

**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>	April 1, 2015 – September 29, 2015
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Dave Christopolis
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<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Hilltown Community Development Corporation
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Community Planning for a Regional Food System in the Hilltowns
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-MA-0076
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2014
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Chesterfield, MA
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$25,000

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

- Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).  
 Different individual: Name: \_\_\_\_\_; Email: \_\_\_\_\_; Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### **Goal/Objective 1: Organize the community**

The Hilltown CDC held 4 community meetings in 2012 and 2013 that were facilitated by UMASS professor Joseph Krupczynski and Hilltown CDC Executive Director Dave Christopolis to identify topics of community interest. As stated earlier, feedback from residents that attended these meetings indicated strong interest in participating in a food and farming project to strengthen agriculture in the region. Conversations with farmers in the region confirmed support for Keep Farming as an appropriate method of engaging the community, with a successful Keep Farming process having recently taken place in nearby Berkshire County. Hilltown CDC then applied to the USDA Local Food Promotion Grant to undergo a Keep Farming community planning process in an 8-town region of the Hilltowns.

The Hilltown CDC’s proposal was accepted to receive a grant award from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Services’ Local Food Promotion Program to implement Keep Farming for one-year from September 2014 through Sept 2015. Hilltown CDC is the sponsoring organization, partnering with consultant Melissa Adams, the Old Creamery Cooperative, and Agricultural Commissions and Select Boards in participating towns<sup>1</sup>.

Farmers and others that provided letters of support for the grant proposal were contacted to thank them and inform them that project funding had been secured to begin the project.

Project partners continued outreach in Fall of 2014 to notify stakeholders about the project. This included meetings with the Cooperative Creamery Board, Agricultural Commissions and Select Boards of participating towns to inform members about the project, how it will benefit the community, and confirm interest in participating. Additional outreach was conducted to key individuals and organizations in the community through emails, phone calls, and meetings. Descriptions of the project were sent out to the broader community through Hilltown CDC and Old Creamery Cooperative e-newsletters (200 members and 1,200 members, respectively) and a press release was provided to local newspapers announcing the project and the date of the community kickoff meeting.

A community kickoff forum for Keep Farming in the Hilltowns took place on November 17 at the Cumington Community House. 60 people attended the event, including 30 farmers. The purpose of the meeting was to inform stakeholders about the project, provide them with the opportunity to provide some initial feedback, and explain how to get actively involved as a volunteer. After a presentation and discussion, attendees divided up into smaller, guided break-out groups to form 2 teams based on interest: Local Food and Local

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<sup>1</sup> 7 of the 8 participating towns have an Agricultural Commission or similar town committee; Goshen is the only town that does not, so approval was provided through the Select Board.

Farms. The role of each group throughout the upcoming process was described in more detail by project partners in each group and attendees were given more time to provide feedback about the project. Contact information was collected from interested attendees to inform them of project updates through quarterly emails.

### **Goal/ Objective 2: Gather Data**

The Local Food team and Local Farm teams met monthly from December 2014 through May of 2015 to collect regional data about current demand for and supply of local food and farm products to help inform the process. The volunteer teams were provided guidance and sample surveys to adapt to the needs of the community.

**Local Food Team:** The purpose of this team was to help the community better understand the demand for locally produced food in the region. The team conducted the following surveys:

*RESIDENT SURVEY:* To determine where residents are purchasing their food, how much is local, and interest in increasing the amount of local foods they purchase and consume.

*STORES, RESTAURANTS & DISTRIBUTORS:* To determine how much local food is being purchased by local stores and restaurants and to identify interest and/or barriers to purchasing more local food from area farmers.

*SCHOOLS & MEALS PROGRAMS:* To understand where schools and meals programs currently get their food, identify any barriers to serving more local food, and any assistance needed.

**Local Farms Team:** The purpose of this team was to help the community better understand existing agriculture in the region. Team members developed a list of farms in the region and invited farmers to a farmer's forum lunch on March 22, 2015. The purpose of this event was to get feedback from farmers about challenges and opportunities for farming in the region as well as to introduce the farmer's survey, explain its importance and assure confidentiality of results by individual farm. A meal highlighting available locally produced food was shared by attendees and the event offered an opportunity to further develop relationships. Farm team members developed and conducted the following survey:

*FARMERS SURVEY:* To obtain information about existing commercial farms, what they are producing, and what is needed to support viable farms in the Hilltowns.

Surveys were distributed through multiple methods. Online google surveys were sent out through e-newsletters and hard copies were made available in public places including libraries, post offices, and town halls in the participating towns. Personal interviews were conducted with willing store and restaurant owners and school district dining services staff.

Survey results were compiled into spreadsheets, summarized, and reviewed by members of the volunteer teams. Findings of food and farm surveys were reviewed by both teams to identify needs and opportunities for resulting actions in the Hilltowns.

### **Goal/Objective 3: Develop Action Plan**

Farm and Food teams were combined and members met together in June and July 2015, along with additional leaders within the community that had been provided with information throughout the process and were invited to participate. The purpose of these meetings was to develop a list of preliminary actions based on survey findings and feedback gathered at the community launch forum and the farmer's forum. A list of potential actions was developed that was divided into general categories based on identified goals. This list was then reviewed and revised based on the feasibility of implementation for the Hilltown CDC or other project partners to achieve project goals, with the assumption that implementation funding would need to be secured for some activities.

Findings and draft actions were presented at the Keep Farming in the Hilltowns Community Forum on August 24, 2015 to 25 attendees in order to obtain input from the broader community about the feasibility of proposed activities. After presenting a summary of findings and proposed actions, a discussion period offered the opportunity for questions and comments. Attendees were then encouraged to prioritize potential actions that were listed in the front of the room by putting a sticker on their top 5 favorites. Feedback from this community meeting was compiled and incorporated into the final list of actions in this plan. See question 12 in this document for completed action plan.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable.
  - I. Number of farmers that participated by taking a survey: **60+ attendees to kick off, 35 volunteers, 103 farmers engaged**
  - II. Number of farmers that participate by attending team meetings and/or forums: **Community Kickoff 30 farmers, monthly team meetings 10+ farmers, farmers forum 13, community forum 10 farmers,**
  - III. Number of residents that participated by attending team meetings and/or forums: **More than 60 community members attended our Kick Off Meeting, and 35 community members have participated in monthly volunteer meetings, 25 community members came to our community forum, and we will submit the Action Plan to the general community for final comments in January 2016.**
  - IV. Number of residents that participated by completing survey: **More than 160 residents have completed the survey, and we will continue to collect responses through April 15th, 2015.**
  - V. Number of school districts that participated by completing a survey/interview: **1 School completed a survey.**

- VII. Number of stores and distributors that participated by completing a survey/interview: **Over 11 stores have done interviews.**
- VIII. Number of residents reached through direct email contact with project updates: **170, and creamery newsletter (1,200)**

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, the farming population. As an organization we provide low income housing units, and have surveyed our tenants and recipients of our Elder's program. 43.5% of respondents are over the age of 60, 13% over the age of 70. 37.9% of respondents say their households make less than \$50,000 a year, and 14.9% make less than \$25,000.**

4. Discuss your community partnerships. Who are your community partners? **Old Creamery Co-op, Town Select board, Town Agricultural Commissions, Representatives from the following organizations are also participating: Forever Farmland, Hilltown Land Trust, Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions (MAAC), Western Massachusetts Food Bank, Representative Steve Kulik, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Hampshire Regional Council of Governments, United Way of Hampshire County, and the Hilltown Community Health Center.**

5. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? **Our partners have helped us guide the project through planning meetings and helped with promotion and outreach for the project and recruiting volunteers through e-newsletters, advertisements on their websites, social media, and through word of mouth.**

6. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? **Our community partners will continue to be involved; will help implement our action plan with a focus on the priorities established by the communities and will continue with project guidance and provide in-kind support. We are working closely across the state with a group of advocates to implement a state wide food plan which has been developed through a Food Policy Council. We anticipate legislation that will provide resources for local food and farming projects.**

7. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? **We are using Melissa Adams as a contracted consultant. Melissa has worked with similar Keep Farming projects in other regions in addition to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources as a farm planning consultant and other agricultural and planning organizations. She provides our project with guidance and structure as well as connections and relationships with organizations, residents and farmers within the community.**

8. Have you publicized any results yet?\*

I. If yes, how did you publicize the results? **We've publicized our progress through quarterly newsletters, on our website and our program's social media. We've also run press releases in local newspapers and made announcements at other agricultural events such as: Agricultural Commission Roundtable 1/10/15, Berkshire Grown Buyer/Producer event 3/3/15. The Hilltown CDC Annual Meeting 3/30/15, Health Equity Network Meeting 3/31/15. In addition, we held a community forum for**

**feedback on our draft action plan and once the draft is finalized we will open one final comment period for the public (slated for early January 2016).**

**II. To whom did you publicize the results? To all attendees of our meetings, farmers and business in the 8 towns, 170 residents through an email newsletter, steering committee members from the Old Creamery, more than 600 members from the Hilltown CDC newsletter, 1,200 recipients of the Old Creamery newsletter, and to the general public in the region through press releases in local newspapers.**

**III. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? An estimated 1,000+.**

\*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).

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

**I. If so, how did you collect the information? We collected feedback on project scope and agricultural issues at our Community Kickoff meeting through the general discussion session and group breakouts. At our Farmers' Forum we solicited structured feedback from farmers in the 8 towns through discussion and the completion of detailed farmers' surveys. We also collected feedback from sections on the 4 surveys we administered and at monthly team meetings. Our draft action plan was presented to the community during a forum in August for feedback on action plan goals, and as stated previously, we will be opening a comment period in early January 2016 for our final action plan.**

II. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

*"I can see that the relationships built through this process will be the most important part. We have lost the Granges and the Future Farmers of America which used to fill this networking role for many farmers." - Ann Irvine, Cooperative Creamery Board*

*"As a farmer, I see the value of these surveys to provide input about what support is needed for the agricultural community; As the General Manager of the Old Creamery Cooperative, this process will build relationships that will help us increase the amount of local food we can buy and sell from local farms to increase access of local fresh food for our community."*

**-Michael Kalagher, General Manager Old Creamery Cooperative and co-owner, Manda Farm, Plainfield**

10. Budget Summary:

I. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:

II. Did the project generate any income? **NO**

a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? **N/A**

11. 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). **Working with a structured methodology (Keep Farming) helped create an efficient community engagement process; also having an understanding that there was strong community interest in a food/farming project enabled us to draw many volunteers and community members to the table. It was important for us to provide plenty of time and make several opportunities available for community ideas and feedback.**

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

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: **Work with an experienced consultant with farm planning or agricultural background.**

12. 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. **This was a planning grant, which will hopefully lead to an implementation grant where we will apply our Action Plan. During the planning grant the project has led to increased community engagement and awareness about local agriculture in our region. We've made connections with other organizations working in similar areas such as Communities Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Forever Farmland, and several regional land trusts. We will continue to communicate with these groups and will share our Action Plan with them to get final comments.**

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? **Our recommendations, based on community input, were compiled into an action plan:**

**GOAL 1: MARKETING TO BRAND THE REGION TO INCREASE GENERAL AWARENESS OF FARMS IN HILLTOWNS**

- Develop marketing campaign to promote the region – farms, local food & health (i.e. Hilltown Grown or Hilltown Heros). This could include:
- Farm and food related events (i.e. farm tours, food related movie series, etc.)
- Hilltown Farm Trail – brochure with map to identify farms open to public in Hilltowns – to include: location, products, hours. Would be available in print and online. (develop and promote with Agricultural Commissions and other community partners)

- Promote value of local farms and buying of local products to Hilltown residents on Keep Farming page of Hilltown CDC website. Information on: costs of production, percentage of price that farmers keep, seasonality chart, upcoming farm events, etc.
- List Hilltown farms in existing directories: CDC business directory, CISA Local Guide
- Work with Agricultural Commissions and town webmasters to promote on town websites

**GOAL 2: INCREASE SALES OF LOCAL FARM PRODUCTS TO AREA STORES & RESIDENTS**

- Buyer/Producer meeting – to strengthen relationships, describe expectations on both sides, explore contract growing, producer memberships etc. with goal of increasing volume & variety of local food available through local markets (Partner: Creamery Coop)
- Explore opportunity for existing local food aggregation business to expand into the Hilltowns – to buy from Hilltown farms and to deliver farm shares/baskets to Hilltown residences
- Explore feasibility of delivery of local farm products to isolated elderly and low-income populations in the Hilltowns (delivery of shares, mobile market, etc.)

**GOAL 3: INCREASE FARMERS' AWARENESS OF EXISTING PROGRAMS & RESOURCES TO KEEP AREA FARMS IN BUSINESS**

- Use Keep Farming page of Hilltown CDC website as clearinghouse for agricultural resources:
- Audience: Hilltown Farmers: part-time labor, shared equipment and tools, links to farm programs and assistance, encourage listings on MDAR's Massachusetts Grown & Fresher online map
- Farmer potlucks for information sharing, networking (HCDC initial facilitation with Agricultural Commissions)
- Facilitate or promote informational workshops for farmers on existing programs: grants, business development, energy, succession planning, land protection, (USDA, MDAR, CISA, LFG, HLT, etc.)
- Conduct business assistance tailored to small farms (HCDC, MDAR, CISA) – websites, business planning, etc.

**GOAL 4: RESEARCH EXISTING AND NEEDED INFRASTRUCTURE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF AREA FARMS**

- Assessment of buildings/barns existing in Hilltowns that could be reused for shared use facility to rent to farmers (root storage, cold storage, freezers, etc.)
- Identify existing certified commercial kitchen that could be available to farmers for value-added processing
- Research into regulations/feasibility of small scale processing facility for meat (Hilltown farmers should connect with Berkshire County livestock committee)
- Explore availability of land in Hilltowns that could be used for agriculture for new and existing farmers to expand agricultural and forestry production