

NUTRITION INCENTIVE MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM: LOS ANGELES

The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is a proposal that builds on the evidenced based success of California Market Match, which was founded in 2009 and has been sustained through private donors and foundations on a limited basis up and down the state. This nutrition incentive program has demonstrated a six-fold return on investment by doubling the purchasing power of nutrition assistance benefits such as CalFresh when used to buy fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables at farmers' markets. Market Match is an equitable investment that ensures all Californians benefit from healthy and sustainable food.

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT OF INCENTIVES IN LOS ANGELES

Central Avenue Farmers' Market (CAFM) is in its 10th year of business, and run by Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA). It is open every Thursday, rain or shine, in South Los Angeles in the courtyard of the Central Avenue Constituent Services Center, selling a variety of fresh produce and nuts. CAFM also hosts events that build social capital within the community, such as healthy cooking demonstrations, tastings, free raffles, live music, and arts and craft workshops.

CAFM is also a Market Match farmers' market. According to SEE-LA staff, it is small and mighty, and continues to increase its CalFresh distribution each year as it has been participating in Market Match. In 2014, CAFM distributed \$45,650 in CalFresh, up 30.8 percent from 2012 – the CalFresh customer base also grew to 3,125, a growth of 79.3 percent from 2012 customer numbers at CAFM. Market Match is a unique program that simultaneously benefits California's low-income communities and local farmers. Direct economic benefits support local California producers who struggle with keeping price points competitive for healthy food, and achieve a win-win for California's people and local businesses.

Market Match supports economic development, but its impact is felt most by the consumers who benefit from it. Sia'Kendah, one customer in Los Angeles who shops at Adams Vermont Certified Farmers' Market, states:

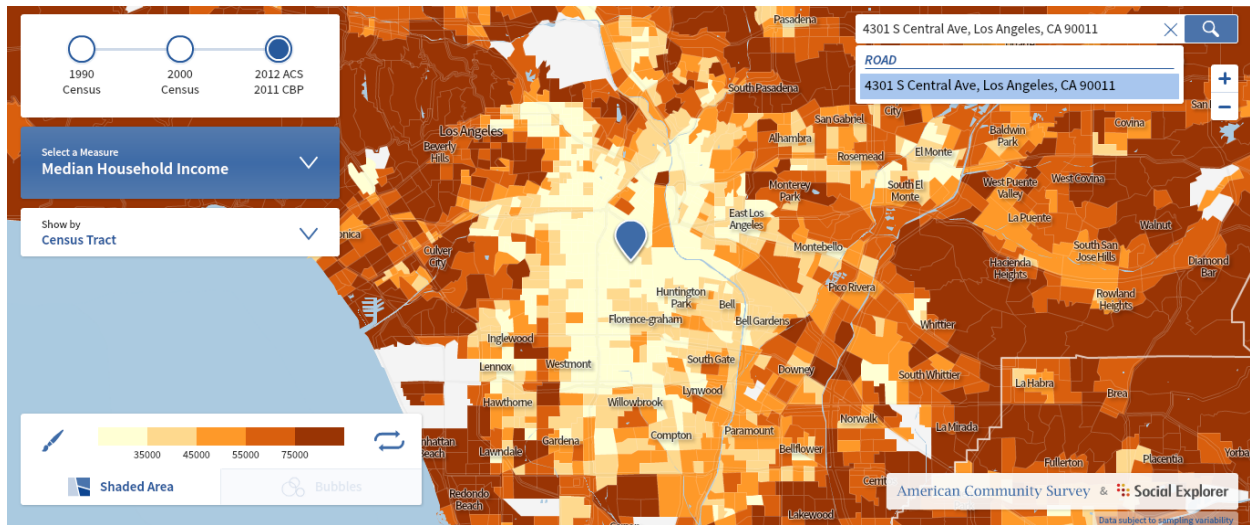
“The amount that I spend at the Farmers Market is limited to the basics of needs, such as lettuce, tomato, onion and broccoli, but your Market Match program helps my family to be able to purchase fruits as opposed to just vegetables that are vital for our nutritional needs. Not only am I able to bring home whole foods to my family, but I am very happy to support the hard working farmers who help bring these whole foods from the soil to my family's table...

I enjoy very much eating and having access to farmed, fresh vegetables. I also greatly appreciate the efforts of Hunger Action Los Angeles for its care and consideration of knowing how important nutrition is needed in our community and how it goes about getting the money and nutritional benefits directly to us.

Without this program, I believe the struggle will be even greater for the hardworking farmers. For the consumer, we would have to go without or look for other means for whole nutrition.

In all regards, the struggle continues, but at this time I am grateful. And, I believe when one is hungry, we all are hungry, so we all should strive for greater understanding and respect for each other as human beings...”

Financial incentives that support low-income communities' purchase of fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables can be an effective anti-poverty strategy as well. The map below shows that the median household income for the community near CAFM averages below \$35,000 a year. The California Health Interview Survey estimates that 21.3 percent of low-income people, in the zip code that CAFM is located in, are food insecure. The statewide average is 8.4 percent. Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked, and a statewide Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is an evidence-based intervention for these issues.



THE OPPORTUNITY TO SCALE UP AN EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAM

With institutional support from the state government, this nutrition incentive model can grow beyond 150 (of 800) certified farmers' markets in California, which only serves 23 counties. A state Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program would also leverage new federal matching funds under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Only \$69 million of FINI's \$100 million remain and California must maximize its share considering that its farms produce a majority of the nation's fruits and vegetables (i.e. specialty crops), which are the target products for FINI funding.

CONCLUSION

- The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is based on Market Match, which aids more than 984 specialty crop farmers in California and approximately 65,000 EBT customers.
- Consumer nutrition incentives for fresh produce is a common sense, proven model for local economic development and promotes a more nutritious diet among safety net beneficiaries.
- CalFresh clients have a buying power of \$7.8 billion. California can drive more of this money towards local farmers and small businesses using this nutrition incentive model, which generated total project sales of over \$2 million in 2014.

For more information, please contact the organizations coordinating support for the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program:

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