

Plan to Grow Kansas Farmers' Markets

Kansas Rural Center, Inc. of Whiting, KS, received \$66,100 to train the managers of the 70 Kansas farmers markets via statewide conferences and workshops, follow-up teleconferences, and a Web site and booklets on managing markets . Training included practical aspects of market management, production, promotion, and business management.

Final Report

Final Performance Report

Date: July 16, 2011

Recipient Name: Kansas Rural Center

Title of Project: "Plan to Grow Kansas Farmers Markets"

Grant Number: KS-062-2008

Location: Whiting, Kansas

Project Summary

Historically there has been limited state-wide organizational and educational support for farmers markets in Kansas. Priority needs identified by markets were market promotion, recruiting new growers, organizing educational workshops, building community partnerships, managing conflicts and organizing a network so that markets can learn from each other. The *Plan to Grow Kansas Farmers Markets* project grew sustainable farmers markets through education, business planning and community partnerships. These markets improved management and marketing, enhanced the local product mix throughout the market season, attracted more customers and increased sales. The investment required for this project totaled \$66,110.

Project Approach

The goals of the project were to grow sustainable farmers markets through education, business planning and community partnerships.

The objectives were to improve management and marketing, enhance the local product mix throughout the market season, attract more customers and increase sales.

Strategies were to:

- Provide educational forums for market farmers and organizers, as well as individual markets;
- Offer farmer mentoring opportunities through a farmer-educator program;
- Develop resources covering market issues and opportunities;
- Provide online access to resources and to promote markets to Kansas consumers.

The activities were:

- Three statewide farmers market conferences (Feb. '09, Jan. '10, Feb. '10);
- Three market manager training workshops (March, April and June 2009) and supplemental conference calls (June-August 2010);
- Ten business planning workshops for individual markets (Feb-June 2009);
- Launch of a Kansas farmers market web site (June 2009);
- Two farmer-educator farm tours and workshops (July and November 2009);
- Five Rapid Market Assessments (August 2009).

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The objectives were to improve management and marketing, enhance the local product mix throughout the market season, attract more customers and increase sales.

Major Accomplishments:

Statewide Farmers Market Conferences:

The 2009 Kansas Farmers Market Conference, held on February 23, provided 158 attendees with almost 1000 hours of education offered by more than 25 presenters. Breakout tracks included: Cut Flowers and Plants, Launching or Revitalizing your Market, Meat and Dairy, Marketing and Display, Market Manager and Board Issues.

In 2010, two statewide farmers market conferences were held:

Kansas Farmers Market Conference for Producers, held on January 30, provided 102 attendees with [600 hours of education](#) offered by more than [30 presenters](#) including keynote speaker Don Wambles. Breakout sessions included: marketing and display, value-added processing, food safety and cut flowers and plants. A particular emphasis was placed on extending the growing season and diversify crops.

Kansas Farmers Market Conference for Organizers, held on January 30, provided 40 attendees with 260 hours of education offered by 6 presenters including keynote speaker Darlene Wolnik. Sessions cover topics such as refining market mission statements, measuring your markets impact, launch a new market, and using the Kansas Farmers Market web site. A particular emphasis was placed on building relationships between markets.

Market Manager Training:

Three face-to-face workshops and three conference calls were conducted reaching 80 participants and providing a total of 358 hours of training:

Workshop One, held on March 7, 2009, provided 9 attendees with 54 hours of training and focused on how to improve market operations.

Workshop Two, held on April 4, 2009, provided 14 attendees with 98 hours of training and focused on how to manage conflicts within markets.

Workshop Three, held on June 9, 2009, provided 18 attendees with 144 hours of training and focused on how to conduct a Rapid Market Assessment.

Call One, held on June 11, 2009, provided 23 participants with 34 hours of training and focused on special events and securing resources for markets.

Call Two, held on July 20, 2009, provided 9 participants with 18 hours of training and focused on conducting Rapid Market Assessments at Kansas markets.

Call Three, held on August, 2009, provided 7 participants with 10 hours of training and focused on expanding SNAP recipient access at Kansas markets.

Facilitated Business Planning for Farmers Markets:

Fifteen *Grow Your Farmers Market* workshops were conducted with the following markets: Andover, Baldwin, Coffeyville, Concordia, Emporia, Fort Scott, Four Corners, Garnett, Haysville, Independence, Leavenworth, Manhattan, Perry-Lecompton, Pittsburg, and Westmoreland. Each market workshop attracted between 5 and 24 participants and shared best management and marketing practices from diverse markets while building consensus on a specific plan for each market. In total, these

workshops reach 124 participants and provided a total of 280 hours of training.

Web Site for Kansas Farmers Markets:

A full-featured site was launched in June 2009. The ksfarmersmarkets.org site serves three primary audiences: consumers (Eaters); market vendors (Producers), and, managers/boards of directors and professionals supporting direct marketers, such as extension agents (Organizers). For Eaters, the site includes: a comprehensive directory of Kansas farmers' markets; market profiles; Savor the Season recipes; events calendar; blog; news section; EBT information; and interactive photo gallery. For Producers and Organizers, the site includes: a library of digital resources (tip sheets, sample market guidelines and applications); rules and regulations publications; promotion and marketing materials; events calendar; links to external resources; and a blog. A user guide was developed for market managers to assist them in updating their market listing, and posting events, recipes, news and blogs.

Farmer-Educator Mentoring Program:

Three sustainable farmer educators, master farmers who have acquired a specialized value-added expertise, educated and coached 148 other farmers by responding to inquiries, sharing experiences, suggesting available resources and making presentations at farmers market meetings, workshops and field days. Farmer-educators provided a total of 547 hours of training/consultations. Two specific events:

[Cedar Valley Farm Field Day](#), held on July 17, 2009, provided 30 attendees with 180 hours of education targeted to farms producing livestock and poultry for direct market sales.

[Autumn Specialty Crop Farm Tour](#), held on November 1, 2009, provided 20 attendees with 80 hours of education focussing on high tunnels and seed starting.

Rapid Market Assessment Initiative:

Building on Workshop Three of the Market Manager Training series, the Kansas Rural Center collaborated with five farmers markets to conduct Rapid Market Assessments. [Four RMA Reports](#) were developed and utilized by market management to evaluate current status and plan future strategies.

Major Outcomes:

Facilitated Business Planning for Farmers Markets:

Ten Kansas farmers markets were able to obtain \$950 mini-grants to promote their markets with the following results:

Andover Farmers Market: Doubling of both number of vendors and shoppers, and a 150% increase in market sales between 2008 and 2009.

Fort Scott Farmers Market: 10 new vendors, 57% increase in shoppers and 30% increase in market sales between 2008 and 2009.

Garnett Farmers Market: 9 new vendors, 67% increase in shoppers and 50% increase in market sales between 2008 and 2009.

Haysville Hometown Market: 8 new vendors, 26% increase in shoppers and 50% increase in market sales between 2008 and 2009.

Leavenworth Farmers Market: 106% increase in shoppers between 2008 and 2009.

Manhattan Farmers Market: 16 new vendors, 15% increase in shoppers and 15%

increase in market sales between 2008 and 2009.

Perry-Lecompton Farmers Market: 5 new vendors, 26% increase in shoppers and 25% increase in market sales between 2008 and 2009.

Web Site for Kansas Farmers Markets:

In the twelve months since its launch (June 2009), the website has received more than 9,474 unique visitors, 13,383 visits with over 53,799 page views. More than 100 Kansas farmers markets have up-to-date market information available on one unified site.

Beneficiaries.

Farmers Market Vendors:

- Obtained training and education on production, post-harvest handling and marketing to increase product diversity at market.
- Experienced average increase in market sales between 15-32%.

Farmers Markets:

- Obtained training and education on recruiting vendors, managing conflict and measuring market impacts for their markets.
- Experienced average increase in market sales between 15-32%.
- 5 farmers markets received in-depth snapshots of market day attendance and sales, as well as shopper feedback, through Rapid Market Assessment Reports.
- Gained an online presence and marketing opportunities through statewide web site.

Kansas Consumers:

- Gained access to up-to-date information on 100+ markets via the ksfarmersmarkets.org web site.
- Learned concepts of seasonal eating and in-depth crop information and recipes.

Lessons Learned.

The most successful strategies were:

Statewide Farmers Market Conferences & Market Manager Training Workshops

Bringing together market vendors and organizers from across the state proved especially valuable. There is great diversity among Kansas markets, from number of vendors to budgets and market staffing and level of organization and rules/guidelines. These training sessions provided opportunities for markets and vendors to learn from one another. Surprising to some, larger markets learned just as much from the strategies of smaller markets. The statewide conferences also permitted KRC to bring in nationally recognized presenters that gave Kansas markets broader insights on market trends.

The Manager Training Workshop Three, focused on Rapid Market Assessment, has proven to have long-term impacts. A direct outgrowth of the workshop was the collaboration among five markets to conduct assessments. Market organizers participated in the RMAs of other markets and took home inspiration for their own markets. Other market organizers download the RMA Reports and subsequently conducted their own assessments.

Facilitated Business Planning for Farmers Markets:

It shouldn't be surprising that most markets do not make time for strategic planning.

And when they do, they may get bogged down trying to deal with differences in opinion. The facilitated business planning workshops presented new ideas and visions for markets and assisted groups in coming to a consensus on key strategies. Many of the markets were able to parlay these new priorities into successful mini-grant applications that permitted them to implement plans.

Web Site for Kansas Farmers Markets:

The ksfarmersmarkets.org now serves as the go-to resource on all matters farmers markets for consumers, market vendors and market organizers, as well as the media. The site has provided a free promotional resource for the 100+ markets in the state. Before the site launched, many markets did not have an online presence, or if they did, updates required the services of a webmaster. The ksfarmersmarkets.org employs user content management allowing each market to designate a market updater. This resulted in markets adding events to the calendar, media releases and stories to the news sections, and peer postings in the blog section. The site also serves as a repository for a wide array of resources for market vendors and organizers. Before the launch, this information was scattered among many collaborator sites or not available online.

The least successful or most challenging to implement strategies were:

Farmer-Educator Mentoring Program

Successfully implementing a mentoring program can be especially challenging as it requires consistent oversight. This mentors for this project, while performing according to contracts, provided variable levels of service. One mentor went above and beyond by quadrupling the number of hours requested and providing in-depth consultations. One mentor, challenged by unanticipated growth in her farming operation, met all obligations and provided some general consultations with farmers. The final mentor primarily presented at workshops and conferences, but did little consultation with growers.

For others considering a mentoring program, we would recommend pre-project and mid project meetings, and quarterly reporting requirements for mentors.

Contact person:

Mercedes Taylor-Puckett, Local Food and Farmers Market Coordinator for the Kansas Rural Center

785.840.6202

mercedes.taylorpuckett@gmail.com