

Seedling to Sapling 10th Anniversary Promotional Campaign: Growing on from a Decade of Success

Through the use of promotional activities the Spokane Farmers' Market intends to: establish on-site consumer nutrition education, particularly for low-income families and improve the overall health and quality of life for the community; improve vendor selling power through the establishment of EBT/debit/credit technology; and increase vendor sales receipts by 40 percent, operating revenues by 20 percent, along with EBT transactions by 20 percent. The number of vendors is expected to increase by 15 percent and customers by 40 percent. These numbers will depend largely on the success of attracting customers through the EBT program and the vendors who will benefit from the increased success of the market.

[Final Report](#)

Final Report for Grant #12-25-G-0597: Seedling to Sapling 10th Anniversary Promotional Campaign: Growing on from a Decade of Success

Farmers' Market Development Grant for Spokane Farmers' Market (SFM) from
United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service
Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

Grant Duration: November 1, 2007 through July 1, 2009

Total Federal Allocation for Project: \$31,695

Project Purpose and Goals as Originally Stated: "This project assists the Spokane Farmers Market (SFM) make most fruitful use of its 10-year anniversary in 2008 through an innovative combination of promotional activities, establishment of on-site consumer nutrition education (especially for low-income families on food assistance) and enhanced vendors' selling power through deployment of EBT/debit/credit technology.

"Project goals are to increase vendor receipts, operating revenues, vendor, customer, and EBT transaction numbers, and to improve nutrition awareness in the community. Seedling to Sapling Project Goals include increasing (over 2007 levels) 1) vendor receipts by 40%, 2) SFM operating revenues by 20%, 3) number of vendors by 15%, 4) number of customers by 40%, 5) number of EBT transactions by 20%, and 6) improve nutrition awareness in the community."

ASSESSMENT: The Spokane Farmers' Market is a farmer-run and –oriented market. The market runs from mid-May through the end of October and has been in operation since 1999. 2008 was our tenth year of operation and this project focused on that time period, running from November 1, 2007 until July 1, 2009 when final grant allocations were made. The Seedling to Sapling (S2S) Project set a strong foundation for continued, sustainable growth of SFM in terms of numbers of customers, numbers of vendors, vendor gross receipts, and market operating revenue. It made a significant contribution to improving the health of low-income families by improving their awareness of healthy diets through education.

Our project could be broken down into four basic components: Promotions, EB T/Credit/Debit, Nutrition Education, and Contract Staff. These will each be assessed, followed by a look at how the project goals were met. Any relevant information from attached graphs or appendices will be referred in text.

PROMOTIONS: This was far and away the largest portion of the project allocation, consuming \$16,671.15 in non-staff grant funding. (Please see attached Excel table “Final Grant Expenditures Report” for an exact breakdown of spending in this and other categories.) The expenditures here were for:

- Logo: We had a local artist redesign our logo, giving us a new look for our tenth anniversary, as well as formatting it so that it worked better in multiple computer and design applications. This logo was used on all of our printed material gotten through the grant.
- Posters, Brochures, Yard Signs: These items were designed to put the word on the street about our market. The posters and brochures were posted on public postboards as well as in businesses, government offices, and visitor bureau. Yard signs were distributed to business and personal fans of the market who wanted to put the word out but did not have a sensible space for a poster or brochure.
- Bags, t-shirts: These served multiple purposes for the market. They act as advertising when people wear or carry them. They also give customers a deeper sense of identity with the market. And as these items are sold, they return resources to the market for further promotions. These were very popular with customers.
- Display Board: We spent money on a promotional display board, so that at market out-reach and promotional events there would be an easy to set up display describing the market with graphic images. The display board worked well at drawing in potential customers and giving them a comfortable way to approach a display table.
- Video, public service announcements: We worked with a local non-profit, public-access, television production organization, Community Minded Enterprises, to produce a video history of the market and a 30 second Public Service Announcement to be distributed to other local stations. The video aired in two parts on public access television and we now own the video and can use it for future promotional events.
- Promotional supplies: This included phone cards, copying, and office supplies needed to do promotional and outreach work.

EBT, Credit, and Debit Card Infrastructure This portion of the grant, which used \$1588.98 in non-staff grant moneys, enabled us to take EBT (food stamp), credit, and debit cards at the market. Customers have been very happy to have this at the market. Many of our customers have expressed a desire to be able to spend “plastic” at the market. Adding this to the market got us media coverage, and undoubtedly increased customer traffic and spending at the market due to increased ease of shopping (not having to stop somewhere else first for cash), backup for those who forgot to bring money or had less than they had thought, and accessible money for impulse buys or remembered items. The EBT portion of the service allowed food stamp recipients to come to the market and buy produce direct from farmers. In 2008 and 2009 food stamp recipients spent nearly \$11,000 at the market on their EBT cards. Though it is hard to say how much credit debit card spending was additional (i.e.: would not have been spent without this service at the market), it is safe to assume that virtually none of the EBT dollars would have been. Money from the grant paid for a Point of Sale card terminal and case, tokens for use with the system, cash boxes, a cash register, and operational fees.

Nutrition Education: The market got a double boost on this front. Our nutrition education programs provide cooking and nutrition information to all our customers but are especially geared towards our lower-income customers, those using EBT cards or WIC or Senior Farmer Market Nutrition Vouchers. The money from this grant, which totaled \$1216.82 in non-staff spending, allowed us to purchase a canopy and tables to devote to the purpose of nutritional education, as well as to purchase supplies and cover other costs associated with providing informational pamphlets, events, demonstrations and other resources. Nutrition events included ones on making vegetable and fruit salads, increasing nutritional health and saving money by making baby food fresh, and healthy and affordable stir-fries. Our efforts here were increased even more by a tie-in grant in '08 and '09 with the Spokane Regional Health District to provide nutrition education at the market. The SRHD provided additional resources and staff. We were also given support by the First Covenant Church (in whose parking lot the market operated) who allowed us use of their certified kitchen for cooking demonstrations. Many of our cooking demonstration were able to function as both nutrition and promotional events.

Contract Staff: \$12,218.05 in grant money was used to expand a recently created position of Promotions Manager to Promotions/Nutrition Education/EBT Manager. During the time period of this grant our contracted staff person for this position was paid out of grant funds:

- \$4550.05 for Promotions work which involved doing outreach events and tabling, distributing posters and flyers, and organizing on-site promotional events, such as music, a pie making contest, and a cider-pressing demonstration.

- \$5643.00 for Nutrition Education work which included organizing events and outreach, and being onsite to distribute nutritional information and oversee events.
- \$2025.00 for EBT/Credit/Debit work which included purchasing the infrastructure, getting it organized into a cohesive system, distributing and reimbursing farmers for pay tokens, doing necessary bookkeeping, and dealing with our bank and the company which distributed the POS machine to ensure smooth operation of the program.

The above programs were very successful in achieving our stated goals. The beneficiaries of this activity were/are many, including: The farmers and vendors of SFM and their families and employees; the general public who shop at the market; Food Assistance recipients who shop at the market; The Spokane Farmers' Market Association and its employees; the City of Spokane downtown area and the partner organizations whose purposes are furthered through participation in CNEP.

ATTAINMENT OF PROJECT GOALS (goals in italics)

- 1) Increase vendor receipts by 40% over 2007 levels. The following table shows comparative vendor sales over the last 4 years; from 2007 to 2009 reported vendor sales increased 47.68%.

Spokane Farmers' Market Reported Vendor Sales							
Year	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
2006	\$10,200.86	\$37,093.94	\$56,954.96	\$83,653.84	\$81,286.32	\$52,969.24	\$322,161.26
2007	\$15,233.00	\$47,079.00	\$52,728.00	\$87,543.00	\$88,115.00	\$57,726.00	\$347,424.00
2008	\$22,441.39	\$43,202.88	\$76,950.46	\$94,609.28	\$80,994.89	\$63,943.85	\$382,142.75
2009	\$31,455.56	\$59,487.78	\$95,945.68	\$132,025.98	\$118,275.24	\$75,874.92	\$513,065.16

2) Increase Spokane Farmers' Market Association revenues by 20% over 2007 levels. The following table shows an increase in vendor fees collected since 2007 of 24.1%. Adding in the approximately \$1900.00 made in t-shirt and bag sales over and above the cost of item purchase and printing in 2008-2009 gives an increase in total market revenues since 2007 of 34.14%.

Spokane Farmers' Market Vendor Fees collected							
Year	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
2006	\$728.25	\$2,320.00	\$3,589.25	\$4,146.75	\$3,863.80	\$2,540.20	\$17,188.25
2007	\$1,165.53	\$3,322.30	\$3,333.15	\$4,116.00	\$4,080.25	\$2,903.75	\$18,920.98
2008	\$1,442.75	\$2,955.25	\$4,745.75	\$4,942.80	\$4,097.10	\$3,372.75	\$21,556.40
2009	\$1,550.75	\$2,742.75	\$4,576.60	\$5,752.25	\$5,173.00	\$3,685.75	\$23,481.10

3) Increase vendor count by 15% from 2007. The table below compares vendor counts over the past three years, showing an increase of 30.44%.

Spokane Farmers' Market Vendor Counts (Total vendors for given month/year)							
Year	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
2007	44	126	114	134	132	95	588
2008	55	117	163	161	130	109	735
2009	58	102	155	178	161	113	767

4) Increase customer count by 40%. A comprehensive customer count was not undertaken due to lack of communication between the original grant administrator and the on-site manager, and lack of organization of volunteer counters. From increase in vendor sales and increase in Credit/debit and EBT customer counts, however, one can assume that customer counts were up between 30-40%. (This may even be a conservative estimate due to two factors: 2008 and 2009 were not, economically, years when one would expect great increases in per customer spending; and newer market customers tend to spend less per capita than established ones.) Looking at the EBT and Credit/debit sales tables below, one can see a per capita increase in credit/debit card spending of \$2.29 from 2008 to 2009, whereas the EBT per capita was down \$3.42. There were 4.4 times as many credit/debit transactions as EBT, and thus the average per capita spending in the card-users pool was

\$1.13; if we assume that the average expenditure and change thereof between cash spending customers was the same as for those using cash, we would conclude that average per capita spending between 2008 and 2009 was up \$1.13, and that the average per capita spend in 2008 was \$25.59 compared to \$26.72 in 2009. This rate of per capita spending increase applied to the increase of reported sales during this period would show an increase in customers of nearly 30% between 2008 and 2009 alone.

- 5) Increase EBT transactions 20%. There is no comparative for 2007, because we had no way to take EBT then. However, through comparing 2008 and 2009, one can see increases of 26.75% in total expenditures and 48.29% in customer usages.

EBT Card sales								
Year	May	Monthly Average Expenditure	June	Monthly Average Expenditure	July	Monthly Average Expenditure	August	Monthly Average Expenditure
2008	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$641.00	\$33.74	\$906.00	\$19.28	\$1,405.00	\$24.65
2009	\$398.00	\$33.17	\$570.00	\$20.36	\$1,333.00	\$19.04	\$1,251.00	\$16.68
EBT Card sales								
Year	September	Monthly Average Expenditure	October	Monthly Average Expenditure	Yearly Total	Yearly Average expenditure	Yearly Customer Usages	
2008	\$922.00	\$18.08	\$960.00	\$30.00	\$4,834.00	\$23.58	205	
2009	\$1,197.00	\$23.47	\$1,378.00	\$20.26	\$6,127.00	\$20.16	304	

Below is a table for credit/debit card sales, which saw total dollars spent rise 39.76%, while customer usage increased 28.47%.

Credit/debit card sales								
Year	May	Monthly Average Expenditure	June	Monthly Average Expenditure	July	Monthly Average Expenditure	August	Monthly Average Expenditure
2008	\$838.00	\$23.28	\$2,830.00	\$23.98	\$4,958.00	\$24.67	\$6,763.00	\$27.16
2009	\$2,612.00	\$31.10	\$3,558.00	\$26.95	\$5,887.00	\$25.05	\$10,904.43	\$31.42

Credit/debit card sales							
Year	September	Monthly Average Expenditure	October	Monthly Average Expenditure	Yearly Total	Yearly Average expenditure	Yearly Customer Usages
2008	\$6,140.00	\$27.17	\$3,960.00	\$26.40	\$25,489.00	\$26.01	980
2009	\$7,895.00	\$27.60	\$4,768.00	\$27.25	\$35,624.43	\$28.30	1259

6) Improve Nutrition Awareness. The nutrition booth at the farmers market provided information to approximately 40 customers per market. This is just people who got flyers, recipe cards, or other information at the booth. Much other information was distributed at the cooking demonstrations, as well as through vendor booths. The persons working the booth, our Nutrition Education Manager and the health department employees said they did not receive any negative comments, most people being very happy and interested in the information available, and many EBT users saying they would tell their friends about the market. The information at the booth focused on a few main points: How to use different fruits and vegetables; the importance of fruits and vegetables in the diet; the nutritional attributes of different fruits and vegetables; and simple ways to get more fruits and vegetable into ones diet. Much of the information had a strong focus on children so as to be useful to the WIC and EBT recipients. As a vendor at the market, I saw many people each market pass through my booth with informational literature from the Nutrition Booth. The Nutrition Booth also acted as a guide, directing

customers to where they could find different foods at the market. The booth staffers felt the booth was well utilized and played an important and useful function in the overall mission of our market.

CONCLUSION:

The S2S project successfully met most of its goals, and we expect the momentum it has given us to continue. We have been forced, through the process, to see weaknesses in our organizational structure which need addressing, weaknesses which caused the administration of the grant to not be as smooth as it could have been; but also we discovered much innovation and flexibility amongst those involved, and this project has helped to increase the potential of and open up more possibilities for the market, and helped generate and put into implementation many good ideas.

Most of the funded projects will be able to continue. Administering the EBT/credit/debit as it grows will require a lot of focus from our board and contract staff. The POS machines we received malfunctioned nearly continually the last two years but hopefully this is a thing of the past as it adds a lot more work to the program. The EBT program will undoubtedly continue to grow as word spreads amongst food stamp recipients and this is an incredibly positive thing for the Spokane community as well as for our market and vendors. We are confident that continued interaction with the SRHD as well as other nutrition-minded people and organizations in the community will continue making the Community Nutrition Program a vibrant and vital part of our market. This grant has not only helped during the time period for which it ran, but it has gotten people in the area a lot more involved in and excited about our market. We have always had a commitment to reaching out to the economically disadvantaged in our area and this grant has helped us to extend that reach. Through this project we have been able to hone a lot of our outreach and promotional skill and have resources, such as the new logo, the video, and the display board which will be useful promotionally long into the future. I believe the resources provided to our market by the FMPP have been well utilized and have been successful in helping taking our market to a higher level. I am confident that the benefits that this grant has brought to our market will continue to accrue as our market continues to grow and thrive. The people of Spokane and the regions small farmers and farmland are all better off for this.

