

## High Point Market Utilizes \$725K in CRF to Ensure Safe Fall 2020 Market

### High Point Market is the Largest Home Furnishings Industry Trade Show in the World

With the enormous challenge of executing a trade show in the midst of a global pandemic before us, we at the High Point Market Authority took a team approach to deciphering how we needed to shift in order for the Fall 2020 Market to still take place in person. With the executive, operations, and marketing teams all at the table, we began to break down the challenges before us, anticipated needs, possible solutions, and funding shortfalls. We are immensely grateful for the CARES Act funding the State of North Carolina provided, as without it, successfully fulfilling all the required safety measures could have easily become an insurmountable task.

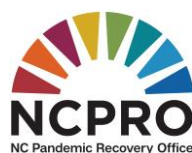
Upon receiving confirmation we'd be receiving \$725,000 to cover costs related to COVID-19 and the planned safety measures, we began to break down the main budget categories that would need the funding infusion. We settled on 5 main areas - Guest Services & Staffing, Registration, Safety Supplies, Marketing & Communications, and Transportation.

One major shift in our Market structure that impacted all of the areas was the first thing we announced as we began to plan for a "COVID-Market" -the expansion of the Market dates. Seeing the need to spread out the crowd in expectation of reduced capacity requirements, we expanded Market from 5 days to 9 days. So that we could control the flow of attendees throughout the entirety of Market, we broke those 9 days into 3, three-day periods and divided the U.S. map into two regions. Attendees whose company was headquartered in Region A could choose to attend during Period I or II, and attendees in Region B could choose to attend during Period II or III. This was a vital first step for our safety plan, but certainly impacted our costs considerably.

For Guest Services & Staffing, funds were spent to cover staffing for the additional 4 days of Market and to expand our guest services to include required daily health checks for staff and attendees. In terms of staffing, we had to increase our typical part time event staff, add extra staffing hours and open dates for our media center and International Buyers Center, expand our needed security to include 4 more days, and hire a cleaning crew to continually disinfect frequently touches surfaces around the Market district. For the health screening program, we partnered with Best Health, a division of the Wake Forest Baptist Health System, to set up a 9-day health check area staffed by nurses and other trained medical staff onsite at Market.

For Registration, we pivoted in several ways to meet the unique needs of Fall Market. First, we had to work with our registration system provider, Showcare, to rebuild the registration process to include the extra four days, the regions, and the periods. Onsite, the Showcare team had to adjust and expand their services to be available for the entirety of Market while also ensuring their team could easily follow all the required safety measures while interacting with exhibitors and guests. We had to rent a new space that was large enough to accommodate incoming customers in a socially distanced manner. Additional staff was hired for the onsite registration areas to ensure social distancing was taking place in any lines that formed. We ordered pass sleeves and lanyards that were pre-packaged together to reduce the amount of contact a staff member would have with the pieces prior to presenting it to the attendee. And we kept online registration open during Market as opposed to closing it beforehand so attendees could still register on their own before walking into a registration area to reduce the amount of time they would need to remain in the registration area.

In terms of Safety Supplies, multiple safety measures required the purchase of PPE and other safety materials. Counter barriers were ordered for all registration areas, info booths, and other spaces where



an attendee might approach a staff member at a counter. Gloves and antibacterial wipes were also provided to staff members at these areas for their use. Face coverings, both cloth and disposable masks plus a small number of face shields, were ordered to supply any staff member or attendee in need to comply with the face coverings mandate. Hand sanitizer stations and travel-sized sanitizers were ordered so hand cleansing could occur often. EPA-certified disinfectant cleaning solutions were ordered for the cleaning crew and other areas managed by the Market Authority. Safety signage was needed across the Market district, including social distancing decals, location signage, safety reminders, health check info, reduced capacity limitations, etc. And colored wristbands were purchased and utilized to indicate someone had passed that day's health check.

Marketing & Communications was an enormous task in terms of conveying all the safety measures, changes, and updates to a variety of different audiences in a timely manner across multiple channels. The communications team employed our website, email communications, social media, videos, webinars, virtual conference calls, press releases, postcard mailings, and podcast recordings to share the message broadly. To attendees, the safety measures, revised structure, and importance of pre-registration were the top priorities for messaging. For exhibitors, information sharing was vital regarding safety requirements, state regulations, resources to assist them in preparation and execution, reduced capacity requirements, and daily health check details. For our community, communications were developed to help them understand the safety efforts being taken and how their safety was also being prioritized. And for the numerous government entities and health partners with which we work, communication was key in terms of implementing the most up-to-date safety guidance, ensuring our execution plans were understood and adequate, and making certain any person onsite in need of medical support received a quality level of care that did not put them or any person assisting them in harm's way.

Transportation not only faced a funding challenge but also several logistical obstacles. CARES Act funding was utilized to broaden Market's transportation services to cover the additional days. This included transportation services for the Charlotte, Raleigh, and Greensboro airports, hotel shuttles for 94 hotels in the Triad, downtown shuttles in the Market district, and transportation two and from two park and ride areas. Beyond the expansion of services, the overall structure of the transportation system had to shift in order to accommodate reduced capacity requirements and the need for more frequent and in-depth cleanings of vehicles. Downtown shuttles moved to smaller vehicles in an effort to accommodate single riders or parties traveling together individually, and where larger shuttles were still used, seats were marked out of service to comply with reduced capacity and social distancing guidelines.

All in all, executing Fall Market in light of COVID-19 proved to be a challenging and expensive endeavor. But it was overwhelmingly worth the effort to not only provide the home furnishings industry with the buying cycle it desperately needed after a missed Spring Market, but also to bring an economic infusion to the state and Triad region at a time when the absence of such is impacting so many negatively. The CARES Act funding received thanks to the State of North Carolina was critically important to the safe and successful execution of the Fall 2020 High Point Market, and we are immensely grateful for all the support it provided.

