



Shopping Patterns of SNAP Participants that are current FM Customers

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Developed by The Food Trust

Purpose of Focus Groups: The Food Trust will conduct focus groups with SNAP participants to understand their perceptions of farmers' markets and how we can improve our reach and impact. The groups will explore SNAP customers' shopping behaviors, perceived barriers and marketing strategies to better serve the SNAP population.

I. Opening (5 min)

- a. Hello my name is _____. Helping me out are (introduce note-taker, etc.). Thank you for coming to talk with us today. We have invited you to speak today about your perceptions about the market and about how we can better serve SNAP participants.
- b. The purpose of this focus group is to hear from SNAP/EBT customers about shopping at farmers' markets in this community. The information that we learn from you today will help us reach more SNAP customers. Additionally, we will record today's focus group.
- c. This group is private and the information that you share today will not be heard by anyone except the people involved with this project. Any specific details about you, such as your name, will not be included in order to keep your responses anonymous. We ask that you also respect each other's privacy as well and not share anything that is discussed today. For participating, you will receive a \$25 Visa gift card at the end of the focus group session, which you can use anywhere that accepts credit/debit cards.
- d. As a reminder, we appreciate your coming today and want to respect your time, so we will not keep you longer than one hour.

Before we start I do have a few guidelines to help the group run smoothly today:

1. Please turn off all cell phones, or put them in silent mode, and put them away until after the session ends.
2. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please be honest and respect each other's opinions, even if you do not agree. Everyone will have a chance to speak. We'll fill out the brief surveys in front of you, then this group will be mostly discussion.
3. Only one person can speak at a time. We're tape recording this meeting today and we want to hear from all of you, but the recorder can only pick up one voice at a time.

4. Also, if any of you are very quiet and not saying much, I may call on you to share with the group. We want to make sure that we hear from each of you, however, this is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.
5. If needed, I may interrupt at times to keep the discussion moving forward.
6. Lastly, (identify note-takers) will be taking notes, in case voice recorders don't work.

Is everyone ready? Let's begin.

II. General: Food Shopping (5-10 minutes)

First I want to talk about shopping for food.

- 1) What comes to mind when you think about food shopping?
- 2) Tell me about your experience shopping for food, what is it like?
 - a. Probe: What are your steps, from planning to purchasing foods?
- 3) How do you decide where you shop for food? What is important to consider in planning your food shopping trip?
 - a. Probe: Convenience? Cost? Close to other businesses? Errands?
- 4) How do you decide what to buy? What do you look for in your food?
 - a. Probe: A certain recipe? Shopping for family? Health reasons? Good prices?
- 5) What type of format for advertising or circulars do you prefer the most?
 - a. Probe: Flyers? Digital? Ads?

III. Farmers' Markets and Barriers (10-15 minutes)

Now I want to talk about farmers' markets.

- 6) What comes to mind when you think about farmers' markets?
- 7) What are your reasons for shopping at the farmers' market?
 - a. {Listen for: convenient location in the community; local food; fresh food; quality of the food; PFB or FMNP vouchers; price; supporting local farmers }
- 8) Thinking back to your experiences shopping at the farmers' market, can you think of some barriers that prevent people from shopping at the farmers' market?
- 9) With these barriers in mind, what keeps you from shopping at the farmers' market more than you already do?

IV. SNAP Use at Markets (10 minutes)

Now, I'd like to shift the conversation to using SNAP at the farmers' market.

- 11) Can you tell us about your experiences using SNAP benefits at the farmers' market?
- 12) Think back to the first time you shopped at the _____ farmers' market. What got you to shop there for the first time?
- 13) How did you know you could use SNAP at the _____ farmers' market?
 - a. Probe: word of mouth? a friend, a farmer, or market staff person? walking by? signage?
- 14) What barriers are there to using SNAP at the farmers' market?

V. Strategies to recruit SNAP Participants (10 minutes)

- 16) Now imagine a friend or family member that doesn't shop at farmers' markets. How could we attract them to the farmers' market?
 - i. Probe: And especially for SNAP participants. How could we get more SNAP customers to visit farmers' markets?
- 17) How do you and people in your community receive information/communications about SNAP benefits?
- 18) We've mentioned several strategies to encourage SNAP participants to shop at the farmers' market. What other kinds of advertising and outreach can farmers' markets use to specifically reach SNAP customers?
 - a. Probe: Are there any specific ways to get information to SNAP participants?
- 19) Do you have any advice for us about advertising and outreach?

a. Advertising (5 minutes)

Now we'd like to focus on marketing for the market.

- 21) Think about the surroundings of the _____ market. Which kinds of advertising have you noticed at the farmers' market?
 - a. Probe: Is there anything that encourages SNAP customers to shop there?
- 22) {Show sample materials and Philly Food Bucks} What do you think of these materials? Are they easily understood? How can these materials be improved?
- 23) What are the best ways to share this information with community residents? Who should we partner with? In which places should we post flyers?
- 24) What suggestions do you have for sharing information with community residents?

VI. Closing (5 minutes)

We have covered a lot of information today. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Thank you for your time. Please make sure you have turned in your paperwork, and sign the attendance sheet to receive your Visa gift card.