

# How to Run a Social Café

## Operational Plan

The Steering Committee will be responsible for operating the café as well as ensuring long term viability. An Operational Plan will assist in ensuring all aspects of governance and management are addressed including:

- details of café operations and costs
- funding and donation sources and arrangements
- composition and skills for the Steering Committee members and volunteers
- roles and responsibilities of members and volunteers
- recruitment of members and volunteers
- frequency of meetings
- communication internally and with the public
- training
- legal and administrative requirements

## Café Management

The Steering Committee will manage the day to day operations of the cafe. Attached to this Toolbox are a number of templates to assist the Committee.

The Steering Committee should provide good leadership by:

- Ensuring effective management
- Directing the activities
- Providing sound financial management and ensuring resources are properly managed
- Ensuring potential risks are managed
- Ensuring health and safety issues are dealt with and managed
- Ensuring volunteers are appropriately trained and managed

## Volunteers

Social café volunteers reinforce the philosophy of 'dining with dignity'. They fill a variety of roles including chef, waiter, welcomer or a member of the preparation or cleaning teams. They are supported and nurtured in their roles through informal training and structured certificate programs such 'Safe food handling', 'Mental health first aid' and 'Workplace health and safety'. They expect respect, appreciation and ownership of the roles. They will invariably report from their experience of working in a social café, that they have received more than they have given.

Volunteers working in Social Cafés or as part of Steering Committees will:

- respect the dignity and nurture the self-respect of clients
- act compassionately
- behave honestly and with integrity

- treat everyone fairly, equally and with respect, in particular taking account of cultural differences; and
- recognise the strengths and weaknesses of others, in particular taking account of how they may be affected by our actions.

## Culture

A 'dining with dignity' experience is one offered in a friendly, accepting, well-managed, well-supported and inclusive environment. The social experience is augmented with attractive healthy and nutritious meals designed to complement existing lifestyles. The aim is to provide a 'total experience' and the meals are sometimes accompanied with entertainment or other socially engaging activities. When carers attend with their guests, they will receive the same level of care and consideration. Occasionally local high school students will attend to complement the staffing or to provide a learning experience for both students and guests.

## Rostering

A key to an effective and efficient social café is a considered and well-ordered rostering system. Often prepared on a monthly or four weekly bases, a quality rostering system will:

- reflect the interest and skills of the volunteers
- empower those rostered to manage roster changes and emergencies
- provide online access to all volunteers
- make changes to the roster easy to identify by the roster coordinator
- avoid under-utilising or over-burdening rostered volunteers

## Training

There are a range of training needs which are required by law or which will assist in ensuring the Café runs smoothly and safely.

These include:

- **Safe food handling** - Critical to the effective operation of a social café is for volunteers to have developed skills and knowledge in safe food handling. ROF can assist volunteer managers by facilitating face to face food safety training or, if preferred, the local Council may provide access to food safety training. The Bega Valley Shire Council offers free online training via the following webpage: [https://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/cp\\_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-CBU-38-23-04](https://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-CBU-38-23-04).
- **Workplace health and safety** - Operating a safe workplace is critical to the success of any volunteering business. Safe Work Australia has developed a resource kit for volunteers to understand work health and safety issues. It can be accessed via the following webpage <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1703/volunteers>

[\\_guide.pdf](#) .Volunteering Australia also has a range of resources to assist volunteer managers. Their resources can be accessed via the following webpage: <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/volunteering-resources/volunteer-managers/>. ROF has access to a range of different forms to assist Volunteer managers as well.

- **Mental health awareness** - It is important for volunteer managers to recognise that some of the guests may have some level of mental health impairment. To assist volunteers in understanding the needs of these people and how best to relate to them, the ROF can arrange mental health awareness training for volunteers. Trained professionals can deliver face to face training for volunteers.

## **Establishing as a Legal Entity**

In order for you to operate you will need to establish the Café as a legal entity. This will assist with obtaining grants and insurance, and entering into contracts. The process for incorporating an Association in NSW is set out [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au).

## **Insurance**

You will require insurance coverage for public liability. An insurance broker in your local area would be able to advise on appropriate policies for the Social Café.