



# Sustainable Event Guide



ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH AND SAFETY



## **Message from the EHS Sustainability Team**

This guide aims to provide guidance to Concordia staff, faculty and student members who wish to contribute to fostering a sustainable university community. It presents eight steps to integrate sustainability for your event and conference planning.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We appreciate your participation, and welcome your ideas to making Concordia a leader in campus sustainability. For more information, questions or comments, please contact [sustainability@concordia.ca](mailto:sustainability@concordia.ca).

## **Message from Sustainable Concordia**

The original Sustainable Event Guide was developed by Sustainable Concordia as a tool to create in-depth knowledge about sustainable practices for events on campus and beyond. This version is an adaptation created as an interactive, readable tool to make it easier to for students, faculty, and staff to create sustainable events. Thank you for reading and using this guide, we appreciate your dedication to sustainability. If you'd like to view the original version of this guide, please visit our website at [sustainableconcordia.ca](http://sustainableconcordia.ca).



If you absolutely must print this guide, please use 100% recycled paper and plant based inks only!

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## **What is sustainability to Concordia?**

Sustainability at Concordia is a mindset and a process that leads to reducing our ecological footprint and enhancing social well-being while maintaining economic viability both on and off campus. To be sustainable in our decisions and activities is to take a long-term perspective, recognize resource capacities and balance the interconnected nature of our environment, society and economy without compromising the needs of future generations.

## **Why plan a sustainable event?**

Participants of events are increasingly interested in sustainable products, ideas, and services. It was once thought that planning a sustainable event costs more money, as decisions about transportation, materials, food, and venue are not solely based on choosing the least expensive. However, the resources that have been developed at Concordia and in the greater Montreal area can actually lower the cost of your event.

## **DID YOU KNOW...?**

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!



## The 3 Pillars Of Sustainability

and how they can positively effect your event

**ECONOMIC** sustainability ensures that the event is financially feasible and repeatable, and can accommodate less well-off individuals.

**ENVIRONMENTAL** sustainability ensures measures were taken to create the least amount of impact on the Earth.

**SOCIAL** sustainability can help participants from all backgrounds feel respected and included.



# GETTING STARTED

## Organize a committee

It's always a good idea to organize an event committee to stay on track.

If you're low on time and capacity for goal setting, find an organizer of a previous event that had impressive sustainability goals and ask for some guidance! A quick meeting, with Environmental Health and Safety can also help speed the process along.

For all questions, please contact Concordia's department of Environmental Health and Safety

General inquiries email [sustainability@concordia.ca](mailto:sustainability@concordia.ca), or call ext. 4877

For supplemental concordia community resources on sustainability issues, please visit [Sustainable Concordia](#) and the [Sustainability Action Fund](#) websites.



## QUICK TIPS

- 🔑 Setting goals early on will minimize future chaos and help everyone get an idea of the big picture
- 🔑 If capacity allows, appoint a sustainability coordinator. This will help ensure product research and procurement happen
- 🔑 Using an event planning app, such as [Grenadine](#) or [Eventbrite](#) can keep you organized and help you save money on printing items such as programs and promotional materials
- 🔑 Use a project management app, such as [Basecamp](#) to help you track milestones and to exchange ideas with your committee
- 🔑 [Submit](#) your event on the University Communication Services calendar to ensure a great turnout

## Preliminary steps to a Sustainable Event

- 1 Create organizing committee 
- 2 Create a timeline and delegate tasks 
- 3 Create a budget 
- 4 Develop funding and sponsorship criteria 
- 5 Set attainable goals 

## DID YOU KNOW...?

Did you know Tourism Montreal can help you find the green accommodation you're looking for. For more information email [meet@MTL.org](mailto:meet@MTL.org)

## LOGISTICS

### Venue and Location

The venue you choose can say a lot about your event, and can have substantial impact on your sustainability goals, and touch on all three pillars of sustainability.

To find an appropriate space for your event, you can reach conference services by visiting their [website](#) or emailing [hospitality@concordia.ca](mailto:hospitality@concordia.ca). To book a space and plan other aspects of your event, visit MyEvents which can be found in the [Concordia Portal](#).

There are many venues on campus you are able to book. For a complete list visit [Concordia's Designated Space Administrator list](#).

## QUICK TIPS

- 🔑 Try your best to ensure the venue is wheelchair accessible
- 🔑 Turn off or unplug all electrical devices when not in use, and be sure to turn out the light when the space is empty – or use natural light!
- 🔑 Create a slide that presents your specific sustainability goals or initiatives that can be on screen before and after each presentation

## Interesting Venues on Campus

- **The Concordia Conference Centre:** Located on the 9th floor of the MB building is made up of 7 different state of the art rooms, with a total space capacity of 280.
- **The Concordia Greenhouse:** A beautiful rooftop greenhouse, open from September to May, grows plants for campus food vendors, and many other species of flora. A relaxing space for many events.
- **The Loyola Quadrangle:** Vast open outdoor space surrounded by historic buildings, perfect for large events.
- **The Hive Café Solidarity Cooperative:** This student-run co-op has over 400 members and two locations, one at Loyola and one downtown. They use a sliding scale system and the rental fee is waived for registered student organizations to ensure accessibility. Loyola's capacity :339, Downtown: 163
- **Loyola Jesuit Hall:** Located on the Loyola campus, this historic building can be rented out and has a maximum capacity of 310 on the main floor.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

The MB, GE, and PERFORM Centre are all LEED Operational and Maintenance certified. Conference Services can help you decide which venue is right for your event. You can find their contact information [here](#).

All Concordia official signage has braille lettering. If you choose to have your event off campus, look for locations that also include Braille in their signage.



# SPEAKERS AND ATTENDEES

## Accommodations

By supporting local talent and services you reduce costs of transportation and accommodation, your carbon footprint, as well as contributes to social sustainability.

When helping out of town guests choose accommodations, suggest alternatives to regular hotels, such as:

- Billeting/opening your home,
- [Couch surfing](#)
- [Hostels/Auberges de Jeunesse](#)
- Green hotels
- [Summer housing in residence buildings](#)

## QUICK TIPS

- 🔍 For large events, book pre-blocked rooms at a green hotel at negotiated rates
- 🔍 Hostels are a great, affordable accommodation option
- 🔍 Create a kid zone with some volunteers, toys and games. You can rent toys from [Eco-quartier Peter-McGill](#) for free!
- 🔍 When possible, try to make your event free or use a sliding scale system.
- 🔍 If you must charge an entry fee, try to offer free passes to students or volunteers.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

Tourism Montreal offers logistical and financial support for event planning. For more information email [meet@montreal.org](mailto:meet@montreal.org), or call 514-844- 4085



## Accessibility

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

Although it is sometimes necessary to fly people in, it does have one of the largest ecological impacts in today's world — a more earth friendly alternative to this is video conferencing. If international guests must be flown in, consider purchasing a carbon credit to offset the damages.



Ask key note speakers if they are ok to video conference call in!

Many large rooms are already equipped for video conferencing, however, if you are renting smaller rooms you may need to order equipment.



## How To: Set up Video Conferencing equipment with IITS

- 1 Visit IITS's [equipment loans and rental page](#) for a list of items and rates
- 2 Decide on the equipment you'll need and send in your order through the [Equipment and Technician Request Form](#)

If you have any questions or concerns you can contact IITS at [help@concordia.ca](mailto:help@concordia.ca), or call extension 7613.

# TRANSPORTATION

One of the most detrimental aspects of events can be transportation, especially if people are flying in from out of town.

One way to counteract the carbon emissions from the event is by encouraging the participant to purchase carbon offsets, which you can tailor to your event type and your sustainability goals. For more information on what type of offset to buy, and how to buy it, visit:

- 👍 [The Gold Standard](#)
- 👍 [David Suzuki Foundation](#)

Another way to decrease your greenhouse gas emissions is by encouraging the use of public transit, carpooling, cycling or walking.



When marketing your event, include these alternative and possibly incentives such as discounted registration fee for those who bike, walk or carpool, or enter those using alternative transportation into a draw for a sustainable prize.

## Carpool

Carpooling and ridesharing with other event participants is a good way to decrease your foot print

- [Amigo Express/Kangaride](#)
- [Net lift](#)
- [Covoiturage Montreal](#)
- [Concordia Rideshare board](#)

## Bikes

Biking is a great way to get around Montreal, and with a BIXI station on almost every corner. [Finding a station is easy!](#)

## STM

Montreal is connected via bus, metro, and train — with plenty of stations and an easy to use card system.

- Let your participants know that discounted passes are available in 1-day, 3-day, and unlimited evenings or weekends
- [Plan your trip today](#)

## Electric Vehicles

Find an [electric fueling station](#) closest to you!

Or take a [Teo Taxi](#), a local zero emission taxi company!

## Car sharing

Another low emission option to get around Montreal is by using car-sharing companies that offer a variety of fuel efficient, hybrid, and electric cars — such as such [car2go](#) or [Communauto!](#)

## DID YOU KNOW...?

Transportation is Canada's second largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions — second to the oil and gas sector, and only barely!



## EVENT MATERIALS

Often event materials are one-time use, disposable, and toxic to the environment, from pamphlets and schedules, to plastic table cloths and decorations, and signage.

Making conscious decisions about decorating and advertising can help you eliminate the amount and type of materials you will need for your event, and how you will dispose of them after your event.

### Resources on Campus

Many items that can be used for decorations or signage can be found at the [Concordia Centre for Creative Reuse \(CUCCR\)](#).

- To access the space, located at H-013-7, take the door H110-3, and follow the floor signs through the basement.
- CUCCR is also looking for [donations](#), to see what kind of material they're looking for, check out their website at [www.cuccr.ca](http://www.cuccr.ca)

🔍 Use electronic means to advertise, register and promote, such as social media, news websites, apps, and e-gifts.

Facebook

Eventbrite

Grenadine

[Now \(e-newsletter\)](#)

The Concordian (online)

Electronic Gift certificates

🔍 If you must print physical copies, use 100% recycled paper and use vegetable based inks.

🔍 Gifts for speakers or participants should NEVER be single-use plastics.

🔍 Try to [choose locally and ethically made gifts](#) made from environmentally friendly materials.

🔍 A great gift for participants: The One-Sided Notebook, which uses discarded paper across both campuses, and started as a Sustainable Concordia project in 2010. [Order here.](#)

When making signage, opt for cardboard or environmentally friendly materials instead of coroplast or foamcore.

Check out:

- Concordia's Print Store, who are committed to using recycled paper
- Rubiks, who offer a variety of environmentally friendly alternatives

Recycle:

- Name badges to be used at another event
- Event programs by donating to the fine arts department

## When in doubt...

Think of the 5 R's: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, and Recycle.

The closer you can get to the beginning of the list, the more sustainable your event will be!



## WATER MANAGEMENT

Since 2011, Concordia has taken huge steps in reducing bottled water on campus.

Although it may be tempting to purchase large amounts of bottled water for events for convenience purposes, there are easy ways to eliminate the need for pre-packaged water.

## QUICK TIPS

- 🔍 Encourage the use of water fountains and filling stations by providing a map.
- 🔍 Make sure your caterer brings water jugs or pitchers instead of plastic bottles for panelist and keynote speakers.
- 🔍 Encourage participants to bring their own reusable cup or water bottles, or make reusable mugs or bottles part of your gift bag.
- 🔍 During coffee breaks, ask the caterer to bring large water containers with slices of citrus or cucumber in them for the participants.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

Approximately 83% of Concordia's landfill waste could be recycled or composted.

In Montreal you can't recycle plastic #6, also known as polystyrene. Choose compostable products over biodegradable ones, as biodegradable items cannot go into a compost bin.

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

One of the most effective ways to create a sustainable event is through onsite waste management. It may take a bit of planning, but will drastically decrease the size of your ecological footprint.

### How To: Ordering and Using Bins for Waste Management

- 1 Submit a work order to Facilities Management by emailing [call2400@concordia.ca](mailto:call2400@concordia.ca) and let them know how many bins you will need\*
- 2 Set a drop off and pick up time
- 3 Create 3D signs with the materials you will be using at your event, and attach the signs to the bins during your event. Place bins with signs in visible, high traffic areas
- 4 Ensure bins are emptied in the appropriate receptacles, if needed



\*Remember to include your event date, drop off and pick up times, the event title, the name and contact information for the event organizer, and the room number.

## QUICK TIPS

- 🔍 Always make sure to have visible garbage, recycling, and compost bins with clear signage. The Concordia "Waste Not Want Not" volunteers provide a variety of tasks for event organizers. Fill a form on their [website](#) to request volunteers.
- 🔍 By creating and sharing a detailed floorplan you ensure that all volunteers, event staff, and catering staff know exactly where the waste bins are placed.

As of August 2016, we are a Fair Trade campus! All of our approved caterers offer fairly traded coffee and tea – make sure to ask or it when you order!



FAIRTRADE  
INTERNATIONAL

## FOOD & BEVERAGES

Food and beverage served at an event is a reflection of the principles of the event organizers and their commitment to sustainability. Whether you are using one of [the University's approved caterers](#), or you're planning on self-catering, make sure to follow these guidelines below:

- Think local!
- Source organic when possible
- Use seasonal produce
- Diversify your menu: include more vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options
- Look for certifications, such as Fair Trade and Ocean wise
- Speak to your university approved caterer to come up with a sustainable menu
- Respect other's dietary needs and allergies

## Catering

- If you choose to self-cater your event, be aware of extra packaging and stay away from individually packaged food and drinks. Try to buy in bulk — [Frigo Vert](#) has some great selections
- If your event will be serving alcohol, choose local or organic wine, beer and cider when possible
- Talk to your caterer about their waste management practices, and make sure to let their staff know where all compost bins are located
- Ask your caterer to use bulk, sugar, milk, and condiments instead of individual packets.
- Make a plan in advance about what to do with any leftovers, and add the delivery cost into your budget to get the food to shelters and missions. To make sure it's safe to donate, check out the University's [Guide for Food handlers](#).
  - [The Welcome Hall](#)
  - [Old Brewery Mission](#)
  - [Chez Doris](#)
  - [Projet Autochtones du Québec](#)
- Ask your caterer to use bulk sugar, milk, and condiments instead of individual packets
- Using dark coloured tablecloths can reduce the number of cleanings and are less likely to get stained

## DID YOU KNOW...?

It's estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization that between 14.5% and 18% of all Greenhouse gas emissions come from the agriculture industry – choose a vegan menu to reduce your carbon footprint.

# REUSABLE DISHES

Instead of using compostable plates and silverware, use the real deal — you can rent everything from table cloths to wine glasses for free if you return them clean.

## How to: The Dish Project

- 1 Look at their [inventory catalogue](#)
- 2 Submit your [request form](#) a minimum of 3 days before your event
- 3 Pick-up your order at a designated time or submit a work order with Facilities Management

For more information, contact the Dish Project coordinator or visit their [website](#).

## Compare and save!

A 4 pieces serving ware, including a plate, glass fork, and knife, for a 50 people event

Dish Project (returned clean): **FREE**

Dish Project (returned dirty): **\$40.00**

Seasons Catering: **\$65.50 plus tax**

External company: **about \$72.00 plus tax**

Signage on 24"x36" Foamcore or Cardboard/Cardstock

Reused Material from CUCCR: **FREE**

Concordia's Print Store: **\$40.00 plus tax**

Rubiks: Foamcore/coroplast: **\$50.00 plus tax**

Cardstock: **\$37.00 plus tax**

8 large rectangular tablecloths

Dish Project: **FREE**

CUCCR: **FREE (availability may vary)**

Seasons Catering: **about \$84.00 plus tax**

External company: **about \$101.76 plus tax**





Reducing the ecological footprint of an event is critical to hosting an event within the ecological capacity of this planet, and ensuring that your event is both economically and socially sustainable means that participants will be able to attend and enjoy your event. Whether your event is a six-person seminar or a 1000 person conference, by following this Sustainable Event Guide a significant step can be made towards lowering your event's ecological footprint while being socially responsible.

## BEWARE OF GREENWASHING!

Greenwashing is when a company, government or group make environmental or sustainable claims about their initiatives or products, but fails to operate in such ways. Do a little research on the companies you plan on purchasing from and make sure they're third party certified.



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