



Trail Events 101

Who, What, Where, Why and When

Who is the target audience?

- Friends of the Trails, Cycling Club, Public, All?

What is the purpose of the event?

- To showcase the trail, encourage fundraising, health and wellness, for profit?

Where will the event take place?

- On the trail, only, crossing roadways, on backroads, to county parks?

Why are you hosting an event?

- To raise awareness, as a benefit for our friends group, to get more volunteers, to make money

What is the event?

- Hike, Bike, Run, Walk, Canine, Biking, XX Ski, Snowshoe

When is the event?

- Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter
- Does the date conflict with local events, televised sports, school events, regional festivals, other walk/hike/bike/ski events?
- Do you need specific weather?
- What is the weather historically?
- Consult the Farmer's Almanac

Event Agenda

Develop an event timeline

- This is an ongoing process as more things are added to the event and as things need to be scheduled
- Microsoft Outlook or similar program that combines email, to do list, and an event calendar that can alert you on deadlines

Develop a "Run of Show" for staff and volunteers

- This is of utmost importance to ensure everyone is in the know and if you get sick, someone can step in and take over.
- The Run of Show will outline the entire event from start to finish on the day(s) of the event itself
- Create a Volunteer Road Bible, generally a binder with all contact phone numbers, copies of permits, back up plans, maps and the run of show

Planning Steps

Location

- Where will the event begin and end?
- What permits do you need?
 - Michigan Department of Natural Resources
 - Local Parks and Recreation Department
 - Michigan Department of Transportation
 - County Road Commission
 - Local government



Transportation

- Will people travel long distances to your event?
- Will they need to be transported back to the start?
- Is there ample parking and/or easy access from mass transit?

Venue

- When is your location available?
- When do you need to close/depart your location?

Safety

All events need a safety plan

- Contact Police, Fire and EMS and share your event map and details with them prior to finalizing your route.
 - Ask for any edits or areas where they would see a conflict and update your route plan.
- If your event requires additional public services beyond their daily routine, be willing to pay for additional services.
 - Street closures
 - Crossing assistance
 - Traffic control
- Some city governments require the events to be vetted via the police department before moving forward.
- Some police departments have officers designated to assist with permits.
- During the event, what is your First Aid Plan?
 - Do you have Red Cross Certified Volunteers?
- If a bicycle event, do you have a mobile bike mechanic?
- How will you assist those on the trail that get injured or need assistance?
 - Roving SAGs on road following the trail
 - SAG Sweeps on trail
 - App for communication, we like Zello

Budget

Prepare an event budget

- Downloadable budgets available from Microsoft and Apple online
- Determine your event ticket price/cost based on all overall costs
 - Insurance, Permits and Park fees
 - Refreshments
 - Event Signage & Road Marking Supplies; banners, signs, chalk paint, magnetic car signs
 - Vehicle and Truck rentals
 - Marketing, Printing, Postage, Distribution
 - Event supplies, paper, pens, iPad, Cell, Square Card Reader, PayPal Reader, etc.
 - Porta Johns, Porta Supplies, Water, Ice, Jugs
 - Tents, Tables, Chairs
 - Staff payroll
 - Other expenses



Monitor your spending as you go

- Best to have a second person managing the accounting
- Track spending as you go and compare budget to actual costs, adjust event spending as needed.
- Add 15% to the bottom line for overages and unexpected costs
- Check your budget and update as needed.

Signage & Trail Marking

What is permissible? This is a sticky subject for many jurisdictions. It is key to know what is acceptable and follow the ordinances. Do not ask forgiveness later, do the right thing from the start.

- Signage
- Chalk Paint
- Spray Paint
- Nothing
- Printed maps
- MapMyRide, MapMyRun, etc.

Refreshments & Restrooms

Refreshments

This will depend on the type of event. At the very least, you need to provide access to fresh water and restrooms.

- Prepared snacks, who will distribute?
- Prepared food on site, catered? Cooking on site?
- ServeSafe & Food Safety

Restrooms

- How many on site?
- Are there any along the course?
- Are there any at the end or is this a loop?

Porta Johns

- How to determine the number of Porta Johns
- Where to place Porta Johns
- Permission for Porta Johns
- Schedule for drop off and pick up
- Air freshener
- Hand Sanitizer
- Toilet paper back up



Sponsors

Create a sponsorship proposal

- How much do you want to raise?
- How many sponsor levels will you create?
 - Cash
 - In Kind; for merchandise, giveaways, refreshments, hosting a SAG stop
 - Advertising in kind; local radio station, TV station, newspaper, etc.
- What will each level receive for their sponsorship?
 - Logo on website, print materials, email correspondence, event signage
- How will you measure the success of your event to the sponsor?
- When will you follow up post – event with the ROI (return on investment)
- Who will be the sponsor liaison from your organization?
- Identify potential sponsors
- Contact potential sponsors
- Submit online sponsor requests
- Understand deadlines for sponsors, many have specific timelines and only issue sponsorships once a year.
- Confirm sponsorship, ask if they need an invoice, if yes, send invoice.
- Send thank you upon receipt of sponsor donation.
- Use sponsor testimonials and always acknowledge sponsors
- Follow up post event with thank you and supply and ROI.
- If an annual event, let them know you look forward to partnering next year if relevant.

Other income

- Donations on site
- Silent Auction
 - Who will gather the items, who will set up and tear down, how will you collect and when?
- Charitable Gaming License: Necessary for all Raffles, 50/50, etc.

Entertainment

- Will you have live music/entertainment?
 - What is your budget?
 - Will they bring their own PA System?
 - Will they act as an emcee?
 - Will they offer an additional microphone for an emcee or for you to address the attendees?
 - Will they need access to electricity?
 - Who is the point person on site?
 - What is the amperage of the venue?
 - How much amperage does the DJ/band need?
 - Is live music permitted at the venue?
- Will you have an emcee?
 - How will the attendees hear the emcee?
 - Will you provide the microphone and the PA System so that the attendees can hear the emcee?



If yes to either above, you'll need to determine the following:

- Do you need a permit for live music or need to fill out an application to comply with the local noise ordinance? Is there a time restriction or decibel level restriction?
- Who will provide the entertainment contract?
 - When will you pay the DJ/Band?
 - How will you pay? Check, certified check, cash?
 - What do they require in their rider?
 - Is it reasonable?
 - Force Majeure, Cancellation?
- The type of PA System needed will be based on whether the event is inside or outside.
 - How large is the space?
 - Do you have someone you can trust to manage the pro audio for you?
 - Will you need a permit to use a PA System outside?
 - Who will set up and tear down the PA?
 - Who will run sound?
 - Does the venue have one to provide?
 - What is the cost?
 - Who will set up and tear down?

Marketing & Promotion

- Hire a marketing person or DIY?
- Develop Marketing / Communication Plan
- Press Release
- Load it to PR Log, free distribution and paid distribution
- Design promotional material
- Do you have an identity set for the event? Logo, Letterhead, Poster, Rack Card, Postcard, Biz Card?
- Do you have a website? Is it current?
- Do you have the basics of social media down?
- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest
 - Create a Facebook Event and share liberally
 - Facebook ads, inexpensive way to promote to a specific group/region
- Distribution of flyers/posters/email/brochures to community (don't forget to budget printing and mailing costs)
- Submit event information to Michigan.org, local events calendars and radio station event calendars.

Staff and Volunteers

Don't go it alone, get help from staff and volunteers

Staff, Volunteer Requirements, Managing Volunteers

- Payroll, do you need to budget for overtime pay?
- Comp pay?
- Will staff volunteer time?
- Familiarity with event, is this necessary or do you just need people to be the eyes and ears and cheer on participants?



- Family members participating, they aren't, but would like to help by volunteering
- Volunteer Assignments
- Thanking Volunteers
- Volunteer Manual
- Vetting Volunteers
 - Child participation (best practice is follow National 4H or local school rules for volunteers)
 - Vehicles driven for the event
 - Insurance

Pricing the Event

Regardless of whether you plan to charge for your event or not, it is still a good exercise to do a cost analysis.

- Take all costs and divide by the lowest number of attendees that you think will attend to set the price
- Compare your pricing to similar events
 - Keep in mind some set prices that are offset by the organization and or sponsors
 - If your event is higher priced, what sets your event apart from the rest?
 - If your event is underpriced, are you undercutting another group unnecessarily?
- Ensure you have a cap for the event so that you don't run out of resources and or violate fire code.
- Should you add in the actual sponsor income to reduce the admission?
 - Yes, some events use their sponsor contributions so they can host a free event
 - Some use the sponsor monies to offset the admission fee
 - Some have scholarships for the event on behalf of a specific sponsor
 - Some prefer to use the sponsor money for marketing only.
 - Some sponsors give in kind, which means they do not give money, but product such as refreshments.
- If you do not meet your required number of attendees, what is your plan?
 - Offer to comp admission to shore up the event to special groups/individuals?
 - Find more sponsors?
 - Cancel the event?
 - Go in the red?
 - Who would need to approve this?
 - Some events don't meet their goal; this usually occurs in the first couple of years.
 - Determine if there are extenuating circumstances that harmed the turnout
 - Weather
 - Unexpected playoff games
 - Other conflict
 - Lack of interest
 - How long will you host the event until it breaks even or turns a profit?
 - The rule is 3 years for most event planners, unless it is a general fund event, more sponsor money can be curated or the board determines it is worth the risk.



Event Registration

Participant Registration and Invitations

- Deliver an email announcement to your past participants with link to your online registration form and downloadable paper registration.
- Invite members, government officials, local stakeholders, trail groups, gyms, sporting goods shops, bike shops, etc. via email
- For government officials, most have an appearance request form on their websites.

Registration

- Online, most efficient as it will let the attendees pay by credit or debit card.
- Paper Registration, a few folks still use checks and or distrust online payment portals.
- We prefer www.runsignup.com for event registration, excellent platform and useful for biking, walking, hiking events too.
- Link to your registration on your website
- Link online registration and a link to the downloadable paper registration on Facebook Event Page.
- Determine what is included in the cost of registration (event t-shirt, pre-event dinner, etc.)

Post Event Follow Up

- Thank you letters, hard copies for direct involvement, emails for others.
- Thank you letter and ROI for sponsors, email is good when sending both, otherwise, letter of thanks, email ROI.
- Survey to participants so you can improve the event the next year (we like Survey Monkey)
- Profit and Loss Statement for review by board or Friends Group.
- Set date for next year, start on new timeline

Contact:

Mary McGuire Slevin
Assistant Director
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
www.michigantrails.org

An Affiliate of the Michigan Fitness Foundation
www.michiganfitness.org

Thank you for attending this seminar hosted by West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition. Each year, we host two events, The Michiganander Bicycle Tour (800+ participants over 8 days) and Trail Towns Tour (100+ participants on one day). They are distinctly different but share the same planning techniques, one is just more complicated. Should you have any questions that arise after our meeting tonight, please feel free to email mary@michigantrails.org or call 517-485-6022.