

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

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

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

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

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

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

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2016 to September 29, 2016
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Recipient Organization Name:	Hattie Larham Community Services
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Hattie's Gardens Mobile Farm Market
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-LFPPH0060
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Akron, OH
Total Awarded Budget:	\$25,000

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

- i. **Goal/Objective 1: Conduct market research to identify the current market of local (within 50-100 miles) food producers (produce, dairy, meats, herbs, items such as honey, prepared value added foods like salsa) and establish their interest in and capacity for participating as suppliers to the Mobile Market.**
 - a. Progress Made: Market Research completed in March, 2016 revealed more than 200 growers of all sizes and business models. In addition to the contacts developed through the grant-funded research, we were able to leverage those new relationships to connect with other members of the supply/value chain, such as off-the-radar growers, brokers, distributors, and transportation resources that may prove valuable as this initiative grows.
 - b. Impact on Community: These relationships have brought fresh local produce to the Food Hub facility which is now working with close to a dozen growers. Produce currently is offered in our Retail Corner Market and was offered in our 2016 CSA program along with Hattie’s Gardens produce. The produce availability at the Corner Market has technically eliminated this Food Desert in 44307.

- ii. **Goal/Objective 2: Develop an effective marketing and business development and stewardship strategy that will attract and help retain potential local food suppliers. Identify/solicit feedback on perceived and actual barriers to participation, examine and establish realistic price points, develop supplier program.**
 - a. Progress Made: USDA LFPP grant funds were used to develop a first line of print materials distributed to farm contacts in the radius (up to 150 miles). The facility began soft operations prior to the June 2016 opening and has continued to grow the agricultural customer base.
 - b. Impact on Community: The neighborhood in which the Food Hub is located has already expressed gratitude for having new access to fresh fruits and vegetables. At this stage there has not been sufficient interaction between our farmer suppliers and community residents to assess whether we are creating a connection between the two. Unrelated to this grant, our 2017 farm market program will be an opportunity for residents to connect with farmers and for those farmers to better understand the importance of making produce available to this market. We are exploring all avenues to incentivize participation in the markets for customers who rely on food assistance benefits, and to make sure we have ample foot traffic from conventional customers to help maintain the balance and retain farmers.

- iii. **Goal/Objective 3: Select 8-12 block clusters within the Lane-Wooster neighborhood around the Food Hub with populations experiencing the highest rates of low access and low income.**
 - a. Progress Made: The initial target area is comprised of both business and residential populations. Most of the estimated 5,500 households experience either fixed-income or low-income constraints and limited personal transportation. These numbers include a high-density public housing community that uses a mixed-income model. In terms of transporting produce or groceries, there are clear

justifications to go beyond the original 8-12 neighborhoods based on a newer grocery delivery model vs. the originally conceived “mobile farm market” which was more of a pop up market concept. The idea of servicing some of the businesses in the area with a regular (monthly, seasonally) “pop-up” market is a possibility being explored to help promote the project as well as attract retail customers whose purchases can support the sustainability of the overall program.

b. Impact on Community: The need is essentially evenly spread across the entire service area, so we deemed that limiting to a handful of neighborhoods was less effective than focusing on developing relationships with resources clustered in neighborhoods that might serve as “route partners” or provide other supports such as transportation to the Corner Market. The idea of offering periodic “pop up” markets as well as the delivery service to businesses in the area has emerged as a possible way to help sustain the program since those customers would be more likely to pay up front and would not require incentivizing.

iv. Goal/Objective 4: Identify, engage, and recruit community organizations and institutions in those selected areas to serve as “route partners” willing to host and help promote the Mobile Market to local constituents.

a. Progress Made: Working with United Way and Summit County Public Health, we have identified more than two dozen organizations including churches and community centers working with the targeted population within one mile of the Food Hub. Most of these new contacts have helped to promote the focus groups and the Food Hub. Existing partners such as the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority and the Akron Public Schools have been a tremendous help in creating interest for the Food Hub and the conversation about whether a “mobile market/grocery delivery” program would be necessary and effective.

b. Impact on Community: New awareness about the Hub and the potential for home delivery of groceries has the neighborhood talking about and also visiting the Food Hub. Residents are purchasing more fresh food and requesting education on how to prepare healthy meals. This is setting the tone for future conversations about supports such as a mobile market or grocery to help people obtain and use fresh produce.

v. Goal/Objective 5: Build constituent buy-in for the Mobile Market for both residents and potential suppliers by conducting focus groups, public meetings, participation in community events, and when possible direct constituent contact to promote the project and collect feedback for designing implementation.

a. Progress Made: The opening of Hattie’s Food Hub in June 2016 opened a natural conversation with the neighborhood. The facility and its Corner Market is the first new operation in the area in 15 years. Many constituents have been somewhat skeptical. Some did not realize that a Corner Market is part of the facility. In addition to more structured conversations such as the focus groups – conducted with the help of Project Ujima as “discussion circles” – a survey was conducted later in the project based on the success of a similar survey prior to the Food Hub opening. While several respondents indicated an interest in this service, some expressed concerns about safety and sustainability. While it is earlier in the discussion than we had planned to be at the end of our project, we are encouraged that, while people don’t necessarily express the idea that a mobile farm market is the solution, the notion that some form of a delivery service for produce, perhaps coupled with other activities on a regular basis, holds a lot of interest.

b. Impact on the community: A core group of residents who have attended the “discussion circles” (focus groups) has emerged and started to “gel” as a group willing to help get

others involved in the conversation about the mobile grocery/farm market concept. Their feedback confirms that more work needs to be done to engage and understand the overall needs of the community we plan to serve, as well as the care we need to take in building trust. Many organizations have reached out with various services and when those programs are pulled because of funding or lack of interest, the loss compounds what can be best described as a sense of isolation among residents in communities like our target area. As a new entity, there are always concerns that a new service would fill a void but then fade out without adequate support.

vi. Goal/Objective 6: Develop an implementation and business plan that responds to feedback and data collected through market research and constituent building steps, but allows for flexibility to adjust strategy as necessary to remain effective and support growth. Plan will include nutrition education and healthy meal planning components to encourage consumption and enjoyment of products consumers may be trying for the first time.

a. Progress made: We have not yet completed a formal business plan, but the information gathered and lessons learned during the second half of the project, when we really engaged the community and learned what they preferred, provide good justification for a test/pilot phase. Transportation remains a real challenge for the majority of people living in the targeted area, but not everyone feels a mobile farm market is the answer. There is interest in a service that might “piggyback” on things already happening. The general feedback is that people who want or need the service would be more likely to use it if it were stopping at known community assets and coordinated at times where people are already attending other activities on a regular basis.

b. Impact on Community: Using the Food Hub as our home base, we have already initiated cooking and nutrition classes to meet the call for more information about eating healthy. The response so far has been extremely positive. We are most encouraged about the way that people have taken the mobile market/grocery service idea and started to talk about ways to make it work. It’s taken on an unexpectedly organic life of its own.

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, 2016). Include further explanation if necessary.

While the Food Hub has created and retained 33 jobs, and established and expanded markets for approximately 15 growers from within 100 miles of the Food Hub, we do not yet have data exclusive to the mobile market/grocery project since it was a planning grant.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 3 projected jobs, work training participant and a job coach to operate the market, with an alternate to help with procurement, stocking, and sales.
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 2 – The alternate position would be part of general operations.
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 1
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 1
- v. Number of new markets established: 3
- vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. Since this was a planning grant, we don’t have these numbers for a mobile operation, but we are approaching \$180K in produce sales with our 15 growers via the Food Hub, and so we expect this will expand as value-added items are included.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
 - a. Percent Increase: 100%

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?

Absolutely. As a new resource in a depressed area poised for a comeback, the Food Hub and the services that will emanate from it have excited residents. We are building relationships with people in the neighborhood who have a range of experience with fresh food, customer traffic increases daily. This is being accomplished both through local promotions and a coupon incentive that was supported by a local foundation. Employees of businesses in the area enjoy frequenting the Hub for lunch items and several have booked the community meeting room for trainings. These organizations would be natural route partners that we may not have considered. They represent a “captive” retail customer market of employees and other nearby businesses whose purchases can help stimulate support for the project both in terms of awareness and financial stability. In our most recent community meeting, several participants offered more ideas about promoting the Food Hub and linking it to the mobile grocery or market, because they realize that business must continue to grow in order for this resource to remain available.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

Who are your community partners?

We have been very fortunate to continue our work with Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA), the Akron Public Schools, Summit County Public Health and InfoLine of Summit County. We are building new relationships with additional partners such as Akron General Hospital (now Cleveland Clinic), a local community center, the neighborhood Head Start program, and several churches.

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

AMHA and the Akron Public Schools were instrumental in getting word out about the project and sparking interest in feedback about the idea of a mobile market. We were able to enlist close to 15 participants for each of our focus groups with their help. Summit County Public Health and InfoLine each provided important baseline health and community data that helped us get an initial sense of the social and economic status of the area as well as organizations serving residents in the neighborhood. As the Food Hub opened and became more of a presence, local churches became a natural outlet for promotion.

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

A shared commitment to increasing amount of fresh food available to people in the community and promoting better eating habits keeps our partners engaged with us. Many have pledged assistance and resources such as access, information, and volunteers to help with initiatives that connect people with more healthy food. Churches regularly invite our team to make presentations and health professionals have offered to participate in community events at the Food Hub to provide various health education and screenings activities. We envision these partners being a part of any mobile grocery or farm market activity as an added way to drive use of the service. As most feedback indicates that success of a mobile market or grocery delivery service would depend on coordinating the project around other activities where people congregate, our partners would likely help us to coordinate a program that met the needs of their constituents.

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

We used three contractors during the course of the project. The first was the market research conducted by Coleman Wick. This work, establishing the baseline agricultural market within 50-100 miles, was the foundation of the rest of the project. Their results showed more than 200 farms within the specified radius. When we eliminated growers that were producing items outside of our processing capacity such as meats or dairy, we were able to zero in on 25-30 farms. Some

respondents to a survey conducted by Coleman Wick self-identified for services which was helpful. However the research was not the only valid source of information about local farms. As our team began to contact growers we came in contact with distributors as well as more informal networks that yielded additional “under the radar” producers as well as valuable sources of “seconds” or cosmetically imperfect items that could be used rather than discarded by growers.

A second contractor was Project Ujima, a highly effective facilitation resource that helped us to organize and execute the focus groups. The groups were conducted as “discussion circles” using the equitable Ujima model. Attendees represented a wide range of ages, races, and economic backgrounds, and all lived in the Food Hub neighborhood. Not only did we get immediate feedback about the prospects of a mobile farm market or grocery, but the conversations ignited interest in more long-term conversation and involvement around food in that community.

A third contractor, Printing Concepts, helped us to execute a survey near the end of the grant period to reconnect with a broader cross section of residents. We were surprised to find that many of these residents still did not know about the Corner Market at the Food Hub, that we accept EBT SNAP and Senior Cash benefits, and that we were considering a mobile market. The contractor handled the distribution of the survey to approximately 5,500 households.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

We have communicated some results internally but will be sharing publicly for the first time at a meeting of “Building Better Communities,” a separate Hattie Larlham initiative, in January, 2017. The group is a loose coalition of leaders from people serving institutions in the same footprint.

- 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?

*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?

Yes.

- i. If so, how did you collect the information? The primary methods were our focus groups and a survey that included questions about the prospect of using a mobile market or grocery service. We also collected anecdotal feedback from customers at our Food Hub Corner Market who would be a primary market for the service.
- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

Focus Groups (“Discussion Circles”): We started the sessions with a question about how many of the participants eat a fresh fruit or vegetable daily. The majority of participants did not, and indicated several reasons, including:

- Don’t know where to start
- Too much time to prepare
- Diet
- Lack of Availability
- Cost – can’t afford it; cheaper to buy snack foods like potato chips
- No Access – only place to shop are corner stores
- Fruit is not sweet enough for sweet tooth
- No time – need to plan meals at the beginning of the week
- Schedule throughout the day gets in the way

- Lack of mindfulness and lack of planning
- Lazy
- Winters make it hard to get local fresh food
- Need to learn a faster way to prepare fresh food
- Fresh food has a short shelf life
- “Unhealthy” food satisfies stress triggers (eating comfort food when stressed)
- Hard to overcome current eating habits

Among participants, it was clear throughout the conversation that unlearning poor habits and having access to information about how to prepare healthy meals was as important as access to produce. When asked specifically about the idea of a delivery service or mobile market, respondents indicated that coordinating the service with other existing functions would make it more accessible, potential cost to users and the process for placing orders could be perceived as barriers.

The survey allowed us to drill down a bit more as to what people felt about the mobile market concept. While we did not ask respondents to indicate their age or race, we did ask how many persons live in the household, and were surprised to learn that 44% are single person households. It drops sharply to 2-person households (27%) then sharply again to 4 person households (13% percent) and 3-person households (12%). However, more than half (56%) felt they would use a delivery service, vs 44% who said they would likely not. Interestingly, overall 43% noted transportation as a going concern in their households, suggesting that there is a mix of families and single persons, possibly elderly, who rely on other methods of transportation to buy groceries.

Given the in-person group discussions and survey results, while there is skepticism about a new service we believe there is enough interest and need to consider a pilot delivery program.

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
 - If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

Note: A remainder of \$1,548.78 is to be deobligated.

9. Lessons Learned:

- 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).**
 - Most successful, sustainable urban Mobile Farm Markets are in communities with high population density that generates sufficient customer traffic. The target market for our mobile farm market is in a low-income, low-access area with fairly low density except for our public housing communities. Given the uneven performance of Pop-Up Farm Markets organized in similar neighborhoods in Akron, it’s unlikely that sales in these communities alone would be enough to sustain the mobile market program as originally conceived without substantial outside operating support.
 - The community around Hattie’s Food Hub is enthusiastic about having new access to fresh produce and overall expressed a desire to learn better ways of eating. This educational aspect came across loud and clear and led to organizing nutrition and cooking

demonstrations at the Food Hub within the first four months of operation. We are seeking private and corporate grant funds to help underwrite the costs of these workshops.

3. A concern raised in both the focus groups and the survey was the issue of reliability and the risk of creating a dependence on a service that might not be sustainable. Many respondents to the survey expressed that they would not want the Food Hub to “go away” and indicated they might use the delivery service if it were to “last.” These comments are tied to a generalized skepticism that stems from years of programs coming and going in the neighborhood.

4. While there was mild interest in a mobile farm market akin to the old fashioned “vegetable truck”, the alternative concept of a grocery delivery service drew more interest and support. There are some other resources available to older residents and those with mobility challenges to schedule trips to the grocery store, medical appointments, and other destinations through Akron’s “SCAT” service, but many do not qualify. Transportation between the Food Hub and higher population dense neighborhoods, or a service that delivered food as ordered from the Hub on a regularly scheduled basis, seemed more appealing.

5. Organizations in the area are enthusiastic and very willing to partner with us to promote access to fresh food among their constituents. Our Community Organizer identified approximately 100 community-based organizations, churches, schools (public and public magnet schools, private, and after school programs), public assistance sites, retirement and day programs, housing, and recreational programs slightly outside our original 1-2mile radius. We have been working with a number of these groups to let them know about our retail market and start the conversation about food access leading to the possibility of an affordable mobile market solution.

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

We got an immediate start on the market research regarding regional growers and were able to do the price point matrix comparing organic vs conventional produce prices fairly easily. These project components were more or less self-contained, but other aspects of the project really didn’t crystallize until the Food Hub was closer to opening and we started to really understand the community. Our initial impressions about the need and desire for fresh food were confirmed, but there was more to learn, and trust to build among residents. More time would be needed to develop a base and establish the Food Hub brand in order to launch an affiliate Mobile Farm Market successfully.

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:**

1. Assess what capacities need to be amplified and select the right contractor to complement that. If you have competent and knowledgeable staff, contract work should enhance and support that knowledge, not try to replace it. The research firm we hired initially did not understand our depth of knowledge about the agriculture market, and staff probably spent more time than should have been necessary helping them to design their market research.

2. Maximize community resources. We were pleased that our community organizer did not have to start from scratch to build a source list of amazing organizations. The help of planning organizations in and around Akron reduced her time and streamlined her research efforts so that she could spend more time reaching out to organizations.

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.

This planning project has opened doors to genuine relationships with residents as well as organizations in this community, but more work needs to be done to continue to build trust, identify the real needs, and make sure that any mobile delivery activity adds value rather than dilutes action being taken by other organizations to address food access. For example, some programs that are well known in the community, such as Akron's Mobile Meals program, address food access to a wide market but do not include fresh produce, and there is a wide gap between the price point they would pay for produce we could provide and the break even for our producers. This suggests that a mobile delivery focused on the distribution of fresh, *local* produce would be enhancing, rather than detracting from, existing meal services. It also begs a larger policy question of whether existing programs designed to meet the needs of the same market should be expanded to incorporate fresh local food, which may be an opportunity for the USDA.

With the opening of Hattie's Food Hub as the "home base" of this project, the local neighborhood is experiencing the first new development of any kind in some time. The people who attended our focus groups around food and our mobile delivery concept are continuing to meet, suggesting that Hattie Larlham is building trust that can stimulate change and contribute solutions but that residents may need to lead the way. The group is identifying many ancillary issues related to the challenge of food access, such as transportation, economic stability and income, and neighborhood safety, all of which relate back to how a mobile delivery model might be implemented.

Clearly the market for local produce in this community is new for most of our producers. There are no existing farm markets in the immediate area nor any within the two-mile radius originally proposed for this project. Treating a mobile produce delivery service as a 12-month venture, whether inclusive of non-produce items or not, absolutely creates opportunity for producers in a neighborhood that is being viewed as "up and coming" by planning professionals. The proximity to the area's historic "Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath" which is undergoing a substantial rehabilitation aligns the neighborhood with coming systemic changes that will further bolster that market share and even may attract new occupancy from a new urbanist class of middle income shoppers.

What has been most encouraging is that the participants in our focus groups understand and embrace the core mission of Hattie Larlham's food program, and that expanding the retail services we offer through the establishment of a mobile delivery service creates new work training opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The

potential for our trainees to be part of this program professionally helps them to connect with people and provide a service that changes lives on both sides of the equation.

- 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?

As the area surrounding the Food Hub begins a rebound resulting in part from the renewed development around the Food Hub and the Akron Zoo, we believe that there is room for a program like a Mobile Farm Market or other service focused on expanding access to fresh produce for consumers with limited mobility or transportation who cannot access the Food Hub or for whom a delivery service is more appealing for a variety of reasons. Given the lack of fresh produce included in other meal delivery services, we have initiated discussions with Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority about piloting this program among residents in two nearby housing communities, one of which has residents who have been active in our original focus groups. Our initial planning with Resident Services staff has focused on a small number of buildings, and incorporates the possibility of a coordinator on site to work with the staff at the Food Hub on facilitating orders and delivery. This may be a great volunteer or even work opportunity for a public housing resident or as a project of a resident council.

As Hattie's Food Hub ramps up its operation in the second half of Year 1, we have been exploring supply management solutions. A relatively popular and user-friendly option, Farmer's Web, may provide a simple, seamless ordering process for mobile grocery customers. We are planning to integrate Farmer's Web into our work with the Akron Public Schools and can extend the value of our subscription by working the mobile grocery customers into a route that best suits them. A local car dealership on the corner opposite the Food Hub has offered us the use of an electric car, which we could outfit with appropriate coolers or a trailer to start the implementation of this program without the investment in a truck.

We also will continue to keep our organizational partners engaged. The Akron Public Schools has offered to host future "discussion circle" events which will allow us better access to families with young children. Attracting these young families over the summer as we launched our groups was more challenging than expected either because of transportation, time, child care, or other barriers. Other established and emerging partnerships with sites like the local public library branch, Balch Street Community Center, and nearby Head Start locations continue to help us spread the word.

We are grateful to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service for funds that allowed us to fully explore the prospect of launching a mobile market in Akron. Increasing consumption of healthy, abundant local fruits and vegetables provides an outlet to local farms for produce and seconds year round, and allows us to provide residents facing considerable socio-economic challenges new access to fresh foods. Despite 55% of Akron's restaurants serving fast food, 61% of our survey respondents indicated they cook meals daily. Connecting these residents with fresh local produce via a mobile delivery can be a win-win for farmers and their customers if Hattie Larlham can leverage both relationships in the future.