

Steps to Planning a Dropout Prevention Summit

The America's Promise Alliance Dropout Prevention Summits are designed to bring state and local leaders together to raise awareness of the dropout crisis in America and implement proven solutions that will help kids graduate from high school ready for college, work and life. Here are a few steps to planning a successful summit in your area:

- ✓ **Determine your summit goals.** Be sure to have a clear idea of what you hope to accomplish and how you will measure the success of your event. For example:
 - Will you unveil an action plan that you hope to rally the community around?
 - Will it be an interactive meeting that will create a community action plan?
 - How will the outcome of the summit help improve graduation rates and the number of students that are college ready?
- ✓ **Assemble a summit organizing committee.** Be sure to include a cross sector of the community, including school representatives, local PTAs, businesses and local chambers of commerce, the governor, mayor or superintendent's office, youth-serving organizations, faith community leaders, parents and health and human services, juvenile justice and young people themselves. You can also visit www.americaspromise.org for a list of national partners.
- ✓ **Obtain local graduation data.** Make sure you know your state's/community's true, on-time graduation rate using an accepted formula. You may use a tool created by [Education Week](#) to obtain an accurate graduation rate.
- ✓ **Conduct an audit of your local resources.** Complete an inventory of the existing programs, policies and services your community has available for young people and determine your community's greatest assets and needs.
- ✓ **Recruit a "community champion."** Are there one or two individuals who are trusted and respected by community members of all ages, political affiliations and backgrounds? Again, think about securing your school superintendent, the governor, mayor or county executive, a member of the clergy, and/or the CEO of the area's major employer. This person is essential to bridging gaps between sectors and helping the community reach a consensus about how to help improve graduation rates in your city.
- ✓ **Seek support from community partners.** Starting with your organizing committee and "community champion," identify partners in the community that can provide financial and in-kind support for the summit. Consider approaching your major television station or newspaper to serve as your media partner to promote the summit in advance, cover the actual event and commit to follow-up stories in the coming year. Develop an initial budget and then approach local businesses to provide financial or in-kind support—like a hotel to host the event, restaurants and caterers to

provide meals and refreshments, printing companies to produce materials, etc. You might also want to consider partnering with a local student group like ROTC or Circle K for help recruiting youth volunteers to help staff your event.

- ✓ **Choose a date and location.** Try to find a time and place that makes it easy for your desired participants to attend. Avoid dates near major holidays, common family vacation weeks, or state and community-wide events like fairs, festivals and elections. Identify a location that has access to public transportation, can accommodate the physically challenged and will house the number of participants you anticipate for large- and/or small-group sessions. If space permits, you may also consider an exhibit space or literature tables to promote existing programs and services to help young people graduate on time.
- ✓ **Set your agenda and confirm presenters.** We put together a [sample agenda](#), which can be tailored to meet the needs of your summit and its participants. In this document, we also offer suggestions for presenters and topic areas they might address. We suggest confirming speakers as soon as possible, since scheduling can be a time-consuming process.
- ✓ **Develop an invitation list.** Consider inviting people who will bring access to the expertise, programs, resources, young people most at-risk of dropping out and the overall energy and commitment to move your community to action. Be sure to include some or all of the types of groups suggested above for your organizing committee. We suggest sending a save the date via mail or email a month before your summit, and then another reminder the week of the event to ensure attendance.
- ✓ **Develop a “call to action.”** Your summit should culminate in a “call to action” that mobilizes your community to provide kids the supports they need to graduate from high school ready for work, college and life. The call to action should include goals that are: 1) **specific** (who should do what), 2) **measurable** (how will results be tracked), 3) **achievable** (both in the short and long-term) and **timely** (when will these actions happen and when will they be monitored). In addition to your call to action, also encourage participants to learn more about what is happening in your area and become a part of the national dropout prevention network by registering at www.americaspromise.org.

Final Report & Follow Up

- ✓ **Draft a final report and share findings with the community.** Consider drafting a final report within one month following your summit. This will ensure that details are still fresh and that you will capture the highlights of your meeting. The summit planning committee should discuss the report findings and then develop a plan for releasing the results of the summit to the community. You might release the results at a press conference or town hall meeting, or by sending a mailing (both electronically and/or via U.S. mail) to summit participants.
- ✓ **Implement a plan and follow-up.** Summits are great tools to rally a community around a common topic or goal. But to be real catalysts for change, these events need follow-up and implementation. After the summit commences, think about implementing activities that support education reform tailored to fit your community or state. Here are a few ideas:
 - Will a new task force be formed out of the governor's or mayor's office or school district to monitor the community's progress toward implementing its call to action?
 - Will you build a media partnership where the newspaper or local television news showcases monthly stories and/or profiles about the work being done to help kids succeed in your community?
 - As more community members get inspired to help, who can they call to get involved?
 - What is your plan for measuring and reporting your progress to show momentum, including next steps and timelines?
 - Have you considered setting up a website with data, resources and a way to register volunteers and garner community feedback?
- ✓ **Keep in touch with the America's Promise Alliance.** In addition to sharing your progress reports, take advantage of the Alliance's partners, initiatives and resources. Learn more about the Alliance's [National Action Strategies](#) and access the tools and supports available online to help you implement them in your community.

For more information regarding the Dropout Prevention Summits, please visit www.americaspromise.org.