

Fergus Falls -- Event Planning Tool Kit

Welcome and thank you for choosing Fergus Falls to host an event. Whether you are a long-time resident or a guest in our community, this tool kit is designed to help you navigate many of the resources to help your event succeed. It was produced in 2011 as an initiative of Forward Fergus Falls. We want your event to succeed. Please don't hesitate to contact us (info at the end of this document).

1. **Dates** - Because Fergus Falls is a relatively small community, multiple events held on the same day can hurt attendance. It's hard to avoid conflicting dates, but the Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau are good organizations to check with about other activities. The ISD #544 School District website is also a good spot to check for calendar information.
 - a. <http://fergusfallschamber.chambermaster.com/events/index/>
 - b. www.visitfergusfalls.com/pages/CalendarofEvents
 - c. www.isd544.org (click on the resources tab - then calendar menu)
2. **Locations** - There are many locations to hold events including indoor and outdoor, some with built-in catering options and others without. Some provide free space and others charge a fee. For a printed event and meeting planning guide call the Convention and Visitors Bureau: 800-726-8959 or [e-mail meetings@visitfergusfalls.com](mailto:meetings@visitfergusfalls.com) or click: www.visitfergusfalls.com/pages/MeetingsConferences. These links provide available meeting space resources and hotel information. Be sure to work with your event site host on required insurance and liability issues. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce has a list of several smaller meeting locations.
3. **Event Services - Vendors & Volunteers.** Depending on your event, you may need the resources of local businesses. Whether looking for a photographer, DJ, caterer, florist or something else, the Chamber of Commerce keeps an updated list of Chamber members offering these services <http://fergusfallschamber.chambermaster.com/list/> or 218-736-6951. Check the downloadable meeting & event planning guide - "professional services" for an online resource www.visitfergusfalls.com/pages/MeetingsConferences. The Chamber of Commerce also maintains a list of local service clubs. They can be a great resource if you need volunteers to help with your event.
4. **City of Fergus Falls** - City staff are a great resource if you are meeting in a public space, selling or serving food or alcohol, or need assistance with roads and routes for a special event such as a parade or street dance.
 - a. **Event Permits** - A special event permit is required for events held in public spaces or using public routes. There is no fee for submitting this form. It is available from Lynne Olson, 218-332-5404, lynne.olson@ci.fergus-falls.mn.us. The completion of this form initiates communication among city staff who should be informed and involved with your event planning - if appropriate (police, public works, etc.). This permit requires City Council approval; allow three weeks.
 - b. **Liquor** - The City Code has several sections dealing with the selling and serving of all types of alcohol. Permits, licenses and fees are all coordinated through Lynne Olson, 218-332-5404, lynne.olson@ci.fergus-falls.mn.us. Some approvals are required by the City Council (which meets twice monthly) and then go on the department of public safety for input. Please allow one month for appropriate approvals to be put in place.
 - i. **Food** - Food vending or serving in public spaces requires input from the **MN Dept. of Health**. Contact 218-332-5152. MDH has strict guidelines regarding food service for festivals and events. You will need to provide plans and permits well in advance (3 weeks minimum) of your event. It is not recommended to follow the "Ask for forgiveness instead of permission" mantra with the MDH.

- ii. Licensing Homepage:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/license/index.html>
 - iii. Special Event Food Stand:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/license/specevent.html>
 - iv. Seasonal Temporary Food Stand:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/license/tempseason.html>
 - v. Hand washing for food handlers:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/handhygiene/food/index.html>
- c. **Park Reservations** - Parks and picnic shelters are available for events. Rental fees vary depending on which site. Contact steve.plaza@ci.fergus-falls.mn.us 218-739-3205 for current rates and availability.
- i. **The Minnesota Department of Health** also regulates special event camping:
 - ii. Special Event Camping Info:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/mhprca/planreview.html>
- d. **Fireworks** - Public display of fireworks requires a fee and permit as well as approval from the fire department. Contact Lynne Olson at 218-332-5404.
- e. **Noise** - City ordinance requires noise levels at events in public spaces to end by 11 p.m. This includes street dances, festivals, parades, etc. If the event host receives a complaint earlier and police ask for lower noise levels - and you do not comply - they can end the event early. Please be respectful of neighbors.
- f. **Public Works** - Events that require street closures, equipment rental (picnic tables, garbage cans, barricades, cones, etc.) should all be arranged through the public works department. Contact at 218-332-5418.
- g. **Police** - the police department is not involved in most events; however it is a good idea to keep them informed if you expect crowds, noise or other activities that may cause them to receive calls from citizens. A courtesy call prior to your event can go a long way in creating understanding and good will, 218-332-5555.
- h. **Raffle Tickets/Sales** - If you are considering raffle ticket sales or contest as part of your event you will need approval from the Fergus Falls City Council first and then the State of Minnesota. For current rules regarding gambling and proper permits, check www.gcb.state.mn.us. According to Minnesota law, raffles may only be conducted by nonprofit organizations. Contact Lynne Olson at 218-332-5404 to file for a license with the city. A \$50 fee (due to the State) for events 30 days + in advance of the planned event and the charge is \$100 if the date is within 30 days. The local Gambling Control Board office is: 218-739-7402

5. Public Relations - Publicity - Promotion

a. Social Media

- i. Social media is another great, mostly free, way to get the word out locally, regionally and nationally about your event.
- ii. Consider creating a **Facebook page** for your event and/or advertising the event on the Facebook pages of sponsoring organizations. Under the Local/Business or Place category on the *Create a Page link* choose "Attractions/Things to Do" and create a page for your event. www.facebook.com.
- iii. Tweet about your event from your own **Twitter account**, a sponsoring organization's Twitter account or create an account for your event. Twitter is a great tool to use to create buzz about your event as it is happening. www.twitter.com.
- iv. Upload promotional videos or videos taken at the event to **YouTube** www.youtube.com or upload photos to **Flickr** www.flickr.com. Both of these social media products help promote your event visually.

- v. You can also link to your Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr accounts from your sponsoring organizations' websites to create an easy way for potential event attendees to link to your social media pages.
- vi. There are many other social media tools available as well and many of them are free or nearly free. Try some of them out and determine which work for you!

b. **Website/Online**

- i. The Daily Journal - newsroom@fergusfallsjournal.com
 - 1. Submit your event on The Daily Journal's calendar
- ii. Fergus Forum - contact@fergusforum.com
- iii. Lakes Radio calendar: <http://www.lakesradio.net/pages/10219752.php?>
- iv. Chamber of Commerce Evens Calendar -
<http://fergusfallschamber.chambermaster.com/events/index/> Just click on the "Submit New Event" on the right-hand side of the page, about halfway down. Fill in all the details and the chamber will review and approve your event to be posted on their website www.fergusfalls.com.
- c. **Readerboards/Private Marquis Signs** - Several privately owned businesses in Fergus Falls are often willing to use their public signs to inform the public about worthy events - especially non-profit events. Send them a 4-6 word draft of the copy you'd like them to display with clear dates (most will run for 3-4 days prior to an event).
- d. **"Neon" Board Rentals** - If you want to put these signs in public space permission is required from the City's Park & Recreation Department. Allow three weeks for approval. Contact Steve at 218-332-5804 steve.plaza@ci.fergus-falls.mn.us.
- e. **Billboard** - Digital Billboard company offer billboard space in the area: Newman Outdoor 800-337-9770.
- f. **Sample News Release** (to be included)
- g. **News Media** - Fergus Falls has a daily newspaper, local cable and radio stations. Larger media markets near us are Alexandria (45 miles to the SE) and Fargo (60 miles to the NW). You are encouraged to send your event news to as many media outlets as possible and we offer this list at no charge. Because media contacts change often, contact the Fergus Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau for the latest list of local and regional media at 800-726-8959. All contacts are electronic.
- h. **Community Bulletin Boards** - Posters are a great way to increase awareness and attendance. Many retailers and restaurants will allow you to post information on their billboards - as long as you do the leg work. For a list of poster locations contact the Chamber of Commerce, 218-736-6951

6. **Contacts** -

- a. Fergus Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau/Visit Fergus Falls 218-332-5425
- b. Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, 218-736-6951

This document was created by the Forward Fergus Falls 10 Signature Events Team.