

Planning Local Gatherings

Some Key Considerations:

What is the purpose?

- It's important to ask yourself, why are we meeting and what do we hope are the outcomes? Local Gatherings often have a mixture of both spiritual, communal and mission elements. It's helpful to have a range of events and gatherings throughout the year.
- Some Local Groups gather every few months for a particular formation focus, such as the Marian Lecture, reflection on the national theme, or to renew their commitment on a key Marist date (Champagnat Day, Fourvière Pledge or Feast of the Assumption).
- Local Groups may take on a specific outreach project such as preparing meals for distribution in the broader community. It's important to consider the needs of those you are serving and the availability of your group. Marist Volunteering and Lavalla200 provides international opportunities.
- Many Local Gatherings take on a social aspect which helps to build community and strengthen relationships. The environment can play a key role in generating the right atmosphere.

Who will be there?

- The best Local Gatherings begin with the people in mind. What is it that they need? What will draw them to be involved? Knowing your people and what motivates them is a critical part of planning for a Local Gathering.
- Consider the timing of the gathering, both in the calendar and time of day.
- Use reminders, personal invitation and recruit others to help you to engage a broad range of people.

What content will be used?

- If you are preparing a Local Gathering that requires materials, consider making use of the many resources available online and based on the national theme.
- Guest speakers and other stimulus material can help animate rich conversations.

What processes will be used?

- It's a good idea to draw on a variety of processes throughout the year.
- Depending on the format of your Local Gathering you may like to start or end with a prayer and reflection.
- Provide time for personal reflection
- Invite participants to discuss their thoughts with others.
- Is there a commitment or takeaway message from the gathering.

Who is able to assist you?

- A Local Gathering can have a few moving parts and it's helpful to draw on the talents and energy of others to assist you, before, during and after the event.
- Some local groups assign roles such as hospitality, set up/clean up, prayer and input.
- The MLF Contact Person can also assist with the preparation and delivery if required.

How will the gathering be promoted?

- Promotion prior and after the event is important for spreading the word about what the Local Group does and who is involved.
- Preparing an attractive invitation or poster that briefly outlines the purpose of the gathering and sharing this through regular community notices is essential.
- Taking photos during the Local Gathering and asking one or two participants to write about the experience will provide you with content to celebrate and share your event both within your community and the National Marist Association.

What resources do you need?

- Hospitality
- Venue
- Materials