

STANFORD GREEN EVENTS CONSULTING

Sustainable Event Recommendations for Student Groups

Executive Summary
February 2011

INTENDED USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is an executive summary of the Green Events Consulting (GEC) Handbook that the program's consultants use to assist student groups; any and all student groups are encouraged to read and act upon these recommendations. This summary communicates the areas where event-planning changes are possible, the steps to take to accomplish these alterations, and the outside resources that can assist in making these modifications. The following are quick summary guides for four main event-planning categories: **advertising, purchasing, food, and waste disposal.**

ABOUT STANFORD GREEN EVENTS CONSULTING

Green Events Consulting (GEC) is an ASSU (Associated Students of Stanford University) Executive initiative that aims to bring sustainable practices to Stanford campus. The program encourages voluntary student organizations (VSOs) to make their events as "green" as possible while simultaneously educating the students and campus about sustainable behavior.

After GEC recruits VSOs interested in participating in the program, a Green Events Consultant guides the student group event organizers step-by-step through the event-planning process. Together, they review the student group's previous budgets for the event if it is recurring, and the consultant suggests alternate options for each line item on that budget, or area of the event, that could be made more sustainable. During this planning process, the consultant focuses on the four key aspects of an event: **advertising, purchasing, food, and waste disposal.**

More information about Green Events Consulting (and GEC program participation applications) can be found at our website: <http://greenevents.stanford.edu>.

Note: This Executive Summary is printed on 100% recycled paper.

Table of Contents

ADVERTISING	4
INTRODUCTION.....	4
FLIERLESS ADVERTISING	4
SUSTAINABLE FLIERING.....	4
GREEN MESSAGING DURING THE EVENT	5
PURCHASING.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	6
SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING FOR STUDENT EVENTS.....	6
5 QUICK TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING	6
RESOURCES AND CONTACTS	7
FOOD	8
INTRODUCTION.....	8
A GUIDE TO EATING SUSTAINBLY IN THE SOUTH BAY/PENINSULA AREA	8
ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR PURCHASING FOOD.....	9
RESOURCES AND ON-CAMPUS CONTACTS	9
WASTE DISPOSAL	10
INTRODUCTION.....	10
LANDFILL-DIVERSIONS	10
<i>Recycling</i>	11
<i>Composting</i>	11
TEN QUICK TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE WASTE DISPOSAL	11
COMPOSTING AT YOUR EVENT	12
<i>Requirements for Food/ Compost Collection</i>	12
<i>What Kinds of Compostable Materials can be Recycled?</i>	12
<i>Pricing and Number of Bins</i>	12
<i>Ordering Compost Bins</i>	12
RESOURCES AND CONTACTS	13

ADVERTISING

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is generally the first topic to tackle since it is the first major step your organization takes in event execution. It is a key part of event-planning, and how an event is publicized largely determines its number of attendees. However, advertising often is implemented inefficiently with the use of excess material. Most events use printed fliers and posters as their primary outreach medium because student groups view this as the easiest method of informing the public. Printed advertisement, however, raises the level of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere during production and distribution. In addition, conventional logging practices cause land degradation and deforestation, as well as chemical water pollution through the bleaching and paper production process. This section describes effective methods student groups can use to improve their environmental footprint.

FLIERLESS ADVERTISING

Our ideal suggestion is to have a 100% No-Flier policy.

To divert paper fliering methods, ask questions like “Why do we need to flier?” and brainstorm other marketing methods that are equally (if not more) effective. Keep in mind the audience you are targeting for your event, and their main sources for information.

If your group has no idea where to start, take a look at the following options:

- **Internet**
 - Create an **online registration** system for your event
 - Advertise the event on your student group’s **website** or create a separate site for the event
 - Use **Facebook**: make an event page or purchase advertisement space for the day
 - **Email** your dorm/house and group lists
 - Post on Stanford’s official event site: <http://events.stanford.edu>
- **Published Advertising**
 - **Create an ad** for campus magazines and journals (i.e.the Daily)
 - Put an ad in Stanford Dining’s monthly table place cards (one free ad per quarter)
 - Publish an announcement in Stanford’s Unofficial Guide or directory
- **Other Means**
 - Wear event **t-shirts** from previous years
 - Contact relevant **departments** to make announcements
 - **Chalk** White Plaza
 - Create promotional **videos**
 - Ask Stanford Persuasive Technology for event-specific ideas (captology.stanford.edu)

SUSTAINABLE FLIERING

We understand that a 100% No-Flier policy is not always possible (though highly encouraged). However, it *is* feasible to reduce the intended amount.

If your student group insists on printing physical advertisements, develop ways to reduce the number of fliers that need to be printed out. Adhere to the Flier: No-Flier ratio – use more online sources and less paper

fliers. Make a list of strategic locations to post the fliers and decided the appropriate number of fliers for each location (usually not more than 1 or 2). Then use the guidelines below to make fliering as sustainable as possible:

- Use **recycled** paper
 - Print on the other side of previously used fliers
 - Use 55% (or more) post-consumer recycled paper
 - Ask Kinko's or Copy America for the most recyclable option
- Print **half-page** fliers (2 fliers per one sheet of paper)
- Employ targeted flier methods – instead of mass-fliering every visible surface, target your audience by putting up fewer fliers in specific high-traffic areas (bathrooms, freshman dorms, related academic departments)
- Use **soy-based inks** and chlorine-free paper when available
- Encourage **reusable** banners and posters
 - **Avoid printing the dates** on these so that you can reuse them in the future
- Avoid handouts and unnecessary brochures during the event
- Use **paper tape** rather than plastic – Stanford policy!
- For oversize flier and poster printing, try using PsPrint (psprint.com), a company than offers eco-friendly options

Remember to always write “please recycle me” at the bottom of every printed page.

GREEN MESSAGING DURING THE EVENT

Advertising is not over after the initial fliering; an important factor to remember is event attendee education. During the event, make sure the attendees know that the event has put effort in being “green,” and inform them about sustainable behavior.

- Announce the “green” measures your group has taken in event invitations and fliers as well as in event emails
- Make announcements throughout the event
- Have a sustainable booth (if applicable)
- Tell attendees the landfill diversion rate after the event

PURCHASING

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable purchasing is “a process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, services, works, and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimizing damage to the environment.”¹ It involves making smart decisions about purchasing by buying adequate quantities of material, and ensuring that the majority (if not all) procurements are reusable, recyclable, or compostable to keep the overall waste to a minimum.

Green products and services use fewer resources, are designed to last longer, and minimize their impact on the environment from cradle to grave (throughout their life cycles); they are more efficient. Sustainable purchasing helps reduce waste if products are disposed of properly. While some green products and services can cost more upfront, they reduce expenditures over their life cycles by being reusable and reducing related expenses like permit fees, toxic material handling charges, and staff training.

SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING FOR STUDENT EVENTS

The hierarchy of purchasing that GEC prescribes is the following (from best to worst):



Reusable (glass, silverware, etc) – cutlery, plates, and cups that do not need to be disposed

Compostable (avoid biodegradable, which is less eco-friendly than compostable)

Recyclable



Disposable / Unrecyclable (i.e. Styrofoam) – at this point, your event is not considered sustainable in terms of procurement

FIVE QUICK TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING

1. If you have to select products, **choose compostable plastic materials or plastics #s 1-2.**
2. **Think of cost in a bigger sense** – do not just think of the expense of purchasing the material, but think about the cost of using certain materials on the environment as well as on the community.
3. If you cannot rent materials, purchase cutlery, decorations, banners, and other items that can be composted or recycled.
4. Make sure that compostable materials that you purchase are **BPI-certified** because Stanford can only compost BPI-certified compostable material. BPI stands for Biodegradable Products Institute-certified, or material that can degrade within 180 days.
5. **Take attendance polls** and predict exactly how much material you will need in order to avoid producing additional waste.

¹ Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) <http://www.ekobai.com/analysis/details/1>

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Green Store (<http://greenstore.stanford.edu>)

Student-run online store that sells eco-friendly products (recyclable plastic cups as well as compostable material upon request) on campus and delivers orders to Stanford students' residences. Discounts are provided on bulk orders of recyclable cups.

World Centric (<http://worldcentric.org>)

Online store that sells BPI-certified compostable products; Green Store can help you get in touch with World Centric.

ECOPRODUCTS Online Store (<http://ecoproductsstore.com>)

Sells BPI-certified compostables.

Natureworks, LLC (<http://natureworkslc.com/where-to-buy.aspx>)

If you click on "Product & Applications" and then "Ingeo Biopolymer," you can find a list of Natureworks's partners that make products using Natureworks's BPI-certified biopolymer

Green Party Goods (<http://greenpartygoods.com/top-the-table-c-12.html>)

A local store with sustainable décor.

FOOD

INTRODUCTION

The type of food that you choose to purchase for your event has enormous environmental and social welfare implications. Conventional food production is a major source of environmental toxins, water and air pollution, and questionable labor practices. Ideal event food choices would meet the following criteria:

- **Local**
Within 150 miles of Stanford campus
- **Organic** (USDA-certified)
In general, organic production practices signify a lower fossil fuel-based impact because there are no synthetic pesticides or fertilizers used as inputs into the natural system. Organic growers use integrated pest management (IPM) techniques and increase nutrients in the soil by adding compost and using crop rotation and cover cropping systems on their land.
- **Locally-owned and operated**
By “local,” we mean in-state ownership (as opposed to national or multi-national corporate ownership). Choosing to spend Stanford’s money on certain companies rather than others is equivalent to supporting those systems of production and distribution. Supporting smaller, locally-owned and operated companies provides monetary inputs to the local economy and supports a diversified product base in our region.
- **Free range, grass-fed** (for meat and dairy)
Fewer antibiotics, steroids, and toxins are introduced to the meat and our water supply
- **Meet the Monterey Bay Aquarium guidelines** (for seafood)
Generally recognized as the accepted consumer standard for sustainable seafood. The guidelines can be found online.

In practice, it may be difficult to find products that meet all of the above criteria. When purchasing food, you should strive to **meet at least two of the above criteria**. Here are some stores where you can find food products that meet one or more of the criteria:

- **Munger Market** (on campus)
- **The Stanford Produce Stand**: Every Friday from 11 AM to 2 PM in the front court yard of Tressider Memorial Union. This student-run produce stand has fresh, local, organic produce that is harvested on the Stanford Community Farm.
- **Trader Joe’s**
- **Whole Foods**
- **Safeway and Costco** (some items)

A GUIDE TO EATING SUSTAINABLY IN THE SOUTH BAY/PENINSULA AREA:

The link below is a link to the document “Eating Sustainably: Resources for the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay.” The document contains information about all the local farmers’ markets, organic CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), produce delivery suppliers, and organic supplier grocery stores

<http://www.globalcommunity.org/vhd/eatsusbay.pdf>

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR PURCHASING FOOD

When planning and purchasing for your event, here are some basic guidelines to follow in order to reduce the environmental impact of your event:

- **Buy bite-size or finger foods**
These items require no utensils and generally have less packaging.
- **Offer vegan and vegetarian meal selections** (i.e. veggie platters) and encourage their selection as a means to reduce the carbon footprint of the event.
- **Buy bulk containers for condiments instead of individually wrapped items** (such as ketchup, mayo, mustard, mints, salt, pepper, or sugar).
- **Minimize the amount of packaging:**
 - *Best option:* Buy only food items without packaging (fresh bread/pastries, fruit, vegetables) and serve them on reusable plates and dishes
 - *Good alternatives:*
Example #1: If you need cookies for 30 people, instead of buying three 10-cookie packages, try to buy a small tray or platter of cookies instead. Safeway and Costco both usually have platter options. Also, the plastic cookie trays are recyclable.
Example #2: Instead of buying individual small chip bags, buy a few large bags of chips and serve the chips in reusable bowls at the event.
- **Avoid use of disposable items** like coffee stirrers (use a few spoons), straws, paper doilies, and toothpicks.
- **Make arrangements to donate** any usable leftovers to a food bank or shelter. The student group SPOON (Stanford Project on Hunger) is a great on-campus resource for this.
- **Use water glasses, pitchers, and bulk containers** of water, iced tea, or lemonade. Do not use bottled or imported water.
- **Soda**
Canned soda incurs a high transportation emissions cost, and it is almost never produced by a locally-owned company (Coca Cola, Pepsi, etc). Some **healthier alternatives are juices and iced teas mixed from concentrate, which can be served in pitchers and coolers**. If you are set on buying soda for your event, be sure to have clearly-marked recycling bins available so that event attendees can properly dispose of the aluminum cans.

RESOURCES AND ON-CAMPUS CONTACTS

Matt Rothe (Sustainable Food Coordinator for Stanford Dining)
Email: mrothe@stanford.edu

Stanford Farm Project (sustainable food-focused student group)
Contact: Briana Swette (bswette@stanford.edu) or Yoshika Crider (ycrider@stanford.edu)

SPOON (Stanford Project on Hunger): on-campus food bank
Contact: Jamie Querubin (jamieque@stanford.edu)

WASTE DISPOSAL

INTRODUCTION









Waste is perhaps the biggest “social cost” of planning events at Stanford. In 2007 alone, Stanford generated approximately 254 million tons of waste. The administration has recently taken an aggressive stance on this issue, which has resulted in 65% of waste at Stanford being recycled, composted, or otherwise sustainably sourced in 2009. Stanford’s ultimate goal is to increase the school’s rate of diversion from landfills up to 75%, and students can help reach this goal through sustainable waste disposal practices at their events.

LANDFILL-DIVERSIONS

There are two main processes for landfill-diverted waste disposal: recycling and composting.

Recycling

Recycling involves processing used materials into new products. In comparison to virgin production, this reduces the consumption of raw materials, uses less energy, and lowers greenhouse gases. See the following chart for items that can be recycled at Stanford:

Bottles and Cans			
	<p>Accepted Items Aluminum cans Glass bottles & jars Tin/bi-metal cans Aluminum foil Plastic #1 & #2 Plastic Bottles #1-7 Milk and juice cartons Aseptic containers</p>	<p>Not Accepted Aerosol containers Frosted glass Mirrors Plate glass Test tubes Polystyrene Foam Pyrex</p>	<p>Procedures No plastic bags. Please rinse containers, if possible.</p> 
Mixed Paper			
	<p>Accepted Items ALL PAPER that tears including white paper, junk mail, newspapers, hard and soft backed books, phone books, etc... Plastic bags Bubble wrap</p>	<p>Not Accepted Paper that has food or oil on it (i.e. pizza or donut boxes). Paper that is waxed or plasticized. Paper cups, napkins, plates or tissues.</p>	<p>Procedures Empty your personal mixed paper bin into the larger Mixed Paper collection bins.</p> 
Corrugated Cardboard			
	<p>Accepted Items Corrugated cardboard Brown paper bags</p>	<p>Not Accepted Paperboard (thin brown - cardboard like material). Pizza or donut boxes. Paper cups, napkins, plates or tissues.</p>	<p>Procedures Cardboard is collected in the green metal dumpsters located next to the garbage dumpsters outside of most buildings.</p> 
Batteries, Electronics, Toner Cartridges			
<p>In the Battery Bin: AA, AAA, C, D, 9 volt and rechargables</p> 	<p>In the E-Waste Bin: Calculators, CDs, cellular phones, PDAs, telephones, wireless devices, empty printer/toner cartridges, and other e-waste.</p> 		
Other Items			
Scrap metal, wood, yard waste, and food waste can also be recycled on campus. Polystyrene blocks and peanuts can be collected by a volunteer and taken to a local reuse or recycling location. Please call or email us for options!			

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Composting

Composting is different from recycling because it involves only organic materials. Food and compostable material are collected separately from garbage, corrugated cardboard, paper, and bottles and cans. Once collected, this material is taken to a compost facility off-campus and is made into a new soil product. Composting greatly reduces landfill use and is an alternative to garbage incineration. It not only helps reduce the total amount of waste, but it also converts remaining organic waste into a viable product for gardening and landscaping. Better yet, composting food increases soil biodiversity. Local recycling infrastructures are also sustained by composting, which helps them meet waste reduction goals. The following can and cannot be composted at Stanford:

What is Acceptable - Yes	What is Not Acceptable – No
Food Scraps	Metal
Fruits	Glass
Vegetables	Plastic
Meat	Foil
Fish	Cans
Bones	Styrofoam
Coffee Grounds	Diapers
Teas Bags	Kitty Litter
Plants	Pet Waste
Flowers	Ash
Leaves	Rock
Tree Trimmings	Stone
Sawdust	Chemicals: Bleach, Detergents, Degreasers
Soiled Paper and Napkins	Batteries
Pizza Boxes/Donut Boxes	Non-Compostable Serveware
Compostable Serveware that are certified by Biodegradable Products Institute (http://bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved.html).	

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TEN QUICK TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE WASTE DISPOSAL

1. **Buy compostable or recyclable utensils and non-bleached napkins**, and look for recyclable packaging (plastic #s 1 and 2) or compostable materials. Green Store (<http://greenstore.stanford.edu>) sells recyclable cups.
2. **Poll potential guests** about food preferences and attendance ahead of time in order to ensure that the correct amount of food is ordered.
3. **Submit a purchase order to PSSI** (Stanford's Recycling Center – <http://recycling.stanford.edu>) at http://bgm.stanford.edu/pssi_smartmart to have obtain recycling and compost bin drop-off and pickup services for your event.
4. **Utilize the Stanford Recycling Center** (<http://recycling.stanford.edu/dropoff/index.html>) to recycle unwanted supplies and materials leftover from your event.
5. **Choose entertainment activities that produce little to no waste.**
6. For recurring events, **make durable reusable banners and signs** with non-event specific information (ie, no specific dates).
7. **Organize volunteers** to help manage waste stations during the event and to help inform guests about greening efforts made by the event. Ask Students for a Sustainable Stanford (SSS) and Green Living Council (GLC) for volunteers.
8. Save paper by **printing** invitations and brochures **on both sides** of recycled paper, and use as few fliers as possible.
9. **Purchase supplies in bulk** to reduce packaging.
10. Select **“finger foods”** that can be served without utensils.

At the end of your event, **calculate how much waste was diverted** from landfills in order to measure your success and to see where you can improve next time.

COMPOSTING AT YOUR EVENT

If you are going to have food at your event, you need to have compost bins. Details on what types of material can be composted and how to order bins are below.

Requirements for Food/Compost Collection

- Purchase only BPI-certified compostable serviceware (Biodegradable Products Institute -- <http://bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved.html>)
- Replace all single-use and/or disposal items with a reusable, recyclable, or compostable option
- Train special event volunteers and staff on food waste and recycling
- Develop announcements, signage, and other educational material to educate attendees on food waste and recycling
- Assign volunteers or staff to monitor bins

What kinds of compostable materials can be recycled?

PSSI accepts food scraps, fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, bones, coffee grounds, teas bags, soiled paper, soiled napkins, plants, flowers, leaves, tree trimmings, sawdust, and compostable serviceware that is certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (<http://bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved.html>).

They do not accept any kind of non-compostable plastic in the food/compost bins, including paper coffee cups that are lined with a plastic film. However they do accept pizza boxes, donut boxes, and paper plates/napkins/cups that are not lined with plastic in the food/compost bins.

Pricing and Number of Bins

You can rent compost bins from Peninsula Sanitary Services, Inc. (PSSI). PSSI provides 32-gallon bins for your composting needs. Food/compost bins must be ordered in the same number as garbage bins so they can be placed side by side at your event. The charge per bin is \$15.37 (call the office for most current rate). This rate includes delivery and removal of the bins.

Ordering Compost Bins

For special event recycling and composting collection services on campus, submit a purchase order to PSSI/Stanford Recycling through SmartMart via Building, Grounds, and Maintenance (BGM)'s website: http://bgm.stanford.edu/pssi_smartmart.

Note: If the purchase order is not approved by the appropriate approver, PSSI will not receive it, and services will not be rendered. If you have questions about the service, call PSSI directly at (650) 321-4236 or email the company at lievem@pssi.stanford.edu.

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

PSSI/Stanford Recycling's website (<http://recycling.stanford.edu>)

This website can give you extensive information on waste diversion services and efforts at Stanford. Clicking on the Special Event Recycling and Composting link will lead you to a document entitled “**Five Simple Tips to Reduce Waste at Your Special Event**” which provides 5 easy ways to reduce waste at your event.

Stanford's Composting Program

<http://recycling.stanford.edu/specialevent/specialevents.html>

BPI's list of certified composting items

<http://bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved.html>

World Centric's list of places where you can purchase compostable service ware:

<http://worldcentric.org/bio/index.htm>

Stanford's Gateway to Financial Activities

<http://fingate.stanford.edu/staff/buy Paying/index.html>

Descriptions of recycling bins

<http://recycling.stanford.edu/acadbuild/locations.html>

Stanford Recycling Drop-Off Center

<http://recycling.stanford.edu/dropoff/index.html>

Commonly asked questions about recycling at Stanford

<http://recycling.stanford.edu/recycling/caq.html>