

**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

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	October 01, 2014-March 31,2017
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Recipient Organization Name:	City of Alexandria, VA
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Promoting Access to Healthy Eating at Alexandria Old Town Farmers' Market
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-FMPPX-VA-0042
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Alexandria, VA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$ 94,249

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: _____

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- i. 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: Expand Direct Producer-To-Consumer Purchasing Opportunities at the OTFM Market.**

a. Progress Made: The following summarizes progress made during the grant period:

1. Activity: 1.1.1 Conduct Market Assessments

OTFM completed three customer attendance assessments demonstrating continued growth in attendance over the course of the grant. Growth highlights include: an increase in the number of participants reporting first knowledge of the market from social media (1% in baseline survey to 4.6% in 2016) and signage (1% in baseline survey to 6.4% in 2016); an increase in the percentage of weekly visitors (21% in baseline to 23.9% in 2016); an increase in the number of shoppers spending over \$25 per visit (from 58% in baseline survey to 68% in 2016).

Market staff completed two customer surveys, one in August 2015 and one in August/September 2016. Vendor sales data proved difficult to come by; those who did submit data for both years over the course of the grant show slight growth. Anecdotal discussions with vendors at market resulted in vendors reporting slightly increased or maintained sales which were heavily impacted in 2016 by inclement weather during the busiest months of the market season.

12 customer event satisfaction surveys demonstrate consistent levels of satisfaction in the type and quality of events that were held at market. Customer knowledge about events is dominated between learning about the event on social media, and learning about the event by passing by.

2. Activity 1.1.2 Monthly Meetings

The Market Manager held 24 monthly Marketing Committee meetings during this reporting period to develop new and creative ways to promote the farmers market in the local community, and ensure that shoppers stay longer and spend more while onsite. The Market Manager developed and implemented a market activity calendar with input from the Market Committee and feedback from customer surveys.

3. Activity 1.1.3 – Farmer Profiles:

12 farmer’s profiles and 12 promotional blogs were featured from October 2014 to October 2016. The blogs and profiles were published on the market website and weekly newsletter and posted on Facebook, and Twitter.

4. Activity 1.1.4 Social Media Updates:

- a. Posted 108 weekly updates on market Facebook page and Twitter with a link to the weekly market newsletter.
- b. Posted 12 monthly updates on the gleaning, bicycle food rescue events, and SNAP incentives on Facebook and Twitter.
- c. Boosted posts once per month in the summer and fall (12 boosts) to reach a larger audience and create interest in the Old Town Farmers’ Market Facebook and Twitter sites.

5. 1.1.5 Signage

The OTFM was unable to secure permission to install permanent directional signage due to zoning regulations in an historic area. In lieu of directional signage, the market was able to purchase a-frame signs which are displayed at market and help to circulate customer traffic more evenly, particularly in two sections which see diminished traffic.

6. 1.1.6 OTFM Newsletters

The first annual newsletter was distributed to market vendors in December 2015. Vendor feedback was that ongoing awareness would be preferable over one large annual newsletter so the Market Manger worked with the Rules Committee, the Marketing Committee, through weekly/monthly "alert" emails and through direct discussions at market to inform vendors about the grant activities that took place in year two.

b. **Impact on Community:** Market assessments demonstrated continuing satisfaction with events and programming; better communication and promotion of events, farmers and activities through social media, signs and the City's website/newsletter. The sharp incline in social media follows over the life of the grant resulted in an increase in program attendees learning about events through Facebook and Twitter.

ii. Goal/Objective 1.2: Implement an OTFM Public Outreach and Education Program.

a. Progress made:

1. 1.2.1 Farmer Training Sessions

The OTFM hosted a farmers training session on March 22, 2016. Information discussed during this meeting included how to conduct outreach, how to improve your market booth, and how to increase sales by expanding your product line. The presentation and handouts were made available in person at the meeting, and afterwards via our website. There were 27 vendors in attendance.

2. 1.2.2 Diverse Market Programs

Ongoing externally-managed events at market through the life of the grant include Virginia Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners at market from May – October 2015 and 2016 and the City of Alexandria's Resource Recovery Station (compost station) at market year-round. The market hosted 38 events through the life of the grant, including yoga, healthy cooking demonstrations; children's programming and community partnerships.

3. 1.2.3 Nutrition and Cooking Demos at Market

The market hosted 15 healthy cooking demonstrations in partnership with the Virginia Cooperative Extension's Master Food Volunteers over the life of the grant.

4. 1.2.4 Market Purchases

The market purchased an amplification system, tote bags and t-shirts. Customer Event Satisfaction surveys demonstrated satisfaction with the amplification level of the musicians at market, as well as desire for an increase in the number of live music performances. Tote bags and t-shirts are distributed at celebration days (Spring Kickoff, Mother's/Father's Day, National Farmers Market Week) and are also used to incentivize participation in our customer event satisfaction surveys and annual surveys.

Impact on Community: Improved social media outreach by increasing the number of Facebook likes from 3,500 to 6,314. Individual posts over this time period received 1,100 likes. Increased awareness of the market by residents and visitors continues to result in an increase in market attendance. Our diverse market programs benefit the community through (1) bringing more families to market (an anecdotal observation of market staff and vendors); (2) increased knowledge by shoppers of the market's offerings (through education events or demos that feature a particular vendor or specialty item); and (3) cross-promoting with community partners who, in turn, promote the market in their outreach and social media channels.

iii. **Goal/Objective 2: Increase Consumption and Access to Healthy Foods, Especially for Low-Income Communities.**

1. **2.1.1 FM Coordinator**

The market hired the Farmers' Market Coordinator on January 24th, 2015.

2. **2.1.2 OTFM Volunteers:**

Staffed an Old Town Farmers' Market information booth at the Alexandria DCHS on the first and last Wednesday of every month to provide information to potential customers. Recruited and trained 11 volunteers to staff the Farmers' Market booth and DCHS outreach table. Recruited 96 volunteers for the bicycle gleaning program. Consistent and trained volunteer base enhanced the management of the EBT and gleaning program. Achieved targets set for EBT program outreach and exceeded target for increasing EBT customers during the grant period. Increased awareness on EBT and the double dollar program at the market for 5,040 customers visiting DCHS for SNAP services and the farmers' market through outreach and DCHS and targeted mailings throughout the 2-1/2 years of the grant. Increased the number of new EBT customers by 48% from October 2014 to December 2016. Increased sales from a total of \$500 by September 2014 to \$12,736 (from 10/2014 to 3/4/2017), a 96% increase in sales. Informed 2,520 SNAP recipients about the EBT and double dollar program through targeted mailings and outreach.

3. **2.1.3 Email Listserve (Weekly Market Newsletters):**

Developed weekly newsletter content and sent out 109 weekly market newsletters to listserv and City eNews customers. Increased awareness on farmers market vendors, activities, and EBT/incentive programs. Increased newsletter customers from 150 to more than 2,100 by the end of the grant period. Achieved targets set for consistent newsletter delivery.

4. **2.1.4 Cooking Demos/Healthy Food Marketing:**

Increased awareness for 538 low income and at risk populations on how to prepare healthy food purchased at the market through 13 cooking demos and 300 recipe distributions at DCHS and area homeless shelters. Created 12 recipe cards. Distributed and discussed price comparison shopping lists with SNAP customers at the farmers' market, customer surveys, and at DCHS.

5. **2.2.1 Outreach Field Trips to the Market with ARHA/DCHS Customers.**

Conducted 48 outreach visits to DCHS with 340 customers informed about the market EBT and incentive program. Completed eight field trips to the market with 31 SNAP customers over the two year grant. Mailed 2,000 field trip invitations to SNAP customers from 2015-2016.

6. **2.2.2 ARHA Meetings:**

Increased awareness on EBT and Double Dollar program during 12 outreach visits at ARHA meetings over the 2.5 year grant period.

7. **2.2.3 School Visits to the OTFM:**

Scheduled five children's field trips to the market with two field trip cancellations (Jefferson-Houston Middle School and Charles-Houston Rec Center). Achieved three field trips with an average of 5 children attending per visit (15 total children). Created two interactive market field trip programs: (1) lesson plan and activities for 3rd graders, and (2) lesson plan/activities for 7th graders. Field trips were advertised in school newsletters for one week prior to the trip date and fliers advertising the trip were provided to the teachers.

8. **2.3.1 Gleaning Volunteer Program:**

Conducted weekly gleaning at the farmers' market from last week in May to third week in November for two years (48 total gleaning sessions) using a combination of bicycles and vehicles. Gleaned a total of 12,876 pounds and distributed to ~540 at risk residents in Alexandria. Recruited and trained 52 volunteers for gleaning over the life of the grant. Exceeded target of 2 recipient organizations: Christ Church, St. Paul's Episcopal, Annie B. Rose Home.

9. **2.3.2 Gleaning Program Promotion:**

Enhanced promotion and information sharing regarding gleaning program achievements to 6,260 Facebook, 676 Twitter followers, and more than 2,100 Alexandria newsletter recipients. Reached out to local and national media: two stories (Alexandria Gazette and AARP) and one podcast (Karma Sense Wellness) were published on the Old Town Farmers' market gleaning and SNAP/EBT program. Two YouTube videos on the market bicycle gleaning program were produced and posted on Facebook, Twitter, newsletters and on the City YouTube channel. These videos received 2,766 views.

10. **2.3.3 Annual Community Gleaning Day at the Market:**

Achieved the target of two community gleaning events at the market in September during Hunger Action Month. Collected and distributed 420 pounds of produce to 240 at-risk Alexandria residents.

b. Impact on Community: Retained SNAP and gleaning volunteers over the life of the grant and increased the number of customers receiving weekly market newsletter to more than 2,100 Alexandria residents per week. The newsletter was also posted each week on the market Facebook and Twitter sites to broaden customer reach. Staff significantly improved communications on seasonal market produce updates, market activities, farmer/vendor promotions, and healthy seasonal recipes through cooking demos and weekly newsletters.

The increased social media presence and consistent and regular outreach at social service and low income housing meeting events, the variety of field trips with SNAP recipients, and enhanced management of the SNAP program has made a significant impact on many customers' lives in terms of improving their ability to access fresh produce, meat, and milk at a competitive price. The gleaning program was a major success with 12,876 pounds of fresh produce delivered to more than 500 at-risk families and seniors living in Alexandria, VA during the two-year grant period.

The City increased the number of new EBT customers by 48% from October 2014 to December 2016 and increased SNAP sales from \$500 (in September 2014) to \$12,736 (from 10/2014 to 3/4/2017), a 96% increase.

- ii. **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: Unknown. We do not ask vendors to report new employee numbers.
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: The Old Town Farmers' Market vendors employ approximately 200 people every Saturday.
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Unknown. We do not ask vendors to report new employee numbers.
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 1. By increasing foot traffic at market during the high season, we have expanded the potential customer base of our market vendors.
 - v. Number of new markets established: 0
 - vi. Market sales data is approximate and collected by an anonymous vendor survey. Market sales increased by \$71,000 and increased by 3%.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 95
Percent Increase: 7%
 - iii. **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?**
Increased SNAP/EBT sales by 96% and brought in 149 new SNAP customers during the grant period. This was accomplished via regular and targeted social media postings on Facebook, Twitter, and email newsletters as well as consistent outreach and presentations at DCHS, ARHA, and other social service organizations in the City (WIC, Churches, shelters).
- iv. **Discuss your community partnerships.**
 - i. **Who are your community partners?** Hunger Free Alexandria, ARHA, Alexandria DCHS, and the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). The market works closely with Visit Alexandria and local restaurants such as Brabo and Jackson 20 to assist in outreach efforts and host professional chef cooking demonstrations.
 - ii. **How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?** These organizations contributed to the gleaning, bicycle food rescue, and SNAP/EBT efforts.
 - iii. **How will they contribute to future results?** They will continue their involvement in the market gleaning and SNAP/EBT efforts after completion of the FMPP grant.
 - v. **Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project?** We contracted with a professional blogger to write engaging and descriptive blogs about the market and vendor-specific pieces highlighting our local farmers. The blogs were posted on the market Facebook, Twitter, website, and newsletters and obtained thousands of likes and comments—directly impacting vendor business.
 - vi. **Have you publicized any results yet? Yes.**
 - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? Results have been publicized on Facebook, Twitter, The General Services newsletter and the City website. In addition, we write articles regarding the grant activities and post the results in the weekly market newsletters, City of Alexandria newsletter, and pitch ideas to local media. We publicized outcomes to our vendors through newsletters and word of mouth.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? Market customers, vendors, and the general public.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 1,660 people (via newsletters) and more than 6,300 customers who follow the market Facebook and Twitter sites.

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

- iv. If so, how did you collect the information? Online and in-person market surveys
- vii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? See Attachments for Event Satisfaction Survey results and Annual Customer Survey results. Feedback highlights from the survey include: “Most inclusive SNAP vendor participation & two incentive-extra SNAP bucks programs!”, “Used to be close to home/shopped every week. Moved to Manassas. Alex FM still the very BEST!”, “It's the best market in the area”.

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? No.
- viii. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

ix. 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).

- i. For **Objective 1**, social media updates (particularly boosting posts) and newsletters had a direct and measurable impact on vendor sales and event attendance. Vendors report an increase in sales after being featured in the newsletter or shared on our social media. Market assessments for special events and activities were generally very positive overall, but did not glean meaningful information or provide much insight on what types of events customers would like to see in the future. Positive market assessments did not necessarily correlate to high attendance. In the future, the Market Manager intends to make comment cards available rather than conduct assessments. The marketing committee will continue to meet quarterly to make meetings easier to attend by vendors and community partners.
- ii. For **Objective 2**, the gleaning and SNAP outreach activities worked well and served to increase SNAP sales, increase new customers, and redistribute healthy food to at-risk Alexandria residents. The farmers’ market coordinator successfully partnered with social service and public health agencies to enhance desired health effects on program participants and document their efforts. The bicycle food rescue served as a community building activity at the market and was positively received by the public. We learned that using Film & Video interns is a useful way to help students gain experience and provide the market with high quality YouTube videos. We also learned that Saturday farmer’s market field trips for children and SNAP customers are difficult to schedule with many transportation barriers and are not a high impact activity that creates measurable outcome results.
- iii. **If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving.** We did not meet our target outcome measures for SNAP customer market field trips or school children market field trips. This was due to a number of factors:

(1) SNAP Customer Field Trip Transportation Barriers – We noticed that most of the SNAP customers who came to the adult field trips were seniors and they had to take public transportation to get to the market. Few returned to the market after the field trip because of this difficulty—they all attended to receive the free \$5 incentive. I believe we overestimated the number who would come attend these field trips and would not recommend continuing this activity.

(2) Saturday Time Difficult for Children’s Field Trip – The greatest barrier to success for the

children's field trips was its occurrence on Saturday morning. Schools, nonprofits working with children, parents, and the children were either busy with other activities or did not want to invest the time to participate in this extracurricular activity on Saturday morning. Since the time cannot be changed (market only occurs on Saturday morning), we do not recommend continuing this activity for future programs as it did not impact the market or the SNAP/EBT program and involved a tremendous amount of time and effort that might have been spent on more impactful outreach activities.

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:

With regards to administering the projects, it is important to do the hiring process early on to insure resources are available if planned for in the grant. It is also important to do regular meetings to insure activities and targets are met according to the planned timeline. As stated under bullet point iii above, some outreach activities proved difficult to achieve due to the nature of the market hours or accessibility issues so it is important to take that into consideration while developing the grant narrative and to come up with creative solutions to incentivize people to attend.

x. 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.** The work implemented under the FMPP grant will continue at the Old Town Farmers' Market. The City has hired a permanent employee to manage the SNAP/EBT and gleaning program at the market; this employee is charged with continuing the successful outreach activities that were piloted in the FMPP grant during 2014-2016. We anticipate the market SNAP/EBT program will continue to grow at the current rate of a ~50% per year increase in sales and customers and will continue to positively impact the eating behaviors and health of its SNAP customers. Interviews with SNAP customers in 2016 attest to an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption:

"I have needed and haven't had a job this last year and have scrambled to stay afloat. In general, the SNAP program has been a blessing. In particular, the SNAP program at the Old Town Farmers' Market has been an absolute joy: the extensive varieties of apples, the corn and tomatoes, the beet juice, the eggs, the occasional cheese and bread. Here, at the market, I am nourished both in body and spirit." KM, January 2016

The new Farmers' Market Coordinator and current Market Manager will use the results of the FMPP program to continue to increase SNAP/EBT customers, EBT transactions, and market vendor sales in the future. The gleaning program was so successful that Healthy Alexandria, a nonprofit that gleans at the market, created a 6-month paid position to manage their efforts at the Old Town Farmers' Market from June-November.

- ii. The Market Manager will continue to utilize social media to conduct outreach and inform new and current shoppers about market vendors and activities. The newsletter will also continue as a way to spotlight individual vendors and act as an additional "touch" for shoppers who don't interact with social media. The number of Facebook and Twitter likes accrued through the life of the grant provide a substantial reach into the Alexandria community and the market staff plans continues engagement with these followers. The Market Manager anticipates a continued bump in sales of farmers who have items featured in the cooking demos.

- iii. Financial review of market sales shows that the FMPP program did have a significantly positive impact on vendor sales and, thus, on the local economy.
- iv. **Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?**
 - a. Recommendations for future activities and additional research:
 - 1. Continue SNAP/EBT outreach activities outlined in the grant and expand the scope to include additional social service organizations such as WIC, public health clinics, low-income childcare organizations, and nonprofits that work with at-risk populations in Alexandria, VA.
 - 2. The evaluation findings point to important areas for future research. The market transaction data shows that most SNAP dollars and incentives distributed at the market were redeemed at vendor stands over the course of the grant; however, some funds went unused and were reported as “floating tokens.” Possible reasons floating tokens are tokens that are lost, misplaced, or reserved for a future visit that did not occur. Nevertheless, this represents a negative loss in purchasing power that affects the financial benefits provided by the incentive program to both the customer and the market farmer/vendor. Future work should strive to better understand this problem and test solutions to increase SNAP and incentive redemption rates.
 - 3. Continued financial support from the private, public, and philanthropic sectors remains critically important to continuing the Old Town Farmers’ Market incentive program. The City must explore innovative solutions to continue funding for this crucial program for the low income community in Alexandria.