

General Tips for Hosting an Agricultural Field Day

Planning – Promotion – Place



Planning

- **Identify one or two key concepts to cover during your field day** – your field day is only a couple hours long, so more is not always better – focus your speaker topics and demos around these concepts – split distinct topics into separate field days
- **Choose speakers who are comfortable presenting in a field setting** – select dynamic, local speakers and topics that provide practical, applicable information for your area – consider using local farmers and industry professionals as presenters
- **Decide if you are having a half day or whole day program** – a shortened program may not require lunch planning – a longer program allows for more in-depth education, but requires more planning for attendee comfort and changing weather
- **Have flexible, picnic-friendly food options to accommodate a wide number of attendees** – boxed lunches are convenient, but can't be "stretched" to serve more – self-serve foods are more flexible – enlist servers to hand out reasonable portions
- **Take advantage of the outdoor setting** – highlight machinery, management practices, fields/pastures, soil pit, etc. – engage the farm's operator to provide a history of the field or livestock practices to put demonstrated practices "in perspective"
- **Strategize demonstration plot planting, management and/or harvest timing** – ensure the appropriate length of time has elapsed between the targeted operation and the field day to ensure attendees will see what you want them to see – for example, planting a cover crop four weeks before your field day may not achieve the amount of growth you want to showcase
- **Secure an audio system** – not everyone may be able to hear in an outdoor setting, particularly on a windy day, without using an audio system – you may be able to borrow one from UW-Extension, the library, the local coop, etc.
- **Will you require pre-registration?** – pre-registration helps with planning, but many attendees will simply come the day of the event – decide your pre-registration deadline, if walk-ins are allowed, and registration fees early and include this on your promotional materials – you may want to collect attendee phone numbers and emails as they pre-register in case you need to reschedule the event due to weather
- **If pertinent to your audience, offer Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) continuing education credits** – credits can be offered for many agronomy topics – Visit <https://www.certifiedcropadviser.org/> to apply
- **Keep your field day agenda flexible and open** – Ensure time for breaks, refreshments and networking, travel between sites, speaker transitions, questions, etc. – it is better to over budget time than be rushed from one activity to the next
- **Have an articulated contingency plan for weather** – options may include: advertising an alternative date on promotional materials, posting changes to a website/social media, contacting pre-registered attendees, having a call-in number, etc.
- **Design great educational signage and handouts** – ensure signs are large enough to be read at a distance – For practices or machinery you are highlighting, include details on management, practices, costs, etc. – provide attendees with a handout with take home information they can think about and use
- **Increase the impact of your planning**– Consider hosting additional, separate events at your site for high school or technical college students, lake shore owners, or industry and agency professionals before or after your primary field day
- **Liability coverage** – Inquire with your insurance or legal professional if additional liability coverage is required – explore requirements and protection provided by Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Law (WI Act 269)



Promotion

- **Use your organization's brand on everything** – mailings, flyers, shirts, hats, etc. – wear your branded clothing to the field day – the more people see your brand, the more they will recognize your organization's efforts in the community
- **Use multiple promotional approaches to advertise your event** – different strategies reach different audiences – using a blend of traditional and online advertisements will extend your reach to diverse members of your community
- **Press releases** – many papers like press releases three to four weeks ahead of the event – target local newspapers, state ag newspapers, radio, and TV
- **Websites and social media** – online resources are often free and can be used to provide reminders leading up your field day – create an “event” in Facebook to allow for easy sharing – recruit members to share social media posts with their followers/friends – garner interest by posting new information and/or photos about the field day regularly
- **Newsletters** – create an eye-catching, one page promotional flyer, ideally in PDF format – ask partners, such as UW-Extension, Land Conservation offices, RC&Ds, USDA offices, etc. to include the flyer in their newsletters or emails to farmers
- **Postcards** – brightly colored postcards stand out in the mail – consider providing postcards to your local agronomists, nutritionists, milk haulers, veterinarians, etc. to share with farmers when they are making farm calls

Place

- **Keep attendees comfortable** – a large tent provides shade and shelter from precipitation – use the sides on the tent when temperatures are cool to block the wind and retain heat
- **Ensure restroom availability** – even for a few hour event, a restroom is needed and can often be rented locally – consider renting a handwashing station if participants will be interacting with livestock or if you are serving food
- **Provide seating for attendees** – many attendees cannot or do not want to stand for several hours – chair rentals may be available from local town halls, churches or fire departments
- **If doing a field tour or walking a distance, provide a wagon or UTVs for those with mobility issues** – transportation becomes increasingly important on uneven terrain, in poor weather, or for longer distances – section off a parking area near the registration table for those who would benefit from parking closer to the event
- **If traffic may be an issue or if you need to park attendees on the road, contact the appropriate town, county, or state roads department** – these agencies may assist you with additional signage or personnel to help keep attendees safe and traffic flowing smoothly – these departments can also provide you information on how to legally display any promotional or directional signage near the roadways
- **Water or refreshments are a must** – provide attendees with, at minimum, a bottle of water, no matter the length of the field day – be sure to bring trash and recycling bags
- **Avoid confusion** – provide large directional signs on the roads leading to site – put a large sign at the field entrance – clearly mark the area for parking with signs and tape – provide a parking attendant or directional signs to the registration table
- **Registration table should be clearly identified** – two or more people working the registration table can get attendees checked in and questions answered quickly – if charging a registration fee, be sure to have a secure location for money, plenty of small denominations to make change, and a receipt book – pack a supplies box with pens, markers, tape, staplers or anything else you may need, just in case
- **Check the street address to ensure GPS will bring attendees to the site** – if not, note this on promotional materials and provide the latitude and longitude and/or a small map to reduce the likelihood of attendees getting lost
- **Practice good biosecurity** – ask host farms if they would like attendees to wear disposable plastic boots, particularly on livestock farms – provide disposable boots, hand sanitizer, hand washing stations, hair nets, etc. where appropriate
- **Ensure the health and safety of speakers and attendees** – contact Diggers Hotline before digging a soil pit – follow all OSHA standards for soil excavations, manure storage facilities, confined spaces, etc. – clearly mark areas where attendees are not allowed on the farm or where extra caution is needed (i.e. uneven surfaces) – provide safety goggles and hearing protection where appropriate – limit unnecessary contact with livestock

Additional Resources

SARE Farmer Field Day Toolkit

<https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Topic-Rooms/The-Farmer-Field-Day-Toolkit>



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