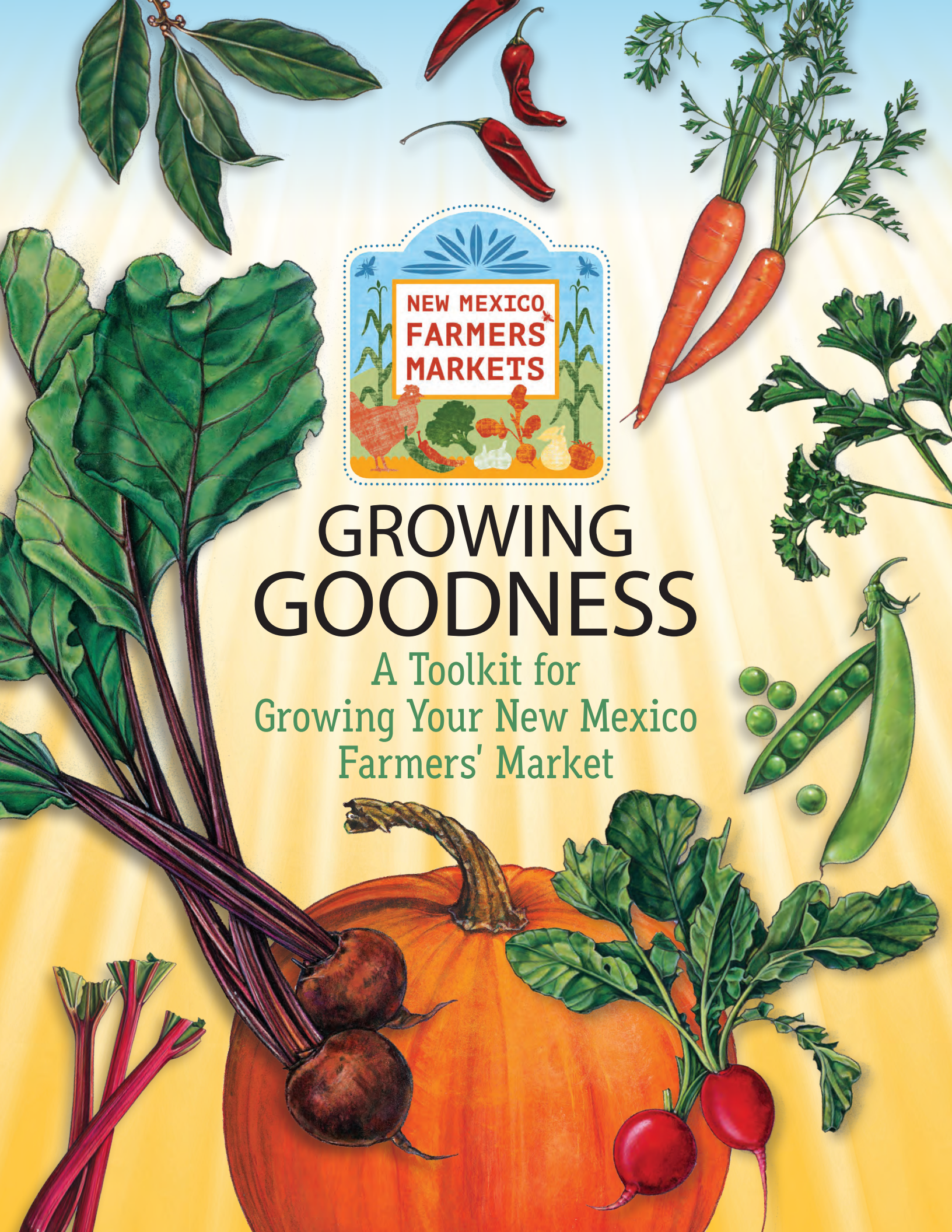




GROWING GOODNESS

A Toolkit for
Growing Your New Mexico
Farmers' Market





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1 Introduction and Overview

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Understand the history and position of farmers' markets in the food system
- > Understand the steps involved in strategic marketing of your farmers' market

Whether you are a manager or member of the board of directors for a farmers' market, and whether your market is new or established, if development and growth are among your goals for your market, this resource guide is for you. The purpose of this toolkit is to help you grow your farmers' market so that it fulfills its potential to benefit farmers/vendors, customers, and your community.

Farmers' markets grow and develop best under the leadership of managers and boards who are aware of the competitive environment and able to use it to the market's advantage. That means reviewing the market's mission and assessing its effectiveness, gauging how well the market is meeting the needs of its target clientele, and assessing its position relative to competitors such as supermarkets. It also means using the results of such assessment to improve the market's revenues by encouraging vendors to add products that appeal to existing customers so that they may make more purchases at the market or by appealing to a larger number of customers or both.

FARMERS' MARKETS AND COMMUNITIES

Trading and food markets are probably as old as agriculture itself, likely developing in ancient Mesopotamian and Nile Valley civilizations. From the colonial era to the present, marketplaces have been an integral part of the social life and sense of community of many towns and cities in the United States, as well as a source of fresh food. Since the advent of the industrial age, farmers' markets have experienced varying levels of popularity. Their role as a source of fresh produce declined through much of the twentieth century as suburbs and supermarkets gained in popularity, but they have recently seen a resurgence of interest and loyalty among consumers committed to supporting local farmers and interested in buying the freshest, highest-quality produce available.

Consumer awareness of the benefits of farmers' markets stems in large part from the efforts of small-scale farmers and their advocates to establish channels through which farmers can sell their produce directly to local consumers. Such efforts have been so effective that farmers' markets have come to be seen by city planners and economic developers as an instrument of revitalization, drawing consumers into neighborhoods.

For many community activists, farmers' markets are of greatest benefit as a source of affordable nutritious fruits and vegetables for neighborhoods and populations with restricted access to supermarkets. For a broad view of the varied roles of



farmers' markets, consider three of the farmers' markets in New Mexico: The Santa Fe Railyard Farmers' Market, The Santa Fe Southside Farmers' Market, and the Albuquerque Presbyterian Growers' Market.

The Santa Fe Railyard Farmers' Market is the most upscale of the state's markets. While it is not specifically targeted to only upper-middleclass residents and tourists visiting the city, product pricing is often set with Whole Foods as the neighborhood standard. Many of its growers are organic farmers so the product quality and prices are generally higher than most other competitors in the area. In addition to produce, it offers specialty products such as jams, breads, pastries, lamb, cheese, chicken, and other gourmet items. Displays are well designed and colorful. Peak season brings more than 100 vendors to the market on Saturdays. Operating year round, it is also frequented by area chefs. While programs such as SNAP and WIC are designed to serve lower-income area residents, and educational outreach to area school children is regularly scheduled, this market occupies a special place in the minds and shopping experiences of local consumers. People go to purchase high-quality products and to enjoy the unique experience and ambience of the marketplace.

The Santa Fe Southside Farmers' Market takes place on the opposite side of town from the downtown market, and more closely reflects the Hispanic community that populates the surrounding neighborhoods. While the downtown market may host 40 vendors on a Tuesday morning during peak season,

the Southside market may have only 12 vendors later that same afternoon. Prices look different at the Southside market as well, even though most of the vendors have just been selling the same produce for a higher price at the downtown market in the morning. At the Southside market, WIC and Senior checks are often the most prominent form of currency. Nearly all of the vendors and customers speak Spanish, and you have the feeling that the consumers that frequent this marketplace do so to buy needed produce for the week and then head home. The percentage of young moms, children, and elderly people at this market is higher than at the downtown market. It takes place in the local mall parking lot and esthetically, it is not as attractive as the downtown Railyard market.

The Albuquerque Presbyterian Growers' Market caters to a variety of different market segments. This market is an offshoot of a predecessor that had been popular for decades in a low-to-moderate income section of the city. When that market was forced to relocate due to rent issues, it split its Tuesday and Saturday markets into two different locations. The Tuesday market began a partnership with a local hospital and re-located on its property, while the Saturday market moved to a separate retail-intensive location. The Tuesday Presbyterian market caters to low and middle-income customers, quality is moderate to very good and products are moderately priced. Many of its customers are WIC moms and employees of the hospital. It receives help promoting the market from the hospital who pays for signage, puts notices





in their employee newsletters, and helps with the funding of several nutrition incentive programs targeted at underserved populations.

Each of these markets has a different mission and customer base, and each occupies a different position in the market. To grow, each would have to employ different strategies. No matter what strategies are used to grow a market, though, the process follows a common set of steps that are important to know.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC MARKETING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Farmers' markets, whatever their mission and position at any point in time, exist within a larger neighborhood, community, and set of social and economic conditions, all of which change constantly. Strategic marketing, done well, allows the market to maintain and even increase its revenue consistent with the market's vision and mission. If managers and boards do not employ strategic marketing, they may find their market floundering as a result of failing to anticipate or keep pace with changes in its environment.

Today's farmers' markets exist in a world of great competition—supermarkets, big box stores, and specialty food retailers all have large budgets for marketing, advertising, and promotion, and are constantly adapting to gain loyalty and ever larger shares of consumer income.

When consumers do not have to wait until summer for fresh raspberries, farmers who grow raspberries to sell at a farmers' market are at a disadvantage unless they can carve out a market position that preserves their place in customers' hearts—and budgets.

STEPS INVOLVED IN STRATEGIC MARKETING AND GROWTH

Strategic marketing involves some common procedures. To create and implement an effective marketing plan, the manager and board of directors will need to:

- Review and, if necessary, revise the market's vision and mission
- Gauge the extent to which the market is fulfilling its mission by collecting data from vendors, customers, and other stakeholders
- Assess the competition by collecting and analyzing data from competitors
- Determine goals and priorities to better achieve the market's mission and increase revenue
- Develop a set of strategies such as promotions, special events, and product mix to meet the market's goals and priorities
- Implement the established strategies
- Monitor, evaluate, and make necessary changes

When viewed as a list, this looks like a straightforward process with a clear beginning and end; in fact, it should be an ongoing, continuous quality-improvement process that becomes a way of doing business and in which each cycle leads to further improvement. While the manager has primary responsibility for implementing plans for strategic marketing and growth, the board of directors should take an active leadership role in working with the manager to create a strategic marketing plan.

CONCLUSION

This guide is designed to help managers and boards work through a sequential process of strategic marketing. Each section deals with a component of strategic marketing—by working through this toolkit section by section, farmers' market management will learn to create and implement a strategic marketing plan.

This toolkit is not intended as a one-time exercise. The effectiveness and success of managers, vendors, and farmers' markets depends on continuous development and application of research, knowledge, and skill. The skills you develop as you work through this guide should be honed and built through regular practice researching market trends, establishing priorities, setting goals, and choosing, implementing, and evaluating strategies to improve your market.



2 Reviewing Your Market's Vision and Mission

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Review, evaluate, and, if necessary, revise your market's vision and mission statements
- > Understand the role of the vision and mission in strategic marketing efforts
- > Use your market's vision and mission to evaluate your market's performance and craft a plan with a strong purpose and likelihood of success

Your farmers' market probably has vision and mission statements. They may be used to actively guide decision-making regarding the market's direction or they may be filed somewhere and practically forgotten. When undertaking a strategic marketing effort, it is a good idea to review and perhaps revise the vision and mission statements so that they can be used to guide your efforts. If you do not know why your market is in business, what niche it should fill, and whom it exists to serve, you run the risk of trying to be all things to all people and may be pulled in so many directions that you cannot be effective at anything in particular.

THE VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement is a broad statement of the place of the market in the community. The founders of your market probably had a mental picture of the farmers' market they wanted and the role it would play in the community or a clear idea of the problem to be solved with the addition of a farmers' market.

That vision may or may not be relevant today. As manager, you probably have your own vision for the market. Some of the common elements of a farmers' market that can reflect the vision of its founders and management are listed here along with space to draft your own vision statement. You can use these elements to articulate your vision for the farmers' market, draft your vision statement, and compare it with the existing one. Reviewing and revising the vision statement should entail dialogue among the board of directors, the market manager, and stakeholders so that the vision defined by it has broad support.

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENT

The XYZ-NM Farmers' Market is devoted to keeping local agriculture in NNMM County thriving and creating healthy, vibrant communities for all residents.



Which of the following attributes and goals are true for your market's vision statement?

- Affordable produce
- Accessible by public transportation
- Lots of variety
- Meats, fish, dairy, eggs, honey, etc.
- Neighborhood-based
- Downtown
- Convenient
- Community gathering place
- Cultural forum
- Information dissemination
- Free speech
- Gourmet products
- Individuals/families as customers
- Restaurants as customers or vendors
- Entertainment
- Family friendly
- Arts and crafts products
- Value-added products
- Education
- Product demonstrations
- Fundraising
- Agricultural heritage
- Sustainable agriculture

WRITE YOUR MARKET VISION STATEMENT:



THE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement is a concise, fairly concrete, specific statement of how the market organization intends to realize its vision. Clarifying and synthesizing the group's purpose and beliefs in a written statement makes it easier to present the concept to growers, the community, and others and to use it to guide decision-making.

The mission statement should:

- Identify the market's key goals; and
- Provide philosophical direction for developing the market's objectives

A clearly defined mission statement will give the market a starting point for long-range planning and for major decision-making. The organizational mission statement should be agreed upon and supported by everyone on the board.

If the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement seems confusing, think of it this way: The vision expresses an organization's optimal goal and reason for existence, while a mission statement provides an overview of the group's plans to realize that vision by identifying the service areas, target audience, and values and goals of the organization. The following chart came from www.diffen.com.

	VISION STATEMENT	MISSION STATEMENT
About	A Vision statement outlines WHERE you want to be. Communicates both the purpose and values of your business.	A Mission statement talks about HOW you will get to where you want to be. Defines the purpose and primary objectives related to your customer needs and team values.
Answer	It answers the question, "Where do we aim to be?"	It answers the question, "What do we do? What makes us different?"
Time	A vision statement talks about your future.	A mission statement talks about the present leading to its future.
Function	It lists where you see yourself some years from now. It inspires you to give your best. It shapes your understanding of why you are working here.	It lists the broad goals for which the organization is formed. Its prime function is internal; to define the key measure or measures of the organization's success.
Change	As your organization evolves, you might feel tempted to change your vision. However, mission or vision statements explain your organization's foundation, so change should be kept to a minimum.	Your mission statement may change, but it should still tie back to your core values, customer needs and vision.
Developing a Statement	Where do we want to be going forward? When do we want to reach that stage? How do we want to do it?	What do we do today? For whom do we do it? What is the benefit? In other words, Why we do what we do? What, For Whom and Why?
Features of an Effective Statement	Clarity and lack of ambiguity: Describing a bright future (hope); Memorable and engaging expression; realistic aspirations, achievable; alignment with organizational values and culture.	Purpose and values of the organization: Who are the organization's primary "clients" (stakeholders)? What are the responsibilities of the organization towards the clients?

Source: www.diffen.com

If there is no mission statement for your market, here is a process to create one:

STEP 1. To define your market's mission and develop a mission statement, first look at the vision statement. The mission statement should grow from and be consistent with the vision statement. Write the vision statement on a large piece of paper or a whiteboard with plenty of room around it for ideas about the mission.

STEP 2. With the vision statement on a large piece of paper or whiteboard, start brainstorming actions that would be most effective in achieving the vision. Brainstorming means simply getting ideas on paper without judgment, censorship, or evaluation yet.

STEP 3. When the ideas are exhausted, it is time to start evaluating them. Which ideas are not actions or cannot be turned into actions? Set them aside (they may be great ideas, just not mission statement material). Which would be the most effective action (big steps versus little steps—the mission involves giant steps)?

STEP 4. Write the mission statement. Get feedback from all members of the board of directors and, if possible, from other stakeholders. Evaluate, revise, and get more feedback until members of the board are satisfied with the mission statement for the market.

SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT

The XYZ-NM's mission is to establish and operate a community-supported farmers' market that provides a viable economic outlet for NM farmers and food producers, provides access to affordable farm fresh products for our region, and educates the public about local food and sustainable agriculture.

CREATE YOUR MISSION STATEMENT:

HOW DO THE VISION AND MISSION GUIDE STRATEGIC MARKETING?

Strategic marketing involves increasing revenue consistent with the market's vision and mission. In some cases, it might be easy to increase revenue if the board of directors and manager ignore the market's vision and mission and much harder to accomplish while remaining true to those guiding statements. This is especially true if the vision and mission involve activities that generally are not highly profitable, such as providing access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables for a low-income neighborhood or population.

So it may be tempting to either depart from the mission or expect low revenue. Once you have reviewed the vision and mission statements and are certain they still reflect the purpose, direction, and goals of the market, the next steps are to:

- List the ways the market can fulfill its mission and indicators by which to gauge whether and to what extent it is doing so.
- Gauge the extent to which the market is fulfilling its mission by collecting data from vendors, customers, and other stakeholders.
- Assess the competition by collecting and analyzing data from competitors.

LISTING INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Depending on the market's mission, individual aspects of the market will vary in importance. For example, if the market's mission is to provide access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, then price is a primary consideration. If, however, the mission of the market is to promote organic farming by providing direct-marketing opportunities for organic farmers, price is a much less important consideration and access to the market by organic growers becomes more important.

Use your market's mission to generate a list of indicators that can be used to assess whether the market is fulfilling that mission. These are things you will look for and ask about as you gather information to assess your market's performance.

See the example on the following page to help you create your own table with your market's mission and indicators.

CONCLUSION

When you gauge the extent to which the market is fulfilling its mission, any gap between the market's mission and its current performance is an opportunity to employ strategic marketing activities to bridge that gap. The next section will familiarize you with ways to collect data so that you can assess the extent to which your market is fulfilling its vision and mission.

SAMPLE – Developing Indicators for Your Market	EXAMPLE HERE
Write your market’s mission statement.	To provide high-quality, affordable produce to low- and middle-income residents of Anywhere, NM.
The underlined parts of the mission statement can be used to develop indicators of how well the market is achieving its mission. If providing “high quality” produce is one part of the market’s mission, then you need to list factors that describe quality.	To provide <u>high-quality, affordable</u> produce to <u>low- and middle-income residents</u> of Anywhere, NM.
Part 1: Indicator	High Quality (see Section 11)
What does success look like?	What does “high quality” look like? <input type="checkbox"/> Freshness <input type="checkbox"/> Flavor <input type="checkbox"/> Texture <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance <input type="checkbox"/> Size <input type="checkbox"/> Maturity/Ripeness
Part 2: Indicator	Affordability (see Section 12)
What does success look like?	What does affordability look like? <input type="checkbox"/> Prices lower than or equal to supermarket <input type="checkbox"/> Prices lower than or equal to club store <input type="checkbox"/> Prices lower than convenience store <input type="checkbox"/> Prices lower than or equal to other competitors <input type="checkbox"/> Prices lower than or equal to customers’ expectations
Part 3: Indicator	Serve low- and middle-income residents of Anywhere, NM
What does success look like?	What does serving these residents look like? <input type="checkbox"/> What level of service is acceptable? <input type="checkbox"/> % of low- and middle-income residents who shop at our farmers’ market <input type="checkbox"/> % of shoppers at our market who are low- or middle-income <input type="checkbox"/> % of shoppers at our market who live in Anyplace, NM



Developing Indicators for YOUR Market	WRITE HERE
<p>Use the preceding example as a model for creating indicators for your market. First, write your market's mission statement.</p> <hr/>	
<p>Next, use a highlighter, numbers, or symbols to break the mission into its parts and then list measurable, observable factors that make up each part of the mission that you can use to evaluate how well your market is achieving that mission. We will use this worksheet as the basis for the next steps in the evaluation and strategic marketing process.</p>	
<p>Part 1: Indicator</p>	
<p>What does success look like?</p>	
<p>Part 2: Indicator</p>	
<p>What does success look like?</p>	
<p>Part 3: Indicator</p>	
<p>What does success look like?</p>	

3 Collecting and Interpreting Data

Research Tools and Methods for Market Performance Assessment

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Be familiar with a variety of data collection methods and their uses
- > Begin choosing the data collection methods to use in assessing your market's performance

To grow your market, you need to assess its current performance, strengths, and weaknesses. Assessment involves research—collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. There are a number of research methods and tools that can be used to collect data on the performance of your farmers' market.

The type of information you want will affect data sources you use. Some very useful market analysis can come strictly from a market walk-thru, anecdotal evidence, and dot surveys, for example. Don't be put off by the concept of assessing your market—determining where your market is now is a key step in deciding where you want to go and how to get there.

AN OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

There are a number of different methods of collecting the data you need to assess your market's performance, evaluate your strengths, weaknesses and position relative to your competitors, and create a strategic marketing plan. This section provides a brief overview of those data collection methods and their appropriate use.

MARKET DATA

This is information you already collect annually for the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association. It includes customer counts, market sales (food and non-food), the number of vendor days, average number of vendors, etc. In addition to being useful to the NMFMA, this data provides a historical record for market management to view the ups and downs of market factors over time.

ANECDOTAL DATA

Anecdotes are stories. Anecdotal data simply means the information you get from the stories you hear about the market from day to day—vendors' stories about outrageous complaints or happy customers, customers' stories about their favorite market experience when you run into them at the library or a meeting, stories you tell your family at the dinner table. Anecdotal data is a good starting point for more formal research. From interacting with customers, the manager, staff, and vendors probably have a fairly good idea of basic issues and questions to be asked. The manager should also have a picture of the issues that concern the market's vendors and possibly of issues regarding the market that may con-



cern area business owners and neighbors. Such data, while not gathered or interpreted systematically, can point to the questions that should be the focus of more formal efforts to evaluate market performance.

CUSTOMER AND VENDOR FEEDBACK

If the market has a suggestion box or a process for handling written complaints, the records of these also can be useful for evaluating themes and trends in the strengths and weaknesses of the market. Such themes and trends can be a basis for more formal research and analysis.

SURVEYS

Surveys are probably the most common method of formal research. Surveys are usually written documents, though they may be administered verbally (see Dot Surveys at right). Surveys ask a common set of questions of everyone who responds, typically offering multiple choice answers or rating scales and sometimes allowing respondents to add information or comments.

A major advantage of surveys is that they standardize the collection of information so that it is uniform and interpretation can be relatively straightforward. Another advantage is that administration by mail, the internet, or on paper at the market itself is often less labor intensive than any other method of collecting information.

Some disadvantages of surveys are that the success of the survey depends in large part on the focus of the questions and the quality of the survey's design. For example, a survey may

ask respondents to rate their satisfaction with the market's schedule. If respondents indicate they are not satisfied with the schedule and there is no survey question about what they find unsatisfactory or about what schedule would be more satisfactory, the survey's information is not very helpful.

Some common pitfalls in designing surveys are to make them too short to be fully informative, too long for respondents to finish, too general to elicit information that is useful in improving the market, or too specific to allow respondents to give feedback about concerns that are important to them but not represented in the survey. Finding a balance between too short and too long and too general and too specific can be very difficult! It helps to have a clear idea of what you want to learn from a survey and who you want to respond.

DOT SURVEYS

A simple way to query the market's customers is to survey them at market with several large easels and big pads of paper that each contain a pertinent question written out. By giving people who pass by a sticky dot (like those found at an office supply store) to place in one of the pre-written answer categories, you create a quick survey from which is easy to tabulate results. If for example, you want to know what zip codes people are coming from, write in many of the neighborhood zip codes as choices, and leave one column for people to write in any you may not have considered (tourists, etc.) This method can also be used to get a quick and graphic picture of customer satisfaction with many factors of market performance, including quality, variety, and pricing.



If you want to collect information from people who may not be market customers, dot surveys could also be conducted at other community locations such as a grocery store (with the store's permission), a park, an office park, etc. This might be particularly useful if you want to find out what might be keeping potential customers away from your market—location, market schedule, parking, price, etc.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews can be valuable sources of in-depth information about the preferences and evaluations of respondents. Interviews can range from the very formal, following a strict protocol with the same questions asked of every respondent, to very informal, with the interviewer following the respondent's comments and allowing information to emerge based on those comments. Most interviews will fall somewhere in the middle with a common set of questions and leeway to follow up on interesting comments. The primary advantage of the interview as a data collection tool is the chance to get more in-depth information than is possible in a survey.

However, interviews also have a number of disadvantages. First, they are far more labor intensive to conduct and interpret than surveys. Someone must ask the interview questions of each individual respondent and either tape record or take detailed notes of the answers. The personality of the interviewer can have a huge effect on the quality and completeness of responses. If interviews are recorded, they must be played back, transcribed, or both. Because responses will probably contain a great deal of variation among respondents, it can be difficult and time-consuming to find the themes that are useful for improving the market. All these considerations mean that interviews are only practical with a small number of respondents, unlike the much larger number that can be reached with a survey. The two in combination can improve on the results of either interviews or surveys alone, and we discuss how to combine methods for maximum effectiveness in the section on evaluating your market.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are interviews in which the researchers bring together a group of people who do not necessarily know each other but who share a characteristic that is relevant to the question to be answered.

If, for example, you wish to learn why some people in the target population do not shop at your farmers' market, you might assemble a focus group of people who have shopped at the market in the past but do not do so now, or a group of people in your target population who have never shopped at the market.



An advantage to focus group interviews is that they allow people to build on each others' ideas, reflecting and listening and developing their opinions through interaction. Such interviews can yield richer, more thoughtful answers than individual interviews.

Disadvantages of focus groups are that they are difficult to organize and that they require some skill on the part of the interviewer to keep the group on track. Furthermore, because the answers are the result of interaction, they may vary highly from group to group and so can be difficult to interpret. A group can easily be "hijacked" by the strong opinions of a single individual. Trustworthy results depend on conducting several focus group interviews and looking for common themes in the responses.

TASTING PANELS

Related to a focus group, a tasting panel is a group of people gathered to evaluate market products. You can use tasting panels to assess your product mix and quality.

OBSERVATION

Another useful source of data is observation with specific criteria or questions in mind. Market management might gather data by observing and recording the level of activity at the market at different hours— is the market busy early in the day with business tapering off later or is it steady? Do vendors tend to have large amounts of product left or run out early? Observation, especially when combined with other sources of data, can be very useful in evaluating the market's performance. One method of observation involves counting—numbers of customers per half hour or the number of customers who fit certain categories, such as families with young children or seniors, for example.

OBSERVATION/COMPARISON

Especially when evaluating your position relative to competitors such as supermarkets, you can use observations and comparisons; for example, you may compare price, quality, or selection of a sample of produce.



CENSUS DATA

You can gain useful information about customer and community demographics from census data; especially when compared with a profile of the market's customers obtained from observations, counts, and/or surveys. Census data can help the market's management evaluate how well the market is attracting and serving its target customers and how representative the market's customers are of the community as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The most important consideration for collecting high-quality data and interpreting it accurately is knowing what questions you want to answer with the information you gather. Once you have identified those questions, you can choose the most appropriate methods for gathering and interpreting information to answer them. With a focused effort, you will likely find the information you need to create a successful strategic marketing effort.

4 Assessing Your Market's Performance

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Distinguish between types of evaluation tools and their appropriate uses
- > Decide how to evaluate your market
- > Collect data
- > Interpret data and reach conclusions

In the previous section you learned about various strategies to gather information about your market. In this section, you will learn to choose and implement evaluation strategies for your particular market.

INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATING YOUR MARKET

There are many ways to evaluate your market. Areas subject to evaluation include: leadership; overall performance, including products and services; customer demographics; and activities/marketing.

How all of your market factors work together is also important. For example, a market can appeal to different types of customers at lunchtime, late afternoons during the week, and weekend mornings. At each of those times, different product mixes and types of activities may improve the market's success.

You can collect data from current vendors, farmers who are not part of the market (who either would like to be or are prospective recruits), customers and people you would like to have as customers, and community members and organizations who support the market or whose support you would like to enlist. To ensure your conclusions are valid, it is a good idea to have more than one source of data to answer each question you pose.

METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR EVALUATING YOUR MARKET

A walk-through evaluation of the market can yield valuable information, but it cannot substitute for the perspectives of your customers, vendors, and others. Use the results of your walk-through to formulate questions and methods of collecting information. Following are some ways to tailor the information-gathering methods discussed in Section 3 to your specific needs.



START WITH AVAILABLE INFORMATION

There is a great deal of information available even before you begin to engage in formal assessment of the market. Consider anecdotal data: What have you been hearing from vendors and customers informally? What complaints do you receive most often? What is the positive feedback you most often hear? Use this information and the following questions to decide what further information you need and how to collect that information.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Who are your current customers? Are they the customers you intended to serve? Why do they shop at your market? How much do they spend and what do they buy? What do they like and what changes would they like to see?
- Who are the potential customers you have not yet reached? Why do they not shop at the market? Where do they shop? What would it take to bring them to the market?
- Who are your current vendors? Why do they sell at the market? How satisfied are they with the market? What changes would they like to see? Who are the producers who do not sell at the market? Why not?
- What are the sales and revenue trends for the market as a whole and per vendor (if that information is available)? Are sales and revenues growing? Shrinking? At what rate?
- Is your current internal structure steady or strong enough to allow you to focus on strategic marketing at this time, or do you need to shore up the support system(s) of your market organization first?

DECIDE WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

Your informal assessment and the anecdotal data available to you may point to some themes that you can follow up with further research. For example, ask yourself:

- Why do your customers shop at the market?
- What do they like and what changes would they like to see?

Your initial impressions of the answers to the questions may lead to some categories that require further exploration through research. Early information may suggest that you should investigate customers' interest in new products. If your market does not offer eggs and dairy products, for example, is there a strong interest in such products among your current customers? Or you may want to learn customers' and non-customers' impressions of the market's offerings, the safety of the neighborhood, accessibility by public transportation, or availability of parking nearby.



COLLECT DATA

Collecting data involves deciding what methods of data collection to use (surveys, focus groups, etc.), designing the tools that will be used to collect the information, and administering any surveys or interviews.

Working with the first example provided, if you wanted to investigate customers' interest in new products, you could choose to do so through surveys, focus groups, or interviews. To get ideas for new products or services, you could post a suggestion box or conduct focus groups—both methods lend themselves to creative responses. If you already have an idea of the types of new products you would like to offer (e.g., eggs and dairy in the preceding example), then getting an accurate picture of demand for a product is more important than generating a number of ideas. In that case, you would probably choose to assess customer demand through a dot survey which can be easily administered to a large number of people and does not need make much allowance for individualized responses.

Under the second example, when the goal is to learn about customers' impressions of the market, you could conduct several focus groups to find out general themes in customers' and the public's impressions of the market and factors that affect whether they shop there. Once you have an idea of the factors involved, you could gather more data by surveying a larger group or may find that you got all the information you needed from the focus groups.

To choose the evaluation strategies that produce the most useful results, you need to focus on the goals of your market!

EVALUATION GOALS AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

TO ASSESS:	FIRST LOOK AT:	THEN LOOK AT:	SOURCES OF DATA: (add your own)
A. Market Performance	Vision & Mission statements	Indicators (Discussed in Section 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Focus groups • Market walk-thru • Tasting panels
B. Leadership	Current resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential resources • Needs • Gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection • Board and/or vendor feedback • Anecdotal
C. Customer Participation	Vision & Mission statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current customers • Shopping behavior • Potential customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data • Anecdotal evidence • WIC & SNAP sales as a % of overall sales
D. Activities/ Marketing Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission & Vision • Current scan of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current resources • Current customers • Desired customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market data • Anecdotal evidence





A. MARKETPLACE PERFORMANCE

To assess your market's performance, start with your vision and mission. In Section 2, you were prompted to review your vision and mission statements and create a list of indicators of how your market fulfills its mission. Keep these indicators in mind as you conduct evaluations and design surveys or focus group questions. Using the table from Section 2, you can see how you might set up an evaluation of your market.

SAMPLE EVALUATION PLAN

INDICATORS	SOURCES OF DATA (How can you find out?)
<p>HIGH QUALITY (see Section 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshness • Flavor • Texture • Appearance • Size • Maturity/Ripeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Tasting Panels • Survey/interviews • Market Records—look at sales • Trends and Revenue changes per vendor
<p>AFFORDABLE (see Section 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared to supermarket • Compared to club store • Compared to convenience store • Compared to customers' expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations/Comparisons • Survey
<p>SERVE LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME RESIDENTS OF ANYWHERE, NM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What portion of customers are low and middle-income? • What portion of low- and middle income residents are we serving? • What portion of customers come from outside the area? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data • Surveys • Interviews

A. MARKETPLACE PERFORMANCE (continued)

DEVELOP YOUR OWN EVALUATION PLAN

EVALUATION UNIT INDICATORS FROM THE LIST YOU CREATED IN SECTION 2	SOURCES OF DATA – HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT?
INDICATOR:	
INDICATOR:	
INDICATOR:	

Following is an example of an evaluation tool you can use or adapt to evaluate your market based on observations and visits. For the most reliable results, use this tool at different times and with different evaluators and then compare notes. Use the list of indicators you generated in Section 2 and copied on the preceding page to customize this evaluation tool or highlight those aspects of the tool that are most important for your market.

SAMPLE EVALUATION PLAN

FARMERS' MARKET WALK-THROUGH EVALUATION	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – NOTES
LOCATION			
Easy to find			
Accessible to foot traffic			
Accessible to cars only			
Accessible by public transportation			
Directional signs			
Near other businesses			
Near residential area			
Room for expansion			
Unique features			
PARKING			
Easy to find			
Reasonable walking distance			
Entry & exit signs			
Directional signs			
Adequate number of spaces			

cont. next page

SAMPLE EVALUATION PLAN continued

FARMERS' MARKET WALK-THROUGH EVALUATION	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – NOTES
PARKING (cont.)			
Traffic circulates well			
Surfaced driving lanes			
GROUNDS			
Attractively landscaped			
Clean, debris-free			
Unique features			
Benches, places to sit			
Trash receptacles			
Restrooms nearby			
Running water for public use nearby (handwashing, etc)			
Diaper changing			
Handicap accessible restrooms			
Other:			
CUSTOMER SERVICE			
Information booth			
FMNP (WIC & Senior programs)			
SNAP/EBT Access			
ATM			

FARMERS' MARKET WALK-THROUGH EVALUATION	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – NOTES
CUSTOMER SERVICE (cont.)			
Community Information			
Bags and baskets			
Other:			
OUTDOOR FACILITY			
Vendor spaces adequate size			
Spaces clearly marked			
Room to expand			
Adequate aisles			
Easy-to-walk-on surface			
Good signage			
Logical pedestrian traffic through market			
INDOOR FACILITY			
Vendor spaces adequate size			
Spaces clearly marked			
Room to expand			
Adequate aisles			
Clean, non-skid flooring			
Clean, non-skid flooring			
Logical pedestrian traffic through market			

SAMPLE EVALUATION PLAN continued

FARMERS' MARKET WALK-THROUGH EVALUATION	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – NOTES
ATMOSPHERE			
Favorable overall			
Entertainment/demonstrations			
Adequate number of customers			
Other:			
CUSTOMER ACTIVITY			
Shop entire market			
Linger			
Appear to be enjoying themselves			
Other:			
VENDORS OVERALL			
Adequate number of vendors			
Friendly with customers			
Offer a variety of products			
Good overall presentation			
Good quality products			
Vendor Product Summary <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> Processed <input type="checkbox"/> Fruits <input type="checkbox"/> foods (breads) <input type="checkbox"/> Dairy <input type="checkbox"/> Prepared foods <input type="checkbox"/> Meat <input type="checkbox"/> Cider <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs <input type="checkbox"/> Plants <input type="checkbox"/> Honey <input type="checkbox"/> Flowers <input type="checkbox"/> Herbs <input type="checkbox"/> Other specialty (vinegar, etc)			

B. LEADERSHIP

Understanding your market's internal capacity is particularly important when taking on new projects or activities. You probably already have an intuitive sense about the answers to the following questions, but putting it in writing can clarify things both for you and/or your board of directors, community groups, and potential funders. Every market has an evolutionary life cycle, and if your market is new or one that struggles with leadership, consider making improvements in this area one of your primary goals.

Look for help from community groups with like-minded missions, volunteers, and/or suggestions from the NMFMA.

MARKET'S INTERNAL FACTORS	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – NOTES
MANAGEMENT/SUPPORT			
How long has your market been in existence? <i>(Answer under "notes.")</i>			
Paid market manager position?			
Board of directors or advisory group? (Note which one)			
If yes, list who is represented on the board (e.g. retailers, farmers as vendors, farmers non-vendors, etc.)			
Does the Market depend on other community volunteers to support the weekly/monthly operations of the market? If so, how many?			
Co-manager, or people to split major duties with (promotions, putting out signs, WIC, etc.)			
Is there an organization or entity within the community that provides support to the market / market manager for communications, coordination and other logistics. If so, please identify the organization and type of support.			
Community partnerships (these may be for single events or on an ongoing basis)			

cont. next page

MARKET'S INTERNAL FACTORS	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT – NOTES
MANAGEMENT/SUPPORT			
What is the annual operating budget of the market? (the budget should include all costs for market management, advertising, training, vender recruitment, bookkeeping, etc.)			
What funding sources support your market? (<i>Answer under "notes."</i>)			
How many regular vendors did your market have last season? (<i>Answer under "notes."</i>)			
STRUCTURE AND PRACTICES			
Does the market have written guidelines? (Market rules for vendors, bylaws, etc. List what kinds.)	Yes	No	
If no, why not?			
Circle yes or no if your market has guidelines or other materials address the following items:	Yes	No	
Checklist of activities to do pre-season	Yes	No	
Checklist of activities to do during the market season	Yes	No	
Definition of eligible vendors (as well as who is not allowed to sell)	Yes	No	
Pricing of produce or items for sale	Yes	No	
Information sharing by non-vendors	Yes	No	
List of duties—who is responsible for reporting and filing documents (i.e market data, SNAP, insurances (if applicable), annual NMFMA membership, etc.)	Yes	No	
Does your market have a process for retaining records and documents that can be handed over to others if leadership changes?	Yes	No	___ Electronic Files ___ Hard Files
Does your market offer training opportunities to:	Yes	No	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Manager • Vendors • Volunteers 			

C. CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION

To get a quick overview of your current market demographics, you can fill out the chart below. Or, to work out a more detailed analysis of prospective customers, see **Section 5, Defining and Finding Your Target Customer**.

CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS	
Approximate age	20-40 years old ____ % 40-65 years old ____ % Over 65 ____ %
Gender	Female ____ % Male ____ %
Ethnicity	Anglo ____ % Hispanic ____ % Native American ____ % African American ____ % Asian ____ % Other ____ %
Family Units	Singles ____ % Couples ____ % Families ____ % Others ____ %
Language	____ English only ____ English and Spanish ____ Spanish only

D. ACTIVITIES/MARKETING

Market activities and marketing of those activities work together especially well at farmers' markets. That is because many farmers' markets are interested in providing community service—in addition to great locally grown food—and some services (like cooking demonstrations and mobile health screenings, for example) become great tools for marketing your market.

After all, one of the unique attributes of farmers' markets is their ability to create community. The more farmers' markets are able to take advantage of this unique asset, the better they will be able to draw new customers and retain current customers.

The first set of questions ask about specific marketing activities, followed by questions about entertainment and scheduled market activities. Finally, there is a set of questions about community engagement. Optimally, all of these pieces work together to help you offer unique reasons for prospective and current customers to come to market.

MARKETING & SALES

What kinds of marketing do you already do? Check all that apply, indicate frequency, and target audience. (Target audience might be a demographic—age, gender, income, etc. and/or psychographic—a behavior such as gardener, etc.)

MARKETING & SALES		
SALES	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
Total market sales—food only—last year?		
WIC & Senior sales last year?		
SNAP sales last year?		

cont. next page

MARKETING & SALES		
MARKETING		
TYPE	# TIMES/SEASON	TARGET AUDIENCE
Radio		
Newspaper Ads		
Signs		
Flyers		
Mailings		
Website		
Social Media		
E-newsletter		
Magnets/Calendars		
Other:		
EFFECTIVENESS		
Of these marketing techniques, which one(s) do you think are most effective, and how do you know?		
Is there a kind of marketing you're not currently doing that you would like to do? What is the obstacle (i.e. time, money, knowledge)		
SERVICES/EVENTS		
What services/events do you currently offer at your market, and with what frequency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live music ____ x per season • Educational activities for adults ____ x per season • Educational activities for kids ____ x per season • Health screenings ____ x per season • Art activities ____ x per season • Other (please list) _____ x per season _____ x per season _____ x per season _____ x per season 	

cont. next page

MARKETING & SALES		
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
What types of government or community organizations are in your community?	Are active in community	Your market currently partners with them
Churches/Temples/Other Religious		
Community Health Clinics		
WIC Clinics		
Cooperative Extension		
Diabetes Prevention/Heart Health Orgs.		
Neighborhood Associations		
Youth Groups		
Environmental Groups		
Chamber of Commerce		
Chamber of Commerce		
Sports Groups		
Other:		

INTERPRET YOUR DATA AND REACH CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of ways to interpret data. Survey and interview data are generally interpreted with different methods—with surveys you usually analyze numbers; for interviews you analyze words—but the analyses are similar. When you analyze data, you are looking for two kinds of information:

- What is the trend? That is, what do most people think or feel?
- What is the range? That is, what is the full continuum of preferences and opinions?

An analysis of trends tells you what actions to take to please most of the customers you want to serve, whereas an analysis that includes the full spectrum is more likely to generate unusual, potentially very successful ideas. Use the following table to summarize your findings. In Section 6, you will be prompted to apply results to develop goals and priorities for your market.

INDICATOR	WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p>
	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p>
	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p>
	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p>

CONCLUSION

In the first cycle of research, evaluation, and action, you may choose to limit your activities to factors within the market itself.

As you become more familiar and skillful with research and strategic marketing, you can extend your activities to include assessment of your competition and positioning of your market to better compete with supermarkets, club stores, and other competitors.

The next section will address issues of assessing your competition and positioning your market, and Section 6 will help you to set goals and priorities for growing your market.

5 Defining and Finding Your Target Customer

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Define who your target market customer is
- > Think about where you can find them, and effective ways of reaching them



In the previous sections you have probably mentioned something about your target customer. They might be included in your vision and or mission statements, and/or in the demographic section. But now it's time to go deeper into thinking about these groups of people so that as you develop your marketing plan, you can identify strategies and tactics mostly likely to attract their attention and bring them to market.

Start by looking at your mission and vision statement, as this should tell you in broad terms who you hope are included in your customer base.

REVIEW

Rewrite your vision statement here:

Rewrite your mission statement here:





QUESTIONS:

1. Have you defined the geographic region of your customer base? Have you said anything else about them such as their income level or age groups?

Underline all the words in your vision or mission statement that relate to WHO your customer is.

2. Now, describe your current market customers (maybe not mentioned in the above statements) here. You may have already done this in the previous section. Pretend you are looking at a photograph on a busy day during peak season. Who would you see?

<i>CURRENT CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS</i>	
Approximate age	20-40 years old ___ % 40-65 years old ___ % Over 65 ___ %
Gender	Female ___ % Male ___ %
Ethnicity	Anglo ___ % Hispanic ___ % Native American ___ % African American ___ % Asian ___ % Other ___ %
Family Units	Singles ___ % Couples ___ % Families ___ % Others ___ %
Language	___ English only ___ English and Spanish ___ Spanish only
What do you think are strongest motivations for your customers to shop at the market? (<i>Please rank, 1 being most important and 6 being least important.</i>)	___ Supporting local economy ___ Taste/freshness ___ Social nature of the farmers' market ___ Hard to find fresh produce nearby ___ Varieties of produce that don't exist other places ___ Healthier choices than at grocery store (i.e. organic/pesticide free) ___ Other (describe)

Depending on which groups of DESIRED CUSTOMERS you have checked off in the questions on the previous page, now it's time to think about where and how you can reach them.

TARGET GROUP	WHERE TO FIND THEM	NOTES ON COMMUNITY GROUPS THAT MIGHT FIT	MARKETING ACTIONS YOU MIGHT TAKE
Locavores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local food Co-Op members • CSA members • Home gardening groups • Cooking clubs/classes 		
Healthy Lifestyle Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of a gym/ community center • Bike group • Hiking group • Skiers • Golfers • Diabetes or healthy weight groups 		
Environmentally Conscious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardeners • Pollinators • Volunteers for environmental groups • Activists (like anti-fracking, anti-nuke, etc.) 		
Community-minded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church/temple/ meditation retreats • Volunteer groups • Art groups • Tribal groups • Neighborhood association 		
Culinary Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers' Market Trail • Cooking schools • Good restaurants in town 		
WIC Moms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIC clinics • Head Start schools • Play groups • Pediatrician/OB offices • Community health clinics 		
Seniors/Commodity Recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior centers • Community center • Volunteer groups 		
SNAP Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISD offices • Head Start schools • Community health clinics • Local community events 		
Others			

NEXT STEPS

Once you have identified target audience groups and some ways to reach them, you can begin the creative process of choosing tactics or marketing activities that will meet your strategic needs.

Money is always helpful when it comes to marketing, but good results can be obtained from small budgets when your focus stays sharp. Be sure to take into account what your market resources are—both financial and human—before you embark on executing a marketing plan. See the “How To” pages in Section 8 for a detailed description of some tactics that might be useful for attracting different audiences to your farmers’ market.

CONCLUSION

By determining which groups of people you: a) think are missing from your customer base; and b) think are most likely to attend your market, you can begin to think about how to best reach these groups and what kind of marketing plan will be most useful to your market organization. The more focused a marketing plan is, the greater the results you will see.



6 Assessing the Competition

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Assess your competition
- > Identify your major competitors
- > Determine how you compete
- > Compare your market to your competitors



Farmers' markets nationwide have been under pressure from economic restructuring. Many of today's largest and most successful farmers' markets have grown from humble beginnings and have been able to effectively compete with alternative food outlets by offering customers quality products, customer service, contact with growers, and locally grown produce from small-scale farmers.

When you begin to grow your market, you may start with internal factors. Analyzing the competition may not be part of your first round of strategic marketing, but strategic marketing is an ongoing process. Once you have developed some familiarity and skill with the process, you probably will want to extend your activities to include analysis of the competition and positioning or repositioning of your market to compete more effectively.



SUPERMARKETS AS COMPETITORS

Almost every farmers' market competes with supermarkets for customers. Although they may not offer the same variety of fresh produce as a farmers' market, supermarkets offer convenient hours, convenient locations from home and work, adequate parking, store promotions, relatively low prices, and a consistent and dependable supply of produce. Disadvantages of supermarkets are that food may be transported hundreds of miles to warehouses and distribution centers and then to supermarkets. Varieties of fruits and vegetables are often selected for their ability to withstand transportation to distant markets rather than for taste. To keep them in good condition over the course of long trips, the foods undergo various levels of processing and then are packaged and preserved.

So farmers' markets may have an advantage in offering fresh, local, great-tasting fruits and vegetables. However, these factors only function to the advantage of farmers' markets if consumers know about them. Consumers who are not aware of the flavor and quality they can expect from their produce or of the effects of transportation and storage on supermarket produce may be satisfied with their supermarket purchases. Furthermore, many supermarket franchises are becoming increasingly aware of consumers' desires, see farmers' markets as competition, and now offer a greater variety and selection of produce in addition to an enhanced shopping ambience. To respond to this competitive advantage, farmers' market managers must address factors that make the supermarket a desirable outlet to customers compared to farmers' markets.

LOOK AT YOUR MAJOR COMPETITORS

Identifying your competition is not as straightforward as it may appear since competitors may not always be obvious. Readily identifiable competitors are other farmers' markets and nearby supermarkets. Other competitors include specialty stores (Trader Joe's, Whole Foods), small grocery suppliers, CSAs, and roadside vendors.

List your top three competitors.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now you need to analyze these competitors thoroughly. Start by doing in-depth research on each competitor using the competitive strategy worksheet on the following page and these steps:

FIRST: If the competitor has a website, review it for information about the company's mission statement, product offerings, management team, and financial statements. If the competitor does not have a website, get as of its much promotional material as possible.

SECOND: Search through newspaper and magazine articles at the library and on the internet. Find out what kind of a presence they have carved out for themselves.

THIRD: Visit each competitor's store location. Look at comparable products, prices, variety, and visual displays. Notice the atmosphere, lighting, and customer service. You may want to buy some of their products to get a feel for the entire buying experience. Ask questions and take notes (take the worksheet along with you and fill it in as you go).

STOP AND THINK... If you were to create a mental map of your competitive placement, where would you fall relative to your competitors? Use the worksheets on the following pages to develop a mental map of where your market is located among your competitors.



COMPETITIVE STRATEGY WORKSHEET: CUSTOMER PREFERENCES

Rank and assign points for your market and each competitor using a ten-point scale in which one is the lowest rating possible and ten is the highest rating possible.

FEATURE	YOUR MARKET	COMPETITOR 1	COMPETITOR 2	COMPETITOR 3
Produce Variety				
Produce Selection				
Specialty Products				
Purchase Prices				
Quality				
Customer Service				
Location				
Convenience				
Atmosphere/Ambiance				
Shopping Experience				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				
Total Points				
Notes				

CONDUCT A SWOT ANALYSIS

Now you can develop a SWOT analysis. This matrix defines the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for you and your competitors. This will serve as a foundation for building a competitive advantage. The strengths and weaknesses help to identify your internal environment, such as organization, vendors, image, experience, operational efficiency, financial resources, and market awareness of your brand. Opportunities and threats from the external environment can involve many factors, including customer preferences, market trends, technologies, residential patterns, social changes, economic environment, and the political environment.

STRENGTHS are your farmers' market's capabilities and resources that can be used as a basis for developing a competitive advantage. Examples of this include a good reputation with customers, access to top-quality produce, strong brand awareness and perceptions.

WEAKNESSES are areas where improvement is necessary. Examples of these include weak brand awareness, a bad reputation, and a high cost structure. Certain elements may be considered strengths as well as weaknesses. For instance, say that you have a great location for your farmers' market. It is easily accessible to walking customers but has no available parking and therefore is not easily accessible for customers who drive. In this case, location is both a strength and a weakness.

OPPORTUNITIES for growth and profit in the external environment can be revealed through this process. Examples include filling a need for food access or entering a location where no other comparable grocery markets currently exist.

THREATS to your success can come from unpredictable changes in the external environment, so contingency planning is warranted. Examples of such threats include new farming regulations that increase production costs and therefore prices or shifts in consumer tastes and behavior. Another example, is that in recent years low-carbohydrate diets have become increasingly popular. Most of these diets suggest decreasing consumption of fruit and vegetables that are considered to be high in sugar and carbohydrates. This trend could dramatically affect your vendors and the desirability of your market.

POSITIONING YOUR MARKET

The primary elements of positioning are **quality, service, packaging, pricing, and your overall image**. How you attend to these elements helps to define your position in the larger marketplace and further determines how effective your marketing efforts can be in attracting the type and volume of customers you desire. It is crucial to keep the vision and mission of your market in focus as you position your market; otherwise, you may find your attention consumed by practices that improve the market's position relative to its competition but also result in the unexpected loss of the market's former identity.

When considering quality, look at the level of value you want to provide to your customers. What controls are in place to assure consistency? Do you back your quality claim with cus-

tommer-friendly guarantees or return policies? Issues of quality are further discussed in Section 11.

When considering customer service, look at the added value of customer support that you can offer. Are there products available through your farmers' market that can be customized? Issues of customer support are further addressed in Section 8.

Packaging at a farmer's market refers the way vendors package their items for sale to customers.

When considering pricing, research your local competitors and determine what types of items your vendors offer that are similar and different. If vendor prices are higher than that at local grocers, try helping customers understand why local produce costs more and what that value means. This is not a simple task!

On the other hand, you may decide to go after a more up-scale market, thereby charging higher prices while providing high quality and a more aesthetically pleasing atmosphere as part of your bundle of service offerings. Farmers' markets can include products such as cheese and fine edibles that are considered luxury items. If included, these luxury items should reflect the expectations of area customers regarding price and quality.

Making sure your market is correctly positioned in the marketplace to take advantage of your community's demographics and your market's internal strengths is key to its success. Understanding that circumstances can change and that adaptation is possible is also important to recognize and why ongoing strategic evaluation is a good idea.

CONCLUSION

This section addressed issues of the positioning of your market in relation to its competition. While it may not be a component of your first round of strategic marketing, at some point your efforts should include an analysis of your competition and awareness of your position in the marketplace as a whole. This may be the aspect of strategic marketing that poses the greatest threat to remaining true to your market's vision and mission. As you consider the position of your market, keep its vision and mission in mind so that your efforts to compete successfully do not lead you astray from your core purpose. But keep in mind that you can adapt your position, vision, and mission in response to changing circumstances, thus generating new opportunities.

7 Creating Your Marketing Plan

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Be aware of a variety of marketing strategies
- > Fill in the elements of a strategic marketing plan
- > Define your marketing goals

Now that you have collected and evaluated information about your market's performance and your target customers, this section gives you a place to apply that information to create a strategic marketing plan.

AN OVERVIEW OF MARKETING STRATEGIES

Your evaluation of your market's strengths and weaknesses, and possibly of its competitive position, has probably led you to some ideas about what you need to change or enhance. As you read through the marketing strategies discussed here, think about how they can be used to build on your market's strengths and mitigate its weaknesses.

After an overview of marketing strategies, there is another set of worksheets to help you choose strategies to address priority issues for your market. Determining what your market's priorities are at any given time is critical because resources are always limited. Your priorities will change over time, but being conscious of market's your current priorities will help determine what this year's marketing plan should look like.

This is a basic marketing plan. Following is a brief overview of each strategy. Strategies are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections, and will be of more or less use to your organization depending where in the evolutionary continuum your market sits (new market to long-time market).

THE INFAMOUS 4 PS OF MARKETING, +1

1. PRODUCT

a. Product Mix at Market

Are your customers finding the variety of products they expect? Is there anything you can do to encourage a greater variety of vendors to attend your market? Is there anything you can do to encourage current vendors to expand their product offerings?

b. The market itself as a product; i.e, Customer Service and Relations

Customer service includes all the services provided by vendors and volunteers throughout the market. Is there a central place in the market where customers can easily access services such as SNAP or debit/credit transactions? When there is a complaint, is there an established procedure for handling it so that the customer feels that the market is responsive to his or her needs?



2. PLACE—Location and Schedule

Is the market in the most attractive and convenient location possible? Have you made any improvements to the atmosphere and attractiveness of the site? Are the hours convenient for the customers you want to attract? Look back at the market walkthrough evaluation in section 4 and note whether improvements are needed. If changes need to be made, then they are also part of your marketing strategies.

3. PRICE/VALUE

Value includes quality, convenience, and pricing. Quality assurance measures can include developing a common definition of quality, instituting procedures for sampling the quality of products offered at your market, and adhering to good food-safety practices. Pricing methods vary, but quality means products are priced at a level customers expect, can afford, and are willing to pay.

4. PROMOTION

a) Sales promotions

Promotions can include a frequent shopper card or reward once the customer has spent a certain amount or coupons given when a purchase is made. Promotions can reward current customers for bringing a new customer to the market, build customers' awareness of the market, and bring in new customers.

b) Special Events

Special events can entice current customers to spend more, as well as attract new customers to the market. Tastings and contests can draw in customers and attract publicity to the market.

c) Advertising

From low-cost to expensive, from broadly appealing to narrowly targeted, paid advertising can increase the number of customers at the market. But advertising can be costly so your choice of advertising media must be based on a careful evaluation of their cost-effectiveness compared to other marketing strategies to grow your market.

d) Publicity

Promotions and special events often generate publicity, but obtaining the maximum effect requires some public relations and media work on the part of the farmers' market's management before and after the event. Again, you need to assess your capacity in terms of cash outlay, volunteers, staff time, collaborative possibilities, and opportunity costs.

4 + 1 = Partnerships

Community partnerships can be invaluable to not only offering structural support (such as acting as a fiscal agent or providing a staff member who manages the market) but also they can be very helpful creating special events such as providing cooking demonstrations, for example.

DEVELOP GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR YOUR MARKET

With the preceding overview of marketing strategies in mind, complete the following table. Work with your board of directors to finalize the strategic marketing plan. As part of developing the marketing plan, create a timeline and milestones. Assign responsibilities to specific individuals or groups and decide how you will evaluate completion and success.

INDICATOR	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?	WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BRING ABOUT THE NEEDED CHANGES?



8 Advertising, Promotions and Publicity

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Distinguish between advertising, promotions, and publicity
- > Choose and develop the activities with the most potential to attract the new customers you seek while remaining within your market's budget constraints
- > Use this section's appendix for "Recipes for Special Promotional Projects" with complete instructional guides

One of the major ways of increasing revenue is to bring new customers to the market. In the preceding sections, you defined the type of customer you want to attract to the market. Your advertising, promotion, and publicity efforts should appeal to those customers.

BRANDING YOUR MARKET

Your market, and everything about it, is your brand. Markets all share certain characteristics—fresh food and farmers—but every market is different, and your brand refers to the identity that lives in the mind of your customers. It includes everything from the logo and tagline you use in your marketing materials, to the customer service, atmosphere and prices that customers experience at your market. Your brand is what you want your customer to remember.

LOGOS & IDENTITY

Use the New Mexico Farmers' Markets logo to raise visibility and create awareness. If you have your own market logo, consider using your logo more prominently and add the NMFMA logo like a stamp of approval at the bottom of the ad. The NMFMA logo is available for download on the NMFMA website under the Market Manager tab. You will also find a style guide that shows our approved color palette, fonts, ways to use the logo and tagline, and more. While your market is not required to use this logo (or our color palette), the more markets that embrace it, the stronger our collective identity will be.

CREATING AWARENESS

Market researchers have long known that buyer awareness of a brand strongly influences preference for that brand. Research now shows that 70% of buyers must be aware of your product before 25% of them will make it their preference. This is a much lower ratio than traditional marketing models suggest, reaffirming the fact that a high level of brand awareness is essential to achieving significant brand preference in your market. Your marketing activities should seek to raise awareness as the first step toward creating brand preference.

ADVERTISING

Advertising can be defined as communication intended to raise awareness of the market, increase attendance, and/or influence purchasing. Farmers' markets can advertise through a variety of media—from newspapers, radio, and television to social media, bulletin boards, and websites.



Tailor your advertising message to the audience you intend to reach. Use the goals you set in Section 6 to guide your advertising efforts. If you want to reach more families, consider what you have learned about why they do or do not shop at your market.

- What is important to this group of potential customers?
- What does your market have to offer?

Create messages that communicate the ways your market can serve this group of customers and how your market is different and better than any competitor that also serves this group.

METHODS OF ADVERTISING

NEWSPAPERS

Your local daily newspaper is one place to advertise but there are others as well, including free classifieds, neighborhood papers, and free local weeklies. Ask for non-profit advertising rates and one-paid/one-free if you are purchasing a substantial number of ads. Inserts into local, small circulation papers can be relatively inexpensive but should be printed on colorful paper to attract attention.

Ask the media outlet to sponsor the market. In exchange for publicizing the market in their paper, the name of the paper can be listed as a major sponsor on the market's poster. A special rate may be available if you take out a classified ad for an entire season, altering the ad each week to highlight new fruits and vegetables coming into season.

Cost depends on size of ad, 4-color or B&W, and cost of publication. This depends on reach of publication. Usually priced at CPM, or cost per thousand. Bigger cities = increased \$\$\$\$. Plan to have some upfront costs for design and production, but once done, it can be easily adapted over time. Some publications will provide the design and production free of charge. If they do this, ask if you can have original art files in case you want to later publish elsewhere.

RADIO

Radio is a great media choice to advertise special events or sales, but keep your message simple. Use the best stations available that cater to your audience. Purchase the best times available.

If you don't have experience writing radio copy—it is quite different than print ad copy—the station may be able to help you. They can also help with recording and/or adding music.

If you are buying a decent amount of radio time, see if you can get the station to match some of your purchase with "free" ads since markets are a community service.

SOCIAL MEDIA

It's tough to overstate the importance of social media in your advertising efforts. While it is more frequently associated with younger shoppers, all age groups use social media to keep informed. But it's a dynamic, quickly changing landscape and an effective social media campaign strives to keep up with those changes. Luckily, most social media platforms are free, and only require your time to maintain.

The uses for social media are many, and therein lies the strength. You can increase your market's overall visibility in your community, create events where people can actively schedule their attendance, leverage content to gain more followers, or pay a nominal fee to advertise your market and reach even more potential customers.

FLYERS AND HANDOUTS

Include coupons on a flyer to make it more eye-catching and attractive. People may be more likely to make their first trip to the market if they receive a discount. The coupon could be for \$5 off a purchase. When customers come to the market to redeem their coupon at the Information Table, be sure to get their email address and mobile phone number if they are willing to get reminders. This is a great way to build your customer list.

POSTERS

Posters are designed to catch the eye, get people interested in the market, and let them know where it is located and when it is open. The NMFMA has 4-color posters available for your use. Just ask us for posters and we will get them to you.

POSTCARDS

Postcards can be passed out and mailed to supporters and the community at large. The Espanola market takes a group photo of all the vendors at their end-of-season "Biggest Vegetable Contest." Then they print this photo on an oversized postcard that they use throughout the next year to promote the market.

MAILINGS

Local civic organizations like the chamber of commerce, the Lions' Club, and Rotary may be willing to mail a flyer or brochure about the market with their monthly newsletters. Be sure to budget to pay for the cost of producing the flyer and the extra postage you will need to send it in their mailing.

Word-of-mouth advertising can be promoted through "Tell a Friend" mailings. Market shoppers can write the name and address of a friend on this special market mailing and the manager then adds the postage and sends it out.

MERCHANDISE WITH THE MARKET LOGO

Merchandise displaying the market logo—pint glasses, t-shirts, aprons, cloth shopping bags, hats, buttons, bookmarks, and bumper stickers—can be used by staff and sold at the market and elsewhere.

SIGNS

Signs include billboards, banners, and sandwich boards that direct people to the market as well as permanent signs that remain at the market site. Permanent signs are great because even when the market is not open for business, people passing by are reminded when the market takes place. Sandwich boards announce that the market is open, communicate that it is a fun place, and direct traffic there. Include hours of operation plus directional arrows to help customers find the market.

RESTAURANTS

Restaurants that use produce from the market can display the market's logo on their menus and other signs.

BROCHURES

Offer information for customers at the market's information table that tells the story of the market, something about the vendors, when products are in season, and the times and locations of the area's markets and include the market's logo.

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS

Bulletin boards can be found at the grocery store, places of worship, health clubs, schools and universities, parks, and apartment buildings. Some market managers find that a grass-roots approach to advertising that reaches customers more directly (including direct mail and flyers) is more effective than the traditional media route of newspaper ads.

PROMOTIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

A promotion is an event or activity organized by a farmers' market that is usually held during the market and is designed to raise consumer awareness and attract customers.

Special events add interest to a farmers' market. They provide opportunities to diversify the market's offerings in terms of entertainment, education, and service. Special events are a way to promote the market, benefit the community, and celebrate accomplishments.

A special event serves a promotional purpose when the manager uses it to generate publicity for the market through media relations, press releases, and/or advertising.

Special events include a wide variety of activities that range from low-effort, minor activities such as a weekly raffle for a

basket of produce to complex, highly organized annual events such as an anniversary celebration or harvest festival.

SOME THEMES FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

- Annual opening and closing days
- Seasonal themes
- Crop-specific themes that focus on preparing and tasting produce
- Holiday events
- Cultural events
- Benefits and fundraisers for the market or other supporting community organizations

ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN A SPECIAL EVENT

- Health screenings
- Book signings
- Live music/dancing
- Raffles
- Contests
- Lectures or demonstrations
- Hands-on activities
- Tastings
- Information booths
- Craft sales
- Games and contests for kids

Regularly scheduled and annual events help to build customers' familiarity, which can eventually evolve into a tradition and nostalgia. Some markets, follow a monthly schedule such as:

- Chef at Market: First and third Sundays
- Market Demo: Second Sunday
- Activist Day: Third Sunday
- Kids' Activity: Fourth Sunday
- Market Tours: Last Sunday of the month

A regular schedule simplifies planning and logistics. Whether your market develops a regular event schedule or not, planning in advance helps both the market and its customers. Small-scale activities may require only a few weeks of preparation, while larger events can take months to plan. A calendar of events, actively promoted to customers and the media, can build customer and media awareness and generate both new business and publicity for the market.

Publish your calendar on the NMFMA's website, your own market website, and develop contacts with other organizations that will post links to your website or add your calendar to their sites.

Send a press release and, if possible, follow up with phone calls to media contacts before special events. Planning special events involves awareness of:

- Your budget, costs, and expenses
- Equipment needs (e.g., sound system)
- Need for additional help and volunteers
- Any special permits or licenses needed
- Insurance concerns
- Announcements and press releases
- Crowd control
- Clean-up
- Any follow-up needed (e.g., equipment returns, thank-you notes, paying bills).

COLLABORATING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS

The potential of special events to promote the market and bring in new customers can be increased by effective collaboration with other organizations. For example, a local Slow Food organization or health clinic could organize a tasting or demonstration at the market. A local school could hold a concert there or the market can serve as the backdrop for a local charitable organization's fundraising raffle. With clear

communication and division of responsibilities, collaborative events can increase the number of new customers attracted to the market.

GENERATING PUBLICITY FOR THE MARKET

Publicity is free media coverage that raises awareness of the farmers' market and its goals and attracts more customers. If you can, or if you have a volunteer who has experience with the media, it is helpful to compile a media list of reporters and editors who have been or are likely interested in stories and events at the market. Remember to include food editors from local and regional papers. Learn to tailor your stories for different sections of the paper. The business page would carry a story about using the market as a vehicle for small business development while the food section would be more interested in a tomato tasting event or a cooking demonstration.

IS YOUR MARKET READY?

Here is an easy-to-scan chart of advertising and promotion tactics, who they target, and a brief overview of resources that are needed to make each happen. Make sure you have the help you need either from community volunteers, partner organizations, or even vendors to make things happen!

MARKETING ACTIVITY	MARKETING OBJECTIVE	TARGET AUDIENCE	\$ NEEDED (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)	OTHER RESOURCES	NOTES
Advertising – Print	Create awareness	Broad, can target by publication type	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$	Human: Someone to create ad content & purchase media	Small community newspapers can be great ad vehicles
Advertising – Radio	Promote special event	Broad, can target by station	\$\$\$	Human: Someone to create ad content & purchase media	This can be very effective in areas with a strong local radio station
Advertising – Broadcast	Create awareness	Broad	\$\$\$\$\$	This medium is in decline with changing TV viewing	Creative production assistance is often provided by the station
Cooking Demos	Education, Entertainment, Creating Preference	Current customers	\$	Knowledge of local codes, cooking gear, someone to cook	Using local produce is a must, as is handing out recipes
Farmers' Market Trail	Create awareness	Tourists, others	FREE	Farmers willing to welcome and entertain strangers onto their property	Someone to submit info to the NMFMA

MARKETING ACTIVITY	MARKETING OBJECTIVE	TARGET AUDIENCE	\$ NEEDED (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)	OTHER RESOURCES	NOTES
Farmer Profiles	Create preference and customer retention	Current customers	FREE	Keep an eye out for farmers who want to share their experience	Someone to collect and submit info to the NMFMA
Mobile Messaging	Create awareness and preference	Current customer or interested party	FREE – at least during 2-year trial period	This new service may become more popular	Need to collect info
Posters	Create awareness and customer retention	Broad community	FREE	Great volunteer activity	4-color available from NMFMA
Social Media– Facebook	Increase awareness and community engagement, education	Broad or specific target	FREE to \$\$	Find a volunteer and FB user if you're not so inclined	The NMFMA can get you started
Social Media– Twitter	Increase awareness and loyalty	Enthusiasts	FREE	Vendors may want to do this if they are interested	Good for promoting a daily special, event, etc.
Social Media– Instagram	Increase awareness and loyalty	Broad target to enthusiasts	FREE	This is a place to post engaging photos and promote events	A smartphone is needed. The NMFMA can get you started.
Social Media– Blog	Increase awareness and loyalty, education	Broad	\$ to \$\$\$\$	This is where you can tell your story and the stories of your vendors	Someone with website skills, time to write blog posts. The NMFMA can get you started
Social Media– Pinterest	Link back to your blog or website (increase awareness), education	Broad to enthusiasts	FREE	Increase awareness to your website and your market	Easy to use, most effective when used in conjunction with a blog or website. The NMFMA can get you started.
Social Media – LinkedIn	Create community partnerships	Enthusiasts	FREE	Time is needed to develop a profile, connect with community partners	The NMFMA can get you started
Special Events – Health Related	Education, create loyalty	Current customers, new customers with advertising	\$	Community partners or experts	Partnerships can increase advertising potential
Special Events – Entertainment	Increase awareness, customer retention	Broad	\$ to \$\$\$	Local entertainment, from musicians to face painters	Consistent, regular entertainment offerings most effective



9 How-To Guide for Common Advertising, Promotions, and Publicity Campaigns

THIS LIST OF SELECT ADVERTISING, PROMOTION, AND PUBLICITY IDEAS WILL BE EXPLAINED IN MORE DETAIL, INCLUDING NEEDED RESOURCES, COSTS, AND PROCESSES.

- > Print Advertising
- > Broadcast Advertising
- > Posters
- > Social Media
- > Special Events
- > Cooking Demos
- > Photo Voice
- > Mobile Messaging (coming in the future)
- > NM Farmers' Market Trail (coming in the future)
- > Farmer Profiles (coming in the future)

Strategic marketing should always include some publicity, advertising, and promotional activities. The activities you choose should support your market's vision and mission, and reach the customers you want to bring to market. After customers start shopping at your market, you can build loyalty with positive customer relationships. You can also entice them to spend more during their market visit by using wise product development, merchandising, and improvements to produce mix and quality. These issues are addressed in the subsequent section.

PRINT ADVERTISING

Print advertising can appear in local newsletters, bulletins, newspapers, or magazines. It is a great way to increase market awareness or promote special events. Below are some tips and examples for creating ads that can attract new customers and help you keep in touch with existing customers.

You'll want to make sure your ad achieves some simple goals. If you are having someone else design your ad, be sure to communicate these to the designer:

- **State your goal clearly.** Is it to increase market awareness, advertise in-season produce, or promote a special cooking or entertainment event? Be sure your ad does so clearly.
- **Use an attractive logo.** Our updated New Mexico Farmers' Markets logo will be customized for your market, and achieves visual recognition for your market among customers.
- **Include a "call to action."** Do you want your customers to enjoy upcoming entertainment, or take advantage of a special promotion? State so clearly in an active voice. Think of words and phrases like, "Shop now," "Buy in-season tomatoes now," or "Listen to great music this Saturday from 8AM to noon. Bring the whole family."



Successful ad design contains some basic elements. Like your above goals, be sure to include these tried-and-true elements in your ad:

Headline: This is the most important part of your ad. In many cases, people won't read the rest of your ad unless the headline compels them to. It is important for your headline to dominate the ad. Avoid using too many graphic elements or fancy fonts that obscure your headline. Your headline should also be clear and concise; avoid trying to get too clever or creative to the point that your meaning is missed.

Subheads: A subhead is optional, but can be handy to highlight important information if you are trying to explain lengthier information. Like the headline, it must be attention-getting, but don't let it overwhelm your headline. Keep the type size smaller, and the design simpler.

Body copy: This is where you can provide your main offer or message in detail. But keep it brief, if you even decide to include it at all. For many effective ads, the headline is all you'll need along with an eye-catching graphic element.

Graphics: Ultimately, the graphics are what will first catch a reader's eye (a good headline will keep their eyes on the ad). Besides being eye catching, your graphics should relate to the topic of your ad, and be of a high enough quality and contrast balance to appear sharp and attractive in your chosen outlet.

PRINT ADVERTISING: VISUALS



RADIO AND BROADCAST ADVERTISING

Broadcast advertising can take place on radio, television, or the Internet in the form of commercials or other types of video ads. While broadcast television ads are generally outside the budget of a farmers' market, localized radio, cable and Internet ads can be affordable. Follow these steps to create an effective broadcast ad campaign:

1) Be ready to answer the inevitable demographic questions that the cable or radio company will likely ask you, and questions about the goals of your ad campaign:

- Are you trying to reach men, women, or both?
- What age ranges are you trying to reach?
- Are you trying to reach people whose incomes fall within a certain range?
- What are you, exactly, trying to advertise?
- What are the goals of your ad? Are you trying to sell a specific in-season crop, get people to come to a special event, or just increase general awareness?

2) Armed with this information—and what your advertising budget will be—contact the sales department of your local cable or radio company and ask to speak to a sales representative. Tell the representative what you want to achieve in an ad, and tell them your desired audience. Ask them which time slot would best fit who you are trying to reach, and if you want to see the potential audience numbers for those recommendations, don't be shy asking for them.

3) Ask the representative for airtime at the time of your choosing. This is where some negotiation will likely take place. While it will be much cheaper to have your ad air at 3 AM, no doubt any cost savings you might see will be negated by the simple fact that so few people will see or hear your ad. When deciding how much to pay for airtime, calculate it along the lines of a per-listen cost instead of a lump sum; you'll find that a higher lump-sum cost might actually equate to a fairly low per-listen cost.

4) Radio stations will likely help you with copy (if you want) and will usually offer to record the ads for you. You can tell them what kind of voice you would like (female, male, young, old, etc.) and you will have a chance to review the ad before it is aired. If you are not happy with something, just let them know. You are the paying customer!

Here are some elements to include as you create the elements of your radio or broadcast ad:

Know Your Target Audience: This includes, as indicated above, things like age, income, and gender. The more you can pinpoint who you are really trying to reach, the easier it will be to create an effective ad.

Make Your Message Relevant: While narrowing your audience using demographics might seem counterintuitive, it will allow you to enhance the impact on your select audience. Vague messaging meant to appeal to everyone is only marginally effective at meeting desired goals.

Keep it Simple: As with your print ads, a simple, clear message is key. Not only will your audience be more apt to listen to a simple message, it may also be more cost effective as it may be shorter.

Make it Unique: Yes, broadcast and radio ads can be simple, and targeted, yet still be unique. Don't be afraid to show the personality of your market in your ad while staying away from clichés. Your ad can be appealing by being different while still conveying your desired message.

This 30-second radio ad for Alamogordo Alameda Park Farmers' Market is a relevant, targeted message that includes the classic who, what, where, when, and why. It also includes direction to like them on Facebook and stay updated, which is important.

(:30 sec.) Want fresh, local produce grown in Otero County? Come on down to the Alamogordo Alameda Park Farmers' Market, next to the toy train depot on Whitesands Blvd. and meet your local farmers who love to share how they grow and prepare their foods! Open Saturdays 9AM to sellout. Cash, WIC, Senior Nutrition Checks, and SNAP/EBT Double Up Food Bucks program accepted. "Like" Alamogordo Alameda Park Farmers' Market on Facebook for regular updates.

POSTERS AND FLYERS

The main function posters and flyers is to catch the attention of people who are passing by, or whose attention is being demanded from other sources. Key points in a successful poster or flyer include:

- Make sure the headline is emphasized using a large text size
- Have a simple and clear layout so key information is easy to locate
- Be sure the key information includes important information such as pertinent dates, locations, and times
- Include ways people can connect with you, such as an email address, phone number, website address, or social media symbols
- Include graphics that will quickly catch a reader's attention, and are related to your message
- Use bold, intense colors so that your poster or flyer can be easily seen from a distance

SIMPLE LAYOUTS WITH BOLD COLORS

Large Headline →

Key Information →

Eye-catching, relevant graphics →

SOCIAL MEDIA

While there are well over 100 social media and network platforms worldwide, only about 20 have mass appeal at this time. We've narrowed this list down to six platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blog/Website, LinkedIn, and Pinterest) and provided an overview of which social media platforms reach the most people. You need to select at least one of these platforms for your market, and not more than three.



PLATFORM	PROS	CONS	USES
Facebook (Pages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large audience • Easy to use • Posts can be scheduled in advance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a small percentage of fans are shown your posts • Facebook rewards regular, consistent posting with higher views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise events • Connect with current and future customers • Educate about nutrition and farming • Advocate for local farmers
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing audience, especially among younger people • Visually oriented • Easy to update • Integrates with Facebook easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires good, artistic photos • Leverage #hashtags to draw new customers • Can only be used on smartphones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise your market • Connect with current and future customers
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-known, easy-to-use platform • All tweets go out to 100% of followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining in popularity • Need to tweet many times a day to be noticed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise events • Communicate short news items
Blog/Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a “home base” for all of your news and activities • Other platforms can be used to draw people to your website • Provides higher levels of engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work, requires an initial financial and time investment • Website needs to be updated regularly to stay fresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise events • Connect with current and future customers • Advocate for your vendors • Educate about local food and farming
Pinterest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large following • Provides a place to link-back to your website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires engaging images • Best used in conjunction with a blog/website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with current customers • Educating about health, food, and farming
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for building business connections and local partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial time outlay is required to create a detailed and effective profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships can be used to increase market awareness and customer base • Updates can be used to advocate for local farmers and food

Meeting your objectives involves planning how you'll create messaging for your chosen social media platforms. The main objectives for your market will likely be:

- Growing the number of your followers
- Increasing the number of market customers
- Becoming a local "expert"

Create content that not only discusses your market, but also shares content from outside sources with messaging that is similar to yours. This includes stories about farmers or farming worldwide, organic food, nutrition, healthy eating, raising livestock, and more. Include fun videos and photos. The goal is to get your platform's fans to like, comment, or share as much content as possible. The more they share, the more their local friends will see your posts, and the more people who will start following you. This means more customers in the long run.

Take lots of engaging photos of delicious produce, friendly vendor faces, happy customers, and a vibrant market to share on your platforms. These images will engage not only your current customers, but will attract and engage the interest of new customers.

Become a local expert and share your knowledge of local food laws, environmental stresses, farming challenges, farming successes, and other community events. The more you share with the community, the more they will engage with you and your market. Their loyalty will increase along with their word-of-mouth advertising.

For more detailed information on any one of these social media outlets, please contact the NMFMA Community Outreach Manager directly.

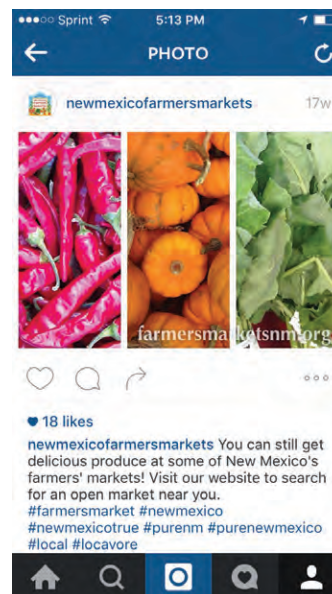


Twitter Post



Twitter is a way to share brief announcements or reminders. Make use of relevant #hashtags to allow people to find you by searching for the #hashtags you highlight.

Instagram Post



Instagram is quickly rising in popularity, and is a great way to reach younger shoppers. As with Twitter, using relevant #hashtags will allow people to find your posts, but attractive images are also key.

Facebook Post



All markets should consider having a Facebook Page, and post to their pages at least once or twice a day.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events include things like entertainment, one-time speakers, book signings for local food authors, or other unique activities meant to draw customers to your market. Let imagination be your guide, and don't be afraid to think outside the box. Here are some tips when brainstorming topics for special events:

Pay attention to your audience, and try to include events that might appeal to specific groups instead of trying to be too general in your appeal. Partnering with other community organizations is also a good idea. Some unique ideas might include:

- Produce-focused body care demonstrations for adults (think honey masques or egg-based hair conditioners)
- Partner with a local environmental group and have your farmers' market be the meet-up and discussion point for a community clean-up day at a local park, or along waterways.
- Start a "healthier life" or diet challenge at your market, highlighting in-season produce.
- Ask your local high school drama club to perform one-act plays during your market.

You don't need special events every week, but try to aim for one special event a month (on top of regular entertainment that you might offer at every market).

Follow these simple steps for offering special events at your market:

- Plan your events for the year well in advance, and make sure you're making those contacts and creating interest early, before your market responsibilities get heavy.
- Be sure to get commitments from event participants in writing, just to avoid any misunderstandings later. Be sure to include event dates and times, and responsibilities of everyone involved.
- Plan how you will advertise your special event, including all of the outlets discussed above, from posters to radio ads, to social media outreach.
- Start advertising the event several weeks in advance, to give people time to plan.
- Recruit volunteers several weeks (or more) in advance to help with any set-up or take-down requirements.
- After the event, while everything is fresh in your mind, be sure to document everything you did to plan, prepare for, and execute the event. Make notes of what worked and what didn't, to make your next special event that much more successful.



Sample logo

National Farmers' Market Week: This is an annual special event that the NMFMA will celebrate as a group. National Farmers' Market Week typically occurs the first full week in August, and it's a great opportunity to highlight the many ways your farmers' market is benefitting your community. The NMFMA will be creating a special annual outreach package to help markets plan for the event in advance, including recipe cards, tips for writing press releases, and more. Keep an eye out on our website as we build this package for you.



Farmers' Market Week celebration with U.S.D.A in Santa Fe, August, 2015. Photo courtesy Lisa Law.

COOKING DEMOS

Cooking demonstrations are a great activity to host at farmers' markets. They usually involve some kind of food preparation and recipe distribution. There is nothing better for showcasing food that is on vendors' tables than to have someone preparing the food for sampling and providing information. If you're cooking hot food, the smell alone will help sell food. Cooking techniques/recipes are usually simple, which is important for showing customers how easy it is to make great tasting food.

Single Ingredient Sampling (A Less Involved Option)

If you don't feel you have the resources for a full cooking demonstration, you might try doing single ingredient sampling. Fruits, vegetables, or other healthful foods that may be new to the audience are cut into bite-sized pieces for sampling. This type of food demonstration is often used with limited space and equipment.

Cooking Demos

Providing a more complete cooking demonstration has numerous benefits. You will:

- Educate customers about the great taste of local, seasonal food at the market
- Educate customers about the ease of preparation
- Educate customers about how to prepare new or less familiar types of produce
- Educate customers about nutrition
- Provide family entertainment and a potentially interactive vent
- Create a great event to promote at area health clinics, gyms, community centers, newspapers, etc.
- Have an opportunity to partner with area chefs that showcases their connection to fresh food

Average Demo Cost; \$22 (not including cooking tools, propane, and time)

Resources Required

- **Human Resources:**
 - Someone to plan the recipes, make copies of the recipes, and bring equipment
 - Someone to cook at the market
 - Someone to help handout samples and answer questions
 - Someone to clean up after the demo is complete
- **Hard Goods:**
 - A cooking set up. This usually means a table, a burner, a pan or wok, utensils, etc. (see complete list under the Santa Fe Southside example that follows)
 - Food from the vendors: If possible, pay for the food with a grant or out of market funds. If necessary, vendors may be willing to donate
 - Signage that tells customers what is being cooked, and which vendors provided the food
 - Copies of recipes to hand out
- **Time Required: (see Southside Santa Fe Market example that follows for specifics)**
 - Preparation: Between 1 and 3 hours
 - Time at market 4-5 hours
 - Breakdown, washing 1- 2 hours
 - Overall, an average demo took about 9 hours from preparation to clean up

Who Can Help

- Cooperative Extension has home economists who may be willing to help
- A local health clinic may have community health workers they are willing to have help
- Market volunteers
- Create a “Cook with the Chef” program and they will do the cooking—you coordinate and promote

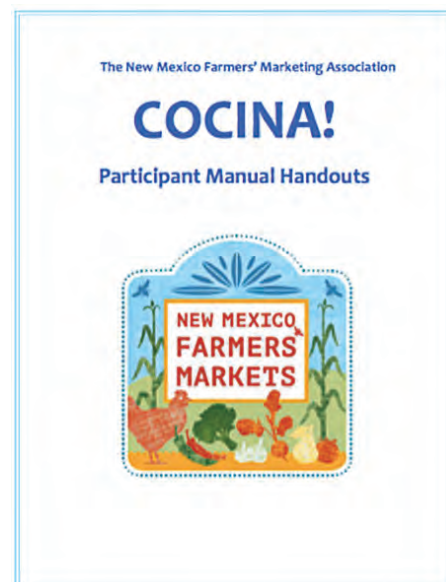
Common Items for Purchase

- The burners
- A grill
- Cooking Utensils (pans, spatulas, etc. see Santa Fe Southside Market Example that follows)

Regulations

Depending on when and where your market takes place, sampling regulations may or may not be a factor. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Food Division oversees these regulations, plus your county may have additional requirements. In general, requirements involve common sense cleanliness including things like using a plastic cutting board rather than wood, having a hand washing station, using plastic gloves, not touching money and food, having toothpicks or single serving containers for customers use, etc. As a general rule, markets that take place on weekends in rural areas are less likely to be visited by NMED inspectors than markets that take place in Bernalillo County.

*For additional resources, check out the **Cocina!** publication on our website.*



10 Keys to a Successful Food Demonstration

1. Know your audience—How much experience or knowledge do they have? What do you want them to learn during the demonstration?
2. Have a clear and simple nutrition message.
3. Be organized and well-prepared.
4. Use appropriate recipes and handouts.
5. Be sure the demonstration area is colorful and attractive and will capture the audience's attention.
6. Incorporate nutrition information throughout the demonstration. (See the Fruit and Vegetable Guide for ideas.)

7. Let participants taste the food when the recipe has been completed.
8. Always follow food safety guidelines.
9. Give the participants recipes to take home and any additional flyers or brochures that will help reinforce the nutrition message.
10. Use evaluations to help direct future demonstrations.

Note: Be sure to check local requirements for on-site food sampling. Your local office of the New Mexico Environment Department Food Division will be able to provide food safety guidelines.



Case Study:

2014 Southside Farmer's Market Cooking Demonstrations Report,

provided by Jackie Munro of La Familia Medical Center

Cooking with Kids

— for a healthy future —

Seven cooking demonstrations were held, occurring every other week, during the duration of the Southside Farmer's Market (July 1-September 30). Jackie Munro, employed by La Familia Family Medical Center (LFMC), was in charge of organizing the demos in collaboration with the REACH Program at LFMC. Demos were implemented by Jackie (6 demos) and Abby Ferla (1 demo). Rachel Shreve helped organize supplies and Jane Stacey helped plan recipes. Christopher Sabo, the Southside Farmer's Market Manager, provided logistical help and support.

Recipes were informal and based on the products available at the Southside Farmers' Market. The goal was to prepare fresh, simple dishes that appealed to customers and encouraged them to purchase the product(s) sampled. It was important to remain flexible regarding recipes in case certain products were not available. Minimal additional ingredients were purchased at Albertson's and Sprouts and/or acquired from the Cooking With Kids (CWK) office. When buying ingredients at the Southside Farmer's Market, I made sure to tell the farmer that I was cooking for the demo. Doing this, I usually got a discounted price.

Handouts were produced and given out with recipes and nutrition information when possible and appropriate. CWK Tasting packets, classroom materials and recipes were also kept on hand and given out when appropriate. REACH brochures and New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association materials were displayed. The name of the dish and the farm(s) where the food was purchased was written on a sandwich board that pointed to the demo table. I told everyone who got a sample where the product was from to encourage purchasing.

Preparing for a demo, including gathering needed equipment and developing recipes, took between 1 and 3 hours. I typically started loading the equipment into my car at 1:00 at La Familia, picked up items at the grocery store

and the propane tank at Lynn's house, and arrived at the market by 2:00. I then set-up, bought ingredients and cooked my first batch of samples by 3:00. I typically broke down my set-up starting at 6:00 and left the market by 6:30. Upon arriving home, I washed dishes and reorganized the equipment until about 7:30. The next day, I returned the equipment to La Familia. Overall, an average demo took about 9 hours from preparation to clean-up.

Challenges encountered included bad weather, low attendance and customers being intimidated by the process of sampling. I found that my consistent presence every other week, through good weather and bad, and my continuous offers to help out the farmers (set up tents, tables, etc.) helped me establish great relationships with the farmers. These relationships helped build a good atmosphere around the demo table. My persistence and friendliness in communicating with customers encouraged people to try samples.

Funding was provided by the Santa Fe Farmers' Market (\$140 cash) and the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (\$140 for food-\$30 Sprouts gift certificates; \$110 Santa Fe Farmers' Market coins to pay vendors). The average demo cost approximately \$22 and there were leftover funds at the end of the summer. Demo costs lowered as I got to know the farmers and received more products for free or at a discounted price.

The market manager, Christopher Sabo gave out surveys to all participating farmers about the effectiveness of the cooking demos and received 3 completed surveys. Similar surveys were written for customers but not handed out because of time constraints. The surveys, in English and Spanish, are in a document titled 'Southside Farmers' Market Surveys.' Three farmer responses were received.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- The propane burner burns very hot, so I always used it on medium heat or lower. It stains the bottoms of pots and pans, which can make transporting dirty dishes difficult.
- When it comes to encouraging people to try samples, I found that you really have to drag people in. I said hello to everyone I could and I always offered samples to kids waiting in line for WIC Benefits with their parents. I set up my tent next to the WIC tent to facilitate this process.

Over half of the Southside Farmers' Market attendees prefer to communicate in Spanish, so Spanish fluency is an asset.

- Give samples to as many farmers as you can, especially the ones that sell you products. This helps build community around the idea of the cooking demonstrations. When possible, include farmers in the cooking process. This increases their skills in selling their product and communicating with customers.

Here is a breakdown of foods prepared and cost:

DATE	FOOD PREPARED	COST
7/1	Sautéed peas with lemon and mint	Approximately \$31
7/15	Beets 3 ways: grated in a raw salad, boiled with butter & sautéed beet greens	Approximately \$31
7/29	Blanched green beans in a Dijon vinaigrette	Approximately \$31
8/12	Potato salad	\$9
8/26	Chips and salsa with a tomato tasting	\$14
9/9	Fried okra and coleslaw (prepared by Abby Ferla)	\$15
9/23	Green salad and Fried Zucchini (prepared by Jose Antonio of Stephenson Farms)	\$26
	TOTAL	\$157

Equipment List:

Equipment was stored at La Familia Medical Center's Southside Clinic in the REACH office and the storage shed. The propane tank was stored at Lynn's house.

Burners	1 small bowl
Propane tank	1 medium bowl
Matches	1 large bowl
2 pans	2 cutting boards
1 pot	2 sharp knives / knife box
2 cast iron pans	Measuring spoons
3 pot tops	Dry measuring cups
1 wooden spoon	Liquid measuring cup
2 metal spoons	Steamer basket
1 small serving spoon (from CWK kitchen)	Strainer
Serving spoons	Juicer
3 serving plates (from CWK kitchen)	Grater
1 spatula	Zester
Tongs	Peeler
	Mortar and pestle
	Whisk

Pantry Supplies:

Oils
Vinegars
Spices
Salt and pepper

Serving Supplies:

Boats
Plates
Napkins
Forks

Cleaning Supplies:

Paper towels
2 dish tubs
Sponge
Dish soap
Trash bags
2 trash cans

Educational materials (CWK, REACH, Farmers' Marketing Association, self-produced):

1 chair
La Familia /CWK banner
Water jug
Plastic bags
1 oil cloth for table
1 oil cloth for car
(covering supplies
and putting under
propane tank)

Supplied by Farmers' Market:

1 table
1 tent
1 sandwich board
(for writing information)

Photo Voice: Using Photography in Marketing

provided by Jackie Munro of La Familia Medical Center

Photographs of your market, vendors and their products can serve as powerful promotion via social media (including Facebook) and other advertising. NMFMA research has shown that potential customers respond strongly to photographs of farmers, specifically when they are shown in the field harvesting. Potential customers also respond strongly to images that convey freshness and family.



Photo by Jose Antonio Serrano

Photos are easy to take—many people have phones with high quality cameras—and can easily be posted to Facebook and other social media outlets. Posting a quote from a farmer alongside a photo of them or their product also helps a viewer connect with the image.

*Siempre me he gustado el rancho.
Es algo natural. Estoy en aire libre.*

*I have always liked the country.
It's natural. I'm in fresh air.*



Photo by Augustin Orozco

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS



Look for **shapes and patterns** that look appealing to the eye.

Look for **cool colors (blues or greens)** next to **warm colors (reds or oranges)**. The contrast between colors makes photos pop!



Look for interesting **light** when taking pictures—photos like this one are sure to catch someone's eye. **Details** like this are also intriguing—get close!

Photo by Jose Antonio Serrano



When you're making **portraits**, never be afraid to ask someone to stand still! Take a few shots—you're first one usually won't be the best. And get nice and close to who ever you're shooting.

Experiment with the **angle** from which you make your portraits. Try shooting from below, from above, from the side or straight on. Include **signs and veggies** in your portraits.

BASIC INTERVIEW TIPS

Here are some sample questions you can ask your vendors. Include their responses alongside photos in social media and other marketing.

- *Why do you choose to farm? Why do you like to farm?*
- *Why do you come to sell at this market? What do you like about the atmosphere of this market?*
- *How can farming be difficult? How can farming be rewarding?*
- *Why do you think it is important for people to buy locally grown and produced products? Why do you think it is important for people to eat local food?*

MORE ABOUT PHOTO VOICE

Excited about this approach to advertising and want to learn more? 'Photo Voice' is framework for engaging *your vendors* in making photos and telling their own stories about agriculture. These stories can be turned into Facebook advertising, other marketing campaigns, flyers, exhibitions at community centers, etc.



Estas son fotografías de mi sobrino, Jesus. El quiere aprender todo lo que es agricultura. A él le encantan los productos frescos.

These are photographs of my nephew, Jesus. He wants to learn everything about agriculture and he loves fresh vegetables.

Photos this page by vendor Rocio Alcantar from Santa Fe's Southside Farmers' Market

Él estaba triste porque tenía sobrepeso. ¡Cuando le dije que me podía ayudar él estaba muy emocionado! Él se levanta a las 5 de la mañana para trabajar y ha estado muy feliz. Para él, trabajar es como jugar. Ha perdido un poco de peso. Antes, él jugaba videojuegos todo el tiempo. Ahora, trabaja en el jardín.

Jesus was sad that he was overweight, and when I told him that he could help me with my work he was so excited. He woke up at 5:00 in the morning the next day. For him, it's like playing. He has lost a bit of weight already. Before, he played video games all of the time. Now he works in the garden.



10 Building Positive Customer Relations

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Be familiar with ways to maintain positive customer relations
- > Be aware of strategies for retaining current customers

While customers appreciate freshness and quality in the produce they buy at a farmers' market, it literally goes without saying that they expect a positive experience and good relations with vendors and with any staff members with whom they have contact. The presence of good customer relations practices may never be noted, but its absence will surely be noticed and will affect customer loyalty.

METHODS FOR POSITIVE CUSTOMER RELATIONS AND CUSTOMER RETENTION

Positive relations depend on customers perceiving vendors, the market manager, and any other market staff and volunteers as respectful, fair, and friendly. Skills and training in customer service are invaluable in this respect. There are also a few ways to build customer service into the market's basic business practices.

Include procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes in the market rules. It is easier to resolve disputes between a customer and a grower or the market when market policies are already established, clearly written, and approved and understood by growers and the board of directors.

Reserve at least one seat on the board of directors for a consumer or community representative. While the market's mission may be to improve farmers' economic viability or to promote organic agriculture—in other words, customer service is not an explicit part of the market's mission—no market can thrive if it does not serve its customers and meet their needs. Including customer representation on the board contributes to the market's ability to succeed by meeting customers' needs and preferences.

Offer forums for customer feedback such as a suggestion box, comment cards, surveys, and focus groups. Besides maintaining and improving customer relations, these venues also provide data about customer preferences that you can use to improve products and services.

METHODS OF RETAINING CURRENT CUSTOMERS

In addition to positive customer relations, there are other ways to maintain customer loyalty. They include consistency, quality, and easy access to the market and its goods and services, as well as special services and promotions.

Offer Assistance to Customers: Consider having volunteers on hand to help carry groceries or heavy items (e.g., watermelons) to the car for elderly and disabled customers and those who have too much to carry alone. Have baskets or even wagons available so customers can manage their many purchases while at the market. If parking is far away, establish a loading zone close to the market and have



volunteers hold groceries with a claim check while customers pick up their vehicles.

Transportation to the Market: Organize shuttles for senior citizens and customers from outlying neighborhoods. Provide schedules for public transportation with stops close to the market.

Consistent Organization of Vendors: Locate vendors in the same spot from week to week so customers always know where to find their favorite products and vendors. If the market is sizeable, make a map of the vendors' stalls that also includes each vendor's name and contact information to encourage special orders and sales outside of the market.

Frequent Shopper Cards and Rewards: Vendors can punch cards or otherwise note amounts of purchases. For every \$50 or \$100 spent, a customer could earn a reward such as a market tote bag or t-shirt or \$5 off the next purchase.

Promotions: Raffles, tastings, music, and children's events all keep customers coming back to the market. See Section 8 for more on promotions.

Newsletter: If you have the capacity, consider starting an email or mailing list and keeping core customers up to date on market news, what is in season, and special events through a brief monthly newsletter. Invite customers to subscribe to the newsletter and give them a way to unsubscribe to an email list. Also, be sure never to give away or sell your email or mailing list without customers' permission.



CONCLUSION

Basic friendliness, respect, and courtesy are the most important aspects of positive customer relations, so if there is any question that guidelines or training may be needed, those things should be a priority. Other strategies may require more staff time and energy than the market has available; if that is the case, then do not attempt to implement them. It is better to do the basics well than to attempt more energy-intensive strategies and implement them poorly. As the market grows and develops greater capacity, you may choose to implement additional customer relations strategies.

11 Product Development and Merchandising

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Understand the basic concepts and processes in product development and merchandising
- > Apply your understanding to strategically develop products and merchandise for your market

Successful farmers' markets evolve to keep pace with changes in consumer preferences and demographics. Basic consumer demands for quality, value, and convenience are always of paramount importance, but remaining successful also requires a dynamic approach to meeting changing demands. In some cases, the manager guides these changes by bringing in new vendors. In addition, the manager and farmers can work together or the manager can advise farmers in the development of new products and merchandising of current products.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Previous sections considered the market itself as the product to be developed; in this section, the goods that are sold at the market are the products under consideration. The rhythms of agricultural production lend the market a natural dynamic; selection changes as various crops are in season. Beyond seasonal availability, though, product development can mean the addition of new products and adding value to existing products.

Adding New Products Can Include:

- New product lines at the market, such as meat, dairy products, fish, or flowers
- Expanding existing product lines by adding new varieties of fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, etc.
- Increasing the selection available

Adding Value to Existing Products Can Include:

- Improving on the quality, value, or convenience of existing products
- Improving packaging, labeling, and information available to customers
- Improving food safety and "traceability"

The addition of prepared meals and other conveniences can come under the heading of new products or of adding value to existing products, depending on how the products are offered.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FROM CONCEPT TO MARKET

As is true of strategic marketing for the farmers' market as a whole, product development begins with research and observation. Farmers may try new varieties of a crops or pick up on a new trend they have seen somewhere. For example, about five years ago, a certain farmer introduced shishito peppers to the Santa Fe



Farmers' Market by cooking up many pans full of shishitos week after week for customer sampling. As the peppers caught on, more vendors started growing and selling them, and now shishito peppers are popular at many markets around the state. Another example is a vendor who decides to try a prepared line of pasta sauces as he sees an opportunity for creating a product that customers who are interested in convenience will buy.

Farmers' markets provide vendors with access to unparalleled customer feedback. Small-scale farmers can use this feature of the market to great advantage by test-marketing new crops and products and by noting and responding to the emergence

of trends in consumer preferences. By observing and recording the responses of different groups of customers (by age, ethnicity, and location), vendors can develop products and add value in ways that appeal to specific segments of the broad population of consumers.

CONCLUSION

In addition to developing and merchandising new products, farmers' markets grow by constant attention to the quality of existing products. Subsequent sections address issues of value, quality, and pricing.



12 Value and Quality

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Be aware of the manager's role in quality assurance
- > Provide resources for establishing a quality assurance program for your market

Customers shop for value. Good value equates to the right mix of convenience, quality, and price. While price and quality decisions are ultimately up to each vendor, farmers' market management should strive to ensure that customers are finding good value from week to week and season to season. This section addresses issues of quality assurance while the next is devoted to pricing.

PRODUCT MERCHANDISING

Merchandising includes packaging, labeling, positioning, and price. Vendors should be aware of any product-liability risks that could be affected by packaging or labeling. For example, ingredient lists that alert consumers with allergies to potential hazards and appropriate labels on inedible plant products intended for decoration only can reduce the risks involved with marketing some value-added products. These risks should be addressed at every step of product development and may warrant consultation with a legal professional experienced in product liability as well as relevant regulatory agencies.

EACH VENDOR'S ATTENTION TO QUALITY AFFECTS THE MARKET AS A WHOLE

Meeting everyone's expectations all of the time is seldom possible, but some issues, such as food safety and fair pricing practices, demand consistent attention and high standards without compromise. One vendor's careless or ignorant disregard for proper food-safety practices can result in illness and put a market's reputation at risk, hurting everyone involved and possibly resulting in damaging legal action. Likewise, a single vendor who leaves customers feeling cheated can compromise customer loyalty, adversely affecting everyone's sales and the fun atmosphere in which markets thrive.

Fortunately, there are a few simple steps to follow and numerous resources available to help ensure that the market consistently provides the highest value possible to the majority of its customers. To achieve this goal, a market should establish quality standards and develop a program to monitor and evaluate its vendors' products and services. The program should contain measures to educate vendors about maintaining and improving quality, as well as how to set fair market prices that meet their need for financial sustainability.

ESTABLISHING A QUALITY ASSURANCE PROTOCOL

Research shows that an overwhelming majority of customers expect to find high quality and freshness at farmers' markets. Meeting this expectation requires an understanding of customer preferences. Consumers of farmers' market products



perceive quality in many ways that depend on the type of product, how it is to be prepared, when it will be consumed, and who will be consuming it. In addition to properties such as freshness, flavor, and cosmetic appeal, quality concerns address issues such as food safety, production methods, and place of origin.

Some basic measures of produce quality for common products at a farmers' market include:

ALL PRODUCTS

- Freshness
- When harvested/prepared, postharvest handling and storage practices, etc.
- Production practices
- Organic, free-range, grass-fed, etc.
- Place of origin
- Local versus regional or out of state, label examples, etc.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Flavor, sweet, rich, bitter, bland, etc.
- Texture—crisp, juicy, soft, mealy, etc.
- Appearance – color, shape, blemishes, cleanliness, etc.
- Size
- Degree of maturity—green, ripe or mature, overly ripe

MEATS

- Flavor
- Amount of fat
- Cut—filet, boneless, etc.
- Fresh or frozen

EGGS

- Size and color

DAIRY

- Flavor, texture, and fat content

BAKED GOODS

- Flavor, texture, and nutritional value

PRESERVES, JAMS, AND JELLIES

- Flavor
- Color
- Texture
- Percent fruit content
- Amount and type of sweetener

Every market should take an active role in quality assurance, working above and with each vendor's individual efforts. A team effort with feedback from growers, customers, and other agencies and organizations will help to establish and even exceed benchmarks for quality. Communication and education also will aid vendors in improving overall quality and in fine-tuning their products to meet customer preferences. Remember that merchandising and display also affect customer perceptions of quality.

PUTTING A QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS IN PLACE: SIX STEPS TOWARD ENSURING QUALITY AT A FARMERS' MARKET

1. Create a market quality assurance board or committee with growers, customers, restaurateurs, nutritionists, and Cooperative Extension specialists. A diverse board or committee is more likely to represent all stakeholders' interests. Learn about and include your customers' demographic perspectives on quality. Your quality board should work proactively with other agencies that deal with quality issues rather than waiting for problems to surface. See the following section for some examples of such agencies. Its role in the market should be considered at the outset. Will the body be advisory only or will it have certain powers? For example, if members of a quality assurance board make recommendations that are rejected by the manager or board of directors and there are no clearly established roles and responsibilities, hard feelings may result. In such a case, the overall effect could be detrimental to the market as an organization and a quality assurance board begun with the best of intentions may have a negative impact on the market. Think through your decisions and processes for assuring high quality at the market.
2. Learn what customers want through surveys, tastings, and quality-judging events. Blind taste tests can include non-local produce from outlets such as supermarkets.
3. Write a policy that defines a set of quality characteristics in simple terms so that everyone understands what the benchmarks are.
4. Sample produce yourself and talk with vendors. Learn about their production practices, seasonal effects, and other factors that influence quality. Feedback helps everyone focus on improving quality.
5. Assist and support vendors with their quality-control efforts. One of the biggest challenges to quality at outdoor markets is keeping fresh produce cool throughout the day. Every effort should be made to provide shade, especially for vendors with

heat-sensitive products like greens and lettuce mixes. Assign stall spaces accordingly, placing vendors of such products in areas with maximum shade, such as beneath a tree or on the north-facing side of the street. Keep a few extra spray bottles handy to lend to vendors and make sure water is available.

6. Inform customers of your efforts. For example, publish taste-test results in your newsletter. Watch and listen for customer input on quality at the market and in written suggestions, comments, and letters. Help the public and press understand market quality in press releases and through education at the market. Sponsor a local chef, nutritionist, or master gardener to train customers on how to choose quality produce and how to store produce at home to prolong shelf life and protect quality and nutritional value.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS

From time to time, a customer may express dissatisfaction with a vendor's product or service. The following suggestions are offered in addition to help specifically with quality-related issues:

- First, determine whether or not the customer has brought the complaint to the attention of the vendor in question. While it may be appropriate for the market manager to assist with mediation, most quality issues should be resolved directly between the customer and the vendor. Such complaints typically can be handled by a simple refund or exchange.
- Keep a written record of all complaints. This will be useful in identifying problem vendors and problem customers. Make sure all volunteers and staff members at the market are informed of the complaint policy and notify management immediately of any problems.
- When possible, discuss complaints with a vendor after the market rather than during busy periods or when other customers are present.
- If a complaint is serious (related to food safety, for example) or a vendor has generated numerous complaints, bring this to the attention of the board. You may then choose to issue a written notice to the vendor. Request that the vendor provide you with a written response detailing how he or she plans to resolve the issue.
- If a vendor refuses or is unable to resolve the matter after repeated notices, it may be necessary to consider more serious action. Make sure your bylaws cover such action, whatever it may be.
- Be aware of potentially serious complaints such as those that relate to food safety and fraud. Do not hesitate to con-

tact appropriate authorities immediately on such matters. Delaying only increases the risks to customers as well as the liability of the manager, the vendor, and the market as a whole. Some municipalities require all merchants, including vendors at farmers' markets, to carry product liability insurance. It might be worth researching this option as a risk management strategy and for peace of mind.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

A number of organizations and agencies deal with product and service quality.

Some cities have even begun to establish food policies that impact the sale of food products to city agencies and at city-sponsored events, including farmers' markets.

Be informed and develop a rapport with the people with whom you will be dealing on quality issues. Help vendors stay informed as well. Many of them may be selling in different cities and counties and regulations that govern food quality and safety often vary from place to place. Here is a list of organization and agencies you might contact:

CITY GOVERNMENT

- Local health codes
- Product liability requirements
- Food policies
- Consumer assurance agencies (see an example on the following page)
- Small business associations (to help vendors with pricing and profit/loss)

COUNTY

- Health department
- Agricultural commissioner
- Cooperative Extension (information for vendors on postharvest handling, food safety, and profit/loss studies)
- County marketing programs

STATE

- Department of agriculture
- Organic certification programs
- Consumer protection agencies
- State quality regulations for agricultural products

FEDERAL

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) The Agricultural Marketing Service administers programs that facilitate efficient, fair marketing

of U.S. agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops. Some USDA-AMS programs, such as the one for livestock, mandate inspection for quality control; others offer guidelines for quality standards.

Visit the agency's website at www.ams.usda.gov. For quality standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/standards

- The National Organic Program USDA-AMS also administers the new National Organic Program. This program affects the production, processing, and marketing of all agricultural products labeled "organic" in the U.S. For more information, visit the program website at www.ams.usda.gov/nop or contact: Richard Mathews, Program Manager Telephone: 202.720.3252 USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP Fax: 202.205.7808 Room 4008-South Building email: NOPWebmaster@usda.gov 1400 and Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250-0020

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- Markets in Your Area. A good place to start with quality and pricing questions is with other markets in your area. Visit them periodically and consult with other managers. Supermarkets, particularly those known for quality, are also worth visiting.
- Qualifying Organizations. There are many organizations that rate or certify food product quality. Some to consider are: Demeter (certifies "biodynamic" produce), Kosher (there are about 300 Kosher certification organizations in the U.S.), Labor (United Farm Workers and other labels). Make sure vendors use proper signs and postings.

CONCLUSION

This section has introduced strategies your market can employ to improve and ensure the quality of products offered at the market. The next will address issues of pricing.



13 Pricing for Value

THIS SECTION WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

- > Understand the role of pricing in customers' perceptions of quality
- > Understand the mechanism of pricing and provide vendors with helpful information

Pricing is as important to a customer's perception of value as quality. While a customer may be willing to pay a little more for higher-quality produce, most consumers shop on a budget and will search for the right value that affordably meets their needs. Likewise, a farmer might be willing to lower prices to sell higher volumes but ultimately must cover his or her input costs and make enough of a profit to remain a viable business. The right price balance provides customers with an appropriate, affordable value and vendors with enough profit for financial security. Over time, vendors and their customers naturally develop a mutually equitable relationship around price, but a market's management can take an active roll in facilitating this process.

As a basic rule, price should represent production costs plus whatever gross profit the market will bear. As with quality, though, a customer's perception of a fair price varies depending on individual preferences and resources. Similarly, every vendor has a "bottom line" that depends on input costs related to production expenses and personal needs. These differences result in a range of acceptable prices at every market.

USING COMPETITORS' PRICES AND CUSTOMERS' WILLINGNESS TO PAY TO SET PRICES

New vendors, and even some experienced ones, may not be certain how much to charge at a farmers' market, and prices often vary from one market to the next based on customer demographics and competition from other outlets. As a starting point, vendors often use current retail prices at local grocery stores as a guide. The ability to charge retail prices at farmers' markets is one of the primary reasons many farmers choose direct marketing for their produce. While retail prices can serve as a useful benchmark, these prices may not accurately represent the true parameters of pricing at your market.

On the other hand, some vendors use the farmers' market to gauge their prices at other outlets. The direct customer feedback at the market provides invaluable information on consumer preferences.

USING PRODUCTION COSTS TO SET PRICES

Vendors should begin to determine price by at least estimating their production costs for each product offered. In this context, production costs include all costs up to the point of purchase. Production costs provide a lower limit on



what vendors should charge. An exception might be items sold as “loss-leaders”—products discounted below cost to attract customers into making other purchases from which the vendor profits. This basic guideline for pricing assumes farmers know their cost of production, an assumption that, as many farmers’ market managers know, is not always realistic. Several resources are available to help farmers and small business owners learn about costs and returns (profit/loss) studies. County Cooperative Extension offices, small business development centers, and local community colleges and school district’s adult education programs are good places to start. When working with farmers who do not know their costs of production, a manager’s role may be limited to encouraging them to take a basic business, accounting, and/or spreadsheet course to develop the skills necessary to set appropriate prices. Some small-scale vendors may sell at the market more for enjoyment and the social aspects than as a primary source of income. Urge these vendors to be considerate and not to “dump” their produce at a low price or undersell a vendor who depends on market sales for a livelihood.

CUSTOMERS EXPECT COMPETITIVE PRICING

Published surveys give a general view of what farmers’ market customers expect or are willing to pay and what farmers actually charge:

- A survey of New Jersey farmers’ market patrons showed that the majority of the survey respondents (56 percent) believed that prices are lower at farmers’ markets, 25 percent did not expect any difference, and 21 percent anticipated higher prices than at other retail facilities. Only 16 percent indicated that price was the most important characteristic affecting their decision of where to shop.
- University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources researchers found that customers valued the ideas that their purchases supported a local family farm and that products were locally grown or produced. The most important reasons for purchasing locally grown products were freshness, better taste, and the opportunity to support local farmers. Forty-eight percent of consumers would be willing to pay an amount equal to the typical retail price.

These two examples are typical and suggest that customers generally expect farmers’ market prices to be competitive with grocery stores, though they might be willing to pay a little more for higher-quality, locally grown produce.

CONDUCT YOUR OWN PRICE COMPARISONS

Remember that results will vary and do not represent trends everywhere or for all products during all seasons. Your market should try its own comparisons to determine how competitive it is with nearby grocery stores and even other farmers’ markets. When conducting a price study, choose a range of products and average prices from several vendors. Compare these prices to those for similar produce at local alternative outlets.

Remember that some quality characteristics, such as organic or select varieties and grades, can carry a price premium at either outlet. In other words, endeavor to ensure that you are comparing apples with apples and oranges with oranges.

ANALYSIS

Tabulate the data using a spreadsheet and calculate the differences between the market and nearby grocery stores.

IF YOUR MARKET HAS EQUAL OR LOWER PRICES

If you find that your market prices are consistently equal to or less than other retail outlets in the area, you could make low or competitive prices the focus of some of your advertising. Such a result might also be reason for vendors to consider charging more. Before doing so, though, urge them to consider customer demographics. Market shoppers may have smaller incomes than those who shop at the supermarket and a price increase could force them to shop elsewhere or to buy less. If vendors’ prices are lower, though, and they often sell out of products before the end of the market, then it is definitely time to think about a price increase.

IF YOUR MARKET HAS HIGHER PRICES

If you find that your market prices are consistently higher than those at other outlets in the area, you would emphasize quality in your advertisements and promotions. Offering higher quality than the competition enhances perceived value, even at a slightly higher price. As is the case with lower prices, vendors should analyze their sales and consider customer demographics before lowering prices. Use your market’s price survey data to identify strengths and weaknesses that factor into determining your market’s overall performance.

PRICE FLUCTUATIONS

Fluctuations in prices are natural for products with variable input costs, seasonal effects, and changing supply and demand. Help customers understand why the price for a given product may be high early in the season, lower during the peak, and then higher again as availability waxes and wanes.



Vendors may also change prices during a single market day as they adjust to consumer demand and as overall product quality declines as the day progresses. Quality declines during a market for two main reasons: Exposure to heat and handling and sorting by customers.

Since many perishable products that are not sold the first day cannot be sold another day, some vendors lower prices significantly at the end of the day to sell the surplus rather than bring it home. Vendors should consider how this impacts subsequent sales. Do customers intentionally come late to pick up bargains? Will they react unfavorably if they see the same product at a higher price the following week? These considerations require vendors to monitor sales trends in response to price changes. In some cases, it might be better to hold prices constant during the market and donate the surplus produce to a food bank or gleaning organization rather than lower the price and encourage bargain hunters. The manager can help vendors make such decisions by keeping track of customer traffic at the market from day to day and week to week and noting trends that individual vendors may not be able to track.

AVOID PRICE FIXING

While it may seem unlikely that anyone would enact Sherman Antitrust laws against a market or vendor, the potential does exist. In one case, a complaint was made against a market because of a clause in its rules that stated that “vendors cannot price their goods more than 25 percent lower than the going rate for that item.” The intention of this rule was to limit

“dumping” of produce at the market, but it had unintended effects. You can avoid similar controversies at your market by letting vendors set their prices independently. It is better to protect your vendors by maintaining a carefully balanced market mix that meets customer demand without too much oversupply than to try to regulate prices arbitrarily.

CONCLUSION

In this section you learned about the mechanisms vendors can use to set prices, strategies you as the manager can use to determine if vendors’ prices are competitive, and ways to improve your market’s pricing. Many of these strategies, and others in this guide, depend on your willingness and ability to collect, analyze, and make good use of available information and on vendors’ willingness and ability to keep accurate records and use them to guide decisions.

CONCLUSION

To repeat a few thoughts (edited slightly) from the beginning of this Guide:

- Farmers' markets, whatever their mission and position at any point in time, exist within a larger neighborhood, community, and set of social and economic conditions, all of which change constantly.
- Strategic marketing, done well, allows the market to maintain and even increase its revenue consistent with the market's vision and mission.
- If managers and boards do not employ strategic marketing, they may find their market floundering as a result of failing to anticipate or keep pace with changes in its environment.
- Today's farmers' markets exist in a world of great competition. When consumers do not have to wait until summer for

fresh raspberries, farmers who grow raspberries to sell at a farmers' market are at a disadvantage unless they can carve out a market position that preserves their place in customers' hearts—and budgets.

The New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association hopes this Guide provides some useful tools for helping you assess your market's position, as well as to determine goals and strategies helpful in achieving your mission and driving revenue for your vendors. Marketing is an ongoing and ever-changing process, and therefore this Guide is also intended to be a living, evolving document. You will find it housed on the NMFMA's website, and over time, the NMFMA will adapt it to reflect new ideas, resources, and tools. Thank you for taking the time to look through this Guide and continuing to hone your skills and knowledge about your market and community.

