

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market 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 LFPP 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 LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

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

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	October 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Susan G. Pronovost
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Recipient Organization Name:	Brass City Harvest, Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Waterbury Food Hub Planning & Design Project
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15LFPPCT0095
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Waterbury, Connecticut
Total Awarded Budget:	\$24,505.00

LFPP 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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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP 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.

i. Goal/Objective 1: Develop interior and exterior architectural design plan.

a. Progress Made: One hundred percent attainment of this goal.

b. Impact on Community: This organization and its project partner, the Waterbury Development Corporation, solicited proposals from local architects who were knowledgeable about Waterbury and who had a proven track record of successful projects in the area and who were previous municipal bidders in good standing. We selected the architectural firm of Ames & Whitaker Associates whose proposal addressed the scope of services we outlined and was on-budget. After several meetings, the firm tendered several interior and exterior renderings of our project developed in accordance with the contours of the land which lie along a major water course.

The architectural designs allowed us to tangibly communicate the project to the local community and to the agricultural community. The renderings facilitated further discussion and discernment as to the food hub as a destination, as an employer, and as a means to spur entrepreneurial activities by farmers who will seek to augment their farm revenue with new valued added product lines. The visual effect of an architectural rendering has proven invaluable in the planning of this food hub to be a group GAP facility and its importance to the medium-sized farmers of the State of Connecticut who have indicated their willingness to utilize this facility.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Conduct a market analysis and feasibility study that will be utilized in the development of a marketing plan for the Food Hub.

a. Progress Made: One hundred percent attainment of that goal.

b. Impact on Community: This organization and the Waterbury Development Corp., our major stakeholder partner, turned to Farm Credit East – a national financial institution that serves the needs of America’s agricultural community and who has become deeply invested in the development of food hubs around the country. Farm Credit East ACA developed a preliminary business and marketing plan as well as an intermediate plan based on the input of the local and agricultural community and other known factors that arose from the development of architectural renderings.

Separate from Farm Credit East, we hired an agricultural business development consultant who went out into the field and spoke one-on-one with farmers located border-to-border (north and south) and west to the New York board, east to the mid-point of the state, which is the Connecticut River. We developed brochures and surveys to determine what our farmers need or what services they are interested in and used their feedback to market the facility so that we can “check the boxes” of all of the basic needs for GAP wash,

aggregation/distribution, wholesaling, and value-added food chain related items.

Information returned from the farmers that we met with and/or surveyed provided some interesting results: 100% of the farmers were interested in finding new wholesale and retail markets for their produce – preferable to institutions, school systems, and out-of-state end users. Most farms lack the business development staff required to organically grow business networks that would facilitate these new markets. They need a place to bring (or wholesale) their produce so that it finds its way to new markets. More than 75% of the farms we surveyed were interested in value-added product development for their excess crops. Some farmers did not realize the potential of the development of this secondary revenue source and because they lack on-farm facilities, have never embraced the concept in their business plan.

The GAP wash bay was the most controversial item that required much explanation from Brass City Harvest staff and our consultant because the local farming community clearly does not have a firm grasp of new rules under the Federal Food Safety Modernization Act and GAP principles. There is much more outreach and education to be conducted in Connecticut. Many farms have tried to go it “alone”; sadly, one-by-one, farms are not passing GAP audits because the farm owners and managers have greatly underestimated the amount of paperwork [record keeping] and on-farm capital improvements required to achieve GAP certification. The information gleaned from surveys and direct interviews points to the need that this facility should be developed with Group GAP in mind so that the costs, resources, and knowledge can be shared amongst the group members. Our state’s agricultural producers will not be able to attain new markets without meeting the most rudimentary regulations under GAP. As an example, USDA requires GAP certified produce when used in farm-to-school initiatives; hence it is vital to assist them in attaining that status through our wash bay and Group GAP so that they can reach new markets.

- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Retain a business development consultant to identify demand and build upon food chain supply and capacity by recruiting partner farmers, tenants, and entrepreneurs to develop on-site businesses related to food and food distribution.
 - a. Progress Made: One hundred percent attainment of this goal.
 - b. Impact on Community: The agricultural community will be the largest beneficiary of this project. This organization and our project partner, the Waterbury Development Corp, solicited a local agricultural expert who is extremely familiar with most of our state’s agricultural producers. Our business development consultant has made contact, surveyed, and received letters of interest from many farmers within a 25-30 minute driving distance from the proposed food hub.

In his travels he uncovered more farms than we were aware existed – many of these farms are run by new farmers who have either left mainstream employment or who are still employed at least part time in the private sector. Many others were “gentleman’s farms”. No matter the size, our proposed

facility can address the needs of all producers who are seeking to either wholesale, find new markets, or create new value-added products from their harvest. The beginning farmers we have reached are well versed on agricultural issues and are anxiously seeking new markets for their produce and they are keenly aware of GAP and FSMA requirements (more so than older generation farmers). These younger entrepreneurial farmers are much more open to the development of new product lines and/or to enhance their on-farm CSA by contributing to a new entrepreneurial CSA veggie-box program that this organization has identified as being a potential program that will realize a substantial income source.

Our business development consultant also made some networking visits with food truck operators whose need for leased commercial kitchen space are quite intense because local health regulations are quite strict and thus can hamper their development. Many of these food truck operators are seeking fresh, locally sourced food so that they may appeal to health-conscious consumers who demand to know where their food has come from and if its organic or GMO-free. This is a potential new market for our producers that were uncovered during the business development stage that we had previously not considered.

The business development under this grant-funded planning project has taken on a life of its own and continues to evolve organically with existing staff.

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, 2015). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: Not applicable as this was a planning grant.
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: Not applicable.
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Not applicable.
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: Not applicable.
 - v. Number of new markets established: Not applicable.
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$ and increased by %. Not applicable.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Not applicable.
 - a. Percent Increase: Not applicable.

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 future customer base was engaged during this planning process as we made outreach to the local Hispanic Coalition which represents the majority of the South End Neighborhood's residents. The Hispanic Coalition provided suggestions and public commentary that would make the final project more appealing to their culture and the Coalition advised us as to the types of culturally appropriate food, venues, etc. that would be appealing to that future customer base.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners?

Our community partners are the Waterbury Development Corporation, Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury, and Loyola Development Corporation. The latter two community partners are new partners and are also the remaining stakeholder service organizations in the South End Neighborhood of Waterbury, where this project is being proposed. The Waterbury Development Corporation is the City of Waterbury's quasi economic development arm that also oversees the distribution of U.S. Housing & Urban Development Agency funds that are utilized to provide basic services and support of non-profit community organizations and neighborhood revitalization. The Waterbury Development Corporation is continuing to work with this organization to further the efforts of the construction of the Waterbury Food Hub by leveraging state and federal funding to provide a neighborhood assessment, environmental assessment, and restoration of the area's natural habitat that will lead to increased green space and access to a nearby river.

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

The Waterbury Development Corporation has provided us with technical assistance and oversight of vetting procedures and contract awards for consultants covered under this contract award. The Waterbury Development Corporation has also secured leveraged state funding that has allowed for focused attention, planning, and brownfield remediation to the Mad River Corridor which is the subject property for our proposed food hub.

The Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury is the neighborhood stakeholder organization that addresses the basic needs and cultural development of the largely Hispanic and Latino population of the target neighborhood. They have assisted us in visioning a facility that will become a destination and create an access portal to fresh, locally sourced food that currently does not exist in that neighborhood. Loyola Development Corporation is a Community Housing Development Corporation that is restoring old housing stock and creating new family housing to repopulate the neighborhood surrounding the proposed food hub with new families that will help to rebuild the neighborhood.

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

It is essential to gather community support – both locally and within the agricultural community – in order to develop business networks and cultivate a base of future patrons and clients. The community around this proposed food hub is in desperate need of economic stimulus, jobs, and redevelopment. The culture of the neighborhood must be infused into the project because it will ultimately be a destination that will be welcoming to all people – especially in terms of the on-site entrepreneurial activities as they relate to the farmers' market and café. The cultivation of local support and community partnerships will only enhance business relationships throughout the community and give our state's farmers new markets for their produce. These partnerships are also vital towards the attainment of leveraged funding sources to enable development, growth, and sustainability of the food hub as it expands its economic footprint, agricultural and entrepreneurial development, and community

outreach.

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

This organization did utilize contractor services for business plan development, business development with agricultural producers and potential wholesale customers, and finance and fund development to maintain the sustainability of the project – both in the construction phase and beyond. The work that the contractors provided to this LFPP project was invaluable in that it helped this organization to realize potential new funding and business streams, and to make outreach with the state’s agricultural producers and identify their needs for this facility.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*
- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?
- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

*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).

We have not publicized our results yet because we are still compiling data as part of a leveraged grant from the State of Connecticut that directly impacts the work done under the LFPP. We have reached three solid stakeholders and approximately two dozen area farmers who have enough crop variety and acreage to make their engagement with our food hub financially viable for them (and us). While not a stakeholder, we garnered partnership with the City of Waterbury’s Department of Education – specifically the food service division. The Waterbury Board of Education purchases approximately \$1 million in fresh food for its 20,000 students each school year and they are looking to fulfill their fresh food requirements utilizing a local entity such as this food hub.

We hope to publish our results by October 30, 2016 which we estimate will conclude all planning activities that have been funded by outside leveraged sources.

This organization did develop a simple brochure and grower survey that will be appended to this report.

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 did not collect feedback from the community and stakeholders per se, but rather held community meetings with the neighborhood, stakeholders, and elected officials twice within the grant’s time period to discuss the food hub, it’s economic and labor impact, and its redevelopment aspects.

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

The feedback from the neighborhood has been consistent: 1) we need jobs and 2) we need this project for our South End Neighborhood. We have found that residents are tired of empty promises of job creation for manufacturing or retail that never seems to come to fruition in Waterbury. Food is universal and we all need to become healthier through increased access to fresh food. Expansion of the food chain has been viewed by the community as an attainable goal that can improve the health of the local community and the state's agricultural sector.

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP 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:
- 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? Not applicable.

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).

Positive experiences were working with the community (both the local and the agricultural) and engaging as many interested parties as possible in order to cultivate future bases for business and patronage. One of the most rewarding experiences has been to uncover so many start-up farmers who have smaller tracts of land but in a state the size of Connecticut, every farmer is a contributing member to the agricultural community and to the state's economy and they should not be overlooked. As stated earlier in this narrative, it was far more productive to make outreach to younger farmers than to older generation "nutmeggers" who have carried on their business and all of their practices for dozens of years.

The largest negative experience we've had is convincing some of the older farmers the need to diversify their product lines and create new value-added products. We are most especially concerned that the "message" about the new food safety guidelines either hasn't made its way down to farmers or they have just turned a deaf ear to that message. We have been quite turned off by the way some of the packing houses are operated and apparently the risk of food borne illness isn't a high priority issue for some of our farmers. There has to be more one-on-one field work in educating farmers as to the new GAP and FSMA rules and the consequences if the Department of Consumer Protection or other inspectors make a surprise farm visit to find so many non-compliant issues.

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

- 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:

The greatest lessons or helpful advice that we can offer is to: 1) always be transparent and 2) communicate with the local community including elected officials and stakeholders. Everyone must be “on the same page”. The development of a food hub is not a singular activity; it takes a team of devoted people whose actions must be embraced by the community or else, “you can build it, but they won’t come”. In these days of economic cutbacks, no one can afford to build a “field of dreams” unless there is community support and demonstrated support for agricultural producers and entrepreneurs.

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.

The work of this project is being continued thanks to leveraged funding and new funding proposals, as well as existing outreach efforts in the local and the agricultural community by Brass City Harvest staff. The results of the project’s work has enabled us to coalesce the project stakeholders and we are continuing conversations that center around cultural inclusion, improving access to fresh food, healthy cooking and nutrition program expansion, and cultural events that will take place at the Waterbury Food Hub. The City of Waterbury has moved forward to control all of the land required for the construction of this facility and has received funding for environmental assessment, habitat restoration, and environmental engineering so that the project may move forward.

The ultimate construction of this facility will forever change the life of the surrounding neighborhood. This redevelopment project is an essential linkage between stakeholders and it bridges an all-important fresh food access point into a food dessert community. It will be a place to offer vocational development for public school students, an employer for local citizens, and it will be a game-changer for agriculture in the State of Connecticut but opening up new revenue streams and wholesale/retail customers to our state’s growers.

- 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 working on our future activities as of this writing. Those activities include the development of school and institution based business networks with whom we can partner with to provide fresh, local produce through wholesale sales. The fresh food needs of the local school system (20,000 students) are being assessed, as are those of both local hospitals, private schools, and colleges. We are expanding our networking to other food hubs both existing and planned in the Boston-to-New York corridor.

Securing construction funding is a primary activity that we are actively engaged in. We are continuing to meet with experts in the field of bio-hazard controls in the food processing industry so that our project will ultimately be constructed as a model facility that will be inclusive of all precautions and food safety infrastructure to prevent contamination and the spread of food borne illness in our processed food products.