



# SUSTAINABLE EVENT QUICK GUIDE

The header features a dark red horizontal band on the left containing the word 'CONTENTS' in white. To the right, a sunflower is partially visible, with its bright yellow and orange petals and dark brown center. Overlaid on the sunflower and extending from the top left are several overlapping geometric shapes in shades of purple, green, and yellow.

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# INTRODUCTION



The purpose of the [Sustainable Event Guide and Certification](#) is to support Concordians in hosting environmentally, socially and economically sustainable events. It was developed by the Office of Sustainability and Hospitality Concordia in collaboration with the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities, the Black Perspectives Office, the Office of Community Engagement, the Equity Office, the Office of Indigenous Directions, and Zero Waste Concordia in Facilities Management. We also thank the Concordia Student Union, the Sustainability Action Fund and Sustainable Concordia for their valuable contributions.

This abridged version of the guide is designed to give an overview of the recommended actions. Please use the [Sustainable Event Guide](#) for a comprehensive explanation of the actions and to accompany the Sustainable Event Certification, a voluntary and free service available to all members of Concordia who wish to take measurable action in making their events more sustainable.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We appreciate your participation and welcome your involvement in making Concordia a leader in campus sustainability.

**For more information, questions or comments, please contact:**

[sustainable.events@concordia.ca](mailto:sustainable.events@concordia.ca)

## Territorial acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters of Tiohtià:ke/Montréal. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We give territorial acknowledgements at events to recognize and honor our ongoing connection with the past, present and future generations of Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. As we discuss ways to make events more sustainable, we recognize that decolonization is an important and unalienable aspect of sustainability. We acknowledge the historical and enduring leadership of Indigenous peoples in environmental stewardship and protection since time immemorial.

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



If you have an event planning committee\*, deliberately integrate underrepresented communities

## Who?

Concordia's [Report of the Working Group on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) defines under-represented groups as including Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, women, persons with disabilities (invisible or visible), members of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and others) communities and ethnic and religious groups.

## Not sure how to recruit?

- Choose individuals whose work, mandate, or interests align well with the topic or purpose of your event.
- Ask groups such as the [CSU BIPOC Committee](#), [CSU Diversity Services](#), [Equity Office](#), [Black Perspectives Office](#), and [Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#) if they can share your call-out for committee participation.

## Listen and Learn

- Value and prioritize their perspectives just as you would any other committee member.
- Remain open to new ideas.
- Remember: An individual cannot speak for their entire community and you should not put them in a position to speak as an "expert" on any given topic.

## Build Solidarity

Further invest in the interests of the communities you are seeking participation from by:

- Attending their events
- Supporting their initiatives through donations, volunteer work, or promotion to your networks

Include and adequately compensate voices of underrepresented communities in your event's content

## How?

- Follow the recruitment tips in the previous section.
- When putting out a call for participation, state your intention to prioritize submissions by underrepresented groups and (in cases involving formal submissions) include an option in the submission form for people to indicate that they identify as a member of one or more of the under-represented groups.

## Make it meaningful

- Provide a platform for voices that are not typically represented in academia or in this topic.
- Centre communities most affected by the topic of your event.

\*An event planning committee is a semi-formal group of individuals that represent different departments, organizations and/or groups. It is different from an event planning team which usually consists of two or three individuals from the same department/organization/group.



## Promote your event using diverse channels

- Use multiple avenues for promotion such as the Concordia events calendar, social media and newsletters).
- In the planning process, ask groups such as the [CSU BIPOC Committee](#), [CSU Diversity Services](#), [Equity Office](#), [Black Perspectives Office](#), [Office of Indigenous Directions](#), [Office of Community Engagement](#), and [Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#) if they are willing to share your event within their networks or on social media.

## Establish a code of conduct and clarify channels for participants to report violations

- Use [Appendix C](#) to develop your code of conduct
- Make it clear that your event does not tolerate discrimination, bullying, or harassment.
- Help ensure that those who have previously had negative experiences at events feel safe.

## Encourage speakers and participants to optionally share their pronouns when introducing themselves, and use non-binary language when possible

- To create an inclusive space, set the stage by having the event host introduce themselves using their pronouns (for example: she/her) and giving participants and audience members the option to do so when speaking.
- Participants can be given the option to signal their gender identity using nametags (at an in-person event) or in their display name (at a virtual event).

## Provide options for childcare

- Identify your event as child-friendly OR
- Direct participants to childcare services on campus, e.g. [Concordia University Student Parents Centre](#) OR
- Provide a space for childcare at your event.

# INDIGENIZATION



## If you have an event planning committee\*, deliberately integrate Indigenous perspectives

- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - Are the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples being actively taken into consideration on your committee?
  - What are the ways in which your event could be enriched and strengthened through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the event planning process, even if Indigenous voices are not the central focus of your event?
- Email the Office of Indigenous Directions and the Office of Community Engagement to ask whether they would provide some perspective on seeking Indigenous representation; make sure to include your reflections about how the event could be enriched by Indigenous perspectives.

## If your event features content or perspectives related to Indigenous peoples, ensure that you consult with and invite the appropriate voices and provide appropriate compensation

### **When planning an event that features research, case studies, cultural worldviews, writings, or other material by or related to Indigenous peoples:**

- Work with willing and relevant participants in the Indigenous community to ensure that the content of your event is making a positive impact and will not perpetuate harm or offense.
- Choose to celebrate the leadership, accomplishments, and initiatives of Indigenous peoples rather than frame Indigenous topics solely through a lens of victimization and struggles.
- [Concordia's Indigenous Elder and Community Protocols](#) offer guidelines on offering appropriate compensation for the type of participation being requested.

## Familiarize yourself with the land acknowledgement available from Indigenous Directions and practice pronunciation beforehand

- Encourage recognition of Indigenous peoples' long and continued history with the land and waters that are their home and territory.
- The Acknowledgement should always be delivered by persons who are guests on the land (which always includes non-Indigenous people).
- The Concordia [territorial acknowledgment web page](#) includes a guide to correct pronunciation.

*\*An event planning committee is a semi-formal group of individuals that represent different departments, organizations and/or groups. It is different from an event planning team which usually consists of two or three individuals from the same department/organization/group.*

# ACCESSIBILITY



## Follow basic best practices for universal accessibility

### For events with a virtual component:

- Allow participants to participate via mic and text chat.
- Enable automatic closed captioning
- If you're recording the event, ensure that everyone is aware of it
- Provide online tutorials for the platform in use

### For in-person events:

- Mobility-related accessibility for all (venue choice)
- Directions and amenities are provided clearly
- Ensure clear signage is available along with greeters or volunteers to guide event participants

## Enable accessibility accommodations

- Reserve a portion of your budget to accommodate accessibility needs (e.g., sign language interpretation services).
- On your event page or in your registration form enable participants to flag their accessibility needs by specifying a contact person and deadline for accommodation.

## Ensure web pages, documents, presentation materials, and promotional material follow accessibility guidelines

- Web pages and registration forms should be compliant with [web accessibility standards](#):
  - Use [Concordia's web colour palette](#) to ensure the most accessible colour pairings.
  - Use [Appendix B](#) to format presentation materials and documents.
  - Check out these [learning modules](#) if you need extra guidance.

## Make your event financially accessible by offering it for free or enabling reduced pricing

- Consider if you can make your event free for all.
- Include reduced-price options on the registration page such as for students, people at different levels of their careers or participants from different countries.



## Hold your event at an accessible time for your audience

- Event dates should not conflict with:
  - Other key events in your department or partnering departments;
  - [Public or Faith-based holidays](#)
  - General Elections
- Avoid early morning and late evening time slots.
- Use the [World Clock Meeting Planner](#) to find the best time for cross time zone virtual participation.

## Encourage your facilitator, moderator, or event host to use accessible and anti-oppressive facilitation styles

Share the guidelines in [Appendix C](#) with your facilitator, moderator or event host well in advance of the event so that they have time to identify any questions or concerns.

## If offering an all-day or multi-day event, include adequate breaks and wellness activities in your program

- Schedule breaks of adequate duration.
- Integrate optional [stretching or fitness activities](#) into your programming, including [yoga while seated](#).

## After your event is over, make event materials accessible

- Publish your event with captions, publish a transcript or your presentation slides, and/or provide an event recap.
- Choose external links (for public sharing) and cloud-based platforms (for private sharing) over email attachments that use unnecessarily large amounts of data.

## Collect feedback after the event and record lessons learned

- **Options for virtual events:**
  - Use built-in survey features provided by Grenadine and Zoom.
  - Email participants a [Google Form](#), [Microsoft Form](#) or [JotForm](#).
- **Options for in-person events:**
  - Link an online form to a customized QR Code that participants can scan.
  - Provide a pen, paper, and a feedback box.



# WASTE AND TRANSPORTATION



## Use sustainable options for event materials

- Borrow materials from the [Concordia University Centre for Creative Reuse \(CUCCR\)](#) and donate any un-needed materials to them after your event.
- Invest in signboards and decorations that can be reused at future events.
- Choose cardboard, recyclable coroplast or environmentally friendly materials instead of foam core for event signage.
- Favour electronic means over posters for event promotion and registration.

## Use reusable dishware over disposable

- Ask your caterer for reusable dishware; it will likely come with an additional cost.
- Alternatively, borrow dishware for free through the [Zero Waste Event Services form](#).

## Reduce single-use packaging and select eco-responsible packaging options

- Discuss with your caterer whether there are ways to reduce unnecessary packaging from food and beverage like avoiding individually wrapped items.
- Choose [compostable](#) or [recyclable](#) packaging; avoid plastic where possible.

## Provide sorting bins for waste management and hire waste sorting volunteers\*

- Request separate waste bins and signage for compost, container recycling, paper recycling, and landfill through the [Zero Waste Event Services form](#).
- Request volunteers to help your participants sort their waste at the bins.

\*Waste sorting volunteers only required for events with over 50 participants



## Donate leftover food

- Work with your Hospitality Concordia event coordinator or make a request through [Zero Waste Event Services](#) to arrange for your food to be donated.
- If you do not anticipate a large amount of leftover food, plan to have your participants take home leftovers.
  - Ask caterers for reusable or compostable containers to take home leftovers.
  - Provide your own or ask participants to bring their own containers.

## If your event includes off-campus participants, encourage participants to take sustainable modes of transportation to your event

- [Sustainable transportation modes](#) include walking, cycling, public transit, and carpooling.
- When sharing the event location, identify the closest metro stations, bus stations, and bike paths.

## If non-local speakers are invited, have them participate virtually

- This action reduces travel-related emissions and enables people who are unable to travel to also attend.
- Contact IITS to ensure proper set-up and to discuss [live technical support](#).

## If your event has international participation, host it virtually

- This action reduces travel-related emissions and enables people who are unable to travel to also attend.
- Contact IITS to ensure proper set-up and to discuss [live technical support](#).



# PURCHASING AND SPONSORSHIP



Choose sponsors and suppliers that fulfill at least two of the following criteria\*:

**1. local;**

**2. operate as a social economy enterprise or are committed to social sustainability; and / or**

**3. committed to environmental sustainability**

- A local company must have its head office and operations in Quebec.
- Consult the [CESIM directory](#) and the [Chantier de l'économie sociale](#) or email Élisabeth Beaulne-Morin for help with identifying suppliers from the social economy.
- Consult the questions in [Appendix D](#) to help determine whether a company is committed to environmental or social sustainability.
- Consult [Appendix E](#) to determine which local caterers best align with social and environmental sustainability

Choose caterers that fulfill at least two of the following criteria\*:

**1. local;**

**2. operate as a social economy enterprise or are committed to social sustainability; and / or**

**3. committed to environmental sustainability**

Purchase from at least one supplier and/or catering business owned by underrepresented communities

**Why?**

- Systematic barriers to capital, credit and networking opportunities continue to hold back businesses owned by people with disabilities and by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, LGBTQ+, or immigrant community members.
- By diversifying the suppliers we work with, we widen access to resources, which in turn promotes greater economic equity and helps close the wealth gap among our communities.

**Underrepresented community-owned business directories:**

- [BUYPOC](#)
- [Canada's Black-owned Business Directory](#)
- [Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Economic Development Commission Indigenous Business Directory](#)
- [Shop First Nations](#)
- [Canadian LGBTQ+ businesses](#)

\*At least 75% of your sponsors, suppliers and caterers must meet the sustainability criteria



Give non-physical gifts, prizes, and giveaways or, if necessary, choose products that are environmentally and/or socially responsible and which attendees can opt out of

• **Gifts can include:**

- Tickets to an event or gift cards for restaurants or activities.
- Socially and/or environmentally responsible gifts that bring value to the recipient, are durable, and avoid needless packaging.
- Locally-made artisan products or seeds from a small local nursery.
- When offering gifts to Indigenous people, follow the guidelines in Concordia's [Indigenous Elder and Community Protocols](#).

• **Be careful with giveaways:**

- Typical “swag” items do not meet environmentally and socially responsible criteria and should be avoided.
- Participants should be allowed to opt out of receiving giveaways!
- If you must give away items, follow Equiterre's product evaluation checklist on page 14 of their [Guide to Sustainable Promotional Products](#).

Offer an equal number or more plant-based (vegan) dishes than meat options and no dishes that include beef

- Global animal production has an outsized impact on water and land use, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Menus with plant-based options are also friendlier to people with different diets and allergies.
- At least half of the food options should be entirely plant-based.
- Avoid beef-based options.
- Consult [Appendix E](#) to determine which caterers offer ample plant-based menu options.

Prioritize and correctly label local, sustainable, and culturally inclusive food and beverage

- If you are offering food and beverage, aim to provide items or dishes that fulfill three or more of the following criteria:
  - Grown or produced in Quebec
  - [Fairtrade](#)
  - [Certified Organic](#)
  - [Certified Halal](#)
  - [Certified Kosher](#)
  - [Certified Humane](#)
  - [Certified sustainable seafood](#)
- Consult [Appendix H](#) to determine which caterers offer local or sustainable options.
- Correctly label the items or dishes.

*Offerings represent 3 or more of the criteria (Local; Fair Trade; Certified organic; Certified Halal; Certified Kosher; Certified Humane; Certified sustainable seafood)*

# DIGITAL CONSUMPTION



Invite your participants to reduce their streaming quality and turn off their cameras when not presenting or interacting with others

## **Inform participants why it is important to do so:**

- High-definition video streaming requires significant data usage and energy.
- One minute of [audio video conferencing](#) on a PC consumes an average of 27% less energy when cameras are deactivated.

## **Select a video platform with a low carbon impact**

- Another factor influencing the carbon impact of a videoconferencing events is related to where and how the video conferencing company (for example Zoom) hosts their servers.
- To reduce the carbon impact of your event, use one of the four platforms (Zoho, Teams, Whereby, and Zoom) considered to have a low carbon impact (i.e., less than 0.5 grams of carbon dioxide equivalent per minute of videoconferencing).

If you are emailing participants, in the signature portion of your email include a reminder to delete emails that are no longer necessary

- Collectively, we can remove the enormous volume of unneeded emails stored in data centres and eliminate wasteful energy consumption.
- Add a message to your email signature such as: To help save energy and the environment, please delete this email when no longer useful.

When sending documents and videos to participants, rely on your event platform or use cloud-based sharing

- File attachments have a large carbon footprint, especially when sending them to large numbers of recipients.
- For event platforms such as Grenadine, provide the link to the event platform and remind participants that the content will only be available for a specified duration of time after the event closes.
- For content sent directly to participants, include links to platforms such as YouTube, WeTransfer, OneDrive, and others and notify recipients if the link has an expiry date or will be removed at some point.

# SUSTAINABILITY AWARENESS AND REPORTING



Communicate the sustainability measures that are being taken for the event and suggest the actions that participants, speakers, and presenters can take to increase the sustainability of the event

- Opportunities to highlight sustainability efforts and raise awareness:
  - emails to stakeholders, e.g. attendees, speakers, presenters, suppliers and potential sponsors (e.g. [Appendix F](#))
  - social media posts
  - event website
  - presentation materials or holding slide (e.g. [Appendix G](#))
- Make sure to include the Sustainable Event Certification seal, which you will receive, in your communications!

If your in-person event has over 100 participants or your virtual event spans multiple days or has or 500 participants, calculate the GHG emissions associated with organizing and hosting the event

## **In-Person Events**

- Use the [Events Emissions Calculator](#) created by the Princeton Student Climate Initiative to estimate emissions related to dining.
- When inviting participants from outside of Quebec, include questions in your registration that can be used to calculate their emissions.
  - Use the questions provided in [our template](#)
  - Email participant responses to [sustainable.events@concordia.ca](mailto:sustainable.events@concordia.ca) and we will calculate the volume of emissions



### **Virtual Events**

- Though much less than its in-person counterpart, virtual events still emit greenhouse gases owing primarily to the energy required to power the Internet, streaming platform, and the devices we use.
- Use an excel spreadsheet template to track data required to calculate emissions from your virtual event
- Email the spreadsheet to [sustainable.events@concordia.ca](mailto:sustainable.events@concordia.ca) and we will calculate the volume of emissions

### **Raise Awareness**

- Communicate the total estimated greenhouse gas emissions of your event to your participants or event team in relatable terms by using this [equivalency calculator](#).