

How to Organize an Electrification Fair



A How-To Guide Created by ElectrifyPDX and Electrify LO

Contacts:

Linda Ganzini | lganzini@losn.org

Shannon Wilson | shannon@electrifypdx.org

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Audience: Who are you trying to reach?](#)

[Goals: What do you want to achieve with your event?](#)

[Planning Team: Volunteer or paid?](#)

[Event Date and Venue](#)

[Budget](#)

[Sponsorship: Depends on your audience](#)

[Event Branding and Materials](#)

[Promotion](#)

[Planning and Communication Tips](#)

[Volunteers](#)

[Managing Finances](#)

[What to include in your event](#)

[EVs or no EVs](#)

[Exhibitors and Activations](#)

[Other ideas for activations:](#)

[Outcomes](#)

[Portland](#)

[Lake Oswego](#)

About the creators of this guide:

Shannon Wilson is the program manager of [ElectrifyPDX](#), and she led the planning for the [Electrify Portland! Fair](#). Linda Ganzini led the planning for [Electrify LO](#) and the [Lake Oswego Electric Home and Vehicle Fair](#). Both organizations belong to the growing grassroots movements that have formed in communities in various parts of Oregon, which are increasingly connected through [Electrify Oregon](#).

Introduction

As the climate crisis becomes more urgent, activists are trying to find ways of countering that are effective and attractive. In 2021, ElectrifyPDX in Portland and Electrify LO, an action group of the Lake Oswego Sustainability Network in Lake Oswego (a suburb of Portland), launched practical, consumer-oriented campaigns to accelerate the transition to clean electricity from fossil fuels by promoting efficient electric appliances such as heat pumps and induction cooktops, rooftop solar, and electric vehicles (EVs).



A central activity of both groups was organizing and producing annual “electrification” fairs in which we celebrated the advantages of using electricity to power our vehicles, heat and cool our homes, heat our water and cook. Having gained some experience in organizing electrification fairs, we have now written this summary of our combined experiences. We hope that it can serve as a guide for other community groups that may want to do something similar. We have not perfected the art of fair-production by any means, but our first steps may help other groups, yours included, in getting started. We

invite you to share your experience in return when you have tried it once or twice.



For those who want more detail, [Electrify LO has written a case study](#) for their event, and [ElectrifyPDX has provided their event planning templates](#) that can be modified and used. Both links provide a variety of tools and resources that may be used free of charge (though attribution would be appreciated).

Why host a home electrification fair?

The early adopters now converting to clean renewable electricity are often navigating the process independently. While there is a growing movement of homeowners and renters who are curious about electrification and taking steps on climate and indoor air quality, most others who are interested just aren't sure where to start. An electrification fair is an occasion to gather interested homeowners and renters in one place and provide opportunities to:

1. Discover why electrification can help avoid the worst effects of the climate crisis.
2. Learn the important elements of home and vehicle electrification, home energy efficiency upgrades and the steps to implement them.
3. Learn the co-benefits of electrification including improved home air quality, comfort, and lower operational costs.
4. Connect contractors and potential clients.
5. Learn how to participate in the financial programs that provide rebates, tax credits, contractor discounts, and financing for clean energy home improvements and electric vehicle purchases.
6. See equipment and new technology in person.
7. Have fun and create buzz to grow the movement.
8. Demonstrate consumer demand to local businesses and government leaders.

Audience: Who are you trying to reach?

Our primary audience is typically homeowners and renters. But within that demographic, we suggest you look at your community and who you are trying to reach. Some examples from LO and PDX:



Portland identified their target demographics as climate-concerned families with children, new homeowners in their 30's, and newly retired people. We decided to make our event family-friendly.

Lake Oswego's target demographics are older and more affluent. Since we planned to feature EV test drives and had some safety concerns, we decided to not have events focused on children.

Other flavors of electrification fairs are possible. These might include:

- Offering continuing education units (CEUs) to educate contractors about home electrification technologies.
- Inviting manufacturers to demonstrate their products to contractors.
- Hosting a job fair to connect young people with green workforce opportunities in rapidly growing HVAC companies eager for employees.
- Hosting a fair to educate low- and moderate-income communities about rebates available from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), or other special programs available to them.

Goals: What do you want to achieve with your event?

To host a successful fair, you need to determine what success means to your organization. In addition to raising awareness of the benefits and urgency of electrification, do you want to raise money? Connect with a new subset of your community? Get new signs up for your program? Engage with local government?

Set at least one quantifiable goal (e.g., number of committed sponsorships, number of attendees) that can help guide your planning and decision-making. You can also review these goals after the event to measure how successful you were and what you can improve in the future.

Planning Team: Volunteer or paid?

Establish who will be planning your event and assign clear roles and responsibilities. Will you form an event committee? Will you hire an event organizer? Examples:

- The Lake Oswego event was all-volunteer organized. Except for the advertising, almost all of the expenses for the fair were donated – the event was held at a church parking lot, all of the work was carried out by volunteers, and printing was donated “in-kind” by our city government.
- Because ElectrifyPDX had a smaller volunteer base and a larger budget, we relied on our part-time program manager to organize the event with the help of a part-time event coordinator. The event coordinator helped with sponsorships, media outreach, and day-of coordination.

It's smart to delegate someone to each of the major aspects of the event and come up with a clear strategy for how you'll communicate. Here are some of the roles that will need to be filled:

- Venue points of contact
- Sponsorships and major donors
- Marketing and promotion
- Volunteer management
- Media outreach
- Activations and speakers
- Venue setup and day-of coordination
- Event follow-up

Event Date and Venue

The first order of business is to choose an event date and find a venue. We recommend giving yourself at least 6 months to plan your event.

Timing: It can be helpful to time your event as part of, or adjacent to, a well-known event. For example:

- Lake Oswego plans its fair to fall during “National Drive Electric Week,” which is usually the last two weeks in September and comes with additional advertising opportunities through local EV organizations.
- Portland picked a date adjacent to Sustainable Building Week and the National Solar Home Tour so that they could cross-promote their events.

Otherwise, timing will be informed by conflicts with other events that would attract a similar audience, availability of venues, and cost. Will weather impact your event? If you plan to have outdoor components, then choose a date when the weather is likely to be warm and dry. Consider whether a weekend or weeknight would work better for your target audience and compare that with venue availability and cost.

Venue: Make a list of available venues in your community and consider what they offer as far as location (convenient for your target audience), amenities, flexibility of space, cost, and ambiance.

- Example: For the Portland event, we wanted a venue that was centrally located, and had spacious interior and exterior spaces. We chose [The Redd on Salmon St](#), which provided both at a half-day, nonprofit rate.

- Example: The Lake Oswego event was held at a large church that donated its space, had ample outdoor parking space for the 35 parked EVs and the multiple test drives, and included a large indoor exhibition and speaker space, all free. LOSN might add a cautionary note: if the event grows much larger, we will have to seek a larger venue.

Budget

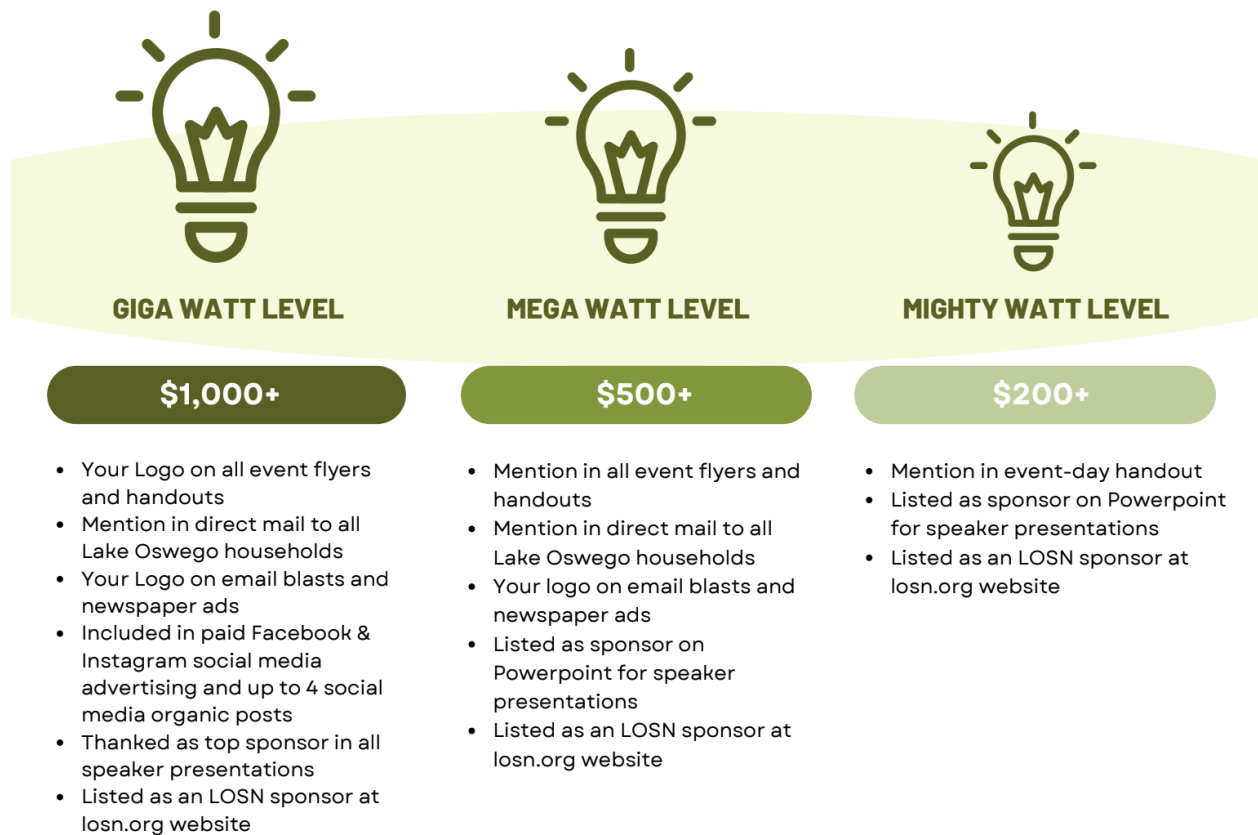
To make sure you're on top of costs, start creating a detailed budget before you start planning. Feel free to use the budget in [ElectrifyPDX's master fair planning doc](#). Include the items you think you'll need, doing some research to find average prices until you have specific estimates. It's smart to add some padding for unexpected costs.

Knowing your budget will inform your goals for acquiring sponsorships...

Sponsorship: Depends on your audience

Both LO and PDX had good luck finding willing sponsors in their communities. LO came up with sponsorship levels for the first time in 2023 and developed a [sponsorship plan](#) with clearly defined benefits for exhibitors and three sponsorship levels, Mighty Watt for \$200, Mega Watt for \$500, and Giga Watt for \$1000. Once it became clear that sponsorship could support a fair at LO, PDX adapted the same sponsorship levels for their fair, adding one higher level of sponsorship.

- If the intended audience includes homeowners, contractors may be interested in co-sponsoring as a way of gaining visibility and exposure to potential clients.
- If the intended audience includes contractors, manufacturers may be interested in co-sponsoring.
- If government/nonprofits are reaching out to low-moderate income audiences, public funding and/or grants may be available.
- Utilities with net zero goals may provide grants and other support.
- Funding for both PDX and LO came primarily from contractors with smaller amounts from utilities and local governments.



Some businesses, public entities, and non-profits you may want to consider inviting to co-sponsor your event:

- An appliance store that carries a good selection of induction ranges, induction clothes dryers, and highly efficient models,
- A heating and cooling contractor or dealer that provides heat pumps for home heating/cooling or a plumbing business that provides heat pump water heaters,
- The county health department, if they are concerned about indoor air quality,
- A realty group that is up-to-speed on rebates and incentives available to help homebuyers make all-electric updates,
- Your city if it has a climate action plan with time-related goals. The City of Lake Oswego, for example, was an in-kind sponsor and publicized the fair extensively because the goals of the fair helped meet the goals of the City’s climate action plan.

Create a list of potential sponsors and prioritize them. (For reference, see the Potential Sponsors tab in the [ElectrifyPDX’s master fair planning doc](#)). Create a professional pitch email, and/or plan to do outreach by phone.

ElectrifyPDX created a sponsorship deadline to collect sponsor logos and have printed materials (posters, flyers) printed in advance of the event.

But before you reach out to sponsors, establish branding and an online presence for your event...

Event Branding and Materials



Establishing a professional and attractive look and feel for your event is important. You want to convey the tone and purpose of the event through the name and graphics. [More examples of the Electrify Portland! Graphics are here](#)

1. **Event name:** establish a name for your event
2. **Event Logo:** create a simple logo and graphic for your event that you can use for promotional purposes. It's best to have this in a few sizes and dimensions.
3. **Online presence:** If you have the bandwidth and capabilities, create a page or standalone website for your event that you can point people to. Do you need to purchase a URL?
4. **Online registration page (optional):** You may choose to have people register for your event online. This is certainly not required, but it can be helpful for determining the number of attendees to expect and for gathering contact information. LO did not have online registration for their event, while Portland did, making use of Eventbrite. Portland had free tickets as well as \$10 tickets that included a sign-up for their [signage program](#); attendees could pick up their signs at the event.
5. **Sponsorship pitch:** If you plan to seek sponsors, create a sponsorship pitch document for prospective sponsors that describes the event, the sponsorship levels, your plans for promoting the event, your target audience, and some potential benefits to them. [Click here to see an example of Electrify Portland's sponsorship pitch](#) and [Lake Oswego's sponsorship pitch](#).

6. **Social media:** Make a simple social media calendar for promoting your event, and develop some attractive graphics. [An example of Electrify Portland's social media calendar is in the Master doc.](#) Examples of [LOSN's social media calendar, social media advertising budget and sponsor social media handles](#)
7. **T-shirts:** At both LO and Electrify Portland!, volunteers wore custom fair t-shirts.
8. **Signage:** Consider what banners or signage would be appropriate for your venue and helpful for attendees (e.g. schedule of events, welcome signage).
9. **Pledge cards:** PDX used [Pledge Cards](#), both to encourage commitment to electrify participants' homes and to find out exactly what home electrification steps they are interested in doing next.
10. **Day-of event materials:** An event schedule or map may be helpful. LOSN developed orientation documents for both exhibitors and [attendees](#).
11. **Slideshow:** If you will have a projector and screen at your event, consider a slideshow that shares facts about electrification and your program(s).

Promotion

To get the word out about your event, you'll need a plan for marketing and promotion. This can vary based on your budget and target audience.

Lake Oswego Promotion

The LO volunteer team volunteers included experts in social media and newspaper marketing and that informed its decisions. In 2022 we sent out a postcard about the event to a subset of LO residents. We included a QR code that linked to the event web page. Almost 20% of postcard recipients used the QR code on the postcard to open the event website, and we realized that this seemed like an educational opportunity even if they would never attend the event. Accordingly in 2023 we designed the promotion and the event page to educate readers on three topics: the link between electrification and climate change, the basic components of home electrification, and the advantage of a five-year electrification plan. Promotion and education in 2023 included:

- Oversize [postcards](#) to most of the 14,000 or so single-family households in Lake Oswego.
- Two newsletters ([August](#) and [September](#)) to the almost 1000 registrants on the LOSN email list.
- A half page ad in the local newspaper and newspapers in five adjoining communities (Pamplin media, 57,000 person readership).

- Social media promotion on Facebook and Instagram that linked to the [event page](#). Social media was amplified by participating exhibitors.
- 24 Spot Radio Ads on Oregon Public Broadcasting.
- Additional promotion from some of our Partners such as the LO Chamber of Commerce, Lake Oswego School District, [Electrify Now](#), [Climate Solutions](#), Electrify PDX, and [National Drive Electric Week](#).
- Total spent on promotion and education was \$10,300.

We encouraged exhibitors to offer coupons with promo codes so that we could determine the number of purchases that resulted from the fair. Most of the coupons were worth \$200-\$300. We advertised the coupons in the LOSN newsletters. Coupons were available only by stopping by the exhibitors table at the fair.

Portland Promotion

Portland has more opportunities for spreading the word about these types of opportunities than do small cities. ElectrifyPDX created a [promotional toolkit](#), which was shared with all organizations who might have interested members, from faith communities where ElectrifyPDX had presented Electrify101 earlier in the year, to neighborhood associations, and environmental nonprofits. Content was provided for social media and email. Other promotions included:

- Posters and flyers (put up around town by a local company)
- Social media promotion on Instagram, Facebook Group, and LinkedIn
- [Media, partner and government outreach](#)
- Advertising on a local bike delivery service
- Blurbs from the toolkit were posted across all community calendars. The post in PDX Kids Calendar featured performance times for a popular children's musician.
- Total spent on promotion was \$1,600.

Planning and Communication Tips

Pre-event Communication

- Communicate details and expectations clearly. For example, send out an email to all exhibitors 1-2 weeks before the event with all logistical information (arrival time, booth number, load-in details etc.)

- Confirm shifts and duties with volunteers the week before the event.
- Confirm all details with the venue and make sure all questions are answered.
- Confirm all vendors and reservations prior to the event.
- Lake Oswego scheduled an in-person run through with all volunteers the week before the fair.

Post-event Communication

- Follow up with all exhibitors after the event to thank them and ask for feedback.
- Send out a post-event survey to attendees if you collected contact information, to get feedback.
- Lake Oswego received low follow-up survey responses by email in 2022 so completed the survey in person in the final half hour of the 2023 event.
- Lake Oswego had two high school students conduct in-person interviews of attendees of the fairs on why they attended, where they had heard about the fair, what they liked most about the fair and what they wished was at the fair that was missing.
- Thank all volunteers and sponsors.

Volunteers

For the day of the event, it's helpful to be amply prepared. Having enough volunteers and/or staff for set-up, takedown, volunteer coordination, AV, etc. will make the day go much smoother.

- Example: ElectrifyPDX recruited roughly 15 volunteers for the event and had folks working in 2-hour shifts in groups of two. They were given clear instructions and had a staff person as their point of contact if they had questions.
- Example: Lake Oswego had 24 volunteers, always including 8 on traffic control/parking. Walkie talkies were very useful for communicating outdoors. There was one lead person for all indoor activities and another for all outdoor activities.

Managing Finances

- Track sponsorship payments carefully: Keep a spreadsheet that logs invoice date, who has paid, how much, and when.

- Ask sponsors to pay by check or zelle, not online. The transaction fee for a \$2K sponsorship can be as high as \$65.

What to include in your event

EVs or no EVs

Around the country, electrification fairs have focused on EVs. Decide if you would like to include electric vehicles or not. Lake Oswego organizes the EV portion around [National Drive Electric Week](#). This is a national showcase of local EVs that involves working with local car dealerships to have vehicles on site for test drives and local EV owners who bring their vehicles to answer questions about their EVs and EV ownership in general. Thus, an audience who usually comes for the vehicles can be newly interested in home electrification. Including EVs and test drives requires more considerations around safety. For this reason, the Lake Oswego event does not emphasize kid activities. Electrify Portland included e-bike & e-scooter test rides but did not include EVs.

Exhibitors and Activations

Lake Oswego and Portland shared their list of potential exhibitors with each other and their final lists with links are in the case studies. The types of exhibitors included:

- HVAC and water heater companies known to specialize or at least be interested in heat pumps.
- Appliance stores wanting to promote induction cooktops.
- Electric fireplace stores
- Rooftop solar with storage/battery contractors
- Home efficacy contractors
- Green building contractors and architects
- Electric bicycles and scooters
- Electric utilities
- Specialists in Inflation Reduction Act tax credits, rebates, and energy efficiency financing, including on-bill financing.
- 1:1 Home electrification consultations who can help build personal home electrification plans.
- Allied nonprofits

Other ideas for activations:

- Both PDX and LO had demonstration tests for induction cooking with samples to taste. The induction test cooking table had handouts on induction cooking, risks of fossil gas stoves, and indoor tests of NO_x. The Lake Oswego table included a handout provided by the Lake Oswego Library about an [induction burner set](#) with induction pans that can be checked out from the library.
- The LO Fair had nine dealers who brought 16 cars for display and demo rides and three dozen residents who brought their EVs for display (see [LO case study](#) for lists)
- In LO, Portland General Electric brought their “[Tiny Electric Home](#)”, a small, fully electric home that demonstrates how all of these elements of an electric home work together.
- Both PDX and LO featured the [Oregon State University Solar Trailer](#) that powered some of their events including the PGE home, a bouncy castle and the induction cooking.
- Talks and Presentations:
 - LO presented [seven talks](#) scheduled on the half hour in a room in the church on topics such as EVs, Rooftop solar, community solar, and heat pumps.
 - PDX presented four talks including an Electrification 101 presentation, two panels, and an appearance by US Senator Jeff Merkely.



PDX included other family-focused activities such as:

- Electric Tailgate Party showed off an electric grill, an induction hot plate and a dorm fridge plugged into a Ford F150 Lightning. Free hot dogs, fresh donuts, and cool beverages were offered. (A donation jar was present)
- The kid’s music stage with a local musician and two bouncy castles were plugged into the OSU solar trailer.
- Free ice cream sandwiches, donated in part by Ruby Jewel, a local company. Tickets for the ice cream were handed out at the registration table.

- E-bike and e-Scooter test rides were provided by two local companies on a circular one-way track in the outdoor space.
- [Families for Climate](#) hosted a kid zone with coloring activities and other fun things for children to do while their parents checked out the exhibits.



Outcomes

Portland

- About 800 people registered for the PDX fair and an estimated 750 attended.
- Earned media: The Oregonian wrote an advance article about the event which boosted registrations.
- The kid-friendly events and free ice cream sandwiches were a big hit.
- All of the sponsors want to return in 2024.
- 17 people signed up for [ElectrifyPDX signs](#) and picked their signs up at the fair.
- See the [Electrify Portland! 2023 Report](#) for some additional details

Lake Oswego

- Almost 500 adults attended the event.
- Attendance at the talks ran between 30-60 people.
- Social media – Facebook and Instagram were very wide-reaching vehicles for publicity (74,000 Facebook impressions) and cost-effective, and combined, they led to almost 1,200 unique visits to our [event page](#). Overall, there were almost 2000 unique visits to the event page.
- All exhibitors were very happy with the size of the crowd and the seriousness of their intent to electrify. All indicated they would return next year.
- Our good relationship with the City of Lake Oswego was furthered.
- The Lake Oswego Review [covered the event](#) the next day with a story on the front page.
- The [postcards](#) resulted in substantial education about electrification.
- See the [LO case study](#) for opportunities for improvement.