

Know your food service



There are a range of factors that can influence your food service. Understanding these factors and how your food service operates can help you take action if changes occur.

Size of your market

- How many members does your venue have or how many people attend the venue on average (for example, per day, week, month or quarter)?
- On average, how many people use the food service regularly?
- How many staff (for example, coaches, umpires, instructors, administration employees etc.) use the food service?

Can you increase the size of your market?

- What can you change to increase the number of people using the food service?
- Are there catering opportunities at the venue (for example, events or meetings)?
- Are there catering opportunities for local businesses in the area?
- Could the venue provide a regular lunch service for a local school/s?

Staffing

- How many paid staff do you have and what are their hours?
- How many regular volunteers do you have?
- How can you increase your pool of volunteers? See the '[Valuing volunteers](#)' fact sheet for more information.

Menu

- Consider all menu items, is everything popular? (Hint: sales data and daily tally sheets will help determine your best sellers)
- Can the range of menu items be streamlined? The more items you offer, the higher your stock and labour costs will be
- Is your venue open all year round? If so, it's a good idea to create variety and interest. Consider using seasonal produce or changing the menu seasonally. For example, soup is usually a winner in winter and fresh, crunchy rice paper rolls in summer.



Food service operations and efficiency

- How many days per week does your food service operate?
- Is your menu realistic given the preparation time you have?
- Is your food service purchasing through wholesale suppliers as much as possible?
- Does your food service have its own computer, printer and internet access?
- Have you considered online ordering?

Financial controls

- Who is responsible for financial management?
- What are your daily takings? Yearly takings?
- What are your average daily expenses? Yearly expenses?
- Do you know the cost price of all items?
- Do you use a formula for calculating the selling price of all items?



Collaboration with the community

- Does the food service manager have a good relationship with other staff? For example, community venue management and/or volunteer committees
- Do you communicate regularly with the community about your food service? For example, via your venue's newsletters or social media?
- Is the food service kept informed about what is going on at the community venue? For example, major events, teams playing offsite, bye games etc.
- Have you surveyed customers to find out how they perceive the food service and if it is meeting their wants/needs?

Food service premises

- List all the equipment you have, its condition and estimate its age. Will any equipment need to be replaced in the near future?
- Make a list of the equipment you don't have but would like, and why
- What does the food service look like? Is it clean, freshly painted, neat and functional (inside and outside)?
- Make a list of improvements needed; list in priority order
- Is the food service central and easily located? If not, how could you increase foot traffic to the food service?
- Is the food service secure and safe?



Take action

There are usually a number of factors that lead to a food service being in trouble. In general, one or a combination of the solutions below may help:

- Review and/or implement a food service *Healthier Food and Drink policy*
- Review the number of days (and/or hours) the food service is open; consider reducing or increasing the number of days and/or hours
- Reduce the number of items on the menu
- Don't waste staff time, especially when you have to pay for it:
 - Get goods delivered rather going to the supermarket. This may mean you need to invest in an additional freezer, so that your orders are large enough to meet the suppliers' minimum requirements for delivery
 - Design templates for all repetitive tasks. For example, daily tally sheets, stock-take, daily takings records, ordering, rosters, etc.
 - Invest in a computer and printer for your food service, preferably with internet access
 - Purchase and cook in bulk
 - Think about multiple uses for the same ingredients and the same packaging, to maximise economies of scale. For example, you may offer a pasta/bolognese dish, but you can also use the same bolognese mix as a topping on a jacket potato, in a toasted jaffle, chilli con carne, tacos or lasagne
- It is essential to understand your income, expenses and to monitor this continually. You need to use a formula specific to your food service's overheads
- Marketing is important:
 - Continually promote good news stories about your food service to the community in newsletters and on social media
 - Advertise new items on chalkboards, menu boards, newsletters and social media
 - Make your 'specials' truly special. Create a culture in which people are always interested to know what the food service is going to do next.



Do you have questions?

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