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## **Tuesday Market: An Integrated Management Approach Leverages a Small Farmers Market for Synergistic Community Benefits**

### **Abstract**

Beginning farmers who wish to engage in direct-to-consumer sales need scale-appropriate opportunities to increase their product volume and develop sales and marketing skills. A small mid-week farmers market in Moscow, ID, the Tuesday Market, has been identified as an important community asset. With support from a citizen advisory committee and with UI Extension staff, intern, and volunteer help, UI Extension adopted the coordination of the Tuesday Market. An integrated management approach led to the achievement of synergistic educational and community development goals. Over a four-year period, the market expanded in terms of dollars spent, increased the number of customers, and increased the number of weekly vendors. In 2022, the market was awarded a \$250,000 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service grant to fund new marketing activities for the Tuesday Market including advertising, value-added food research and training, and development of an online farmers market. The goal of the grant is to increase the number of customers and profits for farmers.

**Keywords:** farmers market, economic development, community development, social capital, fresh food access, farmer veterans

## **Introduction**

In 2018, a citizen committee consisting of Moscow Food Cooperative staff, farmers and other stakeholders was interested in collaborating with UI Extension, Latah County to help coordinate a mid-week farmers market that had previously been located in a parking lot and had been relocated around town several times. The market has been identified as an important economic asset, a food access point as well as a small business incubator, and a hands-on learning opportunity for small farmers and other vendors. Beginning farmers who wish to engage in direct-to-consumer sales need this small-scale opportunity to increase their product volume, to develop sales and marketing skills and to build a customer base. Four beginning farmer vendors in 2021 were U.S. military veterans and three of the vendors in 2022 were veterans.

An additional issue in the local community is a segment of farmers and vendors who do not want to work on Saturday, some for religious reasons. They appreciate the opportunity to sell their products during the week.

Each year the market has hosted various produce, craft, youth and non-profit vendors and one local brewery vendor. Additionally, staff recruited a live musician or music group and a prepared food vendor for each week. Market volunteers set up tables for a meeting garden/food court where customers could gather, socialize, eat dinner, and some join for work meetings.

## **Methods**

This section outlines the approaches for implementing the market and for tracking market metrics that can demonstrate growth of the market. An integrated management approach, involving a cross section of stakeholders, meant that multiple educational and community development goals could be simultaneously and synergistically developed. These goals included relocating the market to a better location, providing beginning small acreage farmers an avenue for income and for hands-on market education and experience, improving the customer experience, community access to fresh produce, and providing the market as an educational opportunity for agriculture and food system

college students. With support and input from the citizen committee and with help from UI Extension staff, interns volunteersp, the market was relocated once more and hosted at the Latah County Fairgrounds. The market was held once per month from June to October in 2018. Due to the success of the monthly market, it was then offered weekly on Tuesdays from 4-7 p.m. June to October in 2019. No market was held in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The market was resumed weekly in 2021 and 2022 with increased attendance and overall sales each year.

Two beginning farmer grants from USDA helped fund educational opportunities associated with the market in 2018 and 2021, such as market management education and booth layout instruction. Intern funding from UI Extension provided a student manager in 2019 and 2021. Interns were trained to collect anonymous sales data from each vendor at each market.

In 2021 and 2022 a volunteer and intern counted all customers at each market. In 2021 and 2022, UI Extension also conducted a customer and vendor survey. A voluntary vendor booth evaluation was offered in 2021.

## **Results**

The citizen committee identified goals for the market that would meet the needs of the community and link to the original purpose of the market to help new vendors develop their businesses and market skills. Additional educational goals were also identified and achieved due to the role of UI Extension.

As Table 1 shows, the market expanded in terms of total customer dollars spent (from \$2,741 to \$16,936 per season), increasing the number of customers (from 45 to 58 average) and increasing the number of weekly vendors (from 9 to 12). There were many more volunteer hours in 2019 (273) compared with 2022 (174). Overall staffing became more efficient with a reduction of the hours needed to run the market in 2021 and 2022.

Table 1. Tuesday Market metrics

Year	Number of Markets	Average Number of Customers	Dollars Spent at the Market	Average Number of Weekly Vendors	Staff, Intern and Volunteers Hours
2018	5	45*	\$2,741	9	140
2019	17	45*	\$7,509	7	273
2021	16	70	\$14,398	12	194
2022	16	58	\$16,936	12	174

\*estimated based on Rapid Market Assessment and total sales

In addition to military veterans, vendors included youth and others working to establish produce, food, and craft businesses. The meeting garden/food court has served as a social networking opportunity with regular attendance by various groups including:

- Latah County Commissioners
- Latah County Fair Board
- Eat Local Month Committee
- Master Gardeners
- WSU and U of I faculty and students in social groups
- various other neighborhood citizens

Social networking at the market serves to improve and increase social ties, strengthening social capital and thereby increasing community resiliency including food security (Warsaw, 2021). Out of 76 customers 20 responded (26%) to the market survey in 2021. All respondents expressed gratitude for the market and for the opportunity to safely socialize outside. Customers listed many benefits including music, social interaction, consistent fun for kids, and meeting farmers and other vendors. One customer said that they benefited from the market due to “more interactions with neighbors, especially after COVID lock-down. We met some vendors from local farms

and were able to share and learn from them.” The market customer base included families with children of all ages, and a wide range of ages from young adults to seniors.

Dollars spent at the market have helped improve the local economy by being spent with these new local businesses. A produce vendor from 2018 and 2019 was able to grow their business to sell at the larger Saturday Moscow Farmers Market during 2020 and 2021. Another craft vendor from 2019 was able to open a profitable storefront business in downtown Moscow even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to participating as a vendor, each of the sellers also expressed willingness to support the market by following market rules, sharing their sales data, attending vendor meetings, and providing a positive experience for customers.

The Tuesday Community Market has served as a business incubator and learning opportunity for new vendors and interns. All regular weekly vendors in 2021 indicated that they would like to have their booth evaluated. Evaluations were then conducted based on a booth photo with a standard market rubric regarding facets such as signage and table layout and provided back to each vendor who then made various improvements.

Additionally, some vendors indicated they were interested in entering the larger Saturday Moscow Farmers Market (MFM) in 2022. UI Extension Educator Iris Mayes attended a MFM City Commission meeting and requested that the jury committee attend the Tuesday Community Market to communicate MFM jury criteria to vendors, which they agreed to do and met with eight different vendors. Four of these vendors are now selling at the MFM.

In 2022, the market was awarded a \$250,000 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service grant to fund new marketing activities for the Tuesday Market including advertising, value-added food research and training, and development of an online farmers market. The goal of the grant is to increase the number of customers and profits for farmers.

## **Discussion**

While Stephenson et.al. (2006) found that half of new farmers markets do not last more than one year, Scott et.al (2015) found that longevity of a market leads to increased economic success. If a market can continue to function over time, revenue and customer base will grow. The Tuesday Market, although suspended in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, rebounded with increased overall sales in subsequent years 2021 and 2022. With a four-year track record and significant increase in marketing funding, the Tuesday Market is positioned to grow and thereby improve profit for its vendors. It will continue to operate as a business incubator and as a hands-on educational opportunity for university student interns and beginning farmers. The next phase of development includes a focus on diversity, sustainability and on supporting veteran vendors, and development of a more cooperative governing structure. Improving social ties between people who wouldn't otherwise interact builds social capital so that the market grows and the community is strengthened (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2013).

Farmers' markets require input of time and effort from vendors and organizers. Starting with a visible yet appealing location, dedicated vendors, and community support are key features of hosting a successful market. Markets also necessitate other types of public support such as a free location to hold the market and policies that allow for market activities such as selling prepared food and beverages. Extension faculty and staff can be well-positioned to facilitate farmers markets serving multiple goals that include education and access to fresh produce. A farmers' market can also serve as a contact point between Extension educators and community members to promote other programs such as master gardeners.

A resilient community is created over time by the efforts of many people and organizations. Access to fresh food and connection to local farmers who produce that food is important to the well-being of the community. Farmers markets serve that purpose and fulfill many other positive functions that strengthen the economic, social, and environmental fabric of a community.

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