

Hosting a Public Education Event

An event that brings people together to learn about an issue is a great way to build interest in, and a community around, your advocacy efforts. Reaching out to the right people, creating a welcoming learning environment, and effective follow-up are the keys to success.

1. Identify Your Partners

Partnering with a community group is an excellent way to foster relationships, reach new people, and build power and influence. Begin by researching your topic thoroughly to identify the people most affected by it, reaching out to them, and inviting them to take part. Look to community centers, places of worship, environmental or civic organizations, social or environmental justice groups, neighborhood associations, and more. Many of these groups can be found online via social media, or check local newspapers. Be inclusive, and recognize that it may take time to develop trusting relationships with some groups because of the history of injustice they have experienced.

Define mutual goals for the meeting and your work together. Make the relationship reciprocal and beneficial to all involved. Let others contribute to the event development and encourage people to step into leadership and coordinator roles. Allow partners to play to their strengths and contribute whatever makes the most sense for them. See our guide “Strengthening Your Impact through Collaboration” at www.ucsusa.org/CoordinateForImpact for additional considerations.

2. Select a Location and Coordinate Logistics

Make a ballpark estimate of the size of your event and choose a venue that can accommodate it. Look into local community spaces (for example, if you are a student, faculty member, or employee of a local college, utilize space on campus). Try to find a venue that is centrally located, accessible by public transportation, or has easy and ample parking. Consider accessibility for hearing- or visually-impaired attendees, as well as translation or babysitting needs. Provide accommodations for guest speakers or other invited guests. Ensure you are prepared for their audio/visual needs, and test the technology in advance.

Refreshments are always a perk. If funding is available, have the event catered (something as simple as pizza and salad). If your budget is tight, have a potluck, or provide coffee, tea, and cookies or donuts. Reach out to local restaurants or delis to see if they would donate food or offer you a discount; you could promote the restaurant to your audience in exchange.

Importantly, don't take responsibility for everything. Discuss logistics with your partners and suggest dividing up the work in a way that leverages their strengths and connections.

3. Create an Outreach Plan

Take stock of all your connections, others that may be interested in the issue, and venues where you can publicize the event. To guide your outreach:



Bringing together people with a variety of experiences and expertise can create a welcome learning environment and make your event more effective.



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Participating in public engagement events is just one way in which you can help create an atmosphere in which scientists are encouraged to engage in policy debates and hold decisionmakers accountable.

- Start with an email distribution list of your and your partners' contacts.
- Add relevant Facebook groups or the email addresses of other people who might be interested in your event.
- If you're on a campus or have access to a heavily trafficked area and other groups that may be interested, set up a table to distribute flyers.
- Connect with relevant blogs, Facebook groups, or use local hashtags on Twitter, or create a Facebook event or an Evite.
- Be inclusive and reach out to those most affected by the issue, not just technical experts and activists.

4. Promote and Publicize

Coordinate with your partners to send out:

- an initial invitation about one month ahead of the date;
- a reminder two weeks prior to the event; and
- another reminder early on the day of the event.

When people RSVP, capture information that may be useful in your campaign: name, address, email, experience with the issue.

You can also collect this information at the event, at a registration table or by passing a clipboard.

Social media can be used before, during, and after the event to get attention and share information. Encourage your partners and attendees to use social media at the event to publicize what is happening in real time.

5. Follow Up

Stay in touch with attendees after the event. Follow up within a week to share next steps, along with any important videos, notes, or pictures—and encourage others to do the same. If there was a specific request of attendees, ask people to report back.

Finally, create a Facebook group, email chain, Google group, or LinkedIn community to keep people informed about your ongoing efforts. You are building a community of people (and groups) working together for change.

Questions? If you have any questions as you develop your event, email us at ScienceNetwork@ucsusa.org.