

FY 2014

\$47,758 to Grow Benzie, Benzonia, MI, for advertising and promotion of its farmers' market and incubator kitchen.

Final Report

**Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
Final Performance Report**

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your FMPP award objectives. As stated in the FMPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future FMPP or Local Food 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 FMPP 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 FMPP staff to avoid delays:

FMPP Phone: 202-690-4152; Email: USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-690-4152

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

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2014 – September 30, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Joshua Stoltz
Authorized Representative Phone:	231-882-9510
Authorized Representative Email:	josh@GrowBenzie.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Grow Benzie
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Promoting Local Foods and Value Added Products
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-FMPPX-MI-0086
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Benzonia, MI
Total Awarded Budget:	\$47,715

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0287. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable sex, marital status, or familial status, parental status religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

FMPP 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: _____

1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by FMPP 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: Increase the number of vendors to expand our Farmers Market, increasing the availability and consumption of local foods.**

a. Progress Made:

Every year we attracted new farmers and vendors at our Farmers Market, including six new/unique vendors in 2016. This increased and sustained consistent market space capacity, and compensated for vendor turnover due to closed businesses & farmers expanding markets (to restaurants, distributors, or new farmers markets). We also enhanced our existing vendor opportunities to increase the availability and consumption of local foods by offering demonstrations and samples with Michigan State University Extension office. In 2015, we partnered with Benzie County District Health Department and provided 12 families with fruit/vegetable vouchers, and in 2016 partnered with Northwest Michigan Health Services to provide 10 low-income families fruit/vegetable prescription fulfillment with nutrition and culinary classes. In 2016, we partnered with Goodwill Industries and their MI Fresh Start food truck to accomplish our objective- by creating a menu with ingredients from market vendors and produce grown in Grow Benzie’s gardens, we provided 15,000 market/event attendees a unique option to other food vendors, serving 1,500 meals made from fresh, local ingredients. We increased the availability and consumption of local foods with the food truck for 15 weeks at two different farmers markets and at 25 unique, private and public events in 2016.

b. Impact on Community:

Promoting local food and the farmers that produce it has had a positive influence on the number of local restaurants that offer local ingredients as part of their summer menu. By the end of 2016, eleven new restaurants and caterers had purchased food from the Grow Benzie farmers markets- four on a regular basis. Two new farmers markets have started within 20 miles, and community demand has led to the expansion of farm to school initiatives at both local public schools.

- ii. **Goal/Objective 2: Increase the number of clients using our Incubator Kitchen.**

a. Progress Made:

We gained seventeen new clients from the start of this grant. Seven were value-added food businesses that sold products at farmers

markets and retail outlets. Six were clients that utilized the kitchen as a commissary for their catering or mobile food service businesses. Four were local organizations requiring an inspected kitchen for their projects or needing a kitchen for group dinners, including school groups and sports teams. In addition to this progress directly relating to revenue, Grow Benzie also made marked gains in requests for information and tours of the Incubator Kitchen, from averaging two per month to one per week. These inquiries included rental requests and business guidance for potential startup food businesses.

b. Impact on Community:

Although not all inquiries resulted in income for our organization, receiving weekly inquiries about our facility illustrates the impact and conversations that people are having in our community about local food. In addition, kitchen clients are in the community promoting the facility and encouraging its use by serving/selling/promoting food created in the Incubator Kitchen. From this greater awareness of the kitchen, 600 kids and their families have used the kitchen to learn about local foods, nutrition, and the importance of eating healthful foods. At the end of our grant cycle, there have been three separate inquiries about starting a winter meal-making program- for seniors, families, and as a delivery service. This shows the momentum and impact this grant is fueling for the future of the kitchen.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Increase local food sales and value-added products at our Farmers Market by offering business support, market opportunities and food preservation workshops.

a. Progress Made:

88% of our 2015 farmers market vendors reported an increase in sales. 2016 sales were stagnant due to the deconstruction and rebuilding of the state highway our market is located on. Our food truck purchased \$2500 from local markets in ingredients in 2016, and recorded \$8,000 in item sales. We increased value-added food vendors at our market by four, and helped three other businesses sell their products in other markets. Our food preservation workshops had stronger attendance by hobbyists rather than entrepreneurs, with classes full during fall harvest (12 avg) vs. minimal attendance during the summer months (2 avg).

b. Impact on Community:

This boost for each individual farmer at our market is improvement in our local economy. It also inspires their return to our market and the positive message in our community that local farmers can make a living while local and fresh food is affordable. Our food preservation classes inspire local purchases, but few consultations on starting value-added food businesses. The risk to cover costs for scaling up production was too great for entrepreneurs interested in pickles, salsa, baked goods and sauerkraut.

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: 13; Grow Benzie- 1 Executive Director, 1 Facilities Manager, 1 After School Coordinator, 1 Food Truck Manager, 4 Support Staff; Value-Added Food Businesses- 5

- ii. Number of jobs retained: 1 (Greenhouse Manager/Educator)
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 5 (Employees of kitchen clients)
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 4 (Grow Benzie Farmers Market, Elberta Farmers Market, Restaurants, Incubator Kitchen)
 - v. Number of new markets established: 1 (Food Truck)
 - vi. Market sales increased by: \$3,525 and increased by 128%.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 36
 - a. Percent Increase: (212%)
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- by increasing our promotions and outreach into the local pantries and health related agencies, Grow Benzie's farmers market and incubator kitchen reached more low income/low access populations. This improved our certificate-based, food assistance program participation by 184%, including WIC and Senior Market Fresh. By the end of 2016, eleven new restaurants and caterers had purchased food from the Grow Benzie farmers markets- four on a regular basis.**
4. Discuss your community partnerships.
- i. Who are your community partners?
Benzie County Health Department, CentraWellness, Northwest Michigan Health Services, Michigan State University Extension, BACN, Benzie County Central Schools, Grand Traverse Food Innovation Hub, Northern Michigan Culinary Arts Community, 5toOne Great Start Collaborative, Traverse City Downtown Development Authority, Sara Hardy Farmers Market, Goodwill Industries, Northwest Michigan Food & Farming Network, Benzie County Council on Aging
 - ii. How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?
Benzie County Health Department: promotes our farmers market via flyers and counseling and distributed food coupons to encourage shopping at the farmers market; CentraWellness: brought clients on a weekly basis to grow food in the community gardens and attend nutrition/preserving classes; Michigan State University Extension: hosts food tastings and demonstrations at the farmers market and hosted Cooking Matters classes helping distribute local, fresh, healthy food from our farmers market vendors, Grow Benzie and local retail stores; BACN: this local pantry promotes our events and farmers markets and hosts their own classes in our facilities; Benzie County Central Schools: shares kitchen space at the school for our after school program to cook local, healthy meals from market vendors; Grand Traverse Food Innovation Hub: shares resources and promotional opportunities and offers referrals to entrepreneurs seeking kitchen space; Northern Michigan Culinary Arts Community: host bi-weekly community dinners at Grow Benzie in the winter with local ingredients and made from scratch, providing Grow Benzie grant money for other food programs; 5toOne Great Start Collaborative: hosts weekly playgroups for families and toddlers 0-5 where Grow Benzie would demonstrate how to make healthy meals and snacks; Traverse City DDA & Sara Hardy Farmers Market: provided space and promotions for our food truck and staff to offer demonstrations how to shop at the farmers market and how to take prepare meals; Goodwill Industries: Shared their food truck with us that visited venues in 5 counties, teaching kitchen skills to 5 employees and serving 1,500 meals; Northwest Michigan Food & Farming Network: provides connections to other organizations and awarded Grow Benzie with three mini-grants in 2016; Benzie County

Council on Aging: Help distribute and promote Senior Market Fresh coupons and host visits/presentations about healthy diets

iii. How will they contribute to future results?

Every partner listed is enthusiastic about their contribution and success to our program, and plans on maintaining their role (as described above) in our partnership in 2017 and beyond.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?

As amended, the primary contractor was replaced by a full-time executive director after the grant was awarded. This transition was slow, but necessary, and with a dedicated employee to administer and create a more diverse advertising/marketing plan- the attention to our facility has resulted in consistent growth in program attendance. The other contract work with a bus wrap design and print company has been exceptional. According to bus drivers and management, the current wraps (one promoting farmers market, one promoting incubator kitchen) have been well received and seen by hundreds of people every day. We also contracted video production work with MyNorth Media who helped us create viral attention to our promotion via social media.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

No. We will promote this report in the winter of 2016 on our website, on social media, and in local newspapers.

i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

***Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).**

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? **Yes.**

i. If so, how did you collect the information?

We poll attendees at public events held in our community center, which increased in attendance by 50% while awareness of our facilities increased by 40%. An online poll was taken in October of 2015 that will help us benchmark and gauge community awareness about our facilities in the future. We also utilize Facebook reviews as a measurement of our success- currently 12 of 12 reviews have been 5 out of 5 stars. We track the number of views and shares of our online video promoting our incubator kitchen and food truck, which has reached 12,400 people, viewed 6,000 times and shared 118 times. We have also tracked the number of "likes" on our Facebook page since this grant started, increasing from 424 to 1616.

ii. What feedback have you collected thus far (specific comments)?

The most popular comment from the 2015 online poll was "I never knew what your organization did until now- I'm glad you're advertising it". Our online poll had 71 participants, of which only 49% considered themselves familiar with Grow Benzie- 63% of the respondents knew about our incubator kitchen and 53% knew of our Farmers Market. One Facebook review: "GREAT Farmers Market! Super nice people & great produce!!" Specific comments about our video: "What a fantastic promo! You continue to do such great work." "What a great presentation! Just what our community needs." "Awesome stuff way to go I'm excited to try some grow Benzie stuff out of the food truck!!!" "Fantastic!! Keep up the great work!!"

“Excellent!! We have a community garden where I live but not so connected socially and interactive with classes. Need more like this.” “Aren't we lucky to have this in Benzie County!” “Kuddos for a fabulous video of the many wonderful food initiatives in Benzie County....my favorite place to shop! “SO awesome!!!!!! ♥♥♥♥♥” “What a wonderful job. I never realized Grow Benzie was doing so much in our county.” “AWESOME!!!!”

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the FMPP 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? If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?
 - a. Farm market vendors and entrepreneurs renting the incubator kitchen did not share their income due to privacy concerns- however in 2015, 88% of them reported increase earnings from the prior year.
 - b. Farmers Market income included vendor rentals and food assistance programs which help offset our Market Manager wages and advertising: 2015- \$2,586, 2016- \$1,676
 - c. Produce Sales include Grow Benzie market and restaurant sales which help offset our Greenhouse Manager/Educator wages and advertising: 2015- \$8,000, 2016- \$4,474
 - d. Kitchen Rentals help offset our Facilities Manager wages and advertising: 2015- \$2,028, 2016- \$2,133
 - e. Program/Class Fees pay for instructors, facility maintenance and advertising: 2015- \$1,875, 2016- \$1,501
 - f. Food Truck sales include all receipts and additional grant funding which help offset staff wages, operating costs, and advertising: 2016- \$11,590.
 - g. Total generated income for Grow Benzie during grant period: 2015- \$14,616, 2016- \$21,374, Combined years of the grant- #35,990

9. 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).

The positive lesson learned is that the more engaging the advertising and promotion, the clearer the results. When a local newspaper closed its business, one that we had planned on advertising with for this grant, we needed to shift those dedicated dollars into multiple, different advertising channels. The resulting ads in specialty publications and video promotions were easily tracked (by reach and audience demographics), which was more cost effective- and results based- than regular advertisements in a weekly newspaper. Another direct and creative approach we took with these dollars was the addition of a food truck and manager. Beside the innate advertising properties a mobile unit has- a billboard on wheels- for every person that purchased food from the window of the truck, we would talk to three people about local foods, our farmers market, and the healthy ingredients we used from our garden and local farmers markets. The food truck was also a great way to go out into the community where populations gathered (events, meetings, etc.) to engage the public on days we could guarantee foot traffic.

The biggest lesson learned, to change in the future, would be to over plan for success. In the resulting momentum we gained from this grant, which attracted additional funding and more business to our organization, our staff grew in size and responsibilities shifted. The transition caused a short lapse in spending/implementation of this grant, and the growth required additional training time for each of the new roles. We would also add additional time for evaluation, particularly with social media. These platforms are fantastic for direct results, gathering statistics, and building your audience. However, since these are new and evolving applications, unless you are trained to understand their full capacity, it takes a lot of time to learn how they can be a tool for success. Plus it takes time to gather and record and track these successes.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
We're satisfied that we achieved our Goal/Objective #2 by increasing the number of clients in our Incubator Kitchen. However, part of this intention was to increase the number of value-added food businesses utilizing the space as an incubator. What we've learned over the past two years, collaborating and communicating with food hubs and networks around the country, is that incubator kitchens are difficult to maintain a cash-flow (especially in a rural area), unless you diversify like we have. Since we have greenhouses and a food truck on site, we were able to maintain our grants goals and our organization's mission of "increasing access to healthful foods and jobs" by promoting the certified kitchen as an incubator AND a versatile kitchen space for people to rent. Before promoting a kitchen or farmers market, researchers should look at current data about market demand and the diversity of potential income streams.
- 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:
Do not underestimate the time it takes for administration. This includes factoring in unplanned phone calls, meetings, staff changes and weather. You should also add extra time for tracking and evaluation of results. As we progressed through the grant cycle, we found new and improved ways to track our promotions impact, but this required extra time to create those systems, train staff/volunteers to use, and then process and record afterward. Also, don't be afraid to ask for help. Being our first major grant from a federal organization, we were very pleased with the responsiveness and personal care provided by the USDA-FMPP staff. They were genuinely interested in our successes.

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.
By far, the biggest impact and connection this promotions grant has created for Grow Benzie is the relationship built with Munson Healthcare Foundation (the largest healthcare provider in northwest-lower Michigan with 11 hospitals) and Traverse City Rotary Charities. With these partners, we will continue the objective of this USDA grant, increasing the availability and consumption of local foods, by providing fruit and vegetable prescriptions to

125 residents at our farmers market. Local healthcare providers will provide vouchers that attendees will redeem for fresh produce and nutrition classes. We will also offer gas cards and bus passes to overcome any transportation obstacles for folks in remote rural areas. In addition to the fruit/veggie prescriptions, we will be taking our farmers market “on the road” by building a mobile food trailer we can pull behind our food truck. This will allow us to attend local, rural events, providing access to healthful foods and demonstrations how to prepare it. The goal of this project is to track the consumption and physical impact that fruits and vegetables have for people diagnosed as obese or with chronic health issues. This will have a direct impact on our farmers market sales, as this grant will distribute \$12,500 in vouchers which will be paid directly to the vendors at our market. We are currently looking at ways to increase the number of vendors our property can maintain for the market. This partnership will help us retain four jobs including our executive director, facilities/market manager, food truck manager and greenhouse manager.

This USDA grant has also propelled other food related programs at Grow Benzie including an edible trails project and our after school program. The edible trails grant (recently awarded) will connect learning stations around the property with trails lined with edible plants and trees. Visitors to the facilities and farmers market can explore the four-acre property on these trails, learning about the bee hives, compost pile, mushroom logs, herb garden, butterfly garden, hops poles, u-pick greenhouses, etc. The goal is to expose visitors to the simplicity of growing food, and how accessible fresh and healthy food options are in the area. Our after school program will be expanding from the school wood shop into the kitchen with tasting activities and chef competitions. Our goal is to expose students to healthy food options, and promote the opportunity for their families to shop at the farmers market. The last notable project we will maintain and expand upon after this grant, is outreach to at-risk families in with low incomes and low access to fresh fruits and vegetables. We plan on continuing food demonstrations and taste-testing activities at toddler playgroups, libraries, schools and churches in the future, as well as partner with farmers markets and the Northwest Michigan Food & Farming Network to teach attendees about food assistance programs and how to shop at, and prepare foods from, farmers markets.

- 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? To maximize the efforts of all small farmers, food-related businesses, markets and associated organizations in our region, I’d recommend a comprehensive analysis on the current farming and production capacity and its associated distribution channels. Research could also include buying patterns and the impact of food education for low income residents.



**GROW
BENZIE**

FARMER'S

MARKET

SUMMER 2017



BENZIE BUS



27

Benzie Bus

YOUR IDEA

YOUR PRODUCT

OUR KITCHEN

LET'S CREATE SOMETHING GREAT!



Grow Benzie
231-882-9510

FREE



REAL
GOOD
STREET FOOD

I  GROW
BENZIE

#GOOD
FOOD



peninsula
pops

GARDEN

peninsula
pops
FROZEN FRUIT POPS
\$3
• Raspberry Lemonade
• Watermelon
• Mango Peach
• Strawberry Lime
• Peachy Keen
• Pineapple
• Blueberry

Woman in blue shirt and black shorts holding a basket of produce, interacting with the food truck counter.

Menu
BBQ Pork Sandwich
w/cheese \$5
BBQ Pork baked
Baked Potato \$5
Pacho Bowl
Beers \$5