

Organizing a Large Event: Logistics to Consider



If executed properly, large events such as rallies, marches, parades, and speaking tours are great ways to apply pressure on lawmakers, educate the general public and disseminate your message. Here are some basic guidelines for organizing an event in your community.

A. Choose a Target – Who is the decision-maker that has the power to give you what you want? Determine who you are targeting for the event, whether that person is an elected official, business executive, school board official, etc.

B. Location and Venues for an event – Here are some possible venues to consider:

- In front of your Representative or Senator’s local office
- Town halls
- Public parks
- Public squares
- College campuses
- Private homes in a prominent location
- A place of worship
- Schools

C. Impact Strategy – To what extent do you want this event to make a public statement, generate media, or influence policy? For example, if you are interested in making a strong statement on U.S. policy, consider holding your event in a prominent public location that is easily accessible for media and the general public.

D. Accessibility and attendance – If you hope to attract a large crowd you should consider practicalities like parking, public transportation and handicap accessibility. In addition, if you expect a large group, it is important that you have the proper permits for public spaces (if necessary), enough volunteers to staff the event, and a sound system that will ensure that everyone in attendance can hear.

E. Speakers – Who will best carry your message? The answer to this question often depends on what you are trying to accomplish with your event or campaign. Politicians are a good choice if you are seeking policy change. Celebrities are a great way to bring widespread attention to an issue. Advocates with personal stories can be very compelling and connect with the audience on an emotional level. Below are some “profiles” to consider when thinking about who to invite to speak.

- Elected officials
- HIV/AIDS and reproductive health advocates
- Celebrities
- Those directly affected by HIV
- Health care workers, such as family planning or HIV prevention providers
- Religious leaders
- Academics
- International students or public health workers
- Youth activists

F. Message of event— A clear and compelling message is essential for any advocacy campaign and should be integrated throughout your event. A good message:

- Is credible. It is factually accurate, provides information to back up assertions, and is delivered by people that are trusted on the subject.
- Is clear and concise.
- Connects with a person's interests. It starts with what a person already knows and thinks and moves them to where you want them to be.
- Communicates values. Messages that are easy to understand and framed in a way that resonates with people's core values (e.g. fairness, equality, freedom, honesty) are the most powerful.

G. Timing— Deciding the date and timeframe of your event can greatly affect its impact and how well it is received. Think strategically about when your event will make the most impact, whether that is in terms of media attention or attendance. Some things to consider:

- Weekday events— preferably held in the morning or mid-day — are likely to be better for press coverage than weekend or evening events.
- An event on an important day, such as World AIDS Day (December 1) or International Women's Day (March 8), may be a powerful incentive for participation and media coverage.
- Consider your target audience and when they might be available to attend. Working professionals may prefer an evening or weekend event; students may have more flexible schedules.

H. Length of Event— Take into consideration the total length of your event. Be conscious of how much time you need to clearly convey your message and how long the attention spans of the media and participants are likely to be. If you want to do a longer event, you will want to come up with ways to keep people engaged, such as listening to a performer, screening a video, or marching.

