

West Side United Request for Information

Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program

Background and Statement of Need

West Side United (WSU) is a collaborative of six hospitals* working to reduce the life expectancy gap between Chicago's West Side neighborhoods and the central business district (the Loop). WSU initiatives address healthcare, built environment (i.e. healthy food access), education, and economic vitality to empower West Side communities. WSU focuses on ten Chicago neighborhoods: Belmont Cragin, Humboldt Park, Austin, West Town, East Garfield Park, West Garfield Park, Near West Side, North Lawndale, Lower West Side, and South Lawndale.

To increase and encourage consumption of produce among West Side residents, WSU is creating a Fruits and Vegetables Voucher Program. The goal of this program is to provide hospital patients who live in the WSU catchment area with vouchers that can be redeemed for fruits and vegetables at a wide variety of neighborhood vendors (e.g., grocers, corner stores, farmers markets, produce stands). The program seeks to expand and improve access to local vendors that sell fruits and vegetables. The vouchers will be distributed to qualifying patients by WSU's hospital partners.

WSU's program envisions the use of a third-party entity or collaborative to assist with:

1. Recruitment and sustained participation of qualified neighborhood vendors in the WSU catchment area;
2. Creation of a voucher distribution system in which WSU hospitals would be responsible for identifying and distributing to qualified patients; and
3. Creation, implementation, and maintenance of a voucher redemption program with participating neighborhood vendors, including funds disbursement.

WSU's program is modeled after similar efforts in San Francisco and Los Angeles (Vouchers 4 Veggies; www.EatSFvoucher.org).

Goal of the RFI

The healthy food access working group of WSU seeks information on any or all elements of the proposed program. We seek information to help guide decision-making about the scope, scale, and cost of the proposed program. We also seek recommendations related to the type or third party entities who would be most successful in managing the program. Finally, we seek information from interested third party entities about the specific experience or qualifications they have that would make them a successful partner. Respondents to this RFI are not required to answer all questions listed below but encouraged to answer any questions they feel qualified to answer. Respondents are also not required to be interested in serving as

the third party entity to manage the program. Anyone interested in sharing what they know about voucher programs is encouraged to respond.

Information Requested

1. What local and/or national organizations have the relevant experience or capacity to run a fruits and vegetables voucher program for WSU's communities?
2. What are the best practices to engage and sustain relationships with neighborhood food retailers and larger chain grocery stores to accept vouchers and participate in this program?
 - a. What organizations or entities should be included in these efforts?
3. What is the best method(s) for distributing and collecting vouchers?
4. Please share your vision for how the voucher redemption process by patient/recipient would work and any anticipated challenges that might need to be addressed, including but not limited to timely redemption, finding a list of eligible retailers, etc.
5. What technical assistance or support is necessary to initiate and sustain this work?
6. While the goal is to have this program available to all WSU community areas, we realize that the initial efforts may start small. Please share your thoughts about how to pilot this in 1-2 WSU communities and the timeline and necessary resources to scale up.
7. How much would this type of program cost? Please share a draft budget if you have one or can create one and include an accompanying narrative.
8. What are the best ways to measure success? Please list qualitative and quantitative examples.
9. How would you define success for a voucher program and what indicators would you use to measure it?
10. For interested parties who might want to be considered as third-party partners: what qualifies your organization to manage such a program?
11. For organizations or individuals interested in participating as vendors in the program: what would you need to be a successful vendor that could accept vouchers from consumers in exchange for produce?
12. For organizations or individuals interested in participating in a role other than serving as the third-party manager or a vendor: what role would you be interested in playing and what qualifies you to play that role?
13. Please include any other responses that would be helpful to WSU in our planning efforts.

Next steps in selection of manager and recruitment of vendors:

Following review of the submitted Request for Information, WSU expects to issue a Request for Proposals to identify a third-party manager. Once in place, that manager would begin to recruit vendors to participate in the program.

Time for Response:

Due: May 15, 2020 to Jennifer Norsworthy at jnorsworthy@westsideunited.org

Please limit your responses to no more than 4 pages, 12 point-font, single sided, double spaced.

***Reference List of WSU Hospital Partners:**

1. AMITA Health
2. Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
3. Cook County Health
4. Rush University Medical Center
5. Sinai Health System
6. University of Illinois Hospital & Health Science System

To learn more about WSU please visit www.WestSideUnited.org.