

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

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

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

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

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; 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, 2015 – September, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Peter J. Crichton
Authorized Representative Phone:	207-871-8380
Authorized Representative Email:	crichton@cumberlandcounty.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Cumberland County Government
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Lakes Region Food System Planning Project
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15LFPPME0014
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Maine
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: Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center ; Email: kmeter@crcworks.org; Phone: 612-869-8664

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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: To determine the key assets the region holds as it strives to produce more food for itself.
 - a. Progress Made: Local food leaders recommended the consultants survey second-home owners in the lakes region to determine their purchasing habits when sourcing locally produced food during their weekend, seasonal and holiday visits. A postcard invitation was distributed to over 2,400 second-home owners. Nearly 200 responses were collected.
 - b. Impact on Community: It became evident from our survey responses that wealthy second homeowners frequented only a small section of local shops or providers, and showed relatively little awareness of local farmers’ markets, farm stands, and/or grocery cooperatives. We learned that in order for consumption of local food to increase, we must focus our efforts on a marketing strategy that address convenient access to a variety, uniqueness, and easy, prepared take-away options. Respondents were not reticent to pay for quality and convenient access, however, they were more likely to bring food from their primary residence without these guarantees.
 - ii. Goal/Objective 2: To analyze the key limitations and opportunities of/within the region.
 - a. Progress made: In-person interviews were held with 39 local food system practitioners, including 24 food system leaders and practitioners; farmers, chefs, food service directors, food bank staff, meat processor, farmer’s market staff, community gardening coordinator, and a small distributor.
 - b. Impact on Community: Both the surveys and interviews identified that knowledge about local food trade is elusive. One of the most profound obstacles to building local food trade is a lack of volunteer time. Our consultant stated that “more than any other region we have studied, the Lakes Region suffers from over commitment by its leaders. Many individuals who promised to assist this study ended up with no time to devote to the project. This pointed to the a severe obstacle – if residents have no time to volunteer beyond what they are already doing, funds will have to be raised to ensure that community builders are paid adequately to dedicate the time needed. This will require those who have the resources to invest in community ventures that do not bring a rapid return, simply because the community needs to act to build its own capacity.”
 - iii. Goal/Objective 3: To highlight the most significant barriers to progress in attaining this purpose.
 - a. Progress Made: To accomplish this goal, our consultant, Ken Meter and his associate Megan Phillips Goldenberg, combined quantitative analysis of the region’s farm and food economy, drawing upon readily available public data sources.

b. Impact on Community: The close proximity of Portland as a nationally known “foodie” destination is an unexplored market. In addition to the 40 years of history within the lakes region, a strong statewide network flourishes among Maine food leaders. Through educational initiatives such as cooking classes, recipe swaps, seed swaps, outreach campaigns, regional branding, as well as the community meals, a “Local Foods Coordinator” will be able to bring residents into working collaborations that promote lasting social and commercial networks to support community-based food trade.

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, 20__). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - 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: refer to recommendations below
 - v. Number of new markets established: refer to recommendations below
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
 - 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 Town of Bridgton has begun discussions with several community leaders who work closely with low-income residents, including the town’s Community Center, a local food security initiative held at St. Peter’s Church, the state’s largest food bank, and several young farmers who are just starting farms. These populations are being more fully integrated into the formal discussion of economic development in the lakes region area of Cumberland County.

Small farms of the Lakes Region have taken special leadership convening food policy councils across the state, and have launched a micro-distribution project to pick up produce from scattered small farms, and aggregate these into larger shipments for commercial customers.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners?
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project’s future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

Our partnering was extensive and broad. As explained previously, 39 food system practitioners elected and appointed leaders throughout the lakes region, and a separate targeted mailing to second homeowners proved to provide clear and convincing evidence of a working, yet little known, system of quality food production. These participants have expressed gratitude for the process and the findings and have committed to working with the state and elected leaders to continue to assess and assist the success and longevity of the area’s farmers.

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

Yes. Ken Meters, Principal of Crossroads Resource Center, and his associate Megan Phillips Goldenberg, conducted the study; performing the interviews survey, as well as the data collection and reporting. Their time spent personally interacting and interviewing local farmers, producers, non-profits, and retail enterprises provided significant validity and weight to the study and its findings.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes
- 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).

The report, titled "Building Support For Community-Based Foods In The Lakes Region" was presented to the public at a meeting held at the Bridgton Town Hall, on Monday, September 26, at 6:00 p.m. Despite the snowy evening, there were over 20 attendees. Mr. Meters presented his report to the audience and provided a summarization of his findings with supporting photos, visuals and graphs.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
- i. If so, how did you collect the information?
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

The response to the consultant's report and presentation has been very favorable. Many farmers and stakeholders who participated in the study, and/or attended or have reviewed the presentation are supportive of the recommendations. There is heavy support for a regional ombudsman to ensure that a person is dedicated to continuing the collaboration and dialogue that has begun through this study, and to ensure that all opportunities for expansion, concentration and diversification are properly and fully explored.

8. Budget Summary:
- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:
It has been submitted previously.
 - 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? N/A

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. Draw from positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
- 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:

All parties consider the project useful and beneficial. This grant provided funding for a study only; however, these funds allowed the county and communities within the region to ensure that the key players in the lakes region food system were personally contacted; from producers to purchasers. We would highly encourage these limited 'study' funds to be utilized by future grantees in the same way; to connect directly with those in and impacted by the food system.

The extensive and broad dialogue that occurred during this study brought our attention to some very important areas of focus for the Lakes Region. The steering committee and stakeholders identified some important components to advancing the promotion, access and consumption of local food.

A first critical component is infrastructure. There is clearly enough of a market for food in Cumberland and Oxford counties to support a far larger number of farms than currently exist. What is lacking is the infrastructure that would convey food raised by smaller farms in the lakes region to local consumers. The local food trade will not be resilient over time until appropriate physical and intellectual infrastructure exists to create efficiencies in local food trade. The task of the economic development authorities in the towns of the Lakes Region, as well as private investors who may consider their task to include broader capacity building and relational commerce, not simply commodity flows: to build supportive infrastructure that creates efficiencies in community-based food trade.

Wholesale and institutional markets are critical to the region's farming prosperity. Many producers in the region desire to sell to institutions. A local lakes region institution, St. Joseph's College, has committed to purchasing food from as many local farms as possible. "We buy from 30 farms and artisanal bakers. We use all local pork...buy grass-fed beef from Maine family farms." One of the school's feature events is a "local lunch" every Thursday, where he places each menu item on the cafeteria line with a placard displaying the name and location of each farm, and the number of miles each food item traveled to the college. For his next challenge, Food Director Stuart Leckie will work to make the campus "the first campus that is self-sufficient for chicken." Leckie has received a federal grant to plan the construction of a state-certified processing plant on the campus grounds. Once that is in place, he will expand his burgeoning consumption of local goods with the addition of contracts with area growers to raise chickens to sell to the college; estimating a need for 20,000 chickens per year.

Our survey of second-home owners provided some interesting insight into the importance of convenience for this overlooked segment of consumers. To our dismay, we learned that a significant number bring food with them from their primary residence, often in another state. The reason given was the lack of both convenient access and convenient food choices. Our respondents want higher quality, fresher, local produce at the locations where they already shop. There appears to be a lack of carryout options consistent with consumer preferences, at local restaurants, stores and farmers markets. Said one respondent, "I would love to see more local cheeses and homemade breads. I

would even buy prepared meals such as potpies, lasagna and mashed potatoes” made with local farm ingredients. Thirty one percent of survey respondents indicated a willingness to pay 5-9% more, and another 32% indicated a willingness to pay 10-14% more for locally produced foods. This represents a potential marketing opportunity if locally grown foods can be featured at area grocery stores, and utilized in ready-made take-away items.

Land in Maine is still relatively inexpensive. We found that additional sources of income have become very reliable for many local farmers. Currently, farm owners make more money by renting out land than they do by farming it – bringing in another \$10 million per year of ‘farm-related income’, which also includes performing custom work for neighboring farms. Farm-related income has also become one of the steadiest, less prone to market fluctuations than actually selling crops or livestock.

Finally, the lakes region is well positioned to focus its efforts on community-based food production. The lakes region has a unique cultural identity within Maine, and boasts a proud heritage of agriculture. If the region wishes to feed itself, however, it will need to both eat different foods and develop different food systems infrastructure that promotes community-based food trade. Supportive social networks exist in volume in the lakes region, as seen by the number of community meals served weekly. Given the large number of community meals sponsored in the region, it is not difficult to imagine that after two or three years, most everyone (including seasonal homeowners) in the lakes region would have had the experience of eating a meal that featured locally raised foods, and had a direct experience of a local culture that celebrates seasonal cycles and the work farmers and chefs do within those cycles. In small, discreet steps, farmers would sell more products, make closer connections with a broader number of local residents, and enjoy new visibility. Community venues would hold a stronger sense of how their meals fit into a community-wide effort, and might find pragmatic ways to coordinate with each other around delivery of foods. New market channels would be built that are appropriate to the supply of food that farmers can provide, and the demand for local food that these community meals can harness. Supply and demand would grow in harmony with each other, balanced over time.

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.
- 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?

The representatives of the town of Bridgton, several farmers and attendees of the September 26 presentation of Ken Meter’s report expressed a strong interest in furthering discussions regarding the recommendation for a regional *Foods Coordinator*. It is clear that the work of education, marketing, grant sourcing, networking, and coordination, cannot be sustained by volunteer activity alone. Such a position could work with all stakeholders to launch initiatives that build stronger support within the community for community-based food trade, and help build commerce that upholds that purpose. As noted above, the high volume of community engagement witnessed in the region through church, non-profit, profit, institutional and other venues who gather the citizens of the Lakes Region with food as a denominator, there must be a priority to ensure these dinners/gatherings feature food from local

farmers. This is a critical step to ensuring that all residents are exposed to the potential for locally raised food to improve their lives. If done with care and consciousness, this initiative could engage farmers, caterers, cooks, low-income residents, community leaders, second-home owners and tourists all at once.