



COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK



Stage an Ecofestival



Bruce Scott

Stage an Ecofestival

Earth Day Canada presents the *Stage an Ecofestival* booklet. It's your guide to motivating people in your community to become *green* achievers.

Note: This project is designed to be used in conjunction with your CAN manual. The Project Planner Pack may help you as well.

*Need help with
your ecofestival?*
**Contact Earth Day Canada
for assistance and resources,
and local contacts.**

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About Us

Earth Day Canada facilitates positive environmental action.

Earth Day Canada is a national environmental charitable organization that provides youth and community organizations, schools, businesses, government departments, and individual Canadians with an opportunity to make a positive difference. Our national network includes thousands of community organizers in every sector — all working for positive change.

Operating year-round, Earth Day Canada's mission is to improve the state of the environment by motivating and helping individual Canadians just like you to take positive environmental action. We offer interactive programs, a free community Earth Day/Earth Week public events calendar (available in March and April), and information and tools you'll use again and again.

Earth Day Canada is the national organizer of Earth Day/Earth Week in Canada. April 22 is International Earth Day — the largest environmental event in the world. Every year, millions of Canadians join people in about 100 countries in positive environmental action. This popular event has grown into Earth Week in Canada to accommodate the scores of events that take place across the country.

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Goals

Offer people in your community an opportunity to participate in a fun information-fest to update them on local environmental challenges, how these challenges affect their community's ecosystems and human health, and what they can do to be part of the solution.

Challenge

"What can I do?"

Most of us don't realize that we can all protect our community's environment. Put simply, here's why:

- 1.** Media coverage continually depicts environmental problems as daunting and overwhelming. Such doom and gloom is so disempowering that it makes people think that their actions — no matter how large or small — won't make a difference. It also turns people off, which leads to apathy.
- 2.** What makes environmental issues so confusing is that they're complex. Environmentalists, government, and industry hold different viewpoints on problems and their solutions. This contradictory information leaves us wondering what on Earth we can do to help.
- 3.** Many Canadians aren't fully aware of environmental challenges and how they affect the quality of human life. We're so busy! We have little time to get the facts about these issues.

Solution

Your group can stage an ecofestival to help spread the word about positive environmental action and to provide information on how environmental problems harm human health, wildlife, and the ecosystems we all live within. Your ecofestival can involve various community partners, such as individuals from area environmental organizations,

schools, local businesses, community and youth organizations, and government representatives.

Invite all the sectors in your community or just a few. The steps to organizing a small ecofestival are similar to organizing a large one. The subjects your ecofest addresses and the types of activities you have may influence the size of the festival.

Tips

- Before you decide to stage an ecofestival, determine if it's an effective means of sharing information in *your community*. Organizing an ecofestival takes a great deal of time and effort. Is your group willing to make this commitment?
- To make this project more manageable, you can co-organize the festival with other organizations, such as environmental groups, your local government, area schools, etc.
- Include fun, educational activities. The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet can show you how to organize an event that will motivate people to attend.
- Your ecofestival can provide information on some or all of your community's challenges. Refer to the *Community Partners for Positive Change* chapter in your CAN manual for a list of local partners you can work with and invite to the ecofestival, and for a list of sources you can access for local environmental information.

Some suggestions on what information to present:

- How your community manages its waste and how consumers, householders, organizations, companies, industries, etc., can divert materials from the waste stream
 - Locations of littered nature, urban, and recreation sites, and what people can do to rehabilitate them (The *Clean Up a Community Site* project and *Rehabilitate Community Sites* project may help you.)
 - How to protect your community's environment from household hazardous waste (The *Protect Your Community from Household Hazardous Waste* project may help you.)
 - The available wildlife habitat space in your community, facts on disappearing wildlife, and how to protect your community's biodiversity
- To inspire people to be green achievers, introduce resources and activities that stress *positive daily actions* that people can do in *manageable steps*. If people know they can take the steps to address the environmental challenges that affect their lives, they'll pay attention.

Suggestions for ecofestival activities:

- Invite a local radio station to host the event.
- If you're planning a family-oriented festival, arrange for children's activities, crafts, and games.
- Hold a workshop to show people how to make natural alternative household cleaners.
- Hold an awards ceremony for individuals who demonstrate initiative in taking part in environmental solutions.
- Hold "how to composting" workshops.
- Hold workshop on cycling safety. (Contact your local police department and provincial cycling association for information.)
- Through workshops or displays, raise awareness on how to reduce waste during gift-giving occasions.
- Get participants involved in planting part of the Canadian Natural Highway (native trees, shrubs, wildflowers). Contact Earth Day Canada to find out how.
- If the site is littered, arrange to involve participants in cleaning up part of the site.

Needs

1. A volunteer team

Check out the *Valuable Volunteers* chapter in your CAN manual. The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet can help you with more tips on volunteer recruitment and management.

2. Time to prepare for the festival

3. A day and a time

Instructions

a. Planning Committee

Recruit people who represent various interests and skills, such as youth, residents, youth leaders and teachers, local business and government representatives, etc., to join your planning committee.

b. Supervisors

Supervisors should oversee organizational tasks, and train event day volunteers.

c. Volunteers

Have volunteers organize the festival and help out on the day of the event.

Assign volunteers to research, scheduling, organizational, promotional, set-up and clean-up tasks.

On the festival day, assign a volunteer team to coordinate the day's events, greet guests, and deal with problems that arise.

Assign people to introduce and thank guest speakers and workshops, and thank presenters.

We suggest a minimum of three months. Some steps, such as obtaining permission to stage a festival and inviting displays, are time consuming.

Determine when the greatest number of people are likely to attend. What is the best time for organizers and participants? During school or work hours, or after? Consider how much time you need to set up and clean up the site.

Needs

4. A site: A large room or a gymnasium in a local school, a community centre, or a large outdoor area

Note:

The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet can help you with important basic public event requirements.

Instructions

Try to get space donated. If you're staging your festival outdoors, pick a definite rain location, and make sure participants know how to find it.

Before you determine your site, think about the size of your festival. You need enough space to accommodate speakers, workshops, display booths, tables, and community participants. You also need enough space to accommodate simultaneous workshops and presentations.

If you're planning to hold your festival in a park or conservation area, you'll probably need a special permit. Contact the owners or people who look after the site for details. Give yourself a lot of time to get a permit; processes such as these have been known to take longer than expected.



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5. Participants

Identify who (individuals and organizations) you want to invite to the ecofestival to visit displays and learn from presenters. These are the people you want to inspire to become *green* achievers.

- elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities
- residents
- community groups
- youth groups
- environmental groups
- local businesses
- local government representatives

Needs

6. Research potential displayers and local environmental information

Consider your sources' environmental focus issues and area(s) of expertise, policies, and environmental attitudes.

Instructions

Identify who to invite to be presenters and guest speakers.

- environmental organizations
- community and youth groups who are undertaking local environmental projects
- local businesses with successful environmental programs
- recycling companies
- businesses that offer products and services with a low environmental impact:
 - dry cleaners that use organic methods and recycle materials
 - government representatives and agencies, including your Public Works Department and your Parks and Recreation Department
 - manufacturers of environmentally responsible products and services
 - people who can provide information on the products and services that are absent in your community to encourage their use in your community.

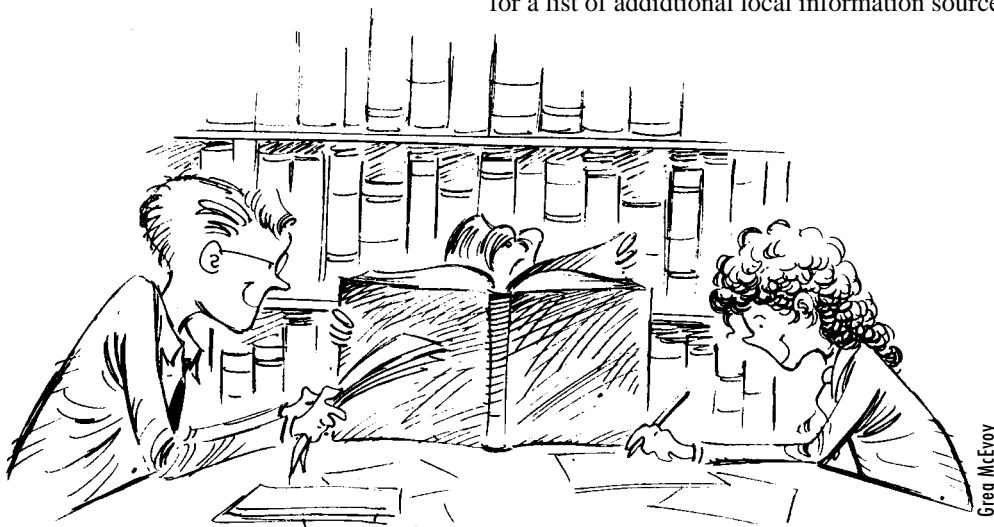
NOTE: Organizations and companies may have experience in staging exhibits. Ask them for advice and assistance, and loans of equipment and supplies. (Refer to the Equipment and Supplies section.) But before you approach them, determine what you're looking for: speakers, presentations, display materials, workshop presenters, information sources, etc.

Where to get information:

- public library for environmental, government, and business directories
- local environmental groups

Contact the Canadian Environmental Network (CEN) for a list of local environmental groups and their mandates. (See the Information Sources section.)

Refer to the *Community Partners for Positive Change* chapter in the CAN manual for a list of additional local information sources.



Greg McEvoy

Needs

7. Pick a focus

When identifying environmental issues to present, try not to focus on doom and gloom.

Try to provide information on positive actions for every negative environmental issue that is presented.

The environmental challenge(s) your ecofestival will address can be general (such as conserving local resources) or issue specific (such as responsible water use).

Once you've determined your focus and finished your research, identify who (individuals and organizations) you can invite to present or display solution-oriented action tips, programs, products, and services from the list of contacts already researched.

8. Invite presenters

Telephone potential displayers and speakers to invite them to attend. Have a brief summary of the ecofestival (schedule of events, refreshments, fees, etc.) in front of you. Don't forget to inquire if they charge a fee for their participation. If they are interested, send them a complete information package.

What to include in your information package:

- an outline of the ecofestival's details (the what, when, where, why, and how of the festival)
- a clear description of what you expect of the displayers
- a form for displayers to sign and send back to confirm their participation.
- a map describing the site's layout and directions for how to get there
- a checklist/information form for displayers to fill out to indicate their needs
- information on any legalities, such as insurance and security measures

What to ask displayer:

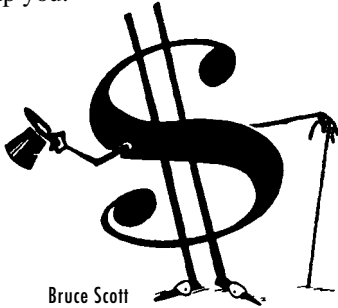
- Collect information about participating organizations for your files. You can request brochures, annual reports, etc.
- Ask them to send you copies or a description of the resources they will present or distribute.

Remember to update displayers and organizers about any changes that will affect them.

Needs

9. Funding

Create a budget to determine how much funding you need. The *Budgets and Fundraising* booklet can help you.



10. Equipment and supplies

Volunteers to handle equipment

The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet may help you with more information.

Instructions

- Do you want a large-scale festival? If you do, you'll need more funds. A small-scale event will cost you little or nothing.

How to raise funds:

- Charge for booths and display space. Be prepared to negotiate with local businesses and organizations who may have limited budgets. You may need to charge extra for displays that require electricity in order to cover electrical bills.
- Charge commission on sales of products sold at the festival.
- Sell Earth Day products, such as posters, T-shirts, etc. (Refer to the Earth Day brochure for merchandise information.)
- Stage a fundraising event.
- Ask organizations, businesses, and government departments to sponsor the event or to donate funds, equipment, and services. The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet can show you how.

Refer to the Earth Day trademark information insert.

Think about your supply and equipment needs. If you're not sure about your needs, make your best guess, and be ready to change your list as you plan. Try to get everything donated or loaned. The Success Story section in the *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet can help you with tips on obtaining donations and loans of equipment and supplies.

Consider:

Equipment

- access to toilets (Rent portable toilets or have their use donated from a local supplier. See "Toilets — Portable" in your telephone directory.)
- tents
- tables, chairs
- dividers or partitions
- bulletin boards
- lighting, electrical outlets, extension cords
- vans for transporting equipment

Volunteers

Recruit volunteers who can handle heavy equipment and those who know how to set up and operate the equipment you use.

Supplies

- writing paper (make pads from reusable scrap)
- pens, markers
- tacks, pins, tape
- scissors
- signage

Use signs to promote your projects. You may need signage to direct people to the event site, and to identify food, tools, and toilet facility areas. These can be made simply from corrugated cardboard mounted on stakes. The Earth Day community event poster has white space for overprinting event information.

Needs

11. Record keeping

The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet may help you with more information on maintaining a workbook.

Instructions

Ask organizers to record:

- completed tasks and the dates they're completed
- confirmations of attendance, donations, and sponsorships

Your records will save your group a great deal of time as you organize, promote, and launch your event.

12. A Plan for the site's layout and schedule

The *Event Staging and Management* booklet may help you with more tips.

- If setting up displays, create a layout plan of the available space to mark where you will locate each displayer. Indicate the first aid and public information area, washrooms, windows, doors, and electrical locations.
- Ask displayers what their equipment needs are, what they'll bring, and what you need to provide. For example, if they plan to bring an overhead projector, provide an electrical outlet.
- If you're planning a few workshops, create a schedule to record locations, time, space, and materials required.

13. Liability insurance

Liability insurance is a "must" for your ecofestival. Ask landowners for the requirements. Check to see if liability insurance is available through your own organization or through the landowner's policies.

14. Health & Safety policy

Each event will have its unique health and safety concerns. Adhere to the regulations applicable to each activity. Review the Safety Guidelines section.

Have a first aid kit ready, and contact St. John Ambulance to find out what other safety precautions to take, and if medical personnel need to be present.

Needs

15. Environmental impact policy

Instructions

Make sure organizers consider the festival's positive and negative environmental impacts. For example:

- Is recycled paper used for promotional materials?
- If you serve food at the festival, try to avoid using disposable dishes and cutlery.

Create an environmental policy for the festival, and inform displayers and participants of this policy. The *Public Event Staging and Management* booklet may help you with more information.

16. Promotions strategy

Tell people about your festival well in advance. The *Publicity and Promotions* booklet can show you how.



DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTAL VIEWPOINTS

Have the planning committee research the viewpoints held by environmentalists, industry, and government for the issues your ecofestival will address. These sectors don't always agree on environmental problems and their solutions.

We recommend that you represent all viewpoints at your festival to promote understanding and cooperation. Some people think that companies (manufacturers, retailers, etc.) shouldn't be festival presenters. We believe that inviting these companies will give the public an opportunity to ask questions about their policies.

Follow-up

- A few days after the festival, thank all participants either by phone or by letter.
- Promote the results of the ecofestival to participants and to the general public.
- Evaluate the success of the festival. Refer to Strategic Steps in your CAN Manual.

GO FOR IT!

An ecofestival will provide your group with a terrific opportunity to start new programs and implement changes. It can be the first step to getting participants and your community involved in interactive hands-on environmental projects.

Information Sources

Earth Day Canada for brochures to display, Earth Day posters, the name of your local Accredited Earth Day Coordinator, and a listing of community partners you can work with or invite to your event, etc.

Provincial Ministries/Departments of Environment, Energy, Natural Resources, and Health for provincial environmental information and action tips

Federal government departments for national environmental information and action tips

Canadian Environmental Network (for a listing of environmental organizations in your community)
P.O. Box 1289, Station B
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5R3
Tel: 613/563-2078
Fax: 613/563-7236
E-Mail: cen@web.apc.org

EcoNet

The Eco Education Network Project established by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, The Green Brick Road and Green Teacher. Services include two toll free phone lines and interactive web sites:

1-800-661-8830 for info on nature, wildlife, and parks

or

1-800-473-3638 or in Toronto (416) 465-5966 for information on energy, air, waste, and other environmental issues

or

<http://www.web.net/fon> for nature and wildlife

<http://www.gbr.org> for environmental education resources and events or drop in to:

The Green Brick Road, 3 Jackman Avenue (basement), Toronto (ON).



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