



Promoting Your Town Hall Meeting

The most difficult part of hosting a town hall meeting is getting people to attend. Here are some ideas that have been tried successfully in Washington State. The more you do, the better the turnout.

Once you have determined a catchy, compelling name for your town hall meeting and have the date, time, and location (using this flyer [example](#) or one of your own), try these ideas:

Get the Word Out

- Advertise on every reader board and banner.
- Invite every faith leader to hand out your flyer, put your flyer in the church bulletin, and promote in ways that fit the organization.
- Place flyer in grocery store bags or on store counters.
- Put flyers at your local library, gym, doctors' offices, dental offices, health dept.
- Place table tents in restaurants, coffee shops.
- Stuff small flyers in mail boxes of school personnel, court house employees, hospital employees, and other large employers.
- Send news releases to a full media list, including local shopper guides, free weeklies, newsletters, church bulletins, school newsletters.
- Ask your partner organizations to mobilize their memberships.
- Remind your key constituencies several times how much you want their involvement.

Note: Consider using your time with the above people as an opportunity to build another partnership/advocate for the cause. Don't **just** ask to post the flyer, invite store owners to contribute coffee or cookies, ask for an in-kind donation of printing, etc. Remember to go back later and thank the people who participated.

Involve VIPS

- Involve well-known and respected local citizens to lend their name to your event.
- Invite sponsors (school district, city, county, and businesses) to be listed on your materials and to promote the event themselves.
- Invite your local legislators to speak or welcome people to the event.
- Invite a local personality (mayor, school superintendent, school board member, or radio announcer) to kick off the event.
- Ask the city council and county commissioners to make a proclamation (sample on StartTalkingNow.org).

Involve Youth

- Train youth to speak about the event.
- Schedule them for a radio interview, presentations at civic groups, city council. (Hearing about underage drinking prevention from young people is the most compelling)
- Sponsor a poster contest and have the posters on display around town.
- Sponsor a contest for youth who get the most adults to attend.
- Have youth ask businesses to provide prizes such as movie tickets, coupons for music downloads, other items that young people would like.
- Encourage high school teachers to offer extra credit to students if they attend and double credit if they bring their parents.
- Ask the school district to send invitations home with all grade school students.
- Involve students so parents will come.

Capitalize on Cyberspace

- Create a THM section on your organization's website and on partner websites.
- Ask the mayor and superintendent of schools to place an invitation on their websites.
- Send email alerts and announcements to listservs. Encourage others on your committee and coalition to do the same.
- Use social networking sites such as www.facebook.com .

