

**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>	11/1/2015-9/29/2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Jennifer Easley
Authorized Representative Phone:	662-325-7404
Authorized Representative Email:	aor@osp.msstate.edu
Recipient Organization Name:	Mississippi State University
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Philadelphia's Fresh Market @The Depot
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15FMPPMS0054
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Philadelphia, MS
Total Awarded Budget:	\$76,210

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: Karen Benson; Email: k.benson@msstate.edu; Phone: 601-656-4011

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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.

Goal/Objective 1: To **extend consumer access to local foods** from the spring through fall months.

- a. Progress Made: This goal was met. Vendors supplied the market with locally grown produce two additional months (September/ October) with the 2018 market scheduled to open in early May.
- b. Impact on Community: Consumers have access to local foods in the spring and fall.

Goal/Objective 2: To **improve connections with outside vendors** in eight neighboring counties to meet increasing consumer demands for local foods.

- a. Progress Made: This goal was met. Our market manager recruited five additional vegetable growers from five of the eight neighboring counties and two specialty food vendors.
- b. Impact on Community: These efforts resulted in a 30% increase of available produce and sustained the market through the fall months of September and October. These vendors provided sweet corn, honey, melons and herbs: crops not readily available with existing vendors.

Goal/Objective 3: To **increase awareness and visibility of the Fresh Market** in the downtown area to potential new customers.

- c. Progress Made: This goal was met. Multiple efforts increased awareness of the market location and promoted the market: 1) the large event tent provided ample shade and was highly visible from a distance. 2) Banners were placed outside the Depot during the week to advertise the market.; 3) Additional red and white signage from the Depot location north to the library and center of town and south towards shopping centers was highly visible from a distance making it easier for drivers to the market and park; 3) Vendors wore T-shirts promoting “Home-grown.” While they preferred different types of T-shirts for comfort while working, each farm or family promoted a consistent theme of local foods with T-shirts and signage. 4) Flyers were distributed to more than twenty agencies and agri-businesses.
- b. Impact on Community: The impact of the market promotion increased customer participation (40%) and market sales from vendors (30%).

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.
 - a. Number of direct jobs created: 2
 - b. Number of jobs retained: 2
 - c. Number of indirect jobs created: 5
 - d. Number of markets expanded: 1
 - e. Number of new markets established: 1
 - f. Market sales increased by \$ 15,000 annually and increased by 30%.

- g. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 24
 - a. Percent Increase: 50%

- 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, two efforts reached new populations: 1) we expanded the customer base with the inclusion of Choctaw produce, two Choctaw vendors, and a local agency who trains unemployed women to reenter the workforce. These vendors attracted minority and tribal customers (approximately 50) to the market; 2) we participated in the Fresh Savings program with AARP that targets SNAP customers through increasing EBT funds for fresh fruits and vegetables. This program drew approximately 40 low income/low access families.
- 4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - a. Who are your community partners?

Jay Jayroe, Farm Bureau President- Farm Bureau has been a long-term supporter of area farmers markets through advertising and serving as the market's fiscal entity for the Fresh Savings program. Farm Bureau hosts an annual Ag Appreciation event in which locally-grown produce is featured and local farms are recognized for vegetable production.

Tim Moore, Director of the Chamber of Commerce- Our Community Development Partnership (CDP) and Philadelphia-Neshoba Chamber Board of Directors have provided in-kind services that include use of the Depot facility, advertising through the Chamber's 300 member email list-serve, market flyers in welcome packages to new residents and businesses, and market promotion on the Chamber's marquee board.

John Hendrix, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians/ Choctaw Produce- The mobile van brought organic produce to our market through July and provided consumers with an expanded selection of vegetables such as kohlrabi, heirloom tomatoes, and bok choy.

Neshoba County Master Gardeners- This group of volunteers assisted elderly customers with vegetable selection, carrying packages to vehicles, and assisting the market manager with the Fresh Savings program. They also promoted the market and during summer months provided additional garden produce.

Richard Goldman, Neshoba County Co-Op- The local Co-op is located across the street from the Depot where the market is held. The Co-op promotes the market on its signage, provides customer and vendor parking, and provides growers with discounts on some items.

Philadelphia Rotary Club- This organization promoted the market with weekly announcements of fruits and vegetables that would be available and assisted with market promotion.

Neshoba County Vegetable Growers Association- This organization provides the leadership and organization for local growers and market vendors.

Rushing's nursery- Growers utilize the greenhouse service to start seeds and reduce costs of growing vegetable transplants. Rushing's worked with local growers to ensure their transplants were ready at the optimal time for planting.

- b. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project? All partnerships involved market promotion and advertising which increased consumer interest and attendance. Overall, the partners have been instrumental in supporting the market. Specifically, Choctaw Produce, the Master Gardeners, and the Neshoba County Vegetable Growers worked collaboratively to insure there was ample produce at the market for consumers.
 - c. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant? Our partners continued to be involved. Plans are being made with these partners to host a spring Farmers Market breakfast to raise funds for shade canopy in the Depot parking lot where the market is held. The breakfast will kick off the 2018 market season, tentatively Mother's Day weekend. The partners will have integral roles in promoting and sustaining future markets. Farm Bureau and the Vegetable Growers Association will be the primary fiscal entities for the market.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? We contracted to use an event tent that was readily seen from the shopping areas downtown. The vendors had shade cover and consumers identified the market with the tent. We also contracted with a market manager who worked extensively to recruit growers and vendors. His efforts contributed significantly to the market with the number of vendors doubling in two years.
6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes
- a. If yes, how did you publicize the results? We utilized Extension Service new letters, information sheets, and maintained a Facebook page: Fresh Market@ the Depot
 - b. To whom did you publicize the results? The City of Philadelphia and the Neshoba County communities.
 - c. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 10,000.
- *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?
- a. If so, how did you collect the information? We collected surveys from growers and customers.
 - b. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

Vendors:

*We need more parking for vendors.
 Continue to advertise in every way possible.
 Increase customers with more advertising.
 Better signage for parking areas.
 My sales have increased significantly more.
 Thank you for asking and supporting vendors.
 The tent has been a big draw for customers- keep it!
 I'd like the downtown location even if parking is challenging.
 The customers in this market are repeaters.
 I have customers who purchase more at this market
 We still need more produce but we are not selling out now.
 The advertising has been great. The new signs look good.*

Customers:

*Need more vendors.
 There is a good supply of produce.
 I love coming to the market!
 I don't always remember when it is- Can you text me?
 I'd like to buy ready-made foods.
 I come to support farm families
 Do you ever sell plants?
 How can I sell stuff here?
 I wish it was open all year long.*

8. Budget Summary:

- a. 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 (**REPORT WAS PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED**):
- b. 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 learned five key factors why our community values shopping at a downtown farmers market: 1) customers want food grown from a garden or farm, yet, they are unable for various reasons to grow their own food, 2) customers prefer eating food that is "in season" 3) many sales at the market are impulse purchases from people passing-by, 4) vendors develop a significant number of repeat customers who purchase more than initial customers, and 5) customers appreciate and want to support local farm families. From a vendor perspective, the market is an enjoyable, social event that introduces customers and potential customers to local foods. Vendors benefit financially from participating, but this is not their only motivation for participating. Most vendors take pride in delivering produce from their farms to the market and feel they are providing a community service to customers who are unable to produce their own foods. All of these factors contributed to the project's success. Notably, the two-year promotion of the market drew new vendors and customers to the market and benefited the downtown community with additional shoppers and consumer activity.

Certainly, there were drawbacks related to production and distribution of locally grown food. The first year of the promotion grant, our area experienced an unprecedented six-month drought. Only growers with irrigation were sustainable for the market season. Thus, the market lacked ample produce in fall months. In the second year, the area experienced a long, wet spring creating planting delays. We were able to open the market because of Choctaw Produce with high tunnel production and one grower with hydroponic greenhouses. Most growers did not have ample produce to sell until mid-June. Crops like strawberries, peaches, and blueberries were scant.

In recent years, we have noted a number of customer incentives through state and federal funding including the senior voucher program and increased benefits to EBT and TANF clients. Natural Resources Soil Conservation has had some incentive programs for high tunnel production and fencing for goat production which strengthen grower production. A few of our vendors participate in these programs. However, most vegetable growers in the county are not participating in the market because it is more cost-effective and timely to sell produce directly from their farms. To maintain sustainability in municipal markets, it is imperative growers receive support and funding to grow specifically for farmers' markets. A particular need in our area is for fencing to keep out deer and raccoons. Our growers are currently losing nearly 1/3 of their crop, or more, to wildlife.

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

We met our outcome measures most likely due to significant market promotion and the efforts of our market manager to continually recruit vendors. Consistent vendor participation with ample produce expedites solutions to most market issues.

- 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:

Our lessons learned would include:

- * Involve the community with planning
- * Hire a market manager with production experience
- * Keep the focus on the farm families, local produce, and food products. Keep entertainment, extra events, and crafts low-key to keep customer focus on purchasing market items.
- * Survey non-customers to find out how they get their information, then advertise to attract potential customers. Our community is more engaged with local schools and the newspaper than social media.
- * Utilize social media by encouraging vendors to share posts on their own sites and pages.

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.

In 2018, we will continue to collaborate and plan with community partners to provide downtown access to locally grown foods. There are plans being made to open the market Mother's Day week-end with a fundraiser farmer's market breakfast. These funds would be used to stipend the market manager position, and the Vegetable Growers Association is considering raising membership fees to assist with the stipend, too. We are securing sponsors to advertise and assist with purchasing shade cloth and event tents. Most vendors (80%) have committed to growing for this market with spring and summer crops. Our local FFA students have also shown some interest in growing spring vegetables to sell at the market in May. The local Farm Bureau Board will continue to support the market with advertising, and the Chamber of Commerce has committed to providing parking, space, and facility for customer restrooms. With most of the basic needs to provide the market in place, we are confident the sustainability of this market has been achieved and we can continue to provide an excellent venue for area farm families to sell produce and food products.

To date, the Fresh Market @ the Depot has grown to more than 20 vendors with market sales of \$58,000.00 and a designation by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture as a mid-size farmers market. Mid-size markets contribute an average, annual economic impact to the local community of \$73,976.00. Vendor sales have increased an average of 30% since the implementation of the promotion grant. The Fresh Market provides 100% locally-grown produce in a thriving, downtown community.

- 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?

The pivotal recommendation is for training and programs that provide grower support. The trend in farmer's markets has been for state and federal funds to be directed towards limited resource customers, promotion, advertising, and establishing local food networks. While these efforts are appreciated and provide access to food, without ample growers, these markets will continue to struggle with providing enough variety to meet customer satisfaction, particularly as the growing season transitions from spring, to summer, and fall. In our area, with a high tunnel, growers can produce year around.

Our growers struggle with production issues that could be alleviated with matching grants for fencing, irrigation, bins, refrigeration, and shade cloth. These are expenses specific to vegetable growers transporting produce to markets. We'd like to see priority given for high tunnel reimbursement in NRCS programs to growers affiliated with local markets.

There are more growers in our area that do not sell at the market than there are vendors participating in the market. This is due to a large number of small producers who are more profitable selling corn, peas, melons, blueberries, or tomatoes (one or two basic crops) from their farm without the time and expense incurred transporting produce to markets. These farms are located in rural communities dispersed throughout the county, leaving the majority of the population in town without reasonable access to purchase local food.

Additional research on small farm production could assist growers sustaining community markets. A network of small producers could provide healthier, safer, local food, at least in our area, we see this as a viable alternative to produce shipped to Walmart and chain grocery stores. We are also located in close proximity to a large high tunnel production project on tribal land. Choctaw produce has been a good partner for our market, and with increased production, this project has the potential to meet future demands for local foods. However, the tribal project faces additional challenges of manpower to work production at peak times and provide additional produce to sell at our market.

Consumers are interested in local food products, too. Therefore, training and support is needed for cottage food industry producers. The costs related to certification and health department regulations to produce, package, and market safely has been increasing. Many consumers do not know how to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables, and daily preparation is time consuming. Consumers want to buy soups, casseroles, breads, and salads made from locally grown food at the market. Cottage food industry regulations need to be expanded to include these items safely for consumers. Stipends or matching grants for cottage industry producers to obtain certification would be helpful.

In conclusion, we find that recommendations to advance projects goals are based on grower and producer needs rather than consumer needs. Growers will strive to be profitable and satisfy customer needs. The farmers market is a popular place for consumers in rural communities. The draw to the market is having ample produce and locally produced food. Efforts to sustain the growers are needed.