

The **North Olympic Peninsula Resource Conservation and Development Council** of Port Angeles, WA received **\$79,408** to implement a new EBT project, improve access to fresh food from local farms for citizens of rural Jefferson and Clallam Counties, and increase the economic viability of local farmers in the area.

[Final Report FY 10](#)

# Final Report for Grant #12-24-G-1204

## PROJECT TITLE

The Good Food Project: New EBT Project for Port Angeles Farmers Market and Improving Food Access for Underserved Communities in Clallam and Jefferson Counties, Washington

## GRANT DURATION

October 1, 2010-September 30, 2012

## TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDS ALLOCATED

\$79.408

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The intention for the project as stated in the project application was to improve access to fresh food from local farms for citizens of rural Jefferson and Clallam Counties and to increase the economic viability of local farmers markets in the area. Our original project description and goals included some components that were not funded through USDA FMPP. Objectives that were not funded included the collaboration with Jefferson County as well as outreach to seniors and tribal members. As funded, the project maintained the heart and intention of the original purpose, however the scope was narrowed to include promotional activities and outreach to low-income families in Clallam County, specifically focused on the Port Angeles Farmers Market and its customer base.

### *Agriculture on the North Olympic Peninsula*

Agriculture is a critical component to a healthy rural economy and environment in Clallam County. Clallam County is home to many small farms and two farmers markets. The mild climate of the Olympic Peninsula is conducive to year-round crop production, and the abundance of prime farmland and precipitation make agriculture in our community an important sector of our rural economy. The North Olympic Peninsula counties are home to 1.5% of Washington State's population, but 4% of its cropland.

The NOP RC&D recognizes farmers markets as key partners in the effort to support and strengthen local agriculture on the North Olympic Peninsula. Successful farmers markets are essential to the economic health of small farms and the restoration of a vibrant farm economy in Clallam County. This project will benefit one of the area's farmers markets that together represent approximately 15 local producers.

Through this project, the NOP RC&D partnered with the Port Angeles Farmers Market and First Step Family Support Center to expand the market's customer base to include low-income families with young children. Because of the demographics of this area, it is essential that local farmers markets reach out to low-income families in order for agricultural producers to build a strong customer base that is representative of our communities and provide residents with access to nutritious local food. The development of a more robust farmers market will increase the long-term economic viability for small local farms. Expanding the existing market program to reach new and underserved audiences will benefit both county residents and local farmers.

### ***Food Insecurity in Clallam County***

Clallam County occupies about 1700 square miles in the northwest corner of the United States. According to the 2010 census, the population is about 71,404. The county is isolated and rural. Over 18% of the population lives below 125% of the federal poverty level. The median age for the area (44) is nearly 10 years higher than Washington State. The median household income is about \$16,000 less than the state.

In Clallam County in 2009, a total of 8889 individuals received SNAP program assistance. Area food banks' records indicate they serve over 7,000 families each month. 63% of mothers who give birth in Clallam County are eligible for Medical and SNAP programs.

### ***Addressing Underutilized Resources through Critical Partnerships***

This project seeks to overcome the barriers identified for low-income people in utilizing these programs to access nutritious, local food. NOP RC&D is partnering with the Port Angeles Farmers Market and First Step Family Support Center following to address the barriers identified:

#### ***First Step Family Support Center (FSFCS)***

In 2009, FSFSC served 4,939 primarily low-income adults and children through a variety of programs including pre-natal health and nutrition classes to problem solving support with housing, transportation, and healthcare. Four days a week, FSFSC hosts a drop-in center where community members can socialize and access support services.

FSFSC also provides home-visiting services to low-income families with young children. Almost all of the clients who are served by First Step are eligible for WIC nutrition services and SNAP. FSFSC will partner with NOP RC&D and area farmers markets to increase the access of low-income clients to nutritious local food.

#### ***Port Angeles Farmers Market***

Established in 2001, the PAFM is a year-round food and craft market that has grown to approximately 25 vendors and over \$300,000 in gross sales per year in 2009. Sixty-three percent of the sales in 2009 were attributed to farm products including vegetables, grains, meats, and eggs. PAFM will partner with NOP RC&D to initiate a new EBT system at the market as well as create new marketing materials to promote local food accessibility to families in Clallam County.

## **PROJECT APPROACH**

The goals of the project will be accomplished through three project components:

- Installation of new EBT system at the Port Angeles Farmers Market (PAFM)
- Targeted and customized programs in partnership with First Step Family Support Center (FSFSC) to help low-income families purchase and utilize fruits and vegetables from local farms, and
- Creation of marketing materials and an advertising campaign that will aid multiple farmers markets in the area with their outreach.”

## **GOALS, OUTPUTS, and OUTCOMES**

### ***EBT/Credit/Debit Card Infrastructure for the PAFM:***

This component of the Good Food Project initiated a new EBT and Credit/Debit swipe card system at PAFM. Using FMPP funds, PAFM purchased a handheld wireless card

swipe machine and in April 2011 initiated a token system for EBT and credit/debit transactions. Other than a service charge for credit/debit transactions under \$10, the system was made available free of charge to both customers and vendors. This service proved to be extremely successful for vendors as well as for customers. Prior to initiating the system, PAFM researched other systems used by markets of similar size in Washington State. Based on this research, PAFM anticipated that they would see approximately \$10,000 in card transactions with 5% being EBT during the first year of the system, with an increase to \$15,000 during subsequent years. In fact PAFM has seen almost \$50,000 in card transactions in the last 12-month period with 12.5% of that coming from EBT. This has exceeded expectations many times over.

Despite the clear popularity of the token system at the Farmers Market, the market has seen a significant increase in the cost and complexity of their bookkeeping system. In previous years, their budget for bookkeeping services was \$50 per month and currently it is \$250 per month. Managing the token system involves a lot of small transactions and it is important to manage it carefully to avoid fraud and confusion. This was a cost that was not fully anticipated and will need to be budgeted in future years without grant support. That said, the market board and staff are committed to continuing to provide this service to both customers and vendors.

It is impossible to say what portion of the credit/debit transactions represent new sales that would not have been made without the system. But certainly 100% of the EBT sales represent new customers who would not otherwise been able to use their SNAP benefits at the Farmers Market.

#### General Promotions through Marketing and Advertisements

Over the course of the two-year grant period the PAFM was able to develop several new advertising resources using both design and production dollars from the FMPP grant.

These include:

- *What's in Season* brochure
- PAFM Rack Card
- Refrigerator magnet
- Three 3'x5' A-boards
- *Market Cookbook: Seasonal Recipes from the Olympic Peninsula*

These marketing and outreach materials will be an ongoing benefit to PAFM well beyond the period of grant funding. In addition to the printed advertising materials listed above, PAFM used FMPP grant funds to promote local foods in various forms of purchased advertising including newspaper, radio, local farm guides and chamber of commerce website.

#### Targeted Outreach

Market Mentor Program: The Market Mentor program was intended to bring new families to the Farmers Market. Home-visiting staff, employed by FSFSC, was encouraged to bring their clients to the Market for a tour. This was an idea that was challenging to get off the ground but ultimately proved to be quite effective. After a slow

start during the first year of the grant, it became clear that FSFSC would not be able to fully utilize the budgeted funds for this component as it was designed. A budget amendment request was made in early 2011 to redirect a portion of the Market Mentor salary funds to create (among other things) the Market Bucks program. Market Bucks provided \$10 in shopping coupons for up to 200 participants on Mentor Tours. Market Bucks were redeemable for fruits and vegetables on the day of the tour. Once the Market Bucks program was in place, Market Mentors were much more successful in motivating new customers to give the market a try. With \$10 for new customers to spend, the tours became a much more meaningful and well-used program.

By the end of the grant period the Market Mentor program had become a popular and well-utilized resource. In addition to Market Bucks, participants on tours were given a copy of the Market Cookbook containing family friendly seasonal recipes. During the tour, participants were introduced to farmers and other producers, encouraged to ask questions, request samples, and get cooking ideas from food producers. A total of 165 tours were taken over the 2 year period, 133 of those occurred after Market Bucks were initiated.

It is impossible to quantify the long-term impact on this program, but many tour participants have frequently been seen shopping at the Farmer Market weeks and months following their tour. One positive example was a young single mother who states that since her tour and cooking classes, she purchases a \$100 supply of EBT tokens at the market at the beginning of every month when she receives her EBT benefit. That way she is less tempted to use her EBT for non-nutritious snacks and drinks at grocery stores. By purchasing the tokens early in the month, she makes sure she will be able to afford fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables all throughout the month.

Not only have tour participants benefited from the Market Mentor program, PAFM has seen the value in this kind of targeted outreach for continuing to build their customer base into the future. PAFM staff and board are interested in continuing this program using volunteers in the future. Shopping at Farmers Markets can be a foreign and awkward experience for some who are new to the idea of an open air shopping environment where personal interactions with food producers are can be an intimidating experience. The tours help customers initiate real (and hopefully lasting) relationships between customers and their food producers.

Cooking Classes: A total of 32 cooking classes were originally planned and due to the popularity of these classes, additional classes were hosted using redirected funds from the Budget Amendment described in the last section of this report. By the end of the 2-year grant period, a total of 58 classes were held including approximately 1385 participants.

The majority of the classes was held at the Drop-in Center at FSFSC and was targeted towards low-income families with young children. Classes included hands on participation and focused on healthy entrees using seasonal and affordable ingredients.

Participants were offered a trip to the Farmers Market and a cookbook or other piece of cooking equipment following each class.

Coincidentally, in early 2011 the City of Port Angeles initiated a Community Garden in a vacant lot across the alley from FSFSC. By this happy accident, we were able to include some basic vegetable gardening as part of many of the cooking classes. We grew artichokes, rhubarb, strawberries, cabbage and squash during this first year and were able to include a walk out to the garden to pick some of the ingredients for cooking classes. This is a resource that will hopefully continue to grow into the future.

In addition to the First Step classes, alternate locations were also used in order to reach out to a more diverse array of participants including Latino families, Farmers Market shoppers, developmentally delayed adults and their caregivers, and elementary school children. A total of 585 adults and children participated in these small group hands-on classes. Finally, two large group educational events were also hosted that included over 100 childcare providers who attended a continuing education session on using local seasonal foods to boost childhood nutrition, and over 700 families who attended a Back to School event at one of the local elementary schools.

As the cooking classes went along, we accumulated a good collection of seasonally appropriate healthy and easy recipes. Using a portion of the funds from the Graphic Design and Class Incentive budget we produced a recipe binder/cookbook that will serve as an add-as-you-go cookbook for class participants and new market shoppers. We produced 150 cookbooks and as of 9/30/12 had distributed 127. The remaining cookbooks will be distributed to PAFM customers participating in the on-going outreach efforts in the coming year. Farmers and other Food Vendors at the market have contributed some of their recipes to the project. At this point we have over 30 recipes and the project is still growing.

As an added bonus, the Peninsula Daily News (local two-county print newspaper) agreed to run a Local Foods Recipe column in the local newspaper on a twice-monthly schedule. Using the Project Manager salary hours to get this column going, we have published columns twice a month for the past six months. The column has proven to be very popular amongst newspaper readers. The Peninsula Daily is planning to continue running the column indefinitely and will begin to pay a small stipend for the pieces now that the grant funding is finished.

## **BENEFICIARIES**

### ***Farmer Vendors at the Port Angeles Farmers Market***

While it seems clear that the EBT and Credit/Debit system is a popular and well utilized system, it is difficult to say how that has affected overall market sales. The following table shows gross vendor sales over the last 5 years at PAFM. PAFM grew steadily from 2008- 2010 but has remained relatively flat for the past couple of years. This may relate to the national economic recession as well as to the loss of two local farmers (one retired, another left the area.) Despite the flattening of the overall sales numbers, the share of market sales generated by farm products has continued to steadily increase over the same

period. This may be where the real success of the FMPP Good Food project can be seen. Farm income has steadily increased despite an overall flattening of market sales.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Yearly Market Sales \$	202,816	305,018	392,607	413,205	412,095 *extrapolation based on previous 11 months
Market Revenue \$ (8% booth fee)	16,225	24,401	31,408	33,056	32,967
Avg # Vendors	19	22	23	18	14
% of total sales as Farm Products	68.9	63.7	60.2	55.1	61.4
Yearly Farmer Sales	139,943	194,487	236,475	227,869	253,234
EBT sales				\$4000 (approx.)	\$6250 (approx.)

\*table compiled from PAFM Market Sales Comparisons Reports

In addition to the ongoing benefit from the Card Swipe system, the FMPP Good Food Project has enabled PAFM to take its marketing efforts to a higher level. The professionally designed rack cards, A-boards, magnets and brochures will be in use far into the future. PAFM intends to continue adding recipes to the cookbook and using volunteers to offer market tours to new customers. The newspaper columns will continue to inform the community of “*What’s in Season and How to Cook It.*”

### Low-income Families

As for FSFSC, the emphasis on cooking and recipes and reaching out to families in the community has had a perceptible effect on the First Step community. At FSFSC, clients and staff have come to expect good cooking at the Drop-In center. There is a greater awareness about healthy and seasonal food, and many clients and staff continue to shop at the market. The garden and the kitchen at FSFSC will continue to be active components of programming for new families in Clallam County.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

In terms of the EBT system at the Port Angeles Farmers Market, the important lesson learned is just how expensive it is for the market to run a successful token system. As noted in the earlier section, there are significant bookkeeping and personnel costs that were not budgeted that far exceed the fees and wireless charges that had been anticipated in implementing the system. One solution for the market would be for individual vendors to switch over to the ‘square’ technology in which each vendor could have their own card swipe equipment and relieve the market from having the expense of a central system.

One of the most important lessons learned in the Outreach work that was accomplished by the Good food Project, was that the promotion of local food and seasonal eating will not be successful if it is only based on highlighting the nutritional and economic value of eating foods grown by local farms. At the conclusion of our two-year FMPA Good Food Project, it is clear that it is the deliciousness of well prepared, fresh, in-season foods that will sell the idea of local foods and drive behavior change.

The challenge now is to find ways to keep the outreach components of the project going and to expand the effort to a larger percentage of the population in the area. Long lasting and widespread change in the eating, cooking and purchasing patterns of a community takes a long term and widespread effort. The Good Food Project was a tremendous start to an effort that many in our community are committed to continuing.

Future funding opportunities will be sought to strengthen the impacts that were initiated by the Good Food Project. Community awareness of this project has already initiated collaboration between First Step Family Support Center and several other human services organizations including the local food bank, teen outreach center and the volunteer free medical clinic. From the prevention of childhood obesity, to the protection of our shared water and dwindling agricultural lands, promoting the purchase of locally grown fresh foods is an important endeavor that many in our community are committed to carrying forward.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

See attached document file

### **CONTACT PERSON**

Betsy Wharton

[bewharton@olypen.com](mailto:bewharton@olypen.com)

360-461-0866