



## Green Meetings

### **What is a Green Meeting or Event?**

By reducing the use of unnecessary resources (water, energy, paper, food, etc.), green meetings and events minimize waste and energy and help reduce the negative impact on the environment and the carbon footprint (climate change impact).

### **What are the Benefits?**

#### *Economic Bottom Line – Green Meetings & Events Can Save Money*

Planning and executing a green meeting isn't just about being environmentally responsible, there are economic benefits as well. In fact, many of the minimum recommended guidelines in the [Green Meetings Report \(best practices\)](#) can actually save money. For example, collecting 1300 attendee name badge holders for reuse can save approximately \$975 for the next event.

#### *Environmental Bottom Line – Green Meetings & Events are Good for the Environment*

Using recycled materials, recycling materials used, reusing items and reducing materials used can significantly lessen the environmental impact an event has. For example, if a five-day event serves 2200 people breaks, breakfasts, lunches and receptions using china instead of plastic disposables, it prevents 1,890 lbs. of plastic from going into a landfill. That's nearly one ton! That disposal cost is avoided. Another example is by not pre-filling water glasses at banquet tables during three days of served lunches for 2200 attendees; 520 gallons of water can be saved.

Source: [Green Meetings Report \(best practices\)](#) - Convention Industry Council

### **Key Resources**

[DEQ's Green Meeting tips brochure](#)

[Green Meetings Web site - EPA](#)

[Bluegreen Meetings . Org](#)

This site has [Success stories](#), [Tips for Planners](#), and other resources for green meetings.

#### [Greening the GreenBuild Conference](#)

The GreenBuild Conference is an excellent example of what can be achieved when greening events. Scroll to the bottom for specific conference reports - Strategies, goals, lessons learned

The Conference has achieved: (attendance over 28,000)

- Hotels -100% offered linen reuse, 77% used green cleaners, 96% offered recycling
- Recycling - 2063 hours of volunteer recycling stations
- Energy use per registrant has decreased 26% in 4 years.
- Waste - 76% was diverted from the landfill
- Emissions - Purchased emission offsets
- Food - 57% was locally grown or organic, 55% was vegan
- Approximately 700 gallons of fair trade coffee was served
- Saved water and \$25,000 by providing water stations instead of bottled water.
- 21 community groups received 31,000lbs of donated materials from the event

## Green Meeting Tips

### Transportation

Promote mass transit. Ask all the attendees to provide their transportation info: whether they drove, bussed, car pooled, bussed, etc., and how far. Then arrange for that amount of carbon to be displaced by buying renewable energy, carbon credits or planting trees.

### Food and Beverage Service

1. Caterer – Give preference to a service that has recycling programs in place or train.
2. Dishes & utensils - Avoid disposable plastic and Styrofoam products. Provide recycling if used. Purchase washable or bio-compostable cups, forks, spoons, plates if possible. Purchase napkins and paper towels with 100% recycled content. Use recycled paper stock for all handouts and print 2 sided.
3. Reusables - Use reusable table clothes, napkins, drink glasses, coffee cups, silverware, etc.
4. Beverages - Serve from dispensers or pitchers, no bottled water or individual containers.
5. Food - Minimize red meats, prefer free run chickens/eggs, ocean/lake caught fish. Offer local, organic, and fair trade food items. Arrange for left over food to be composted or donated to shelters. Serve healthy items for continental breakfast, afternoon snack. Select items other than donuts and glazed rolls. (i.e. muffins, scones, whole wheat breads, etc.) Serve buffet-style meals to minimize waste.
6. Recycle - Recycle all cardboard, glass, plastic, paper, etc. with recycling centers.
7. Purchases – Purchase supplies with minimal packaging and high recycled content.

### Conference Service (meeting management)

1. Table center pieces - Reusable plants or donate them to retirement homes or schools after the event. Consider using seedlings for table center pieces.
2. Name tags - Provide reusable nametag holders and marked boxes for collecting them.
3. Recycle - Recycle all cardboard, glass, plastic, paper, etc. with recycling centers.
4. Transportation - Provide bio-fueled shuttle bus to airport, hotels for attendees and presenters.
5. Hotels - Work with hotels to provide green hotel services. See [Green Lodging](#)
6. Recycled content - Provide high recycled content napkins, paper toweling, toilet paper, eco-friendly cleaning supplies and hand soap.

### Coordinating Committee

1. Awards - Have a Greenest Vendor and Greenest Exhibitor award.
2. Location – Give preference to locations with ‘green’ programs.
3. ID Green goals - Establish a green conference goals statement and distribute to vendors and presenters, staff for maximum participation.
4. Promote Green efforts - Post information informing attendees of the events goals and how they can help. Publicize activities in web site announcements.
5. Count - Submit accurate registration count to vendors, presenters, and conference services to minimize food and paper waste.
6. Totes - Distribute reusable, non-plastic tote bags to attendees to collect items from presentations or vendors. Approach vendors for sponsorship.

7. Vendors - Urge vendors, exhibitors and presenters to use recyclable or recycled giveaways and handouts. Items to be made in USA, preferably Michigan.
8. Recycling - Collect recyclables in clearly marked bins at convenient locations. Invite local recycling waste company as a vendor display. Use their recycling containers promoting the activity & company. Measure recycled waste, food donated, printed material distributed.
9. Recycled Content - Urge all participants to use high recycled-content paper goods.
10. Printed materials - Use double-sided copies for all handouts, presentations, etc. Urge presenters and exhibitors to provide a sign-up sheet for those interested in receiving printed materials or provide links to materials. Consider providing/selling conference presentations on CD or posting to an event website, rather than providing paper copies.
11. Leftover meeting materials – Use at another event, donate, or recycle.

### **Presenters and Exhibitors**

1. Totes - Distribute reusable, non-plastic tote bags to attendees.
2. Recyclable - Provide recyclable or recycled giveaways and handouts. Items made in USA, preferably Michigan
3. Presentations & Handouts – Post the presentation on a website or provide digital downloads or by email. Use double-sided copies, high recycled-content paper. Provide a sign-up sheet for attendees interested in large printed materials or a list of links for documents. Handout website links for presentations and contact information to minimize paper cost and waste.
4. Leftover meeting materials – Use at another event, donate, or recycle.

### **Attendees**

1. Register early - to provide an accurate registration count for use in handout reproduction (minimize paper waste), and food and beverage preparation.
2. Totes - Use reusable, non-plastic tote bags to collect seminar handouts.
3. Recycle – Recycle cardboard, glass, plastic, paper, etc as well as giveaways and handouts when no longer needed.
4. Transportation - Use the shuttle bus to airport, hotels. Arrange carpooling from common locations with other attendees.
5. Hotels – stay at hotels that provide green hotel services.

### **Post-Conference Evaluation**

1. Evaluate green conference policies for improvement at the next conference. Consider the following and compare with standard policies.
    - a. Conference Services feedback.
    - b. Attendee feedback from evaluation forms provided to / by the attendees.
    - c. Measure
      - i. recycled waste,
      - ii. food donated,
      - iii. printed material distributed.
  2. Send out statement of success to attendees post-conference and posting on the website.
  3. Consider off-setting transportation emissions.
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## More Information

### [2009 Articles - Reducing Spend, Growing Green](#)

[Going Green](#) Meeting Professional March, 2006

[Green Meetings Industry Council](#)

This groups supports and educates on green meetings but you must join. They do provide arguments on [Green Meeting Benefits](#) that anyone can use.

[Learning Curve: The Price of Going Green](#) Meeting Professional May, 2005

[Strategies for Green Meetings](#) Meeting Professional December, 2005

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## Guidance

[Green Event -Family Planning Guide](#) for Families, Communities - BridgingtheGap

[Green Meetings Report \(best practices\)](#) Convention Industry Council

[Green Meetings Policy](#) National Recycling Coalition

[Solid Waste Reduction Guide - Calif](#)

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## Green Meeting Awards

[Responsible Meetings Awards](#) - IMEX

[Greenbuild Expo Exhibitor Award](#)

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**Closing the Circle** is a newsletter issued by the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive. The Fall 2008 issue [www.ofee.gov/ctc/ctcfal08.pdf](http://www.ofee.gov/ctc/ctcfal08.pdf) discusses the several green meeting topics listed below.

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