

Certified Green Event Program Action Guide

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Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Certified Green Event program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The CGEP is a program by the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment, the University's center 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!

Certification Process

In order to obtain Green Event Certification, your event must commit to a minimum of 6 actions out of the 15 in this guide. You also must commit to at least 2 actions from each section. These 3 sections are categorized as; **Accessibility**, a huge part of sustainability and event planning is ensuring that all people can participate. This section contains actions around transportation and event accessibility.

Conservation, limiting the purchase of items and using items that we already have. This sections actions involve purchasing less and purchasing responsibly, as well as conserving resources like energy and water. **Community**, an event is a great place for community collaboration and connection. Events are opportunities for local vendors to reach new customers. Actions in this section are about how your event impacts and serves your community.

To earn certification, you must submit a pre-event form which includes the event's sustainability liaison's name and contact. This person will be the primary contact for the Green Event Certification process. You will list at least 6 actions, with 2 from each section that your event is committed to. Once your certification has been evaluated, you will receive an email with your certification award. After your event, complete the after-event form within 2 weeks after your event date.

If you have any questions during the certification process, please reach out to the Greener Campus team at greenercampus@illinois.edu.

Accessibility Actions

Commit to at least 2 actions from this category to earn Green Event Certification.

1. Encourage participants to utilize public/active transportation

While messaging about your event, include information on bus stops, encourage carpooling, and encourage active transportation for your attendees.

2. Select a venue with connectivity and accessibility

Ensure that in your venue selection process, that you are choosing a venue that is; along public transportation routes, is walkable from transportation centers, and has accessible entrances.

3. Ensure that your event has an accessible entrance

While not every event building complies with ADA, choosing your venue with accessibility in mind ensures that more people can attend and will be included in your event. On top of having an accessible entrance, make sure that the paths from the entrance to your event space are accessible. Charge an event member to greet guests at this entrance to provide directions or assistance with reaching the event location.

4. Provide Closed Captioning for any videos played during the event

If you play videos or a movie, ensure that closed captioning is available on. Closed captioning provides accessibility of the information you are presenting.

Conservation Actions

Commit to at least 2 actions from this category to earn Green Event Certification.

5. Work with your venue to utilize natural lighting

Prioritize using natural lighting within your event space and ask to turn off lights when outdoor lighting is sufficient. Or host your event outside without the need for electrical lighting.

6. Use recyclable single use items

For some events, the use of single use items may be inevitable. If this is your case, ensure that you are purchasing products that are recyclable. Check the number of plastics and ensure that they are accepted at the recycling agency your event utilizes.

7. Provide properly labeled recycling and waste bins

Even if you purchase items which are recyclable, if your attendees don't have a recycling bin to place them in, they will go to the trash anyway. Provide signage for recycling and waste bins to avoid contamination.

8. Encourage the use of reusable utensils and cups

In your event messaging, encourage attendees to bring their own reusable cups and utensils for beverages and food. Or provide reusable serve ware at the event.

9. Provide functional giveaway items (or none at all)

Giveaway items can often be useful; pens, notebooks, stickers. But some items may be gimmicky and become trash later on. Think about how many times you have saved a plastic bracelet from an event. Do you still wear it? Consider hosting an activity for attendees to create their own giveaway items. Bracelet making, painting, or cooking can all provide attendees with something to take home that they had a hand in making.

Providing no giveaway items reduces your waste significantly and may reduce the costs of your event. Consider your event's purpose and impact, to determine if giveaway items are a necessity.

10. Work with vendors to reduce single use plastics and replace with recycled/reusable products wherever possible

When inviting a vendor, check to see if they already utilize recyclable, reusable, or compostable products; if not encourage them to do so for your event. Check that plastic items the vendor uses can be recycled with the venue's recycling program.

11. Provide water (and other beverage) refill stations

Ensure that your event has refill stations for drinks so that attendees can utilize their own cups and mugs. Providing water stations is also important for outdoor events. Use a pitcher, a jug, or for larger events a large station like a [Quench Buggy](#).

Community Actions

We encourage events to acknowledge the mission of the university as a land grant institution. In your event planning consider how you can incorporate a [land acknowledgement](#) to educate and remind event attendees of this historical context.

Commit to at least 2 actions from this category to earn Green Event Certification.

12. Utilize local vendors/food

Search for local vendors and stores to table or sell items at your event. Provide opportunities for local businesses to advertise and participate in community events. These events can be great opportunities for small businesses to advertise and reach new consumers. [Experience CU](#) has a listing of businesses that can be sorted based on what you are looking for. If your event requires catering or provides food consider purchasing local food or catering services. And let your event attendees know where their food came from. This is an opportunity to advertise restaurants and farms to promote their business. By using and amplifying small local businesses we encourage consumers to engage with a local circular economy.

13. Ensure that event food caters to at least two options for dietary restrictions

Not every event needs 5 different entrees to cater to every type of diet. But many common dietary restrictions are similar and can be catered to with 1-2 options. Consider the audience of your event and what kinds of diets or allergies your attendees have; you could ask attendees to state their allergies or preferences ahead of time to ensure that food will be eaten and not wasted.

Your event should have food options that cater to at least two of the below options:

- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Gluten-free
- Halal
- Kashrut/Kosher
- Other dietary requirements

14. Communicate your event's sustainability actions and green certification

Let your attendees know that your event is green certified. And let them know about the actions you have taken to be a green event. Post on social media that your event is green certified or in the messaging prior to your event. This can also be a great opportunity to share bus and bike routes, remind attendees to bring reusables, or shout out local vendors who will be at the event.

15. Tell us about your event's other sustainable actions!

If there are other actions that your event is taking towards sustainability that are not included in the current program, tell us about those actions. We can award points based on impact and innovation.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering Green Certification for your event. Every effort towards greening our campus furthers the goals of the Illinois Climate Action Plan. Whether you commit to reducing energy and waste, purchasing responsibly, or promoting active transportation. You and your event are a part of the growing sustainability culture on our campus.

If you have photos of your event, please send them to us! We would love to promote your event's sustainability efforts to encourage other events to take the step to become Green Certified.

If you have any questions along the way, please reach out to greenercampus@illinois.edu.