

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>	October 1, 2014-September 30, 2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Charles Rudelitch
Authorized Representative Phone:	207-255-0983
Authorized Representative Email:	Cruelitch@sunrisecounty.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Sunrise County Economic Council
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Sunrise Food Infrastructure Initiative: Local Markets Viability Project
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-ME-0087
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Machias, ME
Total Awarded Budget:	24,321

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: Tanya Rucosky; Email: trucosky@sunrisecounty.org; Phone: 207-255-0893

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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: Facilitate the formation of a Local Food Market Viability Study Group that will guide strategic planning on local food market initiatives and related issues.

a. Progress Made: SCEC formed a Local Market Viability Study Group in order to guide planning and research for the local food market project which met on multiple occasions. SCEC has conducted outreach to, and meetings with, producers, farmers’ market managers, local buying clubs, grocery stores, and local non-profits involved with local foods to better understand the strengths and challenges of local food production and markets. Based on meetings and conversations with the interested parties listed above, SCEC focused on issues of storage, distribution, and scale.

b. Impact on Community: The connections formed through this process improved buying clubs, producers and larger scale retailers understanding of each other’s needs and capacities. This led to increasing levels of communication, coordination, and several exploratory ventures into distribution by committee members.

Goal/Objective 2: Inventory existing local food markets, distribution networks, aggregation/ storage nodes, and producers.

a. Progress Made: With the leadership of Washington County Council of Governments (WCCOG), a GIS map and database identifying existing producers, distribution/aggregation hubs, markets, retail stores, and processors has been updated and finalized. Extensive interviews of food markets, producers and potential nodes of storage and aggregation have been completed

b. Impact on Community: The mapping and interviews have and identified and clarified areas upon which to further focus efforts – these include a focus on cold storage, distribution, mobile meat processing and scale.

Goal/Objective 3: Work with existing Buying Clubs individually to identify economic opportunities and challenges, and develop strategic plans to address them.

a. Progress Made: SCEC collected and analyzed market data from three local buying clubs, including annual sales data for 2013 and 2014, and year-to-date sales for January – February 2014 and 2015. A survey of buying clubs’ perceived market strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was conducted for comparison and contrast.

b. Impact on Community: SCEC has provided the buying clubs with business planning and market analysis. It has worked with local buying clubs to offer assistance with issues of scale, capital, and development. This has helped the buying clubs plan for challenges, and future expansion strategies.

Goal/Objective 4: Identify areas of the county underserved by local food markets, and evaluate their development capacity.

- a. Progress Made:** Food insecure areas were identified using the USDA Food Desert Map for Washington County. These areas are generally located away from the coast where both the fishing and tourism industry support denser populations, and higher incomes. Extensive interviews of food producers and sellers were conducted in these regions. General stores and grocery stores in adjoining areas in the region were identified as having a high development capacity for the sale of local food products. All expressed a high level of interest in selling more local foods.
- b. Impact on Community:** Conducting interviews in this region spurred greater interest in and connections between local growers and food retailers. Fresh local food is being sold in Waite, Grand Lake Stream, and Wesley on a regular basis. Anecdotal reports suggest the availability of local foods is driving traffic to these general stores. The independent grocery store in the adjoining community of Princeton was unaware there was a source local fresh dairy product in the vicinity and is now investigating participation in the emerging delivery network.

Goal/Objective 5: Generate clear and focused market analysis for the county as a whole.

- a. Progress Made:** SCEC has contacted and interviewed local grocery stores, general stores, farmers' markets, and buying clubs. The goal of this process was to collect focused data about how much locally produced food is available at local markets, sales volumes of local foods in existing markets, customer demand for local food, and barriers to carrying local food. This analysis has been completed, and a full report is available at <http://sunrisecounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Sunrise-Food-Infrastructure-InitiativeLocal-Markets-Viability-Project.pdf>
- b. Impact on Community:** Based on this data, Washington County's local food community is now strongly poised to make informed development and investment decisions. Already it is positioning itself to take advantage of grant programs which could help it ameliorate some of the identified needs and gaps.

Goal/Objective 6: Research case studies and best practices relating to local food system development, and innovative approaches to local food sales development.

- a. Progress Made:** SCEC has completed a survey of case studies and best practices related to the local food system development and innovative approaches to local food sales and distribution.
- b. Impact on Community:** Based on its research, SCEC is pursuing funding, and building networks which will support the creation of a mobile slaughtering unit, additional cold and cool storage as well as a regional distribution network.

Goal/Objective 7: Synthesize findings into a final report.

- a. **Progress Made:** SCEC has completed and published an on-line a final report of its findings. A copy of the report can be found at : <http://sunrisecounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Sunrise-Food-Infrastructure-InitiativeLocal-Markets-Viability-Project.pdf>
 - b. **Impact on Community:** This report forms the basis for further development activities in the county including the expansion of a nascent local food delivery network, the development of year round local food markets, and the creation of USDA certified mobile slaughtering services in the county.
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, 2015). Include further explanation if necessary.
- i. Number of direct jobs created:
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 5
 - 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 \$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?

Through this project's inventory, SCEC has become connected to over 100 local producers, buying clubs, and farmers' markets. During market surveys, SCEC built relationships with three general stores, and nine grocery store owners/managers. SCEC has become increasingly engaged with Healthy Acadia and institutional food consumers such as the University of Maine at Machias, Good Shepard (which provides food to local food pantries) as well as the network of Washington County schools.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
- i. Who are your community partners?
Washington County Council of Governments, Washington County One Community (now Healthy Acadia), Maine Farmland Trust, Machias Marketplace, Growing Concern, Eat Local Eastport.
 - ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?

The partners have participated in the Local Markets Viability Study Group meetings as well as provided one-on-one recommendations and direction. They have offered professional input based on their experiences working in the community with local food infrastructure, as well facilitated interactions with producers, consumers, and markets.
 - iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

With the SCEC's full time Local Foods Program Manager, the Local Markets Viability Study Group members are poised individually and as a unit to pursue the recommendations outlined in the resulting report. Already they are planning implementation grant proposals as well as working in concert with each other to develop nascent distribution networks and explore the development of cooperatives and networks to tackle the challenges which this report clarified.

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

No, the project did not require contractors.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes.
i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

We have made the study available through our website. <http://sunrisecounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Sunrise-Food-Infrastructure-InitiativeLocal-Markets-Viability-Project.pdf>

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?
Our stakeholders and website users

- iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?
Unknown

*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?

Informally

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

Feedback is positive and highly positive. In fact there is a great impatience for the study and planning phase to end, and the actual implementation begin.

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).

The Study Group which convened at the outset of this project provided strategic support and proved to be invaluable. They offered both insights into the direction of the project as well as access to key stakeholders. Members of this group have stayed together and formed the core of several subsequent projects focused on accessing capital, developing distribution and training networks. They are now and continue to be active, cooperative supporters of the local food community in the county. It is from this group distribution and aggregation networks will in all probability grow into viable and sustainable systems which will support the entire agricultural web in the county.

Two issues caused some loss of efficiency on this project:

First, SCEC struggled with staff turn-over during the course of the study. However, SCEC management had strong knowledge of the subject matter, and the Study Group provided continuity. **Having deep and redundant connections to the community protected the project from unanticipated changes** such as this.

Second, to combat the common “I don’t know what I don’t know,” the study should have been designed with an initial literature search. Coupled with the loss of corporate knowledge from staff changes, the project design of case study reviews at the end meant a key supporting study came to light late in the game. Staff knowledge of this study would have been useful at the outset. Again, the Study Group was invaluable—it drew the staff member’s attention to the study, as one of its members had actually written it.

Wide community engagement helped this study succeed, and become an accepted blueprint for future development and investment in the local food sector.

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

Goals were achieved.

- 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:

The project proceeded smoothly; no difficulties were experienced with its administration, beyond staff changes mentioned above.

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 recommendations outlined in the plan are being incorporated into SCEC's strategic plan. They will form the basis for the Sunrise Food Infrastructure Initiative's activities for at least the next few years. Key recommendations are already being followed up upon. These include SCEC's leadership in the creation of a Downeast Region USDA Certified mobile slaughter co-op, and the development of a Local Food Promotion Implementation Grant request to kick start a regional local food delivery and aggregation network. Further, SCEC has secured funding for an on-going Local Foods Program Manager to assist with the creation of these and other emerging cooperatives and networks, as well as provide direct assistance to local producers with access to grants, loans, and technical advice.

- 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 Local Markets Viability Project has led SCEC to incorporate the following recommendations into its strategic plan. These recommendations will inform the work of the Local Foods Program Manager for the coming years.

Connections and Education:

1. Facilitate stronger connections among regional food producers, wholesalers, institutions, retailers and related government and non-profit organizations.
2. Engage farmers in training regarding the growing and selling for wholesale markets.
3. Through the Northern Maine Development Commission, facilitate and engage with growers in the Houlton area to develop distribution networks up the Rt. 1 corridor.
4. Encourage producers, markets and buying clubs to work together to educate customers about the "real cost" of local food
5. Provide opportunities for formal management training of buying club managers as well as producers.
6. Encourage greater participation of seafood vendors and ready to eat/convenience food producers at farmers' markets.
7. Create a clearing house of free or low-cost opportunities available for producers such as loans, grants, soil testing, technical support, and other services.
8. Facilitate GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) training.
9. Enhance connections between, producers, distributors, aggregators, wholesalers, and institutions within the county and beyond into the Great Region.
10. Provide learning opportunities in the form of peer forums, customer outreach, certification trainings, formal management instruction, and a resource clearing house publication to producers, customers, and market managers.
11. Encourage buying clubs to establish wholesale relationships with their suppliers.
12. Facilitate planning between buying clubs, farmers' market managers, farmers and value added suppliers.
13. Facilitate the cooperative use of business services such as a bookkeeper between the buying clubs.
14. Engage with tertiary educational institutions

Certifications/Licensing:

1. Extend microloan/grant programs for producers to purchase liability insurance, as well as assist in the USDA kitchen and MOFGA certifications.
2. Serve as an information resource for producers seeking to attain various licenses and certifications.

Aggregation and Distribution:

1. Engage with local seafood wholesalers and include them in the developing local delivery system.
2. Foster the development of a food hub with aggregation, cool and cold storage, distribution and value adding activities.
3. Assist in the expansion of a wholesale on-line ordering system with associated delivery routes.
4. Increase cooperation between the buying clubs to purchase produce in bulk from local farmers at a wholesale prices.
5. Support the development/expansion of nodes for aggregation, distribution and short term cool and cold storage on or near US Route 1 and Maine State Rt. 9.
6. Assist in the expansion of the on-line ordering arrangements from strictly retail into a wholesale system with expanded delivery routes and just compensation rates for producers.

Infrastructure:

1. Support the development of a state or USDA inspected processor of red meat in Washington County in conjunction either with an existing custom meat processor, regional food hub or as a mobile slaughtering unit.
2. Facilitate a sharing economy at USDA certified kitchens in granges, community centers, closed schools and at religious organizations.
3. Foster the development of a professionally run regional food hub with aggregation, long term cool and cold storage, and distribution access in a central location.

Capital investment:

1. Expand microloan/grant program for producers to purchase liability insurance, achieve GAP training, purchase equipment as well as assist distributors in the purchase of cool and cold storage units.