



Ely residents and organizations are well-versed in the art of gathering – we do it all the time!

This Ely for Ely Event Planning Guide is a tool for individuals and organizations to be as successful as possible in the event planning process, specifically as it relates to events taking place in Ely, Minnesota.

While details about venues, marketing channels, and points of contact are subject to change, the general timeline presented is considered best practice. However, prior to digging into the details of an event, folks who aspire to hosting a gathering are encouraged to tap into the bigger picture.

According to Priya Parker, the author of *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*, the way a group is gathered determines the success of the gathering – little design and execution choices can help your event soar. Parker goes on to suggest that when you host a gathering, you are proposing to consume people’s most precious resource: their time. “Making the effort to consider how you want your guests, and yourself, to be altered by the experience is what you owe people as a good steward of that resource.”

What is motivating you to host an event? When you visualize your event, how does it *feel*? How can you design your event to successfully translate that feeling from your visualization into a reality full of guests who help you achieve the goals you define for your event?

The recommended timelines listed here are considered to be the minimum ideal timelines within which to operate. You can never start too early, but you can start too late!

This event planning guide was created by Boundary Waters Connect. Contact Lacey at [lacey@neminnesotansforwilderness.org](mailto:lacey@neminnesotansforwilderness.org) with feedback and questions.



## Stage One: Conceptualization

- Define the goal of your event. For example: Is the goal of your event to raise money, to connect with like-minded people, to compel folks who are new to your organization to become involved with it, or something else?
- Identify your target audience.
- Define attendance goals, including the maximum number you can handle, and the minimum number of attendees you would need to feel comfortable to proceed with planning and execution.
- Brainstorm event elements and activities, including food and beverage, entertainment, facilitation, and more. Dream big!
- Determine the event budget.
- Decide on event elements and activities (striving for alignment between the big dream and the real budget).
- Identify a few possible event dates and times.
- Check various area event calendars for potential scheduling conflicts. Consider consulting this incomplete list of resources:
  - Ely.org events page
  - Ely Summer/Winter Times events calendar
  - What's Up Ely Facebook group
  - Facebook Events
- Consider potential event venues. Take into consideration your attendance goal, budget, and the activities you hope to conduct during your event. (See appendix A for a list of Ely-area event venues).
- Consider whether or not your event will include food and/or beverages. (See appendix B for a list of Ely-area caterers).
- Consider whether or not your event concept will involve coordinating with performers, speakers, or other special guests. This also includes the coordination of auxiliary services (porta-potty, anyone!?).
- Other:

## Stage Two: Securing the Fundamentals

- Reserve a venue.
- Confirm food and beverage providers.
- Negotiate contracts with entertainment.
- Book service providers (porta-potty, anyone!?)
- If you plan to sell or offer alcoholic beverages, you'll need to apply for a temporary liquor license through the City of Ely. You can find the application form on the City of Ely website. Contact Deputy Clerk Casey Velcheff with questions and to submit your application. (Note: City distributed temporary liquor licenses require your organization to add the City of Ely as an additional insured. Contact your agent to secure the necessary paperwork.)
- Identify how registration or payment will be handled.
- Consider audio/visual needs. Work with your venue contact to confirm what they offer.
- Reserve portable speakers and microphones via Boundary Waters Connect as needed.
- Consider event volunteer needs, including but not limited to:
  - Set up
  - Reception
  - Tear down / clean up
- Develop a plan for how you will communicate volunteer needs, track volunteer placements, and train volunteers in how to execute their roles.
- Consider whether or not you want to contract a designer to make a poster and/or digital graphics for your event.
- Other:

## Stage Three: Marketing

- Develop an event aesthetic – identify the key colors, fonts, and images you want associated with your event’s promotional materials.
- Consider creating a mood board to inform graphic designs, posters, and decor.
- Submit your event to the Ely.org event calendar.
- Update your organization’s website to include event details, including ticketing information and process.
- Submit the basic details of your event to the Ely Summer Times and Ely Winter Times, respectively. Note that winter events are due in early October, and summer events are due in early April.
- Send an email invitation to your organization's audience (and/or target event audience).
- Include your event details in all regularly scheduled email newsletters between when details are defined and the event takes place.
- Let the Ely Echo and/or The Timberjay know about your event. This could involve:
  - Working with the newspaper(s) to place an ad.
  - Submitting a press release with all event information for them to consider covering.
  - Submit details for their “Community Announcement” sections of the papers.
- Print posters via the Ely Echo.
- Distribute posters to a variety of local businesses.
- Create a Facebook event and invite your target audience.
- Consider a paid promotion for your Facebook event.
- Post engaging content in the Facebook event discussion area.
- Share the Facebook event to the What’s Up Ely Facebook group.
- Consider working with Ely’s Historic State Theater to schedule a marquee message promoting your event.
- Consider submitting an advertisement to be shown prior to films at Ely’s Historic State Theater.
- Make a community announcement about your event at the start of a Tuesday Group program (at the Grand Ely Lodge on Tuesdays).
- Contact the Ely Tourism Bureau ([tourism@ely.org](mailto:tourism@ely.org)) to indicate an interest in having your event featured via an episode of the What’s Up Ely Podcast.
- Other:

## Stage Four: Cross t's, Dot i's

- Share volunteer needs and tracking system with a targeted group of prospective volunteers.
- Arrange and finalize details related to the menu if your event includes food and/or beverages.
- Consider venue way-finding. Is your venue easy to find? Do attendees know where to park? Once they arrive on site, will it be clear to them where to go or what to do? Design and print signage accordingly.
- Visualize how you plan the event going from set up to tear down. How will the space be set up? What is the timeline? Who will introduce the event?
- Gather supplies, decorations, and other materials needed for the event. Confirm whether or not you have sufficient supplies, and make a plan to purchase more as needed.
- Contact special guests, performers, volunteers and other collaborators to confirm the details of their participation and the event timeline.
- Prepare digital card readers, cash boxes, and/or money bags.
- Initiate checks or other payment processes.
- Confirm the pick up date and time for the A/V equipment.
- Other:

## Event Day: Time to Party

- Bring all necessary supplies to the venue prior to set up start time.
- Greet volunteers and direct them as to where to go and what to do.
- Execute set up, getting the venue to the correct configuration with all necessarily audio/visual equipment, chairs, and/or tables in the correct spot.
- Greet event attendees warmly – consider the event venue your home for the time being. Welcome people as you would welcome guests into your home!
- Execute your event.
- Distribute payment to artists/collaborators as applicable.
- Finalize event & clean up.
- Other:

## Following the Event:

- Write and send thank you notes to the appropriate people.
- Ensure funds have been deposited or transferred to the appropriate accounts or people.
- Submit receipts to the appropriate people for reimbursement or tracking.
- Update budget documents and other relevant financial records.
- Remove publicity/signs.
- Evaluate the success of the event for future reference. Did you achieve the goals of the event? Did you meet your attendance goals? What worked well? What did not work well? Would you plan this event again? What would you change about the event next time?
- The best time to start planning next year's event is immediately following this year's!
- Other:

Appendix A: List of Ely-Area Event Venues (TO BE COMPILED)

Appendix B: Incomplete List of Ely-Area Caterers (TO BE COMPILED)

Appendix C: Incomplete List of Ely-Area Marketing Tools (TO BE COMPILED)