



IOWA

**IOWA FARMERS MARKET MANAGERS
SHARE ADVICE AND INSPIRATION**

MARKET MANAGER HANDBOOK



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The Iowa Farmers Market Manager Toolkit includes twelve vendor handouts, an online training video series, and this farmers market manager handbook.

Iowa's farmers market managers range from volunteer coordinators to full-time managers with supporting staff, seasonal to year-round. The job descriptions vary depending on the market structure, budget, community and volunteer support, and customer base. Iowa's smallest farmers markets might have only three or four vendors, while it's largest—the Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market—hosts 250. But no matter the structure or size, you can be sure that the manager is passionate about how the farmers market can strengthen the local economy, improve access to fresh local produce, connect people to each other and their food system, offer space for entrepreneurs and small businesses to grow, and cultivate an appreciation for the growing and making of things right here in the Midwest.

There are a variety of market manager manuals and handbooks published at a state and local level across the nation. They are valuable resources no matter what state a manager resides in. With the ease of online searching, these manuals can benefit managers at all skill levels. For this Iowa handbook, the project team combined broad best practices with ideas and encouragement from real Iowa farmers market managers. This place-based approach offers potential market managers and existing market managers in Iowa an opportunity to connect with colleagues from similarly sized towns, provide their boards or committees with justification and inspiration, and fuel grant applications and private sponsorships.

This handbook is meant to complement the existing booklet published by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and resources provided by the Iowa Farmers Market Association.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this handbook is for educational purposes to assist farmers market managers. This material is not intended, and should not be used, as a substitute or replacement for individual legal, financial, or actuarial advice. Each market organization should consult a relevant professional advisor when making business decisions as appropriate.

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MARKET MANAGERS

- *DaQuan Campbell, Waterloo Urban Farmers Market*
- *Tammy Neumann, Iowa City Farmers Market*
- *Nellie & Stephen Kaus, Waverly Farmers Market*
- *Andie Donnan & Danielle Stowell, Millwork Night Market*
- *Steve McCargar, Decorah Farmers Market*
- *Jenn Draper, Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market*
- *Kelly Foss, Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market*
- *Alice Linhart, Swisher Farmers Market*
- *Julie Madden, Akron Farmers Market*
- *Tami Schlamp, Uptown Marion Farmers Market*
- *Dawn Ewoldt, Hiawatha Farmers Market*
- *Eileen Schmidt, Urbana Farmers Market*
- *Lojean Peterson, Ames Main Street Farmers Market*
- *Alexi Groumoutis, Creston Farmers Market*
- *Kendra Vincent, Grinnell Farmers Market*
- *Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market*
- *Jodie Huegerich, College Hill Farmers Market*
- *Matt Hibbard, Coralville Farmers Market*
- *Jennifer DeFosse, Muscatine Farmers Market*
- *Lorrie Beaman, Freight House Farmers Market*
- *Julie Grunklee, Grundy County Farmers Market and Cedar Falls Main Street Farmers Market*
- *Nikki Decker, Le Mars Farmers Market*
- *Jane Gasperi, Beaverdale Farmers Market*
- *Brigham Hoegh, Atlantic Farmers Market*
- *Jay Moore, Marion Farmers Market*
- *Robin McClelland, North Iowa Farmers Market and Clear Lake Farmers Market*
- *Andrea Vaage, LSI Global Greens Farmers Market*
- *Sarah Blunt, Independence Farmers Market*
- *Angie Jager, Rock Rapids Farmers Market*
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- *Northeast Iowa Regional Farmers Market Association*
- *Iowa Farmers Market Association*
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CHAPTER 1

What is a Farmers Market?



The USDA defines a farmers market as “a multi-stall market at which farmer-producers sell agricultural products directly to the general public at a central or fixed location, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables (but also meat products, dairy products, and/or grains).” In addition, today’s farmers markets are often home to prepared food, arts and crafts, flowers, baked goods, and other locally produced, handcrafted items.

A RISE, A FALL, A RENAISSANCE

THE HISTORY OF FARMERS MARKETS

Humans have been selling and purchasing farm-fresh food (and more) at markets for thousands of years. From the Greeks agora and Romans’ macellum to the bazaars of Persia, open-air, public markets were a part of daily life in ancient civilizations—and remained so through the middle ages and onward.

The first recorded farmers market in the United States opened in 1634 in Boston, Massachusetts. Others soon followed in the surrounding colonies. The Easton Farmer’s Market in Easton, Pennsylvania has been in operation since 1752—claiming the title of “America’s longest continuous running open-air market.”



The McCargar family in Northeast Iowa values a local food economy. The family has a long tradition of growing their own food. In the 1980’s, Steve started vending at the local market. Today, he serves as the market manager. His youngest daughter Elsa started as a market vendor at the same market in 2017. Her business, Wilder’s Way, sells tea blends and nature-inspired jewelry.

ALSO KNOWN AS

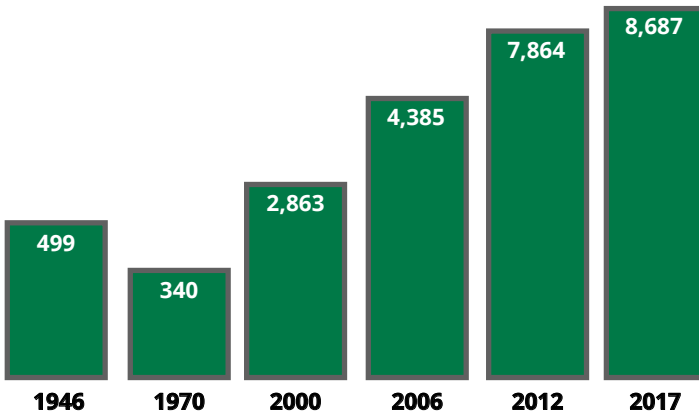
A 1948 effort to categorize markets identified many names for markets:

- PUBLIC MARKET || MUNICIPAL MARKET ||
- TERMINAL MARKET || FARM SHOP
- FARM STAND || CURB MARKET || FLEA MARKET ||
- FARMERS RETAIL MARKET || FESTIVAL MARKET ||
- WET MARKET ||
- FARMERS WOMENS MARKET || TRADE DAY MARKET ||
- LIVESTOCK AUCTION || COURTHOUSE SQUARE MARKET ||
- COURT DAY MARKET || FIRST MONDAY MARKET ||
- FRESH FOOD MARKET || GOOD FOOD MARKETS ||
- FARMERS CITY WHOLESALE MARKETS ||

In 20th Century America, farmers markets saw dramatic growth during the Great Depression, but started to decline after World War II as grocery stores became more commonplace and convenient. In the 1980s, interest in farmers markets picked up again.

The rise and fall of farmers markets reflects changes in national policy. Today, there’s growing concern for and interest in “local” —preserving local farmland, protecting the livelihood of local growers, and diversifying local economies—as well as farm workers’ rights, food safety, and training the next generation of farmers. Farmers markets play a prominent role in new food landscape.

National Count of Farmers Market Directory Listings



FARMERS MARKETS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Markets popped up early in American history. Only 27 years separate the founding of the first colony (Jamestown, Virginia in 1607) and the first formally recorded farmers market in the colonies (Boston, Massachusetts in 1634).

1600s

PRE 20TH CENTURY
1600s: “Street markets” are so commonplace that markets aren’t given specific names—nobody pays much attention to one being established.
1634: The first farmers market establishment formally recorded in the English colonies is in Boston in 1634 by an order of Governor John Winthrop.

1800s

1858: The first farmers market recorded in Iowa takes place in Dubuque at the city hall building (same location where it operates today).
Late 1800s: Pattern of declining importance of city produce markets as transportation improves, cities grow, and agriculture becomes specialized.

1900s

1900 - 1930s: Most cities with 30,000+ residents sponsor municipal markets.
1913: USDA Office of Public Markets is established.
1914: USDA Cooperative Extension Service is established.

1910s

1916: The first self-service grocery store opens in Memphis, Tennessee. This is the first time customers are allowed to select items directly off the shelf instead of asking the store clerk for items behind the counter.

1930s

1930 - 1946: Rise in markets across the country as families seek extra income and self-sufficiency.
1934: Pikes Place Market opens in Seattle, Washington.

1940s

1943: The San Francisco Farmers Market opens in California.
1946: Four economists with the USDA identify 499 farmers markets in the United States.
1948: Farmers markets of all classes account for sales of less than 10% of the total fruit and vegetable production in the United States. Markets are formally defined as “Places where farmers congregate to sell their own products.”

1950s

1950s: Better roads, western irrigation infrastructure, and refrigeration usher in supermarkets and wholesalers, leaving many small farms and markets out of the food system.

1970s

1970: Estimates at the national level log only about 340 farmers markets across the country, many populated by resellers—not farmers—and many on the verge of collapse.
1971: State of Wisconsin records 17 markets of all classes (down from 28 in 1946).
1975: U.S. House Resolution 2458: Defines a Farmers Market as “Any marketplace where at least ten farmers congregate for the purpose of selling their agricultural commodities directly to consumers in a manner designed to lower the cost of food for the consumers while providing an increased income to the farmers.”

1990s

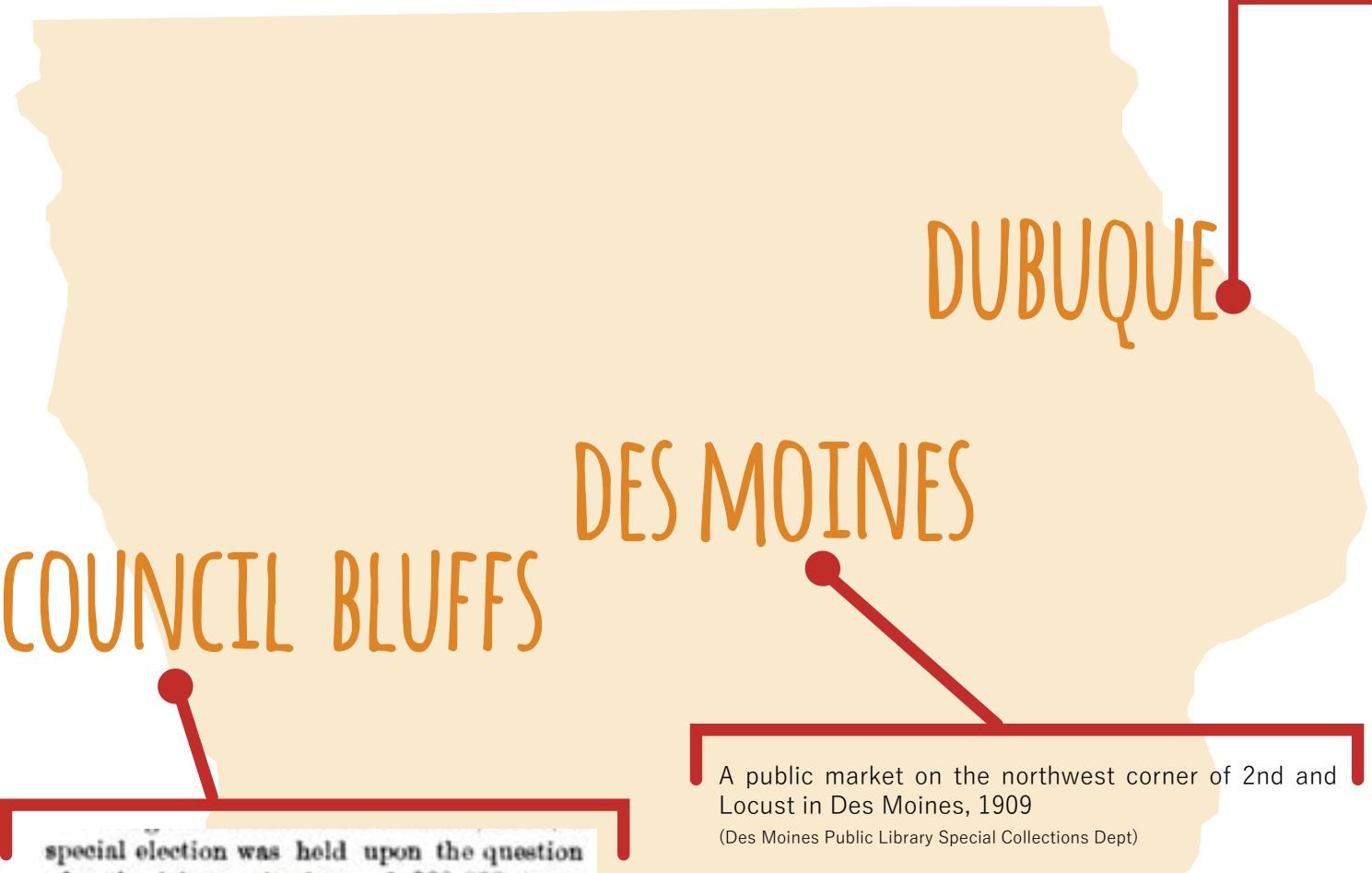
1996: USDA defines a farmers market as “a common facility or area where several farmers/growers gather on a regular, recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables and other farm products directly to consumers.”



A print by Flemish artist Peter van der Borcht (ca. 1575-1608) depicts a vegetable and meat market in the late 16th or early 17th century.

EARLY RECORDS OF MARKETS IN IOWA

THE HISTORY OF FARMERS MARKETS



DUBUQUE

DES MOINES

COUNCIL BLUFFS

special election was held upon the question of authorizing a city loan of \$60,000, to establish a market house, improve the streets and provide a fire department. Under the market-house provision, the city bought of Judge Riddle the brick building now known as the city building, at the southeast corner of Glen avenue and Broadway, it having been used as Green, Wear & Benton's bank-ing-house up to 1857, and the consideration being \$7,000.

November 1866: Pottawattamie County voted for a market house provision.
(History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa by John H. Keatley, OL Baskin, & Co.)

A public market on the northwest corner of 2nd and Locust in Des Moines, 1909
(Des Moines Public Library Special Collections Dept)



New bridges were built on Bluff, Main, Iowa, Clay, Locust and White streets and Lorimer Hollow. In June, 1843, citizens petitioned for the erection of a market house. The city had great

June 1843: Citizens of Dubuque petitioned for a market house. (History of Dubuque County Iowa by Franklin T. Oldt and P.J. Quigley)

The question of a market house was again considered in February, 1845. Levi and Singlet agreed to donate to the city ten feet fronting on their lots on Fifth street between Main and Iowa, providing the same should be used for a market-house. Steps to raise the means to erect the building were taken in February, 1845. James Wilson and E. Dwell leased the city mires on Third street.

February 1845: The question of a market house in Dubuque was considered once again.
(History of Dubuque County Iowa by Franklin T. Oldt and P.J. Quigley)

threws and Lewis L. Wood, aldermen. W. R. Smith was rechosen clerk. Mr. Trower was the first market master—chosen in April, 1846. John T. Cook was paid \$10 for his plan for the market house, the same having been accepted. In April, 1846, the citizens petitioned to have the public square ornamented. A council room was prepared in the new market house in 1847. The rent of inside stalls in the market house was fixed at \$15 per annum; choice stalls were offered publicly to the highest bidder. In May, 1846, C. J. Leist succeeded Mr. Trower as market master. All articles of produce or meat were required to be sold in the market house. A cannon was ordered for \$25 for city use. Market hours were from 3 a. m. to 10 a. m. each day except Sunday—from May to October. Mr. Fulweiler's slaughter house was ordered removed from its then location, it having become a declared nuisance. The case of Mr. Streiser's butchering establishment. Billiard license.

April 1846: Mr. Trower was chosen as the first market master. Stall rental was set at \$15 per year—with the best stalls being offered publicly to the highest bidder. Market hours were 3 am to 10 am. Monday through Saturday, May to October. (History of Dubuque County Iowa by Franklin T. Oldt and P.J. Quigley)

NOTHING LIKE KICKING OFF THE MARKET WITH A CANNON BOOM!



Dubuque's Famous Market, 7 AM Ready for Business, 1912 (Encyclopedia Dubuque, Courtesy of Randy Lyon)



Dubuque's Famous Market, A Typical Stand, 1912 (Encyclopedia Dubuque, Courtesy of Randy Lyon)

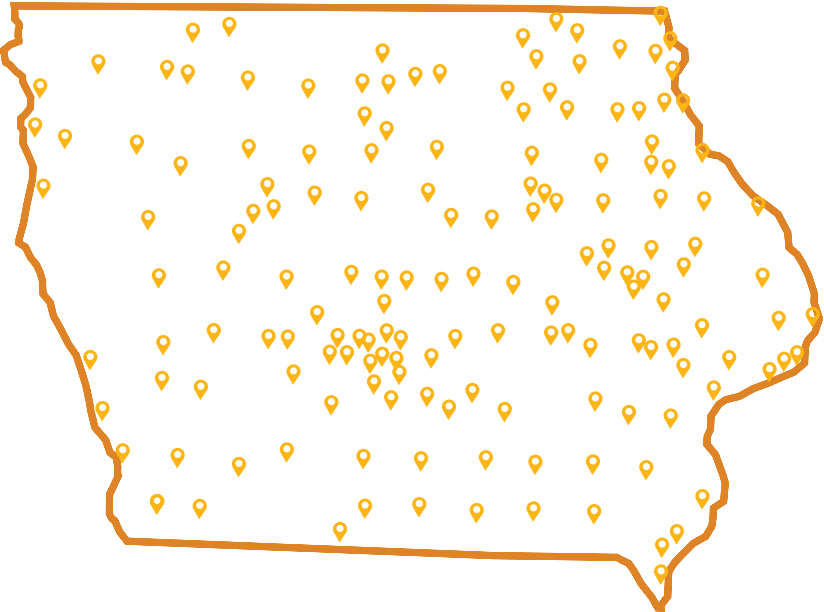


Dubuque's Famous Market, 1912 (Encyclopedia Dubuque, Courtesy of Randy Lyon)

FARMERS MARKETS IN IOWA TODAY

ROOM TO GROW

With Iowa's rich agricultural resources, farmers markets have grown and multiplied across the state—in cities and small towns—in recent decades.



IOWA'S REGISTERED FARMERS MARKETS

Being a "Registered Market" in Iowa means registering with the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship (IDALS). Registered farmers markets are authorized by IDALS to accept FMNP (Farmers Market Nutrition Program) coupons for WIC and Senior FMNP.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING A REGISTERED MARKET
CHECK OUT OUR "FOOD NUTRITION PROGRAM" SECTION IN CHAPTER 4 ON PAGES 61 - 69.

MARKET TRENDS AT A GLANCE

40% JUMP IN WEEKLY ATTENDANCE AT IOWA FARMERS MARKETS BETWEEN 2004 & 2009

2009 Iowa Farmers Market Economic Impact Study by Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship and Iowa Farmers Market Association

AS OF 2018
182 MARKETS
WERE REGISTERED WITH IDALS
Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship

70% INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF FARMERS MARKETS IN IOWA BETWEEN 1994 & 2009
2009 Iowa Farmers Market Economic Impact Study by Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship and Iowa Farmers Market Association

IOWA RANKS
13TH IN THE NATION IN TOTAL NUMBER OF FARMERS MARKETS
USDA National Farmers Market Directory

IOWA HAS ROUGHLY
1 MARKET PER 13,800 PEOPLE
USDA National Farmers Market Directory

FARMERS MARKETS ARE NOW PRESENT IN
228 COMMUNITIES
ACROSS THE STATE
USDA National Farmers Market Directory

IOWA RANKS
5TH IN THE NATION IN NUMBER OF FARMERS MARKETS PER CAPITA
USDA National Farmers Market Directory

CHAPTER 2

What Does it Mean to be a Farmers Market Manager?

The market manager sets the tone and represents the market both internally to vendors and externally to shoppers and market stakeholders.





THE MARKET MANAGER’S ROLE

THE FACE OF THE MARKET AND SO MUCH MORE!

Market managers are responsible for all aspects of market operations during the season, and are the main contact for customers, vendors, volunteers, health inspectors, police, city transportation, sponsors, media and more! Responsibilities include managing vendor relationships, coordinating setup and tear-down, promoting the market, operating the SNAP program, answering customer/vendor questions, and assisting with the market’s special events.

“*In rural communities, farmers markets are often the only place to access fresh produce. Market managers play a role in community health.*”

WHAT VENDORS SAY ABOUT THE MARKET MANAGER ROLE:

*“The success of the farmers market is due to the work of many people—**none more so** than the market manager.”*

*“Having a manager with a wide range of skills and abilities **is a luxury.**”*

*“The market manager is the **face of the farmers** market in the community.”*

*“A farmers market can be a place for **innovation and entrepreneurship.** The manager plays an exciting role in cultivating business development.”*

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MARKET MANAGER

For market managers employed by a city or chamber, the job description will likely be detailed and specific. Volunteer managers may have no job description. Regardless, the job responsibilities are similar.

Here’s an example:

FARMERS MARKET MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION

The market manager must be reliable, self-motivated, and have good communication and customer service skills. The ideal candidate will be an enthusiastic advocate of the local food movement. Specific responsibilities will be determined by the needs of the customers, market partners, and market vendors. Generally, the market manager is responsible for the following activities:

MARKET OPERATIONS

- Arrive at market 2 hours before opening to coordinate setup
- Stay at market until all vendors have left (usually no more than 1 hour after)
- Set up welcome booth tent, table, and display
- Place directional signs promoting the market around the community at key locations prior to opening on each market day; remove at the close of market
- Coordinate vendor parking/setup to ensure vendors are in the correct space
- Staff the welcome booth, provide information to customers and help run the EBT/Credit Card machine

GENERAL MARKET SUPPORT

- Develop and maintain good relationships with staff, interns, vendors, customers, and the community
- Assist vendors, community representatives, and customers by providing market-related information, conflict resolution, and general aid as appropriate
- Enforce market rules
- Vendor recruitment
- Occasionally assist vendors by providing limited setup help and brief personal breaks and by assisting vendors with sales during especially busy times

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

- Work with partners to promote the market through social media, e-newsletters, and community outreach
- Assist with development/coordination of special events

REQUIREMENTS

- Available during all market hours during the season
- Willing and able to work outside in all weather conditions
- Safely able to lift and carry at least 50 pounds

WHOSE MARKET IS IT, ANYWAY?

LET’S EXPLORE THE MANY TYPES OF MARKET MANAGER POSITIONS

Farmers market manager positions vary. Larger markets might employ a full-time, year-round director, while smaller markets rely on an unpaid, part-time, seasonal volunteer. For some managers, the market is the main focus of their job. For others, it's one of several responsibilities. Market managers may be employed by the market itself or contracted through a university program, chamber of commerce, city government or economic development agency. This handbook includes stories, insight, and advice from all types of manager positions.

Here are some of the managers you’ll hear from:



CONTRACTED EMPLOYEE WITH A MAIN STREET PROGRAM

DaQuan Campbell
Waterloo Urban Farmers Market

“The market is part of Main Street Waterloo. I got connected through a program at the University of Northern Iowa. My role was funded by UNI my first year. This year, my second, I’m a contracted employee of Main Street Waterloo.”



CONTRACTED EMPLOYEE WITH A NONPROFIT MARKET

Steve McCargar
Decorah Farmers Market

“I started as a vendor in 1986 when the market first opened. I sold raspberries. In 2009, I was hired as the market manager, so I’ve been serving in that role for ten years now.”



FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE OF AN ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Jenn Draper
Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market

“As the events planner for the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, the farmers market is one of several events that I plan and manage over the course of a year.”



FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Kelly Foss
Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market

“I’m employed by the Greater Des Moines Partnership as Director of the Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market. 100% of my job is working as the farmers market manager. This is my 20th year.”



FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE OF A CITY’S PARKS & REC DEPT

Tammy Neumann
Iowa City Farmers Market

“As administrative secretary for the City of Iowa City’s Parks & Recreation Department, market coordinator is part of my job. The market is a BIG portion of my job. I usually don’t work the market itself since I have an assistant market manager and 3-4 day-of staff who cover market day responsibilities.



MANAGER/VENDOR TEAM AT A NONPROFIT MARKET

Nellie & Stephen Kaus
Waverly Farmers Market

“The manager before us had served in the role for three years and decided to step back. My husband and I were asked if we had interest in the role. A cooperative style of management was considered, but in the end it was the two of us. We receive a \$500 stipend for the market season.”



VOLUNTEER MANAGERS AT A MONTHLY NIGHT MARKET

Andie Donnan & Danielle Stowell
Millwork Night Market

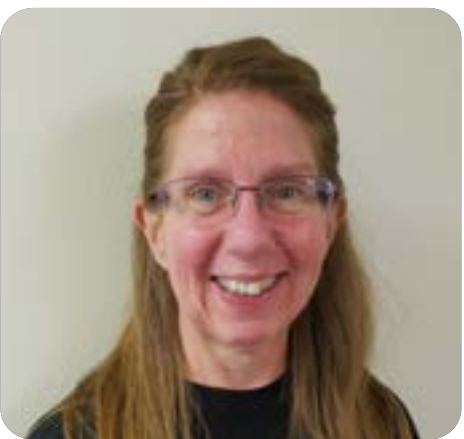
“After working and vending at the Dubuque downtown farmers market, I wanted to start a night market. I teamed up with Danielle because she owns an event planning company. We run the night market together under her company’s umbrella, but we’re looking into it standing on its own, perhaps as a non-profit.”



VOLUNTEER MANAGER OF AN INDEPENDENT MARKET

Alice Linhart
Swisher Farmers Market

“I already had a full-time job when I volunteered to help start the Swisher market, so it wasn’t about being employed. It was about being involved. I wanted to see a farmers market in town. I volunteer about 10 hours per week during market season and less over the winter.”



VOLUNTEER MANAGER /VENDOR OF AN INDEPENDENT MARKET

Julie Madden
Akron Farmers Market

“When Akron’s market was in danger of going away, I volunteered to take over. I wanted to be even more involved, so I soon became a vendor, too. Now, I also vend at the Hawarden market and a market in Le Mars. On top of a full-time job, the markets keep me busy!”



FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Tami Schlamp
Uptown Marion Farmers Market

“My job is Director of Member Services for the Marion Chamber of Commerce. One of my responsibilities is managing the Marion farmers market that takes place uptown.”



**CONTRACTED EMPLOYEE
WITH A CITY'S PARKS AND REC DEPT**

Dawn Ewoldt
Hiawatha Farmers Market

"I have a full-time job at Wells Fargo, but took on the opportunity to work part-time for Hiawatha's Parks & Rec Department as the farmers market manager because I love the market and I'm a people person. I just completed my third year as manager."



**VOLUNTEER MANAGER
OF AN INDEPENDENT MARKET**

Eileen Schmidt
Urbana Farmers Market

"As the volunteer manager of the Urbana Farmers Market, I spend a minimum of 4 and up to 10-15 hours per week on market responsibilities. We also have a committee of two volunteers and two vendors who help run the market."



**FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE
OF A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Lojean Peterson
Ames Main Street Farmers Market

"I'm employed full-time by the Ames Chamber of Commerce to run the Ames Main Street Farmers Market. I manage all aspects of the market. We also have a team of volunteers to assist with day-of market activities like setup, tear-down, and running the information booth."



**CONTRACTED EMPLOYEE
OF A HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION**

Alexi Groumoutis
Creston Farmers Market

"I was a local food coordinator for seven years in Southwest Iowa. This year was my first year as manager for the Creston Farmers Market. The market used to be under the umbrella of the Elks Lodge. Now, it's led by the Greater Regional Healthcare Foundation, the non-profit connected to the Greater Regional Medical Center."



**FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE
OF A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Kendra Vincent
Grinnell Farmers Market

"I'm an employee of the Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce, the managing organization for the market. We also have two vendor day-of managers who receive partial compensation by having reduced market fees. The market is 1 of 16 events I lead throughout the year in addition to doing marketing for the Chamber."



**VOLUNTEER MANAGER
OF AN INDEPENDENT MARKET**

Bob Shepherd
Washington Farmers Market

"Thirty-two years ago, I tried to become a vendor at the Washington Farmers Market. I was one of two vendors. There was no official start time. There were no customers. It was frustrating. What I heard back was: If you can do better, then go ahead. I've been volunteering as the market manager ever since, though I'm no longer a vendor."



Bluff Strokes Paint Out Event
Dubuque Farmers Market

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A MARKET

HOW TO BUILD COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR FARMERS MARKET

At its heart, the farmers market is a place to buy and sell fresh, healthy, local foods. But in many communities, it's much more than that. Markets provide opportunities for collaboration between residents, vendors, volunteers, and local businesses and organizations. Markets began as a way to do business, but have evolved into a way to connect people with their communities, food producers, and the land that surrounds them.

We've gathered some of the ways that Iowa markets are collaborating and connecting within their communities.

Market Connects with Businesses to Create a Rewards Card Program

COLLEGE HILL FARMERS MARKET CEDAR FALLS, IOWA

When College Hill Farmers Market vendors brought up that they were not seeing many return customers, market manager Jodie Huegerich came up with a collaborative, affordable solution to encourage market visitors to come back.

She connected with local businesses on College Hill to implement a rewards card program at the market that helped everyone—vendors, businesses, and customers—without reducing vendor income.

Here's how it works:

Customers pick up a free punch card at the market. Every vendor has a stack of cards and puncher. For each \$3 spent at the market, the card gets a punch. When \$21 is spent (filling up the card's seven punches), the card can be redeemed at a participating business for a special offer. Some of the deals included 50% off one dozen donuts, a free appetizer, or a \$1 beverage discount.

Takeaway Ideas:

Give participating businesses something in return. College Hill businesses receive a window cling and advertising through the farmers market's newsletter, social media, and word of mouth.

Consider your visitors. By keeping each punch at just \$3, College Hill Farmers Market's rewards are both achievable for and appealing to university students living in the College Hill area.



Kids Discover the “Power of Produce” at the Rock Rapids Farmers Market

ROCK RAPIDS FARMERS MARKET

ROCK RAPIDS, IOWA

Today's kids are tomorrow's farmers market shoppers, vendors, and managers. And through Power of Produce (PoP) Club, the children in Rock Rapids have a head start on learning what a farmers market is all about.

Power of Produce (PoP) Club is a farmers market-based program that encourages children aged 4-12 to try new vegetables, learn about growing and eating vegetables, meet their local farmers market vendors, and have fun at the market.

Lyon County ISU Extension in Rock Rapids has been implementing PoP Club at the Rock Rapids Farmers Market for three years. Dawn Henderson, Horticulture Program Coordinator, says that the program **“has had phenomenal response with the kids, parents, and vendors.”** Through the Rising Star program, Henderson has college interns in the summer who help run the program.

Each week, children can come to the market to do an activity with the PoP Club volunteer or staff member. After being introduced to a new vegetable, the kids

answer a few questions, and receive a \$2 token to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables at the market. Participating vendors then return the token to the PoP Club staff to be reimbursed.

Henderson says that it doesn't just benefit produce vendors. **“One vendor wrote in our annual survey that—even though she sells baked goods—she saw an increase in sales because more people were there buying her baked goods in addition to produce.”**

Want PoP Club At Your Market?

Budget for it. Minnesota Extension suggests that markets budget \$500-\$3,000 to run the PoP Club program, depending on participation levels, number of weeks the club is operated, and amount of paid staff and/or unpaid volunteer time needed to operate the program.

Find a partner. The Rock Rapids Farmers Market is operated by the local chamber, but the PoP Club is entirely facilitated by Lyon County ISU Extension. As a market manager, consider who you could partner with in your community to operate the PoP Club program.

Get the toolkit:

It is available for free on Minnesota Extension's website:

<https://extension.umn.edu/local-foods/power-produce-pop-club>

Local School Kids Design Posters for the Grinnell Farmers Market

GRINNELL FARMERS MARKET

GRINNELL, IOWA

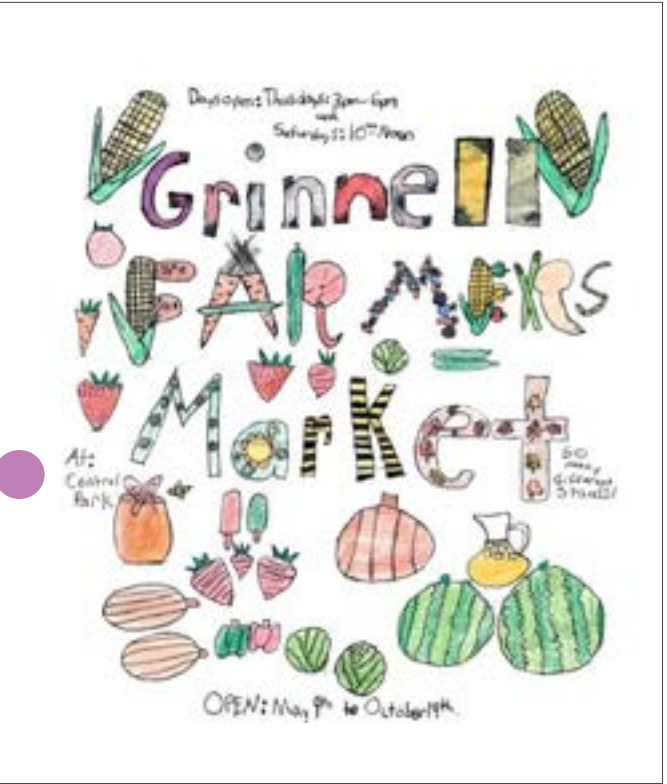
In 2018, Kendra Vincent (manager of the Grinnell Farmers Market) and her team had been brainstorming ways to get more involved in the community and with kids. Inspired by the National Farmers Market Coalition's poster contest, they decided to hold their own poster contest—and invite the local elementary schools to help.

“The first year, we set up meetings with principals and art teachers to talk about what we were trying to do. It was received really well,” says Kendra. “Next, our market staff visited the schools to read to classes, talk to students about what a farmers market is, and hand out the poster sheets for students to draw on.”

That year, Kendra picked up 75 entries. One winner was chosen from each grade level from each of the three elementary schools. Each winner received a \$10 gift card to the farmers market. Kendra also turned the winning artwork into posters by doing a hi-res scan and placing the image onto a template that included the student's first name only, grade, school, and farmers market details, dates, and times. She made ten copies of each of the posters, which were then hung around town to promote the market season.

In 2019, the poster contest received a whopping 175 entries. Once again, the artwork was narrowed down to winners who received two \$5 tokens for the farmers market. And with so much creative work from local students, Kendra arranged to have all the entries displayed in one school's community room for people to stop and see all summer long.

Both years, Kendra also submitted all the poster entries to the National Farmers Market Coalition poster contest.



How the contest inspired mini farmers markets at a local elementary. “The first year of our poster contest went so well and everyone loved it so much that it inspired additional collaboration opportunities with our local schools,” says Kendra, “Each fall, several of our farmers get together and work with the local ISU extension to host a mini farmers market at one of the schools. The students love it.”

Recognizing vendors on poster designs. “It was cool to see the change in posters between year one and year two as kids became more familiar with the farmers market,” Kendra says. “The first year, there were some posters with pineapples and oranges—things we don't sell at the Iowa markets. The next year, kids drew the man that sells lemonade and the truck that brings the apples. It was fun for specific vendors to be identified in some of the posters.”

“

The kids were drawing their posters six months after the market season. They remembered what they saw at the market and drew that when they created their artwork.

BUILD COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR FARMERS MARKET

FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN EVERY MONTH

CORALVILLE FARMERS MARKET - CORALVILLE, IOWA

Once a month, the Coralville Farmers Market puts up a bouncy house and puts on Kids’ Day at the Market by partnering with local businesses and organizations including balloon artists, the children’s museum, storytellers and puppets, and kid-friendly musicians.

A TAIL WAGGIN’ GOOD TIME

MUSCATINE FARMERS MARKET - MUSCATINE, IOWA

The Muscatine Farmers Market often partners with local organizations and non-profits to host their special events at the market as it increases attendance for both parties. The market hosted a “Dog Flash Mob” for people to bring their furry friends and show support for animal welfare.

WATERLOO CENTER FOR THE ARTS BRINGS KID-FRIENDLY ART ACTIVITIES AND “MIMOSAS & MASTERPIECES”

WATERLOO URBAN FARMERS MARKET - WATERLOO, IOWA

Being family-friendly and supporting local arts and culture is a top priority for the Waterloo Urban Farmers Market, making for a great partnership with the Waterloo Center for the Arts. Each week, the arts center has a space dedicated to connecting with market-goers and facilitating art activities with kids and families.

Once a month, adults can register for “Mimosas & Masterpieces,” a \$15 outdoor painting workshop that includes an instructor-led painting project, all supplies, and a refreshing champagne and orange juice cocktail.



FIT FOR THE MARKET

FREIGHT HOUSE FARMERS MARKET - DAVENPORT, IOWA

Freight House partners with local yoga studios and running clubs to host yoga sessions and begin/end runs at the farmers market.

QUAD CITIES CHEFS DEMONSTRATE HOW TO “COOK WHAT OUR FARMERS GROW”

FREIGHT HOUSE FARMERS MARKET - DAVENPORT, IOWA

Through its new “Chef in the Market” program, Freight House invites local chefs to share their culinary skills with the farmers market. Each Saturday, a different Quad Cities chef takes over the Chef’s Tent. All the chefs shop for fresh, seasonal, local produce from the farmers market vendors, then do cooking demonstrations and tastings for market-goers. Recipes are posted to the farmers market’s website for market-goers to recreate at home.

Made possible thanks to a sponsorship from the Regional Development Authority, the program connects local chefs to farmers, vendors, and market shoppers.



LIVE MUSIC + LOTS OF SEATING

AMES MAIN STREET FARMERS MARKET - AMES, IOWA

For many market-goers, the farmers market isn’t just a place to shop. It’s a space to socialize and connect within their community. While there are already benches throughout downtown Ames, market manager Lojean Peterson adds tables and chairs all down the street where the market is held—giving people a spot to sit down with their coffee and prepared foods, chat with each other, and enjoy the performances of local musicians who play at each market.

MARKET-FRESH PIZZA TO-GO

WATERLOO URBAN FARMERS MARKET - WATERLOO, IOWA

The Waterloo Urban Farmers Market partnered with local restaurant Basal to deliver freshly made pizzas. Market-goers order pizzas at the restaurant’s stall, then the pizzas are delivered to the stall via bike.

MORE IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

1. Give a booth to a local nonprofit that can contribute something to your market—like an animal shelter bringing a few adoptable dogs or another organization selling merchandise to raise funds.
2. Partner with a group focused on food or environment. After each Iowa City Farmers Market, local non-profit Table to Table walks through and vendors can donate any produce that they would otherwise compost. Other markets work with local schools’ environmental groups so that they can collect compost materials.
3. Develop an ambassador group made up of your most supportive community members. They can help build connections, give feedback, organize events and fundraisers, and promote the market.
4. Invite a community theatre to perform a teaser of their summer play, a local author to do a short reading, or museum to facilitate an activity related to a new exhibit.
5. Collaborate with county conservation on a campfire skillet-cooking demo using locally grown produce.
6. Stay active during the off-season. Hold a pre- and post-season meeting with vendors, then organize an off-season potluck or training. If you have ambassadors or a committee, check in with them face-to-face, too. The connections you nurture in the off-season will help build your market community for the busy season.

SPECIAL EVENTS ARE A GREAT WAY TO BUILD COMMUNITY, TOO! CHECK OUT OUR “SPECIAL EVENTS” SECTION ON PAGES 72 -77 FOR IDEAS AND TIPS.

NEW MANAGER AT A NEW MARKET

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH A NEW MARKET

As a new manager starting a new market, it can be hard to know where to begin. This sample timeline lays out a suggested order for the many tasks required to launch a market. Certain to-dos need to be completed before others can happen. For example: you'll want to set your market schedule before you lock in vendors—to ensure the vendors will be available during your days and times. Keep in mind that this timeline is based on a 9-12 month period. If you have less time to plan and prepare, the tasks will need to be condensed into a tighter timeframe.



9-12 MONTHS OUT

- Research other nearby markets (online and in-person)
- Talk to vendors and other market managers in the area
- Identify local community partners
- Talk with future customers about what they want
- Research the history of your farmers market



6-9 MONTHS OUT

- Select and reserve the location
- Set the schedule (season/months, days, times)
- Decide on your market business structure
- Secure local partnerships
- Recruit vendors
- Form a market committee



3-6 MONTHS OUT

- Finalize all your permits, insurance, and legal documents
- Start promoting your farmers market
- Create your branding and marketing materials
- Register with IDALS
- Develop your market rules and guidelines
- Create an emergency plan and weather policy
- Start fundraising and secure sponsors
- Plan special events for your market



OPENING DAY - 3 MONTHS OUT

- Create the market layout
- Enlist volunteers and identify tasks
- Ramp up marketing efforts
- Schedule and carry out vendor meetings
- Design market signage and maps
- Create a master contact list
- Get on every local events calendar



DAY/WEEK OF THE MARKET

- Communicate with vendors, volunteers, and partners
- Confirm attendance of vendors and volunteers
- Make sure you're available for all questions
- CELEBRATE OPENING DAY!
- Start collecting vendor payments/dues



ONGOING THINGS TO DO AFTER LAUNCH

- Continue implementing your marketing plan
- Be ready for troubleshooting
- Keep track of market metrics
- Communicate with vendors, volunteers, and partners.
- Ensure market safety and market rules are enforced.
- Attend every market (be the first there, and last to leave)

ADVICE FROM MANAGERS WHO HAVE HELPED LAUNCH NEW MARKETS



01 FIGURE OUT IF STARTING A NEW MARKET IS FEASIBLE

"Do your research. Somehow, you need to ask or figure out if the community wants a farmers market. Is there going to be customer support? Find out what those customers want. Then find your vendors to provide it. It does no good to have vendors selling cupcakes if the customers want carrots. It's an ongoing thing. One of the coolest things I've seen at a market is a weekly question, like 'What did you come here looking for this week?' The answers change week to week and give you feedback to share with vendors as to what they can produce."

Julie Grunklee, Former Manager of Grundy County Farmers Market (2004) and Cedar Falls Main Street Farmers Market (2006)



02 THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX WHEN LOOKING FOR A LOCATION

"When we got started, there hadn't been a market in Le Mars for ten years. We spent a lot of time researching where to locate the market. Kathy, owner of the Cork It liquor store offered us the field behind her shop for free. She has a heart for the Le Mars community and wants to help small businesses because she has one. Vendors can pull in and have their vehicle next to their stand. There's lots of parking. At first, we were concerned about it not being very visible from the main highway. But in our experience, it hasn't hurt us to be off the beaten path. Putting the market in her field was the best thing we could have done. Since starting, we've tripled in size both in vendors and customers."

Nikki Decker, Manager of Le Mars Farmers Market



03 BALANCE INVESTMENT WITH GOALS

"There are always pros and cons to volunteering your time. Some people may not put as much effort into it if they're not making money at it. But when I volunteered to help, I was already working a full-time job so it wasn't about making the money. I wanted to see something like a farmers market or community garden in Swisher. That's why I wanted to be involved. I think because it's a smaller market—and we knew it was never going to be a Cedar Rapids-sized market—we didn't really feel like we needed to pay anybody to do it. Because it's a smaller market, it takes less time to run. We're happy with our market's current size, so we don't feel like we need to dedicate more time to it."

Alice Linhart, Manager of Swisher Farmers Market



04 FIND THE RIGHT PLACE AND STICK WITH IT

"It's critical to identify the best place for your farmers market and then have continuity. Our first year was in a cute little park, but there was no parking. Then we moved to a field for a few years, but that parcel of land was eventually sold. So finally we moved to downtown Beaverdale, which is where we'd always wanted to be. I wish we'd moved to the downtown location sooner. I still have people think we're at our old location."

Jane Gasperi, Manager of Beaverdale Farmers Market

NEW MANAGER AT AN OLD MARKET

HOW TO TAKE THE LEAD AT AN EXISTING MARKET

HIGH PRIORITY

Talking and Listening

- Meet with the previous farmers market manager
- Get a full description of your job duties
- Understand your role at the market
- Visit other nearby farmers markets
- Get to know other market managers in the area
- Hold a meeting with previous/existing vendors
- Reach out individually to customers

Analyzing Your Resources

- Locate marketing materials
- Learn how to use the payment system
- Get social media and email login information
- Check on permits, insurance, and licenses
- Find the market map or existing vendor layout
- Read through and update your rules/regulations
- Repair and replace market supplies, if needed
- Make sure information on website is up-to-date

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Arranging for Extra Help

- Find volunteers to help with day-of tasks
- Form a support team (vendors, partners, friends)

Sending Surveys

- Send a year-end survey to vendors to collect feedback from the past year for future events and other market improvements for next season.

LOW PRIORITY

Making Big Changes

Take the first year to figure out how the market works. Avoid knee jerk reactions and changes based on feeling pressured. Be strategic about the changes you do make. In many cases, it will be wise to wait until you have a year of experience under your belt before making adjustments to the market.

Branding and Logos

For the first year, your time and energy should be focused on having conversations, building relationships, and figuring out how to run the market. Even if you don't love the existing logo or branding, you can still work with it. Save these types of changes for the off-season or next year when you have a better grasp on your role and the market as a whole.



“I wanted it to be perfect my first year, and then came to the realization that it wasn't going to be perfect and that's okay. There will be learning curves. DaQuan Campbell, Waterloo Urban Farmers Market

ADVICE FROM MANAGERS WHO HAVE TAKEN THE REINS OF OLD MARKETS



01 THERE'S A LEARNING CURVE AND THAT'S OKAY

“The most helpful thing for me was building relationships with vendors—especially those long-term vendors who know the market in and out. Get their feedback. Then, make sure they feel like their input is valued and that they are on-board with the direction of the market. We hosted two vendor meetings in the off-season for vendors to voice their opinions, ask questions, share concerns, and say anything they need to get off their chest. Once you create that open dialogue, make sure you are maintaining that communication.”

DaQuan Campbell, Manager of Waterloo Urban Farmers Market



02 SCALE THINGS TO FIT YOUR MARKET AND BUDGET

“The Akron Farmers Market has probably been in existence since the 1960s or so, and it had always been a Chamber-sponsored event. But the chamber was going to stop operating it four years ago when I was Chamber president so I took it over with two other Chamber members. One of the first things I did was go to larger markets like the Sioux City Farmers Market. I copied what bigger markets were doing, but on a smaller scale. Sioux City has entertainment they probably pay for. We now have entertainment at the Akron Market, too, but we don't pay for it. If there's a local band that wants to get started, we'll let them play. Sometimes the high school choir performs.”

Julie Madden, Manager of Akron Farmers Market



03 YOU IMPACT MORE THAN JUST THE MARKET

“The hardest part was that I was the one driving change. There was a way things had always been done. It took time, but I finally let myself realize: I am here and I am working for the people. And 98% of those people understood and wanted to see change. There will always be a few who don't understand or who are just okay with mediocrity. But the goal for me was getting people to understand that we're bigger than just the farmers market. We're an integral part of the city and we have a responsibility to think about businesses and the community and make changes that benefit everyone. And when you do that, good things come your way.”

Lorrie Beaman, Manager of Freight House Farmers Market



04 SHOW GRATITUDE

“There are so many people who contribute to a successful market. Identify and show gratitude to your supporters, your vendors, your volunteers, and your sponsors. The women who started the Atlantic market have already accomplished a lot and have extensive networks in the community. I'm able to be a good manager because a lot of hard work happened before me. My first year has been learning, relationship building, and providing consistency and continuity for the good strategies already in place.”

Brigham Hoegh, Manager of Atlantic Farmers Market

WHAT YOUR VENDORS WISH YOU KNEW...

WE ASKED, VENDORS ANSWERED

...ABOUT WHAT A FARMERS MARKET TRULY IS

“Don’t forget the ‘farm’ in ‘farmers market.’ If you’re going to call it a farmers market, make sure that farm-fresh products and seasonal produce are a priority. When a customer goes to a farmers market, it’s expected that they’ll get to buy from local growers.”

...ABOUT PRODUCTS

“Certain products need shade for different reasons. Some need it because it’s a food safety issue. Others need it because the quality of their product is directly impacted by the sun. Chocolates and candles melt. The quality of greens and delicate produce is quickly affected. Everyone wants to be in the shade, but the priority needs to be on the product.”

“I appreciate when market managers get to know vendors and the products we sell so they are better informed when customers ask about products sold at the market.”

...ABOUT COMMUNICATION

“The best managers make sure to listen to vendor and customer feedback. Being able to make someone feel like they’re heard is important. It is equally important to keep your response to feedback in line with market goals. Keep it professional!”

...ABOUT PREPARED FOODS

“Prepared food vendors get offers to sell food at many places. A lot of them are busts. Every prepared food vendor has a story about working an event with too many other prepared food vendors or too few customers and watching all their food go bad.”

...ABOUT CONSISTENCY

“I would never want to be a market manager. It’s all about consistency, but that’s easier said than done when you’re just trying to get people to the market.”

“Humans are creatures of habit. Consistency is important. Changing anything—time, date, location, vendor arrangement, parking, or even the information booth—will impact your vendors and your customers.”

...ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE

“It goes a long way when the market manager has positive energy and is proactive in helping vendors and customers—not just sitting at the information booth and waiting for problems to come to them.”

“I only have control over the customer’s experience with me. I don’t have control over their experience with the market as a whole. Can they find the bathroom? Are there garbage cans? Do they know where to park? Is there a friendly community vibe? It takes everyone at the market to make customer service work.”

...ABOUT MARKETING THE MARKET

“Vendors appreciate the extra mile taken by organizers to promote the market. Promotion is an opportunity to tell the market’s story visual and verbal consistency across all forms of promotion are an important means of setting the mood.”

“Copy-editing and appealing design—preferably by a professional—are opportunities to bring local creatives into the market inner circle. In print advertising, signage, and weekly emails, vendors want to have the chance to approve or direct the language about their own product. For example, ‘homemade baked goods’ may sound good to an organizer, but a vendor may not want to have their product presented as such.”

...ABOUT COMMUNITY

“When organizers bring in community organizations—such as clubs or schools—and utilize the market as a venue, it becomes more of a community experience rather than simply tables with things for sale. Think: high school jazz band, art club doing portraits, writers guilds writing poems on the spot for \$5. Or just think about what your community values. This kind of engagement has a built-in audience, which translates to customers for market vendors.”

...ABOUT VENDOR MIX

“It can be frustrating when a manager allows a new vendor access to a market that competes with existing, long-term season vendors. The manager needs to be clear with vendors at the beginning about the decision-making process for vendor selection.”

...ABOUT CHANGE OVER TIME

“I’ve been vending for almost thirty years and have watched market managers come and go. There are two things I would want a new manager to know. First, when you have that many independent entrepreneurs grouped together, it’s rare to get 100% consensus. Secondly, you’re not alone. The board or committee is there for a reason. You don’t have to shoulder the full burden of conflict and problem-solving.”

“It’s a year-to-year decision whether we’re going to be vendors at your market. We want to help the market grow and succeed, but it takes lots of prep and time to prepare for a market. So if there are not enough customers to support that effort, we have to reevaluate our attendance.”

While the market itself may last only a few hours, farmers have spent days harvesting, cleaning, and packing. On market day, more time is spent loading, driving, and setting up. When all of that is taken into consideration, it’s hard to turn a profit if the market isn’t well-attended. It’s so important to have a market manager that pulls out all the stops to make sure the market is a well-advertised, fun atmosphere that people don’t want to miss! The more customers that show up, the more vendors that will be able to commit to attending consistently.



CHAPTER 3

First Things First: Planning Your Farmers Market

Whether you're launching a new market or stepping into manage an existing one, there are certain plans to be made to keep your market running smoothly.

MARKET HOURS

CHOOSING DATES & TIMES FOR YOUR MARKET

There are several factors to consider when setting hours. Think about the hours of other markets, nearby businesses, community events, and even the sunset times of changing seasons.

5 TIPS FOR SELECTING MARKET HOURS

Check Nearby Markets' Hours

Look into other area farmers markets' days and times. If you want to attract the same vendors, you may not want to hold your market at the same time.

Piggybacking has Perks

Does your community have a weekly event? This could be a great partnership for the market to piggyback onto an existing event. The event and market can share in marketing efforts and customer base.

It's Okay to Overlap

If there's another event in the community, overlapping with it is okay—even encouraged. When scheduling your market, don't think of it as an isolated event. If there's another event happening nearby before, after, or during the market, both can benefit from shared traffic and cross-promotion.

The More You Advertise, the Better

State the hours of your market clearly and frequently on all marketing (signage, social media, etc.).

Be Consistent Year After Year

When you decide on your market hours, it's strongly recommended to keep the day and time consistent in future years to avoid confusion for customers.

When are markets in Iowa?



MOST POPULAR:
SATURDAY***

LEAST POPULAR:
SUNDAY**

WINNING WEEKDAYS:
WED & THURS*



***BETWEEN 7:00 AM AND NOON

**DESPITE BEING ON THE WEEKEND

*OFTEN FOR 2-3 HOURS IN THE AFTERNOON TO EVENING

“

When we got started 30-some years ago, we knew we'd be competing with nearby larger cities' markets if we did Saturday. I looked at the week instead and decided on Thursday evening since that's the night all the businesses around the square are open late. I knew the market and businesses would benefit from a partnership that brought more people downtown. So I went and talked to those businesses in-person. I told them if they helped promote the market, I'd help bring a crowd. They put fliers in their windows, talked to media, and let customers know about the market. Everyone worked together to promote those Thursday nights—and it was a success!
Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

MARKET FEE & FINE STRUCTURE

HOW A SMART FEE STRUCTURE PAYS OFF

Vendor fees are the primary source of income for covering the operational costs of a farmers market—from paying market staff to helping with marketing costs to hiring a police officer to patrol the market. Part of your responsibility as market manager is to collect the membership fees and enforce any other policies/fees/fines that were established as part of the market rules.

Fees and fines are not one-size-fits-all

Just as rules and structure vary from market to market, so do fees and fines. One manager might need to offer large and small stalls to make the layout possible in their location—charging fees accordingly. Another may only be able to work with stalls all of the same size, not needing to charge less or more based on space. A large market may charge higher fees to cover additional costs, such as marketing or staff. A very small, volunteer-run market may charge a few dollars or nothing at all. Before opting out of fees, consider what even a few dollars per vendor could help you afford.

Not all vendors are created equal

If the goal/mission of the market is to have more produce and less prepared food, the market manager has the right to charge food producers lower rates and charge higher rates to vendors of crafts and prepared foods.

Don't raise rates mid-year

Changing rates in the middle of a market season is likely to cause vendor confusion and complaints. If fees need to be raised or implemented, do so in the off-season and communicate it to vendors clearly, frequently, and well ahead of time.



WHAT, WHEN, & HOW:

WHAT WILL YOU CHARGE?

Decide on your market's vendor fees as well as potential add-ons and fines. Depending on the structure of your market, this may be up to you or it may be a decision made by the board or operating entity.

WHEN WILL YOU COLLECT?

If you're managing a large market, it will save you time and effort to collect dues for the entire season before the first market is held. If you're managing a small market, there's value in collecting fees in-person bi-weekly or weekly.

HOW WILL YOU TAKE PAYMENT?

Cash? Check? Can vendors pay with their debit/credit card in-person or online? Can vendors mail their payment or bring it to a physical office location? Will you go around and collect it yourself?

WONDERING HOW VENDOR FEES IMPACT YOUR MARKET BUDGET? CHECK OUT OUR SECTION ON "FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR YOUR BUDGET" ON PAGES 50 - 51.

Market Fee Examples

	Stall Fee All stalls are the same size and vendors pay the same amount.		Early Entry Fee Vendors who pay this are allowed to start setting up earlier at the market.
	Large/Small Stall Fee Some markets are laid out with smaller or larger sized stalls to fit spaces. Vendors pay more or less depending on size.		Mailing Fee Paid by vendors who do not wish to receive email or do not have email. This covers the cost for mailed communication.
	Reserved Stall Fee Vendors who pay the reserved stall fee may be in the same location at the market all year.		No Show Fine Enforced if a vendor fails to show up to a market without informing the market manager.
	Daily Lease Vendors who arrive the day of the market looking to sell, will be charged a one-day fee to vend.		Trash Disposal Fine Enforced if a vendor does not remove trash or does not clean up their stall after the market.
	Shared Stall Fee Two or more vendors pay for a shared stall to sell their seasonal produce together rather than each pay for their own stall.		Late Arrival Fine Enforced if a market vendor arrives late to set up their stall.
	Refunds/Subletting Refunds and/or subletting stalls is not typically allowed at most farmers markets.		Reckless Driving Fine Enforced if a vendor leaves before the market is closed and customers are still at the market.

I COLLECT FEES IN-PERSON, WAIVE THEM FOR A VENDOR'S FIRST MARKET, & CHARGE EXTRA FOR PREPARED FOODS

"Collecting fees can be a way to maintain and build rapport with vendors. At every market, I go to each vendor to get their \$3 in cash. We've surveyed vendors about paying a pre-season lump sum, but almost everyone likes paying the fee face-to-face each market. Also, first-time vendors don't get charged for their first market day, so they can try it out. And prepared food vendors are charged more because they're going to make more money."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

WE COLLECT FEES BEFORE EACH MARKET SEASON AND INCREASE THEM TO KEEP UP WITH INFLATION

"Because our farmers market is run through the city's Parks and Rec department, when we make changes, it's usually a 3% increase in line with inflation. We collect all the fees from vendors at the beginning of the year. Except for week-to-week or fill-in vendors. For those vendors, the staff will go around on the day-of and collect their money."

Tammy Neumann, Iowa City Farmers Market

VENDOR RECRUITMENT

GET THE RIGHT MIX FOR YOUR MARKET

1. WHAT TYPES OF VENDORS DO YOU WANT AT YOUR MARKET?

Vendor recruitment is an important responsibility for market managers because the variety of vendors can make or break a market. Before you start recruiting, you need to consider the types of vendors that you—and your potential customers—want at your farmers market. Some markets will develop a rough equation for how many different types of vendors they want to have. For example, to encourage customers to do most of their grocery shopping at the market, a market manager may aim to have over half of the vendors be produce vendors.

Here are a few examples of vendor breakdown by type of product:

- Produce
- Meat
- Dairy
- Crafts/Jewelry
- Other food products

Once you have your desired vendors identified, you can then be specific with your efforts to seek out and recruit those vendors.

2. WHAT FACTS AND FIGURES CAN YOU GIVE PROSPECTIVE VENDORS?

To be prepared when trying to convince a prospective vendor to sell at your market, create a simple handout with stats that hold sway, including:

- Average number of customers per market
- Location of the market (if possible, the distance from the market to their farm or place of business)



- Number of existing vendors that sell similar products at the market
- Market achievements (Has your market grown? Held a successful event? Or won an award?)

3. WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT POTENTIAL FARMERS MARKET VENDORS?

Most farmers are planning their season in January and February, so that's generally the best time to contact them about vending at your market.

4. HOW ARE YOU ADVERTISING VENDOR GAPS?

Make sure you're promoting in different ways to reach different vendors. Create a flyer that can be posted around town and on social media. Reach out to your local Extension offices, public library, coffee shops, or other high-traffic areas in the community. Have conversations with local partners, current vendors, customers, and other market managers in the area to gain insights on potential new vendors or types of vendors that could fit into your market mix.

Advice from Market Managers

TO GET MORE VENDORS, YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE SOMETHING

"First-time vendors don't get charged for their first market day, so they can try it out before deciding if they want to come back and be a part of the market."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

"We don't charge any vendor fees because we want anyone to be able to come sell at any time. We're a small market and we don't want to penalize vendors if they end up not having product to sell one week."

Alice Linhart, Swisher Farmers Market

TRY BOTH NEW-FANGLED & OLD-FASHIONED WAYS TO RECRUIT

"Social media helped us gain ten additional vendors last year. Most of those new vendors signed up after seeing a Facebook ad advertising that we were looking for vendors."

Kendra Vincent, Grinnell Farmers Market

"Face-to-face conversations are valuable. Go talk to other vendors at markets that are nearby but not on the same day or during the same time as your market. You don't want to poach, but you can ask if they'd be interested in selling at your market, too."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

"Word of mouth is still a powerful tool. Ask your current vendors or vendors at other markets if they know of anyone who might be interested. Several of my newer vendors were referred to my market thanks to current vendors."

Jay Moore, Marion Farmers Market

"We have one sponsor who covers all of the vendor stall fees. It's a great way to remove the cost barrier to vendors, especially new vendors, without sacrificing income for the market."

Mandy Ludovissy, Guttenberg Farmers Market



FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE OF PREPARED FOOD VENDORS

"Since we've grown, we've been able to become more selective in types of vendors. For us, that means bringing in more food trucks. Because of our location, it's so much easier for us to have food trucks instead of other types of prepared foods setups. Our market has a one-hour setup and tear-down timeframe. Food trucks are just better suited to this. They may have already prepped food earlier in the day, so they can pull in and are ready to start selling. It has taken time to figure out how many of any category of vendors to have at our market—including food trucks—because for prepared food, everyone has to be successful or they won't come back."

Jane Gasperi, Beavertdale Farmers Market

"If there are too many food trucks competing with each other, the food trucks may decide it's not worth coming at all. So we just have one food truck each week. That way, the food truck vendor doesn't have to compete with others—and our customers can try something new every market."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

TAP INTO WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY WANTS

"After the initial vendor application, we have implemented a jury process. We bring in people from the community—outside people who are not professionals at farmers markets, but who have a very good sense of how farmers markets serve communities and what best suits our specific community. We work as a jury, with a slideshow and a point system. Over the course of two days, we review applicants, score them on our criteria, and accept a certain number of vendors per category. It's been a years-long learning process to figure out how many vendors of each type of category works in our market and community. Our jury helps us achieve that diversity and accept new vendors."

Kelly Foss, Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market

LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS (STRUCTURE)

LLCs, 501(c)3s & C CORPS, OH MY!

Most farmers markets will fit into one of the following business structures: sole proprietorship, partnership, limited liability company (LLC), non-profit, or for-profit corporation. If you're starting a farmers market from scratch, there's a lot to consider when choosing a business structure. First, decide whether your farmers market should or needs to be its own independent entity. Next, pay a visit to your nearest Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for expert advice. In the meantime, use our chart to get an idea of what business structure may fit your market.



WHAT'S THE BEST BUSINESS FIT FOR MY MARKET?

To learn more about these types of business structures and how they may suit your farmers market, the Center for Agriculture & Food Systems Farmers Market Legal Toolkit is a great resource.

Find it at: farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org/business-structures

TWO THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING ON A BUSINESS STRUCTURE:

1.

DO YOU HAVE AN UMBRELLA?



Many farmers markets across Iowa are held under an already established business, government entity, or non-profit organization. If there's an existing local entity that would oversee your farmers market, this could be a great option. Being housed under such an "umbrella" gives you access to more resources—such as assistance with financials, marketing and fundraising. But you'll also be relinquishing some control to varying degrees.

2.

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO AN SBDC?



Scott Swenson, SBDC Regional Director in Cedar Rapids, says "The SBDC is a free and confidential service that can help market managers understand and navigate the business formation process and the steps to getting set up properly. This includes the various business structures they may considering and the resources for helping with business planning, marketing strategy, financial projections, and identifying any resources that apply to helping get the market launched successfully."

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF	SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP	PARTNERSHIP	LLC	NON-PROFIT	S & C CORPS
Okay with being personally liable for business debts?	X	X	X	X	
Do you want to protect members and shareholders from personal liability?			X		X
Do you plan to split corporate profit among owners?			X		X
Do you plan to report profit or loss on your own personal tax return?	X	X	X		
Do you want to have an unlimited number of owners?		X	X		X
Do you want to have partners?		X	X		X
Do you want to own the company yourself?	X				X
Do you want to create the company simply and inexpensively with minimum requirements?	X	X	X		
Do you want to create an entity at a state level that protects the company name?			X		X
Do you want the business duration to be perpetual?			X		X
Are you willing to write articles of incorporation and bylaws, file various documents for state and federal regulations, get an EIN with the IRS, and set up a bank account?		X	X	X	X
Do you want few reporting responsibilities?	X	X	X		
Don't want to hold annual meetings?	X	X	X		

MARKET LAYOUT

LAY OUT YOUR MARKET WITH VENDORS AND CUSTOMERS IN MIND

Creating an effective layout of the market is very important for proper space allocation for vendors, as well as ease and comfort of customers shopping the market.



“Dead end” aisles can be seen as inconvenient. To overcome this, many markets use a circular traffic pattern instead.

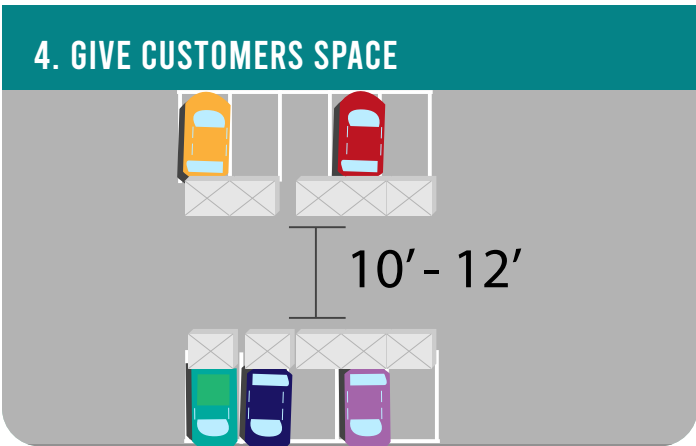


Will you allow vendors to park their vehicles in stalls or will it be a drop-off market? Either way, vendors will need to get their products to their stall.

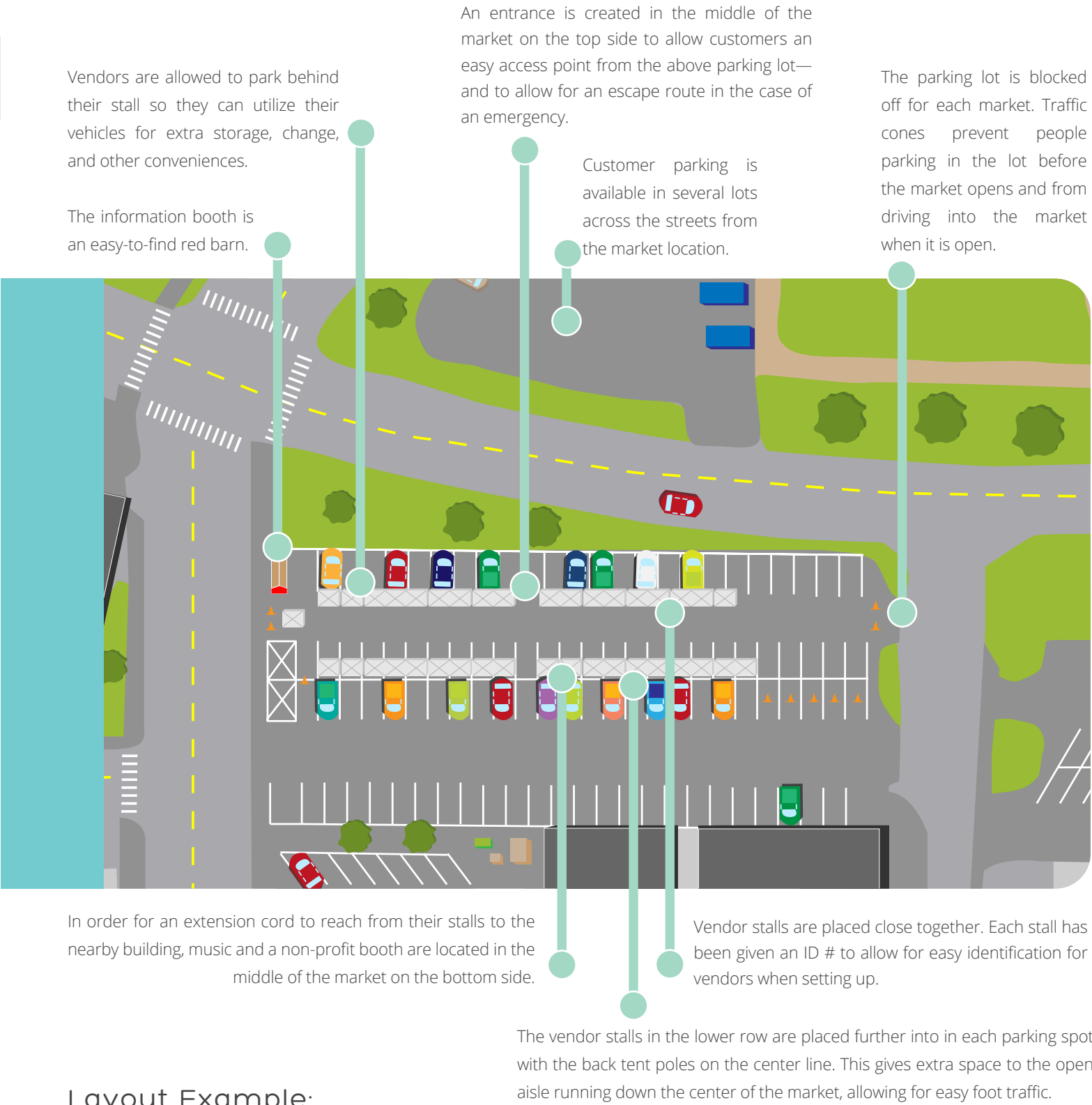


“I like to make sure that there are no blank spaces or empty stalls in my market’s layout. Even if it’s an hour before the market, I want vendors to let me know if they can’t make it so I can fill in their spaces and make the market look full.”

Jane Gasperi, Beaverdale Farmers Market

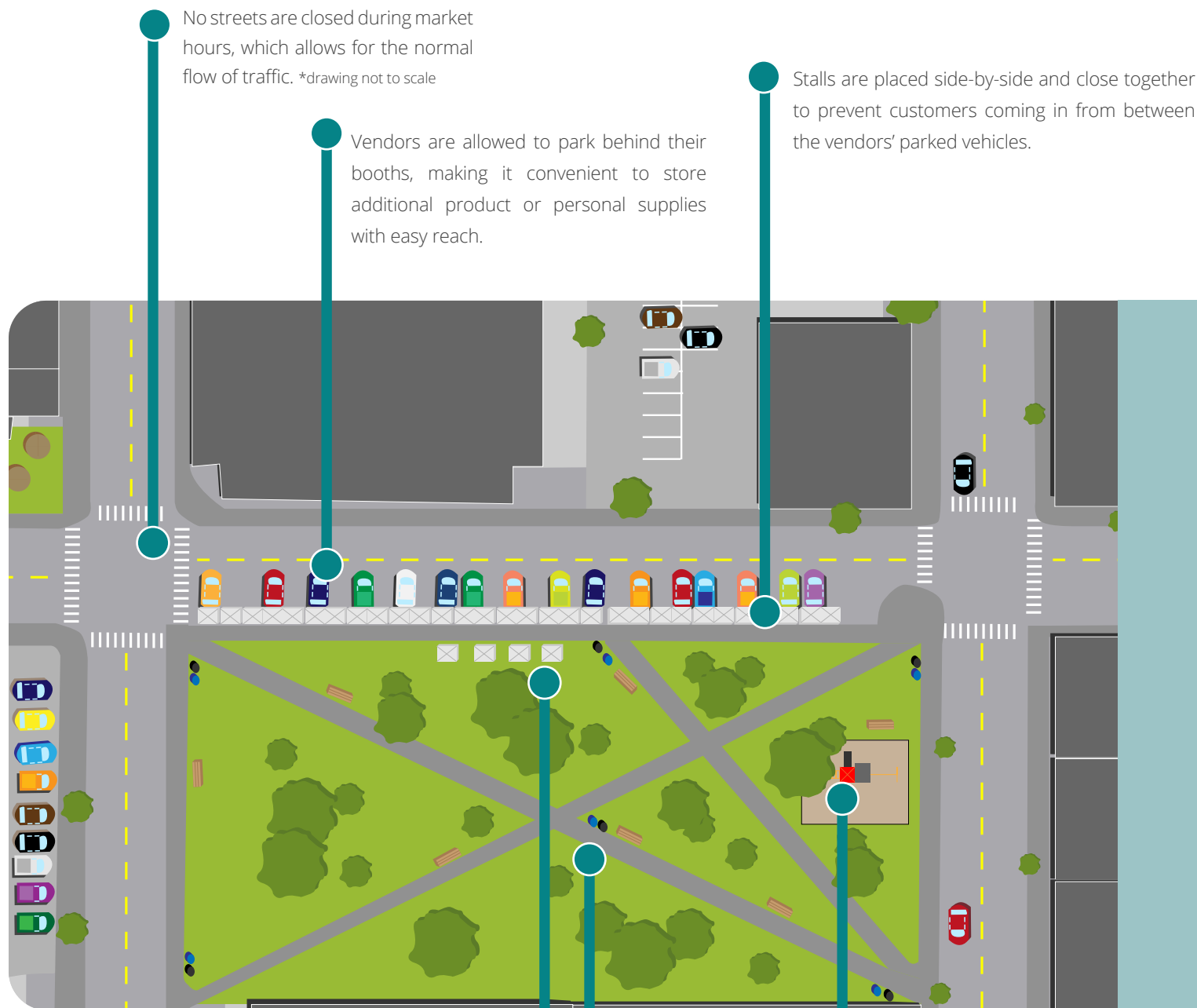


The center aisle between rows of vendors should be at least 10’ to 12’ wide to give customers plenty of room to shop at stands on either side of the aisle and allow for 4’ down the center for others to walk comfortably through.



Layout Example: PARKING LOT

Community Population: 7,000
Market Location: City-owned parking lot behind a grocery store
Description: The market has been in operation for forty years—with seven of those years taking place in this parking lot. Nearby businesses in the downtown district have appreciated the market being in this location and have seen a bump in business when the market is open.



Layout Example: AROUND A PARK

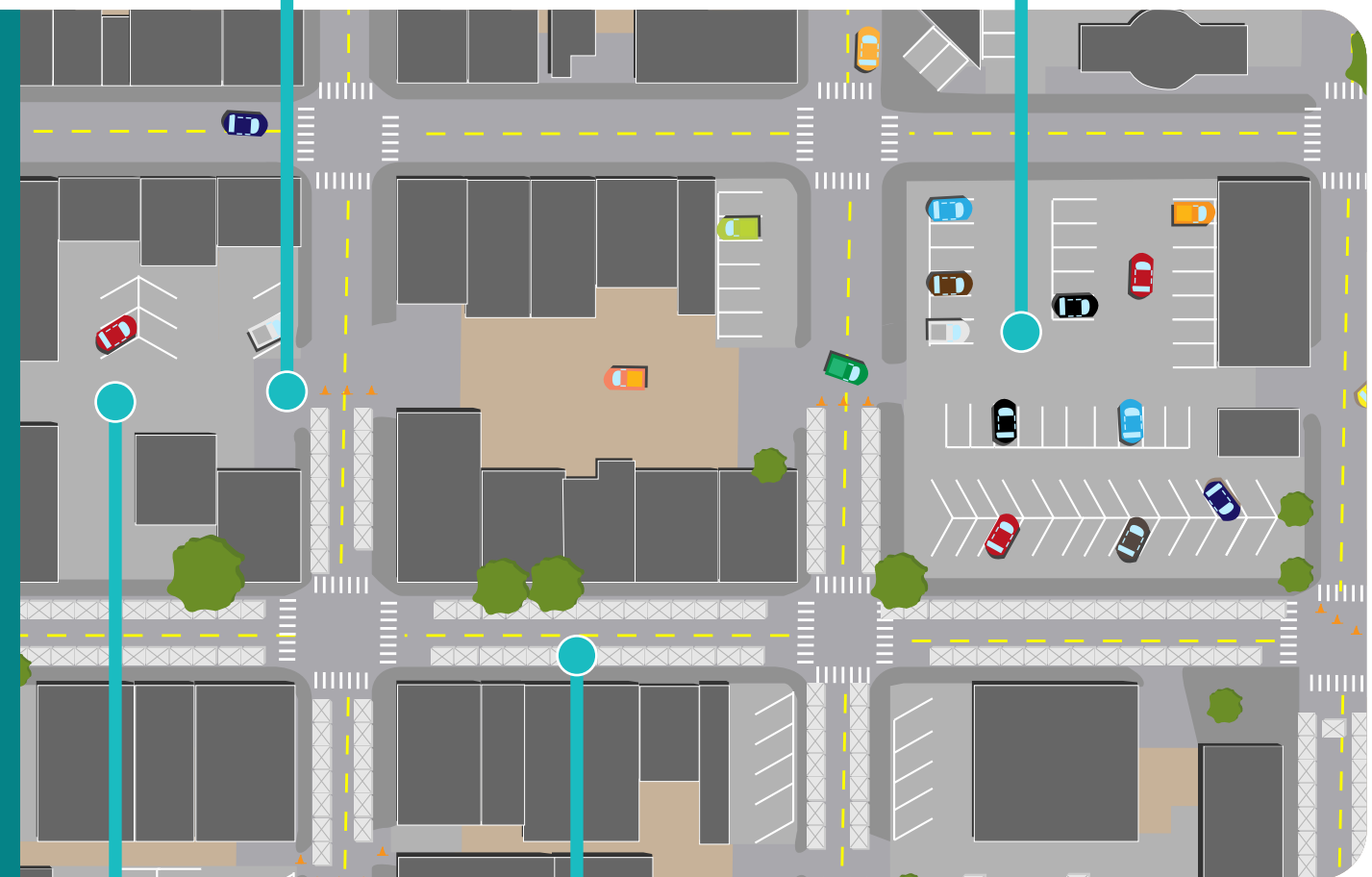
Community Population: 8,000

Market Location: North side of a downtown park and adjacent to a grocery store

Description: The park is large enough for multiple activities to occur simultaneously and offers additional amenities to market attendees—like a playground, benches, and trash/recycling.

Traffic cones are used to close the street to vehicle traffic during the market.

The market doesn't allow vendor vehicles to park on the street during the open hours of the market. Vendors must drop product off at their stalls during setup time, then park elsewhere—like a nearby parking lot.



Layout Example: DOWNTOWN STREET

Community Population: 50,000

Market Location: Downtown streets

Description: The market is located on four streets and spans three blocks downtown. This farmers market has been operating in some form for more than 100 years.



MARKET ADMINISTRATION

RECORDS, REPORTS & COMMUNICATION

1. RECORDS

Organized and consistently maintained records have several benefits:

Accuracy

Rather than relying on your own memory—or the memories of vendors and staff—good records will help you accurately recall agreements, obligations, and other important details.

Paper Trail

If a legal issue arises and your market needs to prove its actions, records will provide a paper trail and needed evidence—especially regarding contracts, insurance, leases, and rules/regulations.

Transitions

Volunteers and part-time staff may come and go each season. Board members may rotate every couple years. Records will help bring people up to speed on the market's past activities.

Decision Making

Records can help you and the market board make more strategic decisions. For example: Past visitor counts can inform special event scheduling.

WHAT RECORDS TO KEEP:

Important legal documents:

Incorporation documents, insurance policies, lease/ rental agreement, SNAP authorization paperwork, copies of annual tax returns

Market operation documents:

Rules and regulations, weather/emergency policies, safety procedures, sponsor/partner agreements, volunteer contact info

Staff and board member records:

Contact information, job descriptions, signed contracts/agreements

Vendor records and information:

Contact information, applications, signed contracts

Marketing and communication:

Marketing contacts, login credentials for social media/ e-newsletter service, email, marketing calendar/plan, past press releases

Past market data:

Special event details, attendance, expenses, press coverage, dated day-of records, attendance counts, how many vendors attended, who vended, weather conditions, sales data, coupon redemption, rule violations/no-shows, survey feedback or complaints

BEST PRACTICES FOR TRACKING RECORDS



ORGANIZATION

If your market has an office and other staff need access to files, consider a filing cabinet or market binder(s) divided with folders and tabs.



SHARING AND STORAGE

To store, backup, or easily share records, upload digital copies to Google Drive, DropBox, or another cloud service.



RECORDS

Remember to type up and save any market day records you took on pen and paper— vendors, weather, sales data, coupon redemption, etc.



REPLICATE

If you pull something from your files to have at the market or take to a meeting, make a copy so you always have the originals in storage.



SECURITY

If you keep records with confidential information (such as SSNs for employment), store paper records securely and encrypt electronic records.

WANT TO SEE ANNUAL REPORT EXAMPLES FROM OTHER MARKETS?

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE RESOURCES AT:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT



Ames Farmers Market Report

2. REPORTS

If your farmers market is a non-profit or operates under the umbrella of another entity (such as a chamber or city department), you will likely be asked to compile an annual report. Even if you're not obligated, creating an annual report is good practice—and can benefit your market in marketing, fundraising, and grant-writing.

The Ames Main Street Farmers Market is a great example of an annual report. In it, market manager Lojean Peterson:

- Highlights the season's awards, numbers, and news
- Lists all vendors and what they sold
- Lists the musicians who played throughout the season
- Thanks the season's sponsors and includes their logos
- Shares the market's goals for the future

You should present your annual report to vendors/board members at the annual meeting to recap the year and compare to previous years. It's a great idea to share your annual report on social media, post it to your website, and send it to any partners, sponsors, and newsletter subscribers. It will also come in handy when reaching out to potential sponsors and applying for grants.

3) COMMUNICATION

As market manager, your communication responsibilities are twofold: internal and external. Internal being communication with your market vendors, volunteers, partners, and committee. External being communication with customers and the general public. Whether communicating internally or externally, it's important to use a variety of communication channels to reach your audience.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media—Facebook especially—can be a valuable tool for reaching out and responding to a large portion of your market audience.

Internal: Facebook Groups

Facebook groups are pages that enable a group of people to interact around a common theme. Groups can be public or private.

Consider creating a private vendor group that you're part of so you can answer questions, gather feedback, and share important updates (weather, parking, rule reminders, changes, etc.). You may also want to create a private group for your board or committee.

Whether you're creating a group for your vendors or your board/committee, make sure that you're a member of a group and make yourself group administrator.



Jodie Huegerich, manager of College Hill Farmers Market in Cedar Falls, posts to social media 3-5x/week. This post is a great example of how social media isn't just for marketing. It can also be used to share important reminders—in this case, about where not to park.

External: Facebook Page + Events

A Facebook page for your market can help with not only marketing and promotion, but also communicating important updates about parking, or weather, and sharing news about upcoming events, new vendors, or what's for sale at the next market. A text post is easy to scroll past. Make it stand out by including an eye-catching image or graphic with text overlay. You can also create standalone or recurring Facebook events for the dates and times of your market.



“Something I've found to be effective is having two Facebook groups—one for the board and volunteers, another separate group for the vendors. I'm in both of them. So when the vendors have an issue and they are talking about something, I know what's going on and can share that with the board.”

Robin McClelland, Manager of North Iowa and Clear Lake Farmers Markets

EMAIL

Collecting email addresses is an incredibly important and direct way for you to reach your vendors, committee members, and market attendees.

Internal: Email Lists

Compile separate email lists for vendors, volunteers, committee/board members, and/or community partners and sponsors.

This way, you can email a specific group all at once to make an announcement, share volunteer or vendor recruitment needs, or give a friendly reminder about upcoming meetings or changes.

External: E-newsletters

Use an online e-newsletter service (such as Mail Chimp or Constant Contact) to design, write, and schedule weekly e-blasts to subscribers.

Each week, spotlight new and returning vendors, share market news and upcoming events, let customers know what will be for sale, what's in season at the next market, and give reminders about parking or market changes.

OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

While the Internet makes online communication convenient, don't discount “old fashioned” ways of getting the word out. Not everyone can or does check their email regularly. Not everyone is social media savvy. It's important to use several channels of communication, ranging from digital to more personal.

Internal: Call or Text

It's crucial for you to have the best phone number for contacting each of your vendors and board/committee members.

If you need to make an important announcement about weather or a last-minute change, pick up the

phone and make the calls yourself. For less-urgent information and reminders, a phone tree can help spread the word from vendor-to-vendor with each person responsible for calling another. You can also send text messages.

Be sure to talk to your vendors as some may have communication preferences.

Internal: Talk Face-to-Face

Especially when communicating a problem or change to the market (such as fees or rules), make sure you're reaching out to your vendors in-person. Certain topics may also need to be addressed in-person at meetings.

External: Printed Products

Posters, flyers, and brochures are still great ways to get market information in front of the public. Hang posters on community boards and speak with local businesses about putting out a stack of flyers or brochures.

External: Media Relations

Remember to reach out to local media (TV and radio stations, magazines, and newspapers). When communicating something in advance (first market of the season or a special event), send out a press release. If it's a last-minute announcement (weather cancellation or sudden change in parking availability due to road construction), reach out directly to local media for help getting the word out.

External: Website

Your website's home page is a great place to post need-to-know information. Post announcements to the home page and calendar section.

WONDERING HOW TO RAMP UP YOUR PROMOTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS?
CHECK OUT OUR SECTION ON “MARKETING YOUR MARKET” IN CHAPTER 5 ON PAGES 84 - 87.

SETTING THE RULES

VENDOR & MARKET REGULATIONS

EVERY MARKET NEEDS A SET OF GUIDELINES

“Your rules and guidelines will be your best friends,” says DaQuan Campbell, who manages the Waterloo Urban Farmers Market.

Rules help your vendors and customers know what’s expected and acceptable (and what isn’t) when it comes to selling, buying, and just being at your farmers market.

Rules and regulations vary from market to market and may be dictated by the market manager (you), the market board or committee, or the entity operating the market (such as a Chamber of Commerce or Parks and Recreation Department). Some rules may apply based on your location. For example, if your market takes place in a city park or parking lot, the city may require that the market follow certain rules. You may also need to follow county, state, or federal regulations.



AS A NEW MANAGER, YOU DON’T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH

When planning to launch a brand new night market in Dubuque, Andie Donnan and Danielle Stowell turned to a few nearby farmers markets and another night market for inspiration.

“One of the first things we did when planning for the night market was to come up with our rules. We knew we needed to have something. I referenced several other Iowa and Wisconsin markets’ handbooks, including Madison, Dubuque, Platteville, and the Cedar Rapids Market After Dark. I looked at their rules to get an idea of structure and what should be mentioned in market rules.”

Andie Donnan, Co-Manager of Dubuque’s Millwork Night Market

And when Julie Madden started managing the Akron Farmers Market, she borrowed a sample vendor contract from the Le Mars market manager. After making a few tweaks, she had vendors sign it—putting a set of rules into effect for the Akron market for the first time.

“The new contract implemented a change that required goods being sold to be homegrown by the vendor. Vendors who were selling someone else’s produce had to pay an extra \$5. We had a problem with a vendor reselling produce they’d purchased at the grocery store. Now that I have a contract, I’m going to tighten it up for next year so that everything has to be homegrown or homemade by the vendor.”

Julie Madden, Manager of the Akron Farmer



If you’re assuming management of an existing market, there may already be a set of rules in place. In most cases, it’s best to wait until you have a year of experience before making changes to those existing rules—unless there’s something unsafe or that needs urgent attention.

If you’re helping to create a brand new market, launch your market with the rules already in place. Aim to have your rules and guidelines established 3-6 months before your market start date. While you may be recruiting vendors before the rules are set, be sure to communicate the rules early.

“***It’s important to be as specific as possible about your rules. You might need to make them more specific over time. We had rules in place, but we would periodically have to look them over and revise them. For example, our rule that vendors had to grow the produce that they sold. That was one that we continued to pull up and examine to try it make it more clear and easier to enforce. Not being farmers and not having a full-time staff, it was hard for us to measure. Rules need to be clear for vendors to follow and for you to enforce. When setting, revising, or changing rules, it’s helpful to have vendor meetings at the front end of the season, even as early as January—especially if you’re establishing new rules.***
Cassidy Bell, Former Manager of the Iowa City Farmers Market (2010-2016)

RULE EXAMPLES

HERE ARE COMMON MARKET GUIDELINES:



VENDOR PRODUCER POLICY

Many farmers markets require the vendor that sells at the market be the producer who grew, produced, or processed the goods being sold at the market. To implement this policy, you must indicate it in your rules and regulations.



SHARED VENDOR BOOTH

A vendor may share their space with another vendor. Example: ABC Farm and XYZ go in on a market stall together. ABC Farm attends the market on Wednesday and XYZ Farm attends on Saturday.



CODE OF CONDUCT

Fraudulent, dishonest, and deceptive practices; inappropriate conduct and activities; and display or sale of obscene, illegal, or unsafe merchandise is prohibited, the determination of which is at the sole discretion of market staff.



TENT WEIGHTS

All tents must be weighted (XX lbs minimum), no drilling or staking is permitted into pavement.



PETS

A pet policy is a common point of contention for vendors, managers, and attendees. If a market has such a policy and does not post “no pets allowed,” the market is held responsible if an incident does occur and the rule was not enforced.



PROOF OF INSURANCE

A typical amount of at least \$500,000 or \$1,000,000 in liability coverage is suggested.



SUBLEASING

Vendors are not permitted to rent their space to anyone or allow additional vendors to sell goods in their space.



CRAFTER POLICY

A transformative act (to undergo a change in form, appearance, or character) must be performed which makes the product a creation of one’s own. No reselling of goods that have not been transformed.



DAMAGE OR LOSS OF PRODUCT

The market is not held responsible for damage or loss of use that the lease/vendor may incur because of acts of God, or any other cause not under the market’s control.



GENERATORS

Vendors are permitted to use generators that do not exceed XX decibels when the market is in operation. Generators must be quiet and must not emit offensive fumes.



NO SMOKING

Iowa’s Smokefree Air Act affects most markets being held in a public space. No smoking or use of tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or e-cigarettes is permitted by attendees or vendors.



NO SPACE HEATERS

Space heaters (electric and propane) are prohibited at the farmers market.



DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

If a vendor(s) enter the market under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they will forfeit the stall for a minimum of one day, and a maximum of the remainder of the market season.



EXTENSION CORDS

Cords or anything in the walkway of market attendees must be taped when the cords cross walkways.



NO HAWKING

Prohibits the calling of attention to products in a loud, repetitive public manner and selling products in an aggressive manner.



COMPLIANCE

Vendors must comply with all city or county ordinances/regulations and federal laws.



LICENSES AND PERMITS

All permits necessary to sell must be on display at all times. It is the responsibility of the vendor to obtain and provide to the market manager copies of all licenses and permits required for the sale of the vendor’s products at the market.



ON-SITE SALES

Family members or employees paid hourly, on commission, or by salary may sell a vendor’s products at the market. Vendors are responsible for making sure all persons who work their booth are aware of the market rules and regulations.



PLASTIC BAG BAN

This ban will be for single use grocery bags with handles and similar plastic bags used at the end of a typical transaction. Vendors are not allowed to recycle and use these bags for distribution.



TRASH

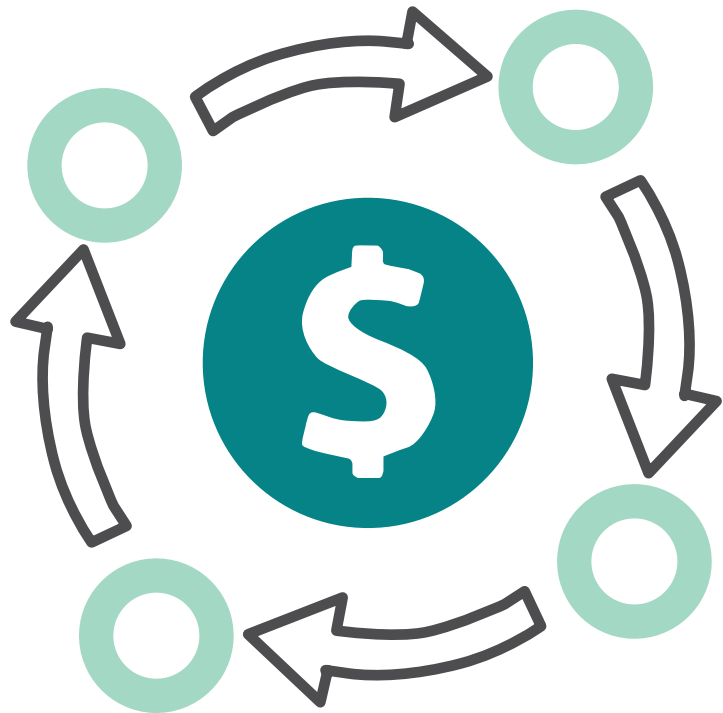
Vendors are responsible for removing all waste, rubbish, recyclables, or trash that they generate during the course of selling at the market.

WANT TO SEE SAMPLE RULES FROM REAL FARMERS MARKETS? CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE RESOURCES AT [NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT](https://northeastiowarcd.org/iowa-farmers-market-toolkit)

YOUR FIRST STEP IS TO SET THE RULES BUT HOW DO YOU ENFORCE THEM? CHECK OUT CHAPTER 4’S SECTION ON “COMMUNICATING AND ENFORCING THE RULES” ON PAGES 56 - 57.

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR YOUR MARKET

MONEY MAKES THE MARKET GO ROUND



“DO I NEED A CENTRALIZED CREDIT CARD SYSTEM?”

A centralized credit card system is a shared credit card terminal that allows all market attendees to access market currency while at the market. The system is typically implemented with the plan to distribute food assistance program dollars at the market and allows all vendors to participate while not having to purchase and manage their own credit card terminal. Types of market currency are dependent on the programs the market participates in (e.g., SNAP) but always include some form of “market bucks” with wooden nickels being commonly used as market currency.

“WHAT KIND OF RECORDS SHOULD I KEEP?”

Markets need to be keeping track of the most basic level incomes and expenses. Typically, income at a market will include vendor stall fees, donations, or sponsors. Expenses will vary depending on where your market is located (rent), what programs you run, events, marketing, and more. Tracking each can be done as simply as using a pen and paper or as complex as using a software program on a computer.

“WHAT ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE SHOULD I USE?”

Accounting software comes in all varieties, prices, and functionality. The most commonly used software is Quickbooks, as it offers a wide range of functions to assist with commonly required tasks—all at a reasonable price. With all the accounting software options available, it is best to research the options and find the one that best fits your budget, use, and skill or comfort level.

“SHOULD MY MARKET HAVE A BANK ACCOUNT?”

If your farmers market is operating under the umbrella of another entity (such as a Chamber of Commerce or City Parks and Recreation Department), that entity may also act as a the fiscal agent for your market. Your income and expenses would be routed through that entity’s bank account, or one it has created for you.

If your market is an LLC, creating a separate bank account for your farmers market is a great way to keep funds separate from any other accounts you may have (personal/business). When opening a bank account, the bank will need:

- A copy of your LLC’s articles of organization, certificate of formation, or an equivalent document, depending on the state in which you registered your LLC
- Your LLC’s federal taxpayer identification number (EIN or Employer Identification Number)
- Your LLC operating agreement or some other document which sets out who is authorized to sign on behalf of your LLC

HOW TO CREATE A BUDGET FOR YOUR FARMERS MARKET

1 Start with Last Year’s Numbers

When creating your market budget for the upcoming year, it is recommended to look at last year’s income and expenses to assist with planning the following year. If you do not have this data from previous years, the example Income Accounts and Expense Accounts tables below highlight the most common line items.

2 Add up Projected Expenses

List the current year’s projected costs related to staff wages, legal and professional services, supplies, rent, advertising and marketing, live music, special events, membership dues, insurance, other miscellaneous costs, and (potentially) SNAP. Miscellaneous costs may include: Utilities, Permits, Office Overhead, Portable Restrooms, Central Credit Card Terminal, Transaction Fees, Monthly Wi-Fi, etc. Remember to plan and save for future long-range projects, too.

Use the actual expense rates when possible, as this will keep your budget more accurate in the long term. Once you think you have a complete list of expenses, it’s always good practice to plan on some contingencies (things you don’t expect that cost money). Surprise costs usually come up—it’s always nice to have money set aside for those.

3 Estimated Expected Income

Now that you know the cost to operate the market in the coming year, list the current year’s expected income from stall fees, membership dues, donations, promotions, sponsorships, and (potentially) SNAP.

4 Compare the Numbers

Take a look at expenses versus income. **For a market to be sustainable in the long term, a market will need a positive balance (Income - Expenses).** If your projected expenses are more than your expected income, you will need to either get creative with finding additional dollars or you will need to trim your budget. As a general rule, it is easier to find additional dollars for programs or events than for your general operating expenses (rent, fees, insurance, personnel).

EXAMPLE CHART OF EXPENSES

EXPENSE ACCOUNTS	Expense Amount	Percentage of Expense
Employees or Contractors	\$3,600	38%
Legal & Professional Services	\$300	3%
Supplies	\$300	3%
Rent	\$1,000	10%
Advertising/Marketing	\$3,500	36%
Market Music & Events	\$500	5%
Membership Dues	\$20	<1%
Insurance	\$300	3%
Miscellaneous	\$100	1%
Total Income	\$9,620	96%

*If you accept SNAP another row would be included

EXAMPLE CHART OF INCOMES

INCOME ACCOUNTS	Income Amount	Percentage of Income
Vendor Booth Fees	\$7,000	80%
Sponsorship Fees	\$1,000	10%
Grants & Donations	\$5,000	10%
Other Income	\$5,000	<1%
Total Income	\$10,000	100%

*If you accept SNAP another row would be included



SEVERE WEATHER & EMERGENCIES

PLANNING FOR THE SAFETY OF YOUR VENDORS

The safety of the farmers market vendors, market manager, and customers must be the highest priority of the market. Every market should include a Weather and Emergencies policy in their rules and regulations and designate who makes the decision in the case of inclement weather or an emergency (typically the market manager). You also need a plan for how you'll

notify both vendors and the general public. As market manager, you may need to occasionally cancel or a close a market due to severe storms, extreme heat or cold, or an imminent weather emergency like flooding. But in order to ensure the success of your farmers market, it's important to enforce a "rain or shine" policy—meaning the market will remain open in the rain and will not close except for inclement weather.

"RAIN OR SHINE"

If the market gets a reputation for closing due to rain customers will check the weather instead of making the market part of their routine. Mark Wall, Producer on the Farmers Market Channel, stresses the importance of keeping your market open rain or shine:



Rain or predicted rain is no reason not to show up at the market. It is a decreasing spiral downward. If there are fewer farmers in the rain, then fewer customers. If there are fewer customers, then fewer farmers.

Here's my policy: If a vendor signs out of the market a week in advance—which is allowed, and for which there is a form and clipboard—then that absence is permitted. Otherwise,

all vendors must show up on a rainy or predicted rainy day. If a vendor does not, that vendor pays \$1 for every vendor that DOES show up on that day. It is \$1 for each farmer or maker. It is paid to the market, and the market distributes it to the farmers who were present. Last time it was invoked it was \$86. If your market is smaller, make it \$2 per vendor.

This policy does three things: One, it rewards the farmers and makers who are keeping the market open. Two, it punishes those that are afraid of the rain. And three, it is a memorable penalty that everyone talks about.

Since the market isn't open all day, rain often comes when we are not open—earlier or later. AND most important, our sales are about 85% of normal on rainy days.

WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR WEATHER & EMERGENCY POLICY



RAIN OR SHINE POLICY

The market is a rain or shine event and will not close for rain. This lets market attendees know that the market will be open unless severe weather is present.



EXTREME HEAT

If the heat index is greater than 103° F (putting vendors and attendees at risk of heat-related illness) the market will be canceled.



DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The market manager has the final authority to cancel a market and will take all necessary actions and precautions to ensure the regular and safe operation of the market.



RAIN DATES

If you're planning a special event, program, or night/holiday market for your farmers market, consider a backup plan or rain date/location in the event of a weather-related cancellation.



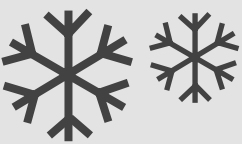
EMERGENCY READY

In case of a full-scale emergency or active shooter situation, all markets should have an emergency action plan and share it with vendors ahead of time.



SEVERE WEATHER

The market will be canceled in the event of severe weather: lightning visible or within a 10-mile radius; wind speeds over 40 mph; and large hail, tornado, or flood warnings.



EXTREME COLD

The market will be canceled if a certain wind chill temp is expected or in the event of inclement winter weather such as a blizzard or ice storm.



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The market manager will notify vendors via email, text message, and/or phone call. Community members will be notified via e-blast, social media, and market website.



CPR + FIRST AID

It's encouraged that market managers be CPR trained. Also, make sure staff, vendors, and volunteers know where to find first-aid kits and what to do in case of an emergency.



AUDIBLE SYSTEM

An audible system can be used at larger markets to assist with the implementation of an Emergency Action Plan.

CHAPTER 4

Preparing for the Market Season

Is your farmers market covered with the proper insurance? How do you enforce the rules and handle conflict between vendors? What are WIC, SNAP, and DUFEB and are you set up to accept them? How can you ensure market customers are satisfied? Where do you even get started when planning a special event?

UNDERSTANDING LIABILITY INSURANCE

IS YOUR FARMERS MARKET COVERED?

Insurance is a means of protection from financial loss. It is a form of risk management, primarily used to hedge against the risk of a contingent or uncertain loss. An entity which provides insurance is known as an insurer, insurance company, insurance carrier, or underwriter.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TYPES OF INSURANCE?

General Liability

Covers claims brought against the farmer that are not related to product that the farmer sells. Example: A shopper tripped over one of the bungee cords that ties down a vendor's tent and needed to get stitches. They sue for personal injury.

Product Liability

Covers claims related to product that the farmer sells which typically includes fruits, vegetables, eggs, baked goods, etc. Example: A consumer buys a dozen eggs, and later claims that those eggs made them sick. They sue for food poisoning or personal injury.

WHAT KIND OF INSURANCE DOES MY FARMERS MARKETS NEED?

All farmers markets should hold a General Liability Insurance Policy.

Many markets are required to have Liability Insurance and many property owners will require this of a farmers market if you do not own the property.

Are you a contracted employee?

If your position as manager is contracted employment,

you will need to purchase your own Contractor Insurance Policy. It is illegal for the market to directly pay for this policy.

For added assurance, also have a "Hold Harmless" clause.

Establish a "Hold Harmless" clause in the market policies in which vendors sign an agreement that they will not hold the market liable for any loss, damages, liability, claims, suits, costs, and/or expenses they incur related to their involvement in the market.

Is your farmers market a non-profit?

If so, your non-profit farmers market should also hold a Board and Officers Policy.

WHERE SHOULD I LOOK FOR INSURANCE?

1. Reach out to the knowledgeable groups, organizations, or other farmers markets in your area. Ask about their policies and providers.
2. Talk to your home or vehicle insurance provider, and find out about their policies for insuring farmers markets.
3. Contact a national or state company that specializes in farmers market insurance, such as: Iowa Farm Bureau or Campbell Risk Management.

WANT TO SEE AN EXAMPLE OF A "HOLD HARMLESS" CLAUSE?
CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE RESOURCES AT:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT

COMMUNICATING & ENFORCING RULES

YOU’VE SET THE RULES... HOW DO YOU ENSURE VENDORS AND VISITORS KNOW AND FOLLOW THEM?

As market manager, it’s your responsibility to not only communicate, but also enforce the market’s rules and regulations. There are many ways you can do this, and it’s a good idea to do it in as many ways as possible—from writing the rules to putting them on display to discussing them in-person.

COMMUNICATING THE RULES

Signed Contracts/Agreements

Give each vendor a copy of the clearly-stated rules and regulations. Have vendors sign an agreement stating that they read, understand, and accept the rules.

Market Rules Signage

Create signs that are easy to read and understand, then place them strategically throughout your market so that visitors are informed and reminded of the rules.

In-Person Conversations

If you’re adapting a set of rules for the first time or making changes to existing rules, touch base in-person with your vendors—at a meeting or one-on-one—to make sure they fully understand and accept them.

Other Visual Demonstrations

“We often have problems with customers trying to buy from vendors earlier than the stated market time. We started putting t-posts into buckets and use string or ribbon to close off the market. This visually and obviously communicates to the public that they’re not allowed to purchase from the vendor yet.” **Nikki Decker, Le Mars Farmers Market**



It’s best if a market has clear policies. It’s much easier for a market manager to point to something so they don’t look like they’re picking sides, and so that everyone looks like they’re being treated equitably.
Shelly Campo, University of Iowa, Professor of Communications



ENFORCING THE RULES

Expectations for “Policing”

Vendors may have a tendency to try to police each other. Encourage vendors to come to you or other market staff with complaints that you can look into and follow up on.

Consistency

Be consistent with rule enforcement from vendor to vendor and customer to customer. The same rules apply whether they’re a new or long-time seller, whether the customer is your friend or a stranger.

Protection from Liability

When you have rules, you must enforce them. If an accident occurs related to an unenforced rule, the market may be liable.

Examples:

Market A has a “No Dog” policy but does not enforce it. Someone brings a dog to the market, but the broken rule goes unaddressed. Another person trips over the dog and is injured. The market and the pet owner can both be held liable for the accident.

Market B does not have a “No Dog” policy. Someone brings a dog to the market. Another person trips over the dog and is injured. The pet owner can be held liable for the accident.

Market C has a “No Dog” policy. Someone brings a dog to the market. Staff addresses the issue. The pet owner must leave, but can return without their dog—enforcing the rules and protecting the market.



EXAMPLE RULES POLICY:

1. All rules of the market are enforced by the Market Coordinator or his/her designee, who has ultimate on-site authority. Complaints or problems should be directed to the Market Coordinator in a timely manner.
2. If a vendor does not abide by the rules of the market or comply with federal, state, and local regulations applicable to market participation, the Market Coordinator or designee may take any action deemed appropriate, including revoking the vendor from selling at the market for future market days.
3. Customer complaints will be forwarded to vendors and kept on file. Complaints may result in disciplinary action, including revocation of authorization to participate in the market.
4. The market reserves the right to visit and inspect the farm or business of any vendor and to request any documents verifying business or employee status.
5. Vendors must remain current with all financial obligations. Vendors who become delinquent in paying financial obligations to the market shall immediately have their market privileges suspended until full payment is made. No refunds of vendor fees will be made. Prior to any suspension, the market will provide the vendor with notice of the delinquency, and allow at least seven (7) calendar days for the vendor to pay the delinquent amount.
6. The host organization or designee reserves the right to make an exception to these market rules and guidelines at its discretion.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

15 CONFLICT RESOLUTION TIPS:

1. Keep Conflict Out of Sight

Problems will arise, but take measures to prevent conflict from impacting customer experience. Whether it's an issue with a vendor or a customer, take it aside for privacy and to avoid creating an uncomfortable situation for customers.

2. Listen Closely

The other person's opinion is important because it's the source of the conflict. If something is important to them, recognize this. Recognition doesn't equal agreement. It just shows that you respect and value their opinion, even if it's different than your's.

3. Encourage Participation

Allow everyone to participate who wants to. When people participate, they are more interested and invested in finding a resolution and compromise.

4. Talk About Feelings

Let the other person blow off steam. But don't react to emotional outbursts. Instead of yelling back, try to apologize. It doesn't take that much effort to say sorry—and it can help calm their emotions.

5. Rephrase What You're Hearing

Be an active listener. Rephrase what they say. For example say: "Let me see if I'm understanding you. You're saying that _____" and then ask: "Do I have that right?"

6. Speak About Yourself

Don't focus on the other person. For example: Instead of saying "You make me mad when you _____" try saying "I feel angry when _____ happens."

Vendor vs. vendor. Vendor vs. customer. Vendor vs. you. Customer vs. you. Maybe even customer vs. customer. The farmers market isn't immune to conflict. As market manager, it's your responsibility to ensure things run as smoothly as possible—for vendors, for customers, and for the market as a whole. Patience, positivity, and some proactive preparation goes a long way.

7. Take your time...

Avoid knee jerk reactions and don't jump to quick judgments. Continue to ask questions and gather information so that you can work to find a solution for everyone. Don't tell the other person to solve their own problems.

8. ...But Solve Problems Quickly

Don't allow problems to fester, which can damage relationships and the market in the long term. Act and resolve issues as they arise. Don't push them off, avoid, or ignore them. Problem solving is a process.

9. Find a Way to Make it Easy

Try to find a way for the other person to accept your decision without them looking weak. Don't call it a way for them to "save face," as that could lead to more conflict. Help them—don't embarrass them.

10. Get Help From Your Board

If you have a board, allow them to establish a policy for conflict resolution at the market—the weight of conflict doesn't need to fall entirely on you. Create a policy that allows the manager to handle day-to-day issues, then pass larger conflicts on to the board to be addressed. This removes you from difficult situations and makes you neutral.

11. Put it in Writing

As part of the conflict resolution policy, allow vendors to send written complaints to the board about issues they don't want to bring up to the manager.

12. Get it in Writing

Give written warning. Make written records of conflicts, violations, and resolutions to create a paper trail. Enforce appropriate suspensions and fines.

13. Be Consistent

Regardless of your relationship with a vendor, be consistent in enforcing the rules and in how you handle conflicts, infractions, and other issues.

14. Consider Third Party Mediation

Sometimes, a conflict simply can't be solved by you, or even by involving the board. In these situations, document as much as you can in writing, then reach out to a third party service such as the Iowa Mediation Service. Founded in 1985, the Iowa Mediation Service is a non-profit organization dedicated to solutions for farmers, families, and anyone who may find themselves in need of a dispute resolution expert.

15. Get Additional Training

Conflict resolution is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and improved. Check with local community colleges and universities or other market managers for possible trainings in your area.



The DOs and DON'Ts of Problem-Solving (from Managers Who Have Been There)

DO MAKE SURE YOU'RE THE POINT-PERSON FOR PROBLEMS

As market manager, it's your responsibility to oversee conflict resolution in a time-sensitive and professional manner.

"Sometimes vendors think they need to tell each other what they are supposed to do or what they're doing wrong. That 'policing' only causes problems. We ask that if our vendors have an issue with another vendor, they talk to the market staff about it. Then we'll check it out, validate the issue, and if needed, discuss it with the other vendor." **Alice Linhart, Manager of Swisher Farmers Market**

DO BE CONSISTENT AND FIRM IN HOW YOU ADDRESS CONFLICT

Conflict arises because people care. Some issues and vendors will be more emotional than others, but it's important for you to commit yourself to consistency in how you approach problems and treat vendors.

"Conflict is inevitable. From the farmer standpoint, it's their livelihood. They have so much invested into these farmers markets and their products and crops. So there's a lot at stake. The thing that I've found that can be your best tool, is to just be consistent. Whatever you and the vendor discussed in the beginning regarding rules and policies, do that throughout so vendors aren't surprised by your actions or the way you feel about certain situations. It will help being consistent and being firm. You have to be firm." **DaQuan Campbell, Manager of Waterloo Urban Farmers Market**

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF "IN-PERSON"

Sometimes you need to just sit down and talk face-to-face with vendors to solve problems. You shouldn't rely or hide behind technology like phones and email, which can complicate or confuse matters. An in-person conversation can bring on a faster, more personal solution.

"Managing conflicts with vendors can be difficult. It gets better with experience, but it takes communication. It's challenging to figure out how everyone communicates, what works best, who follows the rules and who doesn't, and how we deal with that. With one vendor in particular, we had a communication breakdown. So we took a really serious, formal approach. We sat down at their place of business, hashed it all out, and it turned out, it was over stupid stuff like having the wrong email addresses or not having the right phone number. It was a challenge, but we worked through that. Conflict resolution is a constant thing." **Andie Donnan, Co-manager of Dubuque's Millwork Night Market**

CONFLICT: YOU CAN'T SHY AWAY FROM IT

ONE MARKET MANAGER'S STRATEGY FOR RESOLVING FARMERS MARKET CONFLICTS

Andrea Vaage, manager of LSI Global Greens Farmers Market in Des Moines, faced increased conflict during a year of great market growth and success. Her straightforward approach to handling problems ensures that feedback is heard, valued, considered, and solved.

"When it comes to conflict resolution, it's about taking the time to sit down and talk—not just with one person, but the whole party involved," says Andrea. "You can't shy away from it. You have to address it as soon as you can."

But there's a difference between addressing an issue right away and making changes right away.

"It's important to not be reactive," Andrea explains. "You may hear about an issue from one person, then find out two other sides of the story. In that first conversation about the problem, I don't make any promises. I give myself time to get the full story."

Andrea focuses on being an active listener. "What I do is repeat back in a couple different ways what I think the person was trying to say to me to make sure I understand their issue," she says. "This is especially important if we're also using an interpreter." Next, Andrea sets expectations for the conflict resolution process. "I let them know I can't do what they're asking of me right away, but that it will be addressed

in our meeting at the end of the season and that we'll hopefully determine a solution," she says. "Most people are understanding of not being able to make a huge change in the middle of the season. But they feel good knowing that you're hearing them out, writing down ideas, and setting a date to invite them back to see if we can change anything."

Andrea keeps a running list of all the issues brought up, plus proposed solutions. Then at the end of the season, she holds a debrief meeting with all vendors to talk about the issues, share potential solutions, and go over the market's process for making any changes.

"I'll be glad I didn't address a specific issue during the year because I might have addressed it in the wrong way because I probably didn't have the full story. But with time and talking to others, I can put together a better picture of what I think is happening—and discuss it with the larger group."

After sticking with this strategy through a full year of growing pains, Andrea received great feedback from vendors who feel valued. "I had some people who didn't understand certain rules or programs. After the season was over, they came to my office to thank me for listening. They said that they understood why I couldn't make changes before the end of the year, but told me they felt better to have the market staff thinking about them and their issue."

3 SIMPLE STEPS:

1. LISTEN AND REPEAT IT BACK

Use phrases like "This is what I think that you're telling me..." and asking "Is that correct?"

2. SET EXPECTATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

"I can't do what you're asking of me right now, but we will address it at our end-of-season meeting."

3. FOLLOW THROUGH

If you say you're going to address the problem at a meeting, make sure you do.

FOOD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

ACCEPTING FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Food assistance programs can be a great way to make your market a space for all people in the community to access fresh produce, and it can provide an economic boost to your vendors. The world of food assistance can seem daunting and complicated, but there are several resources across the state that can help implement these programs at your market. There are also strategies to increase the use of these benefits at your market. This section will lay out the basics of the programs, how to get started, and how to expand their use once your market is approved to accept them.

Before we start, it's important to address two things:

1. THERE ARE TWO MAIN FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

FMNP: FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAMS

- Run by the Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS)
- Includes the Women, Infant, and Child Program (WIC FMNP) and the Senior FMNP
- Benefits come in the form of paper checks, which are referred to interchangeably as checks, vouchers, and/or coupons

SNAP: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- Run by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Benefits are expended through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards
- This program was formerly called food stamps

2. THIS IS AN ALL-MARKET ACTIVITY

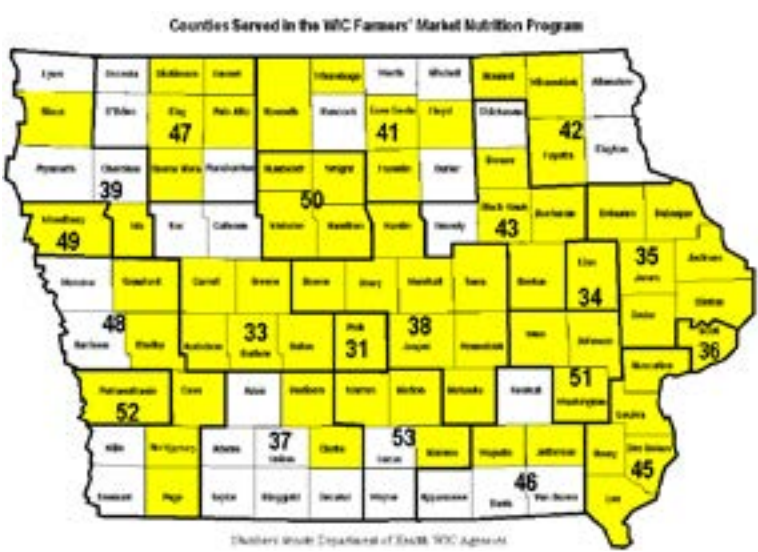
To fully implement these programs, it takes involvement from the vendors and the manager. Expect to have to take the lead on reminding vendors to complete applications, field questions from customers and vendors, and coordinate the implementation of the program



MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAMS

UNDERSTANDING WIC AND SENIOR FMNP

WIC provides supplemental food, health care referrals, and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and infants and children up to 5 years of age, who are found to be at nutritional risk. WIC FMNP is distributed at local WIC agencies from June 1st to August 31st and currently serves 67 out of Iowa's 99 counties.



The Senior FMNP provides low-income seniors with vouchers that can be exchanged for eligible foods, like fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs, at farmers markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs. Senior FMNP benefits are distributed by Area Agencies on Aging from June 1st to August 31 on a first-come-first-served basis. Even though participants can only get these checks until August 31st, they can spend them at the market until October 31st.

HOW DO PARTICIPANTS USE FMNP CHECKS?

After receiving the checks, participants will visit the market anytime between June 1st and October 31st to use their checks. Each check is worth \$3 and can be spent on fresh, local, unprepared fruits and vegetables at vendor stalls that display their "Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition Program Checks Accepted Here" sign.

★ No change will be given for FMNP checks.



“We wanted to be a registered market because we wanted to participate in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Paul Ovrum [of IDALS] and Iowa State helped us through that process. There were several people, myself included, who were produce vendors and wanted to be able to accept the FMNP checks.”
Nikki Decker, Manager of Le Mars Farmers Market

HOW DO VENDORS ACCEPT FMNP CHECKS?

- Vendors must:
- Clearly display their “Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition Program Checks Accepted Here” sign
 - Make sure checks are not past their expiration date
 - Make sure that all items purchased are eligible (i.e. unprepared, fresh fruits and vegetables)
 - Make sure the customer signs the check before handing it over to the vendor
 - Stamp the check with their unique stamp provided by IDALS
 - Turn in the checks to get reimbursed by IDALS. (Checks must be submitted on or before 15 days after the expiration date printed on the check.)

★ Remind vendors to reapply to receive FMNP checks each year. Certification expires annually.

HOW DOES A MARKET BEGIN ACCEPTING FMNP?

- The market manager must complete an IDALS FMNP Farmers Market Assurance Statement and the market must meet the following requirements:
- Operate a minimum of two consecutive hours each week for a majority of weeks of the season, Jun 1 - Oct 31
- Have a minimum of 3 eligible certified vendors indicating intent to participate in the farmers market for the majority of weeks of the season.
 - Post the market hours and days of operation

WHAT DO MARKET VENDORS NEED TO DO?

- If the market has been authorized by IDALS, farmers market vendors can accept FMNP vouchers once they meet the following requirements:
- Reside and grow eligible foods within Iowa or a county adjacent to Iowa’s border
 - Be 18 years or older and submit a completed and signed agreement to IDALS
 - Participate in an IDALS FMNP training on rules and procedures
 - Participate in the majority of weeks at an authorized farmers market

★ For the most up-to-date information, interested farmers market vendors should contact the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

UNDERSTANDING SNAP

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program administered by the USDA Office of Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and managed by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS). SNAP benefits can be used to purchase farm fresh foods for the household to eat, such as: breads and cereals; fruits and vegetables; meats, fish, and poultry; and dairy products. Seeds and plants that produce food can also be purchased.



A tub of blue EBT tokens and yellow credit/debt tokens at the Dubuque Farmers Market information booth.

WHAT’S A POS AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Markets may opt to manage a centralized Point of Sale (POS) system for the entire market. This allows customers to use their credit, debit, or EBT card and receive a “market bucks,” which they can use to purchase items from market vendors. The most common market buck is a wooden token with the market logo on it.

Markets should make a distinction between tokens used for credit/debit and those used for EBT—usually this is done by making the design on the token a different color. Credit/debit are often in \$5 tokens, and customers can receive change from the vendors. EBT/SNAP are often \$1 tokens, because customers cannot receive change for EBT funds.

TIME & MONEY INVESTMENT FOR MARKETS

To establish a centralized POS station at your market, first consider if your market has capacity to invest the time and money needed to purchase a POS system and tokens, apply to become a SNAP-authorized retailer, train market personnel, manage market-day transactions and an accounting system, and reimburse vendors on a weekly/monthly basis.

THINK A POS IS RIGHT FOR YOUR MARKET?

There are many resources available through the USDA FNS, Farmers Market Coalition, and Center for Agriculture and Food Systems.

WE’VE POSTED LINKS TO THESE RESOURCES AT: [NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT](https://northeastiowarcd.org/iowa-farmers-market-toolkit)

IF MY MARKET DOESN’T HAVE A CENTRALIZED POS, CAN VENDORS ACCEPT SNAP BENEFITS ON THEIR OWN?

Yes, even if your farmers market doesn’t have a centralized SNAP system, your vendors that qualify as direct marketing farmers” can become authorized SNAP retailers. Individual market vendors can apply to be SNAP retailers through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. As such, they maintain their own POS and receive the consumer’s benefits directly.

*** If you have a vendor who wants to become a SNAP retailer, have them contact the SNAP Coordinator with the Iowa Wireless EBT Project at the Iowa Department of Human Services.**

MAKING GOOD, HEALTHY FOOD AFFORDABLE FOR EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY

Your market may not accept SNAP benefits, but that doesn’t mean your vendors can’t.

Donna Warhover, farmers market vendor and owner of Morning Glory Farm, went through the process to ensure she could accept SNAP benefits at any market.

“It’s part of Morning Glory’s mission to make sure that good, healthy food is affordable for everyone in our community,” says Donna. “We attended four markets, two of which weren’t SNAP retailers. We wanted to be able to take SNAP, so we contacted the Iowa DHS SNAP coordinator directly to make it happen. She was great. We talked numerous times on the phone and she even drove to our farm to do a training. I recommend that other vendors get set up during the off-season before markets begin. The process is simple and so worth it.”



DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS

WHAT IS THE DUFB PROGRAM?

In Iowa, **Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB)** is a program managed by the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative that aims to improve access and affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables. For every dollar that a SNAP recipient spends on fresh fruits and vegetables, that customer receives a dollar-to-dollar match to spend on more fruits and vegetables. This match is capped at \$10 per day. It's like FREE money that can be spent at farmers markets and grocery stores in Iowa.

Iowa Healthiest State Initiative began a Double Up Food Bucks pilot with 6 markets in 2016. Since then, they have grown to 14 markets in 2019, as well as partnerships with Oneota Food Co-op, New Pioneer Food Co-op, Fareway, and Hy-Vee.

"If the market has a centralized information booth with an EBT machine that accept transactions and hand out the paper Double Up Food Bucks, it creates a Win-Win-Win scenario for the market, vendors, and SNAP recipients!" says Aryn McLaren, the Double Up Food Bucks Coordinator for Iowa's Healthiest State Initiative.

All incentive costs associated with the DUFB currency are reimbursed by the Healthiest State Initiative, which helps keep costs to individual markets low. However, markets should consider seeking funds to build awareness through creative marketing (turn the page for ideas and inspiration).



Above: Double Up Food Bucks paper coupons given to “double up” the amount of EBT dollars SNAP recipients spend at the market.

HOW DOES DUFB WORK?

A customer goes to a participating farmers market, then visits the centralized card reading station and tells the market representative how much they would like to charge to their EBT card. For example, let's say the customer wants to charge \$10

The market staff charges the EBT card \$10, and gives the customer \$10 worth of EBT tokens (usually wooden coins), plus an additional \$10 worth of paper Double Up Food Bucks coupons. The customer can then use the \$20 worth of wooden EBT tokens and paper DUFB coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. It's also possible that a customer receives DUFB coupons at a participating grocery store and then spends those at the farmers market.

*** Credit card systems work this same way (customers tell the centralized card reading station how much they would like to charge, then receive that amount in tokens). The difference is that credit card tokens can receive actual cash in change. EBT tokens must be spent in full and cannot receive cash change. EBT and Credit/Debit tokens are usually a different color.**



Left: At the Iowa City Farmers Market, the \$1 EBT tokens have blue print and a “no change back” reminder on them. The \$5 credit/debit tokens are printed in red and customers can receive cash change.

WHAT DOES MY MARKET NEED TO GET STARTED?

Farmers markets do need to have certain capacity and infrastructure to be ready to start in the Double Up Food Bucks program. The following is a checklist for markets to measure their readiness to implement DUFB:

- ✓ Can you regularly collect & send coupons?** Markets will need to have the capacity to collect DUFB coupons from vendors and send them to the Healthiest State Initiative to be reimbursed.
- ✓ Can your market afford (or secure a sponsor for) a centralized EBT machine?** The main expense to the market is the purchase of the centralized EBT machine, which can cost in the range of \$500 to \$1,000. However, this purchase could be a fitting sponsorship opportunity for a local bank or hospital. There are many models to choose from—some can only receive EBT, others can receive EBT as well as credit and debit cards.
- ✓ Can your market cover ongoing costs?** There will be fees associated with each EBT or credit/debit card use and a staff member/volunteer has to take on the responsibility of operating the card reader.
- ✓ Does your market have easy access to Wi-fi?** Markets without easy access to Wi-fi at their market may also need to purchase a “Hot Spot” (mobile Wi-fi emitter) to be able to run the EBT machine at the market.

SAMPLE BUDGET: WHAT DOES IMPLEMENTING DUFB TYPICALLY COST?

In the sample budget, there is a line for EBT fees, which are charged with each card swipe. Below the budget is the actual SNAP sales for the associated year to show how fees and sales are connected.

Sample DUFB Budget						
Expenses	2018	Notes				
Checks	\$150.00	Annual (based on vendor count)				
Terminal Set Up Fee	\$99.00	1 time fee				
Terminal Shipping Fee	\$20.00	1 time fee				
EBT Fees	\$267.40	Annual (charges vary per month)				
Wooden Tokens	\$75.45	Received (250) \$1 Tokens				
Staff Time	12 - 15 hrs per month	DUFB reporting, marketing, cutting checks, staffing, envelopes, customer/vendor inquiries				
Sample DUFB Year						
SNAP Sales	DUFB Distributed	SNAP Transactions	DUFB Transactions	New Customers	SNAP Redeemed	DUFB Redeemed
\$799	\$744	99	97	55	\$696	\$755

*** Interested in learning more about adding Double Up Food Bucks to your market? Contact The Healthiest State Initiative at info@iowahealthieststate.com.**

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INNOVATION & PROMOTION



IT'S A WRAP! DUBUQUE'S "JULE" BUS MARKETING

The Dubuque Farmers Market opted to market their Double Up Food Bucks program on the city bus, which is called the Jule. In Dubuque, non-profits receive free interior bus marketing and a 25% discount on exterior bus wraps. Similar offers are available in many other cities in Iowa—check with your local Department of Transportation.

Market staff worked with a designer to create the wrap, which was then produced by the local marketing agency chosen by The Jule Public Transit.



A BIGGER, BETTER DEAL GLOBAL GREENS CREATED A NEW MODEL FOR THEIR CUSTOMERS

The Global Greens Market in Des Moines found that many of their customers used their SNAP benefits to purchase over \$100 of produce at each market. Many of the African and Asian varieties of produce grown by the Global Greens Farmers aren't available in the local grocery store, so most customers purchase them and preserve them. With this in mind, the Global Greens staff worked with the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative to change the DUFB model to be a \$40 match for \$60 of SNAP benefits spent on fresh produce. So for every \$100 spent on fresh produce, \$40 is provided by the program.

“Because of the customers we have, we would have people spend \$300 at the market. If people are spending smaller amounts, it's not a better deal for them because they aren't getting a 1:1 match. But for our customers where they are spending \$100+ dollars at every market—it's a good deal for them.”
Andrea Vaage, Market Manager

YOU'VE GOT MAIL! GRINNELL FARMERS MARKET'S DIRECT MAILING CAMPAIGN

The first year of Double Up Food Bucks was a huge success for the Grinnell Farmers Market, but they saw a sharp decline the next year. Market staff identified a few changes they'd made to the market that may have impacted the DUFB use: 1) the card reader location changed, and 2) there was some changeover in local social service agencies.

The next season, the market made an effort to address those changes in order to increase DUFB use. They put the card reader station back in its old location. They made sure all the local agencies knew about the program. But the program use remained low.

That's when market manager Kendra Vincent found out that the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative had sent a direct mailing to SNAP recipients before the first year of the program—and hadn't done it again since then. Kendra wondered if that could be the reason the use dropped so dramatically. “Maybe it was an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ thing,” says Kendra. “People didn't get that reminder at the beginning of the season to use their card at the market.”

Kendra now plans to work with the Iowa Department of Human Services to do a mailing similar to what was done before the first year of DUFB. She will design the mailings, then give them to DHS. DHS will attach the mailing addresses of all SNAP recipients in the local zip code and mail them. DHS projected expenses to be around 60 cents per mailing, not including printing. To cover expenses, Kendra is currently seeking grant funding.

She hopes the mailing will improve awareness, which

is the biggest challenge due to the program being seasonal. “Double Up Food Bucks is only available for six months of the year. After October, people may forget about the program or if they've enrolled in SNAP over the winter, they may not even know it exists. We just want to make sure people know they can use their SNAP card at the market and that free money exists,” Kendra says.

Grinnell is also seeing the value of the DUFB expansion into grocery stores. “We did see a dramatic increase in the number of Double Up Food Bucks redeemed,” says Kendra. “But based on the number we sold, the majority were distributed by Fareway here in town. It works out great because it's easy for Fareway to scan the SNAP card and give out the food bucks. Markets are not a one-stop shop for a lot of people. Having that grocery store connection helped increase the visibility of our program. We hope the partnership continues in the future.”



CUSTOMER SERVICE

ENSURING SATISFACTION FOR EVERY TYPE OF CUSTOMER

Jane Gasperi, manager of the Beavertdale Farmers Market, sees three main types of market customers:

1 The Grocery Shoppers

“You can tell they are grocery shopping. They have their bags. They go through all of the vendors of produce and meats. They’re not going to stay to listen to music; they’re here to buy groceries.”

2 The Food Truck Diners

“There are some that are really coming to the market just for the prepared food vendors. They’ll walk through the market, maybe even buy a few things. But primarily, they are coming to eat supper.

3 The Experience Seekers

“And then, we have the customers that do a little bit of both—shop and eat. They’re also going to sit and listen to music for an hour and meet up with friends. They come to socialize, be entertained, and enjoy the experience.”

And while you may not regularly think of them as such, your vendors are your customers, too.

4 The Market Vendors

Model the level of customer service you want to see them provide. Treat your vendors with the same friendliness and helpfulness you want them to show their customers.

KEEPING CUSTOMERS SATISFIED

Depending on your market’s location, size, times of day, and goals, you may have or want more or less grocery shoppers, food truck diners, or experience seekers than the market in the next town over or across the state. And you may provide certain things at your market to please those customers, from high quality, fresh produce to freshly brewed coffee to tables and chairs for sitting down and enjoying the fresh air. But in order to keep all customers satisfied—no matter why they’re there—you need to provide a high level of customer service.

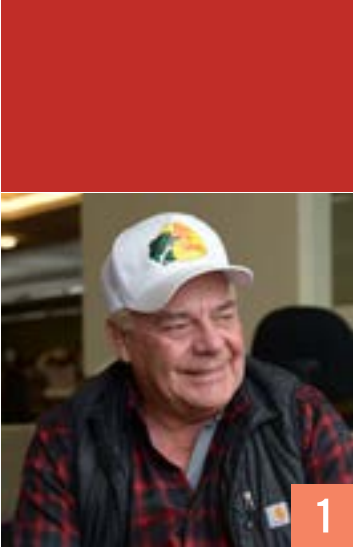


SET A POSITIVE EXAMPLE

You can’t control every product sold or interaction that takes place between your vendors and customers. But as manager, you can set the strongest example. Think about subtle ways to create a positive experience. Consider the layout of your market, proximity of restrooms and trash/recycle bins, and location of the information booth. Coach staff and volunteers to smile, greet customers, and ask customers how they’re doing—and do those same things yourself when interacting with staff, volunteers, customers, and vendors.

REMEMBER, CUSTOMERS ARE SATISFIED WHENEVER THEY CONSISTENTLY RECEIVE:

- A perfect product
 - Delivered by a caring, friendly person
 - In a timely fashion
- ...and (because sometimes any one of those three elements may miss the mark)...
- An effective problem-solving process



Customer Service is Directly Tied to Your Market’s Brand

Here are examples of what Iowa markets are doing:

STAND-OUT SERVICE (LITERALLY)

Market managers, staff, volunteers, and information booths should stand out at the market. Some market managers take this personally in the best of ways. As longtime manager of the Washington Farmers Market, Bob Shepherd ¹ always wears his bright white ball cap, which makes it easy for vendors to track him down.

At the North Iowa Farmers Market, manager Robin McClelland is known as ‘the lady in purple shoes.’ “I wear a pair of purple sneakers and a purple t-shirt with ‘market manager’ on the back,” says Robin. “I tell everyone, if you’re looking for me, I’m the girl in purple. It’s easier for vendors to find me and direct customers to me.”

And while vendor stalls line the downtown streets of the Dubuque Farmers Market, the information booth ² is the only one located in the middle of an intersection. With its bright colors and bold, red, all-caps “Market Booth” tent, customers can’t miss it—even from two blocks down.

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES

Urbana Farmers Market Manager, Eileen Schmidt, ³ doesn’t oversee vendors setting up—she’s right there alongside them. “At our market, market staff and I help vendors unload and load up their market products,” says Eileen. “Because we’re a smaller market, we can do that. They appreciate it. And I enjoy helping out. I’d feel bad just sitting there watching them.”

HELP STAFF HELP CUSTOMERS

When your market staff know the right information, it takes less time and effort to help customers. At the Ames Main Street Farmers Market, staff and volunteers are not only decked out in market branded shirts, but also wear special lanyards ⁴ with

the list of market vendors and their locations. When a customer needs assistance finding a certain vendor or product, with a quick glance, staff or volunteers can show the customer to that stall.

CONVENIENCE ON WHEELS

Many savvy market-goers bring their own carts to market. But several markets, including Des Moines and Decorah, provide this convenience to their customers. At the Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market, customers can borrow a green “Veggie Valet” ⁵ to take purchases to their vehicles.

Similarly, the Decorah market has a little red wagon. “It gets utilized a ton—especially during the fall with pumpkins!” says Josh Dansdill Decorah Farmers Market Board President. “It allows vendors to bring products right to customer’s vehicles, and for customers to keep shopping for more products. It also gets used by the manager when setting up traffic cones and markers, which frees up their availability for questions.”

APPROACH CUSTOMERS FIRST

Don’t wait for customers to come to you. “During market, I’m out there walking around with the people,” says Robin McClelland, North Iowa Farmers Market manager. “When I see someone looking around, I stop and ask them what they’re looking for. I walk them over and introduce them to the vendor. They get what they came for and more—I’ve helped build a connection.”

A SURVEY IS A GREAT TOOL FOR GAUGING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION. CHECK OUT OUR MARKET PERFORMANCE SECTION IN CHAPTER 5 ON PAGES 88 - 95.

SPECIAL EVENTS

SPICE UP YOUR MARKET SEASON

Hosting special events at your farmers market or making adjustments to make your market feel more like a community event are both great ways to attract new visitors and keep existing customers coming back. What makes a farmers market a market is the selling and buying of fresh, locally grown or produced food. By adding prepared food vendors or food trucks, musicians or live performers, and other activities such as painting or yoga, you're creating more of an experience at each market. Your market might also hold a one-time special event, such as a holiday market, night market, or indoor winter market.

EXPERT ADVICE:

Jenn Draper is the events planner for the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance. In addition to overseeing all the economic alliance's events, it's also her job to manage the Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market and the annual night market, Market after Dark, which brings more than 40,000 people downtown for food, beer, wine, art, entertainment and more. When it comes to planning any kind of event, Jenn emphasizes giving yourself enough time to plan, promote, and prepare.

“Always plan ahead. You may be able to do that task in three weeks. But if you gave yourself six weeks, imagine what else you could do. Or imagine how much cleaner or more polished it could look. Making sure that you're giving yourself, your staff, your team, and your volunteers, plenty of time to think about things is really key. We have a lot more partners at the table because of that. We have a lot more sponsorship dollars coming in because of that.”
Jenn Draper, Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market



EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Write brief summary of event
- ☐ Determine event activities
- ☐ Create a budget
- ☐ Create a promotional plan
- ☐ Secure the venue
- ☐ Get necessary licenses/permits
- ☐ Reach out to potential sponsors
- ☐ Recruit and secure vendors
- ☐ Book performers/live music
- ☐ Schedule staff and recruit volunteers
- ☐ Set attendance targets
- ☐ Design event logo and marketing materials
- ☐ Create a landing page on website
- ☐ Promote on social media
- ☐ Send out a press release
- ☐ Add event to community calendars
- ☐ Decide on and order swag
- ☐ Map out the layout
- ☐ Create and distribute schedule
- ☐ Continue marketing and promoting
- ☐ Recognize sponsors, partners, and performers
- ☐ Print event materials, signage, and banners
- ☐ Rent tables, chairs, and equipment
- ☐ Event setup and teardown

SPECIAL EVENTS: LIVE MUSIC

SUCCESSFUL INCORPORATION OF LIVE MUSIC

Regardless of the size or your market, making live music part of the market provides entertainment, makes it feel more like an event, invites customers to sit and stay awhile, and builds connections within your local community.

Live music is a big part of our event

“We always have a band, and we prioritized paying to have a local band play so that when people are here to shop, eat, and drink, they can also enjoy the local music scene. Free or paid, there are many ways to have live music at your market—whether you pay to bring in a band or let someone play on the corner for tips.”

Andie Donnan, Millwork Night Market in Dubuque

We're a small market, but we always have music

“When I started as manager, one of the first things I did was visit other markets for ideas. I went to the Sioux City market, which is a lot bigger than ours, and I copied some of the things they do—just on a smaller scale. For example, Sioux City has entertainment that they probably pay for. We have live music at the Akron market, too, but we don't pay for it. If there's a local band that wants to get started, we let them play. Sometimes the high school choir performs.”

Julie Madden, Akron Farmers Market

This year, we partnered with a local group that focuses on community art and music

“They wanted to enhance a community event that was already happening, and they thought the market was a great place to do that. They sponsored four musicians for the summer. We called it the Second Saturday Series because it happened every Second Saturday from June to September. The musicians were from around this area or around the Midwest. We were able to pay \$300-400 for those four hours of performance, which helped with the quality of the musicians. We saw a huge response—people asking when next one would be. We sat chairs out so people could sit and listen. I followed up with that group to let them know how great it was and they are now on-board to do it again.”

Sarah Blunt, Independence Farmers Market

“In 2019, our farmers market showcased a total of 50 live performances from local musicians.”
Lojean Peterson, Ames Main Street Farmers Market



WITH A LOADING DOCK AS
THEIR STAGE, A LOCAL BAND
PERFORMS AT THE MILLWORK
NIGHT MARKET IN DUBUQUE

ABOUT GRINNELL’S FARM-TO-TABLE DINNER

Every other year, the Grinnell Farmers Market partners with non-profit Local Foods Connection and Grinnell College’s Dining Service for a farm-to-table dinner.

"We do it every other year to keep it fresh and keep the interest," says Kendra Vincent, market manager of the Grinnell Farmers Market. "We wanted to have it be a fundraiser and promotion event for both our organization and Local Foods Connection, a non-profit that works with many of our farmers to get produce into the hands of food-insecure people in town."

The first year of putting on the event was the most challenging. "We didn't know what we were doing at all," Kendra says. "I reached out to the Iowa City folks and they sent me their guide on how to host a farm-to-street dinner. They were so helpful in the first year. It wasn't as big of a fundraiser as we hoped it was going to be, but it was amazing and raised a lot of awareness for our organizations. In 2019, we streamlined it and improved the fundraising aspect. We also had a local band."

Kendra recommends that farmers markets interested in putting on a farm-to-table event reach out to a local college, school district, retirement home, or something similar. "The biggest reason we're able to do this at all is our location. Both years, we partnered with Grinnell College's Dining Service. We targeted 200 people for a 5-course meal and wanted it to be all on full table settings—no disposable things. As a small team, we wouldn't be able to do all of that without the college

and their dining staff. And because of the way our community is laid out, we don't have a good access point for outdoor cooking. With the college, all the food was prepared in their kitchen. Our chefs were granted access to bring in their own ingredients, make everything on site, and have help from staff. The dining team even helped serve and plate everything. And the college has an industrial dishwasher, so we're not spending five hours washing dishes afterwards. **If you have the ability to make a partnership like that, take advantage—it will save you so many headaches."**

Lastly, Kendra suggests being cognizant of the season, date, and time. "The first year, we did it in October. We had to buy heaters and lights because it gets dark early. In 2019, we moved it to July. We had a better selection of produce and avoided additional heat and light costs."



A full table for the Grinnell’s Farmers Market’s farm-to-table fundraiser dinner in July 2019.

EVENTS ARE GREAT WAYS TO RAISE FUNDS!

CHECK OUT OUR FUNDRAISING SECTION IN CHAPTER 5 ON PAGES 88 - 95.

THE STORY OF DUBUQUE’S NIGHT MARKET

In Dubuque’s historic Millwork District, people of all ages turn out for an up-and-coming event mixing farmers market vendors, live music, prepared food stands, and breweries. Andie Donnan, a vendor and former manager at Dubuque’s downtown farmers market, teamed up with Danielle Stowell, owner of Wicked River Event Production, to launch what has become an award-winning event in the city—and one of the most unique markets in the state. Here are her tips:

Start small. "In 2018 and 2019, we did two full seasons—a monthly night market April - October. But we didn't start with a full season. We spent most of 2017 planning, then gave it a go in September. Everyone, including the vendors, loved it. So we did October that year, too."

Expect ups and downs that are out of your control. "Our first full season was perfect weather all year, but 2019 wasn't. April was so rainy only ten of thirty vendors showed up to launch our first market of the season. Only a few hundred customers came down. Then, we had to reschedule the September market due to storms. You can't control the weather. As I've run the market and grown with it, I've realized that we're going to have years that aren't 100% awesome or perfect."

Consider timing. "At a certain time of the year, our night market really is a night market. In October, 7 o'clock is dark. We're always trying to figure out how to keep our attendance up in the evening, especially later in the year. Regardless of the time of year, the crowds taper off around 8 o'clock for sales. I definitely think a night market is worth doing, so don't be intimidated by slow attendance later at night. There are ways to boost it. You could keep the market open later in June and July for a summer concert series, or construct the market so that vendors can leave, but people can stick around for music, beer, and food."



Through challenges, you can make change. "Even though we were considered a farmers market by Iowa’s definition, an old Dubuque city code from the 1800s didn't allow us to officially call ourselves a farmers market that first year. We were designated a special event and had to pay for a special permit each month. After a year of doing research, talking to people, and going to city council meetings, they recognized us as a market. They changed the code. They even created an application and fee structure for people who want to start a market. Since then, another small weekly night market has gotten started. That wouldn't have happened unless we'd laid some of the groundwork."

Get to know people (there’s a good chance they want to help). "Electricity was also a challenge! Throughout our first ten markets, we dealt with some kind of electricity issue. The surrounding building owners were awesome—dropping out power cords to help us out. And eventually we made a good connection with a guy who worked for the city. He drew out a circuit map and labeled all the power poles so we would know the amperage. It helped so much. If you're doing a night market—or any market or event—get to know the people around you. You've got to ask for permission. You've got to ask for help."

Other Special Event Ideas



HOLD A CONTEST WASHINGTON FARMERS MARKET'S "HOT" SALSA CONTEST

A variety of small events at your market can make just as much of an impact as one larger event. As this photo shows, the Washington Farmers Market salsa contest draws a crowd each summer. Bob Shepherd, market manager, tries to have one special event each month.

"Our goal is to reach people that aren't making it a habit to come down every week," Bob says. "Our salsa contest is a taster's choice contest, so everybody that goes through to taste the 18-30 different entries gets to choose which one they like. That's how we pick a winner in each category: mild, medium, and hot. The goal is just to bring more people down. And it does that—people stand around and argue about which one is the best, telling friends which ones to try and all that. It's a super deal, but it also happens at a time when our growers have excess tomatoes, chiles, and the stuff you make salsa out of."

"We designed our special events so that they're sponsored by somebody that wants their name put out front. We have an advisory committee that manages the special events at the market. It's a group of volunteers that help out. These special events are things that I've

designed and put together over the years, but the committee volunteers make them the events better because they have more time to dedicate. More hands make lifting easier for everybody and that's what's happening."

CHANGE UP THE LOCATION COLLEGE HILL FARMERS MARKET'S STREET MARKET

The College Hill Farmers Market in Cedar Falls is usually located in a parking lot. But once a month, they move things out into the street for a special street market.

"In 2018, we hosted our first street market," says Jodie Huegerich, College Hill Farmers Market manager. "We were working with the neighborhood association, the driving force for starting the market. They wanted us to do a big 2018 season opener, so we wanted to do it in the middle of College Hill Street. We weren't sure if it would work for vendors, but everybody loved it. Some regular market customers had never visited the businesses on College Hill Street. We'd hear them say things like, 'Oh, I didn't know there was a coffee shop here!' Business owners liked that. We were able to try it a few more times that year, and people continued to like it. For 2019, we decided to do it consistently once a month—and make sure it was part of the schedule from the beginning and marketed that way. Our customers love it because there's more of a festival feel. I like it because I was able to add vendors specifically for the street market, and those vendors come back later in the year to fill in when main vendors can't make it."



Join in on Festive Fun

Piggybacking onto an existing festivity or holiday is a great way to make your market feel more like an event. Be it a themed event, special winter market series, or holiday market, consider what your farmers market could do to celebrate.

TRICK OR BEET? DES MOINES DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET

On the October date closest to Halloween, the Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market invites vendors and customers to come in costume. It's a low-cost, low-effort, and family-friendly way to make that market special.

GREAT PUMPKIN GIVEAWAY DECORAH FARMERS MARKET

In October during the market, a vendor and artist Lynn Staley carves a giant pumpkin. Kids are encouraged to enter their names to win. At the market close a child draws the winner.

MERRY MILLWORK DUBUQUE NIGHT MARKET

In December, Dubuque's Millwork Night Market puts on a festive Merry Millwork Market full of live music, holiday-themed food and drink, and local artists, farmers, and makers.

CHRISTMAS MARKET MUSCATINE FARMERS MARKET

"For the past seven years, I have hosted a Handcrafted Christmas Event in December, which we hold inside our local mall. We have upwards of 100 vendors, live music, and photos with Santa. For many of our crafter vendors, this is the most profitable day of the season."

Jennifer DeFosse, Muscatine Farmers Market



Improving and Measuring Market Performance



There are many ways to encourage and measure the growth of your farmers market. Raising funds and securing sponsorships can help your market afford what it needs to expand. Marketing and promotions can help boost awareness and attendance of your market. And collecting data and feedback will help you make improvements and changes moving forward.

FUNDRAISING

IT TAKES MONEY TO MAKE MONEY

Fundraising and sponsorships increase awareness, build relationships, and engage staff, volunteers, board members, vendors, and market-goers. And a market's effort to gather data and report metrics makes a request for funds stronger.

First impressions are important and so is a communication strategy that is sustainable. Be realistic. Practice your pitch.

6 C'S TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING YOUR MARKET'S FUNDING STRATEGY

CAPACITY

Consider your capacity as market manager. Coordinate your asks, activities, and stewardship accordingly. Some fundraising methods require more time and different skills than others.

COMMITTEE

Who can help you? Do you have a board member with grant writing experience? A volunteer who does graphic design? Can you assemble a small committee to help seek sponsors, write letters, and follow through? It's okay if you need a year to build that core team and create a strategy, then spend the next year putting a plan into action.

CORRESPONDENCE

Will your committee be making the funding request or will it come directly from you? In letters, will you use "we" or "I" when requesting donations? If you have board members with strong ties to potential sponsors, would you want them to send a more personalized letter?



CREDIT

Give credit where credit is due. Follow through with what you promise sponsors in return for their support. Put their logos on marketing pieces. Give them a booth. Write thank you notes.

CONNECTIONS

Examine your existing relationships in the community. You probably already have supporters who are willing to invest their resources (cash, time, skills) in your market's success.

CLARITY

Be clear in all you do—clear boundaries, clear schedules and reminders, and clear expectations for yourself, your team, your sponsors, and your vendors about who is doing what, when, and why.

15 WAYS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR YOUR FARMERS MARKET



1. MARKET BANNER

Sell space on a large banner that will hang at every market. Offer different sizes of ad squares for different sponsorships levels, ranging from \$150 to \$1500. Estimated cost of one banner: \$450 (designed by the market manager or staff, then printed by a local print/design company). It costs more to hire a graphic designer, but you could save money by ordering printing online. The design and/or printing could be a sponsorship opportunity, too, by offering the designer or printer space on the banner that matches what the design/printing fees would have cost.

2. BRANDED MERCH

Put your market logo on merchandise for sale at the info booth. Many markets do this for cloth shopping bags, aprons, hats, t-shirts, or mugs.

3. CALENDAR

Create a calendar of images from the farmers market. This is a great option for year-round markets who can sell the calendar at the end or beginning of the calendar year. You can order inexpensive calendars in bulk online, but a local print or design shop may be willing to print the calendar free or at a discount as an in-kind donation.

4. PERCENT OF SALES

Partner with a grocery store, restaurant, or other business for a giving day or week. Many restaurants offer dining fundraisers. How it works: The restaurant schedules a day that your organization will benefit from sales. The restaurant will likely create a flyer for you to promote and post on social media, encouraging patrons to dine at that establishment on the given day. For each diner that shows the flyer (on their phone or a printed copy), the restaurant will donate a percent of that patron's sales to you.

5. RAFFLES/AUCTIONS

Raffle or auction off donated products. Have a board member who makes quilts or a vendor who bakes amazing pies? Local businesses may donate a spa gift card, wine tasting, hotel/restaurant package, or tickets to a concert, musical, or sporting event. Note: You may need a permit to do a raffle/auction.

6. LOCAL CLUBS & CHURCHES

Some markets have found success funding their SNAP programs by reaching out to local pastors to help raise funds from congregations. Community clubs may do a donation at their meetings, too.

7. FACEBOOK

If you're a non-profit, you can apply to accept donations via your Facebook page. By providing proof of non-profit status and basic financial info, you can add a "Donate" button to your page, run fundraising campaigns, and even have other Facebook users (board members, vendors, or followers) ask for donations on your behalf.

8. ONLINE

Look into online platforms like Fundly (fundly.com). Give Lively (givelively.org) is free for non-profits.

9. MARKET WEBSITE

Work with your website admin to add donation functionality, a "Donate" button, and a donation/sponsorship page to your website. This is a great place to explain how funds will be used and recognize past and current sponsors with their logos.

10. SPECIAL EVENTS

Raise money by hosting a pre-season potluck, mid-season meal which a local chef prepares using farm fresh produce, or end-of-season benefit concert played by a local band.

11. SPONSORSHIP

Look at who is already going to or supporting the market. Reach out to businesses who support similar causes. Be sure to give the sponsor something in exchange (scaling up what you give them based on what they gave you). For example: logos on banners, materials, maps, and posters; recognition on social media and in newsletters; mentions when you talk about the market on the radio/news; a stall at the market; or handing out promotional items at the info booth.

12. IN-KIND

Dollars make a big difference, but don't underestimate the impact of in-kind donations. A printer in town may donate flyers, posters, a banner, or other promotional materials. Local media may provide in-kind advertising in the newspaper or on the tv/radio. Businesses and individuals may donate their time and skills related to design, websites, grant writing, or marketing.

13. VENDOR FEES

Most markets already charge fees, but if yours doesn't, consider starting. Even the smallest market offers vendors a place to sell their products. It's reasonable to charge a small fee to help support operating costs, improvements, and promotions of the market. Clearly communicate any new fee to all vendors early and in-person, and don't implement or raise rates mid-season.

14. GRANTS

Local businesses, area banks, and community foundations are great places to start. Consider partnering with other markets for larger state or federal grants.

15. DONATION JARS

Grocery/retail stores, gas stations, and coffee shops may be willing to put out a jar to collect donations for your market for a week or month.



It's really important to make sure you're partnering with the right people who can share your values. We have sponsors and partners around the community that support the market not only by giving dollars, but also by participating and adding value with different programming. A good way to start is to think about who in your community might have shared values and a similar mission. For example, we partnered with UnityPoint Health. Their values are really focused around healthy community and healthy people, and it's a great synergy we've created that helps us both reach our potential, missions, and goals. In a smaller community, see who those people are. Local convenience stores, grocery stores, and hospitals can be great partners.

Kelly Foss, Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market



Our market runs for four months. We have four businesses that we ask annually for \$600 sponsorships—a local bank, a car dealer, a tractor company, and a local hospital. One of our board members has a good connection with the hospital and plays a big role in that relationship. Each one sponsors a specific month. We put our sponsors on banners around town and note them in radio and print advertising. We also encourage them to come to the market. The tractor company brought little tractors for their visit, which the kids loved!

Brigham Hoegh, Atlantic Farmers Market



"Sponsorships are key."
Jenn Draper, Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market

FUNDRAISING IDEAS FROM IOWA MARKETS



“A friend of mine actually mentioned that Swisher has a community foundation through the county. Turns out, a member of my market committee is the library director and she’d actually used it before—so she knew how to write a grant. She stepped forward and wrote our grant. We’d been talking about writing a grant for over a year, so I was really glad to finally go ahead and do it. We got very fortunate that this was the first year we applied for it and we were able to get that extra funding. We’re going to use it to replace all the signage and the canopy tent for the musicians. We also want to put some additional seating around the tent so people can sit down after they’ve shopped and enjoy the music.”

Alice Linhart, Swisher Farmers Market

“For years, the Rock Rapids Farmers Market has raised extra funds by collecting and turning in recyclable cans. The nearest can redemption center isn’t accessible to many residents due to hours and location, so it’s easier for many people to put their cans in the farmers market’s can shed. Since the market doesn’t sort the cans, the redemption center charges two cents per can to sort. So, the market receives three cents per can instead of five—a decent payout for little labor, considering the market raised up to \$3,000 in some years. When it came time for the farmers market to replace their can sheds, they bought the supplies to build new ones, gave the supplies to the local high school, and the shop class built the new can sheds.”

Angie Jager, Rock Rapids Farmers Market

“We do a fundraising dinner each week. The fundraising group that has the supper pays \$36, covering half of the cost of the ad that we run in the paper telling what produce will be there, what non-profit/entertainment will be there, and what the meal will be. I also do my best to get local sponsorships so it doesn’t actually cost the Chamber anything.”

Julie Madden, Akron Farmers Market

“For each market, our volunteer market team prepares a hot meal for purchase. We just remodeled our kitchen and we regularly use a grill outside. We publish the menu in the paper the Thursday prior to our Tuesday market. It’s a good value meal and we feature vendor product as much as we can, often when it’s the start of a popular produce season. Half of our patrons are from Fort Madison or Keokuk. We also have people who drive from Navoo, Illinois and even up from Missouri to our tiny town of 800 people. The profits from the meal cover our utilities, railroad lease, and allows our Montrose Riverfront complex to offer free admission for the museum.”

Greg Ruth, Montrose Farmers Market

“We get about \$5,000 every year from Polk county grants. We use it for marketing, signage, radio ads, and a police officer. Having a police officer there is our highest expense every week.”

Jane Gasperi, Beaverdale Farmers Market

SEEKING & SECURING SPONSORSHIPS

HOW JO LYNN PIKE WITH THE DUBUQUE FARMERS MARKET ENGAGES SPONSORS

What do you seek sponsorships for?

“We look at sponsorship funding for the overall market, Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb), and our Kids at Market program. We also explore grants to enhance outreach programming.”

How do you begin sponsor relationships?

“It is different for each sponsor. Most have connections with our organization through other programs. With a new sponsor, we start with a letter and a follow-up call a week later. We have had one-on-one meetings with a few of our sponsors.”

What types of businesses might sponsor markets?

“Businesses who would be good potential sponsors could be anyone who finds benefit to their name being associated with the farmers market. For example, we have a financial institution that needs to have money directed to low income families to receive accreditation. We are asking one business who is connected to agriculture to donate wagons to a program.”

What is the dollar range that you are comfortable seeking? Do you propose that amount in the beginning or is it a back-and-forth with the sponsor?

“The dollar amount proposal comes from us. Every sponsor has a different range they are willing to give. Depending on your impressions—marketing, attendance, and programming—the asking range can vary from \$1,000-\$10,000 for contributions. Contributions can include monetary, supply donations, and staffing/volunteering.”

In what ways are you recognizing the sponsors and stewarding the relationship so they will sponsor again in the future?

“Ways in which we recognize our sponsors would be through marketing: social media, banners, radio, flyers, maps. Every sponsor has their own request so in our letter, we always list that if other opportunities arise we are open for conversation.”

“Sponsors not only help fund your market, but also help build relationships within your community. Be considerate of how you identify, communicate with, and recognize each sponsor.”
Jo Lynn Pike, Dubuque Farmers Market



WONDERING WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A LETTER TO POTENTIAL SPONSORS?

CHECK OUT A SAMPLE LETTER AT:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT

MARKETING YOUR MARKET

BRANDING IS MORE THAN YOUR LOGO—IT’S YOUR VIBE

DEVELOP YOUR BRAND

Your brand is often a customer’s first impression of your market. It’s the public-facing part of your overall marketing plan. How customers perceive your brand can increase awareness, attract new customers, and build trust and loyalty that leads to return customers. From an eye-catching logo to consistent colors, there are several elements to consider. A brand can feel vague at first, but it will become more specific as you start identifying what you want customers to feel and perceive when they interact with your market.

THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR BRAND

Personality: Think of your brand as the personality of your farmers market. What sets it apart from other markets? What are its values? Its mission? How do its products, programs, and events fit into the customer’s life? What words and feelings do you want vendors, customers, and the community to associate with your market?

Voice: Consider how you talk about your market—online and in-person. How do you sound? How do you want to sound? Down-to-earth? Fun? Silly? Polished? By identifying how you want to come across, you can set guidelines for the tone and words you choose to use in social media posts, news interviews, and face-to-face interactions at the market.

Color: Colors are powerful. They inspire feelings and set moods. The colors you use in your branding will affect the overall look and feel of your market. Take some time to research the psychology of color as it relates to the rest of your brand’s image and its vendors, programs, and events. If your market takes place in a park, green might feel right. If your town uses blue in its branding, it might make sense to incorporate a similar shade into your color scheme. Choose two to four colors—you can create additional variation by adjusting their hues.

Typeface: Choose 1-2 fonts to use on signage, social media, website, logo, and other materials. The little details matter! Is it easy to read? Does it reflect your personality? What emotions does it evoke?

Tagline: Can you sum up your market in just a few words? Brainstorm a list of ideas. Ask a few close friends, loyal customers, or vendors to weigh in. Narrow it down to the words and/or phrase that best expresses your brand. Use your tagline in your logo, social media, website, newsletter, press releases, merchandise (such as t-shirts), posters, and more.

Consistency: Strive to be consistent in the voice, colors, fonts, logo, and tagline that you use so that people begin to recognize how your market looks and sounds. You’re reinforcing your brand through all the words and visuals you use in marketing and at the market itself (info booth, signage, etc.). When something is “on brand,” that means it’s consistent with your market’s personality. In everything you do, ask yourself: Is this on brand? Does this show my market’s personality?



When it came time to update the market’s logo, Jane Gasperi turned to her illustrator board member who was able to help with a fresh look.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

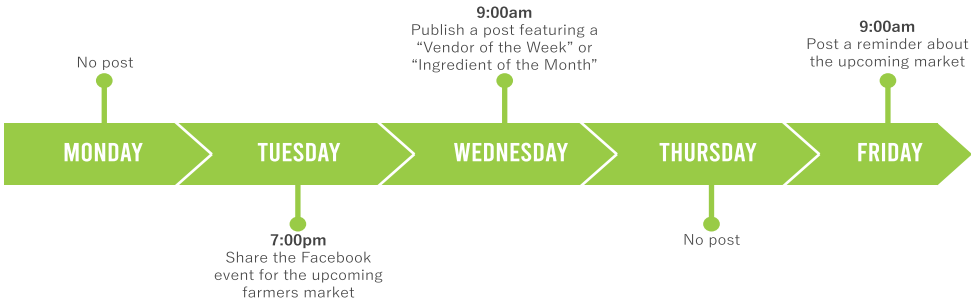
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where should I post?

Social media is always changing and a platform that is popular at the moment may not be next year. If you’re just getting started, focus your efforts on Facebook. With its wide range of users (Baby Boomers, Gen X’ers, and Millennials), event functionality, and pages, it’s a great way to get the word out about your market. Once you’ve got the hang of Facebook, set up an Instagram to reach more potential customers in their twenties and thirties. You can even link your accounts to automatically publish Instagram posts directly to Facebook.

When and how often should I post?

Your audience may be more active on social media on certain days and at different times. According to SproutSocial, global engagement is highest mid-day on weekdays, especially around noon when people are on lunch breaks. When it comes to posting, there’s a fine line between too much and too little. One post a day is ideal, while two posts every day can be excessive. It’s important to find what works for you and be consistent. If you’re just getting started, aim for three posts per week. For example:



TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS

Use Facebook Events

Create Facebook events (or a series of events) for your market dates and any special events throughout the season (such as a farm-to-table fundraiser or a kids day at the market).

Photos and Videos Rule

Include pictures with your social media posts because they’re more likely to catch the eye and get engagement than a regular plain text post. Better yet, use video and Facebook Live.

Copy is Still Key

Even though images and videos quickly grab people’s attention, the accompanying text can make or break engagement with your content. Generally, shorter is better. Experiment until you find a winning combination.

Encourage Engagement

Engagement is when someone likes, shares, comments on, or reacts to your post. Notice what your audience engages with and post more of that. When someone comments, like and/or reply to their comment. In all interactions, strive to be positive and helpful—social media is also a valuable customer service tool!

Tag, Mention, and Share

If your vendors have Facebook, tag/mention their pages in your posts and share their posts on your page.

Tap into a Local Hashtag

Identify any local hashtags used in your city/area that relate to community, events, etc. For example, the hashtags #ThinkIowaCity and #Iowacity focus on the Iowa City area, while #ThisIsIowa is statewide.

Share User-Generated Content

Pay attention to Facebook and Instagram users who tag your market in a post, such as this photo a local videographer shared of the Des Moines Farmers Market. Then, ask for permission to share that photo on your social media page.

MARKETING DOs & DON'Ts FROM MARKET MANAGERS

DO MAKE A MARKETING CALENDAR & CHECKLISTS

Plan out your entire year (not just the market season) of what you want to promote and when you need to promote it. For example: You may want to promote a special event 4-5 weeks before it happens, while you want to promote Double Up Food Bucks once a week all season long.

At a glance, your marketing calendar should show what’s going on and coming up. Using the calendar as a guide, stay on track with more specific to-do lists for tasks such as creating a Facebook event, posting on Instagram, or sending a press release.

Jodie Huegerich (College Hill Farmers Market) makes herself a weekly marketing to-do list. “I do social media posts three to five times a week and also press releases for the local newspaper about once a month, especially when we have special events,” she says.

DO CONNECT WITH LOCAL MEDIA

To promote opening day, an event, or other exciting news, send out a press release. Reach out about free on-air interviews. Offer to contribute a weekly/monthly article. If you’re a 501(c)(3), ask about non-profit discounts on advertising.

Bob Shepherd, manager of Washington Farmers Market shared, “The newspaper would come to each market at no charge and give out 50 papers. In exchange, they allowed me to write a column. I did that every week for 15-20 years. When we first got started, those newspapers were crucial. The columns were informative, but also hit on the social side. My closing line every single time was ‘See you down there.’”

“The media and consumers love local businesses,” says Josie Rozum of Dan & Debbie’s Creamery. “It seems like a lot of work to throw together a press release, but it’s worth it. For us, the newspaper reach is fantastic. It’s one of our best sources for free marketing.”

DON'T PUT ALL YOUR MARKETING EGGS IN ONE AUDIENCE'S BASKET

Social media can be a great way to get in front of market-goers in their twenties and thirties. “I use Facebook and Facebook Live to promote each market,” says Kendra Vincent, manager of Grinnell Farmers Market).

But keep in mind, customers in their fifties and sixties may be more likely to read the newspaper or listen to the radio. “We run a weekly newspaper ad to reach our older audience, then I use video and Facebook Live to reach our younger audience,” says Julie Madden, manager of Akron Farmers Market).



The Grinnell Farmers Market updates their Facebook page’s main cover photo with an eye-catching, easy-to-read image, such as this one promoting the Winter Farmers Market.

DO PUT YOUR MARKET ON EVERY CALENDAR

Local magazines, newspapers, TV/radio stations, businesses, banks, and Chambers of Commerce often have community calendars online or in print.

“It takes time to go through and get on everybody’s calendar, but it’s a great way to be part of their recurring events every week,” says Andie Donnan, manager of Millwork Night Market). “We put ourselves everywhere because you never know who your audience is and what they’re reading. There are several local magazines in town and even if we’re not featured in an article, they still support us by putting our market in the event section.”

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE “OLD FASHIONED” MARKETING

Even in an age of social media and digital advertising, strategies like canvassing and giving out flyers and promotional items can still make a huge impact.

Andrea Vaage manager of Global Greens Cedar Farmers Market used grant funds to test out different marketing strategies. “We tried Facebook ads targeting different demographics. We distributed flyers to local neighborhoods. We did ads on Iowa Public Radio,” says Andrea. “What actually worked best was word-of-mouth and having a lot of stuff up in the neighborhoods. For us, spending lots of money on social media and radio ads didn’t help as much as putting posters in local coffee shops and businesses.”

Jenn Draper manager of Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market advises putting your market dates on something you can physically give to people. “We started putting our dates on brightly colored magnets. Now, people look for them and collect them. They’re really effective. Try to find that thing for your audience. Maybe it’s magnets. Maybe it’s flyer if that’s all your budget allows for. Find some way to get those dates into the hands of your customers.”



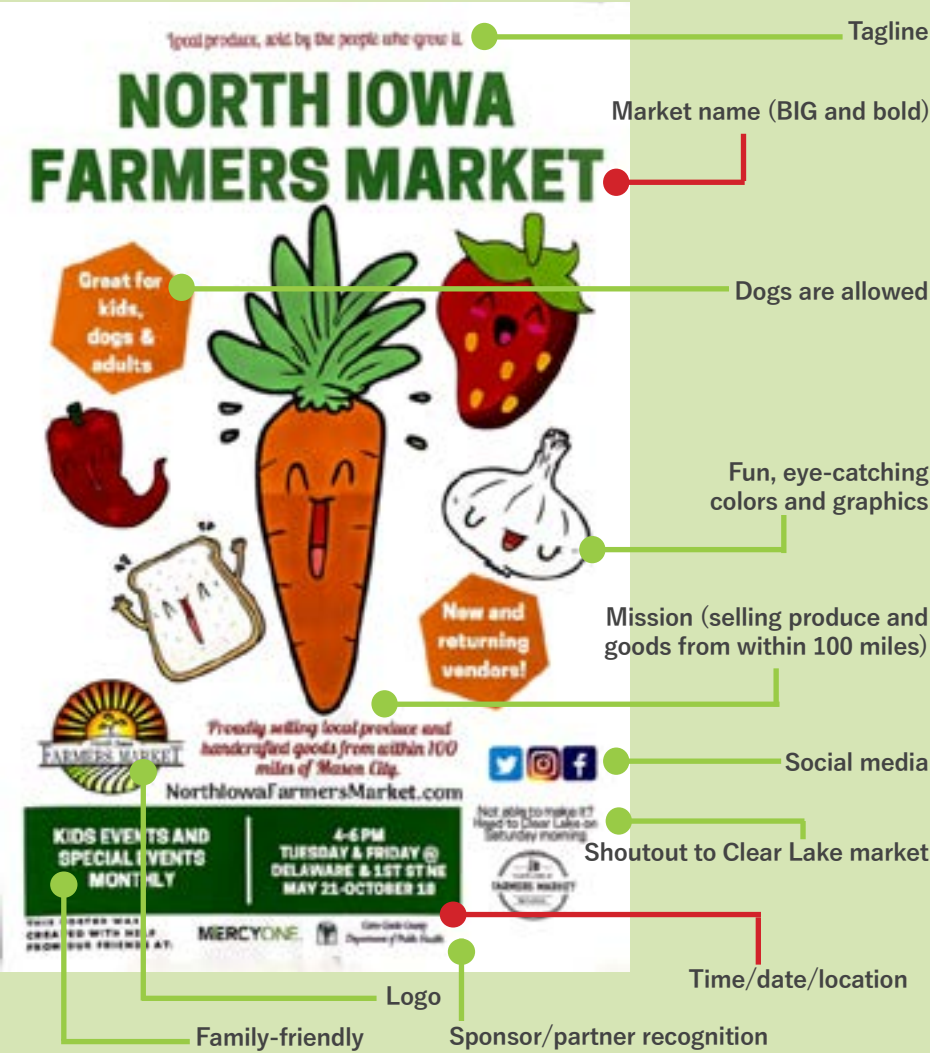
Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market magnets include the dates/times of the market as well its annual special event, Market After Dark.

ANATOMY OF A PROMOTIONAL PRINT PIECE

Printed flyers and posters can be valuable marketing tools. This poster for the North Iowa Farmers Market is a great example of how to balance important details (name, date, location) with additional information (dogs allowed, produce/goods from within a 100-mi radius, sponsors) and fun, eye-catching graphics. Manager Robin McClelland even uses the poster as a way to cross-promote the Saturday market in nearby Clear Lake for folks who can’t make it to Mason City’s market on Tuesdays and Fridays. (She manages both markets.)

Before distributing, double-check:

- Is the market name and date/time/location prominently displayed?
- Is all the info correct? Any typos?
- Are all the fonts clear and easy-to-read?
- Do the colors show up well when printed? (Medium/darker colors will show up better than pastel/neon colors.)
- Does it reflect your market’s personality?



MEASURING YOUR FARMERS MARKET'S PERFORMANCE

WHY AND HOW TO COLLECT DATA

5 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD COLLECT DATA:

1. ECONOMIC IMPACT

Demonstrate to local government, economic development groups, and other partners the market's economic contribution.

2. POTENTIAL SPONSORS

Provide potential sponsors with evidence of how many customers will see their logo on your signage if they fund the market.

3. VENDOR RECRUITMENT

Show potential new vendors the number of customers they will see and the desire for their specific product.

4. PROPOSED CHANGES

Support any proposed changes to the market (e.g., change of location, change of hours, addition of programming or events.)

5. TREND AWARENESS

Be aware of trends in market sales, attendance, or customer demographics that can help improve the market over time.

HOW WILL DATA HELP YOU?

The time and effort it takes to collect data is an investment in the future of your farmers market.

If you are looking to add new vendors, change your hours, start new programming, bring in a new customer base, woo sponsors, or just learn more about how your farmers market is doing, data can help. While there are endless approaches to measuring your performance, here are a few tried-and-true methods for you to start implementing at your farmers market.

DATA IMPROVES...

Decision-Making. Analyzing data helps market managers spot significant changes and areas that need attention. With relevant data, managers and boards can also track key indicators over time and use that knowledge to make decisions.

Market Promotion. Having specific metrics in marketing messages makes them much more likely to be shared. Metrics also help reinforce the benefits of shopping at farmers markets.

Media Relations. Reporters typically want to know more about the market than its opening date, location, and hours. Press releases that include relevant data (such as annual attendance) are much more likely to be picked up by publications.

Advocacy. Sharing the market's community impact with public officials, partners, market neighbors, and other stakeholders helps increase understanding and support for the market.

Funding. Financial supporters want to understand the impact their investments have on the communities they serve. Accordingly, they frequently require outcome measurements.

THE BASICS OF MEASURING MARKET PERFORMANCE

HOW-TO GET STARTED

Ready to start measuring performance? Whether you are new to data collection or a seasoned data collector, attendance counts and surveys are the two best sources for performances measurements for market managers.

Stick to one method

An important place to start is deciding how you want to collect data over a long period of time. To be able to look at trends over time, you need to collect data in the same way. This is most important when it comes to attendance counts.

You don't (and shouldn't) have to do it alone

Develop a committee of interested individuals to help. Vendors should also be at the table. You may reach out to a nearby Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop, student volunteers from a local college or high school, 4-H groups, Master Gardeners, and other like-minded groups that may be sources of volunteers for conducting an attendance count or surveying customers.

Try to record something about every market

Certain measurement practices, like dot surveys and attendance counts, require planning and help from outside partners. Luckily, these don't need to be done at every market (try to do these at four markets each year, more on that later in this section.) However, try to collect some data at every market. Try to answer at least these questions in a Daily Market Report: How many vendors came? What's the weather like? Is there a special event or program? Include an additional note section for other important pieces of information, like "First tomatoes of the season at the market" or "Farmer Jane says it was her best market ever."

“

The job of the modern farmers market manager is absolutely data-driven.

**Darlene Wolnik,
Farmers Market Coalition**



MEASURING PERFORMANCE: ATTENDANCE COUNTS

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE COMING TO YOUR MARKET?

Farmers market research conducted by the Farmers Market Coalition, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Oregon State University over the past decades has advanced our understanding on how to get accurate attendance counts at farmers markets.

What they found was that the most commonly used, accurate method of measuring market attendance is through a 20-minute sample count every hour of the market at a consistent time interval. Since this is the gold-standard, we will go into depth about this method. However, other methods exist and should be considered depending on the specific needs and layout of your market.

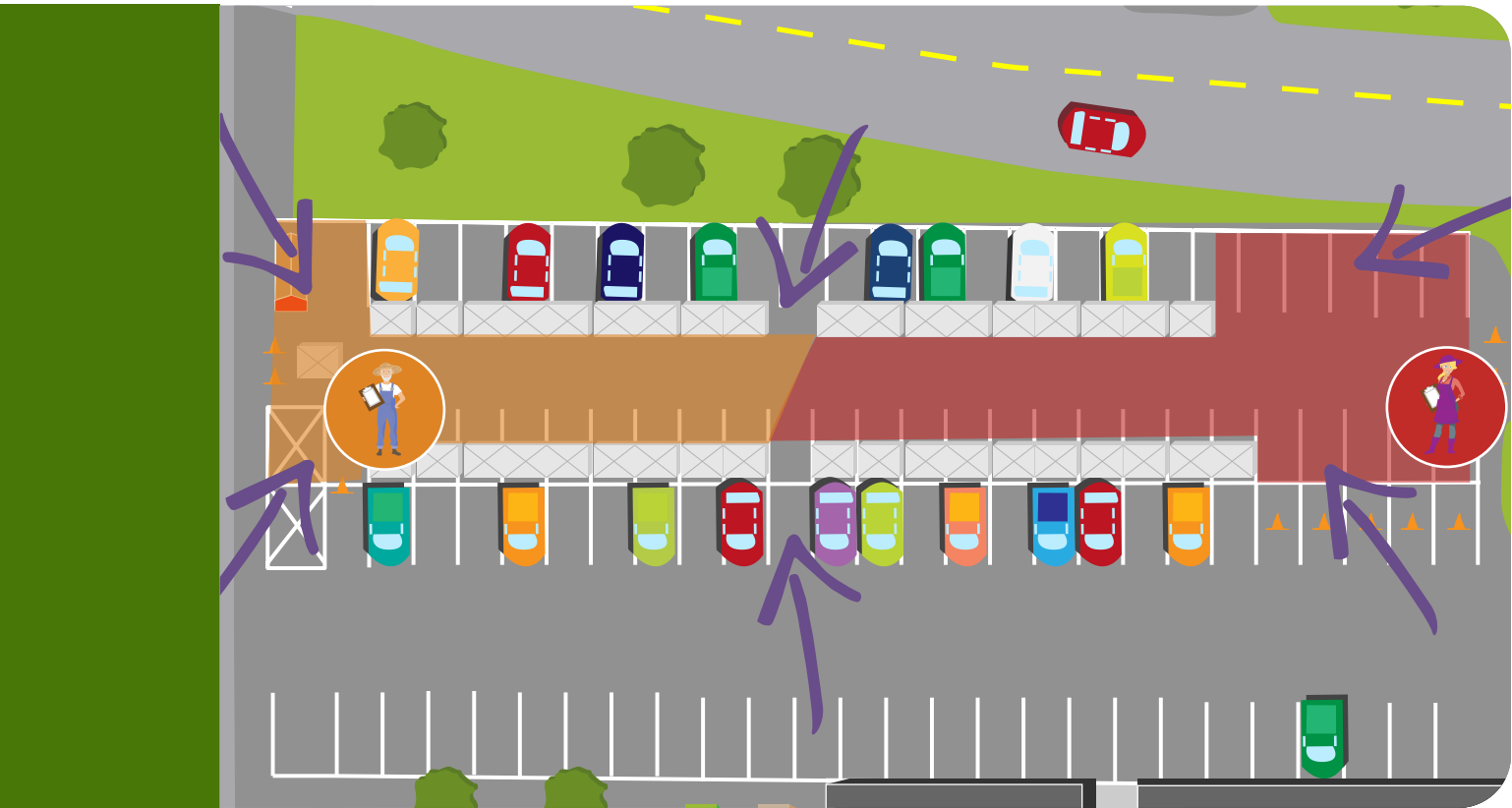
What You'll Need: Tally counters (the object), market counters (the individual), and a count coordinator*

**The market manager has so many other roles that it will be easy to get pulled away from the attendance count. Select a dedicated staff member or long-time volunteer to serve as the count coordinator.*

Market counters can be trained the day of the event, before the market starts. They need to know 1) their specific “zone of responsibility,” 2) that they are only to count adults, 3) that they will only count from :20 to :40 of each hour of the market, and 4) how they will relay that information to the count coordinator. The zones of responsibility will be different for every market (see next page). It may be best to have these zones drawn out on a sheet for each counters to keep with them. The count coordinator will likely know where most customers enter the market and can make sure to have counters near those areas. But also consider if customers enter between stalls, from businesses along the street, out of parking garages, or from any corner of a grassy area.

Your market’s layout—including the location of vendor stalls, the information booth, and other market elements—will impact the flow of customer traffic. Designing your market to have suggested entry points will help with customer traffic and attendance counts. (For market layout examples, see pages 38-41).

From :20 to :40 of every hour of the market, the market volunteer/staff counter will stand in a designated zone of responsibility and count every new adult customer that enters that market in that area. At :40, the “count coordinator” should walk around to each counter and collect that hour’s data to keep track over the course of the market. Each counter then has 40 minutes to drink coffee, eat donuts, chat with vendors, and enjoy the market until :20 rolls around again.



This market is divided into two “zones of responsibility.” The arrows indicate suggested entry points for customers.

At the end of the market, add up all of the 20-minute interval counts and multiply them by three to get the full market attendance count.

This count is meant to get an average count of customers. The :20 to :40 time period is set to avoid rushes in visitors during the beginning and end of the market. Also, make sure to conduct attendance counts on “average” market days—try to avoid days that may have an unusually high or low attendance because of a special event or a competing event in town. Whenever non-average market day attendance is shared, include details of the day it was collected—factors like weather, competing events (Hawkeye/Cyclone games), and time of year can drastically impact attendance.

There are two other common methods:

The Full Count. Every unique adult customer is counted as they enter the market for the entirety of the market. As you can imagine, this is time-consuming and would be best for markets with specific entry points.

The Walkthrough. Market staff walk through the market at set intervals—every half hour, every twenty minutes—and count every adult at the market. This method requires an idea of how long the average customer stays at the market. For instance, if you know the average customer stays for 20 minutes, then count every adult customer during one 20-minute interval every hour. Then multiply that number by three to get the full attendance for the full hour. If it’s 10 minutes, multiply the total by six. If it’s 30 minutes, multiply by two. Because of the difficulty in estimating the length of stay of the average visitor, this is considered to be the least accurate method of measuring attendance.

LOOKING FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT VISITOR COUNT OPTIONS AND APPLICATIONS??
READ DARLENE WOLNIK’S ARTICLE “COUNTING VISITORS AT MARKETS” AT: [FARMERSMARKETCOALITION.ORG/COUNTING-VISITORS-MARKETS](https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/counting-visitors-markets)



MEASURING PERFORMANCE: CONDUCTING SURVEYS

COLLECTING VALUABLE FEEDBACK

The majority of people have participated in some type of survey in their life. And most people despise them. Because of that low-tolerance for answering survey questions, your job is to create a survey that quickly and easily gathers information from a valuable population—customers, vendors, partners.

IOWA GROWN SURVEY TIPS:

The following tips are informed by the outstanding research by Iowa-native, internationally-recognized survey researcher, Dr. Don Dillman.

All surveys should focus on convincing the respondent that the benefits of answering the survey outweigh the costs to them in answer.

Benefits: A chance to win a raffle or other incentive, a sense of improving their community or the market they care about.

Costs: Time it takes to respond to the survey, energy to think about responses, having to share personal information or opinions.

There are several strategies to swing this Cost/Benefit ratio in your favor.

Increase Benefits:

- Stress how the survey results will help the market.
- Ask interesting questions that are easy to understand and easy to answer.
- Make it clear that there are limited opportunities to respond to the survey.
- Share that others have already responded.
- Use incentives to engage respondents (e.g., a raffle to win a market coupon or a basket of products from the market).

SURVEY BASICS

- Focus on what you need to know, not what you simply want to know.
- Develop simple questions that are easy to answer. Avoid subjective questions.
- Multiple choice questions are best.
- Stress how important the information is.
- Provide some kind of incentive or reward. (e.g., entered to win a raffle)

Reduce Costs:

- Make the survey short with simple questions.
- Limit (or avoid asking for) personal or sensitive information.
- Make sure the survey method matches the target population (e.g., younger populations likely prefer online surveys, older populations likely prefer paper).

Build Trust:

- Make sure respondents know how they can learn more about the survey and prove the survey is authentic.
- Clearly state that all information will be kept confidential and protected.
- Focus on making all communications and survey elements look professional. Ask for help if needed.
- If your market hasn't built up community trust, try getting sponsorship from a trusted, legitimate organization (e.g., the town government, local chamber or economic development group, area college, etc.).

TYPES OF SURVEYS

DOT SURVEYS

A dot survey entails one question written on a poster that has several potential answers written out below the question. Customers are then given one colored circular sticker to place next to their answer. Up to four questions on four different posters can maximize the amount of information gathered.

For more information on dot surveys, check out the excellent “Tools for Rapid Market Assessments” article published by Oregon State University Extension Service.

VERBAL SURVEYS

If gregarious market volunteers or staff are available, a verbal survey is an easy way to get a high response rate from customers. Choose fewer than five, easy-to-answer questions and instruct a team of individuals to walk through the market asking questions to a random selection of customers.

ONLINE SURVEY

There are many free, online survey tools (like Google Forms and Survey Monkey) that are slick ways to gather feedback on the market. They require a little online savviness, but otherwise are simple to construct and send out to potential respondents. Response rate will be likely be low if sent out to the general public. This tool may be best for a select group, such as vendors, a market board/committee, or a select group of dedicated customers. An added incentive (such as being entered to win \$50 market gift certificate) may increase the response rate, but keep in mind that this will be not be a representative group of all those who shop at the market.

PAPER SURVEYS

While expensive, paper surveys can be highly effective and earn a high response rate. You can either hand out surveys at the market or mail them out with a pre-stamped return envelope. To make this work, you'll need to have mailing addresses for a targeted group of respondents.

NET PROMOTER SCORE

When crafting your survey question, one possible question to include is what is called the “Net Promoter Score.” The magical question is:

On a scale of one to ten, how likely are you to recommend our market?

Respondents that list a nine or ten on a scale of ten are considered to be “promoters”. In a business landscape where 92% of consumers report they trust word-of-mouth over any other form of advertising, these promoters are critical to business success. The number of customers who are in this promoter zone will be a good picture into the amount of customer loyalty the market has. If you are able to build stronger relationships with these promoters, they can play an out-sized role in the continued marketing and improvement of the market.



Using Google Forms, I sent out surveys to all vendors. I asked some really detailed questions. What were your peak times? What was the average dollar amount spent at your stand? Did it seem like you had new customers or regulars? What was your customer base like? How had customers heard about the market? Customers don't usually come right out and say that, but they might say, 'I've never been here.' and that's an opportunity to engage. It's important for each vendor and the market as a whole to know how people are finding out about us. At the end of the survey, I also asked: Would you do it again? And I included a basic comment section. We thought about all of this feedback when deciding if and how to do our night market the next season.

**Andie Donnan,
Millwork Night Market**

SURVEY SPOTLIGHT:

College Hill Farmers Market, Cedar Falls

“We are growing and we need to show everybody around us that vendors and customers are growing. But we also need to show that economic development part as well—that sales are increasing.”
Jodie Huegerich, College Hill Farmers Market

To develop a culture of data collection, market managers need to take the lead on the various ways to gather information at the market. Jodie Huegerich, Local Food Program Director at the University of Northern Iowa and manager of the College Hill Farmers Market in Cedar Falls, has been conducting surveys from customers and vendors for a number of years. In 2019, Jodie began using the Farmers Market Coalition’s Metric program.

Jodie used survey information to decide what decisions to make for the market. “We had done a pretty good job at increasing our customer base and number of vendors, but we wanted to take the next step,” Jodie says.

Jodie recruited extra college students to work at the market on customer survey days. She gave the students clipboards with the questions on them and has them walk around the market to ask customers the questions. Each survey has fewer than five questions. “The big questions were: ‘How did you hear about the market?’ and ‘What would you like to see at the market?’” says Jodie. She also wanted to know where customers live in order “to try to see if we were capturing the people close by or if they worked at the University. And if not, could we target those areas a little bit more?”

To incentivize survey responses, those who took the survey would be entered to win a basket of College Hill Farmers Market vendor products. The College Hill Farmers Market also has a rewards program, so respondents were given a rewards card with a few punches already taken out of it. Respondents can then use that rewards card to get deals at area businesses. (Read more about the rewards cards in the Community Building section on pages 19-23.

In addition to using Metrics to transition from paper surveys to storing information digitally, Jodie used the program as “an excuse to start tracking sales from vendors.” Despite pushback from vendors who didn’t want to share this information, Jodie saw that sales data was crucial to building the future of the market. “We are growing and we need to show everybody around us that vendor and customers are growing. But we also need to show that economic development part as well—that sales are increasing,” Jodie says.



HOW MUCH TO DO?

If you’ve never collected data at your market before, you may want to start slowly and not try to adopt all these new measurements at once. Trying to do too much at one time can lead to spreading yourself too thin and getting discouraged when the data isn’t collected properly.

If you do nothing else:

- Fill out a daily market report that answers: How many vendors came? What was the weather like? Were there any special events?
- Send out an end-of-year vendor survey

When you’re ready for more:

- Fill out a daily market report
- Send out an end-of-year vendor survey
- Conduct one dot survey
- Conduct one attendance count

The Gold Standard:

- Fill out a daily market report
- Send out an end-of-year vendor survey
- Conduct two dot surveys per season
- Conduct four attendance counts per season
- Use Farmers Market Metrics to analyze and record your data

Beyond the Gold Standard:

If a manager is considering any big changes to the market or seeking to reinvigorate its status, a more thorough assessments (such as the Rapid Market Assessment) can be helpful. Local extension offices, Chambers, Main Street organizations, economic development groups, or tourism offices may be interested in helping markets conduct these more rigorous assessments.

Focus groups and targeted interviews can be also very helpful in conducting a more detailed assessment. These are more time-intensive than a survey and will require some skill to do well, but can be highly informative.

FARMERS MARKET METRICS

Once you’ve collected data, it can also be challenging to know what to do with it. The Farmers Market Coalition offers an easy-to-use online data management system called Farmers Market Metrics. Currently, Metrics is available at a discounted rate to all members of the Iowa Farmers Market Association. Metrics has contributed to a culture of data collection and use of data for markets.

Metrics includes guides on best practices and provides a platform to input all market data. It has an analysis function to help understand the data and is customizable to your goals and capacity. Plus, its dashboard has built-in graphics (below) that look great on reports, grant applications, social media, and websites. These visuals can help tell the story of the market’s success. For example, knowing how many acres are in production by the market’s vendors can help make the case for sustained support by nearby businesses or the municipality.



ASK AN IOWA FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION REP HOW TO GET METRICS AT YOUR MARKET.
OR LEARN MORE ABOUT METRICS ONLINE:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

It's hard work to run a farmers market. It can feel isolating, especially if you're in a small rural town. But remember: You're part of a bigger network—there are 200+ farmers markets in Iowa! You don't have to start from scratch or go at it alone. You can gain inspiration from markets of any size. And even managers with decades of experience are still learning and making changes. Take it from Bob Shepherd, who has managed the Washington Farmers Market for 30+ years. "Every market is unique," Bob says. "Make your market fit your community. It takes time."



As manager, you're the face of the farmers market. Smile, and your customers will, too!
Lojean Peterson
Ames Main Street Farmers Market



SEE THINGS FROM THE FARMER SIDE OF THE TABLE

Kelly Foss

Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market

"Be willing to try new things, but be open to feedback. That's how we've grown as a market—listening to vendors. Frequently throughout the season, I work at vendors' booths to truly experience the market from their perspective.

Vendors tell us that they love how their customers are so passionate about coming to see them—they value the bonds they've created with their customers. I really want to see those interactions. So for a couple hours in the morning, I sit at a booth or take over so a vendor can take a break. I get to see those vendor/customer exchanges. The customer gets an amazing product and the vendor gets payment for that product. You can see that transaction happening in a business sense, but you can also see the human element—the excitement to be purchasing garlic from a favorite vendor.

It helps me as a market manager to see beyond the commerce. There's only so much that metrics can tell you. Giving myself a point of view from the farmer side of the table better connects me to the market."



BE WELCOMING

Cassidy Bell

Iowa City Farmers Market (2010-2016)

"Having breakfast food and music at the market on Saturday is a great way to encourage people to stay around longer—and gives them the opportunity to make more purchases. Consider having an ATM, token system, and bathrooms close-by."



DO SOMETHING SPECIAL

Greg Ruth

Montrose Farmers Market

"Together with local welding and carpentry classes, we designed and built eight traditional handcarts for the vendors to use at the market. It was a show of appreciation for their commitment to the market and gives the market a nice, unified look. It is also a nod to the local history."



TREAT IT LIKE A BUSINESS

Jodie Huegerich

College Hill Farmers Market

"If you can, have two people dedicated to the market: a manager and an assistant. Delegate tasks to committee members and volunteers based on their strengths. Treat the market like a business."



FIND YOUR MARKET NICHE

Andrea Vaage

Global Greens Farmers Market

"We had to find our niche. For awhile we wanted be more like a main street market—more entertainment, more family friendly, and other types of vendors. It turns out that we're wildly successful when we do the opposite, which is leaning into just having produce, trying to make our Double Up Food Bucks system as fast and efficient as we can, and promoting that we have different types of unique produce. We needed to accept we're not a big downtown market and never will be. So let's make the type of experience we can offer the best one."



BE FAIR AND CONSISTENT

Jennifer DeFosse

Muscatine Farmers Market

"Friendships at the market are common and welcome. However, market rules apply to all vendors. I've learned being fair and consistent with rule enforcement is vital. Vendors who try to skirt the rules are not an asset and it's almost never a one-time problem. Consider the good of the market and your vendors before all else and help foster a spirit of teamwork and camaraderie, rather than competition, amongst your vendors."



REMEMBER TO TAKE CARE OF YOU!

Jenn Draper

Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market

"Burnout is different for everyone, so if you feel stressed or burned out, figure out what it is that you're burned out on and focus on fixing that. Is it constant repetition? Add something unique to the next season. Vendor issues? Take another look at the rules, guidelines, and procedures. Decide what you need that will help you be a better market manager."

Vendor Handouts

We asked. Market managers answered. It's hard to be an expert in everything right away. The Vendor Handout Series is intended to make being a manager a little easier. Managers can share links to the online versions or provide hard copies directly to vendors. Handout topics range from vendor stall layout, to licensing, and insurance.



ACCESS THE VENDOR HANDOUTS AT:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT

Lettuce Grow Training Series

The Lettuce Grow Training Series took place from 2017-2019 around the State of Iowa. Now the series is available online. Each training features an experienced market manager and vendor providing insight on farmers markets.



ACCESS THE TRAINING SERIES AT:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT

