

Guide for organizing a neighbourhood festival

A neighbourhood festival is a great way to create meeting places and strengthen a sense of community. This guide will help you organize your own neighbourhood party. We will show you step by step how you can organize your own festival. As an example we use our neighbourhood festival, which took place on 29.07.2023 in the Passau neighbourhood "Innstadt".

Vision, objectives and target group

Before you start, you need to define the goals and target groups of your planned event. I.e. you have to be clear about it:

- What is the event about? What do you want to achieve with the event?
- Which target group(s) do you need to address in order to achieve your goals or the desired effect or result?
- What interests might the target group(s) have in your event?
- What form will the event take? How can you satisfy all interested parties and achieve your goals?

At our neighbourhood festival, we had several goals: to strengthen the sense of community, to bring people together in an informal way, to counteract loneliness, to reduce prejudices, and to create encounters and good togetherness. These are precisely the goals we are pursuing with our Common Good project. For this reason, we organized a neighbourhood party to celebrate the 15th anniversary of our association and the 5th anniversary of the community room, where the Innstadt neighbourhood around our community room was specifically invited. Therefore, we took the festival as an opportunity to look back on our association's history and to show what we have already achieved to bring people together in Passau and why it is worthwhile to get involved in society. In addition, we wanted to involve various institutions in the Innstadt to make the possibilities of neighbourly cooperation visible. Through this festival, neighbourly structures should be built up and strengthened and the residents of the Innstadt should get into conversation.

Format

The event format depends on the objective and the target group. For example, a get-together with coffee and cake is well suited for a smaller target group, whereas a barbecue party is designed for a larger number of people. As a rule, the larger the event, the more requirements must be met and the more expensive the party will be. In this guide, we address three gradations of the size of a neighbourhood party:

1) Low-budget version



2) Higher- budget version



3) Luxury version



Info: Our neighbourhood party was a low-budget version. We planned the party for 50-70 people.

Entertainment program

In order to develop the (entertainment) program, it is important to narrow down the target group. Our target group was the Innstadt neighbourhood. Interactive games are a good way to get the neighbours talking.

The entertainment program of our party included the following:

- Beer tables and benches to share together
- Musical performances
- A small stage for musicians, possibly for local bands, for poetry slammers, etc....
- Greetings and short speeches
- Interactive games to help guests get in touch with each other and get to know each other better
- Interactive knowledge quiz to get to know each other and to impart knowledge about the voluntary structures, the Innstadt, the city etc.. As an incentive, the winners will receive prizes (e.g. cinema vouchers, etc.).
- Presentation about the 15-year history of the association
- Food and drinks

We also wanted to cooperate with various institutions and companies in the *Innstadt* and design the program together with them. In this way, we were to make the possibilities of neighbourly togetherness visible.

Other program items may include:

- raffle
- face painting
- creative or dance workshop
- barbecue and bonfire
- bouncy castle for children
- fireworks

Date and location

Next, you set the date and place. Our festival took place on 29.07.2023 from 15 to 20 o'clock on the Kirchplatz/St.-Gertraud-Platz in the Innstadt of Passau.

Advice: Our party had to be moved indoors due to bad weather. However, most of our guests were people who have known the organisation for long. One can also consider covering the place in case of rain, so that the party can still take place outside and also more neighbours visit the party.

Conditions/Auflagen??

Public events require a permit from the responsible municipal or regional authority (city hall, district office, etc...). A small private party does not require notification. However, as soon as the event is not for a limited group of people, you must expect that it is considered public and must be registered. When registering the event, you must check with the relevant authorities which conditions apply to the event. The best

thing to do is to call the public order office of the respective city and ask who you have to contact.

What is the use of registering the event? The permission of the event prevents, for example, that residents complain and the event does not get prematurely cancelled. In addition, the organizer is responsible for the safety and liability of persons and objects. (Performance against aggression, hatred and discrimination in the context of the event).

Public event on public (traffic) space

In order to register the event with the responsible authority and to obtain a permit, various information is required from them. The following questions may arise in this process, so it is useful to think about them beforehand and, if applicable, to mention the questions immediately in the call to the responsible office. Firstly, the authorities will then have a good understanding of how the event will proceed. Secondly, you make your work easier, since (hopefully) no further requirements will be added in the course of the preparation, since you have already communicated everything relevant at the beginning. And thirdly, a well-planned and thought-out event looks more professional and, in case of doubt, is more likely to receive approval than an unstructured event.

Info: The registration of the event may be associated with costs (see costs).

The following information may be required for the event permit:

- Event reason and motivation
- Date, period, place
- Planned event program
 - List any program items so that the appropriate office can issue the correct requirements
- Site plan
 - **Dimensions** of the square
 - Location and size of the stands
- How is safety ensured?
 - Liability insurance
- Musical program
 - Acoustic or with amplifier?
 - Volume compliance/noise pollution?
 - Does the event affect public traffic space? As a rule, this also includes squares, etc.
 - Certain regulations/ restrictions/ detour imposed by the regulatory agency? (§29 StVO; 45§StVO)
- Will food and drinks be served?
 - Hygiene concept
 - Fire protection
 - For cooking/grilling again more requirements regarding fire protection (fire extinguisher)
 - Alcoholic beverages: liquor license





- Police, fire department, ambulance service: are involved in larger events. This can also be helpful for small events (see cooperation).
- How will residents be informed about the event? (see invitation management)
- Contact person and complaints hotline that can be reached at all times.
- Will minors come to the event?

- Youth Protection Act

- Reduction of curfew hours: Fixed curfew hours can be shortened by this permit.
- Are temporary structures (tents, bleachers, etc.) used? Guidelines depending on federal state.
- Exemptions: Fireworks, sky beamers/special light show.



Additional:

- Music: GEMA fees apply when copyrighted songs are used publicly

Advice: The Free State of Bavaria covers GEMA costs of voluntary associations in Bavaria for two events per year. Info under <https://www.gema.de/de/musiknutzer/vereine-in-bayern>

Public event on private property

Even the events on private property, the organizer is responsible for ensuring the safety of the visitors. Therefore, a public event on private property must also be registered. Even if the event does not take place on public property, it is possible that it will have an impact on traffic and that traffic regulations will come into force. You should clarify this. In addition, regulations also apply with regard to fire protection, etc. Here, too, it is best to work through the questions listed above and clarify with the responsible authority which requirements must be met.

Funding and resource acquisition

Depending on the financial means of the organizers, there are different ways to cover the costs of the event:



- With a high budget, less attention must be paid to not exceeding the financial means and it is possible to plan extensive program points. But even with a high budget, a rough cost breakdown is useful in order not to exceed the budget.



- When financial means are low, the use of existing resources is essential. Missing material and program items, for example the performance of a band, can be procured and requested free of charge through contacts within the association. Cooperation partners are especially important in the low-budget version, as they can provide or donate various resources. In addition, the sale of food on a donation basis and the sale of drinks can recoup the costs (see Food and Drink).

Example of financing and resource acquisition based on our festival:




The basis for the neighbourhood party was our own resources, i.e. internal equipment and material (beverage supply, dishes, food prepared by the staff, prepared games, projector, cash registers, power cables, decoration...).

Through internal contacts we were able to acquire a microphone and a music box, donations of food (board), an interactive game (board) and helpers. Through the sale of drinks and food we want to recoup the costs of the festival.

Costs (breakdown of costs)

The following costs were incurred for our event:

Facilities	Costs	Amount
Internal	Personnel costs, printing costs, electricity, travel expenses, etc.	No breakdown
	Food	250,00 Euro
	Drinks	250,00 Euro
Public order office (road traffic authority)	Processing fee for the "Permission to hold an event in the public traffic area (event permit)".	25,00 Euro
Insurance	Liability for short-term events	119,00 Euro
GEMA	Use of music for band and choir performance	(60,03 Euro)
		Total costs: 704,03 Euro (incl. Gema)

Cooperation partners

Since we wanted to bring the institutions in the Innstadt together with our neighbourhood festival and make neighbourly togetherness visible, we contacted various institutions in order to cooperate with them. For example: kindergarten, gastronomic institutions. The organizer has to take care of the cooperation partners in time to avoid possible problems in the management.

Advice: We asked the church for benches and tables. Unfortunately, the parish did not have any, but referred us to the kindergarten St. Severin. This shows that asking is very helpful, because the intermediaries can always help further and refer to other contact persons.

Letter to the cooperation partners:

We wrote to the institutions with which we wanted to cooperate by mail. In order to arouse interest and receive a response, it is important to provide concrete details about the course of the festival and to give the cooperation partners precise information about the type of cooperation. For example: "We would be happy if you participate in our festival with an information booth. If you have any other ideas about how you can participate in the neighbourhood festival, please write to us! Our experience shows that an unspecific message will not get a response. It is especially effective to call the institutions a few days after the letter and ask. People are usually more cooperative in a personal conversation.

The cooperation partners are also helpful to organize special items that the own club does not have (see info). Here it is again: just ask (nicely) if the people have certain things in their inventory and can help further.

Responsibilities (roles and function)

In terms of work and organizational planning, you first determine which people will be the main organizers of the neighbourhood festival. From our experience, three to four people who work closely together on site and feel responsible for each other

Info: We had the requirement from the public order office to have one fire extinguisher at the food stand and one fire extinguisher at the information stand. Therefore, we called the Innstadt fire department, which then provided us with two fire extinguishers.

make a successful organization team. There must be one person on the organization team who is allowed to make decisions on behalf of that organization. The team must work closely together and coordinate so that no misunderstandings arise and no misinformation is spread.

Work and organization planning

The capacities (time, energy) of the organizers are determined from the beginning, i.e. who works when and how much. Only when the organizers feel responsible for manageable and feasible tasks, the distribution of tasks will work. Then you can create a clear schedule, in which the tasks and responsibilities of the respective people of the organization team are entered and the deadlines are defined. A concrete plan of the event makes coordination easier for you, because with a good plan you can better deal with spontaneous deviations and emerging challenges are easier to solve.

The following tasks are to be assigned:

Implementation of the requirements of the public order office; writing letters to and coordinating the cooperation partners and helpers; invitations, advertising and PR; planning and creating games and entertainment programs; organizing the equipment and preparing the venue; planning and preparing food and drinks.

Regular team meetings, at which reports are given on the respective status of the task areas, provide a good overview of the outstanding tasks. Important decisions should be discussed and made by the team at these meetings.

Time schedule

The following workload resulted for our neighbourhood festival:

Organizer 1: 50 hours

Organizer 2: 73 hours

Board (preparation of interactive games): 5 hours

Executive director: 25 hours

This results in a total workload of 153 hours. The working hours of the organizers during and after the festival as well as the working hours of the helpers were not included in this calculation. The organization of the festival ideally begins 3-4 months before the planned date.

Communication and information processes (internal and external)

Internal: The type of internal communication (mail, WhatsApp) should be determined by the organizing team at the first meeting. The organizers should consider from the beginning how they want to deal with problems that arise and what personal boundaries (regarding tasks, time, human resources management) exist within the organizing team.

Advice: Telephone calls are usually the best way to reach an agreement, as you can listen to the wishes/ideas of the person you are talking to. In the case of important documents and agreements, however, you should ask for confirmation by e-mail on the phone so that the agreement is recorded in writing.

External: The team determines a person under whose name external communication will take place. In this way, cooperation partners have a fixed contact person with whom they communicate and there is no confusion about responsibilities. The person must make sure or be able to make sure that the communication is not problem-oriented. Problem-oriented communication means considering why a certain problem has arisen. Instead, the work must be solution-oriented. That is, when a problem arises - which often happens when planning a neighborhood event - a solution to the problem must be sought, not its origin.

Invitation Management

First of all, you invite the people who should be present at the neighbourhood festival as part of a program item. This includes the cooperation partners and politicians, for example the mayor, who is supposed to give a speech. The mayor and the politicians usually have to be invited two months before the date of the neighbourhood festival.

Then you invite the target group. For this purpose, we distributed advertising flyers for the neighbourhood festival in the neighbourhood. In this way, we have fulfilled the requirement of the public order office (see info).

Info: A requirement of the Passau public order office is that residents be informed at least 14 days in advance about the type, duration and end of the event..

Then you invite the association members, the (former) helpers, volunteers and employees, the supporters and certain associations and institutions of the region by e-mail.

Infrastructure, equipment and technology

You will need the following materials for your festival:

Infrastructure	Technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Electricity <input type="checkbox"/> Water <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen for food preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Toilets (barrier-free?) <input type="checkbox"/> WLAN <input type="checkbox"/> Parking spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Signposting <input type="checkbox"/> Barriers <input type="checkbox"/> Escape route <input type="checkbox"/> Security <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit/medical service	<input type="checkbox"/> Music Box <input type="checkbox"/> Cable drum, extension cable, multiple sockets <input type="checkbox"/> Microphone <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone <input type="checkbox"/> Projector for slide show <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone (phone for complain) <input type="checkbox"/> Social media profiles
Equipment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Organization plans (detailed schedule with times and responsibilities; helpers) <input type="checkbox"/> Tables, chairs and stands <input type="checkbox"/> Stage, tents	<input type="checkbox"/> Food and drinks <input type="checkbox"/> fridge for drinks cooling <input type="checkbox"/> Crockery, cutlery <input type="checkbox"/> Napkins, kitchen roll, sponge, (dish) towels, dishwashing liquid

<input type="checkbox"/> Rain protection for outside, pavilion <input type="checkbox"/> Cash box, change <input type="checkbox"/> Office supplies (tape, pens, ...) <input type="checkbox"/> Decoration (pennant chains, air balloons, candles, fairy lights) <input type="checkbox"/> Posters, banners, stands <input type="checkbox"/> Flyers and forms for membership recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/> Trash cans and bags <input type="checkbox"/> Barbecue, coal <input type="checkbox"/> Fire extinguisher <input type="checkbox"/> Games; consent form for contact forms for prize collection <input type="checkbox"/> Creative materials
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Allocation of volunteers and tasks

It makes sense to approach potential helpers during the planning process, explain their tasks for the festival and assign them to shifts if they agree to help out as volunteers. 2-hour shifts have proven successful at many of our events. You can use a Google Doc document to keep track of the volunteers, shift times and tasks. You can give out food and drink vouchers to the helpers as a reward for their work. Keep in mind that the helpers may not be able to come due to illness, for example. Therefore, look for people who can help in case of an emergency. In addition, helpers are needed who, for example, prepare and bring finger food or people who have and/or organize missing materials.

24h before the neighborhood festival you should already chill the drinks and do the shopping.

Advice: It makes sense to clean the location 24 hours in advance and prepare food that is durable. Then you will have less stress on the day of the party.

Before the neighbourhood party you need people to help with the set-up. This includes: cleaning the location, preparing fresh food, setting up tables and chairs, decorating, setting up and testing technology and setting up stalls.

Info: For the low-budget version, you need about 8 helpers for the set-up, if you start three hours before the festival.

During the neighbourhood festival you will need helpers to supervise the food and drink stall, to run interactive games, to clean up in between/put away plates and wash up, to recruit members and to staff existing information stalls. It is also useful to have one person taking photos. This will capture memories and you can use them later for press releases and social media posts. When changing shifts, you should again inform the "taking over" persons of their exact tasks and responsibilities.

After the neighbourhood party, helpers are needed to help with the dismantling. The tables need to be cleared and put together, the equipment needs to be dismantled, the games need to be cleaned up, the dishes need to be washed, the remaining food needs to be distributed and the venue needs to be tidied and cleaned. In addition, the borrowed materials have to be returned promptly.



Food and drink

Drink: Drinks must be purchased during the preparation time for the festival. We recommend buying water, juice spritzers, so-das and (non-alcoholic) beer.

Advice: At many beverage retailers you can buy drinks on consignment, i.e. you return the drinks that have not been drunk and then get the money for them back.

Food: To avoid being pressed for time on the day of the neighbourhood party, it is a good idea to do the shopping one or two days in advance and prepare non-perishable food the day before. Finger food is best for a neighbourhood party as you can hand out the food on napkins. This saves on disposable dishes and washing up. In the appendix you will find three delicious recipes (spinach feta muffins, blueberry muffins, savoury muffins) that are easy and can be prepared the day before. On the day of the neighbourhood festival, you can then buy fresh rolls and pretzels and top them.

The best way to cover the costs of purchases is to sell food and drinks. Please note that if the prices are fixed, the income can be regarded as a commercial operation for special purposes in the association's accounts and consequently be subject to taxes. If you list the prices as recommended prices on a donation basis, the income does not have to be taxed. In practice, the sale (and thus the planned income) works best if you create a sales atmosphere at the stall despite the voluntary donation basis and a person behind the food stall hands out the food. This way, people really donate and don't just consume the food for free.

Advice: A 'stall' with a vendor is more likely to invite donations than an unattended buffet.

Advertising and visitor acquisition

To make others aware of your festival, you need to promote it. Publicise the event within your organisation: General meetings, newsletters or the organisation's homepage are good ways to inform your staff about the event (preferably before informing the public).

Inform the public! Depending on the target group, you can use different means:



- Prepare a press kit with background information and good photos. This makes the journalists' work easier and increases the chance of being published
- For smaller events, it is sufficient to write a press release. You can also use photos, e.g. from past events.
- Advertise the event in the daily newspaper or other local newspapers.
- Posters in shops, train stations, buses, etc.
- Flyers and brochures



For our neighbourhood festival, we invited our main target group, the neighbourhood from Passau Innstadt near the community room, by flyer. We invited the other guests by email and via our social media channels. We also designed posters and put them up in our office, in our community room and with our cooperation partners.



„Gemeinsam mehr erreichen“



About two weeks before the festival, we created an event on Facebook and shared it in thematically appropriate Facebook groups. We also posted a Facebook and Instagram post, recorded the preparations for the festival in our story and linked the respective cooperation partners.

Monitoring/ Evaluation/ Final Report

Shortly after the neighbourhood festival, a press release and social media posts have to be sent out or posted reporting on the festival.

An event, in this case the neighbourhood festival, will in most cases not run exactly as planned. You should therefore record your experiences in a final report after the party so that you can learn from them for future events. However, deviations from the original plan should not stop you from planning the party! Rather, you can see these changes as an enrichment, as they arise from the interactions of those present and represent the encounter in the neighbourhood.