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: *(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)*	September 30, 2017-March 30, 2018
Authorized Representative Name:	Chris Rand
Authorized Representative Phone:	814-933-2926
Authorized Representative Email:	Randc70@gmail.com
Recipient Organization Name:	Friends & Farmers Cooperative
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Jump Starting Local Food Consumption
Grant Agreement Number: *(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)*	15-LFPP-PA-0049
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	State College, PA
Total Awarded Budget:	$92,299.00

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: Establish and grow a wholesale Online Market where local restaurants and institutions can source from local food producers

a. Progress Made: Farmers have been reluctant to participate in the wholesale market. To address their reluctance, Friends & Farmers is exploring the feasibility of a regional food hub to serve wholesale and institutional buyers along with retail consumers. We have initiated discussions with a broad coalition of key stakeholders including a county commissioner, Penn State food service purchasing managers, farms, and the Board of Directors of Friends & Farmers.

b. Impact on Community: Demonstrated impact to date has been minimal, but the transformational potential of a food hub goes far beyond what Friends & Farmers could achieve through its wholesale market.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Increase the customer base and weekly sales transactions between producers and consumers of the retail Online Market, and the number of local food producers listing products.

a. Progress Made: During the project period our monthly sales averaged $9,502.50 and we averaged 225 order per month. As a new and growing business we have seen an increase in sales since our first year in operation. We attribute this increase of sales to the additional products that we have been able to offer on a more regular basis. Friends & Farmers also added three new Vendors and 1 new Local Loyalty Partner during the most recent reporting period. Three of our farmer vendors also returned from their winter breaks during this time which helps to add variety to the market offerings.

b. Impact on Community: At least one of our vendors relies on the Online Market as a foundation for their business, having expressed numerous times that their business is a success in no small part due to the Online Market. We added a new vendor who is building a farm-to-table restaurant, and has surplus produce in their first year of growing, and supplying the Online Market has generated an incremental income stream for their business. Since the project started we have added 19 new vendors to our market.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Publicize the online markets, attract new customers, and educate the public on the virtues of local food.

. Progress Made: Friends & Farmers hired a marketing firm that will work to increase our outreach via email, social media, and print advertising, and perhaps radio advertising as well. This firm has a budding local artist on staff that has created some great new artwork as part of our social media communications and it has been well received. We've held numerous events for different audiences in our community to work towards this objective.

a. Impact on Community: During the project period we sold just over $285,000 of locally produced products in this community. One of our niches in this community is that we operate year round. Most of the farmers markets in our area are closed for the season and so our market really helps to bring income to small businesses that may otherwise lose their main marketing outlet during the winter. We also serve the

community by offering locally produced products to those community members that may not be able to shop at our local farmers markets.

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, 2015). Include further explanation if necessary.
    i. Number of direct jobs created: 2
    ii. Number of jobs retained: 4
    iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Unknown
    iv. Number of markets expanded: 1
    v. Number of new markets established: 1
    vi. Market sales increased by $210,631.26 and increased by 303%.
    vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 48
        a. Percent Increase: 65%

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?
Several of our newer vendors are new businesses offering unique products. We believe that a more comprehensive offering of products makes shopping through our markets much more appealing getting us closer to a "one stop shop" that will help us reach new and different populations. Many of our vendors are women and we have at least one vendor that is of a racial minority, we are proud to be able to add to the diversity of minority owned and operated businesses in our area. Efforts are also continuing to establish a transactional relationship with The Pennsylvania State University, which is part of a coalition discussing the establishment of a regional food hub.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
    i. Who are your community partners?
    We partnered with Friends School in State College to provide an additional pickup location for Online Market orders. We have also partnered with numerous local businesses, not all of which are Local Loyalty Partners, to publicize and sell tickets for our recent events. One of our partners was Penn State Entomology; they helped out with our Kids Winter Playdate event that we hosted. They educated the children and families that attended about pollinators and how they affect our food. One of the organizations we partnered with one summer was CentreBike; they are a local organization focused on moving our community towards a more bicycle friendly place with a goal of "promoting bicycling as a means of recreation and transportation". Efforts continue to establish a transactional relationship with The Pennsylvania State University, which is part of the coalition discussing the establishment of a regional food hub. We also partnered with a local non-profit organization that teaches job skills to adults with developmental disabilities to share space. This sharing of a physical space has allowed both organizations a chance to have a location in downtown State College, which is often financially prohibitive for many businesses.

    ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?
    Partnering with all of these different groups has allowed for us to reach different populations in our community that we may otherwise not have had contact with. Our

partners have also benefitted in the same way. This also has contributed to one part of mission, which is to build community around a vibrant local food economy.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?
Yes, we will continue to collaborate with several of these partners to continue our respective missions and together continue to build a vibrant, engaged, and healthy community. We will continue to share space with Taproot Kitchen, and we are continuing conversations with Penn State around building a local food hub. We are also strengthening existing relationships by adding an additional pick-up location at a woman owned and operated business in downtown State College that also acts as a community gathering space.

5. did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?
All of the paid work for this project was done so by contractors. We could not have implemented this project without the help of contractors. They also helped to coordinate and work with our volunteers.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*
   i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?
   We've shared information regarding the grant at the Centre County Food Summit held in November 2016 and we have shared the grant information and progress with our vendors at various meetings and communications. Our weekly newspaper, The Gazette, has featured several articles on our On-Line Market, as have the updates from the local Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter. We also have an active social media presence and our partnerships and events have garnered attention in local periodical and newspaper publications, as well as through internal efforts on social media platforms. We also reach our email subscribers with our mass-emailing programs.
   ii. To whom did you publicize the results?
   Results are routinely posted through our email and social media channels, as well as traditional media outlets including newspapers and magazines.
   iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?
   We routinely email our more than 3,000 email subscribers. We have 2,939 likes on our Facebook page and 2,882 followers. Posts that perform better than average typically reach over 1,000 people.

   *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?
   We held a meeting for our vendors in January 2016 to update them on the progress of our first year in operation as well as share our plans for the Wholesale market with them to receive feedback. We've also been sharing our plans with potential customers of the wholesale market

to receive feedback about the products they wish to purchase as well as to get support from their fellow restaurant owners and chefs.

We are always receiving informal feedback through conversation. The exception to this is one of our seasonal eating courses where a survey was given to the participants. Of the participants that responded, 83% rated the course as excellent and the remaining 17% rated the course as good. Overall our instructor received very positive feedback including requests that she teach more classes.

We also send out a customer survey periodically to elicit feedback from our current customers and members.In April 2017 we held a special meeting to solicit feedback from our membership regarding the Online Market. We conducted a member survey prior to the meeting to ensure everyone who wanted to share their views had the chance to do so. We received a robust number of responses to the survey.

ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

Some examples follow below:

"Thanks for this service, it's just what I need with a busy young homeschooling family! I already spend a ton of time tracking down and procuring healthy local food, so it's nice to just be able to order the weekly supplies and have them show up at my door!"

"I buy from OLM weekly but still shop at the grocery store weekly as well. there are some items that are not available on the OLM: butter, soft cheese, cereal (other than granola), bagels, fruit juice(s), and other snacks."

"I'm finding the prices quite high, especially for veggies. I'm willing to pay a little more for freshness and quality, but I do find it difficult to justify spending significantly more for some common items (broccoli, onions, root vegetables). I think you would have more business if the prices came down a bit."

"I think you have done a great job recruiting vendors for the market and are developing a nice variety."

"I enjoy the variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables. The home baked items and herbal items are an added plus. Also, the seasonal wreath is beautiful, and I have received many compliments. The best part is supporting local producers and families."

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?
      a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? $255,613.82 project income was generated and all of it was used to cover operational costs associated with running the Online Market. These costs include paying the salary of the Market Manager, Bookeeper, market

supplies, Marketing Team, paying Vendors, etc.

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).
    This project has really allowed us to fund positions that allow us to grow our Friends & Farmers customers, volunteers, and collaborations that otherwise could not have happened. We have received very positive feedback around our mission, goals, operations, and events. The challenge has been maintaining engagement and energy as the organization continues to evolve and grow. Friends & Farmers Cooperative is located in an university town and has a very transient community. Students, staff, faculty, etc. are often moving into town but also relocating out of town. It can be difficult to maintain volunteers, customers, including board members due to that characteristic of this community. As we grow we've identified issues with identifying and maintaining our supply as we grow. We will be expanding our area of purchasing to help fill our supply gaps at certain times of the year.
    ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
    Our sales and customer growth goals were not realistic for this community and our other goals at the time this project started. We have since doubled down and are focusing solely on the Online Market as a priority of Friends & Farmers Cooperative. We have limited resources and we need to ensure that we are not working on too many project at once and to focus on doing a few things well.
    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:
    We faced one particular challenge when our Grant Administrator temporarily relocated out of town seasonally to work on a farm; resulting in the loss of regular communications and one less person to help with operations of the organization. It would have been helpful to have some duplication of skills so that the organization could continue to function without setbacks if our workers needed to step-away for any period of time. We grossly underestimated the time and dedication needed to continue to grow and operate a business of this type.
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.
    At the close of this project we have decided to create a new position within the organization to help manage the overall operations of the business. Running a market with one part-time person and a volunteer board is not adequate for our continued growth and operations. We have proven this business model has potential in our community and we must continue to work towards building the capacity of the producers in our area along with building and maintaining our customer base. We have also been assisting other organizations in helping them navigate applying for this same funding stream by sharing our experiences with the LFPP.

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 community has identified a need to help our farmers, in particular dairy farmers, to diversify their operations to be able to continue to farm. Several community organizations have begun exploring the idea of creating a food hub in this community to facilitate the sales of local farm products. Friends & Farmers Cooperative has been a part of this new initiative and will likely play some role in the development of this food hub. We have found it important to build partnerships with organizations that share similar goals to help support the work that is needed to build the capacity of the businesses in the area that will also allow us to grow with them. We are effectively rebuilding regional food distribution systems moving away from the current supply chain model. It will take quite a bit of time and labor to rebuild these distribution systems and funding this growth will be crucial to its success.