

# Green Events Planning Guide

## Why host a sustainable event?

As an institution of higher learning and research, Penn State has a responsibility to embody and communicate an evidence-based worldview that allows all of us to prosper, both now and in the future. We must—even more comprehensively and cohesively—integrate sustainability into our research, teaching, outreach, and operations, as well as lead with innovative and aggressive programs institutionally to reduce our impact on the environment.

*2016-2020 Penn State Strategic Plan*

Sustainability is about changing the way you make decisions, taking into account how your actions impact resource use and affect other people. These principles are themes in Penn State's [Strategic Plan](#). Penn State is looking to you to help ensure the success of its commitment to integrate sustainability into its operations. For example, by eliminating the use of one ream of virgin-sourced paper, you would also eliminate the use of 229 gallons of water, avoid 19 pounds of solid waste production, and 56 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions, an amount equivalent to an average passenger car driving 61 miles.<sup>1</sup>

The two checklists below will help you consider the environmental and social impacts of your meetings and events. Reducing these impacts not only saves resources (materials, water and energy) and respects others, but it also demonstrates Penn State's sustainability leadership.



[sustainability.psu.edu](https://sustainability.psu.edu)

# Green Meeting Checklist

| Item   | Individual Responsible | Completion Date |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Planning your meeting</b>   |                        |                 |
| Avoid physical meetings altogether by hosting them over <a href="#">Zoom</a> or another video or teleconferencing platform.  |                        |                 |
| If possible, choose a location that is walkable, has access to public transportation, and/or has bike racks.   |                        |                 |
| If possible, email presentations and meeting agendas instead of printing.  |                        |                 |
| If handouts are unavoidable, create smaller margins, print double-sided, and in black and white. Print on recycled-content paper.  |                        |                 |
| <b>Catering</b>  |                        |                 |
| Provide reusable dinnerware and cutlery or ask individuals to bring their own.   |                        |                 |
| Purchase compostable or recyclable plates, cups and cutlery. Avoid polystyrene products. Use Penn State's <a href="#">General Stores</a> to purchase sustainable products. |                        |                 |
| Offer drinks, milk, creamer, and sweeteners in pitchers/ carafes and containers to eliminate excess packaging.   |                        |                 |
| Use leftover disposable plates, utensils, and cups from previous events or meetings.   |                        |                 |
| Ensure the proper recycling bins are available, and if possible only offer compost bin. Leave surplus food out for colleagues and/or students to take home.                |                        |                 |
| Provide water glasses/cups and filling stations in lieu of single-use plastic water bottles.   |                        |                 |
| Reuse plastic catering trays and tops or recycle in Miscellaneous plastics bin. Utensils can be returned to caterers.  |                        |                 |
| <b>Energy</b>  |                        |                 |
| Ensure that all lights are turned off at the end of your meeting. Choose a venue with abundant natural lighting whenever possible.   |                        |                 |
| Turn off projectors when they are not in use.  |                        |                 |

# On-Campus Green Event Checklist

| Item  | Individual Responsible | Completion Date |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Location</b>   |                        |                 |
| Choose a location which is the appropriate size for the event (larger space than needed = more waste, energy use, etc.)   |                        |                 |
| <b>Transportation</b>   |                        |                 |
| If possible, choose a location that is walkable, has access to public transportation, and/or has bike racks.  |                        |                 |
| If shuttling people from local airport, arrange carpool to reduce single-person trips.  |                        |                 |
| <b>Promotion</b>  |                        |                 |
| Promote your event digitally with online marketing, email, and social media. If paper is necessary, use recycled-content paper.   |                        |                 |
| Highlight sustainable choices for your guests in your event promotion. (Encourage guests to bike, walk, carpool, take public transportation, and bring their own water bottles and reusable coffee mugs.) |                        |                 |
| Determine what materials you can provide digitally before the event. This could include handouts, conference materials, and agendas.  |                        |                 |
| <b>Purchasing</b>   |                        |                 |
| Use reusable decor such as fabric tablecloths and potted plants as much as possible. Consider borrowing event materials from other units such as sign holders, markers, pens, etc.                        |                        |                 |
| If you plan to provide guests with promotional gifts, consider items that are less wasteful but still appealing and useful.   |                        |                 |
| Collect and reuse plastic name tag badges/holders.  |                        |                 |
| Purchase compostable or recyclable plates, cups and cutlery. Avoid polystyrene products. Use Penn State's <a href="#">General Stores</a> to purchase sustainable products.                                |                        |                 |

# On-Campus Green Event Checklist (cont.)

| Item   | Individual Responsible | Completion Date |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Energy</b>  |                        |                 |
| Ensure that all lights are turned off at the end of your meeting. Choose a venue with abundant natural lighting whenever possible.   |                        |                 |
| Turn off projectors when they are not in use.  |                        |                 |
| <b>Catering</b>  |                        |                 |
| Help your guests understand how to dispose of their food waste with a short announcement at the beginning of the meal.   |                        |                 |
| Use <a href="#">Campus Catering</a> and their compostable dinnerware.  |                        |                 |
| Serve food buffet-style to prevent excessive food waste. Choose hors d'oeuvres that are finger foods and don't require utensils. Use pitchers and/or filling stations for serving drinks, instead of single-use cans or plastic water bottles.                             |                        |                 |
| If possible, offer primarily organic and vegetarian options while avoiding red meat and unsustainably sourced seafood. Focus on seasonal and local food options for the menu. Ask your caterer if they can source produce from <a href="#">Penn State's Student Farm</a> . |                        |                 |
| Ensure the proper <a href="#">recycling stations</a> are available for waste, and if possible only offer composting for a zero waste event.  |                        |                 |
| If possible, arrange to have leftover food donated to charitable organizations.  |                        |                 |

<sup>1</sup> Life cycle impact from Environmental Paper Network and EPA GHG Calculator