

# New Mexico Farmers' Market Manager Resource Guide



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**[www.FarmersMarketsNM.org](http://www.FarmersMarketsNM.org)**

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## **Duties of the Market Manager**

The duties of a market manager make up an extremely varied job description. Market managers wear a number of different hats, and the hats change with the seasons. While farmers markets tend to be seasonal, there is plenty of work to be done by farmers' market managers throughout the year. The following is a summary of all the tasks that farmers' market managers need to perform.

### **Pre-Season**

- Develop advertising and promotions plan
  - Media campaign
  - Promotional materials—signs, banners, brochures
  - Special events
- Work with market board/committee on market systems (review, update, and create) to promote sustainability for the market
  - Rules and regulations
  - Strategic planning for the market
  - Board/committee development
- Develop market operations
  - Select opening/closing dates for market
  - Secure necessary permits
  - Secure market liability insurance (available through NMFMA)
  - Review market site for improvements
- Submit membership application, dues, and promotional funds request to NMFMA
- Recruit farmers/vendors
  - Develop recruitment strategy and execute
- Establish budget/funding sources
- Develop community relationships
- Hold pre-season vendor meetings to communicate all of the above
- Ensure WIC/Senior paperwork is current

### **In Season**

- Enroll farmers and vendors in the market through vendor agreements/ market applications
  - Maintain database of all vendors, contact information, and licenses if needed
- Attend to finances—collect vendor fees
- Assign vendor spaces to seasonal vendors, assign spaces each week to daily vendors
- Place all signage prior to market opening
- Ensure all market rules and state/city regulations are adhered to
- Carry out promotional plan
- Resolve any disputes that arise with vendors, customers, or local government
- Maintain market grounds in a safe manner
- Operate info booth for consumer questions, educational materials, EBT transactions, etc.
- Enroll new farmers in the WIC and Senior FMNP and educate vendors about rules
- Stamp WIC & Senior Checks
- If participating, keep transaction records for EBT/debit and reimburse vendors
- Act as liaison between vendors and market board/advisory committee
- Conduct periodic customer counts and collect vendor sales information
- Conduct farm inspections as needed
- Send in requests for promotional expense reimbursements to the NMFMA

## **Post-Season**

- Evaluate the market season—what went right, what could be improved upon
- Submit your market data to the NMFMA
- Attend the NMFMA winter market manager conference

## **MARKET RULES**

When market rules are clear, concise, and easy to understand, they can minimize conflicts in the marketplace. Each market participant operates under the same rules, with the same requirements. By reading and understanding the rules, each vendor is aware of what is expected of them: standards of conduct, what can be sold, and how to handle grievances with other vendors or grievances with the operation of the market.

### **Tips for Creating Effective Market Rules**

There are several things to consider when establishing rules for farmers' markets. First, the rules define and complement the mission, or goal, of the market. The market mission can include such aims as meeting social and economic goals, revitalizing a local economy, creating vibrant public spaces, providing food access to otherwise food-insecure neighborhoods, reclaiming and revitalizing public space, and creating opportunities for local agriculture. For example, if the driving force of the market is to provide a venue for local farmers, then the rules should reflect that by limiting the vendors to farmers only. Likewise, limiting the geographic region where participating farmers reside supports a local theme. If your mission is to provide local residents with access to fresh foods, then your rules may be broader in regard to who may sell in the market, including a broader product mix.

Rules should be reviewed and revised by the market management on a regular basis. Situations change and new issues arise. A review of the rules by the market's governing body will assure that the rules reflect the current state of the market.

### **Basic Elements of Effective Market Rules**

The rules are an important market document that requires careful consideration and input from the vendors. The rules represent an agreement between the vendor and the market and establish each participant's rights and responsibilities within the market. The application process for entering a farmers market should include a copy of the rules and a statement on the application itself that states that the applicant has been given a copy of the rules and will agree to abide by them. The applicant's signature on the application then becomes a legally binding contract to comply with the market rules.

**Market governance.** The rules should identify the governance of the market. Identify who operates the market, who sets the policies and procedures of the market and who applies those policies and procedures. Vendors in the market should know who will have the authority to implement the rules of the market on a daily basis.

**General operations.** Let your vendors know the season of operation and the days and hours of the market so they can be prepared. This section will also give the vendors the information they need about set-up times and when they are allowed to leave. All details of operations should be clearly defined in the rules so there is no ambiguity and all market participants know what is expected of them.

**Who may sell in the market.** This section is critical to market operations and to fulfilling

the market's mission. The definition of who can sell needs to be written in a way that can be verified and enforced. For example, many markets require that products being sold must be 100% grown by bona fide agricultural producers. To verify that the products are 100% self-grown, a farm inspection may be necessary. The authority to conduct such inspections should be a part of the rules.

Also in this section is a definition of the products that can be sold at the market. For example, all farm products grown and sold by the producer of the products can be sold at the market. Some products require additional explanation. For example, if crafts are allowed in the market, what are the factors that will constitute an acceptable craft? Will they need to be juried? Can kits be used? Must all components of the craft be from a local source? The same applies to baked goods. Must the product be made from "scratch?" What about the ingredients? Must they be local or a preponderance of local ingredients?

In addition to what products can be sold in the market, the rules should make clear that each market participant must comply with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations dealing with the products they are selling. It is also important that every vendor selling a product that requires some form of licensing or permit keep these current and on file with market.

**Guidelines for selling.** When everyone participating in the market adheres to the same guidelines for selling in the market, then all vendors are given an equal opportunity to present their products for sale. Customers will be treated fairly and courteously. Some examples of rules that would fall under this category include:

- **Signage.** Many markets require that vendors post signage that identifies who they are and where they are from. Additionally, many

markets require that vendors post their prices. Many customers will not ask for a price if it is not posted and they like to know that they are being treated equally.

- Other rules will govern how vendors must conduct themselves to ensure that the market is a comfortable environment for consumers and a fair place for all vendors to participate. For example, the rules may call for "no hawking, proselytizing, or loud music." Other rules may call for no smoking or no alcoholic beverages at the market.

**Stall fees and assignment.** This section will deal with the fees involved in participating in a market, the size and location of selling space, and the rights of vendors in stall selection and retention. Fees should reflect the mission of the market. For example, if the intent of the market is to support local agriculture, the market may impose higher fees for food processors or crafters. The rules will also spell out how spaces can be rented—seasonally, daily, or, in some cases, shared. For those renting on a seasonal basis, they are usually given privileges such as a reduced annual fee or the right to a permanent location.

**Compliance.** How does market management handle complaints, rules violations, and grievances? This section will provide all participants a full understanding of what to expect when issues arise. The compliance section must also outline the ramifications of violating the market rules. This typically includes a series of verbal and written warnings, suspensions, and expulsion from the market. The intent is to make it clear to vendors that the rules will be enforced and there is a consequence to non-compliance.

## RECRUITING VENDORS

Customers expect choices and abundance when they shop at farmers' markets. Finding farmers to offer customers the level of diversity they expect and desire is perhaps a market manager's biggest challenge. In many areas, farms have given way to shopping centers or housing developments. In other areas, competition for farmers is stiff, as farmers are already committed to other area markets. But for a market to be successful, it is important that there are sufficient numbers of farmers and choices to satisfy customer demand for options.

**Identify Product Needs.** In order to determine recruitment needs and opportunities, the manager must first identify product needs. Start by surveying the products already in the market. A simple list of all products in the market and the quantities available, along with the numbers of farmers carrying each product, will help you see what is missing and what may be in short supply. Keep in mind the adage that one farmer carrying a product is a monopoly, two is collusion, and three is free enterprise.

Next, review the customer base of the market (economic level, ethnicities, etc.). You'll also need to know the numbers of customers who shop at the market to know if you have sufficient quantities to satisfy customer demand. Sharing the results of any customer surveys with existing vendors should help them to better understand customer needs and wants.

**Finding Farmers for Your Market.** Recruiting farmers to round out your market's product offerings can be a time-consuming task and one that will challenge even the most seasoned market manager. Some managers simply visit other local farmers' markets, talk to producers who are selling the products they

need, and try to convince them to sell in their market as well. This is not the favored route. It hurts the first market that has already recruited this farmer and is depending on his continued participation in their market. Furthermore, it does not solve the problem of too few farmers to satisfy customer demand in all the markets. The NMFMA strongly encourages neighboring markets to cooperate.

There are other more constructive techniques to reach farmers. Your county Cooperative Extension office works with local farmers. Seek their assistance in reaching out to the growers with the products you seek. While they may not be able to give you contact information due to confidentiality, they may make the initial contact for you, allow you to include an article in their next newsletter, or send an introduction letter to the farmers for you, providing you agree to pay the postage. Their introduction lends credibility to your letter, because they have the trust of the farmers you wish to speak with.

Another source for locating farmers is producer associations. By matching the product you are seeking with the appropriate association, you may find a laundry list of farmers that you can contact. A Google search will help you to locate the organizations in your state or region. Contact information for the association, if not the list of membership, will be found on their website. A call to the Executive Director will help to narrow down a list of possible farmers in your market area. Remember, this is only an introduction to farmers; you will still need to do the legwork to show farmers that your market is a viable outlet for their products and worth their effort to participate.

The Farm Bureau may also help you to locate farmers in your area. A call to the county officers or field advisor who works in a multi-county region to request assistance may get

you a list of producers in your market's region. While they can supply you names of farmers, they may not be able to give you phone numbers and addresses. These can be searched out in the phone directory or with an Internet search. The Farm Bureau may also be willing to put a request for farmers for your market in their newsletter.

The USDA Service Center and the Farm Service Agency may be helpful in sourcing farmers for your market. In addition, the Soil and Water Conservation District, the Farmers Home Administration, and the USDA Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program work with local farmers in various capacities.

What about good old-fashioned marketing? Send press releases to local newspapers, agriculture publications, growers' newsletters, and extension service newsletters. Place signage in farm supply stores. Ask local farmers for leads. Attend local farmer workshops.

Don't overlook non-traditional sources either. For example, urban gardening programs can add vendors to your market and a connection to the community. Gardeners may be interested in participating in the farmers market as an outlet for their excess produce. Urban gardeners may find that farmers' markets are a great venue to test their skills at production and marketing before they venture into agriculture as a vocation. Whatever their reason for participation, encouraging urban gardeners to participate in the market creates a tie to the community.

### **What Do Farmers Need to Know?**

Before farmers can decide to participate at your farmers' market, they must evaluate whether it fits into their time schedule and marketing and financial plans.

1. Where is the market located? Is it in a

downtown location, shopping center, or residential area? Highlight the farmer-friendly aspects of your site such as adequate off-loading space and parking.

2. What is the day, time, and season of the market?

3. Who are the market's customers? What are the market's average customer counts?

4. What are the sales volumes of your current vendors?

5. What are the market rules and regulations?

6. What are the fees for participating in your market?

7. Who is already in the market?

8. What is required to be a vendor at the market? For example, will farmers be required to carry any special licenses or insurance?

9. What programs does the market participate in that farmers can take advantage of, such as WIC/Senior and EBT?

10. What types of marketing efforts does the market do to attract customers? Share samples of advertisements, posters, banners, press releases, etc.

**Outreach to Farmers.** Once you have a list of potential farmers to contact and you have all your information that farmers will need to know about your market, how do you effectively reach farmers? Many market managers start their contact with an introductory letter. The letter will give the farmer basic information about the market and the opportunities it offers and invite the farmer to take advantage of the opportunities at the market. Be sure to include contact information for the market manager. However, the letter is only the first step and will rarely result in a new vendor for the market by itself. Follow-up steps are critical to complete the recruitment process.

Farm visits can be effective. Call the farmer and make an appointment to stop out to visit. Bring all the information the farmer will need to make an informed decision to participate in

your market. While at the farm, let the farmer show you the operation and a talk about what they do, how they do it and why. When you talk about the market, be honest. Leave a vendor agreement and copy of your market's rules if you do not already have a commitment. While you're visiting with farmers, you may want to ask for recommendations of other farmers that they think you should talk to.

Winter workshops are a great means to reach out to farmers. You can set up an exhibit in a resource fair or trade show of existing farmer workshops and conferences to showcase the opportunities at your market. You may also consider hosting a workshop of your own. This can be a one-day or half-day event that centers on a topic that is of interest to the farmers in your area. Sessions could cover successful strategies for selling at farmers' markets, season extension strategies, food safety regulations, and post-harvest handling, or any number of other topics that would be attractive to farmers. Be sure that your workshop has a session that focuses on your market: how to participate, why farmers should participate, and what your market is all about. Arm workshop attendants with all the information they will need to decide that participating in your market is the right decision for their farm and encourage them to complete the vendor applications onsite.

A final follow-up to your other attempts to reach out to farmers is to host a pre-season vendor meeting/potluck. At this meeting the farmers and vendors at the market will learn all the details about the upcoming year, including the promotions and events schedule, any new rules and regulations, new programs and services, changes or additions to the market fees, etc. Invite all potential new farmers to this meeting. At the end of the season, hold a harvest potluck to thank the farmers, celebrate, and build community.

## MARKET BUDGETS

By providing a picture of the market's anticipated revenue and expenses, a budget allows the market organization to make important financial plans and decisions. It will clearly show whether there is a need for additional fundraising, whether there is a need to adjust fee structures, or whether a need to "tighten the belt" on expenses.

### Expenses

Be as realistic as possible about the expenses attached to each line item. You may also want to add a line item for "contingency" to cover any expenses that were not expected at the time the budget was developed.

**Salaries.** Most markets that compensate their managers choose to hire their manager as an independent contractor. The market does not have to pay the standard employment taxes: federal and state withholding, unemployment, workers compensation, etc. The manager is responsible for their own self-employment tax filings. At year's end, the market (or sponsoring organization) files form 1099 with the market manager reporting the total amount of payments made during the year.

**Insurance.** Most markets choose to carry a minimum of Commercial General Liability insurance. This is a policy known as "slip and fall" insurance. Should someone be injured at the market, the insurance would provide protection for the market and the property owner against any claim made by an injured party. Insurance is available through the NMFMA at the cost of \$6.50 per vendor. Some markets may choose to require food processors to carry product liability insurance as well.

**Promotional Expenses.** Whether doing formal advertising using local media, creating banners and flyers, or getting more creative

with your promotions such as a social media campaign, you are going to incur expenses with promotional efforts. The NMFMA offers a base budget of \$300 plus \$5 per vendor for promotional expenses to all member markets. Contact NMFMA staff if you are unsure of what can be covered.

**Facilities.** Very few markets in New Mexico pay rent for their site. However, other expenses that can arise include city permits, port-a-potty rental, or other supplies.

**Office Expenses.** Even an office as simple as a corner in a market manager's kitchen will incur office expenses. Office supplies of paper, envelopes, and stamps are the bare minimum of expense.

**Professional Development.** Market managers should continually improve their skills as managers. This not only helps the market manager to do a better job, it also helps them to maintain interest in the work and have a sense that they are growing on the job. Manager training is available through the NMFMA every winter. Though there is no cost to member markets for the conference, travel expenses should be budgeted for.

### **Income**

The main income for most markets is vendor space rentals—the amount each market participant must pay for the use of space each market day. Most markets charge a standard day rate or a discounted seasonal fee. Some markets elect to charge a higher fee or a percentage of sales to food processors and crafters.

**Contributory Income:** Market managers and organizations sometimes have sponsors that help with a portion of their budget. This might be an outlay of cash to the market to place in the general fund, or it could be an in-kind sponsorship, where they provide a benefit that

eliminates a budget category as an expense to the market. For example, a sponsor may feel that the market matches their organization's mission and can hire a manager, paid through their organization's funds. Grants can help support market operations, as well. Grants are typically short-term funds that are tied to specific programs, events, or services.

### **Putting the Budget to Use**

If the market is doing well, and the income outweighs the expenses, the market needs to decide how to handle the net income. The market can choose to make improvements such as purchasing equipment for cooking demonstrations, erecting permanent signage, expanding promotional efforts, or improving the market grounds. It may also decide to create new programs that will benefit its consumers and farmers. For example, some markets have developed home delivery programs that bring farmers' market foods to homebound community residents, giving access to more local residents and increasing sales opportunities for the farmers. Other markets choose to bank the extra income as a reserve fund for lean years or to save for a larger market project, such as a structure.

If, on the other hand, there is a budget shortfall, there are a number of ways a market can raise funds: seeking sponsors, holding fundraisers, selling market merchandise, and applying for grants. (See the Fundraising section)

## FUNDRAISING

**Merchandise.** Selling items that promote your market—bags, T-shirts, aprons, baskets, etc.—is a popular income-generating practice. Shoppers who frequent farmers markets like to show that they support this community effort. The NMFMA can provide your market with a customized logo for your market, and Tewa Tees ([www.tewatees.com](http://www.tewatees.com)) is a New Mexico company that can produce customized shirts, aprons and bags for your market. Wholesale baskets made by farmers in Ghana can be ordered through Kruger Farms ([www.krugersbaskets.com](http://www.krugersbaskets.com)).

**Sponsorships.** Businesses and organizations are going to want to associate with your market, so remember that they need you just as much as you need them. Sponsors are cash or in-kind donors that help to defray the expenses of the market or a particular project or event of the market. By choosing to become a market sponsor, the company or organization will have a link to the market's customer base. The sponsorship involves negotiation between the market and the sponsor, until there is a consensus of mutual benefit.

When considering a company for a sponsorship opportunity with the market, you must consider a number of issues:

- What is the market's mission? Does the company you are considering for sponsorship fit this mission? If there is not a mesh of missions, it may send a confusing message to your customers about who the market is, what you are trying to accomplish as a market, and thus result in bad publicity or resentment from your consumers.
- What are your customers' expectations of the market? Will the company be seen by your customers as supporting your local economy?
- What are the company's expectations as a sponsor? As an example of a successful

sponsorship, the Crescent City Farmers Market in New Orleans worked with Tabasco to underwrite a market event. In exchange for promotion at the market, at a cost of \$5,000 to Tabasco, they got a banner (which Tabasco designed) to hang over a booth where their chefs do cooking demonstrations. So instead of the market's regular "Chef's Corner," it became the "Tabasco Chef's Corner." This can be a one-time event or even done on a weekly basis. As Tabasco was a Louisiana company, the market didn't feel a risk of alienating their customers and so were comfortable associating with Tabasco.

**Donations.** People and companies who donate money appreciate and enjoy having the farmers' market in their community. There are hundreds of people in your market's surrounding neighborhoods who feel a kind of "ownership" of the market. Thus, they feel an intrinsic responsibility for it. This presents another fundraising opportunity for you. You can develop a "Friends of the Market" database, with which you can briefly explain what you're doing and what's coming up. Include opportunities for them to provide direct support in the form of donations. This is a relatively simple way to increase market income with little added expense. In return for their donation you can offer these community-minded local donors a gift—perhaps one of the merchandise items mentioned earlier, a promotion from one of your sponsors, or market bucks.

The Friends of the Market income stream may not be huge, but it does identify a core group that you can mobilize for support with future events. They can also provide a source of volunteers for help at the market.

Additionally, if your market participates in an EBT and debit program, put out a sign at your info booth to suggest that debit customers add a dollar to their transaction amount to support

the market's EBT program. Similar to fundraisers conducted through grocery store registers, this is a very easy way for customers to donate to your market.

**Fundraising Events.** Events such as restaurant cooking demonstrations, book signings, etc. elicit great popular and financial response. However, they require a tremendous amount of work that can last several weeks or more (promotions, forming a dedicated event committee, arranging event sites, selling tickets, etc.). The model is to bring in some high-profile, well-connected person to chair the event and utilize their network of connections and resources. So maybe holding it in a local lodge or church hall would work best for you. And choose a day that will be good for attendees, but won't compete with your own market.

Events, much like merchandise, are also extremely valuable from a public relations standpoint. You may find that after an event, a banker or some other local businessperson with an idea will approach you and say, "I had no idea you did this. Have you thought about this such-and-such project that we do?" So it can open up some new doors for your market's future that can expand your reach and generate even more income.

**Grants.** Grant writing can be laborious and time-consuming. While grants are appealing as a source of revenue, there are many things to consider before beginning the process:

- Grants are highly competitive. The larger the foundation or government agency offering the opportunity and the larger the pot of money available, the greater the number of applicants you will need to compete with.
- Most funders require a significant level of accountability, not just financially, but written reports of work done, evaluation techniques, measured results and accomplishments, lessons learned, etc. You will need to know

whether your market has the capacity to fulfill these requirements before applying for and accepting grants.

- Many grant makers require applicants to be classified as an IRS 501 (c) 3, nonprofit corporation before applications will be accepted. This is a long, arduous and expensive process. The majority of markets do not have this non-profit status, but it is possible to find a fiscal sponsor that will act as the reporting agent for the market with the grantor. In fact, by seeking out a local organization to act as a fiscal sponsor, the market has the added benefit of further imbedding itself as part of the local community.

- When considering all the potential grant funders available to you, do not overlook the smaller foundations, such as local churches or the Kiwanis Club. Again, your chances with these groups are greatly improved if you've already cultivated a good relationship with them. You can also approach your local city government for a portion of the local lodger's tax.

- Finally, you want to be sure that you are applying for the right reasons and not just following the money.

### **Money Saved Is Money Earned**

In addition to those sources where actual cash streams in to fill your coffers, there are also ways to benefit your market by keeping money from streaming *out*.

**Space.** When looking for a safe, reliable, and readily accessible site in your community to locate your market, try to secure the space from someone willing to donate it, such as a city park or landlord of a shopping center.

**Volunteers.** Farmers markets could not function without volunteers. The incredible, dedicated members of the volunteer staff are the ones who get up on cold mornings to serve coffee, help set up tables, transport supplies,

etc. You've got to be sure that your volunteers feel valued: meet regularly with them, keep track of their hours, note when they are supposed to get their free volunteer T-shirt or whatever perk you offer.

**Promotions.** Offer to write a monthly column about the market for your local newspaper as a source for free promotion. A local radio station may be interested in having you as a regular guest to talk about current products and events at your market.

## **BUILDING THE MARKET COMMUNITY**

### **What Can Community Partnerships Mean to the Market?**

**Financial:** Many farmers' markets operate on a shoestring budget. Whether looking for financial assistance to shore up a budget or assistance with funding for special projects, events, or outreach, key partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and the municipality may provide the funding needed.

**Outreach:** Governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and business associations can be key partners and help to introduce your market to their clientele. Inviting them to be a part of your market, whether by allowing them to set up an information table, sponsoring an event, or be part of your management team, can be an effective way to build both entities' constituencies.

**Special events:** When hosting a special event, including community partners will reap numerous benefits for your market. Any organization, business, or governmental agency that participates in your event will promote the event to their clientele, bringing

additional customers to the market. It increases goodwill with the organizations, businesses, and agencies that participate, improving the market's stature in their eyes and opening doors to other ways to partner, such as volunteerism or providing current or future funding through sponsorships, donations, or grants.

**General support:** Municipalities can provide no-cost infrastructure needs for the market, such as a site, bathroom facilities, trash receptacles and pickup, street closures and barriers, police presence, and insurance coverage. Neighborhood organizations, such as community centers, could promote the market to their members, but also arrange for transportation to the market or arrange for the market manager to come to meetings to discuss the benefits of the market and the available nutrition programs. Local businesses can provide storage space for the market tent, tables, and supplies; open their restrooms for the market farmers and shoppers; and host special sales and events on market day to make market days a community-wide event.

### **What Can Your Market Offer a Partner?**

Farmers' markets attract a group of regular, local customers. Share what you know about your customers when approaching potential partners. Farmers' markets allow partners to create public relations opportunities, build community support, and show community support. Here are a few examples of what you can offer a partnering organization:

- Allow organizations to set up an informational table at the market
- Allow businesses to distribute samples at the market (newspaper, coffee, flyers, etc.)
- Put businesses' logos on any promotional materials you create, including signs and banners at the market
- Recognize partners in radio and television ads
- Create and promote an event to thank your

partners

- Give away a market basket filled with fresh foods that is sponsored by a partner and promote it

### **Developing Partnerships**

Developing relationships and partnerships within the community is not as difficult as it may at first seem. Start with who you know.

- Look at who is already shopping at your market. Many organizational leaders, municipal leaders, and business owners already shop at the market and my want to be involved.
- Look at any current partners you may have. They often have contacts with others who have similar missions, interests and needs.
- Phone calls, letters of invitation to participate, and meeting and greeting people at community events are great ways to get to know the people in your community. Once you've begun the conversation, invite community organizations, local businesses, and municipal agencies to become involved in your market. Here are some ways to begin:
  - Develop committees where they may begin to get involved. These committees can advise on management issues, special events, specific programs, advertising and promotions, or fundraising, wherever each particular organization best fits.
  - Bring them in as volunteers. Put them to work as volunteers, running a program such as a Veggie Valet, for seniors and families with young children, market tours, taking customer counts, surveying customers, selling coffee, etc.
  - Host an event. Some organizations may want to host an event at the market. This gives the market the exposure of an event, but puts the financial and human resource burden on the organization rather than the market.

When approaching community partners, educate them about the many ways that markets enrich their communities:

- Support local agriculture
- Provide a source of fresh, locally grown food
- Encourage new small business enterprises
- Support local economic development
- Educate the public about buying local, preparing fresh foods, and nutrition
- Provide jobs
- Provide local food security
- Provide a venue for social gathering and community building
- Provide top quality and selection of products
- Become a tourist attraction
- Serve as a resource for community health

### **Who Are Potential Community Partners?**

The list of potential community partners is endless. Here's a partial list of partners that some markets have identified:

#### **Non-profit organizations:**

- Faith-based organizations
- Health-related organization, including hospitals, clinics, health insurance companies, Rural Health Network
- Nutrition agencies
- Agricultural organizations, land trusts
- Youth organizations
- Civic organizations
- Food organizations, including food banks, anti-hunger agencies, food policy councils, etc
- Senior citizen organizations
- People with disabilities organizations
- Veterans groups
- Community Foundations
- United Way
- Animal rescues and shelters
- MainStreet or economic development agency

#### **Businesses**

- Local businesses
- National chains
- Media (radio, newspapers, magazines)

#### **Government:**

- City/village/town clerk
- Mayor's office

- WIC agencies
- Social Services and Income Support offices
- Local branches of USDA and ag extension
- Local fire and police departments

### **Schools and other Educational Institutions**

- Public and private schools

## **DEVELOPING A MARKETING PLAN**

### **Market Brand**

Effective communication revolves around a strong, recognizable, consistent brand. A brand is your organization's identity. It spells out who you are and establishes recognition among consumers when they see or hear your brand, and elicits a positive response.

Your brand consists of your brand name (i.e., your market name), logo, tagline, typography (the type size, font, and spacing), colors, and attitude or voice. Branding your farmers' market can have far-reaching effects when you use your brand consistently, create a positive image for the brand and maintain its integrity.

Your market may choose to develop its own logo, or you can use the NMFMA's "New Mexico Farmers' Markets" logo customized with your market name. Contact the NMFMA if you need a customized logo.

### **Developing Your Marketing Plan**

Your marketing plan gives you the opportunity to get your brand out in front of potential customers and raise their perception of your market. To make your marketing work to its full potential, create a marketing plan. Creating a plan will compel you to identify your target audience, create a targeted message, and find the most effective means to deliver your message.

**Pre-Planning:** To begin, you need to understand the make-up of your community. What are the ages, ethnicities, education levels, employment, income levels, family sizes, etc? What are their motivations for shopping at a farmers' market? Knowing this will help you to develop a marketing plan that will reach your audience with a message that is meaningful to them, and will result in their taking action on your message.

When creating your message, think about the **strengths** of your market. What benefits does your market offer? What value does the market bring to consumers and the community? These may be marketing points that will help you to build a targeted message. For example:

- high-traffic, downtown location
- weekly music events
- strong municipal support
- 25 growers with unique selection of foods

Next, identify your market's **weaknesses**. What would a customer want from your market that you lack? What would prevent a customer from shopping at your market? For example:

- limited days and hours
- perception of high cost
- limited parking
- limited product line

**Marketing Message:** Now you can begin to shape your marketing message. First, you need to develop a marketing objective. What is it that you want your marketing to accomplish? The task is to develop one message that will resonate with the target customer and meet your objective. Keeping a consumer focused increases your chances of being heard, being remembered, and most important, being acted upon. Anything else should be a supporting message that backs up your primary. For example:

*a. Feature:* The freshest produce is available at your local farmers' market.

*b. Benefit:* Savor the flavor of just-picked produce; the freshest fruits and vegetables are only at your local farmers' market. Benefits show how the product or the market relates to the customer. Make your message speak in their language and get personal.

*c. Supporting Benefit:* Put your family's health first by giving them nutrition-rich fresh produce.

### **Marketing Materials**

These allow you to educate your customers about who you are, build awareness of your farmers market, and create opportunities to expose consumers to your market brand.

**Website:** Many consumers are not just computer-savvy, but use their computers as a resource for news and information. A website may be your customers' first introduction to your market. The site does not need to be fancy. Your page should include four main pages. A simple WordPress site, blog, or even a Facebook page will do.

1. The home page (the first page they see)
2. About Us is a page that tells browsers who you are, what your mission is, etc.
3. Another page should list all of your farmers or at least what products are available when.
4. Finally, make it easy for people to find you by including directions to the market, along with your market's days, hours, and season. Complete this section with contact information for further questions.

**Newsletter:** It is cheaper to retain a customer than it is to gain new ones. A newsletter can be a powerful tool in retaining your current customers, especially when you have to retrain customers to come back to the market after a long winter break. Your market's newsletter doesn't have to be a professionally designed, mailed piece. A simple electronic newsletter emailed to your current customer database is just as powerful and much more cost-effective. Use your newsletter to let your

customers know when new products are coming into season, whenever a new farmer or vendor has joined the market, reward repeat customers with market bucks or coupons, and to announce an upcoming special event. The newsletter should be inviting, informative, and short.

**Signage.** Any banners, posters, or flyers are all part of your marketing strategy and should incorporate your brand. As customers become used to seeing your brand, they will instantly recognize your marketing pieces as part of your market.

### **The Media**

**Press releases.** These will help you reach editors and begin building your relationships. To increase your chances of being covered in the media, you need to think like a reporter. They are interested in getting a story that their readers/viewers will find interesting. So ask yourself three key questions:

1. Is it newsworthy? For example:
  - a. There is a new product or farmer in the market
  - b. There's an upcoming event in the market
  - c. A weather event impacts local agriculture
  - d. New services are available in the market
2. Is it timely? Press releases are immediate and should alert the media to what is happening now or be a call to action.
3. Is it relevant? Does your press release relate to the readers/viewers?

If you can answer yes to the above questions, then put this information together into a one-page press release. Be sure to include:

- Contact information.
- Date for release to be issued. Most are set for immediate release.
- Headline. The headline should be concise, but must answer the three key questions.
- Subheading. This is an opportunity to flesh out the headline and further hook the readers.
- Contents. This is the body of the press

release and should answer the journalistic questions: who, what, where, when, how? Include a specific time and description of a photo opportunity. Finally, the last couple of sentences can be basic information about your market.

- #### This series of symbols is used to close out your press release.

Keep in mind that reporters are inundated with press releases every day. To be sure yours stands out, follow up with a courteous phone call. Keep the call simple, short, and respectful.

**Calendar Sections.** Getting a free listing in your newspaper's calendar section is one of the easiest ways to get coverage for your market. Contact your newspaper to find out about deadlines and how they prefer information to be submitted. Know the deadlines.

**Features.** Editorial advertising is generally more powerful than paid advertising. But getting this type of coverage can be a challenge. It requires developing a relationship with reporters, letting them get to know you as a market manager, and having them get familiar with your market and farmers. Reporters need to know that you are a reliable source of information, are available when they need a story or comment, and will return their calls promptly so that they can meet their publishing deadlines. When reporters feel comfortable with you, then you will become their source for information on agriculture, weather, and food.

One way to catch the attention of local media by hosting an event such as an event that celebrates seasonal produce, a cross-promotional event with a local organization such as a health or safety fair, or a cooking event. It can also be helpful to create friendships with local media by inviting radio

hosts, magazine and newspaper editors, reporters, TV station managers, and local celebrities to your market.

**Social media** started as a way for people to stay in touch with one another. Research shows that two-thirds of internet users participate in social networking and 51% of all Americans have a Facebook account. While there is no cost involved, there is an investment of time to update your site pages or blogs. Social media offers customers the opportunity to interact with you and your market, as well as share your market with their friends. The NMFMA has promotional funds available if you would like to use them to pay market staff to do social marketing, hire a social marketing coordinator, or provide market bucks as a prize for a social media contest. Contact NMFMA staff or visit our website for more information.

- Blogs are online journals. Your journal will include talks about your market, your farmers, local foods, etc. It keeps the readers informed from your personal point of view.
- Twitter is a social network in which posts are limited to 140 characters. Quick updates on your market, such as a new product available, can be posted.
- Facebook does not have the character limitations of Twitter, allowing for videos, and lengthier posts.

*Getting started with social media:*

1. Do some research to learn what social media can do for your market by checking out blogs and successful social media campaigns.
2. Find out if people are already talking about your market and join the conversation. Sites such as socialmention.com will search the web for you (remember to put your market name in quotes to have it search for the entire phrase.)
3. Engage with your audience. A thank you or answering a question promptly goes a long way. Remember, social media is a conversation for all to see, not a one-way

message. Amplify your message by recruiting farmers and customers to help.

4. Talk about topics that will interest your customers. Use tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to connect and interact with them. Think about what you want to get out of your efforts – more sales? Better awareness of your market? Customer loyalty?

5. Measure your impact in meaningful ways. The goal of social media is to create behaviors, not just “likes” on Facebook. Get creative and have fun.

**Paid advertising.** Paid advertising allows you to put your brand in front of thousands of people and deliver a strong message and call to action. But it requires that your budget allows for an ad campaign with enough frequency for consumers to hear your message enough times to recognize and respond. There are a few key elements that are common to all paid media advertising. First, keep in mind that the best way to stand out in media is to focus on “what’s in it for me.” Potential customers want to know what their benefits will be by shopping in your market. Each advertisement needs a strong call to action. Be sure your brand is prominently featured in every advertisement. Customers must recognize your brand and know who you are by your image, your logo, and your message.

**Radio.** Being only audio, radio gives a 30- or 60-second time frame to tell your story and sell your brand. You can maximize your advertising dollar by placing your ads during high-listener time slots (the station will have this information). However, ad rates are also based on this, so higher numbers of listeners also means higher ad rates.

**Print advertising.** There are several ways to help make your print ad more effective:

- Feature your market’s brand: logo, message, and tagline. The best logo placement is the bottom right or bottom center of the ad.

- Be generous with white space. Ads that are cluttered do not focus a reader’s attention on your key message. But careful use of white space makes the rest of your ad stand out.
- Include a headline. This grabs the reader’s attention and draws them in.
- Make graphics compelling and be sure they support your headline and message.
- Include a call to action.

### **A Few Final Thoughts**

- Do not put all your plans (and your budget) in one media outlet.
- Get your marketing materials out in creative ways, such as ads in local playhouse bulletins, signs at the Little League ball field, talks to local civic organizations, etc.
- Commit your marketing plan to paper; don’t just keep it in your head.

## **Measuring Farmers’ Market Performance**

A key ingredient for farmers’ market success is a mission to benefit the vendors. If vendors are not benefiting from the market, the market will not flourish. For vendors to flourish, the market must also attract and serve customer needs and desires. It is key that market organizers devote time to monitoring and evaluating market activity. They must keep good records and stay in communication with vendors and customers. At minimum, records to keep at each market include customer counts and vendor sales. In addition, customer surveys are useful: ask customers about why they stopped, what they would like to buy, and how they heard about the market. If you are advertising, be sure to ask if customers have seen the ads. A helpful tool for collecting data and using it to measure your market’s impact

is SEED (Sticky Economic Evaluation Device), which was developed by Market Umbrella in Louisiana. You can find SEED at [www.marketumbrella.org/marketshare](http://www.marketumbrella.org/marketshare).

**Customer data:** Traffic counts are critical. You need to have some idea of how many customers are coming on a weekly basis and during the season. This can be done by placing volunteers with clicker-counters at key locations where customers enter the market. If there are too many entrances to make this feasible, send out volunteers every hour (or more frequently) minutes to count the number of customers to calculate an average.

For detailed information about customer habits, you may want to conduct a survey that could be done in writing, by personal interviews. The following is a list of questions that you might consider asking:

- Where they come from (city/zip code)
- Why they come, what they like about the market
- What they don't like about the market, suggestions for improvements
- How they heard about the market
- How often they come to market— weekly, monthly
- How much they spend per visit
- Do they consider prices to be high, acceptable, or low
- What products are a draw
- Their overall shopping experience
- Impediments to shopping (parking challenges, cash only, variety, etc)
- How the has market impacted their household diet
- If they come to market as their primary destination
- If they shop at other stores before/after their market visit and how much they spend

Market records are vital to be able to document the collective overall impact of the market. Measuring market performance helps

a farmers' market organization know if they are achieving the mission and vision they established for the market. Also, remember that the NMFMA requires that all markets submit annual market data. The form is available at [www.FarmersMarketsNM.org](http://www.FarmersMarketsNM.org).

## New Mexico Agricultural & Food Permits

*Produce:* There are no permits required to sell unprocessed fruits and vegetables, however, some municipalities (such as Albuquerque) do require a permit.

*Dairy:* NMDA Milk Inspection Division, 575-841-9425.

*Eggs:* No permit required for selling ungraded eggs, but egg sellers do need to register for free with NMDA Standards & Consumer Services at [www.nmda.nmsu.edu/scs/license\\_registration/egg-licensing/](http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/scs/license_registration/egg-licensing/)

*Processed Foods:* All food processors must obtain a permit from the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). High-risk items (e.g. salsas, canned vegetables, etc) need to be produced in a certified kitchen. Low-risk items (e.g. baked goods, high-sugar jams, etc.) can be processed in a home kitchen with a license, food safety course and inspection.

### NMED Offices:

Albuquerque	505-222-9500
Rio Rancho	505-771-5980
Ruidoso	575-258-3272
Española	505-753-7256
Las Vegas	505-454-2800
Raton	575-445-3621
Santa Fe	505-827-1840
Taos	575-758-8808
Alamogordo	575-437-7115
Deming	575-546-1464
Las Cruces	575-524-6300

Silver City	575-388-1934
Carlsbad	575-885-9023
Clovis	575-762-3728
Hobbs	575-393-4302
Roswell	575-624-6046
Tucumcari	575-461-1671
Farmington	505-566-9741
Gallup	505-722-4160
Grants	505-287-8845
Los Lunas	505-841-5280
Socorro	575-835-1287

*Meat/Poultry:* New Mexico Livestock Board, 505-841-6161.

*Nursery Stock:* NMDA Bureau of Entomology & Nursery Industries, 575 646-3207. Farmers' markets can obtain an umbrella nursery license for all nursery vendors at the market. Keep in mind that if a nursery vendor sells at more than one market, they must obtain their own license.

*Honey:* Pure raw honey (without additives) does not require any permits, but does require a label. Questions can be directed to Ken Hays with the New Mexico Bee Keepers' Association, 505-841-6161. Honey with additives is considered a processed food item and falls under the jurisdiction of the NMED.

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