

**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 – March 31, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Brian Schalk
Authorized Representative Phone:	956-230-6902
Authorized Representative Email:	theranch@vtxb.com
Recipient Organization Name:	Grace Heritage Ranch, LLC
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Grace Heritage Ranch, LLC, Outreach Training for 2015 FMPP
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-FMPP-TX-0059
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Lyford, TX
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,955

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.

i. Goal/Objective 1: Provide outreach and training to reach the general public and school students with the message of the health and community benefits of locally grown produce and where they can find it, thereby increasing the consumption of locally produced agricultural products.

a. Progress Made: Within three weeks of the grant period starting, local heavy rains resulted in this area being declared a state and federal disaster area. Because of that, it was almost six months into the grant when we were finally able to begin our outreach. However, that didn't “dampen” our spirits. Once started, we hit the ground running and haven't stopped since!

In this 18 month reporting period, we reached out to approximately 2,000 people at our public and private tours with the message of health and locally grown produce. Guests took with them the flyers we previously created that list the many farmer's markets as well as the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups in this area. Besides those 2,000 people, we were also able to pass out those same flyers to approximately 1,000 others at a 2016 fall event we hosted for 6 weekends. All were appreciative, and many were unaware of the farmer's markets and CSAs in this area.

b. Impact on Community: Through our outreach, we have encouraged others to garden, thus producing their own healthy and nutritious fruits and vegetables. The excitement seen in children's eyes as they plant seeds in our demonstration garden is matchless. We can imagine them going home after school and telling their parents what they did, and hopefully encouraging them too.

Guests on our tours have seen first-hand the amount of produce one vine plant can produce and how that, multiplied just a little, can have a positive impact on a community.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Promote public awareness and gain support for the local agricultural producers at farmer's markets and community supported agriculture programs in our area, thereby benefiting numerous local producers and farm vendors.

a. Progress Made: Through funds received through this grant, we have been able to implement a variety of advertising channels that were used to expose people to the farmer's markets and community supported agriculture programs. We ran TV commercials that included sign language interpretation, advertised on 3 radio stations, and incorporated a direct mail campaign with 6”x11” full color postcards. Set up and in place for 3 months, we displayed a large 14' x 48' billboard showing our support for the Valley's farmer's markets. We took advantage of technology and targeted our advertising to people who

searched Google for certain pre-chosen words (Google AdWords) and people who visited certain pre-chosen locations (Geofencing). In both instances, people would receive ads on their phones, tablets, or computers that would direct them to our website to learn what we have to offer them in promotion of farmer's markets and CSAs. In fact, we dedicated a whole section of our site to a listing of the markets in our area. Along with that, we noted which individual producers will have their products available at each of the farmer's markets. The list includes business names, their products for sale, and email, website, and social media contact information.

We promote the local farmer's markets on our Facebook page which has approximately 2,500 followers. Through our 2016 fall festival, we made over 1,000 people aware of the markets and CSAs by giving them flyers we made showing the times and locations of all markets and contact information for the CSAs. At that same event, the attendees were again marketed to about farmer's markets through ads we ran during music played. The same flyers were distributed to guests taking our homestead tours.

b. Impact on Community: We ran our TV commercials at times when the price for a 30 second spot was economical, yet also had good viewership. An example of a time we chose and viewership numbers include one slot during the noon news would be seen by 39,000 viewers.

Those who viewed our website and Facebook page through Google Adwords and Geofencing became aware of the farmer's market resources made available to them. As one example, in November 2016, over 250,000 ads were displayed through AdWords on peoples' electronic devices and 30,000 were displayed through Geofencing.

Our billboard was displayed for three months. Per statistics from the billboard company representative, in the location we chose, the sign would have a weekly impression rate of 212,596.

From the flyers that were distributed on our tours, guests appreciated and responded positively to having a succinct list of the farmer's markets, locations, and times, as well as the CSAs in this area. Our fall festival created a fun atmosphere to further promote markets and CSAs.

- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Expose participants to agricultural career options and direct producer-to-consumer opportunities and assist with development / creation of their own agricultural products, and increase new market opportunities through a system of training, networking, and mentorship.

- a. Progress Made: Agriculture career options are discussed as part of something unexpected but new and exciting that happened since the inception of the grant. Through our current venue, we are able to help Boy Scouts earn their Animal Science Badge, and Girl Scouts earn their Animal Helper and Animal Habitat Merit Badges. In these capacities, we expose the scouts to agricultural career options as part of the curriculums. In addition, career opportunities are also discussed on our school group tours.

By going through in-depth discussions of our own gardening techniques, guests learn, and can later apply, these methods in their own adventures and create their own agricultural products for their own use or taking to sell at a local farmer's market. Their trial-and-error stage is lessened by learning from our mistakes.

We have had the tremendous opportunity to train and be mentors to volunteers who seek learning occasions at Grace Heritage Ranch. Not only do they get to learn about things in the scope of this grant, but also outside its scope. They learn sheep shearing, woodworking, and general ranch maintenance. But in the scope of the grant, they leave here able to apply skills of gardening to include ground preparation, drip irrigation system maintenance, and planting. They take these skills, apply them in their own situations, and would be able to produce products to sell at farmer's markets.

- b. Impact on Community: Our impact is becoming larger as our volunteers apply what they learn in their own lives. The teaching we give to Boy and Girl Scouts is spreading throughout our communities in a 60 mile radius as more and more scout troops contact us for the training.

- iv. Goal/Objective 4: Influence families and the next generation by instructing school children about where food comes from, how it is produced, wise food choices, and agricultural career opportunities.

- a. Progress Made: We have a lot of fun with our educational field trips! Take the classroom outdoors! We gave all students the opportunity to milk a goat and see first-hand where milk comes from. Through various prop items purchased, they learned about making wise food choices. They also saw and learned about our gardening techniques such as the methods we use for naturally controlling weeds, till-free procedures to improve the biology of the soil, and irrigation applications to conserve water and make watering more efficient.

- b. Impact on Community: Throughout this reporting period, we were able to reach approximately 1,200 school students through about 20 tours.

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: 6
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 2
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 4
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 8
 - v. Number of new markets established: 1 (seasonally)
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. Not Applicable
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 62

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? Grace Heritage Ranch is located in Willacy County, Texas. According to recent statistics, Willacy County ranks number 12 among the lowest per capita income counties in the United States. Located just two counties away is Starr County, which ranks number 3. We have continually reached out to the approximately 90 Low Income and Low Access locations near our area as defined in the Food Access Research Atlas.

We have reached out to a new area that included mentally impaired adults. Several groups from different establishments have come out to our education center for tours and learning.

We have also seen very young children in daycares and special needs school groups at our venue to learn basics about fruits, vegetables, and gardening.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners? Our community partners include the Food Bank of the RGV, the Brownsville Wellness Coalition, Subtropical Organic Agriculture Resource (SOAR) partnership, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and seven of the area farmer's markets. Besides them, we have received sponsorship support from Rainbow Play Systems and the local companies of Holiday Inn Express, McCoy's Building Supply, Valley Telephone, Sign Depot, and AEP Electricity.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project? These community partners and sponsors have been wonderful for helping to advance the goals of this grant. The community partners help us inform the public of our educational teaching tours offered to the general public and private groups. These tours are the launching pad for us fulfilling the goals and objectives of this grant.

The sponsors listed have helped us create a new venue in 2016. In the fall of 2016 we launched our Autumn Adventure of 6 weekends of fall activities to include hayrides, a pumpkin patch, and self-guided ranch tours. However, this also opened up the opportunity to provide a new location for farmer's market vendors. While initial commitment was low, as this event becomes more established, we expect vendors will see this as another opportunity.

- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant? These are very committed partners and sponsors. The community partners will continue to help support in advertising for us and letting others know how we can help them. The electricity provided to our new venue will be made available to farmer's market vendors should they decide to set up again in the fall of 2017.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? We have used contractors. One helped us in reinforcing an all-weather access road to our teaching facility, resulting in more reliable access by vehicles and school buses alike. Without this, getting to our facility would have been hampered in times of an abundance of rain. Another contractor set up electricity in the teaching facility. This allowed us to set up a projector and screen for further teaching opportunities. This is now where we also do our Boy Scout Animal Science Merit Badge instruction. This same contractor set up electricity in our 2016 Autumn Adventure area.

We also hired four independent contractors to help during our fall Autumn Adventure. One in particular was responsible for passing out flyers to our guests. These are the flyers we created that list the farmer's market and CSA's in our area. This contractor was invaluable in letting our guests know about these opportunities.

One other contractor was used for sign language interpretation. This contractor was shown interpreting in a small box at the bottom of our TV commercial.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes
- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? Verbally.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? We spoke to the farmer's market vendors and our community partners informing them of our great success in being able to reach out to people in a 60 mile radius to further the goals and objectives of this grant. We were encouraged that people came from even an hour away to hear the message we had to give. We let them know that over the last 18 months, 3,000 people were informed of the farmer's markets and CSAs in this area. We reached out to approximately 20 schools.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 13

*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? Verbal and written.
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Comments were positive and encouraged us to continue. They were anticipatory of positive impact regardless of the slow start due to weather setbacks. Visitors have commented that we are the only ones compiling, into one source, the local producer information (farmer's markets and CSA groups) for the Valley. Below are comments taken directly from our Facebook page.
 - * I want my son to learn what you are doing!
 - * Can't wait til we can return.

- * Wonderful place! Staff is very friendly and knowledgeable. We enjoyed ourselves very much and got to have all of our questions about the animals and plants answered. We will be returning.
- * We absolutely loved it! Such a great place for the whole family. We went to the 2016 Autumn Adventure and we're dying to go back for the regular tour to learn more about all the animals and life on the ranch. Grace Heritage is mother tested and kid approved!
- * Amazing place! Family & staff are very friendly & knowledgeable of everything :) I can't wait to go back!
- * We had a great time! It was a very nice experience for the whole family. We have 4 kids ages 16, 14, 12, 7 and they all had fun! We will definitely be back!
- * My girls loved it. We spent nearly 4 hours there and they still were not ready to leave.
- * Everyone was so nice and knowledgeable. It was great seeing a family working together and sharing their knowledge. Already planning to go back again.
- * Friendly, fun, interactive and right before we left we were asked "What can we change to make it better?" that speaks volumes. Will be back.
- * Great place and great people too! Everyone is very knowledgeable, friendly, and courteous. My family and I loved it, we are absolutely coming back hopefully with my girls' GS troop. I highly recommend this amazing place to everyone, it is well worth the drive. My girls absolutely fell in love with Liberty, Justice, and Kaa. Kuddos to all the great staff, many blessings!

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? Yes
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? \$10,946. We were very encouraged to see the response to the program. We used monies to develop and improve our outreach program itself and to start a new venue for farmer's market vendors.

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). This has been a very important and rewarding experience for us. One of our greatest challenges has been the weather. Federal disaster-sized flooding and an extremely hot summer caused some project delays and time lost due to closures. Those are things we can't control, so we used that down-time to work "on" the project, not just "in" the project. In other words, we had time for further thoughts, planning, looking above from a big perspective, and then implementing when able.

Much of our budget was allocated towards advertising. We tried many types with many price structures. From TV, radio, billboard, digital ads, car magnets, flyers, and social media, to name a few, we discovered that social media was the best resource for the money invested. It is good to have a presence in many areas, but we adjusted some of the money to focus more on social media as the project progressed.

An unanticipated challenge we had to face was the attitude and mindset of this region. Our operation is based in a very economically depressed area, and trying to promote careers requiring hard work and long hours is a hard sell. Even encouraging the discipline to change cooking and eating habits has not been easy. Some people are not aware of all the resources available or are simply in need of the proper training and a source of agricultural information and education. One person in our area wanted to run 50 head of cattle on 5 acres of land! We can and do provide education, however the reality is that many can be content to sit back and live on a welfare check, following the path of least resistance.

Unfortunately, this attitude is also generational being learned by the children. Our daughter-in-law was raised in this area having personal knowledge of friends who were expected by their families to drop out of school and have children to increase the family's government welfare "income". We have therefore placed much of our focus on reaching the children.

Our challenge is not one that will be overcome simply by the advertising to make people aware of the availability of good food and economic opportunities or to supply the training they need to succeed in an agricultural business. We must overcome the routine thoughts, habits, and life-long patterns. We must communicate that the economic opportunities and pride of accomplishment are worth the hard work and difficulties. The benefit to their health is worth extra time, cost, and care in meal preparation. The example they set for a better life for their children is worth the effort to make these changes.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: The four Goals/Objectives of this grant were met. One must constantly review them and the application narrative to maintain a good focus and keep thoughts organized. Take note of new ideas (goals/objectives) that will come up as work in the grant progresses, and ascertain if it is feasible to incorporate those as well. In our case, we were able to create a whole new venue for farmer's market vendors that wasn't anticipated at the start of the grant period.
- 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 grant administrator had to maintain contact with the farmer's market owners. In our area of responsibility, there are 8 markets. Communication with the owners should start early and continue regularly. Some owners were willing to work with the grant administrator, and it appeared others saw the administrator as some type of competition. In actuality, the grant administrator was just trying to promote the market, nothing further. The grant administrator should get to know the specific vendors at each market and develop rapport. As with many things, it comes down to communication. Work with those who want to, and maintain contact, but less, with those who don't.

This administrator also is the one who made contact with schools to set up field trips. Good communication skills and being able to interact well and professionally with others is a must.

Furthermore, this administrator also was the lead presenter in all tours. Good public speaking skills helps to validate your points. This administrator was a member of a local Toastmasters Club (learning leadership and public speaking skills) for a brief period during this grant period.

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 work started with this project will continue. Motivated workers and good feedback make it easy to carry on. It is the goal of every farmer's market to not just stay stagnant with their clientele, but to grow! It's the passion of market owners and vendors to get their products to the public. We will continue our community impact and outreach to the general public and school groups to teach people where to obtain fruits and vegetables that are grown in a healthier, organic manner and promote the markets as sources of fresh, healthy, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and value-added products.

Many communities here have started community gardens. We will continue to educate the public on cultivating produce for personal use and for direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

The schools all over our communities teach children about good eating habits. Our work will continue to help increase the understanding of nutrition and local food production by our region's youth.

All in all, our hope is that all these things will create a synergistic effect on the areas farmer's markets and CSA groups to help boost their attendance and ultimately sales. The communities will be healthier by heeding many of the things we share with them in our agritourism teaching venue. We will provide more jobs to the community during our 2017 Autumn Adventure and possibly a new venue to farmer's market vendors to sell their goods.

- 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?

Future activities involve seeking more volunteers by making more people aware of our volunteer training programs. This is where people really get hands-on experience with food production and skills they can take back home with them. Working with us further encourages them to try cultivating their own produce or taking it to the next level of creating for themselves a direct producer-to-consumer opportunity.

To advance the goals of this project we would like to add more hands-on activities and demonstration models. We would like to incorporate a visual of a live honeybee hive to further enhance our education on honeybees.

We believe the key to a lot of our successes was advertising used to attract people to our venue which then served as the platform for other goals/objectives of this project.

- END -