FY12

FY 2012 Downtown Crossville, Inc.

Farmers Market, Advertisement, Promotion

$10,000 to Downtown Crossville, Inc., Crossville, TN, to improve and expand a young and growing farmers market through producer-to-consumer promotion and marketing activities and by increasing sales among participating farmers through the enhancement of market amenities and advertising.

Final Report

Farmers Market Promotion Program

Final Performance Report

For the Period of October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013

Date: ***January 15, 2014***

Recipient Name: ***Downtown Crossville, Inc.***

Project Title: ***Downtown Crossville, Inc. Promotes the Cumberland Sustainable Farmers' Market***

Grant Number: **12-25-G-*1634***

Project Location: ***Crossville, TN***

Amount Awarded: ***$ 10,000***

Contact: ***Rebecca Pierson/ (931) 277-3875 / Rebecca_pierson@frontier.com***

Goals and Objectives:

Goals:
The overarching project goal was to improve and expand a young and growing farmers' market through concentrated producer-to-consumer promotion and marketing activities. A secondary project goal was to increase sales among participating farmers through the enhancement of market infrastructure.

Objectives:
The project objectives were:
1. To achieve an average of 70 online orders per week, making it possible for the market to become self-sustaining. - We did not achieve this objective. The market actually decreased their online orders this past year to an average of 23 per week, mostly due to a very poor growing season. However, the average size of each online market order increased so that the market did not experience the same decrease in revenue.

2. To increase the number of vendors by 10, to a total of 27 vendors. - While we did not achieve this goal, we did come close. The market lost two key vendors at the beginning of the year, taking the total down to 15. However, over the course of the 2013, the CSFM added eight additional vendors, taking the total number of vendors to 23.

3. To draw vendors selling fruit and baked goods, thereby increasing the variety available. - We happily achieved this goal. The CSFM added three vendors selling fruit to the market and two selling baked goods. Additionally, one of the veteran vendors began selling baked goods as a way to supplement the poor produce crop of the 2013 season.

4. To increase on-site sales by approximately 50%, to a total of $30,000 for the 2013 season. - We do not track this number, therefore, it will only be estimated by surveys with vendors. - Due to the poor weather and growing season, we did not achieve this goal. However, we are happy to report that despite these challenges, the CSFM achieved approximately the same amount of on-site revenue in 2013 as it did in 2012. Since there was much less on-site participation by vendors, this is a big accomplishment. One on-site vendor reported a 65% increase in onsite sales.

5. To double online sales to a total of $43,000 for the 2013 season. - Once again, due to the poor growing season, we did

not achieve this goal. The online market revenue decreased from approximately $21,300 to $20,350.70. However, since the overall number of online orders decreased by one third, this decrease of only $1,000 in revenue indicates that the average size of the each online order actually grew.

Activities:

Project activities included the following:

1. Original Activity: Advertise CSFM through traditional media venues, such as newspapers, signs, and fliers. These include six (2ft x6ft) banner signs, four ¼ page advertisements in the Crossville Life magazine, eight advertisements(size: 8 column inches) in each of the following newspapers – Crossville Chronicle, Fairfield Glade Sun, and Lake Tansi Smoke Signals -, and 3,000 fliers.

To fulfill this activity, Downtown Crossville, Inc. did the following:

Purchased six single-face 2ft. By 6ft. banners. These banners were placed at strategic locations around town - four at major intersections and two a block away from the market site to direct traffic to the market. A photo of one of these signs in attached.

Purchased the equivalent of four ¼ page advertisements in the Crossville Life magazine. CSFM vendors had very little produce to offer during the opening month of May due to a very wet spring which flooded out many crops. Therefore, it was decided with Crossville Life magazine staff that an equivalent purchase of an ½ page advertisement in the June/July issue and a ¼ page advertisement in both the August/September issue and the October /November issue would better suit the market and would provide equivalent advertising for the same price. A copy of one of these advertisements is attached.

Purchased eight months of advertising from each of the following newspapers - the Crossville Chronicle, the Fairfield Glade Sun, and the Lake Tansi Smoke Signals. These advertisements were each eight column inches in size and appeared during the first week of the month in the expanded Tuesday edition of the paper, prior to the first Thursday market of each month. The advertisements started in April 2013 and ran through November 2013. A copy of one of these advertisements is attached.

Purchased 2,500 rack cards from A to Z printing in place of 3,000 fliers. After meeting with the market manager and the printing company in late winter/early spring of 2013, the printing company informed us that businesses usually get better and more professional exposure by distributing rack cards instead of the traditional 8inx11in flier. They could also, they informed us, provide us with a similar number of rack cards for a similar price. Therefore, Downtown Crossville, Inc. and the CSFM chose the rack cards with good results. We began distributing rack cards in April 2013 and continued that distribution until the market closed the first week of December.

2. Original Activity: Advertise CSFM through non-traditional venues, such as digital billboards, online ad placement, and radio. These include three digital billboard truck sessions, one and ¼ weeks' worth of advertising on a digital billboard, and 93 days of online advertising with the Crossville Chronicle.

To fulfill this activity, Downtown Crossville, Inc. did the following:

Hired the digital billboard truck from the local business Flynn Signs for three business days, one each in June, August, and October. The graphic designer at Flynn Signs used the market logos and illustrations to create a flashing sign that advertised the CSFM hours and location. The truck was parked in a strategic location downtown from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on all three of those days.

Hired a digital billboard slots at two major intersections in Crossville for a key week in June from local digital media company Flynn Signs. After discussing the digital billboard advertising with Flynn Signs, it was decided that to give

the market better exposure, we would place the graphic advertisement on two digital billboards at 1/8 rather than one digital billboard at ¼. This strategic placement expanded the market exposure to the Fairfield Glade community, an audience that did not regularly see CSFM advertising. Also, the digital billboard marketing was pushed back to June, from the original May date, due to the poor crop yield in May. The advertisement ran from Friday through Thursday.

By working with the Crossville Chronicle, we were able to purchase eight, rather than three, months of online advertising. For a very reasonable price, the Crossville Chronicle advertised the CSFM online from April through November on the Crossville Chronicle website.

Purchased three weeks of radio spot advertising with local radio conglomerate PEG Broadcasting. One week of advertising took place each in June, August, and November. The stations on which the CSFM was advertised include 102.5WOW Country, Mix99.3, WAEW Talk Radio 96.9FM/1330AM, and 1490WCSV Sports Radio. The script for the radio spot has been attached. The PEG Broadcasting website is http://www.pegbroadcasting.com/

3. Original Activity: Provide CSFM with infrastructure improvements. Including 50 chairs, 25 tables, and 10 tents.

To fulfill this activity, Downtown Crossville, Inc. did the following:

Purchased 50 folding chairs and 25 high quality folding tables for the market from Lowe's, for a price lower than was originally expected.

Purchased the equivalent of 10 tents from Shelterlogic, Inc. Originally, Downtown Crossville, Inc. was going to purchase ten 10ft x 10ft tents. However, during the planning meeting in late winter, it was decided that the market would benefit from some larger tents since we had a few vendors that had very large stalls. Therefore, Downtown Crossville, Inc. purchased six 10ft x 10ft tents and two 10ft x 20ft tents. These tents provided market vendors with the same amount of covered space, while better meeting CSFM needs.

After purchasing this equipment and starting the market season, it was discovered that while the vendors really enjoyed the tents, chairs, and tables, it was difficult to transfer the equipment from the storage unit to the market. Therefore, Downtown Crossville, Inc. applied to the FMPP for a change in budget that would utilize the money saved on tables and chairs to purchase two carts to haul the equipment from storage unit to market site. This budget change was granted and Downtown Crossville, Inc. purchased two carts from Northern Tool, Inc. in Chattanooga, Tennessee for the CSFM. Downtown Crossville, Inc. then had the carts customized with railings to hold the tall loads.

4. Original Activity: Institute an evaluation plan and program measurement matrices. This will include a vendor survey taken in May, August, and November of the 2013 market season.

To fulfill this activity, Downtown Crossville, Inc. did the following:

Downtown Crossville, Inc. developed a vendor survey and distributed it to vendors in June, September, and November. The dates of the survey were pushed back to reflect the bad weather suffered by the farmers in the early part of the year. The results of the survey revealed much about the market and the current advertising practices. A survey sample has been attached.

The program measurement matrices developed included a comparison of the following numbers from the 2012 market season to the 2013 market season: number of vendors online, number of vendors on-site, number of online orders, types of goods offered at the market both online and on-site, total sales in dollars online, and total sales in dollars on-site (estimated). These matrices will be continued in following seasons to measure the market's continued progress and growth.

5. Original Activity: Recruit local talent to provide entertainment events during market hours at no charge.

To fulfill this activity, Downtown Crossville, Inc. did the following:

This was the most difficult activity. Most local groups or individuals were not willing to exhibit their talent for no pay. However, we did succeed in having a local high school group do chalk drawings, a local potter exhibit his pottery for a number of weeks, and a painter exhibit his work for a number of weeks.

In addition to this, we were successful in coordinating a number of activities in conjunction with the market which drew large crowds. The annual food festival, Taste of Crossville, took place just across the street from the market and began during market hours. This local festival draws crowds of more than 700. Additionally, the Caboose opening, celebrating the restoration of an historical train caboose, took place on a Thursday night in June to coincide with the market. Lastly, Downtown Crossville, Inc started "First Thursdays." On First Thursdays, the Shanks Art Center offers free exhibits across the street from the CSFM, downtown businesses stay open later than normal, and Downtown Crossville, Inc offers walking tours of downtown Crossville.

Accomplishments:

Downtown Crossville, Inc and the Cumberland Sustainable Farmers' market accomplished the following in the last year:

1. The average number of weekly online orders decreased from 30 in 2012 to 21 in 2013. However, the market did increase the number of weeks it operated this year to 31 from 26 in previous years. This decrease in number of orders can partially be attributed to the poor growing season and the limited variety of produce available for a large part of the year.

2. Increased the total number of online vendors from 17 in 2012 to 23 in 2013. Additionally 10 vendors participated in the on-site market.

3. Increased the variety of products being sold at the market by adding vendors that sold fruits, baked goods and body care products not offered during the 2012 or any other previous season. These included organic blueberries, bar soap, mums, holiday cookies, and new varieties of artisanal breads. Additionally, the market secured two new meat vendors. One vendor offered chicken and turkey and the other offered beef, milk, and eggs. While these were not new products for the market, their presence is a large draw for the market and increased attendance. Overall, three vendors sold fruit and three sold baked goods.

4. Estimated on-site sales remained steady at $15,000 in 2012 and 2013. However, there was regular on-site vendor participation this year than last due to the poor weather and growing season. Therefore, the vendors that did sell on-site experienced a significant increase in sales. One vendor reported no less than a 65% increase in sales! When put together with their online earnings, that vendor experienced over 52% growth at the CSFM in one year.

5. Online market sales decreased from just over $21,000 in 2012 to $20,350.70 in 2013. This decrease can partially be attributed to the poor growing season and the limited variety of produce available for a large part of the year. However, while the number of weekly orders dropped by almost one third this year, total online sales only dropped by approximately $1,000. This indicates that the average online order actually increased in size.

6. Purchased the following:
25 tables
50 chairs
8 tents - six 10x10 tents and two 20x10 tents
2 carts to haul the market equipment
2,500 rack cards - please see attached for an example

6 banner signs (2ftx6ft)
3 advertisements in the Crossville Life magazine - one ½ page in June/July, one ¼ page in August/September, and one ¼ page in October/November. - please see attached for an example
8 advertisements in the local newspapers, Crossville Chronicle, Fairfield Glade Sun, and Lake Tansi Smoke Signals. These advertisements were all 8 column inches and appeared in each paper each month from April through November. - please see attached for an example.
3 days of digital billboard truck advertising - one day each in June, August, and October
8 months of online advertising through the Crossville Chronicle
One week of digital billboard advertisements on two billboards at major intersections in Crossville at 1/8 slots - please see attached for an example
Three weeks of radio advertising on PEG Broadcasting's local radio stations. One week each in June, August, and November. Please see attached script.

Beneficiaries:

Direct Beneficiaries:

Market Vendors - Onsite vendors reported significantly increased sales at the market. While the number of online orders per week also decreased, the size of each order, on average, increased, also helping vendors with their sales. Vendors repeatedly mentioned in verbal contact and on the vendor surveys that the digital billboard truck brought in a lot of foot traffic to the market. Moreover, both veteran and new vendors stated that having tables, chairs, and tents at their disposal significantly reduced their market preparation time and made it easier to travel to and from the market.

Local Small Businesses - received nearly $5,000 in unexpected advertising revenue from the FMPP grant.

Customers - experienced increased product variety both online and on-site.

Indirect Beneficiaries:

Downtown Businesses - Due to the increased foot traffic on Thursday nights, many downtown businesses chose to stay open late on Thursdays.

The Community of Crossville - Had weekly access to fresh, reasonably-priced, organic and locally grown produce, meats, eggs, flowers, baked goods, and dairy products. Customers who visited downtown for the market each week also were more likely to shop at other local businesses and to support the local economy. Farmers who visited Crossville each week for the market were also more likely to do their shopping while in town and support the local economy. For instance, on farm family reported frequently a local pizzeria every week after market hours as a treat for their children.

Lessons Learned:

- **What unanticipated challenges were encountered?**

Downtown Crossville, Inc. and the CSFM encountered three unanticipated challenges during the 2013 market season. Of these challenges, one was minor and two were major. The minor challenge was how to transport the tables, chairs and tents to the market each week from their storage location across the street. This problem was solved by altering the budget of the FMPP grant to allow us to purchase two carts to haul equipment safely to the market from the storage room.

The CSFM encountered both of its major challenges during the first month of the market season. The most difficult

challenge had to do with the weather in our region of Tennessee. The spring of 2012 in middle Tennessee was uncommonly cool and rainy. It was so rainy, in fact, that all of our vegetable farmers encountered significant problems with their early crops. This was very damaging to the beginning of the market, as vendors did not have much produce to sell until months into the market. As you have seen in the beginning of this report, this challenge significantly impacted our sales goals. We faced this challenge by putting off significant advertising ventures until June when the produce availability had improved. Unfortunately, the difficulties caused by the weather haunted the market and the vendors throughout the season.

The second major challenge stemmed directly from the weather-related difficulty. Due to the unseasonable weather and excessive rain, one anchor vendor who had been with the market since its inception stopped his farming efforts entirely and another anchor vendor did not have enough produce to set up an on-site stall. Therefore, the CSFM lost one vendor from the online portion of the market and two from the on-site portion. This was very significant to the market since it reduced the available produce and the number of vendors. However, we dealt with it by recruiting new vendors and encouraging all vendors to set up at the market as often as possible.

- **What unexpected positive results occurred?**

CSFM experienced four unexpected positive results this year.

The first is that we discovered, without a doubt, which forms of advertising work for our market and which did not. We had lots of success with the digital billboard truck and the rack cards. The digital billboard truck brought in traffic off the street at a moment's notice, while the rack cards were small enough that customers kept them for the long-term instead of folding them up and discarding them like they did the full-size paper filers in the past.

The second is that our efforts helped us bring in new vendors who were committed to setting up on-site and also selling online all year long. These vendors sold meat, baked goods, and body care products and set up week after week after week throughout the entire season even when many of the veteran vendors did not.

The third was that having market tables allowed us to have a much more well-organized, streamlined, and uniform set up for our online market order pick up area. Customers and vendors reported that this part of the market went more smoothly than it had ever before.

The fourth, and most important, was that vendors who did set up on-site reported increased sales. One vendor reported a more than 60% increase in on-site sales and an overall increase in combined sales of over 52%. This increase in sales indicates that in future years, when produce is more plentiful vendors will have no trouble meeting their sales goals.

- **"If I had it to do over, I would have…"**

If I had to do it over I would alter the way in which I spent my advertising dollars. I would put more money into the advertising efforts that worked well - the digital billboard truck, the digital billboards, the rack cards, and the advertisements in the *Crossville Life* magazine. I would eliminate entirely the advertising dollars spent on signs, radio, and online spots. From our surveys and vendor input, those three methods of advertising didn't bring any money into the market. I would also continue to advertise with the newspaper, but I would alter my strategy. Instead of taking out a small advertisement every months for eight months, I would buy one or two much larger advertisements, up to a half-page in size and put them in the newspapers at strategic times. For instance, a large ad at the beginning of the market and a large ad in the early fall when farmers have many new

crops.

In addition to this I would have put some money toward securing entertainment. Since most artists and musicians want to be paid, which is understandable, it would be nice to be able to hire them for the market. I would also allocate money, time, and effort toward three "Customer Appreciation Days" per year, one during each season. On these days I would have entertainment, children's activities, and vendor specials.

- **What specific advice do you have for others taking on a similar project work?**

Our advice to others taking on a similar project is to consolidate his or her advertising dollars. I spread out my advertising dollars over a wide array of advertising methods, hoping to canvas the largest audience possible. However, this was not as beneficial as I had hoped since two or three methods that I chose didn't bring ANY additional traffic to the CSFM. Also, I would advise any other markets in similar situations not necessarily to listen to conventional advertising wisdom. Two of the ways that were least profitable for our market were online and radio, both advertising ways that traditionally have pretty good results.

My other advice is to have fun and stick with it. It is an overwhelming task to try to build up a small farmers market. The payoffs in community benefits and improved health are worth it, however.