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: *(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)*	09/30/2015 – 12/31/17
Authorized Representative Name:	Thomas Knipe
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Recipient Organization Name:	Tompkins County
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Increasing Farm Sales through Agritourism
Grant Agreement Number: *(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)*	15FMPPNY0142
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Ithaca, NY
Total Awarded Budget:	$49,390

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: Kina Viola; Email: Kina@visitithaca.com ; Phone: 272-1313 ext 24

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: **Farm Assessments – Tourism Training and Readiness**

   a. **Progress Made**:

   Milestone 1 – (Feb. 2016) **Surveyed 50 farms** to determine their interest in agritourism; 29 respondents indicated they were engaged in agritourism or were interested in training and a farm assessment.
   Milestone 2 – (March 2016) Compiled a comprehensive list of farms in the area with an interest in agritoursim - **68 businesses identified who are engaged in agritourism or were interested in agritourism development.**
   Milestone 6 – Meetings with farmers to explain agritourism assessment process.
   Milestone 7 – 40 agritourism assessments (farm visits) – **actual number 41**
   Milestone 8 – Farmers were provided with suggestions on how to improve the visitor readiness of their farm.
   Milestone 9 – 40 farms take some steps to make improvements that build visitor traffic. - in progress on about half of the farms.
   Milestone 10 – link farms ready for agritourism visitors with CVB to be included in marketing, packaging and events –done as part of Goal 3 – packaging.

b. Impact on Community – Goal 1 Summary of Accomplishments

Efforts undertaken in this project included identification of farms with current agritourism activities and those with interest and potential. Most farms in the county are not geared towards agritourism however because our county has many visitors this presents an opportunity for farmers to increase income.

During the course of this project we interacted with many farmers through surveys, at the agritourism workshop (March 2016), at two networking events, for the Farm Open Days weekend (August 2017), and through a micro-grant program established to help with marketing and infrastructure improvements. As a result, we learned which farms are visitor ready, and who has is interested but has work to do to become visitor ready.

Farmers identified in surveys and at events were invited to have an agritourism assessment completed for their farm. This involved a visit to the farm where goals were discussed, a facility assessment conducted, and recommendations provided – conducted by Monika Roth, Cooperative Extension Agriculture Educator. A summary of the farm assessments is attached.

<u>Observations resulting from the visits</u>. Farmers identified needing help with marketing and social media. Also, facilities were often not up to par for hosting visitors. Farmers are also looking for training on how to lead tours and what activities to offer. Because visitors take time away from the main task of operating a farm, there is concern about time availability for hosting visitors. Will they make enough money to cover costs of additional staff or lost time. Liability risks are another big concern. As a result, many farms are comfortable with being open for Open Days or occasional festivals, but are hesitant to open for daily drop in visitors unless they are direct marketing farm products and operating a farm market, pick your own farm, or CSA.

As a result of this project, we are better able to understand the farmers' perspectives on agritourism and what is needed to help them establish a successful venture. Agritoursm has many dimensions and farmers must decide what fits best with for their farm.

ii. Goal/Objective 2 – **Agritourism Workshop**

a. Progress Made:

Milestone 3 – Organized and sponsored a daylong Agritourism Workshop – held on March 8, 2016 in Ithaca, NY. 100 attendees (previously reported)

Milestone 4 – Workshop participants completed a survey to provide benchmark data to be able to assess the impact of training on agritourism readiness.

Milestone 5 – Gather/develop educational materials for attendees that guides them in planning an agritourism enterprise.

Updated the Cornell Cooperative Extension Publication – *Getting Started in Agritourism* – and distributed this to all workshop attendees and other farmers not in attendance but with who we interacted at other meetings and during farm visits (over 200 copies distributed).

http://ccetompkins.org/resources/getting-started-in-agritourism

b. Impact on Community – Goal 2 – Summary of Accomplishments

The Agritourism Workshop held on March 8, 2016 served to kickoff this agritourism initiative. The daylong program included speakers on agritourism trends and opportunities, marketing and promotion, risk management and business planning. A total of 100 participants were present, with the majority being from the farm community. Others included tourism professionals and operators of related tourism enterprises (food, lodging, etc.). A key benefit of the event was the networking that took place at tables while participants brainstormed ideas for partnering and packaging.

Two surveys were conducted as part of this conference. One to gain information about the businesses represented and level of agritourism with which they are engaged (30 responses). A second to evaluate the conference (40 responses). Participants were engaged in a variety of agritourism activities, the most prevalent being hosting school groups and tours, or events. The next most prevalent activities were farm markets, pick your own and CSA farms. Annual visitor numbers at these farms ranged from 13 to 3000. Visitors were generally from the local area, nearby counties, and some larger farms draw from the surrounding states. The majority of respondents (71%) indicated that agritourism comprises less than 10% of their total farm income and 75% indicated sales of less than $5000. Clearly agritourism at these farms has limited impact and there is potential for expansion.

Respondents indicated interest in exploring new activities such as classes, tours, tasting events, farms stays, or weddings. Business needs stated include: how to expand, strategic planning, marketing, infrastructure/capital investment and risk management.

The workshop evaluation revealed that collaboration and partnerships was one of the important take home messages and participants shared a long list of ideas they had picked up at the workshop. Insurance, marketing, finance, infrastructure, rules and regulations came up as important needs. These are potential topics for future networking meetings and training that we will offer.

Each workshop attendee received a copy of the publication *Getting Started in Agritourism* which provided further details on operating an agritourism farm. Additionally, 22 participants signed up for a farm assessment with a total of 13 completed (rest were not completed as they were not in Tompkins County).

Goal/Objective 3: **Package Development**

a. **Progress Made**:

Milestone 1 – Formation of a Farm to Fork Agritourism Trail
The idea for an agritourism trail morphed into a Farm to Fork "network," where partner farms are participating in agritourism to varying degrees including farm stores, Open Farm Days, U-picks, the Farm to Fork Website, and farmer-buyer networking events. We decided to avoid the verbiage of a "trail" so as to be more inclusive to farms who may participate in agritourism via other channels, such as selling their products to restaurants. We realize and acknowledge that farms are able to interact with the public and with visitors to Tompkins County in a variety of ways; the idea of a more open "network" of participating farms will ensure than agritourism is an accessible option to more farms.

Milestone 2 – Countywide Open Farm Day Event with at least 10 farms participating.

Open Farm Day evolved into Open Farm Days/Weekend, a two day event on Aug. 12 & 13 with 10 participating farms on Saturday and 8 on Sunday. Details below.

Milestone 3 – Develop agritourism packages to be included on website and in promotional materials.

Several packages have been developed including hotel deals for Open Farm Days (http://www.visitithaca.com/open-farm-days-lodging-deals), discounted room prices for off-season stays, and specific agritourism packages with a focus on farms and dining. A Farm to Fork package was created for the Chamber of Commerce auction that included a stay at Rosebarb farm paired with two garden workshops at Cornell Cooperative Extension, plus local products and a downtown Ithaca gift card. Other packages include a "Winter Wellness" Farm to Fork package and an "Artisan Bread-making" Farm to Fork Package, all involving different lodging partners, farms, farm businesses, restaurants, and spas. (See appendix for more information).

b. **Impact on Community:**

Open Farm Days provided the public an opportunity to interact with local farms in a fun and casual setting, and opened the door for more farms interested in participate in future events.
See Appendix 2 for a summary of the event.

Package development has definitely contributed to a more open and collaborative climate between businesses and lodging partners. During a Group Tourism Roundtable meeting, agri-culinary tourism was a topic of interest for many participants. Currently, more packages are in development, and the Convention & Visitors Bureau is planning a "packaging workshop" to further educate lodging partners and businesses. Package development has also increased farm and farm business accessibility for visitors, who may not know how to reach out and plan these activities on their own, but who might be interested in participating in agritourism.

Goal/Objective 4: **Marketing and Promotion**

a. **Progress Made**:

Milestone 1 – website page listing agritourism destinations - The Farm to Fork portion of the Visit Ithaca Website includes several directories of agritourism destinations, including farms, farmers' markets, farm

stores, and lodging partners. Currently, 25 visitor-ready farms and markets are listed, 39 farm-to-table dining partners are listed, and 22 Farm to Fork lodging partners are listed.

Milestone 2 – packages that include farm destinations: As stated above, packages have been created with farm or farm business participants including Rosebarb Farm, Good Life Farm, Farmscape Yoga, Hazelnut Kitchen, Wide Awake Bakery, and others.

Milestone 3 – Calendar of farm-based events - Farm events are added to the Visit Ithaca events calendar and are promoted on Facebook via the Farm to Fork page as well.

Milestone 4 – Event rack cards and posters for Open Farm Days - attached.
Milestone 5 – Farm Open Days Map created for the event - attached.

Milestone 6 – Social media outreach - For farms, agritourism events, packages, and other related posts have been consistent and successful in their reach, generally.

Milestone 7 – Banner ads - created for NYC tourism partner EscapeMaker. Additional banner ads have not yet been created.

b. **Impact on Community**: Google Analytics and Facebook insights.

Marketing and promotion of farms and agritourism activities has been extensive throughout the grant period. Facebook posts on "Farm to Fork Ithaca" page (4-5 posts per week at least) reach a large portion of our regional target audience (Northeast & NYC specifically).

City	Your Fans
Ithaca, NY	399
New York, NY	182
Philadelphia, PA	86
Rochester, NY	79
Buffalo, NY	60
Syracuse, NY	43
Toronto, ON, Canada	29
Elmira, NY	21
Trumansburg, NY	20
Binghamton, NY	20

Since the beginning of the grant period the number of Facebook followers has grown by more than 1,000.

At least 3 out of 4 weekly Facebook posts specifically mention and tag farms or farm businesses by name; other posts include links to local events including farmers' markets, tastings, farm visits, etc. Though the Farm to Fork portion of the Visit Ithaca website still has room to grow in terms of Google Analytics (during the grant period, the Farm to Fork page received 4,812 page views), the directory of farms, businesses, and markets has been a useful tool for visitors and potential visitors. When Googling a particular farm, the Visit Ithaca website often appears on the first page of esults, providing farms with an additional web page that links to their business website, or a source of online information for visitors (if they do not have their own separate farm website).

One of our most successful marketing projects during the grant period has been our "Ithaca Stories" blog at https://stories.visitithaca.com/. Each "Farm to Fork" story features a specific farm or local food-related business with an extensive narrative of what they do, their farming or food philosophy, and what kind of experience a guest can expect when attending that event or visiting that farm. These compelling, visual blog posts have been some of our most successful Facebook posts and one of our biggest converters to the Visit Ithaca website. The "Press Bay Alley Holiday Market" blog post—mentioning several farms participating in this special occasion market—received 1,252 views. "Copper Horse Coffee Roasters" received 2,090 views, and "Indian Creek Farm" received 1,062 views.

These marketing efforts have directly affected local farms in increasing exposure—by mentioning farms and businesses by name and directly tagging, linking, and referring farms and businesses, interest and activities associated with agritourism have increased throughout the grant period.

iii. *Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (start of award performance period, September 30, 2015).* Include further explanation if necessary.

a. Number of direct jobs created: 14 year-round full time farms; 9 part-time farms (from pre-post farm surveys)
b. Number of jobs retained: 52 farms have at least 2 employees; at least 25 other jobs as field hands, market managers, etc. (based on farm visits)
c. Number of indirect jobs created: not documented
d. Number of markets expanded: Expansion seems to be most prevalent in numbers of farm visitors which grew from 70,000 to 80,000 for farms that reported this data. Lodging is one of the key growth areas with 3 farms offering lodging and 2 more planning to do so in 2018. School tours and events or festivals are a popular tourism strategy used by about half of the farms responding. Tours by appointment is a growing trend among 20 farms. On-line sales are another marketing method used by 2 farms.

e. Number of new markets established: farmers have expanded their marketing channels and increased visitation and sales as a result of agritourism
f. Annual Market sales from agritourism is still relatively low (majority under $5000); however, there was a slight uptick in sales in each category above $5000, the highest amount of annual sales reported was in the $75,000 to $100,000 range. Overall the data appears to show no major change. However, several respondents chose not to answer this question.
g. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: There is a total of 52 farms in our county, plus 16 farms nearby in surrounding counties with agritourism interest and activities. In 2015 when this project started, we documented about 36 of these farms were involved in some agritourism but have significantly increased their activities over the past two years (2016 & 2017).
h. Investments made by farms in agritourism improvements: $162,000
i. Grants acquired by farms for agritourism improvements: $60,000, including $4,000 through a new micro-grant program established by the Tompkins County utilizing local hotel room occupancy tax dollars to help farms implement recommendations from the farm assessments.
j. Open Farm Days results: of 5 farms with direct farm sales, 2 farms reported new customers resulting from the event (3 new customers one farm and 10 for the second); 4 farmers reported having sales at open farm days for a total of $690, and since the event and additional $350 in sales.

See Appendix 3 for a summary of survey responses comparing the 2015 benchmark survey with the current status of agritourism among area enterprises.

iv. *Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc*

The Open Farm Days event reached a large cross-section of visitors (1396 total), a majority being family groups. Because Ithaca is home to Cornell University and many international students and families, we found that we attracted several diverse groups - 12 Humphrey Fellows – international professionals from around the globe, and over 30 Cornell incoming students included a majority of people of color (African American and Hispanic). Open Farm Days is clearly an attractive way to bring the campus community out to farms and provides a new audience of visitors for farmers.

V. Discuss your community partnerships.

a. *Who are your community partners*?

<u>Key partners in executing this project have been</u>: Tompkins County Planning Department Tourism Program Director; Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County – Agriculture Program staff; Ithaca/Tompkins CVB staff; Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board; Farmers; Media

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

<u>Each played an integral role:</u>
County Planning/Tourism – project coordination
CCETC – coordination with farmers, farm assessments, agritourism workshop
CVB – marketing and promotion
STPB – approved funding for Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator position
Farmers – participated at workshops/training, in farm assessments and Farm Open Days

Media – various – Farm Open Days promotion

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

The County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) has adopted an Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan and has provided funding for an Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator. An Agriculinary Tourism Task Force that includes farmers, chefs, Cooperative Extension, tourism staff, and others will continue to operate and provide direction for the implementation of the Agriculinary Plan. http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/tourism/Agriculinary%20Tourism%20Implementation%20Plan%20-%209.16.pdf

VI. *Did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?*

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County was one of the lead contractors and partners on this grant serving on the steering committee and providing expertise in the development of the Agriculinary Implementation Plan, identification of farms with tourism activities or potential, conducting farm surveys and assessments, coordinating the Agritourism Workshop, engaging farmers in Farm Open Days, coordination of volunteers to support Farm Open Days, gathering and tracking relevant data, and reporting.

The Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitor Bureau was the second contractor and partner on this grant, serving on the grant steering committee, and leading the marketing and promotion initiatives of the grant including website content, social media marketing, and Farm Open Days collateral promotion and design. The CVB hired several firms to design marketing materials and videos.

Vii. *Have you publicized any results yet?** In part…

a. *If yes, how did you publicize the results?*

Results of specific activities have been primarily reported to stakeholders at committee meetings or directly shared with farmers and other stakeholders via email. For Open Farm Days, we used facebook (CCETC and Tourism pages) to post pictures of the event.

b. *To whom did you publicize the results?*

County Strategic Tourism Planning Board, Grant steering committee, farmers participating in Open Days, and general public via Facebook.

c. *How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?*

20 people via committees, plus 20 farmers; and Facebook 1200 (CCETC) and 10,000 (CVB)

*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).

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

a. If so, how did you collect the information?

4 Farmer surveys were conducted – 1) Farmers originally surveyed at the outset of the project were surveyed again to determine what changes or impacts have been made as a result of our work; 2) Farm Open Days participants were surveyed to determine if being a partner in the event has had an impact on future visits and sales; 3) Farmers included on the CVB website were surveyed to determine if any visitors had found the farm via the CVB agritourism listings.

b. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

Feedback is included in the impacts and in the appendices attached to the report.

VIII. Budget Summary:

a. 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: ☒

b. Did the project generate any income?

i. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

As previously reported, the only income generated ($2,570) was from the Agritourism Workshop held on March 8, 2016 which helped to cover the expenses of the workshop. The cost of the workshop exceeded the cost of the revenue and speaker travel expenses were covered from the grant.

IX. **Lessons Learned**:

i. Summarize any lessons learned.

Lesson 1 – Farm Trail: At the outset of our project, we assumed that we would be forming a county Farm Trail. However, after conducting our farm inventory and assessments, we discovered that forming a network was more valuable than a trail. A key reason that a trail was not developed is that other than farm markets, CSA and Pick your Own farms, most farms are not regularly open to the public. It would be a hardship for them to be listed on a map and have people drop in expecting to get a tour. To avoid this confusion, we felt that the best approach for the majority of farms was to create a network for training and to feature on the CVB website.

Lesson 2 – Many farms lack the resources to effectively market their agritourism enterprise to have the kind of reach needed for attracting visitors. Partnering with the CVB Tourism agency is essential to develop a tourism clientele beyond local customers.

Lesson 3 – Many of the farms in our area lack the infrastructure and expertise to provide visitor programming and services. Funding is needed for infrastructure improvements and ongoing training is needed on hosting visitors – what to offer, what to charge, etc.

Lesson 4 – It will take time for some farms to develop the capacity of farms to host visitors, given the above two challenges.

Lesson 5 – Networking is an important way to promote linkages between farmers, chefs, lodging operators, and other sectors of tourism to stimulate package development. Comprehensive package development takes time and creativity and an understanding what visitors to the area might find appealing.

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

The only milestone that we had identified and did not achieve was to develop a county Farm Trail, for the reasons noted above in lessons learned.

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:

We all worked well as a team. Having multiple partners combine their expertise was helpful…CCE and our farm network, along with CVB and their marketing network made the project work.

X. Future Work:

a. *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.*

This grant project provided the impetus to jumpstart the work on our County's Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan adopted in September 2016: http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/tourism/Agriculinary%20Tourism%20Implementation%20Plan%20-%209.16.pdf. We now have a comprehensive list of farms with an interest in agritourism and we have a good understanding of the capacity of each farm to host visitors. Further evidence of the county's commitment to supporting plan implementation comes through funding approved for an Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator (part-time, started in July 2017) and funding for a micro-grant program established to assist farmers in making farms visitor ready. In Fall 2017, a total of 8 farmers were awarded $500 microgrants for projects including web and social media improvements, signage, and landscaping. An Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Task Group will continue guide the implementation plan to further strengthen agriculinary tourism in our community.

b. *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?

Next Steps:

- Reactivate the Agriculinary Tourism Task group.
- Farm assessments and capacity building – training on hosting visitors and social media.
- Marketing, promotion and packaging – needs further emphasis.
- Farm Open Days – 2018 is being planned.
- Host networking events to strengthen tourism sector connections.
- Stronger Culinary connections need to be made.
- The County CVB has applied for local room tax funding to continue with the Agriculinary Tourism initiative including funding for the Agriculinary Tourism Coodinator, micro-grants, networking and training.