

2.1 Spreading the word

SPADEWORK

BROADCASTING

GERMINATION

MULCHING

STAKING

HARVEST

SUSTAINABILITY

RESOURCES

- > *Workshops*
- > *Meetings*
- > *Funding*
- > *Format*
- > *Publicity*
- > *Participants*
- > *Information package*
- > *Word of mouth*

Workshops

Communication in the form of workshops, meetings and one-to-one conversations is vital to get the project off the ground.

Generally, farmers' markets start with the enthusiasm of one or two people. One of the first tasks is to get other people involved. In the early days an information workshop is an effective way to get the ball rolling, to canvas support for a farmers' market and to unearth people willing to form an interim committee. The information workshop should explain what a farmers' market is, how it is run, and what you need to do to get one going.

The workshop may take between several hours and a whole day. It should be broken into segments and allow time for the participants to contribute their ideas.

The presenter needs to be an accomplished communicator who has been involved with farmers' markets and who can explain the concept, outline organisational issues and pass on a passion for the farmers' market ethos.

On the day, keep a record of everyone who attends, and those who have sent their apologies. Gather information about what produce is being grown or made in the area.

By the end of the workshop you want people to be inspired, be ready to champion the cause and to have an idea of what is needed to realise the dream. Ask for volunteers to join the interim committee and organise a follow-up meeting as soon as possible.

Meetings

Once an interim committee has been formed, and they have defined goals and decided on a structure, an information meeting is a good way of spreading the word about the project.

The information meeting will:

- > Provide information about farmers' markets
- > Explain the project and introduce the people behind the initiative
- > Provide an opportunity for people to ask questions about the project
- > Allay fears and misconceptions
- > Gather producer information
- > Build membership

The meeting can be shorter and less structured than a workshop.

Holding meetings and attending meetings of other organisations is a cheap and effective way of building impetus and energy in the

project. It is an opportunity for industry networking. Offer to provide speakers to community groups to tell them about the project.

Depending on the region's size, there may need to be several meetings held to promote the idea of the market. Travelling throughout the region to spread the word gives farmers and producers who live and work in rural isolation a sense of inclusion and builds anticipation.

Before the first market you should hold an information session to explain the nuts and bolts of what is required of a stallholder.

The Willunga Farmers Market Experience

We received \$3000 funding as an initiative of the City of Onkaparinga's Tourism Awareness Week to organise an information workshop and consultant Jane Adams to run it. The workshop was vital to spread the word about farmers' markets and to see if there was enough support in the area to start one.

The next problem was to locate producers. This was before the days of regional food groups and Food Industry Development Officers and we soon learnt that there wasn't a comprehensive list of local food producers. Luckily, Zannie had contributed to a book about food on the Fleurieu Peninsula and her research became the basis of our database. Then we used our local knowledge, trawled through the phone book, looked on the internet and asked everyone we could think of for names to add to our list. Apart from producers there were other key people to invite – council officers, local traders, restaurateurs, tourism operators . . .

And there was publicity to arrange. With limited funds we printed and pinned up posters, printed flyers for distribution and wrote press releases.

Five weeks after her holiday trip when Jane first inspired us, she was back again on a cold mid-winter day talking to a smaller than hoped for crowd. But by the end of the day there was a core group of people enthusiastic enough to form an interim committee.

Funding

Work out a budget for your workshop or meeting and what you may be able to get for free. The main costs are:

- > Speaker – travel, fee
- > Venue – venue hire, tea and coffee, lunch, equipment hire
- > Publicity – mailout, poster, advertisement

Look for funding from the local council, tourism and traders organisations, agriculture organisations or regional food group. (see *3.3 Money matters* for information about funding sources.) If you can't get money you may get support for printing, access to websites etc

Seek sponsorship or sponsorship in kind – a venue might support the meeting in return for sales of drinks for instance.

Look for a speaker whose travel costs may be off-set by other engagements.

Format

The timing is important – many farmers and producers have trouble getting away from their business. Try and organise a time that is:

- > Not during vintage
- > Not during harvest
- > Not during milking time
- > Not during peak periods for restaurants

Think about late afternoon or a format that doesn't require all-day commitment.

- > Choose a location pertinent to the group eg a local winery, restaurant, or food business
- > Provide hospitality with local food and wine (sponsored of course!), tea & coffee
- > Make a display of fresh produce
- > Invite entertaining and informative speakers especially those who can demonstrate what is being achieved elsewhere
- > Use video or photographic examples if possible
- > Make it a two-way process. You can explain the project but you can also ask people at the meeting for their input and to suggest names of other producers and supporters

Publicity

Workshops and meetings are good opportunities to seek publicity. Make sure that local newspapers, television and radio stations are sent press releases (see *2.2 Broadcasting ideas*). If possible include an image of the presenter or of an existing farmers' market. Include a direct quote from the organiser or the presenter.

Invite the media to attend– they may be interested in sponsoring some publicity.

Participants

Workshops and meetings should be advertised widely. Put up notices in shops, libraries, council offices etc and send them to

anyone likely to be interested in or affected by the development including:

- > Producers, farmers, gardeners, bakers etc
- > Restaurateurs, caterers
- > Local traders
- > Tourism operators
- > Local council and regional development officers
- > Potential customers and community supporters
- > Neighbours (if a site has been selected)

A mail out is expensive but think of it as publicity.

Follow up the mail out with personal invitations for as many people as possible – they are more likely to come.

Be prepared for the first workshop and meetings to have a few doom-sayers and just-lookers. Be positive. Most people need to see something in operation before they can appreciate it.

Information pack

Prepare some information that people can take away with them or that you can send to people who make enquiries. This package should include:

- > Background information about farmers' markets (eg a magazine or newspaper article)
- > Information about your project
- > Application form for market membership
- > Registration of interest for a stall

Word of mouth

Spreading the word about your farmers' market project will be an ongoing process. A lot of this will be by word of mouth. Talk to local food business owners, other shopkeepers, restaurateurs, arrange meetings with key people from the council, local trade and tourism organisations, funding bodies and, most importantly, farmers and producers.

Remember you need to inform and encourage potential customers and to encourage and inform the producers. Having food producers on the committee (see *3.1 Interim committee*) is crucial to getting other farmers and producers on board. They understand the issues and can speak from experience.

Make sure the committee is familiar and well versed with the issues and arguments in support of the project. When you speak publicly you want to sound as though you are all singing from the same hymn sheet!

Checklist

- > Arrange funding and budget
- > Arrange a speaker
- > Organise date
- > Book venue
- > Hire equipment
- > Arrange publicity – posters, flyers, press releases,
- > Send out notices of the meeting
- > Contact media, local organisations
- > Seek sponsorship for:
 - food from local producers
 - wine
 - graphic design
 - printing
 - photocopying
 - advertising
- > Prepare information packs
- > Set-up
- > Acknowledge sponsors
- > Make sure someone is taking notes
- > Record names, contact details of participants
- > Organise follow-up meetings
- > Send letters of thanks to sponsors
- > Send summary of outcomes to attendees
- > Determine ‘where to from here’

Appendices:

- Appendix A. Workshop poster
- Appendix B. Press releases & publicity
- Appendix C. Producers’ Package