



PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

Many organisations and groups are responsible for coordinating and delivering one-off and ongoing programmes and events, ranging from a social function at a local club to hosting a world championship event.

There are four simple steps that can help you develop and run a successful event or programme: planning; preparation; presentation; and evaluation. About 80 percent of the work in any project is in the planning and preparation stages. And the time spent on evaluation following the event will help ensure future projects run even better.

Step 1: Planning - Think it Through

- bring the ideas together (brainstorm)
- determine the purpose of the event
- time line the procedures required
- identify resources: staffing resources, equipment, facilities
- examine the costs (budget)
- define your goals
- consider what evaluation methods you will incorporate
 - what is to be achieved?
 - who is it for?
 - who can help?
 - what is it called?
 - how much does it cost?

Step 2: Preparation - Organise All That You Need

- make the bookings
- make the phone calls
- write the letters
- confirm all bookings and arrangements
- confirm all manpower - staff and volunteers
- work to a budget!
- confirm: facilities, equipment, transport
- guests and VIPs, PR and promotion.

This is the long and tedious part of the exercise, where most of the work is done. Attention to detail during the "preparation" stage can make or break your event or programme.

Step 3: Presentation - Conduct the Event

The event should run smoothly if adequate time and effort has been put into the planning and preparation stages. Minor problems may arise, however these should be insignificant and have little effect on the presentation of the event.

Step 4: Evaluation - Be Aware of Your Successes and/or Failures

Evaluating all aspects of your project and making recommendations can aid any future events. Ask yourself:

- where did I go wrong?
- what were my successes?
- how can I improve it?
- did the event achieve its goal and/or purpose?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Event Management

The event manager plays a critical role in the planning, coordination and subsequent success of any event. This is often a complex task incorporating many roles. The success of events is often assessed against economic, social, health, and safety measures. The measurements generally include the impact the event has on patrons, event staff, police, emergency services and the community. There is increasing government and community awareness of the legal responsibilities of event managers, specifically in relation to duty of care, negligence and workplace health and safety issues. Event managers need to be aware of these responsibilities and, as much as possible, ensure that their event management plans account for the health, safety and comfort of event patrons and staff, and minimise any disruption and harm to the community. You can find more information on your health and safety obligations in our Health & Safety for Events Guidelines.

Consultation with Key Stakeholders

It is essential that events are developed and reviewed in consultation with identified key stakeholders. All these key people need to be contacted about the event well in advance. Apart from the police, emergency services, local council and security personnel, it is helpful to brainstorm with the organising committee to generate a list of other groups which could be considered stakeholders. Involve those who may be affected by the event, they will appreciate the contact and will often be more cooperative and supportive if they are involved during the initial planning stages.

It is important that a record of contact with various stakeholders is kept on file. These details are useful in the planning phase of the event as well as being useful for any future events. The log can be kept in a diary or a separate book and should include the date, organisation, contact person and details of the conversation. A series of planning meetings should be conducted with the key stakeholders well in advance of the event to allow sufficient time for any planning changes.

Briefing - Before Event

Once the planning has been done it is essential to call all the participants together to conduct a pre-event briefing. Issues of communication, timetabling, responsible service of alcohol, security and emergency procedures should be clarified at this time.

Debriefing - After Event

A debriefing should be conducted with the key stakeholders after the event when information about the event, including attendance and incident data as well as staff and patron feedback, is available. This should be completed as soon as possible to ensure that all information is documented while fresh in the minds of the stakeholders. An event evaluation will be useful to determine what worked, what didn't work, and why. See the Evaluation section for more info on how to complete this.

Venue Selection

The selection and design of the venue will have a significant impact on all components of event planning and on the overall safety and success of the event. In the selection consider the following:

- services and equipment required
- movement of people in, out and around the venue
- crowd regulation and overspill areas
- access for service and emergency vehicles if required
- hazards in and around the area
- potential impact on the local environment
- road access
- traffic flows/parking
- provision for disabled people
- agreement of key stakeholders on selection of route.

There is a listing of event venues on Council's website.

Site plan

A site plan is a map of the event and an essential tool in event planning and management.

Firstly, as a way of communicating during the planning of the event, the site plan can be distributed for comment, and any problems or conflicts can be sorted out early in the planning phase. It may be that some stakeholders have not been to the venue before and a well detailed site plan may help them in their organisation.

Secondly, a site plan can be a worthwhile resource for setting up the event. Staff can use the plan to erect temporary first aid stations, food stalls, position seating, bins and to create walkways.

A site plan is invaluable in the event of an emergency. Security staff, police, first aid personnel and emergency services personnel should carry a copy of the site plan. The site plan can quickly determine the exact location of an incident or emergency thereby assisting in speedy responses.

Remember:

- for the site plan to be most useful it should be set out clearly on a grid format.
- surrounding landmarks and streets will help to identify the venue layout.
- entrances, exits, vendor locations, first aid posts, toilets, phones, security and licensed areas should be numbered, and/or indicated by a symbol.
- include a legend explaining all symbols and numbers.
- all access roads and pathways should be clearly marked to indicate use by patrons, vendors, performers and emergency service vehicles.

Event Promotion and Ticketing

A clear and well sequenced promotion and media strategy can significantly influence the expectations and subsequent behaviour of patrons.

Pre-event messages should promote:

- the focus of the event
- safe drinking practices
- availability of food
- entertainment and transport.

Tickets can also be an important means to disseminate quality information such as:

- maps

- patron information regarding restrictions
- services and their location
- safe drinking information
- transport arrangements
- gate opening and closing times
- personal health and safety warnings, e.g. water, sunscreen and hats.

Signage

Clear and appropriate signs help inform and direct patrons to:

- parking
- entrance conditions
- first aid services
- toilet facilities.

Signs should be strategically placed so patrons are informed before entering the event. This minimises conflict and congestion at entry and exit points. Signs must be displayed at all licensed areas.

Weather

For outdoor events in particular, the prevailing weather conditions should be a major factor in choosing the date and time for the event. Adequate space, freely available water and shade need to be provided before, during and after the event. Make a contingency plan for rain or hotter temperatures. If you need to cancel or change any arrangements, how will the public be notified?

Information Centres and Communications

For large events a well-identified, well-located, and well-publicised information centre on site, serviced by knowledgeable volunteers, can provide a full range of information services to patrons. Remember to mark the location of the information centre on the site plan. Communication between event staff is vital to ensure safety and security for both staff and patrons. Consider how you will communicate, as the organiser of an event, with patrons in emergency situations such as the need for an evacuation or lost children.