

# VEGGIE VOUCHER PROGRAM

GOOD THROUGH:  
FARMERS MARKET  
FRUIT & VEGETABLE VOUCHER



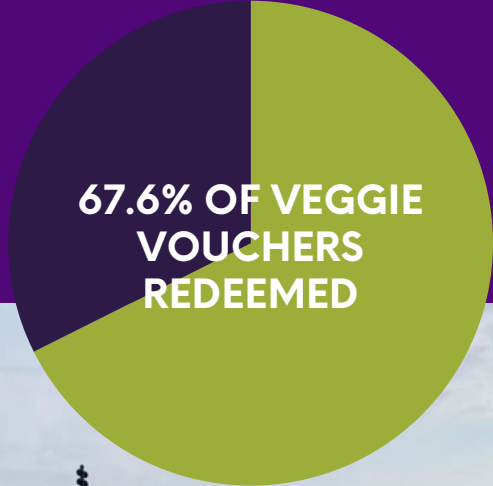
**UNI** / University of Northern Iowa.  
Center for Energy & Environmental Education

**BLACK HAWK COUNTY  
2023**

The Veggie Voucher Program increases access to fruits & vegetables among vulnerable and under-served populations. It is a locally financed program to meet local needs. Bundles of \$3 cash vouchers are given to clients of various health clinics and community organizations. The vouchers are then redeemed by clients at farmers markets and farm stands during the growing season.

## 2023 REDEMPTION RATE

In 2023, \$25,230 (in Veggie Vouchers) were invested in 24 participating local farms. Since the start of this program in 2016, \$97,950 in vegetable vouchers have been redeemed, supporting local vegetable growers.



Families benefited from fresh fruits and vegetables from local farms

**755**

**41%**

Individuals under the age of 18

Household members 65 years of age and older

**30%**

**60%**

Households also using SNAP/EBT

Households also using the Northeast Iowa Food Bank

**54%**



## Host Sites

UnityPoint Health • ACE-SAP Free Clinic • Black Hawk County Public Health • WISE Women • Peoples Community Health Clinic • MercyOne • Jesse Cosby Center • Basurto Behavioral Health • Cunningham Elementary • Lincoln Elementary • Northeast Iowa Food Bank

## Financial Supporters



# VEGGIE VOUCHER PROGRAM

*“Participating in the veggie voucher program aligns perfectly with our mission to elevate urban farming cooperation. The program has enabled our business to source more food from our network of local farmers, help low income families take home more fresh fruits and vegetables, and as a result, build community by increasing access to local and affordable, healthy food options through education and outreach.”*

Daquan Campbell,  
Founding farmer of We Arose



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the Veggie Voucher Program?**

The Veggie Voucher Program provides fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income and underserved individuals in Black Hawk County while supporting the locally grown food economy. Local host sites issue cash vouchers (\$3 each, distributed at \$30/person and capped at \$120/household per month) to clients to be redeemed at local farmers markets and farm stands. Local producers are reimbursed through the UNI's Center for Energy & Environmental Education (UNI-CEEE).

### **Who Benefits from Veggie Vouchers?**

Our 2022 survey of Veggie Voucher recipients showed the majority of beneficiaries of this program are Black (64%) or Hispanic (20%) and have household incomes below the poverty line (78%).

### **Does the Veggie Voucher program work with, collaborate, align, interface with the Northeast Iowa Food Bank?**

The UNI Local Food Program works collaboratively with the food bank. Our organizations work to align our similar goals to feed our communities and advocate for ending hunger in Black Hawk County. In 2023, the food bank funded Veggie Vouchers to pilot at their pantry to supplement what their clients receive from the food bank.

### **Why is there a need for the program?**

The benefits of eating locally grown fruits, vegetables and other nutrient-dense foods are well-documented. The communities who stand to benefit most from healthy diets often face the greatest barriers to food access. Black Hawk County has the 17th highest food insecurity rate in Iowa at 9.9%, with 15.4% of children being food insecure compared to the Iowa average of 13.1%. Recent inflation has hit low income and vulnerable communities especially hard. Grocery store prices increased by 11% in 2022, the largest annual increase in 40 years, just as expanded SNAP benefits were phased out.

### **How do Veggie Vouchers compare to other nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB), and Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for WIC and Seniors?**

Qualifying for federal and state programs is especially difficult for marginalized communities such as homeless populations, immigrants, transient families, those experiencing domestic violence, and seniors. Our host sites have the flexibility to give the Veggie Vouchers to clients they know could benefit from the program. Veggie Vouchers operates as a gap filler where other programs can't reach. Veggie Vouchers operate independently without federal guidelines and allows purchase by proxy, online and home delivery orders through local producers, and does not require income eligibility forms or documentation of need.