

## 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](mailto: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.

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2014 – September 29, 2015
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Carla Rosin
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<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Inquiring Systems, Inc.
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Cooperative Farm Food Hub
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-CA-0026
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2014
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Santa Barbara, California
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$24,886

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).

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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.

Achv'd?	Performance Measures	Progress	Notes	Community Impact
Yes	Advisory board constituted by mid November. Conduct 2 meetings with members and several smaller meetings with individual board members	Constituted Advisory board, October 4 <sup>th</sup> Conference call held November 14 <sup>th</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting held at EcoFarm in January, 3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting in San Luis Obispo February, 4 <sup>th</sup> meeting with advisory board members, Small Farm Conference March final presentation meeting scheduled for the 9/11 VC Ag Summit	Exploring conference calls and smaller group meetings.	Providing advice and support for stakeholders
Yes	Form stakeholder task force by November Conduct a minimum of 2 meetings by March 31st	Task force formed November. Restructuring of task force as the project shifted to Ventura County monthly meetings will continue to meet monthly moving from strategic plan to implementation	Additional meetings scheduled before March and beyond	Diverse often opposed group of stakeholders met in November now united with an intentional common goal Developing plan for necessary infrastructure
Yes	Draft strategic plan by June	Meetings with strategic planning team. Notes for draft from task force and advisors. Monthly meetings. Site plan is being drawn up to be posted on web.	Phone consultations and 2 onsite planning meetings by June.	Buy/sell contract with Ventura Unified for hub pilot project
Yes	Website launch by end of January	Site is up. <a href="http://cooperativefarmhub.org">cooperativefarmhub.org</a>	Will continue to add more information for the website content, images. Blog spot through the Ventura County	Community access to project information open for comment and volunteers options

			Collaborative Food Hub	
Yes	Consultations with experts from food systems organizations. Conduct quarterly conference calls..4 by September 30 <sup>th</sup> .	Interview notes from scheduled phone and in person meetings. 2 meetings 12/10 and 1/6 And 2 meetings with Chris Brown, ALBA	Explored organizations with the most benefit to the project. meeting was February 11 <sup>th</sup> with follow up meetings continuing monthly.	Invitation to new organizations to join bringing their expertise and outreach Successful..we continue to invite people to the table
Yes	Feasibility study completed by May 15 <sup>th</sup>	21 interviews conducted notes and data being collected. With the CAFF report on the Ventura County Farmer Collaborative, although information collected was valuable, a focus on the lessons learned and other county agricultural reports including the Ventura County Economic Development Collaborative's past and most recent reports seem to be more relevant in considering our current implementation phase.	20+ interviews scheduled by March 15 <sup>th</sup> focusing more on a discussion of current and past reports as the food hub pilot project and business plan continue to develop.	Outreach to community members = increased awareness and involvement New stakeholder commitment.
Yes	Focus on food hub incorporation by September 2015.	Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub incorporated with initial buy/sell between McGrath Farms, Abundant Table and Ventura Unified, Farm to School. Business plan draft to be finalized by mid-January 2016.	Core group of stakeholders dedicated to the food hub are working on a more detailed business plan as the pilot project moves forward.	The organic development of the project has lead to individual stakeholders realizing their role. Together the core group is working to build necessary infrastructure.

Yes	Work on up-scaling CSA to include a collaborative of local farmers each with a commitment to the Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub and bi-laws.	CSA workshop with CAFF scheduled for late February inviting local farmer participation. Introduce the idea of a collaborative CSA.	This is an open workshop to reach out to sustainable local farmers from the tri-county region. Looking to extend to the under served, include SNAP.	This will be an important step in building infrastructure and in creating a deeper connection between farmers and the communities they serve.
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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. There is potential for 2016. With project implementation, we hope to be able to elaborate on the following estimates as hopeful recipients of the USDA LFPP grant for implementation. A proposal for the continued development of the Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub will be submitted in June.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 1 for the fall of 2016 we are looking for funding for a food hub coordinator. Seed money through UC Cooperative extension is anticipated for part-time staff. Researcher and basic equipment.
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 18
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: to be determined/Data not available at the moment.
- iv. Number of markets expanded: Many. Local wholesale is more possible with a collaborative effort.
- v. Number of new markets established: Ventura County Unified Farm to School
- vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. To be determined/Data not available at the moment.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Currently 5 directly with the potential of future farmers/producers benefiting from the project
  - a. Percent Increase:

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? This is written into the 2016 food hub business plan. We will be looking to supporting a SNAP program with the expansion of a collaborative CSA effort.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

I. Who are your community partners?

Phil McGrath – McGrath Family Farm

Sarah Nolan – Abundant Table

Sandy Curwood – Farm to School program director for the tri-County region and Conejo Valley School district local food procurement

Chris Massa – Ventura County Unified – Farm to Table – Local food procurement

Chris Smith – UC Cooperative Extension Ventura County

Karen Schmidt – Farm to School/Food Commons

Bill Bartels – Economic Development Collaborative – Ventura County/SCORE

- II. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?  
Each has come to the table realizing their roles in creating the necessary infrastructure for the Cooperative Farm Hub. The partnership of McGrath Family Farm and Abundant Table, created to strengthen both market for product and each organization's educational programs, as they work with Ventura Unified, Farm to School program to create a pilot project and business plan. UC Cooperative Extension will conduct a research project to monitor the progress of the hub and the initial pilot project.
- III. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? The group is dedicated to going beyond the strategic plan to implementation with the pilot project buy/sell contract for carrots for the Farm to School program to begin with the 2016 school year. Abundant Table and McGrath Farm are looking to expand their CSA efforts and will be working with CAFF in February. UC Cooperative Extension will continue to work with the hub to provide seed funding for hub essentials and a mobile processing unit. The Economic Development Collaborative – Ventura County will continue to support the hub product with economic data and financials.
- IV. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?  
I did use contractors. Luis Sierra offered his expertise as a project manager. He wrote an initial farmer questionnaire that was useful for focusing our efforts even though the information proved to be unnecessary. Luis has acted as a consultant in writing the final report along with Christopher Rosin and Bill Bartels. Because of my dedicated hands on involvement in the food hub as project manager, Luis Sierra and the advisory board decided that it made more sense for me to write the final report.  
The Web designer was very helpful in setting up the format of the site. We are currently looking at modifications and links between the initial site and a new Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub site and will continue community outreach and updates.  
The other contractors offered their services in-kind with each acting in an advisory role providing necessary insights with the food hub's progression. Their guidance has been invaluable.  
Ken Haggard, Mark Lakeman, Alex Vincent, Michael Corbett and Meg West came together in the beginning stages of the project to draft a plan for the original Santa Barbara site, Bishop Ranch. That plan is still being considered as we grow the newly

incorporated Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub vision.

- V. Have you publicized any results yet? Yes. Some. With respect for the stakeholders involved, we have been very cautious to not put too much information out too soon. Unfortunately, the competition in Ventura County between conventional and sustainable growers needs to be considered as we move forward with this beginning pilot project. Once data is published from the accompanying research project, there will be a formal announcement and a greater focus on community involvement.
- If yes, how did you publicize the results? On line
  - To whom did you publicize the results? To tri-county stakeholders
  - How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? We have reached hundreds.

\*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).

- VI. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? No, however, there have been group discussions on the CAFF Food Hub report: Lessons Learned, that includes commentary on the 2006 Ventura County Producer Collaborative which, under the direction of CAFF, became a successful local hub until it was decided to pull funding in 2008 to see if the hub could stand on it's own. This is valuable information being considered by the core stakeholder group as we move forward. We have had public meetings on related topics such as the Economics of Restorative Agriculture and the role of a farmer cooperative in forming a viable food hub with Mark Shepard, Organic Valley Cooperative, leading the discussion and a more recent conversation discussing the recent Economic Development Coalition-Ventura County's funded publication on Food Processing in Ventura County, which includes the role of food hubs and the viability of local food systems.

- VII. 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: yes
  - Did the project generate any income? No, not yet. However, the pilot project with a buy/sell contract with Ventura Unified Farm to School program will generate income for both McGrath Family Farm and Abundant Table in 2016 with the potential of expanding that contract for 2017 to include other local sustainable farmers contracted by the Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub as part of their membership.

Lessons Learned:

- 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).

Lessons Learned:

Our initial interview with farmers was not a good format for obtaining pertinent information. The questions were too detailed and uncomfortable and in the end, we found the information we were searching for in documents from the Ventura County Ag Commissioners office annual report, the Economic Development Collaboration-Ventura County economic viability reports and the CAFF and the Sacramento Valley Vision food hub analysis reports (all attached). It was better to reach out to the community and stakeholders with scheduled meetings with an open agenda to explore business model options. This existing information is more accessible/tangible than what we could have pulled together in a strategic plan. With current reports available, it became possible to work with proven models and county agricultural data to easily move forward with a buy/sell pilot project and a manageable business plan.

The best situations occurred when partnerships formed organically especially with those who came to the table realizing what they had to offer and had the capacity to deliver.

We learned that the success in bringing stakeholders to the table is time sensitive and therefore, were very careful to invite potential stakeholders as appropriate to the project time line.

The core Stakeholder group for the farm hub whittled down from 20 to 8 key people meeting once a month to discuss progress, next steps and future goals. It was good to bring people in in the beginning stages for them to realize the big picture vision. The number of future stakeholders is increasing as the project moves forward, infrastructure is put in place and roles becomes clearer.

Having agenda based action oriented monthly meetings has kept the momentum encouraging participation and developing steps forward as we establish necessary infrastructure. These meetings were more effective with attention given to deliverables from subset groups and individuals.

Monthly conversations focused on what is working rather than trying to fix or analyze what's not working has been helpful in moving the project plan forward and in creating a partnership between McGrath Family Farm, Abundant Table and Ventura Unified with the supporting partner, UC Cooperative Extension and the Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County.

This buy/sell pilot project established between Ventura Unified, Farm to School program, Abundant Table and McGrath Farms came together organically and with it the proposal for a research project under UC Cooperative Extension Ventura monitoring and accessing the food hub's progress.

The farm hub business plan is developing through stakeholder meetings and more detailed meetings between Phil McGrath, Sarah Nolan, Chris Massa and Karen Schmidt with feed back from Bill Bartels, Chris Smith, Sandy Curwood and Carla Rosin.

Problematic situations occurred when the meeting conversation turned to a yes, but.. Redirecting the focus from the past hub issues of the Growers Collaborative to present solutions kept the stakeholder group moving forward.

Using the CAFF publication, Lessons Learned focused on Food Hub failures, as a reference, we agreed that a third party food hub is not a viable model. Knowing that, we remain focused on a multi-

stakeholder collaborative and strive to work with existing infrastructure to create a support system for beginning farmers. This model and business plan include establishing future markets, crop planning and cooperative grow opportunities.

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

The biggest lesson learned was something that we discovered early on. I think it was the second meeting when someone said 'if we're going to keep talking and not doing we're not going to come back.' It was then that the conversation turned from the big picture vision to focus on a tangible buy/sell pilot project. It's good to remember to start small when considering next steps for future goals.

- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

The greatest lesson learned as we went from strategic plan to implementation was to focus on a business plan as we initiated the first buy/sell pilot project focusing on steps forward to achieve set goals instead of looking at limitations and current food systems failures. That alone positioned the group of stakeholders to move from strategic plan to implementation realizing that we're not here to reinvent the food system or to directly compete with existing food businesses but, to develop an alternative that will invite existing businesses and organizations and create partnerships and collaborations thereby creating a strong, solid foundation for a viable local food hub model.

VIII. Future Work:

- a. 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.

I will continue to work on this project as organizer and facilitator bringing new stakeholders and concepts to the table as the business plan develops and the initial pilot project is implemented and grows. As the hub gains momentum we will begin to build infrastructure through new community partnerships. As my research broadens and business contacts develop, I will bring appropriate material to the table for stakeholder discussions and will also, work on community outreach projects, events and meetings to develop and grow supportive relationships.

I will continue to work with farmer and farm incubator organizations to strengthen the efforts toward accomplishing the collaborative farm hub's mission driven educational component. We will continue to explore ways to grow a collaborative CSA enlisting new farmer members. CAFF will be holding a CSA workshop in Ventura County in February to assist in the development process. UC Cooperative Extension will continue to pursue funding for their role as researching organization. We have been written into 2 separate grants with ALBA for WSARE and a research project for bio-intensive farming through CAFF. Results of these efforts will be available Spring 2016.

- b. 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?

Outline for future project development

October 2016

- Monthly stakeholder meeting continued discussion of elements of business plan – notes included
- Community meeting headed by Mark Shepard farmer/educator and member of Organic Valley Cooperative, discussing the economics of regenerative agriculture and the viability of a local, farm based food hub – a cooperative model that is behavior based.

End of the year meeting November 17<sup>th</sup> at McGrath Farm

- The latest version of business plan presented by Chris Massa (see attached) is to be revised for January meeting. Plan included food processing unit as part of the start up budget.
- Possible to access seed money for budget from UC Cooperative Extension – Chris Smith.
- The stakeholders are looking at the Market Match program as an added service for the cooperative CSA project. Abundant Table is currently able to receive SNAP.
- Meeting at the EDC-VC regarding the draft of the economic report for Food Production in Ventura County including food hub data and final report – beginning December – Data to be used for food hub funding efforts.
- Multi-stakeholder meetings continue in January
- Market Match meeting in Santa Barbara with Carle at the Ecology Center November 20<sup>th</sup> – some interest in a tri-county effort – Karen with the VC Farmers Markets is interested in implementing the program.

December 2015

- Blue Sky Center – 3<sup>rd</sup> stakeholder meeting in Cuyama for their 12-acre pilot project/incubator at the Cuyama High School – potential future partnership
- Ken Haggard project design mapping- adapting the original plan for Bishop Ranch to the plan for the evolving Food Hub long-term expanding the existing educational programs at McGrath Farm.

Potential for photovoltaics and net-zero greenhouse - Jerome Ostentowski, Michael Thompson, Eco Systems

Christian Dupraz and photovoltaics and agriculture research study. We are looking at accessing funding for a nationwide research project that would track the viability of net-zero greenhouses looking at closed loop farm systems.

- Net-zero greenhouse project Espanola, New Mexico to extend grow efforts to 4 season – SARE project – net-zero greenhouse – growing greens for the school districts year round.

## January 2016

- Multi-stakeholder meeting at McGrath Farm – January 15<sup>th</sup>
- Finalize business plan. Look at financial piece
- Discuss future funding options
- Continue to look at potential infrastructure and partnerships. Motel across from the farm as potential farm worker/intern housing. Looking at nearby empty warehouse space for future lease option.
- Sustainable Food Systems Conference – Grass Valley – Jean-Martin Fortier-bio-intensive growing practices as a potential model for beginning farmer cooperative program. Collaborating with other food hubs and food systems organizations and projects.
- SEI photovoltaics design and installation course for greenhouse and field production.
- Dr. Elaine Ingham – Farm visit at Berry Creek – soil research project for Ventura County and net-zero greenhouse system heated by compost – bio-digester.
- EcoFarm Conference – networking for future food hub expansion and research project partnerships. There will be opportunities to explore potential collaborations with beginning farmer incubator organizations.

## February 2016

- Organic Farming Conference – Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Continuation of monthly multi-stakeholder meetings. Update on proposed funding from UC Cooperative Extension for seed money \$35,000 for the cooperative farm hub project, incorporated as the Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub.
- CAFF, Dave Runsten and Libby - CSA workshop at McGrath Farm in Ventura County to be held February 24th
- Meeting to discuss future growth potential of the hub CSA, partners and marketing strategies.

## March 2016

- Grant funding awards announced for potential collaborative projects with the Ventura County Collaborative Food Hub and ALBA and CAFF
- Monthly multi-stakeholder meetings at McGrath Farm. Approval of finalized business plan Search for new farmer partners for the cooperative CSA
- Launch food hub website.
- Look at SNAP options for hub CSA
- Crop planning meeting with Ventura Unified Farm to School, Phil McGrath and Abundant Table.
- National Good Food Network – National Food Hub Conference – Atlanta, Georgia – the meeting will be attended by one or more stakeholders – potential seed money from UC Cooperative Extension if Chris Smith is unable to attend.

## April 2016

- Monthly multi-stakeholder meeting, McGrath Farm. Focus on future funding, partnerships and collaborations. Pilot project progress and details of research project.
- Update on the National Food Hub Conference.
- Next steps for the collaborative farm CSA. Work on CSA contractual agreement. Marketing promo.
- SEI photovoltaics hands on course in Paonia, Colorado and net-zero greenhouse design internship in Basalt, Colorado to explore the potential of net-zero greenhouse design for viable means of producing specialty crops as part of the food hub's research and development.

#### May 2016

- Monthly multi-stakeholder meeting discussing the status of the USDA LFPP implementation grant proposal to be written under the Abundant Table 501c3.
- Mobile processing unit on order. Accessing trailer to house unit in preparation for summer deliveries.

#### June 2016

- Monthly core stakeholder meeting going over last minute details for proposal submittal. Food hub updates with research and funding discussion.
- USDA LFPP Implementation grant proposal due.

#### July 2016

- Monthly core stakeholder meeting. Deliveries to Ventura Unified Farm to School summer school program begin. Look at contract for the fall and proposed crop plan.
- UCSC Sustainable Food and Ag Conference July 29/30 – opportunity for University partnerships.

#### August 2016

- Monthly core stakeholder meeting invitations to local sustainable farmers to join collaborative to grow CSA and school deliveries for the fall and 2017
- Track progress of the Food Hub measure successes and failures.

#### September 2016

- Monthly core stakeholder meeting. Set date for farm to table fundraiser. Incorporate SNAP as part of CSA program efforts to make fresh produce accessible to the underserved.
- Grow Farm store capacity and sales – look at marketing strategies.
- Hire full-time staff member to orchestrate sales and marketing actions
- School year deliveries begin.

#### October 2016

- Monthly core stakeholder meeting. Continue to plan fundraiser farm to table harvest dinner at the farm early November. Plan weekend holiday sale for Farm Store/CSA members
- Bump up CSA sales. Look at implementing new marketing strategies.
- Crop planning session with Ventura Unified for 2017 include other local school districts. Begin dialogue with UC Channel Islands, Cottage Hospital, Kaiser Permanente and other institutions.
- Evaluate lessons learned with production, processing and deliveries

#### November 2016

- Final monthly core stakeholder meeting of the year. Discuss last minute details for fundraiser
- Plan for 2017 – analyze research project – business plan – focus on what’s working
- 2017 Budget
- Details for Farm Store/CSA members holiday sale event – refreshments and music

#### December 2016

- Farm Store/CSA member holiday sale event