

**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, 2015-January 30, 2018
Authorized Representative Name:	Jane Maxwell
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Recipient Organization Name:	Illinois Farmers Market Association
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Creating a Robust Online Direct Marketing Network for Farmers Markets
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-FMPP-0124
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Naperville, Illinois
Total Awarded Budget:	\$90,594.00

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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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: Develop improved and expanded cooperative online platform for sharing farmer and farmers market profiles via multiple websites.

a. Progress Made: New farmers market profile was developed and is now accessible through current partners websites; Illinois Farmers Market Association, (ILFMA), MarketMaker,(MM), Illinois Specialty Growers Prairie Bounty. It is branded ConnectFresh Illinois. Information entered on one site is automatically synced to all other points of entry. It includes an interactive **online registration system and profile management system** that enables farmers market managers to create and maintain their own profiles, manage multiple markets from a single account and link the farmer market profile to farmer/producers also registered in the system. It expanded the existing MarketMaker profile, adding additional fields and searchable details about the features, programs, vendors, and amenities at each farmers market. The new profile is compatible with the USDA farmers market database.

Non-public data collection-an additional section in the farmers market profile registration collects economic data and information about the farmers market that does not show up in their “public profile.” This information can be used in the future to assess economic impacts of the aggregate of farmers markets within Illinois.

b. Impact on Community: Expanding use of single database of farmers markets and producers to improve identification, communication, outreach and education. Since the launch of ConnectFresh, 97 farmer/producers have created a new profile and 192 updated a profile; and 96 farmers markets have created a new profile and 149 farmers markets have updated a profile. MM reports this is a 3.5 times increase in new farmers market profiles, 6.7 times increase in updated farmers market profiles compared to a similar period before the grant began. Similarly, there is a 1.5 times increase in the number of new farmer/producer profiles and 2.0 times increase in farmer/producer profile updates, compared to a similar period before the grant. This is also the only database providing an interface to connect consumers, farmer/producers and farmers markets.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Promote new online platform and sign up farmer/producers and farmers markets through a single database which will be shared with the direct market partner websites.

a. Progress Made: ConnectFresh is available through the Illinois Specialty Growers, Prairie Bounty, ILFMA and MarketMaker websites. Illinois Department of Agriculture has expressed interest in integrating ConnectFresh into their website in the future. Launched the new ILFMA website, (www.ilfma.org), with ConnectFresh as the centerpiece. Farmer/producers and farmers markets are creating and updating profiles. Promoted Connect Fresh at multiple sites and

conferences; Illinois Specialty Growers annual conference 1/16, 1/17 and 1/18. The 2016 and 2017 ILFMA Statewide Conferences, Local Foods Conference 11/17, Regional Local Foods Conference 11/16, USDA Good Greens call 2/17, Valued Added Agriculture Conferences in 7/16 and 11/17. Highlighted the value of ConnectFresh to consumers on radio shows 7/17 and 1/18 in Chicago and at the GoodFood Fest in Chicago, IL in 3/17.

b. Impact on Community: Gap between farmers market listings and the actual number of farmers markets in Illinois is closing. As farmers markets are identified, they can be found by consumers, generating visits and sales. ILFMA can also connect directly with markets, encouraging participation in training, education, acceptance of Link, the Supplemental Nutrition Acceptance Program, in Illinois, and other food insecurity initiatives. The MarketMaker farmers market and farmer/producer database is also integrated into an Android and Apple phone app, "What's in Season App," (<https://whatsinseasonapp.com>). The app is searchable, map able and identifies specialty products in season by region of the state and places to purchase them; farmers markets or direct from the producer. The What's in Season app was launched in April 2017 and was developed with funding from an Illinois Specialty Crop Grant. These two grants work synergistically to promote farmers markets, farmer/producers and specialty crops in Illinois.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Develop and distribute economic impact analysis identifying the effects the new social platform has on farmers, farmers markets and local communities.

a. Progress Made: The Connect Fresh farmers market profile collects non-public data collection-an additional section in the farmers market profile registration collects economic data and information about the farmers market that does not show up in their "public profile." This information can be used in the future to assess economic impacts of the aggregate of farmers markets within Illinois. Creating a non-public data portal that collected farmer market sales and metrics was beyond the funds and time available for this grant.

b. Impact on Community: The non-public data collection was developed as part of the enhanced farmers market profile, however, few markets have completed this section. This is also the only database that connects consumers, farmer/producers and farmers markets. This feature, along with the map able and searchable website and phone app, will make the data more accessible to the consumer, generating sales. Non-traditional partners, such as the Illinois Department of Tourism have expressed interest in having the ConnectFresh data embedded into their website. This is outreach that can be further developed.

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, January 30, 2018). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 0
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 0
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: N/A
- iv. Number of markets expanded: N/A

- v. Number of new markets established: N/A
- vi. Market sales increased by \$N/A and increased by N/A%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
 - a. Percent Increase:

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

From January 2016-January 2018, ConnectFresh saw a 45% increase in the number of farmers markets creating and/or updating their profiles during the grant period. In September 2015 MM had 340 farmers markets listed. Currently, there are 413 farmers markets listed. At the same time, the 2017 USDA farmers market list showed 333 Illinois Farmers Markets and Illinois Department of Agriculture 2017 farmers market list showed 44 markets.

From January 2016-January 2018, 97 new farmer profiles were created and 192 updated. From January 2016-January 2018, 96 new farmer market profiles created and 149 updated. Further analysis of the data shows the distribution of farmers markets either creating a new profile or updated their profile during the grant period; 2016-31 updates; 2017-87 updates; 1/2018-17 updates; Year to date 2018-39 updates. Maintaining an accurate database is also a challenge, as farmers markets operations and contacts change. The project was used to take existing data and verify market contacts, hours, locations, etc. During January 2018, ILFMA reached out directly to markets with outdated profiles in MM. From January 29 to March 2018, 30 profiles have been updated through this outreach. Ten duplicate profiles were eliminated through the data review. The ILFMA website showed 1400 hits on ConnectFresh in from 11/16-10/17 with that number growing to 2889 in 3/18. The source of those hits are not identified.

The ConnectFresh enhanced farmers market profile includes searchable information about programs aimed to serve low income/low access populations such as; WIC Farmers Market Coupons, Senior Farmer Market Coupons, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (SNAP) acceptance, double value incentives, power of produce and other nutrition incentive programs. In Illinois, the number of farmers markets now accepting SNAP is 167, up from 138 in 2015, an increase of 15%.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners? Specialty crop farmers/producers, Farmers Markets, ILFMA members, (ILFMA membership is made up of 30% producers and 70% farmer markets, organizations and friends), MarketMaker, University of Illinois Extension, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Specialty Growers-Prairie Bounty, Illinois Farm Bureau, City of Chicago Farmers Markets, farmers market managers.
- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project? Farmers market managers helped create the enhanced farmers market profile. University of Illinois Extension hosted multiple educational webinars for ILFMA. Illinois Specialty Growers also encourages their members and associates to create or update their profiles, enhancing the number of farmer/producers listed in the database. Illinois Farm Bureau through their local and regional foods platform have expanded the reach of ILFMA to potential users of the database. Illinois Farm Bureau in partnership with MarketMaker sends letters and emails to members to create or update their direct to consumer profiles.
- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant? Farmers Market managers remain key to the long term success of maintaining an up to date database of farmers markets. Direct

communication or face to face opportunities with farmers market managers worked to promote profile creation and updates. Illinois Department of Agriculture is looking to host a ConnectFresh portal and the University of Illinois continues to offer educational support to ConnectFresh and ILFMA. In Illinois, each of these partners has faced staffing changes and budget challenges. However, they remain committed to promoting ConnectFresh moving forward. Illinois Farm Bureau provides a platform for ILFMA to reach their members through their Local Food and Specialty Growers Networks and workshop/education opportunities.

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

Global Food and Ag Network, GFAN, Food MarketMaker, MM, Program is our technical partner and created the expanded farmers market profile, the website widget to embed the shared profile in partner websites, provided technical assistance in the overall project management. Dar Wolnik is the evaluation consultant and Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant has also assisted with evaluation and data updates.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* The final results have not be publicized. Throughout the grant process, ILFMA and MM shared the project and interim results at meetings, workshops, conferences and in the media.

- 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?

- i. If so, how did you collect the information? ILFMA collected information from stakeholders in a variety of ways; survey, phone interviews, and face-to-face discussion with farmers market managers.

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

Face-to-face discussion. ILFMA received input into creating the expanded farmers market profile from market managers, looking at the USDA profile and working to create a more robust profile, focused on communicating with markets and promoting farmers markets amenities and features. Additionally, once the enhanced farmers market profile was created, farmers market managers were interviewed as they created their profiles at trade shows. The final profile was released in April 2017. Everyone agreed with the need for ConnectFresh and the searchable data it will provide.

Survey. ILFMA created an online survey in August 2017 for market leaders to share their experiences with MarketMaker. Nineteen markets responded and indicated that MM had not reduced the number of sites that they maintained on behalf of their market. Most were willing to use it in the future. As a result of the low response rate, more detailed responses were sought using email and phone.

Using the list of markets who either opened or updated their ConnectFresh and/or MarketMaker profile in 2017 (42), 8 markets were selected for either an in-person or phone interview. The markets were chosen to get a representative sample of Illinois markets (demographics and location). The market managers were asked several questions regarding ConnectFresh including, why did they sign up, what are the benefits, how did they use it, and their plans for future use. The interview also included a couple of questions regarding ILFMA.

Many technology updates were made for easier use and expansion to include smartphone and tablet interfaces. Markets are willing to use Connect Fresh but need some tutorials and support to know when to update their listing and how to use it. There was and is a bit of confusion as to the relationship between Connect Fresh and MarketMaker. Market managers reported a reluctance to supply metrics on their nutrition incentive programs in the non-public part of the farmers market profile. A few markets used it to find vendors, but expect that consumers will use it to find markets.

Following the ConnectFresh interviews, we reviewed the ILFMA list of verified farmers markets (191) and compared it to the current list of farmers markets (400) in Illinois MarketMaker. We shared our findings with MarketMaker staff regarding duplicates, needed updates, and markets that needed to be added to ConnectFresh. In our review, we found that forty-nine markets were not listed in ConnectFresh and sent personalized emails to each of these markets asking them to register their markets. As a result of this outreach, 30 markets registered in

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: X
- ii. Did the project generate any income?
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

ILFMA received the Farm Credit, National Food MarketMaker, MarketMaker 2017 Innovation Award for “ConnectFresh Illinois, A Robust Online Direct Marketing Network for Farmers markets,” in November 2017. ILFMA received a cash award of \$6,000 to support ConnectFresh Illinois moving forward after the grant period.

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).

Technology development takes time and resources. The grant outlines a three month window for developing the expanded farmers market profile and the ILFMA website. These were unrealistic time frames. The final expanded farmers market profile was released in April 2017. Registrations were accepted during the development time, however, the majority of profiles were created in 2017-2018. Many profiles are not complete, not taking full advantage of the ConnectFresh expanded profile and the opportunity to search amenities. The ILFMA website features ConnectFresh as the

cornerstone and was not fully ready until June 2017 as the technology for the shared profile needed further updates for seamless operation.

The implementation phase was not fully ready until late 2017, not the second quarter of 2016.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: Goal 3 was unrealistic within this timeframe and budget. Aggregated data can be achieved in the next phase by integrating with already developed databases of USDA and the Farmers Market Coalition, FMC, if funding can be secured.
- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project: The project was initiated by the founder of ILFMA, who left ILFMA as the grant was initiated. There was a learning curve with the transition in leadership.
- iv. Stakeholder feedback is key and will continue to be solicited as the project moves forward. The most successful way to get stakeholder engagement is face to face, at a conference or trade show, or through personalized contact, phone or email. Mass email or communication reaches some stakeholders, however, a significant response rate was noted with personalized outreach.
- v. Farmers market managers were reluctant to share data and metrics about their markets. Further training is needed to ensure market managers are comfortable with how the data will be used and aggregated to ensure use of the private data collection feature.

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.
All of ILFMA's efforts to promote ConnectFresh and farmers markets will translate into increased market visits and sales.
ILFMA is committed to continuing to promote ConnectFresh and the benefits of a comprehensive database of producer/farmers and farmers markets. Next steps will include aggressive marketing, presentations and outreach to ensure the database is up to date as the 2018 season. ILFMA has secured a market, willing to serve as a pilot, promoting ConnectFresh with its customers and vendors in the 2018 season. The lessons learned will give further feedback for promoting ConnectFresh and farmers markets in Illinois.
- 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 participation by markets and producers ILFMA will continue to promote and build ConnectFresh.
ILFMA will provide tutorials and training for market managers.
Promotion will include; videos and social media blasts, presentations at workshops and conferences. Emphasis will be on grassroots efforts for promotion. Email and newsletter blasts are less effective than face to face or personalized outreach.

ILFMA will create infographics, sheets, postcards, poster for farmers market managers to download distribute to their vendors and engage their customers.

Combine the further promotion of ConnectFresh with the promotion of the “What’s in Season” phone app, which is a consumer friendly interface.

Create an ILFMA splash page which connects and ILFMA user to MM with simple instructions and information about ConnectFresh and the MM database to relieve confusion.

Continue to find partners to host the shared portal for ConnectFresh; such as Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Tourism.

Look to secure funding that allows further integration of the ConnectFresh database with technology focused on farmers markets. ILFMA will secure partnerships with organizations listing farmers markets in Illinois and partners providing technology to collect farmers market metrics and data. This will give an accurate picture of the impact of farmers markets through data about sales, visits, vendors, etc.