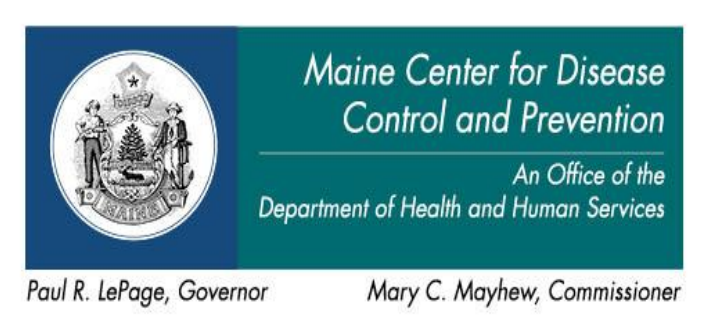


Utilizing Mobile Farm Stands to Increase Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Rural Maine

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INTRODUCTION

- This project was funded by the US CDC State Public Health Actions 1305 Cooperative Agreement.¹
- Partnerships For Health is the independent Evaluator for Maine's 1305 Cooperative Agreement.
- Maine's state health department partnered with state and local partners to pilot a Farm Stand in rural Maine.
- The aim of the project was to increase access to fresh fruit and produce and increase acceptance of EBT cards at Farmers' Markets in underserved areas.
- Leveraging an existing "Mainers Feeding Mainers" program allowed produce to be available at a reduced price. The Farm Stand maintained the merchant-consumer interaction of a traditional Farmers' Market.
- The Farm Stand was implemented in a rural town with a population of 922² residents, with an average age of 45 years old and a median household income of \$23,229².

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- What are the key activities and/or resources considered critical to the successful adoption of the Farm Stand?
- What are the major facilitators and barriers in adopting the Farm Stand? How were the barriers overcome?

METHODS

- The evaluation followed a mixed methods with qualitative priority using an exploratory sequential design.
- Data collection methods and audiences included:
 - Key informant interviews with partners, implementers and consumers
 - Surveys with consumers
 - Direct observations of consumers
 - Focus group with consumers
 - Sales data
- Data was collected between October 2014 and April 2015.

RESULTS

Consumers' Characteristics

Age	61% 60 years or older
Income Level	53% SNAP benefits
Health Insurance	47% MaineCare 47% Medicare
Health Conditions	53% Arthritis 47% Overweight / Obesity
Food Access	47% live 1 – 2 miles from a grocery store 57% live more than 5 miles from a Farmers' Market

Key Activities to Successful Adoption

Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high quality, affordable produce
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically select a location based on far proximity to Farmers' Markets Reduce transportation barriers
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form relationships with community partners Obtain leadership buy-in Work with local farmers
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a Communication Plan



"It tends to be that people using SNAP benefits don't want to stand out in their community as being in need of that service so if a Farmers' Market is only running EBT cards on their machine and then providing tokens for EBT users that stands out and then you're the only person walking around with your tokens and everybody knows that you're using food stamp benefits; that can be uncomfortable for shoppers..." - Implementer

Consumers' Reported Facilitators and Barriers

Facilitators	Barriers
Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word-of-mouth 	Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient advertising Low visibility
Food Quality and Price <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-cost pricing High quality produce 	Produce Availability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Running out of popular produce early in the day
Convenience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central location Hours of operation Consistent schedule 	Convenience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating hours (10am – 3pm) can be difficult for working people Limited parking

Implementers' Reported Facilitators and Barriers

Facilitators	Barriers
Use of EBT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed consumers to buy more Reduced stigma 	Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EBT card reader did not work for the first few weeks due to lack of cell service
Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central to reduce transportation barriers 	Transportation of Produce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming
Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of strong community partners Buy-in from leadership 	Subsidized Prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created misperceptions of food costs
Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing Subsidize produce Farm stand equipment 	Funding Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created a delay in the planning process

LESSONS LEARNED

- Developing local partnerships was essential to coordinating logistics and marketing. Important to include state and local stakeholders in the planning process.
- Funding is needed to support operations, Farm Stand equipment, and staffing.
- Word-of-mouth is an effective promotional avenue.
- A central location and consistent hours resulted in repeat consumers.
- Consumers appreciated the price, quality, and availability of the produce.
- The ability to use EBT cards at the Farm Stand increased acceptance of EBT cards as payment.
- Later hours of operation may increase access for people who work during the day.
- Important to connect with farmers prior to the growing season so they can accommodate for the additional demand.

REFERENCES

- The State Public Health Actions to Prevention and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health- FOA – DP13 -1305.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2010). *American FactFinder fact sheet: Bingham, Maine*. Retrieved October 15, 2015, from <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmmk>

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"And some of them [consumers] will stop coming if you're pretty well sold out. So they say: what's the sense for us to stop?" - Consumer

"So we want to be very careful with the messaging because we do not want to have the message be that kale should be 50 cents a pound, because that's not what it costs and the farmer can't afford to sell it at that." - Implementer

"That's good [the timing] because you can plan on it. You know you can buy this much for that week; next week you're coming again and you can plan on that." - Consumer