

BEYOND THE HEALTH FAIR: USING STRATEGIC EVENTS TO ENHANCE POLICY EFFORTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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TYPES OF EVENTS

SOFT EVENTS



“Soft” events are aimed at educating the community about the health impacts of obesity, physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. Such events provide the community with information, engage supporters and allow advocates to hone their skills around recruitment, turnout and media. They also provide opportunities for your coalition to test its ability to bring out large numbers of supporters in a fun environment while communicating why your issue is important.

Examples:

- Educational presentation at a community center
- Ice cream social/meet-and-greet event
- Having a table at a community event

HARD EVENTS



“Hard” events are aimed at elevating the profile of a specific proposed policy, systems or environmental (PSE) change. They do this by demonstrating the power and commitment of a coalition and its supporters to decision makers. These events are centered on clear and concise messages, strong grassroots and grasstops (decision influencer) turnout, advocacy and as much media coverage as possible. Hard events also seek to draw out the opposition and have a community debate on public health. Such debates are particularly important, given that opposition to your proposed PSE changes may be happening behind the scenes with decision makers and community members.

Examples:

- Day on the Hill
- Board or council hearing
- Press conference

WHAT MAKES AN EVENT STRATEGIC?

Purpose plus planning equals impact

PURPOSE

Create a well-defined and well-communicated purpose. What are the specific goals of this event? To turn out 50 people? To get media attention? To reach a key decision maker? To educate the community about your issue? To practice turning people out to events?

PLANNING

Have a strong planning process. Use the key steps in the Campaign Compass to think through all of the details and develop a strong plan.

IMPACT

Strategic events can have strong impact. They provide the media with a reason to cover your issue, provide an opportunity for community members to be engaged, expose the community and decision makers to why your issue is important and are an opportunity for fun. What’s more, the community may develop positive associations with your efforts and rally to support you in the future.

PLANNING YOUR EVENT: THE CAMPAIGN COMPASS

EQUITY

Use the event to highlight an inequity, build a broad base of support and engage diverse community members.

COMMUNICATION

Consider opportunities to gain earned media, prepare news releases and identify a spokesperson. Follow up with letters to the editor or op-ed pieces.

EVALUATION

Did you achieve your desired outcome? How many key decision makers, stakeholders and others were engaged in strategic conversations? Who was or was not engaged? What would you do differently next time?

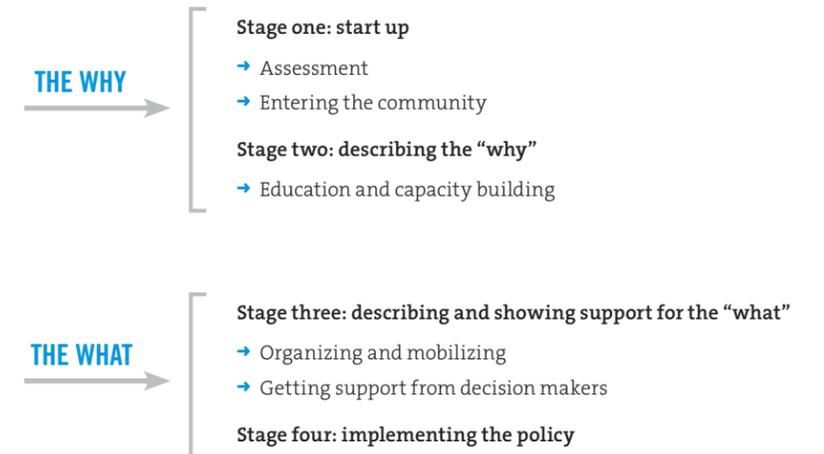
RESOURCES

What do you need to make this event successful? Volunteers, money, educational materials, specific spokespersons? Can this event help you raise funds for your efforts?



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STAGES OF A POLICY, SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE CAMPAIGN



ENGAGEMENT

How are community members engaged and invited to participate? What are you doing to remove potential barriers for low-socioeconomic and other community members? How are your coalition members engaged in this event?

PLANNING

What information do you need to make this event successful? Who is the potential opposition? How are spokespersons and educational materials prepared? Who is at the table for the planning process? Is your target audience engaged in planning?

COALITION

Can this event help you grow your coalition? Is it an opportunity to have existing coalition members be more engaged in your initiative?

DECISION MAKERS

Who are the key targets that you hope to reach? How will you ensure that they participate? If they don’t attend, how will they learn about and experience the impact of this event? Through op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, follow-up briefings?