



HOST A SOLUTIONS SALON

A Green For All Guide

We live in a time of both great crises and great opportunity. The challenges we face range from stopping private mega-prisons and toxic factories that are stealing the dreams of the next generation to curbing global warming and global war, which threaten to uproot the health and security of us all.

At Green For All we believe that what brings people together and inspires them the most are compelling solutions for change. By elevating the stories, the hopes, and the bold ideas of regular people, we can transform the nation. Through bringing together social justice advocates, workers, investors, people of faith, policy-makers, young people, and dreamers of all backgrounds, we can create an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty.

This is a short guide to organizing a community event on the topic of green solutions for all in your town. We call these events Solutions Salons.*

WHAT IS A SOLUTIONS SALON?

A Solutions Salon is generally a 2-3 hour event bringing together 50-300 people from a community to talk about innovative solutions for an inclusive green economy. The event includes a panel discussion and/or keynote presentation, some time to break out into smaller topic groups or simply turn to your neighbor and share thoughts on local solutions, and a cultural performance like music, poetry, or dance. A Solutions Salon has a clear purpose such as: launching a new green jobs network, bringing people together to support an important initiative, or discussing different emerging opportunities for the community.

A Solutions Salon:

- Focuses more on solutions than problems
- Inspires people with great new models and ideas
- Includes a soulful or cultural component - art is key for keeping it real
- Engages the audience directly in a conversation

SAMPLE AGENDA

:00 - :10 Welcome and introduction from the organizers

:10 - 1:00 Moderated panel and/or Keynote discussions focused on solutions and context

1:00 - 1:10 Short cultural performance - music / poetry / dance

1:10 - 1:50 Salon time - break into small groups by topic and discuss

1:50 - 2:20 Main cultural performance - music / poetry / dance

2:20 - 2:30 Closing and next steps

(If more time is available, think about having an hour at the beginning or end for food and networking.)

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL SALON?

1. Identify the goals and purpose of your event and make sure all speakers and coordinators are on board with them. Decide on a target audience to invite.
2. Put together a solid team of staff and/or volunteers to organize food, invite presenters, acquire a space, handle other logistics, and turn people out. Schedule regular meetings with this group, as needed.
3. Invite compelling presenters who can draw peoples' interest and attract a diverse audience, representing different perspectives on green jobs and pathways out of poverty in your community.
4. Identify facilitators for the Salon portion of your event and come up with discussion questions for them.
5. Implement a rigorous turnout strategy to meet the goals of the event. Invite more than twice the number of people than you intend to come and follow up by email ("Save the Date") and phone at least three times including the day before the event.
6. Invite local groups that support the goals and theme of the event to bring information, and provide tables for them.
7. Inform the local media of your event and follow up afterwards. Provide a media table or liaison, and generate clear messaging for the designated spokespeople.
8. Bring a sign-in sheet for the event to collect everyone's contact information.
9. At the end of the event, make an "ask" of everyone that advances your efforts.
10. Consider collecting donations as people are leaving the event. Provide volunteers at the door with baskets, as well as providing a donation box on the table.
11. Consolidate the information input from the Salon and follow-up on it.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR EVENT

While we have laid out some guiding principles and tips above, it is important for you to think about each of these questions as they relate to the specific needs of your constituents and targets.

1. What is the purpose of the event?

Why are you holding this event, and what do you hope to accomplish? Determine 2-4 clear outcomes.

2. When will it be? Where will it be held?

Times and dates- are they convenient and feasible? Can the venue accommodate all of your attendees?

3. Whom do you want to come to the event and how many?

General public, decision-makers, stakeholders, key allies, etc. Large vs. small group?

4. How will you inform people?

What's the best and most efficient way to reach your target audience/invitees? Call allied organizations, local schools, local media, etc.

5. Will you invite any special guests?

Is there anyone who might assist the expected outcome of the event? (guest speakers, elected officials, the media)

6. How and with whom will you create the agenda?

What's going to happen at what time? Collaborate with people who are planning the different sections of the event.

7. What materials do you need?

What will you need to run the event? (flip charts, tables, video projector, etc.)

8. What costs will there be? Where will you get the money?

What will cost money? (Transportation, location rental, food, permits, presenters) How will you raise it?

9. How will you document the event?

Call videographers and photographers.

10. How will you evaluate the event?

Provide evaluation sheets, plan a debrief, etc.

11. How will you provide sustainability and inspiration for the process as well as the product?

Staff appreciation check in times, setting deep intentions, budgeting for artists, etc.

TIMELINE

After deciding how all these things are going to get done, it is important to decide the deadline for their completion. Go back and decide who will accomplish all unfinished tasks and by when they will finish them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit the Green For All website for more resources to help you with your event, including a media toolkit and other documents: <http://www.greenforall.org/resources>

You can also view a VIDEO: Dream Reborn Attendees Share their Dreams at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUqAw1RiJIM>

Good luck!

* While Founder, Van Jones and Events Manager, Alli Chagi-Starr were working at Ella Baker Center, they produced the first Solutions Salon in 2006, which drew over 300 people! Since then, Van and Alli have moved over to Green For All. Ella Baker Center's Green Collar Jobs Campaign has continued to produce Solutions Salons inspiring large audiences across many sectors in the Bay Area.