

Cardinal Green Event Guidelines

A practical guide to planning sustainable
events of all sizes at Stanford University



**SUSTAINABLE
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Introduction

A recognized leader in campus sustainability, Stanford University continually strives to integrate sustainable practices into all aspects of campus and community life. From infrastructure, such as buildings and energy, to services, such as dining and transportation, we are taking steps as a campus to reduce our carbon footprint and ecological impact.

Stanford’s sustainable leadership extends to all aspect of campus life—including planning green events.

By implementing green practices at both large campus events (such as conferences and ceremonies), as well as small events (such as meetings and dinners), the Stanford event planning community seeks to maximize resources, reduce waste, and offer an example of environmental stewardship. For more information, please visit the [Sustainable Stanford website](#).

Purpose and Recommended Use of this Guide

This guide aims to provide easy-to-follow tips on making campus events as sustainable as possible, taking into account the best practices of events hosted at Stanford as well as best practices in this evolving field. This guide does not represent requirements for campus events, nor is there a certification for events that successfully follow its guidelines. Instead, these are merely recommendations for improving the sustainability of campus events. Questions and suggestions can also be shared with campus event planners by emailing cardinalgreenevent@lists.stanford.edu.



How to Plan a Cardinal Green Event

Planning your first Cardinal Green Event can be fun and easy if you are well prepared from the beginning. Follow these steps to ensure a seamless transition from conventional to sustainable events for your department.

Step One: Contact the Office of Sustainability

First time planning a green event? Office of Sustainability provides free consultation to campus departments planning all types and sizes of events. For more information, visit the [Cardinal Green Event Program website](#).

Step Two: Develop an Event Plan

Sustainable events may require additional planning and forethought, so it is important to begin early. Office of Sustainability is happy to help you through the planning process, or you can complete it yourself, using the Cardinal Green Events Checklist on page 18.

During your initial planning, determine what level of green event implementation is best for your team. Do you want to completely rebuild your department's planning policies, or simply improve a few sustainability aspects of a specific event? Once you have decided the scope of your implementation, request approval from your supervisor. Depending on the existing level of sustainability in your event, a Cardinal Green Event may require additional budget.

Step Three: Identify Vendors and Resources

Seek out vendors and supplies that fit your green event strategy. A growing list of staff-recommended vendors can be found in the [Cardinal Green Office Resource Library](#).



Step Four: Organize your Budget

Once you have confirmed your vendors, finalize a budget that incorporates your sustainability goals and accounts for any changes in cost. Additional costs can often be negated by reduced budget for print communications and non-essential decorations.

Step Five: Prepare for Your Event

Office of Sustainability is available for consultation throughout your planning process. Email becardinalgreen@stanford.edu with your specific question and a staff person will reply within two business days. You can also ask your question to fellow event planners on campus by emailing the Cardinal Green Event listserv, at cardinalgreenevent@lists.stanford.edu.

Step Six: Host your Event

While your event is taking place, observe how your attendees interact with the sustainable features you implemented. Take pictures during the event to document areas that worked well and areas that could be improved in future events.

Step Seven: Share your Cardinal Green Event Outcomes

Office of Sustainability coordinates a growing database of green event best practices at Stanford. After your event, Office of Sustainability will schedule a quick, 20 minute phone call to debrief on your event. Examples of questions include: Was additional funding needed to make your event green? Did you receive any feedback about your green event features from your attendees? Did you work with any great vendors that others on campus should know about? What other resources could Office of Sustainability provide to make green event planning easier?

Outreach and Communications

Every event involves some level of communication in both planning and implementation. With forethought, proper communication can be carried out without large amounts of wasted paper, ink, and resources.

Step 1: Rethink Printing and Mailing

Printing can be expensive and time consuming. Reduce your paper use and save on budget by taking advantage of electronic resources for invitations, registration, event program, advertising, and updates. Most of these communications can be completed through an event website, online invitation programs, social media networks, email listservs, and campus publications. As the event nears, distribute digital copies of handouts and only offer paper handouts upon request.

Step 2: Incorporate Sustainability Messaging into Event Communications

Encourage attendees, exhibitors, and speakers to support your green event by prominently featuring your sustainability goals in event communications. The [Cardinal Green Event Resource Library](#) offers digital logos, informational signage, and prepared event announcements that you can customize for your event needs.

Step 3: If you Must, Print Wisely

If printing cannot be avoided, follow these Cardinal Green tips:

- Design reusable print materials by avoiding one-time dates and slogans.
- Laminate your reusable items to keep them in good condition for years to come.
- Print double-sided on recycled paper.
- Use soy-based inks.
- Reduce print size on all materials from full page to half and quarter sheets.
- Print large format signage on cardboard stock instead of foam core.
- Print addresses directly on envelopes instead of using address labels.
- Print internal planning documents on paper that has already been used on one side.



Food Choices and Catering

The food you serve, and how you serve it, can have a significant impact on your event's overall budget and sustainability. Follow these guidelines to avoid unsustainable foods and excess costs.

Step 1: Make Sustainable Food Choices

Menus developed around these suggestions will help make your Cardinal Green Event great for attendees and the environment.

- Offer vegetarian and vegan food choices to all attendees as part of the main menu.
- Serve dishes with seasonal, local, and organic ingredients.
- Serve only cage-free, free-range, or humanely-raised meats and dairy.
- Serve fish that comes from sustainable fish supplies. Use the [Monterey Bay Seafood Watch](#) for guidelines.
- Serve only fair trade coffee, teas, bananas, and chocolate.

Step 2: Request Sustainable Serving Methods

Follow these best practices to minimize your catering waste.

- Serve beverages in bulk containers using reusable or compostable glasses.
- Serve meals buffet style with foods that don't require utensils or individual packaging.
- Only offer reusable or BPI Certified compostable plates, glasses, cutlery, stir sticks, platters, and serving utensils.

Cucumber, Tomato, Avocado
and Pea Shoots (vegan)

Step 3: Pick a Catering Group that Supports your Sustainability Goals

Reduce the event's carbon footprint event by hiring a regional caterer that specializes in local and sustainable food options. Use the Cardinal Green Catering Guidelines on page 22 to clearly explain your needs to your caterer.

Step 4: Donate Leftovers to Those in Need

In many cases, leftover food can be donated to local organizations. For more information on food donation, visit the [Cardinal Green Events Resource Library](#).

Is this compostable?

Not everything advertised as biodegradable should be placed in Stanford's compost bins. When purchasing service ware for your event, only purchase items that are certified compostable by Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI). BPI certification ensures that your products will biodegrade completely, quickly, and safely when sent to the Newby Island Composting Center. A list of BPI Certified service ware vendors is available in the [Cardinal Green Event Resource Library](#).



Reducing Waste

Events of all sizes produce waste. Reducing landfill and collecting recycling and composting are easy, highly visible ways to enhance the sustainability of your event.

Step 1: Purchase Wisely

- Be sure to consider the waste that will be generated during each part of your event. Determine if that waste is recyclable or compostable by referring to [Stanford's Zero Waste Guidelines](#).
- Only offer giveaway items that are recyclable, reusable, and/or created from recycled materials. For a list of sustainable giveaway vendors, visit the [Cardinal Green Events Resource Library](#).
- Purchase reusable nametag holders and collect them at the end of events to be reused.
- Avoid single-use decorations. Instead, try to use dried flowers, live plants, or fruit arrangements. Use cloth or sturdy plastic tablecloths instead of disposable tablecloths. If purchasing cut flowers, look for organically and locally grown plants. For a list of sustainable decoration vendors, visit the [Cardinal Green Events Resource Library](#).

Step 2: Order Recycling, Composting, and Landfill Bins

Recycling, composting, and landfill bins can be ordered through [PSSI/Stanford Recycling's website](#). Recycling and composting bins cost less than landfill bins, helping reduce the overall cost of your Cardinal Green Event.

Step 3: Help Guests Properly Sort their Waste

Stanford's waste sorting system is as unique as the campus itself. Help your attendees sort their waste properly by providing adequate signage at every bin. PSSI offers [customizable signage](#) in a variety of sizes and file formats. For larger events, recruit volunteers to staff waste stations and help guests sort their waste.



Accommodations and Transportation

Travel accounts for one of the largest portions of carbon emissions in the U.S. Fortunately, Stanford offers excellent alternative transportation options.

Step 1: Suggest Hotels Served by Transit

Encourage visitors to find accommodations close to campus to minimize their daily commute.

- On Campus—<http://visit.stanford.edu/plan/stay.html>.
- Stanford Guest House—guesthouse.stanford.edu/.
- Near campus—Contact commuteclub@stanford.edu if you would like information on transit serving the hotel(s) you are considering.

Step 2: Schedule your Event Outside of Peak-Commute Hours

Make trips to and from Stanford less stressful for attendees and reduce the environmental impact of vehicle traffic by scheduling your events at times that will minimize peak-hour trips:

- Avoid arrivals between 7:30 a.m. and 9 a.m.
- Avoid departures between 4:30 p.m. and 6 p.m.



Step 3: Offer green options to, from, and around campus

Encourage alternative transportation options by including information in your event communications:

Airport Transportation

Parking & Transportation Services (P&TS) offers detailed information on alternative transportation options to and from regional airports on its website, <http://transportation.stanford.edu/airport>.

Regional Transit

A full list of local public transportation options, including VTA, SamTrans, Caltrain, BART, Muni, and more, can be found at <http://transportation.stanford.edu/transit>.

Stanford's Free Marguerite Shuttle

Stanford's free Marguerite buses travel around campus and the local community, and also connect to regional transit. Since start and end times vary by line, check specific Marguerite schedules at <http://transportation.stanford.edu/marguerite/schedules.php>.

Charter Bus Services

P&TS offers convenient charter services at below-market rates to the campus community. For more information or to make a reservation, go to <http://transportation.stanford.edu/charterbus>.

Bicycling

Stanford alumni (and their guests 16 and older) can borrow a bike from the Alumni Center front desk for free. All visitors can rent bikes on a daily or weekly basis from the Campus Bike Shop, <http://www.campusbikeshop.com>.

Cars When Guests Need Them

Stanford offers cars when you need them, so visitors can go without a car the rest of the time.

- Zipcar—Stanford has one of the largest university Zipcar programs in the nation, with more than a dozen Zipcar locations at Stanford. Most Zipcars at Stanford are fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles. Rates start at \$7.50 per hour and include gas and insurance. Learn more at <http://zipcar.stanford.edu>.
- Enterprise Rent-A-Car—Enterprise is conveniently located on campus and is open seven days a week, offering discounted rates for Stanford affiliates. Learn more at <http://transportation.stanford.edu/enterprise>.

Recommendations for Specific Event Types

Small Meetings

Hundreds of small meetings take place on campus every week. Green efforts for one meeting may seem low impact, but sustainable actions add up quickly at the campus scale.

Examine Alternatives to Face-to-Face Meetings

- Meeting in-person requires transportation and has associated environmental costs, while meeting remotely can be easier, less time consuming, and more eco-friendly.
- [BlueJeans](#) offers free, remote conferencing options to all Stanford employees.

Adapt Sustainable Event Planning to a Smaller Scale

- **Outreach and Communications** - Avoid print handouts by emailing information to participants prior to meeting and/or project documents on screen.
- **Food Choices and Catering** - Identify locally-owned catering vendors that offer sustainable menus for smaller groups. Avoid ordering bottled water and beverages served in single use plastic containers. If your office regularly hosts meetings with refreshments, consider investing in reusable water pitchers or urns.
- **Reduce Waste** - Remember to recycle and compost at your small event. If your meeting budget cannot afford service from PSSI, take advantage of the compost and recycling bins in your building. Occupants in buildings without internal compost bins can collect food waste in a paper bag and take it to an outdoor compost collection site, often located nearby in a complex's waste corral.
- **Accommodations and Transportation** - Instead of driving to a meeting across campus, ride your bike or take advantage of Stanford's Marguerite Shuttle.

Exhibits and Expos

If your green event includes an exhibit hall or an expo fair, require exhibitors to support your sustainability goals within their booths.

Develop Sustainable Vendor Policies

- Require a "pack-in, pack-out" policy with exhibitors to ensure they leave with everything they brought to the event.
- Create a check-out procedure for exhibitors/vendors that requires event staff to check their areas for discarded materials or waste.
- Only provide tablecoths upon request.

Influence Vendor's Promotional Items

- Ask vendors to reduce paper use by distributing half or quarter sheet flyers. Or, eliminate paper flyers entirely by collecting visitor's email addresses to receive post-event emails about specific products.
- Only allow vendors to distribute reusable promotional items. For a list of sustainable giveaway vendors, visit the [Cardinal Green Events Resource Library](#).
- Remind vendors that plastic film packaging can be recycled in paper recycling bins on campus. Be sure to place these bins in vendor areas during set up times.





Appendices

Cardinal Green Events Planning Checklist 18

Cardinal Green Events Catering Guidelines 22



Planning Checklist

How to Plan a Green Event

- Contact the Office of Sustainability to schedule a free Cardinal Green Event consultation
- Develop an event plan
- Request approval from department leadership for additional budget, as needed
- Confirm vendors and resources
- Prepare a budget, taking into consideration any cost changes
- Prepare for and host event
- Share event outcomes with Office of Sustainability

Outreach and Communications

- Utilize electronic communication resources instead of paper communications for invitations, registration, event programs, handouts, and follow up event emails
- Notify event attendees, exhibitors, and speakers of Stanford's green event standards through pre-event emails and event signage
- Utilize responsible printing techniques when printing is necessary:
 - Design reusable print materials, avoiding one-time dates and slogans
 - Utilize double-sided printing for promotional materials and handouts
 - Use recycled paper and soy-based inks for offset printing
 - Print banners and signage on sustainable materials and/or on materials that can be reused
 - Reduce print size on all materials from full page to half and quarter sheets

Food Choices and Catering

- Offer vegetarian and vegan food choices to all attendees as part of the main menu
- Serve dishes with seasonal, local, and organic ingredients
- Serve only cage-free, free-range, or humanely raised meats and dairy
- Serve fish that comes from sustainable fish supplies
- Serve only fair trade coffee, teas, bananas, and chocolate
- Serve beverages in bulk containers using reusable or compostable glasses
- Serve meals buffet style with foods that don't require utensils or individual packaging
- Only offer reusable or BPI Certified compostable plates, glasses, cutlery, stir sticks, platters, and serving materials
- Choose a catering group that supports your sustainability goals
- Donate leftover food to local organizations

Reducing Waste

- Utilize reusable, recyclable, or compostable decorations and centerpieces
- Distribute environmentally conscious giveaways or gifts
- Collect nametag holders at the end of the event to be reused
- Order recycling at the event through PSSI
- Order composting at the event through PSSI
- Promote recycling and composting at the event through clear signage and announcements
- Place bins in high-traffic areas during the entire event, including set up and take down
- Properly label waste bins using signage available in the [Cardinal Green Events Resource Library](#)
- Utilize volunteers to help direct attendees to recycle and compost



Event Transportation and Accommodations

- Recommend nearby hotels served by transit
- Schedule event outside of peak commute times
- Include information about sustainable transportation options on your website and in pre-event emails
 - Bay Area transit to and from airports
 - Stanford Marguerite and charter services
 - Bicycle (including bicycle valet parking)
 - Parking (contact P&TS to arrange for parking)
 - Zipcar and Enterprise Rent-A-Car at Stanford

Small Meetings

- When possible, examine alternatives to face-to-face meetings
- Utilize telephone or BlueJeans conference services
- Minimize printing of materials by emailing information prior to meeting
- Use locally-owned catering that offers sustainable options for smaller groups
- Order recycling and composting service from PSSI, or dispose of waste in building's compost bin

Exhibits, Expos

- Require a “pack-in, pack-out” policy with exhibitors
- Ask that only reusable promotional giveaway items are distributed
- Encourage vendors to reduce paper handouts
- Ensure paper recycling and film plastics recycling are available for vendor areas
- Only provide tablecloths upon request

Need help planning your event?

Office of Sustainability provides free consultation to campus departments planning events of any size.

Contact us at:

becardinalgreen@stanford.edu



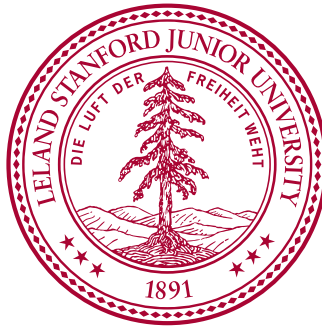
Cardinal Green Event Catering Guidelines

Finding a sustainable caterer is easy when you ask the right questions. Before you sign any contract, make sure your caterer can agree to the following green event guidelines:

- Dishes must be focused around fresh, seasonal, local, organic ingredients
- Only cage-free, free-range, or humanely raised meats and dairy can be served
- Vegan and vegetarian meal selections must be sought-after options that are available to everyone
- All fish should be approved by the [Monterey Bay Seafood Watch](#)
- All coffee, tea, bananas, and chocolate must be fair trade products
- No bottled or imported water can be served
- Service ware must be reusable or compostable, including plates, glasses, cutlery, stir sticks, platters, and serving utensils
- Use water glasses and bulk containers to serve water, iced tea, or lemonade
- No individually wrapped items, such as ketchup, mayo, mustard, mints, salt, pepper, or sugar. Use bulk containers for condiments instead
- No disposable table centerpieces. Instead, use items that can be taken home or reused (e.g., potted plants or flowers, local flowers, candles, fruits)
- Dishes must be served “family style” to avoid excess packaging (e.g., sandwich platters, salad bowls, cookies, chips)
- Serve bite-size and finger foods to avoid excess utensils.
- Use smaller plates to reduce the amount of food taken and not eaten
- Bartenders must recycle glass, plastic, and aluminum containers
- Leftover food must be donated to a food bank or shelter



Stanford University



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