

## PLAN AND PREPARE

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Ag Day events and activities can be both organized and fun if you plan ahead. Below are six steps you can follow to help make your Ag Day efforts a success!

### STEP 1: Develop SMART Goals

No matter what type of event or activity you choose to pursue, the best place to start is to develop SMART goals. This will ensure your efforts are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Use this chart to guide the formation of your event and use it as a means of assessment throughout the process to stay on track and achieve your goals.

<b>S</b>	Specific	What change do you want to see? Who, what, when, where?	
<b>M</b>	Measurable	Will it be possible to measure success? It should be!	
<b>A</b>	Attainable	Be realistic about what can be achieved.	
<b>R</b>	Realistic	Focus on achieving real, meaningful change.	
<b>T</b>	Timely	When will the change happen by?	

### STEP 2: Identify Your Audience

Decide who you want to reach most with your message. Examples include:

- Consumers (general public)
- Children and teachers
- Business leaders
- Parents
- Media contacts
- Government leaders

When thinking about the target audience, think about who will be involved: those sending the message and those receiving it. Properly identifying the target audience for your Ag Day

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event is necessary. Glance back at your goals. Who will be most impacted by what you want to do? Is this who you want to impact? Adjust as necessary.

*Use the space below to describe your target audience.*

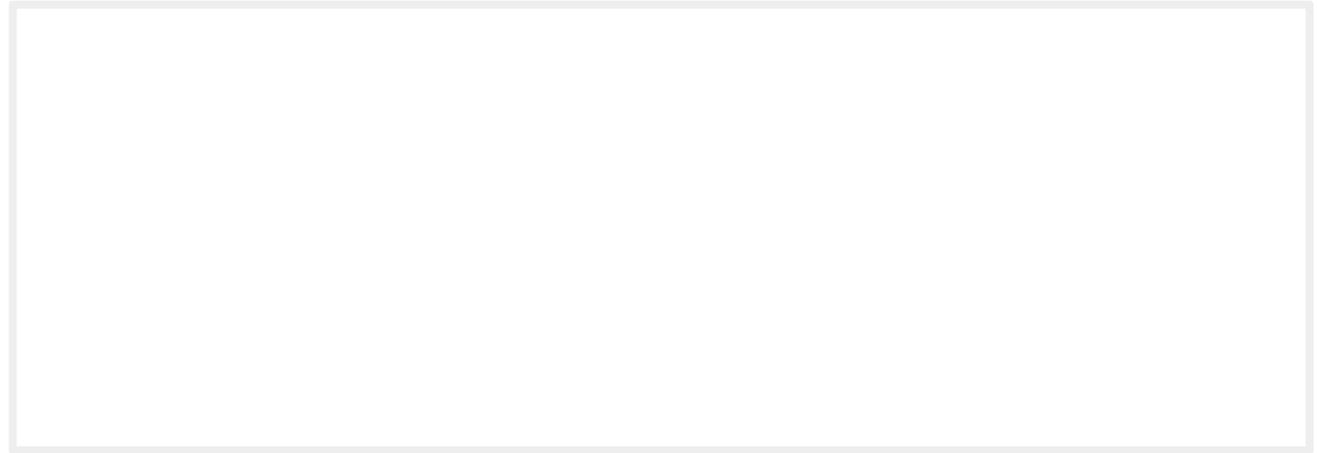
### STEP 3: Determine Your Primary Message

What is the single most important point that you'd like to be able to communicate through your event? Is it the importance of quality ingredients (to a successful recipe or article of clothing)? The value of sound nutrition? The financial impact of agriculture in your community? The contribution of agriculture to renewable fuel resources?

The more specifically you can focus on – and demonstrate – your message, the more likely it is to be remembered! For the different groups you may interact with, develop adapted messages to have your ideas and information resonate more with each of them. As you develop your messages, keep in mind that great messages are:

- Simple
- Solution-focused
- Practical and reasonable in requests
- Evidence-based, with real statistics, stories, and facts
- Suitable for the right audiences in language and content
- Personal – they show why you care

*Use the space below to describe your message.*



### STEP 4: Form a Strong Team

Once you have a general idea of whom you'd like to reach, begin enlisting support from others who share your enthusiasm for agriculture.

- **Committee:** If you don't already have a committee working to plan this event, look at the organizations and communities you are a part of to find other individuals with shared passion. It is valuable to bring in committee members with different skill sets to balance your team. By joining together, you can expand creativity, lend credibility to your celebration, and cut down on costs. Potential committee members may include:
  - Farmers and ranchers
  - Business and trade associations
  - Service, fraternal, and youth groups
  - Religious and educational groups
  - Health, safety, and environmental groups
  - Government
  - Media
  - Women's organizations
  - Merchants
- **Volunteers:** Engaging and retaining volunteers can be a challenge in successfully hosting an Ag Day event. To help in this process, we have developed a guide solely dedicated to engaging the right volunteers. You can find this guide [here](#):
- **Collaborators:** The value of your collaborators is defined by the needs of your event. If you want to create an event where legislators interact with farmers, you need to collaborate with farmers. If you're sharing about ag literacy in youth, it could be valuable to collaborate with extension agents, ag educators, or FFA and 4-H students. If you want to share the value of animal protein, consider collaborating with dietitians. Revisit your goals and think through who else could support your effort.

### STEP 5: Select an Event/Activity

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Now that you have a framework of your goals, you are ready to select and define your event in greater detail. One of the first steps in choosing your event may be to find out what other groups in your community, state, or industry are doing to celebrate Ag Day. This is a good opportunity to enlist their support, thus enhancing each other's efforts. Work with your committee to host an event that keeps to the mission of Ag Day, but also brings exposure to partners and supporters.

Below is a list of possible Ag Day events and activities. Read pages 9-16 for details on each idea and implementation guidance.

- Adopt a Legislator
- Ag Day Breakfast
- Scholarship Contests
- Thank a Farmer Initiative
- Ag Literacy Booths
- Film Screenings
- Dash for Ag 5K Walk/Run
- Petting Zoo

As you plan your event(s) for National Ag Day and National Ag Week, think about how each event can build on one another to make an impactful experience. For example:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Promote making a local meal with your family	State ag commodity booths on Capitol grounds	Youth in agricultural science research symposium	Lunch with farmers at the Capitol	Ag Day proclamation event and Ag Day evening reception	Farm day breakfast	Dash for Ag 5k Walk/Run

### STEP 6: Assess the Plan

The time has come to put your plan into action! Now that you have identified the event, message, audience, and your team, you are ready to begin the real work: putting the plan into action. Start by re-evaluating your SMART goals, and adjust any details or goals as necessary.

### Timeline and Checklist

Here is an event timeline and checklist you can customize to ensure you are hitting the target!

#### Two to Three Months in Advance

- Identify audience and message: Decide on whom you'd like your event to be focused.
- Contact organizations/groups with whom you'd like to partner or visit.
- Begin assembling committee members.
- Develop preliminary budget and ideas for achieving the budget (fundraising/donations).
- Hold your first committee meeting and identify what type of event you'd like to host. Assign responsibilities that need immediate attention.
- Make arrangements with necessary facilities or location.
- Sign any necessary contracts or paperwork to formalize your plans.

#### One Month in Advance

- Check in with your committee on their progress. Assign additional tasks as needed.
- Confirm your plans with participating groups and site location personnel.

#### Two Weeks in Advance

- Remind committee members and other volunteers of the place and time.
- Assign someone to photograph the event. See our example photography release form.
- Prepare – and send – materials to local media. Follow up by telephone with key editors to ensure placement.
- Start learning the lesson plan and gather supplies as necessary.

#### One Week in Advance

- Confirm details with classroom teacher, guest speakers, etc.
- Double check numbers and A/V equipment availability.

#### One Hour to 30 Minutes in Advance

- Arrive on site and set up/check A/V equipment.
- Prepare any necessary supplies and set up for the visit/event.

#### Hold Event and Enjoy!

#### Following the Event

- Send additional press releases/photos to media contacts.
- Seek commitments from committee members for next year's event.
- Send recap/clipping to the Agriculture Council of America.

Send thank you notes.