

**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>	September 30, 2015 – September 29, 2017
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Recipient Organization Name:	Ledge Light Health District
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Eat Fresh New London County
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15FMPPCT0019
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	New London, CT
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,697.63

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: Cindy Barry; Email: cbarry@llhd.org; Phone: 860-448-4883

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.).
 - i. Goal/Objective 1: Establish a New London County Farmers Market Manager Association with participation by at least 75% of market managers, from which to coordinate and promote markets, leverage resources, and train farmers and market managers.
 - a. Progress Made:
 - 1.1. Recruit Members from 18 Farmers' Markets: Eat Fresh New London County (EFNLC) responded to local farmers and market managers, who expressed the need for training, support and networking. Program Coordinator Ms. Cindy Barry established the SECT Farmers' Market Association (SECTFMA), where 83% (15 out of 18) market managers in New London County joined. The SECTFMA also included Ms. Jamie Smith, Farmers' Market Coordinator at the CT Department of Agriculture (CTDoA) and an Environmental Sanitarian from local public health to

provide regulatory information on food handling. The SECTFMA met four times during the off season to share needs/concerns, plan activities, share vendor and market operations information, and receive the training required to accept EBT and WIC/Senior farmers' market vouchers. A group page on Facebook was also used to connect members, share events, and call-out with last minute requests and needs for support.

1.2. Establish Governance, based on Best-Practices: Governance was discussed by the SECTFMA members who decided to forego any rules, dues or formal partnerships. In August 2017, Ms. Barry recruited Ms. Teri Smith of Smith's Acres to coordinate future meetings. Ms. Smith, whose farm attends 20 farmers' markets in the region, has committed to hosting at least two SECTFMA meetings in 2018. Several issues identified by market managers remain unaddressed, i.e., the need for market volunteers, insurance costs and the possibility of a group insurance policy or discounts for SECTFMA members, how to improve vendor retention, finding a more shared approach to market fees, record keeping and incentives.

1.3. Host a Midyear Planning Meeting: The February 2017 meeting was attended by 12 market managers and included a discussion about vendor recruitment and retention. Members created a "farmers' market trail" rack card for New London County, which listed all for the 2017 season in the county. Members then distributed nearly 15,000 rack cards in April thru August 2017 to 20 separate municipalities, public libraries, day care facilities, garden stores, tourist offices, hotels, food pantries, and schools. Recreation and Parks Association distributed rack cards to children in summer recreation camps and recreation programs across the county. The April 2017 meeting was attended by six members and was convened to recertify managers in the WIC Farmers' Market Vouchers program, by Ms. Jaime Smith.

b. Impact on Community: At a recent meeting, market managers reported feeling more confident in market operations and promotion and found value in regular networking with other managers. All markets were certified to take WIC and were compliant with CTDoAg. regulations during the 2017 season. Training was provided to new and existing market managers and the Colchester Farmers' Market completed the process to accept EBT/SNAP at their market. In addition, public health training for vendors about safe food handling resulted in zero complaints foodborne illness from residents visiting farmers' markets. Since most markets measure success differently, have different goals, and do not collect information on vendor income, success was difficult to measure.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Increase participation in farmers' markets by local farmers by 25%.

a. Progress Made: Participation by local farmers increased from 90 in 2015 to 121 (34%) in 2016. In 2017, the number of farmers participating dropped to 102, for a final increase of only 13% compared to 2015. Several opportunities for local farmers are thought to have contributed to this decrease; Farm to School efforts by schools purchasing farm-direct continued to increase, as did the number of farms who expanded their CSA's. Farmers reported an increase in the amount of sales from their roadside stands farm stands. These stands often use the honor system for payment, freeing-up the farmer for farm activities. Fiddleheads Food Coop in New London, CT and several local grocery stores began to offer or expanded their sales of locally grown produce, buying farm-direct. Lesser understood changes included an increase in the number of restaurants purchasing farm-direct, instead of purchasing at farmers' markets. These are great avenues for farmers to sell their crops without the time commitment of attended weekly markets. For several farmers' markets in New London County, this meant having less small farms represented at their market. While new specialty crop farms are being established, there is a shortage of local poultry and seafood farms available to attend markets. With the establishment of higher priced "butcher

shops” becoming trendy, it is suggested that meat, fish and poultry vendors may become even more difficult to secure for local markets.

With regards to the new market in Groton, CT, operated by Thames Valley Sustainable Connections (TVSC), farmers seemed eager to join in 2016 (its first year), because the sales potential was unknown. It was realized during 2016, that the amount of market income could not sustain seven produce farms. In 2017, two farmers who previously participated, chose not to return. Since it was also anticipated there might be fewer sales in year-two, there was no effort to recruit additional farm vendors. It also must be said, that the Groton market includes two large farm vendors - Smith’s Acres and Whittle’s Farm, who at any given market sold five to ten times more than the average small farm, with tent sizes often three times larger. These well-known farms and farmers command a certain level of historic customer loyalty, which is difficult to compete with, often leaving smaller farmers disappointed in what they were making at the market. Often larger farms purchase additional produce at other farms or the Hartford Regional Market, to augment what they are growing themselves. The ability to create a large farm stand with the variety that customers want helps increase customer foot traffic. Small farmers struggle to make the 3-hour trek to the regional market to expand their farm stand.

2.1. Market Analysis: Market analyses will be completed by surveying customers, vendors, market managers and non-customers.

- **Customer Data:** Customer data were collected in Groton, New London, Lisbon and Colchester. The survey tool was made available to all 18 markets in the county. Surveys helped market managers understand what customers were purchasing, how much they were spending, what they wanted to buy at the market, and how the market could be improved. Customers reported how they heard about the market and in what way they wished to be contacted. Customers reported learning about markets, primarily by seeing lawn signs or while driving by. Because of this data, markets countywide increased their use of lawn signs, street banners and newsletters to attract customers.
- **Vendor Data:** A vendor survey tool was designed with input from City Seed in New Haven, CT, two seasoned vendors, and LLHD Epidemiologist Mr. Russ Melmed. In September 2017, surveys were collected from all available vendors at the Groton and New London markets. Ms. Barry drafted a survey report which will inform future market management decisions by TVSC, as they move forward.
- **Market Manager Data:** Market managers were asked to measure the change in the number of farmers participating in their markets, and the growth of their markets. Discussions about market growth suggests that there is no shared definition of “growth”. Other than Groton and New London, no other managers (in the county) collect sales information. Instead, market managers often use changes in crowd size, vendor satisfaction and retention, the number of vendors or the ability to “close” a market (to new vendors) to demonstrate growth.
- **Non-Customer Data:** While no wide-scale surveying of Groton and New London residents was administered, non-customers were asked in small groups about their knowledge and interest in the markets. These groups included individuals attending monthly mobile market stops, education programs, and health fairs. Many people simply did not know the markets existed, some suggested needing a reminder notice, still others had the perception that the market was too expensive. Employees at Electric Boat, one of the largest employers (with offices in both cities), shared that they drive by the market each week when leaving work, but their car-pool prohibits them from stopping.

2.2. **Reporting Key Findings:** All findings were reported to TVSC, SECTFMA members, elected officials and vendors of the Groton and New London markets. Data collected has and will continue to inform future market decisions. Survey tools, now field tested, have been

distributed to managers of other markets and can be replicated or repeated to measure changes over time.

- 2.3. **Working with Farmers to Customize Markets to Meet Customer Demand and Cultural Foods:** The 2016 Customer Survey was shared with farmers who participated in the Groton and New London markets. Farmers from larger farms have been working to offer greater variety, with more greens, herbs (anise, fennel, cilantro and coriander) used in Indian and Hispanic cooking and crops such as okra (an increasingly popular crop in CT) and collards (used in African American cooking). Customers expressed an interest in having more dairy products at the market, so farmers who could provide milk, cheese, ghee and yogurt were invited for the 2017 season – Farm to Gold and Terra Firma Farm attended part-time.
- 2.4. **Farmers' Market Interns Will Work to Support Four Farms at the Market:** At an early advisory meeting with farmers about the Intern Program the number of interns was adjusted from four to three, allowing for more hours per student. In 2017, three interns were hired, one assigned to each of three farms. Applications were distributed at five high schools, with presentations made by Ms. Barry and the 2016 interns. Three high school students were selected - all were very active in their school agriculture programs. Students were hired from June 26, – August 25, paid \$10.10/hr. and worked an average of 16 hours/week. Students spent roughly half of their time on the farm and half of their time at the farmers' market, alongside their farm mentor. In June, interns attended a week-long orientation, prepared by Ms. Barry. The orientation included a five-hour work day and tour on each of the three participating farms, with an opportunity to work along-side the farmers, all who had different practices, farm operations, professional interests and personal philosophies. Students were asked to keep a journal about their experience and met frequently with each other at the end of a market to discuss their experience. The interns marched in the Town of Groton July 4th parade with LLHD staff, wearing costumes - a cow, carrot, and tomato. On August 1, the interns accompanied Ms. Barry and Mr. Melmed to the CT Agricultural Experiment Station's Annual Plant Science Day. This included speakers, exhibits, farm tours and academic posters.

Three farmers were selected to as mentors for the 2017 market season, based on their participation in the Groton and New London Farmers' Market and their willingness to provide a comprehensive farm intern experience. These farms included Whepittituck Farm, Cold Spring Farm, and Sunstone Farm. Each farmer completed an MOU with LLHD, which included a list of guidelines and safety requirements. These completed MOUs are on file at LLHD. The farmers from these farms shared that they found it much easier to participate in local markets because of the farm intern. The interns could contribute time to farm chores, and packing produce and other farm goods for transport to the farmers market. Once at the market, interns organized and displayed goods, and sold produce to the customers. At the end of the internship program, farm mentors and students were asked to evaluate their experience by completing an evaluation form. Intern student Josey Walker is interviewed on LLHD's Health Watch Program mentioned in #3.2 of this report.

- 2.5. **TVSC Will Pilot an Indoor Market to Extend the Season:** The TVSC Advisory Committee decided to pilot a 12-week spring market. It was decided to support these efforts through the USDA FMPP. Two farmers and eight other vendors were recruited to start the market, which was schedule for Saturdays from 9am-1pm from April - June. Despite efforts of LLHD and TVSC the market, which started strong with 200 customers, ended a month early due to declined sales and customers. Reasons given by customers and vendors include: not enough farmers with produce enough to sell, the items for sale were not needed by customers on a weekly basis (pottery, honey, jewelry) there was a myriad of spring garden sales at large stores which were competing for time and money. There were also no senior or WIC vouchers available for customers to use at the market.

b. **Impact on Community:** The data collected was used by market managers and community leaders to improve the market experience for customers, increase profitability for farmers and other vendors, maintain support by elected officials and other community leaders and ultimately ensure sustainability. There was a direct correlation between the number of farmers participating in the market and the number of customers - until a saturation point, which can be different at different markets. Impact in the number of customers, amount in sales, the number of non-farm vendors were observed. The two-year USDA support allowed LLHD and TVSC to use the input from customers, non-customers, vendors and other market managers in the county to pilot changes in operation and promotion. For example, customers can now receive market information in a way that is accessible and tailored to their interests, those of different ethnic groups can now find more produce and meats, needed for their cultural recipes, and an information table can help people using their EBT/SNAP card or pick up recipes or flyers about upcoming market events. Vendors reported wanting more events of “themed days”, as way of attracting more customers. In response, more activities will be added to the 2018 market calendar. Finally, paid student internships extended the reach of local agriculture, making it possible for farmers of small farm to attend markets, improving market awareness by local school personnel, students and parents, and providing an amazing summer experience for students interested in agriculture.

- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Increase market purchases by people of limited means and families with children (to access locally grown, farm fresh fruits, vegetables and foods) at farmers’ markets, by 100%.
- a. Progress Made: In 2016, there were 93 EBT transactions at the New London market, as compared to only 43 in 2012. There were 122 EBT transactions made in 2016 at the new Groton City market. In 2017, LLHD transitioned away from operational activities at the market, with TVSC assuming more responsibility as part of our sustainability plan. Unfortunately, EBT use data at the market was not captured in a way that allows us to confidently measure any change between 2016 and 2017. Building a stronger partnership with local WIC representatives resulted in WIC nutritionists having a physical presence at the market - hosting a tent on Family Days, providing cooking demonstrations and distributing WIC Farmers’ Market Vouchers to their clients while at the market. As a result, there was a significant increase in the number of WIC Coupons redeemed at the New London and Groton markets - increasing redemption values from \$3,448 in 2016 to \$5,802 in 2017.

TVSC made an important change this year by staffing an information table where customers could be welcomed to the market, make EBT transactions, obtain market information, farm maps, health brochures, etc. This added much value to the market and allowed the market manager to focus on sales of his products (at a separate stand), vendor relations, site management, etc.

- 3.1. Establish a Groton City’ EBT/WIC/Senior Coupon Certified Farmers’ Market: The goal of initiating a new market for the City of Groton has been fully realized, with the support from many community partners. The 2017 market was held on Tuesdays, July 11 - October 31, from 3-6 pm. A series of meetings were facilitated by LLHD with newly elected Mayor Keith Hedrick, Director of Recreation Ms. Mary Hill, and representatives from TVSC for the purpose of planning for the market after the conclusion of the USDA-FMPP grant. Discussions included roles and responsibilities of each entity and a transfer of all documents from LLHD to TVSC. Information was shared about community partners and their unique contributions. All reusable grant funded items, i.e., banners, table clothes, ad and poster templates, have been given to TVSC for their reuse. Evident at these meetings was a strong commitment toward working together to sustain the market and improve it over time. Sales figures for the 2017 Groton

Market are thought to be underreported, as many vendor sales sheets were not collected or missing.

- 3.2. Launch a countywide social and conventional media campaign in English and Spanish. An E-Newsletter will be created – rack cards, pocket maps and posters will be distributed: Rack cards were designed and distributed countywide. The rack card was also posted on websites of schools, chambers of commerce, health districts and printed the newspaper in English and Spanish. Banners were hung in front of City Hall, at a large shopping mall, and over Hwy Rt. 1 in Groton, CT. 25 lawn signs were printed and posted at businesses, schools, parks, and other strategic locations. Posters and post cards were printed in English and Spanish. Over 3,000 post cards were distributed through local businesses, along the July 4th parade route, at local events, and at municipal offices. Ms. Barry submitted four articles for the news magazine “Hola”, which is the Spanish language part of The Day Newspaper and delivered to all residents. The Field of Greens e-newsletter subscriptions increased from 600 in 2015 to 1,400 in 2017. These newsletters highlighted all aspects of the Eat Fresh Project with a highlight on vendors, student interns, cooking classes, recipes, and market events. Biweekly advertisements were placed in newspapers which highlighted event days and weekly specials, etc. Facebook was used post and “tag” vendors and customers photographs to reach a wider audience and invite new “friends”. Over 1,600 people to-date have “liked” www.facebook.com/NewLondonFieldofGreens . The website highlighted the market and a new online payment system for vendors was established. www.fog.newlondonfarmersmarket.com. On April 6, 2017 a press released was sent to local papers. LLHD’s “Health Watch” T.V. program was taped at the market on July 26, and can be seen at [Ledge Light Health Watch](#).
- 3.3. Conduct Targeting Outreach through Public Housing Authorities, Food Centers, SNAP Offices, WIC Programs and Senior Centers: Substantial effort was given toward establishing partnerships with agencies that serve low-income residents, e.g., United Way Mobile Food Pantry, Head Start, Riverfront Children Center, social service agencies, public housing authorities, and municipal leaders, etc. Numerous food pantry days, health fairs, flea market and other events were attended with information about the market, \$5 EBT bonus coupons (paid for by TVSC), health information, etc. Participation in the Mayors Health Challenge in New London and the Go Groton Challenge in Groton provided a meaningful connection to other health initiatives and entre into programs for children of all income levels. LLHD worked with the local WIC office, UConn Health Center/SNAP Education Program and Senior Resources to promote the use of WIC vouchers and Senior Nutrition Coupons - meeting to plan 24 cooking demonstrations, weekly nutrition education themes and onsite WIC representatives at the market. CT State Department of Social Services cancelled the Senior Coupon Program for 2017, after the State of CT failed to pass a budget that would have provided them to thousands of residents across the state.
- 3.4. Establish a Latino Market Ambassador at the New London Market: LLHD worked diligently to identify and hire a fully bi-lingual member of the community to serve as market ambassador. LLHD worked with Hispanic agencies and partners, colleges and universities, local newspapers, online employment sites and the VISTA – Americorps program without success. After discussing this challenge with USDA Project Officer, it was decided to reallocate these funds to increasing the hours of the internship program and project coordinator time to write articles for Hola and more materials in Spanish, to be distributed among Spanish speaking communities.
- 3.5. Provide Funding to Run the Senior Van to Groton City: In year-two, the Town of Groton entered into a cost-sharing agreement with LLHD to provide transportation from the Groton Senior Center to the farmers’ market at Washington Park in the City of Groton. This endeavor had marginal success, as less than 12 seniors used the service with an average of six seniors each week. Some of these same seniors had difficulty navigating the park to make their purchases and a few needed more assistance than what was available. If the weather was questionable

- seniors did not come to the market. Having a farm stand at the Senior Center could be explored, to serve seniors who lack transportation.
- 3.6. Provide Healthy Cooking Demonstrations and Food Preservation Classes: Working with UConn Health Center, new recipes were created and tested. UConn used the CTDoAg. crop calendar to schedule recipes for various weeks throughout the season. These recipes were prepared at two markets/week for 12 weeks. Cooking demonstrations were provided by LLHD and coordinated with the SNAP4CT.org website, and themed education was provided by St. Joseph's College and UConn Husky Nutrition Programs who were also at the market, under a separate tent to provide education. Sampling foods were, whenever possible, purchased directly from the farmers at the market and washed and prepared right on-site. Between 60 and 75 samples were prepared at each market with amazing response from customers and vendors alike. Of customers that sampled various recipes, 80% reporting being more likely or very likely to buy the "fruit of the week", 80% reported being likely or very likely to try the recipe at home, and 64% reported being likely or very likely to visit the www.SNAP4CT.org website for more recipes and health tips. In 2017, nine cooking/food preservation classes were offered by TVSC, targeting low-income residents.
 - 3.7. Provide Activities for Children at the Market on a Weekly Basis: A variety of children's activities were planned. In addition to regularly having word games, coloring sheets and scavenger hunts at the market, a Family Day was hosted at the market that invited family serving agencies like public libraries, bike-share programs, Amber Alert, public health, human services to come to the market and provide activities for children. In Groton, the Groton Go Campaign and in New London, the Mayor Fitness Program prompted children to come to the market. The Hispanic Health Council brought their nutrition education puppet show to the market five times in July and children were invited to do taste testing of apples, berries, and melons at the market.

Impact on Community: Solid partnerships have been created to support healthy eating and local agriculture, which will be sustained by TVSC in future years. Groton residents now have increased access to healthy foods, 15 farmers' market managers have completed training on social marketing, data collection, and have become WIC certified, with one additional market becoming EBT/SNAP certified. Cooking demonstrations have proven to increase the likelihood of purchasing fruits and vegetables and preparing healthy recipes at home, and transportation has improved access to farmers' markets for seniors.

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: 7 – TVSC hired a part-time manager and staff to host an information table, One part-time farm assistant was hired by Cold Spring Farm. Three market interns were hired. All three interns were asked to stay passed the grant period.
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 4 - Three jobs were offered by local farms to interns passed the intern period. One TVSC staff was hired and will be retained for the 2018 season.
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 1 – One part-time farm assistant was hired; Sunstone Farm and Cold Spring Farm have recently taken on "Wwoof'ers" with the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms WWOOF program
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 0
 - v. Number of new markets established: 1 – One new farmers market in Groton, CT
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$3,077 and increased by 8.19% from 2015 – 2016. Market sales dropped in New London by \$24,005 or 59% from 2016 to 2017. The market in Groton, CT decreased by \$13,332 from 2016 to 2017 or 24%. Several things may have contributed to this decrease. First, not all market sales sheets were collected in 2017 due to transition of

operations from LLHD to TVSC. There were six market cancellations due to rain and windy weather, and 12 fewer markets because the second market in New London started very late in the season. Observation of customers at the market and the flow of each market day suggests that the market was busy and that more families were coming to the market together, which may not have translated into market sales but that suggested the market was thriving.

- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
 - a. Percent Increase: 17 farmers have benefited from this project. A percent increase of 46.7% over 2015.

- 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? As previously reported, there was an increase in the number of WIC Coupons redeemed at the market and EBT transactions increased during the first year of the project, which indicated that additional low income populations have been reached. Having WIC representatives at the market making vouchers available to their clients was thought to have an influence on the increased number of WIC vouchers redeemed at the market.

- 4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners? TVSC, the Town and City of Groton, the City of New London, Centro de la Comunidad, UConn Health and over 50 state and local agencies, organizations, business, civic organizations, schools, and community leaders helped promote the markets.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project? Over 50 partners contributed to the success of the markets by attended family and senior days, but promoting the market to those they serve, by making suggestions about vendors, by having LLHD speak at their forums, inviting LLHD to table at events such as mobile food distribution sites and health fairs. There were also municipal partners who committed to markets through permits and policies to support them. They gave time to promote the market, by adding market information to their list of resources, websites, Facebook pages, etc. Many attended one or more events at the market, distributed flyers, hung posters and accepted lawn signs.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant? TVSC and the City of Groton are committed to continuing the new market and have begun planning for 2018. TVSC will provide operational support, while the City will assist with promotion. TVSC will expand back to two markets weekly for the City of New London in 2018 and will be contracting with a marketing consultant to continue many of the events and promotion initiated by LLHD. Local senior centers, social service agencies, UConn Health and schools will promote markets, provide education, host cooking demonstrations or attend events.

- 5. **Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?** A contract with the Groton Senior Center increased access to the market among seniors. Contracting with dieticians to host the "Look What's Cooking" stand and offer nutrition education and samples from cooking demonstrations was a big hit.

- 6. **Have you publicized any results yet?***
 - i. **If yes, how did you publicize the results?** Speaking at meetings and memos sent to city officials.

- ii. **To whom did you publicize the results?** Results of the efforts of LLHD were reported to TVSC, elected officials, LLHD Board of Directors, market vendors of the New London and Groton markets and the SECTFMA.
- iii. **How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?** Customer counts at the Groton and New London markets averaged between 300-500 people at each of the 45 markets in 2016 and averaged between 300-400 at each of the markets in 2017.

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

- i. **If so, how did you collect the information?** Customer and vendor surveys were administered at the market. Customer surveys were either given to customers at the market for them to complete or were used interview style with a LLHD staff conducting interviews of customers. Surveys of participating vendors were done by giving them the survey while at the market or sending them a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey, if they were temporary vendors and not physically at the market during the surveying weeks.
- ii. **What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?** Customers want a variety of products at the market so multiple food items can be bought in “one-stop-shopping”, not all customers use social marketing, so outreach needs to be multifaceted. Two main reasons for attending markets are produce freshness and to support local agriculture. Vendors want more events at the market to bring in customers.

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: This form was submitted to USDA from Ledge Light Health District.
- ii. Did the project generate any income? NO
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

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

There were many lessons learned. First and foremost, having a two-year grant funded project (over one-year) meant that LLHD’s Project Coordinator could explore various partnerships in the community that could be leveraged to promote farmers markets e.g., business associations, human service providers, civic organizations, large corporations, U.S. Navy, and farmers. It takes time to explore how supporting a farmers’ market could be of benefit to diverse groups, since a partnership could look different depending on the needs of the group. While time consuming to plan and execute, events or themed days are ways to grow the market, since guest vendors, human service providers, or small businesses tell their clients/customers to come visit them at the market, bringing customers that might not have come otherwise. Market managers need and want assistance with promotion, training, and operations to keeping enthusiasm high throughout the season, since most times they are busy promoting their own stand and business and not the market as a whole. Facebook, newsletters, cross agency promotion, and lawn signs seem to be a winning combination

for promotion. A student internship program builds relationships between the market and local schools, is a wonderful experience for high school students interested in agriculture, and moreover, gives farmers the help they need to attend markets. Farmers have a growing number of opportunities to sell their produce, meats and dairy, often making markets the least favorable due to the considerable time commitment. Markets are an inexpensive way for someone to start a small business, without “brick and mortar” costs, as demonstrated by many vendors who began at the market and now sell their products (soap, bakery items, jewelry, etc.) at local food co-ops, gift shops, and grocery stores, etc. Including local WIC office nutritionists at the market to issue WIC vouchers, offer cooking demonstrations and fun children’s activities, increased redemption rates of WIC farmers’ market vouchers.

Among challenges - Finding staff fluent in both English and Spanish, who could relate to Hispanic communities was difficult. Advertising on multiple websites, employment boards at local colleges, Facebook and local Latino organizations resulted in no viable candidates for the position, which required fluency in English and Spanish and familiarity with local Latinos communities and culture. Perhaps two people are needed; one who can do translation and social media and another who can provide the outreach into the community. Even when the rate of pay was increased, the position went unfilled. Market managers are in competition for customers and vendors, making it challenging to have an honest dialog about promotion, vendor recruitment, incentives, etc. A market location which serves people of low-income is not necessarily the best location for non-farm vendors to make enough money to sustain their participation. The New London market is at a beautiful park but away from higher priced homes, businesses and the downtown. It is in a suitable location to reach those of lower income, without transportation or access to healthy food, perfect for those with EBT and WIC, but not a money maker for those selling non-produce items. Events brought more customers to the market in New London but did not keep the customer base up overtime. Severe weather, i.e., wind, rain and extreme temperatures, greatly reduces market revenue, which is too often the only variable used to measure success. Another challenge was creating an indoor market, with rare exception, an indoor market is difficult to sustain in a low-income area, since the growing season is shorter, due to climate and non-produce vendors couldn’t make enough money to keep coming. There was also a growing and thriving food co-op that was just around the corner from the chosen location and a variety of garden shops, which competed for customers. Lessons in administration include the challenge of deciding on the roles and responsibilities of partners and how the program will be sustained over time. Another challenge is when there is no market advisory committee to make decisions and the market manager is also a vendor. In this situation, conflicts of interest can arise, especially in the absence of a market advisory committee, who can make rules that apply fairly to all vendors.

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. LLHD will continue to support farmers market across its jurisdiction and will be available to work with TVSC on a smooth transition. Several meetings toward the project end resulted in the transition all materials and responsibilities to TVSC. A lengthy list of partners, their contributions and level of commitment to future market seasons have been reviewed and both the City of New London and Groton have pledged their commitment. The 2017 Vendor Survey identified several non-farm vendors and farmers who want to return next season. The market in both cities has improved access to healthy food for thousands of individuals. A new SECTFMA will continue to support the work of 15 market managers in New London County.

- 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? It is suggested that TVSC establish a market advisory committee that meets regularly during the off season, to include vendors and primary stakeholders. This advisory committee would plan events, collect data, review vendor guidelines and fees, and discuss issues such as incentives, volunteer recruitment, vendor retention, market location, etc. Market promotion could be further enhanced, at all markets, with a market information stand and volunteer or staff who could welcome people to the market and give information. A partnership with the CT State Department of Social Services might explore EBT/SNAP use at farmers markets and increase the number of markets that accept EBT/SNAP. A weekly farm stand by Whittle's Farm might be explored for the Groton Senior Center. Farmers might also be interested in donating some of the left-over produce from the market to community meal sites, though this would take some coordination.