Special Events Timeline

12 months before event:
- Appoint Event Chair(s)
- Determine the purpose of your event. (Fundraiser or donor development)
- Establish a theme for the event
- Establish the BUDGET: expenses and revenue
  - Your event can be priced to attract fewer people at a higher price, or more
  people at a lower price. Sometimes exposing the organization to a broader
  group of people is more important than reminding your loyal patrons how
  wonderful you are. Be sure to consider these costs:
    - Venue & service
    - Labor
    - Publishing costs
    - Special equipment
    - Entertainment
    - Decorations
    - Acknowledgment
- Event chairs determine and appoint Key Committee Chairs:
  - Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair (immediately)
  - Volunteer Coordinator Chair (no later than 9 months before event)
  - Media & Public Relations Chair (no later than 7 months before event)
- Event Chair(s) - Appointing specific committee chairs helps distribute the work. However, event chairs guide the overall purpose and vision of the event and cannot avoid working closely with each chair.
  - Schedule timeline:
    - Create a timeline highlighting the important aspects of the event
    - Determine absolute deadlines and plan accordingly to achieve them.
      (Example: If reservations must be received by Nov. 24, the invitation must be
      mailed 4 to 5 weeks earlier. Furthermore, the invitation needs to be to the
      printer 2 weeks before that, and design time can take up to 3 weeks. So far,
      this is 9 to 10 weeks out from date event)
  - Determine guest list. (This will influence price per person costs.)
    - Be sure your guest list comprises appropriate people that will realize the
      purpose of your event. (Example: the more ritzy the event, the more affluent
      the guests.)
    - Start spreadsheet tracking: formal names, addresses, and phone numbers.
      This is the start of your guest list.
    - Use names from the organization’s general patron list
  - Determine Where and When
    - Establish location, time & date (this is vital to the planning)
    - Book venue: make deposits and sign contracts if necessary
9 months before event

- **Initial committee meetings begin**
  - Appoint last Committee Chairs
    - Logistics Committee Chair
    - Invitation Committee Chair
    - Decorations Committee Chair
    - Auction Committee Chair
    - Menu Committee Chair
    - Entertainment/Program Committee Chair

*Individual committees begin to plan the details of each area and adhere to budget constraints determined by Event Chair(s)*

- **Logistics Committee**
  - Determine flow and timing of event
  - Determine volunteers needed
  - Brainstorm ideas for new and unique experiences

- **Invitation Committee**
  - Determine style (in-house? paper choice? professional print job?)
  - Choose design
  - Identify printer
  - Choose and order paper. Be sure paper to be used will allow for the desired effect.
  - Determine whether you will mail invitations first class or bulk

- **Decorations Committee**
  - Begin to determine theme
  - Start cost evaluations

- **Auction Committee**
  - Identify financial goal
  - Determine milestones for success (Set realistic goals and evaluate them regularly.)
  - Get lists of past merchant donors
  - Divide list among committee
  - Design a solicitation mailing for auction donations

  *If goal is large:*
  - Include: Letter, Brochure, Return envelope
  - Determine postage needs
  - Be sure to use a clean address list

  *If goal is modest:*
  - Identify desired items and donors
  - Divide solicitations among committee members based on their personal relationships
  - Start asking

- **Menu Committee**
  - Start brainstorming on menu ideas.
  - Work with caterer on costs
  - Some caterers may invite you to taste a sample of the menu options to help with your decisions
• **Entertainment/Program Committee**
  Determine amount of time available for entertainment before or during the event.
  Determine use of band
  - Identify band
  - Check availability
  - Book ASAP (Some bands require a deposit)
  Speaker/Auctioneer/Master of Ceremonies
  - Identify personality
  - Check availability
  - Book ASAP
  - Start drafting script

Event chair finalizes all deadlines in each committee and recruits volunteers for their committee.

• **Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair**
  - Begin sponsorship solicitations
    - Mail packets and meet potential sponsors in person
    - Get high powered, influential people involved in the ask
    - Follow-up bi-weekly until you get an answer
    - If corporations are uninterested in sponsoring the event at-large, ask them to commit to purchase a table at the event or several tickets

7 to 6 months before the event

• **Event Chair(s)**
  - Begin monthly meetings for all Committee Chairs (Keep this a standing date to insure attendance.)
  - Each committee reports progress and expresses needs
  - Reconcile Budget
    - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends

• **Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair**
  - Continue with sponsorship solicitations and table/ticket sales
  - Start to collect sponsor logos for use in P.R. and signage
  - Ask sponsors to participate in volunteering for event

• **Media & Public Relations Chair**
  - Write press releases
    - Continue to hold monthly committee meetings
    - Include Date, Time, Location, name of organization holding event, volunteer groups involved, purpose of event, celebrities involved, contact information, sponsors
    - Working with the Auction Committee Chair actively solicit large auction donations
      - Items such as cars, trips, art, etc. usually require formal requests
5 months before the event

- Event Chair(s)
  - Start early ticket sales with board members and high end donors- use their names on the invitation later (be sure to get their permission)
    - Send letter with benefits of early purchase if necessary
    - If you plan to list on invitation, be sure to list a deadline for printing purposes
  - Continue to hold monthly committee meetings
    - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends

- Media & Public Relation Chair
  - Fax press releases to all newspapers, radio stations & T.V. stations

- Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair
  - Mail second invoices to corporate sponsors (if necessary)

- Invitation Committee Chair
  - Plan invite to drop in the mail 4-5 weeks before the event
    - Begin working with invitation design
      - Choose and order paper (be sure paper to be used will allow for the desired effect)
      - If you are using bulk mail be wary of busy mailing times: Christmas, Mother’s Day, Valentine’s Day; this could slow down your mailing
      - Including a return envelope will make the RSVP process easier for guests, but will increase expense of invitation.
      - Mailing envelope should have a "return service requested" statement. This will be more expensive, but all erroneous addresses will be returned to organization for correction.
      - Don't forget to use your organization’s logo if possible

4 months before event

- Event Chair(s)
  - Begin cleaning up mailing list for invitations
  - Visit event venue
  - Continue holding monthly committee meetings
  - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends

- Corporate Relations/Sponsorship Chair
  - Report your progress to sponsors

- Decoration Committee Chair
  - Order necessary decorations
  - Finalize decoration details with Event Chair
  - Order necessary party favors

- Auction Committee Chair
  - Start collecting donated auction items
  - Keep an excel spread sheet going with all collected items and information
  - Make sure to keep all props to return to the donors
3 months before event

- **Event Chair(s)**
  - Start bi-weekly Committee meetings
  - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends

- **Media & Public Relation Chair**
  - Fax second round of press releases
  - Report progress to sponsors
    - Include any new/ early ticket or table buyers

- **Logistics Committee Chair**
  - Get volunteers committed for the day of the event
  - Clarify any parking issues that might be attached to using the venue

- **Invitation Committee Chair**
  - Finalize invitation designs- last chance for early sponsor opportunities and tickets purchases!
    - Send to printer within two weeks
    - Allow one week for proofing and approval by committee and organization
    - Start early label printing if necessary

- **Auction Committee Chair**
  - Continue to collect the auction items
    - Determine bidding procedure for larger items:
      - Live - be sure to book an auctioneer
      - Sealed - start promoting items to guests
        - Send out booklet of items collected before the event
      - Silent - Generate bid sheets and determine minimum bids on all items

- **Menu Committee Chair**
  - Begin to focus on menu options
    - Work closely with caterer
    - Don't forget to consider special dietary needs of guests
    - Make menu match the season
    - Set up time for tasting of the menu if necessary

- **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**
  - Final considerations
    - Sound systems
    - Transporting heavy objects
    - Get all information to the invitation committee for publication
Fundraising and Development

2 months before the event

• Event Chair(s)
  o Continue with bi-weekly committee meetings
  o Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends
• Invitation Committee Chair
  o Get invitation volunteers together to assemble
  o Check on available postage first class bulk
  o Mail invitations
• Entertainment/Program Committee
  o Confirm entertainment

1 month to 2 weeks before the event

• Event Chair
  o Begin collecting reservations
  o Seat guests according to their priority. This can be determined by donation level, profile in the community, etc.
  o Final arrangements made and approved for decorations
  o Reconcile budget
  o Volunteer coordinator should meet with each committee chair to determine needs
  o Reconcile Budget
• Corporate Relations/ Sponsorship Chair
  o Start to design signs for sponsors
    • Be sure to use the most updated logo
  o Report progress to sponsors
• Media & Public Relations Chair
  o Send another round of press releases
    • Be sure to get local society reporters to cover the event (you may need to comp their tickets)
• Decorations Committee Chair
  o Order flowers
  o Make sure decorations have been finalized
• Auction Committee Chair
  o Continue to collect auction items
  o Print all necessary bid sheets for the auction
  o Mail mini-auction booklet to confirmed guests to promote items (if budget allows)
• Menu Committee Chair
  o Confirm menus with the caterers
    • Be sure all rentals have been requested
    • Make sure all beverages are set including non-alcoholic beverages
The week of the event

- **Event Chair**
  - Fill empty seats with potential donors/sponsors, dedicated committee members or staff from the organization
  - Finalize the seating chart
  - Call each committee chair to check status
- **Logistics Committee Chair**
  - Confirm volunteers - tell them where to be and when
- **Decoration Committee Chair**
  - Coordinate final plan to deliver decorations
- **Auction Committee Chair**
  - Account for all auction items and bid sheets
- **Menu Committee Chair**
  - Confirm catering
- **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**
  - Confirm entertainment
  - Confirm arrival times
    - Emcee
    - Entertainment
    - Volunteers

Day before the event

- **Event Chair**
  - Print out guest list in alphabetical order for the check-in volunteers
  - Generate checks for entertainment and caterer if required
- **Media & Public Relations Chair**
  - Deliver signage to event site (any other items that can be delivered early should arrive in the late afternoon)
- **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**
  - Be sure all necessary sound equipment is delivered early on the day of the event in case of problems

Day of the event

- **All Event & Committee Chairs**
  - Arrive for set up
  - Work in shifts
  - Be sure all aspects are in place before leaving to get ready
  - Return to the event (dressed for the evening) 45 minutes before guests arrive
- **Logistics Committee Chair**
  - Have volunteer coordinator lead his/her troops
  - Keep timeline close at hand all evening to check the status
- **Decoration Committee Chair**
  - Check the quality of the decorations
- **Menu Committee Chair**
  - Walk through event one final time with the caterer
- **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**
  - Have feature entertainment and speakers in place 20 minutes before you need them
Post-event follow up

Take time to evaluate your event especially if you plan to repeat it! Don't forget one of the most important aspects of your event: saying "Thank you" to everyone that participated in the event.

- **Event Chair**
  - Reconcile budget
    - Collect any outstanding money or pledges
    - Mail or deliver all expenses from event
  - Send thank you notes to all committee members
  - Send a report to all sponsors with a thank you
    - Consider having a follow-up thank you party for everyone who participated
  - Send follow-up communications to all special guests encouraging them to continue to support the organization
  - Collect all articles and press clippings
  - Meet with individual committees 2 to 5 days after the event for evaluation
    - Discuss all successes and challenges of event
    - Offer suggestions to remedy problems
    - Offer explanations as to why certain things did and did not work
    - Evaluate whether the event served its purpose
    - Decide whether you would do the event again
  - Save all notes and compile a notebook for reference to future chairs
    - Include all budget to actual information
    - Include receipts
    - Include planning notes from each committee chair
    - Include all press releases
    - Include sample letters sent to sponsors
    - Include sample invitations
    - Include guest lists