

**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>	September 30, 2014-September 29, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Kristin Gangwer
Authorized Representative Phone:	513.242.0222
Authorized Representative Email:	kristin@ourharvest.coop
Recipient Organization Name:	Our Harvest Cooperative
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Growing the Capacity of the Our Harvest Food Hub: by expanding local markets, increasing the supply and marketability of local food, and by increasing operational efficiency and year round capacity.
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-OH-0141
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Cincinnati, OH
Total Awarded Budget:	\$100,000

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: Develop Markets for Local Food

- a. Progress Made:

1. **MARKETING:** During the grant period, Our Harvest (OHC) implemented a radio marketing campaign, which ran for one week on Cincinnati public radio and focused on our direct-to-consumer sales channel (the Weekly Harvest Box Program). We conducted outreach through social media and our e-newsletter list (900+ members), as well as through in-person events and direct promotion. We advertised in two print media outlets each year. OHC staff attended a 6-month communications bootcamp where they worked to hone the coop’s key messages and value proposition. A new ourharvest.coop website was designed and implemented, a new wholesale online ordering system was implemented, and a new direct-to-consumer sales software was implemented. OHC also developed a suite of marketing materials for our different sales channels:
 - a. For our prospective wholesale buyers: a buyer packet, price list, availability schedule, sample marketing materials and retail signage, and other support materials
 - b. For our direct-to-consumer sales channel: a poster and ½-page flyer, which we updated annually
 - c. For our food access programs: a one-pager, a half-page general flyer, and a full-page customizable handout
 - d. For our food hub in general: a ‘benefits of local food’ sales poster and a producer partner flyer
2. **WEEKLY HARVEST BOX:** Our direct-to-consumer Weekly Harvest Box Program (WHB) was maintained year-round for 150 families for the first time in 2016. The WHB Program was also implemented at three new worksites.
3. **FOOD ACCESS:** OHC has successfully started accepting EBT at all points of sale, and over the two grant years worked with 12 different communities to increase access to healthy fruits and vegetables for residents. Our Harvest conducted pilots for two separate food access programs – the Produce Perks Harvest Box Program and the Harvest Day Program, settling on Harvest Day as the primary method of increasing access to healthy, local food. Harvest Day is a program that turns community institutions (schools, churches, rec centers, etc.) into food access distribution points. Community members can pre-order each week from Our Harvest’s wholesale availability list. A site coordinator at each site totals up the orders, and places one bulk order in our online ordering system. Our Harvest delivers the produce at the designated place and time, and the site coordinator also helps facilitate the order pick-up by individuals. Institutions have the ability to mark up

the produce slightly (to an affordable retail price), thereby using the program as a fundraiser and increasing their investment in its success. Produce Perks, our local incentive program, allows participants to double their dollar up to \$10 when paying with an EBT card. Our Harvest obtained additional funding to construct additional high tunnel space for year-round expansion of the Harvest Day program. Additionally, we have increased healthy food access through farmers' markets, corner stores, on-farm sales, and community-based distribution methods.

4. **WHOLESALE:** Our Harvest used our wholesale buyer packet to approach and conduct preliminary buyer conversations with multiple institutions and food service companies, including: Xavier University, Chartwell's, Sodexo, Norwood City Schools, Margaret Mary Hospital, Fifth Third, Cincinnati Public Schools, Mt. St. Joe University, and Cincinnati State, among others. OHC has also forged new sales relationships with a variety of new wholesale clients, including chain retail stores, small independent markets, and public school systems. In partnership with the Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council, Our Harvest is working to develop local case studies, example procurement policies, and educational materials for area institutions, which should increase their local food purchases in future years. Our Harvest sales staff conducted a thorough sales planning process with all wholesale buyers in order to plan production for each coming season. Staff also supported community-wide efforts to bring the Good Food Purchasing Program to Cincinnati, which would increase institutional good food purchasing. Our Harvest worked with Xavier student to develop a list of self-operated institutional kitchens in the Greater Cincinnati area, as well as MBA students from Mt. St. Joe University to research institutional procurement and develop an institutional sales strategy for Our Harvest. In 2016, a sales contractor was hired to focus specifically on increasing wholesale markets. Finally, a partnership was forged with Norwood City Schools, which led to purchasing for a 'taste of local' month and scheduled field trips to Our Harvest's farm.

b. Impact on Community:

1. **PRODUCER PARTNERS:** By expanding our markets, Our Harvest has been able to form strong distribution partnerships with more than 20 local producers, spending \$67,334 with local producers during the reporting period.
2. **FOOD ACCESS:** This work has led to increased distribution of local, healthy foods to 12 new low-income communities, reaching 350 individuals and families who previously had limited access to healthy fresh foods. 7,500 lbs of fresh, local produce were distributed through food access efforts.
3. **WEEKLY HARVEST BOX:** In 2016, 150 families were able to continue receiving fresh, local produce all winter through our Weekly Harvest Box Program.
4. **WHOLESALE:** 23 new wholesale outlets are now serving/selling local food.

- ii. Goal/Objective 2: Increase Supply and Marketability of Local, Sustainable Food Flowing Through Food Hub
 - a. Progress Made: Our Harvest hosted a full-day Wholesale Success training workshop in January 2015, which was attended by 70 farmers and other food system educators and stakeholders, well exceeding the original goal of educating 20 farmers over two years. This training was led by Atina Diffley, a nationally-renowned trainer, who spent eight hours educating local farmers about marketing, farm planning, food safety, packing, grading, and many other subjects highly relevant to their ability to successfully sell to wholesale markets. For most, this was these farmers' first introduction to this kind of information, and feedback was exceedingly positive. Each year, OHC conducted planning meetings with 10+ local farmers focused on incorporating their fruits and vegetables into OHC's Weekly Harvest Box program. We have also worked to develop our own on-farm food safety plan, which includes standard operating procedures (SOPs) for receiving, storage, packing, cleaning, etc. and are moving towards a self-audit. In partnership with the Our Harvest Research and Education Institute (OHREI), one season extension workshop was conducted with area growers. In May 2015, OHC moved into a new, centralized aggregation and distribution warehouse space, and since then staff have developed a full spectrum of Standard Operating Procedures to guide operational activities. OHC brought this new space and all relevant operational activities into food-safety compliance with local certifying bodies and implemented all tracking and recordkeeping measures needed for GAP certification. OHC has forged successful relationships with 20+ local producers and spent \$67,334 with local food producers in total during the grant period. During this grant period, the OHC Partner Producer Manual was updated with a new food safety checklist and grading standards. A wholesale partner producer plan and price list was developed. In partnership with OHREI, one seed starting for commercial production workshop was held. A new cooler was constructed on Our Harvest's Bahr Farm (not funded through LFPP), which will help maintain product quality and safety necessary for GAP certification. Finally, throughout the grant period, Our Harvest hosted 4 OHREI apprentices, helping to train the next generation of farmers and increase local supply.
 - b. Impact on Community: As a result of this work, 70 farmers and community members have been trained on successful wholesale growing and marketing. Having this workshop has made Our Harvest's role as an aggregator of local foods much easier, providing a common language to use with growers, underscoring the importance of some of the systems and policies that need to be in place. The planning meetings with local farmers have allowed them to plan their production and accurately project scales, and OHC to incorporate those numbers into our plans and revenue projections. OHC has forged successful relationships with 20+ local producers and spent \$67,334 with local food producers in total during the grant period.
- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Improve Capacity and Efficiency by Increasing Number of Packing and Distribution Staff
 - a. Progress Made: OHC hired 1 Operations Coordinator, 1 additional packing/distribution team member, and 1 sales and operations support staff. All of these staff have helped to free up Food Hub Manager and Sales Coordinator's

labor time so that they can focus on growing markets and producer partnerships.

b. Impact on Community: By hiring these three staff members, the OHC food hub management and sales staff have freed up other staff time that could then be used to develop relationships with other farmers and to partner with new institutional buyers. This has had a direct impact on OHC's ability to build markets and also to increase the capacity of the food hub and its ability to work with a larger number of local growers.

iv. Goal/Objective 4: Increase Year-Round Capacity of Food Hub Through Processing Partnerships and Promotion of Season Extension

a. Progress Made: In partnership with the Our Harvest Research and Education Institute (OHREI), one season extension workshop and one seed starting for commercial production workshop was conducted. Additionally, Our Harvest partnered with KHI Foods, a small processor in Kentucky, to process 1,500 lbs of local tomatoes into marinara sauce in both 2015 and 2016, which was then sold via direct-to-consumer and wholesale sales channels. Year-round distribution was also due to successful season extension and root vegetable storage practices. Year-round sales were achieved in 2016.

b. Impact on Community: The local marinara sauce that was processed allows Our Harvest to distribute year-round, thereby increasing our revenue and creating year-round markets for other local growers. Educating other growers on season extension techniques should increase the amount of produce available during winter months in future years.

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.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 3 (Operations Coordinator, Packing/Distribution Staff, Sales and Operations Support Staff)
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 3 (CEO, Sales Coordinator, Senior Sales and Distribution Staff)
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 1 (OHC Farm Apprentice)
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 3 (1 – Winter Weekly Harvest Box Program, 2 - Harvest Day Food Access Program, and 3 - Wholesale Market)
- v. Number of new markets established: 12 new Food Access Sites and 23 new Wholesale Customers
- vi. Market sales increased by:
 - a. Wholesale: \$8,771.89 and 48.65%.
 - b. Harvest Day Food Access: \$581.50 and 58,000%.
 - c. Winter Weekly Harvest Box: \$31,304.25 and 350.97%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 88
 - a. Percent Increase: 486.66%

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, we developed the Harvest Day Program, which, along with other methods of distribution, has increased access to healthy, local fruits and vegetables for low-income residents in 12 Greater Cincinnati communities. We also reached new ethnic groups by beginning sales to the Cincinnati Asian Market, as well as sales to Guatemalan immigrants through farm staff via small Latino

markets and personal networks.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners? Our partners include: Green Umbrella, City of Cincinnati Urban Agriculture Program, Civic Garden Center, Churches Active in Northside (CAIN), Cincinnati Health Department, Gabriel's Place, Cincinnati State, Hamilton County We Thrive!, Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative, OSU Cooperative Extension, each of our Weekly Harvest Box pick-up locations, the Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council, Our Harvest Research and Education Institute (OHREI), Winton Hills Residents Council, Elm Street Health Clinic, New Jerusalem Baptist Church, Brighton Center, Working in Neighborhoods, Bellarmine Chapel, Evanston Recreation Center, Peaslee Neighborhood Center, and the Freestore Foodbank.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved? The Civic Garden Center provided a space for our Wholesale Success training; CAIN, Gabriel's Place, the Cincinnati Health Dept., Peaslee Neighborhood Center, Bellarmine Chapel, New Jerusalem Baptist Church, Winton Hills Residents Council, Elm Street Health Clinic, Hamilton County We Thrive!, Evanston Recreation Center, Brighton Center, and Working in Neighborhoods have been instrumental in developing our new markets in low-access communities; Green Umbrella has helped us spread the word about our programs; and each of our Weekly Harvest Box pick-up locations have helped with participant outreach. OHREI has played an important role in season extension education; the GCR Food Policy Council has been key to moving forward local food procurement work with area institutions. The Freestore Foodbank has provided us with rental warehouse space and an easy mechanism for produce donations. Ohio State University Extension has helped us connect with other food hubs via the Ohio-WV Statewide Food Hub Network.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? The Weekly Harvest Box and food access partnerships are ongoing, so they will continue to be key to community engagement and the successful implementation of those programs. OSU Extension, Cincinnati State, OHREI will continue to play an important role in season extension training, GAP education, and technical assistance for farmers interested in scaling up their operations. The Freestore Foodbank will continue to allow us to rent warehouse space for our food hub.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? Our Marketing Contractor designed the wholesale buyer packet, direct-to-consumer marketing materials (flyer, poster, etc.), and two print ads. Her work was instrumental to the success of Objective 1. We also hired one Sales Contractor in the summer of 2016, who focused on increasing wholesale markets.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes
 - If yes, how did you publicize the results? We have listed the new producers we're working with, as well as our wholesale buyers, on our website. We have published information about our partner producers in our weekly e-newsletter on an ongoing basis. We have also presented about our efforts and programs at meetings of the Green Umbrella Local Food Action Team, the Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council, and the Wholesale Wave 2016 Annual Meeting. Finally, we published an annual report, detailing our 2015 efforts.

- To whom did you publicize the results? The general public (website and Facebook), as well as existing Weekly Harvest Box members and other interested parties (e-newsletter), food system stakeholders (GU meetings and GCRFPD), and a national audience (Wholesome Wave 2016 Annual Meeting).
- How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 1,000+ (30+ at GU meetings, 40+ at GCRFPC, 900+ through e-newsletter and Facebook, 30+ at CHCC meetings, 30+ at Wholesome Wave).

*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).

2. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
 - i. If so, how did you collect the information? We collected physical feedback surveys for USDA RMA/FamilyFarmed.org, who paid for the Wholesale Success trainer, Atina Diffley. Prior to starting our PPHB pilot, we surveyed community members to get feedback on program design. We collected surveys (hard copy and online versions) for Wholesome Wave/Cincinnati Health Department, related to our Weekly Harvest Box program. And we also collect feedback from customers in person. We conducted a customer survey with our WHB customers winter 2015 and 2016. We also solicited feedback from our wholesale customers during the sales planning process.
 - ii. What feedback have you collected thus far (specific comments)? Feedback on the Wholesale Success training was overwhelmingly positive and received the highest marks, including the information conveyed, the presenter's effectiveness, etc. If anything, attendees wished that they had had more time to learn from her, with any specific comments indicating that attendees wished the workshop had lasted two days. Comments we have received about our Weekly Harvest Box and Harvest Day programs include:
 - "I have been grateful for this program, and because of it I am trying to budget my benefits better in the future." – Harvest Day customer
 - "Our harvest box pickup location is right on my way home from work, making it a super convenient way to get a weekly dose of vegetables despite a busy schedule. I always enjoy stopping in and seeing a friendly face on my pickup day!" – WHB member
 - "The Harvest Day program worked great at New Jerusalem. We have a congregation of 'complainers', and we didn't have any complaints about the program except for on one occasion! We consider that a success. " – Harvest Day program organizer
 - "Keep up the good work!" – WHB member
 - "Would love to see year-round pick-up options for the northern suburbs!!" – WHB member
3. 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? N/A

4. 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).
 - a. Radio advertising was not found to be particularly effective for our direct-to-consumer sales channel
 - b. Small, independent retailers are interested in sample signage, chain retailers are generally not
 - c. It proved to be very challenging to get wholesale buyers to make purchasing commitments, or even to accurately predict their future purchases
 - d. Institutions with self-operated kitchens have more flexibility when it comes to purchasing local, whole product
 - e. Of the institutions we've worked with, hospitals have the most stringent food safety regulations
 - f. Increasing EBT usage on local fruits and vegetables is challenging and requires a multi-faceted approach that includes education
 - g. There is a great interest among growers in training on selling to wholesale markets, post-harvest handling, GAP, etc.
 - h. It is challenging to plan production with area producers without first having commitments from wholesale buyers
 - i. Reliance on partners for the provision of educational workshops limits control over timeline of those offerings
 - j. With focused attention and space improvements, operations staff can make substantial improvements to packing efficiency (ours were able to decrease ~7 minutes/box to ~4 minutes/box)
 - k. Locally-processed marinara sauce (using Our Harvest tomatoes) proved to be very popular with individual and wholesale consumers
 - l. Using RPCs (reusable plastic crates) to pack and distribute orders helps reduce costs, staff time, and waste
 - m. Current infrastructure for processing EBT orders limits the easy expansion of food access programs, as each site needs to have an EBT reader on site to process orders
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
 - a. It can be challenging, with limited staff, to balance the energy necessary to grow three separate sales channels – direct-to-consumer, food access, and wholesale – simultaneously. Developing our food access sales channel has taken considerable time and energy, with slow growth in sales while the relationships and systems were developing. We anticipate those sales growing in 2017.
 - b. We experienced limited success in expanding wholesale outlets, even with concerted attention. The concerted attention on wholesale accounts, though, allowed us to better understand the challenges to meeting wholesale buyers' needs, and we are now considering how to best shift our efforts and processes in order to address these challenges.

- c. The Greater Cincinnati local processing infrastructure is limited primarily to tomato-based products, so expansion to other products is currently limited
 - d. The process of preparing a diversified vegetable farm for GAP certification is time consuming and requires key staff who have the skills and ability to oversee the process
- 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:
- a. Staff turnover can reduce the speed at which project objectives are achieved. Our Harvest's Sales Coordinator position experienced high turnover during this period, so three different people were eventually trained on the same work related to certain aspects of the grant. Maintaining consistency among key staff would help facilitate smooth administration of a project such as this.
 - b. In cases where successful meeting of grant objectives is reliant on partner organizations, some flexibility around timelines will be necessary.

5. 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.
 1. Our Harvest has plans to continue all elements of this project after the performance period ends.
 - a. We plan to refine and focus our sales channels in order to most efficiently reach customers and increase sales, which will include:
 - i. Continue our concerted effort on food access distribution, with expansion to multi-county area in the next year
 - ii. Increase strategic marketing based on newly-determined sales focus
 - iii. Grow sales 10% in 2017
 - iv. Implement Harvest Day in 15 communities over 4 counties
 - v. Streamline systems for Harvest Day implementation
 - b. We plan to continue increasing the volume of produce coming from partner producers for all sales channels, thereby increasing the amount of money spent with local producers
 - c. We plan to partner with other organizations to provide grower and consumer education, or obtain additional grant funding, as operations cannot support this kind of work
 - d. Staffing will stay consistent, as operational efficiency has increased greatly, so fewer staff are needed for same output
 - i. We will retain 5 direct food hub jobs and 7 indirect farm jobs
 - e. We will develop a plan for increased processing of tomatoes for marinara so that we have enough inventory to supply all

markets year-round; this will also increase sales opportunities for other local producers

- f. We plan to determine other light processing that can be done to develop higher margin products

- 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?

- a. Food Access

1. We recommend the development of a secure method for transmitting EBT payment information so that individual food access sites don't each need to have an EBT reader or tablet
2. We recommend research into best practices for increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, particularly for lower-income populations

- b. Producer Partners

1. We recommend the development of additional funding opportunities for producer education and technical assistance on food safety, crop planning, season extension, selling to wholesale markets, etc.
2. We recommend the development of additional funding opportunities to cover the cost of GAP certification, FSMA compliance, etc.
3. We recommend research into successful food hub pricing models for a variety of crops in different geographic areas (sale price, food hub %/farmer%, final price to farmer and whether it is high enough for them, etc.)
4. We recommend the development of additional funding opportunities for farmers transitioning land to organic production