Creating an Event Plan

If your organization is planning to host an event, developing a plan will allow you to move forward in an organized fashion, creating an environment for success!

There are six steps to include in your plan:

1. Organization and Community Assessment
2. Goal Setting
3. Planning
4. Implementation
5. Post Event Assessment
6. Administrative Decision Making

Your organization should include Step 1- Organization and Community Assessment- as a component of your goal setting for the year. Having this information from the beginning will allow you to move forward a plan for all events/activities.

**Step 1: Organization and Community Assessment**

- **Current Operations**- Determine what activities and programs are already in place and serving the community’s needs.
  1. Will your efforts be duplicating or contradicting existing programs?
  2. Have your previous activities/events met your organization’s goals, furthered your mission and the mission of the University?

- **Needs**- Use both obtrusive measures (asking students to supply program ideas) and unobtrusive measures (such as consulting with other student groups, faculty advisors, community leaders).
  1. Brainstorm with your organization members
  2. Discuss your goals and mission with your faculty advisors, other student groups, and community leaders. What activities/events would they suggest/support?

- **Institutional Environment**- Consider the institutional mission, history, and political climate and the views of the significant campus decision makers.
  1. Are you providing a perspective of an issue that may be viewed as controversial? If so how are you creating an environment of care for the University community as we move forward?

- **Resources**- Determine the availability and skill levels of your organization leaders, members and volunteers; anticipated costs, potential funding sources, and availability of money; available resources such as space, furnishings, equipment, and services.
  1. How many individuals will support the development of the organization or project? Are they skilled in the areas that will allow successful completion of the project?
2. What are the anticipated costs? Investigate the large items; (performers, space, food, etc.) estimate the small items (marketing, decorations, etc)?
3. What funds do we have available currently?
4. Who can we target for additional $ resources?
5. Are the expenses reasonable? Estimated Cost per person?
6. What facility will accommodate your event?
7. What environment do you want to create?
8. What support services do you need?

Once your organization answers these questions, you can just check back each time to see how your current event plan plays out.

The next step in creating an event plan is to **Goal Set**.

**Step 2: Goal Setting**

- **Target Population**-Identify whom the program is intended for, and take steps accordingly to be appropriately inclusive or restrictive in planning.
  1. What marketing will bring in your target population?
  2. Does the identified venue (location) allow you to capitalize on seating capacity?
  3. How are we or are we targeting the fee paying student population?
- **Desired Outcomes/Objectives**- Be clear about what you expect to accomplish and what you plan to achieve. Indicate for whom and what conditions outcomes should occur. Since broad-based goals are difficult to evaluate, set specific, measurable objectives.
  1. Is there an educational component of your activity?
  2. Is community building intended?
  3. Is this a recruitment activity for your organization?
  4. How will you measure to determine if your goals were achieved?
- **Brainstorm ideas with your organization**- At this stage all ideas are good ideas. Start by asking these questions:
  1. What types of activities will allow you to meet your goals?
  2. What scope of activity your existing resources can support?
  3. What is your organization committed to moving forward?

**Step 3: Planning**

- **Planning team**-Establish a small but effective working group with a broad range of skills that is able to function as a team. The team must include members of the target population or others affected by the program, particularly if the target group is not a mainstream group. Brainstorm for the event.
  1. What are the major components of your event? Establish an event committee and then create a sub-committee for each component.
2. What role will your organization leader (President) play? Remember organization Presidents are responsible for the wellness of the organization this does not mean the management of events.
3. Establish an Event coordinator position for your organization, this will allow the President to participate in the program instead of managing it.
   * see Creating an Event Committee.

- **Approach**- Consider your target population and consider how the group learns, what media are available, what delivery system will be most effective, and whether to use convergent thinking to focus the planning group or a divergent approach to consider different learning styles.
  1. How will the planning committee develop an environment to achieve the goals?
  2. How will the planning committee be organized for success?

- **Initial Extent of the Program**-Determine the initial scope of the program-one hour, multiple hours, multiple days, simple or complex (a speaker or a dinner, dance and speaker).
  1. What type of program will allow you to meet your goals?
  2. What scope of activity your existing resources can support?
  3. What is your planning committee committed to moving forward?

- **Training**-Compare committee members’ skills and abilities against tasks to be performed to determine what training is required. Build in enough time to allow skill development, including train the trainers if appropriate.
  1. What committee members are best suited for what tasks?
  2. Do you need to allow extra time to get our committee prepared to move this activity forward?

- **Time line**-Determine a target date and work backward to establish a realistic, week-by-week activity plan. Select a day, date, and time most conducive to the target populations needs and circumstances. Avoid conflicting with major traditional activities, academic events like final exams, or religious holy days or other special events observed by different members of the campus community.
  1. How many weeks are there between now and your event?
  2. Have each sub-committee create a backwards time-line for their activities.
     Use this as a touchstone to track the planning progress.

- **Budget**-Determine the actual fiscal resources necessary to complete the program, including all costs for personnel, materials, space, marketing, food, transportation, equipment, etc.
  1. Does your current available budget cover these costs?
  2. Do you need to identify a plan to generate more money?
3. Will you be selling tickets?

- **Risk Assessment**- Assign someone to act as the Risk Manager for your organization. This individual is responsible for assessing all organization activities to determine the level of risk and establishing a risk plan for each activity.

**Step 4: Implementation**

- **Responsibilities**- Delegate tasks and responsibilities, identifying clear lines of accountability, reporting relationships, and deadlines.
  1. Be realistic about task load.
  2. Keep in mind available amount of time.
  3. Allow people to identify others to support the work.
  4. Listen when someone says that he/she is swamped, identify others to help.
  5. Do not let things slip through the cracks and become crisis.
  6. Be proactive.
  7. Remember that the wellness of your organization and leadership, and success of your event are dependent on everyone being involved. Events should never be the responsibility of one or two individuals.

- **Publicity**- Catch the target group’s attention and make them want to seek more information. Use a variety of media and techniques. It may not be so much advertising the event as highlighting your organization. Involve members of the targeted group in designing the campaign.
  1. Has your event historically been a sell out? If so, plan to end your advertising of the event with in a day or two of tickets becoming available. Always include the ticket sale location, cost and availability in your marketing. Advertise ticket sales a minimum of 1 week in advance of the tickets becoming available.
  2. Remember to include an ADA statement in all of your marketing. “For accommodations related to ability contact, ______________ by __________.”
  3. Check with Student Involvement BRIDGES Team to learn about “Gorilla Marketing” techniques.
  4. A good marketing plan includes press releases, public service announcements, flyers, posters, table tents, MU bulletin boards, e-broadcast, word of mouth and the required paid Barometer advertising.

- **Location**- The location of the program and your knowledge of it is critical to the success of your program. Take into consideration the traffic flow, available square footage, possible set-up configurations, lighting, access, parking, technology and equipment.
  1. Set a meeting with the facility early in the planning process. Tell your event story; allow them to tell you what is possible. With enough time, and bit of money, almost anything is possible.
  2. Set specific times to meet with the facility throughout the planning process.
3. Communicate all needs and changes well in advance of the event.
4. Set specific times to meet with the facility event coordinator early on the day of the event, just prior to the event start and at the conclusion of the activity.

5. Document all of your interactions; follow up all conversations with an email outlining what you believe to have been agreed upon.

- **Equipment**- Be certain adequate amounts of all needed materials are on hand and in good working order. If a trained technician is required to operate a device, be sure to schedule that person.
  1. Check all equipment prior to the beginning of your event! Do not assume that anything works.
  2. Be certain to get specific equipment needs for all performers. How many microphones, what type of lighting, etc.

- **Evaluation**- Collect evaluative responses from participants. Solicit both process evaluations, on how well the planning and implementation went, and product evaluations, on the elements contained in the program itself. Use a variety of media for evaluation: face-to-face interviews, written forms, telephone calls, suggestion cards.

These are the first four steps in creating a comprehensive event plan. Organizations that take the time and make the effort to move forward in this way will have a comprehensive guide outlining the good work of the organization and an opportunity to raise the bar of success on their events.

Learn how to complete your plan after your event has occurred by reading Step 5: Post Event Assessment and Step 6: Administrative Decision Making.

**Step 5: Post Event Assessment**

- **Analysis**- Create tools to determine if the program planning and program met intended goals.
  1. Provide program participants opportunity to submit an evaluation on the event. Ask for feedback on all of the components of the event.
  2. Follow up with all service providers to evaluate the services provided, what worked---what did not work
  3. Review evaluation data and relate the information to program goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes. Prepare a report applicable to future programs.

- **Recognition and Rewards**- Identify individuals and groups who contributed significantly to the program’s success, including program planners, participants and sponsors publicly acknowledge and celebrate their roles.
1. With-in two weeks of the close of the event follow up with appreciation. Use email, cards, Barometer, etc.

- **Unexpected Outcomes**- Identify activities or events that were not part of the original plan and determine whether they impeded or enhanced the program.
- **Fiscal Evaluation**- Determine how well actual expenses matched anticipated costs for each program component, Identify unusual factors that may account for any change. Document all cost.
- **Programmers reactions**- Collect evaluative data from program planners, including suggestions for potential changes. Ask about both process and product.
  1. Have the members of the planning committee identify the strengths and weaknesses of the process and product, and what, if any, skills and abilities they further developed.
- **Ecological Impact**- Make sure the programs success did not come at the expense of some element of the campus environment. Determine the program’s impact on the campus community as a whole, on other programs, on physical space and its use, on non-targeted segments of the population, and on the institution’s mission and goals.
- **Community Building**- View the program in terms of its effect on efforts to develop positive relationships among all segments of the campus community and with the larger community surrounding the campus.
- **Program modifications**- Use all of the evaluation data to identify suggestions for program modifications. Make appropriate recommendations; even small changes can often bring a program closer to its stated goals and objectives.

**Step 6: Administrative Decision Making**

- **Future plans**- After examining all the information compiled in the post assessment step, decide on one of three actions for the future: modification, abandonment, or continuation. Pass on all information to the next leadership team of your organization
  1. If you are committed to continuation of the program support the next team of event planners by securing a possible location for the next event. All OSU event venues can be reserved one year in advance of the event date.

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Information taken from *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* by Komives and Woodard