

## **FY 2012 - Dixboro Village Green Inc., dba Dixboro Farmers Market**

**\$37,377** to Dixboro Village Green Inc. dba Dixboro Farmers Market, Ann Arbor, MI, to better serve area consumers and farmers by expanding the Dixboro Farmers Market with a usage-based promotional campaign to attract new vendors and customers and by ensuring that the market manager obtains Serve Safe certification to meet local health department requirements.

[Final Report](#)

***Farmers Market Promotion Program***  
***Final Performance Report***  
***For the Period of October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2014***

<b><i>Date:</i></b>	December 14, 2014
<b><i>Recipient Name:</i></b>	Dixboro Farmers' Market Expansion and Enhancement of the Dixboro Farmers' Market
<b><i>Project Title:</i></b>	
<b><i>Grant Number:</i></b>	12-25-G-1580
<b><i>Project Location:</i></b>	Ann Arbor, Michigan
<b><i>Year of Grant Award:</i></b>	2012
<b><i>Amount Awarded:</i></b>	\$37,377
<b><i>Contact:</i></b>	Anita Sandretto 734 668 8143 asandret@umich.edu

***Program Summary:***

The Dixboro Farmers' Market opened its first season on Friday, May 18, 2012, before an FMPP grant application had been filed. However, we had determined our objectives for the market were:

- Successful market management
- Increase numbers of market vendors during the 2012 and 2013 seasons
- Increase numbers of consumers during the 2012 and 2013 seasons
- Increase diversity of goods available in the market
- Increase outreach to consumers via a variety of marketing efforts
- Recruit volunteers to assist with market activities
- Initiate the SNAP program

A market manager was hired at the beginning of the first market season. That person is still managing the market and has very good relationships with vendors and consumers. The market grew from 12 vendors at the end of the first season to a pool of 30 vendors as we closed the 2014 season on October 24, 2014. The average number of consumers increased from 322 per market in 2012 to 493 in 2014. Through a vendor application process, the market manager and the market board of directors selected a diversity of goods for inclusion in the market. By the close of the 2014 season, ten vendors sold primarily produce, another sixteen were food related, three were non food related and five were craft vendors. Craft vendors attended the market the last Friday of each month. Promotional efforts included email notices, selectively published information (local papers), bus advertising, web site ([dixborofarmersmarket.org](http://dixborofarmersmarket.org)), Facebook page, flyer postings and encouragement to "tell a friend" (word of mouth). A dedicated group of volunteers assisted with market activities. The volunteers were invaluable in helping open and close the market, counting consumers as they entered the market and answering questions as consumers moved through the market. A SNAP program was initiated during the 2013 market season. The program was overseen by a volunteer, at no cost to the market, and operations did not require any additional funds from the USDA grant. During the 2013 and 2014 seasons the market also participated in the Double Up Food Bucks program through the Fair Food Network. Beneficiaries of the market have been vendors, consumers, local businesses and the Dixboro community. The Dixboro Farmers' Market has collaborated closely with community businesses and groups to increase awareness of the market. Special events, such as car shows during the season and a Halloween event at the close of the season were sponsored in 2013 and 2014. Consumers from the community commended the market

group time after time for drawing people to the market and highlighting the area. Our most important result measurement is the increase in number of vendors at the market. This increase resulted in a continuously increasing number of consumers, benefited the community by having more healthy food available, provided the structure for a sustainable market, and provided an increasing sense of community "place". It should be noted that there is a waiting list for vendors who wish to sell at our market.

## ***Goals and Objectives:***

### ***Stated Goals of the Project***

- Increase market manager expertise
- Increase number of vendors by at least 100% during the 2013 season
- Increase number of consumers by at least 100% for the 2013 season
- Increase market product diversity
- Increase outreach activities by 200%
- Increase outreach to consumers via a variety of marketing efforts
- Recruit volunteers to assist with market activities
- Initiate the SNAP program

Prior to receipt of the grant monies, a small donation provided funds to partially pay the new market manager. The grant monies have made it possible to:

- retain an excellent market manager
- pay for the manager to become certified through the Michigan Farm Market Manager program and Serve Safe
- obtain equipment for operating the market (signs, banners, tents, office items)
- communicate information about the market through web sites, paper and visual (bus/other sign) marketing
- experiment with different events to raise awareness and consumer participation in the market

By supporting all these efforts and providing methods of evaluation, the grant has enabled market supporters to see the potential for a recurring destination that is a sustainable, independent, non-municipal farmers' market. The market is expected to continue its growth, showing that the funding was a good use of federal grant dollars.

## ***Activities:***

- Increase market manager expertise

The market manager developed excellent working relationships with vendors, contacting each vendor the day before the market to determine who would be participating, opening and closing the market on time and providing web materials to both vendors and consumers (vendor application on line, e mail market information, Friends of the Dixboro Farmers' Market information, separate web pages for special events). The manager was responsible for laying out the market on the Village Green, providing good spacing between stalls, and sturdy tables/tents when needed. The manager gained information and support from both the Market Manager Certification program through the Michigan Farm Market Organization and the Serve Safe program through Michigan Cooperative Extension.

• Increase number of vendors

Sixteen vendors started the 2013 season; the average number of vendors per week by the end of the season was 22. Our original goal of a 100% increase from 2012 to 2013 was too ambitious. However, by the end of our grant period in 2014, our original goal had been reached. Average number of vendors at market per week in mid season = 24-26 in 2014, and 16-18 per week in 2013, compared with 12-14 during the same time in 2012. A pool of 30-33 vendors was available at the end of the 2014 season. Number of vendors was influenced by available products, the weather, and the farm market board of directors decision that we would focus on local food in the market. Reasons for not being accepted as a vendor included type of product (crafts), or duplication of product with a vendor already been accepted for the season. This decreased the number of acceptable vendors, as many applicants were craft vendors. Craft vendors were at the market the last Friday of each month during the 2014 season, and that practice will continue in 2015.

At the end of each season, a meeting, a celebratory event or an evaluation session was held with the vendors. At those times vendors could identify concerns, likes or dislikes about the market and make suggestions for changes. Changes that have occurred due to vendor feedback include:

- growing the market slowly, with continuing feedback from vendors about what types of products were seen as missing or requested by consumers
- adding the SNAP program
- better signage around the market to attract consumers
- large tent to cover tables so that consumers could sit, eat, and listen to music in comfort
- signs at the market entrance to identify vendors and type of product
- addition of a holiday market (a Thanksgiving market was held on November 25, 2014); discussions are continuing regarding additional markets for coming seasons
- availability of a handicap accessible restroom

• Increase number of consumers

The number of consumers increased each season. However, we did not reach the goal of a 100% increase, using the 2012 number as a baseline. We learned that it is easier to increase number of vendors than consumers, since we had some control over number of vendors. Weather, special events, vendor attendance and holidays all impacted the number of consumers. When thunderstorms or 104 degree temperatures were imminent, the consumer numbers dropped. Some vendors participated only sporadically, depending on availability of produce. For example, two vendors were not able to participate in the market during the 2012 season due to a complete loss of fruit after a severe late spring frost. Another late frost in 2014 also affected fruit production. Attendance was also buoyed by the presence of a popular vendor (BBQ) and the appearance of our "house band", Michigan Vintage Strings. During the main summer months, consumers would often buy their food, then stay to eat and listen to the music. Each special event (car shows, the Trunk or Treat Halloween event) resulted in a spike of consumer numbers. There were no special events scheduled for the first market season in 2012. The car shows, with numerous exhibitors from the community, were popular events in 2013 and better in 2014. Each show resulted in a significant increase in consumer traffic. The Trunk or Treat Halloween events drew many families for activities that included pumpkin drawing, a straw bale maze, the haunted Dixboro School, and opportunities to obtain treats from car trunks, decorated in Halloween themes by the owners. Vendors benefited from these special events with more sales, but only after the market was configured so that consumers had to walk through the market to see the special event. These special events were collaborative efforts with local car enthusiasts, the Dixboro Methodist Church, which is located directly across the street from the Village Green, as well as the local businesses Moonwinks Cafe, Dixboro General Store, and Balance Massage.

Consumer counts were done by volunteers with a click counter. This was certainly not precise, but provided a general idea of how attendance varied by the year, the points in each market season and special events. Mean number of consumers per market: 2012: 322 2013: 432 2014: 493 Attendance varied from 203-395 in

2012, 286-615 in 2013 and 313-750 in 2014. Low attendance was usually weather related, while high attendance was often related to a special event.

#### Increase market product diversity

Results from each market season show increasing numbers and diversity of products. A few vendors have decided not to return from one season to the next, but the main trend is both more vendors and a greater variety of products.

Products in the market included produce (fruits/vegetables), baked goods, hot food, one main product vendors (for example honey, maple syrup, pasties, coffee, bread), non food items (landscape plants) and crafts (only in 2014). · Increase outreach activities by 200%; Increase outreach to consumers via a variety of marketing efforts

These two goals overlap. Activities included both marketing outreach and some things that increased consumer comfort, as well as the SNAP program, which will be discussed separately.

Early marketing efforts were primarily advertising in print publications such as papers, posting of flyers in a number of businesses within about a 5 mile radius, email messages, and post cards distributed through neighborhoods. In 2014, advertising was placed on the back of Ann Arbor city buses for a one week period. Fortunately, some of the ads were not replaced at the end of the week and ran for a longer time, prompting more consumers to report seeing them.

More signage for the market was achieved with:

- traditional signs at the front of the market
- campaign style signs at nearby intersections
- large colorful banners at the front and main entrances to the market
- community boards that provided names of vendors at the market each week
- announcement boards for coming events, such as the car shows and Halloween event
- information boards with suggestions/recipes for using currently available produce

Other outreach to consumers

- Recruit volunteers to assist with market activities

Volunteer recruitment meetings were held in early spring of each season, before the market opened. A core group of 10-12 community members was extremely helpful in supporting the market. Their activities included:

- Setting up the market
- Tearing down the market
- Counting consumers
- Building sign boards for notices, vendor lists, recipes, etc.
- Answering consumer questions about the market
- Helping sell merchandise (t-shirts and tote bags with the market logo)
- Fixing problems during the market, such as collapsed tents.

- Initiate the SNAP program

-Initiation of SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks (DUF) programs

A SNAP license was obtained in February, 2013. However, obtaining a processing unit for the EBT claims was arduous and resulted in program implementation being delayed for several months. The program was finally implemented in August, 2013. The Double Up Food Bucks program, initiated by the Fair Food Network, also began at the same time. Because we were so late in starting the programs, there was very little participation during the rest of the market season. However, participation in both programs was much higher during the 2014 season, providing consumers with a lot of healthy food. Please note that these two programs were implemented by a market volunteer, with no cost

to the USDA grant or extra cost to the market. Participants were enthusiastic about the programs, and there were many return customers during the 2014 season. EBT sales

averaged \$ 15 per week in the shortened period of 2013, in comparison with \$ 27 per week during the 2014 season.

### ***Accomplishments:***

1. Number of vendors increased each market season. 2012: Began the season with 7, ended with 12. 2013: Began the season with 14, ended with a pool of 20. 2014: Began the season with 24, ended with a pool of 30. 2. Number of consumers increased with each market season. 2012 ended with a mean attendance of 322; 2013 ended with mean attendance of 432; 2014 ended with a mean attendance of 493. 3. Diversity of market goods increased with each season. More produce (2012: 5, 2013: 7, 2014: 9), baked goods 2012: 3, 2013: 4, 2014: 9) and main product (2012: 2, 2013: 4k 2014: 8) vendors each season. Addition of limited craft vendors in 2014. We still lack vendors for some products, such as any dairy products or meats. Eggs were provided by 2 vendors in 2012, 3 in 2013 and 3-5 vendors in 2014, depending on the time of the season. 4. Outreach changed with changes in consumer use of social media. In 2012, print publications (1 monthly community paper and 1 internet publication), and flyers/post cards posted in community areas were the primary advertising. By 2014, the primary outlets were social media (Facebook), and larger public ads (back of Ann Arbor city buses). Number of signs around the market were increased, with campaign style signs at all nearby intersections on market day as well as colorful banners which attracted attention to the market. Changes were spurred by consumer comments ("we didn't know you were here, I saw the signs and banners and stopped on my way home"). It was not possible to identify exactly which promotions prompted the greatest change in consumers, as our public comes from a wide area and may be influenced by a number of different promotions. 5. SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) programs were begun in mid market season of 2013, with a low participation rate. The SNAP/EBT and DUFB participation was doubled in 2014.

### ***Beneficiaries:***

The Dixboro Farmers' Market is located on the Dixboro Village Green, in an unincorporated village established in 1824. The Dixboro Methodist Church, founded in 1858, draws a congregation from far beyond the village limits. The village is also a "drive through" for many people coming to work in Ann Arbor or going to work in the cities to the east. Until 1976, one of the Ann Arbor School District elementary schools was located in Dixboro. When that school closed, the sense of community began to erode. Newer subdivisions in the area, populated by families employed by several auto makers, have brought more young families into the area. Dixboro is not a food desert, but the nearest grocery store is 2.2 miles to the west. Dixboro residents most often must drive to obtain groceries, since the roads are heavily traveled and dangerous for bicycle or foot traffic. Dixboro also does not qualify as a low income community. However, the increasing number of EBT transactions in the market indicate that there are certainly low income residents close to the market.

The major beneficiaries were:

- Market vendors. The market provided another outlet for local food, much of which is grown organically. Although there were several other thriving markets in the Ann Arbor area, the Dixboro market provided a niche that was previously unfilled. Vendors have often commented about it being a favorite market for them, due to the location on the Green and the friendliness of the consumers. The fact that we have a waiting list of vendors who want to join the market underscores those comments.
- EBT consumers: Especially with the combination of the SNAP and DUFB programs, these consumers were able to purchase twice as much produce as they could with just the SNAP program. This will hopefully translate into better health in the long run. Did those EBT consumers spend their tokens in the market? The return rate for tokens was 97%; when consumers received their tokens, they certainly spent them in the market. Those

consumers had better access to fresh produce and other good food.

· The community. Time and again the volunteers and board members have been thanked for organizing the farmers' market. "Thank you for doing this; it is providing a place where we again feel like a community."

### ***Lessons Learned:***

· Be flexible. There are many things that can and will go wrong, from vendors who do not show up at the market to the weather throwing rain, wind and cold temperatures. A spirit of working together (manager, vendors, volunteers and even consumers) to make the market a success was essential. Marketing strategies were changed for the second year of the grant period, after the usual print material ads for the market seemed to have little effect on consumer numbers.

· Treat everyone with respect. A platitude, perhaps, but absolutely necessary to have both vendors and consumers return to the market.

· Have good management. The market manager has been a critical part of the market success. The manager established good lines of communication, met with the board of directors regularly, and talked with vendors each week during the market season. Good management also included a grant administrator who understood the processes for obtaining funds and the accounting for how those funds were spent.

· Find a dedicated group of volunteers. The estimated time spent helping with the market was 25 hours per week for our group of 10-12 volunteers. That amounts to more than 500 hours of work over the course of the market season!! Use tools like Sign Up Genius to track hours and provide reminders to the volunteers.

· Provide good food and music; these give consumers a reason to come and linger in a market.

· Engage the community; in Dixboro, that engagement has benefited vendors, consumers, volunteers and the board of directors.

**Farmers' Market Promotion Program  
Final Performance Report**

Grant Recipient Dixboro Farmers' Market  
 Project Title Expansion and enhancement of the Dixboro Farmers' Market  
 Grant Number 12-25-G-1580  
 Project Location Ann Arbor Michigan 48105-9429  
 Year of Grant Award 2012



Community Sign



Campaign style sign



Campaign style signs for marker entrance and parking



Campaign style sign and banner flag



Banner and large sign at front of market



Community Signs





Community Sign



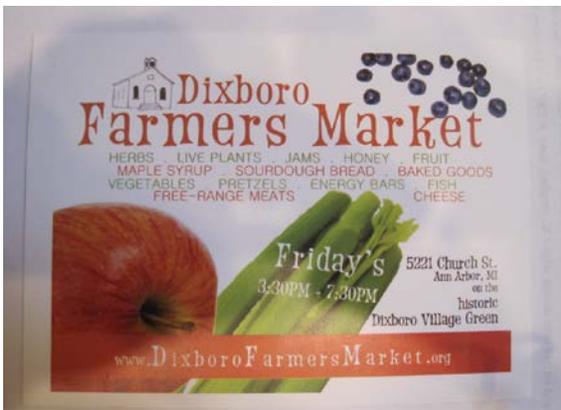
Market Manager Sign



Advertising on City Buses



Signs, Flags, and Banners



Postcards



Website flyer



Special events flyer



Flyer about the market