



Northeastern University

University Events

PLANNING TIMETABLE

Ideally, planning a major event should begin at least one year prior. Sometimes however, we don't get the ample time or the event is smaller in scale. Here is a sample timeline to use as a guide for your event planning. The Office of Events can help you adjust accordingly to suit your specific needs.

Note: Not all suggested actions apply to all events.

18–24 MONTHS AHEAD

- Select dates.
- Research potential venues (locations).
- Visit the facilities and do a site inspection.
- Finalize the venue selection.
- Negotiate with and get signed contract from facility
- Reserve sleeping rooms.
- Prepare a preliminary budget.
- Define your audience.
- Develop a program.
- Contact appropriate associations and publications to begin the process of promoting the event.

12–18 MONTHS AHEAD

- Determine theme/title of event.
- Identify planning committees, define committee responsibilities, and select chairpersons.
- Begin search for speakers.
- Plan business and social agenda.
- Establish event budget.
- Determine cost to attendees.

9–12 MONTHS AHEAD

- Contract with speakers.
- Develop invitation list from various sources. Select and order mailing lists.
- Review program with facility.

6–9 MONTHS AHEAD

- Send first mailing or save-the-date-announcement.
- Design and prepare a printed invitation or conference brochure.
- Design other print materials (registration packets, signs, badges, etc.).
- Maintain contact with speakers and identify audio-visual needs, obtain biographical material for conference brochure and registration packets.
- Review program with key participants.
- Review and refine budget and committee assignments.

3–5 MONTHS AHEAD

- Establish on-site registration procedure.
- Select on-site personnel.
- Plan and confirm special event logistics- food and beverage, room set-ups, décor, florals, linens, etc.
- Begin preparation of name badges, registration material, and signage.

- Continue contact with speakers. Confirm their presentation needs and travel/accommodation arrangements.
- Mail invitations and correspond with participants if appropriate.
- Review and refine budget.
- Develop attendance list from brochure responses; address problem areas where responses are lower than expected.
- Meet with publicists to begin developing press releases.

2-6 WEEKS AHEAD

- Finalize agenda.
- Track attendance using an Excel spreadsheet. Note who is attending, who declined, meal choices, special accommodations, etc. all in one place.
- Select final food and beverage selections. Don't forget any guests' dietary accommodations.
- Confirm all audio-visual arrangements.
- Confirm all room set-up arrangements.
- Review all planning committee activity and make appropriate final assignments to committees and/or individuals
- Confirm parking and transportation requirements
- Confirm any special ADA accommodations
- Have final program printed
- Have registration packets completed

1 WEEK PRIOR

- Finalize attendance list and let your vendors know how many people you are expecting.
- Confirm arrangements with all vendors- catering, AV, rentals, speakers, etc. Send them a detailed event timeline so everyone is on the same page. Also include a list of everyone's phone numbers for day-of contact.
- Call or e-mail attendees to remind them of the event and to confirm details.

2 DAYS PRIOR TO EVENT

- Walk through the program at the event site.
- Review program with facility manager.
- Review all details, including the registration area with staff members.
- Have pre-conference meeting with all appropriate personnel servicing the event.

DAY-OF EVENT

- Arrive at least ½ hour before your vendors arrive and at least 2 hours before your guests are slated to arrive.
- Designate an area for guest inquiries and issues.
- Be sure to stay until the last guest has departed, all vendors are finished breaking down and the venue has been cleared and cleaned up.

POST-EVENT

- Send a survey to attendees so you can gather feedback on the event.
- Send thank-you notes to vendors who did an outstanding job.
- Ensure all invoices are paid in a timely manner.