

2019 Annual Report: A Year Review
By Katie Daman and Nathan Enns (Co-Chairs)

Acknowledgement of Work

As a working board, we're all putting in a significant amount of unpaid labour for this project because: (1) We enjoy the work (2) We believe in the work (3) We like working as a team. Each person will likely have additional personal reasons as well. That said, with upwards of 10 hours per month, we've added a section at each monthly board meeting where we appreciate the labour that each of us has put into the organization. This has been especially helpful, as sometimes our work is done in silos and others don't even know who is doing what! So here's a very summarized version of who's done what over the past year:

- Arianna: Beautiful, eye-catching graphic design for markets and campaigns, social media coordination (prior to Asha being hired), marketing and market consulting, Winter CSA and on-site market volunteer bi-weekly
- Jon: Farmers' Market Advisory Committee, policy development, weekly on-site market volunteer and support for Asha, as well as unending market errands
- Kelly: All financials including vendor receipts, deposits, final cash outs, year-end financials, and setting up and issuing payroll, as well as grant work with Canada Summer Grants (surprisingly, a major process for us as new applicants) and occasional market volunteer
- Anna: Chew on This! creator as well as most of the coordination of the project, oversight of summer research student, writing and editing grant applications, development work on membership packages, Food Coupon Committee (more below), minute taking at meetings, Winter CSA, occasional market volunteer
- Nick: Winter CSA, countless errands, consultant, occasional market volunteer
- Nathan: Winter CSA, email monitoring and communications, conflict resolution /critical problem solving, representation at events, consulting on operations, co-chair during meetings, human resources/staff support, occasional market volunteer
- Katie: Being essentially a full time, near constant availability to get things done, managing so many details that it makes most people's heads spin, creating a wonderful, fulfilling and healthy job experience for Asha (HR/staff support), near constant brainstorming and dreaming about the market and the food hub followed by meaningful action, constantly inspiring those around her with her vision and enthusiasm
- Asha: Lots of patience as our first employee, has taken significant initiative on brainstorming, bringing her own vision into our work/team, and implementing new projects, putting new financial systems into place, doing excellent volunteer recruitment, having a great working relationship with board of directors
- We also want to thank all our volunteers this year who were amazing, the market would literally fall apart without your/their support, all the vendors who came and made the space come to life, all the people who came and hung out, shopped and grew this community and the Lord Roberts Community Centre for being our home.

Winter CSA

Last year, we decided to last minute put together what we called a “Winter CSA”. Essentially, we aggregated remaining vegetables from the harvest season and provided three packages:

- Winter Storage Vegetable Boxes (Large and Small)
- Winter Feast Box

This project, despite being put together in about 2.5 weeks, was hugely popular. Our revenue totalled just under \$5k. Unfortunately, due to its last minute nature, the costs were higher than they would have been had we had more planning time. Altogether, our profit from this project was just under \$1k, but we estimate that the attention it garnered was also a positive outcome. We plan to run this project again at this year’s Holiday Market.

Mother’s Day Market

This year our Mother’s Day Market was the largest it’s ever been, with approximately 30 vendors set up indoors and 10 vendors set up outdoors and over 700 people through the market. As there’s not much more room for growth at these markets, we may have to look at switching locations in upcoming years. However, for now we appreciate the size as its a lot more manageable.

Farmers’ Market Advisory Committee

This year we set up the inaugural Farmers’ Market Advisory Committee (FMAC) to help advise on farmers’ market fees and policies. The FMAC also contributed to the “Vendor Selection Process” document through meetings, guidance and feedback. While the Committee was selected by our Board this year, we will be putting a formal application process into place for following years.

The purpose of the FMAC is to help FFFH create good, strong, relevant processes for accepting vendors at the South Osborne Farmers’ Market (& indoor markets). As the market grows, FFFH has recognized a need for some feedback on creating and maintaining a process that is fair and accessible, but also results in an appealing vendor mix for the general public. The FMAC should also allow for a thorough evaluation of market successes, failures and changes that need to be made to various market activities and processes.

The idea is that FMAC will meet twice a year (pre-market and post-market), and change year over year to allow for new vendors to join and provide feedback. The FMAC will be made up of a combination of vendors (FFFH Co-op member vendors and non-members) and board members chosen by the FFFH board’s Farmers’ Market Sub-Committee. It will be representative of both food and craft vendors. The FMAC will target 7-8 diverse and enthusiastic representatives to join, and there must always be a vegetable vendor or a meat vendor on the FMAC.

Employees

One of our most exciting developments this year was the hiring of a Farmers' Market Coordinator! Asha Nelson, our new coordinator, has her undergrad in global political economy and has been doing research work in food sovereignty for the past couple years. She also has experience in event planning and nonprofit development, as one of the co-founders of Sawa Theatre and the past-Operations Manager of Rainbow Trout Music Festival. With all of the projects she implemented at the market, we even ended up increasing her hours during the summer from 30 to 35 hours a week. We have also decided to extend her employment through the off-season, as Asha has been an amazing addition to our team and we don't want to lose her! As such, she'll be working on a part-time basis as farmers' market coordinator (with the Holiday Market, planning for next season, and then the Mother's Day Market) as well as part-time as Food Hub Coordinator. The Food Hub Coordinator position will be on an interim basis, while we're working on laying some of the groundwork for the Food Hub. We plan to hire a full-time Food Hub Coordinator who has the necessary experience in sales and distribution.

We are also currently in the process of hiring a part-time bookkeeper.

Strategic Planning

One thing that we have been having a continued discussion about is the sustainability of a volunteer board, and ensuring that our directors and co-chairs are able to find the balance necessary to allow for long lasting involvement. This has led to many conversations around board structures, governance and leadership and is an ongoing 'experiment'.

We also received a grant this year from the Manitoba Co-op Association to undergo a more formal 1.5 day strategic planning and visioning process, which we were able to do in spring. Some of the major items discussed during that time included: the need for an operations plan more than a strategic plan, the values, mission and vision of the organization, as well as governance and decision-making. Overall, we found it to be a helpful process, but will require a more dedicated follow-up meeting to properly complete the resulting action items.

South Osborne Farmers' Market

In follow-up to an inquiry around beer and alcohol at our markets last year, we want to provide a brief assurance that board members do not get free drinks at the market beyond what is allowed for regular volunteers. Volunteers who volunteer on market day, receive one drink per two hours of volunteering, up to a maximum of two drinks. We do occasionally have some amount of leftover beer from our kegs that would then be offered to board members and volunteers; however, we have been making significant efforts to decrease the amount of leftover beer over the past two years. It can be difficult to predict how much to purchase as sales vary greatly depending on a number of factors such as weather, other events happening, etc. This is an

ongoing effort. Please see the Farmers' Market Report by our Farmers' Market Coordinator for further details on this summer's market activities.

Grants

This year we received three grants: Manitoba Co-op Association Grant, Canada Summer Jobs Grant, and the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Grant (more below). We currently have two additional grant applications in place: Manitoba Co-op Association Grant and Assiniboine Credit Union Community Grant. We are expecting to apply for two additional grants in the upcoming months: Local Food Infrastructure Fund and Winnipeg Foundation.

Food Hub

A Food Hub can take many different forms, but it is typically an aggregator and distributor of locally grown foods that helps smaller scale, regional food producers gain a larger, more stable market share in a central urban market. In other words, a Food Hub acts as a broker to collectivize the power of small scale producers, and help them gain access to larger buyers like grocery stores, restaurants and institutions.

As most of you have probably heard by now, we have recently received a \$48,750 dollar grant from Canadian Agricultural Partnership Manitoba to develop a Food Hub. This is a large undertaking that we are excited to have the opportunity to deliver. It is a pilot project, meaning that it will not be full scale, and will be run on an experimental basis for just over one year. With a number of deliverables required as part of the grant, our hope is to discover more effective and sustainable ways to help small Manitoba farmers get their product to market.

We are just beginning to solidify the shapes we imagine for the Food Hub. There are still things that remain obscure, and also because of the experimental nature of the project, we want the model to have a certain amount of flexibility. Our focus right now is determining the best form of distribution. We have begun a few discussions, but cannot publicly state anything solid at this point. Further information can be found in our CAPM Grant Two-Pager and "Farm Fresh Food Hub 101" documents.

Membership Development

We are in the midst of redeveloping our membership packages. Our cooperative has recently reached a new stage of development and therefore we recognize the need to improve how we include our members in decision-making and the sorts of benefits we can offer to sustain long time co-op members and attract new members. Currently, we have two classes of membership: supporter members and producer members. On the "Membership" section of our website, we have also added links to past financial statements and annual reports for your convenience.

Farmers' Market Final Report

Asha Nelson, Market Coordinator
Farm Fresh Food Hub -- AGM 2019

Vendor Management:

Recruitment: The market has gained a lot more interest from vendors with over 88 participating vendors throughout this past season. Based on our increased exposure and recent expressed interest, we expect the number of applicants to continue to increase next season.

Cancellations: Although there's been a lot more excitement around the market, last minute cancellations and no shows were still an issue this season with often 3-5 cancellations day of and 2-3 cancellations before the 24 hour cancellation period. Our 24 cancellation policy does push vendors to give notice, however, it's still not enough time to find a replacement. We've also had to turn away quite a few vendors who may have otherwise been more reliable than those who frequently cancelled. Next year, we're planning to collect vendor fees using an e-transfer method to help solve some of these issues. This will also free up more of the coordinator's time during the market to tend to other issues.

Vendor End of Season Survey: At the end of the season, I sent out an end-of-season survey asking vendors for their general feedback on this past season, experience with our new policies, and any ideas they might have for next season. According to the 19 responses we received, vendors were enthusiastic about: the selection of vendors; diverse entertainment and speakers series; community atmosphere; and overall organization of the market. The main area they believed we could improve on was marketing and promotions, particularly with reaching people outside of the South Osborne community, to increase the number of market goers. We hope to use this data to improve our policies and vendor procedures for next year.

Volunteers

In general, our volunteers this season have been highly dependable and eager to help. Come September, however, our number of volunteers began to peter out with the start of school. In order to retain interest, I organized a volunteer appreciation party and was relatively happy with the turn out. I also think it would be good to partner with community organizations working with youth to ensure reliable volunteers while also giving youth an opportunity to gain employment skills as well as learn about what we do. I already have a few organizations in mind.

Education, Policies & Partnerships

Zero Plastic Bag & Styrofoam Policy: This past season, we implemented a plastic and styrofoam free policy in collaboration with the Green Action Centre. To ensure the accessibility of this project, we also introduced a Take-a-Bag Leave-a-Bag program whereby customers could take a reusable or plastic bags for free but were also asked to drop off their own extra bags. We also sold Sewdandee tote bags made of recycled material at our info tent. Overall, I believe this project was successful although we still need to find better ways to encourage folks to drop off their reusable bags.

Refillable Container Program: We also introduced a Refillable Container Program that had about eight vendors participate in and many of which adopted it as a permanent offer with their business. Although it was a slow start, it really got going towards the end of the season with a good number of market goers bringing their jars to be refilled at the market. We hope to expand this program next season by increasing the number of participating vendors as well as stepping up our marketing efforts for this particular project such as improving education around packaging. However, we understand that due to health regulations and the nature of certain products, many vendors won't be able to participate.

Marketing, Promotions and Public Engagement

Marketing strategies: We used a number of new and old advertising strategies including street signage on Osborne; free public radio announcements on UMFM and Nostalgia Radio; event listing on tourism directories and summer entertainment guides; posters and handbills in local businesses; sandwich board signs in front of local businesses; Facebook and Instagram paid advertisements; as well as maintaining an active presence on our social media accounts. We also received a fair bit of radio and print media attention this season with features on CBC radio and CJNU as well as in The Manitoban, The Manitoba Co-operator, and Canstar Community News.

Below is a breakdown of some noteworthy stats that correlate with some of these marketing efforts.

Website:

- During summer 2019, we've had 6,391 page visits with the most number of visits during the month of August and the majority of these were accessed through Facebook.

Facebook:

- We had 5,500 event responses this season
- On average, we had about 60 post engagements per week
- 150 new likes and 1764 total likes

Google:

- We've had over 31,000 searches on google in the last 3 months
- Our google business photos have been viewed 43.1 thousand times in the last three months

Instagram:

- We currently have 2,370 followers

Market Attendance:

- This season, we've seen as steady increase in market goers averaging at 550 per market. July 31 and September 25 were our largest market with over 700 people in attendance.

Finance:

If you want to view our expenses and profits from this seasons, check out the summer financials spreadsheet.

Alcohol sales were highest during the first two markets but averaged at \$900 to \$1000 per market. We also introduced a new fall drink, spiked hot apple cider, which was very successful. As for strawberries, we quickly sold out every week but were encouraged to increase our prices from \$20 to \$22-24 for next year.

Ongoing Projects & Ideas

Holiday Market: Within a week of opening applications, we already received 26 vendor applicants. The application period will close on November 8 at which we will begin selecting our vendors based on an already determined appropriate market mix. Unfortunately, we can only accept 30 vendors in total as the space at Lord Roberts Community Centre is far too small. This is something to look into for next year. The Holiday Market is scheduled for December 15 from 11am to 3pm.

Winter CSA/Winter Veggie Box: We are in the midst of finding farmers who will sell us bulk storage vegetables at wholesale prices. Based on the overwhelming success last year, we plan to increase our order from \$2000 to \$3000. We will use traditional marketing strategies, such as social media, as well as circulate the order form around offices and organizations.

Accessibility Strategy: The Lord Roberts Community Centre is trying to make the space more wheel-chair accessible, however, we also discussed ways of helping other folks in the area attend the market who may otherwise not be able to. To accommodate these folks, this may mean partnering with Peg City car co-op and running a pickup service or partnering with another community organization to organize group bike rides to the market. The project is still in its infancy. A vendor also suggested partnering with a bike courier service to deliver veggies to nearby homes. These are all just ideas at this point.

South Osborne Farmers' Market Gift Cards: We had a number of market goers ask about gift cards and although we have an online gift card option, I think it would be good to sell physical cards or market bucks at the market . I'm currently looking into the feasibility of this project.