



*Rooted In Tradition,  
Growing for Tomorrow*

## **BC's Agricultural Fairs and Their Impact in BC Communities**

**Community Benefits and Strategic Direction  
2013**

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# Executive Summary

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This document reports on research conducted by BC Fairs in 2013 to explore the community benefits and strategic direction of BC's agricultural fairs. The research was primarily focused through surveys and direct consultation with BC's Fair Associations and their stakeholders.

Throughout British Columbia an estimated 61 agricultural fairs deliver events and other programming that brings their community together and provides economic benefits for the community and for the agricultural economy. Forty six of the agricultural Fair Associations are members of the BC Association of Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions ("BC Fairs"). BC Fairs is mandated to provide leadership, communication, industry development, industry relations and other appropriate programming. Data for the Pacific National Exhibition are not included in quantitative analyses because in many respects they would dominate the results.

## **A 100 year plus history confirms the value and sustainability of the agricultural fair**

- Although challenged by limited human and financial resources BC's Fair Associations continue to deliver wholesome and tangible benefits for BC's communities and population.
- In many communities the agricultural fair is the major annual community event and celebration.
- 56% of survey respondents indicate the health of their Fair Association is improving compared with previous years, versus 17.6% who indicated deterioration. The Fair Associations indicate the improvement is a result of innovation and dedication by the Boards of Directors and the support of their communities.
- BC's Fair Associations use 777 hectares of land to stage their events.
- Throughout their history, Fair Associations have consistently provided many of the community facilities used for community gatherings, meetings and shows, agricultural shows and many other events and entertainment.
- One third of the Fair Associations own the facilities they use for their events, one third own some of their facilities and the remaining third use facilities owned mainly by their local government.
- Facilities owned by the Fair Associations are aging and provision must be made for renovation.

## **BC's Fair Associations engage local and provincial populations:**

- Broad ranging programming and events capture the imagination and support of all segments of the population, including urban and rural, young and old, families and individuals
- Attendance at the 1,316 events staged in 2012 by BC's Fair Associations was 1.44 million, including 1.16 million at their annual agricultural fairs. These numbers increase dramatically with the inclusion of the Pacific National

Exhibition, which reported 2012 attendance of 800,000 at its annual exhibition and a further 375,000 guests outside fair time.

- Attendance at the annual agricultural fairs includes 847,000 local residents and 313,000 who travel to an agricultural fair as least an hour away from home (not including PNE).
- Attendance counted at BC's annual agricultural fairs is equivalent to 19% of the entire population of British Columbia, again not including PNE.

#### **Fair Associations directly produce economic benefits for BC communities**

- The Fair Associations themselves spend \$13.3 million annually directly in their own communities or close in region and a further 1.5 million elsewhere, mainly in BC. PNE reported an additional \$50.4 million in spending.
- Attendees are estimated to spend \$17-25 million on site at the annual agricultural fairs (not including PNE). Local residents are estimated to spend a further \$9.5 million in the community in connection with their visit.
- Non-residents travelling to agricultural fairs located more than an hour away from home are estimated have spent \$15.7 million, including their onsite spending and other expenditures during their visit.
- Spending by contracted attractions, exhibitors and competitors in British Columbia is believed to significantly exceed \$10.0 million annually.

#### **BC's agricultural fairs bring the local food chain into perspective**

- Changing trends in agriculture indicate increasing consumer interest in local agricultural production and innovation. People want to know what they eat.
- Fair Associations are increasingly engaging, promoting and celebrating local agricultural producers and innovators, thus increasing their relevance to their local community and agricultural producers.
- This evolving focus returns the Fair Associations to their roots of 100 years ago, when their local agricultural community comprised mostly small farms.

#### **Agricultural Fair Associations are connected**

- The 700 individuals who volunteer as members of the Boards of Directors of the Fair Associations report their current or previous occupations spanned all sectors of the economy.
- Many local community organizations benefit financially from the Fair Associations through contracts at fair time and discounted or free rental of facilities year round.

#### **Agricultural fair events blend traditional and new entertainment**

- Responding to the expectations of their attendees Fair Associations produce events that range from traditional agricultural shows and activities to business development for local agricultural producers and high energy entertainment.

#### **Fair Associations are characterized by dedicated volunteers**

- 11,500 volunteers contribute 127,000 hours to support their local Fair Association

#### **Agricultural fairs are not a “one size fits all” proposition**

- Agricultural fairs have evolved with their communities and grown with the vision of their leaders, while maintaining their important traditional values.

#### **Future direction will depend on focus, planning, communication and innovation**

- Fair Associations need to engage their communities more closely in order to build new alliances and new strategic direction.

#### **BC Fairs**

- Fair Associations rated BC Fairs programming and communication tools as valuable and particularly acknowledge the extent and quality of support provided by the Staff and Board of BC Fairs
- The Fair Associations rate the BC Fairs programs focused on industry leadership and representation to be the most valuable.
- The Fair Associations seek programming from BC Fairs that will contribute to their strategic direction for the future.
- BC Fairs is challenged by very limited financial and human resources and must seek additional support in order to provide the leadership and resources expected by the industry.

#### **Key Recommendations**

- *For BC Fairs:*
  - Implement a new communication plan for the industry to raise awareness and the visibility of BC's Fair Associations and their contribution; Consider industry re-branding to bring greater relevance to the benefits driven by the Fair Associations
  - Establish a mentorship program to encourage peer interaction and support among member Fair Associations.
  - Explore a new funding model for BC's fairs industry to facilitate continued growth and new initiatives focused on expanding the social, economic and agricultural benefits for communities.
  - Seek out strategic alliances for the industry.
  - Assist Fair Association Boards of Directors to enhance their professionalism and leadership.
  - Engage First Nations and ethnic population groups to determine appropriate strategies to encourage them to participate more in agricultural fairs.
- *For the Fair Associations:*
  - Set the future direction of the Fair Association through focused consultation with key stakeholders and strategic planning.

- Execute a year-round community engagement and communication plan to promote dialogue on the contribution and direction of the Fair Association.
- Pursue new initiatives to engage and promote local agricultural producers and innovators and connect them to customers.
- Add vibrant, educational and interactive entertainment within the agricultural component of the fair, supporting traditional programming, to expand the engagement of fair attendees.
- Prioritize development of the business of the Fair Association to drive new initiatives and programming, leading to enhanced value.

The enthusiastic contribution to this research by BC's Fair Associations, community participants and other stakeholder is strongly appreciated.



# Introduction

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This document reports on research to document the status of BC's agricultural fairs and exhibitions. The research was focused on the business of BC's fair associations, addressing the benefits accruing to their communities and opportunities to enhance their strategic direction.

The work was conducted on behalf of the BC Association of Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions ("BC Fairs"), the industry association whose members are 46 of the estimated 61 community agricultural fairs. The research led to conclusions and recommendations that may contribute to the strategic direction of BC's agricultural fairs community and increasing benefits for their stakeholders.

A grant from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia contributed to funding the work.

## Purpose

The purpose of the research is:

- Explore the current status and challenges and opportunities facing BC's fairs
- Identify priorities for the future direction of BC's fairs industry
- Provide some "how to" suggestions for fairs
- Provide directional recommendations for BC Fairs as the agricultural fairs industry umbrella association
- Provide criteria against which to measure progress and priorities.

## Methodology

The research was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The following approach was employed:

1. A detailed discussion was held with the Board of Directors of BC Fairs to clarify the business environment in which the fairs operate and the key objectives and methodology for the research
2. Two online surveys of BC's agricultural fairs were launched concurrently. Members of BC Fairs and other agricultural fair associations that are not members of BC Fairs were invited to participate in the surveys.
  - a. The first survey addressed the structure, organization and operation of the respondent fair associations, exploring their activities, target markets, community relationships, leadership, priorities, opportunities, barriers and challenges. A total of 35 Fair Associations responded to the survey. Agricultural fair associations that are not members of BC Fairs provided two of the responses to the qualitative survey. Most respondents to this survey answered all questions they were asked.

- b. The second survey focused on target markets, attendance, financial operations, ticket sales and human resources. A total of 32 Fair Associations responded to this survey, most of which were members of BC Fairs. This survey was challenging for some Fair Associations and a small proportion was unable to answer some of the financial questions.
3. Following completion and preliminary analysis of the surveys a round of interviews was conducted with Fair Association Boards of Directors around BC. A total of 29 fair associations were engaged in this interview program. The interviews were conducted to explore community relationships and strategic direction in an exploratory format. Two kinds of interview were conducted:
  - a. Three focus group discussions, in which representatives of a total of 12 Fair Association were engaged: These discussions were held in Saanich, to include fair association representatives from southern Vancouver Island, Courtenay, to include representatives of northern Vancouver Island and Sunshine Coast fair associations and Cloverdale, to engage fair association representatives from the Fraser Valley.
  - b. Individual interviews, each of approximately two hours duration, were conducted with representatives of 17 Fair Association Boards, in locations throughout BC ranging from Fort St John to Burns Lake to Creston to the Alberni Valley. A small number of interviews were conducted during the BC Fairs 2013 Convention at Sun Peaks.
4. During the interview tour a program of informal discussions was organized with figures in the various communities visited. These interviews were with individuals in local government, community organizations, academia, the hospitality industry and others in the community. Approximately 30 interviews of this nature were conducted.
5. Interviews were conducted with key government and industry stakeholders and affiliated organizations.
6. An interim presentation of the results was made at the 2013 BC Fairs Annual Convention.
7. The results of the surveys and all interview programs were synthesized to form this report.

### **BC Fairs Membership and the Base for Forecasts**

It is important to consider a base for forecasting data regarding BC's agricultural fairs. It is known there are more agricultural fairs in British Columbia than are members of BC Fairs.

Membership of BC Fairs includes 46 fair organizations, referred to in this research as "fair associations". The agricultural fairs that are BC Fairs members are located in communities throughout the province of British Columbia.

General discussion suggests there may be approximately 15 additional agricultural fair organizations in BC. Thus BC Fairs' membership likely includes 75% of all agricultural fairs in the province. There are also many community fairs and

community festivals that do not consider themselves to be agricultural fairs as they do not have a significant agricultural component.

A later section of this report addresses the challenge of focus and identity for the many kinds of fair staged in BC. That discussion concludes that many other community fairs and community festivals have very similar characteristics to those identified as “agricultural fairs” – including some agricultural displays and programming. However, the 46 agricultural fairs included in BC Fairs membership and the other approximately 15 fairs also identified as agricultural fairs are likely the core of this historic community of agricultural fairs organizations.

In order to provide a reasonable base, calculations and forecasts in this report are based on two scenarios as appropriate:

- The 46 agricultural fair associations represented by membership in BC Fairs
- Forecasts for a total of 61 fairs (46 BC Fairs members and 15 non-members).

For clarity, forecasts and other data reported do not include the Pacific National Exhibition. This exclusion was made to avoid the extreme domination of quantitative data by the PNE, given the sheer size of PNE compared with other Fair Associations. However, while not included in general PNE data are referred to where appropriate.

Overall, 35 of BC’s fair associations responded to the qualitative survey and 31 to the quantitative survey. Two non-members responded to the qualitative survey and one non-member responded to the quantitative survey. Three agricultural fairs that are not members of BC Fairs were included in the interview program.

The impact of including or not including survey data provided by the non-members results in minimal difference in data forecasted to represent a 46-member base. Therefore they are included.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of BC’s agricultural fair associations, community, government and other stakeholder contacts, and BC Fairs for their support and enthusiasm in this project. The commitment of the Boards of Directors and other representatives of BC’s fair associations to this work was outstanding.

Funding for this project has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP). In British Columbia, this program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is committed to working with industry partners. Opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and not necessarily those of AAFC or the Investment Agriculture Foundation.

# Fairs Statistics

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This section of the report summarizes some key statistics concerning the community of BC's agricultural fairs. The research identified some key high-level findings about BC's Fair Associations:

- **The 46 Fair Associations that are members of BC Fairs staged 990 events in 2012. That suggests the estimated 61 Fair Associations in BC staged 1,313 events**
- Most fairs, and most of those owning their own facilities, staged multiple events during the course of the year. Just 17 of the BC Fairs member Fair Associations deliver only one annual event
- BC Fairs member Fair Associations attracted more than 1.0 million attendees at their events, including 840,000 attendees at their “most important annual event”, suggesting BC's 61 agricultural fairs in total attracted more than 1.3 million attendees. The Annual Report of PNE indicates attendance at their annual event was 800,000
- The research shows that approximately 75% of attendees at events organized by the Fair Associations are residents of the local community. The remainder are mostly from regional or secondary markets
- 80% of the respondent Fair Associations report that they require a ticket for entry or they conduct gate counts, thus providing confidence in attendee forecasts
- Projected to include all 61 Fair Associations the Fair Associations that actually sell tickets sold, for their major annual event:
  - 522,104 single entry tickets
  - 24,603 multi day tickets
  - 10,580 family or group tickets
- BC Fair Associations are mostly operated by volunteers, although 60% of the respondents indicated they have one or more employees. The cumulative total number of employees reported is 440 employees. However, three quarters of the employees are seasonal part time or casual and are focused on staging events – mostly the annual agricultural fair
- Fair Associations report cumulative annual budgets of \$14.8 million, not including PNE, and indicated approximately 90% of their expenditure takes place in their own community or in their community's normal trading area.

The research revealed positive benefits and areas in which improvement would benefit the Fair Association and its events, the direct stakeholders, and the community.

- The Good:
  - Fairs contribute significant measurable and positive benefits for their communities and stakeholders
  - They reinforce tradition and provide an annual forum and celebration for urban and rural populations, the business community and agricultural sector to come together
- The Bad:
  - Many Fair Associations would benefit from more effective engagement of their communities and other stakeholders
  - Fairs are challenged by human and financial resource limitations.
  - Volunteers are stretched thin and hard to attract
- The Ugly:
  - Some fairs have a challenging future - they need to take positive action and re-focus to survive.

## Positive Direction

All of the interviews conducted with Fair Associations began with a discussion about success stories and accomplishments of the Fair Association during the past two to three years. **Discussions about success stories revealed significant achievements in many areas, including:**

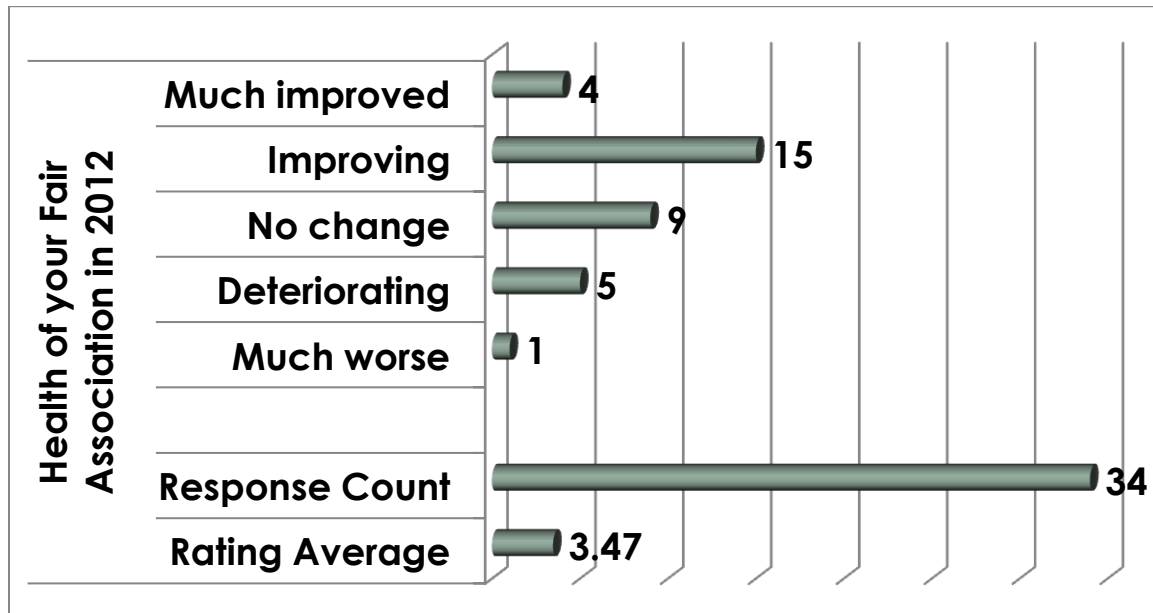
- Innovation in fair operations
- Creative programming and relationships
- Benefits for the communities
- Benefits for other stakeholders
- Enthusiasm
- Board development achievements
- Growth in their many deliverables.

However, it was noted that in many cases the Fair Associations have not talked in their community about their achievements. Thus progress and innovation achieved often go unnoticed. This is an important issue. In many communities the Fair Association may be able to increase local support and participation from business, local government and other community organizations by stronger communication and engagement.

During the interviews many Fair Associations indicated they tend to maintain a low profile in their community – some indicated that is the “Canadian way”. However, several challenges they face may be better addressed with broader community support. **Closer engagement of the community would directly benefit the visibility, success and support of the Fair Association.**

## The Health of BC's Fair Associations

BC's Fair Associations report that compared with recent previous years, the general health of their Fair Association in 2012 was improving. Compared with 14% of the respondents reporting "no change", **56% of the survey respondents reported improvement in the health of their Fair Association** compared with 18% who reported deterioration. The following chart illustrates the ratings assigned by Fair Associations using a five point scale where 1 means "much worse" and 5 means "much improved".



Discussions with Fair Associations during the interviews indicated the improvements are a result of the renewed focus of their Board, growing consumer and community support and the confidence that results from continuing recovery in the economy.

## General data

The survey asked respondents the question "In which community or district does the largest proportion of people who attend your major event live?" respondents were then asked to indicate the approximate population of those communities. These data were verified during analysis by reference to provincial population data for 2011 and the population estimates provided were judged to be appropriate or were corrected. The following analysis provides a perspective on the primary market served by the fairs.

The primary markets defined by the Fair Associations include many more than 46 of BC's communities or regions. The following table presents a summary of the 31 response, banded by categories of population size.

<b>Population Range Served</b>	<b>Total population served</b>	<b>Number of fair associations reporting</b>
75,000 and over	1,481,000	8
20,000 to 74,999	300,000	9
5,000 to 19,999	100,000	9
Less than 5,000	11,700	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,892,700</b>	<b>31</b>

Based on these data, it is likely **BC's 61 agricultural fairs serve 3.5-3.7 million people, or almost all (95%) of the 3.9 million residents of BC's 156 cities, towns, villages and regional district municipalities.**

There will be overlaps in service coverage. As fair associations grow they increasingly attract attendance from nearby or regional communities – some of which may also have their own, local agricultural fair. This issue was addressed in the interview program with local and more regionally focused fair associations. Interviewees confirm that many residents of their communities will attend both their own fair and a larger, more regional event or smaller, more local event.

The research sought to address this overlap through the survey by asking respondents about their secondary markets, with the question “What is the second most important community or district for you as a market for your major annual event”.

Not surprisingly, responses to this question identified larger scale population areas. Some respondents did not identify, or were unable to define, a secondary market. Further, responses to this question naturally revealed significant overlaps as many of the respondents that were able to define secondary markets were clearly regionally attractive.

The sum of the 25 responses that quantified their secondary markets identified a population area of 7.8 million people – nearly double the provincial population. It is also clear from discussions with several of these Fair Associations that they do, indeed, attract significant numbers of attendees from their secondary markets. Again extending these data to BC's 61 fairs suggests that most residents of BC are within the market of four or more fairs.

While the population included in this secondary market analysis is dominated by responses from larger, regionally focused fair associations it is important to note that six of the 25 responses to this question reported a secondary market size of 10,000 or less.

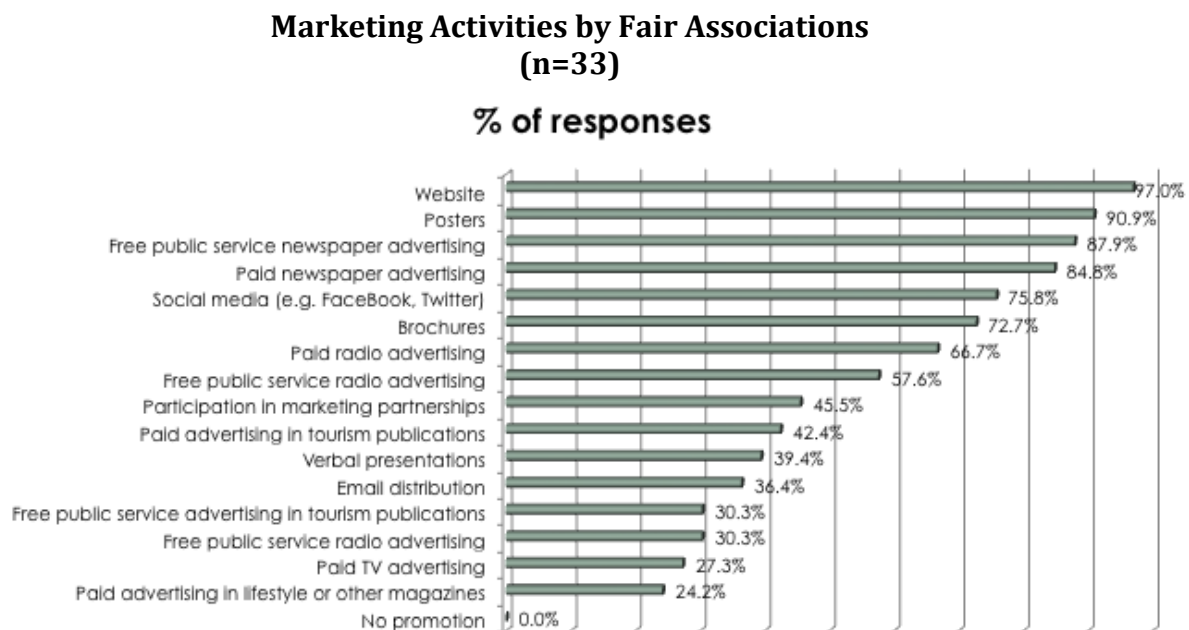
## Event Marketing

The surveys reveal that most (87.5%) of the responding Fair Associations spend money on advertising and promotion to attract people who reside less than one hour away – generally their primary market. Discussions in the communities indicate that although residents know when and where the annual agricultural fair takes place it is still important to remind them and motivate them to attend, compete or exhibit.

The respondents indicating they do not spend money on advertising and promotion are in the smallest communities, where the Fair Association tends to operate only one single day agricultural fair event, but that event is one of the community's major events of the year. However, it appears they generally use local signage and self produced posters to promote their event. Promotion in those communities also takes place naturally by word of mouth through individuals showing, exhibiting, competing or volunteering at the event.

## Marketing Investments

The following table indicates the percentage of respondents indicating that they used each of the various marketing tools listed to promote their events.



The use of electronic media by Fair Associations is clearly quite common. Several discussions during the interviews reinforced the value and benefits of social marketing.

Fair Associations are encouraged to continue to be progressive with respect to their marketing activities, but to be aware of the value they gain as a return on their marketing investment.



## The Major Annual Event

For most of the Fair Associations the major annual event is the agricultural fair. The following table shows the percentage of Fair Associations that included each of the listed components in their major annual event.

Category	Major components	% of Fair Associations that include this component in their major annual event in 2012 (n=33)
<b>Food and beverage</b>		
	Food court/outlets	93.9%
<b>Agricultural content</b>		
	Agricultural exhibits	87.9%
	Agricultural showcase	75.8%
	Agricultural competition	75.8%
	Livestock show	69.7%
	Farmers Market	27.3%
	Rodeo	21.2%
<b>Community</b>		
	Heritage showcase	75.8%
	Educational events	69.7%
	Business showcase	54.5%
	Parade	45.5%
	Trade show	27.3%
	Consumer show	9.1%
<b>Entertainment</b>		
	Local community stage shows	78.8%
	Headline concerts	36.4%
<b>Fun activities</b>		
	Games and skill challenges	57.6%
	Midway	39.4%
	Horse racing	3.0%
	BMX events	3.0%

In addition to these key components the Fair Associations identified many other components of their major annual event, including:

- Aboriginal area
- Craft vendors, kids carnival, silent auction, raffle
- Draft and light horse show
- Logger sports and shows
- A “top hand” competition for cowboys
- Lawnmower racing
- Major celebrations (e.g., 100<sup>th</sup> year celebrations)
- Sectional displays

- Community Groups promotion
- Etc.

It is clear from the interviews with Fair Association Boards that the continued evolution of the fair as their major annual event is a key issue. Attendees expect to see the event components they are accustomed to seeing but also look for new and interesting components. Further insight came from discussions with other stakeholders and others in the community.

Some interesting challenges were discussed in depth during the interviews, including:

- The difference between what is a viable fair concept for a local community agricultural fair and a regional fair and exhibition
- The balance between agriculture and entertainment
- The difficulty experienced by some Fair Associations that have tried to attract a midway – and the way in which the midway impacts the operation of the fair
- The importance of actively engaging attendees with local producers
- The importance of exposing attendees to new knowledge about smaller scale farming and local agricultural production
- The opportunity and the challenge of building entertainment out of agriculture to increase the engagement of the attendees
- Balancing the fair experience to engage all demographic groups
- The challenges of appropriately engaging First Nations and various cultural groups
- The importance and entertainment value of heavy horse events and the cost of staging those events
- Declines in livestock participation (e.g., reducing presence of bull activity) but the importance of livestock in attracting and engaging the attendees
- Challenges in decision making about potential new activities

These discussions revealed some of the operating challenges faced by the Fair Associations with respect to their major annual event. **BC Fairs may consider approaches to help its members with these quandaries. Approaches may include:**

- **Building a forum for Fair Associations to discuss these topics with their peers on an ongoing basis, thus building on the success of the Fair Managers Forum at the Annual Convention.**
- **Developing and documenting specific outline strategies to assist Fair Associations to address regularly identified or clearly definable topics.**

## Number of events

All of the Fair Associations operate at least one agricultural fair or a community fair with an agricultural focus. However, the research shows that just 11 (36%) of 31 Fair Associations answering this question in the quantitative survey reported that they stage only one event per year – their agricultural fair.

This report has noted previously an estimate that there are 15 Fair Associations in BC that are not members of BC Fairs. The research shows that at least some of these deliver more than one event per year, but it is presumed most are smaller organizations that deliver just one annual agricultural fair.

Based on the survey data, the following table provides an analysis of the events staged by the respondents.

Type of Event	% of Fair Associations staging these events	Number of events staged by all respondents (n=31)	Estimated total number of events staged by BC Fairs Members	Estimated Total Number of Events staged by all BC Agricultural Fair Associations
Agricultural fairs	100	32	47	63
Educational events	29	43	64	85
Farmers Markets	23	102	151	201
Entertainment events	23	105	156	207
Swap meets or flea markets	19	76	113	150
Festivals	13	4	6	8
Rodeos	13	4	6	8
Trade shows	10	17	25	33
Auctions	10	12	18	24
Consumer shows	3	4	6	8
Other events	26	270	401	531
Overall number of events in 2012		669	993	1316

In this table the estimated total presumes that the non-members of BC Fairs deliver a similar program of events to the BC Fairs members. Further, it is noted that one of the respondent fairs reports staging two agricultural fairs annually.

## Attendance

**Overall 2012 attendance at all events staged by BC's estimated 61 agricultural fairs is estimated to be 1.44 million**, or an average of 23,540 per Fair Association, including 1.08 million attendee days at the 46 BC Fairs member associations.

**Attendance at the major annual event of the 61 BC agricultural fairs is estimated total 1.16 million**, with 872,000 at the 46 BC Fairs member Fair Associations' events. Survey respondents indicate their attendance to be an average of 18,945.

Local residents constitute the largest proportion of attendees at the major annual event. **Based on the survey responses it is estimated that a total of 847,000 local residents attend BC's 61 annual agriculture events** (639,000 at the major annual events operated by BC Fairs members). Further **313,000 non-residents visit a BC fair in a community at least an hour away from home.**

The cumulative population of the 61 agricultural fairs' primary markets is estimated to be 4.4 million. Although this report has noted overlaps in primary markets, most of BC's population is enclosed within the primary market areas described by the fairs. Therefore, it is not surprising that the market size equates to BC's 4.4 million residents. BC Fairs' 46 agricultural fairs members directly serve, within their primary market areas, a population of 2.7 million.

The projected attendance suggests **BC's agricultural fairs attract 19.1% of BC's residents to their major annual event.** A larger number of BC residents is included in the cumulative attendance at all of the events delivered by Fair Associations and the events delivered by other organizations in the Fair Associations facilities.

Attendee forecasts provided by the Fair Associations are supported by the fact that 80% of the survey respondents estimated their attendance based on actual gate counts or ticket sales.

## Implications of Facility Ownership

The research shows that the ownership of facilities for the fair does not necessarily dictate the number of events the Fair Associations deliver. The following table shows the difference between Fair Associations that own all of their facilities, those that own no facilities and those that own some of their facilities.

The group of Fair Associations identified as owning some, but not all of the facilities used for their events tend to be larger – they own many facilities but still require more so they lease, rent or use additional facilities for their events.

Facility Ownership	Average overall number of events staged	Average overall annual attendance*	Average attendance at most important annual event
Fair Associations owning all of their facilities	16	10,909	11,379
Fair Associations owning no facilities	7	11,860	11,536

Fair Associations owning some of their facilities	48	51,852	36,408
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*\* Some Fair Associations were not able to estimate total attendance*

Several of the Fair Associations not owning all their facilities operate the facilities year round on behalf of the (generally local government) owner of the facilities but that is not always the case. Fair Associations in this group are not necessarily located close to large urban centres. Each of these groups contains several very progressive and growing Fair Associations.

The number of events Fair Associations stage annually depends on several factors. Fair Associations with extensive facilities will stage multiple events as they have the facilities, they have the opportunity and they need to generate income to support them. There is often also an expectation in the community that the owners should use the facilities in addition to providing them for other community users. More progressive Fair Associations without facilities also often stage more than one event annually as a part of their mission for the community or for agriculture.

## **Land and facilities**

One quarter of the survey respondents (24.2%) report that their Fair Association owns all of the land they use for their events. A further 9% of the respondents report they own some of the land they use. Further, one third of the respondents (33.3%) show that their Fair Association owns all of the facilities in which they stage their events. The Fair Associations that do not own all of the land they use are most likely to use land owned by their local government.

## Land Ownership

The following table shows the ownership of land used by the fair associations:

<b>Owner of the land used for Fair Association events</b>	<b>% of Fair Associations reporting this owner</b>
Fair Association is 100% owner	24.2%
Fair Association Partial Owner	9.1%
Fair Association does not own land	66.7%

<b>Other owner of land used by the Fair Association</b>	<b>% of Fair Associations reporting this owner</b>
Local government	48%
Community Park (owned by local government)	16%
Provincial or Federal Government	16%
Another Not-for-Profit Society	16%
Private owner	12%

Based on the survey responses, BC's estimated 61 Fair Associations use a total of approximately 777 hectares of land to stage their events. Approximately one third of that land is allocated to parking for attendees.

The survey respondents indicate they use their land regularly. Approximately 30% of the Fair Associations owning land report that their land is used year round and most the remaining respondents also report frequent use.

## Facility Ownership and Use

One third of the survey respondents indicate they own all of the facilities used for their events. Some reported they own facilities on leased land. Among the fairs not owning their own land or facilities, 44% pay rent to use facilities for their events, 40% use facilities on the land they use at no cost and 16% of the Fair Associations reported there are no facilities on the land they use.

### Fair Associations Owning their Facilities

The following table summarizes the ownership of different types of facilities by the Fair Associations.

<b>Type of Facility Owned by Fair Associations</b>	<b>% of Fair Associations owning these facilities (n=33)</b>
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Livestock Arenas	33
RV/Camping facilities	18
Race tracks for horse racing	3
Barns	36
Entertainment stages	46
Grandstands	27
Exhibition, conference, convention or banqueting halls	39
Meeting rooms	36
Fair Association Administration Offices	36

Fair Associations have traditionally provided these kinds of facility in their communities. These facilities are core to many activities and events in their communities. Research in several jurisdictions, including this research, shows that these kinds of facility would not exist in many communities had the Fair Association not provided them at some time. Further, the research shows that some community residents view these facilities as community assets, having long forgotten that the Fair Association provided them.

In many communities where the Fair Association has not provided these facilities local municipality has done so – indicating the importance of having such facilities available in the community. This issue is addressed further below. In some cases municipalities have taken over the ownership and operation of these community facilities where the Fair Association, which provided the facilities and originally operated them, has become unable to do so.

### Facility Condition

The research shows that the Fair Associations have maintained this community-valued infrastructure in reasonable order. Although the infrastructure is aging, the Fair Associations have emphasized the importance of providing facilities that are safe and in good condition. The following table shows the Fair Associations’ assessment of the condition of the facilities they own:

Type of Facility Owned by Fair Associations	% of Fair Associations reporting this condition description for these facilities (n=11)			
	Deteriorating to the extent they may not be usable in the foreseeable future	Poor condition	Acceptable condition	Good condition
Livestock Arenas			36	64
RV/Camping facilities	0	0	67	33
Race tracks for horse racing			100	
Barns	0	8	33	58
Entertainment stages	0	0	60	40
Grandstands	11	0	67	22
Exhibition, conference, convention or banqueting halls	0	8	39	54
Meeting rooms	0	8	33	58
Fair Association Administration Offices	0	8	42	50

Clearly, despite some challenging financial priorities, the Fair Associations have been able to prioritize the important job of maintaining the condition of the facilities to at least “acceptable” standards. However, this must remain an ongoing priority.

### Facilities Used but not Owned by the Fair Association

The Fair Associations reported they use the following facilities owned by others:

Type of Facility	Number of Fair Associations that reported using these facilities NOT owned by the Fair Association (n=23)
Barn(s)	60.9%
Livestock arena(s)	52.2%
Exhibition, conference, convention or banqueting hall(s)	47.8%
Arenas and curling rink(s)	43.5%
Entertainment stage(s)	39.1%
Grandstand(s)	34.8%
Meeting room(s)	34.8%
Administration office(s)	30.4%
RV/campground(s)	26.1%
Racetrack(s) for horse racing	4.3%
Sports racetrack(s) (e.g., BMX)	4.3%

Fair Associations were asked to indicate the ownership of these facilities. Most of the facilities that are not owned by the Fair Associations were reported to be owned



by local governments (69.6%), followed by “other community organizations (26.1%). A small number of facilities were reported to be privately owned or owned by an agriculture or agri-business organization.

The research also shows that 78.3% of the 23 Fair Associations that responded they use facilities owned by other organizations have entered into a lease or rental agreement for the use of the facilities. Further 17.4% of these fair organizations manage the facilities year round on behalf of the owner.

A small proportion (13%) of these Fair Associations are responsible for maintenance and repairs for the facilities that they rent or lease. Most (65.2%) are not responsible for repairs and maintenance and 21.7% report they are responsible for repairs and maintenance on some of the facilities they use.

### Use of Fair Association Facilities by Other Organizations

Twelve of the Fair Associations indicated the facilities they own or manage are used extensively by other organizations. Responses to questions in the survey about the number of events staged in their facilities by other organizations or tenants ranged up to “several hundred”. There were two predominant ranges of response: more than 100 (four responses) and less than 50 (eight responses).

**The cumulative annual attendance at events staged by other organizations in the Fair Associations’ facilities was estimated by the Fair Associations to be an average of 10,300, or perhaps a cumulative 120,000 people.** The following table shows the broad use of the fair facilities owned or managed by Fair Associations.

% of Fair Associations reporting that these organizations use these Fair Association facilities (n=9-15)

Type of Facility Owned by Fair Associations	No other organizations use them	Organizations or individuals who rent them	Individuals who pay user fees	Organizations that use the facilities free or at a discounted rate	Agricultural businesses or organizations	Entertainment Businesses	Corporations and other associations
Livestock Arenas		73	55	91	46		
RV/Camping facilities		67	67	83	50		
Race tracks for horse racing	100						
Barns		67	67	75	33		
Entertainment stages	27	67	40	47	27	40	
Grandstands	11	67	56	67	22	22	
Exhibition, conference, convention or banqueting halls		77	62	69	69	46	62
Meeting rooms	17	75	58	67	42	17	
Fair Association Administration Offices	100						

**All but one of the 12 respondents in this category indicated that at least some community organizations used the facilities “free” or at a discounted rate.** This is a significant measurable benefit for community organizations, agricultural organizations and other users given free or discounted access to the facilities and for the attendees at their events.

It is clear that the facilities owned or operated by the Fair Associations are a gathering place for the many aspects of community life, funded in many cases by the operation of the Fair Association's events.

**The facilities owned by the Fair Associations are also used by organizations based outside the community, including corporations, entertainment businesses, agriculturally-focused businesses, associations and other organizations staging conventions, meetings, shows and other events in the community.** This is acknowledged to be an important value for the community and encourages the inclusion of the community in a broader economic environment.

## Tourism and Economic Stimulation

Tourism or destination marketing is an investment in economic growth. Two kinds of benefit accrue from non-residents attracted to the community for special events such as fairs and exhibitions:

- Increased general attendance, competition in agricultural events and the number and scope of exhibitors benefit the fair. Benefits include:
  - Building the fair's stature and value for attendees and the community
  - Increased operating revenue from exhibitor and attendance fees, on site spending, etc.
  - Secondary promotion as non-residents discuss or promote their participation in their own communities.
- Non-residents visiting the community spend money at local businesses.
  - They may spend money on overnight accommodation, fuel, food and beverage, retail, and other purchases.
  - Notably they may make purchases from other exhibitors at the fair.
  - Significantly, a benefit of attracting non-residents to the community is that their awareness of the community and its attributes (and merchants) is increased. Many of those non-residents attending the fair are believed to visit the community again at a later date.

Non residents visiting at fair time may be directly motivated to visit the community by the fair. Others may regularly visit the community and choose to attend the fair during a visit – thus their visit may not be motivated directly by the fair. However, regardless of the motivation to visit, **non-residents spend money during their visit both at the fair and elsewhere in the community and that is a direct economic benefit for the community.**

The tourism industry is focused primarily on making investments to achieve economic benefit. Marketing and visitor servicing motivates increasing spending in the community. Of course, it is important that visitors enjoy their visit – research has shown that people spend more money when they are having a good time and

they speak positively about their experience to their friends and relatives – the basis of referral.

### The structure of tourism

From the perspective of BC's Fair Associations the tourism industry is segmented into focused components:

- Tourism businesses, who have invested in developing and operating their attraction, hotel, restaurant, transportation system, etc., and who invest in marketing individually and in partnership with other operators to attract customers to spend money with them
  - These businesses will participate in joint investments of time and money with Fair Associations for mutual benefit. Fair Associations participating in these initiatives should understand what each party will invest and how each party benefits from such an investment.
  - Some tourism businesses will provide general sponsorship to support the fair and to gain exposure – and hopefully customers - for themselves. It is incumbent on the fairs, as the recipient of such sponsorship, to explore with the donor how mutual benefits may be achieved.
  - In this respect the fair or other event is a kind of tourism attraction – and thus a tourism business.
- Visitor Centres are located in most communities to provide information for visitors about the tourism businesses
  - An important purpose of the visitor centre is to motivate visitors to spend as much time and money in the community as possible, by exposing them to all of the tourism attractions and other businesses in the community
  - Most visitor centres in BC are “provincial” visitor centres – they promote tourism attractions and businesses in all regions of the province in addition to a special emphasis on promoting the local community and region. They have trained staff or volunteers and receive provincial funding
  - Visitor centres are often operated by the local Chamber of Commerce – but sometimes by destination marketing organizations or other operators
  - In many cases tourism businesses pay to display their brochures at the visitor centre
  - BC Fairs has arranged to display the BC Fairs Annual Fair Guide at Visitor Centres
  - **The opportunity may exist for Fair Associations to motivate their local visitor centre to bring a mobile display and counsellor to promote the community's tourism assets at the fair**

- Local Community Destination Marketing Organizations are tourism marketing agencies for cities, towns and other specific tourism destinations. Many communities have a destination marketing organization.
  - The job of the destination marketing organization is to stage marketing initiatives to raise awareness of the destination and motivate people to visit. Strategies include advertising in targeted markets, attending trade and consumer shows, internet marketing and direct marketing initiatives
  - They build partnerships and packages and work with local tourism businesses to optimize their benefits from visitor spending
  - They are often membership driven but are generally not-for-profit societies funded by a combination of investment by the local tourism businesses, advertising and local or regional government grants and contributions
  - Destination marketing is an expensive proposition and it is often challenging for smaller Fair Associations to commit funds for this kind of investment. **Where there has a community destination marketing organization the local Fair Association should directly engage the organization to ensure their major events are included and promoted as a part of the destination's tourism inventory.**
  
- Regional Tourism Organizations are focused on marketing and developing their regional tourism destination
  - Under the provincial destination marketing organization "Destination British Columbia" umbrella there are seven Tourism Regions, each with its own active tourism association.
  - Regional tourism organizations develop and facilitate strategies to promote the attributes of their destination area. Strategies include production of regional tourism brochures and websites, participation in consumer and trade shows and extensive media relations.
  - They also facilitate the promotion of provincial tourism promotion tools of Destination British Columbia
  - **BC's Fair Associations. Coordinated by BC Fairs, should work together to engage their regional tourism organization to determine how to position and promote their event(s).**
  - The research indicates the regional tourism organizations are potentially valuable partners for BC's fairs industry but that potential has not been fully developed.
  
- Destination British Columbia is the provincial facilitator of tourism development and promotion.
  - Destination BC promotes travel to and within BC in selected target markets

- Many tourism development, research and promotion tools are made available by Destination British Columbia
  - The “Hello BC” tourism website offers a promotional opportunity for BC’s agricultural fairs and it is suggested that BC Fairs works with Destination BC and the local Fair Associations to ensure that fairs and other events are included in the “Things to Do: category of the website.
- Working directly with the regional tourism organizations, and with “HelloBC”, is likely the most appropriate approach for most of BC’s agricultural fairs industry to take the best advantage promotional and developmental opportunities developed by the regional tourism organizations and by Destination BC. However, it is also appropriate for BC Fairs to engage Destination BC to promote the value that BC’s Fair Associations contribute throughout British Columbia.

### Local Tourism Operators

Discussions with hoteliers and restaurateurs during this research indicate that they benefit directly from fairs that take place in or very near to their community. To support this position, many hotels directly support the fair as sponsors.

The hoteliers and restaurateurs interviewed in this research indicate their most visible benefit of the fair is from exhibitors. The research shows that **most of the attendees at events staged by the Fair Associations are local residents**. Many of those attendees categorized as non-residents (they drive more than about an hour to travel to the event) bring an RV or camp. Many Fair Associations have taken advantage of that market by building their own campgrounds. Some of these visitors make their journey as a day trip and do not stay overnight.

Local retailers also benefit from fair and other events staged by the Fair Associations as people are attracted to their community, sometimes motivated to visit solely by the event and sometimes making a day out to include the event and other activities. Some local retailers exhibit at the various fairs and other events operated by the Fair Associations.

Retailers and other community businesspeople indicate that attendees, including both local residents and visitors, are exposed to retailers and other business people at the fair or event and return at a later date to do business with them.

Several of the Fair Associations indicated in the interviews that their local retailers do not actively promote or celebrate the annual fair, although they may support it with sponsorship and may exhibit at the fair. Discussion on that topic with local businesses and with Chambers of Commerce suggest that the Fair Associations can achieve stronger and more visible support by creating local promotions such as window signage for businesses, information sheets for distribution in local businesses and other “home grown” promotions. **It may be appropriate to engage the local business people and media through a “fair kick off” event at which**

**these initiatives are launched, thus bringing the fair “front of mind”.** However, it is important to acknowledge that the impetus rests with the Fair Association to motivate interest and excitements among the business community.

The timing of Fall Fairs is an interesting challenge for some communities. It has been suggested by some fair associations that the timing of fairs occurring in September, which accounts for many of BC’s agricultural fairs, is inconsistent with the general travel patterns of tourists in BC. The supposition is that visitors with children are more focused on “back to school” priorities. However, fair attendees include a broad demographic profile. Many “empty nesters” and older BC residents choose to travel when “school is back in”.

In the survey, 69.7% of respondents reported they spend money on advertising and promotion to attract attendees to their major events who are resident more than one hour away. More than two thirds (70%) of the fair associations responding that they spend money to attract attendance from their secondary market responded that they also invest in joint marketing initiatives. Their partners include organizations such as their local tourism organization, chamber of commerce, hoteliers and/or local government.

In summary, the discussions with tourism officials, Visitor Centres and hoteliers during this research suggests that **Fair Associations should seek out and work closer with their tourism and hospitality industry partners to explore ways to optimize the mutual benefits from the fair and their community.**

# The Nature of Fairs

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This section of the report explores the identity and nature of BC's Fair Associations and the events and programs they stage.

## Identity of the Fair

The identity of agricultural fairs was explored through the interviews with Fair Associations and with local leaders included in the informal community interview program. This became an issue for exploration as it became evident through the research that agricultural fairs are in many respects very similar to other community fairs and some community-based festivals and other celebrations.

What makes agricultural fairs stand out is that they have a predominant focus on agriculture and a very long history as a core of their community. However, as decades have passed the communities, the nature of agriculture and the fairs themselves have evolved.

Discussion with Fair Associations indicates that they themselves have differing views of their identity. While all of the fairs emphasize the importance of their focus on agriculture some Fair Associations are clearly more focused on delivering a more comprehensive entertainment experience.

## History, Positioning and Mandate

In many cases BC's agricultural fairs have been at the core of their community for more than 100 years. Some have been in existence since before many communities were incorporated.

In the early days the agricultural fairs presented an opportunity for local rural people to gather after a busy summer – and in many cases after a busy harvest. The attendees were simply the community of local farmers and other residents – in many cases in rural and agricultural communities. The population attending the fair included the operators of small farms and other agricultural producers. Competition led to identifying the most successful or most skilled producers or operators – a benefit for those aspiring to optimize their own production or operation.

A significant value for the fair was to bring together local residents, local suppliers and local producers. It was a forum for local agriculture. The fair also provided the opportunity for residents and local agricultural producers to learn about new and relevant approaches to agricultural production methods and opportunities.

Entertainment, much of it initially focused on agriculture, naturally became a part of the fair celebration.

As time passed by the farms became larger and more automated and, through corporate purchase strategies, became less likely to be owned locally. The need, and perhaps the ability, for the fair to serve the agricultural community gave way to the importance of supporting and celebrating the “community” focus of the fair.

The agricultural fair organizations continued to provide event infrastructure such as fairgrounds, riding arenas, barns, community halls, stages, meeting facilities, etc. They also maintained their focus on celebration of community at the annual gathering.

As the communities grew there was an increasing need for work opportunities. However, in many cases those who might have worked in agriculture in the previous, less mechanized farming methods left the community for work and education.

In the present time frame there is a returning focus on smaller scale, local production in agriculture, often with new methods. “Backyard” farmers and local agricultural production are seeing resurgence. Consumers are becoming increasingly interested in how what they eat affects their health and the environment and their interest is being piqued by media communication.

At the same time there has been some out-migration from cities as families choose less pressure-driven rural lifestyles. Further, families are experiencing time stresses resulting from work schedules, economic challenges, newer trends in activities for children, education, etc.

Due to changes in the food supply chain many residents of both urban and rural communities are not familiar with local agriculture. **The opportunity exists for the Fair Associations to clarify and enhance their roles in agriculture, in rural development and in their communities with an increasing focus on “local”.**

### **Agricultural Fairs are not a “one size fits all” proposition**

The research shows that today agricultural fairs are viewed to be many things by different audiences:

- A community gathering place
- A family event
- A showcase
- A festive and fun occasion
- Entertainment
- A business opportunity
- A celebration of community pride
- A celebration of agriculture
- A place of learning and new experiences
- A tradition.



Clearly fairs mean different things to different people. It is complex for the Fair Associations to serve all these visions for the fair, so they have evolved with what the Board of Directors and attendees determine is appropriate. Thus agricultural fairs are different, although they continue to serve their agricultural and community mandates.

## **Agriculture, Entertainment and the Fair**

Several of the discussions with Fair Associations and other interviewees show that agriculture is a key defining component of the fair. However, lines of distinction can become somewhat unclear as several “community fairs” and festivals that do not consider themselves to be “agricultural fairs” also have some kind of agricultural component.

The agricultural Fair Associations are quick to emphasize that a primary priority for their events and their association is to continue to build agricultural awareness. Several of the Fair Associations describe this as being to do with agricultural displays and competition. Their focus and programming is quite traditional.

The role of entertainment for the Fair Associations introduces a multi faceted discussion. Most Fair Associations agree that some form of entertainment is an essential part of the fair today. However, some Fair Associations indicate entertainment attracts people to the fair so they can convey agricultural messages and others say that entertainment is needed to keep people at the fair longer so they can convey agricultural messages.

Ultimately the fairs provide what they determine is an appropriate balance of agriculture, education and entertainment. All components are needed to focus on the broad interests of the community and key stakeholders, but how they are delivered varies. Some maintain a very traditional agricultural focus. Some are more focused on entertainment. Many create their entertainment component out of agriculture. Some are in between.

## **Trends**

Several trends influence the future for agricultural fairs and for Fair Associations:

- The number of smaller, more specialized agriculture ventures is expanding and becoming much more visible
- “Backyard” farming is increasing
- Innovation in agriculture relative to smaller agricultural production units is expanding
- There is an increasing need for expertise among smaller agricultural operators
- Recently traditional farming is changing
  - The beef industry shrinking

- At the birth of the fairs 100 years ago farms were much smaller
- Larger farms are continuing to grow through corporate acquisition strategies and often now owned by non-agricultural investors
- Detailed agriculture trends are readily available online
- The strength of history (for example, 4-H in BC, also shown to be an important traditional feature of the agricultural or rural community, will celebrate its 100 years birthday in 2014 and many Fair Associations have chosen to celebrate this with them at their fair.)
- Fairs are traditional gathering places and showcases for local farmers and producers but the changes in the agricultural economy have resulted in changes in the participation of the agricultural community
- The fair has more to offer smaller, local producers than large scale landholding/farm owners
- Fairs have maintained their focus on their local population and community.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The research shows that some of BC's Fair Associations are focused primarily on delivering just one annual event. Others, with facilities to support, operate with the broader mandate of an exhibition, providing facilities for various users and staging multiple events. However, the research shows the breadth or focus of the mandate does not significantly affect the Board's view of success.

A distinct focus on agriculture is a core value of nearly all Fair Associations interviewed in this research. Several of the Fair Associations interviewed proudly celebrate their agricultural roots and measure their success based on support for their agricultural focus. Other Fair Associations celebrate their having grown to become major regional agriculturally focused attractions. Still others point to their powerful draw as an entertainment attraction with an agricultural or traditional theme.

Fair Associations agreed that the inclusion of some form of entertainment is important to engage their audience. Discussions in the communities emphasized the importance of the fair providing a comprehensive experience that engages attendees, rather than a series of static displays.

The nature and extent of the entertainment part of the fair experience was a significant talking point among the Fair Associations during the interview tour. Many Fair Associations discussed the importance of including a midway as a core of the entertainment component. Some noted that they could not attract, or had lost, their midway supplier. And some did not want a midway or had tried it previously and found it inconsistent with their particular fair concept.

There are limitations in the supply of dates for midways, particularly given the large number of fair associations holding their events on the same weekends and the

small number of midway companies servicing BC. It is clear from the interview program that while midways are extremely important for some Fair Associations others provide other forms of entertainment.

Discussion in the communities indicates that fair events need to be as interactive as possible. Static displays are described as not engaging and the opportunity exists to engage attendees with discussions, demonstrations, seminars, things to take away, etc.

Consistent with recommendations made by several community contacts it is recommended that the fairs evaluate their entertainment and agriculture components to see how entertainment and attendee engagement can be achieved by delivering agriculture through entertainment. In the traditional agricultural fairs, this is achieved by such features as heavy horse competition, engagement of children with livestock, etc. However, opportunities consistent with the changing nature of agricultural production should be explored to update the event – without losing the tradition.

Given the priority of agriculture for the Fair Associations it is important to explore another significant agriculturally focused area of opportunity. That is to “update” the agricultural focus (perhaps to where it was 100 years ago) by establishing a clear strategy with respect to current trends in agricultural production and the importance and value of supporting local producers and innovators. This may lead the Fair Associations into education as a an important benefit for their communities.

Key components of this strategy might be to build strong, year round communication to link appropriate stakeholders with local residents

- Position the Fair Association in local media as a key point of focus for information about small scale farming
  - Encourage interviews, contact, etc.
- Identify local agricultural producers, suppliers, educators and other stakeholders
  - Through ongoing engagement, encourage them to inform the Fair Association about their production, methods, timing, successes, harvests, etc.
  - Stage seminars, workshops, etc., delivered by local producers to introduce new methods
- Identify appropriate local communication vehicles to engage local and regional residents:
  - Produce regular stories in local newspapers and local TV/radio channels to promote the use of local products, such as:
    - Information about local production and the value and benefits of eating locally
    - Discussion about “what’s new” in the local agriculture marketplace

- Information about local innovation and where to see or taste it
  - Information about how to contact local suppliers
  - Discussions with local suppliers
- Promote local producers using the Fair Association's website, FaceBook and Twitter accounts (don't forget to include liability disclaimers!)
- Regular, seasonal announcements identifying "what's fresh" in local media releases and on Twitter and FaceBook
- Use email contact lists where appropriate
- Establish an area of concentration in Fair events focused on local producers
  - Encourage the local producers to stage seminars and workshops either at the fair or that can be signed up for at the fair.

# Fair Association Boards

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A total of nearly 700 Board Members serve BC's Fair Association Boards. The average size of Fair Association's Board of Directors is 11.7 members.

## Composition of the Board

The following table shows that Boards report a good combination of new vision and longevity among their members, presenting the percentage of fairs reporting that they have Board members with selected years of experience as their Board Members. The table also shows the cumulative number of individual Board members engaged by years of service. Survey data for 34 valid responses are shown along with forecasts to the 46 members of BC Fairs and the estimated 61 agricultural fairs in BC.

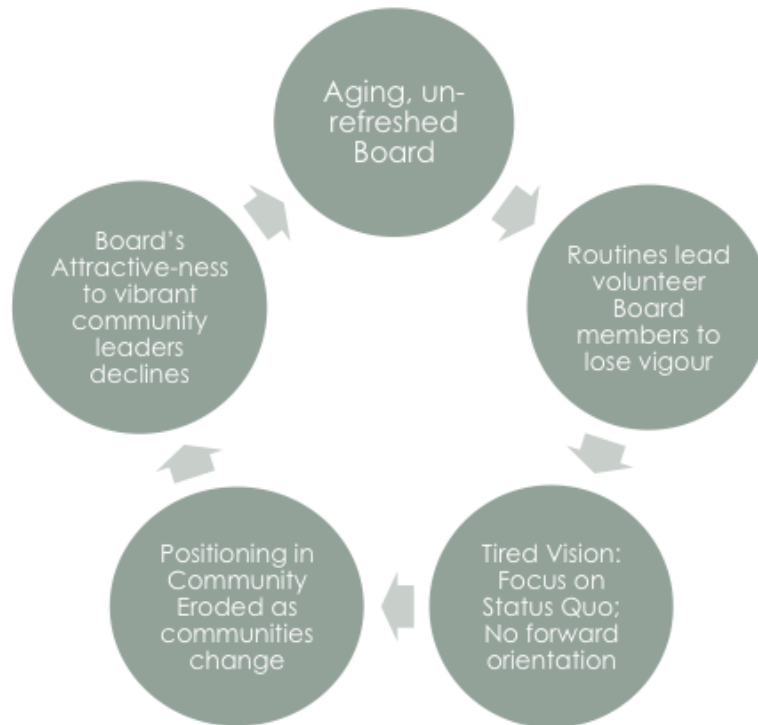
Years Served	Board Members served for the the following number of years						Total Board Members
	< 5	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 30	> 30	
% of Fair Associations	94%	79%	65%	29%	29%	9%	
Responses (n=34)	157	92	81	29	23	4	386
46 fairs	212	124	110	39	31	5	522
61 fairs	282	165	145	52	41	7	693

It was noted during the interviews that some people leave the Boards for a while and then return.

During the interviews with Fair Associations several Board representatives noted they wrestle with the challenge of attracting new and younger Board Members to join the Board and its working committees and departments. This is not an unusual challenge, particularly for organizations as mature as BC's agricultural fairs with "Working Boards". However, significant implications may result from Boards without regeneration.

The Board of Directors has as critical a role in a progressive, not-for-profit organization as it does in any other environment. The Board needs to provide vision, innovation and strong, motivational leadership. It is difficult for Board member to continue to deliver those skills year after year. However, some Boards interviewed indicated that their strongest leadership came from Board members who have been on the Board for more than 15 years. Boards are encouraged to continue to pursue "new blood" in order to remain relevant to their marketplace. The following graphic

shows that Boards can become stale and less capable of attracting new, motivated leaders to join them.



It is noted that the market for BC's fairs includes young families and younger people. It is particularly important for Boards and Committees to include members who can contribute a vision appropriate to younger and future customers and can understand clearly how to communicate with them.

Research in the volunteer community suggests that asking people directly to help to do something specific may attract new and younger Board members. New volunteers are more likely to respond to a request to pursue a clearly defined task or expected achievement within a finite time frame. As they become engaged and see their achievements are acknowledged and used they will become more inclined to take a greater leadership role.

## Connected Boards

The Boards of Directors of the Fair Associations are well connected in their extended communities. The following chart shows the current occupation, or the prior occupation if retired, of the Board Members of responding Fair Associations.

Despite these connections, discussions with Fair Associations during the interview program suggested that many Boards do not specifically attempt to harvest the connections and industry linkages of their Board Members. They note that these well-connected Board Members bring their experience to the Board table but generally remain focused on the Fair Association Board priorities.

Occupation of Board Members	Projection to 46 BC Fairs Members	Projection to 61 Agricultural Fairs	% of Boards reporting at least one Director with this background
Agriculture or agri-business	118	156	72
Healthcare, financial, legal, media and professional services	40	53	63
Other industries or occupations	124	164	63
Home-maker	59	78	56
Public service, education, scientific research, information technology or libraries	59	78	53
Tourism, service, hospitality or entertainment,	39	51	50
Retail business	45	59	44
Manufacturing, processing or construction	35	46	41
Other renewable resource industries	17	23	16
Wholesaling, distribution, or transportation	6	8	13
Non-renewable resource industries	4	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>722</b>	

These are invaluable linkages as they span most sectors of the economy. It is recommended that Board Members consider how they may be able to reach further into their current or prior occupation for additional connections, resources, partnerships and strategic alliances to optimize the pursuit of the Fair Association Board's priorities.

## Priorities and Direction of Fair Associations

The interview program included discussions with very progressive Boards and some less motivated. Some Boards had a clear vision for the future and a plan to pursue aggressive goals and some were more focused on delivering a quality event annually.

Regardless of their focus the Boards are 100% committed to their mission to deliver and enhance their agricultural fair and other events they may stage. Some may not fully grasp their opportunity, held back by limited human and financial resources.

## Sustainability

During the past five years the Fair Associations have been tasked with the major challenge of finding innovative ways to support their sustainability or survival. The following table shows some of the initiatives they have pursued.

The table shows that the most successful initiatives were to do with programming changes focused on revenue generation, pursuit of grant funding for new initiatives, improvements in community engagement and specific revenue generation strategies.

It is interesting that the least successful initiatives were generally to do with expense reduction. Exploring this with the Fair Associations in the interview program revealed that there is nowhere left to cut as the Fair Associations traditionally have challenges generating cash to meet their expenses and always maintain their expenses as low as possible.

Answer Options (n=33)	Did not try this	Tried but did not achieve measurable improvement	Did this and saw measurable improvement	Did this and found it extremely successful	Rating Average (scale of 1-4 where 4 is high)
Changed programming to make events more attractive or more profitable	5	8	13	6	2.63
Pursued grant funds for new initiatives	5	10	11	7	2.61
Become more focused on engaging your community	2	14	12	5	2.61
Increased revenue from business sponsors	5	8	15	4	2.56
Increased revenue from user fees, rentals, or other operations	9	8	10	5	2.34
Developed partnerships with other community organizations	9	8	14	2	2.27
Reduced operating expenses	9	9	14	1	2.21
Reduced administrative expenses	17	7	8	1	1.79
Developed partnerships with other fair associations	25	2	4	1	1.41

## Relevance, Trends, Challenges

In the history of their communities Fair Association Boards of Directors have been strong leaders. They have delivered many of the events and provided much of the infrastructure in the community.

While some Fair Associations remain clearly acknowledged community leaders, many appear to have become somewhat complacent with their positioning in the community and have not responded to changing times as quickly as may be appropriate. Thus they may have fallen behind the ongoing evolution of the community. As a result, people and organizations representing other mandates have taken a stronger leadership role and become positioned more prominently.

Discussions with Fair Associations explored this challenge. It appears true that some Fair Association Boards have become introspective and perhaps tired as the same small group of people meets the same challenges of staging their fair year after year.



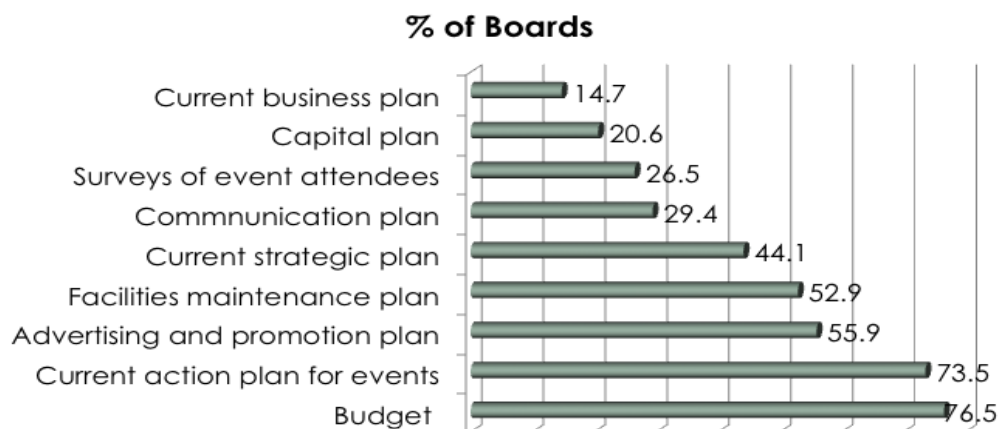
Without focused local consultation with stakeholders it is difficult for the Fair Association Boards to understand if they have lost some of their relevance to the needs and expectations and current trends reflecting their stakeholders.

Boards that find it necessary could then place a significant focus of attention on regaining relevance to their marketplace that may have been lost or eroded over many years. Tradition is so important, but as time passes the needs and expectations of communities and the many stakeholders of fairs and the Fair Associations change. But overall it remains important to support the tradition that is embodied in the fair.

**It is strongly recommended that Boards undertake a process of stakeholder engagement to address the future direction of their association and their events.** This should be undertaken in the format of strategic planning. Further comment about stakeholder engagement and strategic planning is conveyed below in this report

## Planning Activities

The research shows that Fair Associations are more focused on short term issues than longer range direction. The following chart shows the planning tools reported to be used by the Boards.



The table shows that most Fair Associations have a current budget approved by their Board of Directors and an action plan for the current year's event(s). Slightly more than half have an advertising and promotion plan. These planning activities are all documents focused on current year operations.

However, items focused on the directing the future of the Fair Association, such as strategic plans, business plans, communication plans, and attendee surveys are a lower priority for many Fair Associations. However, exploring this issue during the interviews it became clear that some Boards were not familiar with the techniques

appropriate to address these issues and would benefit from guidance in that respect.

**It is strongly recommended that Fair Association Boards pursue enhanced planning activities to maintain or regain relevance to the needs and expectations of the stakeholders, to identify and explore opportunities to be pursued and to regain more appropriate positioning in the community.**

Fair Associations that own or manage facilities have a facilities maintenance plan. Some of them also have a capital plan. However, discussions in the interview program about capital projects indicated that these projects are mostly based on evolving needs related to facility condition rather than future needs. Fortunately, as has been shown earlier in this report, the Fair Associations have been able to keep their facilities in generally reasonable condition.

It is of concern that most Fair Associations do not appear to have a “war chest” of cash to address capital improvements. The Boards’ short-range views and lack of a focus on future direction contribute to that position as needs for future investments are not identified. However, likely the most significant reason is simply the challenge of raising excess cash from operations.

Further, during the past several years Fair Associations have been working hard to come to grips with a new financial reality following the significant retraction of financial support by the Government of BC Ministry of Agriculture. As a consequence, Fair Associations have been unable to build cash resources to fund future needs.

An increased focus on strategic and business planning and closer stakeholder engagement would contribute to identifying future needs that must be planned for and would drive the Fair Associations to build a financial reserve.

**Fair Association Boards should be encouraged to intensify their focus on planning. Outline tools are included in this report to assist the Boards to move towards more future-orientated leadership. It is recommended that BC Fairs provides guidance on request for Fair Association Boards taking this important step.**

### **Planning Priorities**

The Fair Associations were asked to rate a series of planning priorities. The following table shows how those priorities ranked.

## Planning Priority Areas

Average Rating Scale is 1-4  
where 1 means "Not a priority  
for our fair association and 4  
means "We pursue this very  
aggressively"

Developing programs and initiatives to promote awareness of the importance of local agriculture and agri-business	2.7
Seeking out active partners for the society among the business community	2.5
Seeking out active partners for the society among the agricultural and agri-business community	2.4
Developing programs and initiatives with other community organizations and local government to contribute to building the community	2.3
Facilitating or contributing to promotional events or activities that attract and enhance tourism to the community	2.3
Staging entertainment events for the community	2.2
Building partnerships with tourism organizations or tourism operators to attract and engage non-residents to visit the community and spend money there	2.0
Seeking out partnerships to stage entertainment events for the community	1.9
Developing programs and initiatives with the business community to help build the local economy	1.8

## Board Development

It is apparent from the interview program that several Fair Association Boards wrestle with ongoing challenges that affect their ability to be the best they can be. The Boards of Directors of the Fair Associations have risen to many challenges and have excelled in their achievements. They have survived and grown, passing the test of time and the effects of economic fluctuations. However, as is the case in many Not-for Profit organizations, the process of being a Board of Directors challenges several Fair Association Boards.

Some examples of the challenges Boards identified are:

- Indistinct areas of responsibility for the Directors
- Communication
- Succession planning
- Lack of time
- Recruitment of Board members and other volunteers
- Organization and pursuit of priorities
- Insufficient financial resources
- "No-one to ask"
- Isolation
- Leadership
- Ethics
- Accountability
- Burnout
- Relationships with the community
- Managing meetings.

These issues have become so challenging in some communities that the Boards have been changed, either by “take over” by the members or by the resignation of the Board. Several current Boards are currently in the process of rebuilding their Fair Association in light of a significant change in the Board.

These are very common challenges for Boards. In most cases they can be overcome quite simply by reorientation and refocusing that would result from Board development training. A significant benefit of such training is that refocusing would ease the stress and “burnout” that some Boards experience.

## **Mentorship**

Boards often seek additional knowledge or opinions but sometimes do not appear to have a forum in which to obtain them. Many Boards noted they have consulted BC Fairs on one or more occasions and received excellent support and valid, informed guidance.

Dialogue between Fair Association Boards has also proved valuable to address challenges, answer questions, and find new direction. Several Fair Association Board Members and employees have taken the initiative to consult with their colleagues in other Fair Associations and received enthusiastic support. Further, some Boards suggested that dialogue with other Fair Boards is so important that Board members should be required to attend one or two other fairs and meet with their Board representatives as an annual condition of being a member of the Board.

It is appropriate to encourage Fair Associations to assist each other as mentors. The survey addressed this issue and analysis and recommendations concerning the value of mentorship are provided later in this report.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the Fair Association Boards are achievers. Their members are dedicated and focused, committing significant amounts of time and energy to pursuing the direction of the Fair Association.

Recommendations below are focused on identifying opportunities for Boards to simplify their operations, enhance their achievements and reinforce their positioning in their communities. Some key priorities for planning future direction are:

- Explore and build the relevance of fairs to the stakeholders
- Understand stakeholders
- Understand the fair’s market
- Understand the Fair Associations business environment
- Develop thoughtful direction for the future

- Integrate learning into planning
- Communicate well with all stakeholder groups
- Reach out to your peers.

### Planning approach

It is recommended that Boards develop their own clear vision for the future. This process would start the development of a simple and clear strategic plan to outline their direction for the forthcoming five years.

The process of building the strategic plan would significantly include the ongoing engagement of their local stakeholders to discuss priorities, opportunities and collaboration. A tool is included in this document to assist Boards to undertake their own strategic planning process. It is recommended that BC Fairs provides guidance to assist the Fair Associations to undertake sound planning

Following the development of strategic plans the next step in planning is to build business plans to guide the execution of the strategic plan. The business plan contains action plans, budgets and resource plans.

It is noted that in Alberta, where the Government of Alberta, Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), provides funding for is nearly 300 Agricultural Fairs, the fair organizations are required to provide a properly prepared financial statement for the past year and a business plan for the forthcoming three years in order to receive their annual funding allocation. This requirement has encouraged Alberta's fair boards to focus more on future direction. The provincial association, the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies, assisted ARD to develop the format for the business plan submissions.

### Board Development

The value of board development is well known to contribute to clear, transparent and effective direction and management – and to relieve many pressures experienced by Boards. **It is appropriate for BC Fairs to encourage BC's Fair Associations to adopt ongoing Board development programming** – and perhaps to bring the benefits of Board development to other not-for-profit organizations in their communities. This is addressed later in this report.

It is strongly recommended that Boards engage in Board Training as a part of establishing stronger direction. In the interim, some recommendations that would assist several Fair Association Boards to provide stable and exciting direction include:

- Establish a succession plan to protect future leadership
- Prepare job descriptions for directors
- Create and document committee work or department plans to guide future directors

- Attract young, vibrant community leaders to take on specific initiatives that have clearly defined benefits.
  - Encourage and support them: they will see the value of being a part of the Board or volunteer program
- Focus on making the Fair Association Board “A Board to be on” in the community
- Initiate strong communication of goals, achievements, benefits, innovation and fun
- Use the experience and connections of Board members to open doors.

## Relevance and Stakeholder Engagement

**Establish an ongoing program of stakeholder and community engagement** to explore needs, expectations and opportunities and keep the Fair Association visible. This will contribute to building direction for the future that is consistent with the direction of the community and will open doors to enhance local partnerships.

Guidelines for stakeholder engagement and communication planning are outlined later in this report. Key issues are:

- Encourage dialogue about the Fair Association in the community
- Communication with all stakeholder groups is an essential component of building support and credibility for the Fair Association.

## Mentorship

**Establish an approach to mentorship to encourage and facilitate interaction between Fair Associations** as they face challenges and questions and as they explore options for the future.

# Fair Associations and the Community

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BC's agricultural fairs, like fairs in many jurisdictions are as old as the communities in which they are located. They are a part of the fibre of the community. Because they have been a part of the community for so long the residents and even other community facilitators and leaders may have lost sight of the key role the fair has played and continues to play for the community. The research concludes that because of its mandate and history, the Fair Association is ideally positioned to assume a critical role as the "glue" that holds much of the community together.

Significantly, the Fair Associations stimulate community pride. Several trends in communities will affect the way in which the Fair Association serves its community.

During the large scale farming and economic expansion people moved away from small communities. However while there is some resurgence of interest in living in smaller and less heavily populated communities, the demands of the population have changed.

There are tougher priorities and time management challenges. Even in smaller communities people have broader expectations from having lived and travelled elsewhere, and from what they see on television. There are challenges of priorities. People need to be motivated to get out to events or to get involved in planning and delivering them.

People want to know more about their food. They are learning about the value of locally produced food but they clearly seek better engagement so they can learn and experience the benefits. Facilitating this engagement is a clear area of opportunity for Fair Associations.

## Fair Associations are Community Builders

Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Centres, local government officials and other community leaders interviewed during the research explored the value, and the potential value, of the fairs for the community's residential and business sector. They point to several very significant benefits for the community from the events staged by the Fair Associations. The following summary outlines their comments and comments from discussions on this topic with the Fair Associations.

- Fair Associations contribute both community and rural development benefits
- Fair Associations provide events that remind attendees and exhibitors of the importance of their community and local agricultural environment
- The events bring the community together.
  - They motivate people to get back "in touch" after a busy summer
  - They provide an annual celebration of community – and this research has shown that the community responds

- They provide a safe and wholesome environment for families to celebrate and relax together
  - They bring together multiple generations for an annual outing
- They showcase the community, its values, its business sector, its capability and its local agricultural producers
  - They celebrate the history and heritage of the community and its people as well as they celebrate its current status and goals
- They showcase the skills and competitiveness of local craftspeople and artists
- They provide entertainment that may not otherwise be available in the community
  - The large attendance at fair events and the availability of facilities provides the viability for both local entertainers and other “big name” entertainers to entertain
- They stage and fund relevant competition
  - Competition builds knowledge and skill levels. It enhances the visibility and pride of local competitors and provides them with a forum to compete against non-locals
- They provide event management skills and experience that are not otherwise available in several communities
  - Fair Associations are accustomed to attracting and handling major events and can assist other community players to stage their events
- They are a powerful vehicle to build awareness of linkages between rural and urban values
  - More than any other events they bring local and more rural populations together to celebrate their traditions and their roots
  - They celebrate the importance of agriculture and food production in the rural roots of BC
- They celebrate the importance of local agriculture and agricultural production
  - They provide an annual opportunity to celebrate the value and benefits delivered by local agricultural producers
  - They provide a forum for local and regional residents and businesses to learn about what their local agricultural producers do and how they can take advantage of those benefits
  - They raise awareness among local and regional residents about the food chain, the importance of agriculture and how local producers fit into that equation
- They offer the opportunity for the business community to come to a focus for a common benefit and for celebration
  - The business community supports this mission, but clearly in many communities needs to be motivated to actively participate in the celebration



- Fairs provide an opportunity for local and regional suppliers to display and promote their goods and services to their agricultural customers – and to meet new potential customers
- Local messaging and communication
  - Fairs provide an opportunity for messaging and communication that is relevant to the needs of many different kinds of stakeholder and audience
- They stimulate non-resident spending in the community
  - By attracting non-local residents to the community they stimulate economic growth and contribute to building the reputation of the community
  - They provide linkages for local businesspeople to regional and other customers they might otherwise not see
- Historically, in many communities fairs have provided facility infrastructure that is still used today
  - Fairs have provided or facilitated the provision of arenas, curling rinks, meeting and exhibition facilities, campgrounds, agricultural show facilities and many other facilities that would not have existed in the community had the Fair Association not provided them.
  - By continuing to own and/or operate these facilities they provide accommodation for many other kinds of community events.

The Fair Associations have the opportunity to expand on the value of all of these important and benefits for their community. Identifying and engaging their key stakeholders, enhancing their planning, delivering on their opportunities and engaging their community can guide the Fair Associations to expand these benefits.

As that happens the Fair Association will increasingly be considered a motivator and leader in the community and will itself benefit directly. Its benefits will include:

- Enhanced partnership opportunities focused on further increasing the community's benefits
- Increased access to a variety of sources of revenue
- Opportunities to offset expenses
- Less difficulty in attracting participation of young leaders to join the Fair Association's leadership team
- Enhanced stature in the community.

In turn, the Fair Association Board will become viewed as a 'board to be on' in the community based on its visible achievements and evidently strong leadership.

## **Implications of Population Trends and Segments**

Several population trends influence the role of BC's Fair Associations in their communities. The first is the distribution of population between different kinds of rural and urban communities.

Statistics Canada Census data show that British Columbia's population in 2012 was distributed as follows:

<b>Population Centre Size</b>	<b>Population</b>
100,000 and over	2,743,150
30,000 to 99,999	533,349
1,000 to 30,000	514,195
Rural population	609,363
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,400,457</b>

The "rural" population living in smaller than the smallest population centres (of less than 1,000 population) is generally unchanged over the past four Census periods (16 years) while population growth has occurred most in the largest population centres, including the Census Metropolitan Areas.

An interesting fact is that an increasing number of rural areas, and many smaller urban communities, have come under the influence or commuting range of the larger urban population centres and metropolitan areas as they have expanded with increasing population.

Fair Associations identify that populations in all sizes of population centre are becoming increasingly interested in what they eat. Populations have been targeted by many initiatives that have raised awareness of the importance and value of local diets and its availability.

- **BC Fairs may identify partners or individual champions in the food chain, perhaps supported by a media partner, who would assist in bringing focus to the key topic of eating locally produced food directly in partnership with BC's fairs.**

A second key factor is that of ethnic populations. Statistics Canada Census data show that in 2011, 20.6% of Canada's population was foreign born and that was the highest proportion of all G8 countries. Further, 19.1% of Canada's total population classify themselves as a visible minority. Most of the BC residents classifying themselves as visible minorities are resident in the Lower Mainland and are thus a significant proportion of the market for many of the Fair Associations.

Several Fair Associations indicated that despite significant efforts they had great difficulty in engaging visible minorities in their fairs and other events.

- **BC Fairs may take a lead, perhaps supported by one or two of the Fraser Valley Fair Associations, to explore directly with ethnic community leaders how the Fair Associations might engage them better to celebrate their heritage as a part of the fair.**

First Nations have a long tradition of partnership with several fair organizations across Canada. Perhaps the most visible is their relationship with the Calgary Stampede.

BC's population of 232,290 First Nations people constitutes 5.4% of the total provincial population (Statistics Canada Census 2011). While some BC Fair Associations have successfully involved celebration of First Nations in their events many more indicate less satisfaction.

- **BC Fairs may take a leadership role to explore with the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation how to engage First Nations better in Fair Association events, activities and leadership**, perhaps supported by a Fair Association that has successfully facilitated the celebration of First Nations priorities and populations.

### Other Population Trends

Several other factors will influence planning for the future of the Fair Associations.

- Changing population
  - Aging population
  - Ethnic diversity
- Need for families to re-connect
- People need outlets to gather together
- Availability of time and energy for volunteering
- New methods of communicating influence how people keep in touch
- New priorities exist for families, work, and home
- Increasing financial constraints on many in the population.

Fair Associations need to accommodate these factors in their planning. For example, introducing new approaches to accommodate and entertain the aging and changing population, communication focused on reconnecting, communication methods based on current choices and approaches, building new approaches to volunteering.

### Community Engagement

A strong program of community engagement is a key component of enhanced strategic direction. Leadership and progress are significantly focused through effective, two-way communication.

Discussions with Fair Associations indicate that in many cases their local communication is predominantly through local newspaper coverage and signage around the topic of the annual fair. This is somewhat limiting and does not encourage feedback that can be used in planning. As has been shown previously some Fair Associations also use surveys of attendees to learn about the attitudes and opinions of the attendees.

Some key priorities and opportunities for community engagement include:

- Media relations

- Speaking engagements and news communication at community organizations
- Community surveys to explore opinions and attitudes
- Focus group discussions on key planning topics
- Regular email distribution to highlight Fair Association news
- Continually updated websites and actively worked FaceBook pages and Twitter accounts

A simple outline planning tool to assist Fair Associations to develop a plan for community engagement is attached to this report.

## Key Stakeholders

Many Fair Associations have relied mostly on the traditions of the Fair Association and the ideas and insight of the Board and Committees as they make decisions about their events. Although the survey indicates a reasonable level of engagement of stakeholder groups, discussion with Fair Associations about the needs and expectations of their stakeholders suggests that stakeholder engagement for consultation has been a lower priority for Boards.

The following chart from the survey summarizes the engagement of some critical stakeholder groups.

Engagement of Local Stakeholders	Minimal relationship, infrequent contact,	Occasional discussions	Good working relationship and regular contact	Active working relationship with plans to optimize mutual benefits
Local media	1	4	15	12
4-H	4	3	8	13
Service Clubs	3	9	7	11
Community Organ	3	10	9	11
Other Businesses	1	9	10	7
Local Government	3	12	7	11
Agriculture/Agribu:	4	10	9	7

The interview program explained this, indicating it is likely that the Boards' stakeholder engagement is more focused on current operations of the fair than on future opportunities. Further, the limited human resources of the Board also appear to have constrained stakeholder engagement. This is particularly challenging because stakeholder engagement should be an ongoing process.

Stakeholders include:

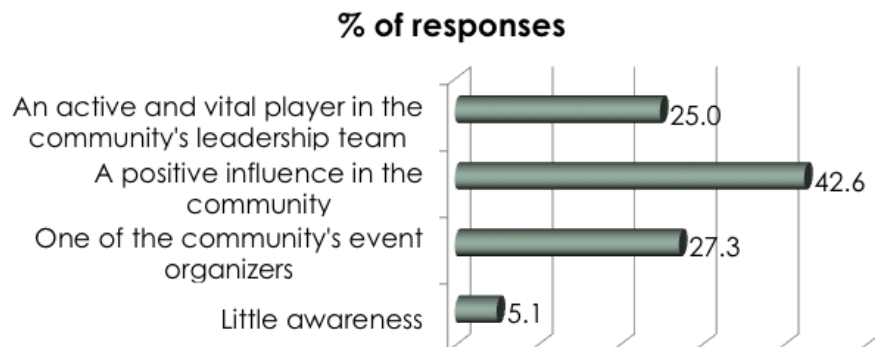
- People or businesses who may be influenced by the fair
- Those making money from the fair
- Those spending money in connection with the fair
- Attendees and those who don't attend
- Exhibitors

- Local community organizations
- Local government
- Local business community

Discussion about community and stakeholder engagement with Fair Association representatives at the BC Fairs 2013 Convention revealed the value of viewing the stakeholders in two distinct groups:

- Inside the gates
  - Fairgoers
  - Non fairgoers
  - Volunteers
  - Exhibitors and competitors
  - Contractors
- Outside the gates
  - Sponsors and strategic partners
  - Local governments (politicians and administration)
  - Local business organizations
  - Service clubs
  - Local businesses
  - Local community organizations.

In the survey respondents were asked to indicate how they perceive their local “outside the gates” stakeholders view them. The respondents could choose only one of the following options to describe how they believe the Fair Association is viewed. The following chart summarizes the response to this question:



In general, the informal community interviews that took place reinforce this view of positioning of the Fair Association in the community, although those discussions also suggest that the Fair Association is not “top of mind” indicating that the response “one of the community’s event organizers” may be more common, at the expense of other response options. There is no question that the fair itself and the Fair Association’s facilities are of great importance in the communities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This component of the research concludes that the Fair Associations deliver strong benefits but that in many cases the benefits they deliver for their community could be better communicated and may be enhanced. **Fair Associations should directly clarify the benefits they deliver for their community and build a plan to enhance them.** Further, the Fair Associations should **establish and execute a communication plan to convey key messages to their primary community audiences.**

The Fair Associations may achieve significant progress in that respect if they **directly enhance their engagement of their communities and their primary stakeholders.** This would provide clearer input to determine opportunities and priorities and would add insight to contribute to decision-making.

# Financial Analysis

## Cumulative Income Statement

The following table presents a cumulative statement of revenue and expenses for BC's Fair Associations (not including PNE) based on data provided in the survey.

	Total reported	Average (n=25)	% of Total Revenue	Estimated total for 46 BC Fairs members	Estimated total for BC's 61 fairs
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	246,571	9,863	3.9	453,691	601,633
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	518,294	20,732	8.2	953,661	1,264,637
Grants: Local government	184,225	7,369	2.9	338,974	449,509
 Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	 3,504,180	 140,167	 55.3	 6,447,691	 8,550,199
Rental income	348,025	13,921	5.5	640,366	849,181
Interest income	17,048	682	0.3	31,369	41,598
Membership fees	15,156	606	0.2	27,887	36,981
Donations and fundraising	355,023	14,201	5.6	653,243	866,257
Sponsorships and advertising	780,633	31,225	12.3	1,436,364	1,904,744
GST recovery (net)	32,558	1,302	0.5	59,907	79,442
Revenue from other sources	339,159	13,566	5.3	624,052	827,547
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>6,340,872</b>	<b>253,635</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11,667,204</b>	<b>15,471,728</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	432,738	17,310	6.8	796,238	1,055,881
Amortization and depreciation	126,497	5,059.88	2.0	232,754	308,653
 Awards, prizes and scholarships	 552,734	 22,109	 8.7	 1,017,031	 1,348,671
Rural development, leadership and training	20,876	835	0.3	38,412	50,938
Donations to other organizations	62,464	2,499	1.0	114,934	152,412
Insurance	189,555	7,582	3.0	348,782	462,515
Interest	20,267	811	0.3	37,292	49,452
Office and administration expenses	514,284	20,571	8.1	946,283	1,254,854
Memberships	10,069	403	0.2	18,526	24,567
Professional fees and accounting	47,261	1,890	0.7	86,960	115,317
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	2,038,836	81,553	32.2	3,751,458	4,974,760
Repairs and maintenance	472,310	18,892	7.4	869,051	1,152,438
Utilities and telephones	133,143	5,326	2.1	244,983	324,868
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	1,094,660	43,786	17.3	2,014,174	2,670,970
Rent and other expenses	351,198	14,048	5.5	646,205	856,924
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>6,066,894</b>	<b>242,676</b>	<b>95.7</b>	<b>11,163,085</b>	<b>14,803,221</b>
 <b>Excess of Revenue over Expenses</b>	 <b>273,978</b>	 <b>10,959</b>	 <b>4.3</b>	 <b>504,120</b>	 <b>668,507</b>

The data presented in the table were provided in the quantitative survey. A total of 25 Fair Associations provided the data, converting it themselves from the format of

their own financial statement to a standard format that was presented in the survey. Projections were made based on the data provided to represent the cumulative operating results of the 46 BC Fairs member Fair Associations and the estimated 61 agricultural fairs in BC.

In overview, it is clear that the Fair Associations operate on shoestring budgets. Little excess revenue exists to fund growth, capital needs or new initiatives. Further, as many Fair Associations tend to employ cash or fund accounting methods it is possible that excess revenue reported in this table was used for smaller capital projects. Most of the fairs confirm they are operating with very challenging budgets.

### Segmented Analysis

Several more detailed analyses were conducted, including analysis of the differences between:

- Fair Associations owning their own facilities, owning some facilities and not owning facilities
- Fair Associations segmented by location
- Fair Associations segmented by size of primary market
- Fair Associations segmented by volume of attendance.

Tables are included in Appendix 1 to this report with these analyses. However, while there are significant differences between the groups, many similar characteristics are found. Fair Associations can compare their own data with data contained in these tables.

### Source and Application of Funds

The following table summarizes how the fairs use their funds.

Summary of source and use of funds	Averages (n=25) \$'000	% of Revenue	Total for 46 BC Fairs members \$'000	Total BC 61 Fair Associations \$'000
<b>Source of Funds</b>				
Earned Income, Rentals and sponsorships/advertising	185.3	73.1	8,524.4	11,304.1
Grants	38.0	15.0	1,746.3	2,315.8
Other Income	30.4	12.0	1,396.5	1,851.8
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>253.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11,667.2</b>	<b>15,471.7</b>
<b>Use of funds</b>				
Operational expenses	167.3	65.9	7,693.8	10,202.7
Support and administration	75.4	29.7	3,469.2	4,600.5
<b>Total funds used</b>	<b>242.7</b>	<b>95.7</b>	<b>11,163.1</b>	<b>14,803.2</b>

The table shows that the Fair Associations generate nearly three quarters of their revenue from operations, including receipts at the fair, rental income, advertising



and other activities from which they directly gain revenue. Grants account for 15% of their income.

The analysis shows that the Fair Associations use two thirds of their revenue to support the direct costs of operations on which the operational income is earned. Their administrative needs are met within the somewhat limited amount of remaining available revenue, reflecting conservative management by the Fair Associations.

### Revenue Analysis

The following table summarizes the 2012 revenue reported by the Fair Associations

Revenue Analysis	Average (n=25)		Average (n=25)		
	\$'000	% of Revenue	\$'000	% of Revenue	
Earned Revenue			Grant Revenue		
Ticket sales, fees, etc	140.2	55.3	Gov't of BC and Agencies	20.7	8.2
Sponsorships and Advertising	31.2	12.3	Federal Gov't and Agencies	9.9	3.9
Donations and Fundraising	14.2	5.6	Local Government	7.4	2.9
Rental Income	13.9	5.5			
Other income	16.2	6.4			
Total	215.7	85.0	Total	38.0	15.0

The table shows that earned revenue is dominated by the direct operating revenue accruing to the Fair Association from its events. Sponsorships and fundraising revenue resulting from active revenue generation also contributes significant support. Rental income accrues to the Fair Associations with facilities. Fourteen of the 25 Fair Associations that provided financial data included rental income in their report.

The Government of British Columbia, significantly through gaming grants, leads the grants and contributions table. Sixteen of the 25 Fair Associations included in this analysis reported receiving grants from the Government of BC or its agencies.

Grants from Federal Government sources are reported to be primarily from regional economic development or labour initiatives. Just seven of the 25 fairs reported they had received grants from the Federal Government or its agencies. Local government contributes to ten of the 25 Fair Associations. However, some fairs that use facilities owned by their local government do not record imputed rents.

### Expense Analysis

The following table summarizes the 2012 expenses reported by the Fair Associations.

## Operating Expenses

The table shows that the predominant component of operational expenses is the cost of delivering the programs and events. Human resources costs consume the second highest component of operational expenses, followed by awards, prizes and scholarships and then advertising and promotion.

Human resources costs are included as operational expenses as they are mainly used in connection with the delivery of programming. However, several fair associations have full time management staff and others have part or full time bookkeeping staff.

Expense Analysis	Average (n=25)		Administration and Support	Average (n=25)	
	\$'000	% of Revenue		\$'000	% of Revenue
<b>Operations</b>					
Programs, events and activities	81.6	32.2	Office and administration	20.6	8.1
Awards, prizes, scholarships	22.1	8.7	Repairs and Maintenance	18.9	7.4
Donations to other organizations	2.5	1.0	Insurance	7.6	3.0
Advertising and promotion	17.31	6.8	Utilities, telephones	5.3	2.1
Wages and volunteers	43.8	17.3	Professional fees	1.9	0.7
			Rural development and leadership	0.8	0.3
			Interest	0.8	0.3
			Memberships	0.4	0.2
			Rent and uncategorized expenses	14.0	5.5
			Amortization and depreciation	5.1	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>167.3</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>29.7</b>

The Fair Associations are strongly motivated to maintain strong programs that contribute to reinforcing a developmental mandate in their agricultural and rural roots, significantly funding awards, prizes and scholarships. Further supporting their community mandate, the Fair Associations engage other community organizations to deliver some components of the fair and they donate funds to those organizations through those agreements.

Just nine of the 25 fairs included reported this expense. However, the interviews revealed that in several cases the Fair Association does not receive funds collected by those other organizations (and consequently does not bear the expenses associated with them) as the funds accrue directly to those community partners.

## Administrative Expenses

The administrative and support expenses are led by office and administration expense. That is followed by repairs and maintenance, reported by just 18 Fair

Associations. Similarly, just 16 of the fairs reported incurring utility costs and making the non-cash provision of amortization and depreciation.

## Capital Investment

Limited capital investment was reported by the Fair Associations. Only eight of the responding fair associations, reflecting just two thirds of the Fair Associations with their own facilities, reported starting a capital project during the past five years. The following table shows capital investment reported by the fair associations.

<b>Capital Investments</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Totals</b>	-	<b>110,000</b>	<b>629,000</b>	<b>1,709,564</b>	<b>74,644</b>
Average for all fairs reporting (n=25)	-	4,400	25,160	68,383	2,986
Estimated total for 46 BC Fairs members	-	202,400	1,157,360	3,145,598	137,345
Estimated total for 61 BC fair associations	-	268,400	1,534,760	4,171,336	182,132
 # of fairs reporting	 0	 2	 4	 5	 5

This limitation is of serious concern of security. The buildings owned by the Fair Associations are aging and deteriorating but funds are not available to pursue safety and modernization consistent with the expectations of the users and attendees.

Fair Associations believe that grants and contributions are crucial to maintain these facilities that are viewed by many to be core community facilities. However, the Fair Association Boards must be congratulated for having maintained their facilities in what they determine to be “acceptable” condition despite significant cuts in financial support.

The financial analysis shows that there is not sufficient revenue left after meeting operating expenses to continue to maintain facilities appropriately to meet the needs and expectations of the growing population.

## Opportunities and Challenges

Discussions with the Fair Associations indicate they perceive there may be additional opportunities to attract new partners to support their programs and direction. However, they are challenged by the time that can be committed to seeking out and securing new grants and financial relationships. It may be appropriate for BC Fairs to research and publish information about relevant grants. The community discussions indicated that several Regional District councils have staff that may assist fairs to apply for grants, but perhaps BC Fairs may also assist.

Fair associations reported challenges with respect to timing aspects and other constraints surrounding Community Gaming Grants. A significant issue is that granting decisions are sometimes not received until significantly late in the planning

process for the coming major events. The Fair Associations also note that they are most successful when they make immediate applications as soon as applications can be received. It is suggested that BC Fairs explore this challenge with the BC Lotteries Corporation to see if there is an opportunity to assist the Fair Associations more in this respect.

Another significant challenge identified by several of the Fair Associations is associated with the rules applied for beer tent licensing. Again, it may be appropriate for BC Fairs to explore this issue further and advise the Fair Associations accordingly.

## **Trends and Risks**

While this research gathered data for just one year, thus providing a benchmark for future evaluation, the Fair Associations report that they have operated through some very challenging times during recent years. The erosion of financial support by the BC Ministry of Agriculture had significant impact on the operation and sustainability of the Fair Associations. The Fair Associations believe they have “tapped” most of the financial resources that are available to them and they must become increasingly innovative to maintain the tradition of their events and continue to serve their communities.

Sustainability is a significant priority for the Fair Associations. The following table summarizes some of the attempts they have made to maintain sustainability during the past five years.

Answer Options	Did not try this	Tried but did not achieve measurable improvement	Did this and saw measurable improvement	Did this and found it extremely successful	Rating Average (scale is 1-4 where 4 is high)
Changed programming to make events more attractive or more profitable	5	8	13	6	2.63
Pursued grant funds for new initiatives	5	10	11	7	2.61
Become more focused on engaging your community	2	14	12	5	2.61
Increased revenue from business sponsors	5	8	15	4	2.56
Increased revenue from user fees, rentals, or other operations	9	8	10	5	2.34
Developed partnerships with other community organizations	9	8	14	2	2.27
Reduced operating expenses	9	9	14	1	2.21
Reduced administrative expenses	17	7	8	1	1.79
Developed partnerships with other fair associations	25	2	4	1	1.41

It is clear that the Fair Associations have been innovative in addressing this serious concern.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

It is vitally important that fairs “take care of the business of the Fair Association” in order to build a secure future. The Fair Associations have survived through a hundred years of economic variation and have maintained a key component of their community. However, if they are to pursue the opportunities available to them to expand their focus on their communities and the agriculture community they must seek out new revenue streams in related fields.

# Human Resources

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BC's Fair Associations are volunteer driven. The volunteer Boards of Directors are challenged by difficulties in attracting additional volunteers to participate in leadership and in planning and executing their events.

Very few Fair Associations have full time employees – not surprising as many of the Fair Associations tend to be focused on delivering only a small number of events annually. However, while several Fair Associations would like to expand their mandate for their community and in support of agriculture they are unable to fund the salaries that would be required to do so.

## Employment

The analysis shows only minimal employment among the Fair Associations. A few Fair Associations employ management staff and some contract for administrative support – mostly focused on bookkeeping. More Fair Associations employ part time or casual workers in connection with the operation of their fair. Fair-operations based employees are mostly engaged for manual activities and security.

It is notable that several fairs revealed in the interviews that they contract with local community organizations and clubs to provide a variety of services such as gate and security management, beer tent operations, etc.

A total of 16 of the 25 Fair Associations completing this part of the quantitative survey indicated they had at least one employee. A total of 239 employees were reported, including 221 part time or seasonal and 18 full time.

This leads to a projection of a total 33 full time and 407 part time or seasonal employees for a total of 440 employees among the 46 BC Fairs members and a total of 583 employees, including 44 full time and 540 part time or seasonal for the estimated 61 agricultural Fair Associations in BC.

Only three of the Fair Associations reported having at least one full time employee. The remainder had only part time or seasonal employees.

## Volunteers

Volunteer management is a challenge for many Fair Associations. They report their ongoing efforts to attract younger leaders to join their Boards and to lead or participate in Committees or “Departments”.

The following table shows the involvement of volunteers among the Fair Associations.

<b>BC's Fair Association Volunteers</b>	<b>Average per Fair Association (n=33)</b>	<b>Estimated total for BC Fairs' 46 member fair associations</b>	<b>Estimated total for BC's 61 fair associations</b>
<b>Number of volunteers engaged in event planning and execution</b>	111	5,109	6,775
<b>Number of hours contributed per volunteer in connection with event planning and execution</b>	1,253	57,638	76,433
<b>Number of volunteers engaged in the operation and maintenance of the grounds and facilities of the fair association</b>	40	1,829	2,425
<b>Number of hours contributed per volunteer in connection with the operation and maintenance of the grounds and facilities of the fair association</b>	351	16,138	21,401
<b>Number of volunteers engaged as members of the Board of Directors and Committees of the Board</b>	33	1,496	1,983
<b>Number of hours contributed per volunteer in connection with their participation in activities of the Board of Directors and Committees of the Board</b>	232	10,676	14,157
<b>Number of volunteers engaged to assist in the administration of the societies day to day administration and management</b>	4	203	269
<b>Number of hours contributed per volunteer in connection with the administration and management of the society</b>	243	11,191	14,840
<b>Total Volunteers</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>8,636</b>	<b>11,452</b>
<b>Total hours contributed</b>	<b>2,079</b>	<b>95,643</b>	<b>126,831</b>

It is clear from this table that the residents of the communities strongly support the fairs. The estimated total of **11,500 volunteers between them contribute 127,000 hours annually to support their local Fair Association** in order to maintain this long standing community tradition.

Overall, nearly 60% (57.6%) of the Fair Association's report it is more difficult to attract volunteers. Most of the remainder indicate there is little change in that respect.

The Fair Associations described their view of the way in which volunteer recruitment and retention has changed. The following table summarizes their responses.

Answer Options	Response Percent
There are less volunteers due to other demands on people's time	43.8%
There are less volunteers due to economic stresses affecting volunteers	18.8%
Volunteers are more selective about the work they do	12.5%
There is little change	12.5%
Volunteers are more selective about which organization they work for	9.4%
Other organizations in the community offer more interesting or attractive work for volunteers	3.1%

As is the case in many organizations engaging volunteers, the Fair Associations find the volunteer market is significantly occupied with other priorities that limit their ability to contribute. However, the fact that only 3.1% of the Fair Associations indicated volunteers prefer to contribute their time to other community organizations indicates strong community support for the mission of the Fair Associations.

Fair Associations were also asked about the use of volunteer pools in the community. Approximately 30% of the Fair Associations have used a volunteer pool. However, discussions with the Fair Associations on this topic during the interviews often noted that the Fair Association came out on the losing end of these arrangements: they contributed more volunteers to the pool than they gained and subsequently found their volunteer support declined.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Operating without paid staff the Fair Association Boards are mostly “Working Boards”. Thus the extent to which they are able to deliver an expanded mandate is limited by the available time and skills of the volunteer Board and Committee members and other volunteers.

Three key directions should be pursued to address these challenges:

1. **Fair Association Boards should identify strategic partners for new initiatives** as they identify new priorities and clarify their mandate with respect to their community role, build new programming around priorities with respect to local agricultural producers and other priorities associated with new direction.



- a. In some cases, as leaders, they may be able to motivate their partners with employees to take on the delivery of the initiatives. In essence, they will provide intellectual leadership and their partner may be the delivery agent.
  - b. In other cases financial resources will be required to pursue these new initiatives. It is quite clear from the financial analysis that it will take some years for excess funds to be generated to fund expanded mandates with employees and other required resources.
  - c. Further, it may be possible to engage volunteers for these initiatives. The volunteers would need to have sufficient time available to fully execute the initiatives. However, it may be easier to find volunteers for this purpose if they are specifically tasked and if Fair Association Board Members assist them to develop clear definition of their mandate, work plan and expected achievements. Achievements should be acknowledged clearly.
- 2. **Fair Associations may consider developing several strategic alliances** – which many clearly already have in place – to pursue specific planned major initiatives
  - a. Such alliances would provide a team approach to pursuing the new, and perhaps some existing, initiatives and would result in mutual benefits for both or all partners in the initiative.
  - b. There are many examples of successful strategic alliances in the social environment.
- 3. **Boards should pursue a clearer understanding of the volunteer strategies and re-think their approach to volunteer recruitment and engagement.** While voluntarism has been a feature of the “community” approach Fair Associations employ to deliver their programming, it may be that traditional approaches to volunteer recruitment and management prevail.
  - a. Research has shown that while a larger proportion of volunteers in the population are younger people, the volunteers who commit the most time per capita are older. Further, there is a drop off in voluntarism during the years when parents are committed to new careers and are bringing up young children.
  - b. Volunteers are increasingly challenged by their own time priorities and have consequently become increasingly selective about how they use their precious volunteer time.
  - c. Volunteers are more likely to commit if they are asked to do a specific and finite task rather than “be a volunteer”. Further they are more inclined to respond to a direct invitation than to respond to a “call for volunteers”.
  - d. Volunteers are significantly motivated by understanding what is required of them, being able to visualize their contribution and be acknowledged for having delivered.

# Community Economic Benefits

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This section of the report summarizes the quantitative benefits that are associated with BC's Fair Associations.

## Direct Quantitative Benefits

Measurable benefits are estimated based on the survey data. Percentages are calculated directly from the Fair Associations' responses. Projections to the 46 members of BC Fairs and the estimated 61 Agricultural Fairs are directly extended from the number of valid responses.

### Spending by Fair Associations

Fair Associations spend almost all of the revenue they are able to secure. Fair Associations estimate that they spend 90% of their expenditure budget in their local community or trading area.

The remaining 10% of spending mostly takes place in BC. The geographic distribution of spending was discussed in detail with several of the Fair Associations during the interviews. Discussions on this topic included Fair Associations located in or near major centres and those more remotely located. That proportion is consistent with findings related to fair organization expenditure in several other jurisdictions.

The analysis finds that the estimated **61 Fair Associations in BC spend approximately \$13.3 million dollars in 2012 in their communities and trading area and a further \$1.5 million elsewhere, mostly in BC**, contributing several million dollars to BC's Gross Domestic Product.

The source of the funds used for these expenditures include all sources of revenue described previously in this report. While most of the funds are shown to be generated locally, other sources include spending at the event by non-residents and grant and partner-contributed funds, which may be from broader geographies and occasionally from outside of BC. Thus the Fair Associations are attracting local and export revenue and spending it within their community and trading area.

It should be noted that on-site spending accruing to the Fair Association includes items such as gate receipts, beer sales, some concessions, parking, camping, etc. In addition, the Fair Associations gain revenue from commissions, revenue splits, participation charges, etc. in connection with the involvement of major attractions and activities and food and beverage outlets.

Attendees at BC's fair events may spend approximately \$20-30 per person per day at the event, depending upon the extent of the entertainment component of the fair

and the entrance fees. Some attendees will spend significantly more. The research shows that attendees mostly attend on slightly more than one day per year.

**Attendee spending on site at the major annual agricultural fair is estimated to be \$17 to \$25 million.**

There is also imputed revenue associated with expenses offset by contributions to other organizations in return for free labour and services. For example, if a service club operates gate control, parking, or beer tent operations at no charge in return for a revenue split with the Fair Association. This revenue is not always recorded in the financial statements of the Fair Associations so revenue may be under represented in these calculations. It is, however, a significant benefit to the community and should be acknowledged as a positive impact of the Fair Association.

#### **Spending by Locally Resident Fair Attendees**

Most of the spending on site by fair attendees is used for operations and is included in the spending profile summarized above. However, research in several jurisdictions has shown that some local residents spend money on fuel and other transportation costs, meals outside the fair and some retail purchases.

These funds may account for an additional \$10-15 per local resident person attending the event. The beneficiaries of that spending are local businesses.

**In addition to spending on site, local cash flow in the community resulting from local residents attending the agricultural fair may exceed \$9.5 million.**

#### **Non Resident Spending**

This is tourism spending. Non-resident, or visitor spending in connection with their visit to the fair contributes new cash flow to the community. While most of their spending is likely on site, visitors may also spend money on overnight accommodation, food and beverage outside the gate, retail purchases, other entertainment and transportation.

This report has noted previously that some of the Fair Associations have provided RV/camping facilities to accommodate their non-resident visitors and as a revenue generator. A larger proportion of non-resident attendees spend money outside the gate but within the community as a direct result of their visit than is the case with local residents.

Other research has suggested non-residents spend an average of approximately \$30 per capita per day off-site, in connection with their visit to the fair. Most of this expenditure takes place in the community. Therefore it is estimated that the 313,000 non-resident attendees spend \$9.4 million in connection with their visit to an agricultural fair in a community located an hour or more away from their home.

**Based on these data cumulative visitor spending on site and en route or in the destination community in connection with visits to BC's fairs may be \$15.7 million.**

Additionally, many non-residents attend other events staged by the Fair Association or events that are staged in the Fair Association's facilities by other organizations. While difficult to estimate proportions or spending without more detailed research on that topic, every day that a non-resident is in the community as a result of those events is a direct benefit for the community's hospitality and other business sector and contributes to building the general perception of the community.

### **Benefits for Suppliers and Competitors**

Suppliers and competitors gain directly from their participation in the event. In some cases, such as midway and other contracted attraction operators, their revenue from the event is very significant and results directly from attendee spending on site.

Suppliers such as equipment suppliers and other major exhibitors gain revenue as a result of their participation in the fair. While they can benefit from sales during the fair, they have reported in other research that they often benefit from later sales that result from contacts made or maintained during the fair.

These items are not reflected in the financial statements of the Fair Associations. Therefore they are not included in the spending profile of the Fair Association.

The third major group that benefits financially in connection with the fair is the group of competitors who win prizes. These prizes are reflected in the Fair Associations' financial statements. However, discussion with several competitors in connection with this research indicates their winnings seldom exceed the expenses they incur in competition.

The per capita volume of this spending depends primarily on the extent of the commercial aspects of the fair and the number of people attending the event.

### **Spending by Suppliers and Competitors**

Suppliers and competitors attending a fair event provide significant economic benefit for the community's business sector and often also employ local people to address labour needs. Thus they are a major contributor to cash flow in the community.

Hospitality industry businesses quickly point to this group of visitors as the most likely identifiable group to do business with them, ranging from overnight accommodation (often for several nights), food and beverage, entertainment, etc. In addition, some retailers – notably in hardware, clothing, office supplies and automotive businesses and tack shops, also note the exhibitors and competitors as the primary group of spenders.

These spenders are non-residents of the fair's community and their spending contributes direct economic benefit for the community's businesses. To put this into perspective, commercial members of BC Fairs providing attractions for the fairs estimated that their spending in BC communities may exceed \$10.0 million annually.

This amount may not be spent in BC if the Fair Associations did not contract to present those attractions. Naturally, however, this spending is a function of expense related to revenue accruing to these important partners on site.

### **Sponsors, Contributors and Donors**

Sponsors, contributors and donors bolster the spending of attendees to help fund the Fair Association's events. Their cash is provided for philanthropic reasons associated with supporting the community or is spent from marketing budgets in order to gain increased awareness or to connect with existing and new customers at the fair. Their spending is included in the Fair Association's revenue profile. Fair Associations should work with these partners to determine how to assist them achieve their goals from their support.

### **Community benefits**

Specifically, the non-residents who visit are introduced to, or become more familiar with, the community's businesses, hospitality sector and other attributes of the community. It is clear from other research that people who come to the fair gain a new appreciation for the community and return at other times, when they may spend more money than during their fair visit.

Many predominant qualitative benefits accrue to the community. They are to do with community building and support and are described in an earlier section of this report.

### **Regional influence**

It is clear from the interviews and the surveys that Fair Associations contribute value for both their community and their trading region. It is an expensive task to motivate people to travel and to influence them to spend money. With their marketing focus on both primary and secondary markets and their strong mission to deliver an outstanding experience for their attendees both the region and the community benefit.

### **Agriculture**

The benefit for the agricultural economy is predominantly in several specific areas:

- The Fair Associations bring agriculture people together with their potential suppliers and their potential purchasers.

- The Fair Associations focus significantly on delivering messaging and motivation to build agricultural and rural awareness among local and visitor populations. They are hampered in this mission by their limited resources: they develop programming and encourage others to deliver it through innovation, demonstrations and displays.
- The Fair Associations deliver agricultural and rural entertainment and learning experiences with an agricultural focus that is relevant to their agricultural clientele and others. The annual celebration at the fair is an important annual “release” for the attendees
- The fairs may provide an opportunity for learning about new and emerging local agricultural techniques.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The research concludes that in addition to providing a valuable role in community building and in agricultural business awareness, BC’s agricultural fairs directly and indirectly contribute very significant economic benefits for their communities and for British Columbia. If the agricultural fairs ceased to exist there would be significant losses in all of these environments.

# Strategic Analysis

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The analysis provided in this section of the report is derived from the survey responses. This analysis provides insight, coupled with other findings described in this document, that suggest a foundation for Fair Associations and for BC Fairs to develop strong strategic direction.

It is evident from the research that many Fair Associations are facing some difficult challenges but they may not all have the resources to address them. Many have not concluded that they are running a business venture and they need to take care of the business. The business issues are quite conventional, but need to be addressed.

- Many fairs are challenged by sustainability or viability
- The fair must match or exceed the expectations of the customers. This requires a blend of creativity and a conventional business approach
- The Board's focus must be on the future
- Fairs need to find new ways to address human resources and financial limitations
- Many Boards are limited by the experience or time commitments of Board members
- Boards need to be innovative to deal with their realities and still move forward
- Boards need to attract skilled individuals, businesses and other community partners to help with specific missions.

## Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths and weaknesses are internally focused. They are associated with the people and the history of the Fair Association.

### Strengths:

BC's Fair Associations:

- Provide a forum for the community to celebrate
- Reinforce agricultural values and pursuits
- Deliver on a tradition
- Provide traditional competition
- Provide relevant programming for their traditional audiences
- Some provide facilities and activities for their communities that would not be there otherwise.

### Weaknesses

Some of BC's Fair Associations suffer from:

- Struggles with innovation and direction
- Communication

- Inadequate planning
- Business focus
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Financial resources
- Volunteers and human resources.

### To take advantage of strengths and offset weaknesses

BC's Fair Associations should:

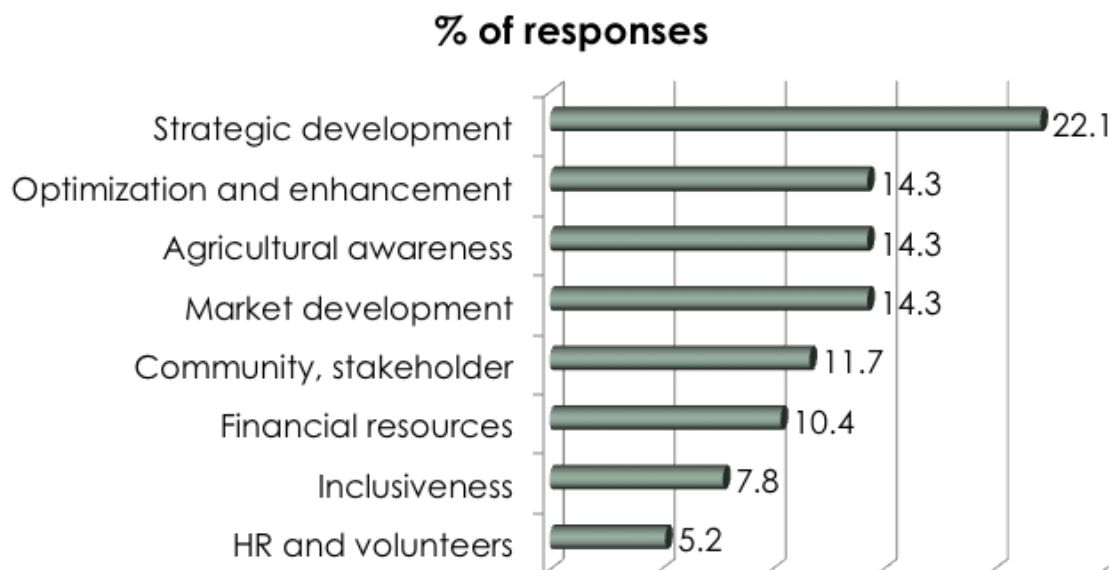
- Look forward
- Engage their community and their stakeholders
- Pursue business development
- Take advantage of skilled resources
- Integrate changing populations
- Explore and take advantage of opportunities.

## Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities and threats are external factors. Using their strengths and offsetting their weaknesses the Fair Associations need to act aggressively to take advantage of the opportunities they have defined and offset the limiting threats and barriers.

### Opportunities

Opportunities that the Fair Associations defined in the surveys are categorized below into groupings. It is clear that the Fair Associations identified opportunities in many areas that will directly enhance their organization and expand on the benefits that it delivers for the community.



Notably the Fair Associations saw opportunities to do with new trends in small scale and local agriculture and finding ways to create a more interactive experience at



their fair events. They noted the opportunity to produce more entertainment experiences for their attendees that are specifically based on learning about agriculture.

Further, the Fair Associations noted the ongoing opportunity to contribute to building relationships within their community and region for the benefit of their stakeholder and fair event attendees.

### **Threats:**

Threats identified during the research are mostly perceived to be to do with the Fair Associations' financial fears:

- Continued erosion of the positioning of the fair and the Fair Association resulting from the challenge of ongoing funding inadequacies and competitive factors
- Increasing competition for funding
- Facility shortcomings
- Long-term stability.

# Strategic Direction

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Strategic direction is a road map for the Fair Associations and the Fair Association industry. Fair Associations need to determine where their focus lies and to set direction to pursue a clear vision for the future. With new focus, agricultural Fair Associations can become a key motivator and facilitator within their sphere of influence. Key factors to build strong strategic direction are:

1. Constantly maintaining a focus on the relevance of fairs to the stakeholders
  - a. Understand stakeholders
  - b. Understand markets
  - c. Understand business environment
  - d. Understand the factors that will influence direction for the future
2. Integrate this knowledge into planning
3. Define and communicate with all stakeholder groups
4. Reach out to peers (other Fair Associations)
5. Focus on strong communication of achievements, benefits, innovation and fun.

Focus, intensity and strong communication are vital priorities today. However, some Fair Associations have not pursued programming or communication initiatives that are consistent with changes in their community and in agriculture.

The opportunity exists for Fair Associations to return to their earlier roots in both their agricultural focus and their community building focus.

- In agriculture:
  - There is a renewed focus on small scale experimentation and production
  - Fair Associations should increasingly bring smaller farmers, agricultural producers and relevant agricultural innovators together for networking, learning and showcase opportunities
  - They should reinforce for their attendee populations, and others in their communities, the benefits and opportunities of small scale farming
- In community building:
  - Community leaders and Fair Associations believe there is a resurgence in the importance of community
  - Planning to refocus to serve that trend, Fair Associations should explore how that might look in the local community and deliver on it.

As Fair Associations consider future direction they should also appreciate that there is a significant difference in product concept among BC's Fair Associations. Some

have grown to become regional attractions and some have maintained their focus on their close in agricultural community.

This difference in direction for the Fair Associations is traditionally primarily driven by:

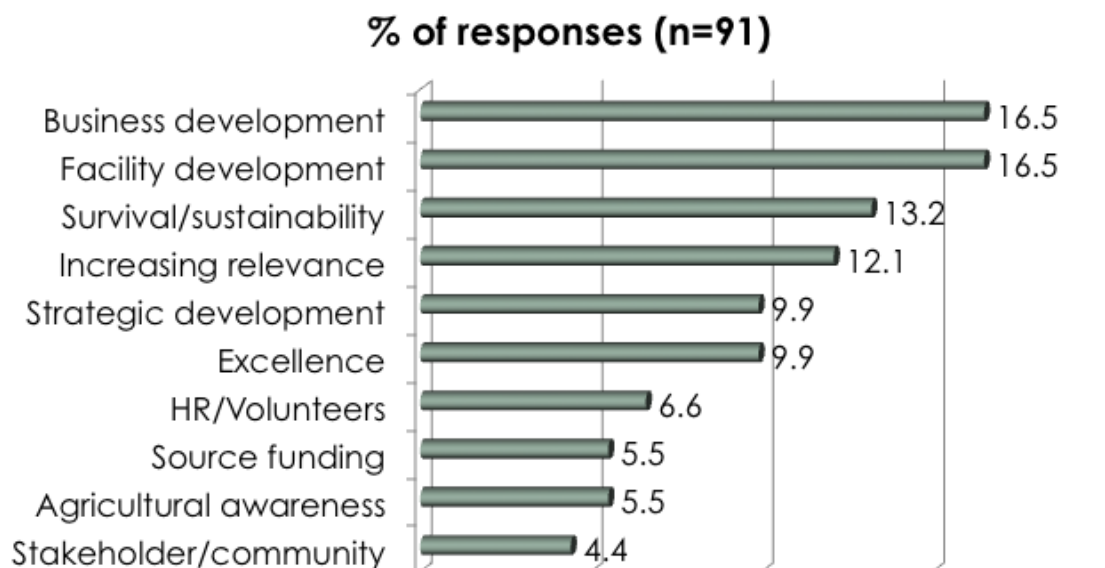
- The scope of vision of their Board of Directors for the kind of focus they want to maintain and their commitment to pursue it
- The perception held by the Fair Association Board about the expectations of their community, their stakeholders and their attendees.

With appropriate strategic development any Fair Association can be successful in its chosen positioning. However, the research shows clearly that neither ownership, or not, of facilities nor local market size significantly affect this balance. Some Fair Associations that own their own facilities have chosen to remain locally focused and some without have become widely acknowledged event. Some in large market areas have remained narrowly focused and others have grown significantly larger.

Strong and progressive Boards are essential for leadership – even if the chosen direction is to maintain traditions. However, trends in agriculture, socio economic factors, demographics, and communities are all crucial to planning decisions

## New Priorities

Fair Associations were able to clearly define their goals for the future. The following chart summarizes the areas within which these priorities and goals were defined.



The survey question leading to that chart was open ended and respondents were asked to define up to three goals or areas of priority they consider to be important

over the forthcoming years. They were not ranked so this table includes all responses.

## Partnerships and Strategic Alliances

Fair Associations were asked in the survey about existing partnerships and strategic alliances and about how they relate to other Fair Associations. The following table shows that **43% of the Fair Associations are involved in strategic partnerships with other organizations or businesses**. The survey question included the clarification that strategic partnerships have defined goals and reporting relationships, clear identification of who is responsible for what, how each organization expects to benefit from initiatives of the partnership, and clear indication of the investment of resources required from each partner.

The Fair Associations describe the mission of their strategic partnerships as:

- Marketing
- Promoting agricultural awareness
- Alliances with other community organizations to reduce the cost of operating the fair by sharing revenues with others who provide human and communication resources
- Community promotion
- Business development for the community
- Facility use.

Several other areas of focus were noted.

The survey also asked Fair Associations if they were involved in economic or community development committees or boards in their community. More than half of the Fair Associations reported they are not involved in these initiatives but 40% (n=33) are involved.

The remaining 9% of the responding Fair Associations indicated there is no such organization in their community. As leaders in the community, the Fair Associations in communities without such an organization should investigate how to establish an initiative of this kind.

The following table shows how Fair Associations relate to their peers in other Fair Associations.

Answer Options	Response Percent (n=32)
We have no working relationship with other fair associations	46.9%
We have negotiated dates and programming with nearby fair associations to avoid conflicts and optimize attendance at each fair association's events	46.9%
We share equipment with other fair associations to minimize duplication of little used equipment	34.4%
We have an active formal or informal mentorship relationship	21.9%
Joint initiatives exists with respect to sponsors and business partners	12.5%

Discussions in the interview program addressed this issue in further depth. The Fair Associations have many questions; some strategic, some tactical and some basic working questions that they perceive may be able to be answered by their peers.

The research shows that some Fair Associations have engaged their peers to address their challenges and received valuable guidance. This supports the value of initiating a forum to encourage mentorship among the Fair Associations. This issue is addressed later in this report.

## 4-H

The 4-H organization has a similarly long history, recording its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in BC in 2014. Some Fair Associations plan to celebrate the centenary of 4-H as a major theme at their 2014 annual agricultural fair event.

There has long been an informal alliance between 4-H and the Fair Associations. The fairs provide a competitive and exhibition outlet for 4-H that is strongly supported by most Fair Associations. The following table shows how the Fair Associations support 4-H.

Answer Options	Response Percent (n=33)
Provide facilities for 4-H events at no charge or at a discounted rate	66.7%
Provide special programming for 4-H as a part of your major annual events	63.6%
Meet with local 4-H leaders to explore opportunities for mutual benefit	45.5%
Include a 4-H representative on your Board of Directors	39.4%
Nothing	9.1%

All of the fairs agree that 4-H should continue to be supported by the Fair Associations. While two thirds answer unequivocally, one third indicates that support should be mutually beneficial.

## Fairs and Government

It was a severe blow to BC's Fair Associations and to BC Fairs when the Government of BC Ministry of Agriculture withdrew its traditional funding support for fairs. While they have survived, consistently with their history of 100 years of service to their communities, their ability to serve their communities has been significantly eroded. They should be significantly respected for their skill in recovery.

A survey question asked Fair Associations about the issue of public funding for Fair Associations. Not surprisingly, all Fair Associations believe public funding is important for BC's Fair Associations. The Fair Associations provided a large number of unaided responses to explain why fairs should receive public funding. They included several themes:

- Supporting what are perceived to be the traditional community and agricultural motivation roles of the Fair Association in light of their extreme challenge to break even annually while continuing the tradition of the fair
- Supporting new initiatives to increase the value of potential advances in community, local agricultural awareness and education
- Building new focus on heritage and to celebrate the "fabric of the community"
- Supporting initiatives to attract new visitor spending in the community.

The responses show clearly that additional funding of fairs would support the fairs as a vital part of their community, motivating Fair Associations to pursue new and focused initiatives that would benefit agriculture and the community.

The following table shows that the Fair Associations believe public funding is most appropriate to support new initiatives and new projects.

Answer Options	Response Percent (n=32)
New initiatives	87.5%
Projects	93.8%
Core or administration funding	46.9%
Special partnerships	43.8%
Other (please specify)	12.5%

Additional responses noted the value of public funding to support critical issues including education, incentives for local agriculture operators to be involved and have more exposure to potential customers and clients, and the maintenance, repair, renovation and construction of facilities.

In the surveys Fair Associations were asked how they could actively support Government of BC initiatives or priorities in order to build a mutually beneficial partnership between the fairs industry and provincial government. The following table summarizes their responses.

Answer Options	Response Percent (n=33)
Promote awareness of the importance of agriculture	100.0%
Promote tourism	81.8%
Prioritize rural, regional or community pride	87.9%
Promote retention of rural values	93.9%
Promote the heritage of local communities	97.0%
Promote local and regional businesses	78.8%
Provide an opportunity for provincial government to promote their programs	78.8%

Unaided responses identified the potential to support health and the agricultural industry by providing educational information on the benefits of growing and buying local products and using the fair events as a two-way communication vehicle to explore government messages. Some Fair Associations noted they already do all of these things.

- Fairs must build a proposition that is equally valuable for government and the fairs
- Fairs strongly committed to support government initiatives
- Fairs can communicate government messages to targeted audiences.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Fair Associations have an extraordinary opportunity to continue to build on their history and contribution to their community. Key recommendations include:

- Set the future direction of the Fair Association through focused consultation with key stakeholders and strategic planning.
- Execute a year-round community engagement and communication plan to promote dialogue on the contribution and direction of the Fair Association.
- Pursue new initiatives to engage and promote local agricultural producers and innovators and connect them to customers.
- Add vibrant, educational and interactive entertainment within the agricultural component of the fair, supporting traditional programming, to expand the engagement of fair attendees.
- Prioritize development of the business of the Fair Association to drive new initiatives and programming, leading to enhanced value.

# BC Fairs and its Members

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The Fair Associations acknowledge the commitment of the BC Fairs Board and staff, noting they have continued to provide a high level of service despite significant budget reduction. This section of the report provides focus and recommendations for BC Fairs to pursue aggressive direction consistent with the expectations of Fair Associations and opportunities for BC's fairs industry. However, it is acknowledge that BC Fairs must seek additional financial and human resources in order to fulfill that mission.

## Industry Challenges

The Fair Associations identified their perception of the challenges facing the fairs industry. These include:

- The changing agricultural environment
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Optimizing the relevance of the Fair Association to its targeted markets
- A new funding model and new strategies are required to increase the financial resources available for BC Fairs and for its member Fair Associations
- The emergence of other mandates which enter the traditional sphere of the agricultural fair
- Communication
- Identity and awareness
- Directional quandaries (e.g., agriculture vs. entertainment vs. education vs. agricultural market development)
- Perceptions regarding government support
- Isolation
- Regional differences and imbalances.

## Needs and Expectations of Fairs

Through this research the Fair Associations have indicated that they perceive BC Fairs can help them to address several key priorities. These priorities are focused on future enhancements and strategic development for Fair Associations, their events and the industry.

Their motivation for Fair Associations to describe these areas of priority is simply that they want to excel in their mission in any way that they can. Most of the Fair Associations are very clearly progressive in their vision. Their achievements speak for themselves. Sadly some are tired but it is perceived they can be motivated to become more focused with additional guidance and support.



## Priorities for Industry Development

The Fair Associations suggest the following areas of priority for BC Fairs, as their provincial association, to contribute to the growth and re-positioning of the industry. These are areas that challenge many Fair Associations as they pursue their own future direction. There is no ranking for these areas of priority. These suggestions are presented in three groups:

### Programs that will directly provide assist the Fair Associations

- Initiate a Board development program to assist Fair Associations to enhance the performance of the Boards and make their Boards of Directors respected as the “Board to be on” in the community
- Provide a suite of planning tools and associated guidance (e.g., consumer survey tools and methods, strategic planning guidelines)
- Establish a mentorship program to help fair associations address opportunities and challenges among themselves
- Guide Fair Associations in community and stakeholder engagement
- Seek out a new funding model for Fair Associations
- Share knowledge through a mentorship and resources program
- Provide opportunities for individual Fair Associations to participate in broader strategic development initiatives.

### Deliver industry strategies to enhance the business environment of BC’s Fair Associations

- Build strong and mutually beneficial working relationships with carefully targeted government agencies
- Seek new financial support to facilitate the priorities of the fairs industry
- Pursue business relationships with selected strategic partners
- Focus on leadership and education
- Build a strong identity and increase awareness for BC’s fairs
- Consider rebranding fairs and the fairs industry to clarify and update the industry
- Explore and develop new relationships with stakeholders at the provincial level.

### Provide industry leadership

- Be a visible leader.
- Focus on the future
- Execute a comprehensive communication and promotion strategy to inform population, government and other stakeholders about BC’s fairs and their contribution

### Detailed Initiatives BC Fairs to pursue on behalf of its Members

The following notes summarize the Fair Associations’ recommendations for the initiatives that BC Fairs may pursue. It is acknowledged that BC Fairs has very limited financial and human resources to pursue these initiatives. Therefore it will

be important for BC Fairs to prioritize these prospective initiatives and, where appropriate, to seek out financial partners to help execute them.

### **Active promotion of industry awareness**

- Raise awareness of BC's Fair Associations, their mission and their achievements
- Promote active participation by the population in making local food choices
- Execute a public education campaign to promote and illustrate the role of BC's fairs with respect to the growth and progress of BC's local agricultural producers
- Increase awareness of the profile and contribution and direction of the fair industry in the eyes of all levels of government
- Report to government partners and other industry stakeholders on the progress of the industry and its member Fair Associations towards their stated strategic direction.

### **Agricultural initiatives**

- Create a forum to showcase new agricultural initiatives & technologies
- Educate larger population centre dwellers and government about the challenges and opportunities of agriculture and rural living.
- Continue to support agricultural awareness priorities
- Encourage active and sustainable use of agricultural lands
- Become the "go to" organization for education, forums and current local agricultural issues in the community
- Gather and promote relevant agriculturally focused literature
- Promote local farming and local agricultural market initiatives
- Initiate a joint agricultural education communication program with government and industry partners.

### **Strategic development for the industry**

- Provide monthly emails to Fair Associations on initiatives, priorities and opportunities
- Build niche development strategies for the industry
- In concert with regional tourism organizations, initiate regular tourism development and marketing communication and other initiatives focused on the role of Fair Associations in enhancing visitor spending; include engagement of tourism marketers and visitor centres
- Develop broad strategies to attract more young people to participate in the fairs industry
- Guide Fair Associations to achieve greater community engagement and participation
- Focus on separate priorities for small, medium and large fairs as not all initiatives apply to all Fair Associations
- Acknowledge the regional differences between BC's Fair Associations, modifying programming and other membership communication accordingly

- Pursue enthusiastic government involvement and partnership with Fair Associations
- Develop and execute initiatives and communication focused on education about agriculture and rural and smaller community life
- Guide Fair Associations to develop prioritize programming for people of all ages, all types of market, First Nations and other ethnic origins
- Establish a strong, ongoing dialogue and relationship with all appropriate departments and politicians in the Government of British Columbia
- Work with the agriculture industry to explore and define its expectations from fairs and its priorities that can be shared with fairs
- Conduct population research to determine factors such as awareness, interests, motivation, participation rates, behaviour and vision, needs and expectations of the general public relevant to the mission of the fairs.

### **Strategic partnership development**

- Define agricultural priorities through ongoing discussion with BC Agriculture and agriculture industry representatives
- Pursue increased participation by agriculture industry players at the level of the fairs
- Develop appropriate agricultural partnerships
- Build increased collaboration with agricultural producer groups, perhaps focusing on new initiatives with local producers
- Explore partnership opportunities with farmers markets for joint promotion of “buy local” initiatives and to access possible funding
- Encourage promotion by the Government of BC to encourage attendance at the fairs by promoting “Buy local” and the importance of local agriculture.

### **Financial /funding support**

- Seek out mutually beneficial partnerships with provincial government agencies and local government to support the positioning, programming and evolution of BC’s fairs and the industry
- Explore opportunities for a new financial model for the industry and for the Fair Associations.

### **Market development**

- Develop an initiative with the BC Ministry of Agriculture to promote and support agricultural displays and competitions
- Guide Fair Associations to develop focused marketing strategies and plans and to optimize their marketing investment
- Provide recommendations for local advertising for Fair Associations.

### **Industry liaison**

- Attract the remaining 15 agricultural Fair Associations to join BC Fairs
- Explore opportunities to expand the sphere of influence of BC Fairs by adding new membership categories or expanding the scope of membership

eligibility.

### **Industry standards**

- Assist Fair Associations to enhance their operating standards at their events.

### **Fairs assistance**

- Guide BC's Fair Associations to initiative projects to add appropriate new facilities for their local fairs
- Guide Fair Associations to optimize the use of community fairgrounds and facilities.

## **Communication**

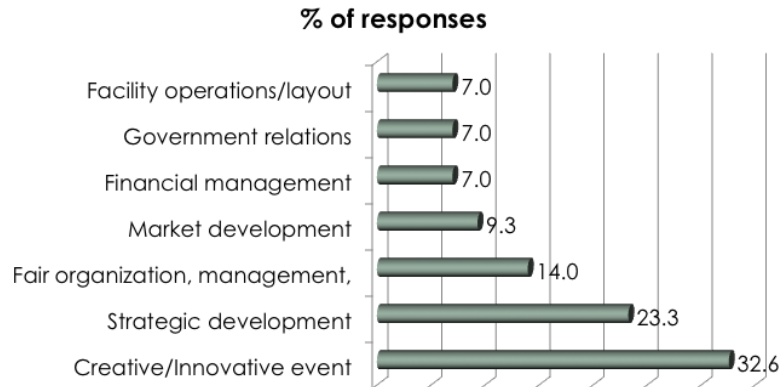
Communication is a vital issue for BC's fairs industry to address. Many communication priorities exist, including:

- BC Fairs Communication requirements
  - Communication between BC Fairs and the individual Fair Associations
  - Communication with the public about fairs, their role and their accomplishments
  - Communication with government and other stakeholders
  - Providing information resources for the industry, media, government, prospective partners and the population
- Local communication requirements for Fair Associations
  - Notifications and announcements
  - Ongoing community, partner and stakeholder engagement
  - Marketing activities

It is essential to prepare communication strategies and plans to manage these many communication needs effectively. Effective communication is an expensive priority. In general, the industry has not been the strongest communicator due to its very limited financial resources at the provincial (BC Fairs) level and at the community (Fair Association) level. However, communication must become a strong priority for BC Fairs and the Fair Associations and funding must be secured or set aside to execute strong communication programs. This is an ideal opportunity for partner investment or co-operation.

## **Mentorship and Collaboration**

Fairs want to learn from each other. An open-ended survey question asked "What would you like to learn from the fairs you respect most?" The responses are summarized below.



Detailed responses to this question include:

#### **Government relations**

- *Dealing with bureaucrats*
- *Relationship building with local government/municipal support in the way of dollars/capital assets*

#### **Fair organization management and leadership**

- *Team Building, Sponsorship and Grant Writing*
- *Recruiting volunteers*
- *How they obtain volunteers*
- *Organizational Structure*
- *Volunteer sharing*

#### **Creative/innovative event programming and delivery**

- *How to develop creative, hands on agriculture exhibits for kids & families*
- *Different events*
- *Overall improvement to the Fair experience/promotion*
- *Increase participation from the agricultural community to increase competitive livestock shows*
- *Any thing to improve our fair*
- *Developing booklets for categories/entries*
- *Programming*
- *Entertainment*
- *Children's activities*
- *Rodeo Operations*
- *Operations*
- *Games*

#### **Facility operations**

- *Effective lay out of grounds to optimize space and the performance of the fair*

### **Market development**

- *How to attract more attendees*
- *Marketing and promotion*
- *How they encourage participation*

### **Financial management**

- *Financial*
- *Grant applications*
- *Their expense structure*

### **Strategic development**

- *How we can successfully transition from being a small country fair to a much larger event.*
- *How they succeed*
- *How to build a diverse revenue base*
- *Building strong relationships with the community*
- *Achieving business and philanthropic financial support*
- *Community involvement*
- *Increase participation from community organizations*
- *New ideas*

Clearly the range of desired knowledge is broad, but it is clearly defined. BC Fairs can provide guidance on some of these priorities for its members. However, there is also an important opportunity for the Fair Associations to engage each other.

We learn well from our peers. The Fair Associations indicate that peer discussion is a significant value of the annual BC Fairs convention. The popularity of the Fair Managers' Forum is very evident.

The survey respondents identified the Fair Associations they perceived to be the industry leaders. They include large/small, remote/urban, wealthy/not so wealthy, and other Fair Associations. During the research these individual Fair Associations were consulted to determine their willingness to be a part of a mentorship program.

More detailed recommendations for the development of such a program will be provided directly to BC Fairs. However, Appendix 2 to this report contains a possible approach to delivering a mentorship program that would be facilitated by BC Fairs but operated by the members of BC Fairs.

## **BC Fairs Program Evaluation**

The survey and interview programs asked Fair Associations to consider the value of several programs and initiatives of BC Fairs. While summary data from the survey are provided below, more detailed discussion will take place with the BC Fairs Board of Directors to examine the survey findings in further detail. Further, a

separate report with recommendations was provided to BC Fairs in connection with their examination of the BC Fairs Fair Evaluations Program.

The following table summarizes the survey responses to a question asking respondents to rate how valuable a series of BC Fairs programs and priorities were to them. The evaluation used a four point scale where “1” means “Little value” and “4” means “Extremely valuable”.

<b>Program or Priority</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
Presenting a joint face and image for BC's agricultural societies	3.1
Lobbying on behalf of the industry	3.0
The annual BC Fairs convention	2.8
Research conducted for the industry	2.8
Promoting awareness of the value of agricultural societies	2.8
Networking	2.8
Regular communications from BC Fairs	2.8
Inclusiveness as a member of the industry	2.7
Advertising programs	2.7
Membership benefits such as insurance discounts, etc.	2.7
Mentorship and guidance for your society	2.6
Annual evaluations	2.4

The table shows clearly that the Fair Associations rated highest the programs associated with leadership of the industry. They were closely followed by the value of the BC Fairs Annual Convention and research conducted for the industry.

The survey also asked respondents to rate four communication tools used by BC Fairs. The following table summarizes the responses.

<b>Communication tools</b>	<b>Rating on a four point scale where 0 means "Not at all valuable" and 3 means "Extremely valuable".</b>
-	
Website	2.4
Annual Fair Guide	2.6
Newsletter	2.5
Annual Directory	2.6

Clearly the members rated these vehicles highly.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

There is potentially a strong future for BC's fairs industry as it approaches and executes new priorities at the provincial and local levels. Fairs operate in what is currently a changing marketplace, but they have a strong track record of performance and delivery. There is extraordinary potential for growth with strong direction and leadership and new partnership opportunities.

The following overall recommendations are provided for BC Fairs based on the conclusions of the research:

- Implement a new communication plan for the industry to raise awareness and the visibility of BC's Fair Associations and their contribution; Consider industry re-branding to bring greater relevance to the benefits driven by the Fair Associations
- Establish a mentorship program to encourage peer interaction and support among member Fair Associations.
- Explore a new funding model for BC's fairs industry to facilitate continued growth and new initiatives focused on expanding the social, economic and agricultural benefits for communities.
- Seek out strategic alliances for the industry.
- Assist Fair Association Boards of Directors to enhance their professionalism and leadership.
- Engage First Nations and ethnic population groups to determine appropriate strategies to encourage them to participate more in agricultural fairs.

## What Next

In February 2014 the BC Fairs Board of Directors will meet to discuss further background findings from this research and to consider strategies to integrate the findings into their planning for forthcoming years.



# Appendix 1: Comparison of Financial Performance

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The following pages provide comparisons of the financial performance of Fair Associations grouped by:

- Ownership of facilities
- Primary market size
- Attendance at main annual event
- Region of BC

The analyses are based on data provided by the Fair Associations that fully completed the financial portion of the Quantitative Survey. Each table includes two parts:

- Financial statement analysis showing the average of the valid response data
- Financial statement analysis showing the percentage of each revenue and expense account forms of total revenue, coded by colour to show the largest and smallest reported percentage value by category

Analysis of financial performance by ownership of facilities	Own all of their facilities	Own none of their facilities	Own most/some of their facilities	Overall
Incidence of responses	10	11	9	30
Valid responses	7	11	8	25
Average of valid responses	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Revenue</b>				
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	4,271	9,988	13,350	9,863
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	16,229	18,984	24,484	20,732
Grants: Local government	125	13,123	4,875	7,369
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	159,383	70,204	202,032	140,167
Rental income	43,999	1,063	3,542	13,921
Interest income	2,253	48	94	682
Membership fees	607	436	764	606
Donations and fundraising	4,247	14,663	20,500	14,201
Sponsorships and advertising	10,187	34,835	40,768	31,225
GST recovery (net)	1,309	1,980	202	1,302
Revenue from other sources	6,400	24,948	2,491	13,566
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>249,010</b>	<b>190,271</b>	<b>313,102</b>	<b>253,635</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	5,922	19,547	22,034	17,310
Amortization and depreciation	7,440	-	9,302	5,060
Awards, prizes and scholarships	11,077	13,894	40,295	22,109
Rural development, leadership and training	642	906	803	835
Donations to other organizations	1,448	3,657	1,513	2,499
Insurance	14,911	3,093	6,394	7,582
Interest	1,347	5	1,348	811
Office and administration expenses	16,350	18,313	24,799	20,571
Memberships	460	236	531	403
Professional fees and accounting	984	1,464	3,033	1,890
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	37,979	70,143	125,176	81,553
Repairs and maintenance	24,370	4,752	31,181	18,892
Utilities and telephones	13,721	1,400	2,711	5,326
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	41,812	41,824	42,739	43,786
Rent and other expenses	40,775	3,200	3,821	14,048
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>219,239</b>	<b>182,435</b>	<b>315,680</b>	<b>242,676</b>
<b>Excess of revenue after expenses</b>	<b>29,771</b>	<b>7,837</b>	<b>( 2,578 )</b>	<b>10,959</b>
	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>
<b>Revenue</b>				
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	1.7	5.2	4.3	3.9
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	6.5	10.0	7.8	8.2
Grants: Local government	0.1	6.9	1.6	2.9
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	64.0	36.9	64.5	55.3
Rental income	17.7	0.6	1.1	5.5
Interest income	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.3
Membership fees	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Donations and fundraising	1.7	7.7	6.5	5.6
Sponsorships and advertising	4.1	18.3	13.0	12.3
GST recovery (net)	0.5	1.0	0.1	0.5
Revenue from other sources	2.6	13.1	0.8	5.3
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	2.4	10.3	7.0	6.8
Amortization and depreciation	3.0	-	3.0	2.0
Awards, prizes and scholarships	4.4	7.3	12.9	8.7
Rural development, leadership and training	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3
Donations to other organizations	0.6	1.9	0.5	1.0
Insurance	6.0	1.6	2.0	3.0
Interest	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.3
Office and administration expenses	6.6	9.6	7.9	8.1
Memberships	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
Professional fees and accounting	0.4	0.8	1.0	0.7
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	15.3	36.9	40.0	32.2
Repairs and maintenance	9.8	2.5	10.0	7.4
Utilities and telephones	5.5	0.7	0.9	2.1
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	16.8	22.0	13.7	17.3
Rent and other expenses	16.4	1.7	1.2	5.5
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>88.0</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>100.8</b>	<b>95.7</b>
Highest average response				
Lowest average response				

# Analysis of Financial Performance by Primary Market Size

Primary Market Population	Less than 15,000	15,000-49,999	50,000-84,999	85,000 or more	Overall
Response distribution	11	8	5	6	30
Valid responses	9	7	4	5	25
Average of valid responses by category	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	667	4,271	39,033	10,908	9,863
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	2,278	23,371	74,549	7,200	20,732
Grants: Local government	2,261	54	9,500	25,100	7,369
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	36,932	100,100	450,861	133,529	140,167
Rental income	3,586	17,994	6,605	32,676	13,921
Interest income	103	121	84	2,988	682
Membership fees	233	619	1,745	350	606
Donations and fundraising	4,021	3,477	69,792	3,067	14,201
Sponsorships and advertising	4,519	16,917	107,556	38,263	31,225
GST recovery (net)	-	1,309	5,849	-	1,302
Revenue from other sources	2,733	2,659	3,578	56,328	13,566
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>57,332</b>	<b>170,891</b>	<b>769,149</b>	<b>310,409</b>	<b>253,635</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	3,063	4,346	61,087	26,080	17,310
Amortization and depreciation	5,253	686	16,699	1,525	5,060
Awards, prizes and scholarships	4,493	13,813	82,334	17,253	22,109
Rural development, leadership and training	289	1,693	1,606	-	835
Donations to other organizations	1,173	100	12,802	-	2,499
Insurance	3,365	9,657	10,712	9,765	7,582
Interest	88	1,242	2,080	493	811
Office and administration expenses	1,124	18,478	53,837	31,896	20,571
Memberships	317	302	1,072	162	403
Professional fees and accounting	279	2,805	4,584	1,356	1,890
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	18,711	44,036	346,464	35,266	81,553
Repairs and maintenance	4,122	13,433	71,553	10,994	18,892
Utilities and telephones	2,078	7,001	6,045	8,251	5,326
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	4,439	15,332	134,432	81,930	43,786
Rent and other expenses	6,110	6,861	5,379	45,333	14,048
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>54,903</b>	<b>139,786</b>	<b>810,685</b>	<b>270,305</b>	<b>242,676</b>
<b>Excess revenue after expenses</b>	<b>2,429</b>	<b>31,105</b>	<b>( 41,535 )</b>	<b>40,104</b>	<b>10,959</b>

Percent of valid responses

<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	1.2	2.5	5.1	3.5	3.9
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	4.0	13.7	9.7	2.3	8.2
Grants: Local government	3.9	0.0	1.2	8.1	2.9
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	64.4	58.6	58.6	43.0	55.3
Rental income	6.3	10.5	0.9	10.5	5.5
Interest income	0.2	0.1	0.0	1.0	0.3
Membership fees	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2
Donations and fundraising	7.0	2.0	9.1	1.0	5.6
Sponsorships and advertising	7.9	9.9	14.0	12.3	12.3
GST recovery (net)	-	0.8	0.8	-	0.5
Revenue from other sources	4.8	1.6	0.5	18.1	5.3
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	5.3	2.5	7.9	8.4	6.8
Amortization and depreciation	9.2	0.4	2.2	0.5	2.0
Awards, prizes and scholarships	7.8	8.1	10.7	5.6	8.7
Rural development, leadership and training	0.5	1.0	0.2	-	0.3
Donations to other organizations	2.0	0.1	1.7	-	1.0
Insurance	5.9	5.7	1.4	3.1	3.0
Interest	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.3
Office and administration expenses	2.0	10.8	7.0	10.3	8.1
Memberships	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2
Professional fees and accounting	0.5	1.6	0.6	0.4	0.7
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	32.6	25.8	45.0	11.4	32.2
Repairs and maintenance	7.2	7.9	9.3	3.5	7.4
Utilities and telephones	3.6	4.1	0.8	2.7	2.1
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	7.7	9.0	17.5	26.4	17.3
Rent and other expenses	10.7	4.0	0.7	14.6	5.5
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>81.8</b>	<b>105.4</b>	<b>87.1</b>	<b>95.7</b>
<b>Excess revenue after expenses</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>( 5.4 )</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>4.3</b>

Average

Highest average response  
Lowest average response

Analysis of financial performance based on attendance at Major Annual Event

	Less than 10,000	10,000- 14,999	15,000- 39,999	40,000 or more	Overall
<b>Attendance at major annual event</b>					
Response distribution	4	4	7	15	30
Valid responses included	3	4	7	11	25
Averages of valid responses	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	52,043	8,810	7,029	545	9,863
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	66,108	27,750	24,067	3,682	20,732
Grants: Local government	11,500	27,000	3,054	1,850	7,369
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	695,295	174,340	79,185	15,149	140,167
Rental income	56,102	6,660	21,080	502	13,921
Interest income	4,874	128	259	9	682
Membership fees	2,275	386	598	237	606
Donations and fundraising	70,566	1,881	14,874	2,880	14,201
Sponsorships and advertising	134,972	46,822	11,595	9,751	31,225
GST recovery (net)	7,259	-	1,540	-	1,302
Revenue from other sources	7,659	63,435	5,859	1,948	13,566
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>1,108,653</b>	<b>357,212</b>	<b>169,139</b>	<b>36,554</b>	<b>253,635</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	78,204	21,323	7,520	5,472	17,310
Amortization and depreciation	22,265	2,819	6,918	-	5,060
Awards, prizes and scholarships	110,159	21,208	11,586	5,120	22,109
Rural development, leadership and training	-	2,118	1,221	351	835
Donations to other organizations	16,702	125	1,533	102	2,499
Insurance	17,253	10,141	11,309	1,643	7,582
Interest	2,771	890	1,177	14	811
Office and administration expenses	61,609	64,542	8,650	976	20,571
Memberships	1,200	181	550	173	403
Professional fees and accounting	7,022	1,945	315	1,474	1,890
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	418,144	84,098	45,944	11,491	81,553
Repairs and maintenance	85,944	11,857	21,559	1,467	18,892
Utilities and telephones	18,172	7,377	6,530	310	5,326
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	248,154	62,361	13,235	737	43,786
Rent and other expenses	74,569	2,654	8,755	5,054	14,048
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>1,162,168</b>	<b>293,637</b>	<b>146,801</b>	<b>34,385</b>	<b>242,676</b>
<b>Excess Revenue after Expenses</b>	<b>(53,515)</b>	<b>63,575</b>	<b>22,338</b>	<b>2,169</b>	<b>10,959</b>

Percentage Distribution of Response Data by attendance grouping

	% of Total Revenue	% of Total Revenue	% of Total Revenue	% of Total Revenue	% of Total Revenue
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	4.7	2.5	4.2	1.5	3.9
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	6.0	7.8	14.2	10.1	8.2
Grants: Local government	1.0	7.6	1.8	5.1	2.9
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	62.7	48.8	46.8	41.4	55.3
Rental income	5.1	1.9	12.5	1.4	5.5
Interest income	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3
Membership fees	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.2
Donations and fundraising	6.4	0.5	8.8	7.9	5.6
Sponsorships and advertising	12.2	13.1	6.9	26.7	12.3
GST recovery (net)	0.7	-	0.9	-	0.5
Revenue from other sources	0.7	17.8	3.5	5.3	5.3
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	7.1	6.0	4.4	15.0	6.8
Amortization and depreciation	2.0	0.8	4.1	-	2.0
Awards, prizes and scholarships	9.9	5.9	6.8	14.0	8.7
Rural development, leadership and training	-	0.6	0.7	1.0	0.3
Donations to other organizations	1.5	0.0	0.9	0.3	1.0
Insurance	1.6	2.8	6.7	4.5	3.0
Interest	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.0	0.3
Office and administration expenses	5.6	18.1	5.1	2.7	8.1
Memberships	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.2
Professional fees and accounting	0.6	0.5	0.2	4.0	0.7
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	37.7	23.5	27.2	31.4	32.2
Repairs and maintenance	7.8	3.3	12.7	4.0	7.4
Utilities and telephones	1.6	2.1	3.9	0.8	2.1
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	22.4	17.5	7.8	2.0	17.3
Rent and other expenses	6.7	0.7	5.2	13.8	5.5
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>104.8</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>86.8</b>	<b>94.1</b>	<b>95.7</b>
<b>Excess Revenue after Expenses</b>	<b>(4.8)</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>4.3</b>

Highest average response

Lowest average response

Analysis of financial performance by region	Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast	Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley	Okanagan, Kootenays, Rockies	Central, North	Overall
Incidence of responses by category	10	5	6	9	30
Valid responses by category	8	4	5	8	25
Average of valid responses					
<b>Revenue</b>					
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	3,738	15,135	10,452	12,984	9,863
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	18,731	9,000	16,450	31,274	20,732
Grants: Local government	684	35,000	950	4,250	7,369
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	114,594	58,317	315,303	97,206	140,167
Rental income	27,255	625	19,453	3,778	13,921
Interest income	1,911	90	161	75	682
Membership fees	750	201	1,031	400	606
Donations and fundraising	4,092	3,346	20,901	25,550	14,201
Sponsorships and advertising	6,956	41,079	32,695	49,649	31,225
GST recovery (net)	575	-	1,236	2,722	1,302
Revenue from other sources	5,326	64,638	4,728	1,794	13,566
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>184,611</b>	<b>227,431</b>	<b>423,360</b>	<b>229,682</b>	<b>253,635</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	5,398	20,486	18,669	26,783	17,310
Amortization and depreciation	3,820	1,906	17,663	-	5,060
Awards, prizes and scholarships	10,581	13,011	46,774	22,772	22,109
Rural development, leadership and training	1,360	-	524	921	835
Donations to other organizations	1,295	150	2,261	5,025	2,499
Insurance	9,424	6,265	10,504	4,574	7,582
Interest	1,126	591	1,759	13	811
Office and administration expenses	16,584	38,329	35,036	6,640	20,571
Memberships	488	215	755	191	403
Professional fees and accounting	686	625	1,437	4,011	1,890
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	23,990	55,682	164,310	100,329	81,553
Repairs and maintenance	18,223	402	39,956	15,642	18,892
Utilities and telephones	10,388	1,257	5,773	2,018	5,326
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	34,259	47,604	56,569	43,416	43,786
Rent and other expenses	30,116	594	8,011	8,480	14,048
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>167,739</b>	<b>187,116</b>	<b>410,002</b>	<b>240,814</b>	<b>242,676</b>
<b>Excess of Revenue after Expenses</b>	<b>16,873</b>	<b>40,316</b>	<b>13,358</b>	<b>( 11,132 )</b>	<b>10,959</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>	<b>% of total revenue</b>
Grants: Federal Government and agencies	2.0	6.7	2.5	5.7	3.9
Grants: Government of BC and agencies	10.1	4.0	3.9	13.6	8.2
Grants: Local government	0.4	15.4	0.2	1.9	2.9
Earned revenue from operations (e.g., ticket sales, fees, exhibitor fees, etc)	62.1	25.6	74.5	42.3	55.3
Rental income	14.8	0.3	4.6	1.6	5.5
Interest income	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Membership fees	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Donations and fundraising	2.2	1.5	4.9	11.1	5.6
Sponsorships and advertising	3.8	18.1	7.7	21.6	12.3
GST recovery (net)	0.3	-	0.3	1.2	0.5
Revenue from other sources	2.9	28.4	1.1	0.8	5.3
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Advertising and promotion (including website and social media)	2.9	9.0	4.4	11.7	6.8
Amortization and depreciation	2.1	0.8	4.2	-	2.0
Awards, prizes and scholarships	5.7	5.7	11.0	9.9	8.7
Rural development, leadership and training	0.7	-	0.1	0.4	0.3
Donations to other organizations	0.7	0.1	0.5	2.2	1.0
Insurance	5.1	2.8	2.5	2.0	3.0
Interest	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.3
Office and administration expenses	9.0	16.9	8.3	2.9	8.1
Memberships	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
Professional fees and accounting	0.4	0.3	0.3	1.7	0.7
Programming and operations (including all expenses and fees incurred directly in connection with staging events and activities)	13.0	24.5	38.8	43.7	32.2
Repairs and maintenance	9.9	0.2	9.4	6.8	7.4
Utilities and telephones	5.6	0.6	1.4	0.9	2.1
Wages, salaries and/or volunteer support	18.6	20.9	13.4	18.9	17.3
Rent and other expenses	16.3	0.3	1.9	3.7	5.5
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>90.9</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>96.8</b>	<b>104.8</b>	<b>95.7</b>
<b>Excess of Revenue after Expenses</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>( 4.8 )</b>	<b>4.3</b>
Highest average response					
Lowest average response					

## Appendix 2: Mentorship Initiative

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A **mentorship program** may be established to assist Fair Boards to benefit from the experience of selected peers in problem solving, planning, developing strategic direction and operations

- The mentorship program would include a panel of 5-7 members from Fair Associations identified as industry leaders in the 2013 qualitative research program. Consultation with several of those leaders indicates they would be prepared to participate in such a program. The composition of the panel would change from time to time.
- BC Fairs may appoint a Board of Staff Member to monitor the mentors area and facilitate resolution of issues that arise
- The mentorship program would operate in a “members only” area of the BC Fairs website
- Copies of the completed checklists and self-evaluations could be available online for the mentors panel to review
- At the suggestion of the mentors panel, a member of the panel may travel to meet with a Fair Board challenged by specific issues relevant to the experience and vision of a particular panel member
- A budget may be made available by BC Fairs to fund travel expenses; alternatively the recipient Fair Board may pay for these expenses.

A secondary “**Members to Members**” discussion forum may be established using the BC Fairs website or the FaceBook page. This forum is to encourage fairs to exchange ideas and experiences among themselves.

The concept of the mentorship program will be explored in further depth directly with the Board of Directors of BC Fairs.



# Appendix 3: Fairs Toolkit

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## Strategic Planning

The purpose of strategic planning is to bring perspective to the future through focused examination of options and discussion among the appropriate stakeholders. The plan should look five years into the future.

The strategic plan is about the direction of the organization, not about one particular operational issue. It describes how the Fair Association Board wants their organization to look five years or so into the future and guides the organization towards the Board's vision. The strategic plan is a high level document: it will likely be 2-3 pages.

## Developing a Strategic Plan

The following approach may be used to develop a strategic plan.

1. Build a vision for the future
  - Discuss recent achievements
  - Determine the values that will underpin your plan for the future
  - Look 5 years ahead. What should the fair look like?
    - i. Think of what you will be proud to have achieved if you look back from five years hence
    - ii. Discuss what strengths you have relative to the pursuit of your vision and what you think will hold you back.
2. Consult stakeholders regarding your business environment
  - i. A round table group meeting with your primary stakeholders is an effective way to consult them
  - ii. Ask them how they think your organization and its mandate should look five years into the future
  - iii. Ask them to identify what they perceive to be the highest priority areas for you over the next few years
  - iv. Blend their thinking about the future with your Board's thinking
  - v. Ask the stakeholders how they can help you to pursue your joint vision
3. Determine the job for your Board to pursue that vision
2. Set priority areas or goals
  - Define where you will prioritize your effort to make that happen
  - Set some clear deliverables for each of the priority areas or goals – things that will pursue the vision and this priority area and that you can achieve
  - Identify how to track your progress

3. Build a strategy to pursue the goals in light of the realities of your business environment
  - How will you pursue the goals and achieve the deliverables?
  - What resources, partners do you need to accomplish them?

It should take little more than a day or two to prepare for and develop the strategic plan.

It is valuable to have an external facilitator to guide the planning process.

The Board of Directors should formally adopt its strategic plan and then the Board should present it to the primary stakeholders of the Fair Association.

The strategic plan guides the organization in its decision-making and business operations. Each of the Committees of the Fair Association should understand how the strategic plan guides the operation of their committees. There should be a report on progress with pursuit of the strategic plan at Board Meetings and at least an annual report on progress to the stakeholders.

Never miss an opportunity to talk about the vision and goals of the Fair Association.

## **Business Plan**

Build an annual business plan and budget to execute the deliverables of the strategic plan and to run the business of the Fair Association. The business plan shows how the Fair Association will move forward. It includes action steps, budgets and timing.

The business plan should be segmented into three components:

1. A section that provides for pursuit of each goal or priority area including a budget for each
2. A section that contains the core administration program after all operational components have been removed, including the remaining budget
3. A combined budget.

The business plan components should be developed by Board Committees (or staff) The Board should adopt the business plan. This is an internal document.

It may be possible to ask a local college to assist in developing the first business plan.

It may be appropriate for BC Fairs to develop and recommend a detailed structure for the business plan, for budgeting and for the structure of financial reporting.



## Community and Stakeholder Engagement Planning

The research has concluded that Fair Associations would benefit from stronger and ongoing engagement of their primary stakeholders and their community. A similar approach is used in both cases.

To optimize the benefits of the fair in the community the fair needs to engage its community and other stakeholders

- Need an active plan for community engagement
- Clear messages
- Identify local targets (e.g., media, politicians, local government staffers, local businesses, Chamber, local organizations, etc.)
- Talk about successes, opportunities, challenges and future direction

### Primary stakeholders

The purpose of stakeholder engagement for Fair Associations is to develop a mutually inclusive dialogue and mutually supportive action plan between the Fair Association and its community or other partners. It is also the foundation for new strategic alliances.

Stakeholders are people or organizations:

- Trading with the Fair Association
- Who may be influenced or impacted in some way by decisions made by the Fair Association
- Who may influence or impact the Fair Association with their decisions
- Who may be a potential partner for the Fair Association for an initiative or program because of the potential for mutual benefits.

Stakeholder engagement can be as simple as an enhanced communication plan (see “Communication Planning” below) or a more detailed plan to develop a strategic alliance (following).

### Focused primary stakeholder engagement

Depending on the kind of stakeholder and the nature of your relationship an action plan might be:

1. Identify the stakeholder(s) and determine with your Board why they are important to the Fair Association
2. Determine what you would like to achieve through dialogue with them, for example:
  - a. Better knowledge or understanding
  - b. Local support
  - c. Joint initiative(s)
  - d. Etc.
3. Prepare a discussion or “pitch”
4. Meet with the stakeholder(s) to
  - a. Get to know each other and each other’s priorities and resources

- b. Promote the Fair Association's vision and goals
  - c. Introduce and discuss the mission for your meeting
  - d. Promote and determine the support for your mission
  - e. Determine how it will serve the goals of both the Fair Association and the stakeholder(s)
  - f. Develop a commitment and action plan to execute your mission
  - g. Determine who does what and how each benefits
  - h. Determine a way to track and share reports on progress with the agreed mission.
5. Keep in touch with them, reporting regularly on progress

### General Priorities for Community Engagement

Some key priorities and opportunities for community engagement for the Fair Association include:

- Document a media engagement strategy to facilitate communication of messages
  - Include an online media kit to provide key data
  - Provide regular media releases about achievements new initiatives, etc.
  - Provide regular stories about relevant topics, e.g.: local agricultural producers, local entertainment, Fair Association priorities and future direction, challenges for the Fair Association, key issues for the fair, key partners of the Fair Association
  - Specific engagement of the media by planned interviews to address achievements and successes, new opportunities and challenges, etc.
- Conduct speaking engagements at local service clubs and Chamber of Commerce meetings, make presentations at local government council meetings and other public engagements to address future direction and specific new opportunities and initiatives; take the time to introduce discussion on successes and achievements
- Conduct surveys of attendees
- Hold occasional focus group discussions including specific groups of residents or stakeholders to explore specific issues important to decision making
- Provide linkages with other relevant organizations
- Always make sure people know who to talk to at the Fair Association and how to contact them
- Host annual "open house" meetings or meetings of stakeholders to discuss where the Fair Association is heading and how the Fair Association and the audience can work together to make this work the best for everyone (after all, it is their fair association!)

## Communications Planning

Your messages must be clear and focused on relevant audiences. Communication is a two way street. It is important to be sure that the audience has received and understands your messages and has the opportunity to engage you about them.

### The benefits or values of a communication plan:

- Build awareness about your organization
- Build support (financial, other support)
- Build reputation and stature
- Attract sponsors and volunteers
- Source resources and cooperation
- Attract new and vibrant Board Members
- Build strategic alliances and partnerships
- Dialogue leading to business and fair development
- Gain strategic planning guidance
- Elevate “inclusion” in community leadership – that’s where the fairs were!
- Understand change.

### The job of a communication plan is:

- Inform selected audiences
- Motivate understanding
- Motivate support and passion
- Encourage dialogue
- Maintain current knowledge
- Get people involved
- Expand visibility
- Make sure the CORRECT information is out there
- Encourage people to talk about you

### Components of a Communications Plan

To develop your communication plan you simply answer the following questions. You will need to do this for each of the main issues you wish to communicate about.

- What is the issue you want to communicate about?
- Who is the audience?
- What do we want them to know or believe?
- What do they know or believe now?
- What are the key messages to convey the correct knowledge?
- What is the best way to get these messages to this specific audience?
- What is the cost of the communication?
- Who can help get our messages out?
- What is the timing of that communication?
- How do we reinforce our messages?
- How do we know we were successful?

### Executing the Communication Plan:

- The plan will include details of what you need to do and what the steps are, for example:
  - Presentations to appropriate audiences
  - Interviews with selected people
  - Articles for media or other markets
  - Advertising
  - Building alliances
  - Etc.
- Identify a “go to” person on your Board to take the lead
- Use a carefully selected and carefully briefed “champion” or two in the community to help
- For the media, consider preparing an on-line media area in your website with key facts and information.

### Attendee and Visitor Surveys

Several Fair Associations indicated they would like some guidance on how to conduct surveys. The following approach is suggested for a simple survey approach that would help to gather some valuable information.

BC Fairs should have available for members a standard survey form and simple method for data collection for Fair Associations to use as a base. The questions below may be included. The Fair Associations would add their own additional questions.

Local colleges and universities will often be able to provide guidance in survey planning and may be able to help analyze the resulting data. To an extent appropriate for many of BC’s fairs a simple tabulation using computerized spreadsheet software would suffice to provide valuable knowledge about attendees and visitors.

The best time and place to collect survey data is as people leave the grounds so they have had their full experience at the fair. However, that requires several volunteers and they should all be well trained so they can work quickly.

Alternatively, it is quite acceptable to locate a small number of interviewers at key high traffic locations on site.

The methodology for responses could be using tablets/computers, a self completion form, or a form completed by an interviewer.

Key issues to ask in a survey are:

1. Which community are you from?
  - a. If a visitor:

- i. Where are you from?
  - ii. How long will you spend in our community on this visit?
  - iii. Is your main reason for being in our community on this visit to attend our fair?
  - iv. How did you find out about our fair?
- b. If local or a visitor:
- c. Have you visited the (fair) in previous years?
- d. How many people are in your party here today?
- e. How many of them are children?
- f. How long do you expect to be at the fair today?
- g. Which areas of the fair have you visited? (include checklist)
- h. Which did you find the most interesting?
- i. Is there another area you have particularly enjoyed?
- j. How long did you spend in that area?
- k. Is there a specific part of the fair that caused you to come to the fair today?
- l. Is there anything you would like to see at the fair in future years?
- m. Are there other changes you would recommend?
- n. How long in total do you think you will spend at the fair today?
- o. Have you purchased food at the fair today?
- p. Can you estimate how much money your group will spend at the fair today?
- q. Are you from an agricultural background?