



## Event Planning Tips & Timeline

### AT LEAST ONE YEAR OUT:

Notify the Greater Grand Forks Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) to see what types of assistance (monetary and in kind complimentary services) they may be able to offer your group. Start looking for facility space at least one year out, if not two or more to assure availability and first choice of property:

- Keep in mind last year's program set up, attendance and room block pick up at the hotel
- Choosing the right site involves: availability, size, exhibit space requirements, rates if applicable (will there be meeting room cost if F & B are purchased on site?), can outside F & B be brought in, sleeping rooms types, hotel availability, location to meeting facility

You should always allot 10% of your expense budget to cover 'contingency' costs such as cancellation insurance, speaker travel expenses, bad weather etc.

Host your event (if possible) when the sleeping room costs and/or meeting room facility costs are cheaper: weekday versus weekend or vice versa.

Give conservative room block needs; booking too many rooms can become an unnecessary cost if a hotel requires attrition. Most room block cut-off dates are 30 days out from event start date.

Let hotels/ meeting facility know how much you typically spend on F & B from past years' records.

Get RFP's from various printing companies for all printed material (save the date postcards, mailers and program books).

### ONE YEAR TO TEN MONTHS OUT:

Start researching speakers based on your budget and your subject matter...negotiate cost and book (may have to partial pay).

Start working on theme (if necessary) and tentative agenda layout; fill in the blanks once you have commitments from speakers.

Start working on logo/website registration site. Contact your local Convention Bureau to see if they have an onsite Event Planner Tool Registration site you may use at no charge.

Send out a Save the Date Postcard/Email to your potential attendees/member list. Don't forget to list the host meeting facility as well as the host hotel. You can also list the registration website too.

### TEN MONTHS TO EIGHT MONTHS OUT:

Start searching for evening off-site locations if hosting events elsewhere: book.

Start your search for day activities/tours for the spouses: book (Also don't forget to book the transportation for these off-site events).

Start soliciting additional sponsorships/exhibitors elsewhere in the host city or state (collect up-to-date logos, send invoices for payment).

### EIGHT MONTHS TO SIX MONTHS OUT:

Start searching for local photographers and/or local decorators/florists if need be: book.

Confirm local bussing company if shuttling folks to an off-site event or shuttling attendees between hotels.

Send out e-blasts to your potential attendees reminding them of the date of the event as well as location. Use this opportunity to update them on potential speakers, off-site activities, remind them of early bird registration rates, etc.

### SIX MONTHS TO FOUR MONTHS OUT:

Decide when your registration site will go live; work on downloading items such as logos, agendas, registration rates etc.

Finalize speakers and agenda.

Decide if you are using a production company for the sound and lighting, or using what is available at the facility: book.

Meet with your CVB representative to discuss the services your group will need.

### FOUR MONTHS TO TWO MONTHS OUT:

Submit agenda to printing company for registration mailer (make sure mailer has correct log in and password information listed on it if using an online registration system).

Start going over menus and deciding on food items as well as break items: discuss deadlines and final numbers with your host facility contact. If you don't see an item on their menu, just ask. Most times they are willing to modify an item to accommodate a need or a price point.





#### **Four months to two months out (cnt'd):**

If you are hosting a multiple day event, keep the meeting room set up identical throughout: this saves conversion costs and is a time saver as well; discuss layout with your host facility contact.

Double and triple check with your speakers to find out what they need for AV costs; to automatically place these items in each breakout room will cost you and there are typically no refunds given for unused equipment. Submit this information to the meeting facility or production company.

#### **TWO MONTHS TO SIX WEEKS OUT:**

Submit program booklet to the printing company; don't forget to include your Sponsors logos and names; ask for delivery date 10 days – two weeks prior to your event start date.

Review registration numbers.

Start to place your speakers, VIP's, staff into hotel rooms.

Ask Exhibitors if they want electricity, Wi Fi for their booths.

Send out reminder e-blasts to your potential attendees reminding them of the date of the event as well as location. Use this opportunity to update them on potential speakers, off-site activities remind them of early bird registration rates, etc.

#### **SIX WEEKS TO FOUR WEEKS OUT:**

Review registration numbers again; double check room block numbers with hotel(s) and release any unneeded rooms to avoid attrition (if hotels have that policy).

Make final billing arrangements with facilities and the hotel holding the staff rooms and/or speaker rooms.

Confirm with CVB representative if you need registration assistance: what days, what hours, how many people.

#### **FOUR WEEKS TO TWO WEEKS OUT:**

Place Exhibitors in the meeting facility, send them confirmation of placement in the room and an address where they can have booth items sent prior to event.

Confirm with meeting facility how they will allow you to hang signage and banners on the walls.

Confirm meeting room seat numbers.

Finalize equipment needs in the meeting rooms, go over numbers with sales person or the production company and confirm.

Choose final menu items, confirm with sales person: offer rough numbers based on registration attendance at that time.

Send banner and signage needs to your CVB representative; include logos and wording. Send names of registrants for name badge printing. Discuss badge layout. Give CVB representative names for VIP/Speaker gifts.

Assign final to-do lists to your committee members.

Receive and review program books.

Confirm decorator arrival day/time.

#### **THREE-FIVE DAYS PRIOR:**

Give final head count to facility for meals.

Collect items from CVB and bring to meeting facility.

