

Certified Green Event Program Action Guide

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Introduction

Hello and welcome again to the Certified Green Event Program at the University of Illinois! The CGEP is a program by the [Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment \(iSEE\)](#), the UI's hub for sustainability-focused research and campus sustainability improvement. We are very excited to be working with you to increase the sustainability of events around our campus!

We've provided this guide so its resources will always be easily accessible, and that each coordinator can complete the program at their own pace prior to their event. Please select **5 or more elective actions** from any category to be qualified for certification. If you have additional questions about how best to complete an action, feel free to contact iSEE at any time at iseegreenoffice@gmail.com.

Happy greening!



**INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY,
ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT**

Updated 11/10/2020

I. Transportation Elective Actions

I. *Elective Action #1: Encourage carpooling for out-of-town attendees, and provide information about lower-carbon ways to travel (e.g. rail instead of flying)*

Carpooling is probably the easiest way to cut transportation emissions to and from events for those who live furthest from the location, where they are unlikely to be able to bike or catch the bus. So, it is very important to encourage the benefits of sharing rides, and to remind everyone that the conveniences of having your own vehicle at all times don't always outweigh the harm burning gasoline does to the planet. The biggest job is going to be getting one started in the first place, you can send out a survey to get an estimate of who is interested in carpooling. In addition, every student and staff member of the university has free CUMTD bus service by showing their I-card! Check out the MTD bus map app, and the [MTD Trip Planner](#) service to create a seamless travel plan across different bus routes.



Image credit: MTD.org

As for lower-carbon ways to travel off campus, here is a list of resources for trains and buses to check out!

- [Amtrak](#) (cross-country train service)
- [Metra](#) (train service within Chicago metropolitan area)
- [Greyhound](#) (cross-country bus service)

- [Trailways](#) (cross-country bus service)
- [Peoria Charter](#) (bus service from Champaign to Chicago & suburbs)

II. *Elective Action #2: Offer teleconference opportunities for attendees to participate remotely.*

On an individual basis, transportation emissions typically make up some of the largest portions of our carbon footprints. There are ways to reduce your work-related emissions if travel is necessary. Choosing to teleconference can significantly cut down your emissions — whether the meeting would have taken place on the other side of campus, elsewhere in the state, or maybe even across the country. Common teleconferencing applications include Skype, Zoom, or even FaceTime for less formal meetings.

III. *Elective Action #3: Hold the event at a location convenient for public transportation, biking, or walking.*

To further encourage the use of active or public transport, choose a location that would be easily reached by these methods. Consider where the majority of attendees are located — if most people are on campus, offer a location near a well connected and central area such as buildings on the Main Quad. Choose a location well connected by frequent and nearby bus stops, and bike/walking paths. Avoid choosing locations that would increase the difficulty of attending without a car whenever possible, such as fringe campus locations, Research Park, iHotel, etc.

II. Energy Use Reduction Elective Actions

IV. **Elective Action #4: Regulate room temperatures and reduce HVAC strain.**

Work with building services to ensure mild temperature in the room (avoiding extreme heat/cooling). Adjust the HVAC as needed to avoid the use of space heaters, fans, etc. Not only will your guests be more comfortable, but it will reduce unnecessary energy use and strain on the HVAC system from constant fluctuations.

V. **Elective Action #5: Choose locations with natural lighting whenever possible to minimize lighting needs.**

Weather and situation permitting, why not hold an event outside? Enjoy the outdoors and reduce lighting use by choosing locations with natural lighting. For example, the Illini Grove has picnic tables, a roofed pavilion, and grills that can be reserved for groups. For a more open area, many students choose to congregate for meetings, fundraising, demonstrations, and more along the Main Quad sidewalks and in front of the Union. If the outdoors is incompatible with your event, choose a well lit location indoors.



Photo credit: Daily Illini

III. Waste Reduction Elective Actions

VI. ***Elective Action #6: Go paperless and offer the event program online.***

Aside from being environmentally friendly, going paperless is also much more affordable and convenient. Offering the conference program online through a website or email will decrease paper waste and save printing or mailing costs. Having an electronic file will be more convenient for both the host and the guests, as transporting, dispensing, and collecting flyers after the event will no longer be necessary. In addition, disposing of the program after the event will be as simple as deleting an email, reducing recycling needs and clutter at once. You can offer your attendees all of the information they need electronically using a smartphone or tablet, and encourage people to bring devices as needed. Make sure to tell attendees in advance that there will be no printed materials, and that materials will be provided electronically. Provide information on how to access your materials, and send them out in advance.

VII. ***Elective Action #7: Use paper with recycled content for any printed materials.***

Using printer paper with at least a portion of recycled content reduces the impact of how much paper we use. Purchasing recycled paper through [iStores](#) is cheaper than buying virgin paper. Talk to whoever is in charge of purchasing in your office to make this change — they should have access to iStores.

1. Go to the iStore portal on the F&S website: <https://my.fs.illinois.edu/fsportal/>
2. Click the COPY PAPER AND SUPPLIES link in the top right sidebar.
3. Click on the case of 30% recycled content paper to order a full case or the ream to order just one ream.
4. Add the product to cart, and checkout.

VIII. ***Elective Action #8: Ensure recycling bins are available at the event location.***

Most of us are probably well aware of the benefits of recycling: reduced raw material extraction, reduced energy consumption, less land and marine litter, and lower landfill usage, just to name a few. Recycling is one of the easiest and most basic actions we can take to be good stewards of the environment. However, be sure to note that University Recycling cannot recycle all the materials that a standard community recycling program does!

- Some people don't know what can be recycled on campus. Signage on the bins can help this problem, so we recommend downloading the [university signs](#).
- If you don't have recycling bins or need new ones, you may be eligible for free ones from Facilities & Services. Request bins at 217-444-7183 or recycling@illinois.edu. More information on Waste Management & Recycling on campus [can be found here](#).

IX. *Elective Action #9: Encourage people to bring their own reusable mugs and/or offer them to attendees as a promotional item.*

Help to reduce waste at the end of an event, especially easily avoidable wastes. Let people know in advance to bring their own reusable mugs to decrease plastic or styrofoam cup usage, and potentially offer a small incentive for doing so. Another option is to offer a reusable mug or canteen as a promotional item, which can be offered as an alternative.

IV. Food & Dining Elective Actions

X. **Elective Action #10: Offer at least one vegetarian or vegan option at all event meals.**

Though it hasn't always been widely known, many are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that animal agriculture is one of the greatest drivers of global warming. This is largely because of the [tremendous amounts of energy](#) required to grow the crops fed to animals, though many other factors such as processing/distribution emissions and methane emitted by cows play a role as well. As such, becoming vegetarian (or even better yet, a vegan) has been [consistently listed](#) as one of the best ways to reduce one's personal carbon footprint. However, any amount of meat reduction in your diet makes a difference (especially reducing beef and other red meats, which require the most energy input). This is why we ask all Green Events to make sure there are meat-free meal options at events. In addition, this will ensure a more inclusive dining experience, so that any guests who are vegan/vegetarian are not excluded and are able to enjoy the entire event as well.

- You can do this through [University Catering](#) or a local restaurant. (The Red Herring Vegetarian Restaurant on campus caters!)
- Pasta, pizza, and empanadas are relatively cheap options and very easy to make vegetarian.
- Have a meatless salad option. When you order, make sure the salad you selected has no chicken, ham, or any other meat. (Or if it does, ask for the meat to be excluded)
- Many soups are also vegetarian-friendly. If given the option to pick one soup, make it vegetarian, and if given the option to pick two, make at least one vegetarian. Be sure to inquire if soups that sound vegetarian actually use a meat-based broth or stock before ordering.
- Similarly, make sure side dishes that sound vegetarian actually are. (For instance, if you see "mashed potatoes," make sure there are no bacon bits).
- Veggie, cheese, bread platters and baskets are good vegetarian sides and snacks, rather than having a meat platter.
- When given the option to choose two entrees, make sure one is vegetarian.

See below for more information on vegetarian options at University Catering:

- Many of Catering's meal options come with salad. Salad selections include Caesar, Mixed Greens, Cole Slaw, Pasta Salad, and Potato Salad. While none of

these salads contain meat, please recall that some Caesar dressings include anchovies.

- Catering's meat-free soup options include Broccoli & White Cheddar, Roasted Tomato with Basil, and Vegetable Minestrone.
- If you want to order the Sandwich Buffet (with choice of side salad) from Catering, the vegetarian sandwiches include the Veggie Dagwood and Vegan Wrap. These sandwiches are also options when ordering Classic Box Lunches, as well as an Entrée Salad.
- University Catering's vegetarian standard buffet options include Stuffed Shells Florentine, Spinach and Ricotta Lasagna, Penne Pasta with Roasted Tomatoes, Basil & Garlic Bread Crumbs.
- Vegetarian friendly theme buffets include the Tuscan Mangia (pasta), Bharata (various Indian dishes), Midwest Barbecue (Black Bean Burger & Three-Cheese Penne).
- Gourmet buffet options include Pasta Puttanesca and Wild Mushroom Lasagna with Fontina.
- Vegetarian table served meals at Catering include Roasted Vegetable Ravioli, Roasted Vegetable Towers, Eggplant Involtini, and Pappardelle Pasta Primavera.

XI. Elective Action #11: Serve local food, and advertise where it's from.

If your event is directly responsible for selecting or preparing food, opt to cater from local restaurants or cook with local foods and produce. This will help to reduce the CO₂ emissions and plastic use associated with food transportation, packaging, and distribution by going straight to the source. In addition, not only will the food be fresher, but it will help support Urbana-Champaign and surrounding communities.

Some great local restaurants and sources for fresh food products include:

- [The Student Sustainable Farm](#)
- [The Red Herring Vegetarian Restaurant](#)
- [Common Grounds Co-Op](#)
- [Urbana's Market at the Square](#)
- [Urbana's Market IN the Square](#)
- [Champaign Farmers Market](#)

Image Credit: Student Sustainable Farm webpage



XII. *Elective Action #12: Offer food/beverages in reusable tableware (no single-use plastics or disposables).*

Ask caterers for options to use non-plastic and returnable utensils (i.e. washable silverware, bamboo utensils, wooden or ceramic chopsticks). If that is not an option, ask caterers to simply bring fewer disposables; events often end with excess plastic utensils and cups that are tossed. You can also consider what types of food items are ordered:

1. Finger foods such as cookies, mini sandwiches, and pizza are popular options that require no utensils.
2. Family-style platters, such as sandwich or cheese platter can reduce the number of individually packaged meals.
3. If condiments typically come with a meal, ask them to bring a bulk size (ketchup, mayo, sugar, salt, etc.) rather than individual packets.

V. Innovation Elective Actions

XIII. ***Elective Action #13: Communicate the ways the event is sustainable and a Green Event via signage, shout-out, or other means.***

Promote your sustainable event by putting the Certified Green Event logo on your program and mentioning it during your event. This will raise awareness about sustainability and can encourage others to do the same!



XIV. ***Elective Action #14: Communicate at the event itself that sustainability is a priority and identify in what ways.***

Communicate to guests what actions or priorities the event holds to promote sustainability, whether through this certification program or otherwise. For example, discuss how your event upholds iCAP 2020 goals, why sustainability is important, or how your organization as a whole is working to undergo sustainability improvements.

XV. ***Elective Action #15: Provide functional giveaway items.***

Avoid giving out gimmicky or non reusable items, such as rubber bracelets, mini Frisbees, or other cheaply made items. Consider the demographic of your guests, and what items will be most likely appreciated — as opposed to thrown out immediately after the event, or broken in a few uses. As mentioned above, promotional mugs with your organization logo can act as a gift and be used during the event. Other commonly used promo items include T-shirts, pens, and stickers, which are all functional. In addition, only offer promotional items to those who request them. For example, rather than handing out a gift to every attendee, have a table of promo items that people can choose to take from. This ensures that only people who want items will take them, reducing potential wastes and minimizing costs.

XVI. ***Elective Action #16: Recruit another event/host to join the program.***

Do you know another upcoming event that the hosts may be interested in making more sustainable? Let them know of this opportunity and what actions your event took. Creating a network of certified events and interested organizations makes this

certification program more effective, and increases support for sharing ideas or consolidating efforts.

XVII. *Elective Action #17: Provide information on other sustainability events or opportunities.*

Consider discussing or provisioning information on other events your guests can participate in. Promote certification programs within the Greener Campus Program (e.g., Certified Green Office, Green Chapter programs, etc.). Recommend upcoming events by other organizations, relevant RSO participation opportunities, sustainability webinars, or a subscription to the iSEE weekly E-Newsletter.

XVIII. *Elective Action #18: Record the event (if hosting online) and make it publicly available afterward.*

If you elected to take on Action #2 and are hosting your event online, consider recording the virtual platform and uploading the event for others to view. This will help to further boost the accessibility of your event, and allow attendees to go back and rewatch sections as desired. In addition, uploading this video on your main webpage, social media, or over email can help to promote your organization and spread the message of your event.

XIX. *Elective Action #19: Come up with your own strategy to make your event more sustainable — and tell us about it!*

If there are any ideas that come to mind right away, or if a specific need arises during the course of certification, let us know! We are always looking to add new and unique ways to connect organizations with sustainable efforts.

V. Conclusion

First and foremost, we at the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment would like to thank you in advance for taking part in the Certified Green Event Program. Every little bit of effort counts when it comes to making our campus greener, and we are looking forward to awarding your certifications!

While we have a master plan for making campus more sustainable (see information about the Illinois Climate Action Plan [here](#)), this plan cannot account for the impact of entities outside the university's direct jurisdiction. By choosing to participate in the CGEP, you are complementing and even further advancing the iCAP's goals and mission by:

- Conserving energy through Elective Actions #4 and #5
- Promoting more sustainable transportation with Elective Actions #1-3.
- Preserving water indirectly through actions such as reducing meat consumption and energy usage.
- Increasing responsible purchasing of ethical and sustainable products, and minimizing waste generation/promoting recycling with Elective Actions #6-9, #11 and #14.
- Reducing the impacts of agriculture, land use, and food with Elective Actions #10-12.

The iCAP allows the campus to work towards each of these general goals on a large scale, but there's absolutely more work to be done, which is why it is so important to engage as many groups as possible. With each office that joins the program, the larger our campus culture of sustainability grows.

As a reminder, remember that CGEP certification is not permanent! Each certification is a designation per event, so getting certified once does not mean you will continue to be certified for upcoming events. This is because sustainability is a continuous process, and we always have more work to do. As such, we would like to ask that you make sure your organization continues to re-enroll with each new event, or let us know if you intend to apply the same actions across a series of events.

We would also love to have a photo gallery of our Certified Green Events! Please send us photos of your event, members, and/or sustainability improvements. We can't wait to see the changes you have made and to recognize all of your agents of change!

Lastly, don't forget that the CGEP is just the beginning — there are endless ways to keep making your own life more sustainable, and we encourage you to continue living by the principles and actions of the program. Please consider doing everything you can to extend the mission of the Certified Green Event Program into your long-term habits, and promote them to your friends and family!

Updated 11/10/2020