

How-to-Guide for Creating and Operating Events in Attleboro, MA

Helping people and organizations in the Attleboro
community plan, organize, and carry out city events.



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Purpose of this Guide

This guide is designed to help people and organizations in the Attleboro community plan, organize, and carry out exceptional events in the city. Whether you have a great idea for an event that you would like to see happen and this is your first time creating an event in Attleboro or you have run some smaller events in the community and want to scale up your impact, this document should serve as a helpful guide. The document is formatted into five broad steps that dive deeper into the details, process, deadlines, informational links, and tried and true strategies from seasoned event organizers in the city. Please note that planning and implementation of your event may not follow the order of the steps that are outlined, and you may not need everything that is listed. Also, of note, the authors of this guide have marked any step or item that they view as critical for a successful event with **(ESSENTIAL)**. As with any document in the digital age, links or contact information may change without notice, although city staff will make their best effort to periodically review it for accuracy.

It takes a lot of time, effort, and dedication to run a successful event, but the reward for the community, your organizational development, and personal growth can be well worth it. We hope that this guide provides a strong foundation for your future success and reduces the amount of time that you spend searching for answers as you embark on the process. Best of luck and thank you for helping to enrich the city of Attleboro.



Five Steps to Creating an Event in Attleboro, MA

Step 1: Answering the Big Questions

(ESSENTIAL) Determine the Purpose of the Event

Ask yourself, why do you want to run this event and how is the community benefitting from it?

If your event is exclusively self-serving, people will recognize that, and it will hamper your chances for success. The best events are those that have underlying objectives that extend beyond holding an event simply for the sake of doing so. Maybe you also want to raise money for a good cause, help support downtown businesses, bring awareness to an important issue, or create something that you know people want in Attleboro, but does not currently exist.

- Is your event being organized by an established business, or are you a citizen creating a single or recurring event? Consider whether you need to incorporate as a business, 501c3 nonprofit, or neither.
 - If you plan to raise money to operate the event and you are not a federally recognized nonprofit, find a fiscal agent who is willing to accept donations on your behalf. What is a fiscal agent, you may ask? It is typically a more established nonprofit that has a federal 501c3 designation who agrees to accept donations on your behalf. In addition to accepting any money that you raise; they also take on the responsibility of distributing that money as you request it to pay for things that are related to the event or issue the check to the cause that you are supporting. While some organizations may do this for free, it is not uncommon for a fiscal agent to build in an administration fee, as they are required to report the money on their taxes and write any checks associated with the funds on your behalf. One of the best ways to find a fiscal agent is to look for established organizations that share similar values to what you are trying to accomplish.
 - If you are raising money for a cause, identify where those funds are going to go.
 - While certainly not necessary to run an event, if you intend to incorporate as a business, start here: [Business Certificates | Attleboro, MA \(cityofattleboro.us\)](https://www.cityofattleboro.us/business-certificates)

(ESSENTIAL) Determine venue, audience, date and time (at least 6 months in advance)

When do you plan to hold your event, who are you trying to attract, and where will it occur?

(ESSENTIAL) There are many events that happen throughout the year in Attleboro, make sure to do your research and reduce the chances that your event is going to take place on the same date and time as another event somewhere else in the city. Not only will this help attendance at your event, but it is also a courteous practice that will support the hard work of your fellow event planners in the city. Community calendars are a great resource for checking upcoming schedules. While no centralized calendar currently exists for the city, different organizations maintain their own calendars and

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sometimes incorporate other events that are happening in the community. For example: [Attleboro Public Library](#)

- **(ESSENTIAL)** Venues are often subject to organization availability, may have fees, and long lead times for booking. This should be asked before any event planning begins so that you can switch venues if needed.

- If your event is outside, consider whether or not to have a rain date – if you do, let vendors know to be available for both. Keep in mind that some vendors may increase their fee to be available for a rain date.



- Public venues:
 - [Attleboro Public Library - Information on the rooms available](#) and [contact information](#).
 - Attleboro Parks near Downtown (other parks throughout the city follow the same procedures) - Balfour Riverwalk, Judith H. Robbins Riverfront Park, Capron Park.

- **(ESSENTIAL – If using Park Space)** Permits are required and need to be requested **60 days prior** to the event. Prior to filling out an application, please call (774) 203-1865 to verify if the date you requested is available.

File Event Applications with the Parks Commission. They meet on the third Wednesday of the month. For further information, contact Park Superintendent Derek Corsi. Link to permit application: <http://ma-attleboro.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/333/Grounds-Permit-PDF?bidId=>

- Areas of Capron Park available:
 - Hagopian Walk and Rose Garden
 - Newell Shelter
 - Various grassy areas throughout the Park

- Cuddy Court
 - Contact Kaylynlockyer@cityofattleboro.us and mayorsoffice@cityofattleboro.us for permits to use this fee-free venue. They ask for a one-month notice and will send paperwork to fill out.

- Private venues - not listed as each has their own separate needs and requirements. Event planners should reach out to private venues for their guidelines and availability. Lock in a contract with your venue so that all considerations are agreed upon.

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- **(ESSENTIAL)** Secure Event Insurance – It's not fun to think about, but if an accident happens at the event, someone is going to be held liable for the damages. Don't put you or your partners in a position where your personal assets are threatened. We live in a litigious society.
 - Single event insurance can be purchased online and usually coasts a few hundred dollars.
 - A partner organization may be willing to take a rider out on an existing policy if they have one.
 - Insist that your vendors and performers also have insurance

Step 2: How to Pay for it All?

(ESSENTIAL) Even the most simple public events are going to require some amount of funding in order to cover the basic operating costs. If it is a small event that is not designed to attract a crowd, funding needs could be fairly minimal. On the other hand, if you intend to have an event that accomplishes the objectives that you identified in Step 1 of this guide, you will more than likely need money in order to execute it at a high level.

- **(ESSENTIAL)** Determine the budget for your event (at least 6 months in advance)
 - Frequent Budget Line Items
 - Equipment
 - Staff
 - Permits & Fees
 - Insurance
 - Marketing
 - Power (generators, temporary wiring)
 - Entertainers, Performers, Exhibitors
 - Vendors
 - Site Preparation
 - Police Detail/Security
 - Portable Restrooms
 - Post-Event Cleanup
 - Rubbish Disposal
 - Administrative Fees



Where do you find the money to pay for your event costs?

- Local businesses with established grants for 501c3 organizations. You can often use a fiscal agent (see pg. 3) if you are not a 501c3

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- Local Attleboro examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Bristol County Savings Bank
 - Sensata Technologies Foundation (STEM)
 - Corporate Sponsors
- Crowdfunding platforms can be a way to not only raise money for the event, but also spread the word through the community that it is happening.
- [Attleboro Cultural Council](#)
 - Accepts funding applications for events and cultural activities each fall. Note: Cultural Councils outside of Attleboro may fund an event if it benefits members of that Council's community.
- Individual Sponsors. Ask friends, family, neighbors, etc.



Step 3: Building Community Support

Successful public events can seem like they magically happen, but there is a tremendous amount of effort behind the scenes from the event organizers to ensure that everything operates smoothly and support exists within the community. Building this support requires a multidimensional approach to winning over residents, businesses, City officials, and more. It takes a team, even if you are the one who has assumed the lead role in organizing the event.

- **(ESSENTIAL)** Secure volunteers and physical equipment at least 2 – 3 months in advance.
 - Building your volunteer team – Pro Tips
 - Find people with skills that you don't have.
 - Have regular meetings with volunteers or at minimum a volunteer meeting a week or two in advance to inform them about what is expected of them at the event and to assign event work.
 - Make appearances at other events around town to spread the word about your event and make connections. For example, the [Attleboro Farmers Market](#) is a good place to do this.
- **(ESSENTIAL)** Permitting
 - Speak with the Mayor's Office (508) 223-2222 ext. 3221 to learn what permits you will need for your specific event. The Mayor's Office is a good place to start. Have these conversations at least 4 months in advance to make sure that you can get on an agenda for the appropriate commission or board, if required.
 - If you plan to have alcohol at the event, you will need an [Alcohol permit](#). To get the permit approved is a two-step process. First, you will need a one-day license approved through the licensing board and then you will need approval through the Municipal Council to serve on public property. Before you meet with the Municipal Council, please visit the Clerk's office to receive and submit a Liquor Waiver on City Property. This is in accordance of Attleboro Ordinances, Section 11-15.3.
 - [Police](#) and/or [Fire](#) will typically need to be notified for a public event and may be needed to sign off on permits or be present at the event, depending on your venue, crowd size, and features

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- **(ESSENTIAL)** Hold regular event planning meetings with your team from the time when your idea is conceived all the way to the implementation. These will likely involve a variety of different team members depending on the event planning phase that you are in. Examples may include:
 - Performers/vendors (all should have contracts in place and proof of insurance)
 - Key players from your core planning team
 - Contractors
 - Parking, traffic
 - Port a Johns need, tents, chairs, other physical items considered for either rent or purchase
 - Recycling/Waste Management/Cleanup Efforts
- **(ESSENTIAL)** Hold at least one of the event planning meetings at the event site. All team members will need to get a feel for the space, traffic flow, any hazards to avoid and realities of the environment.
 - Measure the venue to confirm that all attractions and structures fit.
 - Check for electricity if needed

Step 4: Getting the Word Out

If you want people to show up to your event, you have to put time and effort into marketing it so that people know it is happening. In a world where everyone's attention is divided across multiple media platforms, you need to be savvy and precise about reaching the target audience that you are trying to attract on the big day.

- Marketing (6 weeks to one month prior)
 - Signs and flyers
 - **(ESSENTIAL)** Sign on the fence at Balfour Riverwalk Park (County Street side) - Talk to Parks Department to get approval and plan for installation. Individuals cannot hang their own signs.
 - **(ESSENTIAL)** Press release to The Sun Chronicle a few months before the event with time, date, location AND THEN press release to The Sun Chronicle a few weeks before the event with more details about what people can expect to see...What are you going to have there that will make them show up that day?
 - **(ESSENTIAL)** Press release also sent to Double ACS and/or WARA 1320 AM Radio station. Both of these services are free to community organizers to broadcast event. They might request that you speak to them, so be sure to prepare talking points about your event. To contact Double ACS email: bulletin@doubleacs.com

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- Social media – know your audience and what platforms they use the most or try to advertise on them all. Posts should be short, catchy, and include photos or videos.
- Prepare and Print the Signs that will be used at the Event. Put yourself in the shoes of the attendees, vendors, and performers and think of what they might need that day. It will save you, your staff, and volunteers time during the actual event. This may include the following:
 - Directional signage, both indoor and outdoor so people know where to go
 - Parking Areas
 - Coat Room
 - Restrooms
 - Event Program
 - Event Maps
 - List of Vendors
 - Parking Passes for Vendors and Performers
- Clearly spell out what vendors and performers are responsible for bringing to the event. Indicate that you are not responsible for lost, misplaced, or stolen items and that all cash handling/transactions are the responsibility of the vendor (unless otherwise specified).

(Essential, if serving food) Contact the City Health Department

- The Health Department requires food permits for everyone who will be supplying food. The application for temporary vendors and food trucks is located on the City's website. Physically submit applications 2 weeks prior to the event in order to accommodate inspections.

If you are hosting a large scale event, it is worthwhile to contact the Health Department to talk through your plan and ask for their feedback. Their primary concerns are going to be ensuring that hand washing stations are available for food vendors, hot food is kept hot, cold food is kept cold, and the vendors secure their proper permits prior to the event.

- Link to food vendor application:
<http://www.cityofattleboro.us/DocumentCenter/View/6399/Temporary-Food-Cart--Truck-Permit-Application>
- For Health Department questions please contact: (508) 223-2222 ext. 3241



Step 5: Making it Happen!

After all of that hard work and preparation, it's time for the big day. Nothing that you have done up to this point will matter in the eyes of the public or your funders unless the event itself is deemed a success and this ultimately determined by the experience that your attendees have. A degree of grace is typically given if the weather is poor and it's an outside event or if it is an inaugural year and the turnout is low. All events have problems and issues to tackle while they are occurring but your job is to address them quickly and create the illusion that things just went off without a hitch. Here are some tips to help you do that and make sure that you use the day to help make the next event even better and more successful.



- Set Up and Operations
 - **(ESSENTIAL)** Be at your event!
 - You need to be there talking to key players, coordinating your staff/volunteer teams, sharing in the work, and constantly observing how things are going.
 - Have your phone close by – it will be ringing. Note: You will need to provide a way for team members to get in touch with you, but always consider who is a trusted contact. Protect your privacy, but understand at the same time, you need to be accessible.
 - Depending on the type of event and your access to the site, you may have been setting up well in advance or you may have to be setting up everything that day. Plan accordingly as this will likely take longer than you expect.
 - For post-event cleanup, have a dedicated and well-briefed team ready to strike when the event concludes. Your venue needs to appear as if your event never happened before you leave. If appropriate, check in with your venue's host to see if the cleanup meets their standards before leaving.
- Documentation – Data and documentations is critical to understanding if you achieved the impact that you originally set out to do and making improvements to your event if you decide to do it again.

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- **(Essential, if you received grants)** Keep documents for grant reporting and for your own records - photography, newspaper stories, data who attends (per day), surveys, pamphlets, vendor sales, a people's choice ballot. These will all help tell the story of what happened and make it easier to secure funding in following years.
- Debrief afterwards. Have a meeting with your team to talk about what to change for next year and what was great.
- Surveys
 - Physically handed out at event - remind people to fill out before they go
 - Virtual - send out soon after event
 - Open-ended questions are less likely to be answered, giving multiple choice with "other," or yes or no questions.