



Green Events Planning Guide for UW-River Falls

St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development

This guide will help members of the UWRF community to plan and execute meetings, parties, or other events that “Walk the Talk” consistent with our sustainable campus community objectives; especially minimizing energy and material waste, and overall environmental and social impact without sacrificing the quality of the event. This guide also seeks to raise the level of participant experience, education, and application in their own personal, professional, and civic life. The guide outlines the most important factors to consider and provides information about local resources available to maximize your event’s sustainability footprint at minimized cost, based on the 4 System Conditions of The Natural Step:

In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:

1. concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust (e.g. fossil fuels, heavy metals, etc.);
2. concentrations of substances produced by society (e.g. Dioxin, Bisphenyl A, melanine, etc.);
3. degradation by physical means (e.g. deforestation, wetland destruction, etc.);
4. and, in that society, people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs (e.g. lack of food, water, shelter, sanitation, living wage, etc.)

General Guidelines

- Be aware and creative in minimizing waste and environmental impact, and maximizing social responsibility.
- Build support and assign leadership roles amongst the event planning committee for working toward a zero waste event.

Event Advertising

- Minimize paper and printing by taking advantage of electronic media for event PR.
- Create an event web site.
- Offer electronic registration or confirmation.
- Use flyers sparsely and strategically and assure that they are recycled when removed from bulletin boards.
- Advertise in the Student Voice; contact @ Ext. 3264 / 3118
- Advertise on WRFW radio; contact @ Ext. 3887
- Advertise on the electronic message boards in the UC by contacting Jon Levendoski at: jonathan.m.levendoski@uwrf.edu or 715-425-4444 x121 for posting ads.
- Advertise on the webpage of the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development. Contact information is on the “Contact Us” page.

Preventing & Reducing Solid Waste at the Event

- Avoid mass distribution of paper handouts. Distribute copies of handouts or slides electronically via the web after the event.
- Use double-sided printing for any materials to be distributed.
- Limit the use of glossy paper to applications where it significantly improves the publication.
- Assure that a sufficient number of well-labeled recycling receptacles are available throughout the venue (along with garbage containers to make sure recycling bins aren't contaminated).
- Provide and later re-collect reusable name badges.
- Design reusable or recyclable signs for use at the event or use overhead projections.
- Utilize and publicize use of 100% post-consumer paper and soy-based inks.

Food Service

- Work closely with the UWRP Director of Food Service (Phone: 4444 Ext 117), and the catering and other food venue coordinators of the Sodexo Food Service contractor at the University Center (Phone Ext 3113 or 3274).
- Request locally sourced food (raw and value-added within a 100 mile radius) and/or sustainably grown certified food as per the Food Alliance Certification service, with whom Sodexo works closely.
- Plan food service needs carefully to avoid unnecessary waste by accurately forecasting the head-count. Use RSVPs or registration to assist in event planning.
- Maximize the use of local, seasonal and organic food.
- Assure that there are vegetarian and vegan meal options.
- Consider the use of reusable or compostable cutlery, dishware and linens. PLA starch-based disposable containers and cutlery are now standard in the UC.
- Provide incentives for attendees to bring reusable items (e.g. mugs, utensils) rather than expect disposable serviceware.
- Offer fair trade certified foods, beverages (e.g. organic, shade grown coffee), and other event products, such as T-shirts.
- Serve food buffet style rather than in "box lunch" form.
- Procure beverages and condiments in resource efficient bulk-packaging (e.g. 2-liter, kegs, etc.) rather than individual serving packets.
- Use cloth, compostable, or post-consumer-recycled-content napkins.
- Provide food and organic waste composting services and receptacles.
- Donate excess food to local shelters, food banks, or soup kitchens.
- Put it in writing. Include the policies above in RFP's and/or contract for food and related services.

Green Product Sourcing

- Consider the life-cycle (environmental and social) impact of any raffled prizes, give-a-ways, centerpieces, or decorations to be used at the event, and minimize the packaging for such items. Innovative resource- or energy-efficient products might be demonstrated (e.g. LED holiday string lights).
- Distribute items to attendees that will help them to reduce waste and restore environmental quality and social justice in the future (e.g. fair trade cloth bags, native plant seeds, potted plants, etc.).
- Select products made from recycled or rapidly renewable materials. List the amount of recycled content and/or vegetable- or soy-based inks used.

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

- Select venues that are as energy efficient as possible. Easy ways to assess this include seeking spaces with significant daylighting, modest and energy efficient electric lighting, automated building controls, and well insulated/large thermal mass building envelopes.
- UWRF University Center is an excellent building for demonstrating the latest in green design and human performance capacity.
- Purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) or “green-tags” to offset the emissions of any electricity used for the event. There are numerous competitive certified-REC providers. For a list of providers, see http://www.green-e.org/your_e_choices/trcs.html. The current average price of a REC is 2.5¢ per kWh.
- To determine the projected energy usage for a particular building on campus, contact UWRF Facilities Management Engineer Tim Thum at timothy.g.thum@uwrp.edu.
- Select venues adjacent to public transportation and with sufficient bicycle racks.
- Encourage carpooling and provide a carpooling mechanism for ease of coordination (e.g. UWRF carpooling board located by Freddy's C-Store in the UC).

Participant Education

- Explain the zero-waste objectives of the event to participants, in advance if possible.
- Provide frequent visual and verbal reminders to recycle and reduce waste.
- Encourage the return of items that can be reused at another event.
- Promote the events sustainable community objectives.
- Provide space for educational tables and stations that provide literature and actual demonstration programs (e.g. Wigwam Worm Food Composting equipment)
- St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development educational slides are available for use on background display screen during the event. Call 425-3479 for information and availability.

Resources

St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development: www.uwrp.edu/sustain

The Natural Step Canada: www.naturalstep.org/canada

This document also draws heavily from a variety of green event planning guides, especially MIT's 1st annual “Zero Waste Party” in conjunction with Earth Day, April 2006.

