



# EVENT PLANNING 101

---

Do you want to plan an event but have no idea where to start? This guide will provide you with a few best practices and tips for a successful event.

## Phase 1

### 1.1 — Identify Needs

Timeline: 12 to 9 months before event

- Who is your intended audience?
- What would you like them to see and experience with this event?
  - Taking Action or Raising Money (Advocating vs. Fundraising)
- How big do you want the event to be? Does this type of event limit the audience size? If so, how will you determine who can and cannot attend?
- Who do you want to influence with your event? Consider your government officials, media/press and your local community.

### 1.2 — Develop Event Goals and Objectives

Timeline: 12 to 9 months before event

- What is the purpose of your event? How does this impact when, where and how it will take place?
- What are the desired outcomes of your program?
- What do you want the participants to learn or experience from your event?

### 1.3 — Three: Determine a Location

Timeline: 12 to 9 months before event

- Choose a location that best fits your needs, size, and goals.
- Book the venue of your event early in the planning process.
- Check the community calendars and with larger organizations to ensure there are no conflicts for the date you are considering. What marquee moments can you plan your event around to maximize interest/attendance?

## Phase 2

### 2.1 — Finalize your Focus

Timeline: 9 to 6 months before event

- Reach out to UNF about the timeliest advocacy ask for your event. They can supply you with the tools necessary (digital and/or print) to make it easy for attendees to act.
- Maintain bipartisan nature as representatives of the United Nations Foundation.
- To comply with federal regulation, do not offer attendees free materials in exchange for actions. We cannot incentivize advocacy actions with gifts and/or rewards.

## 2.2 — Organize the Details

Timeline: 9 to 6 months before event

- Establish a budget that includes each item you will need to spend money on.
- Make a list of what needs to be done before, during and after the event. This might include equipment needs, registration tables, volunteers, printing, and more. Even the smallest details should be written down, and someone should be responsible for each item before the event takes place!
- Determine the speaker(s) you will need (experts, those who have a personal story/experience, legislators, community leaders, professors, etc.)
  - Try to find speakers, particularly local speakers, who will donate their time for their event to reduce costs.
- Prioritize your goals by creating a reverse timeline. Begin at the day of the event and list deadlines you must accomplish between now and then.

## 2.3 — Form Partnerships

Timeline: 6 to 3 months before event

- One of the best ways to reach wider audiences is to promote your event with partners. Think about like-minded organizations that will help you draw attention to your event.
- Identify the type of collaboration you would like to establish before reaching out to potential organizations. Be sure to clearly state your goals and objectives to those organizations you wish to partner with.
- Consider co-sponsoring with another student group or department on campus to help cover costs

# Phase 3

## 3.1 — Publicize

Timeline: 6 to 1 month(s) before event

- Publicity is vital to the success of your event. Even the best events cannot succeed without proper promotion.
- Create eye-catching flyers and posters to draw in supporters and potential attendees.

- Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are great ways to spread the word far and fast. Make an event page, promote it, and ask your members to invite their friends. Update the event in the lead-up to generate enthusiasm.
- Advocacy-oriented events are a great opportunity to invite local media and legislators.

### **3.2 — Organize the Details**

Timeline: 3 to 1 month(s) before event

- Create an event program or a handout for participants. It should be short but sweet and informative. Grab their attention and have a compelling focus without creating an information overload.
- Have a backup plan! No matter how well you plan, unexpected issues can arise any time. Be flexible and make sure you have enough staffers to sort out any problems that might come up.
- Test any A/V or media equipment well in advance and make sure you know how to use them.

### **3.3 — Follow Up**

Timeline: 1 to 2 weeks after event

- Be grateful! Thank attendees after the event for coming and offer more opportunities to get more involved. If possible, be sure to send a follow up survey as well.
- Send thank you cards to speakers and performers.
- Do a little bragging! Share your event's success on social media and with your local media source (i.e. newspaper)
- Invite your participants to donate towards your cause/campaign.
  - Checks, online fundraising, "in-cash" donations
- Keep an accurate record of funds collected during and after event.

# Planning an Event

---

The goal of UNA-USA is to build popular support for the UN in the United States. UNA-USA chapters can help further that goal by planning successful events. Public events can help a chapter build membership, raise funds for activities, increase its profile in the community, strengthen relationships with partner organizations, and help establish local understanding of the UN's importance in international affairs.

## Possible Event Ideas

*Different events appeal to different audiences. Make sure your chapter plans a diverse range of events to keep members actively involved. Here are some possible event ideas.*

- **Film Screening:** show a film on a UN related topic at a public space or member's house with a discussion afterwards.
- **Speaking Event:** invite a speaker or panel of speakers to discuss UN issues with members.
- **Luncheon/Dinner:** invite a speaker to address members during a lunch or dinner.
- **Issue/Book Discussion:** hold regular discussions on current events or selected books.
- **Networking Event/reception:** host social events for members to get to know one another.
- **Fundraising Event:** host a garage sale, bingo, or raffle to raise funds for the chapter

## Tips on Planning and Executing a Successful Event

*Learning how to organize a truly successful event takes practice and experience, but here are a few simple pointers to get you started on the right path.*

- Before you begin determining the details of an event, define success and then start to plan accordingly.
- Determine the right type of event for your community or for the demographic you are trying to target. Make sure event time and location are convenient for your target audience.
- Make sure to match your ambitions to your capacity. Don't plan an event that requires more volunteers than you have, better speakers than you have access to, or a significant amount of up-front costs.
- Create a planning committee to share the workload and to claim individual responsibility for the event.
- Create a business plan for all events. The plan should include a budget, which includes expenses, revenue streams and sponsorship opportunities and establish whether or not the event is paid or free.
- Develop a list of potential sponsors for the event and make it an individual or groups responsibility to pursue sponsorships.
- Draft a one-page description of the event or an event wish list. This will help to flush-out ideas and focus the activities and logistics of the event as well as list the resources needed to execute the event successfully.
- Remember to make sure that your event hits one or all three of the following: Builds membership for your chapter; raises funds for your chapter; provides positive visibility for your chapter.
- Each chapter event can serve as a valuable learning experience, but only if its success is properly evaluated afterward. Conduct a post-event evaluation to see what went right, what went wrong, and what can be done to make the next event even better.

## Suggested Components of a Successful Event

*Well planned events consist of multiple factors each requiring attention and focus. Below is some advice regarding a few of these components that can help to make an event successful.*

### Detailed Logistics Planning

- Prepare event area with UNA-UAS and Chapter signage.

- Always have a sign-in sheet for each event. The sign-in sheet must capture the person's contact information.
- Have an information table; the information table should have materials on UNA-USA, information about the chapter and information about the event.
- Make sure that use of the logo and all UNA materials are in accordance with the Chapter Handbook.
- Invoices, if any should be settled according to the guidelines of the contract.
- Develop a good rapport with vendors at all times.
- Arrive at the venue according to contract or vendor stipulations.
- Test equipment to make sure that they work.
- Obtain individual plaque cards or tent card displaying the name of each speaker for events that require these things. Make sure that there is some type of beverage for speakers to have during their presentation, e.g., water, coffee or tea.
- Create a program for the event.
- Always have a well-developed plan B. Just in case something goes wrong with the original plan, have a clearly devised plan B to buffer any unforeseen challenges.
- After the event, send follow-up emails to encourage people to join your chapter.
- Send thank you letters to supporters and a report of how the funds were used.
- Recognize and thank all the people who made your event a success!

### **Captivating Speakers**

- Consult the Speakers' Bureau for speakers.
- Identify at least three speakers initially. Make sure that any of the three can be tapped if a problem occurs with the confirmed keynote speaker. Always have a back-up!
- Write an invitation letter on the chapter's letterhead to prospective speakers.
- Follow-up two to three weeks after with a phone call or an email.
- Make sure to obtain written confirmation for speakers.
- Obtain updated bio on speaker, preferably from the speaker.
- Gain speaker's written consent if possible, for publicity purposes, e.g., flyers.
- Clarify details pertaining to honorarium, travel itinerary and hotel accommodations if necessary.
- Make sure that two persons are kept informed of confirmation and reservation numbers and all pertinent details for the speaker. Be sure to appoint a "handler" for each speaker. The handler should have all the information for the speaker, pick-up information, check-in and check-out information etc.
- Follow-up with the speakers three weeks before the conference.

### **Attractive Venues**

- Make sure to obtain written confirmation for venues.
- Obtain a contract detailing everything discussed and agreed upon during meetings with venue rep. Do not agree to one thing with the venue rep and sign a contract that does not stipulate the verbal agreement. Make sure that the contract contains everything that you discussed and agreed to.
- Verify whether or not insurance is needed for the event. If insurance is needed, be sure to contact the Membership Team for support.
- Know all of the liabilities involved when requesting a venue. Do not secure venues that place an enormous liability burden on the chapter.
- Make sure that the venue can accommodate the type of event the chapter is hosting. For instance, if the chapter offers meals with the registration cost, etc., make sure that the venue allows food and beverages on the premises. Also, establish whether or not the venue allows in-house and or external catering if and when food is required for your event.
- Do a walk thru of the venue to make sure that it is suitable for the event. If the event is a conference, check on such things as AV capabilities, DVD, podiums, microphones and conference call-in features.

- Always negotiate cheaper prices, especially if the venue provides all the services that the chapter requires for the event.
- Make sure that there is **one** reliable person of contact for all vendors.

#### **Far-Reaching Publicity**

- Create a flyer to publicize the event, a webpage if applicable and a web based registration page. Make sure that flyers disseminated online link invitees to the event registration page in one click.
- Clearly print and publicized contact information.
- Publicize the event in local newspapers, social media networking sites, local television shows, community bulletin boards, schools, universities, churches and with like-minded organizations. If possible, co-sponsor the event. Co-sponsoring allows the chapter to draw on additional resources for the event and potentially increases the number of attendees at an event.

# Sponsorships

---

Sponsorships aid campaigns by establishing a base of reliable funding, providing an annual foothold for activities.

## 1. Set realistic fundraising goals

When planning ideas, consider these questions:

How much money is needed to fund your project as well as pay for general operating expenses?

How much of your income is reliable? (What can you really count on?)

How much of your income is unreliable? (Things like ticket sales or donations might be a little harder to predict)

Where do you have opportunities to raise funds from?

Remember, at the end of the day, what funds you don't have in your budget you have to raise yourself – so be savvy!

## 2. Budget Basics

**Pre-Plan Events** – Have an idea of which events you would like to implement and create a timeline. (Check your calendars for UN holidays, local events, etc.).

**Estimate Costs** – Now that you have your timeline flushed out, think about what supplies you may need (tables, handouts, etc.) and funds that need to be covered (registration fees, etc.). Start taking a tally!

**Craft an Explanation** – Oftentimes your group will have to argue why your funding should be approved, so make sure that you have an explanation as to why it's necessary and how it will positively affect the entire community (and the reputation at the national or even international scene).

### *For Youth Members*

As a student organization, you may be granted an opportunity to receive funding from the university itself. Often times this will be determined by your student government or through your school's student activity office. Take the time to become familiar with the process and those who will determine each semester's distributions. Often times, these organizations will have office hours where you can meet with someone on the committee to go over the budget allocation process and what you will need to do. No matter what, prepare a budget ahead of time which you will be able to explain and defend.

# Individual Sponsorship

---

Individual Sponsorships rely upon donations from within your community, though these are more common day to day, they can sometimes be difficult to attain. Nevertheless, with proper planning it can be a dynamic branch of your fundraising platform.

## 1. Know what works, and what doesn't

Not every fundraising effort will be a big success. Events such as bake sales and car washes may be reliable for some; however, for others it may be more costly and time-consuming than profitable. That said; get to know your community, the social cycles, and overall needs in order to plan something creative and unforgettable.

## 2. Man-Power

Once you set a plan in motion, make sure that your group is well informed and organized. If the event lasts for the whole day, assign shifts collaboratively and have one of your board members confirm. Try to set up in high-traffic areas during busy times, keep your volunteers enthusiastic and outgoing – it's hard to raise anything if you don't dive in with both feet.

### *For Youth Members*

Remember to be as unique as possible, while also making it fun for your group. Here are examples of successful fundraisers that we've seen work:

- Late Night Pizza Sales
- Raffles
- Movie Showings
- Dinner Donations
- Kickball Tournaments
- Singing Valentines