

Citizen Engagement Through Community Celebration:

The Grand Vision's Community Action Updates



A toolkit for celebrating implementation of a citizen-defined vision, engaging community members, and reporting success.



thegrandvision.org

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A Toolkit for celebrating implementation of a citizen-defined vision, engaging community members, and reporting success.

In October of 2012, the six-county region of Northwestern lower Michigan held a series of events to celebrate the progress made toward realizing its citizen-defined community vision. It had been five years since the vision was developed, and several stakeholders felt it was important to report to the community on implementation efforts.



A similar, but singular, event was held in September of 2011. However, the reach of the event was limited because it was held in one location. The community vision – The Grand Vision – applies to members of six counties; a geographically large area containing many small communities. Although the 2011 event was broadcast throughout the region via the local community access channel, there was no true engagement with those small communities. When planning for the 2012 event, the planning group decided to do a “road show” – to hold the event at a community in each county, giving that community a chance to shine.

This was a critical and successful decision. The events became celebrations of the small communities, showing that each community is valuable and is an important part of the overall Grand Vision.

The National Association of REALTORS® provided a Smart Growth Grant to support The Grand Vision Community Action Updates. Through this funding, The Grand Vision CORE team (Communication, Outreach, Resources, and Education) was able to create this toolkit as a way to share our successes and challenges with other communities throughout the country.

This toolkit is intended to assist rural regions with a similar effort – designing and delivering a series of community events that celebrate implementation of a community vision. This toolkit is for you if:

- Your community has created a comprehensive, long-term vision;
- Local organizations are implementing that vision through specific projects; and
- The public is not regularly updated on the progress being made toward realizing the vision.

This toolkit assumes that your community will host a series of events that are spread throughout the region, and that you are committed to engaging stakeholders in the planning and development of the events.



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The Grand Vision

The Grand Vision is a long-range planning framework for the six-county region. It began with a land use and transportation study and the largest community engagement process ever implemented in Michigan. It was created to ensure that the communities of the six-county region had an opportunity for input on managing projected growth.

The nature of the region presents unique challenges for land use planning, housing, development, and transportation systems. The region consists of 98 units of government (townships, incorporated villages, cities, and counties). Its geographic expanse is 3,300 square miles, which includes many inland lakes and other bodies of water. There are eight population centers in the region, where population size ranges from 300 to 15,000. However, the entire region represents one labor shed, with commute patterns crossing all boundaries. Transit systems exist in all six counties, but vary in their range of services. Projections indicate a population increase of 50,000 people over the next 50 years, a growth rate of 28% from the current population of 176,727 (ACS, www.nwmcog.org).



Community involvement established our vision.

The Grand Vision process explored all of these challenges, and gathered input on how best to guide the anticipated growth. Citizens, organizations, businesses, and local governments participated in the community engagement process. Scenario planning workshops were held to procure input on how to handle the increased population and the infrastructure necessary to support it. Results of the workshops were summarized in four growth scenarios that were presented to the public for a vote. Approximately

12,000 people (7% of the population) voted; 87% chose scenarios where growth occurs in existing population centers.



The public values expressed in The Grand Vision vote were verified by an independent survey, conducted less than one year after The Grand Vision community input process was finalized. This survey was a random sample telephone survey that indicated an 84% support of scenarios where growth occurs in existing population centers.

During the process, much input was collected that pointed to a comprehensive vision for future land use planning and regional development. Citizens expressed a need to explore and connect issue areas that have impact across the region. In order to capture this input, six "Guiding Principles" were developed.



Each Network is focused on one of the the Guiding Principles.

These principles convey a big picture vision for the future of the region. These Guiding Principles are:

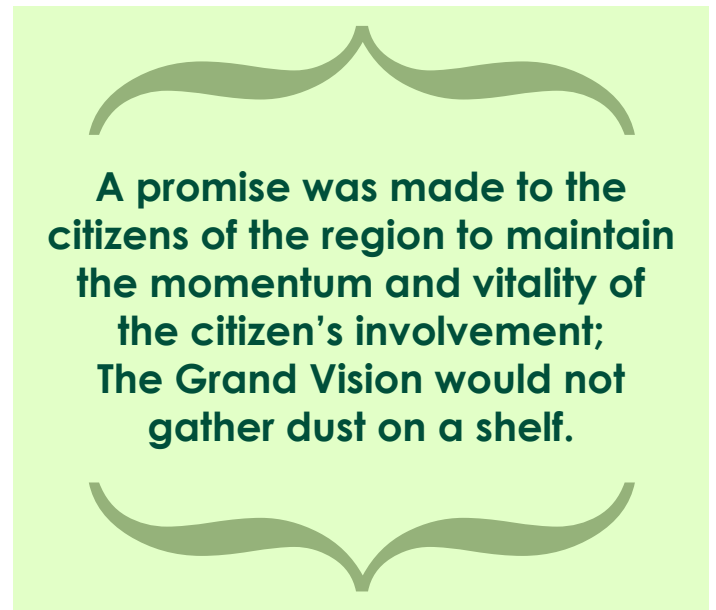
- o **Transportation:** A regional multi-modal transportation system that supports energy conservation
- o **Energy:** Sustainable-energy uses in construction, transportation and economic development
- o **Natural Resources:** Protected and preserved water, forests, natural and scenic areas
- o **Growth and Investment:** Unique and vibrant communities that strengthen the local economy
- o **Food and Farming:** Local farms and regional food systems as a viable part of our communities
- o **Housing:** A diverse mix of regional housing choices with affordable options

The preferred growth scenarios, along with the six guiding principles, provide a framework for managing growth; a framework that is truly reflective of the wishes of the community. In order to move this framework forward, six networks were created in alignment with the principles. A CORE team was created to provide support and connection for the networks, and to ensure that through The Grand Vision, the community's input stays front of mind for decision-makers and citizens throughout the region.

The Grand Vision Community Action Updates

A promise was made to the citizens of the region after The Grand Vision vote. The promise was to maintain the momentum and vitality of the citizen's involvement; The Grand Vision would not gather dust on a shelf. The passionate input of so many people was too important to forget.

In order to sustain awareness of The Grand Vision, and show progress toward realizing the vision, it was decided that a public event highlighting local projects would be held every year.



The Grand Vision Community Action Updates 2012: Connecting Communities to \$10 million and Counting took place in communities throughout the region and showcased local projects. The events included video reports involving local students, designation of each county's 2012 Grand Visionary recipient, Community Growth grant awards, and a preview of next steps in The Grand Vision process. Each event was followed by a "post party" in a local restaurant, so community members could continue the celebration.

An invitation was sent through email by partner organizations.

How to Create Successful Community Celebrations

This toolkit documents the efforts necessary to hold these public events. The action steps, checklists, suggestions, and lessons learned provided here are a resource for repeating the events in the future, and can support similar programs in communities throughout the nation.

The steps shown below consist of instructions for your community, a description of how that step was implemented for The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, and lessons that were learned along the way.

The steps described below may not be sequential; much of the planning must begin early and be sustained throughout the coordination process.

Step 1 – Establish a Coordination Committee

Instructions for Your Community

Decide who will be involved in development, coordination, and running of your events. Establish a committee that is charged with managing all components of the events. The committee should consist of members who are passionate and committed to making the events a success. Define who will fulfill the following roles:

- **Committee Chair:** This person will have final decision-making authority and will manage the many individuals who are planning the events.
- **Marketing and Public Relations:** At least two people with marketing experience and media connections should develop and implement a marketing plan.
- **Project Updates:** Two to three people should collect and organize the information on local projects that will be shared at the events. They should decide how the project information should be presented, which projects to prioritize and highlight, and who in the community should be recognized for each project.
- **Awards:** Three or more people should decide who

will be honored with awards at the event. They will define the process for making this decision, which may include taking nominations, reviewing local press coverage, and ensuring distribution across sectors and geography.

- **Youth Engagement:** At least one person should coordinate aspects of involving youth in the events.
- **Logistics:** At least one person should select and reserve event locations, decide on room layout, arrange for refreshments, and manage logistics for the events.



Two to three people should collect and organize the information on local projects that will be shared at the events.



For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we established a Coordination Committee that consisted of the following:

- Grand Vision CORE Chairman
- Grand Vision CORE Communications Director
- Grand Vision Media Relations consultant
- Executive Director of NorthSky Nonprofit Network
- Owner of EventsNorth, a firm contracted to manage logistics



Chairperson led community-centered celebrations.

The Coordination Committee should meet regularly. Depending upon the timeline from the beginning stages of development to the time of the events, regular meetings should occur monthly or bi-weekly at first, then weekly as the events get closer.

Lesson Learned

Our committee was not big enough. We needed more individuals to do the work. We definitely underestimated the volume of work and time commitment. We also did not clearly define roles and set specific expectations. This caused duplication of effort, confusion, and unnecessary stress.

Step 2 – Set Goals

Instructions for Your Community

The Coordination Committee should begin their work by defining the primary goals for the event. This will guide all decisions made, from small to large, and keep the scope of the events at a manageable level. In order to set goals that are targeted, realistic, and compelling, consider these factors:

- Public perception of and support for the community vision;
- Public awareness of and interest in implementation projects;
- Public willingness to participate in a community celebration.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we determined the following goals:

- o Inform the public in each community about the progress being made toward realizing The Grand Vision;
- o Engage new people in The Grand Vision and educate them on what it is, especially the youth in each community;
- o Motivate continued involvement;
- o Solidify connections with the leaders in each community;
- o Honor community advocates for their leadership and “grand vision.”

Step 3 – Develop the Agenda

Instructions for Your Community

The Coordination Committee should create the agenda for the events early in the process. The agenda should be structured to match the goals. Early committee meetings can be brainstorming sessions that generate creative and inspiring activities for the agenda. The activities should directly correlate to the goals. Consider creating a grid, such as that shown below, to ensure that activities will deliver on the goals.

The agenda will give the committee a means for organizing its work. Once the program is developed, committee members can work individually on the components to which they are assigned. Then all members will update and connect at the committee meetings.

Program Component:	Speaker:	Associated Goal:
Opening Remarks and an overview of the status of implementation of The Grand Vision.	The Grand Vision CORE Team Chairman and Spokesperson	Inform the public in each community about the progress being made toward realizing The Grand Vision
Student Videos highlighting each community	Presented by emcee	Engage new people in The Grand vision and educate them on what it is, especially the youth in each community
Local Updates on projects taking place in that community	A local champion/ opinion leader	Inform the public Solidify connections with the leaders in each community
Next Steps	Director of the Regional Planning Organization	Motivate continued involvement
Community Growth Grant winners were announced	Leader from a regional organization	Motivate continued involvement
Grand Visionary Awards were announced, honoring a local champion	Leader from a local organization	Honor community champions for their leadership and “grand vision.”



Step 4 – Create Champions

Instructions for Your Community

Local champions are essential to the success of your events. They should be opinion leaders who are connected to and respected by community members. These champions should do the following:

- Promote the events through their networks;
- Act as speakers for at least one component of the events;
- Provide testimonials for media coverage.

Local champions are especially important if your events are planned for several locations throughout a large rural region. These champions will be the connection necessary to the small communities, ensuring that the events resonate with those community members.



Penny Hill

Village Manager,
Village of Kalkaska

For *The Grand Vision Community Action Updates*, a local champion was identified for each county. Most champions were associated with local government, although many are also involved in the business sector. All were respected and involved in their communities. They were chosen based on their commitment to The Grand Vision, their willingness to represent their communities at the events, and their past public support for Grand Vision activities.

- Antrim: Owner and Operator, Shoreline Fruit (Business sector)
- Kalkaska: Village Manager, Village of Kalkaska (Local government sector)
- Grand Traverse: Grand Vision CORE Chairman (Business sector)
- Wexford: Development Director, City of Cadillac (Local government sector)

- Benzie: City Superintendent, City of Frankfort (Local government sector)
- Leelanau: Village Manager, Village of Suttons Bay (Local government sector)



Wally Delamater

Village Manager,
Village of Suttons Bay

Lesson Learned

Our Coordination Committee identified champions fairly early in the planning process, but did not engage them in the planning process. We should have involved them in the development of event activities and promotion for their respective communities. This would have given them some ownership in the events, providing more motivation to act as a champion. We should have also provided support for their role, such as giving them talking points and connecting them to media.

Step 5 – Develop Each Event Component

Local Project Summaries

Instructions for Your Community

If the purpose of your events is to update the public about implementation activities associated with your community vision, then the Local Project information is the most important part of your agenda. You should begin working on this component very early in the process, and involve as many people as possible in its development.

In order to present information about local projects, you have to know what they are and whom to contact. Collection of information about these projects should occur on a regular, ongoing basis. A database or standardized system of collecting and storing this information is ideal.

If you do not have a standardized system that holds local project information, consider creating a survey. The survey should ask about local projects, how they are funded and if this funding was obtained by leveraging the community vision, why the local projects should be considered as implementation of the community vision, and any other questions that will support your effort to update the public. The survey should be sent early and respondents should be given plenty of time to complete it. This type of survey could be complex and require significant time to complete.



WiFi is installed in the business district of Empire.

The Coordination Committee members who are assigned to this component of the events should review all project information from each local community. They should decide which projects will be highlighted at the event in that community. In order to be unbiased in this decision-making, consider creating a list of criteria that will be used to determine which projects are included. The list of criteria could take the form of questions such as:

- Is the public aware of this project?
- Is the public interested in the progress this project is making?
- Can we show direct ties to the community vision? If yes, how?

Transportation
Transit Provider
Collaboration



Growth & Investment
Citizen Input on
Master Plans & Zoning



When the projects to be highlighted at the event are chosen, the committee should then make contact with the relevant organizations. In addition to the facts and key points about the project, make sure to get the “story” behind the information. What was the motivation for the project? How has it impacted the community? Why is it important? It is these stories that will be of interest to the public, much more so than hard data. Stories will give the events some heart.

**Get the story
behind the projects.
How has it impacted
the community?**

The committee should decide how the information will be presented. This could include a slide show (Microsoft PowerPoint or the web-based Prezi); a video; a panel of individuals working on the projects; or countless other methods. The presentation method should consist of telling the story, and the format should be dynamic and interesting.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we used the results of a survey conducted earlier in the year to obtain project information. The survey was sent to Grand Vision Network members, partner organizations, and other interested stakeholders. The survey responses were organized by county and by issue area, showing alignment with one or more of the six Grand Vision Guiding Principles.

The responses to the survey did not provide enough information to summarize the projects for the events so a Coordination Committee member contacted the relevant organizations for the “story.” Each project that was highlighted at the event was given its own slide in the presentation, with bullet points and/or pictures to tell the story. Whenever possible, results and impact of each project was included. Community members

who worked on the project were asked to stand and be recognized for their efforts.

Lesson Learned

We did not begin to work on this component of the events until shortly before they were held. We were so focused on marketing and logistics that we lost sight of the primary goal of the events. This component should have been our first focus, because in order to have successful events, you must have compelling content. The delay in developing this component resulted in a disconnect with the organizations and individuals who are implementing The Grand Vision. It was a chaotic and stressful last-minute attempt to pull it all together.

Youth Engagement

Instructions for Your Community

If one of your goals is to ensure that youth are involved in realizing a community vision, then some part of your event should include the youth of the community. Remember that the vision is most applicable to younger generations; they are the ones who will be around to see the vision become a reality.



Students created a rap video to promote recycling.

Connect with a local youth group or school. They can take on a role that will meet the requirements of a service learning project.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, our VISTA workers were assigned to engage youth. They worked with local schools to support students involved in the project. The students created videos that highlighted projects in their communities that are actively implementing The Grand Vision principles.

Lesson Learned

The students chose a project to film based on their interests. However, we did not give them enough guidance to ensure that the project was directly connected to The Grand Vision. Therefore some of the films appeared random, and attendees were confused about the films' correlation to implementation of The Grand Vision.

Awards

Instructions for Your Community

Everyone likes awards. People like to be honored, and communities like to see someone deserving receive recognition for their hard work. Presenting an award at each event helps to tie the event to the community.



"Grand Visionaries" were recognized for their community contributions.

Establish a subcommittee that obtains nominations, reviews the nominations, and decides on the winners. The subcommittee should develop a standard set of criteria for making its decisions. When soliciting nominations, make sure that those criteria are shared. Create a nomination form that asks questions related to the criteria. This will ensure that enough information is provided for the subcommittee to make an informed decision.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, a small committee managed the Grand Visionary Awards. They solicited and reviewed nominations. Criteria used in selecting the winners included an equal distribution across sectors. Here is a list of winners:

- Antrim County: Joe Short and Leah Hannan, owners

of Shorts Brewing Company, for their community involvement and commitment to successful business operations and providing jobs;

- Benzie County: Benzie Bus, for its commitment to regional, affordable public transportation;
- Grand Traverse: Wayne Kladder, Supervisor, Acme Township, for his leadership in the Acme Shores placemaking initiative;
- Kalkaska: George and Sally Shetler, owners of Shetler Family Dairy, for their community involvement and generosity;
- Leelanau: Ian Plamondon, Suttons Bay high school student, for leading an effort to create a disc golf course for youth;
- Wexford: Baker College of Cadillac, for its Agricultural Tech Program, which connected to Grand Vision networks early in the development phase.



Grand Visionary awards recognized important citizen contributions.

Visit: thegrandvision.org/communityactionupdates to see the list of winners and videos which include their thoughts on The Grand Vision.

Recipients of this award were given a gift of a high quality pair of field binoculars, in a case engraved with the name of the award.

The winners were informed of their award, but the public was not aware of who the winners would be until they were announced at the events. A local community leader was asked to introduce and present the award.

Lesson Learned

The subcommittee did not establish its standard criteria prior to obtaining nominations. As such, the subcommittee was unable to suitably answer questions about why they selected those particular winners. It was fortunate that no one challenged the decisions made by the subcommittee.

Supporting Materials

Instructions for Your Community

Provide attendees with materials that will help them to follow along with the agenda, remind them of the original community visioning process, share progress of implementation progress in other communities within the region, and reinforce the goals of the events. Consider creating a grid that gives you some guidance on which materials to develop and provide at the events.

THE GRAND VISION The Six Guiding Principles
For more information or to volunteer go to www.thegrandvision.org

- 1 TRANSPORTATION**
A regional multi-modal transportation system that supports energy conservation
- 2 GROWTH & INVESTMENT**
Unique and vibrant communities that strengthen the local economy
- 3 NATURAL RESOURCES**
Protected and preserved water, forests, natural and scenic areas
- 4 FOOD & FARMING**
Local farms and regional food systems as a viable part of our economy
- 5 HOUSING SOLUTIONS**
A diverse mix of regional housing choices with affordable options
- 6 ENERGY**
Sustainable energy uses in construction, transportation and economic development

Collateral Material:	Description:	Associated Goal:
Event Program	5.5" x 8.5" bifold	All goals – the program was the most important supporting material. Each event's program was customized, and included the sequence of the event, speaker names, and sponsor logos.
Grand Vision Timeline showing key activities that began with the original visioning process and include projects highlighted at the events	a). Large format 6' x 3' on easel b). graphic used on various printed materials c). .jpg on website	Inform the public in each community about the progress being made toward realizing The Grand Vision
The Grand Vision Guiding Principles listing each guiding principle and its associated issue area	8.5" x 11" 1-sided flier	Engage new people in The Grand vision and educate them on what it is, especially the youth in each community
Bumper Stickers	11.5" x 3" 2-color printed	Motivate continued involvement and support
County Updates showing county-specific participation in the original visioning process, as well as results of surveys and voting from that county		<i>No associated goal</i>
Original Grand Vision report	8.5" x 11" saddle-stitch (magazine style)	<i>No associated goal</i>
Other: we allowed participating organizations and The Grand Vision networks to bring materials	various	Inform the public in each community about the progress being made toward realizing The Grand Vision

Lesson Learned

Some of the materials that we provided were intended to justify the continued support for The Grand Vision as a community planning process. However, since this was not one of the primary goals of the event, those materials did not appear connected. And, very few people took any of the materials provided.

Step 6 – Marketing

Instructions for Your Community

Planning for marketing the events should begin early in the process. The plan should include specific activities that engage the local champions, partner organizations, and other stakeholders to utilize their existing communications channels. Media venues can promote the events as early as six weeks prior, with the concentration of promotional activities occurring in the two weeks prior to the events.

Specific activities that could be included in your marketing plan:

- An early "Save the Date" invitation to all stakeholders;
- Personalized, formal invitations to elected officials;
- Letters to the editor by local champions;
- Guest appearances on morning news shows and/or radio talk shows;
- Broadcast email newsletters;
- Social media: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook;
- General press release;
- Community calendars;
- Post a notice of the events on web site of all partner organizations.

Procure sponsors for the events by soliciting local media stations, businesses that are known supporters your community vision as well as businesses that are new to the area and eager to get involved. Make sure that sponsor logos appear on all materials, including the

program, posters, postcards, and any other marketing efforts. Include mention of primary sponsors in news releases.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, our marketing strategy was to go local. Although the planning for the events occurred in the centralized location of Traverse City, we attempted to relate the content of the events to the local communities in which the events were held. The marketing strategy followed suit: we issued county-specific press releases, quoting the local champions, and focusing on projects implemented within that county.

Our marketing activities relied heavily on promotion by partner organizations and members of the Grand Vision Networks. We gave standard promotional language to all partner organizations and requested that they post the information on their web sites and promote the events in their newsletters and on their social media channels.

We also obtained a local Media Sponsor. TV7&4 / TV29&8 have been very supportive of The Grand Vision and are eager to contribute their vast resources to its success. They provided news anchors to emcee all six events, and gave us a discount on promotional spots featuring one of the anchors. These spots, which consisted of an invitation to attend the events, ran during the nightly news show for a week before the events began.



Media sponsor TV7&4 provided talented emcees for the events.

We also placed print ads in each county's newspaper. Some of those newspapers ran a local story using the information from our county-specific press releases.

By relying so heavily on partner organizations, we captured an audience that was already supportive of The Grand Vision, and already well informed about local projects. We should have engaged new partner organizations in the efforts in order to engage a new audience.

Lesson Learned

Marketing a series of events like this is an immense task. It takes experienced marketing professionals to manage the various factors and to analyze the best options for targeting the right audience. We were fortunate to have two excellent marketing professionals working jointly on the project. We should have ensured that these two professionals were communicating well and had specific areas of focus. Unfortunately, some duplication of effort occurred, which resulted in confusion among media outlets.

Our marketing activities relied heavily on promotion by partner organizations and members of the Grand Vision Networks.

Step 7 – Logistics

Instructions for Your Community

The time and effort required to coordinate a series of community events should not be underestimated. If a professional events coordinator is not a member of your Coordination Committee, consider finding one in your community and raising the funds to hire him/her. It will be well worth the cost.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we utilized funds provided by the Smart Growth Grant from National Association of REALTORS® to contract with a local events planning firm, Events North. The owner

of this firm became a member of our Coordination Committee, which enhanced our connections to her planning efforts.

The following are elements of events coordination that should be addressed in your logistics planning:

- **Budget** – A realistic budget should be established before planning begins. The Coordination Committee should determine which elements of the events will be covered by the budget and which will be procured as contributions.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we set a budget of \$15,000 for event logistics. This was the entire amount of the Smart Growth Grant



Allison Beers, event planner

provided by the National Association of REALTORS®. It was determined that the cost of hiring the event planning firm, as well as the various additional costs such as AV, refreshments, etc., would be the best use of this funding. Other elements of the events, such as the staff time necessary

to plan and promote the events, would be easier to procure as in-kind contributions. The match amount of \$2,500 provided by the Traverse Area Association of REALTORS® was utilized for advertising costs.

- **Site Selection** – sites should be selected based on a set of agreed upon criteria. This set of criteria should include:

Location awareness in the community -- the site should be familiar to the audience, easy to find, and preferably in a well-traveled area that will attract more attendees.

Available dates – check community calendars to avoid scheduling conflicts with other community events such as board meetings, school plays, and Chamber of Commerce events.

Size of location – Determine a target number of attendees for each event and select a site that will accommodate that number. It's better to have a room that is too small, with "standing room only" than a room that is so big it looks like the event was a failure.

Layout of space – determine the format of your events. Will they be presentation style? Will there be discussion tables or expo-type booths? Select a site that will allow a layout to accommodate your chosen format.

Cost – know your budget for event venues and stick to it. Or scout locations with little or no rental fee.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we chose a presentation format for our events. Since much of our presentations consisted of videos, we selected community theaters whenever possible. When a theater was not available, we selected a location that allowed for a projector and screen at the front of the room, proper lighting, audio, and enough chairs for our target number of attendees. All events were obtained at no cost, thanks to the generous contribution of the location managers.



The State Theatre hosts The Grand Vision in Grand Traverse County.

Antrim County – Elk Rapids Cinema
Post party at Siren Hall

Grand Traverse County – State Theatre
Post party at Red Ginger

Benzie County – The Garden Theater
Post party at Dinghy's Restaurant and Bar

Leelanau County – Inland Seas Education Center
Post party at The Village Inn

Kalkaska County – The Kalisuem
Post party at Whitetails Restaurant

Wexford County – The Cadillac Public Library
Post party at Hermann's

- **Timing** – create a schedule for managing all logistics, with deadlines that ensure all needs are addressed in a timely manner. This will reduce the chaos and stress associated with last-minute planning.



For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we used the following timeline, which incorporates some elements of marketing:

- Week of July 16th
Review events in each county for best dates in each
- Week of July 23rd
Initial calls for venue locations
- Week of July 30th
Wrap up final meetings to gather all details
- Week of August 6th
Follow up calls to venues
- Week of August 13th
Calls for services- chair and table rentals, sound, emcee, etc.
- Week of August 27th
Finalize location details and plans, contact local community leaders
- Week of September 3rd
Produce materials needed, write press release, create events postings on Facebook
- Week of September 10th
Push out all invites, releases and FB events, line up radio interviews
- Week of September 24th
TV interviews & final push with email to all contacts
- Week of October 1st
Event Week
- Week of October 6th
Event Week
- **Signage** – each event location should have easily identifiable signage to promote the event. In this digital age, it can be easy to forget that physical signage is still very important for promoting an event and identifying a location. Get creative with your signage options. Signs can consist of a marquee on a theater, yard signs on the front lawn of the venue, digital displays, and more.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, we used the following signage for most event locations:

- Marquee on theaters or digital display;
- Yard signs at the street;
- Sandwich board at the door of the event;

- Balloons outside and inside the venue;
- Podium signage inside the venue;
- Volunteers wore Grand Vision shirts.



Get creative with your signage options.

- **Onsite needs** – each location will have different needs, which will depend upon the format of the events. Determine those onsite needs and create a checklist. Assign one person to manage all onsite needs.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, the following checklist was used:

- Check-in table
- Information table
- Clipboards for registration
- Raffle tickets to enter to win gift certificates
- Basket to collect ticket stubs
- Balloons and signs
- Gift for Grand Visionary award winner
- Screen, projector, and laptop
- Thumb drive containing presentation (this was transported to the venue by someone other than the person transporting the laptop)
- Microphone and speaker system
- Lighting
- Podium
- Podium sign
- Chairs
- Refreshments (popcorn and pop were purchased from theaters and provided at no cost to attendees)

- **Staffing** – recruit volunteers to staff the events. Assign them to a role, ensuring that they understand what is expected of them. Consider creating a brief “job description” for each role to reduce confusion and ambiguity.



AmeriCorps VISTAs served as greeters at the events.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, the following staffing roles were assigned to VISTA workers, who provide regular support to The Grand Vision CORE team.

- Greeters
- Registration
- Set up
- Tear down
- AV assistance

An onsite event manager oversaw the production of each event, including arrival of speakers, presenters, winners, and student video makers.



A high school band played prior to the start of the event.

Step 8 – The Fun Element

Instructions for Your Community

Make your events fun! They should have a celebratory atmosphere that fits with the culture of the local community. Involve community members, youth, and other passionate individuals in brainstorming the fun element. Get creative and be bold about carrying out your ideas.



Grants were awarded to communities supporting The Grand Vision.

The Coordination Committee should assign an outgoing and creative committee member to infuse elements of fun throughout the agenda.

For The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, a raffle was held for a gift certificate at a local restaurant. This was the same restaurant where the “post party” was held. The emcee drew the raffle ticket at the conclusion of the event, announced the winner, and invited everyone to continue the celebration at the post party location.

We also asked a local high school band to play outside one of the venues prior to the start of the event.

Lesson Learned


We underestimated the importance of the fun element. We were a victim of our own hubris, assuming that everyone would want to give up an evening at home and come to hear about projects that implement The Grand Vision. We should have realized that it would take more excitement to create interest in attending these events. We should have focused more on the celebration and story-telling, making it fun for everyone.

Step 9 – The Events!

Instructions for Your Community

Be prepared to work hard at the events. Glitches will occur, and that's okay. Make sure that one person is assigned to take charge at each event. He or she will be the "go to" person for anyone who has questions, and will make decisions on how to handle any issues that arise.

Create a Speaker's Agenda with scripts and/or notes in order to help the speakers to stay on message. This will prevent the speakers from forgetting important points and will give them guidance when they may be nervous.



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For [The Grand Vision Community Action Updates](#), we used a powerpoint slide show for each event. Scripts were written and included in the Notes section of the slides. These were provided in hard copy to each speaker. The emcees were given scripts as well, with transition notes so they could make smooth segues from one topic to the next, introducing student videos and speakers.

Videos were embedded in powerpoint slides, making it easy for the person running the slide show to start the videos.



Events celebrated contributions to quality of life.

Conclusion

With careful and thoughtful preparation, your events will be successful celebrations of community implementation of your vision. Make sure to give yourself the recognition and praise that you deserve!

For more information about The Grand Vision Community Action Updates, visit the following websites:

thegrandvision.org/communityactionupdates

This web site lists Grand Visionary Award Winners, Community Growth Grant winners, and provides a summary of the events. It also shows embedded videos of the winners.

flickr.com/photos/grandvisionmi/sets

This flickr channel shows still pictures of the events.

youtube.com/thegrandvision

The Grand Vision's YouTube channel shows videos used at the events, along with videos of supporters of The Grand Vision.

thegrandvision/student-video

This webpage shows all of the student-produced videos that were featured at the events.

thegrandvision/news-updates

This webpage lists all press releases issued by The Grand Vision communications team, including county-specific news releases inviting the public to attend the Community Action Updates.

thegrandvision.org/the-grand-vision-monthly-update

This webpage links to an archive of The Grand Vision's monthly email newsletter. View the newsletters for September and October 2012 for information about the Community Action Updates.



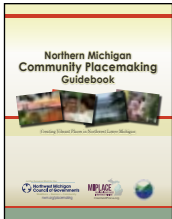
Local Resources

Let Our Resources Work For You.



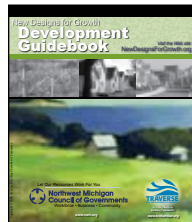
Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG) is a 10-county public agency providing workforce development, economic development, and regional planning services in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford counties. The NWMCOG's Regional Planning and Community Development Department's goal is to be a planning resource, enabling and enhancing the region's ability to preserve and create high quality of life conditions.

View the Placemaking video & Guidebook: nwm.org/placemaking
Visit the website: nwm.org



The Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook is intended to be the resource for communities who desire to transform their spaces into Great Places. The website provides access to the Northern Michigan Placemaking Guidebook and provides an opportunity to share and view placemaking best practices throughout the region.

Visit the website: CreateMiPlace.org



The New Designs for Growth Guidebook, designed specifically for northwest lower Michigan, stems from the premise that growth in the region is inevitable and that development, with good planning and design, can be compatible with the landscape. Communities in northwest lower Michigan have choices on how they want to grow, and the New Designs for Growth Guidebook serves as a reference manual on ways to achieve development which protects peoples' choices, community character, and economic opportunities.

Visit the website: NewDesignsForGrowth.org



For more information about placemaking in northwest lower Michigan, visit



Northern Michigan
Community Placemaking
G u i d e b o o k

Creating Vibrant Places in Northwest Lower Michigan

Let Our Resources Work For You.



**Northwest Michigan
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nwm.org/placemaking

