

# Best Practices for Displays

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## Vision Statement

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BICT is committed to minimizing the environmental impact of campus events through:

- Decreasing the amount of solid waste produced by the event;
- Reducing energy and water consumption at the event;
- Minimizing or off-setting harmful emissions resulting from vehicular transportation and energy consumption associated with the event;
- Disposing of solid and liquid waste in an environmentally responsible manner;
- Eliminating the use of harmful chemicals at or for the event;
- Contributing positively to the community; and
- Increasing the event experience for visitors, exhibitors and organizers.

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## Aspects of displays to consider

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- Display itself (aesthetic improvements to display space, display objects, takeaway objects & information)
- Transportation of display items to venue
- Information distribution to audience about display event

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## Detailed Ideas & Strategies

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### Specific Objectives / Strategies

- Minimize demand for raw materials, and generally materials that eventually result in waste
- Decrease energy consumption
- Decrease pollution from use of toxic substances
  - E.g., Use *locally sourced* products with *post-consumer recycled content*, containing *no toxic substances*
  - E.g., Minimize waste through reuse, recycling, composting and avoiding disposable items

### Displays / Exhibits

- Incorporate a display as a permanent improvement for the actual venue (e.g., instead of displaying a dual flush toilet, install one in a bathroom stall for visitors to experience, and make appropriate signs to identify it as a display, with instructions on how to use it and with information about water and energy savings; other products – install water saving faucet, programmable thermostat, motion sensor for lighting, a landscaping feature or a green roof feature outdoors of the venue or in the community so it can be left in-place)
- Aesthetic improvements to display space:
  - Use reusable table cloths or table draping
  - Use light-emitting diode (LED) lights or compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) (and turn lights off when not needed, or have them on motion sensors)
  - Bring live plant decorations from other areas at the venue for the event and return after the event
- Choose decorations and display materials that can be re-used
- Inquire at local schools, charitable organizations or other community centres prior to the event if they would like to receive used decorations or other unwanted materials

- Specific ideas for physical display objects: (MATERIALS USAGE IMPACT REDUCTION – could include handouts, giveaways in addition to displays themselves)
  - Make display objects either a) durable for re-use or functionality as a whole object, or b) durable and dismantable for re-use (re-purposing), or c) transitional/re-absorbable through biodegradation or recycling (ZERO WASTE)
  - Use previously used materials (re-purposed), or highest recycled content
  - Use locally available materials with locally available re-purposing or composting/recycling options
  - Use non-toxic materials and materials that don't use toxic substances in their manufacture
  - Use of certified wood products, post-consumer chlorine-free recycled paper (certified, e.g., EcoLogo® or tree-free plant fibre paper), vegetable/soy-based inks, water-based non-toxic markers, no- or low-VOC paint, products containing waste by-products (e.g., EcoSmart (fly ash) concrete)
  - Avoid / Don't use VOCs, PVC, materials containing toxic substances, plastics, Styrofoam
  - Consult with a Habitat for Humanity ReStore or other building and construction materials company for sourcing and returning materials  
([http://vancouverhabitat.bc.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=153](http://vancouverhabitat.bc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=153))
- Offer one Recycling display booth by the exit where visitors can drop off unwanted items on the way out, and instruct this booth's staff to return clearly identifiable objects to owners who brought them to the display event for re-use or recycling (by owner!)

### **Organizers & Staff**

- Instruct all staff and display event organizers to enforce best practices by reminding exhibitors and visitors about turning off lights, recycling options (at the exit), etc.
- Ensure clean-up crews are trained to keep recyclable and reusable items out of the garbage

### **Name Tags**

- Re-use nametag holders
- Print nametags following best practices for "paper handouts"
- Print on the back of nametags clear instructions for returning nametag holders on the way out (e.g., provide re-use collection bins at the Recycling display booth by the exit)

### **Signage**

- Re-use from previous events or rent signage
- If purchasing, make signage durable, generic and undated so that it can be re-used at other events (e.g., plastic signs with removable letters or Velcro attachable sponsor logos)
- Mount signage on recycled and reusable cardboard (not plastic or foam board)
- Project sponsor recognition logos on the wall using PowerPoint rather than printing logos on foam board
- Use signs to educate and remind participants of sustainability objectives and preferred behaviours (including locations of compost and recycling facilities)
- Use small prompts to turn off lights (at light switches), to re-use dishes (at fresh dish table), to recycle unwanted materials at the Recycling display booth by the exit (prompt at distribution point and at recycling booth), naturally using best practices to make the prompts

### **Information "Handouts"**

- Use websites and electronic devices to distribute information "handouts" instead of paper (PAPER REDUCTION BUT SEE NOTE)
- Advise participants to bring their own USB memory sticks (USB flash drives) or PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) for downloading desired "handout" information (e.g., fact sheets) and provide a computer station in the event room where exhibitors can upload information and visitors can download it

- Offer information materials (e.g., fact sheets) on reusable electronic media (e.g., USB memory sticks) for a small fee
- Provide a sign-up sheet or collect business cards for subsequent information delivery (by email, to provide website links, or for paper copies in the mail for those who respond to email inquiry that they still want the hard-copy material)
- For paper handouts:
  - Limit “handout” information to bare essentials and use post-card or business-card size handouts referring visitors to more information on website
  - Use double-sided post-consumer recycled paper (certified, EcoLogo®, paper that contains at least 30% post-consumer waste and is 70% elemental chlorine free, but note, there are paper products available that use 100% post-consumer waste)
  - Use vegetable/soy-based inks
  - Minimize ink usage for printed materials by limiting colour intensive graphics, avoid excessive ink coverage (i.e., solid blocks of ink), and minimize colour printing in favour of black and white printing
  - Avoid glossy paper

### **Giveaways / Exhibitor Gifts**

- Made of recycled content or scrap materials such as a material made from recycled pop bottles, recycled plastics, old circuit boards, etc.
- Are recyclable
- Made without harmful chemicals, bleaches or dyes
- Make them optional (e.g., don’t assume every visitor will take a bag or a pen)
- Are reusable (e.g., don’t put a date on promotional material if item is not time-sensitive, so that if it is not used this time, it can be used the next time)
- Are consumable (such as food/chocolate or candles)
- Are original and “carbon neutral” (e.g., certificate showing that a certain amount of carbon generated (through travel, heating, lights, etc.) has been offset through the planting (“afforestation”) of trees in their name)
- Are relevant and useful for visitors (e.g., does it truly represent the spirit of your “product or idea”, will it have sufficient number of uses that a wide variety of visitors will find a use for it)
- Include with the giveaway a description of the environmental merits of each gift
- Avoid over-packaging

### **Exhibitors**

- Select only exhibitors who have socially and environmentally friendly products, ideas or projects to display (Note: they should naturally have a reduced display footprint, but this is not guaranteed!)
- Select projects for display that give back to the community either directly (through subject matter of the display, or indirectly by involving the local community in the construction / preparation of the project and/or by donating to the community display objects that exhibitors don’t want to keep but that the community would like to have)
- Instruct exhibitors that they should bring only what they need for the event, and take away what they don’t distribute at the event (including items returned to the Recycling display booth by the exit)
- Augment the exhibitor “check-in” system by developing a “check-out” system that will remind exhibitors to recycle any materials not being taken back or to let event organizers know that any materials left can be recycled
- Recognition of “Green” Exhibitors
  - Develop criteria to recognize “green” exhibitors
  - Send to criteria to exhibitors in advance
  - Give exhibitors a checklist for self-evaluation of recycling efforts (See sample **Display Presenter “Green” Checklist**)
  - Ask visitors to evaluate the sustainability aspects of the event (**Develop a Visitor Evaluation Checklist**), and give relevant feedback to exhibitors

- Recognize exhibitors who meet a required level of “green” in post-event materials and at subsequent event(s) (special notation on their display signage)

### **Visitors / Participants**

- Advise visitors in advance that the display event will be “green”
- Include in event advertisement the sustainability objectives and solutions that will be provided at the event, and ask visitors and exhibitors for assistance in meeting the objectives
- Ask for visitor RSVP including whether they would like food/drinks, giveaways, and how they would like to take back information (paper or on USB memory stick), and inform exhibitors in advance of the expected number of visitors to help them plan for an appropriate number of handouts/giveaways to bring
- When mailing event notices, make materials self-mailers (i.e., post-card type), possibly with perforated line to allow participant to retain stub with event info and send in just the RSVP portion
- Ask visitors to bring their own pens and paper (provide just some pens and paper on-site for those who forget)
- Evaluation or feedback forms – refer to website vs. paper on the spot, or have one computer station at event for typing in feedback

### **Food Service at Display Events**

- Serve food that is seasonal, local, fair trade, organic, predominantly vegetarian and fresh (not pre-packaged)
- Serve food and beverages on reusable dishes and utensils
- If using single-use dishes, use biodegradable / compostable dishes (NO Styrofoam), unbleached, post-consumer waste napkins, and biodegradable plastic utensils
- Serve water and juice from pitchers instead of individual containers, and use linen napkins
- Offer condiments in bulk rather than individually wrapped, and ensure any packaging is recyclable and recycled
- Donate leftover food
- Compost food scraps and paper plates, cups napkins (if using single-use dishes)
- Provide easily identifiable and easy to locate compost, recycling and (small) garbage containers with diagram instructions for what goes and what doesn't go into each
- Make prior arrangements with a local organic (urban) farmer or set up / use on-site composting facility
- Make an arrangement with IBR (International Bio Recovery) in North Vancouver, [www.ibrcorp.com](http://www.ibrcorp.com), for pickup of food scraps and single-use paper dishes and napkins (commingled), where they digest it (using the EATAD, enhanced autogenous thermophilic aerobic digestion, technology) to make soil fertility products (natural fertilizer (Ref. Used by Environment Canada at 401 Burrard in Vancouver)

### **Transportation Strategies**

- Encourage participants to take transit (by giving transit directions), travel by bike (by indicating bicycle facilities at destination and link to bike route map), or car pool
- Provide drivers with tips on efficient use of vehicles (e.g., turn engines off while parked)
- Where possible, organize natural gas powered or low emission fuel vehicles (methanol, ethanol, propane) or shuttle buses
- Offset GHG emissions by purchasing carbon credits
- Use re-usable packaging materials for transporting the display components, keep packing containers and filler material when unpacking displays until the end of the event, and re-use to repackage for transporting display contents back
- Offer door prize incentives to visitors for using transit or bike, and advertise this in advance (e.g., door prize draw entries only for those who can produce a valid transit ticket or cycling gear)

### **NOTE:**

- It is widely accepted and quoted that electronic communication is preferred and encouraged over paper-based communication, but no references are provided for evidence that electronic communication is actually more environmentally friendly than paper communication in every situation.

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## References

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- Environment Canada Green Meeting Checklist
- Environment Canada Green Meeting Guide, [http://www.greeninggovernment.gc.ca/F5B1C0BC-741C-4493-B4B7-B0D56BBE6566/Green\\_Meeting\\_Guide\\_07.pdf](http://www.greeninggovernment.gc.ca/F5B1C0BC-741C-4493-B4B7-B0D56BBE6566/Green_Meeting_Guide_07.pdf)
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- Social & Environmental Responsibility Promotional Products, <http://www.fairware.ca/>
- Sierra Club Sustainable Events, <http://www.sierraclub.org/sustainable%5Fconsumption/downloads/sustainable-event.pdf>
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore Directory, [http://www.habitat.org/cd/env/restore\\_detail.aspx?place=43](http://www.habitat.org/cd/env/restore_detail.aspx?place=43)
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