

Gathering of Native Americans Planning Guide

Using this Guide

This guide serves as a reference tool for planning a Gathering of Native Americans (GONA). A GONA can be an impactful, healing community experience that can also provide a solid strategic planning foundation. However, this multiple-day intervention takes a lot of time, effort, and resources, so adequate planning and support with and from community stakeholders is strongly suggested. This guide offers a starting point in planning a successful event that meets community goals and explores some processes and potential milestones that could be part of your planning experience. The guide breaks down the planning process into four sections: pre-planning, planning, implementation, and after care.

Pre-Planning (6-9 months before projected dates)

As part of the planning process, address the following areas and questions:

Process	Milestone
Has the community hosted a GONA before? If so, when? Are any past planning members willing and able to help with planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review GONA fact sheet available through the SAMHSA Tribal Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Center Develop a list of planning questions Reach out to networks to get more insight on GONA (Optional) Submit a technical assistance (TA) request to the Tribal TTA Center Develop initial GONA budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets range between \$5,000-\$18,000 based on a variety of cost
Recruit the GONA planning committee. Hint: keep the planning committee manageable and a cross section of various departments/grassroots community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule first GONA planning committee meeting Set up recurring planning schedule Identify potential GONA facilitators Brainstorm on the number of days needed for the GONA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideally 4 days; 3 days is also a good option Project dates: identify a few date options Brainstorm on main topic of GONA and a

	<p>few goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify audience for the GONA (leadership, managers, youth, families, community, etc.) • Work with experienced GONA facilitators to develop a draft agenda
Recruit community stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop GONA social marketing plan • Schedule meetings with community stakeholders to inform them of the GONA • Make sure tribal or agency leadership is well informed regarding the GONA

Planning (2-5 months before projected dates)

As part of the planning process, address the following questions:

Process	Milestone
Ongoing GONA planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold at least 2 planning calls per month • Confirm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GONA length and dates ○ Audience ○ GONA topic and goals ○ Facilitators ○ Location ○ Budget ○ Agenda details agreed upon • Registration process set up • GONA Save the Date sent out • GONA supplies purchased • Food arranged
Discuss GONA roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Small group facilitators ○ Greeters ○ Affirmation pictures ○ Storytellers for each theme ○ Quiet space manager ○ Opening and welcome speakers

Recruit community stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize GONA social marketing plan • Schedule meetings with community stakeholders to inform them of the GONA • Make sure tribal or agency leadership is well informed regarding the GONA
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Implementation (0-2 months before projected dates)

As part of the planning process, address the following questions:

Process	Milestone
Ongoing GONA planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSVPs are confirmed • Food arrangements confirmed • Parking/childcare confirmed • Walk-through of GONA location by planning team completed • Sign-in sheets, evaluation forms, other paperwork completed and printed • Final planning call with GONA facilitators • GONA supplies purchased • Post-GONA meeting scheduled for at least 2-3 weeks after GONA
Prep day: This is a vital component of a successful GONA. Usually, the prep day is conducted one day prior to the GONA and is typically 4-6 hour day. It is important for the planning team to do a walk-through of the first day of the GONA. The prep day is led by the GONA facilitators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm prep day location and time frames • Invite planning team and those who will be supporting any of the GONA roles • Set up room (see appendix for diagram) • Test sound system • Set up quiet space/prayer room
Day 1-4 of GONA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan on arriving at least 30 minutes before start of the GONA for a quick head huddle • Check in with people who will be supporting the welcome and opening prayer to make sure they will be ready • Ensure the quiet space/prayer room is ready • Be an active participant during the GONA • Be prepared for 30-45 minute debrief session after each day

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GONA planning team and facilitators should expect an 8-10 hour day for onsite efforts
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After care (2 weeks to 2 months post GONA)

As part of the planning process, address the following questions:

Process	Milestone
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report of GONA submitted to leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail any action planning completed Assets/resource mapping Evaluation data Testimonials from GONA participants Pictures
Follow up meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review lessons learned from GONA planning Verify information that was helpful for grant program Track goals

Considerations

Please consider the following to help ensure a successful gathering:

- Identify experienced and skilled GONA facilitators who have at least 3 years of experience being a lead facilitator for urban and reservation GONAs.
- Request letters of reference from your GONA facilitators.
- Do not set dates until you have a confirmed facilitation team.
- IF requesting TA from the SAMHSA Tribal TTA Center, please be mindful that the process could take up to 3-4 weeks to gain approval. Additional time will be needed for planning.
- Hosting a GONA prior to conducting GONA Training of Facilitators is ideal.
- Using the GONA as the name of your event isn't necessary, GONA is the process. You can call your event something different.

Additional Resources

Additional GONA resources can be found through the Tribal TTA Center website. Resources include:

- The [GONA/GOAN Fact Sheet](#) provides an overview of the curriculum for the GONA/Gathering of Alaska Natives (GOAN).
- The [GONA/GOAN Curriculum and Facilitator Guide](#) presents a roadmap through the GONA/GOAN journey, offering history, pre-planning resources, and a detailed examination of the four GONA/GOAN themes.
- The [GONA/GOAN Toolkit](#) provides hands-on resources, checklists, activities, stories, and other materials to supplement the Curriculum and Facilitator Guide.
- GONA webinars are available through the Tribal TTA Center website under [Wellness Planning and Capacity Building](#) in the Gathering of Native Americans/Gathering of Alaska Natives section and [Community Collaboration](#) in the Evaluation in Indian Country section.
- A PDF is attached to this document for the IGNITE: Social Marketing Toolkit to help develop your social marketing plan.
- To submit a TTA request for assistance with a GONA, go to <https://www.samhsa.gov/tribal-ttac/contact-us>.

Summary

This guide should be used as a reference tool and does not provide all the details that go into GONA planning. An effective GONA process should be customized to the hosting community, empowering local culture, stories, and worldview through the four themes of the GONA. The GONA planning team should be mindful of overall goals the team would like to accomplish with the GONA process.

Appendix

See the image below for a sample room diagram for a GONA.

