

Leon County Sustainable Events Guide



Sustainable Choices for Every Occasion

Making daily sustainable choices can be implemented into a lifestyle over time. However, special occasions often complicate and disrupt sustainable patterns. When it is time to celebrate, many adopt a “go big or go home” motto. Large events often generate large amounts of waste and can have a negative impact on the environment.

Learn more about how you can “go big and go green” with Leon County’s Sustainable Events Guide! Integrating sustainable practices into an event can not only reduce the carbon footprint, but also save money and enhance the experience for guests.

In this document, you will find:

 Tips for a Greener Event	 Sustainable Event Checklist
 Vendor Request Form	 Food Donation Sites

Visit our webpage to view a list of local vendor and catering options for your event planning!





Tips for a Greener Event

Waste Reduction

Preventing Waste

The key to reducing waste at an event is to begin with the planning stage. To minimize unnecessary waste, consider:

1. Identifying items that will not serve a purpose beyond this event.

Items such as signage, giveaway prizes with dates or the name of the event, or single-use plastic dishware are all likely to end up in the landfill after the event is over. When gathering materials for the event, take note of which single-use items could be swapped for something with a greater lifespan.

2. Looking for sustainable alternatives.

Consider reusable dishware options, switch from paper to online promotion, and search for gift items that are useful and not branded with specific dates or events. This can save money, as you can reuse these items for future events, and can create long-lasting keepsakes for your guests.

Food and Catering

Food provision and catering services have a significant effect on the environmental impact of an event. Serving local food and vegetarian options helps reduce your carbon footprint and create a unique and memorable experience for your guests.

When ordering food, it can be tempting to over-order. To reduce excess food waste, confirm the headcount of your event beforehand and order for that number. To go above and beyond – have guests provide food restrictions and preferences in advance to help guide a menu.

Proper Waste Disposal

Waste that cannot be avoided should be properly disposed of, and it's important to have the right disposal options secured before the event.

Recycling bins should be clearly labeled and stationed near the trash cans to avoid confusion. Larger events, where leftover food is unavoidable, can be a great opportunity to organize a food recovery donation. For smaller events, encourage guests to take leftover food home or consider composting.

Keep in mind that single-use plastic straws and utensils are not recyclable in Leon County, and neither are bioplastics. Bioplastics are also not compostable, although some cardboard and sugarcane products can be composted. Find a list of what can and cannot be recycled [here](#), or contact the Office of Sustainability with questions prior to your event.

Engaging with Attendees

Communicating with attendees about ways to further reduce the event's carbon footprint is an impactful step in sustainable event planning. You can encourage guests to:

✓ **Carpool**

✓ **Bring a reusable water bottle**

✓ **Share bus and bike routes to the event**

✓ **Take home leftover food**

Sharing your sustainability goals with guests is the best way to support a greener event and to inspire your community to strive for an environmentally conscious lifestyle!

Find further resources for your green event below.

Thanks for Growing Green with us!

Leon County Government Office of Sustainability
850-606-5000 | Sustainability@leoncountyfl.gov





Sustainable Event Checklist

Planning an event or meeting takes work, and the task of making them more sustainable can be daunting. This checklist provides easy-to-follow tips and procedures for making an event or gathering more sustainable. Event organizers should consider each of the following actions when planning events:

Communication & Giveaways

- Use electronic communications instead of paper for invitations, registrations, event programs, handouts, and follow-up communications.
- Incorporate sustainability messaging into pre-event communications by highlighting the event's sustainability goals. Encourage attendees and speakers to actively participate by bringing reusable bottles and supporting eco-friendly practices
- When printing is necessary, use double sided printing, and design reusable print materials by avoiding one-time dates and slogans.
- When opting for an event giveaway, offer giveaway items that are reusable and/or created from recycled materials.

Food, Beverages, & Catering

- Consider catering from a locally owned establishment that supports sustainability.
- Offer vegetarian and vegan food choices.
- Consider serving beverages in pitchers or beverage dispensers instead of gallon containers and opt for reusable or compostable* cups.
- Consider serving meals buffet style or serving foods that don't require single-use utensils or individual packaging.
- Consider composting food scraps at smaller events.
- *Use reusable tableware when possible. If not possible, look for compostable or recyclable products made from renewable resources or post-consumer recycled material.

Waste Reduction

- Encourage attendees and speakers to bring reusable bottles. Avoid single-use plastic products by opting for reusable tableware.
- *Use reusable, recyclable, or compostable dishware and decorations.
- Choose the correct sizes and quantities of tableware and other supplies for your event type.
- Provide wooden stirrers and plastic straws by request only.
- Promote recycling at the event through clear signage and announcements.
- Have attendees take leftovers home or consider donating leftover food to a donation site.

** It is encouraged to use compostable products made from paper, sugarcane, bamboo, or other similar renewable resources. Avoid bioplastics, as they are not recyclable and not easily compostable.*

[DOWNLOAD THE LIST HERE](#)





Vendor Request Form

Finding a caterer that can meet your sustainability requests is easy when you ask the right questions. This list is comprised of encouraged sustainability actions. Before finalizing your order, find out which of the actions each caterer can accommodate. Instead of having to make individual requests, you can share this form with the vendor of your choice for them to complete and return to you.

Encouraged Sustainability Actions

- Food is locally sourced, seasonal, organic, and made with fresh ingredients
- Vegetarian and vegan options are available
- Gluten-free and dairy-free options are available

Beverages

- Beverages are available in bulk packaging as an alternative to individual bottles/containers
- Creamer and sugar are available in bulk packaging as an alternative to individual packets/containers
- Coffee and tea are fair trade and/or organic certified products

General Waste Reduction

- Water is provided in reusable pitchers or large containers, to avoid waste from plastic bottles. No expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers or items (i.e. cups, to-go boxes, plates, etc.) are used or provided
- Reusable tableware are available for use or rental
- Buffet style meals (e.g. sandwich platters, salad bowls, cookies platters) are available to avoid excess single-use packaging waste
- Compostable and/or recyclable tableware (e.g., platters, plates, cups, cutlery, stir sticks, napkins, and serving utensils) are available. It is encouraged to use compostable products made from paper, sugarcane, bamboo, or other similar renewable resources. Avoid bioplastics as they are not recyclable and not easily compostable.
- Plastic straws and wooden stirrers are provided by request only
- Bulk condiments (e.g. ketchup, mayo, mustard, salad dressing, salt, pepper, sugar, etc.) are available as an alternative to individually wrapped items
- Compost receptacles for food waste are available for use or rental
- Excess food planned to be donated to _____

If you have any questions or need assistance making these more sustainable options available to catering customers, reach out to the Leon County Office of Sustainability at Sustainability@LeonCountyFl.gov or call at 850-606-5022.

[DOWNLOAD THE FORM HERE](#)



Food Donation Sites

Many events that include food result in leftovers that can be donated to a local non-profit. Event organizers are encouraged to make arrangements for leftover food to be disposed of at one of our identified food donation sites.

Accepting Prepared Foods

Kearney Center

2650 Municipal Way
Tallahassee, FL 32304
850-792-9000
kearneycenter.org

Lighthouse Children's Home

7771 Mahan Dr. (this location only)
Tallahassee, FL 32309
850-877-3778
lighthousechildrenshome.com

CARE Tallahassee

1224 Eppes Dr.
Tallahassee, FL 32304
850-320-0281
caretallahassee.org

Not Accepting Prepared Foods

Elder Care Services

2518 W. Tennessee St.
Tallahassee, FL 32304
850-921-5554
ecsbend.org

Emergency Care Help Organization

1707 S. Gadsden St.
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850-224-3246
echothl.org

Refuge House

3295 Crawfordville Hwy.
Crawfordville, FL 32327
850-926-9005
refugehouse.com

The Salvation Army

2410 Allen Rd.
Tallahassee, FL 32312
850-575-9798
salvationarmy.org

FSU Food Pantry

University Center A, Suite 4100
282 Champions Way
Tallahassee, FL 32306
850-644-2428
dos.fsu.edu/resouces/food-forthought-pantry

Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Federal Law)

The Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was signed into law in 1996 and protects the donor and the recipient agency against liability, excepting only gross negligence and/or intentional misconduct. In addition, each state has passed Good Samaritan Laws that provide liability protection to good faith donors.

Know of other sites accepting food donations? Interested in getting more information on how to donate leftover food? Have additional questions? Reach out to the Leon County Office of Sustainability at Sustainability@LeonCountyFL.gov or call at 850-606-5022.

[DOWNLOAD THE LIST HERE](#)



