HOW-TO GUIDE TO HOSTING A DIABETES TOWN HALL

When it comes to diabetes, engaging the community is no easy undertaking. Awareness of the issues surrounding diabetes and strong community collaboration is a great way to decrease the burden of diabetes and similar chronic conditions. Town hall meetings provide legislators with a forum to present diabetes topics to the public by convening subject matter experts in a panel and encouraging community feedback. Elected and appointed officials, medical providers, resource organizations, and champions in the community can present relevant information while promoting a balanced perspective of the confusing concepts that shape knowledge of the disease. It can also draw attention to much-needed solutions and brings the community together in active conversation about diabetes and their health.

10 Steps to a Successful Town Hall Meeting

1. Plan and Designate Tasks
2. Brainstorming for Support
3. Check-off the Logistics
4. Gather Data About the Issues
5. Find Speakers
6. Craft a Media Strategy
7. Engage the Community
8. Hold the Town Hall Meeting
9. Say Thank You to Sponsors and Supporters
10. Develop a Diabetes Action Plan to Address Diabetes
Thorough planning for a town hall meeting might seem a challenge but with proper strategic planning your diabetes town hall meeting can be a success. Consider the following “10 steps to success” when planning your town hall meeting.

1. **Plan and Designate Tasks**

No town hall meeting can be complete without a list of goals to accomplish. Smart planning includes well-delineated tasks, assigned deadlines, and responsible person(s) designated to follow through with the tasks. Based on the goals, consider the following questions:

- What topics will be highlighted?
- What kind of speakers and panels will there be?
- What is the best location to have the town hall meeting? Remember, it is important that the venue is politically neutral and can hold the expected number of attendees.
- What materials will be distributed to attendees? This can be the meeting agenda, Women In Government newsletters, or a list of fact sheets taken from your local American Diabetes Association chapter and other organizations in the community.

From the onset, it is important to discuss the town hall topics and decide how to reach participants and engage various groups in the community. Additionally, listing and designating responsibilities for event planning, programmatic details, and media outreach early on will make for a more efficient planning process.

2. **Brainstorming for Support**

The community is rich with organizations and supporters passionate about diabetes. Planning a town hall is a multi-faceted endeavor that requires well-choreographed collaboration from all involved. Contact your local American Diabetes Association (ADA) chapter to help with planning and finding speakers for your town hall. The American Diabetes Association holds hundreds of events each year which raise awareness of diabetes throughout the nation. Visit [http://www.diabetes.org/in-my-community](http://www.diabetes.org/in-my-community) to find your local ADA chapter.

Additionally, it’s helpful to make a list of contacts that can help with the town hall such as:

- Potential Speakers List
- Elected and Appointed Officials
- Volunteers

[WWW.WOMENINGOVERNMENT.ORG](http://WWW.WOMENINGOVERNMENT.ORG)
3. Check-off the Logistics

There is a lot to consider in the logistics of a town hall meeting. Be sure to stay on top of the tasks well before the event. Consider each of the items below:

- **Select a date, time, and duration** for the town hall meeting.
  - During session, town halls are typically on a Monday or Friday. Remember that certain times of year may be subject to inopportune weather.

- **Location:** The location must be politically neutral and can hold the expected number of attendees. Keep in mind access to parking and public transportation. Consider locations that are wheelchair accessible. Also note that your location can determine the kind of audience you attract.
  - Town Hall Location Ideas: Park District; Senior Center; Public Library; Township Hall; Village Hall; Community College; Community Organizations; Golf Course; Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities; Local Schools; Community Gardens.

- **Material Items:** Decide how much of your budget to allocate for flyers, mailings, and other materials. Draft an agenda and prepare fact sheets about diabetes to distribute to attendees.
  - Invitations
  - Agenda
  - Community Resources
  - Flyers & Brochures
  - Fact Sheets
  - Organizations throughout the community can provide brochures and flyers about diabetes. Determine what organizations can provide materials.

  - Fact sheets and diabetes newsletters are available at Women In Government’s Diabetes Policy Resource Center at [www.womeningovernment.org/diabetes](http://www.womeningovernment.org/diabetes)

  - The American Association of Diabetes Educators also has a number of fact sheets accessed at [http://www.diabeteseducator.org/DiabetesEducation/Fact_Sheets.html](http://www.diabeteseducator.org/DiabetesEducation/Fact_Sheets.html)
4. Gather Data About the Issues

It's hard to know where to direct much-needed resources to fight against diabetes without knowing the prevalence and economic burden it places on your constituents specifically and comparing it to national diabetes statistics.

Women In Government has partnered with the National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF) to provide you with individualized reports on the diabetes health index in your district. Using the U.S. Diabetes Index (USDI), you can get up-to-date information about diabetes prevalence, per patient costs, and hospitalization costs based specifically on your district. To get a copy of the USDI report of your district, contact LDerting@WomenInGovernment.org.


5. Find Speakers

Traditionally, a town hall speaker forum includes a panel of experts, such as diabetes educators, health professionals, and health advocates that provide information to constituents. Contact the American Diabetes Association (ADA) or the American Association of Diabetes Educators for potential speakers that can contribute to the panel. Once appropriate speakers are found, send a formal invitation and ask them to share their knowledge on a particular aspect of diabetes or diabetes care in your community.

The typical speaker agenda might include:

- Legislator introduction and overview (10 minutes)

- Panel presentations (45 minutes)
  - Healthcare professional – Diabetes overview, risk factors, detection, treatment (15 minutes)
  - Diabetes Educator – Physical activity and nutrition (15 minutes)
  - Advocacy volunteer – Resources in the community (15 minutes)

- Question and Answer with Attendees (25 minutes or more)

- Legislator closes town hall and thanks participants (5 minutes)
6. Craft a Media Strategy

Before the Town Hall Meeting

Attracting the media can help the town hall gain a larger audience. Make sure to create a press release along with an invitation to the event. Invite your local television and radio stations to attend. Place announcements in your local newspapers and magazines. Call your local public broadcasting stations, Univision, Telemundo, and other stations whose audience might be disproportionately affected by diabetes.

During and After the Town Hall Meeting

Make sure that during the event a section is reserved for media members. Determine if the media require additional equipment such as risers or a melt box for camera crews. Additionally, having someone photograph or videotape the town hall is a good idea for later use. The video can be posted on the Internet or used in other diabetes related presentations. If some of the media representatives were unable to attend, offer to send a press release after the town hall meeting complete with pictures.

7. Engage the Community

How will the community know about the diabetes town hall? This is the opportunity to be creative and reach out to constituents. Networking with existing local organizations is the best way to reach potential attendees. Make presentations about diabetes to local clubs, such as Kiwanis or Elks. Network with diabetes non-profit organizations and reach their members. Talk to faculty and staff at the local colleges or universities and inform student organizations of the town hall. Put fliers up throughout the area including coffee shops, bookstores, libraries, restaurants, and grocery stores. Reach out to diverse groups throughout the area so that your attendees can offer feedback based on a diversity of perspectives.

8. Hold the Town Hall Meeting

The day of the town hall meeting may be stressful but the best way to avoid additional stress is to arrive at the event location early. Check to see that all resource tables are set-up. Ensure that the space for the panel is set-up and bottled water is available for speakers. Ensure there are enough copies of resources, such as the agenda and fact sheets, available to attendees. If other diabetes organizations have brochures to distribute, ensure there is space
for their information as well. Ensure that the media equipment is in place for the press. If you have a photographer or videographer, make sure the photographer is taking pictures throughout the event. Lastly, a good survey asking the effectiveness of the town hall speakers, as well as potential topics about diabetes that the attendees would like to know more about, can inform where diabetes knowledge gaps are in the community and gauge town hall success.

9. Say Thank You to Sponsors and Supporters

The town hall meeting is now over and the event would not have been possible without the help of community sponsors, organizations, and volunteers. Make sure to send thank you letters to key participants, speakers, and contacts. This will help continue positive relationships with key players who fight against diabetes in the district.

10. Develop a Plan to Address Diabetes

A successful town hall keeps issues pertaining to diabetes fresh in the minds of community members. It is important to consider information from the town hall meeting and develop an action plan. Consider developing an ad hoc task force primarily to follow up on town hall recommendations. Speakers could potentially play a role in leading the task force. Community volunteers and organizations can begin to take action and keep diabetes in the forefront of the community.
### DIABETES TOWN HALL TIMELINE

* Use this sheet to help you plan your town hall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE PERSON (S)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 MONTHS (OR LONGER) PRIOR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Pick date and time</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Brainstorm potential speakers to contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Reserve location for event</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Advertise event (agenda, flyers, mailings, newsletters, social media, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Arrange media coverage of town hall</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WITHIN 1 MONTH PRIOR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Final reminder for speakers and contacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Final round of advertisement activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Continue to network with the community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DAY OF</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Arrive early at event location to set up resource table</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Distribute copies of agenda and evaluation survey to attendees</td>
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<td>o Take pictures during town hall</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AFTER</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Send follow-up thank you communications to participants and key contacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Develop and distribute press release about event</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Look through evaluation surveys to gauge event success</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Create a diabetes action plan for the community</td>
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