

**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>	October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Elizabeth Ann Kernes Krause
Authorized Representative Phone:	800.993.2379
Authorized Representative Email:	am@nebraskafood.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Nebraska Food Cooperative Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	The Nebraska Food Cooperative: Strategic Marketing and Capacity Enhancements
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15FMPPNE0014
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Belgrade, NE
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99, 987

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

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

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0287. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable sex, marital status, or familial status, parental status religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

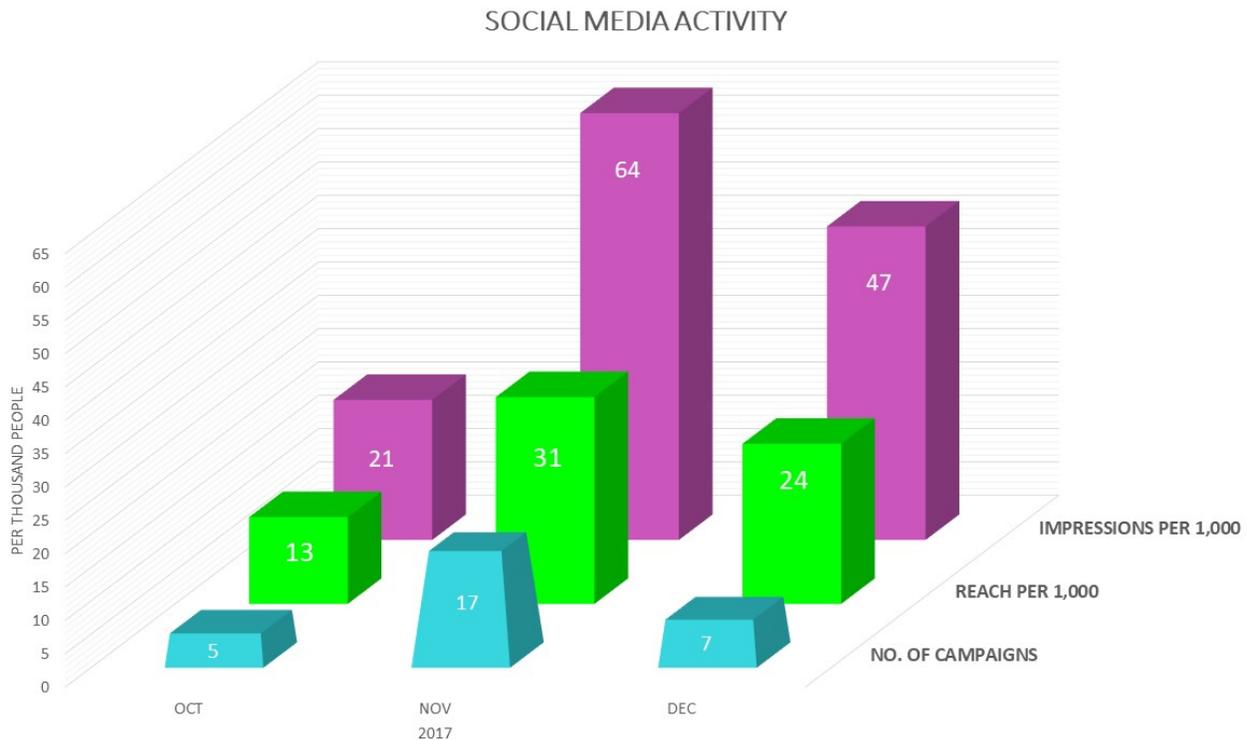
1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by FMPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional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

i. Goal/Objective 1: Expand Marketing and Outreach

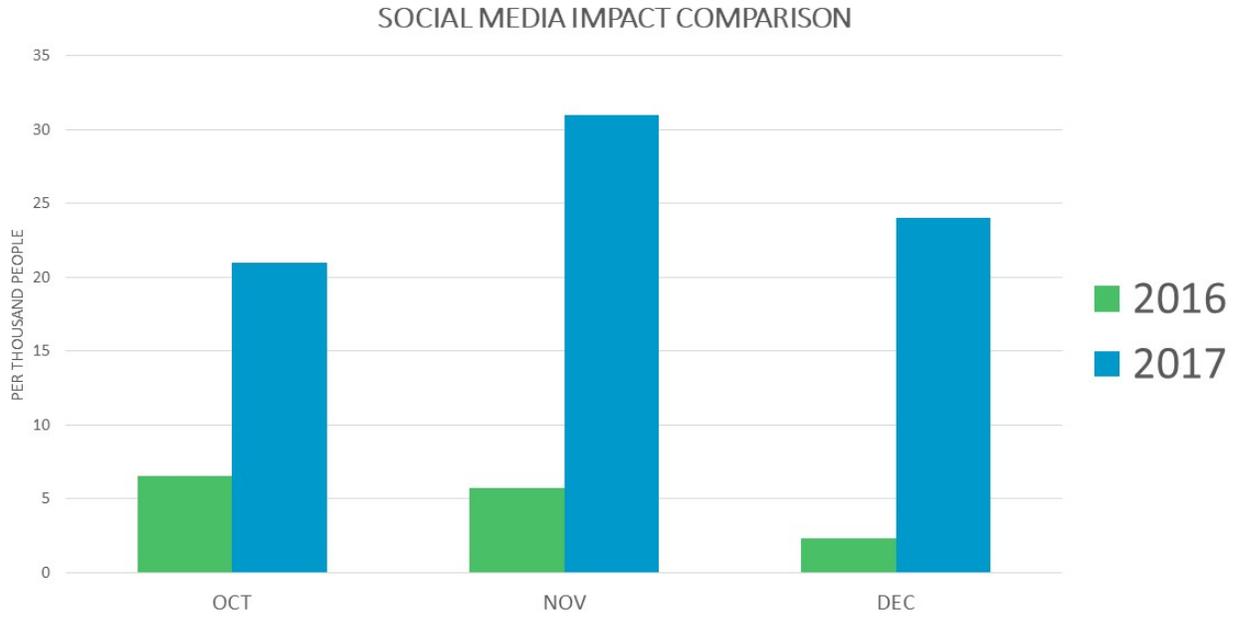
a. Progress Made: NFC attended 11 events over the grant period, targeting both potential producer-members and customer-members. We designed and purchased a custom retractable banner that shows the geographic distribution of both farmers and customer pickup locations around the state of Nebraska. We refreshed our cooperative’s logo and a producer-member took several high-quality photographs of a wide variety of products available from our producers, which we then integrated into promotional cards. Grant funds were used to purchase a case of the promotional cards from a local vendor and we distributed most of the cards during events and via member-farmers on their farms and at other events they attended. We purchased branded apparel for four drivers. We established advertising campaigns with radio (NET Nebraska) and print (Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska or BFBL), as well as expanded our online marketing through Facebook and the BFBL website.

b. New Consultant: We have engaged the services of a member who is a professional marketing consultant in October 2017. To date our spend is \$1,434.00 on Facebook and our reach for the period October 2017 to December 2017 exceeds 110,000 people.

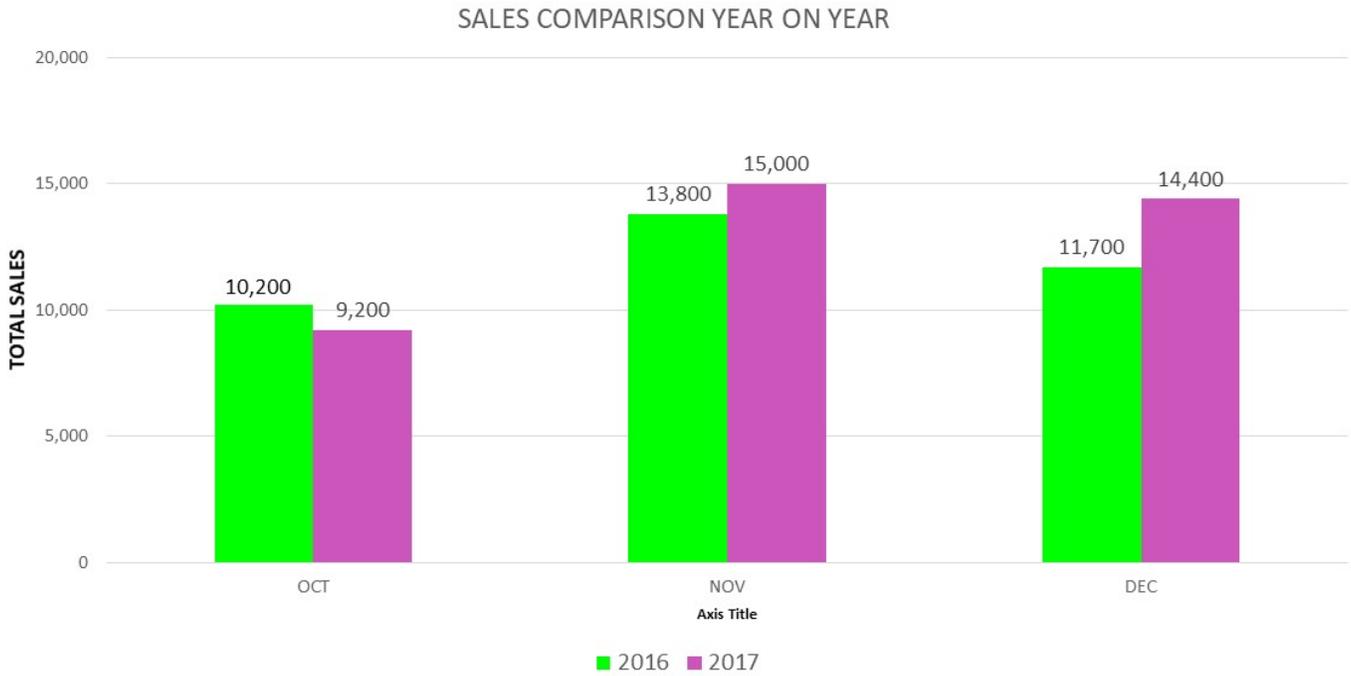
The following graphs show our impact over the last three months of 2017. We believe the hard social media drive helped us to bounce back after the various difficulties encountered over the past year.



A comparison of Social Media impact made during the same period in 2016 versus 2017 show significant growth, which we are continuing to push through to 2018.



This drive also impacted on our year on year sales figures for the same period.



Work began on producer videos. However, due to significant turnover in NFC's management over the grant period, this part of the project wasn't completed. Filming is in progress, with initial video release expected by mid-2018.

c. Impact on Community: We continue to add new members, both on the producer side, as well as the customer side. While Nebraska's population is based overwhelmingly in the far eastern area (Omaha and Lincoln), that population often has access to local food in other ways (farmers markets, grocery stores, CSAs, urban farms, etc.). Our customer-members in the non-metro communities often do not have a farmers' market or any other local food access. We continue to work with people in these communities to find a way to serve them.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Expand Retail Site Support

a. Progress Made: We leased and operated a 10' cargo van through the grant period. When the lease ended, we continued this additional route. This additional route has helped NFC ensure maintenance of the food's high quality while keeping driver hours within DOT requirements. Additionally, NFC retrofitted a delivery trailer to meet the upcoming Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) requirements.

b. Impact on Community: The additional vehicle and route has helped NFC ensure maintenance of the food's high quality while keeping driver hours within DOT requirements. The delivery trailer retrofit ensures compliance with FSMA requirements, so NFC can continue to provide local food to our distribution network.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Streamline Website Interface

a. Progress Made: Our website is now updated, upgraded and optimized for mobile devices. We integrated many changes and improvements for both customers and producers. This work included SEO improvements and changes to more closely reflect current industry standards for user expectations of e-commerce systems. We have also expanded our payments options to include Square, where supported. Additionally, we now have reserve ordering, which allows customers to 'order' more than current inventory allows, providing an opportunity for producers to sell additional quantities of products, if the items are available. We also added functionality to support use of "offsite" SMTP email, enhancing our marketing flexibility.

b. Impact on Community: Both our producer-members and customer-members now enjoy an up-to-date, fully functional website whether using a computer or a mobile device. This allows our producer-members to update their items in the field with their tablets or smartphones, rather than waiting to return to their computers. Customer-members can order as they wish from their mobile devices. Additionally, improvements provide more convenience, which has already been noted by both producer-members and customer-members alike.

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: 2
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 2
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 2
 - v. Number of new markets established: 1
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. *Please note that, due to suspension of operations for a 3-month period in 2017 (details in #9 below), we strongly believe this metric not a reliable measurement of grant performance. Therefore, we are choosing to not report these numbers, so we do not create misleading or false perceptions.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 35+
 - a. Percent Increase: -47% (However, we believe this metric is of questionable value, for the same reasons discussed in 2.vi above.)

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 have begun a partnership with No More Empty Pots, a “collaborative community centered food hub” and much more, located in Omaha. We are providing food for their Culinary Workforce Training Program and the Community Market Basket. The Community Market Basket program also allows NFC to support a program that accepts SNAP/EBT benefits. Even better, another Community Market Basket program partner doubles those benefits. Together, this partnership is getting fresh, local foods into the hands of low income/low access populations in Omaha!

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners? No More Empty Pots (NMEPs) in Omaha, Nebraska.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project? See #3 above
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project’s future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant? Our ongoing partnership provides a new market for producer-members, in addition to providing access to fresh, local food for NMEP’s Community Market Basket participants.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? NFC employed contractors for discrete tasks when specific expertise or skills could not be found within our cooperative. Their work directly supported this grant’s goals.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* No
 - 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).

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? Yes
- i. If so, how did you collect the information? Anecdotal (comments sent verbally or written)
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? The following few comments represent typical feedback:
 - a. From CB (customer-member): "Quite appreciate your availability and service to quality food industry."
 - b. From JM (customer-member), in response to an email from NFC leadership to members, thanking them for support: ". . . Not only that, but it just tastes better. Our turkey was delicious! Thank you for making out Thanksgiving Day special."
 - c. From BM (customer-member): "Located in western Nebraska, I have no source of lamb other than NFC. Thanks!"
 - d. From GM (customer-member), when NFC had to cancel a cycle due to significant technical issues: "rec'd your cancellation email - so sorry - missing my fresh, nongmo, organic eggs and my poultry, beef and oh so much more..."

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? Not directly.
 - 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):

During the grant period, NFC experienced significant leadership turnover and challenges, in addition to critical equipment breakdowns, causing extensive logistical disruptions and straining NFC's finances. As a result of the rapidly shrinking pool of members willing to assume responsibilities, NFC experienced personnel burnout which, exacerbated by normal employee turnover, resulted in suspension of operations for 3 months in 2017. However, this situation forced members to reexamine their level of commitment to both local foods in general and NFC in particular, giving rise to renewed dedication from many active members and fresh volunteers, as well. NFC has resumed deliveries and is in the process of developing plans to address the existing debt, in addition to growing our distribution network.

In addition to the internal challenges NFC faced, some of the partners with whom we planned to work were not able to continue our anticipated projects or ceased to exist altogether. While this delayed some work, we have been able to develop new partnerships as the opportunities arose, such as that with NMEP detailed above.

It continues to be very gratifying to provide access to fresh, local food to those communities in Nebraska that have limited, if any, access without the Nebraska Food Cooperative. It makes the hard work worth it!

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

It is difficult to recommend specific actions for addressing the particular challenges and issues NFC faced during this grant period. However, we strongly advise other groups develop “bench strength” in their leadership positions. Having depth in those positions would have helped us respond more quickly and efficiently as problems arose and may have prevented employee burnout, as well.

- 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:

Part of the challenges NFC has overcome is with grant administration. This author has never written a grant, let alone administered one. I would like to express my personal thanks to those at the USDA and other agencies who have helped me learn the ropes!

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.

Our ongoing partnership with NMEP is an exciting venture for us, providing both entities with the opportunity to bring fresh, local food to low income/low access populations in the Omaha metro area. This has long been a goal for NFC. As the partnership develops, we anticipate increased sales.

We continue to investigate opportunities for customer pickup locations in central and western Nebraska. Our Western Route driver is currently exploring options for deliveries in smaller communities along his established route and we are planning to open two new pickup locations in 1Q2018.

- 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?

As stated above, we continue to develop our distribution network and pursue partnerships, as opportunities arise. Our marketing, especially on social media, will continue to be a focus, including release of producer videos.