McGill Sustainable Events Certification Program

List of all Checklist Resources

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Accessible Virtual Events

Why?

Making your virtual event accessible ensures that attendees who experience various barriers to participation can engage with your event with the same level of independence and privacy as anyone else.

How?

Gather accessibility feedback before an event

Include a webform in which participants can highlight their accessibility needs privately. It is best to do this when you launch your communications about the event, during registration, or at the time of ticket sales. The text included to gather feedback may be modeled on this example:

> We are committed to offering a barrier-free event that is accessible to all attendees. Please let us know of any accommodations you may require:
>
> - Receiving presentations slides in advance
> - Live captioning
> - Sign language interpreter
> - Other: *[Fill in the blank option]*
>
> If you would like to communicate with us directly regarding your accessibility needs, please contact *[organiser's contact information]*.

Consult resources from the McGill Equity Team

The Equity Team has created a Virtual Presenters' Accessibility Guide with tips on making your online event more accessible. These tips are also accessible on the Equity Team's website and include:

- Building in breaks to the event programming,
- Describing the visuals of a presentation, and
- Using Microsoft's built-in Accessibility Checker before sharing recordings or other event materials.

Research your options for live captioning

- **Zoom**
  1. In your Zoom navigation panel, click "Account Management" then "Account Settings."
  2. Click the "Meeting Tab."
  3. Verify that "Closed Captioning" is enabled.
  4. If the setting is disabled, click the toggle to enable it. If a verification dialog displays, click "Turn On" to verify the change.

- **YouTube**
  1. If captions are available, "CC" will be visible on the bottom right of the video player.
  2. To turn on captions, click "CC."

- **Microsoft Teams**

1. Go to “Meeting Controls” and select “More Options.”
2. Turn on “Live Captions.”

Research your options for sign language interpreters

- The McGill Equity Team recommends consulting the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada directory, which provides ASL and LSQ interpreters.

Carbon Offsets

What?

Carbon offsets are voluntary payments to third-party organizations to compensate for harmful greenhouse gas emissions that result from your activities. To mitigate these emissions, you can purchase carbon offsets that help fund projects that either remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere or prevent greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere. These projects are often nature-based (e.g., tree planting) or technology-based (e.g., direct air capture or clean energy infrastructure). Carbon offsets are measured in tonnes of CO_2-equivalent (or tCO_2e).

Why?

Nearly every aspect of your event—from travel to catering to energy use—can generate greenhouse gas emissions in our atmosphere. The McGill Sustainable Events program focuses on greenhouse gas emissions from travel. Find out more about the environmental impacts of travel and why it is important to reduce travel-related emissions on the McGill Sustainable Travel web page.

How?

Step 1: Use a carbon calculator to estimate your event's greenhouse gas emissions related to travel. To estimate travel-related emissions, event planners can use the "Estimated Travel Emissions" tab in the event certification checklist. Talk to your Sustainable Events Ambassador for assistance with the calculator or to inquire about other carbon calculator options.

Step 2 (Optional): Communicate the total estimated greenhouse gas emissions from your event in relatable terms during or after your event. Natural Resources Canada offers a greenhouse gas equivalencies calculator in which you can translate your emissions into the approximate equivalent number of litres of gasoline consumed, average homes' electricity use for one year, number of propane cylinders used for home barbeques, and other metrics. Use the "If You Have Emissions Data" tab and enter the amount of emissions calculated using the appropriate measuring unit.

Step 3: Purchase carbon offsets for your event. Centre Planetair is McGill's vetted carbon offset provider. It is a Quebec-based non-profit organization through which you can offset your emissions via Gold-Standard-certified carbon offset projects. A variety of project portfolios are available, including a Global Portfolio and specialized portfolios of projects in Quebec and Canada. Be sure to use the "Carbon Offset" expense item in your expense report.

Catering Options on MMP

Why?

The seven caterers listed below (in alphabetical order) are all approved vendors on the McGill MarketPlace (MMP). Using caterers on MMP may be a requirement for events organised by certain academic and administrative units. The notes included may also help student event planners make informed choices on the options available with different Montreal-based catering services.

Notes:

- All caterers offer vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and dairy-free menu options.
- All caterers offer Fairtrade coffee and tea upon request.
- All caterers have options when it comes to organic and local foods. Be sure to ask your chosen caterer which foods on your event's menu are organic and/or local. You can also request for a menu to be adapted to organic and/or local food availability.
- All caterers can accommodate for allergies. Ask your caterer to provide allergy labels and/or complete ingredients lists for the different menu items you order to share with guests who may have food allergies.

1. Avec Plaisirs Traiteur	
Menu Notes	• Emphasis placed on local suppliers.
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• Single-use dishware is recyclable or, in some cases, partially compostable (i.e., lunch boxes). • Complete set of single-use compostable dishware (i.e., dinner plate, dessert plate, cutlery, and napkins) available at $2,00 per unit. • Compostable single-use glasses available at $0,20 per unit. • Reusable tableware sets (i.e., dinner plate, dessert plate, cutlery) available at $3,75 per unit • Reusable glasses available at $0,85 per unit.
Additional Notes	• Carbon offsets: Avec Plaisirs partners with Planetair to offset the carbon emissions created by their delivery fleet. • Website includes information on the business' commitment to sustainability.

2. Gourmaison	
Menu Notes	• Kosher options available upon request. • Requests for organic and/or local food options can be accommodated upon request.
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• Recyclable platters, lids, and trays can be picked up at end of service. • No added charge for compostable single-use dishware. • Reusable dishware available upon request at an added charge based on event requirements (not a per-person charge).
Additional Notes	• Can send containers for leftovers that can be donated if kept at the right temperature. • Plans to get compostable saran wrap to replace all plastic saran wrap.

3. Julien-Leblanc	
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• Complete set of compostable single-use dishware available at $1,50 per person. • Added charge of $1,50 per person for compostable saran wrap. • Reusable dishware available at $2,50 per person.
Additional Notes	• Have partnerships with venues close to McGill (i.e., McCord Museum).

4. La Cuisine Traiteur	
Menu Notes	• Kosher and Halal options available. • Emphasis placed on local suppliers.
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• Single-use dishware is compostable or recyclable when compostable options aren't available. • Reusable dishware available upon request at an added charge based on event requirements.
Additional Notes	• Food surplus is distributed through a partnership with La Tablée des Chefs, a charitable foundation based in Montreal. • McGill's in-house catering service.

5. Mache	
Menu Notes	• Kosher and Halal options available. • Emphasis placed on sourcing local and organic ingredients.
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• All single-use dishware is compostable. • Reusable dishware available upon request at a per-person charge.
Additional Notes	• On MMP as Rawlin Inc. Mache. • Partnered with more than 20 local small restaurants (suppliers are listed here). Work with suppliers to reduce packaging and eliminating single-use plastic. • Business model flexibility allows them to offer prices that are affordable for students. • Started by two students from Desautels Faculty of Management. • Website includes information on the business' commitment to sustainability.

6. Pekarna	
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• Single-use dishware is compostable or recyclable when compostable options aren't available. • Reusable dishware available upon request at an added charge based on event requirements (includes set-up and pick-up fee).

7. Soupe Café	
Menu Notes	• Kosher and Halal options available.
Dishware & Serving Dish Options	• Compostable single-use dishware available upon request at a $0,15 per person. • Reusable plates available upon request at $10,00 flat rate for pick-up after the event. If plates are returned by the client, there is no charge.
Additional Notes	• Contribute to food-related charities and social programs. • Full nutritional information of menu items listed on website. • Run a café in Burnside Building on McGill's downtown campus.

Community Agreements

What?

Community agreements, sometimes referred to as “community norms,” are guidelines given to a group of people in order to ensure open, active, inclusive, and respectful dialogue and participation. Here are some ground rules widely used in group activities for reference:

- Listen actively and respect others when they are talking.
- Participate to the fullest of your ability without taking up too much space – community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
- Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "we”).
- Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions but refrain from personal attacks – focus on ideas.
- Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses – they can be as disrespectful as words. [Source]

Some additional agreements:

- Invite participants to share any personal access needs with the facilitator and/or the group whenever necessary. Some examples of access needs include getting up and stretch every 20 minutes, lowering the lights to avoid headaches, participating less for health reasons, etc.
- Invite participants to share their preferred gender pronoun(s) with the group. These include gender binary pronouns (he, she) and gender-neutral ones (they, ze), and are used when an attendant is referred to as a third person.

Why?

Event attendees come from a wide variety of backgrounds and lived experiences. In order to provide everyone an equally interactive and engaging learning space – one where participants and facilitators can address topics openly and honestly – it is important to provide structures and opportunities for safe self-expression.

How?

We recommend setting community agreements prior to any activity that involves conversations, discussions, and participation of some kind. The facilitator may start by listing a set of agreements prepared beforehand, then ask for additional contributions to the list from the attendees and participants if time allows. It is important to ensure these guidelines are observed throughout the activity, so it may be useful to reiterate them with the group from time to time.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

What?

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be defined as "(…) voluntary activities undertaken by a company to operate in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner." [Source]

CSR activities may include:

- Company policies that insist on working with partners who follow ethical business practices,
- Reinvesting profits in health and safety or environmental programs,
- Supporting charitable organizations in the communities where a company operates,
- Promoting equal opportunities for men and women at the executive level. [Source]

Why?

Even the smallest events can produce impacts reaching far beyond their immediate time and place. Whether through their direct operations or investments, firms of all sizes can pose significant risks to ecology and humans alike. It is important to consider partnerships with organizations and sponsors that have positive reputations for consideration and mitigation of the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of their operations.

How?

For the McGill Sustainable Events Certification, we recommend finding sponsor(s) that have a public statement on their website or media channels regarding CSR. If such information cannot be found online, we suggest the event planner communicate with the sponsor(s) and inquire a clear indication or explanation of any CSR policies implemented by the sponsor(s).

Alternatively, there are a number of lists and rankings that include certified socially responsible firms to consult: B-Corp, Fair Trade, 1% For the Planet, and the Corporate Knights Global 100 list, among others.

As much as possible, be clear with event attendees on the intent of the sponsorship agreement. Being transparent and up-front with information on where the money goes and why the partnership exists may build more trust between all event stakeholders.

Document & Presentation Accessibility

Why?

Making your documents and presentations accessible ensures that event attendees who experience various barriers to participation can navigate electronic documents and engage with presentations with the same level of independence and privacy as anyone else. [Source] [Source]

How?

We strongly recommend you implement these tips for event documents and presentations:

- Use sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Helvetica) with the size 12 points or larger for documents and size 16 points or larger for presentations.
- Use bullet points and smaller paragraphs instead of long chunks of text.
- Use formatting (**bold**, *italics*, underline) appropriately to highlight key ideas.
- Provide a table of contents or list of sections.
- Send out documents and slideshows in advance, if possible.
- Provide written descriptions and captions for all images (Alt-Text).
- Use a screen reader to verify the accessibility of your documents, if possible.

Other best practices for **document accessibility**:

- Use true headings.
- Use “left aligned” instead of “justified” text identification.
- Use the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word and consult Accessibility Checker rules.
- For long documents, provide a short summary (2–5 sentences) highlighting key points.

Other best practices for **presentation accessibility**:

- Limit the use of animation.
- Provide text transcript and/or closed captions for any videos.
- Use good color contrast combinations for the background and the text.
- Avoid having text overlaid on images, or images overlaid on one another.
- Use punctuation at the end of the bulleted points so the screen reader knows where to stop.
- Indicate the page number (in size 14 points) on every slide for easier navigation.
- Slide transition should move from left to right, at minimum speed. If possible, add a sound to clearly indicate slide transition.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Why?

It is important that everyone feel welcome and included at events for them to be socially sustainable. Putting conscious effort into including voices of diverse populations into your events' content by including speakers, themes, and topics that represent McGill's many communities is a critical way to promote inclusivity at your event.

What?

McGill Sustainable Events recognizes the definitions for equity, diversity, and inclusion put forward by the McGill University Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Plan 2020-2025 developed by the equity team in the Office of the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic) (page 3, emphasis ours):

> **EQUITY**: Equity, unlike the notion of equality, is not about sameness of treatment. It denotes fairness and justice in process and in results. Equitable outcomes often require differential treatment and resource redistribution to achieve a level playing field among all individuals and communities. ***This requires recognizing and addressing barriers to opportunities for all to thrive in our University environment.***
>
> **DIVERSITY**: Diversity describes the presence of difference within any collection of people. In discussions of social equity, diversity addresses differences in social group membership related, for example, to race, Indigenous identity, class, gender identity or expression, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and religion. Discussions about diversity linked to access and equity require knowledge and understanding of historical and contemporary experiences of oppression and exclusion.
>
> Diversity should be understood as uniting rather than dividing. ***The term calls upon us to appreciate both differences and interconnectedness, and to recognize and respond to systemic and institutionalized discrimination.***
>
> **INCLUSION**: Inclusion refers to the notion of belonging, feeling welcome and valued, having a sense of citizenship. It also speaks to a capacity to engage and succeed in a given institution, program, or setting. ***Inclusion calls for recognizing, reducing, and removing barriers to participation created by social disadvantage or oppression, and can result in the reimagination of an institution, program, or setting.***

How?

Consider the diversity of your team and seek out training

- Look for opportunities to embed diversity in your event's organizing team. If your team represents a narrow spectrum of voices on campus, consider bringing on consultants who may represent other perspectives and lived experiences.
- Compile resources around addressing unconscious bias, understanding diversity and inclusion, and eliminating barriers to participation. Use the information to inform your organizing team and any speakers

or facilitators about how to create safe spaces at your event for diverse communities.
- Make equity training a mandatory part for participation on your event's organizing team.

Reflect on the topic of your event

- Consider who may be most affected by the event topic and why. Invite speakers, hosts, and panelists that may help remove barriers to certain groups of participants and address these inequalities in the content of your event where applicable.

Be inclusive in your event promotion

- Invite participants that represent different nationalities, races, Indigenous identities, gender identities or expressions, religious affiliations, and ages. You can also consider the diversity of your event by inviting members of different faculties, departments, clubs, and other social groups that exist on campus.
- The choices made in the design of marketing materials for an event may attract a narrow or diverse range of interest from participants. Be thoughtful about how the language and imagery used for your event promotions may be received by different members of the McGill community.

Pay attention to language

- Remember that systemic and institutionalized exclusion leads to underlying assumptions in the language we use. For example, avoid gender binaries by encouraging participants to share their preferred pronouns.
- Setting community ground rules at the start of your event helps promote mutual respect and identity-affirming interactions for all participants.

Food Inclusivity and Accessibility

Why?

It is important to provide a comfortable environment for your guests, and part of this is ensuring that everyone's dietary restrictions are accommodated for. By tending to your participants' dietary needs, you help make the event more inclusive and accessible.

How?

There are a few things to consider when implementing **food** accessibility and inclusivity:

- Provide food options for various needs: vegetarian and/or vegan, kosher, halal, specific allergies or dietary restrictions (e.g., gluten-free, nut-free), etc.
- Prepare the different food options using different cookware and utensils.
- Serve the different food options in different serving platters and with different serving utensils, preferably on different tables, if possible.
- Label food and list the ingredients where possible.
- Keep condiments, especially those that contain dairy or eggs (e.g., cheese, sour cream, and mayonnaise) away from meat.
- Avoid messy or sticky food.
- Provide food vouchers/money for food to anyone who may need if food is not offered at the event.

When it comes to **drinks and beverages**, consider these points:

- Provide water free of charge to anyone who asks.
- Provide non-alcoholic beverages (that are not water).
- Serve all drinks in the same kind of drinkware to minimize peer pressure to drink.
- Always have paper or reusable straws available for accessibility purposes.

Sources: Accessibility Guidelines by COCo and Tips for Organizing Inclusive Events by the McGill Social Equity and Diversity Education Office.

Healthy and Sustainable Meal Event Planning

Have A Balanced Plate

- Choose foods that will create a balanced plate, comprising of half the plate fruits and vegetables, a quarter of the plate protein, and a quarter of the plate grains (preferably whole grains). For more information, see Canada's Food Guide.
- Make water the drink of choice.
    - Tip: Make it fun by adding slices of fruit, herbs, or even cucumbers.
- For buffet-style events, place vegetables as the first items.
    - Tip: For buffet-style and grab-and-go events, select a smaller plate size to promote mindful eating and reduce food waste.
- For grab-and-go events, ensure healthy options are just as accessible in this format.
    - Tip: Cutting up fruits and vegetables into bite sized pieces can increase their appeal.
    - Tip: Offer smaller portions (e.g. small sandwiches) to encourage attendants to consume a variety of foods.
    - Tip: Serve bite-size dessert portions and include fruit and whole grain options (e.g. oatmeal raisin cookies, mini yogurt parfaits, or bite-sized black bean brownies).

Portion Sizes of Main Meal

- Planning for an appropriate portion size will help to reduce food waste.
- Pasta or other cooked grain: 1 cup is the recommended serving size, roughly the size of a tennis ball.
- Meat or fish: 3 to 4 oz is the recommended serving size, roughly the size of a deck of cards.

Include Plant-Based Options

- Common plant proteins include beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, and tempeh.
- Plant proteins are equally as nutritious as animal protein, more cost-efficient, and gentler on the environment, making them great staples for meal events.
    - Tip: Look for legumes, including beans and lentils, when selecting meals. They can easily be incorporated into soups, chili, and salads. They also can be used to create burger patties or substituted for meat in many main courses.

Ask About Dietary Restrictions

- Ensure information is gathered on attendant dietary restrictions prior to event. This will ensure that all attendants have a suitable meal.
- When possible, adjust meal items to be suitable for common dietary restrictions.

- Tip: Rather than a cream of broccoli soup, make a vegetable soup to accommodate potential lactose-free and vegan individuals.
- Tip: Select gluten-free grains such as quinoa, buckwheat, or rice to accommodate gluten-sensitive individuals.

Food Purchasing

- When possible, create dishes that include seasonal items. This will also reduce food cost, as seasonal items typically are less expensive to source.
- When possible, purchase locally grown food.
- Consider ways to limit plastic packaging and disposables by requesting bulk service with washable plates and cutlery or compostable options.
- Select foods that are steamed to preserve nutritional value.
- Have dressings and sauces served on the side and include lower fat options like yogurt-based dips.
    - Tip: Read nutrition labels and include foods with less sodium and saturated fat. Less than 5% daily value means a food item is low in that nutrient. 20% or greater daily value means a food item is high in that nutrient.

Use Accredited Recipes

- Explore recipes assembled by Dietitians of Canada.

Dietitians of Canada
Les diététistes du Canada

Minimizing Food Waste

- Sell tickets to your event so that the number of guests is known in advance. This will help to reduce overproduction of food.
- If possible, seek advice from individuals who have executed a similar event. They may have insight on appropriate food quantities to prepare.
- Ensure that there is a plan in place for possible meal event leftovers. Depending on the event, leftover options may include donation of food, freezing for a later time or selling leftover food in an appropriate setting.

Quick Guide created with the support of McGill's School of Human Nutrition.

Inclusive Scheduling

Why?

In order to make your event as inclusive as possible, it is important to schedule it during times and dates that will not exclude those celebrating religious or cultural holidays from attending. It is also important to consider other factors such as academic/work and personal schedules in attempting to offer your event at a time that accommodates as many individuals and communities as possible.

How?

Besides the public and legal holidays, consider the holy days of major religions when scheduling your event to make sure you are not excluding any attendees who celebrate them.

These holy days include but are not limited to:

- Lunar New Year
- Ash Wednesday (Christianity)
- Holi (Hinduism)
- Purim (Judaism)
- Naw Ruz (Muslim, Bahai'i, Secular)
- Palm Sunday (Christianity)
- Vaisakhi (Hindu)
- Passover (Judaism)
- Maundy Thursday (Christianity)
- Good Friday (Christianity)
- Easter Vigil (Christianity)
- Ridvan (Baha'i)
- Easter (Christianity)
- Pascha (Orthodox)
- Ramadan (Islam)
- Eid al Ghadeer (Islam)
- Eid al Adha (Islam)
- Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)
- Yom Kippur (Judaism)
- Day of Aushura (Islam)
- Sukkot (Judaism)
- Simchat Torah/Shmini Atzeret (Judaism)
- Arba'een (Islam)
- All Saints Day (Christianity)
- Diwali (Hindusim)
- Birth of the Bab (Bahai'i)
- Eid al-Mawlid an-Nabawī (Islam)
- Chanukah (Judaism)
- Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Christianity)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe (Christianity)
- Christmas (Christianity)
- Kwanzaa
- Bodhi Day (Buddhism)

Because these holy days might not take place on the same dates every year, we recommend checking an up-to-date calendar of holy days for the specific calendar year, such as this one from the McGill website.

Land Acknowledgements

What?

A land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. A connection to the land is inextricably linked to Indigenous identity. It is crucial to understand that a land acknowledgement, when performed by non-Indigenous individuals, is not a superficial protocol to brush over without reflection and deliberation. This article adapted from a radio interview with Hayden King, an Anishinaabe writer and educator at Ryerson University, explains the importance of putting your own thoughts into developing a land acknowledgement.

Why?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

How?

We encourage you to read the land acknowledgement created by the McGill First Peoples' House and to consult the information included on their webpage on the significance of acknowledging traditional territory and on truth and reconciliation at McGill. We also invite you to turn to the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) webpage on the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg peoples whose ancestral territory includes Montreal, including their site's historical resources and allyship tools.

As you plan your event's land acknowledgment, we highly recommend you reflect on how your event can contribute to reconciliation and bring light to Indigenous initiatives, histories, and cultures. We suggest you personalize and craft your own land acknowledgement as much as possible. Consult these tips from Equity at McGill or this guide from Amnesty International on how to make a customised land acknowledgment.

It is also important to correctly pronounce the names of nations while performing the land acknowledgement. Haudenosaunee is pronounced as **hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee** and Anishinabeg as **Ah-nish-ih-nah'-bey**. Videos to help practice pronunciation are available online.

Ultimately, the best way to honor the traditional stewards of the land is to invite Indigenous speakers, perspectives, authors, artists, etc. into the actual event programming. Performing a land acknowledgement and reflecting on it are only first steps to understanding the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on these lands and to seek to understand your place within that history.

Locally Based Suppliers and Services

What?

Locally based suppliers and services may be involved in your event in several ways. They may be the vendor you partner with for catering, childcare services, live music, gift giveaways, or awards for your event.

Locally based suppliers and services may also be referred to as local independent businesses. As opposed to franchises, local independent businesses typically have few outlets and are owned privately by individuals, the community, or a cooperative. As such, “decision-making authority is vested in the local owners and not subject to conditions dictated remotely” [Source].

In the context of your event, we encourage you to seek suppliers and services that are founded and/or based in Montreal.

Why?

Although McGill events are most often located on campus, such occasions can involve manufacturing facilities, industries, and investors from across the world. It is therefore recommended to work with local suppliers and services in order to reduce environmental footprints, promote social partnerships, and improve the overall sustainability of our events.

Furthermore, working with local independent businesses often involves the following benefits:

- Support to local economy as profits stay in local communities rather than going to a national or international franchise,
- Promoting local crafts, traditions, and identity,
- Faster and more reliable delivery times as well as lower delivery costs,
- Fresher and seasonal produce (when involving food),
- Connections with the local community, and
- Environmental benefits through a lower carbon footprint from travel-related emissions. [Source]

Promotional Items and Material Waste

Why?

From branded bottles to glossy brochures, the education sector is a prominent offender in the promotional item industry [Source]. When thinking about what "swag" you want to distribute to your guests, it's critical to first reflect on how to reduce the quantity of items produced and what alternatives may suit your event.

How?

Instead of offering material items, consider offering experiences to your guests. Alternatively, you may consider having an option to "opt out of swag, opt into [example] donation" for a vetted offset project or your chosen charitable cause. Not only is it more sustainable to offer donation certificates, public transportation passes, or tickets to shows, museums, or other local venues, but it may also be more meaningful than a pen, pin, or bag.

If you are committed to ordering material items, some guiding points to consider are:

1. **Order thoughtfully**
    - Partner with local suppliers. See the Quick Guide to Locally Based Suppliers and Services.
    - Partner with social economy initiatives. See the Quick Guide to Social Economy Initiatives.
    - Search for Fairtrade, FSC, B Corp, Ecocert, GOTS, 1% For The Planet, and other third-party certifications that ensure ethical, sustainable, quality, and durable materials and practices are present.
2. **Order less**: Not every guest will want leave with a promotional item. There is therefore no need to order one item per person attending your event. This will help keep extra padding in your budget.
3. **Order smaller items**: Smaller items are typically lighter, use fewer materials, and create less waste.
4. **Offer a small variety of items**: Offering a small variety of items allows people to choose something most useful to them.
5. **Have a flexible budget**
    - Low price points come with hidden costs, so be wary of choosing the cheapest option for your promotional items. A "sustainable" item (i.e., a reusable drink bottle) made of poor-quality materials or made in poor working conditions is a form of greenwashing.
    - Tip: Choose materials like stainless steel, glass, or bamboo over plastic, and opt for certified organic cotton over polyester.

Other ideas may include:

- STM passes or 1-month BIXI subscriptions
- Small house/office plants or seed cards
- Discount vouchers for local cafés
- Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance-certified coffee, tea, chocolate

Reducing Food Packaging Waste

Why?

Reducing packaged food takes thought and forward planning, but it is easily accomplished by keeping a few tips in mind and ultimately can make a big difference to your event's footprint. Give yourself plenty of time to research various food options for your event and plan a timeline and budget around procuring sustainable food options.

How?

Consider alternatives to catering

- If appropriate, make your event a potluck! Homemade dishes are often a low-waste and tasty option.
- Rather than offering catering, inform participants to bring their own lunches or snacks to your event.

Buy in bulk

- Several grocery stores have bulk sections where you can purchase snacks while avoiding packaging. Be sure to bring your own bags and containers when buying bulk foods to avoid using the store's plastic bags.
- Choose fruit or vegetables instead of packaged snacks like chips, granola bars, and cookies. Instead of buying pre-cut fruit and vegetable platters served in plastic, create your own platters or provide loose whole foods. Remember to bring your own produce bags while shopping!

Review packaged products carefully

- Avoid individually wrapped portions.
- Check to see if the item you are buying comes in recyclable packaging. Remember that plastic #6 is not recyclable. To find out on what materials are recyclable, download the Ça va où? app.
    - Choose paper or cardboard wrapping over plastic packaging.
    - When disposing of an item, make sure packaging is clean before it goes in the recycling bins.

Catering recommendations

- Request options that avoid unnecessary packaging:
    - Limit or eliminate bottled beverages. Request that beverages come in pitchers, including dairy and dairy alternatives for coffee and tea. Add fruit to water pitchers for a flavor-infused option.
    - Request a bowl of sugar rather than individual sweetener sachets and reusable spoons instead of coffee stirrers for coffee and tea.
    - Ask for reusable serving utensils rather than plastic utensils.
    - Request that food arrive in reusable dishware or wrapped in paper/aluminum rather than in plastic.
    - Request platters rather than individually wrapped portions.
    - Choose fruit and vegetables as snacks rather than packaged options like chips or muesli bars.
- Invite your staff or attendees to bring containers with them in order to take home any leftover food.

Social Economy Initiatives (SEIs)

What?

A Social Economy Initiative (SEI) is an association-based economic initiative founded on values of solidarity, autonomy and citizenship. These values could be manifested through:

- a purpose of service to members of the community rather than accumulating profit,
- autonomous management (i.e. not under decision-making authority of any public body),
- democratic governance and decision-making processes among the members,
- prioritization of people over capital and redistribution of profit, or
- operations based on participation, empowerment, and individual and collective accountability. [Source] [Source]

Why?

By purchasing goods or services from Social Economy Initiatives, your event can help support and empower the important community endeavours that these initiatives work on.

How?

If you have yet to find your sponsors and suppliers, you may want to consult this directory of SEIs around the Montreal area and select suppliers based on your needs. If you have already started working with sponsors and suppliers, you can identify whether they are SEIs by inquiring with the business or service provider directly.

Some examples of SEIs in Montreal include:

- Chic Resto Pop (food and catering)
- La Cuisine Collective Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (food and catering)
- Resto Plateau (food and catering)
- Coop La Maison Verte (groceries and household products)
- Ten Thousand Villages (accessories and household products)
- Les Petites Mains (clothes and accessories, food and catering)
- Santropol Roulant (community service)
- Inter-Mission (food and catering)
- Mealshare (food and catering)