



# EVENT PLANNING TOOLKIT

**Created by:**



## Fresh on the Farm Event Toolkit



A **Fresh on the Farm event** is a series of on-farm tours that provide the public an opportunity to meet local farmers, learn about their farms, sample the foods they grow and purchase their products. The event is designed to benefit your local community by cultivating relationships and inspiring residents and guests to “taste” the difference of buying local, as well as contribute to the larger local food system conversation.

### **Before we dive into structuring and planning, here’s a bit about Healthy Harvest of North Iowa:**

Our **Vision** is that Healthy Harvest of North Iowa will serve as **the** resource for creating, developing, and supporting a community-based North Iowa regional food system.

Our **Mission** is to lead and strengthen diverse partnerships to build a sustainable regional and local food system that brings health and vitality to our communities.

In other words: we see food is a critical platform for community and economic development as well as for public health – and we hope you will too.

Healthy Harvest of North Iowa has assisted with Fresh on the Farm events in Franklin, Mitchell, Floyd Counties. As we continue to work with more communities, we further our understanding of the power of these events and gain better insight into the planning process. The following resources are intended to serve as a base to your planning, with the acknowledgement that each community is different in their resources available and the challenges that may develop.

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## Fresh on the Farm Event Toolkit

### Building Your Team

A Fresh on the Farm event should be developed with support from a 4-6 community member committee. This will be a working committee. Your core members will likely be producers with farms, wineries, or breweries in the area who are interested showcasing their operations, but since the season can often be a busy time for them, consider other players who can bring good planning skills and community connections to the conversation. Consider partners who would be interested in promoting local agriculture as an attractive part of the community, including:

- Local food advocates
- Schools
- Service clubs
- Businesses
- Chamber of Commerce
- City government officials
- Grocery stores/Restaurants
- Local artisans or musicians

It's important to keep in mind that some planning partners fill nuts and bolts planning while others will be dynamite at finite task aspects of the planning. You will need the “thinkers” and the “doers.” It can also be helpful to evaluate skill sets of each of your team members, such as graphic design/marketing or ticket sales and sponsorship. The more diverse resources that your team has, the stronger your event will be.

Healthy Harvest staff or Board may be contacted for possible assistance with the planning process.

### Goal Setting

The impact of the Fresh on the Farm event depends upon how well it reaches target goals and advances connections set by the planning team. **The goals your team chooses will guide discussions around budgeting, partnerships, customer-base, and more.** It's important that each team member understands the agreed upon goals, so that each decision that is made supports the main goals of your event.

Healthy Harvest believes a main goal of Fresh on the Farm events should be building relationships, including:

- among attendees who get to explore the local farms and businesses, talk with the producers about their products, and maybe even sample some of the goods!
- between producers– helping to strengthen relationship amongst local producers allowing that could lead to strategic plans between farms, such as how to fill a hole in local offerings.
- among committee members who may find this event serves as a spring board for further community investment in local food.
- between other community assets and local food – i.e. artisans, musicians, etc.- who may participate in the event.

Other goals may include highlighting local resources, raising funds, expanding the capacity of the local food system, increasing local tourism, and more. Each community is different; therefore, goals will vary. It is important to regularly check to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with your team's goals.

Healthy Harvest of North Iowa offers to provide guidance and support. Ideally a Fresh on the Farm event should not be an annual standalone event; rather we believe in exploring what other doors connected to local food development this event can help open for your community.

A post-event evaluation meeting should be scheduled as part of the planning process to assess the event's ability to meet the goals you set and determine next steps.

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### Planning Timeline

Planning generally should allow 4-6 months with monthly meetings and regular email exchanges. Team members should expect some delegation tasks to be completed between meetings.

- 5-6 months before event
  - Pull together interested team members to discuss event idea
  - Evaluate team for who could should be recruited
- 4-5 months before event
  - Meet with Healthy Harvest representative(s) to set goals and objectives for event
  - Decide on a target date(s) for event
  - Discuss the format of the event (Open house, scheduled tour, multiple dates, etc.)
  - Identify list of locations and plan for how to start the conversation with each location
  - Build budget and determine sponsorship needs – assign recruitment plan
- 3 months before event
  - Review the list of interested locations to evaluate layout of tour map
  - Develop list of additional producers and local artisans who could add to each location (musicians, artists, food trucks, other producers, etc.)
  - Recruit sponsors based on previously discussed plan
- 2 months before event
  - Follow up with locations and additional guests as to their commitment
  - Finalize core event details for use in marketing
- 6 weeks before event
  - Begin publicity of event – press release, flyers, social media, radio etc.
  - Finalize sponsor list for marketing purposes
  - Finalize commitment from additional guest producers and entertainment
- 1 month before event
  - Continue with PR
- 1 week before event
  - Develop supplies list, including signage, activity materials, maps, etc.
  - Create a day-of schedule and assign committee members to day-of event roles
- Event
  - Host/manage event
  - Take photos and video for post-event promotion
  - Enjoy the tour and your hard work
- 2-3 weeks after the event
  - Host post–event meeting to debrief strengthens/challenges of event
  - Evaluate the event’s ability to meet goals
  - Finalize all budget issues
  - Consider next steps

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### Event Planning Tips

Fresh on the Farm events have some features that we hope to replicate between communities, but each community will have their own unique circumstances that will influence the design of their event.

To hold true to the spirit of Fresh on the Farm events, we expect the event to:

- Feature as much local product as possible – produce, meat, honey, flour/baked goods, beer/wine, artisan products (soap, wood carvings, pottery, etc.)
  - Food producers can be sourced from Healthy Harvest’s North Iowa Local Food Guide (see “Find Local Food” at our website: [www.healthyharvestofni.com](http://www.healthyharvestofni.com)).
- Capitalize on the experience of being “fresh on the farm” – have producers present directly to attendees through demonstrations and/or tastings, and allowing for questions to be asked
  - It is encouraged to have youth activities that highlight the potential to become a farmer
- Promote the products available in a manageable, identifiable area (i.e. one county).
- Consider various format options\*: Multiple Open Houses has set hours for all locations (i.e. 12-4pm) that attendees can visit each of the farms; Scheduled tour is more controlled for a group of people to travel around to each farm on a set schedule (i.e. 1-1:45pm at location #1, 2-2:45pm at location #2, and so on).

<b>Format</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Multiple Open Houses	Allows attendees to flow at their own pace and on their own schedule  Likely have attendance spread out over multiple hours instead of all packed into set blocks of time  Single day with larger attendance potential is easier for recruiting other vendors/entertainment to participate	Need venues that are close together  Difficult for ticket sales  Difficult to gauge expected attendance numbers  Each site must meet expected quality of experience
Scheduled Tour	Ensures each attendee visit each location/guarantees set # of attendance  Limits the amount of time each location needs to be available for customers  Allows for potential of multiple dates  Allows for ticket sales	Requires coordination of schedules amongst multiple locations  Logistics of transportation (i.e. bus vs. caravan of vehicles)  May limit attendance based on transportation (i.e. bus)  Difficult to attract other producers/entertainment to join for short time block

We seek to design the events to compliment partner efforts, assets and circumstances. For example, the Franklin County Farm Crawl held 2012 – 2016 included a Christmas tree farm, a pumpkin patch, a winery, and a fruit/vegetable farm, that were within a 10-mile radius of each other. Similarly, a group in Mitchell and Floyd Counties created a map of produce farms, a restaurant that locally sources, and a winery across a 15-mile radius in 2013-2014. The key is to be creative with your community resources.

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### Setting the Budget

Ideally, a Fresh on the Farm event should primarily serve as a “consciousness raising” event and an opportunity for producers to showcase their products. It can be planned to serve as a fundraiser too – as seed money for your next event or another identified local food priority initiative – but for many communities in this first year, budgetary goals are to cover costs and have a bit of surplus at the end.

We encourage communities to identify a local partner to act as fiscal agent for this project or set-up an independent project account with a local banking partner.

Your team’s budget needs to be built upon:

- **Promotional expenses** – radio, t.v?, printed posters, maps, hand-outs w/farm summary and info about the other “visiting” vendors
- **Cost of transportation** if necessary (for scheduled tour method)
- **Cost of activities**, like music, samples, games, etc - Largely covered by ticket sales (if applicable)
- **Farm liability insurance, food/alcohol permit, etc.**
- **Porta-potties/handwashing stations** (if no on-site restroom is available at each stop)
- Optional: “Seed money for future event and/or local food project”

If your event is structured in such a way that allows for ticket sales, then you may use those funds to cover your expenses. It is likely you will still need sponsorship support to cover some core costs, such as promotional expenses. Consider sponsors with common goals and commitment to a healthy community.

Your team may also ask that each participating farm and/or vendors contribute funds, as they benefit from the promotion. One suggested formula: Host farms: \$100; Guest vendors: 15% of their product sale (not to exceed \$20).

Sample budget items include:

- Income
  - Farm/vendor contributions
  - Ticket sales (if applicable)
  - Sponsors contributions
- Expenses
  - Marketing expenses (Design, printing, social media, radio air time, etc)
    - Pre-event promotion
    - On-site signage and directional signs to help people find the farms
  - Entertainment costs (if applicable)
  - Transportation costs (if applicable)

Other things to consider are the costs that are unique to your event. It is also important to look at licensing and insurance necessary for your event. It is unlikely, but you may need to acquire a temporary food service permit, a liquor license, dram shop insurance, or other legal documents. If you are unsure about requirements, reach out to your food establishments or Public Health for direction.

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### Working with Local Farms

Involving farms in tourism (also known as agritourism) is a new concept for many communities. Local farms might be looking for a way to promote their business to a new group of customers, and could already have a schedule that aligns with the proposed timeline of your event. Alternatively, some local producers do not typically sell from their farms, so a Fresh on the Farm event could allow the public an opportunity to get a behind the scenes tour to view their practices and see where the magic happens.

It may take some time to gain traction with local area residents on **why** they should attend, but once you get them on site, you'll want to wet their appetite for local products in a way that will keep them coming back. That is why we recommend involving as many 'vendors' as possible to 'wow' guests who attend.

Remember to include all types of local products to showcase all that the community has to offer. This includes foods (produce, honey, jam/jelly, meat, eggs, dairy, baked goods, etc.) and drinks (wine, beer, etc.) as well as hand-crafted products like pottery, soaps/lotions, woodworking, and more. It can also be fun to incorporate local talent, such as musicians and artists, for entertainment.

Your planning team should do all they can to **promote attendance at all host locations** – this includes:

- Creating a map with a suggested route to minimize travel time
- Ensuring there is an equal balance of activities at all locations
- Scheduling the hours for attendees to have enough time to thoroughly explore each venue

There's nothing worse than shoppers getting the feeling that they could have stopped at one farm and have seen all there was to see – instead **each location should have its own personality**, to give attendees a different experience at each place and build on their interest. Embracing this type of plan will help each host site to feel as though they received their share of the benefit as well. Each farm might already have some relationships with vendors who would be interested in participating in the event at their location. This is absolutely encouraged, just remember that the planning team should view the entire event, to ensure that balance exist and to avoid repetition.

We encourage farm hosts to line up some extra traffic control help with parking and bathroom directions, to allow farm owners to be available to host visitors without being preoccupied the day of the event.

### Including Restaurants and More

If your community has restaurants who source locally, or are willing to enter the conversation, consider making them a stop on your map or ask them to attend as a vendor. For example, Taste in Osage was present at the Mitchell/Floyd County Fresh on the Farm tours. Some communities might even have a food truck that uses local product – if so, invite them to set up at one of the farms. Furthering the conversation to include not only the farms, but larger-scale buyers of the product is just another way to develop your community's investment into the local food system.

If these restaurants are unsure of where to source their product, share a copy of Healthy Harvest's Local Food Guide. This information is available on **www.healthyharvestni.com** under "Find Local Food."

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### Marketing Hints

Promotion of your event is key if you want people to attend. It's best to get information circulated starting at least one month prior to your event, but six weeks is ideal. The tactics you use will be up to your committee, but successful methods in other communities have included social media, flyers, radio promos and interviews, and press releases (sample is below). Healthy Harvest is happy to supply samples of past event materials for your reference. Don't forget to share your event date and information with the Healthy Harvest team so we can list it on our website and Facebook page.



Note: participating farms, vendors and sponsors should be listed on promotional materials whenever possible. Be sure to share promotional materials to your partners and sponsors to share with their customers and employees.

### Sample Press Release

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### CONTACT:

Contact name, phone number, email address

## \_\_\_\_\_ County Local Foods Committee Hosts Fresh on the Farm Event

*Take a crawl around to explore the local products and build community*

(City, IA) – date – The (NAME OF LOCAL FOODS COMMITTEE) has partnered with local farmers and artisans to present the first annual (EVENT NAME) to be held (DATE). A brief statement about what makes the event unique to your community.

Quote from local farm hosting part of the event.

The event will be hosted at (LOCATION) beginning at (TIME). Explanation of schedule of events, highlighting each stop and what attendees will find there.

Quote from Committee Member about community impact.

Thank you to list of event sponsors for their commitment to our community and for support the development of our local food system.

(Tickets details including pricing and where they can be purchased. Space is limited, so early reservation is encouraged!)

###

(LOCAL FOODS COMMITTEE NAME) is a group of volunteers comprised of (PARTNER TYPES). All members share a common interest in promoting the local foods movement in (COUNTY NAME) and the North Iowa area.



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### Sample Sponsor Letter

CONTACT NAME  
MAILING ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE, ZIP

Dear (CONTACT NAME),

The (NAME OF LOCAL FOOD COMMITTEE) is partnering with Healthy Harvest of North Iowa, (SHORT LIST OF PARTNERS) and local food producers to present “(NAME OF EVENT)” on (DATE). The purpose of this event is to showcase what locally-grown foods and hand-crafted products are available right here in (NAME OF COUNTY), how to find them and the benefits associated with buying local.

(DESCRIPTION OF EVENT INCLUDING WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE AND WHY IT MATTERS.)

Please consider partnering with us in this endeavor to spotlight our local talent and products by being an event co-sponsor for \$(TARGET AMOUNT).

Your sponsorship will include:

- One free table at one of our host locations
- Name listed on event flyer, if provided by (DATE)
- Name and/or logo included on event signage displayed at event
- Name included on event press releases as sponsoring partner
- Inclusion in the sponsor Facebook photo album for event
- One (1) original, dedicated Facebook post prior to the sponsored event
- Verbal recognition during the event
- (OTHER BENEFITS THAT YOUR TEAM DECIDES)

Please let me know if your company/business/organization would be interested in supporting this unique event. Your generous sponsorship would certainly be appreciated and acknowledged. (BREIF DESCRIPTION OF EVENT DAY SCHEDULE TO ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE).

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (PHONE NUMBER/EMAIL) for additional information. Donation checks should be made payable to (EVENT ACCOUNT OR FISCAL AGENT), with “Fresh on the Farm event” in the memo line.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(NAME OF SENDER)  
On behalf of (PLANNING TEAM NAME)  
CONTACT INFORMATION

**Fresh on the Farm  
Host Location Agreement**

This agreement is to help all parties know mutual expectations.

This is not legally binding, but encourages all to follow through in good faith to the best of their abilities.

**Fresh on the Farm Event** – We are hosting a Fresh on the Farm event at \_\_\_\_\_ (# of locations) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) from \_\_\_\_\_ (time) to \_\_\_\_\_ (time). Our goals are to: \_\_\_\_\_ (goal #1) and \_\_\_\_\_ (goal #2). We appreciate your interest in supporting this event by being a host site. Our event format is as follows: (briefly explain the format of event). You are responsible for promoting your own farm, as well as providing a space for other vendors and entertainers to promote their products and/or services. These vendors will not be direct competition of your business, but instead will compliment your offerings by highlighting the power in our community to provide locally grown and made products for everyday life. The planning team will work to recruit the local vendors who will join you, and they will be encouraged to supply their own table/chairs, unless you have those resources available.

**Event Day Activities** – We do ask that you promote your local products through a demonstration and/or tasting, and be available for questions as a face of local production scene. Ideally at least one of these activities can be targeted at young families, with the hopes of inspiring kids to see farmer and local craftsmanship as a viable career path for their future. Other activities could include hayrides, crafts, games, campfires, and more.

We do ask that your site come up with an activity to engage young families in the local conversation.

**Marketing contribution (Optional)** - Host location partners are asked to contribute \$100 toward our marketing budget, as promotional materials will mutually benefit the event and your establishment. A check can be made out to \_\_\_\_ (*Event Account/Fiscal Agent*) or a deduction may be reflected on invoice.

**You keep whatever profit you make on event day.** This event is intended to support your business and build the local economy, therefore we expect you to benefit from the increased traffic on this date.

**As a representative of** \_\_\_\_\_ (*farm owner*), my signature is my commitment to participate in the Fresh on the Farm event, following the outlined criteria in this Agreement.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
*Farm Owner*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
*Member of local planning committee*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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### Other References

We hope this manual is helpful in your Fresh on the Farm event planning. All the information and advice provided is pulled from our experiences in communities we've worked with in North Iowa. We encourage you to use this as a reference point, but hope that you bring creativity and originality to your event.

Other online resources that you could reference for tips and/or inspiration:

- Sharing Your Farm: 'Six Ideas from Women Farmers for Hosting Farm Tours'  
<http://www.northcentralsare.org/Educational-Resources/SARE-Project-Products/Sharing-Your-Farm-Six-Ideas-from-Women-Farmers-for-Hosting-Farm-Tours>
- University of Minnesota Extension Office's 'Host a Farm Tour':  
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/dairy/farm-life/host-a-farm-tour/index.html>
- ASAP's 'Farm Tour Voices' podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/growinglocal/farm-tour-voices>
- Enchanted Acres' blog post 'Enjoy Farmers' Markets? You'll love "Fresh on the Farm":  
<http://www.enchantedacresia.com/single-post/2016/09/13/ENJOY-FARMERS%E2%80%99-MARKETS-YOU%E2%80%99LL-LOVE-%E2%80%9CFRESH-ON-THE-FARM%E2%80%9D>
- Growing Farms Podcast "Starting a Farm Crawl" - <https://player.fm/series/farm-marketing-solutions/gfp084-starting-a-farm-crawl>
- Farm Crawl example as hosted by Blue Gate Farm: <http://www.farmcrawl.com/>
- Dubuque's Driftless Farm & Food Fest: <https://driftlessfarmcrawl.com/saturday-farm-crawl/>

### Contact Information

For more information, please contact a Healthy Harvest of North Iowa staff member:

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