



GreenNY

# Greening Giveaways

NEW YORK STATE Department of Environmental Conservation

Promotional items can remind your audience of your message and encourage them to continue to be engaged. However, short-lived giveaways can also have a large environmental impact by increasing demand for petroleum-based plastic and quickly ending up in landfills.

Rethink your strategy on giveaways by following these steps to save money and reduce waste.

## 1. Only Use Giveaways When Necessary

In most instances, a giveaway is not necessary to convey your message, and money spent on giveaway items in the past might be better spent on other communication tools, such as digital media, a social media campaign, or attending more events. Thus, when creating messaging for a program, evaluate if a giveaway is needed to convey the message you want to get to your intended audience.

### Tips to Find Greener Items

Use a **vendor service representative** to help find an item that meets your desired environmental criteria and messaging. Vendor service representatives can often:

- Find items not listed on their website
- Offer better pricing

Consult with other **state agencies** that have purchased items that could support your messaging on the criteria they considered and the availability of such items.

## 2. Collaborate and Right Size Purchases

If you are going to purchase giveaway items, make sure there is collaboration between programs and purchasing staff to determine the correct item to purchase and the number of items you need. This also ensures that everyone involved in the process of purchasing giveaways knows that sustainability is a crucial element of the procurement and that you are purchasing only what is needed.

## 3. Select a Greener Giveaway Item

Follow these tips to select a greener giveaway item:

- Follow existing specifications and guidance when applicable, such as for [reusable bags](#)
- Avoid purchasing items branded for a specific event or date
- Avoid products that are individually wrapped, such as lens cleaners
- Look for more durable versions of products
- Look for items that are recyclable or compostable
- Buy local or domestic whenever possible
- Take the following general ranking of materials into account when considering an item's raw materials:
  - Recycled content is preferable over virgin materials.
  - Readily recyclable materials (ex: metal, glass).
  - Rapidly renewable materials (ex: bamboo, cork).
  - Renewable materials (ex: wood, rubber).
  - Synthetic materials (ex: vinyl, silicon).
  - Plastics: petroleum-based plastics are less preferable than bio-based plastics, such as polylactic acid.

## 4. Use Sustainable Giveaways Effectively and Efficiently

Instead of leaving giveaway items on a table for people to come by and take without engaging with you, keep them hidden from view. When you interact with someone who is particularly engaged, interested in the topic or applicable to your messaging, give them an item to remember the interaction and information shared. Alternatively, giveaways can be used as a reward for providing you with information. For example, have people take a survey or play a game testing their knowledge on action items pertaining to your topic. This information can then be used to target further outreach efforts.