

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 30, 2015 – December 31, 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Danielle Gaebel
Authorized Representative Phone:	888-551-8625
Authorized Representative Email:	Danielle@naturalcontents.com
Recipient Organization Name:	NaturalContents.com LLC
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Natural Contents Kitchen Local Food Expansion Project
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15LFPPNY0026
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Narrowsburg, NY
Total Awarded Budget:	\$96,200.00

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: Increase consumption of value-added healthy, fresh foods in our local community.**

Our goals were to engage and educate food consumers about the benefits of fresh, healthy, local food while increasing our marketing efforts showcasing NCK, our farm partners, farmers’ markets and local-healthy eating.

 - a. **Progress Made:** Through a series of cooking demos at area farmers’ markets, and via social media, food consumers were guided through farm fresh cooking – learning a new recipe, what to look for when sourcing, questions to ask farmers, seasonality at the markets and healthy eating tips. In addition, we produced a full-color, 196-page cookbook focused on farm fresh clean eating and supporting farms and farmers’ markets. Through participation in various expos, events and farmers’ markets within New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, we believe awareness of local food, healthy eating and our farm partners was enhanced. Expos and events attended allowed us to reach beyond the farm market shopper, broadening our reach and marketing efforts.
 - b. **Impact on Community:** The response to the demos, cookbook and marketing outreach has been nothing but positive. Overall, we estimate our efforts reached well over 25,000 food consumers.
 - c. **In general, we observed that food consumers are seeking the following:**
 1. Knowledge in regards to sourcing local and regional food.
 2. Recipe ideas and cooking instruction.
 3. Food preservation information and instruction.
 4. Healthy living tips and information.
 - ii. **Goal/Objective 2: Increase the supply of locally produced farm products.**

Our goals were to increase the availability of locally produced foods, offer farmers a good price for their products on a consistent basis, increase our farm purchases and develop co-branded products with select farm partners.

 - a. **Progress Made:** Our farm purchases accounted for over 50% of our total spend on ingredients, always paying our farmers the price set forth. Co-branded products proved to be a bit of a challenge given the nature of various concepts tested. In the end, co-branded frozen soup showed the most promise for future development.
 - b. **Impact on Community:** Overall, we believe the greatest impact of this goal/objective benefited our farm partners and local economy. Our successful co-branded, value-added products proved to be an additional revenue/interest generator for our farm partner, Butchie’s Organic Farm.
 - c. **In general, we observed that farmers and food consumers have a need and desire for value-added products. Our findings show the following as the most popular value-added products:**
 1. Fresh or frozen soup
 2. Fresh or frozen meals
 3. Baked goods
 4. Pickled/lacto-fermented products
 - iii. **Goal/Objective 3: Increase availability of fresh processed local products at retailers, farmers’ markets and CSA’s.**

Our goals were to double our processing capacity, reach three additional farmers’ markets and at least ten retail outlets.

 - a. **Progress Made:** Through the purchase of needed equipment we were able to increase our production capacity and open new sales channels; producing upwards of 900+ units per week (when needed). We successfully expanded our reach to 14 regional farmers’ markets and established 10 wholesale partners.
 - b. **Impact on Community:** Overall, we produced over 25,000 units of local and value-added products in the grant reporting period. Showcasing 20+ local and regional farms rooted in organic practice; ultimately, giving food consumers access to additional local-healthy food options.
 - c. **In general, we observed the following:**
 1. Scale is key to building a sustainable small-scale food company; as is the proper equipment
 2. Farmers’ markets offer great potential under the right circumstances

3. Face-to-face sales/marketing and food sampling at farmers' markets is invaluable
4. Fresh, frozen and perishable food products are challenging for market and wholesale alike
5. There is opportunity in the marketplace for value-added products

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: 1
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 1
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 5
- iv. Number of markets expanded: n/a
- v. Number of new markets established: 24
- vi. Sales remained flat with no increase due to the closing of Farmigo (a 40% loss in sales).
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 25
 - a. Percent Increase: 25%

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

Through farm market vending in New York City, we were able to reach a broader, more diverse group of food consumers. Unfortunately, given the price point of the majority of products we produce, accessing the low-income population is a tough reach. That said, we did participate in the EBT (food stamp) program when applicable at area farmers' markets. When vending at the Liberty Farmers' Market in Liberty, NY, we were able to reach a low-access population – which is where we received the most EBT participation.

Our growth was attributed to Farmigo, based in Brooklyn, NY. An online farmers' market, accounting for more than 40% of our sales. Unfortunately, due to many challenges, Farmigo closed July 2016.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

i. Who are your community partners?

Farmers, food hubs and farmers' markets are our community partners. Which include: Willow Wisp Organic Farm, Butchie's Organic Farm, Anthill Farm, Lucky Dog Farm, Andy's Specialty Garlic and Produce, Stick & Stone Farm, Root N' Roost Farm, Channery Hill Farm, Chaljeri Meats, Pure Mountain Honey, Catskill Mountain Sugar House, Far Away Farm, Nonnenmacher Acres, Salem Mountain Farms, Safford Farms, The Good Life Farm, Lancaster Food Co-Op, Summerset Farm, Thompson-Finch Farm, Bleuet Hill Farm, Neversink Farm, Lani's Farm, Karl Family Farms, Cayuga Pure Organics, Alldrin Brothers Almond Co., Swiss Villa Dairy, Kriemhild Dairy, Lucky Dog Food Hub, Regional Access Food Hub, Lackawaxen Farm Co. Food Hub, Barryville Farmers' Market, Callicoon Farmers' Market, Down to Earth Farmers' Markets, Pleasantville Farmers' Market, Liberty Farmers' Market, Milford Farmers' Market, Bethel Woods Harvest Festival Farmers' Market, The Cooperage Farmers' Market and the Irvington Farmers' Market.

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

Our farmers and food hubs ensure a quality product and have always been able to work with us in regards to price, variety, selection and consistent supply of farm fresh food. The farmers' markets have been a great way to connect with consumers and expand our growth. Therefore, expanding our farm purchases.

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

We look forward to working with our farm partners, food hubs and farmers' markets in a different capacity (as outlined in Future Work).

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

There were key components to successfully completing aspects of this project – including a new website, photography, graphic design, printing, marketing services, etc. In total we contracted over \$31,000. Without the LFPP grant, this would not have been possible.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?

End results will be published January 2017. We will use a variety of media methods to publish the outcomes including: local press, social media and other earned media.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?

Feedback from our farm/community partners will be collected January 2017.

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?**

The project has not yet generated any income. That said, the sale of the cookbook will generate income in 2017. Monies generated will be reinvested into the business.

9. Lessons Learned:

i. **Positive experiences include:**

- a. Working on a funded project has been a wonderful experience. Without the USDA LFPP Grant, we would not have been able to accomplish the majority of our goals. As a small-scale, self-funded small business, it is near impossible to invest in equipment, marketing, sales and expansion.
- b. In addition to value-added products, food consumers are seeking real food education and healthy living information. Through our marketing outreach efforts and direct-to-consumer interactions, we were able educate and bring awareness to farms and farmers' markets.
- c. Working with local and regional farms has been, and will remain, our most positive experience.

ii. **Negative experiences include:**

- a. Due to the high quality of our products (farm fresh, local-organic) and our unique dietary niche (gluten, grain and soy free), our ultimate challenge is price point and profit margins.

10. Future Work:

i. **To expand this project's goals and initiatives, we're planning to:**

- a. Focus on food education; with an objective to launch a virtual healthy teaching kitchen.
- b. Assist farmers with sales and marketing efforts; with an objective to reach and develop new audiences and consumers.

ii. **Next steps to move the goals and initiatives forward include:**

- a. Updating our existing business plan to reflect the goals above
- b. Securing funding related to the goals above