

Guidelines for Great Events



So, you are having a retreat!

It would seem that a relaxing get-away or a fun-filled excursion to a remote site would be an easy task, yet planning and preparing for a quality event takes forethought and diligence. Usually the full weight of an event falls on one key person and can be quite overwhelming. The purpose of this Guidelines for Great Events is to assist you in the various steps towards having a fabulous event.

Guideline 1: Why? The Purpose

The primary issue that needs to be established is 'why are we having this event?' Stating the purpose goes a long way to focusing in on what needs to happen at the event. Ben Franklin said, "Living without a goal is like shooting without a target." Some people aim at nothing ... and hit it!

A. List the Major Objectives of the event.

By listing the objectives, you have a measurement device to evaluate each part of your planning as to how it interfaces with your overall desires for the event. Your objectives need not be lofty. Some groups have stated one of their goals for a retreat was to 'totally kick back', allowing the participants to 'veg out' with little or no planned events. While they had meal and snack times, the planners merely provided suggested areas of supervised entertainment during the day, but the attendees could sleep in, stay up late or be enthusiastically involved by their own choice.

B. Define Your Objectives in one or two word targets; such as, relaxation, inspiration, or fellowship.

After each major objective is established, write a one sentence goal for that area, IE: Relaxation – we want to provide a schedule that is not rushed, but allows for ample 'down time' to rest and kick back. The objectives need to be specific enough so that after the event is completed you can evaluate how well you achieved them.

C. Write Down major events and activities to accomplish your objectives.

For example: A group with a goal to develop a closer relationship with God may need various areas for small devotional groups or planned times for a quiet walk around our lake or on one of our trails. It is extremely important to have actions and activities that point toward achieving of your objectives.

Guideline 2: Where? The Location Of The Event

Where you are hoping to have your event will dictate many factors of your planning. SCCC's calendar fills up months in advance, so securing your date is essential. Your housing, meals, activities available, etc. all hinge on the retreat location and date. When choosing your date, consider any potential conflicts with other events that may affect your participants' attendance, holidays, etc.

A call to SCCC can put you in contact with someone to guide you through your event- planning process. We will ask you questions to help chart your event into the best time slot available, the optimum facility for your needs and provide ideas to stretch your thinking.

After gathering sufficient information, a contract will be sent to you. Return the signed contract along with the required deposit, and then your event is set on the calendar. Changes and updates can be made over time, but your deposit and signed contract guarantees a site and time for your event. Please check in regularly with SCCC with questions, ideas and changes so that everything and everyone will be prepared for your event.

Guideline 3: How Much? Budgeting For Your Event

There are many factors that enter into the planning of your event at this stage. You will have an estimated cost per person to enter into your equation. You must also consider the following:

- A. Honorarium/Travel Expenses for speakers, musicians.
- B. Materials expense for games, activities, group t-shirts, etc.
- C. Advertisement, mailings, printing costs.
- D. Cost for chaperones or helpers.
- E. Transportation to and from SCCC.
- F. Miscellaneous expenses

It is good to add in a couple of dollars per person just as a 'safety cushion' for unexpected expenses. After arriving at a total cost for the event, you can easily calculate a 'per person cost' to charge your participants.

For larger, more expensive events, fund-raisers or scholarship programs can be put in place since you have allowed adequate lead-time to prepare for your event. Planning one year in advance is great, but sometimes it is not possible. A shorter preparation time means more must be done in a narrower margin of time. Remember – good planning produces great events.

Guideline 4: How? Promoting The Event

All the planning to this point has been largely "behind the scenes", but now promoting and advertising the event moves into the foreground. You have the ability to answer key questions at this juncture, such as: when, where, why and how much. Now is the opportune time to advertise the event and then keep the retreat before the eyes of all involved on a regular basis.

Engage your planning team to develop a catchy theme, phrase, or logo for the event--one that captures the 'why' objectives of your group. If this is a youth or children's event remember that the major key to success is in the parents. Parents need to be completely and fully informed at the earliest possible time and in a variety of ways. Their support is crucial to the success of an event involving their children. One announcement in a bulletin or newsletter is never adequate to gather people to an event. Notes, email, posters, personal recruiting committees, post cards, and phone calls are all great ways to get the information out. The more ways you communicate the details of the event, the greater possibility of success. Use a "countdown" type of reminder as well – "Just 6 weeks till Youth Blast!"

As you look at the scheduled date for the event, establish a registration date deadline and early registration discounts, etc. to get people financially committed to the event. When a person is financially committed to a

retreat they are less likely to let other things hinder their attendance. (Know what cancellation policies are in place.) Again, the SCCC staff can help you in this area as well.

Guideline 5: When? Nearing The Event

Communication is pivotal to the success of an event. Communication with SCCC will help at all levels. Our Food Services Director needs up to date information on your dining numbers. Our Facility Prep Coordinator needs accurate information as to how your facilities are to be readied for you. Our Housekeeping Team needs to know what rooms and areas to have ready for you. As you see, communication is very important to us here at SCCC to help make your event a success. Communicate your group's needs or any changes to us *no less* than a week in advance of the event.

You will receive a copy of our User Guidelines. From mealtimes to ground rules, everyone needs these items communicated to them. *It is imperative that you communicate these policies and guidelines with each leader, chaperone and every guest that will be attending your event at SCCC* to ensure a safe and fun event.

Guideline 6: What? After The Event Follow-Up

It is always important to check up on an event afterwards to see 'how you did.' Evaluate as a team what was right, what was wrong, what could have been better, etc. SCCC also would like to know how we served you and in what ways we can improve.

Springville Camp and Conference Center is committed to making your event the best ever. All of our resources, planning ideas and expertise in events are at your disposal. Call us, drop by for a tour or visit, and email us often.

Sincerely,

Kevin Pierson
Executive Director
Springville Camp and Conference Center