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ACTION SHEET: ORGANIZING A VEGFEST

For Pods who are interested in initiating a VegFest in their community, here is a general guide for planning and organizing the event.

First things first:

- Find several people interested in helping and/or form a committee. Refer to *Action Sheet: Volunteer Roles for an Event* for guidance
- Clearly define what your goals are for the VegFest, and how you will be able to measure how successful you are in achieving these goals (e.g., having good attendance, getting people to sign up for your Pod newsletter, making money to support Pod activities, etc.).
- Set up regular planning meetings and/or calls
- Keep track of action items and delegate tasks
- Start planning a minimum of 6 - 8 months before the proposed date
- Get familiar with the permits and regulations that may be required
 - Check with your locality/village/town/city to determine what, if any, permits or notices are required to hold the event and how far in advance they must be received
 - Most municipalities require special event permits for gatherings of over 50 people, even when the event is done on private property. Often these event permits do not allow the use of public property if an entry fee is being charged. Suggesting an entry donation is one way to get around this.
 - Usually the municipality's event permit will list the various other licenses, permits, traffic control, portable toilets, and sanitation requirements that must be arranged before the permit will be granted. If the event is being done in an event facility, these requirements can be easily met. If it is being done in a park or space that is not designated for festival events, much more coordination will be required.
 - If you plan to sell alcohol, check on licensing fees and requirements.
 - Check with your local Health Department on requirements and fees that may be required for food vendors, e.g., they may be required to obtain permits.



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- The mechanics of several important matters connected to funds and contracts may trigger the need for involvement/leadership of a specific type of entity. For example, in order to accept tax deductible donations, a tax exempt organization must be involved; in order to accept sponsor contributions, execute the contract for the venue and/or to rent necessary equipment, it will likely be necessary to have an organization that can process checks. There are several ways that Group Leaders have sought to address this. Refer to *Action Sheet: Establishing the Organizational Structure*.
- Consider obtaining event insurance. Event insurance is not very expensive and can be important if you do not have personal liability protection. You will also need to find out if the venue chosen for the VegFest has insurance requirements, or whether they are able to cover your event under their existing insurance. Here are several insurance providers to consult when looking for insurance:
 - <http://usli.com/products/special-events/>
 - <http://www.csicoverage.com>
 - <https://www.theeventhelper.com>
- Choose the name for your event, and set up a dedicated website for your VegFest

Date

- Check local event calendars to avoid big events
- Summer is usually slower due to vacations and school recess
- Some groups will be less likely to attend on certain days (such as the 7th Adventist Church folks might not attend on Saturdays)
- See the list of current VegFests across the nation and abroad [here](#)

Location

- Securing the location is usually the most challenging part of planning
- Decide on outdoor, indoor, or a combination of the two. If outdoor, come up with an alternative plan in the event of bad weather.
- Hosting at a free community center or donated location can help cut costs. Consider land trusts, community centers, government gathering buildings, church recreation centers, large church parking lots, and parks.
- Check if you need permission from the city/locality to host an event
- Check if location provides tables and tents or will you have to ask vendors to bring their own or rent separately
- It is not uncommon for event places to have exclusive contracts with catering companies. Speak with the venue about their contract with the catering company, and if they are unable to meet the needs of your event, exclusivity may no longer apply.
- Find out how many vendors can be hosted at the location
- Figure out where to put signs and volunteers to direct people to the activities of the festival



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Budget/Funds

- Depending on the size and scope of your event it will be useful to raise funds. Costs may include: location, insurance, permit fees, speaker traveling expenses, tents, chairs, port-a-potty rentals, etc. Costs may range anywhere from \$2,000 for a small event, to \$8,000 or more for a larger event.
- Consider donations and crowdfunding campaigns (e.g., "GoFundMe")
- Decide if your event is free to the public or if there will be an entrance fee
- Consider selling merchandise at the event or your website to generate funds to cover expenses and kick start your planning for the next year. Below are a couple of examples of the card processing services you could use:
 - PayPal <https://www.paypal.com>
 - Square <https://squareup.com>
 - Here is one examples of how you could sell stickers from your VegFest site using PayPal and Google Forms: <http://tinyurl.com/y8k4aa92>
- Printed material might get rather expensive. Here is a link that may be helpful. It can be used at any Office Depot and will get discounts of up to 70% off standard pricing on copying and other print needs: <http://mbp.ctcshares.com>

Sponsors : Entities that provide financial and other support for your VegFest, generally in exchange for publicity. Sponsors may also be vendors, but not always.

- Approach sponsors early on - at least 6 months before the event as they need a long time (6 - 10 months) to process sponsorship applications.
- Start with places you know such as local food co-op, health food stores, nutrition centers, etc.
- Reach out to your local Chamber of Commerce for support.
- Develop sponsorship levels to list benefits for your sponsors. Refer to the template on working with sponsors, located in the Template section of the VegFest Toolkit.
- Explore options for sponsors outside of your area such as:
 - VegFund offers reimbursements: <http://www.vegfund.org>
 - Tofurky offers a charitable giving program:
<http://www.tofurky.com/donations-request-page/>

Vendors : Entities which offer something for sale or exhibit at your VegFest

- Invite local vendors first (they are more likely to participate).
- Decide whether or not you are going to allow alcohol - research licensing requirements.
- Decide whether you will allow vegetarian foods (such as honey) or only vegan foods, and whether or not you wish to allow "vegan junk food" vendors, or simply place them in a separate section.



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- Plan in advance how you will provide electricity to booths if they are offering hot food or demonstrating an electrical product. Also consider audio visual requirements and parking for vendors.
- Draft clear instructions and contract with vendors - require food labels and permits (It is important to require food labels - to display ingredients when samples are offered).
- Refer to the templates on working with vendors and sponsors, located in the Template section of the VegFest Toolkit.

Speakers

- Consider local speakers for the first year (Refer to *Action Sheet: Finding Speakers for Pod Meetings* in the Leadership Toolkit for additional ideas)
- If you wish to acquire well-known speakers, who normally have high fees, here are some tips to help reduce costs:
 - Ask the speaker if he/she will come for free or a reduced speaker fee if you pay airfare and lodging. Sometimes they will do this if you give a minimum guarantee of how many people will be there, and provide a volunteer to help sell their books at the event.
 - Find out when the speaker is going to be in your area for another speaking event for which he/she is already being paid. Schedule your event so the speaker can speak at the paid event and then at your event for free or for a reduced cost.
 - If you are having a smaller event (less than 200 people), you can still often get a nationally recognized speaker to agree to a Skype-in for a live speech and Q&A. All you have to do is make sure you have a big screen, projector, a sound system, wifi and computer.
- Secure speakers via email with date/time specified 3 - 4 months before the event
- Consider conducting a crowd-fundraiser to cover speaker fees

Promotion

- Refer to *Action Sheet: Promoting Events* for more details
- Website and Social Media promotion are important
- Reach out to local Newspapers 2-3 months ahead of time with information about your event
- Consider offering giveaways and swag bags from sponsors of the event
- Include yoga, cooking classes, etc. to make your program interesting to a wider audience (Refer to *Action Sheet: Building the Event Program*)



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Links to Additional Information

- Pod News page: search articles for stories related to VegFest
- VegFest Support Group on Pods Site - join to connect with other VegFest organizers
- VegFest Organizers Unite closed group on Facebook
- Global VegFests 2017 courtesy of Vegan Travel Club
- Detailed planning information



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We welcome your suggestions and ideas!
Please send them to info@plantpurecommunities.org