

Environmentally Preferable Guidance

Giveaways and Promotional Materials

The following guidance is issued by the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee to assist with the procurement and purchase of environmentally preferable promotional products and materials. If hosting an event, share this guidance with those tabling at your event. Promotional products and materials are those that are used at events as part of marketing materials and giveaways (e.g., water bottles, reusable bags, pens & pencils, notepads, t-shirts).

*Only **21%** of promotional products and branded items are kept for any length of time. The rest are given to somebody else or thrown away.*

- *2019 Global Ad Impressions Study, Advertising Specialty Institute*

To limit the environmental footprint of state operations and ensure your products stay out of the landfill, **AVOID TRINKETS AND LOW-QUALITY ITEMS** (e.g., keychains, magnets, stress balls, etc.).

Instead, **CHOOSE DESIRABLE, HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCTS** that event participants look forward to using. In addition, the following product-specific guidance will help you identify the sustainable option for your events.

Marketing Materials

Go digital whenever possible or keep a reference copy of your materials at your table. When paper-handouts are necessary,

AVOID

- **Laminated and coated papers** which are not recyclable.

CHOOSE

- Products that contain a minimum of 50% post-consumer recycled content.

Customized Notepads

CHOOSE

- Products that contain a minimum of 50% post-consumer recycled content.

[BISM](#), Maryland's preferred provider for office supplies offers customized notepads that meet these environmental requirements for State of Maryland purchasers.

Reusable Shopping Bags:

Reusable shopping bags are a popular promotional product, but make sure you chose a durable, long-lasting product for your events.

A [2018 lifecycle impact study](#) shows that a **cotton bag needs to be used 7,100 times** to make it an environmentally friendly alternative to a single-use plastic bag. An organic cotton bag needs to be used 20,000 times and a polypropylene bag needs to be used 37 times.

To make sure your reusable bag is good for the environment, use the following material, durability, and strength recommendations to guide your purchasing decisions.

CHOOSE

- Products that contain a minimum of 40% post-consumer recycled content.
- Have a minimum fabric weight not less than 80 GSM.
- Have a minimum lifespan of 125 uses. *One use is equivalent to carrying a minimum of 22 pounds over a distance of at least 175 feet.*
- Hold 22 lbs. for the duration of the above-mentioned lifespan of the bag.
- Have a volume capacity not less than 15 liters.
- Have at least one handle that does not stretch and is fastened to the bag in such a manner that it allows the bag to meet the above-outlined durability and strength standards.

Reusable Water Bottles:

Support public health and the environment when selecting reusable water bottles.

AVOID

- **Plastic water bottles** - typically made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET). According to the [MIT Office of Sustainability](#), PET bottles contain “multiple types of phthalates, which have been seen to affect the reproductive systems of laboratory animals.” In addition, if the bottle is left in warmer temperatures, it can increase the level of leaching from the bottle.

46% of consumers have a more favorable opinion of an advertiser if the promo product they received was environmentally friendly.

- 2020 Global Ad Impressions Study, Advertising Specialty Institute

CHOOSE

- Phenol-free products. Phenol-free includes products that are BPA and BPS free - both linked to endocrine disruption.
- Products which contain a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content.
- Products made of food-grade aluminum, glass, or stainless steel.

Other Promotional Products and Giveaways:

For other promotional products (e.g., pens, pencils, post-it notes, t-shirts, etc.), choose items that meet one of the following criteria:

- Contain a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content.
OR
- 100% compostable; preferably backyard compostable.