

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

**Ada County**

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## Helping Treasure Valley farmers markets evaluate impact and plan for the future

### AT A GLANCE

**Rapid Market Assessments capture valuable consumer information and document social and economic impacts of farmers markets in Idaho communities.**

### The Situation

During the summer months, 10 farmers markets operate in the Treasure Valley region of southwest Idaho. These markets vary widely in size and scale, from the multi-block downtown Saturday Capital City Public Market in Boise to small weekday evening markets in communities like Caldwell and Weiser. Most of these markets are managed by volunteers, often vendors themselves, who have limited time, training or resources to devote to strategic planning, evaluation and communication. As a result, a markets' health, social and economic benefits are not always known or fully realized by the market, community or stakeholders (city officials, funders, etc.)

### Our Response

Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) is an efficient survey method for researchers and markets to easily capture the opinions and habits of market-goers on a single market day. Information collected on attendance, consumer habits and preferences helps market managers, boards and vendors assess how well they are achieving their mission and goals and may be useful in planning and future decision making. The process was developed by Oregon State University.

The key components of an RMA are attendance counts and dot surveys that ask questions previously determined by the market staff and researchers. Volunteers are also key to the process.



Rapid Market Assessment conducted with the Boise Capital City Public Market in July 2016. Photo by Ariel Agenbroad.

During the 2016 and 2017 seasons, Area Extension Educator Ariel Agenbroad conducted seven RMAs in the Treasure Valley, with support from University of Idaho undergraduate intern Gabriela Franco (in 2016) and the Idaho Farmers Market Association's Program Director Eileen Stachowski (in 2017). They collaborated with market managers and boards of directors to develop questions, recruit volunteers, conduct the assessments, evaluate the data and generate reports for each market.

Markets assessed included Boise Farmers Market, Boise Farmers Mobile Market, Capital City Public Market, North End Organic Nursery Market (Garden City), Payette Farmers Market, Nampa Farmers Market and Weiser Farmers Market.

The RMAs were conducted during July and August.

## Program Outcomes

Each market received a report containing the complete results from their RMA with graphs, explanations, interpretation and comments, prepared by University of Idaho Extension. Data included attendance counts, number of vendors present, daily reported sales (when available) and the responses from the dot survey questions. Although dot survey questions varied slightly from market to market, depending on what the market most wanted to learn from customers, questions about the motivation for attendance and visitors' spending habits were asked at each location in order to begin collecting regional and statewide information on markets' public value and economic impact.

The RMA reports provide valuable findings that markets use to demonstrate their economic and social value to a community and contributions to downtown revitalization. For example, even at very low estimates of average customer spending, the Nampa Farmers Market is generating tens of thousands of dollars in economic activity every month, and 57 percent of customers are staying downtown after market to dine and shop at area merchants. This information can be vital when securing city support, permits and/or funding.

Markets have also been using the results of their RMAs to make adjustments that strengthen their market, focus advertising and outreach efforts, and add products and services.

Following their 2016 RMA, the Boise Farmers Mobile Market began adding fresh local eggs to the produce van during the 2017 season.

Nampa Farmers Market Manager David Zink's comments reflect the appreciation and enthusiasm of markets participating in RMAs with this comment:

"Thanks for helping us with this whole process. The final write-up is very good. I appreciate your attention to all the details. This will be a great tool for us to use going forward. I will be sharing this with the board so that we can have some well-directed planning meetings in our off-season. Also, it was nice to see how relatively simple an RMA is to conduct. I expect that the market will incorporate various aspects of this – especially attendance records on a regular basis."

## The Future

Recognizing the benefits of collecting and aggregating data from farmers markets statewide, University of Idaho Extension, UI Economics Professor Steve Peterson and the Idaho farmers market collaborated in 2017 to develop and present a Rapid Market Assessment training webinar for Extension educators and farmers market managers. Partners are also working with Peterson to develop a number of standardized questions and a plan for conducting RMAs with all 46 markets in Idaho over the next three years.

Eileen Stachowski of the Idaho Farmers Association, affirms "Farmers markets are in a unique position because while the individual vendors are for-profit businesses, the management operates with limited resources, capacity and leverage, especially when documenting their importance in communities. This is why RMA, with the small commitment of time and effort, are so effective."



Example reports produced by UI Extension for Boise Farmers Mobile Market and Nampa Farmers Markets.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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