

**Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)
Final Performance Report**

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

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

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

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

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

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	10/01/2016 – 03/31/2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Pedro Soto
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Recipient Organization Name:	City of Peabody
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	"Laying the Groundwork: A Feasibility Study for a Community Supported Agriculture program in Peabody, MA"
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-LFPP-MA-0012
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Peabody, MA
Total Awarded Budget:	USDA Award \$25,000 (Total Budget \$33,333)

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.

- i. **Goal/Objective 1: Conduct Feasibility Study**

Our goal was to determine the economic viability of expanding the operations at Tillie’s Farm to include a community supported agriculture program.

- a. **Progress Made:**

The City of Peabody purchased Tillie’s Farm in 2007 and immediately agreed to a 10-year leaseback with the prior owners. The terms of the lease expired on April 1, 2017. At that time, the city took full possession of the 16-acre farm. In preparation for the management transition that took place in April 2017, the City began considering alternative business models that would (a) make better use of the agricultural land and (b) compliment the agricultural operations at Brooksby Farm, another farm owned by the city.

With funding from the USDA’s Local Food Promotion Program, the city undertook a feasibility study to explore how the farm could be improved and expand its services to better serve constituents in Peabody and surrounding communities.

The Tillie’s Farm Feasibility Study was successfully completed in July 2016. This process was led by food consultants Julia Shanks of Julia Shanks Food Consulting and Myrna Greenfield of Good Egg Marketing and facilitated by City of Peabody City Planner, Pedro Soto. The process included meetings with a steering committee that included area residents, stakeholders, as well as civic and business leaders. Based on the expert recommendations and committee guidance the steering committee voted to support the expansion of the farm operations by first renovating the existing farm stand and then to (1) develop a farm to school education program in year one (2) a mobile market in year two and (3) community supported agriculture program in the third year.

Based on the recommendations set forth by the steering committee in July 2016 the city budgeted \$16,000 for building repairs, \$3,500 for materials/supplies, and \$4,500 for office equipment (Budget 2016-2017). Immediate renovations included an interior layout improvement (to improve flow of customers), upgrades to the product displays, refrigeration systems, improved interior lighting, increased shelving space and improved site signage. One of the most important renovation elements was the addition of a computerized point of sale system. Previously, the farm stand operated solely on a cash basis. This improvement will allow sales to be tracked more efficiently, incorporate income projections more seamlessly into the city’s general ledger, as well as track inventory with ease. Additionally, two of the greenhouses have also been lined with new panels. These changes will substantially improve the over operation of the farm and the consumer experience. The city has also purchased a box truck to transport goods as well as equipment to work the fields.

Most recently in June 2017, the city recently allocated \$649,242 to fund the operating account and has also allocated a \$500,000 line of credit to help cover the cost of unforeseen inventory or material purchases.

b. Impact on Community: We believe that improvements like the point of sale system will allow the farm to accept SNAP payments as well as attract buyers that do not regularly use cash. Additionally, the farm stand renovations and improved layout and shelving will allow a larger volume of customers to flow through the shopping areas and comfortably view produce. Together, these improvements create a more friendly and enjoyable buying experience that we believe will translate to more repeat customers, increased sales, and most importantly more access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

ii. **Goal/Objective 2: Produce a comprehensive business plan/plan of action.**

a. **Progress Made:** The comprehensive business plan/plan of action was created. The action plan details the goals, action steps, budget, timeline, and personnel needed to implement the vision for Tillie's Farm. The following is the vision statement crafted by the community: *"The mission of Tillie's Farm is to grow and provide local, healthy, and seasonal produce using sustainable farming practices with a focus on education for community members, youth, and vocational training"*. This vision statement was created through in-depth discussion with the steering committee, and the directors of the Peabody Parks, Recreational and Forestry Department.

b. **Impact on Community:** Through the community engagement process, several members of the community interested in helping to implement the vision of the farm have emerged. One key community champion is Jeannette McGinn. Jeannette is an Education Masters Candidate at Leslie University (Cambridge, MA) and her research focuses on creating educational opportunities/programs at municipally owned farms. Jeannette has started the Tillie's Farm Education Committee and the committee's goal is to research and design educational program that will enrich the curriculum within the Peabody Public School System. The committee has been meeting monthly for several months and have identified several project ideas that the group hopes to implement this year and in the 2018 planting season. The projects include: (1) renovating the onsite chicken coop, (2) creating an outdoor classroom, (3) documenting the history of Tillie's Farm, (4) designing and constructing a small cold frame greenhouse, (5) constructing a bee hive enclosure, (6) building raised beds for a community garden and (7) commissioning a site plan to accommodate more parking.

Additionally, the group has begun actively applying for grant funding to further their efforts.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Disseminate the business plan/plan of action and the results of the study

a. Progress Made: The city has enlisted the services of Thomson Communications to create the newly developed marketing plan. Their work included the creation of a logo and tagline, site specific signage, a website, revamped social media accounts and the development of printed marketing materials. Through these channels the city has begun communicating the city's scaled implementation plans for the farm as well as weekly specials and upcoming farm activities. To ensure community input and feedback, Thomson engaged the steering committee two times a month (March, April and May 2017) to present design concept and receive feedback on print media, website layout and site signage design. The final concepts were approved by the director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry.

b. Impact on Community: Tillie's Farm has been a staple of the South Peabody community for the better part of a century. The city's revamped marketing plan prominently features the use of social media and the website to engage regular customers as well as actively reach and engaging new consumers. Since the farm has only been open for three months, we do not yet have enough data to gauge the effectiveness of the new marketing strategy. However, we have noticed an influx of foot traffic inside the farm stand. While the farm has not yet gathered significant feedback, the farm stand manger has reported that many customers have been delighted with the freshly painted interior and improved produce display units. The Mayor's office sent a "robo call" out to the community in the opening week in April that has led to many new customers that were not aware that a farm is located within 10-15 minute walking distance from their home.

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: 10 – part time farm stand worker seasonal positions @19.5 hours per week, no benefits
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 2 - 1 Full Time Farm Stand Manager at 40hr per week with full benefits, and 1 Farm Stand Supervisor @30/hours per week with benefits
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: data not available
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 0
 - v. Number of new markets established: 0
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$0 and increased by 0%.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
 - a. Percent Increase: 0
- *****Note: this project was a planning activity for the expansion of Tillie's Farm. As a municipally owned farm, the city quickly reviewed the recommendations outlined in our planning activity and worked with City Council to allocate funding to implement many of the recommendations.

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?

Not applicable. Please see response # 4, iii.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?

Our community partners include, the City of Peabody, The Recreation, Parks and Forestry Department, Brooksby Farm, The Peabody Institute Library, The Peabody Area Chamber of Commerce, Peabody Public Schools, Alex Lennon-Simon, Education Program and Community Outreach Manager from Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF), Greenfest (sustainability advocate group) North East Arc (offering lifelong support for people with disabilities), Haven from Hunger, Julia Shanks Food Consulting, Myrna Greenfield of Good Egg Marketing.

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

Our community partnerships are critical to the success and financial viability of Tillies Farm. The partners have offered their expertise and many volunteer hours to bring this project to fruition. Once the action plan was finalized, the Director of Recreation, Parks and Forestry Department, Jennifer Davis worked with the newly hired farm stand manager, Billy Murphy to identify needed repairs at the farm. She also began working with the newly formed Education Committee, led by Jeannette McGinn to identify areas where the Peabody Public Schools and the farm could collaborate. Outreach to the Waltham Fields Community farm has proven to be invaluable as it has informed the way in which the city should move forward to implement its own educational programs.

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

Much of the design and development of the educational programs have not been finalized. The city will continue working with the Peabody Public Schools and experts such as Jeannette McGinn and Alex Lennon-Simon to further develop the educational programs that will be eventually implemented.

Additionally, in the coming year, the farm manager will be looking for ways to increase yields while maintaining sustainable farming practices (particularly with organic farming principles), sustaining ongoing marketing activities, and managing the business side of the operation. The farm manager will assess other crops that will make the farm more profitable. Special attention will be paid to possibly adding crops to the rotation that are important ethnic staples, such as Aji Dulce or Asian Mellon that may attract local ethnic populations residing in neighboring cities and towns.

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

The city employed the services of Food Consultants Myrna Greenfield (Good Egg Marketing) and Julia Shanks (Julia Shanks Food Consulting). Julia's focus was financial modeling of the farm revamp". Myrna focused her work on interpreting the market demands on products offered at the farm. Together, the team produced a set of recommendations that would help the farm become a central community gathering area and steady source of fresh, local, affordable and healthy food.

Additionally, the city enlisted the services of Thompson Communications, a local marketing firm to develop the marketing plan for the farm and outward facing messaging to the community, and potential consumer bases.

6. Have you publicized any results yet? No – we have not yet formally publicized the results of this work. A formal press release is planned for the 2017 growing season. The article aims to inform the public of the capital improvements made at the farm as well as the incremental growth plan the will happen over the course of the next three years.
- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? N/a
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? N/a
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? N/a

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? Yes.
- i. If so, how did you collect the information?
The food consultants conducted several interviews with area stakeholders and organizations.
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

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

9. Lessons Learned:
- i. Summarize any lessons learned. Draw from positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).
 - The most valuable lesson we learned was the value of collaboration with other communities. There are several communities in the commonwealth who own and operate farms. These communities were more than willing to share their

experience that the City of Peabody used to make more informed decisions. Continue to seek collaborations.

- Educational farming programs can help make the farm operations more sustainable. At the beginning of our assessment in 2015 the school system already had a small school gardening program. Working with the school system has allowed them to improve their programs, share resources and will ultimately increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables to the public, as well as disadvantaged and low-income populations in the city who traditionally do not enjoy regular access to fresh produce.
 - Like in many community processes, the city received some backlash from disgruntled neighbors about the city's plans to ramp up production, an action some neighbors felt would be a nuisance (tractor noise, manure smells etc.). Through conversations and educating neighbors the city could calm fears and involve those residents in the process.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
- Tracking new customer/client retention has been difficult to document. This Fall however, the farm will start using credit card transaction data through the POS system, to track new customers and zip codes of the new customers. Using this information, the farm will be able to track specially where the new customers are coming from and have the ability more effectively allocate ad and marketing dollars. In retrospect, we would have preferred to start using this system since opening day.
- 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:
- If we were starting this project again, a helpful tip would have been to take a more thorough inventory of farm related entities in the area. We found, for example too late in the process that a local non-profit called the Food Project who farms on inner-city lots did not have their lease renewed in a neighboring community. Had we known earlier, we could have engaged that organization in conversations that could have led to a more robust discussion about possible partnership to run a portion of the farm for their training program or assist in the educational program.

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.
- Potential future projects include: (1) renovating the onsite chicken coop, (2) creating an outdoor classroom, (3) documenting the history of Tillie's Farm, (4) designing and constructing a small cold frame greenhouse, (5) constructing a bee hive enclosure, (6) building raised beds for a community garden and (7)

commissioning a site plan to accommodate more parking (please see response 2b).

11. 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?

One of the future project goals include adding ethnic vegetables to the produce offered at the farm. Neighborhoods in Peabody and surrounding communities have growing Latino and multicultural populations who may be searching for culturally appropriate foods. According to the Census Bureau (2010), Peabody has a minority population of 9.6%, compared to 18.1% for Essex County and 19.6% statewide. There is also a substantial Latino/Hispanic population within 5 miles of the farm, in both Lynn (32.1%) and Salem (14.9%) that may be seeking out specific types of produce that Tillie's could potentially grow. Potential research will include an investigation of exactly what culturally appropriate crops would be both profitable and in demand.

Additionally, the City of Peabody remains committed to implementing the remaining components of this project over the next four years:

- (1) Developing a farm to school education program (2017-2018)
- (2) Expanding the farm crop production and to include ethnic produce (2018-2019)
- (3) Developing a community supported agriculture program (2019-2020)
- (4) Designing and outfitting a vehicle (bus or box truck) into a mobile market (2019-2020)