



Advocacy Event Planning

This area provides step by step information on event planning.

HOW TO PLAN AN EVENT

Have a goal and desired outcome.

Goal of the event – As always, before moving ahead with planning a big event, make sure it is rooted in a specific goal and outcome. Be able to answer the following questions:

- How does this event help us achieve our campaign goal(s)?
- What is our message/vision with this event?
- Do we have enough buy-in for the event from stakeholders to move ahead?
- Is this event the best use of our resources, or would a different tactic be more effective?

PLANNING STEP-BY-STEP

1. **Assemble a team.** Make sure all the right people are a part of the planning process. Inclusion of key decision-makers or stakeholders can be a great way to build relationships and power. Delegate roles to make the planning process run smoothly.
2. **Create an ideal timeline and plan backward.** Include benchmarks for when things should be prepped and ready – materials, speakers confirmed, space confirmed, invites out, etc.
3. **Create a budget.** Determine what is necessary to implement the vision. Be sure to include fees for VIP speakers (honorarium, travel, lodging, food, etc..), rental fees, permits, equipment, promotional materials/advertising, catering, décor, materials.
4. **Set a date.** If necessary, find out from key participants what the best dates are for them in order to maximize turnout. Make sure to set the date far enough in advance to give VIPs enough lead time to fit it in their schedules.
5. **Reserve a location.** Brainstorm a big list of possibilities to ensure you'll find a quality facility for your ideal date. If you are planning a big event that requires special permits or security, apply and reserve as early as possible. Think about accessibility, ASL, and translation services.

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6. **Invite VIPs.** If it's a candidate forum, get invites to candidates as soon as you have a date and location set. Typically you'll need at least a month of lead time. If you're looking to invite an Expert Lecturer, Celebrity, etc, find out the lowest fee they'll speak for.
7. **Fundraise.** If your event requires funding beyond your resources, identify potential sources of funding and apply as early as possible. If you hold your event at a School, often you can partner with the School directly, and/or parent and student groups to get funding.
8. **Publicize the event.** Put up a website with details of the event, send out a formal email, use event sections in newspapers and websites, social networking sites, partner groups, etc.
9. **Create materials.** Branding your event will maximize your visibility and help tie it into your larger campaign. Materials for the event should include
 - Packets of info including speaker bios, organizational info, fact sheets, action plans, etc.
 - Podium banner
 - Name tags/pens
 - Sign-in sheets with clip boards
 - Materials in languages other than English, if necessary
 - Tote to carry your materials
10. **Logistics.** Make sure you give yourself enough time in advance to rent/buy everything you need.
 - Catering
 - AV equipment – find out what speakers need in advance ie projector
 - Permits/security
 - Materials
 - Volunteers – figure out what roles you need filled the day of the event and assign those roles out to the team. If you need volunteers beyond your capacity, recruit some. Colleges, partner groups, confirmed attendees, etc.
11. **Invite attendees.** Develop and vet an algorithm to determine how many people you'll need to invite to reach your target attendance, then brainstorm all the places from and methods by which you can reach people.
 - rule of halves
 - email invites – keep them short and to the point
 - make it easy for people to attend – directions on website, parking suggestions, refreshments, etc..
 - use macro and micro recruiting methods. Send a mass email, but also make individual phone calls. Individual recruitment is by far the most effective.

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12. **Invite the media.** If you question whether your event is media-worthy, you should question whether your event is worthy of being held at all. Get a Press Advisory out a week in advance, then again 2 days out, and a 3rd time the morning of. Make follow up calls each time. Have a press release ready to send out immediately after the event.
13. **Confirm VIPs.** Do this 1-2 weeks out.
14. **Confirm/Remind Attendees.** People forget things. Dance on the line of appropriateness when inviting and reminding attendees. You don't want to annoy them, but you want to maximize attendance. Send a reminder a week out, and another 1-2 days before. If you think necessary, send one the morning of as well. To minimize overkill, think of creative reasons for the multiple reminders. Ex. "We just found out New VIP will be attending – can't wait to see you there!"
15. **The Big Day.** Although everyone should be set in motion before the day of, there is plenty you can do to make sure the day runs early.
 - Make sure all the volunteers arrive early. Allow enough time for any last minute prep that needs to happen. Make sure there is someone to run errands if necessary.
 - Greet attendees as they arrive
 - Be ready to adjust the schedule to fit the mood of the event
 - Have a post-event celebration with volunteers, speakers, and important attendees.
16. **After the event.** Make sure to build on your success by
 - sending out thank-you's
 - adding attendee contact information to your contact database
 - follow-up on ideas or concerns that came out of the event
 - evaluation of the event

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Are special permits or security required?
- Continuing COVID requirements, precautions, and practices.
- Some venues have policies about what kind of food/drink can be served ie. No homemade or unpackaged food
- Weather – If you are doing an outdoor event, be prepared with canopies, tents, etc.
- Your municipality can help (with a fee) to put up no parking signs, provide sanitation services, etc.
- Ask for feedback on the planning process from confirmed attendees to maximize turnout.

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- Are children welcomed?
- Are things accessible, do you have ASL or other translation services?
- Is this an in-person/virtual/ hybrid event.

(RACC acknowledges much of this Advocacy Tool Kit and information is inspired from Arts for LA)

Accessibility Information

[American Sign Language Services](#) (ASL)

[Language Translation services](#)