

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to your assigned grant specialist to avoid delays:

LFPP PHONE: 202-720-2731; EMAIL: USDALFPPQUESTIONS@AMS.USDA.GOV; FAX: 202-720-0300

SHOULD YOU NEED TO MAIL YOUR DOCUMENTS VIA HARD copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	October 1, 2015 –March 31, 2018
Authorized Representative Name:	Robert Pierson
Authorized Representative Phone:	215-733-9599 x 2
Authorized Representative Email:	bob@farmtocity.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Farm to City LLC
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Webtools for Food Hubs and Farms
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15LFPPPA0145
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Philadelphia/PA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$95,350

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

Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS

Farm to City is a business located in Philadelphia, PA and founded in 2001. Our mission is to unite communities, families, and farmers year round through good, locally produced food. We achieve this mission through four programs:

1. Producer-only farmers' markets,
2. CSA support service recruiting CSA members,

3. Local food buying club, and
4. Web services to entities in other local food movements.

Farm to City built its first website in 2002 to provide an ordering platform for our Winter Harvest Buying Club, a tool to recruit members for CSA farms, and to list details of the farmers' markets we operate. In 2005, we opened our website so other entities could use our website to set up buying clubs and CSA recruitment programs on their own web pages.

Over the years since, our experience with the website generated many ideas on how to improve it. Thus Farm to City sought and was awarded this LFPP grant. The purpose of this grant was to rebuild Farm to City's old website for our own use and to offer online programs for food hubs, family farms, and local food organizations.

During the work on this project to rebuild our website, we focused on four online programs:

1. Administration of food buying clubs,
2. CSA member recruitment,
3. Management of farmers' markets, and
4. Farm-to-Chef ordering and delivery program via farmers' markets.

The beneficiaries of this project are farmers, food artisans using locally produced ingredients, food hubs, and other businesses or organizations supporting local food movements. Using the programs on Farm to City's rebuilt website, the beneficiaries can improve administrative efficiencies and sales of locally produced foods. The rebuilt website will also include features that improve public user experience as they seek ways to find and purchase or sell locally produced foods.

The approach Farm to City took was to dedicate nearly all the grant resources to hire technical contractors to rebuild, test, and launch the website. We supplemented the grant resources with two smaller grants to meet most of the matching requirement.

PROJECT STAGES

Rebuilding the Web Platform.

The first phase of the contractor's work was to completely replace the old web platform. The entire site was built with Django, Django Content Management System, PostgreSQL database, Python, and Docker containers. The site was built to run under https/sll for secure communications. This phase was completed in August, 2015. This platform allows other entities to set up their own programs and pages on Farm to City's rebuilt website. We refer to these entities as Affiliates, who have their own access to the administrative side of their web pages and can manage their online public content.

Rebuilding the Buying Club Program

After the work on the website platform was completed, the contractor rebuilt the Buying Club web software. Ideas to improve this program came from Farm to City staff, several partner farms (Affiliates), and buyers (public users) who have used the program for many years.

The new features for the Buying Club program include many useful and time-saving tools for both website administrators and users:

Setup by Administrators. Program administrators (Farm to City or Affiliates) are able to perform many website setup functions.

- add administrators (several access levels available)
- create program home page
- create product list by producer: item name, description, category, attributes (e.g., certified organic, pastured, sugar-free: admin defines these), producer's price (wholesale) and price point formulae, storage type, weighed item (yes/no), delivery dates if not every delivery
- set price point in 4 categories by program, producer, or item; manual edit at item level
- create producer list, each producer for business name, profile, image, contact info, price point formulae, order reports needed for delivery, report delivery (email or surface mail)
- tag weighed items for post delivery price adjustment; assign approximate weight for initial charge
- create delivery location list: name, approx. location, site host
- create terms and conditions statement

Management of Operations. Administrators are able to set up ordering periods, order fulfillment functions, and use many other features necessary to managing Buying Club operations:

- approve membership applications; options to charge membership fee or require a minimum account balance
- set delivery dates and order periods (e.g., order period Y weeks with X delivery dates in Y)
- set ordering deadlines - ends member ordering for the order period
- create producer packing lists: items by delivery date, storage type, and quantity
- create product labels for producers - general with item, unit, and producer; specific with member name, location, item, unit, item count,
- create box labels for producers/packers - by date and storage type
- create delivery box labels for packers/delivery
- create packer sheets by delivery date: by producer, location, storage type, item, count or by location, producer, storage type, item
- create order sheets for site hosts by delivery location and date, member, and item (sorted by storage type)
- create labels for site hosts - delivery date, member
- create weighed item reports for producers
- create producer update report - for editing product lists before next order period
- create report file for each producer after ordering deadline to send via email to all producers with one click or to print for surface mailing
- order adjustments: search by order date or period, by producer, location, item, other parameters; bulk or individual adjustments
- system-generated member email address lists by delivery date, order period, location, producer, item, item missing.
- order adjustments: charge member for actual weight reported by producer
- attribute order fulfillment error to producer, packer, delivery, site host, member, or no-fault (admin pays)
- verification of order adjustments, then adjusting member accounts
- create other admin reports: producer sales summary, producer adjustment details, member purchase summary, member adjustment details, member balance, order period sales stats

- reset program member password

Program Members. Public users of the website who register can:

- search for items by producer, product name, category and/or attribute; product list provides item descriptions, attributes, cost per unit and images of products
- print their orders or access online
- order and pay online through a shopping cart feature
- receive reminders to order, messages about known missing items (sent by Admin via email using sys generated lists)
- have access to items ordered, details of order adjustments, and member account transactions and current balance

This phase of the project took the contractor much longer than was planned. The Buying Club program completed in December 2016 and launched in January 2017, more than a year late.

Both Farm to City and Rondout Valley Organics, an Affiliate, have used the rebuilt Buying Club website for many months, achieving better control over the ordering process, order fulfillment, and saving time for program administration.

Farm to City staff discovered that the Buying Club program could be adapted to administer all the key elements of a CSA support program, including member-choice CSA. We also realized that an online farmers' market management program would be more useful to our business than a Farm to Chef program. Therefore we decided to apply the remaining resources of the grant to an online farmers' market management program.

Creating A Farmers' Market Management Program

Farm to City started planning and operating producer-only outdoor farmers' markets in 2001. We now operate 14 outdoor farmers' markets where over 120 farms and food artisans offer their products for sale. We have developed a number of useful management tools over the years and now have integrated these tools into an online Farmers' Market Management Program. This program covers producer recruitment, market site manager recruitment, market site manager reports to admin, and accounting to issue market fee invoices, record payments, and payments to market managers.

For this phase of the project Farm to City was obliged to seek a second web contractor due to the unexpected delays in delivery of the Phase 2 products by the first contractor. In the 2nd quarter of 2017, we requested and received a 6-month grant extension to March 31, 2018. In the 3rd quarter of 2017, we dismissed the first contractor and developed a request for proposals. In the 4th quarter, we selected the second web contractor for Phase 3 and worked with this contractor to finalize a scope of work, the cost of which exceeded the resources remaining in the grant. The second contractor started work on the Farmers' Market Management Program in January 2018. The contractor was able to complete some parts of the program, some were underway, and some not started by the end of the grant period on March 31, 2018. Farm to City intends to use its own funds to complete the Farmers' Market Management Program.

Here is a list of this program's online features:

Producer Application Process

- pre-candidate screening for market readiness
- candidate receives market rules and completes application form (products, season and days available, certificates of insurance, health licenses, other details needed by admin).
- candidate invited to sell at one or more markets
- candidate accepts invitation

Market Site Manager Application Process

- pre-candidate screening
- candidate completes and submits application form (season and days available, qualifications)
- candidate invited to manage one or more markets
- candidate accepts invitation

Market Site Manager Reporting, by Market

- producer attendance
- market conditions
- unresolved issues for admin action
- time sheet

Accounting

- receives weekly Market Site Manager Reports
- sends monthly market fee invoice to producers
- tracks and posts accounts receivable
- authorizes payment to Market Site Managers

Several related databases support these features:

- **Producer File** (contact info, product categories production methods, vehicle size, markets attending, begin/end dates, insurance coverage, health department licenses)
- **Market File** (location, day and hours open, season, market manager)
- **Market Manager File** (contact info, market assignments, hourly pay)
- **Time-dependent File** (Market Manager report fields, by market and date, accounting data by date)

Access. In addition to access by administrators to the previously listed admin functions, Producers, Market Managers, and Public Users have access to the website.

Producers have log-in access to their market fee account page showing amounts invoiced and amounts paid, by date. They can pay their market fees on-line, which are entered directly into their account receivable file.

Market Site Managers have log-in access to their market report forms, which they complete and submit after each market day.

Public Users have access to public web pages listing market information: location, day and hours open, producer profiles with photos. Public users who register online have option to receive a market newsletter by email.

The contractor website programming areas, with a total of 26 tasks, are

- Users and Access Permissions
- Public Interface
- Market Manager Buildout
- Producer Buildout
- Additional Considerations (document library, newsletter, email capability)
- Reports (for administrators, accounting, and producers)
- Affiliate Modifications (navigation issues)

At the end of the grant period, of the 26 tasks, two are complete, eight are in progress, four in quality assurance stage, and 12 not yet started.

The Farmers' Market Management Program is a work-in progress, which will continue after the end of the grant period. Farm to City intends to work with the contractor to finish the remaining 24 tasks so that we can use the Farmers' Market Management Program and offer it for use by others.

1. Goals and Objectives

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

Objective 1. To rebuild the entire Farm to City web application and database platforms.

- a. **Progress Made.** This objective was met. The first web contractor completed tasks to meet this objective in late 2015.
- b. **Impact on Community.** There was no expected impact on the community.

Objective 2. To add new tools and features to the web application in response to suggestions from Farm to City staff, partner farms (**Affiliates**) and buyers (**users**) who have used the website over the past 12 years.

- a. **Progress Made.** The Buying Club application programming was completed in June, 2016. The programming of the Farmers' Market Management Program started in January 2018 but not yet to the quality assurance testing stage.
- b. **Impact on Community.** There was no expected impact on the community.

Objective 3. To conduct beta and quality assurance testing of the rebuilt and enhanced web applications using Farm to City staff, current Affiliate staff, and selected website users.

- a. **Progress Made.** Beta and quality assurance testing of the Buying Club application began in June 2016 by Farm to City and Rusty Plow Farm Valley staff. [Note: Rusty Plow Farm staff

is Affiliate administrator of Rondout Valley Organics buying club.] Testers identified over 500 bugs and errors in the last half of 2016. The website contractor resolved nearly all of these by early December 2016.

Farm to City tested one component of the Farmers' Market Management Program in early 2018 and provided suggestions to the contractor.

- b. **Impact on Community.** There was no expected impact on the community.

Objective 4. To launch the new web application and market its availability to farms and food hubs nationwide.

- a. **Progress Made.** The Buying Club Application was launched in January 2018 and used for 5 months by Farm to City. Due to delays in the project and other factors, sales of Farm to City's Winter Harvest Buying Club fell below those needed to sustain it financially so we ended the program in December 2017. Rondout Valley Organics, an Affiliate, has used the Buying Club application from its launch through and beyond the grant period.

Farm to City made no effort to market the availability of its new website nationwide since one of the web applications – the Farmers' Market Management Program – was not complete at the end of the grant period.

- b. **Impact on Community.** For Farm to City's Winter Buying Club, the trend in sales pre- to post-launch of the rebuilt website was down nearly 25 percent. Sales for Rondout Valley Organic's buying club were down about 10 percent. In the case of Roundout Valley however, there was a slight increase in the number of producers offering products.

We note that sales for many local CSA and buying club programs have leveled off or decreased in recent years as more local food is available in conventional retail outlets and there is an increase in "convenience foods" offering home delivery of farm products and even proportioned ingredients with recipes. A second Affiliate, Meadow Run Farm, stopped using our website a month after launch and switched to another similar online service.

Objective 5. To provide support and technical assistance to current and new Affiliates as they launch commercial activities through the shared resources of the rebuilt web application and to collect and analyze information on the success of the project.

- a. **Progress Made.** Farm to City has provided support to its remaining Affiliate Rondout Valley Organics since the launch in January 2017 to the end of the grant period.
- b. **Impact on Community.** Farm to City was able to assist Rondout Valley Organics with several dozen difficulties it encountered and to get our first web contractor to fix several errors encountered after the launch. Apart from this, there was no measurable impact on communities beyond this Affiliate.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date, September 30, 2015. Include further explanation if necessary.

Since parts of Objectives 3, 4, and 5 were not met due to significant delays earlier in the project, we can cite no direct or indirect jobs created, no markets established or expanded, and no increase in

sales. To the contrary, Farm to City's buying club ended during the 2017 launch year due to lower and lower sales; sales of the Affiliate buying club decreased slightly. The number of farmers/producers benefiting from the project is also negative due to the closing of the larger of the two buying clubs using the website.

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.?

We did not expand our customer base. At the closure of Farm to City's Winter Harvest Buying Club, we referred both its producers and members to another local food buying club in the Philadelphia area.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

i. Who are your community partners?

Farm to City's community partners were farmers and food artisans in the Philadelphia area and our remaining Affiliate, Rondout Valley Organics Buying Club.

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

Rondout Valley Organics' staff (Rusty Plough Farm owners) was an active, engaged and effective participant in quality control and testing the pre-launch Buying Club program in 2016. Several of the farmers and food artisans selling their food items in Farm to City's Winter Harvest Buying Club provided suggestions to improve communication and data transmission that benefited the project.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? Farm to City will fund the contractor work to the completion of the Farmers' Market Management Program since the resources of the LFPP were insufficient to cover the cost overruns we experienced. When the work on this program is tested and launched, Farm to City will use it for the 2019 season and be in a better position to determine the feasibility of marketing the rebuilt website to other local food programs, food hubs, and farmers.

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

We engaged two web contractors to rebuild our website. The first did a good job to rebuild the website foundation and the Buying Club application, but its work on the Buying Club application so delayed the project that we could not complete it by the end of the grant period. The second web contractor was only able to complete part of the scope of work for the Farmers' Market Management Program. Only Rusty Plough Farm of the three minor contractors completed testing the Buying Club application.

6. Have you publicized any results yet? No.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? No.

8. Budget Summary:

- i. **As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:**
- ii. **Did the project generate any income? No**

Negative net income (loss) was generated during the project. This result was due to market conditions independent of the project.

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. **Summarize any lessons learned. Draw from 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).**

Negative experiences: web design contractors significantly underestimated the time and cost to complete web design contracts. See 9.ii for suggestion of change.

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

Website design for online data management, communications, multiple levels of administrative access, and public use for product ordering is a complex and expensive process. Farm to City and its two web design contractors all underestimated the time and expense it would take to rebuild Farm to City's website. We caution any future LFPP or FMPP applicants who seek grants for website design to include an independent expert to assist in creating specs and approximate cost for the design and have several alternative plans ready to scale the product to the funds available before selecting a qualified contractor.

- 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:**

Although Farm to City staff completed Forms 425 and 270, an accountant or bookkeeper would have been useful at the beginning to set up an internal system for completing the forms.

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.**

Farm to City will attempt to complete this project after the grant period with its own resources since the rebuilt website is critical to our business. Once we are able to use the completed website, Farm to City can begin to market it to other local food businesses including farms, food hubs.

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?

Farm to City recommends an ongoing project to profile all web-based programs that support, food hub, local farm, and food artisan sales and make the profiles available to participants in the local food movement. The profile should include type of program (CSA support, Buying Club, Farmers' Market Management, wholesale aggregation and distribution, Farm to Chef via Farmer' Markets, and new programs that may appear), cost and basis of cost, level of technical support and cost, ability to custom-tailor web tools to needs of users, types of routine reports generated and their formats, special reports to summarize data over user-selected time periods, shopping cart feature/use of credit/debit card for user payment, ability to communicate from website via email to subsets of producers and buyers, capacity to include images of products, producers. There are likely other key features of interest to potential local food movement users.