

WSU Farmers Market Wireless Technology Project

Credit/Debit/SNAP (food stamp) Program Description

Introduction

Washington State University (WSU) in partnership with the Washington State Farmers Markets Association (WSFMA) is offering mini-grants to Washington farmers markets that intend to increase sales of specialty crops for credit/debit/SNAP (food stamps) customers in their markets. This project is being funded by the WA State Dept. of Agriculture through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

Farmers markets provide an increasingly important, high-value sales venue for specialty and sustainable crops grown in WA State. Developing the technological capacity of WA farmers markets by allowing shoppers to pay with credit/debit cards or use SNAP (food stamp) benefits could maximize sales volumes and expand access to fresh market specialty crops for far greater numbers of consumers. Using the data collected by market managers at each market, this project will allow WSU to evaluate the overall economic impact to specialty crop growers selling at markets with credit/debit/SNAP (food stamp) machines.

Specialty crops are defined as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).” Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification to be considered specialty crops. Meat, dairy, poultry, fish and fiber, as well as commodities (grains, etc.) are NOT Specialty Crops.

The farmers market mini-grants will offer a number of essential program materials and tools for eligible markets including: credit/debit/SNAP (food stamp) wireless technology, token purchases, marketing and outreach materials (banners, signs, customized flyers, etc.), and several hours of outreach support, technical assistance and training to maximize use of this expanded sales technology. To receive this equipment and support, applicants must meet all eligibility criteria and submit a complete application.

Background

The project has been designed to expand sales of specialty crops in Washington’s farmers markets. By combining the technology necessary to accept SNAP (food stamp) benefits with credit/debit capacity, markets receiving this equipment and support will be able to serve a broader range of customers.

Before securing the equipment and support, markets need to determine if their market’s size and infrastructure can support a credit/debit/SNAP program over the long term. In the past few years, many farmers markets in Washington have implemented credit/debit/SNAP programs. The markets have shared that having adequate accounting procedures and staff/board support are crucial for the program’s success and that timely, accurate financial and project reporting processes are essential. Credit/debit/SNAP services can increase sales to farm vendors substantially, but it is important to understand how these services work and the necessary accounting that must be done.

[Type text]



WSU Farmers Market Wireless Technology Project

Credit/Debit/SNAP (food stamp) Program Description

Project Resources Provided

The total amount of resources available from Washington State University is the equivalent of approximately \$1,500 per market in equipment, materials, training and support.

Upon acceptance of a farmers market's application, the market will receive a wireless Point of Sale device to process credit/debit/SNAP (food stamp) transactions, wooden tokens, information about how to access marketing and outreach materials, and technical assistance and training for the project manager. The Farmers Market Wireless Technology Project will provide training, one-on-one support and/or other activities for markets in order to provide more in-depth assistance that will ensure successful implementation of a market's project.

Increasing specialty crop sales is the primary goal; much of the project support will focus on effective outreach, marketing, and developing and strengthening community partnerships to achieve the goal in each farmers market. Increasing total sales through credit/debit/SNAP access are an additional financial benefit of project participation.

Application and Eligibility Requirements

Markets applying to participate in this project do *not* need to belong to WSFMA. Other criteria for assessing grant applications are described in the application. To apply, please submit:

1. Completed grant application. (Application is available on the WA Farmers Market Association website: www.wafarmersmarkets.com.)
2. A copy of certification or application for SNAP (Food Stamp) Retail outlet. (i.e. FNS number).

To apply to be approved retailer for food stamps (SNAP), please go online to:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/register.htm>

You have to register first, and then for the SNAP retailer application you will need to gather the required documentation (e.g. Social Security Numbers of Responsible Person/s (Farmers Market Board Officers, Market Manager, etc), business license and photo identification). You can apply online, or call 1-877-823-4369 to receive a paper application. Please note that FNS may take up to 45 days to process an application once it's complete.

3. A copy of signed Market Board Resolution confirming Market Manager and Board understanding of the USDA SNAP (Food Stamp Program) requirements. Board President and Market Manager signatures are required. Sample document is attached and also available at www.wafarmersmarkets.com
4. A separate letter signed & dated by your farmers market manager and board chair/president that indicates your market has performed analysis to run a credit/debit/SNAP (food stamp program) successfully (e.g. can afford associated costs, handle accounting and reporting requirements, staff and/or volunteer capacity, understands SNAP (Food Stamp Program) rules, etc.).
5. A 2011 budget for your farmers market
6. A 2010 Profit and Loss Report for your farmers market

[Type text]



WSU Farmers Market Wireless Technology Project

Credit/Debit/SNAP (food stamp) Program Description

End of Season Report

A summary report for the duration of your participation using the credit/debit/SNAP (food stamp program) will be required by grant recipients. Information in that report should include the date the program started, how your market conducted outreach, how the program was received by customers and vendors, and a post-season statement of how many transactions (credit/debit/SNAP) and dollars (credit/debit/SNAP) were spent in the market. Especially important will be the tracking and reporting of specialty crop sales made by credit/debit/SNAP tokens. The WSU Coordinator will provide a form for vendors to use to track the sale of specialty crops that are purchased by credit/debit/SNAP tokens. Upon acceptance of your application, you will receive the end of season grant report form and a form for vendors to utilize for tracking specialty crop sales. This will enable your market to plan your implementation appropriately.

Timeline for Grants

Grant Timeline:

Application Final Deadline: **February 18, 2011** (postmarked on or before).

Grant recipients notified in writing no later than: **February 28, 2011**.

Email application and supporting documents to ritaromaine@gmail.com

Mail originals of application and supporting documents to:

Rita Ordóñez, Coordinator
Farmers Market Wireless Technology Project
WSU Small Farms Team
PO Box 2051
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

If you have questions, please call: Rita Ordóñez at (360) 336-0932.

[Type text]

