

Washington State Farmers Market Manual



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Small Farm &
Direct Marketing Program
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Washington State Farmers Market Manual

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Front cover Photos: (main) Olympia FM, (top right) Bellingham FM, Pike Place Market, Spokane FM, and Leavenworth FM
Section pages: Tacoma Farmers Market

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Sedro Wooley Farmers Market
Sedro Wooley, WA

Introduction

Farmers markets have been experiencing a renaissance in America since the late 1970s. During the last ten years, in particular, the USDA estimates that the number of farmers markets nationwide has doubled. Similarly, Washington State has seen steady growth from 56 operating markets ten years ago to over 100 today. A resurgence of farmers markets is one face of a widespread grassroots movement to revitalize small-scale, community-based agriculture as an alternative to an increasingly globally organized and impersonal food supply.

Many perceive farmers markets as a recent phenomenon, however they are an age-old tradition. From the beginning of agriculture, wherever farmers could produce more than they could consume, markets were held to trade surplus goods. In the U.S., historians point to a burst of new farmers and public markets during the late 1800s in response to the Industrial Revolution, but some markets, such as Quincy Market in Boston, Reading Terminal in Philadelphia, or Central Market in Lancaster, have roots going back to the American Revolution or earlier. George Washington worked to shift the trend of raising commodity crops for overseas trading to raising food crops for local markets. Farmers markets have persisted because of the clear economic and social benefits of creating a public space for buyers and sellers and other community members to come together and interact directly with one another.

Today, farmers markets are critical to the survival of many small family farms and the preservation of farmland around the country. Selling directly to consumers allows farmers to become more profitable by obtaining retail rather than wholesale prices and developing a loyal customer base. Washington's farmers markets provide profitable market outlets for farmers in a variety of communities throughout the state. They also contribute to local community economies. Money spent in farmers markets goes directly to the farmers and can be recirculated to support other local jobs and businesses. This

entrepreneurial activity encourages additional economic activity. For example, peripheral businesses may locate near farmers markets to take advantage of the crowds and existing nearby businesses may experience increased sales on market day. Markets can draw new shoppers into downtown business districts. Markets can also serve as business incubators by providing a testing ground for new, value-added agricultural products and novel crops. While most markets tend to be utilized by people from nearby neighborhoods, they can also attract visitors from surrounding areas and even serve as a

hub of culture and tourism for a larger region.



Olympia Farmers Market, Olympia, WA

Farmers markets are popular with consumers who believe the food is healthier, tastier, and fresher and like to support local farmers. In some communities, fresh fruits and vegetables may not otherwise be available at all, while in others, markets meet the growing demand for specific types of products such as locally grown, organics, heirloom fruits and vegetables, artisan cheeses, honey, fresh berries, or grassfed

meats. Federal Farmers Market Nutrition Programs can provide new opportunities for senior citizens and low-income families to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables through farmers markets.

Most notably, people seem to treasure the experience of shopping at farmers markets. In an era of big box stores, shopping malls, and convenience food chains; markets offer a rare opportunity to be out in the fresh air, discover tasty new fruits and vegetables, meet the farmers, learn how the food was grown, and gather with friends and family. Few other institutions bring communities together more than farmers markets.

This renewed appreciation for the benefits of farmers markets is reflected in the increasing numbers of Washington communities that want to start a market. The purpose of this manual is to encourage and assist communities, farmers, and citizen groups to create and successfully operate vibrant community farmers markets. While a number of excellent farmers market manuals and resources already exist, this document is designed specifically

for Washington State and includes references, regulations and links to local and state resources. The content is organized by the different stages of a market's development.

Organization of the Manual

Section 1: Steps for Starting a Farmers Market. Most successful farmers markets in Washington have been developed through a step-by-step planning process. This manual illustrates the most important steps to consider when planning or starting a market from developing a vision through organization building.

Section 2: Best Practices in Market Management. This section summarizes a set of best practices for managing farmers markets. Although

established markets are the primary audience, start-up markets can learn from it as well. This section provides ideas for enhancing market sales and strengthening the customer and vendor base, as well as other suggestions for enhancing markets gleaned from successful managers throughout Washington State and the United States.

Section 3: Reevaluating Market for Continuous Improvement. Even the most successful markets have room to learn and grow. Every market should regularly evaluate itself to ensure its health and re-envision the future. Topics include reviewing and updating a market's mission and goals, updating a market's governing documents, reevaluating a market's management structure, and developing a strategic plan for the future.

Steps for Starting a Farmers Market **1**

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Step 1: Initiating a New Market

Assessing Market Dreams

While anyone can initiate a farmers market, from farmers to community groups to city governments, most markets result from the inspiration and persistence of one person or a small group. These initiators recognize the potential of a farmers market in their community, carefully assess its feasibility, and determine to make it a reality. Market initiators have many things to consider before proceeding. “Why do we want to have a market?” is the single most important question initiators should ask. The answer to this central question will impact nearly every aspect of creating a vision and a plan for the market. Other important considerations will follow such as whether there is a sufficient customer and farmer base, where and when the market should operate, and how the market will recruit farmers, shoppers, and community partners.

Self Evaluation. After careful consideration of whether there is a need for a market, the first step for any new market is a realistic assessment of what will be required to ensure success. Since it is not realistic to think that one person will have all the skills or energy to complete this task, forming a strong organizing committee will be an essential part of the process. Planning and starting a viable new market takes concentrated time, energy, and resources, but it can be done. Farmers markets have a long history of success in Washington and continue to grow in popularity.

Questions to ask before initiating a market:

- 1. Why are we doing this?** Knowing the reasons for starting a farmers market will help articulate a vision, determine how the market should be structured, and decide who should be engaged in the process. Is the market primarily being created to revitalize a community’s business district, support family farmers, or improve access to fresh local produce (or all three)? Regardless of the motivation for starting a market, a market’s customers are its vendors. The vendors’ customers are the shoppers at the market. It is important to develop a shared mission that incorporates both farmer and consumer perspectives.
- 2. When should the market open?** Many people get so excited at the beginning of spring about a new farmers market season that they want to start one immediately. However, extensive planning is needed to launch a successful farmers market. It is wise



Phinney Farmers Market, Opening Day, Seattle, WA

to give the organizing team adequate time to prepare—maybe a year or longer. Many building blocks and partners are required for a market to succeed. False starts can create a loss of involvement from potential collaborators and, most importantly, a loss of participating farmers. It is vital that a market’s opening day is a true community happening, with an abundance of customers, vendors and beautiful fresh produce.

- 3. Where should the market be?** First, market planners need to map out where and when other markets are currently operating. It is unwise for a market to be so close to another market that it renders both markets weak. Farmers markets are about community, and not just the community in which one particular market operates. Markets are also about the greater community of markets and the community of vendors that the market serves. Markets should complement rather than compete with each other. The location and time will need to accommodate the market’s vision, its customers and vendors, its neighbors, and its future.
- 4. How does one start a market?** Starting a market involves developing a vision and mission, organizing a core steering committee, and conducting a feasibility analysis. If the committee decides to move ahead, the next steps involve engaging key community partners and support, planning an organizational structure, and building a dynamic board of directors. The board will ultimately secure a market manager and guide the market through opening day and ongoing operations.



Step 2: Market Homework

What to Learn Before Starting the Process

Substantial preparation is needed prior to starting a farmers market. First, review this text and the other resources referenced. Next, visit a wide variety of operating markets to make observations, talk with market managers, and hold informal conversations with vendors about their market preferences. Research the history of farmers markets in a proposed neighborhood and the larger community. Have there been other attempts to start a market? If so, what happened to them? If they failed, why did they fail? Are there other markets nearby or in neighborhoods with similar demographics? What has worked well for them? Become familiar with the characteristics of the target market neighborhood. What is the average age of the families living there? What cultural background do they come from? Where do people currently shop for food?

Washington's farmers market system has a unique asset in its statewide association, the Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA), one of the two oldest state farmers market associations in the U.S. The WSFMA sets standards for markets, provides access to insurance, offers educational opportunities for farmers, market managers, and board members; and works in partnership with Washington State University (WSU) and the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Most farmers markets in Washington belong to the WSFMA and voluntarily abide by its statewide standards. It is important to become familiar with this organization and its programs and, if possible, attend its annual winter conference workshop on market start-up and management.

Develop a Unique Vision for your Market.

The most important homework is to begin creating a unique vision for your farmers market. Being able to clearly communicate a vision to others will be the key to motivating their participation. It will be helpful to develop a solid understanding of the potential benefits of a farmers market for your community and an outline of the characteristics you would like to see in a market. For example, a market vision can be framed in terms of helping local farmers, supporting local businesses near



2004 WSFMA Farmers Market Conference, WSU Puyallup, WA

the market, downtown revitalization, economic development, community health, community food security, or some combination of these points. California's market manual emphasizes the importance of writing these ideas down and offers several sample market visions, as well as a useful vision development worksheet (Jolly 2005 (1): 9-13).

Sample Market Mission Statement:

The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance NFMA is a community-based non-profit organization developed in response to the growing popularity and public support of the neighborhood farmers markets in Seattle. The NFMA's primary mission is to support Washington's small farms and farming families by providing strong and effective direct market sales sites for our region's family farmers, and by educating consumers about farm products and the benefits of buying direct from local farmers. (Appendix B)



Step 3: Organizing an Exploratory Meeting

Sharing a Vision, Measuring Interest, and Forming a Steering Committee

The next step is to hold an exploratory meeting where the vision of the new farmers market can be shared with potential partners, stakeholders, and community supporters. The goal of this meeting is to assess interest levels, invite participation and ideas, and, ultimately, identify a core group of committed partners who can carry the project forward as a steering committee. This meeting will require careful planning and publicity so as to attract and engage a wide range of participants.

Plan the meeting. First, reserve an affordable and easily accessible public meeting space and begin developing a contact list of people to invite. Requesting support in the form of a meeting space is a good opportunity to enlist the help of potential allies early on. Examples of meeting venues that may be offered free of charge for the purpose of organizing a community farmers market include the county extension office, a local school or college classroom, the public library, a community center, local churches, a Grange Hall, the Chamber of Commerce, or a supportive local business or non-profit.

Send out invitations. A broad, representative group of stakeholders and interested parties should be identified and invited to attend the meeting. A carefully worded invitation letter or phone call a month or so prior to the meeting can be used to introduce the project to the community and initiate contact with potential supporters and partners. Examples of key people to invite would include nutrition and agricultural educators from the county extension office, local farmers, leaders of farmers' groups, representatives of community non-profits and foundations, city and county officials, urban planners, religious leaders, local business leaders and associations, high school or university agricultural specialists, chefs, health-oriented food businesses and cooperatives, social service agencies, food banks and pantries, gardening and service organizations, and consumer advocates (*for more ideas see Jolly 2005(1):15*).

An invitation letter or meeting announcement should state the purpose of the meeting (i.e. to form an organizing committee to assess the feasibility of starting a farmers market), briefly communicate a vision for a new market, and describe some of the potential benefits that markets can have for communities and farmers. It is also important to provide clear details on the location, date, and time

for the meeting; contact information for an RSVP or more information; and the names of people and organizations already associated with the effort.

In addition to personalized invitations, the meeting can be widely publicized through announcements in local newspaper and radio outlets, flyers on community bulletin boards, and the newsletters and e-mail lists of supportive community organizations such as the county extension office, farmers groups, and other non-profit groups. Follow-up e-mail reminders and phone calls with key contacts can help assure their participation.

Structuring the meeting. Careful thought should be given to planning the meeting agenda and facilitation. Sufficient time should be allocated for introducing and sharing a vision, brainstorming and discussing ideas with participants, and obtaining commitments to work on committees or support the organizing process in other ways. The meeting needs to be closely facilitated to allow plenty of time for discussion and enough structure to keep the conversation flowing towards concrete outcomes. The group discussion will help to gauge interest levels among participants and identify who has the time, motivation and skills to help carry the process forward.

Meeting participants can brainstorm a list of additional community members who could be recruited for committees or added to the mailing list. The most significant outcome of this meeting will be identifying the foundational members of a core steering committee and further developing the contact or mailing list of supporters and stakeholders. The core committee will be the small group of active partners who can provide ongoing leadership through the initial stages of planning and assessing market feasibility. Before closing, it will be important to think through the roles and goals for the steering committee and any other committees, make plans for future meetings, and plan communication with stakeholders and the public. (*see Jolly 2005(1):18-20 for sample invitation letter, meeting agenda and facilitation tips*).

Launching a steering committee. The core group that emerges from the exploratory meeting may need to be augmented by recruiting additional key players. An ideal steering committee should have representation from county extension, local farmer leaders, local civic and business leaders, key

non-profits and community groups, community food programs, and consumers. Having members with a balance of organizational, fundraising, communication, and marketing skills is also critical. The duties of a steering committee may vary depending on the size and type of the market desired. At a minimum, the committee will need to:

- **Further refine a vision and mission.** Whatever the purpose for starting the market, it needs to be clearly agreed upon and articulated.
- **Identify long-term goals.** These will provide continuity, guidance and direction over the course of the project. What is the desired scale for the market, both initially and over time? The goals should correspond with the market mission.
- **Establish short-term objectives.** These should be measurable and attainable within a year and provide a sense of accomplishment.
- **Provide ongoing communication with community partners.** The committee can maintain communication through a contact list of market supporters and interested stakeholders including farmers, consumers, and neighboring businesses that may be impacted.

The initial planning tasks for the steering committee will include:

1. **Market Analysis**
 - Assess the need and potential support for a market within the community.
 - Assess the extent and nature of consumer demand for locally grown products.
 - Evaluate the potential scale of market that could be supported.
2. **Site Analysis**
 - Assess potential sites for the market.
3. **Financial Analysis**
 - Assess potential revenue and costs to determine the market's probability of reaching financial self-sufficiency or profitability.
 - Assess the profit potential for market vendors.
4. **Vendor Analysis**
 - Assess the availability of enough farmers and other vendors to assure sufficient product volume and variety.

Depending on the scope and scale of the market and the extent of the volunteer base, the above tasks may be accomplished by steering committee members or by separate subcommittees chaired by steering committee members.



Step 4: Assessing the Feasibility of a Market

The Committees Get to Work

First, the committee needs to assess whether the market should realistically move forward. If subcommittees are formed for separate tasks, the steering committee should be responsible for maintaining overall communication and leadership around the agreed upon mission and objectives.

Market Analysis. A market should not be started unless it has a reasonable chance of success. Will community members view it as a welcome addition and support it financially and logistically? Conducting market research helps to understand the potential customer base. Research on farmers markets has consistently shown that markets draw customers primarily from nearby neighborhoods (Brown 2002). Therefore, understanding who lives in the market vicinity and what types of foods they might buy is critical. The committee can collect detailed demographic and socioeconomic data from sources like American Demographics, the Census Bureau or the local community planning department. It is important to observe current shopping habits and venues in the area. Does there appear to be a high demand for quality, specialty or organic foods based on what the groceries and restaurants offer? Do particular ethnic foods appear to be important? Does the neighborhood support up-scale groceries and health food stores, discount supermarkets, or, perhaps, have a lack of food retailers all together? What types of restaurants are located nearby?

Washington surveys indicate generally high levels of consumer interest in purchasing more products directly from local farmers (Ostrom 2005). However, while over 80 percent of people polled say they want to buy more fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers, currently only around 12 percent report shopping at a farmers market more than once a month. A key barrier appears to be a perceived lack of convenience. The steering committee may want to consider ways to counter this perception. Research suggests that once people begin shopping at farmers markets, there is a high level of repeat patronage (Brown 2002). In Washington surveys, freshness, taste, and nutrition are the top purchasing criteria across most income and demographic categories (Ostrom 2005). A short summary of Washington food purchasing preferences can be found at: <http://csanr.wsu.edu/InfoSources/ConsumerSurvey1.pdf>

In the market analysis, the committee should also research the rates of success and failure of other



Puyallup Farmers Market, Puyallup, WA

markets in the area and assess whether a new market could be a collaborative addition or would impede the other market's sales. Consider the locations, operation times, attendance levels and vendor mixes at the other markets. More specific market information can be obtained using a local survey. Pennsylvania's market manual offers a sample survey for use with potential shoppers (PA 2006: 23).

Site Analysis. A site analysis provides the foundation for selecting and securing a market location. Choosing the right location is vital to a market's success. Input from community service agencies (i.e. public works, health, police, fire, and planning departments) is key to this decision-making process, as is gaining their cooperation and support. A myriad of factors needs to be considered when weighing possible sites.

- **Space Needs.** How many vendors are ultimately envisioned? Is the plan to start with a smaller number and later expand? What size stall space is planned for each vendor and how will stalls be laid out? A standard pop-up canopy is 10' x 10'. Allow at least 5 feet in front of each vendor stall – if stalls face each other, they will need at least 10 feet between them (for example, the Olympia market has 12 ½ foot wide aisles). Some markets with facing stalls plan for an additional 5 feet between the two 5 foot vendor zones to allow for traffic flow. Will vendors be allowed to park their trucks behind their stalls or will they be required to load in and load out? A typical farm truck can be 20' long or more. Plan space for the market managers table. Finally, it is important to visualize the traffic flow both within and outside of the market through entrances and exits. A circular traffic flow inside the market



Port Angeles Farmers Market, Port Angeles, WA works well for shoppers and vendors.

- **Centrality.** The goal is to attract hundreds or thousands of shoppers to the farmers market each market day. Do sufficient numbers of people live, work, shop, and play in the area? What is the population density in a two-mile radius? The site needs to be attractive and conveniently accessible, with ample space for customers to shop. High visibility and easy access from main roads are key factors. It is more important to be near the majority of customers than the producers. Typically shoppers will not drive a long distance to reach the market, while vendors will travel further.
- **Transportation and Access.** Is the site easily accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including public transportation, bicycles and pedestrians? It is important to plan for special access needs, such as wheelchairs, seniors using scooters, or parents with strollers.
- **Available Amenities.** A market needs access to lighting and electricity, restrooms, hot and cold running water, and sufficient parking for both vendors and shoppers.
- **Trucking Needs.** Are there multiple entrances and sufficient turning lanes for trucks (they need 18')? Can the surface at the site support trucks?
- **Surface Cover.** Hot, dry, sunny areas in Eastern Washington may want to hold the market on grass, under trees, and on soft, light-colored ground. Westside markets may want a hard or gravel surface with excellent drainage in case of rain.

- **Fire and Emergency Response.** Depending on the market location, the fire department may require a fire lane, particularly in street closure situations. A fire lane can range from 9' to 20' in width, depending on the local fire code. Knowing the requirements for emergency vehicles in advance is important.
- **Insurability and Zoning.** Planning will need to account for site insurance and liability risks, as well as property tax responsibilities. If the site is not zoned for business, a variance may be needed.
- **Long-term Stability.** Can the space be assured into the future? Once customers become accustomed to frequenting a particular site, moves can disrupt sales. The ownership of the property and whether a long-term, affordable lease can be arranged will determine its long-term availability. Markets have been successfully located on property owned by cities, churches, businesses, non-profits, individuals, and county fairgrounds, among others.
- **Ambience.** While intangible, esthetics and atmosphere should be among the most important site selection criteria. Is this a place that shoppers will enjoy coming to? The ability to create an inviting and pleasant atmosphere, whatever the original character of the site, is crucial to attracting and retaining loyal shoppers.

Potential sites can be compared based on the criteria outlined above. The Pennsylvania manual offers a detailed checklist for assessing different sites (PA 2006: 25).

Financial Analysis. Accurate financial analysis builds on the market and site research. The committee must assess potential sources of funding and project costs and income as accurately as possible in order to decide whether the market is feasible. These calculations will also provide the basis for the market's operating budget if organizers decide to move forward with it. An important aspect of developing a balanced budget is securing start-up funding. Sources of start-up funding can include sponsorships, grants, and vendor fees (UC 2005: 47).

- **Sponsorship.** It is helpful if a single major market sponsor or a group of sponsors can be located early on. Organizations that

have sponsored markets include municipal governments; chambers of commerce or other business groups, such as downtown improvement or main street associations; shopping centers; health organizations; and non-profits. Partners participating in the market organizing committee may be able to offer some start-up sponsorship funds or in-kind services.

- **Grants.** The market organization or some of its partners may qualify for government or foundation grant programs related to small business or community economic development, public markets, agriculture, health and nutrition, tourism, cultural activities, etc. Local businesses or financial institutions, service organizations, religious groups, county hotel/motel tax funds, and local non-profits may also be sources of small grants.
- **Vendor Fees.** Vendor membership and stall fees can provide significant up-front funds and should be factored into the overall financial analysis. Some markets charge a flat fee that is paid weekly by each vendor or in one large payment at the beginning of the season. Others use a commission system where vendor fees are based on how much money they earn at the market that day. Other markets combine these two systems, charging a smaller flat fee plus some percentage of commission.

Next, the Financial Analysis Committee should project all likely expenses, including start-up costs. Expenses may include:

- Site rental
- Staff wages and benefits
- Insurance and licenses
- Office space and computer equipment
- Parking for vendors and customers
- Garbage collection
- Health department permits
- Creation of a logo, signage and other marketing materials
- Advertising and costs of activities and special events
- Printing of written materials and announcements
- Postage

When adding up costs, consider both material and operational expenses. To most accurately estimate income and expenses, it is useful to seek out ideas

and advice from experienced market managers. In addition to personal conversations, the WSFMA listserve offers a useful way to obtain feedback from other managers. It is reasonable to expect that it will take a full season to balance the budget and begin to make the market self-sustaining.

Vendor Analysis. Market organizers sometimes underestimate the challenge of recruiting the right mix of farmers to a new market. Being able to amass a sufficient quantity and mix of farm products is the basis of market viability. Planners must be able to locate a critical mass of growers; three would be the minimum. However, for a genuine farmers market ambience, a minimum mix could include three to five produce growers with a diverse selection of crops, a baker or two, and perhaps another vendor featuring plants and related crafts. Much of the market's success depends on having a respected and capable grower express and maintain a commitment to the market vision. Such a vendor can serve as an anchor for the market by providing a diverse and consistent array of quality farm products throughout the length of the season.

To assess whether the market will be capable of building a sufficient farmer base to attract customers, the committee should take the following steps:

1. Visit existing markets around the state and talk to managers about what might be an appropriate and desirable vendor base for the area.
2. Research the availability of vendors within a reasonable distance of the proposed market. A new or smaller market may have limited ability to draw vendors from great distances.
3. Test the market idea with potential vendors by calling or visiting their farm or place of business. You are simply gathering information at this point and not inviting them to participate in the market.

Vendor balance. The mix of vendors is extremely important in building a successful market. Try to find producers of diverse farm products, including a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, nursery stock, cheese, meats, eggs, seafood, herbs, and wine. High quality processed foods such as breads, jams, sauces, flour, and other value-added products will encourage shoppers to do the bulk of their grocery shopping at the market. Among current farmers

market shoppers in Washington, organic produce is an important draw (Ostrom and Jussaume 2002). Therefore, recruiting some organic vendors could be a strong asset. The committee members should make sure that the vendors being contacted and the overall number of vendors desired are consistent with the overall mission and goals of the market project.

Deciding whether to move ahead. After the committee (or committees) have had time to conduct their analyses, the whole group should reconvene to share findings. Positive reports from the market, site, and vendor analyses are necessary to move forward. If any of these studies conclude that the proposed market will not work, the time for the market may not be right. The report from the financial analysis

is also critical, however, adjustments to both funding sources and expenditures may be possible. In making the decision about whether to proceed, it is important to keep in mind the keys to market success and the past causes of market failure. Most critical is the capacity to generate a critical mass of both vendors and shoppers, neither of which can exist without the other. Ultimately, a market that cannot attract sufficient vendors or customers will be severely challenged to garner the financial and human resources needed to successfully manage and administer a market over time (Stephenson et al. 2006).



San Juan Farmers Market Sign



Step 5: Organizational Planning

Building an Operating Structure

If the steering committee decides that the market is a feasible project with potential to reach the desired goals, the next round of planning will focus on establishing an organizational structure and forming ongoing planning and management teams. The resources available to the market and its sponsors will affect the potential ways it can be structured.

Market Structure. Giving careful thought to the key aspects of a market's structure in the planning and design phase will help to avoid common pitfalls. Most successful markets have a board of directors to oversee the market and its development; a set of formal bylaws to guide the market's internal operations; market rules and a manager to provide day-to-day decision-making, communication and coordination; and a budget based on realistic financial planning and a sound fee structure. The board of directors is responsible for enforcing the bylaws, hiring the market manager, helping to create a set of market rules, and creating and managing the budget. Ways to establish each of these organizational elements will be addressed in greater detail under Step 6.

Organizational Structure. Depending on the goals of the organizers, the organization of the market can be informal or formal. Farmers markets can vary from not having any kind of official structure, to having an outside entity as an owner/operator, to becoming formally incorporated as a non-profit or a business (PA 2006: 11-13).

1. *Informal.* The simplest way to hold a market is to let anyone who wants to sell something put up a stand. Such arrangements have the advantage of having few complicated rules to follow, being extremely low-budget, and requiring minimal time investment in group decision-making or management. Significant drawbacks, however, include the absence of quality control, liability protection, tax status, or income for maintaining a lease or promoting the market. There is no way to optimize the mix of vendors. Such groups may eventually wish to develop some type of informal association so that the fees needed to cover basic rent, promotional expenses, and insurance can be collected.
2. *Outside Owner/Operator.* In some cases market vendors may operate under an agreement with an outside entity such as a private property

owner, a business, a city or government agency, a parks department, or a community organization. Generally in these arrangements, the proprietor or operator sets the rules and the vendors are essentially tenants (PA 2006: 11). Several of the large, permanent, year-round market facilities in Washington are owned by cities.

Having an outside proprietor can have advantages for vendors in that it relieves them of responsibility for site location or coordination, liability, or market promotion. Often public entities can provide excellent market sites and be very supportive of local farmers. On the downside, depending on the proprietor, vendors may have very little say over how the market is managed, including the fee structure, the types of vendors involved, or whether resellers will be allowed.

3. *Formal Market Organization.* Some markets choose to become fully incorporated as a legal, non-profit or business entity. This allows them to more easily comply with tax requirements, purchase liability insurance, hire staff, and apply for checking accounts and grants. Disadvantages of incorporation include extensive legal paperwork, legal fees, and specific requirements for developing by-laws, a board of directors, and tax reporting. Information and legal forms for forming a non-profit can be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service at (800) 829-1040 or www.irs.gov. In Washington State, information on incorporation can be obtained by contacting the Secretary of State's Office.

Another option is to find another legal entity to serve as an operating umbrella for the market. Options include working under a private business sponsor, a government sponsor, a business association, or a farmer organization such as the Grange. Even if a market organization decides to work under the auspices of another non-profit with its own board of directors, it is still advisable to create a management structure and an advisory board specifically for the market.

Permanent Planning Committees. The initial steering committee and working committees will need to transition from organizational and analysis tasks to ongoing planning committees, such as site, vendor recruitment, and strategic planning teams. New committees might also need to be formed,

such as a board recruitment, governing documents, and rules committee. The needed teams should be established at the first organizational planning meeting and everyone in the group should have a general understanding of how they fit together and what they need to do. The original steering committee will need to continue at least until a board of directors has been established and the market is up and running. Again, a member of the steering committee should also be a member of each planning committee.



Robert Elliott, Left Foot Organics, Tumwater Farmers Market, Tumwater, WA



Step 6: Getting Down to Business

Developing Governing Documents, Setting Market Rules, Recruiting Board Members, Selecting a Site, Finding Vendors and More

In planning and establishing the different aspects of the market's structure, the subcommittees or teams can meet separately while continuing to maintain communication with one another through the steering committee.

Board Recruitment. The job of this committee, ultimately, is to create a capable, talented, action-oriented board of directors that is committed to the original mission of the steering committee and can guide the market towards its established short and long-term goals. The board of directors will deal with policy, rules, fees and budgeting, fundraising, staff management, membership issues, disputes, elections, continued guidance towards the stated mission and goals, and assistance with market operations when necessary. Even if the market does not elect to obtain non-profit status, having a board is still important (Jolly 2005: 61-66).

A standard board has an executive committee made up of a president or chair, vice-president or vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, and several directors. Good candidates for a board of directors may be very similar to the people recruited for the steering committee, however, this committee should not simply become the board. Ideally, the board should include carefully planned representation from broad groups of market stakeholders, including farmers and farmer organizations, consumers, local businesses, sponsoring organizations, food banks, relevant community groups, and local government agencies. It is also useful to have people with expertise in legal issues, business management, accounting, marketing, organizational development, communications, and fundraising. Having a board made up entirely of vendors is not recommended. The broader the community involvement, the greater the chances of success.

The composition and election of the board members should follow the market by-laws. One of the primary duties of the board of directors will be staffing. For most market operations, this means hiring and providing direction for a market manager. The hiring process may work differently for specific groups depending on the past experience of their members. Before beginning, board members will need to create a detailed job description and lay out a system for supervision and performance evaluations for the market manager.

The Role of a Market Manager. Most market managers are primarily responsible for onsite

tasks during market day. However, most markets could benefit substantially from having a full-time manager if funds exist. The market manager directly impacts the success of the market because they represent the market to the public and the vendors. The more time a manager or other paid employees have to focus on the market, the more active progress can be made towards achieving the market's goals. Volunteers are often invaluable, but compensation generally encourages increased productivity, job longevity, and professionalism. Research on farmers markets in the Pacific Northwest shows a direct correlation between the amount of money invested in market management and the success of the market (Stephenson et al. 2006).

Duties of a market manager include:

- Facilitating orderly parking by sellers (and buyers);
- Maintaining order and cleanliness;
- Opening and closing the market grounds;
- Enforcing market rules and paperwork requirements;
- Ensuring compliance with health codes and regulations;
- Recording names and addresses of sellers;
- Collecting vendor fees;
- Developing a system for reporting sales by seller;
- Marketing, communications and outreach;
- Handling complaints and inquiries from the public;
- Managing conflicts and complaints among vendors;
- Working with local officials to regulate behaviors and disruptions;
- Preparing and maintaining emergency plans and supplies;
- Working with growers to encourage adequate quantity and variety of products each day.

Often, the market manager acts as the communication link among the various groups involved with the market (vendors, board members, sponsors, outside governing agencies, etc.). The manager needs to thoroughly understand the rules and regulations governing the market so that these can be communicated to the vendors and the

public. The manager will regularly need to draw on advanced communication and interpersonal skills, strong organizational and multi-tasking skills, and conflict resolution skills.

Market employees need to be able to effectively and fairly handle unpredictable situations such as medical emergencies, equipment failures, complaints from the public, or disputes among vendors as they arise in order to maintain the stability and cohesion of the market. The ability to make quick and effective decisions and stay calm in a crisis is key.

Governing Documents. This governing documents committee is responsible for establishing the official written documents necessary for the market to operate. Depending on the type of organizational structure selected and how the market has been categorized by IRS, bylaws and articles of incorporation may not be legally required. However, along with a stated mission, vision, values and goals, bylaws can be useful documents to have available for reference. Bylaws are not the same as the rules necessary for day to day market operations. Instead, they are the broader rules that establish the purpose and decision-making structure of the organization and the process by which more specific rules will be developed and enforced.

The Difference between Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Articles of Incorporation are essentially a contract between an organization and the government, while bylaws are a more involved contract between an organization and its various stakeholders. Neither document determines specific market rules. Articles of Incorporation tend to be very basic and almost generic, laying out the structure of the organization in simple terms. It is important to do some research on state and federal rules concerning legal incorporation and understand the process before developing Articles of Incorporation. Information about incorporation can be obtained through the Secretary of State's office at (360) 753-7115 or <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/corps>

Bylaws will address these topics in greater detail. For instance, bylaws may specifically address when or exactly how often meetings must be held, designate methods of notification, or provide concrete numbers for the size of the board, length of terms, etc. Many businesses and organizations use a very similar framework for their governing bylaws,

examples of which are easily accessible online. County extension offices, along with the WSFMA, may also be able to offer assistance on establishing bylaws specifically for farmers markets and other non-profit groups related to agriculture.

Some of the basic elements generally included in both articles and bylaws are:

- The name of the organization
- A description of the basic organizational structure
- The stated mission
- Definitions of terms
- Description of election procedures

Market Rules. Market rules define the character and substance of a market. Therefore, it is important to have a broadly representative planning committee dedicated solely to the formulation of a complete set of rules for smooth day to day market operations. The target of most rules will be the vendors. The bylaws establish the market's right to make rules and the rules themselves provide the framework for avoiding and negotiating future market problems and misunderstandings. As soon as a manager is hired, he/she should serve on this team, along with vendor and board member representatives. Trying to formulate a set of rules may seem overwhelming at first because it is impossible to address every issue that could potentially arise. It is important to make rules as complete as possible while avoiding any unnecessary rules or complexity. Fortunately, many good models of market rules already exist (*see Appendix B*).

Rules should reflect the vision and mission of the market and provide straightforward operating guidelines. For farmers markets, the following areas should be addressed:

- **Basics.** Include information such as the opening and closing dates of the market, the day(s) of the week it operates, and its time and location.
- **Mission.** It is important to include a clear statement of a market's purpose and goals and how it plans to implement its mission

- **Structure.** Briefly describe how the market organization is structured. Is there a board of directors and/or a staff? What is the relationship among vendors, board members, and managers? Who will make what kinds of decisions? How will disputes be addressed?
- **Vendor Requirements.** Rules define the types of vendors that are eligible to sell at the market and state procedures for application, fees, and membership. Are there restrictions on what vendors can sell, where products are grown or made, and who completed the work?

Producer-Only vs. Reseller Markets. The allowance or restriction of reselling is one of the most problematic aspects of many farmers markets. Should a farmer be allowed to buy and resell fresh produce or other products from another grower, or should every vendor sell only what is harvested at his or her farm? Existing markets vary widely. Some are strictly “sell-only-what-you-grow” (producer-only), while others are “anything-goes.” Some require that only local produce be resold. Others state that an item can be resold only when the vendor’s crop comes in short for a particular week. Still others have special allowances for farmer cooperatives. Each farmers market member must understand that violating the chosen rule is a breach of good faith with other vendors. Consequences of violations should be stated in the bylaws. The Pennsylvania Manual (2006: 13) summarizes the trade-offs.

RULE: Allow vendors to resell another grower’s products.

1. Positive:
 - Ensures consumers will find the widest selections and longest in-season period possible.
 - Can be tempered with an “in-state source,” maximum-percent, temporary shortfall allowance, or “buy-resell if no one is growing it” rule.
2. Negative:
 - Weakens direct-from-the-grower authenticity.
 - Is harder to verify, even with tempering rules.
 - Can undermine the sales of a grower when other vendors resell the same product, perhaps disrupting the market.

RULE: Restrict products to only what the vendors grow.

3. Positive:
 - Assures consumer of authentic direct-from-the-grower purchase.
 - Easier to verify compliance.
 - Rewards the more innovative producers.
 - More likely to win support of community businesses.
4. Negative:
 - Disappoints shoppers when growers do not have a desired product available.
 - Requires growers to more carefully plan timing and selection of their crops.

(PA 2006: 13)

Membership and Application Process. The process for becoming and remaining a participant in the market should be clearly laid out. The explanation should include a general timeline of when applications will be posted, how they can be accessed, when they will be due, when and how accepted vendors will be notified, and what else will be necessary to prepare for market season. Rules should clarify what vendors should expect on market day. For instance, whether stall locations are guaranteed for the full season and how assignments will be determined should be clearly spelled out. It is also important to state what documents and licensing will be required from vendors. A market may want copies of documents like organic certifications, nursery or food processor licenses, health department approval papers, proof of insurance, business licenses, etc. Many markets require a signed member agreement form from vendors. The rules and the application should also clearly state the market’s right to refuse membership to any one. A market does not have to take all applicants.

Market Day Procedure. It is vital that all participants in the market are aware of how they are expected to operate on market days. When should vendors arrive, how should they go about parking and setting up, when and how do they pay, etc? Make sure vendors know what is required of them in regards to:

- Attendance and punctuality
- Cautiousness with vehicles



Omak Farmers Market, Omak, Washington

- Respectful and appropriate behavior
- Cleanliness
- Labeling and pricing

Quality of Market Products. The rules should establish the market manager's right to monitor the quality and authenticity of the crops being sold. Enforcing standards for who produces the products and their quality and freshness is critical to the success of the market because these attributes are generally what attracts consumers to shop there. Consumers value taste, nutrition, food safety, and, perhaps most of all, knowing where their food comes from. The viability of a market depends on its ability to offer premium quality, wholesome products from trusted sources.

Production Location. Since many markets have a mission to support local agriculture, their rules often limit farmer eligibility to a specific geographical region, such as a particular county, a set of counties, or a state. For example, vendors selling at the Seattle Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance markets must grow their own products and they must be grown in Washington State. At least some amount of geographical diversity may be desirable in order to offer a wider range of products. If a market does allow reselling, rules can require vendors to source products locally and to display signs showing the products' origin and grower (FL 2006: 17). As stated below, it is important for markets to reserve the right to make farm inspections to verify the location of the production if necessary.

Hold Harmless. Participating in farmers markets involves risks to both vendors and customers. A "hold harmless" clause can be included in the market rules in which vendors agree not to hold the market responsible for injuries or accidents

that might happen to them while they are at the market. The written rules should state, in general, what the market is and is not liable for. Even with the market's own liability insurance to protect against site-wide costs such as customer injury, it is still important for vendors to have their own insurance for themselves, their products, and their equipment.

Allowing Craft and Food Vendors. A farmers market must determine, absolutely, whether or not it will allow the sale of crafts and/or prepared foods and, if so, how many vendors should be allowed to represent each category. Referring back to the research conducted in the vendor analysis and the overall vision and mission of the market can help answer this question.

Craft Vendors. Whether to allow the sale of crafts at farmers markets has been an ongoing debate for many years. Here are some things to consider:

- WSFMA policies require member markets to maintain a majority of overall sale from farmers. This is because a large part of the Association's ultimate mission is to serve small farmers and support local agriculture.
- Some communities can support food only farmers markets. These are often dense urban markets.
- People buy food every week, but they only occasionally buy crafts. If a market wants to encourage weekly return customers, the focus should be on meeting grocery needs and crafts should be a secondary consideration. A strong guideline is to set the maximum number of crafters at 20-30% of total vendors.
- Crafts create a colorful, festive, and diverse atmosphere at markets. Allowing their participation supports local artists in making direct sales and, thus, the local economy.
- Look for quality in crafts as well as quality in foods. There will likely be more willing crafters than room available. Establishing a jurying committee comprised of neighborhood art experts from galleries or art commissions can help make the decision of what crafts to allow more systematic and fair.



Spokane Farmers Market, Spokane, WA

Prepared Food Vendors. Having hot or ready-to-eat foods and drinks at a farmers market can be a lot of extra work, but it can also help draw an entirely new crowd to a market site and increase overall sales to support the market's operation. Special considerations may need to be made for prepared food vendors such as electrical needs for cooking equipment and local health department regulations.

- Prepared food sales could potentially compete with nearby restaurants or with farmer sales if shoppers only plan to spend a certain amount of money.
- Markets may want to give preference to prepared food vendors that use local farm products.
- Markets offer a great location for incubating new value-added farm products and food businesses.
- Prepared food vendors can be juried in the same spirit as crafter-juries.

Depending on the size of the market, it may be worth designing slightly different applications for different vendor categories and, also, keeping track of their information and sales in separate spreadsheets. Refer to the Record Keeping chapter in Section 2 (Best Practices) for more specific suggestions.

Making Rules Effective. There is no point in having rules if they are not consistently enforced. Only when understood and respected, can rules keep “the market from dissolving into numerous petty arguments” (KDA 2006: 11). The rules need to define who is responsible for making sure they are followed (most often, the market manager) and, also, clearly state the consequences if they are not

followed. A market may want to establish a penalty system based on the severity and frequency of possible offenses. While a minor infraction might result in a warning or a fine, the most severe penalty would be the termination of the right to participate in the market.

In order to assure that a grower has actually produced the products being sold, some markets require or reserve the right to make farm inspections. These requirements should be stated upfront in the rules and, ideally, farmer permission to make farm visits should be granted as part of a signed membership agreement.

Regardless of how strong a market's rules may be, they are useless unless each vendor receives and reads them. Some markets have vendors sign statements that they have read and understood the rules as part of a membership agreement. For vendors who do not read in English or do not read, someone from the market should review the rules with them orally in their own language.

Hints for Making Rules

1. Rules should be easily understood.
2. Rules should be written down and made available to all members and sponsors
3. Rules need to be fairly and consistently enforced.
4. Rules should work to the advantage of the producers selling at the market.
5. Rules should protect the credibility of the market by requiring producers to properly label and represent product at the market
6. Rules should protect the market. (KDA: 2006: 9)

When it comes to an exhaustive examination of a farmers market rules, no document is more comprehensive than *Farmers Market Rules, Regulations and Opportunities* by Neil Hamilton. Hamilton emphasizes that:

The farmer is the critical element in any successful farmers market. Without local farmers raising the type of foods customers want to buy – and without farmers willing to load their produce, bring it to the market, and set up a booth to sell it – farmers markets wouldn't exist. That is why it is important to consider the operation of the markets from the

perspective of the farmers who are the vendors. (2002: 39).

Hamilton provides a list of questions that a farmer should ask about a market and an interesting survey of legal cases that have arisen at farmers markets that exemplify the importance of having rules regarding behaviors and grievances procedures, products, vendor/market relations and public policy issues. Another useful resource is the publication "Understanding Farmer's Market Rules" from the "Farmers' Legal Action Group", www.flaginc.org (Speier and Krueger 2006).

In Washington, if a market would like to be a member of the WSFMA, the market will need to follow the organization's written guidelines. A complete set of WSFMA guidelines can be found in Appendix A.

Developing a Budget. The strategic planning committee has the job of reviewing and revising the short and long-term goals of the new organization, as first drafted by the steering committee.

Among the most important challenges of strategic planning are raising funds and budgeting. In order to project a budget early on in the planning stages, the committee will want to consider all possible sources of funds and expenses, many of which were previously researched for the feasibility study (see page 11 for a list of potential expenses). Ideally, in-kind donations may eliminate some expenses. Potential costs include such items as site rental and improvements, permits and licenses, salaries, promotion and advertising, insurance, and miscellaneous equipment and supplies.

After considering all anticipated expenses, the strategic planning committee will need to plan how costs will be covered and establish accounting procedures. It is important to have a well-organized record keeping system. At this point, contact should be made with all possible sponsors and donors. The team may also want to seek out the availability of appropriate grants.

Fee Structure. The board of directors usually determines the fee structure. In general, fees charged to vendors should accurately reflect their proportion of the actual costs of operating the market. These fees are needed to generate the funds for hiring

a market manager, securing a site, advertising and promotion, etc. In reality, some markets can support higher vendor fees than others based on the strength of farmer sales and the desirability of the market for vendors. Markets in low-income or rural neighborhoods may have difficulty attracting vendors if they set their fees too high.

Stall fees are normally assessed for each vendor and should be carefully explained in the market rules. Fees may be daily or seasonal and they may be set at a flat rate or based on a percentage of gross daily sales. Requiring prepayment of seasonal stall fees or a membership fee at the beginning of the season helps to cover essential market start-up costs. The Kentucky Manual (2005: 14) provides a worksheet for determining fee rates based on adding up and dividing the market's expenses among members.

Ideally, the Strategic Planning Team will be able to create a multi-year budget, though this may be a difficult task prior to the first market season. Financial reports should be made on a regular basis and projections and budget plans should be adjusted accordingly. Those planning and managing the budget should stay in close contact the other planning teams to make sure that all financial needs are addressed and that everyone is working towards a similar vision. Even if the market initially succeeds in obtaining external donations, grants or sponsors to help with start-up costs, it is still important to develop a plan and a timeline for becoming financially self-sustaining. The ultimate financial goal is a self-supported market operation.

Site Selection. The site committee follows up on the research conducted in the site analysis to select and prepare a market site. If all or part of the market site resides on the property of a private owner, use parameters should be negotiated. It is best to have a written and signed contract stating the agreed upon terms (i.e. whether the market will be paying rent and what areas and/or facilities will be accessible to the market). The committee should make sure that all the key elements of a successful market site outlined in Step 4, such as water, restrooms, parking, telephones, lighting and electrical outlets, are secured. The WSDA Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program's Green Book, a comprehensive handbook outlining legal requirements for direct marketing, is an excellent reference for determining what regulations need to be followed in setting up a market site (WSDA 2006).

The legal requirements for opening a market can vary substantially from one market to the next depending on where it is located. It is important to contact local authorities such as the town, city, or county, as well as state and federal regulators to determine which permits and licenses are needed. Most markets will need to acquire some sort of Special Event Permit from city officials, along with approval documents from other legal entities like the fire and/or police departments. Each of these groups may supply the site committee with a list of procedures that need to be completed prior to opening day or carried out regularly throughout the market season. Also, depending on the county, vendor licensing may be required and the local health department may have its own rules about selling meats, wine, prepared foods, food samples, or chef demonstrations.

Vendor Recruitment. The balance of vendors is an art form. Vendors must be carefully selected, considering all the relevant guidelines and restrictions laid out by the rules committee. Here are some things to think about:

- Look for quality in products and reinforce the market's mission in the selection of vendors.
- Markets, like the vendors, want to create the appearance of abundance in product and in product mix. (*see Section 2.5 Best Practices*).
- Particular items such as eggs, berries, cheese, wine, seafood and stone fruit draw in customers.
- Changes in regulations have impacted the types of products available. There has been an increase in the availability of meats and cheese, wine, and hard ciders. However, there has been a decrease in the availability of processed products such as jams and pickles with the enforcement of licensing requirements.
- Beware of exclusive agreements with vendors. Research has shown that with an increase in the number of vendors selling the same product, there is an increase in the amount of sales of that product. Customers respond positively to increases in abundance and choice of products. However, also be cautious that the market is not saturated with a single product beyond the point of positive competition.

Locating farmer vendors. Other markets can be a good source for finding growers, however it is highly advisable as good form to obtain the permission of the market manager before soliciting growers and other vendors at a market. Many markets will share this information, and many maintain waiting lists. Some markets will not share this information. Also, many private and public agencies will not provide lists of farmers or producers, but will forward requests. Possible resources include:

1. Washington State University Extension
2. Tilth Producers of Washington Directory
3. Washington State Department of Agriculture Small Farm Direct Marketing Program
4. Washington State Farmers Market Association
5. Farm Guides and Maps
6. Other farmers
7. Farmer associations and organizations

Insurance. Every market must have general liability insurance. While it is possible to find a market sponsor that will extend its own insurance policy to a market (for example, the Puyallup Farmers Market is covered under the policy of its sponsor, the Puyallup Main Street Association), most markets will need to get a separate insurance policy specifically for the market. In general, every market location requires its own separate coverage. The WSFMA offers access to market general liability coverage as a benefit of membership. About 80% of farmers markets in Washington are insured through this program. The 2006 WSFMA policy was secured through American States Insurance Company, a division of Seattle-based Safeco Insurance. It is managed by Conover Insurance, a Washington-based insurance brokerage with offices throughout the state.

The 2006 WSFMA policy offered \$1 million in "per occurrence coverage," and it sets the standard for farmers market insurance by most municipalities and private landowners in the state. In 2006, the annual premium for this coverage was \$400, and required WSFMA membership. Some municipalities may ask for \$2 million in coverage per occurrence. While this additional coverage is available, it may cost more, and often, when the statewide standard is explained, they are willing to accept the \$1 million level of coverage. Confer with WSFMA



Port Townsend Farmers Market, Port Townsend, WA

and/or its insurance broker, or another agent for more information regarding general liability or “slip and fall” coverage for markets.

Markets may also require individual vendors to show proof of having purchased their own liability insurance. The Risk Management chapter in the Best Practices section contains information on how to keep the market safe so that insurance will never have to be used. For example, the WSFMA requires markets to have vendors sign agreements regarding canopy safety. The reason farmers market coverage is currently so affordable in Washington is the diligence of managers in keeping their markets safe (*see Risk Management Section 2.3*).

Record keeping. Record keeping systems should be in place before opening day and vendors need to understand the record keeping that will be expected of them. It is a good idea for markets to clearly explain record keeping requirements for vendors in their Market Rules. Suggestions for vendor and market record keeping are described in detail in Section 2.1.

Opening Day. Regular committee meetings should be held throughout the planning process, but it is vital that a market hold at least one organized full-group meeting before opening day. This meeting will provide an opportunity for each team to report what has been done and present any complications that have arisen. The original steering committee should have a master list of all necessary tasks to be completed ready for review at

this meeting.

The Grand Opening of a market should be nothing short of a community happening. Planning for Opening Day should begin months in advance. As soon as the market’s location is set and a date for the opening has been declared, it is critical to start getting the word out. The market will need to have an abundance of vendors, fresh produce and customers right out of the starting gate so that everyone who comes on the first day will want to come on the second, third and fourth days. While planning for vendors and produce may already be completed, attracting customers is vital. Try to make the Opening Day Event such a spectacle that people will not want to miss it.

Consider inviting the mayor, county executive, congressperson, or other prominent elected official to cut a ribbon and make a proclamation officially opening the market. Make the market as colorful as possible on Opening Day so that it will be impossible to drive past without stopping. Host an abundance of activities, such as chef demonstrations, fun things for children to do, live music, balloons, and street performers. Plaster the front window of every business with a poster announcing Opening Day. For a cost-effective and lasting impact, design a poster that can be left up all season long. Three to five weeks before Opening Day, over-street or light-pole banners and posters should be up. Residential neighborhoods can also be filled with distinctive yard signs announcing the market. In the two weeks prior to Opening Day, try to appear on all locally oriented television and radio programs. In the months before opening, bring leaflets, yard signs and posters to every community meeting possible and request the opportunity to make a short announcements about the new market.

For more information and ideas, see the Low Budget Promotions & Media chapter and also the Communications & Outreach chapter on “Outreach to public officials” both in the Best Practices section.

Best Practices in Market Management **2**

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2.1 Record Keeping

Ways to Measure and Track Progress

Good records form the cornerstone of a successful business. A farmers market is a business and each vendor is also a business. Keeping track of the particulars and the history of a market's performance over time is essential to effective future planning. Good market records should include the basic information required for each market's annual report to the Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA), as well as the information necessary to assess market performance and make improvements. Learning from the record-keeping strategies of experienced market managers and employing new software options (*see Technology Tools, Section 2.4*) can make the task of designing, collecting, and managing data easier. Two categories of records are important: data about the market as a whole and data about vendors.

Market Data. Tracking market information allows managers to understand business trends and cycles and more accurately predict how the market will perform. For example, studying customer numbers throughout the season can help to detect seasonal fluctuations and understand the impacts of various external and internal events or circumstances. If a particular local event consistently reduces customer foot traffic and vendor sales each year, the manager can remind farmers the week before the event to reduce how much they bring to market. Or if strawberry season results in a dramatic spike in foot traffic each season, a manager might be inspired to develop a special event or a marketing campaign to capitalize on this trend. Tracking baseline attendance over time also helps to measure and evaluate the impacts of various promotional strategies or changes to the market.

Market records should include:

- Total market sales (daily)
- Sales in different vendor categories (daily)
- Stall fees collected
- All other income and expenses by amount, type and date
- Weather conditions for each market day
- Customer foot traffic counts
- External special events
- Timing and types of promotional effort
- Seasons for crops and duration at market

Vendor Data should be collected weekly or daily. This information allows the market to track the performance of vendors and vendor categories in order to maximize overall market performance. It also helps evaluate vendor stall assignments to determine the most effective market layout. Finally, it allows the market to provide reports to the WSFMA and to individual vendors. These reports can help vendors improve their sales and file their taxes.

While the vendor records needed are rather straightforward, collecting them, especially sales data, has sometimes been a sensitive issue. In response, some markets have implemented anonymous sales reporting systems. These systems put vendors at ease about their privacy, but they make it far more difficult to draw useful conclusions from the data or to collect stall fees based on a percentage of sales. Today, most farmers selling at Washington markets are becoming accustomed to providing sales numbers, regardless of how the market's stall fees are calculated.

Open vendor sales reporting helps managers assess how well individual vendors are doing at the market and allows them to assess how well categories of vendors are doing. It also helps them see how particular seasonal crops influence the market. Managers need to understand the types of products that are in demand in order to maintain a vibrant market. In markets with limited space, a structure based on sales also insures that the market is maximizing its potential. Thus an open system for data reporting is preferable to an anonymous system.

In either case, tracking vendor data is required for WSFMA members. It is also critical for market success since it allows managers to determine which strategies are working. In addition, sales data can be invaluable for demonstrating the economic power of a market to local policy-makers, the business community, and other community stakeholders. These numbers can be used to promote the market, impress the media, and recruit new vendors. The WSFMA uses sales data to educate local and state government officials about the economic impacts of farmers markets, resulting in such legislation as the Farmers Market Wine Sales bill and increased funding for Farmers Market Nutrition Programs.

Vendor records should include:

- Individual vendor sales
- Stall fees paid by each vendor
- Vendor stall location
- Vendor category
- Crops grown and number of weeks available
- Vendor contact information (including family and partners)
- Farm or business name and location
- Records of important correspondence, forms, and conversations
- Lists of current, past, and potential vendors

Keeping Track of Shoppers. Learning as much as possible about customer spending preferences and habits, how they receive information about the market, what motivates them to come to the market, and what keeps them away, is vital to both vendor and market success. There are simple and effective ways to estimate customer attendance. However, collecting other kinds of customer information can

feel daunting. Understandably, many people feel shy about contacting strangers and asking them questions about their shopping preferences and behaviors. Market managers can make customer data collection more practical and more fun by using the techniques described in the next section (2.2).



Prosser Farmers Market, Prosser, WA



2.2 Market Evaluation

Useful Assessment Tools

This section provides background and ideas for managers and board members to implement effective evaluations. Since the purpose of evaluation is to find ways to improve a market, a goal of improving the experience of the vendors, the shoppers, and the market staff and volunteers should help guide the process. Keeping this purpose in the forefront helps board members and market managers avoid trivial conflicts and stay focused on the end goal of enhancing the market.

The information gathered and utilized for evaluation can take many forms, including the records that track vendor sales, customer counts, and weather data; the results of a Rapid Market Assessment; and surveys of vendors taken at the close of the market season. In addition, useful information can come from a manager's own careful observations and ongoing conversations with vendors, board members, volunteers, and shoppers. Successful, responsive markets regularly gather both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate their current status and plan their futures.

Self-Evaluation. Market managers and board members should be in the habit of looking at their market with a critical eye and a view toward improvement. There may be some areas in need of improvement that cannot be addressed immediately due to limited financial resources. However, identifying and recording these areas is helpful to future planning and can assist market managers in developing creative or short-term solutions. It is a good idea to keep a three-ring binder and/or a computer folder to track ideas for evaluating the market's performance as well as information that monitors how the market is doing. A self-evaluation should consider the following areas:

- **Staffing:** Is there adequate market staff to ensure coverage on market day? What about staffing behind the scenes, such as bookkeeping?
- **Rules and Governance:** Does the market need to add or clarify an existing policy in its rules? Are vendor requests and issues addressed efficiently and equitably?
- **Budget:** Are resources being strategically invested to ensure safety, build market sales, and improve the vendor and shopper experience?
- **Market Layout:** Does foot traffic flow through the market, offering a sense of fullness and liveliness while not being

overcrowded?

- **Parking:** What are vendors and shoppers saying about the parking situation?
- **Safety:** Are shoppers and vendors safe from vehicle traffic flow? What kind of barriers or signage could be used to enhance safety? Are best management practices being employed to ensure food safety?
- **Vendor Sales and Vendor Mix:** What strategies could be used to support vendors in building their sales? Is there enough variety of products and diversity of vendors to keep shoppers interested?
- **Market Mission and Goals:** Is the market fulfilling its mission as presented to community leaders and partners?

Peer Evaluation. Peer evaluators can help managers look at some of the issues related to market operations and future enhancements from a fresh perspective. A set of fresh eyes may be able to uncover management problems and solutions that have escaped the market's managers throughout the season. At the same time, participating in the evaluation of another market can provide insights into a board member or a manager's own market. Farmers markets are places where both competition and cooperation thrive, and many managers are surprised at the willingness of other market managers to help them improve their own market.

Peer evaluation can take many forms. Perhaps the most common method is to set up an "exchange" with another market, in which at some time during the season—preferably during the peak season—staff and board members from market "A" visit market "B" and vice versa. The activities undertaken during an exchange day can vary depending on the kind of information and insights desired by each market. Often the centerpiece of such an exchange is a Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) (*see description below*). Representatives of one or more markets work together to assess a market, meeting beforehand to discuss objectives and afterward to talk about their findings and what they might mean to the market.

A market exchange day or a series of market exchange days throughout the season is an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships with other markets, to build a support network, and to address issues of mutual concern—for example, state or local policies that might affect multiple markets. WSU Extension offices can often provide staffing



Dot Survey, 2004 Rapid Market Assessment, Friday Harbor, WA

support to help organize a market exchange. See the WSU Small Farms Team website at www.smallfarms.wsu.edu for more information and local contacts.

Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) is a simple and effective tool for learning more about a market. The RMA process was developed by a team from Oregon State University led by Larry Lev (Lev et al 2004). It is a three-component process that includes:

1. An easy, effective system for tracking customer foot traffic.
2. A fun, colorful and interactive method of collecting shopper feedback on a series of focused questions.
3. A debriefing period during which the market receives feedback and input from participating representatives of other markets, as well as a discussion among participants and managers about what they observed and learned.

Each segment of the RMA process is valuable to the market when done alone or in combination.

The full RMA process is designed to be a collaborative effort among a number of markets. Beyond a tool for making individual market improvements; it can be a shared learning experience within the greater market community. Market managers often feel isolated, rarely getting a chance to see how other markets operate. By involving representatives from other markets, as well as county extension educators, WSDA staff, and others who can provide useful input, a market benefits from the focused attention and diverse experiences of the participants. Indeed, while the target market learns from its fellow markets, those markets also learn from each other. What's more, the collaborative effort of the RMA process strengthens bonds between markets and fosters

cooperation that contributes to building a climate that fosters the success of all markets.

On a purely logistical level, it can be difficult for a market to round up enough staff or volunteers to successfully carry out an RMA, especially the first time. Enlisting sufficient help from outside the market and from other markets frees up remaining market staff to attend to the regular business of the market. Optimally, over time markets can develop their own core of experienced locals—staff, volunteers, neighboring business representatives, community groups, extension personnel, local government officials, etc.—who can effectively carry out periodic RMAs on their own.

Larry Lev and the OSU team have prepared a 21-page document called *Tools for Rapid Market Assessments* that provides clear instructions on how to stage an RMA (Lev et al 2004). Managers, board members, and community members can learn RMA techniques by studying this resource and participating in an organized RMA training hosted by WSU, OSU, or WSFMA, or by attending an RMA workshop at WSFMA's annual conference. Below is a brief introduction to each of the three components in the RMA process.

1. Market counts or foot traffic counts, provide a relatively easy, systematic means for estimating total market attendance. Volunteers with clickers are stationed at each market entrance to count and record incoming shoppers for the first 10 minutes of each hour. This data can then be multiplied to estimate the number of shoppers for each hour and day of the market. Ideally, these counts should be conducted and recorded every week, each day the market is open, so that patterns can be discerned.

Matching market counts with sales data, weather, seasonal crop availability and other information provides revealing and often surprising information to help make critical decisions about market operations (see *Record Keeping Section 2.1*). In addition to sales figures, market counts can provide the market with public relations information. For example, the Roslyn Sunday Market counts found that the market averaged 800 people per day in 2006, a remarkable figure considering that Roslyn only has a population of 1200. In this case, the market count demonstrates the importance of the market to the community.

2. "Doing the Dots" is a quick way to collect shopper

feedback. In a dot survey, three or four flip charts are erected in a carefully selected location of the market, each with one question and several answer options laid out in columns beneath it. Volunteers stand by the charts to engage passing shoppers and offer them dot stickers. For each question, shoppers are asked to place a dot on the one answer category that best matches their response.

Since there can only be a few survey questions, these should be constructed with utmost care to provide the key information desired by the market. Questions should be short and easy to comprehend, and the list of response choices should be clear and inclusive. Lists of potential questions can be found in Lev et al (2004) or at an RMA training. Each market should construct its own surveys based on its unique needs. While it is tempting to rely on findings from other markets, the characteristics of shoppers, and the factors that influence them, can vary significantly from one market to the next.

It is important to think outside the confines of the market when asking questions. For example, shoppers can be asked how much they spend at neighboring businesses in conjunction with their trips to the market. This kind of information can be invaluable for educating and influencing local government officials and neighboring businesses. Other questions may be designed to better understand the characteristics of the shoppers such as where they live, family size, income, or preferred products. It is better not to present this process as a survey, which may hold a negative stigma, but rather as an opportunity to help improve the market, or as “an invitation to do the dots.”

Using several different colors of dots can create a colorful, festive look that may help draw shoppers’ interest. Different color themes can provide the ability to change colors mid-market, which can help illustrate response changes, if any, over the course of the market day. For example, do afternoon shoppers feel differently about the market than the customers who arrive first thing in the morning?

3. Debriefing. The goal of debriefing is to get detailed feedback from people who have diverse market perspectives and experiences. Soliciting the constructive comments and observations from the RMA team is the key benefit of the full RMA. Debriefing also serves to deepen the participatory problem-solving process of the RMA and facilitates

the cooperative flow of support and information between markets.

As useful as it is, an RMA is only one method of gathering information for evaluation. It represents a snapshot of the market on a particular day. To be most useful, the data collected during an RMA should be supplemented with continuous observations and record keeping; and documentation of the ideas, feedback, and further insights that will certainly arise among vendors, shoppers, managers, and board members.

Annual Reports: Giving Form to Evaluations.

At the close of each market season, the market management should prepare a report summarizing the results of the many forms of evaluation it has conducted. The report should be distributed to:

- The market’s board or other governing body
- The vendors
- Local merchants’ groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce or business association
- Sponsors and other community partners
- Other markets
- Local government officials

In addition to a written report, it is a good idea to develop a short presentation summarizing the key points. The delivery of this presentation by the market manager or a board member can help to build goodwill and a sense of ownership of the market, particularly among the community partners and local government officials whose support could help enhance the market in future years. Delivering this report in-person also provides an opportunity to listen to questions and concerns, to engage new community partners, to reach out to prospective new board members, and to find new sources of support for the market.

Just as the evaluation should take stock of both quantitative and qualitative information, so too should the report reflect both measurable numbers and the meanings that have been uncovered behind the statistics.

Quantitative Information - Examples

1. Number of vendors involved
2. Number of shoppers (estimated)
To find the total market audience, multiply

the estimated number of shoppers at each market day times the number of market days. Include vendors in this count since they often purchase items from each other.

3. Gross market sales and total economic impact of the market
4. Key numbers from shopper surveys, including market spillover effect
5. Other statistics that provide an overview of the market's importance to the community

Qualitative Information – Examples

1. A comment from a farmer about how the market has made her farm profitable again
2. A comment from a shopper about how the market has made it easier to prepare healthy, nutritious foods
3. A comment from a non-profit vendor about how the market has raised the visibility of

their organization in the community

4. A photo of a child eating a fresh fruit or vegetable
5. A photo of a farmer and a shopper interacting
6. Observations

The Annual Report is an opportunity to communicate the market's impact on the community. An annual report can be an outreach tool that tells the story of how the market is helping to sustain farms and farmland, how it improves access to healthy food for people of all income levels, how it builds civic culture, and how it supports and expands regional business activity and entrepreneurship. It can also be a valuable yardstick for measuring progress over time.



2.3 Risk Management

Establishing a Safe Market

Risks are inherent in farming and in farmers markets. Risk management is a blanket term that encompasses both the insurance needed to protect a market against liability claims, as well as the preventative measures that can be taken to minimize the chance of problems occurring in the first place. While a critical aspect of any business, risk management is too commonly overlooked in market situations. Keeping a market safe and secure is the responsibility of all vendors, staff, and board members; however, the market manager should take a strong leadership role in creating a culture of safety and protecting the market from accidents and financial loss.

Insurance

General liability insurance is commonly known as a “slip and fall” policy. This insurance covers incidents of physical injuries and property damage resulting from regular farmers market activities and incidents caused by the negligence of the market management. Such incidents might include someone tripping over a display or power cord, a wind-blown canopy or table hitting someone or something, or a market-related vehicle hitting a pedestrian or a car. Market management negligence generally means that an incident should have been foreseen and actions taken to prevent it.

The Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) offers member markets access to an excellent and affordable insurance program, which provides up to \$1 million liability coverage per incident, with an annual limit of \$5 million per market, for only \$400 per year (as of 2006). The policy covers all regular market day activities with general liability coverage, including the market’s officially designated parking area and vendor canopies, street banners and light pole flags.

The WSFMA policy comes with a \$1,000 deductible per incident designed to help keep premiums down by sharing the risk with the market and by creating an incentive for markets to emphasize risk reduction. Many markets include language in their vendor agreement or contract that passes the deductible on to the vendor should their negligence result in a claim. WSFMA requires that all its member markets have specific language in their vendor agreements or contracts regarding canopy safety (*see Appendix A, Member Policy #9*).

The policy offered by WSFMA generally does not cover special events such as petting zoos, beer or wine gardens, or parades. It also excludes market vehicles, most injuries to market staff, or theft of market property (contact WSFMA for current specifics on coverage). Other insurance, such as Workers Compensation from the Department of Labor and Industries, auto insurance, property insurance or special event riders, may be available to cover these risk exposures. Special event riders may be available through WSFMA’s insurance broker.

Product Liability Insurance. It is highly advisable for individual farmers to purchase their own product liability insurance. Some markets require vendors to carry certain levels of insurance coverage and to show proof of such insurance. Regardless of market requirements, this is the insurance needed by individual farmers to protect themselves in case a customer becomes sick after eating their product. Farmers should consult an insurance agent about their specific business needs.

Managing for Market Safety. Market managers should not plan on using their insurance. The relatively low insurance premiums enjoyed by farmers markets in Washington is the result of a long history of managers taking responsibility for keeping farmers markets a low risk event. The experience of many years has produced a list of common hazards at farmers markets, and, fortunately, best practice standards to help reduce their incidence.

Canopy Safety. Wind-blown canopies and umbrellas are the number one cause of insurance claims for farmers markets, but all, or nearly all, of these claims are preventable. Wind is unpredictable and can come without warning, toppling improperly secured canopies and umbrellas. Most wind-blown canopy insurance claims happen at the end of the market day, when the wind picks up and blows over a canopy left improperly secured in the process of packing up a display. As other displays come down, windbreaks are removed. The danger is exacerbated because vendors often detach their canopy weights from their canopies, but leave the canopy standing.

All canopies, umbrellas, and other forms of stall cover must be sufficiently and safely secured to the ground, from the moment the canopy is erected at the start of the market day until the moment immediately before it is taken down at the end



Dome District Farmers Market, Tacoma, WA

of the market day. *Sufficiently* means at least 24 pounds per leg for canopies, and at least 50 pounds for umbrellas (these figures may change—contact WSFMA for the current standard). *Safely* means that the method used to secure the canopy does not create its own safety hazards:

- Canopy weights should not cause a tripping hazard
- Canopy weights should be tethered with lines that are clearly visible
- Canopy weights should have soft edges to avoid causing scrapes and cuts
- Canopy weights should be secured to the bottom of the canopy's legs, with tethers stretching up to the inside corner of the canopy to lower the center of gravity
- Canopy weights should be securely attached to the canopy

Understand How Market Shoppers Behave.

Customers shopping at farmers markets are looking straight ahead, waist-level, at vendor tables. They are not looking at the ground or above their heads for hazards. It is essential to protect customers by eliminating obstacles or by calling attention to them. Orange cones, flags, tape, and other bright objects can be used to draw attention downward or upward to notice hazards such as cracks in the pavement, uneven surfaces, tree roots, curbs, canopy weights, ground level displays, etc. Avoid running power cords across public walkways. If a cord must cross a path, it should be well-marked and covered with a rubber or plastic traffic cover. Regularly scan the market environment for slippery surfaces or debris, exposed sharp points and edges, and unstable tables or stands.

Vehicle Traffic. Customer parking should be clearly marked and the pathways to and from the market should be obvious and safe. When market parking lots are across the street from the market site, crosswalks should be clearly marked and “pedestrian crossing” warning signs should be placed at either end of the market to alert passing vehicles to pedestrian traffic.

The market should have clear start and closing times and clear policies keeping vehicles out of the area when shoppers are present. Vendor vehicles should either be parked by their stalls or offsite at least 10 minutes prior to opening. Likewise, vendors should not enter the market with their vehicles until 10 minutes after the market closes. Vendors arriving late for market set-up should carry in their products rather than driving through pedestrians.

Street Closure and Parking Lot Markets. Check with local authorities to determine requirements for street closures. Markets held on closed-off streets should use very large, highly visible, unavoidable barriers at each end of the market and anywhere else vehicle traffic might enter the market. There should be no opportunity for stray traffic to enter the market. Physical barricades such as street barricades, police cars, and vendor vehicles are appropriate barriers.

Bright colored, well-labeled street closure signs should be placed at the closure and a block before the actual closure. These signs can be obtained through construction safety supply companies. They are usually collapsible for storage and transportation, and many are now made from lightweight, durable fabrics. It's also a good idea to station a market staff person or volunteer at each end of the market to intercept and control vehicles before they can enter the market. Before setting up a new market in a street or parking lot, visit other markets to observe how they control traffic.

Market Security. It is important for vendors, shoppers and staff to feel secure at the market. Vendors and market managers frequently deal with large quantities of cash and they need to feel safe conducting business. Shoppers should not have to fear harassment or theft. To achieve these goals, begin with strong, clear language in the market rules that empowers staff to quickly deal with disputes and threatening behavior. Police should be called immediately if a situation appears threatening or

out of control. Crime can be prevented by reminding vendors to watch their cash boxes, reducing the amount of cash stored on site, establishing safe bank deposit procedures, and by encouraging everyone to look out for each other. Encourage a regular police presence and consider hiring a security guard if crime becomes a concern.

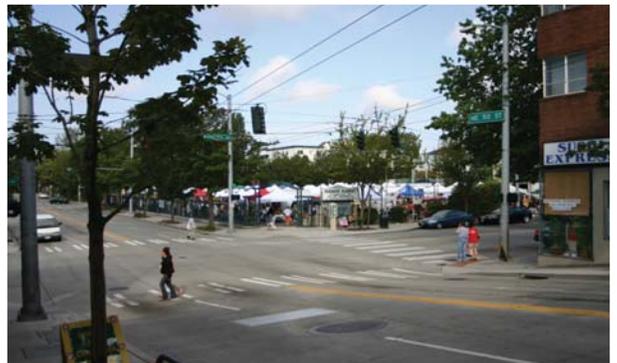
Food Safety and Handling. Reducing the risk of foodborne illness is a crucial aspect of protecting customers, farmers, and the market. Best management practices for minimizing microbial contamination of fresh produce should be taught and implemented all the way from the farm to the consumer. On the farm, good agricultural practices begin with maintaining and monitoring soil and water cleanliness. Manure applications and contaminated irrigation and washing water are of special concern. Workers, equipment, and livestock can potentially spread bacteria, viruses and parasites as well.

Measures such as carefully tracking and timing manure applications (manure should not be applied within 120 days of harvest), providing clean restrooms and hand washing facilities for workers and other farm visitors (including soap and single-use towels), and regular irrigation water testing can help reduce production risks. At harvest, packing facilities, equipment, and bins need to be regularly washed and sanitized. Wash water quality should be carefully maintained and monitored. Finally, properly cooling, storing, transporting, and handling produce reduce the potential for pathogen growth.

A pamphlet from Cornell, “Food Safety Begins on the Farm” provides an excellent summary and checklist of good agricultural practices (GAPS) for fresh produce growers (<http://www.gaps.cornell.edu/Educationalmaterials/Samples/PamphletEng.pdf> or Cornell GAPS Program, 607-255-1428). This brochure or similar materials should be distributed to each market grower. Meats and processed foods require distinct sets of handling procedures (for Washington see the Handbook of Regulations for Direct Farm Marketing, WSDA 2006, <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/056-Greenbook-web.pdf>). Finally, at the market, the manager needs to ensure the availability of good hand washing stations and require proper food handling practices and permits as needed.

Market Day Communications. Establishing good communication systems among market staff and vendors can help prevent problems and enable a quick response if something does go wrong on market day.

- Have a set system for directing vendor traffic in and out of the market during setup and breakdown.
- Give staff two-way radios in larger markets.
- Clearly instruct both staff and vendors about where each vendor’s stall is located, and give staff clear instructions as to how to handle any problems that arise with regard to vendor stall assignments.
- Make sure market staff and signage clearly inform the general public that the market is closed to them during setup and breakdown times for their safety.
- Have a clearly spelled out system for handling any problems that arise during the market day.
- Make sure market staff and vendors know how problems and disputes should be solved and who is designated to handle them.
- Make sure that market staff and volunteers are clearly identifiable to the public should a problem arise (i.e. use badges, nametags, matching T-shirts, etc.).
- Have clear emergency procedures in place for accidents, medical emergencies, safety or crime issues, fires, and natural disasters.
- Consider a regular market communications bulletin for vendors, staff and volunteers to be handed out once a week, or once a month, with reminders about rules and safety issues and to let vendors know about upcoming events that could affect them.



University District Farmers Market, Seattle’s oldest and largest “farmers-only” neighborhood market



2.4 Technology Tools for Markets

What Works?

Technology can play many roles in today's farmers markets. From laptop computers to cell phones to wireless EBT machines and custom software, technology can vastly improve the job of a market manager.

Record Keeping Software is highly effective for tracking and improving a market's performance and compiling financial reports. Most farmers markets use one of the following three spreadsheet-based software programs:

1. **Excel.** Currently, most markets use Excel spreadsheets to track their data. Excel can be customized to fit the needs of the market and it can sort data and deliver reports in a variety of ways. It can also manage contacts. Excel has the added benefit of being widely used, making it easier to transmit files from one computer to another and to import and export files from other software programs.
2. **QuickBooks.** Used by many markets, QuickBooks is primarily used to track financial information, although it can also manage contacts to a certain extent. It is designed to track income and outflow, manage accounts payable and receivable, plan and track budgets, calculate costs, etc. Whereas Excel needs to be configured by the user to perform many of these functions, QuickBooks comes ready to go. This readymade approach allows for ease-of-use, although sometimes less flexibility. With QuickBooks, it is helpful to obtain instruction on the software before using it.
3. **Oxdata.com** – The Farmers Market in Portland, Oregon has linked up with Portland-based OX Data Systems to design their data tracking software and their website. The OX Data system is unique in that it is web-based so that managers can input daily market data right at the market using a laptop and a wireless internet connection. A simple "Administrative Services" interface allows managers to run database queries, track vendor information, and assign stalls (for more information contact: info@oxdata.com or 503-235-8429).

Electronic Payment Systems

It is important to know who your market customers are and understand their needs and preferences. The availability of electronic payment methods and ATM machines can potentially attract new



EBT/EFT card processing devices, Olympia Farmers Market, Olympia, WA

market customers, as well as increase the potential for existing customers to spend more than they had originally intended. Electronic access to funds allows for unplanned purchases such as the first strawberries or cherries of the season or a purchase motivated by a fresh, savory sample or a conversation with a farmer about a tantalizing new recipe. In other settings, people are increasingly using debit and credit cards in place of cash, even for very small transactions. If vendors are unable to accept these payment methods, they could be missing out on tremendous opportunities.

EBT/EFT: Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) is the term used to describe the credit card-like system used to distribute government benefits, such as food stamps, social security and disability. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is the term used to describe all credit, debit and smart card transactions. Both systems work with the same technology. The largest issue for most portable markets is that processing EBT/EFT cards requires access to telephone lines and electricity. Markets that do not have access to these resources can use a combination of a battery-powered card swiping machine and a cell phone, or an all-in-one card reading machine made specifically for this purpose, located at the market manager's table or a vendor's stall. Free wireless EBT machines are now available from DSHS (Department of Social and Health Services) that use the Verizon network. However, start up, monthly, and transaction fees apply. Wireless EFT machines are also available for a cost from many different companies. Again, usage fees apply. Check with companies for their offerings and rates. This technology is evolving rapidly. Markets with an EBT/EFT set-up at the manager's table can sell market tokens using EBT or EFT.

ATM: Since most shoppers arrive at a farmers market with a set amount of cash, providing access to their bank accounts through an automated teller machine (ATM) can potentially expand the amount they spend. Market managers might consider an ATM as another option for encouraging cash flow into the market since so few vendors currently accept EBT/EFT cards.

The Internet

E-mail. If possible, all markets should take advantage of e-mail as a means of fast, efficient and inexpensive communication with market stakeholders.

Listserve. E-mail listserve allow users to send messages to a large group of people at once. They also help to build an online community of stakeholders. Listserve can be set up through online services such as yahoogroups.com or OneNW.org, and they come with a variety of management options to control access and message distribution. Listserve can be set up for the market's board, vendors and shoppers. The Neighborhood Farmers Market Association uses a listserve for weekly announcements about what fresh products are available that week.

Websites. The market's website is a both a billboard and a storefront, providing the market with exposure and credibility. A website should provide useful information, such as:

- Market bylaws and rules
- Days and hours of operation
- A map and directions
- Calendar of events
- Seasonal crop charts

- Vendor highlights
- Educational information
- Recipes
- Contact information for the market

While a website does not have to be extravagant, it should be inviting. Include pictures, if possible, and be sure to proofread the content. Above all, make sure the website is updated regularly. Out-of-date information can cost a market customers, while regular updates can showcase all that is going on at the market.

Laptops and Portable Computers are useful to have on-site to access information via the web, to input data (e.g. foot traffic counts, vendor sales, notes and observations, etc.), and to manage other information such as stall layout, rules, and vendor information.

Cash Registers and Scales are essential to doing business. It is a good idea to offer vendors information about where they can obtain appropriate registers and scales.

Digital Cameras can be used to document a market's history, activities and character. A good collection of market photos can help promote the market in publications, advertisements, and media stories. They are also useful for year-end reporting and evaluations.

Cell Phones and Two-way Radios can be indispensable for dealing with emergencies. They are also an efficient means of communication among staff in large markets.



2.5 Finessing the Right Product Mix

Optimizing Diversity, Quality, and Quantity

One of the more challenging aspects of market management is achieving the optimal product mix, coupled with verification that the vendors actually produced the products being sold. Some markets specify where products can be produced such as in the surrounding county or counties, the island upon which the market resides, or a specific mileage radius around the market. Such restrictions may focus the market on enhancing the local economy and environment, but they can also impede the market's ability to develop an adequately diverse product mix or sufficient product supply.

Product Mix. Most markets have a limited amount of space for vendors. As they mature, many markets fill up and develop vendor waiting lists. Deliberate and sometimes difficult choices have to be made to attain the right balance of vendors and products. A market's success will be determined in large part by the economic health of its vendors, and this, in turn, depends upon the combined quality and diversity of their products.

Managers should seek variety, abundance and quality in product. Setting high standards for quality will draw customers. The ideal goal is to maximize sales for vendors by ensuring that customers are getting what they want.

Finessing the right product mix is viewed as an art by some managers and a science by others. For example, the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance in Seattle has a systematic process for accepting vendors and products and assigning stalls. Its system of prioritization is clearly spelled out in the vendor rules, including such factors as the maintenance of a strong, diverse product mix; past performance including sales history; and a desire to work new vendors into new markets (see *NFMA rules, Appendix B, Part IV*). Returning vendors generally have seniority if they have fulfilled their agreements in the past.

On the other hand, Grant Davidson runs his various East King County markets – Crossroads Mall, Kirkland, Lake Forest Park, and Woodinville

– using anonymous systems for reporting sales. He uses a relationship-based approach for determining the health of product sales. He periodically visits with vendors during the market day to gain a feel for how they are doing, and he closely watches customer behavior and purchases. And while NFMA has total control over the character of its markets, Davidson has to work with three market locations--two shopping centers and one municipality--that impose restrictions on his product mix (i.e. no bakeries at one and a requirement to have local crafters at another).

Judy Kirkhuff runs four markets in Seattle: Queen Anne, Ballard, Mad Cap and Wallingford. She assesses her markets based on the percentage of the different types of products within the market versus the overall product mix, while accounting for seasonal fluctuations. The relatively short, two-page market rules explain what is required of vendors, but do not make any promises about who will be accepted. Vendor mix and participation is entirely left to the manager's discretion. Kirkhuff has limited space at her markets, and farmers have priority. She looks for diversity and abundance and “things I need,” such as wine, cheese, or a farmer with unusual produce. According to Kirkhuff, balancing the product mix is “about knowing the limits of the market.” She asks herself “are my farmers going to succeed?”

The three contrasting management approaches above emanate from highly successful markets, yet utilize different styles, rules and circumstances. A system that works well for one market may not work for another. Achieving the right product and vendor mix depends on the unique characteristics of that market and requires managers to know their vendors, their shoppers, and their community.

How many is too many? While it is common for vendors to resist the introduction of other vendors selling the same product, allowing one vendor to have a monopoly on a particular product can limit the market's capacity. It has been well documented that when several producers of the

same product are together in one market, each of their sales tend to be greater than if they were the only vendor of that product.

Dynamic managers keep a constant eye out for unusual or missing farm products and find ways to make room for them at the market.

Shoppers in the U.S. respond to choice and abundance with increased spending. When they see multiple booths with the same produce, they seem to buy more produce. In markets with a lot of vendors, shoppers tend to develop an affinity with a small group from whom they make regular purchases each week. With increased choices, they feel comfortable choosing favorite farmers to patronize. With fewer choices, shoppers may feel they are being forced to take what is offered. Ultimately offering more choices in the market will benefit the vendors by providing an anchor base of returning customers. The steady foot traffic created by regular customers will in turn draw new customers as the market evolves into a vital community happening.

Nevertheless, it is possible to reach a saturation point by having too much product in the market, sometimes while not having enough of another product. Watching for seasonal variations and remaining attentive to individual vendor sales, sales in product categories, customer counts, and the demographics and buying habits of shoppers

will help the manager determine if any changes or adjustments need to be made to the market's product portfolio.

Seniority? Vendor seniority systems at markets are common, but they can limit the manager's capacity to make changes that optimize sales and product mix. Some markets have seniority systems based on sales, years at market, or both. The problem with a seniority system that only rewards attendance and longevity is that vendors who have been in the market forever, but do not generate sales or shopper traffic can become entrenched. While this may benefit those vendors, it can be an undermining force for the market as a whole.

Seniority systems and cronyism tend to be more common at markets with governing boards dominated by vendors. While it is essential to have strong vendor representation, having the board populated entirely with vendors can limit overall perspective and the market's capacity for growth (see *Board Recruitment 1.6*).



Chehalis Farmers Market, Chehalis, WA



2.6 Farm Product Verification

Farmers markets are popular because they offer what most stores cannot: a relationship with the person who grew the food. It is essential that managers assure that the person representing themselves as the farmer actually grew the product. This process starts with the vendor agreement or market rules, which should include clear language that:

- Describes exactly what kinds of vendors selling what kinds of products will be accepted, as well as what will not be considered.
- Identifies the market as a WSFMA member, if it is, and explains that the market and its vendors must abide by the WSFMA Guidelines (*Appendix A*).
- Reserves the market's right to visit any vendor's farmland or production facility to inspect it for the purpose of verifying the capacity to produce the items sold at market, and to see that the vendor is currently producing those items.
- Defines how product verification may take place and how any dispute or concerns about the legitimacy of any vendor's product(s) shall be handled.
- Requires vendors to post clearly visible and legible signage that identifies the business name and location.

With these provisions in the vendor agreement, market managers have the authority needed to verify the information provided by the vendors on paper.

Every vendor application should include:

1. The physical location of all farmland and/or production facilities, including maps and directions to reach them.
2. The total acreage in production and the total acreage available for cultivation.
3. A complete list of any and all crops the farmer intends to bring to the market and an approximate date that those crops will be available.
4. A complete list of all the farmers markets at which the vendor is selling that year.

While a thorough application and well-written vendor agreement should discourage cheating, the information provided on applications can also be verified through farm visits and booth audits.



Terry Carkner, Terry's Berries setting up at Tacoma Farmers Market, Tacoma, WA

Farm Visits. Ideally, managers should visit each new vendor's farm to begin building a good relationship and to assess its production capacity. Each farm should then be visited annually, if possible, to continue building that relationship, to reassess capacity and rules compliance, and to gain the authoritative knowledge to fend off any intra-market gossip. A farm visit should be viewed first and foremost as an opportunity to build relationships. While verification of vendors' statements to ensure compliance with market policies is usually the underlying purpose, the visit should not be seen as "policing." Everything about the visit should be polite and respectful, from the request to visit the farm to the thank-you note after the visit. In general, managers should try to provide the vendor with ample notice of the visit and should venture to make sure it is as convenient as possible for the vendor.

In cases where vendor misrepresentation or a violation of market policies is suspected, the timing of the visit may demand more spontaneity. This may include a clause that the market will give the vendor at least 24 hours notice before such a visit to ensure that the vendor will be there to participate in the inspection.

While regular farm visits are ideal, it may not be practical to visit every vendor every year. Washington, however, has one of the strongest networks of farmers markets in the U.S. Markets can share information with each other about the vendors they have visited—usually the farms located closest to each market. By cross-referencing the information provided on vendor applications, managers can assist each other in product



Kirsop Farm, Tumwater, WA sells produce at the Olympia and the Tumwater Farmers Markets

verification, while minimizing the intrusion on vendors and assuring all vendors of an even playing field.

Sound Policy to Counter Rumors. Few issues raise the ire of market farmers more than product verification. Every year, some vendors allege that other vendors are not producing what they are selling, but are buying and reselling instead. While this system of self-policing among farmers can alert managers to potential problems, many markets are rife with allegations spread as gossip rather than filed as formal complaints.

Markets need to have clear policies for controlling rumors and derogatory comments, as well as clear protocols for filing complaints of violations for formal market investigation. In disputes, a third party farm visit can be arranged. To discourage unfounded accusations, some markets establish a price for the third party verification. If the farm in question is found to be legitimately selling their product, then the accusing farm must pay for the inspection. If the accused farmer is indeed violating the rules, then they must pay for the inspection and face suspension or expulsion from the market.

Outside of formally filing a complaint, derogatory comments among vendors, the media, or the market management or board should not be tolerated. In some cases, fines and suspensions for spreading negative rumors may be warranted. While markets should be places for free and open exchange of thoughts and ideas, specific negative talk about particular vendors can harm public confidence in the market as a whole, resulting in lost sales for all of the vendors.

Below are some examples of how Washington markets address farm visits and vendor mix in their vendor agreements and rules.

Anacortes Farmers Market

Farm Inspections: The market reserves the right to visit the farms of growers to confirm that the products brought to the market are their own products. Such visits will be set up at least 24 hours in advance. The same type of visit can be extended to the production site(s) of producers and crafters if a question should arise regarding the origin of merchandise offered for sale.

Vendors: Classification of vendors, as well as the number and proportion of the various classifications of vendors, follows the guidelines in the WSFMA publication *Getting Back to our Roots!* The Depot Arts Council has decided that the classifications known as “brokers” and “resellers” will not be allowed. The members of the market voted to allow growers to broker produce from other growers if they buy directly from that grower; brokered produce must be posted as such. There will be no brokering of craft items.

University Place - T.H.E. Farmers Market

Farm/Craft Inspection:

- All new members may be inspected, and market management reserves the right to inspect any member’s farm or crafters workshop. Inspections shall be coordinated between the vendor and the Farm Inspection Committee.
- The primary purpose of farm/craft inspections will be to determine whether members are in fact producing all that they are selling at the market.
- The resale of any products that are not grown or produced by the member is strictly forbidden, except as outlined under “Resellers” below.
- A complaint procedure has been established by the Board and will be used if a member or customer believes a rules violation is occurring

Shelton Farmers Market

Vendor Inspections: The purpose of inspections is to assure that products sold at the market are vendor-produced as required in the bylaws, and that the vendor lives and works within the geographical boundaries established by the bylaws.

- The market manager will keep a record of inspections but may delegate to vendor members or other qualified individuals the authority to assist in the execution of required inspections.
- Inspection is mandatory. All new vendors will be inspected prior to selling at the market. Existing vendors must inform the market manager of a change of address, change of products, or other material changes, and inspections may be required in these instances. Vendors may also be inspected if a complaint is received by the market manager or if inspection is otherwise requested by the manager or the board.
- Vendors will be contacted at least 24 hours in advance of inspection.
- If the manager cannot verify that a vendor produces his/her own product, membership may be denied. The vendor may appeal to the Board of directors.
- The board must respond to written appeals within thirty days. The board has final authority to resolve all discrepancies referred to it by the market manager or appealed by a vendor.



Shelton Farmers Market, Shelton, WA

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance (Seattle)

Farm Visits: The NFMA and its representatives may inspect or visit any farms or establishments used by vendors. Farm visits will be conducted with at least 24-hour notice. Vendors should provide help during a visit in identifying the crops listed on the application for permit to sell.

Booth Audits: The NFMA may conduct random booth audits at any given vendor's stall during the Market day. These audits will be carried out by third party observers. Vendors will be given 48 hour notice prior to the audit.



Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance, Seattle, WA



2.7 Vendor Best Practices

Coaching Vendors for Strong Customer Relationships and Sales

Successful vendors make a successful market. Good vending skills include attention to product quality and display, customer safety, product knowledge, and appearance and behavior. In addition to the tips on optimal vendor practices below (which managers may want to print and give to vendors), managers can take advantage of educational opportunities such as the annual WSFMA conference or visits to other markets to become the best possible resource for their vendors.

Vendor appearance and demeanor

- Be clean, friendly and welcoming.
- Be mentally present and ready to engage the customer.
- Reach out and connect with passing customers to draw them in, but avoid hawking, i.e. disturbing the customer or the rest of the market.
- Know your crops, how they are produced, and how they can be used.
- Be prepared to answer customer questions.
- Offer recipes and provide storage tips.
- Be ready to suggest a new taste experience.

Stall Appearance and Farm Signage. A market stall is a farm's storefront. There is no rule that says canopies need to be white. Vendors can experiment with colors, banners, awnings, table covers and flags. Stalls that are distinguishable from all the others can be easily remembered and found again the next week. Each stall should have a clearly understandable, unique sign identifying the farm or business and its location. The more information that can be provided about the farm, the better. Brochures, business cards, and websites can all be used to help tell the story of the farm so that customers can build a connection with the farmers. Shoppers that develop a connection with a particular farm will keep returning and make recommendations to friends, family and neighbors.

Displays should be attractive and easy to reach for all market customers. Keep market stalls comfortable and safe to navigate. Products should be identified with signage that is clearly marked and includes prices. Prices set in whole numbers are easy to calculate for both vendors and customers. Farmers accepting FMNP checks (*see: Federal and State Food Programs, Section 2.10*) should adopt pricing or bundling that is easily adaptable to \$2 increments.

Pricing should be in keeping with other vendors and should reflect the value of a premium product.

Abundance and Quality. Color and vertical layout are key ways to visually attract customers. Keep display baskets and bins looking full throughout the market day. Customers are hesitant to buy the last of anything. Many times vendors with impressively full displays will keep selling well right up to the end of the day, while vendors with picked-over displays will stop drawing customers.

Produce quality should remain high throughout the market day. Perishable products may need to be re-freshed often. Clean water and crushed ice can be used to keep delicate greens looking fresh and attractive. Use awnings or set tables in from the edge of the canopy to shade produce from the hot sun. Only bring first quality to the market. Many markets have *anti-dumping* rules to prevent vendors from selling lower quality goods at lower prices that will undercut other vendors (*for example, see NFMA Rules, Appendix B, Section VII*). At many markets, leftovers can be donated to the local food bank (*see Section 2.10*).

Professionalism

- Have the equipment ready that is needed to do business. Scales, calculators, and cash registers/boxes provide a professional appearance and make smooth transactions.
- Be there. Make sure you have adequate staff on hand to attend the stall at all times. Counting on a neighbor to keep an eye on your stall for very long is impractical.
- Respond courteously and earnestly to complaints.
- Risk Management: See Section 2.3 on risk management for important ways to ensure the trust, security, and the safety of customers.

While each vendor strives to be unique, improvements and innovations enacted by one vendor often influence and inspire other vendors, enhancing the overall quality of the market. At the same time, the behavior of one or two vendors can negatively affect the whole market. Managers should encourage vendors to emulate the positive things their neighbors are doing and to collaborate to improve the market as a whole.



2.8 Cross-Culture Skill Building

Strategies to Create a Welcoming Market

Washington's communities are becoming increasingly culturally diverse. Washington's farmers markets reflect this trend, drawing vendors and shoppers from every ethnicity, race, culture, economic strata, political persuasion, age, and gender. An appreciation of that diversity can help market managers successfully interact with and serve their communities, enhancing the profitability and vitality of their markets in the process. Beyond ethnic differences, there are many "cultures" that make up most markets: people with disabilities, older people, rural and suburban, eastern and western Washington, men and women, organic and conventional farmers, varying family structures, etc.

Cultural and social differences can create challenges within the market, such as language gaps, conflicts and misunderstandings among vendors or customer groups, misunderstandings with managers, and disagreements as to the role of bargaining versus fixed prices. Arranging educational opportunities for managers, board members, staff, vendors, and customers to explore and learn about cultural differences will enable market participants to better understand and engage in problem solving around these challenges as they arise.

When viewed as an asset, cultural diversity strengthens markets in multiple ways. Diverse vendors bring a wider variety of products to the market and a diverse customer base ensures demand for these products. By making a market comfortable and welcoming for all community members, managers can bring in new customers, increase the

significance of the market, and build the market as an integral and central gathering place for the community. To aid in communication across cultural differences, managers can:

- Provide market rules and documents in multiple languages and obtain translation for meetings and conversations with vendors.
- Provide assistance with developing signage and written materials in English. Do not assume that all vendors can read.
- Connect new immigrant farmers with informational resources through such organizations as WSU Extension, the WSU Small Farms Program, Heifer International, Pacific NW Project Region, and federal farm programs.
- Partner with service organizations, churches, associations, and community centers to reach diverse audiences.
- Think about whether everyone has physical access and transportation to the market.
- Consider whether everyone understands the signage at the market.
- Host special events and festivals at the market that celebrate cultural diversity and diverse food traditions.
- Provide educational materials for shoppers and vendors about the foods and food traditions of new immigrant groups.
- Offer cooking demonstrations and recipes from diverse cultures.
- Involve children! Often second generation immigrants have multiple language skills.



Ju Cha at the Kirkland Farmers Market, Kirkland, WA



2.9 Sustainability

Improving the Market Footprint

This section examines how farmers markets can contribute to environmental and community sustainability. Buying food from a local farmers market can be about more than just getting the freshest and tastiest food available. Farmers markets can enhance communities and the environment in a variety of ways.

Supplying more of a community's fresh produce needs through a farmers market can potentially:

- Produce commonly travels around the world to reach the grocery shelf. The farthest distance any farmer travels to sell at a farmers market in Washington is across the state.
- Increase overall consumption of fruits and vegetables, thereby improving community health.
- Build local economies and support neighboring local businesses. A goal of many markets is to bring people back into a depressed urban center. Market shoppers report that during their trip to the market they spend additional money at other businesses near the market (Lev and Stephenson 1998).
- Keep money circulating in the local economy. With imported food purchases, the bulk of the money flows out of the local community. When money is paid directly to local vendors at a farmers market, that person in turn makes other purchases in the community.
- Keep farmers on the land. Maintaining profitable local farms protects farmers, farmland and local food-producing capacity from urban sprawl.
- Promote environmental stewardship by protecting farmland. Well-managed farms can provide valuable eco-system services to the larger community, such as water filtration, carbon sequestration, wildlife enhancement, recycling of urban waste streams as soil amendments, etc.

Education. Markets can play a critical role in environmental education. Sustainability can be embraced as part of a market's mission and part of its public image. Managers can strengthen that connection by modeling environmental sustainability and emphasizing it in press releases, on the market's website, and in newspaper interviews.

Waste Management is a significant component of managing a farmers market and it offers an



Alvarez Organic Farms, Yakima Farmers Market, Yakima, WA

opportunity to practice, and serve as a model for, sustainable waste management practices. The “three R’s” of waste management—reduce, reuse, recycle—can perhaps be applied more readily to a farmers market than to most other businesses.

Reduce. The first priority in managing a market's waste is to avoid producing it in the first place. Reductions in waste can be accomplished through a variety of easy steps. Educate vendors and shoppers to use fewer plastic bags. Not every different kind of produce needs to be segregated from every other kind. Different foods which cost the same per pound, for example, can generally be put in the same bag, and different foods sold by the bunch can share a bag. The multiple bags that people are accustomed to using require resources to produce, ship, recycle or landfill, and they increase vendors' costs.

A canvas shopping bag can be created with the market's logo on it, and sold to shoppers as a fundraising, marketing, and educational tool. These can be reused, reducing the need for plastic bags, and they promote the market and its sustainability programs everywhere they go. The bags can even have educational slogans printed on them (*see Low Budget Promotions, Section 2.11*).

Sampling and taste tests at the market offer another opportunity to reduce wastes. Does every sample need its own plate, fork and napkin, or will a simple toothpick do? Arranging for a food bank or soup kitchen to pick up surplus produce from the farmers keeps it from being composted or thrown away. A careful assessment can determine how much waste is generated at the market, as well as how much is



Claude Mahmood, Giggling Goat Farm, Shelton Farmers Market

being generated away from the market as the result of market activities.

Reuse. The second waste management priority should be to reuse items that would otherwise be sent to the landfill. Farmers market managers can:

- Encourage shoppers to reuse their plastic bags week after week, and encourage vendors to reinforce the same message. Shoppers can be reminded that new bags cost vendors money and increase the prices shoppers pay.
- Encourage farmers to reuse boxes (most already do because of the costs). Shoppers can also return produce boxes for reuse.
- Encourage farmers to invest in sturdy, reusable plastic produce totes. While initial costs may be higher; they last longer, stand up to moisture better, resist crushing, are easier to stack and clean, and remain more stable in trucks.
- Keep information on hand as to where reusable totes can be purchased.

Recycle. Recycling is the third waste management priority. It is becoming possible for markets to recycle (including composting) all waste remaining after reduction and reuse. All markets should have recycling (and, if available, composting) receptacles throughout the market to make it easy for shoppers to find and use them. They should be clearly marked as to what can and cannot be placed in them. Evaluate what kinds of waste are being generated in the market, and encourage—perhaps even require—vendors to use packaging, plates and utensils that are recyclable or compostable.

Trash. Trash collection can be messy, smelly, and expensive, and it can make a market look unappealing.

Make sure the market has enough, effectively located trash receptacles. Market staff or volunteers should monitor them, as well as recycling and composting receptacles, at regular intervals, to make sure they are not overflowing.

Most markets do not provide refuse collection for vendors because they can produce enormous quantities of waste that can overwhelm public receptacles quickly. Very clear language in market rules and/or vendor agreements can stipulate a “pack it in, pack it out” approach to trash. Vendors caught using the public waste receptacles should be on notice that they will be disciplined with fines or suspensions. Below are some examples of the wording of trash policies currently employed at Washington farmers markets.

Zero Waste and Composting. The Farmers Market in Santa Monica, California (http://www.smgov.net/farmers_market) has embarked on a “zero waste” waste management program. The market did a waste analysis of its trash receptacles and discovered that it was composed of 20% recyclable cans, plastic and glass; 20% compostable food scraps; 40% foam or paper food service products (all of which is compostable or could be); 7% recyclable mixed paper; and 3% trash.

With at least 97% of its waste being recyclable or compostable, the Santa Monica market decided to try to eliminate trash altogether. Managers worked with the City of Santa Monica to develop a zero-waste program and consulted a company that had developed a similar program for the Boulder, Colorado, farmers market. They put up informational signage and formed crews to educate vendors and shoppers about the new policy. Specially labeled compost receptacles and recycling receptacles were strategically placed throughout the market without any trash receptacles.

Shelton Farmers Market

Garbage: Vendors are responsible for removing their own boxes and garbage from the market site. Trash cans are provided as a courtesy to customers.

Styrofoam Ban: The market encourages vendors to use containers other than Styrofoam.

Roslyn Farmers Market

“You are responsible for your own stall and must supply all necessary trash containers. **You must pack out your own trash**, removing containers, waste and trimmings before leaving the market. The Market will provide trash receptacles for the customers only. You must keep your area attractive and clean during Market hours. Your customers will respond favorably to a well kept booth!”

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance in Seattle

BOOTH CLEAN UP: Vendors are required to maintain their individual selling space in a clean, safe and sanitary manner, including protecting the pavement from drips from any part of the vendor’s vehicle. Each vendor is responsible for keeping his/her booth space clean during the Market and for complete clean up of their space at the close of the Market. This includes taking with you any trash or garbage that is generated in or around your booth and sweeping up any product debris left on the ground. Farmers are not permitted to dispose of produce waste, overripe or leftover produce or boxes in any on-site garbage cans or dumpsters. **MARKET TRASH CANS AND DUMPSTERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR VENDOR USE.** Vendors should bring their own brooms and dustpans. Those who do not clean up at the end of the Market will be issued a written warning for the first offense and a \$25 fine for the second offense. A third offense is grounds for termination of vendor’s permit to sell.

Some markets provide waste receptacles for vendors. Markets that do so should clearly spell out the conditions of use in their rules, and the cost of this service should be factored into the fees charged to vendors.

The idea is to have all prepared-food vendor waste—plates, cups, forks, napkins, food scraps, etc—be compostable or recyclable. The City waste removal system hauls compostables to a composting facility, much like King County’s Cedar Grove.

While the concept of a zero-waste market is very appealing, unfortunately, most communities in Washington State do not yet have composting programs that can adequately support such a program. Cedar Grove can accept some types of “compostable” food service wares at present, but not most. Determining an item’s actual compostability requires long-term testing. Results at Cedar Grove have been mixed so far, with only one entire product line being found acceptable. Instead, most product lines have some items that are acceptable and others that are not, making Cedar Grove reluctant to accept zero-waste compost from anyone without direct involvement in the program.

From another angle, the Bayview Farmers Market on Whidbey Island has worked with WSU Extension

and local nonprofits to address the impact of their restrooms on the environment. They have built model restrooms employing composting toilets and a grey water system for wastewater. Market managers, especially those in the process of designing a new permanent site for their market, might want to visit this site.

These projects suggest that food service product manufacturers, city planners, local governments, composting facilities, vendors, and university researchers need to be encouraged to investigate and implement programs that will support zero-waste programs at farmers markets. Farmers markets have a unique opportunity to serve as pilot sites and models of sustainability for the larger society.



2.10 Understanding Federal and State Food Programs

In response to citizen advocacy, new public programs are emerging that seek to simultaneously improve access to fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables for low-income households, while at the same time, support family farmers who are struggling to find stable and profitable markets for their crops. While farmers markets have provided thousands of farms with direct access to local markets; new partnerships with federal, state and local government agencies, as well as food security organizations can expand these markets to include nutritionally at-risk citizens.

Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP)

WIC FMNP. Since 1992, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) of the federal Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) has provided lower-income families with young children direct access to fresh produce from local farmers markets. The goals of the program are threefold: to support the development of farmers markets; to encourage direct sales by farmers; and to provide nutrition education and supplementation to WIC families. WIC participants report that they eat more fresh produce, learn about new produce and how to cook it, and continue to shop at farmers markets even after they have spent their WIC FMNP checks.

Senior FMNP. Launched in 2000, the Senior FMNP operates with the same three primary goals as the WIC FMNP, but targets lower-income seniors. This program encourages seniors to eat more nutritiously. Its popularity may stem, in part, from the positive memories or experiences people have had with farming and gardening or buying produce directly from farmers in their past.

Both the WIC and Senior FMNPs are administered in Washington by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), though the Senior FMNP is managed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). In 2006, over \$1 million in FMNP checks were distributed in Washington State. (see WSDA 2006, *The Green Book*, for more information on these programs.)

Food Stamps and Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). Over the last ten years paper Food Stamps have been replaced, state-by-state, with a system called Electronic Benefits Transfer, or EBT. In

Washington, when a Food Stamp recipient purchases food using their benefits, they swipe a card, called a “Quest” card, in the same machine as they would a debit or credit card. The magnetic stripe on the back of the Quest card accesses the recipient’s benefits account and transfers the purchase amount to the grocer’s account.



WIC Checks and Tokens at the University Place Farmers Market, Tacoma, WA

markets, that lack easy access to electricity and telephone lines. Food Stamps sales at farmers markets in Washington have fallen off dramatically since the conversion to EBT in the late 1990s.

A number of markets in Washington are now set up to accept the EBT cards (formerly Food Stamps) again using a system of cell phones and market scrip tokens worked out with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). People can spend Food Stamp dollars at participating farmers markets by presenting their Quest card at the manager’s table in return for market tokens and signing a voucher confirming the transaction amount. The manager phones in the account number and the dollar amount via cell phone. The market scrip tokens, usually worth \$1 or \$2 each, are only good for purchases at that market. Vendors then turn the tokens back in to the manager at the end of the day, either for cash or to pay their stall fees. Later, a standard card-swiping unit is used to finalize the transaction.

Markets with an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) machine could also sell gift tokens to people using debit and credit cards or cash. Market tokens used for EBT redemption can be easily distinguished from EFT or gift card tokens by color, or an “x” with a

permanent marker. This reduces the stigma attached to tokens since anyone could be using them. And because the tokens can only be used at that farmers market, there is very little risk of fraud. However, the centralized token system still creates a cumbersome intermediate step.

Ideally, every vendor could accept Quest cards directly. New, more efficient technologies are being developed that could allow vendors to use hand-held, battery operated, wireless data transmission devices to interface with the Quest card system. These devices have been tested by Seattle's Lake City Farmers Market and the New York Federation of Farmers Markets for a few years with great success. Using this technology, a manager or vendor could complete an EBT, debit or credit card transaction in seconds, with funds directly transferred into their accounts. These new devices could reinvigorate Food Stamps sales at farmers markets, as well as open up debit and credit card sales (*see Section 2.4*).

Food Banks. Farmers often have surplus produce at the end of the day. Instead of hauling it back to the farm and composting it, many farmers are willing to donate leftovers to local food banks and soup kitchens if a convenient and dependable pick-up system can be established. Beyond the obvious benefits of distributing healthy food to those who need it, the donations of end-of-day surplus can help keep market prices stable. Since many farmers feel pressure to squeeze every dollar they can out of their produce, they may think that dropping their prices towards the end of the day will help them sell more and earn more money. However, this creates an atmosphere that draws bargain hunters and hagglers to the market at the end of the day and results in pricing practices that undercut other farmers.

Farmers may also bring their leftover produce to their next market. Produce that is not freshly harvested can negatively affect shoppers' perspectives of the market. Low quality can also deflate prices in the market if these products are sold at reduced prices. Ironically, farmers who cut their prices to move product at the end of the day, or carry over produce that is past prime, often end up making less. By donating surplus produce, farmers can reduce the leverage of bargain hunters, while at the same time maintain shoppers' expectations that both prices and quality will remain consistent throughout the day.

Market managers should seek out relationships with local food banks and soup kitchens that are reputable and reliable so that farmers know their donations are worthwhile and they can count on donations being picked up at the market as scheduled. Farmers may also be able to receive a tax deduction for their donations under the Good Samaritan Hunger Relief Tax Incentive Act, signed into law in 2006 (consult a tax advisor or WSFMA for additional information). Farmers, managers, and food banks should work together to track how much produce is donated and what it is worth. Farmers should collect receipts to document tax deductions. Additionally, statistics about how much produce is donated by a market each season can be used to illustrate the market's community benefits.

Markets can also design their own innovative ways to reach nutritionally at-risk citizens. The University District Farmers Market in Seattle, for example, has a program with a local food bank to distribute Helping Harvest vouchers that can be redeemed for produce at the market. The food bank purchases the vouchers from the market with funds donated by local businesses, philanthropists and foundations. Another program, organized through Benton County, Oregon churches sells farmers market coupon booklets, of which, 10% of the purchase price is used to subsidize coupons for low-income shoppers.

Engaging New Partners and Shoppers. The various food programs discussed above provide more than food assistance. They also provide opportunities for markets to engage new partners, attract new shoppers, and diversify. The FMNPs, for example, offer an opportunity to develop relationships with the local WIC or Senior Nutrition office, a relationship that could lead to distribution of FMNP checks to clients at the market. These agencies may also support cooking demonstrations and nutritional education. Senior centers and religious congregations may be able to help transport seniors and others to the market. Engaging these potential partners can develop strong allies and boosters for the market, broaden the customer base, and make the market a more vibrant and integral part of the community.



2.11 Low Budget Promotions and Media Relations

Early every business needs to advertise its products. Farmers markets are no different, but most work on shoestring budgets with little cash to spare for marketing. Finding simple, affordable, and free methods of promotion is critical. As a starting point, the list below summarizes some of the ideas and strategies for low-cost marketing that have been employed effectively by markets in Washington and elsewhere. Other opportunities abound for the creative manager.

Yard Signs and Posters provide a highly visible market presence and can be produced by local printers relatively inexpensively. Market supporters or local businesses may even sponsor their production. Market shoppers, vendors, and supporters can place signs in their yards, while posters can be placed outside (subject to some restrictions) or in businesses and organizations with high indoor foot traffic. Consider holding a contest to design signs or posters, thereby engaging the local arts community.

E-mail Lists can be developed over time and used to keep media outlets, market shoppers and community members apprised of happenings at the market.

Press Releases are a simple and inexpensive means of distributing news about a market. Develop a list of media outlets and newsletter publishers that might report information about the market, and send them press releases with photos. For large newspapers or magazines, be sure the press release gets to the right editor. Managers may need to contact multiple editors or different editors depending on the focus of a given release, such as calendar, food, agriculture, local, news, etc. Also, identify particular writers who support the market and cultivate relationships with them. Target radio and television stations that have community calendars or cooking and gardening shows. These stations also have websites which frequently have far more information than can be broadcast.

Press releases should be short and sweet, fitting on one page. Provide a catchy title and focus on the “five W’s”: who, what, when, where and why. Press releases generate “earned media,” meaning the market gets free attention as a news or informational story, rather than paying for an advertisement. Not only is earned media free, it is also more effective. Many media outlets, large and small, are hungry for positive stories that add color to their community.



Moses Lake Farmers Market, Moses Lake, WA

Articles can be written by market staff to be published in community newspapers, organizational newsletters, and even some major newspapers and regional magazines. Community newspapers, in particular, may be looking for content, or they may simply be supportive of their local market. Include newsletters of non-profit organizations, congregations, schools, neighborhood associations, hospitals, food banks, etc. They are likely to be interested in the market and have a targeted local audience.

- Major newspapers may publish articles provided by the market as an op-ed piece in the editorial section. Pertinent letters to the editor can get attention, too.
- Regional magazines may be interested in a success or human-interest story about one of the market’s vendors.
- Instead of articles that seem self-serving, create articles about the interest stories within and surrounding the market. Give readers new insights into farmers markets.

Food Writers generally recognize farmers markets as highly interesting and significant places for food. These writers, however, are also very busy. Market staff and board members can cultivate connections with them by inviting them for a market tour or special event, sending them gift baskets of market products, sending them story ideas, and thanking them when they do write about the market.

Write a newspaper column. Many local newspapers will give important local community institutions regular space in their pages, especially in smaller communities where newspapers are tighter on resources and eager for good copy. Talk to an editor about writing a weekly column.

Reach Out to Food Program Staff and Clients.

Managers can invite WIC clinic and senior center staff to the market, and make sure they understand the nutritional value of farmers markets. Invite the same staff to distribute WIC and Senior FMNP checks at the market. This will help attract WIC and Senior FMNP clients, and it will give them an opportunity to spend those checks immediately (*see Section 2.10*).

Advertise EBT (Food Stamps) Acceptance.

If the market can accept EBT payments, make sure people know. In Washington these benefits are issued via a “Quest” card (*see Section 2.10*), so all market literature, signs, and press releases should include the Quest logo, and the words “Quest cards welcome.” Work with local clinics and agencies that manage Food Stamp caseloads to promote the farmers market as an alternative shopping venue.

Use Signs to Establish a Permanent Presence.

While markets may operate part-time, signs can work around-the-clock, every day, all year long to promote the market.

- Many municipalities permit markets to hang banners and light pole flags and local businesses or governments may help sponsor them. The market’s insurance probably covers these off-site signs (at least for liability), but it is a good idea to double-check. Some municipalities may require additional language on the market’s insurance certificate.
- Highway and street signs can be both a reminder of your market’s presence and a guide to the market. In Seattle and some other jurisdictions, for example, markets can arrange for signs to be attached to light poles in strategic locations. Managers must work with the relevant highway jurisdiction to get signs installed.
- Billboards can be especially effective for markets near interstates and other high-traffic roads. Alternatively, banners hung conspicuously on buildings may serve the same purpose. Work with business and property owners to arrange for free or low-cost billboard or banner advertising.

Marketing the Market Year Round.

Markets should be advertising all year. Flower and garden shows and county fairs may have free or low-cost space available for local nonprofits, including farmers markets, to set up informational displays. The market could also work with local gardening groups

to do a cooperative plant sale. People attending these events are already interested in gardening or agriculture. Use the event to draw their attention to the obvious connection between their interests and the market. Since flower and garden shows tend to happen in the winter, it is a good time to remind the community that the market season is coming.

Call in to Radio Shows.

Whenever the on-air discussion permits, try to call in and mention the market, or have the market’s board members and major boosters call. If a show is about food, agriculture, the federal budget, nutrition in schools, or anything relevant, it is reasonable to call, year-round, and it is a free way to keep the market in the consciousness of the community even in the off season.

Attend Public Meetings

to provide information about the market. Many city and county council meetings have periods for public comment, and many of those meetings are broadcast over cable access channels. Get up and mention your market and the benefits that it provides for your community. It is good to educate policy makers about the benefits of farmers markets so they keep them in mind as they legislate. Since public legislative hearings on bills are broadcast statewide on the TVW cable television channel, if a manager or board member testifies about a bill, they can also teach people across the state about their market, and farmers markets in general.



Chef's Demonstration, University District, Seattle, WA



2.12 Public Education and Relations

Building and Engaging New Partners

Engaging New Partners is a key strategy for helping a market achieve its goals. Collaboration with new and unusual partners will boost the success of the market, and, as an organization with multiple community benefits, farmers markets are in an ideal position to attract such partners. Collaborating with partners can:

- Broaden the shopper base of the market.
- Assist with fundraising.
- Provide educational opportunities for vendors and shoppers.
- Expand market services (i.e., ATM, WIC/Basic Food, EBT, Wi-Fi, etc.)
- Assist with website development/maintenance.
- Provide assistance with site location or other infrastructure.
- Provide support through sponsorship.
- Diversify financial support.
- Strengthen political support for issues affecting the market.
- Create a volunteer base.

Potential collaborators include banks, businesses, chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, elected officials, newspapers, and local governments. Everyone who eats has a stake in farmers markets, so opportunities for engaging others are nearly limitless. Managers need to deliberately seek out organizations or individuals that can help and then “sell” the idea of collaboration to them.

Washington State University (WSU) offers assistance through county extension offices, the Small Farms Program, statewide research and extension specialists, and the Master Gardeners. WSU has assisted farmers markets in many ways beyond educational support. For example, WSU food safety researchers helped to develop procedures for safely storing and selling meat, seafood and poultry at farmers markets without mechanical refrigeration. Researchers at the WSU Small Farms Program obtained a grant to lead a series of participatory Rapid Market Assessments (RMAs) and RMA (see Section 2.2) trainings for managers and board members in Washington. WSU Small Farms Team members have also assisted with market board and organizational development, the annual WSFMA conference, and vendor education programs. WSU’s statewide network of county extension offices and Research and Extension Centers are valuable community resources.

There are several marketing organizations that partner with farmers markets in Washington, including the Washington State Department of Agriculture’s (WSDA) Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program which offers technical assistance and grant programs, county agricultural commissions, and promotional programs such as From the Heart of Washington, Puget Sound Fresh, Whatcom Fresh, and various Buy Local campaigns.

Form a support organization. Another way to encourage partnership within the community is to help start a booster organization to support the market, such as a “Friends of the Farmers Market” group that can undertake fundraising activities (see Section 2.14).

Organize children’s activities at the market. A little creativity can go a long way toward engaging children and making the market a memorable, educational experience for them. Make these activities fun, interactive, easy and safe.

- Columbia City Farmers Market has championed the Zucchini 500, a terrifically uproarious spectacle that allows children to make a mess while playing “race car” with their food.
- Columbia City has also pioneered the Children’s Activity Tent where well-supervised children are engaged in a variety of fun educational activities that involve them with the market.
- Taste tests let children explore the different tastes of fresh tomatoes, stone fruit and lettuce varieties, inspiring a new appreciation for the tastes of ripe, seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Chef demonstrations designed specifically for children and catered to their tastes can teach them simple, tasty, fun ways to use what they find at markets. Soon they will begin making specific requests for market products.



Entertainers at Mason County Farmers Market, Shelton, WA

As a side note, often the first thought in hosting a kid's activity is the classic farm animal petting zoo. However, the effort to secure permits and insurance is onerous and many markets have found these are not worth the effort.

Organize market tours for schools. Work with local schools to bring children on field trips to the market, and plan kid-friendly activities during the tour. Consider how such tours might work to support efforts at the school to develop a farm-to-cafeteria program. While kids are generally out of school during the market's peak season, many markets are still going strong in late summer when school starts.

Organize farm tours. Children love dirt, tractors, animals, and the farm atmosphere. Hayrides, corn mazes, pumpkin patches, cooking demonstrations, and the opportunity to meet "Farmer Jones" make for an unforgettable experience for children. The opportunity to show children where their food comes from and how it is produced is invaluable. Market vendors can help identify farms suitable for a children's tour. Local schools, WSU Extension, or local farm organizations, such as Tilth groups, 4-H clubs, FFA, Farm Bureau or the Grange might help with organizing.

Learn to effectively tell the story of the market. An ability to communicate the value of the market to the right people will, to a great extent, determine the market's success. Many of the benefits of farmers markets, however, such as their ability to bring multiple cultures together or build community spirit are difficult to communicate and require careful thought. Using anecdotes effectively and quantifying tangibles, like sales, attendance, and economic benefits to local businesses can help to make the case for the market in a captivating way.

Elected Officials and Community Leaders. Any opportunity to involve elected officials and community leaders with the market is good. These are the decision makers whose actions can bolster or hinder a market. The more familiar they are with the market, the more likely their actions will benefit it. Invite them to opening day or any other high profile or media event at the market. Have them cut the ribbon, read a proclamation, preside over an event or just meet and greet vendors and shoppers. It is important for them to see firsthand

how many of the people who vote in their district attend the market.

Make sure elected officials are educated about all of the benefits the market brings to their district and that they understand what the market needs to succeed, be it funding, an expanded FMNP program, help with regulatory obstacles, or easier access for dairy farmers. The market serves their district, so they should be familiar with it.

Health Departments and Other Permitting Agencies. Every market has to work with county health department and municipal permitting processes. It is beneficial to maintain clear and healthy communications with these stakeholders. Be honest and clear about the market's needs, objectives, and requests; and teach regulators about the organizational structure and mission of the market. Keep them informed about special events and future plans. If regulators are treated respectfully, they can become valuable allies, collaborating with farmers and the market to help prevent and solve problems as they arise.

Shoppers. Above all, keep the market's shoppers informed about, and connected to, the market as much as possible. Use e-mail listserves, radio and newspaper announcements, special events, promotions, newsletters, websites, RMA surveys, etc., to keep in touch with shoppers. Fun tidbits, stories, or recipes from vendors can be used in regular newsletters to engage them. The weekly "Ripe 'n' Ready" e-mail bulletin put out by the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance is a great example of ongoing educational communication with shoppers (*see archives at* <http://www.seattlefarmersmarkets.org/ripe-n-ready>).



Home Depot Days at Kelso Bridge Market, Kelso, WA



2.13 Special Events

Organizing Events that Meet Multiple Market Goals

While vendors are the solid foundation of any market, special events are the French doors and open floor plan that will sell the market. Events are one of the many things that distinguish a farmers market from the supermarket. They can be used to help a market:

- Draw in new partners;
- Raise money for the market;
- Increase foot traffic during slow periods of spring and late fall/winter;
- Enhance publicity for the market;
- Sell more product;
- Improve the ambiance of the market;
- Establish the market as a community gathering place;
- Create awareness of issues affecting the market.

Special events require attention to detail and good planning to be successful. Determine the needs of the market, such as increasing the foot traffic during the late fall, and consider if hosting an event can be a part of the solution. Try to estimate the amount of time it will take to produce this event, and then,



Tomato Tasting at University Place Farmers Market, Tacoma, WA

double it. Will the amount of effort required be a good exchange for the benefits it will achieve?

Special events range in nature, from very simple activities held during the regular market day to elaborate fundraising galas. Most events can be designed to meet multiple market goals and to have multiple benefits. Consider mixing and matching any of the following activities to create a tapestry of excitement at your market.

Suggestions for hosting a successful event:

- *Start early.* Determine if a special events permit is required, and plan events long before the beginning of the market season.
- *Seek partners and volunteers.* Events are a specific way for partners and volunteers to get involved with the market, and, as such, can be very useful for developing relationships. Local businesses can donate goods or services for prizes. Events can be planned to benefit more than one organization.
- *Establish a committee* to carry out the organizing of the event. Many hands make light work, and having specific people assigned each task will help ensure success. The committee should create an overall plan and timeline for the event.
- *Create a publicity plan.* Printed materials such as “save the date” postcards are very useful. Develop a news story for the event. Remember to update the market’s website, and announce the event in the weekly newsletters. If hosting a large gala fundraiser, ask partners or staunch supporters of the market to each personally invite ten friends who are likely to make donations.
- *Create an evaluation plan.* This is a good task to do before the event, in the pre-planning stage, because it helps the planning team to establish goals and begin evaluation of the event from the start. Well-planned evaluations will help determine if goals were met and whether the market should host the event again
- *Logistics.* What equipment will be needed for the event? Who will supply it? Will crowd control be needed? Make sure all tasks are assigned to someone, and determine how event partners can help.
- *Special events are generally not covered under the market’s insurance policy* but may be eligible for a temporary coverage rider. Always check to see if an activity is covered.

Crop Festivals. Throughout the market season, there will always be an abundance of one crop or another. Activities that highlight the crop du jour will help vendors sell more product, will educate the public about seasonal foods, and are a great way to bring in local chefs for cooking demonstrations. For instance, Mount Vernon Farmers Market has invited WSU to do lettuce tastings, and the University District Farmers Market does tomato tastings. Highlighting a crop can range from a very simple taste test or cooking demonstration to a more elaborate festival.

Kids Events. Offering activities for kids is the perfect way to appeal to diverse neighborhood families. Adding kids' activities to other events is also a good idea. Fun activities can be designed to educate children about food, nutrition and farming (see Section 2.12).

Opening day is a day of rebirth for your market, and an opportunity to get media coverage, celebrate the new season, and remind the community that the market is back for another season. Invite local government, business, and community leaders and use it as an opportunity to encourage their support for the market.

Closing day is not the end. Shoppers may be disappointed that they will miss the market for several months, but they can be reassured that the market will return with gusto next year. Throw a party during the last market so that shoppers will remember the market during the off-season. After the market closes, throw a party for the vendors.

Holidays are good opportunities for developing cultural awareness in the market's community. Consider hosting events that celebrate the many holidays and food traditions practiced by the people that visit or sell at the market. The USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center's (FNIC) has created documents that provide information on a wide range of cultural holiday foods and celebrations. The FNIC website is at http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs_and_db.html.

Contests are a fun way to draw attention to the market and get people excited. The crazier the contest, the better (i.e. Zucchini 500 in section 2.12, vegetable art, pumpkin/tomato throwing, etc.).

Chef's Demonstrations and Workshops. Bring people to the market by holding educational workshops. There are many food and market related topics that make great workshops, such as food preservation, gardening, flower arranging, and, of course, cooking demonstrations.

Community Health Activities. Events that focus on nutrition and maintaining good health make a great match for farmers markets. Consider holding a blood drive that also includes a cooking demonstration on leafy greens and farm-raised meats. Collaborations with local health departments or hospitals that include health tests, nutrition, or food safety education are good for both community health and help build relationships with these partners.

Galas and Large-scale events: Large-scale events require a substantial amount of work to host. They can, however, be very popular for fun and fundraising. Located in restaurant-rich Seattle, the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance organizes an annual event called "The Incredible Feast," in which market farmers are paired with top Seattle-area chefs to prepare wonderful culinary concoctions.. The Yakima Farmers Market is in wine country, so a wine tasting event is a natural choice.

Join Other Large Community Events. By involving your market in a larger event already largely organized, you can still reap the benefits of exposure to large crowds without having to do all of the organizing.

- Tag-team with other markets and WSFMA during the annual Washington Farmers Market Week during the second week of August to organize events while there is a statewide emphasis on farmers markets.
- Link up with your county's Harvest Celebration Weekend activities, usually on the first Saturday of October.
- Many communities organize harvest dinners in the fall that serve as fundraisers and an opportunity for the community to celebrate another successful farming season.
- Enter a market float in a parade. Parades are a fun place for the market to show off. Have the market staff join the local parade, dressed as giant vegetables or driving antique tractors.

Events That Include Alcohol. Beer and wine tastings make great fundraisers; they are a lot of fun for the public, and they help markets network with wineries and breweries. Serving alcohol, however, entails extra responsibility and bureaucracy:

1. Permits must be obtained from the Washington State Liquor Control Board. Most State liquor stores in Washington can either issue the necessary permit provide additional information on how to obtain it.
2. Trained and licensed staff should always be used to serve alcohol.
3. Take care to avoid any excessive consumption during the event.
4. Events with alcohol may require an additional insurance rider.
5. Children most likely will not be allowed to attend the event, unless it has a separate, designated area for the consumption of alcohol.



*Drew Zimmerman at Washington State University Days
at Pike Street Market, Seattle, WA*



2.14 Fundraising for Markets

Opportunities, Challenges, and Considerations

Retail sales are the bread and butter farmers markets. A market's health and viability are largely determined by the stall fees and/or percentages generated by creating—and continuously improving—a market as an outlet for profitable vending. Markets, however, are also about community. They help cities and towns achieve objectives beyond business development: enhancing or restoring an urban center, helping stem the loss of farms and farmland, ensuring access to healthy foods for low-income people, providing a venue for performing and visual artists, and offering a platform for non-profit organizations and businesses to reach out to the community. All of these additional benefits—in addition to nurturing entrepreneurial activity—put markets in a terrific position to raise grant funding and sponsorships for both core operations and supplemental programs.

This section provides the background and methods that successful markets use to raise both private and public support. It covers creative ideas for generating support as well as the pros and cons of various approaches. Many of these approaches can require a considerable investment of time and resources, and as a rule, fundraising rarely raises as much as expected. However, programs that increase a market's visibility and build partnerships can pay long-term dividends.

Private Grant Programs. Many farmers markets are within areas covered by a community foundation or a trust established for the betterment of a particular region. In addition, private foundations from all over the world grant funds for specific project areas, such as the arts, community development, healthy families, and environmental enhancement. Finding grants that match a market's geographical area or activities can be daunting, but searchable databases such as Big Online America (www.bigdatabase.com) or the Foundation Center (www.foundationcenter.org) make the task easier. Most of these databases are available by subscription only, but many public libraries have subscriptions.

Reference librarians can be helpful in identifying sources of information about private grants available to markets in a specific region. One national grant program of particular interest to farmers markets is coordinated by Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org), with funding from the Ford Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, but many other opportunities exist.

Markets can make a strong case for private support in many activities that foundations are interested in funding. Most markets, however, face a significant barrier to such funding—they are not registered as a non-profit organization. To receive the tax advantages of charitable giving, private foundations, as well as individuals, can only make contributions to a "501(c)(3)" organization. Still, farmers markets do not have to forego this funding.

A *fiscal sponsor*, a non-profit that has 501(c)(3) status, may be willing to allow the market to make an application to a foundation under its auspices. Markets also can request contributions from individuals, who donate funds to the non-profit to be used by the market. Most fiscal sponsors charge an administrative fee for receiving and processing funds, which ranges from 5 to 10 percent or even more. The search for a fiscal sponsor is an opportunity to identify a non-profit partner whose mission and goals align closely with the market's. Indeed, the IRS requires such congruence because, for the purposes of the gift or grant, the market essentially becomes a project of that non-profit organization. This approach can work well if a market and its fiscal sponsor are both committed to furthering mutual goals and funds and reporting are managed conscientiously.

Markets can apply to the IRS for non-profit 501(c)(3) status, even if the market was not incorporated as such an organization. It is recommended that those seeking to do so consult the WSFMA for a list of markets that have made a successful application to the IRS, and then request from these markets a copy of their bylaws and the form they submitted. It is also prudent to hire a tax attorney to review the documents and ensure appropriate steps are followed and the correct language used. This can be a time-consuming and costly approach, but may be worth the trouble to ensure maximum private support.

Those involved with a market can also form a separate 501(c)(3) organization for the benefit of the market. The Friends of the Woodinville Market is such an example. The benefit of this approach is that the 501(c)(3) organization then has a singular focus—the enhancement of the market. There is a downside, however: the IRS requires that the board of such a "Friends" organization operate separately from the board of the market. This can be a challenge for markets that are already having

difficulty attracting volunteers and managing their current workload.

Grant making organizations generally prefer not to support operating expenses—the normal costs of running the market—but rather try to fund special projects. Those new to grant writing often make the mistake of dramatically underestimating the actual costs in time and financial resources that a specific project will require. Not only is there work involved in preparing and submitting a proposal, but the work promised must also be done on time and with the funds provided, and then reports must be submitted to the funding organization or agency.

Public Grant Programs. Many federal, state, and local agencies also maintain grant programs, offering a competitive process to fund organizations that are working in communities. Visit a local library for assistance finding Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or Requests for Applications (RFAs) produced by various agencies. The USDA Risk Management Agency, USDA Farmers Market Promotional Program, USDA Specialty Crops Program, and Washington Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), and the WSDA Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program are among the public agencies that offer grant funding for which markets can apply. Local community and economic development councils and associations are also ideal public funding sources.

Sponsorships. The best market managers are always looking for ways that resources can do double duty. Corporate sponsorship offers huge potential to maximize resources. The key to success is a continual search for ways that free or reduced-rate products and services can meet not only the market's goals but also the business objectives of the contributing company. For example, a company might happily pay the cost of a new banner for a market if its logo is also prominently displayed there.

Some market boards maintain a sponsorship committee that spearheads the process of identifying, soliciting, and following up with corporate sponsors. In other markets, the pursuit of corporate sponsorship falls to the market staff or the board members and the staff can team up to tackle the job. The first step in attracting these funds is the creation of a sponsorship packet, which includes:

- A list of the reasons why a company should contribute free or reduced-rate products

and services to the market. This should include key facts about your market, such as the number of shoppers and vendors who attend during the entire season or on a typical market day, and profiles of typical market shoppers. The aim of this document is to show that those who sell and shop at the market are within the company's target audience—either its customers or the people it wants to influence.

- A list of sponsorship levels with dollar amounts attached to each and a description of the benefits a corporate sponsor would receive when contributing goods or services at each level. These benefit levels can be named to indicate the value of that support to the market—for example, Gold, Silver, and Bronze. The idea is that a Gold sponsor will receive more visibility—such as more prominent placement of its logo and business name in more places—than a Bronze sponsor receives. Request copies of sponsorship packets used by other markets to help put prices on the sponsorship levels.
- Other terms and conditions of sponsorship. Markets often include a statement assuring sponsors of business category exclusivity, which means that only one type of business—such as a bank—will be a Gold sponsor during a single season. And markets also can promise “first right of refusal” to sponsors, meaning that a Gold sponsor of the market this season would be first in line to sponsor the market again next year at the same sponsorship level. Marketing professionals stress the importance of repeat messaging to consumers over time. The assurance of first right of refusal allows corporate sponsors to plan long-term investments in the market as part of their overall strategy of reaching a target audience.

Once the packet is ready, those board or staff members responsible for sponsorship should attempt to set up appointments with the decision makers at the companies targeted and make a brief presentation to them. It is best to present the sponsorship as a way that the company can meet its business goals by sponsoring the market.

Typically, a corporate sponsor makes contributions from its advertising or marketing budget. If it offers cash or donates products or services to the market,

it is seeking to raise its visibility in the community while being aligned with a “good cause.” When a sponsor receives such value for its contributions, these donations are no longer considered charitable for IRS purposes. Thus corporate sponsors are usually unconcerned with a market’s 501(c)(3) status.

Special Fundraising Events. Most market boards host at least one special event each year (*see Section 2.13*). Harvest dinners, such as a “Taste of the Market,” or a black-tie gala event with farm footwear required, are opportunities to thank vendors, shoppers, volunteers, and community partners for their support. Special events help to build goodwill in the community; they offer a chance to recognize exceptional people and mark milestones for the market; and they are an opportunity to raise financial support. Silent or live auctions are a chance for local businesses—whether they have participated as corporate sponsors or not—to contribute gift certificates and other prizes to support the market.

Those who have produced special events know that these can be all-consuming for the staff and/or the board. The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance in Seattle has perhaps an ideal solution: A local chef has volunteered her time to organize an event celebrating markets in the alliance, with

proceeds from ticket sales going to the support of these markets.

Other Ways to Generate Support

Merchandise. The market can sell an array of items with its logo, such as tote bags, t-shirts, hats, and mugs, to generate revenue. Some items can represent a significant source of net revenue for a market, but in most cases merchandise sales are not a reliable way to fill holes in the budget. Such merchandise should be viewed as part of the overall marketing strategy—a way to build the market’s visibility within the community.

Bricks, plaques, and benches. Markets that have or are planning to build a permanent location can “sell” architectural features with the names of donors inscribed on them. This option also could work with benches or tables and chairs in a non-permanent market, since these items could be set up on market day and stored when not in use.

Membership Programs. Innovative markets invite their shoppers to contribute as members. For an annual fee—often around \$25—market members can receive a copy of the market newsletter, as well as advance notice of seasonal varieties, special offers, and recipes.

Reevaluating Markets for Continuous Improvement

3

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3.1 Revisiting Mission and Goals

Even mature markets need to remain open to new ideas and possibilities. At some point the market staff may realize that it has too many customers and a waiting list of vendors, and that it has outgrown the current location site of the market. The market may have begun with a particular goal in mind and now find that this goal has been reached, or that it is no longer relevant to the market's situation. It may be realized that the market has a big need for permanent shade. The market is at the point where it needs to be reevaluated to determine the next steps and the next evolution of the market.

The third section of this manual gives an overview of the steps to take and the questions that should be asked as a market matures. As a market experiences growing pains, the market board and staff need to be adaptable and ready to take honest stock of the situation. By now, the market has some real experience, a core of stakeholders has been built, and the market's vendors and shopping community have developed a vested interest in the continued success of the market. Do not forget to involve them.

Revisiting Mission and Goals Statements. As a farmers market grows, it may reach, or out-grow, its original mission and goals. This could happen without a manager even realizing it. Because those closest to a market generally remain deeply involved in its day-to-day, year-to-year operations, it is relatively easy to get into a routine and relatively difficult to see the larger picture of the market organization. While it may seem obvious to the market's leaders that the rules need to be updated, the bylaws rewritten, or the manager paid more; the need to revise the market's mission and goals can be less obvious.

The mission and goals statements capture the vision(s) that a community has for its market, and help to explain who the market is meant to serve, what it intends to accomplish, and how goals are going to be met. The first steps in this manual were to identify a vision for the market, and then to develop mission and goals statements to drive all future action steps.

While it is understandable how these statements can get lost amidst the daily minutia of market

operations, their presence should still guide the market. If the mission and goals are completely forgotten, or if they become outdated, a market may lose direction. Revisiting a market's mission and goals statements should be done regularly, both to be sure that they are up-to-date and that a market is staying true to its purposes. Changes in structural and operational components may follow.

Why would the mission and goals statements of a farmers market need updating? Perhaps the initial mission was to reinvigorate a downtown commercial district on Sundays, while helping local farmers at the same time. If a market has already accomplished both, it might be time to look beyond the initial goals and set new ones—like helping a community's low-income seniors or providing more nutritional education opportunities for local children.

Perhaps a first goal was to provide access to fresh, nutritious local fruits and vegetables in a lower-income neighborhood not adequately served by grocery stores. If the market is now well established, a new emphasis might be to ensure that farmers are sufficiently benefiting from market sales.

And what if a market has out-grown its current space? If a market has to move, will the new space accommodate the original mission, or will the market need to grow to serve more farmers and customers? Will growth cause the market to move away from other goals? Is it time to build a permanent presence by acquiring land or building a market structure? Clear and up-to-date mission and goals statements will help guide a market through these tough questions.

A first step in reevaluating a market with growth in mind is to revisit the original mission and goals statements, going back to the first market meeting, as described in Step 3 of this manual. This time, instead of starting from scratch, the review process will already be aided by:

- A clearly identified group of interested stakeholders to engage in discussion.
- Market history and guiding experience.



3.2 Reevaluating Management Structure

Once a market has been up and operating for a while – a few years or even a few months – a market community may begin to find that some of the management structures are not keeping up with the actual market. It is time to reevaluate, and perhaps update, those organizational structures.

What management structures may need to be reevaluated and possibly updated?

- Rules
- Bylaws
- Fees
- Manager Salaries
- Manager/Board/Vendor Relations

Rules. When a market was first established, the rules making committee may very well have addressed all anticipated situations. As a market grows and changes, though, it takes on a life of its own. What was initially important may change, and unanticipated changes to market conditions and economics are inevitable. For example:

- A first year market may discover that it had not established a rule about vendor parking, resulting in vendors parking vehicles too close to the market, thus using up spaces needed for customers. A rule may need to be added instructing vendors to park in a specific location.
- A first year market may need to clarify rules such as waste disposal, after discovering that vendors are using the market's trash cans instead of packing it out. Vendor rules may need to be amended to include a fine for using market cans.
- A mature market may need to create a seniority program for vendors if the market has reached its capacity
- If a market moves to a new space, the rules may need to be revised to address new conditions.

To update a market's rules, first review Step 6 of the Start-up Section of this manual. The process used to update a market's rules is essentially the same as the one used to establish them. Form a new rules making committee, recruiting market stakeholders who are relevant to the market's current situation to participate. This rules updating committee will serve

as an ad hoc, not standing, committee so set clear goals and timelines.

This committee has the advantage of market history and experience that the original rules making committee did not. It should start with a brainstorming session to make lists of the issues that are not currently being addressed by the existing rules, and what rules might work to address those issues. It should also fully review the existing rules to enumerate what issues of concern might be addressed by simple clarification or tweaking of existing rules, and to identify rules that have outlived their usefulness. The WSFMA member discussion listserv is an excellent resource for querying about how other markets have dealt with particular situations.

Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. As a market grows, it may find that its bylaws and articles are no longer functioning as well as they should. It may be that the bylaws set a date range for the organization's annual meeting that is impractical. Or, the market may wish to alter how the Board of Directors is defined so as to expand or restrict who may serve on it. A market might be applying for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status with the IRS, and therefore need to revise the articles and bylaws to conform with accepted language for IRS determination status.

Rarely is there a set of bylaws that comes out perfectly the first time, and markets evolve to a point where bylaws require updating. Articles, which are more difficult to amend than bylaws, should rarely need updating.

If the bylaws should require an update, the Board of Directors may create an ad hoc bylaws committee formed with specific goals and a specific timelines. In the case of a general bylaws review, the committee may require several months to research what changes it would propose to the Board. If the committee is charged with finding a solution to a particular problem in the bylaws, such as a loophole or changing language regarding board membership eligibility, it likely will need less time. However, in any bylaws updating process, the current bylaws should spell out exactly what formal process will need to take place to amend the bylaws, such as who gets to vote on proposed bylaws amendments, when that vote will take place, what participation levels equal a quorum, how big a majority (i.e., simple majority, two-thirds, three-fourths, etc.) will be necessary for the proposed



Royal Produce, Ephrata Farmers Market, Ephrata, WA

amendments to pass, and/or how much notice the membership needs in advance of the scheduled vote.

With regards to proper notice of a bylaws amendment vote, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Is the market required to notify only voting members, or all members?
2. When sending out a notice, include a complete copy of the current bylaws, as well as a complete copy of the proposed amended bylaws, clearly showing what language will be different and how it will differ.
3. Clearly explain why it is being proposed that amendments are added to the market's bylaws. Remember, bylaws are a market's legal governing documents. A market's membership may be reluctant to alter them. The more educated your membership is before the meeting to vote on the amendments, the better the meeting will go.
4. Finally, be aware of whether the bylaws allow for proxy voting on bylaws amendments. If they do, make sure that there is a procedure in place for such voting. (Proxy voting can be both efficient and problematic—while it does not require an in-person vote it also does not allow for the open forum of discussion that takes place at a formal meeting,.)

Fees

Stall fees. It is a good idea to periodically review a market's fee structure to make sure it is still in alignment with the market's mission and goals, and with its budget. Many a new market has started out

by setting vendor stall fees low or having a flat-rate vendor stall fee instead of a percentage with the idea of attracting vendors

Once a market is well established, attracting vendors may no longer be an issue. Instead, generating adequate revenue to pay staff and support the management needs for the market may become a higher priority. If vendors are experiencing success at the market, they will likely have no problem supporting a shift to a percentage basis of stall fees, especially if the revenue generated will ultimately enhance their sales. After all, if a flat percentage basis leads to vendors' stall fees continuing to increase, it also means that vendors are making more per market day.

Remember to consider what fees neighboring markets are charging. Vendors at farmers markets are charging prices that the local market will bare. Markets must adhere to the same economic principles. If a market is the only one charging 5% stall fees when everyone else is charging 6%, this does not necessarily guarantee that the market will attract more or better vendors. If service suffers because a market cannot pay for the same things the other markets can, vendors may decide to favor the higher percentage stall fees because the added services of other markets are worth the percentage difference.

Making the case to vendors to increase stall fees is critical. Market management must be able to explain the benefits and justify the fee increases. Ultimately, a market needs to be able to make the case for the stall fees every day, through the quality of the market's management.

Annual fees. Some markets have annual fees, while others do not. Some markets require an annual membership fee to attend the market. Others charge an application fee. These fees can be critical to generating revenue for the launch of a new season at the market. They also pay for management and marketing before the market season begins, when there are no stall fees coming in.

A market's annual fees may become outdated. They should be periodically reviewed to make sure they are still serving the interest of the market. It is a good idea to check what other markets are charging and why.

Questions to Ask

- Are fees structured to support the Mission and Goals Statement?
- Do the fees meet the needs of the market's budget?
- Do they demonstrate enough of a commitment from the vendors of the market?

Tips. Consider offering vendors an opportunity to prepay some of their stall fees for a discounted rate. This approach generates more up-front revenue and ensures the farmer's presence at the market. Refer to the Startup Section to review procedures for establishing market fees, and follow them when you need to revise those fees.

Manager Salaries. A market should periodically review how well it is paying its employees and evaluate the costs and benefits of investments in human resources. Is the staff being paid sufficiently? Are there enough staff to provide quality management of the market? Studies have shown a direct correlation between the money invested in management staff and the markets' success (Stephenson et al. 2006). These considerations should be part of developing a market's Mission and Goals statement, as well as the budget and all strategic planning documents.

Manager/Board/Vendor Relations. A market should have language in its governing documents

that define everyone's role and enumerates dispute resolution protocols. It is a wise idea to reevaluate a market's protocols on a regular basis – at least annually.

Common problems that may arise from inadequate or outdated documents:

- The Board of Directors is regularly interfering with day-to-day operations of a market – duties that are more appropriate for the manager. This scenario could result from outdated role definitions, or it could result from failing to clearly define the organizational structure and delegation of authority.
- The manager is assigning stalls in a manner that is upsetting to many vendors. Are the market's organizational guiding documents sufficient to address such situations?

A market's governing documents must effectively define who is responsible for what tasks, and the behavioral protocols for the market's stakeholders.

Most markets find that they need to update these guiding documents when circumstances arise that expose inadequacies. The stronger the thinking is behind a market's documents and the better able a market's board and staff can ensure their integrity and enforcement, the more effective and successful a market will be. A market needs both strong written documents and the leadership to implement them.



3.3 Reassessing Location

If a market has outgrown its current location, is finding problems with the location, or if access to a current location will be restricted, it may be time to find a new home for the market. Refer back to the Startup Section, Steps 4 and 6 to rethink site selection. The process for finding a new location is similar to the process of finding an initial location, with some important advantages:

- The market now has a history, giving experience and insight into what a new location will need to offer.
- The market has a track record, meaning it will have the credibility to positively influence landowners and community leaders in negotiations for a new site.
- The market has an established community presence and a broader support base.

If a market aspires to have a permanent, physical structure, consider that:

- A site that can accommodate a structure may be more difficult to locate.
- A market will need to find a site that can be leased long-term.
- As the structure will be customized for a specific market, the Board and staff will need to work closely with the architects and all stakeholders to be sure that the structure is built with the goals and mission of the market in mind.
- Many enclosed markets do not succeed as true farmers markets because the construction costs of an expensive structure can create a perceived need for “permanent tenants” such



Bellingham Farmers Market, Bellingham, WA

as restaurants or flower shops. Would these businesses conflict with, or compliment, your market?

- Additional fundraising or sponsorship will likely be required to pay for a new structure.

Once a new site is selected it is important to let the community know about it. Use every possible communications tool the market currently employs and more to notify the community about the market’s move, including when, where, and, depending on the forum, why. Organize a party for the first day at the site. Involve the community in work parties as the sight is prepared for opening day. Invite community leaders and elected officials to the site on opening day. Indeed, treat the opening of the new location the same as if it were the grand opening of the initial location (*see Opening Day, Step 6 in Section 1*).



3.4 Strategic Planning to Enhance an Existing Market

The most challenging goal of market management is to have a budget that is intimately linked to the strategic plan of the organization. Few markets, even established, well-capitalized ones, ever reach this standard. Those who do go through the effort to link budgets with plans, however, are optimizing their management and setting up their markets for stable, vibrant futures.

Through a strategic planning process, the board and market management reach a consensus and articulate their goals for the future, based on their understanding of the market and the community it serves. These goals become the priorities for the market over the next three to five years, the typical life of a strategic plan. By thinking in broader terms than “What do we need to get done before next season starts?” the market management helps ensure that the organization is ready to seize opportunities and address challenges for the years ahead.

A well-developed strategic plan has the following benefits:

- A sense of excitement about the market's future prospects, which starts with the market management but quickly radiates to the wider community.
- Decreased risk of spending funds on equipment, personnel, or initiatives that are inconsistent with the market's goals or for which the timing is not right.
- Greater transparency for vendors, shoppers, and market partners about how the organization is using its share of the retail dollar to realize the best possible future for the market.
- Less burnout of staff and board members.
- Enhanced likelihood of identifying and attracting the right staff and board members to reach the market's long-term goals.

When the strategic plan is completed, the priorities determined by the board should drive the annual budgeting process. The bulk of the market's financial and human resources should be allocated to those activities that advance the plan. It is important, however, that the market management remains responsive to opportunity. Entrepreneurialism is, after all, the cornerstone of farmers markets. In this light, the strategic plan should be viewed more as a guide than a rulebook. It should help prevent bad outcomes while not becoming an obstacle to the best outcomes.

Planning the Plan. A Board retreat is the perfect time to develop a long-range strategic plan for the market. The Board should make a habit of meeting at least once yearly for a day of reflection and discussion. Once the plan is developed, the Board can focus its attention in future years' retreats on implementation.

The Board retreat is a chance to ask the big questions, ones beyond the scope of day-to-day market operations. Boards have a tendency to get caught up in the same discussions and the Board retreat is an opportunity to look at the market's situation with fresh eyes.

Key Questions. Markets develop strategic plans to answer two fundamental questions:

1. What is the best possible future for our market?
2. What are we going to do over the next three to five years to ensure that that future becomes a reality?

Although these two questions are fundamental, to find the answers, it is necessary to first ask even more questions. The bulk of the agenda during the retreat should be focused on addressing these questions. Initial questions might include the following considerations.

Regarding vendors: *In a best-case scenario, what will the vendor mix look like? How many vendors should attend the market? What are the trends affecting the availability of vendors—i.e., what changes are we seeing in the availability of farmland and of farms that use direct marketing?*

Regarding customers: *What will the community look like in five years? How are the demographics of the community expected to change? What do these trends mean for the market?*

Regarding the market as an organization: *How big should the market be at the end of the planning period? Size can be considered in terms of customer counts, size of budget, and number of vendors. What, if any, major changes should be made, such as a new permanent market structure, one or more additional market locations, or new partnerships with community organizations that increase sales or ensure better access to healthy food for all citizens? What would be done with additional market revenue—new staff, new or expanded programs?*

Trying to predict the future can seem overly abstract to some. However, it is important during a retreat to look into the future and not get caught up on current concerns. There may be legitimate and pressing issues that need to be resolved by the board, but these should not interfere with the process of brainstorming the needs of a complete strategic plan. These concerns can be addressed during the retreat but should not be the focus of the discussion or the reason for meeting.

Getting Ready to Hold a Retreat. In order to answer the questions above during the strategic planning meeting, the planning committee should first assemble some basic information. If possible, give board members several weeks to review the results of pre-retreat research. The retreat committee can also develop a presentation to convey the main points and how these might affect the future of the market. Some things to include:

- Past years' budgets
- Results of most recent Rapid Market Assessment(s) (*See Rapid Market Assessments in Section 2.2*)
- Information about current and future trends affecting the market's consumer base and its vendors. The Washington State's Office of Financial Management website (www.ofm.wa.gov) includes research and data on the state's population and economy, including profiles of each county.

Steps to Holding a Successful retreat:

1. *Form a retreat planning committee.* One to two months before the retreat is scheduled, the committee should begin meeting to plan the agenda and activities.
2. *Select a site for the retreat.* If the board typically meets in a certain location, try something different for the retreat. A new venue often leads to new thinking and new insights.
3. *Find a facilitator for the retreat.* The best candidate is someone who is not a board or staff member. If funding allows, a paid facilitator can be a good investment. However, it is most important that the facilitator brings a neutral viewpoint to the table, is a good listener, is able to keep the agenda moving, and is fair—ensuring that everyone's voice is heard.

4. *Assign roles for retreat-day support of the facilitator.* One or more note-takers to capture the conversation and a timekeeper to help ensure that the agenda stays on track are key.
5. *Ensure that snacks, hot and cold beverages, and lunch are provided* so those participating can focus on the discussion at hand.

Setting a Retreat Agenda. If you are able to secure a facilitator, this person should be involved in the agenda development as soon as possible. As a rough guide, about one-third of the agenda should be devoted to a discussion of the best possible future for the market. The Key Questions above, and the research on current issues and trends, are a starting point for this discussion. By the close of this segment, participants should be able to determine anywhere from one to five main goals that characterize the desired future for the market.

One-third of the agenda should then be spent deciding what strategies can be used to meet these goals and who on the board or staff will do them. This is not the time to discuss at length what particular tasks or tactics can be used to carry out these strategies—that level of detail can come later.

The last third of the agenda can be allocated to a tour or other activity (as well as other business). This final third can be broken up—for example, you might start the day with a tour and end with a discussion of old business.

Alternative Approach. The “S.W.O.T. analysis” is a classic approach to strategic planning, and it can be integrated into the retreat as well. S.W.O.T. is shorthand for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Articulating where a market stands with respect to these four areas is critical. If using this format, the group can work through the following questions to better understand the market and where it stands.

Strengths: What is going well with the market right now? What are the assets and activities that are already in place?

Weaknesses: What are current or potential difficulties?

Opportunities: What trends and developments could have a positive impact on the market, provided we are ready?

Threats: What are the forces, both external and internal, that might work against the desired future?

The Strategic Plan Document. By the close of the retreat, participants should create an outline for the strategic plan. It may just be a set of goals with bullet points under them. Following the retreat, the planning committee, executive committee, or an ad hoc or existing team should keep working on the draft to develop a version that can be presented to the full Board for consideration and, eventually, adoption. In future drafts, the goal is to put some specificity to the tasks at hand, and to identify benchmarks or milestones that can be used to track progress over time.

- **Goals or Priorities.** This could be anywhere from one to five (or even more) goals.
- **Strategies.** These are bullets under each goal that reflect how you're going to reach the goals.
- **Tasks.** Who is going to do what by when to ensure that objectives are met? This is information that can be sketched during

the retreat and elaborated upon later.

- **Evaluation.** Here are some questions that should be answered in the strategic plan itself: How to tell if the market is on track? What can be measured? What can be observed but not necessarily measured? What information do we need to collect in future market assessments to ensure that the market is reaching its goals?

In a market's beginning stages, the management is typically focused on just getting through each market day. This approach is appropriate. But later, as a market matures and seeks to grow and remain dynamic, a long-range plan is needed.

Once a strategic plan is developed at a Board retreat (or similar gathering), and once the plan is fleshed out in greater detail, it becomes a touchstone for the market management that can be referenced at Board meetings throughout the year, as well as at future retreats. The strategic plan is a tool that can be used to attract the right people to the Board and staff while helping ensure the best desired future for the market and the community it serves.



Conclusion

Farmers markets are greatly impacted by policies set by governments at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as by the personal food values of individual shoppers. These policies and consumer awareness levels impact the success of markets by determining which products can or cannot be sold, the pricing of products, farm viability, and many other issues. Likewise, markets can promote changes to, or the development of, new policies concerning food and agriculture.

Many communities struggle with epidemic occurrences of food-related disease, loss of productive farms and farmland, loss of locally-owned businesses, and inequitable access to healthy foods. Because of their broad-based constituency, farmers markets can potentially set examples of positive solutions to environmental and economic problems and help find ways to reduce inequities in community access to quality foods. They are a community gathering place where people from many different walks of life can interact with each other and communicate about food. Markets are a place where urban dwellers can learn directly from farmers about rural and agricultural issues, and learn about nutrition, new foods, cooking, and the environment.

Farmers markets are playing a role nationally in providing nutritious foods to underserved communities. In Washington, market managers have taken the lead in devising ways for food stamp beneficiaries to continue shopping at farmers markets despite the technological barriers presented by the transition to EBT cards. Market farmers are also key donors of fresh, nutritious produce to area food banks.

The economic opportunities created by farmers markets in Washington continue to expand, with new communities adding markets and combined farmer sales reaching over 40 million. And a recent study of the Seattle area found that for every dollar spent at a farmers market, 62 cents was re-spent in the local economy and 99 cents remained in the state (Sonntag 2007). Market stakeholders have been instrumental in prompting changes to local regulatory policies in order to allow sales of new farm and value-added products such as meats, seafood, and wine.

Despite their popularity and their many-faceted community benefits, even the most dynamic markets remain fragile institutions. Lack of critical local government and business support, infighting, weak organizational structure, loss of a market site, or rapid turnover of managers and boards can all too quickly put a market's future in jeopardy. Many new markets never get off the ground due to a failure to generate enough sales to support a sufficient farmer base and a sound management structure. Thus, broad-based community involvement and a favorable policy climate are essential to creating sustainable market structures with the capacity to generate a critical mass of both dedicated vendors and shoppers.

Markets have demonstrated the potential to bring together agricultural stakeholders, food security and nutrition advocates, and environmentalists to establish new partnerships and coalitions in the food system that were not even considered 10 years ago. Such dynamic coalitions can potentially impact the development of policies affecting the entire food system and will only grow in importance in the face of the new challenges presented by rising energy costs and the growing impacts of climate change.



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Alberta

- *Farmers Market Manager's Resource Manual*, Chris Tyrkalo, Farmers Market Program, Ag-Entrepreneurship Division, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 2004.

Arizona

- *Direct Farm Marketing and Tourism Handbook*, Russell Tronstad and Julie Leones, Assistant Specialists, Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics, Cooperative Extension, The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, 1995.

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Texas

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Washington

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[Samples/PamphletEng.pdf](#)

- Washington State University, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, 106 FSHN, Pullman, WA 99164-6376

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Appendix A

Washington State Farmers Market Association Member Guidelines

http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com/info/market_info_guidelines.html

Preamble

The purpose of the WSFMA is to encourage and establish successful farmers markets in Washington State. We feel that farmers markets are significant means to two social ends. A farmers market where a grower can sell directly to the consumer is perhaps the small farmer's best opportunity to profit from their land and efforts. And a farmers market where consumers can talk directly to the grower, get the freshest produce possible, and experience the health-giving effects of that freshness, is the consumer's best access to quality.

Farmers Markets operate in every type of community across the state, in cities, in suburbs, in rural communities. Naturally they vary in size according to their location. Finally they vary in sophistication from occasional large shelters housing 50 to 75 vendors, to a few farmers with their pick-ups parked beside each other in a community parking lot. But in each case the customers have the same expectations and it is these expectations that every farmers market needs to meet if it truly intends to be successful in its twin goals. These expectations are at the heart of the standards outlined below.

How Does a Market Qualify for Membership?

The WSFMA is committed to an agriculturally based market system, and has implemented the following minimum qualifications for membership and insurance coverage.

Membership Policies

- To qualify for membership benefits in the Washington State Farmers Market Association, the applying farmers market must submit a vendor roster showing at least five (5) vendors who are Farmers* selling their own farm products.
- Total combined gross annual sales of Processors* and/or Resellers* shall not exceed the total gross annual sales of Farmers*.
- Total gross annual sales of Others* shall not exceed total gross annual sales of Producers*.
- WSFMA member markets are required to keep a current list of their vendor-members, including vendor name, type, address, telephone number and e-mail address.
- WSFMA member markets shall provide WSFMA annually with updated vendor lists*, by-laws, market rules/policies, and examples of any other documents (eg., newsletters, applications, etc.). (*for vendors requesting privacy, list business name, vendor type, and the words "contact vendor through market".)
- WSFMA member markets will be visited annually to assess the degree to which they are meeting WSFMA standards of membership, and to assess market needs.
- No commercial items, no imported items and no second hand items shall be sold by ANY vendor at any WSFMA member Farmers Market.
- No Franchises allowed at any WSFMA member market.
- Member markets shall have the following language included in their vendor contracts: "All vendors who wish to erect canopies (including umbrellas) on the farmers market site during a normal period of market operations, including the set up and break down period, are required to have their canopies sufficiently and safely anchored to the ground from the time their canopy is put up to the time it is taken down. Any vendor who fails to properly anchor his or her canopy will not be allowed to sell at the farmers market on that market day, unless that vendor chooses to take down and stow their canopy and sell without it."
- If a member market is found to be in violation of stated WSFMA policies, the WSFMA Director shall, within 10 days of the alleged violation, submit a description of the violation, via registered mail, to the member market contact person. The member market in question then has 10 days from receipt of the violation notice to appeal. The WSFMA Board of Directors, or a board appointed committee, shall then meet to discuss the appropriate action to take. All decisions made by the Board of Directors shall be final and binding. The WSFMA Board of Directors reserves the right to suspend membership for any violations of these membership policies.

* as defined below

Producers

Farmers

One who raises the produce, plants or animals which they sell at a WSFMA member farmers market on land they own or lease/rent in the state of Washington, or counties which border Washington. This is meant to exclude those who might work on or manage a corporately owned farm and have permission to dispose of surplus product. It may include someone who processes produce grown on their own property into a value added product such as jams, cider, salsa, or alcoholic beverages*. It may also include farmers who raise the basic ingredient(s) of a product, but who must send it out for fundamental processing before creating the value added product. Such Vendors might include those farmers selling mint oils, emu oils, smoked meat or fish, etc. (*Alcoholic beverages must be made entirely from ingredients grown by the producer, except for certain additives required for processing, but which cannot be produced by the grower, not amounting to more than 5% of the total volume of the beverage.)

Processors

One who sells processed foods which they have personally prepared on their own or leased/rented property. Processors are persons or entities offering fresh food products (such as meats, seafoods, ciders, baked goods, jams, etc.) that have added value to their product through some sort of “hands-on” processing (eg., hand filleted fish, smoked or butcher meats, handmade candies, etc.). All processors must meet all federal, state, county and local health requirements. All appropriate permits and licenses shall be displayed whenever a processor is selling at a WSFMA member market. Processors must produce their products in Washington* or in counties which border the State of Washington. Processed food products should use ingredients from Washington* farms or waters as much as possible, and WSFMA member markets should give stall preference to processors using ingredients from Washington farms or waters. Alcoholic beverages must be made entirely from ingredients grown in Washington, or from grapes grown in a recognized Washington appellation, except for certain additives required for processing, but which cannot be produced in the state of Washington, not amounting to more than 5% of the total volume of the beverage. (*In the case of Seafood vendors, product must originate from the greater Pacific Northwest, which includes Washington, Oregon, Alaska and British Columbia.)

Resellers

One who buys produce from farmers in Washington State and counties which border Washington, trucks it to a WSFMA member farmers market, and resells it directly to the consumer. The reseller is expected to be the only stop between the grower and the consumer. They are not expected to deal with shippers, warehousemen or jobbers. They must not sell any produce not grown in Washington and its surrounding counties. They may sell any produce they grow themselves on their own property (see: Farmers). Resellers are sellers of crops that cannot be grown reliably, or offered for sale in sufficient quantity, by farmers selling at a given WSFMA member market, as determined by the individual WSFMA member market’s governing body. Resellers must have crops pre-approved by market governing body before delivering the crops to market for sale. Approved resold crops must be specifically limited, so as not to compete with the crops of farmers within the geographic vendor boundaries of the WSFMA member market, as defined by the market’s policies and by-laws. Resellers must label their products as being resold*, and information must be available for the consumer as to which farms produced those products. (*other terms synonymous with “resold” may be substituted.)

Others

Crafters

Crafters are persons or entities who craft with their own hands the products they offer for sale at WSFMA member markets. To qualify as a crafter, a majority of the tools and equipment used by the crafter to produce their products must require skills, personal handling and/or guidance by the crafter. Crafters should incorporate materials produced in Washington as much as possible. Crafters must create their craft products in Washington, or in counties which border the State of Washington.

Prepared Food Vendors (Concessionaires)

Prepared Food Vendors offer freshly made foods, available for sale and immediate consumption on-site at WSFMA member markets. Prepared Food Vendors shall possess and maintain all required state, county and

local permits. Prepared Food Vendors should use ingredients produced in Washington as much as possible. When selecting Prepared Food Vendors, WSFMA member markets are encouraged to provide a good variety of healthy foods, and to give preference to vendors using ingredients produced in Washington.

Miscellaneous

Any vendor which does not fit into, or violate, any of the above categories or standards.

Washington State Farmers Market Association
(206) 706-5198 or www.wafarmersmarkets.com
Downloaded December 20, 2007

Appendix B

Guidelines and Policies for the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance

Excerpted from the 2007 Guidelines, updated 1/19/2007, www.seattlefarmersmarkets.org

I. THE NEIGHBORHOOD FARMERS MARKET ALLIANCE

The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance (NFMA) is a community-based non-profit organization developed in response to the growing popularity and public support of the neighborhood farmers markets in Seattle. The NFMA is committed to supporting and strengthening Washington's small family farm businesses by creating and operating vibrant, successful neighborhood farmers markets.

The NFMA organizes and operating Farmers Markets that have been established for the benefit of the **community**, the **vendor**, and the **consumer** alike.

The NFMA is a non-profit 501(c) 3 corporation registered with the State of Washington and IRS. A board of ten directors governs the NFMA. Board members are comprised of three farmer vendors. Other board members represent Seattle neighborhoods where the Markets take place and citywide representatives who support the goals of the NFMA. The NFMA hosts an annual vendor steering committee meeting that includes the Market coordinators and representatives from Market vendors. **All vendors who participated in the markets the previous season are invited to this annual meeting.**

In 2007, the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance staff includes the Executive Director, Associate Director, Market Coordinators, office manager, bookkeeper, on-site Market managers and Market assistants. Additional contracts may be held with event consultants, on-site security and others, as appropriate.

III. PRODUCTS SOLD AT THE FARMERS MARKET

Products sold at the Farmers Markets are limited to five categories, listed below as A through E. All vendors must be Washington State farms and businesses. Each vendor's application for a permit to sell shall state what is grown/produced/made by the vendor, and what products the vendor intends to sell at the Farmers Markets. Each vendor may only sell products at the market listed on his/her application. If a vendor wishes to later add a new product, or discontinue a product for sale at a Market, the vendor must inform the NFMA of his/her intent. Requests for new products will be handled on a case by case basis.

A. FRESH FARM PRODUCTS: Includes fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, nuts, honey, dairy products, eggs, poultry, mushrooms, meats, fish and shellfish. Also included in this category are fresh cut flowers, nursery stock, and plants.

All fresh farm products must be grown or produced in Washington State. All fresh farm products must be grown or produced by the seller. Any violation of these rules will result in the product being automatically removed from the vendor's tables and possible revocation of the vendor's Permit to Sell. Interpretation of this rule is at the Market Manager's discretion with possible review by the NFMA Board of Directors.

Only farmers, ranchers, fishers, apiaries, nurseries, and foragers may sell fresh farm products. Vendors must be active owners and operators of the farming operation and may not be operating the business under a franchise agreement (Effective 1/1/00). Farmers must propagate all plants and flowers from seed, cuttings, bulbs or plant division. Farmers must be the owner-operators of bee hives from which they sell honey.

B. VALUE ADDED FARM FOODS: Includes preserves, jams and jellies, cider, wine, distilled spirits, syrups, salsas, smoked or canned meats or fish, dried fruit, flours, salad dressings, and limited on-site processed farm food such as roasted peppers & roasted peanuts.

All value added farm foods must be made from raw products/ ingredients, a majority of

which are grown and produced by the seller. The seller must also be the creator of the value added farm foods he/she is selling (personally doing the cooking, canning, baking, preserving, etc to create the product or supervising his/her raw product with their own recipes produced in a permitted facility). Value-added farm foods in which the majority of the ingredients are NOT grown and produced by the seller **cannot exceed 20% of total inventory** displayed per market day. Situations where third-party processing is deemed necessary (eg., fish that is canned by a third party) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. All processed foods must have the proper permits and licenses as required by the WSDA, City of Seattle and Seattle-King County Health Department. Vendor must be an active owner and operator of the farming operation and may not be operating the business under a franchise agreement (Effective 1/1/00). All processed value-added farm foods must carry product liability insurance. Copies of proof of insurance must be provided to the NFMA. (see VIII, G & H)
Wines allowable for sale at the Market must use grapes and fruit grown in the five wine appellations of Washington State.

C. DRIED FLOWERS, CRAFTED FARM PRODUCTS: Allowed are: bouquets, wreaths, roping, arrangements and displays of fresh and dried flowers, vines and gourds. Beeswax candles are allowed by honey producers only. **Only vine and woven wood baskets from farmers are allowed.**

These items must be grown, foraged and produced by vendor on vendor's own farm. These items are intended as a supplement to fresh produce, value added farm goods, or nursery/flower inventory and cannot exceed 25% of total displayed inventory per market day. Vendor must be an active owner and operator of the farming operation and may not be operating the business under a franchise agreement (Effective 1/1/00).

D. PROCESSED FOODS: Includes juices, wines, preserved foods, salad dressings, jams, wines, pastries, pasta, granola, cookies, muffins, breads, pies and related take home desserts, not prepared on site. Vendor must be an active owner/operator of the business and may not be operating under a franchise agreement (Effective 1/1/00).

Processed foods must be produced by the vendor from raw ingredients. Vendors in this category are those who have cooked, baked or otherwise treated the product they sell. No commercially prepared dough mixes, crusts, shells or fillings are allowed. Our intent is to support local agriculture. It is expected that the vendor will use raw ingredients that are grown in Washington, as appropriate for the product, and when possible, use products from participating market farmers. All processed foods must have the proper permits and licenses required by the City of Seattle, the Seattle-King Co. Health Dept. and/ or the Washington State Dept. of Agriculture. All processed foods must carry product liability insurance. Copies of proof of insurance must be provided to the NFMA. All processed food vendors must carry a current City of Seattle business license. All processed foods must be properly labeled (see VIII, G & H).

Wines allowable for sale at the Market must use grapes and fruit grown in the five wine appellations of Washington state.

E. PREPARED FOODS: Allowed are freshly made foods available for sale and immediate consumption on-site. Vendor must be active owner/operator of the business and may not be operating under a franchise agreement (Effective 1/1/00).

When selecting prepared food vendors, priority will be given to vendors preparing food from raw ingredients and using ingredients grown and/or produced in Washington State and by participating market farmers. Vendor must have all required state, county and local food permits. All prepared foods must carry product liability insurance. Copies of proof of insurance must be provided to the NFMA. All prepared food vendors must carry a current City of Seattle business license

During the regular Market season, vendors in categories D and E will be limited to less than 30% of the total vendors selling at the market. Category E is especially limited or even

omitted at the Markets, in consideration of neighborhood business districts.

IV. HOW MARKET VENDOR PARTICIPATION IS DETERMINED

The NFMA grants Permits to Sell based on individual Markets' need to balance available produce with a well-rounded "market basket" for customers. The NFMA strives to meet the needs of participating farmers and our goal of creating viable and successful Markets.

A: MARKET STAFF: The Market Coordinator and Market Manager jobs are to implement Market policies. This includes overseeing vendor participation and booth assignments, Market set-up, collection of fees, providing information on Market policies, and assuring vendor compliance with all Market policies. The Coordinators and Managers will also be responsible for public concerns and vendor complaints. The Coordinators and Managers are the conduit between vendors/customers and the NFMA and Board of Directors. The Market Coordinators and Managers have complete authority to interpret and implement policy on the Market site, and to make all decisions regarding market participation, stall assignments and other market operations.

B: VENDOR PARTICIPATION: The Market Coordinators will make vendor participation decisions based on available space in the Market, the need for specific products to create a viable and successful market, and vendors' past participation at each market. The goal of the NFMA is to create a Market vendor mix with at least 70% farmers. The NFMA is also committed to supporting and helping incubate smaller start-up businesses in vendor categories D and E, when possible.

C. PARTICIPATION IN EXISTING MARKETS: Priority is given to returning vendors who were in good standing the previous season, turn in their 2007 applications by the due date (see section VI-B), and participated for either a full or half season the previous year. The Market Coordinator may also consider the product and space needs of the market. Circumstances involving hardship that cause a vendor to lose their continuity of participation will be considered on a case by case basis.

D: STALL LOCATION: Participation in a market is **not** a guarantee of a particular stall location.

E: PARTICIPATION IN NEW MARKETS will be determined by the Market Coordinators, whose job is to provide a healthy, viable mix of new vendors, current vendors who have less access to existing markets, and experienced vendors with a proven record of high sales and of selling consistent quality/variety at all markets they participate in. The goal is to create an economically successful and sustainable Farmers Market while also providing increasing opportunities for new vendors to direct sell their products.

V. HOW STALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE MADE

A. STALL ASSIGNMENTS are made by the NFMA Staff and Market Coordinator based on the following criteria:

1. Available space in the market
2. The need for a specific product and the vendor's ability to produce it at each market where they sell.
3. The number of spaces the vendor requires. At most markets, the more space you need, the harder it is to place you. In those stalls that provide space for a vehicle, smaller vans and pickups are easier to accommodate.
4. Vendor performance at other NFMA markets including: good product quality, good display and signage, ability to follow NFMA rules and manager's directions at market (punctuality, clean-up, prompt notification when canceling, etc), sales history, market fees paid on time with checks that don't bounce.

B. The Manager will make every attempt to keep stall spaces consistent throughout the season. However, some crops are part-season and not all vendors participate for a full season. This means that some stall assignments will change over the course of the season in order to maximize the market space and provide a good mix of products. Other factors such as a vendor being unable to attend on a scheduled day also affect the daily stall layout and may necessitate changes to stall assignments.

VI. 2007 DAILY STALL FEES AND PREPAYMENTS

A. DAILY STALL FEES:

1. All vendors will pay a yearly APPLICATION fee of \$20. This fee is non-refundable. This fee must be paid at the time of application (mailed in with the application). Returning vendors who return their application late will be charged \$40.
2. Each vendor will pay a minimum base fee per stall per market day or a set percentage of daily gross sales, whichever is greater.
3. a The minimum base fee applies to each stall for every Market day.
b The percentage listed applies to the vendor's gross revenue (less any sales tax). Gross revenue includes the value of any on-site CSA pick-ups, and all revenue from WIC and Senior FMNP, and Helping Harvest sales. ***CSA sales may be exempted from gross revenues at Markets during the months of January, February and March only.***
c The daily stall fee is:
\$30 at the Magnolia, Broadway, Lake City and Phinney Farmers Markets
\$35 at the U-District, West Seattle, Columbia City Farmers Markets
OR, 6% or 7% of gross sales, WHICHEVER IS GREATER. The percentage rate is based on the vendor's length of frontage sales space. **Vendors**, whether owing percentage fees or not, **must report to the Market manager their total gross sales** for that Market day by the end of each Market day. The NFMA provides daily reporting forms for vendors to fill out. **Vendors who fail to report accurate sales may forfeit their right to sell at our markets.**
4. Each vendor is responsible for paying the base stall fee and/or the required percentage (%) of their gross sales to the NFMA at the end of each Market day or on a monthly basis. Statements will be mailed to those Market participants who wish to be invoiced at the beginning of each month. **Fees are due and payable by the 20th of the month. Fees received after this date may be charged a \$10 late fee. Fees late after 60 days may result in the termination of vendor's permit to sell.** No deduction in stall fees will be given for produce donations.
5. Receipt of a Permit to Sell and proper payment of all fees allows the vendor to use and occupy a market space designated by the Market Manager. **Depending on location, market spaces are typically 9 to 12 ft. wide by 25 ft. deep. These spaces are intended to accommodate the vendor sales area and vehicle. Some spaces are load-off and are approximately 10 ft by 12 ft.**
6. Prepaid vendors who fail to show up on Market day without having made special arrangements with the NFMA office before Market day are not entitled to a refund for that day.
7. Vendors who cannot attend on a Market day should contact the Market Manager and/or the NFMA office **48 hours prior to Market day**. Vendors who do not call at least 48 hours before Market day will be charged the minimum stall fee for that Market day. Please call 206 632-5234 or your Market manager's cell phone.

B. APPLICATIONS AND STALL FEES

1. DUE DATE for the 2007 application, application fee, and any pre-payments is:

December 1, 2006 for participation between January– April at any Market.

December 31, 2006 for participation after May 1 at any Market.

Vendors may choose to pre-pay for part or all of a season, or may choose not to pre-pay any stall fees with their application.

2. Returning vendors whose applications are received after Dec. 31, 2006 will be charged an application fee of \$40 instead of \$20, and will be in danger of forfeiting their priority status.

3. FULL SEASON PRE-PAYMENTS (optional):

University District

Total Fees Full Season: (51 days x \$35 = \$1785)

*****Please note that there is a \$10.50 per stall per Market day user fee charged by the University Heights Community Center. Each vendor will be charged \$5.25 per market day and NFMA will pay \$5.25 per vendor per market day. Vendor's share will be collected with daily stall fees or invoiced with monthly statements.*****

West Seattle

Total Fees Full Season: (36 days x \$35 = \$1260) (Payment for the Winter Market Season is separate)

Columbia City

Total Fees Full Season: (27 days x \$35 = \$945)

Broadway

Total Fees Full Season: (28 days x \$30 = \$840)

Lake City

Total Fees Full Season: (21 days x \$30 = \$630)

Magnolia

Total Fees Full Season: (18 days x \$30 = \$540)

Phinney

Total Fees Full Season: (16 days x \$30 = \$480)

A DISCOUNT IS GIVEN TO VENDORS WHO CHOOSE TO PREPAY BY **Dec. 1, 200** for a full season at 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 Markets. The discount is one free day per market that is fully pre-paid (worth \$30/\$35 per market, based on the daily stall fee for each market). For example, if you choose to pre-pay for the full Lake City market season by Dec. 1, you would actually only pay \$600 (\$630 minus one free day = \$600). No discount is given for partial season pre-payments, even if you can only be at market for part of the season.

VII. VENDOR RULES FOR 2007

A ONLY WASHINGTON STATE FARMERS, PRODUCERS AND BUSINESSES MAY SELL AT THE MARKETS. Permits to Sell are only granted to the principal farmer/producer owner. The principal farmer/producer may send family members, partners or employees to the Market in their place, but are responsible for having their on-site representatives aware of **all** Market rules and violation policies. All employees, partners, and family members may be asked to sign an agreement that states they understand and will comply with Market policies and guidelines. The NFMA recommends that the principal farmer/producer be present at as many Markets as feasible, and that they staff their booth at least once a season at every Market where they participate.

All products must be grown or produced in Washington State. All products must be grown or produced by the seller. Any violation of these rules will result in the product being automatically removed from the vendor's tables and possible revocation of the vendor's Permit to Sell. Interpretation of this rule is at the Market Manager's or Coordinator's discretion with possible review by the NFMA Board of Directors.

THE MARKET DOES NOT PROVIDE TABLES, AWNINGS, TENTS, OR TENT WEIGHTS FOR VENDORS.

B WEIGHTS ARE REQUIRED. All vendors with tents and umbrellas are required have at least 20 to 25 pounds per tent leg or umbrella stand, securely attached at all times, in order to sell at the Markets. Failure to have proper weights means that vendor's tents and umbrellas cannot be set up on Market day. Any damage incurred by a vendor due to insufficient weights will be at the expense of that vendor. Occasionally, a market may have an extra tent or weights for vendors to rent on an emergency basis – check with the market manager if such an emergency arises.

C PUNCTUALITY

- 1. University District HOURS OF OPERATION: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m (10:00 – 2:00 during January –April)** No vendors will be allowed on the site before 7:00 a.m. All vendors must vacate the site by 3:00 p.m.
- 2. West Seattle HOURS OF OPERATION: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m (10 am – 1 pm during the Winter Market season.)** Vendors are not allowed on the site before 8:00 a.m. All vendors must vacate the site by 3:00 p.m.
- 3. Columbia City HOURS OF OPERATION: 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.** No vendors will be allowed on the site before 1:00 p.m. All vendors must vacate the site by 8:00 p.m.
- 4. Lake City HOURS OF OPERATION: 3:00 – 7:00 pm.** No vendors will be allowed on the site before 1:00 pm. All vendors must vacate site by 8:00 pm.
- 5. Magnolia HOURS OF OPERATION: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm.** No vendors will be allowed on the site before 8:00 am. All vendors must vacate the site by 3:00 pm.
- 6. Broadway HOURS OF OPERATION: 11:00 am – 3:00 pm.** No vendors will be allowed on the site before 9:00 am. All vendors must vacate the site by 4:00 pm.
- 7. Phinney HOURS OF OPERATION: 3:00 – 7:00 pm.** No vendors will be allowed on the site before 1:00 pm. All vendors must vacate site by 8:00 pm.

ALL VENDORS MUST BE SET UP AND READY TO SELL BY START TIME. Vendors with vehicles

must arrive between 30 minutes to 2 hours before market start time. Vendors with vehicles who arrive less than 30 minutes before the Markets open will have to load off from the street and find other parking for their vehicle for the day, and will be issued a verbal warning. A second late offense will result in a written warning of termination and a \$25.00 fine. A third late offense will result in a \$25.00 fine and possible termination of the vendor's permit to sell.

Vendors who are assigned a load-off stall must remove their vehicle from the Market area within 30 minutes of start-time. Vendors who fail to remove their vehicles within 30 minutes of start time will be issued a verbal warning. A second late offense will result in a written warning of termination and a \$25 fine. A third violation will result in a \$25 fine and possible termination of the vendor's permit to sell.

Vendors are not allowed on the site until the Market area has been chalked and the Market manager gives them permission. Vendors who set up before the Market manager gives them permission will be fined \$25.00. Vendors who violate this policy a second time, will be fined \$25 and given a written warning of termination. A third offense will result in a \$25 fine and termination of the vendor's permit to sell. *Note*** The Market site is not insured by the NFMA, nor staffed, outside of set-up, selling and clean-up time. Our landlords expect us to arrive and be gone within the hours our contracts with them state.**

Vendors who cannot attend on a Market day should contact the Market Manager and/or the NFMA office **48 hours prior to Market day**. Vendors who do not call at least 48 hours before Market day will be charged an additional minimum stall fee for that Market day. Please call the NFMA offices at **206 632-5234** or contact your Market manager.

If a vendor does not call or occupy the reserved booth three weeks in a row, the stall will be declared vacant and given to another vendor on the wait list.

D SELLING TIME: No selling shall begin before the opening time at each market and the designated signal is given by the Market Manager indicating that the Market is officially opened. Repeated violation of this policy will result in termination of vendor's permit to sell.

Vendors are required to stay until closing. Vendors who sell-out early must keep their stall set up until closing time, and should post a sign letting customers know they have sold-out. Vendors should not leave their vehicles and possessions unattended. Vendors will be loaded up and vacate the site **no later than one hour** after the Market is closed. Any exceptions must be cleared with the Market Manager.

E REPORTING SALES: Vendors must report their total **gross sales** to Market managers within 45 minutes of closing time. Gross revenue includes the value of any on-site CSA pick-ups, and all revenue from WIC, Senior FMNP, and Helping Harvest sales. (CSA sales are exempt from January, February and March Market sales reporting only.)

F SIGNAGE: All vendors will post a sign identifying the name of the farm/business represented and where it is located. Signs should not be smaller than 24" wide by 8" high. Vendors will have their signs displayed before sales begin. **FAILURE TO HAVE A SIGN WILL RESULT IN A FIRST OFFENSE WARNING. THE SECOND OFFENSE WILL RESULT IN A \$10 FINE. THIRD OFFENSE WILL RESULT IN THE VENDOR HAVING TO PAY FOR A SIGN WHICH THE NFMA BUYS FOR THE VENDOR.** Vendors should limit their advertising of other types of marketing (CSA, websites, etc) to brochures and/or small information signs on their tables.

G PRICE SIGNAGE: All goods for sale should be CLEARLY MARKED WITH THEIR PRICES. This can be done by individually tagging each item with a sign or by listing all produce and prices on a large

sign or blackboard, so that it is clearly readable. Violation of this policy may result in the vendor losing their permit to sell. **Vendors who fail to post their prices will be issued a verbal warning. A second offense will result in a written warning of termination and a \$25 fine. A third violation will result in a \$25 fine and termination of the vendor's permit to sell.**

H SELLING SPACE: The vendor sales area (where the produce is marketed) must not extend beyond the allotted boundaries of the stall space.

I VENDOR VEHICLES AND LOADING/UNLOADING: Vendor booths and/or vehicles must not extend beyond allotted booth space. Most Market stall spaces have been designed with on-site vendor vehicles in mind. Any additional vehicles must be off the Market site no later than 30 minutes before the Market starts and **PARKED AT LEAST THREE BLOCKS AWAY FROM THE MARKET SITE OR AT THE PARKING SITE DESIGNATED FOR VENDORS.** Fees may be charged by site and/or parking lot landlords for the privilege of parking a vehicle off site.

J BOOTH CLEAN UP: Vendors are required to maintain their individual selling space in a clean, safe and sanitary manner, including protecting the pavement from drips from any part of the vendor's vehicle. Each vendor is responsible for keeping his/her booth space clean during the Market and for complete clean up of their space at the close of the Market. This includes taking with you any trash or garbage that is generated in or around your booth and sweeping up any product debris left on the ground. Farmers are not permitted to dispose of produce waste, overripe or leftover produce or boxes in any on-site garbage cans or dumpsters. **MARKET TRASHCANS AND DUMPSTERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR VENDOR USE.** Vendors should bring their own brooms and dustpans. Those who do not clean up at the end of the Market will be issued a written warning for the first offense and a \$25 fine for the second offense. A third offense is grounds for termination of vendor's permit to sell.

K SET OUT DISTANCE FOR VENDOR DISPLAY: Displays and signs must allow clear visibility to adjoining booths. Display and selling techniques must not impair other vendors' ability to sell, nor create a hazardous situation for customers. Our intention is to create a visually enticing market to customers and enable all vendors to maximize their selling space.

L PRICING and QUALITY OF PRODUCE:

1. Pricing of goods sold at Market is solely the responsibility of the individual vendor. **Vendors are expected to price goods in a way that doesn't give the appearance of a "loss leader" product as used in large grocery stores.**
2. Vendors are not allowed to give produce or other items away for free or at below-cost pricing, thus undercutting potential sales of other vendors.
3. Vendors are expected to bring good quality produce to market.
4. **Vendors are responsible for the safety of their food and cannot sell adulterated food.**
(1/19/2007)

M SCALES: Vendors selling produce by weight must provide their own scales. Scales must be "legal for trade" and are subject to inspection by the Dept. of Agriculture's Weights and Measures Program. All scale displays must be readable and in easy sight to your customers during business transactions.

N PETS: No pets will be allowed in the vendor's selling area. The only exceptions will be seeing-eye dogs, dogs for the hearing impaired or other disability guide dogs.

O CHILDREN: Vendors must monitor and supervise their children at all times during the Market day.

Set-up and take-down time can be an especially dangerous time for unattended children. Children should not be allowed to wander the grounds and adjacent properties without a parent or guardian with them. The Market can take no responsibility for their safety or whereabouts, or for any damages they may incur.

P COURTESY/CONDUCT:

1. The markets are community events where many diverse people are gathered to shop and sell. Vendors and their representatives are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, safe, courteous and harmonious manner with customers, market staff and with each other.
2. Any language or behavior that jeopardizes the normal operations of the Market will be grounds for termination of the vendor's permit to sell. Vendors may not threaten or use abusive language with customers, staff, community representatives OR each other during Market operations. Complaints of any kind should be written up on a vendor concern form and given to market staff (*see "V" below*).
3. Customer complaints about individual vendors will be discussed with the vendor. Shoppers may also fill out the Shopper Concern Form which will be shared with Market staff. If the market receives numerous complaints about a vendor, the market manager will discuss the situation with the vendor and will determine if any corrective action is needed.
4. All vendors need to respect each other's booth space and products during market hours and stay within the boundaries of this policy. Non-compliance with this basic policy can result in the termination of a vendor's permit to sell.
5. Consumption of alcoholic beverages or any controlled or illegal substance while at the Market is prohibited.
6. Refunds: Customers who have a legitimate complaint about the produce they purchase should be given a full monetary refund or replacement of equal value. If a customer wishes to exchange only a partial bag of produce, only partial credit is due. It is the Market's policy to satisfy the customer and to promote good will by being generous with produce and food products. If produce is overripe and must be consumed the same day, the customer must be informed in advance. Complaints that seem unfounded or excessive may need to be mediated by Market management.

Q HAWKING: Hawking (calling attention to your products in a loud, repetitive, public manner) during the Market day is discouraged and may be limited or prohibited by the Market manager.

R VENDOR DRESS: Vendors are requested to wear shirts and shoes at their booths during the Market hours.

S VENDOR MUSIC: Vendors may play individual music/radio in their booth space, but should be aware of volume and other vendors' ability to transact business without any audio interference. Be considerate of different tastes, and remember some markets are held in quiet neighborhoods.

T SAFETY: Vendor vehicles, tables and overhead shades must be maintained and used in a safe manner. Table legs must be firmly locked into place. Tables must have smooth edges and remain stable when loaded with produce. Tent poles, canopy legs, boxes, umbrella stands must not obstruct foot traffic flow and care must be taken when setting up or taking down displays. All tents and umbrellas must be weighted and properly tied down.

U NO-SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the Market sites **AT ANY TIME**.

- V VENDOR CONCERN FORMS:** Vendors who have concerns regarding Market operations and vendor policies should complete a Vendor Concern Form. Forms are available from the Market Coordinator and Manager. Each Concern Form will be read and responded to by the NFMA staff and/or Board of Directors and will receive a specific written response. **Shopper Concern Forms** are also available at all Market Info booths.
- W FARM VISITS:** The NFMA and its representatives may inspect or visit any farms or establishments used by vendors. Farm visits will be conducted with at least 24-hour notice. Vendors should provide help during a visit in identifying the crops listed on the application for permit to sell.
- X BOOTH AUDITS:** The NFMA may conduct random booth audits at any given vendor's stall during the Market day. These audits will be carried out by third party observers. Vendors will be given 48 hour notice prior to the audit.
- Y The NFMA reserves the right to prohibit anyone from selling or any product from being sold.
- Z The NFMA is not responsible for loss of property or damage.
- AA There will be no discrimination according to race, color, creed, sex, religion, sexual orientation, age or nationality.
- AB **NO TIPPING:** Vendors, including prepared food vendors, should not ask for tips or put out tip jars.

VIII. LICENSES, PERMITS AND SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

- A ON-SITE FOOD STORAGE REQUIREMENTS:** Seattle/King County Health Department requires that all food must be kept at least 18" above the ground.
- B TAXES:** Retail sales taxes and Business and Occupation taxes are the responsibility of the individual vendor. Most vendors are required by law to have a Washington State Master Business License Number and must supply this tax number when application is made to sell at the Market. (Note: the vendor's application will not be processed without this number.)
- C INSURANCE:** All vendors must show proof of current **automobile insurance** for on-site vehicles, and provide the Market with policy numbers, which will be kept on file. **Proof of Product Liability Insurance** is required from processors in Category B, D and E .
- D PERMITS, LICENSES AND INSURANCE:** All vendors shall provide at the time of application current copies of any permits, insurance and licenses applicable to the sale of their products. These will include the vendor's **Washington State tax number**, and where applicable, **City of Seattle Business License, Seattle King County Health Department permits, Washington State Nursery License, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture Food Processors License, Certification for Organically Grown Produce, Grade A Dairy Permits, Washington State Liquor Control Board Endorsement for sale of Washington State wines at Farmers Markets, Pesticide Applicator's License or Department of Fisheries Wholesale License, Vehicle Insurance, Product Liability Insurance, Fire Dept. Permits, Processors Insurance.** Vendors selling shellfish must have additional licenses from the Washington State Dept. of Health. All Processors and Prepared Food vendors must have a city of Seattle business license
- E ORGANIC PRODUCTS:** If a product (raw or processed) is labeled "**organic**," or verbally referred to as "**organic**", it must be certified as required by Washington State law. **VERBAL OR WRITTEN DECLARATIONS OF ORGANIC STATUS NOT CERTIFIED OR VERIFIED, WILL RESULT IN TERMINATION OF VENDOR'S PERMIT TO SELL.** When a farmer is selling both organic and

non-organic produce at the same stand, the non-organic produce must be physically separated from the organic produce and clearly labeled as non-organic or conventionally grown.

- F “UNSPRAYED, PESTICIDE-FREE OR LOW-SPRAY”:** Written and verbal declarations regarding pesticide use which cannot be certified such as “Unsprayed” “Pesticide free” or “Low Spray” may need to provide a notarized affidavit attesting how these procedures are followed. This affidavit will be kept with the Market management for the season. Consumer queries regarding farming practices must be answered factually.
- G PROCESSED FOODS: All farmers and vendors who sell processed foods MUST be licensed** by the Washington State Department of Agriculture and/or Liquor Control Board as a **Food Processor** or **Winery**. These foods include baked goods, breads, dried fruits, dried or mixed herbs, teas, cider, wines, distilled beverages, preserves, jams, jellies, salsas, canned fish and meats, dried fish and meats, condiments, salad dressings. Beekeepers who process their own honey do not need a Food Processor’s license, unless the honey is sold wholesale. Vendors who sell processed foods are responsible for understanding and meeting **all** WSDA requirements for processing and selling food, and must provide copies of all permits and licenses to the NFMA with their application to sell. State requirements include, and are not limited to: cooking, labeling, facility permits, oversight, liability insurance, acidity, Brix levels. Other King County Health Department requirements apply.
- H LABELING:** Processed foods, including honey, have Washington State labeling **requirements**. Labels on processed foods must meet State requirements and include 1) The name of the product 2) Company name 3) Address (if not found in the phonebook) 4) Net weight in ounces and metric on bottom 1/3 of label and 5) Ingredients listed in decreasing order of predominance. Organic labeling as per the certifying agency. Vendors are required to provide copies of all labels of all processed foods they plan to sell at the farmers markets prior to selling their products at the markets.
- I SAMPLING:** Special Health Department guidelines can be used at vendor booths for **some limited food demonstration and sampling**. Vendors **MUST** consult with the Health Department or Market Manager regarding these regulations. Sampling, **if permitted**, must take place within the boundaries of the vendor’s assigned stall space.
- J FOOD HANDLER’S PERMITS:** All prepared foods and baked goods vendors must have a current King County Health Department Food Handler’s Permit, and keep a copy of this permit at their market stall at all times.
- K VENDOR CONTRIBUTIONS:** Vendors may be asked to contribute product to the Market’s promotional and educational events such as chef’s demos, produce tastings, and special events. Please consider contributing to these Market events. The local Food Bank may also solicit food contributions every week. Please consider that the local Food Bank is the best resource for distributing your unsold product to the local community in need.



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