So you are going to plan a big event, but you don't know where to start. This section is designed to take you through the basics of planning and preparing for a successful event. A program can be planned in five simple steps:

Step 1: Identify Needs
- Who is your audience? What does the audience want to see or experience with this kind of program?
- What are the audience needs?
  - What methods of assessment (e.g. word of mouth, surveys, or a suggestion box) will you use to determine this?
- How big do you want this program to be?
- Does the type of event you are planning limit the audience size? If so, how will you determine who can attend?

Step 2: Develop Program Goals and Objectives
- What program outcomes (goals) are you hoping for?
- What specific steps do you need to complete to accomplish these outcomes?
- What is the purpose of your event/program/project?
  - How does the answer to that question impact when, where, and how you would like it to take place?
- Define specifically what you want the participants to learn or experience from your event/program/project. This will be the goal of your program or event.

Step 3: Organize Your Plans
- What do you specifically need to accomplish your objectives?
- When do you want to hold the event?
- Determine a timeline working in reverse: start at the day of the event and fill in publicity deadlines, facility agreements, etc. This can help you see if you are being realistic in your objectives.
- Consider whether or not you have enough time to make all the necessary arrangements and whether your members can complete all of the tasks.
- It is also recommended that you meet with university staff (Student Involvement, Union Programming, or Reservations and Event Planning Services) to get feedback on your plans.

The following are areas you will want to focus on while organizing plans:

Scheduling Facilities
Scheduling facilities is vital to the success of your program. Facilities can determine audience size, date, and time. Facilities can also set the mood for formal, informal, or auditorium style programs.

Establishing Budgets
Establishing a budget is necessary because it helps shape your program. Budgets help create guidelines for spending, admission fees, and the amount of fundraising or resource-finding work you will need to accomplish. Can you apply for a grant for your event? Do you need to do fundraising to support the event?

Contracts
Contracts are often required for facilities, catering, or entertainers. Read them carefully stud have a staff member review the contract. If you have questions, do not be afraid to ask.

Marketing
Marketing is vital to the success of your program. If you plan a good program but nobody knows about it, you are setting yourself up for disappointment. Marketing can include posters, flyers, banners, direct mailings, public service announcements, Facebook events, and even interactive methods.

Determine Details
Determine the program's details. Make a list of what needs to be done before, during, and after the event. These might include equipment needs, registration tables, special power hookups, etc. Even the smallest details should be written down on a checklist.

Step 4: Implement Plans
- Once you have thoroughly prepared yourself for the event, determine who will implement it. In the beginning of the process, make clear expectations as to whom will perform what tasks and fulfill which roles.
- Assign tasks and roles appropriately.
- Give people enough time for the responsibilities and make sure that they are within their abilities. People support what they help to create, so involve as many people as is meaningfully possible.

Step 5: Evaluate the Event
The evaluation process is threefold:
- Audience feedback
- Presenter/entertainer's experience
- Planner's thoughts and recommendations

Each of these groups should be asked whether they felt the program's goals and objectives were accomplished. What went well? What could have gone better? There are several different methods of obtaining this information, but the most often used method is a written evaluation distributed following the program. Evaluations should be kept on historical file with the organization so future programmers may learn from past experiences.

Additional Tips and Suggestions
Here are some other tips to consider when planning an event:
- In an ideal program, everything runs so smoothly that the participants may see little evidence of pre-planning or behind-the-scenes work.
- Don't compromise on details.
- Don't assume anything or allow situations to continue to a point where you are uncertain or nervous.
- Meet all problems head-on.
- Things rarely go as planned, but if you are prepared and avoid panicking, any problem can be solved.
- Make your event accessible to all. What do you need to do to insure that all students, faculty, staff, and community members have the opportunity to participate?

References
University of Michigan Center for Campus Involvement. Event planning. Retrieved from <http://campusinvolvement.umich.edu/content/event-planning>.

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