

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>	April 1, 2015 – September 30, 2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Dina Sears-Graves
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Recipient Organization Name:	United Way of Southeastern Connecticut
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Is a Food hub Feasible in New London County?
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-CT-0035
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Gales Ferry, CT
Total Awarded Budget:	\$25,000

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.

i. Goal/Objective 1: Are there enough farmers in the county, regardless of size, willing to participate in a Food Hub? Can they support the volume demand generated by the county food hub?

a. Progress Made: There are certainly enough farmers in New London County that are interested in participating in the Food Hub. The New London County Food Policy Council (NLCFPC) has been working with a number of organizations in the county that support local farmers including the New London County Farm Bureau, the Connecticut Farm Services Agency, and local town governments to engage with our local farmers. According to the New London County Farm Bureau, New London County is home to more than [775 farms, totaling 63,000 acres of farms and aquaculture](#). Though not all farmers are interested in participating in a Food Hub, our study showed that many are interested in a Food Hub as another sales avenue to help increase their total annual sales.

Our study also found that currently, demand from local institutional buyers exceeds the immediate supply of vegetables, fruits, meats and other items from local farmers (pg. 12). However, this fact coupled with the immense interest from farmers around the county about the possibility of a Food Hub is the catalyst that is driving our ongoing efforts toward establishing a Food Hub in New London County. Our study also reveals that farmers are not only interested in a Food Hub as another sales avenue, but they are also interest in the additional services that a Food Hub could provide (i.e. transportation/distribution, processing, marketing, etc.). This revelation is driving our current efforts in developing a Food Hub, as the [NLCFPC’s Food Hub Development Task Team](#) has developed subcommittees to focus on these additional services.

Impact on Community: Obtaining this information from the study is allowing the NLCFPC’s Development Task Team an opportunity to look at additional services that the Food Hub could provide once formed. Services identified included transportation/distribution, processing, marketing etc. Subcommittees in each of these areas have been formed, which is involving more people from the community to the formation of the Food Hub.

In addition, the base case of supply for the model assumes that 40 acres of specialty produce will be sold through the food hub at steady state. 40 acres of production in New London County yields approximately **36,473 cases annually** – based on an average yield per acre of 25,112 pounds and 31 pounds per case for the top crops as identified by the grower and buyer survey respondents. 36,473 cases of produce represent approximately \$860K in annual sales.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Is there a commitment from local retail, institutional and commercial markets to source their produce, dairy and other agricultural products from the county food hub?

a. Progress Made: One of the strongest findings in our study was that local institutional buyers are very interested in purchasing local produce, fruit, meat, dairy and other products. The sample of local institutional buyers that we engaged with during our study have a combined food purchasing capacity of approximately \$7.5 million (pg. 12). The challenge for many institutional buyers is that they need direct delivery for food and many farmers lack the appropriate equipment (i.e. refrigerated truck), the time or both, to make direct deliveries (pg. 14). The facilitation of transportation/distribution and coordination with billing are two of the underlying interests that both local growers and buyers have in the developing of a Food Hub in New London County (pg. 14).

b. Impact on Community: If institutional buyers purchase local produce, fruit, meat, dairy and other products, this will have great impact on the community. It will impact the local economy. Money for food will stay local as well as keep farmers and those jobs connected to farming (ex. Delivery trucks, veterinarians, equipment repairmen/salesmen etc.) here in the county. The food hub may also be able to capture 10% of 'total produce spend' among those buyers who responded to the survey.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Will local governments support this critical connection between farmers and consumers through advocacy and funding?

a. Progress Made: Local governments and officials are very aware that agriculture is a significant industry in New London County, which has led many to become interested and engaged in the New London County Food Policy Council's efforts to establish a Food Hub. Throughout the process of crafting our Food Hub study and continuing now through phase one of our implementation process, we have had officials representing 13 of the 21 towns in New London County actively engaged. Additionally, we have had representatives from Senator Chris Murphy's office, Congressman Joe Courtney's office, the New London County Farm Bureau and the Connecticut Farm Services Agency actively engaged and supportive of our work.

b. Impact on Community: New London County is home to more than 775 farms, totaling 63,000 acres of farms and aquaculture. Having the support of local government is extremely important and beneficial to this project and the community. Support of local government (which includes 21 towns) allows us to pool our resources and to act collectively which we would not be able to handle as individuals.

iv. Goal/Objective 4: What are the existing assets that could be leveraged to meet infrastructure and other needs in the development and operation of a county food hub?

a. Progress Made: A preliminary analysis of existing infrastructure assets was completed during our Food Hub study (pg. 39-49) and now the NLCFPC's Food Hub Development Task Team has begun a deeper analysis. To-date our analysis has revealed a number of existing assets that we believe will provide a foundation for the development of a Food Hub during phase one. These assets include refrigerated box trucks owned by local organizations (e.g. Connecticut College, FRESH New London) and local farmers who are interested and willing to support the transportation and distribution of produce and products. Additionally, local organizations and farmers with spare refrigeration and freezing capacity on site have been identified to augment what can be organized during phase one (pg. 23).

As the NLCFPC continues its work during phase one, we are actively considering how the efforts of phase one will scale of for future phases of our Food Hub. The NLCFPC's Food Hub Development Task Team is actively discussing the priorities for this scaling process with many constituencies across the county. At the moment, it seems that there is interest and support for our Food Hub to own/rent refrigerated trucks and to consider centralizing the small processing initiatives that are popping up around the county.

b. Impact on the Community: Utilizing existing resources will allow us to advance this project more efficiently. Not only will it save money, but it will allow us to tap into an infrastructure already in existence, thus not having us reinvent the wheel. This will keep cost minimal and allow more focus on the project itself instead of using time to fundraise and brainstorm new ideas on how to best do this work.

v. Goal/Objective 5: What food hub business model and facility infrastructure would best suit the needs of New London County producers and consumers?

a. Progress Made: As is articulated in the "Recommended Food Hub Business Model" section of our study, we are pursuing a non-profit business model for our Food Hub for at least the first few years, specifically while we work through phase one. Starting as a non-profit will allow us the flexibility of receiving necessary grants during phase one to help build a solid foundation of equipment, relationships and people, from which additional phases can be built. The primary efforts of phase one are still very much focused on honing our understanding of the needs and desires of local producers and buyers, while simultaneously starting to build the business foundation of our Food Hub. (pg. 56-61).

The "Business Analysis" section of our report further details our desire to remain open to a different business model for our Food Hub as phase one comes to an end. We articulate our desire to continue increasing revenue throughout phase one and to consider either a profit/non-profit hybrid or

straight for-profit business model for our Food Hub in future phases. We strongly believe that the best way to ensure long-term sustainability for the Food Hub and flexibility over time is to consider business models that are not strictly non-profit. This view is held not only by many people that were integrally involved in the development of our study, but is also held by many local farmers and buyers in New London County. (pg. 61-68).

Link to full Food Hub Feasibility

Study: http://www.uwsect.org/sites/uwsect.org/files/Final_NLC_Feasibility-Study_12915_web.pdf

b. Impact on the Community: Based on the results of the study, the business model recommended is what best suits the needs of our community at this time. The study included both farmers and institutional buyers and based on their feedback this model is what is best for the community.

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: 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 \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%. N/A
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:

a. Percent Increase: There were 16 interested growers identified through the survey with ~180 acres of current fruit and vegetable production with a potential to expand into an additional ~15-20 acres and ~30 greenhouses. One producer indicated the ability to expand indefinitely if demand warranted the investment.

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?

Having a Kickoff event and a Buyer/Grower meeting allowed us to reach new populations which included businesses, government officials, farmers, buyers from large institutions, and restaurant owners. In addition, the Food Hub Feasibility Study rollout event and the follow up Food Hub Development Task Team brought new community members that were not involved in the first two events. This included individuals from nonprofit organizations, the faith-based community and government. New farmers came to both meetings as well as a representative from a very large food company and leading distributor of food for our county. The follow up meeting also brought an entrepreneur who works in hydroponics and has experience with online platforms similar to the online food hub platform recommended in the Study.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
 - i. Who are your community partners?
Community partners include the NLCFPC, Farm Fresh New London County Schools, Connecticut College, farmers, and buyers.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?
Partners have contributed in many ways including completing surveys, participating in interviews, spreading the word to and engaging their networks, attending and participating in meetings.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?
This work is already happening. A Food Hub Development Task Team has been developed. The first meeting was held in January 2016. Over 25 people from the community came to the meeting to help with the recommendations put forth in the Study.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?
After an extensive RFP process, New Venture Associates, LLC was selected and contracted to lead the feasibility study.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes
 - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? A meeting was held in December which revealed the results of the study as well as the identified next steps. The study is also on many partners websites including: United Way of Southeastern Connecticut, Connecticut College, NLCFPC, and Fresh New London.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? The community was invited to the event through Facebook and other public social media outlets. The President/CEO of United Way wrote a column for The Bulletin newspaper and in that article included an invite for anyone in the community to attend. However, individual invitations were sent to over 130 stakeholders in the community, including government officials.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? Currently United Way has over 1,100 followers on Twitter and Facebook. In addition to the newspaper articles, invitation were sent to over 130 individuals and members of the NLCFPC were asked to forward the invite to anyone they knew who would be interested in the event.

*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? In December, the NLCFPC held an event for the community with the study results. This event was well attended and included many sectors from the community, including government, farmers, buyers, community agencies, and community members.
 - i. If so, how did you collect the information? Although no information was collected, we invited the community to join the Food Hub Development team. Over 40 people attended the first meeting which showed the community's commitment to this project.

Individuals from many sectors attended and volunteered to help develop the food hub and see it begin here in New London County. The second meeting has already been scheduled and subcommittees have met and have started the tasks suggested in the study.

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? “After investigating (i.e. Googling Food Hubs) what a “Food Hub” can do and going to the Food Hub Feasibility Study Results unveiling, I was impressed with the positive effect that food hubs have on local farms, city neighborhoods, and the environment and want to be more involved.” – Community Member (now a member of the Food Hub Development Task Team)

“What we’re finding is that small farms in the area need to have a diversified revenue stream,” Alicia McAvay, New London County Farm-to-School Coordinator for FRESH New London said. “That’ll help the institutions sell the food, which I think will help us scale up those sales and production to help the whole food hub be more financially sound.”

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).
Having weekly phone calls with the Consultants was very helpful. It allowed more connection to project especially during times that data was being analyzed by the consultants.
- 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:
Having community meetings throughout the process allowed for the project to continue its momentum. It was continuously being talked about and it kept the community interested.

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.
A Food Hub Development Task Team was created. There are six things that were identified as next steps in order to establish a Food Hub in our region. The first meeting

community members divided themselves into areas of interest. Groups then developed goals for their areas that they will work on for the next meeting. Due to the collaboration with Connecticut College, students have been assigned to each group and will help staff and administer the groups.

- 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? N/A