

How to Plan a Health Fair



A health fair is an event where organizations have an opportunity to disseminate health information to the public at booths and/or to provide health screenings. Health fairs are usually co-sponsored by groups, including hospitals, churches, sororities, and community organizations. They may last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. This document will give you planning tips on how to coordinate a health fair in your community.

Ten Planning Steps

1. Form a committee and develop a budget. Determine your goals and what issues you want to focus on. Check on legal requirements, insurance coverage, and waiver forms for your organization. Establish operating rules, including reimbursement procedures, status reports, sponsor support, storage locations for materials/donations, and committee member back-up. Delegate responsibilities, including those related to obtaining clearances, security, transportation, parking, vendor recruitment, publicity and other printed materials, volunteer recruitment, refreshments, vendor lunches, display setup/breakdown/cleaning, contracts, donations, and insurance. Establish milestones and timelines.
2. Determine the date, and confirm the location. Identify a guest speaker for opening remarks at the kick-off ceremony.
3. Initiate logistical efforts for vendors, including those related to clearances, contracts, security requirements, parking, and transportation. Determine the number of vendors the location can accommodate. Determine if you want vendors that represent business, non-profit, and/or government organizations. Vendors should all have a health mission.
4. Develop materials, including evaluation forms, an event logo, promotional media (i.e. for print, internet, TV, radio, email), and a letter for vendors and product donors about the event.
5. Contact vendors. Send an initial letter announcing the event and its sponsors. Follow up with telephone calls and emails. Contact donors, or purchase items to be given away at the health fair if appropriate.
6. Send out a confirmation to vendors who have agreed to participate. Include directions to the event, vendor name tags, lunch options, and parking passes. Confirm donations and material delivery options (i.e. where to unload on the day of the event or where to ship). Confirm the guest speaker(s) and obtain speaker support, including a podium, microphone, and audio visual equipment. Send a letter to the VIPs, such as directors and department heads.

7. Finalize logistical efforts, including those related to vendor display/table layout, table skirts, event bags, audio visual needs, signs, vendor lunch selection, confirmation of vendor delivery time, trash cans, reserved parking, water/cup delivery, kick-off ceremony cake, room set-up schedule, time the room is accessible to volunteers, and photographer arrangements.
8. Obtain volunteers, establish responsibilities, and create a work schedule. Responsibilities should include meeting and escorting vendors, providing refreshments in the morning or afternoon, setting up, cleaning up, serving as host/hostess, distributing vendor lunches, working the reception desk, giving out event bags, and distributing and collecting evaluation forms. Have an orientation meeting with volunteers a week before the event to make sure everyone knows their responsibilities.
9. On the morning of the event, arrive early, before the event begins. Meet with volunteers to answer questions and to set up the reception area (i.e. arranging bags, evaluation forms and drop box, donated materials, and hostess name tags). Meet vendors, assist with setup, and ensure vendor lunches are set as needed. Announce the speaker, thank the volunteers and committee members, identify restroom locations, and explain the role of the host/hostess (i.e. answering logistical questions, locating booths for specific information, and providing emergency assistance). Take pictures, and encourage attendees to complete evaluations.
10. Thank the committee and volunteers for their assistance. Replenish refreshments, materials, and other items.
11. Remain after the event to meet with the committee and volunteers responsible for clean-up, finalize any payment, collect any undistributed materials, and ensure all equipment signed for is returned. Collect the evaluation forms from the drop box.
12. After the event, analyze the evaluations, and develop a list of lessons learned. Include any recommendations for the next health fair, such as additional topics or vendors. Send thank you notes to the committee, volunteers, sponsors, and others that helped make the health fair a success.

Helpful Hints

- Start planning early, and form the planning committee a year in advance. The last month before the event is time-consuming no matter how well you've planned.
- Pay attention to small details, including those related to trash cans, water locations, electrical outlets, smoke alarms (if you have something like a popcorn machine), lost and found items, and name tags.
- Have a back-up plan for last-minute vendor cancellations or no-shows. Always have a co-chair on the planning committee, and plan knowing you will probably lose some members of the committee during the planning process.
- If this is your first health fair, pay special attention to getting the word out about it in your community. Vendors and organizations that participate rely on having people with whom they can interact. Poor attendance should be

avoided as much as possible.

- Prepare an historical binder of vendors, evaluation forms, time lines for each

or less time depending on your setting.

This tip sheet is provided as a service only. Some details may vary, depending on your organization's resources and needs.



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