

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- March 31, 2016
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Recipient Organization Name:	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Planning for a WNY Food Enterprise Center
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-NY-0130
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Lockport, NY
Total Awarded Budget:	23,376.00

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: _____; 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:** Assess the needs of the target food and Ag business community via survey and one-on-one interviews. First survey- The goal was to distribute a survey to small and mid-size specialty crop producers across the 5 county region (Niagara, Erie, Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming).
 - a. **Progress Made:** This ten question survey was developed using the online tool, Qualtrics and distributed in the beginning of December 2014. It was then heavily promoted throughout December and January. The survey was sent out to each CCE Association Executive Director in in following counties; Erie, Niagara, Orleans and Genesee and was distributed to their list serve. In addition, a press release was developed and sent to local media outlets such as the Buffalo News with 266,123 daily readers, the Lockport-Union and Sun with 18,624 daily readers and the Niagara Frontier Publications (Niagara-Wheatfield Tribune, Island Dispatch and Lewiston-Porter Sentinel) with around 100,000 daily readers. This survey was also promoted on the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County webpage, the CCE Facebook page, and through CCE newsletters and e-newsletters. Additionally, the survey was also distributed through the Regional Farm Bureau email list serve. As a result of this reach, we had approximately 25 community members respond to the survey, which is about a 2% response rate.
 - b. **Impact on Community:** The survey and press release brought attention to the grant and the project. Although we only had 25 community members respond, awareness of the project was expanded. Based on the first survey responses and the enthusiastic support of our community partners, we have concluded there is interest in this type of facility.
 - ii. **Goal/Objective 2:** Assess the needs of the target food and Ag business community via survey and one-to-one interviews. Second survey- The goal was to distribute survey to existing and prospective food business and social entrepreneurs.
 - a. **Progress Made:** A second survey was developed using the online tool, Qualtrics and was distributed in the beginning of April 2015. The second survey was used to solicit more detailed information such as what type of equipment would be appropriate for the kitchen space, what type of training and services the community would like to be offered, the amount of time the facility might be used, etc. Considering the difficulty in obtaining responses for the first survey, we tried a variety of different methods for the second survey. In February, we visited the NYS Food Venture Center in Geneva, NY, to meet with experts in the field to discuss the project, as well as the contents of the second survey and tour the facility. We met with Dr. Olga I. Padilla-Zakour who is the Center Director as well as Elizabeth Sullivan who works closely with food entrepreneurs. They were able to give us advice on how to change some of the questions on the survey to maximize relevant information gathered from responders. This allowed us to finalize the survey in March and develop a plan of distribution. On the first survey we asked responders to provide their contact

information if they were interested in filling out a more detailed survey or participating in a brief phone interview. Twelve community members stated they were interested, so the second survey was sent to them. In addition, we collaborated with the Small Business Development Center from Niagara County Community College to send out the survey to small business owners and entrepreneurs. As we did in the first survey, we sent the second survey out to the local and regional Farm Bureau list serve and Cornell Cooperative Extension list serves in Erie, Niagara, Orleans and Genesee Counties.

In March 2015, CCE was a guest speaker at the Niagara County Economic Development Alliance meeting where we discussed the Local Food Promotion Project (LFPP): Planning for a WNY Food Enterprise Center, to members of this alliance. The project was well received and we were able to send out the survey to those members, so they could share it with interested community members. In addition, we presented at the 2nd annual Plentiful Partnership on Niagara (PPN) workshop in March to discuss the LFPP. PPN is a partnership among the Food Bank of WNY, Niagara Community Action Program (NiCAP), WNY Farmers, area institutions, food pantries, and food banks across WNY. PPN holds both market and field gleaning events to secure unused produce, in an effort to reduce hunger and waste. We asked members of PPN to participate in the survey if they were interested or pass the information on to someone they knew who might want to utilize a shared use kitchen. A press release regarding the survey was sent to local newspaper and media contacts, and the CCE newsletter. A link to the survey was available on the CCE website and the CCE Facebook page. We had 19 responses for the second survey, which is nearly a 2% response rate.

b. **Impact on Community:** The survey and presentations brought more attention to the LFPP and community support of the project was expanded. As a result of the survey responses, we determined that small to mid-sized producers and food business entrepreneurs would like filling and packing equipment, walk-in cooler, food processor, dishwasher, stainless steel tables, labeling equipment, kitchen utensils and storage space available to them in a shared-use commercial kitchen facility. Survey participants also indicated they would be most interested in the following wrap-around services, food safety consulting services and assistance sourcing local produce, meats, and/or dairy.

iii. **NEW Goal/Objective 3:** Assess the needs of the target food and Ag business community via survey and one-on-one interviews. Third Survey- The goal was to distribute to survey to existing and prospective food business and social entrepreneurs.

a. **Progress Made:** The third survey was also developed using the online tool, Qualtrics in response to the low number of participants for the second survey in May 2015. The second survey was 36 questions in the hopes that we could glean very detailed information. However, the length of the survey seemed to be a deterrent for some people. Survey number three consisted of 12 questions from which we were able to collect the core data we needed. The third survey was distributed starting in May 2015. Considering we had a low number of responses for the first and second survey we again tried another approach to encourage responses. We printed surveys and mailed them out with self-addressed stamped envelopes to members on our Ag list and small food businesses in the area. We also visited local farmers' markets in Niagara and

Genesee Counties to distribute surveys and conduct interviews. For the third survey, we again sent it out to the Farm Bureau and our own list serve and posted a link to the survey on the CCE Niagara website and Facebook page. We received completed surveys from 26 specialty crop farmers and prospective food business entrepreneurs. In June 2015 we presented the LFPP to the Lockport Steering Committee, where it was well received. Since we were unable to visit the Vermont Food Venture Center because of travel time and cost, we were able to conduct a phone interview instead, in June 2015. Sarah Waring, the Executive Director of the Center for an Agricultural Economy, of which the Vermont Venture Center is a part, explained their facility and services to us. Sarah also shared advice about getting a shared-use commercial kitchen facility up and running.

b. **Impact on Community:** As a result of the survey responses, we determined that mid-sized producers and food business entrepreneurs would like a standard range/oven, a commercial mixer, filling and packing equipment, walk-in cooler, food processor, a dishwasher, stainless steel tables, labeling equipment, vacuum packing equipment, kitchen utensils and storage space available to them in a shared-use commercial kitchen facility. Survey participants also indicated they would be most interested in the following wrap-around services: label design assistance, food safety consulting, assistance in meeting local, state, and federal health regulations, and marketing assistance. The meeting with the Lockport Steering Committee provided us a chance to present the idea of creating the WNY Food Enterprise Center to stakeholders in the City of Lockport. The Committee was very enthusiastic about the idea, further expanding community support of this project.

iv. **Goal/Objective 4:** Assess the needs of the target food and Ag business community via survey and one-on-one interviews. Develop a brief follow-up interview with questions specific to the WNY Food Enterprise Center and its intended purpose and interview 5-8 small and mid-size specialty crop producers and 5-8 existing and prospective business and social entrepreneurs.

a. **Progress Made:** Nine interviews were conducted throughout the months of May, June, July and August of 2015, with specialty crop growers and prospective food entrepreneurs. As with the surveys, it was difficult to find prospective food entrepreneurs and specialty crop farmers interested in creating value-added products to complete an interview, largely due to the fact that there is no database or 'list' of people who are thinking about starting or expanding their business. Of the nine interviews completed, three were people who had not heard of the feasibility study, and called CCE to inquire about a commercial kitchen facility to rent.

When conducting the surveys, either in person or by phone, we asked the same questions that are found on survey 3, to keep the information gleaned from the interviews the same as what we were asking on the surveys.

b. **Impact on Community:** Individuals completing the interviews were very excited about the idea of the shared-use commercial kitchen facility. Many mentioned that they would use a commercial kitchen space. More than half of the individuals completing interviews were interested in this commercial kitchen facility as a place to start a business. The remaining three individuals were interested in the WNY Food Enterprise Center as a facility to develop and test

new products for their current farm or food business. Individuals completing interviews were interested in the same kitchen equipment and wrap-around services as respondents from survey 3. All individuals completing interviews were especially interested in assistance meeting food safety regulations.

- v. **Goal/Objective 5:** Feasibility of WNY Food Enterprise Center- Building assessment
- a. Progress Made:** The original intent of this project was to reuse an existing, underutilized building on CCE grounds for the WNY Food Enterprise Center which already contains a kitchen space. This kitchen was previously used by caterers to prepare meals but has not been in use for several years and is in need of many improvements in order to fulfill programmatic and service needs. In assessing this space as a possible site we utilized the information and feedback obtained from the completed surveys and one-on-one interviews. From this review, we were able to determine the equipment desired for the kitchen space as well as desired uses. We also utilized the expertise of two CCE employees – one with a background in commercial kitchen design and residential/commercial construction, and the other in Health Department kitchen inspections and food safety. This process revealed the need for the following improvements: removal of cupboards, countertops, flooring, wall covering, an island, and old equipment; installation of a new hood system, new floor and wall coverings as well as stainless steel countertops, shelving and kitchen equipment. CCE possesses some commercial kitchen equipment donated by local manufacturing facility that closed its kitchen and cafeteria (i.e., stainless steel tables, racks, etc.). Equipment needed for the facility includes, a standard range/oven, commercial mixer, food processor, dishwasher, vacuum packing equipment, kitchen utensils and pot and pans, filling and packing equipment, a 3-bay sink, and labeling equipment. The kitchen area already has a walk-in cooler. Cost estimates are outlined in the WNY Food Enterprise Center Implimentation Plan.
- b. Impact on Community:** While considering an alternative location, updating the kitchen facility in the CCE building as originally intended proved to be the most feasible and beneficial location for the community. The location of the CCE facility is well known and easily accessible since the Niagara County Fair is held at the grounds each year. The kitchen space is also accessible with a back overhead entrance so individuals utilizing the facility can easily bring produce or other ingredients into the kitchen and finished products can go out. Parking is ample and there is space for potential storage. Considering there is an existing kitchen in the space, the cost to renovate the space would be considerably less than starting with no infrastructure necessitating a total overhaul. CCE grounds are close to the center of Lockport and also a central location to the general WNY area.
- vi. **Goal/Objective 6:** Develop an implementation plan for the WNY Food Enterprise Center
- a. Progress Made:** As stated above, the original plan for the WNY Food Enterprise Center was to utilize existing infrastructure on CCE Niagara County property and this location proved the best for this project as a result of this planning process. While we were approached to consider Harrison Place, the former Harrison Radiator plant, it became clear this was not the most viable as CCE would never own that space making such a significant build out investment impracticable. See the attached Implementation Plan.

b. Impact on Community: Locating the WNY Food Enterprise Center in an under-utilized building on the CCE grounds will create significant economic development and educational opportunities for this area. There is an existing kitchen space that is ample and will provide specialty crop farmers and food business entrepreneurs a place to start out producing value added products as well as provide the opportunity to grow their business. There is also an existing supportive infrastructure that would provide amenities, including storage space, parking, expansion opportunities, security, etc. Other community organizations have expressed interest in utilizing the food enterprise center, once developed, and also in collaborating to develop educational programs and services to help diversify programming and provide for future sustainability.

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, 20__). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. **Number of direct jobs created:** Not Applicable
 - ii. **Number of jobs retained:** Not Applicable
 - iii. **Number of indirect jobs created:** Not Applicable
 - iv. **Number of markets expanded:** Not Applicable
 - v. **Number of new markets established:** Not Applicable
 - vi. **Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%.** Not Applicable
 - vii. **Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:** Not Applicable
 - a. **Percent Increase:** Not Applicable
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?** Our Community partners include Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie, Genesee and Orleans Counties; regional and local Farm Bureau; Small Business Development Center at NCCC; the Greater Lockport Development Corporation; PPN; and Niagara County Economic Development Alliance.
 - ii. **How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?** Many of the partners listed have been instrumental in distributing the surveys. Some partners have also invited us to present this project at various meetings, which helped with distributing surveys and getting buy-in from the community.
 - iii. **How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?** As the WNY Food Enterprise Center Implementation plan is carried out, the community partners listed above will help promote the facility. Some community partners, such as the Small Business Development Center at NCCC, will assist in providing wrap-around services.
5. **Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?** Not Applicable.
6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. **If yes, how did you publicize the results?** Final results of each of the surveys were compiled into a single document. The results described desired equipment and wrap around services. The results were then posted on the CCE Niagara County Website, Facebook page and Twitter account. The results were also sent out to each of our community partners to share with their audience.
- ii. **To whom did you publicize the results?** The results were available on our CCE Niagara County Website, Facebook page and Twitter account, potentially reaching 8,980 people. Additionally, the results were sent out to our community partners.
- iii. **How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?** We were able to reach approximately 45 stakeholders as a result of publicizing the survey data. These stakeholders include our community partners and other interested individuals.

*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).

- 7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
 - i. **If so, how did you collect the information?** Several people, who had not heard of our project, contacted us to inquire about using a commercial kitchen space for their new or expanding food business. We were able to speak with these food business entrepreneurs to find out their specific needs for a shared use commercial kitchen facility, including the wrap-around services they would utilize. Other community organizations communicated that they also received requests and calls from individuals looking for a commercial kitchen facility. They stressed how much such a facility was needed. This feedback also supported the conclusion that there is a need for the WNY Food Enterprise Center. Additionally, we visited Grass Roots Mercantile in Lockport, NY to speak with the shop owner. Grass Roots Mercantile sells only locally made products, ranging from BBQ sauce and loose teas to handmade dolls. Many of the food entrepreneurs that sell products there have expressed interest in a local commercial kitchen with wrap-around services, considering many of them use facilities 50 -100 miles or more away.
 - ii. **What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?** Comments made by individuals during interviews were similar. Current food business entrepreneurs are, “looking for a commercial kitchen space to rent that will allow us to produce more of our product and develop a variety of new products”. New food business entrepreneurs are all interested in, ...”help navigating food safety regulations and assistance with working through the Article 20C and developing a schedule process”. An email we received from an individual interested in starting a food business indicates, “I have been looking into rental kitchen space, however, there is just none in the area. It would be nice to stay local in Lockport for personal reasons and to support the local economic growth. I wanted to email you personally to let you know there is definitely a need for this in the area.”

- 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?** Not applicable.

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).** Completing a feasibility study for the WNY Food Enterprise Center was a positive experience. Although we struggled to collect survey data, largely due to the lack of an organized group of prospective food business entrepreneurs, we were able to reach enough people to get a good sense of what equipment and services are desired in a shared-use commercial kitchen facility. Throughout the study, we were fortunate to be able to speak with the NYS Food Venture Center in Geneva, NY, as well as the Vermont Venture Center to glean ideas about how to reach food entrepreneurs and set up a shared-use commercial kitchen facility. In discussing the idea of the WNY Food Enterprise Center with each of these organizations, we were able to develop a realistic idea of how our kitchen space could be laid out and what wrap around services could be offered. It was extremely beneficial to have these discussions because both of these organizations created successful enterprises with goals similar to what we have for the WNY Food Enterprise Center.
- ii. **If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:** The outcomes for the WNY Food Enterprise Center included preparing an implementation plan for the shared-use kitchen facility and wrap-around services at the CCE Niagara County grounds. While we succeeded in achieving this goal to a large extent, we were only able to estimate some larger portions of the cost of required installation/build out, such as general contracting services. CCE is required to follow a public bid process and make an award as a result. This bid process can only be initiated when installation is imminent and an award is able to be made. Obviously, we are not at that point. Additionally, CCE would need to have detailed specifications developed by an architect in order to go to bid. Of course, CCE did not retain an architect as the planning phase has just been completed and such an expense is premature and impractical.
- 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:** The feasibility study for the WNY Food Enterprise Center has taken several unexpected turns over the course of the project. We struggled at first to get the number of survey responses we originally had planned. However, speaking about the project to community partners and other organizations that already had a shared-use commercial kitchen, gave us a new perspective on our approach and lead to more responses. Additionally, sharing the project with our community partners, lead to more support for the project than we anticipated. Almost unanimously, community partners have stated that the WNY Food Enterprise Center is needed and will add tremendous value to our community by providing a space for food business entrepreneurs to get started and grow. In addition, partners feel that this center will provide a place for educational and economic development opportunities to develop so they are willing to invest time and resources into making it happen. We would suggest to anyone interested in implementing a similar project to be flexible. Activities did not always go as planned for this project, but because we were flexible we were ultimately successful.

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.** Through the planning process and feasibility study, we have learned a great deal about creating a shared-use commercial kitchen and what our audience is looking for in such a facility. The conversations with farmers, food business entrepreneurs and other community members made it very clear this type of facility is wanted and needed in our community and the WNY Region. It became clear through this process that the community sees the CCE facility as the most viable and desirable location. This facility is of ample size and will be able to host a variety of businesses as well as educational and economic development programs. There will be more opportunity for synergistic and collaborative growth that will ultimately be of the greatest benefit to the community. CCE offers adult education classes such as cooking classes and food preservation classes that would utilize the commercial kitchen space. In addition, CCE is starting a workforce development program that will utilize the space for cooking, preservation and packaging of products. In addition to being able to host a range of food entrepreneurial ventures and provide an array of wrap around services and programming.
- 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?** The WNY Food Enterprise Center will be a place for food business as well as educational and economic development programs to thrive. CCE has developed an initial implementation plan to make the Food Enterprise Center a reality and will continue to develop this plan as well as a formal business plan. Additionally, CCE will be applying for funding through various sources, including the 2016 LFPP grant. This funding will lay the foundation for implementation of the commercial kitchen facility.