

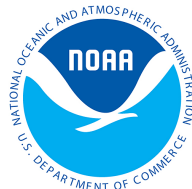
Sustainable Meeting Guide

Purpose: To supply recommendations and best practices for environmental awareness and health, wellness and safety when holding a meeting or hosting a conference.

Benefit: Sustainable practices to protect the environment.

Contents:

- ❖ Material and Meeting Space
- ❖ Transportation
- ❖ Food and Beverage
- ❖ Recycling and Waste Management
- ❖ Health, Wellness & Safety



Materials and Meeting Space

Meeting Space

- Consider meeting outside to save on heating, cooling or electrical needs.
- If meeting inside, set the temperature to limit heating and cooling needs or use natural air flow to heat or cool the space.
- Meet in a LEED certified building if able
- Turn off lights during the meeting if there is ambient natural light.
- Unplug computers and other equipment and turn off lights when not in use.
- Turn off lights and unplug equipment after the meeting.
- If offering food during the meeting, meet somewhere with a full kitchen to make food prep and storage, and cleaning of reusable dinnerware and drinkware easier.

Attendee List of Items to Bring

- Computer, phone, or tablet to access virtual materials during the meeting.
- Name tag. (Have a few reusable ones one hand.)
 - [Chalkboard name tags](#)
- Writing utensils and notebook.
 - Encourage the use of a digital notebook or using recycled or scrap paper for taking notes.
- Water bottle, mug, napkin, straw, and utensils if food is being offered.
 - A reusable to go container in case there are leftovers.

Agenda Items

- Send agenda materials before the meeting so attendees have access to them virtually during the meeting. They can print if they want, but it is discouraged. Avoid offering paper copies if possible. If you must print, print on recycled paper and print double sided.
- Have the agenda and other meeting materials up on a large screen during the meeting for everyone to see or use a digital conference app for the agenda. A dry erase or chalk board can also be used to show the agenda.
- Add a stewardship initiative to the meeting.
 - Take a break to pick up trash outside the meeting space.
 - After eating, make sure all recyclables are rinsed and dried before placing in the recycling bin.
 - Incorporate a sustainability learning program into the meeting.

Capturing Ideas

- Designate a note taker who will share a digital copy of meetings notes. (Reduces need for everyone to take their own notes on paper.)
- Use dry erase boards or an online platform to capture ideas instead of the single-use large paper pads.
- Encourage use of digital notepads (getrocketbook.com).

Overnight Meeting

- Have people bring their own toiletries in reusable containers so they are not using the single waste bottles or stay at a hotel that offers toiletries in the refillable containers.
- Ask attendees to place their “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door so their room is not serviced. Ask the hotel if they offer money off your stay or reward points if you do not have your room cleaned during your stay.

Meeting Swag or Giveaways

- Avoid if possible or buy local products that are made sustainably from local businesses.
- Instead of giving swag items to attendees donate money to a non-profit with the money saved.
- Offer experiences instead of items.

Fieldtrips

- Provide trips that offer physical activities such as walking or biking to avoid driving.
- Carpool if possible or use public transportation to transport people.
- Provide water in a large cooler and ask people to refill their bottles instead of using single-use plastic disposable bottles.
- Offer food family style to reduce plastic packaging per meal.

Future Meetings

- Develop a hybrid meeting schedule of in person and virtual meetings.
- Learn from each meeting and determine how to make the next meeting more sustainable.
- Share your successes and lessons learned with others.
- Reach out to zero waste event planners or consult zero waste planning guides to guide you during the process.
- Start planning early so you have time to offer sustainable alternatives.

Transportation

In 2019, [transportation accounted for 29% of greenhouse gas emissions](#) in the United States. Light-duty vehicles, such as passenger cars and light-duty trucks, contributed to 58% of the transportation sector's emissions; aircraft, buses, and rail only make up about 17% of emissions combined.

Walk or Bike

- If your meeting or conference is within walking distance, try walking or riding your bike rather than driving. These methods have little to no impact on the environment and you can get some exercise as well!

Carpool with others

- Because passenger cars and light-duty trucks (such as SUVs and minivans) used about 117 billion gallons of fossil fuel in 2019 ([epa.gov/sites/production/files/2021-06/documents/420f21049.pdf](#)), carpooling with others is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint.
- See if any of your coworkers are attending the same meeting or conference and ride together. Everyone can chip in on gas and you can avoid extra vehicles on the road.

Public transportation (buses, ride shares, etc.)

- Utilizing public transportation like buses save a lot of fossil fuels. In 2019, buses only made up about 0.1 billion gallons of gasoline used ([epa.gov/sites/production/files/2021-06/documents/420f21049.pdf](#)). If possible, try taking the bus to your meeting or share a ride in an Uber or Lyft to reduce emissions.

Provide online options for participation

- Joining conferences and meetings virtually can drastically reduce your emissions. If the average person drives 50 miles one way for a conference, they can create up to 44 pounds of CO₂ emissions ([epa.gov/greenvehicles](#)).
- While internet usage does have an impact ([bbc.com/future](#)), the pros of virtual attendance far outweigh the cons.

Ensure hybrid formats are of a quality to reduce transport impact of participants who would opt to participate virtually

- Develop a guide for best hybrid meetings practices for each platform (Zoom, Skype, Teams, etc.).
- Tips for hybrid meeting ([hbr.org/2021/06/what-it-takes-to-run-a-great-hybrid-meeting](#)):
 - Update audio so virtual participants don't have trouble hearing or participating
 - Explore other videoconferencing technologies
 - Host conferences from participant perspective
 - Set up screens so the participants are "life sized"

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- Do a trial run of all tech before the meeting
- Organize your meeting to include everyone
- Provide a facilitator to keep the discussion equal between in-person and virtual attendees
- euro.who.int

Website/link to identify carbon footprint and cost savings when using vehicles (vs. meeting virtually)

- anthropocenemagazine.org
- Hour meeting vs. three-hour meetings

Food and Beverage

First decide, will food and drink be included as part of the meeting?

- Is it feasible for attendees to bring their own food? Can you provide cold storage if attendees bring their own food?
- Is a variety of food for purchase accessible within walking distance of the meeting site? Can attendees get lunch expenditures reimbursed if it is not part of the meeting fee?

If food and drink will be included, consider the following:

- Use surveys on the registration form to ensure you order the right amount of food that matches attendee preferences and dietary restrictions
 - Consider an option that permits participants to indicate that they will bring their own lunch, even if food is offered by the organizer
- Consider the carbon footprint and nutrition of the food chosen for centralized menus. Consider vegetarian and local options as appropriate
- Decide how excess food will be handled and organize an implementation strategy
 - Boxed meals may feature more packaging materials, but can help unused food to be donated or used by others more easily
 - Buffets have less packaging materials, but may limit recovery of uneaten food. If used, consider inviting attendees to bring reusable storage containers and providing cold storage to ensure leftover safety
 - Allow attendees to take extra food home or bring back to main office to share
- Encourage attendees to bring their own utensils and containers, including
 - Reusable utensils that can break down and fit in a travel container
 - Compartmented snack boxes
 - Sandwich boxes with snap-tight lids
 - Silicon zip top bags
 - Bee's wax wraps for packing lunch and sandwich items
 - Water bottles/infused water bottles/insulated mugs/coffee mugs
 - Consider including reusable utensils or containers as a "give away" for attendees to use at subsequent meetings
- Consider making coffee with a coffee maker on site with a large coffee pot
 - Save coffee grinds for compost pile
 - If using a box of coffee via catering, recycle the box (and let attendees take excess coffee home or share with the hosting office)
 - If reliant on Keurig-style machines, consider using reusable pods that can be filled with any kind of ground coffee
 - For creamer and sugar options, offer a bulk option (carton of creamer/box or bag of sugar) rather than individual pods/packets with a plan to send unused items home with attendees or organizers

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- Offer loose leaf tea and reusable tea infusers (tea ball) that can be washed and reused
- Consider following the '[Water First for Thirst](#)' drink suggestions by providing water in pitchers and limiting other alternatives
 - To provide variety, consider infusing water with produce (e.g., lemon, cucumbers, mint) to add flavor

What will be done with unavoidable organic waste?

- If the facility has a composting option, identify the items that can be composted and develop signage to direct attendees when discarding items
- If the facility has no composting options, consider offering a compost bin at the meeting to be composted by an organizer or attendee who has access to composting

Recycling and Waste Management

Fun Facts:

The average person generates about five pounds of trash per day.

recyclingpartnership.org

In the United States in 2018, 292.4 million tons of Municipal Solid Waste (trash) was generated. About 94 million tons of MSW were recycled and composted, resulting in a 32.1 percent recycling rate. An additional 17.7 million tons was managed through other food pathways

epa.gov/facts-and-figures

Placement of recycling bin and types of bins...

- Placement of a recycle bin is very important to your recycling success. Keep in mind accessibility and also be aware of your recycle bins surroundings.
- Place the recycle bin directly next to the trash receptacle for best results.
- Place bins in where they can be seen and identified easily.
- Placing bins near exits and entrances is a good starting place.
- Seek out other natural locations – lunch areas (create a waste station), hot spot areas where people clean-up before leaving for the day, placement near or on the way to the restroom, located within display areas

Make sure to label ALL of your containers, both Trash and Recycling

- DIY FREE, open-sourced templets to personalized signs to show what goes in which bin: recyclingpartnership.org/diysigns

Use the proper collection method:

- Trash: Make sure to use a BLACK trash bag.
Recycling: Use just the BLUE bin! If you have to use a bag for collection, make sure it is CLEAR bag and please empty the bag's content into the final recycle collection bin.
- Contact your local Solid Waste District to borrow a recycle bin
oepa.maps.arcgis.com

Universal of what can be accepted in recycling bin...

- Recycling is not the same everywhere! Yes, it is very unfortunate that recycling is not universal. The accepted items list varies from town to town or even differs within the same community. It all depends on where the material ends up to be sorted; this facility is called a MRF or a Material Recovery Facility.
- However, there are a few rules to recycling that are:
 1. Toss only clean and dry items into the recycle bin.
 2. Keep food and liquid out! These items are not recyclable, but may be composted

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3. No bagged recyclables.
4. No tangles (plastic bags, plastic film, hoses, cords, clothes, wires, hangers, electronics)!

FUN FACT:

Recycling is actually sorted with the support of high-tech machines and equipment that is designed to scan and sort mixed recycling back out into individual products.

recyclingpartnership.org/communitiesforrecycling/recycling-how-it-works

Most common accepted items just about anywhere include:

flattened cardboard, office paper, newspaper, metal cans (clean), aluminum cans, plastic water bottles and jugs with handles (check to see if lids stay on or removed).

Keep in mind, items smaller than a credit card will likely end up in the landfill or jam up the sorting equipment

- Glass and cartons are becoming more acceptable recyclable items

Film and plastic bag recycling

- Flex plastics such as grocery bags, plastic packaging, and bubble wrap, bread/sandwich bags, plastic wrap, etc. require special recycling procedures and should only be recycled at grocery or big box stores that accept them for proper recycling.
- Choose to not use them at all
- Dispose of them in the landfill if you are unable to take them back to a store that will properly recycle them.

Pizza Box

- There are local inconsistencies when it comes to acceptability based on concerns about the grease and residual cheese left on the box
- The clean lid portion of a pizza box is typically considered recyclable.
- These cardboard boxes can be composted if no recycle option is to be found.

When in doubt, throw it out!

- Paper plates, paper towels and napkins belong in the trash or compost bin, not the recycle bin.
- Just one “dirty” or “food/liquid” item can contaminate the contents of an entire recycling truck.
- Just because it looks like it is recyclable, doesn’t mean that it is! This is especially true when it comes to plastic items. There are seven different common types of plastic and only two of the seven are most commonly accepted for recycling (1 & 2)

FUN FACT: DID YOU KNOW?

The recycling symbol on the bottom of a plastic product does not necessarily indicate that the item can be recycled. That number surrounded by chasing arrows is a resin

identification code and tells users what kind of plastic they're holding.
centervilleohio.gov/home/showpublisheddocument

Pledge that you are recycling!

- Step up and be a leader. Encourage your participants and others to not only recycle, but recycle correctly. Don't forget to tell your guests that at this event we support and encourage proper recycling. It is our expectation for all to support this idea of recycling for a healthier, more responsible tomorrow.

Fun Fact:

Recycling helps our planet and our economy. If all 37.4 million tons of recyclable materials from households were recycled each year, it would reduce greenhouse gas emissions equal to removing 20 million cars from U.S. highways and support the creation of 370,000 jobs.

recyclingpartnership.org/communitiesforrecycling

Health, Wellness & Safety: Best Practices

Health issues and Food allergies (Food and Beverage)

- Consider the big eight foods that cause allergies: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybean
- Consider alternate dietary options: Gluten-Free, Vegan, Vegetarian

Health promotion (Materials and Meeting Space)

- Smoke-free environment: Including tobacco products and vapors from electronic smoking devices
- Make movement part of the agenda: Incorporating movement and physical activity in in-person/virtual/hybrid meetings longer than 60 minutes; be mindful of participants with physical disabilities.
 - Suggestions: chair stretch and chair yoga, standing up and standing in back of room, small group walk, standing meeting, walking meeting
- Activity and Stretch Breaks: [Physical Activity Breaks for the Workplace](#) (Resource Guide, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 2021) [cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion](https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion)
- Accessibility for all: Including Assistive Technology, Digital Accessibility, Captioning, Interpreting and Transcribing Services
 - Ohio State University Office of Student Life Disability Services: slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/best-practices-and-resources/#guides
 - Accessibility: making Extension events welcoming to all: cfaes.osu.edu/newsletter/cfaes-monthly/january-2018/accessibility-making-extension-events-welcoming-all

Safety promotion (Material and Meeting Space)

- Check with County Health District to determine number of people allowed to gather in one place and obtain their guidelines
- Hand Sanitizer: Provide either hands free hand sanitizer stations or have sanitizer readily available

Guidance for Organizing Large Events and Gatherings: Center for Disease Control and Prevention [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community)

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