

Organizing a Stellar Event

Events are a great way to build momentum, excitement, and visibility for your campaign or conservation goals. Careful planning and attention to detail can be the difference between an event that dazzles and an event that's a dud. The best events flow with ease and leave guests wanting more.



Develop the Event

Below is a suggested timeline of tasks and benchmarks, planning backwards from your event date. Adapt as needed to fit your event! Large events take many months to plan, while smaller events (like a house party or movie screening) may be pulled together in a few weeks or less. However, the sooner you start planning, the more successful your event is likely to be!

8 - 10 weeks prior to event

- **Gather a team.** If you're planning a big event, recruit a planning team. Delegate, divide, and conquer! You may have one person take a lead on the venue, put another in charge of food, another in charge of volunteer coordination, etc.
- **Decide the purpose.** E.g. educate community members on an issue, gather support for an initiative, persuade people to send letters to a decision-maker, etc.
- **Confirm speakers/film/agenda.** Identify a speaker or film that is inspirational and educational. Keep in mind that public events typically last between 30 minutes and 2 hours.
- **Create an event budget** to cover venue space, refreshments, speaker fees, etc. Contact the Chapter to discuss funding options or request funding assistance. Staff will likely need to get the event approved as c(3) nonprofit compliant by national Sierra Club (at least 1-2 days).
- **Confirm date and venue.** The sooner, the better!
- **Find community partners that will co-host the event,** help with outreach, and perhaps fund part of the event. (See our list of potential community allies.)
- **Secure equipment.** Reserve projector; slide remote, and laptop from Chapter Office, along with any other equipment you will need. Don't forget your camera!

5 to 7 weeks prior to event

- **Get the word out!**
 - **Create a flyer and/or poster.** Make the flyer simple with large text and a striking picture. Keep it uncluttered and engaging. Make sure the event name, date, and location are large and visible on the publication. If food is provided, advertise it!
 - **Post it.** Put flyers/posters in community hotspots such as schools, libraries, cafes, grocery stores, health clubs, etc. Think about where the people you most want to invite spend their time.
 - **Email blast** - Work with Chapter to email Sierra Club network.
 - **Phone bank** - For larger events, arrange a phone bank with Chapter staff to invite Sierra Club members.
 - **Invite your networks** and ask partner groups to do the same.

- **Invite other chapter groups** – Reach out to other chapter leaders and groups. Invite them to attend and ask them to invite others.
- **Post on social media:** email the event information to Publicity@lomaprieta.sierraclub.org to get it posted on the Chapter's Facebook, Meetup, and Twitter pages. Use your own social media accounts to get the word out as well.
- **Post to Chapter online event calendar.** [Email to someone?]
- **Post to other community calendars.** Many newspapers and other organizations have community calendars. Make sure to plan ahead as submission deadlines may be several weeks prior to the event.
- **Recruit volunteers.** Think about potential volunteer roles (e.g. media greeters, speakers, registration table attendants, refreshment replenishers, set up, and clean up). Then put the call out!

3 to 5 weeks prior to event

- **Have a check-in.** Convene members of the event team for a progress check, make sure everything is on track, and troubleshoot any snags.
- **Send reminders** about the event to all invitees.
- **Create a press release.** Send the press release to local media sources and follow up with a phone call.

1 to 3 weeks prior to event

- **Check in with presenters.** Confirm the presenters have their presentations ready and the technology they need.
- **Prepare handouts and other print materials.** These could include nametags, sign-in sheets, agendas, directional signs for the venue, business cards, fliers, banners, etc.
- **Organize materials.** Make sure all materials for the event are ready to go.
- **Prepare your volunteers.** Make sure your volunteers have the information they need and make a plan for getting volunteers oriented and assigning tasks. Consider holding a training beforehand, if needed.
- **Prepare welcome/closing.** Someone on the team should welcome participants, provide a short statement about your team, introduce presenters, and end by thanking participants and inviting questions.

Post-event follow-up

- **Thank attendees, speakers, and volunteers for participating.** Remind them the major points covered at the event and the call to action. Ask what they thought about the event and encourage them to get involved with your next event.
- **Send receipts to Chapter for reimbursement** (if pre-approved).