

Project Connect



Nuts and Bolts

Lessons Learned in Asheville, NC

Getting Started

- It is as easy as deciding you want to! Try not to worry about how “big” it seems – you can design the event to meet your capacity.
- Use USICH (usich.gov) as a resource – they have guides, sample forms, and example communities to draw information from.

Step One: Get to know the Facts

Estimate how many people will be at the event, total:

- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- provider representatives
- Volunteers

Evaluate how much money you know you have to make the event happen.

Find a venue

- Will the venue be a place that people experiencing homelessness will want to go?
- Will people be able to access it?
- Will the people who own the venue respect the value of Project Connect and the participants?

Venue Logistics

- How many people can the space accommodate?
- What is the cost? Can you get a price break?
- Any additional costs (technology fee)?
- Are there outlets, phone jacks, internet access?
- Is it accessible for people with physical disabilities?
- Can it accommodate places for private rooms/areas?
- Is there a place where people can eat, if food is going to be served?

Set a Date & Time

- Are certain days better than other days for service providers?
- What about people who are experiencing homelessness?
 - If you want to include families, how does school/daycare affect your plan?
 - What about people who are working?
 - How will people get there? When do busses run?

Create a Planning Group

- Diverse group, representing groups that will participate – you want people with *knowledge, connections, and time*
- There are benefits to both large and small groups
- A few people will need to agree to take the lead – be the point person for planning
- More people may join as Project Connect plans begin to solidify

What will your event focus be?

- Brainstorm – think of the best case scenario, who would meet unmet needs of the community?
- Make a list of providers – just a *few* examples are providers from:

Child and Family Services, Counseling, Disability Services, Eye Care, Employment, Financial Support Services, Health Care, Housing, Outreach, Referral and Support, Substance Abuse, Transportation, and Well Being (like haircuts!).

Develop your Message

- Project connect is a new concept for many people in the community – take the time to decide how you'll help people embrace it.
- Set the stage: this event is about respect, creativity, collaboration, access...what else? You decide!
- Think about the audience – what *message* will you use? What *method* will you use to share the message?
 - People experiencing homelessness
 - Providers
 - Volunteers

TIP: Here is a great video to help inform and excite people:http://ncntv.org/flash_homeless.html

Record, Record, Record

- NAME
- Contact Information
- Service to be provided
- Special needs (such as fax, copier, internet, computer, etc.)
- Other agencies/groups they will need to collaborate w/at the event & how

Contact the Providers

- Who will give you a “yes” – get them on board early
- Ask people who agree to refer you to another service/colleague
- Contact federal/state/county agencies as soon as possible
- If someone says “no” find out why and remove the barrier.
- Note how providers will need to interact at the event to provide services.
- Ask providers to tell clients and friends about project connect!

Volunteers, sweet volunteers!

- The backbone of your event
- Recruit from every source possible
 - Governor's council, newspapers, word of mouth...
- The more diverse the volunteers, the better (create positive interactions)
- Train groups, if possible
- How will you thank the volunteers?

Volunteers need jobs

- Create job descriptions for volunteers (ambassador, serve food, clean-up, etc)
- Make sure volunteers will have everything they need on the day-of the event.
- Ask volunteers to come early so you can provide orientation to the event.

Donations

- Make a list – what will make your event amazing?
 - Food, coffee, snacks for the event
 - Health care supplies
 - Personal Hygiene
 - Tents, Sleeping Bags, Bug Spray
 - Socks, Jackets, Clothes
 - “Give Away” to encourage surveys are filled out

Designing the Space

- Make several trips to the space.
- Create a map.
- How will people move through the day of the event?
- Where are the doorways? The bathrooms? The smoking area? Lights? If it rains – how will you accommodate for wet floors?

Keeping in Touch

- Since this is new – keeping in touch with participants will help them feel involved and start to understand what Project Connect is all about.
- Details help! As the event nears, share information about parking information, when to arrive, what to do when people arrive, what to expect
- Share information with people experiencing homelessness within the week of the event so it is fresh in their minds.

Promote your Event!

- Develop a press release
 - 10-Tips: http://www.press-release-writing.com/10_essential_tips.htm
 - How to write a release:
 - <http://www.publicityinsider.com/release.asp>
 - Sample press release: <http://www.stetson.edu/~rhansen/press.html>
- Invite local, state, and federal officials (have an agenda for the opening ceremony ready)
- Identify one or two individuals who will be attending the event who are willing to speak with media if requested

Down to the Nitty-Gritty

- Create forms:
 - entrance/exit survey for both providers and people experiencing homelessness (include elements of the USICH Outcomes Form!)
 - Confidentiality
 - Release of Information
 - Finalize event map as a hand-out
- Examples on USICH website, or call other communities who have successfully had an event.

The Day OF!

- Set-Up the night before
- Have a plan for how federal, state, and local invitees will be able to participate.
- Have a way to quickly communicate – walkie-talkies, or “room leaders”
- Be ready for anything!