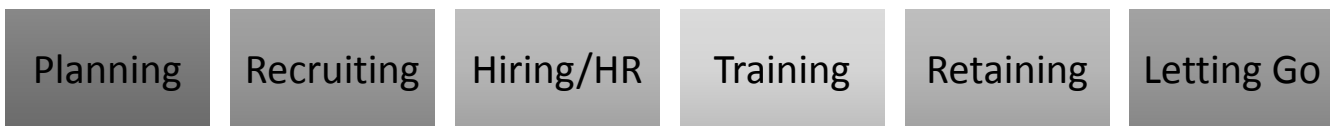


# Hiring for Farmers Markets Success

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 Available as PDF at: <http://www.wafarmersmarkettoolkit.org/chapter-4/>

The goal of this guide is to help farmers and other vendors recruit, train, and retain employees who enhance your success at farmers markets. End game: Build your team. Grow your markets. Good sales. Loyal customers. Strong partnership with the market organizers and peace with other vendors.



## PLANNING

There are options how to get help to grow your business. Think through what is best fit for where you are now and where you want to go.

### Type of position offered:

- Hourly or salary (overtime exempt)?
- Full-time or part-time?
- Seasonal or year-round?
- Employee or independent contractor or intern?
- Farmers markets only? Or on-farm and farmers markets?

### Budget including:

- Base pay
- Bonus or incentive
- Payroll taxes
- Benefits (if offered)
- Training investment
- Tools and equipment

### Job description including:

- Purpose of position and intro to your farm/business
- Who person will report to? Who will supervise this position?
- Terms of employment
- Compensation, including eligibility for bonus or incentive
- Duties, including travel and lifting
- Requirements, including own vehicle or driving record
- Goals or performance measures
- Instructions on how to apply

## RECRUITING

Finding staff that represent your farm the way you want them to with shoppers and in markets; reliable; know your products; will stay.

- Word of mouth, especially from past employees who recommended people.
- Reach out to local ag programs: SAGE, Viva Farms, WSU Organic Certificate Program, Evergreen Organic Farm.

- Ask farmers market managers and staff.
- Job Boards: Good Food Jobs, Idealist, Craigslist or local community Facebook groups

### Recruiting local people at farmers markets.

*Tips from Stacy Felure of Tonnemaker Farm (2017 WSFMA presentation)*

#### PROS:

- They know the neighborhood and may be able to help with local trends, contacts and patterns
- They already know where the market is located and can get there without transportation from you

#### CONS:

- They might not be able to help load/unload before and after markets
- They might not have transportation to work at other markets

**Employee references are key!** Employees know the job and will recommend people they feel can handle what the job entails

## HIRING

### 1. Interview:

- What do you ask about them?
- What do you tell them about the job?
- What key skills you are screening for?
- What questions will you ask all applicants?
- What is the process (e.g. phone screening before interviewing in person)?

### 2. Homework

- References  
“Resumes are only worth the paper they are written on if you don’t check their references. Buyer beware!” Stacy Felure, Tonnemaker Farm.
- Background checks are performed on new employees  
Tip: Washington State Patrol “Watch” aggregates criminal records and does background checks. To get started, you need the person’s name and birthday. <https://fortress.wa.gov/wsp/watch/Home/Index>
- DMV report (driving record)

### 3. Personnel check list:

- Employee’s legal name, contact information, and emergency contact information is complete, up-to-date and located so that others could find it. Make it part of the application process!
- IRS Form 1099 for employees and W9 for contractors; update annually.
- Copy of valid driver’s license.
- IRS Forms W-4 (Federal Income Tax Withholding), I9 (Employee Eligibility).

## TRAINING (& RETRAINING)

Training saves time and money in the long run by retaining good employees and making good employees into great ones. Customers also notice high staff turnover. Adopt the mindset that training is ongoing process.

- Start slow. Set up for success.
- Create an “in house” program and tap into external training opportunities. Ex: Neighborhood Farmers Market Onboarding Checklist.
- Opportunities to grow. Hit milestones or goals for first month, season.
- Opportunities to own with full autonomy. Pathway to being a crew leader, greater input
- Reward progress.
- Discover talents and skills and use them.
- Provide feedback + have difficult conversations early.

Feed employee expectations:

- Direction – need to know where you are trying to go.... What does the boss want them to do?
- Tell them your story, the farm’s story. Why are you doing this? What are your goals? Deepen their product knowledge by sharing your own.

### CORE SKILLS: HEALTH, SAFETY, HYGIENE, MARKET RULES

Safety, market rules, and regulations (Money, safety, harassment, emergency, food safety)

- All employees know where to find up-to-date first aid kits and water flush bottles, including in truck going to market. Consider paying for employees to get first aid/CPR training.
- Employees and family members know how to monitor for security issues and what to do in the event of a security breach
- Food safety
- Market rules. Ex: NFM or Vancouver ‘Quick Guide’ from Vendor Handbook.
- Dressing for appearance, safety, and the physical aspects of the job.

### SALES SKILLS: DISPLAY, PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE, FARM & FARMER STORY, CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Train on each product and variety sold – and how it changes over the season.
- Give them product descriptions and talking points. For example, these apples are for eating for 2 days, then good for cooking.
- Expect/encourage staff to cook the food
- Materials to give to staff to support them while selling at FM. Ex: Market Profile, Handbook, orientation materials – call your Market Manager.
- Create “specialists” to give sense of ownership and tap in to product nerd
- Establish Money handling procedures: Credit card security; Cash handling; EBT, tokens, matching programs, FMNP, and any other market currency

### + Focus on Customer Service:

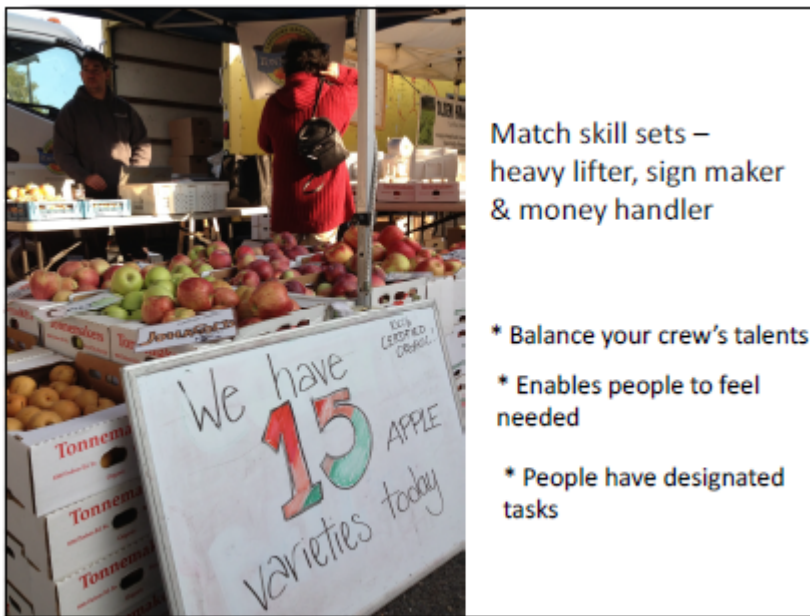
- Welcoming and first impressions
- Active listening and good communication skills
- Expert product knowledge – educating, providing alternatives
- Cultural competence

- Visual display
- Negotiation, price concerns, handling complaints/concerns
- Transactions

## RETAINING

- Surround them with other good people*
- Your staff will tell you who they do like working with and who they don't like working with.*
- Happy staff leads to better sales & service.*
- Employee (fun!) functions help build a "team feeling."*
- Mission statement for the staff so they can have ownership, and know what the end goal.*
- Ask for their input whenever you can, especially on market decisions that they may have better first-hand knowledge about.*
- Give your staff autonomy.*
- When possible, take employees to your farm – helps them feel connected to what you are doing.*

Stacy Felure (Tonnemaker Farm)



Pay a fair wage.

Pay scale and compensations ideas

Investment in career of person hired.

## LETTING GO

- Legal Dos & Don'ts
- Exit Interview
- Thank you