

The Rotary Club of Tucson Verde

A Quick Guide to Reducing Waste at Meetings, Conferences and Events

Thank you for coming to this site. Tucson Verde advocates for green meetings. Rotary clubs are more aware of the importance of climate-friendly ways to run their meetings. This guide will help put those climate-friendly ways into action as club members join for meetings to socialize, plan projects, listen to speakers and enjoy the fellowship. Anything that can be reduced, recycled, reused, or repurposed will contribute to greener and more sustainable meetings. Below are the reasons why.

FOOD WASTE

39% of food ends up unsold or uneaten each year. Its production, transport, storage, preparation, and ultimate disposal produce the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions as nearly 100 coal-fired plants. Food waste in landfills releases methane, a greenhouse gas that is 20-25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. It is the 3rd largest source of human-related methane emissions. What we eat can be destructive to our environment and health. One mature cow produces 220 pounds of methane gas per year. We should limit our saturated fats to 10 grams per day. One 8-ounce steak contains 20 grams.

PLASTICS

Drinking out of a plastic bottle or cup is dangerous to our health and environment. Plastic water bottles take up to 450 years to decompose. 86% of plastic water bottles end up in the landfill. Only 5% of plastics intended to be recycled are recycled. There are about 13,000 chemicals associated with plastics of which many are hazardous to our health and environment. One bottle of water costs \$1.29 to produce of which \$.0004 is the cost of the water in the bottle. More than 5 trillion plastic pieces weighing over 250 tons are afloat at sea suffocating and starving wildlife.

WATER

It takes 22 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of virgin plastic. It takes 2/3 of a gallon to recycle one pound of plastic. Every single egg needs 53 pounds of water to produce. A pound of cheese requires 382 gallons of water and a pound of butter 665 gallons of water. It takes approximately 1,847 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of beef. It takes 36 ounces to produce one 12 ounce plastic water bottle.

Fact: The City of Tucson pays an average of \$30,000 a month for contaminated recycling.

SUSTAINABILITY

- When possible, purchase organic and fair-trade coffee. Cows are responsible for 18% of methane gas emissions. One mature cow produces an average of 220 lbs. of methane per year. Help the planet by complementing meals with vegetarian and vegan dishes.
- Forecast the head count to ensure appropriate ordering and serving portions to avoid unnecessary food waste. Encourage attendees to bring a container from home for leftovers.
- Use reusable or compostable serviceware. Or as an option, have your participants bring their own utensils and plates.
- Serve finger food to reduce or eliminate the need for utensils.
- Serve buffet style vs individually wrapped meals.
- Have attendees bring their own hot or cold reusable mug or bottle.
- Choose bulk condiments over individually packaged ketchup, cream, sugar, salt, or pepper.
- Use cloth tablecloths and napkins. Or have your participants bring their own napkin or purchase cloth napkins for your club.
- Have well-marked containers for trash, aluminum, glass, plastic, paper etc. If it is a large event, have volunteers stationed at each disposal site to help participants sort their trash.
- After a meeting, provide a drop off point near the exits for unwanted materials such as name tag holders, maps, programs, and giveaways to be reused.

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PINS, BADGES, VENDOR GIVEAWAYS, FLYERS, AWARDS

Inform vendors, exhibitors, and presenters that your event or meeting is aiming for zero waste meetings and events. Eliminate wasteful use of paper flyers, plastic bags, logo giveaways. Instead think of reusable items or things people will use; thumb drives, cloth bags, ceramic mugs, water bottles, and gift cards (which can be digital). Make sure your audience knows they do not have to take it if they won't use it. Awards are very nice but eventually become trash. Make sure pins, awards, and badges can be either used over again or recycled. Consider acknowledging members with gift certificates, membership to a favorite nonprofit etc.

FORGET THE PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES AND CUPS

An easy way to reduce waste is to eliminate the single use disposable water bottles and plastic cups at meetings. Encourage everyone to bring their own hot and cold reusable beverage container. Provide refillable water stations. Drinking out of a plastic bottle or cup is dangerous to our health and environment due to the many chemicals associated with plastics. Did you know that plastic water bottles take up to 450 years to decompose? 86% of plastic water bottles end up in the landfill.

USE LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES

When you support locally owned businesses, 67-cents of every dollar stays in our community and recirculates to create jobs and build a self-reliant economy. Only 17 cents stays in the community from large box stores and chains. Additionally, unlike those big box stores and chains, you can easily work with your locally owned caterers and restaurants to reduce the use of disposables.

MORE IDEAS:

- Carpool
- Alternate meetings with Zoom or Google Meets to reduce gas and time.
- Go digital for invitations and communications.
- Create an environment in your home that supports recycling. Ditch the paper towels for absorbent washable towels. Use cloth napkins. Compost your food. Check out Food Cycle. www.foodcyclers.com
- Get your Hefty Bags and start recycling hard to recycle plastics and Styrofoam. Request a starter kit from the Hefty Renew Program. www.hefty.com/hefty-renew-starter-kit-for-drop-off

Thank you for your interest in protecting our environment!