

Planning a Bench Show



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These resources were developed to help committees who are planning and updating their bench shows.

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Introduction

This planning book was designed to help you plan your bench show. If it is your community's first bench show you might use all of the material. If you have already had bench shows in your community, you will get some hints or ideas on ways to improve your show. You will also end up with an ongoing record for future bench show committees and organizers.

How to Use the Planning Book

The planning book is divided into the basic steps or tasks needed to put on a bench show. There is a list of resources at the end of the book. Throughout the book are examples taken from communities in Alberta. Use appropriate sections depending on your plans and size of show. You may want to review all of the material at once or section by section. At the end of the planning book are worksheets to record your plans. These can be photocopied for your use. Once your show is over, these will go together and form a record for bench show organizers the following year.

You will also need five dividers. Label the first one with the current year and place your completed worksheets there. You then have a planning file for the following year.

What is a Bench Show?

Fairs have been part of community activities in Alberta since the late 1800s. Fairs are an entertainment event, an educational opportunity, a competition and any activity that suits the needs of the community. A fair may include livestock classes, various games and activities, contests, a parade, midway, rodeo, races and so on.

One part of this traditional fair is the bench show. It is a term used in Alberta to describe classes in sewing, handicrafts, cooking, artwork and photography. Often a bench show is held alongside a horticulture show and seed show. The three may be held together inside the same building. The steps outlined in this planning book are applicable to all three shows, but the examples are from bench shows.

Who Puts on the Bench Show?

At the very least there must be one or two very committed individuals to get the idea going. Generally, agricultural societies host the fair. From this evolves a fair committee and a bench show committee. To go along with the bench show committee are committees for the various classes. There may be any number of people involved with the bench show depending on the size of the show, how long it runs and the number of classes and entries.

Developing Your Plan

Developing a plan for your bench show is an important first step. It ensures everyone is heading in the same direction with the same goals. Before you jump into planning, ask yourselves:

- why are we having the bench show?
- what do we want to achieve?

If everyone is clear about the reasons for holding the bench show, they are more likely to work towards the same goal. Listed below are some possible reasons for holding a bench show:

- tradition
- pulling the community together
- fun
- showing our work

You also want a clear idea of who you want to participate. For example, you may want participation or entries from:

- seniors
- crafters
- children
- cooks

You may want attendance from:

- parents
- friends
- relatives
- the whole town
- families
- visitors and tourists

Now focus on your bench show. On a blank sheet of paper, write down your reasons for holding the show and who you want to be involved. Place this sheet in your planning file when you are finished. This is a useful activity for both the experienced and the novice bench show planners.

Decide on the Length of the Show

Once you have determined the reasons for your bench show, decide how long the show should last. Depending on your community, history and season, your bench show could be a half-day event or a week long show.

From Manning, Edmonton, and Chestermere...

Manning holds a four-day fair and rodeo. The Home Garden competition sponsored by Edmonton Northlands runs for almost a week. Chestermere runs a one-day show with bench show exhibits open for one day.

Determine the Size of the Show

To determine the size of the bench show, consider the following:

- space available
- money available
- number of people willing to work
- number of people willing to attend
- other community events and activities

At this point, you may not know what each of these are, but as you continue to plan, keep these factors in mind. Eventually, you will need to set a limit to the size of your bench show. If you have already done a bench show, you will have some idea of the appropriate size.

Choose a Theme

Some fair committees choose a theme as a starting point. Choose an idea that fits your community and the type of show you are planning.

From Edgerton, Grande Prairie and Altario...

- 20 Years of Homemade Memories — Edgerton
- It's a New Frontier — Grande Prairie
- A Salute to Farmers — Altario

As a committee, brainstorm for potential themes for the next bench show. Use a large sheet of flipchart paper and list all the ideas that come to mind. Write down all the ideas with no comments or criticisms. Ideas often come from developing something that seemed unusual at the time. Save the list in your planning file for use the following year.

Schedule Events

A bench show can be held along with other events that make up a fair. Be sure to coordinate the timing of the full day's activities so that people can attend everything.

For the bench show committee, it is important to make up your schedule so that you don't conflict with important happenings at the fair.

For example, everyone loves to see the parade. Try not to schedule taking of entries at the same time. Not only will the exhibitors have trouble getting their entries to you, but the volunteers working at your bench show will miss the important event as well. Develop a schedule and check that there are no major conflicts.

From High Prairie...

Schedule of Events

Friday, August 14

Open Draft Horse Competitions

Saturday, August 15

Horse Show

Petting Zoo

Farmer's Market

Children's Activities (Games)

Entertainment (Clown, Etc.)

Adult Novelty Events (Log Sawing, Nail Driving)

B-B-Q Supper

Evening Grandstand Entertainment

Sunday, August 16

Cattle Show

Little Britches Rodeo

Gymkhana

Pancake Breakfast..... Saturday & Sunday Morning

Horse Shoe Tournament..... T.B.A.

Horse & Wagon Rides..... Saturday & Sunday

Candy Drop..... T.B.A.

Displays..... Daily

Concession (Ag. Society)..... Daily

Exhibit Hall..... Saturday & Sunday

Draw a picture of your successful bench show. Each person on your committee could draw her or his own picture and explain it to the others. This does not have to be a sophisticated picture but can be done with words and stick people. The picture answers the questions:

- who is there?
- what are the people doing?
- what does the show look like?

The idea is to get people thinking about a successful event. Do this activity every year. This might seem to be a difficult activity but it can bring your committee together.

Develop a Written Plan

In order to plan a successful bench show, you must start early. If you have already had a bench show, planning starts immediately after the show with an evaluation of the event. This forms the basis for the next year's show. If this is your first show, you will be starting from scratch. You will need to use people's experiences and observations from other fairs as guides. To give you some idea of the time involved in planning, look at "Some Key Steps in Developing a Written Plan for Your Show."

Some Key Steps in Developing a Written Plan for Your Show		
Key Tasks	Consider the Following	Time Before Fair
Prize list	content	8-12 months
	printing	4-6 months
	distribution	4-6 months
Judges	initial contact	minimum 6 months
	contract returned	3-4 months
Supplies	display materials	5-6 months
	order tags, ribbons, trophies, etc.	3-4 months
Volunteers	job descriptions	6-8 months
	recruitment	6 months
	reminders	1 month
	recognition	after show

Using some of your key tasks and the example above, you can develop your own timeline. You now have an idea of how early you must start to plan.

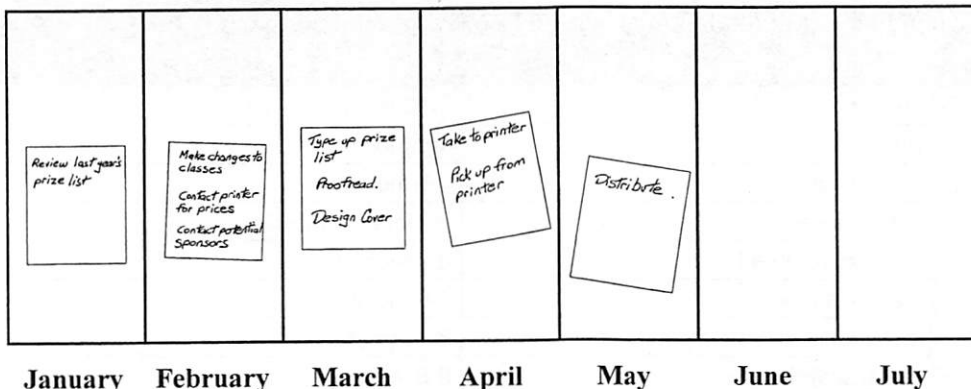
Developing a written outline by month is very helpful to all committees. It provides easy reference so that any volunteer can turn to a certain month and know what needs to be done.

The activity described on the next page has been used successfully to plan an event. It describes one way to develop a timeline.

Steps in Developing a Timeline

- Hang a long roll of paper across a wall. At the right-hand side, tape a picture of the ideal bench show drawn by your committee.
- Put the months leading up to the bench show across the top of the paper.
- Use "Post-it" notes to list all the tasks to do for a successful bench show. An example would be to develop the prize list.
- Attach these papers to the chart in the order the tasks need to be done. Start from the picture of the successful bench show and work backwards in time, always asking "What has to happen before this step?"
- Group the related tasks as you go. There may be many activities required in one month and only one task required in another.
- Break down each activity into smaller steps. For example, think of all the steps needed to design the prize list cover. Note when these tasks need to be done.
- Review the steps to see if anything is missing.
- Ask for each task, "Who will do this?"

Example Steps in Developing and Distributing a Prize List



This detailed outline will help your committee see the time frame required, the activities and the tasks involved. This is your plan for the bench show. It is better to have everything written down ahead of time than to do a last minute scramble. It also helps you in recruiting help and writing job descriptions for volunteers.

Now that you have developed a framework for your bench show, you can begin filling in the details. Once the ideas are on paper, tasks and timelines become clear.

Finances

Most bench shows need cash to cover expenses. Try to answer these questions.

- how much money will your committee need to produce a quality show?
- how much money is available?

Whether the amount is a few hundred or several thousand dollars, your committee needs to have a clear picture of finances.

Make a Budget

A budget is an estimate of your financial position. With experience and practice a committee can develop a budget close to the final financial picture. If you have records, review the financial report from the last bench show to get an idea of expenses and income.

Next, estimate the expenses and income of any new projects. Income can come from various sources and should be detailed.

Use the worksheet "Budget" on page 35 to list the income and expenses for your bench show. Once the show is over you can fill in the actual figures. The following example gives you a picture of what a budget might look like.

Example Budget for a Bench Show		
Expenses	Budget	Actual
Advertising	\$300	\$278
Decorating	\$150	\$76
Printing Prize List	\$200	\$200
Judges	\$400	\$210
Postage	\$50	\$65
Prize Money	\$1200	\$1405
Ribbons	\$200	\$150
Total	\$2500	\$2384
Income		
Entry Fees	\$100	\$150
Fund Raising	\$1500	\$1600
Grants	\$1000	\$750
Donations	\$500	\$600
Total	\$3100	\$3100

Estimate Cash Flow

If you are planning to raise all your money at the bench show, how will you pay the bills for the advertising, printing, and materials acquired long before the event? Completing a cash flow chart is important as it identifies when expenses and income are expected to occur.

Use the example below to help you develop a cash flow statement using your committee's plan. Beside each step in the plan (see page 5), note the expenses. Total the expenses for each month and list them on the included "Cash Flow" worksheet. Do the same for the expected income. What changes do you need to make so you have the money when it is needed?

Example Cash Flow For a Bench Show			
Month (Balance From Last Year)	Income	Expenses	Balance
January		\$200	\$1300
February	\$1500	\$200	\$2400
March			
April		\$150	\$2250
May		\$200	\$2050
June		\$150	\$1900
July	\$600	\$1600	\$900
August		\$300	\$600
September			
October	\$1000		\$1600
November			
December			

Preparing a budget and cash flow statement before the bench show eliminates surprises. Changes can be made at the planning stages for any shortfall or surpluses of funds.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the "lifeblood" of any not-for-profit organization. It is critical to ensure that the methods your organization uses to recruit, train and support these volunteers reflects a well organized and caring organization. If volunteers are selected with care for specific tasks that reflect their individual talents and interests, the entire organization benefits.

There are four major steps in an effective volunteer management program:

- prepare
- orientate and train
- recruit
- recognize

Prepare

Before you start to look for volunteers decide what types of committees are needed to have a successful bench show. You may have already made some of these decisions if you worked through the section "Developing Your Plan." Some bench shows have separate committees for various classes (e.g., visual arts, horticulture, handicrafts, junior and baking) as well as committees to look after trophies, displays, hosting, phoning, prize lists and so on.

From Vermilion...

Agricultural Products

Grains, Grasses, Sheaves – Margaret Gibson

Horticulture Products

Vegetables, Fruits, Flowers, Plants – Albertha van Wageningen, Ruby Ruud, Dorothy Westman, Stephania Jacula

Home Products

Canning and Cooking – Delsie Strome, Olga Lychak

Handicrafts

Sewing and Stitchery – Shirley Roy, Ruby Samuelson, Marguerite McDonald

Photography, Painting and Drawing

Knitting, Crocheting, Miscellaneous-General Arts – Frances King, Sally Stewart, Ruth Oldenburg

Youth Section

Senior Citizens and Group Specials – Opal Hughes, Grace Bowman
Marian Barr, Bev Green

School Fair Exhibit

Sewing and Handicrafts, Cooking, Arts and Crafts, Agricultural Products – Lil Sweet

Bev Green

Committees need both thinkers and doers. Be sure you have some of each. Most bench shows would not exist without the dedication of volunteers. It is important to carefully recruit, train, and support those volunteers.

What Volunteers Do We Need?

Before you begin to recruit volunteers, determine:

- what jobs need to be done
- what skills are required to do the job
- possible volunteers that have the necessary skills to do the jobs

Use the worksheet "Volunteers" on page 37 to write down the jobs to be done and the skills required. Don't worry about possible volunteers yet.

Example of Jobs to be Done		
Jobs to be Done	Skills Required	Possible Volunteers
<i>develop display material</i>	<i>artistic</i>	<i>Betty</i>
	<i>organized</i>	<i>Joan</i>
	<i>quick worker</i>	<i>Sally</i>

Recruit

Recruiting is getting the right person in the right job, with the right skills at the right time. This involves defining the type of jobs to be done, making a list of possible volunteers and then matching the volunteers to the jobs.

Write Job Descriptions

The people responsible for recruiting others should have a clear understanding of what the job involves so they can tell potential volunteers. The following job description identifies the purpose of the job, the responsibilities, the skills needed, the relationships, the expected time commitment, and the benefits. A copy of the worksheet is included. For each job you identified on the worksheet, "Volunteers," write up a job description. When the bench show is over, have all volunteers review their job descriptions and make any necessary changes.

Example Job Description
Purpose of the Job: Give a general statement of what the job is and why it is necessary.
• <i>person in charge of obtaining advertising</i>
Responsibilities: List the responsibilities and duties of the job.
• <i>contact all free media opportunities</i>
• <i>work within advertising budget</i>
• <i>write stories and advertisements</i>
Skills Needed: List the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes.
• <i>good writing skills</i>
• <i>outgoing, works with timelines</i>
• <i>likes people</i>
Relationships: List other committee members and head convenor.
• <i>reports to fair committee</i>
Expected Time Commitment: Be specific — weekly, monthly, long term, self determined, flexible, day of the bench show, etc.
• <i>attend fair committee meetings (1 1/2 hours each)</i>
• <i>four meetings in the winter</i>
• <i>six meetings prior to the show</i>
Benefits: Describe what is in it for the volunteer.
• <i>experience with developing advertising</i>
• <i>opportunity to work with their own time</i>
• <i>flexibility</i>

List Possible Volunteers

Now that you have job descriptions, make a list of possible volunteers. Do this on the worksheet "Volunteers." Remember, people volunteer for different reasons. The organization should make every effort to satisfy the individual's own needs when filling positions.

Examples of Volunteers

The "people" person might be good at social committee work, canvassing, or public relations.

The "outgoing" person might enjoy being a master of ceremonies, media spokesperson, or committee leader.

The "achievement" person might look forward to program planning, chairing a committee, setting up displays, or being on the executive.

Recruitment Tips

The best recruiters for volunteers are those who are happy with your organization. Try to think what would interest you in volunteering. People are attracted to programs that use positive, honest, enthusiastic appeals.

- Have current volunteers tell their story at meetings or gatherings of membership.
- Be interested in your members, not only as volunteers but as individuals.
- Don't over-recruit. Volunteers will lose interest if they have signed up to help and there isn't a job for them.

- Involve volunteers in decision making. Make certain they feel they are an important part of the organization.
- Recognize their efforts. Saying "thanks" goes a long way.

Any "type" of person could do a very good job at any volunteer position, but both the bench show and the volunteer benefit most from a perfect match.

Search for Volunteers

The first place you might start is within your committee. Other sources of volunteers might be other community organizations, the welcome wagon, schools, or places where people gather such as church groups.

If the potential volunteer accepts the offer, welcome him or her into your group.

Orientate and Train

The new volunteer will appreciate an orientation session about your organization. Providing some basics about the structure, policies, procedures, and activities done in the past helps the new volunteer understand the group. The best time to do this is right after the initial meeting. Ensure each volunteer has a job description to refer to. After the bench show, have each volunteer revise his or her job description for use the following year.

Training may not always be possible, but could be part of the agenda during regular meetings or as an outside event. Provision of training and upgrading of skills shows support for the volunteer and serves to motivate and build commitment to the organization.

Recognize

A simple smile and a warm "Thank you" may encourage a volunteer to take on another job. But what happens when a volunteer works hard and gets results, but nobody notices or he/she receives only critical feedback? Soon the volunteer will begin to question whether he/she makes a difference and whether the effort is worthwhile.

There are many ways of recognizing the efforts of volunteers working with bench shows. Creative suggestions range from pictures of the committee being put in the local paper, to a thank you supper, and special name tags for the day of the show. Asking the person for advice and guidance is a more subtle, and for some, a more motivating vote of appreciation. You may want to ask the person how she or he would like to be recognized.

From Edgerton...

Edgerton holds a volunteer appreciation supper for the volunteers and judges the night before the bench show.

Volunteer Dissatisfaction

The signs of volunteer dissatisfaction are not always evident. In cases where there are concerns about a volunteer and his or her effect on the organization, there is no easy answer. Treat the volunteer fairly. Ask if he/she needs assistance or if there is something else that he/she would rather do. The volunteer may actually be looking for a change. The problem should be dealt with before the volunteer is lost or does some damage to your committee spirit.

Part of keeping volunteers is training successors so the same volunteer is not stuck with the same job year after year. Encourage volunteers to work together and share information.

A satisfied volunteer will:

- do a good job for the organization
- have only good things to say about your organization
- give your organization a good reputation
- recruit volunteers by word and example
- be committed and enthusiastic

Remember, all volunteers can be useful if put in the right job.

Capturing the energy, enthusiasm and creativity of your volunteers requires a conscious effort. The energy you put into preparing, recruiting, training and recognizing your volunteers will pay back many times over.

The Prize List

The prize list is an important part of your bench show. It lists classes, guidelines, fees, deadlines and prizes. It can be the biggest advertiser to encourage people to enter exhibits in the bench show and for others to visit the exhibit hall. Clear class listing will also reduce misunderstandings.

What Classes Should Go in the Prize List?

If your organization has already done a bench show, take out the prize list from last year. As you go through the following suggestions, you may want to delete some classes and add others.

From Vegreville...

Adults

Section 9 – Home Baking

NO cake mixes permitted unless specified. All baking to be shown in plastic bags, otherwise it will be disqualified.

Award: \$5, \$4, \$3

Yeast Breads and Rolls

Class:

1. White Bread, one regular size loaf
2. Brown Bread, one regular size loaf
3. Fruit Bread, one regular size loaf
4. Health Bread, one regular size loaf
5. Coffee or Tea Ring (yeast and sweet dough) approx. 10"
- 5a. Cinamon Rolls, 3, standard method, unspiced sweet dough
6. Raised Doughnuts, no icing, 3
7. Plain White Buns, 3
- 7a. Brown Buns, 3

Quick Breads

8. Baking Powder Biscuits, plain, 3
9. Bran Muffins, 3
10. Cake Doughnuts, plain, 3
11. Vegetable Loaf, 1/2 (carrot, zucchini, beet, etc.)
12. Fruit Loaf, 1/2 (banana, apple, date, etc.)

Cakes – One Half

13. Cake, Angel, no icing, One Half
14. Cake, Chocolate, (not layer) iced, One Half
15. Cake, Gingerbread, not iced, One Half
16. Cake, Marble, no icing, One Half

The prize list classes should reflect the lifestyle of your community and provide opportunities for all segments of your community to take part in the competition. Choose classes suitable for youth, seniors, special groups and for skills ranging from beginners to craftsmen to encourage total community participation. Periodically review the list to ensure that it remains up-to-date.

From Edgerton...

Junior Competition

- tiny tots
- microwave baking
- arts and crafts
- horticulture
- baking

Senior Citizen Competition

Open Classes

- sewing
- quilting
- crocheting
- knitting
- visual arts
- painting
- photography
- baking

How Do You Develop a Prize List?

Many committees use prize lists from past shows as an outline for each year. If this is your first bench show, gather prize lists from surrounding communities. Use the following ideas:

- brainstorm for crafts, baking and sewing ideas that the community might be interested in entering in a show
- ask each other – "What classes would you enter?"
- contact local craft instructors, store owners and clubs to find out what is new and what people are making
- use the following checklist to assess your prize list

Tailor the prize list to fit the lifestyle of your community.

The Prize List

- does it reflect the interests of the people in your community?
- are there classes or sections that fit with your theme?

Does it provide opportunities for the following groups to take part in your bench show?

- children
- seniors
- busy moms and dads
- teenagers
- crafters (both beginners and advanced)
- special groups

Select Classes for the Prize List

If this is your first bench show, you will be choosing classes. If you already have a prize list, you may want to change it or add new classes. Use your imagination. The following ideas might get you started.

Ideas for Bench Show Classes

Extra challenge classes. For example, in food classes you might include:

- spectacular desserts
- homemade pasta
- preserved meals
- theme place settings

Special classes. For example, these might be:

- homecoming, ethnic
- environmental
- theme classes for the fair

Recognition awards. Encourage entries and acknowledge good workmanship. Possible awards are:

- grand aggregate
- draw prize for each category where all exhibitors are eligible
- family awards
- first-time exhibitors
- section awards

Special sponsorship classes by national or local companies (see the example on the next page).

Plan well ahead. Contact companies early and inform the community of their participation to encourage entries.

From Irma...

57. CANBRA FOODS LTD. - SPECIAL FOR ORANGE CHIFFON CAKE: One whole cake. Label from West Oil to accompany exhibit. Prizes donated by Canbra Foods.

58. PAULIN CHAMBER'S SPECIAL: Paulin's Honey Graham Wafers "Favourite Dessert"
Competition: Redemption Coupons valued at: 1st - \$10.00; 2nd - \$6.00; 3rd - \$4.00. Entries to be exhibited in a small container only. All entries must be accompanied by an empty Paulin's Honey Graham Wafer box.

If you already have a prize list, set some ground rules for changing it. These changes should be made by informed people. Depending on the wishes of the group, members of each committee could decide on changes to their classes, or the larger group may make the changes.

For each bench show, answer the following.

- What classes will you remove? For example, some shows remove classes which have attracted no entries for two years.
- What classes will you add?
- What wording changes are needed?

Use last year's prize list as an editing copy and make your changes there. Any changes made to the prize list should be well thought out.

From Edgerton...

Look What's New This Year!

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Junior | –happy anniversary card on Edgerton's 20th fair |
| Seniors | –crocheting large afghan; crocheting baby afghan |
| Open Class | –remade article; quilted wall hanging; adult's or child's siwash sweater; cross-stitch embroidery - picture |
| Visual Arts | –open class (any subject - any medium);
photo depicting theme "Homemade Memories" |
| Baking | –scones, cloverleaf rolls; rhubarb pie; pineapple filled bars |
| Horticulture | –bachelor buttons; violas |

Write Up the Prize List

Make the prize list informative, clear and concise. Use the following checklist to see if you could improve your prize list.

The Prize List

Classes

- Number of items to be shown
- Size of item
- Materials to be used

Exhibiting

- A list of new classes
- Type of container
- Finished and ready to hang
- Information on where exhibitors can get a copy of the judging standards (see "Other Resources")

Guidelines for Entering the Bench Show

- Entry deadline
- Fees

Other

- Contact names and telephone numbers for information on entries
- Identification and thank you to sponsors

Readability

- No abbreviations
- Use of bold type, capitals, underlining and different print. Bigger print is easier to see.
- Adequate spacing and wide margins to avoid the crowded look
- Illustrations
- Short list of regulations (see the example on the next page). If there's too much detail the regulations may not be read.

From Castor...

Rules and Regulations

1. All exhibits must be the work of the exhibitor and not previously shown in the Castor Fair.
2. Exhibits must be entered from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 25.
3. All entries should be properly tagged prior to entry time. Tags are available from Convenors or the Town Office. Please refer to sample tag at back of book to see how to properly fill out tag.
4. No more than one article per class per exhibitor.
5. Exhibitors will at all times give the necessary attention to their exhibits and at the close of the Fair take charge of the same. This Fair Committee will endeavour to prevent damage to all exhibits but will not be responsible for any damage or loss that may occur.
7. Clothing and handicraft exhibits may have been used prior to exhibiting, but must be clean and suitably presentable before entry.
8. Amateurs can exhibit; professionals may display.
9. Unless otherwise specified, prizes will be ribbons. Awards on points made as follows:
 - 5 points for 1st prize
 - 3 points for 2nd prize
 - 1 point for 3rd prize
 - special prizes for some categories
 - ribbons presented for most outstanding in each category
10. The committee reserves the right to decide any point not covered by the rules or regulations.
11. Judges shall exercise discretion as to whether they shall award ribbons or prizes in a class.
12. No exhibits may be removed before 8:30 p.m. on August 26.
13. The Fair Committee will not be responsible for any injury or accident in the rinks or grounds.

The prize list is an opportunity to reflect on unique aspects of your community. It can also signal to various groups within the community that they are welcome to participate.

Clear, well thought out rules, class listings and schedules will reduce misunderstandings and problems.

Advertising and Promotion

Well-planned and well-executed publicity does more than help ensure attendance at events. It also enhances your organization's sense of purpose, builds pride, and creates community awareness. Good promotion of your organization's activities can be one of its best assets.

The goal of promotion is:

- to serve as a communication link with members and others involved in your organization's programs by informing people of upcoming events, promoting items of interest and providing newsworthy information
- to serve as a communication link with the general public by explaining the objectives of your group and placing your successful programs and activities before the public to foster understanding and goodwill

Advertise the Prize List

Advertise the prize list well. With the prize list widely available, new and updated classes will be known by everyone from the novice to the most seasoned exhibitor. Publish the prize list anywhere from three to six months ahead so people can plan and complete projects. Remember, the prize list is your greatest advertiser!

Brainstorm ideas to advertise your prize list. Write them down on the worksheet "Advertising and Promotion." Be sure to evaluate both the effectiveness of each method and the cost. Return the worksheet to the planning file for next year's event.

Example Promotion Ideas		
Ways to Advertise the Prize List	Effectiveness (# of exhibitors reached)	Cost
prize lists left in store	good	\$50
personal contact	excellent	
attend Weavers Club meeting	good	
ad in local paper	good	\$150
stories in local paper	better	
mailout of last year's exhibitors	good to excellent	\$30

Encourage Entries

People enter, or do not enter, bench shows for many reasons. The checklist below gives some ideas that bench show committees use to encourage entries. Use the checklist to assess what your organization does to encourage entries.

The Prize List

- We review and revise the prize list every year to keep it up-to-date with what people are making.
- We ensure the prize lists are out early so people have time to prepare exhibits.
- We widely distribute the prize list including new locations and new groups.
- We promote the bench show at community functions before the fair.
- We submit write-ups to the newspaper by:
 - asking a longtime and a junior exhibitor why they enter the show
 - interviewing convenors about new or unusual classes
 - explaining a bench show to people who are unfamiliar with them
- We prepare newspaper advertisements directed at exhibitors.
- We send bulk mail-outs to promote entering the bench show. We include a sampling of the classes and why we want people to enter.
- We advertise in community group and school newsletters.
- We make posters inviting people to “enter the bench show.” To ensure certain groups of people enter, we place the posters where these people are likely to be (junior — schools or youth centre; senior — senior centre).
- We approach local organizations about inviting their members to enter (e.g., service groups, schools, senior centres, 4-H clubs, and craft groups).
- We plan an exhibitor’s workshop and advertise it well. We demonstrate how to prepare exhibits and highlight features of first class exhibits.
- We ask each committee member to encourage one new exhibitor each year.

Advertising and promotion lets the community know about your exciting events. Make sure the message is positive and reflects your committee's goals. You can also modify the included "Tips for Exhibitors" (page 41) worksheet to suit your needs and distribute it to evaluators.

Judges

A judge's role is to make decisions about the quality of each entry. Your role is to ensure the judge can work as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Judging Systems

Before you can hire the judges, your committee will need to make some decisions about what prizes you want to give out.

The "fair" system of judging means that all items are judged against each other and the prizes awarded are first, second and third. The "Danish" system of judging asks the judge to judge each item against a standard. Each item is given a score on a ten point scale. All the items receive a ribbon or prize. You may have all firsts or all thirds.

Some committees modify these judging systems. Be sure that your judges know exactly how you want items judged and how many prizes you provide.

From Delia...

8. THE FAIR SYSTEM OF JUDGING will be used whereby only a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, will be awarded in each class.

- PURPLE ribbon - award of excellence
 - 1st. - RED ribbon - 3 points
 - 2nd. - BLUE ribbon - 2 points
 - 3rd. - WHITE ribbon - 1 point
- Ribbons will be awarded only if the item merits it.

Number of Judges

The number of judges required for your bench show may be difficult to determine. Use records from previous shows to find out how many entries can be expected.

Another consideration in calculating the number of judges required is the amount of time allotted for judging. You need to allow the judge time to do a good job. This can be difficult to allow for in a one-day bench show when the entries are to be received and judged by noon. Many shows try to have their items judged the afternoon or evening before opening the show to the public.

An important factor in your decisions about number of judges should be the total budget. If you have volunteer judges, you may want to have many to lighten the load. If you are paying, you can save money by hiring a judge who can judge two or three sections. Remember you are the employer. You must decide what will give a well-judged show within your budget.

Contacting Judges

Contact judges at least four to six months in advance to ensure you are able to get the judges you want. If this is your first bench show, use the following sources to locate judges:

- Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies – see "Other Resources" on page 33 for contact information
- Alberta Horticultural Society
- other agricultural societies in your area
- local experts such as former 4-H members

Judges Example		Evaluation		
Number of judges needed and sections	Possible judges and phone numbers	Confirmed by phone call	would use again	comments
Baking – (1)	Morley Muffet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Cathy Cupcake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sewing – (1)	Susan Seams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Helen Hemming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Handicrafts – (1)	Lynda Lego	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wally Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Fill in the worksheet "Judges" (page 42) as per the example above. After the show is over, fill in the evaluation section and place the worksheet in the planning file for use next year.

Once you have confirmed your judges by telephone, send them a letter or contract that covers the following:

- classes they are to judge
- system of judging – Danish or fair
- offer of payment
- names of other judges if they wish to travel with others
- estimate of the time it should take to judge
- other expectations such as "written comments wanted" or "only one first placement winner per class"
- map or clear directions to the facility
- a prize list

Below is an example contract between an organization and the judge. There is a blank copy of this contract with the worksheets that you can use.

Example Contract

Date: March 20

Agricultural Society Name: Anytown Agricultural Society

Name of Judge: Garry Grains

Section(s) or Classes to be Judged: Grains and Grasses (Class Numbers 101 to 122)

Dear Garry:

Thank you for agreeing to judge at the "*Anytown Days*" fair to be held on *Aug. 1* at the *Community Center, one block west of main street, left at the post office*. Judging will begin promptly at *6:00 pm, July 31* and you will be judging using the *fair (1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes)* system.

The doors will be open to the public at *9:00 am the next day, Aug. 1*. We will be giving you a fee of *\$30/day* plus expenses *15¢/km*. *Coffee & lunch will be provided*.

We will provide you with *paper plates for the grain samples, as requested*. If you have any questions, please contact *John Tyme* at *555-2121*. The telephone number of the *Community Center* is *555-2011*.

We have enclosed a prize list. We would like you to give as many comments as time permits to encourage entries for another year. Our convenors will be there to help write comments if you wish.

The judges for the day are as follows: *Sally Sewing, Bigtown, 777-1111, Karen Crafty, Littletown, 881-2222*. We encourage you to travel with others from your area.

We hope you will enjoy the day at our fair.

Sincerely,
John Tyme

Working With The Judge

On the day of show:

- arrange the classes and check the number of entries before the judge arrives
- ensure entries comply with the requirements of the class
- remind the judge of your committee's expectations or requirements; for example, only one first place winner per class
- provide adequate light, space, and utensils
- refrain from commenting about entries while the judge is working
- if the committee wants written comments, ask the judge to do so, or offer to help with this
- provide pens, pencils and comment sheets
- have extra copies of the fair book and judging standards available
- ask the judge what help is required (for example, opening and closing baking containers)
- ask the judge for suggestions for changes in the prize list

Arranging judges long in advance and setting out clear expectations establishes a positive working relationship at the beginning. Being prepared and organized before the judge arrives allows the judge to work quickly and efficiently.

Displaying

When people first walk into the exhibit area, what will they see? After the items have been judged, it is time for the display committee to present them to the public. The exhibitors have worked hard on their entries and it is the display committee's responsibility to show them to their best advantage. You want the community to stop and take time to view the exhibits. Make the first sight of the bench show a welcoming one.

If you have a theme for your fair, use it to coordinate the look of the exhibit area.

From Edgerton...

In keeping with the theme of "Homemade Memories", the exhibit area included:

- a theme sign
- large colorful displays
- balloons and streamers
- a large styrofoam loaf of bread

Make the Whole Area Look Good

Bench shows are held in a variety of facilities. The challenge to any display committee is to make the entire space look good. Try some of the following:

- use walls to show off art work, photography and school work classes – if your walls are not straight, as in a curling rink, you may need to add pegboards or easels to your inventory
- hang up quilts to create a wall using straight wire or clothes line (always protect the items from any damage)
- hang plants on stands, either by making your own or using old sturdy coat racks
- use wooden frame clothes dryers to display afghans or smaller quilts
- make or borrow easels and a-frame pegboards to display artwork and photography
- use portable blackboards or dividers to display schoolwork, art or pictures
- use a mannequin to display an exceptional sewing item (e.g., a wedding dress)
- hang sewing items on a coat rack

Tips for Exhibit Areas

Use the following ideas to create an appealing exhibit area:

- provide a centre of interest
- appeal to the senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste – to attract people's attention
- use colour to create impact:
 - people are attracted by warm and bright colours
 - use colour for contrast, to keep the eye moving and to attract attention
 - keep background colours neutral
 - if the articles are white use colour to make them stand out
 - colour coding for different sections divides classes at a glance
 - theme colours will add unity to the display
- allow enough open area for people to circulate around the exhibits and enough space for the articles to be shown without crowding
- make use of different textures, materials and real objects to add variety and appeal to the display

Tips for Signs

Signs are always an important part of any bench show. They:

- identify individual classes and special competitions
- give directions
- recognize sponsors
- recognize outstanding workmanship
- highlight the aggregate prize or special class winners

Sign Guidelines

- keep the information short, neat and accurate
- use large and bold lettering and appropriate illustrations to highlight sections
- use pictures on signs to send a message not just fill a space
- place large section signs at the end of the table people first see, on a pedestal or hung from the ceiling; colour code them to match individual class signs.

Make your signs:

Visible

Interesting

Structured

Useful

Accurate

Legible

Simple

Tips for Exhibits

Show off the exhibits to the best advantage. Think of the whole table when you set up the exhibits. Use the following guidelines:

- Keep all entries in one class together. This allows people to find and to compare the exhibits easily. Strips of wood or coloured paper work well to frame entries and divide classes.
- Emphasize the winners by moving them to the front of the table, but do not overshadow other entries for they are equally important. All entries could be of a high standard and this should be recognized.
- Use a number and name cards for each class.
- Allow enough space to show off the work.
- Tidy up the exhibits for the final display. This includes removing crumbs from the plates of food and refolding or arranging the sewn and craft items.

- Create points of interest.
 - individual classes that relate to the theme of the bench show should have a special place on the exhibit table
 - a specially sponsored class could be the starting point for a display
 - highlight interesting techniques or especially well done articles
- Relieve the monotony of long flat areas by raising certain classes, using coloured background or props, using three dimensional layouts, having a small table display, or displaying a poster listing the judging standards for a group of classes.

Example of Items that Enhance a Display

- covered boxes, ice cream pails and benches to create a variety of levels
- camera in photography classes
- paint brushes with art
- baking utensils or ingredients
- knitting needles, balls of yarn and a finished article
- microwave oven with easy meal classes

As a group brainstorm two ways you can improve the display of entries.

Use the "Display Inventory" worksheet on page 44 to help you keep track of items that you use to display bench show entries. On the back of the worksheet, there are some ideas for making tabletop exhibits.

Taking Down the Show

One of the most difficult tasks is taking down the show. Make sure there are specific pickup times for entries. Your rules should state what happens if no one claims an item (see the example below). Write up job descriptions for the cleanup crew and ensure you have enough volunteers. Finally, scrounge storage space for display items and indicate on the "Display Inventory" worksheet where the items are stored.

From Chestermere...

14. No ribbons or exhibits to be removed before 4:30 p.m. the day of the Fair. The Fair Directors are not responsible for any articles left on the grounds or in the facilities after 6:00 p.m. on Fair Day.
15. All entries will remain the property of the exhibitor. Any entry remaining after the show will be disposed of at the discretion of the committee.
16. All entries must be removed from the Chestermere Regional Community Centre between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., Saturday, June 20th. See also rule #15 above.

First impressions are important! Make sure your exhibits highlight exhibitors' work. Show off the work of your committee.

Evaluation

When planning the evaluation think back to what you were trying to achieve and why you were having the show. Did you achieve what you set out to? Your bench show evaluation is a year long process as new ideas for classes are discovered and suggestions are raised in meetings. Try the following throughout the year:

The Prize List

- talk to exhibitors and potential exhibitors at meetings
- survey local craft clubs and senior groups
- contact the further education council
- provide a suggestion box
- develop new classes based on past entries in the miscellaneous or general category
- look at other prize lists
- examine the display-only section
- identify new trends in foods, sewing, crafts and horticulture
- examine whether the prize money reflects the costs and efforts of the exhibitor

The evaluation is a chance to give yourself a pat on the back. Be sure to look beyond the number of entries:

- did people have fun?
- did you involve many parts of the community?
- did your volunteers feel good about their goals?

Evaluation of Classes

After the bench show each committee head should fill in a brief evaluation of the classes. A sample is included with the worksheets. Store the results in your planning file. On the next page you will find an example of a filled-in evaluation.

Class Evaluation Example

Section Handicrafts Handicrafts Number of entries 122

Classes with no entries 30, 41, 63
(list class by number)

Classes with less than 2 entries 33
(your committee could set an appropriate number)

Changes to classes for next year

separate Christmas crafts into

wreaths and ornaments

New class suggestions

polar fleece garment

fabric photo albums

Judge Bev Brown

Would you like to have this judge again? yes

Evaluation of the Bench Show

The bench show evaluation can be filled out individually or by the whole committee. It should take place within a few days of your bench show. Comments from judges and the public are fresh in your minds as are the problems and successes of the current show. A sample evaluation is included with the worksheets. Store the worksheets in the planning file for next year's committee. An example of a filled-in evaluation is below.

Bench Show Evaluation Example

1. Did our bench show meet our expectations or goals for this year?
Yes, most of them
2. What were our successes?
Receiving entries went smoother, and we attracted more visitors to view exhibits.
3. What would we change?
We would like to attract more youth entries.
4. Review your key steps. Identify specific areas that need improvement.

Key Steps	Did Well	Needs Work	Ideas for Next Year
Advertising		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>send youth prize list home with school children</i>
Prize List		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>list names and phone numbers of convenors with each section</i>
Judges		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>ask judges for comments, especially in youth section</i>
Number of Exhibitors		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>try to attract more youth entries</i>
Number of Visitors		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>have more signs leading people from exhibition area to bench show</i>
Pre-show Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Displays		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>make coloured dividers for each major section (e.g. handicrafts, baking)</i>
Budget		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>allow for extra promotion of youth section</i>

5. Other ideas for next year. (If you have made notes in your planning book, attach these or include them in the evaluation.)
Consider contacting a local business to sponsor a special class, e.g., flower shop to sponsor a dried flower arrangement class.

Public Survey

Many communities try to get feedback from the public. Some of the things you may want to find out include:

- how they found out about the show
- where they live
- suggestions for improvement of existing features
- new ideas for entries or themes
- what they liked or enjoyed most

From Vegreville Public Survey...

1. How did you find out about the Vegreville Exhibition?

Radio _____ Paper _____
Other _____ (please specify) _____

2. Where do you live?

Vegreville _____ Rural _____
Other Town _____ Urban _____

3. What did you enjoy most about the fair?

4. Have you any suggestions for improving the overall operation of the fair?

5. What new ideas or programs would you suggest for future fairs or fair activities?
Please give examples.

6. What would you suggest as a theme for the Vegreville Fair?

Return this questionnaire to the Information Booth or mail it to:
Vegreville Agricultural Society.

Other Resources

The following publications are available from Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development at 1-800-292-5697 (toll free in Canada) or www.agriculture.alberta.ca/publications

Volunteers:

- FS1926-30 Working with Volunteers. Revised 1998.
- FS1926-40 Motivation and Leadership. Revised 1999.

Promotion:

- FS1926-50 Promoting Your Organization's Activities. Revised 1999.

Finances:

- FS1932-10 A Guide to Financial Management for Non-Profit Organizations. 1989.

Planning:

- FS1933-30 Program Planning for Organizations. Revised 1999.
- FS1933-31-1 Working Guide to Planning an Event. Revised 1992.

Judging and Exhibiting:

- 980-10 Judging Standards for Foods, Sewing and Handicrafts (\$1.00)
- 200/47 Judging and Exhibiting Standards for Horticultural Shows (\$12.00)

For fair supplies, contact:

Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies
Room 200, 7000-113 Street
Edmonton AB T6H 5T6
Phone: 780-427-2174
Fax: 780-422-7755
email: aaas@gov.ab.ca

Website: www.albertaagsocieties.ca



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Budget Worksheet

Expenses	Budget	Actual
Advertising		
Decorating		
Printing Prize List		
Judges		
Postage		
Prize Money		
Ribbons		
Other:		
Total	\$	\$

Income	Budget	Actual
Entry Fees		
Fund Raising		
Other Events		
Grants		
Donations		
Other:		
Total	\$	\$

Cash Flow Worksheet

Month	Income (\$)	Expenses (\$)	Balance (\$)
(Balance From Last Year)	(\$)		
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			

Volunteers Worksheet

Jobs to be Done	Skills Required	Possible Volunteers

Job Description Worksheet

Purpose of the Job: Give a general statement of what the job is and why it is necessary.

Responsibilities: List the responsibilities and duties of the job.

Skills Needed: List the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Relationships: List other committee members and head convenor.

Expected Time Commitment: Be specific — weekly, monthly, long term, self determined, flexible, day of the bench show, etc.

Benefits: Describe what is in it for the volunteer.

Prize List Worksheet

Section (e.g., Horticulture)	Class Number (e.g., 21)	Description (e.g., sweet peas)	Specific rules

Advertising and Promotion Worksheet

Ways to Advertise the Prize List	Effectiveness (# of exhibitors reached)	Cost

Tips for Exhibitors Worksheet

People need to know their responsibilities before entering a bench show. Your bench show committee might hold a workshop for exhibitors, or at the very least, inform them of the etiquette of entering a bench show. The following guidelines could be modified to suit your needs and given to all exhibitors.

Exhibitor Etiquette

Pre-Bench Show:

- Read the prize list carefully. Follow the rules and regulations. Follow any rules for presentation.
- Obtain and read judging standards (check "Other Resources" on page 33).
- Make sure the entries are clean and neat.
- Enter the right category. If unsure, ask a committee member.
- Organize and fill in entry tags in advance. Write clearly. Check the tags for errors.

Day of Bench Show:

- Make sure entries are on time.
- Give entries to convenors or place them where asked.
- Write clearly; be organized.
- Have entry fees totalled and ready for the convenor.
- Enjoy yourself.

Post Bench Show:

- Be open minded.
- If you have questions or suggestions for improvement, tell the bench show committee.
- Pick up your entries on time.
- Encourage others to enter next year.

Judges Worksheet

Number of Judges Needed and Sections	Possible Judges and Phone Numbers	Confirmed by Phone Call	Evaluation	
			Would Use Again	Comments
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Judges Contract Worksheet

Date _____ Agricultural Society Name _____

Name of Judge _____

Section(s) to be Judged:

Dear _____:

Thank you for agreeing to judge at the **(Community name)** fair to be held on **(date)** at the **(location – include directions if streets are not clearly marked)**. Judging will begin promptly at **(time)** and you will be judging using the **(fair or danish)** system.

The doors will be open to the public at **(time)**. We will be giving you a fee of **(amount)** plus expenses **(amount of mileage and meals agreed upon)**.

We will provide you with **(coffee, lunch, supplies for you to use in judging...)**. If you have any questions, please contact **(Name)** at **(phone)**. The telephone number of the **(facility)** is **(phone)**.

We have enclosed a prize list. We would like you to give as many comments as time permits to encourage entries for another year. Our convenors will be there to help write comments if you wish.

The judges for the day are as follows: **(Names, addresses, and phone numbers)**. We encourage you to travel with others from your area.

We hope you will enjoy the day at our fair.

Sincerely,

Display Inventory Worksheet

List articles that can be made, scrounged or bought to help display. Develop a bench show inventory for use in subsequent years.

Items	Where Stored

Class Evaluation Worksheet

Section _____ Number of entries _____

Classes with no entries _____
(list class by number)

Classes with less than two entries _____
(your committee could set an appropriate number)

Changes to classes for next year

New class suggestions

Judge _____

Would you like to have this judge again? _____

Bench Show Evaluation Worksheet

1. Did our bench show meet our expectations or goals for this year? _____

2. What were our successes? _____

3. What would we change? _____

4. Review your key steps. Identify specific areas that need improvement.

Key Steps	Did Well	Needs Work	Ideas for Next Year
Advertising			
Prize List			
Judges			
Number of Exhibitors			
Number of Visitors			
Pre-show Planning			
Displays			
Budget			

5. Other ideas for next year (if you have made notes in your planning book, attach these or include them in the evaluation).



Alberta 
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