

Farmers Market Manager Frequently Asked Questions



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Welcome

to the Farmers Market Manager Frequently Asked Questions

> This is a starting place for WffYbhand prospective farmers market managers and organizers looking to develop, expand, and improve their organizations.

This resource is made possible thanks to the contributions many market leaders have made to the [Farmers Market Resource Library](#), discussions among peers on the [FMC Listserv](#), and the expertise of the FMC Education Committee. Support for these Frequently Asked Questions is the result of a partnership between the [Farmers Market Coalition](#) and the [Wallace Center at Winrock International](#), with funding from USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#).

The FAQs are broken into seven categories: [Market Fundamentals](#); [Market Policies](#); [Market Staff](#); [Insurance, Liability and Regulation](#); [Market Growth, Outreach and Evaluation](#); [Extending the Market Season](#); and [Increasing Market Access](#). You can use the [Table of Contents](#) to select a link to a specific category or question, or simply browse through. Additional resources are available online at farmersmarketcoalition.org/managerFAQs.

Throughout these pages, you will find lots of links to specific resources from the FMC Resource Library. You can help us improve the content of the library, and the FAQs, by rating or commenting on these entries.

Please use the [Contact Form](#) to suggest additional questions and answers, as well as to clarify or add detail to an existing question or notify us of broken links. Updates will be made to the FAQ periodically based on this input.

To share resources with your peers by adding a new resource to the FMC Resource Library, please use the [Submit Form](#).

And finally, special thanks to Kathleen Stewart for all of her hard work in researching and preparing this resource.



Category: Market Staff

Category Description: *Once a structure and policies are in place, how will they be upheld, and who will work with vendors, promote the market, and coordinate with community partners? Even if a market is largely volunteer-operated, a professional, paid manager can likely be the best person to coordinate the many on-site and administrative tasks that take place both on market day and in the ‘back office.’*

Can vendors run markets?

Many markets, particularly those initiated by a group of farmers, start with a vendor assuming the role of market manager. As a market evolves, however, a professional market manager is often hired so that producers can focus on what they do best. When resources are scarce, a vendor can run the daily management duties of a farmers market. The Beaver County Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association in Pennsylvania has farmer members elect a board for their farmers markets, and one vendor at each market is in charge of sounding the horn for the market and handling management duties for the day.

However, special attention should be paid to fairness, equity, and conflict of interest when using this model. If a vendor is in charge, he or she may make less money on market day due to managerial duties. Other vendors may perceive unfairness if another, competing vendor is in charge of assigning spaces, fees, and penalties to other vendors. Rotating the vendor-managers, establishing a vendor advisory board, or managing purely by consensus or through a vendor-run board could be good solutions to these potential snags.

Even when no vendors are involved in management duties, vendors should definitely be involved in the market’s planning and decision-making processes so that they have a sense of ownership in the market and a stake in its improvement. This can be done by including vendors in the governance structure or establishing a farmers market association. For more information on starting an association, go to the Farmers’ Market Federation of New York’s [Step By Step Guide to Establishing a Farmers Market Association](#).

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What should be included in a market manager Job Description? How much should we budget to pay a manager?

As the Farmers' Market Federation of New York states in their [Farmers Market Manager Training Manual](#), “Most market organizers and farmers will say that the single most important tool for market success is its manager.” With that said, the market manager has many responsibilities and should possess certain skills to make the market a success. Your Market Manager job description should include the responsibilities or duties of the market manager as well as the set of desired skills and qualifications.

The duties and responsibilities of a farmers market manager will vary based on your market's size, structure, and programs. To get an idea of the most common responsibilities of the market manager, look at the Farmers Market Coalition's [Market Manager Responsibilities](#). The Farmers' Market Federation of New York also lists the duties of a market manager based on the season in the What Does it Mean to Be a Market Manager section of the [Farmers Market Manager Training Manual](#) and in their PowerPoint, [Duties of Farmers Market Managers](#).

In terms of skills or qualifications to include in your job description, think of what skills one would need for a market to be most successful. A market manager must be passionate about farmers markets and highly self-motivated to say the least. Here are some other skills and qualifications to include in a market manager description:

- The ability to learn on the job
- The ability to multitask
- Excellent communications skills and the ability to effectively communicate with a wide range of audiences
- Marketing skills
- Conflict resolution and problem-solving skills
- Financial skills

See the *What Does it Mean to Be a Market Manager* section of the Farmers' Market Federation of New York's [Farmers Market Manager Training Manual](#) for more details about the types of skills a market manager should have.

As you are developing a job description to meet the needs of your individual market, take a look at these sample job descriptions for guidance:



- Farmers' Market Federation of New York's [Farmers Market Manager Job Description](#)
- The Farmers Market Alliance of Western Pennsylvania's [Farmers Market Manager Sample Job Descriptions](#)

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How much should be budgeted to pay a manager?

Whether a market can pay someone full- or part-time will depend on the size of the market, how much predictable revenue is available to pay a manager, and the time needed to perform the responsibilities of market operation. Some smaller markets may not take as much time to run, and thus their manager's compensation is in line with their input of time. If a market requires full-time management but lacks sufficient revenues to pay a full-time salary, consider re-evaluating the fee structure or engage in fundraising strategies.

Our recommendation is that you compensate a manager based on the market value for the skills they bring to the market and the time they spend making sure your market is successful. While most markets are limited by shoestring budgets, keep in mind that paid managers can greatly increase the likelihood of a market's long-term success.

For more information about the relationship between the compensation of the market manager and the success of the market, take a look at Oregon State University Extension Service's [When Things Don't Work: Some Insights Into Why Farmers Markets Close](#).

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How do we find (and keep) good volunteers?

Volunteers can be critical to the success of even well-staffed market organizations. Recruiting, managing, and holding onto good volunteers leverages the time invested by paid staff and provides a market with an experienced and passionate group of individuals, allowing you to spend less time on volunteer recruitment and training. Here are some ideas on how to find volunteers:

- Enlist your friends and family to help and ask your current volunteers to do the same.
- Have a volunteer sign-up sheet at your market for interested costumers.
- Use your web presence to ask for volunteers through your newsletter, listserv, Facebook, or Twitter account.
- Post a request on [Craigslist](#).
- See if there is a Master Gardner Program in your community and recruit Master Gardeners in training who need volunteer hours to become certified. They could set up a booth offering gardening advice and tips for your customers.
- Find youth groups or other service organizations who want to be involved.
- Contact your local high schools or universities to get students who need community service hours.
- Danae McDevitt, from [Catonsville’s Sunday Farmers Market](#) says, “If you have an organization sponsoring you, see if they can volunteer. We are going to ask Chamber members to help and, in exchange, they can have their promotional items out and do give-aways.”
- If you are looking for volunteers for more of a time commitment or larger project, consider utilizing the resources of the [Corporation for National and Community Service \(CNCS\)](#) to get AmeriCorps volunteers. Take a look at [How Can National Service Help Our Organization](#) for more information.

Take a look at these additional resources for Recruiting Volunteers:

- Marketumbrella.org’s [Market Day: Recruiting and Managing Volunteers](#)
- Massachusetts Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Markets’ [Recruiting Volunteers](#)

Identify the tasks you’d like a volunteer to perform and draft a one-page job description outlining the responsibilities, time required, and skills needed. The key to keeping your volunteers is successfully managing and appreciating them for all their hard work. Try to find out what your volunteers really want to do and where their talents and passions lie to keep them engaged and satisfied with their work. Provide your volunteers with an orientation to your market so they are familiar with your mission, values, opportunities, and expectations of them. Respect them as (unpaid) staff and invite their input for the improvement of market operations. Take a look at marketumbrella.org’s [Volunteer Orientation Guide](#) and their [Market Day: Recruiting and Managing Volunteers](#) for guidance. Most importantly, find ways to offer appreciation for your volunteers and share and celebrate your successes with them. You can hold volunteer appreciation events or offer gifts to your volunteers for working a certain number of hours.

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The Wallace Center supports entrepreneurs and communities as they build a new, 21st century food system that is healthier for people, the environment, and the economy. The Center builds and strengthens links in the emerging chain of businesses and civic efforts focused on making good food—healthy, green, fair, affordable food—an everyday reality in every community.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



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The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is a national 501(c)(3) organization devoted to strengthening farmers markets through education, networking, and advocacy. FMC members include farmers, farmers markets, regional and state farmers market organizations and agencies, and individuals and businesses supporting farmers markets.

