

MCOA

Legislative Event Planning Guide

Step by Step

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1. Each town and region decides whether to have one large event, multiple events, or a local one-on-one event. Regional Reps are to ensure that every legislature within their defined region is invited to attend "an event". **If a one-on-one event is planned – see #14 below.**
2. If a regional event is planned, the Regional Rep in conjunction with local COAs schedules a meeting for planning purposes.
3. All regional COAs play a role in the planning process at the meeting.
4. A mutually agreed-upon date for the workshop is established. Consideration must be given to the legislators' schedule. Mondays and Fridays are the best because Legislators are usually in the district. Tuesday through Thursday, they tend to be on Beacon Hill. One of the COAs should contact their legislator prior to this meeting to determine what dates and/or days are best.
5. An agenda for the workshop must be established at this time. Be sure to include MCOA's budget request (refer to MCOA's fact sheet), information on the impact of formula grant funding within your community (refer to "formula grant impact workshop"), any other additional information and/or programs which you feel illustrate the role of COAs in your community, and any other issues on whose behalf you choose to advocate. Presentations from the agenda should be brief. The entire workshop, including questions and answers, should not exceed one hour.
6. Determine who will present each topic at the workshop and which COA will take the lead in coordinating this effort. Consider using board members as presenters. Case scenarios also add a "human" element to the factual information. Handouts are always helpful, and don't confuse the facts... Or figures!! Select an MC for the event.
7. Don't forget the task of writing letters of invitation to the workshop for the legislators. Each COA should follow up by phone with their legislator to get a verbal commitment of attendance. Remember, legislators are preferable for the workshop, but aides are acceptable.
8. Light refreshments are always a nice touch. Potluck works fine. Just beverages are also politically correct!!
9. Organize your workshop site in a manner that is conducive to presentations and discussions. The workshop location should be in an area that is quiet and free of disruptions. Avoid a busy area in your senior center. Select a centrally located site. Decide if a P.A. system is needed.
10. Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the workshop to ensure that everything is in order. Be sure to introduce all legislators and COAs prior to starting on the agenda.
11. Wow them with your presentations!!!

12. Regional Reps should follow up with MCOA once the workshop has concluded. If further information is requested, be sure to follow through with it. Always phone your legislator to see if they have received the additional information.

13. Thank them in writing for attending and reiterate the message.

14. Recently many COAs have found it more effective to conduct a one-on-one meeting with their Senator and another with their Representative. We have found legislators to be more candid in a smaller setting, and each Council can speak directly as to why the Formula Grant (and the Incentive Grant) is important to that community. This is an opportunity to fully acquaint them with your operations, and you can combine MCOA handouts along with your own into a prepared packet (2 pocket folder, etc).

These individual meetings are easier to schedule and can be conducted on-site or in Boston at the Statehouse. In attendance the COA could include staff, board member and even a consumer to explain the importance of state funding assistance. Ask for 15-30 minutes; if on site, give them a tour of the Senior Center and introduce them to participants. Also note, some legislators hold monthly office hours at Senior Centers and this might be something you suggest to your legislator as a way to keep lines of communication open year round.

15. All 'events' need to be conducted by ML King Holiday. Ask your legislators to mention to the Ways and Means Chair during their annual budget priority meeting to make COA funding a priority — specifically use the word 'priority'.