

**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](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.

Report Date Range:	October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Craig Lapine
Authorized Representative Phone:	207-761-4769
Authorized Representative Email:	<a href="mailto:craig@cultivatingcommunity.org">craig@cultivatingcommunity.org</a>
Recipient Organization Name:	Cultivating Community
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Leveraging a Food Hub and Mobile Market to Develop a Value Chain Benefitting Local Producers and Low-Income Consumers in Maine
Grant Agreement Number:	15-LFPP-ME-0019
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Portland, Maine
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,614.00

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).

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.
  - a. Goal/Objective 1: *In partnership with St. Mary’s Nutrition Center, launch a mobile market that sells local fruits and vegetables, local dairy, local grains, and other local foods including ethnic crops highly valued by a segment of our prospective local low-income customer base. By the end of the grant period, the Mobile Market will encompass 16 stops across two counties and Maine’s two largest cities and will accept (and double) SNAP, WIC, and SFMNP, while also hosting tastings, providing nutrition education, and offering recipes and cooking tips.*

Progress Made:

*Cultivating Community has launched The Good Food Bus in partnership with St. Mary’s Nutrition Center. The market sells local fruits and vegetables, local dairy, and other local foods including prepared lunch and snack items. In partnership, we also launched a program called “Anchor Meals” that supports individuals in cooking nutritious and wholesome meals. The Good Food Bus encompassed 14 stops across three counties; included one of the largest cities in the state of Maine; and accepted (and doubled) SNAP and WIC. It also hosted tastings, provided nutrition education, and offered recipes and cooking tips while at each site. It did not reach the 16 stop goal but it is planned to do so in the coming season. The market did not have a stop in Portland because of the existing farm stands that are apart of the Fresh Start Farms Food Hub operation. The market did not accept or double SFMNP; it instead focused its efforts on SNAP and WIC.*

Impact on Community:

*The Good Food Bus created a space for community members to meet, for individuals to get outside, and fostered an appreciation for local and healthy fruits and vegetables. The market also created an avenue for low-income shoppers to increase their buying power by doubling SNAP and WIC benefits; 42% of our transactions in 2017 were low-income. The market also increased its sales each year, ending with total sales of \$30,000 this past season. Finally, it helped promote healthy eating in local communities, which is evident in the following statistics (data gathered from a 2017 post-season survey): 26% of shoppers said they would not have eaten as many fruits or vegetables if it were not for the Good Food Bus; 87.76% of shoppers said the Good Food Bus made it easier for them to purchase fruits and vegetables; 68% of shoppers that purchased the Anchor Meals said the program supported them in learning new, healthy recipes to cook at home.*

*Goal/Objective 2: During the grant period (which will coincide with years 3-5 of Fresh Start Farms Food Hub operation) expand the hub from 6 to 16 producers, with some production channeled through the new Mobile Market with food that is fresh, appealing, and culturally appropriate for the designated neighborhoods where the Mobile Market will stop.*

**Progress Made:**

*Cultivating Community had 27 farmers selling to the Fresh Start Farm Food Hub in 2017 and 19 of those farmers sold to the Mobile Market, The Good Food Bus. Many of the farmers grew culturally appropriate crops that they could sell to their diverse communities. Crops like African eggplant, amaranth, squash, African amaranth, roselle, beans, sweet potato leaves, African squash, collard greens, swiss chard, and squash leaves were popular among the farmers' communities in Lewiston and Portland this past year.*

**Impact on Community:**

*The farmers at the Food Hub not only supplied crops to their direct markets; approximately 15,000 lbs of crops from the farmers were not sold through the Food Hub directly, but instead were used by the low-income farmers for their own home consumption (and to increase their own food security). The farmers also sold their produce to neighbors, friends, and families at a discounted rate. Fresh Start Farm farmers also donated to pantries in the Lewiston area.*

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.
  - a. Number of direct jobs created: 1.5. *These are new jobs associated with staffing the Good Food Bus.*
  - b. Number of jobs retained: 1.5. *These are retained jobs in the Fresh Start Farms food hub.*
  - c. Number of indirect jobs created: 0. *It's difficult to track jobs indirectly created. We do know that Fresh Start Farms food hub sales to all markets (not just the mobile market) increased by 150% during the grant period which had large, positive impacts on the businesses of the participating farmers. We didn't have a mechanism for understanding whether those sales increases resulted in hiring additional help--but it certainly contributed to farm viability.*
  - d. Number of markets expanded: *Fresh Start Farms Food Hub expanded 11 markets, including the farm stands in low-income communities and the CSA market. The FSF CSA market went from 300 to 450 customers, and we doubled the amount of low-income CSA customers. FSF sales to the Mobile Market went from \$2,577 in 2015 to \$2,626 in 2016, to \$2,791 in 2017.*

- e. Number of new markets established: *Fresh Start Farms Food Hub sold to 10 new markets that we had not previously sold to.*
- f. *FSF Food Hub sales increased by \$21,754 this year. This was in spite of the fact that a single large account valued at \$15,000 in annual sales withdrew. (This account--which funded the purchase of local foods by food pantries--was itself grant funded and lost that funding.) We were able to make up for those lost sales **plus** add an additional nearly \$22K in sales.*
- g. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 27
- h. Percent increase: *Not clear which baseline this refers to.*

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?

*In the past year, the Good Food Bus managed a schedule that included 12 full-time stops and 2 additional trial stops. Out of those stops, 7 were considered low-income, neighborhood stops that included diverse populations and comprised 42% of our total transactions. The additional 7 stops were comprised of mixed-income business stops that reached across three counties and four towns. Throughout the past two years, we have been able to cultivate strong connections with the communities and businesses that we have partnered with and continue to put the emphasis on reaching more individuals and creating deeper connections with our existing customers.*

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- a. Who are your community partners?

*The Good Food Bus works closely with our partner sites, which included the following organizations throughout the past two years: Auburn Police Athletic League (Auburn), Bath Iron Works (Bath), Bedard Pharmacy and Medical Supplies (Auburn), St. Hyacinth's Church of St. Anthony's Parish (Westbrook), Central Maine Medical Center (Lewiston), Goodwill Industries of Northern New England (Gorham), Great Falls Plaza/Auburn YMCA (Auburn), Knox Street Community Garden (downtown Lewiston), Center for Wisdom's Women (Lewiston), Westbrook Pointe (Westbrook), Lake Auburn Town House (Auburn), St. Mary's Integrative Health and Weight Management (Lewiston), and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center (Lewiston). Each of these partners provided support with administration, coordination, outreach, and/or promotion specific to the market site they represented. We have also maintained partnerships with Opportunity Alliance members that have offered support on the ground as well as resources for nutrition education and taste-testings at our Westbrook stops.*

*We have chosen these community partners by evaluating each using the following criteria: 1) there is a clear community need; 2) there is the ability to have a consistent schedule at the location; 3) there is viability via a certain level of customer activity that results in approximately \$150 in sales per day or 40 transactions per day; 4) the partner is able to provide consistent communication with our team; 5) the partner is willing and able to do consistent outreach efforts on the ground.*

- b. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP projects?

*Our partners are crucial for the viability of the Good Food Bus project as we rely on them for the majority of outreach efforts and support on the ground. Each partner has been excellent in providing feedback, while also encouraging their employees or community members to continuously support the Good Food Bus project. A number of our partners have also been able to provide monetary support that has been converted into customer incentives on the ground, which have positively impacted our sales and the ability for our customers to purchase more local fruits and vegetables.*

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

*Our partners will continue to provide support to our project on the ground and within their channels. In the upcoming seasons, we will continue to grow those relationships and search for more partners to help grow the project.*

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

*St. Mary's Nutrition Center continues to be our primary contractor for this project but, as was indicated in our original proposal, they are more truly characterized as a partner. We have co-developed programming and partnerships, outreach and promotional networking, and organizing vehicle registration/ownership and cold storage, among other shared responsibilities. St. Mary's Nutrition Center is a trusted local partner and service provider to individuals, businesses, city officials, and other nonprofits and community groups in the greater Lewiston/Auburn area, which bolsters the reputation of the Good Food Bus in that region and which provides valuable insights and connections that have led to new partnerships and a greater understanding of where and how local needs are met.*

6. Have you publicized any results yet?

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

*Project milestones for the Good Food Bus have been shared regularly over the course of the project with key stakeholders and sponsors through partner e-newsletters and end of season reports. This includes approximately six close partners and sponsors and up to fifteen supporters. Partner e-newsletter would be shared at least twice a season and end of season reports once at the end of the season.*

*Additionally, results were shared out annually with our founding partner Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation. Project specific results from 2016 were grouped along with other findings from projects from HPHC's Healthy Food Fund cohort, and released and shared out through a 2016 Healthy Food Fund Impact Report.*

*During 2017, mid season milestones were share out with the wider community and picked up by local new sources such as Maine Biz Magazine.*

- b. To who did you publicize the results?

*We publicized our results to the general public, our founding partners, and our community partners.*

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

*Although we do not have a solid number on how many people we reached, we can estimate that we reached a few hundred people through all the different publicized reports.*

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

- a. If so, how did you collect the information?

*The Good Food Bus team has conducted surveys that we have distributed to our customers (via email, paper copies or orally) and have conducted regular meetings with our community partners.*

*The Food Hub team collected feedback from our customers and farmers each year. We will also start interviews with Food Hub farmers in January. The customer and CSA feedback is gained through Survey Monkey data; farmer's have one-on-one interviews.*

- b. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

*Within the Good Food Bus, we have heard positive feedback from our customers and community partners, although we are always looking for ways to deepen our relationships with our communities and be a more productive project. Most of the feedback is related to stronger outreach efforts and creating avenues for lower-income individuals to access the food that we are providing.*

*We have also heard specific requests to provide more information about where our produce is coming from and to have more labels for the local products, organic products, etc. In the future we will provide better signage and be more transparent about where each item originated. We also received feedback that the check-out process was slow in the beginning of this season because of delays with our credit card machine and because we only provided one avenue for checkout. In the future we will problem solve a plan for when the credit card machine is not working and we will train both individuals on the market to be comfortable and confident checking individuals out to quicken the shopping experience.*

*As for the Food Hub, some of the feedback from CSA customers includes; "Using a CSA forced me to start cooking, rather than buying packaged foods. I saved a considerable amount of money, and started eating healthier," "the produce is beautiful. It's the right amount for a very fair price... I feel like I am actually supporting farmers who need it!" "My favorite part was learning about veggie I didn't even know existed." Some of the feedback from wholesale customers includes; "I would buy way more peppers if you have them," "I would like to do more winter planning with you."*

8. Budget Summary:

- a. 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: *We have.*
- b. Did the project generate any income?

*The project generated revenue--including significant revenue for farmers and some retained revenue for the Cultivating Community. For Cultivating Community, that revenue did not outstrip costs, so we had no net positive income. Nevertheless, the marketing fees collected and from farmers and the sales through the Good Food Bus*

*were important parts of the business model and were vital to help open up these new marketing channels to underresourced farmers.*

9. Lessons Learned:

- a. 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).

*Good Food Bus: Over the course of the past 2 years, the Good Food Bus project has continued to grow and change as we learn from on the ground experience as well as feedback from our communities. One of the most notable lessons that was learned was that an old school bus being used for the market is a great billboard for the project, but it was not a productive vehicle for the project both literally and figuratively. The bus needed a separate driver and required all of the produce to be unloaded and reloaded at each stop. This past season, the bus was swapped for a truck and trailer model that allowed for a much more productive project and thus allowed us to reach more individuals and be open for longer at stops because of the quick set-up and takedown procedures.*

*Another learning lesson was the staff structure and how it could better reflect the needs of the project. In the beginning there was one person running the entirety of the market with support staff, but moving into this year the staff structure was altered and two new positions (coordinator and assistant coordinator) were onboarded to make the program more sustainable and allow for continuous growth.*

*We also learned from our successes, especially our Anchor Meal program (which is a bag with all the ingredients and a recipe to make a home-cooked meal that served 2-4). The program was successful in the first year and we expanded the program from selling 20 bags/week in the first year to 60 bags/week this past season. We also listened to our customers feedback and continuously changed the meal bag program to better reflect what our customers wanted and needed.*

*Food Hub: The Food Hub learned that markets are volatile and are prone to change, and we need to change with them. Getting feedback from customers and catering to their wants and needs is paramount to success. The CSA portion of the Food Hub is changing the structure next year because of low-income customers asking for a smaller bag. The new bag will include "staples" for low-income customers that would just include lettuce, potatoes, onions, carrots, beans, broccoli, etc. This flexibility and willingness to change, based on customer feedback, is what offers the food hub steady and predictable growth.*

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

*In terms of the mobile-market goal, we fell short in the following areas: number of stops, location of stops, and the SFMNP benefits.*

*As stated above, we had 14 stops this past season (our goal was 16); we learned that the number of stops is important, but also the relationships that are being built with the individuals at those stops that already exist is crucial to the sustainability of our project. In the future we do hope to expand to more stops, but we also are putting in a great deal of energy to reach more people in the stops that we already have. We learned that it is important to reach many different areas, but it's also important to realize that there will be a limit to how many stops a single vehicle like this can do, and how to better use the resources available (i.e. a longer stop may be more valuable than two shorter stops).*

*We also learned that our project does not take place in a vacuum, and this is why we did not expand our reach to Portland, which was stated in our original goal. The mobile market would be in direct competition with the Food Hub farm stands and we did not want to take customers away from another important part of our organization. We learned how to work within the space that we are given, and how to create relationships with other projects and communities to be stronger together, instead of working against one another.*

*Lastly, the SFMNP goal was not met, and that was because our focus was on SNAP and WIC benefits, where we thought we could reach a greater number of individuals. We are open to including SFMNP in the future.*

- c. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

*Good Food Bus: A very clear goal and understanding among all of the individuals working on a project is important, and crucial when multiple people are representing the organization on the ground.*

*It was important for our project to onboard new positions with a training on how to run the market and a training on why we are doing the work that we are doing. Representing two organizations can be difficult, and that is why it's important that the goals and values of the project and being articulated the same regardless of who is the one saying them.*

*We also acknowledge that real-world trial and error is crucial to a project like this, in order to better understand our communities and their wants/needs. We also used real-world trial and error to better reflect on our own infrastructure, and were able to make informed decisions about how to move forward because of what we learned on the ground. Lastly, it was important to invest in solid infrastructure, once we knew what direction was best for the project.*

*Food Hub: One large take away from the Food Hub project is that if you are targeting a specific group, such as low-income customers, it's important to do a survey before launching a project to find out what they want/need. It's also as important, if not more, to continually check in with those customers (and any new customers) to see if any changes can be made to better fit their needs.*

## 10. Future work:

- a. 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.

*The Good Food Bus will be going into its first season without any large logistical changes, and because of that, we are focusing on how to make the existing parts of the project stronger. We hope to expand our reach by doing more stops in the communities where we are already present. We are also meeting with our community partners to discuss how to create deeper and long-lasting connections with the individuals that already shop with us. One of the biggest barriers for individuals to shop with us is the affordability of our produce, and we are currently seeking out ways to increase access to fruits and vegetables for lower-income customers while also sparking conversation about our food system and the "true cost of food." We hope to strengthen our educational component in this way, and enrich our own efforts with more nutrition education through our Anchor Meal programs and through partnerships with outside organizations that can prepare demonstrations at our stops.*

*The Food Hub will continue to provide extensive educational opportunities and ongoing training and technical assistance to participants through classroom based workshops, in-season and field-based education, and by connecting farmers with viable market opportunities. The Food Hub will continue to work in local food systems and hopes to grow sales next year, especially to low-income customers. The Food Hub will accept 10 new farmers next year into the training program to make the total number of low-income, new American farmers we are working with to 37. Every farmer in our program is working towards self-sufficiency, food security, and the right for their community members to access fresh local vegetables.*

- b. 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?

*We will continue to speak with our communities to better understand what they really need out of both the Good Food Bus and the Food Hub; with this knowledge we will continue to be flexible with how we run our programs, and hopefully create more sustainable and profitable projects.*