

Non-Profit Guide to Planning and Running Events: Festivals, Concerts, Fundraisers, Art Shows and More

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INTRODUCTION

I have a great idea for an event that I hope will raise money and educate the public about my cause or work, but...where do I begin?

By having an idea to hold a public event, you've made a good start already. If you are a non-profit organization, artist, educator, activist, or anyone else with a passion for public service, chances are you spend a great deal of time crafting and refining projects that you think will create value for the public. Whether your focus is local, regional, or international, you direct your energies towards necessities such as innovation, outreach, funding, education, research, and collaboration with affiliated organizations and individuals. You probably realize the importance of the Internet in achieving these goals, and the many tools made available through online networking and publishing. You probably also use e-mail, fax, letters, board meetings, and other common tools that require sitting in offices or desks, often by yourself or with a few co-workers.

However, organizing a public event is another very effective way to reach new and larger audiences and to get a broader public informed about – and hopefully involved in – the work your organization does. Events such as fundraising concerts, festivals, parties, and art shows bring people together *face to face*, away from computer screens and desks, to meet, network, share ideas, and combine fun and recreation with the ideals and goals you are so passionate about. If done properly, you can even raise money for the cause of your choice – whether it be general fiscal support for your organization, specific public programs, or local arts, education, and entertainment.

Included in this document are steps that we have found from experience to be easy and effective when planning events, along with tips and observations. This guide will grow as future volunteers add their own insights.

OUR BACKGROUND

The authors have worked together, from 2008-2009, as AmeriCorps CTC VISTA volunteers at the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center (IMC). The IMC is a non-profit, grassroots organization committed to using media production and distribution as tools for promoting social and economic justice in the Champaign County area. The IMC owns and operates a public Media and Arts Center, housed in the historic downtown Urbana post office, which includes a stage, radio station, production studios, art studios, library, and meeting spaces. As VISTAs, our goal has been to increase public awareness and use of the IMC by building membership, improving facilities and funding, and teaching citizens to be comfortable learning new technologies and arts while making their own media.

Together we have expanded on the IMC's local legacy by organizing a three-day regional IMC Film Festival 2009 and a three-day music festival and art show, the 2009 IMCFest, as well as several smaller Film Nights, various concerts, volunteer work-days, training workshops, and a membership drive. This document reflects our collective experiences and advice in planning, hosting, and running successful fundraiser events for the IMC and affiliated local partners. We focus our advice especially towards larger events such as the IMC Film Festival and IMCFest, which drew hundreds of attendees, brought together dozens of regional and local film-makers, musicians, visual artists, and businesses, and raised considerable amounts of money while also making the IMC more active, present, and relevant in the local community.

For more information on events we have hosted at the IMC, please visit our festival web sites:

<http://www.imcfilmfest.org/>

<http://www.imcfest.org/>

PLANNING AN EVENT

Planning is the most important part of hosting an event, but if you give yourself plenty of time and recruit the talents and assistance of others, you will be able to design a successful event without any stress. There are many components to planning, which we will outline here as a checklist, but depending on your project, you may approach each of these steps in a different order, or all at the same time.

NOTE: Start planning at least two months in advance, preferably longer, up to six months in advance. Large or annual events should begin planning around eight months in advance.

CHECKLIST

Regardless of how you plan, your plans must at least include the following, discussed in greater detail further in this guide:

- **Schedule Date(s)/Time(s):** Be strategic here; what will attract your target audience?
- **Venue/Location:** Choose and reserve a place that will have necessary amenities and accommodate the numbers of attendees you expect.
- **Format:** What type of event will this be? – non-profit vs. profit; art? Film? Music? Food? More than one of these?; party, conference, performance?; one day/evening or

multiple-day event?; theme? Making decisions on format will guide your budget, promotion, and the way you run the event.

- **Promotion:** This too will grow as the event approaches, but it must start immediately. Promotion includes many things – web site; social networking; fliers/posters; invitations; media (TV/radio/newspapers and magazines); word-of-mouth; and more.
- **Budget:** Even if you are running an event for next-to-nothing (we have at the IMC!), it takes money to make money, so start estimating your costs – space rental; catering/entertainment; promotion/advertisement; possible paid staff; etc.
- **Team:** This will grow as the event approaches, but you will need to delegate different types of tasks to a variety of individuals, so don't go it alone – build a team!
- **Staffing & Setup:** This is an outgrowth of building your event team. What type and numbers of staff will you need – sound techs? Runners? Greeters? Concessions? Tickets? Promo?
- **Catering/Entertainment:** Almost any event you schedule will feature some sort of entertainment and refreshments for visitors, whether for free or for a fee.
- **Networking:** Have a plan ready to keep in touch with all of the great contacts you'll make during your event (mailing lists, updates/newsletters, etc.).
- **Documentation:** Also, document your successes using all media available – video and audio recordings of the event; web site updates/blogs; local press; organizational record-keeping. ACKNOWLEDGE the hard work and talents of everyone who was involved – artists, sponsors, caterers, staff, guests, donors, local media, and the event planning team!

SET THE DATE(S) – then start promoting

This seems simple, but you need to choose the best date(s), time(s), and place for your event before you can begin *Promotion* and other planning steps. Will the event be mid-day or late night, weekday or weekend, one day or multiple days, one or two hours or all-day?

The date and time of your event will likely depend on the *Format* of the event – whether it will involve art, music, food, parties, conference discussions, open houses, or education programs – so think of setting the date and format together as the first steps in planning. It depends on what your goal is in reaching out to the public, and who you expect will attend and enjoy your event.

- *Research other events in your area* – For example, if you intend to host an art gallery exhibition with food, wine, and maybe a prize raffle, look at local newspapers and event calendars to find a day and time with few conflicting attractions. Also, make sure the hours are appropriate – they are after typical work hours (9-5pm) if during the week, but not so late that your event conflicts with late-night concerts, plays, festivals, or private parties that your guests might also be attending. Make your attraction stand out from others going on, or better yet, at a time when little else is going on! (However, avoid holidays or periods when lots of people are traveling)
- *Base the date and time on your audience* – If your project is aimed at demonstrating theatre or an educational program for children, don't plan it late at night, and coordinate with schools if needed. If you are planning a concert with an after-party, aimed at young adults, schedule several late night hours so people can come and go as they wish.
- *One day or multiple days?* - Typically, an event that lasts more than one day is a festival. The advantage of hosting a festival is that the public has more options of when they can attend your event, based on their availability or particular items on your schedule that

interest them. Festivals will generate greater local interest and potential media coverage. The detriments to hosting a festival are the long hours, large staff required, and potential expense (especially if you are renting a venue). One day events are often advantageous when you have a single purpose for your program, or a single featured entertainer/artist. They are easier to plan and staff, but you may have less visibility and fewer chances to raise funds – therefore, promote accordingly for each type of event (one day vs. Festival).

– No matter what type of schedule you choose, all events are an opportunity to build greater social and business networks, raise funds, and promote your work to the public.

What did we do?

For our IMC Film Festival and IMCFest, we chose 3-day, festival schedules.

For the Film Festival, we chose 3 days in the winter (February 6-8, 2009), and because we live in a college town, we made sure that this weekend festival occurred *after* students, teachers, and staff returned from Christmas break. Why winter? We also live in Illinois, so a 3-day *indoor* event with food, beverages, and free movies makes a lot more sense in the winter – and draws people! Three days gave us time to schedule over thirty films, by several filmmakers and in many genres, so we were able to sincerely promote our event as a unique showcase of all styles of local and regional filmmaking talent. It also gave us the opportunity to create blocks for children/families, live entertainment and catered receptions, and scheduled Q&A with the directors of films.

For the IMCFest, which included live music and a gallery art show, we chose 3 days in the spring (April 17-19, 2009). In part, we did this so we could collaborate with the local Boneyard Arts Festival, an important and long-running event that allowed us to host a gallery (which inspired for greater local sponsorship). We also chose the spring because that is when people are getting eager to get of the house to do and see things in public. Three days again gave us time to feature dozens of performers and artists, and to promote the schedule in advance so attendees could come and go for the artists they like.

VENUE/LOCATION

Okay, we said start promoting as soon as you have confirmed a date, but in order to confirm a date that you can post all over town, media, and the Internet, you must have a confirmed venue space and an idea of the format of your event. Here we will focus on selecting and confirming a venue.

– *Home Territory or Remote Location* – Will you host visitors and guests at your place of business, or do you need or prefer a separate location? This in part depends on the occupancy of your space and the amenities available, as well as the expected numbers of guests. The advantage to an "open-house" on your own property is that guests get to know your office, business, gallery, home, or venue firsthand and they may be more likely to come back as clients or volunteers in the future. Some events, like small receptions, live music, brunches, and networking conferences, may be much better suited to an "open-house" than a week-long festival, stage performance, grill-out, sporting event, or late-night party, all of which will require the reservation of a larger venue with the proper equipment. The other advantages to confirming a larger venue are lower damage/theft liability, dedicated kitchen

and technical amenities, and space. If your organization has large spaces or special event features (kitchens, stages, public bathrooms, sound/PA gear, parking, etc.), take advantage of these attributes – and use this as an opportunity to promote that you are not only a great, innovative non-profit, but you can host parties, shows, conferences, and more.

– Determining What you Need in an Event Location – This relates to Format, which we will discuss further, but as you decide on the date, time, and place of your event, you will need to make a list of what you will need on-site to make everything go smoothly.

Obviously, occupancy – how many people the space can hold – matters, and this depends on what type of turn-out you desire and/or expect. But there are other factors, such as catering, entrances, storage, stage and stage gear (for performers), parking (for staff, guests, and entertainment/caterers), lighting, cleaning/decoration, and more. Here is a brief outline of event formats and the kinds of amenities you may need (note that some events combine more than one of the following):

Food/Catering: Tables; seating; plates/silverware (or plastic-ware); garbage cans, bags, and remote storage; kitchen (optional); coolers/refridgerator; staff and supplies for cleaning

Films/Multimedia: screen(s), whether portable or installed; speakers and sound system; seating; laptop/DVD player; projector; lighting that you can control (films generally require that some lights be turned out); electricity

Live Music/Theatre: stage; sound system (with all related gear such as mics, cables, mixer, etc.); electricity; lighting; storage/loading areas (may be used for artists as greenroom); video/audio recording

Art Gallery: empty, clean, and open space(s); lighting; moveable walls/partitions; seating or tables for information

Conference: seating; sound system; tables; privacy/separation from disruptive sounds; video/audio recording

Workshops: seating; privacy; computers (optional); projector (optional)

Picnic/Outdoor Sporting Event: outdoor venue reserved; dry ground; rain-cover; cooking amenities; coolers/storage; parking; tables and seating; open space/fields

What did we do?

We are fortunate to *be* a live performance venue as well as a community media center at the IMC, and we are equipped with lots of open space, a complete performance stage with flexible sound and lighting, private offices, a radio station, computer labs, proximity to a major bus station and public parking garage, and more. We held our events at very low cost to ourselves (and one festival free to the public!) by taking advantage of our existing amenities and volunteers. We have combined many of the above formats in our events, featuring films, music, art, food, discussion, and workshops, often during the course of one weekend.

FORMAT

Schedule, location, and *format* are all closely related. The format of your event is based on your goals. What type of event will this be, and why are you going through the trouble? By raising awareness (and maybe some funds) you will enhance the work your organization is doing on a daily basis, all while having fun and proving your value to your community.

When deciding upon format, consider the following questions:

– Cost - Free Event or Fee Event: Will you charge admission, will the event be by

private invitation, or will it be free and open to the public? Free, public events will generally bring more people, but you will have to come up with other strategies to raise money or at least cover costs (these methods include sponsorship, concessions, merchandise, and raffles). Fees or tickets may be necessary if live entertainment, such as an invited musical guest, is present.

- Content – Music, Art, Film, Food, all of the above?: See above discussion of the amenities you will have, and the kind of schedule you intend to manage. If you decide on including any of these, you will need to plan accordingly for catering & entertainment.
- Receptions or After-Parties?: Some events benefit from discrete receptions or parties scheduled at the beginning, middle, or end of festivities. These may be dedicated times when guests can eat, view/listen to entertainment, and dance.
- Theme: Having an overall theme to the event, whether it be a topic of discussion, a style of music or cuisine, a charitable cause, or just decorative/promotional motifs, can draw a specific crowd that you wish to reach. Don't get too narrow with your theme, though, unless you are planning for a discrete, private party – a small amount of variety will also draw more consistent attendance and make your event memorable. For example, if you observe that your town or city has many talented folk musicians, but no central venue or showcase them, you could plan a folk music festival with the dual themes of *local* and *folk* – you could call it *folkal*. Seriously, though, your event would provide a needed service, raise awareness, entertain, and draw a crowd that is eager for the rare event that celebrates their interests and accomplishments. Meanwhile, you've let people know about your organization and its abilities to connect people and resources – proving your worth as a non-profit and creating more support for the work you care about, too.

What did we do?

Both 2009 IMC festivals were three-day showcases of local art with food, receptions, discussions, and parties – but important differences in format were cost and content.

The IMC Film Festival was free to the public. Nearly all afternoon and all night for the whole weekend anyone could enter our building and watch independent, engaging films, some of which had never been released or shown. We wanted everyone to have equal access, and to create an open-house environment where visitors would see how unique we are as an organization and the kinds of things can make happen if they join, too. To do this, we had to carefully plan and budget, identifying local businesses as sponsors – some donated food and drink for sale as concessions and others donated money and permission to play (and get copies of) their films. We found free and cheap ways to promote the festival. We had learned from previous events at the IMC that feature film did not combine well with other forms of art (at least in our space). Film requires attention and seating, and switching between movies and live bands is time consuming and jostles the audience from near-sleep to a loud, dance-floor environment. Also, having an art gallery with films showing leads to one area getting neglected – as people hang out in the gallery talking, or sit and watch films while no one looks at the art. Accordingly, we scheduled an entire weekend of films, but made sure to create breaks for food, music, and discussion. The theme was local and independent film – so we had a lot of filmmakers and their family and friends in attendance, which meant they could all network and other artists and musicians could learn that our town actually has a thriving film community!

The IMCFest featured live music, with an attached art gallery – a great combination, because visitors can still listen to music (or even dance) while appreciating sculpture, painting, and drawings. Again the theme was local, but to get nearly 30 bands to play a festival, you need money to pay people, so we charged tickets, at a reasonable price for students and adults, and we also had concessions and merchandise. We raised a significant amount for our organization beyond covering costs. We took advantage of the fact that we are the only multi-genre local music festival currently, with other festivals featuring national acts, or specific genres like blues or bluegrass. We scheduled artists so that they were all mixed together – a folk act followed by electronic, followed by hip-hop and then indie rock – to keep the audience interested and informed about the variety of art in their area. Artists in the gallery were given nearly complete freedom to design and arrange the gallery space as they wished, adding a lounge area with coffee-table art. Because we charged attendance, we gained permission from our steering committee to allow visitors to bring food and drink, but we still sold refreshments and did not have to hold discrete receptions or parties – the whole event was a party.

PROMOTION – Probably the most important part of event planning

No one will come to your event if they don't know about it. Even if a lot of people know about, only a few might come. There is a lesson in this – **Your goal is to let everyone know about your event and to get them interested in attending.** You NEED a strong and creative advertising campaign, and it needs to start as soon as you have a date and place confirmed. Your promotion can start out simple and then grow to be quite sophisticated.

Good first steps are a basic website and basic fliers. For example, once we had a date and place set for our Film Festival, we began distributing small 4" x 5" paper cards with our logo, a picture of our building, IMC FILM FESTIVAL 2009, and basic info about the festival – dates, times, address. We handed these out at other, smaller events like concerts, left them in public places, gave stacks to friends to distribute, and put a copy on the local public-access television station's TV bulletin.

Many outlets for promoting events are free or at least very inexpensive. Here is a checklist:

Website – You should absolutely have a website, and it can absolutely start out basic, with information about the time, place, and general description of the event. In fact, *keep it basic*, so it is easy for people to visit and immediately learn about your organization and event. If you have a logo for your organization and/or event, include it, as well as contact information (how about a form where visitors can sign up for e-mail updates?). *You can create a web site for free, with no experience necessary* – see these resources:

- <http://sites.google.com/>
- <http://wordpress.org/>
- <http://drupal.org/about>
- <http://www.joomla.org/>
- <http://www.yola.com/>
- <http://www.weebly.com/>

Note: If you want to host your own web site on your organization's local server, contact your organization's tech support for help. If you don't need tech support, and can do this on your own, kudos to you!

Fliers/Posters – This is simple enough; design and print your own fliers at minimal cost,

and make sure they get spread all over the place. Choose a design that is simple, striking, and informative. Contact a local concert promoter or newspaper distributor to get their distribution list, or compile one yourself – a list of all places where you can post or hand out fliers.

Media – This includes newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV. Contact local newspapers and arts/culture magazines for interviews about your event – they might even do a profile on your organization (and we did receive such positive profiles for our efforts). Make PSAs (public service announcements), both written and audio recordings, to give to local radio stations. The community and public stations will offer this service for free; you may have to pay advertising rates to get an ad on a commercial station, which could be beyond your budget. If it's in the budget, don't hesitate. Contact local TV stations for interviews – or better yet, get them to come cover the event when it does happen. Public-access TV will air any videotaped footage you record yourself, and will allow free promotion in advance.

Online Social Networks – Slightly different, but related to your website are *social networks* – sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, and other blogs and profile sites that are incredibly popular and are now probably the first places people hear about upcoming events at the last minute, or weeks in advance. Post calendar dates and links to your site on these pages, leave comments and blog entries to build interest, and if there are specific artists, musicians, or businesses that are participating in your event, promote on their personal sites or profiles, too.

Local Interest Groups – Contact nearby arts organizations, Chambers of Commerce, hobby groups, and University students and professors who might be interested in your event. Be clear about your goals so you can attract the most appropriate demographic – the group(s) that will most likely attend and benefit from your event.

Other Internet Tools – Craigslist; festival websites (like FilmFest World) – there are people that may travel far and wide to your event if you get it listed on a national site; your organization's existing contact list and mailing lists.

Schedule/Handbills – Once you've determined a detailed schedule of performers, speakers, receptions, etc. for your event, publish the schedule on your web site and make paper copies of the program to give to event partners and attendees when they arrive. Make your schedule well enough in advance to give your visitors informed options about when they should come. It helps a parent of small children to know when you'll be showing that controversial horror film or when the loud electronic music starts, so they can plan to arrive for other features.

What did we do?

All of the above, because we are awesome. Honestly, and in retrospect, we did much of our promotion with only weeks (or less) to go before the festivals started, and even though both events were successes, they could have been even more well-attended and lucrative had we given ourselves more time and developed a broader event planning team. This is a common problem for small non-profits and artists, and we did the best with our resources. After all, planning two festivals at nearly no cost to ourselves was a feat in itself, but it would have been even more impressive with a more focused and prolonged promotional effort. In a major sense, that depends on one's *Budget...*

BUDGET

Even if the only money you spend is on paper and ink for posters and fliers, you will need to

plan a budget. Probably, there will be other up-front costs, such as renting space and equipment, hiring talent and caterers, reimbursing staff for expenses, decorations, and commercial advertising. Your budget has to take into account **expenses** and **profits** (or returns). You're probably holding this event to raise awareness and money, so have a plan to turn your costs into gain, or to minimize your costs so you do not lose money while promoting your organization. Here are two lists – one for potential expenses and another for methods to cover those expenses and hopefully make a profit:

Expenses

- Space/venue rental
- Catering/food and entertainment
- Equipment purchase or rental (lighting, coolers, cooking, stage/sound, etc.)
- Decoration, supplies, and cleaning
- Advertising
- Paid staff (ticketers, maintenance, security, stage/sound techs, etc.)

Profits (or Ways to Cover Expenses and Make a Little Extra)

- Sponsorship: offer local businesses and individuals the opportunity to be included in your promotions and press as a sponsor, in return for their financial or in-kind support (donated catering, entertainment, supplies, or staffing); offer different levels of sponsorship (with increasing benefits) so sponsors will compete for recognition
- Grants: if your event is a non-profit, cultural, charitable, or artistic program, you probably qualify for city, county, or state funding; contact your local city and state councils at least several months in advance to see what kinds of public funding are available to help you put on your event.
- Tickets: if you decide that your event will have an admission charge for some portion of the festivities, charge a fair price that is appropriate for your central demographic, and be sure to give visitors the option of buying in advance (at discount) from your website or office.
- Concessions: if your event is free, charge for food and refreshments; once people get in for free, they will be more likely to pay a few dollars for some snacks. See above note on sponsorship for more ideas.
- Merchandise: if your organization offers products or services, sell some during the event.
- Raffle: a common feature of fundraisers and charity drives, raffles give your guests the opportunity to win prizes while generating funds for the event/cause.
- Minimize Expenses: if you plan on a low budget, you won't have to receive as many returns to cover costs; however, you might be limited with the scale of your event.

What did we do?

Over the course of both festivals, we tried most of the above strategies, especially sponsorship and minimizing expenses. Sponsorship proved very effective at developing better and ongoing relationships with the local artistic and business communities, and gave us the opportunity to sell concessions at the free festival. Our ticketed festival benefited from ticket sales and a more free attitude towards catering. We have continued to explore grant funding, and due to the success of both events, the city has agreed to fund one of next year's festivals!

A final note: Appoint an Event Treasurer (this could be you) to manage the budget and funds. This is an important part of your *Team*...

TEAM & STAFF

If you are reading this, you are probably working with a non-profit organization of some sort, which means you probably regularly interact with others who have similar interests. If they are not already aware of your plans to host an event, get them involved and start building a team of individuals to help with planning, promoting, and running the event.

Building your team should start as soon as the idea for an event begins. Small meetings to discuss format, scheduling, and budget are helpful. Given that you will begin promotion as soon as you have a date and location confirmed, get your team working on spreading the word about the event. This group will grow to include more people, especially if you successfully generate more interest in your project. Delegating tasks to individuals or small groups ensures that no one has too much to do at once, but that everything is getting done at once. Here are some tasks or roles that benefit from wise delegation (remember, you cannot do it all alone):

Core Planning/Scheduling: A few people who decide on the best date(s), time(s), locations, content, format, and schedule. This group will be in charge of delegating all the other tasks and managing the project so that everything gets done. This group can also work directly with artists, entertainers, and caterers for scheduling and ensuring that everyone has what they need.

Budget/Treasurer: This should be one person who keeps track of all expenses and returns, and is the sole person responsible for handling money and book-keeping. This keeps things secure and simple. This requires an honest, straightforward individual.

Sponsorship & Grants: A group that solicits sponsorship from local organizations, donors, and businesses, creating levels and benefits for sponsors, and networking to create long-term relationships. This requires responsible, personable individuals.

Media Contact/Team [Promotion]: This should be primarily one individual with a small team responsible for contacting news outlets, stations, and publications for coverage and interviews, as well as representing the goals and identity of the event. Makes PSAs, radio ads, newspaper announcements and blurbs for papers and sites. Works with street and web teams.

Street Team [Promotion]: This group will design, print, and distribute fliers and posters. Recruit several individuals for these tasks, especially those who know their way around your city or town.

Web Team [Promotion]: This should ideally be more than one tech-savvy person, but a small group, who together will be responsible for a) designing, publishing, and updating the event web site; and b) promoting other places online, such as social networking sites, blogs, artist sites, festival sites, and local events calendars and news publications.

Staff Coordinator: If possible, assign (and even compensate) someone who will be the staff coordinator before and during the event. This person will manage a schedule of **Volunteer Staff**, including setup/cleaning crews; stage/sound techs; ticket-booth/greeters; concessions; runners (people who can go and get things as needed).

An Important Tip: Have regular meetings with your team and staff, and maintain contact over a dedicated e-mail list. Share and update documents using a service such as Google Docs.

What did we do?

We stretched out most of the above tasks among a very small group, which was very time-consuming. Our jobs are in non-profit volunteering, so that worked for us, but may not suit your project or personal schedule and commitments. We did successfully recruit and manage a large volunteer base to staff both festivals, which made things much easier at showtime - when it really mattered. Throughout the process we stayed in constant communication, and developed positive relationships with media, artists, sponsors, and each other.

CATERING/ENTERTAINMENT

There are a few things to consider when adding catering and entertainment to your event. The core planners of your event team will need to be in direct and regular contact with all sponsors, caterers, artists, and other entertainment, to maintain a schedule and system of compensation that works for everyone. Remember that you may use sponsorship as a way to get catering and financial support in return for free publicity and advertising. For that reason, many artists are willing to perform for free, for the chance at a large and diverse audience.

Food/Refreshments: If you have hired caterers, or have sponsoring caterers, make sure there is space for tables, chairs, cool storage, garbage, and tableware. Schedule and arrange festivities so guests will have easy access to food; remember, this might be one of your major sources of revenue. Make sure the core planning group decides whether or not there will be alcohol and how it will be managed. Keep in mind that you can have more than one caterer – one selling snacks, one meals, one drinks, etc. From our experience, we can testify that cookies and popcorn are VERY popular, more so than more meal-like foods such as pizza and sandwiches. BYOB is also very popular, but requires staff to keep things safe and clean.

Arts/Entertainment: For visual artists, give them an advance opportunity to view the gallery space and plan their layout and lighting. They will set up just a day or a few days before a show. For film, make sure you begin screening, selecting, and scheduling a line-up well in advance, so you can publicize the content and notify filmmakers. For live music, coordinate with artists' schedules, determine set lengths, and ask about technical requirements – how many instruments, microphones, etc.

In your promotional efforts, give credit to all caterers, artists, performers, and sponsors. Link to their web sites, and they will link to yours.

What did we do?

For the Film Festival, we had five different catering sponsors, who allowed us to sell their excellent foods and keep most of the proceeds, as long as we included them in our advertising and provided our own concessions staff. Between the five caterers, we had pastries, cookies, desserts, pizza, popcorn, soda, coffee, and nice artisan breads. We maintained direct and constant contact with filmmakers, to get their submissions, screen and select films, notify them of schedules, and get them to attend and participate. Some filmmakers even became sponsors.

For the IMCFest, we did largely our own catering, since we were making money from ticket sales. We had free food and refreshments for volunteer staff and artists. We had a BYOB policy that kept things festive, and was safe and orderly due to our large volunteer staff. One whole stage/sound team helped artists load/unload, setup equipment, get refreshments, and promote the schedule.

NETWORKING

An event is an obvious opportunity for networking – meeting people with whom you can collaborate in the future and share ideas and knowledge. There are ways to make this networking more effective than just meeting and talking, though:

- Promote your website** – direct everyone to it, so they can learn more about what you do
- E-mail** – get sponsors, volunteers, guests, artists, and everyone you can to sign up for e-mail lists and newsletters about upcoming events and projects of interest
- Social Networking** – share your site and profiles on other people's sites; leave comments; chat; build your future team
- Pamphlets** – give guests not just event handbills (with your sponsors listed), but also information about your organization
- Acknowledgements** – provide written, web, and face-to-face recognition for your sponsors, team, and caterers and entertainers; volunteers and entertainers should be fed at no cost during the event, and sponsors should receive gift certificates or some future benefit from your organization for their assistance

What did we do?

For both festivals, we shared news of our success with everyone who participated, gave publicity to our sponsors, compensated volunteers with free food, and published our final comments online.

DOCUMENTATION

Related to networking is documenting the event with text, picture, video, and sound, so those who could not attend get to appreciate the event, and so those who want to plan another event in the future will have an example. Have your staff or media team record the event's audio/video, blog and send online updates during the event (someone online may decide to drop by in person). Publish your videos on YouTube and local public-access television. Save all your planning documents and share them digitally so your organization can benefit from your experience and insight.

What did we do?

We recorded audio and video, posted frequent updates during the festivals, and finally, we made this document, so you can plan your own event using some of our observations of what works.

IMC members, please contact production@ucimc.org for more detailed, specific contact and distribution lists, sponsor addresses, and local (Champaign-Urbana, IL) and private observations that are not included here because they are less useful to a general audience.