

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; 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 – September 29, 2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Michelle Edwards
Authorized Representative Phone:	540-829-7450
Authorized Representative Email:	medwards@rrregion.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Virginia Piedmont Regional Food System Planning
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-VA-0170
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties, Virginia
Total Awarded Budget:	\$15,014

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: Conduct an economic analysis of the region’s food system
 - a. Progress Made: The analysis and report are complete. The consultant presented draft results at three public meetings around the region in early-February 2015, and the final report was released in mid-April.
 - b. Impact on Community: 50 stakeholders attended the presentations with favorable project feedback. Report recommendations and statistical data were utilized in developing the Regional Food System Plan, as well as a feasibility study for a regional agricultural institute, which is intended to house educational programs, research, a community kitchen and processing facility.
 - ii. Goal/Objective 2: Hold focus group meetings and interviews of local stakeholders
 - a. Progress Made: Twelve interviews were conducted by RRRRC staff and the consultant. The results were incorporated into the Food System Analysis Report. Four producer/agri-business focus group meetings have been held and the results published to the project webpage. One additional focus group meeting was held at our agri-tourism symposium in early-April, and one for institutional buyers in late-April.
 - b. Impact on Community: 100 stakeholders participated and their concerns and resource needs were incorporated into the final plan.
 - iii. Goal/Objective 3: Strategic Planning Meetings
 - a. Progress Made: 3 Community Conversations were held in a central location within the region. The meetings were facilitated by trained Virginia Cooperative Extension facilitators.
 - b. Impact on Community: Approximately 20 people participated at each meeting. A vision for the region’s food system and a list of priority projects were developed. Further details on the priority projects to allow was provided by the Regional Commission’s Agricultural Working Group as needed to allow for implementation.
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.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: 0
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 0
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 0
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 0
 - v. Number of new markets established: 0
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. N/A
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 70 producers directly participated in project meetings, while approximately 3,000 stand to benefit directly or indirectly from the final plan
 - 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? N/A
4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners? farmers and agri-businesses, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Piedmont Environmental Council, Farm Bureau, Rural Madison (citizens' organization), local governments, local schools, local hospitals, local farm-to-table restaurants and retail stores, Charlottesville Food Hub, Blue Ridge Growers (aggregator), Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute & Research Center, Virginia Food Enterprise Center
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? Many of these stakeholders groups participated in steering committee meetings, while others shared comments through the focus group meetings, interviews, or the strategic planning meetings. While not part of this grant, we also received producer comments through surveys sent to producers in the region.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? We hope that some of these stakeholders will participate in the planned Regional Food Council, or assist in developing the Regional Marketing Plan, or contribute to other projects listed in the Regional Food System Plan.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center, was contracted to conduct the economic analysis and stakeholder interviews, as well as provide recommendations for next-steps.
6. Have you publicized any results yet? All results have been published except for the final plan. The draft Regional Food System Plan is currently being reviewed by the Agriculture Working Group. The final version will be officially released at the Region Commission's Annual Meeting in mid-October 2015.
 - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? The results have been posted to the project webpage and emailed to stakeholders. Project webpage address: www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html (major reports can be downloaded at the top of the page). The results of the major studies are also included as appendices in the final plan.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? Emails were sent to those that attended our meetings, and the RRRC Agricultural Working Group distribution list. This list includes representatives of the major stakeholder groups, including several farmers as well as staff and administrators from each local government in the region. The link to the webpage was also included in the cover letter with the producer surveys.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? 1,436

*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? Yes.
 - i. If so, how did you collect the information? Comments about the project were taken during public meetings, focus group meetings and the producer surveys. The verbal comments during meetings were recorded by facilitators in written summaries. The

survey responses, which included space for open-ended comments, are in writing and anonymous.

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? Comments have included suggestions for others to include in the process, many thanks for pursuing this effort, frustration with federal and state regulations (mostly food safety), skepticism that consumer demand for local food will ever increase, and a few who are happy with their agricultural operation as it is. We also collected comments on what people most would like to see come out of this project. While the answers varied, the most common were infrastructure (processing and aggregation) and marketing assistance.

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? 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).

Our local cooperative extension agents were invaluable resources, providing data for the asset assessment, producer contact information for the surveys, trained facilitation at no-cost, and feedback throughout the project.

Since there is a great deal of disagreement among local stakeholders regarding the definition of local, organic vs. conventional, and commodity agriculture vs. smaller growers, we avoided these hot button issues to the extent possible and continually stressed that the project is inclusive of the entire regional food system. In most cases, this prevented discussions from being sidetracked. We also instructed stakeholders during the strategic planning sessions to restrict their comments to what could be solved regionally, as opposed to state or national policy. This worked very well to focus discussions.

We found it very difficult to get stakeholders in the agricultural sector to participate during the growing season, and did not achieve as much participation during the strategic planning meetings as we would have liked, despite including meeting flyers with the producer surveys, news articles, email, etc. Altering meeting times also did not improve attendance. Delays with our state grant funds and a later than normal planting season necessitating this timing, but future projects should avoid public input activities during the planting season at all costs.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: N/A
- 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 found it important to be proactive in actively engaging stakeholders likely to be negative or antagonistic toward the project. Once they heard the facts directly,

generally their concerns were eliminated or greatly diminished. There were stakeholders who simply refused to participate, however, despite trying multiple avenues and methods. It is important to acknowledge that some relationships may require more time to build than the duration of the grant term.

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.

The Regional Commission plans to pursue implementation of the Regional Food System Plan beginning with creation of a Regional Food Council to act as an advisory body that will guide future implementation efforts. One of the first tasks of the Council will be to develop the Regional Local Foods Marketing Plan, which is one the priority projects recommended by the 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? The next steps are outlined with the Recommendations chapter of the Regional Food System Plan.