**9 - 12 Months Prior to Conference**

* Assemble a conference planning committee. Consider two subcommittees – one for logistics (room setups and catering) and another for programming (conference content).
* If annual conference, review notes from previous year for areas of improvement.
* Develop conference plan and timeline.
* Establish event goals and objectives:
  + Target audience (e.g., specific industry or career, general public, university faculty/staff, students)
  + Purpose/goal of the event (e.g., raise funds, provide or gain support, entertain, educate, unify)
  + Verify resources (e.g., time, money, people, and availability).
* Determine date and venue:
  + Select preferred and alternate dates.
  + Select preferred and alternate venues.
  + Submit request to preferred venue and negotiate details.
  + Sign letter of agreement/contract with venue to guarantee dates and pricing.
* Obtain cost estimates (e.g., venue costs, catering, audio/visual support, speaker fees, entertainment, and travel).
* Select hotel and request block of hotel rooms for attendees and speakers (if applicable).
* Create a budget (see budget template for guidance).
* Identify and confirm speakers, VIP guests, entertainers, etc.
  + Discuss venue location, time, date, and fees
  + Have contracts signed (if applicable)
* Identify and contact sponsors and/or partners (if applicable).
* Determine registration fees, if applicable.
* Set up registration process.
* Determine a marketing plan for promoting the conference.
* Create a conference website with all the details about the conference, including a link to registration.

**6 - 9 Months Prior to Conference**

* Begin promoting conference
  + Request logos from corporate sponsors for online and printed materials
    - Design and print postcards, posters, brochures, invitations, etc.
  + Create event page on your website
  + Create email event notices
  + Create a Facebook page
  + Register the event with online event calendars (e.g., Arkansas Newswire)
  + Social media, newsletters, advertisements, radio spots, and blogs.
* Open registration.
* Begin weekly tracking of registration and sleeping room reservations.
* Determine after-hour activities (receptions, tours, networking events, etc.)
* Determine transportation needs and dietary requirements for speakers and distinguished guests (if applicable) and make reservations.

**3 - 6 months Prior to Conference**

* Start developing a conference agenda.
  + Finalize topics with speakers
  + Obtain speaker bio and photo
* Determine AV (audio visual) needs based on the agenda and give to venue coordinator. Ask them to provide a cost estimate for the AV needs and support.
* Send email updates to speakers, with tips for a good presentation, reminders about registration and housing, and information about room setups and AV provisions.
* Determine catering needs. Contact caterer to set menus. Provide options for dietary restrictions.
* Notify venue of parking permit/validation requirements.
* Determine event staffing needs and begin requesting volunteers.

**1 – 3 months Prior to Conference**

* Purchase attendee supplies (name tags, attendee folders, promotional items, etc.)
* Send final email promotion for conference registration. If there is an option for onsite registration, share the location and hours for on-site registration.
* Confirm with vendors, sponsors and partners.
* Send email reminder to registered participants.
* Send event notices to media, if applicable.

**3 - 4 weeks Prior to Conference**

* Send draft of program/agenda to speakers and request copy of speech and/or presentation.
* Check with venue’s coordinator to finalize meeting rooms, setup requirements, catering requests, and audio visual needs. Obtain a signed agreement of estimated final charges.
* Send event notices to media, if applicable.

**1 - 2 weeks Prior to Conference**

* Meet with planning committee chairs to review master plan and verify that all details are completed.
* Schedule appointment with venue management to conduct a walk through with media demonstration.
* Prepare registration packets, name tags, table tents, and any other event materials.
* Finalize agenda
* Print event signage.
* Give final count to caterer.

**1 Day Prior to Conference**

* Touch base with event sub-committees. Review logistics for the event day. Have everyone review their checklists.
* Conduct a pre-conference meeting with venue staff. Get key contact information.
* Walk through meeting space to ensure proper set up.
* Verify all supplies (e.g., blank name badges, paper, pens, tape, stapler, etc..) and all promo items and/or gifts are on-site.
* Post directional signage.
* Touch base with caterer(s) to reconfirm time and order.

**During Conference**

* Make sure you have agenda, instructions, directions, contact numbers, extra parking permits, participant list, and seating chart (if applicable).
* Place water and glass at the podium for each speaker.
* Relax! All planning is done and the conference is here.

**After Conference**

* Send thank you notes to speakers, vendors, sponsors, partners, venue management and volunteers.
* Email post-event survey, including a thank you for participating to conference attendees.
* Create a list of all expenses. Submit unpaid invoices for payment.
* Update budget.
* Hold follow up meeting with conference committee staff. Tie up loose ends, discuss participant and staff evaluations of the event.
* Write a post-event report for what went well and what needed improvement.