Event Planning

When planning an event or activity there are a number of steps that can be followed to make the process an easy one for everyone involved in the organization of the event. You can always contact the Office of Student Organizations at 359-4711 if you need assistance with planning an event. The steps are broken down into three sections:

Preliminary Design
Project Planning
Reflection

Preliminary Design

1. Identify the problem, issue, or need. Before you even plan an event, you want to consider why you are doing this project. This means you have to assess whether there is a problem that needs working on, an issue that needs to be confronted, or a need that must be filled. Once you have identified the problem, issue, or need, you can begin to move forward.

2. Brainstorm possible methods of addressing the problem, issue or need. Ask yourself, how does this idea deal with the problem, issue or need?

3. Once you have come up with the basic idea of a project, it is time to develop its goals. Clearly articulated goals will keep everyone focused on the purpose of the project and help with the functioning of the team.

Project Planning

Now that you know what the event or project is that you are going to develop and you have clearly stated goals, you have to determine the components of the program. Each program is different so some of the elements below may not relate to what you are doing. For all programs, some of the listed topics will relate and must be considered. Click on the links below to find out more information about each section.

Facilities Scheduling  Budget  Food Service  Publicity
Speaker/Entertainer  Parking  Safety/Security  Equipment
Evaluation
Facilities Scheduling
The location and site of your event is critical for the event’s success. Selecting a site is more than just finding out what rooms are available. There are many factors to consider:

- **Room Capacity** - How many people do you expect at the event?
- **Indoor vs. Outdoor** - Outdoor events may necessitate more set-up and it is a good idea to have a rain site
- **Reservation Process** - Different sites on campus have different reservation processes.
- **Cost vs. No Cost** - What is your budget? Are you seeking a no-cost location?
- **Number of Rooms** - How many different rooms do you need? Do you want all rooms in the same building?
- **Room Layout** - Do you require movable furniture in the room, theater style seating, or a different set up?
- **Electrical Needs** - if your event requires electricity, you may need to make special arrangements.
- **Sound System** - What technological support will you need?
- **AV Equipment** - Some sites may have some AV equipment already while for others you may need to rent/bring additional equipment. Ask when reserving the room.
- **Wired for Telecommunications** – Are phones or computer hookups needed?
- **Tables and Chairs** - What “furniture” needs do you have? Require a podium? Stage? Registration table?
- **Time Available** - Reserve the site to include set-up time and clean-up time.
- **Food** – Is food permitted in the room or rooms?
- **Privacy Factor** - Does your event require a closed-door room? Is a glass walled conference room okay?
Budget

Funding and budgeting are essential considerations in the development of an event. Before you can move forward on your idea, you must have sufficient financial resources to support it. You must work out a budget which includes all the various aspects for your event.

Here are some items to consider when developing a budget:

- Room costs
- Food costs
- Publicity/Marketing
- Postage for mailings
- Travel costs
- Fees for speaker or entertainer
- Rental of AV equipment
- Security costs
- Materials (paper, markers, etc.)
- Miscellaneous (This category gives you some leeway for unexpected expenses)

A few items to consider about budgets:
- Know your financial limits - make sure you don't spend money you don't have or can't get
- Maintain good records - keep track of all income and expenses
- Make sure everyone retains receipts - money must be accounted for
- Expect the unexpected - extra expenses will come up, so plan ahead
- Consider co-sponsorship with other campus organizations to share expenses of your event

Food Service

Are you planning to serve food and beverages at your event? If so, here are some things you need to consider when holding an event.

- How much money do you have budgeted for food?
- What kind of food will you serve? Lunch? Snack foods? Dinner? Buffet? Sit down? There are many options so think it through.
- What kind of beverages will you be serving?
- Will beverages be served in a can, punch bowl, or other manner?

Once you have an idea about what you want, you can call Dining Services at 359-2540 to discuss your plans in detail. They will be able to assist you in picking out foods that meet your needs. Remember to consider vegetarians in your planning.

Alcohol

If you intend to serve alcohol at your event you must receive University approval at least 30 days in advance. This is done through an application submitted to the Office of Student Affairs. To review the policies and procedures for having an
event with alcohol please go to the policy page. Applications for a permit are available at the Office of Student Organizations in PUB 320.

Publicity/Marketing

Great publicity and marketing are the key to a successful program. There are many different methods you can use to get the word out about your program. Below are several tips to think about when planning your marketing strategy:

- **Determine who you want to attend and then target your advertising to them.** If you wish to reach the entire student population, you may want to place an ad in the Easterner, or run an ad in the Focus.

- **Determine your marketing budget.** Remember the budget you had to design for your event. Now it becomes important. Advertising can cost money and how much money you have available will determine what type of advertising you can afford. Some of the more popular advertising mediums are: flyers, posters, print ads in the Easterner. Flyers or handouts are usually one of the least expensive mediums.

- **Conceptual meetings with your committee.** Your team should meet to discuss what you are trying to promote and how you want the visual or audio product to look to the public.

- **Timelines in advertising are important.** Marketing materials distributed or run too early, in relation to your event date, may be forgotten or lost by the time your event takes place. There are three waves to an advertising campaign.

There are many departments on campus that can help you get the word out. Here are some resources available to you.

**Three Waves of Publicity**

**First Wave** - 10 to 14 days before – During this time, you will develop interest builders, teasers, and flyers that keep’em asking for more. Tell something about the program but not everything.

**Second Wave** – 5 – 10 days before – This is the time for the MEDIA BLITZ. Use new, creative, and attention getting forms of publicity. Change old signs with new ones, people get bored of the same sign, and they stop seeing it after a while.

**Third Wave** – 2 days before. Word of mouth is very important so keep talking the event up to friends and in classes, engage in a publicity stunt, have a pre-show appearance. You have built the interest, now keep it up and people will show up for your event.
Speaker/Entertainment

Consider the following factors if you are planning a speaker, entertainment, or facilitator for an event:

Who is the agent/manager for the speaker/entertainment?
Does the speaker/entertainment appeal to a broad audience?
How many people are expected to attend?
What other events will be taking place at EWU or in the community during the event?
Can you contact former places that hired the speaker/entertainment for a reference?
Will the topic or message strike an emotional response?
Does the artist/entertainment have special technical requirements for their presentation?
Does the artist/entertainment require hotel or transportation arrangements?
Is there a potential co-sponsor(s) on or off-campus?

Please note: Any speaker or entertainment (DJ, band, anything) must sign a contract.

Parking Services

If you are bringing a large number of people to campus for your event, there are a number of issues to consider. One issue to consider is the number of vehicles that will be coming to campus. If there are a large number of people coming during normal parking enforcement hours, you should contact parking services to talk to them about the quantity of people and what can be done so your attendees don’t get ticketed.

Considerations

- Is parking easily accessible to the location of the event
- If you have delivery trucks, caterers, or special equipment being brought to campus, do they know how to easily access the building? Most buildings have an entrance where it is easy to load and unload a vehicle. Contact the building manager for questions about this issue.
- Are buses bringing people to the event? Where can they park?
- Need for cones or barricades to block parking spaces?
- Are other concurrent events in close proximity that may limit parking?
- Time and day of week?

You can contact Parking Services at 359-7275 with any questions related to parking on campus.
Safety/Security

The safety and security of those who host and attend events held at EWU is of the utmost importance. How do you know if you should contact University Police in conjunction with your event? Consider the following questions:

- Is there a large attendance anticipated?
- Could this event draw enough attendees to affect traffic?
- Are there items of value (including at-the-door ticket sale receipts, equipment, other property) that may need special safeguarding?
- Is this a controversial event that might elicit a response from another group or from individuals in attendance?
- Will any alcohol be served or permitted? Contact the Office of Student Organizations at 359-4711 to secure the proper approval.
- Might any emergency medical services be needed? Is there any risk of injury associated with this event?
- Are there any harmful or flammable materials expected to be used at this event?
- Will the event take place late in the evening or very early in the morning?
- Do you have other reasons to think the University Police should be notified?

Don't overlook this important aspect of event planning! If you have answered "yes" to any of the above, do not hesitate to contact University Police at 359-6300. They are available to assist in making your event a successful and safe one.

Equipment

What special equipment needs does your event have? Equipment you may need includes:

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<th>Equipment</th>
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<td>Telephones</td>
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<td>Computers</td>
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<td>Tables and chairs</td>
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<td>Televisions</td>
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<td>VCRs</td>
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<td>Network Connection</td>
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<td>CD Players</td>
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<td>Overhead Projector</td>
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<td>Trash Cans</td>
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Most of the electronic equipment (TV/VCR, overhead projector, etc) listed above can be rented from Mars Lab at 359-4875.
Evaluation

One of the most ignored, yet important, elements of project planning is evaluation. If you want to determine how successful an event is, you will want to give participants the opportunity to evaluate their experience. If this is an event that you want to do annually, it is especially important to allow time for evaluation. Every program can always use improvement or can be changed to accommodate more people. Create an evaluation tool which you hand out at the end of the event to be returned for your use.

Some items to consider in an evaluation:

- The evaluation should be anonymous. People are more likely to honestly fill out and return the form if they do not have to put their name on it.
- The form should be short. Know exactly what information you want and ask for it. Do not ask for information you do not intend to use.
- Use a combination of Lickert scale items with short answer questions. A Lickert scale is a way of generating a quantitative value (numerical) to a qualitative questionnaire (e.g. poor, fair, good, very good, excellent). For an ascending five point scale incremental values are assigned to each category. Example: Assigned values are: needs improvement=1, fair=2, good=3, very good=4, excellent=5. The Lickert scale provides you with a quick easy way to review your program, while the short answer questions provide some more depth to people’s responses. You can ask for suggestions on future programs or what was specifically liked or disliked about the program.
- Make your questions clear and concise.
Reflection

Once your program or event is complete and you have received evaluation forms back, you are still not finished. You want to take time to reflect back not only on the actual event but the entire process that lead to the holding of the event. If a committee worked on the project, the entire committee should engage in reflection. Reflecting back will help improve the event for the next time.

Here are some items to help you reflect back on the process and the event:

1. List three successes that came out of the project (ways students, the group, or the community benefited).

2. If you were to plan the same project again, list three things you would do to improve it.

3. What one thing surprised you the most while working on this project? It can be negative or positive. Why did this surprise you?

4. a. How would you rate your group’s teamwork skills and explain why (circle one):
   Ineffective    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent

5. Describe your group’s best effort during the project and why you think this was the best effort.

6. Describe your group’s worst team effort during the project and explain why you think this was the worst effort.

7. How would you rate your performance as a team member and explain why (circle one):
   Ineffective    Fair    Good    Very Good    Excellent

8. List the three most important things you learned about working on a team.

9. What were the favorite jobs you participated in to make the project happen and explain why these were your favorite?

10. What jobs did you like the list and explain why these were your least favorite?

11. Review the evaluation forms. How do other people’s perspectives match yours?