



If you're reading this fact sheet, it is assumed that it has already been determined that a Farmers Market is a good match for your community. (For more information, view the Fact Sheet "Farmers Markets: Market Research")

The following information will help you determine how to set up your Farmers Market in order for it to be a success.

Also check out the Fact Sheet "Farmers Markets: Legal Considerations", before starting your market.

Market Management Organization

How market management is organized determines how efficient a market is going to be. In Alaska, how market management is organized varies greatly.

As markets grow, it is beneficial to change how market management is organized in order to keep the market running efficiently. There are four broad management categories the majority of Farmers Markets fall under:

1. No organization among producers; farmers simply show up.
2. An arrangement with the owner of a private business. In this instance, producers are tenants and the owner makes all the rules.
3. Unofficial agreement among producers. The market is organized informally, but collects fees and uses guidelines. Producers are members of an "association" that is not legally organized or incorporated.
4. Official agreement among producers. This type of organization is a legal entity having secure legal and tax status.

In general, markets start in category one or two and as they grow, move to category three or four. For more information on management organization, go to: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FMM/013APPJMarketSizeMgmtOrganization.pdf>

Time and Season

Conducting community surveys is one way to select the best days, times, and season(s) to operate a farmers market because the community tells you when they are willing/able to visit your market. If you performed a pre-market survey, you may already have this information.

In general, Alaskan farmer's markets begin operation late in the spring (May-June) and continue until after harvest in the fall (September-October), when there is fresh produce available.

It is important, however, to consider days of the week and operation times carefully, and to keep those days and times as consistent as possible. Make sure to give consideration to when people in the community are most available to attend the market, and when vendors are available to sell their products.

Feel free to change opening times and/or days to reflect the habits of the customers. For example, if the market opens at 9am, and no customers show up until after 10am, it may be useful to open an hour later and close an hour later. Or if your market is only open on Fridays, but a cruise ship docks on Thursdays, you may want to add Thursday to the schedule to be open for two days, or consider Thursdays as your only day of operation.

Market Rules

Establishment of market rules and regulations is strongly encouraged prior to recruiting market vendors. It is important to establish at least minimal guidelines to make sure everyone knows what the rules are and to avoid misunderstandings of what is expected of each vendor.

Some items to consider adding to your market rules include:

1. Market Organization
2. Market fees
3. Market operation times



4. Method of vendor stall assignment
5. Market Insurance Policy
(Will vendors need individual insurance?)
6. Vendor eligibility
(Who can be a vendor at your market)
7. Set-up and break-down times for the market
8. Pet Policy
(Can vendors bring their pets to the market)
9. Penalties for breaking certain market rules
10. How a vendor contract can be terminated from the market

Although some larger markets have succeeded in establishing expansive and strict rules, vendors in general are likely to accept rules they understand and agree with. For an Alaskan example of Farmers Market Rules, go to: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FMM/015APPLAnchMktFestivalVendorHandbook.pdf>

Also, it is wise to consider creating contracts that participating vendors must agree to and sign. This contract would outline both the market rules and what is expected of the vendor. It can be very valuable in resolving disputes and assist with a contract termination for the vendor if necessary. The Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG) has put together, "Understanding Farmers' Market Rules", which includes information on dispute resolution and penalties, and on contract termination. This document can be found at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FMM/016APPMUnderstandingFMRules.pdf>

Market Location

It is important to choose the market's location very carefully. Take the time to look into the following considerations for all the potential locations of your market.

Cost

Choosing your site might depend on what is available to you and how much it will cost to use it. Can you find a

private landowner that will allow you to use their property or will you have to pay for a permit for public property?

Accessibility

Look for a site in a central location with plenty of through traffic, and that's easy to get to by all modes of transportation. Try to find a place by a well-known landmark or intersection or near offices or other businesses.

Pay attention to whether the site is American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible or not. (Ex. ramps available.)

Space

You want to find a location that can accommodate the space needs for the number of vendors you will have and/or hope to grow to in the future, while leaving space for shoppers to easily circulate through the market and stop and socialize with one another. Here is how Carla Jenkins of Cedar Park Farmers Market calculates her spacing needs: "I allow width for farmers' trucks (18') + their canopy (10') + an aisle (15') + canopy (10') + another aisle (15') + canopy (10') + truck (18'). All of that is my width, times the number of 10' booths for my length to figure the square footage needed."

Parking

If you expect many of your customers to be driving to the market, make sure there is enough parking nearby. Remember to consider paid parking vs free parking for your customers.

Utilities

A site with access to electricity, water, public restrooms, and a place for people to wash their hands will all be things to consider when choosing a site.

Essentials

Make sure the site has access to sufficient restroom facilities for both the vendors and the customers.



Place trash receptacles at varying locations throughout the market. Make sure a system is in place so that the trash receptacles are never overflowing during the market.

Ground Cover

Try to find a site with a level surface on asphalt with minimum standing water and pot holes. That will make it easier for vendors to drive their trucks without risking damage, and provide a safe shopping experience for customers.

Long - Term Availability

Opening a market in one place only to move the next season when the site owner sells or redevelops the property is a frustrating, but not uncommon, experience for farmer's markets. You can avoid this by requesting a long - term lease.

Federal Buildings

When reviewing potential sites, consider whether there are any federal buildings in your community that could be good locations for a market based on the criteria above. If there are, check out the USDA's resource for Opening a Farmers Market on Federal Property at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5079490>.

Vendor Arrangement

Arranging a market is an art and there are some general guidelines for moderating flow of business and ease of movement.

Here are some quick tips for vendor arrangement:

- Studies show that having a designated entrance and exit generates a traffic flow that is beneficial for vendors and for the market. A designated entrance and exit helps direct traffic and encourages customers to view each vendor. When markets conduct customer counts, it allows for more accurate counts. Coordinating traffic flow has proven beneficial

to many outside markets, although it is not widely practiced in Alaska.

- Ensure that vendors have space to park their vehicles nearby, for replenishing product.
- Consider strategically placing your *anchor vendors throughout the market, so customers browse the entire market. You can identify similar strategies at work in grocery stores, where milk is strategically placed at the back of the store, so customers have to walk by other items to get the milk.
- If you have anchor vendors or popular vendors where long lines tend to form, place less popular booths on either side so lines don't intermingle. An added benefit is that while waiting in line, customers can peruse what the other vendors are selling.
- Another option is to let the vendors pick their space. How vendors select their space can be done in a variety of ways. Vendors can choose their space based on:
 - A "first come, first serve" policy, where whoever shows up at the market first that market day gets first choice of their space.
 - A preferential policy, where vendors who have sold at your market in the past and were a reliable vendor get first pick for their space and will keep that space for the entire season.
 - A monetary policy, where vendors can pay extra in order to have first pick of their space and keep that space for the entire season.

Overall, what we encourage most is ensuring that your market is arranged so that it has a smooth and unrestricted flow.

*Anchor Vendor: A vendor that will be at every market with the same core products. These vendors are usually the reason people visit a market, because they know those vendors will be there.



Advertising

Advertising is a critical component to a successful market. Potential customers need to know you exist before they can decide to visit your market.

Advertising methods include road signs, signs on local shop windows, rack cards or flyers in local tourist shops or grocery stores, ads in the local newspapers, e-newsletters, internet, social media (Ex. Facebook), and television ads. Be proactive about getting the word out and building a strong customer base for the market. Encourage participating vendors to help advertise the market, after all, everyone benefits.

If you create any social media site, make sure to maintain the site. Customers want to hear how the market is doing and feel like they are an essential part of the market (Which they are).

Once the market is established, consider creating a market newsletter to inform your customers of special events, special discounts and fun market news. Make your customers feel like family.

When creating a budget for the market, consider adding a section for advertising. This money would allow you to purchase ad space in local newspapers, print rack cards, create signs, and so much more. These could be invaluable tools to getting new clients.

Road Signage on Market Day

Signage is one of the most important methods of advertising a market, and often draws in the largest number of people (compared to other types of advertisement). Both the sign and the placement of the sign are very important. Signs can range from a simple poster attached to a stand to permanent signs made of wood or metal.

No matter what type of sign it is, make sure your sign and

its placement follow state and local laws. For a summary of the state road sign laws, view the Fact Sheet "Farmers Markets: Legal Considerations".

Special Events

Holding special events is an excellent way to bring additional customers into the market. Some possible events include: musical events, cooking demonstrations, gardening classes, arts and crafts, children's day games, making veggie critters, and times when select vendors offer specials on products (like buy one get one free). Some special events also raise money for local charities and organizations. Special events ultimately build a sense of community and draw in additional customers, particularly new customers.

Consider creating an annual event that your market does every year. Annual events get the community excited and keep customers coming back to the market every year.

For special events at your market, contact local newspapers, radio stations and/or television stations to try and get them to do a feature story or article about the event. This type of media attention gets you positive press and potentially new customers.

Community Buy-In and Contribution

Wherever markets are located, it is important that they benefit the community. When local businesses benefit from the market traffic, it creates a symbiotic relationship. Additionally if managers can develop community buy-in, there may be community members who will donate financially, or be a sponsor of the market, by providing space for vendors to setup their booths.

Market managers may consider drawing in community members by holding events at the market. This is an excellent way to connect with consumers. Some managers view it as developing symbiotic relationships, where local



businesses can benefit from the market and the market benefits from consumers the local businesses are drawing in. If and when promotions occur at the market or a local business, both benefit. Historically these business relationships have been successful and beneficial. You may consider credit unions and banks in the vicinity of your market, because they are required to donate to community activities and have proven to be valuable sponsors in Alaska.

Market Sponsors

So far, there are very few Farmers Markets in Alaska who utilize having market sponsors. Sponsors might offer rent-free space for markets, fund market insurance, host events, or offer financial or other donations of items that are needed for the market. An additional benefit to sponsors is increased foot traffic, and/or increased advertising for their business.

Ask around the community to see who might be interested in sponsoring your market. Give local businesses incentives to sponsor your market by giving them a discount at the market or having free advertising for their business throughout the market.

Pets

Allowing or not allowing pets at a Farmers Market is a controversial issue. Before your market opens, it needs to decide if pets are or are not allowed in the market. Having an upfront policy can attract potential clients to your market and decrease potential arguments with clients and vendors.

If the market does allow pets, consider providing a “pet” area at the entrance to the market where customers can tie up their dogs. These areas generally consist of short

leashes tied to posts where the dogs cannot come in contact with each other. Water is provided for the animals. Usually someone is designated to watch the pet area to make sure the dogs are friendly and keep everyone honest and safe.

If you decide to allow pets into the market, consider rules that will keep everyone safe. For example: Dogs are not allowed inside the booths. Dogs can get scared in confined spaces and act in ways they don’t normally. Most owners are aware of their dog’s limits, but it only takes one dog bite for a client to sue the market.

Make sure it is clear to customers whether pets are or are not allowed as they enter your market. This will help decrease confusion and potential confrontations.

Service animals must be allowed in the market according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The market staff can inquire whether the animal is a service animal and what tasks the animal is specially trained to do. The market staff may NOT inquire about the individual’s disabilities and may not require the service animal to wear identification as a service animal.

According to ADA, service animals are any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Animals that provide companionship or emotional support are not recognized as service animals.

For more information on service animals, visit: <https://adata.org/factsheet/service-animals>

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

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