



VirginiaGreenTravel.org

Green Events

*Environmentally-responsible conferences,
meetings & events.*

Virginia Green is the Commonwealth's program to encourage environmentally-friendly practices in all sectors of Virginia's tourism industry.

Planning a green event does not mean additional incurred costs – it simply requires a change in mindset and some thoughtful up-front planning. Conferences, meetings, and events can result in significant environmental impacts due to energy and water use, transportation, and waste generation. Negative environmental impacts can be minimized when event organizers choose to look for green options. Below are some green tips for event planning.

Is your event a **Virginia Green Event**? It could be if you are taking steps to reduce its environmental impacts. Virginia Green Events are allowed to use the Virginia Green logo and are included on Virginia Tourism's Green Events Calendar (www.Virginia.org/green). For an application or more information about the program visit Virginia Green's website: www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/virginiagreen.

How to Green Your Event?

A checklist of good ideas for planning an effective green event.

Opportunities for recycling...

- Recycler.** Find a recycling vendor to collect the recyclables from your event.
- Recycle it.** Recycling should be available and clearly marked in meeting areas and guest rooms when applicable for the following:
 - glass bottles,
 - aluminum cans,
 - plastic bottles,
 - paper,
 - cardboard; and
 - food & other compostable items...

When it comes to food service products...

- Reusable!** Dishes, glassware, silverware, table cloths, and cloth napkins can be reused and many banquet tables are designed to not need tablecloths.
- No Polystyrene.** Reusable is the best way to go, but when using disposables look for “eco-friendly” disposables including those that are:
 - made from bio-based renewable materials (corn, bamboo, potato starch, sugarcane...);
 - made with recycled content; and
 - recyclable or compostable.

Be particular about printing...

- Electronic Registration & Correspondence.** Event information should be provided electronically via e-mail and website.

- ❑ **Printing.** When using printed brochures or other items, look for printers that will:
 - double-side your material;
 - use soy-based inks;
 - use non-bleached paper; and
 - use paper with post consumer recycled content.

Weighing in on waste...

- ❑ **Weigh & Measure.** It's the only way that you will be able to know how effective your recycling and waste reduction efforts were. Work with your waste management / recycling vendors to get weights or use a scale to weigh wastes, recycling, and other materials so that you are able to calculate the percentage of wastes diverted from landfill and track costs.

Location, location, location...

- ❑ **Start with a *Virginia Green Facility*.** Have your event at one of the 700+ registered Virginia Green facilities. Virginia Green facilities have made a commitment to support green events and should be ready to actively support your green efforts! If no Virginia Green facilities are available, look for the following from your venue:
 - Optional towel and linen service
 - Bulk dispensers for toiletries
 - Toiletries are only replaced when empty or for new guests
 - Programmable & controlled thermostats
 - Low-flow toilets and water fixtures
 - Water efficient landscaping methods
 - Water and energy efficient laundry services
 - Compact fluorescents
 - Recycling of fluorescent lamps
 - High-efficiency hand-dryers
 - Paper towels with high recycled content
- ❑ **Food Service.** Don't let refreshments put a damper on your environmental goals. The following tips can help you manage food service:
 - Donate excess food
 - Avoid box lunches
 - Provide pitchers of water
 - Provide condiments in bulk
 - Compost food wastes and disposables
 - Use non-bleached napkins and coffee filters
- ❑ **Restrooms.** Yes, you can even make "green" choices when it comes to the restroom.
 - **Green Port-o-potties!** There are various new green substitutes for the traditional formaldehyde-based sterilization products.
 - **Recycled content.** Look for paper-towels and toilet paper comprised of recycled content.
- ❑ **Logistics.** Getting people and products to and from your event uses energy and produces wastes.
 - **Public Transportation.** Choose facilities in close proximity to airports and public transit. Encourage the use of public transit by providing information or even public transportation tokens.
 - **Reusable Packing.** Crates can handle the stress of putting on events and will be back to help next time. Encourage use of crates or cartons versus cardboard when transporting supplies to reduce packaging materials. Encourage reuse and donation of shipping supplies.
 - **Green the Exhibitors & Vendors.** Recruit "green vendors" and encourage all vendors to stay with the green theme, minimize wasteful giveaways wherever possible, and use available recycling services.

Say it...

- ❑ **Green Event Signage.** Signage should greet your participants as they enter your event, including a list of the green practices that your event features.

- ❑ **Labeling & Placement.** Participants can't recycle if they can't find the recycling locations. Ensure recycling areas are easily accessible and well marked.
- ❑ **Greenpage.** Flaunt your events green activities on the events webpage. Use your webpage to communicate your events effort to minimize its environmental impacts through a "green commitment."
- ❑ **Updates.** Participants want to know how your green efforts paid off. Make estimates of reduced environmental impacts available on the events website. You may want to...
 - **Estimate Your Carbon Footprint.** Estimate the carbon footprint from your event by using a carbon calculator (ex: <http://www.terrapass.com/event-carbon-calculator/>). Also calculate saving due to recycling and landfill diversion.
 - **Get feedback.** Participants can identify potential improvements and suggestions.
- ❑ **Register as a Virginia Green Event** Does your Green Event make the cut? If you're taking steps in each of the categories above your event could be a *Virginia Green Event*. Virginia Green Events are allowed to use the Virginia Green logo for advertising and can link their webpage to their Virginia Green Profile summarizing their green activities. Applications can be found on Virginia Green's website: www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/viriniagreen.

Can't get enough? More sustainability actions below...

- ❑ **Sustainable, Organic, and Local Foods & Beverage.** Encourage food services to provide local, certified organic, and sustainably-harvested foods and beverages.
- ❑ **Green Energy.** Consider purchasing "Green Tags" or "Renewable Energy Certificates" to offset the additional costs of using energy from renewable sources to power your conference. See <http://www.green-e.org/>.
- ❑ **Training of Staff.** Ensure that a training program is in place to inform the workers of the facility's "greening" policies.
- ❑ **How Many?** Having accurate attendance estimates will help cut down on excess. Left over food and other conference wastes can be reduced when providers have accurate attendance estimates.
- ❑ **Volunteerism.** Consider a team-building / learning exercise to plant trees, clean up a waterway, or other environmentally-focused project.

Virginia Green Contact Information



For questions about Virginia Green or to **Register Your Virginia Green Event**, go to:

www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/viriniagreen

Or you may contact the Virginia Green program at

viriniagreen@deq.virginia.gov.

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