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Considerations for a County Fair Profile and Economic Analysis

OVERVIEW

County fairs provide an opportunity for community members to gather and celebrate their hobbies and interests. They can also be places for learning about new research and practices. And yes, fairs can generate economic activity in the community.

Many communities are interested in understanding the role a county fair plays in the local economy. Determining an exact answer, however, can be complex.



This factsheet explains the different factors considered when conducting the economic analysis of a county fair. Often an economic analysis also includes a profile of county fair attendees.

FAIR ATTENDEE SURVEY

An economic analysis typically begins with a survey of fair attendees, which does two things. First, the survey gathers detailed information on attendee spending. This is the cornerstone of measuring economic activity. Second, the survey gathers information on the types of attendees, their satisfaction with the event, and their event preferences. This is critical information when planning future county fairs.

Fair Events

A quality attendee survey gathers responses from a broad representation of fair attendees at different fair events and on different fair days. For example, surveys should be gathered from people in the barns, along the midway, and at the derby or rodeo. Most county fairs have myriad events happening on any given day at any given time. Care must be taken to gather surveys from as many attendees as possible.

Length of Fair

A quality attendee survey also accounts for differences in the demographics of fair attendees. For example, Thursday afternoon may attract more retirees to the fair, while Saturday afternoon may appeal more to families. Surveys should be gathered from as wide a demographic group as possible.

Collecting Surveys

An intercept survey is the most efficient way to gather data from fair attendees. To implement an intercept survey, trained surveyors approach individuals and ask for their participation in the survey. As highlighted above, trained surveyors should be deployed to multiple locations during multiple times and days of the fair. As such, the number of trained surveyors required is relatively high (as compared to a one-day, one-location event).

A coordinator for the surveying process is also critical. This person ensures the surveys are printed and surveying supplies are on-site. He or she also manages the trained surveyors.

For the most reliable analysis, 400 or more completed surveys should to be collected. Analysis **cannot** be completed with fewer than 250 completed surveys.

Measuring Attendance

An attendee survey provides an estimate of spending per person at the fair. To measure the collective impact of all people attending the fair, an estimate of the total number of attendees is needed. To do this, surveyors or fair staff will need to be deployed multiple times per day to different areas of the fairgrounds to count the number of people.

Fair Vendor and Local Business Survey

A second component of a county fair analysis is a survey of two types of businesses: fair vendors and retailers in the community. This survey collects information on sales and the experiences of vendors and businesses during the fair. If email addresses are available for businesses and vendors, the survey can be conducted online to save printing and postage costs.

COST CONSIDERATIONS

The above details are all considered when pricing an economic analysis and fair attendee profile. University of Minnesota Extension typically includes the following in its cost:

- Attendee survey collection
 - Development of a custom survey
 - Compensation for the surveyor coordinator
 - Compensation for surveyors
 - Costs for printing surveys and for surveying supplies
 - Coordination of surveying process
 - Surveyor training
- Vendor and business survey collection
 - Development of a custom survey
 - Printing and postage of surveys (if email addresses are not available)
- Survey tabulation (including data entry)



- Analysis of survey data
 - Economic analysis provided by Extension's Community Economics team
 - Attendee profile and preferences provided by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center
- Written report summarizing the results (in pdf format)
- Presentation of results to the community (including PowerPoint provided to client)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

While not a county fair, Extension recently completed an analysis on an event in Southern Minnesota. The report is an example of the product a community would receive from a county fair study. The report is available at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/economic-impact-analysis/reports/docs/2017-henderson-classic-car.pdf>

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