

Community Food Connections, Inc. of Phoenix, AZ, received \$58,273 to direct market local agricultural commodities at the downtown Phoenix Public Market through extensive promotional efforts, including purchase of print advertising, signage, and expanded social media efforts.

[Final Report FY 10](#)

2010 FMPP Final Performance Report

Date: 2/19/13

Recipient Name: Community Food Connections

**Title of Project: Direct Marketing Assistance for Agricultural Commodities
Produced by Local Arizona Farmers and Ranchers**

Grant Number: G-1131

Location: Phoenix, Arizona

Project Summary

This project was proposed to increase sales of agricultural products by farmers and ranchers that sell their products at the Phoenix Public Market by promoting the market to the local employment base and to double sales of agricultural products at the Wednesday Market and the then formed Urban Grocery Store. The problem was reaching out to the downtown employee base and the surrounding neighborhoods in order to boost sales. The overall cost of the project was far greater than the roughly \$58,000 grant with a great deal of in kind and outside assistance coming to the Market. The funds were used for signage, social media, video vignettes and customer recruitment. Grant funds have been leveraged several times over with all social media now being done for free for the past 18 months and many new volunteers helping the non-profit to get the word out about the market and support its everyday activities. We have also seen customer counts at the two outdoor market days grow from roughly 1,200 per week to 1,600-1,800 a week.

Our twice a week e-mail blast has grown to 6,584 people. The Market has grown its Facebook and Twitter fan by several thousand percent. Sales at the open air Wednesday market have grown 29% between 2011 and 2012. While sales at the Urban Grocery grew by approximately 20% it unfortunately was forced to close because the economy was too challenging. However, the emphasis on all of our value added/prepared food vendors at the outdoor market to use local products has increased the amount purchased from local farmers and ranchers. In addition the restaurant that is taking over the closed grocery store purchases approximately 20% of its supplies from local farmers which will likely be even more than what the Urban Grocery sold. So while it was bittersweet to close the grocery store the end result will actually be more sales for local farmers.

Project Approach

The two goals of the project were to promote the availability of local agricultural products to the enormous employment base and double the sales of agricultural products to them at the Wednesday evening farmers market and within the Urban Grocery store that sold local produce and meat from Arizona producers.

Strategies used included hiring a social media company, creating video vignettes and building permanent signage to attract more customers. All of

these activities have helped the outdoor market sales and increased customer counts since the grant was received.

The main activities that were completed include:

- 1. Video vignettes about many of our vendors that are on the website**
- 2. A new website which promotes our local agricultural vendors**
- 3. Building of a facebook, twitter and foursquare following**
- 4. New marketing materials for outreach to the employee base**
- 5. Creation of a large sign for the market**

***All of these activities were designed to double sales of agricultural products and increase the number of customers from the adjacent downtown core.**

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

- Outreach materials were designed to reach employees in the downtown core and were distributed through the Downtown Ambassadors, employees of the business improvement district**
- Weekly customers to both our Wednesday and Saturday market grew from 1,200 a week to approximately 1,600-1,800 per week. This has occurred even as several new farmers' markets have opened within 10 miles of the Phoenix Public Market.**
- A new website was designed and has attracted 133,497 unique visitors and 413,793 page views. 73% of the web traffic comes from the Phoenix metro area**
- A Facebook page that began with 183 followers now has 11,904 followers**
- A Twitter handle that began with 144 followers now has 7,677 followers**
- A FourSquare account that had 205 followers now has 1,322 followers**
- The twice a week e-mail blast list has grown to 6,584 people**
- Video vignettes are posted on our new website which promotes all of the local agricultural and ranching vendors**
- Sales at the Wednesday market grew to an average of \$2,793 per week from \$2,164 per week when the grant began for an average weekly increase of \$629 per week.**

Beneficiaries.

- Vendor sales have grown by \$629 per week at Wednesday market.**
- Again while the grocery store closed the new restaurant moving in will likely purchase several hundred thousands of dollars from local farmers and ranchers. The restaurant opens in mid-April and is being run by a highly successful local restaurateur. The restaurant is basing its entire concept off of the farmers market and local/fresh.**
- Low income customers and all people living and working in the neighborhood have great access to fresh local produce and meat.**
- The 120 vendors that are not growers or ranchers have actively moved toward using as much local produce as possible in their products.**

- **New applications for prepared food and value added vendors now require the use of as much local product as possible in their products.**

Lessons Learned.

What worked:

- **Adding social media has made a major difference in attracting customers for specific products or events extolling specific products. The hard part about social media is that it cannot be someone who just likes to tweet or put up facebook messages. We were fortunate that the social media company employees we hired would be at the market multiple times a week to really get good information out. In addition our good fortune continued when they agreed to continue helping even when funds ran out. A persistently good and regular messaging campaign is key. Social media is not just a thing you do on the side once in a while or you lose your followers and it has no impact.**
- **Upgrading our website to have a nice look and consistent information has been key. Again it is great to get it up and running but constant maintenance is the key. Once again we have been fortunate to have our social media company also able to continue updating the website as well.**

What did not work quite as well:

- **The video vignettes were great, but also need to occasionally be tweaked. This has been a bit more challenging to stay on top of.**
- **Reaching downtown employees has remained challenging and was one of the reasons the grocery store was unable to stay open. That customer base is very hard to reach and change their commuting habits.**

Unforeseen challenges:

- **Getting the necessary sign variance from the city to place the signage on the carport took the project longer than expected and the struggling grocery store made it difficult to focus as much energy on marketing as should have been even though it is so important. In the end the signage combined with ongoing social media will likely be the most important items in the long run from a customer attraction standpoint for the farmers market and it has already produced results.**

Unexpected positive results:

- **The biggest was just the huge response and customer base we have gained through social media. It attracts a different and new customer because of re-tweeting and sharing the page with friends. It is not as cheap as everyone thinks it is because to do it right you must put resources toward it, but it can be very effective.**

If I had the power to do it all over again we would try to figure out better strategies to reach the downtown employment base. They are just a hard crowd to change commuting habits.

Additional Information:

The most important aspect of this project is that the vendors we brought in for the grant really cared about the project and the market. They were not just someone we hired. Instead they gave far more than what they were paid such as the sign company and

designer who charged less than half of what they would normally charge and thereby built us a sign much more valuable than what we had to pay through the grant. As stated before, the social media company has likely given us at least \$30,000 of free work during the last 18 months which in turn has garnered us many spots in the local television and newspapers. The Downtown Phoenix Partnership, which is the business improvement district, has also allowed one of its employees to put in countless hours toward the overall project because it enhances the downtown so much. In addition the Ambassadors who work for the Downtown Phoenix Partnership regularly bring information to employees and visitors to downtown in order to get them to shop at the market.

Contact person:

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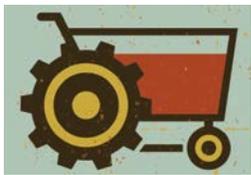


21.75" high open channel letters (galvanized aluminum with painted interiors and red neon) mount to raised enclosed painted base.
Flat aluminum painted tractor/cart logo mounts secondary pole.
Pole engineering to be supplied by Airpark Signs & Graphics

PHOENIX PUBLIC MARKET



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Phoenix Public Market

A program of Community Food Connections

Long-term goal: Create permanent indoor/outdoor public market like those in all great cities throughout the world.

Interim step: Opened Phoenix Public Market Urban Grocery and Wine Bar in addition to two Open-Air Market days.

Objectives of the project:

- Support micro-business development
- Help small farmers grow their businesses and stay on the land
- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods in an underserved area
- Create a vibrant community gathering place

Conservative business plan to grow the project over time:

- From one outdoor market day, add additional days and times
- First step toward a permanent indoor site is to expand into a 4,000 sq. ft. building adjacent to outdoor market site-Urban Grocery and Wine Bar-completed

How the Urban Grocery and Wine Bar differs from the outdoor market:

- Additional staff
- Open 5 days a week
- Expanded product and customer base
- Constant presence vs. 4 hours up/down then we're gone
- No individual vendor booths

Market research and team building:

- Two-year two-phase feasibility study with US Department of Agriculture and Arizona State University
- Partners include members of the business community, local and state government, education and research institutions, Native American Connections, nearby neighborhoods, and the vendors themselves

Milestones:

- Year 6 sales of the Open-Air Market topped \$1.18 million in sales
- Vendor growth from daily average of 33 to 83
- Customer growth began with a handful of shoppers. Now it is over 3,000 a week
- 37% of the businesses participating in the Market are operated by low to moderate income families; 52% are women-owned, and 23% are minority-owned.

Expansion Funds and Ongoing Support provided by:

- Industrial Development Authority-City of Phoenix Arizona-\$250,000 loan
- Community Development Block Grant-City of Phoenix-\$300,000
- Arizona Community Foundation-\$25,000
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Phoenix-\$30,000
- St. Luke's Health Initiatives-\$45,000
- Bank of America-\$25,000
- Gila River Indian Community - \$115,000

Next steps:

- Strengthen Urban Grocery and Wine Bar
- Continue working toward permanent indoor/outdoor public market

The Phoenix Public Market is located at 721 N. Central (outdoor market) and 14 East Pierce Street (Urban Grocery and Wine Bar), three blocks south of Roosevelt.



A program of Community Food Connections, a 501 c 3 non-profit
Working to grow strong Arizona communities through healthy food from healthy farms.
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