

ENERGIZE
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NEIGHBORHOODS



CITY *of* BOISE
GUIDE TO STARTING A
FARMERS MARKET



STARTING A FARMERS MARKET



GETTING STARTED

VISION. Most farmers markets begin with a few visionary and committed individuals with a shared vision. When launching a farmers market, you should have distinct goals that you can clearly communicate. What is your vision for the market? Is it to support local growers, community health, food security, economic development or any combination of the above?

EVALUATING NEED. To be successful, a farmers market must have the interest and support of the community. You should be able to clearly articulate answers to questions like, “Is there a need for a farmers market in your area? Why do you want to have a farmers market?” You should also evaluate if there is a sufficient farmer and customer base in your community to support a market.

MAKING CONTACTS. It is a good idea to visit other markets and talk to market managers/vendors to learn what has and hasn’t worked for them. As you start measuring support for a farmers market, be sure to contact residents as well as community groups and organizations. Organizations can help you identify and connect with potential growers/vendors. Contacts may include:

- Agricultural organizations such as Idaho State Dept. of Agriculture, Idaho Farmers Market Association, health district, universities, bureaus, garden clubs, nonprofit farm organizations, etc.
- Consumer/civic/religious organizations such as food banks, nutrition programs, church groups/foundations, health care organizations, small business associations, etc.

GROWERS/VENDORS. Locating farmers and gardeners can be the most difficult part of establishing a farmers market. The best candidates are usually small-scale farmers and large-scale gardeners. It is important to find out which farmers are interested, what crops they grow and when the crops will be ready for market. If you want specialty processed foods and crafters at your market, begin contacting those sellers to gauge interest. Face-to-face contact is best, but you may have to rely partly on well-placed posters, radio announcements and word of mouth.

- **Diversify:** Don’t choose vendors that all sell the same thing. A well-rounded farmers market offering a variety of produce, crafts and baked goods will appeal to a wide range of people. This is especially important if starting small.
- **Finding Vendors:**
 - Hold a public meeting and place an ad in the local paper asking interested sponsors, growers and vendors to contact you.
 - If your market includes artisans, go to craft fairs to seek out potential vendors.

PRELIMINARY MEETINGS. Hold at least three well-organized meetings (with agendas) with interested community members, potential growers/vendors and government officials. It may take a significant amount of work to organize these meetings, but this is often the turning point that marks the official formation of a market. Properly facilitated meetings allow plenty of time for discussion, help gauge the group’s level of buy-in, and identify potential committee leaders.

SOURCES

This ‘How to’ for starting a farmers market largely pulls information from the following sources:

- **‘Establishing A Farmers Market In Idaho,’** a publication by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), with input and consultation provided by the Idaho Farmers Market Association (IFMA) and University of Idaho Extension. <http://www.agri.idaho.gov/AGRI/Categories/Marketing/Documents/EstablishFarmersMarket.pdf>
- **Farmers Market Toolkit Guide,** a publication by Idaho Farmers Market Association <http://www.idahofma.org/2016-market-manager-toolkit>

MANAGING THE MARKET



MEETING GOALS:

- Create a steering committee to start the planning process and ensure consistency with goals and vision of the market.
- Define the mission around the type of market you want: organic-only growers and producers, both food and craft vendors, raw produce only or prepared foods, etc.
- Establish a vision for your market and develop a planning strategy with growers to ensure produce availability for opening day.
- Presentations about license and permit requirements from the local Central District Health, Idaho Tax Commission, ISDA Farmers Market representative, and other interested parties.

MANAGEMENT

PLAN. A farmers market can be formally incorporated as a non-profit or business, managed by an outside entity as an owner, or have no official management structure. Either way, a detailed *Guiding Document* is crucial for providing clarity about the mission, vision, rules of operation, vendor/product guidelines, etc. Finding a business professional to help draft a business plan can build a successful market. Most established markets have a board of directors, formal by-laws, market rules and a paid manager (part-time for smaller markets). The board oversees development and creates the market rules, enforces bylaws, hires the market manager and manages the budget.

LOCATION. Your location should be visible, easy to get to and accessible by all ages and audiences. The market's success depends partly on how well you select your location. One common reason consumers don't shop at farmers markets is the perceived lack of convenience. Ideally, the site should be selected by a committee since there are many things to be considered, such as:

- Easy access for vendors to set up their tables
- Easy access for shoppers – plenty of parking, room for bikes, close to public transportation
- A location that provides shade over vendor tables with perishable products

RULES/OPERATIONS. Writing the market's policies and rules is one of the most important tasks. Rules are crucial to sustain a properly functioning market, to maintain integrity and to keep the peace. Vendors should be clear about who is in charge and all rules/regulations and licensing requirements. The rules, which should be written by the market's advisory board, should be easy to understand, available to all participating parties, equitably enforced, protect the market, work to the advantage of producers selling at the market and protect the market's credibility.

Be sure to address things like:

- Mission, goals and audience
- Who can sell and what can be sold
- Configuration of vendors, parking, etc.
- Stall assignments
- Dates and hours of operation
- Vendor fee structure
- Product pricing
- Required vendor performance
- Market safety
- Required paperwork
- Communication
- Contracts/application

RECORD KEEPING. Keeping accurate records is important for both the market and vendors. Records include copies of all permits, licenses, correspondence, legal paperwork, expense reports and meeting minutes. Vendor sales data is a great marketing tool and way to gauge success and make future adjustments.

OTHER AREA FARMERS MARKETS

- Boise Farmers Market - Downtown Boise, Saturdays
<http://www.theboisefarmersmarket.com/>
- Capital City Public Market - Downtown Boise, Saturdays
<https://www.capitalcitypublicmarket.com/>
- Eagle Saturday Market - Downtown Eagle, Saturdays, April - Oct. <http://www.cityofeagle.org/index.asp?SEC=9972C54C-6EE8-4127-A325-FB1625CBE7AD>
- Meridian Youth Farmers Market - Meridian City Hall Plaza, Saturdays, June - Sept. - <http://meridianyouthfarmersmarket.com/>

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

- For grant opportunities specific to farmers markets, go to the Tool Kit section of energizeourneighborhoods.org.
energize.cityofboise.org/toolkit/farmersmarket-grants/

PERMITS + REGULATIONS



BUDGETING. Knowing the market's total expenses and income over the course of the season is necessary. Vendor fees are the main source of a market's income. If established as a non-profit, it may be possible to get many products and services donated or at a discounted rate.

MARKET EVALUATION. It is a good idea for the board to evaluate the market at least once per year to review its initial goals, continuing or new vision, customer and sales numbers, and logistics.

ANNUAL REPORT. Creating a report at the end of every season will help track changes and market growth. In addition to statistics, it should include a narrative of the market – sustaining local/family farms, improving access to healthy foods, expanding entrepreneurship, building community, etc.

PERMITS, LICENSES AND REGULATIONS

REGULATIONS. Before the market begins, make sure you have all required permits and that all vendors have the necessary licenses to conduct business. Consult with city and state officials to ensure you comply with rules and regulations regarding taxes, licenses, structures, insurance and health and sanitation. Plan in advance! Don't wait until the last minute to obtain the necessary permits, certificates and licenses. Give yourself several weeks as a safety margin, and keep in mind that some will require fees, such as liability insurance.

CITY OF BOISE PERMITS.

- A **Special Events Application** is required for any event on public property. The application includes information on City of Boise permitting requirements. <https://cityclerk.cityofboise.org/special-events/>
 - Farmers Markets require review by the Citywide Special Event Permit Process. It is strongly recommended that applications be submitted 120 days prior to the event (the minimum is 45 days).

- Any event using a city park must complete the entire Special Events Application and will need additional permits from the Parks and Recreation Department:
 - Special Use Permit <https://parks.cityofboise.org/media/775089/parks-special-event-application.pdf>
 - Short-Term Concession Permit for each day
 - Park Special Event Coordinator (208) 608-7618.
- Promotional materials/signs placed along streets must be reviewed by the Planning Department, (208) 608-7100

SALES TAX REQUIREMENTS. Don't let the idea of collecting sales tax and obtaining seller permits and tax identification numbers scare you off – the process is simple! When selling to consumers or users, growers must obtain a seller's permit and report sales tax on their taxable sales. Sellers can either obtain a regular sales tax permit (also called a Sales and Use Tax permit) or a temporary sales tax permit, and should always keep a copy on-hand.

LIABILITY INSURANCE. Liability insurance can be one of the most expensive start-up costs for farmers markets. Take time to price options to get the best deal possible.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT RULES. The rules for selling food products to the public are explained in the Idaho Food Code at www.foodsafety.idaho.gov and from the Central District Health Department (CDHD). Permits, licensing and inspection requirements vary depending on what products are being sold, therefore individual vendors may have to adhere to different requirements. It is *strongly recommended* that all agricultural and food vendors and all market managers talk with the CDHD to ensure they understand all food safety rules and regulations.

General guidelines to note:

- Licensing/inspection are required for vendors selling 'Potentially Hazardous' foods, including raw animal foods, heat-treated plant/animal foods, raw seed sprouts, cut melons, garlic in oil mixtures and salsa.

ADVERTISING + OUTREACH

- General exemptions from licensing requirements: raw, uncut produce, nuts in a shell, and cottage foods. Direct sales of cottage foods to the customer do not require a food establishment permit.

Cottage foods are made in someone's home and are non-time/temperature control for safety (non-TCS) foods, which means they do not require refrigeration. This could include baked goods like breads and cakes, as well as jams/jellies and granola. Note that a farmers market may establish its own rules for safety and liability reasons, and may require that cottage foods be prepared in a commercial kitchen. Boise has several commercial kitchens. It is also advisable that vendors complete the Cottage Foods Risk Assessment Form <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Default.aspx?TabId=96>

- Additional standards exist and may also be regulated by the ISDA:
 - Product sampling
 - Processed foods
 - Cottage foods
 - Food Safety at the Market
 - Weight and Measures Regulations
 - Selling Organic Products
 - Nursery Licenses
 - Animal Feed Products
 - Commercial Fertilizers
 - Seed Licensing
 - Plant-related Quarantines
 - Soil and Plant Amendments
 - Selling Dairy
 - Selling Eggs
 - Selling Meats

INCENTIVES AND PAYMENT PROGRAMS

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(SNAP). Accepting SNAP at your farmers market is a win-win situation. The program gives retailers direct access to new customers and gives SNAP recipients access to healthy, locally-grown produce. The USDA has made it a priority to increase access to fresh produce for low-income Americans by helping farmers markets and direct marketing farmers become SNAP authorized. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/snap-and-farmers-markets>

DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS (DUFEB). This national program doubles the value of food stamp benefits spent at participating farmers markets. The Idaho Farmers Market Association is the official state partner of the DUFEB program. To learn more, visit www.IdahoFMA.org/doubleup



Photo: Abingdon Farmers Market, Flickr

ADVERTISING AND OUTREACH

GOAL. Generally, a successful farmers market begins with at least six vendors and 100 visitors at the launch. No matter what methods of publicity and promotion you use, the message must be both informative and motivational. It is important to know your target audience.

INITIAL OUTREACH. Even before promoting the date and venue, it is important to establish contact and make personal connections. Keep detailed information for all points of contact for future outreach and support. Preliminary outreach should include:

- **Newspapers:** Find out who reports on community agriculture events
- **Radio:** Try to get free announcements or “community interest” bulletins
- **TV:** Find contacts for events and opening day
- **Officials:** Meet them in person and keep them in the loop throughout the planning process – they are a great resource and champion for your cause

LOGO. An attractive logo helps build market recognition and consumer awareness. The Idaho Commission on the Arts has trained arts leaders in consulting and workshop techniques. There may be an artist next door to help your farmers market develop a unique logo! For more information, call the Idaho Commission on the Arts’ Community Development Director at (800) 278-3863 or (208) 334-2119.

SPONSORSHIP. Talk to local corporations, nonprofit organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and your growers and vendors to see what they can offer to help pay for management and promotion of the market. Make a contact list of entities/individuals to reach out to, and have literature to give them. Determine the budget required to find vendors and handle setup of the event for each day it runs, and include promotional expenses.

OUTREACH + INCENTIVES



PROMOTE

- **Idaho Farmers Market Guide:** Contact the Idaho State Department of Agriculture at (208) 332-8530 to request your market be included in this guide.
- **Press Releases:** Free coverage! If you are providing a service other than simply promoting your own interests, you will have a much better chance of getting free media coverage. For example, offer to write a weekly article about new products that are available and include a recipe. Consider writing a weekly or monthly article for the business section featuring one of your vendors.
- **Public Service Announcement (PSA):** free radio and TV spots for community activities.
- **Circulars/Flyers/Posters:** Keep it simple and direct since clutter detracts from the main point. Hang signs around streets, stores and businesses near the market, and if possible, leave them up during the entire market season to attract the community. Ask area businesses to hand out flyers since they will likely benefit from the added traffic the market generates. Since these materials cost money, volunteer labor and donations are very helpful. Another way to save costs is through holding a design contest within the community and schools.
- **Email Lists:** It is important to collect emails from contacts, customers, organizations, media, community partners, etc. to send initial and periodic emails, including information about available products and upcoming events.
- **Website and Social Media:** This should be a high priority. If no one on your planning team has the skills or willingness to develop and maintain a market website, look to community partners who will let you post market information on their existing site. Social media sites like Twitter and Facebook are free and easy to create and update. Ask vendors to share information through their social media sites and networks.
- **Commercial Advertising:** Classified and commercial display ads are more expensive than other mediums, but benefits can be long-lasting. This is often most beneficial during the first year of the market.
- **Theme Events and Festivals:** Creating a fun and attractive atmosphere can increase sales and customer count.

NUTRITION PROGRAMS AND INCENTIVES

SNAP INFORMATION FOR FARMERS MARKETS.

- FAQs <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/ SNAP-Farmers-Market-FAQs.pdf>
- USDA helps farmers markets and direct marketing farmers become SNAP authorized
 - Retailer Training Information <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers-store-training-information>
 - SNAP and Farmers Markets <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/snap-and-farmers-markets>
 - Bonus Incentives to Attract SNAP Customers <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/bonus-incentives>
- The Idaho Farmers Market Association provides one-on-one technical assistance to help markets complete the steps to become authorized. Video tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDwxolod6pY>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAMS (NAFMNP).

Cultivates opportunities for consumers to buy fresh produce from local growers. <http://www.nafmnp.org/>

MARKETLINK.

MarketLink is a NAFMNP program that assists farmers and markets with accepting SNAP and electronic payments. <http://marketlink.org/>

RESOURCES

INFORMATION/RESOURCES

IDAHO STATE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE (ISDA).

ISDA consists of several divisions that can be beneficial for farmers markets, including marketing, organics, weights and measures, plants, and more. ISDA can help make Idaho's farmers markets successful. They can assist vendors and markets with marketing, organic certification, licenses and permits and more.

- **Establishing a Farmers Market in Idaho**
<http://www.agri.idaho.gov/AGRI/Categories/Marketing/Documents/EstablishFarmersMarket.pdf>
- **Local Food Directories** (farmers markets, on-farm markets, food hugs, etc.) <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-directories>

IDAHO DEPT. OF HEALTH AND WELFARE (IDHW).

Provides assistance around the rules, regulations and permits for selling food products to the public.

- **Guidelines on food protection, food safety manual, food code**
<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/FoodProtection/English/tabid/769/Default.aspx>
- **Farmers Market Informational Brochure**
<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/o/Health/FoodProtection/Farmers%20Market%20Guide.pdf>

IDAHO FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION (IFMA).

Association created to bring together resources and expertise from around the state to help Idaho's farmers markets thrive. Their mission is to support and promote the sustainability of farmers markets through education, outreach and advocacy efforts that increase accessibility to local food systems for all Idahoans. Contact them for assistance in addressing market sustainability, educating the public about benefits of local food, helping markets reach new customer bases, providing support/assistance to markets, or increasing access to nutritious foods for low-income families.

- **Information, manuals, and funding sources**
<http://www.idahofma.org/for-market-managers>
- **Farmers Market Toolkit Guide**
<http://www.idahofma.org/2016-market-manager-toolkit>
- **Toolkit Brochure**
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54ebb77ce4b05bee3a09f904/t/58f93732d2b85759c7de9d1f/1492727609191/IFMA_UI_Toolkit_2016+%281%29.pdf
- **Agency and Organization Contacts**
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54ebb77ce4b05bee3a09f904/t/57505252859fd0bb8a9babcd/1464881746386/IFMA+Regulatory+Resources+at+a+Glance.pdf>



FARMERS MARKET COALITION. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers markets across the United States so they can serve as community assets while providing real income opportunities for farmers.

<https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/joinus/>

BOISE FARMERS MARKET.

<http://www.theboisefarmersmarket.com/>

- **Guiding Document**
<http://www.theboisefarmersmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BFM-Guidelines-2017.pdf>

FARMERS MARKET TIPS AND STEPS

- **"7 Steps to Start Your Own Farmers Market"**
<http://www.organicauthority.com/organic-gardening/start-your-own-farmers-market.html>
- **"How to Start a Farmers Market"**
<https://bizfluent.com/how-2078822-start-farmers-market.html>

CONTACT INFORMATION



CONTACT DETAILS

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE (IDHW)

Food Protection Program
450 W. State Street
Boise, ID 83702

Tel: (208) 334-5938

Fax: (208) 332-7307

www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov

CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

707 N. Armstrong Place
Boise, ID 83704

Tel: (208) 327-7499

Fax: (208) 327-8553

www.cdhd.idaho.gov

IDAHO STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (ISDA)

Tel: (208) 332-8500

Email: info@agri.idaho.gov

Website: www.agri.idaho.gov

IDAHO STATE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

2270 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, ID 83712

Tel: (208) 332-8530

Email: marketing@agri.idaho.gov

IDAHO FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION (IFMA)

963 S. Orchard Street, Suite H
Boise, ID 83705

Tel: (208) 639-0030

Email: info@IdahoFMA.org

Website: www.IdahoFMA.org

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO EXTENSION

Provides research-based education and information to help people, businesses and communities solve problems and develop skills. They focus on topics such as small and large scale sustainable agriculture, community development, horticulture, health and nutrition, food safety, and financial management.

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