

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>	09/30/2015 – 12/31/16
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Recipient Organization Name:	Greater Lansing Food Bank – Lansing Roots
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Collaborative CSA and Veggie Box Project
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15LFPPMI0020
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Lansing, MI
Total Awarded Budget:	\$85,315

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: _____

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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: Bring together two well-established organizations to co-brand and co-market a Pilot Veggie Box Program to maximize impact and efficiency.*

- a. *Progress Made:*

GLFB and AMP leveraged an array of resources to make the program more efficient and maximize its impact. On the part of GLFB, these included interpretation and translation services for refugee farmers, a vegetable washing station, delivery vehicle, online platforms for registration, and packing supplies. Resources leveraged by AMP include AMP’s Local Orbit Exchange (an online resource that connects area buyers and sellers), hosting of the CSA Fair and Farmer Luncheon, and communications with neighborhood groups and businesses regarding LFPP-related promotions. Both partners provided volunteer and staff time and shared their contact lists of producers, customers, and businesses. Finally, both partners provided dry and cold storage space, as well as marketing capacity in the form of print and radio ads, e-newsletters, website and social media promotions, and press releases.

The partners found several challenges in engaging neighborhood organizations to seek out potential CSA customers. We reached out to organizations that had previously expressed interest in the program, and also to those which had not, but received few responses overall. Access to the Allen Neighborhood Center and Lansing City Market proved helpful for marketing to these organizations and also allowed for outreach to low-income families, as it permitted the use of SNAP benefits to purchase CSA Starter Boxes. Overall, the key impediment to neighborhood outreach was lack of follow up from neighborhood organizations.

The partners also reached out to area employers in search of potential CSA customers. In this task, we benefited from GLFB’s existing employer relationships, as well as its credibility in the Greater Lansing community. Initial employer contacts were made easier at the start of the program by company staff members who assisted with recruiting and promotion internally. Finally, the partners were allowed to conduct vendor fairs on site at the companies. Challenges included the need for repeated and sustained outreach; differences in logistical, contractual, or legal needs across employers; and difficulties in arranging for the return of supplies on a weekly basis.

- b. *Impact on Community:*

The partners considered many of their leveraged resources to be essential to the successful implementation of the program. The most critical were the CSA Fair, Farmer Luncheon, both partners’ marketing capacity, and the use of the Local Orbit Exchange, which helped raise awareness about the program among potential customers and growers. The online registration platform greatly improved the ease of registration. Other important resources included the staff time, delivery vehicle, food storage space.

- ii. *Goal/Objective 2: Increase revenues for nine small to medium growers involved in the Lansing Roots program and 10 of the 83 growers/producers currently enrolled in the Exchange Food Hub.*

- a. *Progress Made: (See Below?)*

- 26 Total Farmer/Producer Beneficiaries: 12 GLFB LR Farmers and 14 AMP Exchange Food Hub Farmers/Producers participated (See farmer survey results below)
- \$7156 New Market Sales

b. Impact on Community:

- 23 Total Jobs Impacted: 4 Jobs Directly Retained or Expanded and 19 Jobs Indirectly Retained or Expanded
- 3 New Markets Established: 2 Employer Sites, 1 Neighborhood Site
 - New Customer Base: More than 2,000 new customers reached through new markets
- 6 Existing Markets Expanded: 4 Employer Sites, 2 Neighborhood Sites
 - Expanded Customer Base: More than 1,500 existing customers offered expanded service

All 19 growers who participated in the post-season survey expressed satisfaction with their experience supplying produce to the 2016 CSA Starter Box program. Lansing Roots helped growers in several ways. Specifically, of 12 Lansing Roots Incubator Farm growers responding to the survey at the end of the 2016 growing season, all growers were either very (9, or 75%) or somewhat (3, or 25%) satisfied with Lansing Roots. All growers also indicated that Lansing Roots was well organized, the staff were helpful and easy to work with, and the farm infrastructure was sufficient for their needs. 10 (58%) praised the Marketing Collective, but 2 (16%) somewhat disagreed. All 12 growers received mentorship, staff support, or technical assistance with their farming, and all were either very (7, or 58%) or somewhat (5, or 42%) satisfied with this help.

Most Lansing Roots growers also valued the program as a sales venue. When asked how much the program had contributed to their overall produce income in 2016, nearly all Lansing Roots growers said the program had contributed a lot (5, or 42%) or somewhat (6, or 50%); one grower said the program had not contributed much. Somewhat fewer Lansing Roots growers said the program improved their financial security. Although most said their financial security had improved somewhat (7, or 58%) or a lot (1, or 8%), several growers saw little (3, or 25%) or no (1, or 8%) improvement.

Exchange growers were also satisfied with the Exchange Food Hub overall. In the end of growing season survey, all 7 responding Exchange growers were either very (4, or 57%) or somewhat (3, or 43%) satisfied. However, the Exchange had relatively limited value as a sales venue. The respondents indicated that it contributed somewhat (2, or 29%) or not much (5, or 71%) to their overall income, and improved their financial security somewhat (3, or 43%) or not much (4, or 57%).

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Educate and engage residents of the region, particularly residents of low-moderate income neighborhoods and corporate worksites, about the benefits of consuming locally grown/produced food on individual health and the regional economy.

a. Progress Made:

We created an informational sheet to educate customers on the basic concepts and details of different CSA programs to help guide their purchase decision, informational brochures, bumper stickers touting pride in being a local CSA member, and created content on our website with links to area farms. These were distributed to members of the joint box pilot and our own independent CSA members, as well as at 9 unique farm stands (3 public and 6 at corporate partner sites), a company fundraiser and other company events, a program open house targeting our program

sponsors, corporate partners' vendor fairs, and within our food bank network of agencies. Area farmers were also given access to the bumper stickers to distribute to their members. Facebook advertising was targeted at raising awareness of CSA impact on the community. This included a link to our website where formerly produced info sheet on 'Choosing a CSA' was hosted.

b. Impact on Community:

Most Lansing Roots CSA customers are first-time CSA participants who probably would not have joined another CSA if they had not participated in Lansing Roots. In a pre-season survey of Lansing Roots CSA participants, 76 of 92 (83%) had never participated in a CSA before. In addition, the majority (62 of 90, or 69%) said they would have been somewhat or very unlikely to join a different CSA if they had not joined Lansing Roots.

Matched pre- and post-season survey data were available for 61 CSA customers. Of those 61, 36% had higher levels of satisfaction at post-season survey and 54% reported no change in their level of satisfaction with the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten by their family.

Percent	Number	Change from pre- to post-season for matched cases in level of "How satisfied are you with the amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables that your household eats right now?"
54%	33	No change
36%	22	Increased satisfaction
10%	6	Decreased satisfaction
100%	61	

Many customers used and valued the recipes and nutritional information shared through the program. About half of the post-survey respondents (53%) reported using the recipes frequently. Slightly fewer reported that they shared the recipes with others (43%). Most customers (84%) found the nutrition information useful.

In the pre-season survey completed by 92 customers, nearly all respondents indicated they were very satisfied (81%) or somewhat satisfied (18%) with the process of signing up for the Lansing Roots CSA (n=91 item response).

Most respondents were also satisfied with the program as a whole. In the post-season survey, 93% of participants (76 of 82) were satisfied with their CSA experience. Likewise, 95% (75 of 79) were satisfied with the value of their CSA share. The table below provides more detail on their overall high level of satisfaction.

Statement	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Total Strongly or somewhat agree	Total # of responses
The delivery went smoothly	92%	8%	100%	77
It was well organized	94%	6%	100%	77
Fruits and vegetables were of high quality	75%	22%	97%	76

There was a good variety of fruits and vegetables	58%	39%	97%	77
It offered the right amount of fruits and vegetables	52%	40%	92%	77
The pick-up location was convenient	83%	14%	97%	77
The sign-up process was easy	87%	10%	97%	77
Communication with staff was easy	75%	25%	100%	76
The price was fair	65%	32%	97%	77

A final testimonial of the high level of customer satisfaction is their likelihood of rejoining the CSA; 69% indicated they were very or somewhat likely to rejoin in 2017.

The customers enjoyed many different types of fruits and vegetables. When asked to rate their favorites, the top three items were garlic and garlic scapes, salad greens, and tomatoes. The top three least liked items were cooking greens, root crops, and eggplant.

The post-survey also asked for greater detail on vegetable delivery preferences. Most respondents were content with the amounts and frequency of deliveries they had received, but others would have preferred fewer items and larger quantities of each item. Their detailed responses are shown below.

As a CSA subscriber, would you have preferred to receive: (select all that apply) (n=72)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The same amount of vegetables you received every week	30.6%	22
The same amount of vegetables you received every other week	26.4%	19
Fewer items (4-6) every week	6.9%	5
Fewer items (4-6) every other week	18.1%	13
More items (12-15) every week	5.6%	4
More items (12-15) every other week	5.6%	4
Bigger quantities of each item	26.4%	19
Lesser quantities of each item	2.8%	2

- iv. *Goal/Objective 4: Plan, promote and host a CSA/Veggie Box Fair to increase awareness about the 14+ CSAs in the region, the jointly administered Veggie Box program, Lansing Roots, and Allen Market Place Exchange and to link Greater Lansing residents and businesses with opportunities to purchase mid-Michigan food products.*

a. Progress Made:

On February 14, 2016, the Greater Lansing Food Bank/Lansing Roots and the Allen Market Place co-hosted the 2016 CSA Fair at Allen Neighborhood Center. The purpose of the fair was to help local residents learn about CSAs and connect local farmers with potential CSA customers. The organizers used several mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of the event in reaching these goals, including dot surveys to indicate city of residence and whether attendees had ever attended a CSA fair or purchased a CSA, as well as a survey of all farmers who acted as vendors at the fair.

b. Impact on Community:

There were over 350 attendees at the event, as counted by clicker as attendees entered; which is an indicator of successful event marketing. The turnout was substantially higher than that of CSA fairs held in Lansing in prior years by other organizations. Including outreach through neighborhood and

organizational listserves, print and social media ads, and radio ads, it can be estimated that a minimum of over 5,000 individuals were reached when promoting the event.

Another success was the relatively high response rate of attendees to dot surveys, with about half (n=157) participating. Attendees indicated their city of residence in the dot survey, and about half were from Lansing:

- 48% Lansing
- 15% East Lansing
- 11% Haslett and Okemos
- 26% Other outlying areas

The CSA was effective in reaching new audiences. Based on a dot survey, 95% of attendees (8 of 157) had never attended a CSA fair before. Of those who answered the dot survey, about 7 in 10 attendees (98 of 142) had never purchased a CSA. Note that if every person walking in the door who did not answer this question had in fact had a CSA before, it can be said that at minimum one-third of attendees would have had no prior experience as a CSA shareholder.

All farmers who were vendors (n=13) responded to an onsite survey at the end of the event. 100% of farmers said the fair was “very helpful” in promoting their CSA, and that they were “very likely” to participate if another CSA fair were held in February 2017. Slightly less than half of farmers (6 of 13) sold CSA shares during the event. A total of 20 shares were sold immediately at the event. Although we attempted to have each farmer report back at the end of the season as to how many shares were ultimately purchased as a result of the CSA Fair, many farmers did not add the question of “How did you hear about our CSA” to their registration forms, making it difficult to quantify the overall impact for farmers. Many farmers have said they will add that for 2017. The farmers offered several open-end comments on the results of the CSA Fair, which were generally positive.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2015). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: 2
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 2
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 19
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 6
 - v. Number of new markets established: 3
 - vi. Market sales: \$7,156
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project 26 (12 Lansing Roots farmers and 14 AMP Exchange farmers/producers)

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 formed partnerships with three new businesses for CSA distribution and sales, allowing us to reach over 2,200 new customers. One, a very large corporation in the area that already had ties with our organization and the second, a local community college centrally located in our distribution area. The third location, our local city market, was used as a pickup location for the general public. This location is highly accessible to bus line and can offer the opportunity for customers to shop at other local

businesses in the market. We are handling SNAP payment internally at our grant partner's public location at the Allen Neighborhood Center, which will allow us to feed all of our community by making the boxes more accessible in price. The two public locations allowed us to reach out individual residents of densely populated, mixed income, and ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners? Allen Neighborhood Center, Lansing City Market, Lansing Urban Farm Project, Immigrant and Refugee Resource Collaborative, and six corporate partners for customer/employee sales.
- ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? Allen Neighborhood Center is our subcontracted grant partner and have been involved with all of the work we have accomplished. Lansing City Market is a new partnership for public pick up of CSA shares and promotion of their sales. Lansing Urban Farm Project is an area non-profit that has helped promote the CSA in their low-income neighborhood and is providing produce for the shares. Immigrant and Refugee Resource Collaborative has helped with sales promotion and finding appropriate farmers for our incubator farm. Our six corporate partners have provided support and outreach, and offered physical locations for sales to their employees. Each provides a point of contact for us to communicate with and to offer customers a point of contact within their organization. This is usually an HR rep or Health and Wellness coordinator.
- iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? They will continue to contribute in the ways they have, building on our established successes. Allen Neighborhood Center, especially, will take on a larger role by continuing to reach out to more employer sites and bring in more farmers to provide for weekly vegetable boxes.

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

Yes, we have 3 subcontractors that have assisted. Allen Neighborhood Center is a primary partner and have been involved with the grant to the same extent we have. Public Policy Associates is providing evaluation for the grant. Public Policy Associates, Inc. (PPA) contributed to the documentation of the program's process and results by drafting research questions, developing surveys and interview guides, and providing data analysis and reporting. A graphic designer was initially hired to help with design of promotional posters, brochures and stickers. Due to a change in her ability to complete the necessary work in a timely manner, GLFB completed the majority of this work internally; with our Marketing and Communications Coordinator taking on a significant role.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes

- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? To whom did you publicize the results? How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

The results of the work were presented to farmers and producers at a post-season meeting at the Allen Neighborhood Center in December 2016. Additionally, the program was discussed at a national conference, the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative Field School, in October 2016. At least 100 individuals learned about our program through the meeting and conference.

*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?

Dot Survey for attendees of the CSA Fair, pre- and post- surveys from both farmers/producers and customers, post-season meetings with employer sites, and roundtable discussion with GLFB and ANC Staff.

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

The key findings from the data collection activities for this program are detailed in the other sections of this report. Feedback was collected from the following sources:

- *CSA Fair participants* via dot surveys conducted at the event. Information was gathered on their community of origin, whether they had ever attended a CSA fair before, and whether they had purchased a CSA before.
- *Farmer-vendors at the CSA fair* via a paper survey fielded during the event. Information was gathered on the helpfulness of the event for their business, the number of shares sold, the likelihood of future CSA fair participation, and ways to improve future CSA fairs.
- *Farmers at Lansing Roots and the Exchange* via a survey administered online and, for selected farmers, in person. Information was gathered on their satisfaction with the program, its value for their business, and their likelihood of future participation in the program.
- *CSA customers* via online surveys conducted at the start and the end of the program. Information was gathered on their previous CSA participation, as well as their satisfaction with the CSA program processes and results.
- *Employer site coordinators* were met with or questioned via email on their company's level of satisfaction, their willingness to continue in the future, and how to improve the service. All expressed overall satisfaction and desire to continue offering this service in the future.
- *Staff roundtable* at the close of the program. Information was gathered on lessons learned, specific value of collaboration, sustainability, and next steps.

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:
- ii. Did the project generate any income?
a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

Yes. \$1,314 of income was generated by the project and was used to cover staff and program costs.

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).
- 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:
Both partners consider the program beneficial and successful, and have a strong interest in continuing it. To streamline the direction of the program, we are considering changing from two points of leadership (an equal partnership between AMP and GLFB) to having AMP act as the parent organization. This could be operationalized, for example, by having all purchases, marketing, and delivery go through AMP Exchange; with Lansing Roots farmers continuing to provide some of the produce. We are also interested in establishing formal procedures and trainings for employer-site coordinators, as well as more centralized direction of accounting, packing, distribution, and delivery. The leveraging of resources from both partners will continue, as will the CSA Fair, and continuing the SNAP option for payments.

The partners identified several additional resources that could help improve program operation. These include improving coordination of cold and dry storage with vehicle deliveries (including use of a refrigerated truck), and providing farmers with training that empowers them to conduct more business on their own. In the longer term, there is interest in contracting with farmers for crop management and growing more produce to order.

The partners identified several challenges to program sustainability. One of these is the ability of farmers to keep up with increased demand. This also relates to the need to balance the number of shares sold with planned crop yields while incorporating last-minute variables such as dropouts and late additions. Another is the possibility that demand for this product will taper off beyond the existing customer base. To address these challenges, the partners have been working to contract with and train additional farmers before the next season, conduct strategic planning activities to streamline program processes, and made use of both the core partnership and outside partners to coordinate marketing.

Based on experience with this pilot, the partners believe the program could be scaled up with minor improvements in infrastructure, including those described in the paragraphs above. Despite concerns about eventually finding a ceiling for the number of interested customers in the community, the partners believe there is currently untapped demand, including employers who have not yet participated as well as the potential for expanding the customer base within current participating employers. The CSA Starter Box and biweekly share options hold particular expansion potential, given their affordability their more manageable cost.

2. 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.

This project has allowed us to greatly expand our customer base and given our farmers the ability to increase their knowledge and production capacity. Our goal is to increase sales and production by 40% this year, and have already begun implementing the plans by meeting with farmers, distribution partners, and reaching out to our existing base of support. Additionally, we are able to offer fully subsidized CSA shares to 40 families this season through a State of Michigan Health Endowment Fund Grant. We received a subcontract to be a producer and administrator for this project in part because of our performance in this LFPP Grant Project. This allows us to work with more farmers and producers, as well as hire a new seasonal Farm Coordinator. Primarily, it assures that we are able to reach out to all members of our community, not only those who can afford to eat fresh, local food on a regular basis.

- 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?
Future CSA fairs planned?

Some of our recommendations for future planning have been addressed already, but we are specifically excited to continue offering a similar program this year. ANC will administer the program alone, with Lansing Roots farmers and many other local producers continuing to supply the food. We hope that by having a single entity manage the program, the logistics will be streamlined and allow for more work to be done on sales and marketing to a wide client base, including within neighborhoods and at more local businesses. A CSA Fair was held again this year in February 2017, and again had 13 participating farms and over 200 attendees. Momentum for this work continues to build.