

SECTION M: Event Planning, Promotions and Communications

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Special Events Checklist

There are many elements involved in planning and hosting successful events. The following checklists contain items regarding facilities/ transportation; promotions; and finance that you may want to consider before, during and after your event:

1. Pre-Event

- Brainstorm - the more brains the better!
- Displays
- Demonstrations - the more hands the better!
- Activities
- Sports
- Food
- Entertainment
- Official ceremony
- Organize contests and secure prizes
- Identify and invite participants
- Draw up site plan, display space, stage and a schedule of events etc.

- Identify and invite volunteers to handle planned activities
- Is there fun for everyone? (i.e. pre-schoolers, children, teens, adults, seniors, persons with disabilities)
- Refreshments. Use ceramic or paper containers rather than Styrofoam
- Rainy day program
- Promotional materials
- Registration/information system
- Participant survey

Event Day

- Station counters/surveyors
- Activity schedule posted
- Site map posted
- Info/registration booth set up and shirts given out
- All equipment and signage at proper place for activities
- Public announcement system (i.e. 2-way radio, megaphones etc.) to inform public/leaders of scheduled activities

- Lost and found area
- First Aid station
- Prizes (awards, ribbons, etc.)

Post-Event

- Clean-up
- Return equipment
- Thank participating clubs, organizations, volunteers, sponsors
- Evaluation survey analysis

2. Facilities/Transport Booking Sites

- Review all site facilities with regard to needs
- Check accessibility
- Determine costs
- Book day-of and rain-date facility

Parking

- Assess parking capability
- Secure parking permits, if necessary
- Inform Police Traffic Services
- Apply for race permit if necessary
- Recruit volunteers for security and to direct traffic
- Place signs/ barricades for restricted area(s)
- Reserve parking for officials, participants, exhibitors
- Encourage use of non-motorized vehicles, walking, park'n ride

Secure Permits

- Vending license
- Street permits
- Building permits
- Fireworks/fire permits
- Liquor license
- Temporary structure permit
- Festival market license
- Hot air balloon release, parachute permits

- Race permits
- Raffle permit

Facilities to Secure

- Refreshment areas
- Toilets
- First Aid facility
- Stage(s)
- Display equipment (display boards, electricity, water, phone lines, audio/visual equipment)
- Info/registration booth
- Tables, chairs, linens
- Tents, bleachers, picnic tables
- Sound system
- 2-way radios, cellular phones
- Golf carts
- Post site plan, signs
- Extra garbage cans
- Extra bike racks

3. Promotions Establish Identity

- Letterhead, logos
- Information kits prepared and distributed
- Orientation workshop for:
 - Staff
 - Community leaders/ groups
 - Media
 - Displayers, volunteers

Media Relations I

Develop and distribute promotional material to local businesses, neighbourhoods, participating organizations, schools, city departments.

Secure permission to display at other events, malls, etc.

Material could include:

- Calendars of events
- Posters, flyers, stickers
- Restaurant placemats
- Bridge banners
- Advertisements

- Paycheques
- Bus transfers
- Newsletter for participating organizations, staff and volunteers
- Buttons, ribbons, T-shirts, entry forms, etc.

Media Relations II

- Prepare media kits, media releases
- Publicize rainy-day alternatives
- Prepare public service announcements for radio, newspapers, and television media outlets
- General mailing to all media.
- Arrange interviews between various media and key participants
- Submit feature articles on event
- Contact media celebrities to participate in event (contests, challenges)
- Increase promotions two weeks prior to event

Day of Event

- Prepare news release for day
- Ensure media passes are at a central location
- Provide an interview area
- Book photographer for event to prepare photo report/feature shots

Post-Event

- Send final media release to let sponsors, participants know what happened
- Thank media celebrities and other supportive promotions people
- Clip all articles, tape samples and retain for final report
- Post-event follow-up: How did things go?

- Prepare final report with recommendations and ideas for the next year

4. Finance Pre-Event

- Set up work order and account number or bank account
- Prepare and submit budget
- Apply for grants
- Identify sponsorship opportunities within the budget
- Identify appropriate sponsors
- Prepare an inventory of equipment needs
- Solicit goods and services donations in lieu of money
- Arrange all payments well in advance. The larger the payment, the longer the lead time required.
- Apply for petty cash and floats for the day of the event.
- Secure rolls of tickets for admittance, etc.

Day of the Event

- Ensure all vendors have small change
- Ensure all cheque payments are available for entertainers, sound equipment, etc.
- Ensure there is a cash box in place for any activity which costs money
- Ensure money is continuously being collected and put in a secure location
- Account for all money spent and received
- Allocate funds or food vouchers for volunteers

Post-Event

- Audit funds
- Review budget estimates and actual amounts
- Review unexpected expenses
- Obtain receipts for value of donated goods and services
- Thank sponsors with a photo record.

Key City and Agencies Checklist

You may be required to contact other City departments and agencies not included in this list, depending on the nature and scope of your festival.

New Street Events By-Law

City Council adopted a new street events by-law effective January 1, 2009. The purpose of this is primarily to consolidate practices of the former municipalities and address issues such as:

- Road closure equipment and city service costs
- Admission
- By-law enforcement/infractions
- Existing permit fees
- Waste management and clean-up
- Services of divisions, agencies, boards and commissions
- Limiting the number of events on the same roadway
- Public notification
- Insurance

A copy of the report can be located at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-18059.pdf>

A copy of the Street Event Implementation Guidelines can be located at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-18061.pdf>

Permits

The Transportation Services Division, Right-of-Way Management receives applications and provides permits for banners, sidewalk sales, festivals, street closures, installation of hanging flower baskets, advance signage, barricading and construction.

Toronto-East York

Dennis Dionyssiou, Supervisor
Phone: 416 392-0839
Fax: 416 392-0504
E-mail: ddionyss@toronto.ca

Etobicoke York

Isa Lunardi
Phone: 416 394-8428
Fax: 416 394-8942
E-mail: ilunardi@toronto.ca

North York

Eric Jensen
Phone: 416 395-7112
Fax: 416 395-7482
E-mail: ejensen@toronto.ca

Scarborough

Bob Taylor
Phone: 416 396-4245
Fax: 416 396-5641
E-mail: btaylor@toronto.ca

Parking

Use of Toronto Parking Authority
Parking Lots (Green "P" Parking)
Phone: 416-393-7275

Food Serving Permits

Food Handler Certification Program
Toronto Public Health
Phone: 416-338-3663

<http://app.toronto.ca/foodhandler/pub/pubIndex.jsp>

Security

Toronto Police Services,
Special Events Unit
Phone: 416-808-1510

Toronto Emergency Medical Services

Phone: 416-392-2000

Toronto Fire Services

Phone: 416-338-9050

Vending Permits

City of Toronto Municipal Licensing
Standards
Phone: 416-392-6700

City Park Permits

Phone: 416-392-8188

Ward Councillors

A list of Ward Councillors can be located at:
<http://app.toronto.ca/im/council/councillors.jsp>

Permits for Serving or Selling Alcohol in Public

A permit is required any time liquor is sold or served outside of a licensed establishment or a private place. Special Occasion permits are for either sale or consumption and are issued for specific types of events.

Please call or write to:
Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario
90 Sheppard Avenue East
Suite 200-300
Toronto, Ontario
M2N 0A4

Telephone 416-326-8700

Toll free 1-800 522-2876

Fax 416-326-5555

E-mail address: Licensing@agco.on.ca

Website: www.agco.on.ca

Temporary Structures On-Site

City of Toronto: Building Division

Phone: 416-392-7539

You may be required to contact various City departments depending on the type of permit for which you are applying. For example, you need to contact your local Community Council Administrator to obtain a Council Resolution to designate your event as a Community Festival or a Significant Event.

For outdoor events you must notify the Clerk's Department, Police, Fire and Health departments of the event and identify physical boundaries in writing. If a tent or marquee is used you must also notify the building division. The City of Toronto may involve other departments as well, depending on your request. The City's [Special Events Planning Guide](#) provides useful information to help you organize your event.

Promotional Ideas for the Best Results

- Involve as many members as possible
- Hold activities within the BIA, rather than elsewhere, and on days when most of your member businesses are open
- Don't neglect involving member businesses on upper floors, on the periphery or around the corner
- Appeal to as many senses as appropriate: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch

- Conduct post-event follow up asking: “What can we do to make it even better next time?”

Hold Contests such as ...

- (Themed) window display contests among your merchants
- Amateur entertainment competition
- Children’s poster painting, scavenger hunt, clean-up campaign
- Baby contest
- Pet parade
- Sponsor sports competitions: softball, track & field, tennis
- Writing, poetry, photography, art, handicraft, ice sculptures
- Look-alike contests: famous persons, family generations, pets and owners

Conduct Promotions...

- Sidewalk sale
- Farmers market
- Flea market
- Giant garage sale

Stage Events...

- Hold a street dance, costume party, music festival, food fair, arts and crafts exhibition, fashion show, ethnic cultural exhibition, winter carnival
- Sponsor a play, Christmas caroling
- Provide weekday lunch-time activities

Get Involved With Your Neighbourhood/Community...

- Hold a BIA “Lets Get Acquainted” Open House
- Show the neighbourhood/community that the BIA cares and wants to co-

operate with them on common interests and concerns; (“We Hear You”)

- Provide daycare during BIA events

Cross-Promotions

Here is an opportunity to make your BIA event bigger!

In a large, dynamic and attraction-filled city like Toronto, there is a wide diversity of entertainment and events happening every day throughout the year. Many of these provide excellent opportunities for cross-promotion by enterprising BIAs.

Collaborating on events affords BIAs exceptionally attractive opportunities to participate and share in the benefits of more ambitious events at significantly less cost and effort than would be needed if attempted alone. Also, some BIAs – especially those located near to each other – have joined forces on occasion to co-sponsor successful joint promotions. Also BIAs across the City have participated in TABIA’s annual Citywide promotional, advertising and publicity campaigns.

Sponsorships

One practical means of obtaining additional funding for an event or promotion is to get the support of one or more sponsors. Large corporations and other organizations with an obvious interest in a particular audience that your activity is apt to attract are especially likely to respond favorably to your request for support. Such organizations need to be convinced that it would be worthwhile for them to provide funding and/or other kinds of support and thereby have their name associated with an event that can enhance their brand or product

awareness, visibility, market penetration or image and gain favorable publicity for them among a specific target audience. The combination of a suitable venue (e. g. your shopping district) with a special event or promotion and a built-in audience (i.e. those likely to be attracted to your event) creates an attractive marketing opportunity for prospective sponsors. Not all prospective sponsors are prepared to make cash donations. Many prefer to provide products and/or services on a contra basis or “something in return for something else”. However, arrangements of this kind can often be converted into cash by means of sales or auctions.

In making your approach to prospective sponsor organizations, it is best to be prepared.

- Anticipate what information decision makers(s) will want to know before agreeing to participate, and present it to them in a clear, concise, well-organized, preferably written form.
- Make sure that the extent of involvement and related benefits in return for their participation (i.e. identification in event advertising and other means of exposure) is carefully spelled out and formally agreed to in advance. You may even be willing to offer some potential sponsors an exclusive in order to get their participation.
- Make your approach as far in advance of the event as possible. Such spending commitments are often made before the beginning of the fiscal year and frequently involve a considerable amount of time before a decision is made.

- Make sure that the BIA fulfills its part of the commitment to the sponsoring organization, and that the latter is provided with ample evidence thereof. This is very important if you hope to request support from this organization again in the future!

Categories of Corporate Sponsors

Here is a partial list of the types of corporate sponsors that have supported BIA events:

- Major brand-name consumer goods manufacturers
- Banks and trust companies
- Large retail chains
- Fast food outlets
- Grocery chains
- Television and radio stations
- Daily newspapers
- Police and fire departments

Student Help

Local schools can provide a readily available source of inexpensive, talented and skilled labour. Using local students on BIA projects can help build stronger ties with the community as well. And developing good relations with the local schools can prove helpful when you want to make use of their facilities or secure the services of their band or other entertainment group for a special event.

Students can perform a broad range of useful functions. They can work on clean-up and set-up crews, distribute newsletters and other communications throughout the neighbourhood, entertain and look after younger children, as well as a variety of other jobs. Students are also available through the Co-operative Education program offered at several local community colleges to work for BIAs or individual businesses on special

projects or to fill in during peak workload periods, employee vacations or leaves. High school students must complete a minimum number of volunteer hours in the community before graduating; this is your opportunity to recruit for your BIA. They can also be hired for short-term, part-time or freelance work.

Advertising: Print, Television and Radio

Print

Useful tips on how to create successful print advertising.

Effective advertising begins with a definite **PLAN**. Decide first of all:

- **What** do you want to advertise?
- **Who** do you want to reach – your target audience?
- **How** do you intend to reach them – and what approach do you intend to use?
- **How much** do you intend to spend on your advertising?
- **Where** to advertise?
- **What** media to use?
- **When** to advertise – and for how long?

Effective advertising – in any medium – must:

- Get your prospect's **ATTENTION**
- Arouse his/her **INTEREST**
- Stimulate a **DESIRE** for your product
- Create a **DEMAND** for your product
- Lead to **ACTION** to obtain your product

Remember the “**AIDDA**” Principle:
ATTENTION - INTEREST - DESIRE - DEMAND - ACTION

Consistency in both content and scheduling helps build a recognizable image for your product.

Layout Tips

- **K.I.S.S.** (“Keep it **SIMPLE**, Seller). Organize ad elements so your message is easy to follow
- Make one element dominate – a bold headline or an attention-arresting photograph or illustration
- White space and the use of colour will help an ad stand out amid a mass of surrounding hype
- Avoid using small, hard-to-read type
- Avoid overprinting copy on tints, screens, illustrations or photographs
- Use reverse lettering only sparingly

Copy Tips

- The text in your ad should be clear, concise, informative, persuasive, and believable
- Use short, familiar words and simple, easy-to-understand sentences
- State the benefit for the reader in the headline
- Keep in mind that inappropriate humor may have an unintended, undesirable backlash

Television

Television has wide market coverage and is capable of delivering highly dramatic visual impact and a memorable image, but it is also relatively expensive in terms of both commercial time (especially prime time) and production costs.

Since television reaches a broad audience and is quite expensive, it is critical, particularly with a limited budget, to purchase advertising time that will be seen by the majority of your target audience.

Cable television, with its increasing number of specialty channels aimed at sharply defined audiences (e.g. women, ethno-specific, sportsmen, travelers, etc.) offers even greater opportunities to be selective when it comes to placement of your message.

Also, like radio, television does offer some opportunities for free publicity, particularly via such vehicles as community affairs programs, how-to shows and interviews.

Radio

Radio is one of the most popular media for retailers and other small businesses to use. Radio is versatile, flexible, immediate, relatively inexpensive and has a clearly definable audience.

Especially in a large metropolitan area such as Greater Toronto, there are a large number of radio stations from which to choose.

Stations feature a particular type of programming that appeals to a readily identifiable audience (e.g. commuters, housewives, teens etc.) with a specific demographic profile.

This variety allows advertisers to select the best stations to reach its target audience of present and potential customers.

Radio stations are generally quite flexible when it comes to offering “extras” to advertisers. These may be in the form of extra “plays” of commercials and/or reduced rate charges (particularly during lower listening hours and seasons) as well as contests and other offers to listeners, merchandising items, public appearances by on-air personalities and on-site “remote” promotional broadcasts at special events. Many stations are also willing to provide free airtime to broadcast public service announcements and “community billboard” items.

Newsletters - Tips for Producing an Effective BIA Newsletter

Determine what your objectives are in having a newsletter and record them for ready future reference (e.g. “to provide a means of communicating regularly with our members and keeping them informed about what the BIA is doing for them”).

Identify your intended audience precisely. Who do you want to reach?

- Your fellow BIA members only
- Residents of the surrounding neighbourhood
- City Councillors
- Others (specify)

Flavor your approach with the make-up of your audience(s) in mind then:

- Decide when and how often you will publish
- Establish your potential news sources

- Determine who will be responsible for gathering material, writing/editing and producing it
- Determine who will approve its content

Decide on design elements including:

- Size
- Number of pages
- Colour(s) of paper and types
- Format appearance

Decide on regular editorial features, if any to be included in specific issue(s).

These could include:

- What's happening in the BIA
- News from TABIA
- News from the BIA Office
- What's happening elsewhere (i.e. in the city or other jurisdictions that could affect the BIA or its members)
- Issues that concern BIA members
- Answers to questions about the BIA
- Brief history of the BIA
- List of Board of Management members and how to contact them
- Call for volunteers
- Welcome to new members
- Request for input from readers

Decide on a method of distribution:

- Mail, postal walk, hand-deliver (by whom?), handout
- Encourage input from readers. Make it easy for them to respond (e.g. include response form)

Producing a Newsletter the Easy Way

Every BIA needs to communicate regularly and frequently to all its members – and in certain instances, to other individuals and groups, such as

politicians and neighbourhood residents' organizations. A newsletter is an effective means of doing so on an ongoing basis.

The following nine areas represent commonly used section headings in BIA newsletters that help create an informative, well organized and attractive newsletter.

1. Masthead

The top of the first page of the newsletter – called the “masthead” – should include the following information:

- The name of your BIA
- The name you choose to call your newsletter (e.g. “BIA Reporter”, “Neighbourhood News”)
- A slogan or brief theme line you may wish to add as a subheading, to describe what the newsletter’s objectives are and/or who its intended audience is
- The number of the current issue of the newsletter (e.g. issue #1 of volume #1)
- The date or month and year of this issue

2. Board of Management

A narrow column extending down the left of the front page is a suitable prominent place to list your BIA’s Board of Management. This only needs to be updated when there’s a change on your Board. It should appear in every issue and should include:

- Each Board member’s name
- Name of business
- Business address / Property address
- Business phone number, and
- Fax number (where applicable)
- E-mail address (where applicable)

3. Lead Story

Your most important article should begin at the top of a wider column on the first page. You’ll need to provide a new story here for every issue.

The headline should be big and bold and “catchy” wherever possible, in order to attract attention.

The subject should be timely and of interest, importance and concern to your readers; e.g. an upcoming BIA event or meeting, a new or expected development likely to affect members, etc. No article should be overly long, but each should answer the key reader’s questions: “Who?”, “What?”, “When?”, “Where?”, “Why?”, and “How?” as clearly and concisely as possible.

4. Secondary Article(s)

Additional articles may follow your lead story on a variety of subjects, such as a successful recent BIA event or happening. Such an article should emphasize positive results, and all who contributed significantly to the success of the activity should be named and thanked.

5. Welcome New Members

It’s a good idea to list the individual names, business names and/or property addresses of any new members who have moved into the BIA since the last newsletter was published.

It helps them become known to their fellow members and makes them feel part of the BIA.

6. News from TABIA

The information for this feature can be supplied on a regular basis by the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) and will consist of items of general interest to BIA members.

7. News From The City BIA Office

The City of Toronto BIA Office can provide new material for every issue. A question-and-answer format is just one example of the kinds of informative material that can be regularly supplied to

you by the City BIA Office. Subjects could include:

- Current issues likely to affect BIA members
- Upcoming events and activities of interest to members

8. “Help!”

An appeal for volunteers to help carry out your BIA’s program of activities should be included in every issue of your newsletter. You can change this copy as often as you like, or let it stand.

9. What’s Your Opinion?

This feature which can be updated periodically gives your readers a convenient opportunity to let you know what they think of the BIA and the job it is doing, as well as what they feel could be done to improve the BIA’s effectiveness. Include a handy reply form that can be quickly completed and passed along to any Board member.

Guidelines for a BIA Web site **The Value of a BIA Web site**

A BIA web site can be an inexpensive yet effective way to promote local merchants and entice potential shoppers and entrepreneurs to come to your BIA.

Drawing on features of some successful examples and balancing this with the particular development objectives and characteristics of a unique business community, this section provides a set of recommended guidelines for the creation of a BIA web site.

General Design Guidelines

A good web site should reinforce the desired image of your BIA and carefully organize information so that it is quickly retrievable. The following design principals will help to achieve this result.

Appeal to a wide audience

- The web site is at once a business card, a gateway, a directional sign, a local information resource and a marketing tool. It should promote your business community and be inviting to both potential shoppers (residents and visitors) and potential merchants.

Be consistently stylish and professional

- Your web site should reflect and reinforce the image of your BIA that you are trying to promote. The aesthetics of the site should be consistent with other communications materials.

Avoid the temptation to clutter

- Create hierarchies of information and avoid overwhelming visitors with a crowded homepage. Information should be carefully organized into thematic areas with descriptions that make it clear which content is where.

The “three click” rule

- A user should be able to access any information contained in the web site with no more than three mouse clicks from the homepage. A link to the homepage should be clearly visible on every page and the most important and/ or most frequently used information should be accessed the easiest.

Promotion, promotion, promotion

- When completed, the web site should be promoted and included on all communications materials (i.e. business cards, brochures, newspapers, local small business websites, TABIA’s web site).

Suggested Basic Content

At a minimum, an effective BIA web site should contain the following areas. Additional, personalized information should be added to this basic framework.

Home Page (precedent 1)

- Simple in design and easy to navigate. Always think of this as a gateway for visitors entering your BIA for the first time
- A photograph or photographs that capture the essence of your BIA.
- A brief description of your business community, the image you are trying to promote.
- A navigation bar with links to content.

Business Directory (precedents 2 and 3)

- A searchable database containing business names, storefront photographs, addresses, business descriptions, hours of operation and contact information.
- A street map showing store locations.

Directions and Parking (precedent 4)

- Easy to read map showing the location of parking and directions for all modes of transportation.
- A downloadable version containing all of the same information.

Event Calendar (precedent 5)

- A searchable event calendar with event listings and descriptions, organizer contact information and, if possible, photographs from previous years

- Listing of active community groups and event organizers.

Merchant Opportunities (precedent 6)

- A listing of existing commercial vacancies with interior and exterior photographs and information on floor space, municipal appraisal, zoning, building history and owner contact information.

Contact Information

- For your BIA Board, TABIA, the City of Toronto BIA Office, Enterprise Toronto.

Suggestions for Additional Content

- A featured merchant or restaurant of the month with additional interior photos and description (precedent 7)
- An overview of the history of the BIA and the community (precedent 8)
- A community profile with qualitative and quantitative information about the neighborhood and the local market
- A posting forum for visitors to request information and send feedback to the BIA
- A section with Frequently Asked Questions
- A community bulletin board linked to the event calendar for local residents and organizations to post information on upcoming events
- A featured partners section to promote another BIA in exchange for them prominently promoting you
- A news items section for press releases about upcoming events,

- Minutes from meetings and/ or links to important City policy documents
- Anything else that helps to build the unique identity of your BIA and entice visitors, shoppers and investors.

Potential Financial and Human Resources

- Co-op students from local high-schools, colleges and universities

Links to various Toronto BIA web sites can be located at:

http://www.toronto.ca/bia/toronto_bia.htm

Design Precedents

1. A simple yet effective home page
 - www.park-avenue.org

2. A searchable business directory
 - http://www.shopottawastreet.com/ottawastreet_directory.html
3. Street map with store locations
 - <http://www.robsonstreet.ca/shops/>
4. A searchable event calendar.
 - www.nanaimodowntown.com/events.asp
5. Commercial Vacancy Listing:
 - http://boulevardsaintlaurent.com/?page_id=2372&a=browseads&lang=fr
6. Featured merchant / restaurant.
 - www.torontocorsoitalia.com
7. Historical overview
 - www.parkdalevillagebia.com
 - www.stlawrencemarketbia.ca/oldtown.htm