

Sustainable Meetings Checklist

A Sustainable Event balances the 3 Ps: People, Planet, & Prosperity:

People (Social responsibilities) such as fair use of human resources and a healthy and safe workplace for all involved, respecting human rights, complying with international labor rights standards, inclusion of minorities, respecting diversity, attention to equal opportunities, sensitivity to cultural or religious groups encouraging involvement of the local community, ensuring accessibility to the event, tracking product supply chains to ensure ethical production and fair trade agreements, sourcing goods and services locally and employing local people, etc.

Planet (Environmental responsibilities) such as low-emission transport and mobility, waste reduction, reuse and recycling, water and energy efficiency, exclusion of dangerous and hazardous substances and material, climate targets, etc.

Prosperity (Economic responsibility) such as savings through increased efficiency, avoidance of corruption, sensible and transparent public procurement, quality of goods, boosting innovation, job creation, profitability, responsible accounting, sustainable growth, etc.

Sustainable events should:

- be an accessible and inclusive setting for all
- be a safe and secure atmosphere
- have minimal negative impacts on the environment and the community
- encourage healthy living
- promote responsible sources
- leave a positive legacy
- encourage more sustainable behavior

An event can be called “sustainable” if all the following criteria have been fulfilled:

1. Efforts are made to reduce event emissions of greenhouse gases and support off-setting of unavoidable emissions.
2. Procedures are implemented to reduce the consumption of water, energy, materials and other resources.
3. Measures are in place to reduce the generation of waste and to reuse, recycle and/or repurpose unavoidable waste.
4. When purchasing goods and services, factor into the purchasing process the environmental and social impacts of the lifecycle of those goods and services. Prioritize locally sourced goods and services.
5. Social principles are applied to reduce damage to ensure accessibility, inclusion and well-being of all participants and staff.
6. Measures are taken to foster economic, social and environmental benefits for the local community, and minimize disruption.

7. Efforts are made to increase awareness of, inform, and involve relevant stakeholders, including participants, the workforce, local hosts, regional and national authorities, sponsors, civil society groups, NGOs, businesses and technical experts, in order to comply with and support the principles stated above.
8. A reporting system is put in place that allows for the communication, assessment and evaluation of sustainable processes, initiatives and results.

Benefits of Organizing a Sustainable Meeting or Event

Financial advantages. Conserving energy, reducing waste, purchasing local products and simply consuming less - all can result in money saved. Despite a sometimes higher investment of resources (financial or human) to research new systems or invest in new tools, applying sustainability principles can bring immediate savings (e.g., by printing less material and having less waste to collect). They can also have long-term financial benefits, due to the more efficient use of resources and easier access to credit lines and sponsors.

Positive reputation and improved image. Promoting the fact that you are organizing or hosting a sustainable event will raise the profile of the event, attract participants that are becoming increasingly aware of sustainability issues and potentially engage the media's attention. It may also be appreciated by the general public as well as partners and potential donors.

Social benefits. If planned and implemented carefully, the event can provide benefits to the region by creating jobs, encouraging local investment, involving regional Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and can promote better working conditions and social inclusion. It can also act as a catalyst for encouraging environmental and sustainable best practices across the region, as well as improving the relationship between the organizer and the local community.

Triggering innovation. As an organizer of large, sustainable events, you drive the demand: your request for more sustainable products will both trigger as well as promote the development of innovative technologies and techniques, leading to a more efficient use of resources and the improvement of the delegate experience.

Raising awareness and inspiring change. Your event is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness among your participants, staff and colleagues, service providers, the local community, the wider events community and the general public on the theme of sustainability and sustainable events. Leading by example, you motivate them to take responsible decisions and introduce environmental and social improvements into their own events and organizations.

Sustainable Management Principles

Organizing a sustainable meeting is a process that starts long before the event takes place and continues after its conclusion - make sure you start early and develop your strategy well in advance. In particular, don't forget to:

- Prepare an action plan with clear measurable objectives (key performance indicators), responsibilities, deadlines and appropriate monitoring actions.

- Allocate sufficient resources (time, staff capacity and, to a certain extent, money) – remember, the long-term financial savings and more efficient use of resources will quickly compensate for the initial investment!
- Build a core “sustainability team” with internal staff from the main units or departments involved in the organization of the event and, ideally, representatives from the main stakeholder groups (e.g., sponsors, suppliers, venue, hotel, local community, etc.). If you have limited human resources, make one staff member responsible for implementing the action plan. Take a step-by-step approach: You can organize events with sustainable attributes despite your limitations (e.g., if you have never done it before, or if you have a small team, or if you have limited financial resources). Start gradually, focusing on one or two aspects and, preferably, beginning where tangible and measurable results are quickly seen (e.g., reducing the use of materials or recycling waste). You can then expand your goals in the next event.
- Focus on the areas where you have influence: If you are not responsible for the selection of the venue or of the service providers, your sustainability team can still offer recommendations.
- Develop a communication plan: if you have introduced sustainability into your event planning, promote it! Make sure your participants and other stakeholders are aware and engaged in your sustainable activities – use your communication channels to promote the sustainability of your event and engage those involved.
- Monitor and report: measure the progress of your sustainability activities - to quantify achievements, benchmark weaker areas and set targets and improvements for the future. This can also be used as a marketing and communication tool.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST (Check All that Apply)

Communication

Participant Communication

- Provide advice by email to participants on “sustainable behavior”, explaining what delegates could do before and during the meeting.
- Develop a “sustainable participant” guide/ factsheet and post it on your website and include it in your conference material.
- Reduce, as much as possible, the use of paper in all communications with participants, in favor of electronic communication
- Set up an electronic registration system that allows participants to register as well as submit forms and pictures via email or another web service.
- Encourage participants to offset their carbon emissions created by the trip, unless you plan to do so yourself.
- Provide links to public transport websites – [Park City Transit](#) and [High Valley Transit](#)
- Provide a platform for participants to communicate and organize sharing of cars, buses and/or taxis.
- Share with participants the following list of sustainable behaviors:
 - Train, shared hybrid/electric vehicles, bus or car (if not shared a smaller car is recommended), direct flight in economy class when travelling by plane is necessary.
 - Only print what you need before travelling.
 - Bring your own pen and paper to the meeting.

- Travel by foot, bicycle or public transport as much as possible.
- Stay in one of the recommended hotels, which operate in an environmentally responsible manner
- Turn off any lights, TV, air conditioner or heater when you leave your hotel room for the day.
- If the hotel offers this service, take the energy-saving option of not having sheets and towels changed every day (and make sure it is enforced). If not in place, talk to the hotel managers and inform them of your wishes.
- Recycle your waste: bottles, cans, paper, etc. χ Ensure that the information on your sustainability efforts is provided electronically prior to and after the meeting.
- ❑ Create an online marketing/promotional campaign on the sustainability practices of the event.
- ❑ Make sure that the recommendations to participants about sustainable practices (like recycling signage) are clear, well located and easy to understand for a diverse audience (iconography is often well-suited for this purpose).
- ❑ Set up a stand (e.g., in the exhibition area) to communicate the sustainability aspects of the meeting to participants. Promote it on the website and during the opening session. Make participants feel part of the sustainability process of the event.
- ❑ Incorporate sustainability concepts into the topic of your event.

Stakeholder & Staff Communication

- ❑ Identify key stakeholders and inform them of the event and the sustainability measures undertaken.
- ❑ Plan proper communications campaigns to engage all stakeholders in your sustainability communication strategy and action plan and inform them of all stages of event preparation, through the website, regular pre-event emails, tailored infosheets on how they can contribute.
- ❑ Consult and cooperate with stakeholders (e.g. neighboring landowners, public authorities and emergency services) to reduce environmental impacts such as noise and waste.
- ❑ Involve the media before, during and after the event and ensure that they are informed about the sustainability strategy.
- ❑ Involve stakeholders in competitions that create awareness and require active participation (for example by establishing a special recognition system for partners, sponsors or participants who engage in sustainable practices (e.g., certificates).
- ❑ Provide training programs for staff and service providers.
- ❑ At the beginning of the event (e.g. during the opening plenary) remind both staff and participants that they should follow certain rules to help the sustainability of the event and ensure minimum environmental impacts, including the following measures:
 - Favour the use of daylight – plan the setting of the secretariat in a way that maximizes the use of natural light: e.g., place working stations close to windows or coffee areas with natural light, etc.
 - Turn off lights and equipment and switch off the multi-plug socket when not in use.
 - Favour the use of more energy efficient electronic devices (e.g. laptops instead of PCs).
 - Print and photocopy on both sides, keeping font size to a minimum whilst ensuring readability, and minimize the use of color copies. When designing the corporate image of the event, choose colors that are compatible when printing in black and white (it is preferable to use light colors rather than darker colors).
 - Collect paper that has been used on one side only in collector trays, and reuse for printing and notepaper.

- Ensure that the energy-saving features of all electronic equipment are enabled.
- All waste produced by the secretariat should be collected separately (e.g., paper, plastic, metal, organic). Provide bins for collection.

Social Considerations & Accessibility

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

- ❑ Find out about the special needs of participants during the registration process and consider them in the organization of the event (e.g. access to building and conference area, acoustics appropriate for hearing aid users, Braille printing, sign-language interpreters, child-care services, etc.).
- ❑ Consider the representation of diversity in event literature and among the hosts/ speakers to reflect that of the target audience.
- ❑ Make sure to adhere to legal requirements for employment (e.g., equal opportunities and pay) and health and safety. Aim to employ diverse, local staff.
- ❑ If possible and culturally appropriate, provide signage in multiple languages and favor remote translation options for participants.
- ❑ Favor the use of internationally recognized symbols instead of words on signage, so that they can be understood by different language-speakers.

Well-being

- ❑ Improve the wellbeing of your delegates by minimizing travel, providing plenty of fruit and water, and maximizing natural daylight.
- ❑ Provide an area where participants can relax during the day, especially for those whose hotel is located far from the venue.
- ❑ Try to ensure your event runs on time and schedule plenty of breaks.
- ❑ Promote local attractions and amenities to your delegates to benefit the local economy and educate participants.
- ❑ Organize activities with local non-profits, thus involving the local community and acknowledging the importance of their work in society.
- ❑ It is important to ensure that workers are properly insured, and illegal labor is not used (e.g., to lower the cost of employing a workforce).

Transportation

- ❑ Consider proximity to public transport connections when selecting the venue and hotels, as this has a major bearing on local transportation impacts
- ❑ If public transport is not available, organize a shuttle service or car-share scheme for travel between the hotel, venue and/or point of arrival/departure (railway station, airport).
- ❑ If organizing shared transport is not feasible, ask the hotels to organize joint pick-up of participants.
- ❑ Adjust the start and end time of an event to the public transit schedules and avoiding traffic rush hours.
- ❑ If a bus rental company needs to be hired, select one that operates with hybrid/ electric/alternative fuel fleets and that applies ecological driving practices if possible.
- ❑ Ensure that parking areas for events do not damage the natural environment.
- ❑ Provide walking options by creating safe walking routes with maps between the venue and the hotels.

- Make bicycles available for participants to borrow/rent and ensure that secure parking facilities are provided at the venue and hotels – consider supplementing the cost of [Summit Bike Share](#) for participants and/or staff

Event Materials

Given the scale of goods and services needed for larger events, it is important to make sure to include sustainable procurement considerations in all your purchasing activities:

- Print only necessary material. Send relevant documentation to participants by email beforehand and have either a small number of spare printed copies of documents at the registration desk or printing/copying facilities available for participants at the venue on a request-only basis.
- Any paper used (promotional material, program, signs, etc) should be 100% recycled, with a minimum of 65% of post consumer waste content. If 100% recycled products are not available, try to use paper with as high a percentage of recycled content as possible, or paper derived from legally (and ideally sustainably) harvested forests.
- Participants should be encouraged to keep their conference material until the end of the meeting. Asking them to sign upon receipt of the material can serve as an incentive.
- Print as much as possible locally
- Adopt a generic event brand (e.g., without dates and specific titles) and use it in signage (banners, posters, signs, place cards) so that they can be re-used for the next event.
- Avoid PVC and adhesive signage, as well as signage made with polystyrene, in favor of paper or electronic ones.
- Minimize the use of decorative elements and always choose sustainable decor (e.g., foliage should not be cut flowers, but rather the whole plant). In events that last more than one day, plants should be chosen according to the external conditions where the plant will be placed after the event.
- Avoid decorations that might be related to animal cruelty or endangered species (e.g., fur, rare flowers).
- Consider whether gifts are necessary: you can substitute them with donations for local environmental and/or social causes. Make certain to inform the participants about the charity to which they are contributing.
- If you choose to give out gifts at the events, encourage the purchase of useful giveaways such as travel mugs, aluminum water bottles, USB drives, and other such items that participants can reuse. Consider gifts that convey a green or socially responsible message, such as tree planted in the recipient's name or local artisanal products.
- Participant bags/packs, banners, gifts and other relevant items should be produced locally, using sustainably harvested organic or recycled material, and should be reusable.
- Donate material that cannot be reused at future conferences to local businesses or nonprofit organizations.
- Reusable/recyclable accreditation badges should be provided. Set up a dedicated area for participants to return them and other material that can be reused.
- All waste produced must be collected separately (e.g. paper, plastic, metal, organic).
- Limit the amount of material exhibitors can bring in; charge the exhibitors for the amount of waste they produce that cannot be recycled or re-used, or ask them to take it back themselves.
- Consider hosting a competition or providing a discount for the most sustainable exhibition design.
- Rent furniture instead of purchasing it, whenever possible.

- Be innovative - use fold-up furniture (to make transport easier) and opt for multifunctional, reusable furniture.
- Reduce decorations, carpets and display materials and when necessary, make sure they are made of recycled materials and/or can be reused for future meetings.
- Use packaging that is minimal, reusable and/or recyclable.
- Make an effort to collect and reuse publications discarded by participants.
- Use environmentally-friendly materials in the construction of the base exhibition stands, including legally and sustainably harvested timber and recycled materials. All materials used should be recyclable.

Venues

When selecting a venue, it is extremely important to assess the commitment to sustainability of the venue management beforehand. If a “sustainable venue” is not available, work with the venue managers to make, if not major infrastructural changes, at least some smaller operational improvements, leaving a lasting sustainability legacy for future users.

General

- Provide information to staff and participants about the green aspects of the venue to inform and encourage guest participation.
- Have an environmental/sustainability policy and action plan in place, ideally covering: sustainable procurement, energy saving, catering services, transportation and waste.
- Apply environmental and social considerations in purchasing policy, buying locally-produced products and emphasizing a life-cycle analysis of all products (waste reduction, energy conservation, etc.).
- Have an established program for reporting and addressing health and safety in the workplace.
- Have training courses for staff focused on environmental responsibilities and opportunities.
- Be certified with a recognized sustainable building or another recognized sustainability/ environmental management system (e.g. BREEM, LEED, ISO 14001, EMAS, BS8901 or equivalent).

Accessibility and social inclusion

- Have good access (ideally within walking distance) to the main public transport connections and town center
- Be located near hotels where participants and speakers can stay or even provide accommodation facilities at the venue itself.
- Ensure full accessibility for all, (e.g., access to buildings and stages with ramps of a gradient no steeper than 1:20, acoustics appropriate for hearing aid users and working loop systems in lecture theatres and reception desks).
- Ensure unisex and single-sex accessible toilets on the same level as the main event space.
- Provide a variety of seating space allocation (e.g., space for deaf people to sit near the sign language interpreter, and hearing-aid users to benefit from the use of an induction loop).
- Ensure that elevators are at least 1.4 m long and 1.1 m wide and that they are in working order.

Energy and Water

- It should be possible to regulate the temperature within the building.
- Preference should be given to “bioclimatic” venues: Designed to maximize the use of daylight (rooms, coffee areas, lunch areas and exhibition areas).
- With energy-efficient lighting and other appliances installed.

- With water-saving appliances in kitchens and toilets.
- Supplied with green electricity.
- With green building standards, e.g. high insulation and efficient heating and cooling systems.
- The venue should make use of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind or Renewable Energy Credits (RECs).
- Promote the use of a “green” taxi operator, for situations when a taxi is needed.
- Operate fuel-efficient vehicles. χ 6.1.4.2 Waste Y/N? All waste produced at the venue should be separated (e.g., paper, plastic, metal, organic) at source and sufficient, well marked bins should be provided in both participant and staff areas.
- Where no organic waste collection system is in place, organic waste should be separately collected for composting and/or supplying to farmers for livestock feed.
- The venue should reuse materials or donate them to charities (e.g., used linens or usable food).

Catering

General

- The catering company should be local, have an environmental policy and action plan in place or be willing to follow the core recommendations in the checklist.
- Provide information to staff and participants about the green aspects of the menu to raise awareness of the origin of food and the disposal of leftovers.
- Encourage the use of water-and energy-efficient kitchen appliances (e.g. appliances carrying the ENERGY STAR Ecolabel, the EU energy/water label classification A, or other regional standards).
- Encourage catering companies and food and beverage suppliers to use efficient and low-emission vehicles and to address the efficiency of transportation routes.
- Consider if there are any cultural or religious considerations to be respected when setting menus. (In case of doubt ensure that a vegetarian and a vegan option are always available.)
- Minimize the quantity of meat and dairy products offered, and always offer at least one vegetarian option.
- Make sure that the vegetarian and vegan options are kept separate from the other options and are well labelled.
- Opt for tap water. In all situations, avoid bottled water, choosing instead large dispensers and/or carafes. Make it easy for participants by setting up several water points. If it’s essential to provide pre-packaged water, opt for canned water.
- Use locally grown and non-frozen food and drinks. Menus should reflect the seasonal produce if possible.
- Provide Fair Trade-labelled products (such as coffee, tea, and sugar) as the standard, accepting potentially higher prices. Products should be independently certified as Fair Trade. They should either carry the internationally recognized Fair Trade product label (www.fairtrade.net), or be supplied by a company registered with the WFTO (the World Fair Trade Organization – www.wfto.com).
- Where livestock products are used, purchase only those produced according to high welfare standards and certified as such (e.g., free-range eggs, bio meat).
- Where marine and aquaculture products are offered, these should be caught/ produced using sustainable methods. If available, use products certified with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or a similar label. The WWF has also produced a number of country-specific buying guides: http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/marine/our_solutions/sustainable_fishing/sustainable_seafood/seafood_guides/index.cfm. Another useful resource is www.Seafoodchoices.com.

- Donate surplus edible food to non-profit organizations and/or food banks

Materials and Packaging

- Avoid the use of disposable items by using reusable dishes, cutlery, glassware and linens (i.e. no paper, plastic or polystyrene cups, no paper napkins or table cover, no plastic cutlery, and no disposable doilies).
- Avoid the use of single-use bottles for juice and water. If unavoidable, prioritize drinks packaged in aluminum cans.
- Provide recyclable bottles for participants to refill with drinking water.
- Avoid single-serve containers for food and condiments (e.g., milk, cream, artificial sweeteners, butter, ketchup, vinegar, mustard, jams, salt, pepper, breakfast cereals). Use bulk dispensers or jars for water.
- Packaging should not contain PVC.
- Products should be supplied in reusable or recyclable packaging or alternatively the supplier should take back all packaging and guarantee its recycling or reuse.
- If disposable items are essential, try to ensure they contain a high content of recycled or plant-based material.
- If a composting service is available, consider using compostable material for disposables.
- Inform caterers of the exact number of participants and re-evaluate quantity needed during the meeting to help avoid waste.
- Provide numerous, well-located bins for the separate waste fractions with clear signs/ instructions – particularly in kitchens and in dining areas.
- All waste produced during catering should be collected separately (e.g., paper, plastic, metal, organic).
- Make sure that biodegradable and recyclable items are collected separately to optimize the recycling and composting process.
- Make sure to minimize run-off water and to reuse or dispose of it sustainably.
- Collect oil and fat and provide it to respective users and/or use for fueling.

Accommodations

Management

- Provide to staff a place in guest rooms, information about the green aspects of the hotel to inform and encourage guest participation.
- Have an environmental/sustainability policy and action plan in place, ideally covering: sustainable procurement, energy saving, catering services, transportation and waste.
- Apply environmental and social considerations in its purchasing policy, buying locally produced products and emphasizing a lifecycle analysis of all products (waste reduction, energy conservation, etc.).
- Have an established program for reporting and addressing health and safety issues in the workplace.
- Provide a training course for staff focused on environmental responsibilities and opportunities.
- Be certified with a recognized Ecolabel or another recognized environmental management system: (e.g., Green Key, ISO 14001, EMAS or equivalent, UNGC).

Accessibility

- Be located near public transportation and the conference facilities (preferably within walking distance). Close proximity to social infrastructure (pharmacies, shops) might be an asset.
- Meet guidelines for accessibility and be adapted for people with reduced mobility.
- Operate fuel-efficient vehicles.

Services

- The hotel should provide a Fair Trade coffee option in its coffee service.
- The hotel should use ceramics/glassware for in-room coffee service. If only disposable cups can be provided, they should be locally recyclable.
- The hotel should practice environmentally friendly cleaning. This should ensure that: The venue cleaning staff or private cleaning contractors are trained in environmentally friendly cleaning practices. This training should cover cleaning agents, methods and dosage, equipment and machines used; waste management; and aspects of health, safety and the environment. A record of these training measures should be provided.

Energy and Water

- Guests should have the option of a re-use sheet and towel program to save energy and water used by laundry.
- Guests and staff should be encouraged to reduce water use, turn off lights and other energy-consuming devices and invited to walk instead of taking the elevator – all indicated with clearly visible signs.
- Energy-efficient light-bulbs and systems should be standard, and lighting should be set to the minimum level necessary for comfort, safety and accessibility. The use of natural light and ventilation should be promoted where possible.
- Facilities should be equipped with water saving devices (e.g. tap and shower flow regulators, automatic shut-off of faucets and shower, low-flush and dual-flush toilets).
- Hotel rooms should not be heated above 20°C, or cooled 6°C below the outside temperature.
- Key cards should be linked to energy appliances (e.g. lights and air-conditioning should switch off when people leave the room).
- Lighting systems equipped with motion detectors should be installed.
- Offer and coordinate group pick-up service for participants (carpooling), or promote the use of a “green” taxi operator, when local transport is not an option.
- The building should have an efficient water and electrical system, regularly maintained in order to save energy and reduce long-term costs, which can imply: Good internal insulation so that less energy is wasted through overheated corridors and unoccupied rooms.
- Automatic controls for heating and cooling, with levels set to the minimum necessary for comfort.
- Hot water heaters, pipes and water-using fixtures properly insulated and regularly maintained. χ Curtains and blinds should be manually operable, instead of electrically powered. Otherwise, they should be linked to an intelligent system that controls them in order to maintain a suitable temperature indoors.
- Insulating covers should be installed on all indoor and outdoor swimming pools and hot tubs to reduce both energy and water use (as a result of evaporation).
- The hotel should make use of renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind energy, or RECs
- Rainwater and grey water use should be maximized in the hotel buildings.
- Water use for grounds maintenance should be reduced through conservation measures such as planting drought-tolerant vegetation and mulching.

Waste

- All waste produced by the hotel should be collected separately (e.g. paper, plastic, metal, organic), and sufficiently well-marked bins provided in both guest and staff areas.
- Measures should be taken to reduce paper use: Short forms or computerized systems at check-in/out and for the billing process. Newspapers delivered to rooms only if requested and not wrapped in a plastic bag.

- If used, ensure that paper is printed double-sided.
- Products such as shampoo and soap should be purchased in bulk and provided in refillable dispensers. If not possible, the hotel should instruct housekeeping staff not to replace consumable amenities unless they are empty, except for when new guests arrive.
- Reusable items should be used as much as possible. If disposable items are essential, they should be recyclable and the appropriate recycling systems should be in place.
- Paper products used by the hotel (including fine notepaper, computer paper, tissues, toilet paper, paper towels and paper for guests) should have a high-recycled content (ideally 100%), be totally or elementary chlorine-free (TCF or ECF) and, ideally, carry the approval of a forest-conservation organization.
- Packaging should be avoided or reduced, and when it is needed it should contain a high percentage of recycled content.
- Packaging should not contain PVC.
- Where no organic waste collection system is in place, hotels should separately collect organic waste for composting and/or supplying to farmers for livestock feed.
- Hotels should reuse or donate materials to charities (e.g. linens and edible food).