

SNAP-Ed Toolkit

This document was downloaded from <https://snapedtoolkit.org/interventions/programs/the-farmers-market-food-navigator-program/>. Copyright © 2022 UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

The Farmers Market Food Navigator Program

Michigan Fitness Foundation

Overview

The Farmers Market Food Navigator Program is a direct education and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change intervention designed to increase use of farmers markets to purchase affordable produce, increase frequency of vegetables consumed by farmers market shoppers, and improve access to farmers markets through PSE initiatives. The program follows a social ecological framework and has four key components:

- Conduct community outreach to build awareness of farmers markets and increase awareness of the food assistance programs available
- Work with farmers market managers and vendors to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes that are supportive of healthy behaviors
- Help shoppers effectively use their food budgets at farmers markets through tours that may include introductions to vendors, tips, and support
- Provide resources and experiential nutrition education to shoppers at farmers markets, including tastings and cooking demonstrations

Food Navigators attend a one-day training and are equipped with a program Playbook that provides direction on how to carry out each of the four key components of their role, as well as provides guidance to farmers market managers and community partner organizations. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Food Insecurity/Food Assistance, Other: Food Resource Management **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

The Farmers Market Food Navigator Program partners with market managers interested in hosting a Food Navigator in their markets. Fourteen farmers markets in Michigan met the key eligibility criteria (located in SNAP-Ed eligible census tract, accept SNAP benefits, have produce vendors) and adopted the program for at least one of the last four seasons (May-October). Over four years, food navigators have had over 30,000 interactions with shoppers, and in order to improve the intervention's reach, the barriers that prevent low-

Setting: Farmers markets **Target Audience:** Parents/Mothers/Fathers, Adults, Older Adults **Race/Ethnicity:** No special focus

Intervention Components

The Farmers Market Food Navigator Program includes four interconnected components. The first component is to conduct community outreach to build awareness of farmers markets and increase awareness of the food assistance programs available. This is important to start early and continue throughout the season in order to drive new shoppers with low resources to the market. The second component is to work with farmers market managers and vendors to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes that are supportive of healthy behaviors and help shoppers know that markets have affordable fresh food. The third component is to help shoppers effectively leverage their food budgets at farmers markets through tours that may include introductions to vendors, tips, and support from Food Navigators. The last component is to provide recipes, resources and experiential nutrition education to shoppers, including tastings and cooking demonstrations, aligned with the produce being sold at the markets.

Intervention Materials

The Farmers Market Food Navigator Kit includes:

- Program Playbook
- Recipe cards aligned with the 29 feature items listed in the Playbook
- Recipe website promotion cards for sharing additional recipes with shoppers
- Seasonality Poster for produce items listed by month
- Food Navigator t-shirts and sweatshirt
- Shopper behavior surveys with items aligned with the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework
- Ballot box
- Clicker counter

Intervention Costs

One Farmers Market Food Navigator Kit is \$400 and includes the core supplies used in programming to establish the evidence base:

- Program Playbooks (three)
- Recipe cards (100 each of 29 recipes)
- Recipe website promotion cards (500)
- Seasonality Poster (two)
- Food Navigator t-shirts (two) and sweatshirt (one)
- Shopper behavior surveys, ballot box, and clicker counter
- Discounts for orders to serve multiple markets are available.

Additional a la carte items available upon request:

- Food Navigator market set-up kit

- Apron, table runner, dry erase board and markers, name tag, clipboard, stickers
- Customized paid social media posts
- Market-specific nutrition education reinforcing items
- Customized one-day food navigator training (Digital and in-person options)
- Evaluation and reporting services

Evidence Summary

In order to evaluate the program, Food Navigators completed logs for each day they were in the market, and this revealed where Food Navigators needed more support on understanding and implementing program components. Additionally, shopper surveys verified the types of interactions they had with Food Navigators and identified the additional resources/interactions they desired. Market manager surveys similarly helped confirm the types of activities Food Navigators were conducting in markets, as well as understand their suggestions for program revision and potential impact. Vendor surveys described the frequency and types of interactions vendors had with food navigators and their perceptions of program impact. Additionally, the Public Health Institute operated as the external program evaluator from 2016-2019 during the development and testing phases to reduce bias and gain additional insight. Overall, outcomes aligned with program objectives and the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework. Specifically, after interacting with the Food Navigator, shoppers (n=762) reported intentions to: shop at a farmers market (70%), eat a variety of vegetables (50%), eat more vegetables (47%), buy more vegetables (45%), and eat new vegetables (38%). Among shoppers surveyed who interacted with the Food Navigator more than one time (n=133), 29% reported a higher frequency of vegetable consumption between their first and last survey. Shoppers at intervention farmers markets (n=122) were statistically significantly more confident in using their food assistance benefits (p=0.04) and talking to vendors (p=0.03) than shoppers at comparison markets (n=57). Overall, outcomes are aligned with program objectives and the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework. The unintended benefits of the intervention include:

- Market vendors feeling more connected to the market due to the open line of communication with the Food Navigators
- The overall acceptance of the program by vendors

The challenges include:

- Market criteria and selection is key to success for the program (e.g. the market should have enough produce vendors from whom to buy ingredients and have a schedule broad enough for residents working different schedules to have access to the market)
- Community outreach through social media promotion can be difficult if the market doesn't currently have an online profile to build from

Lessons learned from feedback include that recipes for tastings/demonstrations should be adapted to how food is purchased in a farmers market. For instance, corn listed in ears instead of cups. Recommendations include having market selection criterion and successful recipes for use in farmers markets located in the program Playbook. **Evidence-based Approach:** Research-tested

Evaluation Indicators

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate

intervention progress and success.

	Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)	Changes – Medium Term (MT)	Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)	Population Results (R)
Individual	<u>ST1</u>	<u>MT1, MT2</u>		
Environmental Settings		<u>MT5</u>		
Sectors of Influence				

ST1. Healthy Eating

- In 2019, 47% (354/762) of shoppers reported intentions to eat more vegetables as a result of their interaction with the Food Navigator.
- In 2019, 50% (377/762) of shoppers reported intentions to eat a greater variety of vegetables after interacting with the Food Navigator.

MT1. Healthy Eating Behaviors

- In 2019, 29% (38/133) of shoppers who interacted with the Food Navigator more than once reported a higher frequency of vegetable consumption between their first and last survey completed.

MT2. Food Resource Management

- MT2f: In 2019, 45% (346/762) of shoppers reported buying more vegetables as a result of their interactions with the Food Navigator.

MT5. Nutrition Supports

- In 2019, all (7/7) farmers markets had a paid social media promotion campaign and used organic social media posts to promote the market and food navigator activities.
- Google analytics determined the 128,066 the unique people were exposed to the formal promotion campaign in the seven market areas.

Evaluation Materials

The Playbook includes an evaluation section with surveys for shoppers, market managers, and vendors, as well as an observation form for supervisors of Food Navigators. Other evaluation tools used during the establishment of the evidence base that can be shared with program adopters include:

- Interview guide for market managers
- Online training follow-up
- Online mid-season check-in surveys for Food Navigators
- Online shopper intercept survey for use in intervention and comparison markets

Additional Information

Website: [The Farmers Market Food Navigator Kit website](#) includes an overview of the program and stakeholder reviews, as well as describes its importance and impact on shoppers. **Contact Person(s):** Teresa Zwemer Phone: 800-434-8642 Email: resources@michiganfitness.org