

NYC GOOD CLEAN FUN

SUSTAINABLE EVENT GUIDELINES



NYC
GOOD
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FUN

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INTRODUCTION

New York City sees thousands of events every year – concerts, festivals, parades, sports events, promoted events, and all kinds of large-scale gatherings. These events contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of our city. But with the thousands of attendees they attract, events also generate significant carbon emissions and waste.

To bring more Good Clean Fun to New York City, we are encouraging event producers to rethink how events are planned and delivered by choosing operations that reduce environmental impact and contribute to a more sustainable, equitable, and joyful city. Sustainable events reduce waste, emissions, and resource use—while making it easier for attendees to engage in climate-friendly behavior. Making choices today helps ensure that events continue to deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits for years to come.

The Good Clean Fun checklist is meant to serve as a planning document for event producers and vendors interested in integrating sustainability into various areas of their event. It outlines best practices across various categories – such as waste, food and beverage, energy, and venue. It also includes helpful city agency resources, sample sustainability commitments for vendors, and guidance on measuring the impact of sustainable actions. At the same time, the City is working to develop incentives that make sustainable event planning easier and more accessible.

Whether you are a seasoned sustainable event producer or are interested in getting started, we encourage you to read through this checklist to assess your current practices and identify opportunities to bring sustainability to your events in New York City.



Set and Communicate Sustainability Goals



Reduce Environmental Impact at Venue



Use Low-Emission Energy and Transportation



Provide Climate-Friendly Food and Drink Options



Minimize Waste and Maximise Resuse

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We recognize that events come in all shapes and sizes, but all events have the ability to reduce their environmental impact. The key is to start.

That's why the Good Clean Fun guidelines offer three flexible levels of sustainability action — so every event, no matter the size or budget, can take meaningful steps toward reducing environmental impact. Event producers can start small or go big, depending on capacity. These levels are designed to encourage event producers to build on their sustainable actions and make progress over time, celebrating impact at every stage:



[GREEN] Clean City Champions:

Get started with simple, low-cost actions.



[BLUE] Clean City Trailblazers:

Take mid-level steps to reduce emissions, waste, and energy use.



[PURPLE] Clean City Visionaries:

Lead the way with bold sustainability measures and long-term planning.

Use the ten recommendations, examples, and list of guidelines to set goals, track progress, and scale your event's impact. Work with New York City to make strides towards decreasing our carbon emissions, increasing our waste diversion, and leaving a positive environmental impact.

Note: All events must be in compliance with citywide permit requirements.

MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE CHOICES

It is important to plan in advance for sustainability – the impact of your event on the environment should be considered at every step of the planning process to have a successful sustainable event. To support this planning, the City has created downloadable tools to help you keep track of your sustainable actions and measure environmental impact across the various sections in the *Good Clean Fun Guidelines*.

WASTE PLAN TEMPLATE

ENERGY PLAN TEMPLATE

METRICS TRACKER

TEN MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACHIEVING A SUSTAINABLE EVENT

1. **Set measurable sustainability goals** and plan to collect data on waste diversion, carbon emissions, and energy savings to share the impact of your efforts
2. **Select energy-efficient venues** and use renewable or alternative power sources (solar, battery, biodiesel, etc.)¹
3. **Collaborate with vendors** early to reduce packaging, use low-emission vehicles, and consolidate deliveries
4. **Design a plant-forward, low-waste menu**, prioritizing local and organic ingredients and providing free water stations
5. **Prioritize reuse and decrease waste** by doing all communications electronically, avoiding giveaways, and creating reusable signage and design materials
6. **Use reusable materials** and eliminate single-use plastics across the event
7. **Donate leftover food and materials** using tools like [donateNYC](#) instead of throwing them out.
8. **Ensure waste stations** include sorting for food waste, recycling, and landfill with clear signage and staff support
9. **Engage attendees in sustainable actions**—encourage sustainable accommodation, transit use, refillable water bottles, and proper waste sorting
10. **Leave no trace:** ensure site is protected, cleaned, and restored if it sustains any damage

¹ Fire Code §2303.1.1: Provides safety clearances and other protections for outdoor liquid motor fuel dispensing devices.

Fire Code §2307: Provides design and installation requirements for biodiesel motor fuel.

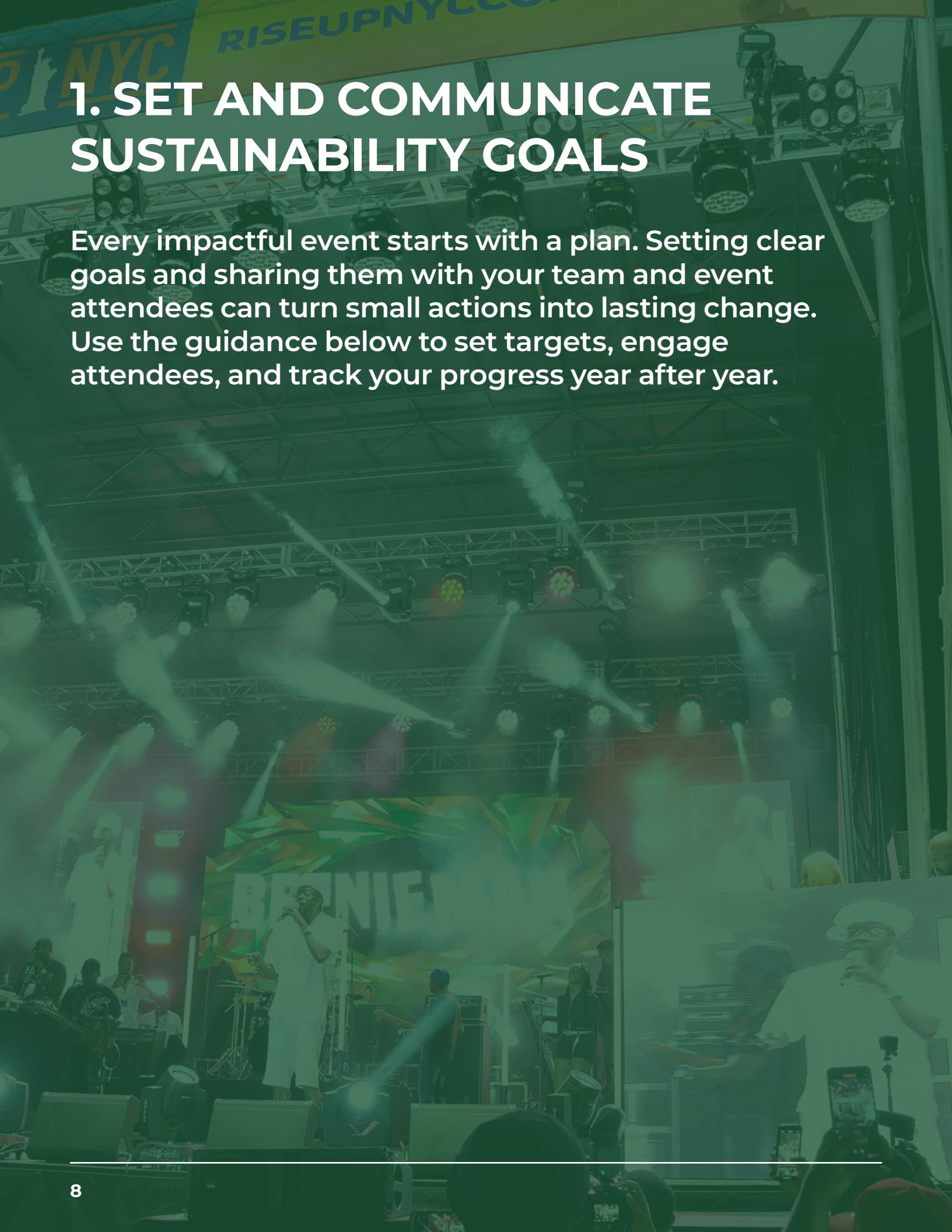
Fire Code §512: Provides requirements for solar panels for various rooftop installations

EXAMPLE ACTIONS BY LEVEL & CATEGORY

CATEGORY	CHAMPION (LEVEL 1)	TRAILBLAZER (LEVEL 2)	VISIONARY (LEVEL 3)
Planning & Goals	Designate a sustainability lead and include sustainability in planning meetings	Set and track 2–3 measurable sustainability goals (e.g. % waste diverted, % plant-based food)	Publish a post-event sustainability report with year-over-year comparison
Venue & Construction	Select venue near public transit and ensure site is protected and restored	Choose an energy efficient venue or use low-carbon ecofriendly materials for temporary structures	Plan for end-of-life recycling for any temporary materials used
Energy	Use LED lighting and unplug equipment when not in use	Create a detailed energy plan and use B20 biodiesel or hybrid generators	Power event with solar or renewables energy; monitor energy in real-time
Transportation	Encourage public transit options in pre-event materials	Provide bike parking and EV charging on-site	Prioritize use of all-electric vehicles and reduce delivery trips
Food & Beverage	Provide at least one plant-based option and donate leftover food	Design a plant-forward menu with 2:1 plant to meat ratio	Make event plant-forward; source 75%+ locally and organically
Waste & Reuse	Provide bins for recyclables, organic waste, and landfill	Staff sorting stations to ensure proper sorting and reuse signage	Eliminate all single-use items; achieve 90%+ waste diversion rate
Attendee Engagement	Use digital communications and signage	Share tips for sustainable behavior on site (e.g., bring bottle, sort waste)	Gamify engagement (rewards, pledges) and survey attendees for feedback

SUSTAINABLE EVENT GUIDELINES





1. SET AND COMMUNICATE SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Every impactful event starts with a plan. Setting clear goals and sharing them with your team and event attendees can turn small actions into lasting change. Use the guidance below to set targets, engage attendees, and track your progress year after year.



SET SUSTAINABLE GOALS AND TARGETS

- Designate a “Sustainability Leader” from your team to plan and manage sustainability efforts across all aspects of the event
- Analyze past event data to inform realistic goal setting around carbon emissions, energy use, and waste diversion
- Establish ambitious but achievable sustainability targets to be monitored, refined, and built upon after every event (e.g., percentage diverted, emissions reduced)
- Ensure sustainability goals are inclusive – for example, ensuring access to clean drinking water and sustainable food choices at all price points
- Establish check-ins with team and partners to ensure progress on sustainability goals before, during, and after the event
- Incorporate sustainability goals into vendor RFPs and contracts to communicate priorities and align expectations early

PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY AT EVENT

- Prioritize digital communication using screens, emails/links, QR codes over printed materials.
- If printing is necessary, use double-sided, 100% recycled or carbon-neutral paper, print only what is needed, and plan for reused or recycled
- Engage with vendors, performers, and sponsors that are committed to climate action and sustainability
- Design signage and banners for multi-year reuse (aiming for a 3-to-5-year use cycle) by avoiding dates and custom logos
- Choose lower-emissions shipping methods for any physical event materials (wristbands, signage, etc.)

ENCOURAGE ATTENDEE PARTICIPATION

- Share your sustainable commitments with attendees before the event
- Skip parking perks—encourage walking, transit, and biking (refer to [DOT Bike Parking](#) and [Bike Share](#) information)
- Find creative ways to incentivize attendee participation in sustainable actions, such as bringing reusable water bottles, taking public transit, or sorting waste properly at event



1. SET AND COMMUNICATE SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- Offer visible recognition to attendees or vendors that show commitment to sustainable goals

REPORT IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS

- Track total attendance and participation in sustainability initiatives during the event
- Collect event data and metrics using the City's metrics tracker to evaluate impact
- Survey attendee about their experience with sustainability measures and gather feedback for improvement
- Share impact with attendees, vendors, and sponsors in a post-event sustainability report

2. REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AT VENUE

Choosing the right venue is one of the easiest ways to reduce your event's carbon footprint. Whether you're hosting indoors or outside, the following guidelines can help you choose or design a space with a lower environmental impact.



2. REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AT VENUE

CHOOSE A TRANSIT-FRIENDLY, ENERGY-EFFICIENT VENUE

- Communicate public transit options to event attendees
- Recommend nearby accommodations that are within walking distance or accessible by public transportation
- When selecting an indoor venue, prioritize venues that demonstrate energy efficiency and renewable energy use, such as those with LEED certification
- When selecting an outdoor venue, consider site-specific environmental conditions, such as sun exposure, shading, flood risk, heat exposure, air quality, etc. and accommodate accordingly to ensure resiliency to extreme weather
- If your venue is not powered by renewable energy, work with operator to purchase green power, connect to community solar, or establish temporary on-site solar installations

USE LOW-CARBON REUSABLE MATERIALS FOR TEMPORARY STRUCTURES

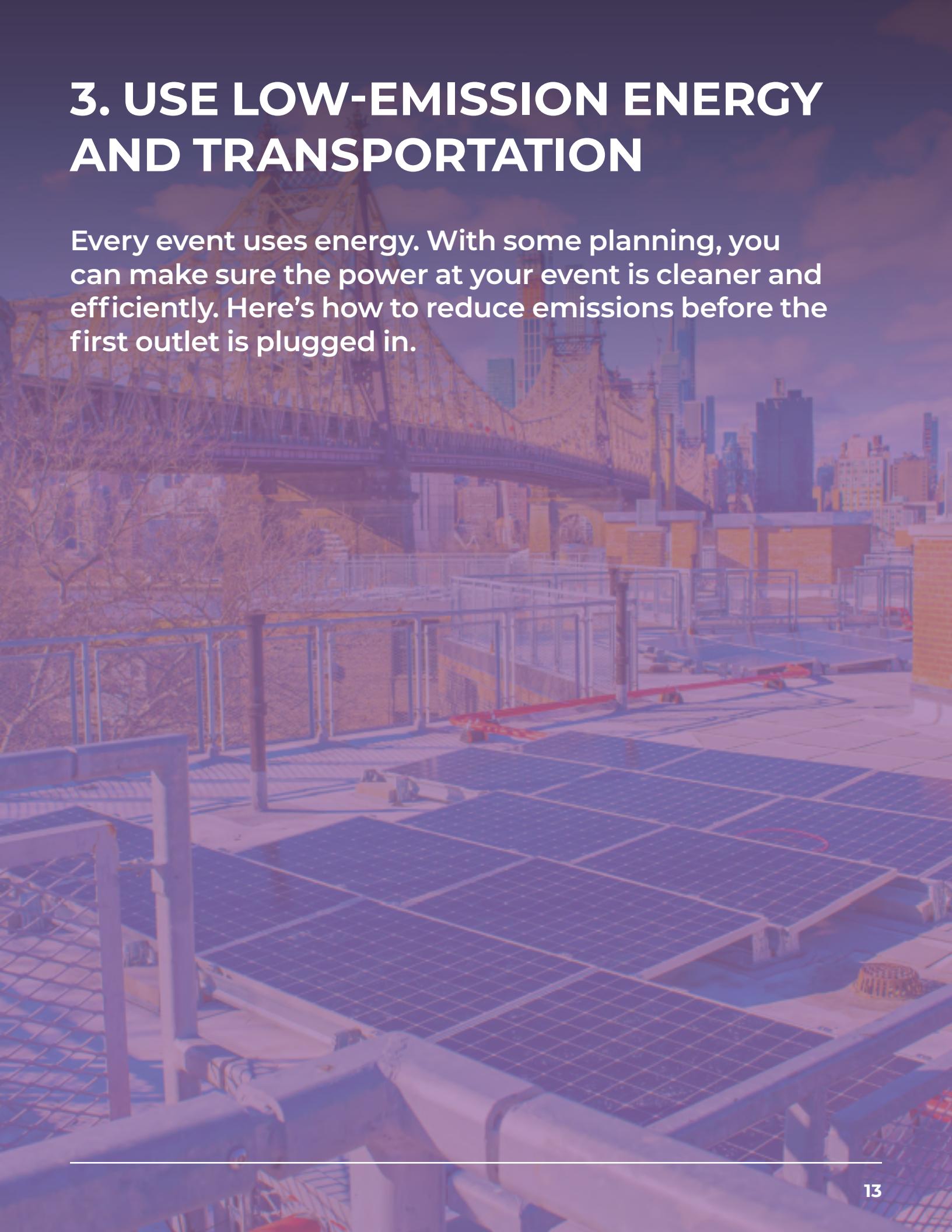
- Avoid large-scale temporary construction to minimize material usage and site impact
- Prioritize low-carbon, environmentally friendly materials (e.g., FSC-certified wood) for all temporary structures and scenic elements
- Ensure temporary structures can be disassembled and stored for future reuse
- Plan ahead for end-of-life recycling of any unusable construction material to decrease waste
- Obtain Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for structural material where possible

PROTECT AND RESTORE EVENT SITE

- Ensure all temporary water-features are low-flow and efficient to conserve water on site
- Avoid environmental contamination by ensuring proper handling of pollutants (i.e. oils, cleaners, fuels, melting ice) and preventing disposal in drains, catch basins, or soil
- For events in public spaces, coordinate with relevant City agencies to meet site care, restoration and other permitting requirements
- Avoid the use of outside plants or seeds as part of an event activation or scenic design as such species may not be native to the parkland, and is generally prohibited
- Minimize noise pollution, especially near residential or natural areas, with speaker direction, volume limits, timeframe of amplified sound, and low-noise equipment or generators

3. USE LOW-EMISSION ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION

Every event uses energy. With some planning, you can make sure the power at your event is cleaner and more efficiently. Here's how to reduce emissions before the first outlet is plugged in.



DEVELOP AN ENERGY USE PLAN

- Create an energy plan using the City's energy plan template with production staff, venue staff, and energy power contractor, if applicable
- Make a list of all energy sources that may be used at the event and identify where there can be energy savings
- Use past event data to project energy use at event to track efficiencies gained over time
- Request additional energy data from venues and vendors on their individual energy use
- Set a new energy reduction goal and identify energy saved to inform future efforts

USE CLEANER POWER SOURCES

- Size generators appropriately based on need and demand²
- Capture and donate leftover fuel if possible
- Opt for solar power, battery, or hybrid generators instead of fuel generators, if permitted
- Where renewable sources are unavailable, use biodiesel (>B20), compressed natural gas (CNG), or propane as petroleum fuel alternatives, in accordance with FDNY permit rules and regulations
- Include sustainability clauses in energy vendor contracts, prioritizing fuel-efficient, hybrid, or renewable systems
- Plan for clean backup power sources, such as battery storage or hybrid systems, to avoid defaulting to diesel generators in case of failure
- If renewable energy cannot be used, consider purchasing renewable energy credits or carbon offsets

PRIORITIZE LOW-EMISSION EVENT TRANSPORTATION

- Ensure vendors and staff comply with [citywide idling laws](#) to ensure vehicles are not idling more than three minutes
- Schedule deliveries during lower congestion hours, such as before 8am or after 9pm (refer to [DOT Off-Hour Delivery Incentive Program](#))
- Prioritize local vendors and consolidation of trips to decrease distance traveled and reduce emissions during shipping (refer to [DOT Reports & Studies](#) on efficient and sustainable freight management)

² Fire Code §608: Provides requirements for Energy Storage Systems and portable installations.



- Use all fuel-efficient, hybrid, or electric vehicles for deliveries and staff transport and provide EV charging on site when feasible (refer to [NYC Clean Truck Program](#), [DOT Electric Vehicle website](#), and [DOT NYC Streets Plan 2025](#))

LIMIT ON-SITE ENERGY CONSUMPTION

- Provide basic training for staff and vendors on energy-saving practices, including idling policies, efficient use of equipment, and shut-off protocols
- Use daylight in preference to power lights when possible
- Choose more energy-efficient equipment, like LED lighting and ENERGY STAR certified products
- Actively manage and monitor energy consumption onsite to ensure lighting and equipment are used optimally (e.g., via timers) and promptly turn off when not in use

4. SERVE CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FOOD AND DRINK OPTIONS

Food is often a crucial part at any event, but it's also one of the most carbon intensive components. The good news? Simple menu changes can make a big difference. From offering more plant-forward meals to reducing waste and planning donations, your event can serve delicious food that's better for the planet.





CREATE A PLANT-FORWARD MENU

- Nudge guests towards plant-based options by offering meat as a side or for an upcharge to add to plant-based main courses, or by selecting dishes that call for a small amount of meat alongside plant-based proteins
- Use signage to highlight the climate benefits of plant-based menu items
- Provide 2-3 plant-based options for every 1 meat option to reduce carbon emissions
- Build in plant-based defaults, such as having a featured dish be plant-based and using plant-based milks in featured coffee drinks
- Highlight culturally diverse plant-based meals options
- Reduce serving sizes for animal proteins by up to 25% and blend animal proteins with plant-based ingredients such as mushrooms by up to 50%
- Host an entirely plant-based event where possible

PRIORITIZE LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE VENDOR OPTIONS

- Select local and seasonal foods and beverages whenever possible
- Clearly label all food and drink options with dietary information (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free) and highlight locally sources or certified items
- Source products with organic, Fair Trade, and humane foods with certifications like USDA organic (animal products and produce), Animal Welfare Approved (meat), and Marine Stewardship Council and Seafood Watch (seafood)
- Choose carbon-neutral, organic, or biodynamic alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages

PREVENT AND REDUCE FOOD WASTE

- Collect attendee numbers well in advance and communicate them to food and beverage vendors to minimize food and beverages that go unused
- Provide basic training to vendors on waste management, such as separating food scraps, eliminating food waste, and preparing food for donation using [NYC's food safety standards](#)
- Track the amounts of food and beverages that were unused to inform future offerings and quantities
- Register in advance for the [donateNYC Food Portal](#) and post leftover food on the portal after the event to connect food with local community organizations



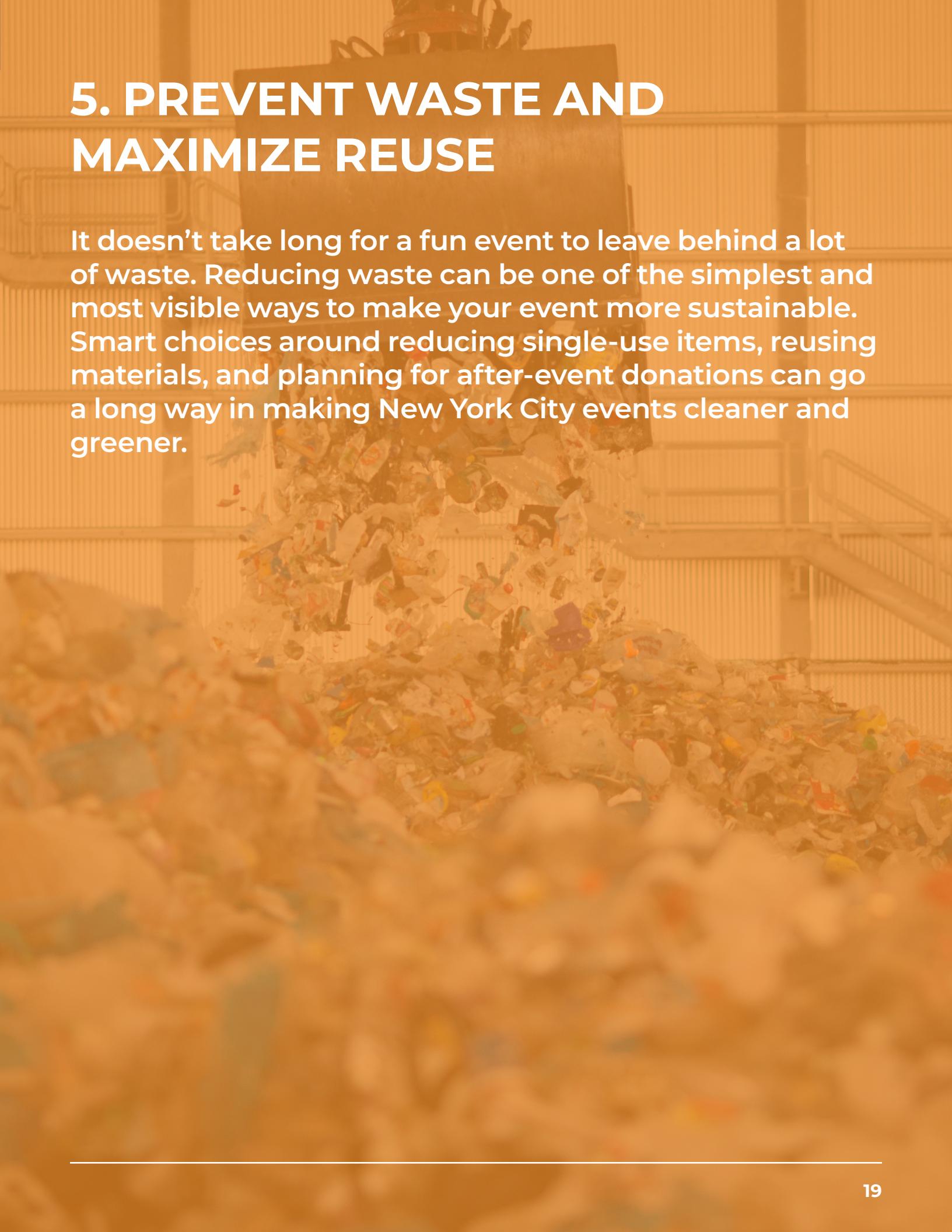
4. SERVE CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FOOD AND DRINK OPTIONS

- If there is little leftover food and you need a last-minute solution, use the [donateNYC directory](#) to find drop-off locations, such as community fridges

PROVIDE ACCESS TO WATER

- Encourage attendees to bring their own empty reusable water bottles in pre-event communications and allow empty water bottles in site rules
- Ensure availability of free, accessible drinking water or water bottle refill stations
- Avoid single-use plastic water bottles
- Confirm systems for providing water are efficient and leak-free to prevent water waste

5. PREVENT WASTE AND MAXIMIZE REUSE

A large, sprawling pile of discarded event waste, including plastic bottles and containers, is shown in a industrial setting. The waste is piled high, creating a textured, chaotic mound. In the background, a metal structure and a staircase are visible, suggesting a backstage or storage area.

It doesn't take long for a fun event to leave behind a lot of waste. Reducing waste can be one of the simplest and most visible ways to make your event more sustainable. Smart choices around reducing single-use items, reusing materials, and planning for after-event donations can go a long way in making New York City events cleaner and greener.



5. PREVENT WASTE AND MAXIMIZE REUSE

DEVELOP A WASTE PLAN

- Create a waste plan using the City's waste plan template with production staff, venue staff, and waste hauler contractor, if applicable
- Make a list of disposables that may be used at the event and identify which disposables could be refused, reduced, reused, or recycled
- Use past event data to project waste generated for each waste stream (organics, paper, metal/ glass/ plastic, landfill)
- Request additional data from vendors or waste hauler (i.e. waste tonnage) to track performance over time
- Set a new waste reduction goal and identify percentage diverted to inform future efforts

SET UP ON-SITE WASTE SYSTEMS

- Place food waste and recycling bins near all trash cans where appropriate and in high-traffic areas (e.g., near activities, food vendors, guest seating, and exits)
- Use clear, consistent signage with icons and color coding at each waste station to show attendees where to place food waste, trash, plastic and paper recycling
- Ensure all waste is containerized in bins or dumpsters before it is picked up
- Provide pre-event and/or on-site visuals showing proper sorting of materials to reduce contamination and improve sorting accuracy
- Add staff/volunteers at waste stations to support correct sorting of materials and provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- If smoking is permitted, provide designated areas with specific receptacles for cigarette disposal and add a station for disposing of electronic cigarettes and vapes (Note: smoking is prohibited on parkland)

REDUCE SINGLE-USE ITEMS AND EXCESSIVE WASTE

- Avoid giveaways or giving out "swag" to reduce creation of items that may end up in the landfill
- If selling merchandise, ensure merchandise is recyclable and/or made with eco-friendly material, like cotton t-shirts or reusable bags
- Work with vendors to comply with single-use item regulations, including the "Skip the Stuff" law, the foam ban, and the plastic bag ban



- Work with vendors to reduce excessive packaging on any material delivered to the event.
- Avoid single-use items when possible (i.e. condiment packets, straws, signage, balloons, etc.)
- Rent supplies and materials rather than buying new, when possible
- Avoid disposable decor and single-use furniture
- Work with vendors to provide reusable service-ware (i.e. cups, utensils, plates, etc.) with take-back options

REUSE OR DONATE UNUSED MATERIALS

- Save and store materials that can be reused for the next event, like construction materials, fixtures, signage, textiles, etc.
- Register for the donateNYC Exchange and plan ahead to post estimated available material days before the event, and the donate NYC team will support finding a recipient

PARTNER WITH RIGHT VENDOR

- Require waste haulers to provide composting and recycling services or partner with additional haulers to cover these needs
- Confirm waste hauler can accept and process compostable single-use items, as it may be difficult to distinguish in sorting process
- Find vendors that can responsibly recycle or reuse items that would otherwise go into regular waste streams (i.e. e-waste, textiles, batteries, animal byproducts, among others)

APPENDIX



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

Resources for Donating Food through [donateNYC](#)

- Events should plan ahead and register for the [donateNYC Food Portal](#), which matches available food to organizations based on proximity and food needs
- For small, last minute food donations use the [donateNYC Directory](#) to find food donation drop-off locations, such as community fridges
- To find a partner, review the [donateNYC Partnership](#) list to find potential food rescue organizations

Resources for Donating Other Items through [donateNYC Exchange](#)

- Events can post items available after the event on [donateNYC Exchange](#)— it's free to use, with no minimums
- Event producers can list arts and crafts, building products, cleaning products, clothing, electronics, furniture, storage, tools/ equipment, and more
- DSNY acts as matchmaker and messaging and calendar features allow users to arrange pick-up or delivery

Resources for Building Sustainable Menus

- [NYC's Plant-Powered Carbon Challenge](#) provides free resources and technical assistance for building climate-friendly menus
- World Resources Institute, [Greener by Default](#), and the [Culinary Institute of America](#) offer many techniques and resources to create plant-forward menus and boost demand
- [WRI's Coolfood Calculator](#) helps assess the sustainability of and track the carbon footprint of your menu.

Resources for Selecting Venue and Coordinating Transportation

- When searching for venue, consider [Open Streets](#), [Pedestrian Plazas](#), or [Park](#) as preferred venues
- To promote biking to venue, refer to [DOT's Bike Parking](#) and [Bike Share Info](#)
- For more information on how to encourage efficient and sustainable freight management, reference [NYC Clean Truck Program](#), [NYC DOT Off-Hour Delivery Incentive Program](#), [NYC DOT Electric Vehicle page](#), [NYC DOT Streets Plan 2025](#), and [NYC DOT Reports & Studies](#)

Resources for Nightlife and Hospitality Businesses

- The [NYC Office of Nightlife](#) promotes panels and industry events to explore emerging trends, technologies, and initiatives in sustainability.
- The NYC Office of Nightlife acts as a matchmaker, offering one-on-one support to help venues assess available incentives, [risk assessment and grant opportunities](#).
- It also helps venues access SBS resources like [BePrep](#) and flood zone information and adopt greener business practices.

Resources for Film Productions

- The [Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment](#) has created the first sustainability program for the film and television industry in the United States administered by a government agency.
- [NYC Film Green](#) is a voluntary program that enables productions engaging in environmentally conscious practices to apply for and receive recognition for their efforts.
- NYC Film Green is greening New York City's film and television industry one production at a time and setting the gold standard for best practices in sustainable film and television production throughout the world.

Resources for Ensuring Energy Safety and Fire Prevention

- Powered equipment such as light towers and portable generators at street fairs have become a more common, cleaner, and quieter practice, replacing the historically utilized noisy and polluting gasoline and diesel fueled generators. Any requests for the intended use of a battery powered equipment over 2 kWh, including light towers, must be mailed to FDNY at BusinessSupport@fdny.nyc.gov & DistrictOfficeHeadquarters@fdny.nyc.gov.
 - A Letter of No Objection may be required if the system is above 2 kWh.
 - A Fire Department permit is required for a lithium-ion powered equipment over 20 kWh and lead acid over 70 kWh. UL Listing is also required.
 - Certified/listed powered equipment shall be used.
- Requirements for Energy Storage Systems (ESS), including mobile ESS:
 - Compliance with the NYC Fire Code §608, Construction Code and Rules of the City of NY, 3RCNY §608-01
 - Approval and permit from the Department of Buildings
 - Operating Permit from the FDNY
 - Certificate of Fitness Holder (W-28/B-28)
 - Subject Matter Expert who will be available by phone in 15 minutes in case of emergency

- Secured against unauthorized entry with a fence
 - Mobile Energy Storage shall not be charged on site
 - Site cleared of any combustible materials
 - Warning signs, emergency contact and emergency shut-down
 - 24/7 remote monitoring
- Requirements for Solar:
 - Similar to ESS, diesel fueled light towers are now being replaced by battery powered light towers. FDNY upholds the same requirements as ESS or Powered Equipment.
- Requirements for Biodiesel:
 - Permit required as of Fire Code 5701-01 and Fire Code 105.6.
- Requirements for Gasoline or Diesel Generators:
 - Filling of the fuel tank during the outdoor event NOT ALLOWED. Incidental storage of flammable liquids (e.g., gasoline) prohibited
 - Caps on the fuel tanks secured during the outdoor event
 - One (1) 10-B:C rated fire extinguisher
 - Minimum 10 feet from combustible materials
- Requirements for Power-Mobile Trailers (diesel generators):
 - Site-Specific Permit required if used at a street fair, bazaar, carnival, concert, festival or similar public outdoor gathering
 - One (1) dry chemical 20-B:C OR One (1) CO2 2-B:C rated portable fire extinguisher to be provided
 - Mobile Power Generator must have a plate indicating the name and address of the owner
 - The trailer and equipment shall be electrically grounded in an approved manner
 - Fueling / refueling can only be done by cargo tanks that has a permit issued by the Hazardous Cargo Unit
- If filled manually (e.g., portable containers), person holding a certificate of fitness Type: C – 92 is required

SAMPLE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS FOR VENDORS

Organizing and running an event is not done alone. To advance your sustainability goals, it is essential to clearly communicate your environmental principles and objectives when engaging with vendors. This is especially true when negotiating vendor contracts. Contracts define the rights and responsibilities of each party. Without language that explicitly outlines sustainability requirements, there is no guarantee that vendors will meet your event's sustainability goals.

By clearly stating sustainability expectations and incorporating them into applicable contracts, you can reduce waste, maximize resource efficiency, and reduce emissions, supporting the City's sustainability objectives. This resource offers sample language that may help you include sustainability standards into vendor contracts.

Note: This document is for informational purpose only and is not legal advice. Always consult your legal counsel or contracting officer before finalizing any contract language.

1. KNOW YOUR EVENT GOALS AND CONSTRAINTS

Before drafting or negotiating a contract, determine your sustainability goals and understand any limitations that may exist. This will form the basis of any proposed terms. You may want to consider any of the following:

- **Sustainability Goals**

- Are you aiming for a zero-waste event? Lowering greenhouse gas emissions? Reducing single-use plastics? If you're serving food, are you sourcing local or plant-based food?

- **Operational Goals**

- How big is your event? Consider audience size, indoor vs. outdoor setting, duration, and equipment needs.

- **Budget and Staffing**

- What are the resources available to you? Is your event budget able to withstand additional costs related to sustainability? Understand what resources are available to implement and monitor sustainability efforts.

- **Legal or Policy Requirements**

- Are there any City-wide or internal rules and policies that will affect your event? Make sure to review any internal or citywide policies or ordinances related to environmental performance, procurement, or waste.

2. USE GOALS TO INFORM CONTRACT CLAUSES.

Once your goals and constraints are defined, make a plan. Prioritize your key sustainability goals in contracting discussions and remain flexible where necessary. Any language incorporated should be tailored to fit your event's needs and be reviewed by your legal and contracting team for consistency and enforceability. You may want to include one or more of the following as requirements in your contracts with your vendors, along with a phrase requiring the vendor to comply, ("Vendor shall...").

For Energy and Power Provider:

- Meet [%] of energy needs through alternative energy solutions such as solar, battery, biodiesel (>B20), or hybrid systems
- Conduct an energy assessment to optimize generator sizing and avoid overuse
- Provide power factor correction equipment to ensure efficient operations
- Create and execute a plan, acceptable to the Event Organizer, to responsibly source fuel and recover unused fuel

For Transportation and Delivery Vendors:

- Prioritize low-emission fleet options like electric vehicles, cargo bikes, or hybrid vehicles for all on-site deliveries and staff/attendee transport whenever possible
- Optimize delivery schedules and consolidate trips to reduce emissions and idling
- Eliminate all single-use plastic packaging and exclusively use reusable crates, bins, or compostable alternatives
- Ensure all drivers, strictly follow no-idling policies
- Provide documentation of vehicle fuel types and routes upon request
- Track and report total vehicle miles, mode split, and estimated emissions where feasible

For Construction / Event Infrastructure Vendors:

- Use modular, reusable staging, scaffolding, and temporary structures to reduce material waste.
- Source reclaimed, recycled, or sustainably certified materials where feasible (e.g., FSC-certified wood, recycled steel)
- Minimize on-site noise and air pollution
- Ensure proper disposal of any construction waste with preference for reuse or recycling over landfill
- Create a plan to ensure efficient use of energy and water

For Merchandise / Retail Vendors:

- Ensure that merchandise is made from recycled, organic, or Fair Trade-certified materials where possible
- Give preference to vendors using environmentally friendly packaging (recyclable, compostable, or minimal use of packaging)
- Limit use of single-use plastic packaging and not use foam-based materials
- Provide transparency on labor practices and certifications (e.g., GOTS, Fair Trade, WRAP, B Corp)

For Food & Beverage Vendors:

- Provide at least 2 plant-based menu items for every 1 meat option offered
- Prioritize ingredients that are local, organic, seasonal, Fair Trade, or humanely raised
- List all third-party certifications (e.g., USDA Organic, Animal Welfare Approved, Marine Stewardship Council)
- Use only refillable, reusable, or certified compostable service-ware (i.e. cups, cutlery, plates, etc.) only
- Do not use plastic bags, straws, or plastic utensils
- Support food waste minimization by adjusting portions to attendance projections and donating unused food via donateNYC or an equivalent
- Use an electric generator over diesel generator if energy is required

For Waste Management Vendors

- Provide clearly labeled bins for organics, recycling, and landfill waste with consistent color codes and signage
- Offer composting services that can accept certified compostable service-ware (if used)
- Track and report volumes of waste collected by type and diversion rate
- Adequately staff waste stations or coordinate with event staff to ensure correct sorting

SUSTAINABLE EVENT CHECKLIST

1. SET AND COMMUNICATE SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- Have you designated a Sustainability Leader for your event? (Yes/No)
- Have you analyzed past event data to set goals for emissions, energy, and waste?
- Have you set ambitious but achievable sustainability targets (e.g., % waste diverted)?
- Do your goals ensure inclusivity (e.g., affordable access to sustainable food and water)?
- Have you scheduled sustainability check-ins with your team and partners?
- Have you included sustainability goals in vendor RFPs and contracts?
- Are you using mostly digital communication instead of printed materials?
- If printing is necessary, are you using recycled/carbon-neutral paper and minimizing quantities?
- Are your vendors, performers, and sponsors aligned with sustainability commitments?
- Is your event signage reusable for multiple years (no dates/custom logos)?
- Are you choosing lower-emissions shipping for any physical materials?
- Have you communicated your sustainability commitments to attendees?
- Are you avoiding parking perks and encouraging walking, transit, or biking?
- Are you incentivizing attendee participation in sustainable actions (e.g., bring reusable bottles)?
- Do you recognize attendees/vendors that meet sustainability goals?
- Are you tracking attendance and participation in sustainability initiatives?
- Are you collecting sustainability data with the City's metrics tracker?
- Are you surveying attendees about sustainability at the event?
- Will you share a post-event sustainability report with stakeholders?

2. REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AT VENUE

- Are you communicating public transit options to attendees?
- Are nearby accommodations walkable or transit-accessible?
- Is your indoor venue energy-efficient and/or using renewable energy?

- Have you considered environmental risks for outdoor venues (flood, heat, air quality)?
- If renewable power isn't provided, are you purchasing green power or solar?
- Have you minimized large-scale temporary construction?
- Are you using low-carbon, reusable, or FSC-certified materials?
- Can temporary structures be disassembled and reused?
- Have you planned for recycling/disposal of leftover construction materials?
- Have you obtained Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) where possible?
- Are water features efficient and low-flow?
- Are pollutants (oils, cleaners, fuels) handled to avoid contamination?
- If in public space, are you coordinating with City agencies for site restoration?
- Are you avoiding non-native plants/seeds in scenic design?
- Are you minimizing noise pollution through direction, volume limits, and low-noise equipment?

3. USE LOW-EMISSION ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION

- Have you created an energy use plan using the City's template?
- Have you listed all energy sources and identified efficiency opportunities?
- Are you using past event data to project and track energy use?
- Have you requested energy data from venues/vendors?
- Have you set a new energy reduction goal?
- Are generators right-sized for actual need?
- Are you capturing and donating leftover fuel when possible?
- Are you using solar, battery, or hybrid generators instead of fuel (if permitted)?
- If not, are you using biodiesel (>B20), CNG, or propane as alternatives?
- Do your energy vendor contracts include sustainability clauses?
- Do you have a clean backup power source (battery or hybrid)?
- If renewables aren't possible, are you purchasing renewable energy credits or offsets?
- Are vendors and staff following the 3-minute idling law?
- Are deliveries scheduled during off-peak hours (before 8am or after 9pm)?

- Are vendors trips consolidated to reduce transport emissions?
- Are you using hybrid/electric vehicles and providing EV charging on-site?
- Are staff/vendors trained in energy-saving practices?
- Are you using daylight where possible instead of artificial lighting?
- Are you using energy-efficient equipment (LED, ENERGY STAR)?
- Are you actively monitoring and turning off unused equipment?

4. SERVE CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FOOD AND DRINK OPTIONS

- Are plant-based dishes offered as the default or majority of the menu?
- Do you provide at least 2–3 plant-based options for every one meat option?
- Are serving sizes for animal proteins reduced or blended with plants?
- Is signage highlighting the climate benefits of plant-based meals?
- Are culturally diverse plant-based options included?
- Is the event fully plant-based (if possible)?
- Are foods and beverages locally or seasonally sourced?
- Are all menu items clearly labeled (vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, certified, etc.)?
- Are vendors providing certified sustainable products (organic, Fair Trade, humane)?
- Are carbon-neutral or organic beverage options provided?
- Have attendee numbers been collected early to minimize over-catering?
- Are vendors trained in food waste reduction and donation standards?
- Is leftover food tracked for future planning?
- Have you registered for the donateNYC Food Portal to donate unused food?
- If last-minute leftovers, will you use the donateNYC Directory (e.g., community fridges)?
- Are attendees encouraged to bring empty reusable water bottles?
- Are free water refill stations provided?
- Are single-use plastic water bottles avoided?
- Are water systems efficient and leak-free?

5. PREVENT WASTE AND MAXIMIZE REUSE

- Have you created a waste plan using the City's template?
- Have you listed disposables and identified what can be refused, reduced, reused, or recycled?
- Are you projecting waste by stream (organics, recycling, landfill) using past data?
- Are you requesting waste data (e.g., tonnage) from vendors/haulers?
- Have you set a new waste reduction/diversion goal?
- Are bins for recycling and compost placed in all high-traffic areas?
- Is signage clear, consistent, and color-coded at waste stations?
- Is waste containerized in bins/dumpsters before pickup?
- Are waste stations staffed to help with sorting?
- Are staff/volunteers equipped with PPE for waste management?
- If smoking is allowed, are designated disposal receptacles provided?
- Are giveaways and “swag” avoided?
- If selling merchandise, is it recyclable or eco-friendly (e.g., cotton shirts, reusable bags)?
- Are vendors compliant with (“Skip the Stuff,” foam ban, bag ban)?
- Are vendors reducing excessive packaging?
- Are single-use items (condiment packets, balloons, straws, signage) avoided?
- Are supplies rented instead of purchased new when possible?
- Are disposable décor and furniture avoided?
- Are reusable service-ware options (cups, utensils, plates) provided with take-back systems?
- Are leftover materials stored for reuse (signage, fixtures, construction materials)?
- Have you registered with donateNYC Exchange to donate leftover items?
- Does your waste hauler provide composting and recycling?
- Can your hauler process compostable single-use items if used?
- Have you identified vendors for recycling specialty items (e-waste, textiles, batteries, oil)?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Good Clean Fun Sustainable Event Guidelines were developed through a collaborative effort between city agencies and event producers committed to making New York City events cleaner and greener.

We gratefully acknowledge the partnership, expertise, and creativity of:



New York City
Department of
Sanitation



New York City
Department of Parks
and Recreation



New York City
Fire Department



New York City
Department of
Transportation

We extend special thanks to the cohort of event producers and organizations that shared best practices and provided feedback on NYC's first ever sustainable event guidelines:



New York
Road Runners



Governor's Ball



Macy's



FIFA World Cup
2026™ New York
New Jersey Host
Committee



Barwick Group



IDEKO



SailGP

Thank you to all city staff and event professionals who contributed their time, insights, and energy to shaping this toolkit.

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