



Avoid Unexpected Costs by Asking the Right Questions at Your Event Venue

- ✓ **What is the legal capacity of the venue or room you are renting?**
Unless it is a private home or a temporary structure, the space will have a set maximum occupancy limit.
- ✓ **What permits are required for events?**
Whether it's a permit for street activity (such as closing a street or creating a lane for drop-offs), for a temporary place of assembly, or for building a structure inside a venue, you need to know what's required for your event. Make sure a site has a liquor license and know what the Fire Marshall expects in terms of open flames and fire retardant fabric drapes. In many states, live animals need a permit as well.
- ✓ **Are there exclusive or preferred vendors?**
Some sites do not allow vendors who are not preapproved, so it's necessary to ask questions about exclusive vendors and perhaps sample pricing from those vendors. Caterers, lighting companies, designers, and other vendors who have experience working in a space may also be able to help with permits and layouts.
- ✓ **What equipment is available on site?**
Just as exclusive vendors can impact the budget, so, too, can the availability of in-house lighting, sound, and audio-visual gear as well as stage equipment and even furniture. Ask about rigging points, which can be important for extensive lighting or projection elements. Ask if there are backup generators and be sure to see if Wi-Fi is available, the quality of the signal, and whether the service is included in the venue's rental fee.
- ✓ **Are there areas for storage or back-of-house operations?**
Don't forget that production and planning crews will need somewhere to store equipment or set up a remote office or control room. If separate rooms for back-of-house operations aren't available, think about setting aside an area within the main space and how that might affect the layout.
- ✓ **Is there an on-site kitchen?**
Not every venue has a dedicated kitchen or catering prep space, which can complicate the setup for an event's caterer. Find out what kind of area will be available for food prep—and let the catering company know ahead of time.
- ✓ **What time can we set up and break down, and what are the rates?**
Do not assume you have all day to set-up. If a luncheon is clearing out of the room, it may only leave a couple of hours to set-up for a dinner event. Ask about the availability of a service or freight elevator, which can be crucial if the venue is located in a building with other tenants. Is there a shared loading dock for multiple events?
- ✓ **Where can vendors and attendees park?**
Is there a place to park near the event venue? Is there a parking fee? Are free parking vouchers available? If parking isn't convenient, valet parking is a perk your guests will truly appreciate.
- ✓ **How late can events run?**
Often neighborhoods have a strict noise ordinance that must be adhered to. This will make the event end-time nonnegotiable, so if it is a deal-breaker, make sure you ask this before booking the event.

