

### **Alternative Purchase Program**

The Alternative Purchase Program will serve as a pilot program for other farmers markets in Utah by providing for purchases using EBT technology and the food stamp program so that low-income and fixed-income consumers will have the opportunity to buy fresh produce. Also, provide educational materials to the Farmers Market management, farmers and other vendors who are allowing customers to make purchases using EBT technology. These efforts will increase sales volume and revenue for the more than 200 vendors at the farmers market through a larger customer base, adding to the market's success as well as the cultural, business, and economic success of the central business area.

[Final Report](#)

**Farmers Market Alternative Purchasing Program  
Final Report  
For USDA**

Project Summary: The Alternative Purchasing Program has made it possible for Electronic Banking Transfer (EBT) users to purchase food items at the Downtown Farmers Market in Salt Lake City. The Alternative Purchasing Program addresses two problems; 1) the area surrounding the Market lacks a supermarket and EBT card users who reside in this area have been underserved in their access to fresh produce, meats and breads and 2) within two blocks of the Market, there are many human service facilities and organizations that serve low income and fixed-income people, many of whom are on government assistance and unable to access fresh produce and meats.

Project Approach: The Alternative Purchasing Program achieved two goals for the Downtown Farmers Market. The first was to help increase the sales of food for local farmers and ranchers by providing a new, untapped source of revenue, namely, those individuals and families that received government assistance. Secondly, it provided access to wholesome, nutritious fruits, vegetables, meats and breads for low and fixed income residents.

The Alternative Purchasing Program allowed shoppers to purchase wooden tokens using their Electronic Benefits Transfer card at the Market each Saturday. Tokens were then used to purchase eligible food items from the food vendors. At the end of each day, the food vendors would redeem each wooden token and receive payment from the Farmers Market management.

New for 2009 season, the Downtown Alliance began the Harvest Market, an extension of the Farmers Market. The Harvest Market, held each Tuesday evening from June through October in Pioneer Park, is a condensed version of popular Saturday morning Farmers Market, featuring only food vendors with, approximately, 30 producers selling their products.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The Alternative Purchasing Program was extremely successful in 2009 with \$13,730 in tokens sold. This is a \$7100 increase from the previous year, the first year of the program. The increase can be attributed to; 1) familiarity of the program with EBT recipients; 2) increase in the number of vendors that are able to accept tokens and; 3) the start this year of the Harvest Market on Tuesday evenings that extends the availability and access to fresh produce and meats to EBT recipients.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the Alternative Purchasing Program are many and varied. First, Electronic Benefits Transfer card users benefited from the program by being able to conveniently purchase local, fresh produce, meats and breads where they were unable to before the implementation of the Program. Secondly, the vendors at the Market benefited

by being able to provide their products to new customers, who previously relied on supermarket produce, breads and meats to prepared their meals.

The community in general benefited from the Alternative Purchasing Program because a segment of the community who previously were not able to access the goods at the Market, now have access to affordable, nutritious food along with the rest of the community.

Because of the downturn in the economy in the last 18 months, more and more people are relying on assistance and having a program such the Alternative Purchasing Program will continue to provide those individuals and families with access to nutritious, affordable food.

Lessons Learned: The Alternative Purchasing Program has been extremely successful since its inception in 2008. The total number of tokens sold during the Saturday Farmers Market and the Tuesday Harvest Market was \$13,730, more that double that of 2008!

Project Partners: The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) partnered with the Downtown Alliance to promote the Alternative Purchasing Program.

DWS created and distributed 6500 direct mail pieces to EBT recipients to promote the Alternative Purchase Program.

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