

Federation of Wine and Food Societies of Australia Inc.

Conventions and Victor Gibson Weekends



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Overview	2
Theme.....	3
Committee.....	4
Committee team.....	5
a. Convenor/Chair/MC	5
b. Treasurer/Registration coordinator	5
c. Secretary	6
d. Wine master.....	6
e. Food master/restaurant coordinator	7
f. Transport/accommodation coordinator	8
g. Registration.....	8
h. FWFSA meeting requirements	9
a. Committee Meeting.....	9
b. Annual General Meeting	9
c. Cost of meeting rooms.....	9
Name Cards	9
Marketing	10
Table seating.....	10
Insurance	11
Sponsorship	11
Awards/Guest Speaker.....	12
Miscellaneous	12
"Wrap Up"	12

Introduction

This guide is intended for use by Societies to assist in the planning and running of a Convention or Victor Gibson Weekend. It is a summary of suggestions collected from Societies who have hosted one or more of these functions.

When considering hosting either function on behalf of the Federation, these guidelines contain items the convening Society should consider and include in the plan. It is not an easy thing to coordinate restaurants, wines, transport, etc. over several days, or a weekend, ensuring it runs smoothly. Ideally function planning should commence 24 months before the proposed function date. Whilst the Federation Committee acknowledge each Society is well skilled in the running of functions, we trust these guidelines will assist your Society for the event you are planning to run on behalf of Federation of Wine and Food Societies of Australia (FWFSA).

In accepting an opportunity to hold one of these annual functions on behalf of the FWFSA, a Society has an opportunity to not only act as host, but also highlight their region to participating delegates and guests from other Societies who attend the function.

We live in a country where each city and regional area has an objective of tourism. The staging of a Federation function will add value to the local economy. Your Society's aim in hosting a FWFSA function should include a goal to have the delegates not only attend and enjoy a great event, but to stay longer to experience the unique features your region has on offer. Talk to your local tourism office, council or shire office and ask them for ways they can help with the organisation of your function. Ask for suggestions as to how they may help with local tours, giveaways, and local information.

Write to your State Minister, Mayor and local councillor, requesting a letter of welcome to delegates, together with a financial contribution. Each have discretionary funds available. Any donations you may receive will help to defray some of the administration expenses incurred during the organisation of the function.

Overview

Once your society has agreed to hold a Convention or Victor Gibson Weekend, confirm your acceptance of the invitation to host in writing to the FWFSA President. Your Society

will receive a letter from FWFSA confirming your appointment and setting out the terms and conditions that apply. A preliminary business plan should be prepared and submitted to FWFSA for consideration and acceptance. This will then make available a seeding loan of up to \$5,000.00 from FWFSA to assist with initial expenses following the acceptance of the plan.

Consider how many delegates you realistically expect to attend, where your minimum number will be for breakeven viability. Conventions normally attract around 80-100 delegates, Victor Gibson Weekends attract 50-60. It is rare to get delegates from New Zealand to the Victor Gibson weekends, although Conventions normally attract a strong contingent from our neighbour, New Zealand Federation of Wine and Food Societies, due to the holding of combined Conventions.

A capitation fee for each delegate is levied and is payable to the Federation. The fee is \$30.00 per person for a Convention, and \$15.00 per person for a Victor Gibson Weekend, for full time attendees. The capitation fee for delegates should be included in the preliminary budget.

Where guests attend individual functions, we suggest, they are levied a nominal fee over and above the fixed cost price per person for a single function. Attendance at single functions, adds to overall numbers. Use these guests as people who would benefit from attending, who may only be able to attend one function, and who may be prospective members.

Theme

Come up with a “WOW” factor to entice delegates to your area. Think of a theme for the function, be it wine related, or perhaps emphasising produce from your district. Delegates are normally keen to look at local wine, however, note a broader scope is required. The FWFSA has an excellent Cellar to compliment your choice of wines. Delegates normally anticipate to see high quality representative wines of suitable maturity, from your region, Australia, France, New Zealand, Italy, etc. at the functions.

It is worthwhile to include a couple of general interest visits to satisfy those who are not obsessed with visiting local wineries. Providing information on local points of interest could be handy for early birds, or those staying a day or two extra. We would recommend either a pre or a post tour be organised in conjunction with Conventions. Ask your local tourism office for suggestions.

Set down your parameters first, do not waver from the initial ideas put forward. Inevitably, newer, bigger, better ideas will be put forward which may not be within the original budget constraints. These can be hazardous as they take you away from your original concepts, usually costing additional money, over and beyond the budget. Think carefully before digressing from your original goal.

Committee

It is important to appoint a committee. The committee should meet regularly even though the function being hosted may be some months away. A core group of hardworking people will get the job done. Extra helpers do come in handy e.g. for decanting wines, completing name tags, attending to gift bags, or helping to man the registration desk. They may even provide assistance by providing transport for early arrivals/departures etc. Ensure that committee members are going to be available at the time of the Convention/Weekend.

Do you have a keen photographer within the Society who will be happy to act in that role?

It is essential a representative from the FWFSa Committee join the committee, if this is impractical, invite the Federation President to join a committee meeting on at least one occasion. However, to ensure the lines of communication are constant ensure all copies of committee minutes, action plans etc are regularly sent to the FWFSa President.

During a Convention the delegates have time to themselves that could be either occupied with an activity or at the very least, spent doing their own thing. A welcome package, presented at time of registration, including information pamphlets, suggestions, and a map for guidance will help to make guests feel welcome, acting as good publicity for your city or town.

It is suggested your committee should consist of the following:

- Convener (Chair/MC at functions)
- Treasurer/Registration coordinator
- Secretary
- Wine master
- Food master/restaurant coordinator
- Transport/accommodation coordinator

Committee team

a. Convenor/Chair/MC

The Convenor/Chair should maintain overall control and direction of the team throughout the planning and implementation processes. Any problems should be resolved at committee level, as many heads are better than one. All arrangements should be referred to the committee, particularly with regard to functions, timing, accommodation etc.

Ensure that expression of interest notices go out in plenty of time, launch your Society's function at the prior year's FWFSa function (include New Zealand by email). Forward the registration form to the expression of interest persons and all Societies at the latest by July/August for an event planned for the following March/April. The Federation Secretary will email the registration form to all Societies. Mailing labels are available from the FWFSa Secretary for your use.

b. Treasurer/Registration coordinator

The treasurer needs to ensure the budget is accepted both by the committee and FWFSa Committee. It should be followed, monitoring deviations, ensuring each is accounted for and the budget is modified. Each event must cover its expenses, it is the treasurer's role to ensure that this happens. Though it is not necessary to combine these roles, it is easier for the treasurer to receive responses from intending delegates together with any payments. Set out a plan for timing of deposits and final payments. To this end, a separate bank account should be considered and if necessary opened. It is most important that receipts and/or acknowledgements are sent to all registrants acknowledging payment of deposits and/or full payment. Use details from the registration form to ensure the contact details etc. are correct

It is a FWFSa policy that 50% of profit from the function is included with the capitation fees and remitted to the FWFSa at the conclusion of the function. An Income/Surplus/Deficit statement should accompany the payment. Should there be dual hosts, both member societies should equally share the 50% share of profit.

In the rare event that a loss is incurred, 50% of that loss will be borne by the FWFSA provided the activities hosted on its behalf have been run in accordance with the approved budget.

Consideration and thought needs to be given to any Free (guest speakers) or VIPs you may wish to invite. This expense need to be included in the budget for the function.

c. Secretary

It is essential to record minutes at all committee meetings, and action plans. The committee needs to be keep people abreast of their current duties. Copies of minutes should be circulated to the FWFSA President to ensure they are kept up-to-date on progress. The Federation Committee are available for consultation on the running of your event.

It is important that the registered delegates and Societies be informed of any last minute changes to the programme. Ensure the secretary has recorded all relevant addresses and keeps the committee informed with an accurate database of all details in a spreadsheet that may be used for mail merging, nametags etc.

The computer programs assist in acknowledging Registrations, compiling reports, sending updates and work sheets, but there is still a lot of detail, particularly as the Convention/Weekend date approaches. Use of email ensures all are kept informed.

d. Wine master

It is anticipated that some wines used will be purchased from the Federation wine cellar. This gives delegates an opportunity to enjoy a wider variety of wines. Wines are provided to the committee at attractive pricing. Inventory of wine available are listed on the FWFSA web site, www.wineandfood.org.au, reflecting the wines available, or call the Federation Cellar Master for the most up to date wines and prices.

The Federation Cellar Master is always ready to give assistance, advice and can be contacted from details found on the web site. It is recommended you identify those wines that you would like to purchase as early as possible and speak with the Cellar Master, thus ensuring the requirement is kept. Keep in mind that it may be

necessary to have an extra bottle or two on hand in case of corkage etc., particularly when serving mature wines.

Wine allocation of around eight glasses to a bottle is generous, it is best to use a smaller pour and top up only if necessary. The usual pour for champagne is six to the bottle and fourteen for sherry or port. Give strict instructions to the wine staff at the venues as to the number of bottles to be opened. Wine is often wasted due to the opening of bottles that were intended as back-up. Be conscious of the total wine consumption at the event, given the number of differing wines used. Most delegates and venue staff are careful on quantities consumed. Consider using table captains for each table to ensure the function proceeds smoothly, and to ensure wines remain unopened until required.

It is the wine master's responsibility to plan each function and to liaise with the food masters and restaurants, organising sufficient assistance for decanting when required and to ensure sufficient suitable glassware is available. Should there be unopened bottles of wine left over, it may be possible to return same to the vendor, or, offer it to your Society members at cost price.

e. Food master/restaurant coordinator

Any trial dinners must be at the cost of the participants. In running a function and/or pre-tour, it is suggested to allocate a member of the committee to take responsibility for one or two functions. Choice of venues should be discussed at committee – trial run – this takes time and then menus set, firstly in consultation with the wine master and then the restaurant. It is important that each food master report back to the overall coordinator/chair with proposed menus. This avoids repetition of dishes – no one wants to eat duck twice over the weekend for instance!

It is then the responsibility of the restaurant coordinator to ensure that everything runs smoothly, from the arrival of sufficient glasses, to having an alphabetical table listing at the door and place name cards on the tables. Ensure the delegates names are readable from the other side of the table.

Some venues require high upfront deposits, avoid if possible, until you are confident of the numbers. Ensure each venue has a copy of your running sheet for the night, to ensure that the timing for speakers fits in with the needs of the kitchen staff. They will appreciate this courtesy, ensuring the function runs smoothly.

f. Transport/accommodation coordinator

One committee responsibility is to organise transport to and from each venue. It is important to ensure suitable sized vehicles are available, and to ensure the costs are covered by the budget. Get the best there is available, at the most reasonable price.

There is much to be sorted out initially, however, once decisions have been made, the transport coordinator need not necessarily play a role until the deposits are due and the numbers attending are finalised. Someone needs to be on hand prior to departure each day to ensure that all delegates are present, so use a “travelling” delegates list to ensure all are on board for each venue. Should delegates need to walk any distance to or from a function, please consider the women who may have difficulty in walking far in their finery and in high-heeled shoes.

It is essential to nominate a specific hotel for accommodation purposes, and for registration, as the pickup point for all transportation departures. Again consider those who cannot walk far. Hotels will usually offer a special rate for “block bookings” based on a number of proposed room nights by attending delegates.

g. Registration

Develop your registration form to ensure you collect all the data needed to run a successful function. A requirement is an area for registration of arriving delegates, open during early afternoon on the day the function commences as many delegates arrive during the first day.

The form should include such details as:

- Delegate’s name, address, telephone numbers (fixed and mobile), email address
- Partner/spouse name etc
- Emergency contact details eg telephone number of a person who may be contacted
- Name of Wine and Food Society
- Name preference for name badge
- Any dietary requirements
- Detail of any alternative accommodation if not using the nominated hotel

- Include both pre-tour details and function prices
- Individual venues costs for those who may not be able to attend all the functions
- Clear address for the return of completed form
- Date for return of completed forms and address
- Banking details for those who wish to electronically pay the registration.

h. FWFSA meeting requirements

During the function FWFSA executive conducts two meetings:

a. Committee Meeting

On the afternoon day preceding the function (normally Friday afternoon) a meeting room for 10/12 persons is required. This meeting depends on availability and travel arrangements of the Committee Members, liaise with the FWFSA Secretary. Often a board room or similar is available at the hotel.

b. Annual General Meeting

This is held on the afternoon prior to the function dinner or the morning after (Saturday afternoon/Sunday morning). A room with head table for executive with approximately 30 chairs for Society Councillors and other delegates is required, with an area for registration purposes at the AGM. A lectern or PA system is not normally required.

c. Cost of meeting rooms

When costs are incurred they should be separately costed to the FWFSA and listed in the final summary of the functions when providing the report.

Name Cards

Over the years, there has been much debate on type of name card used. Our women do not like “pin” varieties, as they do not wish to have pinholes in their dresses. Single magnetised nametags are unsuitable! Good in theory, looks great, but keep falling off when used with multiple layers of clothing! Name badges having two magnets will hold. Another alternative is to use an appropriate lanyard and name card.

If using a 3 x 2 inch card sized name card, then use 4 x 6 cards and cut in half. Use mail merge to print the names. Alternatively, if using standard name card plastic holders, use "A4 business card" pages. Mail merge the names from the registrations held.

When designing your name card ensure the given name is easily readable (use larger font size and bold), the name of the Society shown, then delegates will know from which region they come. A print run of name cards be done for each individual function

Marketing

It is preferable to release information regarding your Convention/Victor Gibson Weekend at the FWFSA function immediately preceding yours. Prepare an "expression of interest" document stating briefly details of functions, include information for potential delegates to respond by mail or email. Decide on the date for distribution of registration forms, at least nine months ahead is an ideal time. Provide a "reply by" date; consider "early bird" prices for those replying and paying in full, November/December, for an April event? Ensure each delegate is asked about dietary requirements, ensure sure that each venue is notified of any requirements.

The FWFSA Secretary can send a copy of the registration brochure and other information to each Society by email. Where required, the FWFSA Secretary can provide pre-printed labels, or a file in Word of labels to be used for printing (Avery A4 label number will be included) for mailing member Societies, plus your database of interested delegates. Send out a reminder notices to Societies (ask the Federation Secretary to do this) at least three months before your function. Keep in mind Societies may not meet monthly. The registration information will also be uploaded to the Federation website.

Table seating

This can be a very time consuming occupation, and adds to the delegate enjoyment of your function. If allocated seating is not planned, delegates from individual Societies tend to "club" together and so spoil the aim of mixing with other guests, extending their circle of like-minded people. Try to ensure that guests are not sitting with the same people more than once or twice. Avoid having them together on consecutive occasions, print sets of table name cards for each venue.

A seating plan should be displayed in alphabetical order on each side of the entrance to a venue. It is worthwhile to have one or two members ready to meet and greet delegates, directing them to the appropriate tables. Delegates should not need to wander around the venue trying to find their seat.

Place name cards should have the name printed to both sides, and then you do not have to rely on memory when speaking to the guest on the other side of the table, their nametag may be not be readable when sitting down.

Microsoft Publisher has the facility to turn the “name” 180 degrees when text boxes are used. Print the Given name in a larger font, and bold. Make it easy to read from across the table. Use a mail merge facility to print the nametags, on to 6 x 4 110-gsm paper, which can be folded for the table.

Insurance

Keep in mind if your Society has insurance cover through the Federation umbrella policy, you may need an extension to cover your guests and those from who have no PLI cover, speak to the FWFSa Treasurer for more information.

The insurers should be advised the event dates and requesting special cover for the function. Usually only a nominal amount is required to ensure your coverage is adequate, normally each venue for the function carries sufficient PLI cover.

Sponsorship

This has always been a contentious issue. There is an objection at Federation level regarding sponsors displaying prominent advertising throughout their events. However, in an effort to save costs, to display local products, to take advantage of the generosity of people and companies it is wonderful to be able to accept such good fortune.

Acknowledge it in a positive way by including supplied leaflets in delegates' welcome packs, or acknowledging the generosity verbally.

Awards/Guest Speaker

The President of the FWFSA should be contacted prior to the function to ascertain whether any awards are to be presented during your function. Should any awards be planned they are normally included during the formal dinner.

Remember that your Society is hosting the function on behalf of the FWFSA and it is the honour and responsibility of the Federation President to both open and close the Convention/Victor Gibson Weekend, have your Society President welcome delegates.

At the formal dinner it is usual to have a prominent guest speaker address guests on a wine or culinary topic. Ensure the speaker is provided for in the budget as a guest, if necessary, and a suitable gift is obtained for presentation after the speech.

Miscellaneous

Printing is one of your biggest expenses. This is a good area for acquire sponsorship, use email whenever possible by sending documents in PDF format, ensure all member Societies are contacted, including New Zealand. However, to ensure you cover all contingencies use the postal system to contact Societies.

Please ensure all registrations are followed up in writing, as a confirmation of the registration details they have provided on the registration form.

"Wrap Up"

As the convener, the host Society needs to compile a report on the function, together with final financial statements, which needs to be sent to the FWFSA President within three months of the conclusion of your function. Whilst all details are fresh in the mind, compile the report, finalise all bills and accounts. Ensure the Federation receives half of your profit as well as the capitation fee, less any authorised costs, plus the return of any seed funding.

Keep the momentum going for a little longer, for then all the records are together and will not be lost as can happen.

Organise photos, names will go from the mind in a few weeks, then send together with samples of menus, covers and seating plans, to our archivist. Our archives are currently held in Adelaide.

Archivist: Rosemary Radden is on email, ardenlea@bigpond.net.au . Get the formal report and conclusions together sent to Rosemary and the President, and then relax.

It really is a lot of fun – enjoy!