



Hosting an In-Person PFLAG Chapter Event: Sample Plan and Suggested Timeline Guide

Anyone who has ever planned an in-person event knows that it takes more people, more resources, and more time than you expect to be successful. Simply put: Event planning is *hard*. We're providing this Sample Plan and Suggested Timeline Guide to help you plan and run a successful chapter event. Whether you're planning an advocacy rally, a chapter fundraiser, a Read With Love reading, or a holiday party, this guide applies.

As an event grows, there are more considerations for a chapter to address, and this guide will walk through those. There are a few categories of events that, due to their larger scale or other factors, would likely need further discussion. These types of events bring up questions about liabilities, insurance, and permits, among other things, and we want to ensure your chapter is protected while hosting. Regardless of the type of event, if you anticipate having an event with more than 100 attendees, a large-scale event that has the potential for a public or media-driven footprint, or an event that could raise security concerns, make sure to talk to your Chapter Engagement staffer about your idea before launching into planning. Additionally, if your event is exclusively youth focused, there are additional considerations to work through with your PFLAG National staffer. Finally, remember that PFLAG chapters should generally not be hosting Pride, as it raises concerns around fiscal sponsorship, mission drift, and safety. Some exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis; reach out to your Chapter Engagement staffer for more information.

Shortened Timelines

While this is an idealized guide and timeline, we know that we don't always get as much time as we want or need to make an event happen. If you're looking to shift this suggested timeline to a shorter runway before your event, reach out to your Chapter Engagement staffer for help

prioritizing what needs to be done now and what can be skipped. A reduced timeline usually means you'll need more support, so make sure you are reaching out now to your fellow chapter leaders, members, and volunteers to delegate important tasks.

Don't panic if you have an event that's coming up soon—possibly TOO soon to accomplish everything suggested in this guide: You can still host your event, and do it successfully!

At your next board meeting, put aside time to talk as a group about your event. Here are some important topics to cover:

- Location/Date/Time
- Finances and Budgeting
- Safety/Security Needs
- Activities and Programming
- Advertising and Marketing
- Permits, Insurance, and Outside VendorsVolunteers
- Set Up/Clean Up Needs

Six Months Out

- Reach out to your Chapter Engagement staffer - what support can we offer you?
- Start shaping your event:
 - What is the goal of your event?
 - What is the theme of your event?
 - What are the activities you'd like to include?
 - How do you imagine community partners engaging with your event?
 - This includes things like co-hosting, programming support, sponsorships, volunteers, etc.
 - Determine your partner outreach timeline depending on requested level of engagement

- Delegate! Who on your board/event committee will be doing what? How will you report to each other and hold each other accountable?
- Choose a date for your event
- Create a budget for your event
 - Your budget should be approved by your board. Schedule a budget presentation for your next board meeting, and seek approval from the group.
 - Set up a weekly or bi-weekly check in on your budget to make updates and accurately reflect any changes
 - Do you need to fundraise ahead of time to cover the expenses of the event? Factor that into your planning.

Five Months Out

- Create a rough timeline of the day. What activities are happening when?
- How do you envision fundraising at this event? Do you want membership sign ups? Fundraising games? A direct ask? Raffles? Is this an event without a fundraising focus where the goal is furthering community connections?
- Book your venue
 - Talk to the venue about accommodations that folks may need (ADA accessibility, ASL interpreter, language interpreter, captioning, sensory/quiet room, etc.)
 - Talk to the venue about their safety plan
 - What amenities can they provide? (Bathrooms (are they gender neutral or can they be made gender neutral?), tables, chairs, A/V, etc.)
- Purchase event insurance if necessary (recommended)
- Reach out to the city/town/state about any needed permitting (liquor, amplified sound, raffles, traffic, etc.)
- Reach out to any vendors about layout needs - tables, chairs, tents, etc.

Four Months Out

- Determine how to track attendance
 - What is the event cost?
 - Is there ticketing? A sign up list?
 - If offering tickets, choose how you want to process payment.
 - Consider what information you need on your tickets: dietary restrictions/needs, accommodation needs, name tags, pronouns, etc.
- Book all outside vendors for items NOT provided by your venue.
 - This is an opportunity to engage local businesses and potentially ask about in-kind donations or nonprofit rates for things such as:
 - Catering/Food
 - Beverage provider
 - Audio visual (although generally this is provided by the venue)
 - Entertainment
- Announce your event to the public!
 - First, consider how different types of publicity might impact community reactions to the event and your chapter - more publicity may attract negative attention, but can also increase attendance.
 - Who is your target audience and what is the best way to reach them?
 - Ways to promote include:
 - Post on social media
 - Share in newsletter
 - Create a flyer to share in person
 - Send out press release to local media

- Send a calendar listing to your local media
- Consider advertising in print and digital media
- Post on chapter website
- Announce at chapter meetings and events
- Create a working safety plan for event
 - Integrate any safety plan provided by venue along with standing best practices of the chapter
 - What additional considerations do you need for your event? This includes specific safety at your venue, reacting to outside agitators, responding to community members in need, general health needs of attendees (outside vs. inside), etc.
 - For more guidance, see PFLAG's [In Person Event Safety Guidelines](#)
 - Consider a plan for day-of emergencies. This could include a rain location, a secondary date, or a shift to virtual. If you need to cancel the event, how will you communicate this with attendees?

Three Months Out

- Finalize programming for the day
 - Use scheduled speakers and entertainers to drive attendance, such as:
 - Offering a sneak peek of programming to event attendees
 - Asking speakers/entertainers to share the invite with their lists and social media followers
- Make a list of supplies you need for the day. What do you have on hand? Is there anything you need to purchase or make?
 - Is there anything that needs to be ordered online? Do so ASAP.
- Consider having [a step and repeat backdrop](#) for your event. It's a great look for your stage, your entryway, or even a small red carpet for photos. Our branding team can

provide support on this; reach them at branding@pflag.org.

- Continue advertising your event

Two Months Out

- Make a volunteer ask
 - Consider SignUp Genius, signup.com, or another digital sign up form
- Design a program or schedule for the day
- Consider a T-shirt order for event staff, PFLAGers, or attendees.
 - Gather sizing and put in the order.
- Continue advertising your event
 - Ensure you're listed in local event calendars, and consider local radio and other hyperlocal marketing
- Capture the moment with photos and video! Reach out to a photographer or videographer who may be able to donate their time, or see if someone within chapter membership can take photos at your event.
- Make a list of signage needs and get it set up and ready for print.
 - Ensure your branding is on point. Be sure to submit designs through Canva or reach out to branding@pflag.org for assistance and support!
 - If using Canva, you can get designs approved and printed locally right from Canva—ask the branding team how!
 - If you've decided to have a step and repeat, check on the space you have with the venue as you set up your event map—where is it best placed to get great photos and NOT in the way of guests arriving or blocking exits.
 - Place your order with the printer.

One Month Out

- Is there anything attendees need that you want to account for? Reach out and ask

- If hosting a sit down meal, reach out to event attendees about dietary restrictions/needs
- Are there specific accommodation needs that folks have?
- Are you making name tags? Verify the name and pronouns for the tag if printing ahead of time.
- Consider venue layout and create a map for your event - how do you want things laid out? Would it be helpful for the public to have a map?
- Make a list of supplies you need for the day. What do you have on hand? Is there anything you need to purchase or make?
 - Is there anything that needs to be ordered online? Do so ASAP.
- Continue advertising your event

Two Weeks Out

- Gather with the board or event committee to do a run through of the event. Talk through the timeline, and identify any missing needs, make sure folks understand their roles, and make room for questions
 - Go through your safety plan and emergency contacts. What's missing?
- Send out an email to attendees about the event. What important details do they need to know?
 - Schedule
 - Map
- Printing needs - make sure to print anything that needs printing!
 - Schedule
 - Membership sign ups
 - Map
 - Signage

- Name tags
- Scripts/Run of Show
- Photography/Video shot list
- Continue advertising your event

One Week Out

- If making things for the event, have a craft/assembly night
- Put together a general supply box
 - Pens/Pencils/Sharpies/Highlighters
 - Paper
 - Scissors
 - Tape/Stapler
 - Duct tape/Gaffer tape
- Shopping trip - if anything needs to be purchased ahead of time, do so
- Create a set up checklist - what needs to go where and in what order
- Create a tear down checklist - everything that needs to come back to you at the end of the event
- Final advertising push

Event Week

- Gather supplies - see above!
- Double check your prep work! Have you:
 - Printed everything?
 - Gathered all supplies?

- Communicated with volunteers?
- Checked your safety plan?
- Tracked the traffic pattern through your venue?
- Send out final reminder email to attendees

Event Day

- Set up
 - Consider starting the event with a group huddle for any last minute reminders/questions
- Tear down

Week after event

- Invoices - are they paid?
- Count donations, any income from the event
- Send thank you letters/emails
 - Vendors
 - Volunteers
 - Attendees
- Consider sending a post event survey to attendees to receive feedback
- Celebrate!
 - Debrief with the board/event committee on how things went. What would you do differently? What went well?
 - Share on social media/newsletter how the event went
 - Take time to rest!