

**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, 2015 – December 31, 2017
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Recipient Organization Name:	Northern Iowa River Greenbelt DBA Healthy Harvest of North Iowa
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Developing and Expanding Tools for Direct to Consumer Marketing in North Iowa
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15FMPPIA0040
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Belmond, IA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$61,136.00

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: Jan Libbey; Email: libbey.jan@gmail.com; Phone: 515-851-1690

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1. 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.
 - i. **Goal 1: Increase visibility and marketing opportunities of local food producers in North Iowa by expanding and perfecting our set of marketing tools.**

Objective 1-1: Expand our “Faces of North Iowa” Producer profile project by creating 20 additional profiles, to add to the 9 profiles that were completed in 2013.

- a. **Progress Made:** Eighteen producer profiles were completed and distributed to the producers. Each profile included digital files from the professional photo session and printed marketing materials which were chosen by the producers. Printed materials included a combination (chosen by the producer) of all- weather signs (printed on corrugated plastic), posters, postcards, business cards and/or a banner. (Note: 2 producers opted out in 2017 and there was insufficient time to fill those vacancies.)
- b. **Impact on Community:** Eighteen producer in North Iowa have new marketing materials by which to tell the story of their farms. A post project survey was conducted to evaluate the impact of this project and the use of the materials. The full extent of the value of these materials is difficult to evaluate partly because the producers have only started using the materials and also because it’s difficult to know if changes in farm sales were directly related to marketing materials or some other factor. However, based on the survey, half of the respondents indicate that they feel the printed materials helped them increase their sales in 2017 and 89% of the respondents indicated that they anticipate using the materials for many years to come. Almost 70 % said the materials are valuable to their marketing plan and uses have included meeting/conferences, website/social media, farmers markets, parade float, on farm signage, newsletters and other printed materials. Healthy Harvest (HH) has also been using the photos on our website, Facebook and printed materials to promote the purchase of local food, and many of the photos have been incorporated into the redesign of the Healthy Harvest website.

Objective 1-2: YouTube Video

- **Progress Made:** A five minute video was created which highlights the value of the local food system in North Iowa. The video can be shown as one continuous video and has also been cut into five sections featuring economy, community, family, health and future opportunities.
 - **Impact on Community:** The video has and will be used to share the importance of local food with partner organizations and the five component videos will be used to target audiences who are focused on those topical areas and on social media. The video is a succinct way to give our partners (and the general public) an introduction to the value of local food. These videos will greatly improve our ability to share this message.
- ii. **Goal #2: Provide technical assistance to improve and expand agri-tourism events across the Healthy Harvest region.**

Objective 2-1: Develop “Best Practice Manual” for Farm to Fork Community Dinners and Fresh on the Farm Tours to be used when expanding into new communities.

- a. **Progress Made:** The final manuals have been completed and were used to help coach new agri-tourism communities in 2017.

- b. **Impact on Community:** The manuals will provide a resource for new communities to plan agri-tourism events. They will provide needed guidance and checklists to help a local committee take ownership of the event, allowing Healthy Harvest Staff more time to reach out to new communities. The manuals are available on the HH website and have been shared with the Iowa Region Food System Working Group (RFSWG).

Objective 2-2: Add TWO additional agri-tourism events each year, for a total of four new events during the project period.

- a. **Progress Made:** Two new events were held in 2016 - Floyd County (Charles City) Farm to Fork and Franklin County (Hampton) "A Taste of Franklin County". In 2017 three new events were held, Hancock County Fresh on the Farm, Mitchell County (Osage) Farm to Fork, and Worth County (Northwood) Farm to Fork.
- b. **Impact on Community:** New agri-tourism events help to stimulate community involvement in the local food system and are great education tools for introducing local food growers to buyers and customers. These events have proven to increase awareness about where and how to find local foods, stimulate interest and participation in farmers markets, as well as, improving support for and interest in community and school gardens. Specifically, the visibility of local food has risen to the point that the North Iowa Corridor, Economic Development Corp. has been asking for input into their Vision North Iowa initiative and has been sending a representative to our North Iowa Local Food Coalition meetings and Supply Chain Development Project Team. A vibrant local food scene has been identified as a community feature that residents and potential residents value.

Objective 2-3: Continue to support current agri-tourism events which are entering their second or third years. (Note: We supported all existing events including those in their third and fourth year)

- a. **Progress Made:** We supported five existing events: Franklin County Fresh on the Farm (4th annual) and Clear Lake Community Farm to Fork (3rd annual) held event in 2016. Floyd County (Charles City) Farm to Fork (2nd annual), Franklin County (Hampton) Restaurant Crawl (2nd annual, previously called "A taste of Franklin County") and Clear Lake Community Farm to Fork (4th annual) in 2017.
- b. **Impact on Community:** All of these events have impacted projects or programs beyond the event itself. Farm to Fork and Fresh on the Farm events are tangible activities that are make it easy for guests/consumers and restaurant buyers/chefs to understand the connection between local food, the community and economics. We have found that some events start the conversation that then leads to other local food activities (i.e. Clear Lake's and Mason City's farmers market revitalizations), but in some communities the event becomes a tradition (i.e. Clear Lake's 4th annual Farm to Fork was held in 2017). All of the increased local food visibility and recognition of from these events undoubtedly leads to increased local food purchase at restaurants, grocery stores and farmers markets.

iii. Goal #3: Redesign Healthy Harvest's marketing tools and strategies in order to improve producer and consumer awareness and access to information regarding local food.

Objective 3-1: Create a marketing plan, for online and offline media, in order to promote local producers and local food activity.

- a. **Progress Made:** Helen Randal, marketing consultant with HKR Marketing provided us with a marketing plan report entitled "Charting a Course for Marketing of Healthy Harvest and Partner Groups".

- b. **Impact on Community:** Working with Helen really expedited Healthy Harvest’s ability to help producers find market opportunities. She provided valuable input and perspective that has helped us clarify our materials to make them more user-friendly for our producers and local food consumers. Her recommendations have been used when developing our newsletters, website, brochures, etc. One of the marketing strategies outlined in the plan was to “host an annual event”. This spurred us to coordinate the first annual local food “Gathering” on February 24, 2018 to increase general local food awareness and appreciation and to educate people (producers, buyers and the general public) about the local food activity in North Iowa and how they can become connected. This event was designed by a team of partners, showcased all that is going on in North Iowa’s local food movement, and was very well received. Planning partners are already meeting to begin planning for the 2019 Gathering. (Note: Funding for the event was from other sources.)

Objective 3-2: Develop a pilot “Healthy Harvest Bucks” program based on similar established “farmers market coupon” programs in North East Iowa and Wisconsin.

- a. **Progress Made:** The pilot project was conducted from September 22-October 28, 2016. Forty-two (42) employees from POET Biorefining of Hanlontown participated. POET purchased \$25 of Healthy Harvest Bucks for each employee. Employees were able to shop at two participating farmers markets over a 5 week period (15 shopping opportunities). A post pilot survey was conducted and 1 page summary of the program has been developed. This document has and will be used to share the details of the program with partners (via our website and the RFSWG) and potentially to expand the project to additional businesses.
- b. **Impact on Community:** This project proved to be successful at educating customers about the dates and locations of the participating markets and encouraging new customers to shop at markets. The Supervisor at the participating business (POET of Hantlontown) was very complementary of the program and received positive feedback from his employees.

Objective 3-3: Update the Healthy Harvest website to improve the usability of the site and its links to local food related resources.

- a. **Progress Made:** The website redesign has been completed.
 - b. **Impact on Community:** The improved look and ease of access of the re-designed website will help us to better share the resources that we can provide to both producers and consumers. We have incorporated many of the great photos that were collected through the Producer Profile Project. We were also able to incorporate a number of points made through our consultation with Hellen Randall, our marketing consultant, in the website design.
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: Two (2) part time Healthy Harvest Staff (Note: Job creation and retention was not one of the goals of this project.)
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: One (1) part time Healthy Harvest Staff, consulting hours for a marketing consultant, graphic design artists, web designer and photo/videographer
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: A student from the Hampton High School – Food & Consumer Science, who participated in the 2016 “Taste of Franklin County” event - was hired by one of the restaurants who participated in the event. Also indirectly we feel that the increased education and awareness about local food has had a hand in increasing consumer demand for locally sources food at restaurants which has

contributed to the opening of two farm to table restaurants in North Iowa (Fieldhouse, of Clear Lake and Cafe Mir, of Fertile). There have been numerous (10+) jobs created to work at those venues.

- iv. Number of markets expanded: Based on our post project survey of the producer profiles project, four of the eight producers who responded indicated that they feel that the materials helped increase their 2017 sales (50%). The local Food Hub (North Iowa Fresh) has seen a 300% increase in sale from 2016-2017 which may in part be due to the increased awareness generated by this project. The agritourism events involved 19 local food businesses in 2016 and 23 in 2017. Five farmers markets in North Iowa have seen growth over the project timeframe however it's difficult to attribute that solely to this project but the increased activity and public awareness likely had some impact.
 - v. Number of new markets established: Two (2) new farm to table restaurants opened in 2017 (Clear Lake and Fertile). The opening of these restaurants is not a sole result of our project however the increase local awareness has undoubtedly had an impact.
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$?? and increased by ??%. (Note: Our project was not focused on a specific market but rather a region and we do not have an accurate way of reporting on the regional local food sales. However, anecdotally there have been increased sales opportunities for local producers due to the farm to fork events, growth of the local farmers markets and opening of the farm to table restaurants.)
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Eighteen (18) in the Producer Profile Project and 84 (30 in 2016, 54 in 2017) in the agri-tourism events, for a total of 102. Note: Some producers may overlap with both years of events or with the profiles so this is the total of times producers directly benefited from the project. Actual number of unique producers who benefited is approximately 70.
 - a. Percent Increase: With the addition of 18 new profiles we saw a 180% increase from our previous producer profile project. With the addition on 5 new agri-tourism events over the two year project period we have seen greater than a 100% increase in communities who have hosted events.
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?
- The 2016 Taste of Franklin County: 12 of the 16 of the students involved in this event were Latino students and one of the restaurants is owned by Latino family. In 2017 Hispanic students also participated and an offer was made by the Mexican restaurants to allow students to job shadow when they are ready.
 - The farm to fork events, in all three communities, reached new restaurants/businesses and new guests/consumers. Over the course of the project approximately 11 food businesses (6 in 2016 and 7 in 2017) participated in these event who had not participated in any of the past events in the region. There were also other businesses who participated i.e. local flower growers, county extension offices and farm bureau.
4. Discuss your community partnerships.
- i. Who are your community partners?
 - Agri-tourism event planning committees are made up of employees from the city, chambers of commerce, Iowa State University Extension, Farm Bureau, farmers market vendors (food and flowers), restaurants and other local businesses, producers and volunteer community members.

- Five of the events (3 in 2016 and 2 in 2017) also involved students as food preparers, wait staff and/or musical entertainment.
 - We have also been working with the North Iowa Local Food Coalition on the Branding and Marketing of the local food message. This group consists of the One Vision (assists people with disabilities), ISU Extension and Outreach, North Iowa Fresh, LLC (food hub), producers, Ag Ventures Alliance (agri-business development company), Net Zro (waste reduction company), Cerro Gordo County Public Health, and the Agricultural Urbanism Toolkit (program through Iowa State University).
- ii. How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?
- Many have participated in meetings, local planning/execution of agri-tourism events and branding/marketing discussions.
- iii. How will they contribute to future results?
- They will continue to help with local events, fundraising and publicity and marketing of local producers and activities (specifically when we expand our marketing campaign).
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?
- We worked with two web design companies (Blue Compass and Blue Rock Designs), a photographer/videographer (Images Photography), a marketing consultant (HKR Communications & Marketing, Helen Randal), and a graphic design intern from Waldorf Collage (Shannon Clark). As a result we have a redesigned website, photographs and printed marketing materials for eighteen producers, a five minute video about the value of local food and a marketing plan.
6. Have you publicized any results yet?*
- i. Yes, 18 Producer Profiles have been printed and distributed to producers. The HH Bucks summary report and two agritourism manuals are completed and have been distributed to other Iowa local food coordinators through the Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG). These documents are also available on the Healthy Harvest website.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? Regional Food System working group, North Iowa Local Food Coalition, Healthy Harvest website (www.healthyharvestni.com) and Facebook.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? We have shared our materials with 328 Iowa local food leaders via the RFSWG network and have 815 Facebook followers and 36 producers who chose to be listed in our 2017 local food guide.
- *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. We have collected pre and post-project surveys for the Producer Profile Project and the Healthy Harvest Bucks Pilot Project. We have collected data about each of the agritourism events which were held in 2016 and 2017 (i.e. number of attendees, food preparers, producers, partners and narrative comments).
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
 - a. Producer Profile Project** (based on pre and post project survey of the 18 producers – 9 who replied to the post program survey):

- a. The average rating for the quality of the profile materials was 9.2/10.
- b. 7/9 of the producers who answered the survey said they would very likely recommend the project to other producers
- c. Producer statements related to the printed materials included:
 - “very happy with the quality and design of the banner we received”
 - “very satisfied”
 - “very professionally done, they look really nice, thank you”
 - “very nice quality”
 - “worked well”
 - “Nice advertising materials that we hadn't thought of before”
- d. When asked to explain how the materials have impacted their farm they gave these responses:
 - “The materials are so nice and professional that people seem to remember my business more because of them”
 - “Banner displayed at farm. More customers know our location”
 - “They have helped us get a standard format for all our product images and also given us great images to update the website as well as provide us with an informational sheet to hand out”
 - “put a face with the name and our business... and then engage in conversation”
 - “Very easy to use & distribute to our customers”

b. Video – the video was just shown for the first time on February 24, 2018 but overall it was well received. Some of our partners have expressed how versatile the video is for different audiences and have indicated their interest in using the smaller segments of the video.

c. Agritourism Events

- 2016 Taste of Franklin County: Restaurants were very pleased with the event and would gladly participate again. The high school teacher and two members of the Chamber also echoed positive response to the event. The culinary arts teacher said – “it was a great experience - real life, hands-on for her students”. She said the students still talk about it now and again.
- 2016 Floyd County Farm to Fork: Many people were asking to buy tickets for next year, including some who missed the event.
- 2017 Franklin County Restaurant Crawl: One of the restaurant contacted claims he'd be interested in sourcing local produce on a more regular basis.
- 2017 Mitchel County Farm to Fork: Everyone was raving about the event, and in the wrap-up, we struggled to think of one thing that we would have done differently. All was perfect.
- 2017 Clear Lake Area Farm to Fork: One table of attendees indicated that they were following the events on line and had already attended two other events in north Iowa. They said how much they enjoyed them all.

d. Healthy Harvest Bucks Program (based on pre and post project survey of the customers and a post project survey of the farmers market vendors – details of the survey are available on the one page HH Bucks Pilot Project Overview):

- Both customer and vendors indicated that they valued the program
- Customers reported increased in local purchases, increased attendance at farmers markets and 77% cited increased awareness of local food.
- Vendors gained sales and new customers.

- Some specific comments from the participants included (18 responded to post-survey)
 - "I appreciate the effort POET Hanlontown has spent on helping team members have access to healthy foods. Locally produced food is an added bonus. Thank you to those who worked to pull this together and I hope will continue."
 - "Thank you for the opportunity to let us participate in the program. My Grandma and Grandpa used to participate in a few markets in the area. I have not been to one for a very long time. I always enjoy going, great food options, and brings back lots of memories. Thank you again for all your hard work with this program!"
 - "Enjoyed very much spending the bucks and talking to the vendors."
- Some specific comments from the vendors included:
 - "Thanks for everything that is being done to create more customer traffic at North Iowa Farmers Market!"
 - "Your advertising for the market has been great."
 - "Open it up to a wider range of people." (referring to more bucks being available to additional employers)

e. Website redesign – the website redesign was just launched at the end of December 2017 but based on Google Analytics it appears that there has been approximately a 20-25% increase in unique page views when comparing January 2017 to January 2018 (3066/4180). We have also received positive comments about the new design and layout, and how user friendly it is. Facebook likes have increased by almost 30% between March 2016-March 2018 (568/815).

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:
- ii. 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? \$760 in project income was generated by this project. As part of the Producer Profile Project each producer was asked to contribute \$40. The program income was used to fund additional personnel hours related to completing the objectives of the project.

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).
 - a. **Producer Profile Project:** Overall project was very successful. Most of the producers stated that they gained valuable marketing resources to help their business and would recommend the project to other producers. However, it took longer than expected to get producers to commit to the project (send in the paperwork to qualify for the project) and scheduling the best time to showcase a farm (when the photographer could only visit each farm once) proved difficult. A couple of producers stated some dissatisfaction and in both cases it was related to the time or day or time of year that the pictures were taken. It's very important to be very clear with the producers that they should pick a time that they think will best showcase their products.

- b. **Video:** Creating a video is harder than it sounds. Be sure to hire a video company that experience in the type of video you want to produce and be very clear about what message you want portray before you start any filming.
 - c. **Agritourism Events:** Agritourism events are a great way to introduce a new community (and partners) to local foods and give them a tangible event to participate in. "Select" a committee that has a good diversity of interests represented and skills i.e. marketing/sales connections, connections to food businesses, connections to producers, schools/culinary programs etc.
 - d. **Healthy Harvest Bucks:** Pilot went well. Things to consider for future replication of the project included:
 - Use good quality paper and size to fit into billfold.
 - Number bucks sequentially or color by business?
 - It was hoped that \$1 denominations would avoid the need to make change but some vendors reported small purchases & felt the change was "pocketed", so perhaps don't allow change.
 - Provide adequate education to the vendors about the program and products that can be purchases because there are other voucher programs with different rules which causes confusion.
 - e. **Website:** We had a great deal of difficulty finding a web designer who was in line with our vision for the re-design and could work within our budget. Web design work is quite time consuming and expensive. In the end we are very happy with the outcome but it was a long path.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
- In general all the goals and outcomes of the project were achieved. We ended up with two fewer Producer Profiles than expected and only one video but the materials and video that we do have are adequate to meet the objective.
 - Related to evaluating the success of the project, it very important to be clear on the plan for collecting the data and think about it before you begin the project. We could have benefited by including some funding in the budget to work with a metrics specialist, or evaluator, who knows how to design surveys to get the information that is desired.
 - Marketing projects are expensive, but crucial to the growth of any project, market or business.
 - Be flexible when working with partners, as sometimes needs or personal situations can change. However, do not be too flexible, as the goal of the project should remain primary.
- 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:
- Start earlier than you think is necessary. Everything takes longer than expected.
 - If you need feedback or responses from anyone be sure to set a deadline for when you need the information, and expect delays.
 - While working with a design student/intern is a great way to include new partners and give experience to the student, understand that they are just learning and be sure to have a good working relationship with the advisor as well.

- Find examples of styles that you like, and supply those to contractors who are doing creative work. This will allow them to get an idea of what you are looking for.
- It is tricky to schedule photo shoots when farms are filled with products, because that is also when the farmers are most busy. If you do attempt it, have a clear plan for what shots you are capturing, and supply those to all in advance to ensure the most productive use of time possible.

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.
 - a. The producer profiles will continue to help the producers to market their products which will undoubtedly lead to increased sales and market opportunities. The photos will continue to be used in our marketing, improving the quality of our image and brand for years to come.
 - b. The marketing plan, improved website and video will be used to share the importance of local food with other partners and will help us to launch a local food awareness campaign which is being worked on within our Local Food Coalition.
 - c. The agritourism manual have already been used and will continue being used to plan future events in North Iowa and are available on the HH website for other partners to use. We have shared the links with our RFSWG. These documents will make it easier for communities to organize an event and start the conversation about local foods.
 - d. The video will be used to convey the important impacts of local food system work, inspiring various partnerships to develop and engaging new community members in the work. The shorter versions will allow us to quickly target diverse audiences by connecting to their values.
 - e. The relationships built through our agri-tourism events will continue to be strengthened through continued programing, improving the awareness of local food across N. Iowa.
- 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?
 - a. It would be great if the market bucks program could be expanded, possibly partnering with a health care organization to link it to lifestyle changes and healthy eating habits.
 - b. Much more work could be done at farmers markets, specifically related to breaking down the barriers/preconceptions about markets (i.e it's too expensive, unsure of location/hours, use of EBT etc.). A program to encourage new customers to attend markets would be advantageous.
 - c. We want to bring the agri-tourism events to the farmers' markets by hosting a farm-to-fork dinner after market one day and having cultural celebrations at the market that bring in new audiences and demographics to the market. This should include a community survey of what they would like to see at the farmers markets in regards to products and activities.
 - d. We'd like to continue to partner with communities to host farm-to-fork events and farm tours that encourage community members to be curious about what is going on in our local food system, and keep this conversation in the public eye.