

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>	FINAL REPORT: September 30, 2014 – September 30, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Christie Balch
Authorized Representative Phone:	608.843.0580
Authorized Representative Email:	cbalch@crossroadscommunityfoodnetwork.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Crossroads Community Food Network
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Cultivating New Food Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Relationships for Local Food in the Takoma Langley Crossroads
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-MD-0082
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Takoma Park, MD
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,430

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.**

Project Goal: Build long-term economic vitality in the Takoma Langley Crossroads by increasing the self-reliance and equity of the food system and linking food entrepreneurs to local producers

i. Objective 1: TRAIN FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

a. Progress Made:

- 72 aspiring food entrepreneurs graduated from the Microenterprise Training Program (MTP)
- 10 entrepreneurs completed business plans
- 7 aspiring food entrepreneurs are currently waiting for the next offering of MTP
- Educational packets, roadmap binder, and other supporting documents were created and translated

b. Impact on Community:

MTP assisted nontraditional, historically marginalized entrepreneurs through a) the creation of applicable and culturally appropriate materials, b) scheduling evening and weekend classes to accommodate working schedules and family obligations, and c) providing individual mentoring and technical assistance. Initially designed as a three-month bilingual workshop series to increase business skills, MTP adapted to the specific needs of participants and was ultimately offered as a single-language course in either English or Spanish. The length of programming varied (from 3 months up to 5 months, according to the needs of the individual cohorts). Nonetheless, the core classes remained the same: Food Safety, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Plans, Licensures and Permits, Registering and Insuring Businesses, Tracking Expenses, Marketing, and Packaging and Labeling Requirements.

The services provided through this project enabled participants to move beyond simple awareness of licensure towards mastery of key concepts and procedures for keeping food for public consumption safe. Within the industry, only those with capital can readily access this basic but vital information; however, with this grant, we increased low-income entrepreneurs’ access to these principles. Upon completion, participants received an educational binder along with “the roadmap” outlining the steps to opening a food business. The binder also serves as a document organizer and a tool to assist limited English-speaking participants’ interactions with food inspectors. These materials were created at an appropriate reading level for our target participants and were provided in both English and Spanish.

Over the course of this grant, MTP has become a valuable source of reliable and accessible information for participants and partnering organizations. All educational materials—including Maryland’s Official Guides for the HACCP Plan—have been translated into Spanish. Our dedication to translation and documentation of information dictated from the Montgomery County’s Department of Health and Human Services satisfied a need within the community. In fact, over half of all participants (42) came through referrals from other nonprofit organizations working towards creating

sustainable businesses because it was difficult to obtain accessible, understandable, and consistent information specific to starting a food business. MTP filled a vital gap within the DC metro area for accessible and accurate information on starting a food business. Our staff participated as guest speakers on the topic of producing value-added goods at events hosted by: Empowered Women International (EWI), Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC), Life Asset, CASA de Maryland, and Future Harvest – Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture.

ii. Objective 2: GROW NEW BUSINESSES

a. Progress Made:

- 44 participants became Certified Food Managers through Montgomery County and/or Prince George's County, MD
- 16 participants are working with partners to improve their credit and financial literacy
- 8 entrepreneurs completed HACCP plans
- 7 new businesses were inaugurated
- 254 hours of one-on-one assistance from project staff was provided to 44 participants
- 5 entrepreneurs benefited from using Scratch DC Kitchen, a licensed kitchen space; 3 entrepreneurs benefited from using the local Meals on Wheels Kitchen
- 1 entrepreneur opened her own restaurant El Sol in Silver Spring (obtaining a Food Service Facility License)
- 1 entrepreneur obtained the Mobile Food Unit License for El Carreton (obtaining a Mobile Food Service Facility License)

b. Impact on Community:

The LFPP grant helped us leverage additional funding and program support—though a different funding source, we were able to offer scholarships for ServSafe Certification courses.

One important impact has been the strong networking relationships built among participants. It is among the top reasons why participants see MTP as valuable, as program graduate Xavier states, “I can't thank you enough for all the help that you provided me and to actually make my business get started [...] I will try to help out others the way you helped us!” This project provided the opportunities for all participants – both English and Spanish speakers—to share ideas, feedback, resources, and vending opportunities. Contrary to traditional competitive notions of business politics, time and time again, our entrepreneurs assisted each other during vending events, despite being each other's competitors. This camaraderie resulted in moral support and monetary savings, as many participants split application fees for events they partnered on and referred contractors—such as web designers, printers, and workers—to each other.

However, the most valuable relationships built were between the entrepreneurs and health inspectors. Agents from Montgomery County and Prince George's County presented workshops to participants as part of our program and were supportive in listening to the concerns of the community regarding legal expectations for new businesses. It cannot be underestimated how strong and important this sense of inclusion and community has been to the success of our participants and their businesses.

iii. Objective 3: STRENGTHEN MARKETS FOR LOCALLY-GROWN AND PRODUCED FOODS

a. Progress Made:

- 4 MTP graduates sold at the Crossroads Farmers Market in year 1; and 6 MTP graduates sold at the market in year 2
- 9 entrepreneurs regularly procure products from 8 local farmers including: Potomac Vegetable Farms, Montoya's Farm, Toigo Orchards, Vegetales R.L., Tuckey's Mountain Grown, Good Sense Farm, Valle Produce, and ECO City Farms
- 20 entrepreneurs have diversified their marketing venues which include but are not limited to: Bread for the City, Montgomery County Agricultural Fairgrounds, Taste of Silver Spring, Taste of Wheaton, IMPACT Silver Spring, Rooting DC, and Future Harvest's Local Fare Faire
- 8 entrepreneurs and MTP staff have conducted healthy food demos at 10 different farmers markets, nonprofits, public schools, and other community organizations
- Whole Foods -Pentagon City, and AFI Silver currently carry a MTP product, Seedy Nutty

b. Impact on Community:

MTP, in partnership with the Crossroads Farmers Market (CFM), assisted in strengthening the market for locally grown and produced foods. Over 1,000 shoppers attend the market each week, and the opportunity to participate as a market vendor enabled participants to experience the advantages of supporting locally grown and produced products. MTP and CFM provided invaluable opportunities for peer-to-peer teaching, exchange of ideas and strategies for creating viable businesses that included procuring products from local farmers (who they came to regard as friends), venturing to new market venues (to share the experience with a friend), and diversify product selection to maximize profits. Having industry peers was a huge factor in the success of our entrepreneurs.

In fact, on an early evaluation, a participant stated, "more networking among participants could be a mini-market where we 'buy' from each other – or at least, test products, display and critique." CFM and MTP then became incubators for budding food businesses. Each participant, with the assistance of Program Manager and AmeriCorps VISTA, received marketing assistance that indirectly also promoted other farmers markets and community events in which they participated, such as: Port Towns Farmers Mercado, Greenbelt Farmers Market and Riverdale Park Farmers Market. Furthermore, entrepreneurs never missed the opportunity to promote their farmers, for example, "Kevin [from Tuckey's Mountain Grown] has the best peaches!" or "there's nothing like the tomatoes from Montoya [Montoya's Farm]."

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.

- Number of direct jobs created:** 15 (on average within their first 2 years entrepreneurs created 2-5 new jobs that include kitchen help, market help, webpage/communications assistance and graphic designers)
- Number of jobs retained:** 4 – Executive Director, Program Manager, 2 full-time employees of MTP graduates
- Number of indirect jobs created:** 165 (employees supported by our market vendors' businesses)
- Number of markets expanded:** 45

- v. **Number of new markets established:** 7 total new businesses were created (which expanded 45 new markets)
- vi. **Market sales increased by \$31,836** and increased by **90%**. Of the six vendors at CFM who took part in the MTP program, total sales increased from \$35,264 in October of 2013 to \$67,100 in September 2016. This is a 90% increase over the two years, with a 65% average annual increase in sales. The rate of sales increases varied by vendor, with some vendors having zero baseline sales. For those that did have baseline sales, the total increase for their sales between the two years was 6% to 114%.
- vii. **Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:** 143
 - c. **Percent Increase:** 429.6% (since the 27 calculated in the first Interim Report)

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. From the start, MTP brought in local minority entrepreneurs, many of which came from key partnering organizations: IMPACT Silver Spring and ECO City Farms. News of MTP spread quickly through the community via personal referrals from MTP participants, community organizations, and unofficial community leaders. We found that paper advertisements at local community centers or “centros comunitarios,” and libraries were the most effective ways of reaching Latino immigrant communities. Likewise, “unofficial” community leaders (either those working within the public school system and social service agencies, as well as notable community members) were extremely effective avenues for reaching marginalized populations. As noted above (1.i.b) the majority of MTP participants and entrepreneurs were direct referrals and/or the result of Crossroads staff members conducting verbal outreach at local community centers and organizations.

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

A huge factor in the success of this project has been the support of and from many community organizations, which include: Meals on Wheels of Takoma Park, Takoma Park Silver Spring Community Kitchen Coalition, Montgomery County Health and Human Services, Maryland Small Business Development Center, Latino Economic Development Center, LifeAsset, IMPACT Silver Spring, ECO City Farms, Fenton Street Market, Bilingual Hospitality Training Solutions, CHEER, Empowered Women International, CASA de Maryland, Rolling Terrace Elementary School *Padres Latinos* group, Forest Knolls Elementary, Mujeres Unidas de Langley Park, Long Branch Library, Scratch DC, and University of Maryland Extension.

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

Among the invaluable support, IMPACT Silver Spring, Long Branch Library, and Takoma Park Presbyterian Church provided physical space and staff support for MTP workshop series, information sessions, and staff offices. Technical assistance and professional guidance provided by the University of Maryland Extension, Maryland Small Business Development Center, LEDC, Life Asset, and Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services was instrumental in our ability to provide accurate and applicable information. Each partner provided assistance in the creation and translation of our curriculum and classroom instruction. Through this grant we were able to create a diverse and strong network of support. While many community partners strengthen entrepreneurs’

ability to choose an entity structure for his/her business, for example, MTP and Crossroads was able to focus on and assist with the specific issues related to running a food business that had been lacking in the DC metro area.

Bilingual Hospitality Training Solution (BHTS) played a vital role in the success of Latino entrepreneurs passing the ServSafe Food Manager's Certification and acquiring their Food Manager's Licenses. BHTS shared studying materials and curriculum content to create the majority of the "Food Safety" educational packet. Many of our limited resource, Latino participants had little to no formal education, which made taking this standardized test difficult. Therefore, 2 workshops ("Food Safety" and "HACCP Plans") within MTP were devoted to food safety to introduce technical concepts to participants. This method of increasing prior exposure to key food safety concepts enabled 11 out of 13 Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs, in the last offering of ServSafe, to pass the exam on the first try (which results in about \$150 worth of saving for each participant, if they had to take the exam again. Unfortunately, the two participants who did not pass were Indigenous People of the Americas, whose second language was Spanish.)

Similarly, we are in debt to Meals on Wheels of Takoma Park and Scratch DC whose partnership enabled us to prove 10 entrepreneurs with licensed kitchen space to begin and to develop their businesses.

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

Our continued partnership with LifeAsset, LEDC, and EWI will be vital to the development and strengthening of entrepreneurs' business plans, and ability to access capital when needed. Similarly, we expect that our partners will continue to refer entrepreneurs in need of technical assistance and a licensed kitchen space. Also, Meals on Wheels of Takoma Park will continue to temporarily house our entrepreneurs until the TPSS Community Kitchen opens next spring.

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

No.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes

i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? MTP programming and successes, and individual MTP entrepreneurs have been publicized through CCFN's website, e-newsletter, Twitter, and Facebook page, as well as: MFANN Fighting Hunger in Maryland Conference, Montgomery Leadership Conference, Montgomery County Food Council, Takoma Park Presbyterian Church (the site of the future TPSS Community Kitchen) newsletters, MTP update emails to participants, CCFN Open Houses and Ground Opening Events, and CCFN community information booths at farmers markets.

ii. To whom did you publicize the results? CCFN's mailing list and social media followers, community partners listed above, local community professionals working towards the economic health of the community, local legislators, and other community members via brochures and marketing materials.

iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 2,000+

*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?

Feedback has been obtained through 6-month follow up evaluations of participants conducted by CCFN staff not directly involved with MTP participants, and AmeriCorps VISTA Member and Program Manager's one-on-one check-ins with participants. The results from these evaluations have directly resulted in the restructuring and improvement of instruction, program curriculum, and translations.

ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

- "I drove an hour-and-a-half from the Eastern Shore to be here. [...]there is nothing else like this!"
- "Just the number of Spanish-speakers who passed the ServSafe is HUGE!"
- "There is no other program like this one that has pulled all the pieces together in such an organized fashion."
- "Start-up is very mind blowing and difficult and often you are left on your own to find your way through the paperwork, rules and regulations, permits, and decisions that must be made. It can be very intimidating as an English-speaking woman – it must be overwhelming for ESL [sic] women. They are to be applauded!!"
- "I never imagined I would learn so much in such a short [period of] time!"
- "This program is such a blessing to me and I'm so glad I've found it!"
- "There is a reason for this program no matter what your level of expertise is. Very informative.
- Great networking opportunity. Almost a safety net."

8. Budget Summary:

a. **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:**

b. **Did the project generate any income? No**

i. **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).**

Emphasize Issues Specific to Food Businesses, Especially Food Safety: The DC metro area is rich with small business development resources meant to assist residents register businesses, receive information on business structures, tax information, and many other aspects of the "business" side of

entrepreneurship. However, very little assistance exists on the food aspect of the business. For example, prior to MTP, entrepreneurs found little to no information regarding the ServSafe Food Manager's Certification or the purpose of a HACCP Plan. Introducing Food Safety to the workshop series helped entrepreneurs become familiarized with the essential concepts that laid the foundation for understanding the licensure and regulatory process and for passing the ServSafe exam. In addition, knowing temperature danger zones enabled participants to understand why certain foods were labeled "potentially hazardous" and, therefore, required a slightly higher license fee.

Provide Hands-On Technical Assistance: A key to the success of this project was the strong partnership with CFM. As stated earlier (1.iii.b), the farmers market enabled entrepreneurs to start in an encouraging and supportive environment. All food entrepreneurs received vital technical assistance onsite that naturally led to practical teaching moments. For example, the Program Manager assisted the Seedy Nutty business owner in preparing for her business pitch at Whole Foods, and later assisted with her tasting at the store when it was opened. This type of assistance made it possible for entrepreneurs to gain professional confidence and receive tips on marketing, customer service and professional networking. MTP entrepreneurs were also able to save money, while staying focused on their product and food safety, by taking advantage of MTP-provided canopy tents, hand washing stations, and tables. This day-of assistance enabled abstract concepts introduced in class to transition into efficient business practices.

Provide Individualized Assistance: Food business entrepreneurs are not "one size fits all" and many program graduates wanted specific attention to their own business and its particular issues. A major success of the program was the number of one-on-one hours of technical assistance provided by the Program Manager and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. It was through these interactions that staff members were able to get a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing our entrepreneurs. What is telling about the 254 hours of one-on-one assistance provided is that the majority of hours were outside the kitchen! Assistance is needed to fill out permit applications, create HACCP plans, brainstorm vending and marketing ideas. Moreover, in assisting the food vendors who also participated in CFM, we realized that much more assistance will be needed once MTP entrepreneurs enter the TPSS Community Kitchen. For example, the Program Manager spent over 12 hours with a single client, Bev's Gourmet Salad Creations and Catering, on her first "big" catering event. Though the entrepreneur's lack of experience in orchestrating this type of event was obvious during the session, she was able to quickly pick up timesaving techniques, and was able to reflect and reevaluate the management of time and production capacity. In the future, we plan to establish a mentorship program to fulfill this need for individualized assistance.

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

Ensure Access to Appropriate Financial Education and Services: Despite the diverse cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area, a sentiment shared by some entrepreneurs is a mistrust of banks and/or a misunderstanding of the American banking systems and financial institutions. None of our participants received credit or capital to start their new businesses during this project. However, we did have several who worked one-on-one with LifeAsset to improve their credit scores, and one participant, owner of "El Carreton," took out a microloan to settle a delinquent account. Simply put, our participants were not in the appropriate stage to produce a strong application for credit/capital; and many had a distrust of the banks and credit

companies. Furthermore, due to language differences, many immigrant entrepreneurs felt hesitant to use banking institutions.

Our project did not produce 30 participants with business plans; only 10 participants completed business plans. Many have business plans that have not been completed; others need to add significant updates since their graduation from MTP. The majority of our participants, who were the target population as described in the grant narrative, began with an idea of a food business. Many were unemployed and underemployed who simply needed to bring in revenue, and others had lower literacy levels that made it extremely difficult for them to write a formal business plan.

Therefore, for this project to have produced 30 business plans and to increase credit or capital for 20 participants, a strong partnership with a local nonprofit working towards the economic health of the community is needed from the very start. A required partnership with Life Asset or LEDC, or another wealth building nonprofit, will be extremely beneficial going forward. The nonprofit aspect of these organizations, and their expertise on the sensitive and complex topic of finances are exactly what our participants need. Building and improving a credit history is an extremely slow process, entrepreneurs of this grassroots level must receive financial education and must start working towards building and/or improving their credit history. Basic literacy workshops on credit, understanding checking accounts, and on understanding how to compare banking services are needed to empower marginalized entrepreneurs.

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:

Provide Single Language Workshops: As much as organizers wanted to create a diverse, inclusive community by providing Spanish translators in English-led workshops, it was an inefficient use of valuable instructional minutes. Instead, instructional minutes were maximized when entrepreneurs were divided according to language. It enabled MTP staff to create a safe space for Spanish-speakers to become more active participants in their learning. They were more likely to raise questions, contribute insights, and more likely to share the unique socioeconomic challenges they face as immigrant entrepreneurs. Similarly, English speaking entrepreneurs felt that their classroom time was maximized when they are not waiting for a translator to finish communicating to Spanish speakers.

10. Future Work:

- a. 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.**

This concludes our two-year grant activities; however in next six months we will open our community kitchen and give access to qualified MTP graduates. Other upcoming tasks include: hiring a kitchen program manager; finalizing the community kitchen business plan, user guide and other supporting documents; and developing a mentorship program for kitchen users with the help of an AmeriCorps VISTA member. We were recently awarded a Community Food Project Grant through USDA NIFA

which will allow us to take this programming to the next step to further increase impacts on our program graduates as they transition into the kitchen.

b. 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?

Next steps include working with the Network for Incubator and Commissary Kitchens in order to optimize our policies and procedures for our shared-use community kitchen. In addition, we would like to develop a central resource center working with the many organizations listed above that support entrepreneurship.