

Farmers Market Promotion Program
Final Performance Report
For the Period of October 1, 2012 – March 31, 2015

Date: June 30, 2015
Recipient Name: Market Central, Inc.
Project Title: Marketing and Expanding Access to Market Central Programs
Grant Number: 12-25-G 1646
Project Location: Charlottesville, VA
Amount Awarded: \$76,020
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Goals and Objectives:

Market Central's goals are to increase the effectiveness of its programs to enhance the community's support of the local farmers market and to work toward organizational sustainability. We plan to use our programs to bring greater awareness of the benefits of farmers market to the community, and encourage community support through marketing and outreach.

The Healthy Foods Coalition, a sub-grantee, from 9/30/2012 through 4/31/2014 planned to create small cooperative canning businesses for low-income members of the Charlottesville community. The project would provide economic support for local farmers by purchasing produce "seconds" in bulk to make preserved products to sell at the market, and grow viable businesses for low income individuals. Funding supported education and training in production, marketing and sales. For two production seasons the entrepreneurs would receive ongoing soft-skills support.

In spring of 2014 the Healthy Foods Coalition dropped out of the grant. The goals were amended to provide job skills, training and certification to community members in canning and food preservation, whether for life skills or in preparation to start a business. Business skills were offered to both canners and market vendors.

Activities:

Activities to achieve grant goals.

2013 Activities

Jan. – Mar. 2013 pre-market opening

Market Central hired and began training a part-time Market Specialist, to serve as program director for MC programs. Market Central's only other staff member was the SNAP/debit clerk. Market Specialist attended 5 meetings with board and 1 training at the Center for Non-profit Excellence on web site design to prepare for marketing and outreach.

Jan. 28, 2013 participated in the Albemarle County Agritourism Conference to teach, learn and conduct marketing and outreach

Two board members attended a non-profit sustainability training to learn about the life-cycle of non-profits and strategies for sustainable growth and management.

April 2013: Market opens, MC sets up booth for 34 weeks to promote programs, advocate for market, and provide SNAP, incentive coupons, and debit tokens. Program director works approximately 20 hours/week at \$20/hour. The SNAP clerk works approximately 15 hours/week at \$14 per hour. The position includes disbursing tokens at the market, data collection and recording, reimbursing vendors for token sales, and monitoring that the program is adhering to regulations.

Market Specialist attends meeting to plan newsletter to publish each month of the market season.

May- Sept. 2013 Market Central provides weekly SNAP, incentive coupons, and debit tokens on Wednesdays at the mid-week Farmers in the Park market.

May 2013: Market Greens salad demo featuring home-made salad dressings and recipes.

June 2013: The Board and Market Specialist developed The 2013 Friends of the Market strategy to raise the public's awareness of our programs that benefit the market. Earlier in the season, we won an American Society of Architects contest to receive free graphic design expertise in logo design and branding. The logo will be used on both promotional and information cards, letters, our website, and program materials. We ordered branded market tote bags to use for farm tour volunteers over two years. Some of the tote bags were distributed as a thank you for a donation. In that case, the cost of the totebag did not use FMPP funds. We also ordered market stickers and notepads to give away for the purposes of promotion and awareness raising. We held a one-day Friends of the Market day event with media coverage, a demo and tasting of vegetable roll-ups using market produce. We also started a vendor product info board at the market for vendors to advertise specials at the market on the board.

Market Central continues to collect email addresses at market so supporters can receive the Market Central newsletter and news up-dates about the market.

July 2013: MC sponsors 3 cooking classes: Family Ties and Pies; Free Union Grass Farms Chickens; Tomato canning class with Leni Sorenson. Two instructors are vendors; Leni is a well-known local food historian and homesteader.

August 2013: Market Central begins marketing and ticket sales for the Meet Yer Eats farm tour featuring vendors from City Market. A street banner was hung across a major street downtown. Radio ads, interviews, newspaper and magazine ads, and public events listings were previously arranged to publish the information in a timely manner. Volunteers are recruited to serve at the farms for crowd management and to collect data or sell car passes on site.

Sept 2013: Labor Day, Meet Yer Eats farm tour. Poll ticket holders, volunteers and vendors for feedback post tour. Incorporate feedback into next year's plans.

Oct. 2013: Last cooking class of season: Farmstead Ferments kraut making

Oct. 31, 2013 the Market Central Market Specialist resigned to go to a full-time job.

Nov. 2013 – April 2014 the "regular" farmers market is closed, although Market Central continued to set up for the Holiday Market, Nov.-mid December.

2014 Activities

2/24/2014: Pre-market opening: distributed farm tour promotional materials at the annual vendor meeting so vendors can think about participating in 2014.

Early March 2014: conducted interviews for the 2014 season Market Specialist. Began training for the April opening of the Market.

April-Dec. 2014: Market Central set up every Saturday at City Market

April through June 2014: The City Market community was in the midst of a campaign to establish a permanent home for the farmers market. As part of the role of Friends of the Market advocate, Market Central compiled and distributed information to vendors and customers to contrast and compare 4

different design proposals for the future market. MC collaborated with city leaders, vendors, designers, and the public to sponsor 3 meetings/ information sessions. The activities culminated with the City Council choosing one of the four designs.

May 6, 2014: MC participated in a community wide non-profit fundraising campaign sponsored by the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation called Give 4 Good. It offered an opportunity for matching pledges, and also allowed collaborative marketing with many local non-profits. Market Central did not use grant funds for this activity, but the activity contributes to post-grant organizational sustainability.

May – Sept 2014: Set up every Wed. at the Farmers in the Park market providing information and SNAP, incentive coupons, and Debit tokens.

Food Education program: Market Central sponsored five demos at the market, and one class off-site during the 2014 market season.

May 30, 2014 Strawberry tasting: 6 vendors, 5-6 “cultivars” of strawberries from different regions of VA. Blind tasting to determine favorite.

June 2014: Farmstead Ferments kraut demo using market produce from 9 vendors

July 2014: Peach demo using market peaches, tomatoes, and basil

August 2014:

1. Eggplant Stacks and Corn Salsa demo
2. Chef at the Market demo featuring products from farm participants of Meet Yer Eats and chef from local catering company, A Pimento.
3. Began marketing and ticket sales for 2014 Meet Yer Eats farm tour, same activities as 2013.

Sept. 2014: Labor Day Meet Yer Eats, 12 participating farms across 6 counties

[Meet Yer Eats Farm Tour](#). Through this link you will find information about the 2015 tour, the maps, and participating vendors. It will demonstrate the graphic design work that goes into coordinating the tour information so it is usable for visitors.

Oct. 2014: Ula Tortilla tortilla-making class and tortilla based dish

Healthy Food Coalition/Market Central Canning Project activities:

The Healthy Food Coalition managed the canning project from October 2012 until April 2014.

After The Healthy Foods Coalition dropped out, Market Central found a canning instructor and requested a budget amendment and grant extension. In August 2014, Market Central re-started the Canning Project and began to teach canning and business skills to local students and market vendors. The project ended March 31, 2015.

Canning Project Activities

Oct.-Dec. 2012

The Vinegar Hill Canning Co-op had 4 canners and had been canning with gleaned produce from the Market in 2012. The canners sold their products at the Holiday Market and winter food fairs.

2013

Winter Marketing and Fundraising activities: participated in a community food fair; conducted radio and newspaper interviews; participated in monthly Chamber of Commerce agritourism roundtable discussion; submitted product to the Piedmont Community College chef taste test

Jan.28, 2013: set up a booth at the Albemarle County Agritourism conference

Production activities:

March 2013: began the season’s canning; one canner selected as book-keeper; recruited 2 canning trainees

The canning co-op set up at Charlottesville City Market most Saturdays during the summer. Arranged to receive “seconds” from local farmers to get canning quality produce, much of which was donated. There were three canning production sessions.

Three canners and a representative of Healthy Food Coalition attended a four hour soft-skill business session administered by a consultant from a local non-profit. The session focused on the deep-seated emotional impact of racial prejudices, how the prejudices affect sales and successful selling techniques required to overcome them.

Late fall and winter of 2013 Kendra Hamilton took on the work of networking to recruit new canners. She interviewed new and old contacts in search of renewing space in a certified kitchen. New rules at the health department caused the old kitchen to no longer offer the canners canning space. Kendra also worked on a plan and schedule for produce availability and recipes for the coming year.

Winter: 2 hours promoting at events

6 hours recruiting new canners

12 hours research and proposal writing

12 hours outreach to former members and partners

Spring 2014 Kendra took a job in South Carolina and left the Healthy Food Coalition

Late April 2014:

Healthy Foods Coalition officially disbands the Vinegar Hill Canning co-op and drops out of grant

May-June 2014: Market Central board and staff rewrite canning project portion of grant, applied for grant amendment and extension

Aug. 2014: received grant amendment and extension for Market Central Canning Project: Canning for Life and Business

Advertised Canning Project to local citizens, market customers, and vendors; at Virginia Extension, Piedmont Virginia Community College Culinary Program, the Market Central Website, Jefferson-Madison library jobs board, City of Promise, neighborhood associations, restaurants, the PB and J fund, churches, UVA Food Collaborative, word of mouth, etc., to look for prospective students

Aug. 5, 2014 First Canning Project Class: Peaches and tomatoes;

Aug. 12, 2014: tomato and peach salsa;

Aug. 26, 2014: tomato ketchup

Sept. 16, 2014: curried squash, okra, and bread and butter pickles

Sept. 23, 2014: bruschetta and pizza sauce

Sept. 30, 2014: jams and jellies, hot pepper jelly with pectin; ginger-pear jam

Oct. 7, 2014: chutneys: apple pear, and tomato

Oct. 14, 2014: pressure canning with Leni Sorenson

Oct. 21, 2014 The Happy Tomato canning business seminar with Liz James, proprietor of a local tomato sauce company started at the farmers market.

Oct. 28, 2014: Farmstead Ferments class on kraut making by business owner Dawn Story

Nov. 4, 2014: Field Trip to Indigo House, a homestead that produces and preserves food

Nov. 11, 2014: Field Trip to Middle Fork Farm to look at producing and preserving strawberries and evaluating 3 strawberry jam recipes.

Nov. 18-Dec.13, 2014: Stage 2 of the canning project started. 3 dedicated students began to produce Apple Pie jam to be sold at the holiday market. The crew canned and labeled 12 cases of the product and manned the booth at the holiday market on Dec.6 and 13, and again at the Valentine’s Day 2015 market. Because it was the end of the fresh market produce season, producing and selling the Apple Pie jam was the end of the canning project.

In January 2015, the business skills development portion of the program began.

January 6, 2015 “Navigating Virginia’s Food Laws” Ian Pasquarelli, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Albemarle/Charlottesville area office discussed the rules and regulations of starting a small food business in Virginia, as well as the resources available for help.

January 13, 2015 noon and 6:00 p.m. “Branding and Packaging – Maximizing the Visibility and Purchase”

This interactive and informative talk was presented by Glenn Lock of College Company Design and TachLock Group. Glenn has over 20 years of consumer and business marketing expertise and offered a fun and engaging presentation about how to bring products to life to capture the attention and interest of consumers/retailers with the objective of inspiring purchase. Students left the program with actionable ideas that could be applied vendor’s own products and business efforts.

Tuesday, January 20, Noon and Tuesday, January 27, 2015 6:30 pm: “Small Business Bookkeeping 101”

Led by Libby Edwards-Allbaugh of The Tax Ladies. This seminar highlighted the importance of having a bookkeeping system and answered related questions on the topic. Students were Charlottesville City Market Vendors and participants in Market Central Canning Project.

Thursday, February 19, 6:00-8:00 pm and Tuesday, February 24, 2015 1:00-3:00 pm (rescheduled) “DIY Web Design”. Designing your own website is no longer just for the technologically advanced. Students came to learn how to utilize the services and templates of websites such as WordPress to make their place on the internet. Led by Daniel Willson of HackCville.

Wednesday, March 11, 2015 6:00 pm: “Internet Marketing & Social Media” Dr. Gustavo Ferreira of Virginia Tech, Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics gave a talk on Internet Marketing and Social Media for small businesses. The goal of the workshop was to help smaller businesses understand the basics of a successful web marketing strategy. The presentation included practical exercises and discussions among participants, and the following topics were covered:

- The Importance of Web marketing
- Website (content & design)
- Search engine marketing
- Web marketing and the Virginia Wine Industry
- Geomarketing

Accomplishments:

Accomplishments for Market Central Programs

Two Market Specialists were hired, and trained, one for 2013 programs, one for 2014. (Funds also went to the 2013 and 2014 Token System Clerk.) Three program coordinators gained temporary part-time employment, along with two canning instructors and two book-keepers over the grant period. Eight canners received canning stipends, 7 students received Servsafe training, and one student received a scholarship towards a Better Processing Certificate from UC Davis.(she was successful). Some of the students were vendors or worked for vendors at the market so the results of their training will benefit the market.

Three categories of programs were implemented at the market over the course of the grant. The Friends of the Market objectives were to use branding and promotional activities to bring awareness of our support of the market and non-profit status. Our SNAP program received in-kind support from the Piedmont Environmental Council in the form of an announcement in the “Buy Fresh Buy Local” publication that went to 70,000 addresses. The Virginia Department of Social Services distributed information about the availability of SNAP benefits at the market. In 2013 the newsletter increased 50 contacts and farmers and customers began using Market Central for a communication hub. During the 2014 market design

competition, the designers and some city officials took advantage of our familiarity with farmers market research and asked us to host meetings with vendors and designers.

Board members or staff attended 3 training sessions at the Center for Non-profit Excellence.

Two members attended the Wholesome Wave double value coupon program convention in 2013 to learn about incentive coupon programs. (did not use FMPP funds).

Over the 2.5 years of the grant, MC conducted the 5th and 6th annual Meet Yer Eats farm tour that takes place on Labor Day, involving the farmers who sell at City Market. The visitors received educational programs at the farms, such as Permaculture talks, hay rides, walking tours, tastings, interaction with farm animals and crops, and other on-site events. Both on-line and hard copy maps are created that visitors use to plan their tour. Sponsorships are solicited and the sponsors' names appear on the map. Advertising on the radio, print media, magazines, and distribution of posters in libraries, public and private spaces generates car pass sales on line and at the market. A giant banner is strung across a city street. A group of volunteers is recruited to help at the farms and with data collection. Insurance is procured and then on Labor Day, ticket holders drive around to 6-7 counties visiting farms.

Meet Yer Eats farm tour: 2013- approximately 1037 attendees, 2014 approx. 680. (This data is not too reliable because visitors don't go to all the farms and we don't know which ones they go to. We only count the first visitors at the farms to avoid counting a visitor twice. If the volunteer is not keeping track, the visitors may not get counted.)

The number of car passes sold is another way to track attendance, although it only counts groups and not individuals since a ticket is for a vehicle, not per person.

The Meet Yer Eats farm tour is also partially funded by local sponsors. The expenses are also considered when comparing the Meet Yer Eats performance.

Meet Yer Eats ticket sales, sponsorships and expenses:

2012 (benchmark) ticket sales: \$3,570; sponsorships: \$2,700; expenses: \$3,880

2013 ticket sales: \$3,983; sponsorships: \$ 350; expenses: \$7,282.83

2014 ticket sales: \$4,331; sponsorships: \$1,970; expenses: \$4,224.12

Food Education

Market Central conducted seasonal demos for customers to taste farmers market produce, shared recipes using the produce, and conducted cooking and food preservation classes taught by some of the vendors, local food experts, or small businesses that got their start at the market.

2013 Cooking/canning classes: 5 demonstrations; 4 classes (2 more demos and one more class than 2012)

2014: 5 market demos, 1 cooking class

The Vinegar Hill Canning Co-op started out with 4 canners. They recorded sales of \$1600 for the 2012 season and received a donation of 100 pounds of apples from Horse and Buggy to can applesauce. After the leader died, 2 canners left the program. In early 2013, the remaining canner took the lead canner and book-keeper position. Two more canners were trained in "Low Acid Canning" through VA Extension service. The group attended 8 hours of training in canning business operations by Virginia Food Works and participated in three production canning sessions during the canning year, and held three business meetings. In 2013, the Vinegar Hill Canning Co-op completed 28 days of Saturday sales at the Charlottesville City Market and took in \$451.00.

2014 Canning Project: 9 Canning Project classes, 2 Field Trips, 3 production classes, 2 sessions selling at the Holiday market and 1 session at the Feb. 2015 winter market. Canning project income: \$273.31. The funds will be used for 2015 tomato and peach canning classes.

2015 grant extension session:

1 canning business seminar taught by Virginia Cooperative Extension, and 7 market business skills development classes taught by local small business professionals. Two of the classes were second sessions on the same topic.

The canning for life skills classes started out with 15 students enrolled. The canning skills class attendance was stable, with 0 to 2 absentees per class. The canning for production portion of the program had 3 students (one was a board member who helped with data. Three students received Servsafe training, two students received stipends for their participation, and 1 student took the Better Processing course through the University of California, Davis.

Beneficiaries:

The grant activities benefited Market Central, the vendors, market customers and the City of Charlottesville.

Market Central benefited by being able to fund the positions of Market Specialist, canning project program coordinator and canning project instructor position to implement programs. Our programs benefitted from the funding for supplies and services. More than 17 small business were contracted to provide instruction or services such as printing, graphic design, or insurance. At least 25 vendors and local businesses benefited from our purchasing various supplies and ingredients. MC also benefitted from the pro-bono services of VA Cooperative Extension and Ivy Group Design. We were able to generate name recognition which was important because so many customers and vendors assume the city is funding our programs and services. When the public was made aware of our non-profit status and the benefits of our programs, they were more inclined to participate or donate. Our ongoing SNAP and incentive activities benefited indirectly because we could include information about it on Friends of the Market rack cards, website, newsletters, and communications with partner organizations, etc. SNAP families benefited from being able to use their benefits at the market, and receive matching incentives from another grant. Vendors enjoyed higher sales from the SNAP and debit token sales. Market Central benefitted from learning about non-profit management. We were able to use the grant funding as an investment in our programs while we learned about non-profit sustainability. It was also beneficial to our organization to be able to say that our programs were worthwhile enough for the federal government to invest in us. The market customers and community benefitted from learning about the variety of healthy food produced by local farmers. Hundreds of customers tasted unembellished products such as strawberries, or sampled products in recipes such as peach and basil salad, eggplants stacks, or varieties of kraut. In some demos, the vendor benefited because they demonstrated their own product. In the kraut, eggplant, and pork belly demo, Market Central provided the ingredients from other vendors to be made into dishes. Demos typically featured products from 6-10 different vendors. We sponsored 2 demos with local chefs creating recipes using vendor produce. In those cases, vendors, chefs and customers benefited. Sixty community members benefitted from being able to learn how to cook and preserve local produce. The vendors benefitted by having their produce used in various dishes. In the canning classes, we were often able to buy bulk purchases of seconds, food that would otherwise not be sold. Five vendors supplied the canning classes with seconds and/or bulk. The canners benefitted from a lower price. Two community non-profit kitchens also benefitted: the Haven, and the Bread and Roses Ministry of the Trinity Episcopal Church, from whom we rented kitchen space.

The farm tour benefits the market community in several ways. Visitors benefit from the education: the children learn about the source of their food, market and garden enthusiasts learn about production methods, and learn to appreciate the hard work that goes into growing food. In turn the farmers gain customer loyalty and support, because the customers have seen first-hand the quality and enormity of the

work. Often, the farmers benefit by selling produce at the farm tours. The farmers and customers also develop a personal relationship, which does not happen in a grocery store and also develops more of a feeling of responsibility from the farmer to the customer. Now the farmer knows who is eating his/her produce. The farm tour also produces competition, which benefits the customer. The farmers have to keep their quality up and prices reasonable in order to compete for sales. Each year 12-20 farmers benefit, along with other vendors such as Rock Barn meat producers, or Pantheon Popsicles, who partner with the farms providing food-related programming at the tours. The state and counties also promotes farm tours as agritourism events.

The city in general benefitted from the grant because Market Central was able to provide programs and customer service that enriched the market as a place to buy food and expanded access to the market to SNAP recipients. Our programs provide marketing that brings in more customers, and customer loyalty. We research and advocate for best practices at markets through memberships in the Center for Non-profit Excellence, and the Farmers Market Coalition. Our market benefits from the information learned and shared and from new ideas such as SNAP and incentives that are brought to the market. A great market is good for the community in terms of an identification for the city and support of healthy local food and local economics, and it's a great place for people to come together.

Lessons Learned:

Administering a 2.5 year grant was an immense challenge and great learning experience. Some people will probably never want to do it again, but Market Central has become stronger and more competent from the process.

We have learned that organization and teamwork is needed to succeed. Sometimes we were a bit over our heads in this project.

1. Become an expert at collecting data. Count and record anything that can be counted, from expenses, to numbers of students, to numbers of participants, etc. Even the weather will have an impact on farm tour visitors, customers at the market, and what the customers buy.
2. Market Central became an employer. We had to learn how to collect taxes, deductions, make quarterly reports, do payroll etc. We were not prepared for the level of work of grant administration as a job in itself. For the future, we realize we need to budget adequately for grant administration, and not just program execution. For this, our first grant, all of the grant administration was volunteer! We lost some opportunities because we were not as organized as we needed to be. Another learning curve of being an employer was in the hiring process. We had as many as 20 applicants for each offering of the Market Specialist position. The first year our hire was quite good but he needed more work hours so he moved on. The second hire was not as competent. In hindsight, we should have started the hiring process earlier, and checked all references more thoroughly.

3. Budgets: it is hard to estimate what you are going to need and how things will turn out in reality. Because of unforeseen obstacles (the lead canner's death, difficulty in finding leadership in the Healthy Food Coalition; and - it seems improbable - but the City Market building burned down on the second to last market day of 2013, destroying about \$500 in value of Market Central supplies, such as banners, tables, our market tent, info cards, etc. that were funded by the FMPP grants!) Market Central ended up taking over the sub-grantee's program. We did not have enough time to thoroughly evaluate the need or public demand of the "product" (canning business skills) and therefore, we were not able to recruit enough long-term students to use most of the funding for training students and production. The type of training required meant students would need to make large time commitments, and few students could rearrange jobs and schedules on such short notice. We had to rework remaining VHCC funding to pay for

the Market Central Canning Project canning instructor and different expenses. Optimally, organizations should test the market for demand and do advance recruiting before offering programs. Organizations should also be aware of the accountabilities of sub-grantees and have policies in place if a sub-grantee should drop out.

In some cases, what we budgeted for was not actually needed, whereas other areas needed more funding. For example, Market Central did not need as much funding for kitchen rental. In 2013, we conducted 4 classes in rented commercial kitchens, one more than the previous year. The Board planned for an increase in classes based on student response in 2011 and 2012, but the actual enrollments did not reach the projected enrollment. We noted that cooking classes had increased in the area within a short time frame. Charlottesville Cooking School, the Piedmont Culinary Institute, Transition Charlottesville and VA Cooperative Extension were offering cooking and canning classes, maybe diluting the student pool for our classes. After cancelling several classes in 2013, we decided to offer more demos in 2014 since they benefit more market customers and vendors. Therefore we did not use as much of the kitchen rental funding. What we did not use for kitchen rental, we applied to storage and co-work space rental.

On the other hand, our costs for graphic design, printing, and marketing exceeded our budget. In graphic design, the wages were higher than the BLS level. The program director made the decision to stick with the original farm tour website and map graphic designer, because they contributed the first year of farm tour graphics pro bono. The board will have to make more cost-conscious decisions for the future. In addition, we did not adequately account for the costs of outreach through Constant Contact, Adobe and Facebook boosts which were essential for farm tour, fund-raising, and disseminating information. Although we did not specifically designate funding for board training, we had unused stipends and funding for canning students, so we applied some of it to board training, since one of our expressed goals was to achieve sustainability. Board education will help us achieve the goal of being a sustainable organization.

As difficult as it was, dealing with the grant extension and budget amendment resulted in some programs that were the most beneficial and popular with the vendors: the small business skills development classes. It turns out that the vendors most needed and appreciated help with book-keeping and accounting, as evidenced by 2 sessions attended by 12 and 20 students, respectively. The other small business seminars were also well attended.

Administering this grant has helped Market Central grow as a non-profit organization. We have learned more about what it will take to be a sustainable viable, organization to continue to support our farmers market.

We are most appreciative that our federal government invests in organizations like us and believes in the value of what we are doing for our communities. We also commend the USDA AMS for your expertise and patience in helping us learn how to be accountable with a federal grant.

Thank you

The Market Central Board

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/hwjutcog2fm7udg/FMPP%20Compressed%20%28zipped%29%20Folder.zip?dl=0>