



Appalachian Grown Farmers Market Toolkit



PART 1

Farmers Market Toolkit

Marketing, Promotion, and Outreach

The Appalachian Grown Farmers Market Toolkit is a collection of strategies, resources, and best practices for farmers markets, compiled by ASAP based on the experience and expertise of individual markets and managers. This section, focusing on marketing, promotion, and outreach, is the first part of what will eventually be a comprehensive resource for farmers market management. It is intended as a guide to help market managers increase sales to existing customers, improve customer retention, and expand the customer base.



May 2021

Written and compiled by ASAP staff. For more resources visit asapconnections.org.

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We Need More Marketing!

One of the most common comments from markets with disappointing customer attendance and vendor sales is, “We need to do more marketing!” Opinions will vary on what this means. It’s challenging to invest limited time and resources without having a sense of what will make the greatest difference. Marketing is not easy. It’s helpful to dive a little deeper, so that we can be more deliberate about what steps to take and what decisions to make.

Define Your Goals

Your efforts, from social media posts to special events, need to be supportive of one or more of the three targets:

- Increase sales to existing customers.
- Improve customer retention.
- Expand the customer base.

Will your post reach and attract new customers? What incentives can be offered to encourage customers to shop more often? Are there practical ways to invite shoppers to increase their weekly market purchases? Having these goals in mind will help guide your marketing, promotion, and outreach strategies.

Messaging

Sharing information about your market is necessary, but it’s not sufficient to change an individual’s food buying routine. What does this mean? We make decisions about our shopping routine based on what is appealing, comfortable, practical, convenient, affordable, etc. What stores are close by? What’s on our grocery list? What are our food preferences?. Marketing, promotion, and outreach to potential market customers must include motivating calls to action that will inspire a change in routine and bring non-shoppers to your market.

Frame your message to illustrate the benefits of your market. Focus on what the market and its vendors will provide to potential customers. Strive to reframe features, vendors, and products as benefit statements or bullet points, keeping the messaging clear and concise.

Word-of-Mouth

The most effective tool for attracting new customers is word-of-mouth and its digital counterpart, word-of-mouse. How is this harnessed? Simply put, you need to give folks something to talk (or post) about. This starts with creating a market that is as appealing as possible. Nothing is more conducive to customers sharing with others than your market’s varied, abundant, and diverse foods and products. The more appealing the vendor and product mix, the more likely customers will be to spread the word. Marketing, promotion, and outreach efforts need to incorporate elements that will generate word-of-mouth and word-of-mouse engagement.



Market Appeal

The foundation of a thriving market, and the starting point for success, begins with the basics: the quality, variety, and abundance offered by vendors who are committed to providing exceptional service. Efforts at marketing, promotion, outreach, etc., will have limited effect without a group of outstanding vendors with appealing products.

Product Mix Management

Every market manager struggles with finding the best mix of products, farms, and vendors. Three bakers? How many egg farmers? How much produce is too much? Not enough? There is no secret formula for the perfect product mix that will allow vendors to prosper while maximizing the overall market appeal for customers. The guiding principle of effective product mix management is to always ask the question, “What is in the best interest of the market?”

Rigid product rules can be counterproductive to achieving their main purpose—successful vendor sales and broad customer appeal. It’s helpful to frame product guidelines in terms of preferences or “priority given” statements. Decisions are unavoidably subjective. Markets must rely on a balancing of vendor input, customer feedback, and the informed judgement of an experienced market manager.

Effective product mix management involves four essential elements: **variety, abundance, selection, and diversity.**

Variety and abundance are most readily apparent. A vibrant market includes an abundance of a wide variety of foods and products on display. Efforts to include as many different vendors and product combinations as possible increases the likelihood of shoppers finding items of interest. And a market must strive to ensure shoppable inventory levels from open to close, especially for staples like greens, eggs, breads, etc.

Selection is one of the more challenging aspects of product mix to keep in balance. Customers prefer to be able to shop around and choose from among at least a few options, especially for those items that have the greatest appeal. It’s best to have more than one farm selling tomatoes, options for finding greens, and a couple or more choices for cheeses.

Of the four foundations of product mix management, product **diversity** may be the most difficult to achieve. In this context diversity refers to having a mix of products that appeals to as many different customer preferences as possible. This includes price point, purchase options (e.g. pre-packaged, by weight, bulk, etc.), growing practices, dietary choices, culturally specific or ethnic ingredients, and more.

Managing product and vendor mix for your market is an ongoing process. The best outcomes balance and re-balance the mix with the best interest of the market always in mind.



Vendor Best Practices

Vendorship, the skills and methods used in selling or promoting products at market, is at the heart of customer engagement and market appeal. Educate your vendors on the importance of quality vendorship to the overall success of the market. Get them to commit to implementing best practices as a condition of participation.

ASAP has developed a [Sell More!](#) workshop that captures many of the best practices for vending success. This snapshot illustration on the right captures the content of the workshop—you can share it with your vendors.

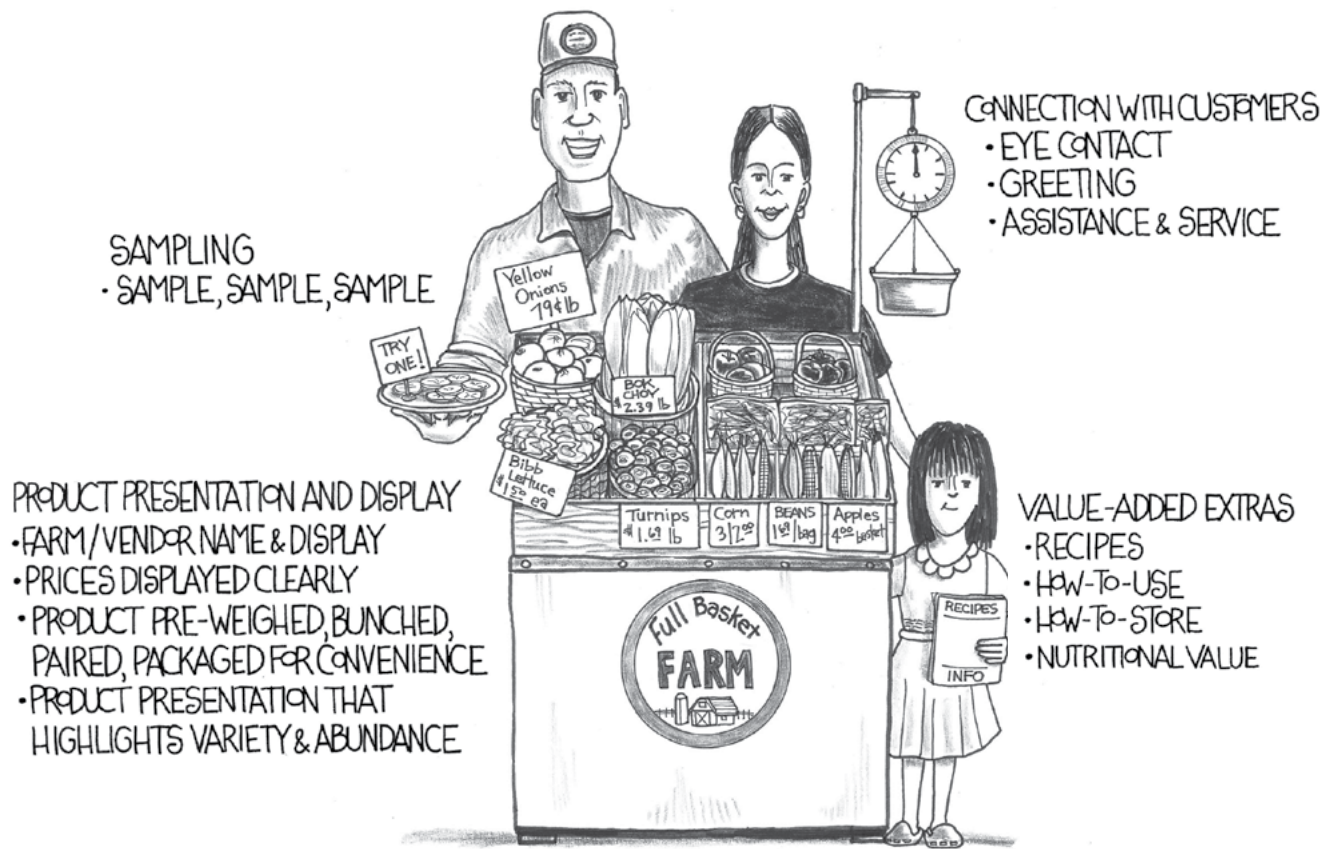
Market Features

Every market strives to create a pleasant, accessible environment for shoppers and visitors. Comfort and convenience contribute to a positive shopping experience. The following are typical features of farmers markets that add to your market's appeal.

- Market information booth
- Comfort elements, such as restrooms, seating, and shade
- Ease of access, including location, parking, site plan for flow, etc.
- Vendor map or guide
- Consistent and clear product pricing
- Convenient payment options, such as credit, debit, and benefit-support transactions (e.g., SNAP)
- Multilingual signage inclusive of community members
- Cooking demos
- Children's activities
- Music



WHAT SELLS



SAMPLING
 • SAMPLE, SAMPLE, SAMPLE

CONNECTION WITH CUSTOMERS
 • EYE CONTACT
 • GREETING
 • ASSISTANCE & SERVICE

PRODUCT PRESENTATION AND DISPLAY
 • FARM/VENDOR NAME & DISPLAY
 • PRICES DISPLAYED CLEARLY
 • PRODUCT PRE-WEIGHED, BUNCHED, PAIRED, PACKAGED FOR CONVENIENCE
 • PRODUCT PRESENTATION THAT HIGHLIGHTS VARIETY & ABUNDANCE

VALUE-ADDED EXTRAS
 • RECIPES
 • HOW-TO-USE
 • HOW-TO-STORE
 • NUTRITIONAL VALUE

WHAT SELLS MORE



Illustrations by David Cohen

Marketing

Many marketing efforts begin (and sometimes end) with print advertising—signage, rack cards, direct mail postcards, print or media ads, etc. Again, there are three targets to keep in mind: increased sales to existing customers, improved customer retention, and an expanded customer base. Traditional marketing is most often focused on attracting new customers and building the customer base. While not a stand-alone strategy, paid and print advertising is a starting point for attracting new customers.

Rack Cards

A basic market rack card serves multiple purposes and can be adapted for use in advertising, web page information, posts, etc. This card provides customers with an informational takeaway that they can share with others. The standard card size for display is 4" x 9". Markets planning to do direct mailings could consider replacing the rack card with a postcard design.

What do you include in your market rack card?

- Show images of the market, particularly a mix of displayed products. Convey the most inviting visuals for potential customers.
- Avoid including details that will change, like specific opening and closing dates each year. This will help you avoid annual reprinting.
- Provide a clear map of the market's location, including details for access and parking.
- Include contact information that will not likely change over time.
- Highlight benefits to the consumer, especially features that demonstrate accessibility and convenience (e.g., bus routes, SNAP accepted).
- Acknowledge market supporters and sponsors. The card can also help demonstrate value to potential sponsors.

ASHEVILLE CITY MARKET
Local Food Local Farmers

NEW CONVENIENT DOWNTOWN LOCATION!
North Market St.
April–December

The Masonic Temple
January–March
See map on back

NEW MARKET ST. LOCATION!

We're in ART's **FARE FREE ZONE** for downtown residents. Served by routes N1, N2, E1, E2, and T70
★ = bus stop

FRUITS • VEGETABLES • BREADS • PRESERVES
MEATS • EGGS • CHEESES • PASTRIES • COFFEE

HERBS • PLANTS • FLOWERS • CHEF DEMOS
CRAFTS • KID ACTIVITIES • LIVE MUSIC • FUN

A weekly farm-fresh adventure!

SATURDAY MORNINGS YEAR ROUND
Jan–March: 10am–Noon
April–Oct: 8am–Noon
Nov–Dec: 9am–Noon

Asa Local Food, Social Enterprise, Healthy Comm.
ashville For more info: mike@asa

Photography

Your farmers market is rich with opportunities for amazing and appealing images. Have a photography plan in place so that you capture these images for ads, print materials, posts, e-newsletters, etc.

Photo tips:

- Be intentional. Create a shot list of images that tell the story of the market. Set aside time to capture these targeted images.
- Balance abundance and detail. Capture the big picture, then zoom in for a close-up.
- Take lots of photos. Change your position, angle, and orientation.
- See the whole frame. Take care to avoid distracting elements.
- Stay camera ready. Photo opportunities often come when you least expect them.

[ASAP's Promotional Photography for Markets Workshop](#) provides an hour's worth of helpful tips and guidance that will help transition your image library from a collection of snapshots to a useful archive of striking photographs.





Paid Advertising

All markets have limited funding to allocate for paid advertising. The challenge is to determine which options, if any, are cost effective.

Advertising in local print publications can be an affordable option, especially if discounts are available for community groups and nonprofits. Invite individual market vendors to contribute to covering costs in exchange for a featured spot in the ad design. Public radio spots can also be customized to meet a limited budget.

Sponsorship packages should include an option to fund paid advertising in exchange for being mentioned in the ad(s). Engage customers as “friend of the market” ad sponsors (you can post a dot survey to solicit interest). Print ads and radio spots provide an opportunity to acknowledge and say thanks to supportive shoppers.

The popularity and effectiveness of various online advertising options is ever changing. It’s useful to engage individuals with expertise and up-to-date information when considering investing in online media marketing.

Earned Media Coverage

What aspects of a market are most likely to attract media coverage? To sort out what will be considered newsworthy you must place yourself in the position of the listener or reader.

Helpful elements include:

- Target human interest. Share a farmer, vendor, or customer story; show children, families, or animals; convey heartfelt engagement.
- Be calendar relevant. Tie in to seasonal (e.g., spring opening) or holiday-related shopping and experiences.
- Highlight the exceptional. Feature unusual, one-of-a-kind products, one-time events or vendors, etc.
- Extend community engagement. Promote hosted guests, visiting groups, or co-branded activities and events.

To communicate your news or story with media contacts, write a **press release**. A press release is a short written piece that communicates information about an event, circumstance, or happening related to your market. Journalists may use the press release as-is to write a short article, or they may follow up with you to get more details and write a longer piece. This can greatly expand the reach of your news and gain new interest in your market.

The press release template on the next page offers specific guidance on writing a press release. Generally speaking, you want to give the most relevant details about your news as concisely as possible. In addition to providing the essentials (WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and HOW) there are two elements that make your press release easy for your media contacts to use: photos and quotes. There’s a lot going on in the world for reporters to choose from. Providing photos and quotes give your news an advantage over other releases.

Send your press release directly to local newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, and bloggers. The websites of most news organizations will have contact information for their editors or reporters. Because these people often receive dozens of press releases on a daily basis, it’s important to write a concise, eye-catching headline for your press release.

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Market Name
Market Address
Market Phone Number
Market website (hyperlink)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MEDIA CONTACT: Your name, phone number, [email \(hyperlink\)](#)

Headline: Feature Organization Name and News

Subhead: Include additional details or explanation if needed. Optional.

YOUR CITY, STATE (Date)—[Lede paragraph.] The first paragraph of a press release, known as the lede, should quickly answer the big questions about your news or event. By the end of the lede, your reader should know the **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and HOW**. Keep this paragraph short, roughly 30–40 words.

[Second paragraph.] Provide specific details and give context about why it should be important to your audience. Again, **keep your phrasing as concise as possible**.

[Third paragraph/quote.] Include a quote from market leadership, a vendor, or a customer/community member impacted by the news. **Journalists need quotes to turn a press release into a story**, so include one or more throughout the press release.

[Fourth and following paragraphs.] The rest of the press release can provide additional context. **Keep your total word count to 300–400 words if possible**.

*[Photo availability.] Indicate if you have photographs to illustrate the activity. If you do, **provide the contact information for obtaining those photos**.*

ABOUT [INSERT MARKET NAME]

Include a **short (35–50 words)** description of your market or organization. This might include your mission statement, if you have one. For more information, visit [your website].

###

End all press releases with three hash marks (###) to follow journalistic convention.

Direct Mail

How effective is a promotional postcard received by mail? Despite the flood of digital messaging, a niche remains for mailbox marketing. As with other marketing, the key is reaching your potential customers with a message that motivates.

One advantage of direct mail is the opportunity to customize your postcard content and community distribution based on targeted outreach demographics. Most print businesses provide direct mail support. Explore affordable options, such as Every Door Direct Mail distribution versus renting specific mailing lists, for nearby target communities.

An important variable to keep in mind when considering direct mail is how best to manage “effective frequency.” This is how many times a promotional message must be seen or heard before someone takes action. There are lots of assertions circulating in the marketing world over the minimum “magic number” of contacts needed. But how well the message appeals to a non-shopper’s needs, wants, or preferences is more important than the frequency of the ad, post, etc.

Formulating a direct mail campaign needs to balance the breadth of outreach (how many will receive a postcard) versus the depth of the outreach (how many times each targeted non-shopper gets a nudge). If funding is available for multiple mailings, a helpful approach would include some form of redemption incentive to track the response rates and test for the most effective distribution.

Celebrate Appalachian Grown Farmers Market Month

**Shop Safe
Support Local Farms
Save \$**

Visit a participating market near you.

SATURDAY ASAP Farmers Market 9 a.m.–noon A-B Tech Asheville campus	TUESDAY Historic Marion Tailgate Market 3–6 p.m. downtown Marion
Haywood’s Historic Farmers Market 9 a.m.–noon HART Theater parking lot, Waynesville	WEDNESDAY Weaverville Tailgate Market 2:30–6 p.m. Reems Creek Nursery
Mills River Farm Market 8 a.m.–noon 5046 Boylston Hwy #1	THURSDAY Enka-Candler Tailgate Market 3:30–6:30 p.m. A-B Tech Enka campus
Transylvania Farmers’ Market 9 a.m.–noon downtown Brevard	

GOOD AND CHEAP
LEANNE BROWN

Stop by the market tent to enter a free drawing in the month of August to win a Good & Cheap cookbook or other market prizes.

Find markets and farms throughout the region at appalachiangrown.org.

Social Media

Social media—the collective term for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, etc.—can have a huge impact on the success of your market. This where your word-of-mouth comes into play. People use social media to share and discuss their daily lives, including their buying habits, with friends and family. Above and beyond promoting and sharing information about your market, your goal on social media should be to build relationships and community. Interact with your followers however possible, such as liking and responding to comments and resharing what customers post about the market.

Many social media professionals recommend the 80-20 rule when posting. Roughly 80 percent of your content should entertain or educate your customers, while only 20 percent or so should directly market your business. Those lines are certainly blurry, but applied to a farmers market, that 80 percent could include recipes for seasonal produce, cooking demos, vendor stories, and beautiful photos. Customers seeking out local food are looking for authenticity, community, and the stories behind where their food comes from. Use a social media calendar to help balance your promotional and informational content. This can be as simple as a jotted list each week or Google calendar. A weekly farmers market might find a good balance with posting two to three times a week.

While social media is free, it can eat up a lot of hours, especially for limited market staff. Think of it as a marathon, not a sprint: the benefits accumulate over time as you build a base of followers.

If you don't yet have social media accounts set up for your market, ASAP's [Social Media Guide for Farms](#) and related [webinar series](#) can help you get started. Facebook and Instagram tend to be the best fit for farmers markets, as they have a wide audience and emphasize photography and sharing. If you have the skills or time to create appealing videos, you might consider using TikTok and YouTube. Twitter is made up of short posts, known as tweets. Because the average lifespan (time seen after posting) of a tweet is only 14 minutes, Twitter is most suited to businesses that post multiple times throughout the day.



Email Marketing

It's important to collect contact information, particularly email addresses, from market shoppers. Building a list lets you maintain regular contact with the customers you already have, delivering a prompt to visit the market directly into their inbox each week or month. Email marketing is a highly effective strategy for increasing sales from current customers or prospects.

Services such as MailChimp, MyNewsletterBuilder, and Constant Contact help you build and maintain email lists and give you design tools for creating eye-catching e-newsletters. The rule of thumb with email marketing is to make sure you are offering something new each time you send out a newsletter. For some businesses, that could mean a frequency of just once a month. But for a market with a changing vendor roster or with new seasonal products coming in, sending a weekly newsletter is appropriate. You can also use an e-newsletter to feature vendors and products, announce special offers, or alert shoppers to changes in hours or location.

Customers need a compelling reason to sign up for newsletters. Make it easy to join your mailing list with a prominently displayed signup sheet at the market information table and links to signup forms on your website and social media. Offer insider news, special access, or coupons to subscribers. Holding a drawing or other contest can entice people to sign up for a mailing list. But make sure that your subscribers have opted into receiving your communications and that you provide an easy way to unsubscribe.

Promotions and Engagement Activities

Promotional activities are designed to engage customers at your market, such as special events, festivals, or concerts. While these efforts are focused on current shoppers, they are also a tool for reaching new customers. Social media can be used as a virtual promotional activity to extend the market experience and engage customers in their daily routines.

Vendor Involved Promotions (VIP): Promote the Products, Promote the Vendors

The most important resource for engaging shoppers is their relationship with farmers and vendors. Markets don't make sales. Vendors do. Markets can highlight products and vendors through taste tests, food festivals, cooking demonstrations, featured coverage, raffles, giveaways, etc. But to increase basket size, motivate more frequent visits, and keep customers happy, you must involve vendors in promotions. Whenever planning a market activity, ask, "How can I involve vendors?"

An example of this is an annual product coupon drawing. Vendors decide how best to frame their coupon offer (e.g., 10 percent off, free add-on with minimum purchase, discounts, buy-one-get-one, etc.) and the number of coupons to be honored. The market prints off coupon sheets, cuts and folds each coupon, and places them all in a drawing box (as part of a festive and fun display) for a month-long promotion. Remember to include an expiration date in the coupon design. Market members, or any customer who signs up (i.e., provides email), gets to pull two coupons and keeps their favorite one. If someone is clearly disappointed with the coupons drawn, allowing an "extra" pick helps keep things positive.

As a vendor-involved promotion (VIP) it's important to encourage participation by as many vendors as possible. Every vendor should be able to frame a coupon bonus that ensures both a benefit to the customer and profitable transaction for the vendor. In addition to providing goodwill, coupons offer vendors a chance to connect with new customers.

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



EAT YOUR GREENS!
10% OFF GREENS
(salad, lettuce, kale, chard, collards)
with \$10 purchase
while supplies last

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



Fresh Pasta Company
FREE TOMATO BASIL SAUCE
or any **BUTTER** (\$4 value)
with \$30 purchase
first 30 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



FREE
BREAKFAST SAUSAGE
with \$10 purchase
first 60 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



FREE POUND of
CUCUMBERS or **SQUASH**
with \$10 purchase
first 30 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



10% OFF PURCHASE
OF \$20 OR MORE
first 25 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



FREE
BREAKFAST SAUSAGE
with \$10 purchase
first 60 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



20% OFF PURCHASE
first 20 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



\$1 OFF small or
\$2 OFF large
QUICHE OR TART
first 25 customers

City Market Shopper Member

REWARDS

GOOD THROUGH JULY 2015



FREE
BREAKFAST SAUSAGE
with \$10 purchase
first 60 customers

Welcome to the Market: First-time Shopper Appreciation

You may experiment with a variety of initiatives to welcome new market shoppers. This typically includes providing useful market information, shopping tips, giveaways, and some form of incentive for a return visit. While a market tour for first-time visitors would be ideal, this requires advanced scheduling and staffing. (See more tips for tours in the Outreach section on page 21.) Developing a self-guided orientation packet to have on hand is more manageable. What to include?

- Market tote bag giveaway
- Starter market tokens or vendor coupon(s)
- One-page shopping guide with tips and frequently asked questions (see example on the following page)
- Market map (or rack card if available)
- Redeemable return visit voucher
- Bring-a-friend messaging

What else helps first-time shoppers feel more valued, welcomed, and comfortable? The market booth is a busy place, but your market's first impression must include a friendly face and helpful hand. First-time shoppers are a golden opportunity to build your customer base.

Loyalty Programs and Frequent Shopper Rewards

Market membership programs offer regular customers a sense of special status and provide benefits that contribute to market loyalty.

Member engagement is useful to include as a feature of your e-newsletter and social media content. Keep it simple. Anyone can become (or is automatically) a market member.



Increasing the frequency of visits has a dramatic impact on vendor sales at market. Distribution of frequent shopper cards will both reward steady customers (good for customer retention) and motivate occasional shoppers to become regulars.



Vary the incentive depending on what is most affordable, practical, and timely for your market. Keep in mind the value of vendor-provided products as rewards (will you reimburse vendors for products or are you asking them to contribute for free?). Include a time frame for redemption (e.g., a season or specific date). You may want to limit offers (e.g., to the first 50 customers or while supplies last).

ASAP FARMERS MARKET

A-B Tech campus
340 Victoria Rd.
Asheville, NC

Saturdays
9 a.m. – 12 noon

Handicapped parking is available and there is a bus stop on the S4 route adjacent.



VISITING THE FARMERS MARKET

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FARMERS MARKET VISIT:

- Make a loop. Walking around the market lets you see what's available and plan what you want to purchase.
- Talk to farmers. You can ask them what to do with an unfamiliar vegetable, how to store fresh produce to make it last the longest, or what the farm's growing practices are.
- Bring a friend. Meet up at the market to plan a fresh meal together.

WHAT WILL I FIND AT MARKET EACH WEEK?

Depending on the season, you'll find 20 to 50 vendors, including farmers and artisans, selling seasonal produce, meat, seafood, eggs, cheese, bread, baked goods, to-go foods and beverages, crafts, and more. Check ASAP's weekly Fresh at Farmers Markets report online at asapconnections.org or subscribe to the weekly newsletter to find out what's in season. You can also follow @ashevillescitymarket, @asapconnections, and individual farmers on social media for sneak peeks of the harvest.

HOW DOES THE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM WORK?

Take your prescription to the market information booth. Exchange your (filled out) survey question for a \$10 coupon, which can be spent like cash with any market vendor.

HOW DO I FIND THE MARKET INFORMATION BOOTH?

The information booth is located in the middle of the market under a blue tent. You can pick up seasonal recipes or other free resources here.

WHAT OTHER FORMS OF PAYMENT CAN I USE?

Vendors accept cash, debit, or credit. You can also use a SNAP/EBT card to purchase tokens at the market information booth, which can be spent with individual vendors. SNAP dollars are doubled at the ASAP Farmers Market.

DO I NEED TO BRING MY OWN BAG?

Yes. It's easiest to carry your purchases with a reusable tote bag. Most vendors will also have plastic produce bags available.

DO ALL THE FARMERS GROW THE FOOD THEMSELVES?

ASAP Farmers Market is a producer-only market, which means that all farm vendors grow or raise the products they are selling themselves. For non-farm vendors (such as prepared food, seafood, coffee), preference is given to products and foods prepared or processed locally or made with locally sourced ingredients.

ASAP | 306 West Haywood St. | Asheville, NC 28801 | 828-236-1282 | www.asapconnections.org

For more information about the Farm Fresh Prescription program, contact ghill@asapconnections.org.
Funded in part by a grant from the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina.

Customer Dot Surveys and Feedback Requests

Apart from gathering shopper input, preferences, etc., surveys are a valuable form of customer engagement and a best practice for market promotion.

EVERYONE loves a dot survey. Dot surveys are simple to set up with customized question and response categories. How did you hear about the market? How far did you travel to market today? How often do you shop? What do you look for every week? Choose topics that inform or get playful. Whether silly or serious, this is an opportunity to engage. If staffing permits (or with a volunteer), have someone posted at the display to invite participation and convey interest in the choices made.

While everyone loves the dots, it can be challenging to solicit more specific survey responses. Keep longer surveys as brief as possible, while still collecting useful information. If the questions fit on a notecard, more customers will be willing to take a moment to respond. For example:

What products did you purchase at market today?

Fresh Fruit & Veggies
(watermelon, bell pepper, carrot)

Baked Goods
(breads, cakes, muffins, cookies)

Prepared Foods
(empanadas, veggie wraps, soups)

Processed Foods
(honey, jams, jellies)

Other
(cup of coffee)

Please answer these questions to help us improve Asheville City Market. Your answers are anonymous.

1. How frequently do you shop at **this** farmers market (indoor and/or outdoor)
 First time Every week Twice a month Once a month Rarely

2. Please rate the following:

	All	Most	Some	A few	None
Vendors were friendly					
Vendors offered cooking advice					
Vendors offered samples					
Vendors labeled their products with prices					

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Market staff were easy to find					
Market staff were welcoming					

4. How can we improve this market? (Please answer on the back)



Events, Festivals, and Celebrations

Every market holds events. Why?

Those most likely to enjoy and benefit from a tomato festival or farmers market month celebration are the customers you already have. Markets need to engage with current customers, motivate more frequent visits, and encourage continued support. Tending to your customer base is critical, and events, festivals, and celebrations are excellent opportunities to engage, entertain, and motivate.

The key is whether these market activities generate word-of-mouth (mouse) or publicity that attracts noncustomers to the market. When planning a special event or activity, keep in mind the messaging, benefits, and features that could target community members beyond your existing customer base.

One way to connect with noncustomers is a co-promotion with other businesses, organizations, or community groups. Host a cat adoption day or celebrate a read-a-book event with the local library.

Layer as many elements as are appropriate to maximize the potential benefits. The cook-off event example from Haywood's Historic Farmers Market, shown at right, includes vendor involvement, sampling, fundraising, and co-promotion (i.e., reaching out those who frequent movies at The Strand but aren't market shoppers).

Keep in mind that the market is the main event. Planning and implementing special events is time consuming. Keep your schedule manageable. Aim for quality over quantity.





Vote for the Tomato Boss!
Make a **\$10** donation to vote

Tomato Sammich COOK-OFF

*Sample tomato sammiches
made by our very own
vendors using locally
grown tomatoes.*

Tasting from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Winner announced at 11:45 a.m.

COOK-OFF VENDORS

Cook-off is a fundraising event for Haywood's Historic Farmers Market with all proceeds benefiting the 501c3, non profit organization.

FREE MARKET MONEY ON OPENING DAY!

As a special gift to our newsletter subscribers, we're offering \$5 in 'Market Bucks' to anyone who comes to the Information Tent (right by the entrance) and shows us the graphic below! We'll hand you \$5 to spend on anything your heart desires! You can screengrab the image or pull up the email. Just let us know you're "on the list" and the money is yours.

NOTE: The offer is only valid through April 13, 2021.



Giveaways and Drawings

A market's success is built on the foundation of your weekly, regular, supportive customers. Say thanks, show thanks. Giveaways are a great way to show customer appreciation and build loyalty. The example shown from West Asheville Tailgate Market rewards newsletter subscribers with a \$5 coupon on opening day.

Drawings give you the opportunity to collect contact information for your e-newsletter list. For instance, Hendersonville Farmers Market offered a season-long Harvest Bag Giveaway. Customers could sign up with their contact information to be entered into a weekly drawing for a tote bag of donated vendor products.

Contests, Challenges, and Games

Contests, challenges, and games are an opportunity to connect with customers through playful, fun, and engaging activities. There are tons of clever market activities to be found. For instance, in a Mystery Vegetable challenge, visitors reach into a box and try to guess the vegetable. The game attracts the attention of all ages and can be used to feature in-season farm products. Once the guessing game is over, be sure to direct participants to the

vendors who provided the mystery vegetables, so they can buy their own!

As an added feature, combine a coupon incentive with the game. Offer an "I guessed (fill in the vegetable)" coupon to participants for a discount on today's purchase of the mystery vegetable (pre-approved by the farms involved).

Social media offers another platform for contests and challenges that can incorporate both in-person and virtual engagement. Hold a recipe challenge and ask customers to post pictures of their dishes and tag the market for a chance to win coupons or other prizes.



Children's Activities

Activities for kids and families contribute to the draw of your market. This sends the message to families that they have a valued place at the market. Families shop at the market more frequently and spend more time there when their children are happy and when the market is also a positive, fun experience for them. This can lead to a more diverse customer base as well as increase the amount these shoppers spend.

Children's activities at market might include:

- Taste tests of local foods
- Simple no-heat cooking activities
- Take-home recipe cards for seasonal products
- Food-based or food-related crafts
- Edible sculptures
- Physical activities

Organizing children's activities related to market products (such as honey bee crafts, spinach smoothie demonstration, or carrot tastings) provides opportunities to highlight and feature vendors' goods. By working with community partners, such as health organizations, schools, clubs, or businesses, you can reach their clients, friends, and supporters.

ASAP has created a guide, [Growing Minds @ Market](#), that offers practical hands-on activities as well as a framework for organizing community and volunteer support.



Fruit and Veggie Spinners

Make a local food 3-D spinner

Goal
Children make a fruit and vegetable based craft they will take home and display. Children think critically about shapes by turning a 2-D plate into a 3-D spinner.

Materials

- Paper plates (standard size; 1 per child)
- Markers or crayons
- Colored construction paper
- Images of fruits and vegetables from seed catalogs
- Stapler and scissors
- Books (optional): *Growing Colors* by Bruce McMillan (for younger children), *A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds* by Jean Richards (for older children)

Preparation
Cut various images of seasonal fruits and vegetable from seed catalogs. Sketch and cut various seasonal fruit and vegetable shapes from the construction paper. Prepare an example spinner so children can see a model that will help them understand the project.

Activity

1. As children come to the market, ask them what they will be buying.
2. Give the children a paper plate and have them draw patterns on the plate.
3. Guide the children to cut along the outer edge of the plate until you have a spiral about 1-2 inches wide. Young children may need to bend the wrong way and tangle. Older children may need you to draw the spiral on the plate as a cutting guide.
4. Ask the children what fruits and vegetables they see at the market. What's in season? Ask the children to find and cut those vegetables from the seed catalogs or to draw and cut them from the construction paper.
5. Prompt the children to glue or staple their fruit and vegetable shapes onto their spinner. Finally, attach a string on top of the spinner so they can carry it or hang it up.

Read a Book

If children finish their project and are looking for something else to do, they can read *Growing Colors* by Bruce McMillan (for younger children) or *A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds* by Jean Richards (for older children), or an adult can read to them.

Market Merchandise

Merchandise sales help to generate funds (sometimes for a significant amount), increase customer loyalty, and provide exposure (word of merch).

Sized merchandise, such as t-shirts, can present inventory challenges, but tote bags, mugs, hats, stickers, etc., are popular with customers. A cost-cutting option is to co-brand printed merchandise to share space and production costs with a community partner or local business. Ideally, funding from a co-branding sponsor would cover the full cost of the merchandise so that the proceeds of sales fully support the market. Having merchandise also gives you an option when you want to offer giveaways for first-time shoppers or contest prizes.



RAD FARMERS MARKET
BRANDED ITEMS

**\$20
EACH**

YOUR PURCHASE HELPS SUPPORT US
AND SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY OF FARMERS

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!



Did you know we sell totes & t-shirts?
Your support through your purchase of market goods and raffle tickets really makes a difference in our community! I mean, how cute is our RAD little chicken? If you're looking to spend \$20 to get the coolest Christmas gift, stop by our market table. See you there!

Promotional Activity Kits

It can be a struggle to purchase and organize the props and materials involved with market promotions. ASAP has created ready-to-use Promotional Activity Kits that are available to markets through the Pick-A-PAK program. Find a full list of available [Pick-a-PAKs](#) at [asapconnections.org](#). New kits are added each year. Examples include:

- Special event costumes (crow, strawberry, tomato)
- Dot survey materials
- “Know Your Farmer” activity
- “Mystery Vegetable” challenge
- Welcome to the Market
- “Pick-A-Chicken” game
- Gumball dispensers for prize drawings




Outreach

Outreach efforts focus on connecting with non-shoppers by involving yourself with community groups, gatherings, events, etc. outside of the market itself. It may make sense to team up with those who have shared interests related to local foods and farms. But the most effective outreach is to craft messages that appeal to non-shoppers.

Represent

Every community holds events where large numbers gather around a holiday, celebration, sports activity, etc. These offer the potential for a mutually beneficial promotional exchange. The market can provide advance publicity for the event in exchange for a staffed tent or table at the event to reach noncustomers.

With limited time available for off-market activities, the best approach is to focus on one or two outreach efforts a year. Target events that make sense for reaching potential customers. Assemble “road show” elements, such as market information (i.e., rack card), images, market merchandise, giveaways, or incentives. A co-branded coupon, such as the example shown from Weaverville Tailgate Market, can add value for community partners.




Find fresh food at Weaverville Tailgate Market!
Wednesdays 2-5 pm

\$15

This coupon is good for \$15 to spend with any vendor at the Weaverville Tailgate Market located in the parking lot of Gotta Have It Antiques, 60 Monticello Road in Weaverville.

The first 30 customers to present this coupon will receive \$15 in market bucks for purchases at the market.

Redeem by May 26, 2021.



Guest Groups and Tours

Identify groups in your community where outreach may be effective and invite them to visit the market. Brainstorm potential guest groups focusing on a wide range of contacts and varied themes. For example:

- Reach out to health care providers and social service contacts related to wellness or access to healthy foods (e.g., YMCA and YWCA, Health and Human Services, community health & well-being groups, etc.). Offer a tour and information or incentives they can give their patients or clients.
- Coordinate field trips by school groups, summer camps, etc. A market visit is a perfect field trip for earning the [Girl Scouts Senior Locavore Badge](#).
- Invite a local veterans group to gather for a coffee around Veteran’s Day or Memorial Day.
- Offer an appreciation day for municipal employees who can show a badge to receive a coupon or discount.

Market tours work best if scheduled in advance. A successful group tour depends on contacts in the community who are motivated by aspects of the market that would attract a visit. The most efficient approach involves outreach to groups that have members who can coordinate market visits somewhat independently.

ASAP has created a guide to assist community members with planning market tours ([Farmers Market Tour Guide](#)). The guide provides the step-by-step process for arranging a successful group visit.

COMING SOON!

PART 2

Market Operations & Management