

Your Guide to Planning and Hosting School-Based Professional Development





This guide is about professional development and the people who engage in that activity. Specifically, it is a tool to guide teachers in the planning and hosting of professional development at the school level. Good planning will ensure a more valuable experience for everyone involved.

The authors of the guide were a group of teachers/administrators who are part of the Nova Central District's Leadership at Work Program: Kathy Andrews, Greg Drover, Elizabeth Green and Tony Norman. They were supported in this project by Beverley Park, Senior Professional Development Officer at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

The authors acknowledge the support of the Nova Central School District for this project.

We hope you will find it to be a time saver for busy teachers who take on a role on a Professional Development Planning Team.

If you have comments or suggestions for future edits, please contact:

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Preamble

The Value of Professional Development

Professional development and ongoing learning by teachers and others in the school community is essential to the growth of any school. Teachers need to keep abreast of educational research and trends and to avail of new programs and services in order to best serve the needs of our students.

While there are many forms of professional development, one of the very best is that which occurs when colleagues from one school get together to spend some focused time on a topic which they have deemed to be important.

This guide is intended to assist you in planning and hosting such a professional development session for your school.

Why This? Why Now?

While it may appear on the surface a simple thing to decide a date and book a speaker, it is no simple thing to organize a professional development event that is meaningful and relevant and which provides an optimal professional learning experience for participants. For this to happen there are a number of decisions which must be made and numerous details which need attention. Schools are extremely busy places, filled with busy people! This guide will hopefully provide a template for a school-based team to take the necessary steps at three phases of the PD event – **before**, **during** and **after** – to ensure that your experience is all that it should be.

A Word About Terminology and Context

While we realize that different people may take on the responsibility for organizing and planning your PD event, we will refer to the “PD Planning Team” throughout the guide. The next section will comment on the critical role of that team.

The guide is meant to be general enough to apply in any school context, regardless of your configuration (K-12, 7-9, 10-12, etc.) or the number of staff. Participants usually refer to teachers; however, it is understood that this might also include itinerants, Speech Language Pathologists, support staff, etc.

We are also conscious of the fact that in order for this to be general enough to apply to all, it will likely have to be adapted to take into account your particular school/district context.

The PD Planning Team

So... you're hosting a PD session at your school!

Once it has been determined that your school will be hosting a PD event, your first step, **as an administrator**, is to consult with the district regarding the purpose and goals of the event and to put in place a PD Planning Team.

About the Team

- It is advisable that an administrator be a part of the team.
- Appoint a coordinator from the PD Planning Team whose responsibilities will be to oversee the entire planning and delivery of the event.
 - If the principal is not directly involved, he or she needs to be fully briefed and kept up to date on plans.
 - If you are hosting more than one event for your school, consider changing the PD Planning Team for each event. (This will allow for sharing of leadership experience and the skill building which will be a part of the planning process. It also spreads the workload!)
 - The team needs to be in place well in advance of the event and will have a follow-up role after the event. Some districts require considerable advance notice of date/topic. You may even have to put your PD Planning Team in place one year for the next. Also, if you are hoping to book a high-demand speaker or venue, you may have to book in the previous school year.
 - While the whole team should be responsible for the critical decisions around time/date/place/topic/resource persons, individuals or sub-groups can then take on the responsibilities for: (a) communications, (b) presenter/resource person liaison, (c) logistics and (d) social.

Appendix E provides a quick reference duty checklist for the administrator and the PD Planning Team.





Pre-Planning: Critical Advance Decisions

The PD Planning Team

There will be designated roles for members of this team; however, there are some critical decisions that should be made by the whole team (refer to Appendix E). These include the determination of topic, date, location and possible resource person(s).

• **Determine a Topic**

Consider how you will determine your focus for the day. This could be discovered through pre-determined school goals, personal/professional growth plans, surveys of staff and/or staff meeting discussions. Whatever process you use, the staff must be consulted. After all, it is their day!

• **Determine a Date**

When you hold your event is an important decision. Sometimes it will be determined purely by a detail such as the availability of a speaker. However, if you have flexibility, there are some important factors you may want to consider.

Some might suggest that the day before or after a holiday, reporting time, sporting events or other conferences may not be the best time. At these times, teachers are mentally tired or easily distracted by the other things on their agenda. On the other hand, to schedule your PD around other events may have the benefit of having one less interruption in the week/year. You should discuss the pros and cons of any date you are considering.

• **Determine a Location**

While it is a “school” PD day, it does not necessarily have to take place in the school building. You may want to consider a different venue, keeping in mind that the setting you use will impact upon the atmosphere for your session. There are pros and cons for being either in-school or off-site. For example, it will cost more to go off-site, but if your intent is to provide a day of reflection and renewal, a retreat setting may be preferable. However, some topics and presenter requirements (e.g., technology) make the school a better setting.

• **Determine a Facilitator/Resource Person**

You need to consider whether the topic could be best covered by a resource person external to your school or whether the expertise exists on staff. If a member of staff is facilitating your session, he or she should be given time and resources to prepare. Also, consideration should be given to providing an opportunity for your teacher/facilitator to avail of professional development for him/herself at some other time.

Sometimes we forget to draw upon the resources of our colleagues when they may be the best facilitators for the topic. If you do decide to seek an external resource person, you need to find someone to facilitate your session. Again, do not forget to seek the advice/input of staff, or others. Personnel at your district office or the NLTA, for example, may be able to recommend someone. Also, it may be wise to have an alternate in mind, or be prepared to be flexible with your date, particularly if you are counting on one specific individual.

• **Determine a Budget**

Even if you are hosting the PD event at your school, with an internal facilitator, there will still be costs involved, though they may be minimal. You should consider providing refreshments that day. Additionally, there may be special arrangements for lunch (see Social Coordinator) which have costs attached.

If you are going off-site and/or having an external facilitator, you will need to consider how much you have or how much you are willing to spend on these items and what your options are. If there is a cost, consider who will be paying: individuals? school budget? district? sponsorship? other?





PD Planning Team Responsibilities Before the Event

Event Coordinator

While the Event Coordinator has the overall responsibility for all aspects of the session, he or she may also be a member of a sub-team or take on an individual role. Whether this is the case or not, he or she should have a brief (five minute) staff meeting before the event (a day or two before or immediately prior to start time) to update staff of the day's schedule (start, break and end time, the agenda) and to communicate the team's expectations.

- Arrange for any advance payments and getting invoices for charges (e.g. presenters, catering, etc.).
- Prepare an evaluation form to assess the organization, planning and execution of the event (samples are provided in Appendix A).

Communications Coordinator

Because of the nature of the communications associated with a school closure, i.e. consultation with the district and correspondence to parents, the administrator may want to take on this role. However, if this is not the case, the Communications Coordinator will need to work closely with the school administrator.

- Notify parents of event/school closure well in advance:
 - letter
 - website
 - newsletter
 - other

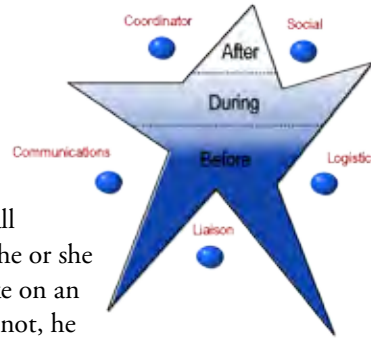
(see Appendix D)

- Notify media, if deemed appropriate:
 - radio stations
 - local cable
 - other

(Note that communications with the presenter will be the responsibility of the designated liaison.)

Presenter/Resource Person Liaison

Well in advance of the session, the liaison person has the following responsibilities:



- Make the initial contact with presenter.
- Discuss and clarify the topic/goals of presentation.
- Ask if there are professional fees and, if so, what they are. This would not apply to NLTA or Department of Education personnel, for example.
- Determine if substitute days are required for the presenter.
- Discuss the schedule (as determined by the PD Planning Team – i.e., start and end times along with any scheduled breaks) and request a draft agenda or description of the session to be presented.
- Determine the set-up needs of the presenter:
 - room size (consider wall space for chart paper and open space for activities)
 - seating arrangements (*see Appendix B*)
 - equipment needs/networking needs (*see Appendix C*)
 - printing and copying of handouts
- Provide a list of participants to presenter.
- Ask if there are any accommodations and transportation costs.
- Ask if the presenter will make his/her own travel/accommodation arrangements or if they would like this to be arranged for them. In either case, ensure you both understand the specifics and follow up with written communication. Keep a copy for your records.
- Ask if they have any other needs/concerns.
- Get notes for introducing the presenter. (Depending on the formality of the event and the wishes of the speaker, this may be very brief – and should never be a full curriculum vitae! Some presenters have a prepared biography; however, you may want to discuss the appropriate excerpts to be used for introduction.)
- Immediately prior to the session (the day/evening before) ensure that the resource person/facilitator has arrived and arrange to meet them. Even if he or she is responsible for arranging travel/accommodations, you may want to meet with them briefly to ensure all is well. If they are to set up in advance, make sure they can get to the site and advise the Logistics Coordinator.

Logistics Coordinator

It will already have been decided by the PD Planning Team if the event will occur on-site or off-site.

If on-site:

- Ensure building is clean and inviting (i.e., temperature, lighting, etc.).





- Consult Presenter/Liaison and Social sub-team regarding their requirements including:
 - the location(s) of presentation(s) and breaks
 - the seating arrangement required (requested by presenter)
(see Appendix B)
 - equipment needs/networking needs
 - tables, space and other requirements for food

If off-site:

- Explore options for venue (i.e., cost, size, Internet access, equipment availability, accommodations, food, etc.).
- Visit site before event to confirm suitability.
- Book venue.
- Communicate needs to venue manager/operator.

If the session is starting in the morning, the presenter will likely need to set up in advance. This may mean the evening before or very early morning. The Logistics Coordinator needs to be aware of this and make the necessary arrangements. Once the setup is ready, be sure to advise the custodial staff and ensure that it is not disturbed.

Social Coordinator

This person has the overall responsibility to ensure a positive professional upbeat environment during the entire event.

Suggestions to consider:

- When people arrive (whether morning or afternoon) have refreshments available.
- Consider using music prior to the session, during breaks, at lunchtime, etc.
- Have a variety of healthy snack food available throughout the day.
- Have water available at all times.
- Arrange for “prizes” or draws during the day.
- Determine the food arrangements and consider options such as:
 - Catered – by whom?
 - Pot Luck
 - Restaurant – go out or take out?
 - School Council or other parent group
- Arrange for someone other than the teacher participants (secretary, parent) to oversee the setup and preparations for snacks and meals... YOU should be in the session.
- Consider having breaks in a space other than the working area.

The Day of the Event

Event Coordinator

To liaise with Committee members to ensure everything is in place and to troubleshoot and problem solve where necessary.

Communications Coordinator

- Verify that media announcements are being made.
- Take photographs (preferably digital) during the session – not forgetting to photograph the social aspects of the event.
- Interview the presenter and get quote for possible inclusion in school newsletter or correspondence to parents/district.

Presenter/Resource Person Liaison

- Either escort the presenter/facilitator to the session OR be at the entrance to meet him/her upon arrival at the site.
- Introduce the presenter to key people (principal, planning team – particularly the Logistics Coordinator) and lead them to the site.
- Show the presenter the washroom facilities and other pertinent areas (staff room, for example).
- Introduce the presenter (since you will have had most contact with the person) or designate someone to do so. If this is the case, give them appropriate notes.
- Be available and accessible to the presenter at all times. This may mean assisting with distributing resource materials, or keeping time so that the schedule is respected, for example. It may be as simple as being a friendly face in the group. Different presenters will have different styles and require varying degrees and types of support. A frank discussion as to how much “space” or how much support your person needs can make the day run more smoothly for all.
- Present or designate someone to present token of appreciation to presenter(s).

Logistics Coordinator

- Your responsibility on the day is to ensure that things and people are where they need to be when they need to be there.
- Arrive early and make sure the room set-up is as required and to be available when the presenter arrives.
- Double check that all equipment (including Internet access if required) is functioning.





- Assist with all aspects of set-up, as required.
- Be available to assist throughout the day.
- If off-site, check with site staff re: their availability to troubleshoot.

Social Coordinator

- Confirm all arrangements for food service are on track. (Remember that you should be in the session and not moving in and out preparing breaks, etc.)
- Consider setting up a CD player with music (either calming or rousing depending on the theme of your session) to be played as participants arrive and in the break area.
- If planning prize draws during the day, coordinate with the presenter(s) to do this at appropriate times and do not unduly interrupt.

Following the Event

Event Coordinator

- Ensure financial aspects are dealt with.
- To review, with the PD Planning Team, the evaluations re: the event organization and prepare a brief for the Administration. See sample evaluations in Appendix A.

Communications Coordinator

- Send thank you letters to presenter, signed by principal on behalf of the school and the PD Planning Committee (copy to district) and any others who assisted (parents, caterers, support staff, etc.).
- Remind principal to write notes of thanks to PD Planning Team (copied to personnel file).
- Communicate with parents re: the success and “learnings” as a result of the session (i.e., how/what we learned will help us better meet your child’s needs as an article in school newsletter).
- Prepare “PA” announcement for students the morning after regarding the PD Day (see Appendix D).

Presenter/Resource Person Liaison

- Make personal contact (phone or email) with presenter(s) to informally thank them and discuss impressions of how the session went.

Logistics Coordinator

- Assist the presenter with dismantling equipment, packing and moving.
- Assist with “de-constructing” the room setup if on-site.
- Communicate with custodian re: any special cleaning needs so that the rooms are ready for student return.

Social Coordinator

- Work with Logistics Coordinator to manage any leftover food/drink.
- Ensure you have attended to financial needs.

What If?

Even the best laid plans sometimes go awry. Your team will no doubt be able to handle the small glitches that may occur – a projector lamp that burns out, the late delivery of the food, etc. However, in the event of a major issue which could affect whether or not the event will go ahead, such as a presenter who has had to cancel at the last minute, you should consider a contingency plan. Do you go ahead with the school closure and engage the staff in a different activity? Do you cancel the PD for that day and go ahead with school as usual? Certainly there are a lot of factors which will influence this decision, including whether or not you can communicate to students/parents on short notice or if there are contracts (for example, off-site venues or catering). You also need to know whether there is a district policy which might govern your response.





Appendix A **Evaluation**

It is important to evaluate the PD event. This happens on two levels. In one instance you want feedback on the content and the learning. You also want to evaluate the logistics and the overall running of the event. If you use a common form, you should divide it into two parts. You will want to compile and review both with the staff but share only that which is relevant with the resource person. Alternatively, you can evaluate the session via an open discussion with staff in which you note any suggestions which could inform future planning teams. This works well in relatively small staffs.

Sample evaluation forms follow. Note that just as you tailor your professional development event, you should likewise tailor your form depending on the feedback you need or want.





Workshop Title/Location

Evaluation

Please rank each session you attended from 1 - 5 where 1 is least effective and 5 is most effective.
Complete after each session and return at the closing plenary on Wednesday.

SESSION	RANK	COMMENTARY
Plenary Session		
Concurrent Sessions		
Title of Session (Presenter's Name)		
Title of Session (Presenter's Name)		
Title of Session (Presenter's Name)		
Plenary Session		
Overall Evaluation		
Suggestions for future workshop topics, speakers, themes, etc.		
Other Comments:		





PD Evaluation Form

Topic: _____

Date: _____

Please comment on the positive aspects and/or offer suggestions on the following:

1. Logistics

Date/Location/Setup/Refreshments

2. Program

Topic/Content/Facilitation

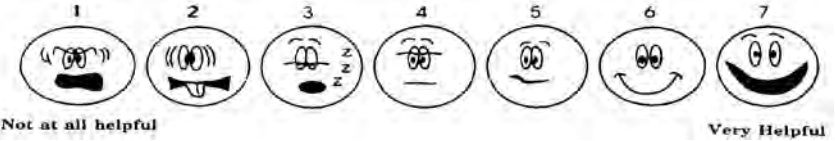
3. What advice would you give to future planning teams? Please be specific.

Title

Date: _____

Facilitator: _____

1. Please circle the number on the continuum that best describes your professional development experience today:



2. What did you find useful in today's session? (Please comment on any aspect of the session, e.g. materials, exercises, setting, facilitator.)

3. Were there any aspects of the session that you didn't find useful or would like to have been different?

4. Other comments that may be useful for planning future sessions.



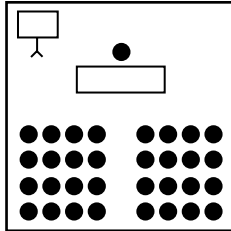


Appendix B

Room Setup

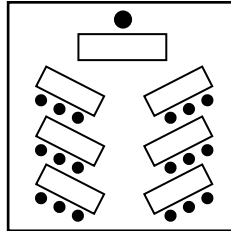
The room setup will depend on the number of participants and the mode of presentation. The venue should be selected to accommodate the needs of the presenter. He or she should be asked to explicitly indicate the style of setup.

Below are some typical seating arrangements:



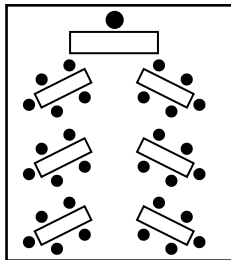
Theatre Style: (8 sq. feet/person)

Primarily for lecture-style presentations and groups of over 50 participants. Provides the greatest number of seats in the smallest space. Audience interaction is difficult with this arrangement.



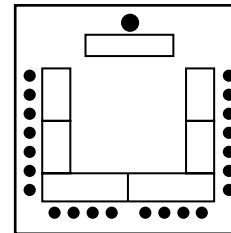
Chevron Style: (16 sq. feet/person)

This setup is good for 30-50 people in which you want presenter/audience dialogue. Gives participants good visual access to other members of the group.



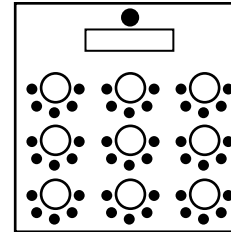
Herringbone Style: (20-24 sq. feet/person)

This setup is good for 30-150 participants. This allows for both lecture and small group work.



U-Shaped Style: (20 sq. feet/person)

U-shaped can be used for groups up to 30. The presenter works from the open end of the U. Each participant can see all others. This setup promotes equity and interaction.



Rounds Style: (20-24 sq. feet/person)

This arrangement can accommodate from 30-150 and facilitates group work.





Appendix C

Presenter Needs

Equipment Which May Be Needed:

- Markers (various colours)
- Flip Chart/Chart Paper
- Chart Stands
- LCD Projector
- Computer
- Overhead Projector
- Overhead Markers
- Overhead Acetates
- Tape
- Extension Cords/Power Bars
- Replacement Bulbs for Equipment
- CD Player
- Music (CDs)
- DVD or VHS Player
- Sticky Notes
- Paper
- Dry Erase Markers or Chalk
- Name Tags
- Tent Cards
- Speakers
- Pens or Pencils (per participant)

Note Paper (per participant)



Appendix D

Informing Parents/Media

Checklist for Letter to Parents:

- Classes cancelled
- Date/Time
- Brief Description of PD
- Value of PD for Students and Teachers

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

On *(day) (date)* there will be no classes for students so that teachers/staff can participate in professional development activities.

Teachers will be attending a session on *(name the topic of PD)*. Professional development and ongoing learning by teachers and others in the school community is essential to the growth of our school. Teachers need to keep abreast of educational research and trends and avail of new programs and services in order to serve the needs of our students.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Checklist for Message to Media:

- Date; Name of School; School Closure; Activity

Sample Message to Media

Advance Notice: On *(Day/Date)* there is a professional development activity planned for *(school)*. Please listen to _____ morning's announcements for confirmation of school closure on that day.

Sample Message to Media

Day of Notice: There will be no classes for students at *(Name of School)*. Teachers are participating in professional development activities today.

After – Encourage teachers to discuss with students what they have learned at the PD day. Teachers can share this with parents in their regular newsletters.



Appendix E

PD Team Checklists

Note: All teams should keep the principal fully informed /briefed throughout the planning process.

These checklists are meant to be used in conjunction with the appropriate sections of the PD Planning Guide (see page 1).

This advance planning is undertaken under the direction of the administration or designate.

Pre-Planning: Administrator or Designate

- Consult with district/staff regarding purpose and goals of event
- Appoint a coordinator
- Review role expectations with coordinator
- Create PD Team
- If new event, do you need a new PD Team?
- Consider the following:
 - Do support staff need to be involved?
 - Does the School Council need to be involved?
 - Does the Student Council need to be involved?

PD Planning Team

- Determine general topic and specific goals
- Determine date
- Determine location
- Determine a facilitator/resource person

Event Coordinator

- BEFORE**
- Convene meetings of the Planning Team to ensure plans are on track

- Brief (five minute) meeting with staff to review upcoming day
- Deal with financial aspects of event – invoices, fees, budget(s)
- Construct evaluation form for event planning, organization, execution

DURING

- Be available/accessible for the PD Planning Team members
- Ensure evaluation forms are completed and collected

AFTER

- Ensure financial aspects are dealt with
- Collate/review evaluations with PD Planning Team
- Prepare brief for administration and PD Team

Note: The Event Coordinator should be in constant and ongoing communication with the principal to keep him/her informed, to ensure support and to troubleshoot potential problems.

Communications Coordinator

BEFORE

- Notify Parents
- Notify Media

DURING

- Verify media has made announcements
- With permission of participants, take photos during the session

AFTER

- Prepare a brief summary of the day to post on Sharepoint Services*
- Write an article for school newsletter, *NLTA Bulletin*, district publications re learnings, etc. (Use photos and quotes from participants and facilitator.)
- Interview presenter
- Ensure thank you letters are sent





- Ensure parents are aware of the event's successes
- Prepare PA announcements for student body

**Ideally, the district will have a database of summaries of PD days from all schools.*

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Presenter/Resource Person Liaison

BEFORE

- Make initial contact with presenter
- Discuss the topic/goals of presentation
- Determine fees, if any
- Determine if substitute days required for the presenter.
- Discuss the agenda and request copy
- Discuss specific needs of the presenter; e.g. room size, dietary, equipment, seating
- Provide a list of participants to presenter
- Make inquiries re accommodations and transportation
- Get notes for presenter introduction

**IMMEDIATELY
PRIOR TO
SESSION
(DAY/
EVENING/
BEFORE**

- Ensure arrival and meet with presenter
- If presenter needs early access to site, ensure Logistics Coordinator is aware and available
- Ensure that other needs/concerns are dealt with
- Either escort the presenter to the session OR be at the entrance to meet him/her
- Introduce the presenter to key people
- Orient presenter to washroom facilities and other pertinent areas
- Introduce the presenter or designate someone
- Be available and accessible to the presenter at all times

AFTER

- Present or designate someone to present token of appreciation to presenter
- Make personal contact with presenter(s) to informally thank them and discuss impression of how the session went
- Prepare a brief summary for Event Coordinator

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Logistics Coordinator

BEFORE

(IF ON-SITE)

- Ensure building is clean and inviting
- Consult with presenter/liaison and social sub-teams regarding requirements
- Check to see if the presenter needs to setup the night before
- Ensure the custodial staff does not disturb presenter's setup

BEFORE

(IF OFF-SITE)

- Explore potential venues
- Visit site to confirm suitability
- Book venue
- Communicate needs/requirements to venue manager/operator
- Check to see if the presenter needs to setup the night before
- Ensure the custodial staff does not disturb presenter's setup

DURING

(IF ON-SITE)

- Arrive early
- Check presenter's setup and availability of room if presenter needs to setup
- Be available when the presenter arrives
- Double check all equipment





**DURING
(IF OFF-SITE)**

- Assist as necessary with all aspects of setup
- Be available throughout the day
- Ensure things run smoothly
- Consult with venue staff regarding their availability to troubleshoot/assist

AFTER

- Assist presenter as required
- Assist the presenter with dismantling of equipment, packing and moving
- Assist with de-constructing of room setup (if on-site)
- If on-site, communicate with custodian any special cleaning needs so room is ready for student return
- Prepare report for Event Coordinator

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Social Coordinator

BEFORE

- Consider using music prior to session at breaks
- Arrange for appropriate amount of refreshments
- Arrange for a variety of healthy refreshments
- Ensure that water is always available
- Consider arranging “prize” draws during the day
- Determine food arrangements
- Designate someone other than the teacher participants to oversee setup and preparations for snacks/food
- Consider having snacks in a location other than working area
- Designate someone to oversee the coordination of Icebreakers

DURING

- Confirm all arrangements for food service are on track
- Consider setting up a CD player with music
- If planning prize draws, coordinate with presenter

AFTER

- Work with Logistics Coordinator to manage any leftover food/drink, including clean up of snack area
- Ensure financial matters are attended to
- Prepare report for Event Coordinator



