

# LOWELL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL AND EVENT PLANNERS RESOURCE GROUP



May 7, 2025 Meeting, 6-7:30 pm, LTC

1. Conversation with guest speaker Gabriel Sosa- Deputy Director of Lawrence Art Center
  1. Overview of Festival - Festival in la Calle - Saturday, July 12 - 11am to 4pm: vibrant and lively block party with live music, dancing, music, art activities, nonprofits, artist vendors, opening of exhibition (annual summer artist exhibition),
    1. First year was 2021
    2. A way to return to in person interaction
2. Nonprofit focused on Arts Education
  1. Offer classes and workshops
  2. Events and activities
  3. Block Party
  4. Involved with various festivals throughout Lawrence
  5. 6 full time staff on team
  6. Yearly signature event used to be paint night - ticketed event, live auctioneer with works of art on sale
    - a) Because of COVID there was a shift in focus since primarily everyone had been inside
    - b) Wanted to focus on something that had been very exclusive to turning it into inclusive - thus the block party outside was born
3. Lowell has a lot of festivals and partnerships to make things happen - speak on Community Support
  1. Each year community support grows and the festival grows
  2. Used to take over half the street, now we take over the full street end to end
  3. Here is what we are planning, would you be interested in participating or supporting us - through door-to-door outreach
  4. Letters (physical) and emails and e-newsletters, and social media, and flyers are distributed as well as the local radio station to share the upcoming event and opportunities

5. We share what we are doing and its an invitation to support as well
6. Return to Door-to-Door is a practice of being good neighbors - participate, join in, support
  - a) In any event, tell your neighbor and encourage them to bring something
  - b) Wide open invitation to support

#### 4. Fundraising

1. How do you approach fundraising for this festival / nonprofit work?
  - a) We break even on the festival.
  - b) We would like to see this as a fundraiser yet we break even.
  - c) Monica - Executive Director
  - d) There isn't an art base in Lawrence that allows contemporary art to sell at the \$10,000 base+
  - e) How do we leverage the art that is for sale - \$200 - \$500
  - f) We're working on how to develop this into a stronger fundraiser
  - g) Fair amount of grants we apply for - local cultural council, mass cultural council, every grant opportunity that we seek involves the discussion of this event because of it's success

#### 5. Floor Questions

1. What is your budget
  - a) \$15,000 to \$20,000
  - b) Largest costs is the tax on staff
    - (1) Having to put aside other responsibilities to plan a one-day event
    - (2) A lot of extra time to plan and work event
  - c) First year largest expense was ice cream - \$4000 with free ice cream to attendees
2. What is your attendance
  - a) 2000 to 3000
3. Do you have a lot of sponsors or what is your strategy for this?

- a) Door-to-door conversations with local businesses, organizations, and community members asking them to participate, join, or support as a sponsor is most successful
- b) Harder when you don't have a record of success for a first time event especially
- c) In-kind donations like creating banners, flyers, marketing, food

4. Aside from cost of staff, and staff time - what are the three largest expenses?

- a) Dunk Tank
- b) Tents (purchased twenty tents rather than rent)
- c) Performers and Music Producer

5. Event Insurance and Police - are these expenses

- a) This is part of our general insurance - we do not take out separate insurance
- b) We are required to fill out a permit for the street / event
- c) We are required to have one police officer

6. Volunteers

- a) 30 volunteers
- b) All Staff are there

7. Is there a stage and sound system for performers?

- a) No stage
- b) Beneath a tent
- c) There is a sound system

8. Community Relationships?

- a) Previous events were more exclusive
- b) Block Party has opened it up to the community and became inclusive
- c) Marks of success is that many people have learned we're here

1. [Gabriel@essexartcenter.org](mailto:Gabriel@essexartcenter.org)

2. Festival Expenses

1. Points of Light

1. Largest expense is production

- a) Stage, sound system
- 2. Event Production Company
  - a) Handles street closure
  - b) Handles AV production
- 3. City Expenses
  - a) DPW
  - b) Police
  - (1) Requests bill - doesn't have to pay in advance
- 1. Overall Budget is \$30,000 and turnout was less than 1000 to 1000
- 2. Event - Unsure - Clemente Park
  - 1. Close down Middlesex Street
    - a) Cost of police keep going up
    - b) Have to pay in advance
    - c) Khmer Food Vendor - Spicy Tara? Kitchen in Salem
- 1. Caribbean Event
  - 1. Bands are expensive
  - 2. Hire police
- 3. Community Kitchen Space
  - 1. Mill City Grows - available for rental
    - 1. For information about the [ROOT Kitchen Rental](mailto:kitchen@millcitygrows.org) program contact Enrique Vargas at kitchen@millcitygrows.org or call 978-455-2620.
  - 2. UTEC - I think Craic Sauce rents it out permanently
- 4. What is the budget ratio to participant ratio for other events
  - 1. \$5000 to 1000
  - 2. \$25,000 Spring Busker Event - 50% is city services (DPW, Police, Trash)
    - 1. City Services
    - 2. Performers (18 performers - \$250 to \$1500)
    - 3.
- 5. Local Grants
  - 1. Local Cultural Council Grants
    - 1. Mention unique program or activities you hope to bring
    - 2. Mention "Community Performers"
    - 3. Review funding priorities for each year
  - 2. Mass Cultural Council
- 6. Food Permits
  - 1. ServSafe, Allergen Awareness
  - 2. Food Prep off-site must have Board of Health Permit

3. Food Prep on-site must be ready with certain requirements
  4. Propane usage - fire department permit
  5. Set up meeting with Board of Health / Health Inspector is possible
  - 6.
  7. Festivals - City Policies and Procedures
    1. Permit information can be found on the [CASE website](#)
  8. We should capture information from various events throughout the year
  9. Help people get their events ready to go (permitting, etc.)
  10. Yet - how do we streamline the process and make this a more smooth procedure
7. Food Vendors
    1. Fork Included
    2. Spicy Tara? Kitchen Salem
  8. How do you handle burn out?
    1. Volunteers that only work day of - no issue
    2. Volunteers that plan and coordinate each year are exhausted
    3. New Volunteers to help plan and coordinate are not standing up
    - 4.
  9. Community Connections
    1. Always make connections