Creating A Culture of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets:
Workshop Summary & Market Toolkit

The Massachusetts Food System Collaborative

Greg Watson, Brittany Peats & Winton Pitcoff


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Creating A Culture of Inclusion Workshops

Introduction

In early 2019, the Massachusetts Food Systems Collaborative convened two workshops entitled Creating A Culture of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets to respond to both the challenges and opportunities resulting from changing demographic composition of customers at farmers markets across the state.

Those demographic shifts not only reflect general population trends as a result of immigration and other factors, but also the implementation of the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). Launched in April 2017, HIP provides a dollar-for-dollar match when shoppers use SNAP to purchase fresh, local produce at participating farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs statewide. The popularity of this program, as well as other incentives programs that enable more low-income people to shop at farmers markets, has resulted in more low-income people, more people of color, and more people who are not native English speakers shopping at farmers markets.

Look what you can earn each month! (based on household size)

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This has expanded and diversified the customer base for local farmers, while at the same time some markets have experienced longer lines, causing frustration among farmer market shoppers. Different cultural expectations for markets, difficulties communicating,
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and expressions of racism have also created conflicts at some markets, resulting in an environment that is not welcoming to everyone.

Overview of workshop

During a meeting of local food policy councils, the Collaborative heard from farmers market stakeholders about increasing conflicts at farmers markets. The Collaborative hoped to start a conversation about the role of farmers markets in creating a welcoming space that reflects the community and the food system. The workshops were conceived as a place for farmers market managers and vendors to share their concerns, their best practices, and their suggestions about additional resources that are needed to reach these goals.

A Workshop Advisory Committee was created to offer input on the project, the consultant selection, the format of the workshops, and to help recruit participants (see Appendix B). The Collaborative hired Greg Watson, former MDAR Commissioner and experienced race and equity presenter, to lead the workshops. Before the workshops, the consultant and Collaborative staff conducted several key informant interviews (see Appendix C) with farmers market managers and vendors to help design the workshop.

The first workshop was quickly overenrolled so a second workshop in another part of the state was added. For more on the attendees, structure, and notes from the workshops see Appendices E through L. Feedback from the key informant interviews and workshop comments led to the development of the Culture of Inclusion Toolkit which summarize various ways that farmers market have, or could, work to improve the environment at their farmers market to ensure that everyone feels welcome.

Workshop Findings

The challenges expressed were varied but fell into three general categories – customer frustrations, vendor frustrations, and market manager frustrations (A full list is available in Appendix H).

Consumer Conflicts

The increasing number and diversity of the people at farmers markets has resulted in conflicts among and between shoppers and vendors. These conflicts may be the result of logistical problems – that the market and the vendors are not prepared for the increased number of customers. Conflicts also arise due to different cultural expectations for markets, language barriers, and people being uncomfortable around people who are different from themselves.
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Lines at many markets have been longer, leading to frustration. Some people report getting elbowed in line or seeing fights break out between customers. Some vendors aren’t prepared for the influx of people and don’t have the staff to process payments in a timely manner or an easy-to-understand line. Some vendors are running out of produce early in the market.

As a result, concerns were expressed that some long-time customers may be put off that they now have to wait in line and may stop coming to the market. New customers may be stressed as they are trying to stretch their limited food dollars and aren’t able to buy the food that they travelled to purchase.

People who come from different backgrounds may have different expectations for markets. Some people may arrive early and begin trying to purchase food before the market begins. Others may touch the produce more than others, and some may attempt to haggle for lower prices. Though these behaviors may be culturally appropriate at certain markets, particularly in other countries, they are not common and often not appreciated at Massachusetts farmers markets. A lack of the ability to communicate these differences and expectations may lead to confusion and resentment.

In addition, some people may feel as though farmer markets are for ‘people like them’ and not for ‘others.’ Several markets report hearing questions about why ‘those people’ were at the market. Clearly racism and xenophobia are at play here.
Vendor Conflicts

Vendors have seen mixed outcomes from the increase in customers due to the HIP program. On the one hand, the new influx of HIP-incentivized customers was an economic bonanza for many, if not all, of those participating in the program. Some say HIP customers increased their sales by as much as 600%! The increased diversity of the customers has also enabled them to sell a large variety of produce. On the other hand, these same vendors feared that their long-term and loyal customer base was in danger of eroding over their frustrations with the changing market.

Vendors envisioned a worst-case scenario: over time there is a slow trickle of non-HIP customer departures, followed by HIP funding being discontinued due to political or economic changes, and the number of HIP customers coming to the market dwindles or disappears. Indeed, in one instance, when the HIP payment system went down, the vendors lost a significant amount of sales.

Many customers using HIP may have questions about how to use the program. Vendors may have difficulty explaining the program due to a lack of time during a busy market, lack of understanding about the intricacies of the program, and the inability to communicate because of language barriers. Vendors may find it difficult to develop a rapport – and therefore loyal customers - with people who speak different languages.

The ideal scenario is one where vendors maintain their established customer base and are able to welcome their new HIP customers as well, serving all equally.

Market Manager Conflicts

Having made the case that farmers markets are dynamic, evolving complex systems, it goes without saying that managing them poses quite a challenge. Farmers market managers often find themselves in the unenviable position of serving simultaneously as
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crowd controller, translator, arbiter of disputes, technical assistant and generally all-purpose problem solver. They often do this working alone, sometimes with volunteers and in rare instances, with the assistance of paid help.

The vendors and market managers attending the workshops were all committed to making their markets more inclusive. They shared anecdotes about how they have dealt with conflicts arising from both cultural intolerance and cultural misunderstandings. Some heard that their markets were not welcoming to low income people or to seniors. Some felt as though they weren’t reaching everyone in the community with information about the market.

No actions, rules or policies can guarantee the elimination of undesirable behavior. However, there are a number of ways to make it clear that cultural and racial intolerance will not be tolerated and to take actions that actively encourage and celebrate all manners of diversity at Massachusetts farmers markets. Market managers need support in implementing such systems.

Conclusion

The main result of these workshops is the creation of the Culture of Inclusion Toolkit, which is intended to help all farmers markets throughout the Commonwealth be welcoming to all and to decrease incidents of cultural and racial intolerance at markets. We hope this tool will help markets to grow and improve.

A one-day workshop cannot be expected to address all of the issues around racism at farmers markets. However, the willingness of the market managers, vendors and other stakeholders to participate in the interviews and workshops, to speak candidly about sensitive and serious issues, and to constructively share their experiences at farmers markets throughout the state, is a positive first step. Throughout these workshops and in the Toolkit, we hope to publicly acknowledge the existence of these conflicts and express a genuine collective desire to resolve them.
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Culture of Inclusion Toolkit

This Culture of Inclusion Toolkit is a compilation of tips and suggestions designed to help market managers and vendors create more inclusive cultures and welcoming environments at their farmers markets for all members of the communities they serve. These tools were shared by market managers and vendors from farmers markets across the state during key informant interviews and the two Creating a Culture of Inclusion at Mass Farmers Markets workshops, hosted by the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative. All of the tools may not be appropriate for every market but will hopefully provide a menu of options with which to strengthen each market. This collection is meant to be a starting point – it is by no means all-inclusive of every appropriate tool, and each of these items deserves further development than given here. Our goal with our Toolkit is to collect ideas and to build on them collectively over time, sharing them broadly.

These tools include:
- Connect with the community
- Celebrate market diversity
- Improve training for market staff, volunteers and vendors
- Build a common language
- Establish market rules
- Improve market design
- Reduce language and cultural barriers
- Support under-resourced vendors
- Support the Healthy Incentives Program
- Share resources between markets
- Identify additional funding

Connect with the community

Connecting to diverse neighborhoods could go a long way toward creating a more inclusive culture at farmers markets. Markets should learn about what languages, races, and ethnicities and other identities are represented in the community as well as other important characteristics of the neighbors (see Appendix M). Outreach would inform neighbors about the existence of the market and solicit feedback on ways the market can
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be more accessible or welcoming to them. Markets may be most successful at beginning a conversation with specific neighborhoods and populations by partnering with churches, schools, senior centers, and community development corporations (see Appendix M). Conversations may address perceptions of the market and the neighborhood where the market is held.

Farmers markets should also do outreach through the local media and community newsletters and be sure that the information is available in the languages spoken by the residents.

At the same time, community connections must go both ways. Markets should solicit input from shoppers, community institutions and organizations, and others about how to best be inclusive of the diverse community. What operating hours would best serve the community? What services such as language translation would be helpful to have? Are there particular foods that the market should ask vendors to source or grow? Others ways to connect various communities to the farmers market includes hiring local people to serve as translators or cultural ambassadors.

Farmers markets should also be cognizant about how they portray their markets – who is included in outreach materials and what message does that send about who is welcome at the market?

Many community organizations that serve low income populations may help them use the HIP program by providing transportation to the markets. To avoid situations where several vans or busses of customers arrive at the same time creating long lines, or arrive too early, or too late to the market, it would be useful for market managers to reach out to the community organizations to coordinate transportation that ensures everyone has the best experience at the market. These community organizations can also be part of the conversation around creating a welcoming market.

Celebrate market diversity

The culture of inclusion at farmers markets may be strengthened through campaigns to educate customers and vendors about the diversity of the market. Outreach could celebrate the numbers of languages spoken at the market or the many crops that are associated with various cultural traditions. Physical signage, smart phone apps, or social media could help disseminate this information.

Many markets offer cooking demonstrations, often in partnership with UMass Extension SNAP-Ed or other community groups. Cooking demonstrations that show how to enjoy less familiar foods and foods from various cultural traditions will help customers from various backgrounds feel confident that they are understood and that they can prepare the foods being sold at the markets.
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Improve training for market staff, volunteers and vendors

Increased training for market staff, volunteers and vendors around the HIP program and cultural sensitivity will help ensure that customers are receiving accurate, consistent, and thoughtful responses. All staff should be familiar with the HIP program, how it works, and frequently asked questions, and should have tools to enable them to explain the program to those with limited English through using printed translated materials, short phrases, or in writing.

Cultural sensitivity training will help staff understand that different people communicate in different ways and have different expectations about markets. For example, some vendors from certain backgrounds may be reluctant to complain to a market manager about problems they are facing. For this reason, it is important that managers understand their vendors and build relationships with them, talk with them at times that are convenient for them, and be open to feedback. Developing trust, openness, and respect among all people involved in the market is critical.

Market staff should be sure that customers and vendors feel heard. When conflicts arise, it is important that staff listen to their concerns and try to improve the situation. Vendors are often the ones who are communicating directly with customers so it is important to involve them in problem solving and be sure they are aware of new information or procedures. Being proactive and addressing problems early avoids unnecessary conflict, damaged relationships, and long-term harm to the market.

Build a common language

One way to make sure that people feel welcome is to state that making people – regardless of their race, culture or language – feel welcome is part of the mission of the market. This communication can be written or verbal, issued by one market or used by markets across the state.

After one farmers market was the site of conflict between people from different backgrounds, the market decided to write down the values of their market, including welcoming everyone and respecting differences. They shared this statement with their customers and vendors via their e-newsletter and social media.

Signage may be another way to publicly communicate these values. Market managers may want to share among themselves the inclusive statements that have worked for their market.

Establish market rules

Managers could establish clear rules for market etiquette as a way to proactively reduce conflicts and misunderstandings. The rules could address such subjects as start and end
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times for the market, protocols for waiting in line, and expectations around how produce is to be handled. This information could be made available by distributing informational handouts and posting signs in languages spoken by all customers.

It would also benefit a market to establish rules that vendors must follow, including welcoming and respecting all customers. These rules could be incorporated into the vendor contracts, and education around how to meet the expectations could be included in trainings for market vendors.

Improve market design

How a market is designed will affect how people use it and who feels comfortable. Some markets have entertainment and a culture that welcomes lingering; this may encourage families to attend and stay but may discourage people who are looking to shop quickly. When scheduling music and events, market managers should be aware of the whole of the audience. Music and other cultural events that are familiar to some customers may be less relatable to others; having cultural events over the course of the season that represent the diversity of cultures of market customers helps customers better enjoy and feel comfortable at the market. Certain market designs may make it difficult for people with reduced mobility to navigate; some seniors have said that they miss having access to the shopping carts that they usually use at grocery stores. Attention to all of these issues, in the context of the community the market serves, is important.

One of the challenges facing farmers markets is long lines. The frustration of waiting in line may lead to conflicts and drive some people away from the market. Various markets have devised creative solutions to ensure that everyone has access to market produce while reducing problems with lines. At an indoor market with limited space, one market gave each customer a number as they arrived. When the market opened they let in a certain number of people at a time; once they finished shopping, the next group of shoppers was invited in. Other markets and vendors have created better line infrastructure – including a longer space, clear signs, and staff to help direct people to the lines. While it may appear more efficient to create separate lines or even booths for customers paying with EBT cards and those who are not, doing so violates the privacy of those using EBT as well as anti-discrimination law.

Some vendors want to ensure that all customers have equal access to their produce, regardless of when during the market hours they arrive. Many vendors will gradually put out more produce throughout the market hours. Others will limit the amount of a certain popular crop that a customer can buy at once; if there is still more left, customers can get in line for additional amounts of the crop.

One other design component that is critical to the smooth functioning of a farmers market is proper functioning of HIP and SNAP payment systems. When the system that processes HIP payments has a technical problem, this creates confusion and frustration.
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Some markets are prepared with redundant systems so they are still able to take HIP when the system is down; vendors can use manual vouchers if the system goes down. Because HIP and SNAP are tied to national computer networks, farmers, market managers, and even state agencies have no control over that system. Developing, in advance, a way to explain that to customers should the system go down, is a good idea.

Reduce language and cultural barriers

Language barriers can contribute to bottlenecks, congestion and frustrated customers and vendors. Thoughtful design, a variety of available translated materials, and interpreters may help address some communication barriers.

Translated materials can include signs at the entrance to the market as well as at each booth outlining the market guidelines. Other signs can address frequently asked questions, particularly regarding using HIP and SNAP at the market. Some markets provide materials in various languages with information about the market and how to use HIP; they distribute the materials to vendors to put in customers’ bags to take home with them.

The MA Department of Transitional Assistance offers some translated materials here (https://www.mass.gov/service-details/healthy-incentives-program-hip-for-clients/resources). Other materials are available through the Office of Food Access in Boston (https://www.boston.gov/departments/food-initiatives/healthy-incentives-program). Mass Farmers Markets, DPH and MDAR produced a HIP FAQ and Shopping Tips in 2018 which were translated into approximately 15 languages and distributed through farmers market partners and WIC; for a hard copy of these materials, contact David Webber at MDAR at david.webber@state.ma.us. Some markets have also worked with students to translate materials.

Many markets and vendors have hired bilingual staff to be at markets to help translate for customers and vendors. These interpreters can be students, volunteers, community members or trained translators. Markets can reach out to direct service agencies that provide support in languages other than English as they may have volunteers/interns looking for some additional hours. One market was able to hire a person who was respected within the Chinese community to provide translation and explain cultural differences. This interpreter may have some hours built into his schedule to provide Mandarin translation to other markets; contact Rosa Hsu at Mass Farmers Markets at rosa@massfarmersmarkets.org for more information. Markets can also check the Farmers Market Coalition for other funding opportunities. The USDA has a printable pdf that enables customers to identify which language(s) they speak, if they are literate in that language (https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cnd/Ispeak.pdf).

Reducing the language barriers may reduce confusion and conflicts at markets and also increase the ability for vendors and customers who speak different languages to develop a rapport. Some farmers have expressed disappointment that they haven’t been able to
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Converse with customers who speak differently languages, as they are able to with English speaking customers.

Support under-resourced vendors

Attracting and making your market more accessible for under-resourced vendors can add to an environment of inclusion. Customers who see vendors who may look and speak like them may feel more comfortable and welcomed. Efforts should be made to assist vendors who fall into this category.

Markets should consider flexible policies for the fees that vendors pay to participate in the market: a large one-time fee at the beginning of the season may present a hardship for small farmers while paying smaller payments throughout the season may be more feasible. Under-resourced vendors may also benefit from business and market technical assistance from the market or other vendors.

Businesses sometimes also offer to attend a market as a way to advertise and markets can reach out to them at the beginning of the season. One market has successfully partnered with a local business to enable an under-resourced farm to participate in the farmers market; the business paid the vendor’s market fee in exchange for publicity at the market. Businesses or universities may be able to provide technical assistance to vendors as well. Markets should work to communicate these opportunities to vendors who might not otherwise participate in the farmers market.

Support the Healthy Incentives Program

The inconsistent and somewhat unpredictable funding of the Healthy Incentives Program poses challenges to both vendors and customers. Vendors are not able to depend on certain customers if the program is without funding for parts of the year and some customers can’t afford to shop at farmers markets during those times. Market managers, vendors and customers can help address this problem by advocating for adequate, sustained funding for HIP.

Many customers and vendors who have used HIP have feedback for how the system could be improved to make it easier to use or understand. It would be useful for these groups to share these constructive comments with the Department of Transitional Assistance, which administers the program. The agency can be reached at 877-382-2363 or DTA.HIP@state.ma.us. Individuals or organizations interested in advocating for HIP call reach out to the MA Food System Collaborative’s HIP Campaign Manager Rebecca Miller at rebecca@mafoodsystem.org.
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Share resources between markets

Many farmers markets struggle with common challenges. One way to strengthen markets as efficiently as possible may be to share resources and best practices. A network of market managers may help support this collaboration and communication. There is currently a private Facebook group for market managers across the state. Other ways to collaborate include creating a newsletter, list serve, website, blog, Slack, basecamp, google group, etc. These networks could help to create a common culture of inclusion through sharing strategies they have employed to achieve cultural inclusion and diversity.

Identify additional funding

Farmers markets provide a huge benefit to many people in a community, including providing a venue for local farmers and small-scale food producers to sell their food, and the ability for customers to purchase healthy local food. Markets also help to build community through educating people about the food system and providing a space for the community to be together etc. Markets are being asked to do a lot – provide a place for commerce, educate consumers, administer HIP, SNAP and other programs, and mediate cultural conflicts.

It is important that funders recognize the important work that farmers markets are doing and provide financial support for those activities. There should be ongoing discussions about how to collectively or individually support the work of farmers markets. One grant program for farmers markets is the US Department of Agriculture’s Farmers Market Promotion Program (https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp).

Conclusion

We are very appreciative of the market managers and vendors who engaged with this project, are passionate about strengthening farmers markets in Massachusetts, and shared the examples listed above. We hope that this Toolkit is a constructive starting point to gather best practices and continue the conversation on how to make farmers markets more welcoming. This Toolkit is by no means all-inclusive; we welcome anyone with other examples, resources, and thoughts to contact Brittany Peats at brittany@mafoodsystem.org.
A. Historical Context

Over the past fifty years, farmers markets have become not only a fixture on the Massachusetts landscape, but an integral part of the state’s food system. Their popularity has soared in the 21st century. According to the Boston Globe “the number of farmers markets in Massachusetts has almost tripled since 2004, to nearly 300 [in 2017].” Many farmers will tell you that the availability of this direct marketing option continues to play a role in keeping them afloat.

In fact, farmers markets were a key component of *A Policy for Food and Agriculture in Massachusetts*, published in 1978. This progressive document was a direct response to the alarming loss of farms and farmland in the Commonwealth that began at the end of World War II and continued into the 1970s. During that period, roughly 29,000 farms were lost while farmland acreage plummeted from over 2,000,000 to about 700,000. At that rate, state agriculture officials realized that, without some kind of intervention, the Massachusetts farm sector had about a thirty-year life expectancy.

*A Policy for Food and Agriculture in Massachusetts* outlined a number of recommendations for preserving our farm legacy that the state had the power to make happen. There were ten categories with suggestions ranging from the purchase of development rights to launching the “Massachusetts Grown and Fresher” campaign.

Farmers markets have grown in size and sophistication since then. It should come as no surprise that growing pains and accompanying tensions would develop along the way. Ironically, the tensions that were the focus of two daylong workshops summarized in this report were triggered by initiatives that most would agree have benefited farmers market customers and vendors.

There was an understandable assumption that drove the wide appeal of farmers markets early on. That assumption was that venues directly connecting farmers and consumers, would be enable growers to sell their produce at prices lower than food imported from thousands of miles away and wends its way through the wholesale marketing system where it changes hands several times before ending up on supermarket shelves -- and eventually to consumers.

*The most ancient of all marketing practices, the “Farmers Market”, has been revived in several communities in the state and is succeeding in bringing the production of small producers direct to consumers, thus providing a market for part-time farmers and gardeners and fresh wholesome food to consumers, without the added costs and delays associated with our mass marketing practices.*

- *A Policy For Food and Agriculture in Massachusetts*
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The seemingly straightforward and informal structure of farmers markets belies their underlying web of complex relationships that includes farmers, consumers, organizers, volunteers, local and state elected officials and members of Congress (among others). It also did not consider subsidies and economies of scale that benefit the agribusiness supply chain.

*Strategies for Creating A Culture of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets* explores recent tensions that have developed as a result of efforts to maintain that dynamic equilibrium between customers and vendors that is arguably the primary purpose for farmers markets and the key to their survival.

We hope this report reaches a receptive audience that includes all relevant farmers market stakeholders including planners, community organizers, chambers of commerce, local, state and federal policymakers and philanthropies.

**B. Workshop Advisory Committee Members**

Martha Assefa  
Worcester Food Policy Council, Worcester

Ashley Carter  
Regional Environmental Council, Worcester

Amanda Chilson  
Be Well Berkshires, Berkshire County

Jennifer Coverdale  
The Food Project, Lynn

Kathy Cunningham  
SNAP-Ed, Boston

Rebecca Davidson  
MDAR, Boston

Jessy Gill  
World Farmers, Lancaster

Mia Kortebein  
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), South Deerfield

Vivien Morris  
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, Boston

Anna Muhammad  
Springfield Food Policy Council, Springfield

Liz O’Gilvie  
Springfield Food Policy Council, Springfield

Bonita Oehlke  
MDAR, Boston

Brittany Peats  
MA Food System Collaborative, Greenfield

Winton Pitcuff  
MA Food System Collaborative, Greenfield

Dimple Rana  
Revere On The Move, Revere

Angela Roell  
UMass Extension, Franklin County

Erica Satin-Hernandez  
Somerville Food Security Coalition, Somerville

Grace Sliwoski  
Regional Environmental Council, Somerville

John Wang  
The Food Project, Lynn

David Webber  
MDAR, Boston

Tracey Wingate  
Growing Places, Leominster

Ayn Yeagle  
Growing Places, Leominster

**C. One-on-one Interviewees**
Creating A Culture of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets

Ashely Carter Regional Environmental Council, Worcester
Ben Clark Clarkdale Fruit Farms, Deerfield
Shane Clyburn Copley Square Farmers Market, Boston
Jenn Coverdale Food Project, Lynn
Jessy Gill World Farmers, Lancaster
John Wang Food Project, Lynn

D. Workshop Attendees

**Eastern Massachusetts Workshop | March 14, 2019**

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<tr>
<td>John Allen</td>
<td>Mary's Garden, Southbridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Barley</td>
<td>Mass Farmers Markets, Waltham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mireia Carpio</td>
<td>Belmont Farmers Market, Belmont</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashley Carter</td>
<td>Regional Environmental Council, Worcester</td>
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<td>Justin Chase</td>
<td>Arrowhead Farm, Newburyport</td>
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<td>Lindsey Close</td>
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<td>Shane Clyburn</td>
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<td>Jeff Cole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha Creedon</td>
<td>Waltham Farmers Market, Waltham</td>
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<td>Kathy Cunningham</td>
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<td>Keely Curliss</td>
<td>The Food Project, Roxbury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel Domond</td>
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<td>Mary Gregoire</td>
<td>Mary's Garden, Southbridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melisa Hollenback</td>
<td>Shrewsbury Farmer Market (WE CAN), Shrewsbury</td>
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<td>Leo Keightley</td>
<td>Waltham Farmers Market, Waltham</td>
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<td>Peg Mallet</td>
<td>Wayland Summer/Winter Farmers Market, Wayland</td>
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<td>Becca Miller</td>
<td>MA Food System Collaborative, Greenfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Moolenbeek</td>
<td>Ashland Farmers Market, Ashland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mariah Notini</td>
<td>Mill No. 5, Lowell</td>
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<td>Winton Pitcoff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florence Seidell</td>
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<td>Hal Shubin</td>
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<td>Laura Smith</td>
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<td>Julie Unger</td>
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<td>David Webber</td>
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<td>Leslie Wilcott-Henrie</td>
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<td>Janel Wright</td>
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<td>Fred Yen</td>
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Western Massachusetts Workshop | April 17, 2019

Glenroy B. Buchanan  
Pioneer Valley/New England Growers Co-Op, South Deerfield

Elodie L. Chicoine  
Chicoine Family Farm, Easthampton

Kafi Dixon  
The Common Good Project, Dorchester

Erin Ferrentino  
Old Friends Farm, Amherst

Alex Gross  
Just Roots - Greenfield Community Farm, Greenfield

Sarah Hastings  
Atlas Farm, South Deerfield

Niki Lankowski  
Grow Food Northampton - Tuesday Market, Northampton

Meryl Latronica  
Just Roots, Greenfield

Belle Rita Novak  
Farmers Market at Forest Park, Springfield

Molly Peterson  
Growing Places, Leominster

Jon Van Kuiken  
Brockton Farmers Market, Brockton

Tracey Wingate  
Growing Places, Leominster

E. Workshop Agenda

**Introductions** – 10:00 - 10:30

What led to your decision to attend this workshop?
What are your expectations?
What are your concerns/skepticisms/fears?

**Discussion: What is a Farmers Market?** – 10:30 - 10:45

What are the goals of farmers markets?
Do farmers markets across the state have a shared vision or mission?

**Presentation: Farmers Markets as Welcoming and Inclusive Spaces – Past & Present** – 10:45 - 11:15

**Discussion: Current Issues of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets** – 11:15 - 11:45

**Presentation: Equality and Equity: What’s the Difference?** – 11:45 - 12:00

**WORKING LUNCH** – 12:00 - 12:30

**Breakout Groups: Sharing Experiences of Market Managers and Vendors** – 12:30 - 1:30

**Reporting Out From Each Group** – 1:30 - 2:00

**Discussion: Creating A Culture of Inclusion Toolkit** – 2:00 - 3:00

*Actions Time Frame: Immediate | Short-term | Long-term | Ongoing*
Wrap Up and Next Steps – 3:00 - 3:30

F. Workshop Design and Format

The idea of hosting a workshop to address the issues arising from the changing demographics at Massachusetts farmers markets was first discussed at a local food policy councils meeting on September 12, 2018. Brittany Peats, the project leader formed an advisory committee in October to explore the concept in greater detail (see Appendix B for a list of advisory committee members).

Former MDAR commissioner Greg Watson submitted a proposal to design and facilitate a workshop in October 2018 following conversations with Collaborative director Winton Pitcoff. Earlier that year, Watson had co-facilitated a two-day workshop for the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) entitled Developing and Applying an Equity Lens for UCS Program Planning and Project Design. Watson had also organized the Boston Farmers Markets in 1978 and thus seemed uniquely qualified to take on this challenge.

Upon acceptance of his proposal, Watson participated in conference calls with the advisory committee. Members provided him with a valuable contextual orientation based on their personal on-the-ground perspectives. Watson also used them as sounding boards for proposed drafts of workshop materials ranging from an introductory flyer to the workshop design and agenda.

Telephone Interviews

Committee members suggested that telephone interviews with some selected market managers from a variety of markets might be helpful in fine-tuning the workshop. A list was composed and Watson and Peats were able to team up on all but a couple of the calls.

The interviews proved invaluable for they afforded Watson and Peats with the opportunity to engage deep into conversations well beyond what would be possible in the actual workshop setting. As it turned out, we were also able to receive input from some key stakeholders who were unable to attend the workshop. All this gave us a much better sense
Creating A Culture of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets

of how to structure the workshop and frame our questions so as to gain the most from the experience.

Recruiting Workshop Participants

The original workshop was scheduled to take place in Wellesley, Massachusetts on March 14, 2019. The Collaborative worked with its consultant to design a flyer describing its purpose that was emailed to a statewide list of Massachusetts farmers markets managers and vendors. Registration consisted of a simple RSVP. Participants were chosen on a first-come first served basis.

The goal to make the workshops as interactive as possible led us to build sessions around breakout groups. This in turn helped define the maximum number of participants. An upper limit of 28 individuals was set based on our decision that four breakout groups of 7 was manageable and would permit everyone to be meaningfully engaged.

The March 14 workshop was oversubscribed within days after the invitation was sent out. The Collaborative created a waiting list. The number of people on that list led to the decision to organize a second workshop. It was subsequently scheduled for April 17 in Greenfield, MA. (See Appendix D for a list of participants at both workshops).

Workshop Structure

The structure of the workshop was designed to help the participants discover their own path to creating a culture of inclusion at their farmers markets:

- By asking what led to your decision to attend the workshop, we attempted to gauge expectations.
- Asking participants to define what a farmers market is helped us determine if there is a shared sense/vision of what farmers markets are (one should never assume that this is the case).
- The presentation on the History of the Boston Farmers Markets was intended to provide participants with a sense of how farmers markets fit into the state’s overall agricultural policy priorities and not overlook lessons learned.
- A quick “around-the-room” survey of current issues of inclusion at Massachusetts farmers markets helped the facilitator get a sense of the current cultural landscape.
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- The SWOT exercise seemed to be the expeditious way of taking a deeper dive into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relevant to the overall economic viability and issues of equity at individual farmers markets.
- Asking participants to create a composite SWOT “map” was intended to help uncover underlying patterns or themes that could be used to construct the most useful toolkit possible.

G. Opening Questions

What led to your decision to attend this workshop?
What Is a Farmers Market?

Responses to the question: “What is a farmers market?” were particularly telling. Vendors and market managers alike described their markets in terms that clearly and powerfully describe something much more than place to conduct transactions. They are dynamic and complex environments where “people feel comfortable,” “make connections,” and that “reconnect people to the seasons.”

These public spaces are physically ephemeral (coming into being for a few hours each week during the growing season), with distinct cultures that endure and evolve over time. How and by whom is that culture defined? Is there an overarching culture that embraces fundamental values common to all farmers markets? Answers to that question will determine the nature of our most effective solutions.

If, for instance, a common, overarching culture of farmers markets exists and is acknowledged, peer-pressure and peer-support can be highly effective in maintaining cultures of inclusion at individual markets.

H. Current Issues of Inclusion at Massachusetts Farmers Markets

Workshop participant were asked to articulate current issues of inclusion experienced at their markets. Below is the distilled list of concerns.

- Customer Concerns
  - Lines have been longer, customers are frustrated.
  - Some existing customers don’t come to the market anymore ‘your lines are too long’ or they are uncomfortable.
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- People get uncomfortable seeing negative interactions.
- Customers were getting elbowed and the vendors were getting sold out.

**Vendor Concerns**
- Farmers also don’t have the resources to help explain HIP or translate.
- Some farmers and vendors have been less than welcoming to customers
- When HIP technology went down, lost a day of sales.

**Market Manager Concerns**
- Customers are people using benefits and wealthy people who don’t work. Are we not getting the people in the middle?
- There is a lot of diversity and the reality of the community. It takes time to adapt to these challenges.
- People who are homeless and use substances – how to involve them in the market?
- Farmers markets are entering a different scale in the community. Can’t take on lots of roles.
- How do we train our farmers and vendors to be receptive to these changing communities?
- Some of our vendors had heard those kinds of comments such as “what are those people doing here?”
- A couple vendors have asked for help to explain that it is not a bartering environment.
- Feels like a cool market - for young people, young families. People come and hang out. There is pizza, safe for kids to run around. That makes other people feel like it’s not for them, including older people. Maybe because it’s too fast paced.
- Some markets are less transactional and include more social interaction.
- Policy to make it all organic may feel exclusive
- Each market can have their own philosophy; some markets are in competition.

**Other**
- Zoning by law about farmers market - restricts them from doing lots of things – how many tents, what they can sell. The town initiated it.
- Lots of people shop early - 80% in the first hour.
- HIP wasn’t helping in the first year but the market decided to keep it because of moral reason.
- Have a long market - haven’t had problems with pushing.

**Solutions**
- First year of HIP was crazy so the vendors and markets put in lines.
- Trial and error to manage crowds - put up barriers.
- Have people line up differently – there is a one-way entrance and exit, snake though pattern.
- Some vendors have created two lines – one for people who paid ahead and one for everyone else
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- A vendor hired security person to manage line.
- A vendor has three people at the register, plus person to stock.
- One farmer staggers the broccolini and broccoli roll out.
- Another farmer limits people to certain amounts of popular types of produce.
- One market came up with their own flier for our matching program – did it in various languages.
- Have translators come in.
- Have doubled SNAP at market tent. Buy tokens - up to $10. Helped people to buy things that aren’t on HIP - eggs, bread, meat.
- One market got support from a local business.
- One farmer understands that there are different ways of bartering in different cultures so puts the price higher so they can drop it.
I. What is a SWOT Analysis?

SWOT Analysis is a useful technique for understanding your Strengths and Weaknesses, and for identifying both the Opportunities open to you and the Threats you face. It can be applied to businesses, organizations, even individuals. For more information on how to conduct a SWOT analysis see: Community Tool Box: https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/swot-analysis/main
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J. Farmers Market SWOT Analysis Exercise

**SWOT** analysis is a tool for understanding **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** and for identifying **Opportunities** and **Threats** to businesses, governments, nonprofit organizations or even one’s personal life. Each workshop participant was given SWOT charts and charged with assessing the farmers market they managed or sold in terms of: (1) its success in creating a favorable and sustainable environment for business and (2) in terms of its success in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

Workshop participants began to fill in their charts over lunch and continued in the afternoon in breakout groups. Their group assignment was to take each personal SWOT chart and merge them into one composite chart.

Apparent contradictions can co-exist and seem perfectly logical in a SWOT chart analysis. One respondent listed downtown gentrification as both a threat and opportunity when viewed through either the business or equity lens. Low-and-fixed income residents fear gentrification coupled with displacement. The notion that you can have the former without the latter was only a theory until resident-driven, community-based development organizations like Boston’s Dudley Street Neighborhood demonstrated ways it could be done. Entities with limited resources like farmers market would do well to focus on the strategies for **transforming threats into opportunities**. Another way of thinking about it is **turning liabilities into assets**. Some individuals – particularly community organizers – are highly skilled in this. They represent a form of community capital that is underappreciated and undervalued.

Participants were given just over an hour to wrap their heads around the concept and begin filling in their SWOT templates. To their credit, they not only grasped the basics of the process but, by relying on their collective wealth of experience, demonstrated the power of this simple, unassuming, and straightforward exercise.

Even a cursory review of their worksheets revealed some
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interesting scenarios that could lead to potential solutions. For example, the juxtaposition of a concern over long lines with a market’s desire but inability to attract additional vendors (identified as a SWOT weakness by at more than one participant) suggests a possible resolution (all other factors being equal): Leverage the long lines as a way to attract new farmers to your growing market. While this would create more competition for existing vendors, it might also keep their long-term customer base intact by reducing lines and delays.

K. Composite Farmers Market SWOT Analysis

Business Lens

Evaluate your market in terms of its success in creating a favorable and sustainable environment for business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRNGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of food</td>
<td>Reliance on volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community support</td>
<td>Competing for same resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Crowd control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad variety of items</td>
<td>Location (hidden in town)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity of the market</td>
<td>Small number of SNAP users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farming new crops</td>
<td>Language barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to SNAP &amp; HIP programs</td>
<td>Location barrier (carless customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translators</td>
<td>Lack of translators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant funding</td>
<td>Sr. customers frustrated w/new customer dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIP/SNAP/WIC/Senior coupons</td>
<td>Farmer frustration w/fluctuating income/demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local matching (community engagement)</td>
<td>Language accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private support for SNAP</td>
<td>Lack of privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant food</td>
<td>Inability to educate/train around culture clashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language accessibility</td>
<td>Logistics of supporting donated food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for social advocacy</td>
<td>Long-term security of programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer meals program</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning about other cultures</td>
<td>Loss of HIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship building</td>
<td>Shifting expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New crops, programs</td>
<td>Prejudice/reactions to new customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Ingrained attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and trust</td>
<td>Lack of staff &amp; volunteers to implement systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach to specific communities</td>
<td>Instability of HIP and other programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample recipes/cooking demos/unfamiliar items</td>
<td>Unstable fundraising outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Pre-orders, economic opportunities
Help w/consistent messaging on inclusivity
UMass extension (cooking demos)
Advocate for system changes
Hours & locations to accommodate community

Delays in approval of HIP vendors
Equipment breakdowns – costs
Resistance from non-produce farmers
Lack of technical support for HIP/SNAP
Garnering support from all customers & vendors
Lack of sustainable fundraising
Systemic oppression
Gentrification 2.0
Capitalism
Perception of dangerous neighborhoods

L. Presentation: Race and Equity at Farmers Markets

Click on graphic below for Brief History of Race and the Boston Farmers Market PDF

In response to the observation from several food policy councils and others that some farmers markets have struggled to adapt to the changing demographics at markets as a result of HIP and other programs, the Collaborative is hosting workshops to help market managers and farmers address issues of race and equity.

Led by former MDAR Commissioner Greg Watson, these two workshops for market managers and vendors provide a space to discuss challenges, share solutions, and provide feedback on what additional resources are needed. A historical perspective of farmers markets and race in Massachusetts provide context for the sessions; Greg’s slideshow illustrating this history is linked here.

The workshops were held in spring of 2019 in Wellesley and Greenfield. For more information, please contact Brittany Peats at brittany@massfoodsystem.org or 617 863 6865.
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M. Selling to Everyone – Resource Packet (CISA)

Possible community organization partnerships for market outreach:
1. Resident groups, public housing, and neighborhood councils
2. Food policy councils
3. Local DTA and WIC offices
4. Food banks and community kitchens
5. Health centers
6. Mass in Motion groups
7. Senior centers
9. Preschools, daycares, family centers
10. Area schools (elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges)
11. Libraries
12. Social service agencies
13. Transportation providers (bus system, vans)
14. Economic councils and chambers of commerce
15. University extension groups
16. Agricultural or ecological groups
17. Other farmers markets

Resources for Community Statistics:

1. Language by neighborhood: https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language_map.html#
   Language mapper by neighborhood (top 10 languages) - 2011
2. Language by county: https://apps.mla.org/map_data
   Language mapper, 2000 by zip code and 2010 by county. Can see numbers of speakers of top 30 languages in your area.
3. Census Business Builder:
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https://cbb.census.gov/sbe/#
Community fact finder targeted toward small businesses who want to research their communities. Can view results on a map or in a report by zip code.

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