

# Farmers Market Promotion Program

## Final Performance Report

**Reporting Period: October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2016**

**Date:** Date of Report: December 30, 2016  
**Recipient Name:** The Columbia Farmers Market  
**Project Title:** *The Columbia Missouri Farmers Market Promotion Program*  
**Grant Number:** 14-FMPPX-0097  
**Project Location:** Columbia, MO  
**Amount Awarded:** \$97,931  
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**Program Summary:** The Columbia Farmers Market has been operating in Boone County since 1980. In the late 1990's the Market Board of Directors decided to work toward the goal of building a permanent shelter for the Farmers Market on the site of the old Boone County Fairgrounds. This effort created a division within the community about the goals and objectives of the Columbia Farmers Market and the original group of producer vendors broke into two market groups. This caused hurt feelings for a lot of the customers of locally grown food in our community, hurt the image of the Columbia Farmers Market and caused a reduction in customers shopping at the Market. Although this all occurred almost 20 years ago, there were still a lot of negative feelings about this division that had lingered into recent history. The goal of this FMPP Grant was to find out what are the current attitudes Boone County citizens had about the Columbia Farmers Market, use the results to "re-brand the Columbia Farmers Market" as a revitalized and inclusive market that was working with the broader community to provide healthy locally grown food to the entire community and move beyond the divisions of the earlier experiences. The FMPP Grant allowed the Market to hire a recent PhD candidate at the University of Missouri School of Rural Sociology to conduct a survey of the attitudes of current and potential customers of the Market. Using the results of this survey, CFM Staff hired a local marketing organization to "re-brand" the Columbia Farmers Market and initiate marketing efforts that would help create a positive brand recognition for the Columbia Farmers Market and encourage citizens to come back and shop for locally grown food. The activities completed with these funds included: developing a Marketing Advisory Committee to help guide the process; development of an overall marketing plan for the Market; surveying of potential customers and producer/vendors to find out their goals; initiated a marketing program that included: creating a new website, development of broad social media efforts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest), revamped the CFM logo and produced materials strengthening brand recognition, developed relationships with local media entities to take advantage of free or discounted media (billboard, TV ads, radio spots, etc.), wrote, published and distributed two printed documents introducing producer vendors at the market to build stronger relationships with their customers, implementation of skill building training workshops for producer/vendors, creation of a "Buy Local Food" Campaign to help customers understand the human and economic value of buying locally grown food from producers at the Columbia Farmers Market, build the connection between local restaurant chefs and local food producers to increase the supply and value of locally grown food, support of a local producer in their development of an online local food ordering, purchasing and delivery system to expand the market for locally grown food, and development of a "Chef s Cooking Demonstrations" at the Farmers Market to encourage tastings and more prepared food for customers of the Columbia Farmers Market.

The beneficiaries of these efforts have been: the citizens of central Missouri who made 81,907 customer visits to the Columbia Farmers Market in 2016 to buy healthy locally grown food from local producer/vendors; the 80 producer vendors and their family members who have worked hard to produce these products and earned financial rewards for their efforts; local restaurants and chefs have benefited from sourcing more locally grown food; the central Missouri economy has benefited from more food dollars staying in our community instead of leaving to pay for food grown elsewhere; our environment has benefited by reducing the impact of importing simple vegetables and food products from all over the world; and all central Missouri citizens have all benefitted from the community building that occurs when producer/vendors, food customers, and City governments all work together to strengthen systems that help build local self-sufficiency.

Our most impressive result measurement is that over the last two years the efforts described in this grant report have helped to create a positive brand recognition and “back of mind” awareness of the Columbia Farmers Market as a strong player in the central Missouri local food movement and helped local citizens understand that the Market has moved beyond the bad feelings that have been lingering from the 1990’s.

### **Goals, Objectives, Activities, Accomplishments and Beneficiaries:**

a) **Goal I:** Create new market opportunities for our local producer/vendor members and increasing customer access and awareness.

i) **Objective A:** Ongoing research and evaluation

(1) **Activity 1:** *Research Farmers Market information from all across the United States.*

Activities Completed:

- Recruited and selected 10 “local food enthusiasts” to serve on the Columbia Farmers Market Marketing Advisory Committee, including an employee of the University of MO Extension; the Director of Food Services for the Columbia Public School District; a graduate student in the UMC Department of Public Health; a buyer for a local health food store; a registered dietician; and three member/vendors of the Columbia Farmers Market.
- Surveyed marketing activities taking place at farmers markets from around the country.
- Captured marketing reports from 7 farmers market organizations in the US. We summarized these reports and created a “*Marketing Advisory Committee Resource Handbook*” which was given to the Marketing Committee Members.
- Researched marketing surveys that have been used at other farmers markets in the US, which gave us ideas about what kind of information we needed to gather through our survey instrument.
- Summarized historical marketing information that the Columbia Farmers Market has generated over the life of the organization.

[Marketing Advisory Committee Members](#)

[FM Research Nationwide Marketing Plans](#)

(2) **Activity 2:** Survey current and potential customers of the Columbia Farmers Market

Activities Completed:

- Negotiated with Elliot Meador, a PhD Candidate in the Rural Sociology Department at the University of Missouri-Columbia to survey current and potential customers of the Columbia Farmers Market to shed light on the practical ways in which the Columbia Farmers Market can increase the volume and revenue of its Spring to Fall market. (See the “Accomplishments Section” for a summary of this survey).

[CFM Barriers to Use Study Meador](#)  
[Meador Results Summary](#)

(3) **Activity 3:** Survey customers of the Market and other members of the general public to find out how well the FMPP Marketing efforts are working.

Activities Completed:

- Prepared a Marketing Advisory Committee Resource Handbook for members of the committee and held our first meeting.
- We researched surveys that have been used at other farmers markets in the US, which gave us ideas about what kind of information we want to gather with our survey instrument.
- Surveyed customers and vendors at the Columbia Farmers Market. A Microsoft Word document is attached entitled, “Communications Survey Results” which summarizes the results of a survey of Columbia Farmers Market customers and vendors and how they felt about the marketing effort initiated through the Columbia Farmers Market Promotion Program.

[Communication Survey Results](#)  
[Survey of Vendors at the Market](#)

ii) **Objective B:** Develop and implement a public relations and marketing campaign.

(1) **Activity 1:** *Re-brand the Columbia Farmers Market; improve messaging and marketing materials and distribute.*

Activities Completed:

- A Request for Proposals (RFP) for a marketing and implementation plan was published in the Columbia Daily Tribune newspaper on May 6, 2015. We received four responses for the May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015 deadline. The Marketing Advisory Committee evaluated all submissions and recommended Hub and Spoke Creative to the Columbia Farmers Market (CFM) Board of Directors (The Board) which signed a contract with Hub and Spoke. Literature review of nationwide studies of Farmers Markets and a synopsis of data previously collected by the Columbia Farmers Market (CFM) and the Missouri River Communities Network (MRCN) was used by Hub and Spoke Creative to develop their research plan.
- Hub and Spoke Creative conducted a combination of online surveys with consumers, in-person interviews at the CFM with customers and vendors, and reviewed CFM documents to identify customer sales trends.
- Hub and Spoke developed a “[Columbia Farmers Market Marketing Plan](#)”. The Marketing Plan outlined the steps to implement a unified image for CFM including overhauling the website, creating engaging email marketing, formalizing a social engagement media plan, and actively using messaging and positioning to gain more brand recognition and back of mind awareness among the public. A copy of this plan is attached to this document at this link: [H&S Marketing Plan for CFM](#)  
[H&S CFM Branding recommendations](#)
- Updated the Columbia Farmers Market website, adding multiple interactive pages and tools, specifically linking vendor’s social media pages to the site, creating an interactive seasonality chart that links to vendors that sell seasonally available products, adding all of the vendor stories featured in the *Food from Home* booklet and linking the Inside Columbia Magazine blog to the CFM website.

[Social Media marketing plan](#)

- We initiated new social media marketing efforts, including:
  - 1361 people on the email list receiving the weekly newsletter. This is an increase of 873 new people receiving the newsletter since October 2014.
  - We have 1,865 followers on Twitter following the Market Manager’s updates (which occur about 2-3 times per week).
  - We have 1,714 followers on Instagram receiving photographic updates of healthy food activities at the Columbia Farmers Market.
  - And we have 6,544 followers on the Columbia Farmers Market Facebook page.  
[See Table on Page 11](#)
  - CFM initiated a “Post it, Stick it, Snap it” social media campaign to increase the number of stickers distributed and increase social media interactions. To increase e-newsletter sign-ups, stickers were given out in exchange for an email address. This generated a significant number of new connections to the CFM social media platforms. See the attached summary of social media numbers.
  - We worked with our social media marketing contractor (Hoot Graphics) to create and upload new files that can be used into the future to promote the CFM through software called Canva. Taking those files we were able to create 100 additional Facebook designs to be uploaded into Edgar. Edgar is a social media app through which you can schedule auto posts on various social media platforms. Through our contract with Hoot, we have access to Edgar for one year for no additional costs. Hoot will upload these 100 images and they will be posted throughout the next year.  
[Facebook posts for Edgar Automated system](#)
  
- Worked with two different marketing organizations to develop and implement marketing for the Columbia Farmers Market, including the following activities:
  - Developed, printed and are still distributing the following items with the CFM logo:
    - 5250 1” CFM stickers
    - 1050 3” CFM stickers and
    - 1050 5” CFM stickers
  - 400 CFM “market list” magnets were printed and distributed.
  - 15 “yard sign posters with Columbia Farmers Market” were printed and are put out during market hours within a .5-mile radius around market, to increase awareness and attendance when the market is open.
  - 125 window clings with the markets logo and word “Supporter” were printed and handed out to 15 local businesses. CFM staff passed out 2-3 window clings to each vendor and asked them to give them to their top customers.
- Developed printed and distributed two information posters that highlighted/informed customers about SNAP opportunities at CFM. One was geared towards customers that wouldn’t use SNAP, but would be interested in knowing how CFM helps low income families. The other one was geared towards informing customers that we accept SNAP dollars at market, as well as match up to \$25 each week.
- CFM Market staff has partnered with a local magazine, (Inside Columbia), to write an online monthly blog about the Columbia Farmers Market, local food and market events.

[CFM window sticker](#)  
[CFM Magnet graphic](#)  
[CFM Poster Graphic](#)

[CFM yard sign graphic](#)  
[CFM Blog posts for Inside Columbia](#)  
[Sample Blog Post from Inside Columbia Magazine](#)

(2) **Activity 2:** Implement a “Buy Local Food Campaign”.

*Activities Completed:*

- Initiated a relationship with a local billboard media company which offers non-profit organizations discounted billboard space. We specifically installed a billboard on Interstate 70 that focused on our new market’s tagline, “Food from Home”.  
[CFM Billboard graphic](#)
- Updated market’s postcards and tri-fold brochures to reflect the new tagline, “Food from Home”.
- Created 3 “Local Means…” posters highlighting when you shop at the Columbia Farmers Market your food dollar stays in the community and supports the families of local farmers. We are using these posters in public places to emphasize the connection between shopping at the Farmers Market and supporting the families of the producer/vendors.  
[Local means.....](#)
- Developed, printed and distributed 2 posters highlighting SNAP usage and matching program at market. Created 1 SNAP matching program flyer and 1 winter market flyer.  
[CFM Double Your Dollars](#)
- Created 12 Facebook Graphics that can be used to automate social media posts through an online application that allows you to set up posts weeks in advance and contain similar messages, style, and colors. So we have utilized FMPP grant funds to purchase tools that we can utilize into the future.  
[CFM Auto Social Media Posts graphics](#)
- Hoot Graphics (a second graphics and marketing group) created a guide for best practices for each social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest), and the weekly e-newsletter.
- Weekly e-newsletter design was updated to reflect our brand and the “Food From Home” campaign message.
- Television ads were created and aired that highlighted seasonal products available at the market and promoted the “Food From Home” message.
- Ads were created and aired on the local NPR radio affiliate, which according to our customer survey, is the radio station that many of our customers listen to regularly.
- CFM Staff created two Power Point presentations that discuss the economic effects of buying locally grown food on our economy.  
[Why Buy Local Food presentation](#)  
[Local Food Presentation](#)

(3) **Activity 3:** Develop, write and publish a “Boone County Buy Local Food” Resource Booklet

*Activities Completed:*

- Designed, printed and distributed the “[2015 Columbia Farmers Market Annual Report](#)” which was the first edition of the Columbia Farmers Market Buy Local Food booklet. This publication was a summary of the recent history of the Market, information about the customers of the Market, the Access to Healthy Food Program (the SNAP benefits), the number of vendors, the social media followers, the Good Food Detective Program (educational program for children that includes free “Munch Money” for Detectives who

complete healthy eating tasks), the Special Events initiated by the Columbia Farmers Market, a list of the Board of Directors and the schedule of the Market for the next year. 1000 copies of this Annual Report were printed as an in-kind donation by Direct Impact. The Reports were distributed to the general public by hand at the Market and through vendors.

[CFM Booklet 1 Annual Report](#)

- Designed, printed and distributed the “[Columbia Farmers Market Food from Home](#)” booklet. This 66 page booklet included a history of the development of the Columbia Farmers Market, information about the various programs available at the Market (introducing the Market Staff Members and Board of Directors, the tokens program, the SNAP match program for SNAP eligible shoppers, the weekly music programs, The Greenhouse children’s education booth, and the Market’s annual Farm to Table Dinner fundraiser). One piece of information we learned from our customer survey was that customers who shop regularly at the Market want to learn more about the vendor/producers and the families who are benefiting from selling at the Market. This group of customers indicated that “*the more information they learned about the families being supported by CFM Market sales the more willing they were to spend more money at the market to help support those families.*” Given this sentiment, we designed our booklet to provide each CFM vendor/producer with a full page of information about what they grow and sell at the market, how they started growing food, what their growing practices are, information about their family members who help with the farming, and a personal favorite recipe that utilizes the food that they grow and sell at the Market. 11,000 copies of this booklet were printed. 7578 of these copies were delivered directly to subscribers of the Columbia Tribune (our local evening newspaper) and another 3,422 have been distributed by hand at the weekly market, to local businesses and to audience members of groups to whom we have been making “Food from Home Educational Presentations”.

[CFM Booklet 2 Food From Home](#)

b) **Goal II:** Enhance effectiveness, efficiency and earnings of our local producer/vendors to help them become more savvy and professional in their own marketing skills.

i) **Objective A:** Develop, plan and implement workshops for producer vendors to help them improve marketing and management skills.

(1) **Activity 1:** Curriculum development

Activities Completed:

- One of the questions on our CFM vendor surveys was asking producer/vendors to give CFM staff feedback on what types of training could we provide that would help them be more successful as a producer/vendor at the Columbia Farmers Market. Out of the vendors that responded to this question in survey, 59 percent were interested in a workshop on creating a Facebook page, 29 percent were interested in a workshop on creating a website, and 76 percent were interested in a workshop on customer engagement on market day which includes booth presentation and customer service.

(2) **Activity 2:** Workshop implementation; plan and conduct training workshops.

Activities Completed:

- Co-Sponsored the Missouri Farmers Market Association Annual Conference in Columbia on January 23 & 24, 2015 that was attended by 80 participants from around the State of Missouri. The Columbia Farmers Market was the host Market for this conference and CFM Staff and Board Members did much of the organizing for this two-day conference. Forty-

five Farmers Market Managers and 35 small farm producers (many from the Columbia Farmers Market) attended educational workshops and gained valuable information on “Product Liability Insurance”, “Food Safety & Understanding the Health Code”; “SNAP Match Programs in Missouri Farmers Markets”; “How to File for Non-Profit Status”; “How to Market your Farmers Market”; “Marketing through Community Supported Agriculture”; “Market Accounting”; “Accounting and Tracking Sales for Vendors”; “Setting Up a Facebook Page For Your Small Business”.

- CFM held two new Vendor Orientation Training sessions, (one in April 2015 and another in March 2016). These trainings included: introduction to the Columbia Farmers Market; history of the Market; instructions on CFM rules, Boone County Health Department Regulations and recommendations for booth presentation at the farmers market.
- CFM sponsored a Vendor Training entitled “Creating a Facebook page for your Food Business and Keeping It Updated”. Eight CFM vendors attended this training and six of them created a Facebook page for their business.  
[Creating a Facebook Page for Vendors presentation](#)
- Co-sponsored a workshop with the Missouri River Communities Network on April 26, 2016 entitled, Food **Value Chain Workshop**, which brought together producer/vendors, distributors, institutional partners, and local processors to learn and discuss opportunities for collaboration to build a structure for developing a local food distribution system in central Missouri. Patty Cantrell, Regional Food Solutions, coordinated the workshop with 30 people attending.

c) **Goal III:** Build relationships between Columbia Farmers Market local food producers and local chefs to increase sales of local produce.

i) **Objective A:** Engage and involve chefs in locally produced food products.

(1) **Activity 1:** Organize two visioning conferences with producer/vendors and chefs to enhance cooperation.

*Activities Completed:*

- Organized a Columbia Farmers Market Vendors and Wholesale Buyers Educational Meeting on November 18, 2014 to initiate communication between Farmers Market producers and local food buyers (institutions, grocery stores, and restaurants). 38 people attended the meeting.

[List of Contacts Attending Restaurant and Food Store meeting](#)

(2) **Activity 2:** Involve chefs in the CFM “Buy Local Food” campaign

*Activities Completed:*

- 125 window clings with the Columbia Farmers Market logo and the word “Supporter” were printed and handed out to 15 local businesses (mostly local restaurants).
- To increase awareness of local restaurants that support locally grown food, 5 stand up “chalk boards” were printed with the Restaurant’s logo, the Columbia Farmer Market logo and the words “Proud to source local product from the Columbia Farmers Market”. These chalkboards were given to five restaurants in Columbia who are working the hardest at sourcing locally grown food.

[Chalk Board Restaurant photos](#)

- CFM changed its "Artisan Allowance Policy" from 10% to 20% of our total membership. This policy now allows 20% of the CFM membership to be selling "artisan products" that are not necessarily grown by the vendor. The Columbia Farmers Market Board of Directors allows this exception so prepared food vendors can sell at the market but aren't required to have grown all of the food they serve. So this policy change allows a larger percentage of Market vendors to be included in the weekly Markets without having to wait for current "artisan vendors" to leave. The 10% increase has allowed the Columbia Farmers Market to allow more prepared food vendors to sell at CFM. CFM's definition of artisan implies that products are made by hand in small batches. The vendor does not grow/raise any item in the product; items such as baked goods, jams or jellies made with fruit purchased, etc. It is expected that they source at least some of their products from CFM vendors. This policy change has already expanded the number of vendors at the market who are preparing and selling prepared food. This desire for more prepared food is one item that was mentioned by many customers in the customer survey we conducted earlier in the grant period.

ii) Objective B:

(1) **Activity 1:** Create and implement an online information system that helps producers and customers communicate about product availability, prices and delivery options.

Activities Completed:

- CFM Staff connected with the Missouri Department of Agriculture which has had an online local food producer catalog system for the last 4 years called "MO-Grown" as a part of their Agri-Missouri Program. This system doesn't really encourage buying and selling but simply has contact information. It seems that the database is not updated regularly.
- Columbia Farmers Market staff reached out to a local regional producer who was in the process of creating an online local food offering, ordering and delivery system that would fulfill all of the features that we anticipated were needed in a system that would encourage local producers and local buyers to communicate with each other to facilitate the sale and procurement of locally grown food. The system that has been developed by this private business person is called: **2BuyAg**. CFM staff has worked closely with the developer of this software, sharing information about what the producer/vendors of the Columbia Farmers Market have indicated were valuable features of such a system. Staff invited **2BuyAg** to make a presentation to the Board of Directors of the Columbia Farmers Market detailing how it will work. CFM staff have also been part of the early evaluators of the early versions of the software giving the developers feedback on how to address specific features that vendors were interested in. The beta version of the software is now available and CFM staff are one of the first reviewers of the software as it currently is offered. We are hopeful that the software will provide an efficient system for local food producers and local food buyers to work together to expand the growth, purchasing and consumption of locally grown food. CFM staff will be promoting and encouraging the use of this online tool when it becomes operational.

[Letter From CEO of 2BuyAg software](#)

[Brochure explaining "2BuyAg" software](#)

(2) **Activity 2:** Design a Local Chef of the Month program at the Market with cooking demonstrations.

Activities Completed:

- Chef sponsored cooking demonstrations were conducted at the Columbia Farmers Market with five different local chefs cooking favorite food items using products sourced from Columbia Farmers Market vendors, which they gave away to interested Market customers. Customers also received recipe cards for the sampled item.

[Photos from Chefs at the Market Cooking and Tasting](#)

(3) **Activity 3:** Brand and organize the Wednesday Farmers Market as a “Chef’s Market”.

Activities Completed:

- CFM staff created an invitation and mailed it to local food trucks in the Columbia area telling them about the effort to create a “prepared food” event at the Wednesday Farmers Market. We were unable to successfully get any food trucks to attend the Wednesday market. These efforts did however, result in at least one food truck to start selling at the regular Saturday Market. Our Wednesday Market is only open from 4 to 6PM. That is a very short period for a food truck to show up, set up and be ready to prepare and serve food. Part of the problem is that the Wednesday Market has a very limited attendance on a normal afternoon. The only time we have a good attendance is when the two peach growers show up with fresh peaches. When you have a spring frost that kills many of the peach flowers before they set fruit, peach season is much shorter.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Recruited 10 local food enthusiasts to serve on a Marketing Advisory Committee.
- This Committee helped research marketing efforts being undertaken at farmers markets across the country and provided them with knowledge to help make recommendations to the Board of Directors of the Columbia Farmers Market about what marketing efforts seemed to be working the best.
- CFM staff contracted with a University of Missouri PhD student in Rural Sociology who coordinated a survey of current and potential customers of the Columbia Farmers Market.
  - Through this survey we learned that our biggest competitors are the food stores that “claim to provide locally grown food”, when in fact many stores are selling very little food that is actually grown locally.
  - We also learned that CFM shoppers have higher than average income and are highly motivated to shop at stores that promote locally grown and organic food choices. These customers are motivated to buy local because they understand it is good for the local economy and the community. These customers are also motivated by learning about the farmers and families who grow the food they buy. They feel that the more they learn about the farmer (and the farmer’s family), the more willing they are to spend more of their food dollars to help support those farmers and their families. These insights from this survey guided many of our decisions about marketing for the Farmers Market throughout the year. As you can see in our new marketing materials we have emphasized printed material and social media that directly connects customers with the farmers and family members who are growing and selling at the Columbia Farmers Market. Our educational presentations related to the “Buy Local Food Campaign” focused on how most food stores in Columbia provide the impression that much of their produce is grown locally whereas the Columbia Farmers Market is really the best place to buy food that is actually grown within 50 miles of Columbia.
  - Shoppers feel the best and most reliable information about food comes from talking directly to the producers themselves.

- We completed a survey of CFM producer/vendors early in the Grant Period with a goal to: 1) increase vendor buy-in on marketing activities through the FMPP Grant; 2) to collect economic data about their sales at the Market; and 3) to gather vendor feedback. We had 43 vendors who responded to the survey with the following results:
  - 42% indicated that their sales were increasing and another 40% said sales were about the same as last year;
  - The three most valuable marketing efforts were: Social Media; the weekly CFM Market Email; and promotion of the token program to make access to cash more convenient.
  - The two characteristics vendors believed would be most helpful to their success at the Market were: more customers and more ready to eat food (both which were priorities in our FMPP Grant activities).
- We completed a second Vendor Survey in September of 2016 (toward the end of the FMPP Grant period) to capture attitudes about our marketing efforts through the FMPP activities. We had 28 (of 80 vendors) respond to this survey with the following results:
  - 55% said they were “Extremely satisfied” with the marketing efforts; 45% that they were “Satisfied”.
  - The marketing efforts that received the most positive response from vendors were:
 

▪ Food From Home Book	57%
▪ 2015 Annual Report	53.5%
▪ CFM Gear (t-shirts, totes, stickers, etc.)	50%
▪ Revised CFM website	44.4%
  - Quotes from Vendors:
 

“CFM’s marketing activities have been very positive and beneficial to my growth as a local producer.”

“Overall, marketing has greatly increased visibility about CFM throughout the community and surrounding region. It is very consistent marketing which I feel is paying real dividends.”
- We completed a Customer Survey asking Market customers about their perception of the “Food From Home” tagline and the “buy local food” campaign. We received 125 responses to our customer survey with the following general perceptions:
  - Overall, customers’ responses demonstrated that their perception of the “Food From Home” tagline aligns with our intention, which is that Food From Home is local, fresh, homegrown, and makes them feel a sense of ownership for the market. One quote summed it up: “That the market food is healthy and just like what I would grow in my garden with the added bonus of supporting our local residents.”
  - Overwhelmingly, customers cited that the major difference between CFM and other places they shop for local food is the ability to interact with and ask questions to farmers who are growing their food. This corroborates the conclusion from our earlier general “customer survey” which indicated that customers feel like they get the best information about healthy food by talking to the producers at the Market who grow the food. We have focused on this interest by our customers and have designed much of our marketing efforts encouraging interaction between customers and the producer/vendors at the Columbia Farmers Market.
- CFM worked with our marketing contractor who developed a “**Columbia Farmers Market Marketing Plan**” with the following suggestions:

- Website: Better incorporate items like SNAP / EBT to lower barriers to entry
    - \* Better showcase vendors
  - Email: Better utilize email to ensure more click throughs.
    - \* Work to ensure content is “worth it” for readers
    - \* Send multiple emails per week
  - Social Media
    - \* Start using a common hashtag.
    - \* Work to generate social activity on Market Day
    - \* Engage customers through Facebook posts
    - \* Work to gain reviews on Yelp, Google and Facebook
  - Advertising
    - \* Better utilize / take advantage of ad platforms, such as TV
    - \* Make sure ads are running during shows that demographically align with potential market shoppers, such as during The Chew, or other food related programs.
    - \* Work to gain more exposure in Tribune and local magazines
    - \* Consider a discounted billboard
    - \* Consider doing a weekly blog or article for magazines like Inside Columbia.
  - Messaging
    - \* Work better to incorporate ‘buy local’ messaging
    - \* Help fight consumer perceptions that Farmers Market = higher costs and that Lucky's (and other local food stores) = farmers market.
- CFM focused much of our marketing efforts on social media (as suggested by our Marketing Contractor). Social media is relatively inexpensive and can be integrated into other marketing efforts to make access to information about our Farmers Market easier for potential customers.

To this goal, CFM re-designed our organization website to feature access to our social media sites as an integral part of the Website. Visitors to the website can immediately sign up for our online newsletter, or interact with the CFM Facebook page, the CFM Instagram, CFM Twitter or CFM Pinterest sites. We also provide CFM vendors with the option of connecting any of their social media accounts directly through the CFM website so customers can connect with producers/vendors’ social media as well.

This has had a significant impact on the amount of social media traffic through our CFM social media accounts. A list of the social media user numbers are listed below.

**Social Media & Newsletter Increase in Followers**

September 2014 to September 16, 2016

Media Type	Start of FMPP grant	September 16, 2016	Percent Increase
E-newsletter (MailChimp)	488	1361	279%
Facebook	2796	6544	234%
Twitter	0	1865	1865%
Instagram	0	1714	1714%
Pinterest	0	58	58%

**Columbia Farmers Market Promotion Program**

## **Customer Counts for Columbia Farmers Market 2015-2016**

### FMPP Grant 2-year Grant Program Increase #'s:

2014 Customers: 66,830

2016 Customers: 81,907

Increase in # of Customers in 2 years: 15,077

Percentage Increase in 2 Years: 22.6%

If the Columbia Farmers Market continues to increase annual customer counts at the same rate as the two years of the FMPP Grant period then.....

The customer count in 2018 would be 100,336, and

The customer count in 2020 would be 122,911

This would mean a 71% increase in customer counts in 6 years.

- We created two educational presentations that discuss the economic value of purchasing food from local producers and how that practice supports the local economy and the farmers and families that grow the food. CFM staff made 22 presentations to more than 820 people communicating about the value of buying locally grown food. We continue to make additional presentations to groups in the Columbia area.

### **Statistical Information About Increased Sales at the Columbia Farmers Market**

The Columbia Farmers Market does not require producer vendors to provide the organization with detailed information about the dollar amount of sales that they gross each year. This would be excellent information for the Market Staff to track each year since it would be direct information about how successful various marketing efforts have affected the gross sales numbers. However, one statistic that we do keep track of (which is an indicator of sales and the growth of financial interaction at the Columbia Farmers Market) is the participation in the Market token program.

The Market has two token programs:

1. The SNAP tokens are the tokens that are provided to SNAP beneficiaries and include:
  - A. The tokens for the SNAP benefits, and
  - B. The tokens from the SNAP matching grant.

These two together constitute the Total SNAP Token Amount

2. The Cash Value tokens are the tokens that are provided to Market customers who use their credit or debit card to “buy cash tokens” as a service by the Columbia Farmers Market.

These two together are a pretty good indicator of the relative amount of money being spent at the Columbia Farmers Market in any weekend or for the entire year. CFM started selling Cash Value tokens in 2010 but we weren't keeping very close track of the amounts sold or redeemed until 2012. 2012 was the first year that CFM had “SNAP Match \$” that provided match dollars for SNAP beneficiaries so the Total Token Program value jumped up 79% from 2012 to 2013. 2014 was the third year of the full program (SNAP, SNAP Match and Cash Value) and the Total Token Program amount only went up 3.9%.

So in the table provided below we are using 2014 as the base year to compare the numbers for looking at the growth in the Market Sales in 2015 and 2016. Of course 2015 and 2016 were the two years when the Columbia Farmers Market Promotion Program was providing marketing assistance to enhance sales at the Market.

**Columbia Farmers Market Tokens Redemption Report (2012 to 2016)**

<u>Year</u>	<u>SNAP</u>	<u>% Increase</u>	<u>Cash Value</u>	<u>% Increase</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
* 2012	\$17,368		\$22,430		\$39,798	
2013	\$33,538		\$35,835		\$69,193	
**2014	\$34,688	Base #	\$37,180	Base #	\$71,868	Base #
2015	\$44,794	29.1%	\$52,210	40.4%	\$97,004	35.0%
2016	\$62,430	39.4%	\$67,335	29.0%	\$129,765	33.8%

**FMPP Grant 2-year Grant Program Increase #'s**

\$27,742	80.0%	\$30,155	81.1%	\$57,897	80.6%
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**At the end of the 2-year FMPP Grant program;**

<b>SNAP Token usage had increased:</b>	<b>80.0%</b>
<b>Cash Value Token usage had increased:</b>	<b>81.1%</b>
<b>Comblined Token Usage increased:</b>	<b>80.6%</b>

\* 2012: Capturing Market Token Redemption information was casual and the program was relatively new.

\*\*2014: We are using 2014 numbers as the Baseline numbers since the number held steady for two years and the increase from 2013 to 2014 was only 3.7%.  
January 1, 2015 is also the first month of the new year of the FMPP grant program.

**Analysis of the Table Above:**

The Columbia Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant started September 30, 2014. So you can see that from 2014 to 2015 (the first full year of the FMPP Grant) the Total Token Redemption Amount increased from \$71,868 to \$97,004 (a 35% increase in one year). And the next year, the Total Token Sales Redemption Amount increased from \$97,004 to \$129,765 (an increase of 33.8%).

So for this two-year period during the FMPP Grant period the Total Token Redemption Amount at the CFM increased 80.6%. I don't think we can extrapolate from this data that the Columbia Farmers Market Total Sales increased during these two years by 80.6%. However, I do believe these numbers are an indication of a trend of increasing sales at the Market during this period and points to some successes from the investment of funds by the USDA in promoting the Columbia Farmers Market.

**Beneficiaries:**

- Staff from ten local food stores in Columbia were introduced to local food producers who are willing to expand their growing and marketing activities to include local food stores.
- Fifteen local growers were introduced to buyers who want to buy produce from local growers.

- Ten CFM volunteer Marketing Committee Members became aware of successful activities being undertaken around the country to promote farmers markets and their producer/vendor products.
- Producer/vendors of the Columbia Farmers Market have a better understanding of the values and expectations of their current customers as well as potential customers who have never been to the Columbia Farmers Market.
- The Members of the Columbia Farmers Market and the CFM Board of Directors have benefited from the development and implementation of an integrated marketing plan for the Market that will guide them in decision making into the future;
- Social media users interested in learning about the Columbia Farmers Market have benefited from having greater access to information about the Market, it's activities products and plans;
- Current and potential customers of the Columbia Farmers Market have a better understanding of the nature of the Market; where it is located, what services and products are offered, when it is open.
  - These customers can now find the Market more easily as a result of signage leading them to Market locations when the various markets are open;
  - These customers have a better understanding about the restaurants in Columbia that purchase food products from CFM producer/vendors;
  - 11,000 customers and potential customers have received an informational "Food From Home" booklet that introduced them to the producer/vendors at the market, with information about who these producers are, better information about their growing practices, how they got started, what produce they grow, and a little something about their farm workers and the families that are supported by the purchase of locally grown food products;
- SNAP eligible customers are benefiting from expanded marketing that is reaching out to new communities in Boone County to inform these customers about the benefits of the SNAP program and how they can gain access to healthy food by shopping at the Columbia Farmers Market;
- A certain number of travelers on Interstate 70 will learn a little more about the where they can access locally grown food;
- Listeners of KBIA radio (which according to our customer survey is the radio station that our Market demographic most listens to) have benefited by learning more about the Columbia Farmers Market, it's products and vendors;
- 820 citizens have benefited from viewing an educational presentation explaining the economic development value of buying food from local food producers; (this group will only grow larger as we continue to make this presentation to new groups in the future),
- CFM producer/vendors have benefited from educational workshops that were designed and presented to enhance their skills as a CFM vendor, such as: marketing, social media development and implementation and market booth set up and design;
- 30 central Missouri producers, buyers and economic developers have learned more about the steps needed to plan and create a regional food distribution and marketing system to help them expand their capacity to grow and distribute more food;
- 10 chefs and several local food producers have benefited from our efforts to introduce them to each other to start the discussion about growing and buying locally grown food; The customers of the restaurants who are eating the locally grown food being purchased and prepared by these chefs are also benefiting from these new relationships;
- All local food producers and institutional food buyers in central Missouri have already (or will soon) benefit from the assistance CFM has provided by assisting in the development of the "2ByAg" online locally grown food offering and purchasing system;
- The regular customers of the Columbia Farmers Market, who made 81,907 trips to the Farmers Market over the last 12 months, have benefited by purchasing and eating some of the freshest, healthiest, and most flavorful food available within a 50 mile radius of Columbia, Missouri;

- And the 80 producer/vendor/members of the Columbia Farmers Market have benefited financially by having 81,907 customers to buy their locally produced food making it possible for the producers to help make a living and support their families.

[Post Grant Activities Vendor Survey](#)

[Letter from Owner of ShowMe Farms; CFM Producer Vendor](#)

### **Lessons Learned**

- People who shop at the market on a regular schedule understand the value that to the community and are willing to spend more of their food dollars for higher quality food and to support the local growers and their families;
- Although these people are the core of our customers, we need to build our marketing efforts beyond this group;
- The general public are confused about what “locally grown food” means. All food stores in the country are marketing themselves as sources for “local food” when in fact very few actually offer food grown locally. We need to educate potential customers about what “local really means” and how shopping at the Columbia Farmers Market is the best way to insure you are buying locally grown food;
- People really want to buy more prepared food at the Columbia Farmers Market;
- Related to the desire for more prepared food is the desire to learn more about how to cook various food items that they purchase at the Market. We need more cooking demonstrations and more sampling by vendors;
- Through guidance from the marketing companies CFM hired, we learned that using the same fonts, colors, logo, etc. help people easily and quickly recognize our brand. We have to be consistent in all of our messaging;
- We learned that social media is an extremely useful tool for advertising, but you need to be careful how you use it. Each social media platform's users are generally different from one another, and different content should be used for each;
- We also learned that although social media posts are important, driving people back to your website is the goal. The information you want to present should live on your website, not hidden in a Facebook feed.
- We learned that many local chefs want to be actively involved in the local food movement, but we have found that it's difficult (with their working hours) for them to attend meetings. Instead through speaking with the chefs individually, CFM staff discovered that many chefs are purchasing local food, (though not always at market) and that they are happy to help promote the market (the chalkboards, sharing and tagging farms in social media posts, etc.). Busy chefs have been willing to volunteer to help provide and cook food for the CFM Farm to Table Fundraising Dinner for three years in a row.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of the Columbia Farmers Market I would like to thank the Staff of the USDA Office of Agriculture Marketing Services, Farmers Market Promotion Program. Thank you especially to Ms. Earlene Henderson-Samuels for her assistance in helping this project to be successful for our community.

Sincerely,  
Steve H. Johnson