Sustainable Purchasing Guide
Meetings and Events

Use this Guide When Planning

- Trainings and workshops
- Committee and council meetings
- Employee celebrations and appreciation events
- Other meetings and events

Operations and Engagement Guidance

- **Promote Sustainable Travel:** Select meeting locations that are transit-accessible, close to participants, and support virtual engagement. In addition, minimize travel impacts by encouraging carpooling, public transit, and remote participation.

- **Facilitate Proper Waste Sorting:** Ensure waste streams can handle all generated waste. Clearly label trash, recycling, and compost containers and place them together in convenient locations. Train custodial staff on proper sorting.

- **Build Awareness:** Communicate the meeting or event's sustainability practices, benefits, and practical ways participants can support them.

- **Track Your Success:** Monitor waste diversion, recycling, and composting rates, as well as participation in sustainable practices, to evaluate and identify opportunities for improvement.

- **Support Local Businesses:** Support local green businesses whenever possible for food, beverages, catering, supplies, and more. Check out the Alameda County Green Business Program for ideas.

Purchasing and Waste Prevention Guidance

SUPPLIES

Purchasing Guidance

- When using copy paper, ensure it contains 30% post-consumer recycled content and is certified by Green Seal or FSC, which is consistent with StopWaste's Sustainable Purchasing Guide for White Copy Paper. Coordinate with your agency's SB 1383 lead to maintain required documentation.

- When buying other paper office products, ensure they meet StopWaste's Sustainable Purchasing Guide for Paper Office Supplies.

- For reoccurring events, choose signage, banners, and decorations that can be reused (e.g., no specific date references, choose durable materials like cloth).

Waste Reduction Guidance

- Follow paper-reduction best practices by using electronic media, QR codes, electronic signage, double-sided printing, reusable name tags, whiteboards, etc.

- For SWAG and other give-aways, offer raffles, reusable items, and food items (e.g., mints). For events with special themes, consider a reusable souvenir cup as a keepsake.

Purchasing and Waste Prevention Guidance - *continued*

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Purchasing Guidance

- Require participants to RSVP to ensure you order only what is needed.

- Maximize plant-based, organic, and locally-sourced food choices.

- Select food that doesn't require plates and utensils (e.g., sandwiches). Avoid individually packaged food items and meals.

- Use bulk beverage service (e.g., refill stations, pitchers, carafes, shared sweeteners/creamers) instead of single-use bottles, cans, or packets.

Waste Reduction Guidance

- Encourage participants to take home leftovers or donate usable leftover food. See StopWaste's Best Practices to Reduce Surplus Edible Food for guidance.

FOOD SERVICE WARE

Purchasing Guidance

- Maximize the use of reusable food service ware and choose items that meet StopWaste's Sustainable Purchasing Guide for Reusable Food Service Ware.

- If buying disposables, choose items that meet StopWaste's Sustainable Purchasing Guide for Single-Use Food Service Ware.

Waste Reduction Guidance

- Encourage participants to bring their own reusable water bottle and/or travel mug for coffee/tea.

- Promote cup reuse by providing washable writing utensils (e.g., dry erase markers, wax pencils) or reusable drink markers (e.g., silicone bands) for attendees to label their cups.

Benefits

- **Reduces Waste and Saves Money:** Implementing sustainable practices—like using digital materials, reusable dishware, and careful food planning—can significantly cut waste and lower costs.

- **Models Sustainable Practices:** Meetings can serve as an opportunity to showcase sustainable practices and motivate attendees to integrate them into their own routines.

Additional Resources

- Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council Case Study: Green & Healthy Meetings and Events (Alameda County)
- StopWaste's Stop Food Waste website
- Check the StopWaste Sustainable Purchasing Website for additional implementation resources such as: compliant product lists, contracting resources, and other support tools.