

SUSTAINABLE SWAG GUIDE



This guide was developed in collaboration between IU Indianapolis Staff Council Sustainability Committee and IU Sustainability to promote sustainable practices in swag procurement. This guide is intended to be used by all IU staff, faculty, and students when designing and purchasing swag.

When swag is thoughtfully chosen, it can be a big hit and leave a lasting impression. On the other hand, if it is not relevant or useful, it might end up forgotten or discarded or even detracting from your event's message. Consider the following questions as you choose swag to ensure that it is sustainable, aligns with the values and needs of the IU community, and enhances your event.

I. NECESSITY

Assess need: What need is being met by providing swag? Would the event be successful without it? Does every individual need swag or could a few more valuable items or experiences be given away?

★ ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Donation to charity
- Event tickets
- State Park day pass
- E-books
- Online subscriptions
- Experiences

II. ADDED VALUE

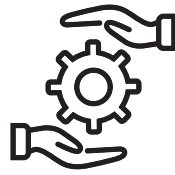
- **Value addition:** What value does the item provide to your event?
- **Message alignment:** Does the swag represent or reinforce an important message in your event?

III. REUSABILITY



Durability

Is the swag item made from high quality materials?



Practicality

Would the swag unnecessarily duplicate items that recipients most likely already have? Could the item be used in daily life?



Versatility

Does the swag have dates or specific event details that would keep you from reusing left-over items for another event?



Notability

Is the swag unique and will it help make your event and brand more memorable?

IV. WASTE REDUCTION

Avoid single-use items: Can this item be used more than once?

Minimal and eco-friendly packaging: Is the item wrapped in unnecessary packaging? Can the packaging be recycled or composted?

Reused or upcycled swag: Can items be sourced from existing inventory or repurposed from leftover items to minimize the need for new purchases?

V. SUSTAINABLE AND ETHICAL PRACTICES

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

- **Eco-friendly materials:** Is there an option to buy the item made from recycled, organic or sustainable materials?
- **Responsible printing:** Can items be printed using recycled paper, non-dated designs, or other eco-friendly printing practices?



★ ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Stickers
- Plants or seed packets
- Consumables
- Reusable straws
- Reusable sporks

ETHICAL PRODUCTION

- **Eco-friendly production:** Are the items produced in an environmentally friendly way, with consideration for the energy used in manufacturing and the working conditions of laborers?
- **Local sourcing:** Does the item support the local economy and reduce the carbon footprint needed for transportation?

VI. VENDOR GUIDELINES

Sustainable vendors: Can you get this item from a vendor or supplier with the green tree or recycled symbol in the Buy.IU catalog?  • Green  • Recycled

Branded suppliers: When purchasing branded content, have you reviewed the sustainability or eco-friendly sections available through the approved suppliers listed here? <https://go.iu.edu/iu-branded-items-and-apparel>

Other certifications: If you are unable to purchase through Buy.IU, does the item have certifications that verify its ethical production, environmental sustainability, or social responsibility?



SUSTAINABLE SWAG CHECKLIST

- Is providing swag necessary?
- Does swag add value to the participants and your event?
- Are the items likely to be reused by participants?
- Are the items made of sustainable materials?
- Have the items been ethically produced?
- How will you reduce waste when distributing swag?
- Did you use a designated green vendor in Buy.IU?

HEIRARCHY OF SWAG



Nothing!



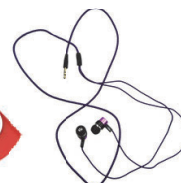
An experience or food



Functional, long lasting, ethical, or local swag



Low quality or wasteful swag



Ensure all swag giveaways adhere to IU's contest, drawing, games, and prizes policy:
<https://policies.iu.edu/policies/fin-acc-640-contests-drawings-games-prizes/index.html>