

Hosting Information

Forest of Reading Celebrations

Introduction

The Forest of Reading Festival is the culmination of the Forest of Reading Award programs and is held each year in Toronto in May. Young readers that attend report that the Festival celebration is a key incentive for their participation in the Forest of Reading and OLA would love to see more celebratory events happen across Canada. These events celebrate the books, the creators, being Canadian, the reading achievements of young people and most importantly linking reading to FUN!

The Forest of Reading Festival is the signature celebration which attracts over 12,000 participants, but any celebration, big or small, is encouraged and we want to help make this happen.

Celebrations that are the most successful host these four things:

- award ceremonies for the nominees;
- nominee workshops;
- autographing;
- exhibitors and/or engaging Canadian entertainment.

The OLA has some capacity to co-host local festivals/celebrations in conjunction with a local organizing committee of members, however the Forest of Reading staff can't be everywhere in May and instead would like to support growth in other ways. Travel arrangements, nominee attendance and field trip costs can often be challenging and prohibitive to get to one of the Festivals. The hope is that this guide will assist Forest of Reading registrants to have the tools they need to host their own event.

The information given is based on an event for approximately 1,000 attendees.

Hosting Information

Suggested Structure for Forest Celebrations

Award Ceremonies

- One 45-minute to 1-hour ceremony per 10 authors (shorter if less, but recommended to not have more than 10 nominees per event).
- Narrow down which age group you would like to be involved and which award programs are the best fit for your community.
- Each ceremony has a host to keep the event on time. This person introduces the nominees and the young readers that introduce them on stage. Local celebrities are best suited for this role. They need to be engaging, enthusiastic and can get the crowd excited.
- Each nominee is assigned a student presenter. Additionally, if there are enough students a sign carrier can be involved where they meet the nominee and hold a sign for the audience. The sign carriers are involved in parading nominees on stage but don't speak to the audience. The student presenters prepare an enthusiastic one-minute speech about the nominee and present this to the crowd. The nominee should be given one minute to greet the audience and make remarks

Nominee Workshops:

- 30-minute workshops that give participants the opportunity to meet their favourite nominees, ask questions, and learn about their work. Technical requirements are often needed for this based on the space allotted. Confirm if computers, screen, projectors and microphones are needed well in advance.

Nominee Autographing:

- Scheduled autographing should always be included and should not exceed 1-hour per nominee.

Roving Entertainment:

- Activities or entertainment that can animate a large space is important, particularly for those waiting in lines for autographing. For example, musical performers, roving entertainers, interactive games, displays by the local community groups, exhibitors such as first responders (Fire, Police Community engagement teams), sports teams, etc. are all good to include. The goal is to tie activities to the nominated books if possible, however this sometimes is not possible. All entertainment and exhibitors need to be engaging and appropriate for the age group in attendance.

Food Vendors:

- Participants are encouraged always to bring a lunch with them as the day is action packed. The venue or local organizing committee can arrange for food vendors to be on-site at no cost (their payment is the cost of food purchased by attendees). Concessions, food carts, food trucks are often used at these types of celebrations.

Hosting Information (continued)

Budget Considerations:

- Seeking Grant and Funding opportunities on behalf of satellite festivals, although funding is not guaranteed. OLA can help advise.
- Teaming up with the public library as a joint venture opens up a lot of opportunities and support. By experience this has been a successful partnership in many Festival instances since 2012.
- If selling tickets, ensure there is a management of tickets sales (price determined early and communicated widely) and the profit is used to go back into the event. The event should not be a money-making event and instead revenues and expenses should even out.
- Consider how you are going to decorate the venue with signage to make it appealing to the attendees, but also in the case of recognizing sponsors etc. – a consideration when looking at space to use.
- All nominees must be compensated for their travel and their time and this needs to be determined before they are confirmed to attend. All events associated with the Forest of Reading brand must compensate the author/illustrator.
- Seek additional sponsorships (cash/in kind) locally where possible.

Organizing/Planning Team Considerations:

- The committee should consist of approximately 15 members (per 1,000 attendees). This is to manage functions such as identifying an affordable/free venue, assisting with the schedule, sourcing entertainment, volunteer sourcing and management, running nominee workshops, liaising with local school and public library boards on student volunteers, local promotion and media, etc.
- Ensure the planning committee that is competent, and each member has a valuable role. Also ensuring there is representation from all sectors you are inviting to attend (school boards, library groups, homeschoolers etc.).
- Consider appointing a Chair of the committee to develop and create the schedule for the event (autographing, workshops, ceremony etc.).
- Ensure there is a member to manage author/illustrator schedules leading up to and on the day of the event and is directly in communication with the nominees.
- A further 30 volunteers on-site at the celebration to assist with way finding, activities, and support, etc.
- Ensure the books of the attending nominees are for sale. Reach out to the Forest of Reading's official wholesaler, of the local bookstore to support this initiative. Be sure to communicate what is for sale ahead of the event to attendees.
- Create and publish all press releases for the celebration and use local channels to publicize this event.