



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



TOOLKIT

STARTING A FARMERS MARKET AT A UNIVERSITY



Developed through a FMC and USDA partnership.
Published July 2025.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was created by the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) and USDA Farmers Market with support from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Cooperative Agreement 21-TMFMX-CA-0001 under the AMS Local and Regional Foods Division, and contributions from partners with Virginia State University, Tennessee State University, and Southern University and A&M College.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) entered into a partnership with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to develop a toolkit for starting a farmers market on a university campus. The project worked with three universities to establish an on-campus farmers market or partnering with an existing market close to campus. The project sought to increase access to fresh, healthy, locally grown foods for university students, staff, and the surrounding community while educating consumers on the benefits of local foods. It also aimed to expand direct sales opportunities for small producers and strengthen connections between the pilot universities and local farmers and growers. The three participating universities in this pilot were Southern University, Tennessee State University, and Virginia State University.

This toolkit is loosely structured around the Four Ms¹ (mission, management, marketing, measurement), a framework developed by Market Umbrella in New Orleans for their Marketshare program. We adapted these strategies to the context of on-campus farmers markets at academic institutions. The toolkit provides guidance on planning and development, market operations, promotion, and evaluation, while highlighting best practices and relevant resources.

Market Feasibility Guide: Before launching an on-campus farmers market, it is essential to assess whether hosting a market is feasible. The Michigan Farmers Market Association offers valuable strategies for evaluating needs, assets, and capacity at your university to support a farmers market. <https://farmdirectincentives.guide/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/MIFMA-Farmers-Market-Feasibility-Guide-051614.pdf>



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1 https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Marketshare_4M_Strategy.pdf

MARKET PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS YOUR MISSION?

The first step in market planning is to establish a clear vision and purpose for your market. Undertaking the planning necessary to create a successful and sustainable market requires time and intention. It is important to consider what your primary goals are for the market. As you identify your goals and develop your mission, consider the following questions:

- Who is the audience you are serving? How does the surrounding community shape the market's needs? Consider the historical context around local agriculture and the experience of local residents in farming and local food access.
- What does your audience need or want from a farmers market?
- What values should be reflected in your market operations and programming?
- What impacts should the market have on stakeholders and the broader community?

Writing a Mission Statement: A well-crafted mission statement should be “original, foundational, and memorable,” connecting with market organizers, on-campus consumers, and the community. This checklist provides useful guidance on writing an effective mission statement: <https://onstrategyhq.com/resources/checklist-for-how-to-write-a-great-mission-statement/>.

Once your team has answered these questions, develop a mission statement that aligns with your goals. It should define the values and characteristics you would like your market to reflect and promote. Create a clear and identifiable statement for stakeholders.

In outlining your market's mission, think about how you will create a market that is a welcoming space for everyone in your community. What does that sense of “belonging”

mean to individual members of your community? Think about how this connects to the vendors you recruit, the products they offer, and the programming you implement.

A community survey can be helpful in answering these questions and provide meaningful information to help inform your market development and promotion. This feedback can also support your mission and the development of your market programming. The pilot team at Virginia State University conducted a survey to gauge interest in a farmers market among campus community members.

PARTNERSHIPS AND OTHER RESOURCES

After your team establishes a mission, the next step is evaluating resources and forming partnerships that match your market's goals. Asset mapping and reciprocal partnership mapping are very useful tools for identifying existing relationships, potential resources, and sources of support on campus and in the local community. For markets on college and university campuses, market organizers should establish firm lines of communication with university administration; and work closely with departments managing facilities, operations, and event coordination.

Planning a sustainable market means securing volunteer and programming support from a variety of on-campus partners, including:

- Colleges or Schools of Agriculture and Nutrition
- Cooperative Extension offices
- USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) Liaison
- Office of Student Life (or similar)
- Student organizations (e.g., athletics, Greek organizations, clubs)
- Dining services

In addition to partners within the university community, consider potential partnerships outside of your university. Below is an example of a reciprocal partnership map for on-campus farmers markets. Create your own map using this [template from North Carolina State Extension](#) (or another tool). Figure 1 shows an example of this exercise for an on-campus market.

Mapping reciprocal partnerships is one way to explore the relationships current and potential stakeholders have to a project, including how each partner gives to the work and what they may receive from a partnership with the market. Before beginning this exercise, do the following:

1. Outline the skills and resources most needed by your team.
2. Evaluate the university's current and previous work around farmers markets.
3. Look for opportunities to engage with stakeholders who have experience with farmers markets and/or offer skills or resources essential to market operations.
4. Consider your market objectives and where shared interests and institutional/operational goals overlap with other partners.

5. For potential community partners, determine if those individuals or organizations already have connections to (or ongoing work with) your university.
6. Assess potential barriers or obstacles to partnership.

Make sure you are aware of and follow any guidelines the university has for bringing in new community partners or sponsors and how these partnerships are to be documented.

These additional resources may also be helpful in mapping and evaluating existing relationships and potential new partnerships:

- University of Minnesota - Reciprocal Partner Mapping: <https://sahc.umn.edu/sites/sahc.umn.edu/files/2024-08/Reciprocal%20Partnerships%20%281%29.pdf>
- University of Southern Maine – A Brief Guide to Reciprocal Community-University Partnerships: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=mu>

Figure 1. Mapping reciprocal partnerships



Asset mapping tool: Asset mapping can be another important tool in your market planning process. This tool created by Penn State Extension, specifically for farmers markets, can help you evaluate existing resources and where you might tap into additional resources to grow and sustain your market. <https://extension.psu.edu/asset-mapping-for-farmers-markets>.

An engaged partner from your campus Cooperative Extension office can be an important part of your planning team, particularly if they are involved in this type of work and are connected to local farmers and growers. Extension staff can also help market organizers tap into other local and regional partnerships, including:

- Small farmer outreach programs and events
- Off-campus farmers markets
- Local and regional food access organizations
- State farmers market association

Figure 2 shows Extension staff at Tennessee State University (TSU) at their booth at TSU's pilot farmers market where they offered SNAP-Ed and nutrition education materials and conducted produce giveaways to incentivize visitor survey participation.

Figure 2. TSU Cooperative Extension booth at Tiger Fresh Farmers Market (October 2023)



Photo by Veronica J. Oates

BUDGETING

Financial planning is another significant piece of asset evaluation and market planning. Funding an on-campus market will look different for different universities. Some market initiatives may be funded largely by the university or Extension services. Others may require outside funding

to be sustained over the long-term, which might be obtained through community-fundraising (e.g. would the university allow an on-campus market to solicit sponsorships?), state agency appropriations, public or private grants, or even federal funding.

Budgeting will be an important part of managing any funds received. This open-book management (OBM) budget template (<https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/resource/open-book-management-budget-template/>) from Chicago's Green City Market may be a helpful starting point in thinking about how to track the finances for your market. The [Business & Financial Planning page from the Alaska Farmers Markets Toolkit](#) also references some helpful tools on this topic.

MODEL, LOCATION, AND SCHEDULE

The next step is deciding when and where to host your market. Start by defining a market season. Based on the climate and growing season in your region, it may make sense to host the market in late summer and early fall, shortly after students return to campus for the fall semester. Spring may also be a viable option for some colleges and universities, particularly those located in the southern United States. Different types of produce are in season at different times of the year. Consider which fruits and vegetables may be in highest demand on your campus and when that produce will be available from local farmers and growers. In your market's off-season, determine how your university and Extension Services can support your vendors/producers in accessing other marketing channels (e.g. wholesale opportunities, community supported agriculture (CSA)).

The market model you choose to offer will also impact the location and frequency of your market events. For many colleges and universities, a traditional walk-up farmers market model may work best. However, depending on your community and resources available, a farmstand or mobile market may offer more flexibility and allow you to serve a wider audience. There are some excellent resources discussing mobile markets, including one authored by the [Mobile Market Coalition](#) based on the Veggie Van² model. In this toolkit, the focus is on the more conventional walk-up or walk-through farmers market model.

2 <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/library/intervention/veggie-van-toolkit>

During your planning, decide how frequently your team would like to host the market (e.g. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or only once or twice per season). Hosting a weekly market may be challenging, depending on capacity, and available market resources, as well as vendor and product availability. If there are other markets that serve the community surrounding your campus, find out which days/hours they operate so you are not competing with them for shoppers or vendors. These factors, along with demand from potential shoppers would help in determining if biweekly, monthly, or even one or two seasonal events might best suit your campus.

Once you've decided how frequently you want to host the market, examine potential locations for the market and determine which day(s) of the week and times of day would best serve your campus community. Consider the following questions during your planning:

- What day(s) are the most students and faculty on campus (e.g. days when more classes are offered)?
- What time(s) of day are most people likely to be on campus? Are there peak hours for on-campus activities (e.g. midday and midweek)?
- What areas of campus have the most foot traffic or are easily walkable for students and faculty going to and from class, residence halls, or offices?
- Are these locations also accessible to off-campus visitors?
- Is parking available nearby?
- Does the university administration allow recurring events to be hosted at these locations?

- Will a permit or other special permissions be needed?
- Does the location offer access to electricity for market staff and vendors, if needed? Which campus office(s) need to be contacted to secure the location?
- Are there campus events or celebrations that our market could partner with to maximize visibility and participation?

A key factor in the success of an on-campus market is a location that strikes a balance between accessibility and visibility. Ideally, it will be walkable for students, faculty and staff, and easily accessible to vendors as well as community members. If welcoming guests from off-campus, additional parking should be available (see Figure 3). Review your campus layout to determine areas that are centrally located and accessible for vendors who will likely drive to your campus. Those using a truck or larger vehicle will have product and tent/booth materials which will need to be moved to and from the market location. Your team may have to consult multiple offices and/or administrators to secure your chosen location, including, but not limited to:

- Offices of chancellors or deans
- Building or facility services
- Campus safety or security services
- Events management
- Office of university or student life

Decide on your location early in the process and identify a back-up location in case your preferred location is not available.

Figure 3. Aerial view of VSU campus with farmers market location highlighted



Photo by Virginia State University Cooperative Extension

Figure 4. VSU Trojan Farmers Market produce vendor (September 2023)



Photo by Virginia State University Cooperative Extension

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Planning and developing a farmers market that best suits the needs of your university community requires you to know your community who they are, what they value, if/how they have previously interacted with farmers markets, if/why other farmers markets in the surrounding community do or do not meet their needs, and what they want from a farmers market on campus.

Understanding the needs of your community will help you decide what your market should offer and inform your outreach to farmers and recruitment of vendors who can meet those needs. When we think about a market that caters to students, it is important to consider how and

when they will be shopping at the market and whether they have access to cooking and storage equipment. Students who live on campus are less likely to have access to cooking equipment such as pots, pans, stovetops, and ovens. They may also have limited or no access to refrigeration. For these shoppers, foods that can be eaten raw or do not require preparation or storage will be the most appealing (e.g. fresh fruit, drinks, and small-sized or individually portioned baked goods, or other prepared foods) (see Figures 4 and 5). If more students (or potential shoppers) commute and live off-campus, there may be a higher demand for raw vegetables, including those which require cold storage.

Figure 5. Southern University JAGFresh Farmers Market value-added product vendor (November 2023)



Photo by The Southern University Ag Cooperative Extension Program

RECRUITING VENDORS

When recruiting vendors, use the resources available to you on campus through Cooperative Extension Service and your College or School of Agriculture. The Cooperative Extension Service will have connections to local farmers and growers and can help connect you to producers who are part of their research and education networks. If your state has a farmers market association, it can serve as another great resource for learning more about markets in your community and region (see Figure 6). When looking for folks who grow specific items (e.g. specific fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, etc.), Extension services may be able to identify farmers your team can contact.

Visiting other local farmers markets and engaging with the staff and/or organizations operating those markets will be valuable as well. It is important to work collaboratively with these other markets, rather than competing with them. These connections will help you coordinate your market schedule and vendor recruitment with local markets already in operation. Contact potential vendors well before your market season begins to give them time to plan to participate.

Figure 6. Tennessee Association of Farmers Market staff visiting with TSU Tiger Fresh Farmers Market Vendor (October 2023)



Photo by Veronica J. Oates

MARKET OPERATIONS

Once your team has moved through the planning phase, you can put your strategies and ideas into action.

Using the Four M strategy, operationalizing your plans should focus on how the market organizer can best manage the various elements of the market. Consider the time needed for the following tasks:

- Set up and breakdown of the market (tents, tables, signage)
- Communicating with vendors (agreements, booth fees (if applicable), scheduling, product availability, data collection)
- Coordinating and communicating programming and activities offered at the market
- Managing staff (if applicable) - assigning duties, training, scheduling
- Managing volunteers (if applicable) - assigning duties, training, scheduling
- Data collection (visitors, vendors, other stakeholders)

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Adequately staffing your market will depend on 1) the physical size of your market (square footage), 2) the layout you choose (how vendor tents/tables are arranged), 3) the number of vendors participating, 4) the average number of visitors, and 5) the mission and goals you have set for your market. If your market will offer programming such as children's activities, SNAP benefit redemption and other nutrition incentives, live music, and/or other wellness or food education opportunities, decide whether you will partner with organizations on campus or from the surrounding community to coordinate and support those activities. Think about this in terms of the number of hours you will need to adequately staff each market (including any program planning and facilitation) and how many of those hours could be covered by student volunteers vs. university or other paid staff. If partnering with any community organizations, find out if those organizations require compensation for their time, and if the university will allow them to promote their work to your market audience.

SNAP Resources: When considering challenges around food access for students and other members of your market community, it will be helpful to determine what proportion of your student population qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or other food benefits (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/students). This free course from Texas Center for Local Food is a helpful reference if your goal is to offer SNAP purchasing at your on-campus market and would like to learn more about the authorization process and implementing SNAP policy at your market (www.txfed.org/courses/accepting-snap-at-your-farmers-market).

Managing market operations includes making decisions about the number of vendors the market can support, the type and variety of products to be sold, the programming that will be offered, if any, and how the market will be managed. When determining requirements for your market operations, consider the following:

- Governance structures (e.g. advisory committee or board) - <https://farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org/>
- Formal market rules and procedures
- Vendor application and agreement (see Appendix B for vendor application developed by VSU)
- Support needed from relevant departments and administrators
- Staffing required
- Volunteer opportunities (e.g. student organizations)
- What products your market will offer
- Programming (i.e. priorities and potential partners)

An on-campus market run by the college or university hosting it may not have the same governance structure as a market run by a non-profit, a municipality, or a private organization. Therefore, your team may want to consider forming an advisory board or committee to support decision-making and to develop vendor and market rules³ and bylaws⁴.

3 <https://farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org/risks/market-rules-procedure/>

4 www.law.cornell.edu/wex/bylaws#:~:text=Bylaws%20refer%20to%20the%20regulations,other%20organization%20for%20internal%20management

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Universities that participated in this pilot noted the importance of engaging with students as a driver of market success. This engagement should occur in multiple ways such as through student shoppers, volunteers, program leads, or even vendors. Highlight ways in which students who would like to volunteer their time as part of fulfilling service learning or other academic requirements could best support your market.

- Target your outreach to students involved in athletics, Greek organizations, or other groups organized around academic pursuits or social causes who might like to volunteer at the market and/or provide outreach or promotional support.
- Identify who on your team will manage these volunteers.
- Explore the possibility of bringing on a student intern to organize volunteers and their activities.
- Find out if your team can compensate this individual for managing this program or if the internship can be formalized to help the student meet other requirements under their degree program.

VENDOR RETENTION

Recruiting vendors who fit your market's mission and model is an important part of market planning. Retaining those vendors is an ongoing process and an essential component of managing operations from market-to-market and across seasons. Talk to your vendors about their business goals and why they want to participate in your university's farmers market. Clearly define and communicate any market policies which impact your vendors, collect feedback from them each season, and apply their input to decision-making. Think about how the market can help your vendors increase sales through cross-promotion and by offering the products your shoppers are most interested in purchasing (see Figure 7). Actively promote your vendors as part of market messaging on social media, in campus newsletters, or through other communication channels. If your university can do so through Cooperative Extension or other programs, offer technical assistance and educational opportunities to vendors to invest in the growth of their small businesses. [Appendix B](#) provides a sample vendor retention checklist from the West Virginia Farmers Market Association highlighting many of these strategies (Oldham et al., 2014).

Figure 7. Shopper line for fresh greens from produce vendor



Photo by The Southern University Ag Cooperative Extension Program

PROGRAMMING

If your team has the capacity to add any regular programming to your market, identify the type of programming most needed (or wanted) by your market audience. Since you will likely start small, don't worry about offering too much at once. Think about programming or activities that might attract more visitors and potential shoppers, including:

- Offering SNAP and other food assistance purchasing options, SNAP education, and/or SNAP application support
- Offering cooking demonstrations or other nutrition education opportunities
- Offering wellness and/or kids' activities
- Hosting live music or a DJ
- Having games and/or promotional giveaways of donated items or market merch
- Inviting community partners to speak or offer services to market visitors
- Inviting sponsor(s) to host a table at the market

Determine what additional equipment (e.g. tents, tables, banners or other signage), if any, will be needed to facilitate this programming. Music will create a more lively and joyful energy around your market and will likely attract passersby, including additional students, staff, and faculty (see Figure 8).

When possible, and it makes sense to do so, connect market programming or activities to major holidays, particularly those celebrated by members of your community. If your university hosts an autumn/harvest celebration or other agriculture-focused events throughout

the year, it might make sense to host a market to coincide with one or more of those events, to increase the market's exposure and possibly draw new shoppers. Are there university organizations (student clubs, athletics, Greek organizations, etc.) that might be interested in doing a "market takeover" event where they volunteer, facilitate activities, and promote or provide information about their group to market visitors? Aligning your market with other university and campus activities helps build anticipation for your market(s), builds community, and may increase vendor and guest retention.

Figure 8. Shoppers and visitors to VSU Trojan



Photo by Virginia State University Cooperative Extension

MARKET PROMOTION

As your team moves towards operationalizing your market plans, it is important to consider how best to communicate this new opportunity to your stakeholders. As you prepare to open your market, find out which marketing strategies are accessible to your team that will reach your market audience most effectively. Crafting a messaging campaign highlighting the missions of your market and its relatability to your community and market audience is a significant part of your marketing strategy.

MARKET AUDIENCE

During the planning process, you identified your market audience, tapped into new or existing community partnerships to help design your market model, and possibly surveyed the community your market will serve. By planning and thinking about the values you would like to be reflected in your market, you will have developed a foundation for your market's messaging. Messaging is the language you use to talk about your market, the "brand" you would like to promote, and how you communicate that to your stakeholders. The tone and values you convey will help shape community members' perceptions of your market and help foster support for your market and its initiatives. Messaging should be simple, clear, and emphasize the value the market offers to your community.

Your market audience is comprised of a variety of stakeholders including students, faculty, university staff, and members of the community surrounding your campus. Depending on your market's mission and goals, your stakeholders may also include local and regional partners such as your state farmers market association, potential funders and sponsors, and state and local government officials. Communicating with these different audiences may require using different marketing channels and strategies, such as print media, email, social media, and possibly other forms of media like radio or television.

MESSAGING

When developing your messaging, make sure it is credible and authentic and that any values you promote are directly reflected in the market model and culture. It is important to engage with various stakeholders. Consider who the most vulnerable members of your community may be and how your messaging can best include them and make them feel welcome at your market. Using [plain language](#) will make your messaging more appealing and accessible to a broader audience.

Center for Plain Language, *Plain Language Learning*:
<https://centerforplainlanguage.org/learning-training/>

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND PLATFORMS

Universities participating in this pilot used a variety of strategies to communicate with potential shoppers and promote their market events. Creating an Instagram or Facebook page for your market can be a great way to remind your audience of upcoming markets, share photos and videos, highlight specific products or vendors, and feature any programming, guests, or other special events at your market. For example, Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, uses their Facebook page to share updates and announcements about their market throughout the year. Another great option is to share information through a newsletter as Rutgers University does for their [Cook's Market at Rutgers Gardens](#).

If resources allow, offering market swag (e.g. tote bags, lanyards, or water bottles) is another effective way to promote your markets and can even be used to incentivize responses to your market visitor surveys. Figure 9 shows some examples from our pilot universities.

Figure 9. Photo from Tennessee Farmers Market and VSU Trojan social media (2023)



Photo by Veronica J. Oates



Photo by Virginia State University Cooperative Extension

This link to Virginia State University's [SmugMug page for the Trojan Farmers Market](#) and Instagram reel for their September 2023 market demonstrates how social media and cloud-based platforms can be used to promote and share stories about your market.

Creating colorful flyers, which can be distributed on social media or printed and posted in high traffic areas of campus, are another great way to get the word out. Make sure your flyer clearly states your market name and the date, time, and location for the event you're promoting. It is also helpful to include social media information and any other identifiable branding. [Canva®](#) is a helpful, easy-to-use tool for creating quick and colorful promotional materials and includes some free options for those who do not have access through their university. Figure 10 below shows the flyer created by the team at Southern to promote their pilot events.

Figure 10. Southern University JAGFresh



Photo by The Southern University Ag Cooperative Extension Program

CONNECTING COMMUNICATIONS TO VALUES AND MISSION

The programming your market offers can also be an important part of marketing and messaging, especially if it connects directly to your market's mission. Talk to your vendors and community partners about promoting your market events to their networks, resharing your social media posts and otherwise amplifying the market's messaging.

On market day, make sure there is visible, easy to read signage on campus identifying your market (see Figure 11) and directing folks to the market from other locations on campus (e.g. student union or center, dormitories, dining hall). If parking is available, make sure it is highlighted in promotional materials and signage. Decide what type of equipment the market may want on hand for general operations and marketing. For example, will your market provide tables and/or tablecloths for your vendors? Will you want (and will funding be available for) branded tents, tablecloths, or other merchandise to promote your market?

Figure 11. Southern University JAGFresh Farmers Market street sign (November 2023)



Photo by The Southern University Ag Cooperative Extension Program

MARKET EVALUATION

Measuring the impacts of your market on your stakeholders (visitors, vendors, staff, volunteers) and the surrounding community is essential to long-term planning and viability of your market. Think about who your audience will be for the data you collect and the story you would like to tell about your market and its impact on your community. Identifying these factors will help you decide which metrics to measure and how often. FMC's Farmers Market Evaluation website offers a range of tools to help your market customize an evaluation plan that suits your market and its goals.

DATA COLLECTION

As you begin your market planning process, your first data collection effort may be in surveying your campus community to assess the demand for a farmers market and what students, faculty, and staff would want the market to offer in terms of products and programming. When surveying your community, it may be helpful to collect data related to transportation and scheduling preferences, access to cooking and storage equipment, demand for non-produce items (e.g. meat, dairy, value-added and prepared foods), and preferred payment options (e.g. credit, cash-app, SNAP-EBT, campus dining card/account, etc.).

DEVELOPING AN EVALUATION PLAN

In developing an evaluation plan for your market, think about data collection in terms of measuring impacts of your on-campus market, both on your university campus and the surrounding community, as well as your vendors and other partners. In measuring impacts, consider metrics which demonstrate how your team is achieving the market's mission. . Surveying visitors can be done multiple times per season, depending on your team's capacity. Be consistent with the questions you ask visitors and offer both electronic and paper versions of your survey. This will be helpful in capturing responses from a wider audience. [Appendix D](#) references the visitor survey questions used by the universities participating in this pilot.

A key first step in developing your evaluation plan is to identify your target audience for the data collected. Determine the market impacts in which these stakeholders will be most interested. Establishing this foundation will help you define your goals around evaluation, determine what to measure and how frequently.

As you develop evaluation strategies for your market, keep these points in mind:

- Don't collect more data than you need. Select metrics which will best demonstrate the impacts of your market.
- Be consistent in what you collect and how you collect it.
- When possible, create a team (market staff or volunteers) who will collect and manage your data.
- Consider which methodologies are best suited to your market and the capacity of your team.
- Choose appropriate data collection tools or instruments.
- Be aware of survey fatigue and be careful not to over survey your market vendors, visitors, or other stakeholders.
- Be conscious of the language you choose and how your questions are phrased.
- Let folks know why you are collecting data and how it will be used (e.g. to promote market impacts to funders and local officials, to inform and improve operations).
- Use the data you collect to shape your messaging and to tell the story of your market.
- Share and promote your data with market stakeholders, including shoppers, vendors, sponsors, and other potential funders.

EVALUATION TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

[FMC's Farmers Market Evaluation Website](#) includes a resource library of guides, tools, templates, and case studies related to this topic. A [Quick Start Tool for developing a custom evaluation plan for your market](#) is also available on this site, along with a repository of metrics, survey questions, and collection tools for developing your own survey forms and questionnaires based on your market's needs and capacity. This website and resources library were designed to meet markets of all types where they are in terms of data collection and evaluation. It acknowledges that some markets have very limited experience with and capacity for this work while also emphasizing that there are simple ways to evaluate market activities which can have a valuable impact for your market.

Once you develop an evaluation plan to measure market outcomes, think about how you might use that data and with whom you plan to share it. It will be helpful to visualize important data to make it easier to share in small bites via social media and to have graphics which may be included in larger reports.

As more universities develop on-campus farmers markets, it will be helpful to connect with other university farmers markets in your network to find out what data they are collecting and how they are collecting it. Creating a shared language around evaluation, asking the same questions (in the same way) of visitors and vendors, will help campus markets more easily compare data over time.

Survey Questions and Templates: When developing survey tools for vendors, visitors, or other stakeholders, the [Survey Question Bank on FMC's Farmers Market Evaluation website](#) will help build forms which use shared language and measurements used by other farmers markets. If developing custom questions, be mindful to use inclusive language and practices in your survey processes.



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SUSTAINING THE MARKET

An essential piece of market planning and development is considering to how the model you develop can be sustained over the long term. Viability of a campus farmers market is dependent on many of the same factors as any farmers market:

1. Long-term funding
2. Adequate staffing
3. Vendor commitment
4. Shopper demand
5. Community buy-in

Continued success of a campus farmers market is largely connected to the amount of support they receive from university administration. Our pilot universities emphasized that making these connections and communicating their farmers market goals to their facilities department, Chancellor's office, University Chief of Staff (that would likely organize and host the market), and/or the Director or Associate Director of the Cooperative Extension service was a helpful first step in market planning and in securing the administration's continued buy-in.

BEST PRACTICES

It will be useful to consider these "best practices" in connection with the various stages of market planning and operations outlined in this toolkit:

- If you are a student looking to start a farmers market on your campus, find a department that will help advocate for your ideas with university administration and support you in outreach and development.
- Obtaining support from university administration (in terms of funding and resources) is key to long-term success of the market.
- Start small and grow your market over time. It's okay if you begin with only two or three vendors and if one of those is a student selling produce grown on your campus farm or garden(s).
- Securing an appropriate location for the market may require permission or acknowledgment by multiple administrators and/or offices within the university. It is important to know the process for getting and retaining these permissions and who on your planning team may already have relationships with these individuals or offices.

- Extension staff with existing connections to local farmers and producers can be a significant asset to vendor recruitment and retention.
- Extension and university research initiatives may provide programming and special event opportunities for the market.
- Engaging with student groups (academic, athletic, and Greek organizations) will be vital to market promotion and can also provide an important source of volunteers to assist with market operations. It is also valuable to build a relationship with the university's office of student life/services/affairs/activities to help facilitate connections to student organizations.
- Talk to your campus administration and dining services team about options which would allow students to use campus dining cards to purchase food or drink at the market.
- Seeking outside funding or sponsorship of the market from local, regional, and state partners, as allowed by the university, may be necessary.
- Survey students and faculty (and possibly the community surrounding the university) to get a sense of what they want from a farmers market in terms of culture, programming, and products available to purchase.
- Utilize on-campus communication networks, university social media, and student/faculty email or listservs to promote the market.
- Effectively communicate and engage in ways that work for project leadership and partners. Finding common ground will help build trust and active participation in cohort activities.
- Measuring the same metrics from season-to-season will help you demonstrate market impacts over time to university administration, market shoppers, potential funders, community partners, and other market stakeholders.

One of the keys to a successful market is applying lessons learned from season-to-season, including feedback and data collected from vendors and visitors, and refining market practices based on that learning. The goal is to develop an iterative process which will help improve your market over time, making it more resilient to both natural and man-made disruptions (e.g. climate change, public health emergencies, economic downturns, etc.) and more responsive to the needs of your university's community.

GLOSSARY

- **Cooperative Extension:** Organized under the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), this service operates through the Land-Grant University System and includes partnerships with state and local governments to support farmers, ranchers, and communities through education, research, and technical assistance.
- **Evaluation:** Assessing the value, amount, or number of something
- **Four Ms:** Developed by Market Umbrella in New Orleans, the 4M strategy is a method of organizing work and outlining organizational priorities around the ideas of Mission, Management, Marketing, and Measurement.
- **Metrics:** Quantifiable standards of measurement which can be used to evaluate or assess progress and performance
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** USDA-sponsored program which provides federal food benefits to low-income adults and families
- **SNAP-EBT:** “EBT” stands for Electronic Benefits Transfer and is the mechanism which enables SNAP participants to pay for food using their benefits.
- **Vendor Agreement:** A contract between a farmers market and individual vendors outlining market rules related to sourcing and production of items sold, booth or stall fees, attendance, setup and cleanup, general conduct, food safety, etc., and how violations of those rules will be addressed

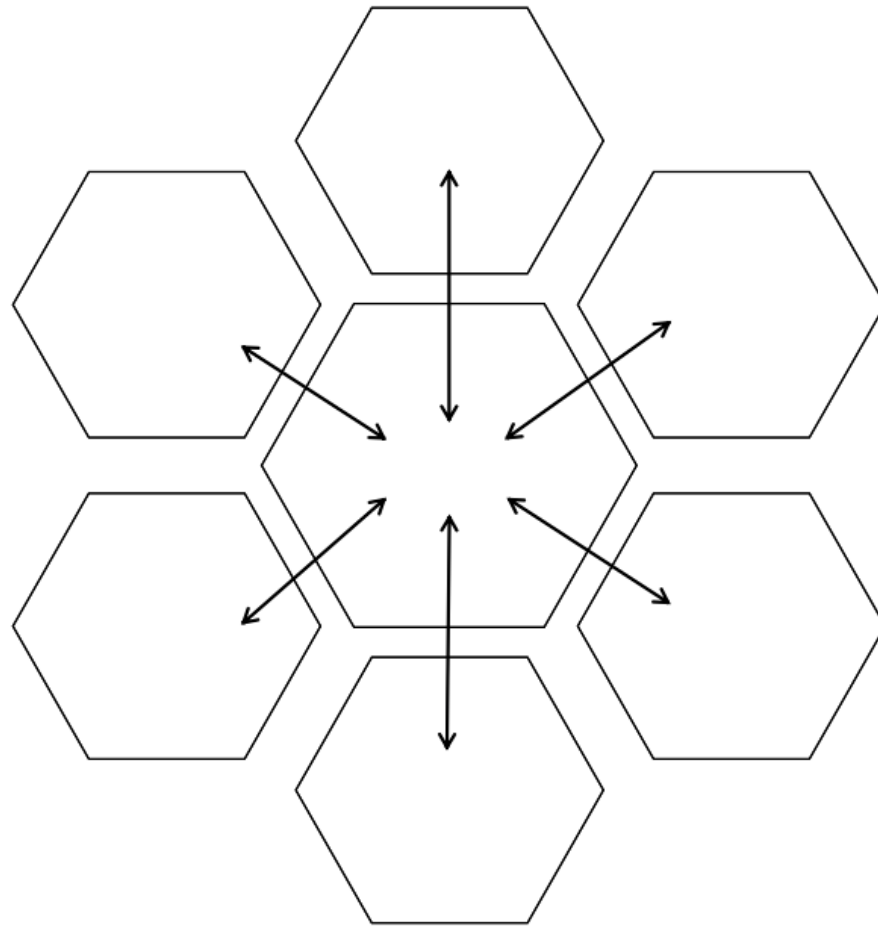
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APPENDIX A. RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES

Mapping Reciprocal Partnerships



APPENDIX B. SAMPLE VENDOR APPLICATION



2023 VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY FARMERS MARKET VENDOR APPLICATION
(Your information is Confidential. Keep Copy of your Submitted Application)

Applicant Name				
Business Name				
Business Address	City		Zip Code	
Mailing Address	City		Zip Code	
Cell Phone				
Home Phone				
Email				
Website				
Alternate Contact	Phone		Email	

How many years have you owned or operated your business? New Business Years

I participated in the VSU SNAP Certification Program ☐ Yes ☐ No

I participated in the VSU SFOP Beginning Farmer Programs ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a woman owned business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a minority owned business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a veteran owned business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you certified to accept USDA SNAP-EBT payments? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a Virginia SWAM certified vendor? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What qualities do you think you have that would benefit this new pilot program?

How many square feet rows, or acres, do you have in production?

I am a new farmer and I am working with a partner farmer to utilize the following land

	Number of 100 foot rows	(or) Number of Acres
Fruit Field Production		
Vegetable Field Production		
High Tunnel Production		

How many square feet or acres, do you have in livestock production?

☐ Square Feet

☐ Acres

What are your post-harvest methods?

	Yes	No
Wash		
Dry		
Refrigeration		
Freeze		
Other (describe):		

Which of the following vegetables do you grow? (Please check below)

<input type="checkbox"/> beets	<input type="checkbox"/> green onions	<input type="checkbox"/> salad greens	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, list below:
<input type="checkbox"/> broccoli	<input type="checkbox"/> hot peppers	<input type="checkbox"/> spinach	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brussels sprouts	<input type="checkbox"/> kale	<input type="checkbox"/> summer squash	
<input type="checkbox"/> cabbage	<input type="checkbox"/> lettuce	<input type="checkbox"/> sweet corn	
<input type="checkbox"/> carrots	<input type="checkbox"/> mushrooms	<input type="checkbox"/> sweet peppers	
<input type="checkbox"/> cauliflower	<input type="checkbox"/> mustard greens	<input type="checkbox"/> sweet potatoes	
<input type="checkbox"/> celery	<input type="checkbox"/> okra	<input type="checkbox"/> Swiss chard	
<input type="checkbox"/> collards	<input type="checkbox"/> onions	<input type="checkbox"/> tomatoes	
<input type="checkbox"/> cucumbers	<input type="checkbox"/> peas	<input type="checkbox"/> turnips	
<input type="checkbox"/> garlic	<input type="checkbox"/> potatoes	<input type="checkbox"/> winter squash	
<input type="checkbox"/> green beans	<input type="checkbox"/> rutabagas	<input type="checkbox"/> zucchini	

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Which of the following fruits do you grow? (Please check below)

<input type="checkbox"/> apples	<input type="checkbox"/> peaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, list below:
<input type="checkbox"/> blackberries	<input type="checkbox"/> pears	
<input type="checkbox"/> blueberries	<input type="checkbox"/> plums	
<input type="checkbox"/> cantaloupes	<input type="checkbox"/> strawberries	
<input type="checkbox"/> figs	<input type="checkbox"/> watermelons	
<input type="checkbox"/> grapes		

Which of the following products do you sell? (Please check below)

Eggs, list types (chicken, duck, etc.) below	Baked goods, list below	Sauces, Jams, Jellies, list below	Flowers/Herbs, list below	Meats, list below

What best describes your operation? (Please check below)

- ☐ Conventionally Grown
☐ Pesticide-Free and Chemical-Free
☐ Certified Organically Grown (Attach Certificate)
☐ Certified Good Agricultural Practices-GAP (Attach Certificate)
☐ Certified Naturally Grown (Attach Certificate)
☐ Other, Describe below:
☐ Integrated Pest Management, I don't want to use anything that would harm anyone or the environment

Check below, if applicable:

- ☐ Yes, I am interested in attending a Becoming a Certified Small Woman and Minority (SWAM) certification training
☐ Yes, I am interested in attending a Becoming USDA SNAP EBT Vendor

Which of these cropping practices are included in your operation? (Please check below)

Integrated Pest Management	Pesticide Free	Attracting Beneficial Insects	Managed Grazing
Nutrient Management	Chemical	Soil Fertility	Non-GMO feeds
Compost Application	Free	Crop Rotation	Drip Irrigation
Manure Application	Non-GMO	seed	Humane raised
		Cover Cropping	Other, list below

In what other market(s) do you already participate? (Please check below)

- ☐ Farmers Markets, list names: _____
☐ Restaurants, list names: _____
☐ Roadside Stand
☐ Community Supported Agriculture
☐ Pick Your Own
☐ Other, Describe below: _____

Do you have product liability insurance?

☐ Yes, Company Name

☐ No

I plan to partner with the following individual farmers to bring products to this market:

Partner Farmer (Name, Address, Phone)	Types of Products I will bring from this farm

Additional Information/Comments:

FORM MUST BE COMPLETE AND SIGNED: Completing an application does not constitute a guarantee of acceptance.

Signature of Farmer Date Signed Name (please print)

(Your information is Confidential. Keep Copy of your Submitted Application)

For any questions or concerns, please contact:

Dr. Theresa J. Nartea, State Program Leader (Food)
 Associate Professor, Extension Specialist-Marketing & Agribusiness
 Virginia State University, Virginia Cooperative Extension
 Email: tnartea@vsu.edu Phone: 804-524-5491

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APPENDIX C. SAMPLE 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 is 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.

NUTURE

- ☐ We are assessing vendor education needs and wants and help connect them to opportunities for growth and development.

APPENDIX D. SAMPLE VISITOR SURVEY

1. What is your connection to [college or university name]?
 - Student
 - University faculty
 - University staff
 - Campus visitor
 - Community member
 - Other (please specify)
2. What brought you to the market today? Please check all that apply.
 - Shopping for fruits and vegetables
 - Shopping for eggs, meat, or dairy goods
 - Shopping for value-added or prepared foods
 - Shopping for non-food items
 - Connecting with friends/community
 - Meetings local farmers and growers
 - Participating in market programming (e.g. kids' activities, yoga, music, etc.)
 - Using SNAP or other nutrition assistance benefits
 - Learning more about local food and local producers
 - Learning more about university and extension agriculture programs
 - Other (please specify)
3. Have you purchased, or do you plan to purchase, any items at today's market?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
4. Which item(s) have you purchased (or are you most likely to purchase) today? Please check all that apply.
 - Fresh fruits or vegetables
 - Eggs/dairy/meat
 - Prepared foods
 - Value-added items (e.g. honey, jam, etc.)
 - Coffee / other drinks
 - Non-food items / artisan goods
 - None
 - Other (please specify)
5. Do you have access to refrigeration, food storage, and/or cooking equipment? Please check all that apply.
 - Refrigeration
 - Food storage (non-refrigerated, dry goods)
 - Stove/oven
 - Cooking equipment (pots, pans, cooking tools and utensils)
 - Other (please specify)

6. How did you find out about the market today?

- Word of mouth
- Student email list
- University social media
- University/school/department website
- Signs, posters, or banner
- Came upon it by chance / walking by
- Other (please specify)

7. How did you get to the market today?

- Walk
- Bike
- Public transportation
- Car
- Carpool or rideshare
- Other (please specify)

8. How likely are you to attend another farmers market event on [college or university name] campus?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Neither likely nor unlike
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely