

**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>	April 1, 2017- September 30, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Lee Swislow
Authorized Representative Phone:	617-523-6565
Authorized Representative Email:	fsgrants@tsne.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Third Sector New England, Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Third Sector New England, Inc. (on behalf of Gardening the Community) Farm to Mason Square Fresh Food Initiative
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-FMPP-MA-0100
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Springfield, MA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,902.00

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).

x Different individual: Name: Anne Richmond ; Email: anne@gardeningthecommunity.org; Phone: 413-693-5340 x2

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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. Objective: Increase by 40% from 300 to 450 the number of customers shopping at the City Soul Farmers Market, GTC Farm Stand and Mobile Market stops in Mason Square and by 45% from 55 to 80 the number of members of the GTC’s CSA program

- a. Progress Made: We have far exceeded our objective target in this area. Analyzing market transaction data and vendor estimates, Mason Square-based farm to consumer markets served approximately 574 families in 2017, a 91% increase over our 2015 baseline. We do not know the overlap between those served in 2016 and 2017. We can safely estimate we served at least 574 customers total over the 2 years and likely more than that, far exceeding our goal of 450 families.

We established 2 new markets - the City Soul Market which began in September 2016 and a new Winter Market, operated by City Soul and Gardening the Community, which developed out of our successful Winter CSA pilot in 2016/2017 and will run from December 2017 - March 2018.

In addition to these customers, another 80 families participated in GTC’s CSA program, thanks in part to the subsidized 12 week Farm Share we were able to offer 25 low income elders through partnerships with CISA, Springfield’s Dept. of Elder Affairs, and other generous individuals. We also added a monthly winter share option, piloted for 13 families during the 2016/2017 winter season which is continuing this year.

A total of 11 farmers benefited from the markets, farm stand and CSA program, selling \$72,011 worth of produce (vegetables and fruits) in 2017 or \$129,285 in sales over 2016 and 2017 combined. Sales in 2017 were \$14,737 higher than in 2016, which is a growth of 26%, similar to the growth from 2015 to 2016.

CSA participation remained the same as 2016 at 80 families, which was already a 45% growth over 2015 numbers. Thirteen of these families extended their participation by signing up for GTC’s new monthly winter share, which we are continuing this season.

b. Impact on Community: More residents know about local farm to consumer markets and are shopping there, purchasing more food overall. This will continue to drive numbers higher in subsequent years as many of our customers are driven by word of mouth. Especially for our CSA members who participate consistently for 12 – 20 weeks, we know this has substantial benefit on their eating habits which, in turn, benefits their health. Members and customers report eating more vegetables and a larger variety of vegetables thanks to the fresh, affordable food they are able to purchase.

The project has contributed significantly to the local farm economy. Over the course of the past 2 years we have had 11 farmers benefiting from the markets, farm stands and CSA with sales totaling \$129,285. This represents a 25% growth each year of the grant.

ii. Objective: Increase the purchases made by market customers through strengthening their knowledge about how to prepare and store locally grown, seasonal produce with a focus on important cultural foods and easy to make dishes popular with Mason Square area families

a. Progress Made: We compiled bilingual information on storing and preparing fresh vegetables, and have made it available online. This information is organized with photos of the vegetables so that those unfamiliar with vegetable/herb names can easily find information. This resource also includes information about the health benefits of the various vegetables, herbs and fruits, emphasizing the theme that food is medicine which ties into our efforts to promote eating real, locally grown food as the best option for good health.

We developed 4 colorful Fresh Prep recipes for market customers, featuring both common and less popular vegetables to give customers ideas for how to prepare fresh, tasty, healthy dishes. (Kale and fennel, tomatoes, onions, chili and garlic, spinach and strawberries, cucumbers and mint) We often distributed these hand in hand with tastings, so they could immediately try something new while shopping or picking up their vegetables. Perhaps most surprising was the popularity of the kale and fennel stir fry recipe! Kids loved it.

In addition to distributing recipes, each year of the grant we also ran 8 - 12 tastings on CSA distribution days, which were very popular and exposed share members to new tastes and ideas for fresh food preparation. These tastings, led by our youth or a community chef, created a community-building space where members would share recipes for foods and trade ideas about what they love to cook with their share. This builds customer loyalty and knowledge. CSA shares can often be very overwhelming for first time members; most of our members have never been part of a CSA before.

While we did 3 workshops on food preservation, we were not able to focus on this at the level we had hoped for. It is difficult to do food preservation workshops outside in a chaotic atmosphere where customers are there for short periods of time and where we had no electricity or sink. We did demonstrate how to make applesauce which was very popular, and we also did a workshop on making herb-based medicinal tonics. People loved the opportunity to talk about the medicinal power of herbs and food. We hope to do more with this theme in future years.

We implemented new data tracking systems which allowed us to better understand average purchase amount/transaction across several markets. Focusing in on food related transactions, we saw amounts increasing by over \$2/purchase from 2016 to 2017, or from an average of \$5.56 to \$7.76. When average purchase amount are low, \$2.20 is a very significant increase (40%) and we are very proud of this result.

We also did a lot of work to promote Mason Square based markets, using print media, social media, local radio shows, and in person presentations. All publicity emphasized the health benefits of eating fresh fruit and vegetables and the affordability of our markets.

b. Impact on Community: Customers loved the tastings/cooking demonstrations and free recipes. These attracted new customers to the CSA and markets and increased the purchases of both new and existing customers. It also gave customers ideas for how to cook seasonally and prepare and store seasonal produce for use during other times of the year.

We know that getting people to buy more fresh fruits and vegetables can lead to healthier eating habits which can reduce obesity and preventable chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, all of which run at higher than average levels in our community. Increased purchase amounts also increased sales for farmers, which helped to further strengthen the local farm economy.

iii. Objective: Increase the capacity of GTC and the City Soul Farmer's Market to lead and sustain local marketing, healthy cooking and food preservation efforts through building the knowledge of staff, GTC youth and board members and City Soul leadership

a. Progress Made: Capacity building for GTC and City Soul Market leaders happened throughout the 2 years of this grant. We increased our marketing knowledge and skills, including the use of social media, and, as a result, better understand its importance in getting the word out. We have experimented successfully with the use of Facebook live to promote the markets. We also strengthened our understanding of how best to set up market displays in a way that are attractive and that increase visibility.

We also provided Safeserv training for market staff, and did food safety trainings with youth workers as well, which has greatly increased our knowledge in this important area. We used the winter months to explore the nutritional value of various foods and organized workshops for staff and youth about pickling and the medicinal use of herbs.

b. Impact on Community: The community has been updated more frequently about local markets in ways that are accessible to them which has increased the number of customers shopping at our markets.

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: 1
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 3
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 1
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 3
 - v. Number of new markets established: 2 plus 6 pop-up markets

- vi. Market sales increased by \$21,011 and increased by 41%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 11
 - a. Percent Increase: 0% (3 farms stopped coming to the Saturday market when the market was abruptly cancelled in May of 2016. They made other commitments and did not rejoin the market when it opened in Sept. that year under new leadership.)

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?

We expanded our customer base through reaching additional low income/low access families living in the neighborhoods close to the markets. We saw an increase in the number of Latino families, thanks to the bilingual materials we developed. During the 2016 growing season we canvassed neighbors (door to door) and did street outreach as well as tabling at community events, distributing 2,000 bilingual flyers and door hangers listing market locations and hours. In addition, we posted flyers around the community, on phone poles and in local businesses. In 2017 we distributed bilingual flyers to 2,500 families through local elementary schools and daycares, and reached another 6,900 families through mailing out bilingual promotional flyers. We also canvassed neighbors and did street outreach.

Through these methods, social media, presentations and radio show appearances, we estimate that 15,000 consumers were exposed to messaging about farm fresh eating and benefits of locally grown food.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?

Our community partners are the Springfield Food Policy Council, Partners for a Healthier Community (PHC), the Go Fresh Mobile Market, the Healthy Hill Initiative, CISA (Community in Support of Sustainable Agriculture), the City of Springfield Department of Elder Affairs, and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA).

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

All partners have helped spread the word about local farm-to-consumer markets and distributed marketing materials to community residents within their networks. CISA provided technical assistance support for getting the City Soul market on-line and provided a doubling incentive for SNAP purchases during its first season. The Food Policy Council made the City Soul Market happen and served as market manager. DTA helped advertise local markets this past summer as part of its roll out of its very exciting Healthy Incentive Program which incentivizes families that use SNAP dollars to purchase directly from area farms. This has greatly increased the interest in shopping at local farms and farmers markets by families receiving SNAP.

The Healthy Hill Initiative built walking to farmers markets into their community engagement plan and fitness programs, with incentives offered to families. CISA and the Springfield Dept. of Elder Affairs provided funding to heavily discount farm shares

for 25 low-income elders for 12 weeks in 2016, with CISA continuing to offer a 6 week discount in 2017. We are exploring other sponsorships so we can continue to offer 12 weeks of discounted shares to those low-income elders who desire it in future years.

PHC provides support for the Go Fresh! Mobile Market which operated two market stops in Mason Square and has helped to raise awareness about the importance of eating fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. GTC serves on the leadership team of this effort.

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

All the above partners will continue to be involved in supporting and sustaining the growth of affordable and accessible farm to consumer outlets in Mason Square. We will continue to work with CISA on the elder share program and they will continue to provide us with marketing and market display technical assistance in 2018 through another grant we have obtained together.

We will also continue to partner with the Springfield Food Policy Council to support the next season of the City Soul Market and to create more staffing and marketing support for this new venture. DTA will continue to be a critical partner as they continue to roll out the Healthy Incentive Program to SNAP recipients and we work to get SNAP clients to shop with us in Mason Square. We will continue to be part of the collaborative that supports these efforts, and will share our experiences and lessons learned with other farmers. We will be speaking with the Dept. of Elder Affairs about how we might collaborate in the future.

We will continue to work with PHC and the leadership team of the Go Fresh Mobile Market to support the market continuing in future years, and working together to offer a range of coordinated farm to consumer options for Mason Square families.

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

We used paid contractors for Spanish translation and to help design evaluation systems for the grant and mentor us in their implementation. The evaluation consultation has been critical to us developing tools and methods for tracking our progress and engaging our staff and youth team in the work. Being able to track and monitor our outcomes will enable us to be more effective. The Spanish language translation is essential to reaching Spanish-speaking market customers.

- 6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

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

We participated in two workshops at conferences organized by the Northeast Organic Farm Association/Mass. Chapter discussing our markets and work to build

community-supported locally controlled food resources. We shared our learnings about community engagement, marketing and outreach with other farmers and community members. We have also shared our resource materials about how to store and prepare the many vegetables, herbs and fruits on our website where they are free and accessible to anyone who wants them.

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results? Area farmers and community members.
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

At the NOFA conferences we reached 100 people and resources available on our website have been available to thousands. We have no way of knowing who has actually downloaded the information. We have also discussed our strategies and learnings in many forums including with the Leadership Team of the Go Fresh! Mobile Market, the Live Well Springfield Coalition, the Urban Agriculture Committee of the Springfield Food Policy Council, and at the Urban Farming Conference which happens each spring in Boston.

*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).

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

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

We collected data from 41 City Soul market customers through an end of season survey. We also conducted an evaluation with 38 members of GTC's CSA program. 100% of respondents stated that the amount and variety of fresh vegetables their family ate increased significantly due to their participation in the CSA or shopping at farmers markets..

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

We received some very positive feedback about the impact of the farmer's markets and GTC Farm Share/CSA program on customers' health as represented by the following quotes:

"I loved the whole experience. I ate healthier than ever in my life."

"Organic and local that is easily available and at a great price - what more could you ask for?"

"The produce is exceptional and the variety is amazing. I have learned to cook with so many new vegetables."

"This is a great way to both help the community and to get the best possible produce. A win for all! We love the involvement of so many youth in this program."

“This is a great way for people in the community to get fresh quality produce at a reasonable price.”

This story about one of the CSA members and market customers will give you a sense of the power of our work to strengthen farm to consumer markets for fresh, locally grown food:

Awilda Sanchez began buying her vegetables at Gardening the Community (GTC) four years ago when she was diabetic and nearly disabled by arthritis. She had suffered from diabetes for ten years as well as high blood pressure, resulting in her needing to take eight medications. She was in so much pain that she required the assistance of a cane when walking. She could not walk on her own to GTC’s Hancock St. Farm which is 5 blocks from her home. None of the stores or bodegas around her have fresh vegetables, and definitely not at an affordable price, leaving many people like her in Mason Square food insecure.

After Awilda learned about GTC, she signed up for our Farm Share program. She began having her weekly share of vegetables delivered to her home by bike. She also began attending GTC workshops, learning more about soil health and growing food. She changed her diet completely thanks to her access to fresh fruits and vegetables through GTC . Today, she is diabetes free, no longer has high blood pressure, and has lost 30 pounds. And she can easily walk to the GTC Hancock St. Farm herself!

Awilda has become an amazing ambassador for fresh, locally grown food and the food justice movement, telling everyone around her about the markets. When she sees someone in a similar situation as her own she tells them that “in order to improve your health you have to start with eating healthier!” She joined GTC’s Board of Directors and has played a leadership role in organizing GTC events. She helps lead her neighborhood council and is very active organizing for healthy food access, opportunities for physical activity and the development of more green spaces in her neighborhood.

5. 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: xx
- 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?

6. 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).

- Community building activities such as tastings and workshops draw people to markets and enliven CSA's, energizing people and sustaining their interest. Tastings and recipes focused on vegetables people may not be familiar with help customers try new things and take an interest in cooking more with fresh foods. Engaging youth in market administration and promotion is effective and builds community.
 - Educating families about the benefits of specific vegetables, fruits and herbs makes them more open to eating and preparing them.
 - Selling produce that is culturally relevant is essential and demonstrates respect for the community. Similarly hiring staff who are from the community and who are from the same cultural and racial background as the customers/members is critical to building trust and engagement.
 - Social media can be highly effective in creating a buzz about markets, even at the last minute. It's good to combine social media with some kind of print material and physical outreach (door knocking, presentations, tabling) because not one outreach strategy works for everyone. That said, we learned that an over-reliance on larger, more expensive print materials is not necessarily the best tactic to drive up interest. Less can be more. And relationship building, word of mouth and going directly to potential customers (ie with pop up markets) is key to everything.
 - It's very difficult when you do not have control of the site for your market - this created instability that delayed our ability to get marketing materials out in a timely way.
 - Customers prefer choosing their own vegetables rather than having pre-packaged Fresh Prep Kits put together for them. They liked the recipes but did not buy the kits. Focusing recipes on both culturally relevant foods (for example, fresh salsa) and on unfamiliar vegetables (such as fennel and kale) worked well.
 - For farming organizations like GTC, planning ahead to develop marketing materials during the off-season is critical
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
- Capacity issues among partner organizations can affect project work greatly and need to be explored as honestly and openly as possible before project implementation.
 - Securing market space far in advance is key.
 - Developing and designing bilingual written materials to share on-line or in print takes far more time than we had anticipated and requires dedicated staffing.
- 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:

- Do not underestimate the time, skills and resources needed to design and implement community-based surveying, especially during cold months

7. 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 will be integrated into the operations of both Gardening the Community and the City Soul Market. We will continue the most promising outreach strategies and build off of the marketing materials that were most effective and least expensive. We will continue to use the Fresh Prep recipes and develop additional ones for both cultural foods popular in our community and unfamiliar vegetables. Offering tastings will become a permanent feature for our CSA and will be integrated into other market venues as our staffing capacity permits.

The increased understanding about healthy and safe food preparation and social media marketing will continue to benefit all markets for years to come, as they have been well integrated into organizational practice. We will continue to grow our knowledge about food preservation through creative partnerships in future years.

We anticipate that sales both for GTC and the City Soul Market will continue to increase as we do this. GTC will also be opening a new, permanent Community Farm Stand on our new Walnut Street Farm site (which we own) in 2018, which will expand opportunities for families to purchase delicious, locally grown fruits and vegetables. We are developing a marketing and business plan for this venture during the winter and spring of 2018, which will be rolled out over the next 3 seasons.

We have successfully sought out 2 new grants to help replace the FMPP funding so that we can retain all positions supported under this grant, including the new position. We are also conducting stepped up donor campaigns to build our base of community support for this work.

- 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?

Continued funding of creative marketing and outreach strategies such as the ones we implemented is critical to building viable, community-based farm to consumer venues in urban areas such as the Mason Square neighborhood of Springfield.