



Diversifying Farmers Markets

Expanding the Potential of State and Regional Farmers Market Associations

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Funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

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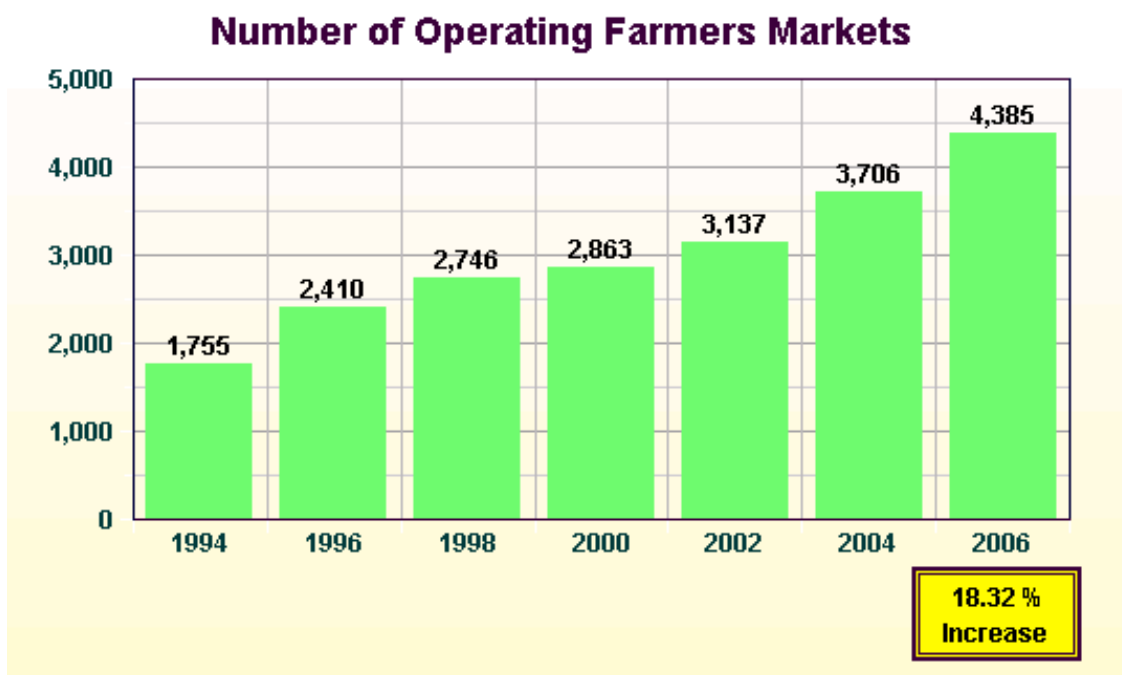
INTRODUCTION

The number of farmers markets in the United States, as recorded by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Services (USDA AMS), has nearly doubled in the last six years from 2,863 markets in 2000 to over 4,385 in 2006 (Table 1). AMS projects that over three million consumers shop at these markets, spending over a billion dollars annually and providing a partial or full living to an estimated 40,000 small farmers and food entrepreneurs.

Farmers markets are powerful grassroots movements that promote civic engagement, social change, economic development and healthy living. However, while markets have gained tremendous support from their customers, from sustainable agriculture, "buy-local" programs, politicians and hunger groups, little of this has translated into the provision of services that develop the capacity of vendors, market managers, governing boards and partners.

This remarkable increase has been made possible because of the groundswell of interest in farmers markets at the community level. Grassroots organizations - churches, downtown associations, chambers of commerce and community food activists -- are increasingly becoming market organizers and/or sponsors, and are expanding to new locations and communities. Today, farmers markets vary in size from a few vendors to many hundred, with management ranging from a vendor-volunteer to a professional management team.

Table 1: Growth of Farmers Markets 1994-2006 ¹



¹ USDA AMS Farmers Markets 2007

Many markets fail within the first three years, with significant economic, social and emotional effect on farmers, consumers and community leaders. Oregon State University recently published a study titled “When Things Don’t Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers’ Markets Close,” which revealed that new markets are vulnerable, with 24 percent closing during or after their first year of operation. Moreover, while the expansion of farmers markets was driven by increasing consumer demand for locally produced fresh products, their sustainability is threatened because of increased competition from specialty supermarkets like Whole Foods, the exploitation of organic certification and “Buy Local” programs which create other opportunities and venues to buy local products.

As existing farmers markets proliferate, there is a very evident, and increasing, need for support services in marketing, regulations and governance – so that farmers markets are run effectively as businesses, while serving their social and community goals. Beyond these operational considerations, individual farmers markets can benefit by working together on policy issues that enhance farmers market operations and their impact on communities.

State and regional farmers market associations would seem to be a logical way to bring markets organizers together to address common issues and challenges. Unfortunately, for reasons elaborated below, farmers market leaders have generally failed to develop a strong organizational infrastructure that can provide the necessary professional training, mentoring, and establishing best practices and market standards that are necessary to provide economic sustainability for markets, their management and their vendors.

In 2006, PPS conducted a survey of all the state farmers market associations. Information about their organizational structure, operating budget, and current activities was collected. In general, the results showed that, if a state had an association, it was largely underfunded

and had a very narrow range of activities and programs. Clearly, the potential was not being reached.

With these challenges in mind, Project for Public Spaces, with the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, provided funding in 2006 for four state farmers market associations under its Diversifying Public Markets and Farmers Markets grant program. The goal of this grant program was to expand the capacity of existing associations, and to develop new associations, with a specific emphasis on the following specific objectives:

- To broaden the impacts of the market association in collaboration with community and rural development organizations, health institutions, food systems organizers, smart growth groups, transportation agencies, and others;
- To expand and enhance existing farmers markets within the state or region, especially in low- to moderate-income communities, including:
 - > Support markets’ efforts to broaden their community impacts in the areas of health and nutrition, urban and rural economic development, smart growth and neighborhood revitalization;
 - > Expand economic opportunities for small to mid-sized farmers and low-income entrepreneurs, especially women, immigrant, refugee and minority producers;
 - > Contribute to the development of local food systems with markets at their core; and
 - > Enable markets to become stronger community gathering places.
- To raise the visibility and standing of farmers markets and other public markets in the state/region and the importance of linking urban and rural economies;
- To create sustainable sources of support for the association and markets within the state or region; and
- To create alliances with indoor public markets or other producer-oriented markets in the state/region.

PPS awarded grants to four projects that were designed to either form new farmers market associations or to build capacity of existing ones. With a two year grant timeline and sufficient funding to complete their project, the four grantees were able to highlight the challenges that farmers market associations face as well as modeling some solutions.

This report begins with an overview of state farmers market associations, based on PPS research, and presents the lessons learned from the PPS grant program for four association grantees. Conclusions are presented discussing future opportunities for supporting and expanding state and regional farmers markets associations. The appendix presents a list of current state farmers markets associations.

AN OVERVIEW OF STATE FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATIONS

“In general, an association is a group of persons banded together for a specific purpose.”
A sense of community coordination is at the heart of associations, whether they are national, regional or state-wide. People voluntarily join associations because they want to work together on a common cause or interest - be it the advancement of a profession, the cure for a disease, or the pursuit of a hobby. America's associations have deep roots in our history. The first American settlers formed “guilds,” patterned after British traditions, to address common challenges and support each other's work and lifestyle. Today, hundreds of national, state, and local associations coordinate assistance to individuals and families in times of natural disaster or urgent need. Others write product standards for everything from children's toys to airline and traffic safety. Still more invest millions of dollars to advance the post-college professional training of our nation's workforce.

Farmers markets by their culture and history have been formed by individuals and ad-hoc groups working together for a common purpose. Farmers market associations, whether they are defined as statewide or regional organizations, are formed for a variety of purposes as varied as being an adjunct to a State Department of Agriculture or to buy joint insurance, and vary significantly in terms of organizational structure, mission, capacity and funding. The associations are organized for all types of purposes, but there are some recurring benefits they typically provide that assist the farmers markets in their region. These include:

- Running and coordinating markets
- Providing services such as insurance and Food Stamp/Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology
- Building new partnerships to expand the number and impact of farmers markets within a given state or region
- Raising awareness within local and state government and among communities of the benefits of farmers markets

- Increasing communication among local markets
- Recruiting vendors and expanding customer base
- Marketing programs that connect farmers markets and consumers
- Providing educational activities and professional development for vendors and market managers
- Facilitating collection and exchange of information and statistics that are needed to justify research and grant programs
- Providing education programs for vendors, market managers and inspectors about the interpretation of health regulation and insurance requirements
- Serving as a forum to discuss common problems and solutions and to provide peer mentoring
- Advocating for policy change on issues of common interest

Farmers Market Associations vary across the country in how they are structured, their membership criteria and the services they provide. The majority of associations are very small, volunteer based, non-profit organizations, although some exist within their State Department of Agriculture. Those that have established themselves as independent organizations have followed a start-up process mimicking the historical development of farmers market, and they tend to rely on the strength and dedication of a few individuals. Often the mentality (“bootstraps, duct tape and wire”) of start-up farmers markets has been carried forward into the development of associations with much repetition of learning and mistakes. Farmers market leaders have difficulty in recognizing the need for, and capacity for using, sophisticated and well developed organizational meeting and community building techniques.

Like many markets they represent, associations are often run on a shoestring budget. Annual operating budgets for farmers market associations can be as little as \$1,500, though a few of the larger and more established associations have budgets of \$200,000 or more. Most associations rely on membership dues as their primary source of revenue; larger associations have received grants or contracts for services (such as

administering a food stamp/EBT program) and one state association, the Massachusetts Federation of Farmers Markets, manages six markets in addition to over 50 dues-paying member markets. While some associations do not charge any membership dues, others charge very little, in part because of a short-sighted fear that they will not attract members if they charge too much.

As an alternative to forming their own farmers market associations, market managers, vendors and supporters look to state departments of agriculture to host an association, providing the administrative and support services from state budgets and appropriations. While this may provide more financial stability, this leaves the association susceptible to political and personnel changes and there is less flexibility in reaching out to funding sources like foundations.

Farmers Market Associations by Region

The following provides an overview of associations by region.

Northeast

In the Northeast, there are two strong statewide farmers market associations in Massachusetts and New York that provide a host of services from insurance, coordination of wireless EBT machines to managing markets. They have established a credible presence with state and federal agencies as representatives of the needs and challenges of markets and market managers and successfully advocate for change in policy and interpretation of regulations. The resulting strength and success of markets in those states is a clear indicator of the support provided by those associations. Other states in the northeast do not fare as well as Massachusetts and New York and have a skeleton support network or their associations still operate on the strength of volunteer work. Currently, non-profit “buy local” and

organic farming groups, like the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) are providing support to groups wishing to start associations.

South

Moving further south with different growing conditions and culture around farmers markets, there is a similar situation with a very strong market association in Alabama and growing associations in Florida and North Carolina. Over the region from Texas to North Carolina there is still a scarcity of support or information with which to inform potential market sponsors, farmers who are looking for an outlet for value-added products or regulatory agencies. The success of the Alabama Farmers Market Authority in establishing markets using the Senior Farmers Market nutrition program highlights the potential of such programs to underwrite start-up markets and the influence of dynamic leaders who are dedicated to their work. Florida and North Carolina associations, which offer limited direct services of insurance or facilitation of wireless EBT, advocate with state and local regulatory agencies about the needs of farmers markets, their role in local food systems, and as venues for public education around health and nutrition.

Midwest, Central and Northwest

In these regions of the country, the associations providing assistance to farmers markets vary from a well orchestrated start-up in Michigan to smaller, recently formed volunteer associations in Colorado, Minnesota and Idaho; more mature volunteer organizations in Washington and Oregon; well established organizations with some paid staff in Nevada and New Mexico, and state run agencies in Iowa and Missouri. The common factor among all of these organizations is the limited staffing to match the increasing need for their resources. Frequently, even the more mature organizations have only one full-time equivalent staff person and rely heavily on assistance from state and federal agencies.

California

With any discussion about farmers market and farmers market associations, California is unique. With over 500 farmers markets certified by the state of California, plus certified producers who can grow and sell produce in markets year-round, California needs are very different from almost any other state. California markets are mostly organized into regional certified farmers market associations that manage a cluster of markets, anywhere from a single market to over 50. For example, Southland Farmers Market Association operates markets in southern California, while Pacific Coast Farmers Market Association and California Farmers Market Association operate markets in northern California, most notably in the San Francisco region. The California Federation of Certified Farmers Markets is a statewide organization that provides promotion and a uniform statewide voice for the industry. However, regional certified farmers market associations appear to provide the most comprehensive services and representation for their farmers markets.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FOUR FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION PPS GRANTEES

With funding from the Kellogg Foundation, Project for Public Spaces awarded grants to the following four projects. Each project represented a learning opportunity, through their successes and challenges, which provides insights into the future development of state and regional farmers markets association.

Michigan Farmers' Market Association

Michigan Farmers' Market Association (MIFMA) received grant funding through its sponsoring agency, Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) to launch their organization with a vision to place farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement; ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food; and advocate on behalf of Michigan farmers markets in the policy arena. It has a mission to advance farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. Their objectives include: providing a network for technical assistance; information sharing, problem-solving and market promotion; facilitating networking and new partnerships; enabling new community-supported market formation; and creating a state policy voice for Michigan farmers markets. The association has been creating awareness about MIFMA among farmers market managers, farmers, vendors and the larger group of farmers market stakeholders. With a Community Outreach Committee, they have been actively promoting the benefits, services and efforts of MIFMA while increasing its membership to over 100, and encouraging the widespread support and patronage of farmers markets.

To launch their state-wide organization, Michigan farmers market advocates worked with Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems, a non-profit organization formed to support sustainable agriculture in the state, to incubate the new association. This process was successful for a variety of reasons:

- Before the grant project began, the Michigan's Cooperative Extension held several meetings

with stakeholders to assess support for the association and to determine what services/function the association could provide for potential members and the state's markets. An ad-hoc volunteer group had defined geographic constituency area and developed a realistic timeline that would make the most advantage of paid staff.

- PPS funding for a staff position and infrastructure support allowed the program to build on the volunteer effort that had provided a solid base for the new organization.
- They were able to partner with an excellent sponsor whose mission supports the development of other organizations
- There was already a critical mass of farmers markets in the state that saw the need for an organization dedicated to their interest.
- The partnering sponsor had the ability and capacity to support an inclusive process that included partners at the beginning of the process.

The association's membership continues to grow and concentrates on fulfilling its mission of supporting farmers markets in Michigan. Initially, project managers envisioned working with its member markets and ancillary service providers such as Cooperative Extension, and were uncertain about the value of developing a wider partner base but interested in exploring new opportunities. By the end of the grant period, they had engaged a very diverse network of partners to include chambers of commerce, downtown development authorities, economic development organizations, health care and nutrition organizations and social service agencies. They formed partnerships around a variety of issues, especially youth development, childhood obesity and food safety. Project organizers note that it was extremely helpful to grow their partnership base. The biggest challenge is to find the funding to build the level of staffing that can provide the services that will in turn encourage farmers markets to become members and justify the membership fee.

New York

The Farmers' Market Federation of New York is a grass-roots, membership organization of farmers market managers, market sponsors, farmers and market supporters. Its mission is to support and promote the viability of farmers markets through innovative services, programs and partnerships that maximize the benefits of markets to sellers, buyers and communities. The Federation is a prime example of a mature organization that is assessing its progress and thinking strategically about its future. PPS provided funding for the Building Community Partnerships Project which proposed to develop strategies to create partnerships between local farmers' markets and local governmental, community and agricultural leaders.

A key goal was to build the capacity of the Federation in order to take on a larger role as a statewide partner and leader in the farmers market arena. This entailed board participation in a two day visioning session at which a strategic plan for the Federation was developed. As a result, the board was restructured into a committee system, with roles for each committee to play in the development and operation of the Federation.

With support from PPS, the Federation undertook an education and web-based communications initiative to build awareness of the broader impacts of farmers markets on communities. It included the development of a white paper entitled, "The Value of Farmers Markets to New York's Communities" which was used as an introduction to the state-wide conference, "Farmers Markets: Building Blocks for NY's Communities" and was distributed to a wide variety of state and local leaders. In addition, the Federation redesigned their website to be a greater resource for information and materials on farmers market development and management. A statewide conference was held for governmental and community leaders on the county, city and village level, including, but not limited to mayors, city and county planners, economic development specialists, health department officials, parks department leaders and farmland protection boards. At this conference, partici-

pants learned of the important roles farmers markets play in our communities - economic, social justice, farmland preservation and fostering a sense of community. Participants also learned of partnership opportunities for farmers markets through programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, National Trust for Historic Preservation (Main Street Programs), as well as those offered through the Farmers' Market Federation of New York. The conference concluded with round table discussions where "pledges" for potential partnerships were secured. The pledges teamed local governmental and community leaders with local farmers markets to increase the capacity of the market management. It was envisioned that these partnerships would be nurtured by the Federation throughout the farmers market season through contacts and consultations and then profiled as a means to share the process and success. The partnership pledges resulted in 11 new farmers markets and 14 ongoing partnerships between markets and community organizations.

Perhaps the most significant and unintended outcome of this conference was the profound impact it has had on the development and sustainability of the Federation. As a result of the conference, a number of new partners emerged for the Federation. These new partnerships have resulted in additional grant funding, contracts for fee-for-service work and an elevated role in statewide initiatives on food policy. These grants and contracts also benefit individual markets in the state. For example, the Federation received a grant to provide incentive coupons for low-income customers to use their food stamps/EBT cards to shop at Federation member markets: the local markets benefit from higher sales while the Federation receives support for administration of the program. With support such as this, the Federation has been able to hire additional personnel and expand its member services. The creation of more long-term partnerships has brought with it an abundance of ideas and resources and over time builds mutual respect and trust in the statewide community.

South Carolina

Grant funds were awarded to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and were used to provide funds for a farmers market project with two goals: the development of a new direct marketing/farmers market association and creating partnerships to increase support and to enhance farmers markets, especially in lower income communities.

Even without an established organization in place, there was been good progress on the second goal. With grant support, the state enhanced a number of markets by supporting paid market managers, establishing food stamps/EBT, offering technical assistance and educational opportunities to farmers and market managers, and engaging relevant community partners, in particular with local community service organizations, to provide market programming focused on healthy eating and sustainability. In addition, partnerships were created with community organizations, faith based organizations, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies. For example, the very successful "Meet Me at the Market" project that engaged almost 1500 youth and 176 adults in a dialogue about the relationship between healthy eating habits and farmers markets. The project was organized by Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, an African American women's service organization, and numerous faith-based organizations in rural South Carolina. Presentations on crop production and sustainable agriculture, as well as nutrition education focused on fresh, local fruits and vegetables, were given to k-12 students and to college and graduate students.

There have been a number of other spin-off benefits, most specifically that numerous long-term partnerships have resulted in a new farmers market on the grounds of a local hospital; the improvement of existing farmers market facilities or the building of a new facility for markets in three counties; and the establishment of food stamp/EBT programs at many markets throughout South Carolina and will continue through the 2008 market season. Also, during the course of the grant, the South Carolina Department of Agri-

culture launched the Certified South Carolina Grown program that focuses on farmers markets, enhances the direct marketing opportunities for farmers, and leverages additional funds for farmers markets.

Unlike in Michigan, where the Cooperative Extension had actively engaged stakeholders in the process of establishing a farmers market association, measuring interest and need in the years preceding their participation in this grant program, South Carolina's first attempt to engage stakeholders began at the outset of the grant. During the course of the grant, project organizers began developing partnerships; building capacity of markets, and leveraging funding to continue this process. It is likely that it will take additional years to create the critical mass and organizational capacity in order to develop a fully functional association, but South Carolina is following the necessary process as it moves forward.

New Mexico

In New Mexico, there are 22 Pueblo Indian and Tribal Nations that are home to about 173,000 Native Americans. These predominantly rural communities have retained their own unique identities through their cultures, languages, and connection to the land. Currently, however, there is increased concern about the deterioration of traditional cultural and family values, as well as disparities in health and economics compared with non-native communities. Farmers markets themselves represent unique challenges in this context: tribal communities address sharing, trading, and marketing differently from non-tribal communities because of traditions, beliefs, and community structures related to food, farming, and natural resource issues.

Grant funds were awarded to Farm to Table, a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote locally based agriculture through education, community outreach and networking, to develop a Native American farmers market association. Although there are 45 farmers markets in New Mexico, only five exist in tribal communities. Markets within the network have

a goal to increase community access to healthy foods, provide farmers opportunities to increase income, and provide education programs that will focus on healthy eating and nutrition. The project focused on all of New Mexico's tribal communities and their need for health, intercultural, agricultural and natural resource programs, along with 12 specific tribal communities who were interested in farmers market development.

The project had two goals: to increase the number of Native American farmers markets and to enhance the capacity of existing markets enhance the capacity of these markets, creating an umbrella organization that would advocate on their behalf and reflect the unique cultural context of Native American farmers markets. The association would allow tribal communities to address their own needs and to develop programs that are tribally controlled and operated.

Farm to Table spent extensive amount of time providing assistance to the start up and expansion of markets in seven communities, working closely with local leaders to assure that the markets reflected local cultural contexts. Before the project began there were four tribal markets, two of those markets closed, but three new markets were created, one of which has opened on a trial basis, with six market days planned this year. As a result of their project, there are now five markets in Native American communities in New Mexico.

Similar to South Carolina, the grassroots organizing for this association began at the start of the grant cycle. Early on, it became clear that building capacity of Native American farmers and actively engaging stakeholders would take a significant amount of time to build the foundation for a Native American Farmers Market Association.

As the project proceeded, other options to creating a separate Native American Farmers Market association were considered. The state already has an established farmers market organization, New Mexico Farmers Market Association (NMFMA) that has developed a track record of relevant programs and successful advocacy on behalf of their members. After experiencing initial

difficulties at organizing the tribal communities, Farm to Table decided to work with NMFMA and established a specific sector for tribal groups within NMFMA. This move enabled the two groups to pool their resources and work directly with the tribal communities, and at the same time form new partnerships that strengthened the whole community of farmers markets in New Mexico. The partnership with NMFMA resulted in increased technical assistance available to tribal farmers markets; a defined track at the annual New Mexico Farmers Market Association conference; and the creation of a Tribal Market manual: "Farmers' Markets in Tribal Communities: Starting Up & Sustaining Success". Scholarships have been given to Native Americans to participate in conferences on organic farming, direct marketing, and farmers markets. Also, the Southwest Marketing Network Conference sponsored a Native American Community Initiatives Reception and Networking Session for over 30 participants to share their projects, resources and challenges.

As a result of this project, there are a growing number of Native American farmers markets and progress has been made in the development of the capacity of farmers to serve these markets. By building capacity and encouraging participation in a wide range of educational opportunities, Native Americans will be able to better organize and consider expanded marketing options for their farm products, as well as improve their ability to grow for market.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With a few notable exemptions in California, New York, Michigan and Massachusetts, there has been no corresponding growth in the provision of accessible and relevant educational and technical support services for market practitioners and their governing bodies, despite the increasingly complicated public health regulations, the changes in federal regulations for the distribution of food stamps/EBT and increased competition for vendors and markets locations. As markets are increasingly being promoted as agents of change and providers of sustainable futures for urban and rural communities, the same attention and financial support has to be made available to national, state and regional organizations that provide support services to markets, market managers and market supporters to provide multi-layered support services on an ongoing basis.

With the rapid expansion of markets, there is a clear need for an organization in every state that can provide the educational programs and policy advocacy that is required to sustain them in an increasingly sophisticated marketplace. In states where there is a well established and funded farmers market association, they are able to deliver resources that match the practical demands of market managers and vendors which are usually very specific around EBT, insurance and marketing, all of which require experience and training to deliver on a region-wide basis.

The reality is that some of the most powerful and useful activities of an association are in influencing policy, creating strong partnerships that can be translated into well developed local support systems, and providing support for start-up and existing markets. These can only be accomplished by an independent organization that is well funded by its members and has its own administrative staff and offers benefits that members find valuable. The process of forming these associations is important in determining their success and future sustainability. The anecdotal reports from the farmers market community, and the evaluated experience of the PPS grantees, suggest the following recommenda-

tions for the formation of state and regional farmers market associations:

1. Partnering with a suitable host organization that is willing to act as an incubator but with a mission that leads the group to independence not dependency. While the initial impetus for an association can be championed by a respected individual, it is important to quickly build a leadership team to carry the project forward.
2. Have secure and adequate funding to hire staff experienced in community organizing that can conduct research and visioning within the selected geographic area before starting the formal process of forming the organization.
3. Appointment of a diverse steering committee or board that is representative of the future members but also include representatives of potential partners, regulators, legislators and market customers. These new partners can translate into new sources of funding for associations, as well.
4. Establish a structured process to form the organization that has key decision points when the farmers market community will be involved either in a decision making process or an advisory position. A transparent, community based process will be particularly useful with this diverse community which has as many stakeholders with different agendas as customers at a farmers market.
5. Develop a clear vision, mission and goals with deliverables that have a timeline that is based on the capacity of the association, its members' needs and the reality of financial support.
6. Ensure that the provision of practical services will provide net income to the association while benefiting the members.

Funding for Farmers Market Associations

Farmers Markets vary in size, structure and mission and do not readily fit into a standard retail scenario. The associations that seek to represent them have to look to a variety of different business structures and ways to finance their activities. There are web-based resources and national organizations that provide a wealth of details about different legal structures that are most appropriate for different missions and goals. When choosing a legal structure attention needs to be paid to how the organization will fund itself. The commonly accepted assumption that a non-profit needs to have at least three different income streams (grants, member dues and income from product/services) applies equally well to a farmers market association, which doesn't necessarily need to be a tax exempt, non-profit entity.

Grants

Foundations tend to give grant monies to project-based activities rather than organizational infrastructure and general support. If the farmers market association is not a 501(c)3, they need a good working relationship with one that has an established track record of managing grant funds. Farmers market associations are in an ideal position to get funding for the coordination of services to community groups that will address issues around low-income families, obesity, health education, revitalization of community space and urban agriculture. Federal and state funds are increasingly available for farmers markets and associations need to advocate directly with legislators to ensure that there is recognition of the need for infrastructure support for farmers markets and their representative associations. However, with grant funding there are drawbacks:

- they are competitive, so cannot be counted on to sustain the organization
- they can overwhelm the association with reporting requirements and paperwork
- grant funding may be program specific, and an association, in an attempt to bolster their budget, may be tempted to develop new programs in order to

qualify for the funding, thus overwhelming the association, since grants are program rather than capacity/infrastructure based.

Membership

Member dues are a source of income and can be tied to receiving "product" in the form of newsletters, email alerts or educational material on a regular basis. Membership can also make the individual markets eligible for certain services, like insurance, that an association can negotiate at lower rates. A realistic charge for membership also creates the buy-in of members who have a realization that services the associations provide are valuable and reduce an operating expense for the individual farmers market.

Income from Products or Services

The provision of services for farmers markets and operating markets (such as administering a state-wide EBT marketing program) can provide regular income for the association that can ensure a sustainable future. While those services can benefit membership, the income that is generated for the association needs to be sufficient to cover the overhead of the program plus the provision of services that do not generate cash income. For example, advocacy on behalf of farmers markets at the state and federal level generally does not generate a cash return, but it is a necessary part of the association's mission.

Recommendations for Future Support for Regional and State Farmers Market Associations

The development of successful and sustainable farmers market associations hinges on the provision of resources that will create an infrastructure for the organization and build the capacity of the individuals leading them. Resources are most useful in the form of grant funding and technical assistance, such as conferences, mentoring, teleconferences and networking opportunities. Providing funding directly to an association or through a fiscal agent appears to be the most beneficial strategy, as can be seen in the example of

the Michigan Farmers Market Association and their partnership with MIFFS as fiscal agent. This strategy allows funding to be used solely for the development of the organization rather than to support the infrastructure of the sponsoring agency.

A sufficient level of funding allows for the incubation of an association, from early grassroots organizing and convening stakeholders, to the development of a formal framework with a board and bylaws. The ability to fund a full-time position is critical for success, especially before and during the start-up phase, and is highly recommended.

- Funding can be targeted in the following areas of capacity building and/or subsets of organizational development:
- Providing pre-organizational capacity building and inventory of need and interest before the formal organizational structure is proposed;
- Building organizational capacity, including board development and organizational sustainability.
- Providing support for existing and new associations to establish innovative partnerships with other organizations and institutions which can provide support to individual, member markets as well as the association at large;
- Providing technical assistance and capacity building for association member markets, as well as farmers and vendors;
- Developing overall marketing and promotion program for member markets;
- Providing targeted program development for such topics as nutrition education, childhood obesity, food access, increasing diversity, immigrant farmer/vendor programs, to name a few.

There is a bright future for farmers markets in the U.S. And, while there is something wonderful about the grassroots, indigenous process that is creating truly unique markets throughout the country, there is a still a need for more structure and underlying support. With effective and sustainable organizations at the state and regional level, local farmers markets can

achieve their true potential, both as economic engines and as catalysts for community revitalization. Clearly, more needs to be done to support farmers market associations that can provide this support -- while still keeping the local flavor so much a part of the recent growth and success of farmers markets.

Sponsorships

Sponsorships are being sought by associations around the country, specifically in New York State. Developing relationships with those who support the mission and work of the organization and donate to the cause is not only important for the association, but can also be a source of unrestricted funds.

APPENDIX

State/Provincial/Regional Farmers' Market Associations

Alabama

- Alabama Farmers Markets Authority:
www.fma.alabama.gov

Arizona

- Arizona Community Farmers Markets Group:
www.arizonafarmersmarkets.com

Arkansas

- Arkansas Farmers' Market Association

California

- California Federation of Farmers' Markets:
cafarmersmarkets.com

Colorado

- Colorado Farmers' Market Association:
www.coloradofarmers.org

Florida

- Florida Association of Community Farmers Markets

Indiana

- Indiana Farm Market Association:
www.hort.purdue.edu/hort/ext/ifma/ifma.html

Iowa

- Iowa Farmers' Market Association

Kentucky

- Kentucky Farmers' Market Association:
www.kentuckyfarmersmarket.org/pages/

Maine

- Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets (MFFM):
www.MFFM.org

Massachusetts

- Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets:
www.massfarmersmarkets.org

Michigan

- Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA):
www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu

Minnesota

- Minnesota Farmers' Market Association (MFMA):
www.mfma.org

Nevada

- Nevada Certified Farmers Market Association

Pennsylvania (Western)

- Farmers' Market Alliance for Western Pennsylvania

New Hampshire

- New Hampshire Farmers' Market Association:
www.nhfma.bizland.com

New Mexico

- New Mexico Farmers Market Association:
www.farmersmarketsnm.org

New York

- Farmers' Market Federation of New York:
www.nyfarmersmarket.com

North Dakota

- North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association:
www.ndfarmersmarkets.com

Oregon

- Oregon Farmers' Markets Association:
www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org

Texas

- Texas Certified Farmers Markets:
www.texascertifiedfarmersmarkets.com

Vermont

- Vermont Farmers' Market Association (NOFA VT)

Washington

- Washington State Farmers Market Association:
www.wafarmersmarkets.com

West Virginia

- West Virginia Farmers Market Association

Wyoming

- Wyoming Farmers Market Association:
www.wyomingfarmersmarkets.org