

Tips and Tools to Plan Your soilSHOP Event



**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry

Proper planning is key to a successful Soil, Screening, Health, Outreach, and Partnership (soilSHOP) event. This toolkit is a comprehensive instruction guide on how to plan an effective soilSHOP event. Within this tool we share a few tips for the following:

1. Working with community partners
2. Identifying resources for your event
3. Choosing a location
4. Choosing a date and time
5. Choosing activities
6. Staffing your event
7. Preparing for your event

To help you plan effectively, use the Planning Tools in the [Appendix](#).

Before engaging in planning activities, we recommend using our [soilSHOP Tutorial Series](#) to learn more about hosting a soilSHOP event, resources available, and key roles.



Working with Community Partners

As you begin planning your soilSHOP event, it's a good idea to partner with a community-based organization or a federal, state, or local agency that serves the audience you wish to reach. A good community partner will have extensive experience working with this audience. Your community partner can help you organize the event, spread the word to prospective attendees, and provide support during the event. Partners can also provide resources to support the event, such as staff, soil screening equipment, and community contacts. They can share responsibilities and offer other unique services to the community, in addition to the free-soil screening and health education. Potential partners in your community could include, but are not limited to, organizations and agencies such as the following:

- Local and state health departments
- Local and state environmental agencies
- Faith-based organizations
- Community centers
- Agricultural extension offices
- University programs (such as environmental and chemistry programs)
- [Regional Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit \(PEHSU\)](#)
- Federal government (e.g., the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry [ATSDR], U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- Local environmental conservation groups and organizations
- Local gardening groups

Talk to your partner about whether the event should be held on its own or as part of a pre-planned, larger event (e.g., Earth Day events, health fairs, or agency-wide events) that might yield higher attendance. Communicate regularly with your partner to create a shared vision of the event and your involvement with the audience. It might help to identify a key contact within the organization or agency who is committed to helping you organize your event, learn the ins and outs of the organization or agency, and build enthusiasm. This champion may be a program coordinator, event organizer, community leader, or staff member. Begin the relationship by asking questions such as the following:

1. What are some of the lead exposures and health concerns of the audience you serve?
2. What are your goals for improving health and wellness for this audience?
3. What type of gardening or lead prevention programs are already being used here (or in this community as a whole)?
4. How can this event help you promote or complement these programs?
5. Have any soilSHOP events been done at previous events? Were they successful? Why?

It's important to understand the goals of your community partner, what's been tried before, and potential opportunities to promote existing programs or organizational successes. Look for ways that your event can fit into the goals and mission of the organization.



Identifying Resources for Your Event

Specific items are needed for each soilSHOP event. Some can be found within our toolkit, others might not, and could have some cost, especially if many people attend. You might wish to seek additional sources of support when hosting your soilSHOP event:

- Talk to your community partners about what resources they already have on hand (such as soil screening equipment) or what they are willing to offer (such as staffing).
- Ask your [ATSDR region office contact](#) for help with trainings, identifying resources, and using materials in the soilSHOP toolkit.



Choosing a Location

Talk to your community partner about spaces at their site that can be used for the soilSHOP event. If your event is part of a larger event (e.g., a farmers' market or health fair), speak with event organizers about where your event will be located. Keep the following considerations in mind:

- Spaces should have room for multiple tents or stations to separate soil screening from health education sections and participant traffic. If this is not possible, use our [Soil Screening Information Guide](#) to learn about proper spacing in single tent areas.
- Check whether the site has sufficient electrical outlets and extension cords for soil screening equipment and if other equipment might be needed.
- Spaces should have enough room for soilSHOP staff members to comfortably work with the number of participants expected.

Tip: Before your event, do a thorough walk-through of the space to learn the location of restrooms, emergency exits, trash cans, recycling bins, etc. This helps avoid surprises and can set you and your co-facilitators at ease about the event. It might also help keep costs down, as you might discover supplies you do not need to bring. Use our [Health and Safety Checklist](#) to ensure you properly plan for health and safety procedures at your event.



Choosing a Date and Time

If your event will not be held as part of a larger, pre-planned event, check with your community partner in advance about the best date and time for holding your event. Ask your partner about high traffic times at the space you are using (e.g., times when you might be able to attract more attendees). Also ask about any holidays, early release days, or other events that would affect normal scheduling. Avoid dates or times that might result in lower-than-normal attendance (e.g., weekdays or holidays). To learn more about marketing your event, use our [soilSHOP Communication Planning Guide](#).



Choosing soilSHOP Activities

During soilSHOP events, participants can take part in educational activities while they wait for their soil screening results. Such activities might include the following:

- Demonstrations of how to build and use raised bed gardens
- Talks by local gardening groups or experts about growing flowers and produce, and about harvesting and preparing home-grown produce to eat
- Free blood lead testing

Keep the following in mind as you select activities for your soilSHOP:

1. Choose one message to focus on.

Ideally, you will choose one consistent message that you will reinforce through each of your chosen activities. A simple, actionable message will allow your audience to walk away with a clear understanding of your purpose and one or more action items they can fit into their daily lives. It will also help you narrow down which activities to use.

Consider the interests and yard uses of your audience. Talk with your community partner about what types of outdoor activities (e.g., local gardening interests) are popular with this audience, or what lead prevention practices this audience might want to learn about. Be sure to ask about the basic characteristics of your target audience so you can choose culturally, economically, and age-appropriate activities to accompany your soilSHOP event. More information on communicating key messages can be found in the [soilSHOP Health Education Planning Guide](#).

2. Consider how much time you will have available.

Plan the number of activities that can be completed in the amount of time you have set for your soilSHOP event. Think about the total time of the event and how long you expect any one participant to spend throughout the event.

- How long will participants need to complete registration forms for their soil samples?
- How long will they need to wait for soil samples to be screened?
- How long will they need to receive sample results and have one-on-one consultations?

3. If you expect families will attend, select activities that are appropriate for the grade or maturity level of children in your group.

For example, if your event involves families with children younger than age 6 years, consider partnering with an organization that can provide free blood lead screenings for children. Also consider having craft stations for children where they can engage in coloring activities, flowerpot painting, or building a small terrarium (container gardening).



Staffing Your Event

You will need to know the expected size of your audience to determine how many people are needed to staff your soilSHOP event. Based on those numbers, consider the following:

- How many soil samples will you be expecting? How many people will you need to screen all of the samples?
- How many people will you need to help provide one-on-one health education or provide handouts?
- How many people will you need to help answer questions about soilSHOP, safe gardening, lead prevention, or other topics? Who are the most appropriate people to answer each of these types of questions?
- If you are expecting the event to run for many hours, or for a full day, will you have enough people to take shifts?
- What other skill sets would be helpful to have on hand (e.g., a community outreach worker who can help connect participants to environmental health programs or lead screening programs)?

Tip: Consider the skills and interests of your soilSHOP team and partners who have expressed interest in staffing the event. Review the soilSHOP staff roles and discuss the staffing assignments with your team. Ask your community partner if they can provide staff members during the event to help oversee the audience, troubleshoot any problems with the space, and answer audience questions you might not know the answer to. Typically, community partners have a prior relationship with the audience and can be particularly helpful for managing any issues.



Preparing for Your Event

Consider the following as you make final preparations to lead your activity:

- **Complete the Planning Timeline Template.** This template allows you to map out your detailed planning activities leading up to the event. Be sure to share this with your soilSHOP team.
- **Consider a practice run.** If possible, rehearse your event in advance. Run through soil screening times and rehearse the activities with everyone who will be staging the event. This will help you understand any timing or other issues you want to work out before the big day.
- **Review responsibilities with everyone involved** (Staff Roles and Functions tool available in the Appendix). Even if a practice run is not possible, be sure to run through the plan with your community partner and anyone else involved in the activity. Ensure that everyone understands their role. Use the [Final Planning Checklist](#) to assist you.
- **Review key health messages as needed.** [The Health Education Planning Guide](#) and [Communication Planning Guide](#) can help you develop messages and activities that are designed to be simple and easily understood by all audiences.
- **Collect the materials and equipment you will need;** an example can be found in the Tools and Equipment List in the [Appendix](#). A more general and editable list of materials and equipment is also available in the [Appendix](#). Be sure you have reviewed these lists thoroughly and know who will be responsible for bringing each item to the activity. Brainstorm any additional materials you may want on hand (e.g., clipboards, extension cords). Organize your materials and equipment by station and activity, so you will have the right materials handy at the right time.

Appendix

Planning Timeline Example

Timeline Dates	Suggested Action Items	Suggested Toolkit Resources
4–5 months before event	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify community partners/stakeholders and talk to them about their goals for the event 2. Complete soilSHOP trainings (if needed) 3. Kick-off meeting with core planning team 4. Draft list of educational resources—use input from partners and target community to update 5. Determine venue, event date and duration, and name 6. Develop and initiate communication plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. soilSHOP Planning Tools 2. soilSHOP Tutorial Series 3. soilSHOP Communication Planning Guide 4. soilSHOP Health Education Planning Guide 5. Resources Sheet for Further Information
2–3 months before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop communication and outreach materials (flyers, logo, announcements, soil sampling kit) 2. Continue meetings and calls with stakeholders/planning team 3. Review supplies and equipment needs (X-ray fluorescence [XRF] instruments, gloves, calculators, logbooks, forms, tables, chairs, pop-up tents) 4. Discuss logistics—venue, AC outlets, parking, restrooms, rain plan, etc. 5. Address translation (if needed)—are community volunteers available? 6. Identify potential personnel for event (volunteers, staff, etc.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Soil Sampling Cartoon—Color 2. soilSHOP Logo 3. Log-in Form 4. soilSHOP Outreach Flyer 5. soilSHOP Planning Tools- Equipment and Printed Materials Checklist 6. soilSHOP Planning Tools— Staff Roles and Functions
1–2 month before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm personnel commitments from various agencies/volunteers 2. Assign staff to station teams (Log-in, Screening, Health Education, etc.) and schedule team calls 3. Implement communications plan (through web sites, list serves, newsletters, local papers, businesses, community meetings, etc.) 4. Finalize all event materials (Log-in Form, labels, Sample Result Card, Health Education Consultation Evaluation Form, signage, etc.) 5. Hold group call to finalize sample kit distribution plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. soilSHOP Health Education Planning Guide 2. Health Education Consultation Evaluation Form 3. soilSHOP Sample Labels 4. Screening Result Card 5. soilSHOP Planning Tools— Staff Roles and Functions 6. soilSHOP Planning Tools— Equipment and Printed Materials Checklist
4 weeks before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schedule team calls—Log-in/Registration Team, Screening Team, and Health Education Team – and schedule training calls 2. Continue implementing communications plan (round 1 of sample kit distribution) 3. Continue logistics planning 4. Finalize educational materials (Resources Sheet, Trifold, etc.); print materials as needed or post on a community/event web site 5. Review equipment and printed materials checklist; order any materials/ supplies needed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. soilSHOP Trifold— English/Spanish 2. Resources Sheet for Further Information 3. soilSHOP Planning Tools— Equipment and Printed Materials Checklist

Timeline Dates	Suggested Action Items	Suggested Toolkit Resources
3–4 weeks before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue outreach meetings in community 2. Continue logistics planning 3. Confirm availability of all materials/supplies 4. Develop soil screening plans (Example Soil Screening Guidance) 5. Finalize health educator materials; reach agreement with partners on key messages 6. Discuss health, safety, and other special considerations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. soilSHOP Planning Tools- Equipment and Printed Materials Checklist 2. Example Soil Screening Guidance 3. Health and Safety Checklist
2–3 weeks before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue logistics planning 2. Visit event venue to review logistics 3. Confirm staff assignments and availability 4. Conduct volunteer and staff training calls 5. Continue implementing communications plan (round 2 of sample kit distribution) 6. Print and ship or package all event material 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resources Sheet for Further Information
3–5 days before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Run through the roles and responsibilities with all involved 2. Develop and share cell phone contact list for event team 3. Send logistics email to event team with directions, contact list, weather forecast, dress code, food, parking, and other necessary information 	

Community soilSHOP Event Day

Timeline Dates	Suggested Action Items	Suggested Toolkit Resources
1–2 weeks after event	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct post-event call with soilSHOP staff members and partners to review event successes and lessons learned 2. Send recap email and thank you letters to staff members and partners 3. Share event information with soilSHOP@cdc.gov 4. Complete soilSHOP Summary Report Form 	

Planning Timeline Template

Timeline Dates	Action Items	Resources

soilSHOP Event Name
 Event date

Timeline Dates	Action Items	Resources

Tools and Equipment List Example

The items listed in the example list below have been identified as needed to conduct a soilSHOP event. When completing your Tools and Equipment list, consider additional equipment and supplies you may need to conduct your event and activities.

Educational Materials

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
soilSHOP Trifold brochure	
Resources Sheet	
Other educational resource handouts (if applicable)	
Brochure holders	
Bags for educational hand-outs, Trifolds, terrariums, sample result cards, etc.	
Paper weights (rocks will work)	

Event Kit

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
Camera (we should have several, and video capability is preferred)	
Plastic tablecloths	
Duct tape (for signs and tablecloths)	
Permanent ink pens and markers	
Pens	
Highlighters	
Contact list for all staff members, volunteers, and other participants	
Staff Roles and Functions Guide	
Health Education Reference Guide	

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
Freezer baggies—gallon size (to group multiple samples that arrive with the same participant)	
Freezer baggies—quart size (for people who don't bring their sample in an appropriate bag)	
Hand sanitizer	
Sanitizing disposable wipes	
Masking tape	
First aid kit	
Stapler and staples—1 for registration, 1 for health education	
Scissors	
Sunscreen	
Water	
Name tags	
Badge holders (for name tags, if applicable)	
Health and Safety Plan	

Event Space

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
Tables—minimum 2 tables: 1 for registration, 1 for health education/educational materials (additional table for XRF screening station, if applicable.)	
Chairs—minimum 10 chairs: 2 for registration, 2 for waiting room, 6 for health education (additional chairs for XRF screening station, if applicable)	
Tent (10' x 10' x2) (additional tent for XRF screening station, if applicable)	
Trash and recycle bins (at least bags if bins/cans/barrels are not available)	

Event Materials

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
soilSHOP Log-in Form	
Pre-printed labels in triplicate with sample number, date, and event name	
Health Education Consultation Evaluation Form	
Results note card	
Clothes Pins (numbered) to provide to participants while they wait for screening results	
Small plastic bowls for clothes pins or small snacks/to draw people over to a table	
Clip boards—up to 10	
Raffle tickets (if applicable)	
Photo release waiver forms	

Signage

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
Laminated station signs: registration, restroom, start here, soil testing in progress, pickup orders, other soilSHOP directional signs	
soilSHOP event name on banner (large 24" x 36" sign, x2)	
soilSHOP signs: welcome and sample processing instructions (2' x 3')	
Event schedule signs and poster board or foam board	
Binder clips to affix posters to foam board	
Tripods/easels	
Flip chart or white board to announce completed screenings	

Soil Screening

Item	Responsible Party and Notes
XRF instrument(s) and extension cord and power strips	
Coolers for soil samples	
Printed XRF Screening Process Factsheet	
Logbooks (one for each XRF) and calculators to assist with averaging	
Disposable gloves (1 box of each needed size: small, medium, large)	
Disposable aluminum pans (like you would serve food in)	
Decontamination equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Paper towels ■ 1-gallon zip closure bags 	
Clipper	
String or green twine to hang clothespins—sample number card	
Brightly colored traffic cones to clear parking area and delineate screening area, and caution tape to delineate screening area	

Staff Roles and Functions

For small events, with limited staff and volunteer resources, several roles may be filled by the same person. One person can do two roles, or one role can be shared by multiple people. Italic text seen within the chart below suggest ways to accomplish the function of a role by assigning multiple roles to one person or many people.

Role	Number of Staff Needed	Staff Name(s), Agency, or Organization	Function
Event Lead			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodically checks in on all stations to make sure communication between tents is going smoothly. Leads an all-staff meeting the morning of the event. Discusses health/safety and overall event logistics. Ideally, this is someone who is with an agency and is not assigned to a specific soilSHOP station.
Event Ambassador			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The face of the soilSHOP event. Does “meet and greets” with local leaders and press, mingles with event partners, promotes event and soilSHOP model. Preferably local person with involvement in partner events.
Log-in Staff			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logs in soil samples and provides participants information on sample flow, where to go for results, and health education. Ensures Log-in Form is filled out correctly by participant. Labels the Log-in Form, soil samples, and Sample Result Card with the sample ID number. Places completed sample packets in a bin for XRF Runner to deliver to XRF screening station. Provides attendee with sample ID number imprinted on note card, clothespin, or other item.
Soil Screening Station Operator			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepts sample packets from Log-in station. Records screening start time on Log-In Form. Screens all samples for lead (and other metals) with XRF, and records readings in data logbook. Records final screening results on Sample Result Card and places the sample packet (without the actual sample) in a bin for Health Education Runner to deliver to Health Education station.
Screening Runner (Log-in to Soil Screening Station)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers completed sample packets from the Log-in station to the XRF screening station. Keeps tabs on sample processing time. Helps answer questions the XRF team has of the Log-in Team. <p><i>Log-In Staff or another volunteer can double as XRF Runner.</i></p>
Health Educator			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts one-on-one health education consultation with soilSHOP participants (discusses soil sample results, shares best practices for health protection and safer gardening). Shares resources provided by soilSHOP including Trifold brochure, resources sheet, and best practices gardening handouts.

Role	Number of Staff Needed	Staff Name(s), Agency, or Organization	Function
Health Education Runner (Soil Screening to Health Education)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Picks up completed sample packets from the XRF screening station, delivers packets to the Health Education station and marks the time of delivery on the Log-in Form. ■ Communicates to participants (verbally and/or by posting status) when screening results are ready and which Health Educator to see for consultation and explanation of screening results. ■ Keeps tabs on sample processing time, informs Log-in table of estimated wait time. ■ Relays Health Education questions to XRF Team. <p><i>Event Lead or any Health Educator can double as Health Education Runner.</i></p>
Station Team Leader			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designs and conducts on-site training for station team. Notifies those staffers of any changes that occur during the event. Makes on-the-spot decisions to continue operation of the station. ■ Communicates with Event Lead and Runners regarding sample processing time and any changes to process or requests made between stations.
Greeter			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Helps with traffic flow, directs soilSHOP participants to registration or to Health Education table if no sample. ■ Gathers photo consent signatures. ■ Hands out educational materials. <p><i>Event Ambassador can double as Greeter.</i></p>
Waiting Room Attendant (Part of Log-in team)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensures participants have used correct container for samples and hands out plastic zip closure baggies as needed. ■ Explains the process of the soilSHOP, sample flow, and helps participants fill out Log-in Form before going to the Log-in table. <p><i>Greeter, or anyone from the Log-in team can double as Waiting Room Attendant.</i></p>
Event Set-up Staff			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ On-site an hour before event to help unload vehicles, set up tents, chairs, tables, signage. ■ Helps unpack other equipment and supplies, set up posters, white boards, etc.
Event Take-down Staff			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Onsite at event end time to take down tents, tables, and chairs, and help load items into vehicles. ■ Picks up trash, cleans up the site, etc.

Final Planning Checklist

Confirm with your community partner(s)

Event date and time are final.

The event space will be cleared and made ready in advance.

The event space will be convenient to electricity (for XRF equipment and charging equipment).

Confirm for yourself

All educational materials and event equipment (e.g., XRF equipment, health education activities, raised bed garden demonstrations) needed are gathered or purchased.

If possible, a site visit to the event location has been conducted to familiarize yourself and your team with the event location and resources:

- Emergency exits
- Restrooms
- Trash and recycle bins
- Water sources
- Electrical outlets
- Materials available on-site
- Key contacts
- Parking

Photocopies of educational handouts, photo release waivers, health education evaluation sheet, Log-in Form, or outreach materials being used at the event have been made for the expected number of attendees.

Confirm with all soilSHOP event staff

Event staff members know the date and time of the event.

Event staff members have directions to the space.

Event staff members have copies of the staff roles and functions and the Health and Safety Checklist.

Event staff members know which items and tasks they are responsible for.

Lead prevention and safe gardening messages have been reviewed with Health Education Team.

Soil screening station information and planning have been reviewed with Soil Screening Team.

Registration and log-in information and process have been reviewed with Check-in Team.