To Do Checklist:

Starting a Community

Pop-Up University

A community pop-up university is a great way to highlight and share local assets and talents, spark the local economy, increase cultural programming, enliven public spaces, and build community spirit. ***Bethel University*** *(located in rural central VT) is the first of its kind, offering FREE classes by the community, for the community, one month a year.* **Here's how to launch your own.**

Step 1

Build a Diverse, Enthusiastic Team.

You'll need lots of hands on deck to pull off a pop-up university, with diverse skills and connections. And you'll need enthusiastic community support. Start by throwing out the idea to the community to be sure there's interest. Then identify team members and partners. Look for people who can help with web & tech support, project management, fundraising, communications and marketing, logistics and more. Öã&˘••Á@¸ Á[˘¦Á�^æ{ Á¸ã|Á˘}&ã}È

Step 2

Design Your University.

Start by making critical decisions about structure and policy. What will you call it? When will it run? Who can teach and take classes? Will it be free? How will you solicit professors and select courses? What parameters will you set, and what will you leave flexible? How will you register and track students? What budget and resources will you need? What equipment or resources do you have, and what will you need? Make the policy decisions ^æ|ˆÊwrite them up clearlyÊand ¸[¦\Áåæ&\¸ æåÁ{Áay out a master timeline.

Step 3

Build Your "Campus" and Infrastructure.

Identify potential course sites in your community and check out their availability and specs. Look for public spaces that are underused, or that would benefit from hosting courses: school, library, Town Hall, church, pizza shop. Then build or develop your digital and project management infrastructure. You'll likely want a website, social media channels, a logo, an email platform, and a file sharing system for your team. Need funding to make the University run? Now's the time to seek funding (grants, donations, etc.) for equipment, course materials, marketing, or other expenses. It's also the time to start building your audience – do an early announcement or press release to announce the launch and sign people up to receive news.

Step 4

Create Your Courses.

Bethel University issues an open call for people to propose a course on any topic they like. Other towns have chosen a particular topic area or decided to approach people directly. Create a course proposal form to make it easy for professors to share their concept. Be sure you have a process for reviewing and making decisions, for assigning dates and locations, and capturing and storing course information. After finalizing details, write up all the info to publicize online and/or in hard copy. You may also want to offer a workshop or guide to help professors develop strong courses and understand how the pop-up university works.

Step 5

Sign up Students.

Before getting started, think hard about registration policies and what information you want to capture from students. Bethel University uses Eventbrite, a free online platform, to share course descriptions and capture registration information; there is also a paper form available at key downtown locations. Try to open registration at least 2-3 weeks before courses begin, and track your progress. Use a variety of marketing channels to reach the most people – posters, social media, news outlets, word of mouth, and more.

Step 6

Have a Great Semester!

Double check all your details as you get close to the start of classes. Confirm times and locations, order materials and check equipment, and arrange for support logistics (opening buildings, greeting people, taking photos, and cleaning up). In the days before each class starts, send reminders and details to students and professors. Once classes start, capture quotes and stories, anecdotes and impacts and continue publicizing classes as you go along.

Step 7

Celebrate and Evaluate.

When classes are finished, take a deep breath – but don't stop! Find time for celebration, whether it's just with your core team or a community-wide graduation celebration like Bethel University's. Recognize your sponsors, site hosts and other key people with thank yous or announcements, and consider a feedback form or evaluation to help you learn how to make your next pop-up university even better.

Bethel University is run by a completely volunteer-based, grassroots organization, the Bethel Revitalization Initiative, in Bethel, Vermont. Organizers received a $2,500 grant to launch the university, and now operate on a budget of less than $1,000 per year. In just four years, it grew into an annual attraction drawing more than 1,000 course participants from 5Ï towns and five states.

Several towns have now adapted or used the model to launch their own pop-up universities. The Bethel Revitalization Initiative invites other communities to use language or documents found on the website, with credit, and love to hear from towns using the model. Learn more at **betheluniversityvt.org.**