

MACC Goes Green!

*Sustainable
Event Guide*



Massachusetts | **Campus Compact**

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Introduction: The *what* and *why* of sustainable events

Why plan a sustainable event?

There are many reasons to make your event more environmentally-friendly. By hosting events that practice and promote sustainability, you are making a positive contribution to the conservation of scarce resources and the protection of environmental and human health. You are developing good habits, and educating others about the simple steps they can take to make their daily activities easier on the earth. Sustainable events can help you save money; showcase local businesses, organizations, and farms that share your commitment to sustainability; and celebrate the environmental ethic of your group or community. Sustainable events reflect careful planning and are fun!

Why plan a sustainable *MACC* event?

Civic engagement involves community stewardship, and environmental awareness and sustainability are instrumental to maintaining the health of your community. As an institution committed to enhancing civic engagement opportunities across the state of Massachusetts, MACC is working to promote environmentally sustainable practices and initiatives on member campuses and in host communities. Taking the time to incorporate sustainability into the operations of MACC and its membership is a key component of this effort. Every time you plan a sustainable event on your MACC member campus, you are contributing to, promoting, and celebrating MACC's sustainability work.

So what is a “sustainable event”?

A sustainable event is one which incorporates products and practices with a minimal environmental impact, while educating attendees about the environmentally-preferred components of the event. There are three “tiers” to describe how sustainable your event is – Gold, Silver, and Bronze. To attain a Gold rating, your event should involve a minimum of 10 Greener Choices from this guide; to attain a Silver rating, your event should involve 8 Greener Choices; and to attain a Bronze rating, your event should involve 5 Greener Choices.

Required Elements of ALL Sustainable Events

Anytime you seek to organize a sustainable event, there are three key elements to remember:

First, you should take the time to prepare a short **statement of environmental responsibility**, which you can share with everyone who is involved in planning the event; this includes your co-organizers, facilities managers, caterers/dining services staff, custodial staff, event presenters, vendors, and exhibitors. This will ensure that there is clarity about your sustainability goals, and buy-in from everyone involved in planning and executing the event.

Second, make sure to **educate and inform your guests** about the sustainable elements of your event and the ways that they minimize environmental impact. This can be accomplished with placards describing the sources of local and organic foods, a paragraph in the event program highlighting the resource savings resulting from your sustainability efforts, or a line in your advertisements – or preferably, all three!

Finally, be sure to **celebrate your efforts and keep track of the steps you took** to make your event more sustainable. Documenting and sharing this information will help raise awareness about sustainability on your campus; it will also facilitate simplified green event planning in the future by tracking information about helpful vendors, facilities, etc.

Greener Choices: Energy

- Host your event during the day, in an area with adequate natural light to obviate the need for electric lighting.
- Calculate the carbon footprint of your event¹ and purchase renewable energy certificates (RECs)² to offset the emissions caused by your event.

Greener Choices: Transportation

- Encourage guests to travel by bike, on foot, or via public transportation; provide maps and directions to your event for each mode of transport. Remember to describe sustainable transportation options that will be accessible to all of your guests.
- Encourage carpooling: Ask guests to indicate whether they are interested in sharing their contact information for carpooling purposes when they RSVP, and/or suggest carpooling resources such as www.goloco.org so that guests can coordinate rideshares on their own.
- Offer virtual conferencing or make your event a webinar for out-of-town participants.
- When organizing an event that utilizes multiple spaces, ensure that they are within walking distance of each other.

Greener Choices: Solid Waste (see Food section for food-related waste minimization)

- Provide adequate containers for recycling, and make sure that they are well-labeled and user friendly. There should be a recycling container for every trash container!
- Collect & reuse plastic nametag holders.
- Minimize giveaways. If you must offer a giveaway item, choose something with recycled/organic/fair trade content, and be sure that this is advertised clearly on the item. Pick something that encourages an environmentally-friendly action, such as a reusable coffee mug. Be sure to communicate with any exhibitors or presenters to make sure that they participate in this effort.

¹ You can calculate the carbon footprint of your event by using The Climate Trust's carbon calculator, at http://www.climatetrust.org/content/calculators/Event_Calculator.pdf

² RECs are available from a number of sources, including Native Energy (www.nativeenergy.com) and the New England Wind Fund (<http://www.newenglandwind.org/wind/membership.event.php>).

Greener Choices: Advertising and Printed Materials

- Choose paperless advertising: use websites, emails, and online forums, and utilize electronic RSVPs.
- Create a display-size master agenda instead of providing individual printed agendas to each guest.
- Create downloadable versions of presentations and handouts instead of making photocopies for guests. Communicate with presenters about doing the same.
- For necessary printing, use 100% recycled paper and vegetable-based inks.
- For recurring or annual events, omit dates to facilitate reuse of materials such as banners and signs.

Greener Choices: Food

- Coordinate with a local food pantry or soup kitchen to donate any leftover food; ensure that food is prepared and served in a manner that meets donation standards.
- Provide clean reused/reusable containers for guests to take home leftover food.
- Choose vegetarian meals. Vegetarian foods require less energy and water to produce, and tend to be more ecologically sound.
- Choose locally grown/produced foods and indicate the source of the items.
- Choose organic foods.
- Choose fair trade coffees & teas.
- No individually-packaged foods, including condiments, seasonings, and sugar/creamer. (Use bowls and shakers that can be reused and people can serve themselves. Milk/cream should be in original cartons on ice or in pitcher.)
- No bottled water. Provide pitchers of chilled water and glasses instead.
- Use reusable dishes, cups, and cutlery. (NOTE: Biodegradable plates, cups, and cutlery should be used only when these items will be disposed of in a composting facility – not put into the regular trash bound for a landfill).
- No plastic or wooden coffee stirrers, straws, packets of plastic flatware, or doilies.
- Use reusable and environmentally-preferred centerpieces that guests can take home, i.e. potted organic plants, local/pesticide-free flowers, cut branches, or local/organic fruits.

__ Use small plates when serving a buffet, to discourage food waste.

__ No saran wrap or disposable packaging. Aluminum foil may be used if it is washed and recycled afterwards.

Sources & Resources

Yale Office of Sustainability, “Sustainable Events Guidelines,”
<http://www.yale.edu/sustainability/sustevents.htm>

Bridging The Gap Inc., “Green Event Manual”,
<http://sustainability.ucsb.edu/purchasing/docs/pubs/Bridging-the-Gap-Green-Event-Manual.pdf>

US EPA, “It’s Easy Being Green! A Guide to Planning and Conducting Environmentally Aware Meetings and Events”,
<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/>

Earthwatch Institute, “Resources for Being Green,”
<http://www.earthwatch2.org/sustainability/>

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