needed for a healthy life in 2010 (Coleman-Jensen, Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2011). In the same year, the USDA estimates that 59% of food insecure households, the majority of which are located in metropolitan areas, used one of three major federal food assistance programs in the previous month (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011). Other studies have shown that lower-income neighborhoods in metropolitan areas have fewer full-scale supermarkets, chain stores, and fruit and vegetable markets (Chung & Myers, 1999; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006). This can result in higher food prices and more difficulty for low-income shoppers to obtain healthy food (Chung & Myers, 1999; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006).

In recent years there has been a growing interest in using farmers markets as venues to address food insecurity. Farmers markets are able to set up in any open space and can provide a regular source of fresh produce to nearby residents (Briggs, Fisher, Lott, Miller, & Tessman, 2010). The popularity of farmers markets is also growing. In 2010 there were 6,132 farmers markets in the United States, compared with just 1,755 in 1994 (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, 2010). Michigan is experiencing a similar trend of growth in farmers markets (Montri, Segar, Chung, & Mino, 2011).

Accompanying this growth is an increase in the number of food assistance programs offered at farmers markets for low-income individuals. Among these is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously known as food stamps, which is the primary food assistance program of the federal government. Like traditional food retailers farmers markets can accept SNAP benefits once they have gain authorization from the USDA Food and

Nutrition Services (FNS). The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior FMNP are two other federally funded food assistance programs (USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2011). The latter two programs are only available through farmers markets and are administered by participating states.

In addition, regional non-profit organizations have begun to create their own food assistance programs for farmers markets. An example is the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFBS) program administered by the Fair Food Network in Michigan. DUFBS operates at select farmers markets in Michigan in conjunction with SNAP. With DUFBS SNAP beneficiaries can double the value of their farmers markets purchases when they use their SNAP benefits (Fair Food Network, 2012). The doubled benefits can be used to purchase Michigan-grown produce at the farmers market. Other similar programs exist such as Wholesome Wave's Double Value Coupon Program that doubles FMNP, SFMNP, and SNAP benefits and currently operates at farmers markets in 25 states (Wholesome Wave, 2012).

While the number of farmers markets offering food assistance programs is still relatively small it is increasing at a rapid rate. In 2006, only 444 U.S. farmers markets could accept SNAP benefits, while in 2010 that number had increased to 1,611 (USDA Food and Nutrition Service Benefit Redemption Division, 2011). In recent years the USDA has become a major supporter of the expansion of SNAP at farmers markets. This year, for example, it announced \$4 million in new funding aimed at expanding the reach of SNAP to more farmers market across the United States (USDA SNAP Benefit Redemption Division, 2012).

The push to expand the delivery of food assistance programs at farmers markets is seen as an important commitment to improving food access for low-income individuals. As government and non-profits seek to expand these programs it becomes important to assess the



potential for more widespread adoption.

However, to do so, it is necessary to understand the consequences for markets currently operating food assistance programs. The rollout for new and adapted food assistance programs in farmers markets has been rapid and decisions have been made with little input from the markets or the staff that will implement these programs. It is clear, however, that the perspective of these professionals can be invaluable to determining how to go about growing these programs and expanding into more farmers markets.

This study, therefore, sets out to examine the experiences of the market managers and staff who have been responsible for implementing food assistance programs at farmers markets. In particular, it aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of farmers markets that are operating multiple food assistance programs?
2. How are farmers markets able to successfully create and maintain food assistance programs?

By understanding the perspective of market managers and staff, this work aims to identify the implications for further expansion of these programs into more farmers markets.

To accomplish this, a qualitative, case-study approach was used. Michigan provides an excellent setting for this study as it is a leader at implementing new food assistance programs at farmers markets. A large number of Michigan farmers markets operate food assistance programs and generate a high volume of sales from these programs (USDA SNAP Benefit Redemption Division, 2012). In addition, the Double Up Food Bucks incentive program has recently been launched in select Michigan farmers markets. A case study of early adopting markets provides

the opportunity to understand their experiences with these programs and to draw conclusions about what factors are important for expansion.

A qualitative approach was chosen to highlight the experiences and perspectives of market staff and managers in this study. Qualitative work allows for an in-depth understanding of program operation from the perspective insiders, while taking into account the context and circumstances of the case study markets. Finally, the use of case studies facilitated a comparison of six farmers markets and enabled the development of a practical theory about what is necessary for successful program operation.

### 1.1 Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

To understand the experiences of farmers markets with food assistance programs it is first necessary to understand the circumstances under which these markets often operate. According to Ragland and Tropp (2006) less than half the farmers markets in the U.S. are financially self-sustaining from vendor fees; instead many markets rely heavily on additional external funding from city and county government and nonprofits. Newer markets are less likely to be self-sustaining and rely more heavily on external funding than older markets (Ragland & Tropp, 2006). In addition, only 39% of farmers markets nationwide have a paid market manager and even fewer have additional paid staff (Ragland & Tropp, 2006). A study of Oregon farmers markets found that markets suffer from high staff turnover (Stephenson, 2008). These conditions are challenging for running any successful market; adding the responsibility of implementing a food assistance program can exacerbate these difficulties (Montri et al., 2011).

The arrangement of food assistance program operation at farmers markets is similar to that of other organizations who are part of what researchers term the “hallow state” (Milward, 1996, p. 193). The hallow state refers to “any joint production situation where a governmental

agency relies on others (firms, nonprofits, or other government agencies) to jointly deliver public services.” Nonprofit organizations that provide services under these circumstances are typically assumed to have the capacity necessary to deliver services (McPhee & Bare, 2001; Fredericksen & London, 2000). However, Fredericksen and London (2000) demonstrated that in practice community-based development organizations often did not have the capacity needed. They acknowledged that this may result in the inability to meet the requirements of government funding entities and the needs of service recipients. They also maintain that it can limit the flexibility of organizations to be responsive to community priorities (Fredericksen & London, 2000).

A large number of studies have examined the elements that contribute to capacity in organizations such as community development corporations (CDCs), community action agencies (CAAs), community-based development organizations, health promotion agencies, among others (Glickman & Servon, 1998; Chaskin, 2001; Goodman et al., 1998; Fredericksen & London, 2000; Watson Bishop, 2007; Plotnikoff et al., 2009). However, to my knowledge organizational capacity has not been used as a framework for studying farmers markets despite its usefulness in studies of organizations operating under similar circumstances.

Previous definitions of capacity vary but many focus on the inputs needed for organizational operations and the outcomes obtained (Plotnikoff et al., 2009; Joffres et al., 2004; Eisinger, 2002; Chaskin, 2001). For the purpose of this study organizational capacity is defined as the ability to obtain and utilize resources in order to create and carry out programs that fulfill the goal(s) of the organization.

The conceptual framework of this research is based on important themes found in the organizational capacity literature, particularly the work of De Vita, Fleming, and Twombly

(2001) on nonprofit capacity. They provide a framework based on five elements of capacity: vision and mission, leadership, resources, outreach and networking, and products and services (De Vita et al., 2001). The primary themes identified in this study coincide with four factors of organizational capacity that are put forward by De Vita and colleagues (2001).

Resources are an important element of organizational capacity and can include financial, human, and physical resources. They are a critical part of organizational capacity because resources enable the operation of programs and services (De Vita et al., 2001). However, it isn't just the existence of resources that is important but also how they are used that affects the abilities of an organization. Thus leadership within an organization can also affect the acquisition and use of resources (De Vita et al., 2001).

Second, capable organizations seek resources and provide support for programs and services based on their alignment with the organization's mission (De Vita et al., 2001). The mission affects many aspects of an organization's capacity. In particular it can be a way to attract leaders that have a common mission (De Vita et al., 2001).

Third, leadership is an essential element of organizational capacity. It is also perhaps the element most consistently addressed in existing literature (see Chaskin, 2001; Joffres et al., 2004, Smith, 2001; Eisinger, 2002; Anderson et al., 2004; Dressendorfer et al., 2005; De Vita et al., 2001) and has been described as the foundation for the other elements of capacity (Plotnikoff et al., 2009; Faulkner et al., 2009p).

Two aspects of leadership as described by De Vita, Fleming, and Twombly (2001) are most relevant for this research. The first is the ability of leaders to implement programs and effectively generate action within an organization that address the organizational goals. Part of the ability of leaders to do this comes from their authority to make decisions within an

organization because of a lack of a top-down hierarchy in an organization's structure. DiLiello and Houghton (2006) also assert that when individuals have more autonomy and feel supported in their organization they are more likely and able to be innovative, a highly beneficial trait for organization leaders.

A second important aspect of leadership is willingness of individuals to work to fulfill the organization's mission (De Vita et al., 2001). Leaders set standards for performance and show ownership within the organization that helps drive success (De Vita et al., 2001). Chaskin (2001) describes this element of capacity as the level of individuals' commitment to take responsibility and actively participate in the work of the organization. Organization leaders are also important for their involvement with networks (De Vita et al., 2001).

Outreach is the final element of organizational capacity identified in the literature used in this study. A major part of outreach is involvement in and creation of networks. Networking can help build relationships and draw a base of external community support, as well as to improve awareness of an organization and its programs (De Vita et al., 2001). This support can be particularly important with resource-limited organizations such as farmers markets to gain financial and informational assistance that contributes to organization stability (De Vita et al., 2001).

The literature maintains that these elements of capacity are highly interdependent (Glickman & Servon, 1998; Fredericksen & London, 2000, De Vita et al., 2001). While the work of De Vita, Fleming, and Twombly (2001) is theoretical, other empirical studies have also identified these elements as important factors in determining an organization's capacity for action (Watson Bishop, 2007; Chaskin 2001; Joffres et al., 2004, Smith, 2001; Plotnikoff et al., 2009; Faulkner et al., 2009; Eisinger, 2002; Glickman, & Servon, 1998).

While the elements of capacity identified in this study have been addressed in previous research, not all previously identified elements were useful for this study. The products and services element of capacity described by DeVita and colleagues (2001) was of limited use in this study and therefore not included. The primary reason is because the food assistance programs are not a service, such as healthcare, and therefore could not be evaluated as such.

Other elements of capacity found in the literature, particularly mission and networking, were discussed often but using a variety of terms and with different emphasis than what was found in this study. The term “will” has been used as a different way to describe the reasons for creating and supporting programs and priorities (Joffres et al., 2004, Faulkner et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2004). This term, which focuses on motivations and beliefs within an organization, has the potential for placing the focus on short-term choices for program implementation instead of the long-term mission that many organizations use as basis for decision-making (Joffres et al., 2004, Faulkner et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2004).

Finally, much of the organizational capacity literature addressing the use of networks and external resources focused more on formal partnerships as a means of support for an organization and its programs (Joffres et al., 2004; Faulkner et al., 2009). For this study we anticipated that informal relationships and participation in networks would be just as important as formal relationships.

## 1.2 Overview of Food Assistance Programs

This research focuses on the experience of six case study farmers markets operating four food assistance programs. Three of these programs were created by the U.S. Federal Government and are funded through Federal legislation: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP), the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP).

SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp program, is the U.S. Government's primary anti-hunger program. This program provides low-income individuals and families with resources to purchase food. The program is administered exclusively by the Federal government. Retailers, including farmers markets, must be authorized through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to accept SNAP benefits. Reimbursement for any purchases made by customers with SNAP benefits is paid using Federal funds directly into the bank account of the authorized retailer where the purchase was made.

SNAP has a long history of use at farmers markets. However, in 1996 there was a dramatic decrease in the amount of food stamps redeemed at farmers markets due to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The PRWORA began the transition from a paper voucher-based system to an electronic benefits system known as EBT (or electronic benefits transfer) (H.R.3734, 2006). This switch effectively precluded farmers markets from accepting food stamps, as they were not equipped to accept electronic benefits (Grace, Grace, Becker, & Lyden, 2007). Accordingly, food stamps sales dropped from \$6.4 million in 1994 to \$3.8 million in 1996 upon implementation of the PRWORA (Grace et al., 2007). Recent efforts to re-institute the acceptance of SNAP benefits at farmers markets have been successful in some states, such as Michigan. In 2007, only 11 Michigan farmers markets accepted SNAP, but by 2011 that number had increased to 82 (Montri et al., 2011).

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was created by Congress in 1992 to 1) improve access to fresh locally-grown produce for low-income mothers and their children and 2) to increase awareness of farmers markets (USDA FNS,

2011a). The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) was created in 2000 to offer similar benefits for low-income seniors (USDA FNS, 2012). Both programs are Federally funded through grants given to individual states (USDA FNS, 2011a; USDA FNS, 2011b). As a result each state creates its own system for operating the program within Federal guidelines and only farmers markets in states receiving grants can participate in the programs.

In Michigan FMNP is administered by the Department of Community Health (MDCH) and is called ProjectFRESH. SFMNP is administered by the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging and is called MarketFRESH. Until 2011 these programs were administered jointly as ProjectFRESH by MDCH. In 2011, the administration of these programs was split across two different state entities. The split meant that participating farmers markets needed to adjust to the administrative requirements of two different administering agencies.

The Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) program is a new incentive-based food assistance program for farmers markets in Michigan. Unlike the three previous programs, DUFB is a program of the Fair Food Network, a regional non-profit organization located in Michigan. The program, which began in 2010, operates at farmers markets within the state of Michigan (Fair Food Network, 2012). The goal of DUFB is to help food insecure individuals consume more fruits and vegetables as well as to support small-scale Michigan farmers that sell at farmers markets. DUFB works by matching (or “doubling”) the value of SNAP purchases made at farmers markets. DUFB purchases are limited to Michigan-grown produce and are capped at \$20 per market visit per customer (Fair Food Network, 2012).

The systems used to accept food assistance benefits at Michigan farmers markets vary by market and program. In Michigan, a common way for markets to accept SNAP benefits is to operate a central booth or office at which SNAP customers can redeem benefits from a state-



issued electronic benefits card. In this system customers go to the market's central booth and inform the market staff of the amount of benefits they would like to redeem at the market. The customers' electronic benefits card is then swiped through the point of sale device (POSD) and customers enter a pin number just as they would with a debit card transaction. Market staff collect required information from the customers and give them the appropriate amount in market currency (usually in the form of paper script, tokens, or receipts) that can be "spent" at the market for qualifying purchases (Montri et al., 2011). In Michigan many markets, including all the markets in this study, rely on a system that uses tokens, usually wooden or metal, as currency for SNAP purchases. At markets that also participate in DUFEB, customers are also given a matching amount, up to \$20 per visit, of Double Up Food Bucks tokens. Customers spend SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks tokens on eligible products at the market as they would cash.

By contrast, ProjectFRESH and MarketFRESH are both voucher-based systems in which eligible vendors accept vouchers directly as a form of payment for eligible products. Vendors collect these vouchers from customers, as well as SNAP and DUFEB tokens, and turn them in to market staff on a predetermined schedule, often daily or weekly. For ProjectFRESH and MarketFRESH market managers must fill out the appropriate vendor number and market number on each voucher and then "batch" all of the vouchers collected at the market. To receive reimbursement from the state, they complete a cumulative batch form that includes market information and the total number and value of the submitted vouchers. All of this is sent via certified mail to the state agency that administers each program. Market staff later reimburse vendors for their sales from all four of these food assistance programs based on the value of tokens and vouchers collected from each. This is typically done by check written by market staff on a predetermined schedule, usually weekly or monthly.

## II. METHODS

Among policymakers, the interest in using farmers markets as a venue for redeeming food assistance benefits is a relatively recent phenomenon. In Michigan, early adopting farmers markets are experimenting with programs that are either new or have been adapted for delivery in the digital age. Not surprisingly, little research exists on the experience of farmers markets that have adopted these programs. To address this gap, this work takes a qualitative approach and explores the perspectives of individuals who have operated these food assistance programs at farmers markets. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it highlights the knowledge and insights of insiders, facilitates an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, and allows for the emergence of important relationships and themes that cannot be known *a priori* (Patton, 2002; Hesse-Biber & Leavey, 2006). Furthermore, the iterative process of data collection and analysis allows researchers to reconcile multiple perspectives and to build theory that is sensitive to the interpretation of context.

### 2.1 Study Site

Michigan provides an excellent opportunity to study the operation of food assistance programs at farmers markets. Michigan is a leading state in the Midwest and the nation in terms of implementing food assistance programs at farmers markets. Michigan ranks third in the number of farmers markets participating in SNAP, with only California and New York registering greater numbers of participating markets (USDA SNAP Benefit Redemption Division, 2012). In addition, in 2011 Michigan surpassed \$1 million in SNAP sales at farmers markets, outpacing all other Midwestern states and ranking fourth in the country (USDA SNAP

Benefit Redemption Division, 2012). Finally, Michigan is at the forefront in terms of experimenting with incentive programs for SNAP participants. Michigan's incentive program, Double Up Food Bucks, began with five markets in its first year of operation and has grown to over 75 farmers markets in 2012 (Fair Food Network, 2012).

## 2.2 Sampling

Six farmers markets were selected as case studies for this study. The six market sites were stratified by city and by level of market development. At the first level, the three metropolitan areas with highest numbers of SNAP participants in the state were chosen for the study. Within each metro area, markets were divided into two categories: well-established farmers markets and markets that were only recently founded. The aim was to capture the variability in stability and experience among older and newer markets. As such, this contrast could be described as a contrast between new or developing markets and older, more established markets. In general, the older, more established markets were also larger and achieved a higher volume of overall sales.

Table 1  
Sampling Decision on Markets Chosen for Case Study (n=6)

City	New or Developing Farmers Market	Established Farmers Market
<i>Waverly</i>	1	2
<i>Pella</i>	3	4
<i>Owatonna</i>	5	6

Finally, to choose among remaining markets that fulfilled these criteria, we chose markets that had adopted at least three of the four major food assistance programs offered in the state. Two of these programs were developed relatively recently for farmers markets. The other two had been available to farmers markets for some time, but were undergoing important administrative changes at the time of study. Each of the four programs was administered by a different agency or private foundation, and set its own rules for accountability, record-keeping

and reporting. Selecting markets that operated multiple programs was important as it allowed us to observe the ability of markets to implement multiple programs and comply with the requirements of four different administrative bodies.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Two methods of data collection were used in this study: participant observation and in-depth interviews. Methods were chosen for their ability to facilitate the researchers' understanding of the perspectives of the market managers and staff involved with the operation of the food assistance programs.

The first phase of data collection consisted of conducting participant observation at each of the six farmers market locations. Participant observation allows “learning through the exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 91). Market visits were arranged in advance with market managers and took place during market hours. Market managers were present at four of the farmers markets during the observation; other market staff were present at the two remaining markets. During each market visit operation of food assistance programs was observed including customer transactions and vendor token redemption. This allowed the researchers to understand the processes used at each market, as well as how these processes fit into the overall market operation. Market managers or staff explained processes as they occurred and also answered the researcher's questions. In some cases other individuals involved with operation of the programs such as other staff, volunteers, and vendors were also present and shared their experiences with the food assistance programs. Minimal notes were taken during the actual market visits, but extensive field notes were written up immediately after.

The second phase of data collection consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with market managers at each of the six farmers markets, as well as other market staff directly involved with daily operation of the food assistance programs. Sampling for this phase could be described as purposeful as we sought interviews from individuals who were found to have direct experience with the phenomenon with which we were interested (Patton, 2002).

In-depth interviews enabled the researchers to gain a thorough understanding of food assistance programs at the market from the perspective of market managers and staff, and gave interviewees the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own words (Hesse-Biber & Leavey, 2006). A total of eight interviews were conducted for this study. All the interviews followed interview guides consisting of primarily open-ended questions. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis. In addition some follow-up was done with interviewees via phone, email or in person to clarify information and ask additional questions. Interviews and the majority of participant observation took place over the course of five months from August to December of 2011.

Finally, throughout the process of this study, the researchers were engaged as active members of the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) and the Food Assistance Partnership, a statewide network of market managers and staff who are engaged in implementing food assistance programs at their markets. The researchers took part in meetings, conferences, and webinars sponsored by these groups that were aimed at facilitating the sharing of information, resources, and experience among its members. Participation began prior to the development of this study and continues at this time. Participation in this network allowed the researchers to learn of the challenges faced by farmers markets that were not included in this study and provided a standard against which the experience of the case study markets could be

compared. It also facilitated our understanding of the environment in which farmers markets operate and the networks utilized by market managers. Detailed field notes and, where appropriate, audio recordings were taken during these events.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Detailed field notes and interview transcriptions were the basis for data analysis in this study. Memos were written after each observation and interview about important themes and concepts that emerged, to make note of topics that should be explored further and to record important ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Emergent themes were regularly discussed between the researchers and were revised throughout the data collection process as more data was collected. Validity of the emergent themes was cross-checked by participant observation at MIFMA events to determine if the themes were also discussed during networking and information sharing of a larger group of Michigan farmers markets.

Memos and emergent themes were used to create a code that was the basis for data extraction and analysis. This form of inductive creation of a unique coding scheme is appropriate for relatively unknown topics like this study (Natasi, 1999). Each code was associated with one of the two research questions addressed and included a name, definition, and an example to guide coding and enable consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This coding scheme was used to code field notes and transcriptions as part of an iterative process in which codes were edited and tested multiple times before they were finalized. After codes were finalized all the data was coded a final time and this was the data used for extraction and further analysis.

Extracted data were compiled by hand for each data collection, by code. Each set of extracted data was reviewed and a summary statement was written to summarize the content

relevant to the two main research questions. Summary statements were put into display matrices by research question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One matrix was created for research question one and multiple matrices were created for research question two to further focus the data analysis. Matrices were used to facilitate comparison of summary statements between data collections and to identify patterns and themes among data collections (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This also helped to provide balance to the interpretation of the results because it allowed the researchers to check for consistency of a particular concept or theme across all data collected at each farmers market (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### III. RESULTS

During the study period, food assistance programs at all case study farmers markets underwent significant change. Markets either implemented a new food assistance program or were required to comply with administrative changes in an existing food assistance program; some did both (Table 2). As a result of these changes, all markets saw a substantial increase in food assistance program sales (MIFMA, unpublished data, 2011). SNAP sales accounted for the vast majority of these sales. Among the five markets that previously accepted SNAP benefits, SNAP sales increased 33% to 325% during the study period, with four markets experiencing more than a doubling of SNAP sales over the previous year (MIFMA, unpublished data, 2011). All markets reported being pleased with their participation in these programs, although some remained unsure how support for them could be sustained. In addition, all ended the season in good standing with the associated administrative agencies after operating for the duration of the season. None of the markets failed to meet program requirements or were in danger of disqualification from hosting any of the food assistance programs.

Table 2  
Changes in Food Assistance Programs at Case Study Farmers Markets

Farmers Market	Implemented New Program	Experienced Program Changes
1		X
2		X
3	X	X
4	X	X
5	X	
6	X	X

All markets, however, cited significant challenges with adapting to the administrative burdens of these programs. Interviews with market managers and staff indicated that changes in



volume brought about by the introduction of new programs, particularly DUFB, as well as the need to adapt to new administrative responsibilities led to a series of challenges for each market. The results of this research details the experiences of the study markets with the food assistance programs and highlights the challenges they faced, as well as the means by which they overcame these challenges.

### 3.1 Research Question 1- What are the experiences of farmers markets that are operating multiple food assistance programs?

#### 3.1.1 Heavy Administrative Burden

Interviews with staff from each of the markets indicated that there were challenges common to all study markets in implementing the new and adapted food assistance programs. In particular, market managers frequently cited the heavy administrative demands as well as the time-consuming nature of interacting with vendors and consumers to meet program requirements. Many remarked that the procedures were not particularly difficult, but that the sum total of actions to implement the program resulted in significant burdens for the market.

Said one market manager:

It takes extra time ... everything by itself. And I think that's one of the more frustrating things. Everything by itself is only like a ten minute thing, or five minutes, or fifteen minutes. Nothing is really time-consuming. But then you add it all up and that's what takes so much time. It's every little thing.

Another from a small market added, "They aren't difficult. They are just time consuming. I can't imagine how a market that has way more transactions than us can keep up with that."

The cumulative burden of managing these programs was perhaps the strongest theme that emerged from interviews with market managers. This burden, however, was multi-faceted.

First, market managers often referred to the difficulty of determining how to actually operate the

programs in their market when they lacked experience with the new or adapted programs. Each food assistance program had different rules regarding the redemption of benefits and accountability to the overseeing agencies. As a result, learning-by-doing became a necessity for each of the markets that took on new or adapted programs. One market manager explained:

In the end you don't really figure out how it works until you're actually doing it. Like I looked at this [form] at the beginning of the season and was like 'Oh, that's not hard.' But then there are these quirky situations that would come up. How do I document that on here? All of those one-time things, like, how do I note that?

In addition, the uniqueness of each market's circumstances meant that approaches that were used in one market could not be applied directly to another. As a result markets had to develop systems to comply with each set of program requirements, often making changes after operation had already begun. One market manager described how the physical set-up of her market presented logistical challenges because she did not want food assistance program consumers to be stigmatized in the process of redeeming benefits:

...figuring out the terminal part was a really hard part. Because you get a free one from the state, and actually [the] FMPP [Farmers Market Promotion Program grant] won't pay for a wireless terminal... But we were a parking lot market. So, as you know, the one from the state you need a phone line and an outlet. An outlet we can probably make happen in the parking lot. But a phone line? ...It would be a lot of money to put that in. You could have [food assistance program clients] go inside the building [for the redemption], but I really didn't want to do that. Because it's like a lot of extra effort for people and it kind of stigmatizes it...

Market managers therefore had to be persistent at troubleshooting their systems so that they could conform to the requirements of the program, the circumstances of their particular market, as well as their own principles about food access. This was often a time-consuming process that market managers felt was taxing and bothersome.

Even for markets that had working systems in place, the addition of a new program or change in a program often necessitated a revision of existing systems. One market manager

described how her vendor reimbursement system had to be modified with the addition of the Double Up Food Bucks program:

Until the end of last year we were ...reimbursing [vendors] on-demand with cash. So this year, we knew with Double Up Food Bucks...we'd be going through a lot more money...Already it was ridiculous; we'd have three or four grand on a Saturday to pay out. We didn't want an armored truck to pull up every Saturday just so we could pay vendors cash.

The market decided to reimburse by check to reduce the risk of holding excessive amounts of cash. This switch, however, necessitated new software for record-keeping that had to be purchased and configured for their needs.

The use of tokens as market currency in exchange for customers' electronic food assistance benefits could also be challenging. One market manager described the headaches associated with something as trivial as knowing how many tokens the market needed:

I was expecting to buy some [new tokens] but not as many as I actually bought. I think I bought 4 times the amount that I was expecting to. So, I was expecting to buy \$500 in \$1 tokens and I ended up buying 1000 tokens of both my \$1 and my \$5. Yeah, and I'm still running short on my \$1. So it's one of those things that I'm like [saying] to myself 'I should have bought 1500. I should have bought 2000.' It was one of those things that at the time you just don't know.

Thus, in each case, market managers had to resort to a time-consuming process of learning-by-doing to develop systems that fit their circumstances.

Second, market managers were also burdened by the responsibility of ensuring that food assistance program sales proceeded as required by each program. Each program mandated that one individual take legal responsibility for the program, going as far as requiring an individual to provide their social security number on the market's application to be an authorized SNAP retailer. Since market managers were ultimately responsible for the fidelity of the redemption process most did not take this responsibility lightly. All reported that they devoted significant time to educating vendors and customer about the rules for each program. One manager

described the difficulties of ensuring that vendors and customers understood the various programs and could comply with the associated rules:

...another challenge is always getting both vendors and customers to understand all of the different programs because there are so many different ones. For the vendors Senior ProjectFRESH can be spent on honey, but WIC ProjectFRESH can't. And Double Up Food Bucks is [for] Michigan fruits and vegetables and SNAP is any food at all.

Each manager interviewed considered this to be a significant challenge, especially early in the season when there were more customers and vendors who were not yet familiar with the rules of the various programs. Two market managers explained:

If you get someone vendor-wise that comes in...that's gone to a market that didn't do any of these [programs] before, and they're brand new at my market... 'Well, here are our three different kinds of tokens. Oh and by the way, you might see these two different kinds of coupons.' I mean, it really gets crazy after a while. So not only does it take a lot of time to explain, it's confusing for the vendors.

A lot of the times [customers] come in thinking they can only buy fruits and vegetables with their Bridge Card and I tell them, 'yes you can buy fruits and vegetables but you can also buy, eggs, milk, cheese, chicken.'

Thus, working with vendors and customers to ensure that programs were implemented correctly was a constant and time-consuming challenge. Monitoring these transactions and correcting problems when they occurred added additional stress for market managers and staff who often felt that they were already pulled in multiple directions.

Third, market managers reported being challenged by the high levels of reporting and accountability necessary for each of these programs. The administering agencies, many of them Federal agencies who have oversight over the use of taxpayer's monies, require very specific documentation of the food assistance transactions at each market. Interviews with each of the market managers described a copious amount of data collection, record-keeping and reporting that was required for each program, sometimes referring to it as "a big pain," "tedious," "frustrating," and "crazy." Aside from the information required by overseeing agencies, markets

also had to keep records on food assistance program sales by vendor and day, so that they could reimburse vendors and reconcile accounts with the funding agencies.

The process of collecting and reporting data was problematic for market administrators for a number of reasons. First, as with many other aspects of the food assistance programs these processes required the cooperation of multiple parties. Market managers needed to collect information from both consumers and vendors. In addition, for some programs, managers had to obtain materials from the administering agency to fulfill requirements for reporting or implementation. One market manager described how a delay in receiving the correct set of forms from the state agency prevented her from filing for reimbursement until the third month of operations:

... I didn't have the "*WIC ProjectFRESH Welcome Here*" signs. ...[Vendors] were all accepting WIC ProjectFRESH though because we had been approved. But I didn't have the ... batch slips that they use. ...so I just didn't send in the reimbursements until I got those. So I was just holding on to these big ProjectFRESH coupons for awhile. I was still reimbursing the vendors and we were fronting the money.

While much of the record-keeping could be routinized and completed outside of market hours, some tasks became burdensome because they required liaising with partners that were only available during market hours. Market staff, for example, had to collect and record the number of tokens that each vendor received at the end of each market day or week so that they could be reimbursed for sales made to customers redeeming their food assistance benefits. Similarly, at the beginning of each season, vendors were required to sign contracts for each different food assistance program they planned to participate in. Vendors, however, were typically available to managers only during market hours and were focused on the work of selling their products. Thus market managers had to painstakingly pursue vendors to get each contract signed. This was time-consuming and distracting for market managers as it required

keeping track of who had turned in each contract and remembering to pursue those who were not in compliance. One market manager explained his frustration:

I mean, same thing with ProjectFRESH and our EBT [SNAP] agreements. There's just so much paperwork and it's so hard to make sure that every single person has signed every single document.

Another market manager elaborated, "I feel bad for the vendors when I say here's another thing that you have to sign that looks exactly like the other thing."

As such, much of the data collection and reporting processes were perceived to be repetitive and unnecessary since the various programs had similar reporting requirements, but asked for information in slightly different formats. This added a layer of redundancy to the process and was regarded as a waste of time by market staff who thought the process should be streamlined.

In total, the cumulative demands of administering the food assistance programs frustrated market managers as they felt pulled in multiple directions, particularly during the busy hours of the market. At these times they felt conflicted over the challenge of keeping up with food assistance program administration while attending to the rest of their duties as market manager.

It's time consuming because you have to go to each vendor individually, while you still have shoppers coming who want tokens and need things administered. It's a lot to juggle.

There are so many things going on that having to make sure that...I was close to that EBT machine all the time so I could issue someone tokens. But if one of my vendors needed change and needed me to run into Rite Aid I couldn't do that. Or if I needed to go back to the storage bin and grab something. But I needed to be at that table [to operate the EBT machine]. It was a huge ball and chain almost....Having to constantly be right there when there are so many other things to pull you in a million different directions.

### 3.1.2 Factors Affecting Market Experience with Administrative Burdens

The previous section details the common challenges that markets faced while implementing multiple, new and adapted food assistance programs. Although all of the study

markets reported these challenges, the data reveal that they varied in how they weathered these challenges. Two factors appear to determine how onerous these challenges were to each market.

First, the total number of food assistance program transactions handled by any market was very important. Markets that processed a small volume of transactions had to make fewer adjustments to ensure programs ran smoothly. In this study, three markets processed a relatively small number of food assistance transactions throughout the season. Although they shared the challenges reported in the previous section, the overall burden was not as great as for markets with high volumes of food assistance program transactions. Overall, these smaller markets explained that they were challenged by the process, but that they were able to manage if staff took on extra work and/or enlisted the help of volunteers. The very small amount of food assistance program transactions at these markets made it manageable, although challenging, to keep up with the administrative aspects of the program. Among these markets, the greatest challenges seemed to be learning how to operate the programs and developing effective systems for redemption, reimbursement and record-keeping. As one market staff described:

It felt a little daunting at first because I felt the record-keeping was scattered ... and a little unwieldy. But once we had the system going, it was still a little unwieldy and I felt like I had to really take time to walk [other staff] through some things because otherwise it wasn't totally obvious...

By contrast, markets that processed a larger volume of food assistance transactions faced greater challenges in absorbing the large amount of work associated with running a popular program. In short, the more food assistance transactions occurring at a market the more work was generated for managers during market hours, as well as “behind the scenes” to perform the necessary reporting and vendor reimbursement processes.

Three case study markets were larger markets, with more vendors, more customers, and hence, more food assistance transactions. During the study period, two experienced more than

100% increase in the volume of SNAP transactions alone following the introduction of a new food assistance program. A third market recorded an increase of over \$80,000 in food assistance sales during the same season, despite having offered this program previously. It was in these high volume markets that the additional administrative requirements demanded real adjustment. The data indicate, however, that the experience among these three markets differed substantially. One market, for example, struggled mightily under the new program, while at the other extreme, another market deftly raised funds and extra resources to cover the additional obligations.

Overall, the principal challenge faced by high volume markets was the added labor required to support the administration and implementation obligations of the new or adapted programs. For example, in one market the market manager explained that the popularity of a single food assistance program, DUFEB, required that they hire an extra person just to help consumers redeem their food assistance benefits at the market's office. For this, they were able to obtain a grant from the foundation sponsoring the new program. The market manager explained:

...It adds more work for us...So we have to hire a second person. So Fair Food Network gives admin money, right? ... Well the admin money's not enough to cover [our costs]. Most markets, I don't think any other market has to hire a second person...So maybe instead of \$100 they do \$400, \$500 a day [under the new program]. But the numbers are so large [in our market], and we gather all that information, there is no way we could. We'd be horrible [at] customer service, right? And that's the last thing you want.

In addition, because this market is a large, established organization with over 10 paid employees it was also able to divide the remaining administrative responsibilities among the time of existing employees. Still, even though it was able to call on a number of internal and external resources to support the growing program, the primary challenges cited by this manager was concern for the sustainability of the programs and the ability to meet the increasing labor demands of the programs.



Other high volume markets in this study were not as fortunate. The market with the second highest grossing food assistance program had a much more difficult time absorbing the obligations brought about by the adoption of the new programs. In contrast to the previous market, which was both well established and had several full-time employees, this market and the food assistance programs were run as a one-person show. The market manager was responsible for the market's vendors and finances, as well as promotion of the market. As a result, adoption of a new food assistance program had a huge effect on this market and the manager's life. During interviews she described how a new program had taken over her work at the market, and how the market in turn had taken over much of her life:

The first year I was here all we had was ProjectFRESH and I could actually sit in the office ...on a slower day waiting for people to pack up, and [I could] stamp and batch things. But now this is all done at home on an off day. ... Home becomes a makeshift work space for me. Especially with Double Up Food Bucks. I don't get anything done here at all during the day anymore. Any daily bookkeeping or anything else; it all gets done at home. Yeah. Answering emails, returning phone calls? I can't do any until the market day is over. Yeah, yeah [that's because of Double Up.] That's because of the sheer volume of people here, and mainly...I'm the only staff.

As the only staff member at her market, this manager became responsible for helping vendors and customers conduct food assistance transactions at the market as well as all other aspects of running the market. She was able to get an assistant to help her on the busiest days by cutting back on her advertising budget, but even then she needed more help than she could afford:

I way overshot the budget for our part-time staff. ...I'd have to have somebody come in just so I could go and collect stall fees. I don't get the chance to go and walk the market....I'm tethered to this office unless I have somebody else to relieve me.

To meet the labor needs of the food assistance programs without overspending in her budget even further this market manager also sought assistance from the foundation that oversees this new food assistance program:

...we had asked the Fair Food Network for more administration money because I was getting very frustrated with only have one person. You know, being a market manager and doing everything else. So they loaned us the community outreach person. She was just here from 10 to 12:30 so I could collect stall fees and go walk the market once at least for the day.

Even with a small amount of additional support this market manager still struggled to meet the competing demands of the food assistance programs and the farmers market. To meet these demands she drafted the assistance of her spouse. Without payment, he regularly reconciled the number of market tokens, completed required paperwork, and helped customers.

The third high-volume market illustrates yet another experience in coping with the volume of food assistance transactions. This market benefited from a strong parent organization with paid staff that took responsibility for much of the “behind the scenes” accounting work. As a result, a substantial amount of the administrative burden was minimized. However, as mentioned above, a high volume of consumers using food assistance benefits at a market means that someone must be available at all times to greet customers, help them extract the desired amount of benefits from their benefits card and exchange them for market currency, in this case, tokens. They must also be ready to explain the program and how the new tokens may be used in the market. The time commitment to interact with consumers can be immense, especially when customers are new to the process. One market manager explained:

...the more [food assistance program] customers I have, the more time it takes out of my day. Or the interruptions that it causes while I’m working with a vendor on a certain issue or trying to clean up a situation. I’m one of those all-in-one managers so I can’t just be sitting in my office at all times.

The demands of working with consumers left this manager feeling frustrated and severely constrained on market days because he could not be on the market floor since he had to be at the redemption office. As with other market managers, he felt as if the needs of the food assistance

program were often in competition with the needs of the market itself. Thus, finding adequate labor to do both jobs was a continual preoccupation for most market managers interviewed.

These findings show that market experiences with the food assistance programs are highly dependent on the volume of food assistance transactions occurring at the market and the amount of labor available to support the programs. To the extent that these factors varied across markets, market staff experienced different levels of challenges in operating the new food assistance programs.

### 3.2 Research Question 2- How are farmers markets able to successfully create and maintain food assistance programs?

Despite the challenges described in the previous section, each case study market implemented the new and adapted food assistance programs and finished the season in good standing with the respective administrative bodies. Their experiences implementing these programs provide important clues as to what is necessary for the successful creation and maintenance of these programs at farmers markets. Interviews and observation suggest that four factors related to aspects of organizational capacity appear to be crucial: 1) the ability to obtain resources to support the food assistance programs; 2) strong leadership that is willing to take risks and assume responsibility for the new programs; 3) alignment of the organization's mission and goals with that of the program; and 4) participation in professional networks that can support experimentation with the new programs. None of these characteristics alone was enough to be successful. Instead, findings suggest a combination of these aspects of capacity were important for implementing the multiple food assistance programs. In addition, to the extent that markets varied in their command over each attribute, so varied their experiences in undertaking these new and adapted programs.

### 3.2.1 The Ability to Obtain Resources

Each of the farmers markets in this study, either independently or through a parent organization, demonstrated an ability to obtain resources that were important to the operation of the food assistance programs. All six farmers markets, for example, showed an ability to write grants in support of the food assistance programs or to obtain resources from external donors. Markets varied in their abilities, but these forms of support were important. External resources were obtained to support start-up and one-time investments, such as for point of sale devices (POSD) or tokens. In rare cases, extra labor to support program operation was obtained, but this was always partial, and did not substitute for a market's own effort to solve any labor shortfalls.

Important support was also provided by the parent organizations of many markets. One market was a particularly large, well-established farmers market that was very capable at fund-raising and was able to leverage its existing staff to support the programs. The other five markets in this study were leaner organizations, but had strong relationships with well-established parent organizations. Given the importance of having sufficient labor to implement the new programs and the general lack of excess labor at the markets themselves, the ability of the markets to access resources through their parent organization became paramount. Resources were provided to the programs in two main forms; first, by offering parent organization staff to directly support the new food assistance programs; and second, by seeking and obtaining external support for the programs on behalf of the market. These resources were essential to support the new programs and had a significant impact on the ease of food assistance operation.

Among these five markets, the support provided by parent organizations varied. Three relied heavily on labor contributions from their parent organizations. In these markets, the parent organizations were similarly committed to the food assistance programs and provided staff time

to assume key administrative roles, such as taking charge of vendor reimbursement for food assistance sales, working with consumers during market hours to exchange program benefits for market currency, and promoting the programs in the community.

By contrast, the remaining two markets did not receive much support from their parent organizations, despite excellent relationships. One parent organization was unable to provide additional support, while the other was less involved in the mission of the market and did not share the same commitment to the food assistance programs. As a result the managers at each market were forced to shoulder the brunt of the responsibility for the new and adapted programs. One struggled substantially as the market received a high volume of food assistance sales.

The findings from this study suggest that the ability of each market to access resources was vital to their ability to implement these new programs. In some cases they were able to raise resources externally, in other cases they relied on the strength and commitment of their parent organizations. However, in many cases even when resources were obtained they were still insufficient for meeting the full needs of the markets to operate the food assistance programs. The ability to acquire resources is an important aspect of organizational capacity (De Vita et al., 2001, Faulkner et al., 2009). DeVita and colleagues (2001) have also noted that resources can enable organizations to attract and maintain leadership.

### 3.2.2 Individual Leadership

The interview and observation data repeatedly illustrated individual leadership was an important aspect that contributed to the markets' capacity to undertake these new programs. Individual leaders, referred to as "champions" in previous research, have been shown to be crucial to the capacity of organizations (Joffres et al., 2004; Faulkner et al., 2009). In this study, as in previous research, leaders were important for establishing and prioritizing new programs

within an organization (Joffres et al., 2004) and for taking ownership in their work and ensuring programs sustainability (Faulkner et al., 2009).

In this study, several market managers took the initiative to start the food assistance programs at their markets and spoke of their decision in interviews. With this decision they knowingly took on a responsibility that was not required of them and that added to their own workload. At one market the manager decided to start ProjectFRESH and MarketFRESH programs despite advice against it:

...People had talked about it and I think they had said ‘Let’s not do it our first year. Let’s get everything else established.’ I had even talked to other market managers and they said their volume wasn’t that high, so this seems like a lot of work for not much money. Maybe we shouldn’t do it?

Another market manager described how she took leadership for all aspects of this program:

... I do all the bookkeeping, there is no treasury department. Same with advertising. There is no marketing department here. ...So that’s kind of my role in the food assistance. It’s up to me to sign up for all these things and manage all of them. There’s no handing off.

Throughout the interviews, one of the strongest themes was of market managers going above and beyond their job responsibilities to meet the demands of the food assistance programs. The three managers at high volume markets, for example, would regularly take work home or use their days off to fulfill the reporting requirements of the program. Individual dedication to the food assistance programs was most evident and necessary at farmers markets that had limited labor support from a parent organization. The market manager at the high volume market without additional labor support relied on her spouse to help her meet the administrative burdens of the new food assistance programs:

My husband has hand-counted all of what’s been reimbursed so far, like \$80,000 altogether...Then he adds up all my customer sheets for the days. He adds that all up for me so it cuts down on my time for bookwork. He does a lot. [*Q: Does he get paid?*] No, he’s already done a lot for the market in general, but no, he doesn’t get paid.

In interviews it was clear that market staff actively weighed the requirements of the food assistance programs against the benefits received as a result of participating in the program. In each case market managers and staff said food assistance programs were worth the work and therefore continued to provide support, set standards for work, and take ownership in the programs. As one market staff stated:

... We make it really easy for people to use their benefits at our markets. We take a lot of payments. Any new forms of payment that we can use, I think we'll do it. At the end of the day it does take up a lot of time but the whole market is kind of like a service that we are providing. It's a community service in a way. That's why we are there.

Thus, the commitment of the market staff to the operation of the food assistance programs was a distinguishing feature of the case markets in this study. Previous studies support the importance of these characteristics for successful organizations and program delivery (DeVita et al., 2001). Faulkner and colleagues (2009) have suggested that leadership of skilled program champions helps minimize challenges in program operation due to limited resources and labor. The commitment shown by market staff and their willingness to take on added responsibility suggests that similar circumstances were present at the farmers markets in this study.

Finally, interviews indicate that champions were able to start food assistance programs because the structure and culture of the market or its parent organizations promoted autonomy and leadership among its employees. All the managers in this study acknowledged they had considerable power and autonomy over decisions made about their markets including the food assistance programs. Decision-making authority was distributed throughout the organization instead of being held primarily by leaders of the organization. Previous research has shown that this type of autonomy promotes innovation among employees, which was evident in this study as

managers took advantage of autonomy to start the food assistance programs (DiLiello & Houghton, 2006). One market manager described her role:

I would have made that decision [to start Double Up Food Bucks]. ... Our president...is pretty much hands off. It has really given me an opportunity to bring life to the project and bring my own ideas and things like that to the project. So unless it's something really major, I would have been the point person and the decision maker.

Even when hierarchies of authority did exist the culture of the parent organizations prevented them from being rigid. Four of the markets had either a board of directors or an executive director that held the power to make the ultimate decision about the food assistance programs. However, market managers described this process as more of a formality than an actual barrier to the programs' development:

It was a decision I made [to do Double Up Food Bucks]. I don't even know if we got board approval necessarily or not. I told them that we were doing it. They are kind of hands-off like that. But no, George signed our grant agreement, the board president, so I'm the one who filled out the grant.

Both the structures and cultures of the parent organizations in this study created conditions that allowed market managers to take on a leadership role and start food assistance programs at their market. The existence of leadership at multiple levels has been shown in other organizations to reduce barriers of top-down management and promote all individuals within the organization to take an active role in decision-making (DeVita et al., 2001). This result was also seen in the farmers markets in this study.

### 3.2.3 Alignment with Market Mission

The data revealed that case markets and their managers were willing to commit time and resources to the food assistance programs because the goals of the programs aligned with those of the market and with market managers themselves. DeVita and colleagues (2001) suggest that commitment to an organization's mission can strengthen the capacity of the organization.



Staff at the six case markets spoke of the food assistance programs in relation to the mission or goals of their market and the market's parent organization. Each of these markets aimed to serve the neighborhoods and communities where they were located. At each market individuals stated that they chose to start the food assistance programs because they believed it would enable them to make the farmers market accessible to more area residents. In particular many were interested in improving access to healthy foods for their low-income neighbors. As one market manager explained her organization's decision:

[Offering SNAP] was just at the very beginning something that they wanted to do. Because why they put the market here, it was deemed to be a food desert, and there wasn't walkable markets near to the vicinity...because it was a lower income neighborhood they thought that [SNAP] would be a really good fit.

Market managers also indicated that they were committed to the food assistance programs because of personal and professional beliefs in the benefits of the programs. This supports previous research that the mission and goals of an organization are important to attract individual leaders who share and will work to support these missions (DeVita et al., 2001). Said one market manager:

On a personal level, [accepting EBT] was just an important thing for me. ...the advocacy and the social justice aspect of farmers markets and increasing access was just important to me.

Finally, markets also chose to operate food assistance programs because leaders believed that adopting these programs would also improve the viability of the market as a whole. The most frequently cited benefit was the ability of the food assistance programs to improve awareness of the market in the community. Market managers felt the Double Up Food Bucks program had been important to improving the markets' visibility and that the sizeable advertising and outreach campaign for the program had been a direct benefit to participating farmers markets since the markets' names and locations were included on promotional materials. They felt that

the extensive outreach helped to increase the total number of customers visiting their farmers markets. One market manager described the impact it had on his market:

The advertising and promotion that Double Up Food Bucks threw into the program was so huge for us this summer. As of right now we have had 700, over 700, new EBT users since June 1st. ...which is huge. When you are talking on our busy days we are only getting in 500 or 600 customers, maybe. 700 new customers total. That's more than a day's worth of new customers. So that really helps us.

Thus, the food assistance programs were important to the viability of the market because additional customers resulted in increased sales for market vendors. Every market manager reported that vendor sales had increased at their market as a result of the programs. Discussions with vendors revealed that some received over half of their total sales from food assistance benefits. Double Up Food Bucks was particularly important to improving vendor sales because it gave customers additional money to spend at the market.

Thus, despite the challenges that market managers and staff faced each of the individuals interviewed spoke favorably about the decision to offer the food assistance programs. Each identified the benefits these programs had for their parent organization, the market, customers, and vendors. One market manager summed up the situation well when she said, "It's been really hard work but it's been really, really rewarding. So I guess it's been worth it." Similar sentiments were common throughout interviews. Previous research has suggested that organizational support for a program is often based on the benefits of the programs and alignment with the mission of an organization and this was found to be true in this study (Plotnikoff et al., 2009). In addition, serving the surrounding community by increasing food access and increasing vendors' sales have been previously identified as reasons for farmers markets operating food assistance programs (Briggs et al., 2010; Montri et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the alignment of these goals with that of the market encouraged market staff and market organizations to commit the necessary time and resources to these programs.

#### 3.2.4 Involvement in Networks

The final key characteristic that was exhibited by all of the farmers markets in this study was active involvement in professional and community networks. This involvement complemented the resources, individual leadership, and motivating mission of the markets and helped to expand the capacity of the organizations that undertook new and adapted food assistance programs. Interviews indicated that market managers frequently relied on both formal and informal networks within their community, state, and the country to support program operation at their market. These networks played three important roles. First, they provided resources that facilitated the creation of new food assistance programs; second, they helped ease the transition for new market managers; and finally, they were used to gain additional financial and other resources to support the new food assistance programs.

The majority of the market managers interviewed for this study mentioned or talked at length about using the state farmers market association as a resource when they had questions, needed information, or were experiencing difficulties with some aspect of a food assistance programs. Market managers also frequently mentioned reaching out to other area market managers, the National Farmers Market Coalition, staff at the USDA, and staff at the Fair Food Network when they were in need of information or assistance.

All market managers reported that they used these networks when starting a new food assistance program. Through these networks they were able to learn from peers who had direct experience with a program and to adapt systems that others had developed. This use of networks helped them avoid repeating efforts and maximized time and effort, a benefit previously noted by

Joffres and colleagues (2004). DeVita, Fleming, and Twombly (2001) have also maintained that networking can improve capacity because organizations can learn from one another and share resources and information. Both of these were evident in the experiences of the farmers markets in this study.

Although this support was beneficial for facilitating the creation of new food assistance programs it is important to note that it did not eliminate the need for each market to develop a system that would work in their circumstances. Market managers spoke of using information from other markets as a place to start for developing their market's systems and making modifications as needed.

The data also indicate that professional networks were important sources of information when market managers were new to their position. Two new market managers in this study said they relied heavily on networks of support to understand how to operate food assistance programs and to make improvements in their programs. Networks were particularly important in situations where there was no one with knowledge or experience with the programs at their market. One new market manager said the state farmers market association "is a great resource for any questions" and gave examples of how she learned from other farmers market managers in the state:

We started a market managers group... We met about once a month and we kind of just like talked about [what] we were all going through at the market. How Double Up Food Bucks was working for us, what we were finding to be the most useful. Just like sharing stories.

Finally, networks were also useful for gaining access to financial and other forms of support for the food assistance programs. One market's parent organization used its networks to build relationships within the community. These relationships later resulted in collaborations that provided funding for food assistance program operation. Another market received financial

resources to cover the costs of implementing SNAP as a result of their connections to the state's farmers market association. In a third case, a market manager well-connected within donor circles was able to leverage enough resources from the community to not only support his own food assistance programs but to also provide financial assistance to other area markets. The relationships maintained by parent organizations and market staff were beneficial in obtaining resources needed for food assistance program operation.

These findings support the results of other research that show that sharing resources and knowledge with other organizations helps minimize challenges due to staff turnover and inability to retain expertise (Faulkner et al., 2009). In addition, DeVita and colleagues (2001) suggest that relationships with other organizations are important to the overall stability of an organization. Findings from this study suggest that the networks formed and utilized by market managers and other leaders played an important role in the ability of the farmers markets to operate food assistance programs successfully.

In summary, the four characteristics demonstrated in varying degree by all the farmers markets in this study were necessary for the successful implementation and operation of the food assistance programs. In previous research existence of resources, strong leadership, a motivating mission, and an involvement in networks have all been attributed to organizations exhibiting capacity (Faulkner et al., 2009; DeVita et al., 2001; Glickman & Servon, 1998; Chaskin, 2001; Goodman et al., 1998). The results of this study indicate that these farmers markets and their parent organizations are organizations with fairly high capacity and these attributes contributed their success in implementing multiple new, and somewhat complicated, food assistance programs.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The literature on food assistance programs at farmers markets is sparse and is generally aimed at the practitioner population. Recent publications serve as guides for the operation of food assistance programs at farmers market and acknowledged the challenges that surround these programs (Briggs et al., 2010; Montri et al., 2011; Wasserman et al., 2010). This study adds to the current literature by providing insight into the daily operation of these programs from the perspective of individuals who run them. It focuses on identifying the challenges involved in implementing these programs and analyzing the implications for further expansion of these programs into more farmers markets. To our knowledge, it is the first study to explore the capacity needed by farmers markets to be successful in this endeavor. Its purpose is to bridge the gap in knowledge between those intimately involved with these programs and policymakers who hope to expand the reach of the food assistance programs to farmers markets nationwide.

The results of this study suggest a number of concerns with the operation as well as the continued expansion of food assistance programs to new farmers markets. First, it is clear that despite their success farmers markets in this study found the administrative requirements of the programs to be a significant burden. In particular, all markets had to make significant adjustments to accommodate the new programs, and some were severely challenged. This suggests that the thinness of labor in farmers markets may be a major challenge for the expansion of programs into more farmers markets.

Second, these administrative burdens are experienced differently by each market. Markets that conduct a high volume of food assistance program sales appear to face the most immediate challenges with these programs. The high volume of food assistance transactions results in a need for significant increases in labor to support the new programs. In the absence of

additional labor, the immediate demands of the food assistance programs compete with day-to-day responsibilities that are important for the overall functioning of the market.

Two high volume markets in this study struggled because they did not have the resources to command extra labor. Rather, market managers struggled to do more themselves and cut back on necessary functions that serve the market as a whole. A third high profile market fared better as it was able to draw labor from its own large staff and received funding to cover costs of labor dedicated to a specific food assistance program. This particular market is unusual, however, and does not necessarily represent the possibilities for farmers markets yet to adopt these programs. Few farmers markets will have this ability.

Even farmers markets conducting a small volume of food assistance program sales must be prepared for the additional burden of these programs. In this study, smaller markets also struggled, but were able to cope due to a lower volume of transactions. The trend in these programs, however, showed significant sales increases with new programs, thus, smaller markets should consider how they will staff these programs should food assistance transactions continue to grow.

Third, this research suggests that the case study markets were able to carry out these programs as a result of the underlying organizational capacity at each market. Specifically, four characteristics that are important to the capacity of an organization were identified in each market: 1) the ability to obtain resources to support programs; 2) strong leadership that is willing to take risks and assume responsibility for the new programs; 3) alignment of the organization's mission and goals with that of the program; and 4) participation in professional networks that can support experimentation with the new programs. DeVita and colleagues (2001) have cited these

highly interdependent characteristics as important to an organization's ability to carry out its work.

Taken together, these findings have important policy implications for the expansion of food assistance programs at farmers markets. At present, the USDA is currently pushing for the expansion of federal food assistance programs to all farmers markets in the U.S. Recently, it has announcement of the availability of \$4 million to support the expansion SNAP to farmers markets not currently participating (USDA SNAP Benefit Redemption Division, 2012). In addition, regional non-profits, such as the Michigan Farmers Market Association and GrowNYC in New York, continue to encourage and assist farmers markets in their area to offer food assistance programs to improve food access for low-income populations.

The results of this research suggest that broad expansion of food assistance programs at farmers markets may not be feasible or at least not as easy as some may anticipate. Not all farmers markets currently have the capacity needed to successfully operate food assistance programs because of the high level of administrative burdens placed on participating markets and the resources needed to be successful. The case study farmers markets all demonstrated a significant amount of capacity to operate the food assistance programs yet still struggled to meet the administrative demands of the programs.

The fact that all of the case markets had paid market managers, the majority of whom were full-time, is significant. Nationwide only 39% of farmers markets have a paid market manager and over half are not self-supporting (Ragland & Tropp, 2006). The ability of these markets to meet the administrative demands of the food assistance programs is likely to be limited because many are already struggling to gain stability as a market. They will likely find it very difficult, if not impossible, to add the administrative demands of these food assistance



programs although exceptions are bound to exist. The current situation where the majority of U.S. farmers markets depend on volunteer labor and short-term external support could severely limit the ability to expand food assistance programs to all farmers markets as the USDA intends.

Even for markets that are capable, the ability to sustain the amount of labor needed to support these programs is of great concern, particularly since market managers in this study were spread very thin and at times appeared overwhelmed by their responsibilities. Case study markets relied on labor provided by parent organizations or short-term grants to finance extra labor. They also asked more of their staff and/or made difficult cuts in their budgets. It is notable that less than a year after this study began, four of the market managers in the study markets had left their positions. Two had only been employed for one market season, another for less than a year and a half. These findings are consistent with those reported by Stephenson (2008) who found that 21-44% of farmers markets in Oregon experience a turnover in market managers annually, depending on the market size. The thinness of labor at farmers markets coupled with the rapid turnover of market managers raises concerns about the difficulty of sustaining these programs at highly capable farmers markets.

#### 4.1 Recommendations for Practice

After completing this research we recommend a course of action for the expansion of food assistance programs that begins by targeting farmers markets with the capacity needed to be successful without putting a large strain on the markets' abilities and resources and negatively impacting overall market operation. Good candidates for market expansion should demonstrate the same characteristics shown by case study markets or be small volume markets that experience a more manageable burden. Markets should be highly capable independently or should have strong support for programs either from a parent organization or another capable

community partner. These organizations are important to help provide and obtain the additional resources needed to operate food assistance programs, especially labor. It is also important that the goals or a mission of the market reflect the aims of food assistance programs that it implements; this will maximize a market's natural interest and commitment to the food assistance programs. Farmers markets with committed leaders and connections to networks to acquire information and support will also be in a better position to successfully operate food assistance programs. Each of these characteristics alone is likely not enough to be successful. Based on our findings farmers markets that have a combination of all four of these characteristics of capacity are in the best position to implement multiple food assistance programs.

Targeting capable markets with a track record of innovation and experimentation will provide additional knowledge and experience with program implementation that will be beneficial when working with remaining markets. Remaining markets with less capacity will likely need greater outside support to obtain the information and resources necessary to successfully operate food assistance programs. This assistance should not be limited to initial program operation due to the large continued burden these programs place on farmers markets. Instead lower capacity markets should receive ongoing support through training, staff development, and facilitating network involvement.

As the current push to expand food assistance programs to more farmers markets continues it is important for market administrators and donor organizations to be knowledgeable about the unique circumstances of each potential market. To determine a market's likelihood of success and to help provide a realistic picture of the market's strengths and weaknesses an understanding of the market's characteristics, how it operates, staff availability, and overall

capacity of the market is important. These steps may also help facilitate preparation for food assistance program implementation and increase the likelihood of program success.

Finally, given the challenges faced by farmers markets in this research to successfully operate food assistance programs it is recommend that policy makers and program developers make efforts to become more informed about the operation of these programs. They should seek the counsel of farmers market administrators who are involved with the programs when making modifications to current programs, creating new programs, or enacting legislation that affects them. This can help create mutually beneficial relationships among these groups, as well as facilitate program operation and expansion by reducing the administrative burdens of these programs. In the state of Michigan some efforts to share information between market administrators and program developers already exist and have been beneficial for both parties and the programs' operation. These efforts should be lauded and expanded to include more programs, more markets, and more partners.

#### 4.2 Limitations and Future Study

The results of this study suggest further research that will be beneficial for learning more about the operation of food assistance programs at farmers markets. Some of these recommendations come from the limitations of the present study. This study focused on a few successful farmers markets to get a valuable, in-depth look at the experience of markets administrators involved with the operation of food assistance programs. In order to check that the results were realistic among the larger population of farmers markets triangulation occurred through researchers' active participation in networking, meetings, and other opportunities for the state's farmers markets facilitated by MIFMA and the Food Assistance Partnership.

However, due to the inclusion of only farmers markets located in Michigan it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study that includes wider geographic variability. This is in part due to the importance of networks for market managers in this study and the existence of Michigan's very strong statewide farmers market association. Expanding this study geographically will enable an understanding of how other market managers operate in areas where such strong support is not readily available and explore other differences that may exist by area.

The importance of the parent organizations in this study also suggests another opportunity for future research. Learning more about how farmers markets that are independent entities are able to successfully operate food assistance programs and what challenges they face in the process is equally important. This could provide information to policy makers, program developers, and interested market administrators about a more diverse group of farmers markets.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, further research that focuses exclusively on farmers markets that are not operating food assistance programs or that have tried to implement a program but were unable to do so successfully would be informative. Such research would facilitate an understanding of how farmers markets make decisions about program implementation and the obstacles to implementation, and further our knowledge of what is necessary to make food assistance programs work. All of this would be beneficial in the efforts to expand programs to additional markets.

As a growing number of Americans, over 46 million as of March 2012 (USDA, 2012), rely on SNAP benefits from the federal government it is important to increase the opportunities these individuals have to purchase healthy food. By understanding the capacity farmers markets need to successfully implement food assistance programs and working to improve that capacity

we can increase opportunities for program expansion and help increase access to healthy, locally grown food for more low-income Americans.

## APPENDIX

## **Interview Guide, Market Managers #1-5**

Interview Goals: 1) to learn the market's challenges running the food assistance programs at the farmers markets including the inputs and resources needed, 2) to learn what advantages or benefits the market receives from operating these programs, and 3) to explore the impacts of running multiple programs simultaneously.

1. How long have you been involved with the market?

- What are your specific responsibilities for the food assistance programs?

### **SNAP**

2. I am really interested in understanding how each of the programs operates on a daily basis at the farmers market. I would like to talk about each one of them individually, starting with the SNAP program. How was the decision made to start accepting SNAP benefits at the market?

- Who was involved with this decision?
- Was there an approval process that was needed?

Visiting the market I was able to see how SNAP works during market hours. I would like to learn more about the step-by-step process for preparing for the market and after the market day is over. If you are getting ready for the SNAP program at the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for the market day?

After the market is over for the day, what must be done to ensure vendors get paid for their SNAP sales?

- What records is the market required to keep?

2a. Now that I understand how SNAP works can you tell me about the challenges you face with this program?

- What do you think leads to these challenges and have attempts been made to address these challenges?

2b. What parts of the SNAP program seem to work well or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- How long did it take to get to this point where the program works well?

2c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

3d. Have you seen any differences in the SNAP program since DUFEB started?



2e. On average what would you estimate is the amount of SNAP sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required on the part of the market?

### **DUFB**

3. We have been talking about the SNAP program. Now I'd like to switch over to talking about the Double Up Food Bucks program. How did DUFB start at the market?

- Who was involved?
- Was there an approval process that was needed?

To run the program, if you are getting ready for the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for Double Up Food Bucks?

After the market is over for the day, what must happen for vendors to get paid for their Double Up Food Bucks sales?

3a. Now that I understand how the Double Up Food Bucks program works can you tell me about the challenges you face with this program?

- What do you think leads to these challenges and have attempts been made to address these challenges?

3b. What parts of the Double Up Food Bucks program seem to work well? Or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- Do you feel like the market is at a point where the program works well? Explain.

3c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

3d. What responsibilities do you have as a market manager and as a market to Fair Food Network?

- Do they offer you any support for the program?

3e. Can you estimate the amount of DUFBS sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required on the part of the market?

### **ProjectFRESH**

4. Can we now talk about ProjectFRESH? How long has the market been a part of this program? How did the program start?

- Who was involved?
- Was there an approval process that was needed?

If you are getting ready for the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for the program?

After the market is over for the day, what must happen for vendors to get paid for their ProjectFRESH sales?

4a. Now that I understand how ProjectFRESH works can you tell me about the challenges you face with the program?

- What do you think leads to these challenges and have attempts been made to address them?
- Have the changes in the program affected the market?

4b. What parts of the ProjectFRESH program seem to work well or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- Do you feel like the market is at a point where the program works well?

4c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

4d. Have you seen any differences in the ProjectFRESH program since DUFb started?

4e. Can you estimate the amount of ProjectFRESH sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required on the part of the market?

### **MarketFRESH**

5. Moving on to MarketFRESH or Senior ProjectFRESH- how long has the market been a part of this program? How did the program start?

- Who was involved? Was there an approval process that was needed?

If you are getting ready for the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for this program?

After the market is over for the day, what must the market do for vendors to get paid for their MarketFRESH sales?

5a. Now that I understand how MarketFRESH works can you tell me about the challenges you face with the program?

- What do you think leads to these challenges and have attempts been made to address them?
- Have the changes in the program affected the market?

5b. What parts of the MarketFRESH program seem to work well or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- Are there positive impacts of the program's changes?
- Do you feel like the market is at a point where the program works well?

5c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

5d. Have you seen any differences in the ProjectFRESH program since DUFb started?

5e. Can you estimate the amount of ProjectFRESH sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required by the market?

### **Overall**

6. Do you think it helps to run multiple programs at the same time, like you get some economies of scale, or do you think it makes it harder running multiple programs? [explain, and give an example ]

7. How do you balance your work for the food assistance programs with your other responsibilities (both market and non-market, if applicable)?

8. What other individuals are directly involved with the food assistance programs at the market?

- What are their roles?
- Are these people paid staff or volunteers?

**If there is time questions**

9. Are there costs associated with any of the food assistance programs that operate at your market? (Use this to follow up if subject hasn't already been addressed and there is time)

- How does the market cover these costs?
- Where does the funding for your time come from?

10. What other support or resources are needed to operate these food assistance programs? (i.e. info from MIFMA, USDA; technical support; training; grants) (use this to follow up if subject hasn't already been addressed and there is time )

- Which of the programs require these resources?
- How are these resources obtained? Who was involved?
- Does the market's parent organization play a role in providing or obtaining resources?

11. Besides these 4 main food assistance programs what other food assistance programs does your market offer?

- What impact do these programs have on the market?

12. Are there other aspects of the food assistance programs or your experience working with them that we didn't talk about that we should have?

## **Interview Guide, Market Master #1**

Interview Goals: 1) To learn more about the paperwork process that happens at OFM, especially the end of the year paperwork for FFN because that's the last piece of the whole paperwork process I don't know about, 2) to learn Stephanie's perspective of the work involved, challenges, and benefits of the FAPs at OFM, and 3) to understand the division of labor within the market staff.

1. How long have you been involved with the market?
2. What are your specific responsibilities at the market?
  - Is your position paid or volunteer?
    - If paid, where does the funding for your pay come from?
3. Which of the food assistance programs are you involved with at the market?
  - What different tasks do you perform?
  - How many hours a week do you work on food assistance programs?
  - How did you learn how to do these tasks?
    - Did you have training? Learn by doing?
4. What challenges do you see with working on the food assistance programs? Could give me an example?
5. So we've talked about the challenges involved with your work. What parts of the FAPs work seem to work well?
  - Can you give me an example?

- Have the systems changed over time or have they always operated this way?

6. Samantha told me that you were working on the end of the year reporting for FFN, including the binder that must be turned in. It includes the daily customer records and all the vendor records, correct? What else?

- Have you completed it? How long did it take?
- Was it easy? Difficult? Straightforward?
- Beside the binder what else must you do at the end of the year for DUFB?
- Did the market use all of the funds or do you have to return some to FFN?
  - How do you go about that process?

7. You also have other responsibilities within the organization. So how do you balance them?

8. Owatonna Farmers Market has a market manager and two market masters. How did you divide the labor for the market, in particular the food assistance programs?

9. How much support for the market, specifically the FAPs, comes from Warren Conner?

- Is this support necessary for the FAPs to operate?

10. Samantha mentioned PFM's association with Main Street Market. Can you tell me more about that relationship?

- Is it a formal relationship (i.e. there is a documented contract, etc)?
- Does any of that support assist with the food assistance programs?

11. In what ways do the FAPs affect the market, positively or negatively?

12. So currently your market runs 4 food assistance programs at the market. Do you think it is easier to run multiple programs at the same time or harder? Why?

If there are time questions:

13. Do you or the market have any relationships with people, organizations, or agencies that are not a part of the market that impact the food assistance programs?

- What role does this play in the food assistance programs?
- How important are these relationships to the food assistance programs operation?

14. Are there other sources of support or resources that are needed to operate these food assistance programs we haven't talked about yet? (i.e. info from MIFMA, USDA; technical support; training)

- How are these resources obtained?
- Who was involved with obtaining these resources?

15. Are there other aspects of the food assistance programs or your experience working with them that we didn't talk about that we should have?



## **Interview Guide, Market Master #2**

Interview Goals: 1) To learn about the recordkeeping system David developed/updated 2) to learn David's perspective of the work involved, challenges, and benefits of the FAPs at OFM, and 3) to learn more about the vendors' interactions with market staff surrounding FAPs.

What we know:

- having three staff people reduced the amount of work that each person had to do and made it easier; when David left Stephanie was overwhelmed with all the work
- Samantha did a significant amount of work prior to market season in order to prepare and reduce the workload during the season; David was part of this upfront prep because he designed the recordkeeping system which Stephanie said saved a lot of time in the end
- David's responsibility was working with the market's vendors

What do we not know:

- What was the recordkeeping system like before David got there? Were the changes he made small or significant?
- What was the time and energy needed to make these improvements? Small? Significant?
- There were many reasons mentioned for doing these programs at OFM, so I would like to see if there is a single idea that was the most important

1. So you were an AmeriCorps member at Warren Conner. When did you start that position?
2. What were your specific responsibilities at the market?
  - How is your AmeriCorps cost shared funded?
  - Did you have experience working with farmers markets in the past?
3. What about the market worked well? What were the strengths of the market?
4. What were some of the challenges faced by the market?
5. Which of the food assistance programs are you involved with at the market?
  - What different tasks do you perform?
  - How many hours a week do you work on food assistance programs?
  - How did you learn how to do these tasks?

6. What challenges do you see with working on the food assistance programs? Could give me an example?

7. So we've talked about the challenges involved with your work. What parts of the FAPs work seem to work well?

- Can you give me an example?
- Have the systems changed over time or have they always operated this way?

8. Stephanie told me that you created or made changes to the recordkeeping system used for the market. Can you describe what was in place when you came?

9. What you did to improve the system?

- How long did it take?
- Was it easy? Difficult? Straightforward?
- How did this impact your work throughout the rest of the season?

10. Was there additional preparation before the market season that you or Stephanie did for the FAPs?

- How much time did you have to prepare for the programs?

11. Stephanie also said that one of your main market responsibilities was working with vendors. How well did vendors work with you on the parts of the FAPs they were involved with?

- Did you see a difference as it got later in the season?

- Now that everyone has a season of experience how do you think it will be difference next year?
12. You also have other responsibilities within the organization. So how do you balance them?
13. In what ways do the FAPs affect the market, positively or negatively?
14. So currently your market runs 4 food assistance programs at the market. Do you think it is easier to run multiple programs at the same time or harder? Why?
15. To you personally what is the most important reason for offering the FAPs at OFM?
16. If I was a market manager thinking about adding these programs to my market what advice would you give me or what do you think it's important that I know?

## **Interview Guide, Market Manager #6**

Interview Goals: 1) to learn the market's challenges running the food assistance programs at the farmers markets including the inputs and resources needed, 3) to learn what advantages or benefits the market receives from operating these programs, and 3) to explore the impacts of running multiple programs simultaneously, especially when starting with all at the same time.

2. You started working for the market early this year correct?
  - How long after the market was decided on where you hired?
  
2. What are your specific responsibilities for the food assistance programs?
  - What is the governance structure of the market?

### **SNAP**

3. I am really interested in understanding how each of the programs operates on a daily basis at the farmers market. I would like to talk about each one of them individually, starting with the SNAP program. How was the decision made to start accepting SNAP benefits at the market?
  - Why was the program started?
  - Who was involved with this decision?
  - Was there an approval process that was needed?

Visiting the market I was able to see how SNAP works during market hours. I would like to learn more about the step-by-step process for preparing for the market and after the market day is over. If you are getting ready for the SNAP program at the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for the market day?

After the market is over for the day, what must be done to ensure vendors get paid for their SNAP sales?

3a. Now that I understand how SNAP works can you tell me about the challenges you face with this program?

3b. What parts of the SNAP program seem to work well or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- How long did it take to get to this point where the program works well?

3c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

3d. On average what would you estimate is the amount of SNAP sales the market does in a month?

Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required on the part of the market?

## **DUFB**

4. We have been talking about the SNAP program. Now I'd like to switch over to talking about the Double Up Food Bucks program. How did DUFB start at the market?

- Who was involved?
- Was there an approval process that was needed?
- How much time did you have to prepare for the program once you knew were accepted?

To run the program, if you are getting ready for the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for Double Up Food Bucks?

After the market is over for the day, what must happen for vendors to get paid for their Double Up Food Bucks sales?

4a. Now that I understand how the Double Up Food Bucks program works can you tell me about the challenges you face with this program?

4b. What parts of the Double Up Food Bucks program seem to work well? Or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- Do you feel like the market is at a point where the program works well? Explain.

4c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

4d. Can you estimate the amount of DUFBS sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required on the part of the market?

### **ProjectFRESH**

5. Can we now talk about ProjectFRESH? How did the program start?

- Why was the decision made to offer this program?
- Who was involved?
- Was there an approval process that was needed?

If you are getting ready for the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for the program?

After the market is over for the day, what must happen for vendors to get paid for their ProjectFRESH sales?

5a. Now that I understand how ProjectFRESH works can you tell me about the challenges you face with the program?

5b. What parts of the ProjectFRESH program seem to work well or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?

- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- Do you feel like the market is at a point where the program works well?

5c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

5f. Can you estimate the amount of ProjectFRESH sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required on the part of the market?

### **MarketFRESH**

6. Moving on to MarketFRESH or Senior ProjectFRESH- how long has the market been a part of this program? How did the program start?

- Why was the decision made to offer this program?
- Who was involved?
- Was there an approval process that was needed

If you are getting ready for the market tomorrow what needs to be done to prepare for this program?

After the market is over for the day, what must the market do for vendors to get paid for their MarketFRESH sales?

6a. Now that I understand how MarketFRESH works can you tell me about the challenges you face with the program?

6b. What parts of the MarketFRESH program seem to work well or run smoothly? What parts are easy to take care of?



- What makes it possible to keep things running smoothly?
- Do you feel like the market is at a point where the program works well?

6c. What kind of benefits or advantages does offering this program provide to your market?

6f. Can you estimate the amount of ProjectFRESH sales the market does in a month?

- Does the volume of sales affect the amount of work required by the market?

### **Overall**

7. Do you think it helps to run multiple programs at the same time, like you get some economies of scale, or do you think it makes it harder running multiple programs? [explain, and give an example ]

8. You started with all of these programs at the same time. What was that process like?

9. As a new market and a new market manager how did you know or learn what you needed to do for all of these FAPs?

10. How do you balance your work for the food assistance programs with your other market responsibilities?

11. To you personally what is the most important reason for offering the FAPs at your market?

12. What other individuals are directly involved with the food assistance programs at the market?

13. If I were a market manager thinking about adding FAPs to my market what would be important for me to know?

**If there is time questions**

14. Are there costs associated with any of the food assistance programs that operate at your market? (Use this to follow up if subject hasn't already been addressed and there is time)

- How does the market cover these costs?
- Where does the funding for your time come from?

15. What other support or resources are needed to operate these food assistance programs? (i.e. info from MIFMA, USDA; technical support; training; grants) (use this to follow up if subject hasn't already been addressed and there is time )

16. Are there other aspects of the food assistance programs or your experience working with them that we didn't talk about that we should have?

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