



Country Market Research

Findings and Recommendations Report



Project Purpose

Historically, Kneehill County staff has been the leader and stewardship of the Kneehill Country Market and Longtable 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 is to conduct a survey to 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.



Project 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.

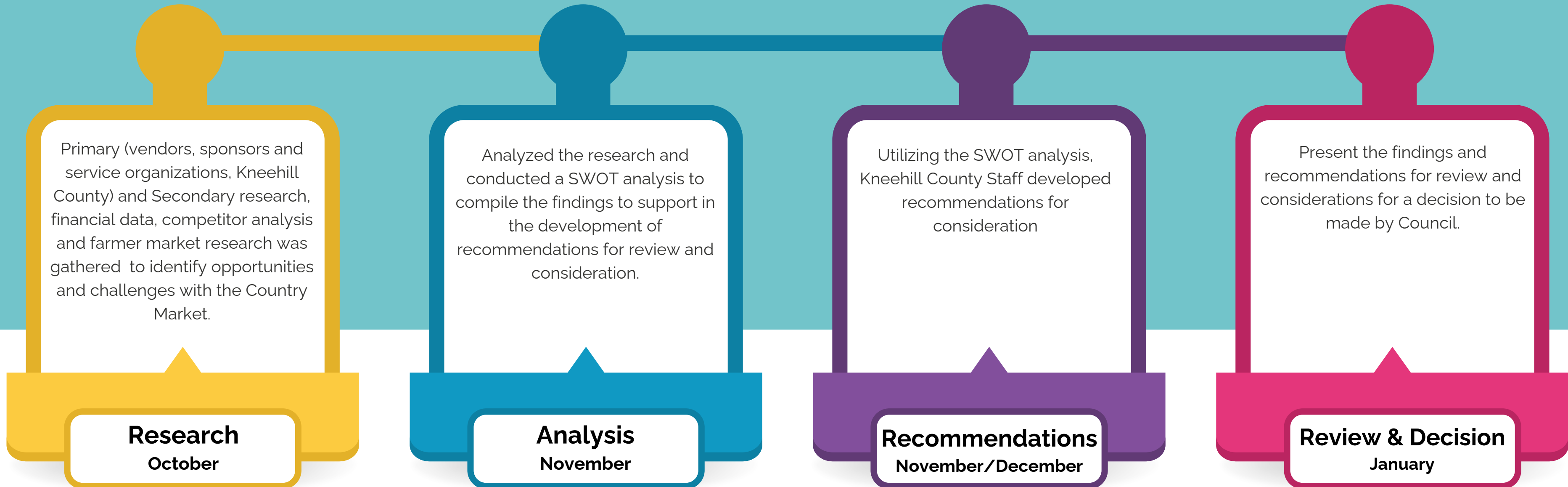
Administration returned to Council on May 28, 2024 to provide an update and receive further direction on the Country Market due to the decline in vendor and sponsor participation. Council set a threshold of 15 vendors, per event, by May 31, 2024 for the Country Market and directed Administration to cancel 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. Administration developed a pre-liminary project plan in July 2024 and met in October once full staffing levels returned to finalize the project plan, communications and marketing plan and survey questions. The vendor survey was released on October 23 through to November 1 on social media and direct email to over 50 contacts.

Upon preliminary review of the vendor results, Administration felt it necessary to seek feedback from the sponsors and service organizations and consequently distributed a survey to support Administration and Council with a deeper understanding and ability to develop and make information decisions on future of the Kneehill Country Market.



Methodology



Primary Research Results

Social media advertising:
reach of 2963 and 85 click links

40

Past & Future Vendors

Registered vendors and 41 past/potential vendors

35

Sponsors

Local and external businesses who have sponsored in the past or might be interested in future sponsorship opportunities

25

Community Groups

Agricultural societies
Chamber of Commerce
Historical Societies and Museums
Lions Club
4H Groups
Drumheller Farmers Market
Three Hills Farmers Market
Travel Drumheller

With a sample size of 100, and a goal of 25-35% feedback, a response rate of 73% (73 respondents) was achieved.

Vendors

45 Respondents

(54 received - 9 eliminated as they were not verified vendors)

Sponsors

6 Respondents

Community Groups

12 Respondents

Secondary Research Results

Competitive Analysis

Reviewed 3/5 Markets of which vendors currently participate
Reviewed 2 local markets

Financial & Participation Analysis

Review of past Country Market goals, income and expenditure and participation rates

External Studies

Approved Farmers Market Statistics - 2023

Internal and external secondary research was conducted to gain an understanding of the current and future environment of farmer's markets, visitors, financial models and participation

Country Market History



Bus tour and the first Long Table Dinner at Horseshoe Canyon. Direction was as a networking opportunity for local entrepreneurs with an opportunity to experience feature businesses in agriculture/food, artisans, tourism and experiences



2018

Continued with the Long Table Dinner and expanded the Country Market at Horseshoe Canyon Continued with the direction of local food and agriculture promotion with a culinary showcase



2022

Country Market and Long Table Dinner hosting on the same day thanks to involvement of a contractor hosting the Long Table Dinner. Perceived direction for promotion and celebration of local agri-food and tourism to an expanded audience

2016

Bus tour for local agriculture producers highlighting local best management practices and Kneehill County Projects

2017



Long Table Dinner and the addition of the Country Market at Horseshoe Canyon. Percieved direction shift towards local ag and culinary promotion to the general public

2019



Post-Covid return of the Country Market & Long Table Dinner. Addition of Ag Education Booth at Market. Continued previous direction.

2023



SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT analysis is a compilation of the key survey results from Vendors, Sponsors, Service Organizations and Kneehill County Staff.

SWOT Analysis: Key Strengths

Internal positive factors that could be leveraged to achieve success

- 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.
- Power and utilities being brought into the Canyon will meet a requirement by vendors.
- Utilizing expert contracts to support in market and long table development.
- 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 provided there is a clear vision for the Country Market.

SWOT Analysis: Key Weaknesses

Internal factors that could be a disadvantage in achieving success

- 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).
- 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).
- 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.
- 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.
- Few to no organizations are considering expansion of programs of services to include Markets, unless it has direct benefit to their organization.

SWOT Analysis: Key Opportunities

External factors that could be capitalized on to improve the Country Market

- 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.
- Increase marketing time, providing vendor spotlights to further promote the market, and could provide more time to gather financial contributions.
- 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), Arboretum, Open Farm Days to bring forward a diverse offering of experiences desired by visitors and vendors.
- Partner with Travel Drumheller, Tyrell Museum, Rosebud, Amphitheatre, Open Farm Days, etc as major tourism draws to increase foot traffic that the vendors are desiring.
- Opportunity to collaborate with local community groups to drive sponsorship, increase volunteerism and build strong community connections.
- Work with the service organizations to provide funding and access to staff and volunteers to support the event.

SWOT Analysis: Key Threats

External challenges that could impact the Country Market

- Unclear vision and goal of the market and long table.
- Competing priorities with other initiatives within the County.
- Sponsors aren't seeing an ROI (sales or visibility) on the events.
- Financial, volunteers, aging infrastructure are the largest barriers to program expansion.
- Weather, utilities, and availability is a limiting factor for vendor participation.

Profile -The Ideal Vendor

Participate in markets mostly to promote their business and direct sales

Participates in 3 to 4 markets a year

Prefer to be contacted 3 months to a year in advance to participate in markets



A range of \$20-\$100 as a registration fee, given the market host provide amenities and support such as:

- Essential advertising and promotion
- Access to power outlets, water stations, and an ideal venue to make the experience more comfortable

Location of market is the most important factor to them, with natural foot traffic and not far to travel to

Profile -The Ideal Sponsor

General focus is on non-profit community groups in highest need such as food banks, small not-for-profit organizations, events or fundraisers supporting youth activities and support, or rural community enhancements



Appreciate being recognized for their contribution



Majority require 2-6 months prior to event to be contacted for potential sponsorship



Look for opportunities that align with their initiatives to support local communities including:

- Quality childcare
- Train or hire students
- Donations to community hall, school, graduation fundraisers

Profile - The Ideal Service Organization

Sports and recreational space are the top services

Financial, volunteers and aging infrastructure are the top 3 barriers to execute new programs

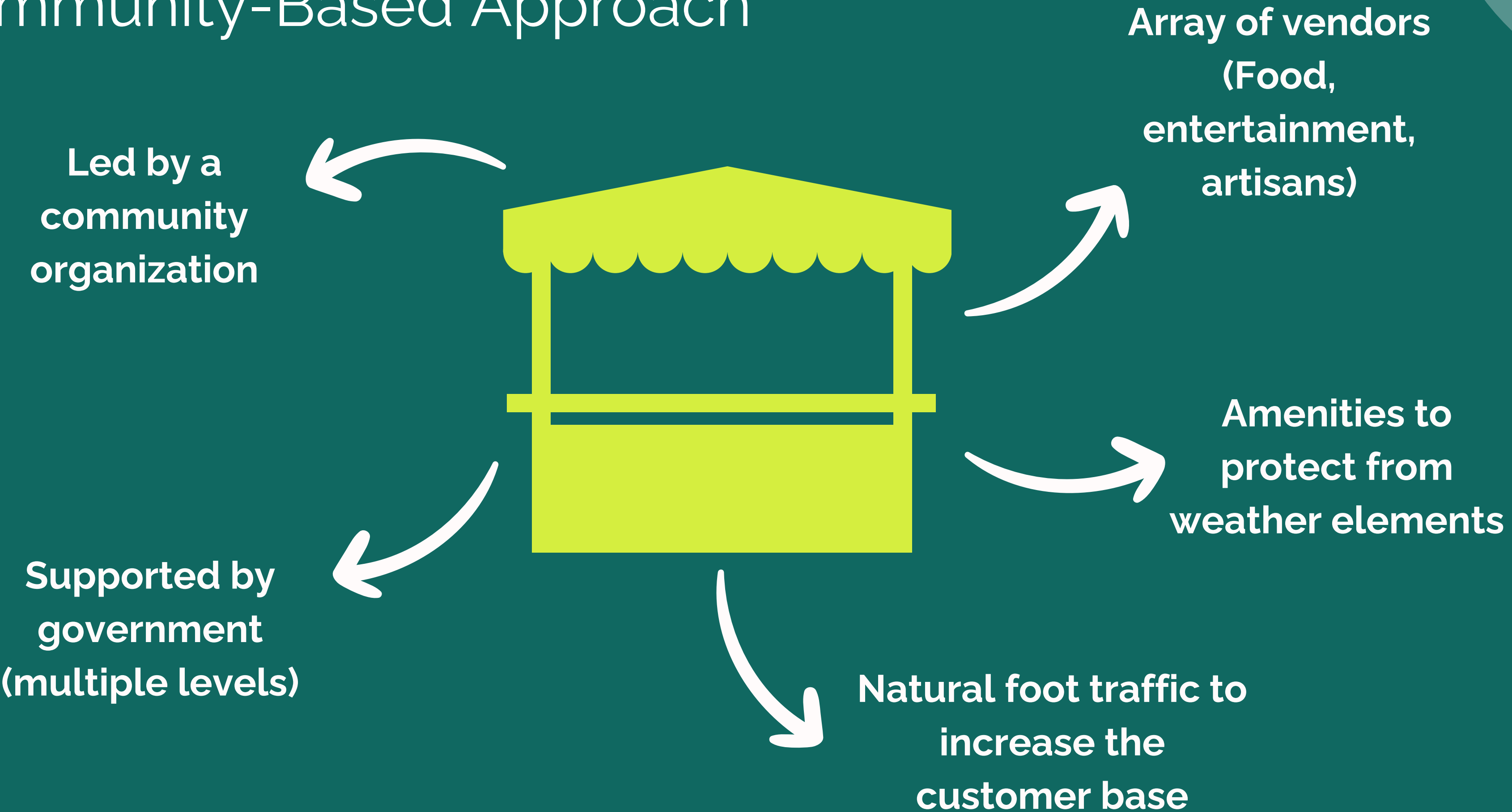
Organizations favor program expansions such as sports, recreation and building upgrades

Organizations often collaborate with other service groups to promote and provide programs and services to the local community and visitors



Profile - The Ideal Market

Community-Based Approach



Market Enhancement by Department

	Economic Development	Community Economic Development	Community Development Agriculture & Parks
What is it?	Economic Development is the process of developing, diversifying and maintaining suitable economic, social, and political environments, in which balanced growth may be realized, increasing the wealth of the community.	Community economic development (CED) is an inclusive and participatory process by which communities initiate and generate their own multiple bottom-line solutions to economic problems. CED focuses on creating inclusive local economies, developing nourishing livelihood opportunities, building on local resources and capacities, increasing community control and ownership, enhancing the health of the environment, and encouraging community resilience. CED is the most sustainable form economic development.	Ag & Parks is responsible for enhancing the quality of life for residents by managing natural spaces, promoting outdoor activities, and supporting agricultural or environmental initiatives within the community. Day to day operations, as well as collaborations with events such as Open Farm Days
How is it promoted/ supported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in infrastructure • Improve access to quality education • R&D leads to technological advancements that can boost productivity, create new industries, and improve the quality of goods and services • Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises • Environmental Sustainability • Sector-Specific Development - Promoting key sectors based on a county's resources and competitive advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Support: funding for community development projects • Policy Framework to enhance opportunity zones • Non profit and social organizations • Community engagement and project development • Corporate social responsibility • Community Led Development • Social services and health initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funding and programs • Non profit organization and foundations • Research and education • Volunteerism and community support • Conservation and environmental programs • Support for economic tourism
Connected Activities	Long Table, Culinary Event	Grant Program, multiple levels of support	Community connection of producers to consumers (Open Farm Days)

FINDINGS

Strengthen Market Appeal & Vendor Engagement

Clarify the market's vision and purpose

Optimize Location & Infrastructure

Utilize alternative venues with existing utilities

Increase Foot Traffic & Market Visibility

Build partnerships with other local events and attractions to cross-promote activities

Address Infrastructure & Volunteer Challenges

Advocate for long-term investments in regional market infrastructure and volunteer capacity to ensure scalability



Sustainability & Financial Growth

Work with local community groups to leverage their ability to attract sponsors and local businesses to create a sustainable financial model

Leverage Cultural & Regional Resources

Identify cultural and agri-tourism events already happening in the region to align with

Increase Community Involvement & Volunteerism

Approach local organizations and service groups to offer support, incentives and recognition

ALIGNMENTS

The recommendations outlined in this presentation align with the following documents:



Economic Development Plan

Strengthen existing businesses, elevate Kneehill County's brand, build leadership capacity



Strategic Plan

To build a robust adaptable economy, to maximize quality of life, provide effective leadership



ASB Plan

Promotion, education and communication, local food and agri-tourism, and environmental resources



THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS
AND DISCUSSIONS