

# GREEN EVENT GUIDE



# BGSU's Green Event Guide

## OFFICE OF CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY

Thank you for your interest in making your next campus event a green event! Your efforts support BGSU's overall commitment to carbon neutrality by 2040, as outlined in the Climate Action Plan.

This guide is intended for event planners in the process of hosting sustainable events in a cost-effective manner. Using this guide, events will produce less waste, increase sustainability knowledge, and lower the event's overall environmental impact. For the purposes of this guide, the terms "Sustainable Event" and "Green Event" are used interchangeably. The Green Event Guide furthers our impact as a public university for the public good!

The BGSU Office of Sustainability developed this quick guide to help plan events of any size. Feel free to pick and choose the items that make sense for your event. Let's get started!

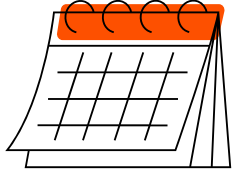
**BGSU**<sup>®</sup>

Office of  
**Campus  
Sustainability**

**BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY**

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# COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION



Start planning your event early! Catering orders through [bgsu.catertrax.com](https://bgsu.catertrax.com) need to be placed a minimum of 2 weeks in advance. To ensure you have plenty of time to make your event as environmentally friendly as possible, allot yourself more than 2 week's planning time.



Avoid unnecessary paper waste and minimize poster printing. Utilize e-marketing strategies like the Campus Update and social media to promote the event. Share handouts, agendas, programs and other materials electronically as much as possible. Consider using only electronic invitations, and request RSVPs through emailed forms or over the phone. Remind attendees not to print out the event invitation or confirmations to save paper.



Encourage attendees in advance to bring their own reusable mug or water bottle for hot beverages and water. Catering also will provide beverage cups that are reused for events. Promote your event as 'green' in marketing materials and invite attendees to be mindful in order to help reach zero/reduced waste goals.



When marketing the event, encourage eco-friendly transportation for attendees such as the Campus Shuttles, carpooling, biking, or walking. Consider holding a raffle or awarding an eco-friendly door prize for those who used one of those modes of transportation in route to your event.



Communicate your green event plans to any organizations that will be present and work with them to source appropriate materials if need be. Ensure their commitment to items that are reusable, compostable, or recyclable.

# FOOD AND CATERING CONT.

For smaller/shorter events, finger foods and hors d'oeuvres reduce or eliminate the need for utensils altogether.

Utilize cloth napkins whenever possible. For other meals other than buffets, there is an extra charge for linen services. Ask Catering Services about costs and inquire if they have a vendor through Chartwells that offers 100% post-consumer recycled napkins

Pair large beverage serving dispensers with reusable containers or compostable cups. Another idea is to serve beverages in pitchers instead of individual servings.

Pump containers are provided for condiments rather than small or individual packets. However, sauce packets come automatically with boxed lunches. Boxed lunches are going to inherently come with more packaging. If your event necessitates these lunches, encourage participants to break down and recycle the boxes.

If hosting a breakfast, creamer and dairy alternatives for coffee can be served in pitchers. Ask about this option, as well as shakers for salt and pepper. Sugar comes in bulk as it is.

Table centerpieces and event decorations are typically reused by catering. If you decide to bring your own decorations, try to source locally and reuse items. Flower arrangements have to be made through a third party such as Klotz Floral Design and Patricia's Petals.



# FOOD AND CATERING

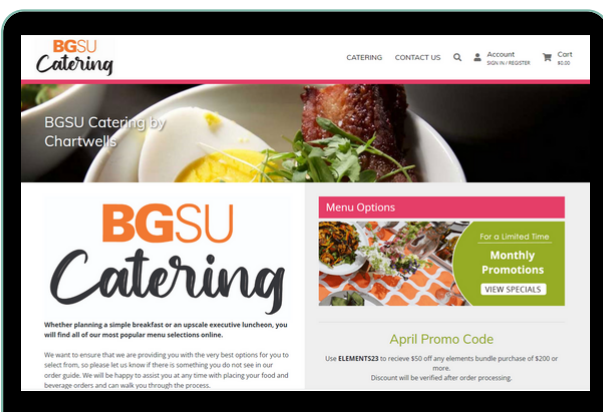
BGSU Catering Services is very willing to work with you to decrease the environmental impact of your event. If hosting an event during the late summer through October, see what seasonal offerings may be available. Choosing a primarily vegetarian, vegan, and/or organic menu is better for our planet than a traditional omnivorous menu.

Choose locally sourced foods whenever possible to reduce the emissions associated with transportation and to support the local economy. BGSU Catering works to source seasonal offerings from local farms when possible; be sure to ask what options may be available when coordinating food with them.

Try to accurately estimate your headcount to ensure BGSU Catering can make appropriate serving portions to avoid unnecessary food waste.

Served Buffets options through CaterTrax automatically have linen napkins and tablecloths. These options come with reusable service ware (plates, cups, utensils, etc.). This is the best eco-friendly option.

BGSU Catering Services offers 100% plant-based and compostable service ware by request at no extra cost. Contact the Office of Campus Sustainability ([greenbg@bgsu.edu](mailto:greenbg@bgsu.edu)) if you'd like to provide composting services at your event. We can work with you to make your event zero-waste.



# VENDORS AND PRIZE IDEAS

## INFORM

Vendors and exhibitors that the event is planned to be as zero-waste or as possible. Be sure to inquire if they are aware of the concept of zero-waste and inform them of best practices if needed.

## CHOOSE

Giveaways that are reusable, made from durable or recycled materials, or consumable. Examples include cloth bags, reusable mugs or water bottles, apparel, gift cards, tickets, memberships, native seeds, USB drives, reusable straws, recycled products, etc. Do a little research and have fun finding products that your guests can use over and over again to lower their carbon footprint.

## DO NOT

Use giveaways that would introduce unwanted waste streams into the event. You could also offer services and experiences as raffle items and giveaways. For example, the Office of Campus Sustainability could offer free bike rentals for an academic year as a raffle item at past events. Prizes like free tutoring, a trip to a museum, a Group X fitness class membership at the Student Recreation Center, or lunch with a distinguished faculty member in your program are just a few of the many ideas you could use to minimize waste generated from material giveaways. Be creative!



# UNEXPECTED SURPRISES & PITFALLS

Convey to everyone involved in the planning process abreast of the zero-waste goal in order to avoid some of the common pitfalls in the implementation of your green event. Communication is key! If someone is unaware of the nature of the event, they may jeopardize the whole event with disposables such as plastic tablecloths or individually wrapped candies.

Staffing the waste stations and copious signage is the best way to educate attendees on the concept of the event and to prevent contamination before it happens. Unstaffed events should withhold the inclusion of any disposables, unless you're willing to sift through the waste.



Waste station monitors guard the integrity of many green events

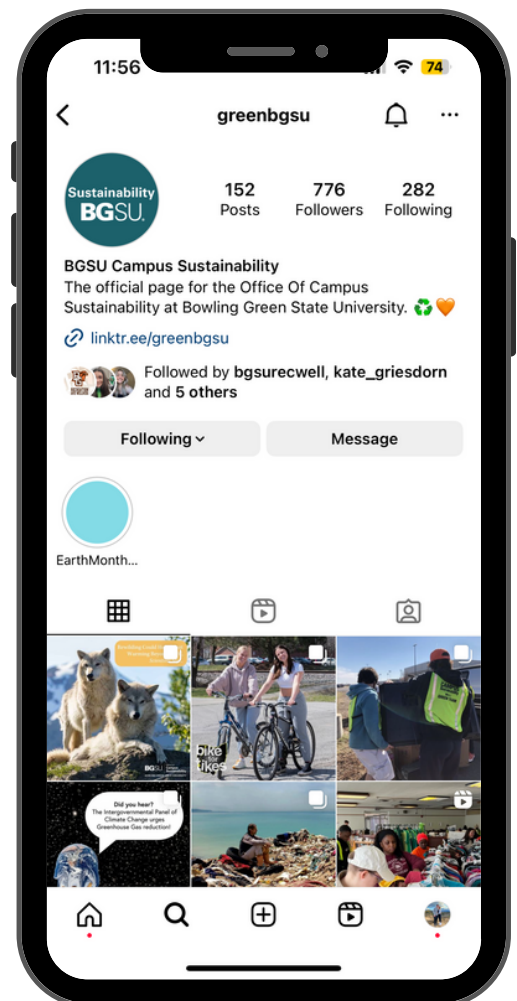


What could have been zero-waste generated around five pounds of trash.

From a recent "zero-waste" picnic at BGSU, here are some examples of what to avoid when hosting your event: 1) raffle tickets which could be recycled but are not compostable ended up in our compost; 2) disposable relish packets; 3) sweetener packets which are lined with wax and need to be landfilled; 4) the buckets of candies which were on picnic tables and filled with candies having the respective wrappers of 5), 6), and 7) that contaminated our compost. These are often small and hard to catch, even with staffed waste stations. 8) Disposable plastic tablecloths added the most volume to the overall trash from the event. Compostable biodegradable parchment and washable linen tablecloths are zero-waste alternatives.

# WASTE AND RECYCLING

- Think about where waste will be generated and review event logistics to evaluate all potential materials in the event waste stream.
- Limit the number of waste stations to help control where waste is disposed. Appoint volunteers to monitor the stations and guide guests for proper composting, recycling, and landfiling (avoid the latter if possible).
- For large zero-waste events, consider using waste education volunteers. A zero waste event should have waste stations staffed by at least one easily identifiable volunteer at all times to help attendees sort waste. Be sure to brief volunteers on composting, recycling and waste prior to the event.
- Not offering or greatly limiting the availability of trash receptacles at the event shifts perceptions that waste is an inherent part of events. Make sure bins have correct liners for the BGSU recycling system – white/clear for recycling and gray/black for trash.
- Reusable items are preferable but if single-use items must be used, work with Catering to provide compostable cups, plates and utensils. They can be composted along with food waste. Contact Campus Sustainability at [greenbg@bgsu.edu](mailto:greenbg@bgsu.edu) to arrange for a composting consultation prior to your event. They will work with you regarding the specific items at your event and whether they can be composted.
- Provide a drop off point near the exit for unwanted event materials that could be reused or recycled such as nametag holders, maps, programs, etc. to be reused or recycled. Develop a plan for tracking and measuring waste generated at the event. Measure results by collecting the volume, weight, or number bags of compost, recyclables and trash generated. Share successes with participants and on social media!





# OTHER SUSTAINABLE IDEAS

Choose reusable banners, decorations and signs. Leave off the date and use them again next year.

Use your green event as an opportunity to educate guests about waste reduction strategies. Plan announcements throughout the event to inform attendees of sustainability goals.

Don't worry if you don't achieve all of your goals. Remember that each effort contributes to BGSU's waste reduction goals and of course, there's always another event to apply what you learned!

## *Stay Connected*

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# Appendix: Green Event Logos to Look For



## AP-Certified Nontoxic

Scientifically certified as safe for humans by ACMI.



## Bio-based/Agricultural Wastes/Rapidly Renewable

PRODUCTS HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED AS  
USDA CERTIFIED BIOBASED PRODUCTS.

Bio-based products are made with renewable alternatives (e.g., corn-based plastics) and rapidly renewable products include agricultural residues as well as crops such as bamboo, cork, wheat straw, and sugarcane waste.



## BPI-certified Compostable

Certification that products meet ASTM D6400 or D6868 standards for biodegradability when composted.



## Cradle to Cradle™

Certifies products to four levels (basic, silver, gold, platinum) based on product life cycle eco impacts.



## ECOLOGO Certified Products

UL ECOLOGO sets standards and certifies products that are eco-preferable across the entire product life cycle.



## EPA Energy Star

Product has been qualified as meeting U.S. EPA and Department of Energy standards for energy efficiency.



## EPA Safer Choice

U.S. EPA Safer Choice program identifies commercial cleaning and maintenance products with improved environmental and human health characteristics.



## EPEAT Electronics Certification

EPEAT qualifies computers and displays, imaging equipment and TVs to three levels (bronze, silver, gold) based on design.



## Fair Trade Certified™

Certified products/companies must buy from certified farms and organizations, pay Fair Trade prices and premiums and submit to rigorous supply chain audits.



## Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC)

FSC certification ensures that products come from responsibly managed forests that provide environmental, social and economic benefit.



### GreenGuard

Furniture certified to reduce indoor air pollution from product off-gassing.



### Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

SFI is a program to certify that paper and wood products come from forests managed to protect the environment.



### Green Seal™

Green Seal certifies products that are holistically designed to be environmentally responsible, including commercial and industrial cleaning products and copy and print paper.



### Recycled

Recycled content is defined as material that has been diverted and recovered from the waste stream. Post-consumer is the portion coming from end consumers. Recycled content does not include manufacturing scraps typically reused in a production process.



### Indoor Advantage Gold

Furniture certified to meet strict standards for reduced indoor air pollution.



### USDA Organic

USDA Organic certification identifies products that meet USDA standards for organic farming practices.



### Level®

Certifies conformance to the ANSI/BIFMA e3 furniture sustainability standard. Products are certified to the levels 1, 2 or 3.



### Certified Vegan

Distributed and recognized globally, the Certified Vegan Logo is a registered trademark, similar in nature to the kosher mark, for products that do not contain animal products or byproducts and that have not been tested on animals. Where you'll find it: Snack foods, packaged drinks.



### Rainforest Alliance Certified™

Product meets comprehensive standards that protect the environment and promote the rights and well-being of workers, their families and communities.