AWS Global Playbook
How to Run an AWS Community Day

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Version: v1.0

Last Updated: 30 November 2025

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Abstract:

This playbook is a practical, community flavored guide for AWS user group leaders who want to run an AWS Community Day in their city. It walks through vision, team structure, timeline, budget, content, operations, and follow up, with links to example events and community resources that you can adapt to your local context.

1. Purpose of this Playbook

This playbook shows AWS community leaders how to plan, run, and wrap up an AWS Community Day in their city without losing their minds or their savings.

It focuses on practical steps that have worked in real events, not corporate theory. The goal is that a small team of motivated leaders can follow this, avoid the most common mistakes, and build an event that can repeat every year.

2. Who This Is For

This playbook is for:

- AWS User Group and community leaders

- Builders who already run regular meetups and want to try a one day, conference style event

- Volunteers who are stepping into event organization for the first time

It assumes you already understand basic meetup concepts (finding a venue, booking speakers, promoting on social) and now want to level up to a full Community Day, with a venue, sponsors, ticketing, and a more formal schedule.

For background on what AWS Community Days are, see the official AWS Community Day page:

- https://aws.amazon.com/events/community-day/

3. What Is an AWS Community Day?

Definition

AWS Community Day events are community led conferences where logistics and content are planned, sourced, and delivered by local community leaders, with support from AWS. [Amazon Web Services, Inc.](#)

Typical traits:

- One full day of technical talks, workshops, or labs

- Talks mainly from real practitioners, not just vendors

- Volunteer run, community owned, AWS supported

- Affordable, with a focus on learning, networking, and giving back

A concrete example is AWS Community Day Canada in Vancouver, archived on:

- https://www.awsday.ca/

There you can see how a real Community Day presents its schedule, sponsors, code of conduct, and previous years.

4. Core Principles

Before you touch dates or venues, lock in the principles of your event:

1. **Community first**
   The event exists to serve local builders, not sponsors or organizers' egos.

2. **Transparent and fair**
   Clear speaker selection, clear sponsor value, and clear communication.

3. **Financially responsible**
   The event should at least break even and ideally build a small surplus for the next year.

4. **Inclusive and safe**
   Code of conduct, accessibility, and psychological safety must be taken seriously.

5. **Repeatable**
   Everything you do this year should make next year easier, not harder.

5. At a Glance Checklist

Use this as your "sticky note" summary. Keep in mind that these dates are what you should do as a minimum timeline but if you are more organized you can do some of these things earlier. The team at www.awsday.ca for example, lock in the venue 12-9mths before the event date so that they can orientate everything around the event location and date.

12 to 9 months before the event

- Form a core committee (4 to 10 people, from different companies).

- Align with your AWS contacts about using the "AWS Community Day" brand and expectations. Amazon Web Services, Inc.

- Reach out to your AWS employed community manager.

  o Have them list your event on the AWS community day upcoming events site

  o See if they can secure some funding from AWS for you

  o They can also help you to find sponsors and speakers. It is a good idea to get them to help you find a keynote speaker from AWS.

- Decide high level goals: size, target audience, and whether you include charity or hackathons. If you are looking to include a hackathon, reach out to the team at Hacker Rivals www.HackerRivals.com as they put on a different type of hackathon that is focused on the audience which is perfect for a community focused event, and their hackathons go for 3hrs, not 1-3 days, again perfect for a conference where you don't want the hackathon to be the only thing.

9 to 6 months before

- Choose and pencil in a date, check for clashes with AWS Summits, re:Invent, and local holidays. Amazon Web Services, Inc.

- Shortlist venues and get quotes. Talk to universities and buildings owned by your local city. Normally they are able to give you non-profit discounts because you are aligned to their goals of educating and providing to the community. Just make sure you make it clear that you don't work for AWS, otherwise they will assume you have deep pockets.

- Draft your sponsorship prospectus and target sponsor list. Creating it as a slide deck and then converting it to pdf to share out is a great way to go. If you can, do a video call with the potential sponsors and walk them through your prospectus before sending them a pdf copy.

- Create a simple landing page and "save the date" announcement. Let us at www.AWSusergroups.com know and we'll feature your landing page.

6 to 3 months before

- Lock in venue and date.

- Open Call for Papers (CfP) and define your selection process.

- Open sponsorship officially and start closing key sponsors.

- Recruit volunteers for logistics, registration, speaker handling, and sponsor support.

3 months to 1 month before

- Finalize speakers and schedule.

- Open ticket sales properly and push marketing hard.

- Confirm catering, AV, signage (digital signage if you can), badges, and any swag.

- Run weekly organizer meetings.

Final month and event day

- Confirm all external vendors and volunteers.

- Share detailed run sheet and contacts with your team.

- Run the event, gather feedback, and collect metrics.

After the event

- Send thank you messages to speakers, sponsors, volunteers, and attendees.

- Share slides or recordings if available.

- Run a retrospective and document lessons learned for next year.

6. Organizing Team Structure

Do not attempt a Community Day alone. A typical structure that works:

- **Lead Organizer / Chair**
  Overall responsibility, final decisions, relationship with AWS and venue.

- **Program Lead**
  Manages CfP, speaker communications, schedule, and room assignments.

- **Sponsorship Lead**
  Builds sponsor prospectus, handles outreach, negotiates benefits, and manages sponsor relationships.

- **Operations Lead**
  Handles venue, AV, catering, registration flow, signage, and day-of logistics.

- **Marketing and Community Lead**
  Handles website, email, social channels, Meetup/Lu.ma/Eventbrite, and cross promotion with other communities.

- **Inclusion and Safety Lead**
  Owns code of conduct, accessibility considerations, and incident response process.

For larger events you can split each of these into sub teams or have co leads, but this is a good starting shape. It's also very helpful to have someone acting as a project manager to keep all the teams organized and accountable.

7. Timeline and Milestones

Adapt the dates to suit your city and scale. A realistic runway for a first time Community Day is 6 to 9 months.

7.1 Vision and Constraints

Before you set dates, answer:

- What size event do you want for year one? (for example 150, 250, or 400 people)

- Do you want workshops and hands on labs, or just talks?

- Will you include extras like a hackathon, after party, or charity component?

Use this to decide your budget envelope and sponsorship targets.

7.2 Example Timeline

You can copy this into a Word table if you prefer.

- **T minus 9 months**

  o Core team formed

  o Alignment with AWS contacts

  o High level budget constraints agreed

- **T minus 6 months**

  o Venue booked

  o Draft sponsor prospectus done

  o Basic website live with "save the date"

- **T minus 4 months**

  o CfP opened

  o Sponsorship outreach starts

  o Marketing basics in motion

- **T minus 3 months**

  o CfP closes and talks chosen

  o Provisional agenda published

- o   Ticket sales opened fully

- **T minus 2 months**

  - o   Sponsors mostly locked in

  - o   Catering and AV confirmed

  - o   Swag and print ordered

  - o   Volunteer team confirmed

- **T minus 1 month**

  - o   Weekly organizer calls

  - o   Detailed run sheet created

  - o   Speaker briefings done

  - o   Final tickets push

- **Event week**

  - o   Confirm everything with venue and vendors

  - o   Pack event kit (badges, signs, cables, backup gear)

  - o   Execute event and capture photos, metrics, and stories

8. Budget and Sponsorship

Community Days can run very lean or quite premium. Typical cost categories:

- Venue hire and venue staff

- AV (projectors, microphones, recording if used)

- Food and drinks (coffee, snacks, lunch)

- Insurance or legal costs if required

- Printing and signage

- Swag (optional)

- Ticketing platform fees

- Tools like Confluence, Jira, Email service, Domain registration, website hosting, File Storage (all optional)

Most events fund this through a mix of:

- Sponsorship tiers (for example Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum)

- Paid tickets at a community friendly price

- In kind support such as venue or food provided by a partner

Use existing events such as AWS Community Day Canada (awsday.ca) and AWS Community Day Australia for ideas on how sponsors are presented and what benefits are offered at each tier.

Example sponsor benefits per tier might include:

- Logo placement on website, slides, and signage

- Booth or table in the sponsor hall

- Access to a limited number of tickets

- Option to host a workshop or prize draw

- Mention in opening or closing remarks

9. Content and Speakers

Content quality is what people remember.

Guidelines for talks

- Favor real world experience and live demos over "marketing decks."

- Limit or strictly filter pure vendor sales pitches.

- Encourage a mix of beginner, intermediate, and advanced talks.

- Set clear talk lengths (for example 25 minutes plus 5 minutes Q&A).

Call for Papers (CfP)

Most Community Days use tools like Sessionize or simple forms to manage CfP submissions. Can can apply for a free non-profit account for Sessionize however they won't provide it to you if you charge for tickets, even if all the money goes to charity. SaaSHub

Key things to define:

- Submission deadline and decision date

- Evaluation criteria (relevance, clarity, originality, diversity, local speakers, etc.)

- Policies about duplicate talks from other conferences

- How you will support first time speakers

You can point potential organizers and speakers to community write ups such as:

- "A small guide how to start AWS Community Day from scratch" https://dev.to/aws-builders/a-small-guide-how-to-start-aws-community-day-from-scratch-3ehk DEV Community

These posts often include real examples of how CfP and content selection can work.

10. Operations and Volunteers

On event day, everything depends on good operations and clear roles.

Volunteer roles to consider

- Registration desk
- Room hosts and timekeepers
- Speaker wranglers (keep speakers on time and in the right place)
- Sponsor support (help with booths, power, and questions)
- Social media and photography
- Quiet room / inclusion support if you have the capacity

Create a simple cheat sheet for each volunteer (or group of volunteers depending on the size of your event) that includes:

- Where they need to be and when
- How to contact the organizing committee members
- What to do if something goes wrong

Run sheet

A run sheet is a minute by minute schedule that includes:

- Registration start and peak times
- Start and end time of each session
- Room changeover times
- Food and coffee service times
- Sponsor moments, raffles, or announcements
- Closing remarks and clean up

Print a few copies and also have it in a shared online doc.

11. Post Event Activities

Do not let all that effort evaporate as soon as the venue lights go off.

Minimum post event tasks:

- Send thank you emails to:
  - Attendees
  - Speakers
  - Sponsors
  - Volunteers
- Share:
  - Slide decks
  - Any recordings
  - Photos and recap posts on social
- Give credit to volunteers
  - Linkedin References
  - If you have a community linkedin company page, encourage volunteers to list themselves as a volunteer for credit
  - List in archived website who the volunteers were. Have those who worked on the website listed in the footer of the site as the site creators with a link to their Linkedin profile.
- Collect metrics:
  - Registrations vs actual check in
  - Ticket breakdown (student, regular, sponsor, etc.)
  - Survey responses for attendees, speakers, and sponsors
- Run a retrospective:
  - What worked very well and should repeat
  - What was painful and must change
  - What experiments you want to try next year

Archive your website and assets each year, similar to how awsday.ca keeps previous year events available under "Previous Years."

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12. Tools and Templates

You can create a "Resources" folder that sits alongside this playbook. Suggested templates:

- Budget spreadsheet

- Sponsorship prospectus (with editable benefits and tiers)

- CfP form and review rubric

- Speaker information sheet and slide template

- Code of conduct page

- Volunteer role descriptions

- Run sheet template

- See www.AWSusergroups.com for many resources like this and more

Useful public resources to link or adapt from:

- **AWS Community Day Global page**
  Overview of the program and list of events around the world
  https://aws.amazon.com/events/community-day/ Amazon Web Services, Inc.

- **AWS User Group Toolkit (GitHub)**
  Community maintained tools and templates for AWS user group leaders
  https://github.com/aws-user-group-toolkit GitHub

- **AWS User Group Templates repository**
  Practical assets for running meetups which you can adapt for Community Days
  https://github.com/aws-user-group-toolkit/user-group-templates GitHub

- **Dev.to article: A small guide how to start AWS Community Day from scratch**
  Real world story and checklist from a community organizer
  https://dev.to/aws-builders/a-small-guide-how-to-start-aws-community-day-from-scratch-3ehk DEV Community

- **Example event sites**

  o AWS Community Day Canada (Vancouver): https://www.awsday.ca/

  o AWS Community Day Australia: https://awscommunitydayaus.com/

  o AWS Community Day Adria: https://awscommunityadria.com/

13. About AWS Global

AWS Global (awsusergroups.com) is a community driven hub for AWS user group leaders around the world. The goal is to share practical guides, templates, and lessons learned that help local organizers build strong, sustainable communities and events.

For feedback on this playbook or to share improvements, you can reach the author at:
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