

Tips for Successfully Running and Promoting Your AHC Speaker or Book-Discussion Program

Connect with the Speaker or Facilitator:

You have already contacted the speaker/facilitator before applying to AHC for funding. Now make sure that the speaker/facilitator knows what to expect.

1. Contact him/her at least once more before the program to confirm details.
2. Ask the speaker/facilitator to arrive early enough for any last minute briefing. Be sure to tell him/her the kind of audience to expect and the level of knowledge the audience may have about the topic or book to be presented.
3. Discuss what information you can use to briefly introduce the speaker/facilitator at the program itself.
4. Discuss technical issues such as podiums, microphones, and the size of room.
5. Give travel advice or directions and give the speaker/facilitator the chance to ask you for any other information he/she might need.

Developing an Audience and Promoting Your Program:

Developing audiences, both in terms of quantity and quality, takes extra effort. Sometimes the personal touch can be even more important than the press. This list will help you get the word out about your program, as well as help you think of a variety of ways to develop local audiences.

Publicity Materials

1. Postcards, posters, and bookmarks are all good ways to publicize your event. AHC provides you with two posters and a stack of bookmarks in your award packet. If you need more of these materials, please call 602/257-0335 X23, or e-mail sweber@azhumanities.org.
2. Put posters, sign-up sheets, and news releases out early. People need time to hear and think about the program.
3. Go beyond the publicity materials supplied in your award packet. Posters can be duplicated and put up in grocery stores or community centers around town.
4. Use an unusual color for your flyers or postcards to make them stand out in the mail.

Media

1. Well-written publicity that can be easily used by your local newspaper and radio station will help, and to that end we include a sample press release for your event.
2. Remember to use the AHC logo and/or the phrase “This program was made possible in part by a grant from the Arizona Humanities Council” in all your publicity and promotional materials. Do not use the phrase, “sponsored by the Arizona Humanities Council,” as AHC is a funding source, not a sponsor. The AHC logo (www.azhumanities.org/logo/) is available to download or you can find a hard copy in your award packet.
3. Make use of organizations’ newsletters, both your own and others, who can help you publicize your event.
4. It’s always valuable to develop a personal relationship with the local press. Learn people’s names, their interests, their deadlines and how they prefer to receive information. Is e-mail okay? Many of them will not want to open attachments, so it is often better to send your release in the body of the message. Would they prefer a fax? Follow up on any press release you send. Be respectful of their time. Be prepared to answer their questions and/or send them additional materials that they may request, such as digital photos.
5. Radio stations often look for local stories and would welcome the opportunity to promote your program in public service announcements, and/or through interviews with you and/or your speaker/facilitator on a talk show.

Personal Contact

1. Encourage and invite people to come. Don’t wait for people to ask – tell them!
2. Phone potential participants or make other personal contacts. Encourage participants to invite others.
3. Check with your speaker/facilitator to see if they have any local contacts or connections that could help spread the word.

New Audiences

1. Encourage people from a variety of age groups and occupations to join. Try to attract people who represent a wide range of viewpoints. Encourage segments of your community who might not otherwise come. These efforts will make discussions more dynamic!
2. Invite new people in the community to take part. This is an excellent way to get acquainted.

3. Reach out to nearby communities that may not host speaker presentations or book-discussion programs. Contact media in those communities.

Support from your Elected Representatives and AHC Board Members

1. AHC asks that you notify your congressional representatives (federal) and legislators (state) about your project. You and your project provide some of the best evidence of the importance of humanities programming. Your award packet includes this sample invitation letter and list of addresses for your congressional representatives. You can find your state representatives by clicking here (www.azleg.state.az.us/MemberRoster.asp).
2. You are also encouraged to invite the AHC Board Members who live in your area. Your award packet includes a Board list with their addresses.

Logistics

1. Schedule the event for the convenience of the participants. Look for days and times away from regular community activities, such as church, sporting events, or community concerts.
2. Refreshments are always crowd-pleasers!
3. Local coordinator duties can be shared or delegated, such as calling participants or making refreshments. Volunteers often enjoy tasks that can make them feel a greater ownership of the program.
4. Distribute the audience evaluations found in your AHC award packet and encourage participants to fill them out. Consider thoughtfully the suggestions of the participants and use the responses for planning subsequent events.

Preparations on the Day of the Program:

1. Arrive early enough to check the site.
2. Check the sound equipment to make sure it works properly and everyone can hear.
3. Make sure the room is ready with chairs and/or a refreshment center with beverages, food, and napkins.
4. Greet people as they come to the program.
5. Prominently display an Arizona Humanities Council poster and announce AHC support when you introduce the speaker/facilitator (this is required!).

Here is a suggestion:

“This project is funded in part by a grant from the Arizona Humanities Council. Through AHC’s support for programs like this one, the people of Arizona benefit from federal funds allocated through the National Endowment for the Humanities. In other words, this project is an example of your tax dollars returning to Arizona to benefit you and others in this community.”

6. Arrange to have photographs taken of the program – a good photo image can help your future publicity efforts. Click [here](#) for tips on how to take a good publicity photo with a digital camera.
7. Begin and end on time. Leave participants wanting more, but not feeling cheated. Encourage them to attend future programs. Capture contact information on the evaluations so you can keep them in the loop for future programs.
8. AHC appreciates and welcomes donations from people who attend our programs. Encourage attendees to use the donation slip found on the bottom half of the audience evaluation.