

# THE KEYS TO SUCCESS IN PROGRAM PLANNING

*If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.*

**1. Survey Needs/Assessment:** *A process in which we determine the needs and wants of the target population. A needs assessment can take many forms:*

- a. Surveys or checklists (could have at an event or in Red Square to get ideas for future programs)
- b. Interviews, informally talking to people
- c. Email to people on your organization's email distribution lists asking for ideas
- d. Former records and program evaluations
- e. Keep abreast of current literature in your field, see what has worked on other campuses
- f. Looking at Facebook and other on-line communities to gauge student interests

**2. Ultimate Goal:** *Develop the goals and objectives of your organization. Your goals and objectives will provide a foundation for determining what types of programs you want to implement. What is the overall purpose for doing a particular program? What do you hope people will gain from the event? What do you hope that you and other planners will learn from the experience?*

**3. Create Plan:** *How can you best accomplish the goals you have set? What ideas do other members of the organization have? Often brainstorming with others is an effective way to develop program ideas which will help meet your goals. In determining what kind of program you will develop:*

- a. Be creative, try something new
- b. Talk with others about past successes and failures where appropriate

Once you have determined the type of programs you wish to have, test their feasibility. Questions you can ask when testing feasibility are attached.

**4. Coordinate Event:** *Determine what needs to be done to implement the program. The logistical program needs must be determined and tasks delegated. Consideration should be made for such things as:*

- a. Entertainment/speaker/performer/film availability
- b. Facility (reserve room, determine set-up arrangements, decorations, etc.)
- c. Equipment (multi-media, white boards, etc.-be sure in room reserved or make arrangements)
- d. Services (sound and lights, security, catering, change fund, parking, etc.)
- e. Forms (contracts, expenditure requests, reservations, etc.)
- f. Publicity (posters, handbills, table tents, banners, Western Front, AS Review, KUGS, press releases, reserve banner/kiosk space, tabling, class announcements, notices to faculty, facebook, etc.)
- g. Financial resources (projected expenses/revenue, organization budget, co-sponsorships, Activities Council, Diversity Fund, related academic departments, fundraising, submit all expenditure requests)
- h. Ticket sales (in advance or at the door? if advance, ticket agreement with PAC)
- i. Hospitality/Catering (make arrangements for any hospitality or catering for performers/attendees)
- i. Follow through. Develop a system of progress reporting (regular meetings) and make sure that the deadlines are being met.

**5. Execute Plan:** *Be sure that you and those assisting you are there in plenty of time to make sure the room is ready, meet any guest speakers, entertainers, or presenters, and attend to any last minute details.*

- a. Introduce guests (have a script or agenda)
- b. Pay performers, speaker after event (arrange to have check ready at the VU Finance Office)

**6. Summarize Results/Evaluate:** *Evaluation should be viewed from a positive standpoint for it is a means of discovering if what was originally planned has actually been carried out. When possible, it is helpful to have an evaluation form for the audience to fill out. This will provide you with immediate feedback about your event.*

- a. Were goals accomplished? Include both formal evaluations and informal comments and reasons for success or failure. The process, as well as the end product, should be assessed.
- b. Was the program designed well? Workshop, lecture, film, discussion. Did the format accomplish what you intended?
- c. Quality of the Program. Was the event educational or entertaining? Was the speaker or performer prepared and effective? Did the audience get involved? Audience response?
- d. Participation & Process. Did other students get involved in the planning and production of the event and gain some skills in doing so? Did you delegate effectively?
- e. Budget. Did the event stay within its planned budget? Were there any unforeseen costs?
- f. Timing. Did the program conflict with other activities? Good time of year, week, day?
- g. Place. Was it convenient and comfortable? Did the space meet the needs of the event?
- h. Promotion. Was your advertising designed properly? Was it distributed effectively? Did you reach your target audience?
- i. Attendance. How many people attended compared to what you expected? Students vs. general public?
- j. Personal. What skills and experience did you gain? How did you handle problems?
- k. Do you think that the program is worth repeating? Why/why not?

**7. Sewing up Loose Ends:** *Now that the program has been completed, there are still a few things that need to be attended to:*

- a. Return borrowed or rented equipment.
- b. Clip newspaper articles to include in a program report.
- c. Take down old publicity.
- d. Send reviews and news articles to special guests, entertainers, speakers, etc.
- e. Make sure all receipts are turned in, invoices paid.
- f. Evaluate the program and prepare a program report.
- g. Congratulate, recognize, and thank all others who contributed to the program. Send thank you notes. The thank you is one of the most important aspects of planning successful programs. People who have given their time, talent, energy, or money like to know that their efforts have been appreciated. A list of the names of everyone who has contributed in some manner should be kept as you plan, organize, and present the program.

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### **Overall Purposes & Goals of Programming in the Associated Students**

- \*to meet needs and interests
- \*to educate
- \*to provide a learning experience for students involved in planning events
- \*to inspire one to action
- \*to encourage involvement
- \*to explore and experiment with ideas
- \*to gain knowledge
- \*to bring people together, provide an opportunity for students to meet new people, create a sense of community
- \*to provide an opportunity for people to share ideas
- \*to provide entertainment
- \*to provide exposure to other cultures, backgrounds and perspectives
- \*to provide social and recreational opportunities
- \*to increase awareness about issues
- \*to teach people new skills
- \*to have fun!

# PROGRAM FEASIBILITY TESTING

*Below are some important questions to consider when deciding whether to implement a program.*

1. What is the general concept of this program idea? What are you trying to provide your audience?
2. Can you define the audience this program may appeal to (type, number, existing group(s), demographics, potential members, students living on campus/off-campus, general public, etc.)? Don't be overly optimistic, but neither limit your horizons.
3. What resources will be needed to carry out the program (the lack of which would affect the success of the program)?
  - a. Financial. Developing an accurate budget is half of the planning process.
  - b. Time (human resource). How many people can afford to put how much time into planning?
  - c. Time (scheduling). Advance planning time? Timing? Competing events? Is it a good time of the year, week, day for your target audience? Be aware of holidays when scheduling.
  - d. Facilities and Equipment. Available? Appropriate?
  - e. Other, such as availability of speakers, performers, etc.
4. Has anything similar been tried in the past by this group or another? Under what conditions and with what results? Learn from the past, but don't let yourself be limited by it.
5. Are similar organizations planning a similar program? If so, what is significantly different about your program idea? Has cooperation or merger been explored to avoid duplication of effort and needless competition?
6. Why is it important to your organization to choose this program? What are the potential benefits?
7. What are the risks of investing time and/or money in this program? Many new program planners are overly optimistic, they tend to overlook problems, underplay dangers, and lack objectivity. They may accept assumptions without thorough investigation. Be realistic by making a list of risks.
8. What results must be present for the program to be a success? How will they be measured?
  - a. Level of ticket sales/income?
  - b. Level of attendance?
  - c. Publicity received?
  - d. Enthusiasm?
  - e. Quality of the program?
  - f. Audience response to the program?
  - g. How smoothly the planning process went?
  - h. How the presenter/performer (if applicable) felt about the program?
  - i. Program budget?
  - j. Some combination?
9. What would constitute a failure? How would failure affect your organization?
10. What are the leaders' and members' motives for planning the program? Is there a measure of obligation or tradition? Is there also new challenge, personal fulfillment and opportunity for skill improvement?

# IMPROVING YOUR PROGRAMMING SKILLS

## **Communication**

- \*Communicate clearly your expectations to the speaker or entertainer.
- \*Send confirmation letters or make confirmation phone calls whenever possible.
- \*Provide written instructions for volunteers and define tasks clearly and completely.
- \*Keep written records, for your use and for those who come after you.
- \*Send written thank you notes.

## **Organization/Planning**

- \*Determine what needs to be done and develop a checklist. Include who is to do what by when.
- \*Allow sufficient planning and implementation time. Decide how long tasks will take before scheduling the program date.
- \*Allow for the unexpected. Anticipate problems & develop back-ups (ex., rain location for outdoor event).
- \*Prioritize tasks.
- \*Use past experiences and available resources in order to plan better.

## **Delegation**

- \*Delegate tasks based on interests and skills. Be sure to provide any necessary instruction or training.
- \*Maintain a consistent follow-up schedule for delegated items and follow it.
- \*Whenever possible, delegate in writing.
- \*If the delegation is not working, change it.
- \*Don't hesitate to delegate! Delegating helps promote investment and interest in the program and responsibility in the individual.

## **Fostering Creativity**

- \*Use words, phrases, and sentences that encourage creativity rather than discourage it.
- \*Deal with the present rather than the past. Learn from the past, but realize that situations and circumstances may have changed.
- \*Encourage open discussion. Learn how to brainstorm.
- \*Spend time with creative people and learn from them.
- \*Never say "I'm not creative".

## **Decision Making**

- \*Seek out options/alternatives. The obvious answer may not always be the best answer.
- \*Ask for advice or opinions from those whose advice and opinions you trust.
- \*Look for that which can prove you wrong as well as that which can indicate you are right.
- \*Make every effort to get all the facts, but also pay attention to "gut feelings." They usually have a basis in fact.
- \*If you need more time, postpone the decision. Some people make quick decisions, others take more time to analyze. Know your style and use it.

## **Evaluation/Use of Feedback**

- \*Have participants evaluate the program whenever possible.
- \*Ask for specific comments, criticism, suggestions.
- \*Evaluate all aspects of the program planning and implementation with all who were involved.
- \*Include suggestions for improvements/ways to handle problems in the evaluation form/program file.
- \*Remember that evaluations are your opportunity to learn, to improve, to grow, and to provide valuable information to future programmers.