



**AMS Sustainable Event Certificate Guide**  
**From the Commission of**  
**Environmental Sustainability**

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# PARTNERS

We would like to thank everyone involved in the creation and completion of this certificate. It would not have been possible without the help and collaboration of so many campus partners!

## Collaborators



## Sponsors



# INTRODUCTION

We are so thrilled that you are taking part in the Sustainable Events Certificate (SEC). This document is complementary to the Excel sheet, providing clarification and further information about the requirements for obtaining the SEC.

We hope that this encourages you to consider environmental implications while planning your event and make easy and tangible switches to incorporate the best possible environmental practices while hosting an on-campus initiative. Switching to more sustainable alternatives may be challenging at first, but we're here to help! To make this process as simple as possible, the AMS Commissioner of Environmental Sustainability and Internal Manager of Environmental Sustainability are available to offer any support required throughout this process. If you ever have any questions, please contact [ces.internal@ams.queensu.ca](mailto:ces.internal@ams.queensu.ca) and cc [ces@ams.queensu.ca](mailto:ces@ams.queensu.ca). Happy planning!



## ABOUT THE SEC

The Sustainable Events Certification (SEC) is a campus initiative founded

by Queen's Backing Action on Climate Change (QBACC) in partnership with the Alma Mater Society, and Commissioner of Environmental Sustainability. This certification focuses on a variety of topics, including waste reduction, promoting the reuse of products and ensuring that best practices are followed for events. Achieving this certification will require you to question the purpose of every product used and measure its importance, as well as assessing the usefulness of more ecofriendly alternatives.

The SEC is divided into five different categories:

1. Food and beverages
2. Packaging and Materials
3. Decorations
4. Location and Transportation
5. Promotion

Within each category there are several different options, each worth a specific number of points based on their difficulty to implement and impact on the environment. The SEC is only awarded if an event reaches 15 out of 43 points. If the Commission of Environmental Sustainability believes your event is impactful, tackling important issues such as climate change and social injustices, you will receive 3 **bonus** points.

While achieving this certification makes us one step closer to minimizing our impact on the earth, it also has several benefits for the event as well. These benefits include:

- Explicit recognition as a Queen's University Sustainable Event
- A reduced cost of renting space by 10%, provided by the Student Life Centre
- A Common Ground catering discount of 10%
- Promotion of your event across social media using QBACC, AMS, and the

Sustainability Office's channels.

# CATEGORIES

## FOOD AND BEVERAGES

One of the main barriers to organizing a sustainable event is having to provide meals and drinks for guests. The SEC has a set criterion so that organizers for events of all sizes can be more eco-friendly. Below, each option is outlined and the reasoning behind their point value is explained.

### 1. Limit meal to one meat item (1 point)

Contributes to lower greenhouse gas emissions from the production of meat.

### 2. Vegetarian and/or vegan options

#### a. Fully vegetarian and vegan options must be available (1 point) OR

Allows vegan students to participate where they can sometimes be neglected. It also opens the opportunity for meat eaters to experience vegan and vegetarian food.

#### b. Fully vegan or fully vegetarian catering (5 points)

Maximizes the number of people who can participate in the event, while minimizing the environmental impact.

### 3. No red meat is served (1 point)

This option still allows meat to be served but reduces the negative environmental impacts.

### 4. Food is sourced from within 100km (3 points)

Decreases the amount of greenhouse gases and other pollutants that are emitted from shipping food internationally, while supporting local vendors.

## How to source food within 100km:

To receive these points, you will have to show documentation from the caterer that the food used was all locally sourced. You will most likely have to specifically request this documentation.

Some catering companies that support local farmers include:

- L'Amour Catering and Cakes, a family run company that provides vegan, vegetarian, lactose-free, and gluten-free options.
- Old Farm Fine Foods, a local catering company that offers seasonal menus.
- The Grocery Basket, which has local and fresh produce available.

## 5. Cutlery, plates and cups

### a. All utensils, plates and cups are reusable (2 points) OR

Using reusable tableware is cheaper in the long run and significantly lowers the environmental impacts of an event, especially when you have many guests.

### b. All utensils, plates and cups are compostable (0.5 points)

Compostable tableware can be used as an alternative to reusable items and is still a more environmentally conscious option than plastic.

### c. Only tablecloths and cloth napkins must be used (2 points)

Using cloth tablecloths and napkins reduces event costs over time, is more environmentally friendly and decreases waste at the event.

## How to accomplish this:

Inquire if Queen's Dining Services (or an outsider caterer) can offer these services or accommodate your event.



## 6. Excess food is donated after the event (4 points)

Allows excess food to be donated safely and easily to those in need.

### How to accomplish this:

Food Rescue is an online service used to help events donate excess food safely and easily to local charities and non-profit organizations in Kingston.

1. Go to <https://www.foodrescue.ca/> and register as a food donor by entering the details of the surplus food available for donation and pick-up time.
2. Based on your details, you will be matched with an organization and will receive an email confirmation when a pick-up time has been agreed upon.
3. Add the email confirmations of the initial posting of the surplus food and the pick-up time to your Evidence Form.

\*They do not accept food that is public (e.g. a tray of sandwiches which people are grabbing from with their bare hands) therefore, buffet style food must be distributed using tongs\*

Additionally, Soul Food ([soulfood@clubs.queensu.ca](mailto:soulfood@clubs.queensu.ca)) is a student-run group on campus that delivers unconsumed food from Queen's University campus cafeterias to local Kingston shelters every night. Food that is not collected by Soul Food is also shared with Loving Spoonful Kingston ([info@lovingspoonful.org](mailto:info@lovingspoonful.org)) to support their food reclamation program.

## 7. Only 5% of the total food ordered can be thrown away as food waste (1.5 points)

The goal of this task is to eliminate the over-ordering done by many event planners, which has historically led to mass amounts of food waste from campus events.

### How to accomplish:

To accomplish this goal, you must be able to prove that you took substantial measures to tighten ordering strategies by only ordering the amount required. This task could be completed by having attendees answer food request forms before the event. Having a pre-planned menu with different size options can assist with this goal as well.

## 8. Extras

### a. Hot beverages extras (2 points)

Instead of having disposable milk and cream containers, which contribute to waste, your event should have reusable dishes. This is a quick and easy way to reduce a large amount of waste.

### b. Food and condiment wrapper extras (1 point)

Instead of having disposable ketchup or salt and pepper containers which also contributes to waste, your event can look for reusable shaker jars for salt and pepper, and a large bottle of ketchup as opposed to numerous single packets.

## 9. Compost all food waste (2 points)

Before and after your meal has been served, consider announcing the location of compost bins so guests can easily locate disposal sites. This can be accomplished by having a committee member direct guests to proper

disposal areas to reduce food waste.

# DECORATIONS

When decorating for the event, groups will at times use disposable decorations due to a lack of knowledge of alternatives. SEC has created this criterion to allow accessible and cost-effective decorations which are still aesthetically pleasing.

## 1. Additional environmentally friendly decorations (2 points)

Providing environmentally conscious and live decorations does not have to be costly or time-consuming. This can be done through using fresh flowers instead of fake ones.

## 2. Reusable decorations (0.5 points)

Creating fabric decorations are inexpensive alternatives to plastic decorations and are multipurpose.

## 3. Paper decorations (0.5 points)

Using paper decorations that can be recycled or reused is a good alternative to plastic decorations.

### How to accomplish this:

There are several thrift stores in Kingston that offer materials for decorations including tablecloths and centerpieces, such as Talize and Mission Thrift Store Kingston. There are also several local florists who can provide flowers for centerpieces including Chartreuse Flower Works, Pam's Flower Garden, or Mc Mahon's House of Flowers Inc.

# PROMOTION

A key aspect of an event would be its promotion. The SEC promotion criteria allows you to promote in an environmentally sustainable way without compromising the amount of attention your event receives.

## 1. Paper free promotion (2 points)

You can promote your event through social media, announcements in lectures and emails from undergraduate coordinators for faculties. Going digital will result in your event information being accessible and easy to disseminate, while also being more environmentally friendly than paper copies.

## 2. Promoting the sustainable initiatives being undertaken (1 points)

By showing your attendees the sustainable initiatives you adopted in planning your event, you will receive support from your attendees as well as possibly inspiring someone to adopt those practices for future events.

## 3. Informing the guests of the schedule (1 point)

Guests can be informed of the schedule via email or an event website as opposed to a paper schedule. This allows them to access it throughout the event, without it being lost or destroyed.

## LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

When organizing an event, one of the first steps is booking a venue. Using a venue that is environmentally accessible is one of the first steps to reaching an eco-sustainable event. The criteria are as follows;

1. Event must be within 200m of a public transportation route (2 points)

Public transport allows the event to be more accessible to those who do not have a car while also being more environmentally friendly and minimizing the risk of drinking and driving.

2. Public transportation route must be indicated before the event (1 point)

This will give people time to plan their schedules, while encouraging guests to use public transportation. Please consider informing your delegates of transportation routes one week prior to the event to allow for proper planning.

3. Holding the event within walking distance (10 minutes) of Union and University (1 point)

Having your event located on campus and within a reasonable walking distance of a central location (such as Stauffer library) may encourage students living within the student district to walk to your venue.

4. Having labeled compost and recycling bins with pictures of everything being served at your event (1 point)

By eliminating garbage bins, people will be more inclined to read the signs on how to properly dispose of their waste. Creating signs that are specific to what is served at your event eliminates the confusion and reduces the probability of people incorrectly disposing of something.

5. Water Bottle refill stations (1 point)

If your venue is equipped with water bottle refill stations, they

should be made known to your guests. This can be simply done by having signs or informing the guests upon entry of the station's location.

6. Energy (LEED Certified) (1 point)

Holding your event in a LEED certified building will reduce energy consumption associated with your event, increasing sustainability and reducing the impact on the environment.

# HOW TO PARTICIPATE

We are so happy that you have taken the time to make your event more sustainable! To be eligible for the Sustainable Event Certificate, you must complete the following;

## 1. Collect 20 points from the designated points system

To obtain certification, you must collect a minimum of 20 points, however we encourage you to obtain as many as possible!

## 2. Submit your application

In your email application to the Internal Manager of Environmental Sustainability ([ces.internal@ams.queensu.ca](mailto:ces.internal@ams.queensu.ca)), you will be required to fill in the Excel sheet provided, as well as attach a pdf document of collated proof, organized by the SEC criteria.

### Examples of proof:

- Receipts: Purchases from local food vendors or suppliers
- Communications: Agreements (via email if possible) between yourself and vendors/venues, such as regarding the use of reusable cutlery.
- Itinerary/ promotion: Please include your paperless graphics, promotion, and event itinerary if applicable.
- Venue: Please inform us of where the event will be held, and if it has refillable water stations and easily accessible disposal sites. Please also inform us if you will have labeled compost and recycling bins.

## 3. Next steps

Thank you for your submission! The Internal Manager of Environmental Sustainability may reach out to you if they require more information or clarification about certain aspects of your submission. Once approved,



you will receive a digital Sustainable Event Certificate, which you can use as promotion for your event as well as for collecting discounts from participating vendors.

#### 4. Final note

Because our points system is heavily reliant on a trust system, we may ask for supporting documentation (such as photos of your event and certain points you have collected) to check that you have truthfully achieved all your points. If your submission includes points that you did not actually achieve or include, you may be ineligible to participate in this certification and its rewards in the future. However, we acknowledge that changes occur rapidly, and if you intended to achieve points in your submission but were unable to due to unforeseen circumstances, please let us know! We will try our best to accommodate these changes as well as support you through this. Because of this, we recommend collecting as many points as possible just in case something falls through or does not go as planned!

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Sustainable event guide and certification process! We appreciate the time you have taken to make your event more sustainable.

**One time use per event.**