

## Guide to Planning a Sustainable Event

Sustainability can be defined many ways but the basic ideas and concepts remain the same: balancing a growing economy, protection for the environment, and social responsibility, so they together lead to an improved quality of life for ourselves and future generations. Sustainability in event planning is just as important as any other aspect of business. We have listed a few ideas for the key areas of the event planning process to assist you in working to make your event as sustainable as possible.

### Event concept development:

The initial planning for your event is the perfect time to think about the sustainability of your event. A key part of this is to put down in writing the environmental statement for the event and publicize it. Put this statement in all your materials as well as communicating it to all sponsors, presenters, and participants for the event. Getting buy-in from the beginning from everyone involved in your event makes it much easier to fulfill your goal of a sustainable event.

### Event Location Selection:

When deciding on a venue, look for one that already has adopted sustainability policies and practices. A location that already is making efforts that coincide with your event goals can only serve to benefit you in achieving what you want.

Identify locations that are easily accessible from public transportation. Event locations that can be accessed on foot, by bus, or train will ease not only the strain on the environment caused by car pollution, but also can be cost beneficial if your venue charges for parking. In addition, if your participants are going to have to travel from site to site, provide a shuttle to ease in both logistics and environmental impact.

Another item in selecting a site is to look for venues that offer areas using natural light and plan your event accordingly to minimize the cost of electricity.



**Event Materials:**

Use new media and electronic technology whenever possible to cut down on paper usage. Ideas include creating a conference web site; offer electronic registration and confirmations; and advertise using the web or email. Also, encourage presenters to put their information on-line.

Be sure to review which materials will be need for the participant packets. If information must be offered in print format use environmentally sound paper and be sure to print double-sided.

Include information about your sustainability objectives in your materials.

Name badge holders can be reused from event to event. Ask your guests to return their name badge holders at the end of your event and provide a receptacle for them.

Encourage your presenters to use white boards with non-toxic markers instead of paper flip charts.

Instead of using cut flowers for decorations, consider using potted plants.

**Catering:**

When planning you food/beverage choices share your sustainability goals with the caterer. Ask if they currently offer local organic and seasonal sources of food and beverages, sustainable seafood sources, vegetarian/vegan meals, etc.

Plan food order needs carefully to avoid unnecessary waste.

Have your caterer provide beverages, salt, pepper, cream, etc. in bulk dispensers rather than providing individualized packages, cans, or bottles.

Inquire if your caterer can utilize reusable plates, flatware, table linens, etc.

**At the Venue:**

Ask the facility to provide visible and accessible reduction, reuse and recycling services for paper, metal, plastic and glass.

Place recycling bins in prominent locations and make announcements during the event reminding your guests to recycle and direct them to bins.

Avoid using dates on signage so that they can be used again for other events.

Create opportunities to educate your participants by placing information about sustainability throughout you event space.

These are but a few ideas that you can utilize to help make your event more sustainable. As we mentioned this is not a complete list and there are of course many other ideas that can be implemented. If you have any further questions regarding sustainability at Florida Atlantic University or anywhere please use the resource links below to help you and thank you for helping support FAU's Mission Green.

**Resources:**

Florida Atlantic University: Sustainability (Mission Green)

<http://www.fau.edu/missiongreen>

FAU Food Service (Chartwells) sustainability page

<http://www.cgnad.com/default.asp?ID=247&action=article>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Sustainability

<http://www.epa.gov/sustainability>

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)

<http://www.aashe.org>

Sustainable Campus

<http://www.sustainablecampus.org>

Blue Green Meetings

<http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org>

Green Biz

<http://www.greenbiz.com>

