

# University of Florida

## Sustainable Event Planning Guide

*Thanks for your commitment to sustainability at UF!*

Sustainability can be defined simply as meeting contemporary needs without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs. Any event on or off campus can be made more sustainable.

The following guide should help get you started in planning your event. You can find further resources at the UF Office of Sustainability's website at [sustainable.ufl.edu](http://sustainable.ufl.edu).



Incorporating sustainability into campus events not only saves resources for the university, it also sends an important message to colleagues, demonstrating that "green events" are the norm, not the exception. You'll impress those involved, demonstrate a commitment to sustainability to our campus community, and educate your participants.

The planning checklist at the end of this guide will also help you in setting priorities. Just remember, implementing even a few of these ideas will make a difference!

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### Getting Started

#### 1) Involve Members of Your Planning Committee

Show your commitment to inclusion and collaboration by inviting wide participation in planning the event. Together, you can set goals for the event and define a method for measuring whether you've achieved them. This will increase your chance of getting creative and unique ideas. You'll also get more buy-in for shared goals and more volunteer commitment.



#### 2) Choose Your Meeting Sites

Choose meeting sites that are easily accessible for everyone involved in the planning process. If meeting on campus, choose a building that is within easy walking or biking distance from planning committee members' offices.

If meeting downtown, send everyone instructions on how to take **RTS** ([go-rts.com](http://go-rts.com)) or organize your own carpool from campus.

The **Information Desk** at the J. Wayne Reitz Union ([union.ufl.edu/eventservices](http://union.ufl.edu/eventservices)) is a convenient place to book a centralized meeting room.

#### 3) Publicize Your Intentions

Let **everyone** know about your commitment to sustainability! Include information about your sustainable initiatives when you send outreach materials or communicate with potential presenters, sponsors, participants, or contractors.

When publicizing your event, use several strategies to reduce waste:

- ➔ Choose recycled paper for printed materials
- ➔ Replace full brochures with small postcards or even better, e-mail notices
- ➔ When mailing information, print addresses directly onto postcards or brochures, as opposed to using stickers or labels
- ➔ Leave dates off of signs and displays so they may be reused for future meetings and conferences
- ➔ Use e-mail and the Internet for publicity

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### Planning Your Event

#### 1) Choose A Venue

Choose a site near public transportation. The Reitz Union has frequent bus service and a hotel, so participants can attend without using personal vehicles. Contact the information desk early on to book the rooms you'll need. Publicize all options for public transit on your website and materials. Arrange for private bus shuttles to the location if off-campus by calling RTS at (352) 334-2600.

If you are planning an event off-campus or are using off-campus vendors, talk to management about sustainable practices. They may be able to improve site performance before your event.

Questions include: How do you conserve energy and water? Do you recycle and minimize waste? Do you use recycled and/or reusable event materials?



#### 2) Identify Presenters

Look for local experts to use as presenters to highlight Gainesville and UF initiatives. If you are bringing in presenters from a distance, determine whether they can book other engagements in the area. This will make the trip more worthwhile and you may be able to share travel expenses. Consider offsetting the carbon footprint of speaker travel through [www.flyneutral.org](http://www.flyneutral.org). Explore the possibility of creating a live webcast for some or all presenters. Organize biographical information and presentation materials through e-mail.

#### 3) Publicize and Begin Registration

For registration and publicity, utilize online communication as much as possible. If you need help organizing online registration, you can contact UF TREEO Center's **Green Services** at [www.treeo.ufl.edu/services/GreenConf.aspx](http://www.treeo.ufl.edu/services/GreenConf.aspx).

#### 4) Prepare Event Materials

Carefully consider which materials must be included in a packet and print these double-sided. You can post the rest online. For nametags, request that participants bring holders from previous conferences or request for them to be returned at the end of your event. Use dry erase boards with non-toxic markers as opposed to flip sheet pads for signs and presentations.

Ask participants to be prepared with their own pen and paper for notes, as opposed to setting places with full pads and new pens. Use reusable cups or water bottles that can be taken home by guests or reused at future events. For table decorations, use potted plants (or other unique reusable items) as opposed to cut flowers.

#### 5) Food Services

If your event is on campus, you can use **Classic Fare Catering** ([bsd.ufl.edu/dining/cfc](http://bsd.ufl.edu/dining/cfc)) through Gator Dining. Contact Classic Fare about organic and local food menu options. Carefully estimate your food amounts to minimize the amount of wasted food. Classic Fare offers low-waste service options with reduced disposables and packaging and Gator Dining works with local organizations to donate unused food to local donations and shelters.

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### At the Event

#### 1) Conserving Energy

Look for naturally lighted rooms and plan for appropriate times of the day to conserve energy. Turn off projectors in between presentations to save energy and increase the life of the bulbs.

Create a forum on the event website where out-of-town participants can contact each other to arrange carpools. Groups like [eRideShare.com](http://eRideShare.com) can coordinate this service.

Choose an event hotel close to your event site and provide information about public transportation or a shuttle if necessary.



#### 2) Education for Participants

Announce your goals during opening and closing speaking events and ask for assistance in meeting those goals. Report your accomplishments at the end of the meeting or conference in the form of statistics on energy reduction, waste avoidance, and other sustainability objectives attained.

Educate participants on any extra efforts the event site has made to be more sustainable.

#### 3) Recycling and Managing Waste

Place recycling bins in prominent locations at the event site. During announcements, remind everyone to recycle and explain where this can be done. On campus, you may need to provide your own containers and then drop off materials in the recycling bins around campus.

For more information, contact Physical Plant's Solid Waste Coordinator, **Dale Morris** ([damorris@ufl.edu](mailto:damorris@ufl.edu)).

Collect food-waste in a bin or **worm composter** (see [livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/waste](http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/waste)) or contact **Dr. Ann Wilkie** ([acwilkie@ufl.edu](mailto:acwilkie@ufl.edu)) for more information on large-scale composting.

Some important questions to ask when purchasing disposable dinnerware for your events:

- Are the products made from recycled and/or renewable resources?
- Where were the products produced?
- How easily will they biodegrade once they have been disposed of?

Cost is also an issue, of course, and some meeting planners have found that 100% compostable dinnerware is feasibly priced.

Find reused event materials including paper, pens, and other office products. Check the website at [fa.ufl.edu/am/surplus](http://fa.ufl.edu/am/surplus) for used electronics and other supplies. For new materials, follow departmental channels and request options made from recycled materials.

#### 4) Evaluate and Celebrate Your Success!

Conduct an online survey asking participants to evaluate the sustainability initiatives and their success. You can display these numbers on the website after your event.

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### Sustainable Event Checklist

#### Waste Prevention and Reduction

- Post materials on a website and print only as needed
- Print necessary materials and handouts on double-sided paper
- Provide receptacles for paper and container recycling
- Provide only reusable or compostable beverage containers, silverware, and plates
- Provide reusable containers for water and coffee
- Serve accurate amounts of food in order to avoid unnecessary waste
- Request that participants bring name badges or provide reusable badges and invite guests to bring reusable event bags from previous conferences



#### Energy Conservation

- Use natural lighting for exhibit and meeting areas
- Publish local public transportation routes
- Provide shuttle and carpool options from off-site hotels

#### Purchasing

- Select products that can be reused
- Use recycled paper for materials and handouts

#### Participant Education

- Encourage participants to reuse (again!) bags and nametags at other events
- Encourage recycling during the event
- Announce goals and achievements at opening and closing ceremonies

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Additional Resources:

Office of Sustainability  
[sustainable.ufl.edu](http://sustainable.ufl.edu)

TREEO Center  
[www.treoo.ufl.edu/services/greenconf.aspx](http://www.treoo.ufl.edu/services/greenconf.aspx)

Public Surplus  
[fa.ufl.edu/am/surplus](http://fa.ufl.edu/am/surplus)

GreenBiz Sustainable Event Planning  
[greenbiz.com/resources/resource/how-plan-a-sustainable-event](http://greenbiz.com/resources/resource/how-plan-a-sustainable-event)

Sustainable Event Planning Guide by UF Office of Sustainability