

# Community Event Planner

Community Events provide a great way for your congregation to start catching the spirit of volunteerism. To help move your church from being “willing and able” to being “doing and able” we’ve put together this guide to help you plan and execute a community event in your area. From resource requirements and timelines, to needs analyses and follow-up strategies, you’ll find everything you need to plan an impactful event.

After you have completed the Count, Walk and Ask steps of the DSC process, one way of implementing “Love” is to execute an event that positively impacts an area of need you learned about. That means that you should already have a “site” (e.g. school, park, etc.) identified where your event can be held.

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## 1. PRE-EVENT PLANNING

### Budget

Determine how much money you have available for the project. You might want to enlist the help of experts within your congregation during this step. For example, if your project involves painting, ask a general contractor or painter to help you determine costs. (Note: If you plan to do multiple events per year, you may plan for a set amount per event in your annual budget.)

Other tips:

- Compliment your budget by reaching out to local vendors (see [Sponsorship Letter](#) example), as well as organizations that support other nonprofits. For example, in San Diego there is an organization called Rebuild Together San Diego who will lend tools for a very small donation.
- To save costs, you can also ask your volunteers to “bring their own tools” to the event (e.g. gloves, gardening equipment, paint brushes, etc.). This will save your ministry countless dollars from having to purchase tools, not to mention the storage space it will take to retain them.
- Other costs to consider include: water, shirts for volunteers, snacks, banners and/or signage, equipment rentals (portable toilets, bobcat, truck rentals, dumpsters, etc.), plants, mulch, paint and sundries, etc. Many times the dumpsters, plants, and mulch are supplied by the organization with which you are working. Remember to list any of the provided supplies in the [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

### Memorandum of Understanding

A [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) is highly recommended between your church and the organization that you will be working with. This will explain the responsibilities and deliverables of both parties in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

### Certificate of Insurance

The organizations that you work with may require proof of insurance. Ask them for the coverage they require and contact your insurance carrier for a [Certificate of Insurance](#).

### Marketing the Event

Once you have determined and confirmed your site, you will want to advertise the opportunity to serve and bless a neighboring community to your church congregation. Determine what marketing vehicles are available at your church, but they could include the Sunday bulletin, an email newsletter, text message, website banner ad, social media, pulpit announcement, etc.

You'll also want to work with city officials to make sure they are aware of the event, and are invited to participate (as leaders or volunteers). If applicable, the PR team can also sent out press releases about the event to local publications and TV stations to generate community awareness and good will.

## 1. PRE-EVENT PLANNING

### Volunteer Recruitment

Your congregation will want to help! Set up online registration so that volunteers can sign up ahead of time, and so that you can track your recruitment efforts and adjust them accordingly. You may get so many sign-ups that you need to close registration!

Notes:

- If your project requires volunteers to have tools, include details (e.g. "Please bring gloves, shovels and garden tools if you own them") on your registration form, and make sure any registration confirmation receipts or event reminders include a note about the desired tools.
- If your event 50 or less volunteers, then it may be feasible for you to have sign up sheets on a Sunday in your lobby.
- For larger events, we highly recommend an online registration such as Wufoo. Example of [Registration Form](#).
- Include any waivers or releases in registration that the volunteers are required to sign electronically.
- Create volunteer sign-in sheet from your online registration to track how many volunteers you actually have show up to your event.
- If your church uses social media, be sure to include posts about your upcoming project to get people excited and drive volunteer registrations equipment rentals (portable toilets, bobcat, truck rentals, dumpsters, etc.), plants, mulch, paint and sundries, etc. Many times the dumpsters, plants, and mulch are supplied by the organization with which you are working. Remember to list any of the provided supplies in the [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

### Waiver Release for Volunteers

In order to protect your church, we suggest that each volunteer sign a [Waiver](#) that releases the ministry from any potential liability issues. You should have the waiver reviewed by legal counsel. The waiver should be included as part of the online volunteer registration for electronic signature, as well as onsite day of for a physical signature.

### Sponsorship Letter for Vendors

Ideally, you will have someone on your event team (such as a volunteer) that is in charge of sponsorships. Their job will be to reach out to local vendors to see if they offer discounts or donations to nonprofit organizations. Most companies will request a Sponsorship letter.

Other tips:

- Your leadership team may have connections in the community that can offer "in-kind" sponsorships. Examples include landscapers willing to donate a few hours to use heavy machinery to dig and haul away dirt, a local restaurant willing to donate food and snacks to your volunteers, etc.
- Some restaurants, e.g. bagel shops, are willing to donate unused food at the end of every day.
- Businesses may be willing to offer cash sponsorships as a tax write-off and to create positive PR "buzz."

Please contact us at [info@dosomethingchurch.org](mailto:info@dosomethingchurch.org) for these additional resources.

[Sponsorship Letter Example](#)  
[Memorandum of Understanding](#)  
[Volunteer Waiver Release Form](#)  
[Certificate of Insurance](#)  
[Registration Form Example](#)

## 2. EVENT PLANNING

### Scope of Work

Once the project site is determined, a decision on the scope of work needs to be made. 1. Tour the site with your leadership team and the staff of the organization. 2. Record or document the work, discuss with your leadership team and let the beneficiary know what you can accomplish.

Note: We recommend that you create a basic [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to ensure both organizations have a clear understanding of the event outcomes and responsibilities.

### Leadership Team

The scope of work will determine the size of your leadership team. We recommend that you identify several Project Managers. Example of [Organizational Chart](#)

Project Managers will need to:

- Visit the site to assess how many volunteers are needed for their area
- Identify tools the volunteers will need or any other equipment to accomplish the work and record it on the scope of work document for their specific area
- Create a check list to ensure they are equipped with everything they need for the day of the event
- Recruit Area Leaders that will help them manage the volunteers working in their area and help with any details

### Leadership Meetings

Set up regular meetings to disseminate information regarding the scope of work, number of volunteers needed, location details and team building. Here is a suggested meeting structure leading up to the event for a medium-sized community event (requiring approx. 300-500 volunteers):

Starting 8 weeks before event:

- Meet with Project Managers for 4 weeks
- Project Managers should be recruiting Area Leaders they will be overseeing

Starting 2 - 4 weeks before event:

- Meet with Area Leaders for 2 - 4 weeks

Day before event:

- Meet with all Project Managers and Area Leaders to review the event day schedule, changes to the plan and to pray over the site.

Important: make sure that you assign someone to take detailed notes of the meetings, including Action Items, should be emailed to all leaders after each meeting for more collaboration and communication.

### Leadership Training

We recommend the entire Leadership review any State Safety Guidelines and impart that to the appropriate Area leads. For California we use CalOSHA safety guidelines. There also may be training that the Event Organization will need your team to review for their specific requirements for volunteering.

## 2. EVENT PLANNING

### Event Materials, Equipment and Rentals

Depending on the nature of your event, you might need to rent commercial equipment such as bobcats, and purchase materials such as paint buckets, tarps, etc. You may also need tools for volunteers. Owning and storing tools can be very expensive, so look to partner with a local organization that can donate the necessary equipment. When considering the needs to complete the event you may want to reach out to local businesses to help offset event expenses.

Tips:

- Have your leadership team reach out to their social networks to see if equipment can be borrowed or donated
- Some businesses do not charge sales tax to non-profits if you provide your EIN #
- If renting equipment, ask if the company offers discounts for nonprofits; they might even agree to donate equipment in exchange for promotion of their company
- Check out Rebuilding Together to see if there's a local site in your community that will allow you to check out tools ranging from shovels to ladders Equipment you might need to rent:
- If the site of your event does not have public bathrooms to use you may consider renting porta-potties
- Communication with the leadership team is critical the day of the event, if needed rent radios for your Project Managers and Area Leaders.
- Canopies for Registration, tool check-out, dumpsters, scissor lifts etc.

### Ministry Partners

Don't forget to leverage ministries within your church and/or other churches and ministries in your community to help provide services for your event. For example you may consider partnering with the following:

- Children's Ministry to bless kids with games, face painting, arts and crafts
- Makeover Ministry to provide haircuts for kids, women and men
- Homeless Ministry to hand out clothing, blankets and toiletries
- Marketing & PR teams to take photographs, video and capture stories for the event, plus write a recap of the event for both internal and external audiences

### Event Rundown/Timeline

It is imperative to have a minute-to-minute rundown of what should be happening on event day, as well as the evening before (if there is prep work). An event rundown/timeline should include all things from pick up or delivery of equipment to the return of that equipment, and EVERYTHING in between.

Please contact us at [info@dosomethingchurch.org](mailto:info@dosomethingchurch.org) for these additional resources.

[Memorandum of Understanding](#)  
[Project Manager Check List](#)  
[Scope of Work Document](#)  
[Event Rundown Timeline](#)

### 3. DAY OF EVENT

## Registration & Volunteer Check In

### Project Managers and Area Leaders

Leaders should arrive approximately 2 hours before the volunteers. They will sign the waiver and safety guidelines, check out a radio (if applicable) and put on something that identifies them as a leader (e.g. orange safety vests). Once checked in, they should go to their assigned area.

### Volunteers

Have tables and chairs available for your Registration Team. Make several copies of the Volunteer Sign In sheets, as well as the waivers. Once the volunteer has checked in and signed the waivers (we recommend brightly colored wristbands to identify they have signed waivers), you can hand out any materials you have for them, e.g. tshirts, water, snacks. They can then report to the area they have been assigned.

Tip: Volunteer ambassadors whose sole duty is to connect volunteers with their leaders is a great way to help add to the volunteers' experience that day. If a volunteer is standing around, not knowing what they should be doing, they will feel ineffective and may not want to come back to another event. Not only do we want to bless and care for our community with the clean up/beautification, but we also want to help volunteers feel purposeful and loved.

### Security Plan

It is always a good idea to have a few assigned volunteers for security purposes. Generally a presence in the parking lots or to be the eyes and ears of the event in regards to safety.

### Tool Check Out and Supplies Distribution

Set up 3 or 4 tables with a canopy to identify where volunteers can check out and return tools for use for the project. Signage to identify the Tool Distribution area is also recommended. If you borrowed tools, we recommended that you label them with tape or stickers so that they are returned to the appropriate lender.

## Media and Public Relations

### Social Media

Your media or PR team can help document your project through photos and stories. Ask them to take photos of volunteers and before and after area pictures. All photos, stories and quotes can be shared via social media during and after the event to celebrate its success.

### VIPS

If city officials will be attending your event, we recommend that your PR team also hosts them as VIPs to give them tours, provide stats about the project, share any impactful stories and capture interviews.

### Video Footage

We highly recommend capturing video footage of the event. Footage can include behind the scenes planning, set-up, volunteers working, and interviews with volunteers, local community residents and city officials discussing the impact of the project. You can use the footage to create a recap video, thank you video for volunteers and sponsors, and can provide the footage to any local TV stations or online media outlets who want to provide coverage of the event.

## Clean Up/Tear Down

Project Managers and Area leads should closely monitor the event timeline to ensure there is enough time for clean up and tear down. Also, make sure that volunteers clearly understood that their volunteer service includes helping with the end of day activities, so that they don't leave early.

## 4. AFTER THE EVENT

### Tracking Volunteers and Hours

Tracking how many volunteers showed up to your event and how much time they spent is important for several reasons. It helps you better plan your next event, helps provide a report to your church's senior staff/pastors and can even be used to report back to your city's office or town council, creating further good will.

Example formula: Total number of volunteers (including leadership) x the event hours = Total hours

### Thank You Letters

After your event is over, be sure to thank the volunteers who served before and during the event, and any sponsors who donated to the event, or provided discounts. In the thank you letters, you may want to include success stories, stats of number of volunteers and total hours, a list of companies who provided in-kind support, donations and or partners/sponsors. See Example of [Sponsor Thank You Letter](#) below.

### Leadership Appreciation and Event Debrief

Your leaders should be appreciated in an extra special way. Throw a picnic, party or team dinner and thank each leader individually. You can also ask the leaders to share stories from the event and what they learned both personally and spiritually as a result of being involved. You may also want to take time to create a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities for Improvement and Threats) analysis of the event with your leaders, while the event is still fresh in their minds. You can do this in person, or even through a survey emailed out after the event.

### Communicating Event Summary and Highlights

Implementing community events is an opportunity to build a platform so that people in both your church and in your community experience serving, giving back and accomplishing something together. Your church leadership will be excited to hear how God worked through people, relationships and collaboration, and transformed lives as a result. Your city officials too will be interested to hear how your church is helping complement their services.

Stats you might want to share include:

- total # of volunteers served
- total # of hours donated to the project
- total amount event saved the city (e.g. # of hours X average hourly wage for that type of work = \$ saved by the project).
- what groups benefitted from the project (kids, families, businesses, communities etc)
- interesting facts about the event (e.g. 300 volunteers moved over 3 football fields of mulch in the park, planted 200 trees, installed 400 hooks for kids to put their backpacks on, used 225 gallons of paint to beautify buildings, gyms etc.)
- List all community partners, sponsors, and City Officials who attended the event If possible, create a highlights video from the event or slide show to help support your stats with powerful imagery.

Please contact us at [info@dosomethingchurch.org](mailto:info@dosomethingchurch.org) for these additional resources.

[Volunteer Thank You Letter Example](#)

[Sponsor Thank You Letter Example](#)