

2017 JMGBL Awards Application

Submission Date	2017-06-23 09:57:07
This application is for:	J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award
Project Title	"Healthy Local Food is Good Business @ the Pee Dee Food Hub with the Carolina Farm Share!"
County/Counties	Marion
Staff Contact	Jody A. Martin
Job Title	Pee Dee Food Hub Director
E-mail Address	jody@peedeefoodhub.com
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Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below.	The Pee Dee Food Hub was established with a mission "To connect quality safe foods from local farmers to local customers." This mission helps obtain several benefits for Marion County and the Pee Dee Region. Two of the top objectives are to help grow the rural economy with the county's largest industry "agriculture" and the other is to help improve the health and wellness of the population within the county and region. This covers two of the top challenges within Marion County growing the economy and improving health of the citizens. The Pee Dee Hub is addressing both of these.
Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker:	Jody A. Martin Pee Dee Food Hub Director jody@peedeefoodhub.com
Will any of the speakers need accommodations (wheelchair accessibility, etc.) during the competition?	No
To submit these attachments online, please upload Microsoft Word or PDF documents below.	2017 J. Mitchell Graham Cover Page Final.pdf CFS - Farm2Workplace (1).pdf PDFH Awards Final.docx PDFH CarolinaFarmShare infosheet 2017 (1) (1).pdf



"Healthy Local Food is Good Business @ the Pee Dee Food Hub with the Carolina Farm Share!"



Farm to Workplace



Healthy Local Food
Is Good Business



HEALTH AND WEALTH IN YOUR REGION:

Anchor institutions and regional food procurement

THE ISSUE

Businesses, hospitals, schools and places of worship all serve to anchor towns and cities by driving economic development, creating jobs, and/or facilitating community engagement. While these “anchor institutions” make intentional and targeted investments in community development, they often look beyond their own communities and regions to meet their food procurement needs. But what if they treated food purchases as investments in local and regional businesses, economies, and the environment.

Anchor institutions can increase social and economic impacts in their regions while providing constituents with fresh, nutritious food—the fuel of vibrant communities. Procuring food from regional farms and small processors not only provide constituents with fresh and sustainable food; it leverages institutions’ substantial buying power to improve both the viability of family farms and the resiliency of rural economies.

Procuring food locally is more than an investment in the land and community—it is an upgrade in food service. Produce at the peak of ripeness and flavor satisfies customers’ tastes while demonstrating the institution’s transparency, community connections, and dedication to serving constituents. Good food—food that is healthy, green, and affordable—can distinguish anchor institutions as leaders in food service quality, wellness, community development and revitalization.

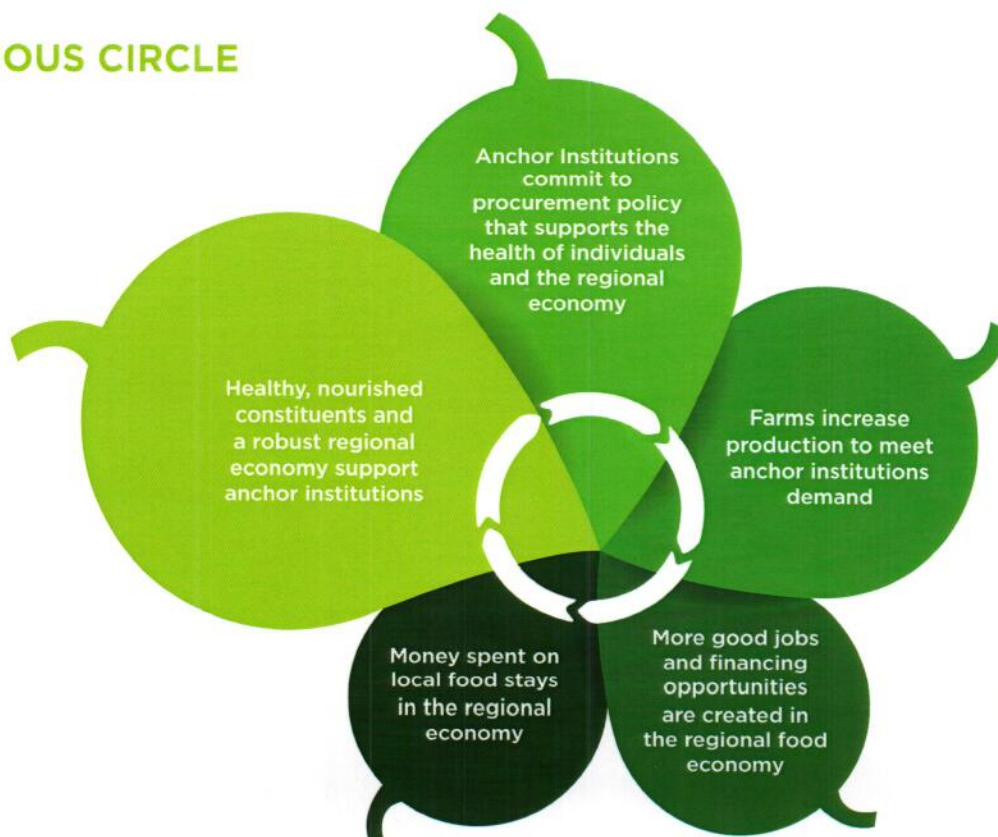
VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

How Institutional Procurement Can Drive Regional Economies

When anchor institutions actively decide to drive regional economic development, they do more than redirect their spending: they invest in the people and infrastructure that make the institution itself stronger and more influential.

The graphic below shows the virtuous circle of economic development and rural wealth creation as a result of implementing regional food procurement policy changes.

THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE





BRINGS FRESH FOOD TO YOUR SETTING

Fruits and vegetables are healthy and taste great. Grocery stores provide one option for purchasing produce, however many of us are looking for ways to buy locally grown produce in other convenient settings. The Pee Dee FoodHub can help anyone who would like to obtain locally grown fruits and vegetables, eggs, and specialty foods. Produce will be delivered to their worksite, place of worship, neighborhood or any gathering place through partnership with various local growers.

A diet high in fat and cholesterol increases the risk for coronary heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. In 2009, approximately four out of five adults in South Carolina, 82.6 percent, did not eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, which is higher than the nationwide prevalence rate of 76.6 percent.

Health, taste and variety—Eating fruits and vegetables is one of the most positive health habits adults and children can have. Unfortunately, less than one in five South Carolinians eat five or more servings a day of fruits and vegetables. People who eat more fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet can reduce the risk of

- chronic diseases
- stroke
- type 2 diabetes
- some forms of cancer
- heart disease
- obesity

Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables provides a wide range of nutrients and fiber. Eating plenty of produce is a great way to eat smart while adding color, taste and variety to our diets.

Healthy environment- The average meal in the United States travels 1,300 miles before reaching your plate. A head of lettuce traveling from California to South Carolina uses 36 times more fossil fuel energy in transport than it provides in food energy.

Supporting local growers helps:

- reduce energy consumption
- improve the environment
- sustainable farms conserve soil
- keep water sources in our communities clean
- provide a habitat for wildlife

Keeping farmers on the land also preserves open space and helps our rural communities remain vibrant places to live.

Healthy economy- It has been estimated that every \$1 spent on locally produced foods returns (or circulates) \$3-\$7 within the community. Consumers buy produce (and other goods) from local farmers, who buy farm supplies from local businesses. Those businesses help to sustain our communities by employing individuals and in turn their income is reinvested in the local communities. This helps encourage a thriving community and increases economic health. Also, when farmers have direct access to consumers, they are able to keep more of each dollar earned from their sales because the middle-man is eliminated. This increases profits to producers and keeps their farms competitive with the traditional retail chain stores. Purchasing local produce not only improves the local economy, it also helps consumers stretch their food dollars and get high quality fruits and vegetables.

WHY CHOOSE GOOD FOOD?

HEALTH

More than one-third of U.S. adults are obese and diet-related conditions are among the leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Workplaces can model healthy behavior by replacing high-fat, high-sodium processed foods with fresh, minimally processed foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and sustainably raised meats, eggs and poultry.

SAFETY

Shortening the supply chain—the number of steps between the producer and the consumer—improves the likelihood a food-borne illness. Unlike “conventional” industrial foods, local source-identified foods can be easily traced back to the farmer or producer who produced it.

STRONGER LOCAL ECONOMY

Anchor institutions are economic engines in communities. By purchasing food locally, anchor institutions multiply their impact on the local economy, supporting agriculture and small food processors, while retaining money and creating sustainable jobs in the region.

BETTER WORK ENVIRONMENT

Employees work long hours and need good food at work and at home to stay healthy and care for others. Farm share programs delivered to the workplace make it easier for staff to bring fresh, healthy food home. Combined with healthier choices, staff can be healthier and happier with good food at home and at work.



Carolina Farm Share operates as a unique CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) which is a production and marketing model whereby consumers buy shares of a farm's harvest in advance. Carolina Farm Share is offered through the Pee Dee FoodHub. Consumers become Carolina

Farm Share members by paying an agreed amount at the beginning of the growing season, either in one lump sum or in installments. The cost of the 6 month farm share is to be shared by a representative of the Pee Dee FoodHub. By paying at the beginning of the season, Carolina Farm Share members share in the risk of production and assures the farmer that his product is purchased within the community. This model allows the farmer to concentrate on good land stewardship and growing high quality food while the Pee Dee FoodHub handles the marketing, aggregation, sales and delivery.

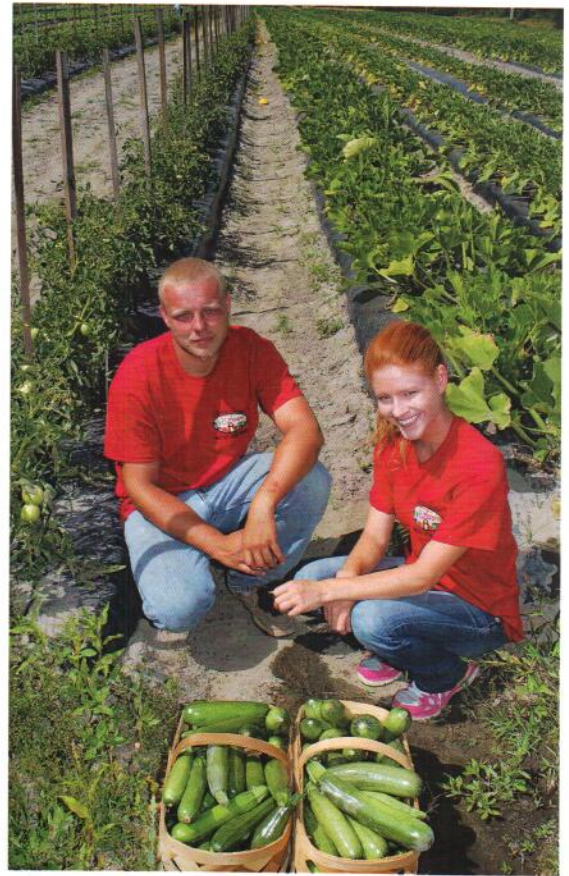
As a Carolina Farm Share member you will receive a variety of freshly picked vegetables and fruits (sometimes organic), eggs, and other local specialty products bi-weekly over a six-month period. The Pee Dee FoodHub is offering a spring and fall share. Members will eat healthy, sustainably produced food and have the satisfaction of knowing where it came from and how it was grown. Carolina Farm Share members will also have access to social and educational activities, recipes and much more to further strengthen their connection to the land and with the farmers who feed them.

For more information contact:



843.431.6001

www.peedeefoodhub.com



Resources

Center for a Livable Future of Johns Hopkins University. Maryland Food System Map. www.mdfoodsystemnap.org
 The Democracy Collaborative, democracycollaborative.org
 Institute for a Competitive Inner City. "What Works for Cities: Anchor Institutions and Food Systems: A Recipe for Economic Growth" and "Anchor Institutions and the Food Cluster in Baltimore." www.icic.org/research-and-analysis/research-library
 Real Food Challenge. "Real Food Calculator." calculator.realfoodchallenge.org

SPUR. "Locally Nourished: How a Stronger Regional Food System Improves the Bay Area (2013)."

USDA. Farm to School Local Procurement Resource Round-up. www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods
<https://growingasmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu/growingasmallfarms-csaguide/>
<http://eatSMARTmovemore.org/>
<http://www.scdhec.gov/>

- **WHAT IS THE PEE DEE FOOD HUB LOCATED IN MARION COUNTY?**

The Pee Dee Food Hub (PDFH) is located at 3215 Bluff Road in Marion, SC at the corner of US HWY 501 bypass and Bluff Road in the center of the Pee Dee Region of the state. There are several opportunities and plans for expansion at this location. The property features a 25,000-sq. ft. warehouse facility and a 5800-sq. ft. house. This allows for many potential expansion phases such as: packing facility, commercial kitchen, retail outlet or other opportunities to assist with rural and agribusiness economic development. The first focus of the PDFH is the Carolina Farm Share (CFS) as described below. The other expansion opportunities will identify themselves as we create success with the Pee Dee Food Hub.

This is an effort to meet the growing demand for SC Certified Grown produce and other products. The demand is for local, fresh, safe, quality products. The Pee Dee Food Hub is here to market, sell, aggregate and deliver these products from the farms in Marion County around the Pee Dee to these markets.

Carolina Farm Share Program: With much research by the PDFH After much researched we found an opportunity to assist corporate and public locations with their health and wellness initiatives by bring in fresh local produce as a CSA. We then created a unique CSA model we call Carolina Farm Share. Please see the information below use in our CFS marketing materials Carolina Farm Share helps you eat well, support local family farms and improve your healthy lifestyle, with convenient bi-weekly deliveries right to your workplace, community or place of worship. As a Carolina Farm Share member, you will receive a variety of freshly picked vegetables, fruits, and other South Carolina Specialty products bi-weekly. The Pee Dee FoodHub is offering a spring and fall share. You can eat healthy sustainably produced food with the satisfaction of knowing where it came from and how it was grown. You will also have access to social and educational activities, recipes and much more to further strengthen your connection to the land and with the farmers who feed your family. The Pee Dee FoodHub partners with numerous farmers from around the Pee Dee Region. These growers concentrate on good land stewardship and growing high quality food while the Hub handles the marketing, aggregation, sales and delivery. We are bringing the farm to you! It's Good, It's Fresh and It's Local!

BENEFIT / IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT:

Why was the Pee Dee Food Hub established? The Pee Dee Food Hub was established with a mission *“To connect quality safe foods from local farmers to local customers.”* This mission helps obtain several benefits for Marion County and the Pee Dee Region as you will see listed below. Two of the top objectives are to help grow the rural economy with the county's largest industry *“agriculture”* and the other is to help improve the health and wellness of the population within the county and region. This covers two of the top challenges within Marion County growing the economy and improving health of the citizens. The Pee Dee Hub is addressing both of these.

This opportunity came at a good time as the SC Department of Agriculture and Clemson Extension had just completed a major study *“Small Farms Mean Big Business”*. This study recommended setting up several food hubs and a network of food nodes around South Carolina. The Pee Dee Food Hub was established with the support of many agencies and organization as explained below. The Hub is established to be a model for other hubs around the state.

What benefits the Pee Dee Food Hubs Carolina Farm Share brings to Marion County and the entire Pee Dee Region?

- Grow the local rural economy in Marion County and the entire Pee Dee Region while helping local farmers connect to new and better customers.
- Provide Local, Fresh, Safe, Quality products to the entire Pee Dee Region.
- Help improve the health and wellness of individuals within Marion County and around the Pee Dee Region.
- Reduce the cost and negative impacts of hauling produce an average of 1500 miles.
- Capitalize on demands for local, fresh foods and help build Culinary Tourism and local customers.

- Partner with the SCDA SC Certified Grown and Fresh on the Menu programs.
- Allows farmers to farm while the Hub takes care of the sales, marketing, aggregation, delivery & customer service.
- Create an Agricultural Cluster in Marion County to help attract other agricultural industries. The best collaborative partnership companies will be within the food industry.

What is the significance of this project to your community as a whole? How does it relate in importance to the other problems in your community? To help grow the rural economy with the county’s largest industry “agriculture” and to help improve the health and wellness of the population within the county and region. This covers two of the top challenges within Marion County and has long term significance. Marion County is ranked 2nd to last in health outcomes in South Carolina; has the highest level of Snap participates in the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina at 29.5% and an annual per capital below \$20,000. These stats prove that health, wellness and economic growth are amount the most important challenges facing the citizens of Marion County.

How much of the county’s population is benefited by the project? This project will have a great impact on everyone within the community who desires a change over the years in one of two ways as listed above. The unfortunate challenge is we cannot help folks who are not willing to help themselves therefor this will limit our success. Two of the top objectives are to help grow the rural economy with the county’s largest industry “agriculture” and to help improve the health and wellness of the population within the county and region. The Pee Dee Food Hub is addressing both of these as explained below.

In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?

The farmers / small business owners around the county and region have an additional avenue to expand and market the local produce. This is having a positive impact on local farm gate revenues.

The PDFH’s Carolina Farm Share program has given everyone in the county access to quality local produce if the desire it. This is helping these folks eat better and improve their health and wellness.

Local businesses and organizations are able to improve and expand the success of their health and wellness efforts for their employees and members.

The PDFH will start a local market in the Fall that the general public and beach travelers can access weekly. We will reach to the EBT customers of Marion County with the *PDFH Food Desert Crop Share Initiative* in the Fall of 2017. This will start in Marion County and later expand into other food desert areas around the Pee Dee Region. See the description of this project below:

The PDFH Food Desert Crop Share Initiative has been developed and is sponsored by the Pee Dee Food Hub (PDFH) and is dedicated to providing fresh, safe, quality, SC Grown fruits, vegetables, and agriculturally produced products to low-income and otherwise needy community citizens of the Pee Dee Region in a repetitive delivery Mobile Market model. The PDFH will use its expertise in acquiring needed produce meeting existing safety and quality standards, and in distributing this product directly to targeted citizens in and near their neighborhoods and advocacy locations – in methods similarly used in the Hub’s CSA Farm Share model.

The PDFH will merge and leverage the use of SNAP, in concert with the Healthy Bucks Program from the SC Department of Social Services to provide maximum benefit to citizens participating in the Food Desert Crop Share Initiative.

SNAP qualified citizens will maximize their access to high quality, safe, and SC Grown produce as the Healthy Bucks Program supplements up to a 200% increase in purchasing power (fresh, local SC Grown Produce only) for the SNAP Card holder.

All produce acquired for distribution in the Food Desert Crop Share Initiative will be first from Pee Dee Area growers which have met the PDFH's quality, traceability and safety guidelines, and secondarily other SC Grown producers which may have product not typical of or for any reason unavailable in the Pee Dee Region.

What degree of success is the project attaining? The PDFH has a facility and a foundation built with processes and markets in place to create great success over the next several years. We have a great team of associates at the Hub as listed below. The Hub will then stand on its own success over the next few years as a farmer corporative. This will allow future expansions to meet market demands. The project is now on first base with a great opportunity to grow and expand as it helps build the local rural economy by growing the farm gate revenue while increasing the health and wellness of the citizens of Marion County and the entire Pee Dee Region.

Another successful step is connecting the local markets to local farmers. The farmers are the foundation and the reason for what we do. The customers we serve are very excited to do business with the local farmers. It is for this reason that our primary goal is to spotlight them in all we do. The farm name will always stand out above the Hub name on our produce labels. The PDFH is focused on food safety and traceability. This plays two roles on the product label. We are able to show single source delivery with the farmer's name listed on each box delivered. We are currently working with 28 growers from Marion County and around the Pee Dee Region. We will continue to add more growers as the markets grow.

What major objectives were achieved?

Work with 25+ local farmers on crop planning, post-harvest handling, food safety, tractability,

Year 1 we did \$70,000+ of gross revenue with around \$50,000 of farm gate revenue going back to the growers.

We began doing lots of research on the best potential layout for proper design for the 25,000 sq. ft. facility and the best marketing approach for success of the Pee Dee Food Hub.

There has been a tremendous amount of research done over the past 2 years to find the best options to benefit the rural farming community of the Pee Dee Region via the Pee Dee Food Hub and reach a breakeven point to cash flow as soon as possible.

After much review, we focused on a few key markets to help grow the local rural economy and improve the health and wellness of its citizens.

Carolina Farm Share - Farm to Workplace / Worship Place: We are currently working with 10 companies and 4 organizations to help enhance their health and wellness as well as employee benefits. In May, we will service around 250 clients via 9 locations. The Hub sales team is working hard on the Fall Share sign up at this time. This should increase the number of shares to 400+.

We will continue sign up for the Carolina Farm Share each season by adding on new companies and individuals at existing locations. This will help us to progress toward our goal of 1000+ shares for the 2018 Spring Share. We will keep each of you posted of the growth.

Improvements have been made to our website to simplify the sign-up process for individuals.

We have also gathered several inspiring testimonies and included them on our website and added to our Facebook and other social media outlets. Take a look at www.peedeefoodhub.com

Other Markets:

Farm to Restaurants: We focus on the top restaurants that appreciate local, fresh, safe products from local farmers and processors. Here is an update of our current restaurant customers. We started sending out a weekly price sheet to 8 restaurants a few weeks ago. Future expansions include connecting with all potential customers including restaurants in the Waccamaw Neck region, between Georgetown and Mullet Inlet.

Farm to Grocery: We are currently working with the Piggly Wiggly McLeod Group who operate 11+ stores in the Pee Dee Region. Plans are to also connect other grocery stores and chains that are focusing on local SC Grown product this summer. Food Lion is now working with us to serve many of their local stores.

Farm to Institutions: This will be a very strong growing market to schools, hospitals, universities and corporate food services. We are currently working with a few corporate food service companies to complement the companies Farm to Workplace program via "Carolina Farm Share". This market interest is growing with many of these companies contacting us with great interest.

Farm to Food Deserts: Scott Mace with the Hub Team is currently working on an additional market. That is best ways to help service a major need with the local EBT Customers by finding ways to help get fresher local produce into their diets.

PROJECT EFFORT / DIFFICULTY:

What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives? The County of Marion took the leadership role through the County Economic Development office to initiate a plan of action to acquire the funding as listed below.

- All funds are obtained and administered by Marion County (see Funding info below)
- County Staff manages the grant reporting, updates and acquiring additional funds.
- Staff was hired by the county as Marion County employees for the first 3 years of the project.
- Marion County provided funding and outstanding support to get project started.
- Marion County helped set up the 501C-5 status of the Pee Dee Food Hub so it could make business transactions and establish a board for long-term stability.
- Marion County Council has oversight of the PDFH
- We could go on with lots of details but let's explain it as listed below.
- The PDFH is a regional project that is taking place under the direction of Marion County and would have happened without the leadership and initiative of Marion County.

FUNDING:

PDFH has been made possible because of the funding of several supportive entities as listed below. We are very thankful and blessed to have all these organizations supporting the opportunities to expand economic rural development through our local farmers via their support of the PDFH.

Marion County: Travel, Vehicle, Repairs, Maintenance, Liability Insurance, Staff Benefits, Office Supplies / Equipment, Fuel, Phones, Internet, Utilities, Electrical, Misc.

Marion County Healthcare Foundation: Truck, Staff Salaries, Software, Repairs/ Maintenance, Supplies, Equipment, etc.

Marion County Progress: Website & Software License

SC Rural Infrastructure Authority: Capital Outlay on Building

SC Department of Agriculture: Directors Salary, Travel

What challenges occurred during the project?

- The Hub could not provide all that was promised to the farmers without increasing input cost (labor, logistics, equipment, boxed, etc.).
- A pricey warehouse software package was already purchased for the Hub before the Director was hired. The software will not work for our model of business and the company will not give a refund.
- Insufficient research done: Incubator Kitchen model, production, logistics, customer base of volume, etc.
- Much of the previous research done was based on [GrowFood Carolina](#), which services Charleston's 200+ restaurants who cater to the Cuisine Tourist who travel to Charleston. That Hub is located within a very short drive to most all of these customers. The Pee Dee Food Hub was established to serve primarily the Myrtle Beach area. This area has 1200+ restaurants that are spread over a 50 mile stretch and are 40-60 miles from the Pee Dee Food Hub facility. We are finding there to be about 40 top restaurants that are potentially our customer base. This creates some volume and logistical challenges we have to overcome.
- Limited amount of volume to be sold to restaurants. Needed to find ways to expand into other markets that demand a higher volume of produce.
- Facility was over engineered in many ways and under engineered in others. This all resulted in costing more to construct and having to cut out some key components to get started in a timely manner.
- With lots of hard work, powerful prayers and the support of Marion County and the local farmers we moved forward.

ADJUSTMENTS:

- We found the need to expand in other directions therefor. After much researched we found an opportunity to assist corporate and public locations with their health and wellness initiatives by bring in fresh local produce as a CSA. We then created a unique CSA model we call Carolina Farm Share.
- Produce is being farm packed however, it will be checked and monitored from planting through harvest, and continue into post-harvest handling.
- All products will go through check point for quality, safety and traceability.
- Many Building Changes have been made to better accomplish the needs.

Were there any community concerns? Absolutely and some of them are still out there.

- Will the project be sustainable?
- Do you have the right people on board?
- Can the Farmers benefit
- Can the farmers produce the needed produce?
- Will the farmers follow the proper food safety, trainability and post-harvest handling procedures?
- Is Marion County the right place for a Food Hub?
- Can it profitable for the growers?
- Will it ever get started?
- Do we have enough of the right kind of customers?

What were the nature and extent of the county government's efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? Marion County and the staff of the Pee Dee Food Hub under the direction of the County has worked and will continue to work to overcome each of these concerns. This is a total team effort under the direction and leadership of Marion County and the Staff.

How difficult was it to accomplish the project's goals and/or objectives? We are making great headway however it has and continues to be a very difficult to accomplish the goals and objectives set before the PDFH. For a few reasons. One it is a very difficult business with lots of factors you cannot control and the other is we have set some very lofty goals to keep stretching us. We are working to become self-sustaining over the 2 years. That takes lots of innovation, hard work, collaborations and God's hand.

Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project? There has been lots of work done to acquire collaborations and funding from 7 sources. This was done primarily prior to the launch in 2015. It took lots of work and initiative from the Marion County Staff. We are now going into the 3rd year of the 3-year funding cycle. With the direction of the Marion County grants coordinator we are keeping all the funders updated on the forward progress and success of the project. We have a few grants that were issued for 1 year however it was understood they were 3 year grants. This is currently creating some excitement; however, we are working to resolve this in a timely manner. Outside of that there we not any major unusual factors inherent in financing the project. The key is to follow the grants and report accordingly.

Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project? Did their participation pose any particular challenges or offer any unique contributions or benefits? You will see below that many agencies, civic groups and other organizations played / play a major role in the PDFH project. They have all contributed by way of funding, providing expertise and/or support. This project is a total team effort for the entire state, county and region. The PDFH is a pilot for the entire state with opportunity to share and help establish other successful Hubs around SC.

The Pee Dee Food Hub has been a total team effort between the local and state supporters who have helped secure funding to get the Hub up and running. This effort was headed up by the Marion County Economic Development Commission. The Hub is located in and supported by Marion County, however it is a Pee Dee Regional project for the benefit of the entire Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. This is an outstanding benefit for Marion County to capitalize on economic activity, employment and an economic trickle effect around the county.

We have a team of partners to help with education, production, funding, marketing, food safety and so much more. Some of these folks are: SC Department of Agriculture; Clemson PSA; Pee Dee Region County Governments; SC Department of Commerce; SC Rural Infrastructure Authority; Marion County Healthcare Foundation; Marion County; Marion County Progress; Local, State and Federal Delegation; and many others.

Most importantly to make this work it takes a committed group of local farmers (small, medium and large) and customers. The customers are: restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals, schools, distributors, businesses, community groups and many more.

Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle? There are always challenges to face. Your success lies in how you face them and work to overcome them. Every day we get up running, some days we are the lion and some days we are the gazelle. The key is being ready and running. The challenges and goals ahead of the PDFH are to create stability for the Hub by growing the current markets and seeking out new markets. This allows the PDFH to expand and become sustainable as we help strength the local rural economy and help improve the health and wellness of the community. The goal is to reach over 5000 families in the Pee Dee Region with fresh quality local produce to help improve their health and wellness. At this point the PDFH will grow to a multimillion-dollar

operation that will help grow the local rural economy. Seventy percent of this will be going back to local growers and these dollars will stay within the local economy.

PROJECT ORIGINALITY / INNOVATION:

Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective? There are many unique aspects of the Pee Dee Food Hub. The PDFH is here to market, sell, aggregate and deliver these products from the farms around the Pee Dee to these markets. Farm to workplace is the Carolina Farm Share which operates as a unique CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), which is a production and marketing model whereby consumers buy shares of a farm's harvest in advance. The theme of our model is "[Healthy Local Food is Good Business](#)". The focus is on anchor institutions such as: businesses, hospitals, schools and places of worship. This gives the Pee Dee Food Hub the opportunity to help these organizations and businesses improve: health and wellness; food safety and traceability; stronger work / community environment for their employees and members. Additionally, it helps create a stronger local economy by purchasing produce from local farms and keeping their food dollars within our local community. This model has been patterned after an organization in the northeast, however we are adjusting things for our unique environment. A few farms and organizations have attempted to do a similar program; however, this is our primary focus to help improve the health and wellness of a region that is one of the worst in the State and in the Country. We are working very diligently to accomplish our mission "*To connect quality safe foods from local farmers to local customers.*" The PDFH is working with multiple markets to make sure our model is sustainable.

Do you know of any other similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different? There are a few Food Hubs around the state however they are all very different based on the needs and opportunities within each community / region they serve. The first in the state was "Grow Food Carolina" we are different because their primary market are the high-end restaurants in Charleston. We have few high-end restaurants therefore we have to focus more on the Farm to Workplace and now the Farm to Food Desert models. Every food hub is different based on the local needs, markets and product availability

What innovations were required in accomplishing your objectives? It takes lots of aggressive hard work to find the right partners who are interested in improved health and wellness, local foods, impacting local farmers and improve the local rural economic development. We have a great team with lots of innovation, ideas and plans to make these things a reality. We have innovative partners as a part of the overall team. We have an innovative marketing approach to help move product for our farmers and give them more opportunity to focus on growing the best crop possible.

A Variety of MARKETS: Farm to Workplace / Worship Place; Farm to Restaurants; Farm to Grocery; Farm to Institutions and Farm to Food Desert / EBT Customers

Here are a few of marketing approaches:

- We have a focus on Farm to Workplace / Farm to Churches / Farm to Food Deserts with a focus on Health and Wellness. (see our "Farm to Workplace – Healthy Local Food is Good Business" brochure)
- The PDFH delivery truck with its billboard box was moved all around Florence and left at key locations throughout the months of February and March to promote the Hub and Carolina Farm Share.
- We have spoken to hundreds of business leaders over the past 45 days at two Florence Rotary Clubs, Breakfast Kiwanis Club, Florence Chamber of Commerce, Marion and Mullins Chamber of Commerce, Hartsville Chamber of Commerce, SC Hospital Association, McLeod Hospital Systems, Florence Area Heart Association and many others.

- The PDFH team has made major improvements to the social media marketing and customer service via Facebook exposure with timely releases and boost, eblast newsletters, eblast promotional newsletters, improved website and much more.
- Other promotional activities have been enhanced via church members, businesses, print media, social media, word of mouth and the PDFH sales team.
- There have been several special printed articles done on the Pee Dee Food Hub and Carolina Farm Share over the past 12 months.
- Several radio programs to help promote the Carolina Farm Share program.

Who provided the creativity and imagination in your project? The Marion County Economic Development office of Marion County provided the creativity and imaginations on this project in the began. They secured the funding to get things started. Then the Staff, you were introduced to above, and a former staff member, Cam Flowers helped with some major adjustments and improvements. This staff is led by Jody Martin, PDFH Director. Jody brings over 40 years of agricultural and business experience to the Hub Team. He has been an innovator in the business of agriculture over the years. We also work with an executive board that are innovators and business men who see great possibilities through the Pee Dee Food Hub. We are working with some folks with Marion County who have some great ideas, imaginations on the success and satiability of this project.

CONCLUSION:

The Pee Dee Food Hub started slower than expected due to many situations; however, with lots of positive public relations and marketing as well as a new team to help open new marketing doors we are moving towards some very positive results. Now in our second year of delivery under our belt, we have learned a lot and make several adjustments, corrections and improvements. The growers are working with us very well and our customers / clients / organizations are very excited about the products and service we are delivering. It is now our focus to grow the volume of business across all of our potential markets and do it with outstanding customer service. In 2017, we are working to expand our delivery area by increasing our farm share, restaurant, grocery and institutional markets around the Pee Dee Region.

We strive to represent all of our partners: Pee Dee Regional Farmers, SC Department of Agriculture, SC Department of Commerce, SC Rural Infrastructure Authority, Marion County Healthcare Foundation, Marion County, USDA, Marion County Progress, Clemson Extension Service, SC Farm Bureau and many others is an outstanding way.

The PDFH is structured under the umbrella of Marion County at the current time. The Hub is set up as a Not for Profit 501-C directed by a board. The original board are as following: Greg Hyman, Horry County; Dupree Atkinson, Marion County; Tim Griggs, Darlington County; Julie Conner, Marion County and Neil Baxley, Marion County. They have been involved in setting up bylaws and procedures for the PDFH. This is in the process of being completed.

We have an expectation to have a strong economic impact on the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina and to be a successful example to assist other similar organizations around South Carolina. We are making a difference in the health and wellness of families around Marion County and the entire Pee Dee Region. Come visit us at the Hub. Please call ahead so we can make sure we are available to show you around. Have a Great Day in the Business of Agriculture!



Carolina Farm Share helps you eat well, support local family farms and improve your healthy lifestyle, with convenient bi-weekly deliveries right to your workplace, community or place of worship.

As a Carolina Farm Share member, you will receive a variety of freshly picked vegetables, fruits, and other South Carolina Specialty products bi-weekly. The Pee Dee FoodHub is offering a spring and fall share. You can eat healthy sustainably produced food with the satisfaction of knowing where it came from and how it was grown. You will also have access to social and educational activities, recipes and much more to further strengthen your connection to the land and with the farmers who feed your family.

The Pee Dee FoodHub partners with numerous farmers from around the Pee Dee Region. These growers concentrate on good land stewardship and growing high quality food while the Hub handles the marketing, aggregation, sales and delivery. **We are bringing the farm to you! It's Good, It's Fresh and It's Local!**

CONNECTING LOCAL FOODS TO LOCAL CUSTOMERS



HOW DOES IT WORK?

WHEN?

Spring Share - April to July (4 months)

Fall Share - August to December (5 months)

HOW MUCH? delivered every other week

Small Share

Spring *\$202 (8 deliveries @ \$25.25 each)

Fall *\$252.50 (10 deliveries @ \$25.25 each)

Medium Share

Spring *\$282.80 (8 deliveries @ \$35.35 each)

Fall *\$353.50 (10 deliveries @ \$35.35 each)

Large Share

Spring *\$363.60 (8 deliveries @ \$45.45 each)

Fall *\$454.50 (10 deliveries @ \$45.45 each)

* Price includes the applicable local option tax.

WHAT DO I GET?

Sample Farm Share

SPRING

Cucumbers
Kale
Strawberries
Carrots
Lettuce
Green Onions
Zucchini

SUMMER

Green Beans
Tomatoes
Eggplant
Yellow Squash
Watermelon
Peaches
Blueberries

FALL

Cilantro
Mustard Greens
Okra
Zucchini
Grape Tomatoes
Broccoli
Sweet Potatoes

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

- Contact your Site Coordinator or Pee Dee FoodHub or visit www.peedeefoodhub.com
- Review the Farm Share Customer Agreement
- Must sign up in advance for the full share time frame so we can properly crop plan and commit with farmers
- Register as a Carolina Farm Share Member
- Choose an extra share for a friend or family member

For more information contact:



843.431.6001

www.peedeefoodhub.com

For more information or to sign up, visit www.peedeefoodhub.com