

OUTCOME

Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables by persons with low incomes through farmers' markets vouchers and promotion



Promising Practice Ideas—Farmers' Market Coalitions to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Description

The WISEWOMAN Program and Nutrition and Activity for Health, in partnership with Public Health Solutions and the “Farmers’ Market Coalition of Southeast Nebraska” piloted a collaborative in five Southeast Nebraska counties to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The Coalition sent farmers’ market vouchers to WISEWOMAN clients within those five counties to use toward the purchase of fresh local fruits and vegetables. The vouchers functioned similar to an actual check to facilitate timely vendor reimbursement.

Ingredients

- Educational materials on the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Community promotion of the health benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Local food guide developed highlighting local farmers’ market access.
- Check vouchers created and approved within local bank requirements.
- Names and addresses of clients to receive vouchers.
- Evaluation plan.

Preparation

Step 1: Work with a local bank(s) to create check vouchers that function similar to cash and can be easily cashed by farmers’ market vendors.

Step 2: Determine how many clients will be reached and the amount of check vouchers needed (example: two vouchers of \$20 each for 500 clients).

Step 3: Develop an evaluation plan to collect data on farmers’ markets and fresh fruits and vegetables usage before and after the project.

Step 4: Develop guidelines for vendor redemption and a tracking/redemption log for growers/producers to track and list purchases at each market.

Step 5: Contact farmers’ markets organizers/managers to explain the project and ask them to promote it with their vendors. Create certificate signage for vendors to post verifying they will accept the vouchers.

Step 6: Develop an introductory letter for clients to introduce the program and help them understand what they need to do with the vouchers and how to access local markets.

Step 7: Develop and distribute a Guide to Local Foods for the season, featuring each local market, regional and local maps, what’s in season, shopping tips, recipes, etc.

Step 8: Obtain client names/addresses and mail check vouchers periodically during the farmer’s market season.

Step 9: Promote farmers' markets in the local area through individual market contacts, community media, and social media.

Keys to Success

- A strong partnership with farmers' market organizers and a local bank for cash vouchers.
- To make check vouchers easy for vendors to use, work with local banks to incorporate magnetic ink character recognition so they work exactly like a personal check.
- After guidelines for vendor redemption are created, distribute them and provide vendor education each week to keep the process as flawless as possible.
- Evaluation is crucial, using pre-project and post-project surveys of participants to determine farmers' market usage and fruit and vegetable consumption. Incentives for survey completion could include additional check vouchers.
- Marketing through individual contacts and community media, such as print media, local radio/TV, signage, press releases, internet, and social media such as Facebook/Twitter.

Summary

To encourage fresh fruit and vegetable consumption, partner with local farmers' markets, banks, and media to promote health benefits, and create and distribute check vouchers.

Resources

- Partners-N-Health Nebraska Physical Activity & Nutrition State Plan: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/StatePlanPresentation.pdf>
- Nebraska Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter: <http://food.unl.edu/buy-fresh-buy-local-nebraska>
- 2011-2016 Nebraska Physical Activity and Nutrition State Plan: http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/PartnersNHealth_NE_StatePlan.pdf

Tips

Partnering with the "Buy Fresh Buy Local" chapter and attaining affiliate status allows use of their logo for marketing.

Vendors are more likely to participate if they receive vouchers they can cash at the local bank.

Make voucher expiration dates coincide with the vendor redemption period.

Providing voucher recipients with recipes using fruits and vegetables found at local farmers' markets will help increase usage.

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