

Camp

Start-Up Guide



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*For the entirety of this guide the word “camp” is used for simplicity. “Camp” is used to describe a specified period of time when people come together with a common goal, a common purpose. This could take the form of a traditional residential/day camp setting, a conference or retreat structure, or an event program. These different programs will vary in many ways, but how to begin the process along with the elements involved is quite similar and will be addressed in this manual under the term “Camp”.

As you start discussing how your camp is going to operate there are many things to consider. This manual is designed to help guide you through the different elements. It provides the questions that need to be answered by your planning team. It will help you think through strategies and concepts. No camp is exactly like another and what works in one place might not work for you. Take this into consideration when exploring the possibilities for your camp. And at all times keep your goal in mind; what you are trying to accomplish.

Planning Stage

The planning stage is a mixture of determining **concrete needs** like finances, location, etc... and also **abstract ideas** like themes and goals

Vision Statement:

This is the entire reason that this camp will exist. The vision is used to keep the focus of planning and assuring that each element of the camp will complement one another.

It answers the questions:

Why are we bringing people together?

What is this camp going to accomplish?

Are we teaching something? Are we providing information?

Goal:

Goals are the practical things that you will do to accomplish the vision. Goals should be five things: Specific, Tangible (Trackable), Realistic (Relevant), Measurable, Attainable.

These can include short-term and long-term goals. You can create a list of both. Is this camp a one-time event or are we planning for longevity? What are some short-term goals in developing this camp? What are some deadlines that we have to meet?

There could be more than one goal for each camp. For example, a soccer camp (goal of learning to play soccer) might have a second goal of character building or a dance camp (first goal) might have the second goal of HIV awareness.

Theme:

Some camps include a theme. The theme of camp is directly related to any curriculum that is used. For instance, at an English Language Camp the vision and the goals will not change from year to year (the goal of teaching English), but the theme could change (one year being "Sunny California", the next year "Comic Book Heroes"). Or an academic camp will maybe choose to concentrate on specific topics varying each year. The reason for this is to attract participants to come back the next time the camp is hosted.

Then the question is: How will you implement the theme into daily activities? How will the camp center around the theme?

Participants:

What is the target age of your camp? Or is there a target age?

Is it age exclusive? Meaning that only campers with a certain age can attend? Or is it an open event where anybody can come?

How many participants is the maximum capacity? Is there a minimum?

Staff:

Are there any requirements concerning age or gender of staff?

Will there be a conduct code for the workers? Ethically and/or morally?

Are the workers going to be paid or volunteer?

Is prior training required to be considered for the position?

Does staff need specialized certification?

If the staff needs to be trained in a certain field who's providing the training?

Is there a Staff Application that a potential staff worker needs to fill out?

Are you going to ask for references or perform background checks?

Are there any worker-to-participant ratio requirements? Example: 1 worker for every 10 participants

Type of Staff: Workers, Trainers, Speakers, Program, Cooks/Meal servers, Security, Cleaning crews

Location:

Things to consider when looking at a location for your camp:

Accessibility: how easy is it to get to?

Room Size (number of beds) or area size (number of tents)

Kitchen/Cooking facilities

Dining room facilities

Large meeting area

Fields or open space

Does this location meet your needs?

Which of the above elements would you be willing to compromise if necessary?

Is this location safe? Is it possible to secure?

What are the expenses for this location? Is it rentable?

If this is a long-term camp, is buying a facility an option?

Is this a camp for a rural area or in the city?

Schedule:

Which time of year works the best? It is found that camps are generally given when there is not a lot to compete for their time. A youth camp should be held when school is on holiday. A camp for adults should not be held during work days or hours.

Different elements that could be in a daily camp schedule:

- meals
- specific activity for the camp (ex. soccer practice for a soccer camp, dance training for a dance camp, teaching class for an academic camp)
- games
- speaker time
- large group activities
- small group time/bible studies
- free time
- rest time
- curfew at night

How to make a schedule:

- Start with the times that are non-negotiable like meal times, curfews,
- Then fill in the times that are dependent on other factors. Speaker schedules, weather... Check to see when your speakers can come and talk and check with the weather. Are there events that would work best at a specific time of day? Is there a part of the day when the heat/cold is unbearable? Or does an element need to be done at night while it's dark?
- Then fill in the remaining slots of time with the remaining activities. Making sure you have enough time for each event. If 3 hours are needed, then make sure you have 3 hours in your schedule.

Meals:

Are meals an additional expense or covered by an entrance fee for the participants?

What do you serve?

When or how often?

Will you provide your own cooks or have the food come in by an outside vendor/caterer?

Rules:

What rules does your camp have? Are there restrictions on alcohol, drugs, smoking?

What are security issues? How are valuables handled?

What are the privacy issues? For residential camps how will guys and girls be separated creating a safe atmosphere?

Are there banned objects? Providing a list of what to bring and what not to bring for residential camps is suggested.

Discipline:

How are you going to handle a violation of the rules?

How do you approach people who violate camp rules?

What are the consequences for breaking the rules? What is appropriate according to the laws of your country?

Security:

How are you going to keep your participants safe?

What are some scenarios that could arise?

Curriculum:

Do you need any written materials as part of the theme? Are you going to buy, borrow, or write this curriculum yourself?

If you are writing your own curriculum, you need to consider

- format
- content
- teacher guidelines
- lesson plans

Are you going to print the materials or teach them verbally?

What additional materials are needed? Black boards, pencils, paper, projectors, computers...

Equipment:

Is specific equipment required? Examples: sound system, sports equipment, transportation vehicles, generators

Are these things going to be rented, borrowed, or bought?

Which method would be financially viable?

Where will the equipment be stored when not in use?

Who will be in charge of equipment management?

Finances:

If possible you want your camp to pay for itself; meaning to have the participants cover the expenses. But there are also other options.

How will you receive the funding for your camps?

- Sponsors - Private organizations
- Donations
- Participant fees
- Government funding
- Grants from organizations

Is this camp for profit or non-profit?

Do you have paid staff or other personnel expenses?

Footwork Stage

The footwork stage is actually finding the location and equipment needed (doing the footwork). At this stage you might discover that what you have planned needs to be adjusted to become reality. Constantly be checking to make sure you are on track with your goals and deadlines.

Advertising & Staff Recruitment:

How are you going to advertise your camp?

Through which media will you reach the target group?

- Posters
- Emails
- Flyers
- Announcements
- Radio
- Newspapers
- ...

From where will you recruit your staff?

- Universities
- Schools
- Communities

- Churches
- ...

Staff Training:

The training time is usually proportional to the length of the camp. Examples: If the camp is a week-long then the training time might be 1 or 2 days. If the camp is three weeks then the training time will be longer 3-4 days. If the camp is shorter, like 1 or 2 days, the training time might be one afternoon or a couple of hours before.

During a staff training time:

- Delegate and explain to the staff their responsibilities
- Go through the schedule together
- Discuss what is expected of the event and how the staff should conduct themselves

Are team-building activities required? Meaning is it important for your staff to work closely together and support each other? Or is it a camp where this is not necessary?

Camp!

This last stage is actually hosting your camp. This is when your planning for staff, activities, and logistics of the camp will be confirmed or need to be adjusted. Flexibility while maintaining order is a must. At the end of this stage will be a period of assessment and review.

Feedback:

Are you going to ask for feedback? From the participants, workers, government, supporting organizations.

How and when are you going to collect this information?

Review:

After the event get the leaders together and see if the event went well. Did it accomplish what was wanted? How could it be improved?

ReachGlobal Camps is a ministry of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA).

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