

Sample Affiliate Contest Planning Checklist for Coordinators

This checklist is written for an Affiliate contest, but could easily be customized for a Regional contest by shifting the dates, and modifying the materials you will be preparing for the “next level” of contest. Please note: Judges are specifically called out in a [separate checklist](#), but the information is included here as well.

<p>August or Earlier</p>	<p>Dates and Reservations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Date: Establish contest date(s) and snow date(s) with the host facility. Share date of contest with stakeholders, including Regional coordinators. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities: Make/update a list of required space at the host facility. Make/confirm reservations. <input type="checkbox"/> Rentals: Note what type of tables/chairs, power cords, and technology is available in each room, and budget for additional rental if needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Deadlines: Plan registration, project submission deadlines, and website lockout dates. Ensure that Regional contest dates give students enough time between Regional events and your Affiliate contest. <input type="checkbox"/> Website: Update your website and NHD Affiliate page with event date and location. <input type="checkbox"/> Promotion. Share the date with your organization and make sure it's on the calendar of promotions. <input type="checkbox"/> Event Attendance: Share your expectations for how Regional coordinators will/will not participate in the Affiliate contest. Explain how you will or will not participate in their Regional contests. <input type="checkbox"/> Photographer: If using, book event photographer. <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> NHD Materials. Order curriculum guides and other items needed from NHD. Check if a new rule book has been created. Recycle any obsolete editions and order new ones.
<p>Fall</p>	<p>Awards Ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify Student Recognition: Identify how you will recognize students (medals, trophies, ribbons, participation certificates, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Order Recognition Items. Remember: Medals from NHD must be ordered in Fall through the National Office and other items may have a long lead time. <p>Facilities and Catering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rentals: Reserve any major rental items (e.g., tables and chairs, extra technology). Ask for a discount and a contract from every vendor. <input type="checkbox"/> Food Service: Contact food service, begin reviewing menus, place tentative orders and note dates for final catering count. <input type="checkbox"/> Internet Access. Confirm with event venue how the public and judges will be able to access the wireless network at the event. <input type="checkbox"/> Activities: Brainstorm activities for students, teachers, and parents during downtime at the contest. If applicable, connect with campus bookstore, food court, and/or admissions about campus tours. Update event information on Zfairs, in printed materials, or website as activities are confirmed. <input type="checkbox"/> Parking: Confirm where judges and attendees will park. If parking passes are needed, make a note on when and where you will get them. <input type="checkbox"/> Signage. Discuss signage with the event, and note any restrictions they have on posting your own signage. <p>Special Awards</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Review Listing: Review special awards listing and any notes from previous year <input type="checkbox"/> Contact Sponsors: Touch base with sponsors about contest date, theme, and begin confirming their intent to sponsor a prize at the contest.
November/ December	<p>Special Awards</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Prize Sponsorship. Get final confirmation from prize sponsors that they intend to sponsor the prize, and language you will include in student materials about prize parameters. <input type="checkbox"/> Judging Process. Confirm you have a system in place to judge special awards. Communicate with prize sponsors on judge recruitment if they will be providing their own judges. <p>Merchandise</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Purchase. If you sell merchandise at your event (buttons, shirts, mugs), begin designing and placing orders. <p>Judges</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss judge recruitment and tracking with regional/district coordinators . Will you recruit centrally and share data? Each recruit for your own contests? What happens if a judge wants to work at multiple events? <input type="checkbox"/> Build your recruitment list. Gather names of previous judges. Add names of potential judges who have expressed interested or partners that may be willing to help promote <input type="checkbox"/> Update ZFairs with judge information (if using). <input type="checkbox"/> Update judge sign-up form - either in ZFairs or another method, like Google Form. Make sure judges are providing the kinds of information you will need later: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Category preferences <input type="checkbox"/> Conflicts of interest with schools or specific students <input type="checkbox"/> Dietary preferences or restrictions <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility issues or accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare the judge recruitment package . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Will it be a print or digital mailing? <input type="checkbox"/> What will it include? Consider a letter (mail-merged with their name is great!), a theme flyer, event dates and locations, sign-up instructions, and RSVP deadline. <input type="checkbox"/> Update your website with the same information <input type="checkbox"/> Draft your judge confirmation . After signing up, judges will appreciate an initial confirmation that lets them know when they can expect more information. You can even automate this in Google Forms! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure to include information on how you want judges to let you know they can no longer make it. Give them plenty of options to “drop-out” in advance, rather than no-showing on the day of the contest. <input type="checkbox"/> Decide if you want to hold judge training workshops or webinars (in addition to the orientation at the event). Include that information in your mailing, create a sign-up form, and reserve facilities (if hosting in-person) <input type="checkbox"/> Decide if you will be giving judges a thank you gift . If so, estimate the quantity and begin the process of ordering.
January	Registration

- ☐ **Prepare Information:** Review previous year's registration information and identify information that needs to be updated. Review registration instructions, advancement caps per category, how to register, dates, contest logistics, general schedule of day, etc.
- ☐ **Advancement:** Confirm with Regional coordinators how many entries they will be able to advance from their events.
- ☐ **Prepare Registration System:** If using ZFairs, you will need to update event information each year. If using another system, make sure it's current.

Supplies

- ☐ **Review Packing List.** Review and update packing list for event.
- ☐ **Begin Purchasing.** Order any supplies that can be purchased early (pencils, stopwatches, special paper, envelopes, certificates, etc.)
- ☐ **Copies.** Begin copying materials that you can produce in advance. Campus maps, theme sheets, blank evaluation forms, sample questions, etc.
- ☐ **Signage:** Walk through event space and identify signage needs. Begin production.
- ☐ **Event Program:** If producing an event program, begin reviewing design and identify placeholder language.

Judges

- ☐ Send the **initial judge recruitment** mailing/email.
- ☐ **Send confirmations to judges** when they sign-up, or create an auto reply notifying them of when they can expect to hear more information from you about assignment and contest logistics.
- ☐ Begin **estimating how many judges you will need**, based on projected event participation. Be sure to include:
 - ☐ First-Round Judges
 - ☐ Final-Round judges (if needed)
 - ☐ Special Award Judges (depending on how they are being judged at your contest)
- ☐ Check on the **judge thank you gift**, if providing.
- ☐ **Assembling judge assignment and event details mailing/email.**
 - ☐ Will this be a print or digital mailing?
 - ☐ What will this include? Consider including a notification of their assignments, judge instructions, sample judging form, schedule for the day, map/directions, sample comments
 - ☐ Think about the specific needs of different types of judges. Such as:
 - ☐ If using **captains**, do they have additional responsibilities?
 - ☐ **Special prize judges** will need specific information
 - ☐ **Paper and website** judges will need to know when they get their entries before the contest.
 - ☐ **Final-round judges** will have more duties at the contest - are they different from or the same as your first-round judges?

National Contest

- ☐ Begin reviewing the [national contest checklist](#)

Awards Ceremony

- ☐ **Recognition.** Check on the status of any recognition items.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Script and Speakers. Look at the awards script from previous years. Update. Begin asking any VIPs who you may need to invite. <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review and Begin Updating Communications. Review the emails and/or printed materials you will give to State Qualifiers and their teachers. Consider what you will send electronically (either via ZFairs or email) and what you may hand out in-person (a packet of materials that you hand to Affiliate Qualifiers at their Regional awards ceremony). <input type="checkbox"/> Website. Update your website with event details. <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Parent Survey. Decide if you want to survey participants. Make sure language is included in your waiver and begin designing survey. <input type="checkbox"/> Judge Survey. Decide if you want to survey judges. Begin designing survey. Decide if you will be handing them out at the event, or sending them afterwards with the thank you.
<p>February/ March</p>	<p>Advancement (Before Regional Contests)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Event Attendance: Confirm with Regional coordinators how you will or will not be able to support their event. Plan for your attendance if necessary. <input type="checkbox"/> Materials: Make sure that Regional coordinators have any necessary materials for their contests for Affiliate Qualifiers (medals, packets, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Affiliate Qualifiers: Make sure Regional coordinators know how many entries they will advance to the Affiliate contest. <p>National Contest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review national contest checklist <input type="checkbox"/> National Qualifier Packets: Prepare and ensure you have materials about national contest ready to hand out to national qualifiers at your awards ceremony <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Teacher Packets. Identify what will be included in the student and teacher packets (usually what they get when they check-in for the event). Begin collecting materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Judge Packets: Identify what will be included in judge packets (what they are given when they arrive at the event). Begin collecting materials that can be produced in advance. <p>Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release. Draft press release for National Qualifiers. Identify who will update it, send it, and to whom it is being sent. <p>Merchandise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Product. Confirm receipt of products and quantities. <input type="checkbox"/> Judge Thank You. If using items that you will also sell as a judge thank you, set aside quantity for judges <input type="checkbox"/> National Qualifiers. If using items that you will also sell for national qualifiers (like t-shirts or buttons), set aside quantity for national qualifiers. <input type="checkbox"/> Sales. If selling merchandise, prepare any sales instructions, signage, cash box, or method for collecting electronic payments. <p>Judges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> How many judges do you need? Check your registered judges against the number you think you'll need. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue recruitment, if needed. Be sure to send a second email to people who have judged in the past but have not signed up this

	<p>year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If you have more than enough judges, either close judge registration or update your sign-up form to be a judging waiting list. <input type="checkbox"/> Make your judging assignments. Once you feel you know about how many judge teams you will need in a category/division, you can start to assign judges. Judges will want/need to know the category they are judging (websites, documentaries, etc.) but you can build yourself some wiggle room and often get away without telling them the division (junior or senior) or group type (individual/group) until the day of the contest. <input type="checkbox"/> Send your judge assignment and event details mailing (print or digital). <input type="checkbox"/> Update your judge rosters. As soon as you send the judge mailing, things are bound to change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> As judges drop-out, you will need to update your judging assignments. <input type="checkbox"/> As judges sign-up, you will need to give them an assignment and send them the same materials other judges have received. <input type="checkbox"/> If having, host any additional judge training workshops or webinars (outside of the orientation on the day of the event). <input type="checkbox"/> Plan key volunteer roles to work with judges. Who will check in judges - and make last minute swaps/replacements if judges no show? Who will deliver the orientation (this should be a different person from check-in/fixing problems)? Who will serve as their point of contact when they return? <input type="checkbox"/> Update your judge orientation. The national office provides a template, but often this needs to be heavily edited with contest-specific details. Share the presentation with the person who will deliver it (if not yourself) and go through it together.
March/ April (After Regional Contests)	<p>Regional Wrap-Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Possible Entries: Look at the numbers of entries advancing from Regionals to get a size of your Affiliate contest. <input type="checkbox"/> Registration: Make sure your Affiliate coordinators have been advanced in ZFairs. <p>Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reservations: Review the number of potential entries advancing from Regional contests to confirm you have enough spaces reserved. Cancel unneeded rooms. <input type="checkbox"/> Reservations: Confirm rooms have necessary equipment (technology) or possible layout (performances) for judging. <input type="checkbox"/> Final Rounds: Based on possible entries advancing from Regionals, confirm which categories need final rounds and adjust reservations and event timeline accordingly.
After Affiliate Contest Registration Deadline	<p>Schedules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Judging: Make the entry schedule. <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits: Assign table numbers and create signage. Consider making a map of the exhibit hall for judges and volunteers. <input type="checkbox"/> Special Awards: Make special awards schedule, if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> General: Update a general event schedule with specific times based on registration

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Awards Speakers: Confirm speakers and provide final details for event. <p>Judges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to update judge rosters based on dropped judges, new judges or changes to the schedule based on registered entries. <input type="checkbox"/> About two weeks before the contest, paper and website judges will need additional communication and the entries they need to view in advance. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan and send your judge reminders so it keeps them aware of the event, but doesn't overwhelm them. Consider an email one week and a few days before the event. Include any last minute changes (parking, road construction) they will need. <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize catering order for judges or buy snacks for judges. Be sure to review dietary preferences, allergies, and restrictions from judge sign-up. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with volunteers who will work with judges on their schedule/role for the day. <p>Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set-Up. Work with event venue to identify when you can access the spaces for set-up before the event. Identify and train other staff or volunteers who will help you with this. <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Signage: Finalize signage and produce. Organize by building/area where it will be posted. <input type="checkbox"/> Event Program: Finalize and print event program, if applicable. <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Teacher Packets. Assemble student and teacher packets. Organize and label based on how students will check-in to the event. <input type="checkbox"/> Judge Packets: Assemble judge packets. Organize based on how judges will check-in to the event. <p>Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Certificates: Pre-print any participation certificates and prepare for distribution.
<p>One Week Before Event</p>	<p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Packing List. Review your packing list and finalize materials for the event. <input type="checkbox"/> Binders. Begin assembling the binders of event information for contest leads. Include the event timeline, schedule, judge assignments, emergency and event contact information, locations, event program, contest rulebook, etc. Make sure your binder has copies of facilities, rentals, and catering agreements. <p>Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meetings. Meet with key staff or volunteers who will help to administer the event. Share their binder and assignments for the day. Answer questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Awards. Share script/agenda for the awards ceremony with any MCs who will help speak at the event. <p>Judges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Print final judge assignments for check-in. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare judge packets to hand out during check-in. Consider including their schedule of entries, evaluation rubrics pre-labelled with entry information, any additional training materials or maps of the event. <input type="checkbox"/> Pull together judge supplies - pencils, judge buttons/badges, stopwatches for performances, clipboards for exhibit judges, scratch paper for notes, and judge surveys (if handing them out in person). <input type="checkbox"/> Think about where judges will return materials at the end of the event

	<p>and get signs/bis ready for clipboards, recyclable notes, process papers/bibliographies, pencils, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize your judge orientation with last minute changes or notes. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare thank you gift, if doing. You can either hand these out before the event, or provide directions for how to redeem when they finish judging. <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation. Finalize the orientation with last minute details, or clarifications that came up during Regional contests.
Post Contest	<p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release. Send press release about national qualifiers <input type="checkbox"/> Website and Social Media. Update website with results and share on social media. <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholders. Share results with stakeholders. <input type="checkbox"/> Thank you. Send thank you and link the results to judges, teachers, and stakeholders. <p>Comment Sheets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review and Send. Review judge comments and distribute via Zfairs, or mail/email if using paper forms. <p>Judges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mail thank-you judges thank you letters (or emails). Include link to judge survey (if doing electronically). <input type="checkbox"/> Review judge evaluation rubrics and send to students or teachers. Most contest coordinators do not try to give the evaluations to students at the contest itself. There is simply not enough time to review, sort, and return them. Communicate with participants when and how they can expect to get these materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Debrief the judge experience and make notes for next year. What worked? What do you think needs to change? What feedback are you seeing in the judge surveys? Are there any problematic judges you need to follow-up with or would remove from your judge recruitment lists? <p>National Contest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Advance Entries: No matter if you are using Zfairs or not, you will need to follow the national offices instructions for advancing entries in ZFairs. <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Nationals Coordinator Planning Checklist: View the separate checklist for details on activities to prepare for nationals. <p>Other Admin Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities. Discuss possible dates for next year and make reservations, if possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Finance. Process student registration fees or invoices. Pay bills. Rectify budget. <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies: Check the condition and quantity of reusable materials (clipboards, stopwatches, etc.) and make notes on what needs to be reordered.