

GREENING YOUR EVENT TOOLKIT

OBJECTIVE:

To minimize the amount of materials and waste generated at an event.

WHY GREEN YOUR EVENT?

Events can generate a lot of waste. Often refreshments and catering are served on disposable dishware. Agendas, presentations and other event materials are often printed and therefore use a lot of paper. Even food is often left over and ends up in the garbage. Greening your event can help you to minimize your waste. Events are an excellent opportunity to showcase the principles of sustainability.

STEPS

Step 1:

Have a discussion with the planning team about having a 'Green Event'. Brainstorm ideas on what you can do to minimize the environmental impact. Here are some ideas:

Choose sustainable catering – Choose caterers who have a commitment to sustainability (if possible). If you're unsure, talk to your caterer, let them know that this is important to you. Look for ways to minimize or eliminate disposable dishware and cutlery. If that is not possible, see if the caterer can offer compostable dishware and if they pick it up. Also look for ways to eliminate single serving items like sugar packets or milk / creamers. See if you can get these items in bulk. Ask the caterer to serve the food on reusable platters. Avoid ordering bottled water. Instead put water in a pitcher and ask people to bring their own water bottles. Choose organic, local and third party eco-certified food where possible.

Event Materials – Avoid having hardcopies of materials such as meeting agendas, presentations or reports. Instead send these out in advance of the event and request that participants review them online. Ensure event evaluations are sent out electronically.

Minimize swag – Do not give away too much corporate swag (branded items such as bags, apparel or office supplies). Instead give away a few thoughtful prizes and choose items that are sustainable such as experiences rather than products.

Choose transit accessible locations – Host events at locations that are easy to get to by public transit and encourage staff to use it. Give away transit tickets as a prize to some staff that do. You can also encourage staff to carpool and/or cycle.

Use reusable beverage containers - Ask participants to bring their own mugs and water bottles. Bring some extra mugs for people who forget.

Set up recycling – Make sure there are paper and refundable beverage container recycling available for the event.

Avoid food waste – Be mindful not to order too much food. Use a 1.5:1 ration – meaning for every 1½ participant, order one meal. If there is food leftover, encourage participants to take it home or back to their offices.

Step 2:

Once you've decided on your "green" strategy for your event, make sure you promote this. Promoting it will not only tell participants that it is an integral part of the event but it will also give event organizers credibility. Many participants will appreciate your efforts. Be sure to include a question about it on your event evaluation.

EVALUATION

Calculate how much waste you've saved by implementing the above measures. Think about how much paper you would have used had you printed and distributed agendas, reports, and/or presentations. By not purchasing corporate swag, calculate the cost savings. Do an informal survey of the number of people who took transit, cycled, walked or carpoled and calculate the percentage of participants who travelled sustainably. You could also add this question to your event evaluation. Send your results to mhunt2@phsa.ca.