PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Meetings, events, and programs are core ways student organizations engage with members and educate the community. Whether you are a new group just starting out or an existing group looking for resources to boost engagement, this is the resource for you!



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EVENT IDEAS

Meetings, events, and programs are core ways student organizations engage with members and educate the community. Whether you are a new group just starting out or an existing group looking for resources to boost engagement, this is the resource for you!

- The history of reproductive justice
- How reproductive justice and Catholic social justice align
- Anti-abortion pregnancy centers and how to combat them on campus
- Sex education, reproductive health, and religion
- Reproductive healthcare access for people who are incarcerated
- The politics of sex education and reproductive justice
- How abortion bans impact different racial and ethnic communities
- Reproductive justice on a global scale
- Reproductive healthcare access for people with disabilities
- Reproductive rights vs. reproductive health vs. reproductive justice

Host Catholics for Choice for a workshop or seminar on your campus! *We have several signature workshops on topics including Pro-Choice Catholicism 101, Fake Clinics: Catholicism's Role and How to Spot Them, and Talking to Catholic People about Abortion. If there is something else that you are interested in, we also provide custom workshops and can work with you to develop one. Learn more and fill out the request form on the Workshops and Seminars webpage.*

Meeting Modalities

- Seminars
- Trivia nights
- Guest speakers
- Movie nights
- Joint events with other campus groups
- Zine-making
- Menstrual pack or abortion care kit assembly
- Volunteer trainings or events with local organizations
- Book clubs
- Create art together for an upcoming action (often called an art build) or just for fun
- Attend protests in your community
- Take action together — your meetings and campaigns do not have to be separate! For example, if you are trying to flood admins' inboxes, get together to send emails.

You've added diverse topics and have varied meeting styles, but how do you increase attendance? Attendance for campus events usually peaks in the fall and dwindles as the year progresses. To avoid that, it's important to keep diversifying your events and to advertise them properly!

EVENT PROMOTION AND OUTREACH

Increasing event turnout takes a lot of effort, especially when you are dealing with restrictions like those faced on Catholic campuses. Your organization may not always have the funds to entice people with free food; however, there are some strategies available.

DIGITAL PROMOTION STRATEGIES

SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Use a free design platform like Canva to make your posts visually appealing and eye-catching.** Make sure your graphics aren't too busy, that the text is large and in easy-to-read colors, and that you include your logo.
- **Increase your reach by making a collaborative post** with other organizations or asking them to share it on their stories.
- **Promote the RSVP link on Instagram stories.** When you are designing your post, think about what someone might want to share on their story.



EMAIL

- **Keep your email short and put the most important information at the top.** Make it easy for folks to find the most important information by bolding it.
- **Check your links before sending an email.** You can make them extra emphasized by underlining, bolding, or changing their color.
- **Speak in your own voice and don't be afraid to have a casual email tone.** If possible, sending the email "from" an individual who can use their own voice and tone works best.
- **Use images, but don't rely on them or make your whole email an image.** Make sure that all information shared in images is also in writing in your email.
- **Keep your subject line short and direct, and include only the most important information.** Other things that can help include using emojis or mentioning the call to action (for example, "Add your name: Fight back against the administration"). If it is for a holiday or specific day, include that information so it seems timely.

GROUP CHATS

Group chats don't just have to be places to share sightings of your campus micro-celebrity: They can also be leveraged to share upcoming events. You may have already invited the people in your group chat to your event, but have they invited their friends? Class group chats from the first day of the semester or other organizations' group chats can be good places to promote your event and spread the word.

Tip: Leverage existing lists and other campus organizations to boost your promotion efforts! Do departments have upcoming event newsletters you could use to promote your event? Are there allied organizations that would share your event on their social media, in their group chat, and/or with their email list?



OTHER PROMOTION STRATEGIES

ALTERNATIVES TO ON-CAMPUS POSTERING

- **Flyering**: Just because you can't be on campus doesn't mean you can't be near campus. Try standing just off campus to pass out flyers! If you choose a time with high foot traffic, you can reach many people quickly. Bonus points if you combine flyering with condom or other contraception distribution efforts! Depending on your campus restrictions and relationship with your university, you might also consider flyering dorm doors (jamming the poster in under the door or wedging it in the handle)
- **Wheatpasting**: Put up flyers on public property near campus using a paste made of water and flour. Before you wheatpaste, check your local laws and confirm public property status.
- **Local Businesses**: Use bulletin boards or stickers in student-frequented businesses.
- **Classes**: If you have supportive professors, ask them to promote events in class.



WHEATPASTE RECIPE

- **1 part flour**
- **4 parts water**

Mix flour and one part water. Bring remaining water to a boil. Add flour and water mix and boil for a few minutes until it thickens.

RELATIONAL ORGANIZING

You don't have to do event outreach alone: Leverage the people in your base to help! Encourage people to bring a friend to your event. For people who frequently attend events, show commitment to your organization, and/or express interest in leadership, bringing others to an event is a great leadership development opportunity. When planning a program, consider identifying people who might fit this description and asking them to commit to bringing someone. You can also make it easier for people by drafting a text script for inviting someone to the event, which they can edit to make it more personalized.

Don't underestimate the power of sending personalized messages asking folks to come! Sending personalized outreach to active and committed people can help not only with turnout but also with relationship-building.

CULTIVATING LONGTERM EVENT ATTENDANCE

Boosting attendance isn't just about promoting a specific event; it's also about running your event so that people want to come back.

- **Make sure people meet other people.** If your attendees leave feeling they didn't connect with anyone, they are less likely to attend another event. Consider ways for attendees to get to know one another and begin building connections.
- **Follow up with people who came and those who didn't.** This not only helps you continue bringing new folks into your organization but also lets regulars know you miss them when they don't show up. If attendees are very active during an event or stay behind to chat more, consider inviting them to a 1:1 to discuss their future engagement.
- **Ask people what they would want to see from future events.** Hosting the types of events people want to attend can help encourage attendance. Plus, someone who feels like they have a stake in the event will be more likely to attend.
- **Prioritize event quality over quantity.** Sometimes it is better to focus your energy on just a couple of solid events each semester. Between gatherings, you can engage members by planning future events and by offering other lower-lift engagement opportunities.

SAFETY

We all want people to feel physically and psychologically safe at our events, and disruptions from antis can ruin an event. You can't always prevent interruptions, but there are steps we can take to make your events safer.

Delay location sharing. Wait to reveal the event location until people RSVP so that you can vet attendees.

Have a plan for disruption. Before an event, align on when you would want to reschedule or relocate an event in the event of a disruption and make a plan. Also, before a disruption occurs, have a plan for whether and how you would involve campus security or law enforcement. In deciding your plan, make sure you consider the impact of campus security and law enforcement on participants' safety.

Prioritize specific audiences. Find the right balance for event promotion. On one hand, we want to reach as many people as possible about the event; on the other hand, we want to ensure that only allies hear about it. Depending on your event's goals, this calculation might differ. If you want to ensure a certain event is just for supporters, consider more personalized, direct outreach to fewer people rather than bulk promotion.

Don't engage. When people try to disrupt our events, the best thing you can do is not engage. Not engaging can help de-escalate a situation and allow us to focus on what matters: the people who are actually interested in what we have to say.



ACCESSIBILITY

We want everyone to be able to come to our events, so it is important to consider accessibility when planning. Disability justice is a key part of reproductive justice, and ensuring disabled perspectives can be present is critical.

ACCESSIBILITY BEST PRACTICES

- **Ask people about their access needs.** If you have an RSVP form, ask people for their access needs (i.e., what they need to participate fully).
- **Consider the physical accessibility of the space you are using.** Try to use only spaces that are fully accessible to attendees.
- **Take accessibility into account when designing your slides and outreach materials.** Make sure your designs are easy to understand, that your online outreach includes alt text, and that you provide accessibility information in promotional materials.
- **Ensure that people can hear you in the space.** Use microphones and other amplifying technology when available.
- **Consider language interpretation.** Language justice is important. Ensure that your event includes language options that match your community's needs, whether it is sign language or another language.
- **Accessibility also means gender inclusivity.** Check whether there are gender-inclusive bathrooms near your event and incorporate ways for people to share their pronouns.
- **Partner with community resources like disability justice student organizations and/or disabled student services on your campus or in your community.** You don't have to think about accessibility alone! Often, community resources can help build accessible events.

FACILITATION

Facilitation is an important part of any meeting or event. Good facilitation makes meetings engaging. It also ensures that diversity of perspectives is welcomed and holds room for productive conflict. Here are some top facilitation tips.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Starting your events with community agreements can help build consensus and set expectations for the space. Community agreements are meant to be developed with the people they impact in the room; however, you don't have to start from scratch every time. Your organization might consider maintaining a standard list of community agreements to start with, then seeking input from attendees at events to see what they would add or change.

Before moving on from community agreements, ensure that everyone agrees. This can be as simple as asking attendees to give a thumbs-up.

BROKEN AGREEMENTS

When attendees violate our shared norms, it's important to ground your response in the community agreements themselves. Remind attendees that if community agreements continue to be broken, they may be asked to leave.

If gentle reminders of the community agreements do not work, or if the tension continues to rise, it can be helpful to take a break. This not only gives attendees time to cool off but also gives you the space to seek support from other organizational leaders and plan your response.

After an event in which community agreements are broken, make sure you check in with people who may have been harmed. You might also do this when you are taking a break and deciding how you want to navigate the conflict.



MAKING EVENTS INERACTIVE

Interactive events are not only more fun and engaging for participants but also help community members build relationships with one another. People are far more likely to keep coming back or stay engaged with your work if they meet someone at an event.

ELEMENTS OF ENGAGING EVENTS:

Begin with an icebreaker or other activity

Host small groups for discussion or brainstorming

Build in exercises for people to practice what they learn

Incorporate a game or creative activity

Include discussion questions and time for conversations

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Creating frequent space for questions can be a great way to encourage participation and be inclusive of all experience levels. However, make sure to balance answering people's questions without getting derailed or missing event content.

One tip you can use is having a "bike rack" or a "parking lot" for questions to be stored for future conversations. This helps folks know their questions will be answered while also allowing you to maintain your facilitation flow.

If someone asks a question that you or the presenter is about to answer, don't be afraid to let folks know you'll get to that soon. After covering the content that answers their question, ask them if they still have any follow-ups.
Especially if you are new to facilitation, consider creating designated times for people to ask questions. This can prevent questions from disrupting your flow while still providing space for people to interact.

Whenever you prompt folks with a question or ask if they have questions, pause longer than you think you should. Don't be afraid to let it get a little awkward. If you struggle with this, consider counting 15 or 30 seconds to give people space. It can also help to acknowledge that the extended pause is awkward but intentional.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Navigating Imbalances

We've all been in an awkward class where one person monopolizes the conversation — or no one participates at all. While we can't completely control it, there are steps we can take to make space for everyone to share during our events.

If you notice someone sharing a lot and you want to hear from others, don't be afraid to say something like "I would love to hear from someone who hasn't shared yet." You can also call on quieter people first. Lastly, it can help to wait a moment before calling on someone, giving people more time to gather their thoughts.



Encouraging Participation

If you are trying to boost audience interaction, prioritize asking open-ended questions. You can also consider polling the audience and then asking follow-up questions.

Often, when the group is quiet, facilitators need to find lower-stakes ways to engage people to build trust and confidence within the group. You can do this using small groups and share-outs, offering ways for people to share anonymously, or building in silent reflection and writing time.

Before your event, prepare answers to your discussion questions. If no one jumps in to answer, you can share your response so people have more time to think, don't have to be the first to speak, and have a response to build on. You might also consider prepping other members of the organization so they can jump in to boost engagement.

EVENT PLANNING WORKSHEET

DETERMINE OUTREACH METHODS

[] Social media post on _____
[] Email
[] Group chats
[] Flyering
[] Postering/wheatpasting
[] Local businesses
[] Classes

Additional Outreach Ideas

_____

_____

_____

ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

Task	***Person Responsible***
Who is going to design the flyer/social media post?	
Who is going to write the email? Who is going to send the email reminder?	
Who is making the RSVP form or event page?	
Who is sending event details in the org group chat?	
Who is going to connect with other organizations/ departments/faculty about promoting your event to their list?	
Who is coordinating volunteers for the flyering/wheatpasting? Who can you invite to flyering/wheatpasting?	
Who can you ask to bring people to the event?	
Who is doing event follow up?	
[Your task here]	
[Your task here]	

CREATE A CALENDAR AND TO-DO LIST

Date	***Task***	***Person Responsible***
Ex. 5/19	*Ex. Email Women and Gender Studies department about promoting event*	*Ex. Nicole*
	EVENT*	

*Note the last row of the table is not the event, that's because event promotion doesn't end with your event! Make sure you think about how to follow up with people.