EVALUATING YOUR
EVENTS

ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

The Main Street Solution Center is a free access portal to resources for communities and organizations working to revitalize and strengthen their local economies. The Solution Center's curated resources are designed to help guide and inspire local leaders and advocates as they navigate the complexities of downtown and neighborhood business district revitalization and economic growth.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This Main Street Solution Center publication was underwritten by Michigan Main Street and Main Street Iowa. Their generous support demonstrates a shared vision and ongoing commitment to freely share knowledge, experience, tools, and best practices to fuel revitalization and economic growth in their own communities, and in locales spanning the nation.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Leigh Young, AICP is Senior Main Street Specialist with Michigan Main Street and a driving force behind the creation of the Main Street Solution Center. Her deep passion for planning, placemaking, community engagement, and sustainable urban development is evident in her work to advance the cause for revitalization and economic development in downtown and neighborhood business districts across Michigan.

Jay Schlinsog, CMSM is the owner of Downtown Professionals Network (DPN), a Franklin, TN-based firm specializing in innovative, market-driven downtown and business district revitalization and economic development solutions. He brings more than thirty years of experience gained while serving as chief executive with chamber and district management organizations, and through his work with communities and organizations across the United States.

Ben Muldrow is a partner at Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a consultancy renowned for its creative approach to economic development, branding, and marketing strategies for small towns and cities across the nation. He brings an innovative mindset and a deep understanding of the unique dynamics of community branding to each engagement, blending traditional community values with modern marketing techniques to help communities and districts unlock their potential.

EVENT EVALUATION

A downtown or district organization, typically focused on community and economic development, should follow a structured approach for creating a post-event summary. This summary is essential for evaluating the event's success, identifying areas for improvement, and documenting the experience for future reference. Here's a guide on what to include in a post-event summary:

Event Overview: Start with a brief description of the event, including its name, date, location, and purpose. Mention the key activities and attractions that were part of the event.

Objectives and Goals: Clearly state the objectives and goals of the event. Were you aiming to increase community engagement, promote local businesses, raise funds, or create awareness about a specific issue? Evaluating the event against its intended goals is crucial for measuring its success.

Attendance and Demographics: Document the number of attendees and any relevant demographic information. This helps in understanding the reach and impact of the event on different segments of the community.

Financial Summary: Provide a detailed financial report. This should include the event's budget, actual expenses, revenue (if any), and net profit or loss. Highlight any major financial sponsors, in-kind gifts or partners

Feedback and Surveys: Summarize the feedback received from participants, attendees, vendors, and sponsors. If you conducted surveys, include key findings and statistics that provide insights into the event's reception and areas for improvement.

Media Coverage and Marketing: Detail the marketing efforts used to promote the event and any media coverage it received. Include metrics from social media engagement and traditional media mentions, if applicable.

Challenges and Successes: Identify any challenges faced during the planning or execution of the event and how they were addressed. Also, highlight the successes and what worked well.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations: Reflect on what was learned from organizing the event. Provide recommendations for future events, including what to repeat and what to change.

Photographs and Documentation: Include photographs or videos that capture key moments of the event. This visual documentation is valuable for future promotions and grants.

Acknowledgments: Recognize the contributions of team members, volunteers, sponsors, and partners. Acknowledgments foster goodwill and strengthen community ties.

Next Steps and Follow-up Actions: Outline any follow-up actions that need to be taken, such as thanking sponsors, paying invoices, or meeting with the organizing team to debrief.

Appendices: Attach any additional documentation such as detailed financial statements, survey forms, media coverage clippings, and event schedules.

DESIGNING THE SCORECARD

Designing an event scorecard for a downtown or district management organization involves creating a structured approach to evaluate the success and impact of an event. The scorecard is a way to represent information gathered from a post-event summary and will serve as a tool for measuring key performance indicators (KPIs) and outlining recommendations or plans for future improvements. Here's a guide for designing a scorecard template to review all your events.

Define Clear Objectives:
Before designing the scorecard, clearly define what the event aimed to achieve. Objectives might include community engagement, economic impact, brand awareness, or specific sales targets.

Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
Select KPIs that align with your event's objectives. Common KPIs include attendance numbers, revenue generated, participant satisfaction, vendor performance, and media coverage. Include both quantitative (e.g., number of attendees) and qualitative (e.g., attendee feedback) measures.

Create a Template:
Design a template that is easy to understand and fill out. It should include sections for each KPI, with space for recording data and observations. Use a mix of charts, graphs, and text boxes to make the data visually appealing and accessible.

Data Collection Methods:
Decide how you will collect data for each KPI. This could include surveys, sales reports, social media analytics, and direct observations. Ensure methods are in place to gather data both during and after the event.

Set Benchmarks or Targets:
For each KPI, establish benchmarks or targets based on past events or industry standards. This helps in evaluating performance against specific goals.

Incorporate Space for Qualitative Feedback:
Besides quantitative data, include sections for qualitative feedback from attendees, vendors, staff, and volunteers. This can provide insights that numbers alone might not reveal.

Analysis Section:
Include a section for analyzing the data. This could involve comparing actual performance against targets, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and suggesting areas for improvement.

Actionable Recommendations:
Based on the analysis, provide actionable recommendations for future events. This could include strategies to improve attendee engagement, cost-saving measures, or marketing tactics among others (this is not an exhaustive list).

Review and Adaptation:
After completing the scorecard, review it with key stakeholders. Be open to adapting the scorecard based on feedback to make it more effective for future events.

Ease of Use and Accessibility:
Ensure the scorecard is user-friendly and accessible to all team members. Consider using digital tools or software that allows for easy data entry, analysis, and sharing.

Remember, the effectiveness of an event scorecard largely depends on its alignment with the specific goals and context of the event. Tailor it to fit the unique needs and objectives of your organization's events.

AFTER THE EVENT

These questions can help an organization evaluate the effectiveness of their event and can guide an organization as they complete their post-event score card. The answers to these questions can help an organization understand how to make improvements to their events in the future.

Attendance: Who and how many attended? Profile the audience and estimate figures using pedestrian counts, parking volume surveys, photo counts, exit surveys, ticket sales, and other quantifiable features.

Attitudes: What did volunteers, attendees and businesses think about the event? Collect this information using formal or informal surveys or evaluations distributed to event participants and organizers. Review the event logistics to determine what worked and what didn't.

Impact: Ask businesses about the economic impact the event had on them. Was there an increase in sales or foot traffic over the same period last year? What was the one thing that they really liked about the event and would like to see continued? What would they like to be changed or added to the event in the future?

Values: What was the media value of the event to your sponsors? Evaluate the cost and benefits to your sponsors based on attendance and the buying power of attendees. Survey attendees to gauge sponsor awareness. Prepare final reports for sponsors that include attendance estimates, attendee demographics, an assessment of media value, and photos showing sponsor visibility at the event.

Challenges: Were any issues or challenges encountered during the event's planning or staging? How were they resolved? Were lessons learned that apply to other events? What should be changed if the event is repeated?

Finances: Include a summary of event revenues and expenses. If the event was intended as a fundraiser or to generate a profit, did it succeed?

Goals: Did the event meet its goals or KPIs? Is the event worth repeating?