

Formal Award Event - Planning Tips

Before Event:

- ☐ Determine who will host the event (DM, ED, Director, other) and their availability (times for event)
- ☐ Book a venue, preferably on that is close to your office, has ample parking, and is accessible.
- ☐ Book music (piano player, piper....) if needed
- ☐ Book photographer through Communications Nova Scotia
- ☐ Develop a communications plan:
 - ☐ Determine your key audience and how to best communicate the event to them
 - ☐ Create text and key messages for e-mail, poster, flyer, newsletter, as required
 - ☐ Is signage required for the event? (posters, directional arrows, podium sign)
 - ☐ Will a brochure be created? An event program?
- ☐ Create invitation list and invitations
- ☐ Send invitations to senior leaders, recipient's supervisor and special guests.
- ☐ Send invitations to recipients, ask for a response by a specific date
- ☐ Consider extending the invitation to one guest for each recipient
- ☐ Are there recipients from out of town? If so, determine if accommodation is necessary
- ☐ Communicate approval process and travel policy guidelines to out-of-town recipients
- ☐ Once RSVP date has passed, contact anyone that you have not heard from to ensure that they received their invitation and have indicated whether or not they will attend.
- ☐ Determine if anyone attending has special needs and arrange reasonable accommodations for them. (e.g. interpreter)
- ☐ Confirm numbers with the venue
- ☐ Order refreshments
- ☐ Make arrangements for any audio/visual requirements
- ☐ Discuss the room set-up. How will seating be arranged? Will a stage be required?
- ☐ Determine the flow within the room, how will recipients make their way to the stage, how will they return to their seat, where will the speakers and presenters stand, etc.
- ☐ Order awards, certificates, gifts
- ☐ Create an event program
- ☐ Create event signage (posters, directional arrows, podium sign, stage signage)
- ☐ Arrange for certificate signing, calligraphy and framing, if applicable
- ☐ Arrange for gift wrapping and delivery, if applicable
- ☐ Confirm date, number of attendees and other details with venue at least 3 days prior to the event
- ☐ Arrange for volunteers to assist on the day of the event (reception desk, greeters, escorts)
- ☐ Create seating plan and name tags.
- ☐ Ensure the photographer has a volunteer accompanying them to record what recipients are wearing. If you are planning on sending photos to recipients after the event, this helps to ensure they receive the correct one.
- ☐ Arrange for a minimum of 2 photos per recipient, to avoid an undesirable photo.
- ☐ Create a detailed list of tasks that need to take place the date of the event - use as a checklist to stay organized.
- ☐ Provide each volunteer with a list of tasks that he/she is responsible for.
- ☐ Contact media, if applicable
- ☐ Arrange for media area at the event, if applicable

- ☐ Arrange for communications director to be the media liaison the day of the event
- ☐ Arrange for refreshments for your volunteers
- ☐ Provide your event host, master of ceremonies, and speakers with a detailed program of the event, outlining their responsibilities.

During Event:

- ☐ Arrive early to coordinate with venue staff
- ☐ Ensure seating is set-up as you require. Label recipient seating, special guest seating, general guest seating
- ☐ Prepare your reception desk – proper signage, invitation list, name tags, greeters
- ☐ Organize volunteers, provide them with their task lists
- ☐ Arrange awards, certificates and gifts in the presentation area
- ☐ Ensure lighting is appropriate
- ☐ Ensure audio/visual equipment is functional
- ☐ Ensure podium is at correct height
- ☐ Ensure there is water at the podium
- ☐ Ensure the speakers notes are at the podium
- ☐ Meet and confirm details with photographer, piper, piano player, florist, etc.
- ☐ Arrange to brief recipients, explain the flow of the event to them.
- ☐ Arrange to meet the event host, MC and speakers in advance of the ceremony for a briefing.
- ☐ Information relayed at the briefing:
 - Order of people involved in the entrance procession
 - Seating arrangements
 - Order of speakers
 - Room layout to visually explain the process of the event
 - Details around the event; how many recipients, what will recipients be presented with, will photos be taken with each presentation, who will hand the host the items for presentation, etc.)

After Event:

- ☐ Send award, certificate, gift to recipients who could not attend the ceremony
- ☐ Send thank you notes to volunteers and others who 'made a difference' in organizing the event
- ☐ Prepare billing if necessary
- ☐ Prepare summary report if required
- ☐ Send photos to recipients (you may consider providing a frame as a gift to along with the photo)
- ☐ Once you have obtained consent from recipients, consider posting event photos and recipient photos on your department website. Include testimonials or a note from the host or senior leaders.
- ☐ Prepare an article for your department newsletter
- ☐ Hold a post mortem meeting with the project team / volunteers to celebrate the event's success and to discuss lessons learned for the next time. What went well? What could be improved?