

## 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 LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: [USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov](mailto: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.

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2015 – March 29, 2018
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Thomas J. Nissly
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<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Chicago Horticultural Society
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Windy City Harvest Food Hub
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-LFPP-IL-0146
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2015
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Chicago, Illinois
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$93,544

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0287. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable sex, marital status, or familial status, parental status religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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: Julie Steffens; Email: [jsteffens@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:jsteffens@chicagobotanic.org); Phone: 847-835-6835

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: Establish a food hub and micro-processing center in North Lawndale.

- a. Progress Made: Progress complete. Despite a significant delay renovating the facility, programming has been taking place at the Farm on Ogden since November, 2017, and the facility opened to the public in June, 2018. The facility was established in partnership with the Lawndale Christian Health Center (LCHC), which purchased the building conducted a joint fundraising campaign with the Chicago Horticultural Society, oversaw its design, and hired contractors to complete the work. A longer fundraising timeline than anticipated, along with some challenges receiving permits for the multi-use facility, elongated the project timeline and necessitated the development of a work-around plan for programming, ensuring that programming remained on track during renovation.

Several partners assisted with the establishment of the Farm on Ogden, including the commercial kitchen that was partially funded by the LFPP grant. Mary Ann Fitzgerald, President of Edible Cuts, a Chicago-based subdivision of regional produce distributor Midwest Foods that specializes in micro-processed and ready-to-eat produce, consulted on the selection of equipment for the wash/pack line, cold storage, and commercial kitchen. Bushel & Peck's a Wisconsin-based local foods business specializing in value-added goods, also consulted on equipment. Chef Kris Murray, former Dean of the Washburn Culinary Institute, also assisted with the equipment and kitchen layout, with an eye to design for teaching/instruction.

Impact on Community: Programming has been taking place at the Farm on Ogden since winter 2017, when a crew of 12 Corps transitional jobs participants received jobs training as they learned basic construction techniques and assisted with facility setup. Staff moved in to the facility in April, 2018, and soon after the aggregation process transitioned to the Farm. Aggregation combines produce from Windy City Harvest production sites throughout the Chicago-area, as well as the produce from small farm business owners in its farm incubator program. These entrepreneurs receive assistance from Windy City Harvest in launching urban farms, including access to land, tools, mentoring, and the Farm on Ogden's cold storage and aggregation. The aggregation process enables them to grow and sell produce using Windy City Harvest's business license and access its existing sales channels, rather than struggling to establish those relationships in the first years of farming.

The Farm on Ogden's grand opening celebration took place in late June, 2018, with significant fanfare. On June 22, more than 200 supporters of the Farm on Ogden's renovation and programming joined to mark the occasion. Visitors were engaged in interpretive tours of the facility led by Windy City Harvest participants, who described how they participated in Farm on Ogden renovations, and how the new facilities will support future programming. A half-hour speaking program included remarks from United States Senator Dick Durbin, Cook County Board President Tony Preckwinkle, LCHC's Chief Medical Officer, and CHS's President & CEO. Each described their own personal connection to Windy City Harvest's urban agriculture programming; President Preckwinkle spoke movingly about how the Farm on Ogden advances two missions of the Cook County Board: reducing recidivism among ex-offenders and providing jobs training and economic opportunity.

A public opening, held the next day, welcomed an astonishing 1,500 community members, many drawn by radio and television news coverage of the event. Programming included tours and introduced many new community members to Windy City Harvest's programs, which include paid youth development opportunities and transitional jobs, a 9-month certificate program conducted in partnership with City Colleges of Chicago, continuing education courses for local foods entrepreneurs, and the farm incubator program. Programming was designed to engage the diverse community in culturally-appropriate ways, and included a music and dance by groups of local performers, including a spectacular ballet folklórico (traditional Mexican dance). The event energized the community and resulted in applicants to Windy City Harvest programs, as well as a surge of prospective volunteers.

- ii. Goal/Objective 2: Train farmers and entrepreneurs in micro-processing practices and the development of value-added products.
  - a. Progress Made: WCH staff consulted with a number of partners to create the curriculum for the value-added product certificate course, as detailed in response to question 4. Contractors with expertise in food safety and the cottage food industry were hired to conduct the course. The course was divided into three sections, each of which conferred a certificate upon completion: 1) introduction to cottage food law and food safety, 2) specific food preservation techniques, and 3) recipe development. Feedback was collected from program participants and will be incorporated into subsequent program delivery.

Windy City Harvest also trained its own staff participants in its Youth Farm leadership development program in the creation of value-added products, including applesauce, honey, beeswax-based body care products, and produce boxes.
  - b. Impact on Community: Eleven students enrolled in the value-added product certificate, some in multiple sessions, with 15 total certificates conferred. As detailed under "feedback," students provided helpful insight into future program adaptations, as well as praising the thorough and relevant curriculum.

Value-added product sales through the conclusion of the grant period totaled \$38,824, nearly doubling the project's \$20,000 target.

- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Increase access to local food for diverse audiences, including community residents and commercial businesses.
  - a. Progress Made: The project increased access to hyper-local fruits and vegetables to a combined total of 30 wholesalers, retailers, healthcare facilities, and community markets, which provided reduced-priced produce to low-income individuals. Seven new market channels were developed throughout the project period; these included Chicago's 61<sup>st</sup> Street Farmers' Market, two corner stores in west suburban Maywood, and Catholic Charities, advancing Windy City Harvest's goal to serve low-income residents of food desert communities. The VeggieRx program ran for two full seasons during the grant period; LCHC healthcare providers channeled patients with diet-related disease into the program, which combines nutrition education, free produce boxes, and cooking demonstrations featuring simple recipes.
  - b. Impact on Community: During the project period, Windy City Harvest aggregated and distributed a total of 152,576 pounds of produce, including 85,534 pounds (more than 122,000 servings) of produce sold at reduced rates or donated to low-income community members. Distribution to low-income community members increased by more than 3,000 pounds in 2017. The VeggieRx program distributed 1,046 boxes of free produce to low-income individuals, surpassing the goal of 900 boxes distributed.
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: None.
  - ii. Number of jobs retained: Nine jobs were retained through the duration of the grant.
  - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Six part-time positions created. Though not funded by the LFPP grant, three seasonal VeggieRx coordinators, one coordinator of certificate programs, one Farm on Ogden coordinator, and one retail coordinator were hired as a result of the facility's establishment and related programming.
  - iv. Number of markets expanded: No markets were expanded during the grant period.
  - v. Number of new markets established: Seven markets channels were initiated through the grant period.
  - vi. Market sales increased by \$\_and increased by %. Because incubator farmers choose their own markets, and because different businesses participate every year, measuring a % increase of incubator sales through Windy City Harvest's sales channels is not an adequate measure of the program's benefit to incubator farmers. For example, only three farm businesses utilized aggregation in 2017, resulting in \$14,731 in sales, compared to five businesses generating \$21,139 in 2016. Aggregation participation by incubators in 2017 was likely reduced because Windy City Harvest instituted a volunteer service hours requirement to offset the significant amount of Windy City Harvest staff time spent packing and grading incubator produce.
  - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 19

a. Percent Increase: The initiatives launched by this grant, such as aggregation, are all new initiatives that were not accessible by small farmers prior to the grant. Therefore, it is not possible to calculate a % increase in farmer participation, as there is no baseline.

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?

Yes. Launched in 2016, the aggregation process facilitated the “VeggieRx” prescription produce program, in partnership with the Lawndale Christian Health Center. Throughout the grant period, the project directly served 437 individuals, who received free nutrition education and a free box of local, culturally-appropriate produce. An additional 1,346 individuals, including 804 children, were members of direct participants’ households and indirectly benefitted from their family members’ participation. Participants mirrored the demographics of the surrounding Lawndale neighborhood, and included 33% Hispanic and 62% African American participants, with the remaining 5% representing a mixture of multi-racial, Caucasian, and Asian participants. Women’s participation (78%) outpaced that of men (22%). A partnership with Catholic Charities developed in 2016 connected Windy City Harvest with its distribution of local produce to Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) recipients, who purchase produce in exchange for Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners? Partners include the Lawndale Christian Health Center (LCHC), University of Illinois – Chicago Department of Nutrition Education (UIC), Chicago Department of Public Health, University of Chicago, Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children, Proviso Partners for Health, Midwest Foods, Bushel & Peck’s, Elizabeth Restaurant, Bon Appetit Management Company, Hilton Chicago, Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion (CPHP), Catholic Charities, Lake County Health Department, and the University of Illinois Extension.
- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? LCHC purchased the food hub, oversaw its design, and hired contractors to outfit the facility. Windy City Harvest is in the first year of a ten-year lease to run and maintain the facility; the option to renew the lease for a subsequent decade is included in the MOU executed by LCHC and Windy City Harvest in October, 2017. The Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children connected Windy City Harvest to corner stores who were interested in purchasing produce in Maywood, a western suburb of Chicago that lacks a full-service grocery store. Windy City Harvest serviced this new market channel in 2017 before determining that it was more appropriate for a smaller local producer. Proviso Partners for Health, which owns several community gardens in the area, assumed distribution to these outlets. Midwest Foods and Bushel & Peck’s consulted on the selection of micro-processing and kitchen equipment. LCHC, CPHP, and the UIC dietetics program helped develop the VeggieRx curriculum, while CPHP conducted nutrition education delivery. The University of Illinois Extension and chefs from Elizabeth Restaurant, Bon Appetit Management Company, and Hilton Chicago consulted on the value-added product certificate curriculum. The University of Chicago hosted the course in a temporary location while Farm on Ogden renovations were being completed. The Lake County Health Department partners with Windy City Harvest to provide nutrition education to

families in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, while sales to Catholic Charities facilitate its food distribution to WIC recipients.

- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? As outlined in the lease agreement, LCHC is responsible for the Farm on Ogden's maintenance and upkeep, while Windy City Harvest is responsible for maintenance and utility costs. LCHC will also continue supporting the VeggieRx program through physician training, internal marketing, and patient follow-through. CPHP will continue to provide nutrition education in support of VeggieRx, while Lake County Health Department and Catholic Charities will continue their successful partnerships serving WIC families.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? Yes. Two contractors were engaged to conduct the value-added product certificate. Justin Behlke, culinary director and head of research development for Elizabeth Restaurant, taught the first session. Local food entrepreneur and professional chef Maddie LaKind taught sessions two and three.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?\* Yes.

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

The most significant publicity was conducted around the Farm on Ogden's public opening in June 2018. Press coverage included an article published in the *Chicago Tribune* the week prior to the opening, and an article published on the *Chicago Tonight* website. Day-of media coverage included local television news coverage on [ABC](#), [CBS](#), [NBC](#), [WGN](#), and [CLTV](#). [CBS Radio](#) and [WBEZ](#) (National Public Radio) also covered the event.

The Chicago Horticultural Society and its partner, the Lawndale Christian Health Center, publicized the Farm on Ogden and related programming throughout the project period. Programming was presented at the 2016, 2017, and 2018 Good Food Festival, a significant local foods forum held annually in Chicago. The project gained significant attention through its participation as a finalist in the Food to Market Challenge, a competitive grant competition that selected Windy City Harvest as a finalist. The Windy City Harvest model was shared by Project Director Mason at an October 2016 "pitch" event held at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. The team also developed a [video](#) for this event, which is hosted on the Chicago Botanic Garden's Youtube channel. In late 2016, the *Chicago Tribune* included Windy City Harvest at the top of its "5 City Farming Efforts to Watch Next Year," citing the Farm on Ogden's workforce development, farmer education, and food access. The Farm on Ogden and VeggieRx program were publicized by the Garden's Winter 2017 edition of its *Keep Growing* member magazine. The article, titled "A Prescription for Health in Chicago's North Lawndale," discussed the VeggieRx partnership with LCHC and the job training capabilities ushered by the farm on Ogden. LCHC also featured the Farm on Ogden in its 2017 annual report.

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

Publicity reached a wide audience, including local television, print, and radio audiences in Chicago, a major media market. Garden and LCHC stakeholders were reached through the Farm on Ogden pitch event, member magazine, and annual report story.

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

Publicity reached an estimated audience of nearly two million (1,990,141) individuals.

\*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? Yes. Staff continually collects informal feedback from project partners related to the Farm on Ogden's role within the local food industry, and from community members on the facility's programmatic offerings and its ability to address community needs. Input on the quality of produce aggregated at the Farm on Ogden is regularly provided by Windy City Harvest's commercial-scale customers, including distributors, restaurants, and social service organizations. Feedback and suggestions for the value-added product course was gathered from students at the conclusion of each of the three sub-sections of the class. VeggieRx participants were surveyed about the quality and content of the nutrition education sessions, produce boxes, and barriers to purchasing and consuming produce.
  - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Project partners are pleased with the new amenities and training initiatives that will be facilitated by the Farm on Ogden. Employment partners are enthusiastic about the new and deepened workforce preparation that Windy City Harvest trainees can now access, particularly related to packing, preparing, and distributing produce for sale. The most frequently expressed needs from community members—job opportunities and food access—are directly addressed by its suite of jobs training programs, VeggieRx program, and year-round farm stand. As programming progresses in the new facility, Windy City Harvest staff will continue to collect and adapt to feedback from various stakeholders. By and large, the feedback from Windy City Harvest's commercial-scale customers is that they wish that more of its high-quality offerings were available from local producers, a problem that Windy City Harvest seeks to remedy in the long-term by including more external farm businesses in its aggregation process. Participants in the value-added product course were largely positive about the experience, lauding the thorough curriculum and content. Participants requested longer course sections that would facilitate longer, continuous time in the kitchen, and this feedback has been incorporated into the course structure moving forward.

As previously reported, the final results of the VeggieRx program were promising. Survey data indicates that participants gained knowledge and changed their attitudes toward accessing and consuming local produce. For example, while first-time attendees cited lack of cooking knowledge as the second most prominent barrier to eating fruits and vegetables, only 11% of those who attended multiple sessions reported that they "did not know how to cook." Survey responses gathered from repeat participants demonstrate that the project increased the purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables among SNAP recipients. The total share of participants who reported eating three or more servings of vegetables per day jumped by 38%, and the vast majority (79%) consumed more than half of the half-bushel produce box that they received. And indication of its cultural appropriateness, the produce in the box was well-rated (above 4 on a 5-point scale) for overall enjoyment, familiarity, and ease of preparation.

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:  The report was submitted prior to the completion of this report.

ii. Did the project generate any income? Yes.

a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? Windy City Harvest sales totaled \$404,483, for an annual average of \$202,242, surpassing the proposed sales goal of \$195,000. Value-added products generated an additional \$38,824 in sales. Revenue generated from Windy City Harvest production sites was re-invested into the program; revenue from incubator farmer sales was given to the individual business owners.

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).

The LFPP project offered a number of valuable lessons in establishing and further developing mutually beneficial relationships with local foods businesses. The Farm on Ogden's establishment would not have been possible without the partnership of the partners described in (4). The Farm and its facilities were designed with both the local community, farmers, and both non-profit and for-profit partnerships in mind. In addition to providing sales channels for incubator farmers, the aggregation process will provide Windy City Harvest's purchasers, including local distributors, restaurants, healthcare providers, and social service agencies, with a more consistent supply of the products that their audiences are interested in. In addition, the commercial kitchen will provide training opportunities to Corps transitional jobs participants, who will learn how to sort, clean, pack, and microprocess produce. These transferable job skills create candidates that are prepared to enter the workforce in food industry jobs, serving both the participants and employers.

The process of planning, renovating, and opening the facility also brought with it a number of lessons, primarily related to the regulatory environment for multi-use facilities, and the timeline for a large-scale facility renovation. The project was initially envisioned as a multi-phase operation, but after it became clear that it would be more cost effective to renovate the entire facility in a single stage, the timeline significantly lengthened. Further, though only the planning and programming of the aggregation and kitchen spaces were funded through the LFPP grant, the Farm on Ogden also includes a community education space, office space, greenhouse, aquaponics facility, and retail space. Permitting the facility for these many purposes impacted the commercial kitchen in particular, as regulators were challenged by city statutes that do not account for a multi-use space. Windy City Harvest staff recommends early, consistent, and thorough communication with relevant regulatory bodies in order to plan and execute projects of this type and scale.

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

Almost all project goals were either achieved or surpassed. The only goal that was not achieved was that of training 30 individuals in microprocessing and value-added product development. Windy City Harvest staff hoped to deliver the value-added product certificate course suite twice during the project period, but due to construction delays, were only able to deliver the course

once prior to the end of the grant period. Course delivery was facilitated by the University of Chicago, which provided the use of its facilities as staff awaited the renovation of the Farm on Ogden. Please see (i) for lessons learned regarding renovation timeline and permitting for multi-use spaces.

- 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:  
Project staff recommends involving partners or consultants on the design of the aggregation space and kitchen, particularly as relates to USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification and Department of Health specifications.

#### 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.

Windy City Harvest will continue to deliver multiple sessions of the value-added product course, with the goal of issuing at least 15 certificates each year. Based on participant feedback in the inaugural course offering, the program will now be conducted in the form of separate, daylong intensives on food safety and basic preservation principles, canning/fermentation, and drying. Windy City Harvest staff will continue to solicit participant and community feedback on its offerings, and explore adaptations that best fit its service population, which is a mix of small farm business owners and individuals interested in small-scale cottage food production.

The VeggieRx program will continue and expand over the next four years. Windy City Harvest is working with LCHC to expand delivery to reach patients at its four satellite clinics in nearby Chicago communities, including Little Village, West Garfield Park, and Archer Heights. Beginning in June 2018, Windy City Harvest launched a new partnership with Loyola University Health System and has launched VeggieRx at one of its satellite clinics in Chicago's western suburbs. A number of additional Chicago-based healthcare providers have reached out to Windy City Harvest to explore the possibility of adapting VeggieRx at their clinics, or to purchase local produce for their in-house food suppliers.

Demand for local produce in Chicago currently outstrips supply, and as demand grows, Windy City Harvest hopes to forge partnerships with other local producers to join the aggregation process and supply prospective buyers, particularly with the goal of expanding VeggieRx to new healthcare providers. The equipment provided by the LFPP grant, as well as the other facilities at the Farm on Ogden, will be key to facilitating this type of collaboration.

Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals? Next steps include pulling together local urban agriculture organizations, most notably Chicago-based Advocates for Urban Agriculture, to learn how better to support farmers and community gardeners in the Chicago region who are interested in marketing value-added products.