



Utah State University

From the Selected Works of Kelsey Hall

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Double Up Food Bucks CSA Program

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Double Up Food Bucks CSA Program

Double Up Food Bucks (Double Up) is a statewide produce incentive program that allows Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) customers to access more locally grown, fresh vegetables and fruits at farmers markets, farm stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. A program of the Utah Department of Health, the benefits of Double Up and SNAP are four-fold: (1) families with low income eat more healthy food, (2) local farmers gain new customers and make more money, (3) more food dollars stay in the local economy, and (4) your community gains increased awareness of your CSA for participation in the Double Up program.

How It Works

Your CSA must be a SNAP-approved retailer and offer a variety of eligible food items (consistent each year), including fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, breads, cereals, snack foods, and nonalcoholic beverages. Seeds and plants producing food for the household to eat are also eligible.

SNAP customers first pre-order or reserve a season-long share with a local SNAP-accepting CSA farm. Due to USDA guidelines, SNAP customers cannot make purchases more than 2 weeks in advance, thus they are unable to purchase a share in full up front. To accommodate this, the Utah Department of Health has devised two payment methods available to SNAP CSA customers:

Payment Method 1

On pick-up day, you swipe customers' EBT card to pay for the cost of that week's share. Then, SNAP customers enjoy a "free" CSA share the following week with the Double Up match. Double Up works for CSAs by matching SNAP benefits dollar-for-dollar, up to \$30. This process is repeated until the end of the season.

Payment Method 2

On pick-up day, you swipe customers' EBT card to pay for half the cost of that week's share. Then, you match the other half of that share's price with the Double Up match. This process is repeated until the end of the season.

SNAP Membership Agreements

Most CSA membership agreements are not tailored for SNAP customers. You can start with a basic membership agreement and tailor information about payments, refundable deposits, missed pickups, and late pickups to develop a SNAP membership agreement.

Refundable Deposits

We recommend that SNAP customers submit a deposit when signing up for your CSA. This deposit serves as an incentive to stay in the CSA and to compensate you if the SNAP customer misses a CSA share pickup or drops out. Consider a deposit amount of one month's share or 5% to 10% of the total cost of the CSA share. The deposit amount needs to be reasonable because the SNAP customers have limited expendable income. The deposit is paid by cash, check, credit card, or debit card, but the EBT Card cannot be used for the deposit.

Missed Pickups

Do not process a SNAP payment for a share that a SNAP customer does not pick up. If you accept a SNAP payment for food that was not delivered at the time of the transaction, you could risk trouble with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Consider being flexible about missed pickups and set a specific number of pickups SNAP customers can miss before you deduct payment from their deposit or cancel their membership.

Late Pickups

In the membership agreement form, clearly explain your policy and procedures for late pickups of CSA shares. A late pickup can complicate payments from SNAP customers because you state your pickup times when you apply to be a SNAP vendor. You need to consider how you will collect payment from SNAP customers who come after hours.

Expectations and Benefits

What can you expect

- Marketing materials to assist in marketing your CSA to SNAP customers (banner, vendor banners, community posters, direct-household marketing).
- Technical assistance about Point-of-Sale equipment from USU Extension's local food marketing specialist, if needed, to ensure a viable incentive system.
- Inclusion in a communications plan that employs a variety of methods including a direct mailing to SNAP customers, social media, and list of participating farmers markets, farm stands and CSAs that are distributed by community partners, including Utah Workforce Services, Utahns Against Hunger, and USU Extension.
- Feedback on the impact of participating in the program, based on data from evaluations.

What we will expect

- Data collection and the timely submission of reports.
- Regular updates and communication with program coordinator, Hannah Martin.
- Accommodation of evaluation teams to conduct surveys with SNAP customers or CSA owners/managers.

Benefits We Hope the Double Up Program Will Show

- Greater number of SNAP customers are able to access fresh vegetables and fruits.
- Increased consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits by SNAP customers.
- Improved health of SNAP customers.
- Increased support and income for Utah's local growers of fruits and vegetables.

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