

Farmers Markets and the Latinx Community: Approaches and Programs Facilitating Accessibility

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Abstract

In recent years farmers markets have increased their efforts to address food insecurity issues. In Worcester farmers markets Economic Support programs run by REC have been lacking participation from the Latinx community. The first objective of this project was to identify possible barriers between farmers markets and the Latinx community. The second objective was to use those barriers to analyze farmers' programs and categorize them based on the organizations' approach to improving farmers' market accessibility. Different approaches to provide Economic Support, a variety of locations, and times for customers, and to encourage Community Engagement was noted. Because of the conditions in Worcester, a mixture of Community Engagement and Cultural Representation are the two facilitators that could help make farmers markets more accessible to the Latinx community.

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Executive Summary:

Today over 30,000 Americans rely on financial aid to pay for their food (USDA 2019). Over the last decade, governments across the country have been supporting local food efforts in order to provide a source of healthy food and produce to different communities. Farmers markets have improved their access to more vulnerable communities, such as low-income households, by accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars for payment. However, there is still much to do. Many of these farmers markets resources are not reaching minority communities, such as the Latinx and the black community. It is important that the people who need this support receive the aid, no matter race or ethnicity.

I worked with the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester in order to understand and identify some of the barriers to accessing farmers markets for the Latinx community. I started with previous literature on food insecurity and farmers markets. After identifying the main barriers to farmers markets in the literature, I analyzed individual programs, aimed at underserved communities. I used information from websites and social media, and conducted interviews with five different organizations about their approaches towards making farmers markets more accessible across the country. I analyzed these data, and identified four different categories of facilitators that make markets more accessible: Economic Support, Community Engagement, Spatial-Temporal, and Cultural Representation. *Economic Support* makes farmers markets more affordable. Affordability was the barrier mentioned most in literature and Economic Support was the facilitator found in all programs. This supports the idea that programs like SNAP and HIP are essential to making farmers markets more accessible to low-income communities. While some markets rely on state and federal Economic Support

programs, others go beyond and offer their own programs. This ensures low-income communities have support all year long in case the federal funds supporting the SNAP program run low by the end of the season.

The least explored issues affecting access to farmers markets were *Spatial-Temporal* factors. This category represented markets that target a specific community and choose a specific location and time for that community. The most common program that used this strategy were mobile markets. Markets in vans or busses that stop by senior centers, schools, or hospitals for an hour or two to provide for that community.

The category of strategies that facilitated access to farmers markets with the most variety was *Community Engagement*. The Community Engagement approaches were of three main types; markets providing a diversity of events and vendors, organizations that collaborated with other organizations, and organizations with additional educational and support programs. Diversity in events and vendors attracts a diverse set of customers. While SNAP programs usually only allow the purchase of produce (vegetables and fruits), some organizations have worked to make sure that low-income communities can also get support to other food, such as tofu or meat. This also supports local vendors that don't focus on produce. The collaboration with local vendors leads us to the second category, collaborating with other organizations. There is a lot of competition between farmers markets and collaborating with other organizations can provide the market with the community support needed. Organizations can range from a city's parks to restaurants or business coalitions. The one type of collaboration that was not common was between farmers markets. The one organization that did collaborate with other farmers markets found it rewarding as they could help each other if they had problems with the city or the vendors and could work to make farmers markets more accessible and a more prominent

source of food. The organizations that run additional educational programs focus on health, agricultural, and cooking classes. These programs usually target families, mothers or children. However, some also reach out to the Latinx community by providing the classes in Spanish. This is where the last facilitator comes in: *Cultural Representation*. This factor is the one that overlaps the most with other facilitators. It was found in other Community Engagement tactics such as providing Spanish translation on the website or collaborating with other cultural hubs of the area or restaurants.

I conclude and recommend that the approach that would work best with Worcester is *Community Engagement*. Worcester farmers markets already carry economic support, with SNAP and HIP programs, check the Spatial-Temporal facilitator, as they started a mobile market a couple of years ago. The Regional Environmental Council also runs educational programs, focusing on community gardens. Out of all the approaches the Community Engagement approach has the widest variety and options. For that reason, a program involving Community Engagement and Cultural Representation would be the best to make farmers markets more accessible to the Latinx community.

Introduction

In recent years farmers markets have increased their efforts to address food insecurity issues in low income and diverse communities. Farmers markets can provide these communities with an affordable local source of healthy food. To make farmers markets more affordable to lower-income and diverse communities, federal and state economic aid programs are available. In recent years, support for these programs has increased with the rise in popularity of local businesses and agriculture. While farmers markets have the potential to become reliable and sustainable food sources for a diverse population, they still have a long way before they get there. Farmers markets are attracting a wealthier white demographic instead of the more needed low-income communities. The markets are failing to engage all communities, despite their intentions to provide for them.

This study analyzes the barriers to accessing farmers markets for low-income Latinx communities, as well as the approaches used by farmers markets organizations to engage these communities. These findings are then applied to the context of Worcester, Massachusetts. Worcester's farmers markets want to create an inclusive community that provides Latinx members as much support and opportunities as the other communities. I recommend the approaches that would benefit Worcester the best, based on Worcester's farmers markets current barriers, approaches and opportunity for improvement.

Food Insecurity

Today many Americans experience a lack of access to healthy and affordable food. Families with smaller food budgets struggle to afford a healthy diet. According to the 2015-2020 Dietary guidelines, 87% of Americans are not meeting their daily vegetable intake recommendation and 75% are not meeting the fruit intake recommendation (Dietary Guidelines

2015-2020). Access to an affordable market plays a key role in a family's ability to obtain a healthy diet (Mackenbach, 2017). Making fresh produce more accessible and affordable would allow more people to obtain a healthy diet. Additionally, educational programming about preparing and cultivating healthy food can help people understand how to maintain a healthy diet. Such programming exists in some community gardens that allow residents to grow their own produce, or in the farmers markets that provide economic aid for fresh produce to those in low-income communities.

In 2018 in the United States, nearly 40,000 people relied on federal assistance programs in order to obtain their next meal (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbitt et al. 2018). The availability of economic aid allows food-insecure families to get access to healthier foods, such as fresh vegetables and fruits. Economic aid can come from private organizations or state programs. Many of the families relying on aid, however, are from minority communities and find themselves in food deserts - areas where it is hard or impossible to access healthy and affordable food. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Hispanic and black households experience food insecurity twice as many white households, with 16.2% and 21.2 % of Hispanic and black households respectively compared to 8.15% white households (Coleman-Jensen 2018). Research on food justice addresses this disparity between communities by examining how and why some communities experience food insecurity and access to healthy food. The next section will provide an overview of this research, with particular reference to farmers markets.

Farmers markets

Access to Healthy Food

In an attempt to remain healthy many Americans are interested in alternative ways of obtaining food. Consumers who are looking for healthier meals are switching from buying

organic to buying local (Adams 2010). Initially, consumers who wanted healthier produce would stay away from conventional food sources, such as food from supermarket chains, because of their use of strong chemicals as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides on plants as well as antibiotics and growth hormones on animal products (thediabetescouncil.com). Now that big companies are selling organic produce some consumers are questioning the validity of this statement. Many big companies sell “organic” food that does not have the FDA approval label or follow organic standards. Farmers markets are one of the alternative food practices that bring the customer closer to the actual food, the vendor, and the land. The one-on-one relationship between the farmer and the customer can make farmers markets perceived as more trustworthy than big companies, as you can ask the farmer personally about the farming techniques and if the produce was exposed to pesticides or not. Even if farmers markets are perceived to be more expensive, they provide a sense of trust customers desire (Zepeda 2009). Customers can ask the farmers directly about how their food is produced. It would be hard to get big corporations to answer the same type of questions. Through what are known as ‘ag-gag’ laws, some states make it even illegal to take pictures of an animal facility without the owner's consent.

Local Community

Farmers Markets support local farmers and other vendors like restaurants or artisans. For this reason, some of the markets are part of economic groups and coalitions that provide opportunities for local businesses to display their products. Additionally, many markets provide internships for younger people who want to get involved in the food industry and volunteer opportunities for people who want to give back to the community. A study in 2008 calculated that farmers markets had a state positive impact on the state’s economy of \$1.075 million (Hughes 2008). First time customers attend the farmers markets because of their curiosity, however, in time, they turn into weekly customers. Going to the farmers market can become a

social activity and a way to connect with your neighbors and other members of the community. Some farmers describe how the market place has become a community center, not only where customers can interact with each other, but where farmers can also share tips and form supporting relationships (Trauger 2010).

Government Initiatives

Government incentives are set up to increase the quantity and affordability of healthy food to the public, as well as to promote local food production. In order to achieve this goal, many government bodies have started implementing policies that increase the economic aid for purchasing food produced with alternative practices. Food assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Assistance Program for Women, Children and Infants (WICI) or Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) play a big role in allowing low-income communities to obtain their food. The federal government has been working on the affordability of farmers markets by expanding the number of markets that are authorized to accept these types of government subsidies. However, not all supermarkets or grocery stores carry the SNAP program and only specific items are covered. For this reason, it is not easy to obtain a healthy diet solely by paying with SNAP dollars. Branching out and offering more SNAP opportunities will make healthy food more accessible. In fact, between 2012 and 2017 the number of farmers markets that accept SNAP payment through the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program increased by 129.5% (SNAP, PDF). Many states have also invested in these types of programs. For example, Michigan's double point SNAP program, "Double UP Food Bucks," each EBT dollar used at farmers markets is matched with an extra dollar. California has a "Market Match" program similar to Michigan and New York City has "Health Bucks" and for every \$5 spent through SNAP, \$2 are awarded. These programs provide economic support that farmers markets need in order to afford to target lower-income

communities and allow low-income families to afford fresh produce. The programs can sometimes be financed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) even though they are run by local governments or organizations. This year the USDA will award 23.5 million dollars in grants to local agricultural programs, through the Farmers Markets Promotion program and the Local Food Promotion Program. Programs supporting alternative food practices, such as farmers markets, urban gardens, or community farming, can address food disparities that a particular community is experiencing. These types of programs can target low-income minority communities and aim to improve overall health, community relationships, and reduce environmental impact from agricultural services (Hardison-Moody, 2018). While some of them focus on education and closeness to food sources, such as urban gardens, others focus on the quality of the food, such as farmers markets.

Issues with Farmers Markets

Recently, many scholars from interdisciplinary fields have explored the potential of farmers markets as an approach to combat food justice and insecurity. Farmers markets provide communities with an additional source of healthy food, support local farmers and vendors, create closer communities, and run economic support programs. While there have been considerable improvements in farmer's markets programs in the United States over the past couple years, there are still many areas that require improvement.

Food justice issues deal with two areas, food accessibility and food sovereignty. The first area describes issues that appear through the production and distribution of healthy food (Alkon, Agyeman et al. 2011). The second area deals with the representation of minorities in positions of power inside the food industry. If we want to combat food injustice, we have to address both. This means addressing who farmers markets serve, allowing people to benefit from the markets

no matter income or race, and who is allowed to be part of the farmers market industry, making the farmers market community more diverse and representative of the population. Overall, there are 5 main potential barriers that farmers markets need to overcome in order to become a primary food source for different types of communities (Wetherill, 2015).

The first potential barrier, availability, is determined by the market's schedule. Farmers markets usually open for a couple of hours once a week. This limits the type of people who can come because people have different schedules and lifestyles. Supermarkets, on the other hand tend to be open throughout the day, and therefore can fit workers and customers schedules better.

Accessibility, the second potential barrier, is the distance from the market to the client's house or location in their daily routine. If the farmers market is located on the way to another store the client was planning to attend, they are more likely to also stop by the farmers market. Mothers are the main providers of food for families. They are also responsible for other tasks, like taking the kids to school or the doctor as well as going to work (Fischlmayr 2010). For this reason, it is important that markets are located near other social centers. This barrier also takes into account the markets position regarding forms of public transport or parking (Pitts, Wu et al. 2015).

Affordability, the third potential barrier, involves the price of fresh vegetables and comparison to other stores around. As well, as the financial ability of the customers to buy it. Affordability is one of the barriers that is most cited in the literature. Many authors have critiqued farmers markets current ability to aid or support communities of color (Alkon 2012). Some of the public believes farmers markets as expensive and overpriced (Cotter 2017, Fish 2015). In some communities, farmers markets are overpriced and more expensive than conventional supermarkets. However, in others it is just a belief because the prices at the farmers markets can be cheaper or at the same price as other stores around (Kato 2013, Wetherill & Gray 2015).

Another aspect of affordability is the number of economic programs in place, such as SNAP or Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). The popularity and diversity of the program could dictate the success of the farmers markets. While there are vendors who target only wealthy communities, there are also vendors who prefer to sell in more diverse communities, carry affordable prices, and accept alternative payment methods through federal assistance programs (Alkon 2012). However, the discount does not necessarily make produce affordable. A study in New Orleans showed a 20% discount was not enough for low-income residents to afford groceries at the supermarket (Kato, 2013). This is why it's important to provide extra economic support for populations that needs it, not only to encourage health eating, but allow to enable it.

The fourth potential barrier regards the ability to accommodate the population's needs and preferences. It is important to maintain a conversation with the community in order to understand the clients' needs and potential problems. Sometimes the barriers perceived by the residents, and the ones perceived by non-residents differ. Residents believe spatial and socio-cultural barriers and location are the main barriers, while nonresidents perceive the lack of knowledge about SNAP programs and market hours or locations as the problem (Kato, 2013).

The fifth potential barrier, acceptability, encompasses the quality and variety of the food provided at the farmers market. This category covers barriers focusing on the representation of ethnicity and cultural diversity, as well as the customers' preferences. For example, data shows low-income communities can prefer canned or frozen food because it is more convenient to prepare (Wetherill,2015, Fish, 2015, and Pitts 2015). In one study, some women expressed their lack of knowledge on how to cook fresh food and the convenience of canned and frozen food led them to choose the latter one (Fish, 2015). Latino households who had recently moved to the United States, preferred fresh vegetables overall. However, in Latino households, mothers did not want to buy new foods in case their family did not like it or want to eat it as a result. While

they did want to attend farmers markets with fresh produce, they found the times and locations inconvenient. (Fish, 2015)

Another dimension of acceptability, cultural representation, applies to the diversity of the vendors and the farmers. One study argued, “food initiatives have fallen short on achieving social justice goals because of their failure to engage meaningfully with racial inequality and legacies of institutional aggression” (Glennie & Alkon, 2018). A reason for this disparity could be the difficulty of acquiring land as an immigrant and the bias inside the industry. Throughout history, American agriculture has been an industry dominated by white male farmers relying on other minorities for cheap labor. The census from 2017 revealed that 95% of the farmers in the United States identified as white (CENSUS 2017). The lack of minority farmers’ representation in markets could affect the type of customer who feels comfortable in the farmer’s market. The target group of the farmers markets, the vendors, and the consumer don’t include or represent minorities. Alison Alkon and Christie McCullen call this the “white farm imaginary” (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). This idealized narrative of white local hardworking farmers leaves no room for the representation of minorities in the agriculture industry. The representation of an ethnic group or minority in the field of agriculture makes that group more comfortable with buying from there and lead to a new regular customer.

Towns have implemented programs to encourage farmers market economic and cultural diversity in the agriculture industry. The West Oakland Farmers Market in Oakland supports local and chemical free black owned farms (Alkon 2012). All vendors were people of color and the ingredients to make soul food represent the cultural identity the market wants to carry. Other programs have focused on the cultural representation at farmers markets and the farmers themselves (Alkon, Agyeman et al. 2011), or on the awareness and education of resources and how to use them (Ko, 2016). Some of these educational materials can be paired up with

nutritional information or cooking classes (Ko, 2016; Kato, 2013). One study prepared a program for the Latino community, called “Nuestras Comidas”, and spread nutritional education and encourage participants to buy healthier foods from farmers markets. Using a mix of different strategies can help participants become acquainted with the vegetables or fruits if the season, or give them ideas of how to cook with fresh food sources instead of frozen or canned food.

Some scholars believe that many of the barriers are only caused by misconceptions. The misconception that markets are expensive, inconvenient, or not safe can cause cultural barriers between low-income communities and farmers markets (Wetherill & Gray, 2015). The time inconvenience of farmers’ market could be a misconception, as the average for a farmers’ market visit only lasts 16 minutes (Baber & Frongillo, 2003). Other controversial opinions include the trustworthiness of local farmers. Customers who eat out a lot and live farther from farmers markets trust local food sources less than conventional sources, such as known big commercial supermarkets like Target and Walmart (Chen,2019). This could mean that more exposure to farmers markets or alternative practices can lead to a closer and more trustworthy relationship between the customer and the farmers markets. The customers living farther away from farmers; markets connect them with a smaller size vegetable and more dirt in the produce before buying. These could be due to the lack of connection with the farmer itself that would exists if they lived closer.

Farmers Markets in Worcester

Massachusetts has a program, called the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), to incentivize lower-income residents to buy healthier food through farmers markets. Every resident that qualifies for SNAP automatically qualifies for HIP too. However, it is not fully utilized by all SNAP recipients as its usage instructions can appear complicated to the public. The HIP program

grants SNAP recipients 40 extra dollars that they can only use at markets as long as they have not used up all of their SNAP points yet. The Regional Environmental Council (REC) runs most of the farmers markets in Worcester. The REC food justice has organized a range of events and programs that include community farmers markets, youth engagement, urban gardening, and a mobile farmers market. On their website, they state as an organization their goals are to build a “healthy, sustainable and just communities in Worcester” (REC Community Farmers Market). As part of reaching this goal, the REC hosts mobile markets where they buy produce in bulk from local farms and they sell them at their markets. There are many locations around Worcester where the farmers markets take place and they run for most of the year through different seasons. They accept SNAP EBT as payment and participate in the HIP program. Apart from the HIP program, there have been other programs that have also doubled the amount of money or give a 20% discount.

The Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester hopes to work with REC in order to achieve some of these goals. In 2016 they announced their “Community Health Improvement Plan” (CHIP) where they divided their goals into 9 categories. My focus is on the category of access to healthy food and safety. Figure 1 shows all the individual goals inside the category Access to Healthy Food. One of their objectives inside the food category, is to work with the “increase access to fresh healthy produce at corner stores in underserved neighborhoods and increase utilization of the REC’s Mobile Farmers Market”(Coalition for Healthier Greater Worcester). All of REC’s farmers markets carry SNAP and HIP programs. Families who qualify for SNAP are given an extra 40\$ on their electronic benefit transfer (EBT) account to spend on fresh produce at farmers markets. Recently they have been put in charge of grants from Massachusetts to reduce health disparities among the Hispanic American community.

While the farmers markets programs in Worcester have been attracting many SNAP and HIP recipients there is a lack of participation from the Latinx community. In Massachusetts, 35.2% of the Latino population relies on food stamps, compared to 8.3% of the white demographic (CENSUS 2010). The lack of participation of a specific community is not strange, as a farmers market in Los Angeles had a similar problem with the African American Community (Ruelas, 2012). To address the lack of usage of HIP programs in the Latinx community, a focus group was organized. The focus group The “CHIP-Chats” Public Health Conversations with Worcester’s Latinx Community was conducted by the Coalition and REACH, CENTRO & REC Community Farmer’s Market. The focus group also addressed other health issues such a lack of vegetable intake by younger populations of Latinos. The participants of the focus group were all part of the SNAP program; however, they were not aware of the HIP program or the mobile farmers markets. REC and the coalition have worked together before to address some of the goals previously mentioned, the coalition even participates in some farmers markets in order to communicate with the community so that they can know how to better plan and create policies that will help reach their goal of food justice.

Previous studies from WPI students have focused on farmers markets affordability (Schutte, 2011). No previous study has been conducted addressing the accessibility and diversity of farmers markets in Worcester. This project will focus on the different barriers and approaches farmers markets organizations use to reach out to a diversity of customers. Knowing how to make farmers markets more accessible to minority communities will help increase the participation diversity in the SNAP and HIP programs. When done the right way these programs could increase the amount of fresh and healthy food available to families, while also supporting local businesses. A deeper understanding of the different approaches to addressing farmers

markets barriers could help us identify the most efficient changes that can be tried out in order to make farmers markets more accessible.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Access to Healthy Food</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Ensure all people have equal access to healthful foods by building and sustaining communities that support health through investment in the growth, sale, and preparation of healthy foods.</p>	
7.1	<p>Increase the number of eligible people participating in federal food programs (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, and National School Lunch Program) by 5% and increase utilization of those programs for healthy food.</p>
	<p>7.1.1. Leverage opportunities to enroll eligible individuals in federal food programs such as during MassHealth enrollment.</p>
	<p>7.1.2. Increase the number of primary care providers screening and referring for food insecurity.</p>
	<p>7.1.3. Conduct SNAP and WIC outreach at community-based and faith-based organizations.</p>
	<p>7.1.4. Increase number of farmers markets accepting SNAP and WIC.</p>
	<p>7.1.5. Establish sustainable funding for farmer's market SNAP match programs.</p>
7.2	<p>Increase the average daily number of fruits and vegetables eaten by youth and adults by 1 serving by reducing systemic barriers to healthy eating.</p>
	<p>7.2.1. Make resources available for youth programs to improve their capacity to provide nutritious food to their participants.</p>
	<p>7.2.2. Increase buying power of low income households by increasing the state-wide minimum wage.</p>
	<p>7.2.3. Increase access to fresh healthy produce at corner stores in underserved neighborhoods and increase utilization of the REC's Mobile Farmers Market.</p>
	<p>7.2.4. Create a stronger regional food system by building relationships between farmers and institutional consumers through aggregation, marketing and distribution of fresh and frozen local produce.</p>
	<p>Increase the number of individuals participating in school and community garden and nutrition programs by 50%.</p>
7.3	<p>7.3.1. Increase the means of culturally-diverse community gardens and gardeners to grow fruits and vegetables.</p>
	<p>7.3.2. Ensure community members utilize the provisions of the urban agriculture ordinance through education and resource development.</p>
	<p>7.3.3. Implement the Kindergarten Initiative at schools to engage children from an early age in the growth, preparation, and consumption of fruits and vegetables.</p>
	<p>7.3.4. Develop and expand comprehensive curricula around gardening, cooking, and nutrition to increase the impact of school and community gardens.</p>
	<p>7.3.5. Provide opportunities for faith-based organizations to engage in food justice, including gardening, cooking classes, and healthy options in pantries.</p>

Figure 1. Access to Healthy Food goals by the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester

Methods

The goal of the study is to identify how farmers markets in Worcester can be more accessible/useful for the Latinx community in Worcester and SNAP recipients. To achieve this goal, I created a list of three research objectives. The first objective was to understand farmers markets better by exploring the barriers that stop potential customers from attending the markets. To accomplish this, I researched food security and farmers markets literature, attending and observing local farmers markets, and a semi-formal interview with expert stakeholders.

The next objective was to analyze organizations' approaches towards making farmers markets more accessible. A framework was created to categorize the organizations approaches and their target group of these approaches. These programs were chosen based on their appearance and description in literature as well as the amount of information displayed on their websites. Lack of data shared on websites or social media created chances for inaccuracies and more information was retrieved through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured phone or video call interviews were scheduled in May with five different organizations. Interview questions were prepared based on previous research. The interviews were conducted with representatives and staff members of different organizations in charge of the farmers markets (Fowler, F. 1995). They will act as informant interviews, helping fill in the data gap with the organizations and provide a better perspective of the initial goal of the markets and how they had grown over time (Informant Interview, 2017). All interviewees provided verbal consent for the interview to be used in the research.

These are some of the themes that were discussed during the interviews:

Interview Questions:

Theme: Food justice in (location)/Worcester
What kinds of food justice issues do you find around Worcester? What are some of the reasons? Who do these issues affect? Areas of the city? Demographics?
Theme: Approaches to addressing Food Justice issues
What are some approaches to addressing these issues? Programs in Worcester? Agencies addressing these problems?
Theme: Success of different approaches
What do you think is the most successful? Why? For everyone?

What are some challenges that might arise while addressing this problem? Why?
Theme: Farmers markets as an approach to Food Justice
How does your approach differ from others? What makes it effective? Who comes to farmers markets? Who doesn't come? What are the demographics (age, M/F, parents, etc.) SNAP? Why do they come? What do they buy? How do the customers pay? LatinX? Does the agency (REC) collect data?
Theme: Latin X community/ Other communities
What are the particular challenges faced? What is the Location? The desirability of food at farmers markets (the type of food)? Language? Level of Cultural comfort? Level of participation of Latinx community in other programs? Dependence on SNAP? How can programs be improved to better serve the minority/Latinx community?
Theme: Economic Support programs
What type of SNAP recipients' demographics do you encounter the most? How many SNAP recipients are aware of the HIP/Match programs and farmers markets deals? How do people in the SNAP program learn about changes/updates in policies and opportunities? What is the main media platform (email/text/Facebook)? Does the WCAC carry out an analysis to learn about the demographics of SNAP recipients or other research-based documents?

Table 2: Interview Questions that guided discussion of some of the approaches and problems farmers markets encounter when trying to reach out to a diverse community.

The last objective was to use results from the analysis of the organizations' different experiences and approaches, to identify the best ways to improve farmers markets in Worcester. Organizations and their situation, level of diversity, and location were taken into account when looking at the possibility of applying the different approaches to Worcester.

Building a Framework to Analyze Farmers Markets Approaches

In order to analyze and compare farmers markets approaches a framework based on previous research was created. First, categories for the approaches were identified in each of the programs based on the farmers' market barriers previously defined. At first programs were documented through individual farmers markets, but most private farmers markets were part of a bigger organization, usually focusing on supporting health and nutrition efforts and community building. It was decided that it would be better to look at organizations instead, because their goal and approaches to their problems would be more organized compared to the specific farmers markets. The programs were categorized based on factors facilitating the farmers market, location, target group, and their relation to other programs. Then the programs that are no longer running were taken out. Factors were chosen based on the previously established categories from studies by Freedman and Hsiao (Freedman,2016 / Hsiao, 2019). After categorizing everything in the table results were analyzed and explained.

Results

There were four main facilitating factors used by the organizations; Economic Support, Community Engagement, Spatial-Temporal and Cultural Representation. Below I detail some of characteristics displayed by the organizations that allowed them to classify them under their corresponding facilitator.

The Economic Support facilitator addresses the farmers market intentions to become a more affordable food source. The facilitator of Economic Support in farmers markets included state and federal support programs, accepted and run at the farmers market, and programs funded and run by the organization or a combination of both.

The Community Engagement facilitator addresses the lack of awareness of farmers markets and their support programs. Not only should programming inform the community about the market itself but also about federal support such as SNAP. Awareness of these programs allows for low-income customers to use the economic support programs to their fullest. The Community Engagement facilitator included organizations that collaborated with locals by providing a variety of options, organizations that collaborated with other farmers markets, and organizations that run their own program incentivizing team work and supporting the community through educational and recreational activities.

Spatial-Temporal facilitator addresses the timing and placement of the farmers market. The Spatial-Temporal facilitator is used by programs that decide the timing and placement of the market purely on the customers availability and preferences. An example of this facilitator are mobile markets. Spatial-Temporal was also used as a facilitating factor in the systematic review study by Darcy Freeman (Freeman, 2016).

The Cultural representation facilitator is meant to address minorities representation and equal access disparities in farmers markets. This facilitator is present in organizations with diverse demographics of vendors, farmers, and customers, and organizations that provide minorities with additional resources, such as instructions and information in other languages. In this study I focused on the organizations that provided support in Spanish.

Below Table 2 displays organizations that run and host farmers markets. The table contains the name of the organization, their state and city location, the facilitating factors used by the organization, and the community targeted by the organization. The following abbreviations are used in the text:

CE: Community Engagement

Economic: Economic Support

Cultural: Cultural representation

ST: Spatial-Temporal

Name	Location	Facilitator Factors	Target Group
CUESA	Los Angeles	Economic: EBT, WIC CE: Nutrition Education	Latinx
Berkley Ecology Center	Berkley, CA	Economic: EBT, subsidize program CE: agricultural and environmental Education	Low income/ High income
VenaVer	Los Angeles, CA	Economic: EBT and WIC CE: Diversity of vendors (restaurants, org.)	Diverse: locations (families, college)
SEELA	Los Angeles, CA	Economic: EBT, WIC CE: Education nutrition programs Cultural: Programs in Spanish	Latinx Low/ Moderate Income Diverse
Nuestras Raices	Holyoke, MA	Economic: EBT, WIC, Senior Coupons CE: Nutrition and agricultural education ST: Mobile market Cultural: Emphasizes Latino farmers	Diverse
Centro Hispano of Dance County	Madison, WI	Economic: EBT Cultural: At a cultural center CE: Edu. and support programs	Latinx

Texas Farmers' Market	Austin, TX	Economic: EBT, WIC CE: Entertainment, diverse vendors. Cultural: Website is also in Spanish	Diverse: Support Women in Agriculture
BREADA	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Economic: EBT, Matching ST: Mobil market	
Harvest Home	NYC, NY	Economic: EBT, WIC, Health Bucks, Senior Coupons CE: cooking demonstration/workshops, local restaurants	Diverse: (Communities in need)
Urban Food Connections of Utah	Salt Lake City, UT	Economic: EBT, Double Up Food Bucks (DUFEB) CE: Education and children programs	Diverse: families and children
Green City Market	Chicago, IL	Economic: EBT, Green City Tokens CE: Farming, nutrition education and diverse activities ST: Access to public transport	Diverse: Many children activities programs
Roger Park Business Alliance	Chicago, IL	Economic: EBT, Dollar Matching CE: Run entrepreneurial programs in Spanish and English, support local stores	Low income Diverse
Saint Paul's Farmers Market	Saint Paul, MN	Economic: EBT, Market Bucks CE: work with immigrant support org.	Diverse

Table 2: Organization analysis based on approaches to making farmers markets more accessible and the target group of the farmers' market.

Facilitating Factors and Other Approaches Used to Facilitate Access to Farmers Markets:

Economic Support:

Farmers markets have to compete with the prices of supermarkets, which is why this factor is so important. Many states provide farmers markets with free EBT card readers and printers to be able to transfer the SNAP points. They also run educational programs on how to support SNAP customers that would make it easier for farmers markets to adapt and enable low-income populations to shop at these markets. The importance of this facilitator is seen in Table 1, as all organizations accepted the federal aid, EBT, as a payment. This could be the result of the federal and state assistance given to farmers markets in the past couple years in order for them to accept EBT payment. Many of the organizations also carried their own state version of the HIP program with additional SNAP points that could only be used at farmers markets.

Apart from EBT, there were other sources of economic support. Economic support targeting other vulnerable populations, such as WIC and SFMNP coupons were not as common, as not all states run or support them. Another organization who had additional economic support programs is the Berkeley Ecology Center. Their program uses the profit from farmers markets in wealthier areas to subsidize produce at ~~low~~ low-income locations. When I contacted them about their program for more information, they mentioned that it was currently being redeveloped. While the project has been successful in the past, in the future they might decide to continue with a different strategy or focus on other parts of the organization. Glenwood's Sunday Market has a different strategy regarding Economic Support, as they fundraise money to support the federal or

state programs. During interviews with the REC and Glenwood's Sunday Market it was mentioned that often state and federal funding, for programs such as HIP, wasn't enough to last the whole year. Annual budgets were used up early and programs had to close before the season ended. Organizations had to plan in advance to make sure there was enough support for at least the beginning of the next season.

One of the problems farmers markets face economically is the competition between the markets themselves. In an interview with Casey Burns, part of the Coalition for a Healthier Worcester, the importance of a different income customer base was discussed. Farmers who choose to sell at mainly low-income communities need customers with moderate or high income to participate in the farmers markets as well in order to remain economically sustainable. That is why even if farmers markets have different economic customers as targets there can still be competition for the higher-income customers.

Community Engagement:

Community Engagement involve different approaches and tactics depending on the customer bases and target of the organization and farmers' market. In order for a farmers' markets to become economically independent and be able to compete with commercial supermarkets in a sustainable manner the markets need the community's support. This involves relations with other programs, social life, and outreach using social media or collaborations with local organizations. Additionally, I looked into the diversity of events and programs the organization runs in order to reach new customers and communities.

Diversity of events and vendors at farmers markets: This type of Community Engagement involves turning farmers markets into social centers by holding a variety of events and products outside of the regular fresh produce. It is common to collaborate with local restaurants, shops and entertainment, such as family programming. This was the case in Green

City Market as they work with the Chicago Park District and local restaurants on a regular basis. During an interview with the outreach manager it was highlighted that many customers traveled to their markets even though the location of the market is not closest to their homes because of their diversity of vendors and activities and their locations nearby public transport. One of the reasons Green City Market does not sell produce only is because they wanted to support small local businesses and restaurants as well as farmers, and provide more options for the customers to choose from, such as meat and tofu. One of their unique programs is *Yoga at the Market*, organized with the collaboration of two local yoga instruction gyms. However, they also host more common programs, such as seasonal tasting events. Other Community Engagement tactics include holding performances from volunteers or discussions and talks usually about health and food insecurity.



Picture: Yoga at the park hosted during farmers' market hours by Green City Market.

<https://www.greencitymarket.org/programs/program.asp?id=23>

Educational and support programs: Organizations holding the farmers markets tend to also run programs supporting health and agricultural education. This would involve cooking or nutrition lessons, as well as visits to farms and lessons on cultivation practices. Depending on the goal of the organization, they would also hold cultural or economic educational programs. For example, SEE-LA hosts an educational program inside their culinary school targeting the Latinx

community called *Buena Cocina Nutrition Education Program*. While there were a few other programs that targeted the Latinx community most targeted children and families. Agricultural and activities related programs targeted children and teenagers allowing markets to target a specific group but have the rest of the family attend too. On the other hand, cooking and nutrition programs were targeted towards the adult in charge of providing food for the family, usually mothers, but grandmothers and other members of the family were welcomed too. The programs targeted towards children and teenagers served to bring attention and possible customers to the farmers markets, while the programs targeted towards the food provider served to make sure the family could use the farmers market as one of their food sources and knew how to cook and prepare a meal plan with their products.

Support and Collaboration between organizations: Many organizations spoke about the importance of collaborating with different organizations. Farmers market worked with two kinds of organizations: local organizations and organizations in the agricultural field. Collaboration between farmers markets programs and community organizations was important in order to work together in community projects and support each other in the long run. Saint Paul's Farmers Market works together with the Hmong American Farmers Association organization. Both organizations sell to the same customer base and in another scenario would become the competition. By working together, the market gets more options, as the immigrant Hmong farmers bring a variety of produce that is not usually sold by American farmers. Competition between markets could cause one of the markets to lose part of their customer base. That is why the relationship between farmers markets or other potential competition is not common. An interview with the Sustainability Director of the organization running Glenwood's Sunday Market, Rogers Park Business Alliance, Sheree Morato showed me a different side to the farmers market community. In the past few years, she has started to collaborate with other private

markets from Chicago. It all started because she was having trouble with the city permits and was wondering if other markets were struggling too. After a couple of meetings with the other markets, she realized how helpful it was to share input and have the support from other markets having the same issues as her. They have been able to work together and have successfully launched a farmers' market awareness campaign. She mentioned that competition between farmers markets was vicious and that being able to meet and work together also made it easier for the farmers and vendors themselves. In order to avoid conflict vendors are private and about what markets they sell at. Collaboration between markets allows for more comfortable communication between markets and between markets and vendors. If a market has no space on a Saturday but they know that another market is looking for an additional vendor they can now communicate with the vendor and make sure they have a place to sell their products. This collaboration has become essential for Morato, as the recent COVID 19 pandemic has left local vendors and farmers with an unreliable source of income.

Spatial-Temporal:

As mentioned previously the interview with Green City Market highlighted the importance of reaching customers outside of the immediate location of the farmers markets. This supports the importance of the accessibility barrier identified in the literature review. While having a farmer's market close to your residency might make walking to the market easier, sometimes it is more convenient to pick up produce after work or school. This barrier demonstrated to have multiple layers, as it involves transport options, location and surrounding of the location. One of the main approaches to handle this barrier by the organizations was mobile markets. They target a specific consumer base, usually placed next to social centers such as, senior centers, schools, hospitals or churches. This type of locations act the same way as the previously mentioned activity programs targeting children, attracting more than just the targeted population. For example, a lot of the

customers at the REC mobile farmers market Senior Center stop families visiting their loved ones at the center.

Cultural Representation:

Sheree Morato from Glenwoods' Sunday Market has been working to maintain their market is key to creating a resilient community. The market is located in one of the most diverse districts in Chicago. However, it has been hard to keep the market a diverse place. Just because the community is diverse doesn't mean the market or the vendors is and that affects the attraction of farmers market to the Latinx community. Additionally, with time the community is becoming more Caucasian as gentrification takes place in Chicago. In her interview, Morato mentioned some of her Latinx friends hesitated to go down the street to the market because even though the area is known to be diverse; the vendors in the market themselves were mostly Caucasian. She has heard from multiple members of the organization who did not attend the market that there were just "too many white people". Morato's friend had also only visited the market because she had learned that Morato would be there and might have not done so if she didn't want to greet Morato. A similar face and familiar vendors create a sense of community needed to attract this type of customer base. For this reason, community building in farmers markets is necessary for the Latinx members to feel comfortable at the markets. This includes the demographics of vendors, the language spoken by vendors, or the type of food sold in the farmers markets.

Even if the markets do not provide customers with the food they are used to, markets can set up cooking events where customers could try fresh produce. In an interview with Green City Market, their representative mentioned the importance of immigrant mothers to try the food and make sure they could cook with it before buying it. Offering samples also attracted new customers that were looking for free samples. However, programs like these require funding. Glenwood's Sunday Market used to give out free samples until funding stopped. One of their

interns conducted a small study with the Latinx community and she discovered wealthier immigrants didn't care to attend farmers markets because that is how they used to buy groceries in their native countries and they wanted a different experience in the United States. The migrants perceived supermarkets as the American way to do groceries and therefore preferred to do it that way. For this reason, Glenwood's market struggles to attract minority groups that do not rely on economic support. Morato will continue working to maintain the market diverse, but she is not sure if that will be possible in the long run.

Language: Another form of the Cultural Representation facilitator is the ability to access to instruction and information in another language, mainly Spanish. Some of the websites provided some of the instructions and descriptions of the markets in Spanish in order to reach out to Latinx communities. Green City Market did not provide that, but they mentioned they were currently updating their website and that they wanted to provide that as an option. One of the markets from Green City Market is located in a Latinx center, which is why they wanted to provide that option for their customers. This could mean that instead of providing resources in order to attract the Latinx community, organizations provide those resources once they already have that population as a solid customer base.

Community engagement and Cultural Representation:

In the end, many programs targeted a ~~div~~ diverse customer base, but not many focused on the Latinx community or other minorities. The programs that did target the Latinx community were either part of a Hispanic or Latin center or collaborated with one. These types of programs focused on community building and used farmers markets to bring people together. Similarly, other organizations focused on health and community relationships and hosted a farmers markets as part of their programs. The organizations' approach to Community Engagement depended on the original focus of the organization.

Another option to reach out to specific communities is to collaborate with local cultural community centers. This allows organizations to reach out and understand a community better. In the case of Centro Hispano of Dance County, it is a cultural center that holds a farmer's market. This allows the center to reach out to their target group of Latinx community a lot easier.

Intersectionality between facilitators

From the online research about each individual program, it was noted that most of them held Community engagement programs and carried EBT programs. Many of the programs used more than one approach, and each approach addresses more than one barrier. An overlap between the facilitators of Community Engagement and Cultural Representation was common, as well as an overlap between economic support and Spatial-Temporal accuracy. For example, closer markets or markets with access to public transport won't require customers to own a car.

The potential of Spatial-Temporal and economic support as facilitator depended on variables outside of the organizations' control. Variables such as public transport and the amount of federal or state funding is not in the farmers markets hands. On the other hand, Community Engagement and Cultural Representation did not depend on outside influence as much an allow organizations to grow in more areas.

Effects of Covid-19 on project:

Because of the timing of this project, it was not easy to get in contact with organizations or schedule phone interviews. Many of the markets were dealing with their issues either by shutting down the markets while under the coronavirus threat or by organizing drive-throughs in


order to support farmers and communities with fresh produce that might be hard to find in normal supermarkets during this time.

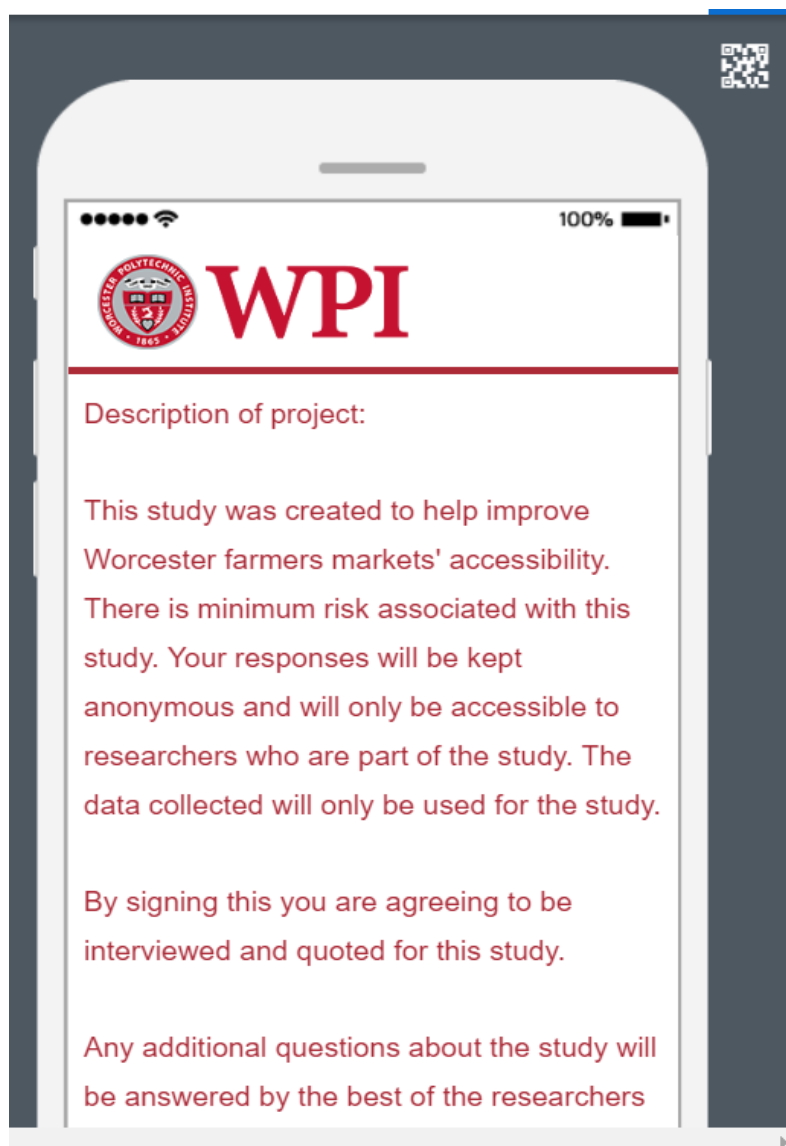
Recommendations for Worcester

After analyzing the different approaches farmers markets use to facilitate access to the markets, the approaches were compared to the situation in Worcester with farmers markets. Regional Environmental Center farmers markets all run EBT and HIP economic support programs but that doesn't mean that SNAP members are aware of these opportunities. This is where Community Engagement becomes important. Community Engagement has been used to reach out to new customer populations. It could be used to reach out to the Latinx community. The best way to do this would be to collaborate with a community center or other organizations that hold a place in the Latinx community in Worcester, such as the local catholic church. Holding an event or together with these types of organizations on a culturally important day or collaborating on a repeating program are some ideas. There are many Latin restaurants in Worcester so finding a restaurant that wants to collaborate should not be hard. One of the organizations that Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester has partnered with for other projects, is Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH), continuing this partnership and expanding their involvement could strengthen the relationship without having to find an outside partner.

Another way to reach out to more customers is to diversify the products sold at the market. While fresh produce is a priority when it comes to Worcester Health goals, other types of produce, such as meat, tofu, or more traditional Latinx food such as cheese could attract Latinx immigrants to the markets. When it comes to Spatial-Temporal efforts the REC runs a mobile

market, and because of the state of Worcester's public transport that is the best one can improve the accessibility to the farmers market.

In the future, a survey could be used to understand which combination of Community Engagement and Cultural Representation approach would work best towards the Latinx community in Worcester. It could be distributed in Latinx community centers by collaborating with other organizations such as CENTRO or at churches. If a survey was created through Qualtrics it might look like  this on the phone:



Conclusion

Farmers markets can become local sources of affordable and healthy produce for minority communities that are less likely to have access. However, they need to overcome the barriers between minority communities and farmers markets. To overcome these barriers, farmers markets organizations have developed a series of facilitators: Economic Support, Community Engagement, Spatial-Temporal and Cultural Representation. While farmers markets need to address all barriers, some are easier to address than others through these facilitator strategies. Because of recent federal and state programs, economic support is the most popular and straightforward approach used by farmers market organizations. The Spatial-Temporal facilitator depended more on the location of the farmers markets city or state and Worcester's quality of public transport leaves no room for improvement. Lastly, Community Engagement and Cultural Representation approach overlapped many times through different programs. When comparing Worcester's environment and resources to other cities, the facilitator that allows for the most improvement is a combination of Community Engagement and Cultural Representation. The combination of these two approaches would allow for many possibilities in improving farmers market accessibility. In the future, a survey could help choose the best approaches to both facilitators.

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