

How to run a community forum

What is a community forum and why hold one?

A community forum is an event where members of the public and a panel of knowledgeable people gather to share and discuss information. Audience members are encouraged to ask the panel questions and engage in discussion. This is one of the best ways to gauge the way a community feels about an issue. It's a great way to:

present facts on an issue to the community
find out what the community thinks
recruit people who may want to get involved
raise awareness of the issue

Organising a forum takes a lot of time and work so it's important there is a group of committed people helping to make sure it runs smoothly. Tasks for organising a community forum include:

- setting a date
- booking a venue
- finding appropriate speakers
- connecting with community partners
- setting the agenda
- publicising the event

Speakers and presenters

For a forum, you'll need 3-4 speakers for the panel and one person to act as moderator. Securing a high profile person to open the event is fantastic if you can organise it. When choosing your speakers consider the following:

- Are they knowledgeable and experienced on the topic?
- Is your panel diverse and includes experts as well as members of the community?
- Are they engaging and good speakers?
- Will speakers appeal to your target audience?

Once you've selected and secured your speakers, make sure you prepare them thoroughly and

know exactly what they need.

Provide them with a draft of the agenda and other speakers.

Make sure they're satisfied with the order of presentations and time allocation.

Discuss the content of their remarks to make sure they cover important points.

Will they need audio visual equipment?

Will they require transport or accommodation?

To get you started, we have five Templates to help you plan, organise, run and evaluate your forum.

[Plan a community forum template](#)

[Organise a community forum template](#)

[Set the community forum agenda template](#)

[Day of the forum: responsibilities check-list template](#)

[Community forum evaluation template](#)

Our sources

Information in this section was drawn from the following sources:

Our Community Pty Ltd, n.d., *Factsheet: Holding Public Forums*, Our Community, Melbourne.

Available from: <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/>

Whitley J, 2002, *A guide to organising community forums*, Community Catalyst Inc, Boston.

Results, *Toolkit: Organising a community forum, 2005*. results.org