



Governor's Energy Office

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the meeting and event industry represents the second most wasteful industry in the US.

The Governor's Energy Office (GEO) is committed to minimizing the impact of all its meetings, workshops and events and uses these guidelines to keep its events as green as possible. Please use this document as a guide to green your events and meetings. Many of these steps are easy and no- or low-cost, too!

Why Go Green?

Making your event or meeting green is cost effective for your organization, and it will build your reputation as an environmentally conscious organization. Plus it's good for the planet.

- Save money by using less.** Something as simple as serving condiments in bulk instead of individual packets can save you at least 50%. Similarly, using water stations instead of bottled water will save money and water and avoid waste. In addition, waste is a major expense to an event's budget. Cutting down on waste will help your bottom line.
- Enhance your organization's positive image.** Your guests will notice the measures you have taken to minimize your event's environmental impact. As environmental issues become more important to the public, demand for appropriate practices across sectors will increase. Make sure you are taking part and reap the benefits of being seen as an organization that is doing the right thing.
- Do the right thing for the planet.** By reducing, reusing, recycling and composting you are avoiding unnecessary use of our limited natural resources. In addition to waste, events produce significant carbon emissions. Consider your event's carbon footprint as you plan, and use this guide in doing so.

Getting Started

The environmental impacts of meetings and events are typically a result of the materials consumed and disposed of before, during, and after the event and transportation to and from the event location. Keep the following general tips in mind throughout your planning:

- Consider the scale of your event to determine how elaborate your greening preparations should be.
- Consider appointing one person whose responsibility is ensuring that all planning choices are made with environmental sustainability in mind.
- Allocate sufficient time and resources to achieve environmental objectives.
- Discuss this guide with all organizers and involved parties at the beginning of the planning process. Make sure that all of event staff, volunteers and vendors are aware of what the green choices and goals are, and train them on procedures when necessary.
- Build sponsor and partnership opportunities with sustainability in mind. Ensure that your sponsors and partners can adhere to the event's greening strategies and assist them in doing so.
- Be relentless in acting on your commitment to minimizing impact. You may have to get creative.
- Some items are highly visible to participants and simple to green, such as the avoidance of disposable products, use of reusable and recyclable materials, and presence of recycling programs. Others, such as venue energy management programs, may be less visible, but are no less important, especially as many of these can actually reduce costs.

- Consider establishing a baseline for resources used in past or similar events and set some goals for reducing those numbers. Make sure your goals are reasonable, and can be tracked. Keep it simple: number of trash bags, number of vehicle miles traveled by participants, etc.
- Get buy in from the highest levels of your organization. Senior managers, directors and board members should publicly commit to the greening process and make it clear to employees and volunteers that the greening effort is an important part of their jobs.
- Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.
- Avoid. Reduce. Offset.
Once you have avoided and reduced, calculate the carbon footprint of the event and offset the emissions through the [Colorado Carbon Fund](#). The calculation should include as much as you can anticipate (transport of materials, staff and equipment, electricity used during the event, etc.) Visit the Colorado Carbon Fund website for an [event carbon calculator](#).

Leading by Example

Educate participants when possible (pre-event, during event, after event) about measures being taken to make the event green. This will educate participants about how they can take part at your event and beyond.

- Include green tips in pre-event correspondence to help participants prepare:
 - Explain the event's goals
 - Alternative transportation information
 - Material reduction tips
 - Tell them what to expect at the event
- Announce the greening measures to participants at opportunities throughout the day:
 - Introduction
 - Breaks
 - Closing
- Tell your participants how it went afterwards
 - Did you meet your goals?
 - How can you do better next time?
 - Congratulate participants and yourselves

The Venue

Consider the following tips when deciding where to hold your event or meeting:

- Do you even need a venue? Can people participate remotely?
 - Consider videoconferencing. If you are a state agency, you have access to the state's videoconferencing equipment located throughout the state. Contact the [Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration](#) for locations.
 - Consider holding a conference call.
 - Use web conferencing tools.
- How will people get there?
 - Select a venue that is accessible by public transportation and/or centrally located.
 - Provide directions to the event using public transportation and/or bicycle routes.
 - Actively promote carpooling, biking, walking, and/or use of public transportation in the event's publicity materials.

- Offer safe and secure bike parking at your venue to encourage biking. Consider providing complimentary valet bike parking and gear checks (like coat checks) for an even better experience.
- Encourage travelers to offset their carbon emissions by purchasing carbon offsets via the [Colorado Carbon Fund](#), or offset travelers' miles as the planning organization.
- Consider setting up a carpooling resource for participants, such as a carpool blog.
- Will the venue support your green decisions?
 - Does the venue have a sustainability coordinator?
 - Does the venue have an environmental policy?
 - What is the venue's recycling/composting strategy?
 - If the venue does not use a waste management service that recycles/composts, will they allow you to bring in a service that will?
 - For smaller events, if there is no other option, handle the recycling/composting yourself.
 - Does the venue purchase carbon offsets?
 - Does the venue have renewable energy on site?
 - Does the venue use energy efficient lighting and appliances where possible?
 - Can the venue ensure that lights and air conditioning will be turned off when rooms are not in use?
- Some venues have already made a commitment to sustainability. Find out if your local area has a green services directory or a green business program. Denver area resources include:
 - [The ReDirect Guide](#)
 - [The Greener Denver Business Program](#)
- Write green language into your venue contract.
 - For example, include a statement in the venue contract to require the venue to commit to "minimizing the environmental impact of the [name of event] ("the event") by:
 - Decreasing the amount of solid waste produced by the event;
 - Reducing energy and water consumption at the event;
 - Minimizing or off-setting harmful emissions resulting from energy consumption associated with the event;
 - Disposing of solid and liquid waste in an environmentally responsible manner; and
 - Eliminating the use of harmful chemicals at or for the event.

Waste Management

Consider the following tips when planning for material use and distribution:

- Limit paper use.
 - Provide event information (advertisements, invitations, announcements, etc.) via electronic means.
 - Provide only online registration options.
 - Encourage participants to bring electronic copies of materials on their computers, PDAs, etc.
 - Limit handouts – provide them on a USB drive and/or make them available on the web.
 - Limit giveaways to items that can be reused or recycled.
 - Make sure partners and participants are handing out printed materials only when absolutely necessary.
- When paper is necessary, make green choices.
 - Use recycled content paper (Chlorine free; 100% recycled content; 50% post-consumer fiber is EPA standard)
 - Print with vegetable-based ink
 - Make double-sided copies
 - Do not use goldenrod or fluorescent-colored paper (it is difficult, to impossible to recycle)
 - Give attendees the option to refuse copies, recycle or return unwanted copies at the end of the event.

- Use flatware, dishes and service utensils that are either reusable (ceramic, glass, silverware, cloth napkins, etc.) or can, and will, be recycled or composted. Styrofoam is unacceptable. Also avoid single-serving containers of anything (condiments, sugar, cream, etc.)
- Ensure that event giveaway items are reusable and recyclable (reusable bags, water bottles, coffee mugs, etc.) Use reusable and/or recycled/recyclable materials in booths, displays, and exhibits.
- Provide recycling/composting receptacles for all waste streams that will be produced throughout the event; ensure that recycling/composting receptacles are located adjacent to, or in place of, trash receptacles and are well marked.
- Consider using “recycling monitors” at waste stations to assist participants with placing materials in the correct receptacles.
- Use name badges that can be re-used and collect them at the end of the event by providing receptacles at all exits from the event.
- When purchasing supplies, ask yourself:
 - Is it necessary?
 - Can it be reused?
 - Can it be recycled or composted?
 - Does it have a recycled content option?
 - Can it be purchased with minimal packaging?

Food and Beverage Service

Consider the following tips when planning for catering or food and beverage service:

- Select a food service vendor that will support your green decisions.
 - Does the vendor have a sustainability coordinator?
 - Does the vendor have an environmental policy?
 - What is the vendor’s recycling/composting strategy?
 - If the vendor does not already recycle and compost, will they be willing to work with a waste management service that does?
 - Does the vendor offset its carbon footprint with renewable energy credits?
 - Does the vendor use energy efficient appliances when possible?
 - Does the vendor use food from locally available sources?
 - Does the vendor use shade grown, organic, fair-trade certified coffee?
 - Can the vendor provide a vegetarian option for participants? What about vegan?
- Some food service vendors have already made a commitment to sustainability. Find out if your local area has a green services directory or a green business program. Denver area resources include:
 - [The ReDirect Guide](#)
 - [The Greener Denver Business Program](#)
- Consider providing food “buffet-style” instead of using individually packaged “boxed” meals or pre-plated quantities. This allows people to take what they will eat.
- Provide recycling/composting receptacles for all waste streams that will be produced throughout the event; ensure that recycling/composting receptacles are located adjacent to, or in place of, all trash receptacles and are well marked.
- Provide watering stations and reusable containers instead of plastic water bottles.

- Consider using “recycling monitors” at trash receptacle stations to assist participants with placing materials in the correct receptacles.
- Always offer a vegetarian option, and consider going completely meatless if possible.
- Work with the caterer and the venue’s waste management service to ensure that all recyclable and compostable materials will be processed appropriately by service staff.
- Encourage participants to take excess food with them (in environmentally preferable packaging) and/or make arrangements to have excess food taken to local food banks or shelters.

***Contact Jennifer Hampton at the Governor’s Energy Office with green event questions and suggestions:
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