

**RESOURCES FOR**  
**chapter eleven**  
**EVENT PLANNING**

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# SAMPLE LEARNING DAY FORMAT

## Why should we have learning days?

*B*...bring addicts together, so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing and service can do their work.”

Basic Text

The longer we stay clean, the more true the above statement becomes for us, and the more we can search to improve how we carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering addict. Learning days are a tool we can use to improve the ways we deliver services in our areas. Learning days are designed to help service committees share information, new materials, challenges, and rewards with each other and other members and groups.

## Who would want to host a learning day event?






A learning day event can be very valuable for emerging areas that are seeking to connect with other service committees. They can be helpful for areas that need more resources and want to educate the local fellowship about service and the service structure. Learning days are also a good tool for those within the service structure who are currently helping to improve services, sharing information and new ideas, and attracting support for the committees within the local area or regional service body.

## Who plans the event?

Usually, an area committee or ad hoc committee will plan a learning day. These members may receive support from the region with planning and hosting the event. For multiregional events and zonal events, participation would be sought from all of the regions involved.

Before beginning the work of planning and presenting a learning day event, it can be helpful to read the *Public Relations Handbook*, in particular Chapters One through Four (for some foundational PR principles) and Chapter Eleven, “Event Planning.” Much of what you will need to help your learning day be successful is included in those chapters.

Once the planning committee is formed, the actual work begins. The following questions usually need to be addressed in this planning stage:

-  Where and when will we hold the event?
-  How long will we need to prepare for the event?
-  How will we pay for it?
-  Who will we want to be the presenters, and how much training will we want to provide for the presenters?
-  What materials will we need to provide?

- ✎ Will we have a social event (dance, comedy show, speaker meeting) associated with the event?
- ✎ How will we publicize the event?

## How do we pay for the event?

In keeping with Tradition Seven, the money to begin the project comes from the sponsoring areas, regions, or zones. A projected budget should be drawn up in the planning stage in order to determine a registration fee. The goal of the event is to be self-supporting, and it can be, if it is planned well. Your budget should include line items for printing, literature, insurance, postage, rent, phone calls, refreshments, speaker travel and lodging, and merchandise.

## Whom should we invite?

Everyone! The more members who attend, the greater the chance for a successful event. Once the date and location have been secured, email area, regional, and zonal websites so the event can be posted. You may also want to mail pre-registration flyers to surrounding areas right up to the date of the event.

## Attracting members to attend

When a committee decides to organize a learning day event, it's helpful to understand that the audience might not yet share your same passion for service in NA. This means that the audience may need some additional motivation to attend, since the focus will be learning about service. This does not mean that learning can't be fun, but in order to share in the fun (and information), the audience will first need to attend the event. The following questions can help trusted servants plan for ways to attract members to the event:

- ✎ What will attract members to the event?
- ✎ Should we offer refreshments? What types of refreshments? Could a "bring your favorite food dish" be considered for lunch or dinner?
- ✎ Are there any speakers we can bring in from other areas, regions, zones, or countries?
- ✎ Will we have a recovery meeting, dance, and/or other entertainment?
- ✎ Is the location convenient and comfortable?
- ✎ Are the dates convenient, and have we made sure that they don't conflict with any other local events?

If a committee takes the time to plan the event from the perspective of the intended audience members, it will improve the effectiveness of a learning day so that it carries the message the committee wants to convey.

## Sample program for learning day

### Saturday

**8am — 9am**

Reception (refreshments) and Registration

**9 — 10:30am**

Service: How We Carry the Message

The Spiritual Rewards of Service

**11am — 12:30pm**

Understanding the Twelve Traditions and Service

**12:30 — 1:30pm**

Lunch Break

**1:30 — 3pm**

Planning for Services – What Is Our #1 Service Priority?

**3:30 — 5pm**

Moving Forward with Our Service Efforts

**5:30pm**

Potluck Dinner

**7pm**

Recovery Meeting



This is only a *sample* program. Topics, programs, and formats may vary, and the only requirement is that the topics address the needs of the participants. Often an area or committee hosting the event will ask members, groups, and trusted servants for topics for the event. When we involve others in the planning of the event, we are more likely to have increased participation and enthusiasm. We have found that providing some information in each session to the participants, and then allowing them to discuss pre-planned questions about that topic, is a productive way for our members to learn. The more involved the participants are, the more they will take away from the discussions.

**Multi-Regional Learning Weekends:** A committee may anticipate a large turnout of members with a multi-regional learning event. In that situation, more than one workshop is usually offered during each time slot.



# SAMPLE COMMUNITY MEETINGS FORMAT










The purpose of a community meeting is to inform the public about Narcotics Anonymous. A community meeting differs from an open NA meeting in that we invite people outside of our fellowship to attend and address a particular focus that is relevant to our guests. Some examples of a community meeting might include:

-  A meeting in a neighborhood where clergy, teachers from nearby schools, or members of a neighborhood association are invited to attend.
-  A city- or county-wide meeting to inform healthcare workers, workers in government agencies, and other professionals about Narcotics Anonymous.

These meetings are hosted by Narcotics Anonymous members and are structured to share information about recovery with people who may be able to refer addicts to NA. In this way, we are expanding our ability to grow closer to our vision that no addict need die without having heard about recovery in NA.

## Planning for a community meeting

First, we will want to consider how our public image will be affected by such an event. For that reason, it's important to be sure that we are well-prepared. Once a committee has identified the professional audience, the following points can help trusted servants successfully prepare for the event:

-  Research the identified professional audience. Whenever possible, learn the names and positions of those who will attend. You can obtain this information through NA members or community resources.
-  Consider scheduling the event at a time of day, and day of the week, that is most likely to work best for invited guests.
-  Find a location that is easily accessible, centrally located, and, if possible, well-known in the community.
-  Send a letter of invitation to the group of local professionals.
-  Be sure to follow up by calling the professionals, reminding them of the meeting, and requesting that they send a representative.
-  If you want to reach members of the entire community, a committee may want to have the meeting announced on radio, and in community calendars, newspapers, etc.
-  Invite speakers and guest speakers in advance of the meeting date. It is a good idea to ask speakers sixty-to-ninety days in advance of the meeting.
-  Offer refreshments and indicate in your announcements that refreshments will be provided.
-  Bring NA literature that best suits the event and the audience that you intend to reach, including informational pamphlets and meeting lists.

## Preparing for a community meeting

When preparing for a community meeting, seeking help from other NA members and trusted servants can help make the event a success. Planning, setup, cleanup, and thank-you letters will all benefit from the support and ideas of other trusted servants. Other helpful ideas include:

- ✎ Remember the purpose, focus, and goal of the meeting.
- ✎ Review the *Public Relations Handbook*, including Chapters Four, “Interacting with Professionals” and Eleven, “Event Planning”.
- ✎ Be aware of available resource tools, such as presentation formats and frequently asked questions.
- ✎ Prepare and train the trusted servants and guest speakers who will be presenting the information about Narcotics Anonymous.
- ✎ Talk about the inclusiveness of NA and emphasize that NA isn’t concerned with what drugs people use.
- ✎ Provide statistics about our worldwide fellowship.
- ✎ Consider using PowerPoint presentations and visual aids with material presentation.
- ✎ Adhere to all of the Twelve Traditions — only respond to NA-related issues.
- ✎ Use quotes from NA literature to express NA’s primary purpose.
- ✎ Dress appropriately for the audience (like you would for a job interview).

## Sample community meeting format

*(This can be tailored for your community meeting.)*

Hello. I would like to welcome everyone to this informational meeting, offered to you by \_\_\_\_\_ (*group/area/region/zone*) of Narcotics Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (*first name only*), and I am an addict.

Before we begin our presentation, I would like to tell you that refreshments will be available (*when and where*), pamphlets and meeting lists are (handed out or available on the back tables), and the bathrooms are \_\_\_\_\_.

The purpose of this meeting is to inform the community about the Narcotics Anonymous program of recovery — a resource in your community for those who want to stop using drugs. There are no membership criteria and there are no dues or fees to become a member of NA.

NA is a spiritual, not religious, program. We are not interested in what drugs a person used or about a person’s age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or educational or financial attainments. We only care that they want to stop using drugs and about how we can help them to remain drug-free.



We are a twelve-step fellowship. Our recovery comes through attendance at NA meetings, asking an experienced member to be a sponsor (or mentor) to help us with our recovery, working and applying the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, reading NA recovery literature, and helping others to stay clean. This has worked for us since 1953, and it continues to work for us today.

We have provided you with our *Membership Survey* and other pamphlets which document historic information about NA, how we have grown as a worldwide fellowship, and some demographics that were compiled from our world convention. (*Areas and regions may want to consider having literature stamped with the area or region's name, address, phone number, and website.*)

However, today's meeting is about NA in *this* community. And I would like to introduce you to (second presenter), who will inform you about how you can use NA as a local resource. (second presenter discusses local meetings, the helpline, H&I activities, current panels, literature, and any future activities that you are capable of offering and that your committee has the resources to provide).



***Leave some time at the end of the presentation for a question-and-answer session. The presenter can ask the first question, such as “What can a newcomer expect at his or her first meeting?”***



# EVENT PLANNING WORKSHOP

This resource is for service committees in their efforts to plan local events. Local events can include anything from area committee workshops to learning days to community events and professional roundtables. Trusted servants are encouraged to adapt this planning aid to fit the needs of the service committee and the proposed event. To further support your event planning efforts, members may want to use the *Public Relations Handbook* as a resource, particularly chapters three (Communication Strategies), four (Interacting with the Public), and eleven (Event Planning). All NA events are an opportunity to further our relationships with the public, and planning can help NA be seen as a positive, credible, and reliable option for addicts.

## Goals of the event

Prior to conducting a workshop for specific aspects of an event, a committee can identify the goal or goals of the event. This may be done during an area service committee meeting or within the committee. One of the benefits of involving the group service representatives (GSRs) in the initial planning is that partnerships with them can contribute to the success of the event. These partnerships can help support the event by improving communication and participation with NA groups in the area. Once the goal or goals of the event have been identified, the planning group or committee can then use this tool (or some other planning process) to conduct a planning workshop for the scheduled event.

### Sample event planning goals

*Committees can either create their own goals or use the overarching goals listed below:*

**To plan an event that will present NA in a positive public light.**

**To incorporate planning and preparation as a regular committee task.**




## Event planning workshop setup

On the tables there will be large note pads, markers, traditions and concepts cards, paper, and pens. In the front of the room or on the walls, the goal or goals of the event are identified. Having the goals of the event available for everyone to see will help members remain focused in their planning.

Before the session begins, the facilitator (usually the committee chairperson) will explain the process and goals of the session, as well as any logistic information that is needed (snacks, breaks, bathroom location, length of session, etc.).

## Planning categories, brainstorming, and prioritizing

The session will be divided into five event planning categories:

-  human and financial resources
-  venue
-  communication

 program

 follow-up

For each category, the group brainstorms ideas while a recorder captures all suggestions for the group to see. Once all ideas are captured, the facilitator posts the lists on the wall for review. New ideas and questions are encouraged and can be added at this time. When all ideas are presented, the group prioritizes the list. Not all categories lend themselves to the prioritization process. The Area Planning Tool has suggestions for the facilitator and for prioritizing. Additionally, there are usually planning components, such as budget forecasting and start-up monies, that may need to go back to the area service committee for approval.

## **Category 1: Human and financial resources**

### **Human resources**

This category focuses the planning group on how to recruit members for the event. Recruiting members involves more than simply identifying members who may be willing to be of service at an event. The committee may want to first look at the availability of members from the area service committee, and then identify the qualities and experience needed for specific event functions. For example, the member who is providing follow-up may need to possess certain communication skills, both written and verbal, that may complement the audience. Follow-up with a professional treatment audience may greatly benefit from having a member involved who has some experience or education in the treatment field. The group can brainstorm ideas, and the recorder writes down all suggestions that pertain to the recruitment of NA members.

### **Financial resources**

Members are encouraged to look at all budgetary issues including start-up costs, event operational costs (such as rent of the facility for the event), refreshment costs, costs associated with the event (such as mileage reimbursement for invited guests), announcement costs, and follow-up activity costs. Brainstorming for this category involves identifying each budget area with a list of specific items that fall in that area. For example, three budgetary areas that would include specific lists would be venue costs, projected refreshments costs, and program costs. Once all budget categories have their identified items, each list is prioritized and the budgetary items are presented to the area service committee. When this activity is completed, the budget created by the planning group will reflect the entire cost of the event, including start-up monies.

## **Category 2: Venue**

The planning group is encouraged to look at all venue issues, keeping in mind the purpose and goal(s) of the event. Facility considerations may vary depending on whether the event is a community meeting, learning day, or professional roundtable. One of the initial venue selection considerations is choosing a place that is comfortable, so that the facility can accommodate the projected attendance and any event meetings and setup. Additional considerations are questions about the room layout, e.g.: Is there a need for a room that seats 100 people theatre-style or 100 people in small groups? Other venue selection items to consider may include kitchen facilities, parking, facility location (the

audience and purpose of the event help determine the location), audiovisual accommodations (such as sound, lights, and video), handicap accessibility, etc. One or more sites can be selected, with the final site selection depending on whether or not the bid is secured and meets the needs of the intended audience. For site selection, members prioritize their top two choices and usually make a recommendation to the area service committee for ratification prior to securing the site.

### **Category 3: Communication**

This category focuses the event planning group on the question of who needs to be informed about the event and what are some effective ways to accomplish that task. There may be different communication strategies depending on who is to receive information and how the information might be most effectively communicated. For example, informing GSRs at the ASC meeting and creating flyers for the groups is one strategy, while writing invitation letters and following up with telephone calls to the invited professionals is a completely different strategy. The group may also want to consider that members who perform the tasks may need to have different skills. A member with graphic art skills may be appropriate for the creation of an event flyer and a member with writing skills may be appropriate for the creation of a letter to an identified audience. The lists created by the planning group or committee will most likely contain several communication strategies.

### **Category 4: Program**

An event program can begin with an overall program design, with the specifics filled in after the program's framework has been created. For the overall program, members can consider what they want to learn from invited guests and how to make the program more valuable to them. Questions can include: What would this public audience like from NA? What do we want NA members to come away with from this event? The program is thus designed to be valuable to both the attendees and NA.

With the overall program design completed, the planning group can begin work on program specifics. These specifics usually include presenters, facilitators, qualified members, reimbursement costs such as mileage and parking, etc. The group recorder writes down all ideas that are offered. In the prioritizing process, it may be helpful to consider "matching talent to task," meaning that the group identifies members whose skills and background are best suited to the event and audience. The group may also want to select alternates to the first choices, as there may be instances when someone becomes ill or a life situation forces a person to cancel.

### **Category 5: Follow-up**

Finally, the planning group is encouraged to look at everything that is needed for follow-up. Following up on an event may include addressing questions such as: If surveys were used at an event, who will be collating the information and developing an action plan? Which members will be responsible for follow-up activities, and how soon after the event should members follow up? What is the best time to follow up, and how should members contact invitees (phone call, thank-you letters, etc.)? Is the cost for follow-up activities included in the budget?

## Workshop wrap-up







At the close of the planning group session, the facilitator thanks all of the members for their hard work. The group recorder will email or send a copy of the prioritized lists to all planning group members in a timely manner.



*This format can be modified and adapted to meet a community's event planning needs. Some events, such as hosting a roundtable for professionals, may be more involved, while others, such as a committee workshop, may need less planning. However, the six categories listed above tend to apply to all events. Even after an area committee workshop, a follow-up activity with the facility manager to learn whether NA has left the facility in good order helps foster a strong relationship between NA and the public.*

# SAMPLE EVENT TIMELINE

**T**his sample timeline may be shorter for an event that doesn't include professionals and presenters. However, taking time to plan events and create a timeline is advisable for any NA event. This timeline describes what needs to be accomplished and when.

-  **Four months prior to the event:** The planning group (usually an area committee) meets to work out all issues that may arise for the event as outlined in the above format. Items that need area ratification (such as the budget) have been taken to the area committee.
-  **Three months prior to the event:** Flyers are designed along with any web announcements; letters of invitation are composed and sent (if a roundtable or community meeting); the venue is reserved and a meeting with venue manager is scheduled; presenters/speakers are contacted, as well as alternate presenters; program is drawn up.
-  **Two months prior to the event:** Flyers are distributed; invited persons are contacted to secure their attendance at the event; the event program is printed and sent to presenters and alternates.
-  **One month prior to the event:** Flyer distribution continues; follow-up calls are made to those who have not responded; food and refreshments are purchased; committee members meet with presenters and alternates to review the program, to prepare and train them, and to answer any questions.
-  **Event.**
-  **One month following the event:** Surveys from the event are reviewed; attendees are contacted for additional feedback and to determine if there are any presentations or there is any literature distribution that may have been generated by the event.