



How to Plan Your Ribbon Cutting, Grand Opening or Ground Breaking Ceremony

Overview

Congratulations! Your ribbon cutting, grand opening, or groundbreaking represents an important day for your business. This guide is designed to help you plan your ceremony with an overall checklist, followed by details explaining each section. Please keep in mind that every business is different, so not all details will apply. There are no hard-and-fast rules - apply your imagination and tailor your event to fit your unique business.

If you would like to plan a Ribbon Cutting, Grand Opening or Ground Breaking Ceremony please contact Your Garrett County Chamber of Commerce Membership Development Manager Nick Sharps at nick@garrettchamber.com or 301-387-5237.

CHECKLIST

Date

- ❖ Set your date: _____
- ❖ Set your rain date (if your event is outside): _____

As soon as you have a date set be sure to contact the Membership Manager with the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce. The Membership Manager will provide you with a VIP list of local dignitaries to invite. The Membership Manager will also inform the Garrett County Diplomats and the Chamber Board of Directors.





Invitations

- ❖ Prepare a guest list
- ❖ Design invitations
- ❖ Set date to mail/email/fax invitations: _____
- ❖ Designate a contact for RSVPs: _____
- ❖ Date to call or send reminders: _____

Speakers

- ❖ Emcee: _____
- ❖ Guest Speaker(s):

Activities

- ❖ Activities Planned/Details of Ceremony:

- ❖ Materials needed:





Media

- ❖ Prepare Press Release
- ❖ Date to contact local media: _____

Event Staff

- ❖ Set-Up: _____
- ❖ Caterer: _____
- ❖ Giveaway/Door Prizes: _____
- ❖ Parking Assistant: _____
- ❖ Greeters/Ushers: _____
- ❖ VIP Coordinator: _____
- ❖ Tour Guides: _____
- ❖ Music: _____
- ❖ Photographer/Videographer (*Chamber will take photos*): _____
- ❖ Florist: _____
- ❖ Thank Departing Guests: _____
- ❖ Takedown/Clean-Up: _____
- ❖ Ribbon & Scissors (*provided by Garrett County Chamber of Commerce*)

Post-Event Tasks

- ❖ Send Thank-You Notes
- ❖ Post Photos and information on website, social media, newsletter, etc.





DETAILS

Setting Your Date

- ❖ Select a date several weeks (**minimum of 2 weeks**) in advance. Experience shows that events planned for Monday through Friday garner the best attendance and enable officials, dignitaries and Garrett County Diplomats to attend. In general, events earlier in the morning or later in the work day often receive the most media coverage. If you wish the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce to participate, you must be a Chamber member and your ribbon cutting or grand opening date and time **MUST** be confirmed **at least 2 weeks** in advance to ensure inclusion on the agenda.
- ❖ Check for schedule conflicts with other events - i.e., Chamber of Commerce and Garrett County calendars, etc.
- ❖ If your location is under construction, consult your construction team when setting the date. You **MUST** have your Use & Occupancy Permit in order to schedule your event.

Invitations

- ❖ If planning an outdoor event, choose an alternative date or location in case of inclement weather.
- ❖ Plan the type of invitation: formal letter, informal letter, postcard, email or flier. Include your logo and name, the type of event, date and time, address and a method for the recipients to RSVP. You may also include your business card and a map, if appropriate.
- ❖ Consider additional methods of getting the word out such as websites, social media, newsletters or posters. Mail your invitations two to four weeks before the event, and establish a cut-off date for RSVPs, usually about one week before the event.
- ❖ Designate a contact person and method of contact to handle incoming questions and track RSVPs as they are returned. You may want to phone or send email reminders a few days before the event.
- ❖ Your guest list can include many varied individuals from your family and friends to staff; clients; business associates such as bankers, advisors and other professionals; neighboring businesses; volunteer associations; community leaders; elected officials; and the media.





Your Chamber of Commerce Membership Manager will provide you with a list of VIPs. Your Membership Manager will also be responsible for informing the Garrett County Diplomats and the Chamber Board of Directors of your event.

Speakers

- ❖ Choose an emcee to welcome your guests and introduce any other speakers. He or she may also offer a few remarks, thank appropriate persons and recognize VIPs in attendance who will not be speaking.
- ❖ If you plan to include guest speakers, contact them early so they have enough time to prepare remarks and tell them how long they will have to speak. This is typically very brief (two to three minutes). Call to confirm their attendance approximately one week prior to the event.

Plan Activities

- ❖ You may decide to hold a traditional ribbon cutting, grand opening or groundbreaking ceremony, with one or a few brief speeches. You may wish to include other activities, such as tours of your facility, exhibits, recognition of dignitaries, music or other entertainment, a raffle or refreshments. You may also want to have brochures available or a handout of frequently asked questions and answers about your business.
- ❖ If you plan to conduct tours, choose your tour guides in advance, or have a self-guided tour with signs or handouts to direct event attendees.
- ❖ Provide safety items such as hard hats or goggles if necessary and secure or rope off any unsafe areas.
- ❖ If you want to include exhibits, consider posters, blueprints, a scale model or a large map of your facility.
- ❖ Refreshments are not required but should you choose to offer them they can be simple or elaborate, and are usually determined by the time of day when your event is held.

Your Ceremony & Program

- ❖ The actual ceremony is usually brief (about 10 to 15 minutes) and should be planned ahead of time with regard to speaker order, the actual ribbon cutting or groundbreaking and any other activities you plan to include.





- ❖ Ribbon cutting - Decide who will cut the ribbon and notify them in advance. Have the cutter (and any other attendees you desire) stand and face the audience with the ribbon between them and the audience. You may want to have the audience or photographer do a countdown to the actual cutting.
- ❖ Groundbreaking - Stage those involved and have a photographer or volunteer ready with a camera. You may want to have the audience or photographer do a countdown to the actual cutting or groundbreaking.

Media

- ❖ After the event, send a photo with press release to local newspapers and also consider posting it on your website, social media, and in any relevant newsletters.

Materials Needed

- ❖ Materials you may need will depend on the scale of your event and the planned activities. For example, if you have speakers, you may need a podium, microphone and chairs. You may also include decorations and flowers, a large display flag, a welcome sign, name tags and a guest book for people to sign as they enter.
- ❖ If you serve food, determine the number of tables, linens and trash cans needed and their placement.
- ❖ Plan the setup of any A/V equipment you will be using and be sure that if you are not hiring a photographer or videographer, you have someone ready with a camera to capture your big moment.
- ❖ Have a Sharpie pen on hand to have guests sign the ribbon.

If you are a Chamber member and have coordinated with the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce a staff member will be in attendance at your ceremony. That staff member will provide ribbon and scissors for your ceremony and will also bring a camera. None of the Chamber employees are professional photographers so if you would like professional photos of your event please arrange this on your own.





Event Staff

- ❖ Your event can be as simple or elaborate as you choose. Among the professionals you may want to involve are a caterer, a photographer/videographer and a florist. Be sure to contact them early - as soon as you have established the date, time and budget - and call to reconfirm your plans one week before the event.

Designate Coordinators

- ❖ To ensure your event goes smoothly be sure that everyone knows their tasks in advance. If you have a guest book, you may want a greeter to oversee this so each guest signs it upon arrival.
- ❖ If you offer tours, indicate a definite spot for interested persons to gather, and brief your tour guides in advance so they can answer visitors' questions quickly and accurately.

Post-Event Tasks

- ❖ Be sure to follow up with thank-you notes to all your speakers, sponsors and other VIPs who attended, as well as your faithful staff.
- ❖ Consider sharing your photos/videos by posting them online, including them in your newsletter or using any other appropriate means.

The Garrett County Chamber of Commerce is the largest professional business association in Garrett County with nearly 600 member firms representing every industry in the region. The Chamber is governed by a 15-member volunteer Board of Directors and is supported by a professional staff of 9 (6 full-time & 3 part-time).

The Chamber also serves as the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) and the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the County. We are responsible for attracting more than 1.2 million visitors per year to Garrett County. We produce the annual Visitors Guide, Activities Guide, maps, brochures and manage the Visitors Center in McHenry at Deep Creek Lake that hosts more than 30,000 people a year. The Garrett County Visitors Center is located at 15 Visitors Center Drive McHenry, MD 21541 and is open from 9 am - 5 pm daily excluding Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, New Year's Day and Easter Sunday.

The Chamber of Commerce was formed to organize, support and represent Garrett County's business community in advancing common interests and additionally to promote Garrett County's hospitality and recreation industry by attracting visitors to the county through comprehensive marketing.

If you are not a Chamber member but are interested in investing in your business and community check out our official website www.visitdeepcreek.com or contact Membership Development Manager, Nick Sharps at nick@garrettchamber.com or 301-387-5237.