

1000 Friends of Iowa

House Party Guide

Hosting a House Party

Thank you so much for hosting a 1000 Friends of Iowa house party! As you go through the planning process, the 1000 Friends of Iowa contact who asked you to host a house party will be available for any questions you might have, be sure to utilize his/her experience and guidance, should you need it.

The purpose of house parties is to spread the message of 1000 Friends of Iowa in a welcoming, relaxed setting. House parties are a more personal approach to informing, educating, and energizing citizens about the issues we address. By bringing people together in small social gatherings you help build new relationships in the community, raise awareness about the issue and visibility for the organization, and find solid sources of local financial support for our work. Our goal is to recruit new members, new volunteers, and new minds to join our mission.

Planning for the House Party:

As you go through the planning process, rely on your house party contact for any questions you may have. You might find it useful to recruit local volunteers or a hosting committee to share the responsibilities. If at any time you need additional assistance, please contact the 1000 Friends office.

Refreshments: This is your party! What and how to serve any refreshments are completely within your control. Snacks and beverages are completely acceptable. If you would like to offer a meal, you might consider the favorite method of ensuring plenty of choices and more than enough to go around without the personal expense: the potluck!

Materials: We will provide you with 1000 Friends of Iowa literature and the final agenda for your house party no later than two weeks prior to your planned event. Your contact with 1000 Friends will make sure you have these well in advance of the event, however if there are any questions or unforeseen setbacks, please contact the office and we will assist you!

Set the Date and Time:

Choose the date, location, and time for your house party. The very name “house party” indicates the location is a given, but you may have a unique location in your area you would prefer. If you do choose to host your party at an alternate location, be sure electricity is available at the site for any slides or presentations. As you consider the start/end time for your house party, please refer to the sample agenda to assist you in that decision.

1000 Friends of Iowa

House Party Guide

The Guest List:

As you plan your list, remember the people you invite need not be passionate about land use issues. One goal of bringing them together is for outreach and education. Not everyone understands how land use issues correlates with their lives. A house party is a fantastic opportunity to inform, respond to questions, and get people talking.

Invitations:

Before you begin sending out invitations, consider asking a few friends or other members of 1000 Friends of Iowa to help you plan. You can even list them as a “host committee” on the invitation to attract more people who will recognize the names.

Generally, maybe one out of every four people you invite to your house party will attend. If you use email-only invitations, the response rate may be even lower. The most effective way to build turn-out is to mail out invitations along with email, and follow later with a personal phone call.

Tips for preparing your invitations:

- While we hope to make the house parties informative and fun, it is important you are clear with your guests about the nature of the party. If they are prepared for an appeal to join, volunteer, or get involved in our work, they will be more comfortable.
- You might consider writing down why you support 1000 Friends of Iowa. Having an overview of why this is important to you will give meaning to the invite.
- Enthusiasm and energy are contagious. If you approach those you invite with excitement about the event, it will spread.
- Ask your guests to RSVP so you have an idea of how many people are coming. This will give you a turnout estimate to work with, will help 1000 Friends better prepare with additional materials if necessary, and increase your turnout.
- It is helpful to include the 1000 Friends of Iowa website on invitations so your guests have time to browse what we do, develop questions and feel better prepared beforehand.

Tips for increasing turnout:

- Use a guest list tracking sheet to assist in tracking and planning for turnout.
- At least two and a half weeks in advance of event send out the invitations.

1000 Friends of Iowa

House Party Guide

- 10 days in advance of event, make calls to those on your list who have not responded and encourage them to attend.
- Three days prior to event: Reminder calls are very effective, especially if you have invited more than 20 people. Use your own judgment when deciding if making reminder calls would be beneficial. Reminder calls are one way to add a personal touch to an event, to let the guests know you are truly passionate about this cause and excited about their attendance. Especially if you have a large guest list, reminder calls are one last step toward a great turnout for your event.

After the party:

- Try and send a thank you note to everyone who attended your party. 1000 Friends will send thank you letters to donors, but a personalized note or card from you strengthens your connection with community members and new supporters of 1000 Friends.
- We designed this guide to assist you in planning your house party from start to finish. We encourage your honest feedback on the usefulness, accuracy, and completeness of this guide. Your thoughts will assist us in making house parties easier and even more productive for future hosts.