

EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

This guide was developed to assist in planning and implementing an event through your peer leadership group activities.



Develop the Idea

All events begin with an idea, but brainstorming is the key to turning your idea into a successful event. Keep an open mind throughout this process, as the original concept may evolve into one that's completely different from where the group started. It's also a good idea to take notes during the discussion.

Once everyone has agreed on an event concept, it's time to flesh it out. You can do this by determining the event's objectives and outcomes and the target audience and their desires.

ESTABLISH THE EVENT'S PURPOSE

When planning an event, it's crucial to be clear and precise about its goals and desired outcomes.

Considerations:

- What do you want this event to accomplish?
- Why is it important to host this event?

IDENTIFY THE TARGET AUDIENCE

With a target audience in mind, you can plan appropriate activities and market the event.

Considerations:

- What age range are you targeting?
- Why is this your target audience?
- What type of activities does this target audience typically attend?
- What is the message/information necessary to get to your target audience

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE OR TOPIC TO ADDRESS

The issue or topic you focus on will depend on your community's issues, concerns, and priorities. It is vital to understand demographics, community awareness of the issue, local policies, and opportunities to partner with like-minded groups or organizations.

Considerations:

- Traffic safety issues
- Underage drinking
- Marijuana use
- Teen dating violence
- Eating disorders
- Mental health-related topic

Review the [Illinois Youth Survey](#) (IYS) results for your school or community. Meet with the community stakeholders to identify what to address at your event.

Planning the Event

Now that you've brainstormed event ideas and selected one, it is time to envision what the event will look like.

Create an overview of the event, assign roles and responsibilities within your group, evaluate potential venues, determine

equipment and supplies needed and obtain the necessary approval.

This information will be helpful when talking to potential sponsors, marketing the event and recruiting volunteers (if needed).

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Event Title	Select a title that reflects the occasion or the target audience. Try to be clear, concise and, if possible, catchy.
Date of Event	Identify any other events scheduled around the same time. Competing with other events may result in low attendance.
Time & Duration of Event	Consider the best time and duration for the audience and the activities you are planning, depending on the event location restrictions.
Event Goals & Outcomes	Clearly state the event goals and desired outcomes. Clear goals will not only maintain focus on planning, but also maintain focus on planning and help to if outcomes are met.
Description of the Event	Prepare a description of your event. A clear description will allow members to communicate with potential sponsors and/or partners.
Target Audience	Describe your target audience, including their age range, gender and geographic location. Another important aspect is explaining how this event is beneficial to this target audience. This information will be helpful if recruiting sponsors or volunteers for your event and can be used for any press coverage of the event.
Number of Attendees	Although it might be difficult to state an exact number of attendees, try to estimate anticipated attendance for the event. It might be helpful to look at similar past events to determine the number.
Event Programming	Detail the activities that the event will involve. It might be a standalone event, such as a town hall meeting, expert panel discussion or Quick Click, Buckle Up Challenge. (Sample agenda in the appendix.)
Budget	Determine potential expenses for the event and brainstorm ways to cover those expenses through partnerships, sponsorships and donations.
Volunteers/ Staff	Determine how many staff or volunteers are necessary to coordinate and attend the event. Brainstorm ways of recruiting volunteers.



SELECT THE LOCATION

Finding the appropriate location is an essential step in planning. Location can often set the tone for the event. It's crucial to select an easy-access place for participants and local media (if you invite them).

Some ideas for potential locations:

- Churches
- Hospitals
- Community Centers
- Public and private schools, universities and colleges
- Public libraries
- Parks or other outdoor facilities

Some locations may let you use their space for free or at a reduced rate. The date and time are equally important and may depend on your venue's availability. When selecting a date, consider school and community calendars to avoid competing with other events.

INVITE AND REGISTER ATTENDEES

Put together an invitation list of individuals and organizations. Strive for a diverse audience.

Think about who would benefit most from attending your event: local youth; civic and political leaders; prevention, treatment and recovery community leaders; parents; educators; school administrators; law enforcement officials and public health officials.

Invite peer leadership group members and other school-sponsored groups to attend the event. If necessary, set up a process for RSVPs to monitor attendance and help recruit and organize speakers. Consider creating an event page on Facebook for this purpose.

STAFF YOUR EVENT

Identify people who could help with the event. They can be peer leadership members, other student leadership groups and community members.

Examples of staff roles:

- Registration
- Greet and seat members of the audience and panelists
- Distribute materials

EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

- Record comments and questions from the audience
- Manage equipment set-up
- Manage any other important logistical matters.

Partner organizations can be sources of volunteers. Ensure you welcome, orient all volunteers and acknowledge them in welcoming remarks.

PREPARE MATERIALS TO DISTRIBUTE ONSITE

Prepare event materials to distribute to attendees when they sign in.

Some ideas might be:

- Agendas
- Presenter bios
- Evaluation forms
- Fact sheets
- Information on how to get involved

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

How to Get Media There

Create a targeted media list (sample in appendix) to identify reporters interested in the event topic. Send an email to reporters on your targeted media list at least one week before your event. The email should focus on the speaker, participants and the importance of the event.

Follow up the email with a phone call. When talking with journalists, always focus on the importance of the event and the information covered.

Invite the public by adding a community calendar in the local newspaper, radio or other public information formats. Another way is to post flyers, posters or banners visible in popular places such as schools, community centers, coffee shops, restaurants, banks, grocery stores, faith-based organizations, public libraries or hospitals. Depending on where you post, there might be a charge.

It is important to keep your message concise when pitching your event. Identify three talking points that you want to get across when speaking to anyone you about your event. Make sure to keep these three points in mind whenever promoting your event.

Press Releases

If requested, write a press release. The press release should:

- Be no longer than one page in length (using no less than 11-point font or no more than 12-point font).



EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

- Include media or general-purpose point of contact, your school peer leadership group and contact information (phone and email).
- Include “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” and the date the press release is issued.

Create a press kit

Prepare a press kit to hand out to reporters. It should include the following:

- Press release
- Fact Sheet with local stats
- Brief bios of speakers
- Contact information

Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for raising awareness about causes and events. Create a Facebook event page to have all event information in one spot and easily shared by others. Post about the event on school and personal social media platforms.

Don't forget to use the following YPRC hashtag #YPRC for us to share as well!

Hold the Event

To ensure a successful event, assign volunteers and staff to different tasks and make sure that you've given them the information and training they need to do their jobs.

Setting Up

- 1 ROOM SET UP:** Some people should arrive early to ensure the room is set up correctly and make any last-minute adjustments. Make sure tables, chairs, podiums, equipment and visual displays are ready. It may be helpful to have a sound system, including table microphones for the panelists and a stage or elevated panel table in the front of the room.
- 2 SIGN-IN TABLE:** Set up a sign-in table where you can collect names and contact information for everyone who attends.
- 3 SIGN-IN SHEETS:** Include name and contact information. The sign-in sheets will give you a record of attendance and enable follow-up with all the participants. Remember to have a separate sign-in sheet for the speakers to help you and your moderator manage the event and formally thank them afterward.
- 4 HANDOUTS:** Have packets with agendas, organization flyers, informational brochures, evaluations and other materials to give to attendees. Remember to provide pens if requesting a paper evaluation.

The Event

- 1** Open the event with introductions. Introduce yourself and any other speakers and presenters, tell attendees about the event's purpose or goals and explain the flow of the program/event. Thank everyone involved in putting the event together.
- 2** Consider serving water, tea or snacks for attendees.
- 3** Allow question and answer time for audience members.
- 4** Conclude the event by thanking everyone for attending.
- 5** **Take Pictures!** Photos are extremely important to not only show the success of your event but increase awareness around the issue. Share the pictures on social media platforms. *Make sure to obtain permission before posting if you are taking pictures at a school event.

Post Event To-Do

CONDUCT A DEBRIEF

Compile the evaluations from the event no more than two weeks after your event. Schedule a meeting with key people involved in planning to discuss how it went.

Ask:

- Were the goals of the event achieved?
- What are the next steps?
- How can we take the information and apply it to action?
- What was the media coverage?

After the debrief, think about the discussion, and determine what actions you need to take next, if applicable. Develop an action plan (found in appendix). Some possible ideas are policy recommendations and /or information dissemination.

SEND THANK YOU NOTES

It's crucial to send individual thank-you notes to speakers and partners, as well as a generic thank-you email to all attendees. Make sure to include the website address for the campaign, if applicable. Send these communications within 72 hours of the event. Consider using event photos in thank-you posts on social media.

EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't forget to share highlights and appreciation for those who supported or helped to plan the event on social media.

STAY CONNECTED

Stay connected with YPRC! Share pictures and use the hashtag #YPRC to share your success on our social media.

Example Format /Agenda Expert Panel

Content	Time	Explanation
Welcome and Introductions	5 Minutes	Welcome participants and introduce planning members and panelists. Briefly review the schedule and what participants can expect from the event.
Presentation	20-30 Minutes	Panel members present information on the event topic and within the agreed-upon time. Presentations could cover latest trends, impacts and warning signs associated with the issue.
Question and Answer	15 Minutes	Attendees ask questions about the information provided at the event.
Wrap Up	5 Minutes	Thank people for attending and sharing resources.



Event Feedback Form

Thank you for your attendance at the (FILL IN EVENT NAME) today! Please take a moment to complete this form and leave it with your event host. We appreciate your feedback. It will help us plan future events.

I found the information to be informative: Yes ___ No ___ Explain:

Did you receive the information you expected? Yes ___ No ___ Explain:

Was sufficient time provided for the presentations? Yes ___ No ___ Explain:

Was sufficient time provided for Q&A? Yes ___ No ___ Explain

Any additional suggestions?

References

California Friday Night Live, *A Powerful Force: A Guide to Youth-Led Town Hall Meetings* (Date unknown)

<http://www.fridaynightlive.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Guide-to-Youth-Led-THMs-potential-final-sans-quote-Formatted.pdf>

Davey, Thomas. (June 2021). *The Ultimate Event Planning Guide: How to Plan an Event*. (Accessed May 2022)

<https://www.eventtia.com/en/blog/the-ultimate-event-planning-guide-how-to-plan-an-event>

Faces and Voices of Recovery, *Community Listening Forum Toolkit: Taking Action to Support Recovery in Your Community* (Date unknown)

<https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/publication/community-listening-forum-toolkit/>

Morand, Tatiana. (December 2021) *How to Plan an Event: A Complete Guide*. (Accessed May 2022).

<https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/how-to-plan-an-event#1-develop-your-event-goal-and-objectives>



EVERY DECISION MATTERS.

Headquarters

2800 Montvale Drive
Springfield, IL 62704
P: (217) 793-7353
F: (217) 793-7354
Toll-Free: (800) 252-8951

Branch Office

33 W. Grand Avenue, Ste. 300
Chicago, IL 60654
P: (312) 988-4646
F: (312) 988-7096
Toll-Free: (800) 252-8951

PREVENTION FIRST 