



# MARKETING & RECRUITMENT STRATEGY HANDBOOK

Community Listening  
Sessions



*This handbook was created by Community Alliance Consulting for the Maricopa County Food System Coalition and made possible through sponsorship from the Gila River Indian Community.*

# Get to know your site

## STEP #1

- Schedule an introductory meeting between the lead facilitator, available team members, and the site gatekeeper.
- Sit down with the person who makes decisions at the site. When you schedule the appointment, be sure to let them know other staff members are welcome. Let them know a little bit about the project. Remember to tell them about the GOALS, PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS, AND LOGISTICS.

### *Questions to ask:*

- What important events are on your calendar for the next month?
- What routine events occur at this facility?
- What do you think is the best way to communicate with your clientele?
- What about the Listening Sessions do you think would inspire them to come?
- Who else, inside or outside of your organization, should I talk to in order to invite more people? Are there school leaders, church or clergy members, local community organizers that you could introduce me to?
- Is there anything important I should know about your community? Can you think of any seriously threatening food issues, past community experience with similar projects or research, or any other urgent things our team should know before engaging with your community?

### *Visit the Possible Meeting Space:*

- Look for accessibility, size, ambience, proximity to childcare space, bathrooms, etc.

## STEP #2

**Select a Listening Session date and begin recruitment immediately.**

Once you've talked about the community's status and needs, as well as provided an adequate project background, pick an appropriate date and time. You will arrive to the site with a sign-up sheet (provided). Write in the selected date and

time. The remainder of your marketing materials will be created by you in the next couple days. Schedule a second meeting in one week or less.

You will leave this sign-up sheet with your site gatekeeper. They will immediately begin collecting names of people who indicate they'd like to come, or who have great interest. Please note, signing up in advance is NOT required.

### **STEP #3**

#### **Return to your site within one week to distribute flyers.**

Using the information gathered at your first meeting, return to the site. Distribute flyers and post them around the site (e.g. bulletin boards, waiting rooms, front desk). Check in with the site gatekeeper to see if they have any suggestions, needs, or good news to share.

### **STEP #4**

#### **Continue additional recruitment strategies.**

You may wish to do this the day of your second meeting, but these strategies should be done throughout the session marketing period. The remainder of this guidebook is dedicated to these strategies.

### **STEP #5**

#### **Confirm with attendees.**

Two days prior to your Community Listening Session confirm and remind all who have shared their contact information. Collect the sign-up sheets from your site gatekeeper, as well as any other sites. (Hint: ask them to smart-phone-photo the sheet and email it to you!)

Contacting prospective attendees may take time - divide the responsibilities among team members. You'll probably do a combination of phone calls, emails, and text messaging. Remind participants of the date and time. Also, mention food will be served, childcare provided, and we really want to know their opinion. Let them know they may bring others with them who have not registered. Ask them if they have any additional questions and thank them for stepping up.

# Consistent messaging

Each published marketing strategy should contain the following three elements: GOALS, PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS, AND LOGISTICS. Some communications will provide ALL of the information (such as long emails and detailed flyers) and some communications will only contain some elements of information (like event announcements and social media blasts).

## GOALS

**The project's goals are to LEARN about community experience with food and to IMPROVE their life by co-creating solutions to improve their food systems.**

The goal is to talk about everything that relates to food, from systems like farming, restaurants, and local laws, to individual choices you make in your kitchen or when shopping. By learning about the best and most challenging parts of food in your life, we can work to develop solutions. The information we collected will be used to create questions for the next listening session, focused specifically on this very community.

## PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

**Participants will answer questions in an open, public format.**

Every person is free to share, and free to disagree. We will ask questions and follow-up probes to make sure we understand your opinion. No names will be collected in the process. Our conversation will be recorded for report writing and accuracy.

## LOGISTICS

**Share details about how to attend the session.**

The date, time, location should be included. If there is a specific room, note that information. Let participants know that a meal will be served, and that free child care is available. You may also wish to promote that three \$75 grocery store gift cards will be raffled at the session. Let it be known that advanced registration is encouraged, but not necessary. Community members are welcome to just show up!

# Outreach strategies

## PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

**Face to face marketing is always the most effective, even though it's time-consuming.**

There are several modes you may use to reach potential participants.

### *Where to go:*

- Attend a couple events at your facility - both special events (e.g. health fair) and regular events (e.g. Zumba class) to make an announcement, take sign-ups, and leave a few extra flyers.
- Make contact with the other community leaders referred to by your site gatekeeper. Visit their locations and have a conversation covering the Goals, Participant Expectations, and Logistics. Leave them a sign-up sheet to collect names and contact info (email or phone number).
- Think about other places in the community you could conduct outreach: senior centers, early childhood learning centers, public schools (the Parent Liaison is a great point of contact!), charter schools, Federally Qualified Health Care Centers, churches and temples, libraries...the possibilities are endless. Leave "cold flyers" there if it's allowed, otherwise, walk in with a smile and a stack of flyers. A warm hand-off often helps but is not always necessary.

## FLYERS

**Flyers provide great access to the public and may be more appropriate in some communities than others.**

Flyers should highlight basic information for participants, and provide directions for them to learn more. Flyers should be left in the selected community site, as well as other nearby community locations. Below are some suggestions about what to highlight.

### *Tips on impactful flyers:*

- Use color! Use block letters! Use your agency or the host agency's past flyers as a template. Make sure flyers are bilingual, if that's what your community needs.
- Emphasize LOGISTICS, while referencing GOALS and PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS.
- Make it clear that participants may "just show up" without registration.
- Provide a tear-off strip at the bottom of the flyer with an email address and phone number through which participants can get more information, or sign-up if they desire.

This website contains some good tips:

<https://designshack.net/articles/graphics/how-to-design-an-awesome-flyer-even-if-youre-not-a-designer/>

## SOCIAL MEDIA

**Depending on your community, social media may be a very influential community communication tool.**

Craft social media posts for the sites to use or share on their own site. Do not only post "to" their pages, as these communications often get lost. Use Facebook, Instagram, email, and the agency website.

### *Tips on social media promotions:*

- Different platforms will demand different types of messages. Instagram messages should be short; some Facebook messages can be long and detailed, while it is also helpful to share quick promotional blurbs.
- Always emphasize LOGISTICS, but social media provides a great opportunity to direct interested parties to detailed descriptions on actual websites.
- Digital promotions should ALWAYS include a PHOTO. Use the coalition logo, brightly colored food photos, or photos of diverse people interacting.
- Include a direct ask in your promotional message for fans to SHARE the event via social media.

Here are some super creative ideas on promoting events via social media:

<https://www.tintup.com/blog/10-social-media-tips-to-promote-your-next-event-without-spending-a-dime/>