

JobsOhio Case Study: The Chef's Garden



The Chef's Garden Quickly Pivots Business to Stay Sustainable During COVID-19

The Chef's Garden has been delivering specialty products with optimum shelf life, quality, flavor, and nutrition direct from the farm to the world's best chefs for over 30 years. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, restaurants and other clients closed or moved to partial capacity and their demand for produce dipped. The Chef's Garden needed to pivot its business to be more sustainable. It chose home delivery. As the company looked to market its growing home delivery service and cultivate future possibilities for its produce, JobsOhio presented the company with an Inclusion Grant for financial support.

JobsOhio Inclusion Grant: The Chef's Garden

Ohio is home to a lot of hidden gem companies that are innovative and fascinating but often pass under the radar. Among them is a small agricultural company that has been sought out by some of the biggest names in the food industry including four- and five-star restaurants and other establishments in 50 states and 17 countries. Even Walt Disney World has turned to this small business for its produce.

The Chef's Garden is a woman-owned business that has been delivering vegetables, microgreens, and herbs with optimum quality, flavor, nutrition, and shelf life to the world's best professional chefs for over 30 years. With over 150 employees, the Chef's Garden employs

traditional farming methods combined with innovative technology to stay on the leading edge of the produce business. Innovation is a guiding principle at the farm as the company continuously develops new product sizes, colors, textures, and flavors.

A Pandemic-Driven Need to Pivot

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and restaurants were forced to close, the company made a pivot to e-commerce sales and at-home customers. The Chef's Garden launched a subscription box in April 2020 on its website. The company saw an opportunity to grow this business during the pandemic and beyond. To do so, it needed additional training in digital marketing for the new product. Its goal was to increase e-commerce sales by 50% in 2021.

Erie County Economic Development Corporation learned about the JobsOhio Inclusion Grant (JOIG) and connected the company with Team NEO and JobsOhio.

Setting The Chef's Garden Up for Ongoing Success

The Chef's Garden is critical to the local economy. The company's potential for growth in a new line of business, strong financial track record, and solid and visionary leadership, made it an ideal recipient for the JOIG.



Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

THE CHEF'S GARDEN®

Created in July 2020 as part of JobsOhio's COVID relief programming, the JOIG provides targeted funding for small- and medium-sized businesses in distressed areas or businesses owned by underrepresented population groups, including women. This funding assists all Ohioans looking to grow their business so the state's economy can recover faster and remain stronger.

With this funding, the company can invest in its team and have the capability to hire additional employees.

The Chef's Garden has a long-term goal to gain corporate clients that want to purchase products to support employee wellness initiatives, including prescribing vegetables as medicine. Additionally, it is prioritizing ongoing research and development work that details the science of how their vegetables are more nutritionally dense.

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The Chef's Garden, Huron, Ohio



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Pivoting from chefs to consumers in our marketing efforts, as a result of COVID, took being flexible in our messaging and learning new ways to engage a new audience. For many years we believed in word-of-mouth within the chef industry. The home market is much different in the sense that they needed to be introduced to who we are. Diving into paid digital marketing opportunities allowed us to reach a customer base far beyond what we would have been able to achieve in such a short time with word of mouth.”

Barbara Jones
co-owner, The Chef's Garden

To learn about the partnerships and resources available in Ohio, visit JobsOhio.com or reach out to our team.



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