

FY 2012

FY 2012 GardenShare, Inc.

Proposal Title: GardenShare St. Lawrence County Direct Connect Program; Includes Food Desert Priority Areas (GardenShare Priority Direct Connect)

Nonprofit, CSA Network, Existing EBT, Producer Association, Regional Farmers Market Authority, Youth, Training/Education/Technical Assistance - Farmers & Market Managers

\$55,590 to GardenShare, Inc. of Canton, NY, to expand and strengthen 10 farmers markets in St. Lawrence County, combining resources with a new market federation or cooperative to open satellite markets for Federal benefits, and recruit and train farmers to run CSAs and accept federal benefits, increasing the acceptance and use of EBT, WIC, FMNP and SFMNP, the number of shoppers, the number of county CSA farms and shareholders, and farm income.

[Final Report](#)

FMPP Final Performance Report

Report Number/Period: (#4)(04/1/14–09/30/14)
Date: October 15, 2014
Contact: Carlene Doane / 315-261-8054 / office@gardenshare.org
Recipient Name: GardenShare

Project Title: GardenShare Priority Direct Connect

Grant Number: NY-060-2012G-1607

Project Location: St. Lawrence County, NY

Total Awarded Budget: \$ 55,590

1. Objective: *State the objective (or each element of the objective, if more than one) and those activities associated with each as identified in the grant agreement.*

GardenShare's two-year Priority Direct Connect Project was to measurably increase direct market producer income while increasing healthy food choices among low-income households in the county through a series of activities that included:

- Collective promotion of markets and applicable federal benefits
- Professional development for market managers that focuses on the needs of very small markets
- CSA training for interested producers
- Recruitment and training for producers to accept federal benefits and increased promotion of federal benefits available for use.

Through better community awareness of local direct market food access, and producer and market manager educational opportunities, we hoped to increase the number of shoppers at our markets by 10% in each of the two years, increase the number of farmers accepting EBT, WIC, FMNP and SFMNP by 10%, increase the number of county CSA farms by 10%, increase the number of CSA shareholders by 20%, and, as a result of all that, increase direct market farmer income by 10% each year. We also hope to begin to establish a market federation or cooperative for the county to pool resources to continue these endeavors.

2. Summary of Activities: *List each activity that occurred since start of project, as stated and funded through the proposal. "Activities" are classes of actions (i.e., advertising, training, market startup, recruitment, etc.).*

FIRST QUARTER:

Hire Program Manager: Program Manager Danielle McAuliffe has been hired. Danielle holds two Master's Degrees in business and marketing, and teaches marketing courses at Clarkson University. She is well-qualified to develop this program, and measure and evaluate outcomes.

Collective and Individual Promotion of St. Lawrence County Markets:

- An advertisement promoting all markets has been designed and added to the Local Food Guide, produced and distributed by GardenShare, for distribution county wide.

- An advertisement promoting the Canton Farmers Market has been designed and submitted to the Canton Visitors Guide, produced and distributed by the Canton Chamber of Commerce, for distribution county wide.
- Market research is currently in progress to create an exhaustive list of businesses and community organizations in the areas surrounding the markets to create a strategic distribution plan for GardenShare's Local Food Guide and other market promotion material.
- Planning has begun with market managers for themed special events at the Potsdam and Canton, NY farmers markets to include educational demonstrations, music, and food samples.
- A dialogue has been started with the St. Lawrence County Department of Health to ensure food sampling at markets is done in compliance with local and state regulations.
- A dialogue has been started to form a partnership between GardenShare and the St. Lawrence Health Initiative to co-sponsor a community 5K in conjunction with Potsdam's annual Summer Fest event.
- A presence will be maintained at the Local Living Festival, a local event promoting sustainable, local living, for county-wide promotion of the farmers markets.
- Debit transaction services have been added to two EBT terminals and a marketing plan to promote this new offering is in the early stages of development.
- Information is being gathered on vendors to create brochures that provide background on each farmer, their farming practices, and the products they bring to market, to better acquaint the community with their local producers.

Market Manager training:

- Multiple meetings have been had, and some currently scheduled, with the market managers to assess training needs and marketing ideas for the upcoming summer season.
- The Program Manager was in attendance for the Pre-Season Market Training administered by Cornell Cooperative Extension with the intent of disseminating a training overview with the most valuable information to the market managers.
- One-on-one trainings will be created using the NY Farmers Market Federation Farmers Market Manager Training Manual.

Increase EBT and other Coupon Use in Area of Need:

- An application has been submitted to the USDA to get EBT terminals for the Massena and Gouverneur markets, two locations with high need, and Martin's Farmstand, an innovative online farmers market.
- The Program Manager is registered for the NYS Farmers Market EBT Training Webinar to become trained in EBT transactions for the purpose of training EBT volunteers and market managers at these new locations.
- A manual is currently in production to clarify the different assistance programs in use by community members that shows a photo of the tender, what program it is from, and explains the redemption process for the farmer.
- GardenShare is hosting the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets' webinar on WIC Vegetable and Fruit Checks on May 15th for local farmers for the purpose of creating more authorized vendors, increasing the use these checks at farmers markets.

Develop St. Lawrence County Farmers' Market Association: Continued contact with the different markets and their management is resulting in new alliances, a feeling of trust, and an understanding that the success of each of the markets in the county contributes to the success of all of the markets in the county.

SECOND QUARTER:

Collective and Individual Promotion of St. Lawrence County Markets:

- An advertisement promoting all markets has been designed and added to the Local Food Guide, produced and distributed by GardenShare, for distribution county wide.
- An advertisement promoting the Canton Farmers Market has been designed and submitted to the Canton Visitors Guide, produced and distributed by the Canton Chamber of Commerce, for distribution county wide.
- Market research is currently in progress to create an exhaustive list of businesses and community organizations in the areas surrounding the markets to create a strategic distribution plan for GardenShare's Local Food Guide and other market promotion material.
- Planning has begun with market managers for themed special events at the Potsdam and Canton, NY farmers markets to include educational demonstrations, music, and food samples. These special events have occurred monthly and have increased attendance at the market by around 30 percent on these days.
- A dialogue has been started with the St. Lawrence County Department of Health to ensure food sampling at markets is done in compliance with local and state regulations. Sampling has been done at the Potsdam market on special event days. The sampling has been very well-received and will be continued on a wider basis in the future.
- A presence at the Local Living Festival, a local event promoting sustainable, local living, for county-wide promotion of the farmers markets reached 1,200 people.
- EBT terminals, already present at three markets in the county, have been added to three additional markets in St. Lawrence County, and a financial incentive for EBT use has been created.
- Debit transaction services have been added to all of the EBT terminals and a marketing plan to promote this new offering has increased sales at markets where the service is available.
- Information is being gathered on vendors to create brochures that provide background on each farmer, their farming practices, and the products they bring to market, to better acquaint the community with their local producers.
- Posters and pamphlets about each market were developed and distributed through the markets' communities, including public libraries, meeting halls, churches, service providers, and at programs that target low-income individuals and families.
- Rapid Market Assessments have been conducted to gather baseline data at the Canton and Potsdam Markets, as well as attendance records for many of the other markets in St. Lawrence County.
- Market assessments revealed that Canton residents would find the market more convenient if it were open later hours at least one of its open days. Unfortunately, vendors chose to open from 9am - 6pm on Tuesdays through the month of August. Since many vendors sold out before the end of the day, many customers found little produce of value at those later hours.
- Radio PSAs and interviews were conducted through September raising awareness of EBT and debit options at the markets and had a huge impact. Debit sales are finally responding, and producers are reporting larger sales per transaction.

Market Manager training:

- Multiple meetings have been had with the market managers to assess training needs and marketing ideas for the season.
- The Program Manager was in attendance for the Pre-Season Market Training administered by Cornell Cooperative Extension with the intent of disseminating a training overview with the most

valuable information to the market managers.

- One-on-one trainings were created using the NY Farmers Market Federation Farmers Market Manager Training Manual.
- Managers and volunteers were trained on EBT and debit use for the season.

Increase EBT and other Coupon Use in Area of Need:

- EBT terminals were obtained for the Massena and Gouverneur markets, two locations with high need, and Martin's Farmstand, an innovative online farmers market.
- The Program Manager attended NYS Farmers Market EBT Training Webinar to become trained in EBT transactions for the purpose of training EBT volunteers and market managers at these new locations.
- A manual was produced to clarify the different assistance programs in use by community members that shows a photo of the tender, what program it is from, and explains the redemption process for the farmer.
- GardenShare hosted the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets' webinar on WIC Vegetable and Fruit Checks on May 15th for local farmers for the purpose of creating more authorized vendors, increasing the use these checks at farmers markets, which resulted in four additional trained producers.
- Radio PSAs and interviews were conducted through September raising awareness of EBT and debit options at the markets and had a huge impact. Debit sales are finally responding, and producers are reporting larger sales per transaction.
- An incentive program was implemented to promote and habituate EBT use at the markets.

Develop St. Lawrence County Farmers' Market Association: Continued contact with the different markets and their management is resulting in new alliances, a feeling of trust, and an understanding that the success of each of the markets in the county contributes to the success of all of the markets in the county.

The successes of some of the market promotions developed through this season may help market managers understand that promotional resources can boost attendance and increase the bottom line for themselves and their other farmers.

THIRD QUARTER:

Collective and Individual Promotion of St. Lawrence County Markets:

Through the winter months our program manager promoted indoor markets in Ogdensburg and Potsdam via Facebook and radio.

The radio projects serve to promote the active markets as well as create excitement about the upcoming season. A "Guess the Veggie" contest at one radio station offers \$10 market tokens as prizes, and the other radio project involves a daily 'veggie joke' along with a reference to online farmers' market resources.

Market Manager training:

- Preseason market meetings are currently being conducted and attended where our program manager is working with market managers on how to share the information she and other managers learned through the winter season at the following venues:

- The three-day conference, " Farmers Market Managers Training: Navigating the Local Food Scene", hosted by The Farmers Market Federation of New York in Binghamton, NY. Topics of workshops attended included food hubs, starting new markets, conflict resolution, expanding market reach, improving customer service, farm inspections, promotion, selling to restaurants, and farmers' markets role in economic development.
- Market promotion/ and improvement webinars covering:
 - How to advertise the positive aspects of market shopping,
 - How to make market shopping fun
 - Campaigning via many outlets
 - How to generate more donations, sponsorships, and volunteers
 - How to connect with local groups to reach target audiences.
- Vendor-focused webinars including:
 - Preparing market products for upselling
 - Improving booth appeal/image
 - How to collect, store and use data on shoppers
 - Legal issues for farmers such as liability, employees, on site events, selling added value goods.
- We also promoted and attended Cornell Cooperative Extensions annual food safety and handling workshop.
- Our program manager has also been assisting in the further development of Hammond Market and a Mobile Market in St. Lawrence County. She attended a Farmers Market Federation hosted seminar that introduced the new EBT and Debit system for farmers' markets and is preparing the iPhone system for Hammond and creating a handbook.
- Because of our high profile work throughout the county, we were contacted by the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Project Development Officer who is looking for ways to start a market on their reservation. We were thrilled to share resources with her.

Increase EBT and other Coupon Use in Area of Need:

- Brochures promoting the markets and SNAP/EBT have been revised to account for last year's experience.
- We have connected with more social service organizations in our community to help promote all of the opportunities to use assistance programs with our local producers including SNAP, FMNP, SFMNP, WIC, CSA Bonus Bucks (a GardenShare program), and CNY Health Bucks (a program of the Food Bank of Central New York).
- EBT service will be included at the Hammond, NY market, a new market in its second year this season.

Develop St. Lawrence County Farmers' Market Association:

Vendor feedback, along with data from GardenShare and area food assistance programs was shared at a county-wide market managers post season meeting. Program and market managers compared notes about the successes/pitfalls of the past season, goals for future, challenges. and how to address them. Processes to streamline EBT and other processes were ironed out.

This winter we started a new monthly e-newsletter for producers, market managers, and other food system workers which compiles all of the relevant educational, marketing and funding opportunities available.

These new initiatives, as well as previous communication efforts, form the base and core of a county-wide association. We have not named and codified an organization due to a culture of resistance to "joining" among our market managers. As we continue to successfully demonstrate the benefits of sharing resources and collaboration, we build support among our markets for this endeavour.

FOURTH QUARTER:

Collective and Individual Promotion of St. Lawrence County Markets:

A "Produce Spotlight" program highlighted in-season produce with recipe ideas and tastings, while giving our Program Manager first hand experience with each of the markets in the county throughout the season.

Radio spots continued throughout the season.

We created ads for a new county mobile market.

News releases about the individual markets and their special events went out frequently, resulting in local news coverage throughout the season. An especially nice feature was run on NCPR featuring the new mobile market and providing access to healthy foods to low-income families.

(<http://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/25566/20140730/mobile-farmers-market-brings-produce-to-you>)

Flyers for each of the smaller, less well-known markets were created and distributed throughout their communities, as well as at each of the other markets.

A program at an area child care facility promoted markets with a market treasure hunt, to familiarize children with market shopping as a way to entice families to the markets.

We represented the markets at area festivals such as the Canton Dairy Festival, and Seniorama, to build awareness of the county's farmers' markets.

Market Manager training

A market manager manual was revised and given to all managers in the county with a one-on-one training session.

Paperwork for EBT and other assistance was streamlined.

An intern system was put into place to provide backup for managers.

Producer News continued.

Increase EBT and Other Coupon Use in Area of Need

EBT terminals were added at two new markets; Hammond, and DeKalb. Managers were trained in their use, and the service was highlighted through radio and newspaper.

Farmer WIC training/paperwork party was coordinated in conjunction with our local Cooperative Extension.

Radio PSAs and interviews were conducted through September raising awareness of EBT and debit options at the markets.

Press releases announcing new incentives, coupon availability, and other opportunities to use federal benefits were released bi-weekly throughout the growing season.

New flyers listing all the markets that accept EBT, WIC, FMNP, SFMNP, their hours, locations... were distributed throughout the county. The reverse of the card had a handy what's-in-season chart.

Develop St. Lawrence County Farmers' Market Association

As the markets grow in the county, and the resources have been shared more widely, we are now ready to pursue exploring what form a consortium that consistently shares resources can take.

Evaluation Activities

Rapid Market Assessments were implemented at the Canton and Potsdam Markets and an online shopper survey was conducted as well, to gain valuable insight on customer demographics, habits, and sentiments.

Producer surveys were conducted to evaluate success of FMPP initiative.

3. Performance: *Report measurable (quantitative) results/accomplishments of each project activity since the beginning of project. Examples: # of new vendors trained, number of new customers weekly, increase in sales from baseline. Apply this to the specific activities of your project.*

EBT/SNAP usage in the county is up by 90% through the extensive promotion through FMPP, as well as NYS Fresh Connect incentives, and because we increased the number of markets where these benefits could be used. Although growth from 2013 to 2014 in EBT sales was pretty stagnant, this rise still significantly impacts producer bottom line. In order to increase EBT sales significantly in the future, our markets will need to offer more produce and more diverse hours of operation.

Our farmers reported an average ten percent increase in their farmers' market incomes for 2013, as projected in our FMPP application, but in 2014 that number rose even higher to 50% for some vendors. This is due to stronger farmer's markets in Canton and Potsdam, where our surveys are conducted. Although for some crops, the 2014 weather was better, that is not the case for all crops, so better weather does not account for such a big jump in vendor sales.

Baseline data suggests only a modest rise in the number of customers coming to the markets, but does suggest that those who are coming are spending more. This presents a great opportunity to further increase promotion to under-represented communities to our farmer's markets.

4. Problems and Delays: *Note unexpected delays or problems for each activity. Explain what the organization did to resolve or address these issues.*

None to report.