

The Corporate Event Preparation Checklist

Three step-by-step tracks for the events companies in the Greater Toronto Area actually run — conferences, trade shows and company celebrations — plus the budget sheet, vendor lead-time guide and day-of run sheet to go with them.

Conferences & seminars

Trade shows, conventions & launches

Holiday parties, team days & town halls

Print it. Tick it. Ship the event.

Built for office managers, EAs, HR and marketing teams who plan events on top of their day job.

corpevent.ca

Greater Toronto Area · Southern
Ontario

How to use this checklist

Pick the track that matches your event, work the phases top to bottom, and use the shared tools at the back for money, vendors and the day itself. Every task is written so that you can hand a page to a colleague and they can own it.

A

Conferences & seminars

Half-day to multi-day, 40–800 attendees, speakers, sessions, registration. Includes AGMs with external guests and customer summits.

B

Trade shows, conventions & launches

You are either hosting a show or exhibiting at one. Booths, leads, shipping, show services and product launch events.

C

Company events

Holiday parties, summer socials, team-building days, staff appreciation, town halls and milestone celebrations.

The master timeline (all tracks)

6–12 months out	3–4 months	6–8 weeks	2–3 weeks	Week of	Day of / after
Goals, budget, date, venue hold, key vendors for peak dates	Contracts signed, program drafted, save-the-date sent	Invites out, menus and AV locked, run-of-show v1	Final numbers, dietary list, floor plan, signage to print	Confirm every vendor in writing, brief staff, pack the kit	Run sheet, contacts, wrap-up and reconcile

What's inside

1. Track A — Conference & seminar checklist (2 pages)
2. Track B — Trade show, convention & product-launch checklist (2 pages)
3. Track C — Company event checklist (2 pages)
4. Vendor booking lead times in the GTA + questions to ask every vendor
5. Budget worksheet
6. Day-of run sheet, contact sheet and emergency kit
7. Post-event wrap-up + Ontario compliance quick reference

Five things to decide before anything else

- ☐ **Why.** One sentence: what should be different for the company after this event?
- ☐ **Who.** Attendee count (realistic, not aspirational) and whether guests are staff, clients, partners or public.
- ☐ **How much.** A total number, signed off, before you call a venue. Use the worksheet on page 9.
- ☐ **When.** Two candidate dates. Check statutory holidays, school breaks, industry shows, playoff runs and the last two weeks of December.
- ☐ **Who owns it.** One named lead with decision authority. Committees plan slowly and pay more.

Rule of thumb: if your date is in November–December or May–June, treat every lead time in this guide as the minimum and add four weeks. GTA venues, caterers and photo booths sell out those months first.

Conference & seminar checklist

For half-day workshops through multi-day conferences, customer summits, AGMs with external attendees and internal leadership offsites with a formal program.

Foundation

6–12 MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Write the event brief: purpose, audience, format (in-person / hybrid), success measures
- ☐ Set the total budget and the approval chain for overages
- ☐ Choose two candidate dates; check against industry calendars and stat holidays
- ☐ Build the core team: lead, content owner, logistics owner, comms owner
- ☐ Shortlist 3–5 venues sized to your *plenary* headcount, plus breakout rooms
- ☐ Site-visit finalists: load-in access, ceiling height for screens, Wi-Fi capacity, parking, transit, accessibility
- ☐ Place a first-right-of-refusal hold; confirm in-house AV and catering exclusivity rules before signing
- ☐ Sign the venue contract; diarise deposit, attrition and cancellation dates
- ☐ Invite keynote speakers; confirm fees, travel and AV needs in writing
- ☐ If sponsored: build the sponsorship package and start outreach

Program & partners

3–4 MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Draft the agenda: session lengths, breaks every 90 minutes, buffer between rooms
- ☐ Confirm all speakers, moderators and panelists; collect bios and headshots
- ☐ Book an AV / production company (see lead times, page 8); request a tech rider per room
- ☐ Book catering or confirm venue menus; decide on plated vs. buffet vs. stations per meal
- ☐ Book event photographer / videographer; brief them on must-have shots
- ☐ Set up registration (ticketing tool or form) with dietary and accessibility fields
- ☐ Send save-the-date; publish an event page
- ☐ Book room blocks at 1–2 nearby hotels if attendees travel
- ☐ Arrange shuttles if the venue is off-transit or the hotel is more than a 10-minute walk
- ☐ Order branded items with long lead times: lanyards, signage structures, welcome kits

Lock it down

6–8 WEEKS OUT

- ☐ Send invitations; schedule two reminders
- ☐ Collect speaker slides in your template; set a slide deadline 10 days out
- ☐ Finalize the floor plan: stage, screens, registration desk, sponsor tables, quiet room
- ☐ Confirm the menu and per-person price; note the final-numbers deadline (usually 72 h – 7 days)
- ☐ Design and proof signage: directional, room names, sponsor recognition, schedule boards
- ☐ Prepare the run-of-show v1 (minute-by-minute) and share with AV and venue
- ☐ Book staffing: registration, room monitors, coat check, bartenders for a reception
- ☐ Confirm hybrid setup: streaming platform, camera positions, remote moderator
- ☐ Print or order name badges; plan an on-site badge printer for late adds
- ☐ Order gifts / swag; confirm delivery to the venue and who signs for it

Final stretch

2–3 WEEKS OUT

- ☐ Send final headcount and dietary list to catering; confirm allergy handling
- ☐ Do a full tech rehearsal with AV: every mic, clicker, video and stream link
- ☐ Confirm speaker arrival times and green-room needs
- ☐ Walk the venue with the venue manager: power, Wi-Fi password, loading dock hours
- ☐ Assign every staff and volunteer a role, a shift and a radio/WhatsApp group
- ☐ Prepare the contact sheet and emergency plan (page 10)
- ☐ Send a "know before you go" email: address, parking, agenda, dress code, app link
- ☐ Pack the event kit (page 10) and print run sheets for each room lead

Week of, day of, and the 48 hours after

Week of

7 - 1 DAYS OUT

- ☐ Reconfirm every vendor in writing: arrival time, contact on site, what they bring
- ☐ Load final slides onto the show laptop and a backup USB; test fonts and video
- ☐ Print: agendas, badges, table tents, place cards, signage, feedback QR codes
- ☐ Brief the registration team: check-in flow, walk-ins, VIP handling, lost badges
- ☐ Confirm the sponsor deliverables list and who is receiving their materials
- ☐ Prepare a seating or room-assignment plan if sessions are capped
- ☐ Set the social media plan: hashtag, who posts, what can be photographed

Day of

SHOW DAY

- ☐ Arrive before AV load-in; walk every room with the run sheet
- ☐ Sound-check every microphone, confirm clicker and confidence monitor
- ☐ Registration open 45–60 minutes before the first session; coffee ready 15 minutes before doors
- ☐ Speaker check-in: mic fitted, slides confirmed, water, timer visible
- ☐ Hold a 5-minute standing huddle with all staff at doors-minus-30
- ☐ Keep one person "floating" — not assigned to a room — to absorb problems
- ☐ Push session-change announcements 5 minutes before each break ends
- ☐ Collect feedback while people are still in the room (QR on last slide)
- ☐ Check catering refresh points against the run sheet; move breaks if sessions overrun
- ☐ Photograph sponsor signage and packed rooms for reports
- ☐ Supervise strike: gifts, banners, AV, leftover materials, lost-and-found

After

WITHIN 48 HOURS - 2 WEEKS

- ☐ Send a thank-you email with slides, recordings and the survey link within 24 hours
- ☐ Thank speakers and sponsors personally; share photos they can post
- ☐ Collect vendor invoices; reconcile against quotes and the budget sheet
- ☐ Hold a 30-minute debrief: what to keep, fix, drop — while it's fresh
- ☐ Log attendance vs. registration (no-show rate) for next year's planning
- ☐ Write the one-page event report for leadership
- ☐ Rebook the venue and key vendors for next year while the date is still open

Format notes. Sessions longer than 60 minutes lose the room. Keep panels to 3 speakers plus a moderator. Plan a 20-minute "nothing scheduled" buffer before lunch — every conference runs late and this is where you claw it back.

Ontario notes. If alcohol is served at a venue without a liquor licence (offices, galleries, some lofts), you need an AGCO Special Occasion Permit — apply at least 10 days ahead (30 for large or public events). Anyone serving must hold Smart Serve. Music played to guests is licensed through Entandem (SOCAN + Re:Sound) unless your venue's licence covers it — ask.

Headcount sanity check

Registered $\times$ 0.75–0.85 = expected attendance for free internal events. Paid or external events run 0.85–0.95. Order catering at the expected number plus 5%, not the registered number.

Trade show, convention & product-launch checklist

Two situations, one page each: **exhibiting** at somebody else's show (this page) and **hosting** your own convention, expo or product launch (next page).

Exhibiting — commit

4-6 MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Set objectives in numbers: qualified leads, meetings booked, demos given
- ☐ Book the booth; get the floor plan and pick a corner or aisle-end if budget allows
- ☐ Read the exhibitor manual cover to cover — note every deadline and surcharge
- ☐ Decide: rent a modular booth, buy a portable display, or custom build
- ☐ Book a display / exhibit company; request renders and a load-in plan
- ☐ Reserve hotel rooms in the official block before it closes
- ☐ Book show services early-bird: electrical, internet, carpet, furniture, lead-retrieval

Exhibiting — build

6-10 WEEKS OUT

- ☐ Finalize booth graphics; proof at 100% for typos and low-res logos
- ☐ Order branded giveaways and a small stock of premium gifts for key prospects
- ☐ Plan the demo: who presents, on what device, backup if the Wi-Fi fails
- ☐ Pre-book meetings with target accounts; send invitations with a booth-map link
- ☐ Book a photographer for booth shots, or brief a staffer with a phone tripod
- ☐ Arrange shipping: advance warehouse vs. direct-to-show; label every crate
- ☐ Prepare the lead-capture form and CRM import template
- ☐ Schedule booth staffing in 3-4 hour shifts; never fewer than two people
- ☐ Decide on in-booth catering or a hospitality suite; check show rules on outside food

Exhibiting — show week

LOAD-IN TO LOAD-OUT

- ☐ Confirm freight arrival with the show's material handler; bring the tracking numbers
- ☐ Supervise set-up; photograph the finished booth before the floor opens
- ☐ Brief staff: the 30-second pitch, qualifying questions, how to end a conversation
- ☐ Run the lead-retrieval scanner test; export leads every evening
- ☐ Restock literature and giveaways at every shift change
- ☐ Post daily on social with the show hashtag
- ☐ Book outbound freight and the return of rental items before the floor closes
- ☐ Follow up every lead within 5 business days, hottest first

Booth staffing rules that work

- ☐ Stand, don't sit. No phones on the counter.
- ☐ One person greets, one person demos, one person captures.
- ☐ Wear the same branded layer; comfortable shoes are a requirement, not a suggestion.
- ☐ Water and snacks under the counter — nobody leaves the booth hungry or dehydrated.
- ☐ Set a leads-per-shift target and read it out at the morning huddle.

Exhibitor packing list

- ☐ Extension cords, power bars, gaffer tape, zip ties
- ☐ Spare graphics clips, Velcro, a small toolkit
- ☐ Tablets / laptops fully charged, chargers, a mobile hotspot
- ☐ Business cards, printed one-pagers, QR sign to the landing page
- ☐ Hand sanitiser, wipes, lint roller, stain pen
- ☐ Lead forms as a paper backup
- ☐ Shipping labels and packing materials for the return
- ☐ Show badges, exhibitor manual, contact list, insurance certificate

Budget reality. Booth space is usually only 30-40% of the true cost. Display, show services, freight, travel, giveaways and staff time make up the rest. Price the whole thing before you commit to the square footage.

Hosting your own convention, expo or product launch

Concept & venue

9-12 MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Define the audience and the business case: attendee revenue, sponsor revenue, pipeline, brand
- ☐ Pick the format: exhibition floor, sessions, launch reveal, hands-on demo zones
- ☐ Book a venue with true exhibition capability: floor load, drive-in doors, rigging points, power distribution
- ☐ Confirm venue exclusives (AV, catering, security, electrical) — these drive cost
- ☐ Build the floor plan with an exhibit company; plan aisle widths and fire-code clearances
- ☐ Set exhibitor pricing and the sponsorship ladder; open sales
- ☐ Engage an event production company for staging, lighting, LED walls and show-calling

Sell & build

3-6 MONTHS OUT

- ☐ Launch the event website and registration; segment attendee vs. exhibitor vs. press
- ☐ Publish the exhibitor manual: deadlines, move-in schedule, insurance, height limits
- ☐ Contract show services partners: electrical, carpet, furniture, drayage/material handling
- ☐ Book catering for attendees, exhibitor lounges and VIP hospitality separately
- ☐ Book security, first aid, coat check and registration staffing
- ☐ Plan media: press list, embargo times, a media room with power and Wi-Fi
- ☐ Book entertainment or a keynote act for the opening or closing
- ☐ Design the signage package: entrance feature, wayfinding, aisle signs, sponsor loops
- ☐ Arrange parking / shuttle plan with the venue; confirm loading dock scheduling

Show-ready

2-6 WEEKS OUT

- ☐ Send exhibitors their final move-in times, booth numbers and dock instructions
- ☐ Freeze the run-of-show for the main stage; rehearse the launch moment end-to-end
- ☐ Print badges by type; test scanners and the badge-printing station
- ☐ Confirm insurance certificates from every exhibitor and vendor
- ☐ Walk the floor plan on site with the fire marshal / venue safety officer if required
- ☐ Brief volunteers and floor managers; assign zones and radios
- ☐ Final catering counts by function; confirm dietary stations

Product launch

LAYER THESE ONTO THE ABOVE

specifics

- ☐ Decide the reveal mechanic (curtain, LED wall, live demo) and rehearse it three times
- ☐ Confirm demo units, spares, and a technician on standby
- ☐ Prepare the press kit: images, spec sheet, executive quotes, embargo date
- ☐ Set up a photo / video moment for guests (branded backdrop or photo booth)
- ☐ Plan a hospitality element: reception, chef stations, signature cocktail
- ☐ Decide who speaks, for how long, in what order — and who is the show-caller
- ☐ Prepare gifts for VIPs, media and partners; hand them at exit, not entry
- ☐ Livestream or record for the sales team and markets that couldn't attend

After the show

1-3 WEEKS

- ☐ Send exhibitor and attendee surveys within 48 hours
- ☐ Reconcile show-services invoices; challenge unexplained drayage or labour charges
- ☐ Share attendance and lead data with sponsors and exhibitors
- ☐ Publish the highlight video and photo gallery
- ☐ Open early-bird rebooking for next year while the excitement is fresh

Move-in is where shows go wrong. Schedule dock times in 30-minute slots, put your most experienced person on the dock, and keep a printed exhibitor list with mobile numbers. Nothing on the floor matters if the crates don't arrive in the right order.

Company event checklist

Holiday parties, summer socials, staff appreciation days, team-building outings, town halls and milestone celebrations. Smaller than a conference, but with the highest expectations — your own people are the audience.

Decide

3-6 MONTHS OUT (6+ FOR DECEMBER)

- ☐ Pick the type: seated dinner, cocktail reception, activity + food, daytime offsite, family event
- ☐ Confirm budget per person and whether plus-ones are included
- ☐ Survey staff on two dates and on-site vs. off-site (a 3-question poll is enough)
- ☐ Book the venue or restaurant — December Fridays and Saturdays in the GTA go first
- ☐ Book the headline element early: team-building provider, live band or DJ, food trucks, photo booth
- ☐ Decide alcohol policy: open bar, drink tickets, dry — and how people get home safely
- ☐ Name a planning lead and a "vibe" committee of 2-3 people from different teams

Book

6-10 WEEKS OUT

- ☐ Confirm catering: style (stations, buffet, plated), kids' options if families attend
- ☐ Collect dietary and accessibility needs with the RSVP
- ☐ Book entertainment and confirm the tech rider (power, space, load-in)
- ☐ Book decor / florals or plan a DIY theme kit; confirm what the venue already provides
- ☐ Book rentals if the space is bare: tables, chairs, linens, lounge furniture, heaters or a tent for outdoor events
- ☐ Book photographer or photo booth; decide on a branded print or GIF layout
- ☐ Arrange transportation: shuttle from the office, taxi / rideshare credits, or a designated-driver plan
- ☐ Order gifts or awards; check engraving and delivery lead times
- ☐ Send invitations with an RSVP deadline two weeks before the event

Finalize

2 WEEKS OUT

- ☐ Chase RSVPs; send the final headcount and dietary list to the caterer and venue
- ☐ Write a simple run sheet: arrival, welcome remarks, food service, awards, entertainment, last call
- ☐ Prepare the executive's speaking notes — 3 minutes, thank people by name
- ☐ Confirm seating plan or table assignments if it's a seated dinner
- ☐ Print signage, place cards, menu cards and the photo-booth backdrop artwork
- ☐ Confirm venue timings: setup access, doors, last call, hard out
- ☐ Brief staff volunteers: greeters, raffle, awards handoff, drink tickets
- ☐ Send the "what to expect" note: dress code, parking, plus-one policy, start time

Day of & after

- ☐ Arrive 90 minutes early; walk the room with the venue contact and caterer
- ☐ Test music, mics and the photo booth before the first guest
- ☐ Greet at the door for the first 30 minutes — it sets the tone
- ☐ Keep speeches short and early, before the food goes cold and the bar gets busy
- ☐ Confirm everyone has a safe way home; have taxi numbers at the coat check
- ☐ Thank the team on Monday with photos; share the gallery link
- ☐ Reconcile invoices; note what was over-ordered for next year

Format add-ons: holiday party, team-building day, town hall

Layer the relevant column onto the core Track C checklist.

Holiday party

- ☐ Book by September for December; venues with a good bar and dance floor go first
- ☐ Decide on a theme and a dress code that works for everyone — "festive" beats "black tie"
- ☐ Plan the flow: cocktails → dinner → short remarks → awards → entertainment
- ☐ Drink tickets or a capped bar keep costs predictable and the evening civil
- ☐ Offer good non-alcoholic options — mocktails, not just pop
- ☐ Raffle or door prizes: buy locally, keep them useful
- ☐ Photo booth with a branded print is the highest-rated item in most staff surveys
- ☐ Transportation home: shuttle, rideshare codes, or hotel rate nearby
- ☐ Consider a daytime or family-friendly alternative for staff who don't do evening events

Team-building day

- ☐ Choose the goal: connection, problem-solving, onboarding, celebration — the activity follows
- ☐ Pick a provider who runs corporate groups weekly, not a venue that "can do" groups
- ☐ Check group-size limits and whether the activity splits into teams of 6–10
- ☐ Indoor backup for any outdoor plan; rain moves fast in the GTA
- ☐ Physical-ability inclusivity: every activity needs a role for someone who can't run, climb or lift
- ☐ Food: working lunch or a proper break? Budget time for both
- ☐ Transportation if the site is off-transit; leave the office together
- ☐ Facilitated debrief at the end — 15 minutes, what did we learn about how we work
- ☐ Keep it in work hours unless attendance is truly optional

Town hall / AGM / milestone

- ☐ Confirm the message first; the event exists to land it
- ☐ Hybrid is standard: book AV with a proven stream setup and a remote-Q&A moderator
- ☐ Rehearse executives with a clicker and confidence monitor; time every segment
- ☐ Plan the Q&A mechanism: live mics, Slido-style tool, or pre-submitted
- ☐ Record it; caption it; post within 24 hours for those who missed it
- ☐ For AGMs with shareholders: registration, proxy handling, minutes, quorum count
- ☐ Milestones (10 years, 100 staff, acquisition): a short video or timeline wall beats a long speech
- ☐ Recognition: name people; awards with a sentence about why
- ☐ Feed people well — a town hall with good food gets attended

Ontario notes for company events. Non-cash gifts and awards to employees are generally non-taxable up to a combined \$500 fair-market value per year under CRA policy; cash and near-cash (gift cards) are taxable — check with your accountant. Any staff, agency or volunteer serving alcohol needs Smart Serve. If your office hosts the party and you serve alcohol, you need an AGCO Special Occasion Permit. Under AODA, make sure the venue, the activity and the invitation are accessible, and ask for accommodation needs on the RSVP.

The three things staff actually remember: whether the food was good and there was enough of it; whether leadership showed up and stayed; and whether they got home easily. Spend there first, then on decor.

Vendor booking lead times in the GTA

Typical minimums for a well-run booking. Peak season (November–December, May–June, and any Friday/Saturday) means the longer end of every range, or earlier.

SERVICE	BOOK BY	WHAT TO HAVE READY WHEN YOU CALL	QUESTIONS TO ASK
Venues & conference spaces	6–12 months (Dec: 9–12)	Date options, headcount, format, budget range, AV needs, whether you need exclusivity	Catering/AV exclusives? Attrition clause? Load-in hours? Wi-Fi capacity? Accessible entrance?
Corporate event planners	4–9 months	Event brief, budget, what you will handle in-house	Fee model (flat / % / hourly)? Who is on site on the day? Vendor mark-ups?
Catering	4–8 weeks (Dec: 8–12)	Headcount, service style, dietary profile, venue kitchen access, timing	Staffing ratio included? Rentals included? Final-count deadline? Allergen protocol?
AV & event production	4–8 weeks (large shows: 3–6 months)	Floor plan, run-of-show, speaker count, screens/streaming needs, venue power info	Technician on site all day? Backup for the main laptop and mics? Rehearsal included?
Photography / videography	4–8 weeks	Shot list, schedule, delivery format and deadline, usage (web, print, press)	Turnaround time? Edited vs. raw? Second shooter for large rooms?
Entertainment (DJ, band, MC, acts)	6–12 weeks (Dec: 3–5 months)	Audience profile, set length, space and power available, must-play / do-not-play	Tech rider? Breaks and background music between sets? Backup performer policy?
Decor & florals	4–8 weeks	Venue photos, colours/brand, focal points (stage, entrance, tables), strike time	Set-up and strike included? Rentals vs. purchase? Candles allowed by venue?
Rentals (tents, tables, chairs, linens)	3–6 weeks (tents: 6–10, permits may apply)	Item list with quantities, delivery window, site access, ground type for tents	Delivery and pickup fees? Damage waiver? Who sets up? Tent permit needed?
Food trucks	3–6 weeks	Headcount, service window, site (power, water, parking length), guaranteed minimum	Serving rate per hour? Minimum spend? Dietary menu? Do they need power from you?
Photo booths	3–6 weeks (Dec: 8–12)	Hours of operation, print or digital, branding artwork, space (approx. 3 m × 3 m)	Attendant included? Unlimited prints? Delivery of the gallery? Backdrop options?
Team-building providers	4–8 weeks	Group size, goal, duration, on-site vs. their site, physical-ability range	Facilitator-to-group ratio? Weather backup? Customisation? Minimum group?
Event staffing & bartenders	2–4 weeks	Shift times, roles, headcount, dress code, Smart Serve requirement	Minimum hours? Supervisor included? Replacement guarantee for no-shows?
Transportation (shuttles, coaches, executive cars)	3–6 weeks	Pickup/drop points, timings, passenger count, accessibility needs	Wait-time policy? Driver gratuity? Insurance and licensing? Tracking for guests?
Corporate gifts & branded swag	4–8 weeks (custom: 8–12)	Quantity, budget per unit, logo files (vector), ship-to address, deadline	Proof before production? Rush options? Individual packaging or bulk?

Ask every vendor, every time: proof of liability insurance (most venues require \$2M–\$5M), a single point of contact with a mobile number for event day, the cancellation and weather policy in writing, and what happens if the event runs 30 minutes over.

Budget worksheet

Fill in the estimate before you request quotes, the quoted column as they arrive, and the actual after the invoices. The share column is a typical range for a mid-size corporate event — use it to spot a line that's out of proportion, not as a rule.

LINE ITEM	TYPICAL SHARE	ESTIMATE	QUOTED	ACTUAL	NOTES
Venue rental, room set-up, security deposit	15–30%				
Food & beverage (incl. service charge, gratuity, HST)	25–40%				
Bar / alcohol, bartenders, permit	5–12%				
AV, staging, lighting, streaming, technicians	8–20%				
Event planner / coordinator fees	0–15%				
Speakers, entertainment, DJ, band, activities	5–15%				
Decor, florals, signage, printing	3–10%				
Rentals (furniture, tents, linens, tableware)	0–10%				
Photography, videography, photo booth	2–6%				
Staffing (registration, servers, coat check, brand ambassadors)	2–6%				
Transportation, parking, hotel blocks	0–8%				
Gifts, swag, awards, welcome kits	2–8%				
Registration tool, event app, website, marketing	1–5%				
Insurance, permits, licences (SOP, music, tent)	1–2%				
Contingency (do not skip)	8–10%				
Total	100%				
Cost per attendee (total ÷ expected attendance)					

Quotes that look cheap usually aren't. Check whether each quote includes HST, gratuity or service charge (often 15–20% on F&B), delivery and pickup, set-up and strike labour, overtime rates, and damage waivers. Compare on the all-in number only.

Where to cut without anyone noticing: decor, printed materials, premium bar brands, a second photographer. **Where cuts show immediately:** food quantity, AV, staffing at the door, and transportation home.

Day-of run sheet, contact sheet & emergency kit

Run sheet (copy one row per segment)

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	OWNER	VENDOR / ROOM
	Vendor load-in begins		
	AV sound check		
	Staff huddle		
	Doors / registration open		
	Welcome remarks		
	Last call / closing		
	Strike complete, venue walk-through		

Contact sheet

ROLE	NAME	MOBILE
Event lead		
Venue manager on duty		
Catering lead		
AV lead		
Entertainment / MC		
Photographer / booth		
Transportation dispatcher		
Security / first aid		
Executive sponsor		

Emergency & "just in case" kit

- ☐ Printed run sheets, floor plan, contact sheet, vendor contracts
- ☐ Printed guest list and dietary list; spare blank badges and markers
- ☐ Gaffer tape, scissors, zip ties, safety pins, Velcro dots
- ☐ Extension cords, power bars, phone chargers, a spare clicker with batteries
- ☐ USB with all slides and videos; HDMI and USB-C adapters
- ☐ First-aid kit; location of the venue AED and nearest hospital
- ☐ Stain remover, lint roller, sewing kit, painkillers, tissues
- ☐ Cash float and a company card for last-minute buys
- ☐ Water, granola bars — staff rarely get to eat
- ☐ Umbrellas and a weather plan for any outdoor element
- ☐ Lost-and-found bin and a sign-out sheet for rentals

If something goes wrong

- ☐ **Speaker no-show:** extend the break, pull the panel forward, or run a facilitated Q&A
- ☐ **AV failure:** switch to the backup laptop; the show-caller announces a 5-minute pause, not an apology
- ☐ **Catering short:** tell the caterer immediately; stagger service by table; order backup from a nearby restaurant
- ☐ **Weather:** trigger the indoor plan by a fixed time (e.g. 2 hours before doors); never wait for the sky
- ☐ **Medical incident:** call 911 first, then the venue manager; one person stays with the guest, one meets EMS at the door
- ☐ **Over-served guest:** bartender stops service; a manager arranges a ride home; document it

One radio channel, one WhatsApp group, one decision-maker. Everyone on site should know who can say yes to spending money and changing the schedule.

Post-event wrap-up & Ontario compliance quick reference

Within 24 hours

- ☐ Thank-you message to attendees with photos, slides or recording, and survey link
- ☐ Personal thanks to speakers, sponsors, executives and the staff who worked it
- ☐ Return rentals; confirm nothing was damaged; retrieve items left at the venue
- ☐ Export leads / attendance data and hand it to the right owner

Within 2 weeks

- ☐ Reconcile every invoice against its quote; query anything unexplained
- ☐ Close the budget worksheet: final total, cost per attendee, variance by line
- ☐ Debrief with the team and the main vendors; record three keeps and three fixes
- ☐ Write a one-page report: goal, attendance, cost, feedback score, recommendations
- ☐ Save the vendor list with ratings so next year starts from a known base
- ☐ Rebook the venue and peak-season vendors if you plan to repeat

Feedback questions that actually help

- ☐ Overall, how would you rate the event? (1–10)
- ☐ What was the single best part?
- ☐ What would you change?
- ☐ Was the food, timing and location right for you?
- ☐ Would you attend again / recommend it to a colleague?

Ontario & GTA compliance quick reference

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
Alcohol — Special Occasion Permit	Required to serve or sell alcohol anywhere that isn't a licensed venue (offices, galleries, tents, some lofts). Issued by the AGCO; apply at least 10 days ahead, 30 for large or public events. Alcohol must come from the LCBO / authorised sources.
Smart Serve	Anyone serving alcohol in Ontario — bartenders, servers, volunteers — must hold a valid Smart Serve certificate. Ask staffing agencies for certificate numbers.
Music licensing	Playing recorded or live music for guests needs SOCAN and Re:Sound licences, handled jointly through Entandem. Many venues hold a blanket licence — confirm in writing; DJs and bands don't carry it for you.
Accessibility (AODA)	Choose venues with step-free access and accessible washrooms, provide accommodation requests on the RSVP, caption recordings and make digital invitations screen-reader friendly.
Food safety	Caterers and food trucks should be able to show a current public-health inspection and food-handler certification. Ask about allergen handling and labelling at buffets.
Tents & outdoor structures	Municipal permits are commonly required for larger tents (thresholds vary by city — check Toronto, Mississauga, Vaughan, etc.). Book electrical and fire-safety inspection time into the schedule.
Insurance	Venues typically require certificates of general liability from you and every vendor, often \$2M–\$5M. Event-specific liability coverage is available for one-off events.
Employee gifts (CRA)	Non-cash gifts and awards are generally non-taxable up to a combined \$500 FMV per employee per year; cash and near-cash (gift cards) are taxable benefits. Confirm with your accountant.
Privacy (photos)	Tell guests photography and video are taking place (signage + invitation line); offer an opt-out badge or wristband for anyone who doesn't want to be photographed.

This reference is general information for planning purposes and is not legal, tax or insurance advice. Requirements change — confirm with the venue, the AGCO, your municipality and your advisors.

Now find the people to deliver it.

Corpevent.ca is the corporate event services directory for the Greater Toronto Area and Southern Ontario — venues, planners, caterers, AV and production, entertainment, decor, rentals, food trucks, photo booths, team building, staffing, transportation and corporate gifts, browsable by service and by city from Toronto to Hamilton, Kitchener–Waterloo, Barrie and Durham.

Browse services or request quotes at corpevent.ca

Free for planners

Compare established providers, check what they specialise in, and send one quote request that reaches several of them at once.

Share this checklist

Send it to whoever is planning the next one. It stays free — no sign-up needed to use it.

List your business

Run an event business serving the GTA? Get in front of the office managers, HR teams and marketers who use this checklist.

Coverage

Toronto · Mississauga · Brampton · Vaughan · Markham ·
Richmond Hill · Oakville · Burlington · Hamilton · Kitchener–
Waterloo · Barrie · Oshawa & Durham