



NATIONAL RECREATION
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



A Farmers Market Resource
MARKET ENGAGEMENT GUIDE





The Overland Park Farmers Market offers more than produce. Photo courtesy of City of Overland Park, Kansas.

Farmers Market Engagement Plan

A market engagement plan focuses on ensuring that community voices are represented and share power in decision making about the types of programs, services, resources and offerings available at your local farmers market. Centering community voice, experiences and interests are key to attracting and sustaining support and engagement from the community you serve. While identifying and building relationships with stakeholders are an important first step in the design process, stakeholder involvement should span the entire life cycle of the project. This guide walks you through five steps for developing an advisory group of stakeholders to provide leadership for your farmers market and support market engagement efforts.



Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Stakeholders are individuals and organizations that have an interest in or are affected by your program, infrastructure and/or program results (see Table 1 below). Stakeholders, such as community members and partners, may have different interests and different available resources. Collaboration is important for designing a program or service, developing new infrastructure or implementing an intervention that considers all beneficiaries of the work.

Table 1. Types of Stakeholders

Type of Stakeholders	Definition	Examples
Implementers	Those directly involved in the operations of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program director, manager or coordinator ● Staff: educators (e.g., nutrition, gardening, cooking), counselors, administrative staff, case managers ● Volunteers ● Consultants
Decision-makers	Those in a position to do or decide something about the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program director ● Park and recreation director ● Program manager ● Community members with shared decision-making structures in place
Participants	Those being served or affected by the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community members, especially historically underrepresented populations ● Youth participants ● Older adult participants
Partners	Those who actively support and/or have invested in your program or in the population your program serves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funders (federal, state, local) ● Coalition partners ● Community-based organizations representative of the target population ● Faith-based community ● State and local health departments ● Local health system (clinics, hospitals) ● Libraries ● Health and medical professional organizations ● Advocacy groups ● Government officials and elected representatives ● Representatives of the school system or other sectors

Source: NRPA *Health Impact Evaluation Framework*





■ Bringing Diverse Voices to the Table

Stakeholder engagement is key to bringing diverse voices to the table. While your program staff may have a scope of expertise and experience, stakeholders — such as community members, participants and coalition partners — can offer new perspectives. Assembling a group of diverse stakeholders ([Table 1](#)), especially people who may not have worked together before, may present challenges in communication and defined roles (see [Table 2](#) below). [Table 2](#) provides some key questions and considerations for you to think about when engaging a diverse group of stakeholders. The following steps may help manage stakeholder engagement more effectively by establishing an environment of respect and inclusivity:

- Assess cultural self-awareness ([NRPA's Elevating Health Equity Through Parks and Recreation: A Framework for Action](#))
- Use inclusive language in written and verbal communication ([NRPA's Equity Language Guide](#))
- Engage stakeholders who reflect the diversity of the community
- Lay ground rules for participation to establish equity
- Create a diverse advisory team to help with engaging stakeholders, planning and implementing
- Build trust through honesty, transparency and accountability

Table 2. Considerations When Engaging Stakeholders

Questions to Assess Engagement Level of Stakeholders	Examples of Factors to Consider
Does the stakeholder group fully represent the diversity of the program's participants and others affected by the program? Is there a diversity of market customers, partners, community residents and vendors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Race, ethnicity, ability, language, culture, age group, social class, biological sex and gender identity, geography
Are meaningful roles planned for stakeholders on an ongoing basis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program design contribution ● Evaluation data support ● Review of dissemination of products
Have I paid attention to the distribution of power among stakeholders? To other distinctions related to status and social class? Are stakeholders being compensated for their time and contributions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership positions and staff positions ● Availability to meet in person and/or online ● Establishment of shared decision-making structures
Has the stakeholder group developed a process to work together with established ground rules?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Channels for providing feedback on evaluation materials ● Channels for discussing opposing views
Have I included multiple voices in planning, implementing, interpreting and decision making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process for incorporating feedback in a meaningful way
Have I included multiple voices in planning, implementing, interpreting and decision making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individuals with varied lived experiences ● Representatives from organizations impacted by your program

Source: CDC, [Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation](#)



How to Form a Stakeholder Advisory Group



Tips to Keep in Mind Throughout Steps 1-5

- Refer to [Table 2](#) for guidance on how to engage stakeholders community members and [Table 1](#) to help identify stakeholders to engage.
- Ensure compensation for advisory group/community stakeholders.
- Ensure advisory group/community stakeholders represent the diverse lived experiences within the community.
- Ensure staff and volunteers who support market operations are included in plan development.
- Establish clear rules, roles and responsibilities (including meeting frequency/timelines) to stakeholder engagement in supporting, informing and making decisions about your farmers market(s).

➔ **Step 1.** Identify which community stakeholders you will engage in an advisory group to help provide leadership for your farmers market and support broader stakeholder engagement efforts. It is important to address the following when setting up a council:

- Selection method for advisory members (e.g., voting, appointment, open volunteer)
- Criteria for demographic, geographic and other types of representation on the council to ensure a diverse stakeholder group
- Ways to incentivize participation
- Scope of work
- Length of service
- Create a diverse advisory team to help with engaging stakeholders, planning and implementing
- Build trust through honesty, transparency and accountability

➔ **Step 2.** As an advisory group, identify other community stakeholders the advisory group will engage to support your farmers market.

- Critically consider which perspectives, or whose voices, are missing from your advisory group.
- Identify which community members are underrepresented in your farmers market and work with your advisory group to intentionally engage members of those communities.

➔ **Step 3.** Answer key questions as a full stakeholder group.

- Important questions to consider before creating your vision/mission statement:
 - a. How does the community we serve view our farmers market?
 - b. Does everyone in the community hold this view?
 - c. How do we know how the community views our farmers market? What tells us this is the case?

➔ **Step 4.** As a stakeholder group, begin to describe the program/initiative.

Step 4a. Describe the program.

Program descriptions, such as the mission and goals, will be used throughout your program in order to promote the program, engage partners and recruit participants ([Table 3](#)).



Table 3. Program Description

Factors	Definition	Example - "Farmers Market"
Need	Reason behind the intervention/program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of access to fresh, healthy foods in the community ● Lack of nutrition knowledge among community members ● Lack of access to local produce and goods ● Lack of local economic benefits
Expected effects	Projected outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased access to fresh produce ● Increased local economic activity ● Increased knowledge of gardening and nutrition ● Increased community connection and cultural enrichment opportunities
Resources	Staff, equipment, venues or other factors essential to implement the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Market manager ● Market educator ● Market vendors ● Market consumers ● Community partners and community members ● Designated outdoor space that is safe and accessible ● Tables, tents, chairs, marketing materials, EBT machines, etc.
Stage of development	Current phase of the program in the timeline (e.g., developmental, implementation, completion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design phase includes identifying resources, planning a timeline, coordinating with partners and community members, etc. ● Implementation phase includes providing program services, meeting with staff and partners regularly, evaluating progress, etc. ● Completion phase includes evaluating program outcomes, planning follow-up activities, debriefing with staff and partners, etc.
Context	Background information about the community, its health status and other factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct a community needs assessment ● Develop a community asset map



➔ **Step 4b.** Develop a vision or mission statement and/or set guiding principles for your farmers market.

A program mission is one to two sentences that describe what the program is, what it does and for whom it is intended. It may contain the words “mission” or “purpose” in the statement. One exercise for developing a program mission statement follows a simple format:

The **[program name]** provides/includes **[primary purpose]** to **[target audience]** through **[primary activities]**.

Example: The Ashburn Farmers Market promotes access to health and well-being opportunities, improves social connections and strengthens the local economy for all people living in Loudoun County — especially historically underrepresented populations — through increased access to healthy, fresh and local foods; engagement of vendors who are people of color; cultural activities and connecting people to other social resources.

➔ **Step 4c.** As a stakeholder group, develop market goals and objectives.

Program goals are more specific than the mission but also should be overarching expectations. Typically, programs establish between two and five goals. If you find yourself developing more than five goals, you should ask yourself if some of the goals work better as objectives (see below). It is important to review the goals and objectives with the market staff to ensure capacity to achieve them as described in the engagement plan.

Goals provide more details than the mission, for example, secondary or tertiary populations of interest, sequential activities or activities specific to subpopulations. Goals also can differentiate activities by implementation level, such as individual, socio-cultural, environmental or community. Lastly, goals typically include a transitive verb — such as increase, decrease or improve — to demonstrate change over time. Goal phrases can follow this simple format:

[Transitive verb] the **[target outcome]** among **[target audience]**.

Example A: Increase access to and consumption of fresh, healthy and local foods for community members.

Example B: Increase the sales of local produce for farmers, ranchers and vendors who identify as Black, Indigenous, people of color or people who are low-income.

Example C: Increase the engagement of community members in farmers market planning, design and implementation among historically underrepresented populations.



Lastly, you should develop program objectives, which are concrete descriptions of expected changes and their degree. A common acronym used to describe effective objectives is SMARTIE. SMARTIE objective characteristics are:

- **Specific:** Concrete, detailed and well-defined objectives will help you to understand where you are going and what to expect when you arrive.
- **Measurable:** Numbers and quantities provide means of measurement and comparison.
- **Achievable:** Feasible objectives that are easy to put into action.
- **Realistic:** Considers constraints such as resources, personnel, cost and time frame.
- **Time-bound:** A time frame helps to set boundaries around the objective.
- **Inclusive:** Brings traditionally marginalized people – particularly those most impacted – into processes, activities, and decision making and policymaking in a way that shares power.
- **Equitable:** Seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity or oppression.

Table 4. Sample SMARTIE Goal

Goal: Increase community awareness of buying local through farmers markets.
Objective in plain language: Our agency will develop a campaign to educate the community about the benefits of shopping at our farmers market.

Key Component	Objective
S pecific: What is the specific task?	Race, ethnicity, ability, language, culture, age group, social class, biological sex and gender identity, geography
M easurable: What are the standards or parameters?	How many social media posts and community conversations documented by posts, reach and engagement and community feedback will be collected via surveys during community conversations?
A chievable: Is the task feasible?	Dedicate the time to develop materials, plan, promote and implement, and navigate any unexpected challenges.
R ealistic: Are sufficient resources available?	Dedicate the staff, tools, funding and other resources
T ime-bound: What are the start and end dates?	July 1 to June 30
I nclusive: Who influences this task?	An advisory group of community members will be formed to influence the marketing campaign.
E quitable: How can this task explicitly address disparities?	Community conversations will take place in communities experiencing higher rates of food insecurity and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility.

Revised **SMARTIE** Objective: Our agency, in partnership with a community advisory group, will develop a campaign to educate the community about the benefits of shopping at the local farmers market by sharing at least 12 social media posts and hosting at least six community conversations in neighborhoods with high rates of SNAP-eligible community members from July 1 to June 30.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3DU6VV>



➔ **Step 5.** As a stakeholder group, develop a plan to continue to engage community members to ensure the market is meeting its goals and objectives and the wants/needs of the community being served.

Important questions to consider in this process include:

- How often will the group continue to meet?
- How will you evaluate your progress toward meeting goals?
- How will you engage other community members (consumers and non-consumers) for their feedback/input?
- What engagement activities will you utilize to get feedback and input from the community?

Consider:

- a. Public stakeholder meetings
 - b. Community focus groups
 - c. Surveys administered at the farmers market
 - d. Interviews with other community leaders
 - e. Population health and other health-related or economic data
- How often will you administer these opportunities?
 - Who is responsible for ensuring these activities move forward?

■ Farmers Market Engagement Plan Template

Each market engagement plan will look different based upon the unique agency and the community they serve. Your engagement plan can be developed based upon outreach statements, plans or roadmaps that already exist in your agency and community.

Now that you’ve assessed your market stakeholders and opportunities to increase equitable engagement, you can systematize it into a market engagement plan that will support your market operations. It is recommended that you complete the market engagement plan after completing an equity action plan through NRPA’s resource, *Elevating Health Equity Through Parks and Recreation: A Framework for Action*. The priorities identified in your health equity framework agency assessment will inform priorities for vendor and community engagement.

While your plan may include additional components or more worksheets than what is recommended below, the following can offer a strong baseline for a market engagement plan:

1. Overview of priority stakeholders

- Consider utilizing community stakeholder worksheets from the *Elevating Health Equity Through Parks and Recreation: A Framework for Action* (section 3, page 55).

2. SMARTIE goal for vendor engagement

- Use NRPA’s *Farmers Market Vendor Engagement Guide* for key considerations and best practices to inform vendor engagement goals.

3. SMARTIE goal for community engagement

- Consider the strategies provided in this market engagement guide for your community engagement SMARTIE goal.

For additional farmers market resources, guides and tools, visit nrpa.org/farmersmarkets.