

**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; 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>	October 1, 2014-September 30, 2015
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Recipient Organization Name:	Growing Hope
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Ypsilanti MarketHub: Planning for Micro-Distribution of Local Food to Increase Food Access
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-MI-0093
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Ypsilanti, MI
Total Awarded Budget:	\$24,794

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: Compile feasibility study for Ypsilanti MarketHub components (aggregation/packing facility, micro-distribution, mobile market/farm stands, kitchen, and MarketPlace activities), synthesizing existing assessments and data, and filling gaps. Among these existing assessments, activities, and other assets.**

a. **Progress Made:** The feasibility study mapped the supply chain of Ypsilanti’s food system from a unique perspective, using a lens of food access and combining the supply chains in the emergency food system (food bank) and the retail food system. Whichever system, or combination of the two, was used, this lens was concerned with how food insecure consumers are accessing food, and backing into the supply chain leading up to that point of access. This mapping, based on stakeholder knowledge and extensive interviews (including with distributors, food bank partners, farmers, et al), identified complicated systems with many inefficiencies, including holes that leave outlets serving food insecure individuals (e.g. corner stores) with no supply chain for healthy food. While, for instance, corner stores not having healthy food was in no way a new discovery, mapping its supply chain alongside other local chains brought a new perspective at gaps and opportunities. The study also looked at the feasibility of a larger kitchen incubator—something that our research has found over and over that there is significant and real demand/need for. Whether a large scale aggregation/packing/distribution facility and/or a kitchen incubator, both deemed infeasible at this time due to a lack of partners with capacity to manage and subsidize the operations in an ongoing way, a willing funding/financing partner, and the cost of urban rents. Smaller scale projects utilizing existing infrastructure and partnerships were recommended, including better connections between entrepreneurs and existing kitchens, and smaller aggregation/cold storage facilities. A mobile market/farm stand financial evaluation was completed and this project operates at a sizeable loss. A complete report is available for review upon request.

b. **Impact on Community:** As a result of the work among partners, and interviews with other community stakeholders, new partnerships were developed. This study used multi-stakeholder input to create models of current supply chains of local product in a way they haven’t been mapped before using a food access frame. By looking at and mapping supply chains from an explicit food access lens, and including in those chains of the free/emergency food system, food procured by institutions, and the supply going to retail and consumers, we gained new insight into the assets and gaps in the systems that are often thought of as separate, SUCH AS... there are no fresh food distributors serving local corner stores. At times, corner store owners, and even local specialty product distributors buy necessary items from local supermarkets and membership warehouses (Costco, Sam’s, Meijer) and mark up products, accordingly. This multi-sectoral approach also highlighted how current and potential future infrastructure used for getting healthy, local food to people with high food insecurity could be better utilized across sectors. For instance, the storage and distribution infrastructure of our food bank is already and could further be used by local farmers to get product to institutions. Finally, through the course of this study, new prospective partners, including local food distributors, have been identified. These local specialty distributors are interested in supporting economic development efforts and increasing efficiencies through backhauling, which is something outside of their current geographic and client market—that was in itself a great discovery. A potential local

entrepreneur- with a background in produce distribution—may consider a small business that would provide micro-distribution to corner stores and restaurants, and we plan to support his exploration of that in 2016.

- **Goal/Objective 2: Draft or update/refine business plans for what are determined as central and/or initial MarketHub components.**

a. Progress Made: A separate aggregation and distribution site complete with commercial kitchen and light processing was deemed infeasible at this time due to reasons listed above and a detailed business plan was not completed. Despite the infeasibility (because of lack of funding source for ongoing operations and management, in particular) of a larger shared kitchen, the demand is still very high for kitchen space, particularly among low-income entrepreneurs. As a result, planning was done to better utilize and certify existing kitchens in the area, and other funds were leveraged to, beginning in 2016, more formally provide matchmaking services for food entrepreneurs to kitchens, business support, and other resources. And, the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace has rethought the role of its own small kitchen, and is now planning to build out a rentable kitchen in this space, and Growing Hope has completed licensing in its own (small!) kitchen at its urban farm and headquarters, including of its outdoor adobe oven. While it has not yet advertised this kitchen as a rental space, as it works to improve internal use procedures first, it plans to in 2016. Additionally, the need for a shared access cold storage facility was identified a small, preliminary cold unit has been constructed in a building already being renovated as part of the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace. Literally, cold storage, available for rental, is now housed in the middle of the farmers markets, so that vendors could in theory bring product to be later picked up or delivered by a small distributor to local stores or restaurants. Growing Hope obtained a state ag dept warehousing license in this space, and a market vendor who needed similar certified space has also done so. LFPP dollars supporting planning for this facility and other dollars leveraged funded its construction. Draft operating guidelines and fee structures have been compiled and we expect the cooler space to be fully online and advertised for use in 2016; initial interest has been strong.

Additionally, LFPP dollars supported planning for a mobile farm stand to increase healthy food access in underserved neighborhoods. Other dollars were leveraged to pilot the farm stand in 2015 to, in an efficient way, distribute product from multiple growers to food insecure audiences. Based on this pilot, data was collected to understand full cost of farm stand operation, and using this information, a business model and plan is being created. The mobile farm stand cannot generate enough revenue to cover its operating and programmatic costs, however various fee structures and rental rates are being considered in order to increase revenues.

b. Impact on Community: Because for several components of the Ypsilanti MarketHub, whose planning was supported through this LFPP award, we were able to then seek funding to pilot implementation, we were able to see initial impact. The Mobile Farm Stand purchased wholesale product from many local producers and was piloted for 17 days (beginning mid-July) in three locations with low food access, bringing in \$3203, including using cash, SNAP, and several other forms of food assistance, from 1326 visitors. There is a high demand for the farm stand to continue for a full season in 2016, and based on data from the pilot funding is being sought. Additionally, two enterprises, including Growing Hope's farm stand, are already licensed to use the cold storage facility, and other farmers market vendors are interested. Local restaurants are also interested in the storage space for fresh local product. Planning for how to access and best utilize this facility will continue in 2016. Growing Hope is considering use of kitchen and storage facilities to aggregate and add

value to local product by doing light processing (washing, cutting) to create simple, local, and healthy snacks for youth after-school and summer programs.

- **Goal/Objective 3: Recommend and outline partnership agreements, operating agreements, and explore legal structure formation (if deemed needed). Consultant will outline and recommend to partners, who will then present to boards and others for consideration and approval.**

a. Progress Made: 50% complete. Given the initial conclusion that a separate facility (and thus program) was infeasible, partnership/operating/legal agreements were not needed. Operating structures were, however, begun for the walk in cooler, and full operating guides created for the mobile farm stand. Further, operating guides for Growing Hope's kitchen were created prior to certification.

b. Impact on Community: None. Partners on this project, however, still actively work together; a lack of formal partnership agreements doesn't reflect any negativity, and in fact has helped the initial and other partners further connect to talk about big picture solutions needed.

- **Goal/Objective 4: Identify facility & infrastructure assets and needs based on results of feasibility study and business plans; develop specs needed for plan review, pricing of infrastructure and improvements needed. Each partner will lead research, bid, and documentation components relevant to their piece of the project-- e.g. Zilke Vegetable Farm re: wash/pack aggregation components, et al.**

a. Progress Made: 100% complete- a full business plan is complete for one component—the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace, largely funded by another source. LFPP dollars supported community outreach and input, and further time spent on facility planning. Properties for the facility were fully secured (after reporting period on April 24, 2015), and first phase of fundraising has been completed. A cold storage unit was designed and built into this facility, along with a preliminary wash area for about \$3000. Additionally, an urban design class was engaged to translate some of the community input and learning thus far into physical and programmatic schema for both the MarketPlace/MarketHub and the surrounding urban neighborhood. These concepts were completed this fall, and ideas from them have influenced continued planning. Link to these concepts?

b. Impact on Community: While the MarketPlace facility is being developed, a first season of outdoor farmers market (in the parking lot of one of the two properties making up the MarketPlace) was able to take place weekly from May-October. While imperfect—not yet any bathrooms, indoor facilities, etc—it was helpful to test the market in this new location, and take continued community, customer, and vendor input. This outreach and input has influenced the design and ongoing planning of the facilities. This ongoing user and other input has influenced how we see the building operate—most notably the food aggregation and production facilities re: the cold storage and the kitchen. The kitchen design has been adjusted to consider production rental and the type of equipment, access, and storage needed for that, even though it will still be small.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.

- Number of direct jobs created: **3**
- Number of jobs retained: **2**
- Number of indirect jobs created: **0**
- Number of markets expanded: **1**
- Number of new markets established: 3 mobile market sites

- Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. (*N/A based on this as a planning grant*)
- Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Approx 40
 - a. Percent Increase: N/A (most producers were already a part of our farmers markets—this project provided new outlets via farm stand sales, planned for new infrastructure via storage facilities, furthered planning on a year-round facility—not yet complete, and explored feasibility and planning for other projects not yet complete)

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. Extensive outreach was specifically targeted towards Latino and low-income neighborhoods within Ypsilanti City and surrounding Ypsilanti Township and the corner stores that serve them, as well as extended outreach to low-income market customers and neighbors around need for and interest in year round farmers market facility. This outreach was performed by a long-term, active member of the community, etc. to build trust and ensure we reached community members in the most effective way. In the future, the buyers for these corner stores will purchase fresh produce items through the MarketHub. As a first step, Growing Hope piloted a mobile farmers markets in 3 low-income and/or Latino neighborhoods with low food access. In its first 17 markets, there were 1326

customers' visits. Additionally, the move of the farmers market to the new Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace site brought new visibility, especially to neighbors and shoppers at the adjacent liquor store who frequented the weekly market. While the first half of the season was lower than normal in terms of weekly customer counts—as people adjusted to the new location, the second half saw increases, and by our observation and customer survey, many more first time customers than other years.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- Who are your community partners?

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Partnership/Contribution
Kim	Bayer	Washtenaw Food Hub	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Tammy	Burgess	Eat Local Eat Natural	Supporter, Interested in being a primary partner during execution phase
Lucy	Dilley	Can-Do Kitchen	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Shannon	Easter White	FUNchitecture	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Amanda	Edmonds	Growing Hope	Primary Partner, Steering Committee
Sean	Gartland	Flint Food Works	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Anika	Grose	Detroit Kitchen Connect	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Bill	Kerr	Food Bank of E. Michigan	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Egypt	Mapes	Allen Market Place	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Karianne	Martus	Flint Farmers Market	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Missy	Orge	Food Gatherers	Primary Partner, Steering Committee
Dick	Ramsdell	Flint Farmers Market	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Cresha	Reid	Washtenaw County OCED	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources
Matt	Robinson	Frog Holler Produce	Supporter, Interested in being a primary partner during execution phase

Eileen	Spring	Food Gatherers	Primary Partner, Steering Committee
Bill	Taylor	Eat Local Eat Natural	Supporter, Interested in being a primary partner during execution phase
Cre	Fuller	Self. Formerly of Whole Foods, Plum Market, and Frog Holler Produce	Supporter, Providing Informational Resources, Interested in being a primary partner
John	Reed	Food Gatherers	Supporter/Advisor, Providing Informational Resources
Vicki	Zilke	Zilke Vegetable Farm	Primary Partner, Steering Committee

- How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?
 - Primary Partners, Steering Committee- Members have met at least monthly as a team and have met near monthly individually with the consultant to discuss on-going findings and guide additional work.
 - Supporters/Providing Informational Resources- Individuals have met with consultant and some members of the steering committee to discuss models, share resources, and guide planning. Many have provided copies of their own feasibility plans and business records and have given tours of facilities. Extensive conversations about “lessons learned” have taken place. Many of these partners are located outside the service area of interest
 - Supporters/Interested in being a primary partner- Individuals have met with consultant and some members of steering committee to discuss needs and gaps in services in Ypsilanti, Michigan, as well as lessons learned. These individuals are interested in continuing to support the planning process and potentially become partners during the execution phase of this project.

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

Primary partners and supporters will continue to provide informational resources and visioning support. Growing Hope will carry out the vast majority of programmatic activities given the scaled back nature of current activities.

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

Megan Phillips Goldenberg, of New Growth Associates, has provided most project management (meeting coordination, facilitation, etc.), research, and writing. She has arranged all tours, stakeholder interviews, and steering committee meetings, as well as compiled the feasibility report (Goal 1), and composed preliminary budget scenarios for the feasibility report (Goal 1). She has provided informational resources and guidance for the operation and fee structure of the cold storage unit and is composing the updated business plan and financial scenarios for the mobile farm stand (Goal 2).

Vicki Zilke of Zilke Vegetable Farm has had a larger role than first anticipated, in part because she is now enrolled in a Food Hub Manager Certificate program out of Vermont, and gaining additional skills in this area. She contributed to the feasibility report (Goal 1) and has advised on the design and use of the cold storage unit (Goal 2 & 4) and sells produce to the mobile farm stand (Goal 2).

Food Gatherers, the third primary partner, has played less of a role than first anticipated because of shifting in staffing and timing/unknowns of their strategic plan process (i.e. how much they will/want to/can be involved in any projects resulting from this feasibility study). The advised the feasibility reporting process (Goal 1) and the design and use of the cold storage unit (Goal 2 & 4).

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- If yes, how did you publicize the results? The initial feasibility report has been emailed to primary partners and some supporters, as well as the Washtenaw County Office of Community Economic Development, who funded portions not supported by LFPP dollars.
- To whom did you publicize the results? We continue to share the initial feasibility report with partners and funders in the food system sector locally, as well as partners involved in the Washtenaw Food Policy Council, Michigan Good Food Charter and Michigan Food Hub Network.
- How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? Public release of the report is still forthcoming, so beyond Washtenaw County and internal board/staff distribution, report has not yet been released.

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

- If so, how did you collect the information? Feedback continues in an ongoing way through meetings with current and prospective partners and stakeholders. This project represents a step along a continuum—versus a discrete activity with a start and finish—of a long-term planning process with multiple components. We continue to gather significant input from potential partners, beneficiaries, and users of the various components of the MarketHub (kitchen incubator, farmers market, distribution/aggregation points). This occurred and continues to occur through one-on-one interviews, through on-site dot-surveys of farmers market customers, through in depth written (given orally or in writing depending on customer preferences) customer surveys, vendor surveys, and through a written & online survey of potential kitchen users, available in both English and Spanish.
- What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Demand for a year round farmers market is extremely high among all audiences (and our market has very diverse audiences, including 39% of customers who live in a household in which they or another participates in SNAP). Demand is also high among most market vendors, though having piloted the first season in the new outdoor space, logistical concerns persist due to the tight configuration and parking in the small and dense downtown. Re: kitchen incubator, demand is also high from a variety of users—60 people took the in-depth survey and represented food entrepreneurs, growers, nutrition/health educators, caterers, and nonprofits. This has led to the creation of a position to help these entrepreneurs (including farmers) better navigate the resources and facilities available to help them start or grow businesses. There is moderate interest in a shared access cold storage facility.

8. Budget Summary:

- 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:
- Did the project generate any income? No
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

9. Lessons Learned:

- 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). Significant staff turnover at two primary partner organizations- Growing Hope and Food Gatherers. This resulted in a re-allocation of resources and responsibilities amongst new and existing staff at both locations, and may have affected at least the timeline of the project, if not also the outcomes. Overall, the time and resources

dedicated to this project have led to favorable and beneficial outcomes. However, in general, staff turnover at non-profits tends to be a pervasive and detrimental issue that leads to programmatic inefficiencies, amongst other things. More secure funding sources for administrative support, competitive wages, and benefits packages may reduce turn over and in the long run reduce need for outside funding through greater efficiency and retention.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: Complete fulfillment of the objectives outlined in this planning proposal required the full buy-in and support of many partners. Although many partners were preliminarily interested in the planning process, many were prepared or had the capacity to make strong commitments. For example, one of the key facilities we examined—a 26,000 square foot, long empty (for decades) building in the heart of downtown Ypsilanti, and across the street from the developing Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace, was and still is in flux around development plans. The newest owners may not be people we want to work with – they have a strong reputation in the area for being poor businesspeople. They have no plan for the building once they renovate, though are open to ideas. Previously (until February 2015) we were working through a broker representing them, who we’ve long known and trust, to explore the idea of kitchen incubator and potential other components of a MarketHub in this building; that broker broke ties in mid-February after poor business dealings. It is unclear whether these owners will move forward with development/ownership of this building, so the kitchen incubator possibility still remains in flux. Another building several blocks away, and well suited for MarketHub needs, is currently for sale, but this project and organizations aren’t in a place to preemptively purchase a facility. It’s difficult, then, to run through pro forma and complete the business plans without a solid facility or facilities in place. It’s also difficult to remain flexible without a significant funder at the table. It may have been unrealistic to pursue a building with potential urban rental rates, yet this building and most of the block are in need of urban re-development.
- 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: **See above comment about staff turnover.**

10. Future Work:

- 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 project allowed us to set the stage for work that will continue and grow into the future. This includes
 - a. Mobile Farm Stand, now up and going, will seek funding of \$20,000 to operate in 2016 and beyond. Cold storage capacity will allow more product to be aggregated to be distributed in this way. Other local vendors (e.g. bread) have inquired about distributing through the farm stand. We expect this work to grow sales, and help market vendors begin or grow wholesale outlets. We found this year that many were not familiar with how to even set wholesale prices, so spent time working with building their capacity in this way. Other wholesale capacity building is needed
 - b. Kitchen development. While a single large facility was not financially feasible, Growing Hope will increase its role in supporting existing kitchen facilities, building out the facility in the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace to be rentable, and helping food system

entrepreneurs navigate to resources to support their businesses. We expect this work to grow businesses and jobs.

- c. Corner stores and institutional purchasing. While this report doesn't touch on that component of the MarketHub in depth, based on the results of this project, we are hiring a staff person who will begin to work with the local school district and corner stores to bring local food into their supply chains, and to, on the other end, help our market vendors provide that product. This may lead to increased sales and new markets for producers. And, an entrepreneur is considering, based on this project, starting a distribution company to help make this work.
- d. The cold storage facility will be available for rent for aggregation and distribution by market vendors and others. One concern will be utility cost to operate both the cold storage and the kitchen area, so investment in solar panels to subsidize will be critical.
- e. Food system business navigation services. Through this project we identified the need – and to a degree an activity we perform informally by default—to help food businesses navigate to the resource they need next. Many already come to Growing Hope—because they inquire about being a market vendor—and we help them find their way to the appropriate licensing entity, a kitchen facility, a loan program (e.g. for hoopouses for farmers), an opportunity to sell wholesale, a business resource center, etc. We are, in 2016, formalizing these services—not duplicating any of the existing services such as the Small Business Development Center, et al—but just helping people know they exist and helping them get there.

- 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?

In our work trying to combine food access goals with food system advances that further distribution of local product to consumers who most need it, it is still very difficult to make the economics work. In the emerging fields of social enterprise and new ways of thinking about food systems, it is exciting that so many models (especially around food hubs, shared facilities and infrastructure, etc) are popping up. But, we're trying as a sector at times to solve issues that don't 'work' (in that they don't self-fund) in our market economy, and expect that they somehow will. While that has shown to work with new models of aggregation and distribution through food hubs, producer co-ops, etc, it is harder when keeping the equity lens and competing with low-income consumers who are very price-sensitive, and lack access. Our mobile farm stand, for instance, does not make a profit, nor get anywhere near breaking even. There is some income from the sale of produce that, in our pilot, covered just barely the cost of goods sold. The most expensive cost for this or any similar project, however, is people. The small scale of the farm stand is appropriate for the scale of community, but we will never as a result win the economies of scale game. Similarly, corner stores are underserved by fresh product in part because of a scale issue; while we are attempting to find a model that, based on being hyper-localized (many stores but in close proximity) may be able to break even, we don't expect it to ever be a profitable venture to serve who and what the market has failed to serve. And, kitchen incubators, as with most types of incubators, require ongoing subsidy, as they are expensive to operate and offering space and services to entrepreneurs for low cost. Together with our partners we recognized that we can't afford to take on another major project that has to fundraise in an ongoing way just to sustain. We will continue, and hope others do as well, to think in innovative ways to find economic models that can self-sustain and meet these food access goals with minimal or no

ongoing charitable subsidization. But, we want the sector and funders to also recognize that certain activities do need subsidy in an ongoing way, even with innovative components and economic activity, if they are to meet equity and access goals amidst our broken corporate food system.