



FARMACY

Project Toolkit

A model for mixed-use food retail alternatives in communities without a traditional grocery store.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



PARTNERS

AdkAction's Farmacy Project is truly grateful for its incredible partners, including:

Keeseville Pharmacy, Well Fed Essex County Collaborative, Essex County Health Department, Essex County WIC, Adirondack Health Institute, Hub on the Hill, Mountain Weavers' Farm Store, Mountain Lake Services, Field and Fork Network, Carriage House Cooking School, CDPHP

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DEAR PARTNER,

I am excited to share this toolkit for replicating the "Farmacy" model to address food access barriers within your community. The strength of the model comes from unconventional partnerships with existing businesses to reduce the overhead costs while increasing community connections. In these pages you will find an innovative approach for bringing healthy food retail options to food deserts.

A food desert is an area that has limited access to affordable and nutritious food. In 2010, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that 23.5 million Americans live in "food deserts", meaning that they live more than one mile from a supermarket in urban or suburban areas, and more than 10 miles from a supermarket in rural areas. While the lack of immediate access to fresh nutritious food is merely inconvenient for some, it can be an insurmountable obstacle for low-income and at-risk families across the country.

The resources in this toolkit have been developed by AdkAction and its partners to address food insecurity in a rural part of Northern New York with a special emphasis on supporting farmers and the local food system. The model can easily be adapted to meet food access needs in urban settings as well. Although the original "Farmacy" was a farm store section within a pharmacy, the model is not specific to a pharmacy setting and has been replicated in other types of businesses with just as much success. Any brick-and-mortar entity that is willing to carry fresh food alongside its existing products or services can replicate the model.

Food access solutions cannot be realized by one single entity. Strong partnerships and networks are critical for project success. AdkAction worked with a variety of community organizations, for-profit businesses, farmers, government entities, and individuals to implement two mixed-use healthy food retail pilot locations in Northern New York. This toolkit has been developed to help you form your own food access team, learn from our success and failures, and ultimately provide a framework for starting your own "Farmacy."

Community support, strong partnership, and a genuine need for improved food access will help make your Farmacy a success and increase your community's capacity to respond to food access barriers that may arise in the future.

Food is integrally connected to health, economics, culture, education, environment, and sustainability. As you explore this toolkit, please consider the ways your organization or business might play a role in combating local food access issues. By bringing fresh, local food into the hands of all people we can help families and entire communities become healthier and more resilient.

Sincerely,



Brittany Christenson
Executive Director, AdkAction



Kiana French
Food Access Coordinator

KEY TERMS

ALICE: A United Way acronym which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and represents the growing number of individuals and families who are working, but are unable to afford the basic necessities of housing, food, childcare, health care, and transportation.

Food Access: The spatial accessibility and affordability of food stores determined by travel time, availability of healthy options, and food affordability, relative to the access to transportation and socioeconomic resources of food buyers.

Food Desert: A food desert is an area that has limited access to affordable and nutritious food, in contrast with an area with higher access to supermarkets or vegetable shops with fresh foods, which is called a food oasis.

Food Security: The conditions in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

FMNP: Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is a federal assistance program in the U.S. associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (known as WIC) that provides fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables and nutrition education to WIC participants.

SFMNP: Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) awards grants to States, United States Territories, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly and commonly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides food-purchasing assistance for low- and no-income people living in the United States. The amount of SNAP benefits received by a household depends on the household's size, income, and expenses.

WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal assistance program of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for healthcare and nutrition of low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under the age of five.

Goal

This toolkit is designed to guide community groups through the steps of creating grocery sections within existing businesses, such as a farm store within a Pharmacy. Resources provided here are likely most relevant in communities or neighborhoods without access to a traditional grocery store, or instances where there is a desire for a central location to buy retail products from local farmers beyond the scope of a weekly farmers market. The toolkit provides information about identifying food insecurity within communities, project planning and implementation steps, and project sustainability measures. The toolkit is intended to help bridge the gap between local producers and consumers and promote sustainability in local food systems.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit offers an approach to implementing a mixed-use retail model to increase access to local, healthy food for your *entire* community.

Use this toolkit to determine if the Farmacy model is a good fit for your community. If it is, you will be guided through the process of planning and implementing the model in your community.

This toolkit will help you >>

- Follow a strategic process for site selection and project readiness,
- Navigate critical partnerships,
- Address specific needs within your community,
- Design and implement your own Farmacy, and
- Plan for sustainability.

ADKACTION TIP

AdkAction has included helpful tips throughout this document to offer specific insights and experiences





Framing the Issue

Healthy food access impacts consumer diet choices and food security for at-risk and low-income consumers. Favorable health outcomes can be linked to a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and collective food choices can impact the economic and environmental health of our communities at large. By eating locally produced food, communities can increase producer accountability to ensure farmland is used sustainably and responsibly. There are countless benefits to eating healthy, and when available, local food.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about 23.5 million Americans live in food deserts. In rural places, that's a low-income area where at least 500 people or one-third of the population live more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket or large grocery store. In urban areas, a food desert is considered to be an area where at least one-third of the population lives more than 1 mile from a grocery store. The communities surrounding these food deserts can experience high rates of food insecurity due to the obstacles presented by the lack of direct access to healthy, fresh food. Often, low-income people are greatly affected by these food access issues. Food access barriers can be attributed to

multiple issues, such as limited access to transportation, proximity to food retailers, affordability, lack of nutrition and cooking education, cultural barriers, and taste preferences. These barriers can negatively influence physical and environmental health due to food consumption choices.

This toolkit was written based on the experience of AdkAction, a nonprofit organization that serves the Adirondack North Country region of New York State. In rural areas such as the North Country, the decline of rural grocery stores poses a threat to food access. Since 2009, the North Country has experienced the loss of at least 9 grocery stores throughout the region forcing residents to travel long distances to get fresh food or to shop at convenience stores or dollar stores that often lack a variety of fresh options. While the loss of grocery stores continues, the North Country is rich in abundance with local producers and farmers. Seeing the need for an innovative food access to connect communities with fresh and local food, AdkAction developed the Farmacy project. Both of the Farmacy project sites mentioned in this toolkit were located in small, rural towns in Essex County, New York.

About Us:

AdkAction's Farmacy Project



AdkAction is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization serving the Adirondack region of Northern New York. Its mission is to create projects that address unmet needs, promote vibrant communities, and preserve the character of the Adirondacks.

AdkAction's Farmacy project was created to provide fresh food access in a rural downtown that had lost its grocery store. While many rural downtowns cannot support a year-round local grocery store, the Farmacy model provides another option whereby an existing business incorporates a farm grocery section into its storefront. This can bring excitement and added foot traffic to the existing store and increased access to high-quality food in a community without incurring the operating costs of opening a new store.

Keeseville experiences high food insecurity rates due to the loss of its only grocery store in 2013. The Farmacy project was created by AdkAction inside the Keeseville Pharmacy to address the need for a centralized location to sell fresh, local food in the community. The Farmacy stocks its shelves with high-quality local produce, meat, dairy, eggs, baked goods, and value-added products. AdkAction

has replicated the Farmacy business model in Port Henry, New York, a small rural town that lost its grocery store in 2019.

While direct access to fresh food can be an obstacle to many communities, another common barrier to consuming local food is cooking education barriers. In addition to physically offering food on the shelves of the Farmacy project locations, AdkAction offers a variety of education and outreach resources revolving around local food, such as cooking classes, demonstrations, incentive programs, recipe development, and local food promotion. This outreach is intended to remove barriers for consumers to using local food in healthy and wholesome food preparation techniques,

Innovative food access programs like the Farmacy help reduce these barriers to fresh food within communities by offering alternative solutions while keeping food dollars within local economies and the hands of local farmers. By bridging the gap between producers and their community, it is possible to put money back into local economies and promote vibrant communities in the North Country, while ensuring that all people have access to the bounty of our region.

By connecting communities with their local producers, money is reinvested back into local economies to promote vibrant communities. Benefits of eating local can include:

- Reducing fossil fuel consumption for food transport.
- Increased economic vitality--local food markets keep more food dollars circulating with a community.
- Consuming fresh food with higher nutritional values may provide health benefits such as obesity prevention, chronic disease prevention, and other improved health outcomes.
- Increased community connections and bolstered resilience to address other pressing issues collectively.

Keeseville Farmacy

A play on words, The Keeseville Farmacy is a project that makes the connection between food and health. It was initiated in 2017 to increase food access in Keeseville, New York, where there are high levels of food insecurity. The Farmacy is a unique non-profit/for-profit partnership between AdkAction and the Keeseville Pharmacy that was formed with the mission of increasing accessibility of local, healthy food to all residents of Keeseville. The Keeseville Pharmacy now uses about 1/3 of its square footage to sell local produce, meat, dairy, eggs, bread, and other pantry staples alongside its traditional health care and medical inventory. The Keeseville Farmacy also hosts educational events, such as cooking classes, to remove food access barriers.



"I have learned there is no better way than the Farmacy project to get full community involvement. The most surprising part of the project is how it was--and continues--to be received. Customers love it, vendors (farmers/producers) love it, my staff loves it, the community loves it, legislators praise it. Starting small, I believe is the key to success and growing interest. Social media has really been a huge part of our success."

- Dan Bosley,
Owner of the Keeseville Pharmacy

Essex County Food Access Data

*Based on 2017 Statistics
Essex County, NY*

Adults Overweight or Obese: 36%

Child Obesity: 38.5%

Grocery Store Density: 0.47 stores
per 1,000 population

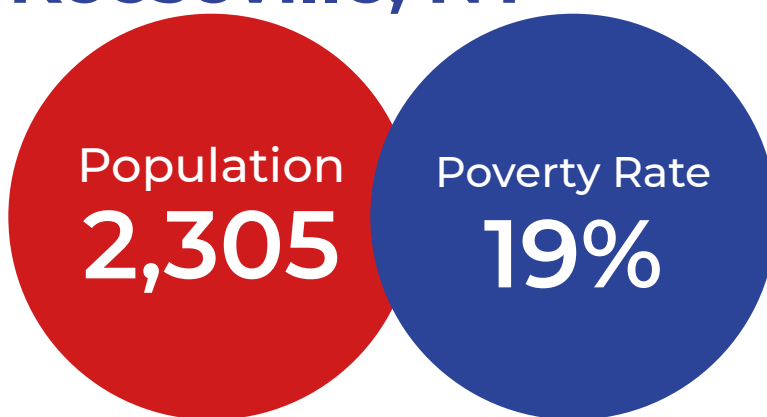
Food Insecure Children Likely
Ineligible for Assistance: 33%

Food Insecurity Rate: 9.5%

People with Low Access to a
Grocery Store: 9.3%

Households with No Car and Low
Access to a Grocery Store: 5%

Keeseville, NY



Alice **36%**

SNAP population: **12%**

Distance to grocery store: **7 miles**

Mountain Weavers' Farm Store

Mountain Weavers' Farm store is a small local food retailer in Port Henry, New York that operates as a mixed-use business model with the mission of increasing accessibility of local, healthy food to all. This project operates as a partnership between AdkAction and Mountain Lake Services, a chapter of the ARC, that assists people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. Many residents of Port Henry have barriers to transportation. The farm store shelves and coolers are stocked with fresh produce, dairy, meat, eggs, and value-added products from local farms and food processors alongside high-quality baskets handmade by the residents of Mountain Lake Services.



"We were absolutely blown away by how much community support the Farmacy project received. Port Henry is a very small town, and it was so great to see how much our local people care about eating healthy and shopping locally. One piece of advice that we would give to anyone starting a Farmacy project would be to keep an open mind about the possibilities and to embrace the changes that the project will bring to your community".

- Tammy Giovazzino, Mountain Weavers' Farm Store

Essex County Food Access Data continued

Based on 2017 Statistics

Total Population: 37,956

Households with children receiving SNAP: 34%

Number of WIC recipients: 700

Population on SNAP benefits: 9%

Port Henry, NY

Population

1,235

Poverty Rate

14%

Alice **50%**

SNAP population: **14%**

Distance to grocery store: **10 miles**



IDENTIFYING YOUR ROLE

Are you the facilitating partner, the community partner, the funding partner, or the owner of the physical site?

This toolkit is written from the experience of AdkAction acting as an intermediary/facilitating partner. Before beginning your Farmacy project, it will be helpful to identify key partners and the roles they will play to make your project a success.

The Intermediary/facilitating partner

acts as convener and project manager for the assessment, implementation, technical assistance, and sustainability of the Farmacy project. The intermediary often has experience with community project coordination or implementation, making them an effective partner with the capacity to build a strong framework for the Farmacy project.

Duties may include:

- Researching the unique food access challenges and potential solutions in the area.
- Convening partners for discovery and planning.
- Providing technical assistance and training for existing staff or volunteers at the project site.
- Securing and managing funding for equipment, merchandising, and promotion.
- Engaging community members and raising awareness about the project.
- Collecting and sharing data.
- Ensuring sustainability by increasing the capacity of the project site owner and staff members.

Potential candidates for the intermediary role may include but are not limited to nonprofit 501(C)(3) with missions that align with the Farmacy project, community organizations that operate projects within communities, or local food system experts.

A physical site location partner can offer physical space and in-kind resources for the Farmacy project, even if they may not have the capacity to facilitate the technical and networking aspects of the Farmacy model. **Duties may include:**

- Offering a physical site location for the Farmacy project.
- Providing the staff time and space for implementation.
- Capacity to adapt to fit the Farmacy project.
- Investing time, resources, and overhead costs to ensure project success and sustainability.

Potential candidates for a project partner may include but are not limited to pharmacy's, downtown business owners, hospitals, senior centers, community centers, or other organizations with physical space to offer the Farmacy project.

A community partner can offer the insight and capacity to round out your project team and build strong a foundation of support for your Farmacy project. **Duties may include:**

- Connecting project partners to resources.
- Actively looking for sustainability and growth opportunities for the Farmacy project.
- Collaboration on events, marketing, or other aspects of the Farmacy project.
- Combining resources to incorporate the Farmacy project into existing programs.

Potential candidates for a project partner may include but are not limited to nonprofit organizations, county health departments, university extensions, and for-profit businesses.

A funding partner does not specialize or have the capacity to facilitate all hands-on aspects of the Farmacy project, but is invested in the mission and willing to contribute in other ways.

Duties may include:

- Providing grants or corporate sponsorships.
- Connecting project partners to resources, including grant writing or crowd funding support.
- Providing or connecting the project with private philanthropic support.

Potential candidates for this role may include but are not limited to community foundations, grant making entities, health insurance companies, government agencies, corporate giving programs, and other institutions with missions that align with the Farmacy project.

Memorandum of Understanding

Having a clear list of responsibilities and expectations for project partners upfront can reduce confusion and provide an efficient implementation plan. Writing an MOU with each of your project partners is a proactive way to ensure maximum efficiency and sustainability. The purpose of the MOU is to establish an agreement among parties concerning their respective roles and responsibilities for implementation of the Farmacy project. Since an MOU is intended to describe how partners will contribute to the establishment and maintenance of the Farmacy Project, it is important that all partners share a collective vision for the project and have a common understanding as to the scope and purpose of the project.

What to include in your MOU:

- Partner names, contact, and organization information.
- Purpose of the project.
- Duties of each party, such as fiscal and technical assistance and daily operations.
- Expectations for meetings and decision making.
- Budget outline.
- Project timeline and duration.
- Procedures for modification and termination.
- Severance clause, including details about equipment ownership if the project does not continue.
- Signatures of representatives.



COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

Is the Farmacy model
a good fit for your
community's food access
needs?

Identifying your community's barriers to food access is the first step to overcoming them. This assessment will help you create a project that is customized to your own community. You will learn how to:

- Collect existing data on health, demographics, and food systems within your community.
- Gather input from the community.
- Conduct asset mapping and inventory of resources.
- Identify key players, organizations, and stakeholders.
- Analyze gaps and opportunities within your community.

Your community food assessment should include the following elements:

Demographics review and food

access barriers: Compile data such as population, poverty rates, distance to grocery outlets with fresh foods, population health statistics such as obesity rates, and number of individuals on SNAP and WIC. Your local health department is a good place to start when collecting data.

Take inventory of your resources:

Scan your community for existing food access programs, find food related organizations, and identify community champions. Make phone calls and request meetings to learn more about the ways your community is already trying to address food access issues. Knowing what is already happening in your community will strengthen your project and help you to avoid duplicating existing efforts.













Community engagement: Gather community member input about food access barriers by conducting surveys, community events, and focus groups. Take the time to learn what your community needs. You may discover that there are barriers to food access that surprise you. You should also be open to learning that your community has already found creative ways to meet food access needs, such as group shopping trips or buying clubs.

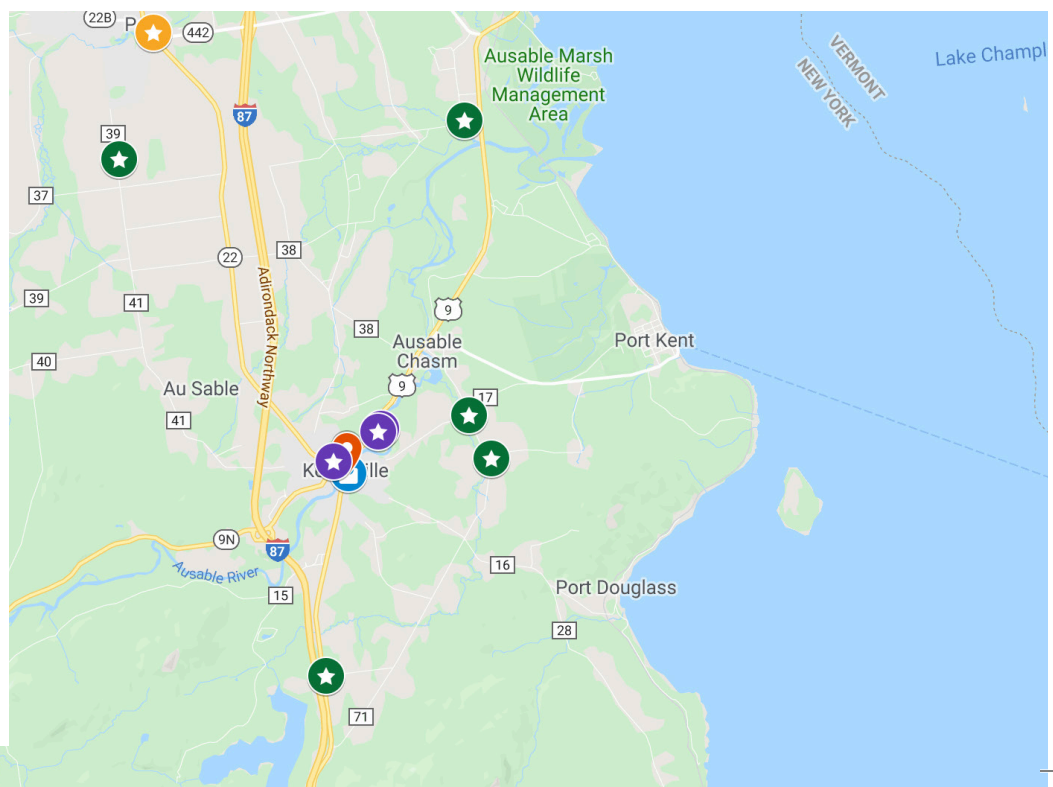
Accept constructive feedback: Create a welcoming atmosphere around the project that empowers community members to get involved and provide honest feedback. Be flexible and really allow your project to evolve as you learn more from your community.

Asset Mapping: When planning your farmacy, it will be helpful to physically see a map laying out your local food system and community assets. Map your community's food retailers, including farms that sell direct-to-consumer or wholesale to local restaurants and food stores. Here's a list of potential assets:

- existing grocery outlets with fresh food
- convenience stores
- WIC and SNAP retailers
- local farms
- farm stands
- farmers markets
- food pantries

Keeseville Food Asset Mapping

-  Keeseville Pharmacy
-  IGA Grocery- Closed 2013
-  Fledging Crow Vegetables
-  North Country Creamery
-  Mace Chasm Farm
-  Tops Friendly Markets
-  Family Dollar
-  Dollar General
-  Plattsburgh
-  Rehoboth Homestead
-  Northern Orchard Farm Stand
-  Stewart's Shops



Project readiness and identifying project site locations:

When assessing your community's food access needs, it is important to take into consideration a variety of factors that can indicate project readiness. Population size, access to farms or food distribution businesses, and a lack of other healthy food retailers are just a few notable considerations. Use the rubric below to get a rough idea of where your community falls on the spectrum of Farmacy project readiness.

Community Assessment Rubric for Project Readiness and Compatibility

Score relevance
1 (not relevant) - 5 (very relevant)

- ☐ The community already has an adequate population and the infrastructure to support at least a few brick-and-mortar businesses.
- ☐ The community travels substantial distances to purchase fresh produce and pantry staples. More than 10 miles if rural, more than 1 mile if urban.
- ☐ The community does currently or has in the past, hosted a farmers' market, farm stands, or other local food outlet.
- ☐ Local farmers and/or value-added producers are located within 100 miles and distribution networks are already established.
- ☐ Low income or at-risk households that might experience barriers to food access have been identified.
- ☐ The community has expressed a clear need or interest in increasing food access.

— TOTAL

IF YOU SCORED:

- 0 - 10 Invest in laying food access groundwork before you consider starting a Farmacy project, such as starting a farmers' market, bus route to improve food access, or a bulk buying club.
- 10-20 If you scored in this range and your community has expressed a clear need or interest in increasing food access, go for it. If the need/interest is lacking, work on that first.
- 20-30 Congratulations! You're ready to implement a Farmacy project.

This rubric is meant to be used to evaluate food access needs within communities. These criteria can be flexible and adaptable depending on the needs of your community. While your community may not be ready for immediate project implementation, this rubric can be used as a guide moving forward when addressing food access projects. Take a look at your scores to determine how project ready your community is and the elements to be addressed when creating your food access project.

How to identify a site within your community

Brainstorm a short list of potential sites. The following site types may be a good place to start.

- Pharmacies (esp. if independently and locally-owned)
- For-profit businesses and shops
- Health centers
- Hospital clinics
- Busy community hubs (e.g. Recreation center)
- Senior centers
- Community centers
- Schools
- Direct support organizations

The possibilities are not limited to this list. Each community will have a different pool of sites to choose from.

The Farmacy Project Site Location Assessment

Once you decide where your community stands on project readiness, it is time to compare the site locations that are on your short list. Score each potential site according to the rubric below.

Score relevance

1 (not relevant) - 5 (very relevant)

- ☐ The site is in a centralized or downtown location or co-located in an area that already receives substantial foot traffic, such as a hospital or health center.
- ☐ The site is locally-owned and/or the owner is community-minded. You may need to ask around or call owners of potential sites directly to determine this.
- ☐ The infrastructure and layout of the site are conducive to adding equipment that requires some floor space and electricity.
- ☐ The business is open year-round and at least 4 days a week and before and/or after common work hours.
- ☐ The business is willing to cooperate in partnership with other community organizations and partners.

_____ TOTAL

If a business scores 16-25 points, it may be a good fit for a Farmacy. If a business scores 6-15 points, you may need to conduct further research and compare other site options before making a decision. If a business scores 0-5 points, your proposed project site is likely not a good fit for this model.

CURIOUS ABOUT WHERE YOUR COMMUNITY FALLS ON THE SCALE OF FOOD ACCESS?

VISIT ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/ to view the statistics on food deserts throughout the country.

County-level Community Health Assessments can also be a great resource. Contact your local health department.



ADKACTION TIP

It is very rare to find a community and project site that fits the criteria perfectly. In AdkAction's experience, enthusiastic partners with an interest in serving the community are the most important criteria. Positive energy and enthusiasm in your partnerships will allow you to fluidly work together and problem solve effectively while propelling your Farmacy project forward.



PARTNERS

Getting the right
people around the
table of good health

Develop a support network:

- *Create partnerships*
- *Identify responsibilities/roles*

*Take inventory of your key stakeholders, potential partners, and the resources that may already exist within your community; there's no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to project implementation. Identify your key partners and the resources or programs that they currently operate, and see if you can build and incorporate them into your project plans. **It will be helpful to gather stakeholders, partners, and potential project site owners for a preliminary meeting to get a sense of what everyone can bring to the project.***

Potential stakeholders on the project may include:

Health departments, clinics, hospitals, schools, community centers, churches, veterans offices, rotary clubs, senior services, community organizations, existing grocery outlets, farmers and producers, farmers market managers, food hubs, business owners, local government officials, etc.

Be sure to include consumers, especially SNAP and WIC eligible consumers and those without access to a vehicle, in the planning and framework building stages of your project. Connecting with the agencies and organizations that offer services for these families will be a good way to effectively reach people and meet them where they're at. Identify these organizations within your community and reach out to learn about the obstacles to finding, buying, and eating healthy food.

ADKACTION TIP

Start small. You will eventually want a broad group of partners to support the project, but early on you may want to work with a small group of key players to establish ideas, boundaries, and expectations. For example, it is critical to build buy-in from the owner of the potential project site before engaging too many other partners.



Important questions to ask at preliminary meetings and stakeholder interviews:

Existing barriers and resources

- How far do residents have to walk or drive to get to grocery stores that sell healthier food options, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy?
- Do any existing shops, convenience stores, or dollar stores in the area accept SNAP and WIC benefits?
- How can existing assets and resources in your community assist in your project efforts?
- Will other resources be needed to encourage purchasing and consumption if availability increases?
- Are there existing state policies that support or incentivize healthier food retail activities?
- How does the potential Farmacy project site connect to your organization's other assets (e.g. affordable housing, community centers, schools)?
- How can you incorporate or expand existing community support programs or services?
- What regional food distribution options are available?
- Who are the experts in your local food system, and how do you incorporate them into your network?
- Are there opportunities to incorporate multiple existing programs with the Farmacy project?
- How do you plan on delegating responsibilities among partners?

Public transportation

- Does your community have reliable public transportation, specifically to grocery outlets?
- Where would someone find transportation schedules posted?

Food pantries and donations

- Where is the closest food pantry?
- What are the hours?
- What food is available there?
- Is there a local gleaning or donation program in place in your community? If so, who coordinates these efforts?

Farmers' markets and local food systems

- Where is the closest farmers' market and what are the hours?
- Does your community have a food hub?
- Does your community have an active community garden?

Local food affordability

- Where are the closest redemption sites for FMNP, SFMNP, or any other local incentive programs?
- What local food incentive programs are available within your community?

FUNDING

Funding your food access project may require creativity and innovation. The mixed-use business model of the Farmacy project ties into many sectors, such as food access, local food systems, and economic development. This opens doors to a wider pool of funding opportunities.

Here are a few tips when searching for funding:

Crowdsourcing: One method that has proven to be effective for getting a project off the ground is crowdsourcing for initial equipment. Crowdsourcing is an online method to raise funds for a project through a public fundraising platform. The request for funds is shared via social media and communications throughout a user's online community. Many crowdsourcing platforms have different fees and terms, so be sure to do some research to see which platform will best fit your needs.

ADKACTION TIP

AdkAction used their local community foundation's crowdsourcing platform, Adirondack Foundation's "Adirondack Gives," to purchase the initial coolers for the Keeseville Farmacy. With lots of in-kind support and just \$4000, AdkAction and Keeseville Pharmacy were able to launch the early stages of their project.



Grant funding: Applying for grants can be a rewarding and effective way to support your food access project. Start with a smaller local or regional grant opportunities to launch your project. Often state and federal grants can help to bolster an existing project that has shown promising signs of early success. Find the nearest community foundation and ask about grant opportunities for your project. Many libraries provide free access to grant search software. You will also be surprised at how many grant opportunities you can find by searching online with keywords related to your project.

Corporate sponsorships: Try to look for potential corporate sponsors with missions that align with your project. Some examples include insurance companies, hospital foundations, and larger companies that employ a lot of people in your area. When you are ready to make the ask, make sure you have a clear value proposition in mind. What will the company receive in return for their money? Make a list of the ways you will promote their business if they support your project.

ADKACTION TIP

Health insurance companies have a vested interest in improving health outcomes in the communities they serve. Write a letter describing the merits of your project and request a sponsorship. Make sure to offer promotional benefits to create a value proposition.

Use your network to identify funding opportunities:

Reach out to your partners on the Farmacy project.

Stocking your shelves:

If you can raise the capital or build enough buy-in from your physical site partner, we recommend buying inventory at wholesale prices from farmers, food hubs, and value-added producers to mark up and sell for a profit. If you do not have the start up funds to buy inventory, we recommend using a consignment model while your project gains momentum. In a consignment model, your local vendors will be responsible for delivering a selection of their products and assuming all risk and loss of perishable products. In return, vendors will be paid a commission for retail sales, the farm store will receive a small portion of that sale to be reinvested into the farm store. Traditionally, AdkAction has worked with a 85% vendor profit to 15% Farmacy profit model for vendors under the consignment model. The small commission allows the project to build a cushion of funds to offset operating costs and be used to purchase inventory if you switch from consignment to a wholesale/retail model. Regardless of how you stock the shelves, it is helpful if the physical site partner can handle transactions and keep a separate record of accounts for the project. If that feels complicated, reach out to a local accountant and ask if they are willing to donate their time to help ensure proper financial management systems are put in place early on.

Here is sample language you might use to negotiate a vendor contract for consignment model:

(Project Name) operates on a consignment model. This means that vendors are responsible for self-stocking products and assume all risks and losses of inventory. If a product exceeds the suggested shelf life, the vendor will choose to have the product returned to them, or allow (Project Name) to donate or dispose of the product. The vendor will receive 85% profit of a retail sale, and 15% percent will be reinvested in the farm store to offset electricity, coordination, and other operating costs. Vendors will receive reimbursement for your sales from (Project Name) on an "enter payment type and frequency". (Project Name) will be in contact with vendors regarding order placement, delivery, and payment."

Data

Collecting data on the impact of your project allows it to be competitive for future funding and grants.

Be sure to track:

- Pounds of food moved
- Sales transactions
- Outdated products
- Number of transactions and total dollars spent using incentive benefits (SNAP, FMNP, Double Up, WIC, Etc)
- Number of local vendors, total dollars spent on local products (this shows your project's role in economic development)
- Number of participants at education/outreach events

Healthy Food Access Portal:

The Healthy Food Access portal is a compilation of online tools and data that serves as a resource for supporting communities in launching and implementing healthy food retail projects. Information is intended to help with the implementation of policies, programs, and projects to improve healthy food access for low-income communities. Resources can include detailed decision-making strategies for selecting relevant food access projects, project examples, helpful tips on planning and outreach for food access projects, and potential funding sources.

VISIT: connectourfuture.org/tools/healthy-food-access-portal to explore Healthy Food Access Portal.

"Be sure to do your research thoroughly before starting a Farmacy project. Talk to your local organizations and community members who are the experts in the local food system."

- Pam Munson, Assistant Manager at Mountain Weavers' Farm Store



GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Learning about the food grown and produced within 100 miles of your town or neighborhood can be exciting and delicious.

LOCAL

Putting the "Farm" in Farmacy

Although many of the ideas behind the Farmacy model are applicable no matter how you source inventory, at its best, the Farmacy model helps build a local food system. By supporting your local food system, you are fostering resilience in your community and working towards a food system that works for everyone.

Benefits of Local Food

- **Fewer Chemicals:** Increasingly, the harmful effects of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are being discovered. Human health and ecosystem health are often threatened by these chemicals. Often, small family farms use fewer chemicals than their large-scale commercial farm counterparts.
- **Transparency and Piece of Mind:** When food is produced locally, consumers understand how and where their food is being produced. This awareness encourages local farmers to use sustainable practices.
- **Keeps Money in the Community:** Instead of supporting large grocery chains and commodity farms, you can support individuals and other businesses in your own community and help them prosper.
- **Less Reliance on Fossil Fuels:** Imported food travels hundreds or even thousands of miles, consuming fossil fuels and causing greater carbon emissions. Local food helps alleviate our dependence on gas and other fossil fuels and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Preserves Land for Family Farms:** By supporting local farms, you are helping to keep their land protected. Without small farms, the land may be developed for other use instead of growing food for people and providing habitat for a diverse array of organisms.
- **More Likely to Support Biodiversity:** Farms, especially small, sustainable, and organic farms, are havens for all types of wildlife.

Challenges of Local Food

- **Affordability:** Local farms have a higher cost of production because their offerings are often diversified and they simply produce at a smaller scale. Additionally, hiring local labor is often more expensive than hiring migrant workers or importing food grown in other countries.
- **Seasonality:** Consumers have grown accustomed to buying strawberries in January, for example, and may have some difficulty adjusting to seasonal availability of local food. Supplementing local offerings with regional and national offerings can help bridge this expectation divide.
- **Coordination:** Whereas large commercial-scale food distributors offer a huge selection with one order form, one invoice, and one delivery, coordinating local food delivery is more complex. Each farm may harvest and wash produce on different days, for example, and ordering and delivery schedules may vary as well.

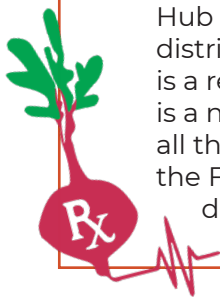
Know Your Farmers

Reach out to your local farmers' market manager, co-op, a local farmer, or an organization focused on agriculture to start networking. It also may be beneficial to reach out to similar food links in surrounding communities to extend your local food network further. Take a cruise through your local farmers' market to get to know your local vendors. Spend an afternoon looking through the shelves of a food co-op in your region to learn about the local suppliers. Schedule a farm tour or volunteer at a local farm to learn about the local practices and production. The Farmacy project relies on strong relationships with all partners, especially farmers. If all goes according to plan, you will be helping them gain access to a new market and supporting their business. Small farms have limitations and are often strapped for time, so respect your farmers time by calling ahead, wearing field appropriate clothes, and maybe even offer to lend a hand while you chat.

Where will you get your inventory?

Source inventory from the closest farms you can identify. You can supplement your inventory with larger regional or national distributors and food hubs, but be sure to minimize your food miles. Be conscious that large distributors may have high order minimums for delivery.

ADKACTION TIP



Hub on the Hill is a hyper-local food distributor in our area. Regional Access is a regional food distributor, and UNFI is a national food distributor. We used all three to keep shelves stocked at the Farmacy. There may be similar distributors within your area.

When reaching out to your potential vendors, you should highlight the Farmacy project benefits for local farmers and producers, including:

- Selling products at the Farmacy opens access to new markets.
- Centralized Farmacy locations allow brand promotion and awareness about product availability
- The Farmacy project can create access to local food benefit programs and incentives, such as Double Up Food Bucks, SNAP, and FMNP, without the vendors having to apply for these programs individually.
- The Farmacy project can rally community support and providing marketing and promotion for local food vendors, eventually helping to shift food culture to include more local products.

Gather preliminary information from your local farmers and producers to help develop an inventory management plan. This will help create a Farmacy's weekly ordering schedule and make accounting for products much easier.

- *Name of Business*
- *Primary Contact*
- *Phone Number*
- *Email*
- *Website*
- *Billing information*
- *Physical Address/Mailing address if different*
- *Please list the products that you produce at your farm or facility:*
- *Do you have any certifications or licenses? (e.g. Certified organic, certified naturally grown, Ag and Markets)?*
- *Do you have any food safety certifications or policies in place such as G.A.P. (Good Agriculture Practices) or a written food safety plan?*
- *Do you deliver your products? What are your delivery days?*
- *Do you have ordering minimums or deadlines?*
- *Do you currently accept FMNP, SFNMP, SNAP, or Double Up Food Bucks?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to share about your business?*

Depending on the scale of your local vendors, some may have an existing wholesale ordering system, while others may have little to no experience with wholesale markets. You may need to learn to use different ordering platforms with each local vendor. Start small and simple to build your networks and troubleshoot any obstacles that may come your way. Understanding your local food system will make your project more effective for all of the partners and vendors involved. These strong relationships will be crucial when navigating your initial inventory and creating systems to keep the project running smoothly.

The background of the slide is a photograph of several large, white yogurt containers from North Country Creamery. The containers are lined up on a refrigerator shelf. The labels are light blue and feature a circular logo with a cow grazing in a field. The text on the labels includes "NORTH COUNTRY CREAMERY", "Creamline Yogurt", "KEESEVILLE, NEW YORK", and "Net Weight 32 oz (908g)". A blue banner with the word "LOCAL" is partially visible in the center. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the title and list.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

- *Assign partner responsibilities and roles*
- *Purchase equipment and materials*
- *Create promotional materials*
- *Create a daily operations plan*

Before getting started with your hands-on project implementation, it is advisable to develop a work plan to reference periodically throughout the process. This will help keep project partners on the same page.

Sample Work Plan

Make sure the partners, space, and legal considerations are in order.

Goal 1

		Deadline	Partner	Evaluation	Notes
1	Create a Memorandum of Understanding to clarify responsibilities and expectations between partners.				
2	Sketch a floor plan detailing how retail space will be used and confirm that it works for the physical site partner and intermediary/facilitating partner.				
3	Order Farmacy equipment including shelving, coolers, freezers, and merchandising supplies.				
4	Ensure that all required certifications for selling food in your state and county have been acquired.				

Establish procurement and inventory systems.

Goal 2

		Deadline	Partner	Evaluation	Notes
1	Develop a par sheet detailing what you will be carrying and who your suppliers are.				
2	Develop an inventory system.				

Schedule a soft opening.

Goal 3

		Deadline	Partner	Evaluation	Notes
1	Advertise the soft opening across all media and marketing channels.				
2	The initial order for inventory has been placed and items are stocked.				
3	The staff has been trained on the tracking and point of sales (POS) system.				

Licensing and Certifications

Regulations for retail food establishments will vary among states. Be sure to research your state's requirements thoroughly. It may be helpful to call your local health inspection office to ask questions as they arise.

State food licensing requirements

Each state has its own Department of Agriculture and Markets or an equivalent department. Consult your state's food licensing authority to ensure compliance with food safety laws and other state regulations. For example, New York State requires a Retail Food Store License Article 28-A to sell food. To view and download this application, visit agriculture.ny.gov/food-business-licensing. You will need to apply for this license and pass a health inspection to become a certified retail food store. In AdkAction's experience, you should submit an application a few weeks before your opening date, along with your application fee. This will give the Department of Ag and Markets time to process your application and send your certificate in the mail. Your health inspection will happen randomly after the Department of Ag and Markets has received your application.

How to become a SNAP vendor

To become a certified SNAP vendor, you will need to submit an application to the Food Nutrition Services of USDA. Find the application at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply-to-accept. To view the requirements for accepting SNAP, visit fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/eligible. After you have been approved and administered an FNS SNAP number, you are eligible to accept SNAP benefits.

How to become a WIC vendor

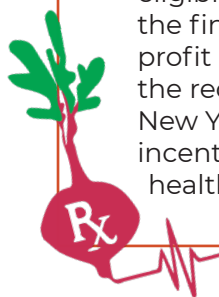
To become a WIC vendor, you will need to research the application procedures in your state. Each state is responsible for authorizing stores to accept WIC card or checks. At a minimum, the state will consider the prices of foods, the business integrity of the store's owner including if the owner has been disqualified from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the variety and quantity of foods available in the store.

"My advice to anyone looking to duplicate this project or any project involving SNAP enrollment would be to be certain that you have qualifying SNAP products on hand prior to applying thus avoiding the 6-month mandatory wait period for re-enrollment."

*- Dan Bosley,
Owner, Keeseville Pharmacy*

ADKACTION TIP

The Mountain Weavers' Farm Store has been approved by NYS Ag and Markets to accept FMNP coupons as a non-profit farm stand selling fruits and vegetables on behalf of local farmers. Since the store's financial operating agency (Mountain Lake Services) is a non-profit organization that meets the required criteria, the application was approved. However, the Keeseville Farmacy is not eligible to accept these coupons because the finances are housed under a for-profit business, which does not meet the required guidelines set forth by the New York State Ag and Markets. Food incentives vary by state, so research healthy food incentive in your area.



Layout Planning

How to make the most of your space

1. Draw a floor plan of the physical site location, including not only the dimensions of the retail space, but also the location of doors, windows, and electrical outlets.
2. Sketch in the equipment and shelving you intend to use, keeping access to electrical outlets in mind for coolers and freezers. Plan an extra 2" on each side of all equipment so you have some wiggle room.
3. Keep height in mind and plan for improved lighting, if needed.

Specific Considerations:

Equipment: You will need cooler(s) and freezer(s) to keep perishable products fresh. Reach out to local HVAC refrigeration technicians to ask for freezer and cooler recommendations and to establish a relationship for servicing your new equipment. Buy new, if possible, and be sure that your equipment has a warranty. Be sure to layout your equipment with electrical outlets in mind and consult an electrician to ensure you will not be overwhelming the existing circuitry.

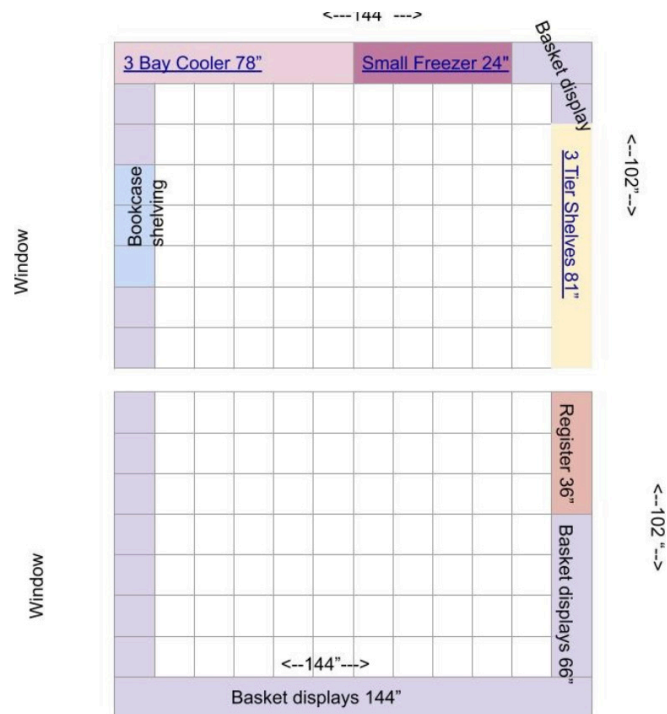
Merchandising: Shelving and attractive displays will go a long way in helping display your inventory. Be creative and you can save a lot of money by using existing shelving or buying used.

POS (Point of Sale): If your physical site partner already has a POS system in place, you will likely want to try and fit your Farmacy sales and tracking into this system. If you plan on accepting SNAP, your POS system may or may not be compatible with EBT card readers. Research your POS and card reading system to determine compatibility. If you are not able to accept EBT cards with your current system, you may be able to purchase an alternative card reader system that is compatible with SNAP cards.

Signage: Make it clear that the chosen site is now carrying local and healthy food options.

Inventory: Before placing your initial order with your local producers, you should ask about their most popular products.

Educational materials: Having signs and materials in your Farmacy section showcasing the local producers and the benefits of eating local can be informative and fun for your customers to browse while shopping. Provide fun, seasonal recipes and pictures of your local farmers to emphasize your products and inventory.



Test and revise: As nice as it would be to have every aspect of your Farmacy project run smoothly and efficiently on the first try, you will most likely hit some obstacles as you roll out your implementation plan. Be adaptable, flexible, and creative when troubleshooting.

Evaluate: Take stock of what is working well in your Farmacy project and what needs improvement. Meet with your project partners shortly after your opening to address any issues that may have been identified. Refer to your sales transactions, initial order inventory, and outdated products to determine your sales and losses.

Refine and improve: Make the modifications necessary to improve your project and meet your goals. Do not get discouraged; there are many kinks to work out early on.

ADKACTION TIP



AdkAction used a Clover POS system at the Mountain Weavers' Farm Store because the Clover Mini has the ability to accept EBT/SNAP cards.

MARKETING & PROMOTION

Media and press: Create a list of media contacts and send press releases out as your project hits significant milestones such as your grand opening or expansion. Develop relationships with local radio, newspaper and tv reporters and keep them updated as your project grows.

Social media presence: Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are powerful marketing tools. Develop a strong online presence to spread the word about your project and keep your community up to date. Promote new products, sales, and special offers to get more foot traffic. Make sure your community knows if you accept SNAP or other benefits.

Networking: Use your networks and partners to get the word out about your project. Ask partners to share your posts on their social media platforms and be sure to reciprocate when possible. Attend community events and set up a booth when possible. Distribute flyers at community hubs like schools, senior centers, and chambers of commerce.


Cooking Classes: If many people in your community are used to buying processed foods, you might find it difficult to sell whole foods that require cooking from scratch. Offer cooking classes to inspire the community to experiment with local ingredients and learn about the seasonal availability of local ingredients.

Tastings: Sometimes local products can be intimidating. Let the products speak for themselves with a free tasting on-site.

You-pick gardens: Build container gardens outside the store and plant free herbs and vegetables. Be sure to put up a sign encouraging people to pick the free veggies and herbs and to come inside for more.

Flyers, posters, and brochures: Create print materials to distribute around your community. There's no better way than to reach people where they already are.

ADKACTION TIP



Keeseville Farmacy grows herbs in front of the store because herbs have a short shelf life and many herbs on the shelves were outdated before they had a chance to sell. Offering you-pick herbs outside the door made people curious and encouraged more foot traffic and solved the outdated herb problem.

Promotional materials: Everybody likes to receive free swag, so why not use promotional items for branding purposes? For example, you can encourage the use of reusable shopping bags and send your customers off with a branded bag to promote your Farmacy project while reducing plastic waste.

Locavore challenge: Generate enthusiasm about eating local with a promotional event such as AdkAction's Locavore Challenge, a 7-day challenge when participants eat only local food for every meal. AdkAction created local purchasing guides, fun educational quizzes about the local food scene, and a daily newsletter to raise excitement about getting creative with local food. AdkAction's Locavore Challenge guidelines and resources are available online.

VISIT www.adkaction.org/farmacy/locavore-challenge/.



MAKING LOCAL FOOD AFFORDABLE

Reducing the stigma

While there are many resources available to families who might suffer from food insecurity, navigating these systems can sometimes be confusing and daunting. The stigmas that come with any benefit system, such as SNAP and WIC, can deter people from applying or redeeming these resources. Reducing these stigmas and creating positive spaces for people to use their benefits is a vital part of increasing food access for all populations. Celebrate the food access resources that are available to communities, as they are often beneficial to local economies and agriculture as well. Finding your communication bridges to low-income families will promote the use of incentives and benefit programs on healthy local food. Reach out to partner organizations or health agencies to find out what you can do to promote and navigate the use of SNAP and WIC while simultaneously keeping food dollars within your local economy.

Benefits and Incentives

There are multiple programs that may be available to your community to assist low-income families with local food affordability. AdkAction has utilized the following programs to address local food affordability. The availability of these programs may vary by location, so be sure to research similar programs in your area.

In addition to accepting SNAP, WIC, and FMNP benefits as outlined in the Licensing and Certifications section of this toolkit, we encourage you to find additional incentive programs, such as:

Double Up Food Bucks

Double Up is designed to help SNAP consumers stretch their food dollars, eat more fruits and vegetables, and support local farmers. For every SNAP dollar a customer spends at a Double Up retail site, the Double Up Food Bucks program will match that dollar amount for customers to spend on fresh, local fruits and vegetables. To learn more about applying to be a Double Up retail site and existing operating sites, [VISIT doubleupfoodbucks.org](https://doubleupfoodbucks.org).

FreshConnect

In collaboration with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Veterans Benefits Advisors with the New York State Division of Veterans' Services offer FreshConnect checks to Active Duty members, Veterans, and their immediate family members, as well as surviving spouses of Veterans. Recipients can use FreshConnect checks for fresh produce and other food items at participating farmers' markets throughout New York State. The application to be a registered vendor location for FreshConnect is included in the application for FMNP and SFMNP.

Wellness RX

Programs vary by state, but many offer vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables prescribed by doctors to patients with health needs that can be addressed with dietary changes. Recipients redeem their vouchers at participating locations, who in return mail these vouchers in for reimbursement to the program operator. To learn more about the Wellness RX program in Essex County, [VISIT wellfededessexcounty.org](https://wellfededessexcounty.org).



SUSTAINABILITY

As your Farmacy project continues to grow and develop, you can be proactive to ensure consistency and sustainability for the future of food access in your community.

Build capacity

In the early stages, the intermediary/facilitating partner might be very hands-on for daily operations and technical assistance. As the project matures, the intermediary/facilitating partner should be on hand to troubleshoot problems as they arise. With time, the physical site partner will be able to take on more and more responsibility for the daily operations of the project. Work together to create an employee manual that outlines daily checklists for quality assurance, ordering new inventory, cleaning, removing out-dated products, and other relevant tasks.

Create a food culture within your community

Not only can food influence community health, but it can dictate land use, economic development, environmental health, and culture. Use your Farmacy project to lead by example and showcase the benefits of supporting local farms. Celebrate other programs that exist to address local food affordability to reduce stigmas. Support local farmers and promote sustainable land use practices. Encourage people to keep their food dollars within your community. Offer educational programs to promote healthy eating habits. Be a force for good and set an example for others.

Build a strong network and use it

Having strong relationships with all of your project partners can open doors for future collaborations. Use your network to improve project outcomes, reach new audiences, and increase access to funding. Funders always look favorably on collaborative projects. If possible, work with your partners to develop a community food access strategy that leverages the strengths of each partner and avoid duplicating efforts.

Invest and encourage partners to take ownership of the project

Project partners can sometimes be hesitant to take full ownership of a project before it has proven to be successful. Tell the story of the impact your project is having in a compelling way and showcase your project successes to encourage continued involvement from your network. In an ideal world, the physical site partner will adopt the project as their own and have the capacity to keep it going well into the future.

About the Partners

AdkAction is a 501(c)(3) that creates projects to address unmet needs, promote vibrant communities, and preserve the character of the Adirondacks.



Keeseville Pharmacy has served the Keeseville Community for over 18 years and strives to be "your key to better health." The Keeseville Pharmacy has been home to the Keeseville Farmacy project since 2017.



Well Fed Essex County Collaborative is focused on increasing healthy food access for all people in Essex County, NY, with a focus on vulnerable residents through mutually reinforcing projects. wellfedessexcounty.org



Essex County Health Department strives to prevent disease, promote health, and protect life by contributing to the conditions within communities such that people can be healthy.



Mountain Lake Services strives to enrich the lives of people with developmental disabilities, their families and our communities.



Mountain Weavers' Guild is a vocational component of Mountain Lake Services with the mission to create high quality baskets while providing strong work skill sets and community connections for its residents.



Double Up Food Bucks from Field and Fork Network is a food and farming organization that connects communities to innovative solutions that foster a sustainable food system. Double Up Food Bucks is a nutrition incentive program that matches SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – formerly known as food stamps) purchases at participating farmers markets, mobile markets and retail sites.



Hub on the Hill As a rural food hub, our aim is to promote and support local farms and food makers in the Eastern Adirondacks.



Committed to making a difference

CDPHP® shares the mission of community pharmacies such as **Keeseville Pharmacy**, who promote health and wellness by providing and supporting vital services throughout the communities they serve.

We are proud to be a sponsor of the **Keeseville Farmacy project** and the efforts to address the needs of the Keeseville community by providing access to healthy and affordable foods for all.

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