

# Nova Scotia Community College Sustainable Events Guide



# Table of Contents

Why sustainable events? .....	2
How to Use This Guide .....	2
Planning .....	4
Wrap-up.....	7
References.....	8

## Why sustainable events?

Events held at NSCC campuses and offices can have significant impacts on the environment.

Traditionally, large amounts of waste are generated during events, including plastic and paper from the packaging of food, utensils, and other necessities, food waste, and event marketing. Other less tangible – but no less impactful – effects can arise from the hosting of conferences, seminars, and other gatherings. If travel is involved, greenhouse gas emissions can be released into the atmosphere from cars and other forms of fossil fuel-based transportation that attendees use to travel to and from the event, contributing to the growing issue of climate change. Even in the planning phase of the event, significant impacts may be generated.

As a sustainability-focused institution, NSCC aims to significantly reduce the impacts of the various categories of events that are held throughout the year at our 13 campuses and at our various office spaces across Nova Scotia. NSCC has maintained a Gold rating under the Sustainability Tracking and Rating System (STARS) – a self-reporting framework developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) – which makes us the highest rated associate college in the world. While we are extremely proud of our progress thus far in developing a robust culture of sustainability, there is always more we can all do.

With a little bit of planning and thoughtful preparation, the impact of events can be significantly reduced. From simple acts, like ensuring re-useable dishware and utensils are procured for the event, to more ambitious actions like reducing the carbon footprint of the event, you can help propel NSCC towards its sustainability goals. When you choose to host a green event, you are choosing to represent NSCC's sustainability values and ensure we are doing our part to make the world a better place for everyone. It might be easier than you think – many of these actions you may already take when organizing events!

## How to Use This Guide

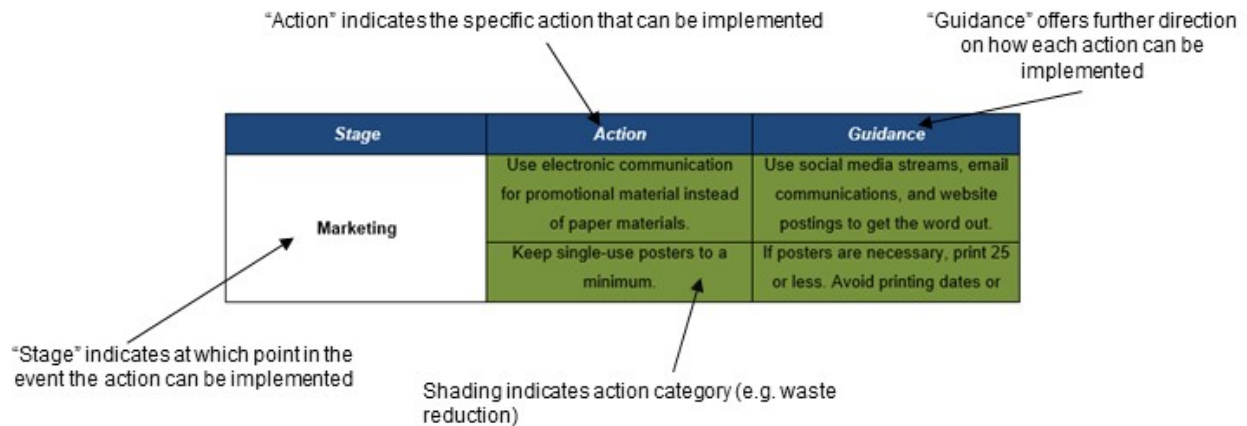
This guide serves as a first resource for planning your sustainable event. Enclosed is a checklist with a variety of sustainable actions that you can take at all stages of the event, from planning to clean-up.

These actions are voluntary, and you may choose which actions to take. However, keep in mind that every contribution is meaningful, and the more you do, the more you can reduce your impact.

The actions check-list is broken up into two main sections: planning, and wrap-up. Within these sections are sub-categories for each aspect of the two main phases, such as organizing, marketing, and set-up. In addition, each action in each sub-category is classified based on the impact it will help reduce (e.g. waste). There are 26 actions in this guide that you can take to make sure your event has a reduced



impact. Each action is colour-coded based on which category it falls under. Below is a diagram illustrating the layout of the checklist.



## Colour-coding

Waste reduction action items are colour-coded with **green**. There are 18 waste reduction items included in the checklist. These actions help to reduce, reuse, or recycle single-use items used during the event.

Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are related to transportation options are colour-coded with **blue**. There are 3 greenhouse gas emission and transportation action items included in the checklist. These actions give attendees the opportunity to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions footprint when traveling to the event by choosing alternative transportation methods.

Actions that have indirect impacts on the environment, impacts on community sustainability culture, and convey or enhance the sustainability message of the event are colour-coded **orange**. There are 5 of these action items include in the checklist. These actions can help reduce the indirect impacts of events (i.e. impacts accrued during the production of goods used during the event), help build a culture of sustainability at your campus/office, and support local communities.

Beyond this guide, you have the option to get your event officially certified by the NSCC Sustainability Department by submitting a Sustainable Events Certification form here:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=etmbxRtLq02JrKCrao5ENYakn1f\\_GQtIhtDr4wIKwJUNFRLRkxISkk1N0tWSjkwSVBQOUNLQ0FPTy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=etmbxRtLq02JrKCrao5ENYakn1f_GQtIhtDr4wIKwJUNFRLRkxISkk1N0tWSjkwSVBQOUNLQ0FPTy4u)

The certification form is a direct replication of the check-list below, and as long as the event completes 50% of the actions, it will gain a certification from the Sustainability Department.

# Planning

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
<b>Marketing</b>	Use electronic communication for promotional material instead of paper materials.	Use social media streams, email communications, and website postings to get the word out.
	Keep single-use posters to a minimum.	If posters are necessary, print 25 or less. Avoid printing dates or slogans so that they can be re-used for future events. If possible, consider laminating the posters with fillable sections for event details.
<b>Marketing</b>	Print any necessary handouts double-sided.	Paper use reduction represents one of NSCC's biggest opportunities to reduce our overall waste impact and one area where you can help the most!
	Print any necessary handouts on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper.	The FSC helps to protect habitat, human rights, and areas of environmental significance, so using FSC certified paper means that your indirect environmental impact is minimized.
<b>Organizing</b>	Use electronic communication between organizers instead of travel.	Use phone calls, Skype, or other means of communication to plan the event rather than in-person meetings if significant travel is necessary.
	Ensure event location is near accessible water.	Check your campus or office for water bottle fill stations, water coolers, or taps that can be used instead of bottled water.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
<b>Organizing</b>	Download and print signage for waste sorting stations. *link to the download*	It is recommended the signage be laminated and re-used for future events.
<b>Product purchasing</b>	Purchase any giveaway items, gifts etc. from local businesses or make sure the gifts/giveaways contribute to the sustainability message of the event.	Many local businesses have a sustainability focus, and will usually use less packaging than larger retail outlets. When local retailers are not an option, try to purchase items that guests will find useful beyond the event to avoid creating more waste.
<b>Product purchasing</b>	Purchase food and other items only after confirming the amount of attendees and ensure to purchase for that number of people to reduce waste.	A little bit of planning goes a long way in this aspect – make sure you have an accurate attendance list so that you can reduce food waste at the source.
<b>Information to participants</b>	In any communications to attendees, identify ways attendees can reduce carbon impacts.	Identify local options for alternative transport, such as public transit, carpooling options, and bicycle pathways.
	Give participants the option to attend via Skype or other video communication service instead of travelling significant distances.	While this might not be possible for conferences or similar events, consider this for annual meetings or other larger meetings that require attendance by personnel from out of town.
	Communicate the sustainability mandate of the event to attendees.	Announce that you are striving for sustainable event certification and identify some of the actions you are taking at the event – this can help attendees buy-in and make your job easier!

Stage	Action	Guidance
<b>Set-up</b>	Ask attendees to bring a reusable mug and/or their own water bottle.	Provide access to somewhere attendees can wash or rinse their mugs and bottles.
	Ask attendees to bring a re-usable food container.	Send any left-overs home with your guests. Nobody says no to free food, and it will help reduce food waste!
	Use re-usable dishware and utensils.	Work with your caterer/food provider to make sure they are able to provide re-usable dishware.
	Provide reusable nametags or nametag holders.	Fold over pin badges or neck tags are great for reusing. Consider using recycled paper for the name tags.
	Do not purchase bottled water.	As mentioned above, try to situate your event near water sources. If it is not possible, use refillable water jugs or pitchers instead.
	Avoid purchasing individual cans/bottles of other beverages.	Work with your caterer to provide bulk beverages.
	Avoid purchasing individual condiment packets.	Work with your caterer to provide bulk condiments.
	Purchase locally-sourced food and beverages whenever possible.	Keeping it local helps to reduce the overall impact of the event.
	Use cloth napkins instead of paper.	Once again, check with your caterer to see if this is an option.
	Position volunteers at each waste station to instruct attendees where different types of waste/recycling go	Having volunteers helping with the waste sorting ensures waste is sorted accurately.

## Wrap-up

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
<b>Clean-up</b>	Collect all signage and posters for recycling or re-use.	Carefully roll up or fold posters and other signage so that they can be re-used next time.
	Collect all nametags/nametag holders.	They can be used at your next event.
	Ensure all waste is sorted and disposed of properly.	See your on-campus sustainability coordinator.
	Ensure all lights and electrical equipment (e.g. computers, projectors etc.) are turned off in the event room, if possible.	To save even more energy, try unplugging electronics if you can. Most electronics still draw small amounts of electricity even when they are turned off.
<b>Follow up</b>	Complete the feedback form at the end of the checklist.	We want to hear from you. What went well? What didn't? Do you have any suggestions for how sustainable events can be run more smoothly? We want to make sure this document keeps evolving to better serve its users, and to make reducing the environmental impact of events at NSCC even easier in the future.



## References

University of Manitoba Sustainability. Green Event Guide.

[http://umanitoba.ca/campus/sustainability/media/Green\\_Event\\_Guide\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](http://umanitoba.ca/campus/sustainability/media/Green_Event_Guide_-_FINAL.pdf)

City of Vancouver. Green Events Planning Guide.

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/green-events-planning-guide.pdf>

Hosting a Green Event. University of New Brunswick.

<https://www.unb.ca/initiatives/sustainability/get-involved/green-events.html>

A Guide to Carbon Neutral and Green Events. University of New Brunswick.

<https://www.unb.ca/initiatives/assets/documents/sustainability-/green-event-guide.pdf>

Guide to Green Events. Harvard University.

<https://green.harvard.edu/sites/green.harvard.edu/files/Guide%20to%20Green%20Events.pdf>