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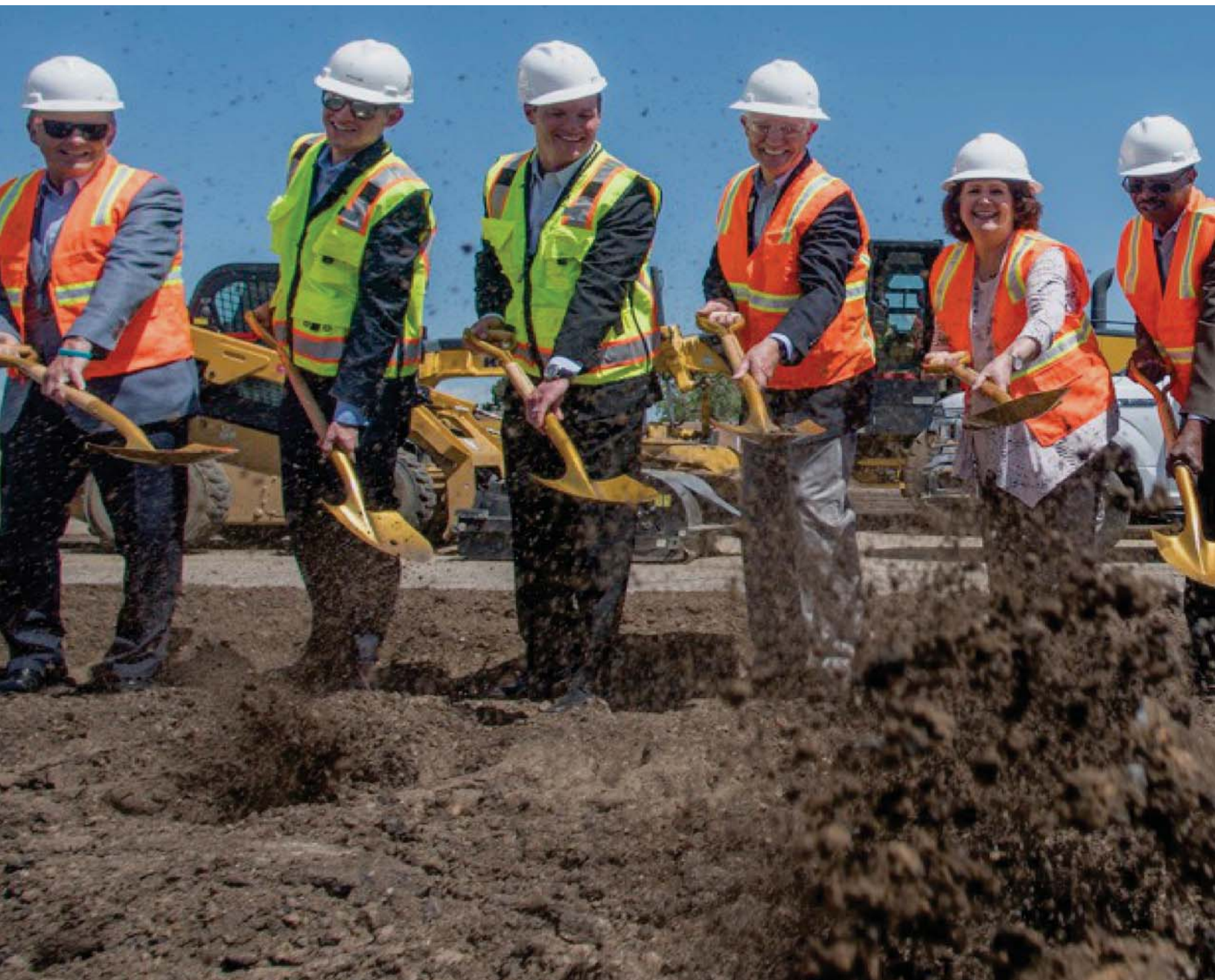


GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

Planning Guide

A comprehensive guide
for planning the perfect
groundbreaking
celebration!

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Introduction

Groundbreaking ceremonies have been around for thousands of years. Originally, they held spiritual significance. Today, a groundbreaking ceremony is a celebration that marks the beginning of new construction. It is an expression of optimism, and of hope for the future. It is an opportunity to bring people together, to generate publicity, to raise public awareness, and to raise support for your venture. It's a way to celebrate the beginning of something new, and to celebrate everyone involved.

Governments, businesses, religious organizations, schools, and more all continue to hold groundbreaking ceremonies to create a memorable moment that marks the start of something great. While some events follow traditional groundbreaking guidelines, groundbreaking ceremonies can be as fun, formal, or creative as you want!

We've written this guide to assist you in designing your own unique, enjoyable, and successful ceremony.



The typical groundbreaking ceremony involves a fair amount of planning and can be as simple or as complex as you wish it to be. The size and type of your organization will dictate the appropriate style, size, and formality required. For example, the groundbreaking ceremony for a Boy Scout camp is unlikely to be as formal as the ceremony for a new bank, or financial organization. Common sense will help you to select the proper level of formality for your event.

You will never have too much time, so begin planning your event at least three months prior to the groundbreaking date. This is a general recommendation as some organizations can move much faster than others. If you dislike stress, leave yourself more time. You will be glad you did!



1. Choose Your Date and Location

Decide at what stage of site preparation or construction to conduct your ceremony. A well planned ceremony should not hold up or otherwise hinder the construction process, so timing can be a very important factor. You may be at the mercy of a construction crew, resulting in an earlier or later beginning date. Just remember – groundbreaking is the symbolic first step, so keep that in mind when deciding when to hold your ceremony. In any case, you will need to dovetail your plans with the contractors or excavators for your project. You may be dealing with subcontractors and third parties, so find out who is responsible for maintaining the overall project schedule.

Ideally, your groundbreaking ceremony should precede or coincide with the actual excavation. This makes it a true groundbreaking. A weekday event is preferable unless the event is open to the public and you desire a larger public turnout. Such would be the case if you are breaking ground for a new stadium. In this case, Saturday would be a more appropriate choice. Ultimately, the availability of key dignitaries, celebrities, and company officials may dictate the chosen day for the event. You should make sure to contact anyone essential to the ceremony to ensure you pick a date that will ensure their attendance.

Mid morning to mid afternoon are prime times to host your event. Give the sun time to rise and dry the dew from the ground. Since most groundbreakings are outdoors, you'll want to keep small details in mind, like where the sun will be at your chosen time, or what will be the best angle for photography.





If your groundbreaking location is within a construction zone, check the laws regarding safety equipment. If it is required by law, make sure to provide hard hats for all guests. Engineers, surveyors and construction workers typically stake out excavation and foundation areas with wooden stakes and ribbons after initial site preparation has been completed, so you should have no trouble finding construction zone locations.



The ideal location for a groundbreaking ceremony is on the property where the construction will take place. Flat or gently sloping areas with good drainage are easier to access and more likely to be dry on the day of the groundbreaking. An open area is preferred, with plenty of room for people, chairs, and the ceremonial trappings. You may want an elevated platform if your event will include speeches or presentations and you are expecting a large crowd. A designated area for the groundbreaking should be chosen that will accommodate all the participants and provide a good photo opportunity for the press. Keep enough distance between your guests and the ceremony so everyone can see.



If you're careful to consider all these things, you should have no problem coming up with the perfect date and time for your event!

2. Choose Your Team



There are many details involved in planning and executing a successful event. Every organization should designate a leader and committee members who will be responsible for organizing and running the event. A large corporation may hire an event company or agency for this role, but they will still need a liaison to communicate the company's wishes. For purposes of this guide, we will assume that you (and/or your team) will be the planners.

Once you agree on a team leader, run through the list of tasks and distribute them to your team. Discuss each task and appoint the person who is best suited to fulfill that role. Set up incremental meeting dates leading up to your event to review progress and adjust assignments.





Coordinator

The coordinator should be a designated leader responsible for organizing and running the event.



Committee

A committee will support the coordinator in fulfilling the tasks involved with planning the event. The coordinator will assign tasks to the committee.



Event Staff

The event staff includes an Emcee and additional speakers, an RSVP contact, parking assistants, greeters, tour guides, and a cleanup crew.

3. Create a Guest List

Give thoughtful consideration to your invitation list. Write down everyone that comes to mind until you have an extensive list. Go through this list and add or subtract as you see fit. Remember, not everyone who is invited will be able to attend. If you host a public event, you may have to ask yourself a few simple questions:

- Who has been instrumental in reaching this milestone?
- Who is personally important to me?
- Who would I miss if they were not in attendance?
- Which prominent community members should be invited?
- How many attendees can I afford to invite?
- Who will be taking part in the ceremony?

These questions should help you fill out your list. You, or a designated member of your groundbreaking committee, should create a spreadsheet of invitees, complete with mailing addresses. A hand-addressed invitation is a nice touch if you have the time and resources. You should also send thank you notes, so having this information readily available will be very helpful.



Your final guest list is likely to include some or all of the following:

- Potential and current customers (Your most important group.)
- Suppliers and vendors
- Contractors or their representatives
- Your local business development agency
- Friends and family
- Your employees and their spouses
- Those who helped you get started – your banker, accountant, attorney and other advisers
- Fellow business men and women in your area
- Representatives and members from your local Chamber of Commerce
- Key local government officials, state representatives from your district, and national figures, if appropriate
- The media

Invited guests who will participate in the ceremony will need to be contacted to confirm that they can attend. If the person is critical to your program, plan on having a replacement for them, just in case something arises. As your event draws near, contact them again to let them know everything is on schedule.

4. Plan the Ceremony

A groundbreaking ceremony is all about breaking ground, and shovels are the stars of the show. It's important that the location of the actual groundbreaking is carefully chosen so your invited guests are able to see and hear what's going on. Once you have chosen the location and determined how many people will be participating, we recommend that you create the ceremonial "dig zone." This is the location where the ceremonial groundbreaking will take place. Remove the sod and replace it with sand, gravel, or soft loam, or create a mound. You can surround the area with a wooden frame, or any other creative method you can think of. If your company or organization is known for a unique product, work it into the design. Stanchions with velvet rope can be used to keep guests out of the dirt.

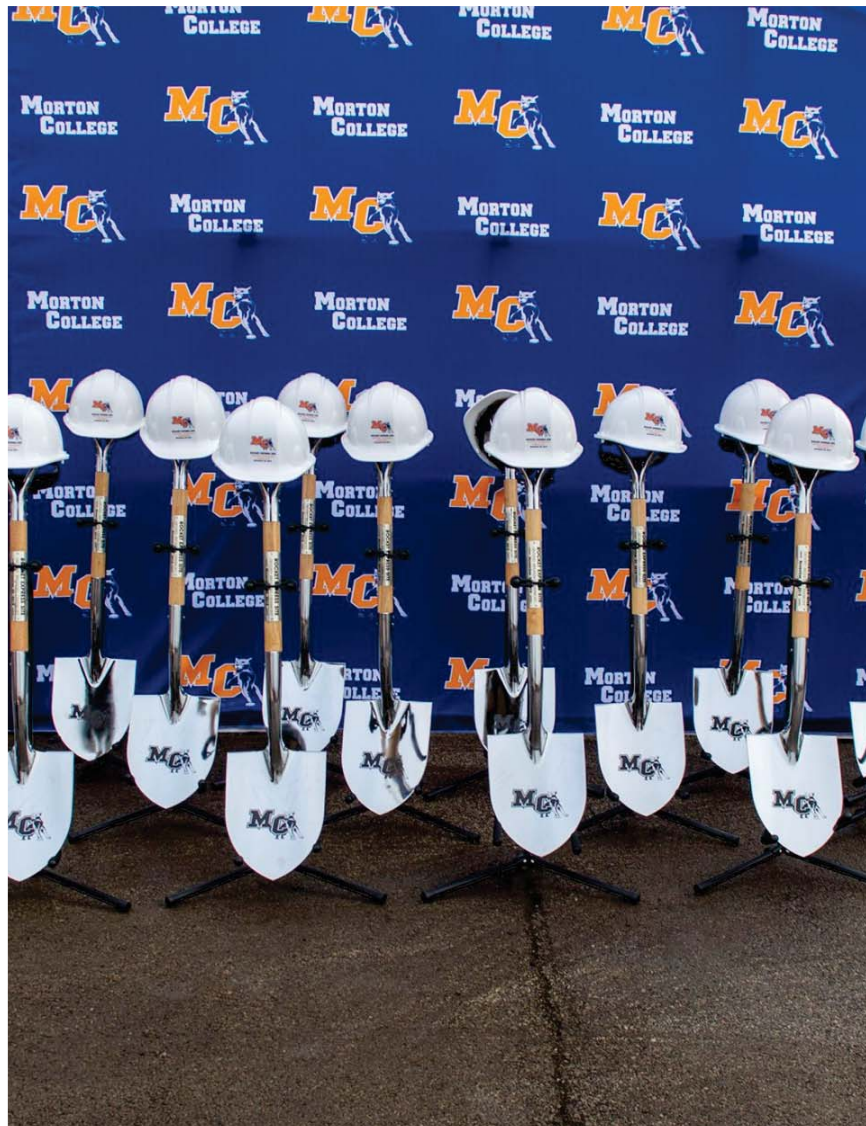
Soil can be brought in for your ceremony, especially if your event is taking place in a paved area or a construction site that has not been prepped. A local landscaping company is a great source for bringing in large amounts of dirt. Keep clean-up in mind however! Have a plan for removing the dirt after. Many companies will use large wooden boxes or containers to hold dirt, rather than putting it directly on the ground.





Shovels should be displayed in close proximity to the dig zone. EAG offers high-quality padded shovel stands that are perfect for this. If your event has a stage, leaning the shovels against the front is a great option. If hard hats are a part of the ceremony, place them over the handles of the shovels for a nice photo opportunity. Make the shovels a focal point of your ceremony. It builds anticipation for the breaking of ground to come!

Display architectural models or renderings of your new building so guests can see what all the excitement is about. Wall-sized art can be produced by large format printers. These can be ordered with your shovels through EAG or you can work with your local sign company to produce one. This image may end up on the evening news or on the front page of your local paper.





Coordinate with your Chamber of Commerce

Contact your local Chamber of Commerce at the earliest possible time to find out what, if any, resources are available to you. They are a great source of publicity, and will usually publicize your event in their newsletters or online. It's also important to have them represented at the event. Remember, they are your connection to the community - supporters of your new venture.



Choose a Theme

A theme for your celebration is not mandatory, but if you have a unique business that lends itself well to creativity, then you might want to theme your event. At the very least, you will want to display your logo or brand colors throughout the event and on your decorations whenever possible. All of our groundbreaking products feature a variety of personalization options and locations to help with this. You will have a captive audience, so take full advantage of this opportunity to brand your business. If you produce a product like ice cream or baked items, you may want to feature samples as part of your snack selection.

Create a Program

Ideally, your event should be finely choreographed and follow a pre-determined timeline. Speeches can run short or long, but the basic timeline will allow you to know when it's time to move to the next step. The schedule will also reflect on the professionalism of your organization. Each incremental step will form the outline for your program, a simple guide that lets your guests know what is going on, and what is to follow. Small events can benefit from this discipline, large events demand it.

Groundbreaking ceremonies on the national level include presidential libraries, with national and international dignitaries in attendance, giving speeches, and receiving commemorative gifts for participating. A printed program for one of these events reads more like a college graduation ceremony than a groundbreaking, and may be just as treasured as a historical memento of the day.

A well written program also serves as a guide for the media and anyone recording the event, allowing them to be in the right place at the right time.

The program sheet can be published as late as you dare, allowing you to make last minute adjustments to the ceremony.



Event Staffing

It's up to you and your organization to determine staffing needs based on the size of your event, logistics of parking, proximity of parking to site, number of invited guests and media, complexity of your event, and security needs of dignitaries or celebrities who may attend. For smaller events, your staff can wear different hats and it may be quite reasonable for the event manager to also be master of ceremonies.

Master of Ceremonies (Emcee)

The Master of Ceremonies is the person who acts as a host for the ceremony. This will be the person responsible for creating and sustaining the intended atmosphere throughout the event. The MC is responsible for keeping the event flowing, keeping the interest of the audience, helping the audience feel respected and engaged, helping the speakers feel valued, keeping the event on time, and keeping everyone updated on what's happening at the event.



Food & Entertainment

Your company may have a favorite caterer or staff member who knows a thing or two about entertaining with food. You'll need one of them to come up with a selection of offerings for your guests. If you are serving a large crowd, it may be more economical to go with a caterer. They are experienced at calculating how much food to prepare per guest. Some of these formulas can be found on the internet if you decide to attempt this yourself.

Time of day and time of year will provide clues to what types of food and beverages are appropriate. A mid-day summertime event in a rural or campus setting may feature an old-fashioned barbecue picnic lunch. An afternoon or evening event in a metro setting may serve a variety of hors d'oevres and champagne. Groundbreaking events for facilities used by children, such as schools, daycare centers, and parks, should strive to include them, and provide snacks that they would enjoy.





Entertainment can take on many forms. Soloists can add a lot of enjoyment and class to an event. Fiddlers, violinists, harpists, and accordionists can create a soothing musical atmosphere. You may also consider additional entertainment for after the formal ceremony and leading into lunch, dinner or hors d'oeuvres. Jugglers, magicians, and mimes are good examples of mobile entertainers who can work a crowd and keep people entertained.

Event Parking

Parking is an important factor to consider when choosing a location. Will there be enough parking available to accommodate everyone? Will there be hazards, like uneven ground, debris, etc that could be problematic for parking? You may want to consider renting a bus, or a shuttle. If you're planning a reception for after the ceremony, maybe at a nearby restaurant, or hall, you could have your guests park at the venue for the reception, and shuttle them to and from the groundbreaking site.



Keepsakes

It's an accepted tradition to provide gifts and keepsakes to attendees. Consider producing a special gift for ceremony participants that is different from what most attendees receive. Numerous desk accessories, plaques, and awards are available that can be personalized with the name and date of your event. Most feature a small shovel or hard hat, sometimes embedded in lucite or clear acrylic. Paperweights are very popular and come in a variety of styles.

Miniature shovel lapel pins are a common and affordable option and can be attached to a small card with an image of your new building.

The ceremonial shovel or shovels used in the event are available in many styles, including gold and chrome plated, stainless steel, or custom painted to match brand colors. They can be laser or rotary engraved, vinyl wrapped, or customized with vinyl decals. One shovel should be retained for future display, and others can be given away to participants in the groundbreaking. You may even want to make a special presentation to someone who has been instrumental in helping you arrive at this day. For more great gift and giveaway ideas, visit: www.EAGawards.com.





Design the Invitation

Don't overlook your invitation. It may be the first impression of your business for many people. Your invitation should echo your brand and set the stage for your event. If you're uncomfortable designing an invitation, your local printer or graphic designer can assist you.

Select the type of invitation that is appropriate for your organization: formal, informal, letter, postcard, email, or flier. Include your logo, name, type of event, date and time, address, and method for recipients to RSVP. Be sure to include an RSVP so you can plan your event size accordingly.

An RSVP will also give you an idea about how much food to order, and how many supplies you will need. You may include your business card and a map, if appropriate. A street address alone is sometimes not sufficient.

Depending on whether your event is public or private, consider additional methods of getting the word out, such as signs, advertisements, websites, 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. Will parking be an issue? If so, please use the invitation to indicate where you would like guests to park.

Send your invitation by first-class mail, if at all possible.

5. Marketing & Publicity

It's relatively easy to market your event once you have chosen a date and theme. Use the following questions to guide you:

Who do I want to know about my event?

Does my audience differ from the general public?

What is the best way to reach my target market?

Does my audience read any unique publications or visit any unique websites?

What is the age of my audience?

Is my project newsworthy on a local, regional, statewide, or national level?

Media

Begin by compiling a list of all media outlets that you feel are necessary to reach your targeted event invitees. If the event is public – newspapers, radio stations, television, online, and any local business organizations. If you live in a small town or city, there is a good chance that your local newspaper will give you some modest publicity for your groundbreaking event, however you should not solely rely on the media to give coverage of your event. Editors are often swamped with business community news and are often unable to provide good coverage to them all. Your local chamber of commerce is often eager to assist you with publicity for your event. They will let you know what is needed from you for information, so be sure to respond to them. Your media efforts will be more successful if you provide a professional looking press release and photographs.

The following are some concrete things you can do to enhance the chances of getting more media coverage for your event.

- Send your invitation to the news directors at least one week ahead of your event. Include a personal letter or note explaining some of the details about your company and why your event is different, or has some significance to the overall community.
- Include a brief letter or news release that contains the journalistic basics of who, what, when, where, and why. Your letter need not be fancy, just factual.
- A follow-up, or reminder call the day before your event is a good idea.





News Release

The news release is the basic tool of media relations. A well-prepared news release can make it easier for you to get your news covered by the media – providing it meets the criteria of what makes a good news story. Keep the release as brief as possible, preferably one page. If additional pages are required, do not break paragraphs at the bottom of the page, and use a separate sheet of paper for each additional page. Provide all the necessary details of your event, as well as contact information. The date of the news release should be included at the top of the page, along with the phrase “For Immediate Release.” Deadlines vary from one news organization to another, and in the case of newspapers, even from department to department.

5. Follow-Up



Thank-You Notes

Be sure to follow up with thank you notes to all of your speakers, sponsors, and other VIPs who attended, as well as your faithful staff.

Consider sharing your photos/videos by posting them to social media, including them in your newsletter, or using any other appropriate means of getting your news out.

Send a post-event news release with photos of your groundbreaking to your local media.





Quick Reference Checklist

For your Groundbreaking Ceremony

- Choose your team.
- Designate your event planner/coordinator. Perhaps it may be you.
- Establish a budget for your event
- Plan activities
- Delegate responsibilities
 - Designate a contact for RSVPs
 - Choose emcee/speakers
 - Parking assistants
 - Greeters/ushers
 - VIP coordinator
 - Tour guides
 - Cleanup
- Contact your local chamber of commerce
- Set event date, time and rain date
- Select and contact event vendors
 - Caterer
 - Photographer/Videographer
 - Florist
 - Entertainment / Musicians
- Pre-determine event layout (where to place tables, chairs, podium, etc.)
 - 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.
- Prepare any materials needed for the event (visuals, awards, checks, documents, gifts, samples, etc.)
 - Locate company sign or banner if needed.
 - Name tags
 - Purchase ceremonial shovels and accessories
 - Design and send invitations
 - Deadline to get invitations to printer: _____
 - Prepare printed mailing labels
 - Date to mail/e-mail/fax invitations: _____
 - Prepare guest list
- Date to call or send reminders: _____
- Prepare press release
- Identify dates to contact local media: _____
 - Notify media
 - Invite media to attend

Products Checklist

- Shovels
- Hard Hats
- Stanchions
- Bows
- Banners
- Shovel Display Case
- Shovel Wall
- Plaque
- Shovel Embedments
- Gifts for Guests



SHOP

Post-event tasks

- Follow up with thank-you notes to all of your speakers, sponsors and other VIPs who attended, as well as your faithful staff.
- Share your photos/videos by posting them online, including them in your newsletter or using any other appropriate means of getting your news out.
- Send a post-event news release with photo of your groundbreaking ceremony to your local media.