



GREEN EVENTS GUIDE

This guide will help you bring sustainable practices to your events. Implementing even a few steps in your planning can reduce the amount of resources needed, energy consumed, emissions created, and waste sent to landfills. Committing to a green event can help secure sponsors, funders, presenters, participants, and contractors.

The time and consideration taken in your planning will be appreciated and impactful as attendees are increasingly interested in sustainable products, ideas, and services. Congratulations on your upcoming event, and thank you for incorporating green principles into your planning!



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CLEAN, GREEN & BEAUTIFUL
THUNDER BAY

Planning

TIP: Commit early to your sustainability goals. Communicate your goals to fellow organizers, sponsors, staff, volunteers, and vendors. Their support will be integral in creating an eco-friendly and low-waste event.

- Request environmentally friendly goods and services in event tenders. Communicate with sponsors how they can support your green goals.
- Tell vendors what is expected in terms of the products/materials they bring onsite and/or work with local businesses that already follow sustainable practices.
- Assign one person the responsibility of handling the green aspects of the event– they can share expectations with vendors, coordinate volunteers to monitor recycling and waste stations, etc. They should be on-site during the event to ensure its success.
- Rent or borrow as much as possible rather than buy new. For not-for-profit events, the City of Thunder Bay has a [large selection of equipment that can be borrowed from Event Services](#), such as cash boxes, event signs, security vests, and more.
- Avoid printing as much as possible and share information digitally. If printing is necessary, do so on both sides of recycled paper.

REMEMBER: Build opportunities during the event to announce your green initiatives including where to properly dispose of waste and cigarette butt stop areas. If you show people you're enthusiastic about the ways you're going green, they'll be more inclined to take part too.

Event Promotion

- Consider paperless strategies to promote your event and provide details to attendees digitally. Use online invitation services. Gather RSVPs and track registration through one of the many websites designed to help.
- If using paper for poster or invitations, avoid using glittery, metallic, or plasticized papers that cannot be recycled. Print on recycled paper or paper derived from sustainable resources such as bamboo, and use soy or vegetable ink when possible.
- Remind attendees to pack appropriate gear such as rain jackets, reusable water bottles, and cutlery to cut down on the materials needed.
- Because you're going the extra mile to host an eco-friendly event, the community should know about it. Share your sustainability goals in your marketing and with the media!



Signage, Ticketing & Giveaways

TIP: Use generic signage without dates that can be used again at future events rather than overly specific ones. Or use signs with removable letters that can be endlessly customized.

- Use paperless ticketing systems where attendees can have their tickets scanned from their phones.
- Get creative with wristband options made of recycled materials or even plantable wristbands made from seed paper.
- If using a token system for food and drink, consider giving out reusable tokens that can be used for future events. Tokens made from a biodegradable material such as wood or potato starch can be used for many years before being replaced.
- Skip giveaways and favours altogether. If choosing to give swag bags, favours or promotional products, avoid cheap plastic items that will ultimately end up in landfills. Instead, consider organic seed packets, small plants, locally produced products or handmade items from local artisans. For promotional materials, look for high-quality items that can be used at the event and beyond, such as fabric bags, mugs, hats, reusable cutlery kits, etc.



Transportation

TIP: When picking your event venue, consider the accessibility of the location for bikers, pedestrians, and city transit access. Consider booking a shuttle or organizing carpools for out-of-town venues to reduce the number of guests travelling by car.

- Encourage green transportation to the event by including public transportation information in your informational materials, making bike racks available or setting up a supervised bike parking area.
- Offer incentives for people who bike or take public transportation – a complimentary drink ticket, small prize, preferred parking spots for carpoolers, etc.
- Make your guest's travel emissions "carbon neutral" by purchasing carbon offsets.



Décor

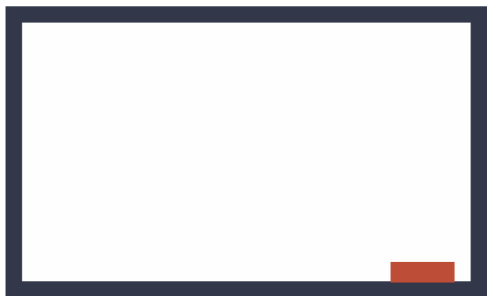
- Avoid balloons, glitter, plastic confetti, and shiny foil, as they are not recyclable. This is especially important during outdoor events as they can be harmful if they end up in the environment.
- Décor doesn't have to be disastrous for the planet. Get creative with natural materials. Choose local or organic cut flowers. Use potted plants, evergreen sprigs, or living herbs.
- Reuse, Upcycle and DIY as much as you can. Choose quality décor items that can be reused at future events. Search local buy-and-sell groups or thrift stores, borrow decorations, or hire a local decorator with items they reuse for multiple events.



Conference Based Events

REMEMBER: Place well-labelled recycling containers alongside garbage receptacles in or near all meeting spaces.

- Share documents with participants digitally. Show documents on a projector rather than printing. If printed are necessary, print double-sided on post-consumer recycled paper.
- Order meeting materials based on confirmed numbers so there won't be any leftovers.
- Use whiteboards at meetings rather than flip charts. If flipcharts are used, ensure the paper contains a high amount of recycled material.
- Provide pitchers of water and glasses for attendees rather than bottled water. If you are serving snacks, opt for serve-yourself buffets with reusable tableware.
- Give participants reusable name tags that can be returned and reused after the event.



Food

The largest contributors to event waste are often food vendors. Communicate your preference for sustainable options with vendors and caterers from the start and develop a plan that is agreeable to both of you. Caterers can help source local, in-season, organic, and/or fair-trade ingredients. This will help support local businesses, bring in fresher-tasting food, and produce fewer emissions from food transportation.

- Significantly reduce the waste produced during your event by ditching the disposables. Reusable dishes, cutlery, and linen will prevent non-recyclable material from going to landfill and can be rented locally by businesses such as Equipment World.
- If renting reusables isn't possible, consider giving out reusable items needed, such as cutlery sets, reusable food containers, etc., as part of the event package.



- If disposable packaging and cutlery must be used, avoid plastic and Styrofoam. Go for products made from renewable and biodegradable materials such as wood, cardboard and paper.
- Avoid the need for cutlery completely by choosing handheld foods such as wraps, pizza, or finger foods.
- Serve condiments in bulk dispensers to cut down on small pieces of trash that are easily littered.

- Have vegan or vegetarian options available and cut back on meat dishes. This reduces your ecological impact and appeals to a wider range of people. If meat is on the menu, choose local free-range farm meats and sustainably harvested seafood as much as possible.



Beverage

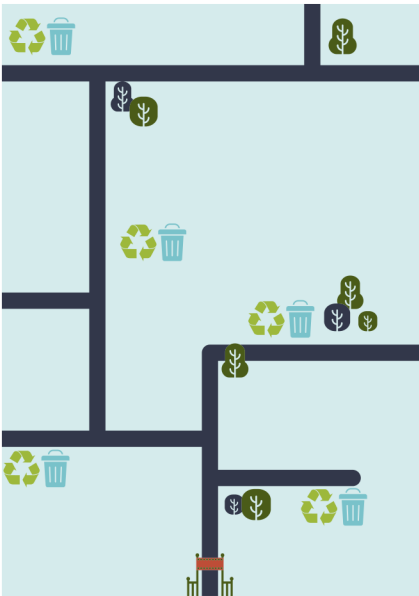
- Host a water bottle-free event. Encourage attendees to bring reusable water bottles and provide a water refill station, which businesses such as SASI Water can supply for larger events.



- Serve fair trade coffee and organic teas. If you serve alcohol, choose organic or locally made beers and wine. Consider providing a keg of local beer (kegs are returnable, refillable and recyclable).
- Skip cans and bottles by serving beverages from dispensers. Supply reusable cups to attendees or encourage them to bring their own. Ditch plastic straws in favour of paper, or offer stainless-steel straws.
- If there is a full bar service, ensure recycling is available nearby for bartenders to access easily.
- Ask vendors to sell drinks to people who have brought refillable beverage containers at a reduced rate and charge more each time they have to use a disposable cup.

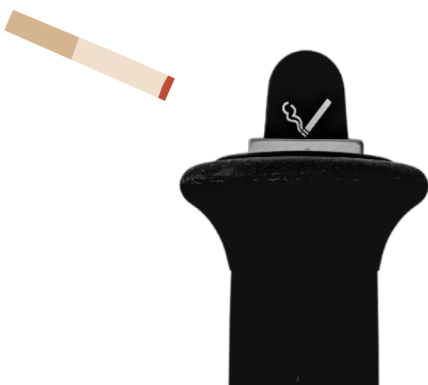
Litter Prevention

DID YOU KNOW? Reducing event waste paired with properly managed garbage and recycling stations is the key to hosting a litter-free and earth-friendly event. If you've already reduced the number of throwaway items given out, you'll see a lot less waste as a result. Plus, attendees are less likely to litter in a clean environment and are more likely to place garbage and recycling in the proper receptacles if others have before.



- Pair recycling receptacles with every garbage and place them in strategic, high-traffic locations, such as eating areas, stages, bathrooms, entrances/exits, and areas where people frequently pass. Have enough waste stations based on the number of attendees and enough garbage and recycling bags for when receptacles need to be emptied.
- On the site map for your event, mark each location you'll want a waste station.
- The City of Thunder Bay, through GFL Environmental, will provide events with recycling bins. Contact GFL Environmental a minimum of two weeks in advance to book.
- If possible, include composting in the event waste management plan.

- Place highly visible signage on waste receptacles detailing what materials can be placed in each. For example, mark your bins as Paper/Cardboard, Garbage, and Containers (plastic, metal, glass). You can include photos of the items placed in each receptacle on the signs.



- When littered on the ground, cigarette butts leach deadly toxins before degrading into microplastic pollution. If smoking is permitted at your event, provide cigarette receptacles. EcoSuperior can provide cigarette butt receptacles and free pocket ashtrays you can give out at your event; contact rethinkingwaste@ecosuperior.org for more information.

TIP: Organize a green team to monitor waste stations to ensure garbage and recycling remain separated and that bins are frequently emptied. Give the group gloves, garbage pickers, and visible t-shirts or vests so they can walk among the crowd to collect any litter, showcasing that event planners are taking pride in the space they are hosting.

After the Event

Hopefully, you've now seen that taking even a few of these actions can have a huge impact in our community and the environment around us. Achieving your goals and seeing how clean the venue is throughout the event, supporting local and sustainable businesses, creating a delicious menu all contribute to memorable experiences for yourself and your guests. Simple changes can make such a big difference.

Wrap-Up List

1. Collect data to show the diversion rates of waste from the landfill or any costs saved to show that your sustainability efforts were worthwhile and should be continued.
2. Gather feedback from attendees, vendors and staff about whether your greening goals were met. Ask a few simple questions, such as whether they were aware of the environmental goals of the event, if they thought they were achieved, and areas for improvement.
3. Evaluate which of your greening goals were met, which were not, and what could be done differently next time.
4. Thank your staff, volunteers, vendors, and participants for their contribution to the greening effort. Share your successes and lessons learned widely to help encourage others to make the effort to keep their events green and litter free!



CONGRATULATIONS
ON YOUR GREEN EVENT!

Together we can build a healthy future for people & the planet.

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