

AN EVENT PLANNER'S GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE EVENT DESIGN



101 GUIDE TO A MORE
ECO-ETHICAL APPROACH
FOR WEDDINGS & EVENTS

LUUM
COLLECTIVE

How to Host a Sustainable Event

A Quick Guide to Getting Started

From single-use plastic, signage, food, and more, events can have a huge environmental impact. Luckily, making your event more sustainable is more accessible than ever before. Plus, you'll focus on creating a memorable experience your guests and attendees are going to appreciate. Let's dive into some tips to reduce waste & carbon footprint, as well as create a more inclusive experience at your next event!

Remember if you're just starting out on your journey it's okay to start small. Feel free to pick 2 - 3 focus areas, or one in each category, and grow from there. Some areas where you can make the most impact are with food and beverage, transportation, venue, and reducing / properly managing waste.

CHOOSE A SUSTAINABLE VENUE AND VENDORS

- Select a green venue - Look for venues that consistently recycle (some still don't!) and/or compost, use water-efficient appliances and fixtures, use LED or renewable energy sources. Ask about sustainability certifications if applicable to larger venues like convention centers or hotels.
- Seek out caterers, florists, bar services, printers and other companies that already have sustainability measures in place. If they don't, just ask! You'd be surprised what they may already do.
- Source from local, small businesses (+women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+ owned!) whenever possible. This keeps money in local communities and makes a positive social impact.
- Be sure to share your sustainability goals with all your vendors and note them in your RFPs and contracts. Work together with your vendors to come up with an accessible plan to meet them where they are at!

CONSIDER YOUR TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

- Reduce flights and airtravel to your events and prioritize event locations that are accessible by walking, biking, and public transportation.
- Encourage carpooling, shuttles, and offer public transportation or rideshare passes whenever you can!
- Ensure event accessibility for all abilities to ensure all are welcome and can participate.
- Reduce carbon-footprint of your event and travel of attendees wherever possible, then consider off-setting with tools. You can measure using tools like Terrapass.

FOOD & BEVERAGE SOURCING

- Add more vegetarian, plant-forward dishes to your menu, or simply reduce/eliminate red meat to start.
- Highlight foods that are in season and work with caterers who source from local farms and small businesses.
- Ask your caterer if they offer organic and/or fair trade certified food items such as coffee, tea, chocolate, and fruits.
- Request attendees RSVP to help you have an idea of how much food and drink to order, and using past orders to help estimate. Offer space for dietary requests to ensure all needs are met and guests feel welcomed.
- Swap individually portioned food and highly packaged items (like single-serving condiment packets, bags of chips, granola bars, bagged/boxed lunches) for large containers or trays.
- Have a plan for leftover food by bringing to an office common kitchen, or partnering with local food rescue organizations for donation. Compost any food that is unsuitable for donation.

BAR & LIBATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- Swap single use plastic with glassware or compostables. Skip the straws and cocktail napkins because you don't actually need them anyways.
- For bar, source alcohol locally from breweries or distilleries when possible and consider organic mixers, bitters, garnishes and wines.
- Consider having only one signature cocktail instead of a full bar.
- Provide designated glass for guests as favors or allow them to refill their glasses to reduce number of glasses used per person.

REDUCE / MANAGE WASTE

- Make sure your event has color-coded and labeled bins for trash, recycling and organics all next to one another. Research your city's recycling guide and know what trash hauler works with your venue.
- Provide instructions to your staff and guests on how to properly dispose of trash, recycling, and organics for food waste at an event.
- Go digital whenever possible. Print necessary materials on both sides of paper.
- Eliminate "swag" items, as most attendees don't keep them anyways. Consider a digital swag bag instead! If it's not possible to convince your clients, source ethically next. Look for fair trade labels or B Corp certifications like [Fair Ware](#).

REDUCE YOUR SINGLE-USE

- Skip bottled water for BYO, drink dispensers, or pitchers and reusable glasses.
- Use reusable dishware and cups whenever possible, swap plastic/styrofoam cutlery and plates for compostable (but be sure to dispose properly in organics recycling bin!).
- Consider renting decor, signage, and display items from locally-based rental company instead of purchasing new—unless you plan to reuse year over year.
- Reduce unnecessary printed materials like programs and signage. Instead, go with electronic programs and digital signage, projections, QR codes and mobile friendly website, or 100% recycled-content paper for necessary printables.
- Swap the foam-core and plastic posters for recyclable paperboard and corrugated cardboard posters.
- Design banners without specific event names or dates for reuse year over year.

INCLUSIVE EVENT DESIGN & COMMUNICATIONS

- Add some educational elements about sustainability and share what your goals are with your event partners, vendors, and attendees.
- Ensure diverse representation in your speaker panels, vendor sourcing, and within marketing materials, website photography, and communication. Pay individuals equitably for their time.
- Include a virtual / hybrid option for attendee accessibility with tiered ticketing prices.
- Ensure your physical and digital spaces are accessible, this includes websites, marketing communications, ADA compliance, offering closed captioning, gender-neutral bathrooms, as well as a diverse menu design for dietary and cultural food requirements.
- Communicate your event's accessibility in the pre-event communications and offer a space for additional requests.
- Learn about the indigenous land your event is hosted on and consider a [land acknowledgment](#) at your event or with your staff/planning team.



MY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Now that you feel inspired by the many ways you can incorporate more sustainable practices into your next event. Let's put those into action! But first, list out some of the aspects of your event that might already be sustainable even if it wasn't intentional. It's important to note and celebrate what you've already done.

TOP THREE FOCUS AREAS FOR MY NEXT EVENT

FOCUS AREA 1. _____

Action: _____

Action: _____

Action: _____

FOCUS AREA 2. _____

Action: _____

Action: _____

Action: _____

FOCUS AREA 3. _____

Action: _____

Action: _____

Action: _____



WANT A BIT MORE?

Need more support on how to implement these tips into your event or wedding? Looking for more direction on what questions to ask your vendors or how to communicate to your attendees and team to curate a successful sustainable event? If you're curious to learn more, explore our online platform for more tangible tips and tools, as well as resources, guides, vendor lists, and join our community of like-minded creatives!

We offer workshops and toolkits for various types of events, offering a deeper dive and more specific insights:

- How to Host a Sustainable Wedding (For Couples and Planners)
- Sustainable Wedding Attire Guide
- How to Design a Sustainable Event (For Planners and Organizations)
- And support on regionally-based resources and connections for vendors and organizations

Visit us at LuumCollective.co and start your sustainability journey.



Photos by Nylon Saddle & Sage E Imagery, Featuring Chowgirls Catering & Apricot Floral

Visit us at LuumCollective.co or on Instagram.
Say hello over at hello@luumcollective.co

We love meeting and hearing from our community and would love to support you with questions, research, and all things sustainable design.