WILDEWOOD

FREE RESOURCE · NO. 02



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR MISSION-DRIVEN EVENTS

Nonprofit Event Planning Guide

Budgets, sponsors, volunteers and the ask – a practical guide for mission-driven events.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Nonprofit events carry a double job: create a memorable experience **and** move people to act. Use this guide to keep your mission at the center, your budget honest and your team prepared. Tick each box as you plan, and share it with your committee.

01

Mission First

Every element should point back to why your organization exists.

- [ ] **Tie every program element back to your mission**
  If a moment doesn't advance the mission or the guest experience, cut it.
- [ ] **Set clear goals: dollars raised, donors engaged, awareness**
  Pick one primary goal and set a number for it.
- [ ] **Define your story and the people who tell it**
  One powerful, personal story beats a list of statistics.
- [ ] **Know your audience**
  First-time guests, loyal donors and community partners need different invitations.

02

Budget & Partners

Plan the money and the people early – they set everything else.

- [ ] **Build a budget with a 10–15% contingency**
  Outdoor events add tents, power, restrooms and weather costs – budget for them.
- [ ] **Create sponsorship tiers with real benefits**
  Offer meaningful visibility and experiences, not just logos.

02

Budget & Partners, continued

- [ ] **Ask for in-kind donations: venue, food, AV, printing**
  Local businesses often prefer giving goods and services – and it stretches your budget.
- [ ] **Recruit and brief volunteers with role sheets**
  A one-page sheet per role: time, place, contact, and what "done" looks like.
- [ ] **Map your timeline backward from event day**
  Lock venue 6–9 months out, sponsors 4–6 months, invitations 6–8 weeks.

03

Program

Keep the energy high and the ask clear.

- [ ] **Keep speaking segments short and personal**
  Aim for under five minutes per speaker; rehearse with a timer.
- [ ] **Plan the ask moment carefully**
  Choose who asks, when, and for what – after the story, before energy fades.
- [ ] **Offer multiple ways to give (on-site, text, online)**
  Test QR codes and payment links on the venue's actual cell signal.
- [ ] **Create a run-of-show minute by minute**
  Share it with staff, volunteers, AV and caterers a week ahead.

04

Day Of

Calm, prepared teams make guests feel welcome.

- [ ] **Hold a volunteer huddle before doors open**
  Walk the site, review roles, and name a go-to person for problems.
- [ ] **Set up a clear welcome and check-in**
  A friendly first face and a smooth line set the tone for the night.
- [ ] **Assign a host to greet major donors and sponsors**
  Make your key supporters feel seen.

05

After the Event

Stewardship turns one-time guests into lifelong supporters.

- [ ] **Thank donors, sponsors and volunteers within a week**
  Personal notes and calls matter more than mass emails.
- [ ] **Share impact results with attendees**
  Tell people exactly what their generosity made possible.
- [ ] **Record lessons learned for next year**
  Capture numbers, feedback and vendor notes while they're fresh.

NOTES

"The best gatherings happen outside — where the landscape does half the work of bringing people together."

WORK WITH WILDEWOOD

Let's gather somewhere wild.

Planning a fundraiser, gala or mission-driven gathering? Wildewood produces nonprofit events and public-private collaborations that move people to act.

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