

# Event Planning

**Where to Start?** Set goals and ways of evaluating your success. Here are some tips and suggestions on planning a sustainable event, based on a [publication](#) from the Sustainable Communities Network.

## PRE-EVENT PREPARATIONS

- Talk to the members of your planning committee about committing to a sustainable event. Ensure that all members of the team are included in the process and are committed to hosting a sustainable event.
- Form a green team to ensure that sustainable event practices are integrated.
- Set goals and indicators to evaluate your success. Use the tips below to establish a “greening your event” framework that will best suit your event.

## VENUE SELECTION

- If possible book a site that features sustainable practices. Ask the following questions:
  - » *Is the building a green building?*
  - If your event is on campus you may wish to try holding it in one of UBC’s green buildings: CK Choi Building, the Liu Institute for Global Issues or the Life Sciences Building.
    - Find out more or information on these buildings’ [green features](#).
    - To book them, contact:
      - CK Choi [contact](#)
      - Liu Institute for Global Issues [contact](#)
      - Life Sciences Institute [contact](#)
  - » *Does the venue have composting and recycling facilities in place?*
  - For events at UBC Point Grey, UBC Waste Management provides composting and recycling services for events.
- For both on campus and off campus events, ask the facility manager or event coordinator if they are willing to work with your planning group to improve the site’s environmental performance in preparation for the event.

## TRANSPORTATION

- If possible, offer attendees the choice to attend the event via videoconferencing.
- Choose a site that is accessible by public transit, walking and biking.
  - If applicable, arrange a shuttle and/or carpooling service on the day of the event so your participants don’t have to drive (see the [TREK website](#) for transportation tips). Remember to publicize all transit options in your outreach materials.

- If possible, provide free passes for public transit.
- To promote cycling to your event, consider using BEST’s Bicycle Valet service. The [Bicycle Valet](#) allows guests to park their bikes for free in a secured area. Panniers, bags and helmets can be left with the valet.
- Give participants appropriate discounts or incentives (eg: door prizes, the chance to enter a draw) for biking or transiting. Participants must show proof of alternative transport to receive the incentive.
- [Register](#) your event with Jack Bell Rideshare to promote and facilitate carpooling to your event. Call 604 879 RIDE (7433) to post your event.
- If your budget allows, offset any travel related greenhouse gas emissions associated with your event. Ask participants where they are traveling from in the registration to help you determine the total number of kilometers traveled to your event.
- Purchase offsets from [Offsetters](#). This local company was founded by two UBC professors, Drs. James Tansey and Hadi Dowlatabadi and offers third party certified offsets that support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

## ACCOMMODATION

Provide event guests with information about hotels that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices through [Green Key](#). Click on the map to find Green Key certified hotels in Canada.

- If possible, promote hotels which are within walking distance of the event venue.
- For more information about green hotel options, see [Section 2.1](#).

Photo credit: Javier Landaeta



# Event Planning continued

## PUBLICITY AND REGISTRATION

- Spread the word about your event using email, listserves, websites and other electronic media to minimize paper use. [Vertical Response](#), [Emma](#) and [Constant Contact](#) are great resources for e-invites.
- Use email for communication with your presenters.
- Provide easy to use online registration at [Eventbrite](#).
- Post your event on [UBC Events](#).
- Publicize your commitment to sustainability in your outreach materials and your communications with potential donors, funders, presenters, participants, etc. Market your sustainable efforts.
- Create a web page to inform attendees of your sustainability initiatives for the event and let them know in advance what they can do to help make this a green event.



Photo credit: Javier Landaeta

## Too much stuff to carry?

An easy and interesting way to transport event materials is with a TREK office cart. The carts can be used biking or walking and carry up to 100lbs. You can borrow them for up to three days for free.

Contact the TREK office at 604-827-8735 to book your cart.

## MATERIALS REDUCTION STRATEGY

### Reduce or Reuse:

Always aim to reduce the amount of materials at your event, or reuse materials from a previous event rather than purchase new materials. If new materials must be purchased (eg: signage, giveaways and gifts), consider how they can be reused in the future.

- Strive toward a paperless event.
- Use PowerPoint presentations.
- Ask event participants to leave their contact information so that you can send them electronic copies of the presentation and handouts.
- Provide reused nametags and lanyards or ask participants to bring a nametag from a previous event or conference.
- Have an on-site drop off for attendees to return materials that can be re-used, such as nametags, lanyards and pens.
- Aim to produce signage that can be re-used at future events. Eliminate specific event information (dates, times, location etc.) from your signage so you can reuse these materials again.
- Consider using blackboards and chalk or whiteboards with non-toxic dry erase markers for breakout sessions, workshops or re-usable signage.
- Eliminate unnecessary conference or meeting packages by asking event participants to bring their own notebook and pen. This will not only save resources but will help lower event costs.
- For tips on reducing materials related to catering, see *Page 12*.

## SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING CHOICES

- If you need to make posters or event handouts, print on recycled paper that has already been used on one side. Alternatively, use recycled paper with a high post-consumer recycled content and follow the printing guidelines in this guide see *Page 20*.
- If you need to purchase additional nametags, choose those that have been created using recycled plastics.
- If conference packages are essential, order green meeting products from the UBC Bookstore. All products meet Supply Management's Principles of Sustainability. To order, contact Roland Porter at the UBC Bookstore Custom Imprint Service, 604 822 5818.
- Select live native plants as centerpieces and event decoration. Give them away at the end of the event to participants.

# Event Planning *continued*

## CATERING

See page 12.

## GIFTS AND GIVEAWAYS

- Eliminate giveaways or ensure the items are useful and will not end up as waste. Choose gifts and prizes that are:
  - locally made
  - environmentally preferable
  - ethically made and sweat shop free
  - consumable or edible
  - experiential
  - have local significance
- Consider gifts that are not items: charity donations in the recipient's name, movie passes or gift certificates, are some ideas.
- Order from vendors that the UBC Bookstore approves. The bookstore can source products for you from companies like [Fairware](#), that specialize in sustainable and ethical sourcing. To find sustainable giveaway options visit the bookstore or Supply Management's sustainability partners page.

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Ensure high numbers of paper, bottle/can and plastic recycling bins are placed throughout the event venue.
- If possible, place composting bins close to food and coffee stations.
- For events at UBC Point Grey, UBC Waste Management makes every effort to provide recycling and composting bins for events. Fill out their event [form](#) online by clicking *Special Jobs* and follow the link under Recycling and Composting for Special Events.
- Create easy to understand, visual and effective signs to encourage proper waste disposal.
- Consider having volunteers staffed at key recycling/composting bins during meal breaks to minimize waste contamination.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Announce the impact of your sustainability initiatives post-event to event participants and event sponsors to ensure accountability. You can measure success against the set of goals and indicators developed pre-event.
- Provide feedback to building managers, caterers, event coordinators and other service providers. What worked? What needs improvement? Your feedback will help others to make future events more sustainable.

## Looking for ethical swag?

UBC Bookstore implemented a no sweat policy in 2004 in collaboration with Oxfam and the Alma Mater Society. All clothing for sale at the UBC Bookstore is purchased from vendors who employ fair labour practices, are environmentally responsible and are law abiding.

Visit the Bookstore [website](#) for more information.



Photo: Amanda Fetterly



Photo: Javier Landaeta