



2018 Report



From the Executive Director

When Experimental Station introduced the Double Value Coupon Program to Illinois in 2009, we did so with our own South Side Chicago community in mind. How, we asked, could we reconcile our commitment to creating access to the region's healthiest fruits, vegetables, and other foods—which come with higher price tags—with the fact that we sought to make these foods affordable for our low-income neighbors? Ten years later, 'Link Match' has provided the answer: double the value of Illinois Link ('SNAP' nationally) purchases, making it possible for Link recipients to buy twice the amount of healthy food for half the price.

Experimental Station's Link Up Illinois program now enables as many as 96 Illinois farmers markets and food co-operatives to answer that question each year in communities all over the state. For the past six years, Link Up Illinois has worked to educate Illinois legislators about the many benefits of SNAP 'nutrition incentive' programs, like Link Match, and to institutionalize funding for such programs at the state level. We are pleased that the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund legislation signed into law in 2017 became an ongoing program in 2018, with the passage of new legislation to eliminate the previous law's expiration date. Experimental Station continues to work with a coalition of health and hunger sector organizations and agencies to ensure that the state budget includes the annual \$500,000 appropriation called for in the law.

The success of Link Match and other SNAP nutrition incentive programs led to the establishment of the \$250 million Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program in the 2018 Farm Bill. Experimental Station is thrilled that lawmakers renamed the program in honor of our dear friend and mentor, and that the amount of nutrition incentive funding provided for in the new Farm Bill more than doubles 2014 Farm Bill levels.

For Illinois, this is all great news. With a strong statewide network of farmers markets offering Link Match through Link Up Illinois, and both state and federal legislation supporting the expansion of nutrition incentives, we are closer than ever to ensuring permanent access to affordable, healthy, and local foods for our state's low-income population. We invite you to learn more in the following pages about what we have accomplished this past year and—whether you are a market manager, farmer, legislator, Link recipient, advocate, or other stakeholder—we are hopeful that you will join us in our effort.



Photo courtesy of Marc Monaghan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Connie Spreen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Connie Spreen, PhD

Executive Director
Experimental Station

From the Program Manager

*"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food."
—Hippocrates*

2018 was yet another successful year for Link Up Illinois. As we innovate and expand into new retail locations, we see that the need for Healthy Food Incentives is great across Illinois. Last year also set the stage for expanding our universal Link Match statewide. This will give Link customers greater flexibility in spending their benefits and feeding their families healthy foods.

Although the future looks promising, we are still seeking ongoing funding. The passage of the Healthy Local Foods Incentive Fund was only the first step in achieving this goal. We still need your help getting funds appropriated for this initiative.

I would like to thank our partner markets for all of the hard work they have done, and continue to do, carrying out Link Match across our great state. Without their sustained efforts this program would not exist.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey Chatman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Corey Chatman

Program Manager
Link Up Illinois

A photograph of a busy farmer's market stall. A woman in a white tank top and a headscarf is smiling and interacting with a customer. The stall is covered with a patterned tablecloth and displays various fresh produce, including yellow squash, green beans, and leafy greens. A chalkboard sign in the foreground reads "Earnest Earth" and "fresco". Other people are visible in the background, some holding shopping bags.

Experimental Station's Link Up Illinois program has been the primary force in bringing SNAP nutrition incentives to more Illinois farmers markets each year.

Overview

Link Up Illinois is a program of Experimental Station, undertaken in partnership with Wholesome Wave and the Illinois Farmers Market Association.

Experimental Station and its partners seek to increase the affordability and accessibility of fresh and nutritious foods sold at Illinois farmers markets and other venues selling locally produced foods. Link Up Illinois was created in 2011 to combat urban and rural food deserts, support local small and mid-size farms, offer lasting health benefits to vulnerable Illinoisans, and advocate for policy change on the state and federal level.

Link Up Illinois achieves these aims by providing farmers markets, other direct-to-consumer venues, and food co-operatives across the state with funding to implement Link Match programs for recipients of Illinois Link (federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits). In addition, Link Up Illinois provides free EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) consulting, funds, training, and technical assistance to ensure successful implementation of these programs. With support from our generous funding partners, Link Up Illinois also provides statewide marketing and promotion.

Program partners provide outreach and advocacy at the state level (Illinois Farmers Market Association) and fundraising support, technical support, outreach, and advocacy at the national level (Wholesome Wave). Link Up Illinois also works closely with the Illinois Department of Human Services, which administers the SNAP program in Illinois.

“All the vendors that used Link Match were beyond grateful. They said this program helped them get new and existing customers coming back each week. Vendors always noticed a smile on customers faces when using Link Match—they finally had enough to get everything they needed.”

Dekalb Farmers Market Manager

CBS Community Partnership Division

Informing Link recipients that they can double the value of their Link benefits with Link Match is a challenge. First, Illinoisans receiving Link are an ever-changing population. In addition, many Link recipients need to be persuaded that there is no catch—that when they spend their Link dollars at participating markets, they will simply receive an equal amount of Link Match to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables!

Thus, since 2012, Link Up Illinois' partnership with CBS Broadcasting's Community Partnership Division has been critical to the expansion of Link Match throughout the greater Chicago metropolitan area and—beginning in 2018—across the state. Providing pro bono production of television and digital advertising, CBS' Community Partnership Division has enabled Link Up Illinois to reach targeted audiences in a variety of creative ways. Our 'It's a SNAP!' and 'I Link Match!' television campaigns (each ad airing over 100 times over 3 weeks), along with email and text messaging campaigns (150,000 and 55,000 sent, respectively), has greatly expanded awareness of the program while building Link Match brand recognition. Ultimately, we aim for Link Match to become as recognized as the Illinois Link program itself. Thanks to our valued partnership with CBS Broadcasting, we have the opportunity to make that happen.

Over 3 weeks in June of 2018, our Link Match ad was broadcast to

3.5 million

households, or 9.1 million people, in Cook and the six surrounding counties (even extending as far as LaSalle, LaPorte, and Kankakee).



68% of the target market viewed our ad

"Link Match means the world to me. As a senior, it affords me more produce each week for my Link budget. Every week I drive over 50 miles each way to participate in this amazing program. I can get all the food I need for the week and even some to can and freeze for winter. Please keep Link Match."

Ronda W., Farmers Market of Carbondale Link Shopper

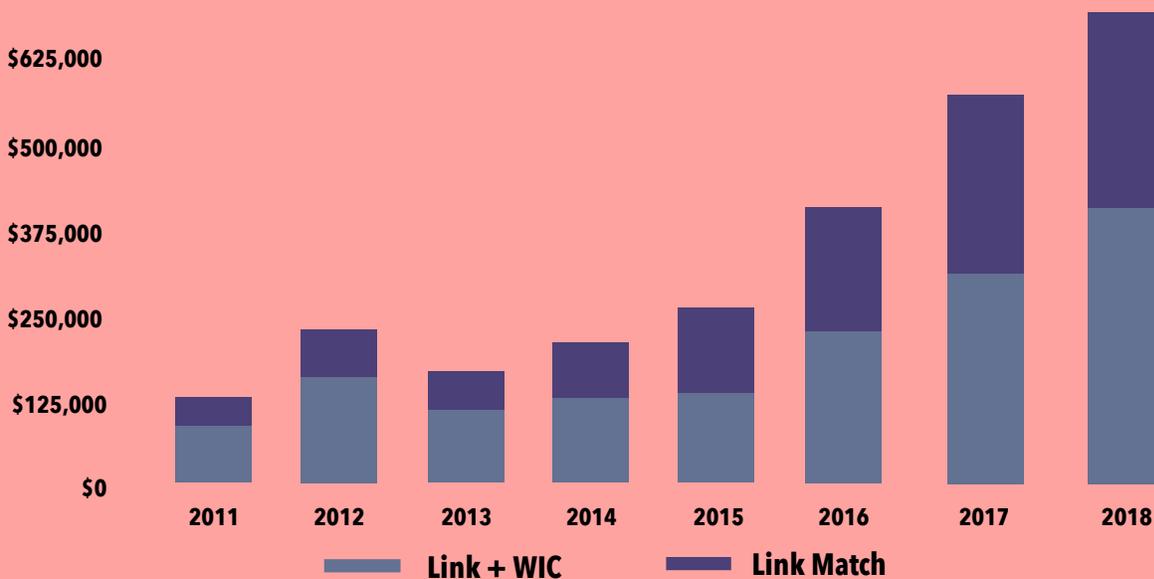
Link Match Across Illinois

Link Up Illinois again received generous support in 2018 from the USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Program, the City of Chicago, The Chicago Community Trust, and others to provide Link Match funding, training, and technical support to 92 Illinois farmers markets and 4 food co-operatives selling locally grown produce. In 2018, Link Up Illinois partner markets and co-ops were granted a total of \$344,042. Together, they distributed \$250,906 in Link Match.

\$678,081

Total Link, WIC, and Link Match purchases among Link Up Illinois Partner and Affiliate Markets

Link, WIC, and Link Match Sales at Link Up Illinois Markets



2018 Illinois Link Redemption

90% of all farmers market Link purchases were at Link Up markets

- Link Up Illinois Partners
- Other Markets

Spotlight on Success: Glenwood Sunday Market

Since 2010, the Glenwood Sunday Market has provided residents in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood with healthy food options. Glenwood Sunday Market is dedicated to providing local, sustainably grown and produced food—and making it accessible for all. Thanks to their dedication, Link shoppers spent \$19,000 last year in combined Link and Link Match on some of the region's best and healthiest foods.



“The food access programs that Glenwood Sunday Market provides for our shoppers is the reason I support the market. Without them we’re just another farmers market.”

Glenwood Sunday Market Supporter

Universal Link Match

As Link Up Illinois' network has grown, it has become apparent that, for Link shoppers, offering different Link Match at each individual farmers market is confusing and inconvenient.

In 2018, Link Up Illinois therefore piloted a universal Link Match at 31 Chicago farmers markets. Link customers were able, for the first time, to take the Link Match they received at one farmers market and buy fruits and vegetables sold at another participating market. No longer did

they have to worry about having the correct Link Match for the market they were shopping at. And, with the Link Up Illinois 'We Link Match' rack card, Link customers were able to learn which 31 Chicago markets accepted their universal Link Match.

The success of this 2018 pilot in Chicago laid the foundation for Link Up Illinois to expand universal Link Match statewide in 2019.

31 Chicago farmers
markets accepted
universal Link Match
in 2018



2018 Link Up Illinois Partner Markets

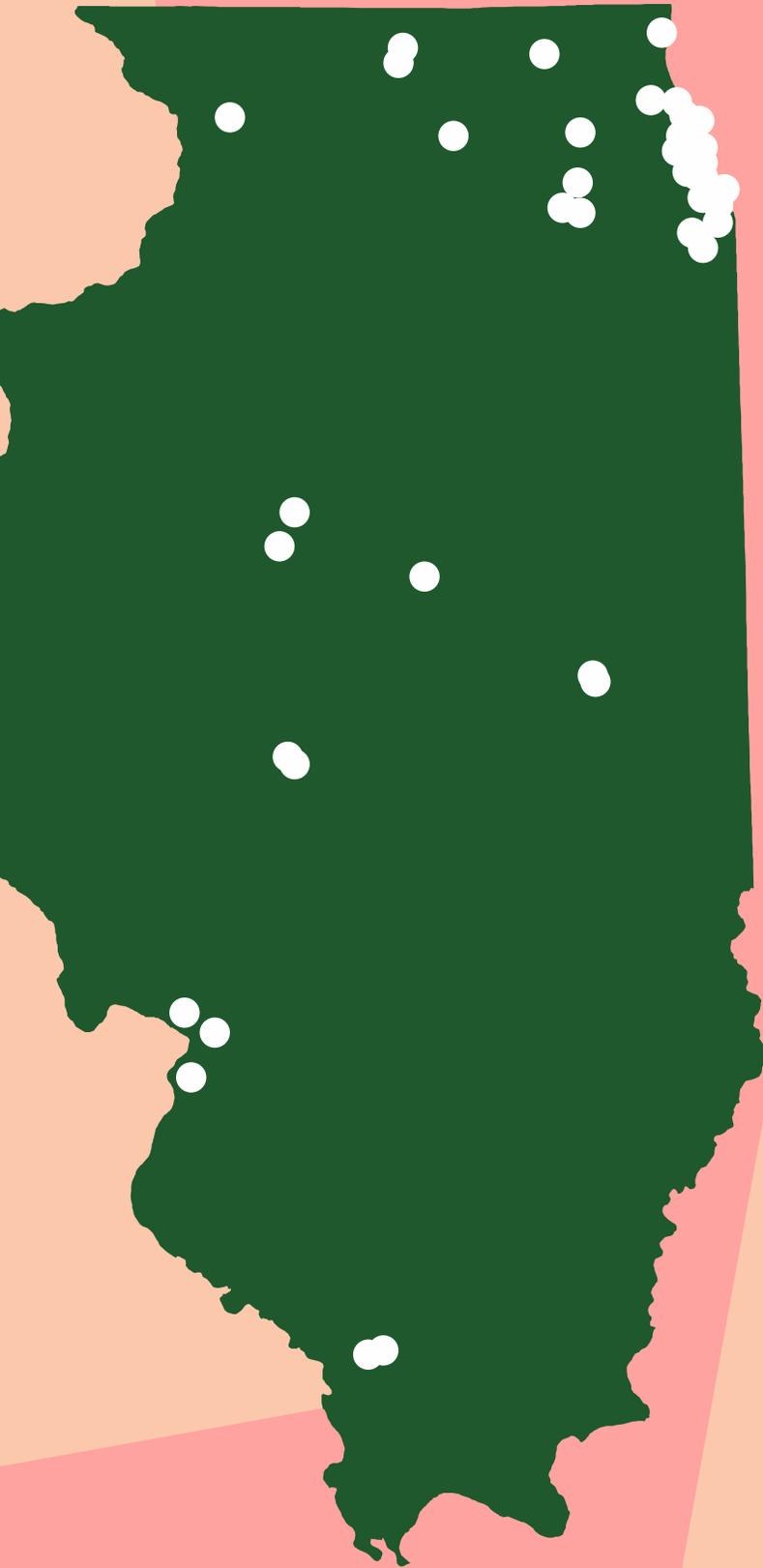
61st Street Farmers Market, Chicago
Alton Farmers and Artisans Market, Alton
Andersonville Farmers Market, Chicago
Aurora Farmers Market, Aurora
Aurora Farmers Market - West, Aurora
Austin Town Hall Farmers Market, Chicago
Batavia Farmers Market, Batavia
Blackhawk Courts Farm & Garden, Rockford
Bronzeville Farmers Market, Chicago
Carbondale Farmers Market, Carbondale
Columbus Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Community Farmers Market in Carbondale, Carbondale
CCHHS - Cottage Grove Health Center, Ford Heights
CCHHS - Oak Forest Health Center, Oak Forest
CCHHS - Robbins Health Center, Robbins
CPS - North Lawndale Farmers Market, Chicago
CPS - Roseland Farmers Market, Chicago
Daley Plaza Farmers Market, Chicago
DeKalb Farmers Market, DeKalb
Division Street Farmers Market, Chicago
Downtown Bloomington Farmers Market, Bloomington
Downtown Elgin Harvest Market, Elgin
Downtown Evanston Farmers Market, Evanston
Edens Place Farmers Market, Chicago
Englewood-Anchor House Farmers Market, Chicago
Faith in Place Winter Farmers Market, Chicago
F.R.E.S.H. Farmers Market, East St. Louis
Federal Plaza Farmers Market, Chicago
Garfield Park Community Council Farmers Market (2 markets), Chicago
Gary Comer Youth Center, Chicago
Glenview Farmers Market (Affiliate), Glenview
Glenwood Sunday Market, Chicago
Green City Market (Affiliate), Chicago
Green City Market Fulton (Affiliate), Chicago
Green Top Grocery Co-op, Bloomington
Green Youth Farm of Lake County, Waukegan
Growing Power's Fresh Moves Mobile Markets (12 sites), Chicago

Illinois Products Farmers Market, Springfield
IMAN Fresh Beats and Eats, Chicago
La Follette Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Lanark Farmers Market, Lanark
Land of Goshen Farmers Market, Edwardsville
Logan Square Farmers Market, Chicago
Loyola Farmers Market, Chicago
McKinley Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Morton Grove Farmers Market, Morton Grove
North End City Market, Rockford
Northbrook Farmers Market (Affiliate), Northbrook
Oak Park Farmers Market (Affiliate), Oak Park
Old Capitol Farmers Market (2 markets), Springfield
Palos Heights Farmers Market, Palos Heights
Park Forest Farmers Market, Park Forest
Park Ridge Farmers Market, Park Ridge
Peoria Riverfront Farmers Market, Peoria
Pullman Farmers Market, Chicago
Quincy Farmers Market, Quincy
Ravenswood Farmers Market, Chicago
Rockford City Farmers Market, Rockford
South Shore Farmers Market, Chicago
South Shore Farmers Market @ the Quarry, Chicago
The Dill Pickle Food Co-op, Chicago
The Plant Farmers Market, Chicago
The Land Connection Champaign Farmers Market (Affiliate), Champaign
Trinity UCC Farmers Market, Chicago
Ujamaa Co-op Farmers Market (5 markets), Chicago
Urbana's Market at the Square, Urbana
West Humboldt Park Farmers Market, Chicago
West Town Health Market (Affiliate), Chicago
Wicker Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Windy City Harvest Farm - Lawndale, Chicago
Windy City Harvest Farm - Ogden, Chicago
Windy City Harvest Farm - Washington Park, Chicago
Woodstock Farmers Market (2 markets), Woodstock

Affiliate Markets

A number of Link Up Illinois partner markets raise funds to support their Link incentive programs, in addition to receiving support from Link Up Illinois. Several markets have been so successful in their fundraising that they do not require Link Up Illinois support. In order to tell the complete

story of nutrition incentives in Illinois, we invite these markets to become Affiliate Markets and to share their Link and incentive sales data with us. In 2018, Link Up Illinois Affiliate markets saw over \$116,000 in Link and nutrition incentive sales!



Spotlight on Success: Woodstock Farmers Market

Established in 1982, 2018 was the Woodstock Farmers Market's 36th year. A producer-only market with 40 vendors, the Woodstock Farmers Market operates twice a week (Tuesdays and Saturdays) and has been a Link Up Illinois partner since our inception in 2011. With a strong and ongoing commitment to bringing healthy food to everyone in their community and \$18,000 in Link and Link Match sales in 2018, Woodstock is one of Illinois' shining stars!

"I feel our market is giving back to our community through the Link Match program. Link Match makes fresh, local produce affordable for the less fortunate among us. We have many young parents who want the best for their children. We have cancer victims who have lost so much and need to eat good food. We have elderly people who are struggling with a fixed income. So many are helped with this program."

Keith Johnson, Woodstock Farmers Market Manager

92 farmers markets supported

4 food co-operatives supported

CCHHS and Black Oaks

In 2017, Link Up Illinois began a partnership with the Cook County Health & Hospitals System (CCHHS) to help address food insecurity in the southern high-poverty communities of Oak Forest, Robbins, and Ford Heights. We sought to support farmers markets and establish Link Match at CCHHS community clinics located in those communities. We also sought to connect CCHHS patients directly with locally grown healthy foods. The Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Renewable Living in Pembroke Township joined the project as a farmer vendor and, with Link Up Illinois funding, matched Link purchases up to \$20 per market day.

With lots of cultivation by all of the project partners, the seeds for the three weekly 'Fresh Markets' that were sown in 2017 began to take root in 2018. In addition to bringing fruits and vegetables to the Fresh Markets each week, Dr. Jifunza Wright and Fred Carter, founders of the Black Oaks Center, provided extensive community outreach and enriched the Fresh Markets' programming by conducting onsite nutrition education and offering an Rx Food Bag program, developed to meet specific health needs. To further support outreach to CCHHS patients, Link Up Illinois also produced a promotional video screened in clinic waiting rooms.



"I have brain cancer—yeah, it sucks. The treatments have left me virtually penniless so that I'm now on food stamps. If not for Link Match, I would never be able to afford to shop at the market and get the kind of fresh food I truly need to stay strong and feel good emotionally. Thank you to all. The generosity of the market has made a world of positive difference in my life."

Green City Market Link Match Shopper

Food Co-ops

Seeking to increase Link customers' access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables year-round, in 2017 Link Up Illinois introduced Link Match in brick-and-mortar food co-ops. Sourcing local and sustainable produce, food co-ops are natural partners. They meet Link Up Illinois' aims to provide affordable healthy food and to support local farmers (according to National Co-op Grocers, the average co-op purchases from 51 local farms and 106 local product producers).

The Neighborhood Co-op Grocery in Carbonale, Green Top Grocery in Bloomington, and the Dill Pickle Food Co-op in Chicago all launched successful Link Match programs in 2018.

We have been wholly impressed by all three co-ops' commitment to overcoming challenges (e.g. in adapting their point-of-sale systems), promoting the program, working with local producers, and making Link Match a visible feature of their produce departments.



"Link Match is such a blessing. The program allows me to use my Link dollars on other food staples and my Link Match on more fresh fruits and vegetables. I particularly enjoy the local mushrooms, micro greens, peppers, and winter squash. More fruits and vegetables from local farms is a win win for everyone involved."

Neighborhood Co-op Link Match Customer



"We have seen an uptick in sales at the Co-op after the Link Match launch!"

Bruce Chrisman,
Neighborhood Co-op

At the 61st Street Farmers Market



Average Link basket



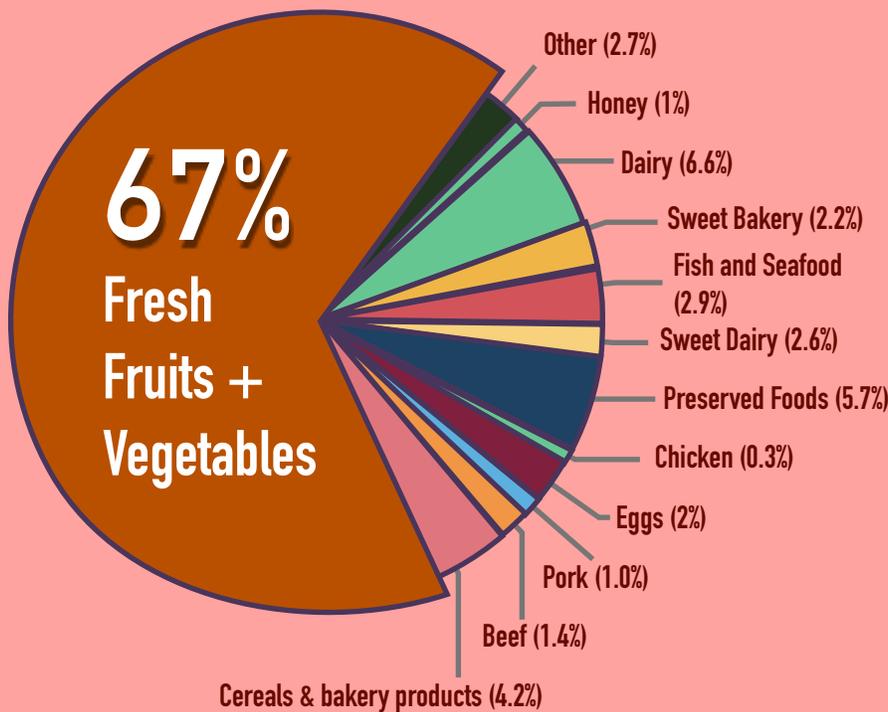
Average non-Link basket

49%

of Link users spent at least to the \$25 match

76% of Link customers agree that coming to the farmers market has positively affected their overall health

Link and Link Match Sales by Category



91%

come to the farmers market to purchase fruits and vegetables

91%

report that Link Match positively affected their fruit and vegetable intake

96%

state that Link Match is important when deciding to spend their Link benefits

“There is no overstating the role that Link Match plays in increasing our customers’ fruit and veggie intake. Each week, customers approach me, eager to show off their bountiful bags of produce and to discuss their dinner plans!”

Wendy Zeldin, 61st Street Farmers Market

Local Economic Impact

700+ small scale farmers and food producers supported

\$1,220,545 Total economic impact from Link, WIC, and Link Match sales in 2018 (\$678,081 x USDA multiplier of 1.8)

"The program has allowed me to extend my growing season! Due to Link Match, customers continue to shop later in the fall."

Dan B., Farmers Market of Carbondale farmer

"Because of Link Match our sales are higher and we have wonderful new customers!" Crystal Cooley,
Land of Goshen Farmers Market

"I can make a car payment during Link season! It really helps my bottom line and it opens the market to many more people who otherwise would not come."

Palos Heights Farmers Market farmer

"Link Match was the extra incentive needed to make hesitant farmers feel like it would be worth it for them to participate in our market!"

Alton Farmers Market Manager



Towards a State of Health: Illinois' Healthy Food Incentives Fund

By improving the health of our Link population, Illinois will save tax dollars on Medicaid.

According to the Illinois Department of Health, 12.8% of Illinois' adult population has diabetes, while 37.5% (3.7 million) are prediabetic. Without intervention, 15-30% of those with prediabetes can be expected to develop Type 2 diabetes in the next 5 years (IDPH, "Illinois Diabetes Action Plan, 2018-2020").

The cost of diabetes to Illinois is astronomical—an estimated \$12.2 billion each year. As reported by the Center for Disease Control, Medicaid expenditures associated with diabetes are substantial; Medicaid enrollees with diabetes cost Illinois 1.9 to 2.9 times more than people without diabetes ("Medical Expenditures Associated With Diabetes Among Adult Medicaid Enrollees in 8 States," September 2018).

With a 97.5% eligibility overlap in Illinois between Link and Medicaid, and with Medicaid representing over 27% of Illinois' 2015 state budget, it is clear that by improving the health of our Link population, Illinois will save tax dollars on Medicaid expenditures.

The Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund (Public Act 100-0636), signed into law in 2017 and made permanent in 2018, has been recognized by Illinois lawmakers as an important investment in the health of our Link population and farm economies. However, lawmakers have yet to include the \$500,000 annual appropriation for the program in the state budget.

Experimental Station will continue to work with a statewide coalition of health and hunger partner organizations in 2019 to ensure that Illinois funds this life- and money-saving investment.



Spotlight on Success: Old Capitol Farmers Market

Located in Springfield, only blocks away from the Illinois state capitol, Old Capitol Farmers Market operates two days per week (Wednesdays and Saturdays).

Operating a Link Match program since 2012, Old Capitol Farmers Market has seen terrific growth in its program over the past year. A 30% increase in the number of Link transactions in 2018 led to a 47% increase in Link sales and a 31.5% increase in Link Match redemptions. That amounts to almost \$23,000 of fresh and healthy foods for Link shoppers and \$23,000 more in the pockets of their local farmers!

Link Up Illinois Funders and Partners



City of Chicago
Mayor Rahm Emanuel



THE CHICAGO
COMMUNITY TRUST
AND AFFILIATES



wholesome
wave



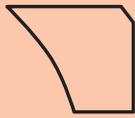
Looking to 2019

Thanks to funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, the City of Chicago, The Chicago Community Trust, and other foundation support, Link Up Illinois will continue to bring Link Match to more Illinoisans in 2019!

- Experimental Station foresees the \$500,000 appropriation for Illinois' Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund, and hopes to work with the Illinois Department of Human Services to ensure that the program is designed to be as impactful as possible.
- Link Up Illinois will launch universal Link Match statewide and undertake a statewide advertising campaign in partnership with CBS Broadcasting's Community Partnership Division.
- In partnership with Cook County Health & Hospitals System and County Care, Link Up Illinois will support Link Match programs at up to 40 Cook County farmers markets, the second largest county in the nation.
- Link Up Illinois will evaluate the impact of Link Match among Link shoppers at the Cook County south suburban community clinics.
- Link Up Illinois will expand Link Match to the Sugar Beet Co-op in Oak Park, Illinois—our fourth Illinois food co-operative!

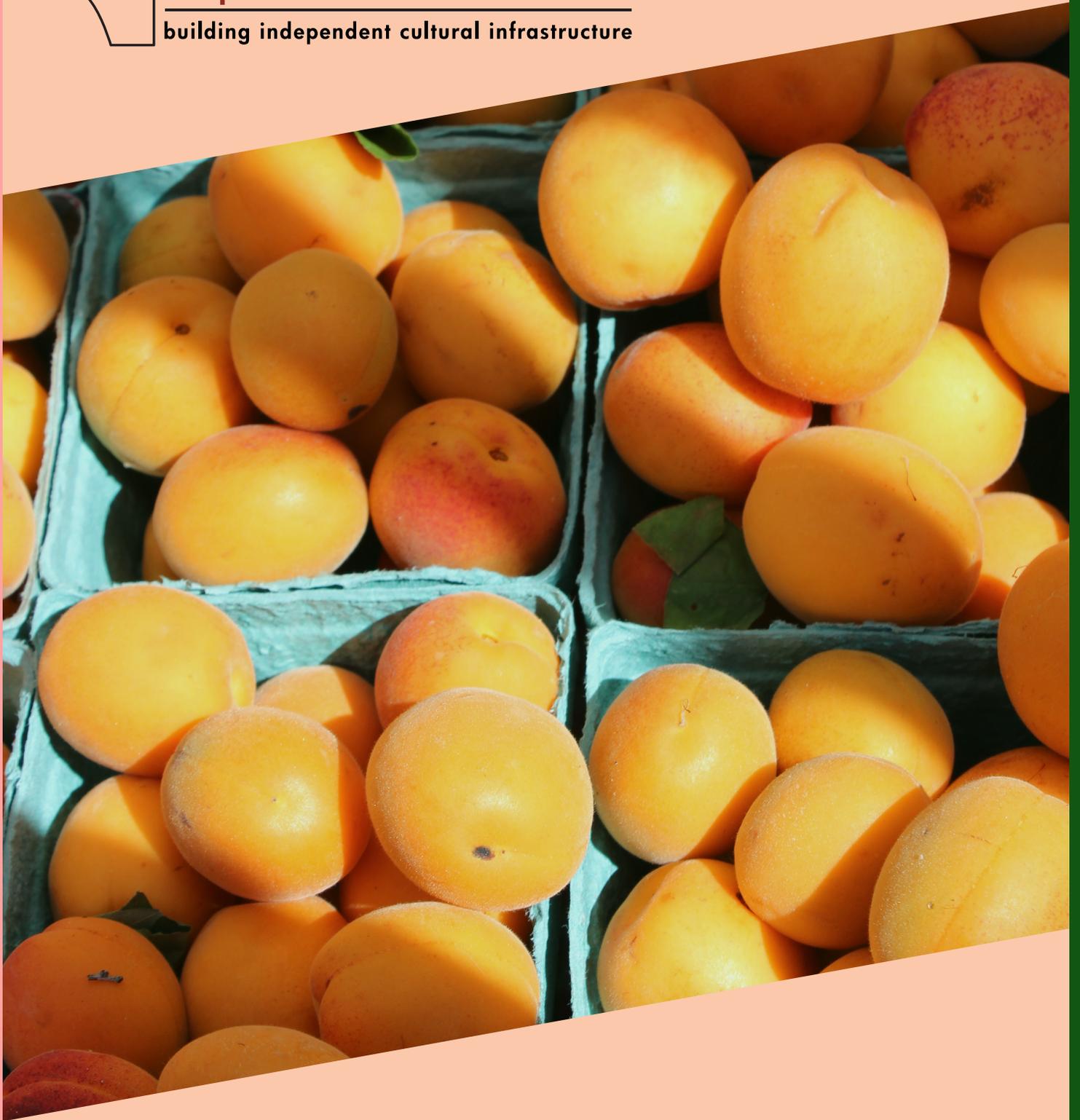
“As a beginning farmer, it can be challenging to determine prices that seem fair to both the grower and the customer. Link and Link Match have made this manageable by giving more people the opportunity to shop at our stand. These programs allow small businesses to consider the value of their time and labor without placing a significant economic burden on their customers. Without Link and Link Match, it may not be possible for us to generate an income while simultaneously providing all customers with the fresh produce they deserve.”

Hannah Tomlin, Moon Girl Farm, Old Capitol Farmers Market



experimental station

building independent cultural infrastructure



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