

Building on Market Bucks to improve access to healthy foods

How does Market Bucks work now?

Market Bucks helps customers who use SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) stretch their food budgets at farmers and mobile markets across Minnesota. SNAP is a federal program that provides monthly benefits to help low-income individuals and families buy groceries. Shoppers using EBT receive a dollar-for-dollar match on SNAP purchases up to \$10 per visit, plus an additional \$10 match for fruits and vegetables through Produce Market Bucks. Funded by state dollars through the Healthy Eating Here at Home program and federal dollars through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, Market Bucks makes fresh, local food more accessible.

Why is an expansion to Fresh Bucks needed?

SNAP customers want to be able to purchase healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables year-round, but often struggle to afford those purchases. By offering a 50% discount to SNAP customers at grocery stores and other food retail settings, we can improve access to healthy foods for low-income Minnesotans.

Expanding the Market Bucks nutrition incentive model to more food retailers is a win-win-win:

Customers

win with more buying power for affordable, healthy foods

Retailers

win by attracting more SNAP shoppers and boosting sales.

Communities

win with stronger economies, healthier people and greater connection.

PILOTING FRESH BUCKS:

We are seeking \$1 million from the Minnesota legislature in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 to pilot an expanded nutrition incentive program across diverse retail settings.

- SNAP customers at participating stores receive 50% off produce purchases.
- Retailers are reimbursed monthly for the discount.
- Grants of \$10,000–\$100,000 available for a 1-year pilot at 5-10 retailers.
- Open to grocery stores, ethnic markets, and corner stores in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- Priority given to communities with low food access or high SNAP participation.
- Retailers receive marketing and outreach support to engage SNAP customers.

To learn more, contact Leah Gardner at lgardner@thefoodgroupmn.org or call 651-789-9850.

Partners include: Advocates for Better Health, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, Fairview Health Services, The Food Group, Legal Services Advocacy Project, MN350, Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND), Minnesota Grocers Association, Pillsbury United Communities, Second Harvest Heartland