



POP Club! Guidebook



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Introduction 1

Resources Guide.....2

Vision and Goals3

Where we outline the motivation behind each activity and the vision for the program to benefit farmers, consumers, and communities.

Planning5

Where we provide tips on things to consider in the process of launching your POP Club.

Implementation 12

Where we outline specifics of the POP Club's activities and provide templates and ideas for you to try.

Evaluation 15

Where we explain how the POP Passport and Booklet can be used to both track success of your program to show potential funders/supports and for POP staff internally to recognize needs for improvement.

Next Steps..... 19



Introduction

The Power of Produce (POP) Club is farmers market-based children program, that seeks to teach children about fruits and vegetables, local food systems, and healthy food preparation through fun activities. Participants engage in the full farmers market experience by trying new foods, having conversations with farmers, and buying local produce. Fun weekly activities ranging from cooking demonstrations to farmers market scavenger hunts provide nutrition, food, agriculture, and exercise education to the children and families that participate each week. POP Club kids are encouraged to try new healthy foods and overcome picky eating through exposure to healthy food options in a fun and exciting environment. Through the Two-Bite Club, POP participants are rewarded for taking two bites of the featured fruit or vegetable, and receive vouchers to spend on the foods of their choice at the market. These vouchers also serve to empower kids, by giving them the purchasing power to buy from farmers and local vendors at the market.

This POP Club Guidebook provides tips, sample activities, templates, and guidance for you to start a POP Club at your farmers market. The resources and materials provided by FMC are intended to assist market managers in implementing a POP Club at their market, but aren't required for use at all POP Club programs—feel free to be creative and customize your POP Club to your own market! **The only requirement of POP Club is to hand out at least \$2 in market-specific currency (POP Bucks) to children attending the farmers market.**



POP Resources Guide



FMC provides the following tools to markets running the POP program:

- **POP Activity guide** featuring educational, cooking, physical, gardening, and artistic activities for children.
- **POP Passport** to be kept at the market to track attendance, parent contact information, and participant age. This is also a great tool to use to offer prizes and incentives for families to attend POP Club throughout the season!
- **POP Booklet evaluation tool** to track lessons learned and for kids to collect stamps for new foods tasted and activities completed.
- **Parent Information Sheet** provides parents with a basic understanding of the program, and has space for parents to give signature permission for their children to participate and a disclaimer for markets to use photos taken at POP Club.
- **Two-Bite Club button template.** After each week's activity, POP kids can try two bites of the 'Vegetable of the Week' to receive additional stickers to add to their Two-Bite Club button. Kids can bring their Two-Bite Club buttons back each week to show with pride their ability to try new vegetables as their number of stickers grow!
- **POP Bucks & token template.** Markets can choose to order POP tokens, or use FMC's printable POP vouchers for kids to use to shop for produce at the market's participating vendors. InDesign token template can be edited to display the market name.
- **Promotional graphics bundle (5 items)** includes POP logo, social media graphics, flyers, banner, and a sponsorship campaign graphic.
- **Budget template** to help plan and organize the funding needs for POP.
- **POP Club Facebook Group** facilitates networking with other POP Markets to learn best practices and lessons learned from markets around the country.
- **Prizes and treats** for kids participating in POP Club. Stickers, temporary tattoos, and more are available for purchase at FMC's online store.

POP Vision And Goals

Each POP Club activity is driven by the Farmers Market Coalition's mission, which we call our triple bottom line:



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Similarly, the Power of Produce Club Program is made up of three main components and goals:



What makes POP unique is that it puts the buying power into the hands of children, giving children the opportunity to be the consumers and connect with farmers the same way regular market shoppers do. POP Club satisfies all aspects of FMC's triple bottom line:

1. **Farmers** benefit from young POP consumers buying fresh produce directly from them at the farmers market. The market currency sales provide both new revenue and the potential for new, dedicated consumers. Farmers' produce is featured as children try new foods each week through Two Bite Club. Further, weekly educational activities instruct children on the important role of farmers markets, farming, and reinforce the connection between the land and our food.
2. **Young consumers** are empowered to make healthy food choices on their own by having the direct buying power. Giving children tokens to spend at the farmers markets gives them access to fresh produce each week. Through both the Two-Bite Club and weekly activities they get to try fresh, nutritious food that they might not have otherwise, growing to recognize new, healthy food options that will be foundational to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Parents of POP kids also discover new, fun ways to get their children to eat healthier and enjoy doing it.
3. **Communities** benefit from the additional families the POP Club brings to the farmers market both through additional local sales and energy at the farmers market as well as benefits to surrounding local businesses. Having an energetic POP Club with dedicated families and young customers can be an important part of having a lively farmers market that encourage other customers to return to be a part of the vibrant public space both now and in future seasons. The POP Club is a win-win-win for the farmers at your market, the POP Club kid and parent consumers, and the surrounding local community. This handbook will provide you with guidance, tips, and resources for you to join the national POP Movement and start a POP Club of your own.

POP Planning

While the basic mission of each POP Club is the same—providing kids with opportunities to buy and try fresh produce at the farmers market, no POP Club is exactly alike. Each POP program should be designed to respond to local needs, market capacity, funding opportunities, and partnership interests. It is this creativity that makes the POP movement so powerful because it means that each Club is uniquely local, just like the farmers market where the program takes place.

It's easy to forego planning in excitement for just getting your POP Club started, but **planning ahead** is important for being able to coordinate with the local organizations needed to make POP truly a community program. Without taking time to estimate how many kids are likely to attend, it is difficult to plan for how much time, money, and staff (or volunteers) will be required to run the program successfully. Without taking time in advance to plan for marketing your POP program, it is difficult to spread the word to families in your community.

This section walks you through this design process to help you think through some of the different choices that will need to be made in planning for a POP Club program.

Level of POP programming. POP Clubs can range from simple to complex levels of programming. This usually depends on the number of staff available to run and organize the program, funding available, and options for partnerships. All POP Clubs are required to maintain the **Baseline** level of programming. **The only requirement each week at POP Club is to hand out at least \$2 in market currency to children attending the farmers market.** While POP has the potential to have multiple activities each week, the staff, funding, and planning required for such a program is not always possible for a market. Each element of POP can be done simply at this **Baseline level** or expanded depending on available resources.

The Two-Bite Club is an important part of the POP Club because it gives children the opportunity to try new healthy foods with the hope of eventually liking them.

- **Baseline:** If your market has limited staff available for the POP program, the Two-Bite Club can be done once a month or every other week. While an important component to POP, it only requires someone planning a recipe or prepping raw produce for samples and staffing the activity to help kids try the food and award those that take two bites with additional stickers to add to their Two-Bite Club button. Remember to check on your county's health permit and sampling rules for farmers markets.
- **Options to expand:** With higher levels of staff and resource capacity, the Two-Bite Club can be offered each week at the market. It is great for kids to have it to look forward to each time they come to the POP Club. Other options to expand might include offering prizes for kids who try new foods 10 weeks in a row, for example.

The educational activities at the POP Club are great ways for children to engage with food in new ways and learn more about where their food comes from.

- **Baseline:** If your market has limited staff available to organize and run POP, using one of the activities we provide will help save planning time. Also, having an activity every other week or once a month would allow for less staff.
- **Options to expand:** With a higher capacity, different educational activities can be offered each week at the market. With more planning time, markets can get creative and create their own activities or use those that are provided in our POP Club Activity Guide. Further, with more staff and planning time, markets can work to build relationships with other organizations to run activities at the market. This makes POP a truly community event but requires more planning and organization than having market staff run the activities.

The rest of this section outlines each of these areas for expansion so you can think through what level of POP programming makes sense for you!

Estimate kid population. An important first step in planning for your Power of Produce program is getting an estimate of how many children are likely to attend each week. These estimates are critical for being able to project how much money to budget for the program each week as well as planning for activities and staffing. An estimate can be calculated using the following method:

1. Stand in one spot at the market and count the number of children that pass you at the top of each hour for 10 minutes.
2. Multiply this number by 6 to get the estimated number of children in attendance for that hour.
3. Repeat this for each hour the market is open and sum up the hourly estimates for a total.
4. From this total number, you can estimate how many children would likely stop by the POP program.

Remember that this number is just an *estimate*. Depending on the effectiveness of your promotional efforts, more or fewer kids may come to POP than estimated. You will ideally be bringing in new children and families who don't normally attend the farmers market to participate in POP. You should account for bringing in a new group of kids, especially if you are marketing through new outlets such as schools, after school programs, and surrounding local businesses.



Garner funding through sponsors. Think outside the box when it comes to potential funding sources and partners. The Power of Produce program has a mission that overlaps with the goals of many categories of possible sponsors. Be cognizant of which aspects of POP Club to highlight based upon the goals and values of different organizations. Below are a few examples:

- **Education organizations and foundations committed to improving literacy and decreasing summer learning loss would likely be most interested in POP for its role in providing educational opportunities to children during summer months.** Research has shown that all young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer¹. The Power of Produce program's variety of activities offers an important opportunity for children to practice reading and writing about vegetables, nutrition, and farming as well as learning about new topics to keep young minds engaged through the summer months.
- **Hospitals or other health organizations would likely be most interested in POP for its role in promoting healthy eating and combating childhood obesity.** The Power of Produce program offers an important opportunity for children to try new foods and become engaged in eating healthier. With obesity rates on the rise, POP can play an important role in combatting childhood obesity.
- **Municipalities would likely be most interested in the role POP plays in bringing new families to the farmers market.** The POP Club is often a draw for both current customers and new customers to come to the market and bring their entire family.
- **Banks or other financial institutions would likely be most interested POP's role in teaching financial literacy.** Each week that children come to the market, they choose between saving their \$2 to use another week on a bigger item or spending it at the market. When approaching banks, it is important to emphasize how POP empowers children to make financial decisions on their own each week they participate.

¹ See http://www.summerlearning.org/?page=know_the_facts

Engage farmers. One of POP's defining goals is to provide children with opportunities to build relationships with farmers and learn first-hand about where their food comes from. Therefore, farmer support is critical to the success of a POP Club. POP Club success benefits farmers, too, when more and more POP customers spend their \$2 dollars on fruits and vegetables each week. A successful POP Club program can have varying degrees of farmer involvement depending on how interested your farmers are and how management styles differ. It is important to think about which level of involvement makes the most sense for your program:

- *High-involvement.* If farmers want to be heavily involved in the POP program, they can be great partners during the POP planning process. You can gauge interest and work with farmers to incorporate demos or lessons on where different vegetables come from, how different vegetables are cared for, or different varieties of vegetables. Encourage farmers to think about ways to advertise to POP kids specifically. For example, in Oregon City's POP Club, farmers offer POP deals with \$2 specials on some of their produce for POP kids to take advantage of. Farmers at the Webster Groves Farmers Market in Webster Groves, MO started selling "POP-sized" portions of vegetables such as cups of carrots or green beans for \$2 for easier purchasing for the POP kids.
- *Low-involvement.* If farmers are not likely to be very involved in the planning of POP, it is important that they are at least informed of the program in advance of the launch. Since POP kids will be shopping for \$2 items each week, farmers need to know to expect the young consumers. In order to give farmers flexibility, some POP Clubs have given farmers the choice to participate and hang a sign on the participating farmers' tents to show POP kids where they could shop with their POP tokens.

Build partnerships. POP Clubs can be great opportunities to expand the farmers market's partnerships and involvement with the local community. The POP Club's opportunities for volunteers make it a great program for bringing in new farmers market supporters and getting entire communities involved. Think creatively about the local non-profits, businesses, and groups that might be interested in getting involved by:

- **Volunteering** to help run POP at the farmers market. Volunteers can help run the Two-Bite Club or help check-in POP kids when they arrive at the POP stand. Some organizations might be interested in volunteering consistently and could commit to sending volunteers the same week each month. Some organizations that might make great volunteering partnerships are:
 - **High schools/universities.** Many high schoolers and college students are looking for community service opportunities. They could be great role models for the POP kids.
 - **Junior Leagues or other community service organizations.** Most localities have Junior League chapters who often are seeking local initiatives to support as their annual projects.
- **Organizing/staffing an activity** at POP that both provides critical volunteers for the POP and a promotional opportunity for the organization. Some organizations that might make great activity partnerships are:
 - **Special interest clubs.** For example, a local gardening club might be interested in running a gardening demo for POP kids at the market to both educate young gardeners and spread the word about the gardening club at the farmers market.
 - **Local restaurants/chefs.** They could be great partners to help lead a cooking demo for kids to get experience cooking some of the fresh vegetables they have purchased.
 - **Local gym or fitness groups.** Part of living a healthy lifestyle is exercising and staying active. Oregon City Farmers Market partnered with their local Lion's Club who led nature walks with the POP kids every 15 minutes.
 - **Chambers of Commerce.** The Muskegon Farmers Market in Muskegon, MI partners with the Women's Division of their Chamber of Commerce who provides volunteers to run and plan different activities at their POP Club each week.

- **Promoting** POP at their organization or to their customers/members. For example, after school programs see families and children each day and would be great partners to hand out promotional materials. Some organizations that might make great promotion partnerships are:
 - **Schools and after school programs.** For example, Boys and Girls Clubs can be great partners for promoting POP. POP is a program accessible for families of all income since all children are given \$2 to spend at the market.
 - **Mentoring programs.** For example, Big Brothers, Big Sisters was a great partnership for the POP Club in Charlottesville, VA. Mentors are required to spend a certain amount of time doing activities with their mentee each week and POP was a great, organized activity they could participate in together.

The most important thing to consider is what organizations are unique to your local community. **What do your local organizations have to offer?** Think creatively about how to get a wide range of businesses, groups, and individuals involved. Good partnerships can be important sources of volunteers, activity plans, and promotion so it is important to spend some time thinking strategically about which organizations to approach.

Acquire health permits. An important part of the Power of Produce programming is serving healthy foods for kids to try at the farmers market. Plan ahead on what health permits your town or city requires. Often you need to allow at least two weeks to get a permit for serving foods at the farmers market. Think through health requirements needed. For example, plan on having a hand washing station on site for kids to clean their hands before taking part in the Two-Bite Club or a cooking demo at the market. A cooler with a spigot and soap dispenser make a great, simple, hand washing station.

POP Implementation

Empower kids to make healthy food choices. By giving out at least \$2 dollars each week in POP Bucks to spend at the farmers market, POP Club gives children an opportunity to be a part of selecting and buying their own food. Since farmers markets often offer many other delicious, but not as healthy treats, here are a few tips to encourage the market bucks to be spent on fruits and vegetables:

- **Remind POP Club kids every time they take the Pop Bucks.** Reinforce that POP Bucks are only for fruits and vegetables each time you are handing out the tokens.
- **Include signage on fruits/vegetable deals going on that week.** Bring POP Kid's attention to \$2 fruit and vegetable deals around the market to encourage them to take advantage of them. This is great promotion for farmers, too!
- **Hand out recipes for Two-Bite Club foods with the POP Bucks.** After POP Kids try a new food with Two-Bite Club they might be more interested in purchasing the ingredients to be able to make some themselves at home.

The POP Bucks in can be handled differently depending on your markets needs and existing systems. Some POP Clubs have created their own currency through using printed POP Bucks. We provide a template for you to print out your own POP Bucks to print and use at your market. Other POP Clubs use existing market currency through debit tokens or other coupons in use to avoid introducing a new system for farmers and market managers to handle. If your market wants to create POP tokens, you can use the template provided to order wooden POP tokens at websites such as www.perfectimprints.com/wooden-nickel.html.

Tracking POP Bucks and Reimbursing Vendors. Using this system, farmers would turn in POP Bucks to be reimbursed at the end of the day for the POP purchases.

1. Kids participate in that week's POP activity and receive a \$2 POP Bucks voucher or token from a market volunteer or staff member.
2. Kids spend their POP Bucks at participating vendors' booths in exchange for healthy and local food.
3. At the end of each market (or the end of a given time period) vendors who have collected POP Bucks or tokens bring them to the market manager
4. Market manager (or volunteer) counts total POP currency with vendor and writes total value amount of POP currency on a tracking spreadsheet (template provided)
5. The next week, market manager reimburses vendors for the POP currency value amount via check, online, or discount from vendor fees
6. Important! Make sure vendors acknowledge their receipt of their reimbursement, whether via email or initialing the tracking spreadsheet.
7. Keep track of your funding to ensure that you have enough to continue handing out POP currency week to week.

Try just Two Bites. One of the first steps in healthy eating is *liking* healthy foods. Picky eating can be an obstacle in getting children to try fruits and vegetables. Each week, the Two-Bite Club offers a different fruit or vegetable raw or featured in a simple recipe for kids to try at the farmers market. Each time a POP kid takes at least two bites, they can add additional stickers to their Two-Bite Club button as a symbol of their courage to try new foods! According to child nutritionist, Ellen Satter, children may have to see, touch, or taste a food 15 or 20 times before they learn to like it². The Two-Bite Club strives to provide a few of these opportunities to see, taste, and touch a fruit or vegetable at the farmers markets! **Display the whole fruit or vegetable used in the recipe** to increase the ways children interact with the food. By being able to see it and touch it, children are more likely to try the food and like it. **Children are more likely to try new foods when the new food is paired with something familiar.** For example, **kale chips** are a great recipe to try because they share the name and consistency of a familiar food, potato chips, but the color of the new vegetable, kale. Similarly, **multicolored peppers** might be a new food for many children but pairing them with a cream cheese dip adds a familiar component.

Make food fun. The success of POP is facilitated by nutrition, agriculture, and lifestyle education through the different activities each week. These activities can range from simple to more involved, depending on your volunteer ability and funding levels. They are also your opportunity to **get creative** and **involve diverse community partner support**. Check out our POP Club Activity Guide for fun activities focused on topics ranging from cooking to vegetable identification.

² See www.ellensatterinstitute.org

POP Evaluation

The POP Passport and Booklet are POP's tools for evaluation that combine data collection with fun activities for the kids to complete. The POP Booklet includes space to collect information on a range of metrics that can be used both to track success of your POP program and recognize possible improvements to try out for next season. We will provide you with the files these tools so that you can print and use them at your POP Club.

Track success. It is important for both current and potential funders and community partners to see evidence of the success of your POP Club. We recommend that you keep the POP Club Passports in a file box (index card size) at the market, so that by having parents check their kids in weekly, you are obtaining data on the program. If POP Passports are sent home, you will not be able to use them to track valuable information. Below are a few metrics you can refer to and how the POP Passport's data can be used to calculate them:

- **Attendance.** By simply counting the number of POP Passports on file, you have the total number of children that participated. Looking at the dates for each week that information was filled out in the Passport, you can quickly calculate the number of participants each week.
- **Return rate.** It is important for a program's success that participants are returning. Looking at the POP Passport, you can calculate how many kids came more than once to be able to report a percentage of participants that returned after their first visit.
- **Age.** Tracking the average age of your POP participants will give your market a better picture of the audience you serve when you are looking for and meeting with potential sponsors and partners in your community.

The POP Booklets can track the following metrics:

- **Percentage of children trying new foods that they now like.** Count the number of children that circled a happy face from the Two-Bite section and had noted that they had not tried the food before. This is in the longer version of the POP Club Booklet. If you are using the index card size, you can use surveys to collect more information on new foods tried.
- **Variety of purchases.** It shows the diversity of food choices when you can point to the many different fruits and vegetables that children chose to purchase during POP. By looking at the drawings that children did of what they purchased that day, you can offer a sampling of some of the different purchases to paint a picture of the program. Even scanning some of the drawings themselves could provide a great graphic and representation of the program! If you are using the index card size, you can use surveys or coloring sheets to collect more information on the variety of food purchased.

Get in a data collection rhythm. Evaluation is often overlooked as a priority when programs are in full swing. With crowds of kids fluctuating or a Two-Bite Club butternut squash spilling, evaluating doesn't often make it to the top of things to do. The goal of the POP Booklet is that it can be used both as a fun activity book and a data collection tool. However, to use it well, it still requires some thinking ahead about how to incorporate it into your POP Club setup so that it doesn't get overlooked once POP activities are in full swing.

Data Collection Tips to Ensure Consistency

- **Keep the Passports at the market.** This ensures that each child's Passport will always be there as opposed to depending on families to remember to bring it each week. Ask children to 'sign in' each time they arrive at the market and you can pull up their Passport from a file box, bin, or any system that works best for you.
- **Use Booklets as a pass to get to participate in the activities.** Have children carry their Booklets from activity to activity. Each staff running each activity should ask for their Booklet before helping them participate. If they do not have one, that is the time to figure out where it is. This way, participation in and reaction to activities is recorded. Also, it's fun for the kids who get stamps for each station!
- **Include a drawing space for kids to draw their purchases.** These drawings are an important part of the Booklet that can be both fun for the kids and informative for POP staff. Having a space set aside for doing this increases the chances that they will take the time to draw their purchases from the day.
- **Have a Booklet drop-off box.** Having a designated place for POP kids and families to drop off Booklets before leaving the market sends the clear message of "don't take these home!" Also, it decreases the responsibility of another staff person to have to collect them individually. It can also help to collect booklets before handing out POP Bucks or tokens to each child for completing the day's activity.

Recognize improvements. The POP Booklets can also be an important to assess internally how effective the program is and recognizing needs for improvement. Here are a few indicators, for example, you might want to pay attention to:

- **Drawings of purchases.** Are children actually buying fruits and vegetables with their POP Tokens? Are there a lot of drawings of popsicles, for example? Use this as an indicator as to how much guidance you need to give POP participants on what to purchase.
- **Two-Bite Club reactions.** For example, are most children noting that they had already tried the food before? If so, maybe Two-Bite needs to be made "harder" with more exotic fruits and vegetables so that more children are trying *new* foods.

Next Steps

Sometimes it's hard to know where to begin a big project like starting your own POP Club. Here are some simple steps to get you going. Good luck!

- 1. Gauge interest levels of partner involvement.** Start by talking to your farmers, talking to surrounding schools, local foundations and non-profits. It is never too early to look for potential partners in your POP Club. Are they excited about the idea of starting POP? What kind of involvement do they envision having in the program?
- 2. Estimate the number of kids who might attend.** How many kids are likely to attend your POP Club?
- 3. Budget.** Depending on interest and estimated attendees you can start budgeting for how much funding you'll need to sustain your POP Club for a market season or at least for a short trial run.
- 4. Secure funding.** After you've gauged interest and can begin to picture what each group's involvement might be in the program, you are ready to start looking for funding to make it happen! How can you match the funder's interest to the mission of POP? How can you make your POP Club unique to fit your funder's and partner's interests?
- 5. Staff your POP Club.** Does your market have the capacity to hire a POP staff person? Will you be needing volunteers to staff your POP Club? Talk to partners, local community service organizations, and schools to coordinate volunteers to run different activities at your POP Club.

6. **Pick a launch date.** When do you want to kick-off your exciting new program? Can it coincide with other events that might draw people to the market? Determine how often you want to host POP (weekly, biweekly, monthly?) and how long it will run—this will be essential to informative marketing when you begin to do so.
7. **Publicize.** Work with your partners to get the word out about POP. Post flyers and posters, send press releases to local media outlets, and talk about POP to everyone you know! Can you get information about POP to the local schools and after school programs?
8. **POP Club Kick Off!** Finally, start your POP Club! You'll probably already be thinking of changes and improvements for the next week, so be flexible. At some point you just have to go for it—trust your planning and dive in. Thanks for being a part of this exciting POP Club movement!



Join our POP Club Facebook group to get more ideas from other POP Club Farmers Markets. Links to join the Facebook group, and all the POP Club resources are available at: farmersmarketcoalition.org



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The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is a 503(c)(3) nonprofit that helps ensure that farmers markets around the country succeed today and tomorrow.

