



## **Sustainable Meeting and Event Guidelines**

### **Purpose**

Washington County recognizes the importance of minimizing negative environmental impacts while hosting meetings and events. By incorporating sustainability considerations in County meeting and event coordination decisions, along with our primary concerns regarding convenience and accessibility, we are able to promote practices that conserve natural resources, improve health, and encourage environmentally responsible behaviors.

The objective of the Sustainable Meeting and Event Guidelines is to identify and implement “best practices” that ensure that all aspects of an event, including its location, food services, transportation and the provision of materials are approached with the goals of reducing impacts to the environment, improving employee and community well-being, and supporting the local economy.

### **Guiding Principles**

The guidelines were developed to support the Board of Commissioners’ adopted sustainability principles and objectives of the County by creating economic, social and environmental benefits for this and future generations through the hosting of green meetings and events. The specific goals of the guidelines are to help the County save paper, reduce waste, improve recycling, conserve energy, reduce emissions, support green businesses and provide sustainable food options. In addition, these guidelines support the County’s [Employee Wellness Initiative](#) by promoting healthy choices for meetings and events.

### **Scope**

These guidelines apply, but are not limited to, County-sponsored meetings, events, and conferences.

### **Best Practices**

The following section highlights best practices for sustainable meetings and events. For additional ideas and detailed tips, please see Attachment A (Sustainable Meeting and Event Checklist). County meeting and event organizers should familiarize themselves with the checklist in order to arrange and host greener meetings or events. The checklist includes many tips and reminders that will help employees improve the sustainability of County events.

#### **1) Save Paper**

Strive to reduce paper used in communication with meeting and event attendees. Use electronic meeting materials whenever possible. Paper handouts are common in meetings and events, but they are not always needed and sometimes become waste. When handouts must be provided, be sure to utilize pages to their fullest extent. Agendas can be written on white boards rather than printing copies for attendees; presentations can be emailed or posted online after an event. Meeting organizers can let attendees know whether or not printed copies will be provided to eliminate duplicates for those needing hard copies.

## 2) Reduce Waste & Recycle

Choose a venue that has a comprehensive recycling program. Meeting and conference rooms should have paired garbage and recycling bins with appropriate signage. Reduce, recycle or reuse leftover meeting materials. Extra printing not only wastes paper, it also wastes toner, ink, energy, and time, so limit or eliminate printed materials whenever possible. Utilize reusable name badges with paper inserts, rather than disposable stick-on labels. Avoid unnecessary disposable items like paper certificates or giveaways wrapped in plastic. Conserve resources by shopping for supplies at the County's ReUse Store. Adhere to the County's [Sustainable Purchasing Administrative Policy](#) and [Guidelines](#).

## 3) Conserve Energy & Reduce Emissions

Be sure to conserve energy in meeting rooms. Choose meeting locations close to public transit and alternative vehicle parking. If possible, choose meeting locations within easily walkable distances for most attendees. Inform attendees about environmentally preferable transportation choices such as transit and carpooling for reaching their destination. Encourage off-site attendees to telecommute by offering a call-in number. Utilize the County's video teleconferencing equipment or online meeting tools to meet with groups or individuals off-site.

## 4) Support Green Businesses & Sustainable Food

If using a caterer, ask for low waste options. Avoid the use of bottled water by providing pitchers of tap water and durable cups. Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable coffee mugs or cups for drinks. If possible provide durable dishware when food is served. Consider healthy, local food options. Avoid unnecessary disposable items like plastic cutlery and individually packaged food when possible. Adhere to the County's [Fiscal Policy](#) regarding the use of County funds to purchase food for meetings.

### **Responsibilities**

The Sustainability Program and Department leadership shall ensure that employees are educated on the guidelines. Departments are not precluded from adopting separate internal policies that require additional actions that support these guidelines. County meeting and event organizers are responsible for complying with the guidelines to the best of their ability. Sustainability Liaisons and the Sustainability Program may provide advice and consultation for meeting and event organizers upon request.

### **Resources**

Sustainability Program: [http://www.co.washington.or.us/Support\\_Services/Sustainability](http://www.co.washington.or.us/Support_Services/Sustainability)  
Employee Wellness: [http://www.co.washington.or.us/Support\\_Services/HR/EmployeeWellness](http://www.co.washington.or.us/Support_Services/HR/EmployeeWellness)  
County Fiscal Plan: [http://county/indices/plcy\\_idx.htm](http://county/indices/plcy_idx.htm)

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Approved:




Signature

7-23-13

Date

## Sustainable Meeting and Event Checklist

County meeting and event organizers should familiarize themselves with this checklist in order to arrange and host a more sustainable meeting or event. Use the checklist at the very beginning of your planning for the most effective and efficient results. Not all items included will apply for every meeting and event. Please use your best judgment to determine what is applicable and practical for the activity planned. Items denoted with  promote wellness and are also included as a best practice in the County's Healthy Meeting Guidelines.

### **Save Paper**

- E-mail agendas to attendees and suggest that meeting attendees not print agendas because the agenda will be available at the meeting. Write agenda on white board or project it (if using a projector).
- E-mail handouts to participants or post them on a web page instead of printing. Let attendees know whether or not hard copies will be provided at the meeting or event.
- Create shared folders or online document storage sites for meeting materials instead of handouts.
- Project important documents on screen during the meeting rather than relying on handouts.
- If paper documents are necessary, print on both sides of the page on recycled content paper.
- Efficiently use paper by formatting with smaller font size; use minimum margins and white space for internal documents. Be prepared to accommodate individuals with visual impairment by providing documents in a larger font size if needed.
- Use white boards with non-toxic markers instead of paper flip charts to document meeting decisions. Take a photo with a digital camera or phone to document ideas before erasing.
- Create signage that can be reused for future meetings and events.
- Print one-time event flyers on once-used paper; feed through printers or copiers manually on reverse side.
- Avoid printing presentations. If necessary, print multiple slides per page on both sides of the page.
- Create event flyers that are easily transmitted and viewed electronically.
- Request that contracted trainers abide by these guidelines to reduce excess paper use.

### **Reduce Waste & Recycle**

- Ensure that recycling and garbage bins at the location are well marked, have accurate signage, and are large enough to hold the anticipated amount of waste and recycling.
- Pair garbage and recycling bins together in high traffic areas to maximize capture of recyclables.
- Choose a venue with a recycling program that includes paper, plastic, metal, and glass.
- If there are leftover meeting materials that are not needed, be sure that all paper is recycled (staples and paperclips are okay to include in commingled recycling).
- Utilize reusable plastic name badges with paper inserts, rather than disposable stick on labels, and have collection locations after the event. Paper inserts can be reused or recycled.
- Avoid unnecessary disposable items like paper certificates or giveaways wrapped in plastic.
- Acquire free meeting and event supplies at the County's ReUse Store in PSB 270.
- Consider sustainable table centerpieces such as potted plants, cut tree branches, or items that guests can reuse. Or borrow decorations from employees and return them after the event.
- Use cloth tablecloths and cloth napkins if possible. If not, use paper ones made from recycled paper.
- Use color sparingly on flyers intended for distributed printing (i.e. by individual departments). Use color fonts, small pictures, or small color blocks rather than a solid color background (to reduce ink use); consider how it will look if printed in black & white (for those without color printers).
- Request that contracted trainers abide by these guidelines to reduce waste.



### **Conserve Energy & Reduce Emissions**

- Seek out meeting rooms with natural light to conserve energy and increase productivity.
- Turn off the lights when leaving a meeting room.
- Turn off projectors, computers, and other electronics when not in use.
- Choose a meeting location that is close to as many attendees as possible and accessible by public transportation, walking, or biking. 🌱
- Choose a meeting location with alternative vehicle parking (such as electric vehicle charging stations, ADA accessible spaces, and bike racks).
- Provide information about which bus lines or rail service the meeting or event location.
- Coordinate meeting start times so that it's convenient to take public transportation. Visit [www.trimet.org](http://www.trimet.org) for transit schedules.
- Suggest carpooling and include a list of attendees and building locations in emailed agenda so attendees can carpool.
- If driving yourself, reach out to nearby attendees to coordinate a carpool.
- Provide a call-in number for off-site attendees in order to reduce travel and increase participation.
- If using multiple facilities, look for locations where the hotel and event venue are within walking distance of each other. 🌱
- Utilize the County's video teleconferencing equipment or online meeting tools to meet with groups or individuals off-site.

### **Support Green Businesses & Sustainable Food**

- When a caterer is being used, ask the caterer to provide durable serviceware, minimize disposables, or offer recyclable options to reduce waste.
- Avoid using bottled water by providing pitchers or dispensers of tap water. Provide durable cups if possible. 🌱
- Provide beverages in bulk whenever feasible, or in containers that are reusable or recyclable.
- Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable mugs or cups, and dishware (if practical).
- Provide durable dishes, cups, and silverware. If durables are not available consider options that are recyclable or made with recycled content. Be aware that in Washington County "compostable" serviceware will go into the landfill since commercial composting is not yet widely available.
- If disposable napkins, tablecloths, and dishware are used, select recycled content varieties.
- Avoid unnecessary disposable items like plastic straws and plastic coffee stirrers.
- Provide condiments, creamer and sugar in reusable or recyclable bulk containers rather than individual, disposable packets.
- Finger or bite sized foods that require no serviceware are preferred. Food items such as sandwiches should not be individually wrapped, to reduce packaging waste. 🌱
- Provide food buffet- or platter-style instead of using individually packaged meals or pre-plated quantities. If packaged food is provided, recyclable packaging is preferred.
- Include locally grown, seasonal and organic ingredients when possible. Healthy, fresh food options are preferred to help support the County's Wellness initiative and enable participation of attendees with dietary restrictions or chronic illnesses. 🌱
- Consider purchasing fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables from the Thursday PSB Farmers Market as meeting snacks. 🌱
- Minimize the amount of meat served and/or offer a vegetarian food option. 🌱
- Donate surplus usable food to charities or otherwise ensure it's eaten rather than thrown out.