

What we did

We created a weekly timeline from now till the CEEM dates, and filled it with the key points. Like this:

week 14	registration form sent
week 11	registration closed, booking tickets started
week 10	form responses analysed, souvenirs chosen
week 9	volunteer registration form
week 8	blank program created with duration of talks and number of sessions calculated, program committee starts working on submitted proposals
week 7	publish list of approved session on meta
week 6	designer works on visual material
week 5	session calls with the speakers
week 3	draft program published on meta
week 2	finalise attendance, communicate with hotel on final numbers; print program/badges/etc.
week 1	detailed plan of event routine, event itself, postconference form sent

Then we filled in the timeline with the starting points for each activity to be finished on time. For example,

week 15	create registration form
week 13	gather souvenir ideas
week 3	postconference form is designed
	etc.

We frequently consulted with the timeline in order to not forget anything.

Event team consisted of staff and volunteers from different parts of country. Those in Lviv were responsible for communication with the venue and food; others - for online work.

Once a week we had a check-in Hangout call on what is done, what's in progress, what are the current issues. We kept a separate document for meeting minutes, for writing down immediate decisions and tasks.

What worked well

- Having a timeline is great for staying on track.
- Weekly meetings are cool, too.
- Session calls with speakers are great! Orgs (and Program committee) and speakers get closer, orgs can make suggestions on content and format, speakers clarify their ideas and needs. Sometimes speakers realize their original idea was a poor fit, and have a chance to change course before the event. These calls have definitely prevented some less-fitting sessions from making it onto the actual event. Per feedback, "the general level of CEE presenters is improving."
- The venue was kind and open to changes on site.
- At least one team member was present during each session to help the speaker and count attendees in the room, and make pictures.
- Evaluation of the public transport suggested to rent buses for the event and this expense appeared to be wise.
- 1/3 of the feedback answers name "Wikimedia 2030" session the most useful session of the day, which means that CEE is not at all reluctant to talk on strategy. Per feedback, "For the first time through this strategy process, I felt involved."

What worked not so well

- Orgs should communicate with participants more, write confirmation emails each time (e.g. we asked if a speaker can come to the preconference training, they replied yes, we never sent confirmation of participation so the speaker thought they are not invited; more emails would eliminate this confusion).
- Participants should communicate with orgs more (e.g. we made branded bottles for event, and some bottle caps appeared to be loose but only some of them; if participants not only discussed this issue between themselves but notified orgs, we could replace bad bottles with good ones and water-on-laptop incident wouldn't happen).
- We did our best to encourage speakers to come prepared, nevertheless some of them were noticed preparing their presentation on the eve of the talk. Asking them to upload their presentations on Commons beforehand might help.
- All expenses have to be written down immediately in one central place. Otherwise it will be hard to find all the ends later.
- We explicitly allocated some time for discussion in each session (if a speaker asked for 30 min, we have allocated 45 min), but attendees still wrote in the feedback form that there wasn't enough time.
- Most popular reasons for the least useful session were: ...I already knew this, ...I didn't understand it, ...it was boring/badly presented. It means, we need more preparation for speakers and clearer session descriptions/titles. And clearer session messages, too; per feedback "Too much of "what I have done" instead of "what you can learn from it"." It is worth noting that this precise advice was repeatedly given by the organising/program committee in advance. It was not always heeded.

- As one attendee says in their feedback, “the *How can we work better together* session could have been less chaotic”. The session was designed for far fewer people. We had high expectations of it, but it’s just not the right format for this many people.
- Obviously, it is better if venue and hotel is in the same place, or closer together. We promised to provide just that, but couldn’t.

Important stuff to try to do

- Have people apply for scholarships / decide who goes to the conference at least 4 months in advance. This will give you (and the program committee) more time to prepare a great programme and work with speakers (and the attendees) more
- Organise a training for speakers in advance (if you have a chance), or at least for your team members (facilitation, for example), so they would be able to help better during the event.
 - We decided to do it as a preconference training for the speakers in order to improve their skills and to maximise the benefit for the attendees. We have discussed this idea with Cornelius from WMDE before (and he has discussed it with Kacie from Wikimedia Foundation) as maybe a separate event before the conference itself, so people would have time to improve their slides, train a bit; but when it did not work out as a separate event, we decided to add an extra day (as a preconference day) and invite all speakers. We understand that this is not optimal, but it should have helped the speakers to be at least more aware of things they did right or wrong, and it might be more helpful for next events they are speaking at.
 - We perceived that it helped both speakers (directly) and attendees (at the receiving end of better prepared speakers)
- It would be better to think about how to change the rules for selecting attendees: we had two scholarships for an affiliate / country / language community, but it meant that from Albania we had four people going from two affiliates. It means that no one from the broader language community was even able to go (unless affiliates decide to have an open call and choose not only from affiliate members). It might be better to have one person from an affiliate and one person from the language community, selected through an open call on the village pump (or some other methods, but this really needs to be discussed by you (as organisers) with the Community Resources team at Wikimedia Foundation)
- Insist on people having enough skills in speaking English and reserve a right to refuse a scholarship if this is not a case: we have had people attending CEEMs for years with very poor English, and unless we can provide translation, it seems like sponsoring tourism. For example, there were participants who themselves told us frankly that they are not speaking English; we could at least refuse participation of these applicants. Next step would be for organisers to proactively discuss this matter with applicants of whose command of English organisers know nothing.
- Have a budget for invited speakers for the program committee to invite (we did not have it in the budget, but it might be the only way to get some needed expertise to the conference attendees).

Trifles to remember

Meta-wiki is full of useful stuff on conference organising, check it out! Here is the list:

[/Conference_patterns](#)

- Badges like to flip, so names have to be written on both sides
- It is good to have lanyards with adjustable length
- On the last day people need more time in the morning because they check out the hotel
- Etherpad of the session needs to be prefilled with the information about the session
- Reimbursement instructions need to be detailed and available before the event

What we didn't do

- Production schedule for event itself
[Learning_patterns/Writing_a_production_schedule_of_event](#)
 We decided not to, because key responsibilities were decided and known to orgs, and small tasks were hardly predictable in regards to availability of orgs in any given moment. In a nutshell, we weren't sure that our level of predictability is enough for production schedule to work.
- Didn't allocate time for Sandra with her Structured data talk but she is eager to talk next year!

What we still plan to do

- Give feedback from our responses to respective speaker; it might be useful thing to do even now, though it would have been better to do it at once.
- Create a YouTube channel for all videos from the sessions, it makes sense to have one channel for all our conferences and other events, so it can be used by the whole community (and definitely not everything should go to Wikimedia Commons!)

What we can share

- Registration form
- Feedback forms
- Access to CEE Twitter channel
- Exact input to the form on "I would have liked to hear a talk on such subject", "I think, the following things should be done differently at the next Conference"