



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL



# Veggie Van Study

## Request for Partners

### Updated 10/1/18

## INTRODUCTION

The Community Health Interventions Lab at the University at Buffalo, in partnership with the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has recently received funding from the National Cancer Institute to evaluate the expansion a mobile produce market model, known as the Veggie Van. The overall goal of this study is to understand if mobile produce markets can impact fruit and vegetable intake and other related health outcomes in lower-income and underserved communities. We are seeking partners who are interested in starting a mobile market program and/or have previously run a mobile market and are looking to expand. Our goal is to identify up to eight organizations that will partner with us on this project. These organizations will receive technical assistance for running a mobile market program and funding to offset the cost of following the Veggie Van model (see below) and participating in study-related data collection.

Similar to many existing mobile produce market programs, the **Veggie Van model** follows a few key principles:

1. Veggie Van is designed to address multiple dimensions of access to fresh produce for lower-income and underserved communities:
  - a. Availability: Markets offer a good variety of fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables
  - b. Affordability: produce is sold at reduced cost (compared to market rate for similar items)
  - c. Accessibility: Market locations are selected based on strong partnerships with organizations that are already serving the target population of low income families with complementary services (i.e., health clinics, community centers, etc.)
  - d. Accessibility: Markets accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and other relevant local incentive and benefit programs (e.g., Double Up Food Bucks)
  - e. Accommodation: Markets are designed to meet the needs of the target community including any cultural specific foods
2. Veggie Van customers are encouraged to purchase an entire share (or box) of produce rather than just 1 or 2 items<sup>1</sup>
3. Cooking demos, recipes and nutrition education are available at the Veggie Van mobile market sites to help customers better use the produce in their boxes/shares<sup>1</sup>

More details about the Veggie Van study and the history of the Veggie Van program can be found on our website: [www.myveggievan.org](http://www.myveggievan.org)

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<sup>1</sup> The Veggie Van model is designed to help people try to eat more fruits and vegetables. To that end, we believe that encouraging larger purchases through shares, incentives and cooking education. This approach can still be compatible with a traditional “free choice” market style and we will work with selected partner organizations to identify the best strategy for their setting.

### DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS

**Study Team:** Researchers from the University at Buffalo, University of North Carolina, and other official consultants working on the Veggie Van Study.

**Selection Committee:** Team of experts, who are not part of the study team, who will review RFP applications and make recommendations to the study team.

**Applicant:** Any organization that completes the Intent to Apply form online.

**Invited Applicant:** Applicants who complete the Intent to Apply form who are subsequently invited by the study team to complete the full RFP application

**Finalist:** One of up to 14 organizations that are invited to participate in an in-person training March 2019.

**Partner Organization:** Eight organizations selected to receive funding and technical assistance through the RFP process. These organizations will need to sign a formal contract with the University at Buffalo prior to receiving any funding. Each partner organization will identify four community sites with which they will partner for this work.

**Community Site:** These are the four locations within each partner organization's service area which will serve as potential hosts for the mobile market program each week. Invited applicants must provide letters of support from four potential community sites at the time of application. Partner organizations will sign a memorandum of understanding with each community site. Of the four community sites identified by each partner organization, the study team will choose two community sites to be mobile market sites and two to be planning sites (more information on this selection process is provided below).

**Mobile Market Sites:** Two of the four community sites selected by the study team to serve as mobile market sites, meaning that partner organizations will agree to run a mobile market program, following the Veggie Van model, at each of these two sites for at least one year starting shortly after funding is awarded.

**Planning Sites:** Two of the four community sites selected by the study team to engage in a year-long food access planning process. Partner organizations will work with these sites to determine if the Veggie Van model or another program will be best for these sites. After one year, the partner organization and the site can decide if they want to start a mobile market or another program.

**Veggie Van Model:** The Veggie Van model is one way to run a mobile produce market. This model has been tested by the study team and shown to help people eat more fruits and vegetables. As it was only previously tested in one region of North Carolina, we want to see if it can also work in other parts of the country. Partner organizations will be asked to run mobile markets following the Veggie Van model.

Note: Partner organizations are free to use the Veggie Van name and logo for their mobile market program or use a new or existing name/logo.

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

RFP Released: September 3, 2018  
RFP Clarification Questions Due: September 11, 2018\*  
Informational Webinar: September 13, 2018\*  
Intent to Apply (online form) Due: September 24, 2018  
Invited Applicants Notified: October 1, 2018  
Full Application Due: November 19, 2018  
Finalists Notified: January 23, 2019  
In-Person Training and Final Selection Process: Mid-March of 2019<sup>2</sup>  
Partners Selected: May 6, 2019

\*Potential applicants are asked to submit clarifying questions about the RFP via e-mail ([contactus@myveggievan.org](mailto:contactus@myveggievan.org)) by September 11<sup>th</sup> so that they can be addressed during the webinar. In addition, a FAQ document with answers to submitted questions will be available on our website.

For information on how to join the webinar, please visit:

<http://www.myveggievan.org/webinar.html>

### **WHY THIS STUDY IS IMPORTANT**

Not only will this study allow us to bring more healthy food to people in underserved communities across the country, but it will provide important information on whether mobile markets work and in what settings. While many people believe that increasing access to healthy food through mobile markets helps people eat better, there is still limited evidence on the best ways to do that. What we learn will help future programs be more successful.

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<sup>2</sup> Travel for up to two individuals from each finalist organization to attend this training and selection event will be paid by the University at Buffalo. At least one individual must attend for the organization to be considered for selection as a study partner.

## ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

Organizations that meet the following criteria are invited to apply:

- Any private, public, religious or government entity is invited to apply. Individuals are not eligible.
- Applicant organizations must primarily operate in one of the following states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Delaware, District of Columbia
- Applicant organizations must serve a predominantly urban<sup>3</sup> population.

Selected partner organizations must agree to:

- Identify four community sites that would be willing to host the Veggie Van on a weekly basis:
  - Sites must be new (i.e., a mobile market has not been hosted at these sites before).
  - At least 50% of individuals served by the selected community sites should be lower-income individuals or have a demonstrated need for food access/assistance.
  - Community sites should serve a predominantly English and/or Spanish speaking community or have translation resources available for other populations.
  - Community sites should be places where community members are already receiving services or visit on a weekly basis. Examples include, but are not limited to churches, federally qualified healthcare centers, worksites, libraries, community/recreation and head start centers.
  - The study team will select two of these four community sites to serve as mobile market sites. The other two sites will serve as planning sites, engaging in a year-long community engagement and planning process related to food access. At the end of that time, partner organizations can decide if they want to work with planning sites to start hosting a mobile market or to implement another food-related program.
- Meet/talk regularly with the study team to coordinate timelines and ensure study goals are met.
- Work with the community sites and study team on community engagement efforts:
  - Create one or more community advisory boards to oversee mobile market work.
  - Plan program kick-off events and identify at least 30 community members at each site to participate in data collection.
- Run a mobile market, following the Veggie Van model, for at least one year at the two community sites which are selected to be mobile market sites. Mobile markets need to be operated on a regular basis (generally weekly) for at least 10 months out of the year. Mobile market days and hours will be selected based on community need. Note that partner organizations may choose to run markets at more than the two selected mobile market sites, but only the two selected sites will be part of the evaluation conducted by the study team.

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<sup>3</sup> The Veggie Van model has not been previously tested in rural areas so we have chosen not to work with organizations that serve an exclusively rural population for this round of the study. As we recognize that urban means different things in different locations, we encourage any organization that might qualify to fill out the intent to apply form so that we can determine if your area would be a good match.

- Work with the study team to collect evaluation measures:
  - The study team will train at least one staff member or volunteer at each partner organization on collecting data from customers.
  - Partner organizations will track market process measures (e.g., how often cooking demos or other activities are completed at each site) using forms provided by the study team.
- Make de-identified customer-level mobile market sales data publically available for at least 3 years.
- Track all expenditures associated with operating the Veggie Van program and submit reports upon request.
- Share mobile market resources (e.g., promotional/educational materials, business model analyses conducted by the study team) to include in the Veggie Van Toolkit for use by future markets.
- Provide updates and feedback about the mobile market program to the study team (e.g., interviews with staff) for up to 3 years.

#### **WHAT SELECTED APPLICANTS WILL RECEIVE**

Our study team includes experts with many years of experience in mobile market operation and food aggregation. In addition, members of our team specialize in food systems planning, engaging lower-income communities, program implementation and partnerships, business plan development and sustainability, changing diet and health behaviors, food benefit and incentive programs, and nutrition and cooking education. We have developed a toolkit which includes resources in all these areas. This toolkit also includes resources accumulated from working with successful mobile markets across the country.

#### **All selected partner organizations will receive:**

- Funding up to \$50,000 to offset the cost of running a mobile market according to the Veggie Van Model and participating in ongoing evaluation efforts. Note that this funding is not intended to be the only funding available for running a mobile market program. In addition to market revenues, applicants are asked to identify other in-kind or financial resources which could support market operation. Further details on how this funding will be distributed and limitations on usage are described below.
- Access to the online Veggie Van toolkit which includes:
  - Veggie Van Operations Manuals
  - Marketing and community engagement materials
  - Financial planning resources
  - “Point-of-sale” nutrition curriculum including a database of recipes by produce item and season, sample newsletters and activity ideas
- Training on the toolkit and ongoing technical assistance throughout the study period related to the areas of expertise discussed above
- Assistance with community engagement and developing a community advisory board
- License for FarmersRegister Mobile Market point-of-sale software (\$800+ value) and an iPad to run the software
- Access to data and reporting related to mobile market evaluation outcomes. In addition to standard measures collected by the study team, each organization will have the option to develop questions which they would like to have the study team answer.
- Assistance with developing a sustainability plan and identifying program funding sources

#### **WHAT ALL APPLICANTS AND FINALISTS WILL RECEIVE**

Our intention with this process is to create a large network of partners who can support each other in their mobile market work. Organizations who are not selected through this RFP will still have opportunities to contribute to and benefit from ongoing collaboration and information sharing.

All applicants will receive:

- Access to the Veggie Van toolkit
- Invitations to participate in future mobile market trainings or networking events

In addition to the above, all finalists will receive:

- Training on the Veggie Van toolkit and consultation with subject area experts (during training event in Mid-March 2019)
- Option to receive a license for Farmers Register Mobile Market software (\$800+ value) and an iPad to run the software<sup>4</sup>
- **We ask that finalist organizations participate in periodic interviews about how they are using the toolkit and/or software. Organizations will be compensated for their time.**

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<sup>4</sup> Limited to organizations that are currently running mobile markets. All organizations that receive FarmersRegister software will agree to make de-identified customer-level mobile market sales data publicly available

**GENERAL PARTNER TIMELINE**

At the time of selection, the study team will notify partner organizations about which of the 4 proposed community sites are selected as mobile market sites and which are selected as planning sites. Partner organizations will start working with these four community sites on a rolling basis according to a timeline agreed upon between the study team, partner organization, and community site.

	Mobile Market Sites (2)	Planning Sites (2)
Community Engagement & Data Collection: 2 –6 months	<b>All sites:</b> Establish Memorandum of Understanding and Timeline, Interviews with Organization Staff	
	Develop a community engagement plan to bring people to the mobile market	Engage community members in a food access planning process
	<b>All sites:</b> Identify people who are interested in having more healthy food options at or around the community site location; have them fill out interest forms	
	Invite people who agree to participate in research to attend a mobile market kick-off and baseline data collection sessions	Invite people who completed interest forms to attend a baseline data collection sessions
	<b>All sites:</b> Complete baseline data collection with at least 30 people	
Implementation: 12 Months	Launch mobile market two weeks after kick-off event and implement VV model for at least 1 year following kick-off. Process measure and sales data collection. Interviews with mobile market staff.	Engage in an extended planning process (focus groups, listening sessions, etc.) to select best food access program for community members for at least 1 year following baseline data collection
	Organization will have regular check-ins and with community engagement and technical assistance team at UB; interviews with mobile market staff	
Follow-up Data Collection and Next Steps	After 1 year, collect in-person data at market from original 30 people over approx. 1 month review mobile market success and determine if it should be continued	After 1 year, Schedule data collection events to collect in-person data from original 30 people. Decide to implement mobile market or another program based on community input <sup>5</sup>
Ongoing Measures: 24 months	<b>All sites:</b> Collect process data and sales data from any community sites currently running mobile markets. Study team will continue periodic interviews with mobile market staff (approx. every 6 months).	

**EXAMPLE PARTNER ORGANIZATION TIMELINE**

<sup>5</sup> While no additional funding is guaranteed, we anticipate that funding may be made available to successful partner organizations to run mobile markets or other community-initiated food access programs at planning only sites. Any additional funding would be accompanied by additional data collection.



To simplify the data collection process, we will synchronize timelines of two community sites (one mobile market and one planning site). An example timeline for one organization to work with all four sites is provided below. This timeline is for illustrative purposes only. Partner organizations' timelines may vary based on level of readiness at the time of selection.

**June 2019:** Sign contract with University at Buffalo

**July 2019:** Establish MOU with Mobile Market Site A and Planning Site A and start community engagement

**September 2019:** Mobile Market Site A and Planning Site A start baseline data collection

**October 2019:** Mobile Market Site A starts mobile market, Planning Site A continues community engagement

**November 2019:** Establish MOU with Mobile Market Site B and Planning Site B and start community engagement

**February 2020:** Mobile Market Site B and Planning Site B start baseline data collection

**March 2020:** Mobile Market Site B starts mobile market, Planning Site B continues community engagement

**September 2020:** Mobile Market Site A and Planning Site A start follow-up data collection

**February 2021:** Mobile Market Site B and Planning Site B start follow-up data collection

#### **FUNDING SCHEDULE**

Each partner organization will receive up to \$50,000 to offset the cost of starting or expanding a mobile market program following the Veggie Van model and participating in the study. Sample Payment Schedule

**Payment 1:** up to \$20,000 after execution of contract with the University at Buffalo

**Payment 2:** \$10,000 after the first two community sites have completed baseline data collection

**Payment 3:** \$10,000 after the second two community sites have completed baseline data collection

**Payment 4:** \$10,000 after completion of follow-up data collection for all 4 sites

NOTE: Continued payments are contingent on meeting the requirements outlined in this document. All milestones must be met by June 2022 at the latest.

### **ACCEPTABLE USAGE OF PROGRAM FUNDS**

#### Examples of Allowable Expenditures

- Salary and fringe for staff working on the mobile market
- Printing of marketing or recruitment materials
- Cost for subsidizing food for sale to lower-income individuals
- Costs associated with cooking demos or nutrition education
- Incentives for community-members/volunteers to participate in advisory committees or other program related events
- Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment (vehicles, mobile EBT reader, coolers, etc.). Items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more must have prior written approval.
- Costs incurred for utilities, insurance, security, necessary maintenance, repair, or upkeep of buildings and equipment which neither add to the permanent value of the property nor appreciably prolong its intended life but keep it in an efficient operating condition
- Travel for program staff to engage in professional development related to mobile markets
- Cost related to mobile market operations including merchant services, gasoline, boxes/bags, wholesale food purchasing for resale
- Printing costs of newsletters, recipes cards or other education materials

#### Examples of Unallowable Expenditures

- Prepared meals or alcohol for program staff
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable except with prior written approval
- Capital expenditures for improvements to land, buildings, or equipment which materially increase their value or useful life except with prior written approval

## HOW TO APPLY

*Detailed instructions for submitting the application have been provided by e-mail to invited applicants at the time of invitation.* The narrative portion of the application is limited to 5 pages of single spaced 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Suggested page lengths for each question are noted below. Appendices and cover letter are not included in the word count.

### Cover Letter

1. Organization name, address, website and Tax ID number
2. Organizational budget (i.e., total revenue) for the previous fiscal year
3. Contact information (e-mail, phone) for the person submitting the application

### Narrative Application

1. Describe your organization's mission or purpose (1/4 page)
2. Describe the programs and services your organization currently offers. We are specifically interested in programs related to food production, aggregation or distribution and cooking/nutrition education. For each program, indicate how long you have run the program, who the target audience is, and how the program is funded. If you currently run a mobile produce market program, please also indicate how many locations and people you serve per week (on average). (3/4 page)
3. What four new community sites do you propose? For each location, describe the community served by those locations and its demographics, food access concerns, and your experience working with these communities in the past, if any. **Please include letters of support from each organization as appendices.** (1 page)
4. Describe your plans for community engagement with potential mobile market customers. (1/2 page)
5. Who at your organization will be responsible for running the mobile market program? Please describe the credentials and relevant experience of this person. In addition, please also include an organizational chart that includes other staff/board members/volunteers within your organization that will be available to support the mobile market program manager. **The organizational chart should be included as an appendix.** (1/2 page)
6. Please detail any resources which your organization currently has access to that could make a mobile produce market program successful. Resources could include:
  - a. Organizational resources such as facilities or equipment for storing food or delivery food
  - b. Community resources such as existing food hubs or food aggregators
  - c. State/federal programs such as F&V incentive program (e.g., double up food bucks, WIC farmers market program)
  - d. Partnerships with other organizations or producers

For each resource listed, please describe how you currently use that resource or the nature of the partnership and how long the resource/partnership has been in place. (1 page)

7. How do you propose using the money you receive for this program? What other funding or in-kind support is available to support a mobile market program. Note: We do not need a detailed budget at this point; narrative estimates are sufficient. (1/2 page)
8. How do you expect to continue to run the mobile market after the initial funding period? If applicable, please include examples of how you have sustained other grant funded projects in the past. (1/2 page)

### **HOW GRANTEES WILL BE SELECTED**

A selection committee of individuals with expertise in local food aggregation, logistics, mobile market operations, community engagement and equity, and farming will review applications and make recommendations to the study team. Applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria and weights:

- Organizational capacity for running a mobile market including suitable staff and resources (30%)
- Availability of partners and community-level resources to support mobile market work (20%)
- Previous experience with food access programs (15%)
- Past success engaging and providing services for lower-income community members (20%)
- Potential for longer-term program sustainability (15%)

Please note that the intent of this program is to provide training and technical assistance, thus successful partners do not necessarily need to be strong in every one of the above areas. Partners will be chosen to represent a mix of strength across these domains.

### **QUESTIONS?**

Contact us via email at [ContactUs@myVeggieVan.org](mailto:ContactUs@myVeggieVan.org)

All questions submitted by September 11, 2018 will be addressed during the webinar and answered in a FAQ page which will be posted on our website. For speedier response to questions which arise after September 11, 2018, please review the FAQs document to see if your question has already been addressed.

or

Visit our Request for Partners page on our website:

<http://www.myveggievan.org/request-for-partners.html>