Green Event Essentials

Events at the University of New Mexico range from small office get-togethers to university-wide functions. Regardless of their size or length though, the choices you make regarding location, food, supplies and transport can all impact the environment. These events can be a great opportunity to showcase sustainability in action! Here are some tips on how to plan an event that even an Eco-Ambassador would be proud of.

Plan to be Green

- **Email Invitations** – It saves paper and money. Web applications such as Evite and Facebook also help to manage invites and RSVPs.

- If a printed invitation is an absolute must for your event, use a high percentage post-consumer recycled-content paper (e.g. 100% recycled content) and give a phone number for RSVPs instead of reply cards. Vegetable-based ink, lower-weight paper, FSC-certified paper, the message “please recycle me” and designs that minimize waste, do not contain metallic or other non-recyclable features make for invitations that send a clear message that you’re serious about impact.

- **Choose a Smart Location** – If possible, try to pick a location that is accessible to public transit. Provide information on green travel options, suggest carpooling or even offer bike valet service.

- **Cut Down on Handouts and Giveaways** as these items often end up in the trash. Ask for electronic versions of presentations and post them on your website or email them afterwards.

- **Green the Menu** – To lower the event’s impact, try to choose vegetarian options and locally sourced/in-season ingredients. Avoid using individual servings of items such as condiments and beverages. Ensure ahead of time that plates and service ware items used are recyclable.

  - **Get Creative on Speaker Gifts/Participant Favors** – If you must provide gifts, aim for useful items that can be used during the event, such as mugs.

Commit to Future Parties!

- Prepare for the next party by investing in reusable plates, cups, utensils, napkins and tablecloths.

- Avoid purchasing new items and buy from yard sales or thrift stores. They’re great sources for good deals on event items.

- If you can’t buy reusable items, look for ones with post-consumer recycled content or are biodegradable and/or compostable.
Deal with Waste

- Make sure recycling bins are set out near trash bins and the food table and are clearly labeled before the event begins. Make the recycling bins large and the trash cans small.
- If you want to use compostable plates or recycle food scraps, recruit compost monitors and have them be easily identifiable in the crowd. Contact Mary Clark at the UNM Office of Sustainability for help.
- Collect name tag holders for reuse.
- Donate surplus/unserved food to shelters.
- Serve drinks in pitchers instead of single-serving cans and bottles.
- Provide a marker so people can label and reuse their cups during the event.
- Use napkins instead of small plates if you are serving finger food.
- If you already have tongs and serving utensils available, ask catering not to provide them.

Spread the Word

- Almost as important as creating a green event is letting people know what you did and why. Advertise your function as a green event. Call attention to eco-friendly items with signs and announcements. Brief all volunteers and staff about the green features of the event so they can help monitor and inform your participants. Share information on how to run a green event and ask for feedback on your efforts.

Learn More

Consult Tufts’ list of green event resources:
http://sustainability.tufts.edu/?pid=137

Learn more about eco-labels on food:
http://sustainability.tufts.edu/?pid=149