

Vermont Repair Café Guide



So you want to host a Repair Café? You're in for a rewarding experience that will provide a valuable service to your community. You and your neighbors will have the opportunity to connect over the act of fixing things, divert waste from the landfill, and engage in responsible stewardship of things you care about. Plus ... it's fun!

As you start planning your Repair Café, consider the following:

- Who can you connect with? Are there any community organizations you can partner with?
- Who can you recruit to help organize and run the event?
- What is your budget? What resources are available? Can you get donations of tools, food, etc.?
- Where can you hold the event? Is there a space with tables and chairs, electricity, a kitchen?
- When will the Repair Café take place? Consider avoiding summer and holiday weekends.
- Who will provide liability and insurance coverage for the event?

This guide is for people who want to organize a Repair Café. The information in this packet has been synthesized from materials the Repair Café organization published and our own experience organizing these events. We have other useful tools on our website at www.cvsmd.org/repair-cafes.html



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COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Find an organization in the community to partner with.

- Other organizations may provide resources, funding, or volunteers.
- Share ownership of the event to ensure its success. It's a lot of work and you'll need help.
- Local organizations have connections and name recognition in their communities. Use their knowledge and familiarity, especially if you're organizing a Repair Café in a town other than your own.
- Partner organizations may have email/ mailing lists that can be used to advertise the Café.

CHOOSING A VENUE

Begin your search three to four months before you plan to hold your Repair Café. Some possible venues could be town halls, schools, churches, libraries, senior centers, community/ recreation centers.

- Pick an **ADA accessible, central location** in the community. If your community has a downtown area, focus there.
- What is your **budget**? Some locations won't charge a fee, most will.
- **Adequate lighting** is important for repairing. If the space does not have adequate lighting, encourage repair volunteers to bring table lamps.
- **Electricity**: Take note of the number of available outlets and where they are located. The more the better. Choose an indoor venue where you can access the outlets or run extension cords if needed. Use a **GFCI power strip** to protect from surges and questionable wiring. Choose a space that has **tables and chairs** available for use.
- **A kitchen** can provide plates, cups, cutlery, a place to wash dishes, and extra food storage.
- It's important to have **plenty of parking** for repair volunteers bringing tools and visitors bringing heavy items for repair.
- Choose a venue with **enough space to accommodate your event**. Once you know how many repair volunteers you will have, you can set up accordingly.
- Choose a **time** when hardware stores in town are open so that if replacement parts or tools are needed, they can be purchased by participants during the café hours. Morning or midday generally works for the largest number of people.
- Some venues will require **floor protection**. If this is the case, ask if they have any drop cloths or floor coverings available. If not, bring your own tarps or drop cloths. Make sure to secure them to the floor to avoid tripping hazards.
- Ask if you can access the venue's **WIFI network**. If a repair person is unsure about how to repair a certain item, they can look up repair manuals or replacement parts.



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RECRUITING AND ORGANIZING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer support is key to the success of a Repair Café. Think about the size and scope of your Repair Café when recruiting volunteers—this will determine how many you need. In addition to repair volunteers, recruit a few event volunteers. These individuals will be responsible for tasks such as set up and breakdown, registration, distributing and collecting surveys, taking photos, and looking after the café. Involve volunteers in the planning process to help ensure continuity for future Repair Cafés.

Volunteers are contributing their time, energy and skills to the Repair Café. Providing a meal for your volunteers is a great way to show appreciation and provide some form of compensation. This meal can be provided via donations from a local restaurant or a team of people who are willing to prepare a meal. A big pot of soup or chili is a great way to feed a crowd and stay on budget.

Recruiting Repair volunteers:

Your repair volunteers will provide a range of repair skills to the Repair Café. Remember that volunteers have different abilities and skill levels.

- Recruit repair volunteers three months prior to the event. This will allow plenty of time to get the word out and receive firm commitments from volunteers.
- Get confirmations from repair volunteers to determine how many tables are needed and let you know what repair skills you can offer at the café.
- **Recruit more repair volunteers than you think you'll need to account for cancellations.**
- Involve repair volunteers in the planning process. The goal is to have recurring Repair Cafés and the more people who are involved, the more likely it is that they will organize another. Sharing the success can provide momentum for future Repair Cafés.
- Share your expectations with repair volunteers when you recruit them.
- Repair volunteers will be required to bring their own tools. They are not required to provide the supplies and materials for repairs, but it's alright if they choose to.

Here are some suggestions for recruiting repair volunteers:

- Front Porch Forum
- Facebook and other social media outlets
- Press Release
- Town listserv
- Connect with a senior center
- Consider local organizations that may have “fix it” people you can recruit
- Repair businesses
- Flyers



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Recruiting Event Staff:

You will need people to set up and help run the event.

If you don't have enough organizers, you may find volunteers at a partner organization or your venue to help support repair volunteers and participants. Give everyone a clear role and engage them in planning to foster ownership. Make sure people know there is a place for them to help even if they aren't skilled in repair work.

BUDGET AND DONATION REQUESTS

Create a budget including all potential Repair Café expenses. This could include venue rental, a basic toolkit and repair supplies, food, and incidental expenses. For accurate estimates, create a list of all of the tools and supplies needed.

Sample Budget

Expense	Description	Estimated Cost
Venue	Building use fee and janitorial fee	\$100
Tools	Basic tools available for repair person use	\$75
Supplies	Glue, table mats, tape, sewing kit, etc.	\$150
Food and Beverages	Lunch for repair volunteers, light refreshments for visitors	\$75
Unanticipated costs		\$100
Total		\$500

- When writing donation requests, be specific about the tools, materials, and/or funds you need.
- Seek out sponsors or donors who can contribute financially to the Repair Café. This could be a town/city council, a local bank, or businesses in your area.
- Local restaurants may donate lunch for your repair volunteers and light refreshments for visitors. If there is leftover food from the café, offer it to volunteers or consider donating it to a local food bank.
- The event is typically free, but donations for future Repair Café expenses are perfectly acceptable. **Leave donation cans on the registration and café tables.**
- Raffles are fun and can generate revenue at your Repair Café. When requesting donations, consider asking for an item to be raffled off.
- Make sure to thank your donors and sponsors for their contributions to the event! Display their business name and logo on outreach materials, in press releases, and other advertising. Have a poster at the Repair Café recognizing your sponsors.



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LIABILITY AND INSURANCE COVERAGE

The nature of Repair Cafés opens up the real possibility of accidents and injuries. If you are an individual planning a café or your organization cannot provide liability insurance to cover the event, seek a partner organization that can. Here are examples of what other Repair Cafés have done:

- Boston, MA area Repair Café organizers have partnered with their local rotary club and utilize their insurance policy when hosting cafés.
- Pittsford, MA Repair Café organizers were provided with a venue and insurance coverage by the Catholic church with whom they partnered.
- Westborough, MA Repair Café organizers can use the municipal umbrella policy because they partnered with their local library.
- In Charlotte, VT, [Transition Town Charlotte](#) has a \$135/year liability insurance policy that covers events like the Repair Cafés they have organized.
- Look into partnering with your local [solid waste management district](#), which may be willing to provide liability insurance as CVSWMD did with the cafés developed during its partnership with Onion River Exchange.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- A laptop or tablet can be useful for looking up repair manuals or parts that may be needed to complete a repair.
- Make sure to have basic supplies like pens, markers, stickers, scissors, tape, name tags, clipboards, table cloths, a donation bucket and a scale for weighing items. Make your Repair Café a [Zero Waste event](#)! Use real plates and cutlery and don't forget the CVSWMD bin loan program to borrow recycling and compost bins. Tell people to bring their favorite coffee mug to the café.



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OUTREACH AND PUBLICITY:

There are many ways you can advertise for the event free of charge. Begin conducting outreach two to three months prior to the Repair Café and create a timeline to stay on track. You can use the same platforms to promote the event as you do for volunteer recruitment. Use online calendar listings, the official Repair Café website, your own website (if you have one), or create a Facebook page. Invite local newspapers to the event. They may be interested in running a story about your Repair Café.

For media outreach include the following:

- Lead with who/what/when/where/why
- Have a brief paragraph about what a Repair Café is
- Mention partners and sponsors
- Contact information and website link

Press Releases:

- Send one press release early, focused on recruiting repair volunteers. After securing repair volunteers and an appropriate space for the event:
- Send a second press release two to three weeks before the event inviting participants. Include a website link to information about repair cafés and how to participate.
- In the second press release, promote the types of items your repair volunteers can repair.
- Follow up on press releases to media outlets requesting pre-event coverage.

Front Porch Forum Posts:

- Shorter than a press release, only a few sentences long.
- FPF posts should always link to your website or Facebook event page.
- Use these posts to recruit volunteers, advertise the event and repair skills that will be offered.
- Post to your community's listserv or Facebook page.

Flyers:

- Use large font, minimal text and only include essential information.
- Put up flyers three months in advance for recruiting repair volunteers.
- Put up event announcements one month in advance and again one week in advance.

Email list/newsletters:

- When spreading the word about the Repair Café in your community, collect emails and add them to an email list. Check for a town or regional listserv in your area.
- Use emails to recruit volunteers and share information about the event.



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Calendar Listings:

- Check calendars before you schedule the Repair Café to see if there are any conflicting events.
- Post the Repair Cafe to events calendars in your area as soon as the location, date and time have been confirmed.

Social media:

- Use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and twitter to advertise the event.
- Include pictures and a short description.
- Create an event on Facebook and promote. Consider a paid “boost” to maximize your outreach.

Other:

- Ask your local library to set up a repair book display, and feature flyers about your upcoming event.
- Send a flyer home with students at your local schools
- Think outside the box! Is there a group, organization, club or other entity that might be interested in promoting your café? Send them a brief blurb about the café so they can share with their members, or email list.

DAY OF THE EVENT:

- Plan to set up the day before, or several hours prior to the start time.
- Prepare your repair volunteers for a pre-event meeting during which time you can serve them a meal, and thank them and your sponsors.
- Make sure your building has adequate signage at all entrances, and A-frame style sign boards outside on sidewalks or near parking areas.
- Make sure to provide a “check out” area as well as a check in table. This will give you an opportunity to collect feedback from participants, including surveys, or provide raffle or donation opportunities.
- Take lots of photos! Your photos will help you promote your NEXT Repair Café as well!

