

***Town of Weymouth
Massachusetts***

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Press Release

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Weymouth Awarded USDA Farmers Market Promotion Grant

The Town was awarded a 3-year federal grant to improve and expand the municipally managed Weymouth Farmers Market.

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Weymouth, MA – Weymouth was awarded a three-year U.S. Department of Agriculture Grant through the FY19 [Farmer's Market Promotion Program](#). This federal grant program will provide the Town with a \$171,570 administered over approximately three years to promote the [Weymouth Farmers Market](#), improve attendance, and enhance access to local food options. The federal funding will be accompanied by a local match, for a total program investment of \$243,125 from December 2019 to November 2022. The USDA issued 49 grant awards across 31 states as well as Washington D.C. for a total of \$11.7M.

The Weymouth Farmers Market has been in operation for 10 years and in 2019 became exclusively municipally managed by the Town's Recreation Department and through a partnership with the [Weymouth Food Pantry](#). This partnership and municipal management of the market makes it a unique model and one that can directly address resident needs. The mission of the market is to cultivate community engagement by creating a place where residents, farmers, and producers connect for a happier, healthier Weymouth.

The market has been well-attended by local residents and receives positive feedback annually; however, there are several threats to its sustainability. The FMPP grant will provide funding to establish and implement best practices that will lead to a more

viable market that reaches more residents, particularly those without access to healthy food options, and allow the market to become self-sustaining in the long term.

“The Weymouth Farmers Market has seen several successes in the past few years especially through the Farm to Family and SNAP programs,” **said Mayor Hedlund.**

“However, as more residents face obstacles accessing healthy, locally grown foods, it is apparent that we need to expand this programming offered by our Farmers Market,” he stated. “The additional funding through the grant will allow us to implement and test the validity of some creative solutions we otherwise would be unable to provide.”

The USDA FMPP grant funding will allow for a Weymouth Farmers Market Sustainability Study & Plan to improve access to healthy foods for low-income populations. According to the South Shore Health Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), 2019-2021, one of the key social determinants of health and barriers to care included issues related to food access. In addition, the grant funding will help address the threats to the sustainability of the Weymouth Farmers Market including: location; attendance/participation; management; and achieving the market’s mission long-term. Since 2015, the market has been hosted at 5 different locations, and unlike other regional or local markets that are operated by a non-profit entity, the Weymouth Farmers Market is entirely municipally managed. While this has resulted in the fostering of public-private partnerships, the market is subject to many factors that threaten its sustainability including budget constraints, available labor/work force, and inefficiencies resulting from restrictive local, state and federal laws and regulations.

The FMPP grant will fund a study of the existing market and an analysis of its outcomes through the use of a full-time Market/Program Manager. In addition, a study will be conducted to identify how the Farmers Market can improve its service as a direct producer-to-consumer market opportunity. Goals of the program include: assessing and implementing area market best practices; evaluating community needs; and increasing attendance, vendors and vendor mix, use of the Farm to family program, SNAP transactions, senior resident participation, and revenue.

Weymouth Farmers Market offers the [Farm to Family program](#), providing a match for those shoppers using [SNAP to purchase food](#). In addition, the market has HIP – Healthy Incentive Program – Farmers. Through this state-sponsored initiative, shoppers can use their SNAP benefits to buy fruits and vegetables and receive \$1 for each dollar spent, up to a monthly limit.

The USDA Grant funding will enhance many of these programs and test how improved access through increased numbers of HIP Farmers, marketing, events, location, and incorporation of other best practices can result in a more sustainable market for the long-term.