

**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>	October 1, 2014 – September 29, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Mai Moua, Ph.D.
Authorized Representative Phone:	(651) 495-1517
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Recipient Organization Name:	Hmong National Development, Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Hmong National Development's Farmer's Market Promotion Program
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-FMPPX-MN-0090
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Fayetteville, Arkansas
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,750.00

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: Ms. Hli Xyooj; Email: hlix@hmong.org; Phone: (651) 495-1612.

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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.

The State of Arkansas experienced a rapid influx of Asian farm operators in the last two decades. A significant contributor to this rapid growth was the migration of Hmong families to the Ozarks to take up poultry farming. While Hmong farmers may be experienced in raising livestock in Southeast Asia, they lack the technical skills and language proficiency to successfully navigate the American agribusiness industry. Many families who moved to the region in hopes of operating a successful family farm lost their farms, homes, and entire life savings in the poultry industry. Those Hmong farmers who remain in Arkansas are looking for ways to diversify their farm product offering, supplement their income, and find market opportunities to sell their farm products.

In summary, this project provided a solution to the challenges faced by Hmong farmers who are choosing to remain in Arkansas. Through this program, HND provided culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach, training and technical assistance to Hmong farmers. The focus of educational sessions and technical assistance focused on diversification of product offering, value added products, marketing and accessing local farmers’ markets. The underling goal of the program centered on developing wealth generating opportunities by diversify farming businesses and bridging better access to local farmers’ markets and new markets to stabilize multiple streams of income. The quantitative results in activities provided by HND to reach program goals and objectives are as follows:

- *Outreach and Recruitment Activities:* Through the performance period, HND staff provided outreach to and engaged with local Hmong farmers through outreach mailings, monthly conference phone calls, word of mouth, farm visits, visits to farmers’ markets, partnering with local Hmong community-based organizations, and being present at community spaces, events, and meetings.
 - Tabled or had a significant presence at 11 community-based events and reached 1552 individuals from the Hmong community in the region with educational materials about diversification and valuable farm programs and services.
 - During the award period, developed 22 outreach letters that were relevant to the goals of this program. Outreach letters were mailed to about 192 individuals per mailing.
 - Presented at 4 community meetings, reaching 145 Hmong individuals. Specifically targeted 15 community spaces which included several farmers’ markets to reach 313 individuals about marketing opportunities, educational workshops, farm program deadlines, and announcements.
- *Education Activities:* HND staff coordinated educational sessions with several local partners and institutions on topics that were relevant to operating a successful farm business.
 - HND staff hosted 35 workshops that focused on or were complementary to market diversification. Workshop topics ranged from disaster assistance for specialty crops, market recordkeeping and business planning, season extension with high tunnels, microloans, food safety, and creating market niche to a host of other marketing related topics. The 35 workshops had a total of 491 participants. Each workshop had on average 32 individual participants.

- Several workshops used MarketMaker, an interactive web resource aimed at promoting products and businesses of agricultural producers. These workshops also introduced farmers to branding and designating their farm operations as Arkansas Grown.
- HND Staff hosted 18 conference calls for Hmong farmers in the region to discuss relevant farming issues, share ideas on creating niche markets, and learn about new techniques to enhance their farm operations. The 18 conference calls had a total of 96 participants, averaging at about 24 farmers participating in each call.
 - In preparation for the conference calls, HND staff researched interesting information that farmers can consider in diversifying their farm businesses. Topics of conference calls have included marketing techniques, heating for high tunnel, compositing unsold products, recordkeeping and having proper insurance coverage for your farm business, herbicide and pesticide use, flood water contamination and food safety, and benefits of cover crops.
- HND staff also used social media and technology like email and text to reach farmers in the Hmong community. An active social media platform that was used is Facebook. HND hosts a Facebook group, Tri-State Hmong Community (AR, MO, and Ok), to share relevant issues, announce important deadlines and workshops. The Facebook group has about 605 members. HND staff emailed about 66 farmers with 70 different emails during the entire grant period. Texted 20 farmers, 62 different texts during the entire grant period.
- *Technical Assistance Activities:* HND staff provided technical assistance to 72 farmers via phone or face-to-face on farms or at community spaces that were convenient to farmers. The total hours of technical assistance provided was 131.25. Staff provided technical assistance in developing diversification implementation plans, filling out vendor applications as part of developing new markets, meeting with market managers, and other direct assistance to help Hmong farmers navigate market requirements. Staff also assisted 25 farmers in their applications to become farmers' market vendors. During the second year of the award period, HND worked closely with 12 farmers in developing a farm to school relationships with the local school district.

Goal/Objective 1: Expand the diversity of agricultural products offered by Hmong farmers at local farmers' markets. Objective was to work with 20 Hmong farmer vendors to diversify their product offering by adding new fruits, vegetables, flowers or value-added products to their farming business.

Progress Made:

- HND worked with 57 Hmong farmer vendors to diversify their product offering during the award period. During the first half of the award period, staff worked closely with 28 farmers in developing plans to diversify their farm offerings. These farmer vendors begun implementing their diversification plans at market by experimenting and adding new products at various markets. Many of the new products were bitter-melons, Hmong pumpkins, Asian greens, and other types of beans.
- Through educational sessions, conference calls, and outreach activities, farmers gained knowledge and confidence in seeking out different market opportunities. Great examples of farmers forging ahead with diversifying their farm operations is two (2) Hmong women farmers who worked closely with Staff to plan the addition of mushrooms to their product list, and another farmer planning to include cut flowers as a new product that she can offer at her

farmers' market stall.

Impact on Community:

- The Hmong farming community in northwest Arkansas was based on poultry. The availability of information about diversifying farm operations beyond poultry and the ability of HND Staff to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and services is an important factor in the long term success of Hmong farmers in the region.
- The work of this program has allowed HND and its partners to expand work with the Hmong farming community beyond poultry to include specialty crop productions and other livestock.
- Hmong farmers who were vendors prior to the start of the program increased their competitiveness by diversifying their product offerings at market. These participants reported that customers were coming back to buy the new products, especially Southeast Asian ethnic vegetables. Additionally, other potential customers are curious about the new products which are leading to higher foot traffic at their stalls. Lastly, the new products increase the diversity of local offerings at the markets.
- Through this program, Hmong farmers gained not only knowledge but confidence in making better business decisions and build relationships with other service providers in their farming community. This has also lead participants to seek out other resources such as how to maintain healthy soil in order to grow quality produces and how having high tunnels can allow farmers to continue selling and take advantage of the winter farmers' markets. In November 2014, 7 Hmong farmers attended a 2 day conference to learn about winter production and high tunnel heating.

Goal/Objective 2: Increase the number of Hmong farmer vendors at local farmers' markets. The objective was to work with 20 Hmong farmers who are not already participating in farmers' markets to begin selling at local farmers' markets.

Progress Made:

- HND Staff assisted 13 farmers who were new to farmers' markets, apply and enroll into local farmers' markets. Staff worked with 12 farmers in accessing public schools as new markets where several farmers joined a farmer co-op to access a farm to school program.
- Staff developed relationships with market managers of 6 farmers markets in the region. Staff had strong presence at the markets during peak selling season; sharing educational materials and announcements. Staff was also invited to speak at vendor meetings to talk about government farm programs and the importance of market and product diversification.
- Staff translated MarketMaker DVDs into Hmong and provided 50 of those DVDs to the Fayetteville Farmers Market Managers to distribute to their Hmong vendors.

Impact on Community:

- Strong relationships between HND, Hmong farmers, and the managers of local farmers' markets have a significant impact on the long term success of the Hmong farmers, the farming community, and the region. Local farmers are supported by stakeholders, and the barriers that Hmong farmers face in accessing appropriate resources and information has been diminished.
- Hmong farmers are moving beyond direct sells at farmers' markets and are starting to sell to restaurants, schools, and other institutional buyers.
- Hmong farmers diversified their farm operations and increased their farm income. Those who are new to growing vegetables for farmers' markets are using more of their farmland to produce healthy food for their community.

Goal/Objective 3: Enhance the ability of Hmong farmers to market their products. The objective of this third goal is 40 Hmong farmers will gain knowledge of and use new marketing strategies such as social media, producing and distributing marketing materials, and branding and logo development.

Progress Made:

- HND worked closely with 72 individuals to develop new marketing strategies to enhance the marketing of their products.
- 5 Hmong farmers received grants for EBT point-of-sale equipment through the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Arkansas - System Division of Agriculture. Point-of-sale equipment allows vendors to accept debit and credit cards, and electronic cards used in SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp program.
- 4 farmers attended the UAPB Rural Life conference and workshop on Aquaculture and Aquaponics as an alternative way to grow produce that is more sustainable.
- HND Staff assisted a farmer in applying for a cooling unit through USDA Farm Service Agency program. The cooling unit helps increase the capacity and longer shelf life of specialty crops.

Impact on Community:

- Through the work of this program, Hmong farmers are much more knowledgeable about farm programs, farmer grants, and educational opportunities such as conferences and seminars. Hmong farmers have applied and been awarded farmer grants; creating pathways for other farmers.
- Farmers who are grantees are now mentors and a resource for other farmers who may have shy away from grants.
- Hmong farmers are able to take different forms of payment at their stalls and consumers can use their SNAP benefits to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and food producing plants and seeds from Hmong farmers.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: 25 farmers who are new to farmers' markets. Many of these farmers are wives of poultry growers who are now operating their own business. 1 new HND Farm Program Associate.
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 57 farmers who have been selling at farmers' markets.
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created:
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 3
 - v. Number of new markets established:
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$5000 (estimated average per farmer) and increased by 25%. This estimation is based on conversations with participants; adding new products and new markets is roughly estimated to bring in about \$160-\$175 per market day, with an average of 29 market days. This brings in about \$4640 to \$5075 for the season. Prior to participation in the program, farmers estimated a gross of about \$20,000 for season.

- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 777 – this number represents those who have directly benefited by participating in workshops, trainings, and conference calls, and those who have received technical assistance.
 - 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?
 - HND expanded its service base by reaching non-Hmong farmers, ranchers, and those who produce value-added products. HND also expanded its relationships with different market institutions including farmers’ markets, schools, co-op, and local entrepreneurs.
 - 25 farmers enter farmers’ markets and 57 enhanced their market offerings, therefore accessing new customers.
 - HND’s participants now have the equipment to sell their products to SNAP recipients and customers who prefer credit or debit cards.

- 4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners?
 - a. Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Arkansas
 - b. Hmong community organizations in Arkansas and Missouri
 - c. Local farmers’ markets: Webb City, Bentonville, Fayetteville, Siloam Springs, Fort Smith, and Hot Springs
 - d. USDA agencies such as NRCS and FSA
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?
 - a. Extension and USDA agencies have contributed experts to train HND Staff, lead workshops; additionally, these two partners have provided grants and microloans that have helped farmers implement their marketing plans.
 - b. Hmong community organizations provided community events and meetings for effective outreach to the Hmong community.
 - c. Local farmers’ markets have cooperated with HND Staff in working with farmers in implementing marketing plans.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project’s future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?
 - a. Community partners are essential in HND’s work. Staff will continue to seek out experts from the University and USDA agencies to consult on work, present at workshops, and create access to other resources for farmers.
 - b. As a national organization that serves the Hmong American community, HND will continue to work with and support local Hmong organizations. Community events, meetings, and gatherings hosted by Hmong organizations will continue to be important in HND’s outreach plan.
 - c. HND have established strong relationships with local farmers’ markets, and will work with farmers and farmers’ market managers to ensure the success of Hmong farmers.

- 5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? Not applicable.

- 6. Have you publicized any results yet?* No
 - 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?

Evaluations were conducted after workshops. Evaluations focused on subject learned and how HND can improve workshops. A full analysis of all evaluations has not been completed.

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

Participants make suggestions about future workshop topics which have led to HND hosting trainings and field days on various topics.

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).

One barrier that many Hmong farmers faced was a lack of internet access at home. In resolving this issue, Staff uses conference calls and mailings to reach farmers. Additionally, Staff identified free computer lab(s) in the community for farmers to use when they are in need of accessing the internet.

A second unanticipated challenge was workshop times, dates and lengths of events that would best fit the Hmong farming community. Staff talked to farmers and started tracking attendance, and found that there are more participants during the week day in the evening once all the duties on the farms could be completed. Staff started shifting workshops and trainings to the time of day that worked best for most farmers. Staff also hosted monthly conference calls at night, from 9:00pm to 11:00pm when farmers are home and available to tune in.

A third barrier is language access. Staff was able to identify that farmers do not only have a language barrier but also a terminology barrier, causing twice as much confusion and misunderstanding. For instance Hmong farmers going to NRCS would ask for the

greenhouse program. What they are looking for is the cost share program for high tunnels. Given that there is no greenhouse program NRCS staff replies with a negative response. This leads to misunderstanding of services and Hmong farmers not receiving services. One resolution to this communication issue is it to connect directly with the Hmong community by having someone who can speak both Hmong and English, and understands agriculture.

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

All goals and outcome measures were achieved.

- 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:

It would have been helpful to develop tracking sheets that correlates with reporting at the start of the program.

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.

Stabilizing Hmong farms in the Ozarks will continue to be important work for HND. This program has allowed HND Staff to gain knowledge and build relationships with community partners. HND will continue to support Hmong farmers with marketing and diversification.

- 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?

The focus of this program was around farmers' markets. Through this work, Hmong farmers accessed other markets like multi-farm CSAs and farm-to-school programs. While accessing new markets is a great thing, we have to remember that success in one type of market does not guarantee success in another market; different market will require different strategies. In our work with Hmong farmers who started to sell to the school district, we learned that farmers need a lot of infrastructure support and in a region like northwest Arkansas, transportation can have a negative impact on a farmers' profit.