Topic 7

EMERGE
Supporting Farmer Led Groups

A collaborative project between
TAS FARM INNOVATION HUB
RMCG

Documents and Knowledge Management

A well run group needs a core set of foundational governance documents, regular meeting packages, and operational records to function effectively. Simple systems for storing documents, sharing knowledge, keeping track of who owns or can use information, and who is responsible for keeping it up to date, will help your group stay organised and make it easier when members or roles change.

This topic includes a checklist of key documents to consider in running your group.

The information provided is not legal advice and you may need to obtain specialist advice from a solicitor or accountant on what documents you should retain.

The resources table at the end captures some additional links and information that will take you to templates and further guidance as needed.

Storage Systems for Group Documents

It's best practice to keep documents in an electronic system that provides security and accessibility, with hard copies of important documents.

Avoid storing documents on an individual's computer hard drive without back up. When setting up your group, or periodically, especially during a change of executive committee members (e.g. President, Treasurer and Secretary or Public Officer), it is useful to consider the storage system for your group documentation.

Cloud-based platforms such as Google Drive or Microsoft 365/SharePoint can provide a practical solution, particularly where members need to access and share documents remotely. A local hard drive or network storage can also be used as a secondary backup.

The key is to have one agreed "source of truth" for group documents, with clear ownership and access arrangements.

Ensure access passwords are not used for other applications, for instance using a phrase specific to the group rather than your personal user password.

Some things to consider:

- Under Privacy and Personal Information regulation, access to the contact details of group members and attendees at events or sponsors should have limited access; your register of members and contact lists are best saved with two-factor authentication, or in a lockable filing cabinet. It may be useful to keep a visible member register with name - member ID - period of membership, separate to the full member contact list.
- Copies of invoices and receipts should also be kept in case a review is required, for a minimum of seven years. Previous versions of important documents like the Constitution should be kept, and
- Use consistent file names, and a clear, consistent folder structure; e.g. governance, meetings, finance, membership, projects and archives.
- Know who has administrator access to the group's account, avoid using an individual member's account.
- Some collaboration tools like Notion, Monday.com and Smartsheet can attach and save documents, but may be lost if the group change to another system.

Checklist

Table 1 - Checklist

Governance Structure (see **Topic 4**)

Informal Group	Committee	Unincorporated Group	Incorporated Group

Document type	Document type	Governance structure			
Foundational and Legal Documents					
Constitution / articles of association or rules	This is the primary legal document that sets out the core rules for running your organisation[1]				x
Bylaws or charters	Rules that detail the board structure, procedures, and committee terms of reference (ToR) - see **Topic 7.01**		x	x	x
Mission and vision statements	A clear summary of your group's purpose and long-term goals	x	x	x	x
Strategic plan	The roadmap that outlines your long-term targets, resource allocation and organisational priorities[2]			x	x
Bank accounts	Includes records and signatories[3]	x	x	x	x
Grant deeds, funding contracts, sponsorship agreements	Includes any document that has been formally agreed to and/or signed by office bearers[4]			x	x
Insurance documents	Including policy renewals and notes from conversations or meetings with brokers[5]	x	x	x	x
Meeting documents - for Group General Meetings and at Annual General Meetings (AGM) *Your group's governance structure will determine how formal your General Meeting, AGM, and/or election of office bearers needs to be					
Meeting agenda	A structure list of items and topics for discussion (see **Topic 8: Agenda and minutes** of this pack)[6]		x	x	x
Previous meeting minutes	Records of past discussions and status updates on outstanding actions (see **Topic 8** of this pack)[7]		x	x	x
Budgets	Useful to support decision making and to understand how to resource your activities[8]	x	x	x	x
Financial reports	Current income statements, balance sheets and cash flow updates[9]	x	x	x	x

Table 1 - Checklist (continued)

Governance Structure (see **Topic 4**)

Informal Group	Committee	Unincorporated Group	Incorporated Group

Document type	Document type	Governance structure			
Risk register and compliance updates	Tracking of active organisational risks, mitigations and legal updates[10]	x	x	x	x
Committee reports	If you have sub-committees, they need to provide updates (e.g. finance, governance, auditing committees)		x	x	x
Draft resolutions	Formal decisions or proposals that require Group approval		x	x	x
AGM notice*:	The notice is to be distributed to members at least 21 days before it is held and should be scheduled to be held within 5 months of the end of your groups' financial year. You will need to provide a notice of the AGM that states the time, date and place of the meeting.				x
General meeting notice*	When a member requests a general meeting, this must occur within 21 days of the request. The notice should be distributed to members at least 21 days before it is held and include the time, date and place of the meeting.				x
Governance and Compliance Policies and Documents					
Roles and responsibilities	Should describe roles for all office bearers (see **Topic 5: Roles and responsibilities**).	x	x	x	x
Conflict of interest policy and register	Disclosures and guidelines for managing competing loyalties[11]			x	x
Privacy and Confidentiality policy	Expected behaviour and processes you will use to maintain privacy and confidentiality of member information and other sensitive data[12]			x	x
Code of conduct	Expected behaviour and ethical standards for directors and staff[13]	x	x	x	x
Risk management framework	Policies outlining how risks are identified, assessed and controlled[14]				x
Key contacts and networks list	Helps to identify who you will work with to support your purpose and plan	x	x	x	x
Register of members	This needs to include current and past member records	x	x	x	x
Intellectual property and permissions	A list of digital tools you use, how you access, and passwords (check this against your office bearer roles and responsibilities and keep secure). Includes Facebook, website, shared drives, email accounts[15]	x	x	x	x

[1] For an unincorporate group, this can be optional.

[2] For an informal group, you can consider a plan as your group develops; for a committee of a group, this usually follows parent group

[3] Required if handling money

[4] It is unlikely that informal groups will be eligible for grants, funding contracts, or to enter formal sponsorship agreements. Committees would follow parent group

[5] Consider before activities begin. If your group cannot hold its own insurance, make sure the venue where you are meeting or holding an event has insurance in place that can cover you, or seek an auspice partner that you can work with who can hold insurance on your behalf

[6] Keep this as simple as your group needs

[7] Keep this as simple as your group needs

[8] Useful if informal groups are planning activities

[9] If handling money informal groups and unincorporated groups should keep financial records. Committees should follow parent group

[10] As a minimum, maintain a record of risks you have assessed for planned activities and how you plan to manage them

[11] Keep this simple as your group needs. If you have a constitution – check its requirements

[12] For informal groups, consider how information will be handled. Committees should follow parent group policies

[13] For informal groups, agree how members will work together

[14] For informal groups, consider when planning activities

[15] For informal groups, consider ownership when creating materials or setting up digital spaces (ie Facebook). You should also consider ownership/use of photos. Passwords themselves should be stored securely rather than in a general register.

Additional Resources

- **Healthy Corporation Checklist (ORIC)**
  This is a comprehensive checklist that you can use in addition to the above. It also includes a range of templates that you can download and adapt for your group.

  https://www.oric.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-08/Checklist%20-%20Healthy%20corporation%20checklist%20-%202018-10.pdf

- **WA Grower Group Alliance - The Grower Group Toolkit for Effective Farmer Groups, Vol. 4**
  This document contains some templates for use, including a strategic plan, risk management checklist, and sponsorship forms.

  https://www.gga.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vol-4_April-2021-GGA-Toolkit.pdf

- **Navigating the key documents (Institute of Community Directors Australia)**
  Contains further details on the core documents required.

  https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/help-sheets/navigating-the-key-documents

- **Board charters – tool (AICD)**
  Your board charter is a tool that will aid you in good governance. It tells you have the board will function and sets a set of guidelines.

  https://www.aicd.com.au/good-governance/charter/example/board-charters.html

How this resource came about

The Emerge project was funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund to support new, emerging and informal farmer groups to develop their skills and knowledge, and to create this set of resources for use by groups into the future. Groups participating in 2026 received coaching and additional learning opportunities to supplement the content of these resources.

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