

5.2 Market office

SPADEWORK
BROADCASTING
GERMINATION
MULCHING
STAKING
HARVEST
SUSTAINABILITY
RESOURCES

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Introduction

A home for the farmers' market is vital. It needs to be central, accessible, visible and friendly so that potential stallholders and partners feel comfortable in approaching the organizing group. Sharing space with other regional groups could mean reasonable rent, and shared expenses and equipment. If it's large enough committee meetings will be able to be held here as well.

Office security

For insurance purposes, privacy, data security and general safety it is necessary to ensure that Standard Operating Procedures are developed to cover protocols for:

- > Access to the safe
- > Access to keys
- > Access to computer
- > Computer security and backup systems
- > Security alarm settings
- > Door and window locking
- > Night lighting

Equipment

- > Desk
- > Chairs
- > Computer
- > Digital camera
- > Phone/fax
- > Shelving for stationery, library, ring files
- > Storage – eg information stall materials
- > Pin-board
- > Safe

Market records

Managing a farmers' market requires a high degree of organisation. Many records need to be kept, either in paper or computer form. These include:

- > Copy of the Market Constitution
- > Copy of Market Rules
- > Copy of planning approval documentation
- > Site lease
- > Certificates of insurance

- > Site layout
- > Minutes of all committee and AGM meetings
- > Copy of Strategic Plan
- > Governance documents
- > Food regulations & legislation
- > All correspondence
- > Publicity file with copies of all articles, collection of good images, copies of awards
- > Contact details – media, committee, members, business, sponsors & partners
- > Stallholder information
 - Membership details
 - Signed copy of Market Rules
 - Insurance details - Certificate of Currency
- > Financial records. These need to be archived and kept for 7 years as per ATO requirements.
- > Information from partners e.g. Food Group, Food SA and about food issues e.g. water allocation, changes to regulations

The Willunga Farmers Market Experience

The Willunga Farmers Market office was set up on a shoe string – a small room just big enough for a large desk and a few chairs, a phone/fax and a filing cabinet.

The office was set up just prior to the market opening and before our Market Manager was employed. As a not for profit organisation with no financial history and a lack of funds, we were unable to buy or lease a computer immediately.

In retrospect not having a computer or a manager with computer skills was a mistake that cost the market dearly both in time and money. This meant that it was some time before we had an efficient database and a financial system that was easily accessible in the Market office.

As the Market has grown these systems have proved crucial to its efficient and cost-effective operation. The systems are still developing, expanding and being fine-tuned.

Market database

It is crucial that a database be set up from the day members are first recruited and money begins to flow either out or in. Data relating to producers, members, stakeholders, media, sponsors and local business partners needs to be accessed efficiently and records must contain up to date and relevant information. Setting up these systems early will save a huge amount of time and money and provide a crucial and professional communication platform for all aspects of the market's operations.

A database can be used for:

- > Record keeping
- > Communication including selective communication ie to store contact details for different groups such as media, stallholders, business partners, sponsors
- > Membership management – fees, reminders, special event information and invitations, absentee voting
- > Produce calendar
- > Collection of information for use in funding applications
- > Market research
- > Quick responses to calls for assistance or for information
- > Maintaining and nurturing good customer relations, valuing members
- > Contact log
- > Insurance reminders

Setting up a database is an area where professional help in selecting a database system and arranging for ongoing professional training is worth every cent.

You can't always imagine what you might need to use the database for, so choose a flexible system that can be developed over time. Ideally the database should easily link to other programs including your email program.

Make sure you see the program in action before you purchase or begin to use a system.

Consistency is the golden rule when setting up and using a database. If records are not consistent information will not be accurate.

Remember that not everyone is a technocrat. A database will help keep track of those people who do not have email facilities so that they can receive hardcopy of important information.

Privacy regulations must be adhered to.

Checklist

- > Select site office and arrange lease if necessary
- > Determine furniture and equipment required
- > Arrange phone and broadband connection
- > Organise security and insurance
- > Organise database system