

How to Host a Company Sing-Off

So, you're thinking of hosting a company sing-off to compete in CincySings. AWESOME!

You probably have questions. This step-by-step guide to hosting a sing-off will answer them. However, if you still have questions after reading this, that's GREAT! We want you to ask us anything and everything until you're comfortable.

For now, read on for everything you'll need to get you from "What is this?" to "And the winner is..."

Quick Glance Summary

Step 1: Find a CincySings/Sing-Off Leader

- This is either you, someone you identify, or a committee

Step 2: Set a Date and Location

- ArtsWave kick-off or finale celebration works well here; try to schedule it by March 6
- Hold the competition anywhere that can accommodate an audience and the technical needs of your show

Step 3: Recruit Choirs

- Put out the call and send info via email, posters, company intranet, etc.

Step 4: Plan the Actual Sing-Off

- Recruit Judges and an Emcee
- Acquire prizes
- Build the show and market it to your coworkers

Step 5: Hold Your Sing-Off

- Show time!

Step 6: Go STRAIGHT to the CincySings Finals

- Mark your calendar for April 9, 2020 at Music Hall. Your winning team will be there!

Step 6a: Wild Card Competition

- Encourage your non-winning teams to enter our online voting competition, they can still make the Finals!



Detailed Guide

Step 1: Find a CincySings/Sing-Off Leader

Since you're reading this, that's probably YOU! You rock! If that's not you, reach out to your HR team to figure out who would be a good fit for this, or, if you know someone, bring them on board. This may require leadership to sign off, so make sure to get the appropriate approvals when doing the search for your sing-off leader.

- The leader doesn't need to be the director, or even be in a choir (in fact, it's probably better if they're NOT in a choir), they need to be someone who feels comfortable reserving a room, getting equipment rented (if necessary), communicating to coworkers, answering questions, event planning, etc.

Alternate Idea: Identify like-minded folks to serve on a Planning Committee so tasks can be delegated.

Step 2: Set a Date and Location

Here are a few ideas for when to hold your competition:

- As part of your ArtsWave kick-off or finale celebration.
- Whenever works for your participants! During lunchtime or afternoon on a workday is usually best.
- **IMPORTANT:** Be sure to schedule your sing-off by March 6, 2020 if your non-winning teams want to enter the Wild Card competition (discussed in Step 6a)



We've seen amazing Sing-Offs in MANY locations, read below for some ideas:

- If you have a theater with tech, lights, etc., hold it there... do not consider anywhere else!
- Reserve a large conference room with rows for seating. Generally, these are already wired for sound and visuals. Talk to the person in your company/office who manages that space regarding technical capabilities (discussed in Step 4).
- In your cafeteria. Block off a section of the cafeteria and set up some microphones and amps. Again, talk to whoever is in charge of your company's technical equipment to see what is available to you.
- When push comes to shove, hold it ANYWHERE! If you don't have a good room, do it in the foyer! If you don't have a foyer, do it in the parking lot! You get my drift... look at what your company has and know that whatever you decide will work for us.
- **IMPORTANT:** Make sure to schedule a Dress Rehearsal no matter where you end up holding your competition. The teams will need at least 5-10 minutes each to run their numbers and feel comfortable on stage. This will mean reserving the room for extra time on the day of the competition or for two days.

Step 3: Recruit Choirs

It's time to get others involved, put out the call for choirs! You can do this through email, posters, company intranet, etc. The sky is the limit and will be based on your company's policies. Some helpful things to include in this call are:

- Date/Time/Location of competition
- How to sign up (this will be however works best for you)
- Link to the [CincySings Highlight Video – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmpzoWWpZ7M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmpzoWWpZ7M)
- The 'How to Form a CincySings Choir' instructions (Appendix A of this document)
- Rules of the competition (You can base these on the rules in the CincySings toolkit section of ArtsWave.org)

Alternate Idea: Get a few representatives to act as leads in their own division/business unit and have them send out a call for choirs. However, encourage teams to form in any way that works with your company culture.



Step 4: Plan the Actual Sing-Off

You've set the date, time, and location. You've gotten a few choirs to sign up. Great! Now you actually have to plan an event. Here are the pieces of the puzzle you'll need to think about:

Technical Capabilities:

- Microphones – We will have mics at CincySings, so it's helpful to have them at your sing off.
- Visual – We will have projection/powerpoint capability at CincySings, so encourage your teams to develop a visual aspect to their performances.

- **NOTE:** If you don't have either of these, you can rent them or just go without.

Recruit Judges/Emcee:

- Judges – Try to get a few judges using the following criteria: company leadership, internal or external 'celebrity', performance-inclined internal or external folks. The most successful competitions are those that have a mix of these types. Make sure to have a judge or two that really does understand music and performance, this way a deserving winner can be named.
 - o **NOTE:** Look for 'How to Judge a Sing Off' in the CincySings toolkit on ArtsWave.org
- Emcee – This is completely up to you. Some companies have had a city 'name' (JonJon from Q102, Bob Herzog from Local 12, Jeff Thomas from Q102, etc.), if you can do that, great! If not, totally ok. Just get someone who is comfortable in front of people who can move the performance along following some sort of simple script or notecards. We can help reach out to folks for you as well, *just ask!*

Prizes

- This is not required; however, it definitely helps if the teams have the dual incentives of competing in the CincySings Finals AND an internal prize. Some ideas are below:
 - o Winning choir gets an extra PTO day
 - o Trophies, certificates, etc.
 - o A party for their division/business unit
- Be creative with this one, but be sure to check your ideas with HR or Leadership.
- Consider leveraging the prizes during Step 3 to recruit more choirs!

Build and market the show:

- Download helpful materials, including scoring guidelines, marketing posters, etc. on ArtsWave.org under the CincySings toolkit section (link at the end of this document)
- Choose the order of performance (this can be done any way you like),
- Write a script for the introductions of the groups, judges, and anything else that you'd like mentioned. Be sure to include an explanation of CincySings, the rules, and what the teams are competing for in the script. If you would like an example or help with this, contact Ryan Strand (contact info at the end of this document).
- Schedule a Dress Rehearsal. The teams will need at least 5-10 minutes each to run their numbers and feel comfortable on stage.
- Invite everyone you can! Put up posters! Send emails! Send carrier pigeons! Put up road flairs! Do EVERYTHING you can to get people to come. You may even consider serving food (if you feed them, they will come!). This competition is only successful (and fun) if there's a lively audience.

- **NOTE:** Make sure your event gets video-recorded! Because 1) you'll want to remember it fondly, and 2) the non-winning teams may want to enter the Wild Card competition (Step 6a).

Step 5: Hold Your Sing-Off

The big day is here! All you'll have left at this point is to tell people where to go and what to do once they're there. On show-day, this becomes much like any other event; just be prepared with extra materials, play the role of event manager... and go with the flow!

Step 6: Go STRAIGHT to the CincySings Finals

Because you've hosted your own Sing-Off, your winning team SKIPS THE SEMI-FINALS! That's right, you're automatically in the big show! All you'll need to do is make sure that your winning choir is in contact with ArtsWave and that there is a HUGE cheering section in the audience pushing your team on to the win! Here is some preliminary info about the 2020 CincySings Finals:

- Calendar Info:
 - o April 8 and 9 at Music Hall (Dress rehearsal on the 8th from 4-8pm, show on the 9th at 7pm)
- Technical Info:
 - o Info to come regarding mics and playable area (most likely 3 solo handheld mics and an unknown number of non-moveable choir mics)
 - o There WILL be video/PowerPoint capabilities so have the choirs think about what they'd like to have projected behind them.
- Tickets/Seating:
 - o Tickets will be available at discounted rates for coworkers, friends, and family of participating companies. Tickets will also be available to the public.
 - o Choir members WILL be seated in the house, this way they'll see the rest of the performances!



Step 6a: Wild Card Competition

What happens to those teams that don't win your sing-off? Well, they still have an opportunity to go to CincySings! They can enter our online Wild Card competition which will happen leading up to our Semi-Finals on March 17. Read on for the instructions:

- 1) Record your sing-off (or have someone in the audience taking video)
- 2) Send the videos of the teams to Ryan Strand at ArtsWave
- 3) ArtsWave will post the video and host a public online vote *ending no later than March 13*.
- 4) The winner(s) will then get the chance to compete at the SEMI-FINALS on March 17. (while the winner of your sing-off goes to the Finals, if a team from your company wins the wild card, they will go to the Semi's. This is why you'll need to finish your Sing-off by March 6)

That's it! Hopefully this step-by-step guide has been helpful and answered your initial questions. However, if you find that you have more, that's awesome! We encourage you to ask as many questions as you need until you're comfortable with the competition.

We hope to see you onstage with us this coming Spring!

Helpful Links

- ArtsWave YouTube channel: [youtube.com/user/TheArtsWave](https://www.youtube.com/user/TheArtsWave)
 - o We encourage you to check out performances from the last few years so you'll have a better idea of what the competition is all about!
- ArtsWave CincySings page: ArtsWave.org/CincySings
 - o We'll post some rudimentary info here, so keep checking back for updates
 - o The toolkit linked at the bottom contains rules, scoring guidelines, marketing materials, etc. Everything you need to execute your competition!
- Producers: Ryan Strand (Ryan.Strand@ArtsWave.org, 513-632-0148) & Andre DuBois (Andre.DuBois@ArtsWave.org, 513-632-0133)
 - o Email or call with ANY questions you have!

Appendix A

How to Form a Sing-Off Choir

If you're reading this, you're either a choir lead, or maybe you're just the first person to respond and now you're tasked with forming a team for your company's sing-off. Either way, you're awesome! Read below for everything you'll need to get you from "what is this..." to "and the winner is...!"

Step 1: Recruit Members!

You can't have a choir of one, you'll need teammates (3 - 19 more to be exact)! This means you'll have to recruit members. Don't worry though, in surveys we've taken, almost everyone says this is actually the easiest part. If it isn't, don't give up! You'll find some choir nerds just like you (and me!) to turn out the melodies.

How to Recruit:

You can use the materials below to communicate, or feel free to get creative and make your own! These can be found in the CincySings toolkit at artswave.org/cincysings.

- Choir/Singer Recruitment Email Template
- Poster Advertisement
- Customizable logos to create your own posters and materials

Who to Recruit:

Try to recruit people with some sort of performance background; including singing (shower singers welcome!), dance, music, etc. You'll be able to use all of those talents when putting together your performance. Here are a few "roles" you may want to think about trying to fill during the recruitment period:

Music director or piano player: While you will most likely be singing to a backing track or a cappella (depending on what song you choose), learning songs is a lot easier when you have someone to "plunk" parts on a piano and/or play along at rehearsals. This person can either be a singer in the choir, play for the choir, or merely be a rehearsal pianist.

NOTE: *You do NOT need this if you can't find someone! Past solutions have been:*

- Find a piano player to record each part and then distribute those recordings for people to learn. The time commitment for the piano player to do this is about 15 minutes total so **this is a GREAT option!** If you can't find anyone who plays piano, let us know and we'll help you find one.
- Just listen to the song over and over and pick it up that way. This is less efficient but has been done in the past (in fact, the 2017 CincySings Grand Champion did it this way!)

Choreographer: You do not need choreography, but all the champion choirs have had some sort of dancing or staging. You don't need someone who does it professionally (in fact, that's actually against the rules!), just someone who was a dancer or in theatre and understands how to create some moves or stage pictures.

NOTE: *You do NOT need this if you can't find someone! Past solutions have been:*

- If you're singing a cappella, minimal movement is usually better so you can make sure to stay on pitch with each other.
- Check out YouTube for the music video of the song or of other choirs doing it and ~~steal~~ borrow choreography from that! (MANY groups have done this!)
- As a group, come up with some simple staging. This can be as simple as moving into different formations to fit each section of the song.

IMPORTANT: The CincySings rules stipulate that a choir must have between 4-20 members, so make sure to stay within that range!

Step 2: Find a Rehearsal Space

Does your company have a theater? Probably not (if it does though... use that!). Other spaces that can be great for rehearsing are:

- Conference Room, Storage Room, Cafeteria (after hours), Break Room, etc. Get creative with your space. Most companies will have something suitable if you look hard enough. Talk to your HR department or whoever schedules rooms to find something great!
 - o Try to find a space with hard floors as this will approximate the stage better, however, your #1 goal is to find any space that's **convenient!**
- Don't have a space at all? That's ok! Let us know and we'll work with you to find an alternative.

Step 3: Choose your song

What songs do you like? What songs do your kids like? What songs would sound good sung by a choir? You'd be surprised, MOST songs sound great when sung with multiple voices. It's helpful to make sure you can get both sheet music and backing tracks (if needed) for your song, so be sure to check the following websites before getting your heart set on a song.

- Helpful sites for sheet music:
 - o www.musicnotes.com/choral
 - o www.jwpepper.com
 - o www.sheetmusicplus.com
- Helpful sites for backing tracks and rehearsal tracks:
 - o www.karaoke-version.com (seems to be the best)
 - o itunes.apple.com/us/genre/music-karaoke/id52
 - o itunes.apple.com/us/artist/backing-tracks-minus-vocals
- [Google is your friend, this list is just to get you started!](#)
- [Feel free to change lyrics to be about your company, Cincinnati, your group, or anything else that may be funny or interesting!](#)
- Here are some examples of successful songs that have been sung in the past
 - o 'Sing' by Pentatonix; 'Love Runs Out' by OneRepublic; 'Joyful, Joyful' from Sister Act; 'California Dreamin' (with lyrics changed to be Cincinnati-focused) by The Mama's and the Papas; 'You Raise Me Up' by Josh Groban; Medleys of Michael Jackson, Beatles and other pop music

Step 4: Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse

Practice makes perfect, right? You'll want to look and sound your best, so rehearsal is a MUST.

- Set rehearsal times so that everyone can come. Duh. Usually this means right after work or during lunch. We recommend 1 ½ hour rehearsals, 2-4 times per month depending on when you're starting this process. As you get closer to the sing-off, you'll need to adjust your rehearsals as needed.
- Assign Homework! If you've recorded your vocal parts (which we suggest you do!), send everyone home with the assignment that in two weeks (for example) everyone must be memorized when they come into rehearsal. You'll find that most people will take it seriously.

NOTE: Keep in mind that this is like any other commitment, if people treat rehearsals as optional, the experience will not be ideal. Let folks know that this can be AWESOME, but only if they are diligent about showing up and putting in a solid effort.

Step 5: Win your Sing-Off!