

Local Foods Plymouth



Project Goal

The goals of Local Foods Plymouth are to reduce the miles that food travels from farm to plate, increase avenues for farmers and growers in the Plymouth area to sell their products locally, and encourage people in the Plymouth area to purchase food from local farms by making it easy, fun and reliable.

Brief Description

Local Foods Plymouth is a project that aims to connect local farmers and area residents in order to support local agriculture and communities. They are an online marketplace that offers food



products from area farmers and growers once a week. Buyers purchase these foods, pay online, and then pick up their food at a central location later that week. By providing an online outlet for locally made or grown products for purchase, it enables easier access to fresh and local foods. They encourage community members to become more aware of and to sustain their local food providers. LFP is made up of a committee and volunteers.

Local Foods Plymouth was created collaboratively by D Acres Organic Farm & Educational Homestead and the Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI). The project was conceived in December 2005 and was launched on June 22, 2006. USDA Rural Development and the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food granted startup funding for the project. The two grants that funded the project totaled \$4495. The funds were split between D Acres and PAREI for staff time. Both of them have also donated labor.



They wanted to start off small with a select buyer base so that they could work out any kinks or problems with their buying website. At first LFP did not pay for any advertising, but they did recruit buyers using three methods:

- D Acres and PAREI spread the word about the project within their own networks.
- Local Foods Plymouth talked about the program by telling individuals and giving presentations, to people who were members or supporters of D Acres and PAREI.
- They created a tri-fold brochure and business cards, which they set up at their presentations at the pickup/drop-off table at the market.

Lessons to Share

The first season of LFP went exceptionally well and the public loved the project. At first the website had a fair number of glitches, but they were all smoothed out by week 4. The project can succeed only if there is a significant number of people and organizations that are willing to take on the various roles involved in the project.

LFP began with seven advertisers, which created advertising dollars that could amount to a significant portion of the revenue needed to pay for the administrative costs of the program. When getting advertisers determine how much your project wants to earn from advertising, how many advertisers you think you can get, and how much those advertisers are willing to pay.



They started off small at first with a \$50 fee for advertisers in order to make it accessible for local organizations.

A project like this is highly fundable by using words such as local agriculture, food security, community and rural development, small enterprise, etc. It is important to try to find somebody with experience in grant writing, which many communities have. For the first year LFP did not charge a handling fee, but it is a good option for taking a cut because it shows that it is an additional fee for program management. In order to give their farmers as much of the income as possible, they gave them everything they received after PayPal took its cut. They believe that handling fees are a good way to generate income and to provide incentives for the administrators of the program to advertise the program effectively. A buyer buy-in fee is another option, which would charge a base membership fee for people to participate.

LFP planned from the start to run concurrently with the Plymouth Farmers Market at their location. They sent out Farmer info Sheets and Farmer Applications to all the farmers at the market and within a 30-mile radius. They explained the project and every farmer was excited to participate. One farmer chose not to participate after the first week because they had a

relationship with a restaurant that took everything that they produced. If a farmer works with Local Foods Plymouth it is not exclusive.



Local Foods Plymouth has gone from having 20 members to now having about 40-50 members. They have done this by expanding their growing season so that they offer local foods all year. They have also had to think outside of the box, which has led to the creation of farm-desk. Farm-desk allows employees of schools, hospitals, businesses, etc. to order to food online, and then on Friday it is dropped off to them at their workplace. This has led to a large increase in members and has boosted up the project considerably.

LFP almost had to close their doors in 2010, but between farm-desk and allowing people to SNAPs they have grown stronger then ever. The SNAP program makes it so that people can buy local foods with food stamps and get double the amount of credit by doing so.

LFP has found it very important to have a good relationship with the community. They rely on collaborating and partnering with local businesses and organizations. LFP also goes along with Plymouth's master plan. In the Vision for Plymouth's Future section of the master plan they list many goals that are supported by Local Foods Plymouth. One goal is a healthy population, supported by food supply supplemented by local agricultural products. Another is a vibrant sense of community, fostered by "Community activities and events that regularly celebrate Plymouth and its residents." They vision an economic well being of local residents, based upon "recognition of local agriculture businesses in maintaining the town's economic diversity and rural character." LFP is a project that helps to achieve this vision for Plymouth's future. They encourage feedback from both the farmers and members, which allows them to improve.



For More Information

Website:

<http://www.localfoodsplymouth.org>

Mailing Address:

PO Box 753

Plymouth, NH 03264

Phone: 603-536-5030

The Community Served: Plymouth, N.H.

Role in Region: Socioeconomic Center, College Town

Total Population	6,990		
Median Age	21.7		
	2000	2010	Change
Total Households	1,678	1,953	275
Family Households	941	974	33
Nonfamily Households	737	979	242
	1999 Median Household Income	2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates	
Median Household Income	35,618	41,709	6,091