

FARMERS' MARKET AND LOCAL FOOD PROMOTION PROGRAM (FMLFPP)
Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome and activities of your FMLFPP award objectives. Failure to submit acceptable closeout reports for an existing grant within 90 calendar days following the grant end date may result in exclusion from future AMS grant opportunities.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by FMLFPP 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 **due within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date (as noted in box 15 of your grant agreement (AMS-33), or sooner if the project is complete. The report must be typed single-spaced in 11-point font, not to exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages (excluding existing Final Performance Report form content). For example, if the Final Performance Report form is six (6) pages before you begin entering your project information into the form, your report may be up to 21 pages (6 pages + 15 pages).

Provide answers to **each question** and all applicable outcome and indicators as it applies to your project. If you are unable to provide a response explain why. It is preferred that you email your completed performance report to your assigned FMLFPP Grants Management Specialist to avoid delays. In case of any extraordinary reason a faxed report can be accepted; please notify your assigned Grants Management Specialist to inform about your submission.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. October 1, 2016 -September 30, 2017)</i>	October 1, 2016 – March 31, 2018
Date Report Submitted	June 26, 2018
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	16- LFPP-OK-0029
Recipient Organization Name:	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Bridging the Gap Between the Local Food Economy and Food Access – The Choctaw Nation Food Hub Assessment
Authorized Representative Name:	Chief Gary Batton
Authorized Representative Phone:	(580) 924-8280
Authorized Representative Email:	grants@choctawnation.com
Year Grant was Awarded:	2016
Amount of Award:	\$100,000

FMLFPP 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: Robert Jackson; Email: rjackson@choctawnation.com ; Phone: (580) 924-8280

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, audiotope, 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.

Executive Summary— In 200 words or less, describe the project’s need, purpose, goals, and quantifiable outcomes.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s mission is “To the Choctaw proud, ours is the sovereign nation offering opportunities for growth and prosperity. “Through the local food promotion program, Choctaw Nation staff was able to facilitate a feasibility study to research ways to strengthen and expand the food system for our tribal members, families, and communities. It is our goal to be able to create a sustainable future for our local food system to ensure a long and healthy future for generations of tribal members to come. The Local Food Promotion Program funded our research, which produced 7 key findings in how to accomplish our goal and create a better food system. A brief description of the findings are listed below.

1. SCALE, Inc. believes there are enough farmers with sufficient potential production capacity to eventually support a food hub.
2. There is need to diversify production.
3. High level of interest and support from partners is needed to assist in strengthening the overall food system.
4. Existing markets are likely continue to present the greatest challenge, due to wholesale distributors.
5. There isn’t an “intermediary market” between CSA and large wholesale markets.
6. Simple space is needed for a pilot hub to launch (1,000 sq ft).
7. Differing food hub models all have significant pros and cons.

1. Please provide the approved project's objectives:

Objectives		Completed	
		Yes	No*
1	Contract Agricultural Expert to conduct a feasibility study.	X	
2	Evaluate human, technical, physical and financial capacity of local agricultural producers by the end of the 18-month grant project.	X	
3	Determine best methods to increase market and economic opportunities, access to and consumption of local food products by the end of the 18-month grant project.	X	
4	Determine long-term sustainability of the food hub by the project's end.	X	
5	Produce a written document with agricultural analysis and recommendations by the end of the 18-month project period.	X	

**If no is selected for any of the listed objectives, you must expand upon this in the challenges section.*

2. List your accomplishments for the project's performance period and indicate how these accomplishments assisted in the fulfillment of your project's objectives. Please include additional objectives approved by FMLFPP during the grant performance period, and highlight the impact that activities had on the project's beneficiaries.

Accomplishments	Relevance to Objective, Outcome, and/or Indicator
Choctaw Nation researched and contracted with SCALE, Inc. and Economic Development Associates to conduct the food hub feasibility study.	Relevant to Objective 1
Surveys were conducted with Farmers, Choctaw Nation employees / potential CSA customers, and wholesale buyers.	Relevant to Objective 2, 3, 4
Created three focus groups involving approximately 30 Choctaw Nation employees to discuss food hubs and CSAs.	Relevant to Objective 2, 3, 4
Five site visits were conducted by SCALE, Inc. and Economic Development Associations to the region encompassing approximately 17 days, during which the consultants held interviews, assessed potential sites and structures, as well as spent time with Choctaw Nation staff to better understand the culture and vision for the Choctaw Nation. The findings of the study and potential business plan were presented publicly.	Relevant to Objective 2, 3, 4, 5

Produced a written document with an agricultural analysis and recommendations by the end of the 18- month project period. Document included best methods to increase market and economic opportunities, access to and consumption of local food products.	Relevant to Objective 3, 5
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3. Please list any challenges experienced during the project’s period of performance. Provide the corrective actions taken to address these issues.

Challenges (Issues)	Corrective Actions and/or Project Changes (s)
One of our greatest challenges is getting producers to return written feedback regarding their operations.	Meeting with producers face-to-face rather than requesting feedback by mail or email has produced a much greater response.

4. Quantify the overall progress on the outcomes and indicators of your project. Include further explanation if necessary.

The project has been completed and all five objectives have been reached successfully. 5 site visits were conducted to gain geographical understanding for the potential locations of the hub, in reference to where tribal producers’ farms are located. Site visits also allowed more insight on the average size of farms across the tribal boundaries and established an interest of farmers willing to participate in the hub. After the site visits and research had completed SCALE, Inc. produced a 53-page written report complete with 9 main sections. The sections include...

- Executive Summary
- Project Background
- Food Industry Supply Chain
- Market Analysis: Part 1
- Market Analysis: Part 2
- Market Analysis: Part 3
- Food Hub Business Models
- Organizational / Ownership Structures
- Risk Mitigation Strategies

The results have been made available for interested parties, and were publicly presented by SCALE, Inc.

Outcome 1: To Increase Consumption of and Access to Locally and Regionally Produced Agricultural Products.

Indicator	Description	Number
1.	Total number of consumers, farm and ranch operations, or wholesale buyers reached	N/A
1.a.	The number that gained knowledge on how to buy or sell local/regional food OR aggregate, store, produce, and/or distribute local/regional food	N/A
1.b.	The number that reported an intention to buy or sell local/regional food OR aggregate, store, produce, and/or distribute local/regional food	N/A
1.c.	The number that reported buying, selling, consuming more or supporting the consumption of local/regional food that they aggregate, store, produce, and/or distribute	N/A
2.	Total number of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached	N/A
2.a.	The number that gained knowledge on how to access, produce, prepare, and/or preserve locally and regionally produced agricultural products	N/A
2.b.	The number that reported an intention to access, produce, prepare, and/or preserve locally and regionally produced agricultural products	N/A
2.c.	The number that reported supplementing their diets with locally and regionally produced agricultural products that they produced, prepared, preserved, and/or obtained	N/A

Does not apply LFPP Project was a feasibility study.

Outcome 2: Increase Customers and sales of local and regional agricultural products.

Indicator	Description	Number
1.	Sales increased as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities during the project performance period.	N/A
	Original Sales Amount (in dollars)	N/A
	Resulted Sales Amount (in dollars)	N/A
	Percent Change $((^{n} \text{final} - ^{n} \text{initial}) / ^{n} \text{initial}) * 100 = \% \text{ change}$	N/A
2.	Customer counts increased during the project performance period.	N/A
	Original Customer Count	N/A
	Resulted Customer Count	N/A
	Percent Change $((^{n} \text{final} - ^{n} \text{initial}) / ^{n} \text{initial}) * 100 = \% \text{ change}$	N/A

Does not apply LFPP Project was a feasibility study.

Outcome 3: Develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets.

Indicator	Description	Number
1.	Number of new and/or existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or improved offerings of	N/A
1.a.	Farmers markets	N/A
1.b.	Roadside stands	N/A
1.c.	Community supported agriculture programs	N/A
1.d.	Agritourism activities	N/A

1.e.	Other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities	N/A
1.f.	Local and regional Food Business Enterprises that process, aggregate, distribute, or store locally and regionally produced agricultural products	N/A

Does not apply LFPP Project was a feasibility study.

Indicator	Description	Number
2.	Number of local and regional farmers and ranchers, processors, aggregators, and/or distributors that reported	N/A
2.a.	An increase in revenue expressed in dollars	N/A
2.b.	A gained knowledge about new market opportunities through technical assistance and education programs	N/A
3.	Number of	N/A
3.a	New rural/urban careers created (Difference between "jobs" and "careers": jobs are net gain of paid employment; new businesses created or adopted can indicate new careers)	N/A
3.b.	Jobs maintained/created	N/A
3.c.	New beginning farmers who went into local/regional food production	N/A
3.d.	Socially disadvantaged famers who went into local/regional food production	N/A
3.e.	Business plans developed	N/A

Does not apply LFPP Project was a feasibility study.

Outcome 4: Improve the food safety of locally and regionally produced agricultural products.

Only applicable to projects focused on food safety!

Indicator	Description	Number
1.	Number of individuals who learned about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices	N/A
2.	Number of those individuals who reported increasing their food safety skills and knowledge	N/A
3.	Number of growers or producers who obtained on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices)	N/A

Does not apply LFPP Project was a feasibility study.

Outcome 5: Quantify the overall progress on this outcome indicator based on relevant project activities not covered above. *This indicator must reflect the project narrative's required additional outcome indicator*

In conclusion, Choctaw Nation is pleased with the findings SCALE, Inc. has reported. There was tremendous success in gathering data from Choctaw Nation employees and their interest in supporting a work-based CSA. Approximately 300 out of 5,000 consumer surveys were returned with 90% of the responses stating they are “LIKELY or VERY LIKELY” to participate. Gathering data from producers was somewhat more challenging due to the generational and technological gap between the majority of our producers and our consultants. Only 31 out of approximately 150 producers responded to surveys that were sent out via mail and email. However, we overcame that obstacle by increasing the number of farm visits and face-to-face meetings with producers and stakeholders. Approximately thirty face-to-face meetings were scheduled and conducted during five site visits. Based on the data collected the potential of a food hub increased significantly from the beginning stages of the study. SCALE, Inc. introduced a three-year pilot CSA model to get the hub started and give the producers' adequate time to expand their growing operations and better serve our tribal members, employees, and communities.

Outcome: Develop a feasibility study to assess the development of a centralized food hub.

Outcome Measurements:

- a. Number of producers who have open access to deliver input to the project:
 - 31 completed producer surveys via mail/email
 - 30 face-to-face meetings reaching and collecting data from approximately 140 producers
 - 3 focus groups were created including producers and CSA potential customers.
 - b. Number of direct project beneficiaries of a locally centralized food system:
 - 10 farmers markets were reached, and data collected
 - 17 tribal community centers (pop up markets on Wednesdays)
 - 9 wholesale markets reached, and data collected
 - 1 roadside stand was reached, and data collected
 - c. Number of project beneficiaries who possess production capacity: based on 31 surveys completed
 - 43% of producers surveyed are farming 2 - 5 acres
 - 27% of producers surveyed are farming less than 2 acres
 - 6% of producers surveyed are farming 6 -10 acres
 - 6 % of producers surveyed are farming 11-25 acres
 - 14% of producers surveyed are farming 25 -50 acres
 - 4% of producers surveyed are farming more than 50 acres
 - Approximately 80% producers reported they are not at production capacity
 - d. Number of socially disadvantaged and veteran agriculture producers who participated in the project study:
 - Approximately 140
 - e. Number of producers who require outreach, technical, physical and financial infrastructure development: (based on 31 surveys collected)
 - Approximately 64% of producers collect \$1,000-\$5,000 annually from production.
5. Discuss your community partnerships (include applicant staff and external partners).
- i. Who were your community partners?

Project Director - Robert “Dale” Jackson
Consultants - SCALE, Inc. and Rural Development Associates
Dr. Dave Shideler - Oklahoma State University Department of Agriculture Economics

- ii. How did they contribute to the overall results of the FMLFPP project?

The project director, along with a committee of Choctaw Nation Agriculture Outreach staff, reviewed applicants and chose to contract with SCALE, Inc. and Rural Development Associates to conduct the feasibility study to determine the viability of establishing a local food hub within the Choctaw Nation boundaries. SCALE, Inc. conducted 5 site visits which included background research, one on one meetings with producers, and also distributed surveys to collect data on potential producers willing to participate in the food hub, as well as Choctaw Nation employees who would potentially participate in an employee-based CSA. OSU Extension has been a huge contributor to the work of the feasibility study by assisting in facilitating one-on-one meetings with stakeholders and producers as well providing local research and information that is gathered on the county, region, and state levels. In conclusion, SCALE, put together the final report and presented it to the Choctaw Nation Agriculture Outreach committee along with Choctaw Nation Business Development and public presentation to tribal producers, employees and community members.

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

The results of the study, including the recommended business model, have been turned over to the Choctaw Nation Business Development. The project director, along with SCALE, Inc., have agreed to assist with any future questions or concerns for future opportunities.

- iv. What feedback have the partners provided (specific comments) about the results of the project?

“The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Food System Preliminary Assessment” was provided by SCALE, Inc. to Choctaw Nation. The assessment has three main components:

- 1) A broad assessment of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma food system overall focused on farmers and production, markets and demand, and other food system components such as infrastructure, technical support, and community support.
- 2) A short SWOT analysis of the food system, that is, the most important Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.
- 3) Suggested next steps and priorities for the consultants and Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma that will allow us to build on this assessment, fully consider a potential food hub, and ultimately provide a set of practical recommendations for strengthening the food system.

At the end of the 18-month period a complete summary of the study was produced including.

- Project Background

- Market Analysis
- Multiple Business Models
- Projected Revenue and Cost

<https://www.choctawnation.com/sites/default/files/CNO-Food-Hub-Report-3-19-2018.pdf>

6. How do you plan to publicize the results?

- i. To whom (i.e. people, entities) do you plan to publicize the project results?

Tribal members, producers, community members, OSU Extension Staff, and USDA Representatives.

- ii. When do you plan to publicize the results?

Results we presented at a community meeting in March.

https://www.choctawnation.com/sites/default/files/CNO%20Food%20Hub_PowerPoint_FINAL.PDF

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

Yes.

If so, how did you collect the information?

SCALE, Inc. used a variety of methods to gain qualitative and quantitative data. The methods used are listed below.

- Surveys (one for producers another for buyers)
- Interviews
- Focus Groups (producers and CSA customers)
- On-site visits
- Research and communication

- i. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

During the study feedback was collected to determine the interest of participants in the Choctaw Nation Food Hub.

- 31 producers responded to the survey reporting the following results:
 1. 69% of farms are less than 5 acres
 2. 86% are selling less than \$10,000.00 of produce annually
 3. 42% of producers that responded have 3 or less years of experience in production.

4. 80% operate with 0 employees

- 300 Choctaw Nation employees responded to the workplace-based survey.
- https://www.choctawnation.com/sites/default/files/CNO%20Food%20Hub_PowerPoint_FINAL.PDF

8. Budget Summary:

- 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: Yes
- Did the project generate any income? Yes No
 - If yes, \$_____ generated and how was it used to further the objectives of this project?
- In the table below include the total amount of **federal funds spent** during the grant performance period (**Do not** include matching or in-kind contributions):

Categories	Amount Approved in Budget	Actual Federal Expenditures (Federal Funds ONLY)
Personnel:		
Fringe:		
Contractual:	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Equipment:		
Travel:		
Supplies:		
Other:		
Indirect Costs:		
TOTAL:	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00

- ONLY for LFPP recipients:** Provide the amount of matching funds/in-kind contributions used during the grant performance period.

Categories	Match Approved in Budget	Actual Match Expenditures
Personnel:		
Fringe:		
Contractual:	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00
Equipment:		
Travel:		
Supplies:		
Other:		
Indirect Costs:		
TOTAL:	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00

9. Lessons Learned:

- 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).

After the Choctaw Nation committee analyzed proposals from multiple consultant firms, we chose SCALE, Inc. on their tribal background, as well as proven success that they have shown in starting and sustaining a successful food hub. While SCALE, Inc. was a perfect fit in knowing what data needed to be collected and understanding the tribal perspective, the greatest challenge that this project faced was that this team was located so far away from our tribal boundaries. The first site visit was very eye opening to the consultants in learning the culture and nature of southeastern Oklahoma. For example, many of our producers do not have internet, so that created obstacles in collecting data. Once the consulting team re-strategized the approach of data collection, the project experience improved tremendously.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:

All objectives and goals were met.

- 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:

In the beginning of the study the approach that was used to collect data was based off of online feedback. The results that were collected showed very little interest from a producer stand point. This gave us very little hope in having enough producers to support a hub. The project director brainstormed with our partners and set up more face-to-face meetings and on farm visits with SCALE, Inc. and had a much greater response from the producers and after meeting with all the partners they were much more willing to assist us with our data collections. With the data that was collected we feel that there are enough producers that eventually we would be able to support a hub.

- iv. Discuss if and how the result of this project can be adapted to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems.

Choctaw Nation encompasses 10 ½ counties of Southeastern Oklahoma, which is an extremely rural area. In fact, almost all of our tribal boundaries fall into a food desert, promise zone, and strike force area. Our results could potentially be adaptable to other rural and low-income areas across other regions. The proposed business model can also potentially be adaptable to other tribes who may have a similar business plans.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond this grant? In other words, how will you implement 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 results of the study along with the LFPP grant information for implementation was turned over to the Choctaw Nation Business Development for them to analyze and present to our tribal council for program approvals. An executive summary was

prepared for tribal leadership to determine a priority and budget for this opportunity. It was determined that the regional consumer price sensitivity and the low profit potential indicate that a food hub system, such as discussed in this summary should begin as a member service activity open to all farmers in Southeast Oklahoma that could benefit the Tribal economy. A full-time manager would need to be hired to oversee the system, pursue grant funding, network with local producers, and continually recruit CSA members. The manager would also immediately scout for an available location to use as an accumulation, cold storage, and distribution center for the beginnings of a CSA program. This project would still have the opportunity to benefit local agriculture producers by providing access to a market share; improve access to healthy food within the CNO region; increase synergy among stakeholders; and be the launch of a foothold within the industry which could allow for easier development of commercial growing in the future. Capital requirements will be fairly minimal with this type of pilot project and a pilot season of 4 weeks could serve as an initial point of entry. This would allow problem issues to be addressed before leaping into the next season with a 10-week duration. The program could just grow from this point and expand to a larger more permanent location with additional equipment and staff as needed. Support from CNO is a critical strategic resource, without this input the food hub will face considerable challenges beyond those mentioned in this summary. It was decided that this project could not be funded for FY19 due to funding constraints but would be reconsidered in future years.

- 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?

Choctaw Nation Agriculture Outreach will be utilizing the connections with producers to continue providing technical assistance and innovative trainings to increase individual production, along with promoting local fresh produce to tribal members and communities. Tribal Leadership will need to prioritize funding to invest time and resources into preparing a business plan for the proposed food hub as a commerce or member service activity that is focused on assisting local producers with a later goal of organically expanding into commercial growing once a foothold has been established. This may include the need to pursue some future grant funding for assistance with the development side of the project. Additionally, business development research and expanded studies for greenhouse and other commercial growing techniques may be necessary. Some of the expenses shown by the consulting team could possibly be absorbed by other business units if that department has excess capacity to assist with the food hub project. These expenses include: part time labor for packaging, deliveries, and administrative tasks. A refrigerated delivery vehicle could possibly be donated from another department and there is potentially a vacant CNO building with a small amount of cold storage space that could be utilized by the food hub at a reduced rate. Nevertheless, the food hub will still operate at a loss even with reduced costs and grant funding.