Coordinate clean-up

Be sure to make plans for clean-up if necessary. This needs to be done in a timely and thorough way so that the B&G staff doesn't get stuck with the dirty jobs. They'll appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Send thank-yous

Thanking the individuals or departments that helped you is also important. If people feel like their assistance was valuable and appreciated, they'll be more likely to help you in the future.

Organize your records

Make sure to leave detailed information for the individuals who may work on this event the next time. Include things like budgets, timelines, meeting notes, contracts, and evaluations. Be sure to leave it where someone else can find it. Having a record of what happened before saves lots of work for the next person.

Some General Tips On Program Planning

• In the ideal program, everything runs so smoothly that the participants may see little evidence of pre-planning or behind-the-scenes work.

• Don’t compromise on details or settle for second best.

• Don’t assume anything or allow situations to continue that make you uncertain or nervous. Meet all problems head-on, sensitively, and firmly.

• People support what they help create, so involve as many people as meaningfully as possible in the planning process.

• If you’re properly prepared and avoid panicking, almost any problem can be solved.

Our mission is to support, challenge, and inspire Colgate students to become responsible, thoughtful, and engaged citizens.

This brochure is part of a series that is an integral component of our endeavor to fulfill our mission. We hope that these are helpful to you. If you have suggestions for additional subjects please let us know.

“Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome.” - Arthur Ashe

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Colgate University
Guide to Event Planning

So you are going to plan a big event, but you don’t know where to start. Don’t panic. All you need to do is break it into smaller pieces and work on each task. Also, don’t forget to ask for help from the other members of your group and from staff on campus. You have many resources at your disposal. This handout is designed to help you through this process and to smooth out the rough spots of planning. It will also help you prepare for a successful and memorable event. You can always ask for more advice or specifics from the appropriate department if you need a little more guidance.

What are some steps that need to be taken to plan a program?

Identify Needs

Who is the audience and what does the audience want to see or experience with this kind of program? What are the audience’s needs? What method of assessment will you use to determine this (word of mouth, surveys, or a suggestion box)? How big do you want this program to be? Does the type of event you’re planning limit the audience size? If so, how will you determine who can attend?

Develop Program Goals

After you have identified your program’s audience and needs, decide which ones you want to have your event address. Define specifically what you want the participants to learn or experience from the program. This will be the goal of your program or event.

Organize Your Plans

What do you specifically need to do to accomplish your objectives? When do you want to hold this event? Be sure to consider whether or not you have enough time to make all the necessary arrangements and whether or not your members will be able to complete all of their tasks. Many program planners find it helpful to make a time line using “backwards planning;” start at the day of the event and fill in publicity deadlines, facility arrangements, etc., until you reach today’s date. This can help you see if you are being realistic or if you are setting yourself up to be unable to meet your obligations. Getting everything down on paper is an arduous process, but it can save lots of complications later. A staff member can also assist you with the process.

Establish a budget

How much money do you have with which to work? Will revenue need to be generated? What kind of resources do you have at your disposal to raise money or cover costs? If you plan on charging admission, it is important to consider what costs you anticipate this fee will cover, as well as how much you can reasonably expect participants to pay. Also think about the following potential costs: band or speaker fees, lodging, travel, publicity costs, catering, hospitality, Building and Grounds (B&G), Campus Safety, sound equipment, equipment rental, etc.

Implement Plans

From the beginning be very clear regarding who will perform specific tasks and certain roles, as well as expectations everyone has of each other. Be realistic when delegating tasks and responsibilities. Give people enough time to complete their work and assign to them tasks that are within their capabilities – set people up to succeed.

Schedule facilities

Where you hold your program is very important. The facility can determine audience size, date, and time, and can set the mood for the event. Proper planning helps avoid scheduling conflicts.

Negotiate contracts

Speakers and entertainers often will want a signed contract before they will perform. This protects both Colgate University and the artist or performer and is a method of preventing misunderstandings. Avoid making verbal contracts over the phone, and be sure to read paper contracts and riders thoroughly. If you have questions, make a notation and ask for clarification. And remember - only designated professional staff members can sign contracts. Staff members can also help out if you have questions or concerns.

Arrange for publicity

There are many different ways to publicize an event. You’re only limited by your imagination (and your budget). To help you decide on the most effective publicity, refer to the ‘Guide to Publicity’ brochure.

Evaluate the event

Don’t forget that your work isn’t over once the event is over. The evaluation process allows you to review an event in terms of its success and in the ways it may be improved. Evaluations can also serve as a historical file for the organization and can be a useful reference for future program planners. Be sure to think about these three areas: the audience’s feedback, the presenter’s experience and recommendations, and the planner’s thoughts and recommendations. Each group should be asked whether they feel the program accomplished its intended goals. What went well? What could have been better?