



ORGANISING A COMMUNITY EVENT OR MEETING



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PLANNING AND HOLDING A COMMUNITY MEETING : INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Introduction

This information is designed to assist community groups or organisations organise and run conferences, programme launches, consultation meetings, workshops or other community functions.

This is written for groups who are primarily Pakeha and want to organise an event which uses a traditional Pakeha approach.

When participants include Maori, or the meeting planned will be a hui held on a Marae, have Maori representation on your organizing committee and consult with local community groups about your process.

One of the best ways in which we can promote a cause, add to each other's knowledge or involve people actively in a consultation exercise is to run a meeting. Other advocacy and consultation tools include

- surveys
- distribution of discussion/consultation documents,
- use of a discussion page on the Internet,
- personal contact and small focus group discussions.

Many agencies advocate on behalf of a population group. This document has been developed by organisations that advocate on behalf of children's rights but the information in it is relevant to groups who promote the interests of other populations. Community based functions present an excellent opportunity for advocacy through the publicity they attract and the information that can be shared at them.

While some major conferences may be funded well enough to involve the use of professional conference organisers such conferences are expensive to run and expensive for people to participate in. Therefore many community groups will wish to organise events which are low budget and affordable. This guide is intended to assist groups to plan and run inexpensive events.

The success of the event will depend on careful planning and efficient completion of tasks. While it is not possible to anticipate all potential problems many can be identified and avoided or at least minimized.

The focus or topic of the function

The focus of the conference or meeting will depend on your interests and what you are trying to share and promote. Sometimes you will want to look at a particular topic quite intensively and sometimes to cover a wider topic in less depth.

Consider:

- Who are the audience you hope to attract?
- What do you hope to achieve from the event?
- In what way do you want the audience to participate?
- What is the best way to achieve your objectives?
- Your opportunities - is there a visiting speaker you can use or an event coming up which makes your topic particularly relevant and of interest to the target audience?

TIPS

- Set realistic goals
- Keep the goals relevant to intended audience.
- Find a way to sell the function that makes it of value to the potential audience by adding to their skills and knowledge or by giving them a chance to share their knowledge, experience and interests.

TOOLS

- Lists of possible speakers
- Lists of ideas for the programme.
- Useful references (literature).

Establishing a working group/committee

It is wise to have a steering committee to plan the event - two or more heads are better than one. Seek the views of others on matters that could be contentious. It may be that the group planning and organising the event is able to delegate to one person to do much of the routine work involved with the organisation of the meeting or, if you are very lucky, you may be able to employ someone to do these tasks. However it is very likely that you will have to share these tasks among yourselves. You need people who will contribute time, work and ideas reliably.

In planning a community based meetings it is a good idea to include representatives from a number of relevant organisations - this is inclusive and generates interest in and support for the function. Sometimes other agencies may give support financially or with personnel time. Sometimes they may not be willing or able to help in financial or practical ways but will be willing to put their name behind the event. This will add to the function's credibility, promote good working relationships between community groups and demonstrate support for the issue around which the meeting is going to be focused.

TIPS

- Select people to work in your group who you know get along well with others.
- Chose group members who have proven that they are thoroughly reliable and do tasks on time.
- Don't overload any one member of the group - you may burn them out.
- At the beginning of the process discuss how you will resolve differences if they occur.
- Schedule regular meetings to keep each other informed, make decisions, support each other and review progress.

TOOLS

- A good contact list with a variety of phone/fax/email contact addresses so you can contact committee members whenever you need to.
- A key person who can provide a listening ear and lead by example – is supportive and listens well.

Planning - Time and timing issues

- 1 You must allow enough time to put into organising the event - there will be lot more work than you think and it takes time - in most circumstances it takes weeks or months not days to get an function off the ground.
- 2 You must plan your event so that it is staged at the right time if possible - sometimes you have no choice - but consider how you can maximise the meeting in terms of publicity and availability of potential participants and speakers.
- 3 Do not try to crowd to much into the event itself - in your planning remember that everything takes longer than you think it will.

TIPS

- Give yourself enough time to organise the event and plan it well.
- Check what else is on about the time you plan to hold the event and try to avoid clashes with other events if possible.
- Give potential participants enough time to fit your function in their schedule but not too much time that they will put off registering and forget the event. For a big event (one day or more) you may want to send out notices 3 months in advance but you may have to do a reminder. For a small event (half day or less) about three weeks ahead is good timing. 2 or 3 day conferences are usually publicised 6 months to a year or more ahead.

TOOLS

- Your most valuable tool is a **project plan and time-line**. This can be quite simple but gives you a picture of what has to be done and when it should be done by. A useful way to establish this is to have a brainstorming session at an early meeting and then put tasks in a logical order.

TASK eg	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETED BY	COMPLETED
			Yes/No
Contact Speakers	Mary	22 March 2000	
Arrange Venue	James	20 March 2000	
Draw up Flyer	Tom	30 March 2000	
Arrange Printing	Tom	10 April 2000	
Draw up distribution list	Mary	30 March 2000	
Post out invitations etc	Tom and Mary	2 April 2000	

It is useful to arrange a **schedule of meetings** ahead of time so that members with tasks know when they will be reporting on their tasks. This can be done by setting dates ahead or having a regular meeting time.

Venue

Venues are very important because they can contribute to or distract from the success of a conference. You will not always have a wide choice because you may be constrained by what is available, by what you can afford and how many people you want to accommodate. Generally speaking the more elaborate the venue and the more services it offers the more expensive it will be. Some choices include:

- low cost options - school halls, church halls or meeting rooms in sponsoring or supportive organisations.
- medium cost - venues in institutions eg hospitals, tertiary institutes
- high cost - hotel and purpose built conference centers.

TIPS

- Estimate how many people you want to attract before you start looking for a venue.
- Estimate how much you think you are going to be able to afford.
- Start looking as early as possible - there is often a heavy demand on venues.
- It will help attract a crowd if you find a venue which is easy to reach by public transport and which has parking.
- If you are going to break up the participants into discussion groups you will need to check that there are break-out rooms and what extra cost will be associated with use of these.
- You may need to pay a deposit on the booking or at least know how long the venue will be kept before it is cancelled.
- It is a good idea to view the venue before you confirm it.
- Check that your venue is suitable for people with disabilities.

TOOLS

- A good list of available venues.
- A number of potential dates.

Speakers

One of the keys to the success of your event will be having high quality speakers and facilitators - that is people who have something of value to say, say it well, who are interesting to listen to and can encourage participants to join in. While it sometimes helps attract a crowd if the speakers or presenters are well known and have a good reputation it is not essential. Credentials should be publicised in order to convince potential participants that the event will be worthwhile.

Sometimes you will want to plan your event around a key person. If the key speaker is not local it is always a good idea to include some known speakers - people with a good reputation in the field of interest or with local knowledge and contacts.

TIPS

- Start looking for your speakers/presenters early - good speakers are in big demand.
- Pick speakers who have a well-established reputation for reliability - both in turning up and in presenting well.
- Avoid unknown overseas or out of district speakers - double check the track record of such people. Some so-called experts can be very disappointing or simply be inappropriate for your setting.
- If it is appropriate for your function include local presenters in the event.
- Check your speaker's requirements eg overhead projectors, power point etc.
- Warn speakers if you want a copy of their presentation/overheads - they may or may not provide these so do not rely on them.
- If you are recording the event or having media present check that this is OK with the speakers.
- Prepare your speakers for the type of audience you are expecting and for any trouble spots you can anticipate.
- Get a short biography from each of the speakers to assist the person who is introducing them.
- Double check before the event that the speakers remember their commitment.
- Contact your speakers personally and in writing and be sure you have really confirmed their availability.
- Make it clear to the speaker what you want them to focus on - however be aware they may well not stick to the topic you want them to speak about.

Programme

Planning a programme is more difficult than it seems. The most common mistake is to try to fit too much in. You should always allow extra time for things going wrong and for discussion to take place. On the other hand you do not want unproductive gaps.

TIPS

- Participants cannot listen for long periods of time without a break - keep sessions to no more than 40 minutes speaking at a time before allowing for a change of speaker and/or discussion.
- There are down times when the group energy will be low - after lunch and late afternoon are the classic times for this. Schedule something active for these times.
- It is usually a good idea to intersperse speakers with sessions in which attendees can actively participate - small group discussions, workshop sessions and question and answer sessions.
- Small group discussions need to be planned and facilitated well if they are to be productive. Unless the tasks of a small group discussion are very clear and the facilitator keeps the group on task discussion may not be useful (see later).
- There may be nothing you can do about participants leaving after afternoon tea but sometimes it works to put in a really exciting speaker at the end of the day and people will wait to hear him or her.

Budget/funds

It is possible to run an event quite inexpensively if you do all the organising yourselves - conference organisers are very expensive. You may wish to pay for some administrative help in any case because the task of compiling a mailing list, sending out flyers and registration forms and processing registrations are very time consuming. If you work for an agency that will supply administrative help your costs will be less.

Major expenses can include:

- the venue (depending on the type of venue you use)
- the catering (see below) - this is the most expensive item
- speakers fees- if required
- speakers travel - if required
- design and printing of publicity material
- stamps for publicly material and registrations (if receipts or confirmation of registrations are sent by post)
- administrative assistance
- gifts for speakers if no fees are paid
- other administrative costs eg phone calls, faxes

TIPS

- Keeping your costs down so that registration is as inexpensive as possible will help attract a good sized audience especially from community based agencies and from individuals who have to meet the expense of their own registration.
- Estimate your expenses as early as possible - as soon as you know what your venue is.
- If you have no other source of funding you will need to set the registration fee at a level that covers your expenses plus some for unexpected expenses.
- Identify one member of your group to be responsible for management of financial matters.
- Ensure that the group approves any spending and that receipts are kept.
- Keep a close watch on spending and try not to add expenses.
- Set up a bank account (if the expenses are not being met and administered by an agency) which is accessible and identify and arrange for three signatories (at least two people must sign each cheque).

TOOLS

- A well laid out budget plan.
- A system for keeping a running account of spending.
- An accessible bank account.

Sponsorship and donations

It is sometimes possible to obtain sponsorships or donations towards the cost of your event from commercial operations, organisations or professional bodies. Applications for grants or sponsorship take time to process, sometimes months, so plan well ahead.

TIPS

- Early in your planning discuss who might be willing to give financial support to your event.
- If you have personal contacts in such organisations identify whom it is you should speak to about financial support.
- If you have a positive response send a formal letter requesting help.
- If financial support is forthcoming it will be important to establish what the supporter wants in return. It may simply be an acknowledgement or it may include advertising a service or product. Any advertising must be compatible with your cause.
- Be sure to acknowledge financial and other support at any opportunity.

Publicity

Unless your event is aimed at being small and restricted to a clearly defined invited audience it is likely you will want to attract a reasonable sized audience.

TIPS

- You need to send out two to three times as many invitations as the number of participants you want to attend your event.
- Ensure you have a comprehensive invitation list by consulting as widely as possible about whom you should ask. Sometimes it is possible to obtain address lists from interested agencies - there may be privacy constraints if there are personal addresses on these lists but organisation addresses are public. Some city councils publish directories of social services and other agencies. The Yellow Pages in the phone book may be a source of information.
- Design your invitation to include as much information about the venue, speakers and programme as possible without making it cramped and unattractive. It can be useful to look at other flyers to see what information they include and how they are designed.
- While professionally designed and produced flyers and invitations look good they can add to your expenses and it is amazing what a good job can be achieved on your PC if you can identify someone with a few skills to help you.
- Publicise your event in as many ways as possible - through relevant newsletters, professional journals, at other meetings and in newspapers.
- Some events (eg conferences which run more than a day and involve extensive travel for participants) need many months warning. Others only need a few weeks. If you

know well in advance you can do publicity some months ahead but it is wise to follow this up with invitations and other publicity three to six weeks before the event.

Registrations

It will usually be desirable to know how many people, and perhaps who, are planning to attend your event. Taking care of registration can be a time consuming task if numbers are large and it is advisable to arrange for the task to be done by someone who has the time and is reliable.

TIPS

- Registrations are best taken in advance so that you have an idea how many participants you will have at your meeting.
- Where there is no fee being charged it may be sufficient to take registrations by phone.
- Where people are required to pay for attending the event it is advisable to take registrations by mail because processing these is time consuming and cannot be left to happen at the event when most people arrive shortly before the event starts.
- Include in your publicity a date at which registrations close.
- Handling cancellations and requests for refunds can be time-consuming. When people cancel at the very last minute or do not attend and ask for a refund after the date of the meeting it will be too late to reduce numbers for catering. It is therefore wise to set a date after which there will be no refunds (and publicise this with your registration information).
- You may wish to have participants pre-register or check in again at a registration desk at the event to receive a conference pack or other handouts. The advantages of having a registration desk at the event are that you can keep a check on who comes, what numbers you are actually coping with and if registrations are closed turn away late-comers. If your function is not fully subscribed it may be to your advantage to take registrations on the day of the event.
- If you do have a registration desk at your event be aware that you will likely have a lot of people arriving shortly before the event begins. To deal with this you may need an extended registration period (and someone to stay at the desk) both before and after the event begins (for late-comers). If you are expecting large numbers you will need several people to work at the desk in order to process the registrants in time for the beginning of the event

Catering

The amount of catering necessary will vary with the nature and length of your event. For short meetings of half a day or less a coffee/tea break with simple food may be all that is necessary. For all day events and events over a longer time period it will be necessary to arrange lunches and, if your event includes an evening session, possibly an evening meal.

It is possible to ask participants to bring their own lunches or, if your meeting is located near a shopping centre, go out and buy their own lunch. However it is more satisfactory and supportive of participants to provide the meal(s). Good food helps create satisfied customers with positive memories of your event.

There are a range of catering options:

- the venue may provide a catering service - in fact some venues will not allow you to use another caterer
- the meeting may be small enough that you can arrange to do the catering yourselves
- a community group may be willing to cater as a fund-raising exercise.

The setting in which meals take place is important. It needs to be pleasant to eat in, and roomy enough to allow all your participants to obtain their meal reasonably rapidly. Long queues for lunches can lead to participant frustration and even to delay in the start of your next session.

TIPS

- Check whether the caterers you are considering are satisfactory by checking with someone who has used them previously (the caterer may be willing to provide the names of regular clients willing to recommend the service).
- Remember to check that whoever is doing catering is willing to serve the food and refreshments and clean up - if not you will have to arrange for someone to help with these tasks.
- When planning the catering estimate how much you can afford spend per head.
- Check prices with the caterer - there may be a number of menu choices depending on what you can afford
- Let the caterers know ahead of time how many you are expecting - you do not want to waste money over-catering.
- Include some vegetarian dishes in the food you provide.
- You may like to ask registrants to indicate if they have any special dietary requirements
- If your event is a big one involving a number of venues concurrently, or if your meeting room is some distance from the room in which meals are served, you may need to allow extra time for meal breaks. It takes time to get from one venue to another and that participants may not think about returning to their meeting room until it is time for the next session to begin.
- If you are planning a formal conference dinner you will need to indicate this on your registration form and establish ahead of time how many people intend to attend. Sometimes it is easier to make informal arrangements on the day of the event for interested participants to get together at a local restaurant.

Running the meeting

The success of the event will depend very much on it running smoothly. Careful planning and thinking ahead about possible trouble spots is key to the smooth running of the event. It is not possible to anticipate every possible hitch - troublesome and disruptive participants and equipment failures cannot always be predicted but the following suggestions will reduce risk of trouble.

Chairperson

Choosing a skilled and experienced chairperson the single most important factor in the smooth running of your event.

TIPS

- Choose a chairperson because of their established skill in the role of chairing rather than because of a person's status.
- The chairperson's primary role will be to keep the meeting running smoothly to programme and to link sessions.
- While it can be useful for the chair to have knowledge of the matter under discussion it is not as important as having the skill to chair the event with confidence, tact and efficiency.
- Make it very clear to the chairperson what their duties are - sometimes they will include introducing speakers for example but sometimes someone else will be asked to introduce speakers.
- Be sure you provide the person/people introducing the speakers with the biographies of the speakers

Help

Depending on the size of your event you will need to make sure that there are enough helpers around to keep the meeting running smoothly. These may include:

- people to help participants find their way around
- identified people to answer any queries from participants (eg where to find phones, get taxis etc) - have your helpers wear large badges or a particular coloured t/shirt.
- technical experts to deal with equipment failures
- facilitators if the meeting is breaking into small group discussions
- errand runners.

Keeping to time

While it is important to be prepared to be flexible about time if the meeting wants to follow-up on a particular topic in more depth, or discuss a contentious point, it is also important to think ahead about getting through your programme or agenda. It is not always possible to be flexible - you may have speakers arriving at a particular time or a specific agenda to get through. These are matters that the organisers should plan before the event and discuss with the chairperson who will be responsible for how time is managed.

TIPS

- Plan your programme carefully (see above).
- Do not overfill your programme - where possible allow some extra time or empty space for unexpected events.
- Make it very clear to your speakers well ahead of time how long they will have for their presentations,
- Appoint a time-keeper to let the chairperson know five minutes before a session is due to end so that the speaker can be warned.
- It may be appropriate to have the chairperson firmly end a session if it is going well over time - this will depend on the nature of your event and your setting.
- Remember meals take longer than you think.

Dealing with problem participants/ unexpected events

Having a skilled chairperson and enough appropriate helpers are the key to handling these unexpected events. You may be able to identify problem participants ahead eg people with tangential agendas of their own, persistently disruptive people or people who oppose the cause you are promoting. It is wise to have discussion with your chairperson about managing these people if you anticipate any difficulties.

In general it is wise to let participants have their say, to acknowledge different points of view but be firm about limiting disruption and politely asking that your meeting be allowed to proceed.

Workshops/discussion groups

Workshops and discussion groups provide opportunities for participants to become involved in the event in a truly participatory way by sharing their experiences, raising their issues and learning from others. Small groups can be difficult to organise and time-consuming. Small groups can be a frustrating waste of time or an empowering and valuable experience for participants depending on how well they are planned and run.

TIPS

- Think carefully about the purpose of the small group meeting. It may be simply giving participants a chance to discuss what they have heard or it may be something more focused - to come up with recommendations on a topic for example or to increase participants in-depth knowledge on a particular topic. Try to plan your small groups so that they will achieve the outcome you want.
- If you have large number of participants at the event and you must allow time to set them up the small groups and to move people around. You will need to identify someone to be responsible for this task.
- Where there is a choice of groups or workshops inform participants ahead of time (preferably in their conference handout material) so they have thought about their choice before you organise the groups.
- Appoint a facilitator in each group ahead of time - preferably someone with some knowledge of the issue under discussion and with the skills to keep participants on task.

- In some cases the small groups will be run as workshops in which case the facilitators may have been asked to prepare a short presentation and an agenda for the group.
- Be very clear with your facilitator about his/her tasks.
- If you want feedback given to the whole group from the small groups you will need to appoint note takers and presenters.

TOOLS

- Comfortable and handy break-out rooms.
- Butcher paper and pens.
- A clear written set of instructions to facilitators and perhaps participants.

Feedback from small groups

While participants will feel heard and acknowledged if there is feedback from some groups it is not always necessary to do this immediately. Sometimes it is better to take time to collate information from the small groups and send it out by mail later. In some circumstances (workshops for example) the small group experience is an event in itself and does not have to be shared with the whole group. Depending on the time of the day the small groups are held feedback might take place through putting up the points on posters on the walls so participants can look at them in their own time.

TIPS

If you do decide to have feedback to the whole group:

- Allow enough time to complete this process in a manner that respects the views of each group.
- Feedback needs to be chaired skillfully to keep presenters on task and limit discussion on points raised to the time available.
- You may wish to ask presenters to only add points that have not been raised by a previous presenter in order to avoid repetitious feedback.
- You will need to be clear what you are going to do with the feedback eg. Ask for votes on a remit, write to politicians, follow-up an issue or compile a report on the meeting's content and discussion.

Opening and closing your event

Opening

How an event is introduced and opened sets the scene for the whole event. The introduction may start before the event with the nature of the publicity about the event and any material sent out to registrants. At registration you may have conference pack or other handout material to give participants.

The aims of the opening and introduction are to welcome the participants and presenters, to respect the cultural traditions and values of all present and to set the tone of the event.

You may or may not wish to have a formal opening speaker.

TIPS

- If you do have an opening speaker, a dignitary or politician for example, it is wise to brief them ahead of time about your meeting and groups involved (briefing notes).
- If possible choose an opening speaker with a reputation for speaking well and sympathetic to the topic of the event.
- In general it is wise to keep formal openings relatively short - participants may be impatient to get on with the event particularly if they have paid money to hear particular speakers.
- At some point early in the event the chairperson (or a member of the organising group) should cover housekeeping items eg toilets, breaks, phones, messages etc.

Closing

It is sometimes useful to have a closing speaker or someone to sum up the day's considerations. However remember that energy is often low at the end of the day and some participants will almost inevitably be leaving early so keep this part of the day brief.

The summing up may include seeking opinions and perhaps consensus about where to go next with a project or campaign. In any case participants should be thanked for their presence and participation. Speakers must be thanked at the completion of their presentations and at the end of the day. Where they are not members of your organisation, or where they are not receiving a speaking fee it may be appropriate to give them a small gift as a token of appreciation.

TIP

- Ensure that you have helpers available at the end of the day. Cleaning up and getting your venue back in order can be time consuming and arduous.

Involving the media

If the topic of your event is something about which you want to raise public awareness and discussion you may wish to invite media to be present. On the other hand there will be events where it is not appropriate to have media and if reporters come uninvited you may have to ask them to leave. This is unusual. It is useful to have discussed ahead your position on media interest.

TIPS

- If you know of a reporter sympathetic to your cause it is useful to inform him/her that the event is coming up and to send background material.
- While it may be more useful to invite specific media personnel to your meeting you may wish to try to attract reporters generally by sending a media release a few days before your event.
- You may wish to embargo the information in your media release until the day of the event.
- A media release should be brief - less than one page if possible (double spaced), should have a catchy heading, interesting and newsworthy content and identify a spokesperson (with contact details) who can be contacted for further information.
- If you know the media are going to be present you should check with speakers about their willingness to be interviewed or quoted.
- You may wish to identify a spokesperson who is well informed about your topic and confident about speaking to the media.

Follow-up

The work associated with organising and running an event does not end immediately it is over. There are a number of ends to tie up and you may wish to capitalise on the publicity and learning that came out of your meeting to advance the cause or there may be an outcome such as a publication or consultation document to produce.

Evaluation

Evaluations can be useful to:

- guide the planning and running of similar events in the future
- providing evidence of value or need in order to raise funds for a similar function in the future
- provide formal feedback to your agency or funder.

There are problems associated with conducting evaluations that arise from either not asking the right questions or difficulties getting participants to co-operate in responding to evaluations.

Classically an evaluation form is given out at the event and participants are asked to complete the form, return it at the end of the event or post it in later. Many participants are in a hurry to get away and give the form scant attention. In any case they may not have had time to process the sessions and give useful feedback.

Another way of completing an evaluation is to send a form to, or ring a random sample of attendees, a short time after the event and ask them to respond to structured questions. Where anonymity not assured respondents may not feel comfortable in giving honest responses.

In some smaller meetings feedback can be sort verbally during a formal round towards the end of the meeting. Participants may be reluctant to be open about their experience, and may be pressured to respond to questions they have not yet had time to think through.

Where formal evaluation is not required you may get some indication of the success or otherwise of your event from informal feedback.

TIPS

- In planning an evaluation form identify why you want feedback and what it is you want to know.
- Consider whether the questions you plan to ask will give you the information you want and abandon questions that do not give you the information you want.
- Give some thought ahead of time to how you are going to analyse and report on your evaluation and check that your questions will fit within your chosen approach.
- It is helpful to ask very structured and specific questions to which respondents can answer yes or no and perhaps rate responses on a one to five scale.
- Keep the questionnaire short.

Debrief

Organising and running an event, particularly a major one is a demanding and sometimes stressful experience. It can also be a satisfying experience. In any event it is useful for the group organising the event to meet shortly after it is over to share experiences, support each other with any difficulties, affirm good work and share tasks associated with the tidy up and follow-up. It is a time to thank your group for their hard work particularly if you want their support in the future.

It is also valuable to plan further action if this is indicated.

Finances

Unless your function has been fully funded by your agency and an administrative person is attending to financial matters there will be a number of tasks to complete. Accounts will need to be paid, decisions made about dealing with any surplus or deficit and there may be and records to be tidied up for accounting purposes. This will be much easier if one person has been responsible for oversight of the financial aspects of the organisation and has kept good records and all receipts.

What next?

Whether there is any follow-up action after your event will depend on whether it was:

- an end in itself – simply an opportunity to inform and promote discussion
- or whether it has led to opportunities to take further action on the issue under discussion.

Possible follow-up activities include:

- producing a publication from the event (this is dependent on funding but can be done relatively inexpensively or self-fund by charging for the publication)
- writing a report on the outcome of the event to inform a particular group or individual about the meeting's views on a topic (this may include recommendations)
- writing letters or submission to relevant bodies
- a decision to hold another meeting or set of meetings
- a decision to form a working party or some other association.

Be aware that follow-up will not happen automatically. To be effective it must be systematically planned and responsibilities allocated to individuals or groups who are motivated and supported to meet them. It is important that someone formally or informally takes a leadership role in this. Their role is to take the initiative, facilitating communication and inspiring others to work by showing an active interest in what is happening and giving regular support and feedback to those who have taken on tasks.

Finally

Good luck – if you are planning a function in your community in order to advocate for a cause you will be creating a great opportunity to advance the cause. Remember the primary keys to the success of your event are:

- Having a supportive and active organising group willing to share tasks.
- Being clear about your objective.
- Planning carefully.

This guide arose out of the experiences of a small group who organized a Conference on children's rights, *The First Decade*, an event designed to mark the 10th Anniversary of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The individuals involved were members of EPOCH New Zealand, Action for Children in Aotearoa and Children's Agenda. This guide was an unintended but useful outcome of the experience.

About the Organisations

EPOCH New Zealand is a charitable trust set up in 1997 to promote violence-free discipline of children. It works to increase awareness of the dangers and disadvantages of physical punishment and to educate parents about ways to avoid smacking. It also promotes legal reform. EPOCH NZ can be contacted at PO Box 11996, Manners St, Wellington.

Action for Children in Aotearoa presented the non-governmental organisations' (NGO) report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1996, and is consulting about what should happen about the next report due in 2002/2003. For further information please contact Alison Blaiklock at alisonb@iconz.co.nz or write to Action for Children in Aotearoa (interim committee) c/- Pauline Tapp, Faculty of law, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland.

Children's Agenda is a non-party-political movement of people from diverse backgrounds whose aim is a society, which values children. It pursues this aim through child advocacy. Since its establishment in 1991 it has been an independent voice for children through publications, in the media, at conferences before committee hearings and in the offices of decision makers. Children's Agenda can be contacted at PO Box 90723, Auckland.

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This resource was prepared by Beth Wood for ‘The First Decade’ conference organizing group (Action for Children in Aotearoa Interim Committee and Children’s Agenda.

North Shore Community & Social Services Council would like to thank them for making this available to Community Groups. We are sure you will find it helpful.