

New Bedford Farmers Market Wins \$233,453 Federal Grant from USDA

The New Bedford Farmers Market recently won a \$233,453, three-year grant from the USDA's highly competitive Farmers Market Promotion Program to better promote the farmers market to a more diverse audience, ultimately increasing sales.

In 2014 Mass in Motion New Bedford, with support from Mayor Mitchell's Office, took over management of the New Bedford Farmers Market. Recently, Kim Ferreira and Stephanie Perks co-founded a new organization, Coastal Foodshed, to transition management of the New Bedford Farmers Market, as well as to develop new programs and initiatives that further support the direct sale and consumption of local foods.

"We are beyond excited to start working on this project," says Kim Ferreira, co-founder of the Coastal Foodshed. "We know farmers markets have a reputation for being expensive so our goal through this project is to dispel this myth. We want to convey to the community that Farmers Markets are not only a place for purchasing healthy, local and affordable foods but also a welcoming gathering space for everyone."

The project has four components:

A community-driven marketing campaign that will look for input from all residents of different backgrounds, using a local company, Ben Gilbarg at Visionary Communications Consultants. A series of cooking videos that highlight produce purchased at the markets, and feature multi-cultural recipes.

A "local-influencers" video campaign working with some very well-known local residents to highlight the market and some of the farms, featuring Maria Lawton, Azorean Greenbean and

award-winning author and TV personality.

A collaboration with the Southeastern Mass Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP) to provide farmers with training on how to better market their farms and products.

“With this funding, we will be able to showcase nearby farms and farmers that sell their produce at the New Bedford Farmers Market,” says Stephanie Perks, co-founder of Coastal Foodshed. “If you ask one of the farmers how they grew their onions, they will be proud to tell you their story. We want to harness those stories and share them with the residents of New Bedford. By fostering relationships between farmers and consumers, we hope to continue to build a community that supports our local food economy.”

Funding also allows the New Bedford Farmers Market to run year-round. The Indoor New Bedford Winter Farmers Market opens November 2nd, and will be held every Thursday from 3-6:30 downtown in the atrium of the Times Square Building (888 Purchase St.) through May 31. This is particularly important for SNAP participants because they can now use their SNAP/EBT benefits while also earning extra money through the Healthy Incentive Program (HIP) year round in New Bedford.

Overall, the project will further connect residents and local farmers, boosting the sale and consumption of local produce. The grant begins this fall and lasts through the fall of 2020.

“The City has supported the growth of the New Bedford Farmers Market over the past three years, and we have seen it evolve into a space for residents to directly purchase local food from local farmers year-round, without having to leave New Bedford,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell. “We are pleased that management of the market is sustainably transitioning from the City to Coastal Foodshed, where it will be in capable hands, and this major three-year grant from the USDA will help propel its success to the next level.”

You can learn more about Coastal Foodshed at www.coastalfoodshed.org. To learn more about the New Bedford Farmers Markets, and for all market updates, please visit [Facebook.com/newbedfordfarmersmarket](https://www.facebook.com/newbedfordfarmersmarket).