

THE

QUEER FARMER CONVERGENCE

GUIDEBOOK

a guide for hosting your very
own gay grower get-together



WELCOME

The QFC guidebook is a support resource for organizers of the well-loved gatherings we call Queer Farmer Convergences. It was assembled by the organizers of the first five national QFCs held in Iowa and is informed by their direct experiences forming and hosting these events.

It's our hope that publicly offering this organizing format will help catalyze new gatherings that can serve queer farmers in the Midwest, where the majority of our work has been based thus far, and beyond.

Everything suggested in this document is based on the specific needs, culture, and ecosystem surrounding our original organizing team. Though we have established some guidelines around what it means to be a 'Queer Farmer Convergence', we expect that each gathering will look different based on the unique shape of your own local communities.

As you make use of this resource, you're invited to alter and expound upon the model as needed, and you can let us know if you find any additions that should be made to this living document that will grow and change as we learn over time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GUIDELINES	— — — — —	4
ROLES	— — — — —	6
FINANCES	— — — — —	10
REGISTRATION	— — — — —	17
OUTREACH	— — — — —	26
SITE	— — — — —	29
FOOD	— — — — —	34
CULTURE	— — — — —	36
RESOURCES	— — — — —	40

GUIDELINES

If you'd like to host a Queer Farmer Convergence that is listed, promoted, and supported by our larger organizing apparatus, the Queer Farmer Network, we ask that you follow these guidelines as a baseline to remain true to the wider organization's basic values and purpose.

1. The event cultivates belonging. The gathering is in service to building community for and supporting queer farmers. Anyone who identifies in the realm of queer and farmer is welcome, and each participant is regarded as queer enough and farmer enough to join.
2. Racial equity is meaningfully addressed in the organizing and structure of the gathering. A system is made for direct financial support for BIPOC attendees through providing travel stipends and other creative means, and a percentage of leftover funds are tithed to BIPOC communities or organizations post-event.
3. The event is grassroots, and a gathering—not a conference. It's co-created by attendees, and roles are sourced within the community as much as possible. Vendors, tabling, and

presentations by outside organizations are discouraged.

4. Event is not-for-profit and registration is intentionally kept as cheap as possible and offered on a sliding scale. Efforts are made to fundraise to cover the majority of event costs.
5. There is proactive transparency around and meaningful attempts toward accessibility with regards to disability, neurodivergence, participation of kids and families, etc. When selecting a site, accessibility features are prioritized as a top consideration.
6. If registration is occurring on an application-basis, priority is given to underserved participants - i.e. Black, Indigenous, Trans, Rural, or participants coming from areas with less access to queer community.
7. Organizers participate in smooth and timely coordination with QFN organizers on Outreach, Fundraising, and Reporting pre and post event. Timelines and requests that impact the larger organization's operations are honored.

ROLES

Assemble your leadership team!

The leadership team collaborates to set the foundation for the event. Although the QFC is co-created by all attendees, the leadership team is responsible for organizing the gathering beforehand and provides the framework for a collaborative grassroots event. Using clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the leadership team works together to do the work of planning and executing the event.

All QFCs to date have been assembled by a volunteer core organizing team of around 3-6 people that work together for months in advance of the gathering to ensure the weekend can run smoothly for all. We find it's healthy when core organizers acknowledge the inherent power and responsibility of leadership roles, while also understanding leadership as a service/gift to the community and a practice of humility and accountability.

Divide into roles!

Following are the main roles we have identified throughout our years of organizing. We have split them here into:

Core Organizing Roles, which are higher commitment and workload roles usually taken on by the core organizing team, and

Event Roles, which tend to be gathering-specific roles that are very important for the smooth running of the event, but require less time and commitment than core roles.

It's possible for core organizers to attend to Event Roles themselves, but we recommend delegating them to folks in your community who may want to help with the event but don't have the time and resources to commit to being a core organizer. This can lessen the load of the core organizing team and help spread the leadership of the event. Note that our core organizers typically do multiple of the roles listed here.

We give an overview of each role in the following pages, and more detail about their responsibilities can be found in later sections.

Core Organizing Roles Overview

Accountant

This person tracks all expenses and incoming money for the gathering, collects donated and registration funds, and pays all event bills.

Fundraising Coordinator

This person is in charge of organizing fundraising efforts and allocating all the funds needed for the gathering.

Registration Coordinator

This person is in charge of creating the registration system for the event and all correspondence with participants leading up to and after the event.

Outreach Coordinator

This person is in charge of getting the word out about the event on whatever platforms the gathering is choosing—social media, flyers, email list, etc. and coordinates with the QFN team to co-promote the event and do post-gathering reporting.

Site Coordinator

This person is responsible for all on-site planning and flow, both before and during the event.

Food Coordinator

This person coordinates meals, snacks, beverages, and catering for the event and ensures all participants are well-fed.

Event Organizing Roles

Facilitator

This person attends to the overall flow of the event, leads opening and closing circles, and plays a distinctive hosting role throughout the gathering. They may undertake some pre-event preparations, such as creating a 'theme' for the event and organizing content around that theme.

Timekeeper

This person keeps the event on schedule. They signal when workshops are starting and ending, mealtimes, and other gathering times.

Ceremonial Moments Keeper

This person supports ceremonial moments and recruits volunteers to do things like share mealtime rituals (gratitudes, songs, moments of silence, etc.) as a way to share culture at the gathering.

Community Support Person

This person is present for anyone who might need emotional or interpersonal support. This could be a trained therapist, mental health professional, restorative justice practitioner, or other skilled person in this realm.

Photographer

Having an event photographer is optional. If you have one, this person is in charge of consensually collecting photos and videos and sharing them with the community after the event.

FINANCES

Accountant

The accountant manages expenses and incoming money. We have identified five possible ways money can be received and disbursed for QFCs:

Opening a bank account in an organizer's name

The benefit of this tactic is that it gives the accountant direct access and control over the money coming in and out for the event. The con is that whomever owns that bank account has to record and pay taxes on all collected funds to keep their operations legal.

Using a pre-existing business

Flowing funds through a pre-existing business is another option that gives the team direct access and control over the money coming in and out for events but might also require the business to record and pay taxes. This could be the host farm or a team member's farm.

Using an under-the-table system

This option makes use of cash or Venmo as a way to avoid more formal systems. This could create additional administration tasks to ensure everything remains off the books.

Fiscal sponsorship

Organizations with 501(c)3 status can help you manage money without having to report income or taxes since money that moves through them is tax-deductible. Donors give money to the 501(c)3, and you communicate with the 501(c)3 when you need to access that money. You can ask the fiscal sponsor to provide money for expenses up-front, to reimburse you after you pay an expense, or to pay the expense directly. This requires more communication, so factor this into your time. Some organizations may charge a 5-10% fee of all the money received to offset the labor they perform on your behalf. We recommend reaching out to 501(c)3s that you already have a relationship with.

Tip: For a template budget, [click here](#) and make a copy in your own Google Drive to adapt to your team's needs. You can also find this in the Resources section at the end of this guidebook.



Making a non-profit

This tactic requires quite a bit of administration and some financial investment, but this could be the right option for some groups.

The first three options are ones the QFN organizing team has experience with. The first year, we ran the money through the host farm's account,

and in the second year, one of the organizers created a bank account in their own name. The most recent round of QFCs have operated their finances through a fiscal sponsor that received, held, reimbursed, and paid out money that was donated and spent.

The latter two are options on the list we have seen used successfully in mutual aid systems but have no direct experience with at scale.

Whatever way you decide to navigate money arrangements, plan to make a basic spreadsheet of "money in" and "money out" to help you keep track of the money wherever it may be.

Fundraising Coordinator

The fundraising coordinator is in charge of allocating the majority of the funds needed for the event. Their job is key for ensuring you are able to pay all the event bills smoothly and uphold our collective commitments to supporting Black, Indigenous, and people of color participants in attending and in keeping registration costs as low as possible for all participants.

The main task of the fundraising team is to reach out to potential and returning sponsors to ask for donations. Fundraising coordinators use personal and community connections, communications templates for cold calls and emails, and other creative means (raffles, social media drives, etc.) to gather the funds needed for the event budget. They keep meticulous records of contacts, amounts, and communications year-

to-year and are in charge of managing donor relationships through efforts like sending post-gathering thank yous to sponsors. They also coordinate with the QFN organizing team to track donor information, report on funding, and to avoid sponsorship request crossover.

Tip: For a template fundraising ask, [click here](#) and make a copy in your own Google Drive to adapt to your team's needs. You can also find this in the Resources section at the end of this guidebook.



Securing Sponsors and Donor Relations

The most important aspect of asking sponsor organizations for donations is to come to potential donors with a very clear ask. The more specific you are, the more willing folks are going to be to give to your cause. You'll need to clearly express your purpose, get them behind your cause, talk about the outcomes you hope to achieve, and let them know what the impact of their support will be.

Fundraisers should also keep a clear and exhaustive list of all donors and sponsors from a given year in a [spreadsheet](#) that gets saved in a collective organizing folder and passed on year to year to new teams for easier work in

consecutive years. This way, you can separate your fundraising efforts into 'new' and 'returning' sponsor categories, which each require different communications. When soliciting previous years' sponsors, for example, you can ask them if they'd like to give even more money for the new year's QFC.

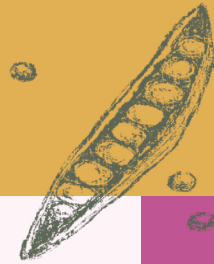
It's a good idea to find a fundraising coordinator who is comfortable talking on the phone with strangers. Calling organizations can be more effective and yield better results than sending emails, as it's harder to say no to a live human voice. Emailing, of course, is easier and takes less time since a person can copy and paste from templates and fill in details.

Sponsors may have questions and contingencies around making donations, so it's good to be prepared for what to say if they ask if they can attend your event, table, present, or share sponsors.

Sponsors may have questions and contingencies around making donations, so it's good to be prepared for what to say if they ask if they can attend your event, table, present, or share information about their work in some way if they donate. They also may ask for promotional materials to share, shout-outs, a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), invoices for the funds, or a list of sponsorship tiers, so be prepared to invest real time in donor relations when fundraising begins.

When the gathering is over, the fundraising coordinator can wrap up the process by sending thank-you emails or mailed notes to sponsors post-event, especially the more significant sponsors.

Tip: Sharing a list of sponsorship tiers automatically with your ask can help organizations decide where they'd like to donate. Set the bar high with a large top donation to encourage higher amounts!



Coordinated Fundraising

If your team is asking national-scale organizations or donors outside your immediate region for funding, be sure and coordinate with a QFN point person to ensure sponsor crossover requests are avoided. Also, if your team is working through the QFN's fiscal sponsor for funding, the fundraiser will need to record donations and donor info in QFN central spreadsheets and use uniform invoicing and reimbursement sheets. If you're not utilizing our fiscal sponsor, we may still ask for copies of your fundraising sheets post-gathering for our own records, if your event is an official 'Queer Farmer Convergence' making use of QFN platforms and resources.

Fundraising Timeline

The fundraising coordinator should begin fundraising efforts at least six months before the event to give adequate time for communications and follow-up and to make sure the funds have been sent and received. They will need to do a fair amount of back-and-forth with each potential donor in order to ensure the money is actually sent and received. The following is an example of a typical fundraising timeline for a September event:

March - April: Start by creating your gathering's budget and making a plan for fundraising based on your funding needs. Then, compile lists of potential and returning donors, gather their contact information, research grants and check their deadlines, update your templates for sponsor letters and cold calls with current information, create your spreadsheets for the year, and coordinate with the QFN for any central support you'll need and to ensure there isn't donor crossover.

May - June: Begin the campaign. Send out your sponsor letters, make calls, respond to requests and needs of donors, carry out the communication needed to ensure the funds land in the bank, coordinate with QFN to keep shared records of donation commitments that come in, communications, amounts, dates, and contacts. It typically takes around 2 months from the beginning of a campaign to fulfill the budget needs.

July - August: For an early September gathering, July is your target time for having the funds on hand, as that's when the majority of your event expenses will start needing to be paid.

Where to Start

Some examples of businesses and organizations to reach out to are:

- Food co-ops in your state or region: The largest number of QFC donations currently come from food co-ops. Many co-ops have a community outreach person you can email for this purpose.
- Ag education non-profits: Some examples in the Midwest are Practical Farmers of Iowa and Marbleseed. The highest dollar donations have come from this type of organization in the past.
- Community development organizations: These could be places like economic development associations in your city or county.
- Small businesses in the area
- Queer-owned small businesses
- Organic food and farming-related brands

REGISTRATION

Registration Coordinator

The registration coordinator is the first point of contact for participants and sets the tone for the event through their communications. Their job is to act as a welcoming host to attendees before, at, and after the event. Registration is an intensive and integral role for the smooth running of the event, and whoever takes it on should be prepared for a significant amount of back-and-forth with attendees and be able to be organized & comfortable with potentially heavy email communication.

Pre-Event Registration Tasks & Communications

Our organizing group runs registration for QFCs on an application basis, as opposed to a first-come-first-serve model. This is because we want to curate the participation of our gathering a bit more than a 'who can sign up the fastest' model allows. Using an application-based model allows us to do things like ensure at least one-third of spaces are reserved for BIPOC attendees, ensure people from targeted geographical areas and especially underrepresented areas (i.e. rural areas, the South, etc) are able to sign up, and generally create the kind of diverse,

thoughtful gathering we want to host. We have found from experience that a first-come-first-serve registration process, though simpler, does not allow for as diverse and thoughtful of a gathering.

If you use an application-based system, it's very important you are clear and upfront about the evaluation criteria you will be using to select participants. One task of the registrar is to coordinate with the host farm and organizing team to set the maximum number of participants who can attend a given gathering, and that number, as well as how you will select participants should be clearly stated on the application. To give you an idea, we have 75 spots available for our QFCs in Iowa, and usually 150 or more participants apply. Not everyone who applies will be able to come.

Tip: For a template application form, [click here](#) and make a copy in your own Google Drive to adapt to your team's needs. For a template registration form, [click here](#). You can also find these in the Resources section at the end of this guidebook.



If using an application, you will need to:

- Create an application form.

- ❑ Set a deadline for submitting applications and close the app when that date comes. We usually allow two weeks for submissions after announcing and sharing out the app publicly.
- ❑ Assemble a team and set a date to review applications and select participants.
- ❑ Create a second form for attendees to complete registration when selected.
- ❑ Email selected participants letting them know they can sign up and give them the next steps to complete registration, which are to fill out the registration form and pay their event fee to the proper place.
- ❑ Create a waitlist with everyone not selected in the first round, and email them letting them know they are on a waitlist for the event and may be contacted to complete registration after the first registration deadline.
- ❑ Set a deadline for those selected to complete registration, with a reminder email going out the day before it's due, and then remove everyone who did not complete registration from the list and send the invitation on to folk on the waitlist.
- ❑ When you finally have all the spots filled with completed registrations and payments, you can finalize your attendee list and begin the next phase of pre-gathering communication with this finalized list.

Example Registration & Application Timeline

Feb 1: Event and application links are made public and shared out by the outreach team to listservs and social media. Outreach can send as many reminders to apply as they wish.

Feb 14: Application closes.

Feb 15: Application review team meets and selects first round of participants.

Feb 15: Registrar notifies selected participants and gives them the packet & deadline to finish registration.

Feb 26: Registrar sends a reminder email to those invited to finish registration.

Feb 29: First round registration closes, and new invites are sent out to folks on the waitlist. Repeat the cycle until all of the event spots are filled.

The registrar will also start to compile participants' ideas and proposals for workshops or other offerings they would like to share at the event. An invitation to submit proposals is included in the registration form, and the registrar follows up with those who indicate initial interest there to collect more information. Reminders to propose workshops can also be added to every group email since new ideas might emerge over time. The workshops are gradually pieced together into a master event

schedule, though that schedule is often not fully finalized until participants have arrived on site at the gathering.

In the immediate weeks leading up to the event, the registrar should be prepared for an uptick in email exchange with attendees as logistical needs emerge. An email containing final details should go out approximately 2 weeks pre-event, and can include a detailed packing list, mock event schedule, information about the site and accessibility, transportation information including public transit info and directions to the venue, health and safety info—example: ticks, Covid, weather, what to expect regarding details like parking and registration, and photos of the gathering spaces at the venue.

Tip: Click on each of the following items to make a copy of each resource in your own Google Drive:

- [Carpooling spreadsheet](#)
- [Gearshare spreadsheet](#)
- [Workshop proposal form](#)
- [Event schedule template](#)

You can also find these in the Resources section at the end of this guidebook.



In our experience, one-third of participants cancel in the weeks and days leading up to the event or no-show without communication, so the registrar needs to be prepared to handle those cancellations as they come. We highly recommend having folks pay registration fees prior to coming to the event, as it can help with turnout and followthrough, and it's important to have a process in place for handling refunds for cancellations in advance. Have your waitlist sorted out so that it's easy to pass on the invitation as folks cancel in the time immediately before the gathering. Because of the high turnover rates, we have never actually had a gathering that's full to the capacity we set beforehand.

On-Site Registration Tasks

The on-site tasks of the registrar are a bit more straightforward and less time-consuming than the pre-event tasks. The on-site tasks primarily happen on arrival day during a set registration period and involve:

- Working with the site team to set up a registration station
- Greeting and welcoming folks as they arrive & orienting them to the site - camping, parking, bathrooms, etc.
- Getting folks signed in, checking off names, and helping folks make nametags

- Reimbursing traveling stipends
- Keeping a final list of who actually showed up to the gathering to use later
- Confirming photo permissions for each attendee and coordinating with the photographer with these details

Typically, the registrar will need a table, pens and paper, name tag-making materials (we use cut cloth, sharpies, safety pins), a printed list of attendees, a way to pay people their travel stipends, and any other welcome materials you'd like to have on hand (printed schedule, site map, fun stuff, etc). As with any coordinator role, the registrar doesn't need to do the entire task of on-site registration alone and can recruit helpers to work the table and delegate tasks.

We acknowledge that arriving at a new space in a group of unknown people can be vulnerable and overwhelming, so we ensure the registration team, who are the first point of contact with people as they arrive, are warm, welcoming, and make sure people feel oriented and like they are part of a community. We actually have systems built into our gathering to help combat the awkwardness and discomfort of being in a new group and support folks in feeling comfortable and connected. Some of these systems can start at arrival and registration to help set the tone, and we will describe one that we utilize in the Culture section.

Registration Fees and Travel Stipends

To call your event a Queer Farmer Convergence and be promoted by our network, registration fees need to be kept as affordable as possible (typically \$50-150) and offered on a sliding scale, and clear financial support needs to be made available to Black, Indigenous, and people of color attendees.

At our QFC, we fundraise to cover registration and travel stipends for BIPOC community members. The maximum amount for each stipend is \$500, and one-third of gathering spots are reserved for BIPOC (this is 25 in our case), meaning the fundraising team needs to raise a minimum of \$12,500 just for travel stipends.

Make a space in the registration form for folks to indicate if they'll be requesting a travel stipend and how much they'll need. Write down who will be receiving stipends and how much to reimburse them on the finalized attendee form, which you will print out and bring to the registration table for check in on the first day of the event. Work with the accountant to have a method to pay folks their stipends on hand when they arrive and check in at the registration table—be proactive in getting them their funds as part of the check-in process, don't make people ask for them.

We have traditionally distributed travel stipends to attendees after their arrival on-site and not

before the gathering due to the high cancellation and no-show rate of attendees. However, if you find that not having the liquid funds on hand before making the trip is a barrier to some folks in getting to the gathering, you'll need to find a way that makes sense for your community and stipend recipients to make sure folks are both able to feasibly make their travel arrangements and also that designated travel stipend funds are actually spent on attendee trips.

Post-Event Tasks

When the event is over, the registrar wraps up the gathering by creating a feedback form, sending out the event follow-up email, submits final attendee list and other records to the organizing Drive, and does any last back and forth with attendees. The post-gathering email should contain gratitudes, a synopsis of the weekend, a link to the feedback form, information about how to stay connected both to each other and the larger network (links to QFN directory, listserv, job board), any information requested by attendees at the gathering, and links to shared photo folders, contact sheets, etc.

Because we are now centrally receiving and distributing grant funding to QFC's from the QFN, the QFN needs to keep track of the impact our events are having on our community. For this reason, we specifically request that some way to track the impact of the event on individual

attendees is worked into feedback forms that go out to post-event. This could be a direct question on the form that asks for folks to share how the event impacted them, a request for positive feedback in addition to our more typical requests for critical feedback, or some other method, ideally framed in a way that lets people know their answer could be shared with funders or the wider community.



OUTREACH

Outreach Coordinator

Outreach is vital to executing a successful event. The outreach coordinator is in charge of interfacing with organizational partners and the general public, and makes sure people know when and how to partake in things like event registration, fundraising efforts, and other public-facing aspects of organizing. They are in charge of overseeing the creation of all promotional materials, including event descriptions, graphics, posters, and social posts, all with the goal of reaching the gathering's target audience.

They also work closely with the Queer Farmer Network national team on centralized outreach efforts happening on QFN channels (Instagram, Email, Website). Once gathering details are established, they will fill out an Outreach Form to help facilitate smooth coordination and ensure the QFN is able to accurately dispel information from organizing teams to the public.

Timeline

It's important to create and stick to an outreach timeline so that information gets out on time for various phases of the organizing process. Here is an example Outreach Timeline for QFN-coordinated post-outs for a July 1st Event.

This timeline excludes any fundraising outreach pushes that may be happening concurrently with registration:

- April 1: Save the Date
- April 15: Registration Opening Announcement
- May 1: Registration is Open
- May 15: Reminder to Register
- June 1: Registration is Closed, Waitlist Announcement
- June 15: Event Hype / Sponsor Thanks
- July 5: Post-event Report, Photo/Video from Event, Recap, Gratitude

Outreach Materials

The job of each outreach coordinator year-to-year becomes easier when the person in this role proactively collects and stores materials from each event for future outreach campaigns. Fundraising and outreach efforts for QFC Coordinating Teams and the QFN are much easier when there's a big body of content on hand to share throughout the year between gatherings. This can look like:

- Taking a variety of (consensual) photos at the event or collaborating with the event photographer or participants collecting photos and video to make sure those are shared in a central way post-event.

- Gathering community-generated content at the event that can be shared in the future as a way to highlight the gathering—collectively made zines, artwork, or popcorn style posters and white boards containing people’s gratitudes, thoughts, and experiences from the weekend and actively documenting these.

Plan to upload any shareable materials gathered to a centralized QFN drive post-event so QFN can keep track of them and support things like national scale fundraising for future gatherings. QFN staff will be asking for these materials after your event so that we can share with our community and funders in grant reporting post-event. Keep track of permissions and credit for any materials gathered and communicate those to the QFN team.



SITE

Site Coordinator

The site coordinator has the all-important job of managing all site-related matters before, during, and after the event. Site coordinators are encouraged to recruit volunteers to help them, especially with set-up, tear-down, and during the execution of the event.

Finding a Site

Finding a safe and comfortable space to host your QFC is essential for creating a welcoming and accessible gathering. We recommend finding a queer-run or friendly farm you trust and coordinating with them to be a venue for your event. We recognize that not everyone has access to a farm who may be able and willing to host, and recommend making your best judgment on sourcing other allied places that you believe would work well.

All QFCs hosted to date have taken place on small working farms during the growing season. In an on-farm gathering, participants camp, partake in farm-related activities, eat seasonal farm fresh food, and are mostly outdoors for the entire gathering. A farm-based gathering can be ideal for the sake of inspiration, education,

and for giving participants an immersive on-farm experience. Being on land together also adds to the overall experience of rest and rejuvenation for organizers and participants.

Be as transparent as possible with landowners, site managers, and attendees regarding the backstory of the land and what will be taking place on it. Making sure site hosts do things like inform their neighbors well in advance can make all the difference for the sense of safety at the event.

Ideally, your organizing team includes and supports host farmers as much as possible and compensates them well for their time and resources. The farmers should be at the center of choosing the dates for the gathering so that the workflow of the farm can be considered and farmers are not stressed about working during the gathering.

Most QFCs have taken place directly on the farm where many of the core organizers live and work, which makes coordinating site-related needs for the gathering fairly simple. If you're hosting on a farm where you do not live or work, consider asking the folks who live or work there to join the organizing team for ease of coordinating site matters, which is a significant planning task.

The on-farm QFCs we have hosted thus far have all been weekend campouts. Participants bring their own personal tents and gear, and we resource extra gear within our local communities to

lend to folks who cannot bring their own. Sites that have some indoor sleeping options have the benefit of being more inclusive and accessible to folks who are unable to camp.

Our host farms have not been equipped with things like indoor bathroom facilities or shelters for large groups, so we reserve porta potties, event tents, tables and chairs, and other needed infrastructure well in advance for our gathering. Many communities have businesses that provide these services, and the costs of these services should be calculated into the registration fee and overall event budget.

Decide and clearly name your boundaries for your gathering regarding things like pets (dogs), substances (smoking in particular), individual music players, personal firepits, etc., and be clear about them from the get-go. Boundaries are encouraged and help make a great space for all.

An ideal on-farm site for hosting might have:

- Flat, mowed spaces for camping
- Access to outdoor drinking water
- A large, flat gathering space for the main events (eating, all group meetings) to take place
- Enough space on-site that participants can access quiet space and alone time (provide a clearly marked quiet space and let people know about it)

- Some accessible electricity/plug-ins
- Multiple smaller, flat gathering areas where people can break out into concurrent workshops or discussions
- A private space with a mirror for tick checks
- The main happenings close enough to a road/parking and flat enough so as to be accessible to folks with movement impairments

If you're not sure where to begin when it comes to finding a space, we suggest perusing the [QFN farm directory](#) to see what farms may be in your immediate region and reach out to them to see if they have interest in participating in your event in any way, including potentially hosting if that's a need.

Pre-Event Tasks

- Booking porta potties, event tents for shade and weather, and tables and chairs if needed.
- Making sure there are adequate outlets for charging phones, food set up, and any other electrical needs.
- Making sure there are lights to create safe, well-lit community spaces in the dark.
- Making sure there are enough distinct spaces for workshops to happen.
- Setting up a designated quiet or affinity spaces.

- Ensuring the registration team communicates boundaries upon arrival.
- Working with the catering team and food coordinator for all meal / food related needs, including food storage (cooler), snack and drink station, and drinking water access.
- Creating and executing a garbage, recycling, and composting plan.
- Making a dishwashing plan and station.
- Making a plan for parking.

On-Site Event Tasks

- Making coffee and hot water in the morning.
- Managing the garbage and recycling.
- Putting away food and executing final meal cleanups.
- Making sure snacks and food are put away at night to keep them safe from animals.
- Carrying out daily cleaning sweeps—in the morning before people gather or in the evening during evening activities.
- Making sure outlets are working for people.

Post-Event Tasks

- Making and keeping track of a QFC bin of items that can be rolled over year to year.
- Coordinating full event tear-down.
- Keeping a lost-and-found box and giving it to the registration coordinator to use in communication with attendees.
- Distributing leftover food.
- Making sure the host farm is clean, tidy, and better than they found it.



FOOD

Sourcing Food

It's fun and enriching if good food can be a centerpiece of your gathering, which will likely be full of people whose lives revolve around food in some way! Food is the thread that ties everyone together at the event.

We highly recommend hiring a local, like-minded caterer of some kind who would be comfortable with the nature and context of the event, which could involve things like traveling out to your site daily to distribute meals. Hiring a quality caterer can be budgeted for in fundraising efforts and registration fees and relieves core organizers or host farmers from the task of needing to feed all the participants. Having high quality meals at the gathering adds so much to the sense of culture, care, and rejuvenation at the event, which is, after all, full of farmers who work hard every day to improve our food system!

Those of us who have been hosting QFCs in Iowa are lucky to have a local, queer-owned catering service that uses local foods to make delicious meals, and these folks are happy to deliver our meals from town three times a day. If a situation like this isn't available to your gathering, do

whatever makes sense in your context to make sure folks are well fed during the event.

We always plan for our opening meal together (Friday night dinner) to be a potluck among all the participants. This removes one meal from the caterer's plates, kicks off the sense of everyone co-creating the gathering, and gives us a chance to taste each other's favorite dishes from home. Whatever route you choose for food, the food coordinator is in charge of making sure it all runs smoothly and bellies are full.

Food Coordinator

The food coordinator is also in charge of sourcing food donations, like snacks for participants, as well as produce and other foods for the caterers if they want support in sourcing. Reaching out to food co-ops, local foods businesses, and farms with very specific asks tends to yield good results. If you know who your caterer is, get a detailed list from them to guide your donation requests (example: 15 lbs salad mix, 10 lbs roasted coffee, etc.).

Plan to have a table dedicated to snacks and hot water, tea, and coffee that's available all throughout the event. Snacks can be sourced from donations by co-ops and businesses, and you can also ask participants (via the registrar's communications) to bring snacks to share at the communal food table. Of course, it's easier to source food donations in the realm of produce and other farm fresh products during the growing season.

CULTURE

QFC's are designed to be grassroots events, organized and put together by the community for the community. They are an opportunity to practice building the kind of world many of us want to live in—one which truly includes and supports a diversity of folks, in which there is space for all to both to lead and share our gifts, as well as rest and let others lead.

A grassroots organizing model is emergent, grown out of who and what exists in a particular place, and expounds upon the gifts and opportunities at hand. Many of the suggestions offered in this handbook are specifically designed to support grassroots culture, which is why some of you might cut and paste parts of the framework presented here for your own gatherings!

Organizers create the container that allows for a grassroots gathering, and set the tone for this both before attendees arrive and throughout the gathering by building infrastructure of inclusion and making specific invitations, requests, and boundaries. Some examples of this from our gatherings include:

- Having opening and closing circles to mark the start and finish of the event with group connective activities that tie people together.

- ❑ Creating spaces on the site for larger all-group gatherings as well as smaller, more intimate sessions.
- ❑ Having opening and closing circles to mark the start and finish of the event with group connective activities that tie everyone together.
- ❑ Creating spaces on the site for larger all-group gatherings as well as smaller, more intimate sessions and affinity groups.
- ❑ Asking participants to practice a culture of consent around touch and other behaviors.
- ❑ Making boundaries around sobriety, quiet time, and related matters and communicating those ahead of the gathering.
- ❑ Intentionally building downtime / free time into the schedule.
- ❑ Encouraging folks to connect with people they don't already know, as well as recharge with alone time and time with friends as needed.
- ❑ Engaging in some kind of fun all-group creative project together - creating a zine, group photo shoot, making a calendar, etc.
- ❑ Dedicating at least one evening to celebration!
Example: Our gatherings always include a Variety Show, in which folks are invited to share a song, poem, cool or gross trick, drag act, or other kind of "performance" with the whole group, followed by a dance party. The

variety show has a magical ability to draw folks out of their shell and warms up the gathering. Be sure to communicate about it with attendees beforehand so they can bring musical instruments, drag costumes, and other props they may need.

- Acknowledging insecurities that come up from being in a group of new people, and finding ways to create a sense of belonging, like verbally affirming that everyone is queer-enough, farmer-enough, cool-enough, and every kind of enough-enough to be there.

Seed Groups

On the last point, we want to expound a little on one way we attempt to weave a sense of connectedness into the gathering and give folks a built in opportunity to connect in a more intimate way, which tends to be especially helpful for introverted, shy, and socially awkward folks - Seed Groups! This idea is an adapted activity from the 8-shields organizing method developed by Jon Young and is just one example of a system one can implement to support a sense of mutual kindness and connectedness at a gathering.

How it works: When folks arrive and check in at the registration table, they find ten different bunches of seeds of all different colors, shapes, and kinds, and are invited to choose one to keep with them throughout the weekend. After everyone

arrives, checks in, and chooses a seed, there will be ten small groups of people with the same kind of seed spread throughout the gathering. Folks are then invited to meet up throughout the weekend for small group check-ins, meals, discussions etc. in their Seed Groups. This provides a built-in way for folks to socialize in more intimate groups, provides some groundedness and structure for the awkwardness of trying to meet new people in a group, and breaks up pre-existing friend and affinity groups that may need dispersing.

There are so many ways to create an inclusive and grassroots culture at a gathering, and we would love to hear your own unique ideas & methods that you implement at your QFC's over time!

Education

We have found that some attendees appreciate when there is a more focused educational element to the gathering, beyond sessions led and taught by participants. For this purpose, we have hired keynote speakers or facilitators that bring theme, shape, and more central points of discussion to the event. Consider the balance of an affordable and accessible gathering as you look for keynotes to hire, and plan for whatever you choose accordingly in the fundraising budget.

You could also plan to incorporate more practical training elements into the schedule to be sourced from among attendees, local community members, or hired professionals. Examples of this could be hoof trimming, vaccinating, pruning, seed starting, no-till, etc. These gatherings have a lot of potential to provide educational opportunities that bolster the skills and knowledge held collectively within our queer farming community, and the possibilities are endless!



RESOURCES

For each template below, click on the link, and it will take you to your browser, where you will be asked if you'd like to make a copy of the document. You can then add it to your team's shared Google Drive for collaboration and centralized planning resources.

And, if you need additional support beyond these templates, please reach out to us at info@queerfarmernetwork.org.

Happy QFC planning!!!

Finances

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Fundraising

[New Fundraising Contact Letter Template](#)

[Returning Fundraising Contact Letter Template](#)

Registration

[Application Template](#)

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This version of the organizing resource was compiled by organizers of the Iowa QFC in Spring 2024, with additional support from the QFN Steering Committee and others in our network. We hope to release a yearly update of this resource based on organizers' feedback each year. For any additions, edits, or changes you'd like to see, please get in touch.