Producing a sustainable event at OSU

Updated 11/11/09

Why would you want to worry about the environment when it’s only “that one time”?

* Education – an event is a chance to educate others
* Reduce our carbon footprint
* Some changes may even SAVE you money
* Because OSU is set up to help you accomplish this with only a few extra steps
* Because it is part of who we are as Beavers. “True to our Oregon heritage, we are dedicated to preserving the healthy balance between human communities and the earth we depend on.”

Earth Week has a history at OSU for being a sustainable event. Others include University Day the past two years, the 2013 welcome picnic for new students (this year), the SustainaBall (last year), Beaver Community Fair, PeaceJam (used reusable water bottles and coffee mugs)

A bit about the history of composting: Within the past six months Allied Waste is now able to compost post consumer waste.

* What is post vs. pre consumer waste?
* What did we do before? (Earthtub)
* How does this fit with the compost that can now go in the yard waste? (post consumer is only allowed compostable by COMMERCIAL entities)
* This is the only location/program in Oregon (Portland is so jealous!)

Start with the big picture, what do you need (and where can you adjust) to make sustainable choices in your event/meeting planning?

* transportation methods
* materials that you provide
* site selection
* menu

Site Selection

* Select a location that best fits your group’s size
  + too large and extra power is being used to light and heat/cool the space
  + work with the building manager for proper temperature control so that doors do not need to be propped open
  + Turn off the lights when you’re done
  + Turn off projectors when not in use (they use a lot more electricity than you’d think!)
* Support locations that practice “green” techniques
* Consider buying carbon offsets to balance out your increased energy use
* Use OSU’s solar trailer to power your equipment needs

Transportation methods

* Select a location that is in close proximity to your target audience
* arrange for bus service
* Organize a ride share option <http://oregonstate.edu/sustainability/rideshare>

Materials that you provide

* **Communicate to attendees that this will be a waste free event**
  + On website
  + In invitations
  + Use signage at the event
  + If you have vendors (there to present to the crowd vs. as a guest) who will be attending your event, discourage them from distributing “free trash”. (Candy wrappers are a big offender. Consider a plate of cookies or gumball machine.)
* Send invitations electronically vs. a traditional paper invitation
* Send out agendas electronically
* post handouts online instead of printing lots of copies
* Request recycled content paper when you must print and include a line at the bottom stating that it is printed on recycled paper.
* Use name badges that can be recycled
  + Plastic pin back nametag holders can be borrowed from University Events
  + Print out inserts on recyclable paper
  + Collect nametag holders after the event (and only pay for the ones that don’t get returned!)
* If you must give a physical item, include a web address that the guest can go to for more information.
* Partner with others to reuse centerpieces and other décor items
  + Use vases from the University Events collection
  + If you purchase items that you’ll only need this once, consider giving them to the UE borrowables collection so that others on campus can use them as well.
  + See if other events are being held close to your date and work with the coordinators to “order once, use twice”
* Gifts: consider offering “experiences” such as tours as prizes instead of trinkets or logoed items. Donations on behalf of the group are also an option (but make sure to tell the audience what you’ve decided so that your unit gets the credit for making such a responsible and environmentally conscious decision!)

Menu/Refreshments

* Tell the caterer that you are working with that you would like to do a zero waste event. Contact the sustainability office so that they can be prepared to assist with collecting recyclables and compost.
  + If asking guests to bring their own water bottles/coffee mugs make sure to let your caterer know so that they can put risers on the dispensers
* Specifically request that personal condiment packets are not used (mustard, catsup, sugar, etc.) but instead ask for pump stations and coffee service items in pour containers.
* Consider reception items that can be served with only a napkin instead of a plate(this can help with portion control too!)
* If ordering sack lunches to be eaten during a meeting, ask for a sackless lunch. Save a bag and label and give your guests a buffet instead. If appropriate, side dishes can be served in big bowls instead of individual containers/packages.
* Use china and real glassware otherwise request all items that can be composted (this includes plastic cups, coffee cups, flatware and plates)
  + $1.75 per person for reception china, $2.75 for lunch or breakfast, $3.00 for dinner
  + Compostables are an additional charge of 50 cents per person vs. traditional disposable

(many more and better products available than just 6 months ago. Actual cost for compostables is around 75 cents to $1. OSU Catering supports this effort by covering the difference.)

* Serve water in a pitcher instead of bottled
* Ask for locally produced and in season menu items (localvore, farm to fork)
  + Not all items are available locally or year around. Talk with your caterer as they work with local vendors and can help identify items that meet this criteria without spending a fortune.
  + Consider reducing the amount of meat served (lower on the food chain)
* If hosting a meeting where it is appropriate, encourage attendees to bring their own coffee mug/water bottle
* Determine if volunteers will be needed to staff the recycle/compost/information desks. Make sure your volunteers get the proper education to teach others (Sustainability office can help with this.)
* Campus recycling vests are available to make compost/recycling staff more visible
* The less you make guests sort, the more likely things will get disposed of correctly.
* Recently, some people have asked caterers if they can use their own dishes. Due to food safety issues these dishes must be cleaned appropriately before the event. OSU Catering does offer this option for a $75 processing fee, although they cannot be responsible for damage.

Another FAQ is to ask if dishes can be “borrowed” from a location on campus. Because of these cleaning and damage issues that is not an option. Special Occasions has a full line of dishware that can be rented, and is designed for groups to take to their activity (say a holiday potluck)!

* What about all that food left over?
  + Food safety prohibits taking hot items as leftovers because safe temperatures cannot be controlled and the caterer is liable if there are any illnesses. This is an important business safeguard. Please respect the caterer and don’t ask.
  + If food has not been out of the warmer, then OSU Catering donates the leftovers to the Linn Benton Food Share. Catering must prepare certain amounts to make sure that your event will have the food needed, but they don’t throw it out! Last year OSU Catering donated XXX lbs of food using this routine.
* Did you know that OSU Catering’s vehicles run on bio-diesel and they have an electric delivery vehicle as well? They also compost all their kitchen waste. Visit Marketplace West as they are the pilot location for daily post-consumer composting. If their trial is successful it will become practice at dining centers across campus!