myCommunity

Parks and Green Spaces: How to run successful events

Thinking about people and having a good plan is vital to a successful event. Avoid common pitfalls with the handy tips and reminders in this guide.

What do you want to achieve?

Set clear objectives

- Should the event raise awareness of, and support for your group? Would you like to get people's input into a consultation, or tell them something, or would you just like to bring people together? Are you aiming to raise money, or just to have fun? Once you know your **objective**, keep it in mind and let it inform your decisions about the event.
- How will you measure success? Set yourself some **measurable goals** related to your objectives (it could be anything from the number of people attending to the extent of the area your volunteers cover, the kilos of litter picked to the number of new members signed up to your group), and think ahead about how you will measure them and evaluate the event.

Think about people at the start, and throughout

Understand and involve your **audience**, then use this understanding to plan and promote the event. If you can, get out and meet them to ask them questions and if not, always ask yourself:

- Who are you hoping to attract to the event?
- Why would they come, what's in it for them?
- What are their needs, motivations and interests?
- Are there any potential partners in your area (i.e. community organisations, local businesses, very active or influential local residents)? Who else is offering something similar to you or addressing similar groups of people? Who has their ear? Could you partner with them in organising the event, or could they help you spread the word?

Think real!

Give yourself enough time

- Start planning your event well in advance to give yourself enough time to organise everything
- Establish a timeline. Think about how much time you will need to put a team together, organise the event, and to publicise it. How much notice will you need to give your audience to ensure enough people attend and participate?
- Don't forget to check the date against other local events, bank holidays, religious festivals etc. Are there any dates you should avoid, or are there any that you should use to make your event more successful?
- Will you need potential attendees to book in advance, and how will you receive bookings?

Set a clear budget, and stick to it

- What's your budget? Be realistic about the resources you have and the resources you need for the activities you're planning. Think about everything you will need (venue, catering, furniture, equipment, promotions... do you need uniforms, merchandise or branded items?)
- Prioritise your spending – what's necessary, what's a 'nice to have', and what gives you the most bang for your buck?
- Add some contingency for unexpected situations that might bring extra costs.

Find a location, and make sure it is accessible

- Find a location that suits your purposes (will it be outdoors, indoors, a large or small venue, do you need natural light...?)
- Include **accessibility** in your site selection process, think about the location of your event and the activities on the day and potential access needs. You can use the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's event planning checklist](#).
- Think about how participants will arrive at the event. By car, train, bus, or by foot? Will they need help on the day? Take note of all the details of public transport and parking, and distances from landmarks if there are any nearby, so you can send give this information to your audience
- Is there accessible public transport nearby? Is there accessible connecting transport suitable for wheelchair users (e.g. taxis) from public transport links if required?

- Check the location in person and use an accessibility checklist during your visit to determine if the venue is accessible and what measures you can put in place to make is even more so.
- Put information on your publicity about how accessible your event will be, so that people know in advance if their needs are going to be catered for.
- You could also invite people to contact you in advance if they have a particular access need, so that you can adjust your plans to make the event accessible for them.
- Are there procedures in place for evacuating disabled people, including wheelchair users, in an emergency? Ask for a copy of the procedures in advance and prepare one if you'll be outdoors.
- Consider if you need a plan B for last minute weather changes or other unforeseen circumstances.
- Will you need to change the layout, bring furniture, equipment, or decorations?

Make sure your event is accessible, not just the venue

You can use the [Equality and Human Rights Commission' event planning checklist](#).

Plan and put a team together

- How much help do you need, and who has the right skills and expertise for the different tasks? Put together a team, perhaps a core group to organise the event, with extra help from volunteers on the day.
- Who will be doing what? Clearly establish **roles and responsibilities** on the organising committee. What's expected from each person?
- Be clear about how the group is going to work and collaborate. Will you email or meet regularly? **Communicate clearly** and, if possible, have an easily accessible place for everyone to update their progress or check in whether tasks have been completed, are on track, or overdue. This can be a physical place, like a folder at your meeting venue, or digital, like a spreadsheet or an online document.

Cover yourself and inform your audience – legal and practical considerations

Health and safety

- What dangers are there at your event location or in your activities? What can you do to avoid accidents and injuries? Conduct a thorough and systematic **risk assessment** in writing, and include in it everything you will do to counteract the inevitable risks. Make sure key people have read it, understood their responsibilities, and have a copy of it on the day.
- Make sure you have trained **first aid** in attendance (at least one person for small events, but a visible first aid point for larger events).

Data and GDPR

If you are asking participants to book and give you their personal data, make sure you are GDPR compliant in how you store and for how long. If you would like to keep in touch with your participants in the future, make sure you explain clearly what you will use their data for and ask for their consent in storing and using their data. You will need to keep a record of their consent, as well as a date stamp for it.

Activities and equipment

If you plan to deliver children's activities, be clear in your publicity whether you are providing care for unsupervised children, or whether children need an adult to attend with them.

Photography

Do you plan to photograph or film your event? Make sure should put up signs informing people that they might be photographed or filmed. You should always gain parental consent before photographing children.

Insurance

Consider whether you need to take out public liability insurance. Public liability insurance will help protect your organisation from costs associated with lawsuits brought by members of the public.

Inform your attendees so they know everything they might need

- If you take bookings in advance, make sure you send confirmations and joining instructions to participants. What should people expect? How should they prepare for the day? How will they get to the event?
- If there is no need for attendees to pre-book, you should provide as much information as possible in your promotion, posters, or online.
- Send reminders and build excitement before the day!

Plan any follow up ahead of time

- Think about cleaning and packing up in advance, and set clear responsibilities.
- How and when will you celebrate and reward your team?
- Consider how to evaluate the success of your event (how will you measure attendance numbers, will you need feedback from participants and will that be through conversations on the day, paper forms, or a survey sent by email? What data will you need and who will compile it?)

Prepare for the day

- Ensure staff/volunteers who are involved in running the day are assigned clear responsibilities. Provide them will all document in advance. This should include a running order and a list of things and locations to check on the day before the event.
- Plan to arrive early, and meet any staff, volunteers and contributors for a briefing. If anyone is expected later or is late, arrange for someone to meet them and check they know where to go and who to talk to.
- Consider whether there are any actions you want attendees to take after the event and how you plan to achieve this? This may include donating, following you on social media, signing up for a newsletter, learning about another event. Plan to maximise the interaction you have with your audience during and after the event.

On the day

- Brief the team and give them a tour of the location.
- Make sure each member of the team is fully briefed and has a document with the information they need and the assigned responsibilities, so that every person knows who to contact for any specific issues.
- Make sure everyone knows who to contact in case of problems, emergencies, and any safeguarding issues.
- Go through your checklist. Is everything where you need it to be? Have all supplies arrived? Go through the running order again.
- Check regularly that everyone is where they are needed – are some parts of the event overstaffed and do others need help, should anything be rearranged?

- Make sure participants feel comfortable, welcomed, and are being helped if needed.
- Are there any recurrent problems that need fixing?

After the event

Take time to rest, celebrate, and evaluate

- Don't forget to rest! After most events, organisers and team will need some down time.
- Celebrate! Events take a lot of effort and energy, seeing the event happen after all the planning is a reward in itself. However, taking the time to celebrate with your team is important and motivating.
- Evaluate! What has worked well, what hasn't, what have you learned, and what would you do differently next time? Set up a wash up meeting and/or a report, and share what you've learned.
- Follow up with your attendees. Thank them for coming, share pictures, anecdotes, successes (i.e. for a fundraising event let them know how much you raised and what you plan to use those funds for). If there was anything you wanted them to do after the event, prompt them in your follow up.