

PITTSBURGH REUNION PLANNER AND WORKBOOK

Everything you need to know to plan the perfect reunion!

VisitPITTSBURGH 

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1. TOP 10 REASONS TO REUNITE IN PITTSBURGH



01

Small-Town Friendly



02

Location



03

Big Group Fun



04

Parks & Riverfront



05

Hotels



06

Time to Tour



07

Sports Action



08

Historical Archives



09

Breathtaking Views



10

Pittsburgh International Airport





2. INTRODUCTION

No matter what type of reunion you are planning, Pittsburgh is your perfect destination in which to gather and reminisce.

Your reunion offers a tremendous opportunity to experience Pittsburgh's great history, and history in the making; especially with former colleagues, employees, military buddies, friends, family and neighbors who have, perhaps, scattered across the globe. There is no better feeling than getting together with people who have been a part of your life and helped influence who you are today.

Pittsburgh has plenty of unique venues to accommodate your reunion, regardless of its size and scope.

Reunions have an enormous economic impact on the southwestern Pennsylvania region – helping to grow the economy through overnight visitation and providing a direct impact on restaurants, hotels, transportation, entertainment and numerous support services.

Your participation is key to the success of reunions in Pittsburgh. It's your opportunity to get creative and plan an event that brings people together under very special circumstances.

This handy workbook will help you stay on track, no matter what type of reunion or meeting you plan to hold in Pittsburgh.

Thank you for getting together and reuniting in Pittsburgh!

3. WHERE TO START

Choose your team!

It's critical to the success of your reunion when assigning members to a Host Committee and planning sub-committees to keep in mind their strengths, capabilities and skills. Assign members from all generations to ensure a balance of ideas and activities. The following each sits on the Host Committee.

CHAIRPERSON / CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

The Chairperson will lead the host committee by coordinating details and following up on committee members' progress. It's critical to the success of your reunion that the leader selected is capable of making decisions. Whether that leader is elected, appointed or is a volunteer, this is the one person who arbitrates final decisions, coordinates details and is always willing to go the extra mile. Choose someone with strong leadership qualities and one who understands the culture and politics of the group and who is capable of spending the necessary time on the event.

- ☐ Has the necessary time to spend on event.
- ☐ Contacts VisitPITTSBURGH for initial help with the event.
- ☐ Understands the culture and politics of the attendees.
- ☐ Able to bear early costs such as deposits, printing, copying and postage.
- ☐ Able to harness every pesky detail of the event.
- ☐ Capable of comprehending and settling conflicts.
- ☐ Capable of making decisions and arbitrate final decisions.
- ☐ Is tactful and not easily intimidated.
- ☐ Meets with attractions, service providers and selects hotel with help from VisitPITTSBURGH.
- ☐ Oversees delivering the best value to attendees.
- ☐ Welcomes attendees.

CO-CHAIR

The Co-Chair will co-lead the committee by coordinating details and following up and reporting on sub-committee member's progress.

- ☐ Assists the Chairperson with all the above duties.
- ☐ Steps in to take the lead when Chairperson is unavailable.
- ☐ Heads sub-committees.
- ☐ Understands the culture and politics of the group and can intercede with the Chairperson.
- ☐ Has the time to meet with hotels, attractions and service providers.
- ☐ Committed to delivering the best value to the attendees.

TREASURER

Works with Chairperson and Co-Chair to develop the budget and long-range fundraising projects. Works closely and communicates financial status with the Chairperson and Co-Chair.

- ☐ Responsible for collecting money and contributions.
- ☐ Opens a bank account for the group to keep a permanent, legal record of reunion income and expenses.

TREASURER *CONTINUED*

- ☐ Makes all payments to hotel, vendors, attractions etc.
- ☐ Capable of handling figures and cash.
- ☐ Has an orderly mind and methodical way of thinking.
- ☐ Has experience in budgeting and financial control.
- ☐ Has an eye for detail.

SECRETARY

Writes and distributes invitations, newsletters, registration materials, etc. Researches and maintains members' names and addresses. Takes and maintains meeting minutes. Expedites/monitors time for scheduled meetings.

- ☐ Detail oriented.
- ☐ Has up-to-date technical skills including computer access, social media skills and connections to members.
- ☐ Has good communication and interpersonal skills.
- ☐ Follows through quickly and efficiently to get the task done.

PROGRAM CHAIR

This position is extremely time consuming. It entails planning and organizing memorable activities involving participants of all ages including entertainment, hiring a photographer/videographer and arranging set-up and clean-up.

- ☐ Must be creative.
- ☐ Likes to have fun.
- ☐ Is imaginative.
- ☐ Not afraid to make plans and see them through.
- ☐ Has the necessary time and energy to spend on programming details.

HISTORIAN/GENEALOGIST/STORYTELLER

This is your group's passionate history keeper. He or she must research, collect and archive the group's history and then packages that information into a memorable keepsake for attendees.

- ☐ Tells the group's story.
- ☐ Creates and displays family/history tree, yearbooks, historical documents, computer printouts, photos and videos.
- ☐ Knows how to dig up facts, beginning on-line at Senator John Heinz History Center Library and Archives.
- ☐ Has a passion for research and reveres the past.
- ☐ Is detail oriented.

4. NOW, BREAK INTO SUB-COMMITTEES

Sub-committees are crucial and help build momentum and excitement for the event. They also create a sense of ownership. Choose sub-committees and their members for their expertise. All sub-committees are ultimately the responsibility of the Chairperson and Co-Chair but their immediate support is noted in parentheses.

SOCIAL MEDIA/PUBLICITY

(Reports to the Secretary)

- ☐ Opens and creates Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. accounts and updates social media regularly with information and progress, both before *and* after reunion.

MEALS

(Reports to the Treasurer and Program Chair)

- ☐ Responsible for coordination of all meals functions with hotel or venue.
- ☐ Responsible for décor, menu and entertainment.

TRANSPORTATION

(Reports to the Treasurer)

- ☐ Arranges all transportation to move members during reunion from one site to another.
- ☐ Coordinates airport pickup/shuttle schedules and local transportation.

SHOULD YOU INCORPORATE?

Some reunions incorporate as non-profit organizations. Recruit an accountant or lawyer from your group to help, as this takes expertise to analyze and master IRS requirements and restrictions.

REUNION TIP:

At the initial meeting of the host and sub-committees, set a timeline for completing assigned tasks and schedule future meetings so that expectations are clear and able to be met by all members.

GIFTS/SOUVENIRS

(Reports to the Historian)

- ☐ Obtains gifts/souvenirs for family members and assembles the welcome packets.

SIGHTSEEING/ACTIVITIES

(Reports to the Program Chair)

- ☐ Organizes and plans any tours or off-site events.

WORSHIP OR FELLOWSHIP

(Reports to the Historian)

- ☐ Plans, presents rituals, ceremonies and memorials.

SET-UP/CLEAN-UP

(Reports to the Program Chair)

- ☐ Works very hard on reunion day to get venues in order before and cleaned up after the event.



5. REUNION TIMETABLE

Below is a suggested timetable and checklist to assist in organizing your reunion.

18-24 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR REUNION

- ☐ Recruit a host committee and schedule meetings.
- ☐ Assign responsibilities.
- ☐ Determine interest in attending a reunion and survey potential attendees (see Sample Letter One).
- ☐ Choose a location using VisitPITTSBURGH's Official Visitors Guide and Special Event Venue Guide.
- ☐ Set a date.
- ☐ Develop a theme.
- ☐ Brainstorm activities, entertainment and food based on your theme (see Sample Program Activities.)
- ☐ Develop a budget and bookkeeping system (estimate costs, determine admission prices).
- ☐ Begin seeking sponsors to help with costs.

ONE YEAR BEFORE REUNION

Gather contacts and/or update contact list.

- ☐ Set an attendee goal.
- ☐ Set a financial goal.
- ☐ Send "Save the Date" mailer (see Sample Letter Two).
- ☐ Collect starter money if a first-time reunion or evaluate balance from last reunion.
- ☐ Open a reunion bank account if you don't have one.
- ☐ Set up a reunion website and/or Facebook page.
- ☐ Set up email template for registration confirmation message.
- ☐ Schedule site visits to choose hotel.
- ☐ Schedule site visits to choose reunion venue.

6-9 MONTHS BEFORE REUNION

Gather contacts and/or update contact list.

- ☐ Reserve hotel block of rooms.
- ☐ Send mailer to include hotel information to make reservation, registration and souvenir order form and cost (see Sample Letter Three).
- ☐ Begin souvenir directory/list of attendees, memory book.
- ☐ Book the reunion venue.
- ☐ Book caterer, photographer, printer, entertainment, speaker etc. using the "Meeting & Event Services" in VisitPITTSBURGH Official Visitors Guide.

- ☐ Apply for permits and reserve parking:
 - alleghenycounty.us/parks/fees/permit
 - pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks/park-facilities
- ☐ Reserve other service if using: chairs, tables, site cleanup.

6-9 MONTHS BEFORE REUNION CONTINUED

- ☐ Prepare map/directions to event site.
- ☐ Design the invitation and tickets if applicable.
- ☐ Order mementos and souvenirs (For customized T-shirts contact 3Estudios, Pittsburgh Northside).
- ☐ Begin preparing personal histories, digital presentation and other reunion handouts or displays.
- ☐ Start with a search on-line at Senator John Heinz History Center Library and Archives.
- ☐ Contact government officials for welcome letters, proclamations or acknowledgements:
 - pittsburghpa.gov/mayor/proclamation/group
 - alleghenycounty.us/executive/procrequest

5 MONTHS BEFORE REUNION

- ☐ Confirm reservations, entertainment, photographer and caterer.
- ☐ Choose menu.
- ☐ Announce event to local news media and elected officials.
- ☐ Make list of milestones to acknowledge at the reunion i.e. eldest in the group, anniversaries, birthdays etc.
- ☐ Look for sales of non-perishable items such as napkins, paper cups and plates.
- ☐ Choose an emcee.

2-4 MONTHS BEFORE REUNION

- ☐ Send reminder announcement include enticing reunion details (see Sample Letter Four).
- ☐ Meet with hotel representative, visit facility with hotel committee, finalize details.
- ☐ According to the theme, select decorations, signs and banners and order printed items.
- ☐ Reserve rental equipment.
- ☐ Submit personalized souvenir order (t-shirts, mugs, caps, etc.).
- ☐ Write script for the emcee.
- ☐ Set contingency plans in the event of weather or other unexpected occurrence.

REUNION TIMETABLE (CONTINUED)

4-6 WEEKS BEFORE REUNION

- ☐ Send another reminder announcement to attendees.
- ☐ Complete directory/memory book and deliver to printer.
- ☐ Update attendee list.
- ☐ Write checklist for reunion tasks and who is responsible for taking care of tasks.
- ☐ Recruit and designate assignments for reunion volunteers.
- ☐ Determine venue layout.
- ☐ Make table center pieces and other decorations.
- ☐ Prepare photo collage.
- ☐ Prepare signage (marking the venue, registration area, drinks, bathrooms).
- ☐ Finalize schedule.
- ☐ Prepare reunion survey.

2 WEEKS BEFORE REUNION

- ☐ Finalize attendee list.
- ☐ Re-confirm meeting, sleeping and eating accommodations.
- ☐ Prepare list of paid attendees (if applicable).
- ☐ Confirm event details with all vendors and suppliers.
- ☐ Finalize announcements and give to emcee.
- ☐ Verify delivery of donated door prizes.
- ☐ Finalize and print out any handouts and labels.
- ☐ Confirm who will be bringing which items to each venue.
- ☐ Shop for final non-perishable items and supplies.
- ☐ Prepare welcome/souvenir bags.
- ☐ Make name tags.

ONE WEEK BEFORE REUNION

- ☐ Update attendance list with any last minute guests.
- ☐ Deliver supplies to venues, if able to store them safely.
- ☐ Confirm room set-up and equipment arrangements with venue.
- ☐ Prepare final payments to venue and vendors.
- ☐ Give meal count to caterer.

ONE WEEK BEFORE *CONTINUED*

- ☐ Confirm contingency plans for weather or other unexpected events.
- ☐ Prepare checklist for the day(s) of the reunion.
- ☐ Complete and distribute a general outline of the day/weekend's activities.

THE DAY BEFORE REUNION DAY(S)

- ☐ Begin welcoming the attendees.
- ☐ Deliver supplies to venue.
- ☐ Review final details with committee/volunteers.

START OF YOUR REUNION DAY

(see Sample Itinerary for the Day of the Event)

- ☐ Emcee welcomes the group.
- ☐ Chairperson/Guest Speaker gives welcome address.
- ☐ Announce names of families who are attending.
- ☐ Announce special attendees, oldest, youngest, furthest traveler, etc.
- ☐ Thank everyone individually who helped put the event together.

AFTER REUNION

- ☐ Meet with committee to reflect and evaluate successes and shortcomings.
- ☐ Finalize photo book with photographer/videographer.
- ☐ Send memory albums and other handouts to those that paid but did not attend.
- ☐ Send thank you notes and follow-up letters to volunteers, hotel staff and caterers.
- ☐ Complete bookkeeping and settle accounts.
- ☐ Close checking account once all checks have cleared or keep open with a minimal balance for the next reunion.
- ☐ Store reunion supplies.
- ☐ Evaluate survey responses.
- ☐ Send regular updates via dedicated website, social media, email and/or mailings.
- ☐ Keep contact list updated.
- ☐ Recruit planning committee volunteers for the next reunion.

6. COMMUNICATION

Talk early and often!

For corporate/business, class or military reunions, invitations go to all known former and current employees and members. Finding them may be your biggest challenge. Ask for help from a reunion planner, use personnel records, or ask current or former staff members to identify people with whom they still have contact.

Family reunion invitees can come in endless combinations. Family reunions are often three generations (parents, children, grandchildren) or cousins who grew up together but have scattered around the world, or anyone with the same last name as yours...you decide. If staying in touch is your responsibility, count on donating your time and creativity to the cause. Costs may include printing, postage or phone.

Technology is constantly changing and makes searching easier. Websites, social media and national phone directories provide instant access to many databases that put information at your fingertips. It is also more cost effective and timely to use technology to contact potential attendees.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE

- ☐ Letter/email announcement – kick off formal plans (see Sample Letter One).
- ☐ E-newsletter – keep a schedule and invite everyone to submit news. When members look forward to reunion information, they learn to respect guidelines and deadlines.
- ☐ Postcards – quick, easy, graphic, friendly and inexpensive. Use them for “Save the Date” to remind folks that time is running out. Have them pre-printed and consider printing overruns and mailing “save the date” cards twice.
- ☐ Phone – share phone and follow-up duties with committee members. Use a phone tree to call and notify. Separate into generations to take responsibility to inform those in the phone tree.
- ☐ Websites – choose from a host of low-cost or free services that help create a professional looking website.
- ☐ Social media – use Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram to announce/report changes and progress.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE *CONTINUED*

- ☐ Word-of-mouth – the spoken word continues to be powerful. Ask members to talk about your reunion. Encourage each other to respond and stay in touch.
- ☐ Publicity – Send a notice, invitation or press release to local or specialty newspapers and associations. If it's a large group or unique/unusual gathering, prepare a story “pitch” and contact the city desk or a local reporter.

BEFORE THE REUNION, SEND A MAILING TO ALL ATTENDEES THAT INCLUDES:

- ☐ Event program or schedule.
- ☐ Costs or fees.
- ☐ Accommodation information.
- ☐ Maps and instructions.
- ☐ Name tag information request: Guest's name, city/state.
- ☐ Special dietary needs.

7. CHOOSING A DATE

Put a stake in the ground!

It is imperative that you select your reunion date one to two years in advance of the event. This will give everyone enough time to request vacation time, make the necessary arrangements for family and pets and save money necessary to attend. It will also give you the time you need to carefully choose a site and negotiate discounts and special amenities. You'll want to be certain that the date is selected by the majority in order to achieve your attendance goal. Send an e-mail or letter to your group with three or four options to avoid conflicts (see Sample Reunion Questionnaire).

GAIN CONSENSUS FROM SEVERAL CHOICES.

If appropriate, consider coinciding with holidays or milestones — birthdays, anniversary, graduation, retirement.

- ☐ Summer when kids are on vacation.
- ☐ Autumn when kids are in school.
- ☐ Spring to beat the winter doldrums.
- ☐ Off-season to take advantage of lower prices.
- ☐ Same date (date, weekend or month) each reunion.
- ☐ Long holiday weekends: Memorial Day, Labor Day.

Note: *If you're planning a reunion that gathers annually, consider setting dates two years in advance so people who are unable to attend this time can plan well in advance to attend the next one*

8. BUDGETING

It's all about the money, honey!

REUNION FINANCES

Set financial goals. For example, you may want to break even or profit just enough to pay your next reunion startup costs. Some reunions have money-making goals such as scholarships, investments or group business enterprises.

ESTABLISH YOUR BUDGET

Make your best, most educated guess when factoring expenses. Don't underestimate or you'll find yourself with reunion bills and no way to pay them. When you're just starting, don't hesitate to ask for donations to help cover expenses.

Consider dues or fees to cover essential administrative costs and perhaps a newsletter. Charge what most people can comfortably pay. Publicly recognize sustaining and donating sponsors to encourage generous individuals.

KEEP COMPLETE RECORDS

You may already use financial software that can be adapted for your reunion budget. Reunion budget costs range from free to lavish. Consider all potential expenses thoroughly.

KEEP COMPLETE RECORDS **CONTINUED**

Add 10% to offset unexpected expenses. If, in the end, there is money left over, save it for the next reunion or a donate it to a charity.

SPONSORSHIPS

Establish a realistic fundraising goal.

Depending on the scale of your reunion, you may want to enlist the members of the fundraising committee to identify appropriate sponsors – those who would benefit from exposure to your audience.

Rather than set specific levels, think about the benefits that you have to offer and approach those entities who are a match.

This must be a personal "ask" not a generic letter. Call the individual and request a short meeting.

Your sponsor may expect certain identification and credit for helping... offer and provide it willingly and often!

You may want to include an auction or silent auction at your event. Ask sponsors to donate items for the auction.

9. FUNDRAISING

Add some extra money to the coffers!

Planning fundraisers will require time to develop. They can also be profitable. Most times they help with overall reunion costs and provide funds for members who otherwise cannot attend. In some cases they are used to raise scholarship money for young members.

FUNDRAISING PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

- ☐ Quilts – created by members of the group and auctioned off or raffled off at the reunion. Modern materials and technology has enabled non-stitchers to quilt like pros.
- ☐ Family cookbooks – a great way to carry on family memories. They are popular fundraisers and keepsakes. The more recipe contributors you include, the more potential customers.
- ☐ Memory books – send every member suggestions about what to write...compile anecdotes, tales, childhood memories, special events and stories about ancestors or past reunions and pictures.
- ☐ Family genealogy – a wonderful keepsake. Ask members to submit biographies, reunion videos, oral history, history tapes etc. along with their place in family history.
- ☐ Raffles & auctions – ask members to donate items of value for sale/auction i.e. heirlooms, gifts, homemade

FUNDRAISING PROJECT SUGGESTIONS **CONTINUED**

Notify members in advance that money will be raised with raffles or auctions. Limit games of chance to your reunion or check with State Department of Revenue for regulations.

- ☐ Runs, walks, and bike rides.
- ☐ Bake, plant or rummage sale.
- ☐ Car wash.

OTHER IDEAS FOR REUNION FUNDRAISING

- ☐ Theater party with meals, tickets and transportation.
- ☐ Fashion Show with location, meal, tickets.
- ☐ Progressive dinner paid for by host, tickets.
- ☐ Casino Night – rent a hall and equipment, have dealers volunteer.
- ☐ Tours with transportation, meals and tickets.

Reunion hint: With each of these other ideas, negotiate a lower-priced group ticket and food costs with your vendors, mark up the total price for the buyer so he or she is paying full price and put the margin in to the reunion account.

10. BUDGET WORKSHEET

Do the math! Here are suggested items to consider.

	DATE	WHAT	VENDOR	WHERE	WHEN	UNIT PRICE	# OF ITEMS	BUDGET	ACTUAL
EXPENSES		Transportation							
		Hotel Rooms							
		Deposits							
		Taxes							
		Gratuities							
		Breakfast							
		Lunch							
		Dinner							
		Attraction Tickets							
		Guest Gifts							
		Parking							
		Activity 1							
		Activity 2							
		Activity 3							
		Activity 4							
		Printing							
		Postage							
		Maps							
		Rentals (tables, linens)							
		Entertainment							
		Photographer							
		Videographer							
		Memory Book							
		Awards							
	TOTAL								
INCOME		In Kind Donations							
		Cash Donations							
		Guest Fees							
		Sponsors							
		TOTAL							

11. NEGOTIATING

If you don't ask, you don't get!

Organizing a reunion requires negotiation with hotels, restaurants, attractions, etc. The Chairman was chosen for having the traits of not being intimidated easily and can tactfully deliver good value. Otherwise, the alternative is to accept the price or go elsewhere. And if you don't negotiate, you may pay a stiff price with few, if any, extras. An excellent tool to use for finding hotels and locations is the VisitPITTSBURGH Official Visitor's Guide and Special Event Venue Guide that you received with the planning kit.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

If this is your first time negotiating, know the facts to get the greatest value for your reunion dollars.

KNOW THE BASICS

Get fair value in exchange for your reunion business. Be realistic. Careful negotiating helps hotels make a reasonable profit while you have the best and most economical reunion. If you are reasonable, you and the hotel sales person both win.

MONEY-SAVING TIPS ON MAKING THE RESERVATION

First, your chosen date will be assured. Second, you'll probably be able to save money by locking in an early contract. Third, early alert will increase attendance. Members have more time to plan, save and anticipate.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND PREVAIL

Ask hotels for dates and times when rates are lowest and business is needed. These are called low, off or soft periods – and they vary from location to location. They also occur more than once a year. If your dates and seasons are flexible, you may be able to save 50% or more off published rates.

LET PLACES KNOW YOU'RE SHOPPING AROUND

Do not select a location just because it offers the lowest price. You may not get the service level you want. The hotel may need to cut back on housekeeping or banquet staff to meet your price.

SPEAK UP

If you really like one location but the price is out of your range, speak up. Tell sales people when you really like their hotel. Ask if they could work with you to make it happen. If they are genuinely interested, they will try hard to do it.

IF YOU DON'T ASK, THEY WON'T OFFER

Hotels can barter various services for free or reduced rates. Here's a list of items that are often open for negotiation:

- ☐ Transportation to/from Airport, Downtown.
- ☐ Audio/visual equipment.
- ☐ Baggage/portage charges.
- ☐ Banners and/or navigational signs.

IF YOU DON'T ASK, THEY WON'T OFFER **CONTINUED**

- ☐ Bonus points with chain's loyalty.
- ☐ Complimentary hospitality suite/meeting rooms.
- ☐ Complimentary welcome or farewell reception.
- ☐ Complimentary rooms per number of reservations.
- ☐ Suite upgrade for reunion hosts, Chair, Co-Chair.
- ☐ Early/late check-in /check-out.
- ☐ Flowers, table or room decorations.
- ☐ Recreational activities.
- ☐ Free or reduced-rate breakfast coupon.
- ☐ Free meal or room as a door or raffle prize.
- ☐ Parking.
- ☐ Storage for materials shipped in advance.
- ☐ Special menu items.

AFTER NEGOTIATION

You should receive a written contract at the end of negotiations. Review it very carefully. It is a road map spelling both parties' responsibilities. It does not have to be written in fancy legalese. Once signed, the contract becomes legally binding for both parties. Return the signed contract by certified mail.

WHAT THE CONTRACT SHOULD INCLUDE

- ☐ A good contract ensures you that the location will meet your obligations.
- ☐ Get everything in writing – from the smallest promised service to the type and number of rooms.
- ☐ Make sure total price is understood, and taxes or gratuities are clearly indicated.
- ☐ Ask questions if you don't understand.
- ☐ Change items that do not agree with your notes.

NEGOTIATING (CONTINUED)

CHECK THE CONTRACT FOR THE FOLLOWING

- ☐ Total number of rooms held for your reunion.
- ☐ How long rooms will be held.
- ☐ Types of rooms and beds.
- ☐ Complimentary rooms, suites.
- ☐ Smoke-free rooms.
- ☐ Meeting space.
- ☐ Deposits.
- ☐ Cut-off dates.
- ☐ Cancellation clauses.
- ☐ Food and beverage charges.

BILLING

Ask lots of questions about billing

- ☐ Discounts for pre- or prompt-payment?
- ☐ Master account provisions?
- ☐ Can separate bills be issued?
- ☐ Pay at check-in or check out?
- ☐ Is deposit required a % or \$?
- ☐ Deposit due date?
- ☐ Which credit cards are accepted?

12. SITE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Check it out!

When you've narrowed your list of locations to those that meet your physical requirements for sleeping rooms and meeting space, it's time to make a site inspection. This "Site Inspection Checklist" gives you a general idea of what to look for and questions to ask. Be prepared. Show location staff you're organized and know what you're doing. Take this checklist with you and use it to evaluate and compare locations.

THINGS TO OBSERVE ABOUT THE SITE WHEN YOU VISIT:

- ☐ Appearance (interior and exterior).
- ☐ Condition of all rooms (sleeping, dining, meeting).
- ☐ Staff attitude.
- ☐ How you are treated during your visit.
- ☐ Overall cleanliness.
- ☐ Location and cleanliness of bathroom facilities.
- ☐ Do employees take pride in their work?
- ☐ Are employees cheerful and helpful?
- ☐ Is the hotel's general décor pleasing?
- ☐ Is the size of the registration area adequate?
- ☐ Is there access to public transportation?
- ☐ Is there sufficient, convenient parking?
- ☐ Are ice machines conveniently located and do they work properly?
- ☐ Is the hotel accessible to attractions/restaurants?
- ☐ Are there adequate security and safety systems; fire exits, sprinkler systems in rooms?
- ☐ Can special needs be met?

DOES THE HOTEL OFFER?

- ☐ Barber, hairdresser
- ☐ Fitness center
- ☐ Pool/Spa
- ☐ Gift shop
- ☐ Recreation facilities
- ☐ Bell service
- ☐ Concierge
- ☐ In-house movies
- ☐ Safe deposit boxes

WHAT TYPES OF SLEEPING ROOMS ARE AVAILABLE?

- ☐ Singles
- ☐ Doubles
- ☐ King-size beds
- ☐ Suites
- ☐ Mix
- ☐ Accessible

SITE INSPECTION CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

OTHER ITEMS TO CONFIRM

- ☐ Are special rates available during certain periods?
- ☐ Are reservation/registration systems automated?
- ☐ Will reservation cards be provided for your group?
- ☐ Does the hotel offer shuttle service; what is the cost?
- ☐ Is 24-hour room service available?
- ☐ Is audio-visual support available; what is the cost?
- ☐ Can you bring your own liquor?
- ☐ Is there a "corkage" fee?

DON'T FORGET TO ASK FOR THESE ITEMS

- ☐ A copy of complimentary room policy
- ☐ A copy of menu selections for meal functions
- ☐ The possibility of creating your own menu

DON'T HESITATE TO BE REALLY THOROUGH

Ask to see the "back of the hotel," the kitchen and engineering (power plant, heating and air conditioning units, etc).

13. MEMORABILIA & KEEPSAKES

You gotta have stuff!

It's very likely that you'll want to provide keepsakes for your reunion attendees. The budget and sponsorship/fundraising efforts will determine whether you will find it necessary to charge for the keepsakes, or will be able to include them in the registration fee.

Choose something meaningful and something they'll enjoy holding on to. It should be functional, good quality and affordable. Popular choices include t-shirts, caps, mugs, key chains, paperweights and tote bags. The most popular keepsake is the t-shirt. Family reunion members wearing the same color t-shirt creates unity and looks great in photos. Before ordering, get quotes from at least three vendors in order to see what the options are i.e. quality, screening and set-up, color, shipping, deposit, price etc. Ask to see samples and design suggestions.

FAMILY REUNION T-SHIRTS

- ☐ Shop around to get the best cost and quality.
- ☐ Send out price of shirts with invitation.
- ☐ Your invitees indicate how many they need and t-shirt sizes of each.
- ☐ Have t-shirts at registration table where they can be paid for and distributed.

FAMILY RECIPE BOOK

- ☐ Use a favorite recipe from each family.
- ☐ Collect recipes beforehand.
- ☐ Use family clip art.
- ☐ Give credit to the contributors.
- ☐ Take orders for in advance.
- ☐ Print copies.

Get quotes in writing and ask when the quote will expire.

When the item is decided upon, let the vendor know when the order will be placed. The more you order, the lower the costs. To meet minimum requirements and to obtain lower costs, buy extras. Family members may want to purchase them at the reunion for others. Divide total cost by members attending and include the price of items on the registration form.

The same color t-shirt creates unity and looks great in photos.

Before ordering, get quotes from at least three vendors in order to see what the options are i.e. quality, screening and set-up, color, shipping, deposit, price etc. Ask to see samples and design suggestions.

14. KEEPSAKE PRODUCTION WORKSHEET

Use this to help budget for Keepsakes:

PRE-PRODUCTION COST	
Catalog cost per piece x number ordered	\$
Cost of artwork	\$
PRODUCTION COST	
Set-up	\$
Additional colors	\$
Customization charges	\$
Taxes	\$
TOTAL PRODUCTION COST	\$
To determine individual costs, divide total production cost by the number of pieces. Your cost per piece = total production cost ÷ number of orders + shipping cost.	
SHIPPING COST	
Packaging materials	\$
Postage	\$
TOTAL	\$

HOW TO PAY FOR KEEPSAKES?

(see Sample Letter Three)

- ☐ Pre-reunion orders.
- ☐ Everyone pays individually, in advance.
- ☐ Include in reunion price/fee.

DISTRIBUTION:

- ☐ At the reunion.
- ☐ In registration packet or unveil at a special ceremony.
- ☐ Send to members before reunion (add postage and shipping).
- ☐ Send to members after reunion (add postage and shipping).



15. PRESERVING YOUR REUNION

Keep the memories alive!

USE TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE A LASTING HISTORY

Use a smart phone to record and edit photos and video. Post them on your Facebook page for all to enjoy.

Don't forget to use Instagram to make your photos memorable. If you have hired professionals to do the job for you, make sure the photos and videos they produce include all the key players at the event. Ask your emcee to host the video.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Professional videographers will edit your memories, for a cost. Spend the extra money for professional editing. Refer to VisitPITTSBURGH Official Visitor Guide for a list of photographers, videographers and audio/visual companies.

The final outcome of your video is dependent upon what you feel is most important to capture and what the budget will allow. There are endless possibilities. Video editors can strategically place dates and names, dub-in music and close-up shots of photos, memorabilia or artifacts pertinent to the story. Professional editing will give your video the look of a professional production. The finished video then becomes a meaningful record of your reunion and family history.

WHO WILL DISTRIBUTE PICTURES OR VIDEOS?

- ☐ Photographer/Videographer
The photographer can charge and keep income from photos or mark-up price and share profit with the reunion.
- ☐ You buy (markup or sell at cost) and distribute to members.
- ☐ Someone you appoint.

16. WRAP UP AND EVALUATE

It's not over 'til it's over!

SUCCESS INCLUDES SOME FINAL STEPS.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE EVENT IS OVER:

- ☐ Return all borrowed equipment and materials.
- ☐ Pay all your bills.
- ☐ Meet with hotel staff to make certain everything is okay. It's easier to solve problems in person than by letter or phone later.
- ☐ Tip staff who deserve special consideration.
- ☐ Collect all the data and information you can about the number of meals eaten in the hotel's restaurant, the amount of room service and number of rooms used by your group. This information is important for your next reunion negotiation to demonstrate your business and economic value. It is well worth the effort.

ONE OR TWO WEEKS LATER:

- ☐ Write thank-you notes to committee members and key hotel staff.
- ☐ Write a letter to the hotel's general manager and recognize employees – by name – who did an outstanding job. Such letters help management to make decisions about raises and promotions. You may also wish to give them a t-shirt, hat or other memento from your group.
- ☐ Include a reunion summary from the chairperson, recommendations and treasurer's report in your newsletter.
- ☐ Write a note to media that covered the event and/or wrote features about it.
- ☐ Analyze all the information you collect — both positive and negative — and give it to the committee for your next reunion.

17. WELCOME PACKETS FROM VISITPITTSBURGH

Reunions are a great way to bring your group together to share memories and celebrate your history.

VISITPITTSBURGH thanks you for bringing your group to our neighborhood.

To help the group get to know our hometown, we offer and provide the items below free of charge. We can provide quantities of these items equal to the number of rooms your group books or quantities equal to number of family's attending.

OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDES - Full-color magazines. Contain information needed for choosing a hotel, equipment, entertainment, transportation, recreation, attractions, historic sites, dining options, nightlife and maps (one free per planning committee member).

100 OFFICIAL VISITORS MAPS - Two-sided, full-color map with a legend to help you identify hotels, points of interests and Welcome Centers. One side features Downtown and neighborhoods including the North Shore, Mt. Washington and South Side. The other features the Oakland Neighborhood, an urban area filled with museums, universities and hospitals.

25 COMPLIMENTARY PITTSBURGH POSTCARDS - Promote the upcoming reunion with postcards or give them to attendees to remember the great time they had at the event and to show friends and other family members that could not attend.

25 COMPLIMENTARY PLASTIC BAGS - Made from 100 percent recycled materials, and identified as being from Pittsburgh. Sized 19x14, large enough to hold the above items plus anything else distributed at the event.

COST FOR ADDITIONAL QUANTITIES OF THE ITEMS LISTED ABOVE ARE:

- Post Cards 0.20 per piece
- Plastic Bags 0.25 per piece
- Visitors Guides 1.00 per piece

TO ORDER THESE MATERIALS,

contact VisitPITTSBURGH at 1-877-LOVE PGH (1-877-568-3744) or 412-281-7711.

Materials can either be picked up by someone in your planning committee prior to the reunion or sent directly to your hotel contact. Payment for additional items can be made by Visa, MasterCard, AMEX or exact cash only.



A. SAMPLE LETTERS

SAMPLE LETTER ONE Determining interest in the Reunion (Send 18 months before the reunion)

LETTER OF INTEREST

Date _____

Dear Member,

The (name of reunion) has decided it's time to have a Reunion.

Some of us recently met to discuss the possibility of hosting that reunion and we need your feedback to see whether you agree.

Our goal is to for the (group/family name) to spend a few days together getting re-acquainted and remembering the good things and good people that have made our best memories last forever!

Before we make any plans, we need to hear from you.

So, please answer the questions on the next page and return the questionnaire to (name of organizer) by (date).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Thanks for responding.

Sincerely
(Signature)
(Name typed here)

REUNION QUESTIONNAIRE

Are you reasonably sure you will attend the (name) Reunion in (city) in (year) Yes _____ No _____

Choose the dates of at least two (2) time periods when you and your family can attend the reunion in (year)
____ Summer ____ Fall ____ Winter ____ Spring

Will you stay at a hotel if family housing is not available? ____Yes ____No

What price range bests fits your budget? ____ \$90-\$105 ____ \$105-\$130 ____ \$130-\$150 ____ \$150-\$200

How many people will attend from your group/family, including you?

____ Adults ____ Children ____ Total

Please list activities or entertainment you would like to see included in the reunion plans.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN

by (date) to:

(Committee Member Name)

(Street Address) (City, State, Zip) (E-mail)

SAMPLE LETTERS (CONTINUED)

SAMPLE LETTER TWO

To Encourage Member to Save-The-Date, including Event Details (Send at least one year prior to the reunion)

SAVE-THE-DATE

Date _____

Dear Member,

The (name) Reunion will be held from (date) to (date), (year).

The reunion planning committee has been busy making arrangements for things we know will be exciting and fun for the group.

We have chosen the (hotel name) at (address and website) as our reunion headquarters.

Accommodations include (get list from hotel representative and include details about parking, courtesy bus etc.)
The daily rate is (\$000.00) plus tax.

To get the special rate the planning committee has negotiated, you must make your reservations by (date, terms of payment, restrictions).

If you have questions about the hotel, please call (name/phone number of person to contact at hotel).

Once you have registered, you will receive details about meals, sightseeing, entertainment etc.

Looking forward to seeing you at the reunion!

Sincerely,
(Committee Member)

P.S. Go to Facebook.com and like the (name on reunion page). It will be updated on a regular basis to keep you informed.

SAMPLE LETTER THREE

**To encourage Registration for attendees, provide hotel info, souvenir order form
(Send 6-9 months before the reunion, after hotel reservations have been made)**

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration form due by (date)

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Email: _____

Total Number of People Attending _____

Adults: _____ Children: _____

Registration Fee: Adult _____ Children _____

Specify family members' t-shirt sizes and quantity:

Extra Small/Qty _____ Small/Qty _____ Medium/Qty _____ Large/Qty _____ Extra Large/Qty _____

Double-Extra-Large/Qty _____ Triple-Extra-large/Qty _____

SAMPLE LETTERS (CONTINUED)

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: I.E., DIETARY NEEDS, DISABILITY NEEDS ETC.

Make check payable to:
(Treasurer Name and address)
if paying by credit card use attached form.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Send to: (Treasurer Name and address)

Credit Card Remittance

Date _____

Credit Card Type: VISA _____ MasterCard _____ Discover _____ AMEX _____

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Name as it appears on card: _____

Billing address of card: _____

Phone number: _____ FAX: _____

Email for receipt: _____

Payment for: _____

Total Amount to be charged: \$ _____

Send to: (Treasurer Name and address)

If you have not yet made your hotel reservation at (host hotel name, address), please do so now:
Accommodations include (get list from hotel representative and include details about parking, courtesy bus etc.)
The daily rate is (\$000.00) plus tax.
To get the special rate the planning committee has negotiated, you must make your reservations by
(date, terms of payment, restrictions). If you have questions about the hotel, please call (name/phone number
of person to contact at hotel).

SAMPLE LETTERS *(CONTINUED)*

SAMPLE LETTER FOUR To make one last Reminder Announcement (Send 2-4 Months before reunion)

REUNION REMINDER

Number of members' expected: Adults _____ Children _____

Hotel name _____ Address _____

Check-in time: _____ Check out time: _____

Day One: Highlight of the day

Day two: Highlight of the day

Day Three: Highlight of the day

Meals: Special restaurant or food being served

Activities: i.e. Day in the park that includes golf, swimming, volleyball etc.

If you haven't made a reservation yet, now is the time. The cutoff date for the special group rate is (date).

Please contact:

(Committee Member Name)

(E-mail)

(Phone number)

B. SAMPLE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- MEET AND GREET

GROUP VISIT TO KENNYWOOD PARK

REUNION BANQUET/DINNER

PITTSBURGH ZOO AND AQUARIUM

GROUP PICNIC

FASHION SHOW
- THEATER OUTING – MUSICAL, CONCERT, MOVIES

TALENT SHOW

NIGHTCLUB OUTING

NIGHT AT RIVERS CASINO

CITY/HISTORICAL TOUR

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

ADULTS

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	TIME NEEDED	COST
			TOTAL COST \$

CHILDREN

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	TIME NEEDED	COST
			TOTAL COST \$

COMBINED ADULTS AND CHILDREN

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	TIME NEEDED	COST
			TOTAL COST \$

TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	TIME NEEDED	COST
			TOTAL COST \$

C. SAMPLE EVENT ITINERARY

ACTIVITY	TIME ALLOTTED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Greetings and Special Words of thanks		
Declaration of family crest (values and beliefs)		
Special reading or poem		
Musical selection		
Blessing of the family		
Special remembrances for those who passed away this year		
Special prayers or verse		
Recognition of new family members, elder birthdays etc.		
Conclusion		
Presentation of family Tree		
Group photo		
Other activities		

D. TAKE IT FROM A PROFESSIONAL

10 Tips for Successful Family Reunions

By Mark Miner

Founder, MinerD.com

Since 1986, our national MinerD-Minard-Miner-Minor family reunion in Western Pennsylvania has tried to re-connect long-lost cousins and celebrate our clan's links to Americana. Says the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, our reunions bring together cousins who have "never met, or even knew existed." Noting that the number of our cousins alive today could be 50,000, Pittsburgh Quarterly says "the reunion could fill Heinz Field."

Here are 10 tips that might help you organize your own meaningful reunion, large or small.

STRUCTURE

Build a mailing list of cousins' postal or email addresses. Stay in touch during the year. To cover costs, pass the hat and create a small fund. Recruit sponsors or underwriters.

GROUP PHOTO

Take a group photograph, close-up enough so that all faces can be recognized. Identify each one by name and send copies to all reunion-goers.

ARCHIVE - Create an electronic archive. Bring a scanner to copy old family photos, letters and news obituaries. Donate copies to local libraries or genealogy societies where your family lived.

FAMILY TREE - Create a family tree display on large poster board – with room for future additions – and strong enough to absorb knocks and dings over the years.

VIDEO INTERVIEWS - Bring a video recorder and set aside quiet time to interview family elders about their memories of parents, grandparents, homes, schools, activities, before it's too late.

THEMES

Establish a reunion theme that's unique to your family. Honor military veterans, coal miners or quilt-makers. Create a display around the theme and prepare a related handout.

GUEST SPEAKER

Enlist a guest speaker to help draw attendance. Actors portraying Rosie the Riveter, Josh Gibson and George Westinghouse are available through the Heinz History Center.

WEBSITE

Create a Facebook page to display family photos. Ancestry.com offers private web pages that are password-protected. Or build your own with help from a child or grandchild.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Plant a tree, attend a ballgame, adopt a highway cleanup or participate in a special charity event. Tour a coal mine or a museum together.

MINDSET

Promote the mindset among younger members that family comes first and of the importance of heritage and togetherness. Instill a deep interest in the stories of past generations.

To learn more about the possibilities, visit my website, www.minerd.com, which Family Tree Magazine has twice named as one of the top 10 family websites in the nation, and which has drawn more than 1.5 million visitors since its launch in 2000.

E. PROFESSIONAL EVENT & REUNION PLANNERS

For printed listings of event planners and services, use the Official Visitors Guide and Special Occasion Venue Guides, available by calling 412-281-0482

Find services like the following using VisitPITTSBURGH's on-line source **VisitPITTSBURGH.com**:

Event Suppliers (w links to site)

Hotels & Resorts

Local Transportation

Program Activities

Venues

A great resource for reunion planning is *Reunions Magazine* and the magazine's many planning kits. For more information call 414-263-4567, or go online to reunionsmag.com.