

10 Easy Steps to Hosting an EOLD Gathering in Your Community

Hosting a gathering of end-of-life doulas in your community can be easy and fun. Here are some blueprint tips for organizing an event that connects doulas in your area:

1. **Determine what the purpose of your gathering will be.** Is your primary goal to provide space and time for doulas to meet each other? Is it a study group? Or do you have intentions of forming a working collective? What do you hope they will take away from the gathering that will help them in their pursuits?
2. **Decide whether you want to gather for free time networking or structure your time together around an activity.** You might decide to have an evening together over a meal or dessert, plan a video or presentation, have a book discussion, the sky's the limit! Be sure to invite speakers early and give them clear direction.
3. **Locate a venue that meets your needs.** For instance, meeting in a restaurant or bar will work great for casual meeting up, while a library or community center will likely have projectors and seating and all the things you need for a more structured schedule.
4. **Think about how much time and when the event will best benefit the participants.** If you are looking to attract attendees from a wide radius, a day event will give them time to get there and return home. If you're in an urban setting where most of your attendees will be local, an evening may work best.
5. **Locate partners.** Going it alone is stressful while creating partnerships will add to the event planning and lighten the load. Look for people interested in hands-on helping, from publicity to chair set-up. And seek out organizations, businesses, and agencies who support your mission by helping monetarily or with ongoing outreach before and after your event.
6. **Design publicity** and engage help in getting the word out with posters, social media posts, guest newsletter blurbs, newspaper press releases - anywhere people learn about what's going on in your community and in the doula world.

7. **Set up an online registration form.** If you don't have a website, see if a related organization or one of your partners would be willing to host this for a short period. Online registration is accurate, easy, and saves you from endless phone calls!
8. **Send your attendees confirmations** of their registration and a schedule, invitation reminder, list of details, whatever they will need to keep them informed and excited about going. Keeping them engaged is as important as creating buzz about it in the first place.
9. **Ask for help** with finding a suitable venue, providing food, printing, staffing registration tables, anything that needs dedicated people to see it through. Again, many hands make light work.
10. **Have a plan for following up with attendees and partners.** Offer a paper and/or online survey that captures their contact information and what they are working on, where their interests lie, what they hope to achieve with their new contacts and information. Make sure to thank your partners!

A Word About Funding

Asking for donations to cover costs of rental space, food, and associated expenses is fine whether or not you have a tax exempt IRS status. Being organized as a 501c3 means that the donor can file for exemption for their donation; it is a benefit offered to donors, not a benefit that inures to the organization itself. Many people are happy to donate small amounts of money without being concerned about tax exemption. Contributing money often encourages people to feel connected to the group and helpful.

Another approach is to partner with 501c3 with a related mission. This can take various forms, such as a contractual relationship, a strategic alliance or affiliation, or a parent-subsidiary relationship. Each has a different structure and balance of pros and cons. The benefit to your organization lies in having an established entity who has the capacity to handle liability and manage money responsibly.

It is important to make it clear to participants at your event that you have a plan for handling funds taken in that exceed the amount needed to run your event.