

# LINCOLN

## Event Planning Toolkit

Stand Tall: Live Like Lincoln  
*Lincoln* Community Screenings  
February 12, 2013

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### INTRODUCTION

Abraham Lincoln, the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, has become an American icon of courage, leadership, diplomacy and moral fortitude. On February 12, 2013, eight American towns named after Lincoln will take part in a national event celebrating his legacy. Featuring exclusive screenings of Steven Spielberg’s *Lincoln*, each town will use Lincoln’s story as a jumping off point to examine the meaning of “standing tall,” explore our complex histories and reflect on the importance of leadership and civic engagement. Pinpointing a complicated and pivotal moment in our nation’s history, *Lincoln* also opens opportunities to discuss and reflect on the meaning of freedom and equality, how far we’ve come as a nation, and the challenges we still need to overcome.

This toolkit is designed to help communities use the film as a springboard to explore local histories, celebrate local leaders and discuss how we can all stand tall in our own way.

### USING FILM TO SPARK DIALOGUE

Film can be a very useful tool to bring people together, inspire problem solving, spark new partnerships and generate collective action. Films—especially those that feature complex and fascinating characters—can reach people on an immediate and emotional level, opening them up to new ideas and possibilities. Character-driven films such as *Lincoln* provide a common text from which to start a conversation, and can put a human face on social, cultural and civic issues. Film can also be used to:

- Heighten the visibility of your organization
- Raise awareness of an issue
- Attract new allies/members/supporters of your organization
- Spark networking, especially with other groups in the community or nearby towns
- Provide a platform for community members to share their thoughts, ideas, concerns, etc.

**How can you use *Lincoln* to spark dialogue in your community? Read on to find out!**

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## PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL “STAND TALL” EVENT

The key to a successful event (it’s really no big secret) is being prepared! This step-by-step guide will help you think through all of the planning and preparation needed to put on a great event.

### 1. Define the goals of your screening

In addition to watching a popular and entertaining film, your “Stand Tall” event will allow your community to reflect together on Lincoln’s legacy and the tough decisions he made in the film. We hope an event like this can inspire renewed and improved civic participation and leadership in your town, whether that’s a discussion about how to be more involved in local government, or organizing a day of service. As the event organizer, if you work for a civic institution, what are the longer-term goals of your work, and how can this screening event align with helping you achieve those goals? Perhaps this is a way to put your town on the map for surrounding cities, or a chance to give an update on important community developments. Identify how you’d like your community to change for the better, and together we can think about how this film screening can support that change.

### 2. Locate and confirm a venue

There are various things to consider when picking the right venue for your community screening.

- Size and Capacity: If your town does not have a local movie theater, you’ll first have to identify a space large enough to accommodate the desired number of audience members (200-250 people, but in some cases, fewer).
- Accessibility: Next, you’ll want to consider if the venue is in a location that the general audience can easily access. Is it an inclusive community-oriented space? Is it centrally-located in town, convenient, is there parking available?
- Layout: Does the space have a reception area or is it big enough to have a space for mingling? This is not essential, but can be helpful in facilitating interaction and conversation.
- A/V Equipment: Does the space have suitable screening and audio equipment available? This includes a screen (or white wall), projector, laptop or dvd player, speakers, and all of the right cords that connect them. If not, additional planning and arrangements will be necessary (the equipment you need can be included in your stipend budgets).
- Other considerations: Access for people with disabilities, heating, comfortable chairs, etc.

### 3. Determine the format and schedule of the event

Your screening event should contain these basic elements, but of course it is up to you to set the exact schedule and format according to what works best with your venue and community.

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Activity	Timeframe	Purpose/Details
Pre-screening Reception (optional)	1 hour	Builds excitement for the screening event. (Tips and ideas for the pre-screening reception on Page 4: “Think fun and dream big!”)
Film Introduction	5 minutes	Gives context to the event. Details and talking points for the introduction are on Page 9.
<i>Lincoln</i> Film Screening	2.5 hours	Given the winter date of the screening, and the length of the film, we encourage to start the screening no later than 6pm.
Post-screening Discussion	30 minutes	Featuring your designated panelists and speakers, you want to have a great facilitated conversation but also be respectful of people’s attention spans and backsides!
Post-screening Reception (optional)	1 hour	People may want to gather for dinner or at a nearby bar, or linger in the space to discuss further thoughts and ideas about the film.

#### 4. Frame the event and post-discussion

What kind of conversation do you want to facilitate that relates to Lincoln’s legacy, civic engagement and leadership in your town? Think about the problems, issues and concerns in your town, or conversely, the positive developments you see. Could this event be a productive and safe platform to discuss something relevant to your community? There are many different directions that your community conversation can go—below are just a few examples:

- a. Discuss Lincoln’s legacy in your town and connect it to modern day
- b. Explore local divides or conflicts, and discuss opportunities for bridge-building
- c. Celebrate different types of leaders in your community (faith leaders, teachers, young people, service workers, government officials, etc.)
- d. Highlight a program or group that is doing great work in the community that others may not know about
- e. Discuss how your town has changed over time, and how leadership roles have shifted accordingly

#### 5. Identify an emcee

Successful events often have a charismatic emcee to move the program along. Invite a significant leader or local personality to introduce the film (such as the mayor, or a local radio host or announcer, high school principal, etc.)—or of course, the lead organizer can do it! If you have an emcee, either make sure they can give context on the broader campaign, or designate a different person to talk about this during the introduction. The emcee could also be the moderator of the post-screening discussion, but doesn’t have to be.

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## 6. Recruit partners and speakers

*Lincoln* raises themes that are relevant to many community institutions and organizations. In an effort to spread the word and engage people across your town, reach out to different groups who can link up to the event as partners. The more partners you have on board, the broader the support and sense of community you'll be able to cultivate. And, the more likely the event will be publicized to different parts of the community, and provide a good mix of attendees to the event. Leaders of your partner groups/organizations can also serve as panelists for the post-screening discussion. The goals of your event and the type of conversation you want to have can also help you determine who to reach out for partnerships. Panelists should be leaders in the community, and represent a varied selection. They could include representatives from:

- School administration
- City government
- Libraries
- Historical Society
- Churches
- League of Women Voters
- Kiwanis Clubs
- Rotary Clubs
- VFW
- Nearby national or state parks

## 7. Think fun and dream big!

During the pre-screening reception, think of ways you can make the event more fun and entertaining—give out or sell popcorn and concessions, have local performers play period-era music, invite Lincoln fans to share their collections of Civil War paraphernalia. Have a raffle or a giveaway item such as a coupon to a local state monument, or an item people can wear like a pin, stove pipe hat, peel-on beard, etc. Get enthusiastic volunteers to dress up in period dress, or give a prize to the person who can most accurately recite the Gettysburg Address. Consider festive patriotic or period-appropriate decorations, or a station where students can write letters to Lincoln (or the mayor) in pen-and-ink. Local partners can also set up tables promoting their work, with their own fun additions.

## 8. Track RSVPs

We strongly recommend gathering RSVPs to this event, especially if your venue has limited seating. Here are tips that should help you through this process:

- In your flyers and ads promoting the screening, request that people call or email ahead of time, to reserve a seat. The responses will help you gauge interest in the event.
- It is important to set a deadline for RSVPs a few days before the actual event (for the Feb 12<sup>th</sup> event, we recommend Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup>). If you get fewer responses than expected, you will still have enough time to reach out to more people, and if there are

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more than expected, you can notify people in advance that they may not be guaranteed a seat.

- If your community is active on the internet, consider creating a Facebook event (see the Social Media section on Page 7 for more details), or an Eventbrite ([eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com)) event.
- If you don't have the capacity to collect RSVPs, you can advertise that the event has limited seating that will fill on a first-come first-served basis.
- On the night of the screening, have an alphabetically-ordered guest list handy to keep track of who comes, and how many unexpected people show up. This will give you an idea of how responsive your community is to RSVPing ahead of time. Don't put all your faith in the RSVP list, there will always be no-shows (could be up to 30% drop-off), but people who did not RSVP will also show up. Tracking ahead of time just gives you an indicator of what to expect.

## LOCAL PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

Since you're putting so much effort into planning this great event, you also want to make sure people attend! One of the best things you have working in your favor is that admission is FREE. Also, *Lincoln* is a new and popular movie that has been nominated for 12 Academy Awards®. A main selling point should be that it's a great community event and collaboration, and a special opportunity to be screening the film. However, the screening is on a weeknight (Lincoln's 204<sup>th</sup> birthday!), and people may be deterred by cold weather. It's your job to make sure people understand the event is not to be missed!

There are different ways to promote an event, each with a different function. Read through the categories outlined below, and pick a few tactics based on what you think will be most successful in your community. Feel free to ask Nicole from Active Voice for any additional explanation or tips ([nicole@activevoice.net](mailto:nicole@activevoice.net)).

### Flyer & Poster Distribution

- Use our flyer template and add in your specific event details. Distribute it to partner organizations, and hand out at events and/or meetings that occur prior to your *Lincoln* screening (church services, city council meetings, club meetings, PTA meetings, etc.).
- Go to local stores or businesses near the venue to post your flyer. Find public areas with high foot traffic—such as grocery stores, community centers, schools, churches, parks, libraries or nearby universities—that would get a lot of eyes on the flyers.
- Consider sending out the flyers in a mailing to people's home addresses, or find some volunteers to do a door-to-door flyer drop-off.

### Calendar Listings

- Add your event to local community calendars and websites. Newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, chambers of commerce and tourism organizations, and even area TV or radio

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stations often have community calendars that are free advertising for events like this. Email or call to let them know about your event.

## Web

- Announce the event on your organization/group's website. Leading up to the event, it should be on your homepage! If appropriate, we encourage you to create a section on your website with event information, a link to the *Lincoln* movie trailer, and links to Active Voice and Participant Media. Active Voice will provide you with the language and photos to post.

## Email Blasts

Email all of your contacts about this upcoming event. There are up to three email blasts you could send out, listed below. For each, encourage people to forward the emails to the contacts in their networks.

- 1) The first email blast announces the event and provides details on the date, location, etc. (sent out as soon as possible)
- 2) The second email is a reminder and provides any new specific details or special features/speakers/activities, etc. (sent a few days before the event)
- 3) After the event, you can share key takeaways from the discussion as well as specific call to action prompts. The last email should share information about what this activity meant for the community and how you can continue contributing.

Active Voice will provide you with template language for these emails, stay tuned!

## Partner Promotion

- Make sure that your partner organizations and groups are kept in the loop with your promotion materials and flyers, so that they can promote the event widely as well. Ask the director of the groups to send out an email blast, using the provided templates. Make sure you give them a good amount of lead time to promote the event. Pass on any tips from this toolkit as well!

## Phone calls and face to face conversation

Telephone promotion calls can be useful, especially in communities with older residents. This could be a good use of any volunteers who want to help with promoting the event.

## Press

Participant Media will publicly announce the "Stand Tall" campaign on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 subject to filmmakers' approval. Prior to this date, Active Voice will provide you with a template press release that you can customize for your event, and forward to all local and state newspapers. Please do not release any press releases prior to January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013. For specific press inquiries and situations, please contact Nicole from Active Voice at [nicole@activevoice.net](mailto:nicole@activevoice.net).

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## Social Media

If your town is well-connected on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, they can be very powerful promotion tools. Facebook Events are great for getting information out to your online community, especially younger audiences. If your organization does not have a Facebook page, this could be a reason to start one. Active Voice can give you a step by step tutorial on creating a Facebook page and/or Twitter account if you'd like help getting started. For those who are active in social media, here are some tips!

- Get Connected on Facebook & Twitter: “Like” *Lincoln*, Active Voice and TakePart.com (the digital division of Participant Media) on Facebook and “Follow” them on Twitter.
  - *Lincoln* the film: Tweet @LincolnMovie; facebook.com/LincolnMovie
  - Active Voice: Tweet @active\_voice; facebook.com/activevoices
  - TakePart.com: Tweet @TakePart; facebook.com/takepart
- Connect with the other Lincoln towns that are active on social media. Support and stay up to date on the actions of your fellow Lincoln towns.
- Create a Facebook event, and post about the event on your Facebook page. After you create the event page, preferably under your official Facebook community page (if you have one), you should aim to use this tool as a platform where you can share relevant information beyond the film, start discussions, and continue to raise awareness of the issues you'll discuss in the post-screening discussion.

### Sample Facebook Posts

- “LINCOLN is coming to Lincoln! See the film for FREE on Feb 12 at [location], followed by a discussion about what it means to stand tall.”
- “A movie night with President Lincoln! Come to [location] on Feb 12 to see the new film for FREE and meet other local leaders in the community.”

Be sure to mention if refreshments will be provided, especially if it's free. At the end of each post, share an image from the film, a link to your Facebook event, or a link to the host organization's website.

### Twitter Recommendations

- Tweet once a day in the two weeks leading up to the event (if possible). Tweets must be short, concise and simple. Use the event hashtag: **#StandTall**
- Tag @LincolnMovie or #LincolnMovie as much as possible, for wider visibility.
- As a promotional tactic, identify local tweeters who may have a wide reach (radio personalities, civic leaders, etc.) and tag them in your posts, to encourage them to retweet.
- Sample posts:
  - #StandTall with us on Tues 2/12 @ [location and time] to see the new @LincolnMovie for FREE. [a few words about food and activities] @TakePart @active\_voice (insert Facebook event link)
  - See the new #LincolnMovie on Tues 2/12 and #StandTall with your community! @TakePart @active\_voice

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- Special screening of @LincolnMovie on 2/12—join us for [food, activities, etc] and a discussion on how to #StandTall @TakePart @active\_voice

As with a Facebook page, if you do not have a Twitter account this is an excellent opportunity to create one. Even if you do not plan to use it afterwards, you may be surprised and change your mind after the event. Ask Active Voice for assistance should you have any questions!

## Grassroots Marketing Checklist

Having trouble keeping it all straight? Here's a to-do list to make sure you're right on track:

- ✓ Customize and distribute a flyer with the flyer template provided to you from Active Voice
- ✓ Contact other organizations in your community or nearby towns to co-host and promote the screening
- ✓ Send out an e-mail blast using the template provided by Active Voice
- ✓ Post about your *Lincoln* screening event on your organizations' website
- ✓ "Like" and "Follow" *Lincoln*, Active Voice and TakePart.com on Facebook and Twitter
- ✓ Create a Facebook event (\*optional)
- ✓ Post a link to the *Lincoln* movie trailer on your Facebook, Twitter page and/or website
- ✓ Customize and distribute a press release after January 29th
- ✓ Track RSVPs

Active Voice will provide the following resources to aid you with promotion:

- Flyer template
- Press release template
- Email blast template language
- Poster image
- *Lincoln* title art header
- Active Voice and Participant Media logos
- Images from the film

All of these resources, along with a link to this toolkit, will also be stored together on an online site for easy access.

## TECHNICAL LOGISTICS

You will receive a copy of the *Lincoln* DVD (or Blu-ray, if applicable) just a few days before the screening date. A tech-check run-through is highly recommended! Schedule a test all of your equipment (including screen, speakers, projector, laptop/dvd player, etc.) at the venue where the film will be screened, and make sure there are no sound or picture quality issues. Active Voice will send you additional information on technology specifications and tips, but making sure the DVD set-up works perfectly is a key step that should not be overlooked or left until the day-of the event. After the screening event, DVDs must be returned to the Active Voice team. Needless to say, no copies may be made!

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## TIPS FOR NIGHT OF SCREENING

Before the event starts, huddle with your local partners and panelists to get everyone on the same page regarding your introductions and post-screening discussion.

- ✓ Set up any tables or display materials
- ✓ Assign one or two people to greet people as they arrive, and distribute programs, materials, etc.
- ✓ Assign a time keeper to keep you on track for the pre- and post-screening presentations
- ✓ Check-in with your photographer to make sure he/she understands the goings-on of the event (Active Voice will send a spec sheet and further details for the photographer prior to the event)
- ✓ Designate a “social media captain” to tweet during your event!

## Guest Arrival

Place a sign-in table at your entrance to keep track of how many people attended your event. Use your RSVP list, and capture the names and emails of new people. (Maybe have two volunteers run this, or high school students, etc.) If you have a free giveaway, this can be a distribution point. Or perhaps with check-in, they get a ticket for their complimentary snack.

## Talking Points: Introductory Remarks

Keep it to five minutes or less. These formalities should be celebratory and not too lengthy. Guests should be welcomed and integrated as core components of the event: their presence is important to communicate the message of the event beyond the walls of the screening!

- Introduce your organization and why you think the event is important to your community.
- Mention that your town is one of eight towns selected to participate in the “Stand Tall” campaign.
- Encourage people to stick around for the discussion afterwards.
- Thank any significant partners, supporters, etc.

## Talking Points: Post-Screening Discussion

- Appointing a discussion moderator is recommended to ensure that all points are addressed in the time you have scheduled for discussion.
- Invite speakers to express their thoughts based on the predefined key points.
- You (or the moderator, in some cases) can set the stage with relevant statistics or anecdotes about what’s happening in your community as a way to localize the story even more.
- If you’re doing a simple discussion, ask your speakers to introduce themselves, their organization, and how their work is similar to what was just seen in the film. And then open it up to questions from the audience.
- If you’re doing a formal panel discussion, talk with Nicole about ideas on how to frame the discussion.
- **Active Voice will send you additional discussion prompts and panel tips that you can share with your moderator prior to the event.**

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## Other Resources & Night-of-Screening Documents

Active Voice will provide the following resources to aid you with night-of-screening logistics:

- Sign-up sheet template: don't miss a great opportunity for your organization to collect names and e-mail addresses to continue the conversation and to grow your base.
- Photo release "Notice to All Attendees" sign template: to be displayed prominently at all entrances to the screening location space.
- Lincoln materials: Active Voice will send you additional materials specific to the film that we'll ask you to display and/or distribute to audiences. Provide materials about your own organizations and programs as well!

## SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM

The conversation doesn't need to end when your event is over! Especially since you won't have a lot of time for audience interaction, we hope that the event can be a pathway for additional activities and conversations that can keep Lincoln's legacy alive and encourage dialogue, community action and civic engagement. Think about what you'd like to see happen before Lincoln's next birthday, and use that as a goal for next year.

## Suggested Follow-Up Activities

- Write about your experience as part of this campaign for the TakePart blog (ask Active Voice for details)
- Start a film series that celebrates Lincoln's legacy and invite community discussion (ask Active Voice for suggestions)
- Encourage local faith communities to host a series of talks about the meaning of "standing tall"
- Motivate local clubs to tie Lincoln themes into their regular meetings
- Work with schools to get young people involved in community service projects
- Start an oral history project that records the history of your town
- Consider the creation of a blog where people can post about how they applied the movie takeaways to their local community. Alternatively, instead of a blog, communities can use a social media platform to collect feedback and stimulate discussions.

## Keeping Social Media Buzz Alive

Event pictures should be posted on your website or Facebook page to show off what a successful event you put on! Use social media to thank the participants, sponsors and speakers for contributing. With Twitter, don't forget to use the hashtag #StandTall

## Lincoln Town Partnerships

Active Voice is hoping that the eight Lincoln towns will continue to stay in touch beyond the *Lincoln* film screenings. Beyond having had the shared experience of hosting screenings as part of this national event, you also have Lincoln's legacy in common. Many of your towns were founded around the same time. Stay connected with each other to share tips on future events, get feedback on upcoming activities, or even consider forming some sort of national alliance or collaborative project to raise your

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towns' profile on a national level. Perhaps you can re-convene next year, or will consider visiting each other's towns and attending each others' Lincoln-themed events. Partnerships and collaborations between the eight Lincoln towns would be an amazing long-term outcome.

## **GOOD LUCK, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!**

Active Voice is here to listen to your ideas, support your plans, and offer advice and guidance to you as needed. Do not hesitate to contact us! We are always happy to hear from our partners across the nation.

## **ABOUT THE "STAND TALL" TEAM**

### **About Participant Media**

Participant Media ([participantmedia.com](http://participantmedia.com)) is an entertainment company that focuses on documentary and non-documentary feature films, television, publishing and digital content about the real issues that shape our lives. For each of its projects, Participant creates social action and advocacy programs to transform the impact of the media experience into individual and community action. Participant's online division and Social Action Network is TakePart ([takepart.com](http://takepart.com)). Participant was founded by Jeff Skoll in 2004 and Jim Berk serves as CEO. Participant's films include *The Kite Runner*; *Charlie Wilson's War*; *An Inconvenient Truth*; *Good Night, and Good Luck*; *The Visitor*; *Food, Inc.*; *The Cove*; *The Craziest*; *Countdown to Zero*; *Waiting for "Superman"*; *Fair Game*; *PAGE ONE: Inside The New York Times*; *The Help*; *Contagion*; *Last Call at the Oasis*; *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*; *Lincoln* and *Promised Land*.

### **About Active Voice**

Active Voice ([activevoice.net](http://activevoice.net)) tackles social issues through the creative use of film. We believe that real progress requires real connection, and that film has a unique power to bring people together in meaningful ways. Every day Active Voice helps filmmakers, funders and communities start the conversations and relationships that lead to lasting, measurable change. Since our inception in 2001, Active Voice has influenced local, regional and national dialogue on issues including immigration, criminal justice, healthcare and education.

### **About the Film**

Steven Spielberg directs two-time Academy Award® winner Daniel Day-Lewis in *Lincoln*, a revealing drama that focuses on the 16<sup>th</sup> President's tumultuous final months in office. In a nation divided by war and the strong winds of change, Lincoln pursues a course of action designed to end the war, unite the country and abolish slavery. With the moral courage and fierce determination to succeed, his choices during this critical moment will change the fate of generations to come.

Starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Sally Field, David Strathairn, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, James Spader, Hal Holbrook and Tommy Lee Jones, *Lincoln* is produced by Steven Spielberg and Kathleen Kennedy, with a screenplay by Tony Kushner, and is based in part on the book *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. The film is a DreamWorks/Twentieth Century Fox production in association with Participant Media.