SELECTING YOUR EVENT SPACE

GATHER BASIC INFORMATION
• Name of hotel or venue
• List of all contact persons and their contact information
• Cancellation policy
• Deposit required
• Group rate for rooms
• Meeting room rates
• Banquet facilities
• Caterer
• Business services
• Audiovisual services
• Parking

SIZE OF SPACE
• Consider the room set-up when determining the appropriate size – you don’t want attendees to be cramped, but you also don’t want to have an overabundance of space.
• Room should have space for A/V equipment, stage, podium, and floral needs, if applicable.
• If you need to schedule breaks, ensure the room has space or you can use a surrounding pre-function area.
• Develop a scale drawing of the room space for set-up.
  o Distribute to volunteers, set-up crew, event assistants, etc.

OVERALL APPEARANCE
• Check for:
  o Panels on ceiling showing dirt or water damage.
  o Dirty air filters. Request that they be changed, if need be.
  o Cleanliness of windows.
  o Stability and appearance of chairs and tables.
  o Appearance of nearby bathrooms.
  o Cleanliness and upkeep of carpeting/wood floors.

COMFORT OF ROOM
• Make sure the room temperature is comfortable and can be adjusted.
• Check for unpleasant odors, perhaps from food or cleaning solutions.
• Ensure that the room is insulated from loud noises (outside, near a kitchen, etc.) that might distract your guest(s).

LIGHTING
• Make sure lights are functioning and set according to preference.
• Ensure adequate lighting for your speaker.
If you have A/V equipment, ensure it can be seen in well-lit venues. If not, you may need to rent pipe and drape.

POSITIONING
- If people are to advance to the stage, make sure they are seated on aisles or at tables close to the stage area.
- When seating large numbers in classroom-style seating, ensure you have at least 1-2 aisles.
- If there is a speaker:
  - Seat group facing the longest wall in the room so that the presenter can be easily seen.
  - Try to place the speaker in front of a plain surface. Placing speakers in front of windows, shiny surfaces, or busy backgrounds can produce distracting elements and diminish attention to the message.
  - Ensure your A/V equipment does not obscure the speaker’s line of vision. For example, if you have a screen set up behind the speaker, ensure the projector hits above the speaker’s head, not in his/her eyes.
  - Place rope and stanchion across back seat rows, forcing people to fill front rows first.
  - Ensure there is enough room between the stage and the first row of guests.
  - If room has columns or obstructions, ensure attendees can still see speaker.

SOUND/AUDIOVISUAL
- Ensure the sound system is in excellent working condition.
- Always ask for a sound operator to assist throughout the entire event. Sound is essential to the success of an event and is a full-time commitment – you will not be able to monitor sound for the entire duration of the event.
- Ask your speakers/VIPs what types of mics they would prefer prior to your event.
- Perform a sound check before the meeting starts and ensure your speaker/VIPs are comfortable with sound equipment.
- Have an additional microphone on hand in case of technical difficulties.
- If holding a town hall meeting or event where audience members will need to speak, ensure the audience is equipped with microphones.
- Ensure venue can provide all A/V needs; if not, ask a colleague who understands your A/V equipment to assist.
- Ask if room has wireless capabilities.
- If needed, determine if meeting/event can be videotaped/recorded for your archives.
- When planning, consider building maintenance schedules and neighboring room noises.
- Does the room have a Business Center nearby for guests to use if needed?
TABLE OPTIONS
• Square or rectangular tables are preferred for instructional meetings and training sessions.
• Round tables are preferred for encouraging discussion and are conducive for creative thinking.
• If holding a reception, ask for both high boys and cocktail rounds, depending on your needs. Guests will appreciate areas to place their drinks/plates (high boys) and some may prefer to sit (cocktail rounds).
• If guests are listening to a speaker for an extended period of time, ensure they are facing him/her (i.e. rounds are difficult, since half of the attendees will have their backs toward the speaker).
• Ensure you know how many people can sit comfortably at each table. All venues are different and not all rounds/rectangular tables are the same size.

VISIBILITY
• Make sure presentations, overheads, and handouts use a large enough typeface for guests to easily view the material.
  o Provide supplemental materials for guests if they will have difficulty reading off the A/V screens.
• Ensure all participants can see one another.

CATERING
• What are standard group offerings for meals and breaks?
• Can menus be created or tailored to your group?
• Are extra charges applied for events that run over schedule?
• Are soft drink machines/vending machines nearby if you are not providing breaks?
• Ensure the catering company knows you are tax-exempt – provide necessary paperwork for them to file.
• Ask if the caterer has additional décor you could use for centerpieces, check-in table decorations, stage embellishments, etc.

OTHER HELPFUL HINTS
• Make sure to assess the location of the room in relation to the building:
  o Is the room easy to find?
  o How much signage/volunteer support will be needed?
  o Is parking easily accessible nearby?
  o Are restrooms nearby?
• Ensure that attendees can leave the room without disturbing others.
• If event will require extensive writing or run longer than two hours:
  o Seat guests at tables.
  o Consider asking the speaker to give participants a stretch break, especially if chairs are not particularly comfortable.
• Provide plenty of ice water, drinking glasses, note pads, pencils, mints, etc.