

**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>	September 30,2015 – September 29,2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Cheryl Hammon
Authorized Representative Phone:	440 474 9885
Authorized Representative Email:	Cheryl@geaugafarmersmarket.com
Recipient Organization Name:	Geauga Fresh Farmers Market
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Geauga Fresh-A Community Market
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15FMPPOH0036
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	South Russell, Ohio
Total Awarded Budget:	20,409.04

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: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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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.

Goals #1. Add and promote SNAP/EBT capabilities plus increase access for a low-income community.

Our goal started with preparing for the program by purchasing the tokens, a tent, a banner and promotional materials as well as the technology to run the program. We were ready by the second week of the market in 2015. Our employee was hired and ready to run the program at the beginning also. Our county Job and Family Services Center had us on a list of markets offering SNAP/EBT.

We promoted the program through fliers, on our website and facebook, our rack cards, a local school newsletter, occasional newspaper ads, the sandwich board and the weekly newsletter for the market. We also promoted it at the local community center which was one of our partners in the grant. They gave out fliers, posted them on a bulletin board and wrote about it in their newsletter.

Early in the program when we realized that participants from the community center were not coming to the market we had a meeting with stakeholders there and they said that our area to accept the SNAP/EBT cards was too evident and people were reluctant to step-up because they felt singled out. We came up with a better plan. We merged the SNAP tent with the market tent and took down the banner to make it more user friendly. We also moved the sandwich board out along one of the major roads at the entrance to the market. This gave us more exposure to traffic and made the card area less obvious. At this meeting we also discussed the fact that the residents near the community center were not using the van to ride to the market as planned. After five weeks it was decided among the stakeholders to discontinue it as it wasn't utilized.

(new objective) We also came up with another idea to show families there that they could afford to shop at the market by making affordable breakfast burritos and fruit cups for their children. This demo was done on August 11th 2016 at the community when they had a school supplies giveaway. Volunteers made the burritos and gave them out with the recipe to show that the food had come from the market and it was affordable. We gave out 120 burritos with a flyer about the market, the SNAP program and the recipe. This was not one of the original objectives but was added and confirmed by a grant administrator.

Our farmers were asked to diversify their produce by offering collard greens, hog jowls and black eyed peas. They had them available in the market early in 2015.

Cooking demos were offered at the Chagrin Falls Park Community Center on a monthly basis performed by the Strategies for Life Coordinator using local food from the market. She often chose new foods to introduce to the participants to get them to eat healthier and to show them healthier ways to cook them. Beets, ground cherries and spaghetti squash were some of the new items used. She also taught them healthier ways to prepare them instead of the breaded and deep fried methods they were accustomed to. They had anywhere from 11 to 43 people attending the demos monthly.

We also had food demos by local chefs at the market on a monthly basis. They created simple dishes made with local food from the market. One of the chefs that came was from the International Institute

of Culinary Arts and Sciences in Chesterland, Ohio just 8 miles from the market. Sometimes he brought a student with him to learn and share recipes with our customers. The majority of the ingredients were from the market with a few additions. One week Chef Will Davis made honey glazed vegetable stir fry. These demos were done on a monthly basis and many times the recipe was published in the weekly newsletter. Samples of what the chef made were given out to any participant willing to try it.

Our market is located in a higher income area that is adjacent to a lower income one. We had a partnership with the community center located within the low-income area where we promoted healthy eating and the SNAP program through flyers, cooking demos with in the center and a breakfast burrito recipe during a school supplies giveaway. We also had a cooking demo at the market monthly with a local chef that prepared easy healthy meals with our local products.

During the two years that we had the SNAP/EBT available we had very little participation. We also had customers come up to us at the market booth and ask if they could use their SNAP/EBT cards and then they would walk around the market and not use them. I believe that the high prices at the market discouraged SNAP usage. This was some of the feedback we got from the community center as well.

(New objective) We added a social media employee for 2017 which was the same person we employed to manage the SNAP/EBT program. She redesigned our website and improved our facebook presence by 500 likes between May and October. She also helped to publish a weekly newsletter that we brought back because the customers asked us too. I wrote articles and she put them in the pre-formatted newsletter where we published upcoming events, recipes and promoted SNAP and the farm tours.

Goal # 2 To increase awareness of locally produced fruit and vegetables through marketing and agri-tourism.

We purchased radio ads through WKSU radio that aired on Sundays during a culinary program called The Splendid Table. This program talks about cooking, sustainability and food culture. We thought it was a good way to reach out to potential customers for our market. The ads ran from June through September and said "Geauga Fresh Farmers Market-providing customers for sixteen years with a diverse selection of fresh local products in South Russell - Opening May 6th from 9-Noon." I listened frequently to the program to make sure that the ads were airing. Later in the season I had the ad changed to "Open until October 14th from 9-Noon. During some of the later Saturdays in the season I put up a dot survey near the market tent and asked if anyone had heard the ads and didn't get a large participation but some people had heard it and some of the vendors had also.

We asked to transport consumers on five farm tours to our local farms and offer samples of what the farmer produced. These were very popular and we asked to add one in 2017 to make the total six (new objective). On six Saturdays I traveled in the mini-bus to the farms that were participants of our market. We promoted this through fliers, our newsletter, the website, facebook and we had two nice feature articles in local newspapers. The mini-buses weren't always full but the participants that did go were very happy about the tours. They enjoyed being on the farm and listening to the farmers talk about his/her products and his experiences: good and bad. Some of the participants were children that got to pick strawberries or hold a baby pig. Some of the challenges were that many of the participants were older folks that couldn't always walk as far as we wanted them too. Even though you try to prepare them for what they might experience as far as physical readiness I did have to help several seniors get through the tour.

The farmers were given \$30.00 to cover the cost of the sampling and they made good use of the money by making something for the people on the tours. Some of the things we did were ride a hay wagon through a beef farm into a sugar bush. Pick strawberries and learn about Amish culture. See hogs and free-range chickens. See a high-tunnel greenhouse with trellised tomatoes and acres of organic vegetables being grown. Surveys were conducted after every tour with nice results. Some of the participants relayed to me that they enjoyed the tour so much they would be willing to pay for something similar. I would say that the tours were the most satisfying part of our grant. The farmers shared their way of life and the people enjoyed it. 126 people participated in the farm tours with 19 of those being children.

We had a flier ready when the market opened in 2015 to promote the SNAP program and we renewed the design in 2017. We also had fliers designed for the farm tours. Our receipts reflected that we printed 130 fliers but it was far more than that as the community center printed some of their own and the SNAP co-coordinator and I printed some from home.

Goal # 3 To increase farmers marketing strategies and sustainability through education and a professional membership

I attended the conference in 2016 and 2017 in Columbus Ohio. This conference is always helpful as they present new ideas for marketing and cover the food safety rules annually. We frequently utilize some of the ideas I bring back from the conference including one we used starting in 2017. This marketing strategy involved using a stuffed animal that travels from vendor to vendor each week where children are asked to find him. A punch card is utilized to track involvement. We found that many families enjoyed this and brought the cards into the market weekly. A random drawing of the punch cards was used at the end of the market for prizes. They also cover challenges that are trending in farmers markets and it always helps to see that other markets struggle with some of things we are experiencing. See attached report.

We offered the OEFFA membership to all of our farmers which also enabled them to attend the OEFFA conference for a reduced price. We had five individual memberships and four family memberships. 11 farmers participated in the OEFFA conference. We also offered GAP(Good Agricultural Practices) classes for five new farmers. Some of those new farmers are still with us. A survey was circulated at the end of the OEFFA conference with comments like "A great opportunity to meet people with diverse experiences and perspectives". "Thanks so much for this opportunity! Great people and networking/learning opportunity that we would have missed otherwise". Although this organization is organic some of the conference classes are more general in subject matter. Some of the classes offered were , Super Berry Production: Opportunities and Challenges, Marketing yourself to Retailers and Relationship Marketing: Why Connecting with your Customer Matters. The farmers that did participate took full advantage of the opportunity to learn and make some change in their practices.

(Direct jobs created (3) and retained (1)) Added a Social Media/SNAP employee that increased our engagement with Facebook and the website: Another job was created at the Community Center to transport customers for SNAP and healthy food but it was discontinued for lack of participation.

A third job was created for a guide to co-ordinate the farm tours. Our Social Media and SNAP employee is now managing the market on her own. She gained valuable knowledge from working for a season in those two capacities to take her into 2018.

Our produce sales dropped between 2015 and 2017 by 21.5% . Produce sales went from \$ 65,670 in 2015 and \$54,963 in 2016 to \$51,474 in 2017.

500 additional likes on Facebook over a 6 month period.

Sent 11 participants to the OEFFA conference and 5 to Gap training.

Added one newsletter to the market that promoted all aspects of the market including the SNAP program.

Sent one market manager to Ohio conference for 2016 and 2017.

Added radio advertising for 2016 and 2017. – 96 spots on radio over a two year period.

Six farm tours completed with success in engaging consumers with farming methods, products and farmers. Average on farm sales for the three farms that reported was \$81.00.

Approximately 300 people participated in the community center food demo's.

We had one new local farmer join the market who was a beginning farmer. She is still participating in the market in 2018.

We lost one female farmer that left the area to try another "adventure". She was one of our popular farmers as she grew a diverse crop, was dependable and had quality produce.

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?

We expanded our customer base with the relationship we had with the Community Center which had low income individuals. We had farmers that grew special crops to encourage their participation but participation was still low.

We tried to reach out to higher income groups through the culinary program on KSU radio but do not have data to know if it worked. I had a chalkboard up with a dot survey trying to encourage participants to let us know if they heard the ads and if they came as a result of them but I didn't have much participation.

Our community partners were the Chagrin Falls Park Community Center (CFPCC), the Bainbridge Food for Friends project, our SNAP/social media employee and local market supporters. The relationship we made with the CFPCC was exceptional as we made a connection with a project that cares deeply about feeding needy people. They reach out to their neighborhood by offering a food pantry and education about accessing and preparing local healthy food. Although their participants didn't utilize our SNAP program they were introduced to a source of local healthy food and the center taught them how to prepare, cook and store food from the market. The Bainbridge Food for Friends project is an organization that collects food and distributes it to needy individuals. Our farmers donated food to them at the end of the market in 2015 and 2016. Two local individuals that helped organize the market in 2002 are still regular customers that are always asking about the status of the market. One serves on the board of the CFPCC and helped me with the food demo that we had during the school supply

giveaway. She is always helpful when it comes to the market and the community center as she wants both to succeed. I believe we will continue to have a good working relationship with the CFPCC as we both have those same goals. Our SNAP/social media employee contributed greatly to the market goals as she improved our website and Facebook page formatted a new newsletter that we used to promote events, educate consumers and promote the SNAP program. The newsletter had been discontinued at the market for a year when we brought it back from a request by the customers.

We plan to discuss the results of the grant at our next board meeting and I will discuss the results with key partners as they occur. We have no plan to publicize the results at this time

We found that the farm tours were one of the more successful parts of our grant. Below find some feedback from a couple of our farms: Tiffany Mushrush Mentzer of Harvest Bell Farm “The farm tour Geauga Fresh Farmers’ Market provided this summer was extremely beneficial to the farm as well as our customers. It gave us the opportunity to showcase what we do on the farm with growing, raising our animals and farming practices. Customers, who normally would not come out to the farm, had the ability to join the scheduled tour and be part of the 20+ group. It’s always a fun experience to share what we do with others and this gave us that chance, while sampling our products and selling them too. The tour encourages a diverse group of people in the community to learn more about farming.”

Jake Trethewey of MapleStar Farm: “Getting customers out to a farm is always beneficial for both the farmer and the customer/consumer. MapleStar Farm LLC is a small farm located in Auburn Township, Geauga County Ohio that has been owned and operated by the Trethewey family since 1040. With the construction of the freeway from Cleveland to Geauga County in 1980’s Auburn Township has been quickly transformed from a primarily agricultural area to residential area. People that toured our farm were able to learn why it is important to support local farm and food production and how difficult it can be, as a farmer to operate a farm in the heart of an affluent community that turns more and more prime farmland into subdivisions every year. During the tour we (the farmers) were able to learn what we can do to better support the needs of the community with products and also as a good neighbor to the community. From a more direct benefit point of view we also gained some additional customer for our roadside stand that we operate 5 days a week in season, in addition to selling at the Geauga Fresh Farmers Market on Saturday.

This is a quote from a customer at the market, Mary Jo Minello: “First of all, one of the favorite things I enjoy about my 4th summer as a resident of South Russell is The Geauga Fresh Farmers Market. I so appreciate everything about the market and the authentic hard work that makes it a weekly reality all summer long. I have been thinking about the market because its presence is the go to place for healthy local veggies, fruit, eggs and it’s thriving is good for all of us -to say nothing of the fact that my favorite vegetables are at my fingertips. Every time I shop, there is a friendly conversation and I can look at an especially fresh bunch of Swiss Chard or a lovely green zucchini or a perfect fat red pepper and the tenderest of green beans.

This is feedback from Helyne Walker (Strategies for Life Co-coordinator) from the Chagrin Falls Park Community Center.

The Chagrin Falls Park community participated and benefitted from the grant provided to the GFFM in several ways. The SNAP/EBT program was made available to residents and publicized in the neighborhood thorough fliers, bulletin board postings and newsletters. Weekly visits to the market were available to residents of Chagrin Falls Park each Saturday using a Community Center van with a driver paid for by the grant. In addition to the driver, the grant funded a SNAP co-coordinator for the program. Cooking demonstrations were presented to a group of residents monthly at the Community Center using produce from the local farmers at the GFFM.

The goal of the program was to expose middle to low-income populations of the CFP Community to the experience of fresh local produce. Participation in the program was limited by several factors. Many residents who might have liked to go to the market were not able to go because of Saturday work commitments. So the turn out for the can trip was lower than expected. It was hoped that the van transportation would enable residents who did not have a car/or experienced isolation relative to options in the purchasing of fresh produce would be encouraged to buy fresh produce from the local farmers. While residents like the idea of fresh and local, they perceived the prices at the market as very high and their comfort level presenting SNAP coupons was very low...being identified as poor, not being able to pay, in an otherwise affluent community. This contributed to low participation in the project.

The cooking demonstrations at the Community Center using local produce from the market were very well attended and the participants benefitted in many way from their experience. Participants experienced eating vegetables, like beets and spaghetti squash, and enjoyed eating vegetables, which were cooked in more healthful ways than the usual breaded and fried style they were used to. Several participants reported that they had changed their cooking style as a result of the demonstrations and several others that they had enjoyed the new vegetables so much that they were not cooking and eating them!

2. Budget Summary:

- i. 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: x
- 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?
- iii.

Lessons Learned

We were asked to remove some of the EBT signage around the market booth so that it wasn't so obvious for participants. We did this by moving the large yellow sandwich board out to our main road that goes by the market and I feel it was better utilized in that situation as it had a higher potential to reach out to SNAP participants.

We had very low participation in our SNAP program which makes me reflect on the fact that our market location is in a higher income area and our prices are high. This should be considered before offering this service. It also may take SNAP participants a while to know where it is offered as they are not as connected with society as others are. This program did help us to connect with another part of our community with residents that normally wouldn't attend the market. Hopefully they will continue to think about the market and what it has to offer them.

I learned that one goal with a predetermined outcome may lead to other positive outcomes. When planning the farm tours I didn't anticipate on farm sales. All of the six farm tours ended up offering their products the day of the tour which resulted in sales. Some of the farms currently had stands for on farm sales but others did not and prepared an area where customers could purchase the products that day.

Offering farm tours could be adapted by any market that has farms within a reasonable distance from the market. As most markets these days are about promoting local products the farms should be accessible. Most of society has no connection to a farm so experiencing it has many valuable lessons. A high percentage of the participants really enjoyed the tours and complemented us. They found them to be a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon as well as educational. I also think that dialog amongst the customers on the tour helped to promote the products as they shared their experiences with what they liked about the market. It was great that many families chose to go on the tours which meant that they had children with them. They could actually get up close to animals and sometimes hold them. They could pick and taste fresh strawberries for the very first time. These experiences could stay with them and affect their purchasing power and health for a lifetime. The sampling on the tours was a good choice also as the participants gathered together around the food they formed a fellowship that encouraged dialog that meant for a pleasant time and maybe some learning too!

This was the first federal grant that our market had applied for and implemented. We were glad that we stayed around the \$20,000 or less dollar amount as running a market is a lot of work and adding a grant onto that was challenging. So, for us and possibly other small markets (30 or less vendors) keeping the grant manageable is probably the best way to go for the first time. Our grant had several different parts that were independent of one another (SNAP, farm tours, new modern social advertising) that required significant time investments so I would encourage potential grant applicants to keep it small for the first year.

Future Work:

We still have a nice relationship with the Chagrin Falls Community Center as we do have a few customers from there although they are not SNAP/EBT customers. Hopefully we can have a brainstorm session in the near future to see what we can do keep that relationship and improve their participation in the market.

There has been some discussion within the market as when we could offer additional farm tours as we got a lot of positive feedback about them. I had customers that told me that they would pay for a farm tour similar to what we offered through this grant. I will have to discuss this with the board of directors see if they want to offer a few in 2018.

We will continue to offer GAP training for any new farmer participant and any farmer that wants to retake the class. The board feels that this training is very important.

We will continue to offer the SNAP program until our contract for the technology has ended.

Our social media/SNAP coordinator will remain with the market as she will be the new market manager for 2018. Having her at the market while I was there gave her valuable experience to carry over into her new role as manager. In this role she will continue to utilize her social media skills, operate the SNAP program and work with the vendors and the community.

Our sales including our produce sales have dropped in the last two years so future work would be to retain and recruit new vendors – especially farmers. Since we are a small market (less than 30 vendors) it hits us hard when we lose a quality farmer as we did at the start of the summer season in 2017. One of our most productive female farmers (\$8,900 in sales) moved. Since then we have added a large apple farm and a new female farmer this fall that will participate in 2018. She is new to farming but we have made a commitment to help her as much as we can.

Our market wanted to diversify its customer base, provide educational opportunities, and reach out to the community through SNAP, farm tours and sharing our local food. We did this with a myriad of ways with cooking demos, printed and social media and educating our farmers to produce a better product. Although our sales did drop within the two year period we gained some new farmers and retained most of them, gave an experience that helped customers including children appreciate farming and I think gave us more of a presence in the community.