

## Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to your assigned grant specialist to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: [USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov](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>	April 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Phoebe Godfrey
<b>Authorized Representative Phone:</b>	860-786-7907
<b>Authorized Representative Email:</b>	clickwillimantic@gmail.com
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Commercially Licensed Cooperative Kitchen, Inc. (CLiCK)
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Local Farmers and local Producers: CLiCK Makes the Connection
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-CT-0033
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2014
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Windham/Willimantic, Connecticut
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$98,111.00

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

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

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

- i. Goal/Objective 1: Complete the build-out & equipping of the commercially licensed kitchen.

- a. Progress Made: The kitchens were completed and became operational in February 2015. With funding from the LFPP Implementation Grant and other sources, commercial kitchens capable of supporting a wide range of food processing functions have been made available to the community.

- b. Impact on Community: The open and functioning commercial kitchens have received significant media/community attention. Twenty-five kitchen members/ new businesses have commenced operations, although, consistent with national statistics for new food businesses, some of these are no longer operating and others operate seasonally, using the kitchen only in the growing/farmers market season. The availability of the facility has also allowed CLiCK to secure grants from other funding sources to support its operation and further expand the functionality of the kitchen.

- ii. Goal/Objective 2: Recruitment of farmers & culinary entrepreneurs to use the kitchen

- a. Progress Made: CLiCK changed kitchen managers during the course of this award altered her job description to focus on the Commercial Kitchen rather than the Teaching Kitchen and specifically the recruitment of new members. This meant a greater focus on the objectives of this LFPP project and the recruitment of new members to use the commercial kitchen. These include one individual who makes prepared meals targeting the Latino community and is negotiating a contract with the local high school for empanadas and a well-established hot sauce manufacturer. Together with a third business that supplies pre-ordered prepared meals, they constitute 3 anchor members important for the financial stability of CLiCK. Farmers have not shown interest in using the CLiCK kitchens themselves since they lack the time. However, they are interested in selling their produce to CLiCK food entrepreneurs. The 2016 growing season saw an increased flow of their produce into the CLiCK kitchens. This has included over 1200 pounds of vegetables as part of our Farm to Freezer to Market program. In addition our anchor members source their ingredients locally wherever possible.

- b. Impact on Community: The entrepreneurs and those working with them are clearly benefiting by finding a meaningful way to make a living. Local farmers have been provided with additional markets for their produce. The community has access to more local foods through the businesses that have been created.

- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Provide business & technical support for CLiCK users

- a. Progress Made: ServSafe classes are being held regularly and are required for users of the kitchen. CLiCK has also working closely with CT Small Business Development Center located at UConn to enable entrepreneurs to set up their

business plans and acquire the appropriate licenses needed to run businesses is CT. A “small business 101” class has been developed to assist beginner entrepreneurs, then additional meetings with the kitchen manager and counseling are offered. A starter package has been developed to recruit culinary entrepreneurs and increase their chances of success. The package includes counseling on business plan development, kitchen time for research and development, yield testing and complimentary promotional spots at CLiCK events. CLiCK also obtained foundation support that provided 50% of start-up costs to new kitchen members. Three awards have now been made under this program. These awards were funded by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut; no LFPP funds were involved. Relationships were developed with the Economic Development Director for the Town of Windham and the local Spanish American Merchants Association to identify appropriate support mechanisms. In addition, we collaborated with UConn Extension and the Farm Bureau to provide support to farmers. We also collaborated with Liberty Bank to offer a business development program in the CLiCK Teaching Kitchen. Participants in the program were given access to low-interest loans.

- b. Impact on Community: CLiCK is providing technical and business support to both food entrepreneurs and farmers. Their success benefits the community by enhancing the availability of locally produced food. A number of local organizations have taken advantage of our ServSafe trainings.

iv. Goal/Objective 4: Develop joint marketing and distribution systems for CLiCK products

- a. Progress Made: Users were counseled on distribution and marketing strategies and connected to local farmers to maximize use of local produce. A new CLiCK website <https://clickwillimantic.com/> was launched and promoted as a tool to publicize CLiCK and its members and to connect famers and kitchen entrepreneurs. Research and development has been completed on a ravioli product that will feature the use of 90% local ingredients, including goat cheese from a local farm. Last summer, tomatoes were processed into single source, local tomato sauce for sale at the Willimantic Food Coop. Frozen vegetables are currently being marketed to local school systems. CLiCK is a member of the Northeast Organic Farmers Association and the Last Green Valley, which give additional networking and advertising opportunities for members. It has also hosted frequent community events that attract good publicity and bring the public into the facility where they can interact with its members.
- b. Impact on Community: CLiCK members are selling their products at the Willimantic Food Coop, farmer’s markets, local cafes and the Willimantic Third Thursday Street Festival. The newer plans for ravioli and tomato and apple sauces will supply the community with branded CLiCK products.

v. Goal/Objective 5: Evaluate the success of ongoing activities

- a. Progress Made: Evaluation of ongoing activities through informal and formal interviews with a variety of stakeholders led to several modifications of this project. These include more focus on farmers as a source of materials for kitchen entrepreneurs rather than recruiting them to be members themselves and development of starter packages to support new entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs can now buy seasonal memberships, which has been particularly helpful to food

truck operators and those selling at farmers markets.

- b. Impact on Community: Continuing evaluation is serving to keep CLiCK on track such that it can deliver on its goal of developing a food hub in eastern Connecticut.
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: 20: This is a minimum estimate of current kitchen users and their employees. Approximately an equal number of additional jobs were created last summer and are expected to return this year.
    - ii. Number of jobs retained: 1: General manager position
    - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Unknown
    - iv. Number of markets expanded: 2: Willimantic Food Coop, Willimantic Farmers Market, Food Trucks/Country Fairs.
    - v. Number of new markets established: 2: One member is providing prepared meals, delivered to customer's homes in several surrounding towns. Another is selling prepared meals to workers at local agricultural businesses. A third at a newly established local coffee shop and a fourth has established an on-line market.
    - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%.  
Unknown
    - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Approximately 6 through sales of produce.
      - a. Percent Increase: Unknown
  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, CLiCK has offered business training and food processing information sessions to the community. For example, training in business skills has been and will continue to be offered in collaboration with Connecticut Small Business Development Center (CTSBDC) and Liberty Bank that has run a Small Business Academy at CLiCK and will do so in the spring in both English and Spanish. ServSafe classes are also offered in Spanish and marketed to the Latino community. CLiCK also collaborated with the local shelter to provide opportunities to people transitioning from homelessness. A foundation grant encouraged the development of new businesses by low-income individuals and members of the Hispanic community and 2/3 of the recipients were from minority groups. No LFPP funds were used for this program.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
  - i. Who are your community partners?  
GrowWindham, Connecticut Farm Bureau, Windham Public Schools, Coventry Public Schools, Mansfield Public Schools, Covenant Soup Kitchen, Windham No-Freeze Shelter, Holy Family Shelter, Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC), Eastern CT State University (ECSU), UConn Extension, UConn MEM (Engineering students), UConn Engineers without Borders, Slow Food (UConn Chapter), UConn Office of Community Engagement, NAFI, Northeast CT Economic Alliance, Inc., Puentes Al Futuro (5 week summer camp for at-risk youth in Windham), Access Agency, Sacred Heart Church, St. Joseph's Living Center, E.O. Smith High School, Perception's Program, Willimantic Food Co-op, Community Companions and Homemakers, Weight Watchers, the Windham

Chapter of the NAACP, Windham Area Progressive Action and members of the Mohegan Tribe. The latter regularly attend CLiCK events and offer land blessings. The most recent one was at the ribbon cutting for CLiCK's community mural featuring indigenous food practices as part of an on-going community mural project funded by the CT Department of the Arts. In addition, CLiCK has over the past 6 years been working with Co-Operative Development Institute (CDI) to establish what it means to be a non-profit co-op and how to best meet our member's needs. This relationship includes yearly Board trainings and on-going communication.

- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?

The universities have provided a platform to educate students about the local food movement, and produced a pool of energetic volunteers to support CLiCK's efforts. We are actively working with Grow Windham (collaborating on reinvigorating the Willimantic Farmers Market; engaging farmers and other community members in conversations about local food issues) and the Willimantic Food Coop (developing markets for CLiCK member products). We have also been working on collaboration with local schools, camps and healthcare facilities to build relationships and develop new markets for local foods. CLiCK's teaching garden (built by volunteers and a UConn student) has provided educational opportunities to the community regarding growing, tending and expanding the accessibility of local foods. Several of the local social service agencies in the community (Access Agency, QVCC and GrowWindham) have discussed using CLiCK as a community service and job training site, UConn, ECSU, Perceptions Programs and Grow Windham have utilized CLiCK for this purpose. UConn students have supported CLiCK with business administration, food manufacturing and building improvement projects.

- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

Some of these organizations plan to collaborate on projects and help support the local businesses that grow and process local foods. Many of these organizations also offer support to CLiCK through volunteering and partnerships. In addition, as CLiCK itself (rather than through its members) processes more food, entry level food processing positions are being created. The activities of this grant position have positioned CLiCK at the center of a number of disparate groups with common interests in community building with a focus on the food and agricultural sector. In general, broad participation is key to the development and continued prosperity of a local food market.

- 5. Did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?

Contractors were used to design and build the website, thereby enhancing the visibility of CLiCK within the community and enabling potential members to find it more easily. Continued development of this site is needed to support the continued growth of CLiCK.

- 6. Have you publicized any results yet?\*

  - 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?

Yes, we have had several news stories in local and regional papers as well as interviews on radio and television. This has resulted in state-wide exposure of the accomplishments to date. Notably, CLiCK was featured in the CT Department of Agriculture weekly bulletin, following a visit from the Commissioner for Agriculture, as well as in Connecticut Magazine. We are collaborating with a local filmmaker to prepare a short documentary on CLiCK, which will be shared via the internet. Articles about CLiCK have appeared in the *Last Green Valley* publication of the *Harford Courant* and *CT Farm and Food*, the *Willimantic Chronicle* and the *Neighbors* newsletter. Two board members contributed a chapter about CLiCK in *Feeding Cities: Improving local food access, security, and resilience*, edited by C.Bosso, 2016 – Routledge, a book focused on improving local food access, security and resilience. One of these has another chapter about CLiCK in *From Loncheras to Lobsta Love: Food trucks, Cultural Identity, and Social Justice* (working title), Agyeman, C. Matthews & H. Sobel, eds. 2017 MIT Press.

Very recently, students from Eastern Connecticut State University completed a promotional video for CLiCK, which can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KanG7y6tv1M&index=7&list=UUnk9yulUVdxwX7Ul6pDQBmg>

\*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).

Three items are being submitted with this report, an advertising brochure, a membership application and a procedure guide.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
  - i. If so, how did you collect the information?
 

Yes. CLiCK holds regular community events that allow for informal conversations and feedback on activities. In addition, an informal community food network meets periodically to allow groups interested in local food issues to share their experiences and plan common events. We also meet regularly with individuals from the Willimantic Food Coop and a joint board meeting is planned for the spring. Social media are also used to interact with the community. Many people email or call with comments and interest in the project based on this outreach. Monthly board meetings, which are open to the public and frequently attract interested visitors, give the manager the opportunity to summarize feedback and the board to take action in response.
  - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
 

Responses are generally very positive. CLiCK is viewed within its community as an active and positive force for change. One kitchen member reported the following

*“Initially, the spectacular equipment available was the draw. Then came the offer from the community gardeners to grow peppers for me. Then came the local farmers bringing their produce to be processed, the resulting networking provided great creative stimulus.”*

And a second said

*“We provide over 300 meals (and growing) every week to our local community and would not have been able to open our doors had it not been for CLiCK and their commitment to our*

*community. CLiCK offers small food businesses an opportunity to develop and grow while working in a co-operative supportive environment.*

- iii. In addition, the mayor of Windham has commented publicly on more than one occasion on CLiCK's unusual successful at making good connections within the Latino community. Further examples of feedback come from the letters of support we have gotten for our new LFPP grant. For example, we have received letters from the Commissioner of the CT Department of Agriculture, the CT Farm Bureau, the Town of Windham and from community agencies and farmers. We see these new letters of support as further feedback that our community and additional stakeholders support our work.

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: X
- ii. Did the project generate any income?  
No

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. Draw from positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).  
The first lesson was that, despite survey answers to the contrary, our local farmers turned out to be too busy to devote time to processing their own fruits and vegetables. They ended up being more interested in CLiCK as a market for their produce, in particular when they have surplus to what can be sold through their usual channels. They are also interested in CLiCK as a guaranteed market, with agreements made at the beginning of the growing season. In short, what they seek is for CLiCK to act as a co-packer. This is the model we have already started where we are either paid by farmers to process for them, returning a product for them to sell either at their Farmer's Market / CSAs or we use produce from multiple farmers (including seconds) to create a product (say tomato sauce as already piloted) that is sold and then profits would be shared. However, for this to fully work by achieving our goal of being a co-packer that can do the required volume for it to be economically viable for all involved, we need to add additional equipment and to expand the commercially licensed kitchen area.

Therefore, a second lesson is that paying market price for vegetables, processing them (e.g. into tomato sauce) may yield a product that may be too expensive to sell. In order to be competitive, the processing operation may require to be done at a scale that enables the raw materials to be purchased in bulk at a lower price that still satisfies the needs of the farmers and then processed efficiently as possible. A related concern is the cost of processing. Under this project, we used funding received from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to pay for kitchen workers to support the manager in doing the processing work. Achieving a scale of production or finding creative ways to provide the processing labor are needed to make this local food system economically viable. This is why in our new LFPP grant application we seek to add a culinary / food processing job training aspect to our project that would work with community agencies to develop this key piece. However, to avoid the additional cost of labor this project seeks to have the

labor costs be covered by other grants and by other agencies and in the future by the income generated.

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

Our website is still not where we would like it to be. A lesson learned here is in many ways ironic given the emphasis of the grant on sourcing locally. We were recommended a web designer located in Chicago who, based on his resume and work, assured us he could create the site that we sought. However, by not being able to meet in person with him our website was compromised, despite the technological means to easily connect. Based on this lesson we are now working with a local web designer with whom we have been meeting regularly in person and with whom we will continue working we would still like it to act as Craig's List type exchange for farmers and food entrepreneurs to exchange information about fruits and vegetables availability and requirements. Despite some re-budgeting, we did not allocate enough money for this development to occur and have made this a priority in our new application.

- 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:

CLiCK's launch as a community-based food processing kitchen has coincided with the conduct of this LFPP project. A constant struggle has been to ensure the economic viability of the kitchen, thereby enabling it to conduct this project. Basic operating costs are not covered by this or most other grants and therefore need to be met by income from memberships and usage fees. The situation has been improving over the past 2 years, as membership and usage has increased. But this has come from kitchen entrepreneurs who are starting new businesses and, in the food industry, most of these do not succeed. Many of the entrepreneurs who started businesses at CLiCK are no longer in operation and others operate on a seasonal basis, which means they do not use the kitchen during the winter months. We are fortunate that we have some anchor members who have developed effective business models and in some cases are actually expanding. So, as we enter our third growing season, the future looks reasonably assured, but will still require additional grant support to expand operations to give economy of scale.

Another lesson in terms of administering this project is to have more comprehensive systems in place to record, document and aggregate all the pieces that this project involved. As a newly created non-profit the past two years have been full of growth, change and achievements such that at times it has been hard to keep track of them all. As we move forward having an additional staff person will help ensure more accurate and comprehensive record keeping

#### 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.

The current LFPP project has performed a vital role in helping to initiate and support the operations of CLiCK in its critical early stages. Our business plan projects that, in the long

term, CLiCK will be mostly self-sufficient when membership and kitchen usage reaches a level that fully supports its running expenses. Currently, CLiCK is operating its commercial kitchen at about 35% of capacity. Full operation might entail 4 anchor members using the kitchen for 60 hours/month and 12 smaller scale operations at 25 hours/month. The proprietors of these businesses usually employ other workers, averaging perhaps 2.5/business giving a total of about 50 individuals finding food related employment. While most of these will not be full-time, they will contribute significantly in this economically stressed community.

CLiCK will continue to encourage its members to source their ingredients locally and current and future relationships with farmers will facilitate this. Continued development of the website will allow communication of availability of and requirements for ingredients. CLiCK is currently receiving produce from 6 local farmers but it is anticipated this will easily double over the next year.

We would also like to develop CLiCK into a full co-packing facility such that fruits and vegetables could be received from farmers, processed as appropriate and then returned to the farmers for sale at farmers' markets, as a part of their CSA, etc. This expansion would give farmers exactly what they are seeking, a means of stabilizing and expanding their income without a large investment of time. In addition, to achieve this we are working with other community agencies to develop a culinary / food processing job training program that will help to keep the product price point within an acceptable range. The multiplier effect of these initiatives on the local economy are hard to estimate but are likely to be significant as a much greater percentage of the consumers' food expenditures are recirculated in the local community. In addition, the foods consumed may well be healthier than the more commercial alternatives, as is the case with one of our members whose business model is to produce only healthy meals that in the summer are 60% locally sourced. Such effects are likely to be increased due to CLiCK's teaching kitchen activities, which provide nutrition education and cooking classes, with a particular focus on underserved communities. These activities have been funded by a local foundation and are in the process of being further developed. In addition, some other funds were received from the USDA RBDG program to further develop our teaching capacity to help farmers with health and safety on their farms and to act as the first stage for our a culinary / food processing job training program.

- 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 anticipating a new application to the LFPP to expand the operations of CLiCK, bringing its operations to a level that will have greater impact on its surrounding communities and be more sustainable in the long term.

Also, by continuing to work with UConn faculty and with those Board members who have already published their research on CLiCK, the goal is to continue to document CLiCK's progress so that lessons—both positive and negative—can be widely learned and applied by others looking into ways to increase the production, processing, marketing and sale of small scale local foods. CLiCK has recently been made aware of the example of a very successful for-profit co-packer in New York State, the Farm Bridge, that we plan to visit and learn from in the near future. We have also remained in contact with the Franklin Country CDC from whom we got many of our ideas and with Brain Norder formally of the Vermont Food Venture Center who now does consulting work. Additionally, CLiCK's manager, interns and Board members have attended food conferences (such as the

NESAWG's 2016 'It Takes a Region Conference | Tackling Wicked Problems in Food Systems' in Hartford, CT) and will continue to do so in order to share and gain ideas on how to in this case, 'tackle wicked problems in food systems'. All of this on-going research, writing and exchanging of ideas will help to assure CLiCK's continuing success and the success of other such projects around the country.