West Virginia Farmers Market Training Network Pilot Program (FMTNPP)

Kelly Nix and Daniel Eades
To strengthen the long-term viability of farmers markets and the income-earning capacity of their vendors through targeted technical assistance and peer networking.

Three key areas:

1. Training
2. Networking
3. Technical Assistance
Partnership

- WVU Extension Service
- West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition
- West Virginia Community Development Hub
Funding

- Grant from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
- Selected markets were eligible to apply for a mini-grant of up to $1,000
Selection of 10 Markets

- Capacity
- Clarity of need
- Ability to commit to the program
- Geographic spread, varying size, organizational level
Steps in the program

- Markets attended four trainings/networking events over 2 market seasons
- Received assistance from a qualified consultant on a topic of their need
- Received up to $1,000 mini-grant to address their need
- Access to expert advice
- Became part of a statewide learning and networking community
Example Convening Agenda

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Sales Data Report
- Mini Grant Project Presentation
- State and Federal Funding Opportunities
- Program Review for future consideration
- Next Steps for sustainability
Literature Review

- Business Plan Creation
- Marketing your Market
- Creating an Event
Stephenson, G., Lev, L., & Brewer, L., 2008 highlighted key reasons for farmers market failure that include:

- Market was too small
- Lack of available farm products
- Misuse or misestimating of administrative funds
- Manager payment and turnover
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), 2013 – emphasized the following:

- Conduct research on your area
- Connect with the right people
- Connect with the right organizations
- Advertise
- Provide incentives for market participation
Marketing the Market

U.S. Small Business Administration (2013) indicated an effective marketing strategy should have the following components:

- Market penetration
- Growth
- Channels of distribution
- Communication
Marketing Your Market Trainings

- Market Ready (University of Kentucky, 2013)
- Market Maker (University of Illinois, 2014)
- Kentucky Proud, 2013
Creating an Event

- Boulder, CO – profits above operating cost donated to nonprofit agricultural and community organizations.

- Portland Farmers Market (Chef, kids cook, music, recipes, etc.)
Four Areas of Focus

- Risk Management (food safety, liability insurance)
- Business Planning
- Developing Producers
- Organizational Structure
Research Questions

- Were the challenges identified by each of the 10 markets addressed through the Farmers Market Training Network Program (FMTNPP)?

- Are the 10 markets more confident regarding the long-term future of their market as a result of the FMTNPP?
Research Methods

- Intake Survey
- Mid Survey
- Final Survey
**QUESTION 1:** “Have your market’s identified challenges been addressed through the Training Network Pilot Program?”

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<th>No</th>
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QUESTION 2: “In your opinion, has the availability of services through the Training Network Pilot program led to improvements in sales at your market?

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QUESTION 3: “On a scale of 1–10, how confident do you feel about the long term future of your market?”

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<td>8.8</td>
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QUESTION 4: “Does your market currently have a long-term business plan?”

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QUESTION 5: “Does your market feel more connected to existing resources and technical assistance as a result of FMTNPP?”

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<tr>
<td>Mid–Point</td>
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Goal 1: Vendors in participating farmers markets will report greater sales

- A 20% increase in farmers market sales from first season to second season
Goal 2: Participating farmers market managers will develop long-term plans for their markets and will feel more confident about the long-term future of their markets.

- A 50% increase in participating markets which have adopted long term management structures and/or long term business plan, as indicated by pre- and post-program surveys of participating markets.
Goal 3: WVFMA will strengthen its role as a resource for farmers markets and will attract a larger number of paid member markets, leading to greater funding stability.

- A 20% increase in the number of paid WVFMA member markets by the end of the project period, as indicated by the WVFMA member database.
Implications

- Increased long-term stability and likelihood of success
- Increased in sales has positively impacted the markets’ abilities to sustain themselves
- Project Coordinator was hired
- Increase in organizational capacity (Policy Committee formed, Marketing Permits)
Recommendations/Lessons Learned

- Data collection and utilization
- Face-to-face meetings/convening's
- Bringing partners and technical assistance to markets’ own localities
- Staff support is critical
- Partnerships with other organizations are essential
- Existing gap in the knowledge of technical assistance providers regarding the unique needs of farmers markets
Next Steps

- Embark on the Training Network
- Develop lasting resources around the effective approaches learned from the Pilot Project
- Assess additional emerging training needs
- Develop tools to meet those and previously identified needs
Thank you!

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