

Organizing a Green Meeting at Smeal

Objectives of a Green Meeting

The main goals of the Green Meeting are to reduce waste, use local resources, reduce transportation impacts, and conserve water and energy.

Planning Considerations

- Send invitations via email whenever possible to avoid generating paper waste and carbon from transportation.
- If there are actions that can be taken by meeting attendees (such as sustainable transportation options, bringing their own beverages/mugs, attending via Skype, etc.), note these options in the meeting notices and other communications.
- Use signage that can be reused for other meetings or events.
- Communicate environmental goals to all planning staff contractors.

Steps to Take During the Meeting

- Open the meeting with a “Green Tip.”
- Set a storage area in the back of the room filled with pens, paper and supplies instead of having them at each place setting. This will provide supplies only if they are needed.
- Reduce paper use by minimizing handouts, printing double-sided, or consider handing out flash drives that contain the meeting materials.
- Reduce the use of electric lighting during daylight hours. Many of the meeting rooms at Smeal have abundant natural light from windows and multiple lighting settings that can be used to minimize use of electric lighting during the day. Turn off lights, computer monitors, and projectors at the end of the meeting.
- Collect ID badges at the meeting’s conclusion, to reuse again.
- Encourage attendees to bring their own coffee mugs.

Food Service Considerations

- Ask the caterer if they can purchase food from local suppliers and select seasonal products. This measure not only supports the local economy, but also reduces transportation emissions.
- Use organically grown and fair-trade foods, if possible.
- Ask the caterer to collect all prep waste to compost and arrange for collection after the event. If your caterer does not have an arrangement to collect the compost, you can request compost bins and bags from Al Matyasvosky at aem3@psu.edu (please request at least 1-2 weeks prior to your event). Alternately, you can request compost bags and deposit in existing containers in the Blue Chip or the back dock.

- Plastic wrap, plastic bottles, cans, paper, cardboard and glass should all be recycled.
- Avoid individual bottles of beverages, substituting pitchers of water and soda.
- Avoid plastic coffee stirrers and individual packages of cream, butter, sugar, salt, pepper, chips, and condiments. These can be aesthetically and safely served in bulk.
- Offer a vegetarian selection on the menu.
- Ask if portion sizes can be reduced to nutritionally sensible sizes or carefully track RSVPs and inform caterers of the exact number of participants for each meal to minimize food waste – you can often reduce this count by 5-10%. Allow guests or staff to take leftovers home or to donate to a local food bank.

Options for Tableware and Cutlery

- Use reusable flatware, plates, serving dishes and glassware and minimize wherever possible.
- Use compostable options as an alternative to plastic and provide compost bins.
- Provide polystyrene recycling bins if using polystyrene (Styrofoam™). Minimize or eliminate the use of plastic unless it is reusable.
- Please see www.ebuy.psu.edu for information on compostable tableware.

Recycling and Composting

- Make sure recycling bins are plentiful, conveniently located, and well-marked.
- The success of diverting waste from the landfill into recycling bins depends on the attendees putting their trash in the correct bin. Enable them to make informed choices by providing clear instructions about what can be recycled and where. Consider adding signage and/or ask hosts to briefly mention what is recyclable/compostable during the meeting.
- Place recycling, compost, and trash bins together. Remove trash bins if not needed.
- Give clear instructions for composting: what can be put in the compost bin and what cannot. Consider adding a small paper sign (e.g. all service ware is compostable) where guests pick up plates.
- For additional plastic bottle bins, contact the RIIT Group.

Transportation

- Opt for central location to encourage public transportation, walking, or biking.
- Provide bus passes for attendees or encourage guests to car pool.
- Consider audio-conferencing (via phone), web-conferencing (via Skype, Adobe Connect, Lync, etc.) or video-conferencing (via Polycom, Cisco, etc.).

Advertise the Advantages of a Green Meeting

- An environmentally friendly meeting produces fewer harmful emissions.
- Conserving resources can save money.
- Demonstrate a commitment to institutional environmental responsibility.