

Toolkit: Organizing a Community Forum

2005

Resources Consulted:

RESULTS TANF Community Forum Handbook 2001(www.results.org)

Advocates for Youth — Advocacy and Organizing Toolkit (www.advocatesforyouth.org)

Midwest Academy (www.midwestacademy.com)

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Getting Started

What is a community forum?

A forum is an event where people who have experience in a particular subject share their knowledge, perspectives, and experience on an issue. It is a great resource for anyone who wants to learn more about an issue. It is also an excellent way to recruit RESULTS activists, people who will become members of your Local Action Network. A community forum is an event that anyone can attend, where a panel of experts shares information, and where members of the audience can ask questions during a pre-set time.

Why hold a community forum?

Community forums can be a very effective way to raise awareness in your community and to get people involved in an issue. It can provide an opportunity for activists to join forces to demand action on a set of issues, advocate for change and get local media attention on issues that are important to your group.

What would our community forum look like?

Much of the event depends on the interests of your group and the time and resources you have available to put into it. It can be as big or small as you want it but in general, a community forum should last about an hour, long enough to educate your audience and short enough to keep their attention. The forum will have around three presenters, each speaking for 10–15 minutes. After all the presenters have spoken, there will be time for a question and answer session, lasting no more than 20 minutes. Finally, it will conclude with a 5–10 minute wrap-up session, motivating your attendees and calling them to action.

Columbus, Ohio RESULTS activist and UU, Ginnie Vogts, led the effort to organize a community forum on health care and the difficult situation many people face of being un- or under-insured.

Collaboration was key to the success of the forum. Using already-established networks of people concerned about the health care crisis in Ohio and across the United States, including the Single-Payer Action Network (SPAN) Ohio, the Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN), as well as RESULTS and the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Columbus, Ginnie and the other organizers were able to tap the existing interests of people and build more energy around this issue. The forum, held at First UU in Columbus, provided the opportunity to create even more connections between community groups and statewide networks on an issue of central importance to each.

A panel of speakers made up of experts in the health policy and service fields educated the almost 100 people in attendance on the current health care crisis in the country and Ohio. Personal testimonies from three members of the community who are uninsured added depth to the statistics and put a face on the issue.

The organizers were pleased with the outcome of the event and said they achieved the main objective of the forum, which was to make sure that health care becomes a major election issue for voters this year. The event provided the space for community members to learn about the presidential candidates' health care proposals and make informed decisions on election day. In addition, greater momentum has been built around putting a single-payer health plan initiative on the ballot in Ohio. But maybe most important, people couldn't stop asking questions and the forum lasted for over two hours!

Should Our RESULTS Group Host a Community Forum?

As you begin to plan your forum, there are some preliminary questions you need to answer as a group. The answers to these questions may change as you talk to other organizations or as you work through specific details. That's OK — it's even good because you want to be responsive to the needs of your partners and community. The important thing is that you work together as a team towards the same goal. Go through the following questions as a group to see if hosting a community forum is right for your group.

What is the most important thing we want to accomplish with this forum?

Write this one down, because you will not want to forget it.

Who can work on this, and how much time can each person commit?

This should be a positive experience. Give yourselves room to be realistic about the commitment each person is able to make so that the rest of the planning can go smoothly.

Who can we collaborate with in the community?

You probably do not have all the knowledge and resources to do everything by yourself. There are already groups and advocates in your community who care about these issues and would want to be involved in this kind of event.

What type of budget and resources do we have for this event?

You will need to know this before you make plans to secure a location, print handouts, consider refreshments etc

Ideally, what would our forum look like?

Spend some time dreaming up a forum that makes you happy and proud. What aspects or elements are most important to you? Give yourself a chance to be creative and make sure that your forum accurately represents your group.

Thinking Through the Logistics

As with any event, it is hard to anticipate all logistical matters, but the better planning you do, the more smoothly the event will go. Eventually, individual team members will be in charge of managing the following issues but before responsibilities are divided, the whole group should talk through these issues. Use the following questions to help you brainstorm resources that are available and put your thoughts together into one common vision for the event.

When, where and at what time will the forum occur?

How long should it last?

How many people will speak and who should they be?

Who will moderate?

Will there be a sponsor for the event?

How will we publicize the event?

What will the room set up be?

Will we need microphones or audio-visual equipment?

Who can we collaborate with for this event?

How will we notify the media about the event?

Should we serve refreshments?

Assigning Tasks

Because there is a lot to do to make a community forum a success, you should ideally start planning the event at least eight to ten weeks in advance. Below is a suggestion of one way to divide the tasks among your group. You may expand, contract, mix and match these fields of responsibility to match the size and personal interests in your team. One person may take on several of these roles, or many people may split them up further. The important thing is that all of these responsibilities are fulfilled and there is one point person overseeing the entire project.

Team Leader Responsibilities (See Appendix 2)

- Keep the big picture in mind.
- Keep track of everyone's progress.
- Support each team member with their responsibilities when they need help.
- Manage budget.

Our Team Leader will be _____

Program Coordinator Responsibilities (See Appendix 4)

- Organize the actual program for the forum.
- Coordinate the agenda.
- Network with local organizations and advocates to find good speakers.
- Moderate the panel during the forum and help move the program along smoothly.

Our Program Coordinator will be _____

Site Organizer Responsibilities (See Appendix 5)

- Reserve the site and coordinating all the physical aspects of the events.
- Coordinate the banners, chairs, tables, handouts, sign in table, sound system, refreshments, etc.

Our Site Organizer will be _____

Media Coordinator Responsibilities (See Appendix 6)

- Invite the media to the forum.
- Contact your local newspaper, television and radio media.
- Follow up with them in the days and weeks leading up to the event.
- Write a press release.
- During the forum, be available to greet media professionals and provide them with materials.

Our Media Coordinator will be _____

Publicity Coordinator Responsibilities (See Appendix 7)

- Build public awareness and "fill the room" for the forum.
- Invite people to the forum through public announcements and advertisements and in one-on-one contacts.
- Invite your congressional representatives and local policy makers.
- Weekly responsibilities included in Appendix 7.

Our Publicity Coordinator will be _____

Planning Your Event

The Importance of Communication

Even if everyone is doing phenomenal work, this project can turn chaotic if progress isn't communicated regularly. In many ways, hosting a community forum is like building a house. If everyone works on their own part of the house, without looking at the blueprint, you may have excellent components, staircases, windows, walls, but they will not fit together to make a house. Likewise, even if your community forum has great speakers, a nice venue or good refreshments, it will not go over well unless it fits into a greater plan.

Make sure that you have a system of communication worked out between group members and keep your team leader updated on your progress so they can be on the look out for any confusion or conflicting plans.

Setting a Date

Ideally, the community forum will take place during times when the issue you want to discuss is topical and relevant. It is also more strategic to have it during a time when members of Congress or your local policymakers can be around to attend. This handbook lays out a planning and preparation timeline of 5 to 6 weeks, but your group may choose to spend more or less time. Identify a space of days to aim for, and be prepared to adjust that date as you talk with your partner organizations, speakers, and the site.

Finding a Location

The location for your event will set the tone for the forum. Here are some things to think about as you choose your site:

- Will this place naturally draw an audience?
- Will there be any fee to use this space?
- What kind of atmosphere will best suit the forum you are planning? Are you looking for a small room, a large auditorium, a park, or the steps of the Capitol?
- Will the guests and the audience feel comfortable in the space? (For example, some people may not feel comfortable in a church building, others may need it to be handicap accessible, etc.)
- Is this a site that will be attractive to the media? (Is it easy to get to? Does it lend itself to good pictures?)
- Is the site accessible by public transportation? Is parking easily available?

Possible Locations:

- Community College or University
- Library
- Community Center
- Community Organization Meeting Room
- School
- Church, Synagogue, Temple or Mosque
- Town Square or Public Amphitheater
- City or State Government Building

Connecting with Community Partners

Partnering with community organizations that are interested in your issue will only enhance the success of your forum. Community partners can lend you help and support in getting materials, media coverage, and community attendance at the forum. Turn to your partners for guidance in whom to invite and how to empower them to speak as powerfully as possible about their experiences. Check out [Activist Milestone #13](#) on the RESULTS website for more information and depending on the topic of your forum, the following types of organizations may be a place to start looking for partners.

Potential Domestic Partners:

- Welfare rights groups
- Family Services Agencies
- Children's advocacy organizations
- Community Action Agencies (CAA) or Community Action Programs (CAP)
- Head Start Center or Head Start Parents
- Food Banks, Pantries, Community Kitchens
- Hunger or Homelessness Coalitions
- Shelters
- Housing Advocates
- Local advocacy groups
- Immigrants Rights Organizations
- Interfaith Coalitions, Church/Synagogue/Mosque congregations or social action committees
- National Organization for Women local chapter
- Salvation Army
- Jobs with Justice
- Microenterprise organizations
- Community health centers
- Clinics

International Allies and Resources

- ActionAid www.actionaid.org
- American Lung Association www.lungusa.org
- Basic Education Coalition www.basiced.org
- BRAC www.brac.net
- Earth Institute www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu
- Earth Policy Institute www.earth-policy.org
- Friends of the Fight www.theglobalfight.org

- Global Action for Children Campaign www.globalactionforchildren.org
- Global AIDS Alliance www.globalaidsalliance.org
- Global Health Council www.globalhealth.org
- Grameen Bank www.grameen-info.org
- InterAction www.interaction.org
- International Union Against Lung Disease www.iuatld.org
- Jubilee USA www.jubileeusa.org
- Open Society Institute www.soros.org
- Stop TB www.stoptb.org
- The Amaya-Lacson TB Photovoice Project www.tbphotovoice.org
- TB Alliance www.tballiance.org
- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria www.theglobalfund.org
- The Microcredit Summit Campaign www.microcreditsummit.org
- Initiative for Global Development www.igdleaders.org
- The Stop TB Partnership www.stoptb.org
- UNICEF www.unicef.org
- Unitarian Universalist Association . www.uua.org
- United Nations Development Programme www.undp.org
- United States Agency for International Development www.usaid.org
- World Health Organization www.who.int

*** Contact the RESULTS office (202) 783-7100 to learn more about potential local and national groups to connect with in your area.

Contacting Partners

Make a list of potential individuals and organizations you could partner with for the forum:

| Name | Organization | Phone Number |
|------|--------------|--------------|
|------|--------------|--------------|

Calling potential partners:

1. Ask to speak with the director or other appropriate staff person.
2. Introduce yourself and RESULTS,
3. Ask if s/he has a moment to talk.
4. Explain that you are planning a community forum.
5. Ask if their organization would be interested in participating or if they can refer you to other interested parties or speakers.
6. Set a plan to follow up — be sure to get all contact information.
7. Thank them.
8. Record contact information and follow up with referrals.

Sample script for reaching out to community partners:

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a volunteer with RESULTS, a grassroots citizen's lobby working to build the political will to end hunger and poverty. I'd like to talk to you about organizing a community event around (describe your issue). I got your name from _____ at _____, who said you might be interested in this. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

We would like to put together a community forum to discuss (describe you issue and your vision for the community forum).

Would you be interested in working with us on designing or hosting the forum?
Do you know of other local organizations or advocates who would be interested in this project?

Setting the Agenda

Now it is time to plan the format of your forum. This sample agenda below should help you do this. The tone of the forum should be upbeat but serious and it should end positively, looking forward to future action. As a group, design the format of your community forum and decide who will be responsible for each component. See Appendix 9 for a sample agenda.

30 min before event: Guests arrive, sign the sign-in sheet, and read through background materials.

Welcome (5 minutes): given by a RESULTS volunteer, local advocate or celebrity, probably the person who will act as moderator for the rest of the event.

Done by _____

Introduction (10 minutes): an overview of the issue to be discussed at the forum
This role would be best for a local advocate, professor, someone with first hand experience, or other experts.

Done by _____

Opening Remarks (10 minutes): given by member of Congress or local policy maker if they are in attendance.

Done by _____

Panel (10 minutes per speaker): Moderator facilitates 3–4 panelists speaking about their experience with the issue at hand.

Panelist 1: _____ Panelist 2: _____

Panelist 3: _____ Panelist 4: _____

Question and Answer (15–20 minutes): Panel and other speakers take questions from the audience.

Facilitated by _____

Call to action (10 minutes): Moderator or local advocate suggests next step for audience, ideally something that can be begun in the room now.

What will this be? _____

Positive End: Make sure that the close of the forum is positive and leads to the next action. Prepare the Program Coordinator to give a rousing closing and send people off prepared to fight another battle, whether it be on this issue or the next.

How will we do this? _____

30 min after event: Clean up room, collect sign-in sheets and participant evaluations.

Selecting Speakers

You will most likely want 2–4 speakers presenting at your forum, representing a variety of perspectives.

Things to think about when selecting speakers:

- Look for articulate and engaging people.
- Think about assembling speakers who reflect the full diversity of culture, experience, and perspective in your community.
- Seek a balance between relying on the strengths of experienced advocates and offering the forum as an opportunity to emerging advocates.
- Be sure all the speakers know about each other and are comfortable speaking together with respect.

As a group, create a list of potential speakers that the program coordinator should invite to participate in the community forum.

Name

Qualifications

Preparing Speakers

Once you have selected and invited speakers and they have accepted your invitations, make sure they understand the set-up and goals of your forum. To help them prepare and to make sure your event is a success, consider doing the following things.

- Send the speakers a packet about RESULTS and our major campaigns.
- Clearly explain the set up of the forum and your desired outcomes.
- Go over the set-up of the event and let them know who will be presenting on the panel with them.
- Be clear about what time the event will start, how long they will have to present and who you hope to have in the audience.
- Follow up with them in the days following up to the event to reconfirm their availability.

Possible Actions Items for Your Forum

- Set up a letter-writing table and encourage everyone to write a letter to their members of Congress — be sure to provide a simple sample letter.
- Make a huge banner, maybe from a bed sheet, on which everyone can write their hopes for your issue area and give it to your congressional representatives.
- Provide sign-up sheets for participation in coming activities, perhaps sponsored by your partner organizations.
- Circulate a petition to send to your congressional representatives, state legislators, etc.
- Organize a call-in day to your congressional representatives and/or to state legislators.
- Recruit members for a community coalition to work together.

Evaluation

There are two ways to evaluate the success of the forum. First, distribute evaluation forms to forum participants to gauge their response to the event and get a better understanding of what they learned. See Appendix 10 for a sample evaluation form.

Second, after the event is over and your group has taken some time to relax, set up a time to meet and discuss how the event went. Go through the following questions to see what team members saw as successful aspects of the event and what areas could be improved for your next community forum.

How did the location work out? Was it able to accommodate the needs of our group?

How successful was the publicity plan?

What are ways we could get even more people to attend our next event?

After checking the sign-in sheets against the list of people who said they would come, did individuals and other organizations produce the people they were committed to bring?

Did people come off the street in response to leaflets, posters or advance media coverage?

What was the speaker panel like?

Would we use the same speakers again?

Were there any logistical problems that occurred?

How could they be avoided in the future?

Publicity and Media

Getting Turnout at Your Event

Your event will have the greatest impact if as many people as possible attend. It is a good idea to have a plan on how you will get people to your event so that you do not spend a significant amount of time putting together an event and only have a small group of people attend. As a group, discuss strategies for getting attendance. Keep in mind that the best strategy to get people to attend is to personally invite them. Empirically, personal invitations, along with follow-up, will attract greater crowds than any other form of inviting.

Possible ways to increase turnout at your event:

- As a group, make a list of the friends and family you will personally invite to the forum.
- Submit announcements to your local and school papers for events calendars.
- Hand out flyers at community events.
- Place flyers on bulletin boards at community centers, religious institutions, in coffee shops, music stores, bus stops, grocery stores, co-ops, laundromats, local schools and universities — anywhere there are people.
- Ask local newspapers and radio, and/or television stations to run public service announcements about the forum.
- Send invitation letters to all community organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals you want in attendance at the forum.
- If you will be having members of Congress in attendance or a local celebrity giving the opening remarks, hype it!

Invite Members of Congress and Local Policy Makers

Inviting members of Congress and local policy makers to your event is a great opportunity for them to spend time with constituents and hear about their concerns.

- Send a fax or e-mail to their office inviting them to attend your community forum.
 - Explain what issue you will be discussing, why it is relevant to them and why it is an important topic for their constituents.
 - Let him/her know that you will honor him/her for attending and for previous good deeds.
 - Note the date, time and location of the forum.
 - Explain that he/she will offer part of the opening remarks (giving him/her a chance to express goodwill and concern for the community and the other speakers) and may choose to participate in the question and answer period.
 - Inform him/her that you will be inviting the media to attend and ask about their availability to take questions from the media.
 - A week after you have sent the fax, make a follow up phone call to their office scheduler.
- Once they have accepted your invitation go over the details of the event.
 - Confirm the date, time and location of the event.
 - Explain the set-up of the event, who will be present.
 - Discuss what you would like them to discuss at the event and when they will speak.
 - Offer to send them talking points for the event.
- A few days before the event, reconfirm their availability to attend.

Putting Together a Press Plan

You can do as many or as few of the following suggestions, based on the amount of time you have to put into getting media attention. Although it is up to you, keep in mind that the more media attention you get, the greater impact your forum will have.

- Try to get advance media coverage. Send a media advisory to key media contacts a week before the meeting. You can contact the RESULTS office for a sample.
- Consider inviting area college media classes to videotape your event.
- Make follow-up calls to media people, city desks, daybooks, and assignment editors a day or two before the meeting.
- Prepare a press packet for distribution to press people at the meeting. It should include a press release and background information on your issue and your organization.
- Prepare visuals for the community forum. Both newspapers and television prefer taking interesting pictures rather than pictures of talking heads. Prepare some visuals, charts, banners, or stunts that you think might be interesting. The visual should not just be "catchy," but should convey your message. "RESULTS" should be visible everywhere but especially at the front of the room or on the podium.
- Talk with press people at the event. One person should be assigned to greet the press. Your planning group should clarify who are your spokespersons, so that the press greeter can direct them to the proper people for interviews.
- Call the press people who did not come to tell them what happened, or send a follow-up press release if you do not expect to get much media coverage.
- Thank the press people for covering your event
- If you received inaccurate coverage, call the media contact to clarify your message.
- If the event was a success but media professionals were not present, publicize the results yourselves.

Appendix 1: Overview of Team Members Responsibilities

| | Team Leader | Program Coordinator | Site Organizer | Media Coordinator | Publicity Coordinator |
|------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Week Six | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Meet with your group to begin planning. * As a group, go over the initial discussion questions. * Set up a support schedule with the RESULTS staff and your group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Contact local organizations to seek support and speaker referrals. * Set up meetings with organizations interested in cooperating. * Contact potential speakers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Contact and visit possible sites to host forum. * Note what is available and what will best accommodate your plans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Brainstorm ideas for attracting the media. * Get feedback from local organizations about visuals or other media pulls. * Work with Program Coordinator and Site Organizer to identify attractive speakers and sites. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify all the possible groups and people that may be interested in your event. * Ask your group members to make a list of the friends and family they will personally invite to the forum. * Plan how many people you would like at the forum and draft a master invitation list. |
| Week Five | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Check in and support your team. * This week is crucial to initiating speaker and site selection. * Be sure your team is communicating with one another. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Work with the Publicity Coordinator to invite members of Congress and local policy makers. * Be in regular contact with the Site Organizer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Secure a location. * Arrange for audio-visual equipment. * Be in regular contact with the Program Manager. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Make a press list of contact names, news organizations, addresses, phone and fax numbers for the media you would like to invite. * Contact the RESULTS office for help in identifying media contacts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Submit announcements to your local and school papers for events calendars. * Communicate regularly with the Program Coordinator to coordinate community contacts. |
| Week Four | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Check in and support your team. * See how relationships with community partners are developing and offer support for inviting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Decide if you want to have a visuals * Continue to talk with local organizations and possible speakers. * Follow up with congressional offices. * Meet with the most interested MOCs to draft an agenda and speaking points. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Decide whether or not you want to serve refreshments. * At this point, the site should be officially reserved. * Print a map of the site location and distribute it to the team, partner organizations, invited speakers and guests. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Draft a media advisory that includes talking points and key facts to illustrate the relevance of the forum. * Post the forum on community calendars by sending the media advisory to the Calendar/Listings Editor of local papers, community newsletters and public access radio and television. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ask the other forum sponsors to help get the word out. * Design a flyer to advertise the community forum * Talk with your partner organizations to coordinate outreach to their members and community partners. * Recruit people to help you invite — be sure they clearly understand the format and purpose of the forum. |

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| <p>Week Three</p> | <p>* Check in and support your team.</p> | <p>* Get feedback and suggestions about the forum agenda, site and date from partner organizations and prospective speakers. * Firm up commitment from speakers. * Ask if they need any materials, props or special accommodations for their presentation.</p> | <p>* Prepare a materials list to bring to forum and gather supplies</p> | <p>* Recruit at least 3 people to record television or radio coverage of the forum. * Consider recruiting someone to videotape the forum.</p> | <p>* Hand out flyers at community events * Place flyers on bulletin boards at community centers, religious institutions * Ask local newspapers, radio, and television stations to run public service announcements about the forum. * Continue to build your invitation list. * Contact the Site Organizer to distribute maps and directions to invited guests. * Recruit one person (or more) to act as a greeter at the forum. * Recruit someone to provide childcare if you have deemed that necessary.</p> |
| <p>Week Two</p> | <p>* Check in and support your team.</p> | <p>* Continue talking with forum partners and speakers as needed.</p> | <p>* Confirm that the room is still booked for the event and all necessary paperwork has been submitted. * Confirm that all the audio visual equipment, podiums, microphones etc have been ordered. * Meet at the site to do a run-through and to identify any remaining logistical needs. * Recruit a few people to help you transport and set up of all materials and to help pack up afterwards.</p> | <p>* The media should receive the press advisory the week before the forum. * Make follow-up calls to media contacts.</p> | <p>* Post additional flyers. * Send invitation letters to all community organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals you want in attendance at the forum. * Follow up with people that have been invited thus far.</p> |

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|---------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Week One | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Check in and support your team. * Verify that everyone is clear on all the details. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Confirm that all the presenters will attend and that you have all the information and equipment they will need. * Give them directions to the site and let them know when they should arrive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Finalize any materials you plan to hand out on your issue. * Finish compiling needed materials. * Make sure you have enough copies for everyone you anticipate showing up. * Create a sign-in sheet. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Continue follow-up calls to confirm invitations. * Ask local papers to run a pre-forum article. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Confirm your greeter(s) and childcare provider. * Reconfirm your invitation list and make sure everyone knows when and where the forum will be. |
| Day Before | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Check in and support your team and help as needed. * Tell them to relax. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Call all speakers and participants to re-confirm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Run through the materials list one last time. * Call anyone who is bringing materials on the day of the forum to confirm time and place. * Confirm your set-up and strike teams and be sure they know when to arrive and how long they will need to stay. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Call all media to invite them to come and/or to confirm attendance. Be bold. If they cannot make it, ask them to run a story anyway, and offer to provide any pertinent information. * Confirm the team who will tape any coverage. Confirm anyone who will be recording or taping the forum. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Continue confirming your invitation list. |
| Day of Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Be on hand to help your team deal with the little emergencies of an event. * Keep everyone calm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Greet speakers. * Moderate panel discussion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Arrive early to ensure the room is properly set up. * Wear nametag. * Make sure the set up is ready. * Put out sign-up sheets . and media sign-in sheets. * Organize handouts. * Have action items ready. * Test all audio-visual equipment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Be at the door to meet and greet the press and hand out press statements. * Introduce the press to the “official spokesperson” for the group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Greet everyone who arrives at the event. * Work with the Site Organizer to make sure the guests have everything they need (water, name tags, etc). |
| After Event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Thank your team. * Support them in thanking everyone who helped in making the forum a success. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Thank everyone for participating. * Send personal thank you notes to everyone who helped in the planning and implementation of the event. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Send thank you notes to the site that hosted the event and any volunteers that helped you set up the event. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Follow up with media who agreed to cover the story. * Contact local papers about running a post-forum article. * Thank everyone for covering the story. * Be sure to share copies of any press coverage with RESULTS. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Thank everyone, for attending the event. * Save your invite list and check it against the sign-in sheet after the event to know how many of the people you called actually came and how many people your allies really produced. |

Appendix 2: Team Leader Responsibilities by Week

Week 6:

- Meet with your group to begin planning the forum.
- As a group, go over the initial discussion questions on page 4 and 5 to decide if planning a community forum is right for your group.
- Set up a support schedule with the RESULTS staff and your group. We suggest that you touch base with us at least once a week.

Week 5:

- Check in and support your team. This week is crucial to initiating speaker and site selection — be sure your team is communicating with one another.

Week 4:

- Check in and support your team. See how relationships with community partners are developing and offer support for inviting.

Week 3:

- Check in and support your team.

Week 2:

- Check in and support your team.

Week 1:

- Check in and support your team. Verify that everyone is clear on all the details.

Day Before:

- Check in and support your team. Tell them to relax.

Day of Forum:

- Be on hand to help your team deal with the little emergencies of an event. Keep everyone calm.

Afterwards:

- Thank your team.
- Support them in thanking everyone who helped in making the forum a success.

Appendix 3: Team Leader Checklist

_____ Do you have an appropriate site that is accessible, conveniently located, and equipped to handle your needs?

_____ Has your group made plans to get turnout at your event?

_____ Has your group made plans to get media coverage of your event?

_____ Initial media advisory and notice sent out.

_____ Follow-up calls to media to get them to come.

_____ Press release in press packets with supporting materials.

_____ Created some visual display to get media attention.

_____ Call to press who didn't attend.

_____ Thank press that covered the session.

_____ Has the agenda been put together with the following items?

_____ Welcome and purpose

_____ Moderator

_____ Presenters

_____ Action and positive ending.

_____ Are all the logistical needs taken care of?

_____ Room set-up

_____ Decorations (posters, banners)

_____ Sign-in sheet

_____ Audio visual equipment

_____ Microphones

_____ Extension cords and masking or duct tape

_____ Refreshments

_____ Post-event activities

_____ Send thank you notes to presenters.

_____ Send thank you notes to everyone who helped.

_____ Send thank you notes (probably via e-mail) to people who attended.

Appendix 4: Program Coordinator Responsibilities by Week

Week 6:

- Contact local organizations to seek support and speaker referrals.
- Set up meetings with organizations interested in cooperating.
- Contact potential speakers early, so that they can arrange their schedules and plan their presentations. (This also provides you with enough time to book alternative speakers, if your first choices do not work out.)

Week 5:

- Work with the Publicity Coordinator to invite members of Congress and local policy makers.
- Be in regular contact with the Site Organizer to coordinate the site and speakers and with the Publicity Coordinator for community contacts.

Week 4:

- Decide if you want to have a visual — brief slide shows or movies (5–10 minutes max) can be used to help the audience visualize a problem.
- Continue to talk with local organizations and possible speakers.
- Follow up with congressional offices. Meet with the most interested to draft an agenda and speaking points.

Week 3:

- Get feedback and suggestions about the forum agenda, site and date from partner organizations and prospective speakers.
- Get firm commitments from speakers. Ask if they need any materials, props or special accommodations for their presentation.

Week 2:

- Continue talking with forum partners and speakers as needed.

Week 1:

- Confirm that all the presenters will attend and that you have all the information and equipment they will need.
- Check in with speakers to make sure they feel comfortable and prepared. Give them directions to the site and let them know when they should arrive.

Day Before:

- Call all speakers and participants to re-confirm.

Day of Forum:

- Greet speakers.
- Moderate panel discussion.

Afterwards:

- Thank everyone for participating.
- Send personal thank you notes to everyone who helped in the planning and implementation of the event.
- Thank, via e-mail if possible, the people who attended, reiterating what they can do to become or get more involved. Include a link to any petition or action, requesting that participants pass the action on to friends and family.

Appendix 5: Site Organizer Responsibilities by Week

Week 6:

- Contact and visit possible sites to host forum. See what is available and what will best accommodate your needs (check on restrooms, the sound system, handicap accessibility, parking, accessibility to public transportation etc.).
- Find a location that is easily accessible and central to your target audience.

Week 5:

- Book the location well in advance and arrange for audio-visual equipment, as needed.
- Be in regular contact with the Program Coordinate to monitor the availability of site and speakers.

Week 4:

- Decide whether or not you want to serve refreshments. If your budget is tight, consider asking local stores for donations and offer to recognize them with signage at the refreshment table or list their name in the program.
- At this point, the site should be officially reserved.
- Print a map of the site location and distribute it to the team, partner organizations, invited speakers and guests.

Week 3:

- Prepare a materials list to bring to forum and gather supplies: signs, name tags, markers, pens, sign-in sheets, brochures from RESULTS and partner organizations, materials needed for the action, chairs, tables, microphones, cameras, props, water bottles, etc.

Week 2:

- Confirm that the room is still booked for the event and all necessary paperwork has been submitted.
- Confirm that all the audio visual equipment, podiums, microphones etc have been ordered.
- Meet at the site to do a run-through and to identify any remaining logistical needs. Recruit a few people to help you transport and set up of all materials and to help pack up afterwards.

Week 1:

- Finalize any materials you plan to hand out on your issue.
- Finish compiling needed materials.
- Make sure you have enough copies for everyone you anticipate showing up.
- Create a sign-in sheet. The goal is to get a complete list of everyone who comes so you need lots of sign-in sheets to avoid a bottleneck at the door. Some tips on how to get people signed in successfully:
 - Set up tables outside in the hall that everyone must pass to get into the room.

- If you have enough people, assign ushers to stand next to the tables and steer people to the sign-in sheets
- If you give out name tags, people are more likely to stop.
- Another method is to offer a door prize. Ask people to fill out a card and drop it in a box to win.

Day Before:

- Run through the materials list one last time.
- Call anyone who is bringing materials on the day of the forum to confirm time and place.
- Confirm your set-up and strike teams and be sure they know when to arrive and how long they will need to stay.

Day of Forum:

- Arrive early to ensure the room is properly set up.
- Have a nametag or arm band on so that people know they can ask you questions.
- Make sure that you have enough chairs for the number of people expected to attend as well as table, chairs, podium and props for speakers.
- Sign-up sheets for participants so that you can contact them after the event.
- Media sign-in sheets for attending members of the press.
- Organized handouts that can be quickly distributed.
- Have action items ready to give to audience members.
- Test all audio-visual equipment to ensure that everything is in working order.
- During the forum, when not working, sit in the audience and encourage clapping and other audience participation.

Afterwards:

- Send thank you notes to the site that hosted the event and any volunteers that helped you set up the event.

Appendix 6: Media Coordinator Responsibilities by Week

Week 6:

- Brainstorm ideas for attracting the media.
- Get feedback from local organizations about visuals or other media pulls.
- Work with Program Coordinator and Site Organizer to identify attractive speakers and sites.

Week 5:

- Make a press list of contact names, news organizations, addresses, phone and fax numbers for the media you would like to invite. The list should include radio shows (especially NPR), all local television stations (including PBS, cable access, and university stations), wire services with local bureaus (AP, Reuters), and local newspapers and editorial writers.
- Contact the RESULTS office for help in identifying media contacts.

Week 4:

- Draft a media advisory that includes talking points and key facts to illustrate the relevance of the forum.
- Post the forum on community calendars by sending the media advisory to the Calendar/Listings Editor of local papers, community newsletters and public access radio and television.

Week 3:

- Recruit at least 3 people to record television or radio coverage of the forum.
- Consider recruiting someone to videotape the forum live.

Week 2:

- The media should receive the press advisory the week before the forum.
- Make follow-up calls to call attention to it: "Did the writer / city desk editor / news director get the advisory? Who will cover the event? Can I tell you more about the forum, the cosponsoring organizations, or the speakers?"

Week 1:

- Continue follow-up calls to confirm invitations.
- Ask local papers to run a pre-forum article.

1 or 2 Days Before:

- Call all media to persuade them to come and/or to confirm attendance. Be bold. If they cannot make it, ask them to run a story anyway, and offer to provide them with any pertinent information.
- Confirm the team who will tape any coverage. Confirm anyone who will be recording or taping the forum for you.

Day of Forum:

- Be at the door to meet and greet the press and hand out press statements
- Introduce the press to the “official spokesperson” for the group. Unless you guide the media to the people you want them to talk to, there is no guarantee that your group’s message will be conveyed.

Afterwards:

- Follow up with media who agreed to cover the story.
- Contact local papers about running a post-forum article.
- Thank everyone for covering the story.
- Be sure to share copies of any press coverage with RESULTS.

Appendix 7: Publicity Coordinator Responsibilities by Week

Week 6:

- Identify all the possible groups and people that may be interested in your event.
- Ask your group members to make a list of the friends and family they will personally invite to the forum.
- Plan how many people you would like at the forum and draft a master invitation list.

Week 5:

- Submit announcements to your local and school papers for events calendars.
- Communicate regularly with the Program Coordinator to coordinate community contacts.

Week 4:

- Ask the other forum sponsors to help get the word out.
- Design a flyer to advertise the community forum.
- Talk with your partner organizations to coordinate outreach to their members and community partners.
- Recruit people to help you invite — be sure they clearly understand the format and purpose of the forum.

Week 3:

- Hand out flyers at community events.
- Place flyers on bulletin boards at community centers, religious institutions.
- Local newspapers and radio, and/or television stations may be willing to run public service announcements about the forum Continue to build your invitation list.
- Contact the Site Organizer to distribute maps and directions to invited guests.
- Recruit one person (or more) to act as a greeter at the forum.
- Recruit someone to provide childcare if you have deemed that necessary.

Week 2:

- Post flyers in coffee shops, music stores, bus stops, grocery stores, co-ops, the laundromat, churches, community clubs, community organizations, local schools and universities — anywhere there are people.
- Send invitation letters to all community organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals you want in attendance at the forum.
- Follow up with people that have been invited thus.

Week 1:

- Confirm your greeter(s) and childcare provider.
- Reconfirm your invitation list and make sure everyone knows when and where the forum will be.

Day Before:

- Continue confirming your invitation list.

Day of forum:

- Greet everyone who arrives at the event.
- Work with the Site Organizer to make sure the guests have everything they need (water, name tags, etc.).

Afterwards:

- Thank everyone, probably via e-mail, for attending the event.
- Save your invite list and check it against the sign-in sheet after the event to know how many of the people you called actually came and how many people your allies really produced.

Appendix 8: Contact List

Make multiple copies of this contact sheet for group members, to help keep track of contacts.

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Name of organization/contact: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will Follow Up: _____ |
| Referred by/position: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will they attend the forum? _____ |

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Name of organization/contact: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will Follow Up: _____ |
| Referred by/position: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will they attend the forum? _____ |

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Name of organization/contact: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will Follow Up: _____ |
| Referred by/position: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will they attend the forum? _____ |

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Name of organization/contact: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will Follow Up: _____ |
| Referred by/position: _____ |
| Address: _____ E-mail: _____ |
| Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ |
| Will they attend the forum? _____ |

Appendix 9: Sample Agenda

Community Forum on Health Care

Is a single-payer health care system the solution to the American health care crisis?

Thursday, April 4, 2005, 7 pm
Maple Street Community Center

Welcome

Mary Larson, Twin Cities Group Leader, RESULTS

Opening Remarks

Representative Jane Thomas, 7th Congressional District

Introduction

Professor Mike Richardson, Public Policy Department, University of Minnesota

Panel

Dr. Jack Sebring, Physicians for a National Health Care Program

Ruth Daniels, Center on Medicaid and Medicare

Dr. Nancy Jacobson, Greater Lakes Hospital

Greg Johnson, Health Care for All

Conclusion

Tony Miller, Twin Cities RESULTS Chapter

Please join us for light refreshments after the program.

This community forum is sponsored by RESULTS, a grassroots citizens' lobby dedicated to creating the public and political will to end hunger and poverty. For more information about RESULTS, check out www.results.org.

Appendix 10: Sample Evaluation Form

Community Forum

Evaluation Form

Did this event help you learn more about the current problems in our health care system?

Did this event help you learn more about a single-payer health care system and other types of universal care proposals?

Please rank the panel of speakers (1= poor 5= excellent)

Speaker 1: _____ (poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (excellent)

Speaker 2: _____ (poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (excellent)

Speaker 3: _____ (poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (excellent)

Speaker 4: _____ (poor) 1 2 3 4 5 (excellent)

What about this event could have been improved?

Would you like to be updated about the work of RESULTS and/or be notified about our next community forum?

If so, please list your name and e-mail address: _____

Additional Comments:

Appendix 11: Sample Announcement

Below, is an example of what could be sent via e-mail or placed in community calendars or in church bulletins:

RESULTS, a grassroots citizens' lobby dedicated to creating the public and political will to end hunger and poverty, will be hosting a community forum on health care in the U.S. Please join us as we learn more about the causes of America's growing uninsured population, increasing health care costs and how a single-payer health care system may offer a solution. The community forum will take place Thursday, April 4 at 7 pm at the Maple Street Community Center. Refreshments will be served after the event.

Appendix 12: Sample Flyer

Community Forum on Health Care

Is a single-payer health care system the solution to the American health care crisis?

RESULTS will be hosting a community forum on health care in the U.S. Please join us as we learn more about the causes of America's growing uninsured population, increasing health care costs and how a single-payer health care system may offer a solution.

This event will be hosted by RESULTS, a grassroots citizens' lobby dedicated to creating the public and political will to end hunger and poverty. For more information about RESULTS, see www.results.org.

Date: Thursday, April 4

Time: 7pm

Location: Maple Street Community Center

Everyone welcome! Refreshments will be served after the event.

For more information, contact _____ at _____.

Appendix 13: Sample Flyer

Community Forum on Cuts to Medicaid and Budget Cuts

RESULTS will be hosting a community forum on the ten billion dollars in slated cuts to the Medicaid program. Please join us as we learn more about what is being proposed, who will be affected, increasing health care costs, and how a single-payer health care system may offer a solution.

This event will be hosted by RESULTS, a grassroots citizens' lobby dedicated to creating the public and political will to end hunger and poverty. For more information about RESULTS, see www.results.org.

Date: Thursday, October 20

Time: 7pm

Location: Maple Street Community Center

Everyone welcome! Refreshments will be served after the event.

For more information, contact _____ at _____.