

Sustainable Event Certification Program

A Guide and Resources



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ABSTRACT

The goal of AS Sustainability's Sustainable Event Certification Program is to help create a more sustainable society. We aim to accomplish this by supporting event planners with resources/information and then recognizing their efforts and contributions through our certification program. By completing this program, event planners will learn the skills necessary to manage, plan, and execute sustainable events. The following document outlines, defines, and justifies the various requirements associated with the certification as well as lists the various resources provided within Chico State and the city of Chico (broadly).

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

Acting in a [sustainable](#) manner means developing an awareness of planetary constraints, behaving as a caretaker for the earth, and planning for future generations dependent on the wellbeing of the planet. ([Chico State](#), 2021)

Creating a sustainable system considers and balances each of its interdependent parts. A system can be as small as a morning routine, as large as Earth's system, and for our specific purposes, the event planning, managing, and execution process.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE EVENT?

A sustainable event considers its [environment](#), [society](#), and [economic feasibility](#); specifically, the event should be [planned](#), [managed](#), and [executed](#) with zero waste, climate neutrality, and social responsibility in mind.

WHAT IS ZERO WASTE?

"Zero waste mimics natural cycles where materials are not simply discarded but recovered for beneficial use. The internationally accepted definition of zero waste states that at least 90% of total solid waste generated, measured by weight, is diverted from landfills through reduction, redesign, reuse, recycling, and composting. To reach true zero waste, emphasis must be placed on eliminating waste before it occurs rather than relying on recycling and composting" ([Chico State](#)). And, by eliminating the waste before it occurs, there would be less litter scattered in our communities, natural spaces, and waterways. According to an [EPA study](#) done from data collected in 2018, the top three materials of municipal waste generated were food, paper and

paperboard, and plastics - 23.05%, 21.59%, and 12.20 %, respectively (and this is just the stuff that makes it in the trash!). Because events often utilize these materials (for marketing, decoration, catering, etc.), it is important that event planners make their best effort to minimize the waste being produced.

WHAT IS CLIMATE NEUTRALITY?

According to Chico State's [Climate Action and Resilience Plan 2.0](#), climate neutrality means "achieving net zero carbon emissions by balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal, through sequestration or offsets, or elimination at the source." Scope 1 greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) includes "direct emissions from processes and equipment under the ownership and control of the campus: mobile combustion in vehicles and yard equipment, stationary combustion in boilers and backup generators, release of refrigerants, and agricultural emissions." Scope 2 GHG emissions includes "Indirect emissions associated with the generation, transmission, and delivery of purchased electricity." Scope 3 emissions includes "Indirect emissions that contribute to campus operations, but not directly owned or operated by the campus: student, faculty, and staff commuting to/from campus; university sponsored travel; wastewater treatment; and solid waste to landfill." By making sure a campus event plans for energy usage and efficiency (from the buildings to the transportation used by planners and attendees), event planners will contribute to the accomplishment of Chico State's climate action and resiliency plan and goals.

WHAT IS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines social responsibility (highlighting its relevance to business organizations) using [14 core subjects/principles](#). The core subjects are organizational governance; human rights; labor practices; environment; fair operating practices; consumer issues; and community involvement/development. The key principles are accountability; transparency; ethical behavior; respect for stakeholder interests; respect for the rule of law; respect for international norms of behavior; and respect for human rights. A socially responsible event considers and balances the core subjects and key principles laid out by ISO. Furthermore, event planners should consider Chico State and its surrounding communities when balancing consumer issues and community involvement.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- Make a significant impact towards creating a sustainable campus
- "Certified Sustainable Event" seal for marketing purposes
- Large, outdoor events can use AS Sustainability's Hydration Station (portable water bottle refill and drinking fountain station)
- Your event included in CSUC's Campus Sustainability Committee annual report data.
- Associated Students will promote your event by reposting on your materials on their Instagram stories.

STEPS

To qualify for certification, event planners must complete the following steps:

- **Email** asgreenevents@csuchico.edu to set up a consultation or to attend a certification workshop (unless you have already been through the program before).
- **Review this handout** for information about each requirement and the various associated resources. Keep in mind not all requirements are applicable to every event.
- **Complete and submit an [application](#)** for certification.
- **If application needs improvement**, you will receive an email with suggestions or recommending the set-up of a consultation. **Once accepted**, you will receive an email with a "Certified Sustainable Event" seal to use for marketing and promotional materials. Qualifying events (large, outside events happening on-campus) can book 2 hydration stations (water bottle/drinking fountain stations).
- **Following your event**, you will receive a post-event survey to provide feedback about the program and get you thinking about lessons learned for future planning purposes. This survey benefits both you and your event by having the opportunity to understand the fundamentals of practicing sustainability on a large scale. Sustainability is a never-ending process of learning and improvement.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

The following is a list of the requirements for certification. Later sections of this document will go into detail about each requirement, including various resources you can utilize.

Required:

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1. At least 90% of all marketing, promotional, and event documents **paperless/digital** or on used or **recycled paper**
 2. **No single-use plastic** or Styrofoam serving ware (straws, water bottles, cups, silverware, plates, or bowls)
 3. **No new plastic decorations** (tablecloths, centerpieces, confetti, banners)
 4. Keep individually-wrapped **food in plastic** to a minimum
 5. At least one **vegan** meal option. Label the food to inform attendees
 6. **Flipped plate** concept for meals (< 1/3 animal-based protein). Label the food to inform attendees
 7. **Inform** attendees about alternative transportation and accessibility before the event. Inform about proper waste disposal during the event

To the Best Extent Possible:

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1. Event in a **LEED certified building, outside**, or in a place that utilizes **natural lighting** and turned-off electronics when not in use
 2. **Seasonal/local/organic** foods and flowers
 3. Event **free and accessible**
 4. **Sustainable swag/prizes** or consider alternatives
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REQUIREMENT DETAILS AND RESOURCES

The following section briefly details why each requirement is important for hosting sustainable events and examples of resources available to event planners/organizers. The first section of requirements **MUST** be met for certification. The second section of requirements (labeled "To the Best Extent Possible") must be considered and reasonably met depending on each event's unique circumstances. Keep in mind that not all requirements (from either section) are applicable to every event; if that is the case, then disregard the requirement.

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1. At least 90% of all marketing, promotional, and event documents are **paperless/digital** or printed on used or **recycled paper**
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WHY?

Reducing the amount of new paper contributes to Chico State's [zero waste](#) goal. Additionally, cloud-based services keep documents stored in one place, allowing team members to access relevant documents for current or future projects. Digital promotion also decreases spending on printing services.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Inquire with asgreenevents@gmail.com for used, single-sided posters
- Instagram, text, email, [Wildcat Sync](#), [campus announcements](#)
- [Canva](#), digital promotion software

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2. **No single-use plastic** or Styrofoam servingware (straws, water bottles, cups, silverware, plates, or bowls)
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WHY?

Since the 1950's, the world has produced more than [8.3 billion tons of plastic](#) - 6.3 billion tons are already considered waste. Single-use plastics, which are made to be used once and thrown away, are mostly found in products used in packaging and serving ware. To reduce the amount of plastic being sent to the landfills and protect the health of our communities, it is important to reduce the purchase and use of single-use plastics wherever possible. Event planners are not the

ones producing the plastics, but they are contributing to the generation of plastic waste when they use them for their events. Therefore, a certified sustainable event must not utilize single-use plastic or Styrofoam servingware.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Contact asgreenevents@csuchico.edu to reserve the Function Junction for events with less than 40 people (reusable plates, mugs, cups, silverware, and tablecloths) or buy a Green Kit
- Utilize [AS Catering](#) for your food needs, and they can provide compostable or reusable dishware.
- [Eco Party Warehouse](#)

3. **No new plastic decorations** (tablecloths, centerpieces, confetti, banners)

WHY?

Non-reusable and non-natural decor add to the already enormous piles of waste in landfills. (on top of the carbon impact of producing the decor). Purchasing longer-lasting decor that can be reused saves costs over time and contributes to Chico State's [zero waste](#) goal. Doing so means carefully planning your decor.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Use locally grown and seasonal flowers: [Floral Native Nursery](#); [Chico Florist](#); [Railflower Farm](#); [Pine Creek Flowers](#). Purchasing flowers from the local farmers market (see the links above) would be a more affordable option if you are looking for just the flowers themselves
- Purchase linen, cotton, or non-plastic tablecloths that can be reused, or contact asgreenevents@csuchico.edu to reserve upcycled tablecloths
- Origami out of used/recycled paper for centerpieces

4. Keep individually wrapped **food in plastic** to a minimum

WHY?

The nature of most [food packaging](#) is single-use. (See requirement two about the impacts of single-use plastic). Once the packaging is separated from the food, it is often thrown away or littered on the streets or in waterways. To help reach zero waste and to help protect our ecosystems and animal life, it is important to find ways to minimize excess plastic food packaging (your non-excess food packaging should still be based on [COVID-19 and Food Safety Guidelines](#))

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- p. 3 of [Zero Waste Event Planning](#) (keep in mind some of the information here is specific to the city of South Portland)
- Chico State's [Food, Cooking, and Hospitality Information](#)

5. Offer at least one **vegan** meal option. Label the food to inform attendees

WHY?

Despite animal products taking up a large majority of farmland (~80%), they provide less than half of our needed calories and protein (~18% and 37%, respectively) ([Science Journals](#)). Other environmental impacts include water usage, soil degradation, high greenhouse emissions, energy usage, marine ecosystem damage, water pollution, and habitat destruction ([Our World Data](#)). Providing at least one vegan meal option at your event is more eco-friendly because it restricts the use of any animal products in food production (including meat, dairy, and eggs). Additionally, in order to be inclusive to as many students as possible, it is important to provide food options for the [growing population of vegans](#) on college campuses.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Consider [AS Catering](#) for our dining services
- Chico State's [Sustainable Catering and Food Guide](#)
- [Vegan or Vegetarian meal tips](#)

6. **Flipped plate** concept for meals (< 1/3 animal-based protein). Label the food to inform attendees

WHY?

"Plant-based foods tend to have a lower carbon footprint than meat and dairy. In many cases a much smaller footprint" ([Our World Data](#)). Additionally, by limiting the amount of animal-based protein on the plate to only 1/3 of the protein category, the cost of the food goes down (meat is generally more expensive than plant-based proteins). By creating plates that include a wider variety of plant-based protein, you are exposing attendees to the flipped plate concept and showing them the delicious possibilities that plants offer.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Consider [AS Catering](#) for your dining services

7. **Inform** attendees about alternative transportation and accessibility before the event. Inform attendees about proper waste disposal during the event (trash, compost, or recycle bins)

WHY?

Students, faculty, and staff commuting to and from campus makes up the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions for Chico State, accounting for 39% of our total emissions. In order to help cut back on those greenhouse gas emissions, it is important to inform your attendees about the various alternative transportation options available. Additionally, by informing attendees about accessibility, you will be helping to persuade attendees to come who would have otherwise felt discouraged by their disability. Finally, by informing attendees about the locations and proper use of waste bins during your event, you will be helping to prevent improper waste disposal and the diversion of recyclable and compostable materials from landfill sites.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- [Alternative Transportation](#) options at Chico State
- Student Shuttles route [8](#) and [9](#)

- [Accommodations and Services](#) offered by Chico State's Accessibility Resource Center. Call 530-898-5959 for any questions.

TO BEST EXTENT POSSIBLE

1. Host event in a **LEED certified building or outside**. Otherwise, use rooms with natural lighting, and turn off electronics not in use
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WHY?

"Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the most widely used green building rating system in the world, is a program of the US Green Building Council. Available for virtually all building, community and home project types, LEED provides a framework to create healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving green buildings" (Chico State). Holding events and using electricity in LEED certified buildings, energy efficient buildings in general, or outside helps decrease the amount of scope 1 and scope 2 emissions (as defined in the Background section of this handout) generated by the event.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- [Chico State's LEED certified buildings](#)
- [Conference Services | Associated Students of CSU, Chico](#)
- [Facilities Reservations and Event Services - CSU, Chico](#)
- Check out this Facilities Reservations and Event Services "[Event Planning Checklist](#)" Guide

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2. Seasonal/local/organic foods and flowers
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WHY?

Fresh and [seasonal fruits and vegetables](#) not only taste better but also have a generally higher nutritional value. Additionally, purchasing seasonal foods and flowers from local farmers (Chico or Northern California based) supports the local economy and helps native pollinator species to flourish.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Chico State's "[Sustainable Catering and Food Guide](#)"
- Use locally grown and seasonal flowers: [Floral Native Nursery](#); [Chico Florist](#); [Railflower Farm](#); [Pine Creek Flowers](#). Purchasing flowers from the local farmers market (see the link in the above bullet point) would be a more affordable option if you are looking for just the flowers themselves

3. Ensure that events are free and accessible

WHY?

According to [California State University 2018 Study of Student Basic Needs](#), 50 percent of students experienced low or very low food security. Students who struggle to get food on the table are way less likely to attend campus events that cost money. Additionally, an average of one in four American adults have some form of disability with mobility issues being the highest percentage ([according to 2016 data](#)). Ensuring an event is both free and accessible to a large portion of the population is sustainable for our society because it allows for social inclusion and would increase community involvement. Another aspect of accessibility is providing accessible waste bins; by placing trash, recycle, and compost bins in a place obvious and accessible to attendees, trash is less likely to be littered or disposed of incorrectly.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- [Accommodations and Services](#) offered by Chico State's Accessibility Resource Center. Call 530-898-5959 for any questions. They may have tips or resources for planning an accessible event
- Chico State's "[Plan an Accessible Event](#)" Guide

4. Sustainable swag/prizes or consider alternatives

WHY?

By not providing physical swag or prizes, your event is contributing to Chico State's [zero waste](#) goal. By spending the money that would have been spent on swag on nonprofits or

community-based organizations, your event and your attendees will leave a positive impact on society. If you would like swag to pass out to students, think about swag that would be useful to the student/attendee and not thrown away immediately after use. This involves careful planning and execution.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Chico State's "[Sustainable Swag](#)" Guidelines