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Welcome to the Training!

*Farmers Market Success During COVID-19:
Market-Managed Online Sales*

We'll get started at NOON (EST)

Market-Managed Online Sales

Due to COVID-19, demand for healthy local food is increasing. Of course, the difficulty of getting that food to customers has increased too.

More and more customers are asking for markets to manage the online ordering process. The market managers in this training have decided to do that.

We will hear about four markets – each one uses a different ordering platform and a different distribution system.

One market has been online since 2013. The others are new since the coronavirus changed the farmers market landscape.

They will share their successes and lessons learned along with their communication strategies, market rules, online platform decisions, payment methods and much more.

Agenda

Kim Hutchinson

Virginia Farmers Market Association

Tracy Frey

Williamsburg Farmers Market

(government, urban)

Woso by Roro, Home Delivery

Justin McKenzie

Charlottesville City Market

(government, urban)

Lulus Local Food, Drive Thru Pickup

<< 5 minute Break >>

<< Intermission: Stanley Jones III >>

Michelle Pridgen

Independence Farmers Market

(non-profit, rural)

Locally Grown, Curbside Pickup

Bailey Mennona

Disappearing Deserts

(private/non-profit, urban)

Multi-Partner Market

Mary Delicate

Virginia Farmers Market Association

Considerations When Setting Up Your Online
Market

Considerations When Setting Up Your Online Market

Mary Delicate

Promoting Local Food

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Choose a Distribution Model

Will the market aggregate orders and distribute to customers?

- Curbside Pickup – market sorts and hands-off orders to customers
- Home Delivery – market sorts and delivers full orders to homes
- Multiple Pickup Locations – market or vendors deliver items to pickup locations; market sorts and hands-off orders

Will the vendors give their items directly to customers?

- Curbside Pickup – individual vendors bring out ordered items to customers
- Drive Through Pickup – customers drive past vendor booths to get ordered items
- Walk Through Pickup – customers walk past vendor booths to pickup ordered items

Choose a Distribution Model

- What capacity do you and your partners have? (staff, volunteers, funding)
- What space do you have available? Indoor? Outdoor?
- How have neighboring businesses been impacted and how will that impact your distribution plan? (less space or more space?)
- Do you have sufficient coolers, cooler bags and ice packs or refrigerator and freezer space?
- Are additional permits required?
- What do vendors want?
- How involved will vendors be in distribution?
- How will your pickup impact traffic? Do police need to be notified?
- Does your liability insurance cover your new set up? Does it cover coronavirus claims?

Choose a Distribution Model

- How will you maintain social distancing during pickup?
- Do you need to shorten or lengthen market hours for pickup?
- Will you schedule customer pickups? [Calendy](#) app can help
- Do you need an inclement weather plan?
- What supplies do you need to enforce traffic flow and rules – cones, caution tape and directional signs (enter here, one way, exit only, curbside pickup, bathrooms, etc)
- Will you have boxes or bags to transfer orders? (sponsorship opportunity – add logo of local company)
- How will you check in items (for markets that are aggregating)?

Choose an Online Platform

There are many online market platforms. Below are ones VAFMA members have recommended to us:

- [Local Line](#)
- [Locally Grown](#)
- [Lulus Local Food](#)
- [What's Good](#)
- [Woso by RoRo](#)

Choose an Online Platform

Make sure you take the time to explain your markets operations. No two farmers markets run the same and the level of involvement you want in your markets operations online should help determine which platform you select.

There are questions on the following pages for you to consider when choosing an online platform.

Choose an Online Platform

Understand How It Works

- Do vendors set up their own inventory or does it require market managers to set up vendor inventories?
- Does the system facilitate vendors selling at multiple markets or through their own online stores using the same inventory set up?
- Is the system mobile-friendly? Will it require an app download? Can people shop via their desktop computers as well?
- Who handles technical support?
- How responsive is the company to technical requests? Will they make changes to the system for you?
- How long will it take to go live?
- How do they notify you about system-wide updates?
- Who handles refunds? How long do refunds take?
- Can you text message and/or email vendors & customers through the program?

Choose an Online Platform

Fees

- Do not assume you know what the fee structure is. Get it in writing.
- Are they transparent about pricing?
- Who pays the fees? Market, vendors, customers or a combination?
- Are fees a percentage of sales or a flat rate? Does the percentage change as sales numbers go up? When are fees paid?
- How are these fees paid? Deducted from sales? Invoiced?
- Are fees on an introductory scale and go up later? Are they upcharging or discounting fees due to COVID-19? What will happen post COVID-19?
- Is lower non-profit pricing available?

Training

- How difficult is it to onboard vendors? Will the company help with this process?
- Does the platform company offer training for the market managers? For vendors? Can you see the training before committing? Make sure the instructions would be understood by your vendors.

Setting Up Your Online Market

Payments

- Will you charge customer membership fees?
- Which payment processing systems will you offer? (PayPal, Stripe, Venmo) Who will pay their fees?
- Will payments be made directly to vendors at time of transaction or will market pay vendors? Who will facilitate that payment? Via check or direct deposit?
- For government run – will locality's treasurer need to facilitate vendor payments?
- Will market or vendors remit sales taxes?
- Are you able to facilitate SNAP transactions?

Setting Up Your Online Market

Application Process

- Which vendors will you allow to sell online?
- If a product category isn't being served, will you add new vendors?

Inventory

- Who will approve each item of inventory? Will you give vendors a deadline to submit inventory?
- Will you send a weekly reminder to vendors?
- Be sure to check the accuracy of tax rates vendors choose (food vs non-food rates)

Buying Window

- When will you open your buying window?
- Remember to allow enough time for vendors to pick, prepare & pack items before delivery day

Setting Up Your Online Market

Customer Interaction

- How will you remind customers about the market opening?
- Will you send order pickup reminders to customers who ordered?
- Who will answer customer questions?
- Prepare a list of Frequently Asked Questions and add it to your site for customers
- Will you be issuing credits or refunds for missing items? How will you determine who pays for the mistake? (Was it the vendor's mistake or staff/volunteer's?)
- What will you do with orders that aren't picked up?

Establish Your Market Rules

Establish Rules and Safety Protocols for Vendors, Staff and Shoppers

- VAFMA's guidelines: <https://vafma.org/covid-19/>
- Example: <http://independencefarmersmarket.org/info-for-vendors/>
- Include your market rules on your website, in emails to vendors, staff and customers, on social media and at market
- Add a link to your COVID-19 website page to your email signature
- Enforce your rules for the safety of all participants
- As market sales increase, how will you determine when it is time to add new vendors to a category?
- Who approves new vendors? Market manager or a committee?

Expand Your Communication Strategy

- What communication channels do you have available? Email, social, website, TV, radio, podcasts, newspapers, press relationships, partners, state and local government agencies
- Local news wants stories about how COVID-19 is impacting local businesses
- How will you communicate your new set up with staff, vendors, volunteers, customers, SNAP customers and other stakeholders?
- Be prepared for people who see the market and are concerned that it is operating as “business as usual.” Consider an A-board and other communication that tells the community what you are doing to protect them and be in full compliance with all directives and best practices.

Expand Your Communication Strategy

- Will you need to increase the number of emails and social posts you share?
- Provide clear and frequent communications with vendors so they know about any market schedule, operational and other changes. Do not rely only on social media alone; find time to call and email so you are sure to reach them.
- Provide clear and frequent communications with shoppers and local market community via newsletters and social media.
- Share a map with simple directions to help customers understand how pickup will work
 - You can screenshot your market location on Google Maps and add notes and signals

Plan for Market Hygiene

- Consider your available bathrooms – are they close by?
- Will you need handwashing stations?
- What about hand sanitizer, wipes, masks and gloves?
- Require vendors to wear masks/face coverings and gloves
- Who will be cleaning coolers and reusable boxes/bags?

Establish Vendor Set Up Rules (Drive Thru)

- Encourage vendors to pre-bag orders and write/label names and cost (if not already paid for) on bags
- Have vendors put banners on the FRONT of tents for drive-thru markets so customers can identify them as they pull up
- How will vendors give orders to customers? Hand it off, or put it on a table and step away? Put it in car trunk?
- What will you or vendors do about missing items from orders?

Reach Out to Partners

- Have you checked in with all of your partners? Are there new ways you can collaborate?
- Are there new potential partners who can help you?
- Can you help neighboring businesses by including them in your market?
- Do you have room to add new vendors with items you need that you previously didn't have?
- Are you able to share information about vendors who aren't able to continue at market?

Useful Tools & Resources

- Calendy App <https://calendly.com/> scheduling customer arrival
- Route4me <https://www.route4me.com/> determining routes for home delivery
- SignUp.com <https://signup.com/> scheduling volunteers and staff
- Insulated Products Corp <https://ipcpack.com/> for Cooliner insulated box liners

Funding Sources

The [Virginia 30 Day Fund](#) is still accepting applications

The nonprofit Virginia 30 Day Fund was launched by Virginia technology entrepreneur Pete Snyder and his wife, Burson. Working with other business leaders throughout the Commonwealth, the Fund's goal is to help save as many Virginia jobs as possible while small businesses await recently approved federal funding.

Virginia businesses that qualify for assistance from the Fund are:

- Small businesses that employ three to 30 people;
- Based in Virginia and have been operating for at least one year;
- Owned and operated by a Virginia resident.

The funds dispersed to small businesses by the Virginia 30 Day fund do not need to be repaid. If businesses who receive the Fund's assistance do, at a later date, wish to "pay it forward" to another Virginia small business in need of assistance, they may do so by directing those dollars back to the Fund, which will disburse the funding to another Virginia business in need.

Funding Sources

- [Small Business Relief Grant](#) - LISC is one of the country's largest social enterprises supporting projects and programs to revitalize underserved communities and bring greater economic opportunity to residents.
- Local Funding Opportunities – <https://www.lisc.org/covid-19/covid-resources/opportunities/>

For Non-Profits in Virginia (use link above to find other states)

- [Community Foundation of Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties](#)
- [Hampton Roads Community Foundation](#)
- [Arlington Community Foundation](#)
- [The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia](#)
- [The Williamsburg Community Foundation](#)
- [Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond](#)
- [TheCommunity Foundation of the New River Valley](#)
- [The Charlottesville Area Community Foundation](#)
- [The Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge](#)
- [The Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region](#)

Funding Sources

Funding and support for small businesses and nonprofits (including farmers markets if fit into these categories):

- [Payroll Protection Program](https://www.sba.gov/paycheckprotection/find) - provides a loan to keep your employees on the payroll during Covid-19. The loan is forgivable if you use it for payroll. Loan amount is 2.5 times monthly payroll. Contact your existing bank first to see if they are a SBA lender. Find the nearest lender here: <https://www.sba.gov/paycheckprotection/find>.
- [Virginia Community Capital](#) is one of the few lenders who are welcoming non-customers to apply for PPP so if you are stuck-- reach out to them.
- [Emergency Injury Disaster Loan](#) (EIDL) - a forgivable loan for small businesses experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. Up to \$10,000 advanced that does not have to be repaid. Apply through SBA.
- Virginia Community Capital has a pretty [comprehensive overview](#) of the funding opportunities and [Farmers Market Coalition also has specific funding information](#)
- [No Kid Hungry](#) has grants for organizations feeding kids during the COvid-19 Crisis.

(list on this page and next provided by Maureen McNamara Best or Virginia Fresh Match)

Funding Sources

Specific Financial Assistance options for farm businesses:

- **Small Business Association's financial assistance**: there is on-going debate over what assistance farmers are eligible for from the CARES act, with daily updates. The best advice we've gotten from officials is this: there is no penalty for applying. If your business needs it, it's in your interest to get in the system as soon as possible. The worst that can happen is you're not approved.
- **Payroll Protection Program** - provides loan forgiveness to keep your employees on the payroll during Covid-19. You work with a local bank to receive a forgivable loan with low interest (1%). Find the nearest lender here: <https://www.sba.gov/paycheckprotection/find>. New lenders are enrolling daily.
- **Emergency Injury Disaster Loan** - a forgivable loan for small businesses experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. Up to \$10,000 advanced that does not have to be repaid.
 - For assistance, contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension agent. They can help you with eligibility, technical assistance, and more: <https://ext.vt.edu/offices.html>.
- **American Farmland Trust Farmer Relief Fund** - awards up to \$1,000 for small and mid-size direct-market producers.
- **Food Animal Concerns Trust Emergency Mini-Grants** - up to \$500 for livestock and poultry farmers to help producers transition to online, alternative sales strategy, or other projects to maintain sales during the COVID-19 crisis.
- **National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition 2020 Funding Opportunities**: a comprehensive list of grants available to farmers
- Consider subscribing to [Future Harvest](#), based out of Maryland. They've been putting out a lot of thoughtful updates for farmers.

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Future Topic Requests?

Let us Know!

Quick survey will be sent to you OR

Email us at info@vafma.org