

**Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
Final Performance Report**

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your FMPP award objectives. As stated in the FMPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future FMPP or Local Food Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by FMPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to FMPP staff to avoid delays:

FMPP Phone: 202-690-4152; Email: USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-690-4152

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact FMPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2014-September 30, 2016
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Recipient Organization Name:	Food Works
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Building Direct Marketing Relationships in Low Income Areas of Southern Illinois
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	IL-069-2014-0061
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Carbondale, IL
Total Awarded Budget:	\$88,231

FMPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

- Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).
 Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by FMPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

1. **Goal 1:** To build the capacity of the fledging year-round Carbondale Community Farmers Market, already providing full access for Illinois LINK and other EBT users by securing adequate staffing, marketing and promotional expertise and a key community location.
 - i. Objective A: Create and implement a marketing plan for the Carbondale and promote the market through social and traditional media
 - ii. Objective B: Engage a part-time market manager to provide market day logistics and weekly market execution
 - iii. Objective C: Engage volunteer assistance for market and vendor operations.
 - iv. Objective D: Operate EBT service that interfaces with Illinois LINK benefits.
 - v. Objective E: Provide organizational management, including bookkeeping and staff supervision.
 - vi. Objective F: Develop and administer consumer surveys to ensure the most effective customer experience.
 - vii. Objective G: Plan and coordinate educational events to be held on market days.

1. **Progress Made:** Food Works successfully created and implemented a new marketing plan for the Community Farmers Market. A part-time market manager was employed to operate EBT service, provide organization administration to the market, and coordinate educational events. The market manager engaged volunteer assistance to coordinate music and special events at the market, and community partners hosted educational events and activities beyond the scope of what the market manager alone could provide. The market manager administered customer surveys three times during the four market seasons (two winter/two summer), and solicited vendor feedback via email and through formal meetings.

- **Impact on Community:** Most importantly, the number of low-income shoppers that are able to access fresh, local produce by using their SNAP benefits at area farmers markets has increased. The market saw a 79% increase from 2015 to 2016 in SNAP sales at the market, despite a 40% decrease in customer attendance. With support from other funders, the amount of double value incentives distributed was also increased significantly, and offered for more months of the season. Partnerships with the public health community have helped to promote the Community Farmers Market, and additional markets around the region, which improves food access. Additionally, the Community Farmers Market has provided an accessible entry point into area farmers markets for beginning sustainable farmers. As a welcoming farmers market for start-up farmers, the Community Farmers Market has nurtured the local food culture in Carbondale, enabled farmers to test market varieties and value-added products, and helped farmers form and maintain relationships with customers that benefit their farms and their enterprises.

Results: This project grew the number of vendors at the outdoor market from an average of 5 in 2015, to 10 in 2016; and grew the average number of vendors at the winter market from 9 in 2015 to 12 in 2016. We also increased the diversity of types of vendors including introducing new prepared food and beverage vendors to the outdoor market in 2016. It gave three beginning

farmers their first opportunity to sell at a farmers market. And six Farm Beginning graduates sold products at the Community Farmers Market.

We collaborated with local radio station to promote the market on WDBX and to coordinate live music for the markets. This increased the diversity of local musicians playing at the market, and took the burden off of the market manager to coordinate music.

We created improved marketing materials with a fresh new logo, focused messaging, and increased online communications. Weekly email newsletters now go out to over 350 market shoppers, text messages to 150 shoppers, and social media posts to 1,000 plus users. The upgraded website is also regularly updated with current information about market hours and location, pictures, recipes, and vendor information.

Having a dedicated market manager who can answer questions and provide guidance to beginning farmers and curious customers, and serve as a liaison between the community and farmers market has been an important outcome for this grant. The partnerships with the public health community, City of Carbondale, Carbondale Main Street, local radio stations, and other community groups would have been difficult to achieve without the dedicated staff time afforded by this grant. The professionalization of the Community Farmers Market has impacted beyond this market pushing other regional markets to adapt their marketing and follow suit. Several area markets started email newsletters and improved social media outreach after seeing the success of online marketing done by the Community Farmers Market. The Carbondale Farmers Market, a larger, established market in the area, looked to us for support with implementing a SNAP and double value incentive program because we had piloted both SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks. We are now partnering with the Carbondale Farmers Market to promote and produce the indoor Community Winter Farmers Market.

2. **Goal/Objective 2:** To assist emerging farmers with small farm businesses to grow produce for local direct markets by providing a comprehensive farmer training. This Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings® program will be implemented for one full year of operation, featuring classroom instruction, on-farm field days; and a mentorship with a successful farmer in a similar enterprise.
 - Objective A: Update course curriculum to reflect evaluation feedback and update website with current course applications materials.
 - Objective B: Engage a Farmer Advisory Committee to assist with participant recruitment, course instruction and curriculum development.
 - Objective C: Participate in Farm Beginnings Collaborative annual meeting and trainings.
 - Objective D: Engage 24 farmer presenters and farm-related technical advisors for business planning and marketing seminars.
 - Objective E: Conduct marketing and outreach sufficient to enroll 15 farm family units (up to 30 new farmers).
 - Objective F: Partner experienced farm mentors with course's beginning farmers and ranchers.
 - Objective G: Evaluate the program using participant surveys and focus groups**New Objective:** Broadening our base of farmer presenters.

1. **Progress Made:** The grant enabled Food Works to offer the Farm Beginnings program for 2015-16 through which we engaged 20 presenters from the food and farming sector; 68% were farmers, others were food system buyers or agency staff. Farm Beginnings students represented three beginning farm enterprises including a poultry operation, a fruit orchard, and a hydroponic

lettuce operation. Farm Beginnings partnered experienced farmers in mentorships with beginning farmers to help the new farmers improve their operation plans. Farm Beginnings seminars were held on-farms or at the Carbondale Main Street facility in downtown Carbondale. Seminar sessions included visits to the Winter Market and an area on-farm store. 2016 Field Days for beginning farmers included programs on maple syrup production, berry production, and produce storage and handling.

Because enrollment in the 2016 class fell below original targets, we have subsequently altered our marketing of the program and our expectations. The benefit of a small class size meant that beginning farmers received personal attention, peer support, and strengthened relationships among students and workshop presenters. Each six-hour seminar offered time for in-depth questions and explanations, mini-field trips, and personal feedback as students drafted their business plans. As we move forward with larger classes, we are sensitive to retaining these benefits. One student dropped out mid-way through the 2016 program for personal reasons.

It appears that enrollment is impacted by confidence in the local economy and the perception of market demand. As families face the economic insecurity in southern Illinois due to an unstable State budget and uncertain funding at the University (the area's economic engine), many beginning farmers have been reluctant to commit to additional spending for training. In response, we have stressed payment plan options and need-based scholarship opportunities to provide flexibility and make Farm Beginnings accessible. Carbondale area layoffs and hiring freezes have also increased anxiety which has forced small farmers to confront a stagnant market. The solution that presented itself was hosting a second 2016 class closer to the St. Louis metro area (100 miles from Carbondale) where farmers' market demand for local food is growing. Because our farmer network in the St. Louis region was just developing, we were unable to implement the solution in fall 2015, however we have since strengthened that network and have been able to offer the 2016-2017 program in St. Clair County featuring on-farm trainings, and local, successful small farmers. One of the biggest challenges in the more crowded metropolitan area was finding appropriate and affordable meeting space for Saturday seminars.

Surveys of each seminar session, closing surveys and a Farm Beginnings alumni focus group helped evaluate the programs and generated suggestions for improvements.

- 2. Impact on Community:** Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings gave start-up farmers the tools to make wise decisions about their operations. The business plan training students received helped them discover weaknesses in their proposed enterprises; forced them to confront the financial realities; provided achievable directions and timelines; and gave them insights into management, resources, marketing, and planning. The program integrated beginning farmers into the larger farm community helping them make critical connections. Student farmers engaged with other farmers, potential markets, and personal mentors. One farmer with a young family put his farm plans on hold and accepted a non-farm position in marketing after realizing the level of investment needed to achieve his vision of an organic orchard. He continues to manage a small personal orchard to continue to gain experience. One farm family implemented a farm expansion plan for their pastured poultry operation and continues to farm. Another farmer whose spouse's employment situation threatens to require relocation put investment plans on hold until their household's location is more stable. She is now working in a collaborative of small growers helping them find routes to new markets.

The experienced farmer presenters who shared their knowledge with the students also gained insights. As they shared their lessons learned, they were reminded of how far they'd come and how their values and decisions are reflected in their farm businesses.

3. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: To date, 35 vendors have participated in the farmers' market; 9 farms have expanded operations; 1 is in development; three contractors have provided services.
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 2 program staff are retained
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Unknown
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 0
- v. Number of new markets established: 1
- vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. Market sales data is not collected, however, the market saw a 79% increase from 2015 to 2016 in SNAP sales at the market; EBT sales at the indoor winter market (Nov.-March) increased 14% (to \$698 from \$613).
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 34

4. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

New partnerships helped us expand the customer base to engage more low income shoppers. The Double Up Food Bucks program brought in 110 new customers to the Community Farmers Market from 2015-16 by providing a \$1 for \$1 match on their SNAP purchases. As a result of our participation in the Jackson County Health Communities Coalition, the program was advertised directly through Department of Human Service agencies, the Jackson County Health Department, area SNAP Nutrition Education services, Southern Illinois Healthcare Wellness and Health Ministries to most directly target this specific population. Additionally, the 2016 outdoor season of the Community Farmers Market was hosted in a new location in downtown Carbondale adjacent to the NE side of town which is predominately African American and lower income than the former location. This location was easily accessible by foot, public transportation, and personal vehicle for a wide array of Carbondale residents. A flyer about the Community Farmers Market was sent home with all students enrolled in the Carbondale School Districts grades K-8 to better reach parents with young children. The pilot project of a double value incentive program funded through a new partner showed positive implications for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among SNAP eligible customers at the Community Farmers Market in Carbondale. 100% of participants surveyed at the end of the season reported buying more fresh fruits and vegetables, 90% eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, and 80% reported that they were making more frequent trips to the farmers market as a result of the double value program.

5. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?
Food Works community partners include: Southern Illinois Healthcare, Jackson County Health Department, the Jackson County Healthy Communities Coalition, the City of Carbondale, Fair Food Network, WDBX Community Radio, Flyover Gardens, WSIU Radio, the Sustainable Living Film Series, Town Square Market, University of Illinois Extension SNAP Nutrition Education.

ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?

Our community partnerships with the public health community have increased the Community Farmers Market's outreach to low income populations to provide information about our SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks programs at the market. These organizations provided funding, printing, outreach, and coordinated special activities at the market at various occasions. The Double Up Food Bucks program was piloted with technical assistance from the Fair Food Network who offered templates for marketing, record keeping, and customer surveys. The City of Carbondale has been a long supporter of farmers markets and provided us with a permit to close a city block in downtown Carbondale and paid its own staff to drop off and remove barricades every week. WDBX Community Radio and WSIU Radio helped to promote the Community Farmers Market on air through public service announcements, program sponsorships, and providing music and kids activities at the market. Nutrition education was provided on a monthly basis with support from the SNAP Nutrition coordinator at University of Illinois Extension and with support from a graduate student intern from the nutrition department at Southern Illinois University. Town Square Market and the Sustainable Living Association, both programs of the Dayemi Tariqat, helped to promote the market through special events, tastings, and a film screening about the importance of buying local.

Carbondale Main Street offered their meeting facilities at a low cost to the Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings program. Many partners provided presenters for SIFB, including : University of Illinois Extension, Illinois Farm Credit, Annie's Project, Farm Services Agency (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA), Owl Creek Vineyards, Rendleman Orchards, All Seasons Farm, Flora Bay Farm, Chautauqua Bend Flower Farm, Darn Hot Peppers, Harness Digital Marketing, and Miller Farms.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?

Many of these organizations are committed to the success of both the Community Farmers Market and Food Works' commitment to making farmers markets more accessible to low income populations through SNAP programming at farmers markets. Southern Illinois Healthcare will continue to fund a version of the Double Up Food Bucks program and will provide funding for SNAP Support Grants, administered by Food Works, to help regional farmers markets become eligible to accept SNAP. The Jackson County Health Department and Healthy Communities Coalition will continue to keep up-to-date records of farmers markets in the region and to share information with those they serve. Downtown businesses and organizations are committed to helping support future seasons of a farmers' market downtown, if enough vendors (and customers) can be recruited to sustain the market.

Carbondale Main Street has continued to offer meeting space for farmer-centric endeavors and trainings. Food Works coordinates with Extension so that our Field Days do not conflict with their beginning farmer field days to maximize learning opportunities for new farmers. The Carbondale Farmers Market is working with us to get their SNAP and Double Up program running. We continue to work with our presenter partners on Farm Beginnings seminars; and with state and regional organizations including the Illinois Stewardship Alliance to promote local food and the Illinois Farmers Market Association to promote farmers' market manager training and are sharing our data on farmers markets in the 23 counties in Southern Illinois.

6. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?

A marketing consultant provided a new communications plan for the Community Farmers Market. The marketing professional helped identify where the market should target its marketing budget, created messaging themes, and redesigned the market logo and provided a style guide. This helped professionalize the Community Farmers Market and direct our efforts into marketing strategies that have better records of success. Together we created the logo and the tag line “small farms/big quality”, which sums up the Community Farmers Market. In addition, a photographer and a videographer were engaged to capture professional level photos of vendors on their farms to help us tell their story in market promotions.



7. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?
No.
- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?
N/A
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?
N/A

*Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).

8. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?

Yes, evaluation is a central pillar in all of our work.

- i. If so, how did you collect the information?
An online survey was sent out to Community Farmers Market customers at the end of the outdoor market seasons in 2015 and 2016 to assess support for different market locations, times, and overall market satisfaction. An online winter farmers market was completed in 2015 to assess satisfaction with market services. Formal vendor feedback was difficult to solicit (did not respond to email requests), but vendors often spoke frankly with the market manager about perceived challenges of the market and offer suggestions for improvement at bi-annual vendor meetings.

We have sought feedback from our Farmer Advisory Committee, Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings (SIFB) alumni, our Farming Alliance, and current SIFB students. At the end of each SIFB class, participants completed a survey to ascertain whether learning goals were achieved. In addition, at the end of the SIFB year, the Farm Beginnings Collaborative collects survey data from all Farm Beginnings alumni nationwide. Locally, a focus group of all Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings alumni solicited feedback on the impact Farm Beginnings had.

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
Forty customers, 27 in 2015 and 13 in 2016, completed an online survey to provide feedback about the downtown Community Farmers Market. A majority of respondents (81%) said that they shop the market because they wanted to support small growers, 74% because they liked

the vendors, and 66% because they wanted to support small farmers markets. About half of all respondents said that the biggest barrier to getting to market was scheduling, several reporting in the comments that they worked until 5 or later and getting to the market by 6 was challenging, few reported that location, parking, or time of day were problematic. A majority of respondents reported that Wednesday was the ideal day for a weekday market, and that 3-6pm (44%) or 4-7pm (39%) were the ideal times. The most requested item at the market was local fruit. The newsletter (72%) was the most popular way respondents got information about the market, with Facebook (28%) and FarmFan (12%) also being ways that some got reminders about the market. Though 55% of respondents had never used a LINK, credit, or debit card at the market, those who had reported that it was easy (8%) or very easy (37%). The initial survey at the end of the 2015 downtown season helped us shape the 2016 market season. Feedback given in 2016 will be used in future vendor meetings to make decisions about the market. Vendors voiced opinions about market structures at bi-annual vendor meetings and major decisions regarding vendor fees, market time, and location, were discussed and voted upon.

The Farm Beginnings program feedback included specific advice about class activities (“I would like to spend more time talking about our business plans in class”) to feedback on the impact of the program on its alumni, who rated it 4/5 generally (“I have learned so much about business plans and how to create the financials needed”; One reported learning “Details on FSA loans; I had gone to FSA office, didn't know what to ask”). One Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings graduate commented, “I’m happy with where we are at, with what we are able to do in our space.” But, he also added that it would be nice to make enough to accumulate some savings for his family, something he had not been able to do as yet. Another said, “You have to be able to make the numbers work.” The evaluation report is submitted herewith.

Budget Summary:

- iii. As part of the FMPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:
- iv. Did the project generate any income?
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? Income generated included market vendor fees and SIFB student tuition for a total of \$13,551. Funds were re-invested in marketing and the winter market site fund (in the case of vendor fees. Total promotions for Community Farmers Market \$4,402.30) and into Farm Beginnings expenses. 100% was used to further objectives of the award.

- 9. Lessons Learned:** Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).
- Employ a double value program to stretch SNAP dollars. The number of SNAP transactions at the market increased significantly with the introduction of the double value incentive programming provided through support from new partners.
 - Partnerships are essential. New community partners included: Southern Illinois Healthcare, The City of Carbondale, WDBX Community Radio, Town Square Market, University of Illinois Extension SNAP Education, Jackson County Health Department, Jackson County Plan4Health Initiative, and the Washington Street Gardens.

- Collaborate with other markets to serve farmers and consumers. The double value incentive program opened up new avenues for collaboration with the existing Saturday farmers market in town, easing several years' worth of tensions between the organizations. The Saturday farmers market has agreed for the first time to help promote the winter farmers market and to work to cross promote double value incentive programs in future seasons.
- Research the buyers and monitor changes they are experiencing. There is limited data to support the need for two markets in a town the size of Carbondale. There is a declining number of middle and high income earners in the area who typically comprise the bulk of farmers market shoppers. In 2014, we did not foresee the economic decline. Additionally, consumers in the region spend a smaller portion of their food budgets on fresh fruits and vegetables compared to similar communities across the country (and they often grow their own).
- Monitor the competition and focus on increasing customer traffic. Though there was a lot of initial interest from vendors in the Wednesday market, few vendors sold through the entire summer season. Three seasonal vendors decided that the market was not profitable for them six weeks into the market season. Others stopped coming in July. The majority of vendors who did continue to vend at the summer Wednesday market were unsatisfied with their sales. The decrease in vendors in late August and early September discouraged many customers from returning to the market. Additionally, there are ample opportunities for consumers to purchase fresh local produce in town thereby reducing the urgency of making it to a weekday farmers market, even for loyal shoppers. There is a strong Saturday market in town, three small grocers that stock local produce, and a number of farm stands within a 10 minute drive of Carbondale. Customers looking for local produce did not have an incentive to prioritize coming to market mid-week.
- Rain drives away Southern Illinois shoppers. The afternoon Wednesday market (4-7 p.m) was plagued with rain and storms this season. Severe thunderstorms forced the market to shut down early or cancel outright on three occasions. Rain was forecasted during market days for 25 weeks of the 28-week market season. A late afternoon summer market might need a roof for long-term viability or morning markets might create more reliable customer traffic.

- i. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:

The farmers' market goals for this grant were achieved. The number of beginning farmers enrolled in Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings (SIFB) training fell short. Instead of 15 farms, the four graduates represented three farm enterprises. The major lesson learned was to start early in recruiting students and recruit from personal and professional networks. Back up direct asks with consistent social media messaging and a navigable website. Then, let prospective beginning farmers know how they can afford it. Secondly, market the program where demand is strong. If farmers markets are looking for vendors, farmer training is the bridge from hobbyist to farmer. If demand is weak, prospective farmers are going to have a hard time seeing a place for them in the economy. Thirdly, find a way to offer the training without interruption. There was no 2014 SIFB class which may have sent a signal that the program had ended permanently.

- ii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

- It is important to analyze the economic feasibility of a farmers market. The City of Carbondale received an FMPP grant in 2015 to complete a feasibility report on farmers markets in Carbondale that suggested that the economic base of Carbondale is too limited

(with the State budget so uncertain) to support multiple markets on the same day. Had it been available earlier, this analysis may have altered the decision to schedule the Community Farmers Market on the same day.

- Competition drives change. Despite its challenges, creation of a new market focused on beginning and sustainable farmers did succeed in helping secure more market access for new, serious growers. The upstart Community Farmers Market encouraged the established Carbondale Farmers Market to take some of the beginning and sustainable farmers more seriously and increase the number that they allow in their market in a given week. The Carbondale Farmers Market is the strongest in the region so access to this market is critical for new (and established) growers. It is uncertain whether the established market would have loosened its access policies without the increased competition from a new market.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

As described above, our work with the Community Farmers Markets as well as others in the region continues. We expect EBT/SNAP access to expand throughout the region, starting with seven targeted counties in Southern Illinois. And with the additional expansion of double value incentive programs and educational partnerships with the public health community, we expect the consumption of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to increase slowly and steadily. We continue to offer and refine Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings for new farmers. We continually seek opportunities for our community of farmers to access strong markets. We are supporting a number of them in their exploration of cooperative models to access new markets farther away and wholesale markets locally. We are committed to growing new farmers and to nurturing farmers beyond the start-up phase.

- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?

Identifying approaches to promote local food effectively in cost-sensitive, low-income populations is Southern Illinois' perennial challenge. For farmers to survive, their costs must be covered. Three courses confront us: Empowering people to learn to eat local and cheap while ensuring farmers can cover their costs (ie: domestic skills like cooking at home, using more beans and vegetables, making multiple meals from whole chickens, food preservation and storage, growing easy additions to upgrade meals); increasing people's perceived value of fresh, local food so that people are willing to prioritize it and support it; creating a food system where smart farmers create more value, manage costs, and retain more of every food dollar. Models that advance these directions should continue to be shared, particularly in rural areas like Southern Illinois.