

## Tactful Ways to Say No

**1. Turning down an event/program proposal because you have too much already scheduled/on your plate.**

“Thank you for your proposal to [create X event or program]. We appreciate your enthusiasm, but our current program priorities are as follows:

- [Priority 1]
- [Priority 2]
- [Priority 3]

Since we are currently at capacity with these projects, we’d like to table [proposed event or program] until a future strategic planning session. This works best for our organization so we can complete the above tasks without affecting the overall timeline/work plan. We look forward to reconnecting at a later date.”

**2. Turning down an event/program that doesn’t fit within your Main Street program’s Transformation Strategies or mission.**

“Thank you so much for thinking of us for this new event/program. We are always up for a challenge at XYZ Main Street, but this falls outside of the scope of our current mission/Transformation Strategies. Although we cannot help you, this sounds like a great event/program for ABC [organization this fits better with]. We’d be glad to connect you with them so you can pitch this opportunity.”

**3. Turning down an offer to be a sponsor/support an event.**

“Thank you so much for thinking of us. Based on our [current budget/strategies/policy/by-laws], we cannot participate in this campaign/event/program. However, we greatly appreciate the offer, and wish you great success with your XYZ event.”

**4. Turning down a proposed event from a single committee member/board member.**

“At our annual work planning session, we decided that our goals for the next year are to [describe a few goals here], with an overall focus on [big goal/mission here]. This event seems like a great way to [describe possible benefit here], but I wonder if it aligns with our adopted goals right now. Just playing devil’s advocate here, what are your thoughts? I just want to make sure I’m prioritizing my time where it is most needed to accomplish our program’s goals.”

**5. Turning down a proposed event, but offering an alternative solution.**

“This sounds like a great program/event, but our program doesn’t have the bandwidth to handle it at the proposed scale. Would you be willing to downsize it/relocate it/send to committee for a brainstorming session on how to best tackle it?”

**6. Saying no after you’ve already said yes.**

“We’ve had a chance to review our program’s priorities and this new event would stop us from contributing to our core responsibilities at the highest level. That wouldn’t be the right or best decision for our organization, so we have to respectfully change our yes to a no.”

*OR*

“After revisiting our schedule/mulling over the logistics/evaluating this proposal, we need to change our decision and decline this event/program right now. But please keep us in mind if you have a proposal in the future that aligns with our organization’s mission and values.”