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PSU Ref. No: 213219

Title: Farm Market Innovation Education & Training

Submitted to: Patti Keller

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Proposed Project **4/1/2020 - 3/31/2021** **Total Project Request: \$4,800**

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Please reference PSU Ref. Number in all correspondence.

Grant Proposal Submitted to SHAP Extension Committee
January 2020

Title **Farm Market Innovation Education & Training**

Personnel Tanya Lamo, Penn State Cooperative Extension,
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Duration of Project—One Year

Farm Market Innovation continues to be a project that engages and educates farmers and market owners by providing hands-on, immersive education opportunities. Fostering innovation in farm markets and direct-to-consumer farmers, it introduces them to the most current trends in marketing, displays, value-added products, merchandising and agritourism. Through face-to-face workshops, immersive educational experiences and webinars, it creates a forum that allows business owners to share feedback, ideas and innovation by expanding their professional network. Hands-on education and training will work to boost the farm market industry and increase direct-to-consumer sales. This grant will allow Penn State Extension to continue to create learning experiences related to agricultural businesses from which participants glean ideas. This initiative will directly impact the continued growth of the farm market industry and small agricultural businesses in Pennsylvania.

Farm market owners and direct-to-consumer farms will all benefit from this education.

Justification

According to the USDA, *local and regional food systems have grown in popularity over the past decade as shown by the increasing supply of and demand for local foods. Some evidence of this growth includes nearly tripling the number of farmers' markets, and the initiation of thousands of farm-to-school programs across the U.S. Local foods have often topped consumer and food professional surveys of food trends.* Consumer interest to have access to fresh, local products has helped sustain and grow the industry. For markets and farmers to capitalize on the growing consumer demand for fresh, local products, they must stay educated and up to date on industry innovation, trends and research-based marketing practices. Value-added products, experiential retail, and agritourism have become additional methods to attract customers to agricultural, retail markets. Businesses will benefit from exposure to markets and retail spaces that are on the cutting-edge of these trends; helping to keep them viable in an expanding, competitive market. This program will explore the various opportunities that help diversify agricultural businesses that are available to farmers and market owners.

Educational priorities:

- Immersion education through tours
- Marketing training (including logo creation, signage, displays, advertising, and social media)
- Customer service training

- Peer to peer networking
- Industry trends (including experiential retail, agritourism, and value-added products)
- Retail space evaluations conducted by extension specialist, peers and customers

Current Challenges:

- Remaining current in a competitive market
- Attracting customers to retail spaces
- Effective signage
- Effective displays
- Marketing
- Direct sales to restaurants
- Product diversification

Preferred learning method:

- Farm market, retail and farm on-site tours
- Networking opportunities
- Hands-on workshops
- Webinars

Procedures

The funding for this grant will be applied to the continuation of programming that will provide the opportunity to partially fund farmers and market owners to attend quality educational tours, workshops and programs. These educational events will facilitate excellent networking opportunities that result in the ability to collect ideas from peers who have proven successful in farm market and direct-to-consumer farm businesses. Along with peer interaction, supportive research-based education will enhance the educational experience. This educational format has proven successful in the past based on programs conducted for hard cider classes, farm market education and wine marketing workshops.

Presentation of Results

The results of this study will be shared with the Pennsylvania horticultural industry through trade publications, workshops, on-line presence, grower conventions and extension newsletters.

Budget

April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021

Travel	\$2000
Supplies	\$1700
<u>Tour Costs</u>	<u>\$1100</u>
 TOTAL	 \$4800

With the farm market business becoming increasingly competitive, this grant will provide the opportunity to farm markets, farmers and direct-to-consumer farms to with current, research-based education and opportunities to gather ideas from farms and businesses that have made cutting-edge changes to their business plans and operations with success.