



Career Fairs That Make an Impact

A Guide for Organizers, Funders, and Workforce Partners

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A practical playbook for running career fairs that deliver measurable outcomes.

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Introduction

The way people find work has changed. Job seekers today apply to dozens, sometimes hundreds, of roles and hear nothing back. For most candidates, the experience is faceless. You upload a resume, click submit, and wait. This affects all job seekers, but for students and new grads competing without experience, people in career transitions trying to start over, or newcomers and immigrants learning to navigate an unfamiliar job market, it's especially difficult.

It's not much better on the other side. Employers post a role and receive hundreds of applications, many filtered out before a human ever sees them. Resumes start to look the same. The candidates who might be a great fit in person get lost in a process designed for volume, not quality.

Done well, career fairs create real connections. A good career fair is a room full of people who showed up because they believe face-to-face still matters.

But career fairs don't always live up to that potential. Not because organizers don't care, but because the process is built on fragmented tools, manual workarounds, and a reporting model that amounts to the number of employer logos and job seeker turnout. The result is a lot of effort for outcomes that are hard to measure and harder to prove.

This guide is about closing that gap. It covers what it takes to run a career fair that produces real, measurable outcomes, organized into three phases: before the fair, during the fair, and after the fair. It's built from hundreds of career fairs run across Canada and the US, working with chambers of commerce, employment centres, workforce agencies, and post-secondary institutions.

Whether you've run fifty fairs or you're planning your first, the goal is the same: an event that's worth the effort for everyone in the room.

Career fairs are one of the few spaces left where a conversation can open a door that an online application never would.

THIS GUIDE IS FOR

- Chamber directors and events managers
- Employment centre program leads
- Workforce development agencies
- Economic development officers

● PHASE 1

Before the Fair

Goals, timelines, employer recruitment, marketing, and candidate registration. Everything that needs to happen before the doors open.

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

SECTION 1.1

Define your goals and success metrics

Before you book a venue, recruit employers, or design a registration page, get clear on what success looks like. Every organizer knows this matters, but in practice it often gets compressed into "let's just get the fair set up" and the metrics get defined after the fact, if at all.

The most common version of success at a career fair is that the fair was busy. That's a feeling, not a metric, and it doesn't hold up when a funder asks what their investment produced or when you're trying to justify running the event again next year.

If you have a reporting obligation, work backward from it. The questions about what the funder needs to see are easier to answer before the fair than after it.

Your goals also shape the type of fair you're running. A sector-specific hiring event (skilled trades, healthcare, tech) serves a different purpose than a general community career fair or a fair focused on newcomers and youth. Each calls for different employers, different candidate outreach, and different measures of success.

One tension worth naming early: are you optimizing for maximum attendance, or for qualified candidates who match what employers are hiring for? There's no single right answer, but the choice affects how you design your registration form, where you promote the event, and how you prepare candidates before they walk in. Decide this upfront so the rest of your planning is consistent.



WHAT TO MEASURE:

Registration and attendance targets

Employer count minimum

Candidate-employer connections

Employer and candidate satisfaction

Funder or reporting requirements

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

SECTION 1.2

Timeline, logistics, and accessibility

For most fairs, 8 to 12 weeks of lead time is the right target. Shorter than that and employer recruitment gets rushed. Longer than that and early commitments go stale before the event.

The most important thing to understand about the timeline is the split between employer recruitment and candidate promotion as they run on completely different schedules. This can feel like a chicken-and-egg problem. Candidates won't register if the employer list is thin or non-existent, and employers won't commit if they can't see who else is coming.

Focus on getting employers to commit first. A strong early lineup draws more employers, and a strong employer list is what gets candidates to sign up. Organizers who get this backwards spend the last month chasing both. The checklist on the right is built around the right sequence: lock employers early, then promote to candidates when the lineup is strong enough to sell.

Employer recruitment needs to start early. Employers commit when their recruiting calendar is still open. Wait until 4 weeks out and the employers you want will often pass. Their team is already booked at other events, or they've shifted budget elsewhere for the quarter.

Candidate promotion gets stronger closer to the event. The peak window is 2 to 3 weeks before the fair. Promote too early and registrations go cold. People sign up in a burst of motivation, forget about it, and don't show. A tighter promotional window produces higher attendance rates from the people who do register.

SAMPLE PLANNING CHECKLIST (FULL CHECKLIST IN APPENDIX)

12+ WEEKS BEFORE

- Define event goals and success metrics
- Assign team roles and responsibilities
- Confirm venue and date, match venue to expected attendance
- Plan for accessibility
- Start warm employer recruitment, send save-the-date to employers

4-8 WEEKS BEFORE

- Prepare candidate-facing event page and registration questions
- Confirm employers, sponsors and participating booths
- Launch candidate-facing event page and open registration
- Begin social media and email promotion to job seekers

1-2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Run final candidate push (peak sign-up window)
- Send final reminders to employers and candidates
- Order and prepare printed materials
- Test all QR codes and check-in technology, prepare backup materials

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

VENUE AND CAPACITY:

Match the venue to your expected attendance. A venue that's too large feels empty and saps energy. One that's too small creates lines outside the door and a chaotic floor inside. Consider capping pre-registrations or using time slots to manage the flow of attendees throughout the day. A steady stream is better than a rush at the doors followed by a dead room two hours later. Time slots give you built-in crowd control without turning anyone away, and they help employers have better conversations because they're not overwhelmed all at once.

SCHEDULING:

Schedule the fair with your audience in mind. Think about who your candidates are and when they can realistically attend: parents with school pickup commitments, people currently employed who can only visit over a lunch break or after work, shift workers with non-standard schedules. A weekday 9-to-3 fair excludes a significant portion of job seekers who are, by definition, currently working somewhere. That doesn't mean you can't run a weekday fair, but consider whether the timing actually serves your target audience or just your team's convenience. Evening hours, extended lunch windows, or weekend options may open the event to the people who need it most.

ACCESSIBILITY:

Build it in from the start. Include an accommodation request in registration so attendees can flag needs in advance (mobility, sensory, dietary, interpreter services) and you have time to prepare rather than react on the day. Consider a low-sensory hour with reduced noise and softer lighting for attendees with anxiety, autism, or other sensory sensitivities. This is increasingly standard at well-run public events and signals that your fair is genuinely inclusive. Plan for physical accessibility: wheelchair access, clear signage, adequate space between booths, and deliberate seating decisions. If you want candidates to linger and network, add seating areas. If you want steady flow-through, keep seating minimal.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Candidate promotion is most effective 2 to 3 weeks before the fair

- 2 Schedule the fair with your audience in mind

- 3 Plan and promote accessibility from the start

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

SECTION 1.3

Employer recruitment and onboarding

Employer recruitment is where career fairs succeed or stall. You can have a perfect venue, a beautiful event page, and strong candidate registrations, but if the employer list is thin or the booths aren't prepared, the fair won't deliver.

HOW TO RECRUIT EMPLOYERS:

Start with your existing relationships and past participants. Reach out directly with a personal invitation. Past participants are your warmest prospects for the next fair, especially if you can share results from the last event they attended.

When you reach out to prospective employers, make the value proposition clear. Include the fair details (date, location, format), a profile of the expected candidate audience, booth options and pricing (if applicable), and a clear explanation of what participation involves. Past participants should hear about results from their last event. New prospects should hear about the audience you're building and what they'll get from being in the room.

For broader reach, use an open application form shared on social media and through partner networks. This works regardless of fair size. Even at smaller fairs, an open application can surface employers you wouldn't have thought to invite. It also generates early interest and visibility for the fair itself, since employers sharing or responding to the form puts your event in front of their networks.

HOW TO ONBOARD EMPLOYERS:

Once an employer commits, onboard them proactively. Don't assume they'll figure out what to do. Send a confirmation with everything they need: deadlines, instructions for setting up their booth profile, what to prepare, and what to bring on the day. If you're charging for booth packages, be transparent about what each tier includes.

The person who commits isn't always the person who shows up.

One of the most underappreciated problems in career fair planning. A hiring manager says yes and completes onboarding. On event morning, someone else arrives who wasn't part of any prior conversation. Plan for it explicitly. Your onboarding materials need to cover what to expect, who to contact if something goes wrong, and work for someone encountering the fair for the first time that morning.

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

SECTION 1.4

Build your event page

Your event page is the first thing candidates and employers see. Treat it like a landing page, not a form with a date on it.

The description matters more than most organizers realize. "Annual Career Fair" tells people nothing. "Meet 40+ employers hiring across healthcare, skilled trades, and technology. Open to job seekers at all experience levels." gives candidates a reason to register.

Booth types matter. Not every booth is there to hire. Some are for brand visibility, others are resource booths (educational institutions, settlement agencies, government programs). Tag and organize them accordingly so candidates can find what they're looking for and employers aren't fielding the wrong questions all day.

Make the employer list work harder. Most event pages list employer logos and stop there. Push further. Encourage employers to share the specific roles they're hiring for, and feature that information on the page. "50 employers attending" is fine. "50 employers hiring for 200+ roles in healthcare, trades, and tech" is a reason to show up.



"When there are a lot of employers, it's hard for job seekers to connect with everyone. If they can see job descriptions in advance, they can come prepared and identify the two or three employers they're targeting and have real conversations. That's much better than spending three hours trying to meet everyone."

Pablo Franco

Manager, Career & Employment Services
Centre for Newcomers



PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

**HOW THE BEST ORGANIZERS
HANDLE THIS**

They don't just share a registration link across every channel. They track where every registration comes from using unique source links for every channel.

The payoff compounds. Your next fair's marketing is sharper than the first because you know which channels actually worked.

SECTION 1.5

Marketing and promotion

Use a mix of channels: email campaigns, social media, employer networks, community partners, physical posters, campus channels, and local media. No single channel will fill your fair. The strongest registration numbers come from layering multiple channels so candidates see the event more than once from more than one source.

Your employers are one of your best channels. Give them a promotion kit: shareable graphics, suggested copy, and a link to their booth on the event page. If you've pushed them to list specific roles, their promotional posts become much more compelling. "We're hiring 15 roles at [Fair Name]" outperforms "Come visit our booth" every time. Community partners (workforce agencies, settlement organizations, libraries, industry associations) can extend your reach significantly. Give them assets and a reason to share. And don't overlook the simplest channel: encourage registered job seekers to refer a friend. A personal recommendation from someone who's already signed up carries more weight than most paid promotion.

Timing is different for candidates and employers. Employer recruitment should start 8 to 12 weeks before the fair. They need time to commit, plan internally, and prepare their teams. Candidate promotion follows a different rhythm. The sweet spot for candidate registration is 2 to 3 weeks before the event. Promote too early and registrations go cold, leading to higher no-show rates. Plan your candidate-facing marketing to build toward that peak window, with a final push in the last 48 to 72 hours.

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

SECTION 1.6

Registration and candidate preparation

REGISTRATION AND QUALIFICATION

Registration is more than a sign-up form. It's your first opportunity to pre-qualify candidates, set expectations, and prepare attendees.

Keep the form short enough that candidates complete it, but collect what you need for reporting, matching, and qualification. Include an accessibility accommodation request so attendees can flag needs in advance. Use form logic to screen for eligibility where applicable. If your fair requires work authorization or is restricted by age or location, build that into the form so ineligible candidates are filtered before the event.

Whatever you collect, use it. Data should feed into your reporting, how you direct candidates at the fair, or what you share with employers. Questions that don't lead anywhere are just friction.

Make resume upload easy. Whether it's optional or required depends on your audience. For fairs targeting newcomers or students who may not have a polished resume, making it required could suppress registrations. For sector-specific or professional fairs, requiring a resume sets a higher bar and gives employers more to work with. Match the requirement to your audience and goals.

BALANCING ATTENDANCE WITH FIT

For general community events, keep the registration bar low. You want volume and diversity, and overly restrictive forms will reduce turnout. For sector-specific fairs, add questions that help candidates self-select: "What industries are you interested in?" "What is your experience level?"



"Job fairs are most effective when the dialogue starts even before the day of the fair. Connecting with job seekers ahead of time turns a brief meeting into more meaningful opportunities for both the job seeker and the employer."

Sherrie Sawkey

Project Manager, Alberta Job Fairs Project
Alberta Chambers of Commerce



PHASE 1: BEFORE THE FAIR

SECTION 1.6

HELP YOUR JOB SEEKERS SUCCEED:

Most career fair advice focuses on marketing the event but stops short of helping candidates show up ready. This is a missed opportunity. Send practical prep guidance: research the employers attending, prepare a short introduction, bring copies of your resume (even if they uploaded one digitally), dress appropriately, and come with questions for employers.

For newcomers, students, and first-time attendees especially, a "how to get the most out of this career fair" email or resource page can make the difference between someone who wanders the floor and someone who makes a real connection. You don't need to write a full preparation manual, practical tips like the ones above, sent a week before the event, go a long way.

CANDIDATE COMMUNICATION:

Registration confirmation

Send immediately. Confirm what they signed up for and tell them what to expect next. If you have an employer list already, link to it.

1-week reminder

Share the updated employer list with specific roles, practical prep guidance, what to bring, and how to prepare for their visit.

Day-before reminder

Check-in instructions, the schedule, parking, how to find the entrance, transit details, what to bring, and who to contact with questions. Don't assume candidates know how to get there. For people who are already anxious about attending a career fair, removing the uncertainty around "how do I actually get in the building" makes a real difference.

Each email should do two things: give the candidate useful information and build anticipation for the event. A candidate who receives three well-timed, genuinely helpful emails is far more likely to show up than one who got a confirmation and nothing else.

★ THREE CANDIDATE TOUCHPOINTS

- 1 Registration confirmation

- 2 1-week reminder

- 3 Day-before reminder

● PHASE 2

Day of the Fair

Setup and logistics, running the fair, and capturing every meaningful connection in real time so your post-event report comes together fast.

PHASE 2: DAY OF THE FAIR

SECTION 2.1

Setup and logistics

Arrive early. Not "an hour before the doors open" early. If your fair opens to candidates at 10:00 and employers start setting up at 8:30, your team should be there by 7:30. A calm, organized setup creates a room that feels ready. A rushed one creates stress that carries into the first hour.

SIGNAGE AND QR CODES:

Signage and QR codes are the operational backbone of day-of setup. Post clear directional signage from the entrance. Use QR codes to make check-in fast and to track candidate-employer connections at each booth.

There are two types of QR codes: a fair-level code at the entrance that handles check-in and gives candidates quick access to the event page, and individual booth-level codes that let candidates scan to connect with a specific employer. Booth-level codes turn every conversation into a tracked connection rather than a business card that gets lost. With generates both automatically for every fair. If you're building them manually, budget the time in your materials prep.

For larger fairs, display a booth map grouped by industry or booth type. Even for smaller fairs, a visible employer list with booth locations near the entrance helps.

SAMPLE DAY-OF CHECKLIST (FULL CHECKLIST IN APPENDIX)

ARRIVAL & SETUP

- Arrive 1 hour before employer setup
- Post directional signage from entrance, display QR codes
- Set up booth map and employer list near entrance

EMPLOYER & CHECK-IN

- Greet employers, direct to booths, brief on schedule
- Verify every booth has table, chairs, signage, QR code
- Set up check-in stations with clear signage

FINAL WALKTHROUGH

- Walk entire floor, check QR codes work, verify signage
- Prepare backup materials: spare QR codes, paper sign-in
- Confirm walk-in policy, brief check-in team

PHASE 2: DAY OF THE FAIR

EMPLOYER ARRIVAL:

Greet employers at the entrance and direct them to their booth. Brief them on the day's schedule, when doors open, what candidate flow will look like, and who to contact if something goes wrong. Some employers will arrive fully prepared with banners, swag, and branded tablecloths. Others will show up unprepared. Both are fine. What matters is that every booth has a table, chairs, signage showing the company name, and their QR code displayed where candidates can scan it.

If you prepared a standalone day-of guide in your onboarding package, this is where it pays off. The employer who shows up as a last-minute substitute for the person who originally committed can get up to speed from the guide alone, without needing your team to walk them through everything from scratch while the room fills up around them.

CHECK-IN

Set up with clear signage visible from the entrance, enough stations to avoid lines at opening, and someone nearby to help people who get stuck with digital check-in. If you're using a manual process (printed lists, name tags), plan for the same capacity. Decide your walk-in policy in advance and make sure your check-in team knows the answer before the first unregistered candidate arrives.

For first-time attendees, check-in is an orientation moment. Consider posting a simple "What to expect" sign near the entrance: how the fair works, where different types of employers are located, and tips for making the most of their time. A quick verbal welcome from a volunteer can go even further. "Welcome to the fair. Here's a map. Employers are grouped by industry. If you need help finding anyone specific, come find us at the info table." That one sentence turns a confused candidate into a confident attendee.

Remember that for many candidates, job seeking is stressful. Add a crowded, unfamiliar event and the anxiety compounds. Keeping things simple, organized, and welcoming pays off enormously in candidate experience.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 A calm, organized setup creates a room that feels ready. A rushed one creates stress that carries into the first hour.
- 2 Booth QR codes turn every conversation into a tracked connection rather than a business card that gets lost.
- 3 A 'what to expect' sign can turn confused candidates into confident attendees.

PHASE 2: DAY OF THE FAIR

SECTION 2.2

Running the fair

Once the doors open, your job shifts from setup to management.

THE OPENING RUSH:

The first thirty to sixty minutes are the busiest. Candidates see the start time and treat it as a deadline to arrive. This is especially true without time slots, because there's nothing spreading people across the day. Staff up your check-in area for the opening window and have volunteers on the floor to direct traffic. The opening rush is when the most things go wrong simultaneously, so front-load your team's energy there.

PEAKS AND LULLS:

After the rush, most fairs settle into a rhythm. There's usually a quieter stretch mid-morning or early afternoon, followed by a second wave during lunch breaks. These lulls are normal. For employers who are newer to fairs, a quick check-in from your team goes a long way. Lulls are also good windows for volunteer breaks, employer coffee runs, and floor maintenance: fix signage, restock materials, and look for dead zones or bottlenecks that were masked by the rush.

EMPLOYER LATE ARRIVALS:

Employer late arrivals are almost as common as no-shows. Have someone ready to meet them, walk them to their booth, and get them operational fast. For no-shows, have a process: signage on empty tables, redirect candidates, adjust the floor.



HOW THE BEST ORGANIZERS HANDLE THIS

The teams that run the best fairs treat the day as two jobs. The first is managing the opening rush: volume, traffic, check-in capacity.

The second is managing the experience once the room settles, helping candidates find the right employers, checking in on booths, catching problems before they compound.

Planning for both shifts, rather than reacting to them, is what separates a fair that runs smoothly from one that survives the day.

PHASE 2: DAY OF THE FAIR

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Front-load team energy for the opening rush. That's when the most things go wrong at once.
- 2 Lulls are working time for your team. Reset the floor, check on newer employers, catch problems masked by the rush.
- 3 Designate one problem-solver. Every issue routes through them, so three people aren't fixing the same thing.

GUIDING CANDIDATES:

Candidates, especially first-timers, benefit from active guidance during the fair. Visible, approachable team members or volunteers who can answer questions, point people toward relevant employers, and help anyone who looks lost or overwhelmed.

Place team members at key transition points: near the entrance after check-in, at the junction between different sections of the floor, and near the exit. Prepare volunteers with one or two sentences about how the fair works and how to approach a booth, so they can orient first-time attendees on the spot. A volunteer who sees a candidate standing at the edge of the room looking uncertain can change the entire trajectory of that person's visit with a simple "Can I help you find an employer in your field?"

SOLVING PROBLEMS:

Every fair has a few things go sideways. The wifi drops. A QR code stops scanning. An employer runs out of materials. Designate one person on your team as the day's problem-solver. Every issue routes through them. This prevents the scenario where three team members are all trying to fix the same thing while a different problem goes unnoticed. Keep a running issue log with timestamps and resolutions. Take photos throughout the day, with consent, for reporting and social media.

PHASE 2: DAY OF THE FAIR

SECTION 2.3

Capturing connections and data in real time

The data that makes your post-event report useful is captured during the fair, not after it. Once people leave the building, the details fade fast.

THE REPORTING STORY STARTS BEFORE THE FAIR:

If your event page allows candidates to browse the employer list and flag which companies they're interested in, you already have a baseline of candidate engagement before anyone walks through the door. Even a simple registration form that asks "which industries are you most interested in?" gives you pre-event data to work with. The more your event page does here, the less you're starting from zero on the day.

CAPTURE IN THE MOMENT:

On the day, the goal is to capture every meaningful interaction as it happens. However you're tracking connections, whether through QR scanning, a digital platform, or a structured manual process, the principle is the same: record the interaction in the moment, not from memory after the fair. A connection captured in real time includes context. A connection reconstructed the next day is a name on a list.

Encourage employers to keep capturing connections throughout the day, not just during the first hour. A reminder during a lull is enough: "Log everyone you talk to. It makes your follow-up so much easier."

The more of this you can tie together automatically, the stronger your report becomes. Registration data, attendance, booth-level connections, employer notes, candidate interest signals: when these connect, you get a complete picture of the fair without manually stitching spreadsheets together afterward.

BUILD IN A MANUAL BACKUP:

Have a manual entry option or paper sign-in sheets as a last resort. The goal is that no meaningful connection is completely lost because the technology didn't capture it.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Capture connections in the moment, not from memory. A connection captured in real time includes context. One reconstructed the next day is a name on a list.
- 2 Your report starts before the fair. Registration data and event page activity build the baseline. Day-of capture layers on top.
- 3 Build in a manual backup. No meaningful connection should be lost because the tech didn't capture it.

● PHASE 3

After the Fair

Reporting outcomes, following up with employers and candidates, and setting up the next one. The part most fairs skip, and where the value compounds.

PHASE 3: AFTER THE FAIR

SECTION 3.1

Reporting and outcomes

If you defined your goals upfront and captured data in real time, reporting becomes an exercise in answering the questions you already asked.

DEBRIEF FIRST:

Schedule it before the fair happens. Put it on the calendar for the day after or within the same week. Walk through the fair chronologically, review the issue log from the day, and end with two questions: what would we do the same way next time, and what would we change? Document both. Do it while the day is still fresh.

ACTIVITY METRICS VS. OUTCOME METRICS:

Funders increasingly care about the difference. Activity metrics tell you what happened: 300 registered, 200 attended, 40 employers participated. Outcome metrics tell the story of impact: 850 connections made, 92% of employers met qualified candidates, 87% of candidates connected with an employer they plan to follow up with. Lead your report with outcomes, not logistics.

WHAT TO MEASURE:

The core data set for most fairs includes: registrations, attendance rate, employer count, total connections, booth-level activity, registrations by source, hourly patterns, and feedback scores. Registrations by source is especially valuable because it shows which marketing channels actually drove attendance, which directly informs how you promote the next fair. The channel that felt productive (e.g. you posted on Instagram every day) and the channel that actually drove registrations (e.g. the partner email blast) are often different. Booth-level performance tells you which employers are most engaged and worth prioritizing for the next event. Hourly activity patterns help you plan staffing, scheduling, and time slots next time around.

PHASE 3: AFTER THE FAIR

TAILOR THE PRESENTATION:

A funder who needs a formal submission may want a structured report or slide deck. A board may want a one-page summary with key numbers. An internal team may just need the data in a shared document. Whatever the format, lead with what was achieved, save the operational details for the internal version, and export the raw data (CSV or similar) for compliance and future reference.



HOW THE BEST ORGANIZERS HANDLE THIS

The strongest post-fair reports don't just count heads, they tell a story. Registration totals, attendance rates, connections made, employer satisfaction scores, and candidate feedback all paint a picture that funders can act on.

The organizers who consistently secure repeat funding are the ones who can show exactly what happened, down to booth-level performance and source attribution. If your reporting amounts to "we had 200 people and it went well," you're leaving money on the table.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Lead your report with outcomes, not logistics. Funders care about impact more than activity.

- 2 Schedule your debrief before the fair happens. The longer you wait, the more you'll miss once the day is over.

- 3 Registrations by source tells you which channels actually worked. The channel that felt productive and the channel that drove real registrations are often different.

PHASE 3: AFTER THE FAIR

SECTION 3.2

Employer and candidate follow-up

Most career fairs just end when the last candidate walks out, the employers pack up, and everyone moves on. This is where a lot of value gets left behind.

EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP:

Send a thank-you within 24 hours that includes their booth-level results: how many candidates connected with them, any notes or ratings they can review, and how to access their data for follow-up. Sharing this back accomplishes two things. It gives employers immediate value from participating (their follow-up list is ready without any manual work), and it demonstrates that your fair produces measurable outcomes, which is the argument for them coming back next time.

Include a short feedback form (five questions or fewer). Pay attention to the answers: an employer who says "sign us up again" is a potential referral source. An employer who had a poor experience is a signal that something needs to change. Either way, the feedback is actionable.

The data tells you who to thank, who to win back, and what to say to either.

CANDIDATE FOLLOW-UP:

Send a thank-you within 24 hours. Direct candidates to the employer career pages or job listings they expressed interest in. If you have data from the fair showing which employers a candidate connected with or flagged as interesting, use it. A candidate who expressed interest in three specific companies should receive a follow-up that points them directly to those employers' application pages or contact information. This is a small effort that significantly increases the chance of a real hiring outcome from the fair.

Include a feedback form. The key question: "Did you connect with an employer you're interested in?" The answer tells you whether the fair delivered value from the candidate's perspective. Other useful questions: how they heard about the fair (which confirms your source tracking data), whether they felt prepared, and what they would improve.

CLOSE THE LOOP WITH FUNDERS:

Share your report, feedback highlights, and your plan for next time. Frame it as "here's what we accomplished, here's what we learned, here's what we're planning next." Funders renew programs, not events.

PHASE 3: AFTER THE FAIR

SECTION 3.3

Setting up the next one

The best time to plan your next career fair is right after you finish one. The lessons are freshest and the assets are still organized.

Export and tag your employer list: who participated, who performed well, who had a poor experience, who said they'd come back. This becomes your recruitment starting point for the next event. Past participants are always your warmest prospects, and the ones who had a strong experience are your referral sources.

Save everything reusable: registration forms, onboarding materials, communication templates, promotional assets. The next fair should not start with "let me rebuild the registration form from scratch." If you used source tracking for promotion, carry that data forward. Double down on what drove registrations. Cut what didn't. Your second fair's marketing should be meaningfully more efficient than your first.

If you're running fairs annually or semi-annually, set a tentative date early. It gives employers a placeholder, your team a timeline, and funders a signal that the program is ongoing.

Every event you run makes the next one easier: tighter operations, warmer employer relationships, better data on what works.

Career fairs compound. The first is the hardest. After that, you're building on something.

★ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1** Plan the next fair while the current one is still fresh. Lessons, assets, and momentum all have a short shelf life.
- 2** Don't rebuild from scratch. Your employer list, registration forms, and source tracking data all carry forward.
- 3** Set a tentative date early. It gives employers a placeholder, your team a timeline, and funders a signal that the program is ongoing.



ABOUT WITHE

Withe is the platform purpose-built for career fairs. We help organizers run better events, capture every connection, and prove the outcomes to the people who fund them.

Used by chambers of commerce, employment centres, workforce agencies, and post-secondary institutions across North America.

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Ready to run career fairs that prove their impact?

We built Withe for the organizers, funders, and workforce partners this guide is written for.

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● CHECKLIST PACK

Checklists

The whole guide, distilled into checklists you can use.
Three pages, three phases, ready to go.

● BEFORE THE FAIR

8–12 WEEKS OUT

- Fair date, venue, and format (in-person, virtual, hybrid) confirmed
- Budget approved and event goals set
- Registration platform and data capture method decided
- Key internal team assigned (lead organizer, day-of coordinator, volunteer lead)
- Employer outreach list built and save-the-date sent

6–8 WEEKS OUT

- Employer invitations sent with registration deadline
- Employer registration page live (booth info, logistics, expectations)
- Job seeker registration page live
- Marketing plan confirmed (channels, send dates, partner amplification)
- Accessibility requirements identified (venue, materials, interpretation)

4 WEEKS OUT

- First marketing push to job seekers (email, social, partner channels)
- Venue floor plan drafted (booth layout, registration flow, traffic patterns)
- Volunteer recruitment begins

2–3 WEEKS OUT

- Second marketing push to job seekers
- Employer briefing document sent (schedule, check-in time, what to bring, QR code use)
- Volunteer roles assigned and briefing time scheduled
- Day-of run sheet drafted (who does what, when)

1 WEEK OUT

- Final marketing push and candidate reminder emails
- Final employer briefing email (parking, load-in, check-in time, contact on day)
- Registration list pulled and printed or loaded for check-in
- QR codes, name badges, signage prepared

● NOTES

● DAY OF THE FAIR

SETUP (2-3 HOURS BEFORE DOORS OPEN)

- Venue layout set up per floor plan
- Registration / check-in station live and tested
- Signage placed (entrance, check-in, employer zones, exits, washrooms)
- Day-of supplies unpacked and distributed to booths (QR codes, extension cords, pens, first aid, water)
- Volunteer briefing held (roles, check-in process, lull coverage, emergency contact)
- Tech tested (wifi, registration scanner, printer if used)

EMPLOYER ARRIVAL (1 HOUR BEFORE DOORS)

- Employer check-in table staffed
- Each employer receives: booth number, schedule, QR code materials, briefing reminder
- Any no-show employers flagged to organizer lead

DOORS OPEN

- Opening rush managed via time slots or staggered entry
- Organizer walks the floor, spot-checks employer experience
- Employer check-ins at mid-point (how's it going, any issues, need a break)
- Lull periods used for volunteer and employer breaks
- Job seekers directed to quieter booths during high-traffic booth queues
- Photos and social content captured if planned

CLOSING PERIOD

- 30-minute warning to employers, 15-minute warning to job seekers
- Final employer sweep (thank them, confirm follow-up, collect any feedback)

AFTER DOORS CLOSE

- Teardown coordinated with venue
- Volunteer debrief (what worked, what didn't)
- Data export confirmed (registration, connections, scans)

● NOTES

● AFTER THE FAIR

SAME DAY / NEXT DAY

- Thank-you email sent to employers
- Thank-you email sent to job seekers
- Data exported and backed up (registration, employer list, connections, resumes)
- Quick team debrief notes captured while memory is fresh

WITHIN 1 WEEK

- Outcome report drafted (attendance, employer count, connections made, employer feedback)
- Report aligned to funder or stakeholder requirements
- Post-event survey + resources sent to employers
- Post-event survey + resources sent to job seekers

WITHIN 2-3 WEEKS

- Outcome report delivered to funder, board, or stakeholders
- Internal team debrief held (what to change for next fair)

WITHIN 1 MONTH

- Referral asks sent to employers who had a strong experience
- Next fair date scoped if recurring

● NOTES
