

Let's Conceptualize Your Event!

FOR EVERYONE WHO HAS AN IDEA AND WANTS TO TURN IT INTO REALITY:

This handbook will give you the ABC's you need to initiate, think through, plan and develop any successful event. The basic framework is the same for all events, so once you've created one great event, you can use many of the same skills for a completely different event next time. Our desire is to provide you with a practical, step-by-step, easy to use "tool" to plan an event.

In this handbook we will cover how to plan an event. It can be used to define your objectives, deciding what kind of event you want to plan, and then actually planning the event. No guide can be definitive, though this one tries to be comprehensive. As you read through this guide, ask yourself: "For my event, what else do I need to consider?"

DEFINING YOUR OBJECTIVE

The first step in planning an event is to define your objective.

An objective is a goal, and objectives should be SMART:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time-bound

As you plan, think about these questions:

1. ***What is the objective of this event?*** DREAM BIG!
2. ***Who do you want to have participate in the event?***
 - a. Your objective will determine who you want to invite. – Be sure to think "outside the box"
 - b. Once you decide who you want to participate, think about what you want them to do.
 - Exchange ideas
 - Connect with family members
 - Participate in a sporting event or recreational activity
 - Listen
 - Watch
 - Etc.
3. ***How can you plan the event to achieve your objective and appeal to your participants?***
 - a. Educational and Informative: Workshops, Field trips, Meetings, Seminars
 - b. Raising Money: Festival, Concert, Entertainment

c. **People-to-People: Bringing people together**

Once you have decided what event you want to have, you need to get organized. Make a list of the tasks and decide how you are going to accomplish them. Organize your time accordingly. Depending on the size of the event, you will probably want to work with other people and share responsibility for planning the event.

LET'S PLAN YOUR EVENT

As you plan your event, you will utilize what we will refer to as building blocks that will become the structure and content of your event. While you may not use all of these building blocks, take time to consider each one and determine if it is part of your structure.

This is not an all-inclusive event manual. Ask yourself: "What else do we need to consider for our event?"

1. Building an Organizing Team

- a. Group of individuals that supports the goals of the event and assists with the planning and execution.
- b. One of the most important pieces of planning a successful event.
- c. They are who makes the event happen.
- d. What is a good Organizing Team?
 - Can work together
 - Gives support to the organizers as they do their work
 - Completes the tasks that it sets out to accomplish
 - Have fun

Some events may not require a whole "Team", but surround yourself with willing workers who can help with specific tasks.

Working as a Team: How the Team will operate

- You will be making decisions about the event and the event planning. Therefore, you will need a good decision making process and communication process so that everyone's input and effort is valued and considered.
- Have a coordinator/facilitator (s) to chair the meetings and coordinate the work that will be done by other team members.

Task Allocation: All the steps needed to accomplish something

- As people commit to doing a task, make sure they are available to see it through to completion.
- Share the responsibility

2. Creating the Agenda and Set the Date

Deciding how to allocate time during your event is one of the most important elements of planning a good event. Plan your event to appeal to your participants.

Activities within your event

- If your event requires audience participation think about ways to make the structure interesting
- Consider social breaks

Allocating Time

- Make sure you include sufficient time for every stage of the event, including time for meals and coffee breaks, and moving from one location to another
- Be realistic about beginning and ending times
- Be on time

Staffing the Event

- Greeters
- People to Chair the meetings
- Information providers

Setting the Date

- Make sure the event does not happen on a date when other major events are taking place
- Pick a time that accommodates those who will attend

3. Creating a Budget

When you're making a budget, look at the money you will spend (expenses) and the money you will be bringing in (revenue).

Expenses:

- **Venue** (location)
 - a. Rental fees
 - b. Security deposits (will these be refunded?)
 - c. Additional costs: Insurance, facility staff charges (janitor, sound, etc.)
- **Catering**
 - a. Will you be providing the food and drinks?
 - b. Are you required to use the food service providers that are located at the facility you are renting, or can you bring in outside caterers?
 - c. What can you afford?
- **Promotion:** Flyers, posters, invitations, media ads, posters, announcements
- **Materials:** Flip charts, name tags, markers, pins, T-shirts, etc.
- **Presenters:** Will you need to pay expenses for anyone who speaks or does a presentation?

- **Documenting the Event:** Camera film, video tapes, film development
- **Subsidizing Participants:** If someone cannot afford to come, will you help them cover their costs to attend?

One good way to organize your budget is to make a chart. Include Cost, Revenue and Bottom Line.

After you have created your budget chart, check where you can cut costs. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What is my break-even item: How much money do I have to bring in to cover my costs?
2. What can I acquire through donations?
3. Can I negotiate costs any lower?
4. What costs can be reduced? Be creative
5. What are really necessary costs?

4. Covering the Costs

There are a few different ways you can cover your costs, and most people use a combination of methods.

In-kind Contributions: Goods or services, including equipment, supplies, space and even staff time

Donations and Contributions: Registration fees, donations and contributions from individuals, businesses or organizations

Technical Assistance: Advice, counsel and direction about things related to your event.

5. Generating Income

You may not always need to make an income, but if you do, here are some ideas.

Participation Fees: Consider the following when determining the fees.

- a. How much will people pay?
- b. Cost to attend similar events
- c. What people who will attend can afford

Product Sales: Food, Baked items, t-shirts, souvenirs

You may need a permit to sell food. Check with the proper authorities.

6. Promoting the Event

What's one thing you absolutely need for a successful event? Participants

Reaching Your Participants:

- a. Invitations: face-to-face, over the telephone, via email, social networks or regular mail
- b. Hand out publicity flyers wherever you can

- c. Publicize it any way you can: papers, newsletters, church bulletins, posters, radio, bulletin boards
- d. Announce it during other events

Best Tried and True Method for Bringing People to Your Event: Word of Mouth

Publicity Materials: Worth investing your time and energy in this.

- a. Name of Event
- b. Location of Event
- c. Time of Event (start and finish)
- d. Cost of Event
- e. Contact Information
 - Include telephone number, email address, and postal address
 - Make sure you can be contacted by people who may not regularly use the latest advanced technologies.
- f. Additional information that may enhance your event attendance
 - If you need to have translators, that they will be available
 - If childcare is provided
 - Handicapped accessible
 - Map with the location marked

Choosing the Right Title for your Event: The title sets the atmosphere for the event, so you want it to reflect the event you are trying to create.

7. Coordinating the Media

Media coverage ranges from a Newsletter notice to special feature articles on radio, internet, newspapers and magazines.

- This is a great way to let people know about your organization and what you are doing.
- Make your event newsworthy.
- Make sure that contact information is included with any information you give out

Ways to Use the Media

- a. Issue a press release
 - i. What
 - ii. When
 - iii. Where
 - iv. Who
 - v. Contact information
- b. Call in to radio shows or ask to be included in an interview type of program

- c. Buy (or get donated) advertisements on radio and newspapers.
- d. Utilize the local Cable Channel to promote your event
- e. Write an article about the event and post on an internet site.

8. Logistics: All the details that make the event happen.

The Organizing Committee should be responsible for coordinating each of the logistical tasks.

- Agenda
- Venue
- Inviting Speakers and Facilitators
- Props
- Materials
- Meals and Refreshments
- Responding to Inquiries and Confirming Attendance
- Registration
- Transportation

Agenda: How the event will look.

- a. Where the participants will be at what times
- b. Who is responsible for that piece of the agenda

Time	Activity	Who's Responsible?

Venue: Maps are a great asset

- a. Where the event will be held
- b. How long the event will last
- c. Who will set up
- d. Who will clean up

Logistical Details	Does the site have it?	Where will we get it?	Who is responsible for set up	Other details
Chairs	Yes	Storage closet	Joe	They can be set up at 4:00 PM
Tables	No	Rent All or Borrow from school	Pete	Jack and Tom will help bring tables over to the building at 4 PM

Microphone	No	Borrow from school	Shelly	
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Inviting Speakers and Facilitators

- a. Contact them
- b. Introduce yourself
- c. Explain the event
- d. Ask for their participation

Be prepared to pay an honorarium or fee for some speakers.

Props

Tools that you will need to run the event.

(Flip charts, markers etc.)

Materials

Welcome Packets

- Welcome letter
- Agenda
- Schedule of times and locations
- Map
- Name Tags
- Writing paper and pen
- Area information (Things to do, Restaurants, etc.)

Meals and Refreshments

Very important to include meal and refreshment breaks during your event and that you organize them well.

- Order food from the caterer
- Organize the food pick-up or delivery
- Organize the set-up and clean up
- Make sure enough beverages are available
- Food dispersal

Responding to Inquiries & Confirming Attendance

Name	Phone Number	Attending?	Email	Address

- a. Save your lists
- b. Confirm attendance

Registration

If your event requires registration, you should create a system for keeping your records.

- Participant's name
- Participant's contact information
- Whether they need lodging
- Whether they require special meals
- Whether they have paid the registration fee

Lodging

Organize lodging for speakers and participants.

Transportation

- If transportation is needed from an airport make sure you organize that ahead of time.
- If transportation is needed from event to event make sure that is arranged ahead of time.

Document Your Event

- Take notes
- Take photos
- Make a video

9. Executing Your Event

a. Welcome Everyone!

b. Registration

There are a few things to take care of.

- Assigning of name tags
- Giving out event materials, including the schedule
- Make sure that lodging is taken care of

c. Information Table/Registration Desk

Make sure someone is available throughout the event to answer questions.

d. Venue Maintenance

The venue must be prepared before the event and maintained throughout the event. If it is more than one day, make sure it is tidied up daily.

e. Staff the Event

Make sure everyone knows where they are expected to be and what they are expected to be doing.

f. Coordinate the Media

g. Transportation

h. Evaluation forms

i. Record your event

10. Wrap Up Your Event

a. Reflect and Assess

- How did the event go overall?
- Did your target participants come to the event?
- Did you follow your agenda?
- How was your pre-event planning? Were you prepared for the event?
- What would you do differently in the planning of your next event?

b. Follow-up

- Correspondence: Be in touch with the people who were a part of the event.
- Delivering post-event materials
- Thinking ahead

As you reflect on your event after it is over, remember to take notes of your thoughts and ideas. You can use them to innovate your next event.

CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING YOUR EVENT

Have you...

- Decided on the objectives of your event?
- Decided what kind of event you want to have?
- Decided if you will organize the event on your own or with a team?

If you decide on organizing as part of a team, have you...

- Found other people who will organize the event with you?
- Divided up the tasks that need to be accomplished?
- Decided how you will make decisions in your group?

In your list of tasks to be accomplished, have you included...

- Setting a date for your event?
- Picking a venue?
- Setting a time?

Have you...

- Made a budget?
- Made a plan for obtaining funds?
- Secured a venue?
- Created a plan for promoting your event?
- Created promotional materials?
- Decided what type of media coverage you want?
- Set an agenda?
- Invited speakers?
- Invited participants?
- Written or collected the Welcome Packet materials for your participants?
- Written or collected the Welcome Packet materials for your speakers?
- Made sure your venue caters to those with disabilities?
- Taken care of all the details?
- Organized transportation, if necessary?
- Confirmed the attendance of your participants and speakers?
- Arranged for translation, if necessary?
- Arranged for child care, if necessary?
- Created a map to your venue or given directions?

Are you prepared to...

- Be flexible in case anything unexpected happens?
- MOST IMPORTANT, IS SOMEONE ACCOUNTABLE FOR MAKING SURE EACH OF THESE TASKS IS ACCOMPLISHED?**

CHECKLIST FOR EXECUTING YOUR EVENT

Have you...

- Made sure everything is ready?
- The Welcome Packets?
- The venue?
- The food?
- The props that will be needed?
- Made a back-up plan, just in case?

Is someone...

- Welcoming the participants, guests, speakers, and media representatives?
- Registering the participants and giving them their Welcome Packets?
- Staying at the registration desk during the entire event to give assistance?
- Staffing the event, facilitating the meeting, introducing speakers?
- Making sure the venue stays clean and neat?
- Documenting the event?

CHECKLIST AFTER THE EVENT

Are you...

- Reflecting on and assessing your event?
- Writing thank you letters?
- Delivering any post-event materials?

Will you...

- Think ahead about how you will pursue the connections made and ideas generated during this event?
- Think about how you can organize an even better event next time?