

**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 - March 31, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Phil Korman
Authorized Representative Phone:	413-665-7100
Authorized Representative Email:	Phil@buylocalfood.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, Inc (CISA)
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Engaging the Community to Enhance Direct Markets in Western Massachusetts
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-FMPPX-MA-0075
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	South Deerfield, MA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,139

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: Kelly Coleman ; Email: Kelly@buylocalfood.org; Phone: 413-665-7100

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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.

i. **Goal/Objective 1: *Improve on-line promotion for direct market farms***

Activity 1(1): Improve CISA’s existing on-line guide to local farms, farm products, farmers’ markets, and agritourism activities, which can be found here: www.buylocalfood.org/farmguide.

Progress Made: Our new and improved on-line farm guide faced significant delays in the development stage due to the complexity of information that we provide to the public and data translation between our previous guide and our new one. Our new guide is now visible and will provide a much improved user experience, it can be seen here:

Impact on Community: Our new and improved guide provides those searching for local farms, farm products, and farmer’s markets with a seamless transition from CISA’s homepage to the farm product information they are searching for and provides the information in more visually appealing and user-friendly way! We believe that the ease of use of our new guide will allow more consumers to use the guide to connect directly with direct market farmers in our region, however to the development delay we don’t yet have data to demonstrate if this is true.

Activity 1(2): Plan and implement online promotion of local farms and farmers’ markets.

Progress Made: We planned and implemented two seasons of on-line promotion of local farms and farmers’ markets each with a campaign budget of roughly \$5,000. Ads were placed on general internet sites (like recipe blogs etc.), Facebook, and with local media providers such as MassAppeal/Channel 22 news and Masslive.com and linked to CISA’s Find Local page on our website. In our first year of the concerted campaign pageviews on this page increased 12.15% and our on-line advertising at a click through rate of 13% through Masslive.com.

Impact on Community: When we compare website traffic for the two years we ran our internet campaign to the two years before, we found that pageviews on our home page increased by 25.58%, pageviews of our community events page increased by 13.4%. These pages direct consumers on how to purchase local food directly from farmers or provide info on experience agritourism events.

Activity 1(3): Support farms and markets in testing and evaluating new tools to build and maintain customer loyalty.

Progress Made: Twenty-one markets used loyalty tools in the summer/winter2016/2017 season. A few additional markets used iPads loaned by CISA in the winters of 2015-2016 (2 markets) and 2016-17 (3 markets). The breakdown of implementation of different tools was as follows:

- Sixteen markets tested punch cards.
- Fifteen markets offered extra activities, such as Kid’s Days or food sampling/preparation demos provided by CISA.
- Four markets used buttons.

- Two markets had used texting communication in the past and was interested in testing CISA's texting app, but in the end they did not.
- Four markets tried iPads.

Market managers' decisions were based on their assessment of the amount of work involved, their capacity to accomplish that work, and the likely effectiveness of the tool. We evaluated the impact of these tools with market manager conversations, vendor surveys, consumer dot surveys, and consumer focus groups.

Impact on Community:

All markets reported loyalty programs were a benefit to the market. Managers believe the cards increased customer satisfaction and number of customers. 100% of managers said loyalty programs were a benefit to their market. Market managers wanted them to continue; 94% of the markets that participated in our study will continue to use the most popular loyalty tool, frequent-customer reward cards, plus four new markets adopted the tool. In total, we anticipate that a total of at least 19 farmers' markets in our region will be using customer reward cards this coming year. Consumers were also favorable about the loyalty tools, but wanted to see more frequent (smaller, if necessary) rewards for every shopper that fills out their card.

- ii. *Goal/Objective 2: Strengthen marketing and management for farms and farmers' markets through technical assistance, networking, and joint planning.*

Activity 2(1): Provide training in using on-line communication and promotion for farmers and farmers' markets.

Progress Made: CISA staff worked directly with markets one-on-one over the 2.5 year grant timeframe to support farmers' markets with on-line communications and promotion questions. For instance we helped one market think about Facebook Promotions, provided assistance to other markets considering paid advertising, and created space for markets to share best practices during our farmers' market manager meetings.

Impact on Community: Providing markets with the tools and ability to market their own farmers' markets is critical to the future success of our farmers' markets. Several markets now use live feeds and day-of market pictures and videos to remind people to come to market and increase customer traffic.

Activity 2(2): Offer two advanced workshops for direct market farmers and farmers' markets on topics related to marketing and communications.

Progress Made: Our last farmers' market manager workshop during this grant period took place on April 5th and during this meeting we provided a summary of our loyalty tools program to share learnings and encourage participation in the coming year and we provided a training on on-line communications lead by CISA's Communications Manager. We also hosted a workshop presentation at Harvest New England for market managers and direct market farmers across the northeast. This workshop was on March 8th entitled Farmers Market Loyalty Tools Program- Do they work?.

Impact on Community: 18 individuals representing 17 farmers' markets attended our April 5th training and the room was packed at Harvest New England with an estimated 100 attendees. Six of those attending the marketing component of the farmers' market training said that they gained ideas for implementing new programs/projects at their market including Facebook live and festival days.

Activity 2(3): Network farmers' markets to explore joint activities, including marketing, management or administration, fundraising for SNAP matching, and evaluation.

Progress Made: CISA partnered with Healthy Hampshire to develop a farmer's market steering committee to explore joint market activities. That group met regularly over the two year period and pioneered the creation of the SNAP & Save SNAP matching program for farmers' markets, which was rolled out to all interested farmers' markets in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties.

Impact on Community: In 2016, SNAP & Save boosted spending at participating farmers' markets to just over \$100,000 of a combination of direct SNAP and SNAP-match spending. These dollars represent an increase in the amount of fresh, local, directly-purchased food for families with SNAP as well as an increase in sales for local farmers.

2. 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: Three full-time and one part-time job was added by direct market farmers who answered our year-end survey in 2015 and they planned on adding a total of three full time positions in 2016 and cutting one part-time position, for a net gain of 2.5 full-time positions in 2016.
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: In 2016, the 71 direct market farms who filled out our year-end evaluation employed 155 full-time seasonal workers, 133 part-time seasonal workers, 86 full-time year round workers and 43 part-time year round workers.
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: We only have indirect ways of calculating indirect jobs created. However, using CISA's Local Food Calculator we know that if each household in our three-county region increased spending on local foods by \$5 per week, the result would be an increase in over 500 new jobs. Just 1% of this increase would be 5 new jobs.
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: Markets remained relatively stable during this grant period.
 - v. Number of new markets established: Our goal was to work with existing markets, though during this time period three new farmers' markets were established and we provided support to them through our on-going work.
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. We intend to use NASS data to get a more accurate picture of direct-market increases, since our goal was to support all direct market farmers. However as an interim number we know that 50% of direct market farmers who completed our year end survey for 2016 noted that their sales increased somewhat (<5%) or significantly increased (>5%) from the previous year.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Fifty seven farmers vended at farmers' markets that participated in our loyalty tools testing. In addition 274 farmers are listed on our on-line guide and membership in the local hero program has increased by 4.6 % in the first year of our grant and 1.5% in the second year.

3. 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?

Our farmers' market work allowed us to reach out to SNAP clients and to partners serving SNAP clients to encourage their use of a SNAP matching program offered at 19 of the Farmers' Markets we worked with (it was offered to all markets). This was a new customer base and because of this effort we were able to expand awareness of farmers' markets and begin to expand customer numbers.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?

Our primary community partners on this project were our media partners Masslive and WWLP/Channel 22 (both with local offices in our region) as well as the 21 farmers' markets that participated in our loyalty tools testing program. In addition we partnered with Healthy Hampshire, The Food Bank, Grow Food Northampton, Gardening the Community, and many other organizations that also play a role in supporting local farmers' markets and direct market farmers.

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

These partners helped with the outreach and communication to the public or to specific subsets of the public.

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

Because of our ability to work concertedly with these partners over the past 2.5 years, CISA staff have developed and solidified our relationships with these partners and expect that these partners will continue to be allies and collaborators on future promotions of farmers' markets and direct market outlets.

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

Our primary contractors during this grant period were our developers for our on-line guide. Our original proposal had a commitment from Farm Fresh Rhode Island (the contractor who developed and maintained our previous guide) to do the upgrade work. However, they were unable to commit to the work on our timeline and we brought in our current web developer CdeVision to complete the guide. Developing an on-line farm product guide is an ambitious and complicated project and we could not have done it without the support of a dedicated web developer.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

We have begun to publicize the results of the loyalty tool research through a three page summary document.

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

We have shared these results with market managers in our region and with partner organizations in the northeast through food system list-serves such as NEFOOD.

- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

1500 individual email addresses.

*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).

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

- i. If so, how did you collect the information?

We performed consumer focus groups, farmers' market manager evaluations, and vendor surveys to assess our work specifically with farmers' markets. In addition we complete an annual survey of farmers that we work with (hard copy or digital options available).

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

From a market manager: "I heard some customers tell other customers about the customer rewards card, I also had one person say that she came to the market because she was going to get an extra stamp on her card for free that day and she was very excited about that. All that won, loved the prize."

8. Budget Summary:

- i. 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: We are still waiting for final payment and will submit our final SF-425 once those have been received.
- ii. Did the project generate any income? No.
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. 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).

Customer loyalty tools can be a valuable method of encouraging existing customers to shop at farmers' markets more frequently. Both customers and market managers were pleased with the programs and wanted them to continue; 94% of the markets that participated in our study will continue to use the most popular loyalty tool, frequent-customer reward cards, plus four new markets adopted the tool. In total, we anticipate that a total of at least 19 farmers' markets in our region will be using customer reward cards this coming year.

Different tools may be a good fit for different markets. Rewards cards are very simple to implement and don't require new skills for most market managers, although they work best when the manager is outgoing and encourages their use consistently in personal interactions with shoppers. Customers also reported that they preferred smaller rewards more frequently rather than the chance at a larger reward. We recommend that markets reward EVERY customer who fills in their card with a small gift such as a small market gift card, a bunch of kale, or a percentage off a purchase.

Tablets or smartphones and texting apps have the potential to reach customers when they are not at the market, reminding them of market hours and enticing them with information about special events and what's available this week. These tools can also harness the power of social media to make market customers ambassadors for the markets. However, some market managers may need mentorship or training in order to make effective use of these tools. Markets with very little staff capacity may find these tools harder to use, because the market manager is too busy during the market and/or because the manager has little or no paid time in between markets.

Service providers such as farmers' market networks, non-profit organizations, or University Extension or Department of Agriculture personnel can play an important role providing training or examples of these tools in use.

Many farmers' markets do not bring in enough money in vendor fees or other income to support an investment in staff time and activities that can help to build a customer base. This lack of capacity can hinder the growth of markets, creating a downward spiral in which farmer vendors don't generate enough income at the market to justify the time that it takes, fewer vendors attend the market, and the lack of product diversity reduces customer attendance. Tools such as those tested here can help to reverse this trend, but they too require an investment of time and effort. Markets, vendors, and communities that value local farms and food must consider business models that allow markets to make an investment in their own success.

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

On-line database work can easily go over time and budget and it is hard to assess the scope of the task until all the parties are fully immersed in the project. Especially if your organization does not do its own website development or database building, it is extremely difficult to translate the lay person's language into interactive website language and back again. Make sure to budget more time than you think you'll need for this aspect of future projects.

Market manager communication, which was critical for this project with partnered with independent farmers' market managers, also takes significant amount of time and effort. With this project we worked hard to set out the expectations for each market in terms of their evaluation responsibilities and communication and still we spent a tremendous amount of time following up with managers and markets to get the bare minimum of data that we requested. Sometimes this was a result of market managers turning over, though more often this was because running a market is often a side job for market managers for few hours and little pay- so they don't have the capacity to follow through without significant handholding.

We learned over two years of on-line advertising that, especially in more rural areas like ours, there are real limits to how many people we can reach through on-line advertising. When we initiated our campaign we experimented with social targeting, that sent our ads to people interested in gardening for instance in addition to being in our target geography. However there were so few people in our region in these social categories that our first year of advertising stretched into late fall before we had received the amount of impressions that we had contracted. As a result the second year we choose to only do geographic targeting and were able to get our ads out in front of people in a timely manner.

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

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.

We plan on continuing to upgrade our on-line guide as we see it in action this year and we will continue to buy on-line advertising, which is a very efficient way of spending advertising dollars. Furthermore, we have developed a deeper relationship with the farmer's markets in our region and will work with them to identify additional needs they have that CISA either can support immediately or work to find future funding to implement.

- 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?

We are very pleased about the success of the loyalty rewards cards, though nervous about whether markets will continue to develop and print them without grant assistance. We will be looking for ways to support markets in developing and paying for specific tools for customer retention and attraction. In addition, markets expressed interest in other forms of group advertising, such as billboards.