

**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](mailto: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.

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2015-September 29, 2017
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Sarah Nolan
<b>Authorized Representative Phone:</b>	626-484-5223
<b>Authorized Representative Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:sarah@theabundanttable.org">sarah@theabundanttable.org</a>
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	The Abundant Table
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	<i>Growing New Markets for Local Farmers in Low Access Communities</i>
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-FMPPCA-0146
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2015
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Oxnard, CA; Ventura, CA; Santa Paula, CA
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$99,997

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: Nicole Janelle Email: [nicole@theabundanttable.org](mailto:nicole@theabundanttable.org); Phone: 310-467-4525

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 05810287. 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

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: Make infrastructure enhancements to improve operations that will increase consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables in low-access and low-income communities of color.*

a. Progress Made:

- Expanded network of participating growers from three (3) to thirteen (13). This expansion allows for increased diversity in most of our sales avenues. Seven (7) of the growers we use on a regular basis, while the other six (6) are seasonal.
- Access to first ever cooling unit. This allowed us the ability to aggregate produce from more growers with increased efficiencies and storage capacity. Previously, we were unable to aggregate produce with a short shelf life due to lack of cooling and storage.
- Leased larger capacity delivery van, increasing the amount of product able to our CSA, Farm Pop-Up Stands, Farm to School and Farm Store sales. Established our CSA program as the first in Ventura County to accept EBT. Although still navigating the complexities of using EBT through the CSA /Farm Stand model, we are continuing to promote and highlight this opportunity throughout the community.
- Took over the management of a roadside farm adjacent to our growing land in July 2017. Our grower network and local community benefit from this additional sales outlet. It also serves as an entry point for our developing education center. Developed a partnership with our local Farm to School Collaborative, receiving funding by the local University of California Extension program to pilot a project focused on the light processing a carrots and lettuce. We have discovered that schools (specifically Title 1) purchase more shredded, coined and stick carrots and chopped lettuce than whole.

b. Impact on Community:

This project has had significant impact on The Abundant Table's ability work with multiple growers and expand market opportunities.

- **Grower Impact:** From October 2015 through September 2017, we have increased sales from other growers from \$6,300 to over \$13,500 (approx.. 210%). Based on projections for 2017-2018, we anticipate that to increase another 50% to almost \$20,000 in purchases from local growers.
- **Consumer Impact:** From October 2015 through September 2017 our overall sales to schools, Farmer Markets, CSA and Farm Stands grew from \$115,000 to \$135,000 (approximately 18%). We also experienced 143 new CSA member sign ups over that period. However, overall CSA

membership participation remained steady at approximately 250 deliveries because of regular attrition due to members moving, leaving CSA, traveling etc. Through the addition of accepting EBT at our Pop-Up Stands, CSA and Farm Store, along with market match dollars from a private foundation contribution, we were able to expand access to affordably priced fruits and vegetables to low income and low access communities. However, our biggest impact regarding creating access was through the addition of sales to new school districts. Since 2015, we have added three new school districts increasing our annual sales to schools (all that have Title I schools) by approximately \$15,000 a year with the plan to increase sales with the introduction of lightly processed produce.

ii. *Goal/Objective 2: Develop new marketing and promotional materials for the monolingual Spanish speaking and English learning communities of color for outreach and expansion in schools, faith-based and farmworker communities.*

a. Progress Made:

- We have developed high-quality fliers and postings that were placed throughout the community. Developed English and Spanish language social media outlets (facebook/Instagram). We updated our website. Printed banners at our CSA locations and Farm Store, as well as, grew our partnerships with local organizations to promote our different sales channels and create new opportunities.
- One of our most exciting areas of progress is the development of our bilingual Farmer-in-the-Classroom program that we offer at the schools. In partnership with our Director of Farm Education, we updated all our Farmer-in-the Classroom materials to be in Spanish and English. Our Farm Manager now joins with our Farm Educators to offer this program in both languages at schools where a large number of the students are Spanish as a first language or are in dual immersion classes.
- We ordered canvas bags, magnets and other swag and have been giving them away to CSA customers, using them as an incentive for purchasing of produce (i.e. by \$x and receive a free bag, use your EBT and get a free bag) and giving them to participants who attend our different get to know the farm/farmer events.

b. Impact on Community:

- The marketing of the CSA, Farm Store and Pop-Up stands has increased awareness of The Abundant Table and the other growers we work with in the community. This has specifically benefitted our multi-farmer CSA program and Farm Store. Although incremental, we have seen a steady upward trend of new CSA sign ups. Although, this is our first year managing the Farm Stand, based on financials from the former manager, we have steadily seen sales trend up, especially in months with traditionally average lower attendance. Not only are our sales impacted, but other growers are reaching out to see if they can work with us or are at least familiar with The Abundant Table and our project, which would not have been the case three years ago.

- Our various marketing avenues also created new partnerships with local organizations (see example reported in Goal/Objective 3).
  - The development of our bilingual Farmer-in-the-Classroom has already reached over 200 students and we are just at the beginning of our annual program offering. Through feedback from students and teachers, we are seeing many students have a more engaged connection with our presentation about agriculture and eating fresh fruits and vegetables, this connection turns into more participation in the school salad bar program where students are excited to eat lettuce, carrots and other items grown by farmers they know.
- iii. *Goal/Objective 3: Pilot a New School Pop-up farm stand at Title I schools in partnership with the Ventura County Farm to School Collaborative.*
- a. Progress Made:
- The participation in our Farm Stands at the schools started off very strong and then began to decline in the first half of 2017, this put a burden financially on our ability to develop a program that has a significant impact on the community and covers costs. Since our last report, we decide to partner with Ventura County of Public Health (VCPH) to sustain and expand our Pop-Up Stand program. This relationship developed out of the success of our marketing campaigns which raised our profile with VCPH. Instead of hosting the Pop-Up stands ourselves, we will now be working with VCPH to connect them with the schools we are working with. They will host the pop-up stands and other events at the schools, as well as, local Boys and Girls Clubs. The Abundant Table will provide the produce for these events, with the produce being purchased by VCPH.
  - We continue to work with students from Santa Paula High School (SPHS) to host a monthly farm stand at their community “Cruise Night.” Through this presence at SPHS and in the City, we partnered with students to convince the City Council to begin the process of developing a city-wide Farmer’s Market.
- b. Impact on Community:
- Through our work with the school districts, we are able to help expand both our own reach to students and families in low access/resourced communities, as well as, partner with local organizations to grow the impact. Working with VCPH will significantly increase the amount of schools reached from the three schools we were able to work with to several schools in every district, as well as, after school programs.
  - The Abundant Table also served as an anchor with our Farm Stand in Santa Paula, to help build a more comprehensive farmer’s market offering in the area. Through this work, more community members are becoming engaged in creating solutions for their own community in regards to food access and supporting local growers.
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: 2 Full-time, 7 Part-time

- ii. Number of jobs retained: 1 Full-time, 5 Part-time
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 4 – added processing and partner farms (Baby Root, Carranza, King and King Ranch) increased staff
- iv. Number of markets expanded: Three – CSA and Farm to School sales
- v. Number of new markets established: Four – Roadside Farm Store, Farmers Market, Farm to Retail, two new pop up stands.
- vi. Market sales increased by approx. \$20,000 an increase of 18%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 13
  - 1. Baby Root Farm, Camarillo
  - 2. McGrath Family Farm, Camarillo
  - 3. Milliken Farms, Goleta
  - 4. King and King Ranch, Fillmore
  - 5. Wallace Ranch, Ventura
  - 6. Faulkner Farms, Santa Paula
  - 7. Givens Farms, Goleta
  - 8. Tutti Frutti Farms, Lompoc
  - 9. Carranza Farms, Camarillo
  - 10. Microbial Solutions, Camarillo
  - 11. Heritage Heirlooms, Camarillo
  - 12. Salad Bar Farms, Ventura
  - 13. Ken Lee Farms, Reedley

Percent Increase: approx...300%

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, we have expanded our customer base in low-access and low-income communities and in predominantly Spanish speaking communities across Ventura County, but concentrated in Port Hueneme, Santa Paula and Oxnard. We accomplished this by physically being present in these communities -- at their schools, their churches and their community events and by working in collaboration with other non-profits, organizations, and school districts.
- We have increased our Farm to School sales at school districts that serve low income/low access, with three new school districts purchasing produce or being connected to growers that we work with.
- By opening/taking over the management of our Roadside Farm Store, we now attract tourists from Los Angeles who are driving through our town, as well as, serving as a retail option for locals (including farm workers who work in nearby fields).

Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners? Ventura County Farm to School Collaborative (VCFSC), Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation, local churches, Ventura Unified School district, El Rio Unified School District, Oxnard Unified School District, CAUSE,

MICOP, Oxnard Housing Authority, and Santa Paula High School Student group SESPEA, Santa Paula School District, Santa Paula City Council, McGrath Family Farms, King & King, Food Forward and Food Share. Mike Roberts of Baby Root Farms, Salad Bar Farms, Economic Development Collaborative of Ventura County (EDCVC), Ventura County Public Health (VCPH), Loa Com Consulting, University of California Cooperative Extension, Hansen Agricultural Resource and Education Center (HAREC), Scratch Foods

- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?
  - We continue to partner closely with VCFSC to grow our relationship and potential sales capacity at local schools, as well as, educational opportunities.
  - We are also working closely with McGrath Family Farm, Baby Root Farms and EDCVC to develop a pilot project connection our aggregation work with lightly processed carrots and other vegetables for school districts and retail markets. This is growing our capacity to incorporate more farmers and connect with more buyers. Baby Roots Farm has played an essential role connecting new vendors to the project, as well as, providing produce.
  - The different school districts listed been essential partners in navigating procurement issues, educational opportunities and on-site sales possibilities.
- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?
  - We will continue to work with all our partners to explore the what is working and what we need to change. UC Cooperative Extension and HAREC have been interested in the growth and direction of this project and have invested in the addition of the processing portion.
  - We will continue to work with EDCVC, VCFSC and McGrath Family Farm to build out an aggregation and processing center.
  - Loa Com Consulting is working with us to develop stakeholder meetings to codified the work of this project and get more people engaged in supporting it.
  - VCPH will work with us to expand and sustain the Pop-Up Farm Stands past the project deadline.
  - We are in conversation with CAUSE, SESPEA and Santa Paula City Council around starting a Farmer's Market in Santa Paula, expanding our current offerings at the monthly Farm Stand.

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

6. Have you publicized any results yet?\*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? We have publicized the work we are doing through Facebook, CSA Newsletter (which goes to over 500 current and former members, Annual Appeal (over 2,000 on list), Farm Tours and Presentations
- ii. To whom did you publicize the results? General public through facebook, stakeholders and customers through facebook and newsletters, local agricultural community and general public through presentations
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

Directly through email ~250-500 engaged readers  
Social media probably ~ 500 Presentations/tours  
~ 75

\*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?
    - Individual conversations and meetings with partners.
    - Through our monthly VC Farm to School Collaborative meetings.
    - We will also hold a stakeholder meeting specifically regarding the growth and ongoing development of adding processing to our aggregation hub in early January, as well as, partnering with more growers and potential distributors. This meeting was to happen in December, prior to writing this report, however the massive Thomas Fire that broke out in Ventura County put a pause on almost all work happening in December.
  - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
    - We have received a lot of good, positive feedback and a desire for more farm stands at current and new school sites. Continued requests for partnerships.
    - There is significant excitement about the growth of a Food Hub with processing. We have also received feedback from many low income community members that our produce is still too expensive and not within their budget.
    - Food Services Directors have also expressed concern about costs and new procurement rules that are vague, which may become a barrier to future purchases.
  
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?
    - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? No
  
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).
    - a. The use of social media, email, texts and in person advertising was more impactful than fliers. It also reduced the amount of funds we needed to spend on printed material.
    - b. Working with multiple growers to provide produce to the schools allowed us to consistently meet the school's orders without expecting anyone grower to

consistently have the needed product all the time. This was a win for both the schools and the growers.

- c. The regular Pop-Up Farm Stands at the school districts were the most difficult piece of the project to get off the ground. They started off with great interest but over time, participation dwindled, although the process to launch stands each time was the same. This eventually became a drain on resources and would clearly not be sustainable over the long term. We identified to changes that we believe will help us reach a better result in the future:
    - i. Hold farm stands during special events at the school or in the community, such as Back to School Night, "Cruise Night", etc. We have experienced these events to be more successful in regards to participation. This also creates a relationship to the families and an anticipation for when we are back at the school again.
    - ii. Partner with local organizations already providing services in the community, such as CAUSE and VCPH. By providing these organizations the produce to sale at their events or to host a farm stand themselves, cuts back on our personnel costs and time, which are already very limited.
  - d. Over the course of the project, several Food Service Directors were concerned about the price of the product, as well as, challenges they face with procurement rules and how they apply to purchasing from local growers. One school eventually decided to no longer purchase for the time being, primarily due concerns around procurement practices and needed our small growers to go through a more competitive bid process, which would likely discount them from being a vendor. Seeing this issue on the horizon, the work we are doing to more formally develop a Food Hub will attempt to address these concerns by leveraging infrastructure and shared buying to be more competitive in the bid process, without hurting the growers bottom line.
  - e. Another issue that arose with the school districts, was the need for more processed produce (especially carrots). This feedback has encouraged us to pilot a processing project that will feed into the developing Food Hub and address the need for more processed produce.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
    - a. We never ended up creating MOUs or purchase agreements with the growers. It ended up becoming more burdensome to coordinate. The personal relationship and weekly text messages to coordinate purchases and sales ended up being the most efficient and effective process. As we grow, we will likely add this more formal component to protect everyone, but in this pilot phase, we found this to be the best approach.
    - b. As mentioned above, the Pop Up Farm stand at the school did not meet the hopes we had for a more consistent and long term presence at the schools that made sense economically. Our attempt to address this issue is noted in lessons learned (setting up at special events and partnering with local organizations to create more access through their existing programs).
  - 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:

- a. Focusing on the end goal of increasing grower participation and consumer access allowed us to be flexible in our methods and evaluate what strategies and methods would be most effective in meeting our goal. Once we realized that the weekly/monthly Pop-Up Farm stand method we were using wasn't going to be the most successful method in our context we allowed for space to experiment with other strategies that would help us meet our goal (event based Pop-Up Stands, increase school participation, partner with local orgs, etc).
- b. We had significant success identifying and bringing on new growers. More than I imagined. We identified both growers who were well established but small medium with similar values, as well as, entry level farmers. This mix of growing experience allowed us to support new growers financially, while having a consistent supply available through more stable growers if the new growers were unable to meet orders.
- c. Our most successful Pop-Up Stand at "Cruise Night," was likely most successful because we had a long history working with the high school and the students were our most effective outreach and marketing tool. They were invested in the Farm Stand and then invited their community to be invested.

#### 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.
  - a. As mentioned above, our Pop-Up Stand portion of this project will now move into a partnership with Ventura County of Public Health. They will lead the coordinating, organizing and marketing, while we will work with our grower network to provide the produce.
  - b. We will be working with community stakeholders we have gathered due to the process and results of this project to codify our aggregation hub and incorporate light processing with the purpose of increasing potential sales avenues. Through this project, we recognized the importance of incorporating lightly processed vegetables into our offerings and have been able to secure financial investment and social capital to continue and expand this work.
  - c. The development and expansion of this processing and aggregation hub will work to layer in already existing infrastructure and resources with new opportunities and market shares. Our results from this project, in conjunction with studies from our local economic development organization, highlight the need for processing facilities that meet the needs of different growers and buyers. We expect what is growing out of this project will address some of the barriers we experienced trying to increase market access to low income communities through the school salad bar programs.
  - d. We anticipate adding at least one new full time position, expanding a part-time position to full time and adding a part-time position with the growth of our processing and aggregation hub.
  - e. As noted earlier, we project that we will increase purchase of product from other growers another by almost \$10,000 or 50%. We plan to add at least five (5) more growers to our list of 13. Currently, we are on track to increase overall

sales by about \$18,000 in 2018, which is about 14% (a conservative estimate). This increase is in addition to our most recent increase in sales of \$20,000 (18%) mentioned in section 2 on page 4.

- f. The Abundant Table plans to incubate the Food Hub, but imagines that it will eventually roll off of the organization and become a community owned or cooperative project with non-profit and for-profit partnerships.
  - g. Expand our agricultural literacy and nutrition education through the development of Farm Education Center connected to our Roadside Farm Store and Food Hub. Our hope is to see each of these pieces work together to support one another like an eco-system, both financially and socially.
- 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?
- a. If we had the time and ability to delve into deeper research and understanding of some of the issues that arose during this project two stand out:
    - 1. *Creating a more efficient and effective EBT system for non-brick and mortar retail users.* The use of the EBT system was often difficult to incorporate into our mobile markets. We didn't always have access to the internet or power outlets needed. Our particular machine continued to have issues over the course of the project and we often reverted to using the paper version to process. We also were unable to sign up our CSA members for more than two weeks with the box and had a hard time coordinating the in person processes need to swipe their card. Almost all our CSA subscriptions are processed online.
    - 2. *Working with local Food Service directors to better understand the challenges and impacts that changing procurement rules have on encouraging schools to purchase products from local growers.* While we are addressing issues of product demand through the increase of processed carrots and lettuce, we will need to work with Food Service directors to make sure we can competitively bid to be a participating vendor in the school. *We are exploring with our local assemblywoman ways to incentivize schools to purchase local, as well as, address confusion and barriers created by vague, and sometimes differing, state and federal procurement rules.*
    - 3. *Explore the value (both economically and socially) of linking Farm Education to the distribution side.* As mentioned above, we will be looking at the benefits, challenges and strategies around incorporating the processing, sales and distribution into our on and off the farm agricultural literacy and nutrition education programs.