



Champions For Children

Event Planning Guide

Thank you for planning an event to benefit the AdvoCare Foundation! Your help to is so important to achieving the mission of ending childhood obesity. This guide will walk you through the process of organizing an event benefitting the AdvoCare Foundation, covering logistics like choosing a date, location, and t-shirts, along with volunteer management, budgeting, and promotion.

If you're ready to start planning your event, let's get started!

Start with the Big Questions

You need to answer five main questions in order to plan a successful event. Who, what, when, where, and why. They help you structure your event.

We'll go through these important questions to lay out your event and start planning. If you already have one of these areas defined, you can start with that and move on to other points in whatever order makes sense for you.

WHAT? What kind of event are you putting on?

We strongly recommend organizing an event that compliments the mission of the AdvoCare Foundation: a run/walk OR a fitness event. You have lots of options, including a short fun run, kettlebell challenge, Zumba, workout, a trail run or hike or the classic 5K distance. Knowing what kind of event you want to put on will help you establish the rest of the details.

Here are a few questions to help you decide what kind of event is right for you and your community:

- How active/physically fit is your community?
- How many races and other fitness events take place where you are?
- What size event are you comfortable taking on? (Look to past events and potential volunteers.)
- How much space can you find for this event?
- Do you want this to be competitive or more fun?

It's also good to keep in mind that you can include more than one physical event. For example, if you're hosting a 5K, you can also add a one-mile fun run for kids. Just don't overextend yourself! It's better to do one event really well than commit to too much. You can also add workshops, entertainment, and other activities to draw bigger crowds and more supporters.

WHY? Why are you putting on this event?

There are actually two sides to the question. The first part is asking what you want to achieve with this event. Fundraising is a priority, but are there other objectives for your event, such as community awareness or engaging new audiences?



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Whenever you have to make tough decisions or feel like the event is getting off track, refer to the goals of the event to guide your decisions.

The other side of the why question is why it is important to help address childhood obesity and support the AdvoCare Foundation. This helps participants connect the event to a positive social outcome. Emphasizing the impact this event will have can help keep participants focused and motivated.

WHO? Who will be supporting and participating?

An event is only as good as the people involved. And it's not just about the participants.

You should also consider your pool of volunteers. Events require a lot of support. You can estimate how many volunteers you will need based on the number of participants and the different amenities and activities at your run/walk. Ultimately, though, it's better to have too many volunteers than too few. In addition to local AdvoCare distributors, you can also reach out to schools, churches, and businesses to recruit more volunteers.

Finally, who is going to be ready to participate on the big day? Start by looking at your audience of supporters, friends and family and how many of them are likely to get involved. You should also look at other local events and reach out to fitness groups. People who have run in other races or participated in a fitness event are great prospects for your event. Get in touch with local fitness groups, gyms, high school teams and college teams, too. Even if they don't all participate, they can help spread the word.

WHEN? When will your run/walk or fitness event take place?

The sooner you set the date, the better. People can't mark their calendar and reserve the date if your 5K is "sometime in May." Unfortunately, setting a date goes hand in hand with finding a location (which we'll get into next).

To start, look at your community's event calendars to see which dates are out of the question. You don't want to compete with another race or parade that falls around the same time.

Finally, scout potential spaces such as parks, trails, gyms or schools and find out when they are available. Ideally, you'll be able to find a date that works for you, doesn't overlap with another event, and is also available at your location.

WHERE? Where will your run/walk or fitness event start and finish?

You have to start somewhere. You have to end somewhere too. When and where are closely intertwined so you should work on both issues at the same time.

Consider these factors:

- Where have other community events like this been held?
- Which locations are convenient for local residential neighborhoods?
- Are these locations close to local businesses and potential sponsors?



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- Will you have to pay to use this location? How much?
- Will potential locations have enough space for an event or run?
- How many people do you expect to attend the event?
- Does the location have adequate parking space for your event?

You will have to juggle several priorities when making this decision. On the one hand you want to keep cost and labor down, so you have to think about travel time, accessibility, and venue costs. But you also want a place that will work for your event and any educational or entertainment features that you are planning. Always keep in mind that a run/walk course can be multiple laps of a single path or an out and back with a turnaround point.

Fundraising, Budgeting, and Registration

One of the primary aims of a fundraising event is to raise money for the cause and keep costs down. The following will cover how to prepare a budget for your event to help you make financial decisions and keep you on track as the big day approaches.

Fundraising

Anyone who participates in run/walks, races or fitness events knows that there is typically a registration fee. Often, the fee will be smallest for those who register beforehand and increase the week or day of the event. This is probably the simplest and most straightforward fundraising model for an event.

If you choose to stick with a simple ticket or registration fee, it can be easier to project your expected revenue because you simply multiply the number of entrants by the fee they paid.

SPONSORSHIPS

Registration fees aren't the only possible revenue sources for an event. Sponsorships are a big part of these events and may come in the form of cash gifts or in-kind donations. Businesses are usually acknowledged in event materials, on event T-shirts, and publicly thanked at the event, so recruiting sponsors early on will make it easier to finalize the design of banners and T-shirts.

Drafting a Budget

Just as it's important to plan for the event's revenue, event organizers must also budget for an event's expenses. Run/walk or fitness events typically have higher overhead than a traditional fundraising campaign, due to the costs of equipment, first aid, insurance, T-shirts, and other amenities. Creating a budget beforehand will help you make many smaller decisions and inform your fundraising goals as well.

Begin by making a list of all the projected expenses of the event. Your list may look something like this.

RUN/WALK EXPENSES

- Insurance
- Permits



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- Marketing/Promotion
- Portable Toilets
- Timing Equipment Rental
- Sound System Rental
- Table and Chairs
- T-shirts
- Race Numbers
- First Aid
- Post-Event Food
- Water coolers and cups
- Miscellaneous Supplies

You can then look into pricing specific to your location and number of participants. You may be starting out with a specific amount allocated for the event. In that case, it may be necessary to use your budget to determine how large your event will be.

Event and Registration Pages

Once you've decided on the main elements of your event, you can create a way for registrants to get more information about the event and register. This is a page people will look to for information on the time, location, and details of the event, and where they will register and begin the fundraising process.

From your event page, a viewer should be able to-

- Register
- Donate
- Learn more about the event and AdvoCare Foundation

Once someone clicks on the button to register or buy a ticket, they should be taken immediately to the checkout page. Here you will collect names, contact information, and registration fee payment. You can also add custom questions, such as asking what size T-shirt the person wants.

Logistics and Details

There are lots of things to consider when planning your event and once you have answered some of the big questions, you can dive into more details. It's important to know who else will be involved with this event and get in contact with them early. Establishing sponsors and partners from the beginning will make the planning process simpler. You will also have to settle on what amenities you will provide at your event. And of course, with any event there are safety and security concerns to consider and plan for.

Who Are You Working With?

PARTNERS



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It's not unusual for groups to collaborate on events. It allows them to share the responsibility. As with any organizational partnership, make sure both sides have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. For example – if a gym is a partner and will be providing water coolers.

Partners are great to help share and encourage attendance. You can even offer space for partners to set up tables and share their message.

SPONSORS

With sound and timing equipment, amenities, and administration costs, an event can quickly build up a lot of expenses. One way to offset these costs is to recruit sponsors from your local community.

Sponsors can contribute cash or in-kind contributions. For example, you could ask a local café to donate breakfast food for participants to enjoy when they finish. Grocery stores may be willing to provide bottled water or other foodstuffs.

Of course, sponsors will want some kind of acknowledgment in return, whether it's their logo on the event T-shirt or a banner at the starting line. Many organizations create a tier system for sponsorship, in which different donation amounts offer different levels of recognition. For example, top sponsors might have their logo prominently displayed on the event T-shirt. This is one reason why you should start looking for sponsors as soon as possible.

VOLUNTEERS

Your first stop when recruiting will be your existing contact and people closest to you. Contact people who have donated time to you in the past and reach out personally if you can. If you're counting on a long-time volunteer to run the PA system, take the time to call and tell them how important they are.

Schools and churches are great outlets for recruiting volunteers. Many students are required by their school to volunteer for a certain number of hours each year and community service is an important value to many faiths. Just be sure to have a member of staff or experienced volunteer leading those who are new to your organization.

Many companies and offices also volunteer at community events, so contact local employers to see if they want to get involved. A sponsor might also have employees who would like to help.

Supplies and Amenities

As events have grown in scale and popularity, so too have the amenities that are offered. Keeping in mind the goal of raising funds, you must decide what they will offer participants at the event.

The most important amenity (which is expected at any event) is water stations. To keep participants hydrated on a run, you should have a water station every mile of your course and at the finish line.

Whether or not you should provide food to participants is a more complex question. Most races offer some kind of recovery food at the end of the race or workout event, such as bananas or protein bars. Ideally, this is another area where you can recruit donations and sponsors.



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Other than food and water, T-shirts are the most common event amenity. The usual design is to put the organization or event logo on the front and the sponsorship logos on the back. Be aware of your deadline for the T-shirt design when soliciting donations and sponsorships.

With registration software, you can easily get a count of how many T-shirts you will need in each size. There will probably be day-of registrants, volunteers, or surprises, so err on the side of having some extra T-shirts. When it comes to unknown attendees, bigger sizes are better. A too-big shirt won't fit well, but a too-small shirt won't fit at all.

Safety and Administration

PERMITS

There are important legal and safety concerns that are inherent to any event. Your first administrative concern is getting permission to hold your event. If you're using any public streets or places you will need approval from your city and police department. Contact your city government to find your local application process.

COURSE EQUIPMENT

You will most likely need some equipment to mark and separate your course from traffic or other dangers. You will also need portable toilets (approximately one for every 50 attendees). You can rent this equipment from local vendors or speak to your police department about barriers.

WAIVERS

Every participant needs to sign a liability waiver before the event takes place. That way, the liability waiver is ready from the very beginning. Always have spare copies of the waiver at the event. When people register or check-in, if they did not complete the online waiver agreement, make sure that they sign a paper copy. Just in case, make sure every waiver is collected and saved by the registration volunteers.

INSURANCE

Wait, didn't they sign waivers?

Yes, but you still run the risk of lawsuits and legal action. There are many insurance companies that offer one-time event policies for run/walks. Consult your own legal or insurance expert to determine what type of policy is necessary in your case.

FIRST AID

Any athletic event has the potential for injury and you must be prepared to respond to both minor issues and emergencies. The finish line is a good place to put your primary first aid station. Not only will most participants end up there anyway, it will also be next to your finish line banner or clock, which is easy to find.

Your first aid station should be stocked with bandages, ice, and antiseptic. If possible, you should recruit medical professionals to staff the station. Look into your state's malpractice laws to ensure you're in compliance.



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Sadly, you must be prepared for a true emergency as well. You should hire an ambulance to stand by. If someone has a heart attack or major injury, the few minutes it takes to call 911 can be decisive. If your event is large, you may need more than one ambulance on hand. It will probably add expense to your budget, but it will always be worth it.

Promotion and Fundraising

Once you know what your event is going to look like, you need to spread the word. The first part of marketing and promoting your event is to get the word out to your audience of supporters. From there you can appeal to your entire local community.

Reaching Your Audience

The most obvious candidates for participants and fundraisers at your event are people you know. Plan a multi-pronged approach to encourage supporters to register and donate.

You can begin with an email addressed specifically to existing supporters to announce the event. Again, the more notice you can give, the better. If you want to get the ball rolling on registrations, you can even offer a discount code to people who have donated in the past or register by an early deadline.

Another important part of promoting your event to your audience is to make it visible on social media. This can start with simply announcing the date or details of the event, revealing the event logo, and sharing the amenities or activities you will have that day.

Once you have some supporters registered for the event, ask if you can feature them in a Facebook or Twitter post. It doesn't have to be fancy, but introducing someone who has already committed to participate provides a little social proof and encourages others to join in.

As race day approaches, you should update your social media profiles and pictures to advertise the event. Anyone who visits your pages should be able to tell you have an event coming up.

Promoting to the Public

Your website and social media will be a resource for people new to your organization, but to reach out to more potential participants, you must go beyond your usual communication outlets.

Local publications and media are a great place to start. You can start by creating a press release to offer the most important details (date, location, cause) and distributing it to all local media, but you will probably fare better if you reach out to specific outlets.

Get in touch with these platforms to reach your community at large:

- Local newspapers and weekly papers
- Church newsletters
- Running/athletic magazines and websites
- Schools and athletic leagues



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And don't forget to contact gyms, fitness groups or adult running groups as well. Many cities have groups that meet and train regularly.

Keep an eye on run/walk events preceding your own, as well. Someone participating in an event in March may be looking for their next 5K in April or May. Why not yours?

The Big Day!

It is reassuring to get on top of planning and promoting your event, but there will always be plenty to do the week and day of your event. You can start the week well-prepared by planning how you will use your volunteers to accomplish tasks that can't be done ahead of time.

A good first step is to create a checklist of all the areas that will need to be set up and all the stations you will need people to be working at during the event.

How to Manage Staff and Volunteers

Managing the people working at your event can be daunting, especially if many of them are new to events. It helps to think of how any large operation functions.

Consider dividing tasks at your event into different areas. Some of the areas you will need people to help with are-

- Registration and check-in
- Water stations and food
- First aid
- Marking the course
- Parking
- Entertainment and other activities

By splitting your staff and volunteers into these different areas, you are making sure everyone knows what they are responsible for and where they should be. Every group, however, should have a leader, someone you have worked with and who you can trust to make decisions. Ideally, these are committed volunteers and supporters.

When you schedule and check in your volunteers, tell them who their team leader is so they can ask for direction if they need it. The team leader can then explain to their volunteers what each individual will be doing that day.

Every volunteer should know who their supervisor is and supervisors can stay in touch with cell phones or walkie-talkies. It's always smart to save and print a contact list ahead of time.

Signs, Directions, and Parking

One group of volunteers should post signs and direct participants to the appropriate parking area.



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You should know the exact location and parking situation ahead of time, so that you can include the information on your website and fundraising pages. Even then, walk yourself through the experience of someone trying to find your event.

You can create a map like this one to plan where each station will be and how many people will be staffing them.

If there is restricted parking near your run/walk, make that clear to attendees and volunteers. Registration, first aid, and information booths should all be clearly marked as well.

Registration and Check-In

With modern event and fundraising software, it's easier than ever to register participants ahead of time. With a run/walk, however, even those who sign up ahead of time will need to check in to receive their race number (bib) and timing chip (if you're using them). This is why your check-in table should be set up and staffed two hours before the starting gun.

When pre-registered participants arrive, they will give their name to the volunteers at the check-in table, who will confirm that they have registered and paid. The volunteer or staff member then issues and records which number and timing chip the participant receives. If possible, you can use laptops or tablets to check in runners through a shared document. This ensures that everyone has access to the most up-to-date registration information. But you should absolutely have printed copies of the check-in list in case you run into any technical issues.

You will probably have some people who show up planning to register that day. Depending on the size of your event, you may want to designate a second table where those people can sign up. This process will take a little longer because you will have to get name and contact information, collect payment, and have the participant sign a waiver. One way run/walk events encourage people to register ahead of time is by increasing the registration fee on the day of the event. This is a standard practice, but be sure to note the day-of fee on the event page.

If participants are receiving a T-shirt or any other gift, it is best to include that in the registration process, or simply put this station nearby.

Crossing the Finish Line and Following Up

When the last participant has crossed the finish line and the crowd has gone home, you can finally breathe a sigh of relief. Pat yourself on the back for getting this far, but like any other campaign, your event isn't truly over until you reengage with supporters and learn from your results.

First things first, you will need to do some cleaning up. Be sure that your volunteer schedule includes people to help pack up and collect trash. Any rented equipment (portable toilets, sound systems, road barriers) should be returned promptly to avoid extra fees.

Following Up

Once the clean-up is over, your next priority is thanking and engaging with participants. Prepare follow up emails and surveys for donors, fundraisers, and other participants. Any new contacts from the event are potential future contributors, so don't leave them hanging.



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In your follow-up message, include

- A sincere thank-you
- Some results or highlights from the event
- A link to compelling content, such as an impact story or video

Your staff and volunteers deserve a big “thank you” as well. If numbers allow, a handwritten card to volunteers can add the personal touch that keeps someone involved for years to come.

Like anyone else who gives to your nonprofit, sponsors and partners should also be thanked for their help. It’s important to maintain strong ties to local organizations and businesses, and a little recognition now could pay off the next time you hold an event. Again, personal messages make the best thank-yous.

Running the Numbers

Now it’s time to see the results of all your hard work. The most obvious number that everyone will be curious about is how much you raised, but because of the costs involved with any event we need to look at that information in relation to other data.

Begin by calculating the total revenue of the event. This is the amount of money collected through registration fees and additional donations.

As an example – let’s say your event raised \$5,000 from registration fees and sponsors. Here’s a simplified example of an event’s expenses* and whether they were covered by any in-kind donations.

SUPPLIES & SERVICES COST DONATED? NET EXPENSE

T-Shirts (50)	\$200.00	-	\$200.00
Bottled Water	-	<input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind by grocery store	-
Fruit	-	<input type="checkbox"/> In-Kind by community market	-
Other Breakfast Foods			\$50.00
Portable Toilets (2)	\$100.00	-	\$100.00
Course Signs & Start/Finish Banner	\$200.00	-	\$200.00
First Aid Kit & Supplies	\$50.00	-	\$50.00
Ambulance Standing by	-	<input type="checkbox"/> Stand by free	-
Liability Insurance	\$100.00	-	\$100.00
Awards (Race winners & top fundraiser)	\$75.00	-	\$30.00
Time Clock (Manual - no timing chips)	-	<input type="checkbox"/> Borrowed from High School	-
Race Numbers (200)	\$25.00	-	\$25.00



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Misc Supplies (Water cups, safety pins, etc.)	\$50.00	-	\$50.00
Marketing and Promotion	\$40.00	-	\$40.00
PA System Rental	\$150.00	-	\$150.00
TOTAL EXPENSES \$855			

While this is a fictional event, it illustrates how to account for event expenses. When we bring it all together it looks like this:

TOTAL REVENUE – (TOTAL EXPENSES \$5000 - \$855) = **\$4,145**

Update on the Event's Impact

While your thank-you message should go out a day or two after the event, you should also reengage with participants, volunteers, and sponsors after you've had time to calculate your revenue and what kind of impact it will have. Also – please send your final results to the AdvoCare Foundation so we can share your success!

Summary

We know there is a lot of detail, time and hard work that goes into planning an event. Your commitment to helping raise funds for the AdvoCare Foundation really makes a huge difference to being able to serve more children in more cities be healthier. Thank you for being a Champion for Children!