Dripping Springs Farmers Market

Marketing & Capacity Expansion Concept

Purpose

The Farmers Market currently operates on a $5,000 annual marketing budget with no staff dedicated to promotion beyond the market manager. This memo lays out a concept for adding a part-time marketing/events role, refreshing the market's web presence, and bringing SNAP/EBT acceptance online — and a two-track funding strategy to pay for it: free or low-cost federal programs available now, and a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant application for FY2027.

The Need

- No dedicated marketing or events capacity: the market manager runs market-day operations but has no bandwidth for social media, a website, or event planning.
- No SNAP/EBT acceptance, which limits the customer base and cuts the market off from USDA nutrition-incentive programs that many peer markets use to drive attendance.
- A $5,000 marketing budget covers basic materials but not a coordinator, a website rebuild, or an incentive program.

Proposed Program

1. Marketing & Events Coordinator (part-time)

A part-time hire (~15–20 hrs/week) to own social media, plan seasonal events and vendor promotions, and coordinate with the market manager. This is the centerpiece of the request — it is also the piece FMPP is best suited to fund, since Capacity Building grants explicitly support market staffing.

2. Website Refresh

A modernized, mobile-friendly site with vendor listings, event calendar, and SNAP/EBT information. Can be scoped as a one-time build within the current budget or folded into the grant.

3. Social Media & Event Marketing

Ongoing content, paid social, signage, and print/digital ads — the current $5,000 line item, run by the new coordinator rather than absorbed into the market manager's plate.

4. SNAP/EBT Acceptance + Incentive Match

Equipment and processing through MarketLink (free), paired with a produce-incentive match — either a partnership with the existing Double Up Texas program (Sustainable Food Center) or a standalone match funded by the grant. Incentive programs are one of the strongest FMPP narrative elements, since they demonstrate both consumer access and farmer revenue impact.

Two-Track Funding Strategy

Track 1: Start now, little or no cost

1. Apply for free SNAP/EBT equipment and processing through MarketLink (USDA FNS cooperative program) — no grant application required.

2. Contact Texas HHSC to confirm whether the state's Farm Bill–mandated wireless EBT equipment program is available to the market at no cost.
3. Reach out to Double Up Texas / Sustainable Food Center about joining as a partner market rather than building a standalone incentive program from scratch.

Track 2: FMPP Capacity Building grant, FY2027

FMPP is a USDA Agricultural Marketing Service program supporting direct producer-to-consumer markets. The Capacity Building category funds market staffing, training, and infrastructure like SNAP/EBT — a good match for this program.

- Award range: $50,000–$250,000 over 36 months.
- Cost share: 25% match required (cash or in-kind (staff time, city services, and facility use typically count)).
- FY26 applications closed June 5, 2026. FY27 NOFO timing is not yet posted; historically opens in winter/early spring with a similar application window.
- Local governments are eligible applicants; the City of Dripping Springs could apply directly.

Because the smallest award tier is $50,000, the binding constraint is the 25% match (roughly $12,500 on a $50,000 award), not the marketing budget itself. That match is the real decision point; in-kind staff time, HOT funds, EDC sponsorship, or vendor fees can all count toward it.

Draft Budget Outline

Figures below are planning estimates for scoping the ask — not vendor quotes or confirmed city pay bands. Replace with actuals once available.

Item	Estimated Cost	Type	Likely Funding Source
Marketing & Events Coordinator (part-time, ~15–20 hrs/wk)	$22,000–$35,000/yr	Ongoing, annual	FMPP grant (Yrs 1–3); Farmers Market budget thereafter
Website redesign & hosting	$3,000–$8,000	One-time + ~$300/yr	FMPP grant or current $5,000 line
Social media tools, event signage, print/digital ads	$5,000/yr	Ongoing, annual	Current Farmers Market marketing budget
SNAP/EBT equipment & processing	$0	One-time setup	Free — USDA FNS / MarketLink
SNAP incentive match (e.g., Double Up Texas)	$3,000–$10,000/season	Ongoing, annual	FMPP grant, sponsorship, or DUFB partnership
Grant administration & reporting (staff time)	$2,000–$4,000/yr equiv.	Ongoing, in-kind	In-kind city staff time (counts toward match)

Possible Match Sources

- In-kind city staff time (finance, HR, facilities support for the coordinator role).
- Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds, if the market qualifies as a tourism/event draw.
- Dripping Springs Economic Development Committee

- Chamber of Commerce partnership or local business sponsorships.
- Vendor/booth fee revenue, if any is earmarked for market operations.

Timeline

Timeframe	Action
Now – Aug 2026	Apply for free SNAP/EBT equipment through MarketLink; contact Double Up Texas (Sustainable Food Center) about a partnership; confirm whether Texas HHSC offers no-cost wireless EBT terminals under the state's Farm Bill obligation.
Sept – Nov 2026	Bring this concept and budget outline to Council for direction on match funding; scope the coordinator position (job description, hours, reporting line); get a firm website quote.
Dec 2026 – Feb 2027	Watch for the FY27 FMPP Notice of Funding Opportunity (historically posted winter/early spring); draft the Capacity Building narrative using this concept as the backbone.
Spring 2027	Submit FMPP application (exact FY27 deadline TBD — FY26 deadline was June 5, 2026, so plan for a similar window).
Fall 2027	Award notifications; if funded, hire coordinator and begin 36-month project.

Recommended Next Steps

1. Start the MarketLink and Double Up Texas outreach this month — independent of any grant decision.
2. Bring this concept to the Farmers Market Committee and City Council to confirm appetite for a 25% match commitment before investing time in a full FMPP application.
3. Get a firm website quote and a draft coordinator job description to sharpen the budget numbers above.
4. Once FY27 FMPP NOFO is released, use this memo as the starting narrative for the Capacity Building application.