



## Planning a Resource Fair or Health Event

Resource Fairs and Health Events are great ways to offer the community valuable services and information. In addition, community events help public and private organizations showcase their resources and programs that contribute to the health, wellness and well-being of the public. A successful and well organized event can be an effective way to reach a “target” population.

It is exciting to host a Resource / Health Event! But be aware that hosting an event take planning, time, coordination and work. The Outreach Planning Group (OPG) at the Florida Department of Health in Broward County wants to help. **If you are new to the field, we encourage you to contact one of the following volunteer advisors from the OPG.** They can offer guidance and support to help you make your events successful and effective.

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## Steps to Planning a Successful Health Event

### 1. Set Goals and Objectives:

- Why do you want to host a health event?
- What would you like to accomplish?

The first thing an Event Planner or Planning Committee should do is figure out who you are trying to reach and what assistance or information your target audience needs from you. Don't just host an event because it sounds good. Get input from your target audience before you start planning. Focus on what you want to achieve.

Identifying goals and objectives will help guide your event planning, event promotion, implementation and evaluation. Share your goals and objectives with your managers and incorporate their suggestions. It is also important to share the goals and objectives with all event team members so everyone is on the same page.

Events that serve one group (church, school or neighborhood) can work well, but also consider thinking about a wider community. Smaller events may not be productive for organizations without a lot of resources for information tables.

### 2. Choose a title/theme

Before selecting a title/theme, consider the goals and objectives of the event, as well as the organization's philosophy or mission. Select a theme that will attract attention. Try to avoid religious and political names; they may turn off some people.

For example, if you are trying to reach an entire neighborhood to educate about the importance children's health, then "Investing in our children's health and nutrition" might be a good title/theme for the event.

You want a title/theme that will let potential participants know what the Event will be about and one that will encourage them to attend.

OPG members advise that Event Planners and participating organizations should offer people something more than information at the Event. For many people, information is not a compelling reason to attend. Offer a reward that benefits them – free screenings, prizes, raffles, food giveaway, entertainment or a subject that is important to them.

You may notice that this Guide does not use the term Health Fair. Many people who work in community outreach believe that the term may turn off people who feel they will be lectured to or told what they are doing wrong. The OPG prefers the terms Resource Fair or Health Event.

### 3. Check the Calendar

Start identifying possible date(s) for your event. Be flexible. Have alternate dates. Don't get locked in before you do some research.

Try to determine if similar events have been held recently in the area, and if anyone else is planning an event like yours. If so, **strongly consider forming a partnership** with the other events. Teaming up will strengthen your efforts – a single combined event will likely attract more people and be more effective than several small events.

You can view event listings at:

- DOH-Broward: <http://broward.floridahealth.gov/events/index.html>
- Broward Regional Health Planning Council: [www.brhpc.org/category/health-blog/](http://www.brhpc.org/category/health-blog/)
- Children's Services Council: [www.cscbroward.org/csc-sponsored-events](http://www.cscbroward.org/csc-sponsored-events)
- Google the date.

Other considerations:

- Be sure the date doesn't conflict with other large community events or holidays.
- Avoid peak vacation times and the first three weekends of August unless you are hosting a back-to-school event that MUST happen then. Those three weekends are SO CROWDED with events that you may do better switching to July, or combining efforts.
  - If you have more than one site, will you set a date for each site? Note that multiple events on the same date might hurt the turnout for both.
  - Consider what you will do if it rains (if it is an outdoor event).
  - If planning a weekend event, consider starting at 10 a.m. or later, depending on your area's patterns.

### 3. Pick a location

Choose a location that will be ideal and convenient for your target population.

- Parks are often good places for outdoor events.
- If participants need transportation, organize the event close to public transit lines.
- Make sure you have adequate lighting and electrical outlets for vendor booths. Examples: Cafeteria, large foyer or hallway, large meeting room.
- If the event is going to be held outside, make sure that there are shade and restrooms available.
- Do you need special permits from the city or county? What's the cost?

### 4. Set a Budget

Use your goals and objectives to help set your budget and allocate funds. Remember that a big budget isn't necessary for a successful event. However, you might want to

consider spending some money to attract attendance and participation. Know your target population and your community.

## **5. Develop a “To-Do” List**

Establish a “To-Do” list, outlining the following elements:

- Each task that needs to be completed
- The person responsible for that task
- The target completion date for each task

Add new responsibilities as they arise and be sure to allow adequate time for each task, keeping in mind that some tasks may need special approval or planning.

## **6. Solicit sponsors and invite organizations to participate**

If you need resources to stage the event or buy prizes, giveaways or other enticements, consider finding a sponsor. Look for companies, organizations or local businesses that have an interest in your target audience or your community. You can offer them special recognition and promotion as an inducement to become a sponsor.

Also, you can ask participating organizations, vendors or providers to donate items as prizes or raffle items. You can consider charging a vendor fee, but be aware that DOH-Broward and many agencies do not have an event budget and may skip your event.

To invite organizations to participate, first think about all of the community agencies, voluntary organizations, for-profit and non-profit organizations that would be valuable to the theme of your event. Make a list and contact them for support and participation.

A good way to invite organizations to set up information tables, be speakers or provide screenings is through the OPG organized by DOH-Broward.

Please fill out a vendor request form, which can be found on the [OPG page](#) of the DOH-Broward website. Pay special attention to page 2, where you list which types of services and programs you want to invite. Email the form to [chd06post@flhealth.gov](mailto:chd06post@flhealth.gov). Or fax the form to 954-713-3106.

Once DOH-Broward receives your form, we will send your event Information to all our programs and also to hundreds of organizations that participate in the OPG. The event information will also be posted on the DOH-Broward event list at <http://broward.floridahealth.gov/events/index.html>.

Be honest about the size and scope of your event, and give a realistic estimate for your crowd. The information helps organizations plan which events they attend.

Completing the form is not a guarantee that any of the services you requested will be available for your event. Each program and organization will decide individually whether to attend, based on the availability of staff and services.

Don't forget to identify departments within your organization or your community partners (e.g. Human Resources, food service providers, houses of worship, etc.) that may be able to contribute to your event.

### **7. Strongly consider attending an Outreach Planning Group meeting**

At each of our monthly meetings, OPG members give a constructive critique of events they attended during the previous month. Most participants have years of experience and know what vendors and the public want to find at an event.

Hearing their remarks BEFORE YOUR EVENT is a great source of valuable insight that can help you make your event more successful. At the meeting, you also can personally invite OPG members to participate as vendors.

OPG meetings are at 3 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month at DOH-Broward, 780 SW 24 St., Fort Lauderdale, 33315.

### **8. Confirm needs and content of your participating organizations (vendors)**

- What type of information your vendors will be sharing?
- How will the material be presented (display, brochures, demonstration)?
- What is the title of their display?
- What size is the display? Is there enough room?
- Do vendors need a table and chairs? How big and how many?
- Do they need electrical outlets?
- Is there a keynote speaker? Will a microphone or podium be needed?
- If there is food, you need proper heating and refrigeration.
- Will there be enough trash cans?
- When will vendors set up?

### **9. Promotion**

The best-planned health event will not help much if no one comes. **Weakness in promoting events is probably the most common failing of health events in our community.**

- Advertising can help a lot. Local print, radio and TV outlets generally require a few weeks advance notice to advertise an event.
- Create a marketing plan. It doesn't have to be fancy. But promotion is very important for generating awareness, interest and excitement about your event. You should begin promoting at least one or two months before the event.

- Look for a “champion.” This would be a local or national person respected or well-known to your target audience who will adopt your event to add star power and/or credibility.

Word of mouth is a good means of advertising. Do as much as you can. But you should also use any and all means available to promote your event:

- Send voice-mails, E-mails, banners/posters and announcements.
- Post and share info about the event on social media, which is more important than ever.
  - Request coverage and listings from media outlets. Contact newspapers, weekly and monthly publications, radio and television stations several weeks prior to your event. Send them an alert or press release (see sample below).
  - Mention the event in newsletters, bulletins and meetings that serve your target audience.
  - Distribute flyers to grocery stores, dry cleaners and other local business that serve your audience.
  - Personally invite to “key” people (e.g. local government officials, key business leaders, etc.).
  - Ask organizations that sign up to be vendors to help promote the event.

## **10. Logistics**

### Staffing

- One or two point persons who know all logistics, to help attendees and vendors.
- A crew to set up, tear down and clean up.
- Someone to move traffic.
- Someone to pleasantly welcome attendees and vendors.
- Adults to supervise if children are involved.

### Draft a floor plan

- Be mindful of the traffic flow – look for potential “jams” and try to move items to ease bottlenecks.
- Avoid crowding tables too closely. Leave space for people to stand and talk.
- Outline where each display will be set up.
- Note the location of electrical outlets and assign those areas based on need of the vendors.
- Give each display enough space (consider width and height).
- If you expect a large crowd, consider staggering people or having them enter in groups, to avoid backlogs at information and screening tables.
- If you have paying sponsors, consider giving them prime locations.

### Prepare a list of equipment that will be required

- Tables (how many and what sizes).
- Chairs.

- LCD projectors.
- Extension cords.
- Reserve all equipment and rooms well in advance (find out the procedure for the event location and follow it).

#### Other issues

- Is parking adequate?
- Is security needed?
- Will someone take pictures or videos at the event? If so, the person can immediately post on social media to help generate interest.
- If offering food, consider healthy choices. Don't forget snacks and water for the vendors, especially if the event runs over lunch or dinner.
- To avoid the potential for identity theft, do not allow participating organizations to collect personal information (Social Security numbers, date of birth, etc.) unless the organization is well-known and using a secure system.
- Consider screening out vendors to avoid those with questionable products or services.

#### **12. Other things to consider:**

- Consider offering games, giveaways, raffles, etc.
- Strongly consider requiring your audience to prove they visited each information table in order to receive your big prizes or giveaway items. One way is to give every person or family a "passport" to be stamped at each table.
  - Plan an alternative for bad weather.
  - Create an emergency kit with first aid supplies.
  - In advance, send a welcome email to organizations that are participating in the event, including instructions, directions, parking info and a contact number.
  - Create "Goody bags" for giveaways.
  - Create a satisfaction survey for the attendees and/or vendors.

#### **13. At the Event:**

- Talk to those who attend and to vendors.
- Is the information offered at the event helpful to those who attend?
- How will people use the information to improve health?
- What (if anything) would they suggest you do next year?

#### **14. Following the event**

- Send thank you letters to speakers, providers and vendors.
- Have an evaluation meeting with the team to analyze results, to determine if goals and objectives were met and to decide if you should make this a recurring event.

We strongly encourage planners to attend the very next meeting of the Outreach Planning Group after the event. Any of your vendors will give a constructive critique of their experience. This will be invaluable in planning for next year.

These steps were written by folks who have put on successful Health Events for years in our community. There are no guarantees, but these steps give you the best chance to have a totally fantastic event. Thank you for working with us to make Broward County a healthier place to live, work and play and we wish you much success with your event.

*Outreach Planning Group  
Florida Department of Health in Broward County*

(updated August 10, 2017)



## LOGO OR LETTERHEAD

[Date]

# **[YOUR ORGANIZATION] HOSTS EVENT TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT [YOUR TOPIC]**

### Contact:

[Contact Name]

[Email]

[Phone]

**[City, Fla.]** — The community is invited to learn about [your subject] and receive free [whatever you are offering] at a health event on [your date] sponsored by [your organization].

The [title of your event] is scheduled from [event hours] at [location with address]. Everyone is welcome, especially [your target audience]. Admission is free [or price].

[Your organization] would like to thank our sponsors, [name(s) of paying or main sponsors], for making the event possible.

[Give details about speakers, attractions, entertainment, free food, games, or other aspects of the event that would attract people to attend or persuade the news media to cover the event.]

[Insert quote from your organization chief or event director, if desired]

For more information about **[event title]**, call **x** or email **y**.

### About **[Your Organization]**

Give a one paragraph summary of your organization, goals and program.

Follow us on [all social media you use]. For more information about the [organization] please visit [your website] or call [your phone number].

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