

Farmer's Market Planning Guide



Setting up a Farmer's Market is a crucial step for success. Best practices always incorporate and maximize the safety of the partner charity's volunteers and clients. Each partner must carefully consider these three aspects when designing a flow of traffic model for the site.

Step 1: Prioritize and assess an area to locate the pallets

Protecting the food source once it has reached the partner charity site is an extremely important task. All produce and cases must be kept off the ground. Keeping the produce on a pallet or a table is the best way to keep produce off the ground and potential pests and contaminants at bay. Greens are sent to the site on ice. Second Harvest has a limited number of shade tents that may be borrowed upon request to keep produce cool. Thermal blankets can also be utilized.

Identify the entrance and exit points. If a partner charity's parking lot has multiple entrance and exit points, the partner charity should consider establishing only one entrance and one exit point for the market. Next, consider the safety of the volunteers and client households when locating the pallets for the market. All pallets should be aligned in a single file line along an edge of the lot that best counters traffic. Remember that volunteers must have the ability to maneuver around obstacles and pallets in a clean and safe environment.

Step 2: Identify and establish an area to have the households begin to line-up

Clients need a safe location to wait for the market to begin. The best way to maintain order and ensure safety is to designate a starting point for clients to line-up. Partner charities need to understand that clients will arrive early and the waiting lines can be very extensive; therefore, the best practice is to register the client households as they arrive.

If clients start arriving before the produce is delivered you will need to establish a crowd control plan to ensure everyone's safety. Staff, volunteers, and clients are to follow the directions of the driver in order to avoid hazards and injuries during truck maneuvering and product unloading process.

Step 3: Create an exit strategy

Both the clients and volunteers must be able to safely load vehicles and exit the grounds without the risk of being injured by moving vehicles. Assign traffic control volunteers to assist the vehicles in exiting and entering the parking lot. Continue this strategy until the market ends and all vehicles and clients have safely exited the parking lot.

Example Pallet/Table Set Up:

Stage the pallets in a single row allowing at least a foot of space between each pallet and at least 4 feet of space between the tables and the pallets. This will give the volunteers space to maneuver. Another best practice is to have 1 table for every 2 items of produce, plus 3 additional tables. The additional tables are used for both registering client households and storing empty boxes. An important best practice is to recycle the empty boxes by placing them on the empty table ahead of the other tables with the produce. Households can use the boxes to collect and carry the produce.

Each item at a table is referred to as a station, hence each table will have 2 stations and each household will receive an item at each station. Keep at least 2 distributors at each table, one for each item of produce the partner charity will distribute. Placing heavier items like 10 pound bagged potatoes at the end of the market is also a best practice.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Table 1 Empty Boxes	Table 2 Stations 1 & 2	Table 3 Stations 3 & 4	Table 4 Stations 5 & 6	Table 5 Stations 7 & 8	Table 6 Stations 9 & 10
------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------

Have the households start lining up in front of the first table. When the market begins, the clients can pick up an empty box at the first table and use it to load and carry the produce. The clients will pick out or the distributors will hand out the produce and the clients will exit the market on the other end with a box full of produce, where volunteers are ready to assist them with loading their vehicles.

*Consider obtaining carts or dollies for assisting the client households with loading the produce into their vehicles. Partner charities have obtained shopping carts from local grocers, utilized dollies and various types of carts with wheels to serve this purpose.

Distribution Models

Here are two models we have seen work for you to consider:

1. Walk Through

The “Walk Through” approach is a line-up method that allows the client households to move freely through the market. Households will need to wait patiently in line for the market. When the market begins, each household will travel along the front ledge of the first table to the last table, picking up a bag or an item of produce at each station. This model gives the clients the option to slide their boxes and/or bags along the front ledges of the tables until they reach the end. A client household does not have to take an item that they will not use at home. Once a client household completes the market, it is extremely important to assist them in loading their vehicles and exiting the grounds to make room for more households.

2. Drive Through

The “Drive Through” Farmer’s Market is not as efficient in measuring the turnout of households as the “Walk Through” model. However, the “Drive Through” model is more efficient.

- Partner charities will utilize the same set up as described above to ensure best practices are met in safety and distribution
- Best practice is to prepare produce boxes ahead of time, some bulk items like carrots, beets, tomatoes, etc. will still require bagging
- Partner charities will need to assign more traffic control volunteers to direct traffic and more in-take volunteers to register client households as they arrive in their vehicles
- Each household in the vehicle will receive a ticket from the in-take volunteer and the driver or passenger will give the ticket(s) to the lead loader at the beginning of the market
- The lead loader will notify the other loaders of the number of households in each vehicle
- Loaders will place boxes and bags of produce prepared by the distributors in the vehicle
- When the vehicle is loaded, the traffic controllers will direct the vehicle to the exit
- The partner charity will need to store excess produce and give it away at the next distribution day if it is not distributed in its entirety on the market day

Clean Up

Partner charities are completely responsible for all of the clean-up following the Farmer’s Market including the disposal of pallets. All garbage, wrap and boxes must be disposed of at the cost and time of the partner charity; however, the amount disposed of can be significantly reduced if the partner charity recycles the boxes by providing them to the clients as they enter the market. Pallets have become a popular item for crafters and are usually picked up if left on a curb. The clean-up time will take a ½ hour to an hour afterwards to complete. Please be sure to plan and schedule volunteers to assist in the cleanup process.

Quantity to Distribute

It is the responsibility of the partner charity to determine the appropriate amount of produce to distribute to clients at the Farmer's Market. The availability of produce is directly related to the growing season and varieties will vary from July to November. Quantities, types and packaging of produce which Second Harvest receives are constantly changing. When determining the amount of produce to send to a partner charity, Second Harvest takes the estimated household count and the amount of produce on hand into consideration. Once the order is placed by the Second Harvest Customer Service Coordinator, an order confirmation will be emailed to the partner charity ordering contact. This order confirmation may be useful in determining the quantity to distribute to clients.

Second Harvest does not recommend pre-bagging produce ahead of time. The bags hold heat and shorten the shelf-life of the produce.

Steps to determine quantity to distribute:

1. Obtain an approximate count of each item received.
2. Divide that by your expected household count.
3. Decide on several check points during the distribution to consider whether you are above or below your target household count and adjust the amount distributed accordingly

For Example:

- 24 cases of peppers have 50 individual peppers. A partner charity expects to serve 150 households. Each household will receive 8 peppers.
- 19 cases have 8 packages of 5 lb. bags of apples. A partner charity expects to have 150 households. Each household will receive 1- 5 lb. package of apples. At the mid-point of the distribution the partner charity discovers that they've only served half the number of households expected. The partner charity begins handing out 2 bags of apples to each household in an attempt to distribute all the apples they received.

Client Education

An important part of the Farmer's Market is to educate clients on how to use the produce and to promote food safety. Signs, handouts, recipe cards and demonstrations are all excellent ways to promote nutrition education and food safety at Farmer's Markets. The Second Harvest Program and Education Coordinator can work with partner charities to promote nutrition education and food safety.

Suggested Volunteer Roles

For a Farmer's Market to operate smoothly, a partner charity must have an adequate amount of volunteers present. Each market will differ depending upon how big it is and how many clients are expected, but here are our tips:

Recruit 15 to 20 volunteers to assist in the operation of a Farmer's Market. Volunteers will have various roles at the market and they must have an understanding of what is required of them.

Farmer's Market Coordinator: The Farmer's Market Coordinator will be a trained member of the partner charity. The Farmer's Market Coordinator must organize the volunteers and the clients while they prepare or wait in-line for the market to start. He or she will ensure best practices are met on the day of the market. When the market time arrives and the volunteers are ready to begin, the Farmer's Market Coordinator should make a public announcement to thank the clients for coming and the volunteers for all their efforts. Take a few minutes during the announcement to tell the clients how the market works and how important it is for them to remain patient. In addition, tell the clients how important it is for safety reasons that they load their vehicle and exit the premise as directed once they have made their way through the market. This will help prevent congestion and complications from arising. In addition, the Farmer's Market Coordinator is responsible for the oversight of all volunteers.

Traffic Controllers: This volunteer's objective is to ensure that clients are entering and exiting the establishment in a safe and orderly fashion

- It is best to have at least 2 traffic controllers, 1 to assist the vehicles entering the market and 1 to assist the vehicles exiting the market

In-take Volunteers: This volunteer is responsible for asking client households for the appropriate information to determine eligibility and having every household complete and sign an Eligibility To Take Food Home form. (If using PantryTrak, reference the PantryTrak section on page 3.)

The Farmer's Market Coordinator should plan to have at least 3 in-take volunteers to assist the clients completing the Eligibility To Take Food Home forms at the registration table. At least 1 in-take volunteer at the end of the line to maintain order is very helpful.

In-take volunteers should be positioned in an open, visible location. Once the client household has registered, the in-take volunteer can direct them to the end of the waiting line. A best practice is to have an additional in-take volunteer(s) positioned at the end of the waiting line with a clipboard and extra forms to register client households that may not have signed an Eligibility To Take Food Home form at the registration table. The in-take volunteer(s) at the end of line can also maintain order in the waiting line.

Distributors: The primary role of a distributor is to interact with the clients, load tables for the client to pick out produce, or hand out predetermined amount(s) of produce to each household. Either way, the distributor will assist the client or hand out a predetermined amount into the client's box or bag as they make their way through the market. (i.e., 2 stalks of celery, 1 head of cabbage, 1 bag of apples, etc.)

- Partner charities need at least 1 distributor for each 1 to 2 items of produce at the market
- A few extra distributors will increase the speed at which the line flows and reduce the workload on the other distributors, packers, loaders and cleanup crew

Loaders: Some clients are capable of carrying and loading their own boxes and/or bags in their vehicle, however some of them are not. Loaders will assist the client in carrying and loading their vehicle. One requirement for a Loader volunteer is an ability to lift between 30 and 50 pounds.

- A partner charity should have 4 to 6 volunteers to help load vehicles

Cleanup Crew: Every partner charity needs volunteers to keep the area clean and safe. These volunteers will help lift heavy boxes onto the table, pick up loose articles of plastic and confine garbage. The cleanup crew will provide empty, durable boxes to client households waiting at the front of the line. This will reduce the amount of garbage and time needed to clean up at the end of the market. As the market continues, the cleanup crew must break down soiled or nondurable boxes while stacking the emptied pallets to keep the area where the volunteers are working safe. One requirement for a Cleanup Crew volunteer is an ability to lift between 50 and 70 pounds.

- Each partner charity should have at least 2 or 3 volunteers to assist in this process

Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteers can be recruited through the partner charity and the community. Volunteers can come from any of the following:

- Partner charities
- Family and friends
- Professional associations (Rotary, etc.)
- Schools
- Churches and faith-based organizations
- Universities and colleges
- Government agencies
- Community organizations
- Sporting events
- Other fundraising events