



## **Alemany Farmers' Market Bonus Bucks Program 2012 Final Report**

Colleen Kavanagh  
11/10/12

### Description

The 2012 Alemany Farmers' Market Bonus Bucks Program in San Francisco offered CalFresh (Food Stamp/EBT) customers an additional \$5 in spending power when they spent \$10 or more on produce at the market. The program is in its fourth year of operation and ran from September 3 (Labor Day) through September 30, 2012. It was funded through a partnership with the San Francisco Department of Real Estate (DRE), the San Francisco Human Services Agency (HSA) and Campaign for Better Nutrition (CBN).

The goals of the 2012 Bonus Bucks Program were: (1) to increase the number of CalFresh shoppers purchasing the low-cost, fresh produce at the market during the Bonus Bucks period; (2) to increase the total amount of fresh produce CalFresh clients purchased for their households; and (3) to increase the number of CalFresh shoppers at Alemany during non-incentive periods.

### Evaluation of Success

For the fourth year in a row, the Bonus Bucks Program has demonstrated that with increased spending power, CalFresh customers buy more fresh produce for their households and remain loyal customers at the Alemany Farmers' Market. During the first three months of the year, there was an average of 145 CalFresh shoppers at the Alemany Farmers' Market during a four-week period. During the four-week Bonus Bucks period, however, the number of CalFresh shoppers increased to 342, a 136 percent increase. The majority of CalFresh shoppers (61 percent) said that the Bonus Bucks were a very important reason they shopped at the market, and 83 percent said their households ate more produce because of the Bonus Bucks program.

It is not surprising that when spending power is increased (we all like free money), more people come to shop. What is remarkable about the Bonus Bucks Program is the growing number of new CalFresh shoppers who remain Alemany customers even after the Bonus Bucks period ends. In fact, a comparison of the number of CalFresh customers shopping at Alemany in the months prior to and after the Bonus Bucks period shows a permanent increase each year since 2009. Early data shows this trend likely to continue in 2012, with 200 or more CalFresh shoppers expected each four week period, compared to less than 50 in 2009.

## 2012 Budget

The breakdown of the \$8,300 budget for the 2012 program is as follows.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>
<b>San Francisco Department of Real Estate (DRE)</b>	\$3,500
Bonus Bucks incentive money	
In-kind staff support (incentive operation at market)	
<b>San Francisco Human Services Agency (HSA)</b>	n/a
In-kind staff support, outreach mailing to CalFresh recipients in select zip codes	
<b>Campaign for Better Nutrition (CBN)</b>	\$5,944
Bonus Bucks Incentive Money (\$3500)	
Administrative Fee (\$944)	
Marketing Materials & Evaluation (\$1500)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,444</b>

About half of the funds raised by CBN were from a generous donation from St. Clemens church. The church's Sunday school children raised the funds by harvesting fruit from parishioners' back yards, making jam and selling it to friends and family. Other donations were from generous individuals in the San Francisco community.

### Making the Program Permanent

The Bonus Bucks Program exemplifies San Francisco community values by promoting the purchase of fresh, healthy foods and helping out those in need. Popular among city employees, advocates, donors and beneficiaries, the program continues to be a success by all measures. With increased interest from the Mayor's office and several members of the Board of Supervisors, this is clearly the time to talk about expanding the program into a permanent, year-round benefit to low-income households and local farmers.

Operating the program each summer for 12 weeks would cost an estimated \$7,000-9,000, and a year-round operation \$24,000-\$30,000 (ranges reflect varying participation levels). Additional financial support would be needed to cover this. For the incentive costs, this should include increasing the DRE contribution and new funding from the Mayor's office or the Board of Supervisors. In addition, a broadened private donor base should be established with the Combined Charities Campaign for City employees. The HSA has been a strong program partner since the beginning and its continued support linking the market and the CalFresh community is critical to ongoing program success. Also, renewed support and partnership with the nonprofit San Francisco Food Systems and the SF Department of Public Health is important. They instigated the program's 2009 pilot and provided support at varying levels from 2009-2011. Their ongoing partnership would reinforce to other city partners and donors the program's value to the health of the city's low-income residents and the food system that supports them.