

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>	October 1, 2014 – September 30,2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Betsy Anderson, Director
Authorized Representative Phone:	330-988-8166
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Recipient Organization Name:	Wooster Local Foods Cooperative, Inc. dba Local Roots Market and Café
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Marketing the Market; Growing Local Roots
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-OH-0412
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Wooster, Ohio
Total Awarded Budget:	\$98,280

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: _____

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0287. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable sex, marital status, or familial status, parental status religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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 awareness of Local Roots and traffic to the Market and Cafe***

- a. **Progress Made:** Through the course of the grant period, we worked to:

- Remind residents about Local Roots - During our initial period of foundation (2009-10) we enjoyed a lot of momentum and free publicity as the “new kid on the block”. This energy slowed as we became established, settled into a routine, and had a few hiccups along the way. By having the resources to participate in community events, and the ability to promote our brand, we were able to get back into the limelight and encourage locals to “check us out” or “try us again”. Community members repeat business is key to the success of the coop and our producers.
- Bring Local Roots to a new, wider audience – While Local Roots is well known throughout the “foodie” community, we struggle to try to attract more mainstream shoppers to our store. Hosting community events that get people through the door and advertisements, like billboards, helped to create interest and break the ice for new customers. Once visited, and given a positive experience, they are more likely to come back.
- Play a more active role in the community – Local Roots hosted and participated in downtown events and collaborative advertising opportunities as a member of the Main Street Wooster association.
- Make Social Media “work” – We found that free platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide an excellent opportunity to connect with potential customers. By posting interesting and informative articles, working to build audience engagement, paying for boosted posts, and promoting products and events we were able to build engagement. The grant funds were also used to pay for placement in Google AdWord search.
- Upgrade our website - We ditched our 5+ year old site and switched to a new content management system that offers a mobile friendly viewing (which increases search ranking). Professional photographs and informational videos create a more polished look and experience.
- Add new signage to exterior of the building - New signs were added to the exterior of the North, South, and West sides of the building and parking lot identification was improved.
- Reach out to the larger Northeast Ohio region – Radio spots, advertisements, and feature articles in a regional print publication (Edible Cleveland magazine) helped us to reach a larger audience and encourage “day trippers”.

- Create a more polished image – We worked with a professional photographer and graphic designer to redesign promotional items and created instore signage to share the mission and goals of Local Roots with customers.
- Urged people to think about what they eat – We executed an ad campaign urging people to “Get to know the story behind your food” tying in new website, professional video of our producers, billboards, and print advertisements.
- Provide member incentives – We implemented more “fun” activities, like giveaways, to promote membership and encourage return business.
- Shared the work, and the story, of Local Roots with other groups – We connected with those looking to start similar endeavors through presentations, conferences, tours, and phone calls.

Qualitative data:

- Facebook “likes” at beginning of grant period were 2163. Current is 4524.
- Email marketing contacts at beginning of the grant period were 3351. Current is 4385.
- Instagram account, which was implemented during the course of this program, now has 812 followers.
- Twitter, also implemented during this period, now has 109 followers.

b. Impact on Community: The LFPP Grant allowed us to...

1. Promote our producers and their products – Many products at our markets are not widely available. Promoting these products and the people who make/grow them helps our sales as well as the producer’s.
2. Be a more active participant in community – The resources provided allowed us to participate in community/downtown events in a way we had not been able to previously, including playing a leading role in organizing and promoting an around town Halloween event. This allowed us to work with, and get to know, other business owners, local media, and the Main Street Wooster promotional organization. We were able to be seen as an active participant instead of just benefitting from the work of others which helps our reputation in the community. We are fortunate that Wooster is a vibrant community with a growing and thriving downtown as it creates a destination and festive atmosphere for shoppers and visitors.

ii. **Goal/Objective 2: *Increase in Co-op sales/rental income, number of producers, and producer income***

a. Progress Made:

- Increase market sales by 10% annually: Total producer sales in 2014 (period when the grant began) was \$563,000. Final sales for 2016 totaled just over \$639,000 (13% increase).
- Increase Café sales to \$2850/week: We fell short on our goals to increase sales through our Café. Over the course of this project,

Management identified that issues with the Café were not limited to lack of customers and internal issues prevented growth of that part of the business. A change of structure of the Café was implemented at the end of 2016 and adjustments are still being made.

- Commercial kitchen processing use: Our goal was to have the kitchen rented a minimum of 40 hrs/wk June-October and 20 hrs/wk November-May (at \$5-30/hr) to be used primarily as a processing facility for excess summer producer. At the beginning of the grant period, the kitchen was being used approximately 45 hr/wk by 7 producers. As of this report, the kitchen is being used approximately 110 hrs/wk by producers to create value-added foods and for catering activities.

Although this is an improvement, as part of our mission, we still seek to see the kitchen used more to preserve produce for off season sales. Local Roots has partnered with a local non-profit to submit a proposal to create the area's first Farm to School Program where our kitchen will be used to process and preserve fresh fruits and vegetables for schools and community sales.

b. Impact on Community:

- Payment to local producers: Local Roots keeps a 5-30% commission on products sold through our market (2016 average was 22%). On sales totaling just over \$639,000, local farms and producers received \$494,000 in payments from Local Roots.
- Support more local producers: In 2014, when this project began, Local Roots sold for 225 different producers between our Wooster and Ashland markets. In 2016, we sold for 284 producers (a 26% increase).
- Less waste for producers: Changes to café means that we are currently buying less from producers. However, we continue to seek funds to implement processing and preserving of seasonal produce that would greatly reduce waste.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: *Secure jobs and add future employee dedicated to marketing and outreach*

a. Progress Made: Even with issues with the Café portion of the business, Local Roots Wooster finished FY 2015-16 in June with positive earnings. The current 1 full-time and 1 part-time market positions will remain intact. In addition, near the end of the grant period, a vacancy for the part-time spot opened up and was filled by Jessica Eikleberry who had handled the marketing. This will allow us to retain the knowledge gained through the grant period and continuity of procedures.

Changes to the structure of the Café has meant a reduction in staffing for that portion of the business, however, we look to transition the production of dine-in foods to producers which will mean increased sales for them.

b. **Impact on Community:** Local Roots is, and will remain, a key part of the community as a place for healthy food, and sales outlet for producers, and community center in Wooster.

iv. **Goal/Objective 4: Encourage healthier eating among low income residents of Wooster**

a. **Progress Made:** The percentage of SNAP/EBT benefits fell short of our sales goal of 5% of sales as SNAP/EBT sales did not increase proportionally with overall sales. SNAP/EBT benefits now make up less than 1% of overall sales. Although attempts were made to reach out to lower income residents, convincing those on limited budgets to spend more money on better foods continues to be a problem not just for us, but nationally.

b. **Impact on Community:** We continue to work with many of Wooster's low income residents through our volunteer program. We find that many of them have never been exposed to cooking or using fresh produce or "real food" ingredients. Through day to day interactions with our managers, farmers, and other volunteers, they become exposed to healthier foods and a different way of eating. While these personal interactions may not yield measureable results, over time these individuals find a new, healthier lifestyle.

We also continue to make regular/weekly donations to the local Salvation Army, women's shelter, and rehabilitation center.

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, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.
- i. **Number of direct jobs created:** 0 jobs have been created as a result of this project.
 - ii. **Number of jobs retained:** 1 full-time position and 1 part-time position in Wooster have been retained. 1 part-time position in Ashland has also been retained.
 - iii. **Number of indirect jobs created:** In 2014, when this project began, Local Roots sold for 225 different producers between our Wooster and Ashland markets. In 2016, we sold for 284 producers representing an addition of 59 individuals or 26%. Although sales at Local Roots surely do not count as a full time "job" for most producers, they have either been able to expand a current business or begin a new business thanks to the Local Roots sales outlet.
 - iv. **Number of markets expanded:** 2 – Total producer sales for Wooster in 2016 were \$486,438, a 9% increase over 2014's \$445,827. Ashland also had a 30% positive increase with 2016 sales at \$152,669 over \$117,428 in 2014 (however, some of that may be due to the new/better location and not necessarily solely due to the work of this project).
 - v. **Number of new markets established:** While Local Roots has not established any new markets, we have worked with several other businesses and non-profit groups seeking to found markets similar to ours around the county.
 - vi. **Market sales increased by \$75,850 and increased by 13.5%.** (Comparison of total Wooster + Ashland sales totals 2014 to 2016.)
 - vii. **Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:** In 2014, when this project began, Local Roots sold for 225 different producers between our Wooster and Ashland markets. In 2016, we sold for 284 producers, an **increase of 26%**.

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?**
- Several of the producers are natives of other countries including Columbia, Tanzania, Ecuador, Chile, Germany, and India. Having a low cost/risk outlet allows them to sell their products and develop a following among locals (and integrates them into the community). Also, having these special items available connects us to a new audience looking for special flavors.
 - Our business model makes us an excellent platform for those seeking a sales outlet for startup ventures/products.
 - Our innovative, low-cost, business model has attracted a lot of attention as a way to bring local food to other communities. Local Roots management regularly provides consulting services to groups seeking to start their own establishments.
4. Discuss your community partnerships.
- i. **Who are your community partners?**
Our farmers/producers, local businesses, the Main Street Wooster Association, the College of Wooster, Ohio State University, The Wilderness Center, Girl Scouts, Cleveland Clinic and numerous local organizations and groups.
 - ii. **How have they contributed to the results you've already achieved?**
 - Since producers sell on a consignment system, the promotion of Local Roots to their customers has direct impact on their sales. Producers are provided a space on site whenever they would like to demo or sample products. Some producers also teach classes at our location. We also help each other by sharing and liking posts on social media.
 - We work with other downtown businesses on cross promotional opportunities.
 - We are members of the "Main Street Wooster" non-profit association that helps to organize and promote events and collaborative advertising opportunities aimed to draw people downtown.
 - The College of Wooster is a supporter of Local Roots as an organization that showcases Wooster as an innovative, happening place to potential students and faculty. We have provided real life case studies for several classes and are often invited to participate in student and campus events. Also, many of our volunteers are C.O.W. students and many faculty are members and frequent shoppers.
 - We also provide space for local groups to meet (Girl Scouts, Cleveland Clinic wellness program – Walking Club, The Wilderness Center classes etc.). Each of these events is advertised to members with "Local Roots" as a location which provided name recognition and also brings new people into our space.
 - iii. **How will they contribute to future results?**
We expect to continue to do more of the same with each of these local organizations and participate in new opportunities as they arise.
5. **Did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?**
- **Mix Marketing/Krista Emerson:** Krista's expertise and experience helped to guide the use of funds for best results. She coached our staff through setting up basics such as online profiles, search engine placement, paid ads, and usage of social media. Her creative ideas guided the design of many of the ads. It was also Krista's work that yielded the fall 2016 edition of *Edible*

Cleveland Magazine (a regional food publication) that featured Wooster including Local Roots, our farmers, and other local businesses.

- **Hugon Art & Design/Jennifer Hugon:** Jennifer provided graphic design services on a weekly basis and included things such as rack cards, flyers, coupons, ads, signage, shirts, etc. She was the point person for the design and installation of new building signage and personally completed the re-design of the website.
- **Grace Jones Photography/Grace Jones (replacement for Blue OX/Ben Leitschuch):** Grace completed 2 onsite photoshoots providing us with new and beautiful pictures of the store and products to use in print advertisements and online. Grace also provided photos and video featuring 4 of our producers as part of our “Get to know the story behind your food” campaign. Grace also has a very active social media presence and helps to promote Local Roots.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

- If yes, how did you publicize the results?** Yes, we published ads and information throughout the course project. For examples of work, see:
 - a. New website <https://www.localrootswooster.com/>
 - b. Videos of farms as part of “Get to know the story behind your food” campaign <https://www.localrootswooster.com/greens> and <https://www.localrootswooster.com/harmony>
 - c. Video featuring producers using our Commercial Kitchen to create products as promotion to increase users (rental) of the Kitchen <https://www.localrootswooster.com/kitchen>
 - d. Pictures from *Edible Cleveland* Fall 2016 “Small Town” Edition featuring Local Roots, our farms, and other local businesses (edible)
 - e. New signs and door decal on South side of the building <https://www.facebook.com/localrootswoo/photos/a.444569678903397.120581.142459175781117/1546880702005617/?type=3&theater>
 - f. Picture of Billboard advertisement from Spring 2016 (billboard)
 - g. Collaborative Wayne County advertisement in 2016 Blossom Music Festival Booklet https://issuu.com/lpcpub/docs/blossom_2016_book1?e=3194205/36842017 (see page 88)
 - h. Pictures of new interior signage (signs)
 - i. Pictures of newly designed Local Roots t-shirts (shirts) with logo on back
 - j. Various articles and features in local newspapers (news)
- To whom did you publicize the results?** We used various media such as newspapers, regional print publications, regional radio, billboards, and online (website, social media, pay per click ads) to reach the largest possible audience.
- How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?** Not able to quantify number of individuals, but reached out to the Wooster/Ashland areas as well as the larger Northeast Ohio region.

*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?

- i. **If so, how did you collect the information?** Any results collected were anecdotal in nature or could be reflected by the increase in sales.
- ii. **What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?** Managers reported customers seeking items that they saw on social media, customers who stopped after seeing a billboard or hearing radio advertisement, interest in specific products after reading an article about it in the local newspaper, etc.

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?** Yes
 - a. **If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?** It is hard to quantify, but an increase of annual producer sales over 2014 totaled close to \$135,000 (\$59,000 in 2015 and \$76,000 in 2016). All of the income generated is invested back into the business to grow and make it self-sustaining.

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).** One of the most positive aspects, and the easiest to continue long term, was the effective use of social media. Negatively, we had issues in dealings with local newspaper and found advertising through that method not to be of a good value.
- ii. **If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:** We had several projects, like in store signage, that were not completed due to time constraints. We underestimated the amount of time that creative work takes.
- 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:** We would suggest that anyone seeking to implement a similar project to direct additional resources to personnel. A clever individual(s) dedicated to promotion, with adequate time, can effectively use low cost methods of advertising available to promote the business.

10. 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.**

As our Marketing Director will remain on staff we will retain the knowledge learned through the course of this project. We use the skills learned best manage our brand and image.

We will continue to use social media to promote our business, partner with other Main Street Wooster businesses and local organizations for events and collaborative advertising opportunities. We will continue to use higher priced print media, or other paid advertisements, for selective purposes. Additionally, many of the items funded by this project, like the new website and signage, will last us for years to come.

We expect to retain our current employees in the Market and look to add an additional position as we develop our new Café business model. Promotion will be included in relaunch plan.

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?

If possible, we would consider applying for this grant a second time to continue the work we started. If funds were received, we would like to focus on:

- a. Implementing some of the projects we dreamed up but were not able to complete (like a cross-promotion “favorite food quote” contest) to engage the community in a dialog about food.
- b. Helping to promote the use of local foods, and real foods in general, through cooking and preserving classes. These classes could be targeted especially at low income residence.

Even without additional funding, our staff, and other volunteer management will continue to work on engaging people with local food, and Local Roots, as time allows. We are grateful for the 2 years that we were able to participate in the USDA’s Local Food Promotion Program. We will continue to encourage people to connect with the land, farmers, and their community through food as part of the mission of our organization. Thank you!