



FARMERS MARKET PLANNING TOOLKIT

VENDOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION



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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT?

The WVFMA recently completed the first round of the WV Farmers Market Training Network, a pilot program funded through the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, where we studied high need training topics for farmers markets in the Mountain State. What we found is that recruiting and retaining vendors to grow markets is one of the **top areas of need and interest** for WV farmers markets.

No farmers market can function without its farmers! While this seems obvious, in practice, ensuring that a market serves its farmers as well as customers and community requires a lot of work and good management. The extent to which a market can keep current vendors and/or recruit new vendors when needed can determine how much it can grow and succeed. This toolkit sets out to provide practical tips, strategies, and examples to help your market improve vendor recruitment and retention.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

No two markets are the same. Your market may be interested in recruiting new vendors, figuring out how to keep current vendors, or both. This toolkit is intended to be a practical guide for WV farmers markets who are looking for strategies to recruit new vendors and improve market management to keep vendors coming back.

In addition to information about best practices and strategies for vendor recruitment and retention, this toolkit will also give you “snap shots” of how markets in WV are creatively trying to retain and recruit vendors as well as hands-on tools such as questions to consider that can help your market assess which strategies can make sense for your market. These pieces are meant to supplement the decision-making processes of your farmers market, and most can be used separately or within the context of the whole document.

Some highlights to look for:



What WV Markets Said...

Insights from surveys of WV farmers markets and vendors



TOOL

Tools to use in planning your vendor recruitment and retention efforts



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BUILDING MARKET SUCCESS WITH VENDOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

A market may be simultaneously trying to retain and recruit new vendors for different reasons. Any decision a farmers market makes should be in line with its goals or overall strategy or plan. Decisions to try out new strategies to recruit vendors or retain current vendors are no different.

According to the Farmers Market Federation of New York in their Farmers Market Manager Training Manual, for farmers markets to be successful, it's very important for farmers markets to constantly assess whether or not they are serving their "triple bottom line": their customers, their vendors, and their community². There will be times where the market might want to make a change to please customers that could hurt their vendors. Likewise changes to benefit vendors must take into account the impact on customers or else the long-term impact could harm vendors and decrease the success of the market. When making key decisions about vendor makeup, policies, and marketing strategies, farmers markets must strive to gauge potential impact on customers and vendors alike and strive to strike a healthy balance.

In order to ensure that the market is serving vendors, it helps to think of vendors as a "target market" that the market is serving. Just like how the market must consider how it can best serve the needs of its customers (as described in the first toolkit in this series: **Marketing Your Market**), it must strive to best serve the needs of its vendors too.

Just as the farmers market must consider how potential efforts to benefit vendors could impact customers; it must also consider how efforts to recruit new vendors could impact current vendors. In this way, a market must simultaneously consider vendor recruitment and retention strategies in order to best benefit vendors and the overall triple-bottom line for market success.

As in any business, it is easier to retain customers than reach new customers. The same should go for farmers markets; it should be a priority for the market to retain and grow its current vendors. Recruiting new vendors may become a need if the market cannot grow given its current vendor and product makeup.

While the practices for both vendor retention and recruitment are inherently related, this document addresses them separately in order to provide practical tools and strategies. Whether your market decides it needs to try to address the needs of current vendors, recruit new vendors, or both, the foundation of the success of these efforts is in the implementation of good business and management practices, adaptability, and communication.

In the References section, you'll find a range of resources that can help with overall market management. In this toolkit we focus on the aspects most related to vendor recruitment and retention.



*According to the Farmers Market Federation of New York².



Vendor recruitment

Vendor recruitment refers to the extent to which new vendors are joining your farmers market. A farmers market must consistently assess a host of factors to determine whether it is necessary to recruit new vendors to the market. A farmers market might want to recruit more vendors if there is a lack of a certain product at the market that customers want. Alternatively, a market may decide to cease vendor recruitment or even make vendor membership requirements stricter if it determines that such efforts will ultimately help build the success of current vendors and the overall market.

Examples of strategies a market might use to improve vendor recruitment:

- make door-to-door calls to personally recruit vendors
- hold the market on a Saturday to enable vendors that work during the week to attend
- consider consignment sales to increase product availability and vendor participation



Vendor Retention

Vendor retention refers to the extent to which the farmers at your farmers market vendors continue to participate in your market year after year. What keeps your farmers coming back has a lot to do with how much they feel that the farmers market is benefiting them in some way and that it is worth their while to continue to participate. In order to ensure that current vendors keep coming back, farmers market must strive to meet their farmers' needs. Needs can change, so markets must be constantly thinking about how they can meet emergent vendor needs.

Examples of efforts to increase vendor retention:

- implementing governance structures, policies and rules to ensure that vendors are treated fairly and participate in decision-making and market direction
- ensure clear and transparent financial management
- increase advertising to boost vendor sales and implement EBT machine program to increase sales
- bring in trainers to help vendors improve production and marketing



The background features a repeating pattern of farm-related icons such as cows, chickens, bees, leaves, and farm tools. A central horizontal band is filled with a red, textured pattern resembling coarse fabric. A white rectangular box is centered within this red band, containing the text 'VENDOR RECRUITMENT'.

VENDOR RECRUITMENT

If you are part of a new farmers market, you will need to seek out vendors. Even if you are part of an established farmers market, your market may decide that you need to bring in more vendors, whether to grow the community sense of the market, increase the volume of products available, or offer a greater diversity of product.

Depending on your local context, sometimes it can be difficult to find new vendors or to recruit them to come to a farmers market. There are many reasons that recruitment can be tough. Perhaps the farmers face barriers that limit them from being able to participate. Or maybe your farmers market has limited human power or finances to do the kind of outreach you need to do to recruit new farmers.

In this toolkit we consider 5 steps to help you be more successful in your efforts to recruit new vendors to your farmers market.

Target. Who do you want to recruit?

Analyze. What barriers may affect vendor recruitment?

Act. What strategies can you use to overcome barriers and recruit vendors?

Reach out. How will you recruit vendors?

Integrate. How will you orient and integrate your new vendors to your market?

TARGET. WHO DO YOU WANT TO RECRUIT?

When trying to recruit new vendors, first consider what you want to accomplish. Most markets want to recruit new vendors in order to offer a greater volume or variety of products to their customer base. In order to determine what kinds of vendors you want to bring in to the market, first consider what products you need.

What will your customers buy?

The market manager can keep a simple list of products that are available, quantities available throughout the season, and number of producers that have the products. This can help your market see what products you are lacking².

While you can guess what products customers will buy, the best way to find out is to ask them. There are several techniques to help you assess customer wants and needs. You might consider conducting a survey at the market on different days throughout the season, or polling customers through email or social media pages.



Dot survey to assess market location change and customer spending patterns at the Morgantown Farmers Market

One popular way to get customer feedback is a “dot survey” in which you put a multiple choice question on a big sheet of paper and ask customers to place a dot on the page to answer^{1,3}. It’s short and quick and involves no writing. You could ask them what products they would like to see at the market, for example. Also consider gathering information about desired product

attributes (ex.organic, grassfed, etc.) or varieties. Even though you have a certain product, not all products are created equal. For example, you may have customers that prefer traditional beefsteak to heirloom tomatoes, or grass-fed beef to grain-fed. It's important to think beyond product category and offer variety and choice to customers.



TOOL: *Appendix A. Using dot surveys to learn what products customers want*

What type of vendor will you target?

Who you try to recruit will depend on the needs of your market, the availability of producers in your region, and also on potential competition from other markets or marketing outlets in your region.

Many markets try to recruit vendors that are already selling at other markets, although that tactic may not be the best idea since it may impact the other markets and does not solve the problem of needing more farmers. Another way to try to bring new vendors to your market is to try to recruit farmers who may not be selling their products currently, such as small-scale hobby farmers or gardeners or even local FFA students.

Especially in areas with high competition from other markets, looking at recruiting farmers that are new to selling or are smaller may be one of your only options - and potentially a good one! Farmers markets are an easy first step for farmers and gardeners that are just beginning to sell their products.



Results from a 2012 survey of WV farmers and gardeners conducted by Oldham & Brown (2013) indicated that farmers markets were the #1 most popular marketing channel that non-commercial farmers were considering beginning to sell through in the future.⁵

What can your market do to recruit vendors that have never sold before?



Buckhannon-Upshur FFA students participate in the WV Winter Blues Farmers Market



TOOL: *Appendix B. Planning Worksheet for Vendor Recruitment*

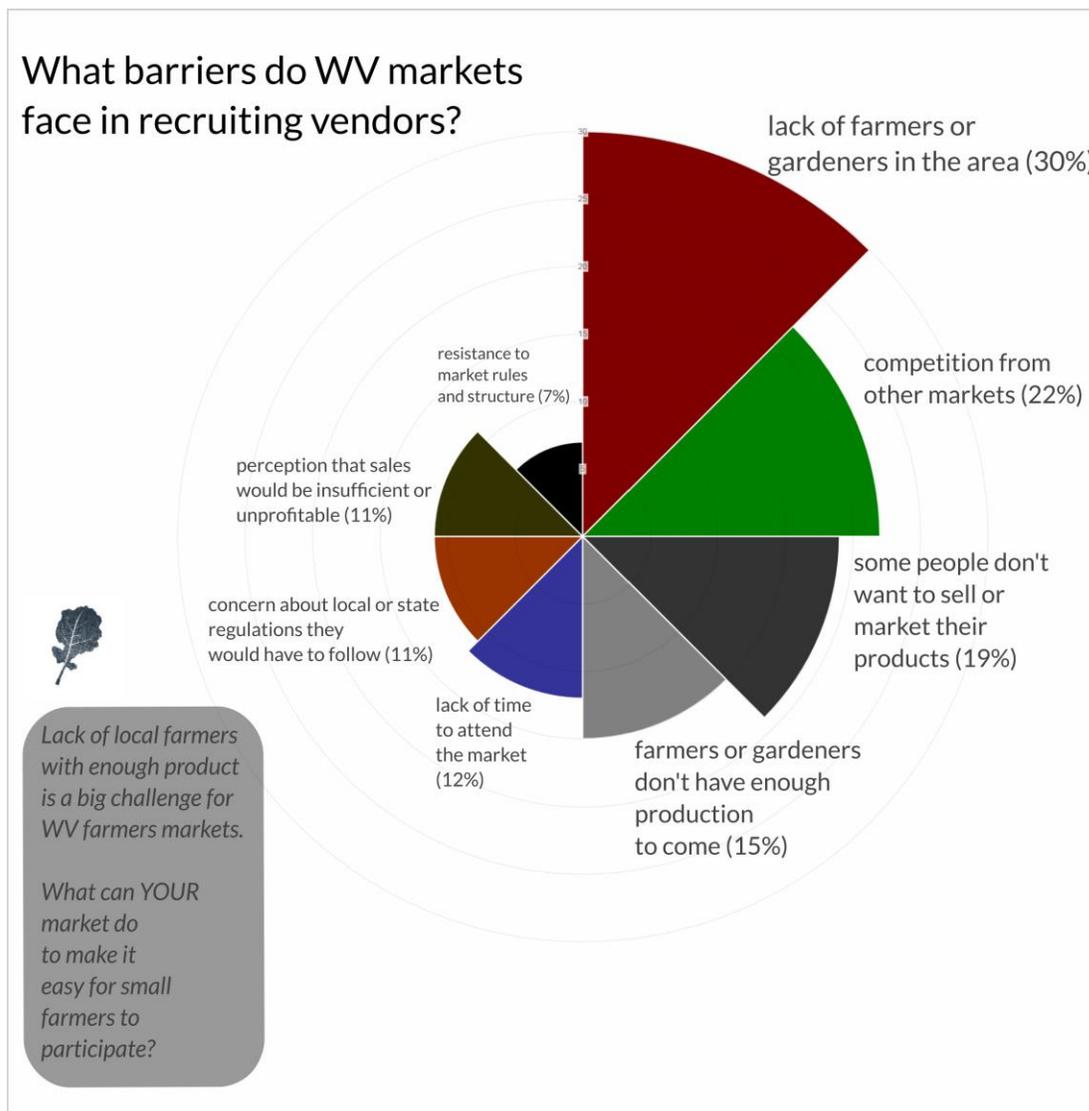


ANALYZE. WHAT BARRIERS MAY AFFECT NEW VENDOR RECRUITMENT?

WVFMA surveyed WV farmers markets to learn about what the main reasons are that markets have trouble recruiting new vendors. Figure 1 shows the percentage of total survey respondents that “strongly agreed” that the reason was a barrier for their market in recruiting new vendors. As you can see from the figure, “lack of farmers or gardeners in the area” was the top reason markets struggled to recruit vendors; 30% of markets strongly agreed that this limited their recruitment efforts.¹⁰

To overcome lack of supply and vendors, markets may have to do a good job of marketing their market to potential vendors, make changes to make it easier or more appealing for small vendors to come, or even grow vendors from the ground up.

Figure 1: Barriers to Recruitment from WVFMA survey, 2014¹⁰



ACT. WHAT STRATEGIES CAN YOU USE TO OVERCOME BARRIERS AND RECRUIT VENDORS?

Market your market to potential vendors

Sometimes just increasing outreach and promoting what's great about your market can help recruit more vendors. Think about vendors as a target market, just as you would your customers. Why should they attend your market? What can you offer that is different than the other markets they attend? How will you convince them that your market can meet their needs?

For example, if your market has the potential to be profitable, let farmers know that. This may simply be a matter of reaching out to them and marketing your market to them a little bit and may not involve any major changes to your market structure. The Washington State Farmers Market Management Toolkit recommends providing potential vendors with information about expected sales such as average sales or customer counts in order to intrigue them to attend your market⁶.

Talk to vendors in the area about what they like or do not like about other markets. Let vendors know what your market does best. This might be something as simple as being open during a convenient time, having good advertising, or having a fun and welcoming market culture.

Provide support to grow local farmers

If lack of product to bring to market is a reason that local farmers are not interested in participating, think about how your market may be able to help them produce more to bring.

Hold a training or recruitment event focused on production

Hobby farmers who have gardens primarily for canning often only plant a few plantings of crops rather than staggering successive plantings throughout the season to have product consistently. Your market could consider offering free training on production or crop planning or season extension and invite new growers to attend to provide them information about how to have product for a longer period of time.

Provide support in navigating regulations and rules

These factors could be a big deterrent for a small farmer to get involved in a market. One thing your market can do is provide information about regulations and rules that apply to different types of vendors and help them understand what they need to do to comply. Having a market manager that is well-versed in these issues and is willing and able to spend the time with individual vendors to discuss these issues can really help a market get new vendors involved.

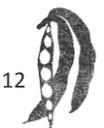
Provide direction on what to grow

One thing your market can do to help you serve vendors and customers best is to know what customers want and communicate that to vendors. If current vendors are unwilling or unable to raise a certain product, consider asking a potential



In a 2012 survey study of WV farmers, one of the biggest reasons non-commercial vendors did not sell their products was due to **concern about complicated regulations**. Another was **concern about consequences if their products made someone sick**.⁵

Support you can provide to help vendors navigate these issues may be a big selling point to recruit them to your market.



vendor to grow the product and come to the market. This strategy may work particularly with younger growers such as FFA students or hobby growers that have never attended the market simply because they had never considered doing so. If new vendors know that there is the demand for a specific product and they've been asked to grow it, they may consider coming to market⁹.

Pursue funding for projects or incentives to get vendors involved

In some cases, lack of funds to purchase signage, seed or other inputs like season extension materials could deter novice farmers or gardeners from getting involved in a farmers market. Your market could look for small donations or grants to provide novice farmers with some of these basic materials to be able to begin coming to the market. Helping them learn what they need to do and what materials could help them.

Consider changes to your market to ease entry of new vendors

If your market is really struggling to get a critical mass of vendors, you may want to re-assess how your market is serving vendors and if there are any aspects of the market that may be inhibiting entry of new vendors. For example, are your rules too restrictive or not strict enough? Is your market held at a good time for vendors? Are your fees appropriate for the vendor base you have available? What are people's biggest complaints?

A decision to change the structure or rules of your market to recruit new vendors is not to be taken lightly, especially if you are a market that already has an established vendor base. Any changes to your market structure or rules should be carefully weighed in terms of how they may impact your other vendors, customers, and your overall market community. Here are some ideas of things you might consider changing if they would meet your goals.

Adapt your fees or fee structure

You may consider lowering your fees and looking for other ways to finance your market, such as through local sponsorships or events. See the second toolkit in this series, ***Structure, Management, and Finance***, for finance and funding strategies. This may encourage small or new vendors to want to participate. If fees are potentially deterring vendors, consider changes to your fee structure that could impact small vendors less (see Financial Management section of this toolkit).

Change your market day or time

If the day or time your market is held is not convenient for vendors, you may want to consider changing it to a better time. This may even increase potential for vendors from other markets to attend if it is on a different day.

Analyze impact of reselling or allowable product policies

Does your market have a policy on allowable products and/or reselling? You may decide to loosen it up or make it stricter- depending on the impact it may be having on your attempts to recruit new vendors.

For example, if you prohibit reselling, you may not have availability of fruits or other products that could draw customers to the market. This in turn may be limiting the profitability of your market and new vendors may not want to attend. A study on why farmers markets closed in Oregon stressed that successful farmers markets need a few “anchor vendors” that can provide a critical variety and volume of products to draw customers in⁷.

If your market struggles to have this volume or variety of vendor-produced items, you might consider allowing vendors to bring certain products that they do not grow, with approval of your board. Several WV markets have policies to allow producers to bring products that are in high demand like Romney peaches or processed foods from a local business, like Uncle Bunks pickles in Tyler County.



What WV markets said...

A WV market on trouble recruiting vendors:

“(there is a) lack of producers in our area. Many cannot meet our requirements of 70% grown and 30% bought”¹⁰.



Consider if your policies are too strict or not strict enough to keep vendors happy, meet your mission, and also grow your market.

Conversely, if your policy on reselling is too loose and other vendors are unable to sell their products at the market, new vendors may not want to attend for that reason. It is important to understand how your policies on products you allow and do not allow may be impacting your current vendors, customers, and your potential to recruit new vendors.

Offer option of a trial market to let new vendors see if they like it

This is a potentially small change your market could offer to ease the entry for new vendors to your market. Your market could allow new vendors to attend the market one day free of charge and with no commitment to join the market. This may encourage novice vendors who have perhaps never sold or marketed a product a chance to come and see if they like it. It is also a chance for vendors that attend other markets to experience your markets’ culture and learn about sales potential so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not to join your market. If they like it, they might consider growing more the following season and attending the market.

Consider allowing alternative marketing strategies

If your farmers market is having trouble recruiting, you may need to consider adapting to be able to offer something unique or better serve the needs of your vendors. This may be the case particularly in rural areas where vendors may have to travel great distances to bring in products or work full-time jobs; their return on investment may not make it worth their while to make this trip or spend the time or they simply may not be able to attend at all even if they have product.

For example, if you are having trouble getting vendors to come to your market, you could consider offering a consignment option. This might involve having a market booth that sells product on behalf of vendors that are unable to consistently attend. In this way, the market and customers benefit from having more product availability and also benefits the vendor who maybe cannot always attend the market. If the vendor is a part of your market and raises their product, this may even be an option for markets that prohibit or limit the amount of reselling.



TOOL: *Appendix C. Analyzing the impact of a change on your triple bottom line*

REACH OUT. HOW WILL YOU RECRUIT POTENTIAL VENDORS?

Now that your farmers market has thought about who your target vendors are and how you can serve their needs you can start to think about the best ways to reach out to them and recruit them.

Having the human power to conduct outreach

Recruiting new vendors is going to take time and resources - both human and financial. Your market should carefully select outreach strategies that meet your budget and the ability of your market manager or board to carry out the needed work.

Having the right information available to share *Flyer or Talking points*

Be able to talk about your market's value and provide information marketing your market on any public forums you have (website, facebook, public flyers, etc.) If your market does not have those capabilities, at least be prepared to speak to your value as a farmers market. Remember, potential vendors are like customers – your farmers market must try to win them over!

Your “pitch” to vendors should center around how your market serves the needs of vendors.

In addition to other information you may want to promote, the Washington State Farmers Market Management Toolkit recommends being ready to talk to potential vendors about the following aspects of your market⁶:

- Policy on reselling and how it is enforced
- Expected sales information (Ex. Share customer counts or average sales data to new vendors)
- Description of shoppers (Ex. Are they high-end or low income? What products do you know they want from your customer assessments?)
- Explanation of fees and where they go (membership, space, etc.)
- Market policies and rules
- How booth locations are assigned (seniority, vendor's choice, etc.?)
- Expected contributions of vendors to special events that market holds
- Programs your market may offer for payment (EBT, FMNP, etc.)



TOOL: *Appendix D. Crafting your market “pitch” to recruit vendors*



What WV markets said...

Over 30% of respondents to a WVFMA member market survey¹⁰ reported using **word of mouth, social media, print media, and active identification and contacting of potential new vendors** to recruit

14% or less reported using **partner referrals, email, mail, recruiting events, and broadcast media**

When asked what recruited them to the markets they attend, top reasons were **geographic proximity, invitation from another vendor or market organizer & individual research on the market**



Personal outreach is among the most effective recruitment strategies.



Application for your farmers market

Have the application materials for your farmers market ready before you begin recruiting new vendors. These materials should ideally be available in a public place so that potential vendors can easily find and reference them. If you have a due date for your application, make sure that you give vendors ample time to do the application and provide any documents, licenses, or insurance proof you require. Make sure your manager and board can be available to help answer questions about the market or application.

In their resources related to vendor recruitment, UC Davis Small Farms Center recommends including the following items in your application⁸:

- Contact information
- Information explaining fees
- Place to indicate the products they will sell
- Copy of rules and/or guidelines
- An agreement that they sign and date
- Any other forms/licenses required by the market

A good example of a simple application can be found in the Starting a Farmers Market in Montana Guide by the Alternative Energy Resources Organization⁴.



TOOL: *Appendix E. Example application, Putnam County Farmers Market*

Where can you start to look for vendors?

Think about the vendors you are trying to target. How will you find them?

While personal outreach is the best way to target and reach potential vendors, if you do not have contact information for anyone, here are some ideas to get you started in your search⁴.

- Can you post material or seek people out at feed stores?
- Can you ask supply stores, butcher shops, restaurants for contact information or introduction to farmers?
- Can you drive around the county and seek out farms and gardens?
- Are their Upick operations, roadside stands, or high school FFA students that could be interested?

Strategies for reaching your potential vendors

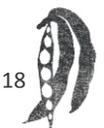
How you reach out to potential vendors will depend on how difficult it will be to recruit them and how they may best respond to your invitation.

Table 1: Outreach strategies pros and cons

Strategy and examples	Pros	Cons
<p>Hold recruitment events and invite potential vendors <i>Examples:</i> <i>Hold a local foods dinner</i> <i>Host a trainer to speak on a topic of interest</i></p>	<p>Good strategy if you are interested in recruiting various types of producers. Can help to build community among current vendors and customers as well.</p>	<p>Your market only needs a certain type of vendor or product Requires time and potentially money to organize.</p>
<p>Mailing information via postal service to potential vendors <i>Examples:</i> <i>Consult with local Extension agents or NRCS offices and ask them if they will send your materials to farmers they work with.</i></p>	<p>Good if potential vendors do not use electronic media. Allows you to give them complete information to think about. Can be helpful to partner with service providers who already work with them as an introduction.</p>	<p>Requires funds for stamps, printing. Requires someone to do the work of printing and mailing. May not be effective if no personal connection or follow-up is established with potential vendor. May not be effective if not targeting the right vendors.</p>
<p>Mass electronic outreach <i>Examples:</i> <i>Send an email to potential vendors</i> <i>Send out an e-blast through a market listserv or facebook page advertising that you need vendors</i></p>	<p>Good way to get the word out to a lot of people who will share and tell others.</p>	<p>May not reach people that do not use computers. Is not personal nor targeted so difficult to provide followup.</p>
<p>Personal outreach <i>Examples:</i> <i>Call up and invite potential vendors</i> <i>Drop by a potential vendor's farm or market booth if they sell at another market</i></p>	<p>Appropriate if you have a particular vendor or product in mind that you want to recruit Can help show sincerity and build trust Provides a way for potential vendor to ask questions about the market or explain why they aren't interested</p>	<p>Requires time and energy Could be seen as invasive if no prior contact is made If calling, make sure to send information prior to call so that person has time to consider. Otherwise, it could be difficult to explain all of the information over the phone.</p>
<p>Broadcast Media <i>Examples:</i> <i>TV or radio ad or press</i></p>	<p>Wide reach if you want to cast the net wide. PSAs & press releases are free</p>	<p>Could involve \$\$\$ You may want to target your audience more directly</p>



TOOL: *Appendix F. Developing your outreach plan*



WV Market Snap Shot

Knocking on doors: Personalized vendor recruitment by Williamson Farmers Market

When they started out, the Williamson Farmers Market team knew they had their work cut out for them. Williamson was a rural community and local residents were of modest income. Most commercial farmers in the area were already attending other larger markets. Local hobby farmers primarily gave away the food they did not eat, and were not sure they wanted to start selling.

The team decided to take a direct and personal approach to getting to know the interests and needs of local producers and to build the potential of a local market. They identified potential vendors through farm census maps and by driving around. They invested time and energy in outreach; they called people, surveyed them, made visits to farms and homes. They talked to producers attending other markets about the market culture, times, costs, and rules regarding products and reselling. The team found that many local producers were not interested in getting involved in bigger markets. While many of them had not marketed their produce before, they were attracted to the local feel of the Williamson Farmers Market.



Farmers and crafters at the Williamson pilot farmers market

The team also held events like a Corn Roast to bring producers together and provide some education about season extension in partnership with the WVU Extension Service and through grant funding. Events like these got people excited about the new market and the idea of growing produce to sell. They also collected information from customers to provide to producers about what products customers wanted.

To get farmers involved in the market and to build a supportive customer base, they held 4 pilot markets the first year before launching the first full season with weekly markets. This helped local growers and crafters get involved slowly and with relatively low risk. Once they saw that they could sell there they became interested in getting more involved in the Williamson Farmers Market. The team was able to recruit 22 producers to share information about what they grew and get involved in the market.

Moving forward, the Williamson Farmers Market has a mobile market that they plan to use to pick up produce from farmers and distribute it to the furthest reaches of the county in addition to having a central market location.

Building relationships and earning the buy-in of local farmers went a long way towards building participation in the market. By making it easy for farmers to get involved with little investment or risk, the Williamson Farmers Market was able to build local support and grow the down-home feel that fit the community.

INTEGRATE. HOW WILL YOU ORIENT AND INTEGRATE NEW VENDORS?

If you've been successful in recruiting new vendors to try out your market, the next step is to provide them with a smooth entry into the culture and structure of your market. Two simple ways to do this are to provide some simple orientation materials and make time and space for the new vendors to get to know and talk to other vendors.

Provide an orientation packet

An orientation packet does not have to be complex, but can go a long way in providing information to new vendors up front. Basic documents that you might want to include could include:

- Rules and policies for the market
- Information about local health department or other regulations that apply to vendors
- Contact information for the market manager, board members, and other vendors

You may also choose to include information about selling that can assist the new vendor to be successful. UC Davis Small Farms Center recommends including information about stand arrangement, timing of set-up, pricing suggestions according to the market culture, gauging quantity to bring to market, customer service, and other potentially helpful advice⁸. This could be especially helpful if your new vendors are farmers who have never sold before.

Create opportunities to get to know other vendors

At your next vendor meeting, you can make time for extra social interaction so that new vendors can get to know current vendors. Consider having a potluck at one of your meetings or providing snacks in order to encourage people to hang out and talk. In addition to providing this casual social time, it's a good idea to take time during the meeting to have some formal introductions. Ask current vendors to introduce themselves and what they do to new vendors and give them a welcome. Ask new vendors to do the same, and give them a formal welcome on behalf of the farmers' market board. While these things seem obvious and simple, they go a long way to helping your new vendors feel like a part of your market.

Some farmers markets in WV are actively setting up semi-formal mentorship programs. Such programs can pair a new vendor with an established vendor to help them learn the ropes of production and marketing. Even if you do not create a formal program, creating a culture of sharing and support at your market can help new vendors feel welcome and prosper and contribute to your market.



What WV markets said...

A WV Market survey respondent on building loyalty at farmers markets:

"If new vendors are actively befriended by a couple of existing vendors, they develop loyalty to their new friends and, before long, to the market itself."¹⁰

VENDOR RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST

✓	
	We have talked with or surveyed customers to find out what products we need.
	We have considered who our potential vendors are and what challenges they may face in attending our market.
	We have considered what value our farmers market offers and how it can benefit the vendors we want to recruit.
	We have chosen an outreach strategy that will best target the vendors we want.
	We have assigned point people and timelines for our outreach efforts.
	Our application and outreach materials are prepared for distribution.
	We have developed a simple orientation packet and discussed how we will help integrate our new vendors into the market.
	We have considered potential changes we could make to the market that could help us recruit more vendors. We have analyzed how these could impact our customer, current vendors, and overall market community.

The image features a repeating pattern of various farm-related icons such as chickens, cows, sheep, pigs, bees, and various fruits and vegetables. A prominent horizontal band of solid red color runs across the middle of the page. Centered within this red band is a white rectangular box containing the text "VENDOR RETENTION".

VENDOR RETENTION

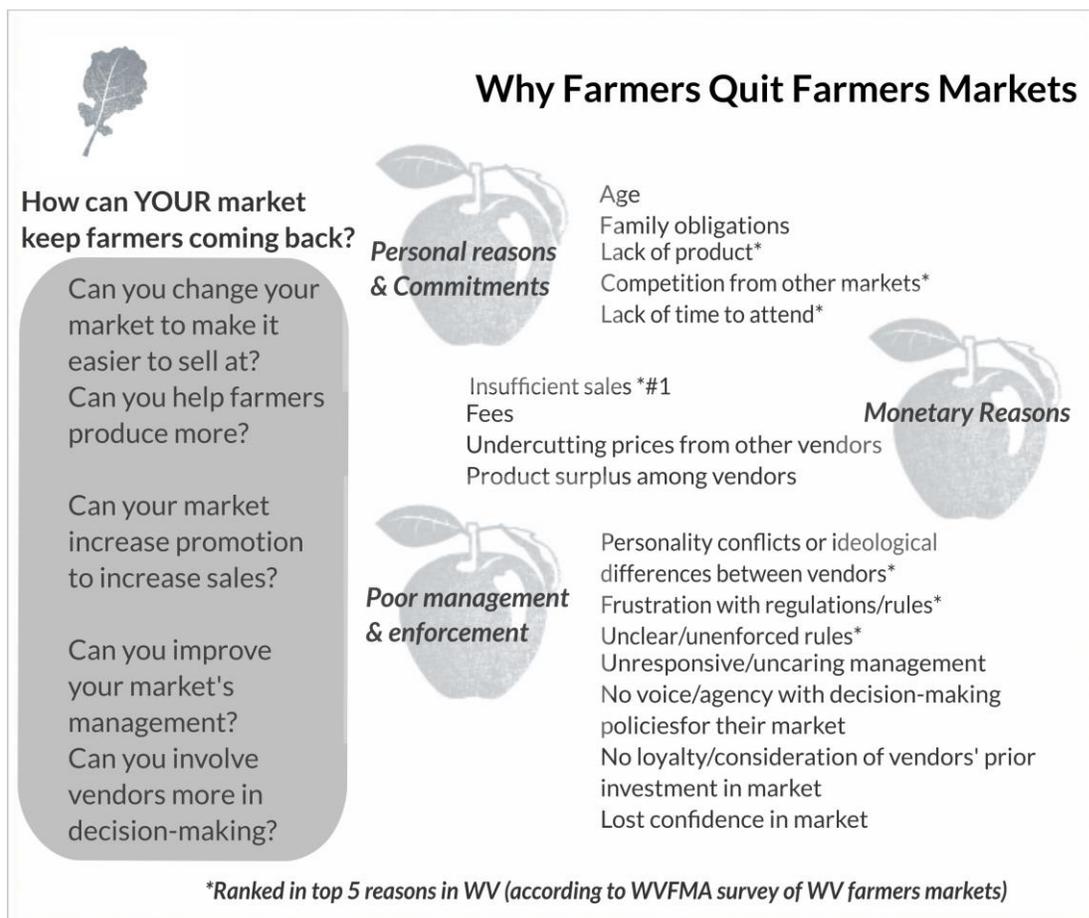
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO KEEP THEM COMING BACK?

The extent to which vendors feel that the farmers market benefits them and supports their goals will impact whether or not they continue to participate in the market. Here we look at five overall strategies that you can use to keep vendors coming back to your market:

- Cultivate. How can you grow your market culture to meet your vendors' goals?
- Govern together. How will you ensure vendor participation and trust?
- Manage Money. How will you manage funds to earn vendor trust and grow the market?
- Promote. How will you engage customers and increase vendor sales?
- Nurture & Grow. How will you invest in vendor education and growth?

These strategies can help you address and prevent the common reasons that farmers quit farmers markets. WVFMA surveyed member markets to learn what the main reasons were that vendors were leaving their markets (Figure 2). The most prevalent reason was that vendors experiences "insufficient sales". Other reasons had to do with governance and lack of supply. These are all things your market can try to tackle by improving your management, increasing promotion to boost sales, and helping producers to increase production or making it easier for them to attend your market¹⁰.

Figure 2: Why Farmers Quit Farmers Markets in WV¹⁰



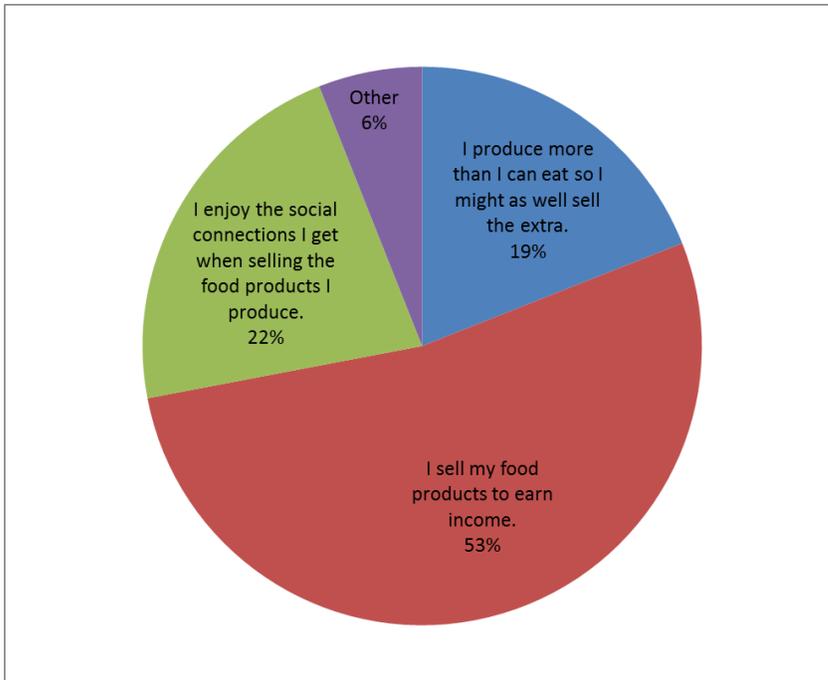
CULTIVATE. HOW CAN YOU GROW YOUR MARKET CULTURE TO MEET YOUR VENDORS' GOALS?

Just as you would pay attention to creating a market culture that customers are attracted to, you must also consider what attracts vendors to the market and keeps them coming back⁶.

Vendors participate in farmers markets for a variety of reasons. For example, some may come just for the social aspects while others may be primarily trying to generate income. A 2012 survey study of WV farmers and gardeners asked respondents about their primary reason for selling the products that they raise. While 53% of the 205 farmers market vendors who responded indicated that they were mainly influenced by the desire to earn income, the other 47% of farmers market vendors who responded indicated that their main reason was not income and was related to social or other goals (Figure 3)⁵.

It is important for a market to have a good sense of the goals of their vendors in order to try to serve their needs and keep them coming back. This involves balancing efforts to increase sales while promoting the social culture that many vendors may desire.

Figure 3: Motivation for attending farmers markets among WV farmers, 2012⁵



What WV markets said...

A WV Market survey respondent on building loyalty at farmers markets:

"We have a core group of year round vendors...Common comments indicate that our market is fun, friendly, educational, cooperative and a true local market."¹⁰

GOVERN TOGETHER. HOW WILL YOU ENSURE VENDOR PARTICIPATION AND TRUST?

Governance structure and process

Every market must put in place some level of “governance” structure for good management and decision making, which are both essential to keeping vendors at a market.

Farmers markets will change and evolve over time, so it is very important that the market governance structure allow for change and evolution as well. For example, a market may need to change its rules related to what products can be brought to market, increase or decrease fees, change how decisions are made, or even open new markets. A farmers market that has key governance structures and processes in place that allow for vendor participation and voting, procedures for how changes can be made and who makes those changes (membership vs. board vs. manager) will be able to more easily adapt to such changes. This will help the market evolve to meet vendor and customer needs and succeed as a market.



What WV markets said...

“Unenforced/unclear rules”

...was among the top five reasons influencing vendors to quit, according to WV markets surveyed.¹⁰



Having clear rules and good enforcement can go a long way to keeping vendors happy at your market.

Every market should have basic key elements of governance such as bylaws, rules, descriptions of the roles of board members and market manager, and a process for making decisions that allow for vendor representation and participation. See the second toolkit in this series, ***Structure Management and Finance***, to learn how to set up this important governance structure.

The market should ensure that farmers have a voice in decision-making. This involves providing opportunities for people to give input. It is often best to schedule important decision-making meetings in the off-season when farmers are not as busy and can dedicate time and thought⁹.

The UC Davis Small Farms Center advises that farmers markets take a “proactive” approach to developing and enforcing rules about key areas of tension in order to help avoid conflicts⁸.

For example, a market should have clear policies on what products are allowed to be sold at the market, or “reselling” policies. Some markets allow vendors to purchase and resell products that they did not grow in order to increase customer traffic to the market and ultimately benefit other vendors. For example, many WV markets lack fruit or cheese products. Allowing a vendor to resell such products may help your market grow, but boundaries are likely needed. Many markets have specifications about what percentage of product a vendor can sell that is not theirs or require special approval by the board to bring in resold products.



The UC Davis Small Farms Center also advises that farmers market take a proactive approach to how they allocate space to vendors at the market. If certain spots are considered more desirable than others, you'll need to ensure that there is a clear process for allocating spots to be fair to vendors and avoid conflict⁸.

Conflict Management

Every farmers market should have a process in place for managing conflict. It should be clear whose responsibility it is for resolving different types of disputes or minor problems. For example, problems that happen at the market may fall on the market manager to manage. However, problems related to violation of certain rules may require board intervention. Vendors should know whether to go to the board or the manager when there are different types of problems. The process for handling complaints and conflict should be understood at the market and written in market governance rules or policies.

Grievance and appeals policies

A farmers market should also have a grievance policy so that vendors know how to take up their problems with the board for resolution. If a vendor does not know who to take their problem to, or does not feel like their issue has been taken seriously, they may not come back to the market or may create further problems.



TOOL: *Appendix G. Example Rules and Grievance Policy*

Conflict resolution options

Sometimes, conflicts can arise among vendors that cannot be adequately handled within the management framework or with the authority that a board has at a farmers market. How farmers markets handle such situations can impact the stability of the market and the rest of the community of vendors. Farmers markets should consider how they will handle such situations if they arise. One way to be prepared is to have people in mind that can help to advise or mediate the conflict. These are usually people that are not on the board and are neutral parties. Depending on the local context, such individuals might be Extension personnel or other community leaders.

UC Davis's Conflict Resolution guide has particularly helpful advice on this topic⁸.



TOOL: *Appendix H. Planning Worksheet for Good and Transparent Governance*



What WV markets said...

"Personality conflicts or ideological differences between vendors"

...was among the top five reasons influencing vendors to quit, according to WV markets surveyed.¹⁰



Being prepared to deal with conflict can go long way towards keeping the peace at your market and keep vendors coming back.

Transparency and communication

Ensuring good communication among the board, vendors, and manager can go a long way in avoiding misunderstandings and conflicts. Consider who should have access to which types of information and how you will be communicate that information. When distributing information to vendors or requesting information back from them, it is important that your market use methods of communication that will be effective with your vendors.



Some tips:

- If your vendors do not use computers you may want to consider sending them information through the postal service mail instead of via email.
- Send important or controversial information in writing to avoid misunderstandings or disputes that could occur through phone or personal conversation.
- When there are key topics up for debate or vote, it is especially important that vendors receive the information so that they can participate in the decision making process and are well-informed. For example, your market may vote at meetings. If you have low turnout at meetings, it is important for vendors to have information ahead of time so that they know what is being voted on.



TOOL: *Appendix I: Transparent and Smooth Communication Worksheet*



MANAGE MONEY. HOW WILL YOU MANAGE FUNDS TO EARN VENDOR TRUST AND GROW THE MARKET?

Part of running a successful market that vendors will want to be a part of is making sure the market has the financial resources it needs to cover its expenses and needed investments. Options for funding your market are discussed in the second toolkit in this series, ***Structure, Management, and Finance***.

How money is handled and managed at a market can potentially be a source of strife that can cause vendors to have frustration or even leave markets. Vendors will be more likely to return to a market if they feel the costs are fair and well-invested and that the management is transparent and confidential.

Where does the money go? Financial transparency and accountability

Whatever the costs are, vendors must understand what happens to the money once they hand it over to the market. What is it invested in? Who handles the money? Are good records kept? Are statements about finances available to the membership? Is there transparency about where funds go? The money vendors pay into the market should go towards expenditures that benefit them. The board must be able to justify how money is spent and to articulate how such expenditures benefit vendors. If vendors understand that market is managing finances well and investing in their success, they are more likely to pay fees and support the board's decisions.

Is sales data private? Vendor financial confidentiality

Vendors should know who has access to their financial information and when. For example a market may collect sales data from vendors to track market progress. Vendors must know who will have that information and if it will be shared. As a rule, individual financial information should be kept confidential between the market manager and treasurer. Vendors will likely lose trust in the market or not be willing to provide their information if they suspect that their information is being shared with other vendors.

You may pursue grant opportunities to help fund your market. Many grants require the market to report sales data. If your market pursues such grants, take all precautions to protect individual financial data or report sales data as a total for the whole market. Also, be clear with vendors about such potential uses of the data prior to applying for such grants.

Do vendor fees match the scale of your market? Financial stability & vendor investment

Ensuring that vendor fee structure is fair to vendors of different sizes and that the amount of fees is appropriate to the scale of the market is critical to keeping vendors coming back to your market. Whatever way you choose to charge vendor fees, make sure that the collection is consistent and enforced. If some vendors are paying fees and others are not, this is a sure fire way to have problems at a market and could lead to vendors dropping out. Table 2 lays out some pros, cons, and considerations to help you consider the impact of your fees on vendors.

Table 2: Comparing the impact of flat fees vs. % fees on your vendors' costs and market revenue

Type of fee	Pros	Cons	Considerations
<p>Flat fees Space or Stall Fees Membership Fees</p>	<p>Easy and quick to collect and track for management. Easy to enforce for management because collected on the day of the market. Allow for higher revenue generation at start-up markets or small markets than sales % fees do. Can be charged on a weekly basis to encourage seasonal or occasional vendors to participate, or on an annual basis if you have limited space and need to encourage commitment to the market. Allows for more predictable budget projections than sales %.</p>	<p>May be charging small vendors disproportionately more than large vendors. As your market grows, have less potential to generate the revenue you need compared to % sales fees.</p>	<p>Should you keep these low to encourage participation of smaller vendors? Should you charge more for certain spaces, or extra spaces? How often will you collect them (one-time annual fee vs. weekly)?</p>
<p>% Sales Fee or Commission</p>	<p>Proportionate to sales, so vendors who benefit more from the market pay more. May keep costs low for small vendors compared to flat fees. Has the potential to generate more revenue for your market as it grows larger, compared to flat fees.</p>	<p>Require more time and careful record-keeping to track. Harder to enforce collection because requires accurate reporting and payment after the fact. May cause tension with larger vendors if they feel like they are carrying the market and benefiting small vendors. May be difficult to predict revenue generated for budgeting purposes due to uncertainty of sales.</p>	<p>Does your manager have the time to manage and track fees? Will your vendors agree to report their sales, or report them accurately?</p>

PROMOTE. HOW WILL YOU ENGAGE CUSTOMERS AND INCREASE VENDOR SALES?

Investing in vendor success involves going to efforts to increase customer flow and sales at markets, helping vendors to understand and meet customer needs, and helping vendors build their production and marketing skills by connecting them with the education and resources they need.

Market Promotion and Customer Education

One major important way a farmers market can help retain vendors is to help them reach more customers or increase their sales from current customers. This can involve holding events, engaging in targeted advertising in local media outlets, developing marketing materials, or using free tools like press releases and public service announcements, and many other options. For more information about marketing, see the first toolkit in this series: **Marketing your Market**.

Programs that reach new demographics

You'll recall that part of the triple bottom line of farmers market success is community. The market should consider how to bring more customers into the market, thereby benefiting customers, generating a sense of community, and increasing vendor sales. A farmers market should consider how to increase vendor sales by increasing accessibility of the market to new demographics. For example, a market can set up a program to accept EBT cards at a market or Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers². To find out about how to set up a system to accept SNAP/EBT, contact the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). To find out about the FMNP, contact the WV Department of Agriculture.

Helping vendors to understand and meet customer needs

Being attentive to customer needs can help both individual vendors and the farmers market as a whole to grow and succeed. A market can find out what products customers would like to see at the market using a variety of ways. For example, a market could use a dot survey to ask customers what products they wish they could buy at the market³. See Appendix A for an example dot survey process.

Then the market manager can encourage current vendors to consider growing some of the products or to boost production of products that are lacking at the market. Alternatively, a market might consider discussing what products are available in excess and encourage producers to space out production in order to better serve customers during



What WV markets said...

"Insufficient sales"

...was the #1 reason influencing vendors to quit, according to WV markets surveyed.¹⁰



Investing in promotion and customer engagement is one of the best things your market can do to boost sales & serve the needs of both your vendors and your customers!



SAGE "agripreneur," Lena Shandor, learns how to inoculate mushroom logs to meet market demands in the Charleston Area

the whole season. Working with current vendors in this way is a recommended first step prior to beginning to recruit new vendors to fill the need for such products.

Encouraging current vendors to step up to meet customer demand can help vendors feel like the market is invested in their success and will help retain them both in terms of building trust and also by increasing their sales.

Alternative marketing options to enable sales from small or niche vendors

If you are having trouble keeping vendors due to low sales, consider if offering alternative marketing arrangements such as a consignment booth would help. A consignment booth allows vendors to sell product without having to be present at the market. This may help if vendors are not able to drive far distances or spend the time marketing their products, or if they do not have enough product to justify coming to the market. It can help your market have a critical volume and variety of product to keep customers coming back, and benefit vendors as well.

WV Market Snap Shot

“Food Column” educates customers & boosts sales at Putnam Co. Farmers’ Market

When Susan Maslowski joined the Putnam Farmers’ Market as a vendor, she was surprised to hear customers ask basic questions about products and cooking methods. She noticed potential buyers were not purchasing items with which they were unfamiliar. Attendance at the market was also waning. She immediately saw a need for educating the consumer (and in some cases, the farmer) about the produce that was being sold, and ways to prepare it, and wanted to find a way to increase attendance.

“When I wrote about kohlrabi, rhubarb and gooseberries, the market saw an influx of “new” customers; older folks who’d remembered these foods from childhood. Unfortunately, the items were in limited supply, which spurred some gardeners/farmers to plant more of these specialty crops when they saw the demand and price they would fetch.”

A reporter for a local weekly newspaper supplement of the Charleston Gazette was a market customer, and Maslowski approached her about writing a “food column” that would feature seasonal items sold at the market. She volunteered to write the column, if the paper would, in turn, provide advertisement for the market, free of charge, each week.

“Every column has an “educational” component. I may write about the history of a certain food, growing or harvesting methods or healthy attributes. I always include a tested recipe and photo with each column to suggest how the food can be prepared. I also like to highlight market vendors throughout the season, which adds human interest”, Maslowski explains.

The newspaper got good feedback from readers and asked Susan to continue the column throughout the year, even when the market is not in operation, and expanded to include the column in the Kanawha Neighbors supplement further increasing circulation and customer traffic.



Photo from a Mushroom soup recipe featured in Maslowski’s food column

This type of outreach and customer education can help keep the market in the spotlight, even during the off-season and the market gets free publicity. One drawback is that someone must be willing to dedicate the time to writing this type of article. However, this type of project could be taken up by a non-vendor volunteer or as community service by a local student. Recipes could even be compiled into a cookbook to be used as a fundraiser for the market, Maslowski explained.

NURTURE & GROW. HOW WILL YOU INVEST IN VENDOR EDUCATION AND GROWTH?

A key service a farmers market can provide to vendors is to help them learn how to produce and market their products better. Here are some examples of how markets are doing this:

- Inviting trainers from Extension or another organization to give a training on a given topic such as season extension at a membership meeting
- Sending information about upcoming trainings or workshops out to members via mail or email listservs
- Providing support to vendor in acquiring correct business paperwork or insurance or understanding regulations
- Offering scholarship opportunities to vendors who attend conferences and agree to share the information they learn with other vendors through a brief presentation

Helping your vendors build their skills in key areas can help them be more successful and help the market grow overall. Investing in their training and success can contribute to building the sense of market community, increase vendor sales and success, and help keep them engaged and involved in the market.

What information do vendors need?

In order to determine what information your farmers market may want to deliver to your vendors, remember the triple bottom line. Whatever education you provide to your vendors should contribute to what your customers need from your market. In this way, you can make sure to invest in your vendors' development in a way that will serve their needs and also grow the market.

What does your market need?

Consider whether the following topic areas would benefit your vendors

Area of need	Potential Education or Information Topics for Vendors
Does your market need more volumes of products or greater diversity of products?	production planning, season extension, new varieties, transplant production, pest/disease management, on-farm meat processing
Do your vendors need help marketing or merchandising their products?	customer service skills, merchandising (booth and stand design and product arrangement), pricing, marketing skills, postharvest handling for increased product quality
Do your vendors need help understanding what regulations apply to them?	labeling of jams/jellies and other products, local health department regulations, insurance requirements
Do your vendors need help with business management?	calculating production costs and setting prices accordingly; record keeping; using basic financial statements; budgeting; business planning

What do your vendors want?

While you may have a good sense of what education or information your vendors need, consider surveying them directly. Directly asking vendors will help your vendors feel like your market is directly responding to their needs.



TOOL. Appendix J: Survey to Assess Vendor Training Interests

Balancing Needs and Wants to build your market

Your farmers market should think about how to best respond to both the wants and needs of your vendors (they may be different sometimes) and also how they will best learn the information.

Once you learn what your vendors want in terms of education or information, you can compare that to what your board thinks your vendors need. Then you can try to offer a mix of information to provide both wanted and necessary information. For example, your vendors may really want information on season extension so it would be valuable to connect them to that training. However, there may be other areas of information that vendors are not interested in learning about but that would benefit them greatly such as information on food safety or production cost calculation.

You'll need to get creative about how to offer these different types of education. This may involve mixing a little sugar into the medicine sometimes. For example, you may choose to offer a separate training on season extension, but tag a brief insurance lesson onto a regularly scheduled meeting and provide reference handouts by mail.

How will you get them the information?

How you get vendors the information they need will depend on a few factors:

- How much time can your market management put into organizing a training?
- Can you find someone who is willing to provide a training for free (ex. Extension agent, community member volunteer)?
- Will the timing of training be a good time for vendors? (ie. late fall/early spring)
- Is there some information that would be better provided as handouts than as training?
- Will your vendors need resources to be able to take advantage of the training? How can your market look for creative projects that also serve as training?
- Are there existing training opportunities that you could help your vendors get to through scholarships?



What WV markets said...

- **Customer service and personal presence**
- **Production planning / season extension**
- **Accounting/Record keeping**
- **Licensing and food safety requirements**
- **Branding and marketing**

...were in the top five most popular topics that surveyed WVFMA members said were “very important to vendor success” at a farmers market.¹⁰

WV Market Snap Shot

Investing in producer growth and sales through a pilot season extension project

With increasing demand for local produce at their consignment-style market in Huntington WV, the Wild Ramp knew they needed to get more product on the shelves. There was a particular demand for products like spinach, lettuce, kale, and root vegetables. To increase the supply of these products and help their farmers grow, the market took on an innovative training project funded through a minigrant administered through WVFMA with funding from the Benedum Foundation.



The project set out to train producers in production of the needed crops as well as provide them the tools to extend their season. Over 20 producers received training in season extension and enterprise budgeting from WVU Extension Horticulture specialist Lewis Jett and Marketing specialist Dee Singh Knights. This prepared them to plan their production to have crops later in the season using low tunnel technology and also to project their costs and income from the crops.

Ten selected producers also received low tunnel kits to be able to cover between 150-200 foot beds with plastic and row cover to extend their seasons. Producers were selected through an open application process, completed on paper and online. Producers were asked to forecast how they would use the tunnel and to explain their experience with season extension. Most had little to no experience with plastic covered low tunnels and had lots of space to implement season extension.

"Our producers are thrilled with the outcome of this project. Many of them plan to expand their season extension growing practices as a result."

Gail Patton
Executive Director,
Unlimited Future Inc.

In the year after the implementation of this project, the market noted an increase of \$6500 in sales among the producers that participated in the project and installed the low tunnels. Market organizers also note that the training has benefited producers beyond their increased sales at the Wild Ramp, by enabling them to ramp up in other markets such as through CSAs.

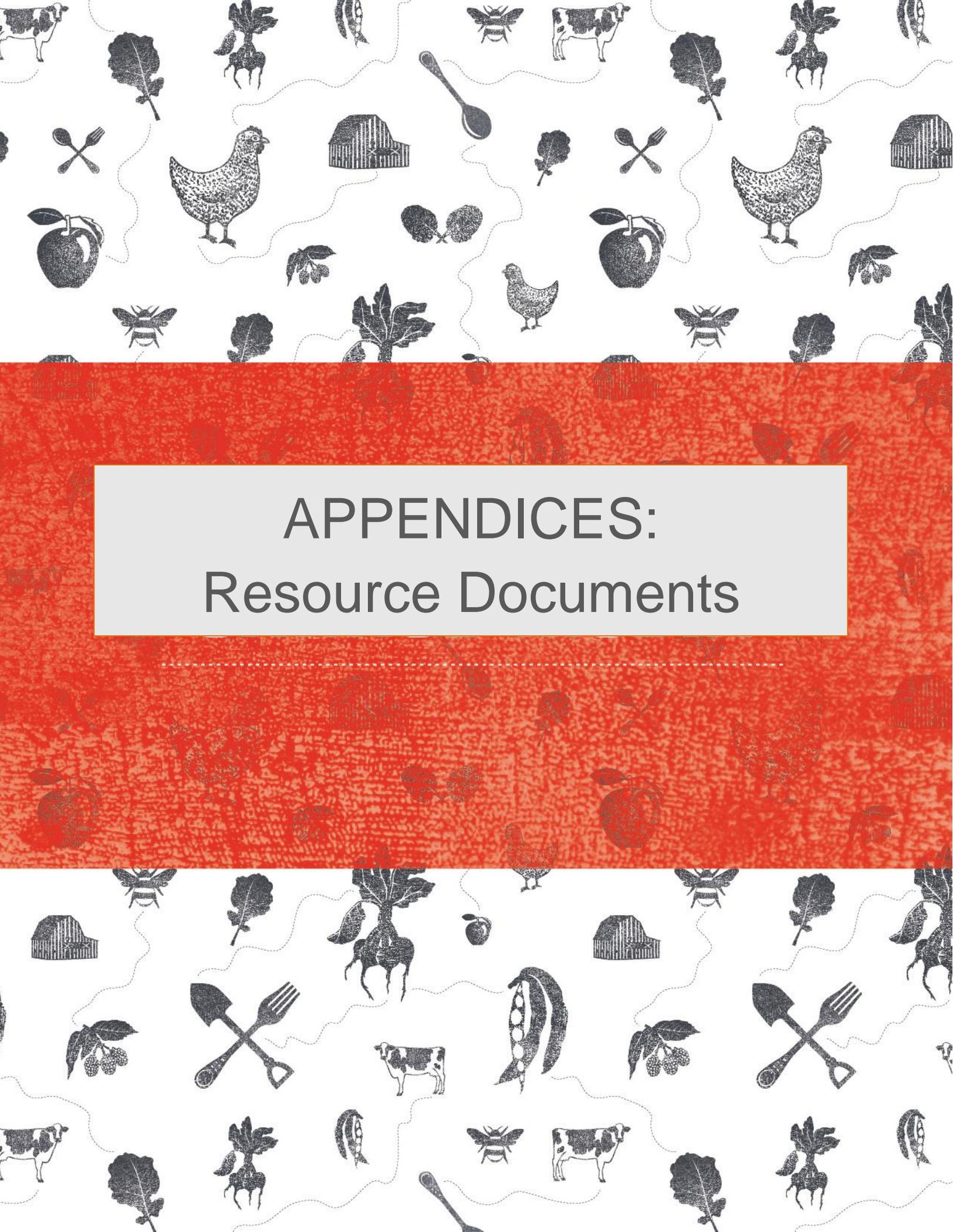
By partnering with service providers and offering the tools needed for season extension, the Wild Ramp reduced the risk and investment for farmers to be able to take the first step towards implementing season extension. Once farmers tried it and saw the success, they could ramp up extended season production, boost sales and help the market meet customer demand.

VENDOR RETENTION CHECKLIST

	Good governance
	Our market has basic bylaws and rules and a process for how these are voted on and can be changed.
	There is clarity about which decisions are made and enforced by the market manager vs. the board.
	Our market has a plan or process for handling conflict including a grievance policy and conflict resolution plan.
	We're taking a proactive approach to developing policies for potentially contentious issues.
	Communication
	Vendors understand who they go to if they have a problem or grievance (manager vs. board).
	Our vendors generally feel that the market is attentive to their problems and fair.
	Our vendors are provided with information and can participate using appropriate communication mechanisms (email, mail, meetings).
	Sound financial management
	Individual vendor information is managed carefully and kept confidential.
	Vendors are regularly provided with budgetary and expenditure information from the market.
	The farmers market is pursuing a financing strategy that covers budgetary needs and is fair and transparent to vendors.
	Promotion
	We have a plan for advertising and promotion that will help increase vendor sales and engage and educate customers.
	We've explored options for increasing sales like accepting SNAP, WIC, or Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Vouchers.
	Our market actively assesses customer needs and communicates that to vendors to help them meet the demands and increase sales.
	Nurture
	We are assessing vendor education needs and wants and help connect them to opportunities for growth and development.

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The background features a repeating pattern of farm-related icons such as cows, chickens, bees, leaves, and farm buildings, separated by wavy dashed lines. A central horizontal band is filled with a red, textured pattern.

APPENDICES: Resource Documents

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Designing a dot survey to find out what products customers want at your market

Appendix B. Planning worksheet: Who will you recruit?

Appendix C. Analyzing the impact of a proposed change on your triple bottom line

Appendix D. Crafting your pitch to vendors Worksheet

Appendix E. Sample application (Putnam County Farmers Market)

Appendix F. Developing an outreach plan worksheet

Appendix G. Example of rules and grievance policy (Putnam County Farmers Market)

Appendix H. Planning Worksheet for Good and Transparent Governance

Appendix I. Communication plan worksheet for transparency within your market

Appendix J. Survey of vendors' interest in education and information

Appendix A. Designing a dot survey to find out what products customers want at your market

For a full explanation of the dot survey technique see this resource:

Lev, L., and Stephenson, G. 2002. A Learning Approach to Strengthening Farmers' Markets. Oregon Small Farms Technical Report #5, Oregon State University Extension Service.

<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/techreports/TechReport5.pdf>

1. What is a dot survey and what can it do for your market?

Rather than a traditional survey that can require someone to walk around and talk to people, a dot survey is a simple and fun "rapid market assessment" tool.³

How does it work? First you have to think hard about what you want to find out. Then you write the question on a big poster board and put the answers in columns under the question. Put the board on a stand in a visible place at your market. Volunteers are needed to call people over to answer the question. People read the question, usually multiple choice, and mark their answer with a sticky colored dot that you provide. You can also have a poster board or comment cards available in case your customers want to provide more info. Then after the market, you tally up the dots to find out what your customers want.

The point is – all your customers have to do is come up and post a dot and get on with their shopping. The big poster board and the dots will attract attention and encourage people to come over to see what's going on, rather than running away from someone trying to survey them!

What do you do with the information? You can take the information from your dot survey and use it to make informed changes at your market. For example, you can ask customers what products they would like to be able to buy at the market. Then you can ask producers if they are able to bring those products to market, or you can go out and recruit new vendors to fill the product need.

2. Potential Dot Survey Questions you might use at your market to assess product needs:

Which of the following products would you like to see more of at the market?

Answers: vegetables, fruits, crafts, bedding plants, house plants, other

Which of the following fruits would you most like to be able to purchase at the market?

Answers: apples, pears, strawberries, berries

Which kind of meat products do you typically buy?

Answers: grass-fed, natural, certified-naturally grown, organic, other

Of the following types of vegetables, which would you like more VARIETY to choose from at the market?

Answers: greens (lettuce/spinach/etc.), root crops, squashes, broccoli/cauliflower, Asian greens, tomatoes/peppers/cucumbers

3. What do you want to find out at YOUR market? _____

Potential Dot Survey Questions and Answers:

Appendix B. Planning worksheet: Who will you recruit?

Once you've gotten a sense of your market's product needs from customers, you can use this table to brainstorm what vendors you might recruit or where you might seek them.

**Note: This tool was created using the Washington State Farmers Market Management Toolkit¹. The questions in column 1 of this tool are directly taken from this helpful toolkit and adapted slightly for the WV context.*

Potentially desirable vendor characteristics	What does your market want/need regarding this characteristic?	Can/will current vendors increase or diversify to fill the need?	Who are potential vendors or vendor groups that you know of that could fill this need?
Product category: Do you need a specific product category to fit with your target product mix (e.g. vegetables, tree fruit, berries, herbs, nuts, dairy, meat, flowers, grains, honey, etc.)?			
Specific products: Do you need a specific product within the product category (e.g. heirloom tomatoes, tree-ripened peaches, fresh meats, etc.)?			
Product attributes: Does your shopper base desire or your market values prioritize specific product attributes (e.g. organic, no sprays, grass-fed, glutenfree, etc.)?			
Geography: Does your market prefer farms or products from a specific area? This may be proximity to the market as in "local" (however defined)?			
Seasonality: Are there times of the year/season that you specifically need more product?			
Involvement in the market organization: Do you prefer vendors that are able to become involved in leading your market organization?			
Playing well with others: Is it important that the farmer (or any vendor) get along with the market manager and other members of the market?			

¹ Recruiting Farmers to your Market. Washington State Farmers Market Management Toolkit. Washington State Farmers Market Association and Washington State University Small Farms Program: December 2012, <http://www.tfrec.wsu.edu/pdfs/P2707.pdf>

**Appendix C. Analyzing the impact of a proposed change on your triple bottom line
(customers/vendors/market community)**

Proposed change	Proposed Change 1	Proposed Change 2
How will it impact the market culture/image (+/-? Explain)		
How will it impact market costs or management time(+/-? Explain)		
How will it make it easier for new vendors to enter market? (+/-? Explain)		
How will it impact current vendors' sales(+/-? Explain)		
How will it impact current vendors' quality of life?(+/-? Explain)		
How will it impact the customer experience?(+/-? Explain)		
How will it impact the variety or quality available to customers? (+/-? Explain)		

Appendix D. Crafting your pitch to potential vendors

You can use these questions to develop your pitch about the value your market offers to new vendors. Once you hone in on your market's value, you'll want to consistently promote that via your public forums (website, facebook, etc.), outreach materials and when you talk to potential vendors.

1. Why do vendors like attending your market? What adjectives would you use to describe the atmosphere or culture at your market? (think about highlighting social aspects, fun, etc.)
2. What is convenient or easy about your market?
3. How does your market invest in your producers' success? (ie. any efforts to help increase sales through promotion/advertising, events to bring in customers, etc.)
4. What can a producer expect at your market in terms of sales potential and customer traffic?
5. What programs does your market offer to accept alternative payment (ie. EBT machine, Farmers Market Nutrition Program, etc.)?
6. What kind of support network does your market provide to vendors? (ie. Does your market help them navigate regulations, rules, and insurance issues? Does it conduct research into what customers want and help vendors improve their offerings? Does it help host or offer training or education in production or marketing practices?)
7. How does your market support the local community or engagement among community members?

Appendix E. Example Application

This application was included with permission from the Putnam Co. Farmers Market and can be found online at: <http://putnamfarmersmarket.weebly.com/become-a-vendor.html>

Putnam Farmers' Market

PO Box 351
Hurricane, WV 25526
(304) 300-8995

2014 Vendor Application of Interest

Name: _____
 Spouse / Partner: _____
 Farm/Business Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____
 Email: _____@_____._____
 Website: _____
 Phone: (Home) _____ - _____ (Cell) _____ - _____
 Best time to call? *Please circle:* morning afternoon evening

Tell us about yourself:

1) What items are you interested in selling at the Putnam Farmers' Market?

Vegetables

- artichoke
- asparagus
- beans, lima
- beans, snap
- beets
- broccoli
- brussel sprouts
- cabbage
- carrots
- cauliflower
- celeriac
- celery
- Chinese cabbage
- collards
- cucumbers
- eggplant
- endive
- garlic
- kale
- kohlrabi
- leeks
- lettuce, leaf
- mustard
- okra
- onions, green
- parsley
- parsnips
- peas
- peppers
- potatoes
- pumpkins
- radishes
- rutabaga

Fruit

- apples
- apricots
- blackberries
- blueberries
- cherries, sweet
- cherries, tart
- currants
- elderberries
- fig
- gooseberries
- grapes
- kiwifruit
- lignonberries
- muskmelon
- nectarines
- peaches
- plums
- raspberries
- strawberries
- watermelon
- Other: _____

Other Items

- baked goods
 - crafts
 - eggs
 - gourds
 - herbs: list under "other"
 - honey
 - jams, jellies
 - maple syrup
 - trees/plants/flowers: list under "other"
 - Other: _____

- Meat:
- pork
 - beef
 - chicken
 - rabbit
 - lamb
 - chevon
 - Other: _____

2) Are these items grown and/or handmade by yourself or someone in your family?
Please Circle: YES NO

3) If no, please explain: _____

4) Please provide directions to the location where your crops are grown:

5) Fruit & Vegetable producers are you (Please circle only one)
 Certified Organic Traditional Transitional Organic Practice

6) Please provide a short summary about your farm for the website:

I do do not give PFM permission to publish my information to the Putnam Farmers' Market webpage.

I _____ have read all the rules and bylaws of the Putnam Farmers' Market and
 Print
understand them fully. I also understand that violation of any may result suspension or expulsion from the market.

Member Signature _____ Date _____

The Putnam Farmers' Market is located at the Hurricane Park.
May: Saturday 10:00am-1:00pm
June – September 13: Tuesday 4:00pm-7:00pm & Thursday 4:00pm-7:00pm & Saturday 10:00am-1:00pm
September 20 – October: Saturday 10:00am-1:00pm
Membership fee is \$25.00 per vendor or \$35.00 for vendor & spouse/partner.
Booth fee is \$5.00 per market payable at the beginning of each market.

Putnam Farmers' Market does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, political affiliation, handicapped status, or any other legally protected status.

Appendix F. Developing an outreach plan

On the plan below, indicate the outreach strategies you've chosen and the basic information related to each strategy. The point person will be in charge of making sure that the strategy is carried out. Consider the questions below and the information in the toolkit as you decide which strategies will work best for your market. Your market will choose outreach strategies based on your target vendors and the capacity of your market. **Outreach strategies you may want to consider: recruitment event, mailings, email, social media, posting flyers, personal outreach/calls/visits, other/etc.**

Outreach Strategy	Primary purpose of outreach (initial contact, follow-up, general outreach) and brief description	People you are targeting	What follow-up will you need to provide?	Estimated costs involved	Point person responsible	Who will help?	Big tasks	Timeline and milestones

Questions to consider:

- Where do your targeted producers access information? (mail, posted material at public places, email, social media, meetings, etc.)
- Do you have contact information for producers to be able to reach out to them personally?
- Are there members of your market who have a personal relationship with vendors that you are trying to recruit? Can they help? What materials do they need?
- Do you have all of the information you need to be able to pitch you market to potential producers? Is this information available in a flyer or talking points?

Appendix G. Example of Rules and Grievance Policy

These rules were included with permission from the Putnam County Farmers Market and are available online at <http://putnamfarmersmarket.weebly.com/become-a-vendor.html>

Market Rules of the Putnam Farmers' Market 2012

1. **Dates of market:** The Putnam Farmers' Market will open for seasonal operation, dates to be determined each year
Opening Date: May 4, 2013
Closing Date: October 26, 2013
2. **Times for market sales:** The Markets will operate at **Hurricane City Park in Hurricane** on the following days: **Tuesdays** from **4:00 until 7:00 PM** and **Saturdays** from **10:00 AM until 1:0 PM**. Vendors must arrive in time to be ready to sell at the official opening time. Market Manager approved vendors may set up an hour before opening time and shall be completed 15 minutes before opening time. Vendors must check in with the Market Manager upon arrival and will be directed to an assigned or open available space. Market Manager will distribute tally sheets and collect \$5 set-up fee from each vendor.

No sales are allowed before the opening time or after the closing time. Orders may be taken prior to market day, but shall not be filled until after the opening bell. For example: if a customer orders a bushel of tomatoes prior to market day, the vendor may set back or reserve the tomatoes, but the vendor may not take money or hand over the tomatoes to the customer until after the opening bell.

3. **Market Manager:** The Market Manager is appointed by the board of directors each season and follows the list of duties approved by the membership (see attached).
4. **Vendor attendance/Late arrival:** Vendors must notify the Market Manager via phone or email **by 11:00 AM on Tuesdays and by 6:00 PM on Friday (for Saturday market)** if they are planning to attend the Market. This is to allow for ease of vendor placement. In emergency situation (such as illness, death, or vehicle problems) vendors should contact the Market Manager via telephone. After the opening bell rings, vendors must be at their tables prepared to sell, so as to prevent disruptive behavior such as carrying of products across the Market or moving vehicles during times customers are present.
5. **Producer-Only rules and exceptions:** The goal of the Putnam Farmers' Market is to support local agriculture in Putnam County and surrounding counties. As such, **all products displayed must be produced by the producer-vendor who sells them.** A producer-vendor may be a sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation.

The re-sale of agricultural products by producer-vendors is not permitted, unless the product is otherwise unavailable at the Market. In that case, the producer-vendor can purchase that product from another "local" or WV producer as a supplement under a provisional arrangement. The Market Manager will approve each provisional arrangement and proof of purchase of the product must

be shown. Should another producer-vendor begin offering that product produced on her/his farm, the vendor selling the supplemental product under provisional arrangement must stop selling that purchased product.

Exceptions can be made to the local producer rule on a case by case basis for products that are not available within the local area. These cases must be brought to the Market Manager and/or Board of Directors for approval on a weekly basis.

“Local” in this case means West Virginia farmers within a fifty (50) air mile radius of Winfield, WV, with preference given to producer-vendors closest to Winfield.

“Vendor” may be the actual producing individual, an immediate family member, another producer member, staff or employee of the producing individual’s farm.

6. **Allowable products:** Producer-vendors shall submit a product plan with their application at the beginning of each season indicating the crops and products they plan to sell at the Market.

Products should fall into one or more of the following categories:

- a) **Vegetables/Fruits/Herbs** grown by the farmer/grower, including mushrooms.
- b) **Fresh baked goods** from scratch (not store bought mixes), using at least one “local” seasonal ingredient in the products for sale. Eggs, fruit, herbs or vegetables used as ingredients in the baked goods must be grown by the producer or purchased from a “local” grower. (Example – if blueberry muffins are sold the blueberries and/or eggs must be “local” for the muffins to be an allowable item.) Vendors selling only baked goods are considered under the “craft” category and must be judged and accepted by the board. Vendors already selling produce or meat are exempt from the craft rule as long as no more than 50% of their inventory is baked goods.
- c) **Cheeses** or other value-added products from milk produced on the producer-vendor’s farm or purchased from “local” dairy farms. All dairy products must be pasteurized and in accordance with state and county health codes.
- d) **Cut flowers** which were grown on the grower’s own farm or greenhouse.
- e) **Eggs** which are from the producer-vendor’s own poultry and kept at 41 degrees F.
- f) **Jams, honey, maple syrup, and other value-added products** which are freshly made from scratch by the vendor (not using store-bought mixes), using seasonal ingredients from their farm or another “local” farm. Processing must comply with local and state health codes. (See note at the end of rule number 5.) Sauces, salsas, canned vegetables and fruits must be processed by a licensed processing facility. Cider or other juices must be produced from the producer-vendor’s own fruits or that of other “local”

producers, but may be processed off-farm. Vendors should be prepared to provide the Market Manager with the name and contact information of the processing facility when asked.

- g) **Soaps/Candles/Body Care products** which are hand-crafted using seasonal ingredients from their farm or another “local” farm. Any herbs (or their essential oils), milk, honey, or other natural products included in the products should be grown by the producer-vendor or purchased directly from another “local” producer. Candles and soaps should be naturally-based from a product grown in the “local” area (milk, honey, etc., NOT soy or other product of unknown origin).
- h) **Meat** from livestock raised by the producer-vendor and which has been processed at a USDA OR WVDA inspected facility. Meat vendors must have a Meat Distributors License. The Code of West Virginia Regulations, Title 61, Series 16 recognizes a federal exemption that allows individuals that raise poultry in West Virginia to slaughter and sell up to 1,000 birds per calendar year without inspection.
- i) **Crafts** which are handcrafted by the vendor must be judged by the board before admitted, with a maximum of five (5) crafters each season.
- j) **Wools and pelts/fleeces** which are from the farmer’s own animals. No more than 25% of non “local” fibers may be added to the yarn during spinning. Carding, cleaning, processing and spinning of pelts may be done off-farm, but the vendor should be prepared to provide the Market Manager with the name and contact information of the facility when asked.
- k) **Potted plants, shrubs, or annual bedding plants** which are raised from seed or cuttings. Greenhouse operations must be approved by the board on an individual basis.
- l) **Straw, hay, compost, or other agricultural products** which are produced by the producer-vendor.
- m) **Other farm-related products** not listed here, **which may be sold through a provisional arrangement.** Permission to sell a product not included in items a-l should be requested from the Market Manager prior to sale at the Market. The Market Manager may refer such requests to the board of directors.

NOTE (April 2008): In keeping with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Document F-7, (formerly F-45) the following specialty items can be sold at farmers’ markets without being processed in certified processing kitchens, provided that they were made in sanitary conditions using recommended hygiene and safety guidelines: Non-dietary jams, jellies and preserves; apple butter; molasses; sorghum; undiluted honey and undiluted maple syrup; dehydrated fruits and vegetables; vinegars (plain, herb or flavored); cakes, cookies, or fruit pies; yeast bread, nut or fruit breads. Note that cream custard, or meringue pies, cakes, or cookies are prohibited.

7. **Vendor membership:** All persons intending to sell at the Putnam Farmers' Market must, prior to participation in the Market, file a vendor application each year with the Market Manager. This document requires the producer-vendor to:
- Become a member of the association by paying the vendor membership fee.
 - Verify that she/he/they are the actual grower or producer of the specified items that they intend to sell. All new applicants will be visited by the Verification committee.
 - List farm name and contact information for farm, home and office.
 - Additional vendors will be added to the Market at the beginning of each season, or as need permits and space allows, if the applying full-time vendor agrees to these rules and regulations.

For a new season, previous full-time vendor members in good standing will receive first priority, followed by late joiners in good standing, then by applicants in the chronological order of their application. The Market Manager and/or Board of Directors reserve the right to refuse Market participation to any new applicant if the producer-vendor is proposing to sell products already in abundant supply at the Market. The producer-vendor applicant will be put on a waiting list for possible openings in the future.

Vendor Membership Fees: Annual membership fee of the PFMA is **\$25 (individual) or \$35 (couple)** and should be submitted to the Treasurer no later than the opening market day. Membership fees are non-refundable.

8. **Vendor space fees:**
- Full-time vendor:** A full-time vendor reserves a permanent market space for the entire current market season. Full-time vendors pay **\$25 or \$35** per year for a 10x10 space. An additional **\$5** is paid at each market the vendor attends to be used primarily for advertising.
9. **External regulations:** Vendors are responsible for compliance with applicable city, county, state and federal regulations and supplying the Market Manager with proof of such. Regulations such as (but not limited to):
- Agricultural business license.
 - Pesticide licensing and safe use.
 - Approval seal on weighing devices granted by the WV Division of Labor
 - State sales tax collected as required.
 - Organic certification on claimed products as required.
 - Food safety, sanitation, health permits and labeling issues that apply to the item.
 - State inspection of nursery stock required for selling whole plants for replanting (packs or pots).
10. **Market signage:**
- Producer-vendors will display a sign identifying the name and location of their farm or business.

- Producer- vendors must have signs, boards, tags, or labels listing prices of every item for sale.
 - Producer-vendors listing “organic” produce, or calling their produce “organic”, must display a sign giving their organic grower’s certification and their certifier’s organization, unless exempt from certification. Proof of exemption from organic certification should be available for the Market Manager’s inspection if so requested.
 - Producer-vendors should clearly separate and label organic and non-organic produce in the same display.
 - Signs must be posted before sales begin.
11. **Clean up:** Producer-vendors must clean up the area around their vehicles and sales area before leaving. Producer-vendors must remove containers, waste and trimmings before leaving the market site and take any trash or garbage they have generated at the market back to the farm. The Market Manager will be responsible for ensuring that any trash from public traffic at the market sites is properly removed and disposed of at the close of each market day.
 12. **Public safety:** Shade structures must be secured to prevent wind damage or injury. No dogs or other animals allowed with the exception of service animals for disabled. Only new or reusable bags can be used. Absolutely no recycled bags.
 13. **Market behavior:** Vendors are independent entrepreneurs with a common stake in creating a vibrant marketplace. Activities that seem to violate normal sales practices and these market rules can be questioned by other vendors. The Market Manager will assist in finding a resolution. If this fails, the Board of Directors will conduct a vote if requested. When a vote on an alleged “abnormal activity” favors a change in a vendor’s practice, the vendor in question must comply. See Market Rule Enforcement and Grievance Policy for the process to be followed.

“**Abnormal Activities**” include but are not limited to:

 - Unsafe conditions or hazards at sales area.
 - A stand that impedes access to other vendors.
 - Condition of sales area, products, or vendor behavior that detracts from the market’s appearance, overall quality or reputation.
 14. **Educational and community activities:** One space will be made available free of charge for educational activities relating to sustainable agriculture and for non-profit community groups. This space will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis, but must be approved and booked by the Market Manager in advance or by calling the Putnam Farmers’ Market at 300-8995.
 15. One **space will be held by the Putnam Farmers Market** to use for promotional or educational purposes of the Putnam Farmers Market.

- 16. Gross vendor sales must be reported on a weekly basis per market.** Failure to remit weekly market sales may result in fines to the vendor and a vendor may be suspended from the Putnam Farmers Market. Fines will be as follows: first offense \$10, second offense \$25, and third offense suspension from the Market for the rest of the season.
- 17. Vendor Member Sabbatical:** Any full-time member in good standing (all past fees paid) and a member for at least three years may request that the Board grant a sabbatical leave for as long as one full season.

Market Rules Enforcement and Grievance Policy

The Market Manager ensures compliance with the market rules, however, the Market Manager has the authority to grant exceptions to the market rules on an individual basis for reasons of dire need.

The Market Manager has the authority to impose disciplinary action at the market site when needed.

In the event of customer dissatisfaction with a particular vendor or some aspect of market operations, the dispute must be resolved to the satisfaction of the customer, vendor and Market Manager in a timely manner.

All violations of the market rules as well as customer complaints should be reported by the Market Manager to the Board of Directors (BOD) at the next BOD meeting.

Failure by a vendor to comply with the market rules or comply with the Market Manager's resolution of complaint of "abnormal market behavior" (see market rules) can result in the temporary removal of the vendor from market participation. The procedure regarding violations of the market rules or a complaint of "abnormal market behavior" is as follows:

First violation: Vendor receives written notification of violation and must cease action cited in violation.

Second violation: If vendor is found committing the same violation or any other violation, then vendor can stay for that market day but will lose the right to sell the following 2 weeks;

Third violation: If vendor is found committing the same violation or any other violation then, vendor can stay for that market day but loses the right to sell for the rest of the market season.

Failure to immediately comply as requested shall be cause for the revocation of right to sell and expulsion from the market. Upon revocation vendor shall promptly vacate premises. Upon failure to vacate, the Market Manager shall remove the vendor's property from the premises at the vendor's expense. The market is relieved and discharged from any and all losses or damages caused by such removal. The PFM shall not be responsible for storage or safekeeping of property so removed.

GRIEVANCE POLICY:

Any vendor has the right to a hearing before the Board of Directors. A request for such a hearing should be submitted in writing and signed by the complainant to the Market Manager and/or President of the BOD. The BOD has one (1) week to respond to the vendor's request for a hearing. A hearing should occur no later than two (2) weeks from submission of the written request for a hearing. The hearing shall be conducted by the BOD and open to any PFM members who want to observe.

A majority vote by the BOD shall determine the final resolution of the grievance by the vendor.

Market Manager's Duties

This is a volunteer position to be appointed by the Putnam Farmers' Market Association Board annually.

1. Market manager enforces all market rules.
2. Set up and take down signs on day of market and storage of signs.
3. Ring bell to start and end market.
4. Map out vendor spaces.
5. Check in vendors and assign spaces.
6. Distribute and collect market reporting forms.
7. Collect \$5 booth fee each market.
8. Check for compliance of market rules and Health Department rules.
9. Handle any complaints at market from vendors or customers.
10. Provide security at the market and adhere to safety measures.
11. Make sure each vendor cleans their area at end of day.
12. Final inspection to be sure closure is complete.
13. Market manager is responsible for arranging a replacement when he can not attend a market.
14. May attend annual WVFMA conference and training.

Appendix H. Planning Worksheet for Good and Transparent Governance

How will your market address key governance issues and make sure policies are clear to vendors?

<i>Key areas to consider</i>	<i>How will your market manage or improve this?</i>	<i>Where will you put your policy about this issue so that vendors can reference it (ex. Bylaws, rules, orientation packet, minutes of a meeting, etc.)?</i>
Do vendors feel like they play a role in decisions made at the market?		
How does your market make decisions about rules or rule changes? Is it decided by board or membership vote?		
Do vendors know the procedure they need to follow if they have a problem with the market?		
How can vendors provide feedback to your market? When is it addressed?		
How do vendors know what types of problems to take to the manager vs. to the board?		
Do vendors know how submit complaints, problems, or grievances? Must it be in writing?		
Does the market have established consequences for violations of rules, enforcement procedures, and grievance policies in place?		
How are vendors notified and dealt with if they have violated a rule? What opportunity do they have to appeal the violation or discuss the issue with the board?		
Does your market have a plan to resolve conflict if it goes beyond the scope of your rules?		
What people or organizations in your community could serve as unbiased advisors to your market?		

Appendix I. Communication plan worksheet for transparency within your market

1. Does your market distribute a contact list for market manager, board, and other members to all vendors? If not, who will produce and distribute that?

2. Who and how will you communicate about the following topics within your market?

	Who Responsible	Email	Phone	Meetings	Text Message	Mail
Provide information about opportunities for vendors (ie. trainings, special events, etc.)						
Provide information about rule enforcement or market management reminders						
Market cancellation or last minute emergency information						
Rule changes or large market changes						
Request product information from vendors to provide to customers						
Invite vendors to meetings						
Other:						

3. Are discussions about individual disputes or vendor rule violations kept confidential within the board?

4. Are vendors encouraged to bring problems to the board? Do vendors feel that the manager and board deal with problems in a timely manner?

5. How can your market further improve transparency and communication between vendors, market managers, and board members?

Appendix J. Survey of vendors' interest in education and information

1. Please indicate if you would like to learn more about the following topics, and how you would most like to receive that information.

Topic	Do you want to learn more about this? (Check if YES; leave blank if NO)	If you said yes, would you come to a training on this topic or would you prefer written information? (Check which you prefer)	
		Training	Written info
Customer Service and personal presence			
Production planning and season extension			
Accounting & Recordkeeping			
Licensing & Food Safety Requirements			
Branding and Marketing			
Harvest and postharvest handling & produce storage			
Visual Merchandising and successful Booth Design			
Managing Risk at Farmers Markets (Insurance, etc.)			
Accepting EBT, Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons, credit cards, and other alternative currency			
Options for expansion beyond farmers markets (CSA's, restaurant sales, etc.)			

2. Which are would you like to learn about the most?

3. Do you have suggestions of topics or trainers that you would like the market to explore inviting to a meeting?

4. Which interests you the least?

