



**PRESIDENT'S
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

Sustainable Engagement and Swag Guide

This guide is intended to be a resource for departments, student groups, and organizations within Colorado State University that are purchasing promotional materials (i.e. swag) to engage students, employees, alumni, or community members. CSU continues to work towards the goal of being an environmentally just, zero-waste campus. This means we must challenge ourselves to take into consideration the full life cycle of materials given away at events and programs, as well as the source of the materials. Often, inexpensive single-use plastic objects are selected because they are affordable and easy to find but they often end up in our landfill, or worse, in our environment or waterways.

If you are giving out promotional materials, please consider:

- An experience rather than an item (e.g. a repair station or how-to booth, photo booth, tickets to a show, gift card to a local restaurant or shop, or a behind-the-scenes tour). Experiences can be a bigger draw to your table and studies show that experiences produce longer-lasting impact and memories than physical items.
- Upcycle/Reuse booth (e.g. decorate and plant existing flower pots, gear or clothing swaps, tie-dye old shirts, screen printing existing items like canvas shopping bags or towels).
- Durable and reusable items (e.g. water bottles, sewing or tool kits, cutlery, towels, socks, or pens that are refillable).
- Goods made from recycled, repurposed, compostable, or rapidly renewable materials (like 100% recycled plastic, bamboo, or compostable items).
- Goods that are Fair Trade Certified or from B Corporations (these certifications demonstrate a commitment to social and environmental responsibility).
- Energy-conserving or sustainable items (e.g. LED lights, safety accessories for bikes, seeds or plants, or consumable items like food).

If providing food (including packaged foods), consider choosing:

- Fair Trade, USDA Organic, or other third-party sustainability certifications.
- Locally grown/produced foods and products.
- Vegan or vegetarian options as they tend to have a lower carbon and nitrogen footprint.

Some questions to consider:

- Consider where the materials were made and by whom. *How far will they need to travel? Was child labor used to produce these materials? What kind of packaging does the item come in?*
- Consider the purpose of the material. *Will it promote health (both physical and mental health)? Will it promote thoughtful consumption? Is the item useful or likely to end up at the back of a drawer or in the trash?*
- What is the purpose of your event/program? And what do attendees find valuable? Lots of people pick up items because they are free but they may not find them valuable and freebies often have no connection to the bigger purpose of the event. *Are attendees hoping to learn a specific skill? Are they hoping to connect or network with other attendees? Would a few bigger prizes be more valuable to attendees than lots of freebies?*

To identify vendors:

- For general recommendations visit the PLAN (Post-Landfill Action Network) [Hierarchical Ethical Guide to Swag](#)
- If you'd like to put the CSU logo on your items, visit <https://licensing.colostate.edu> to see a list of CSU licensed vendors. If you have found a sustainable item from a licensed vendor and need brand approval or you have identified a unique item from a non-licensed vendor and need to request an exemption, contact brand@colostate.edu for next steps.
- [SOURCE Article on sustainable swag](#)

Strong engagement through an experience or conversation is often more effective than trinkets, which are often thrown away. Engaged students and employees feel a greater sense of belonging and community!

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