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Business Plan

North Mississippi FoodRx



Presented To: **Southern Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education (SARE)**

Presented By: **The University of Mississippi's Community First Research Center (CREW) and the Happy Foods Project, Inc.**



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Executive Summary

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Our plan in short.

Mission

to increase the footprint of small-scale specialty crop farmers in north Mississippi.

Vision

a sustainable and expandable market for specialty crop farmers.

Goal

to support a healthy lifestyle for our communities and build wealth for underserved specialty crop farmers.

The Product

North Mississippi FoodRx buys produce from local farmers at competitive rates and sells food boxes to customers in low food access communities.

The Leadership

Robbie Pollard is the founder and Executive Director of North Mississippi FoodRx.

The Competitors

Five major players lead the food box market in the service area, but are solely reliant on grant funding and are not sustainable long-term.

Our Model

North Mississippi FoodRx uses a "Buy Three, Give One," model to attract customers and serve the local community. For every three food boxes sold, one is given to a homebound or disabled neighbor.

Our Benefits

North Mississippi FoodRx accepts SNAP/EBT and participates in the Double-up Bucks program through which SNAP enrolled customers can double the SNAP dollars they spend on a food box. Customers can also have their food boxes delivered to their homes for an additional \$5 fee.

Future Plans

By June 2025, the programs will be fully launched in the service area, and will be fully matured by 2027 through ongoing quality improvement in the first service area and begin launching around the state.

Organization and Management

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Meet our Leadership.



Robbie Pollard

Executive Director

Robbie is the Executive Director of the North Mississippi FoodRx, leads the farmer consortium, the Happy Foods Project, Inc., and is a farmer himself as Start2Finish Farms in Marks, Mississippi.



Cassandra Banks

Director of Customer
Relations

Cassandra is the Director of Customer Relations for the North Mississippi FoodRx, is the Executive Director of the older adult education organization, Creative Minds Academy, and has her own farm in Shaw, Mississippi.



James Brewer

Director of Farmer
Relations

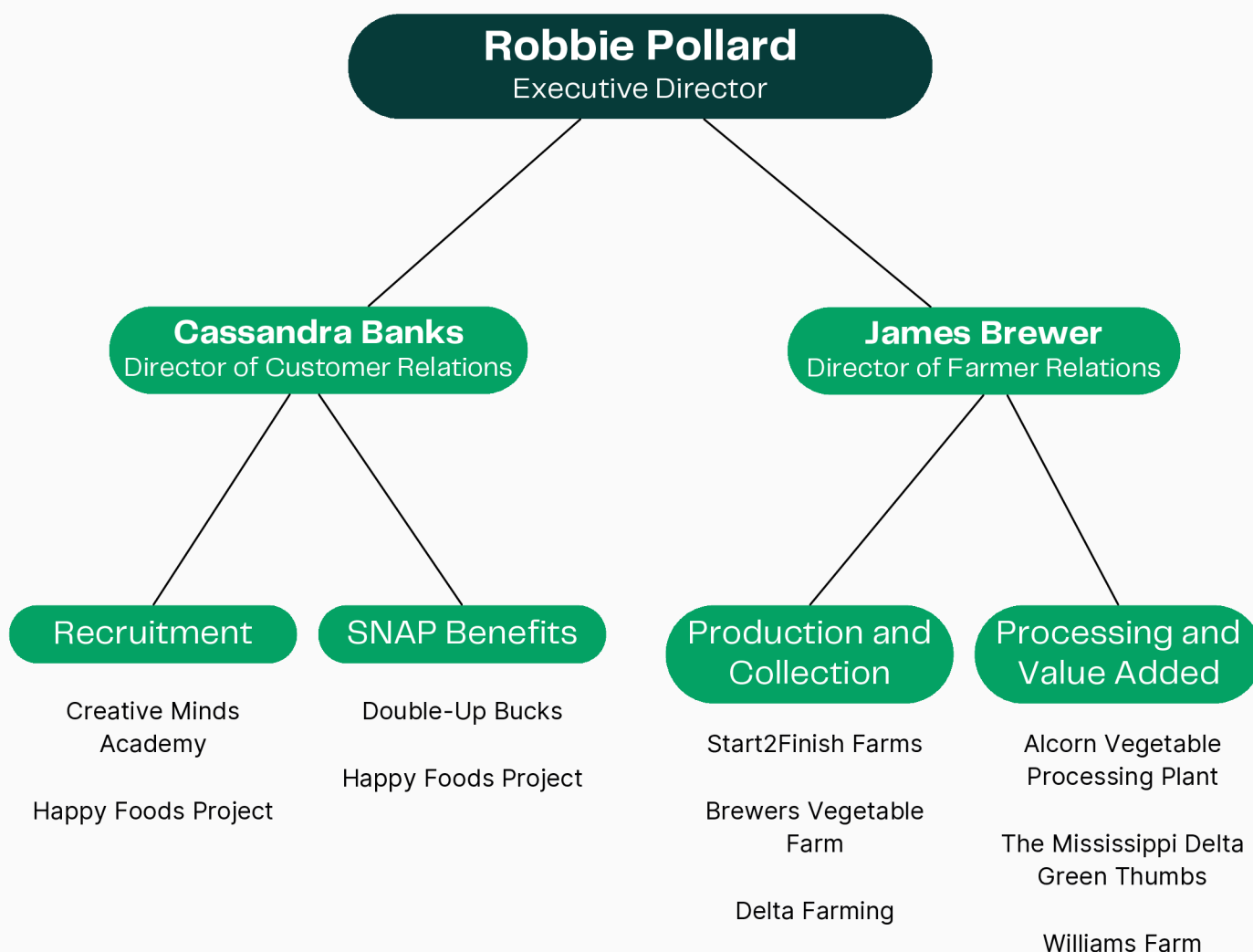
James is the Director of Farmer Relations for the North Mississippi FoodRx, runs his own farm, Brewer Vegetable Farm, and is the director of a farmer training program in Greenwood, Mississippi.

Organization and Management

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How our team works.

Map of the Organization



*Farms producing for NMFP must use sustainable or natural processes and cannot use harmful chemicals.

Business Description

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What we do and how we do it.



Buy Three, Give One

North Mississippi FoodRx is a food box business designed to connect small-scale specialty-crop farmers in northern Mississippi (MS) directly with their communities to expand their marketing system. We purchase produce and value-added products from farms across northern MS at competitive rates to incentivize farm growth. Next, we package 15-20 lb. food boxes for sale at \$40 a box in northern MS using a “buy three, give one,” model. A portion of proceeds for each box sold goes to cover the cost of a box for homebound or disabled customers. Paying customers can use SNAP/EBT and Double-Up Bucks to supplement their purchase. All customers can choose to pick up or have their boxes delivered to their door, and can choose between weekly, biweekly, or monthly deliveries. Any customer choosing to have their boxes delivered must pay a \$5 delivery fee.

This is the first farmer-run venture of this kind and has the potential to expand community to community as far as sustainable and natural food producers can reach.

SWOT Analysis

How we are prepared.

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Program Goal

to increase healthy local food access in Northern Mississippi to support a healthy lifestyle for market participants and build wealth for underserved farmers.

Strengths

1. Diverse Stakeholders and Problem-Solving Skills.
2. Plentiful Expertise and Resources for Farmers.
3. Centralized Infrastructure and Logistics.
4. Participant Support for Accessibility and Inclusivity.
5. Broad Networks and Expansion Potential.
6. Positive Community Impact.

Weaknesses

1. Limited Flexibility Beyond Business Description.
2. Lack of Box Content Personalization.
3. Market Saturation of Food Box Programs.
4. Infrastructure Challenges and Logistical Complexity.
5. Bureaucratic Barriers with Startup Funding.

Opportunities

1. Expanding Farmer-Access to Untapped Markets.
2. Enhancing Community Health and Healthy Food Access.
3. Economic and Workforce Development in Agriculture.
4. Strengthening Community Networks.
5. Capitalize on Momentum and Partnerships.

Threats

1. Operational Challenges.
2. Environmental Risks.
3. Wholesale Competition and Market Pressures.
4. Customer Unpredictability.

We are prepared to...

1. Use expertise in agriculture and networks to educate, train, and support farmers and inform local and state organizations for investment opportunities.
2. Empower farmers to develop their own NMFP community branch and work together to share resources addressing logistical, infrastructure, and customer challenges.
3. Provide nutrition expertise through recipes to excite customers about healthy diet compromises and maintain enrollment numbers.

Strategic Plan

Why we will succeed.

OUR VISION

A sustainable and expandable market for specialty crop farmers.

OUR MISSION

To increase the footprint of small-scale specialty crop farmers in north Mississippi.

OUR GOAL

To support a healthy lifestyle for our communities and build wealth for specialty crop farmers.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Increase cooperating farmers' current revenue by 10% over three years and 20% over five years.
2. Host 1 SNAP/EBT enrollment event for farmers and community members.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

1. Cooperating farmers' business records will reflect changes in revenue.
2. Event advertisement, attendee records, and enrollment records will prove the occurrence of the event.

MEASURES OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. Farmers will expand their market by 10 buyers in two years and an additional 20 buyers in another year. For sustainability to reach year five, farmers must increase buyers by at least another 5 buyers after year three.
2. The event will increase the amount of SNAP/EBT dollars spent and accepted between participants and farmers.

Competitor Analysis

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What we are up against.

Other Food Box Programs in Our Service Area

At least 5 food prescription programs have existed in the north of Mississippi. All programs are reliant on continued grant funding for sustainability, and only 2 programs advertise their produce to be locally sourced.

COUNTY	FOOD BOX INFORMATION
Bolivar and Sunflower	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USDA grant funded.• Locally sourced produce.• Program not sustained past grant funding.
Coahoma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USDA grant funded - ongoing.• MS sourced produce.• Home-delivered food boxes.
Quitman	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USDA grant funded.• Grocery store pick-up.• Program not sustained past grant funding.
Tallahatchie	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walmart Foundation funded.• Wholesale produce.• Program awarded additional grant funding - ongoing.
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USDA grant funded.• Unknown produce source.• Program not sustained past grant funding.

Sustainability Matters

Current programs provide free produce to participants but lack sustainability when grant funding ends. North Mississippi FoodRx can improve the food prescription landscape by adopting a community-shared agriculture (CSA) model, where higher-priced produce boxes fund subsidized boxes for community members in need, ensuring long-term impact and accessibility.

Market Analysis and Strategy

Meet our customers.

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Counties Served:

Bolivar, Coahoma,
Lafayette, Panola,
Quitman, and Tunica

Total Population:

156,904

Geographic Characteristics:

Area: Rural
Median Income: \$42,072
Food Access: Low
Healthcare Access: Low
Disability Rate: 15%
SNAP Enrollment: 28%

Likely Customer Demographics:

Race: Black
Gender: Female
Age: 40
Children: 2
Employed: Yes
SNAP Enrolled: No



78% of the service area population have internet access and internet-capable devices.



11% under the age of 65 are disabled. 17% are age 65 or older.

Marketing Points

Discounts, quality, variety, and consumer choices

Points for Target Market:

- SNAP/EBT and Double-up Bucks acceptance.
- Program sustainability.
- Home delivery and delivery frequency options.
- Local and fresh production packaged for the individual.
- Community impact of "Buy Three, Give One."

Promotion

Social media, flyers posted in popular locations, church service bulletins, health offices

Promotion Mechanisms:

- Post on community social media pages.
- Post flyers at libraries, coffee shops, and corner stores.
- Give flyers to doctors offices and health centers to inform patients.
- Provide information to churches to print in their bulletins.

Mode

Digital advertisement, physical flyers, and word-of-mouth

Modes of Advertising:

- Digital advertising via social media and community partner communication.
- Print physical flyers to post at appropriate institutions (no places that could be seen as competition, like grocery stores.)
- Word-of-mouth advertising.

Funding and Sales

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How we fund our work.

Grant Funding to Sustainable Financing

Previous and current food box programs rely solely on grant funding, which means participants receiving food boxes have the rug pulled out from under them once grant funding runs out. NMFP is different. We expect each and every customer to contribute something to the program, even if that is just \$5 to cover the cost of food box delivery. Customers can choose to pick-up their food boxes at our Clarksdale location for \$40 or have their boxes delivered for \$45. We also accept SNAP/EBT and participate in the Double-up Bucks Mississippi program through which SNAP customers can double their SNAP dollars spent on produce.

Each 15 to 20 lb. food box is worth \$30. We charge an additional \$10 to subsidize food boxes for disabled and homebound customers. Using this model, we can use the additional funds from the sale of 3 food boxes to cover the cost of 1 subsidized food box.



Funding and Sales

Our sales model.

Product

The food box and its features.

The details:

- Provides easy access to produce in produce-scarce areas.
- Box contents include vegetables, fruits, and value-added products that are familiar to the consumer.
- All produce is 100% chemical free and grown within the service area.
- Buying a box is an easy, tax-deductible way for consumers to serve their community.

Price

Cost, payment types, and community contribution.

The details:

- Participating farmers are paid \$2 per lb. of produce, so the value of the 15-20 lb. food box is about \$30.
- Customers pay an additional \$10 to cover 1/3 the cost of a subsidized food box for a homebound or disabled neighbor.
- Customers choosing to have their food boxes delivered to their home pay an additional \$5.
- We accept SNAP/EBT. Customers enrolled in SNAP are also eligible to use Double-up Bucks and have their SNAP dollars doubled for what they spend on the box.

Promotion

Social media, word-of-mouth, and flyers.

The details:

- Promotional approaches most familiar to our target market are social media, word-of-mouth, and flyer displays at trusted locations.
- Our team has various connections in all communities in our service area.
- Printing flyers is our only advertising cost which will be about \$500.

Place

Purchase, pick-up, and delivery.

The details:

- Customers will purchase their food boxes, schedule their deliveries, and set the frequency of their deliveries through the Happy Foods Project website.
- Customers can choose to pick-up their food boxes from our Clarksdale, MS location to avoid the \$5 delivery charge.
- Delivery and pick-up frequency options are set at weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly.
- Deliveries will be made by Happy Foods Project employees.

Evaluation Plan

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How we measure success.

Data Collection

Data will be collected via survey from customers and farmers every six months for the first two years of the program's launch.

Customer Data

Data collected from customers to measure the program's effects on customer satisfaction, behaviors, and health.

Quantitative

Customers and Repeat Customers

Subsidized food boxes

Boxes Delivered

Boxes Picked up

Recipe Card Users

SNAP Enrolled Customers

SNAP dollars used

Qualitative

Dietary Habits

Mental Health

Exercise

Hygiene

Program Experience

Health Fluency

Pre-existing Conditions

Financial health

Farmer Data

Data to collect from participating farmers to measure the program's effects on farmer satisfaction, production, and output.

Quantitative

Production Volume

Income

Acres Farmed

Customers

Volume Sold

Employees

Community Relationships

Qualitative

Work Environment

Financial health

Certifications

Market

Program Experience

Time Spent

Home Life

Stress

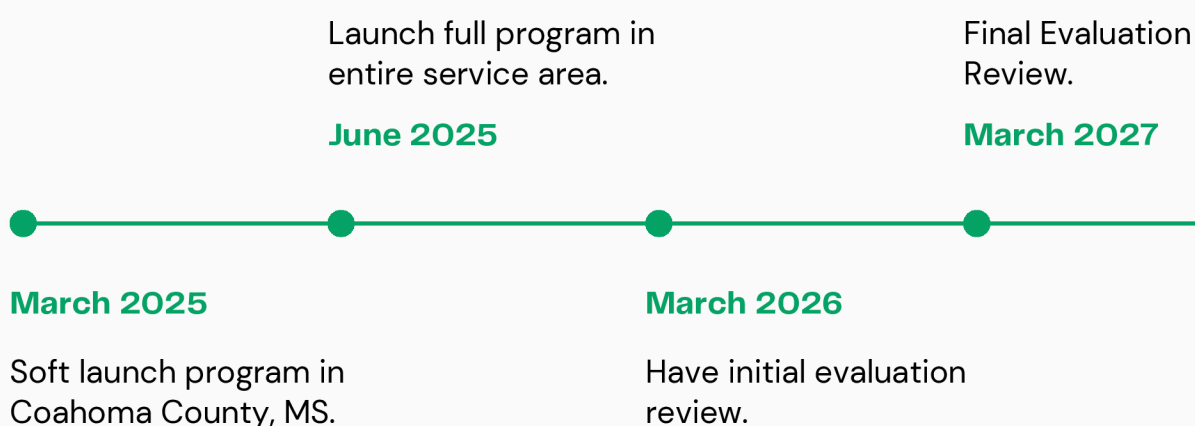
The Future

Our plan to get started.

Connecting Farmers with Communities

This business is a business for all specialty crop farmers. While farmers have the option to plug into this program, they also have the option to build out their own program that best suits the needs of their farm and the communities they serve. Either way, this business plan serves as an aid for farmers in expanding their market reach.

In March 2025, we plan to launch in Coahoma County, MS to monitor farm output and coordinate logistics on a smaller scale, but by June, we expect to have launched in our full service area. Evaluation data will be collected throughout the first two years of the program, and the program will be adjusted accordingly each year.



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