

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

Date: December 31, 2014
Organization Name: Logan County Farmers Market
Project Title: Logan County Grown
Grant Agreement: 12-25-G-1617
Project Location: Logan County, Ohio
Year of Grant Award: 2012
Amount Awarded: \$82,550
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413-687-3109

Summary:

During the life of our FMPP grant, the Logan County Farmers Market has significantly and successfully increased support of market activities and local foods in the community we serve. Between October 1, 2012 and September 30, 2014, we successfully accomplished the following goals: Expanded outreach to low-income residents by providing programming to 4 local social service organizations; provided free agricultural workshops outside of regular market hours; provided new weekly educational programming *at* the market; taught lessons about local agriculture and nutrition to area school districts and after-school groups; established and implemented a successful fundraising model; and created a sustainable market management structure.

Over the course of this grant, our market vendors experienced a gross sales increase of up to 25% during each of the two market seasons the grant funded. In addition, over 1,800 local youth were reached through school and after-school programming as a result of educational components of the grant project.

Goals and Objectives:

The primary goal of the “Logan County Grown” project was to expand education and outreach promoting local food systems in Logan County, Ohio. We achieved this goal by:

- Providing guaranteed income for a year-round part-time Market Manager for two years, and an Events Coordinator for the second Market season of the grant cycle in order to carry out grant-related tasks
- Targeting low-income sectors of our community through educational programming
- Providing in-school and after school programming to local youth promoting the importance of local agriculture and nutrition

- Educating the general public both on and off site about how to grow, care for, and eat nutritious, in-season fruits and vegetables
- Hosting educational film screenings about agriculture and food
- Providing educational workshops to our vendor base
- Fundraising and attaining a sustainable structure to financially support the management of the market in the future.
- Ultimately allowing local food vendors to grow and prosper by increasing foot traffic at the Market

Activities

1. The Logan County Farmers Market (LCFM) hired a part-time year-round Market Manager to carry out all activities surrounding the grant as well as the day-to-day tasks of running the Market. In addition to the activities highlighted in our grant application, the Market Manager also started a POP (Power of Produce) kids club. Although FMPP did not fund this particular project, it would not have been possible without a paid Market Manager position. The Power of Produce kids club brought an estimated 400 new families to the Market and provided \$4,000 of additional revenue for our vendors during the 2013 and 2014 Market seasons.
2. We increased outreach to low-income customers by providing training to local social service employees about the benefits of clients using SNAP at the Farmers Market, and by providing regularly-scheduled programming at four community organizations serving low-income clients. Direct programming reached approximately 250 unduplicated people. In addition, 27 social services employees received training. Prior to this grant, LCFM began accepting SNAP benefits in 2010, and ran a very successful double-incentive program that was funded by the local electric co-op in both 2011 and 2012. Although outreach to SNAP customers increased substantially during the grant period, one of the largest disappointments of the past two years was that despite our increased efforts to attract new SNAP customers, SNAP numbers at the Market actually *declined* during both 2013 and 2014. In 2011 \$3,514 worth of SNAP tokens were redeemed with the double-incentive program and that number was similar in 2012. In 2013, only \$1,728 was redeemed, and in 2014, that number decreased to \$969. According to feedback from customers and vendors, this decline in SNAP sales is due to a few different factors. First, the double incentive program the Market had in effect in 2011 and 2012 literally *doubled* the amount of spending power customers with SNAP benefits could receive at the Market, at which point we saw SNAP dollars rise substantially. Also, according to statistics from local and national Job and Family Services, as well as customer feedback, the decrease is also due in part to an overall cut to SNAP benefits that took effect during the Fall of 2013. Many of our regular SNAP customers saw substantially reduced benefits during this time. In addition, we now see that many families who have historically used their SNAP benefits regularly at the Market are now taking advantage of the fact that their children have spending power through the POP program. We definitely observed a trend of kids providing POP tokens to help the parents shop for produce for the household. Finally, the Market still uses a manual

- paper voucher system that requires a telephone to call SNAP cards in. We are aware of the limitations this puts on the convenience of SNAP use at the Market. We plan to work diligently in the upcoming season to continue to improve SNAP services at the Market, hopefully installing a POS wireless system in the next two years. We feel that although SNAP numbers did not increase, the effort made to include people of different economic backgrounds in the fold of our project has paid off in other ways and will continue to pay off in the future.
3. We provided ongoing educational programming across four school districts and to one homeschool group. Our goal was to reach 750 students across three school districts. We far exceeded this goal by reaching more than 1,600 unduplicated youth spanning 4 districts, most of whom received regular (either weekly or monthly) lessons. This was the first in-school programming the LCFM has ever conducted.
 4. For the first time, the LCFM Manager conducted ongoing educational programming at 4 after-school programs, reaching 250 unduplicated youth through either weekly or monthly programming.
 5. The Events Coordinator, a position that was created during season two of the grant cycle, was responsible for weekly educational programming on site at the Market. Over 1,000 people participated in these activities during the 2014 season. Activities spanned from seed-starting with kids, to canning demonstrations for adults, to cooking demonstrations and contests.
 6. Our goal was to reach 100 individuals through community classes and trainings pertaining to local agriculture. We achieved this goal by seeing 104 attendees and conducting 5 classes. These were the first community classes the LCFM has conducted throughout our 18-year history.
 7. Our goal was to reach 40 individuals/vendors while conducting vendor trainings. 46 vendors attended three separate professional trainings and workshops provided by grant initiatives.
 8. We had no stated goal in our grant application of how many individuals we would reach through film screenings. However, it is important to note that we hosted 6 screenings with discussions held after, and saw 165 attendees throughout the grant cycle.
 9. Fundraising for the Market took place through multiple avenues including mail campaigns, raffles, corporate donor campaigns, and market events. The goal of the grant cycle was to raise \$10,000 outside of vendor fees. We exceeded this goal by raising upwards of \$16,000. By creating a sustainable fundraising plan over the course of the grant cycle, our market has been able to set realistic goals that will allow our organization to grow and thrive (with a paid part-time manager) for years to come.
 10. All market vendors reported an increase in sales by up to 25% across the life of the grant. No vendors reported a decrease in sales.

Beneficiaries:

In Logan County (home of 43,023 people) 15.9% of residents are living below the poverty rate, while in Bellefontaine, the county seat where the Market takes place, 29.5% are living below poverty. In 2005, it was reported that over 31% of our county's youth were overweight or obese, as compared to 18.9% statewide, and 18% nationwide. When setting out on this project, we wanted to first and foremost address why statistics surrounding both poverty and obesity in our community were coupled by the fact that we live in a largely rural agricultural county. Why was it that children whose parents or grandparents grew or had access to fresh fruits and vegetables just a couple of generations ago were suddenly denied access to fresh healthy affordable food? The educational component of this project grew primarily out of this concern.

250 unduplicated youth, all members of families living well below the poverty line, benefitted from regular weekly or monthly educational programming at after-school and summer drop-in programs supported by local Children's Services and Metropolitan Housing agencies. This programming spanned from weekly cooking sessions with local fruits and vegetables to games and lessons surrounding the history of local agriculture in our county. Local youth, many of whom had never sampled fresh strawberries, asparagus, raspberries, blueberries, zucchini, tomatoes, or cucumbers (just to name a few) cultivated new favorite foods over the course of the programming. We received reports from parents that their children were, for the first time, requesting fresh fruits and veggies at home. In 2014, we partnered with the local United Way chapter who funded an incentive program for kids attending these programs, giving every attendant \$2 worth of tokens to spend at the Market for every session they attended. This program increased the number of low-income families visiting the Market and encouraged kids to use their buying power to introduce new healthy foods into their own households.

In the local schools, we conducted both one-time and ongoing programming. This programming spanned from planting a garden with 1st graders with learning disabilities to debating the effectiveness and dangers of mono crops with high school ag students. Throughout the course of the grant, among schools and youth programs combined, we reached 1,600 unduplicated young people, many of whom we have had repeated contact with through regularly scheduled weekly or monthly programming.

Aside from young people, our vendors have been the main beneficiaries of grant-related activities during the grant cycle. All Market Vendors reported an increase in sales both during the 2013 and 2014 Market season. All vendors also reported an increase in customer numbers, including an increase in younger customers. Many of our vendors who have been selling since the Market's inception in 1996 report that FMPP-funded activities led to a larger and more consistent crowd than they have seen in the entirety of the Market's history.

In this project, we extended our work not only during Market hours, but also beyond the normal hours and season of the Market. We accomplished this through holding film screenings, free classes, and off-site Market events. It is through these extra-curricular

activities that we have promoted our Market organization *not* just as a buying point for local food, but as an institution that promotes the well-being of local farmers while encouraging healthy living among our county's residents. By creating conversations around our own local food system in Logan County, we have been able to engage with a diverse range of local people about wider issues of health, economy, environment, and community. Activities taking place at the Market reached more than 1,000 people throughout the second season with the addition of the Events Coordinator. And during two years of hosting off-market classes, events, and film screenings, we reached more than 465 additional people, each of which took part in lively and fruitful conversations surrounding the health and well-being of our community.

Lessons Learned:

Although we celebrated many victories during the grant cycle, we also ran into a few roadblocks. Our Market is small, and it serves a fairly small community. Our hopes and goals concerning new SNAP use at the Market were fueled by a very successful push by our organization to expand SNAP sales during 2011 – 2012. In hindsight, we should have more carefully considered how much we would be able to increase SNAP numbers after the initial push before the grant. We feel that the decline of SNAP statistics at the Market is not only due to the size of the city we serve, but by a wide lack of transportation to surrounding rural areas, limited Market hours (being only open Saturday mornings), and an unforeseen broad cut to SNAP benefits for American families that impacted most of our regular SNAP customers at the Market. Although educational outreach increased substantially during the grant cycle, SNAP dollars spent at the Market decreased. A more realistic forecast will be carefully taken in consideration before embarking in any additional SNAP outreach projects in the future.

Another problem our Market has historically faced is obtaining vendor feedback when it comes to income statistics. Our Market has a long history of serving local farmers and bakers who operate on a very small local scale. Although we have a few vendors who are always forthcoming in sharing their income amounts with the management and the board, many are protective of these figures and choose not to disclose them. Therefore, gathering data about increased income throughout the grant cycle was difficult, and we had to resort to very general questioning, both in written surveying and face-to-face conversations. For instance, we had no trouble getting the statistic that all of our vendors increased revenue up to 25% over the course of the two-year grant. However, when given the option, 90% of our vendors opted out of telling us exactly what that discrepancy was, and how much additional income they made. However, 100% of vendors did report (both orally and by written survey) that sales had not decreased, and 85% reported that sales had increased both in 2013 and 2014. In hindsight, setting up clear expectations regarding reporting of income with all vendors was a crucial step we missed at the onset of the grant project.

Another challenge was getting correct and consistent customer counts. Since we had never done a census project prior to our FMPP grant, there were no solid numbers to compare an increase in customers to. The only numbers we've ever used come from

vendors' individual customer counts, which do not necessarily reflect the Market as a whole. Although every vendor reports an overall increase in foot traffic, it has been hard to solidify actual numbers that can back up this input. And although we had every intention of doing a census count both in 2013 and 2014, we were only able to count in 2014 with the addition of another employee (the Events Coordinator). Since our Market has always run with one part-time Market Manager, it is difficult to stage a census count without either a significant volunteer force or the addition of another paid person to do the count. We counted 650 people in mid August, at an averagely busy Market. According to this number, we can safely guess we saw at least 1,000 people during our peak season in July. This number is higher than any number previously estimated. Incorporating a census count as a volunteer activity is a goal of the Market in the coming years but one that will take careful consideration and planning.

The element of the grant that worked particularly well and exceeded our expectations of success was the work we did with after-school groups. We also found that work in schools with elementary and middle school students yielded the best results for our Market because we were able to promote our Power of Produce kids club in schools simultaneously. We saw hundreds of kids at the Market who found out about the program through in-school sessions with the Market Manager, and then in turn asked their parents to bring them to Market.

And although outreach to low-income adults in the community did not yield the financial results we would have liked to see for our Market Vendors, one relationship in particular, was a very successful one. Through monthly programming with a drop-in center for low-income people facing mental health and addiction issues called "Recovery Zone", the LCFM was able to establish a sustainable and fruitful relationship with a community group that has lasted beyond the FMPP grant cycle. Through working with LCFM on nutrition programming, the Recovery Zone has launched into their own community gardening project, which has in turn been funded by a local hospital for 2015. Out of work done through FMPP between the two groups, LCFM and Recovery Zone will continue to work in partnership to provide growing space and free produce to the poorest area of Logan County.

Overall, our FMPP grant project has yielded tremendous results for our Market organization. In 2012, we faced impeding financial hardship and the chance of losing a Market Manager due to the organization's inability to compensate someone to do the job. Through increased fundraising, a growing face of the Market organization in our community, and a broad effort to provide education to the public about the importance of eating fresh, local, affordable food, LCFM has emerged from this grant project in better shape than we could have ever imagined. Due to the support of FMPP, we are prepared to face the coming years with a clear and consistent image, a confident core leadership, and a sustainable fundraising plan that will lead the Market into many more years of service to our vendors, our youth, and our community as a whole.

For information about past events, please visit our website at <http://www.logancountyfarmersmarket.com/>

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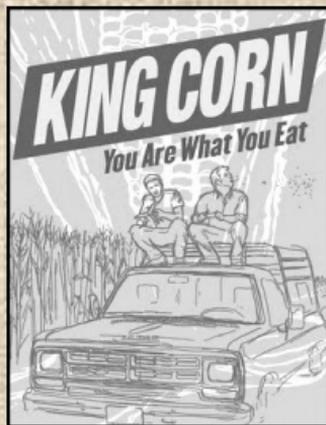
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LOGAN COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

extra curricular activities



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SATURDAY AUGUST 24TH 7PM
\$5 SUGGESTED DONATION
FREE LOCAL SNACKS!

@ MAD RIVER THEATER
2790 SANDUSKY STREET, ZANESFIELD

SEASON EXTENSION HOOP HOUSE WORKSHOP

WITH JANDY'S FARM

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 15TH 2PM
FREE WITH \$25 MATERIALS FEE

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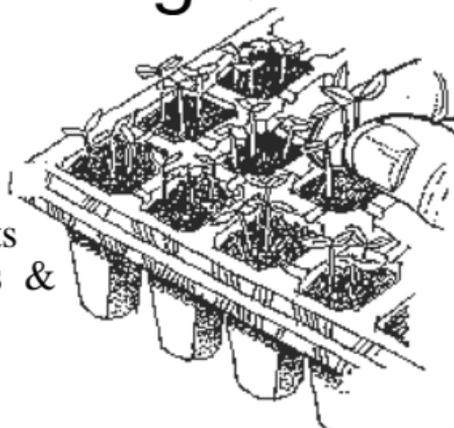
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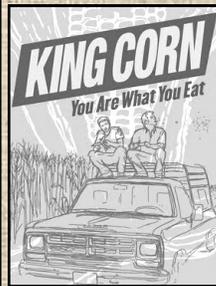
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LOGAN COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

extra curricular activities



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