

“Greening” an Event

What does it mean to “green” an event? According to Harvard’s Campus Green Initiative, it’s about utilizing environmental best practices in the planning and implementation of an event.

It’s part of the sustainability push found on campuses everywhere. Here are some ideas to consider as you work to “green” your campus events:

- Communicate with your team members via email to save paper and postage.
- Put a tagline at the bottom of your emails reading something like, “Before printing this, please consider its impact on the environment.”
- Use mugs, instead of disposable cups, for beverages. You can even encourage folks to bring their own!
- Be smart about what you print. When putting together your materials, print only what you need, on recycled paper, and have it be double-sided.
- Get people on board by letting them know about your waste reduction efforts. They’ll help you be successful.
- Recycle decorations and signs whenever possible. Ask folks to be gentle when hanging them and taking them down so they stay in good shape. You’ll be surprised at how often things can be used again – for the same event or another!
- Using nametags? Reuse some from previous campus events – made from recyclable plastic, of course! Be sure to collect them at the end of training so they can be used again. Or, leave out the plastic all together and just attach cardstock nametags to lanyards. Then, collect the lanyards.
- Recycle programs from events that have multiple viewings. Have bins available at exits so people can recycle them, and then hand them out again at the next session.
- Select centerpieces and other decorative flowers/plants that can be repotted or planted, instead of just thrown away when they die.



Green Event Checklists

Here are two good resources that include complete green event planning checklists you can use:

- www.duke.edu/sustainability/documents/Duke%20Green%20Event%20Planning%20Guide.pdf
- www.myams.org/sustainability/planning-a-green-event
- Save flipchart boxes – they are a great place to store signs that can be reused.
- Consider renting decorations and props instead of buying them.
- Hire local performers and speakers so they don’t have to travel too far, thus reducing their carbon emissions.
- Opt to serve finger foods instead of meals requiring utensils. Then water won’t be wasted washing those utensils.
- Use a dry erase board or a chalkboard instead of flip chart paper/newsprint.
- Shut down equipment when you’re done using it.
- Think about transportation issues. If you’ll be holding events off campus or at multiple venues on a large campus, considering renting a school bus or vans so students don’t drive their own cars.
- Talk about event t-shirts and other apparel. Are they really necessary? Purchase organic or alternative-fiber t-shirts. Or, skip them all together and use recyclable nametags instead.
- Serve local foods as refreshments.
- Set up recycling receptacles in the event space.
- Be coffee conscious and serving a brew that’s shade grown, organic or fair trade.
- Hold events outside or in natural light so you don’t have to turn on as many lights.