

Take your event one step further
Host a Sustainable Event

at the



toronto
ZOO

In our mission to being a living centre for education and science, providing compelling guest experiences and inspiring passion to protect wildlife and habitat we've developed this guide to help you as an event organizer determine the ways you can plan and host a more sustainable event at the Toronto Zoo. No matter the size, an event will have a significant impact on the environment. The Toronto Zoo will help minimize your negative impact on the environment, and maximize your ability to be an agent for change.

Hosting a sustainable event is a conscious decision that has significant contributions to conservation. Every event will have a massive impact on our environment. Those staging these events have a social and environmental responsibility to manage and minimize those impacts.

Making your event a sustainable one will:

- ✔ Create a visual representation of your company's commitment towards the environment.
- ✔ Encourage other decision makers to implement environmental and social improvements in their own organizations.
- ✔ Socially responsible organizations can better attract and retain employees.
- ✔ Help save money. Implementing small changes will work to reduce overall costs.
- ✔ Create market opportunities for innovation by increasing environmental awareness.
- ✔ Encourage sustainable behavior and responsible choices through environmental awareness.
- ✔ Decrease the environmental impact of your event by following the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle.

A sustainable event at the Toronto Zoo incorporates sustainable practices in all 9 planning stages:

Communications & Marketing	Food & Beverage	Accommodation
Transportation	Exhibits	Information Technology
Procurement	Décor/Production	Operations Efficiencies

The Toronto Zoo is committed to providing your sustainable event with:

- ✔ A **venue** that has incorporated environmental sustainability into its corporate culture and immerses your guests into a natural setting.
- ✔ **Social procurement** – products and services provided by the Toronto Zoo and used for your event will be sourced from local business whenever possible.
- ✔ **Green procurement** – products and services provided by the Toronto Zoo and used for your event will be sourced considering environmental manufacturing and shipping practices (including sustainable, organic, fair-trade and recycled choices).
- ✔ **Energy efficiencies** – The improvements we are making to our operations will take the responsibility off your for energy efficiencies at your event. Zoo staff will monitor lighting turning it off when not required and modulate environmental conditions to keep your guests comfortable and helping the environment.

- 🍃 **Waste diversion** – Toronto Zoo will provide waste receptacles for recycling and composting with signage to encourage appropriate waste diversion practices.
- 🍃 **Green Catering** – Meet and discuss greening your menu option with Compass Group Canada (our on-site caterer). Consider local in season organic foods with vegetarian options; use of fairly traded products such as coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate; condiments served in bulk containers rather than individual packages for indoor service; reusable silverware and china ware, tablecloths and napkins for seated events, and biodegradable/compostable single-serve ware for BBQ style events.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING THE REST OF YOUR SUSTAINABLE EVENT

Operating practices at the Toronto Zoo make it easy for you to begin the sustainable events planning process, however many other decisions are necessary to make your event a success. The degree to which sustainability is implemented is up to the event planner and may be affected by costs, convenience and availability of products and services. To help you achieve success in sustainability, consider the following checklist as a tool to guide you during your planning process.

PUBLICIZE YOUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS

- Be honest and upfront about your desire to make this event a sustainable one ask participants to participate in sustainable practices.
- When communicating with planning partners, potential sponsors, presenters, or contractors, include information about your sustainable initiatives.
- Involve your Sustainability Office or Green Team members for assistance.
- Include information about your organization’s sustainability goals and efforts in event programs and during opening and closing addresses.
- Include information about any past sustainable event successes.

HELP YOUR GUESTS TO BE GREEN

- Provide tips on how to be sustainable.
- Publicize all options for public or alternative transportation to your guests (consider ways to promote busing, carpooling, biking, walking or reserving a shuttle).
- If accommodations are required, refer guests to hotels near the Zoo so alternative transportation can be used.
- Encourage use of refillable bottles or coffee mugs.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Source locally – support local businesses and speakers.

- Consider offsetting your entire event. This can be done by purchasing offsets for the emissions the event generated through food production, electricity and transportation (visit <http://www.carbonify.com/finder/offset-tag-companies.htm> for a directory of carbon offset vendors)
- Use the event as an opportunity for service: collect food, toiletries or school supplies for local organizations at the event.
- Consider promoting other sustainability events happening in the area during that time, and provide guests with information on things to do to appreciate the community's natural spaces and culture.

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

- **Go paperless:**
 - Utilize e-communications as much as possible; use email, event website, social media, and existing news outlets, like newspapers or radio
 - Have attendees register online
- **Pursue alternatives:** for unavoidable printing
 - Format material accordingly to minimize the amount of paper used
 - Print double-sided
 - Use post-consumer recycled and/or FSC certified paper, and vegetable based inks
 - Print directly on the card or envelope, to eliminate the resources used to create labels.
 - Limit the use of paper that is difficult to recycle, such as glossy paper, goldenrod or fluorescent.
- **Close the loop:** Encourage the recipient to recycle pieces when done, including name tags.

PURCHASING

- **Opt for quality, durability & versatility:**
 - Use biodegradable or recyclable badge holders and collect them for reuse at all registrations, exhibit or exit areas.
 - Encourage the use of reusable décor and signage; try to keep things general, such as leaving off dates, so they can be used at future events.
 - Include signs about recycling, resource conservation and waste reduction, and other sustainability efforts at the event.
- **Source sustainable, domestic, ethical products:**
 - Reduce the amount of giveaways or other items, as this can help reduce costs and waste.
 - Look for products made of sustainable materials, or ones that can be returned back to the Earth.

- Support locally owned businesses/vendors for printing, goods. Consider products made in Canada, (to support the country's economy while reducing the carbon footprint of the item)
- Consider third party certified, such as Fair Trade and sustainable palm oil.
- **Ask for reduced packaging from contractors and vendors:**
 - Create a demand for more sustainable options.
 - Encourage the elimination of bottles, instead request water to be served in pitchers or dispensers.
 - Ensure all packaging is recyclable, or encourage suppliers to use reusable containers to help reduce excess waste.
- Service suppliers that demonstrate their environmental commitment should be used wherever feasible.
- Request verification from suppliers supporting claims of sustainable products/services.

FOOD SERVICES AND LOGISTICS

- **Green your plate:**
 - Meet and discuss greening your menu option with Compass Group Canada (our on-site caterer).
 - Consider local in season organic foods with vegetarian options.
 - Offer vegetarian and/or vegan options to attendees.
 - Use fairly traded products such as coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate.
 - Request water coolers or jugs instead of individual water bottles.
 - Request condiments served in bulk containers rather than individual packages.
 - Reusable silverware and china ware, tablecloths and napkins for seated events, and biodegradable/compostable silverware and serve-ware for BBQ style events.
 - Ask guests to register for meals to better estimate quantities and reduce potential excess.
 - Remind attendees on numerous occasions to bring their own water bottles and coffee mugs, or consider these as a giveaway option.
- **Decorating**
 - Utilize natural décor, like plants or produce that enhance beauty, reflect a connection to nature and can serve a purpose post-event and/or use décor that can be reused for future events.
 - If purchasing floral arrangements, try to source flowers that are in season and grown locally.
 - Ask attendees to take home natural centerpieces, like plants and flowers, and donate whatever isn't taken to hospitals, nursing homes, etc.
 - Signage – research sustainable materials to use for banners, consider reuse when designing and utilize signage as another opportunity to communicate the importance of sustainability and the event's efforts to attendees.

CONSERVING ENERGY

- Turn off projectors and lights in between use.
- **Alternative Energy Use** – power your event by purchasing alternative energy through Bullfrog Power. www.bullfrogpower.com

WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Use biodegradable or recyclable name badge holders and collect them to be used again at other events.
- Consider using refillable water bottles, coffee mugs, adopt-an-animal packages, or a donation to the Toronto Zoo on behalf of participants as giveaways.
- Encourage guests to follow waste diversion procedures to minimize waste.
- Find out if packaging can be reduced. If not, find out if the supplier can take the excess packaging away with them.

Saving wildlife and habitats is a community effort. The Toronto Zoo has two full time staff who are dedicated to sustainability and a group of staff volunteers as part of the Green Eco-Zoo Team who meet to excel the Zoo towards environmentally sustainable operations. For assistance on greening your next event please contact our Curator of Conservation & Environment Kyla Greenham at kgreenham@torontozoo.ca or 416-397-5202.