



PLANNING BEST PRACTICES FOR DAYS OF ENCOURAGEMENT (or similar equipping events)

FORMAT: These gatherings may take the format of a day, an evening or half a day – it may be titled a day of encouragement, a spring conference, an evening of training or another eye-catching title)

WHY ORGANIZE SUCH AN EVENT?

The event may fulfill any of the following purposes:

- Refresh and encourage those who serve in Christ's Name
- Inspire and motivate to persevere in ministry
- Equip and provide new skills for ministry
- Build community with others in ministry
- Present ministry visions and know-how through workshop leaders and main speakers
- Build relationships and enhance fellowship amongst participants
- Serve as a model for classis and congregational events
- Offer a safe environment for topics and conversations that are difficult for local congregations
- Provide an inclusive environment
- Offer a venue where an entire church family may be affirmed and encouraged

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Pray for God's direction for all those involved in the planning of the event!
- Start early! Pick a date and reserve a location!
- A theme may be helpful for opening devotions, the program and visuals for the day.
- Approach workshop leaders several months before the event is scheduled to take place. Consider gender balance, different ages and ethnic diversity. Be sure to communicate the following with workshop leaders: theme of the day, expectations for their participation, the date, the location, and number of expected participants. Ask

workshop leaders about their equipment needs. Clarify who is responsible for various expenses (eg. travel, accommodations).

- Consider the pros and cons of more workshops for shorter periods of time compared to a few long ones. Limit the number of participants in each workshop. This ensures that the following does not happen: 50% of the people attend one workshop and the other workshops have only a few participants.
- Try to keep registration costs down. The diaconal conference and/or classis may be able to make a financial contribution to this event.
- Prepare a budget (a sample budget is available).
- Promote, promote, promote! Use any and all available means such as bulletin announcements, church mailboxes, clerks, secretaries, announcements, posters, emails and so on. Contact Madeline Robins (robinsm@crcna.ca) at the Diaconal Ministries office with all the details for this event so that this information may be displayed on the website: www.diaconalministries.com
- Invite guests from local Operation Manna sites, Diaconal Ministries Canada, denominational agencies and other local ministries to bring a display. The presence of a guest at displays during “key” viewing times, such as lunch and registration adds to the event. Do place displays in a highly visible location with lots of opportunity for interaction (near food!?!?). Guests with displays should be invited to participate in workshops. Guests with displays may be also a source of revenue.

THE EVENT

- Provide a welcoming and friendly environment for the registration of the event. For preregistration or registration on the day, make the process clear for all participants.
- Use the event to celebrate and share stories of diaconal opportunity and “what has worked well.”
- Give each registrant a folder or envelope to keep their materials together. Include a map of the facility (if necessary), agenda of the event, a list of workshop leaders and an evaluation form (comments can be written down throughout the event). A couple of blank sheets of paper (for taking notes) are always appreciated.
- Have an energetic and inspirational opening program for worship that encourages participants to want to become better equipped in ministry.

- Divide the work. There are lots of details, especially last-minute ones. Make sure you have several people who know what needs to be done and will be able to assist you. As you include different people with varied gifts, a greater experience of ownership and responsibility for the day's "positive outcome" will evolve.
- Pray for all those who will give leadership during the day (i.e. worship leaders, workshop leaders, etc.).
- Nametags are helpful. Include some relevant information such as the church s/he attends or the ministry s/he represents.
- At the event, recognize the Diaconal Ministry Developer(s) in the classis and highlight Operation Manna projects (within the geographic area of the event). This may be done through an announcement, special sign or a note in the folder.
- Go light with lunch. A nice warm meal tastes great but may leave people sleepy in the afternoon workshops. Have lots of refreshments available throughout the day/evening: coffee, water, etc. Wrap up leftovers for people to enjoy on their drive home.

AFTER THE EVENT

- Evaluate! Each year, include an evaluation form for people to complete. Request attendees to complete it at the closing of the event (include a mailing address in case they choose to take it home and fill it out). Offer space in evaluation for comments.
- Have someone compile the results of the evaluations and summarize them. Act on the responses. Make improvements as required! Workshop leaders also appreciate the feedback of the participants in their session.
- Show your appreciation! Thank each person involved in the event: people making lunches and providing refreshments, the people at the registration table, the people sweeping the floors and the people leading the workshops. Celebrate the event with the planning team! Share those God-ordained moments, comments, discoveries and remember the donuts! Go potluck and enjoy a meal together! It creates wonderful momentum for the next time! Pray with thanks to God for being able to play a role in the coming of His Kingdom!