



# Tips to Engage Women and/or Families

When you are planning to target a certain audience for an upcoming effort, it is important to remember some basic universals: atmosphere, accessibility and targeted marketing.

While planning any event you will want to cultivate a welcoming and friendly atmosphere so that people feel welcomed to your community. You will want to organize an event that is accessible by choosing a fitting venue and a manageable timeframe with enough notice to plan for attendance while buffering day-of challenges (traffic, work, family obligations).

Once you have thoughtfully developed your event idea, you will want to effectively market it to your target audience. If you are not aware of what makes an atmosphere friendly, an event accessible or where your target audience learns about events, reach out to your target audience and learn. Marketing firms regularly reach out to learn about their target audience's interests and availability before starting a new campaign. You will want to consider doing something similar on a smaller scale to increase your efficiency and effectiveness.

Now that we have some of the basics of event development, let's look at some of the feedback that we have received from women and families.

## Women Specific Events

It is important to recognize that there are a few event aspects that resonate more closely with women. Keep these in mind when developing your upcoming event for people who identify as female:

- **Create a community:** This holds true for most individuals but especially true for women. Women want to be a part of a community. They want to feel welcomed, recognized and connected at events. Consider this when planning your event. You may want to delegate the role of registration volunteer(s) and/or greeter(s) to specific individuals who embody a warm welcome.
- **Make the event fun:** Consider a theme, contest or other activity to infuse some fun into your event. Keep in mind that what you might think is fun may not appeal to people who identify as female in your community. Consider reaching out and inviting women to be a part of the planning process if they are not already.
- **Recruit female leaders:** Many women are drawn to female led events. Consider creating space for female leaders to take the lead on events. They may request support to facilitate their ideas. They may not. Give them the space to do either.
- **Reach outside of your membership:** Events for people who identify as female are a great way to raise the profile of your efforts in your chapter geography. Take this as an opportunity to connect to new people in new ways. Follow the 60/40 rule and invest 40% of your communication energy to your current members and 60% of your energy to the public.
- **Offer education:** Many of the women specific events that I have helped facilitate include an end-of-event evaluation. In those evaluations, participants share how appreciative they are for educational opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment. They also give high accolades for instructors that are female.
- **Snacks! Snacks! SNACKS!** Food is an important part of a successful event, especially if dinnertime will be missed. Not only is food important during evening events but it is a critical piece to building community. Consider light appetizers or no-host options.
- **Consider providing childcare:** While not all people who identify as female have families, childcare can be a major challenge to attend events. Consider your event timing and your ability to offer some form of childcare. This may look differently for different events—on-site childcare, messaging welcoming children to events with children's activities available, etc.

## Family Friendly Events

If you would like families to participate in your events, you will need to plan for families and communicate through your marketing how your events are family friendly.

- **Choose event wisely**—There are certain activities and venues that are not kid-friendly. There are some portions of events that are. Typically, shorter events (2 hours) or events that allow one to come and go are ideal. Identify in the event description what ages this event is typically appropriate for. Be aware of the family friendly details of your event and effectively communicate the details in your marketing materials.
- **Weather proof**—If your event is outdoors and there is a likely chance of inclement weather, consider having some back-up gear and offer a space for families and individuals to get out of the weather. You may pair this with an educational activity or refreshments.
- **Educationally engaging activities**--Preparing the family for an outing can be a daunting task. Most parents want to know that their child will benefit from your event before expending the energy to attend it. Consider a fun and safe, all ages activity during a conservation event (interpretive “hike”, nature scavenger hunt, “mud mustaches” contest, a craft, etc).
- **Snacks**—Provide kid friendly snacks and breaks. This is important for participants of all ages but is especially true for young attendees.
- **Understand that sometimes plans change**—Maybe families need to leave early or due to a last-minute change, can't attend. Keep this understanding in mind. If it becomes a pattern for a specific family, consider checking-in with them about their wellbeing. This shows your concern and that you've noticed the situation. They may have feedback to share.
- **Grand Finale**—plan something really fun as a last memory of the event. Maybe everyone gets in a circle and you clap up a thunderstorm, maybe you plan a game of Salmon Rochambeau, take a family photo at their favorite event spot which you will post on social media with their permission. Let the family leave the event with a positive impression to increase the likelihood of a return.

These suggestions are not all inclusive but they will give you some good considerations as you move forward in your event planning.