



The Farmers Market Manager plays a key role to the success of every Farmers Market. This Fact Sheet is an extension of the “Farmers Market: Getting Started” Fact Sheet. This Fact Sheet addresses items that are generally addressed by the Farmers Market Manager.

Budget

Creating a budget for the market is a great idea to make sure everything will be paid for.

Specifically consider:

1. Rent
2. Insurance
3. Permits/Licenses
4. Advertising/Promotion
5. Legal Fees
6. Utilities
7. Clean up Costs
8. Office Supplies/Equipment
9. Manager’s Salary if applicable

Establishing vendor fees is the best way to make sure the market has money in order to pay the above expenses.

There are various methods for determining vendor fees at Alaska markets. Some markets have two operational times and days in a week, and vendors who attend both days are given a discount on a second day. Some markets charge an annual fee to participate, as well as a fee for each day a vendor participates in the market. The vendor fee for each market varies.

Vendor Sourcing

Vendors are sourced through many venues. Alaska is a little different in that many of our market managers are producers and those who attend their market are their neighbors. For those who are solely managers and do not know where to source producers, we recommend reviewing producers in the Alaska Grown Source Book. The Alaska Division of Agriculture compiles the Alaska Grown Source Book, which identifies producers and products grown throughout Alaska. The Source Book can be viewed at:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/sourcebook/sourcebookindex2014.html> Another option is to talk with your local Cooperative Extension Services.

If a market manager has multiple vendor candidates to choose from, the manager may consider creating a Farmers’ Market Vendor application in order to easily sift through potential vendors.

An example of a Farmers Market Vendor Application can be found at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FMM/018APPOtananaValleyFMVendorApplication.pdf>

Vendor Selection

Once potential vendors are identified, a manager needs to decide which vendors should attend their market. This can be decided on a variety of factors. It is important to have at least one vendor who can act as your market’s “anchor vendor”. An anchor vendor has the ability to be at all market days throughout the season and has enough product to last the entire season. Anchor vendors are the bread and butter of a market. Customers are more likely to visit your market if they know there are items they can count on purchasing every time they visit.

No matter which direction you take your market, whether it is strictly a food farmers market or if you allow other items such as hats made from local alpaca fur, strongly consider making sure that your market offers a wide variety of products. When selecting vendors, pay close attention to who sells what and try to make sure the vendors who are selected don’t have a lot of overlapping products. Having variety encourages more people to visit your market because you have more to offer.

If you decide to create a Farmers Market Vendor Application, this would be an ideal place to ask what each vendor is planning on selling.

Continual Market Evaluations

Good marketing practices encourage markets to continually evaluate the market throughout the season, from the stand



point of the consumers, community, market management and if applicable, the sponsors. Managers are encouraged to evaluate the market's seasons and times, product availability and supply, time of product availability, effectiveness of events, and community involvement. Review the rules and regulations of the market, to see if there were complaints from vendors or consumers. Evaluate the market's facilities. Evaluate customer traffic, and if it is not steady, try increasing promotional efforts, special events, or new vendors.

Oregon State University Extension Service conducted an untraditional survey, called the "dot survey" at several farmers markets, which provided valuable input from a large number of market goers. The purpose of the survey format was to engage as many market goers as possible with minimal man power, resulting in an unobtrusive self-service market survey.

A dot survey consists of 3-5 close-ended questions written on a board that is placed at a central location in the market. Survey participants are given sticky dots and are asked to answer the survey by sticking their dots in the answer category they feel is most appropriate for each question.

Due to low pressure, many participated in the four question survey. They found that participants were interested in the results and would often go back to the board to see how others were answering. It maintained true survey anonymity, which encouraged honest responses. The surveys provided the markets with valuable information, even though the survey was limited to closed-ended questions.

We encourage managers to consider such an approach for their market, to gain insight into their customers and community. OSU Extension Services has a special report on how to conduct customer counts and surveys, or what

they call Rapid Market Assessments. This document can be found at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FMM/007APPDRapidMarketAssessment.pdf>

These evaluations will help your market know what direction the community wants/needs the market to go in. Always try to continually improve your market.

If you have more questions or request additional information, please contact the Division of Agriculture

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