

Civic Works

Real Food Farm



**A Guide to Mobile Farmer's Markets
Fall 2016**



Get

REAL

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About Real Food Farm

Real Food Farm began in 2009 after a volunteer group called the Urban Agriculture Task Force determined there was a clear need for a fully operational demonstration farm in Baltimore, MD. With the help of the Safe Healing Foundation and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Civic Works, the nonprofit Real Food Farm operates under, took up the challenge to turn six acres in Clifton Park

into such a farm. By October 2009 there were seven hoophouses and the first produce was harvested in December 2010. Now you might be wondering how a farm located in the middle of a park can get its food into the homes of the surrounding neighbors? That's where the idea of the Mobile Farmer's Market comes into play!

The Mobile Farmers Market is Real Food Farm's tool for improving food access in Baltimore. Food access is generally understood as a measure of the availability and accessibility of fresh food needed to maintain a healthy and nutritious lifestyle. We strive to improve food access by focusing on three main concepts: pricing, proximity, and familiarity.

Our primary tool for tackling the first two concepts is our Mobile Farmer's Market, which allows us to distribute fresh produce to the residents of surrounding neighborhoods by setting up market stops or making home deliveries. We work with a handful of partners to think up creative ways to keep our produce affordable and to identify convenient market locations for residents as ways to combat what are known as food deserts (or areas that have extremely low food access).

Providing physical and financial access to healthy food does not solve the issue in its entirety. We also want to increase familiarity with healthy foods and where they come from, thereby helping people incorporate more fruits and vegetables in their diet. To this end, our educational programs strives to connect people of all ages with their food by teaching them about nutrition, agriculture, and food systems.

Who is this Guide For?

This national guide was written for groups or individuals who are considering opening their own Mobile Farmer's Market program or those that are looking to learn more about our specific program.

Mobile Farmer's Market programs are unique ways farmers and organizations are able to get food directly to consumers who may not be able to participate in traditional markets. There are many similar programs throughout the United States and we hope this guide is helpful in answering any questions about their operations and effectiveness.

Acknowledgements

This guide was made possible with a USDA Local Food Promotion Grant.

This guide was written based on six years of experience operating a Mobile Farmer's market program at Civic Works Real Food Farm. In addition to our experiences we spoke with a number of other Mobile Farmer's Market operators throughout the United States and based this guide on their experiences as well.

This guide was written and designed by Charlotte Proctor, *Community Market & Outreach Coordinator for Civic Works Real Food Farm*. Other contributors include current and former staff: Shelley Brosius, Bryan Alexander, Myeasha Taylor, Aliza Sollins as well as AmeriCorps Mobile Farmer's Market Assistants: Kyle Long, and Sarah Holter.

Contact Us

Civic Works Real Food Farm is always happy to accommodate interviews, tours, and more so please don't hesitate to contact us!

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You can also find information about Real Food Farm on the web at realfoodfarm.civicworks.com or connect with us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at [@realfoodfarm](https://www.instagram.com/realfoodfarm).

Establishing Community Interest

When Real Food Farm began, we surveyed the surrounding neighborhoods to find out where residents were shopping, what they were purchasing, and how happy they were with the local food environment. We also asked residents if/what they would want to purchase from a farm and when they would want to engage with a farm enterprise. We continued to ask similar questions to our growing group of community partners and advocates as we developed and refined our Mobile Farmer's Market program.

To be successful, we've found that starting with community conversations was crucial. At the onset, we needed to have a program focused on what our community wanted and what we were actually able to provide. As our program has aged, going back to the same community members and checking in with them has helped ensure we are meeting the goals we establish at the beginning.

Continuing to engage the community in our day to day work is a key piece of our overall operations. Each year we host over 2,000 of students and adults on our farm for field trips, service learning, volunteering and more. These opportunities are what help turn our Mobile Market shoppers into invested partners.

Funding and Budgets

It takes a good deal of money to run our operation, a lot of which is spent on personnel and key start up costs. (See page 5 for our general program expenses.) As a program within a larger nonprofit, we receive a large majority of our funding from federal and private grants. We do make money through sales but that money is directed back into the operation costs.

The important thing to do when starting your own Mobile Market is to set a budget and stick to it! Get creative with vehical retrofits to save money on upfront costs but don't forget to budget for gas, insurance, permits, and emergency repairs that are needed throughout the season!

We reuse a ton of our supplies season to season so don't skimp on the quality of marketing materials. A nice produce scale may seem unnecessary but if it can last the wear and tear of a Mobile Market from season to season it's probably worth it! Same goes for signs and outreach materials; think in general terms when purchasing these items so you can use them for a number of seasons.

General Program Expenses

Operations		
	Full-Time Staff Salary & Fringe Benefits (Annual)	\$42,000
	AmeriCorps Members x 3 (Annual)	\$12,250
	Insurance x 12 (Monthly)	\$150
	Fuel Usage x 12 (Monthly)	\$100
	Repairs/Maintenance (Annual)	\$500
	Total Reoccurring Expenses	\$82,250
Vehicle Items		
	Freightliner mt45 & Retrofits	\$15,000
	Truck Wrapping & Design	\$4,500
	Side-awnings & Shelves	\$3,000
	Refrigeration Units, Generator & Installation	\$5,500
Produce Items	Shopping Bags, Quart/Pint Containers, Produce Bins, Cold Bags, Ice Sheets, Display Hooks, Table Cloths, & Produce Scale	\$500
Sales Items	Point-of-Sale Device, Receipt Paper, Tablet with Farmer's Register Application, Cashbox, Ink Pens, & Stapler	\$800
Maintenace Items	Broom, Mop, Bucket, Trash Can, Compost Bin, & Recycling Bin	\$50
Signs & Promotional Items	Roto Clips & Produce Signs, Sandwich Boards, Stickers, Flyers, Frequent Shopper Cards, & Recipe Cards	\$400
	Total Capital Expenses	\$29,750

Vehicle Options

When Real Food Farm first began our Mobile Farmer's Market program, we looked high and low for a vehicle that would provide the most flexibility which allowed us to experiment with different set ups. We ultimately found an old newspaper delivery truck and set out to retrofit the truck with everything we needed. We always operate our Mobile Farmer's Market with two people, so we added an extra jump seat upfront. We installed shelves for storing produce and extra supplies (shopping bags, staplers and receipt paper, pens, chalk, etc.). We intended to sell other products like eggs and meats so we installed two chest freezers that charge over night and we also mounted a generator as a back-up energy source. The key part of our retrofit was a pull-out drawer that we use as the base for our market stand. When we arrive on site, we simply roll up the back door of the truck, set up a camper awning, and pull-out our drawer already full of beautifully stacked fruits and veggies. All in all, our set up takes about 5-10 minutes.



This past year, we set out to find another truck to expand our program. This was our opportunity to try something new and see how things would go. We started looking exclusively at similar box trucks but ultimately purchased a Chevy Astro refrigerated van. We won't have the grand opening of our second truck until Spring 2017 but are planning on using the smaller van to set up mini-sidewalk markets. We love our first Mobile Market but driving the green machine around the streets of Baltimore is a huge barrier to employment (because not everyone is comfortable driving such a vehicle) and parking isn't always a breeze. We're hoping our smaller van will allow greater flexibility in where we go, but it will take us longer to set up and break down. Once we have our system for the smaller van worked out, we estimate a 10-15 minute set up.

Insurance & Permits



This section is probably one of the most important but is also highly dependent on the specifics of your program and your local laws. We operate our Mobile Farmer's Market as a Mobile Food Vendor and are required to comply with all local laws pertaining to such a vehicle. We register with the Health Department annually and though sometimes there's confusion about how we should be classified we always manage to dot the i's and cross the t's.

The key to permitting is to start early! Don't wait until you have a day or even a week before you want to roll your program out. Some municipalities require inspections, comprehensive registrations and more, so do your research and plan ahead.

Weekly Operations

Consistency is the key to operating a Mobile Farmer's Market. We have to be consistent with our message, with our product standards, and with our customer's experience. With this in mind, we wanted to share a number of appendix items we developed and use to ensure consistency with what we do day-in and day-out.

Appendix page 12: Mobile Farmer's Market Weekly Task List

Appendix page 14: Mobile Farmer's Market Produce Guide

Appendix page 17: Mobile Farmer's Market Trainings

Please feel free to use these resources to aid your own operations. If you find something helpful or if you have your own suggestions please don't hesitate to contact us (our information is on page 3).

Product Sourcing

It didn't take long for our Mobile Farmer's Market program to outgrow our farm. As an urban farm, we have limited growing space and are surrounded by community members who want to purchase local, sustainably grown food. We also wanted to take advantage of several sales outlets and the more we sold on the Mobile Market, the less we could send to traditional multi-vendor farmer's markets or to our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members. While we very well could have continued to operate that way, we figured we'd have an even greater impact on the local food system if we partnered with other local growers to stock the Mobile Farmer's Market every week.

At this point, we partner with over 15 different farms throughout a season. Our partnerships are often centered around a mutual desire to share sustainably grown delicious food with everyone, not just those who can easily access it. The majority of our partners are within 30 miles of our farm and have been with us since the beginning. A huge source of partnership has come from our membership with the Farm Alliance of Baltimore City. This coalition has been a huge benefit to our program and community at large! We absolutely recommend finding or even creating a similar coalition of like-minded farmers for beginning programs.



The key to maintaining strong partnerships throughout the ever changing farming seasons is communication and humility. We rely on our partners to deliver high quality products and they rely on us for feedback and of course payment! As a nonprofit farm, we are constantly paying attention to produce prices so we aren't accidentally undercutting our for-profit farm partners. Our goal is to promote food access never to devalue hardwork and quality products. We also know we succeed when others succeed, so being willing to support other farmers is a welcome reprieve from the often cut-throat food industry. We know our 8 acre operation can't feed the whole world or even our whole city for that matter and so we make friends and work together to meet our community's needs as best as we can.

Staffing & Trainings

Our program is staffed a bit differently than most because we're also offering job training and development through AmeriCorps service. We have one full-time staff member overseeing the overall operation of the Mobile Farmer's Market program and three full-time AmeriCorps Members serving as Mobile Farmer's Market Assistants.

Under the supervision of the Community Market & Outreach Coordinator, the Mobile Farmer's Market Assistants work as a team to manage all aspects of Mobile Farmers Market programming. This includes scheduling, promotion, and execution. They engage with organizational partners and community members daily and serve as the representatives of Real Food Farm when making market stops and home deliveries. The Mobile Farmers Market team is responsible for tracking all market sales and related data using a program called Farmer's Register (from Perigee Labs). The team also helps with Real Food Farm's City Supported Agriculture share distribution.

As a program, we look for candidates who have clean driving records and experience driving in city traffic; however, they don't necessarily need to be experienced truck drivers or have their Commercial Drivers License. Team members also need to be able to work in varying weather conditions (really hot summers and pretty cold winters) and be able to lift 40 lbs. We also look for candidates who have experience in customer service or farming. But as a general rule, we're usually looking to provide an entry-level farm-related experience for non-farmers.

Because we recruit community members who may not know how to identify the different types of produce we grow, we have an extensive orientation and training process. We train our members on types of produce and sale standards, general customer service, box truck driving, food safety, accounting and data tracking as well as how to canvas and do community outreach. We also host conversations about food justice and the historic issues facing our current food system.

We provide opportunities for our Mobile Market team to learn about the production side of our operation and let them take home products so they can talk about the flavors and how to prepare items. We strive to empower our team members with the tools and skills they need to be successful. Knowing what their strengths are and where they want to grow also allows us to tailor their experience so everyone is getting the most out of our Mobile Farmer's Market, not just our customers!

Measuring Impact

We're pretty sure Mobile Farmer's Market Operators would be the first to admit that our programs aren't going to end the health and food crisis facing our nation. But we will also be the first to say that Mobile Farmer's Markets do meet a unique need in our current system.

Since our first year operating our Mobile Farmer's Market program in 2011, we've made tons of tweaks in the day-to-day operations; but we have always been focused on selling quality products at affordable prices to community members who may lack access to healthy, fresh foods. Despite the tweaks, we've always made sure to quantify our goals and track our progress on a monthly and yearly basis. Below are some of the success indicators we track and our overall totals from inception to October 2016.

452 total home deliveries

1,527 total markets

8,829 total transactions

\$12,883.08 in SNAP funds matched

\$65,250.50 total sales

Appendix

Mobile Farmer's Market Weekly Task List

Monday		Responsible Party
1.	Cashbox	
	Complete balance out sheet, payouts to farms, & deposit from previous week	MFM Crew
	Fill out new balance out sheet with new cash reserve	MFM Crew
	Store cashbox	MFM Crew
	Make deposit	CMOC
	Inform farms of their payouts	CMOC
	Visit bank if need small bills/quarters	CMOC
2.	Produce	
	Order produce & other items as necessary (if not done on Friday before)	MFM Crew & CMOC
	Update produce list and pricing as needed	CMOC
	Donate surplus produce in good condition	CMOC
3.	Communications	
	Update Produce Availability flyer and send PDF version to market partners & interested customers	CMOC
	Contact home delivery clients about produce availability and delivery date	MFM Crew
4.	Maintenance	
	Check vehicle maintenance log	MFM Crew
	Clean truck: sweep, mop, dust, empty compost buckets, etc. - whatever is needed (be sure to fill in cleaning log)	MFM Crew
	Check inventories and restock as necessary: bags, outreach materials, etc. - alert CMOC if something needs to be restocked	MFM Crew
	Clean and sanitize crates as necessary	MFM Crew
	Clean and sanitize ice packs as necessary	MFM Crew
	Fill truck with diesel and generator with gas if tanks are low	MFM Crew
	Order supplies as needed	CMOC

CMOC= Community Market & Outreach Coordinator

MFM Crew= AmeriCorps Members

Mobile Farmer's Market Weekly Task List

Tuesday - Friday		Responsible Party
1.	Prepare for market day	
	Sweep truck if necessary	MFM Crew
	Check schedule for any additional activities, events, home deliveries, etc.	MFM Crew
	Harvest herbs as needed	MFM Crew
	Load produce	MFM Crew
	Load proteins (meats & eggs)	MFM Crew
	Retrieve cashbox, EBT machine, scale, and tablet	MFM Crew
	Look over items and prices	MFM Crew
	Fill out and place price markers on product crates	MFM Crew
2.	During market day	
	Conduct market stops and home deliveries	MFM Crew
	Re-load as necessary (call CMOC if needed)	MFM Crew
	Stay hydrated and take breaks to eat lunch and use the bathroom	MFM Crew
3.	Shutting down for the day	
	Unload produce into proper storage areas and cover if necessary	
	Settle and batch out EBT machine- return to charging station	MFM Crew
	Return scale to storage and plug-in to recharge	MFM Crew
	Return tablet to storage and plug in to recharge	MFM Crew
	Staple receipts and store in cashbox until Monday	MFM Crew
	Store FMNP/WIC coupons in cashbox until Monday	MFM Crew
	Return cashbox to safe	MFM Crew
	Return proteins to overnight locations	MFM Crew
	Park truck and plug in freezers to freeze ice packs - lock door!	MFM Crew
	Make sure farm is secured and all tools sheds as well	MFM Crew
	Leave note for farm manager if we need additional items harvested for market for the rest of the week	MFM Crew

CMOC= Community Market & Outreach Coordinator

MFM Crew= AmeriCorps Members

Mobile Farmer's Market Produce Guide

If you're reading this you must be interested in selling produce on a mobile market. This is a guide to everything produce. One section will be devoted to set up and the next is how to check and keep up on produce standards. In this guide, the produce will be sorted by category. Categories will have similar characteristics on how they should be kept to preserve freshness and signs that they might not be at their peak. Enjoy!

OVERVIEW:

There are a couple things that are very important when thinking about selling produce. One is the important of setting up a beautiful display. Your stand must be well decorated and full of color in order to draw people to your stand. You could be selling the most delicious produce in the world but you have to entice people to come by. Keep in mind: just like any business operation you are selling more than just your product. A variety of vegetables is important, as this attracts customers who are looking for different foods. Some may want to do all their shopping with you while others may just want delicious tomatoes during the summer.

Beautiful displays demonstrate you care about the product and have invested time and energy to the market. Nice tablecloths, wooden crates and other advertising materials add a nice welcoming feel to your stand.

As the old saying goes "Stack 'em high, watch 'em fly." This means keep your stand looking full. When a product is sold, find something to take its place. Humans are attracted to abundance. This does not mean being wasteful. The best-case scenario is if you end up selling most of your products by the end of the market. This means you packed the right amount and are not taking too much home. Within the same vein, leaving greens on veggies (leaving carrot, beet and turnip tops on) also make a stand look more full. Of course you do not want to put out vegetables with wilted tops as this makes the product appear to not be fresh.

GREENS: Baby Greens and Mixes (Arugula, Mesclun Mix, Salad Mix, Baby Kale), Lettuce, Kale, Chard, Collard Greens

Greens should be kept cool or in the shade in order to protect their integrity. Otherwise they will become sad and wilted. While their taste will not be affected, you will not find many customers wanting to buy them (except those that may be interested in using them for juicing but that is not too many). One trick could be to keep a couple greens on display and the rest in a cooler. Be careful with this method that the icepacks (or whatever method to keep them cool) are not in direct contact with the greens. Even if the greens are in a plastic bag and touching an icepack they will show the damage of freezer burn.

For kale/collards/ chard: If you cut the bottoms uniformly and put them in a container of water they will look fresh and full. Lettuce heads too can be revived if their base is put in a container of water.

For salad mixes and baby greens: When properly cooled, washed and dried, these easily last for a week or more. When you notice greens that have started to turn dark green and slimy, then the greens should go.

STORAGE CROPS: Garlic, Onions, Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Winter Squash

Storage crops should be properly cured in order to protect their integrity. When properly cured, they should last for months. It is easy to tell when these crops are not fit to sell as they will have soft spots. Sellable storage crops should be firm all over. When not at the market, these crops should be stored in a dark, well-ventilated place with a temperature of 55-60° Fahrenheit.

TOMATOES:

The favorite of summer veggies. Tomatoes are wonderful because they provide a delicious base for many dishes. There is a bit of nuance to tomatoes as heirloom tomatoes differ in a couple of ways to standard hybrid tomatoes. Heirlooms are wonderful because they are tomatoes bred for flavor. They come in many sizes and colors therefore each variety is specific when it comes to judging ripeness. A wide variety of heirloom tomatoes can make for nice displays. They tend to be softer than hybrid tomatoes, which tend to be rather firm as they are designed for shipping and a longer shelf life. Any tomato with a dark spot or crack (except maybe around the top depending on the size of the crack) should be sold as a blemished tomato. Any tomato with black in the cracks should be marketed as a blemished tomato. There is a market for pristine as well as blemished tomatoes. Blemished tomatoes can still make delicious sauces. Tomatoes should not be put in the refrigerator as this robs them of their flavor. Any cool, dark room can be used for storage.

SUMMER SQUASH/ ZUCCHINI/ EGGPLANT/ CUCUMBER/ PEPPERS:

All of these veggies should be firm. Any of these veggies containing soft spots or bits of mold should not be sold. This does not mean that these products are inedible, it may just mean certain sections should not be consumed (they could be perfectly good for your enjoyment). These products should be kept in the refrigerator when not at market.

FRUIT:

With fruit, I find it is helpful to sample it to make sure that the quality is still high. For fruit that is not top quality, you could try to sell them at a greatly discounted price.

Peaches tend not to last more than a week and towards the end of the week could start to become mealy and soft. Peaches with bruises should not be sold directly.

Apples are a wonderful storage fruit. Kept in the right conditions they should store for weeks if needed. The customers are often concerned with the texture. Apples should be crisp. If they are soft or have dark spots they are no longer marketable at full price.

Figs are a wonderfully delicious fruit that is gaining in popularity. They should be picked when they are soft and any fruits that are excessively soft or split should not be sold at full price.

Melons are a bit more nuanced and complicated to tell when they are ripe and fit for sale. You should look at videos for how to tell if a melon is ripe. You will be able to hear the sound it makes. After a melon is picked it should last a week or so. It is important to try melons to make sure that they are being picked at the right time and to make sure that they are storing well. Melons are not a fruit that you should sell at a discounted price.

Raspberries are difficult to sell on a mobile market as they tend to spoil easily and store well.

OKRA:

Okra should be picked small (no more than 3-4 inches or so). If they are too long they become woody and unpleasant to eat. When the okra are no longer firm and floppy they should no longer be sold. (Again, this does not mean they are inedible just typically unappealing to customers).

ROOTS: Beets, Turnips, Radishes, Carrots

The nice thing about root vegetables is that they store pretty well, given the right conditions. Another wonderful thing is that they can be sold with or without the tops. In the case of radishes, turnips and beets, the tops are edible and quite delicious. When selling these products, make mention of that. Feel free to say, "The bugs got to them" or "it's so hot the greens wilt while in the ground." That is okay; you can also cut the tops off and sell the roots in containers. A way to tell when they should no longer be on display is if they are no longer firm as this is less appealing to customers. This does not mean they are inedible but they lose much of their value to potential customers.

BEANS:

Beans should last at least a week at 40-45° Fahrenheit. They should be as thick as a pencil when picked. When they become soft and flimsy they should not be sold. Again, they are still edible but they should not be sold to the customer.

Mobile Farmer's Market Training

OVERALL GOAL: Volunteers and staff will learn to operate the market successfully.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

By the end of the training, individuals should know how to:

- Set up and tear down the market
- Identify and explain each type of produce
- Explain key messages of Real Food Farm (able to answer the FAQ's)
- Conduct friendly customer service
- Give feedback about the day's market

TRAINING COMPONENTS

- Activity 1: Explaining Key Messages
- Activity 2: Friendly Customer Service
- Activity 3: Name That Vegetable!
- Activity 4: Set Up and Tear Down

The following lesson guides and handouts should be modified as appropriate. As much as possible, instruction should place the learner in an active role. This can be done by recreating a sample market and role-playing each aspect of set up, tear down, communicating with customers, and handling transactions.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Produce trays and containers
- Produce signs with prices
- Tablet with Farmer's Register
- Cash box
- Calculator
- EBT machine

Activity 1: Explaining Key Messages

GOAL: Participants will be able to accurately describe Real Food Farm’s core missions and basic information about the farm.

MATERIALS:

- “Explaining Key Messages of Real Food Farm” handout

ACTIVITY:

1. Explain to the group the importance of communicating to customers the mission of RFF in relation to the community and the benefits of buying RFF produce.
2. Ask whether anyone is familiar with the mission of RFF – what is the purpose of the organization? Refer to the mission statement on the “Explaining Key Messages Of Real Food Farm” handout and review it with the group.
3. Demonstrate your pitch of RFF’s mission for the group. Then have participants pair up and practice giving a pitch about RFF’s mission, giving them a chance to say it twice each. Remind participants that they don’t have to say each core function exactly as it is written, but can use their own words or examples.
4. Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate their pitch to the group. Ask the group for constructive feedback for the volunteer.
5. Next, ask the group to name reasons that customers should buy RFF produce. Using their responses and established key points, summarize the key points to the group.
6. Ask for a volunteer to role-play a conversation about RFF and the products at the market. You (trainer) will be a customer and the volunteer will be the market worker. The trainer will start/prompt the conversation and the volunteer should try to respond accordingly.
7. Example of prompts for trainer (who is pretending to peruse the vegetables):
 - Hmm.... These vegetables look good, but there are holes in these salad greens.
 - These tomatoes are funny shaped.
 - Where are these vegetables from?
 - What? I can get tomatoes at Food Depot for better price than this.
 - Are these vegetables organic?
8. After the role-play is finished, invite the rest of the group to give constructive feedback.
9. Last, review the FAQs. Ask each participant to read one of the FAQ responses. Ask if anyone has additional information that they would use in their own response.

Handout: Explaining Key Messages

When people come to the market stand they usually have a lot of questions about who we are, what we're doing and our product. By the end of this exercise, market staff should be able to give a clear explanation about Real Food Farm to a customer. Everyone's pitch does not need to be the same but should communicate key points about the mission and products of Real Food Farm.

RFF Mission Key Points:

- Our host organization is Civic Works, Inc., Baltimore's urban service corps which focuses on community revitalization, workforce development, education, green energy and urban agriculture.
- Real Food Farm works toward a just and sustainable food system by
 1. improving neighborhood access to healthy food
 2. providing experience-based education
 3. developing an economically viable, environmentally responsible local agriculture sector
 4. practicing environmentally sustainable farming methods
- Partnerships with local schools and community organizations to provide nutritional and environmental education, farm skills training, and job creation.

RFF Product Key Points:

- Grown using sustainable methods in hoop houses and open fields in Clifton Park
 1. Sustainable farming methods: no pesticides and no fertilizers (using soil that is enriched naturally with compost and other organic materials)
 2. "Sustainable" is similar to "organic," but we are not certified organic by the United States Department of Agriculture.
 3. Sustainable methods require more hand-labor, so the prices can be more expensive than conventional (non-organic) produce in the store.
 4. Sustainable methods are better for the environment, better for the farmers/farm workers, and better for your health.
- Just picked from the ground - it is fresh!

FAQ's with Sample Answers

What is Real Food Farm?

- Real Food Farm is Civic Work's non-profit urban agriculture project that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to the neighborhoods surrounding Clifton Park. We also have educational programming for local youth.

What are your growing methods?

- We use sustainable methods (similar to organic) so we don't add any chemicals or pesticides. We are growing produce in low energy, low cost hoop houses and also on a nearby field.
- Because we don't use chemicals, it also takes a lot more labor to grow our food. This allows us to provide more jobs instead of using our money to purchase chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Doesn't Baltimore's soil have lead in it?

- We tested our soil to make sure it was healthy and also added truck loads of nutrient rich healthy soil to our original soil.
- We found that one area of the farm has higher lead levels, and we are using that area to study the best methods of removing the lead - we do not sell produce from that area.

Why does this vegetable have holes?

- Since we don't use pesticides, bugs will inevitably eat some of our crop. Holes can be a sure sign that the vegetable is chemical-free. Would you rather eat chemicals, or a leaf with a hole in it?

Why are the prices higher than I usually see at the grocery store?

- The price of the vegetable reflects the amount of time and labor it takes to grow the produce using organic methods and at a smaller scale. You're paying for the freshness and quality of the produce.
- We hire Baltimore City residents, so the money you spend goes directly to your community members. At the grocery store, the money you spend goes to corporate headquarters far away.

Where are you located?

- We are located near the football/track field next to Lake Clifton High School. You can't miss us!

Who does this money support?

- We are a nonprofit organization. Profits go towards buying more seeds, soil, materials, etc. for the farm and to pay our wonderful staff.

Activity 2: Friendly Customer Service

MATERIALS:

- “Customer Service Guidelines” handout, printed customer service scenarios

ACTIVITY:

1. Distribute and explain the “Customer Service Guidelines” handout (see page 22).
2. Customer service skits: Break up into three groups. Each group will get a scenario of poor customer service to act out. Groups can embellish on the scenarios as well. Give the groups 5-7 minutes to practice. Then, come back together and have each group act out their skit. At the end of each skit, ask them to identify what went poorly and how things could’ve been done better.
3. Last, give team 5-7 minutes to come up with a skit that demonstrates good customer service.

SCENARIOS:

(1) The Inattentive & Unhelpful RFF Market Worker

Two market workers at the stand chatting with each other about the latest basketball game. A customer passes by and appears somewhat interested, even approaching the table but the team remain oblivious. The customer leaves without purchasing anything.

(2) The Unfriendly & Uninformed RFF Market Worker

When the customer approaches the table, the team members doesn’t even acknowledge the presence of the customer. Not until the customer asks a question do they respond. The customer asks “How much are the radishes?” The team member answers, “The price is written over there... I think it’s \$2.” The customer then asks “If they are grown in Clifton park doesn’t the ground have lots of lead?” The team member answers (without looking at the customer and crosses his arms) “No, it’s all organic.” The team member does not tell the customer about RFF or give them information.

(3) The Insensitive RFF Market Worker

A customer is considering whether or not he wants to buy some peppers along with some squash. The customer starts talking out loud about his choice “I could make some stir fry with these peppers and squash, but my daughter doesn’t really like peppers. They’re also a little expensive, but they look fresh...” The worker responds by saying (in an overly eager way) “Our peppers are really fresh. I bet your daughter would like them. And if she doesn’t, I am sure you would. You know what else goes with peppers and squash? Eggplants. You can sauté them all together. Perhaps you might want some onions too! Or, what about some broccoli??” The customer says “Nah, I think I won’t buy them.” The worker responds “Are you sure? All of our vegetables are fresh straight from the ground!” The customer says again, “Nah I think I just want the squash.” The worker responds quickly “Alright, but you don’t know what you’re missing out on!” Even while the worker finishes the transaction and bags the squash he tells the customer “Are you sure you don’t want those peppers. They are REALLY GOOD.”

Handout: Customer Service Guidelines

People say customer service will make or break your business. When we are working at the market, we want to make sure we are treating our customers with the utmost respect and in a friendly manner. If we build good customer relationships, then they will want to come back to the market. Follow these guideline to ensure the best quality customer service.

1. Customers are looking at the quality of both the product and customer service.

2. Present yourself in a friendly and attentive manner.

- Make sure your clothing, hair, and accessories are neat.
- Cell phone use is not allowed during markets.
- If someone passes by and looks interested, engage them by calling out to them!
- “Fresh produce from Real Food Farm in Clifton Park!”
- If your friends come to the market to visit make sure they aren’t blocking the signs or making it uninviting. Consider talking to them off to the side (away from the market stand).
- Always face the front of the market stand. Do not huddle in the back or in the truck.
- Always have a few people standing, looking ready to serve.
- Don’t be overly aggressive, but don’t be passive either.

3. Communicate clearly and effectively, verbally and nonverbally.

- Introduce yourself, “Hi, my name is....”
- Always smile and be courteous.
- Never argue with a customer.
- Avoid excessive jargon or insider information (don’t assume that everyone is into gardening or vegetable varieties!).
- Don’t keep your arms crossed while talking, it makes you seem unengaged.
- If you tell people about RFF, make sure you give them a flier/ literature and invite them to sign up on the mailing list.

4. Listen to the customer

- Keep eye contact with the customer
- If you cannot assist a customer or answer a question then ask for the help of someone else
- Value other people’s input or complaints by thanking them and letting them know you will take it into consideration
- Handle problems with customers in a professional manner

5. Go above and beyond

- If appropriate, give people extra produce. For example, if a customer was considering buying radishes but weren’t too sure if they’d like it—give them a few to take home and try!

Activity 3: Name That Vegetable!

GOAL: At the end of this activity everyone should be able to identify, name, and explain a few facts about produce that RFF typically sells. (Note: Vegetables will change based on the growing season and variety of vegetables being grown.)

MATERIALS:

- A variety of produce

ACTIVITY:

1. Split into two teams.
2. Leader will show produce items one at a time. Team will buzz in (slap the table or ground) and will need to (1) identify the vegetable (2) explain an interesting fact about it relating to cooking preparation.

Ex 1. Radish, good for stews or slicing thin into salads

Ex 2. Swiss chard, tastes like spinach and can be cooked like other greens

Ex 3. Purple carrots, taste like the orange carrots, just purple!

Activity 4: Set Up & Tear Down

GOAL: At every market we try to unpack and repack the truck in the same way. You will be able to shadow a market in the next few days but we will verbally run through the protocol.

SET UP:

1. Gather supplies
 - EBT machine
 - tablet with Farmer's Register
 - cash box
 - re-stock pamphlets, bumperstickers, round stickers, other promo materials
2. Clean Mobile Market: (this might change once we have the protocol for Food Safety and vehicles)
 - Sweep truck (all floors, including pull-out drawer for produce)
 - Wipe clean and sanitize pull-out drawer (and other materials if we use boards to position crates)
3. Transfer produce from walk-in to Mobile Market
 - Produce will always be located on the left side of the racks in the center aisle in the walk-in.
 - Produce should always be packed in clean white or green crates. Do not use black or yellow crates.
 - Do not stack crates if contents will be compacted or damaged. Place crates with less or low-lying contents on the bottom when stacking.
 - Arrange crates on pull-out drawer in an aesthetically pleasing way (i.e. place fuller crates towards the truck to allow for best viewing. Avoid having duplicate crates on pull-out drawer unless there is a limited number of items. All surplus crates can be placed on floor space and on shelves in the Mobile Market. This surplus can be used to replenish display crates on pull-out drawer as needed throughout the day. (This might change when we get shelving and refrigeration units.)
4. Blue crates can be hung from the sides of the pull-out drawer using the S-hooks. Fill these crates with produce that will not easily fall out. Do not over-fill.
5. Place labels with correct pricing on crates at each stop.

TEAR DOWN:

1. Before unloading, record on inventory sheet how much is left of each item.
2. Return crates with leftover produce to same location in walk-in as where found during set-up: left side of the center aisle of racks.
3. Return empty crates to appropriate space for used crates behind post-harvest shed.
4. Sweep out the Mobile Market.
5. Staple the day's receipts together and place in bottom of cash box. Return EBT machine and cash box to storage.

Civic Works



REAL FOOD FARM

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