

**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](mailto: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.

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 2014 – August 2015
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Sheri Griffin
<b>Authorized Representative Phone:</b>	401 312 4250
<b>Authorized Representative Email:</b>	Sheri@farmfreshri.org
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Farm Fresh Rhode Island
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Meeting Institutional Needs with Rhode Island Agriculture: Mapping the Way
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-RI-0154
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2014
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Pawtucket, RI
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$22,500

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.**

**Goal/Objective 1:** With this program, Farm Fresh Rhode Island sought to create a **feasibility plan** for enhancing its local food hub to better serve area farms and institutional purchasers.

**a. Progress Made:**

**Proposal Activity: Research review; asset & need review** Review research program results: review outline of existing food infrastructure assets and assets required for increased institutional sales, create a “wish list” for needed, and realistic, infrastructure assets.

- Milestone: Completed review of research findings, correlation of research to existing assets, creation of a “wish list”

Farm Fresh undertook this planning process with the mission to remove barriers between local growers and local eaters. While alternative wholesale distribution systems between growers and purchasers was the primary focus, Farm Fresh also did analyses of its numerous farmers markets and its processing kitchen to ascertain their relevance in farm viability.

With private funding in 2014, Farm Fresh interviewed local growers, institutional purchasers and produce processors to get an analysis of the current state of farm-to-institution sales. This analysis showed that institutional purchasers are receiving requests from their customers to serve more local food. Barriers to these purchases include difficulty sourcing local product, lack of processed or frozen product available, and price sensitivity.

Growers cited barriers to this market as price sensitivity, particularly as corporate food services require the lowest possible price. They cited the dearth of processing facilities, where they could add value to products. They also cited a desire to create more awareness about the capabilities of local farms that could supply institutions, so purchasers would know about the local food available.

Local processors vary in size from farm kitchens to large-scale by-the-truckload processors. Small kitchens cannot create processed produce at an affordable scale for wholesale purchasers, and they are better positioned to serve the retail (farmstand/farmers market) trade. Large processors in the area are reluctant to process from local growers, because of their small scale. Short runs of local produce are not efficient for them, as they interrupt the large-scale production runs.

Building from this information with the Local Foods Promotion Program planning grant, Farm Fresh has been working on plans for overcoming these barriers to create a more relevant and resilient local food system.

Farm Fresh’s food system enterprise programs are:

1. Market Mobile: an aggregation and distribution program for locally grown food, serving 60+ farms and over 200 customers across Rhode Island and eastern Massachusetts. Market Mobile has an online ordering component, a climate controlled warehouse, and will post over \$2.2M in sales in 2015.
2. Harvest Kitchen: a processing kitchen providing job training to at risk youth, while creating value-added products from local produce, such as sauces, pickles, soups and breads.
3. Education and Marketing: Farm Fresh Rhode Island houses the Rhode Island Farm to School program, which has over ten years experience in promoting the use of local foods to institutional purchasers. This experience has led Rhode Island to be the first state to have every school district serving locally grown food.

**Goal/Objective 2:**

**Proposal Activity: Feasibility study process** Utilizing research and wish list, Farm Fresh will analyze the infrastructure elements required to increase Farm to Institutional distribution, using metrics such as cost, site availability, community needs, and funding potential. With this analysis of needed infrastructure, Farm Fresh will create a plan on which elements would be appropriate to support this sector and can be feasibly achieved by Farm Fresh. Farm Fresh will also engage community partners in the results of the survey, and share its findings to seek out others willing/able to take on portions of the infrastructure enhancement.

- Milestone: Feasibility Plan, listing assets to be created, costs, potential funding sources, potential sites, business risks and benefits, potential partners and similar

During the feasibility study, Farm Fresh sought to understand how to use these resources, and other community resources to visualize growth scenarios, and the project income potential. An important aspect of this process was the analysis of potential partnerships and synergies by co-locating with Farm Fresh's distribution and processing platforms. Other aspects were learning how well these platforms worked for large-scale customers, for farmers and other stakeholders.

Farm Fresh Rhode Island has created a flexible plan to accommodate growth in its for food hub programs, including physical growth in warehouse facility; heightened food safety training programs for all employees; additional food handling equipment; upgraded ordering software; improved customer relationship training; increased food processing capabilities; and enhanced promotion and outreach.

Farm Fresh is seeking private funding sources to achieve many of these goals, particularly those that can be accommodated in Farm Fresh's current facilities, such a training and software upgrades. A new facility for Farm Fresh's food hub was envisioned, with square footage requirements, loading docks, highway and parking access, and similar characteristics included. This plan remains flexible, however, in order to consider potential co-locators and creative building reuse. A very promising site for this expansion has been located, and pre-development work is underway.

Fulfilling the elements of this plan will equip Farm Fresh to make more demonstrable and measurable improvements to the local food economy through processing, distribution and promotion, areas in which Farm Fresh already has demonstrated success.

- **Proposal Activity: *Community Outreach, Partnerships Exploration*** Farm Fresh will share its research and plan with community partners and stakeholders to seek partners, collaborators and supports. Farm Fresh will create and outreach plan to share its research and planning process. Farm Fresh will use this plan to connect with local, regional and national groups.
  - Milestone: Partnerships meetings, outreach plan creation and implementation

Through this process, Farm Fresh staff has interviewed farms, value-added processors, retail and wholesale customers, local government officials and other stakeholders. Many of these discussions related to the local food system's assets and needs. The conversations also included discussions on how these stakeholders could benefit from collaboration and co-locating with Farm Fresh's expanded food hub. These conversations were very constructive, and from them Farm Fresh has learned of several food and agriculture-related businesses interested in joining in the project, in a variety of levels. These conversations are continuing and are becoming more pragmatic as a strong contender for a physical space has been identified.

Farm Fresh has shared its planning process at the Farm to Institution New England (FINE) convening in April 2015. Farm Fresh led a workshop on the planning process, with the lens of adopting Food Solutions New England plan document calling for New England to grow 50% of its own food by 2060. This workshop led participants through the process of analyzing existing programs for their efficacy in building the local food system, looking for areas that could be bolstered through partnership and expansion, and ways to analyze the potential projects with measureable criteria.

Farm Fresh will be presenting another national conference in January, on the ways that food hubs can promote healthy food access through food hub capabilities. This planning process and its potential outcomes will be an important part of the presentation.

#### **b. Impact on Community:**

As outlined above, this planning process has been inclusive and much time has been spent with community members, discussing assets and needs, as well as projected activities. While this planning process has not yielded any concrete outcomes for community members, these conversations have stimulated positive ideas about food systems and potential.

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.**

This planning grant did not result in jobs created or sales increases.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: n/a
- ii. Number of jobs retained: n/a
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: n/a
- iv. Number of markets expanded: n/a
- v. Number of new markets established: n/a
- vi. Market sales increased by \$n/a and increased by n/a%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
  - a. Percent Increase: n/a

**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?**

This planning grant did not directly increase our customer base by reaching new populations. These are, however, the goals of the planned project's implementation.

**4. Discuss your community partnerships.**

- i. **Who are your community partners?**
- ii. **How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?**
- iii. **How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?**

Farm Fresh Rhode Island has met with numerous community stakeholders to ascertain their potential inclusion in an expanded food hub facility to enhance the local food system of Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts. These parties include farmers, businesses adding value to locally grown product, and other types of food and agriculture-related businesses. While this project is still in the planning phases, we are treating these conversations with confidentiality.

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

N/A

**6. Have you publicized any results yet?\***

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

As stated above, publicity of the plan has not yet begun, due to many program components still being negotiated.

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

- i. **If so, how did you collect the information?**
- ii. **What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?**

Through this planning process, Farm Fresh had the opportunity to speak to a wide range of community members and stakeholders about Farm Fresh's future plans and the plans of those interviewed. This information was collected in a series of interviews and conversations during the feasibility planning process. Rhode Island and eastern Massachusetts have many farmers seeking to expand their businesses, and to do so in ways that respect the community and the environment. They are often seeking to do so out of the traditional wholesale system. As one grower said, "I like knowing the end user of my product," an advantage that Farm Fresh's Market Mobile food hub provides. Other growers and processors shared confidential information about expansion plans that might collaborate or co-locate with a Farm Fresh expansion.

**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? N/A**

**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).**
- 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:**

Farm Fresh Rhode Island was able to achieve its goals as laid out in the proposal and to create a plan and an implementation strategy. An important lesson learned is to reach out to many, varied stakeholders, rather than just the obvious choices. Small-scale growers, like many small businesspeople, often have creative and ambitious expansion plans that one might not guess.

Another important lesson is to create a framework of non-negotiables in site-selection, and then let other, less critical, considerations be flexible. A site should not drive a plan, but keeping an open mind about sites is wise.

Finally, an experienced real estate professional is a crucial component for planning any type of expansion or move.

**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.**
- 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?**

Farm Fresh Rhode Island is very grateful for the USDA's support of this planning grant. Farm Fresh's growth from a student project with a \$10,000 budget in 2005 to a medium-sized nonprofit with 30 employees and a \$2M budget was largely achieved with a minimal investment of capital resources and low-risk, incremental planning. For the organization's second decade, Farm Fresh is seeking to create a more deliberate expansion strategy, with broad community input and collaboration, in order to serve a wide range of constituencies.

Farm Fresh seeks to expand its physical space to include a larger warehouse area to handle a greater volume of farm sales, a purpose-built processing kitchen for local produce, and a retail component to be determined by stakeholder needs.

Farm Fresh's food hub program has experienced strong growth since inception in 2009, and will see over \$2.2M sales in 2015. Growth strategies for this program, which directly benefits local growers, include expanding and diversifying the customer base to include more large-scale institutional purchasers. Initial efforts to expand sales to schools and universities in 2015 have shown a 65% increase over 2014! This sector clearly has a lot of growth potential, which Farm Fresh will pursue in its planned space.