



## Mass Farmers Markets 5 Year Strategic Plan 2015-2020

### Vision

**Enhance the farmers market system in Massachusetts to connect more individuals to local and healthy food and to support local agriculture.**

### Activities

- Support – provide strategic and innovative methods for enhancing, farmers markets;
- Educate – provide a platform for continuous planning and education in order to sustain and evolve farmers markets;
- Engage – foster active participation in farmers markets and increase the availability and consumption of healthy foods
- Advocate – serve as a voice at the local and state level for people in favor for farmers markets.

### Operational Model

In 1978, MFM was created to establish farmers markets in the Commonwealth. Now, with over 300 markets MFM has helped pave the way for regional organizations and groups to collaborate in order to support their community's farmers markets. To leverage resources, develop partnerships, and gather the best farmers market practitioners and leaders MFM will develop a Thought Leader Alliance; a partnership of regional, governmental and other organizations and leaders working to develop, implement, and oversee enhancement of farmers markets operations and healthy food access.

### Program Initiatives

The following programs are the core initiatives that support MFM's activities and vision and are designed to produce new programs that support its related activity and contribution to MFM's vision.

### Best Practices

*Support/Educate/Engage*

Best practices, provide consistency and guidance that ensures farmers markets in the Commonwealth provide the best possible access to local healthy foods and support to farmers, vendors, shoppers, and their communities .



### **Best practices resource guide:**

With over 36 years of data and research running farmers markets, MFM is able to compile a best practices resource guide for farmers markets in Massachusetts. The guide will be developed in partnership with the organization's newly created Alliance, relying on MFM's experiences and expertise plus the experiences and expertise from partners.

### **Healthy Living Actions:**

SNAP shoppers represent a significant growth factor for farmers markets. MFM will continue to lead efforts to train markets to provide SNAP sales and work to secure funds to support increased SNAP activity.

- Program partner with Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness and the City of Boston providing SNAP matching funding and implementation.
- Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives grant. Has been funded for 5 years to directly work with state agencies, community organizations, and farmers market managers to expand SNAP sales and provide access to 1.25 million in federal funding for nutrition incentives.
- Expand e-token to markets that will benefit by lowering transaction and record keeping expenses for SNAP processing and matching.

**Building on the highly successful Farmers Market Nutrition Program,** MFM will continue to support that program's operation while creating additional coupon and incentive programs with health care, insurance, and other organizations in order to directly increase the consumption of local healthy fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Steward Hospital diabetes program
- Nutri-Savings- After 4 years of consulting Eden Red- parent of Nutri-Savings, we are expanding their system of employer funded healthy food incentives to farmers markets.
- Harvard Pilgrim Health and their newly formed goal of widely incenting eating more fresh fruits and vegetables
- Seek to partner with Project Bread to support/expand the Walk for Hunger and allocate a portion of those funds to farmers market incentives proving fresh fruits and vegetables through food banks and food pantries.

## **Farmers Market Managers Certification Program**

*Support/Educate/Engage*

**A voluntary program** designed to encourage farmers market managers to pursue leadership skills and professional development in topics essential to market management. Market managers will be recognized with a certificate upon completion of the program. The certificate offers acknowledgement



to community organizers and vendors that the market manager is a trained professional. The certificate will be renewed with continuing education credits provided by MFM and Alliance members, available through conferences, workshops, and seminars. Continuing education will be designed so as not to be overly burdensome for managers or providers.

Based in MFM's "Best Practices Guide" and similar certificate programs in other states (Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, and New York) the certification program is the process of ensuring knowledge and skills are transferred to farmers market managers across the state and that they are publically recognized to be professionally trained. Core elements of the MFM certificate program revolves around developing new farmers market shoppers, attention to access to farmers markets' healthy foods, solid integration into the upcoming state food plan, and working to implement healthy food incentive programs and pilots.

Once established, the program will be recommended to municipal leaders as a process they may participate in and use to ensure their community has the best farmers market to offer their community.

## **Though Leader Alliance Lead**

### *Engage/Support*

MFM intends to be the diver to convene, organize , and regularly engage a wide range of farmers market supporters: State and municipal government, NGO's, for profit companies, health care and insurance companies, foundations, and philanthropy.

With a new vision and program initiatives, MFM will be positioned to improve service and could provide MFM the opportunity to develop apps, webinars, videos, and more online support around our new vision.

### **Retain a seat and leadership role on the Governor's MA Food Policy Council**

MFM, unlike many other organizations involved, will continue to create the resources required to materially support the Council, which is an unfunded initiative of the Legislature and Governor.

### **Mass in Motion Farmers Market Group**

MFM will continue to be a group member and bring Mass in Motion and similar programs into the consortium.

### **Boston Public Market Association**

MFM will continue to assist the Market in its planning and execution.

### **Partner with MDAR, other state agencies**

MFM will continue to work collaboratively to enhance and support farmers markets, local agriculture and food businesses.



### **Buy Local Organizations**

MFM will continue and expand its collaborations with Buy Locals

### **Project Bread, Food for Free, Regional Food Banks, and other organizations**

MFM will collaborate with these organizations to increase access to healthy foods, to distribute a greater percentage of unused farm production, and re-direct unsold local produce from the waste stream into food access .

### **Harvard Pilgrim, Bay State Health, BCBS, Partners Health Care, and other health care and insurers.**

MFM will bring these organizations more firmly into strategic thinking and planning, particularly around using healthy food as a means to improving health and lowering health care costs.

### **Foundations interested in health & wellness, food access, and sustainable communities**

MFM will bring foundations into the alliance to ensure innovative thinking and actions.

## **Copley Square Farmers Market – Flagship**

### *Support/Engage*

The Copley Square Farmers Market will become MFM's flagship market. MFM resources and attention will be placed on Copley Square to enhance market operations and offerings and to provide a vehicle for MFM to conduct, in partnership with the Alliance, continuous research and implementation of new services and innovations.

Copley Square Farmers Markets supports MFM's "Best Practices" and will become our organization's testing site and real world farmers market example to use and test thought leader alliance ideas and initiatives.

## **Advocacy Program**

### **Agriculture Day at the Statehouse**

A day in partnership with Massachusetts Farm Bureau, the Mass Agriculture Promotion Board, and Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources AG Day is a celebration of the hard work and diversity in the Commonwealth's agriculture industry and also the opportunity for growers, producers, and farmers markets to have their voices heard by the Massachusetts legislative body. MFM has been a longtime partner and leader in organizing and managing the day.

### **Farmers Market BOH Working Group**

MFM will continue to engage and help lead this consortium that deals with Boards of Health issues related to farmers markets and farming. Volunteers from this group work to answer questions, provide education and perspective to health officers, market managers, and farmers, and solve immediate issues as needed.



#### **Food Policy Council & MA Food Plan**

MFM will remain engaged in the MA Food Policy Council and provide support (as able) to creating and implementing a state wide food plan that includes farmers markets.

#### **Mass Farm Bureau's legislative committee**

MFM will continue to provide information, feedback, and suggestions to this committee.

#### **Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness steering committee**

MFM will continue to participate and represent the needs of farmers markets, vendors, and managers.

#### **Speaking Program Services**

MFM staff will present as well as coordinate with consortium partners to present at other groups and organizations meetings and conferences on behalf of farmers markets.

### **Growing Farmers Market Shoppers**

#### *Engage/support*

MFM understands that the number of farmers markets has grown substantially since 2003. In some cases this has outstripped the growth in shoppers regularly shopping at farmers markets. Some market managers and vendors report stresses in vendor and market sustainability.

MFM provided extensive research into shopper attributes and has created a set of replicable actions to support shoppers increased attendance. MFM will provide training and support to markets in their use and directly support activities that target actions on healthy food access.