

**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>	9/30/15 – 9/29/17
Authorized Representative Name:	Alexi Groumoutis
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Recipient Organization Name:	Southern Iowa Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Growing Farmers' and Farmers' Markets
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15FMPPIA0159
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Creston, Iowa
Total Awarded Budget:	\$35,480.58

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: _____

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.

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. The goal of this project is to grow and promote six farmers’ markets in the seven-county SIRCD region through direct producer-to-consumer opportunities. Farmers’ markets in this region are struggling because of limited vendors, and little to no advertising budgets. To ensure the remaining markets in the SIRCD region succeed, action must be taken. Most rural grocery stores don’t sell locally grown foods, so the revenue potential for farmers’ markets is magnified. With the right support, this unparalleled marketing opportunity can thrive. This project will result in increased number of farmers’ market vendors, expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing skills, and more consumers shopping at farmers’ markets resulting in improved economy.

- i. Goal/Objective 1: Increase the number of farmers’ market vendors

- a. Progress Made: In 2015 there were approximately 56 market vendors. In 2016 there were approximately 111 and in 2017 there were approximately 97 vendors. Coordinator reached out to her local radio station to be a guest on several of their programs throughout the grant period to promote the farmers’ markets in her seven-county region. Coordinator also encouraged financially strapped farmers’ markets to take full advantage of free outlets to promote their markets and increase vendor participation through social media, press releases, newspaper articles, radio guest spots and by simply staying in touch with stakeholders through email. Coordinator organized four farmers’ market workshops directed towards vendors and market managers (explained in greater detail under ‘Goal/Objective 2’). Coordinator also advertised area farmers’ markets through radio and newspaper ads.

- b. Impact on Community: The increased number of vendors at the farmers’ market translated into increased commerce. Creston farmers’ market saw more vendors this year and when coordinator asked one of the vendors if she was making less money because of increased competition, she said business was actually better because more vendors brought in more people which generated more income. More vendors also added to the diversity of products offered at the farmers’ market making the Creston market a sought-after destination. More vendors overall, not only boosted community morale, but it proved to be a great marketing asset for area Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations.

- ii. Goal/Objective 2: Expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing skills

- a. Progress Made: Coordinator organized four farmers’ market seminars attended by market managers and vendors to promote producer-to-consumer marketing skills. Speakers included food coordinator who integrated her ‘Peer to Peer’ workshops at the seminars, giving presentations on *Best Marketing Practices: Becoming a Rock Star Vendor at the Farmers’ Market*, *Polishing Communication Skills at the Farmers’ Market*, and *Farmers’ Market Trends*. Other seminar speakers included Kurt Reuber from the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, who talked about farmers’ market regulations, Paul Ovrom from the

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, who talked about the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and shared how vendors and farmers' markets can become SNAP, FMNP and SFMNP certified, Creston Farmers' Market manager who talked about operating a successful market and Christa Hartsook from Iowa State Extension's Small Farms Program, who discussed specialty crop marketing trends, value added ag and Market Maker. Certified organic farmer, Dale Raasch, also talked about his farm operation, sharing tips that were especially helpful to new growers. Some of the above speakers spoke at multiple workshops hosted by the food coordinator. Steve Ferguson, program specialist from Iowa Finance Authority discussed the Beginner Farm Loan and Tax Credit and Union County Development Association hosted Grow Smart and Smart Start, two, two-session workshops designed to hone business leadership skills, identify opportunities and analyze the feasibility of growing a business. Coordinator was also invited to give two farmers' market presentations at the Iowa Farmers' Market Association's annual meeting in Des Moines, IA, attended by approximately 100 people including farmers' market managers and vendors in her region. Opening speaker was Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Bill Northey. Food Coordinator also gave a presentation in Corning called *Increasing Millennial Participation at Farmers' Markets*. Additionally, she wrote a series of publications for farmers' market managers to provide them with helpful tips and resources to better manage and promote their markets. She shared these tips with managers to pass along to their vendors. One publication titled *Rock Star Vendor Tips* addressed topics that included: *market etiquette, engaging with customers, promoting your products, taking pride in your market booth, showing up to the market consistently, being transparent with consumers when asked about growing practices and food processing regulations contact information*. She then compiled all of these publications into one document called *Tips for Farmers' Market Managers* with added content and pictures.

b. Impact on Community: By expanding producer-to-consumer marketing skills, more producers marketed their products to consumers with professional-looking booths and signs while confidently engaging consumers. Consumers were able to experience cleaner, safer and more diversified markets with more samples and interaction between consumers and vendors. The marketing effort put into vendor booths, reflected the vendors' commitment to not only their products, but a commitment to their customers. Coordinator talked to customers who complimented the extra effort put forth by vendors.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: More consumers shopping at farmers' markets resulting in improved economy, health and community wellness.

a. Progress Made: In 2016, 50% of the farmers' markets reported an increase in foot traffic from the previous year. In 2017 71% of the farmers' markets saw an increase in foot traffic compared to 2016. The lowest increase in foot traffic being 45% and the highest being 120%. Vendors who were surveyed and who shared sales from both 2016 and 2017 had an average sales increase of 47%. Food coordinator launched an advertising campaign. Farmers' market ads were advertised in 10 area newspapers/exchanges throughout seven counties for eight weeks straight. Twelve hundred brochures were mailed to farmers' market managers in seven Iowa counties to be handed out at their respective farmers' markets. Local food coordinator helped produce a farmers' market promotional

video filmed by University of Iowa's film department. The video, which touts the benefits of eating locally grown foods, also highlights the message, 'If every Iowan spent just \$10 a week on locally sourced foods, 1.5 billion dollars would stay in Iowa.' That same message was reiterated in radio ads that were aired on two different radio stations for four weeks straight. The video was shared on social media sites, YouTube, emailed to stakeholders, which included area Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development organizations, and shared on the Southern Iowa RC&D and Union County Development Association's webpage. The video thus far has received 822 views. Press Releases were written promoting the video, as well as newspaper articles. Coordinator handed out business cards promoting the local foods video as well. She also attended business coffees sponsored by Union County Development Association to promote area markets and as a result of networking was asked to be a guest on a local radio show to talk about farmers' markets, a show typically reserved for commercial farming coverage. She was a guest on several other radio shows promoting the market and arranged to have two market managers be guests on area radio shows as well, Brian Zachary, Creston's market manager and Dan Lamgo, Corning's market manager. She was also able to recruit farmers' market volunteers to host kids' activities and wellness demos by attending and networking at business coffees. Coordinator encouraged farmers' market managers to partner with community organizations to organize kids' activities and adult wellness demos to increase market traffic. She created scheduling templates to help market managers get organized. She worked hands-on organizing weekly kids' activities and adult wellness demos at Creston's farmers' market June through mid-August and saw immediate results from this promotional approach. Coordinator encouraged market managers to set up an information booth, to put a 'face' to their market. The information booth was a place where consumers could ask questions, make suggestions, fill out surveys, pick up wellness information and recipes, learn about future activities and market promotions as well as interact with market volunteers and staff. The information booth at Creston's market proved to be a valuable resource for market-goers who enjoyed activities like live food demos and free blood pressure screenings. Food coordinator collaborated with Iowa State Extension specialist, Dr. Shannon Coleman, who was awarded the Heddleson grant, an internal grant to create food safety posters for farmers' market vendors. The project was piloted at Creston Farmers' Market before being shared with the rest of the state. When promoting the farmers' market seminars on local radio shows, food coordinator talked about upcoming speakers, Dr. Shannon Coleman, whose presentation covered *Cottage Food Laws* and Kurt Reuber from Inspections and Appeals, whose presentation covered food safety requirements for farmers' markets. The guest radio spots were not only to recruit managers and vendors to these seminars, but to showcase to the public the effort put forth to operate safe markets and to provide managers and vendors professional development opportunities to create top notch markets.

b. Impact on Community: Farmer market attendees were able to enjoy markets whose vendors and managers were better informed and had an elevated commitment to food safety. The information booth, kids' activities and wellness demos created an ambiance at the market that brought repeat customers back

to the market week after week. Each kids' activity brought between 25 to 60 kids. By adding wellness demos, people were able to connect healthy lifestyle choices, like checking their blood pressure, with healthy food choices. Fruits and vegetables were the top selling products at all the farmers' markets in this region over the last two years.

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.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: 91
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 113
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 29
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: Four out of 6 markets expanded from 2015 to 2016 and 5 out of 7 markets expanded from 2016 to 2017
 - v. Number of new markets established: One: Bedford, IA
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$14,341.48 and increased by 73%. (of the producers who were willing to share their sales in 2017 compared to producer who were willing to share their sales in 2015).
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 147

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. MATURA's WIC program director attended multiple Southern Iowa RC&D food council meetings to brainstorm ways to increase WIC farmer market voucher usage. Parents as Teachers educators and the WIC director passed out farmers' market brochures at WIC clinics and home visits, which highlighted markets that were SNAP EBT and Farmers' Market Nutrition Program certified, to their low-income clients. Food coordinator, her food council, which included a Parents as Teachers educator, and WIC Director organized a class called "What Can the Farmers' Market Do for Me and My Family?" This class included a live cooking demonstration and presentations by different speakers. Together, WIC director and food coordinator created a plan of work to work jointly to increase WIC voucher usage at farmers' markets. They teamed up and attended two different Parent as Teachers events at the YMCA to teach kids about fruits and vegetables and to promote area farmers' markets. These outreach events, which are activity and scholarly based, attract approximately 100 kids who visit different themed booths. Food coordinator also created a one-page survey for WIC recipients to fill out to better understand why more recipients don't take advantage of free farmers' market WIC vouchers. The WIC director then passed out these surveys at WIC clinics. She not only promoted WIC vouchers, but she set up educational booths at Creston's farmers' market three times during the 2017 season, handing out apple peanut butter rollups, free recipe books, nutrition brochures (some of the copies were in Spanish and were passed out to Hispanic customers) and free tote bags, along with other nutritional information. She also organized a "My Plate" kids' activity at the market to promote healthy eating. The Area Agency on Aging set up a booth on opening day of the market to sign up low-income seniors for Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition vouchers. The weekly kids' activities at Creston Farmers' Market brought an unprecedented number of children to the market, expanding the demographic to not only children and young families, but to people of different ethnicities and color. One of the activities included a Smoothie Bike, sponsored by United Health Care, that when pedaled, powered a blender filled with strawberries, yogurt and bananas. The kids were

able to literally taste the fruits of their labor in the form of a delicious smoothie. Public Health set up free blood pressure screenings for the adult wellness demos twice during the season. Approximately 50 people participated in the free screenings. Creston's Farmers' Market was made up of mostly female vendors, two were black. There was one black male vendor as well. As mentioned previously, Paul Ovrom from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship attended the farmers' market seminar to promote the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and shared how vendors and farmers' markets can become SNAP EBT certified as well. As a result, more vendors became FMNP certified.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners? MATURA WIC, MATURA Headstart, Creston YMCA, United Health Care, Union County Environmental Health, Gibson Memorial Library, MATURA Head Start, Greater Regional Medical Center, The Bookwurm (locally owned bookstore), Creston: Arts (non-profit art club), Community Partners for Protecting Children, Parents as Teachers, CrossFit, Iowa State Savings Bank, University of Iowa, KSIB radio station, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Department of Inspections and Appeals, area farmers and farmers' market managers.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project? Creston Farmers' Market saw more kids at the market than ever before due to weekly kids' activities that were hosted by community partners. As previously mentioned, between 25-60 kids participated at the Kids' Activity Center each week. As a result, parents who had never been to the farmers' market, were shopping at the market on a consistent basis. Grandparents were also showing up to the market with their grandkids.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant? All of our partners expressed enthusiasm and offered continued support towards the future of Creston's farmers' market. Many of these organizations and agencies are in multiple counties, so we'd like them to volunteer at additional farmers' markets in the future.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? Yes, the University of Iowa Department of Cinematic Arts filmed a six-minute farmers' market promotional video that was well received and watched by many. The video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3qXccfb7o> or on Southern Iowa RC&D's webpage. The film received press in the Southern Iowa RC&D region, but it also received press from the University of Iowa's *Iowa Now*, their online newspaper. The RC&D partnership with the University of Iowa Office of Outreach and Engagement is designed to provide assistance for economic development, arts and culture development, environmental conservation and public health initiatives in communities within the RC&D regions across the state of Iowa. Many who viewed the film, noted its professional quality which we believe speaks to the reputation of Creston Farmers' Market and surrounding markets.
6. Have you publicized any results yet? Yes
 - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? Coordinator composed a brief Power Point presentation, a "snap-shot" of data results from the 2017 farmers' market season and sent it out in PDF form to stakeholders which included farmers, consumers, community members, professionals, Chambers of Commerce, economic development and market managers via email. She shared an extensive and detailed data report with her market managers, her food council and the RC&D board.

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results? (Mentioned above)
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 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).

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
- i. If so, how did you collect the information? Feedback was collected through paper surveys, online surveys and by talking to people in the community.
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Person 1: "My kids loved the kids' activities and going every week! They would do an activity and then buy lemonade. The music was great!" Person 2: "Really liking how much it expanded this year and can't wait to see what new things they will have for next year."

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

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). It is simply not enough to sell just produce at farmers' markets. In order to survive, farmers' markets must be innovative and change with the times, especially when it comes to market promotions. Consumers want to be entertained, they want an 'event-like,' atmosphere, which means hot food for purchase, live music, artisan crafts, wellness demos and most importantly, kids activities. This can be accomplished by forming partnerships with community organizations who volunteer to host weekly kids' activities and wellness demos for free. All of these ideas combined, generate an energetic atmosphere at the market that will keep people coming back. Negative experiences food coordinator dealt with was the challenge of some market managers not being hands-on or even attending their own markets. Food coordinator provided resources for all markets, but sometimes she needed the cooperation of the market managers to pass information along to their vendors and her impression was not all market managers complied or shared the same enthusiasm. Food coordinator also stressed the importance of surveys throughout the two years of the grant, sending emails to market managers on a regular basis reminding them of the importance of surveys. She stressed the closer the relationship managers have with their vendors, the more compliant and comfortable vendors will be when it comes to filling out anonymous surveys. Food coordinator emailed letters to managers that were then supposed to be shared with the vendors on how their markets benefited from the grant and the importance of filling out surveys to measure market growth. She felt some managers didn't relay the information to their vendors. Food coordinator

decided working with fewer farmers' markets would be more beneficial in the future to reap greater results.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: Five farmers markets had an increase in vendors over the two years of this grant. The two farmers' markets that didn't see an increase either maintained the same number of vendors as before or had less vendors than previously. Coordinator believes lack of enthusiasm and leadership from market managers is partially to blame. Some market managers are burned out, but stay on so their markets don't dissolve. Coordinator believes forming an association would benefit these struggling markets that don't have one. She shared publications and resources about forming an association with all market managers. One market was more successful this year because they changed the day and time the market was held. So, if other markets are struggling, a simple logistical change could make all the difference.
- 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: For those who are managing small markets and have limited funds, there are ways to grow markets with limited resources. First, create partnerships with community organizations and set up weekly kids' activities. It's important the activities are weekly because consistency builds results. Secondly, organize weekly wellness demos with wellness organizations, government organizations and businesses like hospitals, public health and grocery stores. Thirdly, don't underestimate the power of an information booth. No matter the size of your market, your market needs a face, a place where people can go take make suggestions, ask questions, get wellness information, fill out surveys and receive monthly activity schedules. The information booth gives them a sense of connection. Display a whiteboard or chalkboard promoting the day's activities and the upcoming week's activities. Take advantage of social media to either promote your market for free or occasionally spend \$5 to promote the market on Facebook to your desired demographic. Promote your market by asking to be a guest on local radio shows. Ask your local newspaper to write a story on your market. Also, write letters to the editor promoting your market. Because promotional funding is limited for most rural markets, encourage vendors to promote themselves on social media. Have them advertise upcoming raffles and giveaways they will be hosting at their vendor booths. Encourage vendors to hand out samples. Consumers love free samples and are more likely to purchase a product if they've been given a free sample, one: because they like what they've tasted and two: because they feel obligated to purchase something since they received something for free. Fourth, try to partner with Chambers of Commerce and economic development for added support. Finally, it's important to make vendors and managers feel connected to resources. Host workshops with experts from your local government agencies like Inspections and Appeals and your local Extension agencies. Also, stay in touch with vendors through emails with weekly updates and tips.

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. Coordinator forged community partnerships that completely changed the

dynamic and energy of the Creston market, not previously seen. By having community partners volunteer for wellness demos and kids' activities, it brought an unprecedented number of people to the market. Most importantly, it brought more kids to the market. Coordinator believes 71% of the markets she worked with will continue to grow and diversify adding more products and activities. She believes community organizations will become more involved adding to the markets' success. She believes market sales will increase by 10% minimum as long as weather cooperates and crops do well. Fruits and vegetables will continue to be the top seller at farmers' markets, but consumers have suggested adding more hand-crafted items like artisan soaps and artisan food products. As coordinator continues to work with MATURA's WIC program as well as other programs, she anticipates a continued increase in the use of WIC farmers' market vouchers and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Vouchers.

- 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? There is a need to get more millennials to shop at their farmers' markets, so coordinator's next project will focus on kids' activities, wellness demos and using social media to connect with more millennials.