



# SUSTAINABLE EVENT GUIDE

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is the Sustainable Event Guide (SEG)?

This document is filled with guidance, resources and some simple advice that will aid you in organizing an event that benefits the community, promotes ethical purchasing, and reduces waste. For some this guide may function mainly as a resource providing information about environmentally and socially responsible retailers and ways to reduce waste when hosting an event, for those who have never organized a big event it may act as a framework for the "how to" of organizing. Regardless of past experience we suggest browsing through the entire guide, it may inspire new ideas or stir up old ones.

This guide will shed light on what Concordia is doing to move towards a more sustainable future. We believe everyone can make a difference in the way they host academic, social and fundraising events on campus. This guide isn't just for Concordia events - planners from other universities or organizations will also find suggestions of what to look for when putting on an event. This guide was developed to help you find the resources and services to make your events sustainable as possible.

Terms that may be unfamiliar are defined at the footnotes of each page. Terms can be found also be found in the Resource section at the back of the guide, complete with the information needed to utilize each resource.

## What is sustainability?

1. Sustainable development is development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland Commission, 1987)
2. The consideration of economic, social, and ecological issues in decision making; using a triple bottom line approach:
  - a. Economic: economic development policies should ensure equitable access to resources and responsible distribution of their acquisition's costs and benefits
  - b. Social: Extending to all the right to satisfy their basic needs for water, food, shelter, and health; access to education and opportunity; and the potential to live a full life
  - c. Ecological: Protect and restore the integrity and diversity of ecological systems
3. "...to ensure to the degree possible that present and future generations can attain a high degree of economic security and achieve democracy while maintaining the integrity of the ecological systems upon which all life and production depend." (Stephen Viederman, 1993)

## Why plan a sustainable event?

In recent years, sustainability has gained popularity and is increasingly talked about. Unfortunately, some enterprises advertise that they are sustainable, or “green,” without necessarily providing solid evidence that they have reduced their environmental impact. Participants of events are increasingly interested in sustainable products, ideas, and services. Providing transparency through the stages of the planning an event can promote trust between your organization and the participants, and assure attendees that your event really is sustainable.

Planning a sustainable event can cost more money, since decisions about transportation, materials, food, and venue are not solely based on choosing the least expensive. However, sustainability is becoming more valued, and participants may feel more positively about an event or organization that takes it into account. Economic sustainability ensures that the event is financially feasible and repeatable, and can accommodate less well-off individuals. Social sustainability can help participants from all backgrounds feel respected and included.

## Reducing your ecological footprint

By following this Sustainable Event Guide throughout the event planning process, a significant step can be made towards lowering the ecological footprint of your event; alongside other sustainably planned events, we can endeavour to collectively lower the ecological footprint of Concordia University. An ecological footprint is a tool that measures the area of land and water required to produce the natural resources consumed by the human population in comparison to Earth's ecological capacity to regenerate them. This tool helps to gauge our impact on the planet's biological systems, measuring sustainability at the global, national or individual level. Similarly, a carbon calculator measures how much carbon dioxide will be emitted. Currently, the world is living in an ecological deficit, which simply put means that our demand for natural resources exceeds the supply or regenerative capacity of the earth. To sustain our resource consumption rate at its present-day level we would need more than four planets!

Reducing the ecological footprint of an event is critical to hosting an event within the ecological capacity of this planet. Whether your event is a six-person seminar or a full-scale conference, there are some easy things you can do to reduce the environmental impact of your events. Let's get started!

Resources:

Ecological footprint calculator

[EcoMetrics](#)

[Global Footprint Network](#)

[Myfootprint.org](#)

Carbon offsetting vendors

[ZeroCO2](#)

[Planetair](#)

[Terrapass](#)

[Carbonzero](#) [The Gold Standard](#)

[Carbonfund](#) [David Suzuki Foundation](#)

# GETTING STARTED (Stage I)



## 1. ORGANIZING A COMMITTEE

Not all events will need an organizing committee. However, for larger and more complicated events that require sharing responsibilities, forming an organizing committee is an important step in event planning. The organizing committee will be responsible for all major decision-making and will collectively decide on the goals and vision for the event. Before you advertise or ask people to become committee members there are a few things you should consider.

Address some of the aspects of social sustainability by ensuring that membership to the organizing committee is open and inclusive. It is beneficial in some situations to have an open committee selection but in some cases this is not possible. Analyze your situation and decide accordingly.

Select members from a wide community of stakeholders<sup>1</sup>. Many different perspectives will help make the event more accommodating and inter-disciplinary, and ensure that social diversity is respected at the event itself. Selecting diverse committee members promotes social interactions that may not happen in day-to-day life, for example between students and university staff. These interactions help break down stereotypes and foster a strong sense of community.

### a) Preparing for committee selection

Before a call for applicants is put out, the following details should be worked out.

- ✓ Number of interviews per applicant before selection
- ✓ Job/volunteer position description
- ✓ Qualifications of applicants
- ✓ Deadline for applications
- ✓ Number of positions
- ✓ Governance structure of committee
- ✓ Selection through a hiring committee or executive decision
- ✓ A list of questions for the interviewees
- ✓ Compensation to members:
  - Paid vs. volunteer positions
  - Recommendation letters on request
- ✓ Participation:

An organizing committee should represent the diversity of stakeholders in an event. This would include:

  - Representatives of the industry/issue/topic of the event
  - Representatives from the target audience
  - Academics in the field of study related to the event
  - Administration or management of the venue
  - General interest groups
  - Event organizers
  - Representatives of the local community/population affected/targeted by the event

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<sup>1</sup> Stakeholder: Individuals, groups of people, organizations, or companies that can or will be affected by an event, decision, etc.

## b) Committee outreach

Advertise widely! This will make it easier to find the diversity of help you are looking for. Remember to only print posters or flyers if you have to. The following is a list of possible avenues for advertising:

- ✓ The organization's listserv
- ✓ Blogs and social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- ✓ Media resources (radio, newspapers)
- ✓ Listserv/blogs of partner organizations
- ✓ For volunteer positions, try websites such as [Planet Volunteer](#) or [Idealist.org](#)

Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Sustainable Concordia distributes a bi-weekly e-newsletter – promote your sustainable event with us!
- ✓ For paid positions try Job Banks such as:
  - [CAPS](#)
  - [JMSB](#)
  - [CSU Job Bank](#)
  - [CSU classifieds](#)
- ✓ Posters in department offices:
  - [International Students Office](#)
  - [Multi-faith Chaplaincy](#)
  - [2110 Center](#)
  - [Advocacy and Support Services](#)
  - [Dean of Students Office](#)
  - [Counseling and Development](#)

Resources:

Advertise Volunteer Positions

[Planet Volunteer](#)

[Idealist.org](#)

[McGill Volunteering](#)

[CSU classifieds](#)

[CON-ADS](#)

## c) Committee structure

One of the very first things the committee as a whole should decide on, once chosen, is how it will make decisions. Some suggestions are:

- ✓ Hierarchal<sup>2</sup> vs. roundtable<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ Decisions made through majority vote vs complete consensus<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ What training/resources/materials will be provided to members?
- ✓ Goals of the events (sustainable or otherwise)
- ✓ Clearly defined job descriptions for all positions (pro bono or otherwise)
- ✓ Creating a position for a sustainability coordinator

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2 Hierarchical: System of organization in which authority is based on levels of power

3 Round table: A conference for discussion or deliberation by several participants.

4 Consensus: The judgment arrived at by most of those concerned.



## 2. DEVELOPING A THEME

A theme uses a concept to unite aspects of food, decorations, speakers, and entertainment. For ideas of themes, think of different cultures, eras in history, social or environmental issues, or holidays.

However, unless you can theme your party by creatively using found or recycled items, it is a good idea to avoid purchasing extra items to make a theme, since these will be disposed of at the end of the event and will add to landfill. If the planning committee already has items that can create a theme, however, by all means use these to decorate and then return them after the event. A callout to the community can help collect novelty items that could be borrowed for your event. Check out your local thrift shop, you would be surprised at the decor that can be found with a little patience!



## 3. SETTING GOALS

Setting goals is crucial for determining everything from budget to location to the success of the event. Setting goals early on will minimize future chaos and help everyone get an idea of the big picture; it will also be key in determining which actions are necessary to make your event sustainable.

If you commit to organizing a sustainable event you will need to determine what sustainability goals you will aim to meet. Sustainability is comprised of economic, environmental, and social equality. These three pillars may at times conflict, so it is a balancing act to put on a sustainable event. Using a hierarchical approach link to hierarchy to sourcing can simplify and prioritize the many options that are out there. Defining targets early in the planning stages helps reduce the stress of orchestrating the event. Create a vision, explore desired outcomes and discuss criteria for measuring the event's success. This will make narrowing down choices easier and streamline decision making considerably.

### a) Messaging goals

The organizing committee needs to know why this event is being held. What is the idea behind the event? What is the message you wish to communicate with the event? What do you want people to walk away with when it is over? Who are you representing during this event?

### b) Logistical goals

What kind of event is it going to be? Will there be a speaker? A movie? A conference? Food? Workshops? What is the content of the day going to look like? The group should establish a rough estimate of how many people they would like to attend the event, draft a budget, choose an event date and determine how long the event will be. This will give the group a rough outline of the event; details can be worked out later, perhaps by specific sub-committees are formed. When first setting goals, the sky is the limit! Start with a brainstorming session of anything and everything – this gets everyone excited about the event. Once the big ideas are out, the group can narrow down goals based on what is feasible.

### c) Sustainability goals

The group should take a look at the sustainable event checklist and determine the actions that apply to the event and how many of them are feasible and desirable.

Remember that this is only a guide so if you have your own sustainable ideas, go for them!

**MEET WITH SUSTAINABLE CONCORDIA:** Arrange a meeting with the Sustainable Event Team to make sure you are on the right track, come up with new ideas, or for helpful suggestions and resources.

Creating a sustainable purchasing<sup>5</sup> policy - for all items if possible - is a good strategy to narrow criteria, measure compliance and advertise the effort to sponsors and attendees.

To create a sustainable purchasing policy:

- ✓ Liaise with all parties involved (management, suppliers etc.) and create an ideal long-term mission statement.
- ✓ Outline and prioritize goals:
  - Isolate with numbers what goals need to be met (e.g. will buy 80% local products).
  - Outline the strategies that will be used to achieve the goals, keeping in mind investment possibilities, educational campaigns etc.
  - Create a step-by-step plan to reach the goals, as they have been prioritized.
  - Identify mechanism for checking compliance and the indicators of success.
  - Advertise your efforts and educate a larger audience.
  - Examples of purchasing policies and detailed guidelines for creating them can be found at [The Sustainable Food Policy](#) and the [Concordia Food Systems Project](#) website.

Resources:

Purchasing Policy  
[Sustainable Purchasing Policy](#)

## 4. COMMITTEE WORK



### a) Task Delegation

Delegating tasks gives everyone ownership over a part of the event and prevents organizers from feeling overburdened and burnt-out. It may be beneficial to set up a project management timeline to have clear expectations of when each task will be completed. Free programs such as Gantt Project or iTeamWork can be found online. Set up a system for accountability to keep everyone on task and to provide support. This can take the form of weekly check-ins, a buddy system, or a group on a social media site. Depending on the size of the event the group may need to divide up and delegate tasks. These tasks may include:

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5 Sustainable purchasing policy: A formal declaration of the criteria an organization looks for when purchasing materials. The criteria may focus on economic, social, and/or environmental equality.



- ✓ Space reservation
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Materials
- ✓ Workshop
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Volunteers
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Clean-up
- ✓ Publicity/Registration
- ✓ Post-event evaluation
- ✓ Research: Share the tasks of researching potential participants or partners, which have a commitment to sustainable practices.

These would include:

- Event site
- Contractors (organizers, caterers, etc.)
- Sponsors
- Suppliers (paper, printers, etc.)
- Speakers

We will be tackling these tasks specifically in Stage II.



## b) Creating a Budget

Create a wish list or estimated budget to help estimate the cost of the event. Some suggested budget lines are:

- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Conference Kit/Giveaways
- ✓ Misc. Supplies
- ✓ Professional fees (security, caterer, facilitator etc.)
- ✓ Honorarium (for speakers, volunteers)
- ✓ Equipment (computers, tables, chairs)
- ✓ Publicity
- ✓ Carbon offset<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ Waste management<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ Venue
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Food

Once the wish list is complete narrow it down based on what is necessary and what is feasible given your timeline and resources.

6 Carbon Offset/ Carbon Credits: Purchasing a guarantee that another person or organization will prevent a certain amount of carbon dioxide from releasing into the atmosphere.

7 Waste Management: The processes involved in dealing with the waste of humans and organisms, including minimization, handling, processing, storage, recycling, transport, and final disposal.



## c) Funding and sponsorship

### I. Financing

Financing an event is an important consideration for any organizing/finance committee. Financial feasibility is an element of economic sustainability<sup>8</sup> – ensuring that the costs of the event do not exceed the funding makes certain that in the future such events can continue. Having a solid financial foundation also guarantees that everyone involved – from the caterers to the speakers – are treated fairly and respectfully.

Most student events will not need outside funding sources, but in case they do there are some suggested tips for selection criteria below. Funding sources influence the portrayal of the message promoted by the event as sponsors (and by default what they stand for) become associated with the event. While being selective about which sponsors to approach may at first seem disadvantageous, think twice. By setting goals, establishing criteria for sponsorship and identifying an approval process, your organizing committee is making itself more accountable and transparent to the greater public.

Concordia Venues:

Brainstorm a potential funding sources first at Concordia and then off campus. Once funding/donation sources have been identified research can be conducted to ensure these sources uphold sustainable values and practices (see section on Funding and Sponsorship. At Concordia students generally must be working with a student organization to gain access to resources. Most student organizations have funding and know what resources are available to them. Supplemental funding is available through:

- ✓ [The Dean of Students](#)
- ✓ [The Office of the President](#)
- ✓ Departmental offices etc.

For more information on funding sources consult the [CSU](#).

### II. Developing Funding/Sponsorship Criteria

Developing sponsorship criteria and a selection process can seem like a lot of work, but in truth it can be condensed into the following question: "Does this company/organization reflect the same values as the organizing committee?"

In your proposals and funding requests, let sponsors know why they are being approached (where your values and theirs coincide). This will be positive reinforcement to the sponsors, demonstrating that it is beneficial to have a positive mission and image.

Petitioning businesses in your community for sponsorship is a good way to showcase local businesses and be sustainable at the same time. The contribution of the sponsor to the local community in order to reduce their impact and redistribute resources is an additional criterion that may be used to evaluate potential sponsors.

- ✓ Businesses in the area provide jobs in the community, which is part of economic sustainability.
- ✓ People tend to have a more positive association with companies they know treat people and the environment fairly, which could reflect upon your event.

Many sponsors in this day and age claim to uphold values of sustainability, especially that of environmental responsibility<sup>9</sup>. Some companies, corporations and organizations are genuinely dedicated to these values and have made concrete improvements in their operations in regards to sustainability. Examples of these include energy and water conservation, waste reduction and sustainable purchasing habits. Look for eco-certifications from a third party to guarantee objectivity. Others make small changes in order to garner positive public opinion but neglect to address larger issues of sustainability – this is known as “green washing<sup>10</sup>” and is something to be on the lookout for when selecting a sponsor.

When selecting a sponsor who claims to uphold values of sustainability, check if the organization has received negative publicity in the past regarding social/economic/environmental incidents. If it has, did it do anything to rectify the situation?

Any positive actions on behalf of the organization, which demonstrate their dedication to sustainability, will act as reinforcement to the organization's commitment. Without any redeeming actions to establish its dedication, the potential sponsor has not upheld the values you would want to showcase at your event. Be wary of organizations that green wash; check the claims they make thoroughly to avoid nasty surprises.

Is the organization currently the focus of a negative campaign by an organization who works to uphold principles of economic/social/environmental sustainability? An organization currently receiving such attention may bring negative attention to the event's sustainability goals.

## Resources:

Eco-certifications

[EcoLogo](#)

[Greenseal](#)

[Canada Organic Regime](#)

[Forestry Stewardship Council](#)

[Marine Stewardship Council](#)

[Fair Trade](#)

[Energy Star](#)

[David Suzuki Foundation List of Chemicals to Avoid](#)

## III. Donations

In-kind donations are a great way to have marketing material to give away while recognizing sponsors. Evaluate donors the same way as you would sponsors and make the reasons for approaching them clear in your proposals or letters so that requests for donations are justified. Work with donators to focus on products with little packaging or that are locally produced.

9 Environmental responsibility: The moral, legal, or mental accountability towards environmental issues.

10 Green washing: Claims of sustainability or environmental responsibility by a company/organization/enterprise that are not substantiated by scientific evidence, or claims that are exaggerated.

# Let's Talk Logistics! (Stage II)



## VENUE

Venue choice is one of the less obvious ways of making an event more sustainable. Choosing the right place can cut carbon emissions, showcase green buildings<sup>11</sup>, encourage discussion about sustainability and promote diversity and accessibility. The event venue speaks volumes about the message of an event and the values of the event organizers and stakeholders. This in turn touches on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Efficient energy and water use can be achieved by making a few simple decisions and adjustments. This is greatly complemented by educating participants about your sustainability goals for the event. The choice of location can determine how affordable an event is for your planning committee and also for the participants. Making an event economically accessible can be achieved in several different ways.



### a) Location

Choosing a location is one of the major decisions in planning an event. The ecological footprint of an event can be considerably reduced by choosing a space that is appropriate for the number of attendees.

Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Conference Services (ext. 4999) can help you decide which venue is most suitable for your event based on the number of participants. Classrooms and conference rooms can be booked from [MyConcordia.ca](http://MyConcordia.ca).
- ✓ The MB building has been built to LEED Operational and Maintenance standards, although is not yet certified. Solar panels on the building make energy (although not substantial) and heat air that is passed through the ventilation system. The EV also has been built to higher standards than the surrounding buildings.

Non-Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Choose a location that is accessible by pedestrians, city transit and bicyclists. This will reduce the carbon footprint<sup>12</sup> of the event by reducing the number of single occupancy vehicles that are driven to it.
- ✓ A location accessible by a variety of transit methods also ensures that people without cars can participate in the event.
- ✓ Select a location which is easily accessible to any speakers that may have to travel there. Consider the distance the speakers will have to travel to get to the event when choosing accommodations for them.
- ✓ Host the event in an environmentally friendly building (e.g. LEED certified<sup>13</sup>, ISO certified<sup>14</sup>), with good recycling practices, compost facilities, waste reduction and energy/water conservation measures. See the energy section.

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11 Green buildings: A green building is an environmentally sustainable building, designed, constructed and operated to minimize the total environmental impacts.

12 Carbon footprint – The amount of carbon dioxide that is dispelled by a certain action, event or organization.

13 LEED: A third-party certification program and an internationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings.

14 ISO 14000: Requirements for environmental management systems to operate in an environmentally sustainable manner.

- ✓ If the event is large ask the management if they are willing to work with the organizing committee to improve the site's environmental performance in preparation for the event.
- ✓ Be aware that a newer venue could off-gas volatile chemicals that can irritate people with asthma or allergies. If choosing a newer venue, ask if VOC (volatile organic compounds)-free paints and carpets were used.
- ✓ One of the best ways to conserve energy is to use rooms where the HVAC system<sup>15</sup> does not have to be turned on especially for the event.



## Social Considerations

- ✓ Think about accessibility for those with disabilities. Ensuring that the event is wheelchair accessible is a no-brainer! Consider the location of elevators and their proximity to the event.
- ✓ Choose locations that maximize natural light. Sunlight elevates the energy level of participants.
- ✓ The physical environment of a venue affects the people using it. If possible choose a site that is reflective of the goals of the event. For example, encourage discussion by using sites that have forums, circular seating, etc. Get creative!
- ✓ Try to make your event a scent-free environment. Many people are allergic to synthetic chemicals, or find air fresheners and others' perfume irritating. Encourage participants to consider not wearing strong scents, such as perfume or body spray, to your event by publicizing this during registration.

### Concordia Venues:

- ✓ All Concordia permanent signage has Braille lettering.

### Non-Concordia Venues:

- ✓ If possible, choose a location with Braille lettering.
- ✓ Selecting a location with gender-neutral (unisex) bathrooms can ensure that transitioning or transgender people do not feel uncomfortable at the event.



## b) Energy

Nearly everything we do in modern times consumes energy. When organizing an event, simple tweaks can change the flavor of the event and help utilize less energy.

- ✓ Unplug projectors, laptops, and other electrical devices when not in use.
- ✓ Politely, verbally remind people to turn out the lights when not using a space, or use re-usable posters and stickers.
- ✓ Heating and air conditioning are generally the largest energy uses in a building. If possible, turn the thermostat down a few degrees in the winter and up a few degrees in the summer.
- ✓ Keep doors and windows closed to prevent heated or cooled air from escaping.
- ✓ When possible, use natural lighting instead of electrical lights.
- ✓ Remember to turn off electrical equipment when not in use and contact the management to see if they would give you permission to post signs to remind people to turn off the lights. Check with Sustainable Concordia for posters designed for this purpose.

15 HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) System: is an indoor air circulation system which provides optimal thermal comfort.

- ✓ Seek to reduce energy use wherever possible by using:
  - LED/CFL lights<sup>16</sup>.
  - The equipment used is energy star<sup>17</sup> (efficient energy use).
- ✓ Purchasing 'carbon credits'<sup>18</sup> to offset the carbon emissions from your event (travel by participants, energy consumption) helps renewable energy sources<sup>19</sup> such as wind and solar power grow and develop. Seek out verified clean energy projects and be wary of reforestation projects that entail monoculture plantations<sup>20</sup> for logging purposes. Look for offsets certified by [The Gold Standard](#) or a similar verification process to ensure that the project will actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### Concordia Venues:

- ✓ JMSB (2009), Genomics Center (2011) and Perform Center (2011) were built to LEED standards, and may be certified in upcoming years. EV was built to BOMA BEST standards, which is another building energy efficiency criteria. The JMSB building has solar panels installed, aiding reduction in consumption of energy.
- ✓ The Hall building's lobby, auditorium, art gallery, and various classes have installed LED lighting.
- ✓ All buildings have energy management systems.

#### Non-Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Choose buildings that are powered by renewable energy.
- ✓ Newer buildings are generally more energy efficient, in part because they are better insulated.
- ✓ Does the institution use a centralized energy management system that allows to track energy consumption and performance in multiple buildings in a central location?



### c) Water

People at events typically rely on bottled water. However, this uses petroleum to produce and transport, and leaves many bottles destined for landfill, even when recycling is offered. Water is a recognized human right, so individually packaged water promotes the privatization of a precious resource. Luckily, this is an area where it is relatively easy to greatly improve the sustainability of your event. Tips for sustainable water use include:

- ✓ Encourage participants to use water fountains. Make sure the ushers/volunteers are aware of the nearest fountain.
- ✓ Have water in a jug and glasses available or make reusable mugs or flasks part of your goody bag.
- ✓ Encourage participants to bring their own reusable bottles through reminder emails to confirm their registration to the event or by mentioning it in the program. Social media tools such as a Facebook wall or tweet could also remind participants.

16 LED/CFL lights: Light emitting diode (LED) and Compact florescent light (CFL) are energy efficient light bulbs.

17 Energy star: International logo for products that are more energy efficient.

18 Carbon credits/offset: Purchasing a guarantee that another person or organization will prevent a certain amount of carbon dioxide from releasing into the atmosphere.

19 Renewable energy: Energy sources which are able to replace itself within a human's lifetime.

20 Monoculture plantations: Only one type of vegetation grown in an agricultural setting.

- ✓ Be a bottled water free zone. This can be publicized during registration and by a reminder email/text/social media message the day before the event, so participants bring their own beverage containers.
- ✓ Plants can be used as receptacles for excess/unwanted water in a flask/glass. Display posters encouraging participants to use plants to get rid of excess water.
- ✓ Place posters in bathrooms as reminders to not leave a tap running or leaking.

Concordia venues:

- ✓ Nearly all Concordia toilets are now low flow<sup>21</sup>.
- ✓ Choose locations with automatic faucets and/or contain aerators on the faucets. Aerators are attached to the tap opening to reduce the water flow, therefore increasing the pressure. This reduces the flow of water, which can cut water consumption by more than half. Most Concordia faucets have aerators.
- ✓ Concordia has already switched to biodegradable cleaning products at all its facilities.

Non-Concordia venues:

- ✓ Try to find a location with low flow toilets and automatic faucets with aerators.
- ✓ Lower your impact and preserve water quality, use biodegradable<sup>22</sup> and nontoxic cleaning products, certified by a third party [Eco-logo](#) or [Greenseal](#). Avoid using products with many synthetic chemicals. A list of ingredients to avoid can be found on the [David Suzuki Foundation website](#).



#### d) Waste Management

One of the best ways to explicitly showcase an event's commitment to sustainability is through the waste management onsite. Events, especially those serving food, can create huge amounts of garbage. The planning stages are the best time to come up with strategies to reduce waste on the day of your event; what is created does not necessarily have to end up in a landfill. Aim for a zero-waste event; everything should be compostable or recyclable. Waste management tips include:

- ✓ NEVER place just a waste bin and no recycling bins. Always make the waste bin the smallest possible container, especially compared to recycling containers.
- ✓ Recruit and train volunteers to staff the recycling stations and help participants figure out what goes in which container.
- ✓ The [R4 website](#) and [about.com](#) have great resources on what is recyclable and what is garbage.
- ✓ Always put the bins in the order of: plastic/glass/metal, waste/compost, and bin to return reusable dishware. At food events this enables the attendees to get rid of their drink, scrape their plate, and then return reusable dishes. The consistency also makes it easier for people to throw away their recyclables easily without a lot of sorting later.

Composting

- ✓ Composting is extremely important and an excellent way to reduce the ecological footprint of an event. Instead of throwing precious nutrients into a plastic bag where it will sit in a landfill, composting allows for nutrients to re-enter the nutrient cycle and feed the earth!

21 Low flow/flush: A system that uses significantly less water.

22 Biodegradable: Capable of decaying through the action of living organisms.

- ✓ Make sure to promote composting to event attendees. Signs indicating the location of compost bins and the items that may be composted are should be clearly posted. Volunteers and ushers can help participants' sort compostable waste if they have any questions of what is accepted.
- ✓ Avoid disposable material, such as plastic cups and paper coffee cups. Waxed coffee cups and Styrofoam cannot be recycled, so it's best to avoid disposables altogether.
- ✓ If disposable materials are absolutely necessary, compostable plastics can be a better choice, but only if they will actually be composted. Otherwise, crops are grown just for a one-time use, and then thrown in the landfill forever.
- ✓ If this is a reoccurring event, weigh how much materials have been placed in the compost and recycling bin. This can then be publicized as how much waste has been diverted from the landfill.

#### Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Concordia has been a leader in its waste management thanks to the dedication of [R4 Concordia](#).
- ✓ R4 has a [dish rental program](#) available for events. A small deposit is given for reusable dishes, cutlery, and glasses, which is given back upon return of the items. This is an easy and low-cost way to provide sturdy utensils while avoiding disposable materials.
- ✓ Call [Facilities Management](#) at X2400 to set up delivery and pick-up of bins. Specify whether you will have food or compostable items present so they can provide you with compost bins in addition to recycling and trash bins. Provide them an estimate of attendance and of the quantity of organic waste (food and compostable packaging) you expect to serve.
- ✓ Make sure to promote composting to event attendees. Signs indicating the location of zero waste stations and the items that may be composted are should be clearly posted. Signs are provided by Custodial services.

#### Non-Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Place educational posters near bins and other visible areas that help people understand what can be recycled.
- ✓ Place bins in highly visible areas and near doors (but not behind them) to make sure they are accessible.
- ✓ Avoid using large waste bins, since this may lead people to dumping all of their material in it, instead of recycling and composting.

#### Resources:

Compostable Tableware

[Go Compostable Green Event Tableware Kit](#)  
[Nova Envirocom](#)

Reducing Waste:

[R4 Compost](#)

[R4 Dish Project](#)

[Facilities Management](#) (X2400)

[What can be recycled in Montreal?](#)

[McGill Plate Club](#)

[Compost Montreal](#) ([info@compostmontreal.com](mailto:info@compostmontreal.com) to get a quote for an event)





## e) Childcare

Providing childcare at events increases the accessibility of the event and gives a wider audience the ability to attend it.

Concordia Venues:

- ✓ Event organizers need to fill out a [Declaration of Activity Involving Minor Children](#)
- ✓ All parents or guardians must sign a [legal waiver](#) of liability.

Non-Concordia Venues:

- ✓ For more information, contact the [Montreal Childcare Collective](#). Investigate the legal implications before advertising childcare.

Resources:

Childcare

[Concordia Legal Waiver \(PDF\)](#)

[Declaration of Activity Involving Minor Children \(PDF\)](#)

[Montreal Childcare Collective](#)



## SPEAKERS AND ATTENDEES

### a) Speakers

Talented speakers, artists, and experts are very effective in drawing out the public, and their contributions might be the central focus of the event.

The selection process for speakers and guests can incorporate sustainability by:

Finding Speakers in Town:

- ✓ Support local talent and expertise in your own community; this reduces costs for transportation and accommodation, as well as decreasing greenhouse gas emissions<sup>23</sup>.
- ✓ Using the expertise of the community also contributes to social sustainability<sup>24</sup>, strengthening the community by connecting people of the same locale around mutually shared interests and issues.

Choosing Out of Town Speakers:

- ✓ Consider video conferencing. Flying has one of the largest ecological impacts of all human actions. Try to avoid it wherever possible.
- ✓ Encourage speakers to take the train, bus or carpool instead of flying.
- ✓ Your event date could take into account where your speaker will be flying from. If your speaker is on tour, try to choose a date that he or she will be closer to the area.

23 Greenhouse gas emissions: Gases that act as an insulator in the atmosphere, and contribute to climate change.

24 Social sustainability: Maintaining human rights, fair labour wages, and systems of government in a society to promote equal access to resources within generations, and for future generations.

## Accessibility

Making the event more accessible to people of different socio-economic backgrounds will give you a higher turnout, allowing you to spread your message further and ensure more diverse perspectives in discussions.

Consider making admission fees affordable to a diverse group of attendees by:

- ✓ Offering scholarships
- ✓ Offsetting costs with external sponsors and partners
- ✓ Reducing entrance fees, while ensuring the event's costs and revenues break even.
- ✓ Having a sliding payment scale so that those with less money can still afford the event.
- ✓ Offering free or affordable child care services (remember to publicize these services in all outreach materials).
- ✓ Creating an opportunity for people to volunteer the day of the event in exchange for attending.
- ✓ Ensuring the location is accessible by a variety of transport options, as well as being accessible to persons with disabilities and comfortable to Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) respectively.



## b) Accommodation

Regardless of where your guests come from, or what their stature may be, communicate to them that you're attempting to make the event as sustainable as possible and encourage them to take the metro, bus, walk or bike to the event. If your guest is from out of town, consider a variety of options for accommodations. Some of these possibilities include:

- ✓ Billeting/opening your home: perhaps a committee member could host a guest.
- ✓ Suggest the possibility of couchsurfing, where individuals can stay at another person's house for free. This is a great way to meet adventurous new people.
- ✓ Places of accommodation should be evaluated in the same way as sponsors and donors.
- ✓ Hostels: hostels are usually locally run, inexpensive and are a lot of fun.
- ✓ Hotels: many hotels are now making an effort to be sustainable. Choose a hotel that is highly rated for its green initiatives.
- ✓ For large events, blocks of rooms can be pre-booked at negotiated rates with hotels that are close to the venue to keep GHG emissions low.

Resources:

Lodging  
[Green Key Eco-Rating Program](#)  
[iStayGreen](#)  
[Green Hotels Association](#)  
[Hosteling International Canada](#)  
[Couchsurfing](#)



## TRANSPORTATION

Encouraging the use of mass transit, carpooling, cycling, and walking are easy ways to drastically reduce the carbon emissions of the event. A clever way to do this is to make alternative transportation part of your marketing campaign:

- ✓ Provide discounted entrance tickets to those who carpool, use mass transit or bike.
- ✓ Enter those using alternative transportation into a draw for a prize.
- ✓ Link event times to the shuttle bus schedule, and ensure that there are still public transportation options if the event runs late into the evening.
- ✓ Consider going carbon neutral<sup>25</sup>, or carbon offsetting.
- ✓ Advertise the way to the event venues. Both Concordia campuses are conveniently located on major transit routes.
- ✓ Take advantage of the diversity of public transit infrastructure surrounding the event, such as the Montreal bike path in combination with the bixi system or the city's massive public transit (bus and metro) network.
- ✓ Offer Valet Bike parking - this offers a centralized meeting space that encourages socialization.
- ✓ Utilize the resources on campus first and foremost to cut down the distance that materials travel.

Check out the Allégo website for a wealth of information on alternative transportation.

### Resources:

Carbon offsetting vendors:

[Planetair](#)

[Carbonzero](#)

[Carbonfund](#)

[Terrapass](#)

Transportation:

[Shuttle Bus schedule](#)

[allégo](#)

STM route finder - [Tous Azmut](#)

[Communauto](#)

[Bixi bicycle rental](#)

[OPUS cards](#)

Map of bike racks on campus:

SGW - [PDF](#) (1.76 MB)

LOYOLA - [PDF](#) (1.76 MB)

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25 Carbon neutral – No net carbon dioxide is released into the air. If carbon dioxide is emitted, another entity will absorb or prevent the equivalent carbon dioxide from being released.



## a) Carbon offsets

We consume energy when we turn on a light, drive a car, have food delivered - all these actions release carbon dioxide into the air which in turn contributes to global warming. There are many ways to reduce our emissions (conserve energy, use alternative modes of transportation, support the local economy) but it is difficult to have zero emissions.

Usually when organizing an event, it is not possible to switch to clean energy (unless the event is large enough and the infrastructure is available to accommodate the energy switch). This is particularly true when organizing an event on the Concordia campus. An option at this juncture is to buy offsets. To counteract the carbon emissions of the event, there is the option of purchasing carbon offsets. These are credits purchased through another organization for projects that help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These projects come in many forms. Some reduce emissions by planting trees, while others by subsidizing renewable energy sources (such as wind and solar). Every project has its pros and cons and if you choose to offset, the kind of offset you choose should be reflective of your goal. Sustainable Concordia encourages carbon offsetting through financing renewable energy projects. Carbon offsets should be certified by [The Gold Standard](#) or a similar organization to ensure that the project will actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A good analysis of the pros and cons of each project as well as questions to ask when choosing a project can be found on the [David Suzuki Foundation website](#).

### **The major carbon emitters of an event are:**

- ✓ Transportation (the single largest emitter whether by car or bus)
- ✓ Energy use at event venue
- ✓ Energy used at accommodation facility



## b) Carpooling

Encouraging carpooling<sup>26</sup> for participants is a great way to get a bunch of strangers to socialize even before they reach the venue. People share rides because it saves money on parking and gas and is a great way to meet people and have a little company for the ride. Sharing a ride with someone means up to four less cars on the road!

Message boards:

Set up a message board for participants to utilize to find people to carpool with. It is fairly simple to incorporate a message board into the website being used to advertise the event. Even without a website, it is easy to create and update groups through social media, email account (Google, Yahoo, Hotmail), or enable them to contact each other. Upon registration, participants could be asked if they would be willing to carpool with someone else. Some questions to ask when carpooling to avoid hassles could be:

- ✓ Deciding on a pick-up point
- ✓ Setting time-limits on waiting times if running late
- ✓ Exchanging cell-phone numbers or car make and license to facilitate recognition
- ✓ Prohibitions on smoking, eating and drinking in the car.

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26 Carpooling: Instead of a person taking their own individual car, two or more participants travel together to a destination.



### c) Valet bike parking

A fun way to encourage people to bike to your event is to offer valet bike parking. Suggested valet bike parking methods:

Raffle ticket: this method helps to keep count of how many attendees may have used bikes, providing the organizers with a statistic they can quote after the event.

- ✓ Create a map of the space in which the bikes will be parked, allotting numbers to each parking space.
- ✓ Buy a roll of raffle tickets.
- ✓ At the door of the venue, give a ticket to the bike owner (they will need this to claim their bike), and keep the corresponding ticket for the person in charge of the parking. The owner can keep the bike lock and keys, or can give it to the valet to store with the bike.
- ✓ Mark the parking spot number on the raffle ticket the valet keeps.
- ✓ When the owner returns to claim the bike, check the parking space number on the corresponding ticket.
- ✓ Retrieve bike, Return bike.
- ✓ Voila! You have successfully valet parked a bike.

Playing cards:

- ✓ Create a map of the space used to park the bikes.
- ✓ Section out the parking spots (First rack is labeled 1, Second 2)
- ✓ Set a sequence for each slot (Hearts, Club, Spade,...)
- ✓ Buy a pack of playing cards (or two, depending on the estimated number of attendees. There are 52 cards in one pack)
- ✓ Sort card by numbers i.e. group all the fours together etc.
- ✓ Cut the cards in half.
- ✓ Give the bike owner one half of the playing card.
- ✓ Park the bike in corresponding spot (4 of hearts would be fourth rack, first slot depending on how the sectioning has been done)
- ✓ Slide the other half of the playing card between the spokes of the bike.
- ✓ When owner returns, match the card to its location.
- ✓ Retrieve and return with a smile.

Keep a tip jar at the front, and think about dealing with people who lose their claim ticket/card. Get a commitment from the volunteer valets to help go through this process smoothly and institute a mechanism for them to be easily recognizable (T-shirts, name tags, funky hats etc.)



### d) Video conferencing

Sometimes it's just not possible or practical to have a face-to-face meeting with two or more people. Sometimes a telephone conversation or conference call is adequate. Other times, an email exchange is adequate. Video conferencing adds another possible alternative. Consider video conferencing when:

- ✓ A live conversation is needed,
- ✓ Visual information is an important component of the conversation,
- ✓ The parties of the conversation can't physically come to the same location, or
- ✓ The expense, time or ecological footprint<sup>27</sup> of travel is a consideration.

27 Ecological footprint: The amount of global hectares that is consumed by a certain action, event, or organization.

As Concordia and other institutions invest in new technologies, the option of video conferencing, especially at events becomes more viable.

At Concordia, [IITS](#) may need to be contacted separately to send a technician to make sure everything is well executed and all the equipment is set up properly.

Resources:

Technological Considerations

[MyConcordia](#)

[IITS](#)



## EVENT MATERIALS

An event can generate a lot of waste. Reducing the amount of waste your event creates begins with making conscious choices about the materials and methods that will be used for everything from decorations to advertising. This section will help you think beyond the poster and flyer, the pen and the notepad, and help demonstrate your event's commitment to sustainability.



### a) Publicity and advertising

Your event can set a positive example even before it happens. The event committee can minimize waste in advertising and registration, which in itself will send a message to the public that you are committed to a sustainable event. It's also a great way to create awareness about the concept of sustainability and sustainable initiatives. It's like your advertising advertises itself!

Printing is also a major expense so the less you print; the better it is for your budget. Using paperless publicity is easy. Here are a few suggestions for how to spread the word about the event:

- ✓ Email
- ✓ Social media such as Facebook, twitter, or LinkedIn
- ✓ Workplace and community listservs
- ✓ The websites of likeminded organizations or business
- ✓ Free community newspapers, like Hour or Montreal Mirror.
- ✓ Free websites that advertise community events, like [events.montreal.com](#)
- ✓ Class presentation

Concordia Venues:

- ✓ An ad in Concordia's student newspapers, for example [The Link](#) or [The Concordian](#)
- ✓ The [Sustainable Concordia](#) website
- ✓ An ad on [CUTV](#), Concordia's student television station.
- ✓ The Concordia website [NOW Daily Events](#) section or plasma screens around Concordia
- ✓ Announce it at student and community events like [Cinema Politica](#) or [The University of the Streets Café](#)

For information that needs to be distributed the day of the event, such as programs or a reading list:

- ✓ Avoid mass handouts. Send out information in advance electronically, or present it differently. For example, rather than distribute the agenda to every participant, project it on a big screen for everyone to see. Post copies of the agenda in public areas during the event on bulletin boards.
- ✓ Distribute event information and reading resources via email, listserv, websites and other electronic means when possible.
- ✓ Publicize your commitment to a sustainable event in your outreach materials and in communications with potential sponsors, presenters, participants and contractors. This can be done by making a “green logo” or with a statement at the bottom of the materials stating the event’s sustainability goals.
- ✓ Print promotional materials on chlorine-free Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)<sup>28</sup> certified paper and made of 100% recycled and/or post-consumer content or tree-free paper. Advertise this on promotional material. Print all promotional materials using vegetable-based inks. Use double-sided printing for all documents that are more than one page.

Advertising events:

[The Concordian](#)  
[The Link](#)  
[CUTV](#)  
[NOW Daily Events](#)  
[CJLO](#)  
[The University of the Streets Café](#)  
[Cinema Politica](#)



b) Registration

Online registration is the way to go. Provide online registration, and use [Paypal](#) or [Google Checkout](#) for payment. See the resources section for more sites and software online which provide event registration and payment options. If asking for the participant’s gender on the registration form, ensure that you are accommodating towards people who may not identify as either. One possibility is to have three choices of gender: male, female, neither/both. Preferably, questions about gender would not be asked at all.

Resources:

Online Registration and Payments  
[Jumpstart it](#)  
[Formrouter](#)  
[Regonline](#)  
[eHow](#)  
[Create a form using Google Docs](#)  
[PayPal](#)  
[Google Checkout](#)

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28 Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): An independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world’s forests. FSC certification provides a credible link between responsible production and consumption of forest products.



### c) Printing considerations

If you have exhausted all other advertising methods, or if there is an event material that you feel must be printed, here are a few suggestions of what you should consider when printing:

- ✓ Use chlorine-free paper that is 100% post-consumer recycled content.
- ✓ Utilize [Forest Stewardship Council \(FSC\)](#) certified paper.
- ✓ Print double sided.
- ✓ Minimize the number of different colors of ink used.
- ✓ Minimize area covered by ink (use line drawings etc.) and avoid metallic and florescent inks.
- ✓ Print on smaller surfaces (use bookmarks for program instead of a folded sheet of paper).
- ✓ Use printing services with vegetable based inks.
- ✓ Place the recycle logo on materials or make a notation reminding users to recycle the material.

Sustainable Printing Services Resources:

[Green Printer Rubiks](#)

### d) Event materials

It is likely that you will need materials like decorations, signs, and nametags for the day of the event. Much like publicity and registration it is best to think local and about creating less waste.

- ✓ Select live plants, local flowers, or use natural materials as centerpieces and decoration. Give away, raffle or donate them at the end of the event to participants or charities.
- ✓ Ask if anyone you know has an interesting collection or hobby that could be borrowed as centerpieces for the event. For example, someone may have a collection of snow globes or hand-made candles.
- ✓ Where possible, borrow equipment or buy second hand materials instead of buying new.
- ✓ If new materials are being used, choose those which do not off-gas hazardous chemicals

#### I. Giveaways



Many events give away keepsakes of the event or gifts for speakers. When selecting items for these purposes keep in mind the lifecycle<sup>29</sup> of the item, ask yourself: how long will it be before this gift ends up in the landfill? What kind of waste was produced manufacturing this item? What kind of conditions was this product made under? How far was it shipped? Here are a few ways to lessen the impact of gifts.

- ✓ Gifts should be locally and ethically made, from ecologically sound materials (recycled or post-consumer content, etc.).

29 Lifecycle: The environmental impact of all stages of a product (acquiring raw resources, production, transportation, distribution, disposal, etc).



- ✓ Let participants know this will be a sustainable event and as such they will be expected to provide themselves with items they might normally be given. For example, ask them to bring their own pen and paper. Tell conference-goers that conference bags will not be provided – they can bring their own briefcase or knapsack.
- ✓ If appropriate, mugs, water bottles, or reusable bags could be given. Make sure that they are BPA-free (if plastic) and aluminum-free (if metal), and that bags are made out of sustainable materials, such as organic cotton, recycled plastic, or bamboo.
- ✓ Remember that a gift does not have to be an item at all, consider prizes that have less of an environmental impact such as kayak lessons, movie, theatre or concert tickets, dinner at a local restaurant or massage services.
- ✓ Consider a prize or gift that primarily helps impoverished people locally, or internationally. (link to charity section at very end)
- ✓ Consider the keepsake to be a donation made in the speaker's name, for example.
- ✓ Consider gifts and giveaways that are local, sustainable or represent something about the community. For example presenting a Quebec wine, maple syrup or honey would be an excellent example of a local gift that is representative of the community.
- ✓ Consider getting buttons made from the [Concordia Co-op](#) bookstore or a gift certificate to the bookstore or another Co-op.

Resources:

Gifts

[Co-op La Maison Verte](#)

[Concordia Co-op](#)

[Dix Mille Villages](#)

II. Decorations



- ✓ For decorations use living plants native to the area or locally grown and harvested flowers that are in season. The Botanical Garden has a French-only resource that gives a week-by-week breakdown of plants in bloom.
- ✓ A general English version of plants in bloom is also available. These may vary based on rainfall and other weather conditions.
- ✓ If your event takes place during the dead of winter, consider using locally grown evergreen boughs, pinecones and berries for your centerpiece – festive and sustainable!
- ✓ If appropriate, talk to the [Fine Arts Department](#); they are often open to project ideas and you could have custom décor made by Concordia's very own art students.
- ✓ Raffle off the decorations as prizes at the end of the event.

Resources:

Botanical Resources

[What's in season in Montreal](#)

[Week-by week blooms at Botanical Gardens \(French-only\)](#)



### III. Tableware

There is no excuse for disposable dishware! R4 Concordia has a free reusable dishes/linens program, just call ahead of time and reserve as many dishes, linens, glasses, trays and cutlery as you need. If R4 dishes are already reserved, look for other locations around Montreal (McGill plate club, for example) that provide similar services. If really pressed, opt for compostable dishes.

- ✓ All tableware (cutlery, dishes, mugs etc.) must be reusable. Use reusable napkins or compostable napkins made of 100% post-consumer recycled content.

Hopefully you have found a set of reusable dishes for your event but if you have not, consider the following guidelines:

- ✓ Do not use Styrofoam or number 6 plastics, because they are not recyclable.
- ✓ Use biodegradable dishware and compost them along with the rest of the food provided.
- ✓ Ask participants to bring their own mug and container for food. For a departmental lunch or club meeting start a crazy mug competition as a conversation starter.
- ✓ Use uncooked noodles as coffee/tea stirrers instead of plastic spoons or straws, and be sure to compost them.



### IV. Nametags

- ✓ Reuse materials and found objects to make nametags, tickets, banners, awards, etc.
- ✓ Ask people to bring any nametag holders they've collected from other conferences and fill them with standard nametags.
- ✓ If you want to provide your own nametags, don't laminate them. Instead use plastic clip-ons and ask participants to return them at the end of the event. Place a bin to collect the nametags by coat check, and ask the staff to remind participants.
- ✓ If your organization will not need name tags or other materials again, donate them to [the R4 dish project](#) to be reused.
- ✓ If the size of the group is small, play some fun icebreakers instead of making nametags.



### V. Signage

- ✓ If you need directional signs during your event, think of a design that allows you to reuse them in the future. If the signs can't be reused, see if the wood sticks or other parts of the signs can be reused.
- ✓ Use paper that has already been used on one side to make your signs.
- ✓ Use chalkboards or marker boards.



### VI. Workshops

- ✓ Use reusable chalk boards or use water-based, non-toxic markers on reusable white boards instead of paper boards. Use reused materials when possible for workshops and activities.
- ✓ If you are having workshops, use chalkboards and white boards with nontoxic ink.
- ✓ If paper is necessary, use one-sided paper. If you are worried about presentation, [R4 Concordia](#) makes beautiful one-sided notebooks that you can custom design.



## Food and Beverage

Food is a fun way to introduce local culture and educate participants on the interconnected issues of environment, economics and society by getting folks thinking about where their food and drink come from. Making informed food choices also provides an opportunity to reduce the carbon emissions of the event.

The food that is served at an event is a reflection of the principles of the event organizers and their commitment to sustainability. Utilize this aspect to showcase your ideals and to lower your ecological footprint.



### a) Sourcing

The origin and the manner in which food is grown can have a huge impact on whether that product is considered sustainable. Most crops are grown in a monoculture dependent on pesticides and fertilizer, which are both made up of petroleum. Additionally, most produce is transported from far away, further adding to greenhouse gas emissions. Choosing minimally processed and packaged food is a great way to reduce waste and energy. In general, the most sustainable products are organic, seasonal and local, by companies that give a fair wage to those who produced it. Buying local not only reduces your ecological footprint; it supports the regional economy.

Considerations for sourcing criteria:

- ✓ Think local! It can be tough to plan a locally grown meal during the Montreal winter but with a little creativity it's totally possible. [Mangezquebec](#) and [Metro](#) have an excellent listing of fruits and vegetables in season. One local delicacy within Quebec is cheese. Try the variety!
- ✓ This [Globe and Mail article](#) gives an overview of Quebec cheese. [Metro](#) is also a good place to read up on cheeses and which would be good to serve.
- ✓ Choose foods that are in season. Work with the caterer and buy fresh fruits and vegetables from the [farmers market](#).
- ✓ For guidance on sustainable seafood, look for products certified by the [Marine Stewardship Council](#), or species recommended by the [Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch](#). Fish on [Greenpeace's Red List](#) should be avoided because of their negative environmental impact.

Sourcing method:

A hierarchical approach to sourcing is often the easiest approach. The first step is to prioritize your criteria for food – is organic more important than locally sourced, or vice versa? Here is an example of a prioritized hierarchical sourcing method:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1) organic <sup>30</sup> , local and seasonal               | 7) organic, fair trade certified  |
| 2) organic and local  | 8) seasonal, fair trade certified |
| 3) local and seasonal                                       | 9) organic                        |
| 4) organic and seasonal, fair trade certified <sup>31</sup> | 10) seasonal                      |
| 5) local  | 11) fair trade certified          |
| 6) organic and seasonal                                     |                                   |

30 Organic foods: Are not grown using synthetic fertilizers, chemicals or sewage sludge and they cannot be genetically modified or irradiated. Organic meat and poultry must be fed only organically-grown feed and cannot be treated with hormones or antibiotics.

31 Fair Trade Certified: Independent product certification scheme indicating that environmental, social, and economic standards have been met. These standards can include collective.

Start at the top of the list. If the product that you want is not available with these criteria, move down the list to the next set of criteria.

Offering vegetarian<sup>32</sup> and/or vegan<sup>33</sup> food in the menu selection is not only accommodating vegans and vegetarians, it is also a great way to reduce your ecological footprint. Many people are starting to eat less meat as a means of reducing their impact on the environment, do not feel that the lack of a meat option will be a mark against you. Make sure to serve fair-trade certified coffee, tea, rice and sugar.



## b) Food labels

The most difficult part of purchasing sustainable food is deciphering all of the different labels and certifications that declare if food is organic and fair-trade. Explanations of common sustainable certifications can be found at [Ecolife](#). Check out the common food labels section for some helpful definitions of these mysterious labels.



## c) Respecting dietary needs

- ✓ Offering tasty and filling vegan and vegetarian options makes the event accessible to folks who choose not to or cannot eat meat, dairy, or other animal products.
  - ✓ To get some vegan and vegetarian food ideas, check out the sample catering menus.
  - ✓ Keep in mind that some participants may follow dietary rules such as Halal or Kosher.
  - ✓ Label products that contain common possible allergens. This includes gluten, nuts, sulphite, or msg.
- Make healthy food. Your participants will be more energetic if they eat veggies and whole grains as opposed to processed foods and white starch.



## d) Catering

Concordia Venues:

Catered events at Concordia University must use one of the approved caterers. This gives you several options for sustainable food. Brainstorm menu items ahead of time and then sit down with the catering company to discuss the feasibility of these items.

Some places on campus do not fall under exclusivity contract restrictions, meaning that you can choose to hire an outside catering company. Right here on campus, [the People's Potato](#) will sometimes cater events related to social or environmental justice issues, if given at least one week's notice.

You also have the option of providing your own food for the event. However, if your menu contains products that must be kept and served hot or cold (such as meat or dairy), you will need to apply for special events permit at least 20 days before your event.

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32 Vegetarian: A person who does not eat or does not believe in eating meat, fish, fowl, or, in some cases, but subsists on vegetables, fruits, nuts, grain, etc.

33 Vegan: A vegetarian who omits all animal products from the diet.

Non-Concordia Venues:

If your event is held off-campus, use similar guidelines to the sponsorship guidelines you have developed when evaluating potential caterers. Decisions about spending money should be based on a sustainable purchasing policy. As with any other endeavor it is essential to define some objectives to facilitate decision-making.



#### e) Beverages

Again, use local, organic and fair-trade options where available and guide your choices by referring to the hierarchical sourcing method outlined above. Avoid bottled water - it is overly expensive, creates unnecessary waste and represents the privatization of a human and ecological right. See the water conservation section for ideas of how to avoid bottled water. If alcohol is to be served, ensure it is administered responsibly and is sensitive to the needs of non-drinkers (make sure the safety of the space and of participants is secured).

- ✓ Quebec has a unique history within North America. This history is further highlighted in its wine growing tradition, which has seen a recent expansion. Quebec wines have won awards since 1992. A good description of the wines and their characteristics can be found on the website of the [Wines of Quebec](#).
- ✓ Provide non-alcoholic options when appropriate. Quebec offers non-alcoholic ciders.
- ✓ Wine is usually paired with cheese; more information about pairing can be found through [Wines of Quebec](#).
- ✓ Search the [SAQ website](#) for local, organic, or fair-trade wine.
- ✓ Following the creation by the USDA of NOP (National Organic Program), an organic wine is defined as "a wine made from organically grown grapes without any added sulfites". By this restriction, the vast majority of what people have been calling organic wines can now only be referred to as "wines made from organic grapes" (or organically grown grapes), since they are allowed to contain up to 100 ppm of added sulfites.



#### f) Food waste

Providing food at an event can produce a lot of waste, but this can be minimized with proper planning.

- ✓ Avoid the unnecessary waste created by individually packaged milk, sugar, condiments, juice, etc. by buying in bulk and storing products in reusable containers. Keep this area tidy and hygienic so participants feel more comfortable.

Food that is not able to be given away should be composted. Distribute leftover baked goods that do not contain cream or custard and bottled or canned beverages to charity or participants. If your event is held at a university, you are literally surrounded by really hungry students! Some suggested ways to redistribute the leftovers are:

- ✓ Bring them back to your office and give them to volunteers or co-workers.
- ✓ Encourage participants to take them home in their own containers.
- ✓ Step into the hallway and inform passers-by that there is free food.
- ✓ Donate it to a local shelter or food bank. For \$50, [La Tablee des Chefs](#) will pick up most leftover food if it is refrigerated properly within two hours.

Some general rules about giving away food are:

- ✓ Do not distribute anything with cream, custard or meat that has been left out for over two hours.
- ✓ Do not distribute half eaten food. Only distribute what has been in the refrigerator and is unopened.

Concordia Venues:

Ask the [People's Potato](#) or [Le Frigo Vert](#) if they would like to distribute them to their patrons.

## Resources

Local Food:

[Mangezquebec](#)  
[Farmers Markets in Montreal](#)  
[Metro's Harvest Calendar](#)

Vegetarian and Vegan Sample Menus:

[Chef Becky's Sample Vegetarian Menu](#)  
[Red Lentil's Sample Vegan Menu](#)

Local Cheese and Wine:

[On the Quebec Cheese Trail \(Globe & Mail Article\)](#)  
[Metro Cheese](#)  
[Quebec Wines](#)  
[SAQ products](#)  
[Vins du Quebec food-wine pairings](#)

Local and/or Sustainable Wine:

[Quebec Wines](#)  
[SAQ products](#)  
[Vins du Quebec food-wine pairings](#)

Sustainable Seafood:

[Marine Stewardship Council](#)  
[Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch](#)  
[Greenpeace's Red List](#)

Catering:

[Concordia-Approved Caterers List](#)  
[Special Events Permit for Self-Catered Events](#)  
[People's Potato](#)

Self-Catering:

[People's Potato](#)  
[Sustainable Purchasing Policy](#)

Distribution of Leftovers:

[La Tablee des Chefs](#)  
[Moisson Montreal](#)  
[People's Potato](#)  
[Le Frigo Vert](#)



# EVALUATING & CERTIFYING YOUR EVENT (Stage III)

## 1. CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:

The criteria for a successful event will become clear after the goals have been set. The group should create a checklist of all of the goals that were agreed upon; this will make it easy to evaluate the success of the event once it's over. You can even post it on the wall if the group works out of an office. These criteria will also help you assess whether you met your sustainability goals.

These criteria can be crucial if the group decides that the event should become a yearly, monthly or weekly happening; the criteria will prove to sponsors, administration and the community that the event was successful and that there is a demand for it.

## 2. MEET WITH SUSTAINABLE CONCORDIA:

Book an appointment and come to our office to have a free sustainable event consultation. The Event Guide Coordinator will explain how your event can become certified sustainable. At this meeting we can go through the guide step-by step, or skip to the content that may need some clarification. We can also tell you about new resources or ideas that you might be able to use.

## 3. REVIEW THE EVENT CHECKLIST:

Aside from reviewing the checklist with Sustainable Concordia during your consultation, make sure to review the event checklist with your committee or specific volunteers. Be prepared to explain why, how, and when things are done in a certain way in order for them to be considered sustainable.

## 4. ENSURE THAT SOMEONE IS THERE TO EVALUATE YOUR EVENT:

Once you have decided with sustainable actions from the checklist you would like to incorporate into your event, assign one volunteer to evaluate the planning process and the day of the event itself. This is crucial to see how you have adhered to your goals, and to provide the necessary paperwork to get certified. At the same time, be sure our Sustainable Event Guide banner is present to let attendees know your event is in the process of being certified. Once this is completed and your event is evaluated, the next step is commemorating your hard work.

## 5. CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS!

After the self-evaluation has been completed, the next step is to bring these results to the Sustainable Event Guide Coordinator for signing off on your successful sustainable event. As you will see in the checklist, a sustainable event falls into 1 of 4 categories:

Bronze (<40 points)

Silver (<60 points)

Gold (<80 points)

and for a zero-waste event we now offer a Green certified event (<100 points)!

Now that you have had your event certified by Sustainable Concordia place your certification award somewhere noticeable and be proud of your achievement. Also don't forget to let your attendees know the sustainable rating of your event in your post-event follow up, and be sure to advertise for next years' event the commitment your committee made to making our campus one that is more ecologically aware, socially just, and economically responsible.

## Glossary

### Food:

Many labels are not universally agreed upon, so below are summaries of explanations. Label is the search feature in the [eco label website](#). Learn more about a label or the certifying body and its criteria and ideals.

#### 100% VEGETARIAN DIET:

Animals are not fed any animal byproducts. Supplements or additives should not be used.

#### BEYOND ORGANIC:

This label was developed after the USDA had created a baseline for organic farms. Some people felt that the USDA standards were not stringent enough, hence 'beyond organic' was created as a new label with new standards for organic farming practices.

#### BIODYNAMIC:

This holistic method is based on the philosophy that all aspects of the farm are part of an interrelated ecosystem. Biodynamic farmers work in harmony with nature and use a range of techniques to foster a sustainable, prolific environment.

#### CAGE FREE/FREE WALKERS:

Birds are raised without cages. They may have been raised indoors or outdoors; there's no indication of how crowded their conditions were.

#### FREE RANGE/ROAMING:

Animals have some access to the outdoors, but don't necessarily go outside. As long as a door to the outdoors is left open for some period of time, an animal can be considered Free Range.



#### GRAIN-FED:

Animals are raised on grain (most commonly corn), which may be supplemented with animal byproducts and other [strange] matter such as cement dust. Unless the label says "100% Vegetarian Diet," there is no guarantee that the animal's feed was not supplemented with animal byproducts or is organic.

#### GRASS-FED:

Animals eat only grass. Most graze naturally while roaming the pasture, but technically, they could be raised indoors. Grass-fed meats should be free of antibiotics, synthetic hormones, grain and animal byproducts.

#### GRASS-FED/GRAIN SUPPLEMENTED:

Animals are raised on grasses, but grains are added slowly into the diet. By controlling the amount of grain, the animals do not become sick or develop digestion problems that grain-only cattle develop.

#### HERITAGE:

Foods are derived from rare and endangered species or breeds. Most, but not all, heritage farmers use sustainable production methods. Heritage food production saves animals from extinction and preserves genetic diversity.

#### HUMANELY RAISED:

Animals are raised in the most humane, sanitary, and ethical conditions from birth to slaughter. Growth hormones and regular use of antibiotics are prohibited. Producers must comply with local, state and federal environmental standards.

#### IPM (INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT):

Pests are controlled using natural methods, such as habitat manipulation, biological control, and pest resistant plants. Pesticides are used in the smallest possible amounts, only when other techniques prove inadequate.

#### NATURAL:

USDA "natural" applies to meat and poultry only, and means that animals don't contain artificial colors, artificial flavors, preservatives, or artificial ingredients. This label does NOT indicate the product is sustainable, organic, humanely raised, or free of hormones and antibiotics.

#### NO ANTIBIOTICS ADMINISTERED:

No antibiotics are administered to the animal during its lifetime.

#### NO HORMONES ADMINISTERED OR NO ADDED HORMONES:

Animals are raised without added growth hormones. By law, hogs and poultry cannot be given hormones anyway.

#### ORGANIC:

Organic foods are not grown using synthetic fertilizers, chemicals or sewage sludge, and they cannot be genetically modified or irradiated. Organic meat and poultry must be fed only organically-grown feed (without any animal byproducts) and cannot be treated with hormones or antibiotics. Animals must have access to the outdoors, and ruminants must have access to pasture.

#### PASTURED OR PASTURE-RAISED:

Animals are raised on a pasture and eat pasture plants and grasses.

### RBGH-FREE OR RBST-FREE:

Recombinant bovine growth hormone (RBGH) and bovine somatotropin (RBST) are GMO hormones that are used in dairy cows to artificially increase their milk production. Organic milk is RBGH- and RBST-free.

### SUSTAINABLE:

Food production that does not entail the depletion of natural resources, negative impacts (such as soil contamination or water pollution) on the surrounding environment or negative social impacts on the surrounding community. It is more of a philosophy or way of life rather than a label.

### TRANSITIONAL ORGANIC:

This is a claim that is not verified by a third party and is used by farms that are completing the three year transition period towards becoming organic. There is no certainty that these farms will receive the certification organic during this period.

The majority of the above information is taken from the [Om Organics](#) website.

## Resources

### Sources of Funding

A great way to publicize your Club, Department or Association and to educate the Concordia community is to have a guest speaker give a lecture on a topic of concern for your organization or have an informative project. There are a number of places to obtain funding for such expenses as honorariums, travel, hotel, and rental of venues:

**Clubs Special Project Fund:** The CSU has established a \$20,000 Clubs Special Projects Fund. This fund will be available throughout the year to any undergraduate student or CSU club. For more information, please contact Catherine at 848-7573.

**Dean of Students Office:** The Dean of Students administers a Special Projects Fund for the Concordia Council on Student Life (CCSL). Apply by handing in a proposal for your project to the Dean of Students Office located at either AD121 or H-637. Inquire about deadlines for applications, and apply early in the year if at all possible.

The Dean's Special Project Fund gives donations usually not exceeding \$800.00, and is usually based on the amount of contributions from other sources, along with the merit of the proposal.

The Special Projects Committee is looking for proposals that benefit the entire Concordia community and bring "prestige" to the University. Try to go to as many of the following sources as possible for support to ensure a higher contribution from the Special Projects Fund and an overall source of revenue.

**New Students Program:** This is part of CCSL, and collects a fee from all new students (approximately \$200,000). The money is spent on orientation projects although a lot of it is used internally; about \$80,000 is set aside for student initiatives. You can apply to the NSP fund in June for projects aimed at the whole Concordia community. The projects don't need to happen in orientation period, but as said before must have the whole community as an intended audience. Apply by handing in a plan for your proposal to H-440 or AD-103.

**Office of the President:** Although very little money is normally given for projects, you can still apply to the Office of the President for funding. Apply by handing in a proposal for your project to the President's office at GM-801.

Colleges, Schools and Departments: For a speaker of an academic nature, funds can be made available through the related department. For example, if you are bringing in a speaker on an environmental issue, the Department of Geography could contribute funding. Again, apply early, as funding is limited. Contributions from departments vary, but tend to be approximately \$100. Apply by handing in a plan for your project to the department. Remember if your project touches on more than one issue apply to more than one department.

Office of Alumni Affairs: There are three Alumni funds to apply to, the Sir George Alumni, the Loyola Alumni and the Concordia Alumni. The Loyola Alumni have more money than the Sir George Alumni, but tend to only fund things that benefit the Loyola campus. As well, the office of Alumni Affairs, that administers both groups, has a small fund available for student projects. Apply by handing in a plan for your project to 1250 Guy St.

Foundations: There are numerous foundations that give money to specific projects. More often than not, non-profit or charitable status is required to obtain these funds. Foundations have strict deadlines, and you must submit a lot of documentation for them to look at your proposal.

Seed Money (CSU groups): Seed money (starting money for fundraising events) is available for revenue generating events to all CSU groups that are in good financial standing with the Student Union. If you would like to request seed money, please type up a description of your event and list the following in detail: All related expenses, Description of event, Anticipated revenues, A firm repayment date. Once this has been submitted and reviewed, a 'Seed Money' contract will be drafted if the proposal is approved.

## CHARITIES

### Quebeçois Charities:

#### [Club des petits dejeuners du Quebec:](#)

Does its utmost to ensure that every child receives two elements required for learning: a nutritious breakfast and a nourishing environment.

#### [Dans la Rue:](#)

grassroots, community-based organization that works with street kids and at-risk youth aged 12 to 25.

#### [Old Brewery Mission:](#)

provides homeless Montreal Adults with meals, overnight shelter, transitional residences, clothing and services in an atmosphere of caring and respect.

#### [The Benedict Labre House:](#)

Providing guests of the House with essential services such as hot meals, emergency food bags, clothing, showers, as well as providing a variety of individualized services and programs, all which are available at no cost to its guests.

### Canadian Charities:

#### [United Way of Canada Centraide:](#)

Community economic and social development?

#### [Trans Canada Trail:](#)

Creating a hiking trail that stretches across Canada.

### Community Forests International:

A volunteer-driven organization, working to connect people and their communities to the forests that sustain them. As the pace of environmental degradation intensifies around the world, the need for positive environmental stewardship and a restored balance between humanity and nature has become a necessity.

## International Charities:

### Oxfam Unwrapped:

program funnels donations into specific projects, like buying a family a goat or digging them a well.

### Spread The Net:

Provides a mosquito net to a child to prevent malaria.

### Trees for Life:

Donate money to a certain project around the world, such as a community library, fruit trees, or educational materials. Projects are generally initiated and led by members of that community.

### Doctors without Borders:

Provides independent, impartial assistance in more than 60 countries to people whose survival is threatened by violence, neglect, or catastrophe, primarily due to armed conflict, epidemics, malnutrition, exclusion from health care or natural disasters.

### Taking Root:

Taking Root is a non-profit organization based in Montreal that develops social reforestation projects in collaboration with small-scale farmers in Nicaragua. Its activities are funded through the sale of third-party verified carbon offsets to businesses and individuals around the world.

## Sustainable Concordia's Contact:

<http://sustainable.concordia.ca>

Sustainable Concordia is located at 2090 Mackay (Annex Z), and the Sustainable Ambassadors Program operates out of suite 204-1

To reach the Sustainable Event Guide Coordinator contact:

514.848.2424 ext 5177

[suscon.seg@gmail.com](mailto:suscon.seg@gmail.com)

To reach the Sustainable Ambassadors Coordinator contact:

514.848.2424 ext 5177

[sustainable.a@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:sustainable.a@alcor.concordia.ca)

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