

Local Food Promotion Program  
Final Performance Report

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. October 1, 2016 -September</i>	01/10/2014 – 09/30/2016
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-</i>	14-LFPP-WV-0190
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Unlimited Future, Inc.
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Building capacity for distributing local foods in the Ohio Valley.
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Gail Patton, Executive Director
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<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2014
<b>Amount of Award:</b>	\$100,000

FMLFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?  
XXX Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

Different individual: Name: \_\_\_\_\_; Email: \_\_\_\_\_; Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. **Executive Summary**—In 200 words or less, describe the project's need, purpose, goals, and quantifiable outcomes:

The long-term goal of this project is to build existing sites of local food activity into regional food aggregation and distribution hubs. This work is being accomplished by connecting aggregation points, markets and farmers along the Ohio River Valley. There are two well developed aggregation sites in this region, Nelsonville, OH and Huntington, WV. The ability to connect these two aggregation sites and exchange products across the Ohio River Valley will expand opportunities for many food businesses.

The geographic proximity and abundance of farm land between Huntington, WV and Athens, OH makes for a natural connection along the Ohio River. Athens, OH, has an abundance of locally processed locally grown food products. This is due largely in part the ACEnet Food Ventures Center, which is a Processing Kitchen and Business incubator. Currently the value-added food businesses in Athens, OH, are looking to expand their market by including a new customer base being developed by the Wild Ramp in Huntington, WV. The LFPP has allowed these organizations to combine expertise and resources to build a regional value chain. Outcomes include numbers of farmers and markets who participate and volume of sales for products.

2. **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 and have been approved by LFPP staff, please highlight those**

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*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 toward each one and indicate the impact on the community, if any.*

Objectives		Completed	
		Yes	No*
1	Build connections between existing local food aggregation sites, creating more opportunity for farmers and food distribution business for local food products. Food and Farm Businesses will benefit by increased aggregation activities and increased sales from new markets.	YES	
2	Provide training, resources, and technical assistance to new and existing farmer, food producers, and local foods distributors to take advantage of the opportunity to move products between aggregation sites. The target businesses will benefit from the training and resources, which will expand their business capacity and increase returned revenues to the local food economy.	YES	
3	Continue to develop a peer learning community within the WVFFC, ADWG, VC2, ACEnet, UFI, to develop new aggregation points and leverage combined resources for further development. Increased cooperation will benefit the involved organization but also assist target food and farm business.	YES	

*\*If no is selected for any of the listed objectives, you must expand upon this in the challenges section.*

**i. Goal/Objective 1:** *Build connections between existing local food aggregation sites, creating more opportunity for farmers and food distribution business for local food products. Food and farm businesses will benefit by increased aggregation activities and increased sales from new markets.*

**a. Progress Made:** Convened two annual meetings with practitioners working to increase the aggregation and distribution of local food in Ohio River Valley Value Chain. Worked with West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition’s Hub Club to conduct site visits to aggregation/distribution points around the region and leverage combined resources for further development regularly during the grant period. Unlimited Future worked with Refresh Appalachia, a social enterprise that provides regional economic and workforce development in agriculture, to increase sales of local food. We partnered with Refresh Appalachia and Healthy in the Hills in Williamson, WV to create a database of potential restaurant and institutional buyers for local food. On March 25th 2015- Unlimited Future hosted a networking event and speed-dating session between buyers and growers. Thirty farmers and buyers attended. This activity gained 12 new business connections after the event. A printed directory was created listing the business name, address, contact information and a description of available or desired products. Unlimited Future worked with the Value Chain Cluster Initiative and partners on their 2015 LFPP to develop a local food corridor from Athens, Ohio to Abingdon, Virginia with stops in western West Virginia. This project laid the groundwork for a \$1.5M POWER Grant award for the Central Appalachian Food Enterprise Corridor. The WV Hot Dog Project was the embodiment of the deep collaboration that the Huntington 30 Mile Meal hoped to foster at its inception. The project engaged 10 food businesses in order to create a local hot dog. 14,000 pounds of hot dogs were produced over two years, which were sold at the 2014 and 2015 WV Hot Dog Festivals and at the Wild Ramp and 30 Mile Meal partner restaurants.

**b. Impact on Community:** The Annual Meetings of Practitioners brought our state-wide partners to Huntington and highlighted the work being done at The Wild

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Ramp. Visiting other hubs allowed for a focused conversation about the stage of development, strengths and needs of each hub. The survey conducted in partnership with Refresh Appalachia has opened doors for increased sales to restaurants and institutions. The buyer-grower networking event formed new connections which facilitate more availability of local, healthy food to the community. This project in conjunction with The Value Chain Cluster Initiative's LFPP work was instrumental in connecting more than sixteen aggregation/distribution points throughout the region. Each of these points will have an impact on the amount of local food available in their respective communities which will improve economic and health/wellbeing outcomes. The WV Hot Dog Project allowed farmers and value added producers to sell products in order to create the hot dog and also received a lot of marketing. Marketing locally produced food the middle/average consumer will help farmers increase scale. This campaign engaged new and non-foodie consumers in celebrating local food.

**ii. Goal/Objective 2:** *Provide training, resources, and technical assistance to new and existing farmers, food producers, and local foods distributors to take advantage of the opportunity to move products between aggregation sites. The target businesses will benefit from the training and resources, which will expand their business capacity and increase returned revenues to the local food economy.*

**a. Progress Made:** Unlimited Future and contract partner, ACENet of Athens, Ohio presented multiple trainings over the grant period. They included such topics as: *Labeling 101*: From the very first label used at the farmers' market to a professional label ready for national distribution. Seeing the range of revisions helped participants refine labels for their target market and scale of production. Natural Capital Investment Fund presented information about their financing programs at the Local Food Networking Event. Top 10 Recommendations for Growing Farm Businesses: Leslie Schaller counted down her top recommendations for farmers looking for new markets. Using Social Media on the Farm instructed farmers on the basics of setting up a Facebook page. The other major social media platforms were also reviewed as well as how to use mobile payments at the farmers market. The training was attended by nine farm business owners and one farm service provider. Market Ready with Tim Woods from The University of Kentucky: This period we partnered with the WV Department of Agriculture to offer University of Kentucky's market ready program. The program covered the quality standards, bookkeeping, professionalism and delivery requirements for selling into food retailers or grocery stores. The program included a panel with produce buyers from US Foods and Foodfair (grocery store). Unlimited Future hosted The 4th Tri-State Farm and Food Conference on November 14, 2015 in Huntington. More than 30 Food and Farm businesses took advantage of networking opportunities, workshops and planning discussions. Four tracks were available to farmers: Co-op Development, Vegetable Production, Vegetable Processing, Risk and Financial Management, Marketing Farm Products and Farm to School 101. Unlimited Future presented Crowd Funding training at The WV Small Farms Conference in February of 2016. Gail Patton served on a Local Food Aggregation Roundtable at that same conference. Unlimited Future partnered with Refresh Appalachia to conduct a hands-on High Tunnel Construction Workshop at West Edge Refresh Appalachia in November of 2015 and at their Lincoln County High School site in February of 2016.

**b. Impact on Community:** Training sessions enabled growers to see real examples of businesses growing from a farmers market to larger distribution channels. These businesses were encouraged to follow-up with one-to-one technical assistance and the service request dollars will support these growing businesses. Social Media provides a cost effective way for farmers to communicate with their customers or potential customers. Sharing the experience of farming is very compelling and

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trendy because people want to know where their food is coming from. 75% of the farms that attended did not currently use a Facebook page for business, but saw the value and accessibility through this training. All the farms that attended had never thought about accepting mobile electronic payments. Market Ready increases the marketing and business management skills of growers. The Tri-State Farm and Food Conference was well attended with much time for networking and project development conversations. Farmers are growing more products and expecting to sell into markets, restaurants and other small institutions. Sales numbers for these farmers will rise as they become more able to sell to larger outlets. The crowd funding workshop participants were interested in increasing production. Some were interested in using crowd funding to develop agri-tourism sites as a way to promote their products. Unlimited Future's Gail Patton and Appalachian Sustainable Development's Robin Robbins were on the panel for the Local Food Roundtable. Farmers learned about preparing their products for market and facts about selling to wholesale markets like Whole Foods. The high tunnel construction workshop at West Edge provided hands-on experience over a three-day period. Eight farmers attended this workshop. The high tunnel construction workshop at Lincoln County High School took in one day. Twelve farmers from the community and over 80 students from the high school vo-ag program took part in this workshop.

**iii. Goal/Objective 3:** *Continue to develop a peer learning community within the WVFFC, ADWG, VC2, ACEnet, UFI, to develop new aggregation points and leverage combined resources for further development. Increased cooperation will benefit the involved organization but also assist target food and farm business.*

- a. **Progress Made:** Coordination with VC2 started after the first annual meeting. Unlimited Future staff worked with Jill Young to begin sharing tools and resources. Many farmers from the VC2 service area joined the Wild Ramp market. The Aggregation and Distribution Working group has rallied to support new food hubs and making connections to regional hubs. Good Food Network Food Hub Training: Lindsey Good serving as co-chair of the Aggregation Distribution Working group played a central role in organizing this training. The training was facilitated by Anthony Flaccavento, who founded a food hub in Abingdon, VA. The Good Food Network is offering this training to coordinated groups around the country. We met people doing food distribution and food hub work in the north-central and southeast. It was a great time to network. The Hub Club participated in multiple field experiences over the two-year grant period: We toured the Alderson Green Grocer, to learn about their programs and business model. The market while it carries local products caters to tourists using the nearby campground. Wild Ramp Staff attended and was able to share problems and solutions with market staff. Heart and Hand Market in Philippi, WV is operated by a church and has a mostly food access mission. This market has more supply than demand and therefore farmers are getting lower prices. They are located in a very rural area and need ways to sell more products. We toured ACEnet's Nelsonville facility which has huge capacity (100,000sf) and is being developed to be one of the hubs for this project. ACEnet's Athens value added processing facility is growing and some of the overflow is also housed in Nelsonville. The Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action's Paradise Farms project is a job training program where participants will learn how to grow hydroponic and conventional vegetables. A commercial kitchen and value added processing facility will also give participants the opportunity to learn new skills. KISRA has a refrigerated truck that will be making deliveries/pickups in the area. Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) and KISRA joined the Aggregation and Distribution Working Group (HUB Club) during the grant period. ASD brings greater capacity as they have been aggregating and

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distributing in the South East for twenty years. KISRA is located in Dunbar, WV and has cold storage and production facilities and a refrigerated truck. KISRA is GAP certified and working with the Charleston Area Medical Center on a local food buying collaboration.

- b. **Impact on Community:** Conversations have generated connection with farmers from VC2 sub-regions. The Wild Ramp has the potential to act as a production planning coordinator to increase the supply of fresh produce and local products. These connections have created the foundation for the regional distribution corridor project. The networking, sharing and problem solving encountered on the field trips are major benefits. The state-wide collaboration is strengthened when we go on these trips and networking with similar groups is important for sharing ideas and building trust. During the ACENet meeting, a small group of practitioners who are building incubator farm programs met to determine the interest in group collaboration. The Minuteman incubator project in Jackson County, WV will lead the group as Tom McConnell is the Director of the WV Small Farms Center and Tom Snyder is retired from the Ohio Cooperative Development Center. These two men have a wealth of knowledge and experience and will be very capable leaders of this group. A conference call was held. The group is pursuing a Beginner Farmer Rancher Development Grant that will fund a statewide initiative for incubator farm curriculum and workforce training activities. VC2 took the lead on the grant which will benefit all five incubator programs if funded.

Please list any challenges experienced during the project’s period of performance. Provide the corrective actions taken to address these issues.

Challenges (Issues)	Corrective Actions and/or Project Changes (s)
Finding an efficient way to track the grant outcomes has sometimes been a challenge.	We are working with ACENet and VC2 to develop a regional tracking system for local food work. Once the system is in place, we will be more careful to track the outcomes. A Wealth-Works training was held recently in Charleston, WV with representatives from the Central Appalachian Network, VC2, ACENet and other partners.

3. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, since the baseline date (the start date of the award performance period—September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.
  - a) Number of direct jobs created: 37
  - b) Number of jobs retained: 177
  - c) Number of indirect jobs created:
  - d) Number of markets expanded: 8
  - e) Number of new markets established: 3
  - f) Wild Ramp Market sales continue to run around \$30,000 per month. Sales increases have been seen at other markets around the state. The Ohio producers have increased sales through more product shipments to more markets.
  - g) Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 145
  - a. Percent Increase: 29%
4. 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?
  1. The Wild Ramp has held multiple special events over the grant period in Old Central City as part of the City of Huntington’s River to Rail Initiative territory. The goals of this initiative are to help

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transform the West End of Huntington with job creation, blight elimination, crime reduction and rejuvenation of the Old Central City commercial district with the Central City Market building (housing The Wild Ramp) and neighboring antique shops. Special events include Earth Day, Old Central City Days, Chili Cook-off, Salsa making contest, Huntington Arts and Music Festival and more. The Hub Club work to increase local food sales in smaller food hubs across West Virginia served many low income/low access populations in rural areas. The Alderson Green Grocer was opened as a result of the loss of a larger chain grocery store closing.

5. Discuss your community partnerships.
  1. Who are your community partners?
  2. How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?
  3. How will they contribute to future results?
    - i. Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) is a food hub operating in Duffield, VA. The goal is connect farmers from this region to ASD so that they too can access wholesale markets in the South East. ASD is looking for farmers so that they can increase their market share. Refresh Appalachia, KISRA and the WVU Small Farm Center are all working to meet this demand. Appalachian Sustainable Development and ACENet were awarded a \$1.5 million POWER Grant for the development of the Central Appalachian Local Food Enterprise Corridor. This project will build one the work we began with this LFPP and connect food hubs and educate farmers and food entrepreneurs throughout the Ohio Valley and into Virginia.
    - ii. RCBI- sponsored a route study for food distribution in WV, they are also involved in the Central Appalachian Food Enterprise Corridor project. This is a key piece to the distribution corridor and would connect the southern growers of the state to a state highway and two interstates.
    - iii. Coalfield Development Corporation- Launched a new job training project, Refresh Appalachia. Unlimited Future is a key part of this program, offering the training and technical assistance to existing and beginner farmers. Refresh shipped the first squash to Appalachian Sustainable Development this fall which was the first shipment for the new Central Appalachian Local Food Enterprise Corridor.
    - iv. WV Food and Farm Coalition is a major advocate for local foods, they work on systematic changes. They will be a partner with the Farm Incubator Network and the Central Appalachian Local Food Enterprise Corridor.
    - v. Value Chain Cluster/Natural Capital Investment Fund received an LFPP to continue the peer exchange program and actually test distribution routes. They will continue to be a partner on the Central Appalachian Food Enterprise Corridor project.
6. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how has their work contributed to the results achieved thus far?
  - i. ACENet acts as a mentor to Unlimited Future, with 30 years of experience working with food and farm entrepreneurs. ACENet has grown Unlimited Future's capacity to provide technical assistance and assisted in the development of training. ACENet will be a key partner on the Central Appalachian Local Food Enterprise Corridor.
  - ii. Michella Mentor created video content for our restaurant partners which increased awareness for their businesses. Michella produced three videos for area restaurants. Three of the videos have been published on Unlimited Future's social media and web pages.
7. Have you publicized any results yet? We published an annual report for the Livable Communities in Appalachia program. RCBI and Downstream Strategies published the HUB Connectivity Feasibility Study in August of 2015. This study contributed to the work of this LFPP, the Value Chain Cluster Initiative's LFPP and serves as the groundwork for the Central Appalachian Food Enterprise Corridor POWER Grant funding.
  - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? Paper, Facebook, email, website

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- ii. To whom did you publicize the results? We presented it to funders, stakeholders and the WVFFC HUB Club members.
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? Not sure
- 8. Have you collected any feedback thus far about your work?
  - i. If so, how did you collect the information? From partners in conversation
  - ii. What feedback have you collected thus far (specific comments)? We have received feedback from other partners that the regional distribution idea is viable. The Appalachian Regional Commission chose Huntington, WV and The Wild Ramp to be the venue for the announcement of over \$38.8M in POWER Grant funding in August of 2016. We were chosen because of the statewide and regional work that we are doing to build a sustainable local food system. This LFPP grant enabled much of that work.
- 9. Total amount spent during reporting period:

Personnel:	56,395.16
Fringe Benefits:	
Contractual:	22,733.96
Equipment Purchases:	
Travel:	
Supplies:	2,680.14
Other: Outreach	9,951.67
Indirect Costs:	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>96,760.93</b>

Expenses from October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2016 (Federal)

- III. Amount of matching funds/in-kind contributions used during the reporting period: \$40,828.63
- IV. Did the project generate any income? No income was generated by the project.
- 10. Lessons Learned:
  - ii. 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). Working with statewide and regional partners presented a challenge because community project needs vary. In the beginning, we had a hard time communicating the goals of the project to smaller hubs who were more isolated and felt that they were not big enough to participate in the corridor work. Working with statewide and regional partners was a positive experience because having many strong partners kept the work going in a way that is much harder when an organization tries to accomplish things on its own. The experience of the partners and the ability to know what the smaller communities needed in order to grow their markets was invaluable to this project.
  - iii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: Tracking was our biggest issue. If we had set out with a better tracking system from the start we would have had a much easier time with grant reporting and with explaining our work to other potential funders and participants. We are having those conversations now as we move forward on the Central Appalachian Food Enterprise Corridor project.
  - iv. 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 had few administrative issues mostly because the LFPP staff was very helpful! I would recommend that you ask for help when you need it as they are always happy to assist. We truly enjoyed working with them.

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- v. Discuss if and how the result of this project can be adapted to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems: Engaging statewide and regional partners is the key to this project. We had passion and we had the will, but having so many strong partners working together has transformed the local food potential in our region to something we never expected. We would be happy to share our experiences with others as several of our partners are already well-known on the national local food stage.

### 11. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond this grant? In other words, how will you implement 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.

The 2016 POWER Grant awarded by the Appalachian Regional Commission will result in accelerated job growth, new businesses, beginning farmers and processor expansions. Specific economic impacts that will be documented include:

- Production employment
    - Regional projection: 250+ jobs retained
    - 50 new jobs will be added per year through start-ups and expansions
  - Producer revenue in the four targeted sub-regions:
    - Regional: \$1 million increase in 2016, with a 15% annual increase in the following years
  - Food system investment leveraged
    - Regional: \$2 million per year
  - Producers participating in markets
    - 55 new businesses and beginning farmers in the region year 1, 40 year 2
    - 60 producers obtain GAP/GHP and/or organic certification
- 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?

We are confident that the Central Appalachian Food Enterprise Corridor project will reap huge economic results for our area. As we develop distribution routes and new food hubs/markets pop up we will work to connect the dots throughout Central Appalachia. We will continue to work with The Central Appalachian Network and its founding members to build capacity and find funding for this important work.