



UCLA Green Events Certification Guide

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

UCLA Green Events Certification Guide

What is a Green Event?

How would you like your campus event to stand high above the rest? [Go green and get noticed!](#) When you certify your event as a Green Event, you're letting your guests know, along with the entire campus community, that you are committed to the environment by hosting an [event that is eco-friendly and sustainable](#). And with over 10,000 events on campus each year, your event will be a clear standout when certified with this unique honor.

UCLA, along with the entire UC System, has made a far-reaching commitment to sustainability, including a goal of zero waste sent to landfills by 2020. Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Basically, it's wise management of resources with a long term view. And the best part is, we can all play a role!

This guide will walk you through the necessary steps to plan and execute your green event, plus assist you in completing your online Green Events Certification application. Once you've successfully completed the application, you will be awarded the Green Event Certification Seal that you can proudly display on all promotional items for your event.

Quick Reference Guide

For those of you who are new to planning sustainable events and wish to qualify for a Green Event Certification, here are a few suggestions on how to best transform your event into an environmentally friendly one. For those of you familiar with planning sustainable events, we encourage you to review this guide as you may discover new ways to green your event even more. Many of the suggestions listed here can be used for both large and small venues, whether you're hosting a big conference involving a number of off-campus guests or an intimate potluck for department colleagues.

If you have any questions along the way, please contact the Events Office at green@events.ucla.edu.

General Suggestions

Be realistic – It's not always easy or reasonable to implement everything listed in this guide. But start with ideas that are easiest for you to execute and as you go forward and plan more events, add additional sustainable elements to each new event.

Make a commitment – Advertise your event as a sustainable one! Let your participants know that you are committed to hosting an environmentally sound event. Then, wow them with an amazing green event.

Choose products that are recyclable or reusable – Think about sustainability before you place supply orders. Choose products that can be recycled, reused, or produced in a green way.

Utilize natural light – Hold events during daylight hours and in locations that can be lit naturally.

Avoid midday events indoors – Energy demand is highest during afternoon hours and since the UCLA Cogeneration Plant does not provide all the energy needed by the campus during the day, extra energy is supplied by Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, which includes coal power. Using energy at peak times is also more expensive than at other times of the day.

Make sustainable choices for temporary power needs – Consider using a bio-diesel generator instead of a propane or regular diesel generator. For assistance in locating an eco-friendly generator, contact the Events Office.

Thank your participants for contributing – Let your guests know they are part of something special!

Share your success – Share your success stories with us so that we can feature them on the [Events Office's Green Events](#) website. Not only will your event stand out as unique, other event organizers will be inspired to go green as well!

Before the Event

As you'll discover, the majority of what makes an event green requires planning prior to the event itself. Plus, you can make the planning process green as well.

Here are some suggestions –

Organizing and planning

- Print double-sided or use scrap paper for checklists and materials when organizing your event
- Use whiteboards or a flat screen TV to post important information during planning sessions rather than printing meeting handouts

If handouts are required

- Use paper made with a high percentage of post-consumer material
- Print double-sided
- Use [soy-based ink](#)
- Provide an accessible drop-off point for materials to be reused or recycled after the meeting ends

Communicating with guests

- Use only electronic communication (such as email, facebook, etc.) for invitations, event registration, announcements and updates
- Ask event participants to bring their own coffee mugs and water cups, as well as paper and writing utensils
- Encourage guests to stay at sustainability-minded hotels (See a list of suggestions in the *Transportation and Accommodation* section) and take green transportation to the event (public transit, bike, hybrid rental vehicles, etc.). Provide sustainable transportation resources like public transit schedules and carpooling services

Inform your caterer that you're planning a green event

- Ask for compostable or recyclable serving ware if you're having a more casual event, or reusable dishware if you're having a more formal event
- Avoid boxed meals and individually packaged foods (chips, cookies, etc.)
- For formal events, ask servers to pour water only on request. For casual events, provide water stations instead of individual water bottles
- Avoid serving meat, especially beef which is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption
- Serve local, organic, [Fair Trade Certified](#) and [humanely raised food](#)
- Provide reusable drink ware and utensils, and use bulk condiment serving containers to reduce the use of single use products
- Ask caterers to provide signage explaining how they contributed in making the event green (such as sustainable food offerings, a limited waste plan, etc.)

Reusable décor

- Use live herbs and other plants for centerpieces and offer them to guests to take with them after the event
- Use materials that can be reused for future events (signage, name tags, general handouts, etc.)
- Support the community by asking local vendors or schools to donate artwork and use the art pieces for decorations instead of paper decorations
- Use fruit baskets, [locally grown flowers](#), or decorative water and stone vases for centerpieces
- Use [LED lights](#)
- Minimize the use of petroleum-based candles
- Use reusable table linens to cover tables. If reusable linens are not available, use unbleached butcher paper and compost them after your event

Waste management

- Create a recycling/waste plan (see chart below). Contact the Events Office or Facilities Management to help coordinate the delivery, set up, and pick up of waste bins
- Plan your event as a zero waste event (zero waste events mean that all waste produced from the event is either recycled or composted)
- Have volunteers stand by waste bins to assist guests in sorting waste

Other considerations

- If you must use portable electricity, it's best to use a bio-diesel generator. Contact the Events Office for details on rentals and operating instructions
- Always communicate your sustainability goals with vendors
- Upload presentations onto USB flash drives for your guests, or post them online following the event rather than printing hardcopies
- Purchase gifts or giveaways that are recycled or can be reused

During the event

- Request vendors to turn off their vehicles instead of idling when making deliveries or during set ups
- Use whiteboards or flat screen TVs to post announcements
- Provide reusable name badges and collect them at the conclusion of the event
- Use power strips for all electronic equipment (laptops, projectors, etc.) and shut off power strips during breaks or between sessions
- Remind participants to unplug phone chargers or laptops when their equipment is fully charged
- Use rechargeable batteries for electronic devices (cameras, laser pointers, etc.)
- Only distribute paper materials (like handouts or notepads) upon request
- Thank your guests for the considerations they've taken to make this a green event
- Encourage guests to take home items such as centerpieces and artwork
- Post signage or have volunteers direct participants to waste stations

After the event

- Discuss with vendors the possibility of recycling excess materials after the event rather than disposing them
- Make plans to donate materials and centerpieces after the event. [The Goodwill](#) is a great place to donate items like linens, art supplies, reusable center piece material and more. Check with your catering company on where best to donate food
- Collect all items that can be reused later and store them for future events
- Again, share your success stories with us and we'll feature them on the [Events Office's Green Events](#) website!

Green Events Certification

The following is a comprehensive list of actions broken down into event planning categories and can be used as a reference point to complete your Green Events Certification application. Not every recommendation will apply to every event, but feel free to return to this list for suggestions when planning future events.

Décor

Centerpieces – Use live herb, plant, or uncut floral centerpieces that can be offered to guests at the end of the event (suggest planting them at home!). Again, we encourage you to purchase locally grown flowers or use decorative water and stone vases for centerpieces. Other options include fresh fruit that guests can eat or a basket of promotional giveaways that guests can take with them as fun party favors.

Lighting – Use LED lights to light your event when possible. Minimize the use of petroleum-based candles and instead use beeswax candles. Better yet, use battery operated votives as they are not only reusable, but meet fire code safety standards.

Linens – For table tops, use linens if possible. If you are renting from a catering company, check with the vendor to make sure linens are cleaned using environmentally friendly products. Do not use plastic table linens or disposable placemats. If you must use single-use table covers, use unbleached butcher paper which is compostable and can be fun for your guests to decorate.

Decorations – Limit the use of balloons as they are not biodegradable. Instead use banners, flags, ribbon streamers, paper pom-poms, or paper lanterns. If you want to avoid disposable decorations, ask local vendors or schools to donate artwork and then offer the artwork to guests at the end of the event.

Reuse material – Take advantage of materials, centerpieces and signage that you can use again for future events.

Communication & Supplies

Electronic event invitations and registration – Send invitations and conduct event registration electronically. Use web or email-based registration systems such as evite.com or regOnline.com.

Avoid printing handouts – If possible, save paper by directing attendees to your website via email or the electronic invitation, or offer the conference materials and presentations on a USB flash drive.

If handouts are necessary, print double-sided – and only use post-consumer recycled paper as some recycled papers are only produced with 10-30% post-consumer product. Use [processed chlorine free or total chlorine free](#) paper to reduce toxins. For checklists and materials designated only for event organizers, print double-sided or use scrap paper.

Print with soy or vegetable based inks – Soy and Vegetable based ink is less harmful to the environment than their petroleum based counterparts.

Post information on whiteboards or flat screens TVs – Using signage for schedules and program information can reduce the need for printed flyers and booklets.

Highlight your event as sustainable – Inform guests that they are participating in a green event by placing signage at the entrance of the event. Signs and program material could also offer suggestions on how attendees could help make the event even greener by offering public transit schedules and recommending sustainable restaurants in the area.

Provide reusable name badges – Disposable sticker badges are not recyclable. Reusable badges can be collected at the event's conclusion and used for future gatherings.

Encourage participants to bring their own paper and pens – This can be mentioned in the invitation. Have pens and recycled or scrap paper available for guests upon request.

Create Recycling Stations – Provide a convenient location for participants to return handouts (instructions, campus map, etc.) that can be reused for future events.

Food & Beverages

Utensils – Minimize unnecessary utensils and paper products. A great amount of waste at events derives from packaging. Consider the following:

- Serve food items that don't require utensils
- Ask your caterer to provide compostable options for plates, cups, and flatware
- When using disposable tableware, use items labeled with recycling codes #1-7
- Avoid [Styrofoam](#) containers completely
- Keep unused napkins for future events
- Plated dinners on reusable dinnerware are the most sustainable because the plates can be reused and dinners can be portioned properly for the exact number of attendees
- Avoid using doilies or other disposable decorations

Food –

- Make use of campus catering and other on-campus resources to save gas on delivery
- Use local or organic products whenever possible
- Ask your caterer if they serve humanely raised meat and offer [sustainable seafood](#) options
- Consider serving vegetarian or vegan meals. [Beef production](#) is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption
- When providing the caterer with an attendee estimate, avoid ordering more food than is reasonably needed
- Avoid serving boxed lunches
- Serve food on platters that can be reused or dishes that are soy-based
- Avoid individually packaged snacks such as chips and ice cream sandwiches. Ask your caterer to purchase these products in bulk and serve in reusable bowls
- Avoid using individually packaged condiments. Use bulk pumps instead
- Take excess food home or donate it to a shelter after the event. Keep large and medium sized reusable containers and/or tinfoil in the office and use them to take home leftovers, or donate what's left to a local shelter. Be sure to check the leftover food policy with your catering company

The UCOP Sustainable Practices Policy provides guidelines for sourcing sustainable foods. More information can be found [here](#).

Beverages –

- Serve bulk beverages with glassware or with compostable cups
- Serve Fair Trade certified beverages, such as coffee or tea
- If serving alcoholic beverages, investigate sustainably brewed beer and [biodynamic wines](#).
- Ask your caterer to pour water only upon request
- If bottled water is necessary, use refillable water coolers instead of offering individual bottles
- Avoid using single-use stir sticks for coffee and tea, and offer reusable spoons instead

Transportation & Accommodations

Choose event locations and accommodations based on your participants' needs – If your conference or event attendees are predominantly UCLA staff, faculty, or students, hold your event on campus. Campus attendees will save gas and wear and tear on their vehicles.

Hold events in locations that minimize travel – Airplanes and cars are big greenhouse gas emitters. Provide shuttle service or carpool options if your event is far from campus.

Always encourage public transportation – Provide information to your participants about public transit options, such as:

- [LA Metro](#)
- [Santa Monica Big Blue Bus](#)
- [Culver City Bus](#)
- [LADOT Commuter Express](#)
- [FlyAway](#)
- [City of Santa Clarita Transit](#)
- [Antelope Valley Transit Authority](#)
- [Amtrak Thruway Bus Service](#)

Support zero emission transportation – Encourage participants to walk or bike to the event by making your venue easily accessible by foot or bicycle and provide access to secure bicycle storage and/or racks.

Limit car rental usage – Encourage participants to carpool or take public transportation. If rental cars are necessary, request that guest use hybrid or electric vehicles.

Schedule events during off-peak traffic hours – Idling in heavy traffic congestion is a gas guzzler. If your guests need to drive to your event, schedule it during off-peak times like late morning or early afternoon.

Choose sustainable accommodations – Encourage guests to utilize University accommodations. For suggestions, logon to [UCLA Conference Services](#)) or stay at an [eco-friendly hotel](#) near campus.

Waste Management

Determine what types of waste bins work best for your event (see graphic on page 8) – Your event manager or Facilities Management representative can assist you with bin/dumpster needs. Keep in mind that recycling and compost bins cost significantly less than trash bins because there are no landfill fees when recycling or composting waste.



Create signage for waste bins – Provide a list of what goes into each individual bin. Have volunteers assist attendees with using the appropriate bin.

Plan event as a zero waste event – Zero waste events mean that all waste resulting from the event is either recycled or composted - nothing ends up in trash!

For more information on what can be recycled on campus, [Click here](#) to visit the Recycling and Waste portion of the UCLA Sustainability website.