

Starting an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market



Alberta

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Superseded

Starting an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market

As with starting any business venture, starting a farmers' market in your community requires careful planning. Typically the process involves several individuals, such as producers, consumers, community groups or a combination of groups. No matter who initiates it, the planning process takes time and should be comprehensive to achieve a successful market.

The success of your market depends on gaining community support. Community support is more than just getting potential customers on side. It may also include convincing other community businesses that a farmers' market can have a positive economic influence on their businesses. Surveys show that consumers who shop at a farmers' market also spend money in the community on gas, restaurants and groceries they couldn't get at the market. Vendors and employees of vendors also spend money in the community. All of these contribute to a positive impact on the local economy.

The Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program

The Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program (the Program) is a government-run program started in the early 1970's. The Program creates an operational framework that provides direction and guidance to approved farmers' markets in Alberta. Program requirements are described in a specific [Program Guidelines document](#) that outlines the policies and protocols expected of all Alberta approved farmers' markets.

Becoming an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market

There are a number of steps you must take in order to start an Alberta approved farmers' market. The first step is to get "approved." Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) grants "approval" status for farmers' markets in the province under the Program. Being an approved market is voluntary and is one of the decisions that needs to be made during the planning stage. An approved market is not better than a public market (one that chooses to operate outside the Program); it is simply different.

There are benefits to being an approved farmers' market:

- All approved farmers' markets follow the same [Guidelines](#), which strengthens the markets overall by setting minimum standards for consistency across the markets.
- Vendors selling through Alberta approved farmers' markets are able to take advantage of Part 3 of the [Alberta Public Health Act Food Regulation](#), which allows for vendors to produce their food products in home kitchens. Approved farmers' markets are the only venues in Alberta that allow for the sale of home-produced food products.
- Because of this legislative provision, approved farmers' markets are able to attract and "discover" new entrepreneurs and small scale food processors who may want to test and incubate their business ideas before moving production into a commercial kitchen.



**Farmers'
Market**

- Approved farmers' markets are connected to a province-wide communication and administration network.
- Alberta approved farmers' markets are allowed to use the Sunnygirl logo in their advertising and promotions. The Sunnygirl logo is an official mark held by the Government of Alberta. This logo helps the consumer identify that the market is approved and that it is affiliated with a chain of high quality markets offering Alberta-produced products that consumers can trust.
- After incorporating the guideline requirements, the markets develop their own market rules that meet the unique needs of their community. Decisions about the market are made at the local level (i.e. boards, managers).
- Sponsors, managers and vendors have access to the Agriculture and Forestry Farmers' Market Specialist and other AF staff who offer marketing and business expertise and links to other government departments and agencies.
- Approved markets are allowed to become members of the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA), a non-profit, membership-driven organization that operates separately from the Program. While AFMA does not have a role in approving markets, they are a voice for Alberta approved farmers' markets and their vendors, providing advocacy, education and promotion of approved markets.

A public market includes all types of operations, including flea markets. Public markets often have for-profit ownership with no requirement for an advisory body or board of directors. In other cases, they may be operated by a non-profit community group but are unable to meet some of the other requirements of being approved. At a public market, each food vendor must have an individual food permit and produce their food products in a health-approved facility/commercial kitchen. Most municipalities require each vendor at a public market to have a business license, whereas often only a single license is required for the approved farmers' market because of its non-profit status. A public market does not receive any of the above noted benefits enjoyed by an approved farmers' market.

Markets wishing to obtain approval under the Program must complete an AF Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program [application form](#) and be able to demonstrate that the proposed market will meet the minimum requirements outlined in the [Guidelines](#).

Applications are evaluated on the following points:

- Proof of non-profit status: The proposed market must be as follows:
 - sponsored by a non-profit community group and set up as a sub-committee of its organization OR
 - attain non-profit society status under the *Societies Act* OR
 - attain new generation co-operative status under the *Cooperatives Act*.
 - see below for more information about non-profit options
- The farmers' market is governed by either a board of directors (if it is a non-profit society) or advisory committee (if sponsored). Executive members must be identified on the application (see below for more information about governance options).
- A manager or "point" person is identified who is willing and able to meet the learning and training requirements of this position and to maintain the documentation required to meet the Guidelines on an annual basis (see below for more information about the market manager).

- A location must be secured and a day and time chosen. An approved market must operate for a minimum of 10 days per year and 2 hours per market day (see below for more information about selecting an appropriate location, date and time).
- Vendor requirements: Several requirements must be met with respect to proposed vendors in order for an application to be approved:
 - A minimum number of 10 vendors is required, averaged over the course of the market season.
 - The application must include a list of vendors who fall into each category (Agricultural, Food, Craft, Other) as well as how many times the vendors plan to attend the market during the first season. At least 80 per cent of the vendors must consist of Alberta residents selling Alberta products that they, an immediate family member, a staff member or a member of a producer-owned co-operative have made, baked or grown in Alberta. The remaining 20 per cent of the vendors can sell out-of-province, commercial or resale products that complement the market mix (categorized as Other). A calculation is done with this information to determine if the market will meet the minimum of 10 vendors and 80/20 requirements. Approval will not be granted if either of these requirements are not met.

If the vendor is an Albertan who makes, bakes or grows AND sells his/her own products, he/she falls into the 80 per cent. If the vendor is selling a product someone else made, baked or grew OR if they are an out-of-province vendor, he/she falls into the 20 per cent, even if the out-of-province products are made, baked or grown by the vendor.

- A number of products are prohibited for sale at any time at Alberta approved farmers' markets:
 - used, antique or flea market items
 - live animals, whether for sale or customer interaction (i.e. chicks, petting zoo)
 - uninspected meat or meat products for human AND/OR animal consumption
 - raw milk or raw milk products for human AND/OR animal consumption -- exception: raw milk cheeses that are made in a facility meeting federal legislative requirements
 - hatching eggs
 - e-cigarettes or vapor cigarettes
- Market organizers are encouraged to use a vendor application to collect all required information on a vendor. A sample vendor application can be accessed under the [How Do I Start](#) section of the Sunnygirl website. Customize this document to meet your market needs.
- Proof of liability insurance for the market is required. This requirement can be a condition of approval so that market organizers are not purchasing insurance before they know they are able to operate (see below for more information about selecting insurance).
- Market rules must be developed and included with the application form. Sample market rules can be accessed on the [AF website](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620/$FILE/SampleMarketRules.pdf) ([http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620/\\$FILE/SampleMarketRules.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620/$FILE/SampleMarketRules.pdf)). The rules contain a list of potential areas to consider, but you will need to phrase your rules according to your situation. Simply delete those items that do not apply to your market situation.

- A satisfactory business case must be included (see below for more information about the requirements of the business case).
- The sponsoring organization, if applicable, must indicate why they want to start a farmers' market, how it fits into the mandate and strategic plan of the organization and how they will support it so that it continues to grow and succeed.
- A minimum of three letters of support from the community must accompany the application. These letters can be from business owners, community leaders, elected officials, town chief administrative officers, etc.

There are two steps in a market approval:

1. Approval by AF that states the market has met the minimum requirements laid out in the Guidelines and
2. A food permit is issued by Alberta Health Services (AHS).

You **must** have both of these in order to operate as an Alberta approved farmers' market.

If the food permit is revoked by AHS for any reason, approval status is automatically revoked and vice versa.

Not-For-Profit Business Options

Market Sponsorship

Having your market sponsored by a local non-profit community group is one way to satisfy the non-profit status requirement. One of the following can act as a sponsor:

- a registered not-for-profit community organization or group,
- a registered chamber of commerce,
- a municipality, or
- an agricultural society formed under the *Agricultural Societies Act*.

In all cases, there should be a mutually beneficial relationship between the market and the sponsor. With the sponsor's assistance, the market has stability and ongoing support. In return, the sponsor is able to increase its visibility in the community. While the farmers' market is not necessarily a money maker for the organization, any additional funds raised from operating the farmers' market may be used by the sponsoring organization to offer additional services in the community.

The farmers' market is a **committee** of the sponsoring organization. All activities and financial transactions must be reported in the sponsor's books according to the legislation that applies to the sponsor. Sponsors are **actively** involved in providing direction to the overall operation of the market. This includes but is not limited to:

- providing a board member to be the liaison between the farmers' market advisory committee and the sponsor's board of directors;
- overseeing the operation of the approved farmers' market;
- helping establish the rules and processes of the approved farmers' market, ensuring vendors have meaningful input into the formulation of the operating rules and processes;
- the recruitment, selection, performance review and discipline of the market manager;
- determining and/or advising on the remuneration of the market manager;
- encouraging and financially supporting yearly educational opportunities for the market manager so as to further his/her professional development;
- encouraging vendor participation on the market executive;
- ensuring records required by the Program to keep the market in good standing are maintained and submitted;
- ensuring accurate financial records are maintained in accordance with the sponsor's required financial reporting;
- ensuring the approved farmers' market and its vendors adhere to all legislation and regulations; and
- ensuring the approved farmers' market is either insured or indemnified against liability.

The sponsor is ultimately responsible and accountable for the activities of the approved farmers' market.

Non-Profit Society

Forming your own non-profit society is another option. Societies are governed by the *Societies Act* which, a copy of which can be found [online](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=S14.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779782468&display=html) (at http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=S14.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779782468&display=html).

There are several steps to forming your own non-profit society:

- Choose a name that is appropriate to your community and that does not conflict with another society's name in Alberta.
- Get an Alberta NUANS (Newly Upgraded Automated Name Search) report to confirm the name is not identical to another society.
- Fill out the required forms:
 - Application to Form a Society
 - Society Bylaws
 - Notice of Address for Societies
 - Service Request
- Submit the forms, NUANS report and \$50 incorporation fee.

All this required information is clearly outlined on the [Service Alberta](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/Societies.cfm) website (<http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/Societies.cfm>).

Bylaws are the laws governing the internal rules of the society and describe how the society will operate. They do not describe day-to-day operations of the market, which would be covered in the

market policies and rules. Bylaws are required to form a society. A sample copy of society bylaws can be found [online](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/Society_Bylaws_re-entered_(2).pdf) at: [www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/Society_Bylaws_re-entered_\(2\).pdf](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/Society_Bylaws_re-entered_(2).pdf).

Occasionally, society members disagree on how to handle internal matters. Neither AF nor Corporate Registries supervise the conduct of societies, nor do they provide a counseling service on matters other than forms and the documents filed with them. Societies must be prepared to resolve their own internal disputes. To ensure that internal disputes are handled fairly, Corporate Registries recommends including a bylaw outlining an arbitration procedure.

Your society must send a completed annual return to Alberta Corporate Registries every year before the last day of the month following your anniversary month. You must also inform Corporate Registries of bylaw amendments and address changes. All forms can be found on the [Service Alberta](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/Responsibilities-annual-returns.cfm) website: <http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/Responsibilities-annual-returns.cfm>.

New Generation Cooperative

A cooperative is a legally incorporated business arrangement that provides for the control of the business by its membership. A new generation co-op (NGC) is a type of cooperative that uses a system of delivery rights and obligations to encourage business loyalty and provide a form of vertical integration. NGCs are particularly suitable to ventures involved in value-added agricultural processing and marketing.

Legislation governing the NGC business model is found in Alberta's *Cooperatives Act* found [online](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=C28P1.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779800964&display=html) at: http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=C28P1.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779800964&display=html. Sections specific to the NGC can be found in Part 18, Division 4, Sections 422 to 430. There are also corresponding regulations that must be adhered to.

There are some key attributes of NGCs that are consistent with all co-ops:

- NGCs are controlled by their membership using the principle of one member, one vote.
- Earnings are distributed to the members based on patronage.
- The board of directors is elected by the membership.

However, there are several characteristics of NGCs that differentiate them from traditional co-operatives:

- NGCs may issue designated shares which carry delivery rights and obligations.
- Individuals (members and non-members) may hold higher levels of equity through the purchase of investment shares.
- Membership may be restricted to designated shareholders.
- In Alberta, NGCs are applicable only to agricultural ventures, and the word “co-op” or “co-operative” does not necessarily have to appear in the name of the venture.

In general, NGCs are typified by restricted, project-oriented enterprises which require significant investments from their members, and a membership which strives for increased profits and return on capital through this investment.

The paper, *New Generation Co-ops: Alberta's Newest Option for Agriculture Business*, prepared by Corbett Smith Bresee LLP, an Edmonton legal firm, provides an excellent and comprehensive overview of setting up an NGC in Alberta. It can be found [online](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi6646/$FILE/new-gen-coop-alb-newest-option.pdf) at: [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi6646/\\$FILE/new-gen-coop-alb-newest-option.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi6646/$FILE/new-gen-coop-alb-newest-option.pdf).

The new generation cooperative business model operating on a reduced profit basis is allowed under the Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Guidelines. This model allows for the accumulation of capital funds for the purpose of large capital expenditures and, as such, is ideally suited for those markets wanting to own their own permanent facilities.

New generation cooperatives are not for everyone. When compared to traditional business arrangements, NGCs may seem complicated and expensive to set up, manage and maintain. Each market would develop their structure differently depending on the needs of the market, so there is no standard format to follow. It is advisable to contact a lawyer who specializes in cooperatives to assist you in setting up this business model for your market. This person will help you determine if the NGC model meets the needs of your market and will ensure that all aspects of the legislation and corresponding regulations are adhered to during the set-up of the NGC. You will also be advised of any legislative requirements you need to meet on an ongoing basis.

Governance Options

One of the reasons for the non-profit requirement is because non-profit organizations are governed by a board of directors and not just operated by one individual. In the event of conflicts within the market that cannot be resolved by the manager or that may involve the manager, those individuals affected always have the option to escalate their concerns to the board of directors for resolution.

In a sponsored market, the legal board of directors sits with the sponsoring organization. They oversee all the sub-committees under their umbrella, one of which is the farmers' market. In many cases, the sponsoring organization will set up a formal sub-committee (also known as an advisory committee) to work specifically with the farmers' market on an ongoing basis.

The committee will ensure that market rules are consistent with both the bylaws for the sponsoring organization as well as the Program Guidelines. Other sponsoring organizations may choose to be very hands-on with the market decision making and not form a separate committee.

If a sub-committee is formed, the board of directors may delegate certain responsibilities to the committee, but ultimate accountability lies with the board of directors. The committee typically, but not always, will consist of at least one liaison from the board of directors as well as several vendors. Typically, the vendors are elected to the committee by the market membership and often a committee chair and secretary/treasurer will be appointed. These positions should not be confused with the executive positions from the board of directors as they only have the authority granted to them by the board of directors.

In a market that forms its own non-profit society, the board of directors is in place right at the start and is required to be identified on the forms submitted to Alberta Corporate Registries. Using the bylaws developed to form the Society, the board of directors will develop board policies and

procedures and hire the manager. The manager should not be a member of the board of directors because he/she is an employee of the market. Having a manager who is also a member of the board of directors is a conflict of interest.

Among other things, the bylaws will state how many board members are required, quorum for board meetings, when and how elections for board members are held and their terms of office. The bylaws will also indicate if there are any requirements for becoming a board member, i.e. must be a vendor or can include community leaders, etc.

Market Manager

The farmers' market manager is one of the most critical roles in the market, requiring some very specific skills and knowledge. This person is the liaison with the board of directors, the vendors, AF, the public health inspector and other regulatory agencies.

A job description should be developed for your market manager so that everyone is clear about duties and responsibilities. A sample market manager job description has been developed and can be customized to meet the needs of your market. It can be found online at: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620/\\$FILE/MarketManagerJobDescription.pdf#market](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620/$FILE/MarketManagerJobDescription.pdf#market).

One of the primary roles of the market manager is enforcement. The manager enforces market rules, ensures the Program guidelines are adhered to and ensures vendors are compliant with legislation. AF has developed an online market manager training manual that clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of the manager as well as basic information about legislation that applies to the market and its vendors. This home study course is mandatory for all approved farmers' market managers within one year of becoming a manager of an approved farmers' market. It can be found online at: [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/explore13545](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/explore13545).

It is still a common practice in Alberta to have a vendor also manage the market, especially in smaller markets. Managing a farmers' market is a complex job that involves much more than turning on the lights and setting up tables.

Managing a market involves building relationships with vendors, the board of directors, regulatory agencies and customers. It requires a solid understanding of legislation affecting all vendors, and it requires that the individual be present and actively engaged in doing what is best for the market at all times.

Being a successful vendor requires the vendor to be present and actively engaging with their customers to make maximum sales. Wearing both hats on market day results in a conflict of interest that can be challenging to manage effectively and impartially.

Some conflicts to keep in mind:

- The manager's primary role is one of enforcement, ensuring vendors are in compliance with all legislation, enforcing the AF guidelines, enforcing the market rules, etc. Who then polices the manager?

- Selecting vendors to round out the market mix should always be viewed as impartial, and yet, vendor-managers are faulted for rejecting applications from vendors with products that compete with their own. Having a clear and transparent vendor selection criteria will help alleviate this concern.
- Managers should always be “visible” in the market, to customers, vendors, regulators, etc. but then are challenged for securing the “best table location” for themselves in order to accomplish this objective. Think of other methods to easily identify a vendor-manager on market day.

Some markets do choose to operate without an official market manager, rather dividing the responsibilities up among the various board members. Similar to when the market is managed by an individual vendor, this situation is full of challenges and potential conflicts, the least of which is the requirement to have a single point of contact for AF and the regulatory agencies. This point person will also be required to take the mandatory training.

Food Safety Training

The safety of the food being sold at approved farmers’ markets is critical to the success of farmers’ markets in Alberta. AF is committed to ensuring market managers and vendors have a minimum level of food safety training. Working in partnership with Alberta Health Services (AHS) and Alberta Health, a farmers’ market food safety home study course was developed specifically for Alberta approved farmers’ market managers and vendors. It is available on the [AHS website](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-home-study-farmers-market.pdf) (url: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-home-study-farmers-market.pdf>).

AF requires that all market managers and vendors selling an agricultural or processed food product at Alberta approved farmers’ markets complete this course within one year of becoming a market manager or food vendor unless they have already completed a food safety course recognized by AHS. The list of approved courses can be accessed [online](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-food-safety-courses-approved-alberta.pdf) (url: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-food-safety-courses-approved-alberta.pdf>).

The foods offered for sale through farmers’ markets are becoming increasingly complex, with more high risk foods being introduced every year. Therefore, managers are encouraged to complete the additional food safety training that is required under Section 31 of the Food Regulation. Section 31 training will help managers to know the dangers of improper handling of these high risk foods, so they can guide and coach vendors and customers alike on proper handling of these foods.

Location of Your Farmers’ Market

A critical driver behind a successful farmers’ market is a good location. In Alberta, approved farmers’ markets can be found in many different types of locations: indoors, outdoors, in community halls, malls, arenas, parking lots, agriplexes, retro-fitted buildings, rec centres, on the street, etc. Some are in permanent facilities that allow the market to operate year-round while others only allow for seasonal usage since they are located outside or in a building that has another use in the colder months. It is important when choosing a site to look at all possible locations and then outline the positive and negative features of each site.

Things to consider when selecting a site:

- **Size:** How many tables/stalls will the site accommodate? Is there room to increase the existing number of vendors? If your size is limited, is there a way to reconfigure the layout of the stalls to be able to increase the number of vendors? If your site is available year round, could you have some vendors set up outside during the summer months to allow for an increase in vendors during the busy season?
- **Centrality:** Is the site central to where your potential customers live, work and shop? If it isn't central, is there public transportation available so that customers who don't drive can still attend the market?
- **Transportation:** As noted above, some of your customers won't be able to drive so alternatives need to be available to them. For example, if seniors make up an important component of your target audience but the market is not within easy walking distance of where the seniors are located in your community, is it possible to rent a van each week to transport seniors to the market?
- **Parking:** Is there ample parking? The rule of thumb is two to three stalls per vendor. Is the parking lot paved, on grass or gravel and what impact will there be when it rains?
- **Surface cover/flooring:** If indoors, is the market on a cement surface, tile or hardwood? If the market is outside, is the surface paved, gravel, on grass, etc.? And what is the impact when it rains? Consult with Alberta Health Services for outdoor surfaces that are not recommended/viable for a farmers' market.
- **Water:** Potable water must be available for your vendors.
- **Restrooms:** Restrooms for vendors and customers must be available within the area.
- **Cost:** Is the facility provided by your sponsor at no cost or is there a weekly/seasonal fee or a long term lease? If the facility is available exclusively to your market year round, what else can you do with the building on off-market days in order to recoup some of your expenses?

Day and Time

Choosing the most appropriate day and time can be two of the most critical decisions you will make about the market. It is important to consider when the markets in the area are operating. Vendors often attend multiple markets so you want to set your day and time so you will be able to attract the optimal vendor mix.

It is critical that you identify your target audience and when that target audience is able to attend the market. You should not define your target audience as everyone in your community. Are they male or female? Do they work? Do they have children and what are their ages? When can they attend the market, during the day, after school/work, in the evening, only on weekends? It is important to remember that a convenient day or time for your vendors may not be the same for your customers. Consider consulting with both before making a final decision.

AF **must** be notified of all changes in the location, day and time, management or sponsorship of an approved farmers' market in order for the market to retain its approved status. The food permit issued for the market by AHS is location-specific. Approval must be granted by AF for every move as a new food permit must be issued and AHS will only proceed if they know the move has been approved by AF.

Insurance

All approved farmers' markets, regardless of size, must obtain liability insurance. Failure to obtain insurance will lead to the market approval status being revoked. A valid certificate of insurance must be sent into AF each year.

A common misconception is that vendors are covered by the market insurance policy. This is NOT true and vendors should be encouraged to carry their own liability insurance policies. More and more markets are requiring their vendors to provide proof of liability insurance before they are allowed to participate. Talk with your insurance carrier about the risks to the market of not requiring vendors to have insurance.

The Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA) and the Western Financial Group in Vegreville have partnered to offer a group policy for farmers' markets and vendors who are members of AFMA. For more information, visit their website: www.albertamarkets.com/ and click on the Members tab.

It is always advisable to seek out multiple quotes before purchasing insurance coverage to ensure all your needs are being met at the best price.

The Business Case

A farmers' market should always be viewed as a business, no different than your local hardware or grocery store. Starting any business requires careful consideration. A business case captures the reasoning for initiating a project or task. Typically it is presented in a written document. A business case is needed when planning and developing a farmers' market because you want to ensure your plans are in support of a specific business need that will require resources such as money and time. The following list describes some of the considerations when developing your business case for your farmers' market. Note that a written business case is required when submitting an application for an approved farmers' market.

Business Case – Market Committee

The areas to cover in the market's business case submitted with your application include the following:

- Vision and goals for the market
 - A **vision statement** for the market describes what you would like to achieve in the mid-term (3 - 5 years) or long-term (5 - 10 years). The vision statement talks about what you hope the market will offer to the community, consumers and the vendors so that all benefit from the market and it serves as a clear guide for choosing courses of action.

- Start with answering the questions: Why do you want to start a farmers' market? What is the objective of this venture?
- Your **goals** can be either long-term or short-term and should support the vision. Short-term goals detail what you hope to accomplish in the next few months or year while long-term goals will have interim milestones identified.
- SWOT analysis
 - The SWOT analysis is an in-depth look at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of starting the farmers' market. You will look at the vision identified above and then identify internal and external factors that will affect achieving that vision. The strengths and weaknesses will describe internal factors that will help or hinder the success of the market, looking at things like the capacity and skills of the existing organizing committee, etc. The opportunities and threats are those external forces that will affect the success of the market such as the size of the community or competing markets, etc.
- Role in the community
 - Describe the benefits of a farmers' market to the community, an assessment of the pros and cons of having the market as well as any potential risks that you foresee. Consider the seasonality of your proposed market in your analysis, i.e. seasonal market only or year-round market.
 - Successful markets affect many stakeholders and businesses in the community. Planning discussions for a market should include these stakeholders so that all points of view are considered. Describe the results of any consultations you have done with community and business leaders, customers and potential vendors.
- Target audience/customers
 - Who is the target audience? Describe their demographics.
 - How do you know if there is sufficient customer demand for the proposed market? Engage with your potential customers by holding a meeting, asking them to fill out a written survey or by using social media such as Facebook.
 - Will the target audience find the market day, hours and location convenient?
- Population
 - What is the population of your community and the surrounding area? Is it sufficient to support a market(s)?
 - If the proposed market is operating on the same day as another market in the area, either approved or public, describe how the population in the trading area is sufficient to support multiple viable markets.
- Vendors
 - Have you identified and secured vendors for the proposed market? Have you consulted with potential vendors during the planning stage? When seeking vendors, determine their level of commitment. Finding only 10 vendors to start your market will not likely be sufficient

because it is unlikely all of them will be able to attend every market. Describe how you will be able to meet the minimum requirement of 10 vendors and maintain the required 80/20 vendor ratio. These two requirements must be demonstrated in the application before it will be approved and are not areas the market organizers can strive to achieve over time.

- Describe how new vendors will be recruited. Also describe your plans for ensuring an appropriate product mix for the market. Keep in mind that 80 per cent of the money spent at a farmers' market is on food products, so you want to have diverse vendors offering everything from farm-grown products like produce, eggs, honey and meat to prepared food vendors selling items like preserves, baking, sauces and ready-to-eat foods. Consider the ethnic mix of your customers and seek out vendors who can make foods with which your target audience will be familiar.
- Promotions
 - How will the proposed market be promoted to your target audience? Will you use flyers, posters, radio or print advertising, website, social media, etc.?
 - Will you develop a customer newsletter to keep customers informed about upcoming events at the market?
 - If the market is in "competition" with another market, how will you differentiate your market in your promotions?
 - How will you differentiate your market from others in the area in your promotions? Is there a way to develop cross-promotions with other markets so that you share advertising dollars?

Business Case – Sponsoring Organization

This section of the application is only completed if the market is being sponsored by a community group. It does not apply to markets that form their own non-profit societies.

This section is critical to ensure that the goals of the approved farmers' market identified in the market's business case are aligned with the goals of the sponsoring organization. It is completed by a representative from the board of directors.

- Describe how sponsoring the farmers' market fits the mandate of the organization.
- Describe the role of the sponsor in the proposed market. Will a sub-committee be formed with a board liaison or will the board of directors remain hands-on?
- Indicate where the farmers' market fits into the current strategic plan for the organization.
- Describe how the organization will support the farmers' market. The list of some of the requirements of being a sponsor are noted above under the section called "Market sponsorship."

Budget

You want to ensure you have sufficient finances to start and continue the market so developing an annual budget is crucial. Some budget categories to include:

- Accounting fees
- Advertising/promotion
- AFMA membership fee
- Bank charges
- Business license
- Insurance
- Manager's professional development
- Manager's salary/honorarium
- Signage rental or purchase
- Table rental or purchase
- Venue rent or street closure fees

For More Information

For more information about the Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program or how to apply to become an approved farmers' market, contact:

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