



INFO SESSION

Tool Kit

culturedays



CREATE, PARTICIPATE & SHARE



Introduction

What is an Info Session?

A Culture Days info session is a meeting that brings together various people who are interested in finding out more about participating in or supporting Culture Days such as local artists, professional and amateur arts and cultural organizations, municipal cultural staff, staff of local museums and libraries, Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and local media. Generally, Culture Days staff will be in attendance to give an overview of Culture Days, introduce this year's campaign and to facilitate the meeting. Info sessions include time for answering questions about Culture Days and for discussion about how Culture Days could take shape in your local community.

Why Host an Info Session?

Communities that have hosted info sessions have seen many positive outcomes. An info session can help to:

- Kick-start planning and organizing of Culture Days events in your local community
- Widely disseminate the [Call For Participation](#)
- Encourage activity organizers to register their activities earlier in the campaign
- Initiate new collaborations and partnerships
- Identify potential hub locations and venues
- Share examples of successful activities and case studies from communities across the country
- Share [tools and resources](#) which will make participating in Culture Days easier
- Attract local media attention early in the campaign, laying the ground for future media attention for events in September



Venue / Date and Time

Choosing a Venue for the Info Session

Attendance at info sessions can vary depending on the size of community. Estimate attendance based on how large or active your cultural community is. Some considerations for choosing your venue:

- Pick a venue that is centrally located and easy to find.
- Venues where seating can be arranged in a circle or semi-circle are preferable to encourage informal discussion.
- The venue should have audiovisual capabilities and have access to the internet to allow for an engaging presentation.

The Invitation list

Who Should Be Invited to the Information Session?

The info session should be open to the public so that anyone who is interesting in organizing a Culture Days activity or potential supporters can attend; however, there are some key people that you should make sure are invited. Don't just invite the people you usually collaborate with! Culture Days is an opportunity to build new relationships across the community.

The invitation list should include:

- **Municipal Culture Department staff** – many municipalities play an important leadership role in Culture Days. If your municipality is not already involved, make sure to personally invite the cultural services staff.
- **Other Municipal or Regional Departments** – invite staff from tourism, economic development, parks and recreation or any other department that is involved in local events.
- **Municipal and/or Community Arts Councils** – community arts councils play a vital communications role to the local arts community. They can disseminate information to their lists of artists and cultural groups. Some councils also have programming or professional development roles that could be involved in Culture Days.

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- **Business Improvement Association and/or Chamber of Commerce** – BIAs may be interested in fostering relationships between artists and local businesses, especially in downtown revitalization areas. Invite the BIA to the info session so they can become better acquainted with the local arts community.
 - **Local Businesses** – In addition to the BIA, you may want to invite some local businesses that have previously shown their support for arts and culture or who have space that could be ideal venues.
 - **Library Staff** – One of the primary roles of libraries is to be a community hub, which is a natural fit with Culture Days. Libraries have hosted artists of all disciplines as well as presented their own activities during Culture Days. Invite the library’s programming staff or in the case of smaller libraries invite the branch managers.
 - **Museums and Heritage Sites** – Culture Days is not just for the arts – Heritage activities are also encouraged! Invite local museums, Heritage associations and designated Heritage sites to attend.
 - **Individual Artists** – have the community arts council distribute the invitation to their lists of individual artists in your community and post the invitation on any online local artists’ networks.
 - **Arts and cultural organizations** – Invite both the professional and volunteer-run cultural groups in your region. This should include:
 - choirs, orchestras, chamber groups, and musical bands of all sorts
 - artist collectives/associations/craft guilds
 - festivals
 - galleries
 - theatres, theatre troupes, and dance troupes
 - **Previous Years’ Culture Days Participants** – Ask local activity organizers who participated in previous years of Culture Days to share their experiences with the rest of the invitees at the info session. Their testimonies are often very encouraging for new participants to hear.
 - **Multicultural Groups** – Invite groups that promote and celebrate cultural heritage in your region.
 - **Art Schools** – Invite music, dance, theatre and art schools that offer classes to students of all ages. Culture Days is an opportunity for them to reach new students.
 - **Public Schools** – Invite the visual and performing arts teachers or department heads from local schools. Schools may want to get their students involved in creating their own Culture Days activity or may want to invite a participating artist to their school on the Friday of Culture Days.

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- **Colleges and Universities** – Connect with the visual and performing arts faculty and also with the student council. The student council can be vital for disseminating information about Culture Days events in the fall to the student body (who are always looking for free events to attend). Faculty can encourage their students to become involved as activity organizers or volunteers. Universities can also be great venues for events.
 - **Local media** – Send an invitation and press release (see promoting the info session section) to your local radio stations, community newspapers and online media. Encourage them to send a photographer and/or reporter to the info session.
 - **VIPs** – Have you got a Mayor, city councilor, MP or other VIP who is very supportive of culture? Invite them to attend to learn how they can lend their support to Culture Days in your region. With a greater understanding of Culture Days, they may use their influence to help attract business and municipal support for the movement in your region. Since 2012, many mayors have made official proclamations for Culture Days. This may be something you wish to consider this year in your community.

Remember, not only can you invite the people on this list, but you can also ask them to disseminate the invitation to their contacts too!

Are you missing some of the names and contacts for some of the people on this list?

[Talk with Culture Days](#) staff who may be able to help you put together a more comprehensive list.

Invitation Template

You can use the following customizable Invitation template to send your e-invitation. Make sure to include your contact information for RSVP so that you have a good idea of attendance levels.

You are invited to

A Culture Days Information Session

Day, Month, at X:XX p.m.

Location City

Find out about the many available resources, tools, and tips that can make your Culture Days activities a success. Meet and network with other Culture Days activity organizers and find out what is being planned in your community.

What is Culture Days?

Culture Days is a collaborative movement to encourage awareness, participation and engagement of all Canadians in the arts and cultural life of their communities. Now in its sixth year, this Canada-wide celebration represents the largest-ever public participation campaign undertaken by the arts and cultural community in this country. Culture Days will feature free hands-on activities that invite the public to participate in the “behind-the-scenes” world of artists, creators, heritage workers, architects, curators, and designers in their community. Through this exchange, artists and creators have a unique opportunity to engage people of all ages in their creative practice. Culture Days will take place on September 25-27, 2015, in all provinces and territories.

To learn more about Culture Days, visit www.culturedays.ca

If you have any questions about participating in Culture Days, please contact:

Provincial Staff Person Name and Title

Tel: xxx-xxx-xxxx Toll-Free: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email

www.culturedays.ca

RSVP information

Attendance Sign-In

Make sure to bring a copy of your invitation list to the info session and ask attendees to check themselves off the list so you know who attended. Additionally, make sure to get the names and email addresses of anyone who was not on your original list for follow-up after the session.

Promoting the Info Session

Press Announcements

In March, the provincial Culture Days office might distribute a province-wide press release announcing the dates of info sessions across the province. This release will be circulated through Culture Days communications channels including the [Culture365](#) blog, [social media](#) and the provincial Culture Days “micro-website.”

Following this release, we recommend that you distribute the template press release (forthcoming) complete with details of your local info session, to emphasize the local angle of the story to media in your community.

Press Release Template

A template version of the press release will be provided to info session hosts at the beginning of April once the dates of all the sessions have been confirmed. Please [contact](#) your provincial Culture Days staff if you do not receive the template.

Media Follow-Up Calls

A few days before the info session take the time to make some follow-up calls with media to make sure they are aware of the event and plan to send someone to cover it. The media receives many press releases and invitations so a personalized call can make a huge difference.

Social Media

Social media can be a very effective way to get the word out about your info session, especially to individual artists. Post on Facebook and Twitter in the days leading up to the session and make sure to share news about the info session with those on your invitation list. Be sure to tag your posts with #CultureDays and your [provincial Twitter handle](#) to connect to our social media.

VIPs

Confirm the attendance of any invited VIPs with their staff. Find out if they wish to speak at the



session or just observe the meeting. If they are unable to attend, offer to meet with them one-on-one at a later date to provide them with a briefing of Culture Days.

Documenting the Info Session

It is always a good idea to have a camera handy to take pictures at events such as these. Capture some of your guests in conversation, especially any VIPs in attendance, to put faces to the Culture Days movement. Use these photos when you post about the info session on social media or if local media is printing some coverage of the info session. It is also valuable to have someone taking notes at the info session, which you might want to use in follow-up communications with your attendees. We also encourage you to share your community's stories on the [Culture Days](#) blog.

Contact your provincial
representative for more
information

Info Session Sample Agenda

While Information sessions will be tailored to each community to ensure local needs are met (i.e., time for venue matching, identifying hub locations, incorporating pre-existing local festivals or events, etc.) the following sample agenda provides an idea of the type of information that will be shared during the session.

1. Highlights Video

2. About Culture Days

1. Dates – Last Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in September
2. National movement
3. Free, participatory activities. Offer a chance to see the behind-the-scenes or to take part in hands-on activities.
4. Provide a couple examples of activities from different arts and cultural sectors.
5. Overview of previous year's statistics
6. How to register

3. Culture Days Campaign Landmarks

1. Mid-March to mid-May pre-registration
2. Mid-May –registration campaign continues
3. March, April, May – Info sessions/community planning meetings
4. Summer Registration Incentive campaign
5. Local registration/marketing deadlines
6. August – marketing campaign ramps-up
7. Early September (post-Labour day) – marketing and media campaign kicks into full gear!
8. Culture Days weekend –Last Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of September
9. October post-event surveys and collection of content for next year's PR and marketing campaign

4. Campaign Media Partners

1. National media partners
2. Provincial media partners

5. Free Resources and Tools Available

1. [Website](#) – major hub of information
2. [Tips and Tools](#) section
3. [Participant Guide](#)
4. [Marketing templates](#)
5. [DIY Guide to PR](#)
6. Personalized Activity Schedule
7. Newsletters
8. Social media channels

6. Support

1. Provincial staff can assist with registration issues, directing to downloadable resources, answering general questions, etc.
2. Peer-to-peer learning and exchange, via Culture Days blog and social media

7. Suggestions for success

1. Create hub locations
2. Plan a kick-off event a few days prior to Culture Days
3. Gain local political support – mayoral or council proclamation

8. Discussion and networking: What would you like to see happen for Culture Days in your community?

1. A chance for everyone to brainstorm ideas and identify opportunities.
2. A chance for attendees to connect with new possible collaborators or partners.

Post-Session Follow-Up

Don't let the excitement and energy created at the info session dissipate! Some simple follow-up can help to keep the planning and coordination moving along over the summer in preparation for the Culture Days weekend. Follow-up with all those who attended by:

- Circulating any notes taken at the info session
- Circulating any press coverage of the info session
- Making sure that potential collaborators were introduced and have exchanged contact information
- Informing everyone of any deadlines for securing venues or other resources
- Informing everyone of any local registration deadlines that you have set, after which point activities will not be included in local promotions
- Encouraging everyone to sign-up for the Culture Days newsletter to stay informed of campaign developments
- Providing your contact information and that of provincial Culture Days staff if they have further questions
- Following-up with potential business and community supporters
- Follow-up with any invitees who could not attend, but were interested in Culture Days. Offer to speak with them one-on-one and/or direct them to information provided during the session. Make sure to include them on your on-going communications with local Culture Days organizers.



Resource Materials for Info Sessions

Visit the Tips and Tools section of the Culture Days website for a wide variety of resources or click the following links to download materials that you may wish to use for your info session.

- [Call For Participation](#) – Share this document with your network.
- [Culture Days results and impact infographic](#) – Consult the infographic for information about how the movement has grown and statistics on participation across the country.
- [Participation Guide](#) – Find out all the essentials for planning your own Culture Days activities.
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) – Get answers to some of the most common questions about Culture Days. It is likely that some of these questions will be asked at your info session.
- [Download the Culture Days logos and email signature](#)

Use these materials to begin building brand awareness of Culture Days in your community.