

STEP 13. MAKE PROVISIONS FOR CATERING SERVICES TO PROVIDE FOOD AND BEVERAGES ON THE DAY OF THE TRAINING

Food and beverage service is an important part of the training because a bad experience in these areas can have a strong negative affect on the participants' comfort and satisfaction. Make your arrangements with the caterer several weeks in advance and confirm them the day before the training.

For an on-site course, it is best to contract with a good caterer who is accustomed to working at this type of event. If your training is off-site, catering arrangements should be covered in your contract with the facility. Most facilities insist that their own catering department be used if they have one. If not, you usually must get approval from the site manager to bring in an outside caterer. For small trainings with limited budgets, you may be able bring in food and beverage items yourself. If no funds are available to provide catering, consider asking local restaurants to donate food or services. You may also consider asking participants to bring their own food or drink.

There are several points in the training day when food and beverage service might be expected: upon arrival in the morning, during breaks, and at lunchtime. In some cases it might be appropriate to have a reception at the end of the training day. The question of whether food and drink is allowed into the training space is determined by the site provider.

Morning arrival. As participants arrive and register, a hospitality table should be available. Set it up at least an hour in advance of the scheduled start of the training to accommodate early arrivals. Depending on your budget and other considerations, your options are:

- **Beverages only:** At a minimum, provide coffee, decaf, fresh water, and hot water for tea. Offer teabags in a selection of black, green, and herbal varieties. Hot chocolate or fruit juice is also appreciated in the morning. Milk, lemon, and sugar should be available.
- **Continental breakfast:** In addition to beverages, you can offer baked goods, pastries, bagels, muffins, etc. and/or fresh fruit.

Breaks. Participants appreciate beverage service during morning and afternoon breaks. Coffee and tea are served in the morning, and should be refreshed throughout the day. In the afternoon, soft drinks, juices, iced tea, and bottled water may be offered. The afternoon break might also include an assortment of snacks, such as cookies or brownies. (Consider specifying with the caterer that the snacks not contain nuts to avoid allergy problems.)

Lunch. Full-day sessions require a lunch break. While you can give participants a free hour to find lunch on their own, you may wish to consider providing the meal, especially if there are no convenient, reasonably priced restaurants with quick service located nearby. Also, if the participants remain at the site, it is easier to reconvene the session promptly when the lunch break is over.

An easy option is to provide boxed lunches (usually sandwiches), which greatly simplifies serving and cleanup. The caterer delivers the lunches and a selection of drinks to the training site an hour or two before they are scheduled to be served. Be sure to accommodate participants' preferences by including both meat (turkey, roast beef, etc.) and vegetarian meals (a good rule of thumb is to estimate 10%-15% vegetarian meals). You may also want to include a kosher option as well.

PRE-COURSE TASKS

ACTIVITY 13-A

Make a preliminary catering plan based on your predetermined budget. List the points in the training schedule when catering will be needed—arrival and registration periods, breaks, and lunch on each day—and determine what types of beverages and food (if any) you want to make available to participants at each time.

ACTIVITY 13-B

Consult with the facility's catering manager or with caterers of your own choice to consider specific menu options and obtain cost estimates. Also ascertain the timeframe for submitting the final count of participants to the catering manager.

ACTIVITY 13-C

Based on your budget, the caterer's recommendations, and your preferences, develop a final catering plan. Draw up a written agreement with the caterer that specifies:

- When and where the food service will take place
- The food and beverage items to be provided, including accommodations to special food requests (vegetarian, kosher, etc.)
- Additional items to be provided—dishes, utensils, napkins, condiments, etc.
- The number of people who will be served
- Whether the caterer will deliver food, or prepare and serve it on site; if served, what form the service will take (buffet, sit-down, boxed lunches, etc.)
- Costs, per item or service and in total

ACTIVITY 13-D

Call the catering department with the final count of participants (usually 3-4 days prior to the event), including specific food requests.

ACTIVITY 13-E

The day before the training begins, confirm all the arrangements with the caterer.