



FCM
MEETINGS & EVENTS

Sustainable Events Handbook

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What is a sustainable event?

Any type of meeting, social, or business gathering that includes a balance between the environment and the resources used, from planning to execution.

The Green Meeting Industry Council says that implementing sustainable event policies provides environmental, economical, and social benefits.

The purpose of a sustainable event is to encourage, recognize and celebrate the voluntary efforts of the organizers to reduce its impact on social, financial and environmental matters.

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Why host a sustainable event?

By now, we are aware of the damage humans have had on our environment. If we don't make a collective effort to reverse it, everyone will be affected. This will require a renewed focus on the environmental effects of our social, cultural, and financial decisions on the planet.

Climate change is the result of humans creating excess emissions of greenhouse gases, specifically carbon dioxide. We're already seeing the consequences in the forms of hurricanes, higher temperatures, flooding, dwindling resources, among many others.

Together, we need to take action and continue to make collective improvements to how we plan and host professional meetings and events in order to mitigate any more dangerous effects to our shared planet.



What does a sustainable event provide?

Socially:

- Spreads the value of sustainability
- Helps local commerce
- Promotes social initiatives
- Creates returns on investment
- Promotes cultural exchange

Organizational:

- Shows your environmental and social responsibility
- Improves public perception
- Improves event organization and management processes
- Supports cultural initiatives



Environmental:

- Mitigates risks to the environment
- Optimizes use of natural resources
- Encourages Sustainable Mobility, Energy Efficiency and Recycling
- Reduces, balances, or eliminates environmental impact and carbon footprint

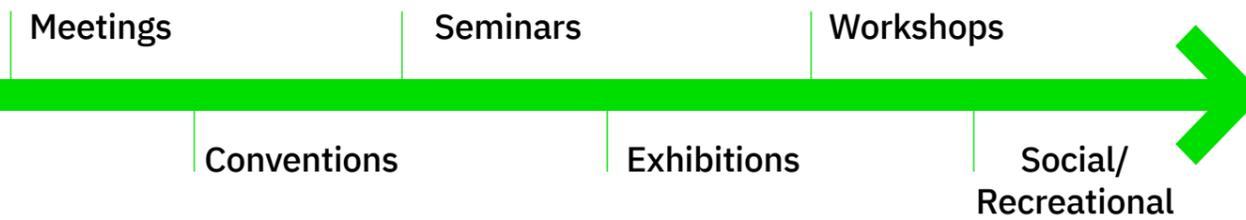
For attendees:

- Meets expectations of sustainability and ethics
- Receives information & training
- Enhances their environmental understanding
- Exposure to new cultural experiences



Sustainable event categories

Sustainable events incorporate environmentally-friendly strategies, from planning to execution. Organizations in countries like United States, Canada, and the UK have already started adopting sustainability into their standard event planning.



Suppliers

- Choose suppliers that help boost the local economy (small businesses, diverse businesses, etc.)
- Suppliers contracted to handle transportation, maintenance, catering, venues, swag, and more should all be assessed for their sustainability practices.

Sustainable Practices Oversight

Attendees are aware of the actions you take to maintain event sustainability. Consider establishing Sustainable Event Committee to oversee the communications with organizers, suppliers, and attendees, and supervise all event practices to ensure everyone stays aligned with the sustainability model.

Transportation

The following measures should be considered when planning out event transportation:

- Choose venues that are within walking distance of where participants are staying
- Identify providers that offer sustainable or mass transportation.
- Include information on public transportation in the event program, so that attendees can find alternate options for transportation.
- Schedule group transportation for speakers or participants to reduce the use of vehicles.
- Encourage participants to carpool in order to reduce CO2 emissions.
- Promote airline initiatives to offset carbon emissions on flights.

Stationary & Supplies

Many types of events will require you to provide writing utensils and materials. This can be a major source of waste at events. When it doubt, remember Reduce, Reuse, & Recycle!

Consider the following when choosing stationary suppliers:

- Use pens and pencils made from biodegradable materials (wood, cardboard, etc.)
- Ask your printing vendors if they used sustainable ink (ex. vegetable-based)
- Recycle paper from previous events.
- Reuse material from past events.
- Use paper that is 100% recycled, acid and chlorine free, and certified environmentally friendly.

Technology

- Use QR codes instead of handing out flyers
- Use virtual registrations
- Provide on-site registration via tablets and kiosks
- Provide the event agenda digitally via email or apps

Food

Tips for more sustainable catering practices:

- Ask caterers about their organic options and how they manage waste, water, and energy outputs. Emphasize the important of purchasing practices that support the local community.
- Design a menu that uses local suppliers, seasonal foods, and a mostly plant-based menu.

Other considerations:

- Serve beverages in glass or porcelain containers. Avoid the use of Styrofoam or PET.
- Choose a supplier that has a solid waste management program.
- Use 100% natural and fresh products.
- Serve organic or seasonal products.
- Donate leftovers from catering services to food banks or people in need.

Energy & Climate Mitigation

- Avoid running A/C when the venue is empty
- Rely on natural lighting where possible
- Unplug appliances that are not in use
- Verify with the venue how they manage their electric output and measure energy consumption

Waste

Provide containers specific to common types of waste (organic, inorganic, paper, glass, plastic, etc.) and make sure they are readily available throughout the venue. Make sure you send recyclable waste to companies that will reuse it effectively.

Tips for Managing Water Waste

Water, H₂O, *agua*. No matter what you call it, we all know how essential it is to our everyday lives. It's also easy to forget how often this precious resource is wasted during corporate events and travel.

When sourcing venues for your next corporate event, meetings & event planners should make sure to ask hotel management about what policies, procedures, and plumbing infrastructures they have in place to monitor water consumption and minimize waste. There are also steps meeting & event planners can take to ensure water waste is minimized during an event, outside of what the hotel/venue already has in place. The truth is, it is everyone's responsibility to work together to ensure water waste is greatly minimized, or at best, eliminated, at your corporate events.

One leaky faucet
can waste more than
3000
gallons of water per year

Methods for managing water waste at venues

The effort a venue puts into the maintenance of their plumbing and water filtration and storage systems is critical to managing water waste and quality at your event. Other systems, like air conditioning, also can affect water waste and are often overlooked. When booking venues, ask management for inspection reports and records of their water and energy outputs, such as their utility bills. Ask management how often they do thorough reviews of their systems, and how often they do surface-level plumbing inspections – according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), one leaky faucet can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water per year!

Take time to ask venue management about any other sustainable measures they take to minimize water waste. Modern sustainable hotels have started implementing rainwater harvesting systems to help with property irrigation, culinary purposes, and sanitary use. Have they installed low-consumption systems, like toilets with low-capacity tanks or flow aerators in faucets and showerheads?

Water waste management tips for meetings & events planners

There are many simple and practical steps you can take to manage water waste at your event without disrupting your attendees' comfort or experience.

- Implement a “no disposable plastic water bottle” policy and provide every attendee with a reusable water bottle. This will require coordination with the venue to ensure there are ample refill stations with filtered water available.
- If your event is catered, instruct staff how on much water or ice to use. Simple steps like indicating fill lines for glasses or sinks or limiting the amount of ice cubes per drink are small steps that add up.
- Provide attendees with informational pamphlets in their rooms that give tips for managing water waste, such as not requesting new sheets and towels every day, taking shorter showers, turning off the faucet when brushing their teeth, etc.

Communication

Communicating the ‘why’ behind your sustainable events policies displays your values to your attendees, leading to an increase in awareness about the importance of sustainability.

Before the event, share with employees, organizers, and attendees all the things you’ve done to create a more sustainable event and why it matters to your organization and the planet.

Internal communication

- Let your teams know why you are adopting sustainable event policies and get early buy-in.
- Inform employees and in-house attendees of the specific sustainability measures you are implementing for each event.

External communication

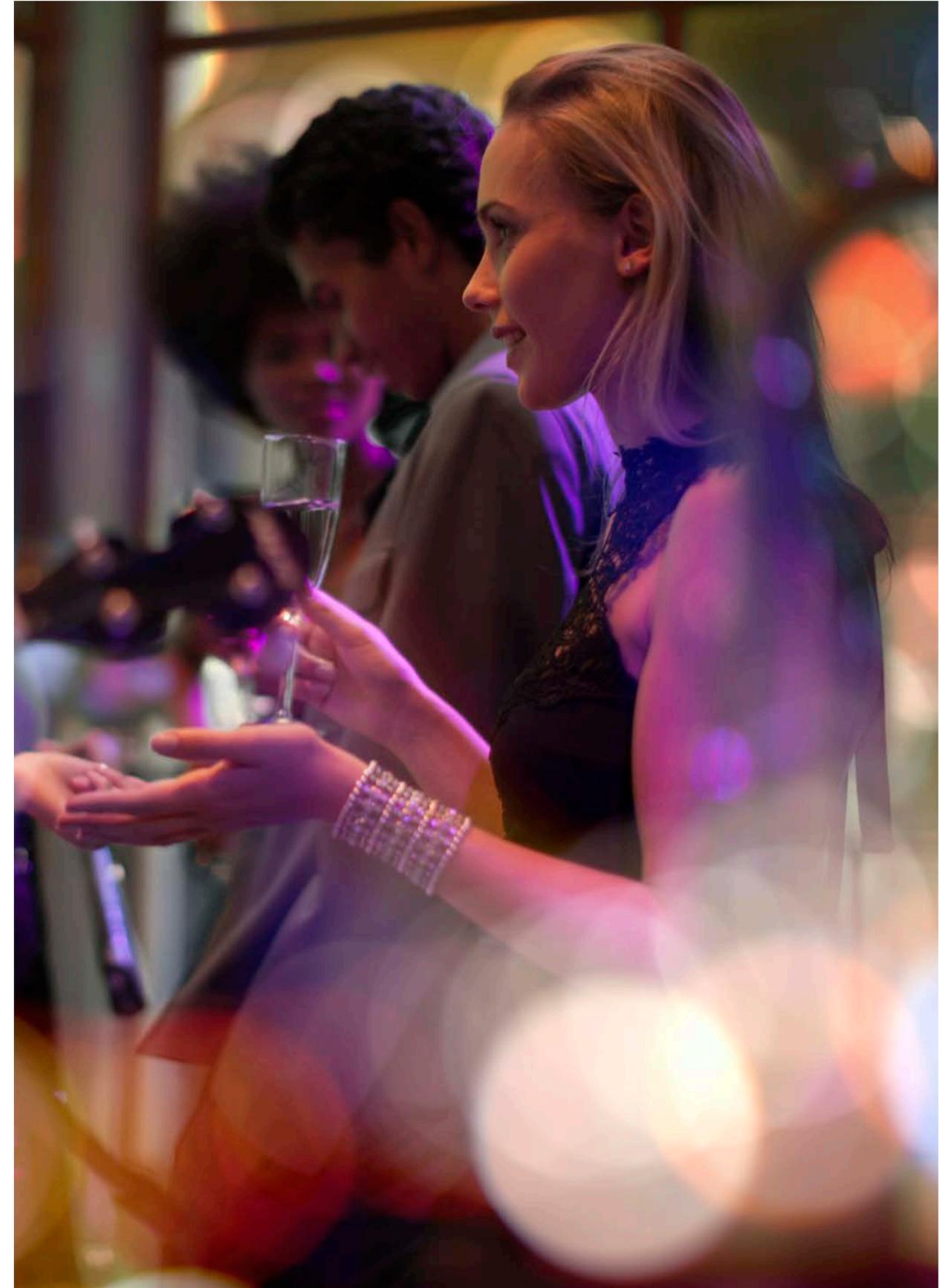
- Brief guests on sustainability issues and their importance.
- Notify suppliers of your sustainability requirements

Tips to communicate sustainability initiatives

- Let attendees know before the event of any/all sustainable event policies you’re implementing
- Share important information with vendors, attendees, and speakers via email or the cloud to reduce paper waste.
- Use a blog to notify attendees of event updates in a timely manner
- A website, social network or blog should be used for event information.
- Campaign via email for your event, with extra focus on your sustainability efforts.
- Post all relevant information about the event, include agendas, activities, directions, menus, and more online. Make sure they are easy to access and download.
- Highlight through all your major channels (web, social, email) the importance of your sustainable event policies and how they are directly benefitting the community and planet.

Additional Tips

- Small actions such as providing free Wi-Fi, reusing prior event materials, decorations, and more all contribute to event sustainability.
- Consider doing your decorating with plants! They look nice and are easy to reuse or replant after an event.



Sustainable Swag

Event goodie bags and swag also provide opportunities for more sustainable measures

Eco-friendly products are also available from suppliers that have eco-certifications. Some eco-friendly gifts that can be handed out during an event are:

- Notebooks made from recycled paper and cardboard
- Pens made of bioplastic or eco-friendly cardboard.
- Reusable water bottle that they can refill during the event and take home
- Bags, totes, and backpacks made of organic cotton, yarn, and other recycled materials.

Post-Event Action Items

- Document all of the sustainable measures taken at the event and calculate their cost and impact on the overall event
- Capture images of all measures performed.
- Showcase the sustainable suppliers you worked with and establish future partnerships
- Continue to refine and improve upon your event sustainability practices and update your processes and procedures accordingly.



Sustainability considerations for bookings

Confirm whether the hotel(s) you're booking have sustainability certifications. A sustainability certification will ensure that the hotel(s) adhere to certain eco-friendly practices:

Maintain eco-friendly facilities

An eco-efficient building that is built with and powered by environmentally friendly materials helps reduce its environmental impact. Monitoring energy consumption, recycling, and using sustainable products (notebooks, upcycled bedding, etc.) and avoiding single-use plastics and non-biodegradable products all make for a greener hotel experience.

Reduce energy and water waste

Hotels that use solar, wind, or waterpower are always the best option when it comes to sustainable accommodation. Water waste is also reduced by faucets and water bottle refill stations that shut off automatically.

Promote responsible tourism

Responsible tourism is more than a trend – a serious commitment to sustainability creates a balanced relationship between the hotel and the community. Hotels, and businesses in general, that raise awareness about sustainable practices can make an impact on the industry and with clients, guests, and the community. When done right, sustainable practices generate added value to hotels, which reinforces a positive reputation and generates brand loyalty.

Flying with sustainability in mind

We know that every flight we take leaves a significant carbon footprint on the environment. Air travel represents between 2% and 3% of all global emissions. Airplanes are responsible for emissions that contribute to the greenhouse effect, a side-effect that indirectly causes global warming.

To reduce their carbon footprints, many airlines have sustainability programs in place to further reduce CO2 emissions, such as carbon off-setting, building solar panels, and conducting research into developing electric planes.

When booking your flights, make note of the carbon footprint and switch to a more sustainable option if possible. Sometimes this may mean booking a rail trip or a rental car. These small actions can make a huge difference in combating the effects of human activity on the planet.



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