

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 LFPP staff 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>	September 30, 2014 through March 31, 2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Sue Schwartz
Authorized Representative Phone:	336-373-2149
Authorized Representative Email:	Sue.schwartz@greensboro-nc.gov
Recipient Organization Name:	City of Greensboro
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Fresh Food Access Plan for Greensboro. This project will produce a strategic plan to improve access to regionally and locally produced fresh food in areas of Greensboro designated as food deserts.
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-NC-0107
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Greensboro North Carolina
Total Awarded Budget:	\$25,000

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: Russ Clegg; Email: Russ.clegg@greensboro-nc.gov; Phone: 336-373-2211

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: Analyze the local and regional fresh food market**

- a. Progress Made: 100%

- b. Impact on Community: *High*.

Food scarcity in Greensboro manifests itself in three ways:

- *high rates of residents unable to afford food;*
- *69,695 residents live in “food deserts” where high poverty levels and a lack of stores makes it difficult for many to buy healthful foods; and*
- *pieces missing from our food system that make our local food economy less efficient.*

This plan’s focus is on the second of these issues, finding long-term improvements to the food system.

The plan’s key findings include:

- *Consumers in food deserts have access to a variety of convenience stores that do not carry fresh food options.*
- *Greensboro is lacking in the local food business enterprises that connect growers with consumers, such as food hubs, commercial kitchens, and local-food distributors.*
- *Despite the fact that agriculture is an important industry in North Carolina, there are few economic incentives for farmers to grow produce for local sales. Most of what is grown are commodity crops.*
- *Consumers need to be better educated on how to prepare and cook fresh produce in order to increase demand.*

The plan’s recommendations are based on the gaps and barriers identified in the planning process, and on a six-part food system model that includes producers, aggregators, distributors, retailers, consumers, and the waste stream. Though the LFPP focuses on Local Food Business Enterprises, recommendations cover the entire system so that the report will be a resource for the entire community and the recommendations leverage each other.

The impact of clearly defining the different aspects of food hardship has been to provide areas of focus to a complex problem. This includes building strong community support for long-term solutions, and helping groups organize their implementation efforts.

- ii. **Goal/Objective 2: Identify fresh food gaps and barriers in neighborhoods identified as food deserts**

- a. Progress Made: 100%

- b. Impact on Community: *High*.

The plan identified barriers to consumers looking for fresh, local food as well as to entrepreneurs looking to start new businesses and farmers looking to diversify beyond commodity crops, which is the predominant type of farming in North Carolina and Guilford County. Barriers include:

- *A lack of retail*

Lack of access to food is part of a larger issue of a lack of retail in food deserts. Most of the retail stores in Greensboro are clustered together, and grocery store locations are similar. A windshield survey of select commercial corridors in food deserts showed multiple vacant store fronts that could be used to sell food, if the demographics and other data used by stores in making location decisions were stronger.

- *Lack of Certainty for Farmers*

Farmers are unlikely to plan and invest in producing food for the local market if they are not confident that they will be able to sell their produce and make a profit. Currently, there is not enough quantifiable demand to provide a strong incentive to increase growing produce locally.

- *Lack of Known Demand*

The demand for local and fresh produce is not well tested. Across all income levels, there is increasing demand for prepared foods either in retail stores, restaurants or through delivery services. There are multiple explanations for this, such as the amount of time and knowledge required to prepare fresh food, and the perceived higher cost of local produce.

- *Transportation*

For households without access to a vehicle, accessing fresh food in stores takes more time and coordination. City's bus routes do not necessarily serve as a direct route from neighborhoods to food shopping locations, and limit the number of bags that passengers are allowed to carry aboard.

- *Product mix in existing stores*

Small retail stores in food deserts do not carry significant produce for a variety of reasons, including physical set up, supplier control of shelf space, and limited connections to local food producers.

The plan studies gaps in the food system as well. Addressing these gaps will help mitigate some of the barriers listed above, and are in keeping with USDA program goals of assisting local food business enterprises.

- *Distribution Points*

There are few markets, retail outlets or other distribution points for local produce.

- *Food hubs*

The Greensboro area does not have facilities to aggregate produce from different farms, to coordinate the growing of different crops, or to repackage goods or create value-added products.

- *Commercial kitchens*

There are few spaces available for farmers or entrepreneurs to turn local produce into other products. These facilities can also be used for consumer education, another plan recommendation, and for food pantry's and community gardens to use in preparing excess fresh food for freezing or canning for long-term storage.

These findings impact the community by supporting current efforts to strengthen the local food economy, such as opening a commercial kitchen and conducting mobile markets. A second benefit comes from the collected information on "best practices" and the local conversations that they have created. There is a growing, national body of knowledge on specific topics such as opening food hubs

and incentive programs to sell fresh foods in convenience stores. The community will benefit from building on this knowledge base and learning from other communities.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Establish Appropriate Benchmark Data

- a. Progress Made: 100%
- b. Impact on Community: *Medium.*

The plan puts gaps found in the food system in the context of other communities in the state to give perspective on what improvements to the food system would be most beneficial. Numerical and anecdotal data was collected to better understand the food system, which can be used as a baseline to measure future implementation. This includes the types of food grown in Guilford County and North Carolina, the existing retail environment in Greensboro and how that impacts conditions in food deserts, and information on small stores operating in food deserts that could sell produce.

Effective implementation will depend on accurately understanding the financial goals and challenges of food businesses. The broader conversation about the economics of the food system has been beneficial in helping community groups understand where to focus their efforts.

iv. Goal/Objective 4: Develop strategies that support the expansion of existing local food business enterprises and incentivize the development of new local food businesses

- a. Progress Made: 100%.
- b. Impact on the Community: *High.*

Strategies have been developed for each of the 6 elements in the food system, including producers, aggregators, distributors, retailers, consumers and the waste stream. Taken together these strategies strengthen the entire food system and reinforce each other; independently they serve as a source of direction of different organizations working on food access in Greensboro.

Producer

- Conduct a “Know Your Farmer Campaign”
- Conduct ongoing production market-gap research

Aggregator/Processor

- Establish a local food product entrepreneurship program for youth and adults
- Establish a food hub
- Establish community commercial kitchens in food deserts

Distributor

- Build and sustain relationships between producers, distributors and institutional customers such as local hospitals, colleges and the school system

Retailer

- Establish a fresh food incentive program for existing retail venues in food deserts
- Conduct ongoing retail-market gap research

Consumer

- Conduct a comprehensive, targeted consumer education campaign

Waste Stream

- Build market acceptance of “imperfect” local food products
- Support food waste reduction entrepreneurship

These strategies have impacted the community by providing focus and agreement on specific issues and have aided in understanding what roles different community organizations can play in addressing them. The breadth and depth of the strategies reinforces the need to address the problem comprehensively.

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.

As this was a planning grant, no jobs have been created or retained.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: N/A
- ii. Number of jobs retained: N/A
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: N/A
- iv. Number of markets expanded: N/A
- v. Number of new markets established: N/A
- vi. Market sales increased by \$0 and increased by 0%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: N/A
 - a. Percent Increase: N/A

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?

The plan identified likely consumers through interviews of food-desert residents and convenience store customers. Businesses that were likely to participate more in the local food economy were identified and interviewed. The process led to an expanded understanding of ethnic food needs and the importance of meeting the needs and interests of residents facing food hardships instead of attempting to impose solutions without cultural relevance or created without their input.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?

Greensboro's community partners span a wide range of public and private interests, including:

- *Guilford County Department of Public Health*
- *Guilford County Agricultural Extension Office*
- *Guilford Food Council*
- *University of North Carolina at Greensboro and North Carolina A&T University*
- *Community Food Task Force*
- *Various neighborhood associations.*

- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?

The plan's steering committee guided the analysis of the local food economy, crafted the recommendations, and guided public outreach. The committee included representation from the Guilford Food Council, Guilford County Department of Public Health, food desert residents, an urban farmer and market organizer, and several City of Greensboro departments. Public outreach included targeted interviews and surveys of community groups such as a local "Rock and Wrap It Up" team that recycles heated food from school cafeterias, and government organizations such as the Agriculture Extension Office. These interviews greatly expanded the plan's understanding of the local food system, and created connections across a broad spectrum of interests.

- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

Connections formed with neighborhood groups and community leaders are key to implementing the plans recommendations, particularly with consumer education and outreach as new programs are developed.

City Council recently formed the Community Food Task Force to respond to food insecurity in the community. In addition to coordinating food distribution at City facilities, this task force includes community groups that have the capacity to begin implementing many of the plan's recommendations related to local food business enterprises. The City is coordinating with specific civic and business organizations to apply for an LFPP Implementation grant to support the expansion and creation of specific local food business enterprises.

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

The contractor played a key role in conducting one-on-one interviews of consumers, business owners and community leaders; attended food-access related events such as the "Local Food Storm" networking event held at UNCG to gather information and make contacts; conducted surveys at community events; and summarized information. These contributions were critical to the formation of the baseline data and development of the strategies.

Efforts included:

Interviews at community events that allowed for open conversation around a common set of questions.

Locations included:

- *the Ritz Store in Glenwood;*
- *City Market and First Friday, both city-wide events in downtown;*
- *Neighborhood association meetings in Benbow Park, Neal Town and Old L. Richardson;*
- *3 food markets: the Corner Market in Lindley Park, Glenwood Farmer's Market, and the Mobile Farmer's Market.*

Participants were asked what fresh food needs the community has, how community advocates want to be involved, and why fresh food matters to the community. Several themes emerged:

- *Access to fresh food is partly a transportation issue. If the base of available stores cannot be expanded, then making it easier to take public transportation to existing stores and increasing the number of mobile markets would be beneficial.*
- *Education is a key component; many do not know how to cook, store food, garden, or shop efficiently. Benefits will include reduced waste of food, savings of time and money, and better health. These efforts have to address the interest of the participants to be effective.*
- *Expanding the number of consumers is an opportunity to support local businesses and keep money in the neighborhood.*

Customer surveys were conducted at five convenience stores located in food deserts to build on the data collected by Guilford County. The focus of the surveys was on where people shop, and where they buy produce. The full results from the survey are in the plan's appendix. These interviews yielded some important findings:

- *71% shopped for households and not just themselves.*
- *65% of respondents were between 21 and 49.*

- 48% shopped for children younger than 15.
- 90% had visited a grocery store in the past 6 months to buy food.
- 69% said that the grocery store was where they most often bought food; 11% said a dollar store.
- The top four reasons for shopping most frequently where they do were its proximity to their home, good prices, good quality and cleanliness.
- 76% said they typically bought fruit at a grocery store, 68% said they most typically bought vegetables in a grocery store. There was a wide variety of answers to how frequently people bought food at the store in which they were being surveyed. To the question why they shop there, 34% said “Close to Home” and 15% said “Good Prices”.
- 56% used their car or a friend’s car to get to the store, but 31% reported walking as well. 53% said they could get to the store in 5 minutes or less.
- As to why they did not buy fruits and vegetables at the store, 40% answered “Not in stock”, 33% answered “Like other food” and 18% answered “Too expensive”.

These responses suggest some existing consumer demand for produce in convenience stores based on the number of respondents that buy produce in grocery stores.

Outreach to producers included an online survey of participants in NC State University’s “Retail Ready” program for farmers, interviews with farmers at the Yanceyville Curb Market, conversations with community leaders involved with community gardens, the Guilford County Agricultural Extension Office, and an urban farmer serving on the steering committee.

Several issues were common to the conversations:

- *The need for a food hub and commercial kitchen facility;*
- *The importance of educating consumers on the benefits of fresh, local produce and how to use it;*
- *All participating farmers responded that “A consistent source of sales” would support current or expanded operations.*

Interviews were conducted with local businesses, including restaurants, distributors, and grocers that sell local produce in areas that would be food deserts without their presence. Although there were a wide variety of perspectives, some themes emerged:

- *Grocery stores need to sell produce but perishable items are frequently a loss-leader section of the store.*
- *It is important to have access to market research and understand your niche.*
- *It is difficult to integrate local produce into existing distribution networks for large chains, and it can be difficult for local stores to find consistent sources of local produce.*
- *Fresh produce is often more expensive and harder to procure; marketing needs to emphasize the value that buying local adds to the local economy and the increased quality of fresh produce.*

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes
 - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

The planning process, the plan's findings and recommendations, and the draft plan have been publicized through public meetings, public hearings, online surveys, the City website, and presentations to community organizations.

ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

Early in the process staff made presentations to the Greensboro Neighborhood Congress, the Greensboro Planning Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission to get input on outreach opportunities. The plan's findings and recommendations were publicized at a meeting open to the public on June 10th; the meeting was preceded by an article in the Greensboro News-Record and publicized by several TV news outlets. About 40 people attended the meeting and gave feedback on the plan.

The Greensboro City Council adopted the plan on August 18 after a presentation and public comments. The Planning Board held a public hearing on the plan at their July 18 meeting. The plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission on August 12. Both boards voted unanimously to recommend adoption of the plan. The plan was also presentations to the Community Food Task Force prior to adoption. The plan is available on the City website and was shared with all that had participated or expressed interest in the project.

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

More than 200 stakeholders participated in the public open house, community events, and hearings. Approximately 40 people attended the open house meeting in June, and emails with links to the plan and survey were sent to all that had participated in or expressed interest in the process, which includes well over 100 individuals and organizations.

**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?

The plan's recommended strategies received public comments in two venues. A public meeting was held on June 10, 2015 at the Peeler Recreation Center on Phillips Avenue. This drop-in style meeting was attended by approximately 40 people, representing a wide range of interest. The goal of the meeting was to vet the proposed strategies, get further suggestions and feedback, and to bring people concerned about food access together to make connections and discuss ideas. An online survey garnered 103 responses. The survey asked some general questions about food access and then asked respondents to rate the plan's recommendations. This information can be found in the index of the plan.

ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

Overall there is very broad interest in responding to food hardship in the community and to supporting increased local production as a way to becoming more self-sufficient. At the open house, attendants were given 3 sticky dots and asked to put them on the recommendations they thought would have the most impact. Top vote getters included:

13 votes Establish a Local Food Product Entrepreneurship Program.

Establish a retail fresh food incentive program for existing retail venues in food deserts.

12 votes Conduct comprehensive, targeted, consumer education campaign.

10 votes *Conduct a Know Your Farmer Campaign.*

9 Votes *Establish a food hub.*
Build Market acceptance of imperfect food products.

From the other comments received, some common themes emerged:

- *Better and more consistent connections between producers and distribution points are needed*
- *Education is key, about a variety of topics including nutrition, cooking, and farming*
- *The community needs to be more aware of available resources such as the Agricultural Extension Agency*
- *Innovation is important, for example with aquaponics (growing produce in water)*

Here is a summary of responses from the online survey:

- *96% said they ate fresh vegetables; 3 respondents did not due to their high cost, and 1 because they do not like them.*
- *15% reported having difficulty accessing fresh fruits and vegetables; 8 respondents said this was due to the high cost, and 3 each said this was due to not having stores that sell them near where they live and that they do not have adequate transportation.*

75 respondents ranked 8 of the strategies. The rankings demonstrate general support for all of the strategies vetted at this point in the process.

Strategy	Average Ranking
<i>Conduct a "know your farmer" campaign so that people will have more access to fresh foods.</i>	5.87
<i>Establish a program to help youth and adults start businesses with local food products.</i>	5.03
<i>Save food from being wasted by saving and using food that is good but does not look perfect enough for stores.</i>	4.55
<i>Establish community commercial kitchens in food deserts to support food education, business ideas and community cooking events.</i>	4.30
<i>Establish a fresh-food incentive program for existing stores in food deserts.</i>	4.2
<i>Educate residents in food deserts on how to economically shop, cook, and store fresh, local foods.</i>	4.16
<i>Establish connections between growers, food distributors and schools hospitals and other institutions to create more demand for local food.</i>	3.57
<i>Establish a food hub to give local farmers and growers a place to package and sell their product and increase the supply of local foods.</i>	3.54

8. Budget Summary:

- 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: YES
- Did the project generate any income? N/A

a. 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. 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).

It was important to include a wide variety of voices in this process as there was a steep learning curve to really understanding the food system and economy, and where support from the City and other partners would be most useful. Providing opportunities for networking has been and will continue to be valuable, as there are many organizations that will benefit from working together and may not be aware of each other.

Because of the broad nature of food access issues in Greensboro, it was difficult to remain focused on retail access issues. While it was important to understand the overall food economy in order to craft the plan's recommendations, it is equally important not to get sidetracked on paths that were not aligned with stated project goals.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: N/A
- 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:
 - Stay focused. *Because of the broad nature of food access interests, remaining focused on the intended outcomes is key.*
 - Be flexible. *The number and diversity of interested stakeholders were a challenge, but ultimately served as a strength, yielding a range of authentic and practical strategies.*

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.

The information developed through this plan will help with other grant applications as they become available. The members of the steering committee are involved in other organizations focused on food-access and will be able to use the plan as a resource in those groups. Conversations are ongoing with community organizations that participated in this plan, such as the downtown Farmer's Market, to partner on upcoming projects. The City expects to use the plan's findings as the basis for an application to the USDA LFPP Implementation Grant in the spring of 2016.

- 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?

We will work with our community partners to prioritize implementation strategies see what plan recommendations they can act on, and possibly partner with them on an LFPP Implementation grant if there are gaps in funding and capacity that the grant can fill.

Attachment: Flyer for Public Meeting



Come to the table...

Bring ideas and share feedback on strategies to help increase access to fresh, local foods in Greensboro's food deserts.
We value your input!

June 10, 2015 • drop in from 4-7 pm
Peeler Recreation Center
1300 Sykes Avenue
(off of Phillips Avenue)

The City is working on a plan funded by a US Department of Agriculture grant to improve retail access to fresh local foods in food deserts.

www.greensboro-nc.gov/FoodDeserts

