

# Event Planning for Non-Profits

## Event Planning

Events help build the backbone of a successful non-profit organization. They are an easy way to address many of the key challenges to building a successful organization, including raising money, recruiting donors, and generating publicity and recognition. If you plan your event right, you'll connect a host of new donors to your cause, give your volunteers and board members valuable fundraising and leadership experience to call upon, and get your organization and mission noticed by your community. Though good organization and proper planning are the true foundations of your success, successful events can turn a struggling non-profit into a thriving one.



## Benefits to a well planned event

### Raise Money

Raising money is generally why non-profits put on events in the first place, other than awareness events. Income can be generated through ticket sales, raffle tickets, or auctions. Truthfully, the financial benefits of an event are more long term. On average, organizations spend \$1.33 to generate \$1 of short-term contributions for an event. But in the long run, the new stream of donors and supporters you can generate will more than cover that loss.

### Recruit New Donors

Anyone that attends your event is a potential donor, so it's essential to expend every effort to make connections with attendees. If your event is fun and appealing, and you take advantage of the "face-to-face" time you have with your guests, you could have a healthy list of new donors by the end of the night.

### Strengthen Relationships with Current Donors

A fun and engaging event can be just the ticket to reigniting that spark that motivated current donors to join you in your mission. Be sure to recognize your current donors and make your appreciation for them known.

### Generate Publicity for Your Organization

An event is prime for exercising your PR muscles. Combine an event with broad appeal with a solid media outreach plan and you'll get lots of eyes turning to your organization. It is important to present your organization in a positive light while still maintaining the importance of your cause. People will be eager to donate if you seem organized and make it clear where your funds are going and how individual contributions will help further your cause.

### Give Your Volunteers Valuable Experience.

Planning and putting together an event can be a great boost to your volunteers' confidence and leadership skills. Volunteers are a valuable resource — they help you save money by donating their time to planning the event or by helping you network within the community to find new donors or businesses to help sponsor the event (not to mention that volunteers come with a variety of backgrounds and skills). Get them involved in the process and give them the opportunity to make accomplishments and you'll mold leaders out of your volunteers and give them experience that can be put to use in the future.

## Galas, Balls and Auctions

Galas, balls and auctions are more time consuming to plan. Essentially, you'll be "wining and dining" your guests into further donations. These events have several aspects to them, including dinner, drinks, live music and sometimes a show. Many galas and balls have live or silent auctions to make sure that your guests get something in return for their donation. Generally galas, balls and auctions are high-end events and require fancy dress and accessories. Spice up your gala by making it a themed event. The more unique it is, the more fun your volunteers and donors will have.



## Tips

### Tips on Location, Donations and Fundraising, Food and Refreshments, Music and Entertainment

#### Location

- Book your space six months to a year in advance.
- Many attendees will bring their kids along. Plan activities that will be fun and entertaining to children as well as their parents.
- Hold the event in a well-populated area that is also safe for children, such as large parking lots or buildings with big open floor plans.
- To put on block parties you will need to go to your city permit office and get a permit to block off the street. If you are planning on blocking the street from traffic you will also need to pay to have a police officer present. The permit clerk will go over what your plans are for the event and inform you of all the permits and forms you'll need to fill out. Don't worry- it's easier than it sounds.

#### Donations and Fundraising

- Always have a donation station. This is generally a jar or box at organizations information booths.
- If the event is in a closed setting make sure that the donation jar is near the exit at the end of the event.
- Selling raffle tickets can generate income and get the crowd to stick around. Local businesses are often happy to donate prizes, as they love the free advertising and the ability show that they are a community friendly company.
- Make some extra cash by selling sidewalk space to vendors. You can either have them pay a small fee like \$25 a day or take a percentage of their sales.

- In order to cut costs team up with other businesses, organizations and local community groups.
- Hosting a silent auction can bring in a lot of money and be very entertaining for the crowd.
- Select a fun and entertaining auctioneer. You want people to laugh and have a good time, not be bored during the auction.

#### Food & Refreshments

- For block parties and community events, having food options is a good idea. You can team up with local restaurants and work out a deal.
- For galas and silent auctions, tailor your menu to your guests. Know their preferences and keep food allergies in mind. It is always good to offer a vegetarian or vegan option. If possible, even a gluten free option as well.
- With galas and silent auctions be sure to designate a fair amount of your budget for food, drinks, and alcohol. They're a big part of what draws people to events and makes them want to donate more to the cause.
- Depending on the event you may want to have a beer garden. One way to avoid having to fill out special permits and get liquor licenses is to team up with a restaurant, bar or brewery and have them set up a beer garden.



Event Worksheet goes here



## Work Sheet Guide

Continued....

### Team Members

**Person responsible for the event:** The Lead has final say on all decisions. Any questions on what to do or how to do it are addressed by the Lead. Include their email and phone number

**Primary Team:** This is a group of team leaders from other teams or committees. Team leaders act as a liaison between team members and other team leaders. Team leaders should consistently meet to monitor the progress of the event plan.

- **Team:** The name of the team or committee. Examples include “decorations committee,” “fundraising team” or “marketing team.”
- **Team Lead:** Name of the liaison for the team. This person will report to the other team leads and the person responsible for the event. Include their email and phone number.

**Teams:** This next section is where you list the name of the team and then add the names of the team members and contact info.

- **Team:** Name of the team.
- **Name:** List the names of the team members with their emails and phone numbers.

### Tasks and Milestones

This section is a good way to set goals and deadlines for the planning process.

**M1, M2, M3..:** Stand for milestones or goals in the order that they need to be done. These are the deadlines for big things like finalizing your event plan, confirming the location, budget, and the advertising deadline. For each mile stone there are three tasks.

**Tasks 1, 2, 3:** These are the tasks that need to be completed for you to meet your milestone goal. For example, in the box “all forms completed and contract signed” designate Task 1 as “sign contracts” and Task 2 as “update team on confirmation.”

**Due Date:** The date the task needs to be completed.

**Team Member:** Name of the person responsible for completing the task.

**Milestone:** These are the milestones that help you determine the order of tasks to be completed.

**Date Completed:** The date the task is actually completed on.

**Milestone Timeline:** This timeline is like a quick reference guide to major dates.

**Notes:** This is a place to add miscellaneous information like contact numbers for venues, bands, and speakers reminders, or tips and suggestions from event meetings.



## Event Planning for Non-Profits

### Music & Entertainment

- Live music does great things for the atmosphere of your event. Picking local bands will save you a lot of money. In many cases, local bands will freely donate their time. If not, their prices should range from \$100 to \$500 depending on the size of the band.
- If hiring an out of town band be prepared to pay for their performance, travel costs, lodging and possibly a budget for food.
- More established bands will have contracts, but most local bands don't. It would be a good idea to look up sample contracts and create one. Contracts will protect you and the musicians from any unexpected problems.
- Hiring a well known band allows you to tap into their fan base for potential donors.
- For most music events it is custom to charge a door cover. When doing an event for charity, you should suggest a minimum donation of \$5. This way, you're guaranteed your \$5 a head, but also have the possibility to make more. Minimum donations range from \$5 to \$10.

### Awareness events like block parties, music festivals, and community festivals

Awareness events serve various purposes, but their primary purpose is to raise awareness of your cause and organization. They also help recruit volunteers and potential donors. It is important to get the community involved and make them feel like they are a part of something much larger than themselves. Providing fun and interactive ways to teach the community about your cause makes it exciting and educational. It is important to have an informational booth with literature about your organization and someone who is able to answer questions.





## Work Sheet Guide

### Explanation of Work Sheet Sections



**Choosing the Lead (Boxed section):** Choose the Lead, who has authority in the event planning process. It includes their contact information. This is generally the person who has final say, especially when it comes to the budget.

**Description of event (Goals/Purpose):** This section will help you define what this event is and what it means to the organization. You should identify your goals and the purpose of the event. This section will help the committees know how to market the event in the community.

**Potential Date, Time and Location of planned event:** This section is to help narrow down what dates might work for your organization, your venue, your speakers, or hosts. You'll sometimes find that your planned date does not work, so planning other options makes the process smoother. Once confirmations are made, select the final or actual date/time/location. Cross out the dates, times and locations that didn't work.

**"Type of Event" Checklist:** Identify the kind of event you'll put on. Will it be a silent auction, music festival or a work party?

**How many expected participants:** Depending on the event, RSVP to know exactly how many people will be coming. Otherwise, make the best estimate possible (within reason). Always expect more guests than you plan on and prepare accommodations accordingly.

**Target Audience:** Determine who will attend the event and who you will be creating your advertising for. If it's a work party, for example, send a memo to

employees or leave a poster in the break room. If it is a silent auction, perhaps send invitations to past donors, and local advertisers.

**Resources required:** Some events require a variety of equipment. Tables and chairs will sometimes come with the venue-in many cases for an extra fee, as with sound systems and variety of different levels of staff support, like waiters, bartenders, or a full kitchen staff. Advertising costs won't be an issue for work parties, but for silent auctions or other community events it is always good to set aside money for printing posters and placing ads in local papers and websites.

#### Budget Breakdown

**Organization:** Write the name of the organization you are planning the event for.

**Current Budget:** This is the amount you have estimated to spend on the event. Below is a breakdown of expenses and what types of funds will be used.

#### Expenses Breakdown

Break down costs and know exactly how much the event is going to cost.

- **Facility rental** will be the venue that the event will be held. Sometimes the cost for the facility rental will include staff, decorations, sound system and so forth.
- **Equipment rental** could be a sound system if it is not included in the facility cost, or it could be chairs and table from a party rental store.

- **Food** is an important section to consider. There are many food options for events; hors d'oeuvres, provide a full three course meal, a dessert and wine party or chafers and wine tasting.
- **Staff** could be bar tenders, waiters. Most of the time the venue provides staff.
- **Performance/Entertainment** section is the total cost of entertainment. When hiring a keynote speaker or a band from out of town, it is common for you to pay for their airfare, hotel and meals on top of the cost of their performance. When hiring local bands, you only pay for their performance.
- **Advertisements** are ads that will be placed in local papers, magazines, posters on community boards, ads on websites. These costs can include the cost of a graphic designer creating the promotional ads, printing costs, as well as the fees for advertising in the paper and magazines.
- **Supplies** are the various things like pens, paper, and staples. This is where some costs for making your own decorations would go.
- **Miscellaneous** could be anything that was unexpected. Generally small items.
- **Estimated Cost of Event:** The total from the above categories.

#### Revenue Breakdown

is where we decide where we are going to get the money to put on the event.

- **Allocated funds:** Funds set aside ahead of time to cover all or some of the costs of the event.
- **Fundraiser Revenue:** Some events need additional

smaller supplemental fundraising events to raise money for the primary event. Write a description of the fundraising event and establish the revenue goal. In other cases organizations can get businesses to underwriter or sponsor the event. This means that they donate a large sum of money to be used only on the events. This is done generally in exchange for a tax deduction and free advertising.

- **Fundraiser Description:** Lay out your plan for your supplementary event.
- **Proposed Fundraising Amount:** State the amount you hope to raise through it.
- **Fundraiser date:** Write the date of the event here.

**Underwriter/Sponsorship Revenue:** To attract sponsors or underwriters, organizations send "ask letters" or "sponsorship requests" to businesses with a list of different sponsorship levels. The levels are determined by the amount they could donate. The more they donate, the more advertising you offer. Advertisements typically would include their logo and a printed recognition of them as a sponsor or underwriter.

- **Underwriter:** The name of the business donating the money.
- **Underwriter Amount:** How much money they will or have donated.
- **Sponsor 1,2,3:** The name of the business donating the money.
- **Amount:** How much money they are or have donated.
- **Funds Available for the Event:** The total amount donated, raised or allocated for the event.