

GREEN YOUR EVENTS



A GREEN YOUR EVERYDAY GUIDE



GREEN YOUR EVERYDAY

Welcome to Green Your Events, a guide produced by Environment Lethbridge to help you Green Your Everyday, whether it be your kitchen, your business or your events.

Green Your Everyday is a project designed to provide practical advice to help you live more sustainably. Through our website greenyoureveryday.com and these guides, we want to give you the tools you need to take the next steps on your plan to be sustainable.

Living sustainably isn't about perfection, it's about improvement. Changing our behaviour is hard and it takes time to build new habits, so don't beat yourself up if sometimes you take a step backwards. A few tips to make your journey easier:

Set a goal. Whether it's a big goal like hosting the greenest possible music festival or a small goal, like remembering your reusable water bottle, setting a goal helps you focus on the end result you want to achieve.

Make a plan. How will you achieve your goal? What are the barriers that are preventing success? How can you overcome them?

Review and repeat. Figure out what did and didn't work, adjust your plan and repeat your actions. This is a process.

Celebrate. Big or small, celebrate your achievements!



TABLE OF CONTENTS



1

GREEN YOUR EVENT

2

MAKE A PLAN



17

PUBLIC EVENTS

26

PRIVATE EVENTS



33

GREEN MEETINGS



GREEN YOUR EVENT

Events come in all shapes and sizes. From business meetings and conferences to a family birthday party to a community music festival, bringing people together comes with a set of unique challenges from managing invitations to reducing waste.

This guide will help you create a plan for your event, identify your goals, and put them into action to make your event, no matter the size, as sustainable as it can be.

Some questions to keep in mind as you begin to create your plan.

- How many people will attend?
- How many people are involved in organizing the event?
- Will you be hiring outside help?
- What infrastructure is available at your event location?
- What is your sustainability goal for your event?

With those in mind, let's get started.



MAKE A PLAN

Making a plan will help you identify your sustainability goals and put them into action. Follow these steps to create your plan.

1. Identify

Identify the projected event footprint, a commitment to sustainability statement, and long and short term goals.

2. Select

Select a favorable location, a Green Team/ Coordinator, and local, sustainable vendors.

3. Support

Find support from community businesses and organizations, offer support to other green initiatives.

4. Promote

Promote your event and green initiatives to the public by using waste-free, low impacts methods.

5. Act & Encourage

Encourage waste reduction and diversion, water conservation and sustainable transport.

6. Review

Review goals, record attendance, calculate diversion rates, and write a summary of your event and green initiatives.

IDENTIFY

It is important to consider the ecological impact you expect your event to create. How big is your event? How many people do you expect to attend? What kind of waste do you expect to generate? By answering these questions beforehand you will be able to anticipate how much and what kinds of waste your event will generate, which will help you plan accordingly.

A Commitment Statement

Having a clear and concise statement on how and why sustainability is a priority at your event makes it easy for you to get your message out to the public, as well as ensure everyone in your organization is on board and in the loop. Your commitment statement should highlight why sustainability is important at your event, what your commitment is, and how sustainability will be achieved.

For example:

“ Our festival recognizes the importance of protecting and preserving the natural environment and is committed to organizing and hosting a low impact event that is accessible to all. We will take measures to reduce and divert waste, encourage sustainable methods of transportation, and educate the public on sustainability through our eco-booth. ”





Goals

Setting goals and targets also acts as a clear way of outlining what you are doing and what you plan to do. Having both long term and short term goals allows you to consider growth and sustainable development for future events. Keep an updated list of your goals: what you've met, what you're on track to meet, and what you need to do to meet the rest of your goals. Make sure to share your goals with the public. Goals will change depending on the size and scale of your event. Sample goals could include:

- Install recycling stations next to garbage receptacles
- Set a percentage of waste to divert from the landfill
- Create and run a social media campaign to advertise your event
- Increase patron use of reusable water bottles
- Have at least one vegetarian meal option



A Green Team/Coordinator

Select 1 - 5 people who are passionate about the environment and sustainability, have leadership experience and who, ideally, have assisted with sustainable events in the past.

A Green Team should:

- recruit, organize, and train specific volunteers
- connect and follow up with vendors and partners
- encourage use of recyclable and/or compostable materials in lieu of plastic and Styrofoam
- answer sustainability-related questions at the event
- organize recycling and organic waste receptacles
- help at sorting stations at the event



A Good Location

Where your event takes place can play a big role when it comes to making your event green. Look into the venue to see if they have an existing commitment to sustainability. Perhaps the venue has waste and recycling receptacles on site that you can use, has water-conserving fixtures, or even provides access to alternative energy sources. If not, there are plenty of other ways your location can help make your event sustainable.

Choose a location that is:

- Accessible by foot, bike, and transit
- Close to overnight accommodation (if a multi-day event)
- Familiar to the public
- In a central location

That has:

- Natural cooling systems (i.e., shaded areas)
- Access to potable water

To better understand the venue, map the event area. Include the locations of existing waste bins and access to water and bathrooms. Plan out where food vendors, eating areas, event viewing areas, designated smoking areas, and recycling stations will be.





Local, Sustainably-Minded Vendors

Vendors are an important part of any event and creating a market - type feel can attract plenty of visitors to your event. Take the time to choose local vendors that can offer local, handmade, and quality goods wherever possible. Do not be afraid to inquire about what vendors will be doing to reduce their waste and how they will promote sustainable consumption. For food vendors, ensure a diverse range of food options by choosing vendors that can offer vegetarian, vegan, nut free, gluten free, dairy free, and international cuisine options.

SUPPORT

Finding Support

It can be difficult to organize a sustainable event alone – and you don't have to! Make sure to take advantage of the many resources, businesses and organizations that your community has to offer.

- Share your commitment to sustainability when reaching out for support, financial or otherwise.
- Focus on local businesses and organizations, these will be easier to contact and help with your event.
- Look into municipal, provincial, federal and private grants for your green event.
- Research what is available to you. You may be surprised what a quick internet search will reveal.

Offering Support

Taking the time to support other initiatives, organizations, and individuals not only allows you to recognize their contribution, but also be a role model for those in your community. When you do something good for someone else and offer support, the good deeds continue to be passed on.



Volunteers

Create a well laid out orientation package or host an orientation meeting with your staff and volunteers. Having well educated workers can dramatically change the outcome of your initiative. Do not underestimate your planning team! They can be a wealth of knowledge once you communicate your commitment to sustainability. And, of course, make sure to thank your staff and volunteers!

Green Efforts and Initiatives

Support green efforts at your event by designing and implementing recognition programs. Take the time to recognize the work of a particular vendor, sponsor, or volunteer who has contributed to the sustainability of the event. This can easily be done via social media. Consider having a prize for "The Most Sustainable" and advertise beforehand so people know to go green.

Reduce food waste by donating leftover food to food banks and soup kitchens. Although food banks often do not accept opened or homemade products, soup kitchens will. Some organizations will even pick up the food. Just make sure to give them some notice.

Support your venue by taking care of the area and ensuring it is cleaned properly after your event. Note how the venue is arranged when you arrive and make sure to leave it how you found it.





PROMOTE

Advertising

Promotion is one of the most important parts of preparing for your event. Successful advertising informs your target audience of the event and encourages people to attend. If they don't know it's happening, they won't show up!

Go paperless

One option is to provide event details using only digital and online methods. While not everyone has the expertise or finances associated to manage their own event website, social media outlets make it easy.

- make an event through Facebook or use an online registration system like Eventbrite and invite guests
- provide links to more event information
- cost effective
- flexibility to edit and add
- option of online registration
- gain a better idea of attendance
- better tracking systems of your reach

If you absolutely must use printed materials, here are some tips to reduce your footprint.

- choose recycled paper
- minimize ink usage by keeping posters simple
- print double sided when possible
- print mindfully and as you need, rather than all at once
- for large posters and banners, don't print dates so they can be reused for future events



Promote Your Green Event

Remember to promote the fact that your event will be green. This includes letting the public know about your sustainable initiatives with your advertising. If your event matches with the work external groups are executing, they may even help promote and advertise your event. You can also encourage participants to engage in the initiatives you are putting forward at your event. You can do this before and during the event by talking to your participants or mentioning your initiatives during any event announcements.

For example, if you want to reduce the number of water bottles, remind people to bring reusable drink containers. Or, if you are concerned about parking at the event site, ask participants to consider carpooling or biking.

Publicizing your green event and commitment to sustainability to the community can help secure potential sponsors.

ACT & ENCOURAGE

Hosting a sustainable event means doing everything you can to make sustainable decisions and encouraging your guests to do the same. Your event plan should include specific actions that you want to take to achieve your sustainability goals.

A full breakdown of some of the different items to include can be found on page 17 for public events, page 26 for private events and page 31 for green meetings.

Be sure to think about the following:

Where can you reduce your footprint prior to your event? Can you replace disposables with reusables? Can you order fewer t-shirts or party favours?

Don't just think about waste. Water conservation, transportation, and energy conservation all present opportunities to be sustainable.

How will you tell your guests about your sustainable initiatives? The best plan can fall apart if the people attending your event don't know about the options you've put in place.





REVIEW

At this time, the event is now over and hopefully your green initiatives were successful. After the event, it is important to reflect and review what worked and what didn't. Were your green goals met? Did you learn anything? Were you surprised at the amount and type of waste your event produced? What challenges made it difficult to carry out your green initiatives? What would you change for future events?

Review your goals

Go back to the goals you set when planning the event. Evaluate how well you and your team met those goals, and discuss what could have been done better in order to meet other goals. Keep written track of your short term and long term goals.

Include participants, performers, and vendors

They may have a unique insight into how waste is managed and what could improve on in the future. You can contact your vendors in a follow up call or email, or create a short online questionnaire for respondents to complete at their leisure.

Don't forget to thank your volunteers and supporters!

Compare your event to previous events

What did you change from your last event? How did it affect your overall sustainability? Understanding past events can help create better events in the future.

Share your experience!

Using a website, social media, newspaper, or email newsletter, let the public know the challenges you faced, what worked well, and what you would change in the future. By sharing this information you are helping other people manage future green events.



To help review your event, look at the sample review questions below. By answering these questions, you will be evaluating the effectiveness of your initiatives, and will be able to create better goals and tactics for future events. This is not an exhaustive list, and the questions may change depending on your event. Consider making your own event-specific questions to ask your planning team, volunteers, and event participants.

Calculate Your Diversion Rate

How much waste did your event produce and how much did you divert from the landfill? Calculating this creates a baseline for the amount of waste your event produces and can help set waste reduction goals for future events. If you hired a private business to take care of your waste and recycling, ask if they can perform a waste audit and provide you with your diversion wastes. Once calculated, be sure to share this with the community.

$$\frac{\textit{Amount of Waste Diverted}}{\textit{Total Amount of Waste Generated}} = \textit{Diversion Rate}$$

$$\frac{\textit{5 Bags of Recycling + 1 Bag of Compost}}{\textit{15 Bags Total}} = \textit{40\% Diversion Rate}$$

$$\frac{\textit{80kg of Recycling}}{\textit{100kg Total}} = \textit{80\% Diversion Rate}$$



How much waste did your event produce?

You can measure this in the number of garbage bags or total weight if you take it all to the Waste and Recycling Centre.

What was the most disposed of item from the event?

Taking a quick look into the trash or observing what is thrown away during the event can reveal what is most wasted. Often, serving items are the most disposed of items. You can minimize this by offering “finger foods” and napkins rather than plates.

Were waste, compost, and recycling bins used properly?

If there was a lot of contamination within these bins, there was likely no clear distinction between the collection bins. Having the bins be different sizes and colors as well as having adequate signage can help minimize contamination. Consider having your waste stations manned so that someone can make sure that they are being used properly.

Were sustainable methods of transportation utilized to attend your event?

Encouraging sustainable transportation can be a great way to green your event, but only if people actually used them! Ask your participants how they reached the site and keep a tally. You can also indirectly analyze how people attended by looking at how full the surrounding bike and vehicle parking areas are.

How many individuals participated in your sustainable initiatives?

Another way to measure the success of the event is to see how many people actually participated in your green initiative. If very few people (participants, volunteers, organizers, and sponsors) contributed to your green event you need to understand why. What can you do at future events to change this?

What challenges (if any) occurred when implementing your sustainable initiatives?

By reviewing your initiatives, you will learn what worked and what you need to improve. Make sure to ask your event participants and volunteers what difficulties they had.



PUBLIC EVENTS

Hosting a large public event that is both sustainable and inclusive with hundreds of participants may seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Simply follow these tips to make your sustainable event come to life.

Start small

Make changes that you know your event will be able to maintain and fulfill. Incorporate different issues on a smaller scale in order to help you grip with the logistics. Social consciousness matters to a large portion of your current or potential attendees; be sure to meet their expectations so they are more likely to attend your next event.

Appreciate Limitations

Take note of initiatives that went well and those that did not. Realize that not everything will go as planned. Identify how to progress in the future.

Be Prepared

It is never too early to start planning and researching. Be sure that your Green Team understands waste categories (organics, recyclables, and other), local transportation systems, energy and water usage, and sustainable venues.

Ask for Proof

Do not be afraid to ask for proof of sustainable initiatives from potential vendors. When your event is finished, ask for proof of the diversion rate, sustainable transport of attendees, and so forth. Use checklists as an incentive to measure initiatives.

Recognize

Identify your biggest area of concern. What sustainable initiatives will your event focus on and what challenges may arise? How can you minimize or successfully navigate these challenges?

Share

Market your goals and successes to your attendees, participants, volunteers, performers, vendors, and business partners. This will foster a green reputation of your business and event.



Why should you host a sustainable event? A sustainable event can have environmental, economic and social benefits for your community and your organizations.

Environmental Benefits

As an event with potential hundreds or thousand of attendees, you have the ability to make a very large impact that benefits the environment by:

- *Reducing the amount of waste* that goes to the landfill. You have the potential to divert hundreds of pounds of waste (like food waste and recyclables) that should not end up in the landfill.
- *Respecting the area where the event is hosted and local wildlife.* Try your best to make your event “No Trace” by limiting littering, discouraging the feeding of local wildlife, and encouraging participants to leave the area as they found it.
- *Carbon emissions management and reduction.* Sustainable transport of vendor tents, products, food, and more (i.e., by taking less trips between point A to point B) and encouraging sustainable transport (walking, biking, busing) of all participants (vendors, attendees, performers, volunteers) will minimize unnecessary carbon emissions.
- *Responsible purchasing.* By purchasing local and in season foods, inviting sustainable vendors, and renting a sustainable venue, your footprint will decrease dramatically.
- *Conserve water and energy.* By encouraging water and energy conservation of both vendors and attendees, your environmental impacts will be greatly minimized.



Economic Benefits

- You may find that you receive more business. Consumers are more likely to attend and buy knowing vendors are mindful of their impacts on society and the environment. You will also have a competitive advantage over non-sustainable events.
- Support the local economy. The use of locally produced and manufactured products and vendors bolsters the local economy and provides jobs in the community.

Social Benefits

- Establish community relationships. Building corporate responsibility and ethical leadership into event plans can help establish vital community relationships and strengthen local bonds.
- Be an example for other businesses and organizations to operate more sustainably.
- Create community events that are accessible and inclusive for all. Be sure to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who claim the traditional territory where your event is taking place.



What makes an event sustainable? Here are some tips and best practices to consider as you make a sustainable event plan.

General Tips

- Place bins in high traffic areas that will be easily seen such as along walkways and paths, near washrooms, and near eating and sitting areas.
- Always place bins in groups; never place a garbage bin without a recycling bin to partner it.
- Consider offering incentives or prizes to those who participate in sustainable practices including using public transportation, bringing their own water bottle, etc.
- Have one individual on your planning team who is in charge of waste management at the event. Have this person measure how much waste your event produced.

Food and Food Waste

- Encourage people to bring their own plates, utensils, reusable water bottles and mugs, etc.
- Provide finger food that can be eaten without the use of utensils and plates.
- Use reusable tablecloths instead of disposable options - or avoid tablecloths entirely
- Avoid using unnecessary packaging materials such as plastic lids on cups, straws, etc.
- Provide condiments in bulk instead of individually packaged items.
- Use pitchers and cups for drinks, including water. This can help eliminate the need for bottled water at the event.
- Offer food that is produced locally and in season.
- Donate leftover food to a local food bank or soup kitchen.
- Where facilities allow, have a collection point for compostable materials



Vendors and Caterers

- Make sure that you discuss your sustainable initiatives with caterers and select food providers that offer the right service for you.
- Consider the materials your food vendors are offering their food in. Is a lot of packaging necessary? Can you use reusable plates and cutlery? Consider asking the food providers to serve food in compostable packaging, and offer compostable cutlery that can be broken down.
- Discuss with food vendors the potential for offering a vegetarian option and vegan option.
- You can also use vendor agreements to affect change by limiting the amount of items given out and the type of serving materials vendors can use.
- Tell your vendors to reduce the number of brochures and other "freebies" that they hand out.

Swag and Event Materials

- Only order the branded swag that you need. Event t-shirts might seem like a perk, but they usually end up in the discount bin at the thrift store
- Have an a la carte system for event materials where attendees can choose what they want instead of providing a bag or packet of materials. Offer a collection point during the event to allow materials to be returned for reuse or recycling.
- Consider using reusable buttons instead of branded t-shirts to reduce waste.
- For multi-year events, avoid printing dates on materials so they can be easily reused.

Water and Beverages

- Tap water is free! Encourage participants to bring and fill their own reusable water bottles.
- Avoid the presence of straws and cup lids. Provide compostable alternatives if needed.
- Plastic coffee stirrers can just as easily be replaced with a reusable spoon!
- Try banning water bottles at your event. If you do ban plastic water bottles, make sure that there are other opportunities to access water at the event.
- Beer gardens can be an enjoyable addition to many events, however, they do produce their own specific types of waste. If you are managing your own beer garden consider keeping the beverages in cans and bottles which can be recycled. Another option is to buy your beverages in bulk and use larger serving cases.
- If serving individual cans is not an option, consider implementing a beer cup recycling program. Make sure that the cups you use are recyclable or compostable!
- You may find it easier to have a local business manage your beer garden. Work with them to create a setup that reduces the amount of waste produced at the event.
- If there are any natural water sources near your event (i.e., rivers, lakes, ponds, etc.) make sure they are free from pollution after your event.



Recycling

- The more people who attend your event, the more waste your event will produce. To keep this low, consider offering multi-waste stations which can collect items from multiple waste streams.
- Plastic packaging from food vendors and cardboard items are often overlooked as waste streams.
- Consider offering recycling to your vendors. If your event produces a lot of unnecessary food waste, offering a compost option can be extremely beneficial.
- If you have the volunteers, consider staffing your waste stations in order to make sure you don't end up with contaminated recycling.
- Announce and inform your attendees of your green initiatives before, and during the event. Let them know where the waste stations are and what materials you are collecting.
- Often, waste generated from cleaning up after the event isn't considered. During clean up, keep recycling bins available to collect recyclable items.



Transportation

- Pick a central, easy to access location for the event that is easy for all participants to get to. Central locations for all participants will include locations near to the homes and/or workplaces of the participants and that are easily accessible by all persons.
- Actively encourage carpooling and other sustainable transportation options such as buses, walking, and biking.
- For those out-of-towners, recommend nearby hotels or ones well served by transit.
- Parking can be a problem with larger events, but by encouraging cycling and walking, you will reduce the number of vehicles at your event.
- Consider scheduling your event with transit times in mind by avoiding peak commute times.
- Post reminders outside of your event asking people to kindly turn off their engines while waiting.

Energy

- If possible, hold your event during the day when no extra lighting is needed.
- Use LED bulbs when possible.
- Strategically place speakers to maximize effectiveness while reducing volume.
- Place signs in bathrooms and other areas participants will be, to remind them to turn lights off when the room is not in use.
- If you must have a generator, rent rather than buy your own, use the smallest generator necessary, and see if you have the option to rent a solar powered one. Generators tend to create a lot of noise which can interfere with your event and make it less enjoyable.
- Use carbon offsetting as a final resort – only after you have tried all other means to reduce your power consumption.



PRIVATE EVENTS

If you are having a barbecue, party, wedding, or any other private event, consider making it sustainable. Being sustainable makes sense – it can improve health, increase safety, and save money. Hosting sustainable private events is a great way to encourage others to do the same!

Environmental Benefits

- Reduce the amount of waste that goes to the landfill.
- Respect the area where the event is hosted and local wildlife.
- Conserve water and energy.

Economic Benefits

- Use of locally produced and manufactured products bolsters the local economy and provides jobs in the community.

Social Benefits

- Set an example for others!
- Encourage the quality of life, health, and well-being of attendees and the planet.

Even a small event can be sustainable. Here are some tips and best practices to consider as you make a sustainable event plan.

General Tips

- Place bins in high traffic areas that will be easily seen such as along walkways and paths, near washrooms, and near eating and sitting areas.
- Always place bins in groups; never place a garbage bin without a recycling bin to partner it.
- Keep things intimate (this way there will be less food waste and less water and energy usage associated with your event).
- Reuse, rent, borrow, or thrift dishes, seating, linens, decorations, etc.
- Shop local (decorations, food, etc.) to limit travel and packaging. This also supports the local economy.
- Try a charity registry/birthday gifts instead of material gifts.
- Try having live entertainment (like roving entertainers or performers) that can immerse your guests in a way that decorations can't.
- Idling is a major problem. Post reminders outside of your event asking people to kindly turn off their engines while waiting.
- Remember noise pollution. Even if you recycle everything at your event, if you're blasting tunes well past midnight, your neighbors will be suffering from noise pollution!

Water and Beverages

- Tap water is free! Encourage people to bring and fill their own reusable water bottles.
- Avoid the presence of straws and cup lids.
- If there are any natural water sources near your event (i.e., rivers, lakes, ponds, etc.) make sure they are free from pollution after your event.

Decorations

- Hiring greenery for your party is a great way to add color and vibrancy to your event space. It's also better for the environment and your pocket! Consider potted flowers that can be reused or transplanted. However, if you really love the look of fresh flowers, try to use in-season, native blooms.
- Consider donating floral arrangements to hospitals, nursing homes, or hospice centres.
- Give out eco-friendly wedding and party favors (with limited packaging) and gift sustainable products like local and natural soaps, seed packets, gift cards, and edible favors. Or just skip favors all together!
- Use what you have. Ceremony backdrop? Turn it into a photo booth backdrop!
- Try generic decorations - opt out of the "Happy Birthday" or "Just Married" decorations, so that you can reuse them at other gatherings. Donate decorations and décor that you will not reuse.
- Opt out of balloons and glitter. Use sustainable alternatives like paper confetti and bubbles.

Paper

- Utilize electronic communications over paper invitations. Social media, text, email, Facebook invites, and online services like Evite or Paperless Post are great electronic options.
- Minimize the amount of print materials by emailing the agenda or other information prior to the event.
- If you do end up using paper invitations, consider using recycled paper or seeded paper that can be planted.



Food and Food Waste

- Encourage people to bring their own plates, utensils, reusable water bottles and mugs, etc., or provide them.
- Provide finger food that can be eaten without the use of utensils and plates.
- Self-serve, buffet style food or have a designated server is a better practice, as people anticipate how much they will need and less food is wasted.
- Use reusable tablecloths instead of disposable options
- Avoid using unnecessary packaging materials such as plastic lids on cups, straws, etc.
- Provide condiments in bulk instead of individually packaged items.
- Use pitchers and cups for drinks, including water. This can help eliminate the need for bottled water.
- Offer food that is produced locally and in season.
- Make sure that you discuss sustainable options with caterers. Is a lot of packaging necessary? Can you use reusable plates and cutlery? Consider asking the food providers to serve food in reusable containers.
- Offer a vegetarian option.
- Donate leftover food to a local food bank or soup kitchen.
- Compost anything that cannot be eaten or donated.
- Do not make more food than necessary, to limit food waste.
- Have a potluck to limit waste. Have people bring meals in reusable containers and take home what they brought for leftovers.
- Pack leftovers for the guests to take home with them.



Recycling

- Have a separate bin to collect cans and bottles for recycling.
- Announce and inform your attendees of your green initiatives before, and during the event. Let them know where the waste stations are and what materials you are collecting.
- Often, waste generated from cleaning up after the event isn't considered. During clean up, keep recycling bins available to collect recyclable items.

Transportation

- Pick a central, easy to access location for the event that is easy for all participants to get to. Central locations for all participants will include locations near to the homes and/or workplaces of the participants and that are easily accessible by all persons.
- Actively encourage carpooling and other sustainable transportation options such as buses, walking, and biking.
- For those out-of-towners, recommend nearby hotels or ones well served by transit.

Energy

- Have your event during the day when no extra lighting is needed.
- Use LED bulbs when possible.
- Or have an outdoor event, where only natural sunlight is needed and no heating or cooling systems will need to be running.
- Strategically place speakers to maximize effectiveness while reducing volume.
- Place signs in bathrooms and other areas people will be to remind them to turn lights off when the room is not in use.
- Consider having activities at your event that don't require the use of generators. If you must have a generator, rent rather than buy your own, use the smallest generator necessary, and see if you have the option to rent a solar powered one. Generators tend to create a lot of noise which can interfere with your event and make it less enjoyable.



GREEN MEETINGS

What is a Green Meeting?

A Green Meeting is one that ensures that the environmental impact of the meeting has been taken into consideration. This means providing environmentally friendly options that have been integrated into all parts of the meeting including the gathering, communications, food, waste, and clean-up.

Why is it important?

A Green Meeting does more than just help the environment, it shows your clients and the public that you are making a change for the better. It's a great way to show that you are walking the walk when it comes to taking care of our environment. Not only will you be a leader in the eyes of your clients or partners, but in the short long term you will save money by lowering costs for some simple swaps.

Steps for a Green Meeting

1 *Green your communications.* Opt for emails inviting your attendees instead of a paper invitation. Let them know that this meeting will be a Green Meeting so they are encouraged to bike, carpool, call or video conference into the meeting.

Let attendees know ahead of time that the agenda and other attachments will not be provided in paper form and if they wish to print the documents to please print double sided. Here is a sample of what to send:

“ *This meeting is a Green Meeting and we are encouraging “greener” options for it. To get to the meeting we suggest carpooling, biking, or video conferencing in to reduce fossil fuel use. Paper copies of documents will not be available, please bring an electronic device to access them. Should you wish to print the documents ahead of time, please print double sided to reduce paper wastage. Thanks!* ”

2 *Food and beverages.* If you are serving food and beverages at the meeting, beyond just water, try to provide local, in season, and vegetarian options. At the end of the meeting, allow employees to bring home any leftovers. Attach a message asking employees to bring along reusable mugs, cups and even dishware. If your office is set up and has dishware, let them know that there will be options for them to use. Try sending:

“ *This meeting will have food & beverages being served. There will be no Styrofoam or single use items and we encourage you to bring your own reusable dishware. If you happen to forget to bring dishware, there will be a Green Meeting* kit available with a small selection of items to use. All meeting participants will be responsible for cleaning the dishware that they use.* ”

3

Go for low energy options where possible. Use natural light by keeping blinds open to reduce the need for lights. Or if you are up for an adventure and there are no privacy issues, have an outdoor meeting. This is a great way to green up your meetings and connect with nature all while at work.

4

Encourage attendees to go as green as possible. Go paperless at the meeting by asking those in attendance to bring an electronic copy and device to take notes on. Use a white board for taking notes or for various exercises. Suggest carpooling if possible to save on vehicle emissions and let those carpooling get to know each other!

5

Have waste separation stations for garbage, recycling, and cans. Ensuring that you have proper waste disposal in place will keep your meeting green and reduce the amount of waste going into the landfill. If someone has a compost at home, ask if they would like to collect the food scraps to add to their home piles.

6

Green up the clean up. Have those participating in the meeting and using reusable dishes clean up what they had used collectively. The object is to have everyone involved in the clean-up so that it is not left to one person.

Making small swaps in your office will create a sustainable office environment. Your employees will be more aware of the impact their actions have on the environment and you will set an example for other businesses to follow. It will also make your transition easier for when disposable or hard-to-recycle products become less available.

Green Meeting Kits

A Green Meeting kit provides those using it with dishware that is reusable so as to reduce the amount of waste produced by your meeting.

What to include:

Source out what will need to be included in your kit. Knowing how many people on average attend your meetings will provide you with the number of items you should accumulate. Things to consider including are:

- Dinner sized plates
- Water glasses
- Coffee mugs
- Basic Cutlery
- Serving spoons/tongs
- Water jug
- Dish towel
- Dish rag/sponge
- Soap for cleaning

Keep all the supplies and a supply list in an enclosed box. This will keep dust and dirt out and ensure that the right amount of supplies are returned to the box.



WRAP IT UP

We hope that you got some ideas for how to make your next event or meeting more green, but don't let this document limit you. This is not an exhaustive list and depending on the activities occurring at your event you may have other unique opportunities to reduce your waste, energy usage, and water usage. Come up with your own practices for your Sustainable Event or Green Meeting!

To help, you can ask yourself these questions:

- Did you actively attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with this event or meeting?
- Did you actively attempt to reduce the number of items necessary for this event or meeting?
- Of the waste materials that you produced, could any of them be reused somehow? Composted, recycled, or donated?
- When planning the event or meeting, were products purchased which are made out of recycled materials, are reusable, or recyclable?
- Were participants, volunteers, and workers aware of your green event and sustainable initiatives?
- Did you reach your green goal for your event or meeting?

Make sure that you take what you have learned and apply improved practices in the future!





This Green Your Event guide was created by Environment Lethbridge and may be reproduced with permission.

Original Content: Sophia Larney

Revised Content: Brooklyn Kolb

Layout and Design: Kathleen Sheppard

For more information, please visit www.greenyoureveryday.com or email info@environmentlethbridge.org



Guides in this Series:

- Green Your Kitchen
- Green Your Holidays
- Green Your Garden
- Green Your Business
- Green Your Office
- Green Your Events