

“How to” Guide for Planning a Financial Fitness Fair

Financial literacy has become a buzzword in recent years, favored by community groups, businesses and politicians. The challenge is to make financial literacy as exciting to the general public as it is to those who promote it.

The recently formed Indiana Financial Literacy Coalition – a consortium of public and private organizations committed to advancing financial literacy among Hoosiers – hosted a Financial Fitness Fair in April 2005. The Fair had two objectives:

- (1) to bring financial literacy opportunities to the attendees; and
- (2) to establish a model for future Financial Fitness Fairs to take place statewide in 2006.

The Fair was successful in reaching more than 100 children and families from Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Central Indiana, Boys & Girls Clubs of Indianapolis and other organizations. Gov. Mitch Daniels proclaimed April 30, 2005, as “Financial Fitness Day” in support of the Fair.

This “how to” guide provides suggestions for coordinating a Financial Fitness Fair. These Fairs can reach large numbers of people in an entertaining atmosphere, plus allow participating organizations to stretch their resources by merging efforts with others.

In order to plan a Financial Fitness Fair, allow 4-6 months for preparation. Planning time will vary depending on size of the community, the number of organizations involved and the anticipated scope of the Fair.

Step 1: Form a Committee

A planning committee of 10-12 people is key. Committee members may be representatives from banks, accounting firms, Internal Revenue Service offices, schools/universities, media outlets and community groups. Both community groups that provide financial literacy programs to offer at the Fair and that reach underserved populations to be invited to the Fair are useful.

Break the committee down into working groups of 2-3 people each. Suggestions for assignments include:

- A. **Fundraising** – establishes a budget, including possible prize giveaways to provide incentive to attend; raises funds to cover costs;
- B. **Invitations/Registration** – coordinates the sending of invitations to community groups, particularly to underserved populations; oversees on-site registration process;
- C. **Itinerary/Program** – determines program offerings, such as presentations and display booths; prepares a written program to be distributed at the Fair;
- D. **Public Relations** – arranges for attention-getters such as a mayor’s proclamation; distributes news releases and invites media presence;
- E. **Volunteer Coordination** – solicits community support for program offerings and for miscellaneous on-site needs; addresses needs for volunteers’ presentations and display booths.

Committee structure – There should be one committee chair, possibly a co-chair, and each working group should assign a leader. The chairperson establishes a planning committee meeting schedule and maintains contact with each working group leader throughout the planning process. Either the chair or a co-chair should distribute agendas prior to each meeting and minutes following each meeting.

“How to” Guide for Planning a Financial Fitness Fair

Step 2: Determine Scope of the Fair

Start by asking the basics – who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Who: There are two main options, a defined audience or the general public. For a defined, invitation-only event, a close working relationship with at least one community group will be essential. If the fair is open to the public, support from local media will be helpful. The age of the audience depends on whether the fair is invitation-only or open to the public. In general, the broader the age range, the larger the turnout at the event

The capacity of the Fair depends on how many people the planners would like to reach. Considerations include the ability to bring in the desired number of participants and the ability to accommodate a crowd (e.g., physical space, number of volunteers available, funds available).

What: Options include a stand-alone Financial Fitness Fair or weaving a financial fitness component into an existing community event, such as a city-wide festival. Fair organizers also should determine which of the elements implied in the name “Financial Fitness Fair” will be present. Ideally the Fair should include a balance of financial information, fitness elements (e.g., jump rope giveaways and healthy cooking demonstrations to emphasize that financial fitness is a lifelong habit) and “fair-like” activities (clowns, balloons, etc.).

Where: Location options include schools, community centers, YMCA facilities or other sites large enough to accommodate the event. Depending on location and the intended audience, the planning committee might consider providing free transportation from a central location.

When: In general, 2006 Financial Fitness Fairs should be scheduled on or around Saturday, April 29, 2006, in anticipation of a governor’s proclamation. If that date is not convenient, another April date is recommended, since April is Financial Literacy Month and Financial Literacy for Youth Month. However any time in 2006 will help accomplish the goal of making Hoosiers more financially literate.

Why: The way people handle money impacts every area of their well-being, affecting health care, housing, education and more. Communities thrive when individuals thrive.

How: The planning committee forms working groups that meet on a frequent, as-needed basis. The full committee meets once a month, more frequently closer to the event date, to report on progress and to assess needs. Communities that establish Financial Fitness Fairs may obtain Indiana Financial Literacy Coalition endorsement; for more information, contact [Carlos Alexander](#), IFLC member, 317-578-0789

Step 3: Implement Plans

Once the committee is in place and the goals of the Fair are determined, the individual working groups should establish timelines of specific tasks. Because event planning can become hectic as the event date nears, each working group should address most details well in advance of the Fair date.

“How to” Guide for Planning a Financial Fitness Fair

The pilot Financial Fitness Fair was to serve not only as a model, but as testing ground for trial and error. The following are some lessons learned from the pilot project:

A. Fundraising

Keep costs low, and there may be no need to fundraise outside of the planning committee. One option to lower costs is to limit the number of expected participants. Other options are to keep the Fair short in duration to avoid providing a meal and to offer only programs and activities that are available at no charge. For additional cost savings, contact local businesses to provide in-kind services (photography, printed banners and posters, etc.) in exchange for recognition in the program and in news releases.

If there is a need to turn to outside groups, make the funding structure realistic. The pilot Fair sought support in the amounts of \$3,000 for a platinum level, \$2,000 for a gold level, and either \$1,000 or \$500 for a silver level. The result was two platinum sponsors and 10 silver sponsors – no mid-level gold sponsors. It would have been better to offer three levels: \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500.

B. Invitations/Registration

If the event is invitation-only, it helps to pre-register participants. Pre-registration forms should include phone numbers, in case of a need to follow-up.

It can be a challenge to motivate people to come to a financial literacy event. If the fair is invitation-only, invite members of more than one group. It also helps to offer an incentive, such as prize giveaways. The pilot Fair planners sent a reminder mailing with information about prizes one week before the Fair.

C. Itinerary/Program

Offer only one information seminar at a time, unless there are hundreds of participants present. Do not schedule any seminars at the same time as lunch, if applicable.

D. Public Relations

To obtain a mayor’s proclamation, contact the mayor’s office to inquire about procedure, and offer to send suggested wording.

Make sure that all sponsors/contributors/organizers are mentioned in all news releases.

The morning of the fair, call all media contacts with a last-minute reminder.

E. Volunteer Coordination

Assessing the number of likely volunteers helps gauge capacity of the Fair event. It is better to aim for quality over quantity; quality is in large part determined by the number of volunteers available.

Ensure that each organization presenting a display booth clarifies its needs in writing by filling out a standardized form.

Have backup plans in place in case any of the seminar presenters have last-minute emergencies and cannot attend the Fair.

“How to” Guide for Planning a Financial Fitness Fair

Step 4: The Day of the Fair

- Set up of tables, chairs, balloons, display booths, banners, etc., should be completed the day before the Fair. The day of the Fair, volunteers should arrive 1-2 hours in advance, depending on their duties.
- The first stop at the Fair is the registration area, where participants either submit pre-registration forms or complete onsite registration forms if they are walk-ins. Each Fair participant should receive a program which shows the day’s events and lists all sponsors/contributors/organizers.
- Some volunteers should be available to answer participants’ questions and to guide the flow of traffic. Events could include opening ceremonies (e.g., the mayor reads a proclamation), games for children, seminars for adults and drawings for prizes.
- Volunteers also need to be in place to accompany visiting media and to assist with food/snacks if applicable. If food is being served, have large disposable trash containers on hand.

Step 5: Post-Fair Assessment

Within 2-3 days after the Fair, the planning committee should convene one last time to assess the fair. The number of participants is important for follow-up news releases. It also is extremely important to discuss and document which aspects of the Fair went well, and what areas were in need of improvement.

A community event such as a Financial Fitness Fair can become an annual happening. This post-fair assessment assures that each succeeding Financial Fitness Fair run more smoothly.

Attached are several sample documents from the pilot Fair that can serve as guides, to be modified according to needs. For more information about Financial Fitness Fairs, please contact [Laura Wilson](#) at the Indiana Bankers Association, 317-921-3135.

Partner Organizations of the Indiana Financial Literacy Coalition:

- Central Indiana Academy of Finance
- Community Bankers Association of Indiana
- Emmis Communications
- Family, Career and Community Leaders of America
- Financial Planning Association
- Indiana Association for Community Economic Development
- Indiana Bankers Association
- Indiana CPA Society
- Indiana Department of Education
- Indy Saves
- Internal Revenue Service
- Junior Achievement of Central Indiana
- National Association of Black Accountants
- Networks Financial Institute

[Appendix A: Sponsor Benefits](#)

[Appendix B: Fund Request](#)

[Appendix C: Pre-Registration Form](#)

[Appendix D: Program](#)

[Appendix E: PR Summary](#)

[Appendix F: Fact Sheet](#)

[Appendix G: News Release](#)

[Appendix H: Proclamation](#)

[Appendix I: Display Booth Form](#)