

Nonprofit Gala Planning and Organizing Guide

Welcome to the Nonprofit Gala Planning and Organizing Guide!

There are two parts to this guide:

PART ONE introduces you to the 13 steps that help you create an impactful and memorable event.

PART TWO contains simple worksheets and checklists for each of the 13 steps followed by links to additional resources.

Let's dive in and make your nonprofit gala an unforgettable success!

PART ONE

1. Establish Your Objective:

Clearly outline your goals for the event. This could be to raise a specific amount of money, to increase awareness of your cause, or to engage with potential donors.

2. Assemble Your Team:

Identify a team of dedicated volunteers or staff members to help plan and execute the event. Divide roles based on individual strengths, such as event planning, logistics, marketing, and fundraising.

3. Set a Budget:

Estimate how much the event will cost, including venue rental, food and drink, entertainment, and promotional materials. Don't forget to factor in unexpected expenses.

4. Choose a Date and Venue:

Select a date that doesn't conflict with other local events. The venue should be easily accessible, have sufficient space for your expected guests, and align with the tone of your event.

5. Plan Your Program:

Decide what activities will occur during the gala. This might include speeches, entertainment, awards, or a live auction. Be sure to allow for mingling and networking time as well.

6. Secure Sponsorships:

Approach local businesses or individuals to sponsor your event. Sponsorships can help offset costs and give businesses a chance to show their support for a local cause.

7. Promote Your Event:

Use all available channels to publicize the gala. This could include email blasts, social media posts, traditional media coverage, and word of mouth.

8. Handling Logistics:

Arrange for all necessary event services. This includes catering, decorations, audiovisual equipment, security, and transportation.

9. Selling Tickets:

Decide on a ticket price that will help you meet your fundraising goals. Offer a variety of ways to purchase tickets, including online and in-person.

10. Implementing a Fundraising Strategy:

In addition to ticket sales, you might host a silent auction, request donations, or offer sponsorship opportunities.

11. Coordinating Volunteers:

Manage volunteers' roles, schedules, and contact information to ensure a seamless and successful execution of various event tasks.

12. Executing the Event:

Create a detailed schedule for the event day, compile an emergency contact list, and prepare a list of necessary supplies.

13. Post-Event Follow Up:

Send thank-you notes to donors, attendees, board members, volunteers, and sponsors. Plan how you'll follow up with people who gave to your organization for the first time.

Remember, the success of your gala will not only be measured by the funds raised but also by the awareness raised for your cause, and the relationships formed or strengthened with your donors and community.

PART TWO

Grab some extra paper, get a notebook, or create a new word document in your computer. In this section you'll work your way through the worksheets for each of the steps above.

Use the following checklists to keep track of what you've accomplished and what still needs to be done.

Establish Your Objective Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify primary event goal
 2. Identify any secondary objectives
 3. Define target audience
 4. Determine target number of attendees
 5. Outline key messages to convey
 6. Set metrics for measuring event success
 7. Obtain team agreement and understanding of event objectives and measurements of success
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1. Event Objective

- What is the primary goal of the event? (E.g., Raise \$50,000; Increase awareness about our cause; Engage potential donors)
- What are the secondary objectives, if any?

2. Target Audience

- Who are we trying to reach with this event? (E.g., Existing donors, Potential donors, Community members)
- How many people are we aiming to attract?

3. Key Messages

- What are the key messages we want to convey at the event? (E.g., The donor's gift makes a difference, the importance of our cause, etc.)

4. Measuring Success

- How will we measure the success of the event? (E.g., Amount of funds raised; Number of attendees; Media coverage)

Remember, these goals, messages, and measures of success should align with your organization's broader objectives and mission.

Assemble Your Team Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify necessary team roles
 2. Assign roles to team members
 3. Establish a communication plan
 4. Confirm all team members understand their roles and responsibilities
 5. Schedule regular team meetings or check-ins
 6. Ensure all team members are aware of the event objectives and key messages
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1. Team Roles

- Event Manager: Oversees the planning and execution of the event.
- Marketing & Promotion Lead: Manages publicity and ticket sales.
- Sponsorship Lead: Secures event sponsorships.
- Logistics Coordinator: Handles event details such as venue, catering, and transportation.
- Volunteer Coordinator: Manages event volunteers.
- Fundraising Lead: Develops and executes the fundraising strategy.

2. Team Member Assignment

- Who will fill each role? Consider their skills, experience, and availability.

3. Communication Plan

- How will the team communicate and coordinate? (E.g., regular meetings, email, shared documents)

As with any team effort, communication is key. Ensure all team members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and how they contribute to the overall goal of the event.

Set a Budget Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify all potential expense categories
 2. Estimate costs for each expense category
 3. Identify all potential income categories
 4. Estimate income for each category
 5. Subtract total estimated expenses from total estimated income to ensure the event is financially viable
 6. Regularly update actual income and expenses to track against estimated budget
 7. Allow for a miscellaneous or contingency category to cover any unexpected expenses
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1. Expense Categories

- Venue: Cost of renting the venue.
- Food & Beverage: Catering costs, including any alcohol.
- Entertainment: Costs for any performers or speakers.
- Decorations: Includes table centerpieces, banners, and other decor.
- Audio/Visual Equipment: Rental cost for microphones, speakers, projectors, etc.
- Marketing & Promotion: Costs for website updates, printed materials, advertising, etc.
- Event Insurance: Cost of liability insurance for the event.
- Miscellaneous: For unexpected expenses that may arise.

2. Income Categories

- Ticket Sales: Revenue from selling tickets to the event.
- Sponsorships: Funds raised through event sponsorships.
- Donations: Any donations received in relation to the event.
- Auctions/Raffles: Money raised from these activities, if applicable.

3. Estimated vs. Actual Costs

- Keep track of your estimated costs in the beginning and fill in actual costs as they accrue to keep track of spending.

Remember, it's crucial to keep your budget realistic and flexible. Regularly compare your actual costs and income to your estimates, and adjust your plans as needed.

Choose a Date and Venue Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify a preferred date for the event
 2. Identify 2-3 backup dates
 3. Create a list of potential venues
 4. Contact each venue for availability and pricing details
 5. Assess the suitability of each venue, considering the budget, number of attendees, location, and vibe of your event
 6. Once a venue is selected, book and confirm the date and time
 7. Make sure to get a written agreement or contract from the venue, outlining all services and costs
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1. Event Date

- Preferred date: Your first choice of date for the event.
- Backup dates: Additional options in case your preferred date isn't available.

2. Venue Options

- List potential venues that align with your event's style, size, and budget. Here's a list of 20 potential venues where you might be able to hold your event:

1. Community Centers:

Local community centers often have event spaces available for rent and are ideal for engaging with the local community.

2. Hotels and Conference Centers:

Hotels and conference centers offer professional event spaces, catering services, and amenities for larger gatherings.

3. Banquet Halls:

Banquet halls provide spacious settings for gala dinners, award ceremonies, and fundraising events.

4. Museums and Art Galleries:

These unique venues offer an artistic and cultural ambiance that can elevate the event experience.

5. Universities and Colleges:

Campus facilities, such as auditoriums and ballrooms, can be rented for nonprofit events and are often equipped with audiovisual amenities.

6. Public Parks and Gardens:

Outdoor venues like parks and gardens are perfect for casual and family-friendly events, such as picnics or charity runs.

7. Historic Buildings and Landmarks:

Historic venues provide a charming and distinctive backdrop for special occasions.

8. Theaters and Performing Arts Centers:

Ideal for events with entertainment or performances, theaters offer a dynamic atmosphere.

9. Corporate Event Spaces:

Some corporations offer their event spaces for community events and nonprofit functions.

10. Sports Arenas or Stadiums:

Large sports venues can host fundraising walks, runs, or other sports-related events.

11. Restaurants and Breweries:

Restaurants with private dining areas or breweries with event spaces can be great for more intimate gatherings.

12. Libraries:

Libraries with meeting rooms can be used for workshops, seminars, or smaller events.

13. Boats or Yachts:

If your event is near water, consider hosting it on a boat or yacht for a unique experience.

14. Art Studios or Creative Spaces:

These venues are perfect for interactive and hands-on events, such as art workshops or creative fundraisers.

15. Country Clubs and Golf Courses:

Country clubs and golf courses often have elegant event spaces and beautiful views.

16. Zoos or Aquariums:

Zoos or aquariums can host unique and family-friendly events, providing attendees with the opportunity to connect with wildlife and learn about conservation efforts.

17. Botanical Gardens:

Botanical gardens provide beautiful and natural settings for outdoor events, especially those with a focus on environmental or conservation causes.

18. Community Theaters:

Community theaters offer stages and seating for performing arts events or presentations.

19. Historic Homes or Estates:

Historic homes or estates can add a touch of elegance and charm to your event, making it a memorable experience for attendees.

20. Wineries or Vineyards:

Wineries or vineyards offer a picturesque backdrop for wine tastings, food pairings, or fundraising dinners.

When selecting a venue, always consider the event's theme, the size of the guest list, and the facilities and services offered by the venue. Additionally, make sure the venue aligns with your organization's mission and the atmosphere you want to create for your event. Before finalizing a venue, consider factors like the event's size, budget, accessibility, location, amenities, and whether the venue aligns with the theme and objectives of the event. It's also essential to visit the venues in person to assess their suitability for your nonprofit's specific needs.

3. Venue Details

- For each venue option, record details such as cost, availability on your chosen dates, capacity, location, and what is included (like tables, chairs, AV equipment).

Choosing the right venue and date can greatly influence the success of your event. Be sure to start this process early, as popular venues can book up quickly.

Plan Your Program Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify the key elements of the event program
 2. Estimate time requirements for each element
 3. Designate individuals responsible for each element
 4. Review the program sequence to ensure a logical flow
 5. Allocate time for guests to network or mingle
 6. Consider incorporating a mix of entertainment and fundraising activities
 7. Once finalized, communicate the program details to all relevant parties, such as the event team, speakers, and entertainers
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1. Program Activities

- Outline the sequence of events for the gala. This might include welcoming remarks, dinner, a keynote speaker, entertainment, an auction, or a donor acknowledgment segment.

2. Time Allocation

- Estimate how long each part of the program will take. Remember to allow time for transitions between activities and informal mingling.

3. Responsibilities

- Who will be responsible for each part of the program? This could include speakers, entertainers, or event staff.

Remember, a well-structured program can keep the event engaging and ensure that it runs smoothly. Make sure all team members, speakers, and entertainers are clear about the schedule and their roles.

Secure Sponsorships Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify potential sponsors
 2. Develop sponsorship packages
 3. Create a compelling sponsorship proposal that highlights the benefits to the sponsor
 4. Begin outreach to potential sponsors
 5. Record all communication with potential sponsors and their responses
 6. Send formal thank you letters to sponsors once they have agreed to support your event
 7. Ensure the sponsorship agreements are honored during the event planning and execution
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1. Potential Sponsors

- Make a list of businesses, individuals, or organizations that might be interested in sponsoring your event. These could be previous donors, local businesses, or corporate sponsors.

2. Sponsorship Packages

- Outline the different levels of sponsorship you'll offer, and what sponsors will receive at each level. This might include logo placement, acknowledgement in speeches, free tickets to the event, or other promotional opportunities.

3. Sponsorship Outreach

- Record who you have reached out to, the date of contact, their response, and any follow-up actions.

Keep in mind, building relationships with sponsors often takes time. Start this step early in your event planning process to increase your chances of securing the needed sponsorships.

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Promoting Your Event Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify potential promotion channels
 2. Create a promotion plan
 3. Develop marketing materials
 4. Schedule and execute your promotional activities according to your plan
 5. Monitor ticket sales and adjust your promotion plan as needed to ensure you reach your attendance goals
 6. Engage with your audience on social media platforms, if applicable
 7. Encourage team members, board members and supporters to help spread the word
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1. Promotion Channels

- Identify the various ways you can promote the event. To help get you started, here's a list of common promotional channels for spreading the word about your event:

Digital Channels:

1. Social Media Platforms:

Utilize platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to share event updates, create engaging posts, and encourage social sharing.

2. Email Marketing:

Send out event invitations, updates, and reminders to your organization's mailing list.

3. Event Website or Landing Page:

Create a dedicated website or landing page for the event, providing all necessary details and an easy way to register.

4. Online Event Calendars:

Submit your event to local event directories and community calendars.

5. Eventbrite or Ticketing Platforms:

Use event ticketing platforms to sell tickets and promote your event to a broader audience.

Traditional Channels:

6. Print Media:

Place advertisements or event listings in local newspapers, magazines, and community publications.

7. Posters and Flyers:

Display posters and distribute flyers in strategic locations, such as community centers, coffee shops, and local businesses.

8. Direct Mail:

Send physical event invitations or postcards to target audiences.

Word of Mouth:

9. Involve Influential Supporters:

Engage with key supporters or influencers who can help spread the word about the event through their networks.

10. Engage Your Board Members:

Encourage your board members to promote the event within their own circles.

11. Encourage Attendees to Bring Guests:

Encourage attendees to bring friends, family, or colleagues to the event, amplifying the reach through their networks.

12. Create Shareable Content:

Design event visuals, graphics, or videos that attendees can easily share on social media.

13. Leverage Partner Organizations:

Collaborate with other organizations or businesses that share similar values, who can promote the event to their audience.

14. Host Pre-Event Gatherings:

Organize pre-event gatherings, such as networking mixers or informational sessions, where attendees can invite others.

Remember that a combination of these channels can help create a well-rounded and effective promotional strategy for your event. Tailor your approach based on your target audience and the nature of the event to maximize its impact.

2. Promotion Plan

- Create a timeline of when and how you will utilize each promotional channel.

3. Marketing Materials

- Identify any marketing materials you need to create, such as email invites, social media posts, press releases, or posters.

Remember that effective promotion is crucial for attracting attendees and meeting your event goals. Tailor your messages for each promotional channel and audience for the best results.

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Handling Logistics Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify all required event services
 2. Research and select providers for each service
 3. Get written quotes or contracts from each provider
 4. Design an event layout
 5. Confirm all logistical details a few days before the event
 6. Prepare a plan B for critical services, in case of any last-minute issues
 7. Ensure all team members and volunteers are aware of the layout and logistics plan
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1. Event Services

- Identify all the services needed for the event. Use the list of commonly needed services below to get you going. Add or subtract services to customize the list for your own event.

1. Catering Services

- Food and beverages for attendees
- Dietary accommodations for guests with specific needs

2. Decorations

- Table centerpieces
- Event signage and banners
- Floral arrangements
- Theme-specific decorations

3. Audio/Visual Equipment

- Sound systems and microphones
- Projectors and screens for presentations
- Lighting equipment
- Video recording and live streaming services

4. Security

- Event security personnel
- Crowd control measures
- Bag checks and entry screening (if necessary)

5. Transportation

- Shuttle services for guests
- Valet parking services
- Arrangements for guest transportation (if needed)

6. Venue Rental

- Reservation and rental fees for the event venue

7. Event Staff

- Event planners and coordinators
- Registration and check-in staff
- Ushers and greeters

8. Photography and Videography

- Professional photographers and videographers to capture the event

9. Entertainment

- Musicians, DJs, or live bands for performances
- Emcees or hosts to lead the event

10. Printing and Promotional Materials

- Invitations and event programs
- Signage and banners
- Name tags and badges

11. Insurance

- Event liability insurance coverage

12. Waste Management

- Trash disposal and recycling services

13. First Aid and Medical Services

- First aid stations or medical personnel on standby

14. Event Technology

- Wi-Fi or internet connectivity for guests and presenters
- Charging stations for electronic devices

15. Event Clean-up

- Cleaning and post-event tidying services

2. Service Providers

- Make a list of potential providers for each service, their quotes, and any other relevant details.

3. Event Layout

- Create a layout for the event venue, showing where key areas will be located. The layout of key areas in your event plan should be carefully thought out to ensure smooth guest flow, easy navigation, and guest enjoyment. Here's a list of key areas you may want to include in your event plan layout:

1. Registration Area

- Check-in desks or registration booths
- Name tags and badges
- Information or welcome desk
- Event programs or materials distribution

2. Dining Area

- Buffet stations or serving tables
- Dining tables and seating arrangements
- Beverage stations or bars
- Trash and recycling bins

3. Stage Area

- Main stage for speakers, performers, or presentations
- Lectern or podium for speakers
- Audio/visual equipment and lighting
- Seating or standing area for audience

4. Restrooms

- Clearly marked restrooms with signs
- Ensure adequate number of restrooms for the expected number of guests
- Include facilities for guests with disabilities

5. Exhibit or Display Area

- Space for exhibitors or sponsors to set up booths or displays
- Tables, chairs, and signage for exhibitors

6. Networking Area

- Lounge or seating area for informal conversations and networking
- High-top tables for mingling
- Refreshment stations or bars (if separate from dining area)

7. Quiet Room or Breakout Area

- Designated space for guests seeking a quiet moment or private conversation
- Comfortable seating and calming ambiance

8. Event Information Center

- Clearly marked information desk or center
- Maps or floor plans for guests to navigate the event
- Staff or volunteers to assist with guest inquiries

9. Children's Area (If applicable)

- Supervised play area or activities for children
- Child-friendly seating and amenities

10. Vendor Load-in/Load-out Area

- Designated area for vendors or suppliers to load-in and load-out equipment and materials
- Ensure smooth traffic flow for deliveries and pick-ups

11. Emergency Exits and Safety Measures

- Clearly marked emergency exits and evacuation routes
- First aid stations or medical personnel on standby

12. Green Room (If needed)

- Private area for performers or VIP guests to rest or prepare
- May include amenities like snacks, refreshments, and seating

Keep in mind that good logistics management can make the difference between a smooth-running event and one filled with last-minute chaos. Pay attention to detail and always have a backup plan.

Selling Tickets Worksheet

Checklist

1. Determine ticket price
 2. Identify ticket sales channels
 3. Set up a ticket sales system or platform
 4. Begin selling tickets according to your promotional plan
 5. Regularly monitor ticket sales and adjust your promotional activities as needed
 6. Keep an organized record of ticket buyers for follow-up communications
 7. Have a deadline to close ticket sales by or when you reach capacity
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1. Ticket Pricing

- Determine the price of the tickets. Consider your audience, event costs, and fundraising goals.

2. Ticket Sales Channels

- Identify where tickets will be sold. Here's a list of 15 potential ticket sales channels for selling tickets for your event:

1. Event Website or Landing Page:

Set up a dedicated event website or landing page where attendees can purchase tickets online.

2. Ticketing Platforms:

Utilize event ticketing platforms like Eventbrite, Ticketmaster, or Brown Paper Tickets to sell and manage ticket sales.

3. Social Media:

Promote your event on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and provide a link to the ticket purchase page.

4. Email Marketing:

Send out event invitations and updates to your organization's email list, including a direct link to purchase tickets.

5. Local Partners and Retailers:

Collaborate with local businesses or retailers to sell physical tickets at their locations.

6. On-Site Sales:

Set up a ticket sales booth or table at strategic locations where potential attendees can purchase tickets in person.

7. Mobile Apps:

Offer ticket sales through mobile event apps or your nonprofit's mobile app (if applicable).

8. Phone Sales:

Provide a phone number for attendees to call and purchase tickets over the phone.

9. Partnership Promotions:

Partner with other organizations or events to cross-promote and sell tickets through their channels.

10. Sponsor Promotion:

Work with event sponsors to promote ticket sales to their employees, customers, or followers.

11. Member Exclusive Sales:

Offer early-bird or discounted ticket sales to your nonprofit's members or donors.

12. Community Bulletin Boards:

Post physical flyers or posters with ticket purchase information on community bulletin boards.

13. Press Releases:

Issue press releases about the event, including ticket purchase details, to local media outlets.

14. QR Codes:

Place QR codes on event promotional materials for quick access to ticket purchase pages.

15. Paid Advertising:

Run targeted online ads to reach potential attendees and drive them to the ticket purchase page.

Remember to make the ticket purchase process as simple and user-friendly as possible for attendees. Offering multiple ticketing channels can help reach a broader audience and increase ticket sales for your nonprofit event.

3. Ticket Sales Tracking

- Develop a system to track ticket sales, money received, and contact information of attendees.

Remember, ticket sales not only contribute to your fundraising goal but also help gauge interest and estimate attendance at your event.

Implementing a Fundraising Strategy Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify fundraising activities for the event
 2. If applicable, solicit items for auctions or raffles
 3. Set up a system for collecting and tracking donations at the event
 4. Train volunteers or staff on how to execute fundraising activities during the event
 5. Keep an organized record of all donations received
 6. Regularly monitor and update on progress towards the fundraising goal
 7. Send immediate thank-you messages or receipts to donors
-

1. Fundraising Activities

- Identify the activities that will contribute to fundraising. Here's a list of 20 fundraising activities you could potentially incorporate into your event:

1. Silent Auction:

Set up a display area with items or experiences donated by sponsors or supporters. Attendees can place bids throughout the event, and the highest bidder wins the item.

2. Live Auction:

Host a live auction with a professional auctioneer to sell high-value items or unique experiences to the highest bidder.

3. Raffle:

Sell raffle tickets for a chance to win prizes donated by sponsors or local businesses. Draw the winning tickets during the event.

4. Fund-A-Need or Paddle Raise:

Invite attendees to make direct monetary donations during a designated portion of the event, highlighting specific projects or needs your organization is working on.

5. Merchandise Sales:

Sell branded merchandise, such as T-shirts, tote bags, or other items related to your cause.

6. Game Booths:

Set up interactive game booths with entry fees and offer small prizes to participants.

7. Photo Booth:

Charge attendees for fun photo booth sessions with themed props and backdrops.

8. Sponsorship Packages:

Offer various sponsorship packages with benefits like logo placement, event tickets, and promotional opportunities.

9. Dining Experiences:

Host special dining experiences, such as a chef's table dinner or a themed food tasting event.

10. Art Auction:

Showcase artworks donated by local artists and hold an art auction during the event.

11. Educational Workshops or Seminars:

Offer educational sessions or workshops and charge a registration fee.

12. Dance-off or Talent Show:

Organize a friendly competition where attendees can participate for a small entry fee.

13. Wine or Beer Tasting:

Partner with local wineries or breweries and charge attendees for a tasting experience.

14. Gaming Tournament:

Host a gaming tournament (video games, board games, etc.) with entry fees and prizes for the winners.

15. Dessert or Bake Sale:

Offer a variety of delicious desserts or baked goods for sale.

16. Petting Zoo or Animal Encounters:

If relevant to your cause, consider hosting a petting zoo or offering animal encounters for a fee.

17. Scavenger Hunt:

Organize a scavenger hunt with teams paying an entry fee to participate.

18. Auction of Experiences:

Offer unique experiences, such as a hot air balloon ride, vacation packages, or exclusive tours, for attendees to bid on.

19. Mystery Boxes or Grab Bags:

Sell mystery boxes or grab bags with surprise items inside.

20. Personalized Messages or Shoutouts:

Charge attendees for personalized messages or shoutouts from event hosts or guest speakers.

Choose activities that align with your nonprofit's mission and are engaging for your event attendees. Additionally, ensure that the activities are properly managed, well-communicated to guests, and comply with any legal regulations for fundraising events in your region.

2. Item Solicitation

- If you're hosting an auction or raffle, list potential sources for items or prizes. Here's a list of potential sources:

1. Local Businesses:

Approach local businesses such as restaurants, shops, spas, or theaters to donate gift certificates, products, or services.

2. Corporate Sponsors:

Seek support from corporate sponsors who may be willing to donate goods, experiences, or monetary contributions.

3. Individual Donors:

Reach out to individual donors who may be willing to contribute items, services, or unique experiences.

4. Artists and Craftsmen:

Connect with local artists and craftsmen who can donate their artworks, handmade items, or customized creations.

5. Experiences:

Seek experiences such as vacation stays, adventure outings, or exclusive tours that can be donated by travel agencies or hospitality businesses.

6. Sports Teams and Entertainment Venues:

Ask sports teams, theaters, or entertainment venues to donate tickets to games, concerts, or shows.

7. Local Attractions:

Approach local museums, amusement parks, or tourist attractions for donations of tickets or memberships.

8. Professional Services:

Seek donations of professional services such as legal advice, photography sessions, or wellness consultations.

9. Tech Gadgets:

Contact technology companies or retailers for donations of gadgets, electronics, or accessories.

10. Books and Media:

Approach local bookstores, publishers, or media outlets for donations of books, DVDs, or music.

11. Charitable Foundations:

Inquire with charitable foundations or grant-giving organizations for support in the form of prizes or funding.

12. Vendors and Suppliers:

Connect with vendors and suppliers who work with your nonprofit, as they might be willing to donate items or services.

13. Local Celebrities or Influencers:

Approach local celebrities or social media influencers to contribute autographed items or personalized experiences.

14. Handmade Crafts and Artisans:

Partner with local crafters and artisans who create unique and handmade items for donation.

15. Membership Subscriptions:

Seek donations of memberships to clubs, gyms, or subscription-based services.

When soliciting donations, ensure that you clearly explain your nonprofit's mission and the purpose of the event. Express gratitude to donors and offer to acknowledge their contributions through event promotion and recognition. A diverse array of auction and raffle items can entice attendees, generate excitement, and boost fundraising efforts for your nonprofit event.

3. Fundraising Goal Tracking

- Develop a system to track the funds raised during your event and compare them to your fundraising goals. Use your CRM, an Excel file, or the simple system example on the next page:

s

Fundraising Event Tracking Worksheet

Event Name:

Date:

Fundraising Goal Amount:

Item/Source	Goal Amount (\$)	Amount Raised (\$)	Difference from Goal (\$)
Ticket Sales			
Sponsorships			
Donations			
Silent Auction			
Live Auction			
Raffle Sales			
Merchandise Sales			
Other Fundraising			
Total Funds Raised			

Notes and Tips:

1. Continuously update the worksheet throughout the event to keep track of the real-time progress.
2. After the event, analyze the data to assess the success of the fundraising efforts and identify areas for improvement.
3. Use this worksheet as a tool for future events, adjusting fundraising strategies based on previous outcomes.

Accurate and timely tracking of funds raised during the event is essential for evaluating the success of your fundraising efforts and setting goals for future events.

Coordinating Volunteers Worksheet

Checklist

1. Identify volunteer roles needed for the event
 2. Recruit enough volunteers to cover all roles
 3. Create a clear schedule and roles for each volunteer
 4. Collect contact information for all volunteers
 5. Conduct a briefing or training session for volunteers before the event
 6. Provide volunteers with all the information they need to perform their roles effectively
 7. Show appreciation for your volunteers' time and effort
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1. Volunteer Roles

- Identify the tasks that volunteers can help with. Here's an initial list of 15 tasks you could ask volunteers to help with:

1. Setting Up:

- Arranging tables, chairs, and decorations
- Setting up signage and banners
- Organizing event materials and supplies

2. Registration:

- Greeting and checking-in guests
- Distributing name tags or event materials
- Assisting with on-site registration

3. Assisting Guests:

- Providing event information and directions
- Answering attendees' questions
- Helping guests with special needs

4. Managing the Auction:

- Assisting with item display and arrangement
- Registering bidders and distributing bid sheets
- Facilitating the auction process

5. Serving Food and Beverages:

- Assisting with food and beverage stations
- Refilling water or drink stations
- Clearing empty plates and glasses

6. Monitoring Event Areas:

- Ensuring event areas are clean and tidy
- Monitoring restrooms and replenishing supplies
- Keeping pathways and exits clear

7. Photography and Videography:

- Capturing event moments and highlights
- Recording speeches or performances
- Documenting the overall event experience

8. Assisting Speakers or Performers:

- Providing support to speakers or performers backstage
- Ensuring they have necessary materials or equipment

9. Selling Merchandise or Raffle Tickets:

- Assisting with sales and transactions
- Promoting merchandise or raffle items to attendees

10. Monitoring Safety and Security:

- Ensuring guests adhere to event guidelines
- Assisting with emergency procedures, if needed

11. Handling Donations or Fundraising Activities:

- Collecting donations or funds from attendees
- Assisting with fundraising games or activities

12. Cleaning Up:

- Disassembling event setups and decorations
- Collecting trash and recycling materials
- Ensuring the venue is left clean and orderly

13. Greeters and Ushers:

- Welcoming guests at the event entrance
- Guiding attendees to different event areas or activities
- Assisting with coat check or bag storage

14. Social Media and Event Promotion:

- Managing social media accounts during the event
- Capturing and sharing real-time event updates and highlights
- Encouraging attendees to engage and share their experiences online

15. Childcare Assistance (If applicable):

- Organizing and supervising children's activities or play area
- Assisting parents with children's needs during the event
- Ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for young attendees and their families

Having volunteers dedicated to these tasks can significantly enhance the event's efficiency, attendee satisfaction, and overall success. Remember to provide clear instructions and guidelines to ensure volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities. Appreciating their efforts and acknowledging their contributions can also go a long way in fostering a positive and committed volunteer team.

2. Volunteer Schedule

- Create a schedule for the volunteers. Include the time they should arrive, their specific roles, and when they can leave.

3. Volunteer Contact Information

- Keep a record of all volunteer names, contact information, and assigned roles.

Remember, volunteers are often the face of your event, so make sure they feel prepared and appreciated. A well-coordinated volunteer team can greatly enhance the guest experience at your event.

Executing the Event Worksheet

Checklist

1. Create a detailed event timeline
 2. Distribute the event timeline to all team members, volunteers, and relevant third-party vendors
 3. Compile an emergency contact list and distribute to key team members
 4. Gather all necessary event supplies
 5. Arrive early on the day of the event to oversee setup
 6. Conduct a final walk-through of the venue to ensure everything is in place
 7. Execute the event according to the plan, adjusting as necessary
 8. Oversee teardown and clean up after the event
-

1. Event Timeline

- Create a detailed schedule for the day of the event, including setup, event start time, program activities, and teardown. Below is an example of a timeline:

EXAMPLE

Event Name:

Date:

Venue:

Event Timeline:

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM: Setup and Preparation

- Event team arrives at the venue for setup
- Decorations are arranged, including centerpieces, banners, and signage
- AV equipment and lighting are tested and set up
- Registration area is organized with name tags, guest lists, and event materials
- Silent auction items are displayed and bidding sheets are set out

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM: Guest Arrival and Registration

- Doors open for guest arrival
- Greeters welcome guests and provide event programs and name tags
- Registration team assists with check-in and distributes bid numbers for the auction

6:30 PM - 7:00 PM: Cocktail Reception

- Guests enjoy a cocktail hour with passed hors d'oeuvres and refreshments
- Volunteers circulate to engage with attendees and encourage networking

7:00 PM - 7:15 PM: Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Emcee or event host welcomes guests and introduces the organization's president
- President delivers a brief opening speech, thanking attendees for their support

7:15 PM - 8:00 PM: Dinner Service

- Guests are seated for a plated dinner or buffet
- Dinner program includes short presentations about the nonprofit's mission and impact

8:00 PM - 9:00 PM: Live Auction

- Auctioneer introduces the live auction, highlighting featured items
- Bidding for live auction items takes place, with volunteers assisting bidders

9:00 PM - 9:30 PM: Fund-A-Need Paddle Raise

- Presentation explaining the Fund-A-Need initiative and its impact
- Guests are invited to make direct donations using bid paddles at various giving levels

9:30 PM - 10:00 PM: Dessert and Entertainment

- Dessert is served, and guests enjoy entertainment, such as a musical performance or keynote speaker

10:00 PM - 10:30 PM: Closing Remarks and Thank You

- Emcee or event host thanks attendees, sponsors, and volunteers for their support
- Closing remarks include a final fundraising total announcement

10:30 PM - 11:00 PM: Auction Checkout and Teardown

- Winning bidders collect their auction items and settle payments
- Teardown team disassembles event setups, cleans the venue, and loads out equipment

11:00 PM: Event Concludes

- Guests depart, and the event concludes

This is just an example, and the actual event timeline will vary based on the specific nature of your nonprofit's gala. It's crucial to create a detailed timeline that accounts for all aspects of the event, ensuring a well-organized and memorable experience for attendees.

2. Emergency Contact List

- Compile a list of key contact people in case of emergencies. This includes event team leaders, venue contact, security, medical assistance, etc.

3. Event Supplies

- Make a comprehensive list of all supplies needed for the event. Below is a sample list of supplies for an event. Customize the list for your event:

1. Decorations and Ambiance:

- Table centerpieces
- Event banners and signage
- Balloons and streamers
- Candles or lighting fixtures
- Table linens and chair covers

2. Audiovisual and Tech Equipment:

- Projectors and screens
- Sound systems and microphones
- Laptops or computers
- AV cables and adapters
- Laser pointers or clickers for presentations

3. Registration and Event Materials:

- Name tags or badges
- Event programs or agendas
- Pens and notepads
- Brochures or informational handouts
- Ticket scanners or registration tablets

4. Catering and Food Service:

- Plates, cups, and utensils
- Napkins and tableware
- Food and beverage trays or chafing dishes
- Drink dispensers or coffee makers
- Ice chests or coolers

5. First Aid and Emergency Supplies:

- First aid kits and supplies
- Emergency contact lists
- Flashlights and batteries
- Fire extinguishers
- Emergency exit signs and plans

6. Promotional Materials:

- Event posters and flyers
- Brochures or promotional cards
- Banners or flags for outdoor display
- Marketing materials for sponsors
- Event-themed merchandise (T-shirts, tote bags, etc.)

7. Cleanup and Sanitation:

- Trash bags and recycling bins
- Cleaning supplies and wipes
- Hand sanitizers or wipes
- Mops, brooms, and dustpans
- Gloves for volunteers and staff

8. Raffle and Auction Supplies:

- Raffle tickets or bid paddles
- Silent auction bid sheets
- Prize display stands or tables
- Winners' envelopes or bags
- Payment processing equipment (credit card readers, etc.)

9. Fundraising Materials:

- Donation envelopes or pledge cards
- Fund-A-Need paddles or placards
- Fundraising thermometers or goal trackers
- Sponsorship packages and promotional materials
- Fundraising incentives or recognition items

10. Event Signage and Directional Aids:

- Directional signs or arrows
- Event banners and entrance signage
- Floor decals or markings
- Parking signs or valet tags
- Informational posters or boards

11. Miscellaneous Supplies:

- Duct tape or adhesive supplies
- Zip ties or cable organizers
- Clipboards or organizers for volunteers
- Easels or stands for signage
- Extension cords and power strips

Remember, on the day of the event, flexibility is key. Despite all your planning, unexpected issues may arise, so be prepared to think on your feet and adjust as needed.

Post-Event Follow Up Worksheet

Checklist

1. Send out thank you notes to all contributors
 2. Put first time donors into a special campaign to keep them engaged
 3. Collect and analyze feedback from attendees, volunteers, and team members
 4. Review financial results against your goals
 5. Hold a debriefing meeting with your team to discuss the event's successes and areas for improvement
 6. Document lessons learned and recommendations for future events
 7. Archive all event documents and data for future reference
 8. Celebrate your accomplishments with your team
-

1. Thank You Notes

- List of all people who should receive a thank you note. This includes attendees, donors, sponsors, board members, volunteers, and any other significant contributors.

2. Event Evaluation

- Develop a method to evaluate the success of the event. This could be a survey for attendees, a feedback form for volunteers, or a financial report to assess whether you met your fundraising goals. On the next page is a sample evaluation form. Customize it to fit your own needs:

Event Evaluation Form

We greatly value your feedback and suggestions to help us improve future events. Please take a few moments to complete this evaluation form. Your responses are anonymous and will be used for internal review purposes only. Thank you for attending our event!

Event Details:

- Event Name: [Event Name]
- Date: [Event Date]
- Venue: [Venue Name]
- Time: [Event Time]

Please rate the following aspects of the event on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being Excellent and 1 being Poor:

1. Overall Event Experience:

- 1 (Poor)
- 2 (Fair)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Very Good)
- 5 (Excellent)

2. Venue and Atmosphere:

- 1 (Poor)
- 2 (Fair)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Very Good)
- 5 (Excellent)

3. Event Program and Activities:

- 1 (Poor)
- 2 (Fair)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Very Good)
- 5 (Excellent)

4. Quality of Food and Beverages:

- 1 (Poor)
- 2 (Fair)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Very Good)
- 5 (Excellent)

5. Auction or Raffle Experience (if applicable):

- 1 (Poor)
- 2 (Fair)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Very Good)
- 5 (Excellent)

6. Entertainment and Performances (if applicable):

- 1 (Poor)
- 2 (Fair)
- 3 (Good)
- 4 (Very Good)
- 5 (Excellent)

Additional Feedback:

7. What did you enjoy most about the event?

8. What aspects of the event could be improved?

9. Were there any challenges or issues you encountered during the event? If yes, please describe.

10. Did the event meet your expectations? Why or why not?

11. Would you attend future events organized by our organization?

12. Please provide any other comments or suggestions:

Contact Information (Optional):

(Leave blank if you wish to remain anonymous)

- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation. Your valuable feedback helps us in our continuous efforts to enhance our events and serve our community better.

3. New Donor Communications

- Building a strong and long-lasting relationship with first-time donors requires ongoing engagement, appreciation, and consistent communication. Here's a list of 14 ways to keep first-time donors engaged and motivated to continue giving to your nonprofit:
 1. Personalized Thank-You:
 - Send a personalized thank-you note or email to each first-time donor after the event, expressing gratitude for their support and highlighting the impact of their contribution.
 2. Impact Stories:
 - Share compelling stories and testimonials that demonstrate the tangible impact of the donor's contribution, showcasing how their support has made a difference in the lives of those the nonprofit serves.
 3. Regular Updates:
 - Provide regular updates via email, newsletters, or social media, keeping donors informed about the nonprofit's activities, achievements, and ongoing projects.
 4. Involve Donors in Decision-Making:
 - Involve first-time donors in decision-making processes, seeking their input on future projects or initiatives, and making them feel like valued partners in the organization's mission.
 5. Exclusive Events or Opportunities:
 - Offer first-time donors exclusive invitations to special events, donor appreciation gatherings, or behind-the-scenes tours, showing them the direct impact of their contributions.
 6. Donor Recognition:
 - Publicly recognize first-time donors on the nonprofit's website, social media platforms, or in newsletters, acknowledging their generosity and support.
 7. Donor Surveys:
 - Conduct donor surveys to gather feedback and preferences, demonstrating that the nonprofit values their opinions and seeks to improve donor experiences.
 8. Monthly Giving Program:
 - Encourage first-time donors to join a monthly giving program, offering convenient and manageable options to support the cause regularly.

9. Personalized Appeals:

- Tailor future fundraising appeals to the interests and passions of first-time donors, making them feel connected to the specific projects or initiatives they care about most.

10. Impact Reports:

- Provide periodic impact reports that show how the nonprofit is utilizing donations and the outcomes achieved, reinforcing the value of continued support.

11. Volunteer Opportunities:

- Invite first-time donors to volunteer at the nonprofit's events or activities, giving them a hands-on experience and a deeper connection to the organization's mission.

12. Matching Gift Programs:

- Inform donors about matching gift opportunities, where their contributions can be multiplied by employer or corporate matches, thereby maximizing their impact.

13. Sustainer Societies:

- Create a donor recognition program with tiered giving levels, offering special benefits to encourage continued giving and loyalty.

14. Gratitude Events:

- Host donor appreciation events to celebrate and honor first-time donors, providing an opportunity for them to network with like-minded supporters.

Remember, Demonstrating the impact of their contributions and making them feel like valued partners will encourage their continued support and involvement with the nonprofit's mission.

4. Post-Event Debrief

- Schedule a meeting with your team to discuss what went well and what could be improved. Here's a list of 20 questions you could ask your team:
 1. What were the highlights of the event?
 2. What aspects of the event do you think worked well?
 3. Did we meet our fundraising goals for the event? If not, what factors contributed to the shortfall?
 4. Were there any challenges or unexpected issues that arose during the event? How did we handle them?

5. Did the event run according to the planned timeline? Were there any timing issues or delays?
6. How was the guest experience during the event? Did attendees seem engaged and satisfied?
7. What feedback did we receive from donors and attendees?
8. Were there any logistical or operational aspects that could be improved for future events?
9. How effective was our communication and coordination among team members during the event?
10. Did we effectively utilize technology, such as fundraising platforms or mobile bidding tools, during the event?
11. What were the most successful fundraising activities or strategies?
12. Were there any fundraising activities or approaches that did not yield the desired results?
13. Did we properly acknowledge and show appreciation to sponsors, donors, and volunteers?
14. Were there any creative or innovative ideas implemented at the event that had a positive impact?
15. How well did we integrate the nonprofit's mission and impact into the event's messaging?
16. Did we effectively engage with first-time donors and encourage them to support future events?
17. Were there any partnerships or collaborations that added value to the event?
18. What did we learn from this event that we can apply to future fundraising galas or events?
19. What specific actions or improvements should we implement based on the lessons learned?
20. Is there anything else you'd like to add or suggest for future event planning and execution?

Conducting a thorough debrief and gathering feedback from staff members will provide valuable insights, help identify areas for growth, and contribute to the continuous improvement of future fundraising events. It also helps recognize the team's efforts and contributions, fostering a collaborative and productive work environment.

Remember, the time you invest in post-event follow-up can pay dividends in strengthening relationships and improving future events. Always show appreciation to everyone who contributed to the event's success.

Additional Resources

GALA THEME GOLDMINE

Your source for over 2400 fun, story-rich themes that make your nonprofit events stand out
It's FREE. Download it now.

NonprofitStorytellingConference.com/gala-themes

BOARD MEMBER GALA TOOLKIT

Helps get your board involved in your event
It's FREE. Download it now.

NonprofitStorytellingConference.com/bm-toolkit

SPONSORSHIP SUCCESS TOOLKIT

Helps you get and engage sponsors for your event
It's FREE. Download it now.

NonprofitStorytellingConference.com/Sponsor-Toolkit

STORY PROMPTS FOR NONPROFITS

900+ story prompts to help you pick the right stories to tell your donors
It's FREE. Download it now.

NonprofitStorytellingConference.com/Story-Prompts-for-Nonprofits

VIRAL CAMPAIGN BUILDER

Attract new donors and become the talk of the town
Check it out today!

NonprofitStorytellingConference.com/Viral-Campaign

NONPROFIT STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

Raise more money through better storytelling
Check it out today!

NonprofitStorytellingConference.com