

# O Grows Marketing Plan

## **Mission Statement:**

Opelika Grows began in 2012 as a solitary effort at one Opelika City school to encourage outdoor education and has grown into a community-wide partnership. As an effort in localism, O Grows seeks to model an approach to civic engagement that relies on local capital and capacity to address local needs. O Grows' vision is the renewal of Alabama's agricultural history to sustain its citizens. Challenges are rarely specific to any one city but every city has the potential to leverage the learning potential of outdoor spaces in service of community need. O Grows promotes gardening and related programming in service and awareness of local food security. Students and community members are involved in planning, installation and maintenance of the spaces. Proceeds benefit the Community Market in Opelika and the O Grows Student Intern program.

## **Markets:**

1. Opelika City Schools
2. Opelika Learning Center
3. Carver-Jeter residents
4. East Alabama Food Bank Community Market
5. Area farmers
6. Local restaurants

## **Services:**

O Grows' services are divided into four parts: programing, donating, farmers, and restaurants.

## **Programing:**

O Grows currently has gardens in Southview Primary School, Northside Intermediate School, Morris Avenue Intermediate, West Forest Intermediate School, Opelika Middle School, and Opelika Learning Center. With the installation of the gardens and outdoor learning areas students are also receiving weekly lessons in food nutrition, fitness, and agriculture.

O Grows has developed a partnership with the Opelika Learning Center, OLC. O Grows has installed a garden and an outdoor classroom at OLC. O Grows has also partnered with Chef Graham from Zazo Gastropub in Opelika and Chef Leo from A•T in Auburn, to teach weekly lessons with Food and Science class. O Grows initiated the O Grows Intern Program. This program allows O Grows to hire OLC students for non-school paid job training. These students are paid through Auburn University.

O Grows is currently seeking funding from grants to renovate the Southside Cultural Arts Center to build a food grade kitchen in the old cafeteria. Building this will allow O Grows to have classes on food security for Carver-Jeter residents.

**Donating:**

O Grows donates fresh produce to the East Alabama Food Bank Community Market and to OLC.

Produce that O Grows produces in the community garden that local restaurants do not want is donated to the community market. Drop-offs are timed to coincide with the food bank's brown bag days. On brown bag days eligible residents can come to the community market and pick up fresh produce.

O Grows also donates fresh produce to the OLC cooking classes.

Having these avenues for donations helps O Grows achieve their goal of food security in the community.

**Farmers:**

O Grows has now taken over the Opelika Farmers Market in an effort to bring local, fresh fruits and vegetables to the Carver-Jeter neighborhoods and give these residents more access to fruits and vegetables.

O Grows does receive some funding for hosting the market from the money the farmers pay each week to participate. This has opened up a small avenue for more funding for the organization.

Vendors are encouraged to be Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, certified through the Extension Service. This allows vendors to accept SNAP vouchers that many patrons use.

Farmers also now have the opportunity to donate any leftover produce they may have at the end of each market day. It is collected and donated to the community market in time for their brown bag days.

Being in charge of the farmers market and moving the market to the Southside Cultural Arts Center helps promote O Grows and its mission in food security in the Carver-Jeter neighborhoods.

**Restaurants:**

Most of O Grows funding comes from grants. Selling to local restaurants gives O Grows a local source of revenue. It also helps to spread the word of O Grows and provides local consumers with locally grown and sourced produce.

## **Marketing and Promotional Strategies:**

### **Signage:**

O Grows banners that list their community and corporate sponsors will be designed and purchased and displayed on market days and when events are being held at the community garden.

Signs for sandwich boards advertising the farmers market and any annual events O Grows will host will be designed. These signs will be placed in key places around Opelika on event days.

O Grows decals with the O Grows' logo will be printed. These will be passed out to farmers and our community and corporate sponsors and available for sale at O Grows events and on the O Grows' website.

### **Social Media:**

Social media will be the main avenue of promotions. The O Grows and O Grows Farmers Market Facebook pages will be merged, making advertising easier and it will increase O Grows social media presence.

Advertising on Facebook is inexpensive. O Grows will purchase advertising for annual events they sponsor. This will increase awareness of O Grows and their events.

### **Literature:**

O Grows brochures and business cards will be designed. They will be given to farmers at the beginning of each market season. The brochures will detail the mission of O Grows. These brochures will also be available at the market and at any other O Grows event.

Promotional material will be printed up for restaurants to use that serve vegetables from the community garden.

### **Clothing:**

O Grows workers will have O Grows t-shirts and will wear them on market days and on event days. These shirts will also be on sale at events and on the website.

Reusable canvas bags with the O Grows logo will also be available for purchase at events and on the website.

### **Fundraisers:**

O Grows will host an annual farm-to-table dinner at the garden. This dinner will give O Grows the opportunity to reach out to people in the community and inform them of the mission of O Grows. All proceeds from the dinner will go directly back to O Grows.

**Civic Involvement:**

O Grows will become members of the Opelika Chamber of Commerce. By being members, O Grows will have the opportunity to promote activities through the Chamber.

O Grows will seek opportunities to speak at various civic clubs in the area.

A team for Burger Wars will be formed to represent O Grows. By participating in Burger Wars, O Grows will have the opportunity to be involved in the community.

O Grows will work with the Cooper Library to promote activities.

They will have O Grows information included on the Food Bank of East Alabama newsletter.

**Contests:**

O Grows will facilitate contests in Opelika City Schools for Earth Day and Arbor Day. They will work with the Opelika Observer to announce the winners from each school.

Contests for best gardening tips will be facilitated. O Grows will work with the Opelika Observer to promote the contest and announce the winner.

**Press Releases:**

Because O Grows is an Opelika based organization, they will distribute press releases through the Opelika Chamber of Commerce, the City of Opelika, and the Opelika Observer.

Press releases will also be distributed through the Opelika-Auburn News and radio stations in the area.

**SWOT Analysis:****Strengths:**

O Grows is located in the middle of the Carver-Jeter neighborhoods. This gives the organization the unique opportunity to serve the residents of these neighborhoods.

Hosting the farmers market and moving it to the community garden and the Southside Cultural Arts Center, gives O Grows a new source of revenue and brings fresh fruits and vegetables to the Carver-Jeter area.

The greenhouse at the garden provides O Grows with the opportunity to grow hydroponic tomatoes and other vegetables. This will allow O Grows with year-round produce to sell to local restaurants and thus, providing O Grows with a continuous source of revenue.

Selling to restaurants provides O Grows with a source of revenue, particularly in the summer months when there is more of a variety of produce. Selling to restaurants also promotes the mission of O Grows and promotes O Grows in the community.

O Grows Intern program gives students a job and an opportunity to learn a trade.

O Grows is easily adapted. O Grows adapts to lack of funds and new opportunities. This flexibility allows the organization to grow and downsize with ease.

O Grows is the only organization of its kind in Lee County giving it a unique opportunity to serve the Opelika community without any competition.

**Weaknesses:**

O Grows is primarily a grant based organization and thus becomes a limiting factor in funding.

Parking for the farmers market is troublesome. Being placed in the middle of a residential area, parking is limited and can cause problems with neighborhood residents.

The various growing seasons in Alabama make it difficult to have a continuous produce crop. O Grows loses a source of revenue in the cooler months because there is no produce to sell to local vendors.

O Grows is located on city property and any changes to the property must go through the proper city channels.

**Opportunities:**

Renovating the old cafeteria in the Southside Cultural Arts Center will provide O Grows with the opportunity and ability to host classes on food security and food preparation for the residents in the Carver-Jeter neighborhood.

Moving the farmers market from the courthouse square to the Southside Cultural Arts Center provides residents in the Carver-Jeter neighborhoods with a better opportunity to purchase fresh produce. The Cultural Arts Center is located in the middle of these two neighborhoods.

By transferring ownership of the market from Opelika Main Street to O Grows, farmers now have the opportunity to donate any leftover produce at the end each market day.

By moving the community garden to the back of the Southside Cultural Arts Center, O Grows has more room to grow. There is room for a greenhouse that is under construction. The cafeteria remodel will allow us to offer food preparation classes for Carver-Jeter residents.

**Threats:**

Being a grant based organization poses a financial problem. This poses a threat to cash flow and is a limiting factor in funding for projects and for paying student employees.

Pest and diseases are a major threat to the organization. If the garden is overrun by pests and diseases, it is costly to solve the problem. A large amount of money will have to be used to replace the infected plants.

As with any organization involved with the city, O Grows will have to work with the city to make improvements. Having a good, working relationship with city officials will ensure that O Grows will be ran smoothly and that its mission will be meet.

## **Marketing Goals:**

### **O Grows Farmers Market:**

Provided that O Grows is given more space in front of the Southside Cultural Arts Center, O Grows will be able to increase the number of market vendors. This increase in vendors will allow for more patrons to come to the market.

### **Social Media:**

By posting daily on Facebook and Instagram and frequently on Twitter, O Grows will further promote the mission of O Grows in the community.

### **Civic Involvement:**

By being involved in various city activities, O Grows will have a chance to promote its mission.

O Grows will participate in Earth Day activities at the Opelika City Schools. This will allow the organization to be more involved in the schools and it will provide the students more opportunities to be involved with O Grows.

By having a farm-to-table dinner fundraiser annually to promote O Grows. This dinner will involve corporate and community partners.

## **Monitor Results:**

### **O Grows Farmers Market:**

At the end of each market season a survey will be conducted with the market vendors to see where to improve for the next season.

### **O Grows Kitchen:**

O Grows will host monthly participant advisory board meetings to monitor the success of the kitchen and the food preparation classes O Grows offers.

O Grows will also conduct surveys to monitor the success of the kitchen and other services that O Grows provides the Carver-Jeter neighborhoods.

### **Social Media:**

By using the administration functions that social media accounts provide O Grows will be able to monitor their social media presence.