



Event Marketing Guide

Tips and tools for festival and event organizers

The importance of marketing

Marketing matters. Whether your event is large or small, volunteer-run or staff supported, you want it to succeed! This guide offers tips and links to resources for marketing your event like a pro so it gets noticed by the people who you most want to attend. If you have comments about the guide, contact the Festivals & Events team at EventServices@calgary.ca

Create a marketing plan

A marketing plan is a roadmap for advertising your festival or event. While it is easy to jump ahead to deciding *how* you will market your event, spending some time up front to think about your event goals, attendees and why your event matters to them can help position your event advertisements for stronger results.

Marketing – The activity of advertising your event to attract the people who will attend.

Parts of a marketing plan



Overview Goals and objectives Audience (attendees) Key messages Advertising (tactics) Media plan Evaluation

1. Overview

Provide a brief description of your event, including event name, when and where it is happening, and highlights of the activities and experiences your event will offer attendees.

2. Goals and objectives

Goals are more general statements while objectives are specific and measurable. Together, they answer the question, “What will success look like for your event?”

An example of a goal may be to bring the neighbourhood together for a day of fun and connecting, while an objective is more specific and could include having 500 people attend your event.



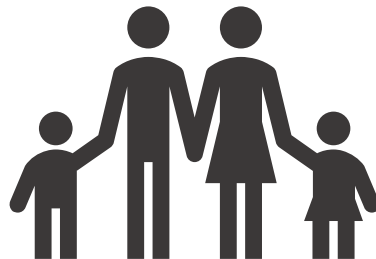
3. Audience (attendees)

To attract people to your event, it's important to know who your event is for and what experiences and activities matter to them. Try to be as specific as possible when describing your event audience. It could be people between the ages of 30-45 with children, older adults, youth, singles, people living in a specific neighbourhood, or some other demographic(s).

Once you have defined your audience demographics, spend some time thinking about what would appeal most to each segment. For example, families with children will be looking for kid-friendly activities, while others may be attracted by specific performances or the variety of entertainment offered. Knowing what excites and motivates your audience will help you develop messaging that attracts them to your event.



Research trends and behaviours for each audience segment. Knowing what social media channels they use, whether they value the recommendations of peers, where they go for news and information and other behaviour patterns can help you target your marketing efforts where they are likely to have the most impact.



4. Key messages

Now that you have a better understanding of the people who you hope will attend your event, you can develop key messages to reach them. Beyond providing the must-know details like event name, date, cost, time and location, consider adding information about venue accessibility.

Your messaging can also focus on highlighting some of the main **attractions** (e.g. cultural performances, food trucks, clowns, face painting) and **benefits** (e.g. fun for the whole family) that attendees could expect at your event.

Develop a short headline to draw attention to your message and make people curious to learn more about your event.



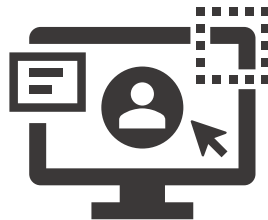
Less is often more for your message to stand out among the information clutter and noise.

5. Advertising (tactics)

It's time to choose how you will reach the audience to advertise your event. Use a variety of digital and traditional/print channels to give your event wider reach to a greater number of people in the community. Some of these channels could include:

- website
- social media (paid and free)
- flyers/postcards
- posters
- signs, including sandwich boards and bold signs (large black signs with fluorescent letters). Sign placement must follow The City of Calgary's [mobile community sign requirements](#) and [applicable bylaws](#).
- newsletters
- email to members/past attendees
- word of mouth (includes social media sharing within networks)
- [banners on City-owned overpasses](#)
- media (radio, television, newspaper)

Assign roles, deadlines and budget for the tactics you choose to help keep your planning team on track as you implement the marketing plan. Whether volunteering to delivery flyers door to door, being the social media wiz who schedules posts and ads, or bringing a creative eye to marketing assets, there are opportunities for all ages and skillsets to be involved.



Digital and print graphic design – Create awareness and reinforce your event in people's minds with a consistent visual look and message on all your design materials. The most effective design assets are very visual and include just enough text to capture people's attention and inspire them to attend.

Make sure you have permission to use the images in your design materials, either by buying the image from a trusted website or getting permission from the photographer if you know them or the image is part of your organization's internal collection.

Include your event website and/or a QR code on print materials to make it easy for people to learn more.



[Canva](#) is a free graphic design tool for creating social media graphics, posters, flyers, and more!

Social media – Use social media to your advantage! With so many people online, this is a great way to market your event, interact with attendees and even grow your audience of followers. You can create a Facebook Event page, post an Instagram story and share quick updates on Twitter in the weeks leading up to your event.



Paid advertising on social media can be an affordable way to target your event to those most likely to attend. With [Facebook Ads](#), you can target ads based on location, interests, and other demographic categories.

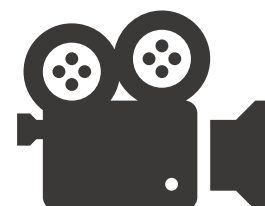
On the day of your event, you can use social media to share the fun, enjoyment and memories being made. If you plan on taking photos or video at your event to post on social media, it is good practice and a courtesy to prominently post signs at your event to let people know that their image may be captured and shared.

Acknowledging City of Calgary funding

If your festival or event has received City of Calgary grant funding or in-kind support, we require that you acknowledge this funding in any related advertising or marketing materials, as set out in your grant agreement or Service Standards Agreement. The City logo and usage guidelines are available from your Event Liaison or grant administrator.

6. Media plan

Local media may hear about your event and ask to do a story either before or during the event. Choose a media spokesperson ahead of time and write out the key messages before the interview that they can practice saying. Your spokesperson should be knowledgeable about your event and have the authority to speak to it.



Keep your key messages to short, memorable soundbites. What one or two things do you want the public to know about your event?

While people have different comfort levels with speaking on camera, remember too that you are an expert storyteller for your event and the reporter is most interested in finding out and sharing that story with the public.

Tell your planning team who the spokesperson is and ask that any media inquiries be sent to that person. This is particularly important if your event has an unexpected controversy emerge. Staying on message and telling a consistent story to the media will help to better manage the controversy and limit damage to your event's reputation in the community.

7. Evaluation

Evaluation measures the extent to which the goals and objectives you developed earlier were met. It is also an opportunity to reflect and debrief as a planning team on what worked well and what could have been done better.

Evaluation can include a mix of numerical data, such as how many attendees came out to your event, and qualitative data, such as attendee feedback gathered through informal conversations and surveys. You can also take note of the tone and amount of media coverage your event received, if applicable.

Other data that you may want to track includes visits to your website and number of impressions and engagements with social media posts. This helps you to know how effective your marketing was in attracting attendees and identify how you might want to advertise your event differently in the future. For example, in a future year you may decide to drop some channels that didn't work as expected so that you can focus more on the channels that did work well.



Implement the plan

With your plan in place, people on your team will understand the big picture and know how their part contributes to the whole. When implementing your plan, remember the three Fs of festival and event marketing: **Follow** the plan, be **flexible** when needed, and have **fun**!

Resources

The following websites are a springboard to more tips and tools to plan and market your event.

[Event Trends, Best Practices, and More - Eventbrite Blog](#)

[How to Set SMART Event Goals & Objectives | Eventbrite](#)

[The Complete Guide to Festival Marketing \(initlive.com\)](#)

[Event marketing Archives - Eventbrite Blog](#)