

THE FUTURE OF THE MARKET-MATCHING PROGRAM

A Thesis

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by

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ii

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Abstract  
of  
THE FUTURE OF THE MARKET-MATCHING PROGRAM  
by  
Lauren Suedkamp

The market-matching program offers Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients a monetary incentive when they purchase fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. The 2014 Farm Bill contains additional funding for the program and presents an opportunity for the program to be sustained and grow with a guaranteed funding amount for at least the proposed term of the funding, four years. Currently, non-profit organizations have been administering the program in local communities, using funds from private organizations and a small amount of state and local funding, which has not always been sustainable. With the substantial amount of federal funding coming to the program, one may expect the public sector to take greater control of the program – perhaps even taking over the administration of the program. However, it is unknown if would be more sustainable for non-profit organizations to continue administering the program or if would be more sustainable for the public sector to administer the program. As such, this study seeks to answer the following research question: would the program be more sustainable if it was run by the public sector rather than the non-profit sector?

In this thesis, I analyzed two alternatives for the program: non-profit run or federally run. I analyzed each of these alternatives for their sustainability, focusing on

financial self-reliance, political environment, and organizational flexibility. Through a review of the literature and interviews with two researchers, four non-profit directors, two advocates, two researchers, and one policymaker, I found that the non-profit sector would be the more sustainable operator of the program.

Keeping the program with the non-profit sector allows the program to reach a local audience and provide the service with more efficiency. However, this program should be reevaluated in four years when the funding is up for renewal to determine if the non-profit sector is still the most sustainable place for the program.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	vii
List of Tables .....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
3. INTERVIEWS .....	19
4. INTERVIEW RESULTS .....	23
5. ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS .....	31
6. FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS .....	41
Appendix A. Interview Questions .....	46
Appendix B. Consent Form .....	48
References.....	50



LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
1. The Market-Matching Program Organizations and Details.....	10
2. Summary of CAM Analysis. ....	39

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

Nearly 47 million Americans participate in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, more commonly referred to as SNAP (Food & Nutrition Services, 2014). This program provides public food assistance for low-income individuals and families. A recent push to provide healthier food options has led to innovations in the SNAP program, such as the market-matching program. The market-matching program offers SNAP recipients a monetary incentive when they purchase fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. The market-matching programs are new and although they have shown success in promoting the purchases/incentives, they are beginning to struggle to be sustained due to private funding sources not being renewed and the need to serve a larger population within their service area. However, current proposals have it set to be eligible for \$100 million from the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program included in the 2014 Farm Bill, the only specific allocation of federal funding that the program has received (Carman, 2014).

The Farm Bill funding presents an opportunity for the program to be sustained and grow with a guaranteed funding amount for at least the proposed term of the funding, four years. Currently, non-profit organizations have been administering the program in local communities, using funds from private organizations and a small amount of state and local funding, which has not always been sustainable. With the substantial amount of federal funding coming to the program, one may expect the public sector to take greater control of the program – perhaps even taking over the administration of the program.

However, it is unknown if it would be more sustainable for non-profit organizations to continue administering the program or if it would be more sustainable for the public sector to administer the program. As such, this study seeks to answer the following research question: would the program be more sustainable if it was run by the public sector rather than the non-profit sector?

### **Background**

Access to affordable nutritious food has historically been an issue for the low-income community. Many in the low-income community are reliant on SNAP benefits to buy their groceries. The benefits they receive are based on income eligibility guidelines (United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (USDA, 2012a). In 2012, the maximum allotment for a family of four was \$668 per month (USDA, 2012a). For those people who participate in SNAP, their fixed incomes and food budgets must last longer than those in the middle to high-income range. Grocery shopping with a SNAP budget typically means choosing foods that are not nutritious, especially since fresh fruits and vegetables have a shorter shelf life and take more resources to prepare. In the last four years, SNAP recipients have been able to redeem their benefits at farmers markets, but they have lacked an incentive to go to the markets as many markets have limited hours and are not easily accessible. Under the market-matching program, the incentives vary by market, with some markets offering a one-to-one match and others doing a spend \$10 get \$5 match (Fair Food Network, 2013). Regardless of the match amount, these programs have been successful on a small scale, increasing SNAP recipient's access to healthy, fresh food (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012).

## **The Alternatives**

This research compared two alternatives for administering the program: the non-profit sector and the public sector. Below is a description of each alternative, which will be the basis for the analysis.

### **The Non-Profit Sector**

The market-matching program is administered by one or more non-profit organizations in specific states. There are no state requirements for operation, other than any requirements that are attached to grant funding. The programs receive the majority of their funding from individual donors and private organizations (Shinkle, 2013). These funds are typically granted on a year-by-year basis or raised via local fundraising efforts. For the public funding that the program receives, there are grant application processes every one to three years, with no guarantee that the program will receive the funding that it had in the past. The program is currently offered in specific states where the non-profits have been active in recruiting, establishing, and fundraising for the program. There is no nationwide requirement or effort to offer the program to SNAP recipients. The non-profit sector reports to the funders on a variety of data points, which are not consistent across non-profits or states. There is currently an effort to create data gathering that is uniform across programs, but this is still in the developmental stage.

### **The Public Sector**

The public sector option would consist of the federal government administering the program. The federal government will be the administrator instead of the individual state governments because it has the funding through the Farm Bill and a greater level of

capacity to implement the program throughout the states (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000). In order to implement the program in the individual states, the federal government may collaborate with the individual states, as it currently does with SNAP benefits. This will make it easier to facilitate the program by combining it with the departments that already operate the SNAP program. The program will be governed by the United States Department of Food and Agriculture (USDA) and in conjunction with individual states Department of Food and Agriculture or Health and Human Services. The main funding for the program is from the Farm Bill and is guaranteed for five years. The states can choose to match some or all of the funding provided by the federal government. Government employees and volunteers will staff the program and will report to the USDA through a general standard for the program, including reporting metrics and goals for the program to reach.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the market-matching program would be more sustainable in the public sector rather than the non-profit sector as the funding becomes predominantly public from the Farm Bill. In order to determine this, I reviewed research on farmers' markets, the SNAP program, the market-matching program, and key differences between the non-profit and public sectors. Then, I used the literature review to form interview questions and interviewed experts of the market-matching program to gain insight into their beliefs surrounding the current state and future of the program. Next, the research from the literature review and the interviews were used to analyze whether the program would be more sustainable if it continued to be

run by the non-profit sector or, instead, were run by the public sector. Last, I recommend which sector is the most sustainable home for the program and discuss topics for future research.

## Chapter Two

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is broken into two sections. In the first section, I discuss the SNAP program and provide information about the market-matching program. In the second section, I provide a comparison between the characteristics that make the private and nonprofit sectors different, with a focus on sustainability. By comparing the characteristics of each sector, the analysis in the fifth chapter will combine two different sources of data: literature and interview data (presented in Chapter Four).

#### **Section I: The Market-Matching Program**

##### **The SNAP Program**

One of the key aspects of the market-matching program is the recruitment of participants and their use of their SNAP benefits. The USDA has promoted this effort over the last fifteen years, starting with the 1999 launch of the Community Food Security Initiative (Kantor, 2008). This is a nationwide initiative aimed at forging partnerships between the USDA and local communities to build local food systems and improve nutrition.

From this initiative, many federal grant programs have emerged that focus on improving access to fresh, healthy foods in low-income communities, especially for SNAP recipients (USDA, 2012b). Two programs, the Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Specialty Block Grant, have grown from the Community Food Security Initiative. Through these funding allocations, millions of dollars are granted to states, farmers' markets, and non-profit organizations that work closely with food

security programs (USDA, 2012b). These types of programs aim to build a stronger infrastructure for the distribution, promotion, and sale of healthy foods (USDA, 2012b). In 2010, Congress specifically targeted ten percent of the FMPP funds to go to providing Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) access at farmers' markets, a key step in providing needed financial aid to implementing this technologically dependent effort (Kantor, 2008). Although the SNAP program is a federal aid program administered by the USDA and receives funding from the federal Farm Bill, the benefits are administered by individual states (USDA, 2011).

State governments began to give these programs funding as well. In the past five years, California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Vermont, Washington, and Washington D.C. have provided additional funding for farmers' markets to process SNAP benefits (Shinkle, 2013). The states listed above have been making the market-matching program a funding priority, due in large part to the USDA grant funding and the success of the programs.

Prior to this increase in funds, SNAP recipients had very limited access to the food at farmers' markets. This is because SNAP recipients typically are only able to use their EBT card at grocery stores and some convenience stores (USDA, 2011).

Over the last twenty years, the physical distribution of the SNAP program has changed. Prior to the 1990's, SNAP recipients received their benefits via stamps or coupons that were torn out individually from a booklet and used in single-use exchange (USDA, 2013). In 1984, Reading, Pennsylvania began to test out the EBT program (USDA, 2013). This change meant that instead of receiving the cumbersome food stamp



booklet or coupons, recipients have benefits deposited directly into an account similar to a bank account. A plastic card and PIN number is issued and recipients can then use the card just as they would a debit card to redeem and use their SNAP benefits at various markets (USDA, 2013).

The program proved to be a successful pilot and with the implementation of the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988, more EBT pilot programs were initiated. As these programs became more prominent and successful, Public Law 104-193, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of August 22, 1996, mandated that states implement EBT systems before October 1, 2002, unless USDA waived the requirement because a state faced unusual barriers to implementation (USDA, 2013). With the mandate to implement the EBT program, state food stamp agencies began working with contractors to procure, set-up, and run the EBT transfer program. At farmers' markets, providing SNAP recipients with the ability to use their EBT cards to purchase items has been challenging. The major barriers to usage are a lack of electricity, lack of wifi, high cost of implementing a transfer system, and battery life of freestanding terminals (Bertmann et al, 2012). There have been technological advances in the last two-three years that allow for some of these barriers to be reduced, but without proper funding to establish and maintain a transfer terminal (similar to an ATM machine), establish a transfer station manned by humans, or provide farmers with the software to process EBT cards, SNAP recipients cannot utilize farmers' markets as well as their non-SNAP counterparts (Bertmann et al, 2012).

## **The Market-Matching Program**

The market-matching program offers SNAP recipients the opportunity to spend their SNAP dollars at farmers' markets, with various incentives offered to encourage the purchase of fruits and vegetables. Farmers' markets bring together producers and consumers, typically in an outdoor setting, where the producers can sell fruits, vegetables, and other homemade goods (although this last factor is not present in all markets) (Kantor, 2008). Farmers' markets are one of the leading sources of direct farm products in the United States, and they not only boost the income of small, local farmers, but also increase consumer access to fresh produce (Kantor, 2008).

The markets vary by city, region, size, run date, and product availability. Most markets take place once a week and many run solely through the summer months. The market-matching program has been administered by both non-profits and individual markets since 2008. Four non-profits have been critical in implementing and supporting the market-matching program: Fair Food Network, Market Umbrella, Roots of Change (with oversight by the Ecology Center in Berkeley, CA), and Wholesome Wave. The following chart compares the four non-profits and their history with the market-matching program.

**Table I: The Market-Matching Program Organizations and Program Details**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Program Founding</b>	<b>Operating Location</b>	<b>Incentive Program</b>	<b>Reach of Incentive Program</b>
Fair Food Network	2009	Michigan and Toledo, Ohio	Double Up Food Bucks: matches SNAP purchases at participating markets up to \$20 per visit	75 farmers' markets and 25 other like sites
Market Umbrella	2008	Louisiana	Market Match: matches up to \$25 per market visit	3 farmers' markets and practical tools for the larger community
Roots of Change	2009	California	Market Match: incentives based on location and funding requirements	134 farmers' markets
Wholesome Wave	2008	Connecticut, California, Massachusetts, and 22 others	Double Value Coupon Program: incentives based on location and individual market discretion	More than 300 farmers' markets and other farm-to-retail vendors with 60 partner organizations

The market-matching programs have slowly expanded since 2008 and in 2010 these four nonprofits operated 177 market programs (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012). That number grew to 526 in 2012, nearly tripling the number of markets that had EBT access and incentive programs (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012). The nonprofits have incentivized the market-matching program, as shown in the chart above, by offering monetary incentives to SNAP recipients who utilize the program. Incentives are one of the most effective ways to draw people to a new program and encourage participants to return (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012). The incentives range from a pure one-to-one match (one SNAP dollar spent earns SNAP recipients another dollar) to scaled matches (for every \$20 spent, the recipient earns an additional \$5).

The markets that utilize the market-matching programs run by these non-profits have seen increases in both their market revenue and foot traffic (USDA, 2012b). In 2010, overall SNAP benefits redemption at farmers' markets increased by 70 percent in just one year (USDA, 2012b). There is a need for future research to evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of these programs, as the programs are fairly new and the research on it is limited. There is also little research on markets that do not incentivize participation for EBT users, so it is difficult to determine whether the incentives are the sole reason for the increase in participation or if SNAP recipients are visiting for other reasons (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012).

The 2013 Community Science Cluster Evaluation, the most comprehensive review of the market-matching program, confirmed that the program is a viable food access intervention. The Evaluation used two measures of success. The first focused on the redemption of incentives offered on site. SNAP recipients took advantage of the SNAP incentives that were offered, redeeming 73% of the incentives distributed in 2011 and 96% in 2012 (The Community Science Evaluation Cluster, 2013). The second measure looked at the motivation for shopping at the farmers' markets. More than three-fourths of SNAP recipients reported that they have increased their purchase of produce due to the incentives and that the incentives are what drove them to the farmers markets (and the three grocery stores that Michigan Double Up Food Bucks partners with) (The Community Science Evaluation Cluster, 2013).

### **Key Findings on the Market-Matching Program**

The above literature review on the market-matching program was composed with the purpose of providing a brief history of the program, farmers' markets, SNAP and the evolution of EBT. A limited amount of research has been conducted on a nationwide scale on the correlation between the market-matching program and SNAP participant's food access, outside of the Cluster Evaluation. However, the limited research does provide a small sample of the programs and shows that the market-matching program has increased the amount of healthy, fresh food that SNAP recipients are purchasing (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012).

There is a need for future research on the market-matching programs, focusing on broader sample sizes and more in-depth analysis of the aspects of the programs that have proven to be the most successful. This study's exploration into the current market-matching program and the future of the programs seeks to add to the limited research on food access interventions in low income communities by focusing on where the programs may be managed the most effectively and efficiently to maximize outcomes.

### **Section II: Sustainability and the Public and Nonprofit Sectors**

In this section, I first define what sustainability is and how it will be used as the lens to analyze the market-matching program. Next, I review the literature on the public and nonprofit sectors with a focus on sustainability. I broke the research into three categories: financial self-reliance, organizational flexibility, and a commitment to the goals of the program. There are a number of factors that differentiate the public and nonprofit sectors. Many organizational theorists differentiate between the sectors using

the following categories: environmental factors, organizational-environment transactions, and internal structures and processes (Dixit, 1997; Perry and Rainey, 1988; Rainey, Backoff and Levine, 1976; Rainey and Bozeman, 2000; Rainey, Face, and Bozeman, 1995; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983; Allison and Kaye, 2012; Boycko, Shleifer and Vishny, 1996; Shleifer and Vishny, 1994). I utilize the literature from these categories within the sections designated above, as each category has factors that contribute to organizational sustainability.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability is the ability of an organization to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to fulfill its mission effectively over time, with the elements necessary to enhance the program (Coblentz, 2002; Mozier & Tracy, 2010).

Organizational sustainability is not an easy achievement. Instead, sustaining an organization can take time, a lot of planning (both short term and long term) and the funds and manpower to react to a changing environment (Pathfinder International, 2000).

Sustainability is an ongoing process and enables an organization to mold both its structure and the program structure to change with the environment. Sustainability is a key component of a successful organization because it enables the organization to weather changes while still thriving and continuing to provide the services that it offers.

There are a number of differing definitions and components that contribute to organizational sustainability. For the purpose of this research, I focused on three elements that I identified as critical to the sustainability of an organization. These are financial

self-reliance, organizational flexibility, and a commitment to the goals of the program (Coblentz, 2002). Below, I provide a review of these factors.

**Financial Self-Reliance.** Financial self-reliance is a combination of short and long term financial planning that utilizes available and potential funds to sustain the program (Coblentz, 2002). This means that there is a need for stable, diverse funding sources, especially for a non-profit, as funding can always be in flux. For the public and non-profit sector, the funding originates from different places and this determines how they are able to accurately plan in both the long-term and the short term. Public organizations receive their funds from taxpayers and the collection and allocation of taxpayer money is to be used for the public good. This means that every activity and goal of the public sector should be focused on providing services for the public good. This also means that the public sector is subjected to more institutional control processes of government (Perry and Rainey, 1988). Taxpayer money is subject to the ebb and flow of the economy, so a downturn in the economy can mean that there is less taxpayer money to budget with while a substantial uptick can lead to a surplus. This makes it challenging for the public sector to have consistent financial planning, as budgetary numbers are based on projections, not on money that has already been collected.

Non-profits typically have their organizational oversight determined by the proportion of funding that they receive from either public or private entities and their Board of Directors (Perry and Rainey, 1988). When the funds are allocated, they usually come with requirements for the non-profit to reach specific outreach numbers or target areas. The non-profit sector receives the majority of its money from a combination of

private and public funds. Their financial planning is based on the amount and length of the private and public grants and the likelihood that these funds will either be renewed or that new opportunities will arise for the non-profit to apply for funding. This also makes long-term financial planning difficult as they have to project based on various grant lengths and amounts, often not a consistent revenue stream from month to month. Therefore, there is a challenge to keep consistent funding, especially when a lot of the funding is reliant on grant approval and private foundation interest.

**Organizational Flexibility.** Organizational flexibility is the ability of the organization that is running the program to grow and expand with the program's needs (Coblentz, 2002). This includes having the physical (building space, technology) and staffing capabilities to change with the program and continue to meet the goals of the program even when facing various staffing and funding concerns. Additionally, the organization needs to be able to incentivize staff and funders to continue to support the program.

Incentives are typically the monetary and motivational reasons that employees stay in the sector. The public sector has a lower valuation of monetary incentives for employees, which has traditionally led to lower work satisfaction amongst employees (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000; Rainey, 1976). One of the ways that the public sector attempts to mitigate this issue is through offering better benefits to employees. This does incentivize some employees to stay and perform to their potential, but for many, this is not the same as a pure monetary incentive (i.e. a bonus). The non-profit sector faces a



similar issue, as their funds are typically very limited and are designated for the goals of the organization.

Employees of all sectors are driven by different work motivations. In the public sector, employees often place a high value on the public service that they are doing, which is typically beneficial to society, and the public policy that they are creating/supporting (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000). Non-profit employees are not often in their position for the money, but rather for the public good that they perceive they are doing every day. Additionally, the non-profit needs leadership that is able to anticipate changes in the environment and stay ahead of the curve.

**Commitment to Program Goals.** In order for the program to sustain itself, there needs to be a commitment to the goals of the program from all of the stakeholders involved (Coblentz, 2002). For the market-matching program, this includes the funders, staff, people served, and the public, since the program is poised to receive major public funds. One of the key aspects of this commitment is that these political influencers are all in support and committed to ensuring that the program is meeting its goals. The public sector is subjected to a larger number of political influencers (citizens, officials, different levels of government, special interest) and these influences place a greater pressure on the public sector than they do on the non-profit sector. The non-profit sector has influencers that are not quite as fragmented as the public sectors influencers, which can make it easier to operate and meet the goals of the business or program (Rainey, Face, and Bozeman, 1995; Rainey 1976). Typically, the Board of Directors is there to promote the

mission of the organization, while the staff and the funders choose to fund/work for an organization that they believe in.

Given that the political influencers vary for the both the public and non-profit sector, each sector faces challenges from the general public. The public should be holding both sectors accountable; however, the public sector is often more scrutinized because the public sector receives all of its funding from taxpayer money. Therefore, the public sector faces the greatest amount of scrutiny. Because services are financed and consumed by the public, there is more participation in the decision making process by those directly outside of the organization (Rainey, 1976). The public and non-profit sectors both work directly with the public and both have a broad impact on society. This visibility can cause public sector employees and leaders to face more pressure than their non-profit counterparts. Public officials are expected to be fair, responsive, accountable, and honest as they work toward furthering the public good (Rainey, 1976). The non-profit sector faces moderate scrutiny, as those who work and manage the sector typically manage organizations that operate to achieve/support a public good, but still need to make money to keep the organization operable (Allison and Kaye, 2012). The Board of Directors and the funders have the greatest amount of influence, but the people that the non-profit serves also play a large role in sustaining the operations of the non-profit. Without the support of the funders and the public, the non-profit will not be able to provide a service to the community effectively.

### **Summary**

This section reviewed the factors that make up the sustainability of an organization. These factors are used to compare the sustainability of the public and non-profit sectors. Organizational sustainability is dependent on the ability of an organization to be financially self-reliant, flexible, and committed to the goals of the program. The non-profit and the public sector must meet these three criteria in order to be sustainable. The non-profit and the public sector have different influences and structures that contribute to their ability to be sustainable administrators of programs. The non-profit sector is not as financially self-reliant as the public sector. Both sectors are committed to the goals of the program, however the pressure to remain committed to the goals comes from two different places. For the non-profit sector, the pressure comes from the funders while the taxpayers keep the public sector committed to the goals of the program.

## Chapter Three

### INTERVIEWS

In order to gather a robust picture of the current program, I conducted interviews with nine experts on the market-matching program. The interview questions were based on a combination of findings from the literature review and areas that the literature did not cover. The interviewees were asked 17 questions, broken into five main subject areas: background on the market-matching program and their experience with the program; organizational capacity of the market-matching program; political feasibility of the program; program budget; and other issues regarding sustainability of the program. Below, I discuss the process of conducting the interviews and the results of the interviews.

#### **Selecting Interview Participants**

Participants were identified through online research of existing market-matching programs and recommendations from other participants, which often arose during the interview process. Criteria for inclusion consisted of being involved with a market-matching program as either a director or researcher, or being a food policy professional with an expertise in farmers' markets and/or SNAP. I requested interviews from four researchers, six non-profit program directors, two food policy advocates, and four policymakers. I interviewed two researchers, four non-profit directors, two advocates, two researchers, and one policymaker. I was not able to interview the other professionals that I contacted due to scheduling conflicts and incorrect contact information. There was no incentive for participation in the study.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Participants were invited to participate in the study via email or telephone. If interested, an interview time was set up. I emailed the consent form (see Appendix B) in advance of the interview so that the participant had the opportunity to review the form and ask any questions. After receiving the completed consent form and answering any initial questions, I scheduled the interview. The interviews were conducted over the phone, and I took detailed notes during the conversation, asking for clarity when needed. When the interview was completed, I thanked the participants for their time and asked them to contact me if any concerns or questions arose after the interviews were completed.

### **Instrument**

The interview protocol had 17 questions and interviews lasted 30-40 minutes. Participants were given the option to skip any question they chose or to end the interview at any time, although none of the participants exercised this option.

The first six questions gathered demographic information on the participant and their involvement with the market-matching program. I asked participants about their program and the organization running the program, their role in the organization, how the program recruits participants, and the length of time they have been involved with the organization and the program. Then I asked them to define how their program measures success and whether, based on this definition, they believe that the program has been successful. I asked about the program's definition of success in order to understand how each individual program works to meet their goals and how they measure the goals.

The next three questions focused on the general sustainability of the program. I asked participants if the organization and the program have faced any challenges and to explain how they handled these challenges. Next, I asked the participants if the organization has faced any significant staff turnover or issues related to the administration of running the program. Last, I asked the participants where they hope the program will be five years from now. For the last question, I probed interviewees to be specific about their answer; including what sector they saw running the program and where the funding for the program would come from.

The following two questions focused on which sector would run the program efficiently and flexibly, followed by two questions on the funding of the program. I asked participants to provide their opinion on how well the current organizations are running the programs and if they thought that the public sector could run the program more efficiently than the current non-profit sector. Then, I asked them to discuss where the program receives its funding and how sustainable these funding sources are. I also asked them if the program has faced any funding challenges and to describe how the organization has overcome them.

The last four questions focused on the current political viewpoints surrounding the program. I asked the participants generally if the program has faced any challenges and how the organization has overcome them. Next, I asked the participants if they believed that the federal or state government had any interest in running the program. Last, I asked their opinion on the funding that the program will receive from the Farm Bill and whether they thought that this was the right place to house program funding.

All of the questions included in the interview were open-ended. I finished each interview by asking the participants if there was something I missed or if they would like to provide any additional information. Each interviewee asked me additional questions about my research and the graduate program. See Appendix A for complete interview protocols.

### **Data Analysis Method**

After finishing the interviews, I compiled all of the interview results into a single table, broken out by questions. I then combined the answers that had similar themes and coded them in blue. Other answers were coded in red. This allowed me to visually see how the answers to the questions were similar and which were different. Any answer that was an outlier was coded in yellow. This system allowed me to easily draw both general conclusions based on the answers and to identify quotes that represent the themes in the interview. This method also allowed me to keep the interview results confidential.

## Chapter Four

### INTERVIEW RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the interviews, broken down in order of the literature review discussion on sustainability. The results are discussed in the following order: background questions, sustainability, funding, organizational flexibility/efficiency, and political environment. The results are presented in this order to provide insight into the sustainability of the program, with a focus on funding, organizational flexibility/efficiency, and political environment. The summary will review the main findings that will influence my analysis in the next chapter.

#### **Background on the participants and market-matching program**

There were a number of common themes that emerged from this section of questions. The first theme that emerged from the background questions is that there is not a lot of research available on these programs. All of the interviewees stated that the information that exists is very program specific (not generalizable) and is not publicly available. There is a need for more research on the programs, with a focus on the outcomes and the processes, in order to share best practices across states and organizations.

The second theme that emerged from the background questions is that every organization is very different. Although, at their core, the organizations are focused on offering incentives to SNAP recipients, they all implement the program in a variety of ways. Some use tokens, others use coupons, while others are testing out mobile applications, colloquially known as “apps”, to make it easier to process EBT cards and



disperse incentives. Some market-matching programs are entirely run by a single non-profit organization, while other market-matching programs provide administrative or financial support, collaborating with other non-profits or individual markets. Interviewees indicated that these differences reflect two ideas. The first is that each program is tailored to the local culture and local needs; not necessarily the needs of the participants in the entire state. The second is that because the programs are localized, it is very challenging to create a uniform policy or requirements that apply to all programs, as they all have their own challenges and specific population that they serve. For example, one non-profit director stated that the agricultural landscape in California is different than that in Michigan or Virginia. Therefore, the definitions of produce are currently different, as the Michigan program requires locally grown produce, while the California one is not specific to certain types of produce.

The last theme to come from this section of questions is that it is challenging to measure the success of the program and every program measures success differently. Each interviewee was asked how they would define success for the market-matching program. Two interviewees stated that they measured success by the number of people who participate in the program. A third non-profit director stated that their program views success as:

*“The money that is put toward the incentive program gets spent. This number can vary by the size of the market, but it is the key to the success of the program.”*

The last non-profit director stated that the number of SNAP dollars spent at the market measures the success of their program. For this program, although the incentives are an added benefit, each program director stated that the end goal of the program was to

have SNAP users use their benefits at the farmers' markets without the added incentives. For them, this will signal that shopping at the farmers' market has started to become habit, not a behavior driven by a monetary incentive. This was the common measure of success for almost all of the programs in the long term: improving food access and healthy food behaviors, without added incentives.

### **Sustainability**

In terms of sustainability, the first thing that the non-profit directors mentioned was that due to a lack/difficulty of information sharing and data management, it is hard to prove that the outcomes of the program are sustainable. Without coordinated efforts to help markets collect and report data, it is challenging to create a standardized reporting mechanism. The current data collection and reporting works on the local level, but the interviewees were uncertain if these mechanisms would be enough in five years. One director stated that:

*“Due to the growth of the program and more coupons being used, the program becomes operationally more difficult to manage. We track the data when it is given to us, occasionally ending up with too much data that is not relevant, which can make it hard to report our outcomes.”*

The four non-profit directors stated that organizationally, they have not experienced a high level of turnover or administrative issues. However, at the market level, the individual markets that implement the programs and work with the non-profits often struggle with the administrative aspects of the program. One director stated that:

*“One of our challenges is tailoring the program for each community to match their budget. This means that each market has to do their own fundraising for their incentive dollars and many funders want to see a unified, statewide program in order to fund the program in the long run.”*

The two researchers and the policymaker reiterated the idea that the non-profits are sustainable at this time, but that funding issues constantly threaten the future of the programs. When asked where they see the program five years from now, all nine interviewees stated that they hoped to see the program with stable federal funding. One non-profit director believes that:

*“The current language in the Farm Bill [Hunger Free Communities Incentive] would be a big step in creating a sustainable program. If the funding is renewed five years from now, then the program has a better chance of succeeding.”*

Two of the researchers stated that with funding from the Farm Bill, the five-year funding guarantee provides the programs with the opportunity to evaluate whether they are continuing to drive outcomes, specifically with eating behaviors. The other idea that all nine interviewees discussed was the impact that changing technology will have on the incentive program. One researcher wondered whether the non-profits or even the government could keep up with technological advancements and implement them at all of the programs:

*“I hope that technology will have moved and we will be using more smartphone technology, instead of the tokens and paper coupons that are currently used. There are pilot apps being tested right now that would help programs move with technological advancements without spending a lot of money. An app has the opportunity to improve the program for all parties involved and is crucial to its continued success.”*

### **Funding**

Funding is currently the biggest issue for the program. All nine interviewees stated that the funding for the program comes from a mix of public and private funding, but most programs currently rely heavily on private funding. The first concern that arose was over the time that it takes to fundraise:

*“If organizations are spending a good amount of time fundraising, they are not spending this time focusing on the program. This can hinder the growth and expansion of the program.”*

The second concern is that private funding is not sustainable in the long run. One researcher and one non-profit director discussed that many of their foundation grants are about to expire and they are concerned about the funding being renewed. The foundation funding, in one non-profit director’s opinion, is not intended to be forever, so it is a challenge to find a variety of funding sources. All nine interviewees agreed that the programs do a good job at fundraising on the local level, but these funds are not always enough to support both the incentives and the administrative costs of the program.

Therefore, when the Farm Bill was passed with the Hunger Free Communities Incentive, it was considered a large funding win for the program. One advocate agreed, stating:

*“Especially now that the SNAP benefits are being reduced, the incentives are becoming more important. A threshold currently exists that makes the market appealing to SNAP recipients. Without that threshold, the farmers’ markets are not worth the continued funding. But, if over five years of sustained funding, we can show results, then the incentive program becomes a critical intervention.”*

Now, the USDA will need to determine how to allocate the funding and give the different non-profits the opportunity to apply for the funds. The policymaker stated that this funding has the potential to change how the program is implemented (more funding can lead to growth or greater incentives) and that there is a chance that the funding will not necessarily be sustainable for all of the individual non-profits.

### **Operational Efficiency/Flexibility of the Program**

These questions focused on whether the interviewee felt that the non-profits had the best organizational structure to manage the program. One non-profit director stated

that although the non-profit had been efficient at managing the program, the program would have more potential if there was a nationwide standard for operations:

*“The more we try to tailor the program to specific markets and implementation methods, the less efficient we become. There really is no one size fits all approach, so it is important to establish a standard that can be flexible so that all programs have the same basic goals.”*

Two of the non-profit directors stated that they believed that the programs in all states were running efficiently, but that there are always processes and procedures that could be introduced to improve operations. These range from implementing a streamlined data input system to developing closer partnerships between the non-profits and individual markets that encourage shared staff and better communication. The researcher stated that because each non-profit runs the program in a different way, there is no current research on which individual method is creating the most consistent outcomes.

The next question asked if the state or federal government would be more efficient at running the program. The answers to this question varied, as the two researchers felt that they could not comment on this question and two non-profit directors stated that at this time, the state or federal government was not a viable option. One non-profit director believed that a different structure may improve efficiency, but that:

*“The program should not be part of the federal government given the current political climate. However, if there was statewide coordination around the program this could be a more efficient way to deliver the program to SNAP recipients.”*

The policymaker discussed how this is a difficult question to answer because the state and federal government structures are more complex than the non-profit structures. Organizational efficiency would be dependent on who is in charge of the program and who implements the program, which would likely be two different government entities.

Funding would also dictate whether a state would be able to opt in to a federal program, as many state governments do not have the extra staff or funds to match administrative funding requirements from the federal government. The two advocates stated that it would be dependent on funding and the requirements attached to the funding as to whether the public sector would be better equipped to run the program.

### **Political Environment**

This section of questions asked whether the programs face any current political challenges, both on the local, state, and federal level. On the local level, all four non-profit directors stated that they have not faced political challenges. There is often a small number of citizens and local elected officials that are skeptical, but most local politicians are supportive of the program. On the state level, there has been support for the program politically because it is aiding the state in improving access to food for SNAP recipients. However, all nine interviewees expressed that they think that the state has no political interest in running the program but instead would be a better partner. One non-profit director stated that:

*“Our state is really supportive and has been an active partner with community health programs. The Health and Human Services department and the Department of Agriculture like the program. However, I believe that there is no realistic way that the state can take the program on. They do not have the capacity to staff and maintain it at this point.”*

The nine interviewees all felt that the federal government does have an interest in the program, but that the current political environment prevents them from becoming more involved in it. In the past, the Farm Bill has had money for these programs through Specialty Crop Block Grants, but this is the first time that there is specific funding for

SNAP incentives. One non-profit director stated that the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture supports the programs and the non-profits expanding them, but that the USDA has no interest in expanding the program under the federal government umbrella. One advocate expressed that:

*“As long as the program continues to provide positive results and supporting data, the program is an easy thing for bi-partisan [federal] support. If we can get SNAP recipients to spend benefits at farmers’ markets (that typically contain healthy foods), the functionality of the SNAP program is improving as well.”*

### **Summary**

Throughout all nine interviews, there were four main things that the interviewees were asked about: sustainability, funding, efficiency/flexibility, and political environment. The biggest concerns that arose over all of the interviews were that sustainable funding is crucial to the continuation of the program and political receptivity is needed at all levels for the program to be successful and stay committed to achieving its goals. In the next section, I combine the literature review and the interview data to compare the non-profit sector and public sector to determine which sector would be more sustainable to run the program.

## Chapter Five

### ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

There are two governance structures that could sustainably implement the market-matching program: the non-profit sector (where it currently resides) or the public sector (who is providing funding in the Farm Bill). The following chapter discusses the two alternatives and then analyzes the sustainability of the program if administered by each. Based on the literature review and the interviews, sustainability will be analyzed under the lens of the financial self-reliance, political environment, and operational flexibility.

#### **The Alternatives**

##### **The Non-Profit Sector**

Under the non-profit sector, the market-matching program is administered by one or more non-profits in specific states. There are no state requirements for operation, other than any requirements that are attached to grant funding. The funding for the programs will come from private funders and public funders. The programs receive the majority of their funding from individual donors and private organizations (Shinkle, 2013). These funds are typically granted on a year-by-year basis or raised via local fundraising efforts. For the public funding that the program receives, there are grant application processes every one to three years, with no guarantee that the program will receive the funding that it had in the past. The program is currently offered in specific states where the non-profits have been active in recruiting, establishing, and fundraising for the program. There is no nationwide requirement or effort to offer the program to SNAP recipients. The non-profit sector reports to the funders on a variety of data points, which are not consistent across



non-profits and states. There is currently an effort to create data gathering that is uniform across programs, but this is still in the developmental stage.

### **The Public Sector**

The public sector option would consist of the federal government administering the program. The federal government would be the administrator instead of the individual state governments because it has the funding through the Farm Bill and a greater level of capacity to implement the program throughout the states (Rainey and Bozeman, 2000). In order to implement the program in the individual states, the federal government may collaborate with the individual states, as it currently does with SNAP benefits. This would make it easier to facilitate the program by combining it with the departments that already operate the SNAP program, since the two are correlated to one another. The United States Department of Food and Agriculture (USDA) would govern the program in conjunction with individual states Departments of Food and Agriculture or Health and Human Services. The main funding for the program is from the Farm Bill and is guaranteed for five years. The states could choose to match some or all of the funding provided by the federal government. Government employees and volunteers would staff the program and would report back to the USDA through a general standard for the program, including reporting metrics and goals for the program to reach.

With the structure of how the program currently is run by the non-profit sector and the potential process that the public sector could use to run the program, they each face their own challenges when it comes to sustaining the program. The following

section will compare the sustainability of the program under each sector, with a focus on the financial self-reliance, political environment, and operational flexibility.

### **Financial Self-Reliance**

Financial self-reliance is a combination of short and long term financial planning that utilizes available and potential funds to sustain the program (Coblentz, 2002). This means that there is a need for diverse funding sources, especially for a non-profit, as funding can always be in flux. Funding is the most important issue for the program. Since 2008, the programs have received a fairly stable level of funding through a combination of mainly private funding and minimal public funding, typically from Specialty Crop Block Grants (The Community Science Evaluation Group, 2012). However, multiple interviewees pointed out that many of the programs private funding sources are slowly reaching the end and they are beginning to look for more options for funding. This is found to be a very common issue for the non-profit sector. Two interviewees stated that many of the non-profits have no guaranteed funding that lasts after the fiscal year is over and even then, they have to ensure that all of the markets that they serve are receiving enough of the budget. One non-profit director stated that:

*“One of our challenges is tailoring the program for each community to match their budget. This means that each market has to do their own fundraising for their incentive dollars and many funders want to see a unified, statewide program in order to fund the program in the long term.”*

Additionally, as the programs begin to maximize their outreach and it becomes more difficult to measure the impact of the programs, interviewees raised concerns over the support that private foundations will provide when there are multiple organizations and programs from which to choose. The Farm Bill is the first time that there will be a

single, stable funding source that is guaranteed for five years. Through this funding, the public sector is stating that the program is a priority and that taxpayer funds should be used to support it (Perry and Rainey, 1988).

In the non-profit sector, this funding will not be enough to sustain every single program as the allocation is available to a variety of programs, so there will be a challenge for the non-profits to ensure that they can find the additional funding needed to fill the gap (Carman, 2014). If the public sector took full control of the program, then there will be a need to provide a larger federal funding budget or a partnership with the states to do fund matching. Interviewees stated that the federal government would be the ideal funder, as all public services receive federal and sustained funding. Public sector programs receive their funding from taxpayer money, which can fluctuate with the economy, but is more reliable than year-to-year private foundation and Specialty Block Grants. As the funding pertains to the market-matching program, all nine interviewees stated that they hoped to see the program with stable federal funding. One non-profit director believes that:

*“The current language in the Farm Bill (Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive) would be a big step in creating a sustainable program. If the funding is renewed five years from now, then the program has a better chance of succeeding.”*

### **Political Environment**

The political environment is comprised of every influencer that has a stake in the program. Some of these influencers, such as politicians, the electorate, or the Board of Directors, carry a larger weight than the everyday citizen (Rainey, 1976; Allison and Kaye, 2012). According to all nine of the interviewees, the political environment has

been favorable to the program, from the federal government all the way to the local government. All four non-profit directors stated that their local communities were receptive and supportive of the programs, including the City Council members and the state representatives. Political support at the local level has consistently been high and the Boards of Directors for each non-profit have remained key champions promoting the program (Dixit, 1997). One advocate stated that:

*“As long as the program continues to provide positive results and supporting data, the program is an easy thing to receive bi-partisan support.”*

However, the programs do face challenges when they begin to expand into other communities. It is costly to expand the operation and, without the availability of additional funding and federal and local support, the program may not be able to establish itself in the new community.

The public and non-profit sectors both work directly with the public and tend to have a broader impact on society, which can lead to increased scrutiny of public officials and their actions. This can cause the public sector to face greater scrutiny, both in monetary allocations and political stance (Dixit, 1997). Although there is currently political support at the federal level for the program, many interviewees expressed that with a new administration the support may disappear or if the program can no longer provide high outcomes, legislators may be pressured to drop their support for the program. As the electorate changes, the political agendas are impacted, especially when influential policymakers retire or new, charismatic policymakers are elected (Kingdon, 2010).

Additionally, the Farm Bill funding line items are largely dependent on the priorities of the legislators, and a number of these legislators will change in the five years before the next Farm Bill will be passed. If the states became partners with the federal government in the implementation of the program, there is the potential for political disagreements over who has the authority to make decisions for the program and how funding will be split between the federal and state level. The electorate will also hold the program more accountable than it currently does because taxpayer money will be used to fund the allocation from the Farm Bill. The USDA will need to ensure that the program is serving the public good and that the standards set for the program ensure that the money is used correctly. Most of the interviewees discussed that although the state and federal government are supportive of the program, the non-profit is currently the most politically secure. One non-profit director stated that:

*“Our state is really supportive and has been an active partner with community health programs. The HHS department and the department of agriculture like the program.”*

Based on the literature and the interviews, the political environment is currently very positive with non-profits administering the program. If the public sector administered the program, the programs would enjoy support with current policymakers but this support could change with electoral shifts (Kingdon, 2010). Moreover, a publicly run program would be subject to greater scrutiny from the public than a program run by a non-profit (Rainey, Face, and Bozeman, 1995; Rainey 1976).

### **Operational Flexibility**

Organizational flexibility is the ability of the organization that is running the program to grow and expand with the program’s needs (Coblentz, 2002). This includes

having the physical (building space, technology) and staffing capabilities to move with the program and continue to meet the goals of the program even when facing various staffing and funding concerns. With the new funding from the Farm Bill, the market-matching programs are poised to have the funding to increase the population that they serve and reach their goals. Under the current structure, non-profits operate the program in areas where there are farmers' markets and an interest in SNAP incentives. The programs vary by state based on the presence of a non-profit that focuses on market-matching, the size of the SNAP population, and the availability of farmers' markets. In states where this does not exist or there is no non-profit currently equipped to implement the program, there is no program to offer incentives to SNAP recipients. If the program does grow into a greater service area and/or there are requirements with the public funding to serve a larger population of SNAP recipients, there is limited operational flexibility for the current non-profit organizations to expand their service area to additional states.

There is no current structure for the non-profits to consistently share information between programs and this makes it difficult for a new non-profit to establish the program in an area that is not currently served. The non-profits also are operating in many areas at organizational capacity. With the Farm Bill funding, the non-profits will receive the additional financial resources to grow the program, but they may not have the infrastructure or staffing for the expansion. If the public sector was in charge of the program, there is currently infrastructure in place at the state and local level (through the USDA and State Departments of Agriculture or Health and Human Services) to increase

the population served. This would be a large initial undertaking and more staff would be needed to run the program. Three non-profit directors stated that they do not think that the public sector has any interest in folding the program into the current infrastructure.

One non-profit director stated:

*“However, I believe that there is no realistic way that the state can take the program on. They do not have the capacity to staff and maintain it at this point.”*

Additionally, the policymaker stated that the size of the USDA may be an issue for organizational flexibility. The USDA currently handles a large number of issues related to food and agriculture and the Farm Bill funding is only a small piece of everything that they do. Because the USDA is a large public organization, there may not be a clear place for oversight of the program, since it influences both local agriculture and SNAP (two different departments in the USDA). There would need to be clear state-level collaboration in order to staff and maintain the program in each community. This is a major challenge and, given the already growing number of departments and issue areas, the USDA may not have the interest or the capacity to absorb the program.

## Summary and Conclusions

**Table II: Summary of Analysis**

	<b>Financial Self-Reliance</b>	<b>Political Environment</b>	<b>Organizational Flexibility</b>
Non-Profit Sector	The literature indicates that a combination of Farm Bill funding and private funding provides short-term stability for the programs. Six of nine interviewees reported that in five years, not all funding may be as consistent and if this happens, then the programs will not be sustainable.	Four of nine interviewees expressed that the sector is focused on the goals of the program and does not currently have a number of competing political influencers. The political environment is supportive of the program and the organizations in charge of running it.	Based on the literature, the non-profit sector is more limited in its ability to be flexible and adjust to a larger market. Seven of nine interviewees expressed that the current infrastructure and information sharing systems are not stable or consistent across organizations.
Public Sector	The literature indicates that the Farm Bill funding may not be enough to sustain the program in every state because there are a number of programs and organizations that can apply for the funding. Even with the application process, the policymaker suggested that this funding is more stable than many of the private funds that the programs have received in the past.	The literature indicates that the sector is responsible for a multitude of programs and there will be pressure to achieve high-level outcomes in order to have sustained political support. Without the political support, five of nine interviewees expressed that the sector will face challenges in providing sustainable support of the program.	The policymaker pointed out that the infrastructure that has already been established in the USDA and throughout the states via the SNAP program is enough to expand the program to all 50 states and sustain it.



After reviewing the literature and the interview results, I concluded that the non-profit sector would be the more sustainable administrator of the program. This is because the program, with the Farm Bill allocation, has financial self-reliance and moderate operational flexibility with the non-profit sector. The non-profit sector has a positive political environment, as political influencers are supportive of the program and its goals. The public sector also has political support but lacks the current capacity and desire to take over the program. However, if administered by the public sector, the program may become lost in the number of programs that the sector has to administer. Even though there is Farm Bill funding available for this program, if there are other programs that meet the criteria to receive the funding, the allocation may not be enough for the public sector to fund the program in all 50 states. Seven of the nine interviewees also expressed that they do not think that the political environment is supportive of a full takeover of the program, although they support the program in the current structure.

## Chapter Six

### FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The market-matching program is poised to receive funding for the first time from the Farm Bill and this presents an opportunity for the program to have a sustainable funding source and expand. The non-profit sector has been administering the program, but they are only able to address the local community needs, and not necessarily, the needs of everyone in the state (very program dependent, with typically one non-profit organization operating in the entire state) and funding for the programs is not stable from year-to-year. This thesis examined whether the non-profit sector is the most sustainable administrator of the program or if a publicly administered program would be more sustainable. For this analysis, I considered the non-profit sector to have substantial federal funding from the Farm Bill. The federally run alternative has the program administered by the federal government, housed within USDA and with funding allocated from the Farm Bill.

Through a review of the literature and interviews with two researchers, four non-profit directors, two advocates, two researchers, and one policymaker, I found that the non-profit sector would be the more sustainable operator of the program. If administered by the non-profit sector, with the Farm Bill allocation, the program will have financial self-reliance and moderate operational flexibility and there should be no change in the level of positive political support the program currently receives. If administered by the public sector, the Farm Bill funding on its own may not be enough to sustain the program and there is currently no apparent political support for a public sector takeover of the

program. Although the public sector has the infrastructure for administering the program in all 50 states, without the financial and political support, this will not be a sustainable move.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The analysis of these alternatives brought out larger implications for food policy. First, states should continue to provide support to these programs and work to form public-private partnerships to further the market-matching program mission. These partnerships can provide additional financial stability, staffing, and help with promotion and expansion of the program. With partnerships between non-profits and states, the program can become more financially and organizationally sustainable. This can also aid the non-profits in developing statewide standards for operating, so that the outcomes can be reported in a manner that will make evaluation more comparable.

Second, the policy maker interviewed believed that the future of the program is reliant on the development of a coalition to support the growth and stability of the program. The coalition would be a place where the many programs could come together and share best practices. It would also be a better way for the programs to establish a private-public partnership, either on the state level or on the federal level. This type of partnership would strengthen the market-matching program and give it leverage to advocate for funding and resources.

### **Questions for Future Research**

To continue research on the market-matching program and its future, I would explore a few areas. First, I would broaden the interview base to speak with more policymakers on the local, state, and federal level. This information would add additional depth to the discussion of sustainability.

Second, a separate analysis could be done that compares the implementation of the market-matching program by each non-profit. This analysis would provide baseline information that would help the non-profit sector implement the program and may point to areas that need to be improved upon to promote sustainability. Five interviewees felt that this type of research would help them stay more informed about the different programs and would encourage the program directors to communicate with each other more frequently.

Third, this study should be replicated in four years, when the Farm Bill funding comes up for renewal. The four-year period will give the non-profits the opportunity to use the funding to improve and expand the program and will show whether the non-profits can manage the program on a larger scale. They will also be able to provide longer-term data on their participants and the effectiveness of the program. This will be critical to showing that the program deserves renewed federal funding. In four years, the programs will have become more established and will be able to show more data on how participants use the program and if participants have made any significant purchasing habit changes.

Last, there should be a study on the potential benefits of another SNAP incentive program: grocery store incentives. The Fair Food Network in Michigan currently collaborates with three grocery stores to offer similar incentives to the ones at farmers' markets. This type of incentive is needed because it will help influence SNAP recipients to purchase healthy fruits and vegetables in other settings. This type of program may meet the food access and consumption goals of the market-matching program but may reach a larger population of SNAP recipients. With more evaluation on the grocery store incentive program, there may be the opportunity to expand the SNAP incentive program to incentivize grocery and convenience store purchases of healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis addresses the question of which sector would be the more sustainable implementer of the market-matching program. The conclusion, based on the literature review and interviews, is that the non-profit sector is the more sustainable administrator of the program. With the additional Farm Bill funding, the non-profit sector is financially self-reliant for the next five years, can institute a degree of organizationally flexible and is committed to the goals of the market-matching program. The public sector alone does not have the financial self-reliance necessary to sustain the program and the market-matching program is not the only commitment that the public sector needs to sustain. However, the program will continue to face issues as it grows and utilizes the Farm Bill allocation. In four years, when the Farm Bill funding is up for renewal, there is the possibility that the federal government would be a more sustainable option for

administering the program. At the point, the program may outgrow the organizational capacity of the non-profits and the funds may be used more efficiently if they are channeled through the federal government infrastructure.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The project you are being interviewed for is exploring whether the farmers' market-matching program, a program that allows SNAP recipients to use their EBT cards at farmers' markets, should continue to be run by non-profits or if the federal or state government should run the program. In the following interview, I am going to ask you questions about your role with the farmers' market-matching program and your view of the success and future of the program. This interview will be kept confidential, per the consent form that I have provided. If, at any time, you do not feel comfortable with any of the questions, you can choose not to answer them and you may end this interview at any time.

Before we go further, do you have any questions?

Interview Questions:

#### **Background**

1. Can you tell me about your program?
2. Can you tell me about your role with the farmers' market-matching program?
3. How long have you (worked/researched/been involved with) the farmers market-matching program?
4. How do you/your organization measure the success of the program? What is success?
5. In your opinion, how successful has the program been?
6. How has the program advertised and recruited SNAP recipients? About how many people participate in the program in a year?

#### **Sustainable**

7. Have there been any logistical or feasibility challenges for the program? If so, what are they and how has the organization overcome them?
8. Has your nonprofit/the non-profits you know of had turnover or issues with running the program?
9. Where do you see the program five years from now?

#### **Efficiency**

10. Do you think that the non-profits that run the program currently are the most efficient? Why or why not?
11. Do you think the state or federal government could run the program more efficiently and with fewer resources? Why or why not?

#### **Budgeting**

12. Where does the funding for the program come from? Are these funding sources sustainable?
  - a. Probe: how does the funding breaks down by funding source
13. Have there been any fiscal challenges for the program? If so, what are they and how has the organization overcome them?

**Political**

14. Have there been any political challenges for the program? If so, what are they and how has the organization overcome them?
15. Do you think that the federal government has an interest in running the program? Why or why not?
16. Do you think that the states have an interest in running the program? Why or why not?
17. Do you know where the SNAP program funding is housed? If so, do you think that the Farm Bill is the correct place to legislate funding the SNAP program and potentially the market-matching program? Why or why not?



APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to participate in research conducted by Lauren Suedkamp as a thesis requirement for the Master of Public Policy and Administration program at California State University, Sacramento.

**Purpose of the research:**

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the market-matching program, a program that provides SNAP recipients the opportunity to use their EBT at farmers markets, should be housed within the state or the federal government or stay where it currently is.

**Funding for the research:**

This research will be funded in its entirety by the researcher.

**Research Procedures:**

The interview will be an open-ended, structured interview. The questions will cover a variety of topics, including the market-matching program; its influential and funding partners, and your view of the future of the program.

**Compensation:**

You will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

**Benefits:**

The benefits of this research are twofold. The first is that the outcome will provide insight into one intervention that is aimed at providing better food access for low-income communities. The second is that the research will provide policymakers and community leaders a recommendation regarding the administration of the program.

**Risks Involved:**

The research will be published as a thesis and may be publicly accessible in digital or print formats. You may decline to answer any question if you wish. Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. Please refer to the section "Confidentiality" for information about risks associated with making public statements.

**Confidentiality:**

Everything you say in the interview will remain confidential unless you grant explicit permission to be identified by name and/or organization in the final report. Please make your request known at the start of the interview and check the appropriate box below. You may change your request at any time during or after the interview.

"I wish to be identified by name in the written research report."

"I request that my name not be disclosed, but consent to being identified as a representative of the organization I represent. I consent to particular quotes from the interview to be attributed to my organization. I acknowledge that given the small number of people being interviewed, it may be possible for readers of the thesis to infer my identity even if I am not identified by name."

"I request that nothing I say be publicly attributed to me, my employer, or clients I represent. However, I acknowledge that given the small number of people being interviewed, it may be possible for readers of the thesis to infer my identity even if I am not identified by name."

**Conflicts of Interest:**

There are no apparent conflicts of interest for this research.

**Contact Information:**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] or you may contact my primary academic advisor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Sacramento.

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Assistant Professor  
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Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have read this consent form and agree to participate in the research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (printed)

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