The background of the page is a photograph of fresh produce, including green bell peppers, cucumbers, and leafy greens, arranged in a market setting. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark overlay. A large, wavy orange shape is positioned at the top, and a blue and orange wavy shape is at the bottom, framing the central text.

Expanding Access to Fresh, Local Produce for Early Head Start and Head Start Families Through WIC Farmers' Markets

Original: January 2021
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COVID-19'S IMPACT ON FOOD ACCESS

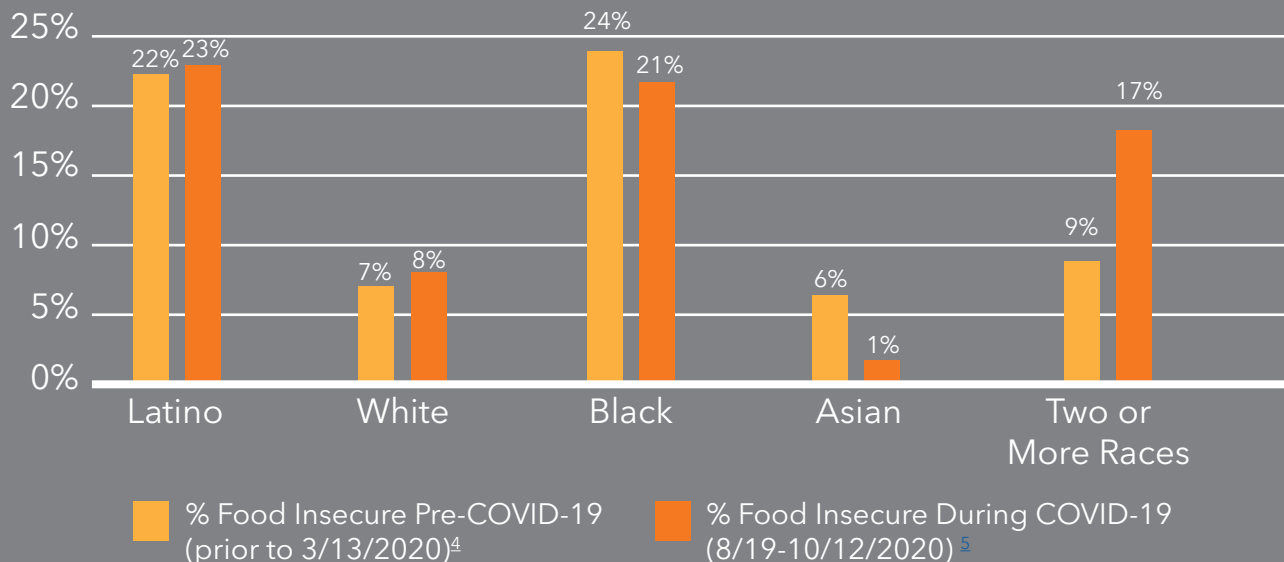
Prior to COVID-19, one in six children in Georgia struggled with hunger,¹ with Black households experiencing food insecurity at nearly double the rate of White households.² According to the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey, COVID-19 has magnified food insecurity across the country, as well as in Georgia: over 430,000 households in the state reported experiencing food insecurity in September 2020, compared to approximately 397,000 in early March 2020 - an 8% increase.³ Additionally, according to these data, Georgia's Black and Latino households with children experienced food insecurity at three times the rate of White families prior to the coronavirus and during the pandemic.¹ Increases in food insecurity during the pandemic were most extreme among multi-racial households.

i This graph reflects an average of reported food insecurity among the Census Household Pulse Survey round two Georgia responses, which include weeks 13-16.

At the start of the public health emergency, school districts, child care providers, food banks, local organizations, state agencies, and faith-based organizations across Georgia rallied around their communities, working day and night to provide food to children and families in need. [Federal legislation](#) provided the United States Department of Agriculture enhanced authority to make flexible decisions around food and nutrition programs - a critical food access resource for children. Early Care and Education (ECE) providers and school systems play a major role administering federal feeding programs like the National School Lunch Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program, which may serve breakfast, lunch, dinner, and/or snacks to children in early care and K-12 settings throughout the school year and summer. Additionally, federal benefit programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) help children and families access food and nutrition services during out-of-school time.

FIGURE 1

PERCENT OF GEORGIA FAMILIES EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY PRIOR TO AND DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, BY RACE / ETHNICITY



Thus far during the pandemic, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Department of Education, and Division of Family and Children Services applied for, or opted into, over 30 waivers addressing food access. These waivers created flexibilities that allowed for parents/guardians to pick up meals from federal food program sponsor sites, and for providers to serve meals outside of traditional settings. Following waiver approval, schools, ECE programs, and community partners have worked tirelessly to carry out newly allowed flexibilities to meet the nutritional needs of children and families.

The economic impact of COVID-19 will have long-term effects on Georgians. Although the extent of the impact is unknown, a struggling economy and workforce are to be expected, and because of this some of Georgia's families and children will struggle to meet their basic needs. While communities and government agencies have taken significant steps to address food insecurity, COVID-19 has magnified the lack of food access that hundreds of thousands of Georgians face. We must continue our efforts to increase access to fresh, nutritious food to children facing food insecurity, one of the state's most vulnerable populations. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is one way to reach that goal. While the 2020 WIC FMNP season looked different from a typical season (markets became drive-through instead of face-to-face) and 2021 may as well, state agencies, farmers, community organizations, schools and ECE providers remain committed to putting fresh, nutritious foods and nutrition education resources into the hands of Georgia's children and families.



Photo Courtesy: Atlanta Community Food Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, Voices for Georgia's Children, in collaboration with Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), Georgia WIC, and the Georgia Head Start Collaboration completed a pilot, whereby Women Infant and Children (WIC) farmers' markets were hosted at Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) locations in Butts and Lowndes counties. The goals of the pilot were to: 1) test the feasibility of hosting a WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) at a EHS/HS location, 2) identify the planning and supports needed for WIC markets to be successful at this non-traditional (EHS/HS) location, and 3) better understand Georgia farmers' experience with the WIC FMNP.

WIC and EHS/HS are natural partners, as both programs serve similar populations (child age and income-level), and have food access and nutrition as key components of their work. Traditionally, WIC FMNP markets are held at WIC clinic offices and public health departments—a successful model in Georgia. These markets offer a traditional farmers' market with the added benefit of nutrition education. **At WIC markets both children and families learn about their local food systems, purchase favorite produce, participate in hands on nutrition education activities, and try new foods.**

The pilot revealed that hosting WIC markets at EHS/HS programs allows families with young children to access fresh, local produce at a convenient location and time (e.g. school pick-up or drop-off), and provided us with valuable findings to improve future farmers' markets. The close partnership between county-level WIC offices and EHS/HS programs was a major factor in the pilot's success, while interviews with farmers highlighted areas for improvement in WIC FMNP certification licensing and training processes. Recommendations consider both farmer and parent experience and highlight opportunities at the state and local level to increase the success of WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets.

Key Findings

Holding WIC farmers' markets at EHS/HS locations is feasible, but a number of factors must align in order for them to successfully reach a large number of EHS/HS families. Many aspects (e.g. parent engagement, market visibility, farmer outreach, etc.) should be considered when planning and implementing WIC markets at EHS/HS locations.

A collaborative relationship between the local WIC office and EHS/HS site is necessary for a successful WIC FMNP implementation. These relationships are critical to the operationalization of

WIC markets as they provide supports and resources throughout the planning process.

The current WIC FMNP season may not align with parental availability or farmer harvest schedules.

Current WIC FMNP season from June through September may unintentionally create a barrier of access for WIC participants attending HS programs following a traditional school calendar, as many HS are not in session for the majority of the market season.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the pilot findings, Voices offers the following initial recommendations to support successful WIC EHS/HS farmers markets.

EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START

- Collaborate with GaFCP coordinators and local WIC offices for market support.
- Create market schedules that accommodate family schedules, increase family participation, and increase farmer participation.

Georgia WIC FMNP

- Consider extending WIC FMNP farmers' market season.
- Engage farmers to identify and address WIC FMNP training and certification challenges.
- Ensure inspectors understanding of crop identification and season patterns or pair inspector with an agriculture professional.

USDA WIC FMNP

- Continue to offer remote WIC FMNP trainings (e.g., conference calls, video conference, web-based trainings) for first-time farmer participants, beyond the pandemic.

Next Steps

This research demonstrates that hosting WIC markets at EHS/HS locations is one opportunity to increase convenient access to nutritious foods for WIC families. The second round of this research was scheduled for the 2020-2021 WIC FMNP season, and would have further explored barriers and facilitators of hosting WIC markets at EHS/HS locations. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and public health and safety priorities, a second pilot was unable to occur.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

For the last three years - with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation - Voices for Georgia's Children (Voices), Georgia Organics, Little Ones Learning Center, Quality Care for Children, and The Common Market have worked together to launch a statewide Farm to Early Care and Education (FTECE) model that equitably incorporates fresh, local produce and nutrition education into the lives of Georgia's youngest children. Exposure to a variety of foods, including fresh produce, is critical for young children, as eating behaviors are established during the first few years of life. FTECE also encourages activities such as gardening and food preparation, which allow children to develop skills that support physical and mental development. Under the FTECE umbrella, and in order to connect some of Georgia's least-resourced families with better access to nutritious, local foods and nutrition education, Voices, with the help of Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) and Georgia's Head Start Collaboration, piloted two Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) farmers' markets at Early Head Start and Head Start (EHS/HS) locations. WIC and EHS/HS are natural partners in this pilot, as both programs serve the same populations (child age and income-level), and have nutrition education as key components of their work. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) offers a traditional farmers' market with the added benefit of nutrition education, and is a space for both child and parent to learn about their local food systems, purchase produce, and participate in hands-on nutrition education activities. By hosting the WIC farmers' markets at a convenient community location such as EHS/HS, where families already go daily, families' access to fresh, local food can be immediately increased.

WOMEN, INFANT, AND CHILDREN (WIC)

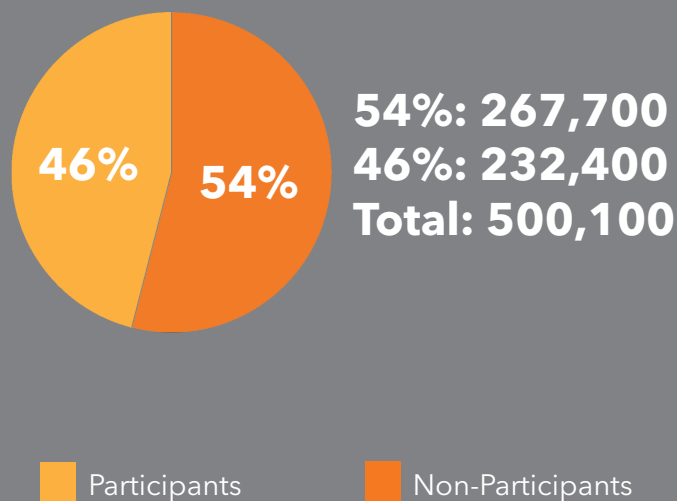
WIC is a federal program, implemented in the 1970s, that provides supplemental nutrition for pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five, who are at [nutritional risk](#) and have family incomes below 185 percent of the [federal poverty level](#) (\$40,182 for a family of three) (See [Appendix A](#) for more details).

Two major categories of [nutritional risk](#) are recognized for WIC eligibility:

1. Medically-based risks (designated as "high priority") such as anemia, underweight, maternal age, history of pregnancy complications, or poor pregnancy outcomes; and,
2. Diet-based risks, such as inadequate dietary pattern (e.g. unable to meet USDA Dietary Guidelines).

FIGURE 2

GEORGIA'S 2017 WIC PARTICIPATION AMONG ELIGIBLE POPULATION



Georgia's WIC Program has provided nutrition education and supplemental food to low-income families for over 30 years. In 2019, the program provided benefits to over 200,000 participants.⁶ However, less than half of eligible Georgians participate in WIC,⁷ and Georgia has seen a 23% decrease in participation over the past five years.⁸ The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), which administers the program, estimates that \$4 to \$5 million of federal funding for Georgia's WIC Program is left unused by families. DPH is working to increase WIC utilization, which includes exploring EHS/HS as a convenient location for accessing services. While both WIC and WIC FMNP are federally funded, they are coordinated at the state level and operationalized at the local level. Georgia's WIC services are provided through 18 health districts (which cover the state) and one contract agency at 203 locations, including: 159 health departments (one for each of Georgia's counties), 20 community health centers, six hospitals, three military bases, and two Division of Family and Children Services offices.²

WOMEN, INFANT, AND CHILDREN FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM (WIC FMNP)

In 1992, Congress designated annual funding for the WIC FMNP, an additional support to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables for WIC participants (See [Appendix B](#) for more details). Georgia's WIC FMNP program is designed to benefit the consumer, farmers, and community at large. As with WIC, DPH

administers the Georgia WIC FMNP, and markets are held at WIC clinic offices and public health departments throughout the state from June through September every year. Each WIC participant is provided five \$6 paper vouchers for fresh fruit and vegetables to redeem at a WIC farmers' market; each individual voucher must be used in full.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The goals of the WIC-EHS/HS farmers' market pilot were to: 1) test the feasibility of hosting a WIC farmers' market at a EHS/HS location, 2) identify the planning and supports needed for WIC markets to be successful at this non-traditional (EHS/HS) location, and 3) better understand Georgia farmers' experience with the WIC FMNP. Informed by discussions with the Georgia's Head Start Association, WIC, and EHS/HS, an EHS/HS in Butts County and a HS in Lowndes County were chosen as sites.

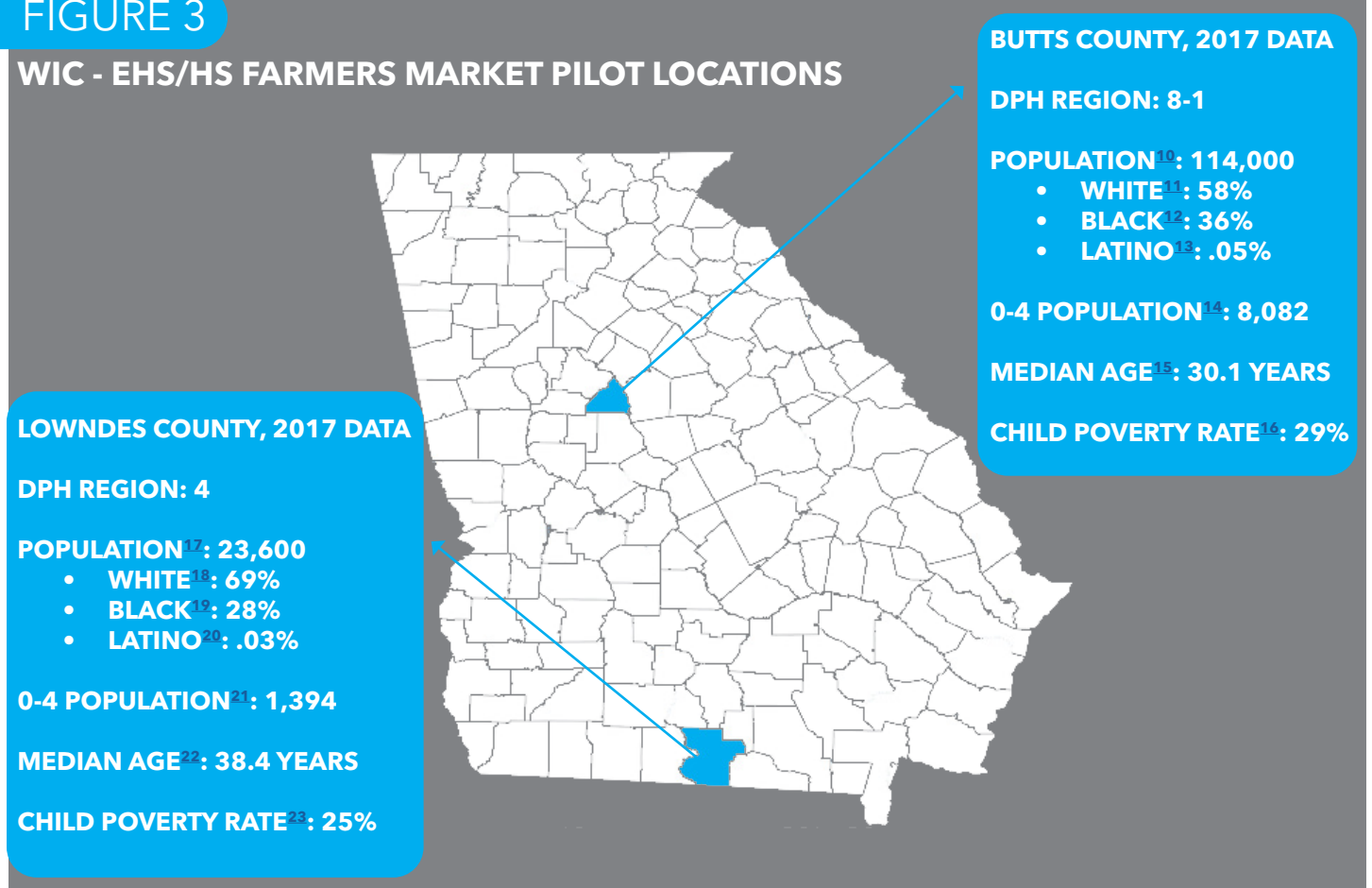
Because the pilot could not succeed without support at both the state (e.g., DPH / WIC FMNP) and local level (e.g., local public health departments / WIC offices, EHS/HS centers), Voices engaged GaFCP, a unique agency with collaboratives in all counties across Georgia (and established relationships with both WIC and EHS/HS programs), to facilitate the markets. The

WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets build on GaFCP's WIC Matters project, which aims to increase WIC utilization among eligible populations in nine Georgia counties through community partnerships. Partnerships and communication were necessary supports for WIC market success at EHS/HS locations. Jointly, EHS/HS and local WIC coordinators planned, promoted, and implemented this pilot.

In addition, to more fully understand the barriers and facilitators for a successful WIC-EHS/HS farmers' market, we conducted interviews with farmers who participate in WIC markets throughout the state. These discussions provided insight into farmer certification and participation experiences. **This report details the findings of the pilot and farmer interviews, and identifies potential barriers and facilitators of successful WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets.** A second round of the WIC-EHS/HS farmers' market pilots, planned for the 2021 FMNP season, was unable to occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on public health and safety priorities.

FIGURE 3

WIC - EHS/HS FARMERS MARKET PILOT LOCATIONS



LOWNDES COUNTY, 2017 DATA

DPH REGION: 4

POPULATION¹⁷: 23,600

- WHITE¹⁸: 69%
- BLACK¹⁹: 28%
- LATINO²⁰: .03%

0-4 POPULATION²¹: 1,394

MEDIAN AGE²²: 38.4 YEARS

CHILD POVERTY RATE²³: 25%

BUTTS COUNTY, 2017 DATA

DPH REGION: 8-1

POPULATION¹⁰: 114,000

- WHITE¹¹: 58%
- BLACK¹²: 36%
- LATINO¹³: .05%

0-4 POPULATION¹⁴: 8,082

MEDIAN AGE¹⁵: 30.1 YEARS

CHILD POVERTY RATE¹⁶: 29%

FINDINGS

Overall, the pilot found that WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets are feasible in an EHS/HS location. However, in order for them to be successful, local WIC offices and EHS/HS programs must closely collaborate with each other, as well as with parents. Market outcomes differed somewhat in each county, a reflection of the local control in administering WIC / the WIC FMNP, as well as EHS/HS. GaFCP county-level coordinators played an essential role in this project, engaging WIC and EHS/HS staff throughout the farmers' market planning, promotion, and implementation process. Below, findings are categorized by outreach, market location, participation, produce selection, and nutrition education.

OUTREACH

Together, GaFCP and EHS/HS staff conducted direct outreach (e.g. flyers, posters, emails) to inform parents of the market and enroll WIC-eligible families.

MARKET LOCATION

Visibility and access are critical to a successful market. The Butts County market was hosted in the side parking lot of the HS building, where it was not easily visible to WIC participants. GaFCP staff supported by directing consumers to the market. The Lowndes County market was held at the WIC clinic, located directly across from an HS location.

PARTICIPATION

Overall, WIC families' participation in the farmers' markets was higher in Butts County than in Lowndes, but both markets were successful in attracting community members. In Butts County, the market was scheduled for the afternoon of July 11, 2019, but when parents dropped off their children that morning they were interested in attending immediately. Therefore, the market hours changed from the afternoon to 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. More than half of the EHS/HS-enrolled families (21 parents) participated. An additional market was held July 18, 2019 for parents who were in the process of enrolling in WIC (and therefore unable to participate) as of the July 11th market.

The Lowndes County market was held in September 2019, and was actively enrolling students up until the market day. Lowndes HS, like many HS locations, follows a traditional academic calendar and is closed during the summer; this meant that Lowndes was only open about 1.5 months of the 4-month season (June-September). One hundred students were enrolled in HS at the time of the September market, and 32 families were eligible for FMNP vouchers. However, only three of the 32 families participated in the market. The market was held during afternoon pick-up for the convenience of the many parents who pick

up their children. Therefore, low participation was unexpected.

PRODUCE SELECTION

One WIC-certified farmer participated at each farmers' market. A variety of fruits and vegetables were offered, including: tomatoes, cucumbers, yellow squash, cabbage, watermelon, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, okra, onions, corn, beans, peaches, and zucchini. Peaches and watermelons were the most popular items offered among WIC participants.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

WIC Matters and University of Georgia (UGA) Extension provided nutrition education to children, parents, and other participants, both individually and in small groups. A WIC nutritionist shared educational materials – recipes, safety and storage techniques, and tips for making nutritionally balanced meals – and led activities (e.g. taste tests, games, and math lessons) at a designated table (See [Appendices C](#) and [D](#) for more detail). Additionally, the nutritionist encouraged families to discuss with farmers where their food came from and how it is grown.

FARMER INTERVIEWS

Farmer participation is a critical component of WIC farmers' markets' ability to operate at EHS/HS or any other location. In 2018, Georgia had 61 WIC FMNP-certified farmers – far fewer than some states with smaller populations.²⁴ To better understand farmers' perspectives on the barriers to and benefits of participating in Georgia's WIC FMNP, Voices engaged farmers in semi-structured conversations during 2018 and again in 2021. Farmers expressed that certification, inspections, and financial opportunities, among other factors, all play a part in influencing the likelihood of their participation, both negatively and positively.

CERTIFICATIONS AND INSPECTIONS

In order to sell at WIC FMNP, farmers must participate in an in-person day-long training, where they learn about rules and regulations regarding produce variety, minimum quantity of goods, pricing, voucher redemption, and client interaction. The time-commitment and distance of the required training sometimes pose a barrier to farmers' participation. In addition, each participating farm must undergo an inspection to ensure that the reported produce is accurate. Farmers report that the inspection can be challenging since some crops have different growing cycles; therefore, plants might be in seedling form and not easily identifiable at the time of the inspection. Some farmers perceive inspectors' level of training to be lacking. Another

er barrier exists even after a farmer is approved as a vendor: some counties have a go-to farmer that they use for each market. So despite a farmer being placed on a county's vendor list, they may rarely be selected for a market. Other counties, however, recruit multiple farmers for each market.

All farmers interviewed believe that school and/or child care provider-based markets have the potential to benefit them financially.

FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY

Farmers' reasons vary for participating in the WIC FMNP. While the FMNP season makes up a large share of some farmers' yearly sales, it is of lesser importance to others, who participate only if their schedules allow and they have extra produce.

One major barrier to farmer participation is the substantial variation in how much money farmers make per market. **FMNP coordinators typically estimate the level of WIC member participation when engaging a farmer, but this is not always accurate.** Farmers would prefer to be able to make decisions about their FMNP participation based on a reasonably accurate expectation of how much produce is needed and their corresponding financial gain.

COVID-19

The second round of interviews provided insight into potential WIC FMNP training and design opportuni-

ties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In preparation for the 2020 market season, first-time farmers were able to participate in remote trainings (e.g., video, conference call, webinar), as opposed to the day long, in-person required training. Some farmers expressed a preference for this format, which expanded access to farmers across the state by reducing travel time and accommodating for various schedules. Additionally, during the 2020 market season, Georgia WIC markets transitioned to a drive-through model rather than the traditional farmers market set-up. The drive-through model consisted of providing a bag - filled with fruit and vegetables by farmers and resources (e.g., nutrition education, recipes) by WIC staff - to clients as they drove through the WIC market line. Farmers mentioned the new format improved market length and food safety, stating that markets went more quickly and there was less possibility of cross contamination compared to traditional markets when many customers handled produce.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the pilot, Voices and its partners gained a deeper understanding of the feasibility of and elements required for success at WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets - lessons that can be shared with EHS/HS and WIC programs across the state and country. The pilot proved that WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets could be a

OVERALL FINDINGS

Location	Time	Outreach	Participation	Nutrition Education	Produce Selection
Butts County	9am to 3pm July 11 th and July 18 th	Direct outreach (e.g. posters, flyers, email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 of 40 eligible EHS/HS families Higher participation among community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freezing and roasting vegetables Creative ways to make your plate half fruits and vegetables Summer recipes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans Cabbage Corn Peaches Tomatoes Watermelon Zucchini
Lowndes County	During student pick-up (afternoon) in mid-September	Direct outreach (e.g. posters, flyers, email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 of 32 eligible HS families Higher participation among community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food safety Food storage techniques Taste tests I-spy <p>Other educational activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabbage Cantaloupe Cucumbers Okra Onions Sweet potatoes Tomatoes Watermelon Yellow squash

legitimate model for increasing low-income families' access to fresh, local produce by offering the markets at a convenient location and time. Further, because the WIC FMNP is administered by the state but operationalized at the county level, the pilot also found that close collaboration across state, county, and local levels is central to the success of EHS/HS-based WIC farmers' markets.

One key responsibility of the implementing partners (e.g. EHS/HS administrators, WIC program managers) that cannot be overlooked is direct outreach and engagement to parents to ensure high market participation. Outreach to and engagement with parents (e.g., emails, posters, and flyers) by WIC, EHS/HS, and GaFCP staff were essential to market participation. One of the market location's experience with low parent participation due to inconvenient market timing made clear the importance of engaging parents more extensively in farmers' market planning.

Another barrier to farmer participation and market success at EHS/HS sites was the 4-month FMNP season from June to September. Farmers are required to be certified prior to the FMNP season, which does not always allow adequate time for training and farm inspections to take place before June (e.g., crops may not be developed yet). Also, sometimes the 4-month season does not align with harvesting schedules. Moreover, some HS are not open during the summer and are still enrolling families in September, the last chance to participate in FMNP. An extension of Georgia's WIC FMNP season would not only increase families' opportunities to access the markets, but also provide more financial opportunities for farmers.

Based on the pilot and farmer interview findings, Voices offers the following recommendations regarding WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Early Head Start /Head Start:

- Collaborate with GaFCP coordinators and local WIC offices for market support.
- Engage parents in planning, and create market schedules that accommodate family schedules, increase family participation, and increase farmer participation.

Georgia WIC FMNP:

- Consider extending WIC FMNP farmers' market season.
- Engage farmers to identify and address WIC FMNP training and certification challenges.
- Ensure inspectors understanding of crop identification and season patterns or pair inspector with an agriculture professional.

USDA WIC FMNP

- Continue to offer remote WIC FMNP trainings (e.g., conference calls, video conference, web-based trainings) for first-time farmer participants, beyond the pandemic.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Through this research, Voices, GaFCP, and EHS/HS program administrators learned that there is a concrete opportunity to increase convenient access to nutritious foods for WIC families by holding farmers' markets at EHS/HS sites. If some adjustments to implementation (and policy) are made based on the initial findings of this report, WIC-EHS/HS farmers' markets are an opportunity to address food insecurity, a major problem in our state for both children and adults.

Looking forward, continued conversations with farmers about their WIC FMNP experience and economic interests will be key. These conversations may inform efforts to increase the number of WIC FMNP participating farmers, which could increase the occurrence of WIC farmers' markets, supporting families' access to local, nutritious foods. Most importantly, additional research must be conducted to determine how to best increase parent market participation (e.g., via engagement in the planning process or suggesting produce items to include), given the challenges encountered during this pilot.

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WOMEN, INFANT, AND CHILDREN PROGRAM (WIC)

The Women, Infant, and Children Program (WIC) is a federal assistance program, implemented in the 1970s by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide supplemental nutrition for pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five, who are at nutritional risk and who fall within established income guidelines.

Two major types of nutritional risk are recognized for WIC eligibility:

- (I) Medically-based risks (designated as “high priority”) such as anemia, underweight, maternal age, history of pregnancy complications, or poor pregnancy outcomes; and
- (II) Diet-based risks such as inadequate dietary pattern (i.e. failure to meet USDA Dietary Guidelines).

A web-based pre-screening tool, a 15-minute [questionnaire](#) provided in 7 languages, is available to the public and allows applicants to assess their eligibility. A formal assessment is utilized for nutritional risk. Nutritional risk is determined by a health professional such as a physician, nutritionist, or nurse, using federal guidelines. This health screening can be conducted at WIC clinics or by an applicant’s physician; it is free to program applicants.

An applicant’s income eligibility for the program is determined by family income. The basic eligibility requirement is a gross family income (i.e., before taxes) that falls at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (\$40,182 for a family of three in 2020). Applicants who already participate in certain benefits programs, such as Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, may automatically meet the income eligibility requirements.

In most WIC state agencies, WIC participants receive checks or vouchers to purchase specific foods each month that are designed to supplement their diets with specific nutrients that benefit WIC’s target population. Different food packages are provided for different categories of participants. Depending on the category of the participant, WIC foods may include infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, peanut butter, dried and canned beans/peas, and canned fish. Federal guidelines recently added soy-based beverages, tofu, fruits and vegetables, baby foods, whole-wheat bread, and other whole-grain options to better meet the nutritional needs of certain WIC participants. WIC is a complex federal program and much has been written about how to reduce barriers to access and increase utilization; however, it is widely perceived as an effective federal program for improving dietary intake. Research has shown that overall diets of young children enrolled in WIC are more nutrient-rich and lower in calories from solid fats and added sugars than the diets of income-eligible nonparticipants.²⁵ It has been shown to be a cost-effective intervention as well. A study of birth outcomes showed benefit-to-cost ratios ranging from \$1.77 to \$3.13 in Medicaid costs saved for each \$1 spent on WIC.²⁶

APPENDIX B

WOMEN, INFANT, AND CHILDREN PROGRAM FARMER'S MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Women, Infant, and Children Program Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) is a separate program, established in 1992 by a congressionally-mandated set aside. This program provides additional vouchers to WIC participants that can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables in the WIC appropriation. FMNP provides fresh, unprepared, locally-grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants to expand the awareness, use of, and sales at farmers' markets.

The program has two goals: to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally-grown fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets to WIC participants who are at nutritional risk; and to expand consumer awareness and use of participating farmers' markets. By November 15 of each year, each participating state agency must submit a State plan for approval for the following year, as a prerequisite to receiving funds, to the FNS Regional Office. FMNP State Plan guidance may be obtained at the FNS Regional Office.²⁷

State agencies that administer the FMNP include the agriculture department, the health department, and other agencies approved by the chief executive officer of the State or Indian Tribal organization.

Evaluation research has been conducted on the effectiveness of FMNP as a means for increasing fruit and vegetable intake and the perceptions of the WIC participants. Research has revealed that among a WIC study population, the primary motivators for market attendance included variety of fruit and vegetables (F&V) (76%), quality of F&V (55%), and to purchase food grown locally (59%).¹⁸ The majority of the total sample agreed (88%) that shopping at the WIC-based farmers' market increased their F&V consumption. WIC FMNP participants were further motivated by low prices (44%) and the ability to easily spend FMNP coupons (75%). Additionally, the study finds that location and convenience play a critical role in increasing FMNP coupon redemption rates.²⁸

Examples of Butts County Early Head Start and Head Start Nutrition Materials



APPENDIX D

Examples of Lowndes County Head Start Nutrition Materials



Farmers Market Fun

Play I Spy. Choose a color and say, "I spy with my little eye something that is... name the color". Your children can look around and try to guess the chosen object.

Get Curious! Ask Plenty of Questions
The farmers market is the best place to learn about new foods. If you see an unfamiliar food, let growers explain what it is and how to use it in a recipe.

Questions to Ask a Farmer

- Does this taste sweet or sour?
- How long does it take to grow this?
- When did you pick this?
- Is this ready to eat today?
- How can you tell when a fruit or vegetable is ripe for picking?
- How do you pick fruit that is really high up in the tree?
- Is this a seed? Flower? Stem? Leaf? or Roots?
- If potatoes grow underground, how do you know when to pick them?
- How many eggs does a chicken lay each week?
- Do chickens lay eggs all year long?

I Ate the Whole Plant: We eat many different parts of a plant - Seeds, Flowers, Stems, Leaves and Roots. Challenge your child to find a food to match each part of the plant. For example - Almond is a seed, Broccoli is a flower, Celery is a stem, Spinach is a leaf, and Sweet Potato is a root.

Taste Testing: Most growers offer small tastings. The farmers market is a great place for your child to experiment with new flavors and to discover new favorite foods. Encourage him to try three new things when you visit the market. Choose one of the items to take home and enjoy at a meal.

Math Matters: The market is a great place for your child to put math lessons to work. For the little ones, it can be counting and sorting shapes and colors. Weighing, figuring cost based on price per pound, and buying on a budget are real-life math problems for older children.



FRESH BABY

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Fruits & Vegetables

STORING FRUITS & VEGETABLES FOR BEST FLAVOR

Store in Refrigerator

Apple	Grapefruit	Lemon	Raspberries
Blueberries	Grapes	Lime	Strawberries
Cantaloupe (cut)	Honeydew	Orange	Tangerine
Cherries	Kiwifruit	Pineapple	Watermelon (cut)
Artichoke	Carrot	Corn	Mushrooms
Asparagus	Cauliflower	Cucumber	Radish
Bell Pepper	Cabbage	Green Beans	Spinach
Broccoli	Celery	Green Onion	Summer Squash
Brussels Sprouts	Collard Greens	Lettuce	

Ripen on Countertop, then refrigerate

Avocado	Mango	Pear	
Banana	Nectarine	Plum	
Cantaloupe (whole)	Peach	Watermelon (whole)	

Store in a Cool, Dark Place

Onion
Potato
Sweet Potato
Winter Squash

Tomato

CLEANING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Keep fruits and vegetables away from raw meat, fish and chicken.
- Never use soap, bleach or dish detergent to wash fruits and vegetables.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables under running water right before using them.



HOW LONG WILL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES LAST?

EAT FIRST	EAT NEXT	EAT LAST
1-2 Days	3-5 Days	One week
7+ Days		
Mango Peach Pear Pine Raspberries Strawberries Avocado	Nectarine Pineapple Watermelon	Cantaloupe Grapes Orange
Collard Greens Corn Green Onion Summer Squash	Asparagus Bell Pepper Broccoli Cauliflower Spinach	Brussels Sprouts Cucumber Green Beans Lettuce Mushrooms Radish Tomato
		Apple Banana Blueberries Cherries Grapefruit Honeydew Kiwifruit Lemon Lime
		Artichoke Carrot Celery Cabbage Onion Potato Sweet Potato Winter Squash





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