



GREEN EVENT GUIDE

A Guide to Reducing Waste at
Meetings, Conferences and Events

THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST IN MAKING YOUR NEXT CAMPUS EVENT A GREEN EVENT! YOUR EFFORTS SUPPORT CSU'S MISSION TO REDUCE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF CAMPUS OPERATIONS.

The CSU Office of Sustainability developed this guide to help event planners reduce waste through source reduction, recycling, and composting. It is designed to be a resource for a wide variety of events, whether big or small. Feel free to pick and choose the items that make sense for your event. Let's get started!

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

- ➔ Consider using only electronic invitations, such as [Eventbrite](#), and request RSVPs online or by email/phone. Remind attendees not to print out the event invitation or confirmation.
- ➔ Avoid unnecessary paper waste and minimize poster and hotcard printing. Utilize e-marketing strategies and social media to promote the event. Share handouts, agendas, programs and other materials electronically.
- ➔ When marketing the event, encourage sustainable transportation by including links to [RTA](#), [HealthLine](#), and [UHBikes](#). Consider awarding a door prize to those who carpooled, biked, took public transit, or walked to the event.
- ➔ Communicate your green event plans to vendors and caterers and work with them to source appropriate materials.
- ➔ Encourage attendees in advance to bring their own reusable mug or water bottle for hot beverages and water.
- ➔ Promote the green aspects of your event in marketing materials and invite attendees to help reach zero/reduced waste goals.

FOOD AND CATERING

- ➔ Sustainably source a percentage of the menu to include vegetarian, vegan, organic, and/or certified fair trade coffee and food options.
- ➔ Choose locally sourced foods whenever possible to reduce the emissions associated with transportation and to support the local economy. [CSU Dining](#) procures a number of sustainably sourced foods from within a 300-mile radius. Ask for 'Menus of Change' items or speak with the Executive Chef or Director of Catering to customize your options. [Approved off-campus caterers](#) have meat-free options and many offer local and sustainably sourced catering options.

Forecast the headcount to ensure appropriate ordering and serving portions to avoid unnecessary food waste

Use reusable or compostable serviceware (plates, cups, utensils, etc.) Choose [BPI-certified](#) compostable products (e.g. [Vegware](#), available through Magnus Mart vendor, Berk Enterprises)

Serve finger foods to reduce or eliminate the need for utensils

Serve beverages in pitchers instead of individual servings

Serve food buffet-style instead of individually wrapped packaging

Serve tap or filtered water in dispensers instead of bottled water

Choose bulk condiments over individually packaged ketchup, cream, sugar, salt, or pepper

Request cloth tablecloths instead of single use plastic tablecloths



DITCH THE PLASTIC BOTTLE!

An easy way to reduce waste is to **eliminate single use disposable water bottles** at the event. Plastic water bottles are an unnecessary addition to the waste stream and add cost. Ask your caterer to provide tap or filtered water in pitchers/dispensers along with reusable or compostable cups. For large events, consider hiring a water distributor to supply water. The City of Cleveland's Division of Water can supply their [Water Buggy](#) for large events.



GIVEAWAYS AND VENDORS

- ➔ Inform vendors and exhibitors that the event is aiming for as little waste as possible.
- ➔ Limit single use giveaways that could introduce unwanted waste streams into the event.
- ➔ Choose giveaways that are reusable, made from durable or recycled materials, or consumable. Examples include cloth bags, reusable mugs or water bottles, apparel, gift cards, tickets, memberships, native seeds, USB drives, sporks, etc.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

- ➔ Think about where waste will be generated and review event logistics to evaluate all potential materials in the event waste stream.
- ➔ Limit the number of waste stations to help control where waste is disposed. Place recycling bins next to every landfill bin and remove any stand-alone trash bins.
- ➔ Determine if the event venue requires additional recycling bins. Contact **CSU Recycling** at **(216) 875-9759** to request bins for bottles/cans and paper.
- ➔ For large events, consider additional signage indicating what materials go into each bin. Don't have the budget to print reusable zero waste signage? **The City of Cleveland Office of Sustainability** has signs available to loan. Contact the Office at **216-664-2455** for more information.
- ➔ For large events, consider using waste education volunteers. A zero waste event should have waste stations staffed by at least one easily identifiable volunteer at all times to help attendees sort waste. Be sure to brief volunteers on composting, recycling, and waste prior to the event.
- ➔ Make sure bins have correct liners for the CSU recycling system – white/clear for recycling and gray/black for trash.
- ➔ Reusable items are preferable but if single-use items must be used, consider using compostable cups, plates, and utensils.
- ➔ If you choose compostable plates and cups, they can be composted along with food waste. CSU utilizes a commercial composting service through **Full Cycle Organics**. For bin delivery, email jimrfullcycle@gmail.com or call **(216) 533-3116**.
- ➔ Avoid Styrofoam products and clamshell containers whenever possible, as neither can be recycled in Cuyahoga County.
- ➔ Provide a drop off point near the exit for unwanted materials (name tag holders, maps, programs, giveaways, etc.) to be reused or recycled.
- ➔ Develop a plan for tracking and measuring waste generated at the event. Measure results by collecting the volume, weight, or number bags of compost, recyclables, and trash generated.

OTHER IDEAS

- ➔ Print signage and menu cards to identify sustainable practices and food sources to educate event attendees.
- ➔ Ask University Marketing to include a footnote stating that recycled content paper is used in printed materials.
- ➔ Consider using reusable centerpieces that can be given away as door prizes or reused for other events.
- ➔ Choose reusable banners, decorations, and signs. Leave off the date and use them again next year.
- ➔ Use plastic name tag holders and ask guests to leave them in a basket before departing.
- ➔ Use your green event as an opportunity to educate guests about waste reduction strategies. Plan announcements throughout the event to inform attendees of sustainability goals.
- ➔ Celebrate your success! Communicate accomplishments with event guests, sponsors, and other stakeholders.
- ➔ Don't worry if you don't achieve all of your goals. Remember that each effort contributes to CSU's waste reduction goals and of course, there's always another event to apply what you learned!



CSU SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Contact **Jenn McMillin**, the CSU Director of Sustainability, for more information, advice and recommendations on hosting a green event at j.mcmillin@csuohio.edu or 216-523-7462



Review the [event planning resources](#) compiled by ZeroWasteNEO in collaboration with Sustainable Cleveland 2019.



Notice energy or water being wasted at your CSU event? Report it by calling (216) 687-2500.

