

# Rapid Market Assessments

Chapter 3: Markets Count! Collecting, Managing, & Deploying Your Data

September 2016

By Colleen Donovan and Karen Kinney

The Rapid Market Assessment or “RMA” is a key tool for farmers markets to collect baseline data, gain new insights and ideas for improvement, measure progress, build consensus and inform big decisions. Using a participatory methodology, a team of local community members and managers from other markets spend an intensive day at the farmers market:

- Counting shoppers;
- Recruiting shoppers to answer a “dot survey” (questions written on flip charts that people answer with round, sticky dots); and
- Providing constructive comments and observations about the market’s physical site, atmosphere, and vendor mix.

The assessment team spends a full day at the market to complete the activities and present general comments and observations to the manager and other market representatives. Because the RMA takes up space at the market, it is especially important that the RMA adds to the market atmosphere and not interfere with vendors and the market staff.



*Deciding your most critical questions, recruiting volunteers, preparing the dot survey flip charts, coordinating the actual RMA, and compiling and evaluating results require a considerable amount of work. If possible, it helps to have a designated team leader. The team leader may be a board member, volunteer or community member who is not involved with the day-to-day workings of the market on the day of the RMA.*

## Tools for Rapid Market Assessments from OSU

### [“Tools for Rapid Market Assessments”](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/sr/sr1088-e.pdf)

(<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/sr/sr1088-e.pdf>) by Larry Lev, Linda Brewer, and Garry Stephenson from Oregon State University Extension is an excellent overview of how to organize, prepare for, and implement a RMA. The publication also provides sample questions for your dot survey and tips on reporting.

## RMA Reports from Pacific Northwest

If you are interested in getting ideas from other markets or doing some comparative research, archived RMA reports are available at the below websites.

Northwest Direct Farmers Market RMA Reports: <http://nwdirect.wsu.edu>

OSU Extension's Small Farms Technical Reports: <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/>

Rural Roots RMA Reports: [www.ruralroots.org](http://www.ruralroots.org)

WSFMA RMA Resources: [www.wafarmersmarkets.com](http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com)

WSU Farmers Market Research Project RMAs: <http://smallfarms.wsu.edu>



Making constructive comments and observations.



Doing the dots at the Vashon Farmers Market.



Counting shoppers entering the U-District Farmers Market.

## Doing a One Question Dot Survey

In some instances organizers may consider just doing a dot survey with one or two key questions. This may be appropriate if the market needs feedback on a critical decision or needs to collect strategic information. For example, the Roslyn Sunday Market did a one-question dot survey to find out where their shoppers lived. This information was needed to bolster their case for receiving county hotel-lodging tax funds.

To do a one (or two) question dot survey, all of the same principles found in the “Tools for Rapid Market Assessments” apply. If possible, also doing a shopper count would enable you to compare the number of responses to the overall shopper estimate. With a smaller physical presence in the market, it may be important to strategically place the A-boards or have an announcement at the information booth in order to get shoppers’ attention and encourage them to participate.

