

# A GUIDE TO PLANNING EVENTS IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER

The point of this guide is to assist organizations and groups at Wartburg College in planning events with a “sustainability conscience”.

This means considering whether typical practices can be improved to cut down on waste.



Planning an event can be a lot of work and sustainable events are no exception. Thankfully, with the right team and tools, it can also be a fun and engaging process! This guide can be of assistance as you plan your next event.

Contact Wartburg’s Sustainability Coordinator, Anne Duncan, at [anne.duncan@wartburg.edu](mailto:anne.duncan@wartburg.edu) or [sustainability@wartburg.edu](mailto:sustainability@wartburg.edu) for more ideas and to start your planning!

Thank you for your support!

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# BEFORE THE EVENT

## Green Your Vision

- A. The successful greening of your event starts in your mind, with the brainstorming and planning.
- B. Consider designating a sustainability chair or director to your planning committee.

## Green Your Shopping List



- A. Avoid buying new things.
  - 1. Reuse old items.
  - 2. Reach out to your social networks and groups you have worked with in the past and build a relationship of reciprocity.
    - a. Borrow their equipment and resources with the expectation that you will, in return, support them in the future.
  - 3. Reach out to groups that you haven't worked with yet and begin a relationship of reciprocity.
    - a. Just because you may not be involved with the same activities doesn't mean partnering opportunities do not exist.
  - 4. Take advantage of campus resources.
    - a. Example: The Work Room in The Hub
- B. Avoid disposable, plastic water or pop bottles, borrow a large jug instead.
- C. If you MUST buy new things, bring your own reusable bag to the store.

## Green Your Vendor List

- A. Look for vendors who have experience with green products and services or are willing to work with you.
  - 1. Ask them about sustainable options.
  - 2. If they do not have any ideas, ask them to find and provide them-be persistent. The more demand they receive, the more likely it is that they will provide such options to future customers.
- B. If you are just buying a few products and not working through a vendor, look for green certified products.
- C. If you have to go with disposables for an event, make sure they are compostable, not just biodegradable.
  - 1. Biodegradable products break down through the action of a naturally occurring microorganism, such as bacteria, fungi etc. However, when dumped in landfills they can create methane or contain toxins.
  - 2. Compostable is pretty close to biodegradable plastic, but it is able to break down into carbon dioxide, water and biomass at the same rate as paper. It should not produce any toxic material, and it should be able to support plant life.
  - 3. For more information: <http://www.greenlivingtips.com/articles/197/1/Degradable-Biodegradable-Compostable.html>

**TIP:** Check out New American Dream's Conscious Consumer Marketplace for great leads on sustainable vendors and products! Go to [www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org)



### Green Your Food Options



- A. Look for local food options!
- B. To increase social sustainability, look to partner with other groups on campus who can provide alternative dishes such as ethnic, vegetarian or vegan options; consider sampling organic products as well.



### Be Creative

- A. Dress up in a creative costume that represents your event or organization and reserve a spot in the Student Center to hang up a banner about your event!
- B. Set up a table and a computer at the bottom of the steps in the Student Center and get people to attend the event through Facebook on your computers.
  - 1. Contact Wartburg's Student Senate about helping with the event and its publicity!
- C. Get out and interact with people. Don't just rely on posters to draw people to your event!



### Use Networks and Connections, Not Paper

- A. Use social networking sites, like Facebook, and set up an event.
- B. Let Anne Duncan, Wartburg's Sustainability Coordinator, know what you have going on by emailing [anne.duncan@wartburg.edu](mailto:anne.duncan@wartburg.edu). She can help by publicizing the event on the sustainability webpage.
- C. Contact your local newspapers for community-wide events or Jean Buckingham for campus events.
  - 1. Don't be afraid of making too many contacts! The more contacts, the better chance of getting coverage.
  - 2. Don't forget the Waterloo Courier! It may not be a local Waverly paper, but it can still help give your event some good publicity.
- D. List the event in The Juice and on the Circuit.
- E. Contact Wartburg Radio (KWAR) and other local stations about the event.
- F. Talk to someone at Wartburg TV about the possibility of featuring a short segment describing the upcoming event.



# DURING THE EVENT

## Energizing The Event

- A. Remember the rule: more with less.
- B. Look for low energy solutions to your event; do as much as you can without energy.
- C. Look for alternative ways to power your events.
  - 1. Search for vendors who provide biodiesel or solar generators.



## Educate Staff, Vendors, and Guests About What You're Doing and Why

- A. Events involve a big group of people: staff, vendors and guests. The key to greening them successfully is education. The staff need to know what changes are being made to the event to make it green, and why each choice was made. If they don't know why, then they can't educate others, especially the vendors who will be executing the plans.
  - 1. For example, if you are composting food scraps everyone should know what goes in the compost bin, and why the choice to compost was made.
- C. Vendors need to know both how and why changes are being made to the event. Most vendors have standard practices, and deviating from normal operations can be confusing. But, by understanding the consequences of their operations and product choices they will learn how and why to make changes to a more sustainable operation.
  - 1. For example, if you establish a no idling policy for load-in, when the trucks arrive, explain how the policy saves gas and cuts down carbon dioxide emissions. Guests need to be educated as well. They should know what you are doing to green your event and why.
    - a. For example, if you're using LED lighting, let everyone know you made that choice to save energy.
- F. There are many ways to communicate with guests without taking away from the event: add a sustainability page to the event website, have signs at the event or find fun ways to educate. People want to know that they are making smart choices when they attend a green event; it makes them feel good.
- G. You will likely find new people are interested and attracted to your event because of your green commitment.

## Transportation for Guests

- A. Try to plan your event at a place where your guests can walk or bike to.
- B. If they need to drive, tell them to consider the following campus resource instead of having each guest drive their own car.
  - 1. UhaulCarShare: <http://www.wartburg.edu/sustainability/carshare.html>



# AFTER THE EVENT

## Reduce

- A. Try to limit the amount of resources that you use at your event. This can save you time, money and waste.



## Reuse

- A. Save the reusable items for your next event; think about supplying them to another group who needs them or has helped you in the past.

## Recycle

- A. Consider providing clearly labeled recycling bins or spaces during the event so sorting is not necessary during clean-up.
  - 1. Reach out to groups on campus who already offer recycling and request their opinions about the event.
    - a. There are two suites in The Residence who are involved in collecting campus recycling.
  - 2. Contact about possibly borrowing recycling bins (Cans for a Cause) for your event!
- B. Think about providing clearly labeled composting bins or containers during the event so as to gather compostable materials at your event.
  - 1. Acceptable materials: leaves, grass clippings, perennial and grass debris from cleaning up landscape beds, greenhouse plant material, food waste with nothing else in it (no plates, silverware, cups, etc.), potting soil, sod and topsoil are okay
  - 2. Unacceptable materials: No metal, sticks, twigs, branches or bigger woody material (such as prunings or trimmings from shrubs, trees and the like), sand, plastic or garbage of any kind, plastic garbage bags, water bottles, cans, cardboard of any kind, plates, food utensils, and cups (not all "compostable" eatery is actually compostable you have to make sure you have the right kind).
  - 3. Materials should be brought out to the facility in garbage cans, totes or in the back of a pickup or other vehicle. Please don't use plastic garbage bags.
  - 4. For more information contact Anne Duncan.



## Share Your Successes

- A. Tell Wartburg's Sustainability Coordinator Anne Duncan at [anne.duncan@wartburg.edu](mailto:anne.duncan@wartburg.edu), so she can help other groups make connections.

