

The Mighty Market Manager

Chapter 4: Human Resources

September 2016

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The ideal Farmers Market Manager candidate is a detail-oriented, big thinker with experience as an event organizer, attitude of a diplomat, eye of an artist, ethic of a judge, entrepreneurial spirit, with the endurance of a marathoner; and believes duct tape can fix most things. Also has a passion for farms, local food, and small businesses, while getting along with all kinds of people and being willing to work every Saturday between May and October. All for humble wages and fresh farm products as the benefit package.

Indeed, the Mighty Market Manager is a vital role for any farmers market. The manager sets the tone and represents the market both internally to vendors and externally to shoppers and other market stakeholders. Most markets (70%) in Washington have a single market manager position. In 13% percent of markets, one position is shared by two people. It is less common to have multiple staff positions for a market. WSU research found that 73% of market managers in Washington State are women; the average age is just over 50; and 98% had at least some college education¹. Regardless of their position or demographics, market managers share a passion and commitment to their market.

Typical Duties and Job Descriptions

While unbelievable, some shoppers still think that “vendors just show up” at the market every week. This couldn’t be further from the truth! The number and complexity of demands on farmers markets and the manager seem to grow every year.

The specific duties will vary by market size, age, whether it is located in a metropolitan area or not, number of market days, and how many markets the organization operates. Specific market manager duties may include:

Administration

- Maintaining website, email listserv, web listings for the FM
- Track market metrics and attend board meetings as requested to report on FM
- Maintain all vendor applications and records, including current licenses and permits

- Collect vendor fees and make bank deposits; keep Treasurer informed of all bookkeeping
- Ensure FM has all licenses and permits needed to operate legally
- Maintain all volunteer records
- With support from Treasurer, prepare and present proposed budget

Operations – during the season

- Ensure market is operated in safe and efficient manner
- Handle all emergencies that arise
- Monitor vendor products and ensure compliance with FM guidelines
- Monitor food vendor compliance with local health department requirements
- Cultivate optimal product mix
- Answer/address all shopper and vendor questions/complaints/concerns
- Assign spots to vendors and manage overall market layout
- Supervise set up and take down
- Oversee the FM information booth
- Collect market data, including shopper counts and vendor sales
- Submit regular reports to board of directors

Operations – during the off-season

- Vendor recruitment and retention
- Professional development for market managers (e.g., attending the WSFMA conference)
- Develop constructive community relationships
- Market promotions, including print materials and special events
- Oversee market site development, including all permits
- Preparations for next season

Promotions and Outreach

- Create, produce, and manage market promotions, advertising, and special events
- Create events calendar for the FM
- Produce and distribute market newsletter
- Participate in community meetings and activities on behalf of FM
- Seek and get articles about FM published in local news outlets
- Create and regularly update social media promoting market and vendors

FMNP or SNAP (and Incentive Programs)

- Ensure market and produce vendors have current contracts to participate in the FMNP program. Monitor farm compliance with FMNP
- Coordinate food access activities with community partners, distribute materials, educate local WIC clinics, senior organizations, and other nonprofits
- Manage market's SNAP program, ensure EBT processing equipment is working

- Track EBT and other special currencies' transactions to reconcile with daily bookkeeping
- Train vendors, volunteers and board members about these programs

Job Description for Carnation Farmers Market Manager

The Carnation Market Manager (Manager) will serve as a positive, energetic face for the Carnation Farmers Market (CFM). The Manager will interact with the local community by providing information, answering questions, and addressing concerns. The Manager must be well organized and will coordinate all CFM activities, uphold the CFM "Guidelines and Policies", implement and enforce other policies as defined by the Sno-Valley Tilth Board of Directors (BOD).

In general, the CFM Manager responsibilities include:

- Day-to-day CFM operations throughout market season.
- Serving as point of contact for the CFM.
- Increasing the volume of agricultural products grown and sold in the Snoqualmie Valley.
- Promotion/advertising of the CFM with a goal of increasing the customer base and individual vendor sales.
- Making the CFM a destination for residents and visitors through a focus on high quality agricultural products and market-based, educational activities of interest to families.
- Maintain accurate and timely financial and statistical records for the CFM.

Source: Carnation Market Manager Job Description (2012)

Market Manager Training

Given the wide range of duties and demands, supporting training and professional development for farmers market managers is essential. Key opportunities include:

- The Washington State Farmers Market Association's annual conference is an excellent opportunity for new and returning managers, as well as board members and vendors. It is held at the end of January or early February and typically includes workshops on every aspect of market management. One of the most popular features is simply the opportunity to meet and network with other market managers. Farmers markets do not have to be members of the WSFMA to attend. Information about the conference is posted at www.wafarmersmarkets.org.
- While not a formal training per se, the WSFMA Listserv is an excellent means of keeping up-to-date and sharing technical information with other market managers.
- In King County, the market managers have quarterly meetings and a listserv organized by Steve Evans.
- The Farmers Market Coalition's ongoing webinar series and Resource Library are excellent sources of market manager training materials.
<https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/education/resource-library/>.

- The Michigan Farmers Market Association offers a Market Manager Certificate Program (<http://mifma.org/mmcp/>) which includes individual webinars that managers from Washington can participate in if they register and pay \$50.00.
- The New York Federation of Farmers Market has a 200+ page “Farmers Market Manager Training Manual” that covers everything from “basic roles” to “building a community.” It is available online at www.nyfarmersmarket.com.

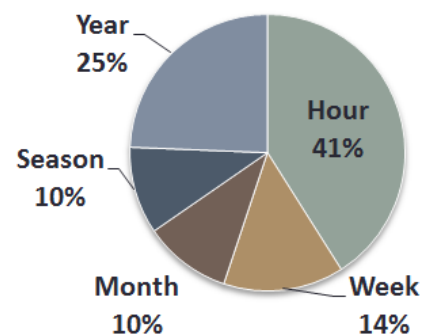
Market Manager Compensation

In 2013, a full third of market manager positions were unpaid, mostly at small and very small markets¹. This, along with a mushrooming list of duties, contribute to high market manager turnover which researchers at OSU have identified as one of the critical factors among markets that fail². As the authors note, not all manager turnover is negative. However, it is almost always stressful for a market and strides towards professionalizing the market manager position are critical for the future of farmers markets. Making sure a market manager feels appreciated by the board as well as vendors and shoppers, can go a long way towards their job satisfaction.

WSU research found that market managers are paid in a variety of ways, making a comparative analysis difficult. Most managers are paid by the hour, although a quarter have an annual salary while others are paid by the week, month, or season.

We know there is a significant amount of interest in researching market manager compensation and need to establish a methodology that takes market size, scope of work, length of season, location, and other key factors into consideration so that we can reasonably compare market manager positions that are similar.

How Farmers Market Manager Pay is Calculated (N=78)¹



¹ “Summary Report: Farmers Markets and the Experience of Market Managers in Washington State” Marcy Ostrom and Colleen Donovan (2013). Available at <http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/marketing/>

² “When Things Don't Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers' Markets Close,” by Garry Stephenson, Larry Lev, and Linda Brewer. Available at http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/small-farms-tech-report/eesc_1073.pdf