

BC Association of Farmers'  
Markets

# Market Managers' Training Manual

February 2010



BC ASSOCIATION OF  
FARMERS' MARKETS

This manual was developed by

Vancouver Island University  
Centre for Continuing Studies

*for*

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Vancouver Island University also recognizes the contributions of the following individuals:

- Sara-Jane Brocklehurst: Project Manager, Researcher, Writer
- Jennifer Horn, PhD: Researcher, Writer, Editor
- Sue Wells: Researcher
- Mary Forstbauer: President, BCAFm
- Donna Anaka: British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
- Nancy Hamilton: Administrative Coordinator, Centre for Continuing Studies, Vancouver Island University
- Dennis Silvestrone: Dean, Adult and Continuing Education, Vancouver Island University

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## **Contact Information**

For more information, please visit [www.bcfarmersmarket.org](http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org).

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# *British Columbian Association of Farmers' Markets*

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Farmers' Markets are an important part of communities in all regions of the province, and many of these markets are represented by the BC Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM).

Farmers' Markets sell a wide range of farm-fresh, wholesome foods such as fruits and vegetables, organics, specialty cheeses, eggs, beef, lamb, seafood, jams, artisan products, baked goods and so much more!

The British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets was founded in 2000 in response to a greater need for networking and communication among Farmers' Markets in British Columbia.

To become a member market, the vendors at the market must make, bake or grow the products and be the sellers of the products at the Farmers' Market.

The purposes of the society are:

- to support British Columbia producers of agricultural products, food products, and crafts;
- to promote, educate, encourage, develop, and support Farmers' Markets in the communities of BC;
- to host an annual conference for the members and associate members;
- to represent the Farmers' Markets of BC in all matters in which they are generally interested; and
- to advocate to industry, government, agencies, commissions and Boards on matters that impact and interest the members.

An elected Board of Directors, made up of voting member markets, runs the Association.

Elections occur in February or March during the annual general meeting and conference. Any interested member of a BCAFm member market is encouraged to seek nomination to the Board.



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## *The Purpose of this Manual*

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This training manual's purpose is to inspire Market Managers (whether new or experienced) to tend to the growth and development of your market like a good farmer would!

No matter what stage your market is at, this manual will be useful – for those markets that are preparing the field for market management and sowing the seeds for market success, or for other markets that are ready to fertilize the ground for growth and development, and for all markets who want to harvest the benefits of value-added activities such as special events or fundraising.

Specifically, the manual will build knowledge and stimulate ideas about the roles and responsibilities of a Market Manager; the management and selection of market sites, vendors and product mixes; and about how to nurture relationships with media, the public, volunteers, or other organizations that can enhance community engagement with your Farmers' Market.

This manual is by no means complete, and there are numerous Farmers' Market manuals available on the Internet that are excellent resources for further exploration. Many of these are listed in the **Resources** section at the end of this manual. In cases where information has been gleaned from specific sources, it is noted in the References section.

These materials will introduce information, ideas, stories and exercises that will help you better understand your role as Market Manager and the relationships that you have with your Board of Governance, the vendors, the customers of the market, volunteers, and the general public. It may also help you work with your board to evaluate your market, strategize for growth, and develop partnerships to move your market closer to its goals.

As you work with the materials provided, you might want to put this training manual in a three-ring binder - then you can add to it as you develop your own stock of records, examples, and resource materials to guide you in managing your market.

It is our hope that this manual becomes dog-eared and tea-stained over the coming years, and that you shape it and groom it and mark up the margins so that it becomes the best guide possible for your particular market.

As a member of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets, this manual really belongs to you - do your part to help keep it a living document and to assure that it is reflective of your unique Farmers' Market!!

## *What is the best thing about being a Farmers' Market Manager?*

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Is it seeing the market buzzing with community members from all walks of life, or smelling the earthy tones of produce picked that day, or seeing the smiles on the vendors' faces as another happy customer leaves? Perhaps you love the time spent talking and learning from vendors and customers alike – practicing your own style of “management by walking around”? Or maybe you enjoy supporting a new vendor to grow from an exploratory start, to expanding on new ideas, to becoming a confident, successful vendor with a loyal customer base?



Whether you are the manager of small, medium, or a large Farmers' Market, this manual will encourage you to work with others to discover all the great things about Farmers' Markets and about being a Market Manager. Along the way, it may help you to decide the best way to manage an economically-sustainable, community-oriented market that will grow and thrive along with your agricultural community.

It doesn't matter if your market is in its seedling stage – just setting its roots into the community – or if it is a well-

established destination market that is firmly planted in the social and economic life of your region. In either case, the manual will provide Farmers' Market Managers with the opportunity to explore how they can work with others to prepare the field for market management, sow multiple seeds for market success, fertilize the market for future growth and development, or harvest the benefits of value-added activities.

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### ***Top 6 Reasons Why Farmers' Markets Succeed:***

*Leadership - skills of Manager and Board of Governance*

*Location - parking, visual to shoppers, stable placement*

*Promotion - creative and imaginative advertising*

*Committed growers - 5 -15 anchor vendors*

*Community support - customer base research*

*Lucrative - economically beneficial to the vendors*

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*Source : North American Direct Farm Marketing Association, Victoria BC, 1998*

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# 1. Preparing the Field for Market Management

This chapter will help you to understand:

- the social and economic impact of Farmers' markets, and
- the roles and responsibilities of a Farmers' Market Manager.

Farmers' Markets (also referred to as “markets” throughout this manual) are important contributors to social and economic sustainability in every corner of British Columbia. They reflect the communities they serve and vary in size and type, from large sheltered public markets to a few vendors clustered in a local park or on a parking lot.

The meaning of “Farmers' Market” has become more diverse as other retailers or re-sale markets have adopted

the term and closely follow the same design concept.

For the purposes of this manual, the BC Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) defines a Farmers' Market as:

*A market comprised exclusively (100%) of vendors who make, bake, grow or raise the products they sell, of which **a majority of the vendors** are selling **farm products** of British Columbia origin. These markets must be British Columbia non-profit organizations, whether incorporated or not, with at least 6 vendors, that operate for 2 or more hours per day for a minimum of 4 markets in a year.<sup>1</sup>*

Whether your market meets this definition or if you are not quite ready but want to be an associate member, the BCAFAM is happy to have you along! The smallest and newest of markets can play key roles in stimulating the local economy by generating farm income, by the sale of agricultural products, and by creating local employment opportunities. New or old, Farmers' Markets contribute to the social and economic sustainability of communities and regions because they increase the consumption of local foods and stimulate public interest in food production and processing.

As a Farmers' Market Manager, it is helpful to know what the public are interested in, so staying in touch with consumer research is important. It is also important to understand that Farmers' Markets have significant economic impact, as shown here in some recent studies.

A National Farmers' Market Impact Study was conducted by the newly-established Farmers' Markets Canada, 2009, and it indicated:

- estimated sales of \$1.03 billion generated in the 508 markets studied;
- average of \$32 being spent at each of the estimated 28 million shopper-visits; and
- visitors to Farmers' Markets tended to spend an average of \$19 in other businesses on the same day.<sup>2</sup>

Closer to home, the study *Economic and Community Impacts of Farmers' Markets in BC*, University of Northern British Columbia, 2006, showed a wide economic impact across the province:

- estimated sales of \$65.3 million in the previous season;
- spending at neighbourhood businesses was estimated to be \$53.3 million, which includes monies vendors spend on materials to get product ready to market.<sup>3</sup>

In a provincial poll conducted in December 2008 by Ipsos Read, it was found that almost 9 out of 10 people said they liked to buy directly at farm gates and at Farmers' Markets. Many stated they would be willing to pay more for produce if it was:

- fresh (91%);
- produced in environmentally-friendlier ways (82%);
- produced in BC (80%); and
- produced in the local region (78%).<sup>4</sup>

Market information such as this can help you to understand and take advantage of arising opportunities for your market to expand or evolve in new directions. The Resources section at the end of this manual suggests other sources of good, reliable research, helpful tools, and examples that can be relevant to small, medium, and large Farmers' Markets.

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### **A Farmer's Market Story:**

*The Market Manager at the Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' Market finds it important to stay in touch with market and consumer trends so that the market can take advantage of these in their strategic planning. If you want your market to stay ahead of the pack, suggests manager Bob Callioux, you have to keep the market experience fresh and exciting and be flexible enough to respond to shifting consumer trends. The success of the Kelowna market is partly due to the fact that Bob is a risk taker and believes that "if you are not making some mistakes, you are not going fast enough!"*

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Like Bob in Kelowna, you can gain fresh ideas about how to improve your market by tracking consumer trends and by building consumer confidence in your market and vendors.

In order to keep the consumer confidence high, Market Managers can work with vendors to educate them about the importance of regulations and codes of practice and can work with boards to assure the regulations are relevant to the size and scope of the market. By attending carefully to customer safety at our Farmers' Markets, you can continue to build the customer base of the market, while maintaining the trust that local producers and food processors are currently flourishing under.<sup>5</sup>



Bob Callioux, Market Manager, Kelowna  
© 2009 BC Association of Farmers' Markets

## **1.1 Role of Market Manager**

The Farmers' Market Manager plays several key roles in assuring the success of a market no matter how long they have been in the job --- they are catalysts for making things happen, they are leaders who set the tone for the market, and they are facilitators who ensure that quality standards are met by clearly communicating the rules and regulations of the market to vendors, customers and community members.

Whether your position is voluntary or paid, Market Managers are coordinators who work with the Board of Governance and its committees to implement their vision for the market; managers are representatives of the board when dealing with the vendors, customers and community at large; and they are appointees who are accountable to the Board for their actions while holding the position of manager.<sup>6</sup> The manager also acts as an interpreter between various other governing bodies (e.g. Ministry of Health, local Council) and the market board, vendors and customers, so you must know what rules and regulations apply in your market and be able to easily explain them to others.

In times when you find your role challenging, draw upon your interpersonal and communication skills as well as strong multi-tasking and organizational capacities, and use these skills for resolving conflicts. Keep in mind that a manager is a leader whose actions show that they are confident, optimistic, decisive, creative, respectful, ethical and trustworthy. The manager is also a visionary who is reflective and takes time to observe and understand the evolving role that Farmers' Markets play in nurturing the growth of local and regional agriculture.

Spending time reflecting will help you to plan for the future of your market, regardless of the level of organization. A Farmers' Market often emerges from being an informal, semi-organized opportunity for vendors and customers to interact. At the start, many operate with low budgets and rely heavily on volunteers – who are often busy farmers or active citizens themselves. In turn, the vendors rely on the volunteer manager to handle administrative chores, to look after the affairs of the day, to improve the profile of the market, and to promote the development of a healthy market community.

If your market has evolved to the point of being able to hire a paid Market Manager, you may find that an employee can bring to the market increased productivity, job longevity, and a professional commitment that volunteers may not be able to sustain.<sup>7</sup> Depending on the circumstances at your market, the manager's pay should reflect the expectations placed on them by the board and vendors for professional services, and may be calculated as a percentage of the market receipts, as an hourly wage, or as a flat fee for service.

The actual duties that are expected of the Market Manager can be periodically negotiated with the Board of Governance or vendors depending on the size and complexity of your market – you will find that these duties may grow and evolve as your market does.

Market Manager Duties Might Include:

- Coordinating set up and tear down of market; making stall assignments;
- Collecting stall fees; keeping daily market log; maintain market information booth;
- Developing relationships with vendors; educating and guiding vendors; garnering vendor feedback; recruiting new vendors;
- Tracking produce prices in stores and other markets to guide pricing; monitoring quality control;
- Coordinating volunteers; working with the board; encouraging good customer relations; Creating special events and festivals; promoting the market and events; developing market image; booking performers and entertainers; maintain order and cleanliness;
- Enforcing regulations and by-laws; responding to complaints or emergencies; resolving disputes; and
- Assessing market development; monitoring goals and strategies; collecting market data; or recommending improvements to management systems.<sup>10</sup>

## ***1.2 Responsibilities of Market Manager***

Whether you manage a small, medium, or large Farmers' Market, as your market grows and changes, so will the responsibilities of the Market Manager. The Board will usually set the short and long term goals of the market, and the Market Manager is responsible for knowing the financial, governance and legal considerations to take while working together to achieve these goals.

Here are some things to consider discussing in detail with your board, so that you all clearly understand and agree upon what responsibilities the Market Manager is expected to undertake.

### **Financial considerations**

Your market may have a tiny operating budget or it may have many financial obligations to meet such as rent and payroll – in either case, the manager and the board must work together to maintain the economic viability and accountability of the market itself.

In order for the Market Manager to maintain financial accountability to the board, it is essential that they both agree on a good record-keeping system at the outset of their relationship. A good accounting system will help to eliminate any misunderstandings, as well as provide management insights for the board.

Good market records should include the basic information necessary to assess market performance and make improvements. If you are not sure about how to set up a record-keeping system, then learn some strategies from experienced Market Managers in your region.

***Exercise:*** What kinds of financial responsibilities do I have as manager of the market? In what ways do our market procedures encourage financial accountability and transparency?

There are many kinds of record books and bookkeeping systems available, but a good record keeping system should be simple to use, easy to understand, reliable, accurate, consistent, and designed to provide information on a timely basis. The legal requirements concerning financial records specify only that they be a permanent, accurate and complete record of your daily income and expenses.

To meet your financial responsibilities, a manager should ensure that permanent written records are kept of all incoming and outgoing money. It is quite likely that your market will be handling cash most of the time and the market should have clearly laid-out and agreed-upon procedures for handling and recording income, petty cash transactions, and reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses.

Income from stall fees is an important piece of financial information that requires weekly recording and for which a receipt should always be issued. In addition, receipts must be kept for any expenses incurred in managing or promoting the market, including paying music and entertainment costs. Often a cash float is established to make it easier for the manager to handle any incidental expenses.

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**A Farmer's Market Story:**

*Although it is a small market that draws six or seven regular vendors, the Merritt Farmers' Market is committed to being accountable and transparent with its financial record keeping. Volunteer Market Manager Isobel Vere likes to keep an informal and personal management style, but she is clear that the manager and the treasurer of the market must not be negligent in their bookkeeping.*

*For example, Isobel likes to keep receipts for all money that comes in or out of the market. She makes sure that she cross-references her stall fees with her attendance records as she hands the cash over to the treasurer, who makes the deposits at the end of the market day. Having an arms-length distance from the treasurer assures the Market Manager and the vendors that there is public accountability for the financial dealings of the market.*

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If you desire a coordinated record-keeping system for evaluation and strategic planning purposes, there are many options to choose from - check out the Resources at the end of this manual. You and your board or finance committee might also look at new software options that can make the task of designing, collecting, and managing data easier. (See Record Keeping Section 3.2 for more on these topics.)

**Governance considerations**

As Market Manager, you will work closely with the Board of Governance and their committees to achieve the goals and objectives of the market, and your relationship with them will be key to the success of your Farmers' Market.

Together, the manager and board may establish financial and accounting systems and determine market policy, while the committees may help the manager to organize special events, design the market layout, create a communication and promotions strategy, or engage in vendor recruitment. In either case, the manager must be able to work with a variety of people, and be capable of communicating clearly in one-on-one or group settings.

<p><b>Exercise:</b> <i>How would you describe your relationship with your board? What are the characteristics of your relationship that support you to meet your responsibilities as Market Manager?</i></p>
--

The relationship between managers and their boards of governance can be both rewarding and challenging, as the board acts as both a supporter and a supervisor of the manager. Clearly-defined roles can avoid the development of feelings of resentment and power struggles, which can compromise the work you undertake to do together.

Depending on the particular situation, the Market Manager might work with the board to set long-term goals, to establish policy and market by-laws, to formulate and monitor the budget, or to design promotional plans. At the same time, the board can support the manager by recruiting new vendors, helping to resolve conflicts, providing direction to the manager, and in making important staffing decisions.

Some boards find it useful to strike a vendor committee to assist the manager in dealing with issues specifically concerning vendors. These committees can be comprised of vendors and committed customers, who may offer a fresh insight into management issues. Vendor

committees can also become involved in setting the direction of the market, in establishing market rules, or in resolving conflicts in a democratic manner.<sup>8</sup>

In order for either the board or its appointed committees to fully support the Market Manager to fulfill their responsibilities, it is very important that everyone concerned is aware of the financial and governance considerations to take, but also are aware of the legal obligations the market is required to meet.

## Legal considerations

The Market Manager is accountable to the board, the vendors, and market supporters for legal conformity, so it is imperative that managers are fully aware of the policies and by-laws that the market operates under, and immediately addresses any infractions that do occur on site. The manager is also responsible for assuring the physical safety of the vendors and their customers while on site, and likewise must record and report any safety issues or incidences for further review.

Customers expect Farmers' Markets to be sources of safe, nutritious food, especially since the recent food recalls in North America have alerted them to the vulnerability of safe food systems. Farmers' Market Managers have an obligation to maintain this trust by educating their vendors, ensuring traceability of vendor products, and by enforcing food safety and labelling rules and regulations. As such, both managers and vendors have a responsibility to be continually aware of the changing issues in Food Safety.<sup>5</sup>

**Exercise:** *In what ways could I help my vendors to understand and adhere to the rules and regulations governing our market? What are the characteristics of my management style that could help foster this understanding?*

**See Appendix** for several sources for information regarding legal considerations for Farmers' Markets operating in British Columbia.

It may be wise for each market to develop a checklist of rules, regulations, by-laws and laws that are relevant in their region. This tool may help to clarify legal considerations for the manager, and will provide assurance that vendors are aware of their legal obligations. (See Appendix for legal references.)

Once you are familiar with the rules and regulations governing the market, it is important for the manager to maintain safety records on behalf of the market, which could be in the form of site safety or incidence reports.

When a safety incident does occur at the market, it is the managers' responsibility to see that an incident statement is recorded, signed and submitted to either the vendor committee or the board for review. Incidents can be anything from a first aid incident or a serious injury, to violence, theft, or a heated discussion with an upset customer. An incident can also be a potentially hazardous situation, in which case a report may be forwarded to the police or other authorities.

**Exercise:** *How can I ensure customers that our market site is safe and provides safe food? What are the characteristics of my market that will encourage customer confidence?*

Customers believe in the integrity and safety of shopping in their local communities, and as customer demand and interest in locally-grown, fresh, health food flourishes, it is increasingly important to customers that they buy directly from the producer. As a result, Canadians are flocking to Farmers' Markets as a source of safe food and to strengthen their local economies.<sup>2</sup>

Think about all the ways your Farmers' Market can enrich your community:

- Support local agriculture;
- Provide fresh, locally-grown produce;
- Encourage new small-business enterprises;
- Support local economic development;
- Educate the public about buying local;
- Provide jobs;
- Provide food security;
- Provide a venue for social gathering and community building;
- Provide top quality and selection of products;
- Become a tourist attraction; and
- Serve as a resource for community health.<sup>18</sup>

Preparing the Field for Market Management is a key step in creating a thriving Farmers' Market in your area. As you have discovered, the roles and responsibilities of the Market Manager vary with the size of the market and with the governance model, but all managers assume the role of visionaries and leaders who move forward carefully yet confidently to Sow the Seeds for Market Success.



**Chapter 1 Tips**

- Most Farmers' Markets have a designated manager who oversees the daily running of the market on behalf of the Board of Governance – in some cases, managers are volunteers, while in other cases managers are paid.
- If your market is small or just starting out, you may not need to hire a paid manager until you gather some momentum. As your market grows, you can consider compensating your manager for the capacity-building work that they do.
- Successful markets have well defined roles and responsibilities for their managers and for their boards, so that they can work together to meet the needs of market members, vendors, customers and the community at large.

**Words of Wisdom**

"We think of a Farmers' Market as a 3-legged stool. One leg being the farmer, one the consumer, and the other is the community, and all three legs are in equal proportions and balanced." <sup>6</sup>



## 2. *Sowing the Seeds for Market Success*

This chapter will:

- Provide ideas for selecting your market site and lay-out.
- Give suggestions for getting the right mix of products and vendors.
- Provide insights into conflict-resolution and solution-building skills.

As the Farmers' Market Manager, you can sow the seeds of a successful market by creating a pleasurable and inviting environment where shopping for fresh food seems natural.

Reflect on what it is about your market or other markets that you have visited that makes them so appealing – What elements of the market helped to create this appeal?

Customers patronize Farmers' Markets first because of the farm-fresh produce and then for the ambience. A pleasurable shopping experience in an organic environment is very important in attracting and retaining customers.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever your location, managers can enliven and enrich the market atmosphere by thoughtful site selection, product mix, and selection or placement of vendors.

### 2.1 *Site Selection*

The selection of a site for the market is one of the most critical decisions that have to be made when establishing a Farmers' Market. It is important to select a site that has a favourable environment, easy access for traffic control and parking, is convenient to buyers and sellers, and has a suitable and inviting physical makeup.



A good Farmers' Market site can enhance its neighbourhood or community, especially if located in an inviting area that shoppers want to visit. When selecting a market site, try to locate yourselves near the majority of customers, as most customers will drive within a 15 mile radius to access a Farmers' Market, while vendors are prepared to travel much further.<sup>11</sup>

To attract shoppers to your market, choose a site that is visible to the main traffic flow in the area, or where clear signage and directions can attract customers. Also consider access to public transit, and whether the site is wheelchair, shopping cart, and baby stroller- friendly. Does it provide a safe drop-off zone and plenty of parking for customers; a rule-of-thumb states 2 – 3 parking spaces per vendor. If you can manage to have separate entrances and exits to the site, it will help keep traffic from congesting.<sup>8</sup> For the safety and comfort of vendors and shoppers, the site itself should strive to provide basic services such as running hot and cold water and proper washing stations, wheelchair-accessible washrooms and ample electricity.

Farmers' Markets are often associated with ruralness, so would benefit from a large, open site. At the same time, a market site must provide shade and shelter so as to protect both the products and the vendors from overheating, excessive wind or rain.<sup>11</sup> In Quesnel, the market enjoys access to both indoor and outdoor space, and makes the most of the park-like setting that surrounds the building.

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*The Quesnel Old Time Farmers' Market has secured a site that is highly visible, familiar to community members, and builds on the flow of traffic to its neighbouring businesses. The market is located on the lawn of the local Adult Learning Centre, near to the Youth Centre and within walking distance for many seniors. The lawn provides a natural environment for the market, and manager Paul Dumais likes to keep the site inviting and to encourage customers to sit and stay a while. He achieves this by setting up picnic tables and by providing a performers tent and sound equipment to showcase local talent. In order to keep the market site clean and maintain good relations with their host site, the manager provides garbage cans and recycling bins that are spread around the site each week.*

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The Quesnel market is also a good example of how working with property owners in your community can secure a long-term site for your market.

When deciding whether to locate your market on a private or business property, take into consideration the stability of the ownership of the property and whether a long-term, affordable arrangement can be arranged. Take a look at other markets - many have been successfully located on property owned by cities, churches, businesses, non-profits, individuals, and county fair boards, among others.<sup>7</sup> For example, the Clearwater Market has successfully been located on private property for many years.

Creating a fun and engaging Farmers' Market depends greatly on the location of the market, and the market will have more chance of thriving if you can find a place that enhances the surrounding neighbourhood. Paying attention to details can create an inviting ambience and can pique people's curiosity as the market grows – all of which helps to keep customers and vendors coming back for more!

**Site set up**

Planning for a great Farmers' Market is like planning for a great party – success comes with inviting your “guests” to mix and mingle and by enticing them to move around the site freely.

Ideally, your goal is to have every customer see all of the vendors, whether your market is large or small, indoors or outdoors. You want to create a market environment where vendors, customers and visitors will enjoy themselves – a pleasurable, upbeat site will attract and retain loyal customers. Get together with some local artists or students to create murals, or partner with the local garden club to beautify the site – why not get the local kids to help?

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', and plan for at least 5 feet in front of each vendor stall – if stalls face each other, they will need at least 10 feet between them. Consider also whether vendors will be allowed to park their trucks behind their stalls of the market.<sup>7</sup>

A circular pattern or woven aisles through the market will create a flow and will assure visibility for all the stalls. Vendors can also be set up into several aisles, with displays and other objects of interest placed thoughtfully to encourage movement right to the ends of the rows. Arranging the stalls to form a “taste trail” will also invite customers to move through the site in one direction. For example, place a vendor with jams and jellies next to a bread maker, or a fresh vegetable producer near to the condiments and dip processor.

### Stall allocation

One of the duties of being a Market Manager is to decide how to allocate the vendor stalls in a way that is attractive to vendors and customers alike. You want to try to accommodate vendor site preferences wherever possible – consistency is good for them and for their customers. Customers are attracted by a wide variety of product choices and they want freedom of choice between various vendors, which in turn stimulates vendors to be competitive and strive for quality assurance.

Some markets have established a system for prioritizing vendor applications and site allocations based on factors such as wanting to maintain a strong, diverse product mix; past performance of the vendor, including sales history; and the market's desire to provide new vendors an opportunity to join the market. Other markets leave it to the discretion of the manager to know the saturation limits of the market and to assess what is best for the farmers. See Vancouver Farmers' Market handbook for vendor seniority system and for stall allocation examples [http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook_2009.pdf)

Managers can also work to establish a balanced mix of product sales by visiting with vendors and closely watching customer behaviours and purchasing patterns.<sup>7</sup>

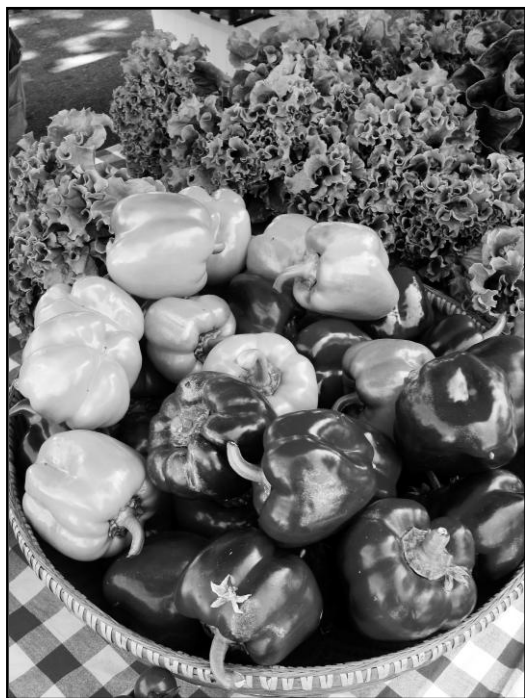
**Exercise:** *What does the image of a successful market look like to you? What is working well at your market to bring you closer to that image?*

## 2.2 Product selection

Getting the product mix “just right” is both an art and a science for Market Managers, who have to balance between offering a variety of products and sources for customers, saturating the market with similar products, and giving in to the demands for “exclusivity” by some vendors. A diversified market is what customers seek, and healthy competition amongst vendors assures that a range of quality products will be offered. Research shows that customers are looking for more of the following products:

- Vegetables, Fruit, Variety of local produce;
- Homemade baked goods; Organic foods;
- Homemade/ handmade items;
- Local artists, crafts, and native art;
- Children's clothing, items, toys, and activities.<sup>8</sup>

As the Market Manager, you may consider seasonal variations, sales in product categories, percentage of vendors in each category, and consumer trends when assessing product mix.<sup>7</sup>



In markets with plenty of choices, shoppers tend to spend more money and to develop relationships with a small group of vendors, which provides a steady flow of customers that will in turn attract new customers.

It may even be a good idea to produce a seasonal product guide that managers, vendors and customers alike will look to when planning for fresh produce. Have a look at the harvesting guide on the BC Association of Farmers' Markets web site: <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/inseason.htm>

As an additional way to bring variety into the market, try to provide customers with opportunities to purchase something to eat at the market – people often don't consider that money spent on food comes from the same budget as money spent on purchases. Having fresh, local food available for purchase also increases the time that customers spend onsite at the market, which can lead to further sales for vendors. Markets may actually want to give preference to prepared food vendors that use local farm products.<sup>7</sup>

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### **A Farmer's Market Story:**

*In Errington, one of the most popular stalls at the Farmers' Market is the food concession, which sells delicious and fragrant cinnamon buns that draw the crowds each week and traffic at the market increases noticeably. The challenge for this market was to encourage other bakers to sell at the market while still protecting the concession stands' business. The compromise that they reached was to restrict the sale of single item baking goods at the vendor stalls as a way to encourage customers to visit the concession stand for a snack or treat.*

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The inclusion of food concessions and of artisans in Farmers' Markets is in keeping with the slogan "make it, bake it, or grow it", and many markets welcome them in the vendor mix.

Other markets may elect to include "British Columbia", "Certified Organic" or "100-mile Diet" in their mandates; however, narrow mandates may impede the market from gaining adequate supply or demand to sustain development. A challenge that arises with establishing market mandates is to develop a verification program so that the mandate is upheld by all vendors.

## **Farm Product Verification**

Customers want to buy local food because they believe it supports local farm families and because they trust it to be safer and more nutritious. Unfortunately, not everyone abides by the principles of a Farmers' Market and some vendors take advantage of the opportunity. In cases where the origin or production claim of a product is being challenged, a farm or local product verification process can be established by the board and administered by the Market Manager with the support of a small committee.

Market boards may decide to include a farm, kitchen or artisan workshop visit by the manager or a verification committee as a requirement for joining the market, while others may only verify sources if a challenge arises.

Having a process in place to deal with farm product verification is a good way to avoid the spread of rumours and accusations at your market. For example, a farmer or artisan may be required to show that their premises actually qualify as local, that it produces everything that it sells, or that it adheres to production claims it makes (e.g. free-range chickens). Verification committees can include board members, the manager, third party members, and vendors – be sure to include artisans, farmers, and food processors. There are many samples of farm verification forms available from the Farmers' Market Coalition at

[http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/resource-library/?cat\\_id=25](http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/resource-library/?cat_id=25)

## **Product Challenge**

Other challenges may arise as to the quality, origin or authenticity of a particular product, and the market rules should establish the Market Managers' right to monitor all products 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 customers.

Challenges may arise regarding the freshness, the cleanliness, or the quality of the product e.g. bruised apples or knit socks that unravel. It is important then for markets boards to reserve the right to make challenges to the quality of a product if necessary.

For an example of a Product Challenge form, see the Farmers' Market Coalition - [http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/wpcontent/uploads/rlib/Product\\_Challenge\\_Form.pdf](http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/wpcontent/uploads/rlib/Product_Challenge_Form.pdf)

To discourage unfounded accusations, some markets establish a fee for processing a product challenge. For instance, those launching the challenge may be required to put up a bond or pay if the farm in question is found to be legitimate – if the challenge is found to be legitimate, the violator might pay for the inspection, amend their practices, or face suspension from the market. At the same time, an appeals process is also recommended so that vendors who feel wrongly treated may have another consideration of their situation. A fair and unbiased appeal may keep the vendor from hurting the reputation of the market in the future.<sup>7</sup>

## **Conflict-Resolution**

The Market Manager is often the first point of contact when issues do arise at the market and is looked to as a facilitator and a solution-builder. It is your responsibility to assure that everyone utilizes their resources to arrive at an equitable solution. As Market Manager, you are bound to apply the rules equally – whether to vendors, shoppers or community partners.

Conflict can actually be a healthy thing, as it shifts people's perspectives and challenges them to stretch their assumptions. What is it that needs changing? Ask others what they think the challenge is – they may have a different perspective, but be prepared to hear answers that you may not like. People will be more likely to support your decision if they were included in the process and understand the reasoning behind the decision. In the end, do not dawdle when it comes to the hard work of making a decision – a good manager knows when enough information has been gathered.<sup>12</sup>

Some key ways to resolve conflicts include:

- **Being a good listener:** Make sure all parties have an opportunity to explain their point of view. You may be surprised at how a solution can be reached when parties listen to the other's perspectives.
- **Find common ground between adversaries:** Start back at the point where each can buy into a common goal. The more people understand each other's point of view, the more likely they will find a suitable compromise.
- **Set up an appeals process:** Have a committee that formal complaints can go to for resolution. There needs to be a clear route for dissatisfied people to take their concerns forward. Have the person submit the complaint in writing to the appeal committee for resolution. The decision of the appeal committee should be binding.
- **Get vendor input:** Vendors are the essence of the market and they must be involved in the working of the market. If the market is not meeting their needs, they will leave, and good vendors are hard to find.
- **Separate personalities from the problem:** Because conflict often occurs from past rivalries, competitive personalities, or lack of knowledge, be sure the problem is clearly identified. This avoids falling into the trap of basing discussions on perceptions – things that exist in people's minds but are not based on facts.<sup>8</sup>



Solving problems is not the same as resolving conflicts. What will solve a problem will not necessarily resolve a conflict. Conflicts are resolved when both persons understand and accept the resolution. Conflict resolution requires good listening and communication skills so that you can see potential solutions where others might not.<sup>13</sup> For more conflict resolution tips, visit the Managers corner of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets website.

*Exercise: Think of a tough decision that you had to make recently. Did the process you used help other people feel included or excluded? Does something need to be done differently next time to keep the situation from recurring?*

Whether dealing with vendors, customers, board members or community partners, the Market Manager draws on conflict-resolution skills to facilitate building a solution that is acceptable to

all parties. A Market Manager can do a lot to create a working environment where conflict and change are managed by nurturing supportive relationships.

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*At the Nicola Valley Farmers' Market, volunteer manager Isobel Vere makes sure that she develops a personal and informal relationship with each of the vendors. When there is a quiet moment at the market, she checks in with the vendors to see how they did that day or to survey them for input to a market decision. She takes a genuine interest in the vendors and encourages them to help each other out. She sees her style as relationship-oriented and helps to build this by gathering all the vendors together for a social wind-up at the end of the season.*

*When a new vendor arrives at the market, they are offered the first month for free, and Isobel tries to provide a low-risk and non-threatening environment for them to test out their products and build their confidence. Isobel is careful to listen to the ideas and concerns of both vendors and customers while at the market; she notices the gaps and tries to encourage existing or new vendors to fill them with their products or services.*

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## **2.3 Vendor Selection**

Selecting the right mix of vendors, products or services to build a thriving Farmers' Market can be complex, but you can simplify the task if you focus on giving the customer what they want. According to Farmers' Markets Canada, what is important to customers are fresh, in-season produce; locally-produced products; and friendly service. What they want more of is... more vendors, more selection, more days of the week, more months of the year and longer hours...in other words – they want more opportunities to do business with your vendors! <sup>2</sup>

### **Vendor Mix**

The mix of vendors is extremely important in building a successful market. Try to find producers of diverse farm products, and to offer a range of high quality processed foods such as breads, jams, sauces, and other value-added products, which will encourage shoppers to do the bulk of their grocery shopping at the market.<sup>7</sup> At the same time that you are seeking vendors for your market, it is important that your market determine clear guidelines for selection, especially when it comes to questions of product re-sale or of the balance of producer to artisan participation.

*For membership in the BCAFM, your Farmers' Market must be:*

*A market comprised exclusively (100%) of vendors who make, bake, grow or raise the products they sell, of which a majority of the vendors are selling farm products of British Columbia origin.*

It is important for Farmers' Market Managers to follow this mandate in order to maintain the authenticity of BCAFM member markets. For example, this commitment means that sales of a neighbour's cherries would be prohibited, as would cherries purchased outside of the region. Regular reviewing of each vendor's products and annual visits to their farms can encourage vendors to uphold the BCAFM standard. Certainly, most Farmers' Markets adopt a policy that restricts the sale of used items as a way to discourage flea market or garage sale items; these distil the purpose of Farmers' Markets to provide healthy food and high quality items.<sup>8</sup>

There are also decisions to be made regarding the mix of farm and craft vendors at the market. Some markets may decide to adhere to a ratio such as 80% farm produce to 20% artisan products. Other markets could decide to fluctuate because they depend on artisans and food concession stands to keep their market stalls adequately filled, or to see them through the shoulder seasons (typically March to June and October to Christmas).<sup>14</sup>

As Market Manager, it is your job to follow the guidelines for vendor selection that your board has established, whether they adhere to established percentages or are flexible and work towards a certain “feel” for the mix of vendors and products. One of the challenges to finding the right feel for your markets is the capacity to recruit new vendors to join in.

## Vendor Recruitment

Finding farmers who are growing the right products for marketing at your market may provide some challenges – there may be an excess of certain producers, or a shortage of farm vendors all around the region.

Whatever the size and situation at your market, actively recruiting vendors may be an important role that you play as Market Manager.

When setting out to recruit new vendors, personal contacts and phone calls are the most effective ways to get the word out about your Farmers' Market. You might decide to visit other markets in your region and talk to their managers about recruiting from their stock of vendors – they may even have a waitlist to share. Farmers often will be interested in selling at more than one market, but be careful not to steal vendors away.

Another idea to recruit new vendors is to visit U-Pick operations and roadside stands in the area, as these farmers may be eager to try another outlet for direct marketing.<sup>10</sup> You might also try attending local agricultural meetings, events or seminars to locate or recruit new vendors – and don't forget to check out on-line specialty food directories such as BC Small Scale Food Processors <http://www.ssfpa.net/bcsfd> or the Wild BC website <http://buybcwild.com/buy-bcwild-directory>.

It is important to clearly communicate what you have to offer a vendor and what it is that you expect in return. You and your board may decide to design some handouts to help with your vendor recruitment, such as the BCAFM as done. Their pamphlet outlines the benefits of being a vendor at a Farmers' Market, and you might add in selling points about your particular market.

In addition to having a recruiting handout, you might want to develop a vendor application and selection process. The Calgary Farmers' Market provides a good example of a simple but clear application form: <http://www.calgaryfarmersmarket.ca/Documents/2007-vendor-application.pdf>.

Once you receive an application, review it to determine if a vendor has a product you need and if they are able to supply your market from the beginning to the end of your season. If so, can they meet your demand for quality and presentation? Find out if the vendor is selling at any other markets and which ones they are. Ask people at the other markets if the vendor is dependable and cooperative. What's the quality





of their products, and is it consistent? Keep in mind that Farmers' Market customers like to talk to vendors. Make sure the vendors you are considering are friendly and willing to talk with their customers when conditions allow.<sup>15</sup>

### Vendor-Customer Relations

You can help to create a healthy business environment at your market by coaching your vendors to develop good customer relations and marketing skills. Many farmers are not accustomed to direct marketing and may need assistance in displaying and promoting their products to build a reliable customer base. As the needs and preferences of your customers are known in more detail, managers can begin to focus on ways to help vendors increase sales.

*Exercise: Think of the last time a new vendor arrived... in what ways could you have been more helpful to them? What worked with their vending skills and what could have been done differently?*

Good vending skills include paying attention to product quality and display, customer safety, product knowledge, and appearance and behaviour. To become the best possible resource for vendors, managers have many ways they can keep up-to-date with marketing trends and ideas: by keeping in touch with the BCAFM, Farmers' Market Canada, and other organizations; by attending educational opportunities such as direct marketing conferences; or by visiting other market sites and gleaning ideas from their managers and vendors.

Things to mention when coaching vendors for strong customer relationships and sales:

- Vendor Appearance and Demeanour: Be clean, friendly and welcoming. Reach out to customers but do not hawk your wares. Know your crops, how they are produced, and how to use them.
- Stall Appearance and Signage: Stalls that are distinguished can be found again. Provide unique signage and tell your farm story on your product tags, business cards, brochures, or website.
- Displays and Products: Create displays that are attractive and easy to reach yet are safe and stable. Make sure that all products are clean, clearly identified, and priced within keeping with other vendors. "Stack it High and it will Fly" is a good practice.
- Abundance and Quality: Color and vertical layout are visually attractive to customers, so are baskets and bins that look full. Arrive with high-quality produce and keep it on ice or cold water so it will stay fresh all day.
- Professionalism: Arrive on time and be ready with all your equipment in good enough shape to present a professional appearance. Have adequate staff to provide courteous and prompt service. Strive to secure the trust, security and safety of your customers.<sup>7</sup>

The BCAFM hosts a Vendors Corner on their website that contains other resources for vendors, such as making your display entertaining, providing samples, standing behind guarantees, and taking email orders ahead of time. See <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/vendors.htm> for more details, including information on the annual BCAFM conference that is chocker-block full of great ideas and opportunities to learn from other Market Managers.

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*At the Kelowna Farmers' and Crafters' Market, manager Bob Callioux works with the vendors to make sure that their customers can trust the market mantra "We Make It, Bake It, Grow It or It isn't Sold Here." Bob does this by encouraging each vendor to have good signage that is to the point, including one that clearly identifies the farm and its location. He would like to see each stall have a picture of the farm or workshop where their products originate, and a farm or product profile that is unique. This includes coming up with a catchy slogan – just like they did for the Kelowna market itself!*

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Customers value taste, nutrition, food safety, and, perhaps most of all, knowing where their food comes from. To meet these expectations, producers should keep in mind that product traceability is important for quality assurance and food safety concerns, and that for most of these customers, sustainable practices are more important than organic certification.<sup>16</sup>

As manager, you can coach your vendors on customer relations and product sales techniques. The quality of the product may get lost with a chaotic display or poorly-presented vendor, and that often means little temptation for the customer to buy the product or no encouragement to develop a relationship with the vendor.

**Vendor Best Practices**

Your responsibility to the vendors is to create a business environment in which they can successfully market their products. All of the work you do in public relations, accounting, and keeping track of regulations is ultimately focused on developing and maintaining your market - where vendors bring their goods and make a living selling them. How you communicate with the vendors, how you apply the rules, how you handle conflict, and the tone you set for the market are critical to the overall health of the market.

**Know Your Vendors and Their Products**

Get to know about agriculture in your region. Talk to the farmers and other vendors at your market and become familiar with what they supply – do you know how they grow or make the product? Find out about their farms, what crops they grow, how many acres they farm and how they market their products (i.e. do they have a farm-gate stall?) This information will help you communicate and develop relationships more easily with your vendors so that you can help them to understand the rules and overall climate of the market.<sup>12</sup>

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*Staying connected to vendors is important for Cindy Nelson, who has promoted the Penticton Farmers' Market as a positive site for 3 of the market's 18 years. Although Cindy works for her Board of Governance, she says her real bosses are the vendors. She has sustained her long-standing relationship with the vendors by staying community-minded and keeping in mind the grassroots reasons for the market. Over the years, she has tried not to get caught in the conflicts or politics of the market, and she does this by staying calm, being patient, and above all, enjoying herself. Cindy is a good listener who is organized and thinks ahead so she knows what she has to do, but at the same time, she realizes that the on-site management is where the really important work gets done.*

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Developing and maintaining good relations with your vendors is essential to the stability of a Farmers' Market. Satisfied vendors are likely to be loyal and will remain with the market or

return season after season, creating consistency of product for the market. Vendors also develop relationships with customers, who come back week after week to buy specific items from their favourite farmers. Happy vendors are more likely to get involved in the market on a larger level and take part in the decision-making process, while dissatisfied vendors tend to undermine a market's stability and success. Vendors who feel like they are being treated unfairly or that the manager is not doing enough to help their business at the market may leave and the entire market will suffer. Even if they do not leave, they may complain among themselves and hurt morale.<sup>12</sup>

### *Communicate With Your Vendors*

Communication regularly with your vendors can be a good preventive measure for managing the market. Ask the vendors to help set the fees and to create a clear set of rules – and to agree on the consequences of breaking those rules. You can achieve this at your regular vendor meeting, through circulating a regular vendor newsletter, or by setting up a vendor committee to deal with issues concerning vendors.

By giving vendors a strong voice, they can help you and your board to set the direction of the market, assist the manager in developing the market plans, set market rules, and resolve conflicts and differences of opinion. If you can, include representation from a variety of vendors in addition to farmers, such as artisans, food vendors, customers, volunteers, and members of the general public – all can bring fresh ideas to the group.<sup>8</sup>

The Board of Governors usually determines the rules of the market and sets the fee structure, while the manager is responsible for implementing them on-site. To avoid disputes and misunderstandings, each vendor or applicant should receive an information package with rules in preparation for the season.



It is good practice to review the rules each year at a vendor meeting to reaffirm their relevance and the vendors' commitment to them. Other ways to communicate with your vendors are to produce a newsletter or memos, set up a bulletin board for notices, have a vendor section on your market website, or host a yearly vendors' review. Be sure to use an encouraging and positive tone in your communications; and even if the news is problematic, try to frame it in terms of possibilities and solutions.

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*The Coquitlam Farmers' Market maintains an on-going conversation with their vendors by producing a newsletter just for them every two months, by emailing notices of upcoming events at the market or of opportunities within the community as they arise, and by producing a monthly newsletter for distribution throughout the general market.*

*Now that the Coquitlam market is in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, it has very little vendor turnover, so the market hosts a vendor retreat every two years. At the retreat, they touch base with the vendors, reflect on market policies, and align them with vendor needs. As a result, most of the policies have evolved from vendor concerns. In addition, they explore how the vendors see shifts in customer traffic or in trends and preferences. The retreats usually include some vendor training, often in the way of marketing or customer relations.*

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Reaching out to existing and prospective vendors is one way that your market can grow and diversify, and together with your board, you can determine the best way to extend your market to new audiences. In many cases, identifying an untapped customer base means taking up a new time slot such as an after-work or mid-week market, but for other markets, it means appealing to customers and vendors who are already living in your neighbourhood but do not participate in the Farmers' Market.

**Cross-Cultural Skill Building**

Appealing to new customers to enhance your Farmers' Market may mean reaching across cultural boundaries by offering opportunities and products to suit your new audience.

A recent study conducted by Farmers' Market Canada identified that of those who do frequent Farmers' Markets, 83% were born in Canada, which suggests future growth potential among non-native-born Canadians.<sup>2</sup> In fact, across British Columbia, the arrival of 1 million immigrants is expected by the year 2015. What is your market doing to meet the growing need for local ethnic or culturally-specific food products?

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*As a new market in its second year, the Surrey Urban Farmers' Market has draw ethnically-diverse Canadians from the surrounding neighbourhoods by establishing a wide offering of locally-produced ethnic foods.*

*The market is building bridges to various communities in Surrey and their goal is to appeal to a broader, diverse customer base, for instance, by inviting the aboriginal community to join in on market days. One new idea is to advertise in the South Asian media, while another is to offer education programs in sustainable, backyard gardening with grant money provided by the BC Healthy Communities Initiative.*

*The Market Manager and board also worked with city staff who had developed a farm fresh guide, and as well, they promoted the market through purchasing ads or taking advantage of free community-news listings.*

*The board and staff of the Surrey Urban Farmers' Market hope that these initiatives will bring a more culturally diverse feel to the market, which will in turn attract new vendors and customers to explore the many tastes, smells, textures and flavours that Surrey has to offer !*

When viewed as an asset, cultural diversity can strengthen a market by bringing in a wider variety of products and shoppers, for example, people with disabilities, older people, rural and suburban dwellers, organic and conventional farmers, families of varying structures, as well as part-time and full-time residents.<sup>7</sup>

*Exercise: How can I reach out to cultural groups and invite them to shop at my Farmers' Market? What can I do to attract more culturally-specific vendors?*

By making your market welcoming for all community members, managers can bring in new customers, increase the significance of the market in the region, and build on the market as an integral gathering place for the community to meet and mingle with each other.

In order to sow the seeds of success for your Farmers' Market, you must carefully select the right mix of site, vendor and products to plant together to bring about a rich harvest. With good soil, companion planting practices, and fertilizer mixed in throughout the season, those seeds will germinate into a robust and stable source of health and economic rewards for all!

### **Chapter 2 Tips**

- Site selection and lay-out is very important in small or large markets – plan your market for optimum movement through the site and for easy management of customer flow.
- To make the most of the opportunity before them, it is important to educate vendors to ensure their displays are eye-catching and that product information is easy to absorb and readily available.
- Market Managers must demonstrate good people skills, which will be observed and absorbed by vendors, who will in turn treat their customers well.

### **Words of Wisdom**

“Be the change you want to see in the world.” Gandhi

### 3. *Fertilizing for Growth and Development*

This chapter will:

- Assist you in understanding the benefits of strategic planning for your market.
- Provide ideas for record-keeping that will benefit your strategic planning process.
- Raise awareness of risk management strategies to assure that your market is safe for vendors, staff, and the general public.

Once you have prepared the field for a successful market by understanding your role as Market Manager, and you have sown the seeds for success by selecting the best site, products and vendors to suit your community of shoppers, it is now time to think about how to fertilize your Farmers' Market to encourage lush growth and development.

Planning for growth and development is an important step in ensuring the sustainability of a Farmers' Market, which involves the manager and board determining what kind of information they need, taking that information and setting out an achievable plan, and then assessing the risks involved in the various options. The Market Manager can be instrumental in the planning process by seeking out specific information about vendor and customer trends and by using a record-keeping system that suits the task.

The strategic plan to fertilize your market may include developing some public relations campaigns to reward existing customers and to draw new shoppers to the Farmers' Market experience. Having good public relations can mean strategizing to develop a team of paid market assistants or a group of enthusiastic volunteers to offer customer services to the shoppers at your market. Having helpers can also mean it is more feasible for the market to host festivals and hold fundraisers to help raise the profile and assure the sustainability of the market.

Don't forget that media relations are an important part of building partnerships and support in the community. Being a media-savvy Farmers' Market means more than relying on the press to spread the word, because it involves using technology to develop your own promotional materials, including a tantalizing website that keeps customers, vendors, and the community at large excited about what's going on at the Farmers' Market in their community!

*Exercise: What are the characteristics of a community-oriented market? What makes a model producer-based market successful? What are some of strategies you can develop to help create this model?*

#### 3.1 *Strategic planning*

Strategic planning is a key activity to sowing the seeds of success for your market – and the Market Manager can assist the process by keeping records of market and vendor activities, conducting market evaluations, and working with others to assess the risks the market faces as it plans for its growth.

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**A Farmer's Market Story:**

*The Vancouver Farmers' Markets (VFM) learned the value of gathering data and using it to engage others in their strategic planning when they recently hosted a flavourful breakfast for key politicians, city staff, and the media.*

*The VFM strategically used fresh local food to illustrate the value and quality of Farmers' Markets in the city - and then clearly laid out the need for support and security for neighbourhood-based markets in the city based on the figures they had collected. Many of those attending the breakfast did not know that the VFM organization is 15 years old, hosts over 200 different vendors, and generates upwards of \$3 million annually, yet the organization had no permanent sites for their 4 weekly markets.*

*The plan worked and within two weeks, the Vancouver City Council began the process of securing sites for the markets and of working together to amend by-laws that impeded the markets' growth and development.*

*Source: Stall Tales, Vendor Newsletter of the Vancouver Farmers' Markets, Summer 2008*

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Many markets in BC operate at temporary locations and, like Vancouver Farmers' Markets, some have no formal relationship with their host city. Strategically planning to ensure some form of security for a market to operate on a specific site is critical, as considerable investment goes into branding a particular location as the destination for the market.<sup>17</sup>

Knowing exactly what is happening (or not happening) in your market is essential to planning for growth and development, and having proof of your markets success, or confirmation of its challenges, will help you and your board to strategize for the future. That is exactly what they did at the Vancouver Farmers' Markets - they strategized about how to secure permanent sites, then gathered the records that they needed to show their significance in the city, and then set out on a campaign to promote the sustainable growth and development of Farmers' Markets across the city of Vancouver.

### **3.2 Record keeping**

Good record keeping makes decision making easier and more effective because it allows management to recognize and benefit from trends and business cycles, as well as helps with budgeting and strategic planning.

Records help Farmers' Markets to keep track of and review past sales performance, vendor and membership information, crop availability, financial transactions, and much more. It is the job of the Market Manager and the board of directors to decide which records are appropriate for their particular situation. Regardless, careful financial records must be kept for tax purposes and they are among the most valuable aids to good business management.<sup>10</sup>

Tracking other market information allows Farmers' Markets to understand business trends and cycles and more accurately predict how the market will perform. Recording customer numbers can help to detect seasonal fluctuations and understand the impacts of events, promotional strategies, or strategic changes to the market.

While some record keeping is rather straightforward, collecting sales data can be a sensitive issue. In response, some markets have implemented mandatory or voluntary sales reporting

systems that are anonymous. While voluntary reporting systems put vendors at ease about their privacy, those who don't submit make it far more difficult to draw useful conclusions from the data.

Open vendor-sales reporting help managers assess how well individual vendors or categories of vendors are doing, or how particular seasonal crops influence the market. Sales records can also be invaluable for demonstrating the economic power of a market to local policy-makers, partners or funders, and other community stakeholders. These numbers can also be used to promote the market, impress the media, and recruit new vendors.<sup>7</sup>

**Market Records Could Include:**

- Total market sales; sales in different vendor categories; requests for new products;
- Stall fees collected; all other income and expenses by amount, type, date;
- Weather conditions; customer foot traffic counts; external special events or draws;
- On-site special events; timing and types of promotional efforts; response to entertainers; and
- Seasons for crops and duration of market; traffic in response to seasonal offerings.<sup>7</sup>

Other information that can be helpful to your market for strategic planning arises from evaluating various aspects of your market such as monthly and annual reports, customer and vendor relations, community partnerships, or promotional efforts.

**Market Evaluation**

Setting up some form of market evaluation can provide you with information that is specific to your market or reflective of consumer trends across the nation. Consider the purpose of your evaluation before you select the means to gather your information – being clear on what your purpose is will help you and your board stay focused on the end goal.



Market evaluations can take many forms, but they don't have to be complex. You may design a simple system to track vendor sales, customer counts, and weather data. You might conduct a Rapid Market Assessment, or survey your vendors or customer at the market or via your website. Don't forget to make room for contributions from the board and to include some of your own observations in the evaluation.

One simple tool that can engage others in evaluating your market is a Rapid Market Assessment (RMA), which involves three components. The first component is a system for easily estimating foot traffic, while another component is the "dot survey" that involves several flip charts with one question and several answer options on each, and the final component of RMA is "debriefing" to get detailed feedback, constructive comments, or key observations from people whom have diverse market experiences.<sup>7</sup>



Other tools that you may consider using for your market evaluation include gathering stories as anecdotal data; conducting surveys with vendors or customers; holding formal or informal interviews; hosting focus groups to build on others' ideas; having tasting panels; recording and comparing your own observations; assessing census data; or simply having your customers mark where they live on a neighbourhood map so you can assess the reach of your market.<sup>12</sup>

Market evaluations are important for measuring and managing the progress of your market, and many markets have developed their own tools for conducting evaluations. For more information on Rapid Market Assessment and other survey tools, see the Resources section.

## **Risk Management**

Market Managers and organizers take many risks to keep their markets viable, but despite their best efforts, some markets do fail and others get embroiled in legal battles because they did not accurately assess the risk associated with operating their market. A board that plans for growth, stability, and safety will ensure that their market will effectively manage challenges and conflicts along the way. Being proactive and working with others can help you and your board to assess the risks that your market may face and to anticipate ways to reduce any problems during the market season.

For risk management, it is important for the Market Manager to understand Food Safety regulations so that they can assure that no one at the market is taking unnecessary risks with public health and customer confidence. The BC Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) offers a MarketSafe program that will educate vendors, managers, and other staff on the safe food-handling practices to adopt at your market. See *Guideline for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets* (pdf) on the BCAFm website.

As another service to its members and associate markets, an excellent group Insurance Plan is available through the BC Association of Farmers' Markets. This plan includes a Commercial Liability plan as well General Insurance for Directors and Officers of the market's board. For more information see <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/insurance.htm>.

One more way to manage the risks associated with operating a Farmers' Market is to establish a Hold Harmless Agreement with your vendors. This agreement states that the seller will not hold the market, its board or its landlords responsible for personal injury, death or property damages. For an example of such an agreement, see [http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/resource-library/?cat\\_id=4](http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/resource-library/?cat_id=4).

Farmers' Markets can manage the risk of legal complications arising, but there are other risks that are not as easy to predict and avoid. The British Columbia Provincial Emergency Planning Department has many tools available to help prepare an emergency response plan and to assess the risks of natural disasters such as earthquakes, forest fires, or floods. For guides to planning for these and many other risk situations, see <http://www.pep.bc.ca/index.html>.

In the end, it is the responsibility of the Board of Governance to set out clear policies, procedures, or guidelines so that all participants in the market understand the boundaries and expectations. In this way, the Market Manager can act alone or in conjunction with an advisory committee to assure adherence or to respond to challenges to these mechanisms. There are many ways in which a board may support the manager to act consistently, fairly, and effectively, such as by providing access to conflict-resolution training.

At the same time, it is important that the market manager be trusted to assess the risk of the situation and to use their own judgment as to the best way to respond. If the manager is clear about their goals and priorities, they can be much surer of their ability to handle conflict. If

conflict arises, the wise market manager does their best to minimize its impact on the ambience of the market site. This may be achieved by resolving the conflict quickly, by reducing the involvement of others, and by assuring that customers are not aware of the tension.

Farmers' Market Managers can ensure that their markets are well fertilized for steady growth and development and can reduce their risk of failure by working with their boards to manage their risks. Managers know that they must have the solid support of the Board of Governors in being able to implement strategic plans, to collect the records necessary to evaluate the market, and to know that risk management plans are in place to refer to if the need arises.

### **Chapter 3 Tips**

- Strategic planning helps board members and Market Managers avoid trivial conflicts and stay focused on the end goal of enhancing the market.
- Successful, responsive markets regularly gather both quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (experiences) data to evaluate their current status and plan their future.
- Risk management involves both the insurance to protect against liability claims and the preventive measures to minimize the chance of a problem arising in the first place.<sup>7</sup>

### **Words of Wisdom**

"Better to be wise by the misfortunes of others than by your own." *Aesop*

## 4. *Harvesting the Benefits of Value-Added Activities*

This chapter will:

- Provide ideas for developing beneficial relationships with community and business members.
- Give suggestions for engaging your community in adding value to your market.
- Provide insights into special event and fundraising activities.
- Demonstrate how having good media relations and technology tools can help you succeed.

### 4.1 *Community Relations*

Farmers' Markets add economic and social value to communities because they offer access to fresh, local, healthy food; they connect small farmers with customers in a unique community gathering; they provide valuable outlets for local growers; and they bring people together and build social connections in neighbourhoods.<sup>19</sup>

Have you ever considered how your Farmers' Market contributes to the social development of your local area? Just walk through any market on a busy day and listen to the chatter in the aisles and you can be sure there is community-building going on in amongst the tomatoes and home-spun woollens!

In fact, recent research on the Economic and Social Impact of Farmers' Markets in BC, 2006, showed that in addition to being a place to find local, seasonal food, Farmers' Markets are also places to come together to build and support your local community.<sup>3</sup> One-third of those shoppers surveyed said they would spend over 30 minutes at the market and they anticipated spending at least half of that time talking with others. In addition, almost eight of every ten people asked (78%) said the Farmers' Market was their primary reason for being in that area of town on that day.

Farmers' Markets are enjoying growth in popularity and this benefits local BC farmers and communities alike. The entire food system has become so large and complex that many customers feel powerless to influence it. Farmers' Markets empower customers and make communities more interdependent. The local population can support its local farmers, who in turn get more money to invest in local businesses. As a result, communities as a whole develop a more secure economic base and food system.<sup>12</sup>

Markets benefit customers by providing access to local, good-quality products and specialty foods as well as to a social outing and a healthy shopping alternative. Farmers' Markets are also increasingly important generators of community involvement and



sources of public education across the province. In addition, markets can build partnerships with community groups, local businesses, educators, or government agencies to add value to the Farmers' Market experience.

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*The Downtown Clearwater Farmers' Market is one market that is located on the grass beside the Interior Whitewater Expedition Company, which provides white water rafting experiences. The market works hard to meet the wishes of the private property holder so they do not interfere with his business. In addition, both the property holder and the market itself have insurance coverage of their own.*

*The Clearwater market site attracts tourists and locals alike, since it is located near to a shopping plaza and next door to a community hall. Long-time vendor Ann Baker explains that the hall hosts a pancake breakfast on market days, which has greatly benefited the community group, and at the same time, the breakfast spot provides a place to gather and visit while shopping at the Farmers' Market next door.*

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Developing partnerships with local businesses and community organizations can be beneficial to all parties, as the Clearwater Farmers' Market example shows.

**Exercise:** What kinds of community partnerships do you nurture as manager of the market? In what ways do your partnerships bring economic and social benefits to the community?

Many Farmers' Markets provide a weekly table for community groups to promote their organization, conduct fundraising activities such as raffles, or to educate community members about their group. Some markets offer this service for free, while others charge a nominal fee for the table.

Likewise, some markets limit the types of activities that the community groups can engage in at the market; for instance, some restrict the sale of T-shirts, food items, or hand-crafted items, to name a few. For an example of Vancouver Farmers' Markets' Community Table application form and guidelines, see <http://www.eatlocal.org/events.html>

Working in partnership with local businesses, schools, volunteer societies and community organizations can add value to the experience that the public has at your market. These and other education or entertainment events can encourage return visits as well as attract new customers to your market.

## **Public Education and Relations**

Farmers in British Columbia and across Canada enjoy a great deal of trust from the public, and it is very important that Market Managers understand this trust and work hard to maintain it.

Farmers' Markets are often the place where the public gets to put a face to food production in their region, so this makes markets a great site to engage in public education and to build trusting relationships with your customers.

In addition, Farmers' Markets provide many opportunities for farmers and customers to interact, with the potential to educate the public about regional food issues, raise the profile and status of farmers, and raise local pride in the people and products of your community.<sup>1</sup>

Farmers' Markets are uniquely situated to educate community members about agriculture by developing communication plans to stay in touch with current customers and to attract new ones to the market. At the same time, developing customer service or loyalty plans can greatly enhance public relations and can draw people to the market that might not come otherwise. Examples of public education events could be to sponsor community partnerships or host events with businesses, organizations or government programs.

For instance, the Island Chefs' Collaborative hosts a Farmers' Market in downtown Victoria, which provides an opportunity for Victorians to purchase good-quality, healthy fruit and vegetables as well as a chance for volunteer Chef members to educate the public about the ecological and economic benefits of buying locally. At the same time, the Chefs' market provides another avenue for farmers to make their businesses viable – check it out at <http://www.iccbc.ca> .

To start working with the Chefs in your region, look over the BC Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) handout on creating a Chef-Friendly market <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/downloads.htm>

Think creatively about how you might enhance your customer base by providing expanded customer services. One way might be to help bring local produce to the customer (and free up the producer to farm or the processor to process) through establishing pocket markets, which are springing up in many cities across the province. Pocket markets are smaller markets that are found in neighbourhoods, workplaces, public places, community spaces, or at special events. These markets can contain both consignment and direct vendor stalls, but are intended to remain “pocket” sized and to serve a specific, small customer base.

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**A Farmers' Market Story:**

*Recently, the Coquitlam Farmers' Market has reached out to bring farm-fresh produce to select customers through offering pocket markets in their region of the city. Having tried this for the first time selling to the students, faculty and staff at Simon Fraser University, Market Manager Tabitha McLoughlin is pleased to say that they have expanded to include the Metro Vancouver office in their offerings. As a matter of fact, they have hired a manager and assistant specifically to run the pocket markets for them.*

*These pocket markets act as a consignment market for local producers who are busy back on the farm, although other vendors do participate, and Tabitha encourages farmers to attend occasionally during the season. She says that pocket markets focus on the farmers, but are beneficial to all, since they accommodate more revenue streams for producers and they bring fresh products to the customer, whom is often happy to support a more direct link between their pocket book and the local farm via the pocket market.*

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There are many ways to expand customer services at your Farmers' Market, and taking the produce to the customer via pocket markets is just one way to achieve this.

Your market might also attract a new customer base by adopting “Earth-Friendly” practices, such as by having recycling bins on site; arranging a Park and Ride program <http://www.stalbertchamber.com> ; or launching a Waste Wise campaign, as the BCAFM has done <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/managers.htm> . In another example, the Vancouver Farmers' Markets encourages carbon-conscious shoppers by providing Bike to Market Routes to all of their markets <http://www.eatlocal.org/markets.html> .

Another example of a new and exciting program offered by the BC Association of Farmers' Markets to engage new customers is the Farmers' Market Nutrition & Coupon Project (FMNCP). This program allows for even more low-income families with children and low-income pregnant women to access market fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs, dairy, nuts, and fresh-cut herbs through their local Farmers' Market.

This program offers a unique opportunity that combines skill building programs and Farmers' Market coupons. To date, the FMNCP has had a very positive impact, resulting in the growth and expansion for some participating markets, and creating more opportunities for local farmers to sell their wares. Programs such as these will require administrative support – often programs bring with them an honorarium to thank the market for participating. For more information, see <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/fmncp.htm>.

Other effective ways to engage and educate the public about local food could include developing a local food information booth; distributing cloth shopping bags; raffling baskets of local food; participating in food coupon programs; inviting community information booths; and organizing special events or fundraising activities. All of these activities can add value to the Farmers' Market experience for vendors, customers, and volunteers alike.

## Volunteer Relations

Effective market management involves combining and coordinating everyone's efforts and that often means delegating tasks to individuals or groups of market volunteers.

One of the key components of developing yourself as a manager and at the same time relieving yourself of the time crunch is to learn how to delegate. Delegating does not mean passing off work and burdening others. Done correctly, it helps volunteers build their skills and abilities while allowing you to work on the projects that really need our unique and valuable expertise.

When working with volunteers, keep in mind the following suggestions:

Be clear about the objectives of the project and the results that you want to achieve; clearly communicate the job and ask for input from the volunteer; offer advice, support and feedback but give room for creativity; build confidence and enthusiasm by picking jobs that suit the individual's interests and abilities; get a commitment and make sure the volunteer has the time and resources they need to be successful; take time to evaluate the results and give constructive feedback; and finally, recognize the lessons that you have learned together.<sup>12</sup>



To maintain good relations with your volunteers, make sure that you, your vendors, and your board take the time to show your appreciation for the contributions of the volunteers and recognize the value they add to the market. You might want to consider hosting an end-of-season party or celebration for the volunteers and community organizations that help to make your market successful. Make sure to get plenty of press coverage so that the whole region can see how much your Farmers' Market values its community members!

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***A Farmers' Market Story:***

*The Abbotsford Farm and Country Market takes good care of their volunteers because volunteers add value to the market in many ways. Volunteers take good care of their market because they know that supporting the market is the right thing to do for their community. The volunteers also take care of their manager, because their presence allows Bruce Fatkin to focus on doing more of the interpersonal work that builds valuable relationships with vendors, customers and community members.*

*Different volunteers add value to the market in many different ways; for example, one regular customer became an on-site volunteer because they wanted to integrate into the community and to improve the downtown core of the city; another volunteer takes responsibility for selling shopping bags and other items as fundraising opportunities for the market. Another volunteer conducts research and interviews and helps produce the newsletter and the market's new Flickr page, which features photos of different vendors and highlights upcoming events and produce. Yet another volunteer (who engages with people well) shares her time to do periodic customer counts, conduct surveys of vendors or customers, and to encourage customers to enter the weekly draw for a free basket of market goodies.*

*Whether volunteering on the board, at the market, or working behind the scenes throughout the season, it is obvious that a whole bunch of people do a lot of little things to make the Abbotsford Farm and Country Market experience a valuable one!*

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Here are some other examples of duties that volunteers can take on at your market:

- Help with setting up/tearing down the market;
- Staff the Farmer's Market information table;
- Provide face-painting or veggie valet services at the market;
- Research recipes, produce purchasing and storage tips, plus interesting facts and trivia concerning local veggies and fruits;
- Distribute posters and flyers in your neighbourhood;
- Organize special events and prepare the market site;
- Represent the market at other community events and gatherings; or
- Produce and distribute communications to vendors and customers.

Once you start to attract volunteers to your market, you may want to provide a volunteer application form, such as the one that is used by Abbotsford Farm and Country Market [http://www.abbotsfordfarmandcountrymarket.com/applications/2009\\_Volunteer\\_Application.pdf](http://www.abbotsfordfarmandcountrymarket.com/applications/2009_Volunteer_Application.pdf)

It may also be a good idea to create a volunteer coordinator's position at the market so that the volunteers get the support and encouragement that will keep them coming back for more! For

more information on how to recruit and keep volunteers to add value to your Farmers' Market, see the Volunteer Canada site at <http://volunteer.ca/en/en-home>

Without volunteers, many markets could not meet their goals of supporting locally grown and prepared foods and of educating the public on the importance of buying locally. Volunteers are essential to every aspect of a Farmers' Market – from the hard-working members of the board to those who help plan and host celebrations, fundraising activities, or promotional events.

## Special Events

While vendors are the solid foundation of any market, special events are valuable assets that will help to promote the market. Events are one of the many things that can distinguish your Farmers' Market from other shopping experiences and they can help a market to:

- 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; or
- Create awareness of issues affecting the market.<sup>7</sup>

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

Special events can be very simple activities held during the regular market day or elaborate fundraising galas. Most events can be designed to meet multiple market goals and have multiple benefits. Consider mixing and matching activities to create excitement at your market. See suggestions for hosting low, medium, or high budget special events in the Appendix.

Market days and special events can be greatly enhanced by including live music or other performances, either by arranging for paid entertainment, by locating community music or drama groups to perform for free, or by inviting buskers to entertain and glean contributions from the crowd. See sample application forms for entertainment in the Resources section.

Whatever the circumstances, there are a few things to consider when arranging for entertainment at your market, such as selecting a suitable entertainment style, the right placement in the market, or deciding what the entertainers may expect in return for performing.

Although having live entertainment at a Farmers' Market can add value to the experience and draw crowds to the site, you must be careful that the music does not take away from the business activities of the market itself. Think about keeping the music style matched to the crowd and about keeping the volume down so vendors and customers can talk comfortably. This means that you probably don't want to invite the local electric rock band or the 50-member brass band – at least not during vending hours.



Keep in mind that placement of the entertainment area can be critical to the success of the market, so it does not tend to draw people away nor have the audience block the aisles of the market. Keep the performance site somewhat separate from the bulk of the vendors, perhaps in a corner of the site that needs some enlivening, or where people are sitting down between shopping ventures. Place your food vendors nearby and people will tend to stick around the market for longer.

If you want your customers to linger at the market while the entertainment is on, you had best be sure that the entertainment is of good quality and appropriate to the audience. Some markets have an assessment committee that auditions the performers ahead of time, while others make selections based on the entertainer's reputation and then assess the first performance as an audition. Of course, if you are hiring professionals you can expect more than from amateurs, although you may be pleasantly surprised by the talent of local buskers.

Some markets pay a small fee to the entertainer, which is collected from the stall fees, while others let the musicians "busk" by putting out a collection hat while playing, and in many cases, musicians are encouraged to sell their original music CD's to the audience. Your market can also arrange for free entertainment by hosting the school choir or inviting the gymnastics club to demonstrate their skills, and in return, the clubs can hold raffles or sell tickets to an upcoming community performance.

Well-selected entertainment can add much value to the market experience for community groups, customers, and vendors, and keep in mind that entertainment can be a vital part of fundraising activities that you might plan for supporting and developing your market.



## **Fundraising for Markets**

Many Market Managers or committees get involved in fundraising for the market because they understand the need to run the market as a business and that there is only so much revenue that can come in from stall fees. Fundraising can take many forms, including on-going membership campaigns, weekly raffles, special events or galas throughout the season, or sponsorships and grants that support special projects.

Farmers' Markets are valuable because they provide profitable business outlets for their vendors and they nurture entrepreneurial activity. But markets are also valuable resources for their communities because they enhance the region, help stem the loss of farmland, ensure healthy food for community members, provide venues for artists and entertainers, and offer a site for businesses and non-profit organizations to reach out to the community. All of these beneficial activities put markets in a terrific position to raise funding for core operations and for special projects.

Using creative ideas, many markets have managed to raise both private and public support for their activities. Private monies may come from fundraising or sponsorship activities, while public support often involves grant and proposal writing to foundations or government programs. In addition, markets can become vendors themselves, and raise additional funds by selling T-shirts, tote bags, hats, or mugs with the market logo brightly displayed on all. Other markets have raised funds for permanent structures or facilities by selling bricks, plaques or benches with the names of their sponsors engraved in them.

Many markets host fundraising events each year, like a Harvest Dinner or Taste of the Market celebration. Events like these can go a long way to raising money to support the market, but more importantly, they raise the spirits and heighten the commitment of shoppers, vendors, community partners and others who deserve recognition and thanks for their support of the market. At these "tasty" events, Farmers' Markets can celebrate and renew existing memberships, as well as win over new supporters and gain valuable partners or sponsors.

Some market boards maintain a sponsorship committee that concentrates on identifying, soliciting, and following up on potential sponsors for the market. Consider if there are corporate sponsors in your region who can meet their business goals while sharing the market's goals – for example, a company might happily pay the cost of a new banner for a market if its logo is also prominently displayed there. It is best to present the sponsorship request in a way that clearly shows how the company can meet its business goals by sponsoring the market.

In much the same way, Market Managers often work with committees to help develop grant applications or proposals to secure funding from publicly-funded sources. Many foundations, community organizations, or government agencies offer grants or accept program proposals from Farmers' Markets. In some case, it is relatively easy to be successful, while other application processes can be complex and involve several partnerships.

The basis of good grant writing is to communicate your ideas in clear and simple terms that make strong links between the project you are proposing and the funding that is being offered. For example, if the local health authority offers support for Food Security programs, then a partnership with your local Food Bank to supply fresh produce may be a good fit, while a proposal to improve the safety of the physical site for the market may be better received by the local municipality.

A key action in successful grant writing is to pay attention to the details given in the grant agencies information package, or check with the agency if instructions are not clearly laid out. For example, if the proposal guidelines state that a timeline is required you must include one, or

if they limit the pages for particular sections, you must not go over the limit. In essence, you want to give them every reason to keep your application in the yes pile and you want to build confidence in your organizations' abilities to deliver the proposed project at every step.

Keep in mind also that poor spelling or formatting may give the assessors concern about your organizational skills or quality of work, even if the ideas that you have are great! Please refer to the Resources section for several good guides to writing successful grants.

## **4.2 Media Relations**

You can help add value to your Farmers' Market by working together with local and regional media to reach current and potential customers or community partners. As Market Manager, you can easily develop good working relationships with the media because Farmers' Markets are of interest to food editors, community events people, business/agriculture editors, and or feature writers. Find out what topics specific press people are interested in and keep them in the loop. Be helpful even if it may not directly benefit your market - developing strong media relationships is the key to long-term media coverage, no matter what your promotional budget may be.

### **Low-Budget Promotions and Media**

When promoting your Farmers' Market, the most important thing to remember is to keep on marketing, no matter what your resources are. There are many opportunities to promote your market that cost very little or no money – some suggestions from the BC Association of Farmers' Markets are:

- Make your market distinct by choosing a logo and use it on everything that you produce. Develop a catchy phrase to go along with your logo, but keep it simple.
- Flood your community with fliers or posters at places where likely customers will be found, such as garden centres, health clubs, or local health food stores.
- Develop a Frequent Shopper program. Customer coupons are coming back in popularity, with an 83% increase in coupon-hunting over the Internet in recent years. 9
- Involve the community in what you do by hosting the local library book sale at the market or by inviting the fire department to hold a pancake breakfast or chilli cook-off. A good way to thank your community for their support is with a strawberry shortcake give-away or a pie bake off with local folks to judge.
- Put a float in the local parade or have a presence at other local festivals, for instance, by holding the market at the Fall Fair and having a fresh food basket to raffle off.
- Cross-market with other businesses by inviting one business a week to participate in the market, or by organizing a scavenger hunt with nearby stores. Link to regular advertisers like car lots and realtors to include the Farmers' Market logo in their weekly promotions.
- Don't forget to work with other Farmers' Markets in your region, perhaps to promote the various markets together, or to refer customers and vendors seeking new opportunities.
- Take the opportunity to educate your customers about agriculture by distributing a quiz about local food, or feature a "Farmer of the Month" and host an on-site farm visit for interested Farmers' Market customers.

There are many other ways that you can create a “buzz” about your market, including developing good signage to direct customers to the right site on the right day. Yard signs, banners and posters can be produced for a fairly low price and placed in high traffic areas such as the community centre bulletin board, or in the yards of vendors and supporters around the region.<sup>7</sup>

Highway signage can also direct customers to your Farmers' Market and these are available to all BC Association of Farmers' Markets members through a partnership with Ministry of Highways – see <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/hwysigns.htm> for more details.

Public Relations are about getting the word of your market into the media for free, so having a promotional plan can bring many returns to your market. One starting point is to develop a press kit that contains information about the history of the market, upcoming seasonal products, a list of market products, a special event calendar, and a few vendor profiles. You may also want to supply some good-quality photographs in digital format for the papers to use. Once you send out the kit, follow up with a phone call and begin to develop an on-going conversation with your local press.

In addition to press releases, you can write a monthly column for the newspaper, church newsletter, or community bulletin featuring what is in season at the market or profiling different vendors or farm products each month. Don't forget to use this opportunity to thank your community partners or to announce an upcoming special event or fundraiser for the market.

- Wherever you plan to publish your message, keep the following in mind: Know why customers attend Farmers' Markets and use it in your promotions (freshness, flavour, friendly, local and unique products).
- Always have a clear message that indicates who, what, when, and where. Choose your words carefully by saying “direct from,” “local,” “grown in the region,” or by stating “every Saturday” rather than “Saturday's”.
- Always provide the customer with a way to contact you for more information.<sup>18</sup> Having an email address or website will greatly enhance your exposure and provide an up-to-date location for customers to access the latest market news.

## **Technology Tools for Markets**

There are many advances in technology that can be used as tools to promote your Farmers' Market, including emails, websites, Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter. Consider that Canadians are amongst the most Internet-savvy customers in the world, so making good use of computer communications makes good sense for your market promotion campaign.

Increasingly, email is being used as a communication tool for Farmers' Markets to keep in touch with vendors, partners and customers alike. You can collect email addresses from customers on market surveys or on raffle tickets but be sure to get their permission before you contact them about developments at the market.

Many markets now have their own websites that reflect the distinct look and feel of the Farmers' Market and their region, and these sites inform customers and community members about developments or events at the market. Websites can be simple and contain basic information for the season, or they can be complex, living documents that change weekly or with the seasons. For an example of a very user friendly site, see the Vancouver Farmers' Market site at <http://www.my-market.ca/index.html> , and a good example of how to present participation information all on one page can be seen at <http://www.stalbertchamber.com/farmers-market> .

The BC Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) hosts a website at <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org> , on which you can find a link to keep you informed of new developments on Twitter.

Like the BCAFM, some markets are developing interactive capacities so that their customers can contribute to the on-line excitement by submitting words or pictures for sharing. For instance, the Vancouver Farmers' Market invites readers to submit a photo of themselves and their market bag in a far-away place, which they then publish in their on-line market newsletter.

Other markets are hosting Facebook sites where their supporters can join in, invite their friends along, and generally spread the word about events and products at the market. Check out the Rochester Institute of Technology Farmers' Market site at [Farmers' Market Facebook Group](#) .

## 5. Conclusion

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Farmers' Markets are something old that is new again, and they are catching on all over Canada. In British Columbia, the British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) knows that markets are where more and more customers are coming to access fresh, local, quality products that can safely nourish both the body and the spirit of community members.

The British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets is working hard on behalf of their member markets to assure that Farmers' Markets and their vendors not only survive, but are able to thrive in the current economic climate. Together with their Farmers' Markets Managers, the Association can provide vital support for entrepreneurs and small to medium sized enterprises to incubate and develop their businesses. By managing a BCAFm market, you are helping others who proudly make, bake or grow their own products for sale at their local Farmers' Market.



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## 6. Further Resources

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- The Farmers' Market Coalition has a helpful collection of articles and examples of best practices  
<http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources>

### *Chapter 1: Preparing the Field for Market Management*

- Ten Principles of a Successful Market – Farmers' Market Federation of New York  
[http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf\\_files/marketprinciples.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf_files/marketprinciples.pdf)
- Consumer trends and market research:  
BC Association of Farmers' Markets – Local Food: Changing Opportunities Power Point show [http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/pdf/localfood\\_pag.pdf](http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/pdf/localfood_pag.pdf)  
Farmers Market Canada: <http://www.farmersmarketscanada.ca/>  
School of Environmental Planning – University of Northern BC – Farmers' Market and Local Food Systems research <http://www.unbc.ca/planning>
- Starting a Farmers' Market and Conducting a Feasibility Study:  
Starting a New Farmers' Market, Volume 1, University of California Small Farm Development Centre Market Analysis pp. 37 – 39, Financial Analysis pp. 45 – 46  
[http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers\\_market/management1.pdf](http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/management1.pdf)
- **1.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Market Manager:**  
Managers' Responsibilities, Starting a New Farmers' Market, Volume One, University of California Small Farm Development Centre pp. 71 – 73  
[http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers\\_market/management1.pdf](http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/management1.pdf)
- Financial, Governance and Legal Considerations:  
For examples of various Bookkeeping systems, see Canada-Ontario Business Service Center, 2009  
[http://www.canadabusiness.ca/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=CBSC\\_ON%2Fdisplay&lang=en&cid=1085667968914&c=GuideFactSheet](http://www.canadabusiness.ca/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=CBSC_ON%2Fdisplay&lang=en&cid=1085667968914&c=GuideFactSheet)
- Market By-Laws and Regulations:  
Your Local Farmers' Market Society – Vancouver Farmers' Markets  
[http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook_2009.pdf)
- Market Managers' Checklist: Permits, Licenses, Certificates Required  
Farmers' Market Federation of New York.  
[http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf\\_files/vendorpermitreqmts.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf_files/vendorpermitreqmts.pdf)

### *Chapter 2: Sowing the Seeds for Market Success*

- **2.1 Site Selection and Set Up**  
Starting a New Farmers' Market, Volume One, University of California Small Farm Development Centre [http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers\\_market/management1.pdf](http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/management1.pdf)  
Site Assessment: pp. 41 – 48
- Iowa Farmers' Market Development Manual, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Lands, 2003

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5062527&acct=wdmgeninfo> Site Selection: pp. 10 – 12

- Sample site set up plans  
Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Managers' Resource Manual, pp. 207-1 and 207-2  
<http://www.albertamarkets.com/>
- **2.2 Product Selection**  
Harvesting guides: Vancouver Farmers' Markets <http://www.eatlocal.org/index.html>
- Seattle Farmers' Markets <http://www.seattlefarmersmarkets.org/ripe-n-ready/ripe-n-ready>
- Foodland Ontario <http://www.foodland.gov.on.ca/english/availability.html>
- **2.3 Vendor Selection**  
Why vendors will choose you - The Rodale Institute  
<http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/2006/0206/frmmrkt/king.shtml>
- Vendor Handbook – Vancouver Farmers' Markets  
[http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook_2009.pdf)
- Vendor Application Examples:  
Abbotsford Farm and Country Market -  
<http://www.abbotsfordfarmandcountrymarket.com/vendors/index.htm>
- Calgary Farmers' Market –  
<http://www.calgaryfarmersmarket.ca/Documents/2007-vendor-application.pdf>
- Recruiting and Orienting Vendors:  
Starting a New Farmers' Market, Volume One, University of California Small Farm Development Centre Tips for Vendors pp. 91 – 94  
[http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers\\_market/management1.pdf](http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/management1.pdf)
- Evaluation of Vendors: New York Federation of Farmers' Markets  
<http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf2007/fmvendorevaluation.pdf>
- Farm Verification:  
Farmers' Market Coalition [http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/resource-library/?cat\\_id=25](http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/resource-library/?cat_id=25)
- Product Challenge:  
Vancouver Farmers' Market handbook pg. 12  
[http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook_2009.pdf)
- Market Rules Examples:  
Comox Valley Farmers' Market Rules  
<http://www.comoxvalleyfarmersmarket.com/pdf/Rules.pdf>  
New York Farmers Markets Rules  
[http://nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf\\_files/fmrulereqs.pdf](http://nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf_files/fmrulereqs.pdf)
- Conflict Resolution:  
Tips for Dealing with Conflict: BC Association of Farmers' Markets, Managers' Corner  
<http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/managers.htm>  
Farmers' Market Management, Vol. 2, University of California, Davis.



- Best Practices:  
Tips for vendors – Vancouver FM handbook pg. 13  
[http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eatlocal.org/applications/pdfs/handbook_2009.pdf)
- Cross – Cultural Skill Building:  
Aid to Communication Across Cultural Differences  
Washington State Farmers' Market Manual, pg. 42

### *Chapter 3: Fertilizing the Ground for Growth and Development*

- **3.1 Strategic Planning**  
Washington State Farmers' Market Manual, Washington State Department of Agriculture and Washington State University. pp. 9 – 13  
<http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/docs/FMM1.pdf>
- Rapid Market Assessment, Oregon State University Extension Service.  
[http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf\\_files/toolsforRMA.pdf](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/pdf_files/toolsforRMA.pdf)
- **3.2 Record Keeping**  
Market Evaluation:  
General market review – Farmers' Market Coalition  
<http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/rlib/MarketEval.pdf>
- Washington State Farmers' Market Manual, Washington State Department of Agriculture and Washington State University. Pp. 61 – 68.  
<http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/docs/FMM1.pdf>
- For an easy-to-use evaluation plan, refer to of the *Guide To Growing A Farmers' Market* by University of California, Davis Pp. 20 – 28  
[http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers\\_market/management3.pdf](http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/farmers_market/management3.pdf)
- Risk Management:  
Groc, I. Growers' Gamble. American Planning Association, March 2008.  
<http://www.eatlocal.org/pdf%20files/APAJournalArticle0308.pdf>
- Stephenson, G., Lev, L., Brewer, L. *Why Markets Don't Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers' Markets Close*. Oregon State University, Extension Services. Special Report 1073-E, July 2008. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/sr/sr1073-e.pdf>
- **4.1 Community Relations**  
Pocket Markets:  
Guide to Starting a Pocket Market – Food Roots, Victoria, BC  
[http://www.foodroots.ca/pmtoolkit\\_index.htm](http://www.foodroots.ca/pmtoolkit_index.htm)
- Buskers and Musicians Applications:  
Various application forms for entertainers, see the St. Albert Farmers' Market  
<http://www.stalbertchamber.com/farmers-market>
- Grant and Proposal Writing:  
BC Centre for Non-Profit Development - <http://bccnpgd.ca/node/78>  
BC Recreation and Parks Association -  
<http://www.activecommunities.bc.ca/wp/grants/grant-writing-resources/>
- Writing a Press Release:  
Find simple instructions on <http://www.wikihow.com/index.php?title=Write-a-Press-Release>

## 7. Appendices

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### 7.1 Legal Considerations for Farmers' Market Managers:

1. Market by-laws and regulations: Refer to your specific market governance documents.
2. Municipalities: See local and regional by-laws for standards for business licensing, pedestrian pathways, hours of operations, use of animals on market site, and noise restrictions.
3. Animal welfare: See BCSPCA: <http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/farm/default.asp>  
 Certifies farms; investigates cruelty complaints; advocates and educates public.  
 Canadian Food Inspection Agency Health of Animals Act  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/reg/rege.shtml>  
 Import and Export Regulations; Hatchery and Avian Flu; Honeybee Prohibition.
4. Plant sales: Canadian Food Inspection Agency *Plant Protection Act*  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/reg/rege.shtml>  
 Plant Breeders Rights; Pest Compensation; Seeds Act; Weed Orders.
5. Ministry of Health Services – *Food Protection Programs*  
 New BC Meat Inspection Regulations  
<http://www.bccdc.org/content.php?item=16>  
 Fish and Shellfish, Food, Meat and Milk Programs.  
 FoodSafe: <http://www.foodsafe.ca/>  
 Local Health Authority or the BC Association of Farmers' Markets for MARKETSAFE manual and training  
 New Health Regulations for BC Farm Market vendors: <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org>  
*Guideline for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets* (pdf) - posted March 2007
6. Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) -  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/reg/rege.shtml>  
 CFIA - *Canadian Agricultural Products Acts* – Dairy, Eggs, Fruit and Vegetables, Honey, Organic, Maple Products; Federal Meat Inspection regulations; Fish Inspection Act; Consumer Packaging and Labeling Act  
 Food Recall listing <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/recarapp/recaltoce.shtml>
7. Ministry of Environment: Wildlife Sundry Permits  
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/applications/process/wildlife.html>  
 Permits for handling wildlife parts such as deer antlers, pelts, skeletal parts.
8. Fire safety and emergency route paths: Consult with your local fire marshal.
9. Weights and Measures: [http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/W-6/bo-ga:s\\_8/en#anchorbo-ga:s\\_8](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/W-6/bo-ga:s_8/en#anchorbo-ga:s_8)  
 Regulates the use of scales and their inspection.
10. Provincial Sales Tax:  
[http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/documents\\_library/brochures/SmallBusinessGuide.pdf](http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/documents_library/brochures/SmallBusinessGuide.pdf)  
 Determine who is required to charge sales tax, who is exempt.

11. On Farm Processing: A Handbook for Producers  
<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/foodsafety/factsheets/index.htm>
12. Contact the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Food Safety and Plant Health Branch  
<http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/fsq/> Food safety and quality; Livestock and Bee Health; Pest Management and Plant Health.
13. Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia: Safety Protection for all workers in BC; Workplace Hazard Identification and signage  
<http://www.worksafebc.com/insurance>

## ***7.2 Themed Events for Fun, Fundraising, and Education***

### **Low Budget**

Organize a Tomato, Zucchini, Pumpkin, Spring Opening, or Harvest Festival  
Arrange for a Gardening or Cooking book and Magazine Swap  
Demonstrate Weaving or Spinning, Goat milking, or Butter Churning  
Host an Aboriginal Traditional Foods demonstration  
Set out a Scarecrow Building Challenge  
Enter a Farmer's Market Float in the Parade or host a Pet Parade at the market  
Construct a "Head through the Hole" Photo Board – Farm themed  
Kids Market – offer small bags of kid-friendly items  
Face Painting – could be done by a busker  
Make a Vienna Vegetable Orchestra - [www.gemueseorchester.org](http://www.gemueseorchester.org)  
Create a Cherry Spitting Contest  
Host Farm Olympics – egg in spoon race, hay bale toss, Goose Patty Bingo  
Have Storytellers, Historians, Librarians read Farm-related books  
Provide supplies for kids to draw pictures of Agriculture  
Have a puzzle table and plenty of chairs  
Arrange for Horse wagon or sleigh rides  
Provide Soap Box or Speakers Corner – host poetry events etc.  
Hand out free recipes from Health Units, Bernardin Canning Supplies, etc.  
Invite the Antique Machinery Club, Car Collectors etc. to organize a display  
Host Gardening Festival to encourage gardening - Kids plant seeds to take home  
Print Market Dollars or Gift Certificates for sale  
Call for a Chili Cook Off challenge amongst local restaurants or caterers  
Establish a Hat Day or Pig Day – vendors wear pig noses and tails

**Mid-Range Budget**

Provide give-aways such as balloons, market pins, paper hats etc.

Create a Mascot – your own, the sports teams', or A & W Root Bear etc.

Produce cookbook for market – make one just for kids

Build a Giant Chess set and board

Sponsor Theatre or puppet shows

Invite downtown local business owners for “After Five” – showcase sample products

Host “Meet Your Maker” event for vendors and customers to network and “speed date”

Collaborate with Chefs from local restaurants to do cooking demonstrations

Co-host Pancake breakfast with other community organization

Initiate a Plaster the Politician event with Whipped Crème pies

Arrange an Easter Egg, Jelly Bean, or Scavenger Hunt at the Market

**Larger Budget**

Organize a “Feast of the Fields” etc. and provide wine and food samplings for an entrance fee

Host the market at a feature farm each year – organize a festival on the farm

Arrange a Breakfast Briefing to update local politicians, sponsors, median, or key supporters

*Seven Event Planning Tips*

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Seven-Event-Management-Tips-for-Fundraisers&id=305800>

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<http://www.farmersmarketscanada.ca/index.cfm>
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