

Town Halls

Fast Facts:

- Town Halls are effective for engaging the community and promoting the coalition.
- Town Halls can cover a number of topics and themes.

What is a Town Hall?

A town hall is a meeting used for informing the public of emerging or ongoing issues, gauging a community's views of a topic, and identifying solutions to a problem (How to Organize a Town Hall Meeting: A Planning Guide).



Why are Town Halls Important?

Coalitions are experiencing many barriers to addressing community substance abuse including: Lack of community awareness of substance abuse, lack of manpower and community mobilization around substance abuse issues, and challenges in implementing strategies to reduce health disparities.

Town Halls are meetings organized to raise public awareness of an issue, gain the perspective of various community members, identify solutions, and mobilize communities to take action (SAMHSA, 2012).

What are the elements of a successful Town Hall?

1. **Local data:** Successful town halls take into consideration the unique characteristics and issues of a specific local community, such as: demographics, culture, political environment, history of substance use problems, opportunities for treatment and recovery support, and historical barriers to obtaining help.
2. **Clear purpose:** Some town halls are designed to inform the community of particular issue, others are designed to call a community to action regarding a particular issue. Successful town halls have a clear objective.
3. **Managed logistics:** Effective town halls are held at locations accessible to the target population, have a thoughtfully chosen panelists and a moderator, are well-staffed, and have informational packets prepared for attendees.
4. **Promotion:** Successful town halls are advertised in advance via newspapers, radio stations, flyers, posters, and local TV stations. Enlist related organizations to promote the event, and convince local TV and radio stations to cover the event.
5. **Use of data:** After a town hall, successful coalitions conduct a debrief with panelists and key stakeholders, develop an action plan, and contact attendees to build their manpower.

How to Get Started Planning A Town Hall

1. Select a **date**
2. Determine **type/size** of event
3. Identify **target participant population**
4. Develop meeting **goals and agenda**
5. Manage **logistics** (location, refreshments, etc.)
6. **Promote** the event

(How to Organize a Town Hall Meeting: A Planning Guide)

Sample Town Hall Agenda:

- Introduction and greeting
- Panel presentation/discussion
- Presentation
- Roundtable discussion
- Community forum
- Q & A

Sample Town Hall Meeting Goals:

1. Educate the community about the prevalence, effects and consequences of underage drinking.
2. Educate the community about evidence-based strategies to prevent underage drinking.
3. Engage the community in strategic planning.
4. Share assessment data related to local use rates, consequences and contributing factors.

Additional Resources on Town Halls:

- CADCA's "How To Organize a Town Hall" Guide:
https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/file_download/inline/bbb1ae0e-f28b-41de-9266-a97658db4b55
- Recovery Advocacy Toolkit's "How to Organize a Town Hall: A Planning Guide":
<https://fullcoll.instructure.com/files/44543/download?download>

References:

https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/file_download/inline/bbb1ae0e-f28b-41de-9266-a97658db4b55

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4838/SMA14-4838.pdf>

https://www.google.com/search?q=town+hall&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj28oX09eXaAhXHlKKhf-jBWcQ_AUIDCgD&biw=1366&bih=662#imgrc=qOAmTzx0EYeiXM: