

**Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
Final Performance Report**

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your FMPP award objectives. As stated in the FMPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future FMPP or Local Food Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by FMPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to FMPP staff to avoid delays:

FMPP Phone: 202-690-4152; Email: USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-690-4152

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

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2015-September 29, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Jean McWeeney
Authorized Representative Phone:	318-255-9175
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Recipient Organization Name:	North Louisiana Farm Fresh
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Expand and Promote Ruston Farmers Market
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	#15-FMPPLA-0084
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Ruston, Louisiana
Total Awarded Budget:	\$47,784.00

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: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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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.
 - i. Goal/Objective 1: Increase the number of vendors
 - a. Progress Made: We have increased the number of vendors from 34 at the end of 2015 to 74 at the end of 2017. This represents an increase of 118% since the FMPP grant period started in fall 2015. We attribute that increase to many factors but the FMPP grant was key in allowing us to increase our visibility to the community through various promotions, as well as allowing us bandwidth in the form of a paid market manager who could speak with more potential vendors about the benefits of selling at our market. In addition, we specifically wanted to increase the number of vendors selling agricultural products. That number increased by 85% from 2015.
 - b. Impact on Community: A much wider variety of local agricultural products and foods are now available to the community. There is also a greater awareness of what produce grows in our area and how to prepare it because of our cooking and canning demos.
 - ii. Goal/Objective 2: Increase the number of customers
 - a. Progress Made: We saw a 29% increase in average number of customers per market day from 2015.
 - b. Impact on Community: Long-time vendors have experienced increased sales and new vendors now have new customers. Our vendors saw a total 143% increase in sales from 2015. In 2016, our vendors saw an 87% year-over-year increase in total sales over 2015 with sales slightly over \$174,000. Sales for 2017 increased to \$214,373, a 23% year-over-year increase from 2016.
 - iii. Goal/Objective 3: Ensure long-term viability of the market
 - a. Progress Made:
 1. Our part-time contractual market manager significantly boosted the market’s visibility on social media, helping to ensure the market remains the place customers think of for fresh and local groceries.
 2. Our market manager attended several conferences and working groups: Mississippi Food Summit and Agricultural Revival conference, LSU AgCenter’s Agritourism meeting about how to ensure a safe environment, and Louisiana Sustainable Agriculture Working Group where she met other Louisiana farmers’ market managers, farmers and producers, and local food initiatives and food hub leaders. She also learned at some of these meetings that Ruston Farmers’ Market is respected for its strict no-resale policy and only carrying products grown and made within the state.
 3. We held a half-day meeting with our farmers’ market consultant to discuss the areas that she felt we needed to work on for long-term viability. Included in that meeting was analysis of our customer survey and which customers we can turn into more regular shoppers.

4. We conducted a survey of vendors at the end of the 2016 season in order to learn what might make the market more successful for them. We plan another vendor survey to cover the 2017 season.
 5. We continued to refine and clarify vendor rules and regulations to make it easier for the market manager to oversee and enforce them.
 6. At the end of 2016, we held a half-day retreat with the NLFF board and market manager to work on the long-term viability items. This included reworking vendor fees, reviewing items to be fixed and purchases to be made in preparation for the 2017 season, as well as a focus on market manager duties, adding an advisory board, how to increase agricultural vendors, and next steps with the City of Ruston for a future community space using the farmers' market as an anchor. We plan to do the same in preparation for the 2018 season.
 7. By reworking the vendor fees with an eye to sustaining the market manager position past the FMPP grant period, we were able to hire an assistant manager in September 2017.
- b. Impact on Community: For many customers, the market has become a weekly destination for purchasing local agricultural products and prepared foods, keeping money within the community. We have heard anecdotally from downtown business owners that they have seen an increase in customers when the market is open. The city of Ruston has started a local foods initiative as a result of the increased popularity of the market. This initiative involves local chefs, city leaders, farmers, Louisiana Tech professors and students, and our manager and some board members. We have also seen a large increase in SNAP sales and customers from the start of the grant period. In 2015 SNAP sales were \$279. Total SNAP sales for 2016 and 2017 were \$3,353.
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: One - market manager
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: NA
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: Five - helpers hired by vendors
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: One
 - v. Number of new markets established: NA
 - vi. Market sales increased by an average of \$3,407 per market day, an increase of 80% per market day. Average sales per market day in 2015 were \$4,248.77, and \$7,656.17 in 2017. In addition, we were open two additional market days in 2017.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 74
 - a. Percent Increase: 118%
 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?
 - i. In terms of numbers, the largest success of this project has been in the dollars spent using SNAP benefits by our shoppers. We attribute that partly to the new location, which is easier to find (it has a mural and permanent signage). We also believe the addition of a paid market manager to oversee the customer service at the market and the strategy to disseminate materials has greatly expanded these efforts.

Increased SNAP sales: \$3,353 in SNAP benefits was spent in 2016 and 2017. We started a SNAP loyalty program and now have at least 77 distinct SNAP customers.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?
 - a. City of Ruston, City of Ruston Local Foods Initiative, Women Influencing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (WiSTEM, a professional women's group sponsored by Louisiana Tech University), Boys and Girls Club, Health Hut, Humanitarian Enterprises of Lincoln Parish, Life Choices of North Central Louisiana, Ruston Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, LSU AgCenter Extension Office, Junior Auxiliary of Ruston, various community-area churches, and North Central Louisiana Arts Council (NCLAC), local wellness-focused businesses such as yoga studios and registered dietitians. In addition, we've partnered with college students through the Wesley Foundation, three art classes, and three communications classes.
- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?
 - a. The City of Ruston contributed some labor needs for minor work on the market building.
 - b. The Local Foods Initiative with the City of Ruston has raised awareness of vendor offerings for local restaurant businesses.
 - c. Health Hut, LSU AgCenter Extension Office, Humanitarian Enterprises of Lincoln Parish, and Life Choices of North Central Louisiana notified their clients of our market through flyers and presentations. Included were steps on how to use SNAP at the market resulting in new SNAP customers.
 - d. WiSTEM and NCLAC provided children's activities each weekend and allowed parents to shop while the children were engaged.
 - e. Area churches and the school district distributed flyers and other special event notices about our market, especially about SNAP acceptance at the market. We know this resulted in new and returning SNAP customers.
 - f. Local wellness businesses held demonstrations and presentations, including cooking demonstrations with market ingredients. Hands-on cooking classes for children were also held and taught by Extension Office personnel.
 - g. Wesley Foundation students started an urban farm and became one of our produce vendors. They also helped with customer counts and other volunteer opportunities.
 - h. Louisiana Tech University communications classes worked on projects to provide feedback on how we can reach out to more college students.
 - i. Louisiana Tech University art classes produced a mural for our building and design ideas for local foods promotion.
- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?
 - a. The City of Ruston will continue to work with us to ensure a viable market in the future. The City is also creating a master blueprint to develop city-owned property adjacent to the market with Ruston Farmers' Market to serve as the anchor business.
 - b. Health Hut, LSU AgCenter Extension Office, Life Choices of North Central Louisiana, and Humanitarian Enterprises of Lincoln Parish will continue to notify their clients of our market through flyers and presentations.

- c. WiSTEM and NCLAC will continue to provide children's activities each weekend.
- d. Area churches and the school district will continue to distribute flyers and other special event notices about our market.
- e. Local wellness businesses will continue to hold demonstrations and presentations.
- f. We will continue to partner with Louisiana Tech classes as needed.

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

- i. The farmers' market consultant assisted us in the development of the job description for the market manager, training the market manager in general trends of the market field and supporting the development of the manager through recommending peer-to-peer trainings or conference attendance, in the creation of the surveys we did with residents in both years, in analysis of the survey findings, and with board development. See section 1.iii.a for information about how the contractual part-time market manager has helped stabilize the market and increased the number of vendors at the market.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? We created large posters detailing both 2015 and 2016 data on market sales, vendors, number of customers, and average number of miles produce traveled to the market. These posters are displayed at the market. Our successful 2016 metrics were announced in press releases and sponsor letters at the end of the market season. We plan to do the same at the end of 2017.
- ii. To whom did you publicize the results? Market customers, vendors, and sponsors. Press releases went to most media outlets in north Louisiana.
- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? Spring/summer average of 828 customers per market day; unknown number from press releases.

*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?
 - a. In 2016 we collected data through a survey about grocery shopping habits in the community in order to try to determine how to reach those shoppers who do not attend the market, as well as to understand the demographic of those who do attend. In March 2017, we sent a very similar survey out in order to do a comparison between years and collect feedback on how we did in 2016.
- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
 - a. Some comments we received from our 2017 survey include:
 - 1. I am pleased with the overall selection and appreciate the variety.
 - 2. I love having access to fresh veggies and bread. Also, the plants.
 - 3. I love Susan Renner and Pebals Farms because I they raise their products as naturally as possible without chemical pesticides and fertilizers.
 - 4. It is nice that there is a site that includes smaller growers.
 - b. Some comments we received from our 2016 survey (before the market opened for the 2016 season):

1. I will shop at the farmers market more often due to its new location.
2. The Farmer's Market offers a great service to the community. Fresh food and a time to visit with people.
3. Would love to see more produce with no pesticides.
4. We love shopping local...especially vegetables!
5. I love meeting friends at the market (sellers and buyers).
6. I appreciate when sellers will create smaller baskets of items for those of us buying for only 1 person.
7. Really like having the Farmers Market as a shopping option.
8. I would love to see meat and dairy options at market!

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: X
- 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).
 - a. The board has grown much more comfortable with outreach and measuring success since the beginning of this grant. The addition of the market manager has meant that the board can still assist in the market day's duties as needed, but can spend more time on outreach, on organizational duties and planning future seasons. However, getting the board to use the raw survey data collected to create a fully formed marketing plan remains difficult; in many cases, we were unable to translate many of the recommendations offered by our consultant into a plan of action. Part of the issue is that because of the largely rural area of Ruston, we could not find savvy marketing people nearby to work with to build our plan. We may decide to add a marketing firm from another location, as our consultant was able to supply some names of firms who have worked with markets across the US. Still, the skills to know how to pick a firm and work with one are still beyond most of the board's comfort level.
 - b. The support of the USDA through this grant has helped the market manage the move to the building location in 2016 much more successfully. The market has a much more prominent role in the city of Ruston and in the region because of the successful transition from a smaller, parking lot market to a branded building market with amenities, some of which were purchased with grant funds (picnic tables, vendor tables, safety equipment, etc.).
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: We far exceeded expectations on our goals so this is not applicable.
- 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. When we added a market manager, she amped up our social media profiles which in turn enticed more customers than ever before to our market. We had to then ensure we had weekly entertainment both for adults and children. We wanted to make it more of a destination than simply a shopping place. Community groups stepped up to help with children's activities but we had to scramble for musical and other types of adult entertainment. So the lesson learned is to set up a yearly calendar of entertainment.

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. The added capacity of a professional market manager will continue to be paid through fundraising and income generated from booth fees. Her addition has deepened the relationship with community partners, which have enthusiastically joined or helped at the market. We intend to retain both the market manager position and an assistant manager position. Plans are underway to experiment with adding an additional market day during the week in the months of June and July 2018, when produce is at its peak as well as is customer interest. We are also continuing to explore the idea of becoming a year-round market since north central Louisiana has no year-round markets presently. The marketing strategy will be added to in future years using the surveys of the project to do outreach to targeted populations.
- 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. The market hopes to build a long-term marketing plan from the two years of surveys in this grant. Focus groups of non-market shoppers would assist our markets and markets of our type.