Produce Plus Program
2017 Season Report

This program is funded by the Government of the District of Columbia, Department of Health, Community Health Administration
What is the Produce Plus Program?

The Produce Plus Program aims to:

- Improve the viability of farmers’ markets selling fresh produce in communities with high poverty rates
- Increase access to fruits and vegetables for low-resource DC residents
- Increase community participation and investment in neighborhood markets

$10 worth of produce at Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Barry Farm
How does Produce Plus work?

With Produce Plus, DC residents participating in qualifying programs can go to farmers’ markets twice per week to get $10 to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables.

The program is administered by DC Greens through a grant from the DC Department of Health and in collaboration with the DC Farmers Market Collaborative.
2017 Summary Overview

Produce Plus Distributed: $812,745

Produce Plus Redeemed: $759,785 (93.48%)

9,453 unique participants*

19,657 additional people served**

*9,928 individuals registered for the program. The total number of unique participants above only includes individuals who picked up checks.

**Customers were asked “How many people do you share food with?”

Customers shop at Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Wah Luck
Updates to the Program in 2017

- Produce Plus distribution sites were limited to areas of the city that have the highest concentration of eligible residents, specifically focusing on wards where at least 10% of residents are SNAP recipients.
- DC Greens expanded the Market Champions program, hiring 21 Produce Plus customers to support outreach and cultivate welcoming environments at farmers’ markets across the city.
- The Farmers’ Market Brigade established a cohort of Volunteer Leaders to facilitate distribution of Produce Plus at markets.
Produce Plus Growth and Customer Participation

Customers shop at Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Congress Heights Seniors Wellness Center
Since 2014, the Produce Plus Program has continued to grow both in amount distributed and number of participating customers.

As investment has increased, Produce Plus has maintained consistently high redemption rates.
9,453 District residents participated in the Produc Plus Program in 2017.

47.7% of participants were Ward 7 or 8 residents, an increase from 44% in 2016.
In 2017 Produce Plus participation increased in almost every ward in the city. Overall program usage increased from 7,045 participants in 2016 to 9,453 participants in 2017 (34% increase).

Note: Ward residency is based on zip codes provided by participants. For zip codes that include several wards (20001, 20002, 20010, 20011, and 20020), residency is estimated based on market distribution data at the locations where customers registered. One Produce Plus customer did not provide a Zip Code.
Building A Base of Farmers’ Market Customers

In 2017, the median number of overall market visits per customer in the program increased (3 to 4) from 2016 indicating higher engagement from returning customers.

Average overall customer visits also increased from 7 in 2016 to 8.6 in 2017, with the average being higher the earlier the customer registered for the program.
Increasing Access in High Need Areas

- Two additional weekend markets opened in Ward 7, bolstered by Produce Plus distribution and support from Market Champions.
- There were 2,488 participants in Ward 7 during the 2017 season; a 47% increase from 2016 when Ward 7 had 1,429 participants and higher than the 34% increase overall.
- In 2016 Ward 7 residents made up 21% of overall Produce Plus customers, that number increased to 26% in 2017.
• Although Wards 7 and 8 had a similar number of participating markets, redemption and participation were significantly higher in Ward 7.

• 66% of markets in Ward 7 had weekend hours compared to only 14% of markets in Ward 8, indicating potential to expand Produce Plus accessibility for those residents through further investment.
Market Champions Program

Market Champions Patrick Zhou and Donna Muhammad helping customers at the Bloomingdale and Deanwood farmers’ markets
As paid staff on the Produce Plus team, Market Champions conduct outreach and cultivate welcoming, inclusive spaces at distributing markets.

Market Champions distribute program materials in their neighborhoods, conduct street outreach, recruit volunteers, register potential customers for the program at community events, and make home visits to ensure homebound customers can sign up for Produce Plus.

Each Market Champion is assigned to one or more farmers’ markets. At market they greet customers, answer questions about Produce Plus and related programs (such as WIC, Grocery Plus, and Medicare QMB), help new customers navigate the market, manage lines and resolve conflicts, collect customer feedback, provide language interpretation services, and encourage customers to try new fruits and vegetables.
Market Champions were placed at locations across the city based on the needs of farmers’ markets and the neighborhoods they serve:

**Ward 1**
14th & U Farmers’ Market
Arcadia and Common Good City Farm’s Market at LeDroit Park
Mount Pleasant Farmers’ Market

**Ward 2**
Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Wah Luck

**Ward 5**
Bloomingdale Farmers’ Market

**Ward 6**
FRESHFARM Capitol Riverfront Farmers’ Market
FRESHFARM H St Farmers’ Market
FRESHFARM Mount Vernon Farmers’ Market
Shaw Farmers’ Market

**Ward 7**
Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Deanwood
Minnesota Avenue-Benning Road Farmers’ Market
Kenilworth-Parkside Farmers’ Market

**Ward 8**
Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Barry Farm
Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Bellevue
Ward 8 Farmers’ Market

*Market Champions and DC Greens staff after a feedback session*
Market Champions helped the Produce Plus team distribute over 10,000 Produce Plus flyers and Ward Food Guides.

Market Champions also helped register 702 people for Produce Plus at senior centers, public housing communities, clinics, health fairs, childcare facilities, and ESA service centers; 58% percent of people who registered for Produce Plus through these off-site registrations visited a market and used the program.
Creating Community Spaces

Market Champions also helped plan and execute “Market Days” at the Kenilworth-Parkside, Ward 8, Minnesota Avenue-Benning Road, and Petworth farmers’ markets.

Featuring live music, children’s activities, and cooking demonstrations, these events aimed to get more families with young children excited about the markets.

A family learns how to make squash stir fry at the Ward 8 Farmers’ Market “Market Day”
Fostering Healthy Eating Habits

Market Champions helped Produce Plus customers develop healthy habits.

On average, customers at markets with Market Champions were 12% more likely to report that they tried a new fruit or vegetable during the Produce Plus season, and 10% more likely to report that they spent something other than Produce Plus (including cash, credit, SNAP, WIC FMNP, and Senior FMNP) at a market in 2017.*

*Based on 78 customer surveys conducted at eight Arcadia Markets (4 with Market Champions, 4 without) during the season
“My favorite moments were when I could make someone believe that trying Produce Plus was their idea.

They would say ‘It’s too good to be true!’ and I would say ‘Go see for yourself like I did.’ When I would run into them again I would ask ‘Have you gone to the market?’ and when they had gone it made me feel real good.

I tell everybody who has ears.”

Hattie Milo, Ward 1 Market Champion
Farmers’ Market Brigade

Volunteers distribute checks at the DC Open Air Farmers’ Market at RFK and Arcadia’s Mobile Market at Congress Heights Senior Wellness Center.
Farmers’ Market Brigade volunteers support the Produce Plus Program by distributing Produce Plus checks at farmers’ markets.

The Farmers’ Market Brigade also aims to foster *community ownership* of the program amongst recipients of Produce Plus. Through targeted outreach and relationship building with Produce Plus recipients, the Farmers’ Market Brigade serves as an important gateway for Produce Plus customer leadership and engagement.
## Year Over Year Growth

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<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>% growth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique Volunteers</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>284*</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unique Customer-Volunteers**</td>
<td>52 (20%)</td>
<td>75 (26%)</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Hours</td>
<td>2,378</td>
<td>4,230***</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer-Volunteer Hours</td>
<td>1,044 (44%)</td>
<td>1,651 (39%)</td>
<td>58%</td>
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*This number only includes individuals who volunteered at a market. DC Greens hosted 28 training. 15% of trained volunteers, 40 individuals, never signed up to volunteer at a farmers’ market.

**Customer-volunteers are volunteers who also receive Produce Plus.

***The growth in volunteer hours is likely a result of implementation of the Volunteer Leaders program as well as more consistent self-reporting of hours by volunteers.
Fostering Community Ownership

 Volunteers who are also Produce Plus customers contributed more than 50% of volunteer hours in Wards 5, 7 and 8, areas of D.C. with the highest food insecurity.

 With over 50% of checks being distributed in those wards, Customer-volunteers play a critical role in making Produce Plus possible at those markets.
Developing Community Leaders

Volunteer Leaders supported 1-3 markets on a weekly basis to help streamline Produce Plus customers’ and volunteers’ experiences, and reduce the burden on market staff to administer the program.

15 out of 25 Volunteer Leaders were returning Customer-Volunteers.
Qualifying Programs for Produce Plus Participants

To sign-up for Produce Plus, customers must present documentation that they participate in SNAP/EBT, Senior Grocery Plus, WIC, Medicaid, TANF, SSI Disability, or Medicare QMB.
Note: Individuals who register for Produce Plus may participate in several qualifying programs. Totals may be more than 100%.
Produce Plus was the first nutrition incentive program nationally to use Medicaid as a qualifying program and helps individuals at risk for diet-related chronic illness access fresh fruits and vegetables.

In 2017, 52.58% of Produce Plus participants reported receiving Medicaid.
Strengthening Food Access for SNAP Users

- In 2017, Produce Plus enrolled over 1,000 more SNAP recipients than in 2016; a 4% increase, bringing overall SNAP participation for Produce Plus customers to 43.64%.
- 22 markets partnered with SNAP-Ed to provide cooking demonstrations and nutrition information to over 4,000 market shoppers.
- Produce Plus allows SNAP recipients to supplement their food budgets and make healthy choices by buying more fresh fruits and vegetables.

SNAP Customer Participation in Produce Plus

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SNAP Participants</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2893</td>
<td>39.40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4125</td>
<td>43.64%</td>
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Concentration of Produce Plus WIC Participants by Zip Code

- 5.88% of participants are parents of young children who participate in WIC to supplement their nutritional needs.
- Participation of WIC recipients varied significantly by market (from 0-29% of customers) and was highest at locations that were accessible from WIC clinics and had intentional outreach from markets.
Connecting Seniors to QMB

- In 2017, DC Greens partnered with the Health Insurance Counseling Project (HICP) to connect customers who receive Medicare and have qualifying incomes with the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) program.
- The number of QMB applications that HICP received and processed nearly doubled in 2017 as compared to 2016.
- The percentage of Produce Plus customers who report enrollment in QMB increased from 6.39% in 2016 to 9.77% in 2017, while the total number of individual customers reporting more than doubled.

Market Champion Shirley Bush distributes Medicare QMB information at Arcadia’s Bellevue Mobile Market
Conclusion and Recommendations
More Markets And Weekend Accessibility Fosters Growth In Produce Plus Participation.

- An increase in number of markets and additional outreach and engagement by Market Champions contributed to a rapid increase in participation Ward 7.
- Although redemption increased slightly in Ward 8, participation did not keep pace with program growth overall. Supporting the development of more robust markets, particularly weekend markets, would help bolster Produce Plus use in Ward 8 and increase customer engagement.
Produce Plus Is Run *With And By* Customers, Not Just *For* Customers

- The Farmers’ Market Brigade functions as a tool to foster community engagement.
- Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders who are also Produce Plus recipients are essential to program implementation and provide the majority of volunteer hours in Wards 5, 7, and 8.
- By recruiting and training Volunteer Leaders and hiring Market Champions, the Produce Plus Program provides avenues for developing food system leaders within the neighborhoods of participating markets.

Volunteers and Market Champions manage check distribution at FRESHFARM’s Mt. Vernon Triangle Farmers’ Market
Participation From Customers In Underrepresented Programs Can Be Increased By Thoughtful Partnerships And Outreach.

- Produce Plus continues to be heavily used by senior DC residents experiencing food insecurity.
- The two locations with highest participation from WIC recipients were both within short walking distance from WIC clinics and had regular outreach to those customers to enroll in Produce Plus. The highest participation was a result of direct involvement from WIC staff on-site at the market.

Volunteers distribute checks at Community Foodworks’ Columbia Heights Farmers’ Market
Contact Information

Michael Segal
Program Coordinator
Healthful Food Access Initiatives
DC Department of Health
Michael.Segal@dc.gov
(202) 442-5874

Mayra Ibarra
Produce Plus Program Manager
DC Greens
mayra@dcgreens.org
(202) 601-9200

A customer shops at Arcadia and Common Good City Farm’s Market at Ledroit Park