TREC TOGETHER RISING AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY

TREC FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE

House Party Guidance for Hosts & Staff

House parties can be *powerful* fundraising tools for connection and cultivation when done right. These are intimate, mission-driven gatherings hosted by a supporter to introduce new prospects to a nonprofit's work and/or build stronger relationships with major donors. They're not typically direct fundraising events, but they lay the groundwork for future giving by creating connection and trust.

Here are tips for you to make your house party more successful and memorable:

Before the Party: Set the Stage

Choose the Right Host

- A host with authentic enthusiasm and strong personal relationships sets the tone.
- Ideally someone with social capital who can introduce you to new prospects.

Curate the Guest List

- Aim for quality over quantity—8 to 20 guests is a sweet spot.
- Mix major donors, warm prospects, and a few current supporters for social proof.

Personalized Invitations

- Have the host send personal invitations by phone, email, or handwritten note.
- Make it feel special and intimate.

Have a Clear Purpose

- Are you cultivating new donors? Thanking current ones? Raising visibility? Be clear with the host and guests.

Prep the Program

- Keep formal remarks to 10–15 minutes max.
- Focus on **stories**, **impact**, and a compelling vision—not just facts or needs.

During the Party: Make It Personal

Keep the Atmosphere Warm & Casual

- Avoid the vibe of a presentation or sales pitch. Think: dinner party with purpose.
- Keep the food and drink simple: Light snacks or drinks are plenty; don't stress over catering.

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Let the Host Shine

- The host's testimonial is *gold*. It's peer-to-peer credibility. Let them share *why they give* and *why others might want to*.

Keep the Ask Light (or Leave It Out)

- Unless it's explicitly a fundraising event, don't make a hard ask.
- Instead: invite them to learn more, attend a tour, or meet for coffee.

Build Relationships, Not Just Rosters

- Make introductions thoughtfully (especially between guests and org staff).
- Note who asks great questions or shows strong interest—these are your warm leads.

Be Present, Not Pushy

- No donation forms unless invited by the host.
- Offer a handout or leave-behind that reflects your brand and mission.

Offer a take-home touchpoint

- A mission postcard, a small gift, or a QR code linking to a compelling story or video.

After the Party: Follow Through with Intention

Send Personalized Thank-Yous

- Within 48 hours. Handwritten is ideal, but email is OK too if you're timely and thoughtful.

Follow Up 1:1

- Ask for coffee or a call with prospects who seemed engaged.
- Keep the host in the loop and thank them again with a short debrief.

Track Your Outcomes

- Record who attended, notes on conversations, and any next steps or follow-up actions.
- Celebrate the impact—even if it's just strong new connections.

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House Party Guide for Host and Staff Checklist

The following guide and checklist will support both the **host** and the **staff partner** in creating a meaningful, effective experience for everyone.

Roles for Host and Staff

Host

- Provides the space, hospitality, food and drink, and personal connections
- Welcomes guests warmly and sets a generous, joyful tone
- Shares why they support the nonprofit
- Handles logistics

Staff

- Plans program flow and supports the host
- Prepares materials and guest follow-up
- Builds relationships with new prospects

Tasks for Host and Staff

Task	Host	Staff
Choose date & venue	✅	✅
Create guest list	✅	
Send invites / RSVP tracking	✅	Optional support
Provide refreshments	✅	Optional
Prepare materials		✅
Run-of-show planning	✅	✅
Welcome guests	✅	
Present about organization		✅
Facilitate follow-up	Optional	✅
Thank-you notes	Optional	✅

Summary Timeline

Timeframe	Task
6 weeks out	Confirm host, date, goals
4–5 weeks out	Send invites, draft guest list
3 weeks out	Confirm RSVPs, prepare program
1 week out	Final logistics, materials, walkthrough if needed
Day of	Event! Relax and connect.
1–2 days after	Send thank-yous, debrief with host
1–2 weeks after	Follow-up meetings with prospects and donors

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Planning Checklist

Planning & Preparation

4–6 Weeks Out: Initial Planning

- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** meet to confirm goals, format, guest list, and date
- ☐ **Host** drafts guest list (8–25 is ideal)
- ☐ **Staff** provides invitation language or evite template
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** choose location and set expectations (indoor/outdoor, seating, etc.)
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** decide on format and food: wine & cheese, brunch, dessert, etc.

3–4 Weeks Out: Invitations & Story Prep

- ☐ **Host** sends invitations (email, phone, or physical)
- ☐ **Host** schedules save-the-date reminders to be sent out
- ☐ **Staff** creates talking points and materials for a brief, compelling 10-15 mins program and sends to host for review (impact stories, visuals)

1–2 Weeks Out: Final Touches

- ☐ **Host** confirms RSVPs with invitees and Staff
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** coordinate refreshments (host provides, with optional Staff support)
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** walkthrough space
- ☐ **Staff** prepares any handouts or takeaways (1-pagers, pledge cards if appropriate)
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** decide whether to take photos or not
- ☐ **Staff** print sign-in sheet or bring guest list
- ☐ **Staff** print name tags if using them

Day of the Event

Preparation

- ☐ **Host** tidy event space
- ☐ **Host** (Staff optional) set up tables, chairs, lighting, and music
- ☐ **Staff** stage printed materials (flyers, info sheets, etc.)
- ☐ **Host** prepare food and drink station
- ☐ **Host** put up signage if needed (restrooms, entrance, parking)
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** final walkthrough of space
- ☐ **Host** & **Staff** run-of-show review

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- ☐ **Staff** confirm guest list and RSVPs
- ☐ **Staff** brief any volunteers or co-hosts
- ☐ **Staff** set up donation/info table (if applicable)
- ☐ **Host** turn on music
- ☐ **Host** greeter at the door
- ☐ **Staff** places "welcome" materials ready at the entrance

During the Event (1.5–2 hours)

- ☐ **Arrival & Mingling (20–30 mins)**
  - **Host** welcomes each guest
  - **Host** & **Staff** greet and mingle with each guest
  - Drinks/snacks available, soft background music
- ☐ **Host makes welcome remarks (5 mins)**
  - **Host** thanks guests, share why you care about the organization
- ☐ **Staff presentation (10–15 mins)**
  - Mission, impact, vision
  - Clear call to connect—not necessarily a direct ask
- ☐ **Staff facilitated Q&A / Conversation (15–20 mins)**
  - **Staff** invites dialogue, not a pitch
- ☐ **More Mingling (30–45 mins)**
  - **Staff** engages personally with prospects
  - **Staff** take mental notes on engaged or high-potential guests

Follow-Up (Within 2 Weeks)

Organization's Responsibility:

- ☐ Send handwritten or personalized thank-you notes to each guest
- ☐ Reach out to qualified prospects for 1:1 follow-up (coffee, outing, etc.)
- ☐ Send materials (info sheet, link to donate, upcoming event invites)
- ☐ Debrief with host (what went well, what can be improved)

Host's Follow-Up:

- ☐ Thank guests personally
- ☐ Encourage future connection with the organization
- ☐ Share a social media post or email update about the event

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