

**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: (e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)	September 30, 2015 – March 30, 2018
Authorized Representative Name:	Robert Bloom
Authorized Representative Phone:	501-907-2806
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Recipient Organization Name:	Heifer Project International, Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	ARKANSAS MULTI-FARM CSA PROJECT: CONNECT
Grant Agreement Number: (e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)	15LFPPAR0043
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Little Rock, Arkansas
Total Awarded Budget:	\$100,000

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).
- Different individual: Name: Sara Brown Email: sara.brown@heifer.org Phone: 501-907-2629 through July 20, 2018. After that date please contact Francine Hill at Francine.hill@heifer.org 501-907-2634 or Virginia Murillo at Virginia.Murillo@heifer.org 501-907-2933

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1. 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.

i. Goal/Objective 1: **Farmers growing cooperatively for the Multi-farm CSA will increase demand and visibility of locally-produced food by developing a brand with logo by spring 2016.**

a. Progress Made:

As stated in the grant narrative, Heifer International’s work in the United States is centered on assessing local food systems and enabling farmers in some of the poorest regions in the USA to make a difference in their own lives and their communities. Small-scale farmers face challenges securing markets and competing with larger commodity farms. Heifer’s programs revive local economies by empowering local agricultural entrepreneurs to build enterprises addressing every link in the local food value chain—from farm to table. To achieve the LFPP goal’s, Heifer focused on rebranding and building the production and management capacity for the existing multi-farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, Foodshed Farms, in order to increase access of locally sourced fruit and vegetables

As an initial step, Heifer facilitated the rebranding process for Foodshed Farms, the CSA brand at the time. Foodshed Farms, used an ‘*Appreciative Inquiry*’ process to identify shared values that the brand should represent as well as initial drafts of the logo design and brand name. Mangan Holcomb Partners, a local public relations firm was contracted to complete the final logo design. The objectives of the LFPP have been achieved as the website (www.newsouthcoop.com) went live in February of 2015 and all promotional materials have been branded with the new ‘New South Produce Cooperative’ logo:



Additionally, several other activities were implemented to increase the visibility of locally-produced food; these include, acquisition of professional uniforms for New South Produce Cooperative staff, branding with the new logo the delivery van used to make CSA drop offs, and printed materials used to promote the Local Foods Legends event carried out on March 11th, 2018. The Local Food Legends was made possible to the partial sponsorship of the LFPP to further promote locally produced food. It engaged 10 local restaurants, who provided free samples of dishes prepared with ingredients from New South to over 400 attendees. (Pictures included as attachments to this report.)

Prior to the rebranding of the Cooperative in 2014, approximately 150 CSA shares were sold in each of the Spring/Summer and Fall seasons. As of the writing of this report in 2018, New South has sold 450 CSA shares, which meets the current capacity of food that can be produced by the farmers in the cooperative. The increase in sales of CSA shares over the lifespan of the LFPP demonstrates an increase in demand for locally-produced food as consequence of activities implemented by the LFPP to increase awareness.

In the early stages of the grant, Heifer relied heavily on its existing partnerships and relationships in the state to recruit farmers to the cooperative and worksites for the sale of CSAs. Two years later, New

South is sought out by farmers expressing interest in becoming members of the cooperative and by businesses and individuals hoping to become a drop site for CSAs. New South, which began with 15 farmers, now includes a permanent members roster of 28 small farmers. Over the lifespan of the grant, 43 farmers have participated in the different project activities in some degree – through transactional partnerships and full membership. The number of workplace sites - businesses that enter into a formal agreement to make CSAs available to their employees – has grown from 2 to 10. The number of drop sites – where individual customers can pick up their boxes - is 22 and spans 7 counties.

b. Impact on Community:

In a 2017 survey asking customers how they heard about New South, many identified ads from various social media sites as the point to become aware of it, others said word of mouth, but the most telling might be the customers who said they “searched ‘CSA’ on the internet.” The creation of the New South brand, and the development of a logo and on-line presence, means that not only the already familiar audience will be able to access information, but those vague searches have a place to land also. The New South presence in large corporations in Arkansas has translated to thousands of people being exposed to the option of purchasing fresh, locally-grown produce through CSA boxes.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: **Small-scale sustainable farmers will increase production of local food by 250 percent between 2015 and 2017.**

a. Progress Made:

The mid-term reports used increase in gross revenue as a proxy for increased production of local food. As reported, the baseline metric from 2015 was \$255,000. The cooperative had \$377,316 in gross revenues at 2016 yearend. The increase from 2015 was 48 percent at 2016 yearend (2016 yearend was used because production declines in December through March during the winter months). Gross revenue for 2017 was \$388,582; which is a 52.4 percent increase from 2015.

While New South did not hit projected sales goals, other measured elements illustrate the amount of locally-grown food made available as a result of this project. The number of customers purchasing full or half-CSA shares was 336 for the Spring/Summer season at the beginning of this project in 2015. At the end of the LFPP in the Spring/Summer season of 2018, 550 customers were buying full or partial CSA shares, which is a 64 percent increase. During the same time period, the number of farmers producing and selling locally-grown food through the cooperative increased by 87 percent. However, most importantly, the availability, as measured by the number of drop-sites at which customers can pick up their boxes went from 4 to 22, a 450 percent increase.

a. Impact on Community:

The increase in production was made possible through the increase in dedicated markets. Pre-sold CSA shares and wholesale distribution commitments allow small-scale farmers to plan ahead, plant more, and hire the necessary labor to produce more. Since New South is responsible to take on much of the distribution and marketing responsibilities, farmers have more time on their farms to grow and harvest more products. The increased production means more access to Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) and Certified Organic local food for Arkansans.

At 2016 yearend, over \$308,000 was paid out to farmers for products and in 2017, over \$315,000 was paid out to farmers. LFPP Funds were not used to paid out to farmers for food products.

Another important element to highlight in regards to impact to the community, is the partnership with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance; this alliance allowed the opportunity to alleviate food needs as 6,427 pounds of fresh produce was donated to hunger relief organizations working within the network of Hunger Relief Alliance in 2016. In 2017, the amount of food donations increased to 7,454 pounds. This produce was distributed to soup kitchens, food pantries, and school meal programs across the state. LFPP Funds were not used to purchase donated food products.

iii.Goal/Objective 3: The Multi-farm CSA enterprise will secure new markets for Arkansas farmers by engaging with four new workplaces in 2016 and six new workplaces in 2017.

a. Progress Made:

In 2015 the New South Produce Cooperative had workplace agreements with two companies: Heifer International and Baptist Health in Little Rock.

In 2016, five new workplaces were added:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Arkansas Children’s Hospital in Little Rock; | 4) ArcBest Corporation in Fort Smith; |
| 2) Baptist Health in North Little Rock; | 5) University of Arkansas at Little Rock. |
| 3) Mercy Hospital in Fort Smith; | |

In 2017, an additional four new workplaces were added:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) St. Bernard’s Hospital in Jonesboro; | 3) Department of Human Services (DSH) state office in Little Rock; |
| 2) FIS in Little Rock; | 4) Dillard’s Corporate Office in Little Rock. |

In 2018, two more were added during the grant’s extension period:

- 1) University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service
- 2) Sharp Family Dentistry

In addition to these thirteen workplace markets, the cooperative delivers CSA shares to community partners for distribution to their own customers in Fayetteville, Little Rock, North Little Rock, Cabot, Conway, Hot Springs, Bryant, and Searcy. These include restaurants such as Mama Carmens Café, churches, and non-profit organizations. The cooperative has also opened over 40 new wholesale markets for the participating farmers through a combination of institutional buyers, farm-to-school relationships, grocery, and restaurant accounts.

b. Impact on Community:

Currently, 28 farmer producers have production plans and growers’ agreements for produce to supply the previously mentioned markets. Heifer’s 2016 impact evaluation indicated that the average farmer participating in the Multi-farm CSA project increased gross farm sales by approximately \$11,000 each. Expanded distribution allowed for increased access to nutritious foods for thousands of community members that may not have other sources as well.

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:

The LFPP project created 10 direct jobs in New South Produce Cooperative. The LFPP supported creation of 4 full-time positions at New South: 1) a general manager, 2) a CSA program manager and marketing specialist, 3) an operations manager in northwest Arkansas, and 4) a warehouse manager at the main headquarters in Little Rock. These positions will be sustained by the CSA program beyond the life of the LFPP by revenue generated by the cooperative. Additionally, a full-time sales rep will be hired in the summer of 2018. The LFPP also supported the creation of 6 part-time packing and delivery positions, which will also be sustained by the CSA Program beyond the life of the LFPP.

ii.Number of jobs retained:

All 10 full time positions remain filled as of the writing of this report and will continue to be sustained by the CSA program beyond the life of the LFPP.

iii.Number of indirect jobs created:

Multiple farmers in the cooperative reported hiring additional laborers as a result of their participation in New South, but a reasonable estimate of indirect jobs could not be determined from the feedback provided by farmers.

iv.Number of markets expanded:

In 2016, the CSA program served only the Little Rock metro region and did so with 4 drop sites. By the end of the life of the award in 2018, the number of drop sites in the Little Rock metro region had grown to 11 and expanded to other communities. Currently over 550 customers have subscribed to receive full- or half-CSA shares.

v.Number of new markets established:

One of the goals of the grant was to form partnerships with 10 new workplaces to provide a stable CSA market. This goal was achieved through the establishment of those new markets. In addition to the workplaces, there are now over 20 drop sites, where CSA subscribers can pick up their boxes. However, the biggest new market established because of the activities implemented by the LFPP was the wholesale market. Over the course of the grant, New South has developed 47 different wholesale distribution points for the produce of the farmers in the cooperative. These include institutions, farm-to-school programs, grocery stores, and restaurants.

vi.Market sales increased by \$ \$133,582 and increased by 52.4 %.

i.Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:

a. Percent Increase:

The New South Produce Cooperative was founded with 15 farmers. That number grew to 28, an 87% percent increase over the life of the project, and it is expected that the number of farmers will continue to grow.

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?

One of the most significant indicators of expansion for New South was the increase of geographic distribution of workplaces and drop sites. The cooperative initially serviced Little Rock, and now sells CSA shares or has wholesale buyers in 7 counties in Arkansas. New communities served since receiving the grant include: Conway, Hot Springs, Bryant, Searcy, Cabot, Fayetteville, Jonesboro and three new areas of Little Rock.

As a result of their partnership with the Department of Human Services, New South is now able to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payment vouchers and is actively working on accepting SNAP payments via their on-line portal. New South has leveraged this accessibility to apply for additional grants, which can reduce the price of a weekly box of fresh, locally-grown produce to as low as \$15 per box for low income individuals and families (normally priced at \$28-\$30 per box).

While not technically a customer base, New South has increased the number of recipients of their produce via their partnership with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. As previously noted, the cooperative donated nearly 14,000 pounds of produce to the Alliance, which provides food to low-income Arkansans across the state through their network of food banks, soup kitchens, school meal programs, and other hunger relief organizations. LFPP Funds were not used to purchase produce donated.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

i. Who are your community partners?

Community partnerships developed or deepened as a result of this grant include:

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, whose previously mentioned network of food bank and hunger relief organizations allowed for produce from unclaimed CSA boxes to go to underserved Arkansans rather than be wasted.

The Department of Human Services was instrumental in developing the infrastructure necessary to allow New South to accept SNAP benefit payments.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension offices provided consultants who gave technical assistance through classes and workshops to the farmers to improve their growing and harvesting practices.

Cooperative Development Services, and the separate organization, **Cooperative Development Services Consulting Co-op** assisted with advice and training on how to organize individual farmers into a functioning cooperative governance structure.

Over 20 workplaces and drop sites have entered into some level of partnership with Heifer and/or New South as a result of this grant, which has allowed fresh, locally-grown produce to become available to more Arkansans.

1. Baptist Health Center;
2. Heifer International;
3. Brightwaters Culinary Institute;
4. Ozark Natural Foods;
5. St. Josephs;
6. St. Bernard's Health and Wellness;
7. The Natural Food Store;
8. Children's Hospital;
9. Dillard's;
10. Fellowship Baptist Church;
11. The Green Corner Store;
- 12.

Bistro; 13. Unitarian Church; 14. Arkansas Heart Hospital; 15. St. Vincent; 16. University of Arkansas Medical School; 17. Stone's Throw Brewery; 18. Height's Corner Market; 19. Northeast Arkansas Hospital; 20. Mercy Hospital

The following restaurants participated in the Local Food Legends event: **At The Corner, Brave New Restaurant, Cathead's Diner, Heifer Café, Southern Table, Streetside Creperie, The Clean Eatery, The Root Café, Trios, and Wunderhaus**. The event allowed them to come together as a community under the banners of Heifer and New South.

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

These partners allowed New South to access additional markets and increase the locations where consumers can purchase locally grown produce. The partners offered additional value such as staffing the drop sites, assisting with marketing to their customer base and being a brand ambassador in their respective communities.

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

The workplace, drop-off sites, and restaurants will enable Heifer and New South expand the customer base and create models for partnerships, which can be duplicated by locally-produced food cooperatives in other states. Department of Human Services is exploring options for allowing customers with SNAP benefits to use those benefits to pay on-line. The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance will continue to accept and distribute fresh, locally-grown produce to Arkansans with low food security, ensuring reduction in produce waste.

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

Heifer contracted a graphic designer to translate input from the farmers into the final logo, which was used to brand on a variety of promotional materials throughout the life of the award; these materials will continue to be used. Heifer also contracted Technical Assistance (TA) consultants, who shared their expertise with New South farmers. These consultants are Certified Naturally Grown producers with formal agricultural training and their own vegetable farms. With Heifer's guidance, they are visiting farmers on a bi-monthly basis to provide technical assistance to newer and less experienced producers.

New South engaged consultants to improve the effectiveness of their on-line marketing through geo-targeted advertising. These efforts led directly to an improvement in the Farmigo data management system. Farmigo is a CSA data management system used by over 300 family farms in the U.S. and Canada. In order to better track the outcome of their on-line ads, New South, in cooperation with Farmigo, commissioned the inclusion of a pixel into the Farmigo software. The pixel allows on-line sales to be traced back to specific advertisements. This feature, originally designed for New South, is now available to all clients using Farmigo, which has the potential to significantly increase the number of people purchasing food produced locally across the United States and Canada.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

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

Yes. The New South Produce Cooperative logo is branded on uniforms, their delivery van, the website, and printed promotional materials. The Local Food Legends event, hosted by Heifer International in March of 2018 as part of the extension of this grant, highlighted New South. The event was designed to promote locally grown produce, introduce community members to the concept and availability of CSAs, and highlight the area restaurants that prominently feature locally-grown ingredients in their dishes. In addition to the event, we used the geo-targeted social media advertising mentioned above.

ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

Indirectly to anyone with access to the internet and anyone who sees the van as it delivers produce, but more directly to specific regions of Arkansas with CSA pick up sites through geo-targeted Facebook ads.

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

The email blasts distributed by New South reach over 3,000 customers, former customers, and interested individuals.

The Local Food Legends event received over 700 RSVPs, and had over 430 confirmed attendees. Beyond that it is impossible to estimate the vast number of people reached via the appearances by members of the Heifer and New South staff as they presented information about CSAs to local service groups, churches, and news outlets across the state combined with the social media users who were exposed to the geo-targeted advertising.

*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).

Pictures of the branded delivery vehicle, staff shirts, and promotional materials from the Local Food Legends event are attached.

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

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

The Appreciative Inquiry process, used by the farmers to develop the name, logo, and shared values of the cooperative is one which is designed around soliciting and using feedback. Since the formation of the New South Produce Cooperative, the organization has regularly solicited feedback from the CSA customers. That feedback directly informed many of the changes to the contents and delivery options for the boxes of produce. This information was gathered informally via interactions with the customers, as well as written and electronic surveys.

ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

A survey asking New South customers to rate their experience from the Spring/Summer 2017 CSA boxes received 90 responses. The quality of the produce received an average rating of 4.52 out of 5. Representative comments from customers included:

“Loved the addition of the recipes that could be made from the products in the box. Loved that I was able to try new veggies that I would not normally choose at the grocery store.”

“Great job everyone. I liked knowing where my food came from and that the meat was antibiotic free and humanely harvested.”

“Excellent produce, though the corn wasn't crisp or too flavorful this year.”

“Loved the cheese! Flowers would have been nice but were too expensive for me.”

New South responded to feedback from previous years by increasing the diversity and variety of produce in the boxes, developing standardized measurements for the size and quality of food (for example, the length of a carrot), and adding locally-made cheeses and flowers as options for the boxes. They continue to solicit feedback in order to adjust and refine the contents of the CSA boxes, the locations of their drop off sites, and other aspects of their transactions in order to improve the customer experience.

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?

a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? The Project did not generate any income.

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).

One of the biggest questions being asked by this project was “Can individual farmers be organized into a cooperative structure that benefits them financially and yields greater access to fresh, locally-grown produce for their community?” Early indications evidence that it is possible to organize individual farmers into cooperatives.

The number of farmers in the cooperative is growing and, in just two years, farmers are beginning to seek out to become members of the cooperative, rather than be recruited. Similarly, the number of communities requesting access to CSA boxes via drop-sites, or workplace agreements has grown steadily and customer retention, which was initially very low, is showing signs of significant improvement in 2018.

Some of the factors contributing to the success of this activity include: improving the diversity in CSA boxes, developing a robust on-line advertising and marketing system, and diversifying the markets available to farmers. Prior to the grant, Heifer believed workplaces would provide the most significant, stable funding stream for CSA boxes. The theory was that having a thousand or more employees - at Dillard’s corporate office in Little Rock or Mercy Hospital in Fort Smith, for example - would provide a captive audience and large customer base. The convenience of picking up produce while at work did, and still does, have some value, however, aspects of that relationship did not work out as well as hoped.

Trying to utilize payroll deduction as a means for those customers to pay for their produce proved too cumbersome and is no longer being pursued by New South. The convenience of workplace delivery did not translate into repeat customers as well as expected either.

Based on early customer feedback, Heifer and New South began focusing on strategies to increase the diversity and quality of produce in the weekly CSA boxes. A quality control guide was developed and is being used by all members of the cooperative to ensure produce would be picked and delivered at peak ripeness. The Cooperative expanded the options available to customers to include a variety of locally-produced meats, cheeses, and flowers. New South now offers CSA shares to be purchased on a bi-weekly basis, rather than every week, to ensure that individuals and couples wanting to participate don't receive more food than they can reasonably eat.

While striving to improve the experience of the individual customer, Heifer and New South have also focused on expanding the markets for their farmers. Actively pursuing wholesale markets has proved to be a greater than expected opportunity. In 2018 New South intends to add an additional full-time staff member devoted exclusively to developing local wholesale markets.

One of the most significant lessons learned relates to developing a clear understanding of the skills necessary to staff a cooperative like New South. During the two-year period of the grant the position of "Community Marketing Manager" was held by 5 different people. The high turnover rate correlates strongly to drops in sales of CSA shares; the primary reason for the high staff turnover was unclear job description, roles and responsibilities. In the off-season, that position is primarily responsible for bringing organization to a complex system, which includes multiple farmers, their crops, and growing seasons, and the customers. In order for farmers to predict how much of each type of produce they need to grow, the staff person must focus on selling CSA shares. Once the harvests are in, the role of the Community Marketing Manager shifts almost entirely to making sure boxes are filled and delivered on schedule. Finding a person with both skill sets was more challenging than expected until the final stages of the grant.

Overall, the model of having Heifer act as a mentoring and supporting organization was essential to achieve the objectives of the LFPP in many levels. Heifer's statewide network of farmers, resources, and organizational ties allowed New South to gain access quickly to potential workplaces and drop-off sites for CSAs. Initial plans allowed for 3-4 years of active mentoring and significant financial support. Based on this experience, it seems more realistic to expect that relationship to last at least 5 years before beginning to slowly taper off, with the eventual outcome of establishing a financially independent, self-sustaining organization in 7-10 years.

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

New South's sales goals did not increase by the amount projected. There are several factors that prevented reaching the sales goals; however, the most prominent is the unusually high turnover rate of the position of community market manager. Given the small staff of New South, and the amount of energy it takes to get a fledgling organization off the ground, it became essential to ensure that each staff member was a strong fit for their position.

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:

Establish clear roles and responsibilities for each partner organization, this includes understanding each's organization internal processes and controls. In this case, the incubating organization, New South is separate from the mentoring organization; mentoring does not necessarily means assuming responsibilities over certain operations of the mentor organization, especially when related to hiring staff for the mentor organization. Heifer was able to manage and facilitate the implementation of U.S. government funds for a new organization, allowing them to grow and scale to be able to now manage donor funds themselves. This was a critical value-add for the cooperative, and important for Heifer to create opportunities and then build the capacity of those individuals and/or organizations to ultimately be able to sustain themselves.

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.

Heifer plans to continue to support the New South Produce Cooperative by having a member of the Heifer staff on the NSPC Board of Directors. Heifer will also continue to utilize its network and social capital in Arkansas to increase opportunities for new markets, add new farmers, provide technical assistance resources for farmers, and assist with governance issues specific to a cooperative. Heifer will continue to provide some operational funding and actively assist as New South pursues other funding sources. Heifer's role will intentionally diminish over the next 3-5 years as New South becomes an independent, financially stable organization.

As previously mentioned, New South has immediate plans to increase their staff to expand the number of wholesale markets available to their farmers. They also plan to increase access of fresh, local produce to the underserved in Arkansas by increasing the ease with which individuals and families can use their SNAP benefits for purchases.

New South's long-term goals include expanding into new parts of the state. Within the next two years they plan to open CSA and wholesale distribution points in eastern Arkansas, while developing relationships with farmers in the southern and northeastern parts of the state for future expansion. They are actively scouting cold-storage facilities and warehouses to serve as distribution hubs across various parts of the state.

- 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?

Heifer and New South would like to continue monitoring the value the cooperative model can offer to small-scale farmers. Most obviously, Heifer would like to track the increase in revenue an individual farmer can expect by having stable sources of revenue through pre-sold CSA packages and wholesale distribution orders. Less obvious, and more difficult to track, are the social values that participating in a cooperative offer to its members and the broader economic impact that increasing the wages of small-scale farmers has on the state.