

# GIVE YOUR OFFICE A MEMORY

*Small organizations don't lose knowledge in disasters – they lose it in transitions. The actual 12-folder Obsidian system behind the Elsa Digital Brain, and how to build one for your org.*

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In small-city government – and small business, and nonprofits – when one person leaves, decades of context can walk out the door with them. My fix at Elsa EDC is a second brain for the **office**: an Obsidian vault where the decisions, data, relationships, and history live as plain markdown files. We call it the Elsa Digital Brain.

## 01 YOUR BRAIN VS. THE OFFICE BRAIN

Guide N° 02 covers my personal vault – my life, my content, my ideas. The office brain is a **separate vault with a different job**: institutional memory. The test it has to pass: any question that starts with "why did we...", "what did the board decide about...", or "where's the data on..." gets answered in 30 seconds – by anyone, not just me.

*Keep them separate, link between them. Your personal vault is yours forever; the office vault should be able to outlive your tenure.*

## 02 THE 12-FOLDER MAP (THE REAL ONE)

FOLDER	WHAT LIVES THERE
00 Dashboard	The front door – open loops, priorities, links to everything
01 Strategy	The strategic plan, annual goals, the "why" documents
02 Programs & Initiatives	One note per ongoing program – history, status, contacts
03 Projects	One note per active project with an end date
04 City Intelligence	What's true about our place – sites, infrastructure, assets
05 Business Recruitment	The pipeline (per-prospect notes) + the local business ecosystem
06 Community & Partnerships	Partners, orgs, and the relationships that make things move
07 Data & Intelligence	Demographics, workforce, foot traffic, traffic counts, competitor cities – each source gets a subfolder, nothing lives in Downloads
08 Content Engine	The public voice – campaigns, assets, the story we're telling

<b>10 Systems &amp; Workflows</b>	How we do things – the runbooks, so processes aren't in one person's head
<b>11 Reputation &amp; Narrative</b>	Us in the news, community sentiment, narrative opportunities
<b>12 Toolbox &amp; Reference</b>	Regulatory/statutory reference, reports, frameworks, training notes

## 03 WHAT MAKES IT INSTITUTIONAL (NOT JUST ORGANIZED)

- 01 **Meetings feed it automatically.** I wear an AI recorder in meetings; a daily scheduled routine files the transcripts and summaries into the vault (Guide N° 05). The vault grows whether or not anyone "does filing."
- 02 **Data gets a home, not a download.** Every dataset lands in 07 under its source. Six months later, the number you need is findable — with the context of when and why you pulled it.
- 03 **Reputation is tracked, not vibed.** Folder 11 logs news mentions and community sentiment over time. When the board asks "how are we doing out there?" you answer with a record, not a feeling.
- 04 **There's an instructions file for AI at the root.** A note that tells any AI assistant the map and the rules of the vault — so it files things correctly and pulls from the right folders. The vault isn't just AI-readable; it's AI-operable.
- 05 **It's all markdown** (Guide N° 03) — which means AI can draft the board memo, the grant narrative, or the annual report FROM the vault, citing what's actually in it.

## 04 THE PAYOFFS, CONCRETELY

- Board packet prep** pulls from 09 + 03 in minutes — last meeting's decisions, this month's project statuses.
- Grant applications** reuse 07's data and 12's regulatory reference instead of re-researching every time.
- Onboarding** a new hire or board member = "read 00 and 01." The context transfer that used to take months.
- The annual report** assembles itself from what accumulated all year.

*The org chart says one person. The vault means the office never forgets.*

## 05 BUILD YOURS THIS MONTH

- 01 Create a new Obsidian vault named "[Your Org] Digital Brain" — separate from your personal one.
- 02 Steal the 12 folders above, then rename them to YOUR functions. A clinic's "05" isn't retail recruitment — keep the numbering, change the words.
- 03 Route meeting notes into it weekly — by hand at first, then automate it (Guide N° 05).
- 04 Move this quarter's data files out of Downloads into 07, one subfolder per source.
- 05 Write the AI instructions note at the root: the map, the rules, where things go. Then start asking AI questions your office used to forget the answers to.

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