

FRESHLINK AMBASSADORS

A peer-to-peer approach to promoting farmers' markets

June 2020

What is the FreshLink Ambassador approach?

The FreshLink Ambassador approach is the product of a five-year research project of the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH. The approach was developed using community-engaged research that was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 2014-2019.

FreshLink Ambassadors are passionate and connected community members hired and trained to spread the word about farmers' markets and explain how to use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and nutrition incentives at farmers' markets.

FreshLink Ambassadors are:

- Passionate and connected advocates for community wellbeing
- Trained to effectively bridge residents to resources for community health
- Eager to spread the word about farmers' markets and SNAP incentives through community outreach
- Welcoming to residents as they "try out" farmers' markets

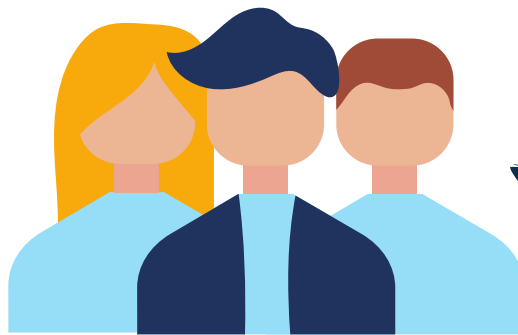
What is the impact of this approach?

In 2017 and 2018, FreshLink Ambassadors in Cleveland, OH reached 3,599 potential farmers' market customers. Outreach was targeted in neighborhoods that were located within one mile of a farmers' market that offered a SNAP incentive program and where 30% or more of the residents received SNAP benefits. More than half of the individuals reached by a FreshLink Ambassador were SNAP beneficiaries with children under 18 years old in their household, but had never shopped at a farmers' market.

3,599

COUPONS DISTRIBUTED TO POTENTIAL FARMERS' MARKET CUSTOMERS

1,126 in 2017
2,473 in 2018



55%

FIRST-TIME SHOPPERS

59%

SNAP BENEFICIARIES

Number of Outreach Events by Type



Community Outreach Events by Type

FreshLink Ambassadors supported three (3) types of community outreach:

- One-on-one interactions with family, friends, and neighbors
- Community events at food pantries, libraries, recreation centers, neighborhood meetings, etc.
- Information booth at social service organizations where SNAP and other benefits are acquired

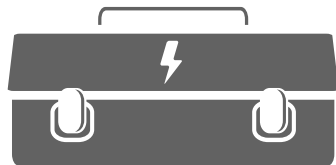
How effective is this approach in reaching new customers?

As part of their outreach efforts, FreshLink Ambassadors provided a \$5 new customer coupon to fellow community members. Throughout the program, coupon redemption rates averaged between **12% and 14%**, compared to traditional methods such as mailers, which have a redemption rate of 1% or less. The most common individuals to redeem the new customer coupons were: **(1)** living in a zip code with a farmers' market in the FreshLink program, **(2)** 50+ years old, **(3)** female, and **(4)** without children in the household.

Does this approach help increase SNAP sales at farmers' markets?

Overall, farmers' markets supported by a FreshLink Ambassador had greater improvements in SNAP sales compared to farmers' markets without the support of a FreshLink Ambassador. On average, farmers' markets with a FreshLink Ambassador generated a 6% increase in SNAP sales in year-to-year comparisons. Implementation of this peer-to-peer outreach approach was feasible and coupon redemption rates exceeded industry standards indicating the "product" (i.e. farmers' markets, nutrition incentive programs) promoted by FreshLink Ambassadors was considered advantageous.

Learn more about the FreshLink Ambassador approach



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Select publications

Freedman et al. (2019) Evaluation of a Peer-to-Peer Approach to Improve the Reach of Farmers' Markets among Low-income Populations," Health Behavior Research: Vol. 2: No. 1. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2572-1836.1034>

Freedman et al (2016) Systematic Review of Factors Influencing Farmers' Market Use Overall and among Low-Income Populations. Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vol. 116, pages 1136-1155. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2016.02.010>

Suggested citation

Freedman, D.A., Sommer, R., & Martinez, R. (2020) FreshLink Ambassadors: Peer-to-peer approach to promote farmers' markets. Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

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