

7.1 Sustainability

SPADEWORK
BROADCASTING
GERMINATION
MULCHING
STAKING
HARVEST
SUSTAINABILITY
RESOURCES

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Introduction

Sustaining the market as a dynamic and relevant weekly community event takes strategic planning and enormous energy.

If the market management focuses on its prime objective – to provide a source of seasonal, local and fresh food produced using environmentally friendly farming methods – then the natural rhythms of the seasonal cycle will create much of the energy. Dynamic activities tied to these seasonal cycles will ensure the market has real relevance to the community and to consumers. The sensory response to the sight of so much fresh food so enticingly displayed can't be beaten!

Strategic planning

- > Undertake annual strategic planning to assist manager and committee in leading the organisation.
- > Invite all stakeholders including members to participate to canvas as many viewpoints as possible.
- > Include as part of the process a committee succession plan.
- > Information from the annual strategic planning session should be used to update and revitalise the market's business plan.

The business plan

The market's business plan should be continually referred to and updated so that it serves as a tool for the ongoing sustainability of the market. It should include a marketing plan, a financial and fund-raising plan and a strategic plan. There may be funding available for the development of the business plan. For further information see the Economic Development Officer at your local council or regional board. See *FoodBiz Toolkit 1.1-1.7* for more information about planning.

Financial Planning

- > Develop an annual financial plan
- > Regularly compare annual financial plan to financial records.
- > Ensure manager and committee are aware of the monthly breakeven point
- > Develop a marketing budget
- > Maintain a base resource budget to fund unexpected items and events
- > Follow financial protocols at all costs
- > Maintain tight financial security

- > Consult with regional development bodies to explore possibilities for ongoing funding for a market manager's position and for special events.

Marketing the market

Develop a marketing plan – check to see if there is funding available for this and invite all stakeholders to contribute ideas. See *FoodBiz Toolkit 2.1-2.4* for more information about marketing.

The Willunga Farmers Market Experience

The initial funding that the Willunga Farmers Market received was to pay for development costs only and so it was vital that we became self-funding as soon as possible. From the beginning we could see that tight financial management and the generation of a stable weekly income was crucial to the Market's sustainability. We quickly learnt to value volunteers, donations and the generous community support we received.

As the success of the Market began to impact on the whole community, our membership also grew, and as our membership grew so too did our income. The membership scheme has been one of the great strengths of Willunga Farmers Market with membership growing steadily each year. Our members provide the stallholders with a solid and reliable weekly customer base. The membership base also gives us access to a supportive group of people to call on whenever a fundraising event or effort is required.

The Willunga Farmers Market committee has continued to develop fundraising opportunities and marketing strategies to contribute to the Market's long term sustainability.

To ensure a smooth succession, Zannie – our first Chair – instigated a strategic planning process prior to her departure. Jude, the Market's first Treasurer developed a Treasurer's Handbook to support future financial management.

Annual calendar of events

Create your own events and tap into other events in the community to maximise exposure and minimise expensive advertising. Local food and wine festivals, Slow Food events, music and arts events all offer opportunities for market participation.

Seasonal celebrations, Easter, Christmas, harvest festivities are the prime opportunities for special market celebration and should form the basis of the seasonal calendar of events. Other ideas include:

- > Quiz nights
- > Food film nights
- > Regular visiting chef program
- > Annual awards night – think Market Oscars
- > Market-inspired regional dinners
- > Market birthday celebrations
- > Venue for local events such as book launches or community announcements
- > A market gift and souvenir stall with postcards, aprons, sweatshirts, t-shirts, caps, books, photos, food gift boxes, wine packs etc

Sponsorship

- > Develop a sponsorship package that can be distributed to local business and potential sponsor partners. Remember anything that the market uses or needs has to come from somewhere or someone who may benefit from being associated with the market.
- > Target partners strategically and work out what the mutual benefits will be before meeting with them.
- > Remember sponsorship can mean in-kind support or financial support or a mixture of both.
- > Potential sponsor partners might include
 - Regional and State agricultural bodies
 - Local, regional and state media
 - Community Groups – Lions, rotary, local sporting associations, business associations
 - Banks and real estate agencies (they often have tents available for special events)
 - Agricultural businesses and outlets
 - Local restaurants, food businesses and wineries
 - TAFE Colleges, schools
 - Printers, internet service providers, telephone companies, computer sales companies

Membership maintenance

- > Deliver benefits regularly ie 10% discount every week at stalls
- > First option for event tickets
- > Keep members informed through direct mail or the much cheaper option via email

- > Regularly thank them for their support.
- > Keep members updated about new stallholders and seasonal product information.
- > Get members involved in recipe collections and the market feed back loop.
- > Feature members in market publications and get them involved in promotions e.g. ask them to cut the annual birthday cake.
- > Encourage renewal by offering a customer loyalty card.
- > Regularly review stall fees and membership fees.

Volunteers

Volunteers have been a vitally important part of the Willunga Farmers Market. The Market was set up by volunteers, and for four months was operated by volunteers between managers. There is no doubt that the Market would not exist without the hundreds of volunteer hours that have been contributed by committee members, community members and members of the Market.

Working with volunteers:

- > Work with their needs and capabilities with good grace
- > Go with what they can offer in terms of time and commitment
- > Remember that you cannot have the same expectations or put the same demands on an unpaid volunteer as you can on a paid employee
- > Match their contribution to their experience and skills
- > Show gratitude and thanks for the contribution regularly
- > Give them well structured tasks with Standard Operating Procedure guidance
- > Provide training if necessary
- > Trust them to do a good job

Jobs for volunteers:

- > Breakfast stall
- > Setting up and breaking down of the market
- > Managing the information stall on market day
- > Selling raffle tickets
- > Assisting the manager with mail-outs and data management
- > Distribution of marketing information at the market
- > Assisting with parking
- > Assisting at fundraising events
- > Market research ie counting customers through the gate, surveys etc

Managing manager burnout

It seems that no matter how efficient and talented the Manager, it is inevitable that they will experience some form of 'manager burnout' as they face the continual challenge of organising and negotiating with stallholders, consumers, committee members, various government departments, the media and the general public.

Below are some options worth considering that may help to alleviate a potential burnout situation:

- > Flexible management structure
 - job share
 - job split
- > Development of active/autonomous subcommittees
- > Outsourcing or sub contracting eg database management, book-keeping, marketing

Checklist

- > Organise a strategic planning session
- > Develop a business plan
- > Develop an annual calendar of events
- > Develop a sponsorship package
- > Develop plan to manage and maintain membership

Websites:

FoodBiz Toolkit: <http://www.safoodcentre.com/industry/>

Appendices:

Appendix I Strategic Plan