

Final Performance Report

Date: 9/30/2016
Recipient Name: City of Madison, MS
Project Title: Downtown Madison Farmers Market
Grant Number: 14-FMPPX-0099(MS)-132
Project Location: Madison, MS
Year of Grant Award: 2014
Amount Awarded: \$59,772
Contact: Robin McCrory, (601) 856-7116, rmccrory@madisonthecity.com

Goal #1: Stabilize and maintain current DMFM operations.

Goal #2: Expand number of vendors who regularly participate in the DMFM by 25% - 50%.

Goal #3: Expand number of customers who regularly visit the DMFM by 75% - 100%.

Goal #4: Educate Madison residents as to the health and economic benefits of purchasing locally grown, fresh produce at the DMFM.

Goal #5: Establish the DMFM such that it will become a yearly seasonal event in perpetuity.

By stabilizing and expanding the DMFM, local famers will have a consistent, reliable space where they can sell their locally grown produce, tax free, and without any charge for participation in the market. Farmers/vendors will thus enjoy a venue where they can sell their produce directly to consumers at a higher profit margin. Consumers will have consistent, reliable access to locally grown, fresh produce at a lower cost than what is available at grocery stores. Such availability will encourage increased consumption of healthy produce.

The promotional aspect of the project will contain an educational component whereby materials sent to Madison residents will explain the health and economic benefits of buying fresh, local produce at the DMFM, thus increasing awareness of the benefits of purchasing and consuming local produce.

Accomplishments:

Describe what was accomplished during the entire project using measurable results. Provide baseline data and actual completed project data, i.e., "before and after" measurements. Include a summary of the required metrics (before and after) (FMPP Guidelines/Announcement). Be comprehensive, descriptive and detailed in regard to each accomplishment. These may include unfavorable or unusual developments, as well. If developed with grant funds, provide website addresses and links to any materials made available via the Internet.

1. As a result of access to the Farmers Market Promotion Program funding and the work of the market director and market manager, the operations of the Downtown Madison Farmers Market (DMFM) have been stabilized and maintained to become a regular part of Tuesday activities in Downtown Madison.

Specifically, the DMFM is a safe farm, family, and community-oriented market – the quintessential fresh air gathering spot to buy wholesome, locally-grown and produced foods in the heart of Downtown Madison on centrally-located green space, adjacent to the iconic Red Caboose that is so synonymous with Madison and just down from a still active railroad track that runs through downtown. Vendors have been provided with a safe, consistent, reliable venue and regular weekly space in which to sell their products and educate and develop a rapport with Madison residents and those from nearby communities who regularly patronize the market. **(Goal #1)**

2. Due to continued efforts to increase public awareness and improve the DMFM over the course of the 2015 and 2016 seasons and the access to the grant funding to facilitate these efforts, both vendor attendance and vendor awareness of the market have increased significantly as compared to the 2014 season (prior to grant funding). Vendor applications have increased to 50 applications for the 2016 season, from 26 in 2014. Vendor attendance has averaged 25 per market, up from an average of 14 per market in 2014 - the discrepancy between the number of applications and average attendance being due to seasonality of crops and occasional vendor circumstance that prevented them from attending, i.e. vehicle or equipment failure or personal circumstance. The layout of the market had to be altered for expansion to include both the east and west sides of the downtown location allocated for the farmers market in order to accommodate more vendor spaces due to growing participation. Compared to the inaugural season of the DMFM in 2014 (prior to FMPP grant funding), when the grounds only occupied a portion of the west side of these grounds. Vendor space is at a premium and all market spaces are occupied by Mississippi farmers and cottage food producers during peak season, even after expanding to include more vendor spaces. **(Goal #2)**

3.) The number of customers who regularly attend the market has also risen significantly due to advertising and marketing efforts such as live radio personality remote broadcasts from the market grounds, radio advertising, local news outlet and magazine advertising, and promotional collaborations with local organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce. This is evidenced through:

- a.) An ever-growing e-mail list which is compiled from contact information provided by market goers on a sign-up sheet placed at the market hospitality tent.
- b.) Vendors regularly report an increase in sales over previous years and greater success at the DMFM as opposed to other markets they may attend.
- c.) Through the number of promotional items given to customers at the market.

Customers are encouraged, at their own option, to sign up for the e-mail mailing list, which allows for a way to track customer attendance and keep customers engaged with the market. A great interest is taken in the market vendors and rapport built with each, as happy vendors correlate to happy and regular customers. As such, vendors are regularly asked about how the market is going for them and regularly report that they are having success selling their products and have an increased number of

"regular customers" who come back to the market week after week, seeking them out to purchase their products - which, in-turn, leads to increased customer exposure for the other vendors. Promotional products such as re-usable canvas market bags, fans, t-shirts, and caps are given to customers at the hospitality tent IF they have made a purchase from one of the market vendors. This is done to incentivize customers to purchase from the vendors at the market, give them reminders of the market outside of market day, and when worn and used out in the community, also markets and raises awareness of and for the DMFM. **(Goal #3)**

4. The Downtown Madison Farmers Market has been educating customers and vendors alike by "bridging the gap between dirt and digital" and making efforts to help vendors better market themselves when at the market. Activities such as a digital media workshop and demonstration on "making vendor booths more appealing and more marketable to consumers" was put on by the market manager at the pre-market season vendor meeting. Also, provided are updates on the variety of fresh weekly options available at the market, educational information regarding benefits of locally grown items, market activities information, and weekly market highlights via the DMFM Facebook page (www.facebook.com/DowntownMadisonFarmersMarket), Instagram account (instagram.com/DowntownMadisonFarmersMarket), and distributed through emails to the consumer list referenced above. **(Goal #4)**

5.) Due to educational efforts directed at consumers, local residents have become more keenly aware not only of the health benefits of buying and eating locally-grown and produced foods and how to prepare them, but also of the economic impact on the local community when they purchase their foods from local farmers and vendors, keeping more monies in their local economy. These consumer educational efforts include:

- a.) The production of health awareness desk-top calendars entitled "A Year of Healthy Choices".
- b.) Cooking demos by local chefs and the market manager.
- c.) Live radio interviews with farmers aired during the remote broadcasts at the market.
- d.) The production and distribution of recipe cards, and other educational and informative items shared via various forms of digital media.

6.) The DMFM has also served to promote community involvement with local residents, students, businesses, and civic organizations through educational channels, annual events, and weekly at the market. Some examples of community involvement include:

- a) Once the market was established and grant awarded, the market needed to be branded and a logo developed. To do this, Mrs. McCrory and the City of Madison partnered with the graphic design

department at the local campus of Tulane University. The students in the class were tasked with designing a logo that personified both Downtown Madison and a farmers market. One student design was chosen and is still in use as the primary logo for the DMFM.

b) The market is held on the grounds of the Madison Square Center for the Arts which also hosts art classes, summer camps, and other programs for local children and youth. The children participating in the visual arts classes at the Madison Square Center for the Arts were charged with drawing what they envisioned when they thought about a farmers market. Their artwork was then displayed on the market grounds during the Tuesday afternoon markets.

c) Local chefs were invited to perform cooking demonstrations at the farmers market to educate market goers on how to prepare the fresh offerings available at the market. These demonstrations serve to both connect local chefs with local farmers and local citizens, as well as to engage market goers - making the prospect of cooking healthy, locally sourced foods less daunting, and instead, more enjoyable and appealing. **(Goal#4)**

7.) With the success and growth of the DMFM since its inception in 2014, especially with the great progress made possible by FMPP over the 2015 and 2016 seasons, the market has become an asset to the City of Madison, local consumers, and to the farmers and vendors who participate. As such, the market has established a solid foundation to continue in perpetuity throughout the foreseeable future. **(Goal#5)**

Activities:

1.) Upon receipt of the grant award, the process of ordering promotional materials and preparing for the 2015 season began. To establish a logo, DMFM collaborated with Tulane University's Madison Campus, through a contest held amongst the graphic arts students who submitted logos for consideration. The current logo used for branding the Downtown Madison Farmers Market was then chosen.

2.) From inception, the DMFM has held fast to a high standard where it regards quality and truly locally grown and produced products from Mississippi farms to the tables of area residents. For that reason, recognition by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture (MDAC) as an MDAC Certified Farmers Market was sought and obtained. The DMFM has maintained this certification for each year the market has been in operation (3 years and counting).

3.) In order to maintain the above-referenced certification, the market manager and director attend a yearly training conference held by MDAC wherein local health department regulations, MDAC regulations, farmers market marketing strategies, and certification requirements are discussed. MDAC

and Health Department representatives are available for questions and clarification of the items discussed at the end of the informational presentations, allowing for market managers and directors to leave with the knowledge needed to operate a certified and regulation abiding market. Certification applications are filled out and farm visits scheduled at these trainings as well.

4.) The DMFM's relationship with MDAC also means that the director and manager are kept in the loop regarding trainings and conferences relative to farming and farmers markets. Pertinent information is disseminated to the farmers who participate in the market and the DMFM market manager had the opportunity to attend the Mississippi Agritourism Conference in Oxford, MS in July of 2016. Programs such as the MS Agritourism Conference provide a wealth of very handy marketing and farmers market promotion knowledge as well as an opportunity to network and connect with other complimentary entities and farms throughout the state.

5.) In furtherance of branding efforts and to establish local familiarity and consumer association with the DMFM, the "Tasty Tuesdays" slogan was coined to brand the DMFM and to distinguish it from other local markets via radio, print ads, educational materials, and social media posts/hashtags.

6.) Live radio broadcasts were held on the market grounds during both the 2015 and 2016 market seasons. A live broadcast was held to kick off the season during the grand opening of the 2015 market season. During the 2016 market season, the live broadcast was held in mid-July to remind consumers of and promote the fact that the market was still open and would be open through September, as other local markets close in mid-late July, and to notify the local communities (all communities/suburbs within the Jackson, MS Metro Area) that August 1 marked the start of the inclusion of craft vendors to the market.

7.) Radio ads were run on local radio stations representing different genres of music and listener demographics to reach as many listeners as possible. Radio spots were run several days per week each week throughout the duration of the market season for both the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

8.) As per grant funding, advertisements were run weekly through the duration of the 2015 and 2016 market seasons in local print media, targeting Madison and Jackson area residents. These publications included: The Madison County Journal, Hometown Madison Magazine, and The Northside Sun.

9.) Promotional materials were purchased and distributed weekly to market goers throughout the 2015 and 2016 market seasons, serving as walking billboards for and reminders of the DMFM. These materials include DMFM-branded fans, t-shirts, canvas market bags, baseball caps, pot holders, vegetable peelers, and pencils. Vendors were also provided with DMFM-branded aprons and allowed to personalize these with their business name and/or logo.

10.) "A Year of Healthy Choices" 2016 desk top calendars were designed and produced promoting monthly health awareness topics per the National Health Organization's health awareness months. Each month highlighted the National Health Organization's health awareness topics for that month and

provided a guideline to fresh, healthy food choices known to stave off, prevent, or assist with the management of the diseases, disorders, and/or health issues highlighted for that respective month.

11.) A market manager was hired to assist in the operations relative to the DMFM, including marketing, reporting, vendor relations, and market day operations.

12.) Social media accounts were established for the DMFM to reach local residents, to promote market activities, give real-time updates and glimpses of the vendors and products available at the market on market day, and to distribute educational information about local farms and practices. A Facebook account (www.facebook.com/downtownmadisonfarmersmarket - currently reaching nearly 1,200 followers, with new users regularly seeing and “liking” the page weekly) and an Instagram account (searchable by “downtownmadisonfarmersmarket” reaching 220+ followers and counting) were established in June of 2015. The “Madison the City” Facebook page also shares DMFM posts and promotes the market.

13.) Links for vendor applications and DMFM rules and regulations as well as MDAC and USDA regulations and permitting information have been made available on the Madison the City website (www.madisonthecity.com).

14.) Articles about the market were published by several local news/print media outlets, including multiple articles and front page coverage in the Clarion Ledger, Madison County Journal, and the Madison Herald, in addition to large, multi-page write-ups and photo spreads in Hometown Madison Magazine, Discover Madison Magazine, and Madison County Magazine.

15.) Cooking demonstrations by local chefs and local vendors were held at the market to promote the products available from farm vendors and to educate market goers on how to use and preserve seasonally available produce and locally-raised meats.

16.) Recipe cards were produced and given to market goers to provide healthy dietary-specific cooking options and to educate them on how to use locally-raised meats and preserve and use seasonally-available produce sold at the market.

17.) The local Master Gardeners set up a booth at the DMFM to educate market goers on growing and composting practices. They also gave away seedlings and promotional items provided by the local Mississippi State Extension Service office to market goers.

18.) The PA system provided for with grant funding was used at the DMFM hospitality tent, which was also purchased with grant funds, to disseminate information to market goers and to facilitate market activities and giveaways throughout the market’s hours of operation each week.

19.) To mitigate the seasonal decline of local produce and farm vendors late in the market season, a decision was made mid-2015 market season to include local craftspeople and artisans for the fall portion of the market only (including the months of August and September, beginning August 1st), filling the

spaces vacated by farmers who no longer had produce to sell and were thus no longer attending. Notifications inviting LOCAL craftspeople and artisans to participate and making the public aware of the inclusion of local arts and crafts were disseminated through the weekly scheduled print media ads and radio commercials as well as through social media channels.

20.) Market-branded promotional materials were given to encourage market goers to provide contact information (e-mail, address, etc...) for marketing purposes as well as to incentivize them to make purchases from market vendors. These items were made available each week at the market hospitality tent and were given away to market goers when they made a purchase from any of the market vendors, and/or provided contact information on the market mailing list sign-up sheet. This served the market and efforts to promote healthy choices in several ways. It allowed the DMFM a means to track customer attendance and provide market information and updates on vendor offerings each week while also encouraging support for local farmers and healthy food choices by market goers thus serving to distribute DMFM-branded items throughout the community to promote visibility and awareness as well as to incentivize market goers

21.) To encourage market goers to provide their contact information for marketing purposes and also to encourage them to engage with farmers and to try various market vendors' products, occasionally throughout the season, giveaways were held throughout the duration of market.

22.) To attract and entertain market goers, live music was provided throughout the market season courtesy of Madison Jazz Society, The Oompah Band, Mississippi Symphonic Community Band's Gazebo Band, Merry Patton Murphy and Ralph Miller.

23.) To promote community awareness of the market, the DMFM provided items donated by DMFM and its vendors for door prizes and silent auctions at community events and set up an informational display allowing for interaction with members of the community who may otherwise may have never been exposed to the fact that Madison had a farmers market, or, perhaps not been as tuned into the benefits of buying locally-grown foods from local farmers. It also allowed for an opportunity to educate those in attendance about the importance and value of having a community farmers market, knowing your farmer, and the healthy benefits of being able to purchase your food locally at the local health fair put on by the Madison The City Chamber of Commerce. While not a "farm-related" event, a health fair seemed a very logical place for a farmers market whose mission it is to provide healthy choices to the residents of Madison.

24.) The DMFM was featured on a local midday news segment called "Midday Mississippi" on WLBT (the Jackson, MS NBC affiliate). This program features interviews with local event organizers, charitable organizations, and other local newsworthy topics. In this particular segment, the director of the market was interviewed and had the opportunity to discuss not only the fact that Downtown Madison has a farmers market, but also to emphasize the importance of eating locally grown and the economic impact of purchasing from local merchants, in this case farmers and cottage food vendors.

LESSONS LEARNED

Successful Strategies:

- 1.) At the outset of the DMFM meetings were held to get vendor insight and allow vendors to participate in some of the strategy creation and perimeter setting for the market. One such strategy born from suggestion to the vendors by the Market Director and nearly unanimous consent among vendors was to keep the market a true farmers market. This meant solely including farmers and cottage food vendors so as not to put farmers and vendors of perishable foods that needed to be sold while fresh in competition with vendors of non-perishable items that could be sold at any time. Also, in keeping with the goal of the DMFM, to provide Madison Residents with healthy, locally-sourced choices, it was agreed that the market should proceed in such a way as to brand itself as a destination for food in the minds of local residents, not, primarily as an entertainment venue, as farmers and vendors come from all over the state to sell their goods (for many this is their livelihood – their sole or main income stream) and are relying on being able to successfully sell their perishable goods so as to cover their overhead and make a living. This strategy proved successful through the beginning and peak of growing season, however, as crops began to wane, it became necessary to fill any market spots vacated by farmers no longer in attendance due to the end of their crop yield. Thus leading to the next strategy discussed:
- 2.) During the second market season (2015 season – the first season to have grant funds available), it was decided that local craftspeople and artisans should be included during the latter part of the market season to fill any empty vendor space as crops started to dwindle, thus leading to decline in farmer attendance. This strategy worked as intended and helped to keep booth spaces full (and therefore more alluring to passers-by) and to keep consumers interested in and attending the market for the duration of the season.
- 3.) Another successful strategy implemented at the DMFM was to give away DMFM-branded promotional items (market bags, t-shirts, baseball caps, pencils, vegetable peelers, fans, and other items) to market goers who had purchased from one of the market vendors. This incentive, made possible by our grant funding, worked very well. When market goers stopped by the DMFM hospitality tent, they were made aware of the promotion. In order to receive the giveaway items, market goers were required show proof of their purchase that afternoon (usually produce or other product they had in-hand from their purchase) and item giveaways were limited to one per purchasing customer.

Beneficiaries:

Beneficiaries of the DMFM included Downtown Madison businesses and most importantly, residents of Madison and surrounding communities and Mississippi Farmers.

- 1.) Because the DMFM is located in the heart of Madison's downtown district, it brings market goers from Madison and surrounding communities to the downtown Madison area. With the market falling on Tuesday afternoon, a typically slow day for local "mom and pop" operations, this means a greater opportunity for increased traffic for businesses in downtown Madison on a day when business is typically less abundant.
- 2.) Residents of Madison and the surrounding metro area have also benefitted from having a farmers market. Because the DMFM is held on Tuesday afternoons when the majority of other area markets are held on Saturdays, the DMFM provides an opportunity for residents to purchase fresh produce, milk, eggs, meats, and cottage foods for week day consumption also. Residents have also benefitted from having a venue to purchase those items directly from the farmer and having the opportunity to get to know the faces behind their food and the practices used in its production, meaning educational opportunities for them to learn about farming, healthy eating, responsible growing practices, and the impact their purchases make on the community, state, and most directly on the small farms from which they are purchasing their products.
- 3.) Residents have also benefitted from having a weekly community gathering spot that is both centrally located and family oriented. With the market's location being on the welcoming grounds of the historic old school building that is now home to Madison Center for the Arts and the iconic red caboose so synonymous with Madison, walking distance to area shops and restaurants, and almost adjacent to the train tracks., it is the quintessential downtown market – a place where families gather, run into friends, and make new ones. It is for those reasons that the DMFM has helped foster a sense of community for those living in Madison and the surrounding areas.
- 4.) Mississippi Farmers have been impacted in a positive way as a result of the opportunity to participate in the DMFM. Throughout the market season, as a group, Mississippi farmers sell thousands of pounds of produce and gross \$100,000+ that are invested back into their farming operation and local communities.