

## NUTRITION INCENTIVE MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM: OAKLAND

The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is a proposal that builds on the evidenced based success of California Market Match, which was founded in 2009 and has been sustained through private donors and foundations on a limited basis up and down the state. This nutrition incentive program has demonstrated a six-fold return on investment by doubling the purchasing power of nutrition assistance benefits such as CalFresh when used to buy fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables at farmers' markets. Market Match is an equitable investment that ensures all Californians benefit from healthy and sustainable food.

### DEMONSTRATED IMPACT OF INCENTIVES IN OAKLAND

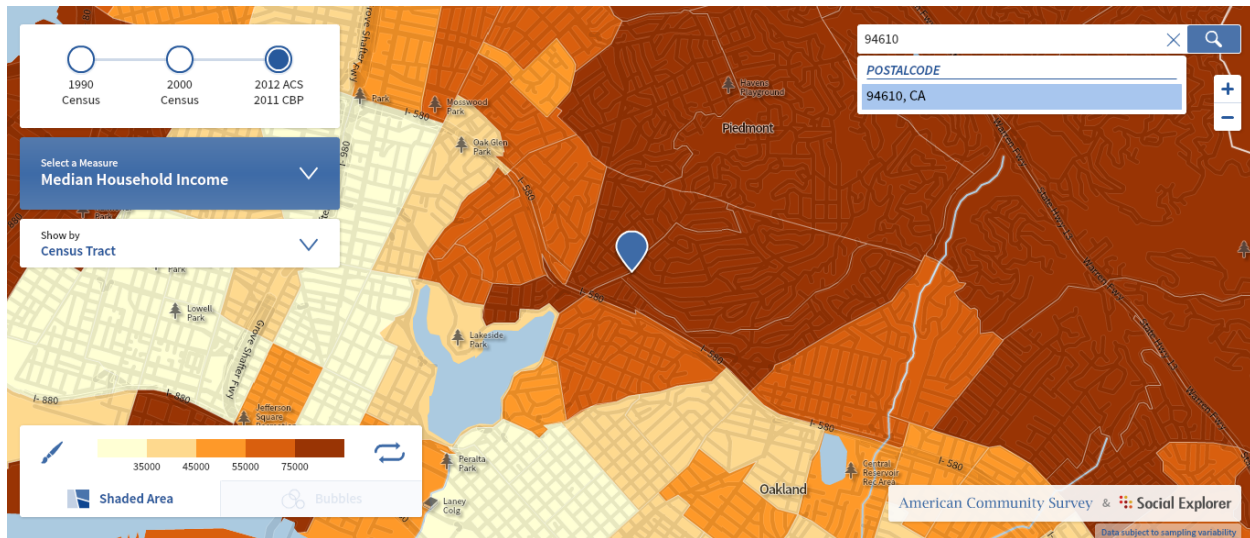
Grand Lake-Oakland Farmers' Market (GLOFM) was awarded by the East Bay Express as the best farmers' market in 2010, and is run by the Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM). It is open year round in Oakland on Saturdays under the freeway overpass adjacent to Lake Merritt. GLOFM has over 44 local farmers, and many Oakland residents have made it a habit to pick up their fruits and vegetables direct from their farmer.

GLOFM is also a Market Match farmers' market. According to AIM staff, this market brought in \$6,650 in EBT spending in 2010, prior to the implementation of Market Match. After these nutrition incentives were introduced to the farmers' market, EBT redemption at the farmers' market jumped to an average of more than \$36,000 per year, which has held stable from 2012 through 2014. Market Match is a unique program that simultaneously benefits California's low-income communities and local farmers. Direct economic benefits support local California producers who struggle with keeping price points competitive for healthy food, and achieve a win-win for California's people and local businesses.

Market Match supports economic development, but its impact is felt most by the consumers who benefit from it. Leah, who works for AIM, states:

“We receive so much gratitude from CalFresh customers who use the Grand Lake Farmers Market to access healthy food, especially during Market Match season. Struggling on a tight budget, Market Match stretches their dollars and enables CalFresh participants to buy more fruits and vegetables. Since we started offering Market Match in 2012, we have seen a dramatic growth in the number of CalFresh participants who come to this vibrant market to buy farm fresh strawberries, bok choy, kale and mandarins, and other seasonal produce. Market Match has a huge impact on the Grand Lake Farmers Market community as a whole, making it more inclusive of the entire diverse Oakland community, while supporting the financial viability of regional farmers, who are valued community members as well.”

Financial incentives that support low-income communities' purchase of fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables can be an effective anti-poverty strategy, as well as a community building strategy. The map on the next page shows that the median household income for the community near GLOFM ranges from more than \$75,000 a year to less than \$35,000 per year. The growth in EBT expenditures at GLOFM once Market Match was implemented shows that it is powerful enough to help bridge the gap in food access between low- and high-income communities. The California Health Interview Survey estimates that 8.4 percent of low-income people in Oakland are food insecure, which reflects the statewide average, but the rate is almost as high as 1 in 5 low-income people in certain neighborhoods. Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked, and a statewide Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is an evidence-based intervention for these issues.



## THE OPPORTUNITY TO SCALE UP AN EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAM

With institutional support from the state government, this nutrition incentive model can grow beyond 150 (of 800) certified farmers’ markets in California, which only serves 23 counties. A state Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program would also leverage new federal matching funds under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Only \$69 million of FINI’s \$100 million remain and California must maximize its share considering that its farms produce a majority of the nation’s fruits and vegetables (i.e. specialty crops), which are the target products for FINI funding.

### CONCLUSION

- The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is based on Market Match, which aids more than 984 specialty crop farmers in California and approximately 65,000 EBT customers.
- Consumer nutrition incentives for fresh produce is a common sense, proven model for local economic development and promotes a more nutritious diet among safety net beneficiaries.
- CalFresh clients have a buying power of \$7.8 billion. California can drive more of this money towards local farmers and small businesses using this nutrition incentive model, which generated total project sales of over \$2 million in 2014.

For more information, please contact the organizations coordinating support for the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program:

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