9 Tips for Successful Program Planning

1. **Know your reasons for holding a library program**
   - To encourage and motivate children and families to read for pleasure
   - To help school age children maintain their reading skills while on vacation
   - To introduce children and their families to the resources of the public library
   - To attract new customers to the library
   - To establish the library as a vital part of community life
   - To create positive publicity for the library
   - To promote community involvement in the mission of the library
   - To establish local partnerships and community connections
   - To increase circulation of library materials

2. **Review last year's programming statistics**
   - What were the successes? (Consider programs presented, attendance, publicity, staff time required, community support, etc.)
   - What weaknesses can you identify?
   - What do the statistics tell you? (Are there groups you want to be more involved this year?)
   - What important feedback about last year's program can you get from library staff?
   - What important feedback about last year's program can you get from people who participated?

3. **Establish goals & objectives for this year's programming with your Library Director**
   - It will be easier to design, publicize and evaluate your programming with this guidance.
   - What are the goals for programming at your library?
   - What types of programs will meet the library mission and long range plan?
   - Who is your library programming for?
   - Are there unserved groups in your community you would like to include in this year's program?
   - Are there parts of the library's collections you want to promote?
   - Are you seeking more community partnerships to support this year's program?
   - Establish specific objectives – how will you make your goals become reality?

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4. **Know your library's resources**
   - How many staff members will be available to help with programming?
   - How much space is available in the library for programs? Will you need to use facilities outside the library?
   - What is the budget for supplies, promotional materials, presenters?
   - How can your library's web site and online calendar be updated frequently with program information?
   - Does the library have a print and electronic newsletter to help get the word out?

5. **Plan the components of the program**
   - How many regularly scheduled programs will you offer in the library? For which age / interest groups?
   - How many staff, volunteers, community presenters or special presenters will you need? Are there teachers or school librarians who would volunteer to assist with presentations for programs scheduled in the library during the summer? Children love to find their favorite teachers at the public library.
   - How many regular or special programs will you offer at sites outside the library?
   - Set program dates and put them on all pertinent calendars. Try to establish an identifiable pattern of scheduling, for example, the fiction book discussion group always meets on Wednesday.
   - Know what information you need to collect before you begin. Keep a separate folder for receipts and program attendance to make the collection of statistics easier at the end of the program.
   - Evaluations: For evaluating how you met your objectives. For reports to supporters, your director, library board, and the state library.
   - Outline each scheduled program. Sign up community presenters or hire professional presenters. Collect necessary books, supplies, and equipment.

6. **Seek community support for the program**
   - Check with your director before establishing partnerships or asking for donations.
   - What community partners will help the library reach its programming goals?
   - How much financial support will you need? Make a specific list.
   - What sort of in-kind support will you need? Make a specific list.
   - Will you need a place outside the library for programs?

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7. **Publicize & promote your programs both in the library & throughout your community**
   - Make sure your flyers have a standardized look, identifiable as from the library.
   - Add prominent displays of theme-related books for all ages and plan to keep them looking fresh.
   - Invite your legislators to attend programs – they provide good photo opportunities.
   - How will you reach people who don't use the library?
   - Word-of-mouth is the #1 way people learn about community information.
   - Signs by the side of the road are the #2 way people learn about community information.
   - Use your community partners to help distribute information about programming to their constituents.
   - Where in your community can you place flyers to reach your target audiences?
   - Are there other publicity venues in your community? Outdoor message boards? Messages added to utility bills or bank statements? Cable TV? Posting to online community calendars?

8. **Communicate with coworkers about preparations, registration & programming so everyone in the library is knowledgeable about the programming at the library**
   - How will you inform library staff of what to expect from your programming? Orientation at a staff meeting? Written information about the program, including all flyers and calendars?
   - Post a schedule of events at every library telephone and circulation desk.

9. **After Programs: send thank yous, collect & report results, evaluate**
   - Send written thank you notes to everyone who helped you.
   - Are there reports you should make to supporters, your director, library board, and the state library.
   - Did you achieve your goals and objectives for this year's program? Review these with appropriate library staff and make notes for next year.
   - Throughout your program, make note of good personal "stories" about the value of the program to be included in reporting.