

COUNTRY MARKET RESEARCH, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT - COUNCIL.DOCX

Findings and Recommendations

ABSTRACT

Kneehill County Administration executed a market research study to help guide the future development of the Kneehill Country County Market.

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents a strategic roadmap to guide administration in developing a robust and future-oriented strategy, following in-depth discussions with the council. The recommendations outlined herein are aimed at aligning administrative priorities with the council's vision, addressing immediate challenges, and capitalizing on emerging opportunities to drive sustainable growth and community impact.

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose

Historically, Kneehill County staff has been the leader and stewardship of the Kneehill Country Market and Long table event. Kneehill County Council directed Administration to gather insights from Kneehill County Country Market vendors on their future interest and needs for future Country Market participation. It was determined the best way to gather insights was to conduct a survey of County vendors that have participated or are located within the County.

Furthermore, Kneehill County is home to a variety of service and community organizations and it will be necessary to understand their future direction, mandate and priorities to potentially add value to the Country Market.

The research and findings are necessary to determine the future of the Country Market and how Kneehill County will continue to support the initiative.

2.2. Background

At the March 12, 2024 Council Meeting, Council motioned to host three Country Markets at Horseshoe Canyon with a budget of \$34,000 as part of the Growing Kneehill Project. Through vendor marketing on social media, email and telephone calls, Administration was able to secure 9 vendors and 1 sponsor for the 2024 Country Markets.

Administration returned to Council on May 28, 2024 to provide an update and receive further direction on the Country Market due to the decline in vendor and sponsor participation. Council set a threshold of 15 vendors, per event, by May 31, 2024 for the Country Market and directed Administration to cancel any respective Country Market that does not meet this threshold.

Following the decision, Council directed Administration to conduct outreach to potential market vendors. On May 31, 2024, Administration cancelled all 3 markets as directed by Council.

3. Methodology

3.1. Administration executed the project utilizing the following approach:

Project Planning (June to September)

- Preliminary Project Planning (June/July) – The Economic Development department developed a preliminary project plan.
- Final Project Planning (September) – Final project plan was presented for approval.
- Marketing and Communications Plan (September) – Outcomes and content were created to execute the project to the public.

Research (September to October)

- Primary and secondary research was conducted to a wide audience to ascertain the current and future state of the vendors, sponsors and local organizations. In addition, financial and competitor analysis was conducted to further identify challenges and opportunities.
- Primary Research – Surveys to vendors, sponsors and service organizations through open and closed-ended questions. The purpose of the surveys was to identify the purpose of why they chose to attend/support the market, challenges that were faced, opportunities for the future and willingness to participate.
- Secondary research - Financial data, competitor analysis and research reports on farmer market research was gathered and analyzed to identify opportunities and challenges with the Country Market.

Analysis (November)

- Analyze the research and compile the findings in a SWOT table. Kneehill County Administration, through the SWOT analysis, included feedback through prior years' experience and future considerations to support in the development of recommendations for review and consideration.

Recommendations (November – December)

- Review the research findings and SWOT to develop recommendations for Senior Management and Council's review and consideration.

Review and Decision (January)

- Present the findings and recommendations to Council to seek future direction on the Kneehill Country County Market.

4. Results/Findings

4.1. Goals, Objectives and Outcomes of Primary Research

A sample size of 100 respondents were identified for the vendor, sponsor and community groups. The sample size was comprised of vendors who have participated or were contacted for the Country Market, sponsors who contributed and/or who were contacted for support for the Country Market and local and regional community groups who have vested interest in the community through events and provide venues throughout Kneehill County. A response rate of 25 – 35% response rate was established for the project.

4.2. Primary Research Results

The research achieved a response rate of 73% (73 respondents). The survey was distributed by email, social media and through direct contact to invite participants to complete the survey.

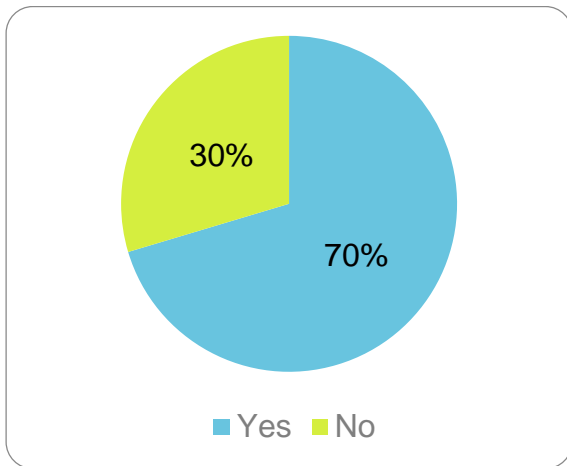
a. Vendor Survey Results

A total of 54 responses were received, however, 9 of the respondents did not participate in the majority of the questions as they were not verified vendors and thus were eliminated to ensure the information obtained was relevant to those respondents who either participated or chose not to participate. Therefore, 45 total responses were received and evaluated for the purpose of this project.

There was a total of 15 questions, comprised of open and closed ended questions. Below are the results.

Q1: Have you participated in the Kneehill County Country Market?

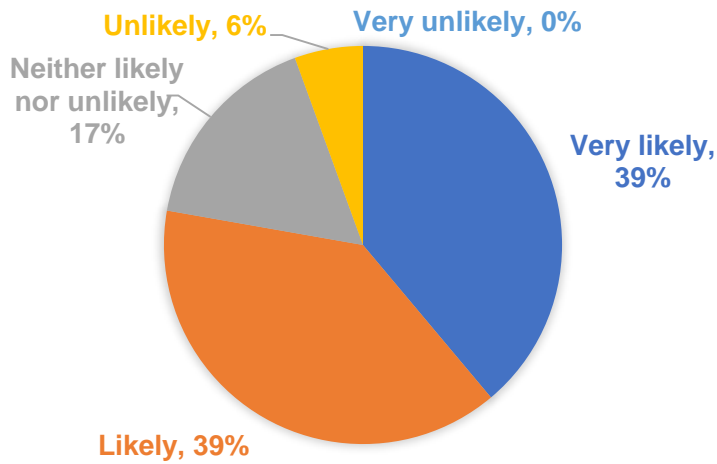
Answered: 54 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	Number
Yes	70%	38
No	30%	16
TOTAL		54

Q2: How likely are you to participate in the Kneehill County Country Market again?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 18



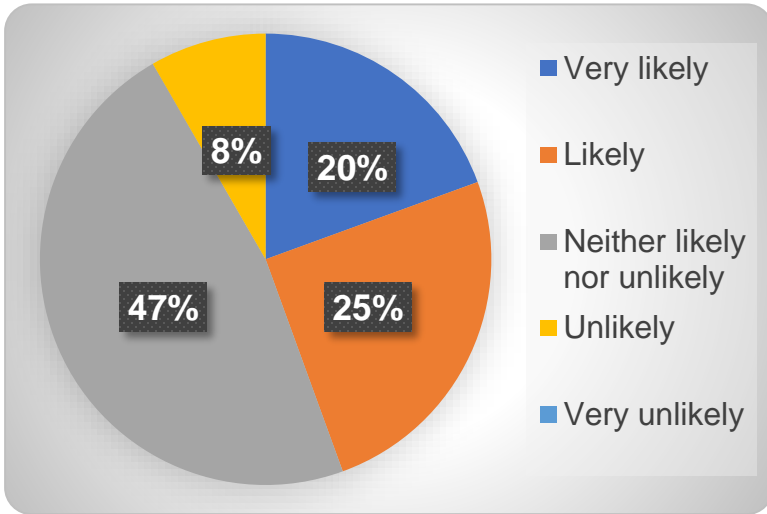
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	Number
Very likely	39%	14
Likely	39%	14
Neither likely nor unlikely	17%	6
Unlikely	6%	2
Very unlikely	0%	0
TOTAL		36

Key Observations:

- Strong Likelihood to Return (Majority Support):
 - 78% of respondents (39% *Very likely* + 39% *Likely*) are inclined to participate again, showing overwhelming support and satisfaction with the market.
 - This suggests a strong base of repeat customers or participants.
- Neutral Respondents:
 - 17% (6 respondents) are *Neither likely nor unlikely*. These individuals may need more information, engagement, or a better experience to lean towards participation.
- Low Likelihood to Return:
 - Only 6% (2 respondents) are *Unlikely* to return, and 0% are *Very unlikely*. This is a positive sign, as very few participants seem dissatisfied.

Q3: How likely are you to recommend the Country Market to others?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 18



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very likely	19% 7
Likely	25% 9
Neither likely nor unlikely	47% 17
Unlikely	8% 3
Very unlikely	0% 0
TOTAL	36

Key Observations:

1. Promoters (Very Likely and Likely):

- **44% (19% Very likely + 25% Likely)** of respondents would recommend the market to others. While positive, this is significantly lower than the participation likelihood (78% in Q2), suggesting that enthusiasm for personal attendance doesn't fully translate into advocacy.

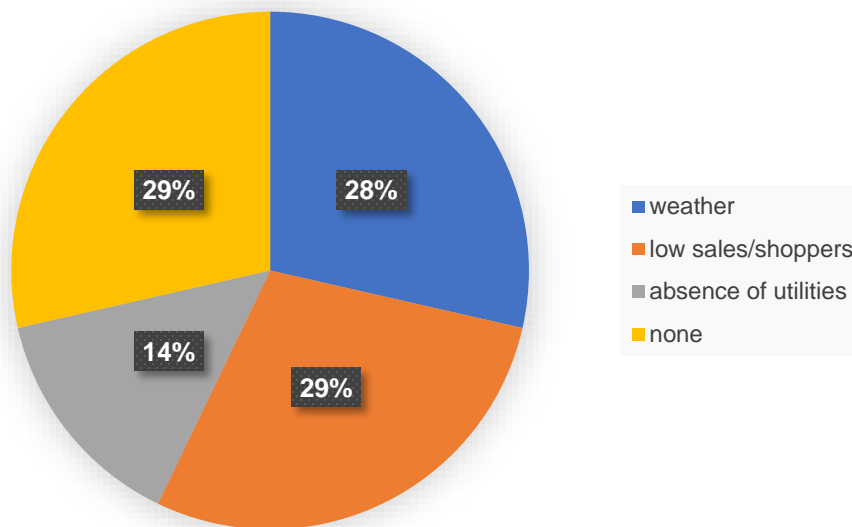
2. Neutral Respondents:

- **47% (17 respondents)** are *Neither likely nor unlikely* to recommend the market. This is the largest group, indicating a lack of strong feelings, either positive or negative, toward endorsing the market.

3. Unlikely to Recommend:

- **8% (3 respondents)** are *Unlikely* to recommend the market, with no respondents selecting *Very unlikely*. This may show a low level of dissatisfaction.

Q4. What challenges did you experience during your participation in the Kneehill County Country Markets?



weather	low sales/shoppers	absence of utilities	none
2	2	1	2

Key Observations

1. Weather Impact:

- Weather is a significant challenge, with **2 respondents** identifying it as an issue. This may indicate that outdoor venues are exposed to environmental factors that could deter attendance or vendor participation.

2. Low Sales/Shoppers:

- **2 respondents** reported low foot traffic and sales, reflecting a potential gap in market promotion or mismatch between vendor offerings and customer expectations.

3. Absence of Utilities:

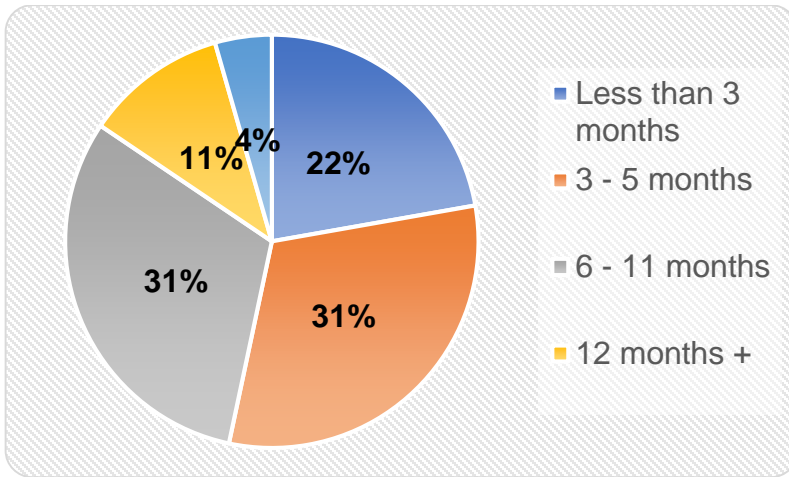
- **1 respondent** mentioned a lack of utilities (e.g., power, water) as a challenge, which may have limited vendors' ability to operate efficiently or attractively present their products.

4. Positive Feedback:

- **2 respondents** stated they experienced no challenges, suggesting that some vendors found the markets met or exceeded their expectations, potentially due to good preparation or alignment with market conditions.

Q5: How far in advance do you register as a vendor in markets? Choose ONE of the following:

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than 3 months	22% 10
3 - 5 months	31% 14
6 - 11 months	31% 14
12 months +	11% 5
Other (please specify)	4% 2
TOTAL	45

Key Observations:

1. Majority Register Within 3–11 Months:

- This accounts for **62% of respondents**, highlighting that most vendors plan moderately far ahead.

2. Short-Term Planners:

- **22% register less than 3 months in advance.** This group may include vendors who decide based on short-term availability or market performance.

3. Long-Term Planners:

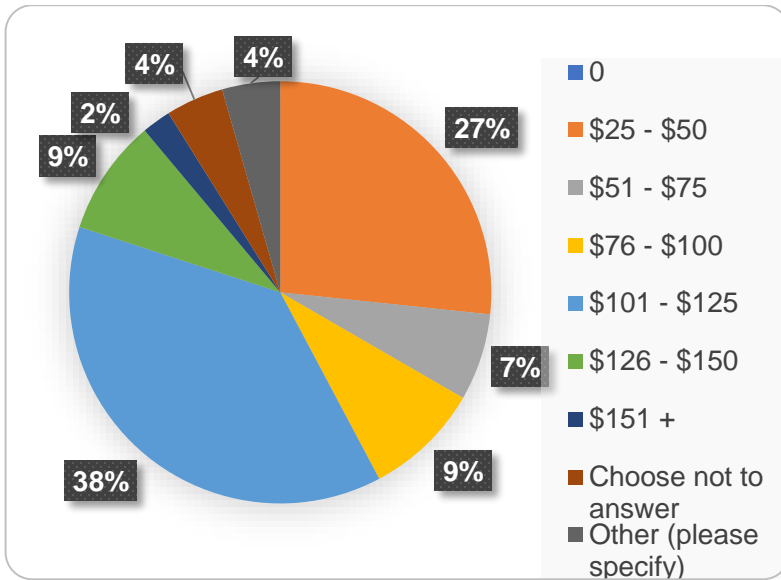
- **11% register 12+ months in advance.** These vendors likely prioritize securing a spot at key markets well ahead of time.

4. Other (4%):

- Only **2 respondents** chose "Other," possibly indicating unique circumstances like registering last minute or depending on specific market dates.

Q6: What is a reasonable price point for registration for a market?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0	0% 0
\$25 - \$50	27% 12
\$51 - \$75	7% 3
\$76 - \$100	9% 4
\$101 - \$125	38% 17
\$126 - \$150	9% 4
\$151 +	2% 1
Choose not to answer	4% 2
Other (please specify)	4% 2
TOTAL	45

Key Observations:

1. Most Preferred Price Point:

- The majority (38%, 17 respondents) consider **\$101–\$125** a reasonable price for market registration. This suggests a willingness to pay moderately high fees for perceived value or benefits.

2. Secondary Preferences:

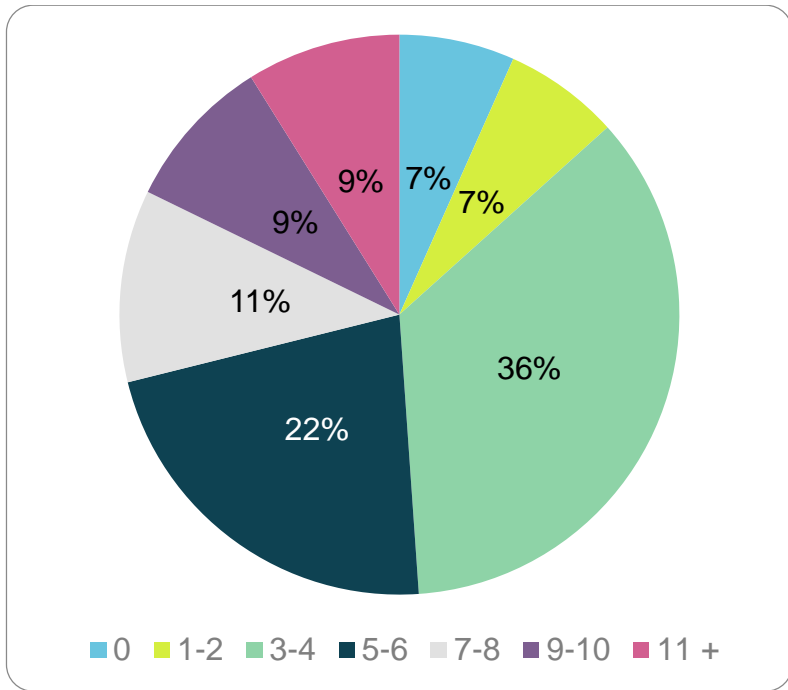
- **27% (12 respondents)** prefer the lower price range of **\$25–\$50**, reflecting a segment that might prioritize affordability.
- Smaller groups favor **\$76–\$100 (9%, 4 respondents)** and **\$126–\$150 (9%, 4 respondents)**.

3. High-End and Low-End Outliers:

- **2% (1 respondent)** are comfortable paying **\$151+**, while **0% opted for \$0**, confirming that most vendors expect to pay something.
- **4% (2 respondents)** chose "Other," likely reflecting unique pricing considerations.

Q7: How many markets do you participate in within a year?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0	7% 3
1-2	7% 3
3-4	36% 16
5-6	22% 10
7-8	11% 5
9-10	9% 4
11 +	9% 4
TOTAL	45

Key Observations:

1. Most Common Participation Frequency:

- **36% (16 respondents)** participate in **3–4 markets annually**, representing the largest segment. This suggests that most vendors are moderately active and selective about their market involvement.

2. Frequent Participants:

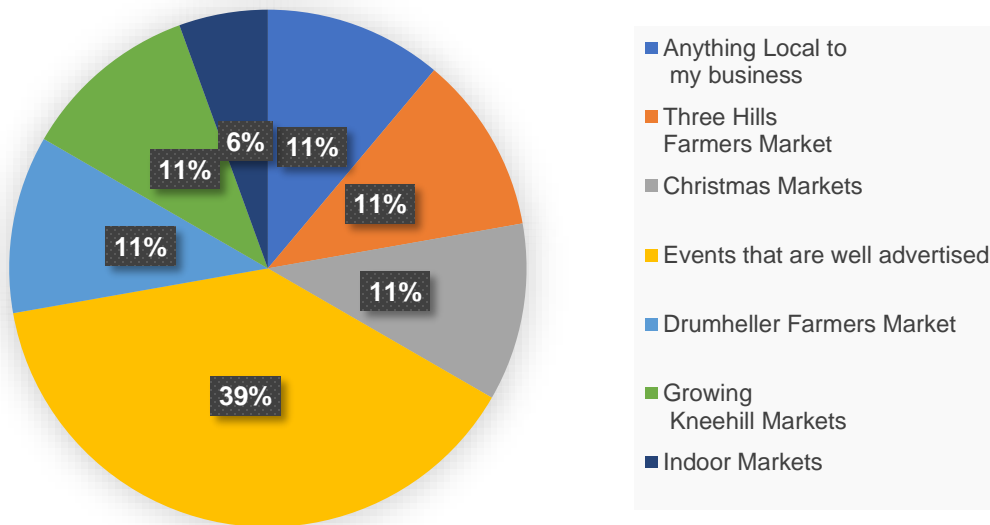
- **22% (10 respondents)** attend **5–6 markets annually**, while smaller groups participate in **7–8 markets (11%, 5 respondents)** and **9–10 markets (9%, 4 respondents)**.
- **9% (4 respondents)** are highly active, attending **11+ markets annually**.

3. Minimal or No Participation:

- **7% (3 respondents)** participate in **0 markets**, and another **7% (3 respondents)** attend only **1–2 markets annually**.
- These respondents might face barriers such as cost, time constraints, or lack of alignment with their target audience.

Q8: We would like to gain an understanding as to the markets our existing or potential vendors currently participate. Please list the markets in which you participate.

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



Anything Local to my business	Three Hills Farmers Market	Christmas Markets	Events that are well advertised	Drumheller Farmers Market	Growing Kneehill Markets	Indoor Markets
2	2	2	7	2	2	1

Key Observations:

1. Markets Vendors Participate:

- **2 respondents** indicated that they participate in markets local to their businesses. This suggests a preference for nearby, community-based markets, highlighting the value of proximity for vendors.
- **2 respondents** specifically mentioned the **Three Hills Farmers Market** as a market they participate in. This indicates some alignment with the existing markets in the region.
- **2 respondents** mentioned **Christmas markets**. Seasonal events appear to be a popular choice for vendors, likely due to the higher foot traffic and festive atmosphere during this time.
- **2 respondents** also participate in the **Drumheller Farmers Market**, showing interest in neighboring markets and regional collaboration.
- **2 respondents** participate in **Growing Kneehill Markets**, signaling interest in local initiatives specifically tailored to the Kneehill County area.

2. Well-Advertised Events:

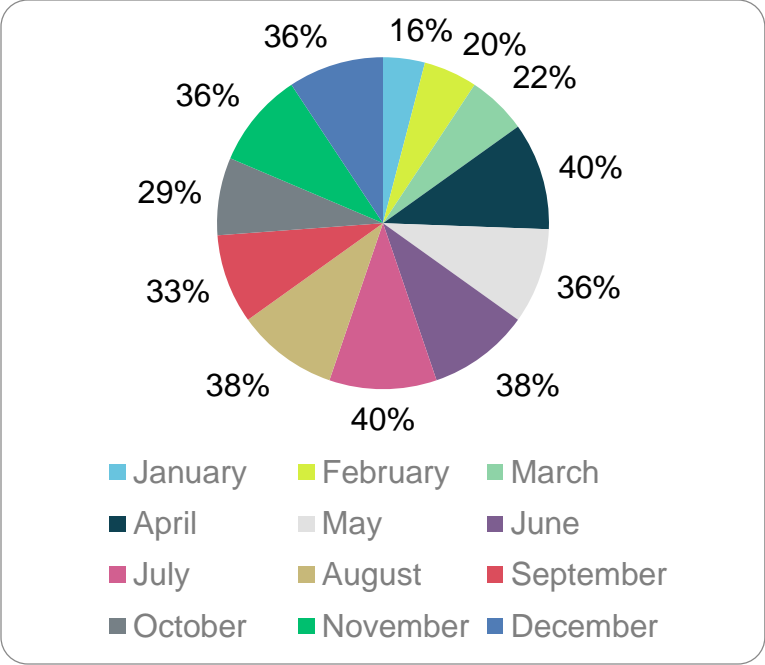
- A notable **7 respondents** indicated a preference for **well-advertised events**. This points to the importance of visibility and strong marketing in attracting vendors and shoppers to a market.

3. Indoor Markets:

- **1 respondent** listed **Indoor Markets** as a preference, which could reflect a desire for more stable, weather-independent market conditions.

Q9: Which months do you usually participate in markets? Select ALL that apply:

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
January	16%	7
February	20%	9
March	22%	10
April	40%	18
May	36%	16
June	38%	17
July	40%	18
August	38%	17
September	33%	15
October	29%	13
November	36%	16
December	36%	16
TOTAL		172

Analysis of Responses to "Which months do you usually participate in markets?"

Key Observations:

1. Peak Participation Months:

- The highest participation is in **April (40%, 18 respondents)** and **July (40%, 18 respondents)**, suggesting these are the most popular months for markets.
- Other high-participation months include **June (38%, 17 respondents)** and **August (38%, 17 respondents)**.

2. Moderate Participation Months:

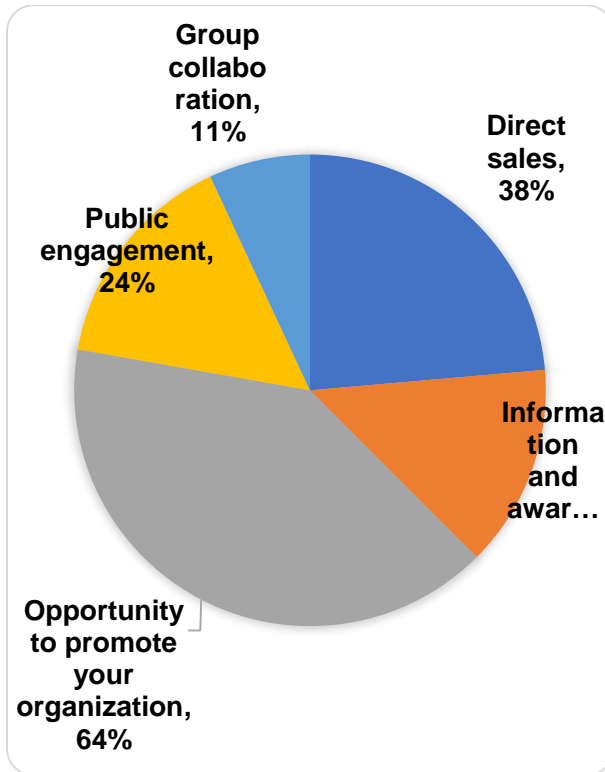
- May, November, and December each attracted 36% (16 respondents), likely tied to spring events and holiday markets.
- September (33%, 15 respondents) and October (29%, 13 respondents) also show moderate activity.

3. Lower Participation Months:

- Winter months like **January (16%, 7 respondents)**, **February (20%, 9 respondents)**, and **March (22%, 10 respondents)** see lower engagement, likely due to weather or fewer scheduled events during this period.

Q10: What are the main reasons you participate in markets? (Select ALL that apply)

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



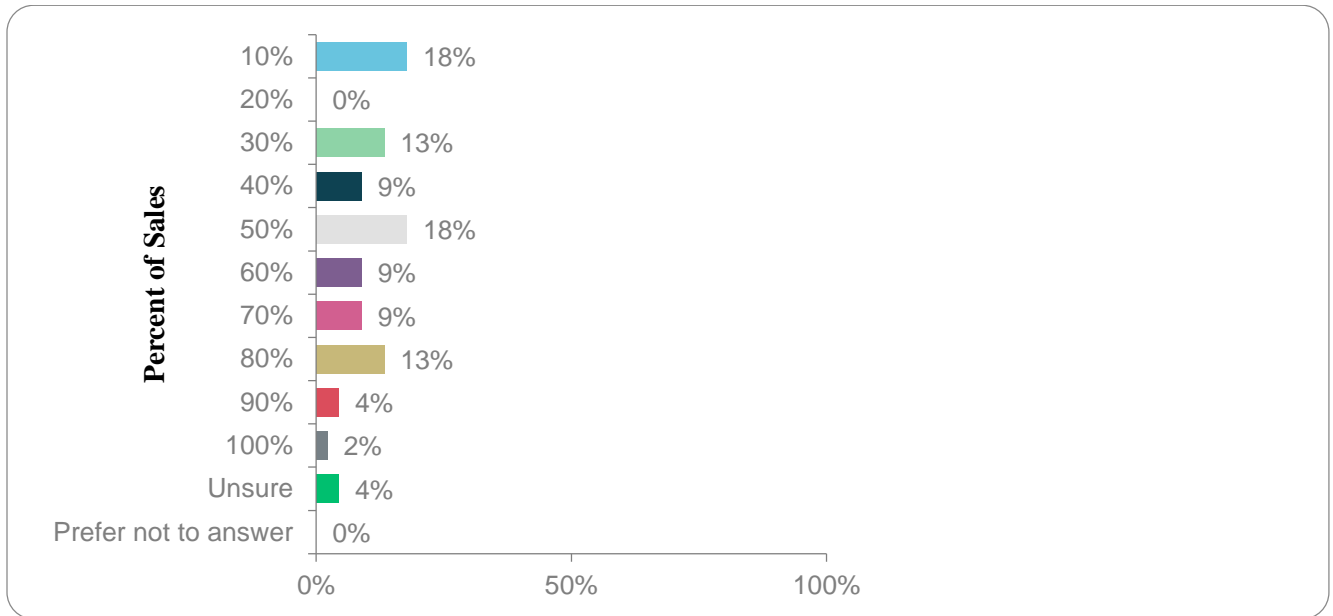
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Direct sales	38%	17
Information and awareness	22%	10
Opportunity to promote your organization	64%	29
Public engagement	24%	11
Group collaboration	11%	5
TOTAL		72

Key Observations:

1. **Promotion: 64% (29 respondents)** identified "**Opportunity to promote your organization**" as the primary reason for participating in markets. This suggests markets are seen as valuable platforms for brand visibility and outreach.
2. **Direct Sales: 38% (17 respondents)** cited "**Direct sales**" as a key motivation. While important, this indicates that selling products or services is secondary to promotional and engagement goals for many vendors.
3. **Public Engagement: 24% (11 respondents)** participate for "**Public engagement**," likely to build relationships or increase community awareness about their business or mission.
4. **Information and Awareness: 22% (10 respondents)** are focused on sharing "**Information and awareness**," which may reflect vendors with educational or advocacy-based goals.
5. **Group Collaboration: 11% (5 respondents)** selected "**Group collaboration**," indicating that networking or partnerships may be less of a priority compared to other reasons.

Q11: Which percent of your total sales come from markets?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



Percent of Responses

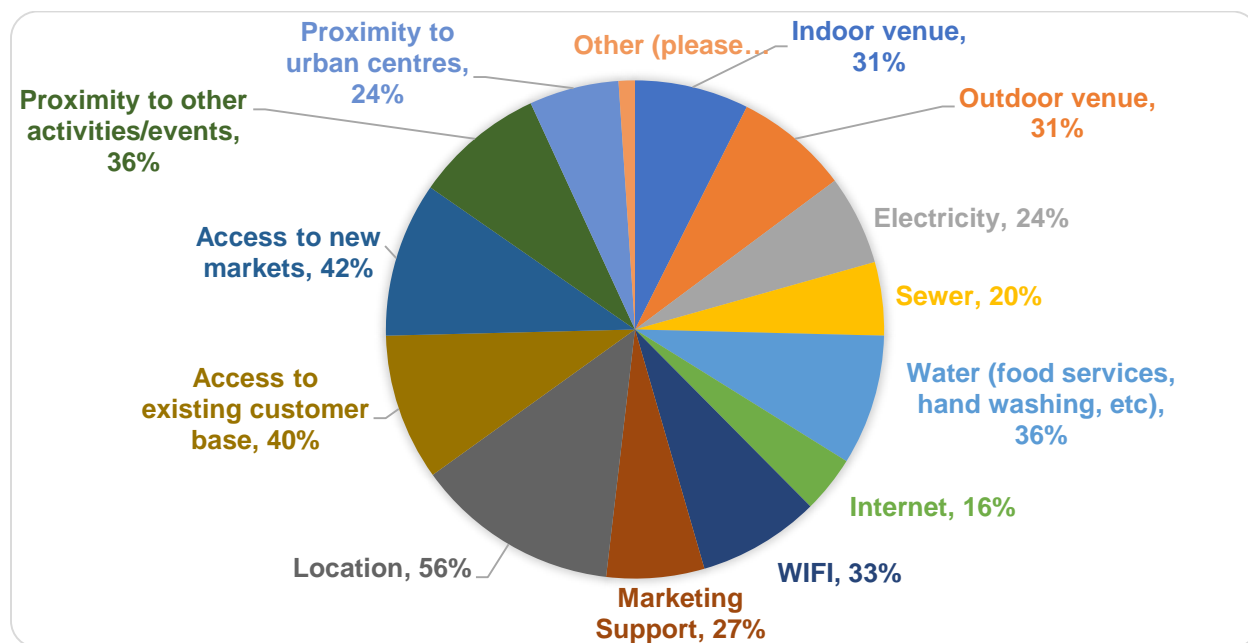
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
10%	18%	8
20%	0%	0
30%	13%	6
40%	9%	4
50%	18%	8
60%	9%	4
70%	9%	4
80%	13%	6
90%	4%	2
100%	2%	1
Unsure	4%	2
Prefer not to answer	0%	0
TOTAL		45

Key Observations:

1. **Low to Moderate Dependency (10%-50%): 58% of respondents** derive 10%-50% of their total sales from markets:
 - **18% (8 respondents)** report 10% of sales, and another **18% (8 respondents)** indicate 50% of sales.
 - Smaller segments fall into **30% (13%, 6 respondents)** and **40% (9%, 4 respondents)**.
2. **High Dependency (60%-100%): 36% of respondents** generate a significant proportion of their sales (60%-100%) from markets:
 - **9% (4 respondents)** report 60%-70%, while **13% (6 respondents)** report 80%.
 - **4% (2 respondents)** derive 90%, and **2% (1 respondent)** indicate 100%.
3. **Other Categories:**
 - **4% (2 respondents)** are "Unsure,"

Q12: What factors are most important to you as a market vendor as you choose the markets in which to participate? Please select ALL that apply:

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Indoor venue	31%	14
Outdoor venue	31%	14
Electricity	24%	11
Sewer	20%	9
Water (food services, hand washing, etc)	36%	16
Internet	16%	7
WIFI	33%	15
Marketing Support	27%	12
Location	56%	25
Access to existing customer base	40%	18
Access to new markets	42%	19
Proximity to other activities/events	36%	16
Proximity to urban centres	24%	11
Other (please specify)	4%	2
TOTAL		189

Key Observations:

1. Location and Accessibility:

- **56% prioritize Location**
- **42% value access to new markets**, suggesting that vendors are keen to expand their reach and attract new customers.
- **40% prioritize access to existing customer base**, indicating that returning customers are a key driver of market participation.

2. Venue Type and Facilities:

- Indoor and Outdoor venues are equally important (**each selected by 31%**). This suggests that vendors may have a preference for specific types of markets depending on the nature of their products.
- **Water (36%) and WIFI (33%)** are also important, indicating a preference for access to water and connectivity.
- **Electricity (24%) and Sewer (20%)** are moderately important amongst those who require power or waste management for their operations.

3. Marketing and Event Context:

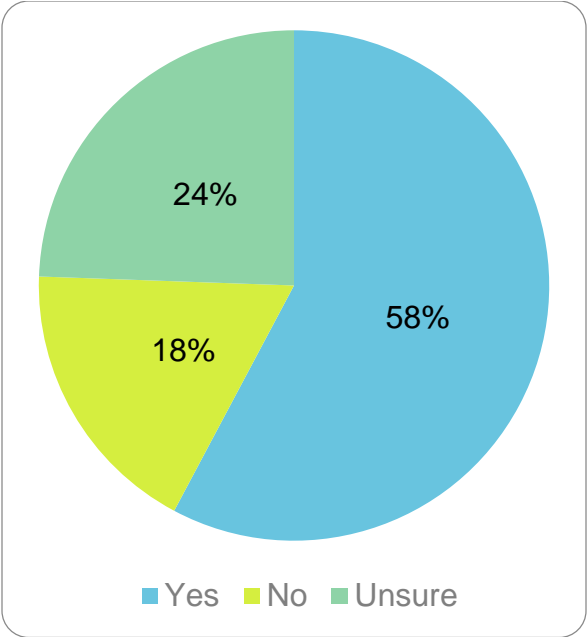
- Marketing Support is important for 27% showing that vendors value assistance with promoting their presence at the market.
- Proximity to other activities/events is another significant factor for 36%, highlighting that a vibrant event ecosystem can help attract more visitors.

4. Urban Proximity and Other Factors:

- **Proximity to urban centres is less important, with only 24%** selecting this option.

Q13: Should Kneehill County continue to offer the Country Market, would you be in favor of the Country Market venue/location rotating to different locations every year?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



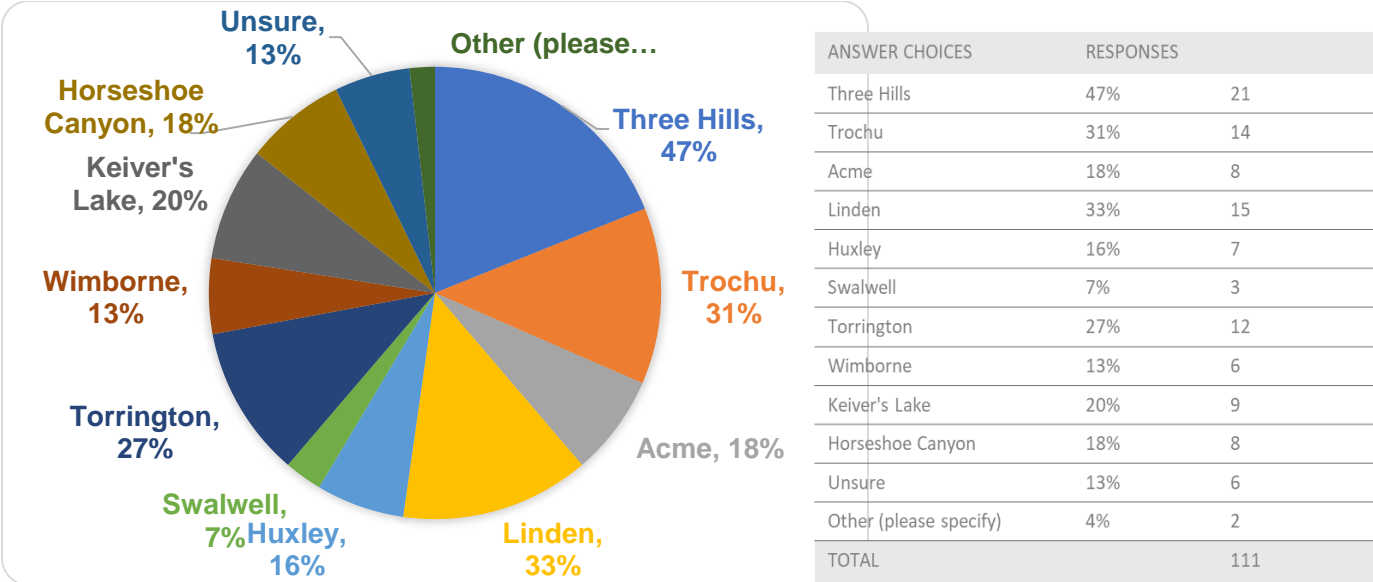
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	58%	26
No	18%	8
Unsure	24%	11
TOTAL		45

Key Observations:

- Favoring Rotation:**
 - 58% are in favor of rotating the **venue/location** of the Country Market each year. This majority suggests that there is support for a more dynamic approach to venue selection.
- Against Rotation:**
 - 18% oppose the idea of rotating the market, indicating a preference for a fixed venue/location.
- Unsure:**
 - 24% are unsure, suggesting that there may be a need for more information before committing.

Q14: Which locations/venues would you recommend a Country Market be located in Kneehill County?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



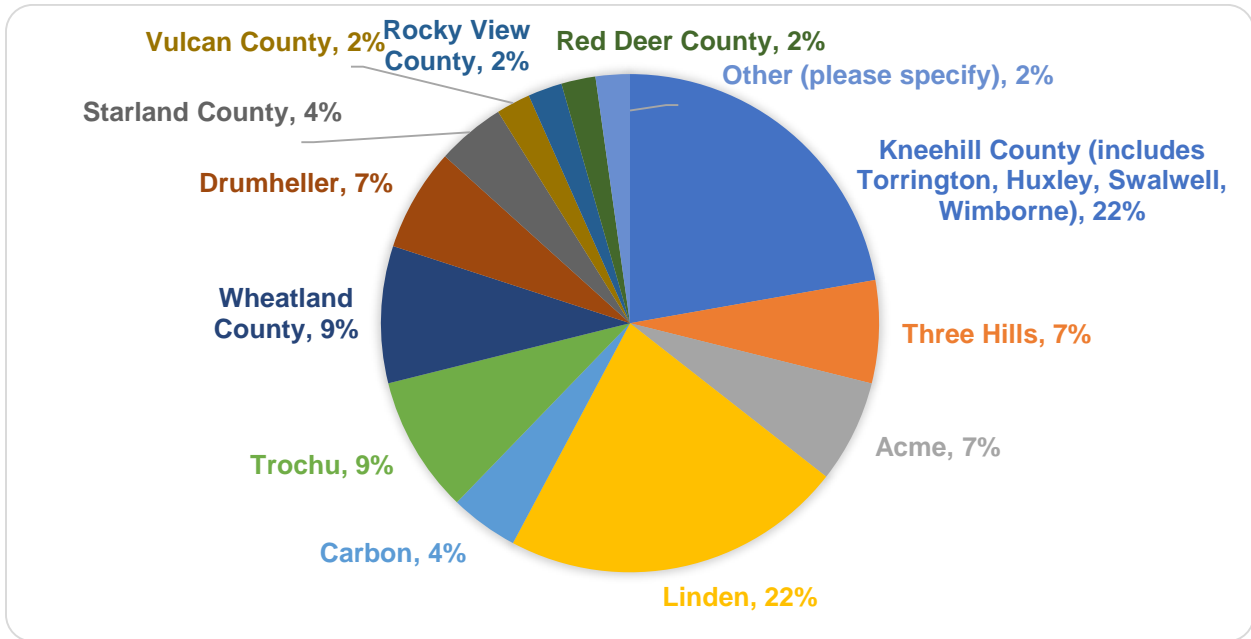
Key Observations:

1. Recommended Location Preference:

- **Three Hills** received the highest recommendation, with **47%**. **Linden** with **33%**, and **Trochu** with **31%**, and Torrington at (27%) indicating that these areas hold strong appeal for hosting a market.
- **Keiver's Lake** was selected by **20%**, marking it as a moderately popular option. Following closely behind are **Acme** and **Horseshoe Canyon** each received **18%**, indicating moderate support but not at the same level as the leading locations.
- **Huxley (16%), Wimborne (13%)** and **Swalwell (7%)** received the least support, suggesting that these areas are less favoured for hosting the market.

Q15: What community are you currently located?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Kneehill County (includes Torrington, Huxley, Swalwell, Wimborne)	22%	10
Three Hills	7%	3
Acme	7%	3
Linden	22%	10
Carbon	4%	2
Trochu	9%	4
Wheatland County	9%	4
Drumheller	7%	3
Starland County	4%	2
Vulcan County	2%	1
Rocky View County	2%	1
Red Deer County	2%	1
Other (please specify)	2%	1
TOTAL		45

Key Observations:

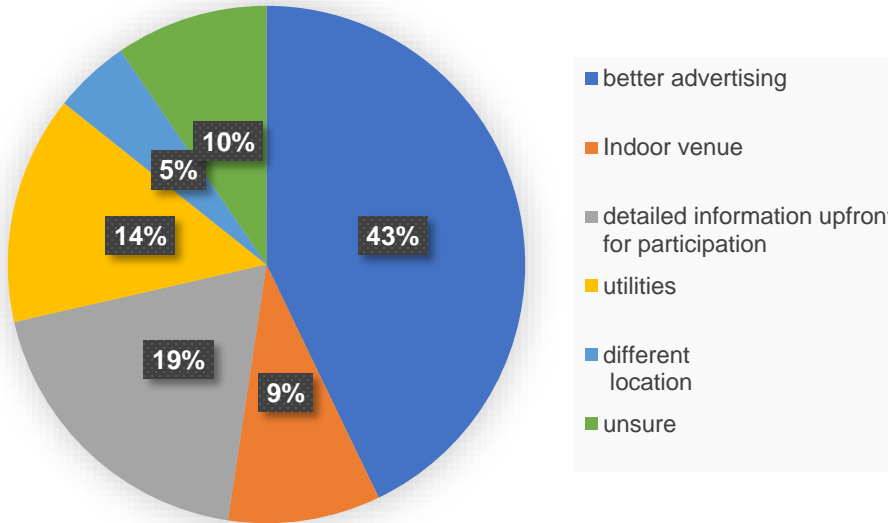
1. Vendor Location

- **22%** of vendors are located within **Kneehill County**.
- **49%** of vendors are located Communities within the Kneehill County Region.
- The total combined number of vendors are located within the Kneehill County region and account for **(71%)**.
- The remaining **29%** of vendors are located at various communities surrounding Kneehill County.

Q16: How could your experience be improved as a vendor for future markets?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 39

Open ended responses were tabulated and charted as follows.



better advertising	Indoor venue	detailed information upfront for participation	utilities	different location	unsure
9	2	4	3	1	2

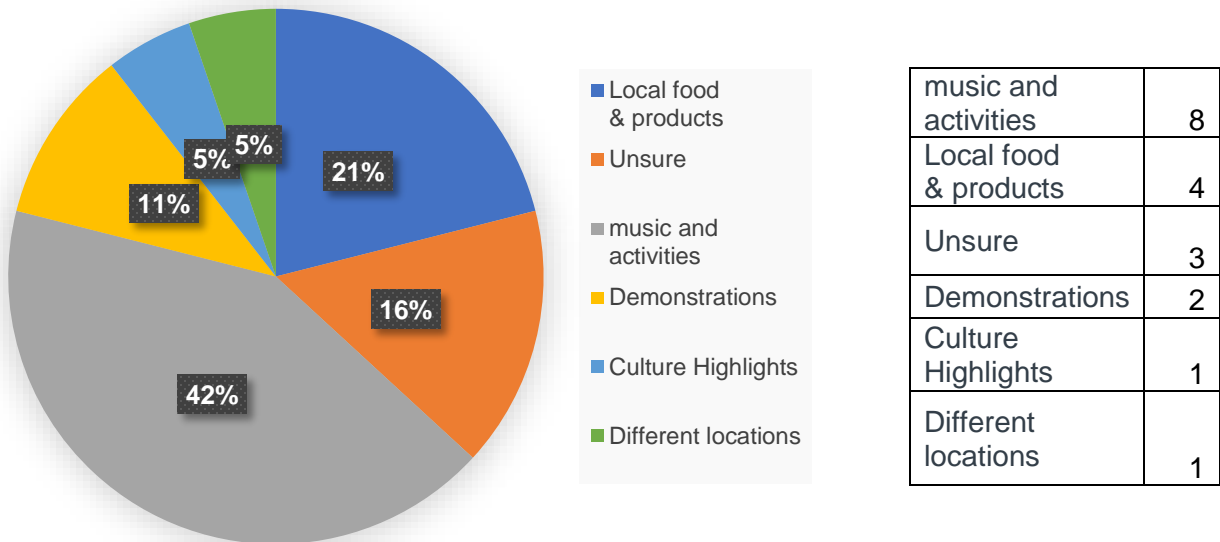
Key Observations:

- **Advertising and Promotion:** The most common theme was a need for better marketing to ensure higher attendance and customer engagement.
- **Venue Preferences:** There seems to be a split in venue preference, with some vendors favoring indoor venues, and others being open to other locations.
- **Operational Details:** Vendors are looking for more clarity around participation guidelines and the availability of essential services (like utilities).
- **Location Considerations:** Only one vendor mentioned the location, suggesting that the current market location is generally suitable for most participants. However, some flexibility could be considered based on vendor feedback. This is contradictory to Question 14 when asked about alternate locations as the **Horseshoe Canyon was not selected as a top choice.**

Q17: How could markets be more unique in Kneehill County?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 38

Open ended responses were tabulated and charted as follows.

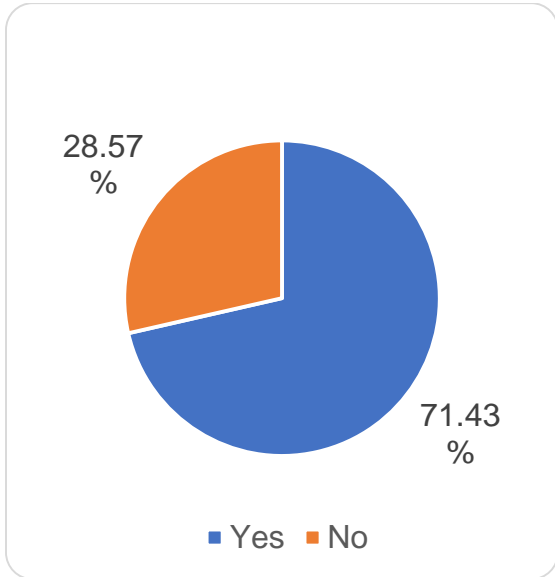


Key Observations:

1. **Music and Activities (8 responses)** received the highest frequency, suggesting that many believe adding entertainment, live performances, or interactive activities could enhance the market experience.
2. **Local Food & Products (4 responses)** is another notable suggestion, indicating that emphasizing local food, crafts, or agricultural products would add a unique touch and appeal to residents and visitors interested in regional offerings.
3. **Demonstrations (2 responses)** suggests that showcasing how products are made or offering skill-building demonstrations could further engage attendees.
4. **Culture Highlights (1 response)** and **Different Locations (1 response)** received the least support, but these responses imply that emphasizing local culture and rotating locations for variety could also contribute to market uniqueness.

b. Sponsor Survey Results

Q1: Have you previously supported the Kneehill County Country Market?
 Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	71.43%	5
No	28.57%	2
TOTAL		7

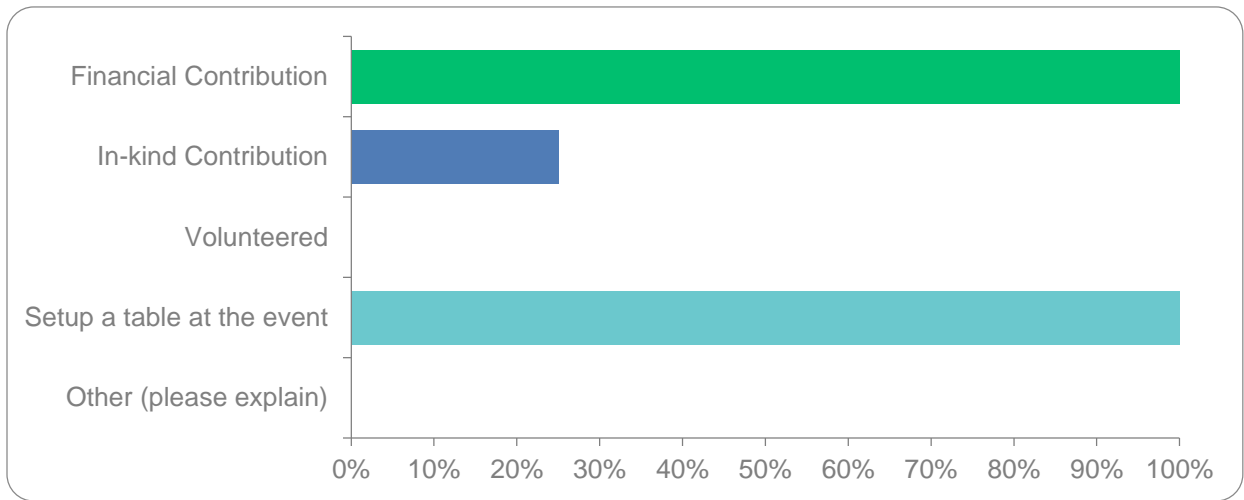
Key Observations:

1. Sponsorship Support:

- A significant **71.43% of respondents** have previously supported the Kneehill County Country Market
- A smaller group, **28.57%** has not supported the market before.
- The survey had a **small sample size of 7 total responses**, meaning the data may not fully represent the views of the broader community. Results could differ with more responses.

Q2: How have you supported the Kneehill County Country Market?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Financial Contribution	100%	4
In Kind Contribution	25%	1
Volunteered	0%	0
Setup a table at the event	100%	4

Key Observations:

1. Financial Contribution:

- **100% of respondents** (4 responses) have supported the Kneehill County Country Market through **financial contributions**. This indicates strong financial backing for the market, which is essential for its sustainability and success.

2. In Kind Contribution:

- **25% of respondents** (1 response) supported the market through **in-kind contributions**. This could include donations of goods, services, or other non-monetary support.

3. Volunteering:

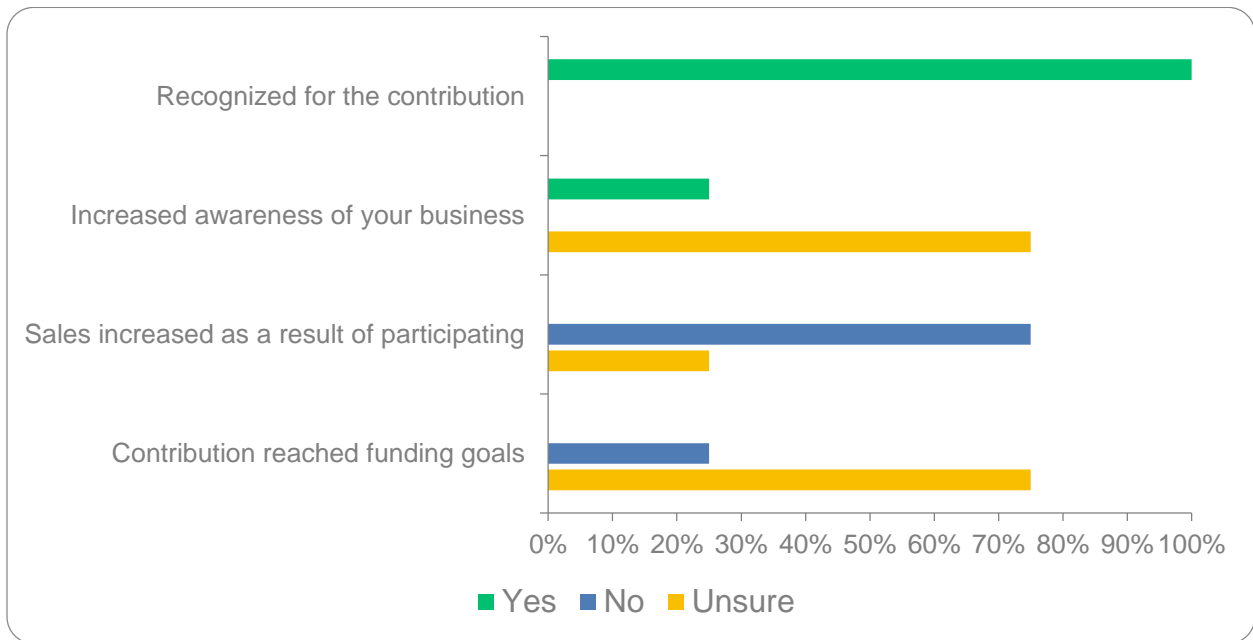
- **0% of respondents** reported volunteering for the market, suggesting that there is a lack of volunteer engagement, or that respondents may not have volunteered in the past.

4. Setting Up a Table:

- **100% of respondents** (4 responses) have also supported the market by **setting up a table** at the event. This shows that those who have contributed are actively involved in the event itself, likely as vendors or participants.

Q3. Please rate the return on investment for your contribution.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 3



	YES	NO	UNSURE	TOTAL
Recognized for the contribution	100.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4
Increased awareness of your business	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	75.00% 3	4
Sales increased as a result of participating	0.00% 0	75.00% 3	25.00% 1	4
Contribution reached funding goals	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	75.00% 3	4

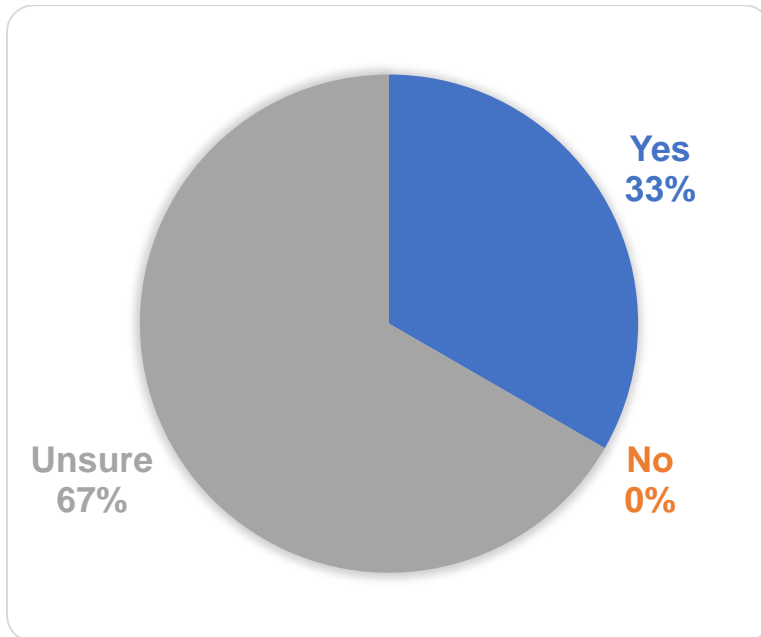
Key Observations for Q3: Please rate the return on investment for your contribution.

1. Recognition of Contributions:

- All respondents (100%) felt recognized for their contributions, indicating a positive acknowledgment by the community or market organizers.
2. **Increased Awareness of Business:**
 - Only 25% of respondents experienced increased awareness of their business, suggesting a potential area for improvement in marketing or promotion efforts during the event.
 3. **Sales Increase:**
 - No respondents reported an increase in sales as a result of participation (0%). This could indicate that the market's audience may not align with the participants' target customers or that the purchasing activity was limited.
 4. **Reaching Funding Goals:**
 - Only 25% felt their contributions reached funding goals. The majority (75%) were unsure, which may reflect a lack of clear communication regarding outcomes or a disconnect between expectations and results.

Q4. Should the Kneehill County Country Market continue, would you consider future contributions?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	33.33%	2
No	0%	0
Unsure	66.67%	4
Total		6

Key Observations:

1. **Future Contributions:**

- **33.33% of respondents** (2 responses) would consider making future contributions to the Kneehill County Country Market if it continues.
- **66.67% of respondents** (4 responses) are **unsure** about making future contributions.

Q5. How far in advance do you need to be notified on contributions to events?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES RESPONSES		
One month	16%	1
Couple of months	67%	4
6 months	17%	1
Total		6

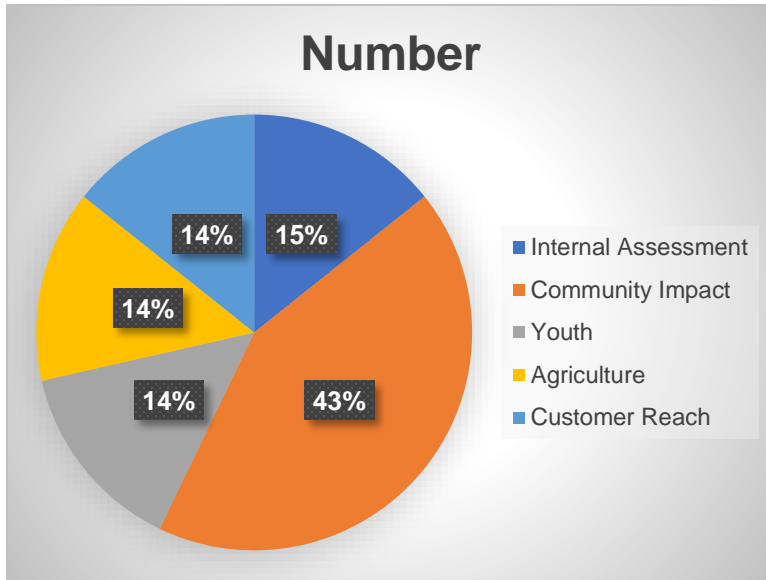
Key Observations:

1. Timing for Notification:

- **67% of respondents** (4 responses) prefer to be notified about contributions **a couple of months** in advance.
- **16% of respondents** (1 response) prefer **one month** notice.
- **17% of respondents** (1 response) prefer **six months** notice.

Q6. What criteria do you utilize to determine which programs/activities that you will support?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 3



	Number
Internal Assessment	1
Community Impact	3
Youth	1
Agriculture	1
Customer Reach	1

Q7. How do you currently collaborate with organizations or residents in the Kneehill County area?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Local connection	50% 3
Volunteer in community	33% 2
Support programs	17% 1
Total	6

Key Observations:

1. **Local Connection:**

- **50% of respondents** (3 responses) collaborate with organizations or residents through a **local connection**. This could mean informal networking or being involved in community events and activities.

2. **Volunteering in the Community:**

- **33% of respondents** (2 responses) collaborate by **volunteering** in the community, indicating active participation in local volunteer-driven initiatives.

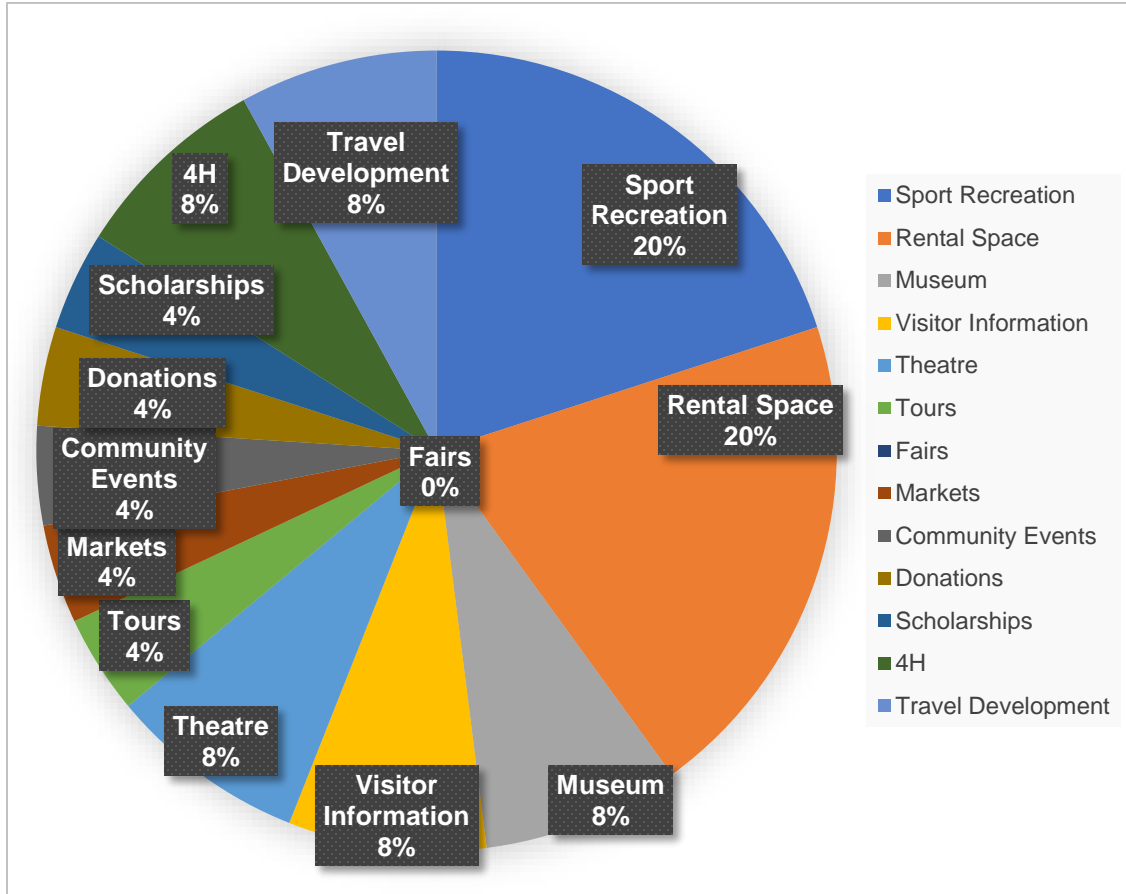
3. **Supporting Programs:**

- **17% of respondents** (1 response) collaborate by **supporting programs**, which may include financial, in-kind, or active participation in community or regional programs.

c. Community Group Survey Results

Q1. Please explain your current programming that your organization provides?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



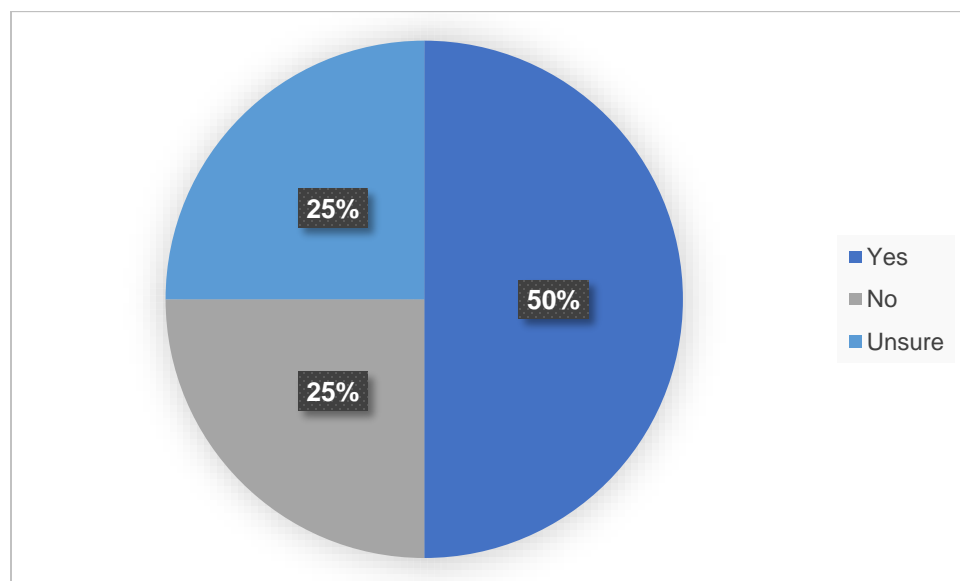
Key Observations:

1. Diverse Programming and Services:

- 40% Organizations in the Kneehill County area offer Rental Space and Sport Recreation for the community. Several of the organizations are non-profit, providing a range of facilities and services through rentals and fundraising efforts to ensure sustainability and community involvement.
- 24% provide Travel Development, visitor information and museums and are necessary for tourism development in the area.
- 36% Service organizations also provide access to events, farmers markets, tours, theatre (culture) as well as scholarships and donations. Many programs have a community-driven focus, including volunteering, fundraising, and local gatherings. The emphasis is on both recreational activities (sports, events) and cultural/community engagement (museum tours, historical societies).

Q2. Do you have any plans in the next 2 – 5 years to expand your programs/services?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



Yes	No	Unsure
6	3	3

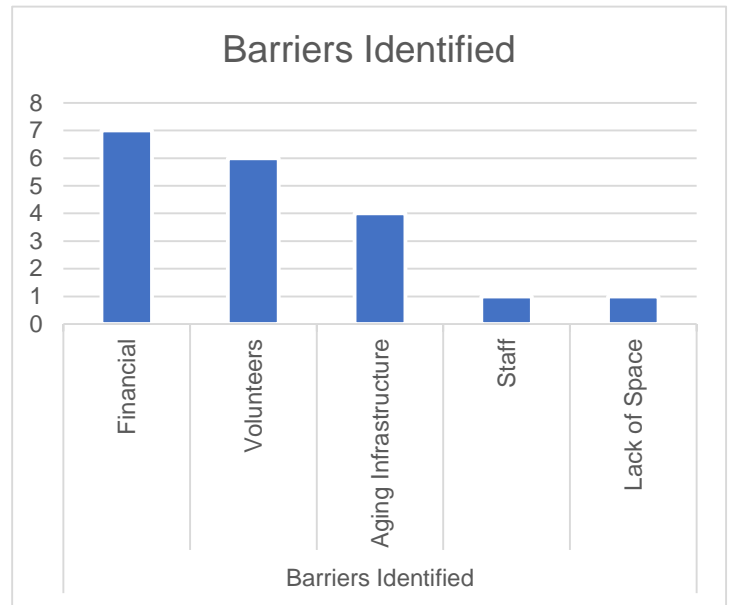
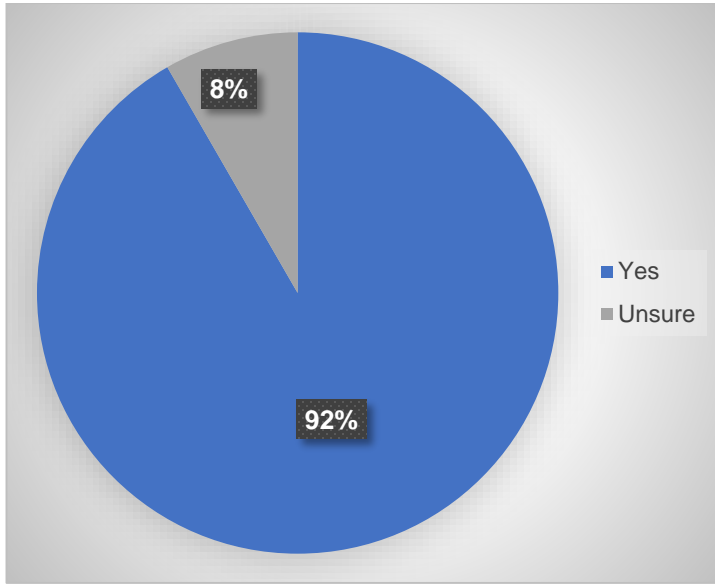
Key Observations

1. Expansion Plans:

- **6 respondents (50%)** indicated they have **plans to expand** their programs or services in the next 2–5 years. This reflects optimism and a desire for growth among half of the organizations surveyed. However, a significant portion either has no plans or is unsure, suggesting possible barriers such as funding, staffing, or infrastructure constraints.
- **3 respondents (25%)** stated they **do not plan to expand**. This could be due to resource limitations, stable operations, or a lack of identified opportunities for growth.
- **3 respondents (25%)** are **uncertain about future expansion**, potentially reflecting unclear long-term goals, external uncertainties, or a need for additional resources to make decisions.
- The responses highlight the need for targeted support to help organizations overcome barriers to expansion or clarify their strategic direction.

Q3. Are you experiencing barriers within your organization to execute new programs?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Financial	7
Volunteers	6
Aging Infrastructure	4
Staff	1
Lack of Space	1

Key Observations

1. Financial Barriers:

- The majority of respondents (7 out of 12, 58%) identified financial limitations as a significant barrier. This suggests funding challenges, whether for operational costs, program execution, or infrastructure upgrades and indicating a need for greater access to grants, fundraising support, or other financial resources.

2. Volunteer Shortages:

- 6 out of 12 respondents (50%) noted difficulty in securing volunteers. This highlights a strain on the human resources needed to sustain or grow programs, likely exacerbated by volunteer burnout or demographic trends.

3. Aging Infrastructure:

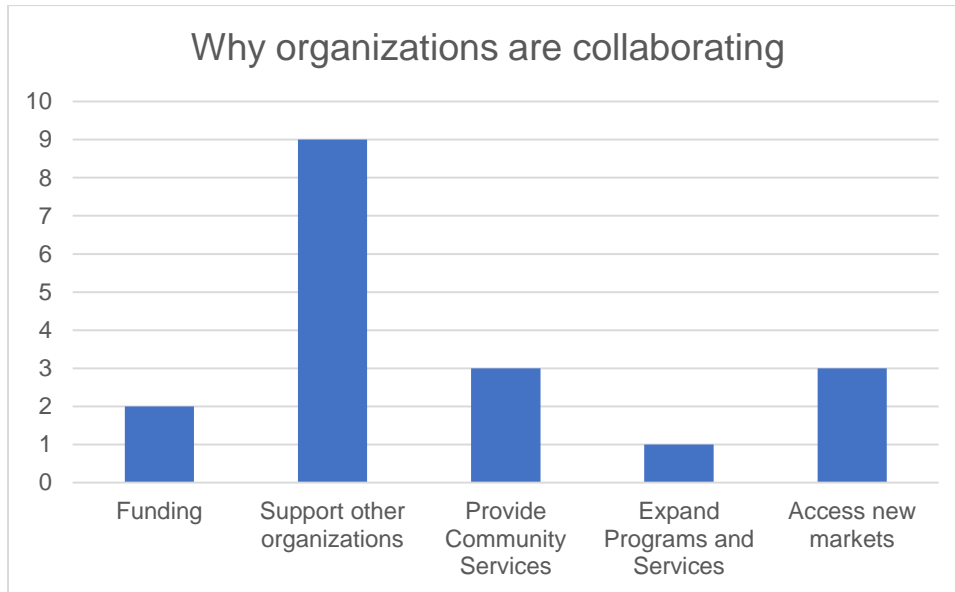
- 4 respondents (33%) mentioned aging infrastructure as a barrier, indicating the need for repairs, upgrades, or replacements to meet current program requirements. This limits ability to delivery quality programming.

4. Staff and Space Limitations:

- 1 respondent each cited barriers related to staff capacity and lack of space. While less frequently mentioned, these issues may still significantly hinder certain organizations' abilities to execute or expand programs.

Q4. Can you explain how you currently collaborate with other organizations and residents within Kneehill County or surrounding area?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



Funding	Support other organizations	Provide Community Services	Expand Programs and Services	Access new markets
2	9	3	1	3

Key Observations

1. Supporting Other Organizations:
 - The majority of respondents (9 out of 12, 75%) collaborate by supporting other organizations. This reflects a strong sense of community and interconnectedness, where groups work together to achieve shared goals.
2. Providing Community Services:
 - 3 respondents (25%) indicated their collaboration efforts focus on providing community services. This highlights a commitment to addressing local needs through partnerships and shared resources.
3. Accessing New Markets:
 - 3 respondents (25%) collaborate to explore or access new markets. This suggests that partnerships are seen as a way to broaden reach and enhance economic opportunities.
4. Funding Collaboration:

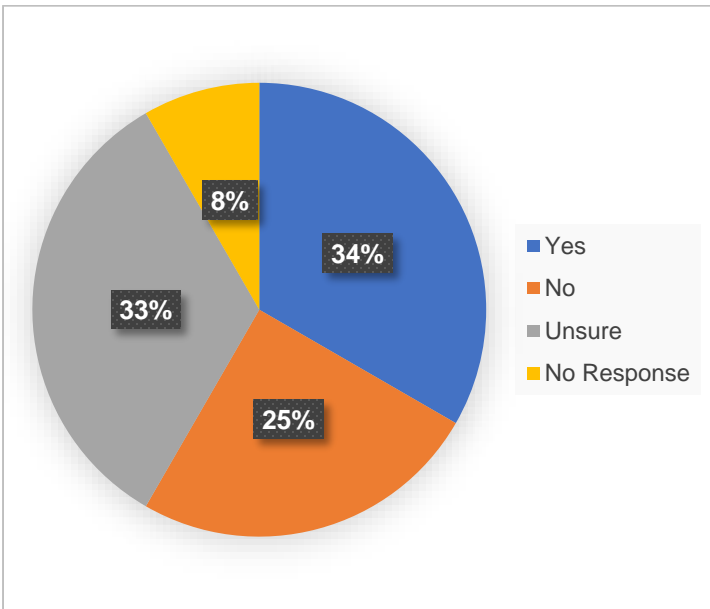
- 2 respondents (17%) mentioned collaborating specifically for funding purposes. This demonstrates a practical approach to pooling resources or jointly applying for grants to support their initiatives.

5. Expanding Programs and Services:

- Only 1 respondent (8%) reported collaboration to expand programs and services. This low figure may indicate that organizations prioritize maintaining existing programs rather than exploring growth opportunities.

Q5. Is your organization considering hosting/participating in Country Markets

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



Yes	No	Unsure	No Response	More Information
4	3	4	1	1

Key Observations

1. Interest in Hosting/Participating:

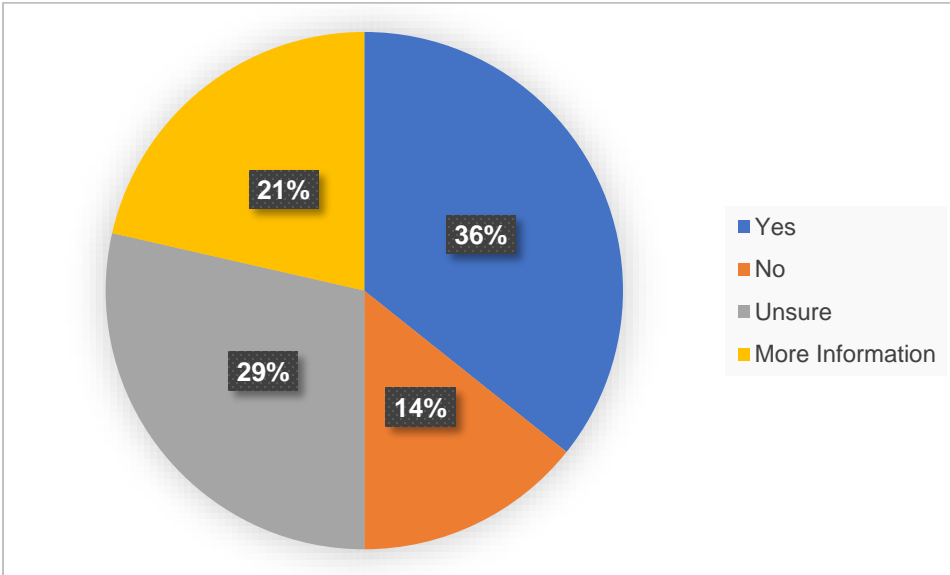
- 4 respondents (33%) expressed a willingness to host or participate in Country Markets, indicating a modest level of enthusiasm. This reflects a recognition of the potential benefits that such events could bring to the community and organizations.
- 4 respondents (33%) were unsure about hosting or participating. This suggests a lack of information or clarity about the benefits, requirements, and expectations associated with

involvement. The level of uncertainty highlights the need for better communication and engagement to explain the opportunities and logistics of participating in these events.

- 3 respondents (25%) explicitly stated that they were not considering hosting or participating. This could indicate either resource constraints or misalignment with their organizational priorities.
- 1 respondent (8%) specifically mentioned the need for more details about the market, reflecting a gap in communication and understanding.
- 1 respondent (8%) did not provide an answer, which might indicate limited interest or relevance of the question to their organization.

Q6. Should Kneehill County continue with the Country Market, would your organization consider being involved?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



Yes	No	Unsure	More Information
5	2	4	3

Key Observations

1. Support for Continued Involvement:

- **5 respondents (42%)** expressed a willingness to be involved if the Country Market continues, indicating a notable level of support among organizations.
- **4 respondents (33%)** were unsure about their involvement, reflecting a need for additional clarity or consideration of their capacity and interest.
- **3 respondents (25%)** stated they required more information before committing, highlighting the importance of transparent and comprehensive communication.
- **2 respondents (17%)** explicitly stated they would not be involved, potentially due to resource limitations or misalignment with their objectives.
- The responses indicate a general openness to the idea of continuing the Country Market, though many organizations are hesitant without further details or reassurances about the benefits and logistics.

- The interest shown by a significant portion of respondents suggests that the market has value as a community initiative, but its implementation needs to address concerns regarding feasibility, roles, and potential returns on investment.

4.3. Secondary Research Results

a. Kneehill County Country Market Analysis

i. Kneehill Country County Market Historical Overview

This event has changed considerably over the past 7 years. Since 2016, the initial vision of agriculture tours has now evolved to the Country Market. The initiatives have been stewarded by the Agriculture Service Board and Economic Development.



Additionally, as outlined in the above graphic it began as an *economic development* initiative to provide a networking opportunity. *Economic development* is the process of developing, diversifying and maintaining suitable economic, social and political environments in which balanced growth may be realized and thus increasing the wealth of the community. The initiative was utilized to connect supply chains and attract investment.

The farm tour aspects of the initiative could be considered *community economic development* by where communities build on local resources and capacities but increasing community ownership to enhance the health of a community.

As the years passed, a bus tour was incorporated to highlight best management practices and Kneehill County projects. In 2018, the initiative

shifted with perceived direction to shift towards local agriculture and culinary promotion to the general public. The 2019 market was added to further food and agriculture promotion with a culinary showcase.

2020/21 the initiative was halted due to Covid19 and returned in 2022 to a market and long-table initiative and no tours. The initiative continued to be led by Parks and Agriculture in the absence of Economic Development. The event attracted locals, domestic visitors and some smaller amounts of international visitors.

ii. **Goals and outcomes**

With a recent turnover in personnel in the economic development and agricultural departments, as well as various contributors' inputs and internal and external transitions, a clear understanding as to the purpose of the markets and measurable outcomes have not been understood and established with measurable goals and clear outcomes.

Upon review of historical information, there is yet to be an understanding if the initiative is:

- An economic development initiative (business retention and expansion, investment attraction, tourism growth, improve the quality of life, marketing and awareness); **OR**
- A community development initiative to provide the community with an event in which to connect to local food, producers, increase volunteerism; **OR**
- A community economic development initiative whereas industry becomes the driver to generate their own solutions to economic problems.

Competitive Analysis of Farmer's Markets

Research was conducted on 3 out of the 5 (2 did not respond) farmer's markets that vendors indicated they participate. In addition, research was conducted two (2) local markets to the Kneehill County area. The research was to gain an understanding of how other markets operate, what is provided, participation, cost and seasonality of the markets provided.

Market	Operated by	Cost	#Vendors	Time of Year	What they offer
Didsbury Market	Agricultural Society and is an Approved Farmer's Market	\$25.00	100+	December	Indoor venue Ample advertising
Airdrie Farmer's Market	Airdrie Farmer's Market	\$45.00	150+	3 Markets Summer - June - Sept (Wednesdays) Winter - Nov - 2 days Christmas - Nov - 1 day	Outdoor Venue Food trucks
Blackfalds - "Little of This Market"	CK Markets and Events	\$20/market	50+	8 Markets throughout the year. Quarterly markets from 11-4	Indoor venue Ample advertising, Door prizes Play zone for children, Local fundraiser
Three Hills Farmer's Market	Non-profit Approved Farmer's Market	\$20/market/day	10+	Summer Market: Tuesdays - June to September Fall Market - Oct 5, 2024 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM Christmas - Nov 22, 2024 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM Christmas - Nov 23, 2024 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM	Indoor/Outdoor Venue Advertising through approved farmers market site, social media (website is outdated)
Drumheller's Farmers Market	Non-profit Approved Farmer's Market		10-20+	February to November Saturdays 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM	Indoor/Outdoor Venue Advertising on social media and on the approved farmers market site

Key Observations

1. Market Size and Vendor Participation:

- **Larger Markets** (e.g., Airdrie and Didsbury) attract **100+ vendors**, indicating robust participation likely driven by strong advertising, established reputation, and attractive amenities.
 - **Smaller Markets** (e.g., Three Hills and Drumheller) report **10–20+ vendors**, reflecting more localized or niche participation but with potential for growth if well-supported.
2. **Cost to Vendors:**
- Vendor costs range from **\$20–\$45 per market**, with smaller markets like Three Hills and Blackfalds charging less, potentially making participation more accessible for smaller-scale vendors.
 - Higher fees (e.g., Airdrie’s \$45) correlate with larger markets and higher visibility, suggesting vendors may see a greater return on investment in such markets.
3. **Seasonality:**
- Most markets operate during peak times, with **summer months** being the most active (e.g., Three Hills and Airdrie).
 - Some markets (e.g., Drumheller, Blackfalds) extend into **winter or offer year-round options**, creating opportunities to cater to holiday shopping and offseason demand.
4. **Amenities and Advertising:**
- Successful markets, such as Didsbury, emphasize **indoor venues**, ample advertising, and enhanced vendor/visitor experiences like **food trucks and play zones for children** (Blackfalds).
 - **Social media and approved market platforms** are common advertising channels, but outdated resources (e.g., Three Hills website) may hinder market visibility.
5. **Unique Features:**
- Some markets offer unique draws like **door prizes, fundraising opportunities** (Blackfalds), or seasonal-themed events (e.g., Christmas markets in Three Hills and Airdrie).

b. Importance of Farmer's Markets and their Impact

According to Alberta Farmer's Markets Association, farmers markets are the best ways to find fresh, local food in season. The association has further outlined seven (7) reasons why people should shop at farmer's markets (Government of Alberta, 2024):

- Support local business
- Tasty and nutritious
- Learn where your food comes from
- Meet your food producers and makers
- Be a part of the community
- Green friendly
- Get ready to be entertained

Connecting Local Food to Customers

According to (Food Secure Canada, 2024) public markets in Canada are a versatile alternative in strengthening local food systems. (Food Secure Canada, 2024) states, "In a world increasingly aware of environmental issues and the importance of supporting local economies, farmers' and public markets in Canada are emerging as key players in the creation of stronger, more resilient food systems.

These markets, which sometimes strive to operate as alternatives to large commercial retailers, offer a space where local producers can sell their products directly to consumers, while meeting the specific needs of each community they serve and promoting sustainable development".

- Foster Local Connections
- Support Small Producers
- Promote food equity
- Meet the diverse needs of communities
- Strengthen access to fresh food

(Food Secure Canada, 2024) has distinguished between two types of markets:

1. **Farmers' Markets**, centered on direct sales by farmers of their fresh produce, and
2. **Public Markets**, which broaden the offer with a wider range of products – including those from resellers, non-local products and non-food items. [They can also be regulated by formal agreements with municipalities](#), underlining a more structured framework.

Both markets are often used interchangeably and many combine features of both. For example, Montreal's Jean-Talon market, historically a farmers' market for direct sales by local producers, also stands out as a public market, offering a wide range of goods, from imported products to artisanal objects.

Approved Farmer's Markets Program and Impact

According to the (Government of Alberta, 2024), farmer's markets are a popular agri-tourism attraction in Alberta by providing access to the most nutritious, fresh, local products. Through their Approved Farmer's Market program in partnership with the Alberta Farmer's Market Association, has over 140 Alberta approved farmers' markets.

According to the (Alberta Farmer's Market Association, 2024), they assist operators and vendors with guidelines and resources to strengthen the quality of farmer's markets in Alberta by providing member markets, vendors, managers, boards and sponsors with advocacy, education, promotion and innovation. Below is a list of supports provided by the association:

- **Marketing:** A centralized database of vendors for customers to locate farmer's markets throughout Alberta. [Markets | The Alberta Farmers' Market Association](#)
- **Verified Vendor Program:** Verify vendors are only selling what they produce is grown on their farms, producers are creating their value-added products and artisans are creating their unique arts and crafts here in Alberta. Customers then know, they're buying directly from the producer and are doing their part to ensure the future of local agriculture and the local economy. [Verified Vendor Program | The Alberta Farmers' Market Association](#)
- **Market Buds:** This a program for children to engage in the local food system. This is done through conversations directly with farmers, educational and cooking activities, tastings, gardening, exercise classes as well as arts and crafts. There are over 20 resources to help communities engage younger customers. [Market Buds Children's Program | The Alberta Farmers' Market Association](#)

Annually, the Government of Alberta releases market statistics on the impact of the Approved Farmer's Market Program. The information contained is compiled from approved farmers' markets across Alberta and helps provide a snapshot of the industry and help individual market organizers make decisions about their markets.

Below are statistics on Approved Farmer's Market (2023) as provided by (Government of Alberta, 2024)

- 149 approved farmer's market in 2023 operated 4,203 days (11 new in 2023)
- 112 communities were served by at least one Alberta approved market (77% of these are in rural communities with a population of less than 10,000)
- 14% operate year-round. Several change locations to facilitate their seasonal extension.
- Approved markets consist of: 28% non-profit organizations or new generation cooperative; 72% are sponsored (35% ag society; 23% community organization; 5% by culture/rec association; 9% sponsored by municipalities, churches, educational organizations).
- 82% compensated their managers

- 3.6 million customers visited
- Table rents average at \$24.92 (range from \$5 - \$85 per/market/day); 19% offer seasonal discount rates; 3% apply variable or long term leases with vendors
- Average 27 vendors per market (53% 20 vendors; 30% 21 - 40 vendors; 14% 41 - 75 vendors; 3% 75+ vendors) and 67% provide tables for non-profits/community groups
- Vendors sell agricultural
- Shopper's spend an average of \$70/farmers' market visit ([Alberta approved farmers' markets | Alberta.ca](#))

Alberta Open Farm Days

According to (Alberta Open Farm Days, 2024), Alberta Open Farm Days (OFD) is an incubator for agri-tourism and rural sustainability by bringing Albertans together through educational and experiential base initiatives to learn where our food comes from. The two-day August initiative provides farm tours and culinary events throughout the Province.

Open Farm Days provides support to participants in preparing for the weekend long event through access to training and resources. In addition, the program provides a provincial wide campaign and website where vendors can list post their event. The event is organized by Alberta Agricultural Societies.

Since 2016, interest throughout the Kneehill County region has varied from local farm tours and culinary events and hosted by agriculture societies, Trochu Arboretum, Kneehill County Long Table and Country Market.

Key Observations

- 72% Markets are largely sponsored by ag society, community organizations and associations; only 9% of the 72% are sponsored by a municipality.
- It is important to note, Approved Farmer's Market are an option but not all markets in Alberta are approved. Public Markets are also an option to consider.
- Provide programming to support market hosts in establishing a market.
- Opportunity to engage youth to establishing their market and thus inspiring entrepreneurship amongst the youth.
- Variety of benefits to markets in the community:
 - social benefits (access to local food, connection to local producers and community);
 - economic benefits by attracting visitors, business incubation and access to new markets;
- Opportunity to leverage the program to host a culinary and market. The program's provincial marketing would support driving traffic to the area.

- Partner with Trochu Arboretum to host or support through contributions would be a natural fit on this growing event in the community.

c. Alberta Agricultural Societies Association

According to (Alberta Agricultural Societies Association, 2024), the object of agricultural societies is “to encourage improvement in agriculture and enhanced quality of life for persons living in the community by developing educational programs, events, services and facilities based on needs of the community”.

A website scan was conducted on the agricultural societies in and around the Kneehill County area. Kneehill County Region is home to six (6) agricultural societies who provide an array of programs and services to the community.

Torrington & District Agricultural Society (Torrington and District Agricultural Society, 2024)

- Ron Gorr Memorial Arena (Indoor Ice surface (curling and skating), Banquet Hall and Kitchen)
- Camping

Carbon & District Ag Society and Curling Club (AAAS Member) (Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies, 2024)

- Curling Rink
- Archery Range

Acme & District Agricultural Society (AAAS Member) (Acme & District Agricultural Society, 2024)

- Education and Leadership Programs
- Acme Swimming Pool
- Community events (Acme Sports Day, Acme Angels)
- Steer Show
- Scholarships and Grants

Linden and District Agricultural Society (AAAS Member) (Alberta Ag Societies, 2024)

- Skating Rink (outdoor)
- Hockey Rink
- Nature Trails

Three Hills Agricultural Society (Government of Alberta, 2024)

- Farmers Market (Summer, Christmas and Fall Markets)
- Three Hills Curling Arena

Trochu and District Agricultural Society (AAAS Member) (Town of Trochu, 2024)

- Outdoor riding arena
- Rodeo and equestrian events

Key Observations:

- The agricultural societies in Kneehill County offer a wealth of facilities, community engagement, and programming that can directly support a farmers market and culinary event.
- Leveraging existing infrastructure such as arenas and banquet halls to host culinary events and markets would meet the needs of the vendors to locate the markets throughout the greater Kneehill County region.
- Three Hills Agricultural Society and Torrington Ag Society are currently undertaking markets and initiatives within the area. Three Hills was noted as one of the top communities by vendors in which to host a market.
- Collaborative efforts across these societies could foster a regional celebration of food, agriculture, and culture, enhancing the county's economic and tourism potential.
- The Community Group Survey results indicated resource challenges (financial and volunteers) are barriers to expanding programs so this would need to be addressed.

d. Connection to Kneehill County Economic Development

i. Investment Attraction

Familiarization "Fam" Tours

According to (Slide Share, 2024), Municipalities can attract site selectors and investors by way of utilizing familiarization tours to promote a municipality and to attract development. These tours can be done with traditional in person tours but also equally effective they can be done virtually.

Fam tours help build relationships with the local economic development organization by meeting face to face with political business leaders and to gain invaluable knowledge of a region by seeing it in person. Tours help promote a community's key assets, key industries and biggest employers in the community. Tours can also showcase the quality-of-life assets in a community. Fam tours are implemented when the community has reached a desired level of investment readiness.

Virtual tours will provide a snapshot of the region by showcasing all of the above, but done through captivating videos, pictures and story telling. Often times virtual tours done through strategic marketing by the municipality to attract investors throughout its key sectors.

ii. Business Retention and Expansion

Providing access to markets and culinary events, provides a means for economic development to collaborate with vendors to further the reach of their product to the marketplace.

Furthermore, having a connection to the County's local agricultural producers and processors provides opportunity for deeper discussion on expansion opportunities. Expansion stimulates the economy throughout employment growth, and adds to the local tax base and beyond.

iii. Building Capacity

Initiatives to build capacity with businesses and services organizations can be provided through access to training, connections to local service providers, access to grant programs and financial resources.

For example, economic development could connect with local agencies to identify sources of support to assist in their development. Various levels of government can also provide grant programs to assist in growth and development to achieve targeted outcomes.

iv. Marketing and Brand Awareness

Directories can also be developed to showcase on the economic development website and local stories can be produced by way to help market existing businesses. Marketing local businesses provides an opportunity to showcase the quality of life and entrepreneurship to the broader community.

Kneehill County currently provides a directory of businesses and in the past has done Agri-preneur spotlights to showcase the County's local businesses and agricultural assets.

e. Connection to Kneehill County's Agricultural Service Board

Since its inception in 2016, the Growing Kneehill Event has undergone significant changes. Initially, the program was conceptualized as an ASB showcase, with the primary focus on demonstrating agricultural best management practices and Kneehill County Ag services programs for the benefit of local farmers and community members. Through involvement with economic development, the event evolved, shifting its emphasis towards agri-tourism and tourism development with the mandate of promoting diversification in agriculture and local industry. This transition involved adopting a more comprehensive approach that integrated networking and marketing for entrepreneurs and local vendors as well as an opportunity to promote to the public. At the 2023 event, the direction had shifted to a promotional platform, spotlighting and celebrating the diverse products cultivated and crafted in the region for both dignitaries and the general public.

Through its Strategic Business Plan, the ASB has a mandate to support Agritourism and diversification of the agriculture industry. Primarily the ASB focuses on delivering information through extension events both to producers to connect them to best management practices and to the public to promote connection to local agriculture. The later point of providing a connection for the public to local agriculture has been an underlying theme of Growing Kneehill and the ASB's involvement since its inception.

Financial information:

The project was initially funded through the ASB Operating budget.

5. Findings

The following SWOT is a compilation of the primary survey and secondary research results and outlines the key findings through the research.

SWOT Analysis – Strengths (Internal positive factors that could be leveraged to achieve success)

- Strong response to participating in future markets from those who previously participated.
- April, June, July, August, November, December, April are the desired months for vendor participation.
- Vendors are in support of the market rotating throughout Kneehill County. Vendors favored the Three Hills, Linden, Torrington, Trochu, Keiver's Lake as their top choices for the market.
- The Country market provide activities such as music, petting zoos, sand dig. Activities and entertainment being brought in also meets the vendors expectation.
- Good collaboration amongst staff.
- Basic marketing materials developed have been a good product.
- Horseshoe Canyon is a good location to other urban centres where visitation is higher than other areas in the County, but only if the weather is cooperative.
- The Canyon promotes a key asset in Kneehill County.
- Good relationships with the vendors.
- Ability to layout venue to appeal to the vendors.
- Power being brought into the Canyon will meet a requirement by vendors.
- Utilizing expert contracts to support in market and long table development.
- Hiring a photographer to capture images from past projects for future marketing.
- Some sponsor participation.
- Sponsors felt recognized.
- Sponsors support events that will help the local community.
- Access to local amenities to host indoor/outdoor markets and events with full access to utilities and open year-round.
- Service organizations collaborate with other organizations and community members to provide support and access to community services and programming.
- Opportunity to utilize Community halls as well as non-traditional event spaces to host indoor events.
- There is willingness and support among the organizations providing there is a clear vision for the Country Market.

SWOT Analysis – Weaknesses (Internal factors that could be a disadvantage in achieving success)

- Reduced market participation from previous years.
- Respondents are not confident they will attend and is dependent upon how/when the market is created.
- Weather is a factor given there is no shelter at Horseshoe Canyon to protect vendors from the elements.
- No utilities at the Horseshoe Canyon site makes it challenging for vendors to maintain food quality (water and electricity).
- Location is a barrier due to distance, proximity to urban centres and other activities and attractions.
- Currently the market appears to be a filler between vendors larger markets and we are competing against larger markets.
- The vision and goal of the market and long table aren't clear and shift regularly. What is the purpose of it and who is it for.
- There was not enough time to market and secure vendors (3-12 months notice is preferred)
- Kneehill County has some ability for Parks and Ag seasonal support May through to August, but it is also their busy time. No seasonal staff limits ability to host another market in the fall. More staff would be required and or volunteers to support.
- Didn't have long enough lead time for marketing the event for visitation.
- Vendors won't participate if foot traffic isn't at the market as it impacts their direct sales and promotion of their organization. Need to increase visitation traffic by offering more things to do that would attract a larger audience.
- Most vendors are coming to market with a 100 km proximity.
- Time constraints (competing priorities and is being done as a side project).
- Marketing reach on vendors to fill in gaps of the programs and activities to create a full experience.
- No ability to track ROI on previous advertising efforts in YYC Curiosity, etc.
- No buy in from different groups (service groups, vendors, sponsors).
- Difficult to track visitation (demographic, where, how much).
- Sponsors are unsure if they would support the events in the futures which impacts Kneehill County's financial model.
- Service organizations primarily focus on sports programming. Arenas can't host indoor events in the winter months.
- Attractions such as museums, visitor information, campgrounds, Keiver's Lake, Horseshoe Canyon, Orkney Viewpoint are seasonal.
- Markets, tours, other community events were not favorable in participating or organizing.
- Lack of volunteers to support market.
- Few to no organizations are considering expansion of programs of services to include Markets, unless it has direct benefit to their organization.
- Kneehill County is competing with other service level priorities to provide access to financial and human resources to support a quality market development and to support service organizations to develop and execute activities.

- Service organizations are focused on providing community services desired by the community that it is creating volunteer fatigue.

SWOT Analysis – Opportunities (External factors that could be capitalized on to improve the Country Market)

- Investigate how the market will appeal to vendors to attract such as introduce a market in the Spring months and in July. Exploring other seasonal markets with winter activities such as a sleigh ride, hot dog roast, etc.
- There is desire by vendors for a more established market to compete with the larger markets.
- Opportunity to increase registration fee to vendors, providing there are more amenities.
- Opportunity for vendors to come multiple times to the market but spread throughout the year.
- Increase marketing time, providing vendor spotlights to further promote the market, and could provide more time to gather financial contributions.
- Change the location and further explore activities to draw vendors and visitors to the market.
- Investigate activities in the region (Three Hills Cruise Night, Parades, Drumheller Passion Play, Rosebud Theatre, Campground, Open Farm Days, Guided Trail Hikes, Gopher Hole Museum, Culture Days)
- Explore other communities and locations to host the market could be an opportunity to revitalize Kneehill County Hamlet's (Wimborne, Torrington, Swalwell).
- Partner with organizations such as local service organizations (Ag Societies, producers, environmental organizations), Tyrell Museum, Arboretum, Open Farm Days to bring forward a diverse offering of experiences desired by visitors and vendors.
- Partner with busy bee for lunch box and other local restaurants with local food and bringing in more food trucks.
- Partner with Travel Drumheller, Tyrell, Rosebud, Amphitheatre, Open Farm Days, etc as major tourism draws to increase foot traffic that the vendors are desiring.
- Reconnect with Food Tourism Strategies and others to assist in market development.
- Expanding the dates and shoulder season of markets.
- More entertainment and activities to appeal the visitors and increase foot traffic.
- Coordinating the market dates with other local events to drive foot traffic.
- Opportunity for support with Travel Alberta on the destination development zone.
- Explore Culture Days and events to make the market more unique.
- Work with the museums and historical societies to share more of what makes agriculture and our producers have done traditionally and modern.
- Opportunity to collaborate with local community groups to drive sponsorship, increase volunteerism and build strong community connections.
- Travel Drumheller has expressed interest in supporting the development of a culinary and market for the first year, additional resources would be required for following year.
- Work with the service organizations to provide funding and access to staff and volunteers to support the event.

- Build stronger connections and relationships with the County's immigration community (such as Kneehill Bayanihan Society).
- Utilize a combination of long table and tours as an investment attraction strategy through a strategically targeted Familiarization Tour (ie Horseshoe Canyon ASP and other future developments and targeted attraction).

SWOT Analysis – Threats (External challenges that could impact the Country Market)

- Weather is a limiting factor.
- Developing activities and things to do such as guided trail hikes are limited to weather and certain age groups.
- The vision and goal of the market and long table aren't clear and shift regularly. What is the purpose of it and who is it for.
- Competing priorities with other initiatives within the County.
- Making it financially sustainable.
- Utilities aren't available to meet the needs of the vendors.
- Kneehill county is lacking in diversity and quality of vendors.
- Do not have a full understanding of our businesses on what they offer and customer base.
- Because we focus on Kneehill County products only, it limits the ability to provide an experience/market that visitors want.
- Sponsors aren't seeing an ROI (sales or visibility) on the events.
- Financial, volunteers, aging infrastructure are the largest barriers to program expansion.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Economic Development

Here are some recommendations based on the SWOT analysis:

1. Strengthen Market Appeal & Vendor Engagement

- **Clarify Vision & Purpose:** Ensure that the market's mission is clear, with a well-defined target audience. This will provide consistency for vendors, sponsors, and attendees. Regular updates and clear messaging will help all stakeholders understand the value proposition.
 - **Increase Vendor Participation:** Offer incentives for early registration and create a more structured, seasonal schedule to attract vendors for multiple events throughout the year. Expanding the market's appeal by integrating various activities such as themed markets or seasonal offerings (e.g., winter sleigh rides) could also attract more diverse vendors.
 - **Target More Diverse Vendor Categories:** Actively recruit vendors that offer diverse products beyond local agriculture, focusing on crafts, artisanal goods, and unique experiences that would attract more visitors.

2. Optimize Location & Infrastructure

- **Enhance Infrastructure:** Work with the county to explore solutions for bringing utilities (water, electricity) to Horseshoe Canyon or other venues to address vendor needs. Consider temporary solutions such as mobile generators or water trucks in the short term.
 - **Consider Alternative Locations:** Explore other venues within Kneehill County that may be more accessible and better equipped to host markets year-round, such as indoor facilities or more centralized locations.
 - **Invest in Infrastructure:** Long-term investments in infrastructure, such as facilities for events that can be used year-round, would reduce reliance on temporary solutions and improve the overall experience for both vendors and visitors.
 - **Weather-Resilient Solutions:** Develop contingency plans for inclement weather, such as providing temporary shelters or partnering with indoor venues during the colder months.

3. Increase Foot Traffic & Market Visibility

- **Marketing Campaigns:** Extend the marketing period (6-12 months) to create more anticipation and secure vendors and sponsors. Develop targeted campaigns highlighting vendor stories and local attractions to increase interest.
- **Collaborate with Regional Attractions:** Coordinate market dates with other local events (e.g., Three Hills Cruise Night, Rosebud Theatre) to drive more visitors to the area. Partner with local attractions like museums and cultural sites to create a holistic tourism experience.
- **Leverage Digital Platforms:** Utilize social media and online platforms more effectively to reach a wider audience. This includes vendor spotlights, event countdowns, and live social media updates.

4. Increase Community Involvement & Volunteerism

- **Partner with Local Organizations:** Build stronger ties with service organizations and community groups to generate more support for events. Develop volunteer-driven initiatives to ease resource constraints and reduce fatigue. Provide access to funding with clearly defined outcomes.
- **Incentivize Sponsorships:** Offer more structured sponsorship packages that show clear ROI through exposure, signage, and recognition. Seek out new sponsors, especially from sectors outside agriculture and local business, such as tourism or entertainment.
- **Engage the Community:** Build relationships with cultural organizations (e.g., Kneehill Bayanihan Society) to encourage greater participation and representation, bringing diverse products and experiences to the market.
- **Address Volunteer Shortages:** Form partnerships with local schools, colleges, and volunteer organizations to tap into a larger pool of support for staffing markets. Create volunteer appreciation programs to ensure a positive experience for those involved.
- **Partner with tourism organizations:** tourism organizations such as Travel Drumheller have capacity to provide access to training to build capacity amongst groups and individuals to run markets and culinary events.

5. Sustainability & Financial Growth

- **Develop a Long-Term Financial Model:** Work with local community groups to leverage their ability to attract sponsors and local businesses to create a sustainable financial model, possibly by increasing vendor fees or introducing tiered sponsorships that benefit the market and community.

- **Track ROI for Sponsors & Vendors:** Implement a method for tracking and reporting on the success of events for vendors and sponsors, which will help justify their continued support and increase participation.
- **Expand Shoulder Seasons:** Consider hosting markets in the shoulder seasons (spring and fall) to maintain interest and provide more opportunities for vendors and visitors.

6. Leverage Cultural & Regional Resources

- **Cultural and Agri-Tourism Integration:** Align with local cultural days or agriculture festivals to create a unique market experience. Explore partnerships with local museums and environmental organizations to tie into the region’s heritage and tourism potential.
- **Create Signature Experiences:** Develop signature market events such as long table dinners or guided hikes, linking them with local agriculture, food tourism, and regional culture to distinguish Kneehill County’s market from others.

7. Address Infrastructure & Volunteer Challenges

These recommendations aim to increase vendor participation, improve the market experience for attendees, enhance sustainability, and foster stronger community engagement. By leveraging Kneehill County’s unique resources and addressing identified weaknesses, the market can grow and evolve into a key economic and social asset for the area.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This Country Market research project represents a forward-thinking strategy for Kneehill County, with a focus on sustainable growth and resilience. By leveraging a deep understanding of local dynamics, building strong partnerships, and continuously adapting to regional needs, Kneehill County is poised to achieve significant success for the country market. The commitment to innovation, community involved approaches, and effective risk management will ensure long-term profitability and competitive positioning.

Appendix

Attachments of additional information (surveys, questionnaires, glossary, etc.)

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