

# Sustainable Event Tips

Your effort supports U-M's  
waste reduction goal:

Reduce landfill waste  
by 40% by 2025



## HOST A GREEN EVENT!

### Location of the Event

- Is meeting in person necessary?  
Consider videoconferencing!
  - <https://its.umich.edu/communication/videoconferencing>
- Choose a location accessible by public transit or with bike storage.
- Arrange for carpooling. Gauge interest with a simple Google Form before the event.

### Promoting the Event

- Digital promotion is cheaper, more effective, and saves paper!
- Promote event through:
  - ITS Digital Signage
  - Student Organization Resource Center (SORC)
  - Canvas ad
- List the event on [events.umich.edu](https://events.umich.edu).
- Use sidewalk chalk.
- Advertise the sustainable efforts you are making when promoting the event.
- Avoid or minimize the use of fliers, handouts, and posters.

### Decorations

- Commercial flowers have a large carbon footprint. Consider live potted plants as decoration and give them away at the end of the event.
- Consider using chalkboards or changeable letter boards to decorate and provide signage. This allows you to change the message for different events.
- Avoid balloons, or at least make sure they are disposed of in the landfill and not let go (which can harm wildlife).
- If possible, use signs with generic phrases ("this way") or arrows to direct people. These signs can be reused for later events!



### Food and Beverages

- Try to purchase in-season, organic local food when possible. The food will taste fresher and have a lower carbon footprint than food purchased from farther away!
- Reduce your carbon footprint with meatless options.
- Let the caterer know you are working toward a zero waste event and ask for their support. Ask for bulk food and reduced or compostable packaging. Specifically state that plastic utensils are not wanted. Check out our Zero Waste Event guide for details.
- Consider these options when serving water:
  - Pitchers/dispensers
  - Borrow jugs from the Office of Campus Sustainability
  - Quench Buggy (for outdoor events) (\$)
  - Potable water hook-ups
  - Don't fill water cups before the event to avoid wasting water
- Students can request free compostable serviceware for their on-campus events at:

[ocs.umich.edu/zero-waste](https://ocs.umich.edu/zero-waste)



# Sustainable Event Tips continued

*That's right, we have even more tips to share!*

## Giveaways/Favors

- Reconsider having giveaways in the first place. They are often thrown away or go unused.
- Give digital swag, such as discount codes, gift cards, or downloadable freebies.
- If using physical gifts, opt for:
  - Food, especially in compostable or minimal packaging
  - Items that produce little to no waste when their useful life is done (such as seed packets or small plants in compostable pots)
  - Reusable items like high-quality water bottles or tote bags (however, life-cycle analysis shows that these items must be used hundreds or thousands of times to be more sustainable than disposables — and most people already have enough)
- Unwrap packaged items (other than food) before the event to make sure the waste goes in the appropriate bin.
- Give away decorations, such as floral arrangements, if they won't be reused.

**Sustainable events generate less waste, use less energy, and raise awareness of sustainability—supporting our campus sustainability goals.**

## Logistics

- Use e-tickets for check-in.
- Collect and reuse lanyards, badge holders, ribbons and other materials.
- Use apps, QR codes, and websites to save paper. Project the agenda and important info on the wall.
- If you must print, use sizes that conserve paper, such as half-sheets. Try to use recycled content paper.
- Make sure to get an accurate count of attendees so you have the correct amount of supplies.
- Projectors burn energy and generate a lot of heat. Turn them off when not in use to save energy.

## At the Event

- Effectively communicate to guests the sustainable measures being taken at the event. Explain what zero waste means, tell people which items go where, and explain why we are using sustainable practices.
- Train staff and volunteers before the event to properly manage compostable and recyclable waste.

## After the Event

- Report back to event participants on the successful sustainable efforts from the event, such as the amount composted.
- Take photos and share with us at: [zerowaste@umich.edu](mailto:zerowaste@umich.edu)

