



Alaska Farmers' Market Quest Program - 2013

Background

Two out of every three Alaska adults is overweight or obese.ⁱ Increasing access to farmers' markets is recognized as a viable means for improving fruit and vegetable consumption and potentially improving rates of obesity. Many initiatives have been implemented to improve access to and affordability of healthy foods for low income populations such as the WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs, as well as programs to assist markets in accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – previously known as “Food Stamps”) benefits. Not only do these efforts increase access to healthy, local foods for low-income people, they also simultaneously increase revenue for local farmers and vendors.

“The [Farmers' Market Quest] Program provides increased access to fresh Alaskan foods, and increases overall sales to all of our vendors...[W]e are proud to be part of a nationwide movement of increasing access to healthy, local food.”

*–Kim Wetzel,
Spenard Farmers' Market*

Program Description

2013 Participating Markets & Farmstands:

- Anchor Point Farmers' Market
- Anchorage Farmers' Market
- Bethel Farmers' Market
- Calypso School Gardens Farm Stands (Fairbanks)
- Fairbanks Downtown Market
- Homer Farmers' Market
- Sitka Farmers' Market
- South Anchorage Farmers' Market
- Spenard Farmers' Market (Anchorage)
- Warehouse Mountain Farm Stand (Dillingham)

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Obesity Prevention and Control Program and Division of Public Assistance, and the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture work together to administer and fund the Alaska Farmers' Market Quest Program (FMQP). The FMQP provides farmers' markets with grant funding and support to accept SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, known as Quest cards in Alaska. Grants cover the purchase or rental of a wireless EBT machine, monthly



associated bank fees, staff to run the program, market tokens, advertising and start-up items. The market grants are administered by the Division of Agriculture.

A matching incentive program for Quest customers is a growing and integral part of the FMQP. On match days, markets match up to the first \$20 spent with a Quest card to help make healthy, local food more affordable. Markets have shown a significant increase in Quest customers on match days.

The wireless EBT machines also allow markets to accept debit and/or credit cards, potentially bringing in even more revenue for Alaska farmers and small food businesses.

Results

	2011	2012	2013
Number of Markets	2	5	10
Quest Transactions	224	404	884
Quest Sales	\$4,830	\$6,458	\$16,743
Quest Matching	\$937	\$2,071	\$13,003
Quest Total	\$5,767	\$8,529	\$29,746
Debit Transactions	152	1070	1817
Debit Sales	\$7,248	\$20,979	\$57,693
Transaction Fee Revenue	\$276	\$518	N/A
Credit Transactions	0	643	781
Credit Sales	\$0	\$20,862	\$27,340
Total Revenue for Markets	\$13,291	\$50,888	\$114,778

ALASKA FARMERS' MARKET-QUEST PROGRAM, 2011-2013

The Alaska FMQP has continued to grow, from two markets in 2011 to ten markets in 2013. Quest sales have grown exponentially with more participating markets, greater awareness of the program and more funds dedicated to the matching incentive. The growth in 2013 was made possible by the additional capacity of an AmeriCorp VISTA volunteer to coordinate the program.

For more information contact:

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Or visit:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Obesity/nutrition/farmersmarket-quest/default.aspx>

ⁱ Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Obesity Prevention and Control Program.
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Obesity/default.aspx>.

