
School Farmstand Manual

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is a companion resource to the [GrowNYC Farmstand Business Curriculum](#), which can be found for free with our other curricula on [GrowNYCEducation.org](#). At this stage, you've gone through some or all of the GrowNYC Farmstand Business Curriculum with your students, and are now ready to take an active role in your local food system by launching a food access point at your school. This manual will give you an idea of what to consider, how to prepare, how to launch, and how to sustain your food access point!

This manual focuses on the regulations and logistics specific to New York City. However, it can be adapted to wherever your school is located. Keep in mind that each school may have a different experience; step by step instructions will vary from site to site.

There are many types of food access points. We tend to use the term “farmstand” because it’s common among our schools, but a food access point could take other forms, such as a community fridge, pantry, Community Supp, etc.

Launching a food access point at your school takes thoughtful planning. It could take weeks, months, or even a year(+) to get everything in place to launch. Different models of food access points require varying levels of capacity and logistics. You can always start small and increase your capacity.

CHOOSING YOUR FOOD ACCESS POINT MODEL

There are many different options and formats for food access points. You should create a model that best fits your community and your operational capacity. In Unit 2 of our [Farmstand Business Curriculum](#), students learn to design and disseminate a community needs assessment that can be used to shape their food access business. This assessment can help you make collective decisions about your food access model. If you haven’t completed it yet, consider checking it out!

Prices and Currencies Accepted: One defining factor will be deciding if you want to distribute the produce for free, accept donations, or charge a price, and if so, which currencies you’ll accept.

Client base: Another defining factor will be deciding if you want your food access point to function within just the school community, or if it will be outward facing and available to the surrounding community and general public.

Frequency and Timing: Also consider if your project will be a regularly recurring and consistent food access point, or if it will be limited to a one-off event or series of events. It is necessary to communicate this to the community so that they know what to expect. A dependable and regularly occurring food access point can be transformative for food access within a community, but requires high commitment and capacity. Smaller, seasonal projects or one-off events allow students and adults some freedom to experiment with the model before committing.

The following charts outline 3 different models of food access points. You can decide which model is the best fit, or design a version of your own.

3 Models For Your School Farmstand



The following charts break down 3 possible models of farmstand business models. You can decide which model is the best fit for your community, mix and match, or create a version of your own. The three models outlined are:

1. Free Distribution
2. Donation-Based Sale
3. For-Pay Farmstand

1. Free Distribution	2. Donation-Based Sale	3. For-Pay Farmstand
<p>Free distribution of food to school and/or surrounding community. This could take the form of a farmstand, as well as produce donations to the cafeteria, pantries, culinary programs, etc.</p>	<p>Donation-based, sliding scale, or pay what you wish. Customers are not required to pay, but the farmstand may suggest prices and is equipped to handle money transactions for those that do pay.</p>	<p>A farmstand with set prices. May be able to set up a sliding scale. The school can choose which forms of payment are accepted (ex: cash, check, credit/debit, etc.).</p> <p>In this model, the school can become qualified to accept food assistance benefits (ex: SNAP). The school can also become registered to accept and distribute Health Bucks.</p>

MODEL 1: FREE DISTRIBUTION

- **Internal Within School:** Distribution of free food to just the school community (students, staff). This could take the form of giving produce to a school culinary program, cafeteria, or having a farmstand on a certain day. It could also be a school pantry where people can grab and go to take produce home.
- **Outward Facing Community:** In addition to serving the internal school community, you could distribute food to the surrounding community. This could take the form of donating produce to community organizations on a regular basis (pantries, soup kitchens, Older Adult Centers, community fridges), or having an outward facing farmstand on a certain day that is open to the general public. The school may also steward a pantry accessible to community members where people can grab and go to take produce home.

Operational Load	Low
Frequency of Farmstand	No predetermined frequency. Can be one-off or recurring.
Outreach	Use regular channels for school-wide communication, such as school newsletter, announcements. If outward facing, do outreach to the community as well. This may involve flyering at local businesses, sending information home to families, sharing on neighborhood listservs, social media, etc.
Affordability for Customers	Free
Supplies Needed	Farmstand materials (tent, tables, weights, signage, etc.)
Staffing Needed	Farmstand staff
Food Assistance Benefits Accepted	N/A (free)
Permission/Permits Needed	Principal approval
Leftover Produce	None - all produce is distributed.
Timeline Considerations	Varies. At the very least, you'll need a few weeks leading up to the first farmstand to prepare and publicize.

MODEL 2: DONATION-BASED SALE

- **Internal Within School:** A farmstand that is donation-based, or pay what you wish. Customers are not required to pay, but the farmstand is equipped to handle money transactions for those that do pay. They are selling on school property to internal school community only. School can choose which forms of payment are accepted (ex: cash, check, credit/debit, etc.).
- **Outward Facing Community:** Same as above, with the addition of making the farmstand accessible to the general public.

	Internal Within School
Operational Load	Medium
Frequency of Farmstand	No predetermined frequency. Can be one-off or recurring.
Outreach	Use regular channels for school-wide communication, such as school newsletter, announcements. If outward facing, do outreach to the community as well. This may involve flyering at local businesses, sending information home to families, sharing on neighborhood listservs, social media, etc.
Affordability for Customers	Free - Pay What You Wish
Supplies Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farmstand materials (tent, tables, weights, signage, etc.) ● Equipment to accept currency
Staffing Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farmstand staff ● Accountant
Food Assistance Benefits Accepted	N/A
Permission/ Permits Needed	Principal approval
Leftover Produce	None - all is distributed.
Timeline Considerations	Varies. At the very least, you'll need a few weeks leading up to the first farmstand to prepare and publicize. You may also need to set up a checking account to accept certain currencies, such as credit/debit.

MODEL 3: FOR-PAY FARMSTAND

Description: A farmstand with set prices. Generally is outward facing to the public. May be able to set up a sliding scale, although sliding scale may be better suited for a donation based model to avoid confusion. The school can choose which forms of payment are accepted (ex: cash, check, credit/debit, etc.).

In this model, the school can become qualified to accept and process food assistance benefits (ex: SNAP). The school can also become registered to accept and distribute Health Bucks.

This model is generally accessible to the outward facing community, since the internal school community would not typically generate enough business.

Operational Load	High
Frequency of Farmstand	Requires pre-determined, recurring frequency.
Outreach	In addition to school-wide communication, outreach to community. This may involve flyering at local businesses, sending information home to families, sharing on neighborhood listservs, social media, etc.
Affordability for Customers	Varies. To make it more economically accessible, there is the option to do a sliding scale, and/or become eligible to accept food benefits to increase affordability.
Supplies Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmstand materials (tent, tables, weights, signage, etc.) • Equipment to accept currency
Staffing Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmstand staff • Accountant • Outreach and Marketing person • Procurement/Wholesale Ordering lead
Food Assistance Benefits Accepted	Possible food benefit currencies include: SNAP, WIC and Senior FMNP, Health Bucks, and FreshConnect Coupons. School will need to become eligible to accept certain currencies.
Permission/ Permits Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal approval • Food Liability Insurance • To accept SNAP, you must apply for a Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) authorization number on the USDA website • If on non-DOE, public property, you will need to apply on-line for a Street Activity Permit at the NYC Street Activities Permitting Office
Leftover Produce	School will need to create a protocol to donate or distribute leftover food (this may include transportation and storage).
Timeline Considerations	To become eligible to accept SNAP, 45 days or 6 weeks is the estimated review time for FSN number application with USDA. To order with GrowNYC Wholesale, it will take a couple of weeks to create an account and set up the first order. You may also need to set up a checking account to accept certain currencies, such as credit/debit.

OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Location

Where will the Food Access point be? On school grounds? Off school grounds? A good location is vital to the success of a farmstand. Generally speaking, a good location will have high visibility and be in an area that will have heavy foot traffic on the market day. Outdoor markets are more successful because they have natural foot traffic and higher visibility. Consider the surroundings of the potential site. What businesses, housing, other schools, subway stations, and houses of worship are in the area? Those same members are potential customers. Consider the location and market hours of your farmstand in relation to school hours. Will it be before or after school when families are dropping off or picking up? The higher the foot traffic, the more successful your farmstand business will be. Depending on the location, you will also need to consider licensing needs (see Permits and Licensing Requirements section below).

Accessibility is a must. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires public accommodations in commercial spaces. Pick-up and drop-off areas closest to the farmstand site should comply with passenger-loading zone requirements (people with disabilities should be able to enter/exit the event in the same area as the rest of the patrons). Provide accessible routes through the event space. To enter/exit, there must be a 36 inch minimum clear pathway for people using wheelchairs. Food counters and tables must be no more than 28 – 34 inches above the floor, 12 inches maximum depth and 36 inch width of usable space to allow access for people using wheelchairs. People using wheelchairs must have knee clearance under a table. This requires clearance that is at least 27 inches high, 30 inches wide and 17 inches deep under accessible tables and counters.

Staffing

Who will oversee your farmstand operations? Will it be adults, youth, or both? Will they be paid or volunteers? Dependable volunteers are helpful at any farmstand but paid staff typically provide more continuity and may be able to dedicate more hours to the program. Depending on the school budget, DOE staff may be paid per session or with a stipend. Students can also be paid as interns using stipends or in class credit or community service credit.

Timeframe

What months of the year will the farmstand operate? The greatest variety of local produce for the NYC climate is available July through November. If your farmstand is going to operate over the summer, and you are employing youth, how will you find youth to staff it when school is not in session? Think about if and when students are going to be available to work.

You'll also want to consider what day of the week and the time of day your farmstand will be open. Remember, the more foot traffic you have, the more patrons you'll have, so try to find a time when there will be a lot of people around, such as dismissal time.

Leftover Food or Food Excess Plans

Waste and excess food disposal is another major challenge, as it is illegal to leave commercial waste of the kind generated by the farmstand in public trash cans. Much of the waste is recyclable and compostable. These can be taken out with the school recyclables and with the curbside composting. If you have excess produce that can't be donated to the school community, you can donate to a community fridge, a local soup kitchen, or pantry. These facilities operate on specific schedules, so it will be necessary to determine when the food will be delivered and who will receive it.

Equipment and Supplies List

The following is a list of some of the equipment and supplies you will need to run your farmstand. Because every market and location is different, use this list as a starting point to consider what unique items your farmstand will require. Our advice is to purchase sturdy, high-quality equipment for your stand, as cheap equipment is more likely to break or lose function.

- Tents/Canopies:** Tents are an iconic and practiced element of any farmstand. They provide shade from the sun, relief from the heat, and shelter from the rain. Tents also help to attract customers by making your market visible from a distance and giving you a place to hang signs. As an example, the GrowNYC Farmstand program uses two to three 10-by-10 feet pop-up canopy tents, depending on the site. Pop-ups make setting up and taking down more efficient. *Safety should be your number 1 priority! Make sure your tents are weighted down appropriately so they can't blow away and cause injuries or damage. Some drastic weather circumstances require that all tents come down.*
- Tables:** Folding tables work well for displaying produce and are easy to store.
- Scales:** Many produce items are sold by the pound—scales are a necessary part of your market's operation. Battery-powered, electronic scales will add speed and accuracy to your selling. Even if you're planning to give away produce for free instead of selling, you should still weigh and record the amount of produce that you distribute. Record-keeping is important for your business plan, your ability to know how much produce you need each week to meet customer demand, and for future grant applications and funding.
- Signage:** Banners, flyers, posters and A-frame chalkboards can help improve visibility, provide information and make your stand look attractive. A fixed banner at your farm stand will attract passers-by, as well as tell customers who you are and what you are doing. Post price cards within the display, preferably where the eye can see the product and the price together.
- Packaging Materials:** How will your customers carry their produce home? As an example, you could provide compostable produce bags on a roll for loose items such as green beans or baby spinach (12"x20" is a good size). Many shoppers bring their own reusable bags to carry their products. You can also provide paper grocery bags for bulkier items. Another idea is to have a "take one, leave one" system for reusable bags

where people can drop off reusable bags if they have too many, and other customers can take them if they forgot to bring their own.

Community Participation

It is important to identify supporting organizations as a way to encourage broad community participation in the farmstand. Inform businesses, religious organizations, community groups, and local newspapers about the farmstand and its mission. Bring them into the planning process. Find out whether they can perform a role, for example, by providing volunteers or transporting excess produce to a soup kitchen. Their investment and enthusiasm will help to build broader community support.

PERMITS AND LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

This section will walk you through the required processes if your school chooses to set up a recurring farmstand that will hold space either on school property or outside of the school property (e.g. NYC public sidewalk). This section also covers the steps required to gain approval for accepting SNAP-EBT payments. At the time of this writing, if you are choosing to have a donation based Food Access Point or Farmstand on **school grounds**, there are no official permits or licenses required. However, you should gain permission from the school's administration.

If Operating on Public Property (non-DOE property)

For a recurring Farmstand that is located on non-DOE public property, you will need to apply online for a [Street Activity Permit](#) at the [NYC Street Activities Permitting Office](#). Applications must be submitted 90 days prior to your event and please note there is a small non-refundable fee (\$25 as of December 2023) associated with the application.

The local Community Board will need to approve any market permit. Reach out to your local CB and ask to present at a Parks committee, Transportation committee, or full board meeting. You will also need approval from the local NYPD Precinct.

Food Liability Insurance

Food Liability Insurance is recommended for your school to purchase if you plan to have a recurring farmstand. This will protect your school (i.e. the vendor) should a situation arise that requires such protection. Consult [The Food Liability Insurance Program](#) for further information.

Applying to Accept SNAP-EBT:

You may want to increase food access at your food access point by accepting SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as "food stamps"). To become an authorized SNAP retailer and accept SNAP at your food access point, you must first apply for a Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) authorization number on the [USDA website](#). Should you need assistance with the application process, [The Farmers Market Federation of New York](#) can assist you with the application and support your school along the way. The Farmers Market Federation

of New York also has a series of [video tutorials](#) on their website if you wish to watch and learn more.

Create USDA Account: To begin an online application, you'll need to register for a USDA account in the link above. USDA will send a confirmation email with a hyperlink to activate your account.

Applicant Status: The category of retailer you select and the materials you will need to provide in your application will depend on the model of your program as well as your organization:

FNS Retailer Type	Who should Apply	Required materials	Nonprofits or Businesses?
Non-profit food buying cooperative	non-profit orgs operating food access points	IRS determination letter, copies of photo ID and SSN, bank account	501(c)(3) nonprofits ONLY
Produce Market	produce stands selling purchased wholesale produce	IRS determination letter OR business license, copies of SSN and photo ID, bank account	Both
Farm Stand	Direct marketing Farmers ONLY (growing what you're selling)	IRS determination letter OR business license, copies of SSN and photo ID, bank account	Both
Farmers Market	market operator applying as central terminal for a site with multiple producers/vendors	IRS determination letter OR business license, copies of SSN and photo ID, bank account	Both. If 501(c)(3), SSN does not need to be provided. Eligible for MarketLink Program

Note: If you are operating with a fiscal sponsor, the fiscal sponsor MUST fill out the FNS application with their information (including SSN) and is considered the SNAP retailer. Other information/documents that FNS may require include: most recent IRS business tax return or IRS form 990 for nonprofits; name, home address, social security number, and date of birth for all owners, partners, and officers of your business or nonprofit organizations.

Timeline: Applications will be processed in approximately six weeks.

SNAP Equipment

Once your FNS application has been accepted and you have received your FNS number, you will need to acquire equipment to begin accepting SNAP at your site. The Farmers Market Federation of New York recommends using the smart device application [TotilPay Go](#) by Novo Dia Group. You can purchase a “bring-your-own-device” (BYOD) package on Novo Dia Group’s website to process SNAP/EBT using a smartphone or tablet: <https://totilpay.com/ndg>

To use the TotilPay Go app, you will need to pay a license fee. TotilPay offers the choice between a month-to-month license that can be suspended in the off-season, if you are operating a site that runs seasonally, or an annual license fee to cover the whole year.

EBT transaction fees are covered in the licensing fee, but if you plan to accept credit and debit cards at your site in addition to EBT cards, there will be additional charges per transaction. At GrowNYC food access points, we charge customers a small transaction fee for credit/debit card transactions to cover this cost.

Other Costs to Consider

- Smartphone or tablet (Apple or Android)
- Data plan for device (or WiFi connection)
- Bluetooth Card Reader and receipt printer for TotilPay Go (\$349)
- Transaction fees for credit and debit card sales

Helpful Contacts

- Novo Dia Group/TotilPay - support & customer service
support@novodiagroup.com | P: 888.377.7884
- Diane Eggert - Farmers Market Federation of NY
deggert@nyfarmersmarket.com | P: 315. 400.1449 | F: 844-.300.6809

Health Bucks

If you have a FSN number and can now accept SNAP-EBT payments, your farmstand will also be able to offer \$2 Health Bucks for every \$2 SNAP sales up to \$10. For more information on the [Health Bucks program](#), contact the [The NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene](#).

Schools are also welcome to apply to receive free Health Bucks to share with school and community members as an avenue to boost participation in local markets independent of any Food Access Point at your school. A school does not need a FSN number nor a way to accept SNAP-EBT to apply to receive a bundle to share outward. Check the DOHMH website in the Spring for the application to apply and please note that these Health Bucks are on a first-come, first served basis to community organizations.

If your organization would like to purchase Health Bucks coupons, email farmersmarkets@health.nyc.gov for more information.

WHOLESALE PRODUCE PROCUREMENT

You may decide to purchase wholesale produce to supplement your food access point in addition to, or instead of, growing your own. This avenue is helpful if you don't have an active growing area at your school, you're planning to serve a large customer base, and/or if you want to provide produce that you do not have from your own on-school growing projects. [GrowNYC Wholesale](#) is a program of GrowNYC that helps regional family farms thrive by delivering their high-quality products to New York City's wholesale buyers. If your NYC school is interested in procuring produce with us, we can work with you to create an account. Email <schoolgardens@grownyc.org> for more info. If you start a regularly recurring farmstand with weekly produce procurement, you'll need a point person to submit weekly produce orders and manage the account.

Additional Helpful Resources for Running a Youth Farmstand:

- [GrowNYC's Farmstand Business Curriculum](#)
- [GrowNYC Wholesale Program](#)
- City Blossoms [Youth Entrepreneurship Manual](#)



The original version of this manual was researched and published during the 2023-24 school year. You can contact us at <schoolgardens@grownyc.org> for comments or questions.