Tips on Successful Special Events

* ***Set ticket price high enough*** to generate the desired profit. Determine the ticket price by estimating the overall cost of the event and the number of people who will attend. You can set goals based on staggered amounts (50 donors at $20, 10 donors at $50, 5 donors at $100).
* ***Plan the event well in advance.*** It is important to have enough time to obtain the desired location, properly publicize, send invitations and receive replies, and to arrange catering, entertainment and other logistics of the event. Many popular locations (parks, ballrooms, etc.) are reserved a year in advance. Keynote speakers, bands or other entertainment may need even more advance notice.
* ***Choose your date wisely.*** Check the state party website calendar ([www.vademocrats.org](http://www.vademocrats.org)). to make sure there are no other fundraising events in your locality that day. Consult with local elected officials, candidates or other guests of honor before scheduling an event. Be aware of community activities such as festivals, parades, other groups’ fundraising activities, holidays, etc. when choosing your date. The key is selecting a date and time when most of your targeted audience will attend. **(Note: After you choose a date, forward the information to the state party so that it can be placed on the calendar.)**
* ***Structure ticket sales carefully.*** It is necessary to have a realistic plan of advance ticket sales/reservations and a way to know how many people will attend the event. Monitor ticket sales all along and make necessary adjustments – in food and beverage numbers and other expenditures. Some committees have each of their members take responsibility for selling a specified number of tickets. Others may establish a separate committee to sell tickets. In any event, the key to your success is selling the number of tickets necessary to reach your goal. We recommend using an excel spreadsheet to track this information.
* ***Get your venue, food, and drinks donated!*** There are two ways to cover expenses of events through donations. In-kind donations and sponsorships.
  + **In-kind donations**. An in-kind donation is when an individual donors pays for event items such as food, beverages, or the event venue. Designate someone from your committee to specifically solicit these in-kind donations.
  + **Sponsorships**. Ask local companies or groups to be a sponsor of the event, donating a lump sum to cover some of the direct costs. Sponsors may be interested in contributing funds to cover a specific item such as the entertainment, travel expenses for the guest of honor, food, or beverages. In return for their donation, companies or sponsors should be properly recognized. This may take the form of a listing in a program or on signs at the event. Verbal acknowledgement and thanks during the event is also appropriate.
  + Always write a thank you letter to anyone who donates items or funds for your event. (Note: Be sure to list all these direct donations as *‘in kind’ contributions* on your financial records and reports)
* ***Negotiate for the best prices.*** Most caterers and hotels are negotiable. Request proposals from several different vendors and compare prices. Use this process of competition to negotiate prices. Also, if a hotel or caterer can anticipate future business from your group, they may be more negotiable.
* ***Maintain records for future use***!! Keep records of people who donated funds or items, volunteers, and people who attended in a spreadsheet format or database. This information will be useful again next year as well as during campaigns. Please make sure to share these records with multiple committee members; for successful annual fundraising events it is imperative to keep the institutional knowledge from prior events.