

First Things First: Planning Your Farmers Market

Whether you're launching a new market or stepping into manage an existing one, there are certain plans to be made to keep your market running smoothly.

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MARKET HOURS

CHOOSING DATES & TIMES FOR YOUR MARKET

There are several factors to consider when setting hours. Think about the hours of other markets, nearby businesses, community events, and even the sunset times of changing seasons.

5 TIPS FOR SELECTING MARKET HOURS

Check Nearby Markets' Hours

Look into other area farmers markets' days and times. If you want to attract the same vendors, you may not want to hold your market at the same time.

Piggybacking has Perks

Does your community have a weekly event? This could be a great partnership for the market to piggyback onto an existing event. The event and market can share in marketing efforts and customer base.

It's Okay to Overlap

If there's another event in the community, overlapping with it is okay—even encouraged. When scheduling your market, don't think of it as an isolated event. If there's another event happening nearby before, after, or during the market, both can benefit from shared traffic and cross-promotion.

The More You Advertise, the Better

State the hours of your market clearly and frequently on all marketing (signage, social media, etc.).

Be Consistent Year After Year

When you decide on your market hours, it's strongly recommended to keep the day and time consistent in future years to avoid confusion for customers.



MOST POPULAR: SATURDAY***

LEAST POPULAR: SUNDAY**

WINNING WEEKDAYS: WED & THURS*



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

***BETWEEN 7:00 AM AND NOON

**DESPITE BEING ON THE WEEKEND

*OFTEN FOR 2-3 HOURS IN THE AFTERNOON TO EVENING



When we got started 30-some years ago, we knew we'd be competing with nearby larger cities' markets if we did Saturday. I looked at the week instead and decided on Thursday evening since that's the night all the businesses around the square are open late. I knew the market and businesses would benefit from a partnership that brought more people downtown. So I went and talked to those businesses in-person. I told them if they helped promote the market, I'd help bring a crowd. They put fliers in their windows, talked to media, and let customers know about the market. Everyone worked together to promote those Thursday nights—and it was a success!

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

MARKET FEE & FINE STRUCTURE

HOW A SMART FEE STRUCTURE PAYS OFF

Vendor fees are the primary source of income for covering the operational costs of a farmers market—from paying market staff to helping with marketing costs to hiring a police officer to patrol the market. Part of your responsibility as market manager is to collect the membership fees and enforce any other policies/fees/fines that were established as part of the market rules.

Fees and fines are not one-size-fits-all

Just as rules and structure vary from market to market, so do fees and fines. One manager might need to offer large and small stalls to make the layout possible in their location—charging fees accordingly. Another may only be able to work with stalls all of the same size, not needing to charge less or more based on space. A large market may charge higher fees to cover additional costs, such as marketing or staff. A very small, volunteer-run market may charge a few dollars or nothing at all. Before opting out of fees, consider what even a few dollars per vendor could help you afford.

Not all vendors are created equal

If the goal/mission of the market is to have more produce and less prepared food, the market manager has the right to charge food producers lower rates and charge higher rates to vendors of crafts and prepared foods.

Don't raise rates mid-year

Changing rates in the middle of a market season is likely to cause vendor confusion and complaints. If fees need to be raised or implemented, do so in the off-season and communicate it to vendors clearly, frequently, and well ahead of time.



WHAT, WHEN, & HOW:

WHAT WILL YOU CHARGE?

Decide on your market's vendor fees as well as potential add-ons and fines. Depending on the structure of your market, this may be up to you or it may be a decision made by the board or operating entity.

WHEN WILL YOU COLLECT?

If you're managing a large market, it will save you time and effort to collect dues for the entire season before the first market is held. If you're managing a small market, there's value in collecting fees in-person bi-weekly or weekly.

HOW WILL YOU TAKE PAYMENT?

Cash? Check? Can vendors pay with their debit/credit card in-person or online? Can vendors mail their payment or bring it to a physical office location? Will you go around and collect it yourself?

WONDERING HOW VENDOR FEES IMPACT YOUR MARKET BUDGET? CHECK OUT OUR SECTION ON "FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR YOUR BUDGET" ON PAGES 50 - 51.

Market Fee Examples

	Stall Fee All stalls are the same size and vendors pay the same amount.		Early Entry Fee Vendors who pay this are allowed to start setting up earlier at the market.
	Large/Small Stall Fee Some markets are laid out with smaller or larger sized stalls to fit spaces. Vendors pay more or less depending on size.		Mailing Fee Paid by vendors who do not wish to receive email or do not have email. This covers the cost for mailed communication.
	Reserved Stall Fee Vendors who pay the reserved stall fee may be in the same location at the market all year.		No Show Fine Enforced if a vendor fails to show up to a market without informing the market manager.
	Daily Lease Vendors who arrive the day of the market looking to sell, will be charged a one-day fee to vend.		Trash Disposal Fine Enforced if a vendor does not remove trash or does not clean up their stall after the market.
	Shared Stall Fee Two or more vendors pay for a shared stall to sell their seasonal produce together rather than each pay for their own stall.		Late Arrival Fine Enforced if a market vendor arrives late to set up their stall.
	Refunds/Subletting Refunds and/or subletting stalls is not typically allowed at most farmers markets.		Reckless Driving Fine Enforced if a vendor leaves before the market is closed and customers are still at the market.

I COLLECT FEES IN-PERSON, WAIVE THEM FOR A VENDOR'S FIRST MARKET, & CHARGE EXTRA FOR PREPARED FOODS

"Collecting fees can be a way to maintain and build rapport with vendors. At every market, I go to each vendor to get their \$3 in cash. We've surveyed vendors about paying a pre-season lump sum, but almost everyone likes paying the fee face-to-face each market. Also, first-time vendors don't get charged for their first market day, so they can try it out. And prepared food vendors are charged more because they're going to make more money."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

WE COLLECT FEES BEFORE EACH MARKET SEASON AND INCREASE THEM TO KEEP UP WITH INFLATION

"Because our farmers market is run through the city's Parks and Rec department, when we make changes, it's usually a 3% increase in line with inflation. We collect all the fees from vendors at the beginning of the year. Except for week-to-week or fill-in vendors. For those vendors, the staff will go around on the day-of and collect their money."

Tammy Neumann, Iowa City Farmers Market

VENDOR RECRUITMENT

GET THE RIGHT MIX FOR YOUR MARKET

1. WHAT TYPES OF VENDORS DO YOU WANT AT YOUR MARKET?

Vendor recruitment is an important responsibility for market managers because the variety of vendors can make or break a market. Before you start recruiting, you need to consider the types of vendors that you—and your potential customers—want at your farmers market. Some markets will develop a rough equation for how many different types of vendors they want to have. For example, to encourage customers to do most of their grocery shopping at the market, a market manager may aim to have over half of the vendors be produce vendors.

Here are a few examples of vendor breakdown by type of product:

- Produce
- Meat
- Dairy
- Crafts/Jewelry
- Other food products

Once you have your desired vendors identified, you can then be specific with your efforts to seek out and recruit those vendors.

2. WHAT FACTS AND FIGURES CAN YOU GIVE PROSPECTIVE VENDORS?

To be prepared when trying to convince a prospective vendor to sell at your market, create a simple handout with stats that hold sway, including:

- Average number of customers per market
- Location of the market (if possible, the distance from the market to their farm or place of business)



- Number of existing vendors that sell similar products at the market
- Market achievements (Has your market grown? Held a successful event? Or won an award?)

3. WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT POTENTIAL FARMERS MARKET VENDORS?

Most farmers are planning their season in January and February, so that's generally the best time to contact them about vending at your market.

4. HOW ARE YOU ADVERTISING VENDOR GAPS?

Make sure you're promoting in different ways to reach different vendors. Create a flyer that can be posted around town and on social media. Reach out to your local Extension offices, public library, coffee shops, or other high-traffic areas in the community. Have conversations with local partners, current vendors, customers, and other market managers in the area to gain insights on potential new vendors or types of vendors that could fit into your market mix.

TO GET MORE VENDORS, YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE SOMETHING

"First-time vendors don't get charged for their first market day, so they can try it out before deciding if they want to come back and be a part of the market."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

"We don't charge any vendor fees because we want anyone to be able to come sell at any time. We're a small market and we don't want to penalize vendors if they end up not having product to sell one week."

Alice Linhart, Swisher Farmers Market

TRY BOTH NEW-FANGLED & OLD-FASHIONED WAYS TO RECRUIT

"Social media helped us gain ten additional vendors last year. Most of those new vendors signed up after seeing a Facebook ad advertising that we were looking for vendors."

Kendra Vincent, Grinnell Farmers Market

"Face-to-face conversations are valuable. Go talk to other vendors at markets that are nearby but not on the same day or during the same time as your market. You don't want to poach, but you can ask if they'd be interested in selling at your market, too."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

"Word of mouth is still a powerful tool. Ask your current vendors or vendors at other markets if they know of anyone who might be interested. Several of my newer vendors were referred to my market thanks to current vendors."

Jay Moore, Marion Farmers Market

"We have one sponsor who covers all of the vendor stall fees. It's a great way to remove the cost barrier to vendors, especially new vendors, without sacrificing income for the market."

**Mandy Ludovissy,
Guttenberg Farmers Market**



FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE OF PREPARED FOOD VENDORS

"Since we've grown, we've been able to become more selective in types of vendors. For us, that means bringing in more food trucks. Because of our location, it's so much easier for us to have food trucks instead of other types of prepared foods setups. Our market has a one-hour setup and tear-down timeframe. Food trucks are just better suited to this. They may have already prepped food earlier in the day, so they can pull in and are ready to start selling. It has taken time to figure out how many of any category of vendors to have at our market—including food trucks—because for prepared food, everyone has to be successful or they won't come back."

Jane Gasperi, Beaverdale Farmers Market

"If there are too many food trucks competing with each other, the food trucks may decide it's not worth coming at all. So we just have one food truck each week. That way, the food truck vendor doesn't have to compete with others—and our customers can try something new every market."

Bob Shepherd, Washington Farmers Market

TAP INTO WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY WANTS

"After the initial vendor application, we have implemented a jury process. We bring in people from the community—outside people who are not professionals at farmers markets, but who have a very good sense of how farmers markets serve communities and what best suits our specific community. We work as a jury, with a slideshow and a point system. Over the course of two days, we review applicants, score them on our criteria, and accept a certain number of vendors per category. It's been a years-long learning process to figure out how many vendors of each type of category works in our market and community. Our jury helps us achieve that diversity and accept new vendors."

**Kelly Foss, Des Moines
Downtown Farmers Market**

LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS (STRUCTURE)

LLCs, 501(c)3s & C CORPS, OH MY!

Most farmers markets will fit into one of the following business structures: sole proprietorship, partnership, limited liability company (LLC), non-profit, or for-profit corporation. If you're starting a farmers market from scratch, there's a lot to consider when choosing a business structure. First, decide whether your farmers market should or needs to be its own independent entity. Next, pay a visit to your nearest Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for expert advice. In the meantime, use our chart to get an idea of what business structure may fit your market.



TWO THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING ON A BUSINESS STRUCTURE:

1. DO YOU HAVE AN UMBRELLA?



Many farmers markets across Iowa are held under an already established business, government entity, or non-profit organization. If there's an existing local entity that would oversee your farmers market, this could be a great option. Being housed under such an "umbrella" gives you access to more resources—such as assistance with financials, marketing and fundraising. But you'll also be relinquishing some control to varying degrees.

2. DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO AN SBDC?



Scott Swenson, SBDC Regional Director in Cedar Rapids, says "The SBDC is a free and confidential service that can help market managers understand and navigate the business formation process and the steps to getting set up properly. This includes the various business structures they may considering and the resources for helping with business planning, marketing strategy, financial projections, and identifying any resources that apply to helping get the market launched successfully."

WHAT'S THE BEST BUSINESS FIT FOR MY MARKET?

To learn more about these types of business structures and how they may suit your farmers market, the Center for Agriculture & Food Systems Farmers Market Legal Toolkit is a great resource.

Find it at: farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org/business-structures

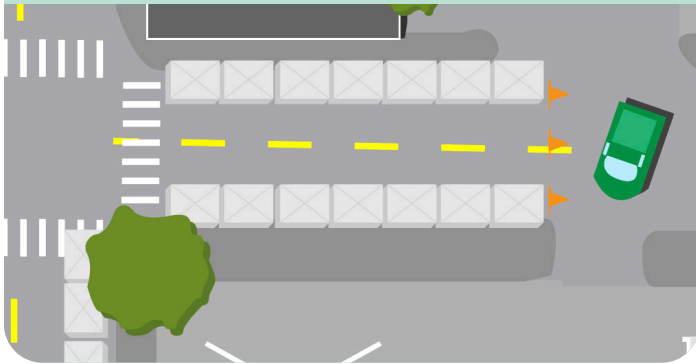
QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF	SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP	PARTNERSHIP	LLC	NON-PROFIT	S & C CORPS
Okay with being personally liable for business debts?	X	X	X	X	
Do you want to protect members and shareholders from personal liability?			X		X
Do you plan to split corporate profit among owners?			X		X
Do you plan to report profit or loss on your own personal tax return?	X	X	X		
Do you want to have an unlimited number of owners?		X	X		X
Do you want to have partners?		X	X		X
Do you want to own the company yourself?	X				X
Do you want to create the company simply and inexpensively with minimum requirements?	X	X	X		
Do you want to create an entity at a state level that protects the company name?			X		X
Do you want the business duration to be perpetual?			X		X
Are you willing to write articles of incorporation and bylaws, file various documents for state and federal regulations, get an EIN with the IRS, and set up a bank account?		X	X	X	X
Do you want few reporting responsibilities?	X	X	X		
Don't want to hold annual meetings?	X	X	X		

MARKET LAYOUT

LAY OUT YOUR MARKET WITH VENDORS AND CUSTOMERS IN MIND

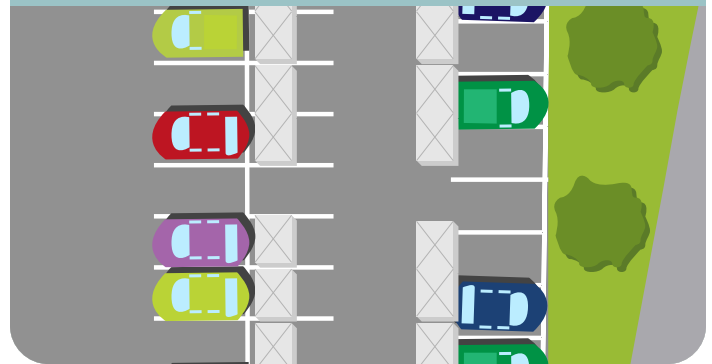
Creating an effective layout of the market is very important for proper space allocation for vendors, as well as ease and comfort of customers shopping the market.

1. THINK ABOUT AVOIDING “DEAD ENDS”



“Dead end” aisles can be seen as inconvenient. To overcome this, many markets use a circular traffic pattern instead.

2. CONSIDER WHERE VENDORS SHOULD PARK



Will you allow vendors to park their vehicles in stalls or will it be a drop-off market? Either way, vendors will need to get their products to their stall.

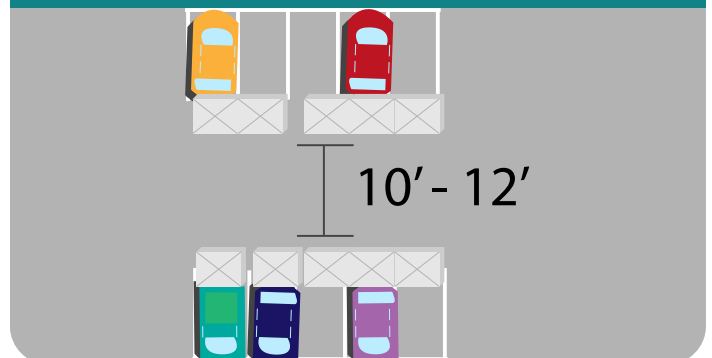
3. PUT STALLS SIDE-BY-SIDE



“I like to make sure that there are no blank spaces or empty stalls in my market’s layout. Even if it’s an hour before the market, I want vendors to let me know if they can’t make it so I can fill in their spaces and make the market look full.”

Jane Gasperi, Beaverdale Farmers Market

4. GIVE CUSTOMERS SPACE



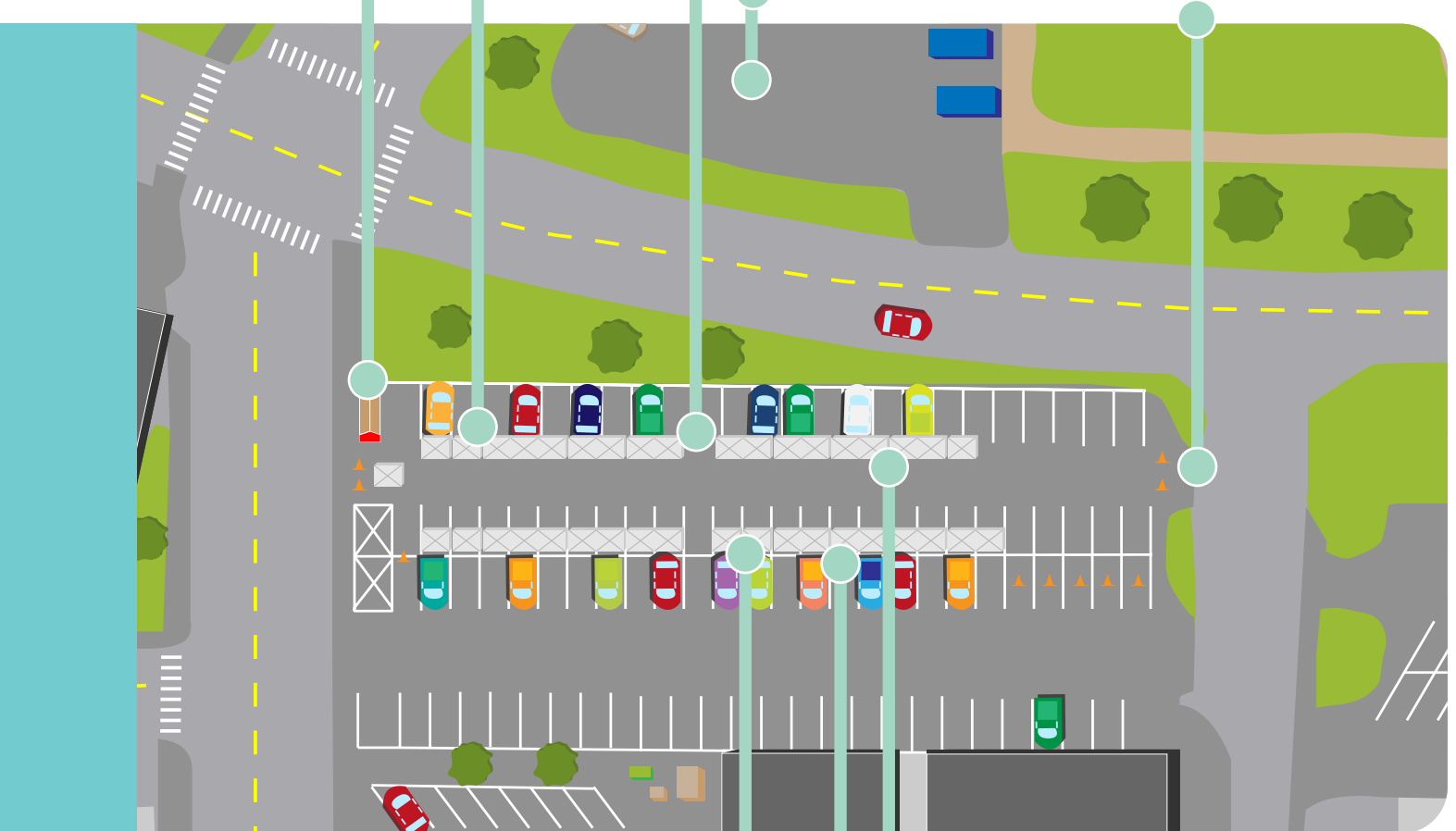
The center aisle between rows of vendors should be at least 10' to 12' wide to give customers plenty of room to shop at stands on either side of the aisle and allow for 4' down the center for others to walk comfortably through.

The information booth is an easy-to-find red barn.

An entrance is created in the middle of the market on the top side to allow customers an easy access point from the above parking lot—and to allow for an escape route in the case of an emergency.

Customer parking is available in several lots across the streets from the market location.

The parking lot is blocked off for each market. Traffic cones prevent people parking in the lot before the market opens and from driving into the market when it is open.



In order for an extension cord to reach from their stalls to the nearby building, music and a non-profit booth are located in the middle of the market on the bottom side.

Vendor stalls are placed close together. Each stall has been given an ID # to allow for easy identification for vendors when setting up.

The vendor stalls in the lower row are placed further into in each parking spot with the back tent poles on the center line. This gives extra space to the open aisle running down the center of the market, allowing for easy foot traffic.

Layout Example: PARKING LOT

Community Population: 7,000

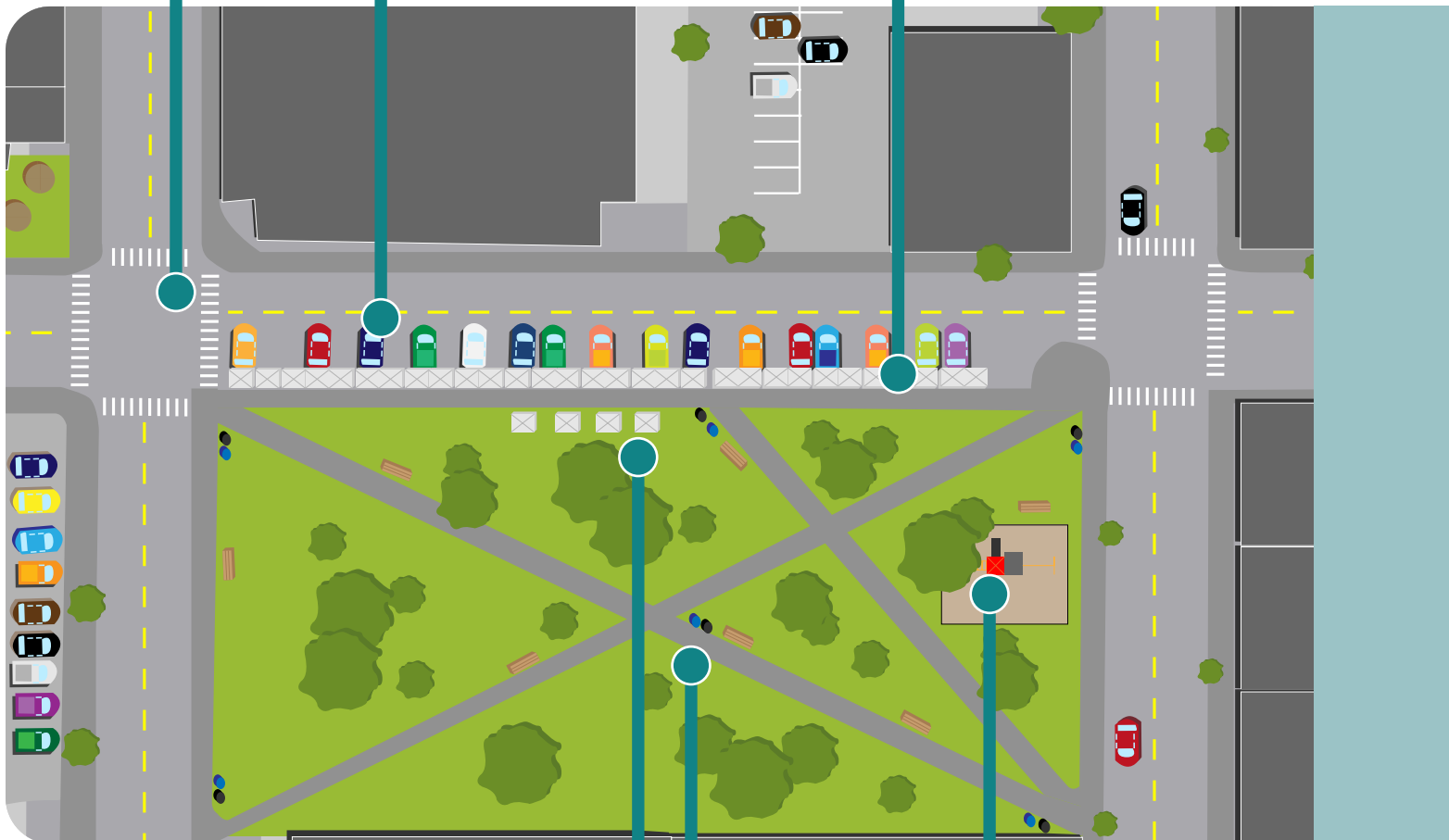
Market Location: City-owned parking lot behind a grocery store

Description: The market has been in operation for forty years—with seven of those years taking place in this parking lot. Nearby businesses in the downtown district have appreciated the market being in this location and have seen a bump in business when the market is open.

No streets are closed during market hours, which allows for the normal flow of traffic. *drawing not to scale

Vendors are allowed to park behind their booths, making it convenient to store additional product or personal supplies with easy reach.

Stalls are placed side-by-side and close together to prevent customers coming in from between the vendors' parked vehicles.



Additional booths are placed in the park adjacent to the street parking vendors. These are for the information booth, non-profit space, and vendors with easy-to-move product.

There are benches and trash/recycling cans throughout the park.

There's a playground in the park.

Layout Example: AROUND A PARK

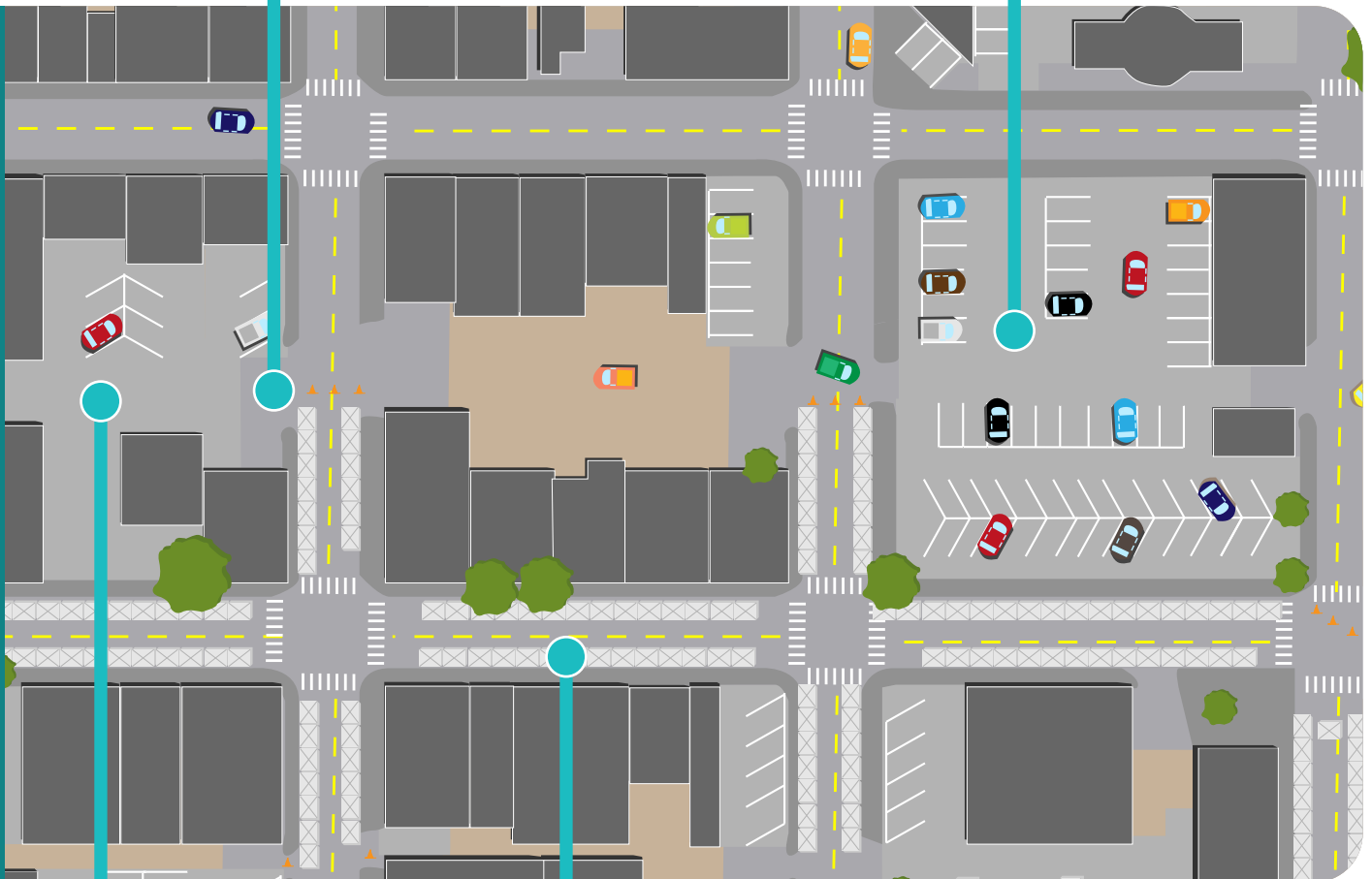
Community Population: 8,000

Market Location: North side of a downtown park and adjacent to a grocery store

Description: The park is large enough for multiple activities to occur simultaneously and offers additional amenities to market attendees—like a playground, benches, and trash/recycling.

Traffic cones are used to close the street to vehicle traffic during the market.

The market doesn't allow vendor vehicles to park on the street during the open hours of the market. Vendors must drop product off at their stalls during setup time, then park elsewhere—like a nearby parking lot.



Customers can park in nearby downtown lots.

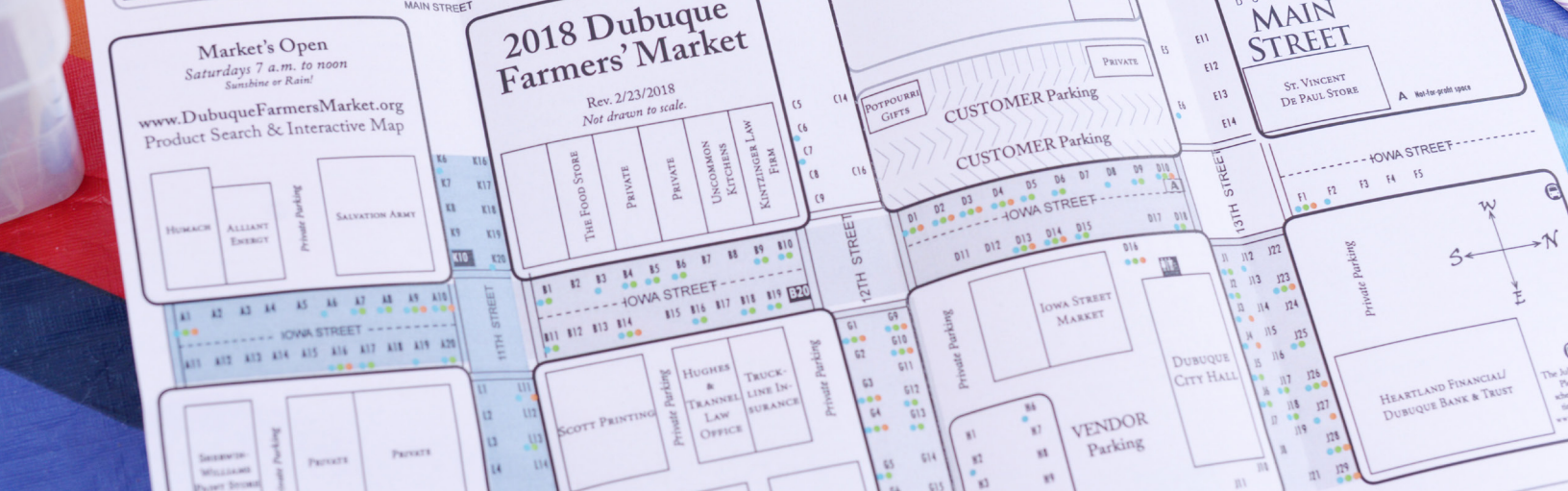
Vendor booths are kept tight together, one right after the other. It not only makes the market appear full, but also eliminates open spaces that allow customers to slip in and out of the market other than at designated entrances.

Layout Example: DOWNTOWN STREET

Community Population: 50,000

Market Location: Downtown streets

Description: The market is located on four streets and spans three blocks downtown. This farmers market has been operating in some form for more than 100 years.



MARKET ADMINISTRATION

RECORDS, REPORTS & COMMUNICATION

1. RECORDS

Organized and consistently maintained records have several benefits:

Accuracy

Rather than relying on your own memory—or the memories of vendors and staff—good records will help you accurately recall agreements, obligations, and other important details.

Paper Trail

If a legal issue arises and your market needs to prove its actions, records will provide a paper trail and needed evidence—especially regarding contracts, insurance, leases, and rules/regulations.

Transitions

Volunteers and part-time staff may come and go each season. Board members may rotate every couple years. Records will help bring people up to speed on the market's past activities.

Decision Making

Records can help you and the market board make more strategic decisions. For example: Past visitor counts can inform special event scheduling.

WHAT RECORDS TO KEEP:

Important legal documents:

Incorporation documents, insurance policies, lease/ rental agreement, SNAP authorization paperwork, copies of annual tax returns

Market operation documents:

Rules and regulations, weather/emergency policies, safety procedures, sponsor/partner agreements, volunteer contact info

Staff and board member records:

Contact information, job descriptions, signed contracts/agreements

Vendor records and information:

Contact information, applications, signed contracts

Marketing and communication:

Marketing contacts, login credentials for social media/ e-newsletter service, email, marketing calendar/plan, past press releases

Past market data:

Special event details, attendance, expenses, press coverage, dated day-of records, attendance counts, how many vendors attended, who vended, weather conditions, sales data, coupon redemption, rule violations/no-shows, survey feedback or complaints

BEST PRACTICES FOR TRACKING RECORDS



ORGANIZATION

If your market has an office and other staff need access to files, consider a filing cabinet or market binder(s) divided with folders and tabs.



SHARING AND STORAGE

To store, backup, or easily share records, upload digital copies to Google Drive, DropBox, or another cloud service.



RECORDS

Remember to type up and save any market day records you took on pen and paper— vendors, weather, sales data, coupon redemption, etc.



REPLICATE

If you pull something from your files to have at the market or take to a meeting, make a copy so you always have the originals in storage.

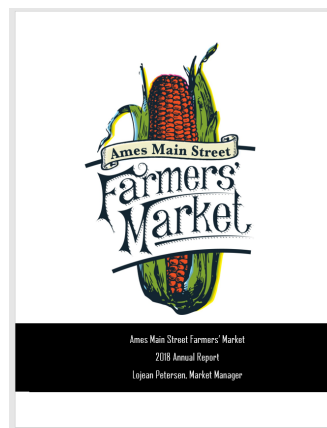


SECURITY

If you keep records with confidential information (such as SSNs for employment), store paper records securely and encrypt electronic records.

WANT TO SEE ANNUAL REPORT EXAMPLES FROM OTHER MARKETS?

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE RESOURCES AT:
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT



Ames Farmers Market Report

2. REPORTS

If your farmers market is a non-profit or operates under the umbrella of another entity (such as a chamber or city department), you will likely be asked to compile an annual report. Even if you're not obligated, creating an annual report is good practice—and can benefit your market in marketing, fundraising, and grant-writing.

The Ames Main Street Farmers Market is a great example of an annual report. In it, market manager Lojean Peterson:

- Highlights the season's awards, numbers, and news
- Lists all vendors and what they sold
- Lists the musicians who played throughout the season
- Thanks the season's sponsors and includes their logos
- Shares the market's goals for the future

You should present your annual report to vendors/board members at the annual meeting to recap the year and compare to previous years. It's a great idea to share your annual report on social media, post it to your website, and send it to any partners, sponsors, and newsletter subscribers. It will also come in handy when reaching out to potential sponsors and applying for grants.

3) COMMUNICATION

As market manager, your communication responsibilities are twofold: internal and external. Internal being communication with your market vendors, volunteers, partners, and committee. External being communication with customers and the general public. Whether communicating internally or externally, it's important to use a variety of communication channels to reach your audience.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media—Facebook especially—can be a valuable tool for reaching out and responding to a large portion of your market audience.

Internal: Facebook Groups

Facebook groups are pages that enable a group of people to interact around a common theme. Groups can be public or private.

Consider creating a private vendor group that you're part of so you can answer questions, gather feedback, and share important updates (weather, parking, rule reminders, changes, etc.). You may also want to create a private group for your board or committee.

Whether you're creating a group for your vendors or your board/committee, make sure that you're a member of a group and make yourself group administrator.



"Something I've found to be effective is having two Facebook groups—one for the board and volunteers, another separate group for the vendors. I'm in both of them. So when the vendors have an issue and they are talking about something, I know what's going on and can share that with the board."

Robin McClelland, Manager of North Iowa and Clear Lake Farmers Markets

**College Hill Farmers Market**
September 26 · 🌐

Please don't park in the City lot next to Octopus on the corner of College Street and 22nd Street on Thursday from 2:30-6:30 pm!



Jodie Huegerich, manager of College Hill Farmers Market in Cedar Falls, posts to social media 3-5x/week. This post is a great example of how social media isn't just for marketing. It can also be used to share important reminders—in this case, about where not to park.

External: Facebook Page + Events

A Facebook page for your market can help with not only marketing and promotion, but also communicating important updates about parking, or weather, and sharing news about upcoming events, new vendors, or what's for sale at the next market. A text post is easy to scroll past. Make it stand out by including an eye-catching image or graphic with text overlay. You can also create standalone or recurring Facebook events for the dates and times of your market.

**North Iowa Farmers Market**
@northiowafarmersmarket

Home About Photos Reviews Events Videos Posts Notes Community [Create a Page](#)



North Iowa Farmers Market

Every Tues and Fri

4-6 p.m. 1st & Delaware Mason City

Like Follow Share

Create Post

Write a post...

Photo/Video Tag Friends Get Messages

Photos



4.8 out of 5 - Based on the opinion of 23 people

ABOUT NORTH IOWA FARMERS MARKET

Our Story

North Iowa Farmers' Market - open Tuesdays and Fridays 4 to 6:00 pm. We are now located in the City ...

[See More](#)

EMAIL

Collecting email addresses is an incredibly important and direct way for you to reach your vendors, committee members, and market attendees.

Internal: Email Lists

Compile separate email lists for vendors, volunteers, committee/board members, and/or community partners and sponsors.

This way, you can email a specific group all at once to make an announcement, share volunteer or vendor recruitment needs, or give a friendly reminder about upcoming meetings or changes.

External: E-newsletters

Use an online e-newsletter service (such as Mail Chimp or Constant Contact) to design, write, and schedule weekly e-blasts to subscribers.

Each week, spotlight new and returning vendors, share market news and upcoming events, let customers know what will be for sale, what's in season at the next market, and give reminders about parking or market changes.

phone and make the calls yourself. For less-urgent information and reminders, a phone tree can help spread the word from vendor-to-vendor with each person responsible for calling another. You can also send text messages.

Be sure to talk to your vendors as some may have communication preferences.

Internal: Talk Face-to-Face

Especially when communicating a problem or change to the market (such as fees or rules), make sure you're reaching out to your vendors in-person. Certain topics may also need to be addressed in-person at meetings.

External: Printed Products

Posters, flyers, and brochures are still great ways to get market information in front of the public. Hang posters on community boards and speak with local businesses about putting out a stack of flyers or brochures.

External: Media Relations

Remember to reach out to local media (TV and radio stations, magazines, and newspapers). When communicating something in advance (first market of the season or a special event), send out a press release. If it's a last-minute announcement (weather cancellation or sudden change in parking availability due to road construction), reach out directly to local media for help getting the word out.

External: Website

Your website's home page is a great place to post need-to-know information. Post announcements to the home page and calendar section.

OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

While the Internet makes online communication convenient, don't discount "old fashioned" ways of getting the word out. Not everyone can or does check their email regularly. Not everyone is social media savvy. It's important to use several channels of communication, ranging from digital to more personal.

Internal: Call or Text

It's crucial for you to have the best phone number for contacting each of your vendors and board/committee members.

If you need to make an important announcement about weather or a last-minute change, pick up the

WONDERING HOW TO RAMP UP YOUR PROMOTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS?

CHECK OUT OUR SECTION ON "MARKETING YOUR MARKET" IN CHAPTER 5 ON PAGES 84 - 87.

SETTING THE RULES

VENDOR & MARKET REGULATIONS

EVERY MARKET NEEDS A SET OF GUIDELINES

“Your rules and guidelines will be your best friends,” says DaQuan Campbell, who manages the Waterloo Urban Farmers Market.

Rules help your vendors and customers know what’s expected and acceptable (and what isn’t) when it comes to selling, buying, and just being at your farmers market.

Rules and regulations vary from market to market and may be dictated by the market manager (you), the market board or committee, or the entity operating the market (such as a Chamber of Commerce or Parks and Recreation Department). Some rules may apply based on your location. For example, if your market takes place in a city park or parking lot, the city may require that the market follow certain rules. You may also need to follow county, state, or federal regulations.



AS A NEW MANAGER, YOU DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH

When planning to launch a brand new night market in Dubuque, Andie Donnan and Danielle Stowell turned to a few nearby farmers markets and another night market for inspiration.

“One of the first things we did when planning for the night market was to come up with our rules. We knew we needed to have something. I referenced several other Iowa and Wisconsin markets’ handbooks, including Madison, Dubuque, Platteville, and the Cedar Rapids Market After Dark. I looked at their rules to get an idea of structure and what should be mentioned in market rules.”

Andie Donnan, Co-Manager of Dubuque’s Millwork Night Market

And when Julie Madden started managing the Akron Farmers Market, she borrowed a sample vendor contract from the Le Mars market manager. After making a few tweaks, she had vendors sign it—putting a set of rules into effect for the Akron market for the first time.

“The new contract implemented a change that required goods being sold to be homegrown by the vendor. Vendors who were selling someone else’s produce had to pay an extra \$5. We had a problem with a vendor reselling produce they’d purchased at the grocery store. Now that I have a contract, I’m going to tighten it up for next year so that everything has to be homegrown or homemade by the vendor.”

Julie Madden, Manager of the Akron Farmer



If you're assuming management of an existing market, there may already be a set of rules in place. In most cases, it's best to wait until you have a year of experience before making changes to those existing rules—unless there's something unsafe or that needs urgent attention.

If you're helping to create a brand new market, launch your market with the rules already in place. Aim to have your rules and guidelines established 3-6 months before your market start date. While you may be recruiting vendors before the rules are set, be sure to communicate the rules early.



It's important to be as specific as possible about your rules. You might need to make them more specific over time. We had rules in place, but we would periodically have to look them over and revise them. For example, our rule that vendors had to grow the produce that they sold. That was one that we continued to pull up and examine to try to make it more clear and easier to enforce. Not being farmers and not having a full-time staff, it was hard for us to measure. Rules need to be clear for vendors to follow and for you to enforce. When setting, revising, or changing rules, it's helpful to have vendor meetings at the front end of the season, even as early as January—especially if you're establishing new rules.

Cassidy Bell, Former Manager of the Iowa City Farmers Market (2010-2016)

RULE EXAMPLES

HERE ARE COMMON MARKET GUIDELINES:



VENDOR PRODUCER POLICY

Many farmers markets require the vendor that sells at the market be the producer who grew, produced, or processed the goods being sold at the market. To implement this policy, you must indicate it in your rules and regulations.



SHARED VENDOR BOOTH

A vendor may share their space with another vendor. Example: ABC Farm and XYZ go in on a market stall together. ABC Farm attends the market on Wednesday and XYZ Farm attends on Saturday.



CODE OF CONDUCT

Fraudulent, dishonest, and deceptive practices; inappropriate conduct and activities; and display or sale of obscene, illegal, or unsafe merchandise is prohibited, the determination of which is at the sole discretion of market staff.



TENT WEIGHTS

All tents must be weighted (XX lbs minimum), no drilling or staking is permitted into pavement.



PETS

A pet policy is a common point of contention for vendors, managers, and attendees. If a market has such a policy and does not post "no pets allowed," the market is held responsible if an incident does occur and the rule was not enforced.



PROOF OF INSURANCE

A typical amount of at least \$500,000 or \$1,000,000 in liability coverage is suggested.



SUBLEASING

Vendors are not permitted to rent their space to anyone or allow additional vendors to sell goods in their space.



CRAFTER POLICY

A transformative act (to undergo a change in form, appearance, or character) must be performed which makes the product a creation of one's own. No reselling of goods that have not been transformed.



DAMAGE OR LOSS OF PRODUCT

The market is not held responsible for damage or loss of use that the lease/vendor may incur because of acts of God, or any other cause not under the market's control.



GENERATORS

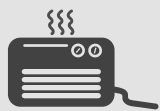
Vendors are permitted to use generators that do not exceed XX decibels when the market is in operation. Generators must be quiet and must not emit offensive fumes.



NO SMOKING

Iowa's Smokefree Air Act affects most markets being held in a public space. No smoking or use of tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or e-cigarettes is permitted by attendees or vendors.

Some rules and regulations are more standard, such as requiring vendors to have all necessary permits and proof of insurance. You may find that others do or do not apply to your farmers market. For example, an indoor-only market probably won't require vendors to use tent weights. Choose the guidelines that make the most sense for the size, location, and goals of your farmers market.



NO SPACE HEATERS

Space heaters (electric and propane) are prohibited at the farmers market.



DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

If a vendor(s) enter the market under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they will forfeit the stall for a minimum of one day, and a maximum of the remainder of the market season.



EXTENSION CORDS

Cords or anything in the walkway of market attendees must be taped when the cords cross walkways.



NO HAWKING

Prohibits the calling of attention to products in a loud, repetitive public manner and selling products in an aggressive manner.



COMPLIANCE

Vendors must comply with all city or county ordinances/regulations and federal laws.



LICENSES AND PERMITS

All permits necessary to sell must be on display at all times. It is the responsibility of the vendor to obtain and provide to the market manager copies of all licenses and permits required for the sale of the vendor's products at the market.



ON-SITE SALES

Family members or employees paid hourly, on commission, or by salary may sell a vendor's products at the market. Vendors are responsible for making sure all persons who work their booth are aware of the market rules and regulations.



PLASTIC BAG BAN

This ban will be for single use grocery bags with handles and similar plastic bags used at the end of a typical transaction. Vendors are not allowed to recycle and use these bags for distribution.



TRASH

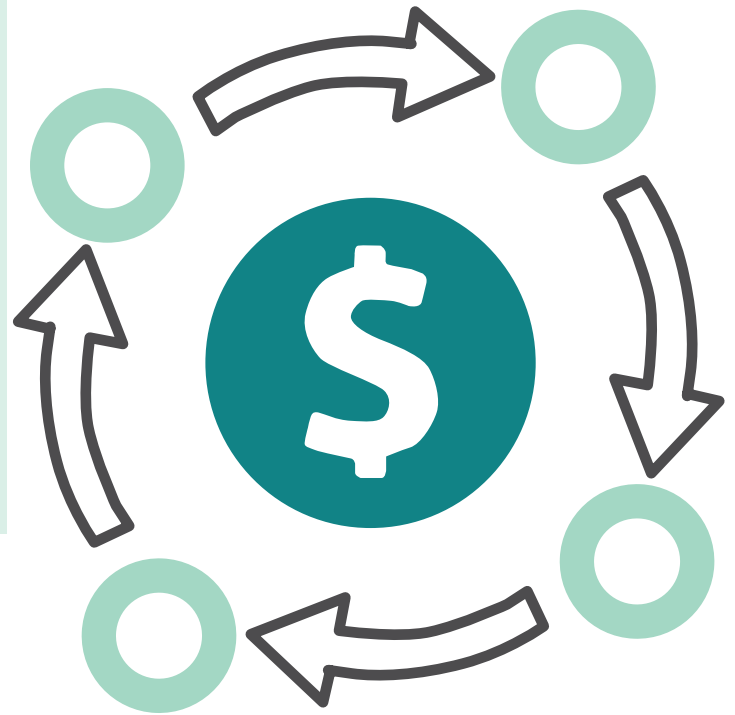
Vendors are responsible for removing all waste, rubbish, recyclables, or trash that they generate during the course of selling at the market.

**WANT TO SEE SAMPLE RULES
FROM REAL FARMERS MARKETS?
CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE RESOURCES AT
NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG/IOWA-FARMERS-MARKET-TOOLKIT**

**YOUR FIRST STEP IS TO SET
THE RULES BUT HOW DO YOU
ENFORCE THEM?
CHECK OUT CHAPTER 4'S SECTION ON
"COMMUNICATING AND ENFORCING THE RULES"
ON PAGES 56 - 57.**

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR YOUR MARKET

MONEY MAKES THE MARKET GO ROUND



“DO I NEED A CENTRALIZED CREDIT CARD SYSTEM?”

A centralized credit card system is a shared credit card terminal that allows all market attendees to access market currency while at the market. The system is typically implemented with the plan to distribute food assistance program dollars at the market and allows all vendors to participate while not having to purchase and manage their own credit card terminal. Types of market currency are dependent on the programs the market participates in (e.g., SNAP) but always include some form of “market bucks” with wooden nickels being commonly used as market currency.

“WHAT KIND OF RECORDS SHOULD I KEEP?”

Markets need to be keeping track of the most basic level incomes and expenses. Typically, income at a market will include vendor stall fees, donations, or sponsors. Expenses will vary depending on where your market is located (rent), what programs you run, events, marketing, and more. Tracking each can be done as simply as using a pen and paper or as complex as using a software program on a computer.

“WHAT ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE SHOULD I USE?”

Accounting software comes in all varieties, prices, and functionality. The most commonly used software is Quickbooks, as it offers a wide range of functions to assist with commonly required tasks—all at a reasonable price. With all the accounting software options available, it is best to research the options and find the one that best fits your budget, use, and skill or comfort level.

“SHOULD MY MARKET HAVE A BANK ACCOUNT?”

If your farmers market is operating under the umbrella of another entity (such as a Chamber of Commerce or City Parks and Recreation Department), that entity may also act as the fiscal agent for your market. Your income and expenses would be routed through that entity’s bank account, or one it has created for you.

If your market is an LLC, creating a separate bank account for your farmers market is a great way to keep funds separate from any other accounts you may have (personal/business). When opening a bank account, the bank will need:

- A copy of your LLC’s articles of organization, certificate of formation, or an equivalent document, depending on the state in which you registered your LLC
- Your LLC’s federal taxpayer identification number (EIN or Employer Identification Number)
- Your LLC operating agreement or some other document which sets out who is authorized to sign on behalf of your LLC

HOW TO CREATE A BUDGET FOR YOUR FARMERS MARKET

1 Start with Last Year's Numbers

When creating your market budget for the upcoming year, it is recommended to look at last year's income and expenses to assist with planning the following year. If you do not have this data from previous years, the example Income Accounts and Expense Accounts tables below highlight the most common line items.

2 Add up Projected Expenses

List the current year's projected costs related to staff wages, legal and professional services, supplies, rent, advertising and marketing, live music, special events, membership dues, insurance, other miscellaneous costs, and (potentially) SNAP. Miscellaneous costs may include: Utilities, Permits, Office Overhead, Portable Restrooms, Central Credit Card Terminal, Transaction Fees, Monthly Wi-Fi, etc. Remember to plan and save for future long-range projects, too.

Use the actual expense rates when possible, as this will keep your budget more accurate in the long term. Once you think you have a complete list of expenses, it's always good practice to plan on some contingencies (things you don't expect that cost money). Surprise costs usually come up—it's always nice to have money set aside for those.

3 Estimated Expected Income

Now that you know the cost to operate the market in the coming year, list the current year's expected income from stall fees, membership dues, donations, promotions, sponsorships, and (potentially) SNAP.

4 Compare the Numbers

Take a look at expenses versus income. **For a market to be sustainable in the long term, a market will need a positive balance (Income - Expenses).** If your projected expenses are more than your expected income, you will need to either get creative with finding additional dollars or you will need to trim your budget. As a general rule, it is easier to find additional dollars for programs or events than for your general operating expenses (rent, fees, insurance, personnel).

EXAMPLE CHART OF EXPENSES

EXPENSE ACCOUNTS	Expense Amount	Percentage of Expense
Employees or Contractors	\$3,600	38%
Legal & Professional Services	\$300	3%
Supplies	\$300	3%
Rent	\$1,000	10%
Advertising/Marketing	\$3,500	36%
Market Music & Events	\$500	5%
Membership Dues	\$20	<1%
Insurance	\$300	3%
Miscellaneous	\$100	1%
Total Income	\$9,620	96%

*If you accept SNAP another row would be included

EXAMPLE CHART OF INCOMES

INCOME ACCOUNTS	Income Amount	Percentage of Income
Vendor Booth Fees	\$7,000	80%
Sponsorship Fees	\$1,000	10%
Grants & Donations	\$5,000	10%
Other Income	\$5,000	<1%
Total Income	\$10,000	100%

*If you accept SNAP another row would be included



SEVERE WEATHER & EMERGENCIES

PLANNING FOR THE SAFETY OF YOUR VENDORS

The safety of the farmers market vendors, market manager, and customers must be the highest priority of the market. Every market should include a Weather and Emergencies policy in their rules and regulations and designate who makes the decision in the case of inclement weather or an emergency (typically the market manager). You also need a plan for how you'll

notify both vendors and the general public.

As market manager, you may need to occasionally cancel or close a market due to severe storms, extreme heat or cold, or an imminent weather emergency like flooding. But in order to ensure the success of your farmers market, it's important to enforce a "rain or shine" policy—meaning the market will remain open in the rain and will not close except for inclement weather.

"RAIN OR SHINE"

If the market gets a reputation for closing due to rain customers will check the weather instead of making the market part of their routine. Mark Wall, Producer on the Farmers Market Channel, stresses the importance of keeping your market open rain or shine:

“

Rain or predicted rain is no reason not to show up at the market. It is a decreasing spiral downward. If there are fewer farmers in the rain, then fewer customers. If there are fewer customers, then fewer farmers.

Here's my policy: If a vendor signs out of the market a week in advance—which is allowed, and for which there is a form and clipboard—then that absence is permitted. Otherwise,

all vendors must show up on a rainy or predicted rainy day. If a vendor does not, that vendor pays \$1 for every vendor that DOES show up on that day. It is \$1 for each farmer or maker. It is paid to the market, and the market distributes it to the farmers who were present. Last time it was invoked it was \$86. If your market is smaller, make it \$2 per vendor.

This policy does three things: One, it rewards the farmers and makers who are keeping the market open. Two, it punishes those that are afraid of the rain. And three, it is a memorable penalty that everyone talks about.

Since the market isn't open all day, rain often comes when we are not open—earlier or later. AND most important, our sales are about 85% of normal on rainy days.

WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR WEATHER & EMERGENCY POLICY



RAIN OR SHINE POLICY

The market is a rain or shine event and will not close for rain. This lets market attendees know that the market will be open unless severe weather is present.



EXTREME HEAT

If the heat index is greater than 103° F (putting vendors and attendees at risk of heat-related illness) the market will be canceled.



DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The market manager has the final authority to cancel a market and will take all necessary actions and precautions to ensure the regular and safe operation of the market.



RAIN DATES

If you're planning a special event, program, or night/holiday market for your farmers market, consider a backup plan or rain date/location in the event of a weather-related cancellation.



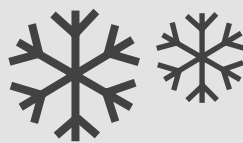
EMERGENCY READY

In case of a full-scale emergency or active shooter situation, all markets should have an emergency action plan and share it with vendors ahead of time.



SEVERE WEATHER

The market will be canceled in the event of severe weather: lightning visible or within a 10-mile radius; wind speeds over 40 mph; and large hail, tornado, or flood warnings.



EXTREME COLD

The market will be canceled if a certain wind chill temp is expected or in the event of inclement winter weather such as a blizzard or ice storm.



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The market manager will notify vendors via email, text message, and/or phone call. Community members will be notified via e-blast, social media, and market website.



CPR + FIRST AID

It's encouraged that market managers be CPR trained. Also, make sure staff, vendors, and volunteers know where to find first-aid kits and what to do in case of an emergency.



AUDIBLE SYSTEM

An audible system can be used at larger markets to assist with the implementation of an Emergency Action Plan.