

## CHAPTER 9

# Establishing Community Partnerships

Building a strong network of community members and organizations that support the farmers' market is a great way to build a sustainable market. This section provides suggestions of whom and how to approach potential partners followed by examples of successful partnerships from across Kentucky. Evaluation tools to measure the impact(s) of building community partnerships are at the end of this section.

*"...the platform for sustainable food systems relies upon like-minded organizations assisting one another, sharing knowledge and resources, and coming together for the common goal of affordable, healthy, fresh food being present in every community and accessible to all community members."*

— Cristina Sandolo, former project co-director,  
Nourishing Neighborhoods for  
Wholesome Wave



# KENTUCKY FARMERS' MARKET TOOLKIT

*“In thousands of communities across the country this summer, farmers’ markets are more than simply a place to buy locally grown fruits and vegetables. They are hubs for information and home to thousands of innovative partnerships that teach skills and expand knowledge about food, health, and agriculture.”*

— Elizabeth Comiskey, Farmers Market Coalition

*“Partnering with organizations who have an interest in your mission is imperative to expanding outreach efforts and advocating for your needs as a market. Make sure to engage community stakeholders as well, who can help guide the creation of your SNAP program and provide general market support.”*

— Farmers Market Coalition

Community partnerships are vital if a market is to provide the scope and quality of services and products required to attract and retain limited-resource shoppers. Partners are necessary to:

- Promote EBT at farmers’ markets at such places as health fairs, school events, and community festivals
- Post signage and distribute flyers about farmers’ markets’ SNAP participation to local Extension programs, SNAP and WIC offices, senior centers, hospitals, clinics, food pantries, schools, churches, community centers, and other places
- Donate television or radio airtime
- Provide additional services such as demonstrations, children’s activities, and entertainment
- Provide financial support
- Provide space for the market or parking
- Partner for incentives to shoppers
- Provide education

## Engaging Community Partners

Good communication is key to beginning any partnership. Expressing hopes, wants, and needs is essential to understanding whether a partnership between organizations is a good idea for all entities. Conversations between farmers’ markets and community partners can start in a variety of ways: face-to-face, by phone call, or e-mail. This will vary greatly based on a variety of factors, such as how you were introduced to the partner, accessibility to partner, and/or time allotment for these types of conversations. The biggest thing to remember is you need to ask to find out if a partnership is possible! Don’t be afraid to start a conversation and see where it leads.

## Starting a Conversation

- Introduce yourself. Tell the prospective partner who you are and how you are associated with the farmers’ market.
- Introduce the farmers’ market. Share details such as location, vendor details, times of operation, goals, and objectives, etc.
- Let the prospective partner know how you heard about them (Through a friend? Flyer? Social media?)

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- Propose your idea for a partnership.
  - Make a specific ask(s) such as, “Could you fund the printing of market signage? Provide youth activities X number of market days? Help advertise the market by letting us put a sign up in front of your business?”
  - Listen to their ideas for a partnership. Talk together about ways to align your goals or work together.
  - If a partnership seems likely, schedule a community partner follow-up meeting. Include board members and/or other market members.

Members of several farmers’ markets with strong community partnerships were interviewed for this section of the toolkit. Each of them agreed that many of their successful community partnerships occurred when the community partner approached the market first. This showed the markets that the potential partner was proactive and interested enough to initiate a conversation.

Market members agreed that the partnerships that felt the most natural were always the most successful. Things that led to this natural flow were alignment of organizations’ missions, common food access goals, mutualistic promotion, and shared enthusiasm for programming. The interviewed markets agreed that collaborations that felt forced or one-sided were seldom, if ever, successful. When partnerships failed, they moved on with no hard feelings, certain they would forge new partnerships.

## Examples of Current Successful Partnerships

Listed below are some ways community partners are currently contributing to the success of Kentucky farmers’ markets.

### Extension Involvement

- Technical assistance around farmers’ market development and expansion
- Food sampling
- Cooking demonstrations
- Distribution of educational materials
- Distribution of recipe cards
- Advisement at farmers’ market meetings
- Soil sampling for farmers’ market producers
- Farmer trainings: example WIC and Senior trainings
- Location support: supplying electricity, bathrooms, Wi-Fi access

## Local Government

- Financial support
- Provision of a farmers’ market permanent structure
- Space for pop-up markets in the town center
- Advertisement and promotion

## Libraries

- Provision of free meeting space for farmer workshops
- Bookmobile at farmers’ market
- Coordination of children’s events on market days

## Schools and Children’s Programming

- Summer Food Service Program site at the farmers’ market
- Day care centers hosting programming (fun for kids and center gets free advertisement)
- Save the Children book donations
- Children’s authors providing story time at the farmers’ market

*“I know at the farmers’ market in Burlington on 18, they have little cooking demonstrations, and the kids can get a free orange or just whatever. Something that the whole family can go to and there’s other things just besides going to buy the fruits and vegetables.”*

— Focus group participant



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## Health Department

- WIC farmers' market voucher distribution and promotion
- Grants offered through the health department
- Walking club with the farmers' market on the route
- Distribution of special vouchers that promote spending at the farmers' market (\$5 to \$10)

## Hospitals or Clinics

- Produce Prescription Program
- Aid in providing Double Dollars for nutrition assistance programs (i.e., SNAP, WIC SFMNP, Pharmacy, Kids' Bucks, Veggie Bucks, etc.)
- Provision of \$5 to \$10 farmers' market vouchers for health screenings

## Local Health Coalitions

- Buy the seconds from the farmers' market for the local food pantry

## Private Businesses

- Zumba, yoga, gyms, and other exercise businesses providing demonstration classes at the market
- Provision of funds for children to shop and hosting a field day at the market (Kids on the Move — Perry County)
- Food trucks or restaurants that use local foods
- Tractor Supply Company hosts a farmers' market in the fall and a market day in the spring, inviting their customers and community partners to display and sell homegrown and homemade products at participating store locations; there is no fee to participate, but participants must register.

## Entertainment

- Dance groups from around the county performing at the farmers' market
- Local musicians performing at the farmers' market
- Local school theater, choral groups, and bands

*“If music played in the background,  
you’d jam — you know...”*

— Focus group participant

## Senior Center

- Provide a location for a pop-up market at the senior center
- Provide transportation for seniors to attend the market and use their SFMNP vouchers

## Tourism

- Farmers' market promoted in tourism brochures, magazines, and social media posts
- Inviting market vendors to set up at special city or county events

## Rotary, Lions Club, Farm Bureau, Banks, Chambers of Commerce

- Provide fiscal sponsorship to their local farmers' market in several Kentucky communities
- Include the local farmers' markets in festivals and other events

## Commodity Groups

- Providing cooking demonstrations, recipes, and food safety swag

## Faith-Based Organizations

- Providing grants for Double Dollar incentive programs for SNAP, WIC and SFMNP

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*“Meaningful relationships between farmers’ markets and faith communities can connect farmers to new customers and to the community in general, while increasing consumers’ access to fresh healthy food and creating a closer connection to where that food comes from. Typically, we see SNAP programs experience the greatest success when the market has a strong network of community partners who are supporting the program and helping with outreach; thus, the attention to building partnerships with faith communities.”*

— Rural Advancement Foundation International

## Some Specific Kentucky Partnership Success Stories

Berea Farmers’ Market (Madison County) participates in the First Friday event each month. Farmers set up in the Old Town area where local artisans are attracting tourists. Local chefs feature Kentucky favorites, using local produce, thus encouraging farmers’ market sales. Berea Farmers’ Market also partners with Berea College to allow students to swipe their meal cards to buy produce at the market.

The Boone County Community Education Advisory Council (chaired and coordinated by the public schools) holds a Community Activities Fair each spring at the market. Booths (tables) are set

up in the market and local nonprofit organizations provide information about their activities and services. The market does not charge for space during the fair. Parks and Recreation provides a bounce house and drinks, and the pet adoption group brings pets. About 35 to 40 organizations usually participate and market patronage is increased. The fair raises awareness of the market and nonprofits’ services.

In Boyd and Campbell counties, the Future Farmers of America promote interaction between vendors and shoppers by hosting a “Backroads Farm Tour.”

In Boyle County, the health department and the farmers’ market partner to provide a WIC farmers’ market outside of the health department on the day WIC FMNP vouchers are distributed. WIC participants can shop in the parking lot for fresh vegetables immediately after vouchers are distributed. It requires no additional planning or transportation.

In both Breathitt and Woodford counties, the Conservation District and the county Extension office partnered to offer additional vouchers to seniors, increasing the value of SFMNP benefits.

In Campbell County, the FCS Extension agent offers the Culinary Couch Potato Challenge. This series of classes begins in the kitchen with a culinary demonstration, spotlight on a small appliance, recipe tastings, and tips on how to choose better foods and become more active. Time in the kitchen is followed by a walk in the educational garden and shopping at the farmers’ market, focusing on locally grown foods.

In Carrollton (Carroll County), the Tourism and Convention Commission sponsors First Friday on the Square on the first Friday of each month, June through September. Between 4 and 8 p.m., stores stay open for extended hours, live music plays, and participants enjoy inflatables, drawings, and games. Blue and white striped tents and event polo shirts are supplied to all farmers’ market vendors. This unifies the market and improves visibility. Sponsors provide money for children to shop for local foods.

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The Letcher County/City of Whitesburg Farmers' Market leverages many partnerships to achieve outstanding growth and make astounding health and economic contributions to the area. Some of the partners include the following:

- The market accepts EBT, WIC and SFMNP benefits. The Kentucky Double Dollars Program is employed to maximize these benefits.
- The Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation began sponsoring the Pharmacy program at the market in 2015. In 2016, 89% of Pharmacy patients reported feeling better, stating they had more energy and had lost weight. Also, 58% credited the Pharmacy program with helping maintain optimal blood glucose levels.
- The Summer Food Service Program provides free, nutritious meals to children at the market during the summer months. Multiple partners sponsor the effort, which buys produce from the farmers' market for school food service workers to turn into fresh, nutritious meals. Meals served grew from 225 in 2017 to 2,490 in 2017.
- The City of Whitesburg (Letcher County) receives a grant from the Levitt Foundation to implement the Levitt AMP Whitesburg Music Series. They are partnering with the farmers' market to encourage attendance at both venues: the music series and the farmers' market. ([www.levitt.org](http://www.levitt.org))

The Letcher County/City of Whitesburg Farmers' Market has enjoyed financial growth from \$7,000 in 2013 to \$115,000 in 2016. In 2017, economic impact recognized by the county from the market was estimated to be nearly \$2.9 million.

In Madison County, a monthly POP program for kids is coupled with recipes for adults. Evaluations showed that more than 80% of people who tried samples bought ingredients at the market that day. More than 70% of participants tried a new vegetable, as well. Additionally, general attendance at the market increased on those days.

In McCracken County, Extension agents offer



classes at the holiday farmers' market. This provides an additional attraction and increases sales for all vendors. The McCracken County Farmers' Market also participates in the Barbecue on the River event, taking advantage of the increased foot traffic to sell local produce and food.

In Meade County, a local food truck and/or ice cream truck sets up at the farmers' market. The presence of the food vendors is advertised through social media. This improves attendance and awareness of the farmers' market and provides sales for the food vendors.

In Northern Kentucky, a local hospital provides a site and advertising for a farmers' market to set up. Hospital employees may have farmers' market purchases deducted from payroll. The county FCS agent provides accounting services for the transactions. The addition of the hospital market site more than doubled the farmers' market total annual sales.

## Friends of the Market Toolkit

The Farmers Market Federation of New York has developed a Friends of the Market Toolkit, accessible by visiting the website, [nyfarmersmarket.com](http://nyfarmersmarket.com). Creating a Friends of the Market organization can provide market supporters with a greater connection

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to the market, create an additional source of income for the market and provide additional manpower for the market.

## Establishing Community Partnerships Evaluation

If you would like to assess the results of your activities, the following table may be useful in evaluating a program or project from the Farmers' Market Toolkit, either as the result of a work plan created after implementing the Assessment Tool

worksheet or for a predetermined activity.

For Extension agents, this table provides examples of ways to evaluate a program or project from the Farmers' Market Toolkit and construct measures to determine outcomes for success stories, KERS, and PSE activities reported via the Food Systems Impact survey.

Examples of related success stories copied from KERS follow the table below. The highlighted sections in the stories show how specific results were reported.

Action	Type of PSE Change	Indicators	Outputs
Involve community partners in farmers' market	Systems change	Number of community partners providing support and resources to FM	Report the number of community partnerships.
		Type of support or resources provided to FM	Report the number of attendees benefitting from the support or resources provided.
	Promotional change	Number of flyers or posters posted advertising community partner support	Report the number of flyers or posters posted to show potential PSE reach.
		Number of locations where flyers or posters advertising community partner support	Report the number of locations flyers or posters posted to show geographic scope of promotion (neighborhoods, sq. miles, etc.).
		Type of media advertising community partner support	Report media reach (newspaper subscribers, mailers, radio listeners) to show PSE reach.
		Type and number of websites promoting community partner support	Report type of website and number of website hits promoting community partner support.



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## Community Partnership Success Stories

All stories reported below were accessed from the Cooperative Extension Reporting System (KERS).

### Whitley County Farmers' Market

According to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, "The demand for affordable, fresh, local, and healthy foods is growing. With more than 160 successful farmers' markets across the Commonwealth, spanning more than 110 counties and 2,700 vendors, farmers' markets and direct-to-consumer marketing are great ways to meet that demand. It's simple for the consumer to find the products they're looking for and buying local puts a face on your food with a connection between the consumer and farmer." The Whitley County Farmers' Market is helping supply this demand in the Corbin and Williamsburg areas. *The market was open each Tuesday in downtown Corbin and each Thursday in downtown Williamsburg throughout the 2020 growing season. Twenty-nine vendors sold more than \$38,000 worth of product at the market. Both Corbin and Williamsburg downtown development groups help the market by providing both space and financial support for entertainment and market management.*

### Franklin-Simpson Farmers' Market Hometown Harvest Dinner

A new Franklin-Simpson Farmers' Market Pavilion was completed in downtown Franklin in 2015. The market is aesthetically pleasing in the downtown area featuring expanded selling spaces and an increase in visibility and traffic. There are men's and women's restrooms and storage space available for vendors. Since the construction of this facility,

vendor numbers and profits have greatly increased.

*The market requires operating expenses, maintenance costs, and funding for festivals, music, and activities for long-term success. As a result, the Franklin-Simpson Farmers' Market collaborates with the Simpson County Extension Service to host the Hometown Harvest Dinner. This dinner takes place on the square in downtown Franklin. It features an outdoor pre-dinner festival in the street during which ticket holders enjoy appetizers served and prepared by Farmers' Market vendors, event sponsor informational booths, and music. The remainder of the dinner is in the Franklin First United Methodist Church Christian Life Center. The event takes place near or during National Farmers' Market Week in order to showcase a menu that features local food products primarily grown by the Farmers' Market vendors, highlight the importance of agriculture in Simpson County and our local community, provide musical entertainment, and a great atmosphere for friendship and fellowship. The meal is prepared by the "Brickyard of Franklin," and local celebrities many of whom are farmers serve the entire meal. We have had very impactful speakers such as State Rep. Wilson Stone, State Sen. David Givens, Dr. Garry Lacefield, and Sharon Spencer discuss the importance of agriculture in our lives and nation. The conclusion of the evening features a drawing for several door prizes donated from local businesses. This last dinner was the third annual Franklin-Simpson Hometown Harvest Dinner.*

*The market is able to flourish in large part because of funds raised at this event. Many vendors have reported an increase in sales because of products served the night of the Hometown Harvest Dinner. Tickets cost \$45 per person. Seven local businesses sponsor the event. Cumulatively, the dinner has raised more than \$17,500 in net profit for the Farmers' Market to use. The event continues to grow. This year, the dinner completely sold out of its 150 tickets for the first time.*

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