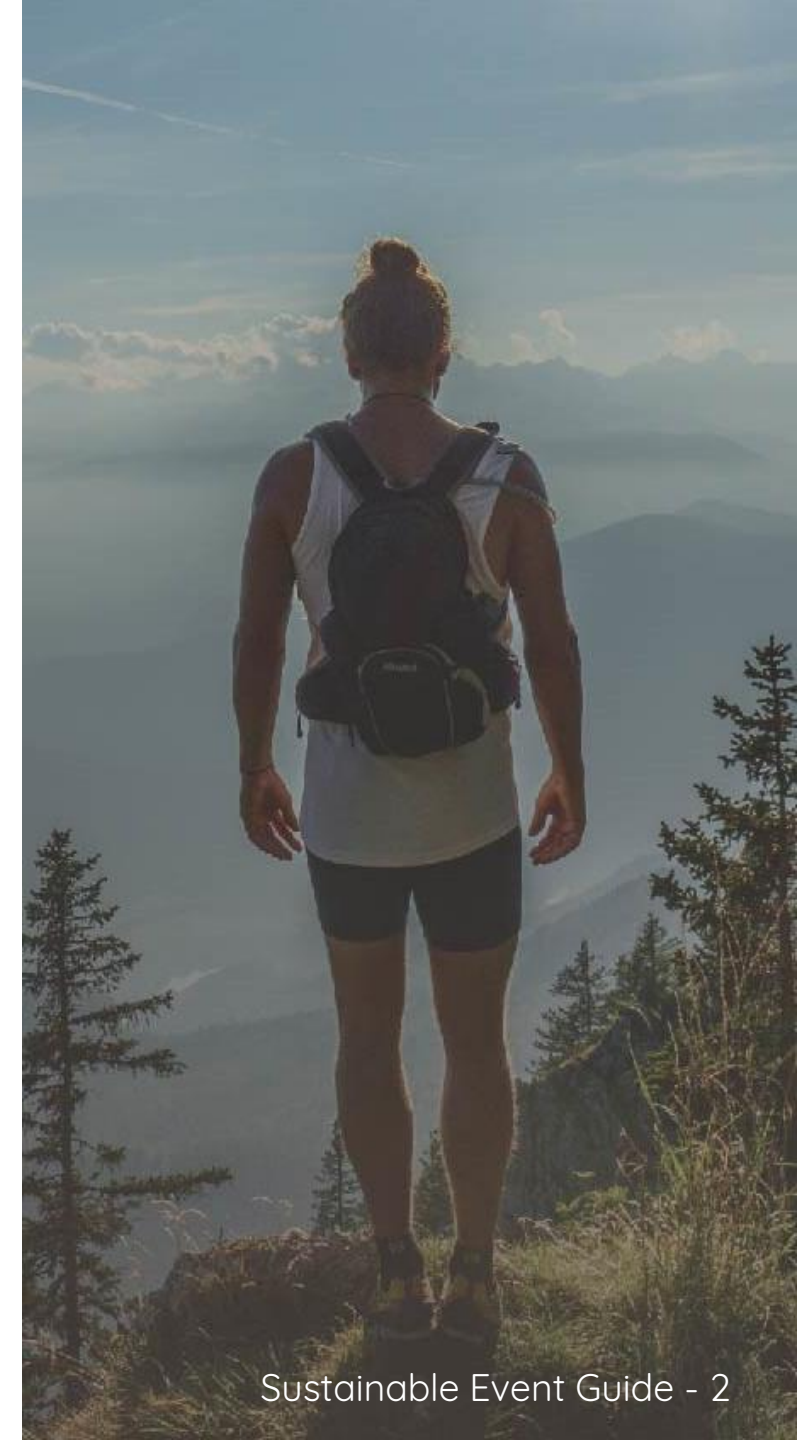


# Sustainable Event Guide

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## About Sustainable Kingston

In 2012, Sustainable Kingston was created as a non-profit organization by the City of Kingston.

Sustainable Kingston's mission is to enhance the livability and resiliency of Kingston and region by sharing knowledge and providing programs that drive community action.



## Priority Areas

Sustainable Kingston focuses its work on driving measurable improvements in the Kingston community across 6 priority areas:

- Climate Action
- Sense of Community
- Environmental Stewardship
- Economic Prosperity
- Sustainable Transportation
- Food Security



# Introduction

Although, corporate, community and fundraising events may have good intentions, they can negatively impact the environment. From reducing food waste to implementing sustainable marketing campaigns, planning a sustainable event is easier than you may think.

At Sustainable Kingston, we do our best to “walk-the-talk” at all of our events. We use our events as an opportunity to showcase that by using a lens of sustainability, event planners can incorporate simple and effective changes that tread lighter on the planet. The goal of this guide is to make sustainable event planning easy. The guide provides ideas and information about sustainable event best practices that Sustainable Kingston has employed to reduce its environmental impact at events in the Kingston area.



# Chapter 1: Food & Beverage





# Menu

## Local Suppliers

Many of the products we consume travel long distances before we buy them. Local products stimulate the local economy, reduce GHG emissions from transportation, and enhance our sense of community. Kingston is fortunate to have many local farms, breweries, and wineries within 150km. When choosing a caterer/vendor make sure to inquire about where their food is sourced from and encourage local procurement of ingredients for your event.

## Water Refill Stations

An effective way to avoid single-use plastic waste is to provide an area where people can refill their own water bottles. Choose a venue that has water fountains available or provide a water refill station for your participants. Remember to remind participants to bring their refillable bottles and promote healthy water consumption. If your venue lacks water fountains, water cooler rentals is another option. For outdoor events, be sure to inquire about [Utilities Kingston's Water Buggy](#).

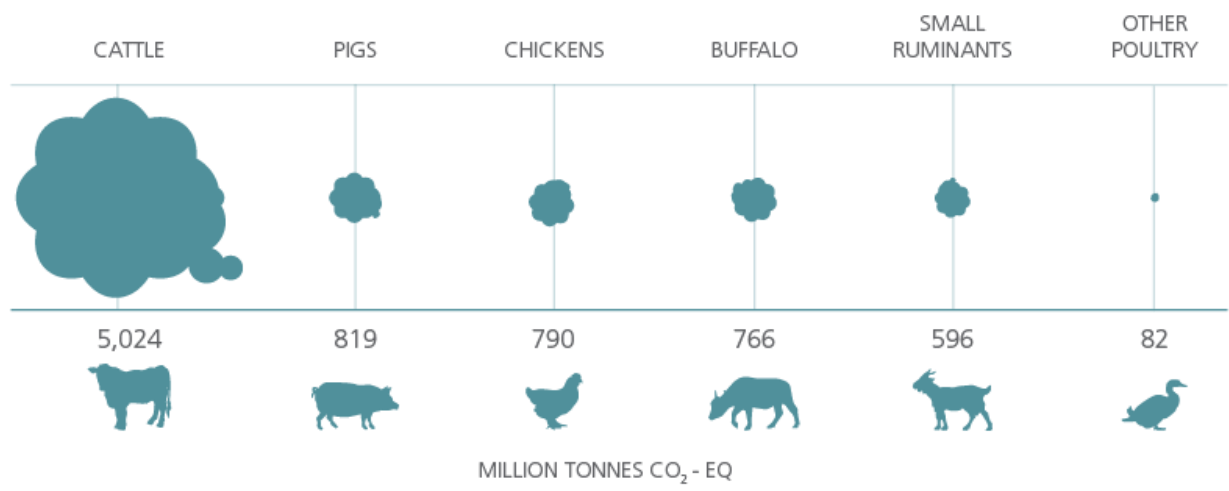


Water Buggy

# Meat and Fish

Canada’s Food Guide describes a healthy diet as primarily plant-based and low in meat. If you decide to serve meat or fish at your event, there are a few things to consider that will decrease the environmental impact common with factory farmed meat. When selecting the caterer, or more specifically, the farm in which the meat or fish is procured, choose local. It supports the local economy, can support more sustainable production systems, and reduces emissions related to transportation. There are many local farms in Kingston and surrounding area that prioritize sustainability. Inquire or research their commitment to sustainability and in animal quality of life, land use, food and water waste, and if they provide zero deforestation beef. Furthermore, when choosing fish, it is important to look for certified fish and seafood which recognizes sustainable fishing practices, such as ASC and MSC, as well as choosing fish that are not endangered.

The following graphic outlines the order of emissions from high to low according to type of meat to help in selecting the menu for an event.



Source:  
[Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#)

# Surplus Food

It is difficult to anticipate the amount of food needed for an event: serving sizes can differ from one guest to the next and there will always be last minute changes and cancellations. This leads to surplus food being discarded at the end of the event. Unfortunately, when food is sent to landfills it breaks down and releases methane gas, a large contributor to climate change. Proper management of surplus food can positively benefit both environment and community.

## Food Rescue

The good news is that you can donate most prepared food to charitable and non-profit organizations if it is kept in a controlled environment. Donations can support community initiatives such as snacks for children's after-school programs, meals for seniors, and food for shelters and drop-in centres. For example, when Sustainable Kingston hosts events, we like to choose a buffet-style that can be refilled. This keeps surplus food in a controlled environment so we can donate surplus after service.

Another option is [FoodRescue.ca](https://www.foodrescue.ca), a free, web-based application developed and operated by [Second Harvest](https://www.secondharvest.ca) that directly connects businesses that have surplus food with local non-profit organizations. Check [FoodRescue.ca](https://www.foodrescue.ca)'s "Best by consumption timetable and Donation Guide" to find out what food can be donated.





## Options for Food Scraps

After donating surplus event food, it is inevitable that there will be un-rescuable food. To reduce negative impacts from food waste, it is important to ensure food scraps get composted or re-purposed. First, ensure all food is composted through a composting program. Determine what materials are acceptable in your program by contacting your service provider. If the services are provided by the City of Kingston, visit [Green Bin – City of Kingston](#). If you have hired a catering company, meet with them prior to the event to discuss this as they may even have a composting process in place.

Another option is to donate food scraps to a local farm or appropriate charity. Please reach out in advance to confirm what food scraps can be used and to arrange pick up or drop offs.





# Chapter 2: Zero Waste





# Digitize where Possible

## Invitations/Itineraries

Invitations, itineraries, and tickets can all easily be digitized through online services like Eventbrite and Eventzilla. Be sure to inform and encourage attendees to use online and mobile ticketing as well.

## Advertising

While postering can be an effective form of advertising, there are more sustainable alternatives. Organic posts and paid social media advertising is a great way to extend your reach, especially if you get partners and like-minded organizations to cross-promote and share online. Other print-less avenues include radio, television and online publications.

If you require physical posters for your event, try posting indoors on recycled paper as it will protect the paper from weather and contamination allowing it to be eventually recycled. Utilizing rentable signs such as [Curbex signs](#) can also be effective with minimal impact. For posters at the event, try to create general signage that can be reused at future events, or use digital screens if available at the venue. For example, Sustainable Kingston reuses a sign that advertises it is a waste-free event.





# The 3Rs

To host a zero-waste event, you must ensure that everything at the event can be recycled or composted and is properly sorted so nothing makes its way to landfill. To check if an item qualifies as recyclable or compostable, discuss with the venue to determine their waste management processes.

**Reduce:** eliminate non-essential items such as straws or paper handouts as much as possible. Remove garbage cans from the event to prevent people from bringing outside waste into the event and before event day, make sure to do a full walk through of the event and eliminate any areas that could produce unnecessary waste.

**Reuse:** consider replacing single use items with durable goods. Examples include replacing paper napkins with cloth napkins, or use washable dishware in place of paper, plastic or foam.

**Recycle:** Provide clear signage to avoid confusion in sorting, or better yet have volunteers help sort materials into the correct recycling or compost stream.

Private waste management companies may have different systems than the City's Solid Waste programs. Direct attendees to the [City of Kingston's Waste Sorting Lookup](#) for residential recycling inquiries.



## Outdoor Events

Outdoor events can be a challenge with waste, but there are options available! While, encouraging your attendees to bring their own dishware, or renting washable dishware is advisable, this may not be possible for every event. If you require single-use options, we suggest providing recyclable or compostable dishware and napkins. [Green Munch](#) is a Canadian company that offers some great compostable dishware options.

Another option is to book [OSKAR \(Off Site Kingston Area Recycler\)](#), the City's mobile diversion trailer, to help keep recyclables and compostables out of the landfill. OSKAR provides one central location for waste diversion with very clear signage. If the event venue has any additional garbage cans, they should be removed to encourage proper waste diversion.



OSKAR

It is also important to collaborate with food vendors who can be a large source of waste at an event. Here are a few suggested requests:

- Serving food on napkins rather than in a full container
- Eliminating the sale of bottled drinks and encourage beverage options compatible with reusable cups.
- Avoid individually wrapping food in plastic
- Serving drinks without straws or lids, unless one is required for accessibility – if someone asks, provide a paper straw

If disposable packaging is unavoidable, request that vendors use compostable or recyclable packaging. The following list of alternatives is in order of most to least sustainable:

- compostable,
- paper recycling,
- plastic recycling,
- landfill.

Try suggesting multiple vendors partner up to purchase compostable packaging together to reduce cost and packaging associated with a bulk purchase.

And don't forget to look for the BPI or Certified Compostable logo!





## Attendee Engagement

The best way to ensure a sustainable event is to get everyone involved, especially when it comes to waste management. It is important to communicate your waste diversion goals, why waste diversion is important, and what participants can do to help.

Numerous strategies can be used to inform and engage the general public:

- Announcing the waste diversion and sustainability goals of the event both in promotions and at the event. This includes social media, posters, and on the event website (including a note to encourage anyone attending the event to bring their own reusable dishes, cutlery and water bottle).
- Advertising catchy slogans at the waste sorting station on event day, such as: “Got Trash? Let us help you sort it out.” Or labelling the garbage bin as the “Bin of last resort” if you do plan to have garbage bins present.
- Inquiries can be made to have a City of Kingston Solid Waste Division representative attend, subject to staff availabilities.

Not only is an event a great opportunity to engage and educate people on sustainability, it showcases that it is feasible to other event planners. Incorporating these initiatives inspire and can create amplified change for the climate.







# Chapter 3: Transportation



# Venue Location

The location of your event strongly impacts the method of transportation that participants will use to get there. If you can control your event's location, consider hosting your event at a location where there is frequent public transit service close by. [Kingston Transit](#) provides a variety of fare options that make it affordable for attendees to use public transit. Contact Kingston Transit to discuss options to provide your attendees with day or event passes. As well, pick a location that is easy to get to by bicycles, using designated infrastructure. You may even wish to provide a bicycle valet service to encourage active transportation to and from your event. In Kingston, [Cycle Kingston](#) offers a bike valet service.



[Transit Trip Planner](#)

To provide options to those who will drive, try to encourage carpooling and ride sharing programs like [VRTUCAR](#), or selecting a venue that has electric vehicle charging stations nearby as another alternative.



# Chapter 4: Accessibility



# Increasing Inclusivity

A sustainable event is an accessible event. An inclusive community provides a wealth of intelligence and sensitivity that will fortify and support community sustainability efforts. Check out a few of these resources to make your event more accessible:

- [Accessibility Services Canada “Planning Accessible Events”](#)
- [Accessibility - City of Kingston](#)

To ensure the event is accessible to all, add an option for people to submit their accessibility requirements before the event. This can either be through registration or providing an email or phone contact.

## Positive Space

It is important to promote that your event is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment. To communicate this to event attendees, display a positive space poster on the event page, or on a sign that can be reused at all events.

Additionally, explore ways to increase inclusivity, such as gender-neutral restrooms. You can visit the [Positive Spaces Initiative](#) for more information on components and considerations relating to LGBTQ+ newcomers inclusivity.



Source: [LGBTQ Parenting Network](#)



## Bilingual Opportunities

1.8% of Kingston residents speak French most often at home. Bilingual schedules, posters, and captions improve your event's accessibility. Visit [ACFOMI's website](#) for guidance on this.

Source: [Neighbourhoods and Communities – City of Kingston](#)

## Land Acknowledgement

A territorial or land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous people who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home. Look into getting a representative from a local indigenous community to do the land acknowledgement for your event. Be sure to meet with them in advance to learn if there is anything you need to prepare, such as a tobacco ceremony.

3.5% of Kingston residents self-identify as indigenous.

Source: [Neighbourhoods and Communities – City of Kingston](#)

Listed are a few helpful links:

- [Four Directions Indigenous Centre](#)
- [Okwaho Equal Source](#)
- [Ollin.ca](#)
- [Kingston National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)



Grandmother Kathy Brant, Grandmother-in-Residence for Grand OnStage, reading a land acknowledgement at the 2020 Kingston Climate Change Symposium





# Chapter 5: Reducing the Carbon Footprint

## Bullfrog Power

[Bullfrog Power](#) can help your event run on 100% green energy. Bullfrog's generators put 100% green electricity or 100% green natural gas onto the respective energy system on your behalf. They ensure the energy going onto the grid or pipeline from the event is from clean, green sources.

## Carbonzero

Another carbon reduction strategy is to purchase carbon offsets to reduce the event's impact. You can talk with a [Carbonzero](#) representative about offsetting the event's emissions. If you know how and where participants are travelling to your event, you can consider offsetting their transportation emissions as well. You can either do your own calculation on how many tonnes of emissions to offset or contact Carbonzero for assistance.

## Solar Powered Outdoor Lights

For outdoor events that require lighting, research the possibility of attaining solar powered lights. They charge during the day to then power the light in the evening. It is a great way to avoid major electricity consumption if your event requires lots of outdoor lighting.



# Chapter 6: Procurement and Suppliers





When purchasing items for your event, examine their sustainability. Check for certified products such as wood and paper if applicable, as well as organic, plant-based, and cruelty-free to contribute to animal protection and reduced environmental impact.

Make sure suppliers and contractors comply with zero waste policies (service operations and deliveries of goods). This can be done by either researching the company or discussing with a representative. Select Living Wage suppliers when possible to promote fair wages, social inclusion, and sense of community. As well as ask suppliers for non-toxic cleaning products, as it is easy for toxic cleaning products to enter our waterways and can be detrimental to the environment.



The mark of  
responsible forestry



[www.sPCA.bc.ca/farm](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/farm)







# Chapter 7: Post-Event Evaluation



Once the event is over, it is important to evaluate its success and assess what worked well and what can be improved for future events.

Discuss with volunteers and OSKAR, if involved, to assess waste diversion and contamination rates. Also, ensure to take lots of pictures and promote your success on social media! Once all the statistics are in, discuss improvements that can be made for the next event to increase sustainability. Examples can include increased signage and communications around recycling and composting, more or less volunteers assisting waste diversion, change in venue, or more efforts in encouraging reusables.

It is difficult to have a perfectly sustainable event, but hopefully this guide has been a helpful resource and increased your event’s sustainability. If we all work together as a community to enhance the livability and resiliency of Kingston, we can have a more #SustainableYGBK.



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February 2020

