

Sustainability Fair Guide



Tips and tools for
creating an engaging
school event that
promotes sustainability
through hands-on
educational activities

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Introduction

RUNNING A SUSTAINABILITY FAIR

The intent of this Sustainability Fair Guide is to outline the key components of holding a successful High School Sustainability Fair, while leaving room for creativity and personalization. We offer tools for planning, project management, fundraising, outreach, and fair activities, as well as a series of tips, hints, and suggestions, all of which can be followed at your discretion based on the vision of your fair planning team and the preferences of your school community.

Important Elements

Tables and activities should be centered on Education, Action, and most importantly Fun! A focus on fun will hopefully attract the attendance of those who would not normally be drawn to learning about sustainability and environmental stewardship. Try to integrate fun, engaging activities, giveaways, games, learning, food, and music throughout your fair.

Involve the Community! Reaching out to local sustainable enterprises, non-profits, and green businesses to table at the event will increase the number of engaging activities and tables at the fair and will provide these companies with their own source of local outreach and networking.

Food and Music! Including local food and music entertainment will attract a wider variety of participants and add to the festive atmosphere of the fair.

★ **Tip:** Spring is the traditional time of year for sustainability fairs, most commonly held in April or May around Earth Day. The Sustainability Fair could also be held near the beginning of the school year and involve some harvest, fall-festival themes. The fair is usually best held outside so a winter date is not usually suggested.

Getting Started

We recommend Getting Started at least 3 months in advance of your target Fair date.

BUILDING A TEAM

Sustainability Fairs are most often organized by Green School Leadership Teams, ideally a multi-stakeholder group including students, parents, teachers, and staff from your school community who are interested in decreasing the environmental footprint of your school while developing green career skills. If your school has not yet organized a Green Team, see the SEI Green School Leadership Team Guide for resources on forming a Team.

If you are not yet ready to form a Green School Leadership Team, we recommend starting with a core group of at least 4 committed, reliable students and a faculty advisor. From there recruit additional students, teachers, parents, and staff.

Determine the date and time of your first strategic planning meeting. Be sure to get approval from your administration for the idea of hosting a Sustainability Fair. If possible, make school wide announcements about the Fair and invite interested students to the first meeting both on the PA system and in the school newspaper. Give special attention to recruiting likely participants, for example environmental science classes, clubs, and faculty. Recruit teachers and parents by requesting 5 minutes on the agenda of upcoming staff and PTA meetings.



Tip: Develop a flyer that is designed both to attract new student members of your team and as early promotion of the event. Be sure to get approval from your administration for posting the flyer before distributing and posting around the school.

HOST YOUR FIRST STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

Begin with sharing the purpose of the Sustainability Fair: Education, Action, and most importantly Fun!

Ask the attendees to introduce themselves with their name, grade, and a fun prompt such as:

If you had a time machine that would work only once, what point in the future or in history would you visit?

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

If you were an animal, what would you be and why?

Develop your vision for the fair as a group. Discuss what your ideal Sustainability Fair looks like – What are the key elements? Who will attend and how many people? What are your intended goals for the fair? How do you want it to be set up?

Begin your Strategic Planning meeting by brainstorming the key categories for your Action Plan (See the Action Plan Template below). What are the main things that you need to accomplish as a group between now and your Fair date in order to realize your vision and make this event a success? Examples include: educational activity planning, marketing, fundraising, music, and food. Include a category for general “Project Management” including things like coordinating with your Administration. Review the rest of this guide for additional ideas.

Request a volunteer to record these ideas in your Action Plan on a computer and either use a projector so share these notes in real time, or record the brainstormed ideas on the board as well.

Determine 2-3 target fair dates to bring to your Administration when requesting formal permission to organize and host the Fair. Your team may decide that the best time is during lunch or on the weekend. We suggest that you discuss your options as a team, but that you plan to strategize together with your administration about the best day and time to host the event.

Vote on Team Leadership positions and volunteer for roles (ideas for these roles provided in the Student Roles section).

Agree upon a weekly meeting day, time, and location.

At this first meeting you will likely just start with brainstorming the Categories for your Action Plan. At the next meeting (or if you have time at this meeting) develop a full Action Plan for education/activity tables, volunteer recruitment, acquiring materials, acquiring community partners, and so on, based on the steps provided in this guide. Determine target dates for each fair planning task and assign volunteers. At each meeting add new tasks to your Action Plan and provide one another with updates on existing tasks.

SUSTAINABILITY FAIR PLANNING ROLES

Determine Team Roles at the first or second meeting. Begin by brainstorming key roles, using the suggestions below as a guide. Delegation and allocation of roles is extremely important to balance the workload of members as well as to stay on track with goals by giving each member a specific responsibility for which they are accountable to the Team.

Suggested Roles:

- **Lead Organizer:**
 - In charge of all student volunteers, reservations, relationship with administration and faculty advisors, point person for questions, and lead contact. Coordinates with each Task Team to make sure they are on track, including Student Tabling and Outreach and Marketing team.
- **Operations Manager:**
 - This is a very important role! Consider having two Operations Managers.

- In charge of taking notes during meetings and maintaining the Action Plan. Coordinates with each Task Team to identify materials and partners needed. Maintains a master materials list and partner contact list (see templates below).
- Very important: In charge of lightening the environmental footprint of the Fair itself, including setting up and coordinating waste management systems.
- **Financial Manager:**
 - In charge of working with each Task Team to identify all costs. Tracks funds that come in and go out. Works closely with the Development Team on fundraising. Maintains tracking document that records all partners and donors and what they have donated.
- **Development Team:**
 - In charge of soliciting donations of funds and materials, including table give-aways. Works closely with the Financial Manager and the Student Tabling Team to identify fundraising goals and material donation needs.
- **Student Tabling Team:**
 - Develops tabling ideas and leads the whole group in deciding on table topics and concepts that visitors should take away after visiting a table. Identifies materials for each table and communicates needs to the Financial Manager and Development Team. Identifies Volunteers needed for tabling. Works closely with Volunteer Management Team to train and coordinate Volunteers.
- **Volunteer Management Team:**
 - Identifies all day-of Fair Roles. Recruits, tracks, and coordinates Fair Volunteers. Volunteers may be members of the Planning Team or additional participants recruited just for the day of the Fair. In charge of a Volunteer Tracking document. Works closely with student tabling team to identify Volunteer Roles and to train volunteers.
- **Outreach and Marketing Team:**
 - Responsible for outreach to the student body to ensure a successful turn out rate. Uses a variety of advertising methods: class announcements, flyers, bulletin board postings, and various forms of social media such as Facebook and Instagram.
- **Community Partner, Food, and Music Team:**
 - In charge of soliciting and tracking all outside partners and tracking all group member's contact with partners. Coordinates with Development Team on external communication in order to avoid reaching out to the same community partner for multiple requests. This group can be sub-divided to focus on: Food, Community Tabling Partners, and Music.
- **Faculty Advisor:**
 - Make sure a member of the faculty is present at all planning meetings and is in close communication with the Lead Organizer. The Faculty Advisor is particularly important in securing the support and participation of the administration, teachers, and staff. Before beginning, ask a faculty member to fill this position and make sure to effectively communicate all of the responsibilities that the faculty member will be expected to fulfill.
- **ALL MEMBERS:** Help with outreach and tabling design (under the direction of the Student Tabling Team). Help with staffing the event and coordinating additional volunteers.

MEET WITH ADMINISTRATION

With the help of a Faculty Advisor, set up a meeting with the school administration to gain approval for the fair. It is important that you arrange this meeting well in advance of your intended fair date (several months). Receiving official approval may take more time and steps than you initially predict. Make sure to ask about:

Inviting outside companies and non-profit organizations to table

Bringing outside food vendors to sell food on campus

Maintenance (especially waste maintenance)

Having amplified music

Location

Providing power to the musicians, food vendors, and tables as needed

Dates and times

Can you/should you advertise to invite community members to the event?

Administrative rules and expectations for this event as well as your own

Volunteer Organizing

STAFFING TABLES

Those involved in planning the tables should be committed to staffing the tables for as long as possible at the event, but where extra help and relief in shifts is needed, you must recruit and organize volunteer staff. Recruit volunteers from within the Sustainability Fair planning group. If more volunteers are needed, recruit through student e-mail and announcements. If you are able to, offer volunteers the option of receiving community service hours for their work. This is often a great incentive.

As Volunteers sign up for shifts, make sure to record them in a document such as the example below:

Volunteer Tracking Document Template

Table	Shift	Name	Cell Phone	Email
Ex: Water Conservation	1-3pm	Jane Smith	123-4567	SmithJ@SustainabilityHigh.edu

Before the Event:

Email Volunteers to remind them of their assigned shift time and table one week and also one day before the Fair. Ask that they arrive 15 minutes before their shift to check-in and receive training.

Remind volunteers to bring any necessary personal items (sunscreen, hat, water etc.).

Have someone who was in charge of planning the booth available to instruct the volunteer on how to run any games or activities before the event begins, including:

Accurate sustainability information and action suggestions.

The key learning objective or take-away message for this table.

Frequently asked questions.