Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
Final Performance Report

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

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

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

FMPP Phone: 202-690-4152; Email: USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-690-4152

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact FMPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: *(e.g. September 30, 2014-September 30, 2016)*	October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Allison T. Brantley/ Dr. Tina N. Jones
Authorized Representative Phone:	(205) 652-3828/ (205)652-3833
Authorized Representative Email:	abrantley@uwa.edu/tnj@uwa.edu
Recipient Organization Name:	University of West Alabama / Division of Economic Development & Outreach
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Market to Market (M2M) Growing the Rural Farmers Marketplace
Grant Agreement Number: *(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)*	14-FMPPX-AL-0003
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Livingston, Alabama
Total Awarded Budget:	$99, 250

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FMPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?
☒ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).
☐ Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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

   Overall program objective: The objective of UWA's M2M Project is to support the growth and new market opportunities for rural farmers by providing outreach, training, and technical assistance services to two markets in the Alabama Black Belt Region

Goal/Objective 1: To support growth and new market opportunities for rural farmers by providing outreach, training, and technical assistance services to farmer's market vendors*:*

Progress Made: Nineteen training sessions were held. The focus of the training sessions provided training in small business development strategies for our vendors and opportunities to explore other possible retail opportunities through agriculture. Some of these workshops included financial management for agricultural business, development of business plans, effective growing methods in extreme temperatures, introduction to local business incubators and their services, Farm Services of Alabama, commercial okra production and its potential in West Alabama, cottage industry law course.

In addition, from our needs assessment with vendors, we learned that basic infrastructure items were needed. Tents and display infrastructure was purchased through the grant and are now housed and maintained by farmers' markets. Vendors received training in produce display techniques as a method of selling more produce. Directional highway signage was also developed to help with branding the markets. This is important due to the rural locations of each of these markets. The directional signage and banners allows both markets to bring traffic off of state highways to their small downtown areas (sample promotional materials are attached).

Impact on Community: Famers Markets now have a visual appeal to the community, encouraging participation and establishing a professional atmosphere. With the assistance received by Gainesville and Thomaston, the cities of York and Livingston reached out to us for assistance with their farmers' markets, and they have adopted the branding logos used by both Thomaston and Gainesville. Our hope is that through consistency logo signage a regional network of farmers markets will develop so that these rural communities can leverage resources better. York and Livingston growers now participate in training opportunities, and vendors from Thomasville and Gainesville can sell their products at York and Livingston.

Because each market is open on different days, the vendors are able to have more opportunities to sell thus creating a larger customer base.

In our training sessions and workshops, we regularly have representatives from four counties at events (Greene, Sumter, Marengo and Wilcox) James Childs Farms in Greene County and one of our original farmers at Gainesville now travels not only to the Sumter County markets but to Thomaston in Marengo and Wilcox Cooperative in Wilcox County to participate in their markets.

Goal/ Objective 2: To develop local/regional supply networks linking independent producers with businesses and cooperatives, and to increase promotion of markets by aiding in the development or expansion of current market websites to include at least a promotional page for each market vendor;

Progress Made: The Thomaston and Gainesville Communities work regularly together and have become active members of the Alabama Sustainable Agricultural Network (ASAN). Founded in 2001, ASAN's mission is to support conservation practices and families who grow and consume natural food and fiber, and the communities where they live. The University has become a site for their meetings including hosting their regional Food Forums that brings producers, educators and cooperatives together to share knowledge receive training and network.

The websites were completed for each market and training was delivered to both markets on website maintenance. Both markets were also introduced to social media and given instruction on the development of Facebook pages.

Impact on Community: We have seen each market retain their original five vendors but they now consistently have 8 or more vendors with visitors of more than 50. While the website has helped, word of mouth and visibility in community with signage has seen the most activity due to the rurality of the region. We feel that the biggest impact has been felt in the development of networking between farmers. This is in large part due to the work of Andrew Williams and his vision for Thomasville. By utilizing the Marengo County Economic Development Authority's business incubator and the Deep South Food Alliance, farmers are able to sell peas, turnip greens and collards and watermelons to the cooperative and the cooperative markets to local supermarkets and school districts. In turn the cooperative employs local individuals to prepare, clean, and package the produce for distribution.

At one of our training sessions, we held a farm day, and individuals explored the farm of James Childs and his sons. We had children on the tour ages 7-12. During the tour, we rode in a wagon pulled by a tractor. Two of the young people were visiting family in rural Alabama at the time. During part of the tour, Mr. Childs pulled to a stop to show how he cultivated his tomatoes. He handed the children tomatoes to eat off the vine and then carried them to the field to pick their own watermelon. One of the children exclaimed, "These tomatoes taste different – better. I did not know they could be eaten like apples!" Their excitement over eating fresh produce was incredible. Suddenly an abstract idea became concrete for these children.

Goal/Objective 3: To provide capacity for vendors to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) funds from consumers authorizing transfer of government benefits from a Federal account to a retailer account as payment for products received.

Progress Made: This goal was not met as the Farmers Market at Gainesville felt that they were not ready for this. The Thomaston Farmers market does have the ability to do this, but they attained this ability on their own not through this grant. Thomaston is a participant in the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

Impact on Community: With the opening of the grocery store in Thomaston, Alabama in 2016 (the first in over 25 years), the Thomaston Farmers market has found a new partner for its produce. They are located across the street from one another, and the use of EPT is helping individuals have more access to fresh food.

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, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.
   i. Number of direct jobs created: 1
   ii. Number of jobs retained: 1
   iii. Number of indirect jobs created:
   iv. Number of markets expanded: 2 (Thomaston and Gainesville)
   v. Number of new markets established: 2 (York and St. John's)
   vi. Market sales increased by $100 weekly by farmers and increased by 15-25%
   vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
      a. Percent Increase: From the original data that our office there has been a 25% increased benefit to farmers/producers

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? The only new ethnic group that we saw occasionally participate in our local farmers markets were Asian. These individuals are students at the University of West Alabama.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
   i. Who are your community partners?
   ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?
   iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?

Community Partnerships:
One of the goals of the original application for FMPP was to encourage the local community to see **UWA** as a resource for technical assistance with community development needs such as Farmers Markets. As a result, partnerships within our own university system developed

(academic units). One of the partnerships that developed was through internships and summer camp programming for youth. Interns provided the expertise in website development and training in website management. This is provided valuable hands-on and service learning skills for UWA students while fulfilling a promotional need of the markets.

During the time of the FMPP grant, UWA was also involved in a career exploration camp for high school sophomores and juniors. Most of these students had not thought about agriculture as a possible career or the various careers that can be linked to something like a farmers market (business, marketing, research, etc. .). As part of the 10-day camp, we carried the 32 participants to Thomaston where they visited the market, visited the business incubator site (Deep South Food Alliance) and participated in the packaging of produce, toured a farm, and ate at a local restaurant featuring some of the fresh produce from the area.

Other university partnerships that were originally identified in the grant and were sustained included work with the Small Business Development Center and the Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Services.

The Alabama Sustainable Agricultural Network became a partner. Founded in 2001, ASAN's mission is to support conservation practices and families who grow and consume natural food and fiber, and the communities where they live. They helped locate new growers and bring additional programming to our community.

Regional County Extension partnerships. While we had worked with our local extension agent on different projects, we were not aware of some of the regional opportunities available. At the time of this grant, a new regional extension agent for food safety and quality was hired. She was located in Linden, and had not known whom to contact in the northern part of her coverage area to help in the promotion of her services and classes. Ms. Alice Moore now reserves space on our campus on a regular basis for canning classes, cottage law, serve-pro certification. The space allows for parking access, handicap accessibility, kitchen access, media equipment, and we help with the marketing of the courses to the local community through newspapers, local radio, social media, church bulletins, local community bulletin boards, and TV morning show appearances.

Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Epes, Alabama. Many of our goals and objectives worked hand-in-hand with our local Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Epes, Alabama. They are very active in our community and became a key partner in helping to publicize workshops and training sessions.

Deep South Food Alliance. With this group, we explored crop opportunities for farmers that could be sold to cooperatives. In particular, we were looking at which crops produced the biggest yield, while allowing any surplus to be sold directly at farmers' markets.

Sumter County Chamber of Commerce. We have been working with the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce, located in Livingston, to extend their promotional efforts of Farmers'

Markets across the county. The new assistant director has been traveling to the markets to meet vendors and now regularly promotes their dates of operation in her outreach efforts.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? We contracted with two UWA CIS students to develop websites and social media identity. A Tuscaloosa printing house was used to produce letterhead, signage and promotional signage that branded the program (see attached materials). Once these materials were developed, our staff updated and added any additional branding items.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* No
   i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?
   ii. To whom did you publicize the results?
   iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

   *Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
   i. If so, how did you collect the information? After our training sessions, we asked participants to provide feedback for additional sessions. They were helpful in letting us know that they wanted information about financial practices, microloan information and cooperatives.
   ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Specifically, they helped us decide times of activities. No training was held on the weekends. Our farm tours were held in the afternoon followed by training session. Our longer workshops were held between 10 and 2 as they felt this provided the best window of opportunity for participation.

8. Budget Summary:
   i. As part of the FMPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: ☐
   ii. Did the project generate any income? No
      a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

9. Lessons Learned:

   Lessons Learned: We feel a lesson that we learned is that executing a grant written by another group is not as easy as it sounds. Yes, the framework is there, but when an entity such as ours has three changes of leadership in less than 18 months, the original intent may get lost in translation. Therefore, during the course of the grant

period, it felt as if we had to return to the introduction process again and again hindering the achievement of some of the original outcomes. With that said, we feel that we now have a better understanding of not only what is expected of this grant but some ways in which we could write a stronger application in the future. For example, in the original grant the focus was on the farmers and their education about farmers' markets. While that education is still needed (we have a list of activities we want to do and we plan to execute by utilizing the partnerships mentioned earlier, we realized that education of the customer is also important. When we reached out to the children through the career camp and our farm tours, there was a realization that there is a need, even among our rural youth, to be exposed to fresh produce, its production and its relationship to a healthy lifestyle. These individuals and their parents needed opportunities to taste and experience fresh food in different ways so that in turn they would more likely to shop at the farmers' markets.

A goal that was not achieved was the ability for Gainesville to conduct EBT transactions. During the administration of the grant, the person who had originally worked to establish the farmers market became ill, and the management of market was uncertain. The city now provides space and storage for the farmer's market materials and we will continue to assist them in finding a way to offer this service.

As an administrator, I learned a lot from this grant, as I had never tried to execute a grant that I had not written before. As our university underwent a series of drastic administration changes, I wished I had asked more questions. This grant is a great opportunity for our region and has the potential to help not only the farmers but enrich the community. Our Division focuses on the improvement of the region every day, but I don't think I truly understood how farmers' markets could be community gathering places not just places to buy fresh food in isolated areas until we were at the end of our time. I think if we had realized that sooner, it would have helped us move past the introduction stage quicker and utilize the networks we have in more innovative ways. My regret is that we did not have another year to finish the work.

10. Future Work:

In order to continue the work that was started, we have set as a goal to host one quarterly workshop that focuses on food. In this way, we want to bring farmers and the community together. We are also sharing our lists of local food producers with regional festivals and events to encourage participation in these activities by our local farmers. We hope this participation will help them continue to build a following that translates in more customers at the farmers' markets. We continue to promote the dates and locations of the farmers' markets as part of our regular community outreach efforts.

As noted earlier, one of our next steps is to focus on children. In working with our local community both in Thomaston and Gainesville, both stated the need to get younger people involved in producing food. Our farmers are aging. Therefore, we have now

adopted as part of our career exploration camps and agriscience unit. In our Health Career Camps that we also oversee, we have included a nutrition unit. And in our Certified Nursing Assistant program, we have also added a healthy living unit for the participants. Our goal is that through exposure, that these individuals will begin to make better decisions when it comes to eating.

Career Camps are scheduled in June for the next three years. Each year with each session, we have a total capacity of 189 students. The CNA program currently has 30 students enrolled with a capacity of 60 over the course of one year.

In addition, we are working with our university's academic deans to explore possible academic programs not currently available at UWA that might encourage students to see agriscience as a viable career path.

We have created a community orchard and a three sisters garden on campus. We invite the community to pick and enjoy through social media. We plan to target families with a cooking opportunity in July. This summer 2017, we are working a summer community container garden for UWA's campus school (ages 3- 6th grade in summer). The students will work with our staff to plant, cultivate and harvest.

Finally, during the grant period for the FMPP, our state reorganized its Workforce Development Councils. In that process, it was realized that a local Alabama Career Center was needed in our community. This was opened on Feb. 28 on the UWA campus, and they have become a valuable resource for services, such as skills training. Similarly, the Marengo County Economic Development Authority, UWA, and the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce have created a regional incubator network and it is our hope that we can provide a space that might nurture our local entrepreneurs as Marengo County has with the Deep South Alliance. We will continue to work with this group.

ST. JOHN COMMUNITY

FARMER'S MARKET

Baked Goods • Fresh Produce • Farm Eggs • Honey

GAINESVILLE, AL

Open 2nd 3rd 4th 5th
SATURDAY

8 a.m. – 12 Noon

Highway 116

PANOLA, AL

Open Every 1st
SATURDAY

8 a.m. – 12 Noon

INTERSECTION OF
Highways 85 & 35

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ST. JOHN COMMUNITY

FARMER'S MARKET

Baked Goods • Fresh Produce • Farm Eggs • Honey

GRAND OPENING

Saturday, June 20, 2015

Highway 116

DOWNTOWN GAINESVILLE

• ALABAMA •

THOMASTON COMMUNITY

FARMERS MARKET

Baked Goods • Fresh Produce • Farm Eggs • Honey

OPEN EVERY SATURDAY

8 AM - 12 NOON

Intersection of Highway 25 & 28

▪ DOWNTOWN THOMASTON, ALABAMA ▪

▪ 334-216-1344 ▪

THOMASTON COMMUNITY

FARMER'S MARKET

5850 Hwy 66 • Safford, Alabama 36773 • 334-216-1344 • andrewwilliams66@yahoo.com

ST. JOHN COMMUNITY

FRESH & FLEA MARKET

1828 Warsaw Road Highway 85 • Aliceville, Alabama 35442 • 205-499-6510 • 334-328-9147