

Organizer Discussions at Regional Events: A Great Remedy for Stagnation, Burnout, and Stress!

by Emily Addison and Linda Henry



Organizer discussion at Hey Fever Dance weekend, Ottawa, Ontario, November 2018 (photo by Emily Addison)

Are you an organizer? Do you sometimes feel like your work is a solo uphill climb? Do you have a good team but feel burned out or stagnant? Are you looking for ways to work productively with other groups in your region? Well here's an exciting idea for you ... read on!

Over the past year, we have been expanding the supports that we offer local organizers, as they are key in keeping dance, music, and song communities healthy and strong. You have likely read about, benefitted from, or even contributed to some of the new initiatives including the

[Organizers Resource Portal](#), [CDSS Web Chats](#), and [Shop Talk](#).

In addition to developing online resources, we want to encourage more organizer gatherings. We know that in-person discussions can be incredibly powerful given the successes of conferences such as [Puttin' on The Dance](#) (2011 and 2015) and the [SW Regional Organizers Conference](#) (2014). However, these large events take a lot of time and effort to organize and don't happen very often.

This article introduces a new resource designed to help create organizer discussions that are much easier to plan! These smaller events can generate meaningful and long-lasting effects:

- Meeting together helps to match faces with names and build connections
- Getting specific advice can help groups address challenges they are facing
- Hearing innovative ideas can inspire local changes
- Exploring ways to partner with other groups strengthens all communities.
- Working with others can be energizing!

How to create an organizer discussion at a pre-existing regional event

Regional festivals, weekends, and camps are usually stacked with organizers. Therefore, these events are a perfect place for organizers talk shop if they have a way to connect. Building in an official time within the program for an organizers discussion is a fantastic way to ensure this will happen.

If you want an organizers discussion to happen at a regional event, approach the event planners many months ahead of time. You may want to share the reasons that the session could benefit them. For instance, it will spice up their programming with minimal effort and expense. In addition, by supporting organizers in their region, they will be strengthening those communities and in turn, that will expand the pool of possible participants for their event.

If the event planners are interested in including an organizer discussion:

- Let them know that it's easy to do. You could even offer to line up someone to facilitate the session
- Give them options: the discussion could be somewhat casual over lunch or it could be a more formal session
- Ask them to include the session mid-way through their event. If it's too near the beginning, attendance

will be low; if it's too late, participants won't have time for follow-up conversations.

- Make sure the discussion is well-publicized so that as many organizers as possible know about it.

Create your own mini gathering

Another great option is to create your own mini gathering for organizers. Perhaps you want to pull together traditional song organizers from your region for an afternoon of sharing ideas. Or perhaps you'd like to focus on your immediate city/town but pull together all the traditional music, song, and dance organizers to see how you can support each other locally. These gatherings are easy to organize and very worthwhile. (See the how-to link below.)

And yes... you can facilitate a session for organizers! Whether or not you have facilitation skills (yet!), you can host an organizer discussion. With help from numerous facilitators from the traditional dance scene, we have created a manual to support anyone interested in facilitating a session.

Check out our ['How To' manual for planning and facilitating organizer discussions](#). Delia Clark's [resource on facilitation](#) is also incredibly useful.

Some festivals, weekends, and camps already include organizer discussions as part of their events. If you are already involved in this type of initiative, we would love to hear about what you do. Please reach out to Emily at emily@cdss.org.

And for those of you who haven't attended or planned an organizer discussion, we hope that this article has inspired some of you to delve into this exciting opportunity for connection and learning. We would love to see many organizer gatherings throughout North America!



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