

# **SUSTAINABLE EVENT GUIDE**

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# SUSTAINABLE EVENTS CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist as a tool to guide your event planning process!

## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB)

- ☐ Ensure diverse perspectives are taken into account in the event planning
- ☐ Prepare and deliver a meaningful Land Acknowledgement
- ☐ Integrate diversity and inclusion into the outreach, communications, and delivery of your event
- ☐ Use resources like Humber's EDI Faculty Toolkit to learn about an EDI mindset
- ☐ Follow Humber's Inclusive Language Guide
- ☐ Supplement your research with the many Library Resource Guides
- ☐ Hire diverse speakers
- ☐ Adequately compensate speakers

## Accessibility

- ☐ Review the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) for compliance
- ☐ For more guidelines on accessibility, review Ontario's Accessible Event Guide
- ☐ Ask registrants about their accessibility requirements in event registration page
- ☐ Host hybrid events so participants can join virtually
- ☐ Enable closed captioning on virtual events
- ☐ Provide tutorials that explain how to navigate the virtual meeting platform
- ☐ Offer adequate breaks throughout the event
- ☐ Ensure event space is wheelchair accessible

## Catering

- ☐ Opt for a plant-based menu to minimize the carbon footprint of meals
- ☐ Order food according to the quantity of RSVPs
- ☐ Cater to the diet needs of guests
- ☐ Request food to be labelled for allergens, meat, and dairy products
- ☐ Opt for Fairtrade certified food products when possible
- ☐ Avoid individually wrapped items (snacks, candy, juice bottles)

## Procurement, Prizes and Swag

- ☐ Invest in high quality decorative items that can be reused in future events
- ☐ Consider the life-cycle cost of materials and opt for more durable options
- ☐ Limit giveaways and swag
- ☐ Give participants the option to opt out of receiving items if they are not interested
- ☐ Raffle a unique experience or meaningful artisanal gifts from local businesses
- ☐ If high volume of materials are absolutely necessary, purchase from organizations that are third-party certified for sustainable and labour practices (such as Fairtrade and BCorp)
- ☐ Review the [Sustainable Supplier List](#)

## Communications & Marketing

- ☐ To avoid paper, use digital platforms to promote events
- ☐ Adopt AODA guidelines in all communications materials
- ☐ Ask guests to RSVP for the event to order an appropriate amount of food
- ☐ Invest in reusable signage and materials
- ☐ Print double sided when printing is needed
- ☐ Communicate about sustainability approaches used in the event

## Transportation

- ☐ Prioritize sourcing local materials and services to reduce transportation distance
- ☐ Promote green transportation (public transit, biking, walking, and carpooling)
- ☐ Include information about public transit options in promotional materials
- ☐ If nonlocal participants or speakers are invited, encourage them to participate virtually to avoid emissions related to transportation

## Energy Conservation

- ☐ Pick a venue that uses green energy sources (such as solar power)
- ☐ Choose a venue of the appropriate size to minimize energy use
- ☐ Host the event on a time that capitalizes on daylight hours to reduce energy use
- ☐ Turn off lights and projectors when not in use
- ☐ Source energy-efficient equipment
- ☐ Use the [Events Emissions Calculator](#) to calculate your event's impact

## Waste

- ☐ Switch single-use items for reusable alternatives, avoiding balloons and other single-use decoration items
- ☐ Avoid using compostable dishware or utensils, as they are not compostable in Ontario
- ☐ Reduce or eliminate swag giveaways
- ☐ Invite vendors and partners to take part in sustainable practices
- ☐ Ensure there is an appropriate number of sorting waste bins at the event
- ☐ Certify waste streams have proper signage
- ☐ Avoid printing in excess, make materials available virtually instead
- ☐ Use one of Humber's many [Low-Waste Event Spaces](#)



# DETAILED EVENT GUIDE

## Sustainability at Humber

Humber is committed to providing climate action leadership as a model of sustainability excellence, to empower learners to shape a better tomorrow. The Office of Sustainability leads and supports campus engagement, awareness-building, and the creation of a culture of sustainability among staff, students and faculty.

Some examples of our efforts are centralized in guiding documents like the Sustainability Vision, Climate Action Plan, and Integrated Energy Master Plan. By addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability across the institution, we are creating career-ready citizens for the challenges of today's world.

## Why plan a sustainable event?

Over 20 events happen on campus every day, and these gatherings have a significant impact on Humber's waste generation, energy consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions. Incorporating sustainability in event planning and execution is key to living our values and showcasing what sustainability and climate action look like in practice.

The Sustainable Events Guide was created to help Humber staff, students, and faculty embed sustainability into all aspects of event design without compromising experience.

This document illustrates how integrating sustainability into our day-to-day roles and responsibilities, like events and event-planning, is important for creating a positive impact. There are many ways to take initiative and have a positive impact on the planet. Humber's Office of Sustainability can provide additional information and resources, if needed.

Contact us via email: [sustainability@humber.ca](mailto:sustainability@humber.ca)



# SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) are foundational to sustainable event planning because they ensure that the environmental, social, and economic benefits reach all communities equitably. Historically marginalized groups – often excluded due to race, income, or geography – are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation and denied fair access to natural and built resources.

Events are a great opportunity to centre this work, ensure diverse perspectives are centered, cultivate environment of belonging, and show many people many facets of sustainability and it's interconnections.

- Events should be welcoming and inclusive of all individuals, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, or social background. This should be reflected from the planning stages to event promotion and execution.
- For instance, when organizing a panel or series of speakers, seek to include diverse speakers who meaningfully represent the audience. Ensure all speakers are adequately compensated.







## Accessibility

Sustainability should be for all to experience and participate in. As aspects of sustainability remain inaccessible to many - due to financial constraints, physical barriers, prohibitive design, and others - it is important to work to reduce and eliminate barriers to sustainability practices. When designing an event, ensure that all participants, regardless of ability, can fully participate and benefit from the experience.

There are many accessibility standards and guides that can be consulted for compliance, such as the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#). In partnership with Tangled Art + Disability, Humber developed [The Accessibility Toolkit](#) that promotes numerous tips and best practices to incorporate accessibility features into art exhibits.

- Upon registration, ask attendees for accessibility requirements to better accommodate everyone.
- If possible, for in-person events, provide the option for virtual participation. Enable close captioning and provide tutorials on how to use tools on the meeting platform in use.



# Catering

Adopting sustainable practices in catering can help reduce the emissions footprint of meals served and minimize food waste. To reduce emissions associated with meals, consider serving a plant-based menu and prioritize local produce.

To reduce food waste, order an amount of food that is appropriate for the number of guests you are expecting. Creating an RSVP page for the event can help you determine this number. It is also good practice to ask registrants about dietary restrictions (allergies, vegetarian or vegan diets) and properly label food for allergens, meat, and dairy products.

## Did you know?

Over 46% of all food in Canada is wasted every year (Second Harvest, 2024)

Humber Polytechnic is a Fairtrade Campus, a designation which means we support the purchase of ethical and sustainable products. Fairtrade is a global movement aimed at ensuring better pay, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers. All coffee and teas served on campus events catered by Chartwells are Fairtrade, as part of the Fairtrade Campus commitments.

Whenever possible, support food service organizations that are small, local, owned by people from equity deserving groups, and have a third-party certification for sustainable and labour practices (such as Fairtrade and BCorp), to promote social and economic benefits.

Tip: Host your event in one of Humber's Low Waste Event Spaces. In Low Waste Event Spaces, reusable china, cutlery, glasses, ceramic milk saucers and sugar bowls are provided automatically, and free of charge.



## Procurement, Prizes and Swag

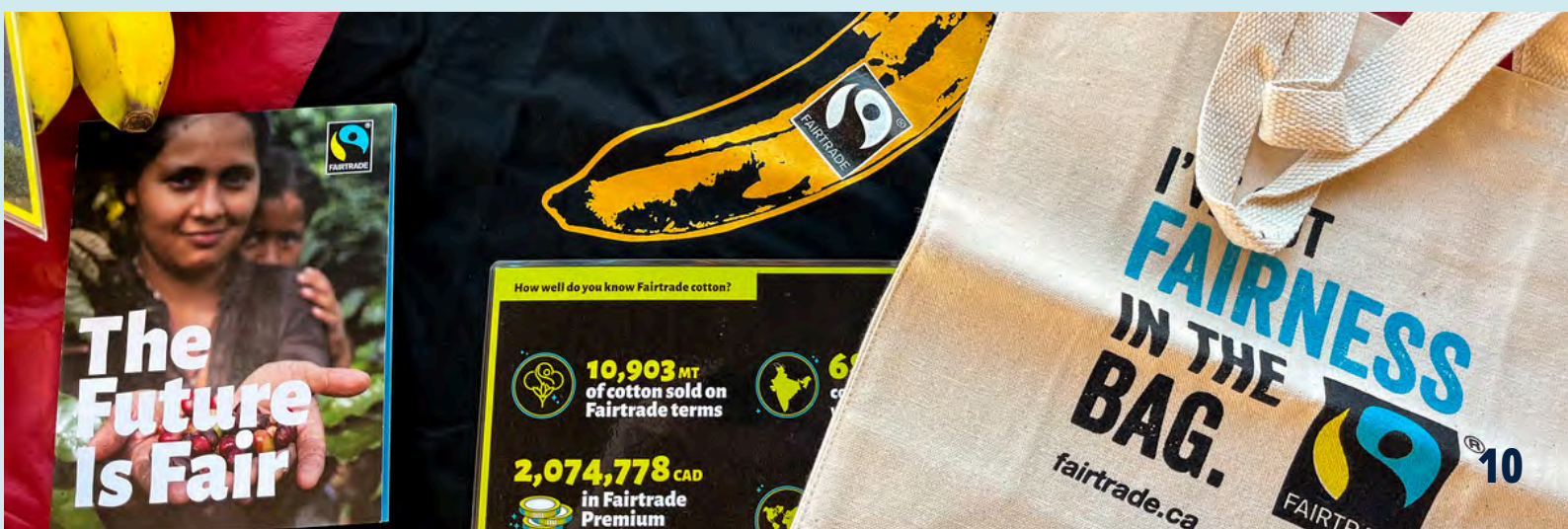
A sustainable mindset must also be prioritized when planning for event materials purchasing, especially prizes and swag items. By applying this thinking that prioritizes long-term environmental, social, and economic prosperity and balance, event spending is optimized and can promote social and economic benefits in addition to supporting sustainable practices. Consider the life-cycle cost of materials: investing in quality products might result in savings over the years as materials are used in future events. Buy from organizations that are small, local, and owned by people from equity deserving groups.

Best practice in sustainability is to limit product giveaways and eliminate swag entirely, as these items are usually mass-produced, do not meet ethical and sustainable practices, and end up in landfill. Rather than gifting low value items to all guests, make a draw for a unique experience or meaningful artisanal gifts from local businesses.

As a last resort, if the purchase of a high volume of materials cannot be avoided, choose products from organizations that are third-party certified for sustainable and labour practices (such as Fairtrade and BCorp).

Many companies today claim to be sustainable, however, this can be a form of marketing (referred to as “greenwashing”) where companies deceptively claim their policies and products are environmentally friendly. To avoid falling for greenwashing, research the company’s commitments to sustainability, publicly available records of environmental and social impact, and designations issued by recognized sustainable certifications.

Review the **Sustainable Supplier List** for additional guidance and list of recommended vendors for common event purchases.





## Communications & Marketing

The messaging and promotion of events should align with sustainability goals. Focus on appropriate digital communication tools to avoid waste associated with printed flyers and posters and emissions footprint associated with virtual activity. Within digital platforms, diversify avenues used and comply with AODA standards.

A virtual registration page or form is strongly recommended, as it will inform the expected number of attendees for catering, venue space required, and accessibility needs.

Create materials that can be reused for events that happen periodically. Consider removing dates and times so materials can be reused in future events.

Communicate to guests the sustainability approaches deployed in the event planning and delivery by incorporating facts in speeches and placing signs about green measures in the space.



## Transportation

Transportation of products, services, and event commuting can be a large source of emissions. To minimize emissions, try to prioritize sourcing materials and services that are local to reduce transportation distance. Or, consider if other departments have materials from their past events that can be borrowed.

Promote sustainable transportation options for attendees – public transit, biking, walking, and carpooling. Include information about public transit options available in promotional materials. This can look like a map that identifies bus stops and subway lines or a list of main routes to the venue.

**Tip:** Allow attendees and speakers to join virtually to avoid long-distance travel.



# Energy Conservation

Events require a significant amount of energy to power lighting, sound systems, screens, cooling and heating systems. Some venues still rely on fossil fuels to power their operations, meaning that greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere to generate electricity.

When possible, make an informed choice on the venue to prioritize buildings that use greener energy sources like solar power. Choose a venue of the appropriate size and host the event during a time that capitalizes on daylight hours to reduce energy consumption.

For additional energy savings, source energy-efficient products with certifications such as Energy Star and turn off lights and projectors when not in use.

Tip: To get a better understanding of the impact of an event, use the [Events Emissions Calculator](#).



# Waste

The most effective waste management strategy is to avoid waste from being created in the first place. For events, this means avoiding single-use materials (such as balloons, cutlery, dishware, and tablecloths) and print materials. Avoid compostable items as waste systems in Ontario are not able to manage compostables, adding to landfills. Instead, find reusable alternatives to single-use and compostable items.

It is also good practice to limit or eliminate giveaways in large quantities as a large percentage of swag items end up in landfill. Before purchasing gifts, give more thought to their use, materials, and environmental impact. Will the event experience be fundamentally impacted by such giveaway? How will attendees use this item after the event?

Invite vendors and partners to take part in sustainable practices. For example, they can reduce the quantity of printed materials and swag brought to the event.

Plan ahead for waste disposal and ensure there are enough sorting bins with correct signage at the venue. Volunteers can be placed next to waste stations to help attendees sort their items.

Avoid printing in excess, especially materials that cannot be used after the event. Maps and brochures, for example, can be available online for attendees. Prioritize digital over printed materials.

## Low Waste Event Spaces

To reduce waste output across campus and align with the federal government's Single-Use Plastics Prohibition Regulation, Humber created Low Waste Event Spaces in 2022. Events catered through Chartwells in the spaces listed below will have china service as the default at no additional cost.

### North Campus

- Doris Tallon Community Room NX
- T-Residence Conference Room
- E-Concourse
- B101 Boardroom
- Residence Dining Hall
- Barrett CTI
- LRC Concourse

### Lakeshore Campus

- L Community Room
- L Building Café 2nd Floor
- G Commons
- Welcome Centre