

## 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](mailto: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.

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30,2015-September 30, 2017
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Cliff Swaim
<b>Authorized Representative Phone:</b>	(859) 509-7063
<b>Authorized Representative Email:</b>	cswaim@marksburyfarm.com
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Marksbury Farm Foods, LLC
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Growing Market Share Through Improved Marketing and Promotion
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15LFPP0098
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2015
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Lancaster, KY
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	99,938.00

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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 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: Content Development for the use throughout broad company platforms
    - a. Progress Made: Content has been developed and implemented to more adequately equip employees and customers to understand and communicate Marksbury’s mission of growing the practice of local, natural, and sustainable farming. We consulted with a Human Resources expert who we allowed to spend time with our employees and leadership in order to learn the details of our business model and our goals. From there, the consultant worked directly with our leaders to develop a comprehensive program of both inward and outward education so that both new hires and established employees could understand our mission, and our leadership could better communicate our message to our target customers and community partners.
    - b. Impact on Community: After we implemented our internal and external program, we observed a positive cultural change within our company as employees at all levels began to understand the impact of their work on the local food system. It also aided in providing a better understanding among wholesale customers and custom clients of the benefits of our specific position within the massive global food system. We began to see greater employee retention and a more positive working atmosphere from the internal program, and we began to attract larger clients to both our wholesale and custom processing sectors from the external education component. Customer retention has also improved.
  - ii. Goal/Objective 2: Implement an increased Social Media Campaign, distinguishing between Pasture Burgers and BBQ and Marksbury Farm Market
    - a. Progress Made: Individual social media accounts have been developed for Pasture Burgers and BBQ. We have a schedule of posting at least 3 times per week across multiple social media platforms, and Liking/Sharing between the existing Marksbury Farm page and the Pasture Burgers and BBQ page.
    - b. Impact on Community: The local community has a greater awareness of activities, offerings, specials, and sales at Pasture Burgers and BBQ, and has a greater exposure to our overall practices. Followers of Marksbury Farm have grown from approximately 3,000 in 2015 to 8,000+ at the close of the grant period, and followers of Pasture Burgers and BBQ grew from less than 500 in 2015 to 3,000+ at the close of the grant period. Also, we have recently opened a restaurant concept in Lexington and have given it its own dedicated social media presence. Wholesale customers and our farm suppliers have frequently been featured on the Marksbury Farm page, which has led to deeper relationships with both of those groups. We have also featured our custom processing capabilities on these pages and that has contributed to landing some larger scale custom clients from other markets, as well as helped promote the smaller scale local growers that depend on our processing services.

- iii. Goal/Objective 3: Redesigning our existing web page to improve and optimize our search engine criteria and to create a more user friendly platform
    - a. Progress Made: Website is up and active ([www.marksburyfarm.com](http://www.marksburyfarm.com)).  
Adjustments have been made along the way to improve the communication of our message and interaction with the user. E-commerce has been added to the page and while there are still minor changes in the works, it far exceeds the page we had previously. Based on the recommendations of the consultant, we realized that our message was weak and confusing, and there was little to no way to engage customers on the previous version of the web page, and our messaging was so inwardly focused that we did not relate well with the potential customers we were seeking. We added e-commerce to try to capture a piece of the growing market of online sales in general, as well as giving that person who wants to respond to our new and more approachable messaging an easy avenue to make a purchase.
    - b. Impact on Community: Customers can find us through general searches for similar products and services online. Retail orders can be placed on the site, custom processing of animals can be scheduled, and potential customers can learn about our products/practices and why we might be a good fit for them.
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: 18
    - ii. Number of jobs retained: 42
    - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 10
    - iv. Number of markets expanded: 4
    - v. Number of new markets established: 10
    - vi. Market sales are actually at the levels they were when the grant period began. The reason for that is in 2015 we had been doing business with a few large customers that lost their contracts so those sales dried up. Sales have since returned to those weekly levels and it is because of sales and marketing efforts we have been afforded by this grant.
    - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 100+
      - a. Percent Increase: This is difficult to quantify because we contract with farmers for our own brand as well as those who have their own markets. The number of farmers that grow for the Marksbury brand have increased by 3%, but the number of animals we have asked them to grow as increased by about 75%.
  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, because of our rural/low income surroundings, we have been able to better serve the local population through certain offerings at our retail store. We have also provided jobs in our processing facility to individuals who would otherwise struggle to find employment.
  4. Discuss your community partnerships.
    - i. Who are your community partners? Marksbury Farm partners with University of Kentucky, the Cooperative Extension Service, First Southern National Bank, Centre

College, Berea College, Garrard County Chamber of Commerce, Local Food Association, Bluegrass Farms and Woodlands, Creation Gardens, and The Marsh Collective.

- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? The existing and new relationships have enabled us to broaden the awareness of our company and its purpose. With the help of these vital partners, we have also launched a fast casual restaurant in nearby Lexington. We have also been actively engaging local schools with the help of these partners to introduce the next generation of food buyers to the notion of small scale, local food production.
  - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? Some of these relationships existed before the grant, but others exist *because* of the grant. Cross promotion will continue as well as special projects that involve incentives for their employees to choose locally grown food.
5. Did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? We used a few different contractors to perform specific tasks during this grant period. Not all achieved the results we had hoped, but all informed the direction we chose to move. In the case of Social Media management, we contracted with an expert in the field and have been very pleased with the results as you read in in Section 1. It also enabled us to have someone who understood our specific business guiding discussions with the web designers to help us build a site that accomplish our goals. We also contracted for a short time with an individual who has had a long career and lots of connections in the meat business. We had assumed that this would open many doors for our wholesale sector but learned that a small scale production like Marksbury Farm did not translate into the larger commodity meat world because of the grass based program we have adopted, and the relatively small scale we operate at. We gained plenty of valuable information from working with this individual but failed to convert meaningful sales through this relationship.
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? Yes
- i. If so, how did you collect the information? We have conducted a series of surveys from comment cards to focus groups that covered as many demographics as possible.
  - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? What we learned from these studies was that most people appreciate what we do and the quality of our product, but would prefer we resemble our commodity counterparts when it comes to price and convenience. A smaller group of folks (about 10%) who were willing to go to a bit more time and trouble to use our products and services still wanted greater convenience and access than what we were currently providing. We are developing several initiatives as a result of this information. E-commerce was one of them but it will continue to be tweaked to improve customer experience. We will also be launching a workplace

buying club in 2018 to hopefully add this extra level of convenience the survey showed us. This will be a program that works with local business owners to form groups of buyers within their company. They will receive a delivery of a selection of our product along with recipes once per week to their place of business.

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? 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. 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). We learned that our story is best told by us. With our product being small scale and locally produced, the more authentic and transparent we are, the more our message resonates. Leaving our brand and message in the hands of third party brokers who are just looking at label claims is a recipe for waste. When our owners and leaders are in front of the customer or in the photo or post, the response is more likely to be a positive one. This is most apparent in our Social Media posts. A point of savings (while not an intentional effort) was that our marketing leaders made note of how the Social Media consultant went about making posts and selecting content. We retained the consultant on a limited contract basis for advice, but we are able to continue most of that work in house because of these lessons learned.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: We had hoped to gain more gross sales than what we did but that has a lot to do with changes in the local food market. There have been several other groups come on to the scene that have flooded the market. There must be a point of differentiation. I would give a lot of thought to how to navigate this issue without denigrating other local producers. Grow the pie rather than fighting over one piece of it. It seems to be more delicate in local food/farming than in other trades.
- 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: Rather than scheduling a large amount of time for administration on an infrequent basis, I would plan more but smaller blocks of time. This more proactive approach will likely keep the direction more focused and the whole project more organized.

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.  
We have developed strategies that will enable us to have a more comprehensive approach to the larger clients that demand the consistency of a commodity relationship,

as well as the more familiar approach needed to create life-long customers at our store and with local chefs. Our social media presence continues to be strong and we are set to do an e-commerce relaunch in 2018. We also have a plan to introduce corporate meal plans that will increase our visibility to the end user, as well as take advantage of retail margins. That project alone will add 3-5 jobs.

- 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?

It would be great if there was funding to support the start of a chain of restaurants that serve carefully sourced local food. Learning from the launch of our store in Lexington, it would be very helpful to have more resources that could be dedicated to R&D as well as general marketing. A single restaurant location could support several full time farming families as well as jobs for the ones who process the animals so I believe energy and resources applied in this way would see maximum return.