

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, 2014 – September 30, 2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Courtney Pinard
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Recipient Organization Name:	Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Where's the Beef? A Needs Assessment for Connecting Local Beef Production to Small Stores in Rural Nebraska
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-NE-0116
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Omaha/Nebraska
Total Awarded Budget:	\$35,390 (\$24,977 awarded; \$10,413 match)

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: To conduct a series of interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders involved in meat production, distribution, selling, and consumption
 - a. Progress Made: Interviews have been conducted with 30 individuals who are currently either working as cattle producers or work for organizations that facilitate ranchers throughout Nebraska. This sample size and targeted population was explained further in the interim report.
 - b. Impact on Community: By interviewing individuals who work first hand with Nebraska ranchers, it has helped identify challenges and barriers current ranchers have to selling their products locally. These interviews have also helped identify areas of low infrastructure and support that have caused previous attempts of procurement throughout these rural areas.
 - ii. Goal/Objective 2: The above stated goal was the main focus of the current planning grant, other goals for **future implementation** were mentioned in previous reports, these include working with producers and stores to pilot selling local beef.
 - a. Progress Made:
 - b. Impact on Community:
 - iii. Goal/Objective 3:
 - a. Progress Made:
 - b. Impact on 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:
 - ii. Number of jobs retained:
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created:
 - iv. Number of markets expanded:
 - v. Number of new markets established:
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$insert dollars and increased by insert percentage%.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:
 - a. Percent Increase:

N/A – this is a needs assessment. Through this needs assessment we interviewed producers, storeowners, and processors from across the state of Nebraska. A future implementation pilot will likely occur in one of these areas. Additional future jobs may be generated with the producers, stores, and processing facilities (N=3-10 jobs). This is an estimate based on the addition of local beef production and distribution within a single community.
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 – this is a needs assessment. Via the study we developed an understanding of what rural consumers may respond well to in terms of locally produced beef. We learned that many of the rural communities are comprised of an aging population, many low-income residents, and that focusing on local pride and supporting your neighbor may be a good future communication strategy to promote local beef. Example quotes are below.

[Storeowner] “Older.” GSCN: An older population. What about economy range? “I suspect that’s probably all over the board. You have some retired farmers that are pretty well off. We have some low rent housing up on the hill that pay 25% of your income can leave there. So, some of those people are, in my mind, just lazy and don’t have any income. Some of them have fallen on hard times of the land there. Like this one couple, I think just had medical issues and are older age and fall on hard times and there probably the people that it was actually designed for that are there. And the retired farmers have good money.”

[Storeowner] {low-income} GSCN: Describing your local population in your community as far as economic level? “You know actually to be honest with you, our food stamp and EBT’s are the number one source of most used currency in this store. EBT’s are used more than it is check, debit, credit card, gift certificate and cash. To be honest with you I would say the economic level in our store is probably, or for this town, is lower than middle class. Probably considered the lower class. There’s really no middle, not a wide variety of middle income. There’s a lot of farmers who are actually wealthy. I would say wealthier than most citizens in this town. You have a higher class, the farmers, and then kind of have the lower class with the lower income. I think one of the reasons why, actually I know one of the reasons is because, what is happening in a lot of your smaller towns, outside your bigger cities, what’s happening is those towns were once flourishing really well and they had people living in those houses in those towns. As they people are getting older, some of the people are passing away, some of the people are moving into retirement homes and what not. There passing those homes down to their family members, but there family members already have houses in the towns that they live in and so then those houses a lot of times become rental property.”

“Once you say local, that is something that they would understand. That you are just trying to make a market for their product within their own area. [It could build off the Nebraska-pride or something like that?] Yes, yes! It's once you get those other subjects that cause that unfortunately...”

[Storeowner] “I mean it would probably take a little bit of exploring because it’s not something that we have done to this point but it’s not something either that we would be reluctant to look into. I would actually the more I’m talking to you and the more I’m thinking about it, I would probably encourage people, if we ever could get back into it, I would encourage people to do it. The biggest thing is that I try to encourage people to buy as much stuff as they can local. The biggest reason is because if you buy your product from a local source a lot of times your local stores will support your small town stores.
Discuss your community partnerships.”

- i. **Who are your community partners?** Health Departments, Cooperative Extension, and University of Nebraska Beef Extension
- ii. **How have they contributed to the results you’ve already achieved?** The community partners have helped assist with identifying beef producers, store owners, and possible

consumers throughout Nebraska to interview gain insight into rural areas with low food access. In addition, these initial interviews have helped the investigators better understand the beef industry. In each of the interviews we conducted, the interviewee was asked to recommend others we should speak to. This is the way we conducted the study, with a snowball recruitment approach. Rural storeowners, producers, and processors all have a role to play in a future implementation of a pilot promoting local beef in rural communities and have the best recommendations of others we should be speaking to and potentially partnering with in the future.

- iii. **How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?** From their interviews and focus groups, the information will be used to help overcome barriers and work with beef producers and store-owners on what consumers are wanting sold in their local corner stores. The data collected from these interviews will inform future work and potential implementation pilots to promote locally produced beef. One example of a group that was able to provide rich detail on the current status of beef production in Nebraska and future potentially barriers and facilitators was extension representatives, in particular, those living out in the rural communities. Below are several examples of the type of information they were able to provide.

- General process description:

[Extension] "I think it's a little bit, so you have people background livestock and you also have people who feed out livestock and there is a difference between that. So if you take a cow/calf pair, the calf is typically born sometimes in between March and April. Maybe even into May, depending on where you are. The calf that weighs somewhere around 90 pounds. The calf would be weaned of the cow in the fall in September, October, November time frame depending on where you are, what type of livestock they are, and the availability of forages, if you are going through a drought, you might wean that calf sooner. Just to move it over to a dry land feed diet. So you have these calves being pulled at the fall time frame. And there are some folks who might background these calves before they sell them. You have other folks who will buy these cows and the background them. When I say background, I mean buy them at 500 pounds and then feed them up to 850 lbs, maybe even a little bit heavier than that." So you have folks who are back grounding that's not from the calf on? It's buying it once it's a little bit bigger. "Once it's basically it is weaned from the cow. So you have folks who background them, then they might turn around and resell them. Then next line down this production segment would be a feedlot. And then the feedlots are the folks who take them from the 8.5 or 9.5 weight up to 13, I think the average weight at one point in time was like 13.25 to 13. Or was it 1275 up to 5 pounds before slaughter." Oh, that's very specific. "They take them to roughly that weight. So what you got is, you got some folks that background and feed the calves out. And you have some take the cows that the calves out, you know the cows from the calves that they calves out, and they take them from birth 'til they are ready to be taken to town for slaughter."

[Extension] "Cattle on feed numbers would be, depending on what month and report you look, we are either first or second with Texas. When we talk about cow/calf operators, I think we are pushed down to third or fourth now. So we bring in a lot of calves outside of Nebraska to feed them and then we still have to bring in a lot of outside steers and heffers to go through the slaughter process as well. So when you are talking locally raised, I'm assuming you are wanting calves that born and raised and processed here in Nebraska."

[Extension] {Pure volume and size of Ne beef industry} "They pretty much go somewhere else in Nebraska. Nebraska's got, we just passed Texas and see to be holding on as the number 1 cattle

finishing state. And we are also a big cattle slaughter state. I think, Cattlemen said something once and not long ago, if anything it's actually increased probably rather than decrease. One out of every 4 steaks is how they put it, in the country comes from Nebraska. So, I mean, talk about local meat production, it matters how closely define local. But you have a 25% chance in a random getting something local from Nebraska in any grocery store in the country."

[Extension] "So they could finish them on site. You know if you find a specialty cow/calf operator, someone who really believes in grass-fed operations, they may try to finish them themselves. I don't have exact numbers here on how many would be there in Nebraska. But some of them, hormone free has been a big push; I know Omaha Greater Beef does some hormone free products. They have the whole chain there. They get cow/calf operators who can send them to their own feedlot or another feedlot but follow them through the whole process. Whether the cow/calf operator keeps them on their property, they can sell it to someone else or they can own it the whole way through but they have somebody else finish it out for them."

- Full-time rancher vs part-time

[Extension] "Probably, less than 50 is certainly small and I would be in our area, there are virtually no one...if they do have that few of cows, they are certainly more likely to be the teacher, or the semi-truck driver. It certainly isn't enough to main. Where I work here, and in Valentine, I call it professional ranchers. I mean these are people who ranch. They don't do anything else for a living but ranch. Our average size in the county is probably somewhere around 300-500 head range. It takes somewhere around in there to have enough money to make a living. That's kinda why we don't have any small acreages. We are just pretty much a professional ranching community."

[Extension] "If you are talking cow/calf producer, they are more likely to, some of them may finish their animals but most are going to send those on to feedlots. And those sizes range quite a bit. Your smaller cow/calf operations probably under 100 cows. They probably have second jobs. As you get into the larger cow/calf operations, then they probably do those as their sole operation."

- Different streams/procedures for different types of practices

[Extension] "Most, at the feedlot point are going to go to a processing facility. They are going to either, there are several different ways that they can have them forwarded and contracted to a processing company. You know, your big ones Cargo, JBS. Those types of things. Some to greater Omaha. Some may, have them coming up and some of them would do what we call a Cash Market. So they didn't have them contracted ahead of time. If you are looking at more hormone-free, organic, things like that, those are probably already pre-contracted. They already have them market in for those to the processor"

[Extension] "They are very varied. It depends on what they want. So there are some folks who have been grass-fed on a big scale, not on a little scale. Who don't do it any longer because it wasn't as profitable as conventional and honestly, their 'conventional' they are serving certified organic for a little while. The only real difference is that they couldn't use treat fence posts anymore and they had a bunch of paperwork to do. It wasn't worth the extra paper work, so they aren't certified organic anymore and they use treated fence posts."

- Restaurants, School, Grocery are selective and have specific requirements (e.g., food safety, needing SKU)

[Extension] “I actually live in Cody and it’s just, seriousness aside, Cody within the last 3 years started, they haven’t had a grocery store for a while. The student-run grocery store. My son is actually the manager; he’s a senior getting ready to graduate. There, just because of the way they have procured and they don’t have a meat stock, they actually, everything that they buy to sell has to be something with a skew. It can’t be something that came through one of the local grocery store meat shops because that’s under a different level of inspection. It can’t be carried over to your grocery store and sold. We don’t have a meat shop and we don’t have that level of inspection. So, I supposed, in the truly rural areas, for grocery stores without a meat shop that might be, and if you are an obstacle that could be...it’s something or somebody to explore. I’m not going to do it but just because of the way things are, it has to come from someplace that has to have a skew.”

- Limited number of USDA inspected plants (barrier by location for transport) and limited capacity at smaller plants that allow producers more control (scheduling and cost issues)

[Extension] “The other thing about small-scale slaughter is more expensive to slaughter, slower smaller scale. So then who is going to recoup that cost, who is going to pay?”

- On smaller scale harder to manage consumer demand, need to use whole animal to be economical

[Extension] “Another issue is supply chain management. How are you going to make sure the grocery store, if the grocery store is only depending on two or three ranchers, are they going to be able to supply what they need at a scale that meets their needs? So cows, they don’t all become steaks, they don’t all come hamburgers, sorta one of the benefits of the system as it currently exists for grocery stores, they don’t have to sell all of the animal in equal proportions. It doesn’t have to match up, the number of steaks with the number of hamburgers, with the number of roasts. It doesn’t all have to match up to a whole animal. The smaller scale you get, the more important that becomes and the more of an issue that becomes. If you are short on hamburger, and you are trying to do it locally, and you aren’t bringing in any hamburger from lean cows into the mix, then how are you getting that hamburger? Are you grinding high value to meet that demand and then it becomes too expensive. There are some logistics that market sorta manages to work out that when you translate them to small scale, it just gets more difficult.”

[Extension] “You know, probably a challenge would be a lot of households do not have a deep freeze that they could take a whole beef or half a beef. Not that is a challenge for the beef producer but it limits and they have to sell like a quarter or select cuts of meat. You know, I don’t know what the barrier is. It might be what the grocery stores are specifically looking for. I’m guessing that grocery stores are looking for specific qualities of meat. There is prime, choice, select grades of meat and if you go into a store, they will say what the grade and cut is. What a grocery store wants is a consistent, constant supply of course that meets whatever the criteria of grades of meat that they are wanting to sell.”

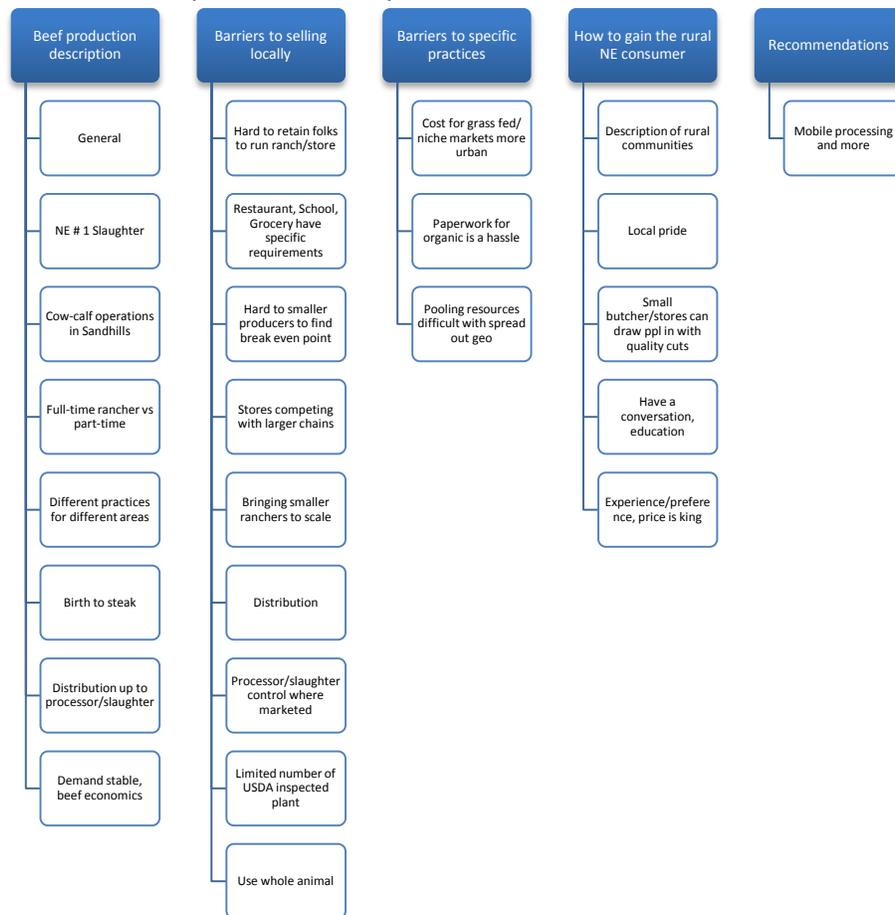
- Barriers to specific practices

[Extension] to be honest to you, there is a fair chunk of conventional that is actually hormone-free that don’t get marketed that way. So, I got to make sure what I am saying matches what you’re hearing. Remember, I talked about cow/calf producers. When I say that I’m talking about calf/calf producers. The calf, by the time they go through a feedlot and get slaughtered, most of them have been implanted. But at the local producer level, there is a desire to go hormone free whether or not it makes sense financially or not is the question.

- Rural low-income residents prioritize price
[Extension] “Right and I would agree with that as well as just by the fact that if I had to bet what the average income is in the area I have my office in but I would say, the amount of discretionary income, if they had to pay extra dollar or \$1.50 per pound for a package of meet versus the whatever brand is in the grocery case right next to it. I don’t see that demand being very high. It would say you would probably have to go to a larger base population where you probably have more professional based positions in an effort to gain the supposed value associated with that or whatever you might want to document from it.”

4. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?
No contractors have been used to conduct any of the work so far into the program. All interviews and community partners have been utilized without any need for a contract or additional funding.
5. Have you publicized any results yet? * Need to answer

We have not yet, but will write a paper for a peer reviewed journal summarizing results from our interviews, see below for a depiction of the key themes we found.



- 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?

*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).

Publications to come/ In progress

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

i. **If so, how did you collect the information?** Feedback has been collected from interviews that have been conducted with Nebraska beef stakeholders and area organizations. As described above, the key informants interviews spanned several sectors and stakeholders in the beef industry across the state of Nebraska.

ii. **What feedback have you collected thus far (specific comments)?** The comments have been positive, as many believe that this is an important topic and area of need for the state of Nebraska as a whole. Some specific comments from individuals in the cattle production have been:

-“Once you say local, that is something that they would understand. That you are just trying to make a market for their product within their own area.”

-“You know, I think most people think wherever they get their beef they are thinking it’s Nebraska beef anyway. I can help you to a point on that.”

-“I would say that the majority of the grass-fed beef in the state of Nebraska, is marketed within the state of Nebraska, whether it’s local marketing at the farmer’s market or whether it’s direct marketing and at the store. There are some farms that do Internet sales and stuff like that. I would say the majority of the feedlot raised beef or whatever the term is, is sold out of state or even out of the country”

The summary of the key themes found in the interviews summarizes the overall findings from our study and the specific recommendations for future implementation. Some other specific comments that will inform our future implementation grant include:

- “You may just need to be really creative and perhaps figure out a way to do it and I don’t, for me personally, I don’t know how much, if the product is going to be a lot more expensive than conventional, I would think twice about how this is going to be in rural areas. Because the volume, that’s the only...in rural areas, a niche market can be a really, really small thing. Cody, there is only 200 people in the whole town. Our grocery store only does about \$5-6,000 a week total in the whole store. So, when you start talking about the meat and then a subdivision of the meat for the niche market that gets pretty small. That is the only thing I would caution about getting too niche.”]
- “So the whole trick is to add value to everything. As much value as you can, treat that local butcher how to cut meat to grab those newer, higher value cuts for steak, and create a kind of niche, creating something that you are part of it. Beef is beef whether it’s Nebraska beef or Colorado beef. I might say ours is better but it’s really not. But trying to sell that sizzle too. I’m not sure what you would call it. Try to create that brand and then it becomes even more sellable.”
- {local is universally appealing} “I think that is true for everybody. I don’t believe personally, organic. I mean it’s marketable. But a few people like to know. I think it’s fun to know where

your food comes from and I think that applies from rural to urban so. I like to buy local beef. I buy it from fridge case but I think like to know who raised it. That's fun for me and I think that's universal."

- I guess also, when I wrote this grant, bleeding this national that Nebraska is in the top for slaughter. "Sorry, you need to look at one of the reports I wrote a while back. Let me see here. I got your email in here I bet. I think it was something along the facts that if you take Nebraska, Kansas, and Texas, they probably account for 60% of the red meat, slaughter beef/cattle in the United States. You take Idaho, Wisconsin, California, Pennsylvania and they you have probably capture over 80%. The question is that if you are trying to create a niche market or something like that with these commercial processors as do they even have the interest to even work on a product like this. Or would you have to focus on that, there still are hometowns, "hometown butchers". There are still scattered facilities like that across the state of Nebraska."
- "Yeah as much as I dislike Wal-Mart, when they change policies, it shifts everything. I does. It tells you something because they are about money. If they see something, it tells you a lot. That tells you something is coming. They don't look this year or next year, they look down the road and it takes time for them to get their wherever they get all their stuff switched over but that's big in the industry. To have somebody like that say that and it's like whoa. Heck, I couldn't believe that and a lot of other one's switching over. You get a lot of these switching over, they buy enough beef where they can move the market and if everybody wants that type of product, it doesn't matter. You are going to have to do it. It's coming, like I said, you know. A lot of people want to know where their stuff comes from and that is kinda who we cater to. It keeps us busy that way."
- "Well we blessed. I think most of our beef is Nebraska raised that we find on our shelves. Or at least near Omaha." By chance though. But knowing where it's come from start to finish and being able to market it as such. "Well I think it has to be a relationship between the retailer, the butcher, and the farmer/rancher. It just can't be the farmer trying to start the process because they probably won't do that. Just the culture. If the retailer is open to is and accepting and then they can find a processor that is USDA inspected. It has to almost be a trifecta to make it all work."
- {direct to consumer} "So if I were, so one of the things this may not be the path you want to go down but one of the business models is worth thinking about, is can a different model be set up where maybe the local store creates, maybe even the local store doesn't even play in this process that may defeat the purpose. But if I'm a rancher, the solutions is that I need to find group of customers who want to buy in volume but maybe not the whole animal. They want to buy, if I harvest one animal and process them to reseal cuts. They want to purchase 20% of that and another person wants to purchase 20% and another person wants to purchase 40% and another person wants to purchase 10% and another person wants to purchase 10% of that volume. At that point in time, now I've got...there is some...that's an easier thing to pull off without having stuff left inventory. Because what you are doing is pushing everything onto your customers in some percentages. And you know, some folks are going to want all ground beef. Some folks are going to want some mix. You gotta have somebody who is coordinating all of these volume buys and then working on the pricing, etc., etc. So anyway that said, just as you go at this, this is always seems like we should be able to do this, this gotta just work. It ends up really complicated."
- "I thought it was in like Bellevue or Papillion. But a guy got some sort of exemption and he has got a processing facility. It was a live meat market where I could be butchering what the description is. But the customer could come in and they can pick what animal they want, whether it is a lamb or beef and they butcher it. You of course can't watch that part of it. I'm not

sure who would want to. But the idea is that you go to a farmer's market and you pick out tomatoes, I don't know. Now that could be something to look into. I don't think it's only smaller scale livestock, I don't think it's beef. I don't know anything about it but I need to find more information as we have people that want to process."

- "It's a great goal, there are just many problems implementing it. I mean that's the only way that I can see it working for us is if a lot of producers went together and you know pooled their products. The problem they are going to have is probably competitive because the IDPs of the world, they have a market of every piece of that beef. Where local, they wouldn't have that. I mean IDP, I mean like Ox tail and stuff like that. While our local producers would probably throw that away. IDP has a market of things of that nature."
- Mobile processing as a potential solution for lack of USDA inspected facilities
 - "Some of their food safety interventions can be expensive to implement. You know, but they recognize it. There have done the same thing, they have federally certified some mobile processing units before. Those are potential but it's cost and I hate to keep bringing that up but it's all cost. It's pretty expensive to drive a mobile unit around to hire someone who is going to go slaughter maybe 10 beef in a day. Especially when you can drive to Skylar, Nebraska and they are slaughtering multiple thousands a day. Of course, they have a lot more people employed and everything but it's just finding a scale and a way of doing it that you can be competitive that is the trick. It's not impossible, a mobile one might be part of the answer. The same thing I said about supply chain management, how you are going to make sure the grocery store gets what it needs when it needs it, the same thing goes with scheduling of small processing facilities. That might, Union Pacific great scheduling to make that happen."
 - "I definitely think there is something to the mobile meat processing unit idea. I know that there was one on the east coast and there is one in South Dakota that is set out for buffalo, not that would be much different but it's really just on how you would kill the animal versus a beef cow. I know that there is one on the west coast. So finding that way to make it cost effective is whether that is a cooperate movement of farmers, organizations getting together to do that or what. I don't know what it costs for that unit that was in Nebraska and Colorado but at least half a million dollars to build it."
 - So those mobile processing, they only take care of the slaughter portion, they don't do the process? "Yupp, yupp, yupp. I think they take them in the thing there and it's just a carcass hanging and then you have to find...when you go to the actual butcher place then you have the carcass hanging there and then you have to find. I suppose there are places that do it but around here, they have their little shoot where they do it and from there they get up on their own. I'm not sure but it would be a little challenge."

7. 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?

8. 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).

From the knowledge gained from this needs assessment, we plan to potentially recruit one store, or other rural outlet, that is also identified as an area of low food access, to participate in a demonstration pilot. During this pilot we will work to connect the local community with appropriate distributor and/or producer(s) in order to procure locally produced beef. We will also test the feasibility of selling the local beef by monitoring sales and conducting intercept interviews with customers. The in-depth knowledge gained from the pilot will help delineate the barriers and facilitators to bolstering the local supply chain for beef in rural Nebraska.

We plan to leverage strengths that the beef industry and rural communities possess to implement a pilot that increases access to locally produced beef for rural consumers. These strengths include a strong identify with their community and desire to support their communities, an interest in knowing where food is coming from, and a collaborative approach that involves various members of the community from multiple sectors. Some of the challenges we will have to overcome include the limited number of USDA inspected facilities and producers having to travel longer distances to process their animals, the ability to sell and use the whole animal and not just the prime cuts, an emphasis on price in low-income rural communities. We plan to overcome this last challenge by including some education and awareness promotion of quality meat in rural communities, and emphasizing specific practices that their neighbors may engage in to increase interest in the locally produced product.

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

The biggest challenges described above include (and a few more): using the whole animal, limited processing facilities, lack of connection with the animal from birth to steak (needing multiple partners to efficiently produce quality beef), most stores working with a single distributor limiting their ability to source locally, and the need for education among consumers.

- 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:

Understanding the intricacies of the beef production system was much more involved than we anticipated. This could be similar to those conducting needs assessments of other areas of the food system. Acknowledging that there will be learning curve, and that the information gained along the way is valuable in informing future efforts. Finding a champion or stakeholder that has a wide range of connections with the producers and storeowners is key to the success of a needs assessment such as this. Finding the right people to speak with that understand the industry and have an open mind about future potential implementation provided the best feedback.

9. Future Work:

- iv. 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 future demonstration pilot described above will facilitate access to locally produced beef in rural communities. By demonstrating potential feasibility and economic benefits of sourcing beef from local producers, other communities can attempt to implement similar projects. The specific challenges and factors contributing to the way the beef is sourced currently in small stores in rural Nebraska outlined above will provide the necessary information to implement a successful pilot in the future.

- i. 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? Further research into the USDA certified processing facilities will help facilitate the goal of creating more local beef production. In addition, innovative outlets in rural communities should be explored as potential partners to source and distribute locally produced beef in communities. We also plan to work closely with specific producers and other stakeholders in rural communities to determine the most feasible method to propose for a pilot.