Introducing Skilled Trades: A Mini Career Fair

Oakland Public Library

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

Introducing Skilled Trades: A Mini Career Fair

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$251-500

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Byline

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Do you like working with your hands? Are you interested in changing careers? At the Trades Career Fair, discover hands-on, high-paying career pathways. Drop in and get information, ask questions, and explore opportunities for adults, youth, and re-enry community members.

Advanced Planning

The goal of this program was to provide a neutral space for everyone to learn about trade careers free of charge. We planned this program six months in advance to allow time to recruit representatives to staff the event, provide sufficient notice for outreach, and handle other logistics. The basic steps are:

1. Decide on a date well in advance (at least six months).
2. Start calling and emailing trade unions and companies to ask them to participate.
3. Work with your library's marketing/communications team to create flyers, a social media plan, etc. As representatives agree to come, ask them for copies of their logos so you can include them in your promotional materials.
4. Three months in advance: start outreach to schools, Eventbrite, and other relevant venues. Include festivals and any other option to make sure you see as many people as possible.
5. Two months in advance: create surveys if needed.
6. Plan food.
7. Start mapping out the room you will use with tables, chairs, power, unblocking emergency exits, etc.
8. One month in advance: confirm with representatives an headcount and secure tables/chairs, parking, etc.
9. One week prior: have a run of show if needed.
10. After the event, send thank you emails to all representatives.

Marketing

We promoted the event using all available library resources, including flyers, bookmarks, social media, and the website. Additionally, there was a lot of outreach to local festivals to take to people personally, and to different workforce programs via email.

I personally reached out to every workforce EDD (Employment Development Department) office, several high schools, all teen/YA service centers, LGBTQ+ centers, and the county probation department. All of the outreach was successful. Approximately 200 people came to the event, and from our surveys we learned that some participants drove over 80 miles to attend.

Budgeting

A large budget is not needed for this program. The majority of our budget was for a catered lunch for the union representatives who agreed to table the event. I wanted to provide lunch as a thank you for their time, since this was our first time hosting the event.

Day-of-event Activity

The set-up was extensive for my branch because we don't have a dedicated meeting room. We had to completely rearrange the shelving and furniture to make the library suitable.

We did this the night before the event, making sure each representative had a table. Because this event took over my small branch for the day, I had three additional team members dedicated to it, in addition to the regular staff. Two of the team members were the OPL job resources librarians, who hosted their own table, and one additional part-time employee who covered lunches for everyone so we could stay fully staffed during the lunch break, 12 - 3 pm.

The biggest unexpected challenge was not knowing that the representatives would leave at 3 pm. We initially scheduled the event until 4:30, but the crowds died out by 3 pm anyway, so everything worked out. One rep stayed until 4:30 and gave us the important feedback about the traditional end time.

Program Execution

Representatives from various trades arrived at 9 am with staff to set up. When the library opened at 10, we had a line of participants waiting outside. When they came in, we gave them a folder with information about the trades (provided by the reps ahead of time) and a pathfinder explaining how to explore the fair. From here, the event was similar to any job or college fair. Participants moved from table to table, gathering information. As the representatives got hungry, they went to the staff break room to grab some lunch.

We received a lot of feedback because we asked participants to complete surveys. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. With an attendance of almost 200 people, one commenter said that her husband had been out of work for 7 months, and our career fair was the first career/job fair they had attended where they received information they could actually use. I'd say "Mission accomplished!"

Advice

1. **START PLANNING EARLY!** In many ways, this is like planning any other library program, but securing representatives takes longer because calendars fill up fast.
2. Trade workers like short career fairs, not all day. I recommend scheduling it for 10 am - 3 pm, allowing participants to redeem part of their weekend.
3. Outreach/market outside your normal service area.
4. Invite the re-entry population.The trades are one sector where their past is not a hindrance to employment.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
OPL Commission Slides 20260427.pptx

Document
trade questions.pdf
Document
Trades Career Fair (8.5 x 11 in).pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

More Programs

Jun 25, 2024
Teens (13-16)+ | $
Image



Fix It Workshop

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Dec 15, 2020
+ |
Image



Take-Home Job Fair

Audiences:

Apr 5, 2017
+ | $
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Game of Careers Boot Camp

Audiences: