

## 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.

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2017
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	David Walczak
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<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Eden Valley Growers
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Western New York Food Hub Mobilization
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-LFPP-NY-0031
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2015
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Eden, NY
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$98,890.00

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).

Different individual: Name: Eve Berry; Email: eve@eveberry.com; Phone: 716-604-2999

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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.

**Objective 1:** Increase regional buyers (institutional, retailers, distributors) percentage of local annual whole/processed produce purchase by 10% over their current baselines.

- a. Progress Made: WNY Food Hub project staff have been in contact with and/or visited a number of retailers, institutional buyers and distributors with an interest in purchasing produce through the WNY Food Hub. These included New York City buyers Dig Inn, Farm Fresh, Nathel, Blue Apron, regional buyers (retail and wholesale) Tops, Wegmans, Desiderio, Boulevard, and Florida (Hearne Produce) and Buffalo Public Schools. Additional buyers added during the grant period include American Food and Veg (Rochester), University at Buffalo and Mento Produce (Syracuse).

Actual buyers from the WNY Food Hub are Wegmans, Desiderio and Boulevard. Wegmans is the one of the two largest retail grocers in Western New York; Desiderio and Boulevard are large wholesalers.

- b. Impact on Community: Adding the Western New York Food Hub growers to the Eden Valley Growers coop has generated interest among regional buyers as they seek to provide fresh, local food to the retail grocery stores, restaurants, consumers and markets they supply.
- c.

**Objective 2:** Increase the profitability of small and mid-sized produce growers participating in the Western New York Food Hub.

Progress Made: In the first year of the project, 34,261 cases were sold to regional buyers for a total of \$315,335. In the second year of the project, 38,567 cases were sold for a total of \$368,302. The food hub realized a net profit in both years one and two of the grant, in the amount of \$48,176 and \$54,747, respectively. This is largely attributed to the fact that the hub was incubated inside an existing business, negating the need for many of the initial start-up costs associated with building a food hub from the ground up; namely costs such as infrastructure, distribution, sales and marketing, and cooling

The profitability of individual food hub growers was not measured quantitatively, as it was realized that it was not possible to directly correlate an increase in on-farm profitability with participation in the food hub with only 1 or 2 years of data.

Impact on Community: Awareness is building about the WNY Food Hub through outreach and presentations at various venues. Because the project focuses primarily at the wholesale level, there are fewer opportunities to contact the community directly. Plans are underway for developing a video on the project as well as revising the website to increase visibility with the community-at-large.

**Objective 3:** Increase the number of small and mid-sized produce growers that sell to the Western New York Food Hub.

Progress Made: In December 2015, more than 60 small and mid-sized produce growers attended an information about the WNY Food Hub project. 15 farms/growers completed a Food Hub Grower Assessment which indicated that 14 of 15 farms could produce a larger volume of a singular or select few products. 11 of 15 indicated interest in obtaining GAP certification (4 are already certified). WNY Food Hub staff also visited with growers interested in selling to the Food Hub from 1) Syracuse (Marzolino group), 2) in Genesee County (Triple-G, Fenton) and 3) Upstate Growers. During the 2016 growing season a total of 17 growers sold through the WNY Food Hub. Western NY Food Hub on-boarded 19 new farmers by the end of the 2017 season, and the goal was 20. 10 of the 19 farmers sold to the hub in both 2016 and 2017.

Impact on Community: As mentioned above, in the first year of the project 34,261 cases were sold to regional buyers for a total of \$315,335. In the second year of the project, 38,567 cases were sold for a total of \$368,302. By adding 19 small- and mid-sized produce growers to the WNY Food Hub, consumers have increased access to low, fresh produce in addition to a greater variety of products previously offered by Eden Valley Growers.

**Objective 4:** Increase by 12 the number of WNY produce growers that are GAP certified.

- Progress Made: In preparation for a customized training on GAP Certification, Eden Valley Growers and Cornell Cooperative Extension developed a specifications and standards book. 42 growers attended the GAP training on March 7 and 8, 2016. Efforts were made to host two other GAP trainings throughout the course of the grant, but had to be canceled to incredibly low interest levels from farmers in Western NY. Food Hub project staff worked with growers attending the training to provide technical assistance in completing GAP certification.

- a. Impact on Community: Arden Farm, DeGraff Farms and Winter Farms were GAP Certified. This objective was the most difficult to achieve. Despite the project's efforts to train, engage and provide technical assistance, participants in the WNY Food Hub were unwilling to implement the tasks and procedures necessary to complete GAP Certification.

- b. **Objective 5:** Increase the sales of NYS certified organic produce sold by the WNY Food Hub by non-Eden Valley growers by 10%.

Progress Made: A number of farms/growers participating in the Food Hub are certified organic producers, which will increase WNY Food Hub organic sales by non-Eden Valley growers. This objective was met. Organic sales from food hub growers totaled \$21,260 over years 1 & 2, which accounted for 11% of total organic sales for those years.

Impact on Community: Consumer demand for organic produce continues to grow, and mobilization of the WNY Food Hub provides increased availability for the region and beyond.

**Objective 6:** Develop and implement standard operating procedures within the Food Hub based on best practices learned through the project

Progress Made: This objective was met. As mentioned under Objective 4, a specifications and standards manual has been developed. The project has also developed a website that posts standard operating procedures. In addition to the work done at the hub level, Cornell Cooperative Extension developed grading and packing guidelines for 16 commonly grown specialty crops in NYS: broccoli crowns, Brussels sprouts, corn, green peppers, cucumbers, green cabbage, red cabbage, savory cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, green beans, jalapenos, poblanos, Hungarian hot peppers, summer squash, and zucchini. Additionally, they also created sizing tools designed to assist packing-house workers with identifying and correctly grading common specialty crops grown by food hub farmers. Cornell Cooperative Extension developed a photo gallery of standards for vegetables (sizes, shapes, etc.) including a “key ring” of size templates made of plastic to distribute to Food Hub growers so they are able to determine the desired size for various vegetables.

Impact on Community: Growers brought on board were able to meet specifications asked of them by the Food Hub Inspection Team & WNY Food Hub customers. While most of the product was shipped within the WNY Area, some was shipped into NYC as well.

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, October 1, 2015). Include further explanation if necessary.
  - i. Number of direct jobs created: 1
  - ii. Number of jobs retained: 2
  - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: unknown
  - iv. Number of markets expanded: 4
  - v. Number of new markets established: 3
  - vi. Market sales increased by \$315,335 (year 1) and \$368,302 (year 2) over a baseline of \$0 before startup.
  - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 42 farmers/producers the GAP training. Once certified, growers will be able to sell to the WNY Food Hub, which will be of benefit to them. 19 growers are currently participating in the Food Hub.

Impacts	2016	2017	TOTAL
Increase in local produce purchases	\$183,224	\$233,971	\$417,195
Increase profitability of the coop/hub (net profit per year)	\$48,176	\$54,747	\$102,923
Increase participation in Food Hub from new growers	15*	4**	19***
Increase number of GAP certified farms in WNY	2	1	3

Increase organic sales	\$12,026	\$9,234	\$21,260
Increase variety of crops sold	10	1	11 new items <sup>1</sup>

\* 5 of these farmers only sold to the hub in 2016

\*\* 14 total farmers sold to the hub in 2017, 10 existing from 2016 and 4 new

\*\*\* 19 is the total number of unique farms that sold to the hub over the 2yr grant timeline

In addition to the impacts highlighted in the table above, the following educational opportunities were offered to food hub stakeholders.

- Four buyer/grower meetings, two in year 1, two in year 2, participation from buyers and growers totaling roughly 215 between the four meetings
  - One GAP food safety training, participation totaling roughly 30 specialty crop growers.
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
4. Discuss your community partnerships.
- i. Who are your community partners?  
The Western New York Food Hub Mobilization project partners are Cornell Cooperative Extension and Field and Fork Network.
  - ii. How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?  
Eden Valley Growers, Cornell Cooperative Extension worked as a team to implement the project. Cornell Cooperative Extension has made significant contributions by developing a GAP Certification training program tailored for small and mid-sized farms in the region that want to sell through the Food Hub. Field and Fork Network has assisted with communications to farmers/producers as well as buyers to publicize information events and training opportunities. Both Cornell and Field and Fork Network assisted with organizing and presenting at outreach events throughout the region. Cornell also developed the evaluation tools and process for measuring results and impact.
  - iii. How will they contribute to future results?  
Project partners will continue to participate in the project as described in Eden Valley Growers' proposal as well as participating in monthly team meetings. Eden Valley Growers will continue to work closely with Cornell Cooperative Extension as in the past. Field & Fork Network is committed to continuing to support the WNY Food Hub beyond the term of the grant in a variety of ways:
    - Co-hosting an annual convening of growers and buyers interested in doing business with the food hub. Field & Fork Network will consider including some workshops for growers

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<sup>1</sup> Greens, beets, berries, melons, micro-greens, wheat grass, onions, potatoes, sugar snap peas, asparagus, peaches

who aren't GAP certified and also info on what buyers can expect. Workshops will include speakers – growers and buyer who already do business with the food hub. The proposed workshops are a smaller scale version of Field & Fork's former farmer-chef conferences.

- o Producing a video documenting the food hub project from inception-feasibility-operator search-biz plan-incubation. Select parts of the video can be used as an effective promotional tool to potential new buyers and new growers.

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

Other than the partners described above, no contractors are being used to conduct the project work.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?\*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?
- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? Approximately 350.

\*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).

Publicity has been generated for the project through Field & Fork Network workshops and website. The WNY Food Hub has built its own website to serve as a platform for publicizing project activities and results. ([www.wnyfoodhub.com](http://www.wnyfoodhub.com)) David Walczak (EVG) and staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension have made a number of visits with potential growers and buyers. Dave Walczak also spoke at a University at Buffalo Chefs Event.

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

During meetings with growers, the project conducted a Food Hub Grower Assessment, which provided valuable feedback about specific crops, acres, certifications, interest in GAP certifications, capacity to work with Food Hub requirements and technical assistance/training needs.

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? No separate income.
  - 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. 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).

Lessons learned from the project include the following:

- Consumers continue to be interested in both local food and organic food;
- Small- and mid-sized growers are appreciative of the food hub concept as a means of getting their produce to market without having to develop a separate marketing and sales infrastructure.
- Growth of the WNY Food Hub will likely be an incremental process over time.
  - ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
    - Although GAP certification may provide long-term benefits to small- and mid-sized growers, motivating growers to complete the process was more difficult than anticipated. The invitation to learn about GAP certification generated significant interest, but implementation proved to be challenging for growers. Lesson learned: For future projects, be conservative if making projections for GAP certification, especially among small- to mid-sized growers.
    - Determination of profitability for small-/mid-sized growers was challenging. The relationship between the WNY Food Hub and the growers participating was a buyer/seller relationship primarily. Most of the growers had basic accounting systems and procedures that did not capture data to calculate profitability. In addition, requesting the information was intrusive given the nature of the relationship between the Food Hub and the growers.
  - 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:

#### 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.

Now that the WNY Food Hub is established, Eden Valley Growers will continue to manage and support outreach to small- and mid-sized growers in the Western New York region, so project sustainability is ensured. As described above, Field & Fork Network and Cornell Cooperative Extension will continue to advise the Food Hub and refer potential growers to the Food Hub.

- 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?