

Friends of Western North Carolina (WNC) Markets

Social Business Plan

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Social Problem Addressed- The Social Business Opportunity

Farmers markets are a great option for fresh healthy foods; however access to these markets is often limited for families with low incomes when markets are not equipped to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, provided to individuals taking part in the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) program. As of June 2012, in Buncombe county North Carolina 39,454 individuals participated in the FNS program (ncdhhs.gov). Currently, for EBT to be available at markets, professionally trained staff, site- specific equipment, and general administration are required. As a result of these criteria, there is an unfulfilled need within Western North Carolina farmers markets to create a sustainable, advantageous model of EBT use. The resulting outcome of a new model/system for EBT would yield an increase in healthy food options to underrepresented populations and thereby contribute towards achieving overall health parity.

Solution Proposed- Business Model, Product/Services/ Programs

The proposed solution for a sustainable EBT system at WNC tailgate markets is to raise supporting revenue through ***Friends of WNC Markets*** programs, offering market memberships and farming classes.

The ***Friends of WNC Markets Membership Program*** will include a seasonal (yearly) sliding scale membership depending on ability to pay. It will be typically purchased by repeat market-goers, who constitute approximately 46% of all market-goers. The benefits of the membership will include a bumper sticker, "Get to Know Your Farmer" cards, and having your name listed in a local newspaper ad.

Friends of WNC Markets Farming Classes Program will provide classes taught by local farmers to consumers. Examples of lessons might include plant identification, urban gardening, and planting or harvesting techniques. These lessons will also be recorded and made available as on-line videos for a small download fee.

Market Analysis and Strategy

The intended market for ***Friends of WNC Markets*** program in the first year is individuals who attend the market weekly. In research conducted by the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) in 2004 it was reported that from seven of the local markets over 2,000 individuals attended weekly. Of these 2,000 individuals, 46.1% were reported to attend the market weekly. Sliding scale projections for the market membership program are based on what an individual can afford to spend on produce/crafts per week at the market, using this number as the membership fee they could pay for a yearly membership.

The ***Friends of WNC Markets*** farming classes will be offered to individuals and schools around Buncombe County. For the 2011-2012 school year Buncombe county school systems proposed 11% of their overall budget be directed toward keeping students healthy, active, and culturally aware. There are 40 elementary to high schools in Buncombe county school system that could better address this goal through paying a yearly membership fee of \$100 for access to farming class videos. For weekly market attendees, projections are based on the ASAP survey done in 2004 of 247 respondents in which the key barriers to purchasing local foods were listed. Our initial consumer base is the 24.7% of respondents who cited Access and Availability as the key barrier. There will be 10 available videos during the first season, each video costing \$2.00 to download.

Launch Strategy and Requirements

Launching the ***Friends of WNC Markets*** membership program will require design of materials and advertising to get the public involved. In addition, a system for processing and managing the memberships will be developed and run through ASAP. To launch the ***Friends of WNC Markets*** farming classes programs, first farmers vending at WNC markets will volunteer their time and tools as class teachers, the incentive associated is that in participating in the EBT program their customer base will be increased. To film the lessons, UNC Asheville multimedia

department faculty and students will provide help with filming and editing. UNC Asheville design and computer science students will work with ASAP to create an on-line access point for the class videos. Marketing will be a pivotal component and will require an initial investment by ASAP. Start up may also be supported by portion of a community transformation grant awarded through the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

Financial Plan and Sustainability

In the first year, 7 markets will participate, providing funds to run EBT programs at 5 markets. Over the next year, additional revenues will be generated to support EBT program expansion to all of the markets and in subsequent years, revenues will be used to support additional machines and marketing of the EBT program.

	Amount in \$
EXPENSES	
EBT Program	
Machine and tokens- Start-up	1,600.00
Market Manager -\$8.88/hour, 9 hours per week, 36 weeks	2,877.12
Transaction Fees	522.88
Total EBT Program across 5 markets (\$5,000x5)	25,000.00
Market Membership Program	
Advertising and database management – Some support from ASAP	240.00
Bumper Sticker, Mountain Xpress ad, “Get to Know Your Farmers” fact sheet	1,499.30
Total Market Membership Program	1,739.30
Farming Classes Program	
Marketing materials – Some support from ASAP	240.00
Film equipment, filming/editing videos, online materials/video website creation - Donated by UNC Asheville and ASAP	0.00
Class materials, farmer time - Donated by farmers	0.00
Download service fee (2.9% + \$0.30 per download)	816.24
Total Farming Classes Program	1,056.24
TOTAL EXPENSES	27,795.54
REVENUES	
Market Membership Program – calculation based on sliding scale and distribution of customers	16,346.00
Farming Classes Program	
School access memberships: \$4,000; Downloads: \$3,743.76	7,743.76
Possible Community Transformation Grant – Seed money	5,000.00
Total REVENUES	29,089.76
NET REVENUE	1,294.22

Impact Summary- Social Benefits

The *Friends of WNC Markets* Programs will provide financing for a program to increase access of low-income families to locally grown produce. This will increase participation in tailgate markets and positively affect nutritional health of families using EBT. The increase in market participation will help support the local food economy and local farmers in Buncombe County and build an overall healthier and connected community. It will be a model for other sites around the country.

(1)Buncombe County Schools. (2012, April). *2011-2012 Buncombe County Schools Annual Report*. Asheville, NC.

(2)Hoffman, Richard L. (2005, Dec.). *A Market Analysis of the Tailgate Farmers Markets of Buncombe and Madison County*. Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project.