Find A Market

FOR FIRST TIME EVENT ORGANIZERS

Start a Market

30 steps from “what kind of event is this” to “should we do it again”

Tick each box as you go. One step a day works well, and so does one step a weekend. Rules, fees and insurance requirements vary by town and venue, so ask the offices that apply to you. This is shared experience, not legal advice.

Decide

Steps 1 to 2

- [ ] **1 What kind of event is it, and who is it for?**
  A market repeats, a pop-up is a one-off, a craft fair leans on handmade vendors, and a fundraiser needs a clear cause. Write two lines: what it is, and who will walk in the door.

- [ ] **2 Write your one-sentence goal.**
  For a first event, small and clear beats big. A goal tells you how many vendors to look for, how much space you need and what counts as success.

Place and time

Steps 3 to 7

- [ ] **3 Pick a date.**
  Check school events, holidays, big sports weekends and other markets within driving distance. Choose two possible dates in case your first venue says no.

- [ ] **4 Pick a venue.**
  Walk it at the time your event will happen. Look at foot traffic, parking, shade, flat ground for tents, power, restrooms and a safe place to unload.

- [ ] **5 Ask the venue the right questions.**
  Tents and stakes, power, restrooms, accessibility, rain plan, day-of contact, fees, deposits and insurance. Get the answers in writing, even if it is an email.

- [ ] **6 Call the right offices.**
  Try the city or town clerk, the health department if food will be sold, the fire marshal if there will be tents, and the venue owner. Ask what is required, how far ahead and what it costs, and write down each name.

- [ ] **7 Ask the insurance questions.**
  Many venues and some towns ask organizers for a certificate of insurance, and some ask vendors for their own. Talk to a broker or your venue about what is required for a small market.

Money

Steps 8 to 9

- [ ] **8 Build the budget.**
  List every cost with rough amounts, then ask the venue and the offices for real numbers. Add a second column for income and find the minimum that covers your costs.

- [ ] **9 Set booth fees.**
  Divide the costs you must cover by the number of spaces you can realistically fill, and compare nearby events. A flat fee per 10 by 10 space is easy to explain. Decide what the fee covers.

Vendors

Steps 10 to 15

- [ ] **10 Decide how many vendors, and what mix.**
  Count how many 10 by 10 spaces fit with room for aisles. A rough rule is about a third per category, a few anchors and room for first-timers. Aim for a number you can fill.

- [ ] **11 Write the vendor application.**
  Ask for what you need to decide: name, what they sell, booth size, photos of their display and power needs. Keep it short enough that people finish it.

- [ ] **12 Find your first ten vendors.**
  Walk other events, ask local makers and guilds, post in local vendor groups and ask friendly vendors who they would recommend. A personal invitation beats a blast.

- [ ] **13 Answer vendor questions.**
  Keep one page with the date, hours, fee, setup time, parking, power and rain plan. Send the same answers to everyone and reply within a day.

- [ ] **14 Choose vendors, and say no kindly.**
  Balance the categories, look at the photos and keep a waitlist. A short, polite no with a reason, and a note about next time, protects the relationship.

- [ ] **15 Send a vendor welcome packet.**
  Date, arrival window, booth number, where to park and unload, power rules, the rain plan, who to call on the day and what to bring.

Plan the day

Steps 16 to 19

- [ ] **16 Draw the layout map.**
  Start with a grid of standard 10 by 10 spaces. Leave aisles wide enough for two people carrying bags and keep clear paths to restrooms and exits. Place anchors first and decide how corners get assigned.

- [ ] **17 Plan load-in and parking.**
  Stagger arrival times, put one person at the gate, keep vendor parking apart from shopper parking and have vehicles out of the aisles before opening.

- [ ] **18 Make a weather plan.**
  Decide in advance what rain, heat or wind means: who makes the call, by what time and how vendors and shoppers hear about it. Remind vendors to weigh down their tents.

- [ ] **19 Plan payments and a cash float.**
  Decide how vendors pay their fees and how you record them. If you will sell tokens, raffle tickets or anything else at a table, plan small bills for change and a way to take cards.

People and promotion

Steps 20 to 24

- [ ] **20 Recruit volunteers.**
  Three to six helpers cover most small events: gate, check-in, aisles and trash. Give each one a clear job, a start time and a badge so people know who to ask.

- [ ] **21 Make the flyer.**
  Date, time, place and what makes the day worth the trip, big enough to read from a few feet away. Put the date and place in every post and print.

- [ ] **22 Create the event listing and event page.**
  Put the same facts in one place that people can find and share. On Find A Market you can claim or register your event so vendors and shoppers can find it.

- [ ] **23 Reach local press, calendars and partners.**
  Three to four weeks out, send the facts to community calendars, local papers, libraries, chambers and neighborhood groups, with one photo and one contact.

- [ ] **24 Post on a six week timeline.**
  Six weeks out, announce the date and place. At four weeks, show a few vendors, with their permission. At two weeks, what to expect and where to park. At one week, hours, parking and the weather plan. The day before, a one-line reminder.

The day, and after

Steps 25 to 30

- [ ] **25 Pack the event-day kit.**
  Printed map and vendor list, zip ties, tape, markers, signs, trash bags, a first aid kit, a phone charger, water, sunscreen, small bills and everyone’s phone numbers.

- [ ] **26 Run the day with a timeline.**
  Walk the site early and put up signs. Stagger load-in, hold a short check-in and huddle an hour before opening, keep one person walking the aisles, and check trash and restrooms at midday.

- [ ] **27 Tear down and clean up.**
  Remind vendors of the teardown rules gently, take a final walk with the venue contact and leave the space better than you found it.

- [ ] **28 Thank vendors, volunteers and the venue.**
  Email vendors within 48 hours and ask one question: what would have made the day better? Thank the venue contact and your helpers by name.

- [ ] **29 Survey vendors and shoppers.**
  Ask what worked, what did not and what would bring them back. Write down your own numbers while memory is fresh: vendor count, rough attendance, weather and what ran late.

- [ ] **30 Decide on date two.**
  With the numbers and the answers in front of you, pick one thing to keep and one thing to change, then set the next date. A repeat date is what turns an event into a market.

Your event at a glance

Fill this in as you go and keep it with your notes.

Event name	**Date and rain date**
Venue and day-of contact	
Offices called and when	
Booth fee and number of spaces	**Rain call made by (who and what time)**
Insurance and permits, with names	
Two lines: what it is and who it is for	

Talk it through with other first time organizers

Start a Market is a Facebook group run by Find A Market. New organizers post one step a day and compare notes, so you can ask your questions where people are planning the same thing.

Join Start a Market on Facebook | More for organizers: find-a-market.com/organizers