

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market 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 LFPP 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 your assigned grant specialist to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	April 1st, 2016 – September 30th, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Travis Byrne, MA
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Authorized Representative Email:	BestGroLLC@gmail.com
Recipient Organization Name:	Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Kentucky Blueberry Growers Local Market Expansion, Improved Efficiency and Community Outreach Project
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPP-KY-0068
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Edmonton, KY
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,733

LFPP 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 LFPP 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: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association's goal was to provide community outreach to our local school's agricultural programs teaching cultivation of blueberries from plants, seeds and propagation by cuttings. This goal was to emphasize the positive impact of eating fresh, local blueberries as a part of a healthy diet as well as providing education for Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters.**

Activity 1: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association successfully visited five (5) school-sites to accomplish our Blueberry Demonstration project.

- **Progress Made: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association partnered with Bluegrass Blueberries and numerous community volunteers to hold Blueberry Demonstrations and planting field days on-site at various school campuses based on land recourses and available community support. Each site consisted of 25 two year old blueberry bushes. These bushes in a few years, with the proper agricultural care, could yield close to 400 LBS of fruit (approximately 40 gallons).**
- **Impact on Community: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association received positive feedback from the community. This project directly impacts the local communities and school-sites that this project was connected to. The blueberries that were planted on these sites will provide fresh fruit into the communities where fresh and local food isn't accessible. This project will also put an abundance of fresh fruit right in the hands of young people, allowing them to taste the nutritious fruit while at the same time building a local food culture giving the community the opportunity to experiment with farm enterprise (fresh fruits, plants and value-added products.) Lastly, this project impacted the lives of the students' education involved with the Blueberry Demonstration. Jeff Essig, of Bluegrass Blueberries, conveyed that he received positive feedback from instructors and teachers involved with the Agricultural Department(s).**

Activity 2: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association successfully provided (6) 2-yearold blueberry bushes to each of the 140 FFA chapters in the State of Kentucky.

- **Progress Made: Kentucky FFA chapters held their state-wide conference on 12/29/2015. With the continued support of Bluegrass Blueberries, we attended the conference and distributed blueberry bushes to the representing chapters. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was effective in delivering bushes to FFA chapters that were unable to make the conference. The shipments were made in the months of Jan to March (2016). Included in the distribution of bushes were instructions on how to plant and care for the blueberry bushes.**
- **Impact on Community: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was motivated to help educate the community and youth within the Kentucky FFA chapters regarding additional and/or alternative farming crops for the State of Kentucky, on top of current crops grown in our state.**

Activity 3: Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association provided ten (10) packages of 1000 blueberry seeds each to the 140 FFA chapters in Kentucky.

- **Progress Made: With the help of *Metcalfe County High School's Community Base Work Transition Program*, packages were sent to all 140 FFA chapters in Kentucky in March of 2015. For weeks, students volunteered their time to prepare seed envelopes; and then stuff envelopes with seed packets, planting instructions and an explanation letter. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was very appreciative for this partnership with Metcalfe County Schools. We received thank you letters from excited**

FFA instructors and requests to be a part of the blueberry demonstration sites (Goal 1, Activity 1).

- **Impact on Community:** The outreach that Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association provided could have an economic impact on the chapters whom decided to grow blueberry plants from seeds to either sell future fruit, or plants. Many communities throughout Kentucky are low-income areas and distributing seeds and plants help in the long-term goal(s) to increase local access to this highly nutritious commodity.

ii. **Goal/Objective 2:** To expand the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association's local and regional marketing efforts to market Kentucky Proud blueberries and blueberry value-added products. Also, to expand into marketing additionally locally grown farm product(s).

Activity 1: With the opportunity of this grant, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was able to expand our local and regional marketing efforts to market KY Proud blueberries and value-added products, which include USDA certified organic blueberries and certified organic value-added products.

- **Progress Made:** Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association had the privilege to work with the University of Kentucky Food Systems Innovation center to create value-added products. Several products that were developed were: blueberry oatmeal breakfast bars, dehydrated blueberries and blueberry fruit-leathers. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association, through the approval from LFPP staff, was able to reallocate a portion of grant funding, originally intended for Marketing Outreach, to create a Research and Development staff person. Through this opportunity, we hired an experienced individual whom holds numerous college degrees in science and has an extensive professional background in food science and development. In the spring of 2016, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association actively pursued the development of KY Proud products of dehydrated blueberries, both organic and conventional, as well as a dehydrated blueberry fruit-leather. Given the minimal additional ingredients in these products, the prolonged shelf-life and the popularity of similar products currently on the market, we feel confident that this development will be a successful KY Proud value-added product and, could in turn increase the blueberry market past the fresh-season.
- **Impact on Community:** The Kentucky Department of Agriculture administers the KY Proud program. This program helps Kentucky farmers and producers highlight to the consumers that the product is grown and/or made in the State of Kentucky. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association received feedback from several consumers and companies our products were sent to. The Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) gave direct feedback from an event they sponsored in which they used out dehydrated blueberries as part of a snack-pack for a Sustainable Field-Day conference they held. Their direct comments are as follows, "The blueberry snacks were wonderful. People devoured them..." Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association is proud to connected to the communities our products find themselves in.

Activity 2: Marketing efforts that have successfully included not only attending, but participation in three (3) trade-shows to promote KY Proud blueberries.

- **Progress Made:** Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association attended and participated in three (3) trade shows: (1) 2015 Fruit and Vegetable Conference in Lexington, KY on January 5th and 6th, (2) 2016 Fruit and Vegetable Conference in Lexington, KY on January 4th and 5th, and (3) 2016 Organic Association of Kentucky conference in Elizabethtown on March 4th and 5th. While at all these trade-shows, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association had the privilege to setup information booths to hand-out information on blueberries in Kentucky and speak directly to community members regarding the benefits of blueberries in our state. This opportunity was a great mechanism for networking and making solid connections to our agricultural sector.

- **Impact on Community:** Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was able to make a positive impact on the community by representing the blueberry community and at the same time, able to make effective networking relationships with producers and buyers of blueberries. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association is working to meet market needs and help our current and future members get a well-valued price for their commodity at the consumer market.

iii. **Goal/Objective 3:** Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association worked to improve the efficiency and work processes at the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association warehouse and marketing facility; and to improve the commercial kitchen for value-product development and production.

Activity 1: The purchase and installation of a new Information Technology System (ITS).

- **Progress Made:** The new Information Technology System was purchased in November 2014. Given that the previous records held at the Association's office were hand-kept, mostly on paper, this addition to our facility has been portrayed a positive outcome. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was able to expand our traceability efforts with our new system to support the requirements from our USDA Organic System Plan. We have created identifying barcodes for each farm member whom brings in their berries to our processing facility. We are able to track the berries by the farm numbers and indicate the date of intake. We track our intake of the blueberries from the initial intake, through the processing, quality control efforts of culling and to the packaging and shipment/purchase of the berries.
- **Impact on Community:** This goal has had a direct impact on the community as a safeguard and has direct effect on our Food-Safety Recall Procedures, which is an industry standard. Several of our markets require this system to be in place in order to have direct contracts with them. Additionally, the Association is able to more accurately track our farmer's commodity insuring that our payout to the farmers are precise and are done in a timely manner.

Activity 2: Safety Trainings: HACCP, Better Processing Control School Training and QuickBooks Training.

- **Progress Made:** Several of our staff had the opportunity to successfully complete two (2) online food safety courses, as well as, an online QuickBooks training course. After the completion of these courses, our staff was able to put together several Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points procedures for our warehouse and processing facility. Additionally, the staff that was able to complete the QuickBooks trainings was able to put their trainings into motion by implementing their education into our working Information Technology Systems.
- **Impact on Community:** Having the trainings as reported above, specifically the Food-Safety trainings, allow for proper systems to be implemented correctly and accurately. The progress from these opportunities has brought the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association up to industry standards regarding the HACCP procedures surrounding food safety practices. These procedures directly impact the community through safety protocols that protect the community's health and well-being.

Activity 3: Installation of an In-feed Conveyor to move blueberries from the new Sorting Belt to the Booth Washer.

- **Progress Made:** The In-feed Conveyor was purchased and installed for the 2015 blueberry season. It has been a very useful piece of equipment and will continue its purpose for years-to-come.
- **Impact on Community:** The purchase of the In-Feed Conveyor significantly assisted with the flow of blueberries through the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association warehouse. In May of 2015, the warehouse received its organic certification for processing and handling, which at that time having the proper professional equipment

has enabled the Association to have clear procedures in place that ensure the integrity of the organic and conventional fruit flowing through our warehouse. These proper procedures ensure that the community's health and well-being are our warehouse's priority.

Activity 4: Purchase of a commercial stove, oven, kettle, exterior walk-in freezer, moisture analyzer and trade-scale.

- **Progress Made:** The items were purchased and received. All items have been installed with exception to the stove, which is scheduled to be installed the winter of 2016/2017. The use of the moisture analyzer has been a productive tool within our research and development portion of our operation.
- **Impact on Community:** All items and equipment purchased will have impact on the farmers and members associated with Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association. The addition of equipment to our kitchen has made it possible for the completion of our certified kitchen. The addition of the walk-in freezer has helped aid our need for cooling space with the increase of blueberries into the warehouse between the seasons of 2014 to present. Additionally, with the approval of our organic certification, it is important to adhere to the USDA requirements of separation of organic and conventional commodities, which the cooler space has contributed.

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, 20__). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. **Number of direct jobs created:** Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has successfully created and maintained approximately 10 seasonal positions in the warehouse during harvest season, including a warehouse foreman/woman and 1 delivery driver. We currently have an on-site office administrator which has been a year-round position. We have made a change to the Research and Development position which is now on an "as-need" basis for our dehydrated blueberry product. We are still working on the economics and marketability of the dehydrated blueberries and currently are being made on a per-order basis.
 - ii. **Number of jobs retained:** 1 office administrator.
 - iii. **Number of indirect jobs created:** As previously reported in past reports, the number of indirect jobs created is unknown. The quantitative data for the number of indirect jobs created during berry harvest season on-site at specific berry farms of our members (pickers, sorters, delivery drivers, etc.) would take a statistical analysis report, which at this time we do not have the proper time or the economic resources to complete such a report.
 - iv. **Number of markets expanded:** The Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has expanded its markets within the Kentucky School Food Programs. We have successfully been able to contact and market frozen blueberries to new school districts and school-sites located in the state of KY. The school systems are able to take the frozen berries, versus the fresh berries, given the blueberry harvest season in Kentucky is during the summer, at which the school sites are out for summer vacation. As previously reported, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has expanded its markets into the organic sector by obtaining USDA Organic Certification of our processing facility through the Kentucky Department of Agriculture Organic Program. As of the fall of 2016, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has marketed to approx. 10 new markets, 25 in total.
 - v. **Number of new markets established:** Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has effectively established markets throughout Kentucky which includes (Edmonton, KY, Burkesville, KY, Lexington, KY, Louisville, KY, Bowling Green, KY, Owensboro, KY, Cincinnati, OH, Columbus, OH, Indianapolis, IN, St. Louis, MO, and Nashville, TN).
 - vi. **Market sales increased by \$15,000 and increased by 19%.**
 - vii. **Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:** It is unknown regarding the exact number of farmers and/or producers that have benefited from the project. What is known however, is that the current association members, which is approx. 251 members (from

commercial farms, mom-and-pop farms, and folks just interested in blueberries), all may benefit from the new equipment, supplies, training and marketing that this grant has been able to provide to the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association. The new machinery and equipment that we were able to purchase from the distributed funds will greatly help the marketability and processing procedures of our farm members' blueberries. We have become more streamlined with regards to our warehouse processes, IT systems, quality control and delivery of our product(s). We are able to work more efficiently from the time we in-take the blueberries until they are shipped out to our buyers.

- **Percent Increase:** Since our previous reports, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has not had any new members join our association. We have not lost any members currently. The association does, however, anticipate generating more member interest through a variety of factors. (1) , Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association plans to hold a Spring 2017 meeting that will outline the scopes of this grant and the direction that Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association plans to follow. With the recent acquisition of becoming a certified organic processing facility, we have opened our doors to new markets and great economic gain for our farmer's commodities. (2) There has been a variety of blueberry "field-day" workshops that have been provided by the University of Kentucky, the Organic Association of Kentucky, as well as, Bluegrass Blueberries (Jeff and Kim Essig). Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association believes that this will generate more interest from farmers and folks interested in generating more income on their land, which in turn, we will be ready to help provide the marketing of those farmer's blueberries. (3) The Organic Association of Kentucky has near future plans to create a job position that will help conventional farmers transition to certified organic operations or new farmers to establish their farm as an organic operation. With the above outlined factors, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association believes that we will have an abundant increase in the number of farmers and/or producers that may benefit from the outcomes of this grant project.

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?

Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has proudly marketed to new school districts both private and public, and to new businesses that include: grocery stores, online grocery delivery services, smoothie/juicer and local community members. It is currently unknown if these new markets and outlets have new ethnic groups, low income/low access populations without conducting proper statistical analysis of surveys, qualitative interviews and on-site inspections of our customer bases. The new market of an online health food store (Green Bean Delivery) has a great potential of reaching anyone whom has internet access and a delivery address. With this in mind, it is very feasible that we may have reached new ethnic groups, low income/access communities, new businesses, etc., but the concrete data for this analysis is currently unidentified.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?

Our community partners in this project are as follows:

- Kentucky FFA Leadership Trainer Center / Dr. Kristie B. Guffey
- Bluegrass Blueberries / Jeff and Kim Essig
- Metcalfe County High School (Edmonton, KY)
- Jackson County High School (McKee, KY)
- Greenwood High School (Bowling Green, KY)
- North Hardin High School (Elizabethtown, KY)
- Louisville Grows (non-profit community gardens)

- UK Cooperative Extension /Dr. Benny Lile (Metcalfe County Superintendent), Brandon Bell (Metcalfe County Cooperative Extension Agriculture Agent), Dr. Strang (University of Kentucky's Fruit and Vegetable Specialist).
 - Annhall Norris (Kentucky Department of Public Health, Food Safety Branch)
 - Kentucky School Nutrition Association
 - Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Association
 - Organic Association of Kentucky
 - State of Kentucky Public School Systems
- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?
- Our community partners have contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project by:
- Kentucky FFA Leadership Trainer Center / Dr. Kristie B. Guffey: Dr. Guffey was our contact at the Kentucky FFA Association and holds the title of Agricultural Education Consultant. Bluegrass Blueberries, whom had the privilege of providing education to our outlined school-sites, was invited to the Kentucky FFA chapter's state-wide conference on 12/29/2015. The FFA Leadership Trainer Center was able to provide us with the list of the 140 FFA chapters in Kentucky which we were able to provide young blueberry bushes intended to be used in their educational programs to offer the FFA members hands-on propagation experiments.
 - Bluegrass Blueberries / Jeff and Kim Essig: Bluegrass Blueberries, run by Jeff and Kim Essig have contributed greatly to the overall results of the LFPP project. Jeff, whom runs the day-to-day operations of the farm/nursery, is so vastly knowledgeable of blueberries. Bluegrass was a tremendous provider to this grant project by (1) supplying the blueberry bushes, (2) offering the blueberry education to school-sites and (3) conveying feedback as needed.
 - State of Kentucky Public School Systems and Administrators: Provided the opportunity to make possible the collaboration of education at the outlined school-sites.
 - Annhall Norris (Kentucky Department of Public Health, Food Safety Branch: Ms. Norris contributed to the LFPP grant opportunity by recommending to the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association by (1) the Better Processing Control School, University of California Online Course which has helped Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association take a more educated professional stance within our certified kitchen to make commercial value-added products, and (2) the Hazard and Critical Control Points (HACCP) safety training course which has helped Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association develop the safety protocol in our warehouse and processing facility.
 - Kentucky School Nutrition Association: The Kentucky School Nutrition Association held a trade-show that Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was able to have a booth at.
 - Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Association: The Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Association held a conference that Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association was able to attend and set-up an information booth to educate attendees on our practices and our services.
 - Organic Association of Kentucky: the Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) has made a tremendous impact on the overall results of the LFPP grant in a numerous of ways. (1) OAK has been a firm support in networking Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association with purchasers of our fresh/frozen and value-added products since the warehouse and processing facility have become certified organic in 2015. (2) OAK was able to provide to Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association booth space and an opportunity for Mr. Travis Byrne to speak at the "Meet the Buyers" section of the 2016 annual OAK Conference. (3) OAK received a donation of Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association's value-added product, dehydrated blueberries, and was able to use the blueberries at a fund-raiser the association held at the Whole Foods locations in Louisville and Lexington. Lastly, (4) OAK has purchased a considerable amount of

processed certified organic frozen blueberries to be used in the upcoming 2017 Fruit and Vegetable Conference in which they will serve a certified organic KY Proud blueberry desert cobbler.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? The above community partners whom have contributed to this LFPP grant project will continue to contribute to our project's future activities, beyond the performance period in a number of ways. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association plans to continue our network with all folks by reaching out to them from time-to-time to see how we as an organization could help benefit their interests and vice versa. Additionally, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association is in frequent contact with folks such as Bluegrass Blueberries, the Organic Association of Kentucky, the Kentucky Public School Systems, and Kentucky School Nutrition Association. It is the Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association's goal to continue to provide education, information and commodities to the listed community support partnerships.

5. Did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? Yes, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association used contractors to conduct some of the work outlined in the grant. As previously reported, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association used Bluegrass Blueberries for the on-site school educational program as illustrated in Goal#1. As stated before, their efforts helped contribute greatly to the results of the LFPP project through their knowledge of blueberry growing practices and processes. Jeff Essig, of Bluegrass Blueberries, was able to provide his expert opinions and practices through the demonstrations that he presented on-site at the various schools. He was able to provide the education workshop on health benefits of blueberries and the growing requirements of a blueberry bush. Additionally, Jeff Essig was able to provide KBGA with feedback regarding his experience(s). Lastly, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association used several contractors to install and adapt our equipment within the warehouse and kitchen.

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

i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? N/A

ii. To whom did you publicize the results? N/A

iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? N/A

*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? Yes.

i. If so, how did you collect the information? Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has collected feedback through: face-to-face verbal communication, telephone communication, email transmissions and letters.

ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has received positive feedback from community members and partners associated with this grant project. We received responses from both teachers and instructors onsite at the high school blueberry demonstrations that the schools were "very appreciative of the plants and education that we had provided." Jeff Essig, of Bluegrass Blueberries, was pleased to mention that he enjoyed working with the schools and connections with the FFA chapters. He stated that he personally felt that "10 percent of the student body, whom participated, portrayed interest in the blueberry demonstrations. This number could be a factor of things, particularly the schools' focus on row crops such as corn and soy, and cattle in our region." Additionally Sarah Fritshner with Organic Association of Kentucky stated in an email that "The blueberry snacks (dehydrated blueberries) were wonderful. People devoured them..." Carolyn and Jacob Gahn, of Sweet Grass Granola, wrote in an email regarding our USDA certified organic dehydrated

blueberries, “We received the samples and LOVE the flavor. They are so delicious”. Keith Waters, of GreenBean Delivery, has verbally expressed that “our (GreenBean Delivery) customers are very excited for the Kentucky organic fresh blueberries and have given us positive feedback on the 6oz clamshells.”

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP 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? Not at this time. We do foresee generation of income in the future.
 - If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? N/A

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. Draw from 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). The opportunity to receive this grant project has been very rewarding. Here at Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association, we have had the chance to learn from our experiences, both positively and negatively. From a negative standpoint, we learned that the Blueberry Oatmeal Breakfast Bars did not market as well as we had anticipated. At the beginning, Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association received great feedback regarding the product. However, once it was marketed in the stores and to the school systems, it did not resonate with the customer base. One notion that we have determined would be the given fact that the product needs to be baked and is not a ready-to-eat product. We received one feedback from a school district that said this very statement. It added an extra step that they were trying to cut out of their food-line. The kids enjoyed the breakfast bar, however, it added more time to the food director’s steps. Another notion that we perceived was that this product needed to be frozen. Many consumers do not go to the frozen food aisle for a breakfast bar. Many breakfast bars are ready-to-eat, given the majority of consumers are on-the-go in the morning and do not have the time to cook a whole sheet of breakfast bars before heading out the door. An idea we have had, which is still in the elementary stages, would be to develop an added-value oatmeal bar product that is ready-to-eat, and is individually wrapped, however, there are many types of these bars on the market, which would invite competition. On the other side of our negative learning experiences, we have found enriching positive experiences. Some of these positive aspects would be drawn from our educational projects that we conducted. The Blueberry Demonstrations were very enriching and Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association took pride in our ability to work with community members to bring education to different school districts and to the FFA chapters of Kentucky. Additionally, the installation of the new ITS equipment in our administration office and the processing equipment in the warehouse have proved to be most positive. The ability to be able to streamline our intake process by virtue of the ITS equipment has demonstrated to be very efficient and up to industry standards. The processing equipment that we have received and installed in both our warehouse and our commercially certified kitchen has also shown similar results. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association takes pride in sustaining our food-safety protocols and procedures and the ability to use and operate this equipment exemplifies those attributes.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: Our goals and outcomes drawn from our narrative, in Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association’s opinion, have been met and exceeded. As mentioned in the paragraph above, our intention(s) of one of our value-added products, our

Blueberry Oatmeal Breakfast Bars were steps in the right direction but needed to be refined given the fact the product was not ready-to-eat.

- 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: Lessons that Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association has learned in the administration of this particular grant project was that staying organized helps every step in the processes of this grant. It is extremely important to keep all documentation of the project's timeline and paperwork together in chronological order. In the process of keeping documents structured, it makes the procedures of reimbursement, reporting, and reflection of the project much more efficient.

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. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association plans to continue our relationship with the community members and organizations that this project has developed. We continue to strive to support and educate the members of Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association through our marketing efforts and our ability to supply information regarding agricultural practices, programs, grants, and material that is useful for our Kentucky growers. Our mission at Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association is to promote, support, advise and help market blueberries for our members. We are hopeful of the increase of blueberry production in the State of Kentucky and with the opportunity of this grant Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association plans to be an integral part of the blueberry sector. Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association plans to continue our work and development of our value-added products, creating opportunities to work past our harvest season. We hope to be able to develop and retain further job opportunities at our processing facility that may, in the future, tailor our facility to other agricultural commodities besides just blueberries. There has been interest drawn from other organizations that our facility may be centrally located for other types of crops to be processed and packaged.
- 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? Not at this time. It has been a pleasure of Kentucky Blueberry Growers Association to be able to work with the school systems of the State of Kentucky, our community partners and with the United States Department of Agriculture: Agricultural Marketing Service and the staff associated with the Local Food Promotion Program.