

**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, 2014 – September 29, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Lydia Sisson
Authorized Representative Phone:	978-455-2620
Authorized Representative Email:	Lydia@millcitygrows.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Mill City Grows
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Mill City Grows' "Fresh for All: Expanding Farmers' Markets in Lowell"
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-FMPPX-MA-0078
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Lowell, MA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$100,000

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: **Goal #1 – Increase access to locally produced and healthy foods for low-income residents**

Progress Made:

Mill City Grows’ Mobile Market Program worked diligently to increase access to locally produced and healthy foods for low-income residents, during the grant period. Through a multipronged approach we worked with local farmers, local residents, and community partners to simultaneously increase low-income residents’ access to local farm products while also increasing distribution for local farmers. This multipronged approach included: building strong relationships with local farmers and sourcing their products weekly throughout the year; expanding marketing opportunities for farmers through increasing sales potential; extending the marketing season; increasing accessibility for low-income residents by expanding our market stops into low access neighborhoods.

Our progress includes:

-Increased gross revenue of Mobile Market Program from \$27,207.03 in 2014 to \$46,825.00 in 2015 and \$52,700 through the end of the grant period in 2016, putting us on track to increase revenues to over \$60,000 by the end of 2016, our original 2016 goal.

-Successfully extended the market season through the end of November at one of our main stops, the Lowell Community Health Center for two seasons.

-Identified under-served areas of Lowell that didn’t currently have a market location and worked with new community partners to bring three new stops to those neighborhoods in 2016 for a total of 9 weekly stops in the 2016 season.

-Purchased and installed infrastructure upgrades including solar panels and refrigeration for the Mobile Market to increase the variety of offerings at each market location with local dairy, eggs, and meat products.

-Purchased \$13,664 worth of product from local farmers in the 2016 season to sell at our Mobile Market including: apples, berries, corn, sweet potatoes, squash, honey, eggs, meat, cheese and dairy, maple syrup, potatoes, beets, garlic, onions, and other products.

Impact on Community:

Mill City Grows’ Mobile Market has created new access points for Lowell residents. In 2015 we increased the number of markets held from 120 the previous year to 203, for an increase of 83 new markets. In 2016 we have held 225 markets thus far, for a year to date increase of 22 markets, with more to be held before the end of the calendar year.

Our Market Bucks Program increased the participation of low-income customers. From 2014 to 2015 we doubled the amount of matching for SNAP, WIC, and Senior Farmer’s Market transactions from \$544 in 2014 to \$1,062 in 2015. We have more than doubled our matching in 2016, as we have offered \$3,766 in matching funds in 2016 to date.

Increased all subsidized transactions from \$1,138.75 in 2014 to \$5,120.76 in 2015 and \$9,834 in 2016; increasing the percentage of subsidized sales from 4% of overall sales in 2014; 11% in 2015; and 19% in 2016. All of these results show that more residents are accessing fresh, local food and that low-income residents using SNAP, WIC, and Senior Coupons are increasing their access with our Market Bucks Program.

- ii. Goal/Objective 2: **Develop new, year round farmers’ markets in the city of Lowell that can support and attract new farm vendors**

Progress Made:

During the grant period Mill City Grows worked in partnership with Mill No.5 (a shopping and entertainment location) to host The Farm Market, the areas only indoor, year round farmers market. The FMPP grant allowed us to pilot this market during the winter of 2014-2015. The market was so successful that it became year round after the first season and has continued to grow and stabilize over the past year. Other progress includes:

- Continued the year-round Farm Market at Mill No. 5 through its second winter season (2015-16) without interruption.
- Increased market transactions from \$1,488 in the 2014/15 period to \$2,098 in the 2015-16 period.
- Maintained a steady cadre of vendors at Lowell's only, year-round market, constantly hosting 8-15 vendors every Sunday including produce, meat, dairy, eggs, and value added products.
- Used the market as a mouthpiece for furthering community engagement with both MCG education events, as well as community partner events.
- Served 300-500 customers at the indoor market on a weekly basis

Impact on Community:

The addition of a year round farmers' market in Lowell, MA has added a year round supply of fresh, local food to our community while providing a market outlet for 15 small businesses within the area. The market was very well received by our community as weekly there are 300-500 market goers and we are selling out of product consistently. This success has now launched new enterprises, including a market within Mill No. 5 featuring local produce, meat, cheese, eggs, dairy, locally prepared foods, and groceries for sale. We have also seen new farms pop up in the area including an indoor hydroponics operation out of a Freight Farm right here in Lowell. It is clear that during the grant period we have had a significant increase of interest and support in local foods, expanding market opportunities and developing a strong customer base.

iii. **Goal/Objective 3: Increase incentive program redemption rates of SNAP, WIC & Senior Coupons, broaden outreach, and educational opportunities for market goers**

Progress Made:

- We were able to quadruple the amount of revenue generated in SNAP/WIC sales from \$1,138.75 in 2014 to \$5,120.76 in 2015 and \$9,834 so far in 2016 as well as increasing the amount of matching for these transactions from \$544 in 2014 to \$1,062 in 2015 and now \$3,766 in 2016.
- Increased the percentage of subsidized sales from 4% of over all sales in 2014 to 11% in 2015 and 19% in 2016.
- Performed markets at the Lowell Senior Center, Lowell Department of Transitional Assistance, D'Youville Senior Wellness Center's Walk-a-thon, Lowell Housing Authority, and River Place Towers (a low-income housing building in Lowell) and provided eight nutrition/cooking demonstrations in partnership with a local youth organization and program partner, UTEC.
- 12 taste tests, cooking demos and farm to table cooking classes hosted at markets by J-Squad, our youth summer employment program.
- 5 Farm to Table cooking classes for families at Lowell Community Health Center
- Created recipe cards for the market that highlighted 26 simple recipes, utilizing ingredients commonly found at local farmers markets that were given away to customers with their purchases at the market and educational events.
- 101 outreach events in 2016. This was part of a successfully executed, season-long outreach campaign that featured flyers, local television spots, newspaper advertisements and publications in local magazines.

Impact on Community:

Through our Market Bucks Program and by increasing the number of farmers' markets we are able to create expanded opportunities for residents to purchase fresh, healthy, local foods close to their home and expand the reach of their SNAP, WIC, and Senior farmers' market coupon dollars so that they can access fresh, local food for more days within the month/season.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: 3
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 2
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 15
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 9
 - v. Number of new markets established: 4
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$32,792 and increased by 100%. (this is an annualized number)
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 30
 - a. Percent Increase: 25%

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, we worked with numerous partners, see below, to outreach within the Lowell community. Specifically we worked to target members of our large Southeast Asian population, through providing translation of materials; to our elderly population, by bringing our Mobile Market to the area Senior Center and senior housing; and to our low-income residents by outreaching through the Department of Transitional Assistance and the WIC Program.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners?

We are currently working closely with a large number of community partners. Our Mobile Market host sites (Lowell Community Health Center, Circle Health, Mill No. 5, D'Youville Senior Wellness Center, Community Teamwork Inc, Lowell Housing Authority, Princeton Properties, Enterprise Bank), our event and outreach partners (Coalition for a Better Acre, Made in Lowell, Western Avenue Studios, UMass Lowell, Lowell Career Center, Department of Transitional Assistance, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association) and our community resources (Lowell Transitional Living Center, Merrimack Valley Food Bank).

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

In 2016 we have participated in 101 outreach events to ensure that as many members of our community are aware of our fresh food access program as possible. These outreach events range from community meetings to events, potlucks, clean-ups, and more.

We have found that by partnering with local organizations that actively participate in our outreach efforts, we are able to increase not only our overall sales at those locations, but we also are able to educate and engage an even wider audience than ever. In the period of this report in comparison to the same timeframe a year prior, we were able to increase our market revenue from \$9,587.64 in the Oct-Apr of 2014/15 to \$15,406.36 in the Oct-Apr of 2015/16.

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

By building a strong network of engaged site hosts with the ability to contact far more stakeholders than we could ever reach alone, we plan on increasing gross market revenue substantially, offer more educational opportunities, and continue to increase access to fresh, local produce to all of Lowell's residents.

- 5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? NO

- 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 used surveys to help us determine new products to carry at our markets and new locations for our market. We did online surveys.
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Numerous survey respondents wanted us to add eggs, meat, cheese, and more fruit to our markets, which helped us add three new farm partnerships to expand our offerings.

- 8. Budget Summary:
 - i. As part of the FMPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:
 - ii. Did the project generate any income? NO
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

- 9. Lessons Learned:
 - i. Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).

We have also come across a few challenges this year, which we are working to overcome. First, we had a slow start to the year due to lack of winter production. This occurred because our access to greenhouse space was greatly reduced and we also were short staffed on our Farm Team. A full-time Farm Manager was hired in April of 2016, which put us on track in terms of preparing for spring and summer plantings, however we are looking to ensure that this position is filled throughout the coming winter, and will be posting this position in the next few weeks. We have also realized that the key to increasing SNAP, WIC

and Senior Coupon redemption is to outreach to partner agencies who work directly with the people receiving these benefits. We had a slow start to the year in terms of serving low-income clients, and had to work on a deep outreach plan in order to get these numbers up. We also learned that longevity at market stops can sometimes be more important than being located in a high traffic but low convenience area. We have lots of repeat customers at our Mill No. 5 indoor Market, one of our longest running sites. We also have had great success at some of our sites adjacent to housing developments.

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

We were able to achieve all goals in the grant period.

- 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:

Throughout the implementation of this project, great communication throughout the community was key to our success. Publishing the schedule, sharing with partners, providing translation, doing as much in person outreach as possible. All of these were key tactics to the success of the program.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

We are very excited about the success of the Mobile Market, and will continue to expand and run the market in the coming year and beyond, increasing our outreach to the most vulnerable populations. We plan to make some enhancement to our existing vehicle to make stops even more accessible to elderly and disabled customers. Another expansion of the project will be to integrate corner stores into our client base, working with them to deliver weekly produce so that their regular customers will also have access to affordable, fresh and healthy produce. The majority of Lowell corners stores have less than 3 varieties of produce available, but they remain the main purveyor of food for the majority of Lowell residents.

- 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 see our expansion into working with corner stores as a next logical step of our goals to change the food system in Lowell. While our Mobile Market has been exceedingly successful, and will continue to run well into the future, we know that we cannot possible serve over 100,000 residents with our vehicle. A program that would help local Mobile Markets/farmers partner with corner stores would be extremely helpful to ensuring that healthy food is more available to vulnerable inner-city residents who frequently can't find the transportation necessary to get to a grocery store or are not able to get to our Mobile Market due to location, or timing.