

# Produce Plus Program 2018 Season Report

This program is funded by the Government of  
the District of Columbia, DC Health



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# 2019 Program Summary



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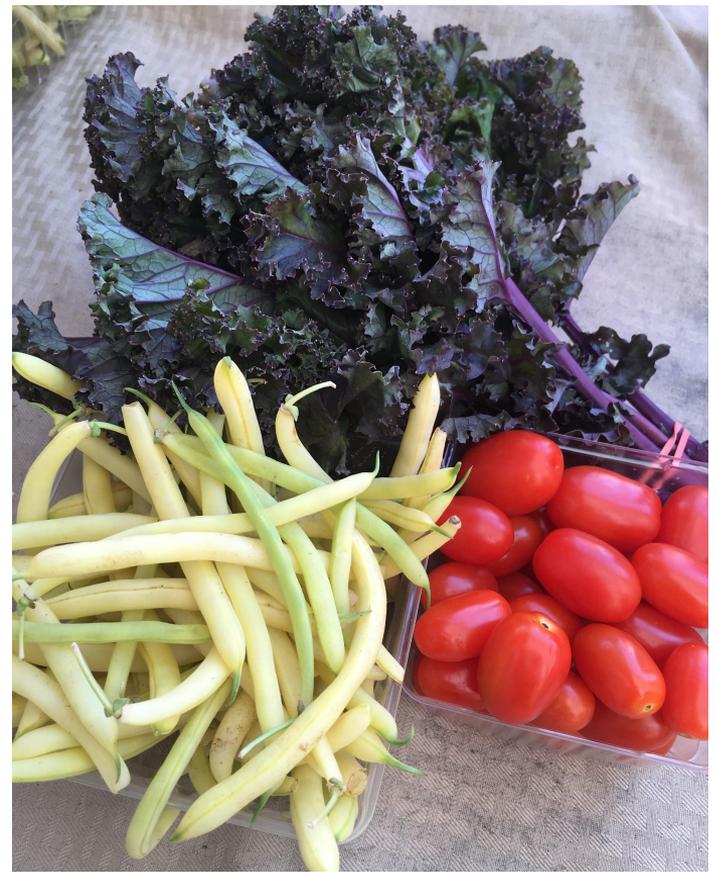


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# What is the Produce Plus Program?

The Produce Plus Program aims to:

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



*\$10 worth of produce at the Columbia Heights Farmers' Market*

# How does Produce Plus work?



*Customers register for Produce Plus at the Bloomingdale Farmers' Market*

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 DC Health and in partnership with farmers' markets across the city.



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# 2018 Summary Overview

Produce Plus Distributed: \$877,195

Produce Plus Redeemed: \$832,170 (94.87%)

9,041 unique participants\*

18,843 additional people served\*\*

\*The total number of unique participants above only includes individuals who picked up checks, not the total number who registered.

\*\*Customers were asked "How many people do you share food with?"



# Who uses Produce Plus?



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# Produce Plus Customers At A Glance

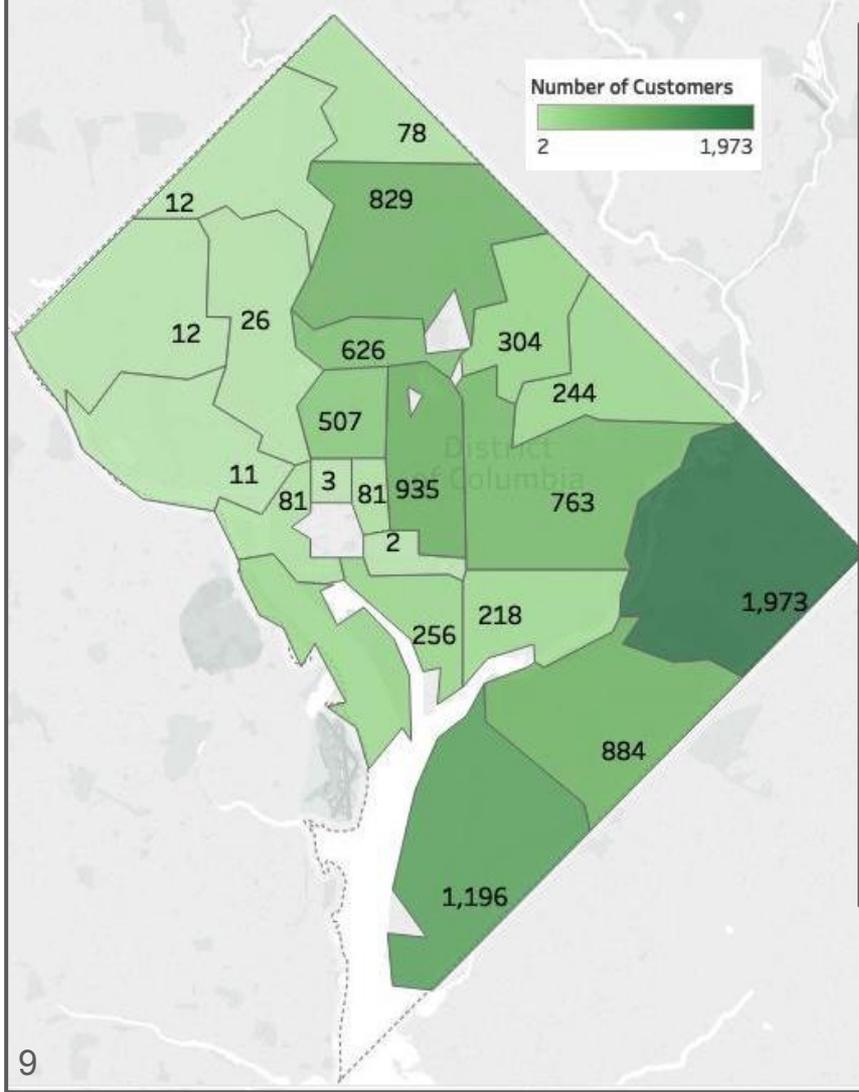
Produce Plus has high participation from seniors and customers over the age of 50.

Female-identified customers make up the majority of Produce Plus participants.

On average, participants report that they share food with two other people.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2018</b>	
Male	2634	29.13%
Female	6398	70.77%
Other	9	0.10%
<b>Age</b>	<b>2018</b>	
Average	50	
Median	59	





Zip Code	Number of Customers
20001	935
20002	763
20003	218
20004	2
20005	81
20007	11
20008	26
20009	507
20010	626
20011	829
20012	78
20015	12
20016	12
20017	304
20018	244
20019	1,973
20020	884
20024	256
20032	1,196
20036	3
20037	81

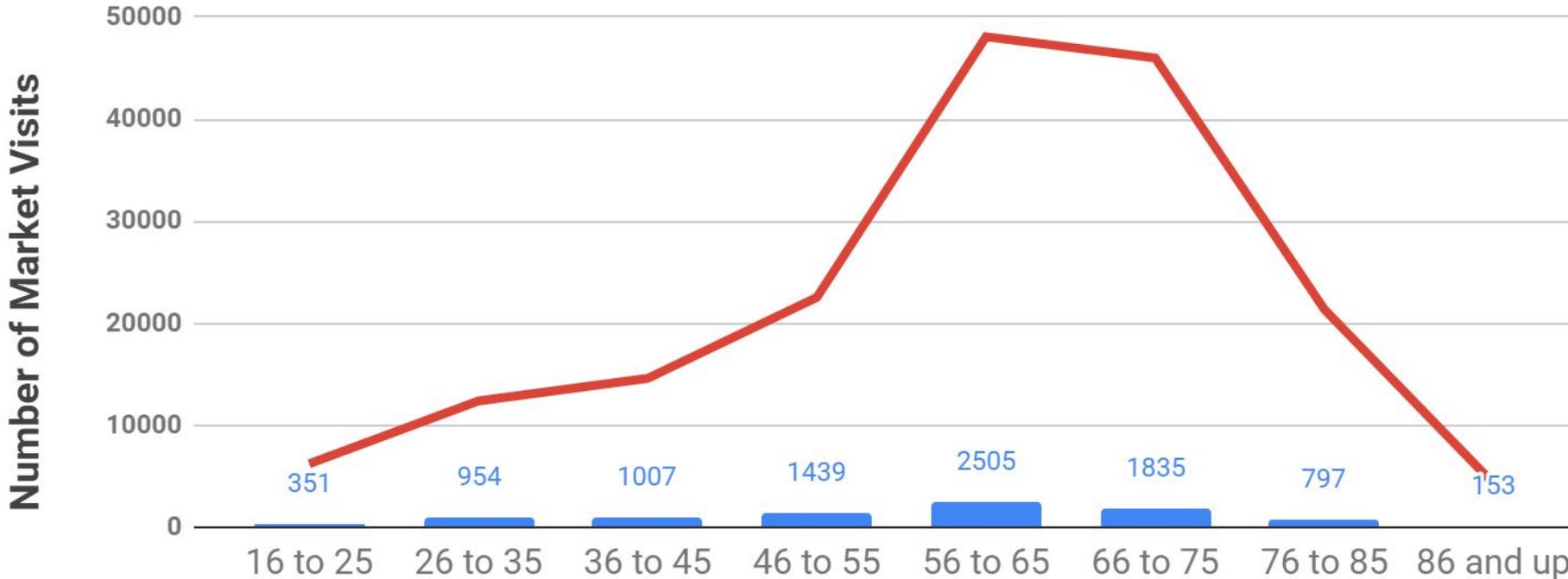
# Produce Plus Participants by Zip Code

In the District, Wards 5, 7 and 8 have the highest number of families receiving SNAP, highest number of residents living below the poverty line, and highest levels of unemployment.

Participation in Produce Plus is highest in Ward 7 and Ward 8 with approximately 45% of customers residing in those Wards.

# Customers by Age

■ # of Customers    — # of Visits



Produce Plus customers range from 16 to over 100 years old. The most dedicated participants tend to be between 56 and 75.

## Age Range





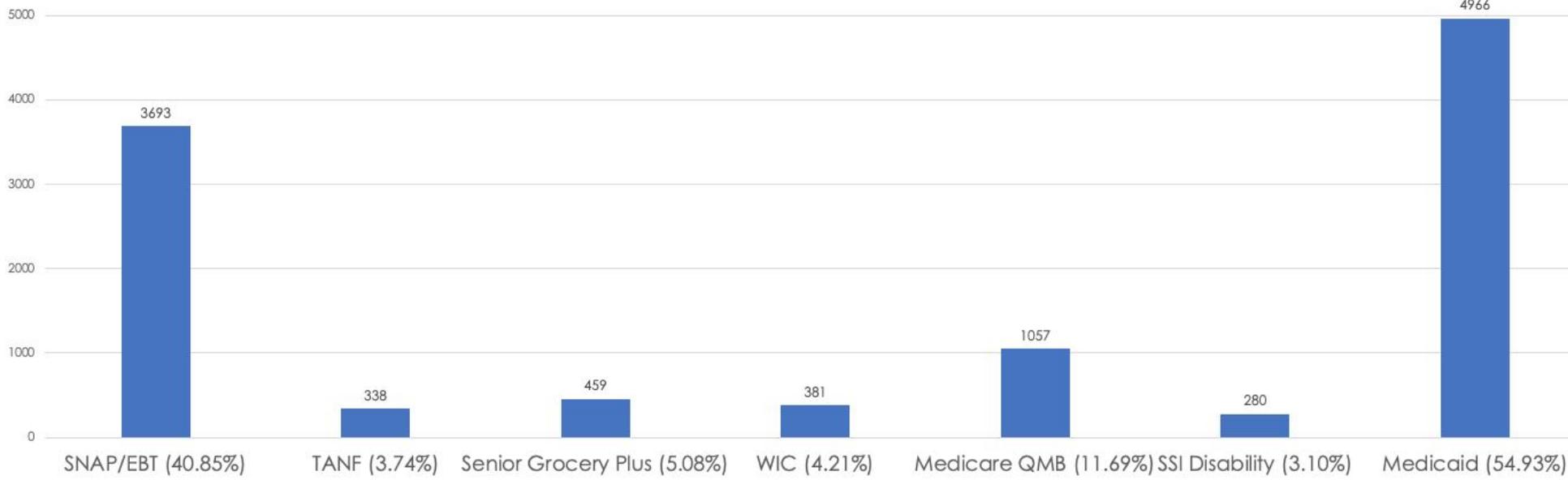
*Customer at Arcadia's Mobile Market at The Overlook at Oxon Run*

# How Do Participants Qualify?

Customers must present documentation that they are DC residents and participate in one of the following programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC),
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Senior Grocery Plus
- SSI Disability, or
- Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (Medicare QMB)

## Qualifying Programs for Produce Plus Participants



Note: Individuals who register for Produce Plus may participate in several qualifying programs. Totals may be more than 100%.



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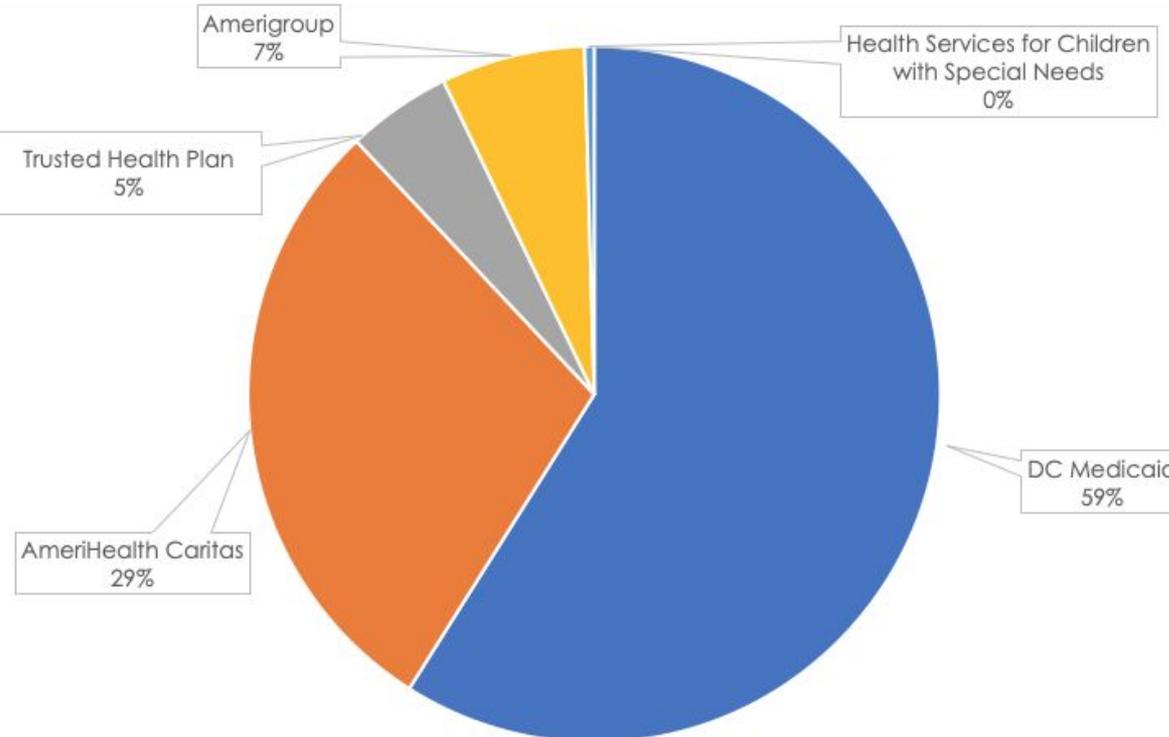
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# Connecting Food and Health



Produce Plus Participants with Medicaid

Medicaid continues to be the most common program that participants use to register for Produce Plus.

54.93% of customers reported that they participate in Medicaid.

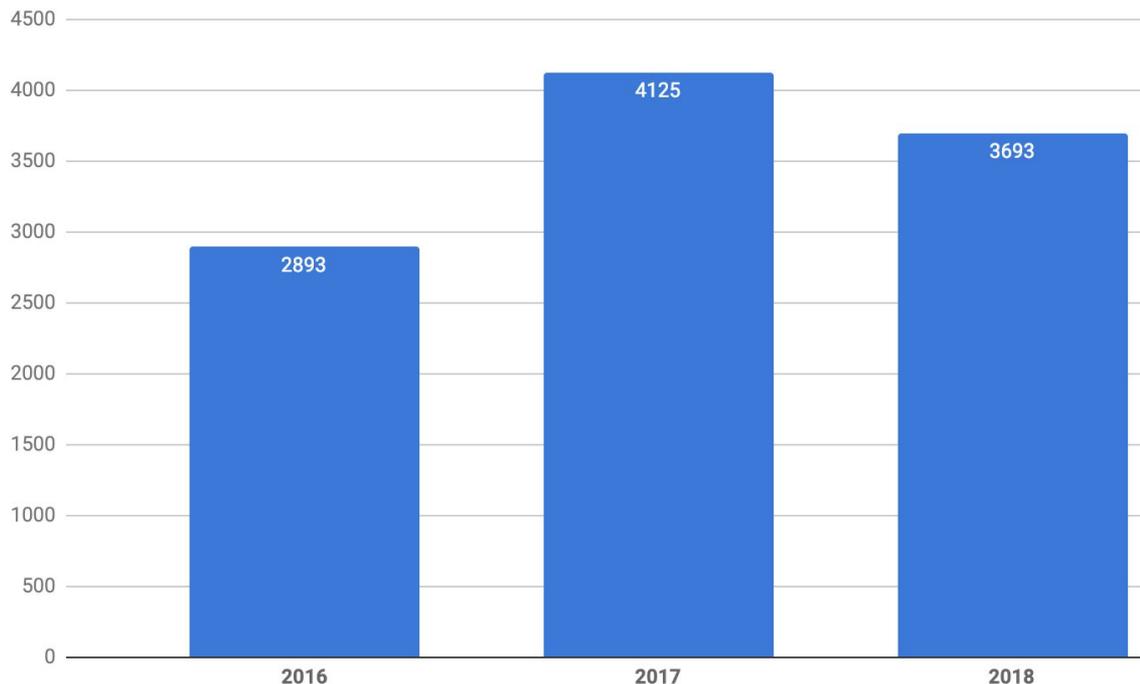
# Food Access for SNAP Users

In 2018, 40% of participants indicated that they are enrolled in SNAP, a slight decrease from 2017.

Produce Plus facilitates entry to SNAP participants into the market space and also provides information about matching programs at markets.

Additionally, SNAP-Ed hosted over 100 food demonstrations at markets distributing Produce Plus.

Number of Produce Plus SNAP Participants Per Year



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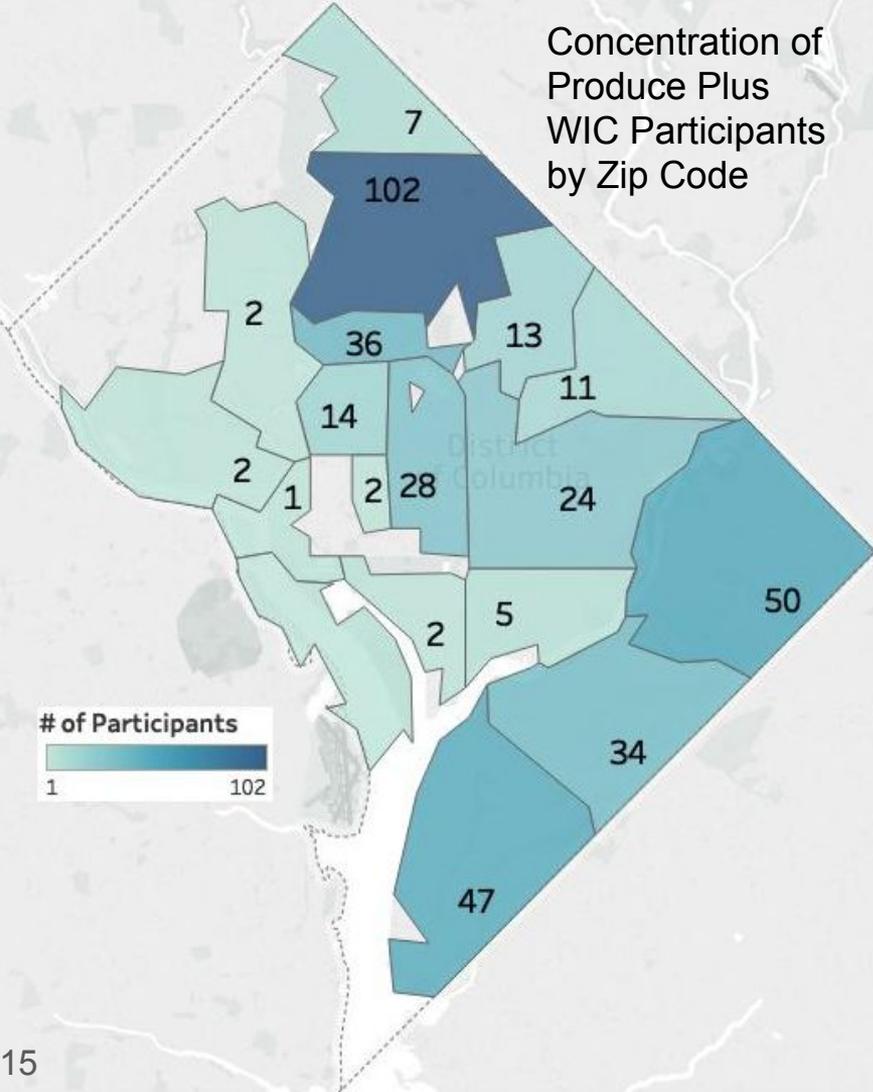
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# Reaching WIC Participants

4.21% of participants are parents of young children who participate in WIC to supplement their nutritional needs.

Participation of WIC continues to be highest in zip code 20011, which has strong partnerships and close proximity between local farmers' markets and WIC clinics.

Concentration of Produce Plus WIC Participants by Zip Code



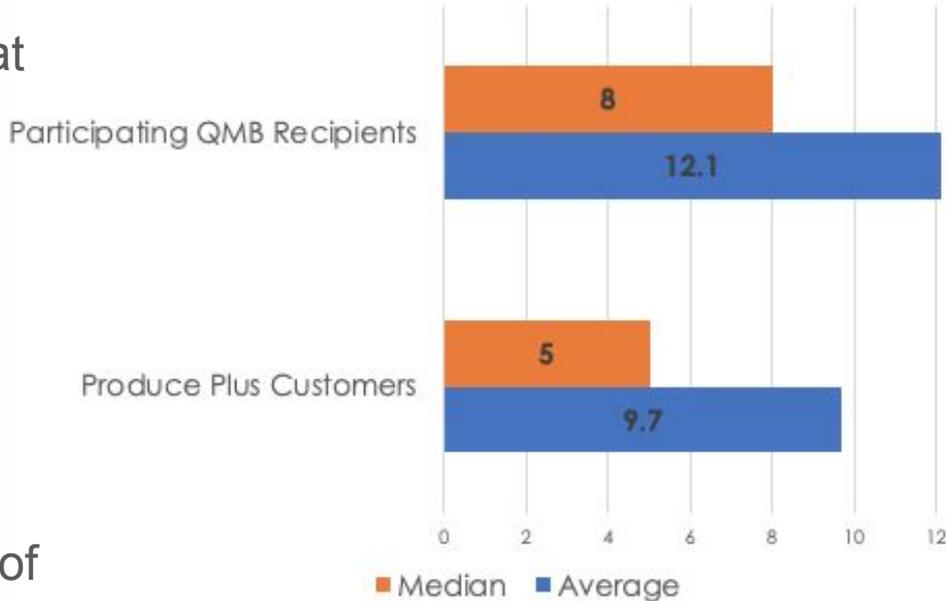
# Medicare QMB

In 2018, the number of Produce Plus participants who participate in Medicare QMB increased to 11.69% of total customers.

Almost 75% of QMB recipients reported that it was their only qualifying program, indicating that Produce Plus reaches a population of seniors that does not participate in other benefit programs.

QMB recipients have both a higher median and average number of visits compared to Produce Plus customers overall, with 59% of them going to the market at least once a week during the season.

Market Visits



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# Increasing Customer Participation



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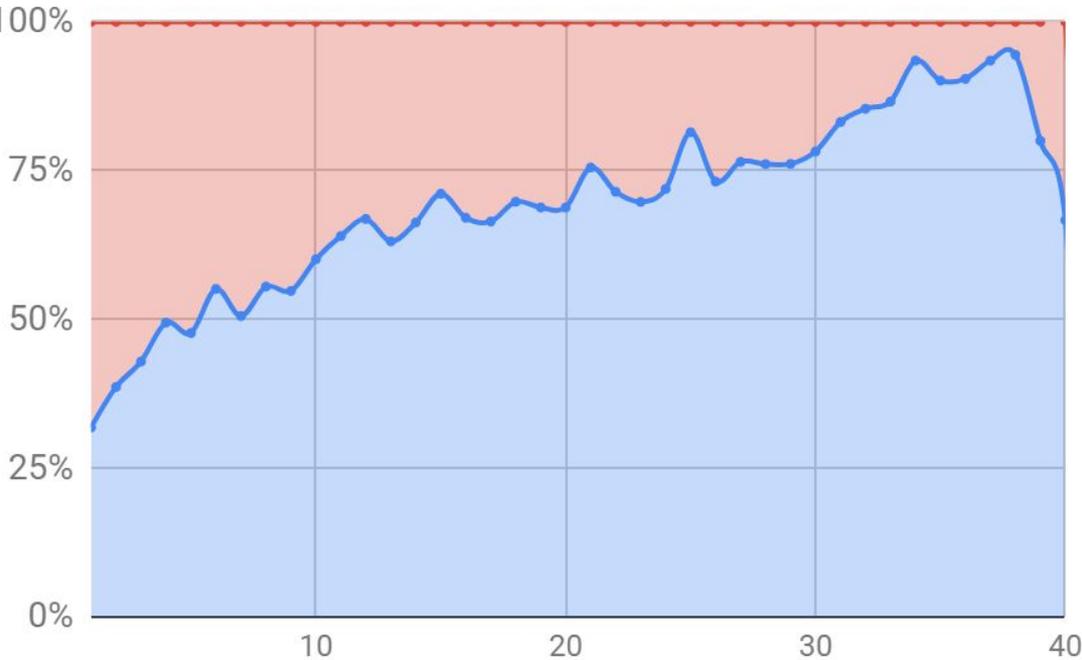
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# Modifying Shopping Habits

● New 2018 Customers ● Returning 2017 Customers



Number of Market Visits

On average, customers who are new to Produce Plus in 2018 returned to a market every two weeks from the day that they registered.

52.56% of Produce Plus customers in 2018 were returning after participating in 2017. These returning customers used the program at twice the rate of new participants, making one market visit per week after registering.



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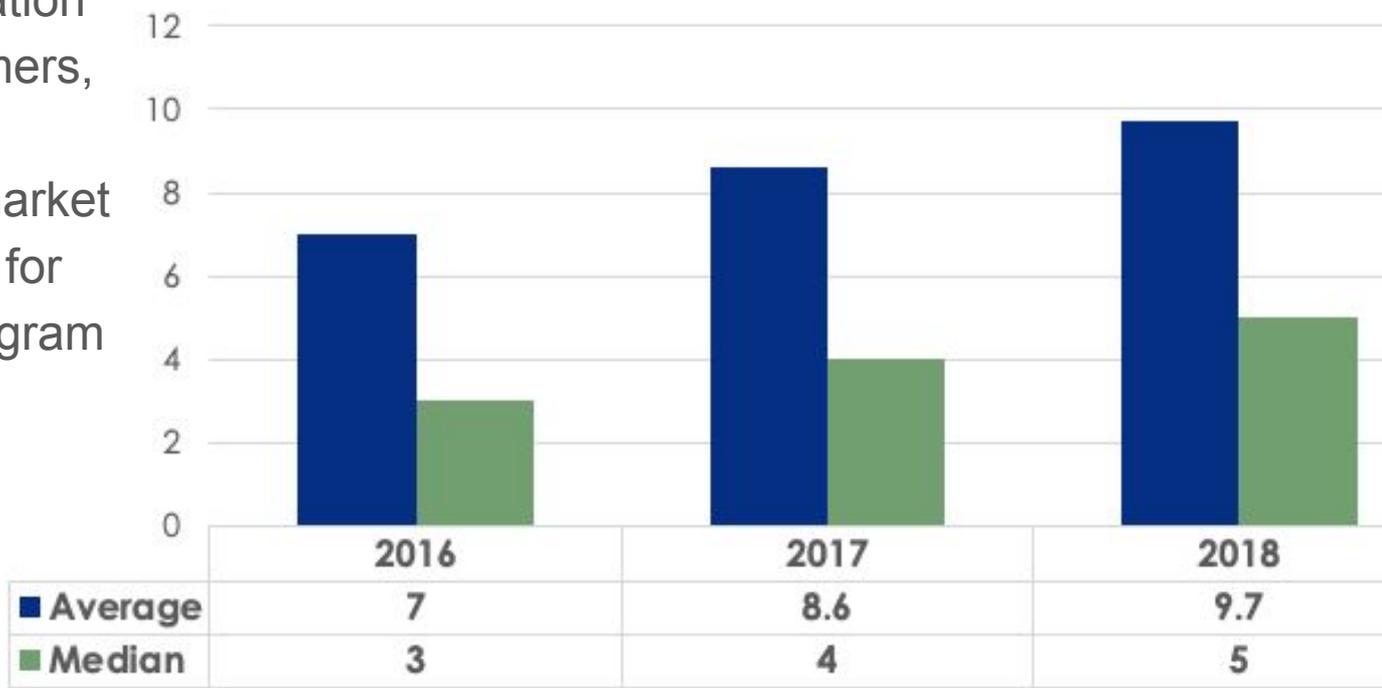
# Increasing Market Visits

Bolstered by participation from returning customers, both the median and average number of market visits have increased for the Produce Plus program from 2016 to 2018.

Note: The median number marks the halfway point in the set of number of visits for each customer if organized in ascending or descending order. This means that half of all customers visited the market an equal or less number of times than the median and half visited an equal or higher number of times.

The average number tends to be higher due to a small number of customers who maximize their market visits every week.

Market Visits for Produce Plus Customers



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# Reaching Customers With Least Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables



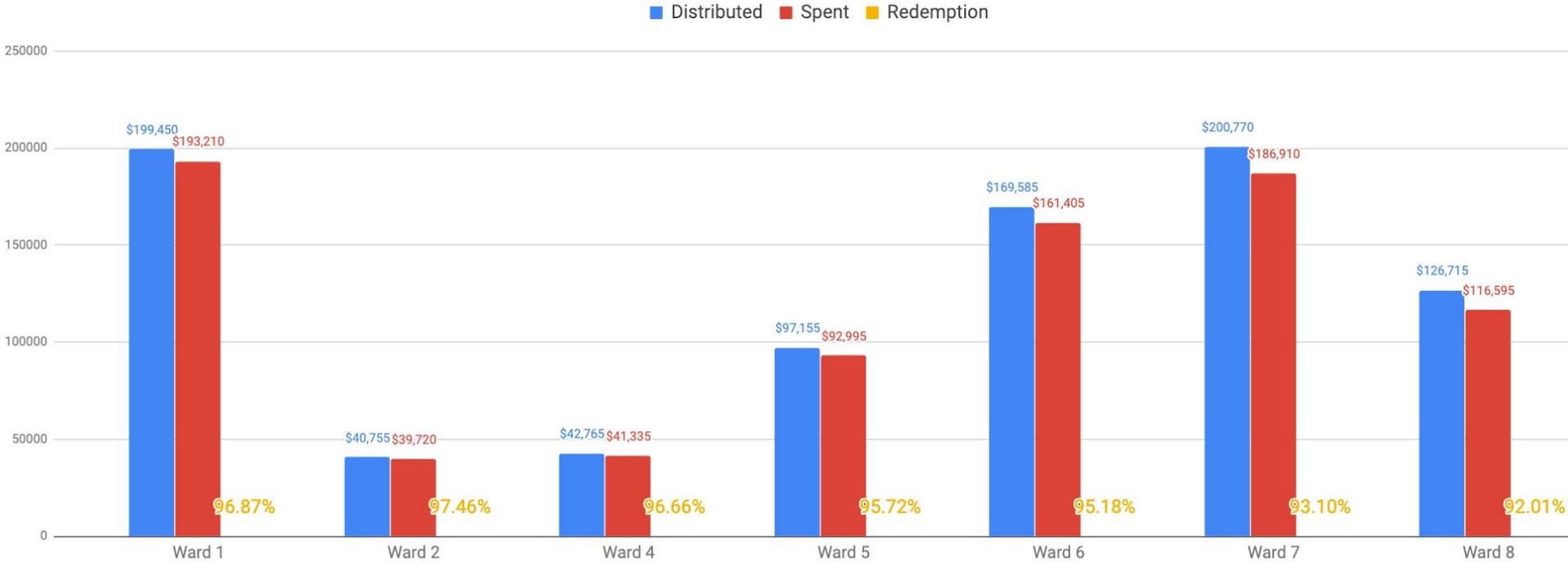
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# 2018 Produce Plus Usage by Ward



Redemption rates for Produce Plus continue to be very high, ranging from 92% to almost 98% by Ward.



# Produce Plus Reaches a Distinct Set of Customers

Produce Plus is one of few programs that includes Medicaid in eligibility, which represents 54.93% of participants - the majority of whom do not indicate that they participate in any other qualifying program.

To assess overlap with other DC Health food programs, registration included a question about Joyful Food Markets which are run exclusively in elementary schools in Wards 7 and 8. Only 5% of Produce Plus customers were familiar with or used the Joyful Food Markets program to access food.

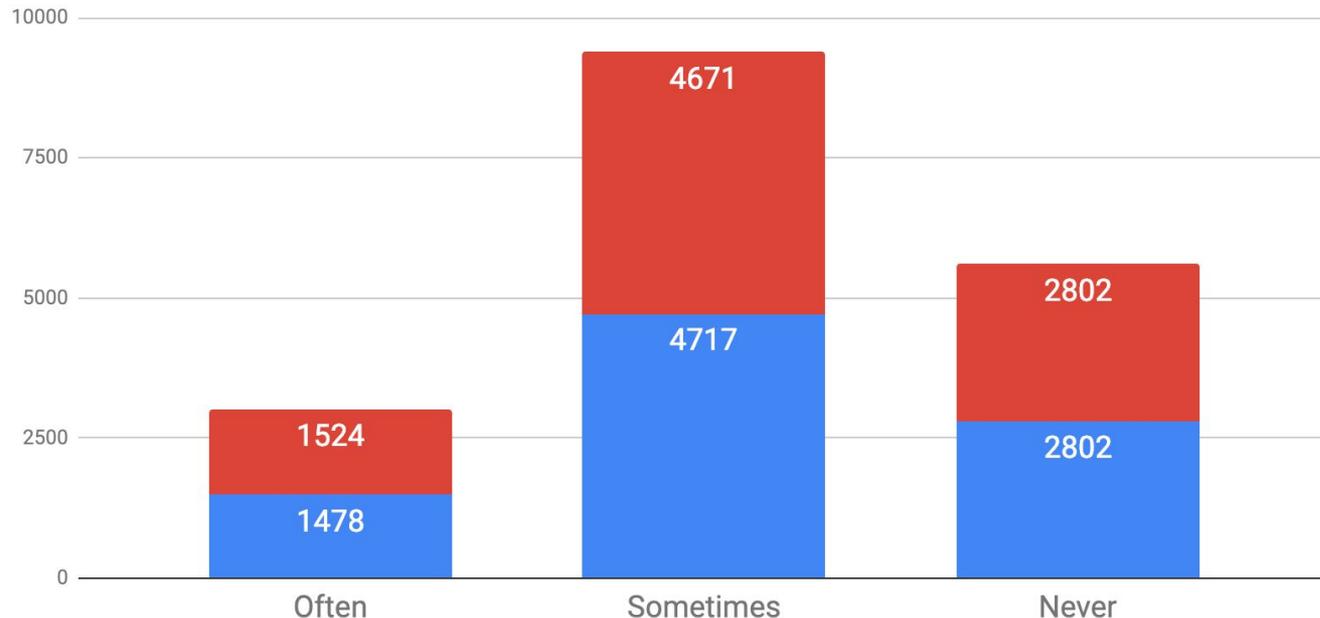


Market Manager Jim and Market Champion Reyita help a customer at the 14th and Kennedy Farmers' Market

# Providing Access for Food Insecure Residents

## Hunger Vital Sign

- Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.
- Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more



In 2018 the Produce Plus program used the Hunger Vital Sign, a 2-question screening tool, to identify participants who are at risk for food insecurity\*.

Using this measure, 68.52% of Produce Plus customers identified as being at risk for food insecurity.

\*Answering that either or both of the two statements is 'often' or 'sometimes' true would identify someone as being at risk for food insecurity. Note also that 44 customers did not answer the questions, and have not been included in the total percentage.



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# Strengthening Community Engagement



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# Market Champions



*Market Champion Patrick and Volunteer Leader Juliet manage the line and provide interpretation at the Bloomingdale Farmers' Market*

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, recruit volunteers, and register potential customers for the program at community events.

Each Market Champion is assigned to one or more farmers' markets. They greet customers, answer questions about Produce Plus, and related programs (such as WIC, SNAP, Medicare QMB, and matching programs available at participating markets), help new customers navigate the market, manage lines, resolve conflicts, collect customer feedback, provide language interpretation services, and encourage customers to try new fruits and vegetables.



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# Creating Community Spaces

Market Champions serve a key role in bringing community members to their neighborhood markets.

In surveys conducted at markets during the 2018 season, 57% of customers indicated that they learned about the market through word of mouth. 53% stated that if they ever had any questions about the market they would ask the Market Champion, with the majority of them identifying the Market Champion by name.

\*Based on 212 customer surveys conducted at fourteen markets that hosted Market Champions during the 2018 Produce Plus season



*Market Champion Miguel and Market Volunteer Donna at the Community Foodworks' Columbia Heights Farmers' Market*

# Farmers' Market Brigade

volunteers support the Produce Plus Program by *distributing checks* at farmers' markets and by *providing general customer service* to customers.

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 as volunteers.



Volunteers Brenda and Tammie and Market Manager Aminat distribute checks at Community Foodworks' Rhode Island Avenue Farmers' Market.

# Year Over Year Growth

	2016	2017	2018	% growth 2017 to 2018
<b>Unique Volunteers</b>	265	284	285	<1%
<b>Unique Customer-Volunteers*</b>	52 (20%)	75 (26%)	83 (29%)	11%
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	2,378	4,230**	6267***	48%
<b>Customer-Volunteer Hours</b>	1,044 (44%)	1,651 (39%)	2917 (47%)	76%

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

\*\*The growth in volunteer hours was likely a result of launching the Volunteer Leaders program in 2017.

\*\*\*The growth in volunteer hours between 2017 to 2018 likely reflects more accurate reporting by volunteers on a new, user-friendly volunteer website platform, VolunteerHub.



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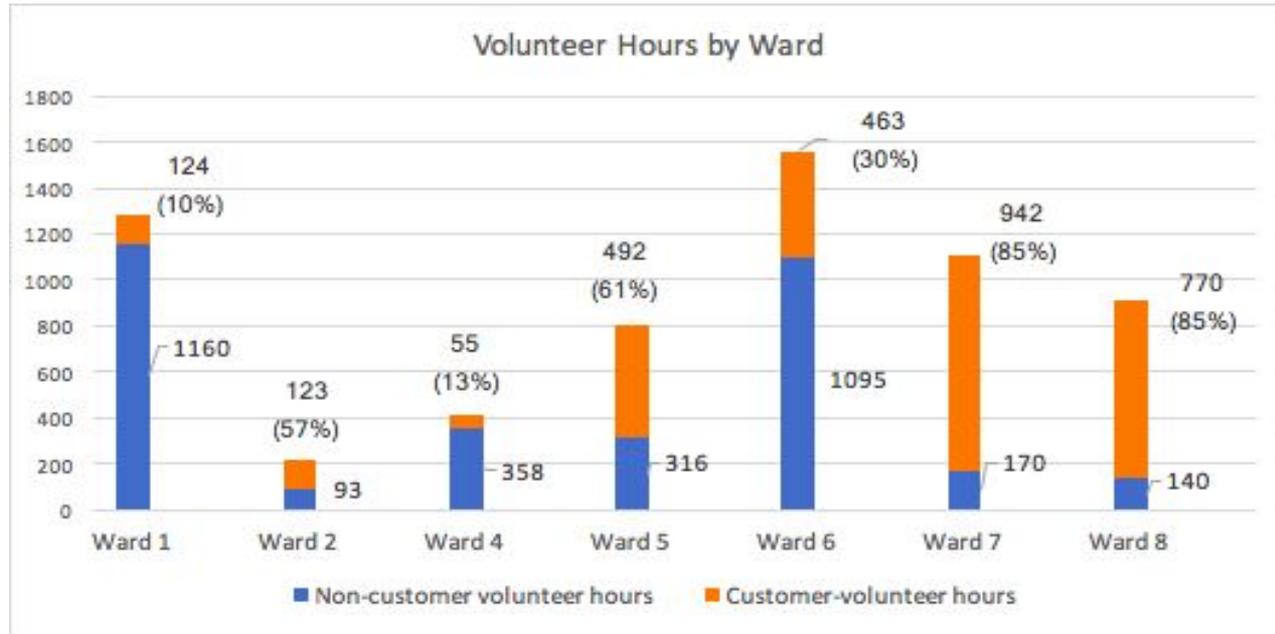
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# Fostering Community Ownership

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.

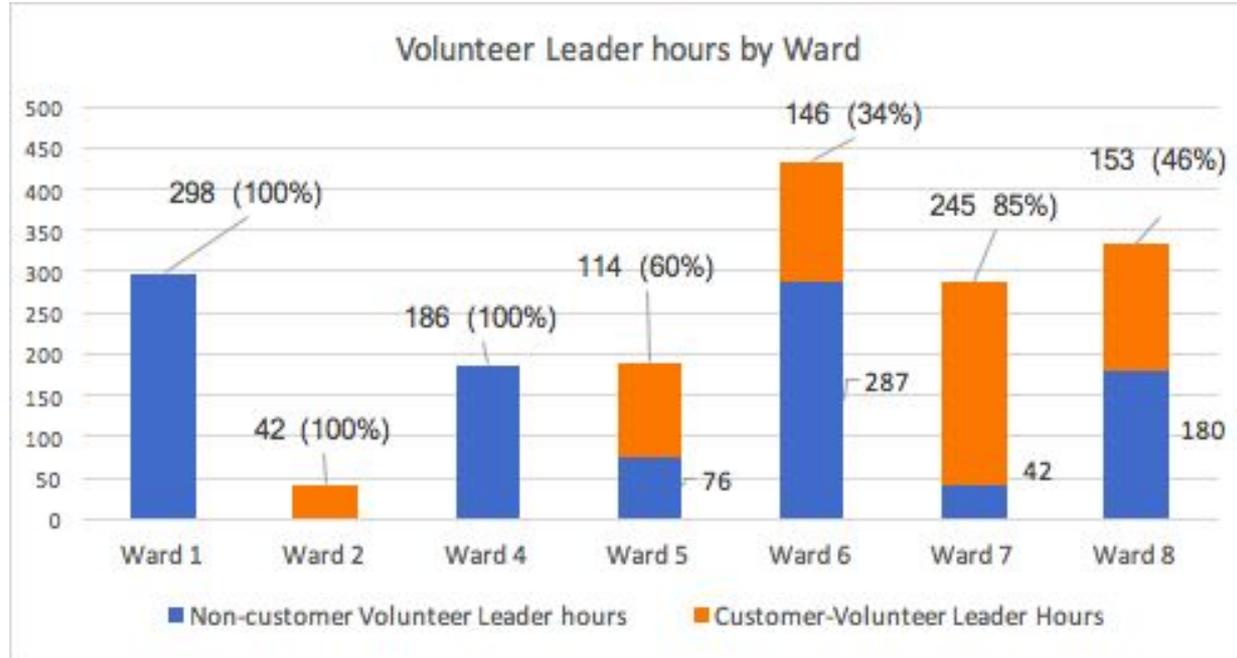
With over 50% of checks being distributed in those wards, Customer-volunteers play a critical role in making Produce Plus possible at those markets.



# Developing Community Leaders

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

We grew from 25 to 31 Volunteer Leaders in 2018, increasing coverage to almost all 37 distribution sites. 12 Volunteer Leaders were also Customer-Volunteers.





# Promoting Neighborhood Markets



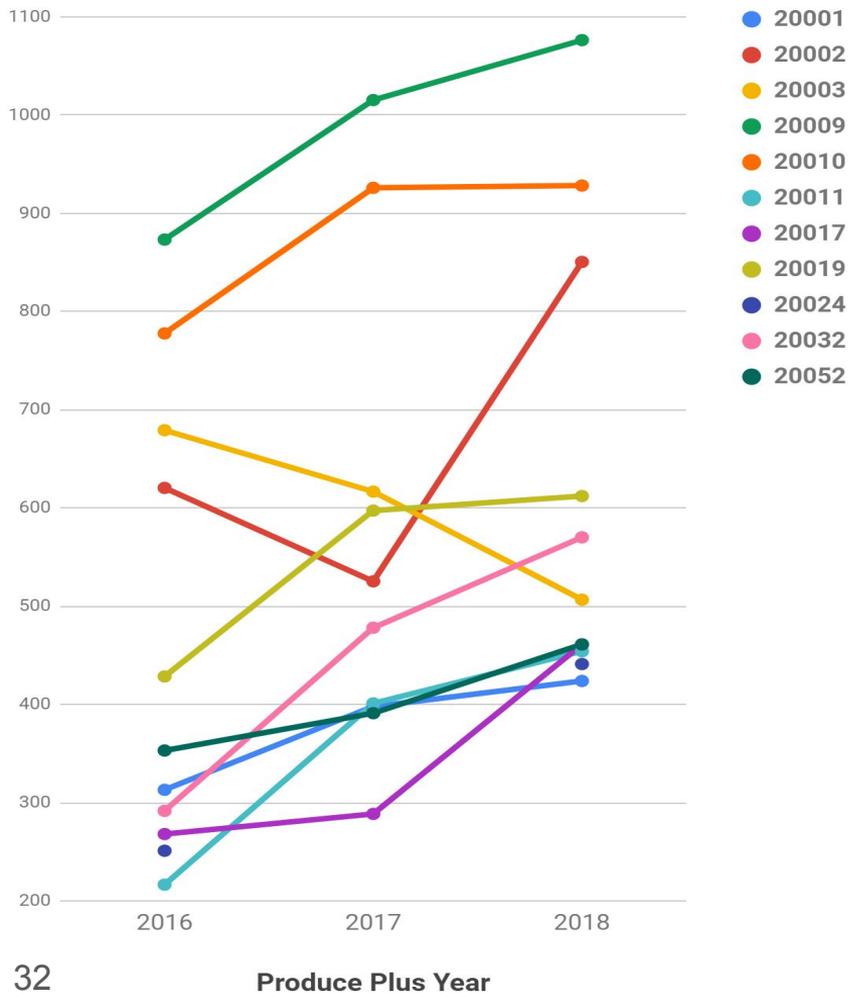
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Neighborhood Participation in Produce Plus Markets (2016, 2017, and 2018)



# Neighborhood Markets

The number of customers who receive Produce Plus at markets in their neighborhoods has generally increased across the city in line with program growth from 2016 to 2018.

The majority of markets have over 50% of Produce Plus customers that are residents from the same zip code as where the market is located.

*Note: Data for this graph only included markets that participated in at least two different program years to measure a year over year change. Additionally, zip code 20024 did not have any participating market in 2017, and as such only reflects data in 2016 and 2018.*

# Identifying Trends

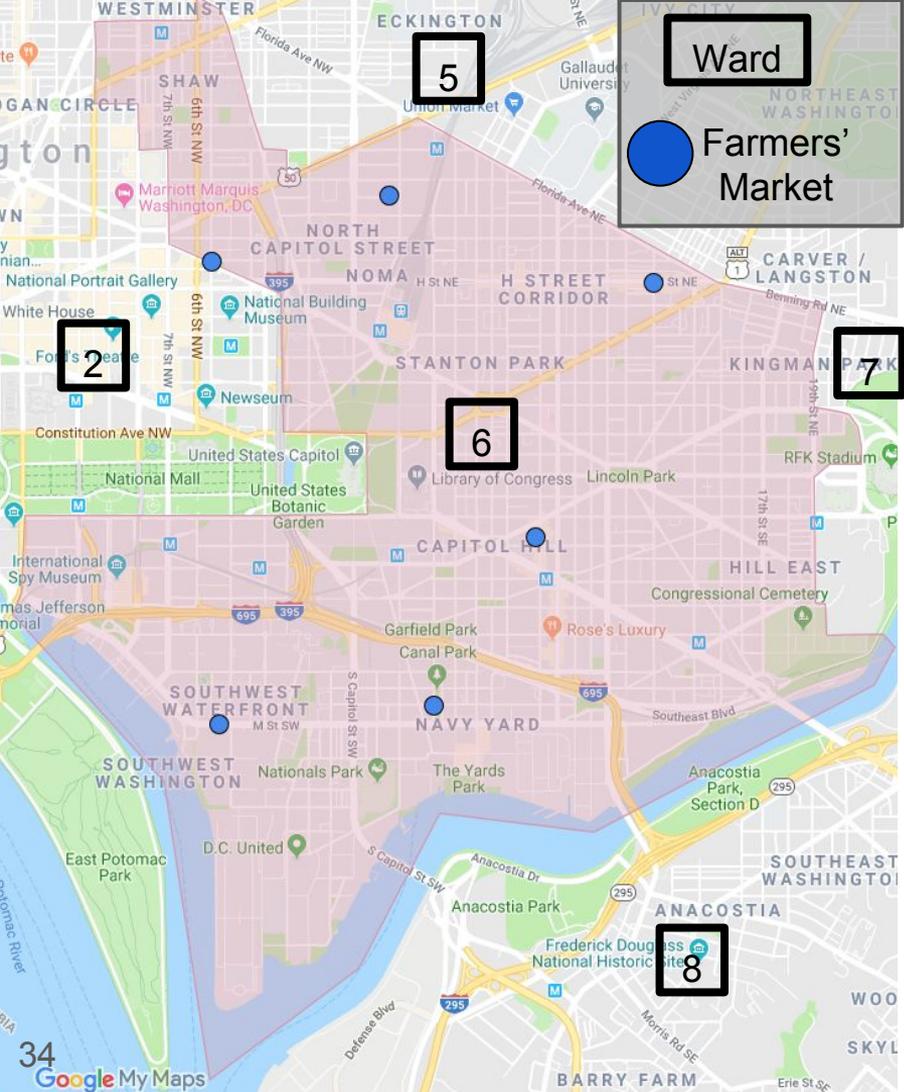
Zip code data on where customers receive Produce Plus reveals the following:

- Ward 6 Markets have the highest percentage of customers who travel from zip codes outside of that Ward, notably from Ward 5 and Ward 8.
- Ward 1 Markets see customers from all across the city. Participants in the same zip code make up the largest group, but no one area has a majority.
- Markets in other areas of the city had at least 50% of customers come from the same zip code.



*\$10 worth of produce at the Mount Pleasant Farmers' Market*

Note: No market had more than 80% of customers from the same zip code as the market location.

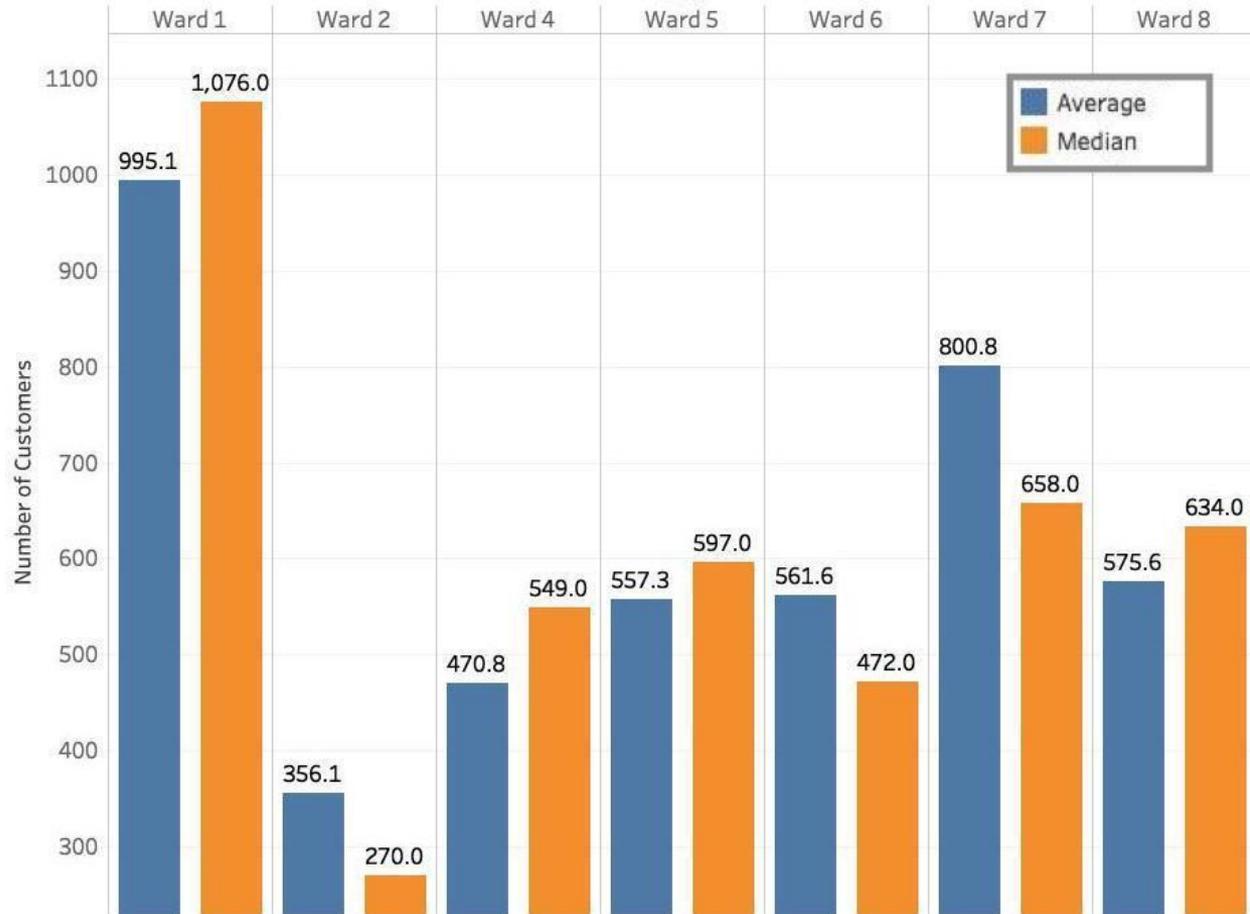


Produce Plus participants travel to Ward 6 markets for many reasons, including:

- **High number of multi-vendor markets.**
  - There are six different markets in Ward 6 including Eastern Market, which is among the oldest and most well-known markets in the District. These are large, multi-vendor markets that allow customers to shop for multiple items at once.
- **Close proximity to food insecure areas.**
  - Ward 6 is adjacent to Wards 5, 7, and 8 which have among the highest levels of food insecurity in DC. Most commonly, customers from zip code 20020 have among the highest participation in Ward 6.
- **Ease of access:**
  - Ward 6 is connected to other areas of the city via major bus and metro lines allowing customers to arrive sometimes more quickly than they would to markets in their own zip codes.

Ward 1 had the highest median and average unique customers served per market location. Despite the high volume the markets maintained an average of 7.88 visits per customer—higher than any other Ward.

The central location of these markets, many of which are located near commercial corridors and other services, as well as weekend operating hours allow many residents to visit.



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# Strengthening Neighborhood Markets

In other areas of the city, an average of 70% of market visitors live in the same neighborhood as their farmers' market.

Customers also visited markets more regularly in 2018 than 2017. This means with increased participation on a weekly basis, customers still tend to pick up checks at markets located near their homes.



*\$10 at the FRESHFARM NOMA Farmers' Market*



# Supporting Market Viability



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# Supporting New Markets

Produce Plus supports market viability in areas of the city with the least access to fresh fruits and vegetables. New farmers' markets have opened in Wards 7 and 8.

- Ex: Community Foodworks has opened four markets in Ward 7 since 2016. These four markets cost \$68,000 to operate in 2018 and redeemed \$48,000 in Produce Plus\*.

Markets typically distribute \$16-20,000 in Produce Plus funds during a season. The Produce Plus team also provides outreach to customers, volunteer support, and promotion of the markets.



*\*Data provided by Community Foodworks*



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# Market Outreach

In 2018, Arcadia's Mobile Market in Downtown Anacostia was new to the program.

The Produce Plus team collaborated with Arcadia to host a Market Festival to publicize the market in the neighborhood and encourage residents to shop there.



Shopping, crafts, and yoga at the Anacostia Market Festival (Photo credit: Alexandria Ligon)



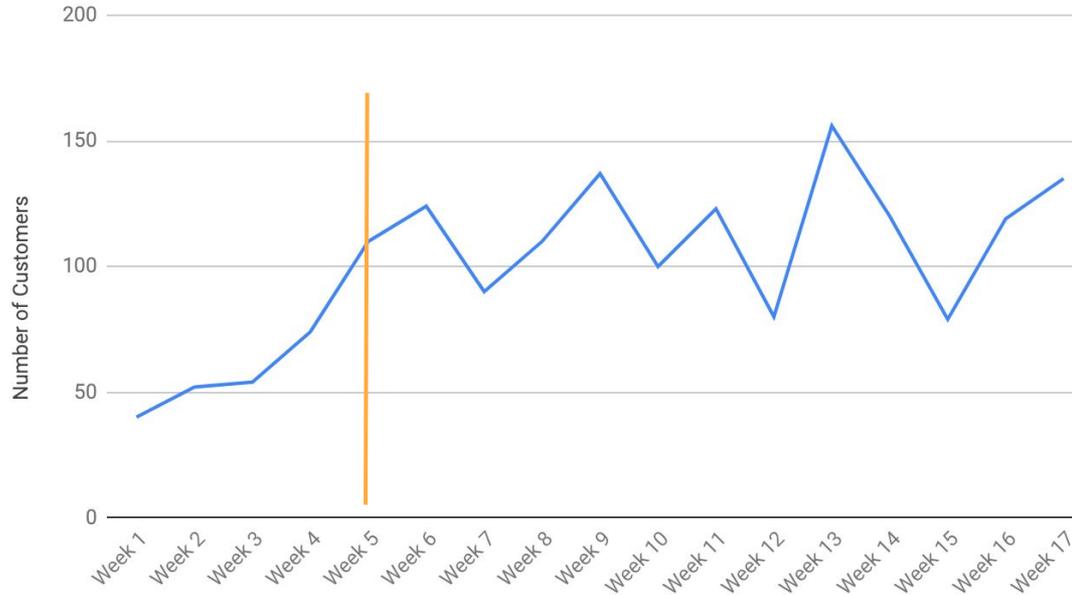
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The Festival resulted in a 68% increase in Produce Plus customers visiting the market from the week prior to the week after. This increase was sustained, on average, throughout the season.

Additionally, sales at the Anacostia Market increased by 55% from the week before the festival to the week after, with non-Produce Plus spending increasing at twice the rate of Produce Plus spending.

*Note: Sales data provided by the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture*

### Downtown Anacostia Market Visits



*The orange horizontal line marks the date of the Anacostia Market festival. Number of Customers here indicates only Produce Plus customers, that number is higher for the market in general. Attendance for Produce Plus customers remained consistent throughout the rest of the season, but varied due to weather and other external factors.*



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# Developing a Customer Base

“Produce Plus made it possible for me to eat healthier. It was so helpful to my limited income. Thank you for having this program.”

-Produce Plus Participant

Although Produce Plus provides access to many DC residents during the June 1st to September 30th program period, a majority of customers surveyed\* indicated that they go to the market less often after the program ends and when they do, they spend less due to financial limitations.

58.62% of customers who said they did not return to the market at all indicated that continuing to shop at market was not within their budget.

*\*Customers were surveyed via email in November and December after the 2018 Produce Plus season. The survey was sent to over 3,000 customers and received 71 responses. 42 customers indicated that they continue to shop at markets after Produce Plus is over.*



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*Customers shopping at the Ward 8 Farmers' Market*

# Prioritizing Sustainability

As Produce Plus has grown and distributed more funds, it has also become a key source of income for farmers - especially those operating in Ward 7 and Ward 8.

Markets report reduced SNAP/EBT, cash, and credit sales at their locations every year as Produce Plus sales increase.

Notably, SNAP/EBT sales tend to increase at some markets during October/November after the program ends. This indicates that there is potential to increase SNAP/EBT usage throughout the season with targeted outreach to those customers.

# Reaching More Customers

In order to strengthen the long-term viability, markets must diversify their customer base to include more shoppers spending SNAP/EBT, cash, and credit.

Produce Plus can support by targeting more SNAP/EBT participants for the program, focusing the role of Market Champions on recruiting cash and credit using customers, informing shoppers about matching programs, and encouraging participants to continue shopping at markets after the program ends.



*The Market Team at Community Foodworks'  
Minnesota Ave-Benning Road Farmers' Market*



# Navigating External Factors

In 2018, Washington, DC experienced extreme rainfall throughout the Produce Plus season. Despite this, total registration was comparable to 2017 and participation was higher in terms of both average and median market visits.

The rain affected production for farmers across the region and limited the variety of produce that was available at markets. Nonetheless, Produce Plus reaches a very committed group of shoppers who visit the market despite weather conditions and spent more at markets this year than in any other program year.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

# Diversifying Participation in Produce Plus may Require Modifying Program Implementation

- The current model of the program appeals most to customers who participate in Medicare QMB and customers who are seniors. This set of customers are very dedicated to the program with high and consistent participation rates.
- Due to a limited number of checks available for distribution per week, customers often cite long lines, wait times, and limited market hours as explanations for not participating in the program.
- Reaching more working people, families with young children and/or non-Senior citizens would require modifying implementation to reduce lines and make it easier to receive Produce Plus funds.



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# Customers Want to Visit Multi-Vendor Markets

- Customers travel furthest to visit markets where they can shop for multiple items at once. These multi-vendor markets are often located in high traffic areas of the city with easy access to public transportation.
- All single vendor markets that participated in Produce Plus during 2018 were in Wards 5, 7, or 8.
- Additional investment in markets, as well as a robust customer base is necessary to create and operate multi-vendor markets in Wards 5, 7, and 8.



*Volunteers Distribute Checks at the  
Bloomingdale Farmers' Market*

# To Support Long-Term Viability of Markets, Produce Plus Must Work Collaboratively with Other Food Access Programs

- Produce Plus should operate simultaneously with other food access programs such as farmers' market matching programs, WIC, and Senior Grocery Plus to meet a variety of customer needs, interests and values.
- Produce Plus should aim to increase the number of SNAP recipients who participate, therefore increasing the number of market customers eligible for matching programs.
- Markets must diversify their customer bases to increase spending of cash and credit overall.

# Acknowledgements

Produce Plus is administered by DC Greens in collaboration with farmers' market organizations and funded by DC Health.

In 2018 we partnered with the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture, Community Foodworks, DC Urban Greens, DC Open Air Farmers' Market at RFK, Diverse Markets Management, Eastern Market (DGS), Fresh Vista Markets, FRESHFARM, Markets & More, Mount Pleasant Farmers' Market, Petworth Community Market, and Ward 8 Farmers' Market, Inc. who supported distribution, volunteer management, and data collection for the program.



*Volunteers at the FRESHFARM H Street NE Farmers' Market*



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