



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board

Recommendation Number (20140512-7D): SNAP Outreach and Enrollment; Improving Farmers Market and Farm Stand Access for Low-Income Residents

WHEREAS, 18 percent of Travis County residents and 25.5 percent of Travis County children live in a food insecure household, which is directly tied to poverty, and results in increased health care costs, lower educational success, and decreased workforce productivity; and

WHEREAS, many food insecure residents have limited access to highly nutritious foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and are thus at greater risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer; and

WHEREAS, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, has proven to be a federal nutrition program that effectively lifts many persons out of poverty and has a 1.79 local economic multiplier effect; and

WHEREAS, in 2011 only 57 percent of eligible persons in Travis County enrolled in SNAP, a loss of \$169,304,251 in federal SNAP benefits, and a loss of \$303,054,609 of economic activity to Travis County that year; and

WHEREAS, direct outreach and application assistance to SNAP-eligible persons has proven to significantly increase SNAP enrollment, thereby decreasing food insecurity for these persons; and

WHEREAS, in April, 2012, the Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) recommended to the Austin City Council that the City implement outreach and assistance efforts to increase participation in the SNAP program; and

WHEREAS, in February, 2013 and August, 2013 the SFPB again recommended to the Austin City Council investment of funding to increase outreach and enrollment in SNAP; and

WHEREAS, students at the LBJ School of Public Affairs reported in May 2013 that throughout the U.S. farmers market incentives programs successfully generated increased purchases of fresh produce by

SNAP recipients while also benefitting local farmers, including Sustainable Food Center's Double Dollars Incentive Program; and

WHEREAS, in May 2013, the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommended, in relation to the Economic Impact of Austin's Food Sector Report, that the City streamline regulations and permitting for farmers markets and farm stands and incentivize adoption of EBT technology to increase healthy food access for low-income persons; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and the Austin/Travis County Community Health Improvement Plan align in their goals of increasing access to healthy foods and the impact of federal food and nutrition assistance programs.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin fund a position with a partner community organization with demonstrated expertise and an established track record of facilitating SNAP outreach and enrollment to increase SNAP enrollment in Travis County;

AND, FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin and Travis County jointly fund an outreach campaign to increase awareness and enrollment in SNAP for eligible persons;

AND, FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin and Travis County partner with, and provide resources to community organizations to facilitate the establishment of effective technology and outreach for redeeming SNAP/WIC/FMNP and providing additional incentives at all area farmers markets and farm stands.

Date of Approval: May 12, 2014

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 10-0 vote

Attest: _____

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Background Information

Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board Budget Recommendation: SNAP Outreach and Enrollment; Improving Farmers Market and Farm Stand Access for Low-Income Residents

1. The estimated cost per year for a SNAP outreach/enrollment position is \$15.50/hr. plus benefits. This is based on information from community non-profits with similar positions on staff.
2. The cost of an outreach campaign will depend on types of media utilized, and cost of airtime and/or printing of materials. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food Research Action Center both have print materials available free to download: <http://snap.ntis.gov/download.aspx>; <http://frac.org/snapfood-stamps-outreach-and-access-toolkit/>
3. The recommended cost for expanding the Double Dollars Incentive Program is \$75,000. This is based on research from students at the LBJ School of Public Affairs <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=189723>; and cost estimates for administration and equipment, as used by the Sustainable Food Center in their program.
4. The lower-income community is frequently challenged in accessing healthy food, which can contribute to higher chronic disease rates. <http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97C6D565-BB43-406D-A6D5-ECA3BBF35AF0%7D/FINALGroceryGap.pdf>
5. The Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recommend that "food assistance programs should encourage and incentivize the purchase of healthy foods." <http://www.fasinfat.org/healthy-affordable-foods/>
6. A recent Gallup nationwide study found that lack of access to healthier food alone is not related to higher obesity rates. Lack of income has a higher correlation. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/164513/income-not-food-deserts-blame-obesity.aspx#1>