



Green Meetings: Tips and Resources for Hotels & Planners

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Tips for Planners

Put your environmental expectations in writing.

- Establish an environmental statement or policy for the meeting.
- Include environmental clauses in your rfp's when soliciting proposals.
- Include an environmental clause in all of your contracts – with suppliers, exhibitors, transportation providers, even delegates and speakers.
- Include expectations for measurable results and consequences for non-performance. Or, offer an incentive for complying with agreed-upon Green practices.

Use paperless technology – use less paper in general.

- Communicate regularly via email with event attendees.
- Create a conference web site; offer electronic registration and confirmation.
- Advertise using the web and/or email.
- If extensive program handouts are required, consider providing content on reusable electronic flash drives as an alternative to printed collateral.
- Ask your exhibitors to use as little paper and plastic as possible – and to find creative ways to use less and to use greener products when things are needed.
- If you must print, have all printed materials published on recycled paper, using vegetable-based inks, and on both sides of the page.

Choose an eco-friendly destination near speakers and attendees.

- Sustainable destinations are more likely to have an active sustainability action plan and networks that you can leverage, and are more likely to have recycling, composting and other waste reduction opportunities available to make your job easier.
- To reduce travel (and global warming emissions), choose a host city that's close to as many speakers and attendees as possible.
- Plan ahead - learn about the environmental programs/services offered at your destination and how they can benefit your event.

Choose a Green hotel and conference venue.

- Choose a hotel and venue that has established sustainability measures in place.
- Within the city, choose a venue and hotel that are close to the airport and are within walking distance of each other.
- If local transportation is required, encourage mass transit use. If this is not possible, arrange a shuttle service, and ideally use alternative energy vehicles.
- Work with the hotel and venue to utilize all the eco-friendly options they offer, and co-create Green solutions as you plan and execute the event.

Recycle and compost.

- Ask your hotel and meeting venue to provide visible and accessible reduction, reuse, recycling and composting services for paper, metal, plastic, glass and compost – including recycling bins in guest rooms!
- Always put trash bins, recycling bins and compost bins together – to avoid having non-recyclable waste placed in the recycling bins, and recyclable materials in the trash bins.
- Set benchmarks for reducing waste and materials headed to the landfill, especially plastic and other non-biodegradable materials. Communicate these benchmarks to your vendors, exhibitors, hotel, venue and staff and put them in writing. Track your results.

Eat local and sustainably.

- Include vegetarian meals, and utilize local, seasonal produce for your meals.
- Have your food & beverage service provider use bulk dispensers for sugar, salt, pepper, cream and other condiments.
- Minimize packaging for all food service.
- Minimize or eliminate plastic bottles.

Save energy at your meeting facilities.

- Coordinate with the meeting venue to ensure that energy lights and air conditioning will be turned off when rooms are not in use.

Communicate your Green practices.

- Tell delegates, speakers, your clients and the media about your Green efforts and your measurable impacts. Let them know they are part of the solution!

Tips for Hotels

Be comprehensive and create long-term strategies.

- Develop a comprehensive plan for the entire hotel, including conference rooms/programs, food service and your staff.
- Create short-term Green goals, long-term green goals, benchmarks and tracking mechanisms.

Create an on-site recycling and composting program.

- Capture paper, cardboard, metals, glass, plastics and separate organic materials for composting.
- In all meeting rooms and workrooms, replace trash bins with a set-up of green compost bins, blue recycling bins and black trash (landfill) bins.
- Put recycling bins in all guest rooms.

Reduce excess paper throughout the hotel, including your marketing materials.

- Encourage your staff to print less.
- When marketing to planners, provide a one-sheet with a link to your online brochure – or provide your marketing materials on a DVD or USB flash drive.

- Limit yellow pages – call the yellow page providers for your hotel and ask them to stop sending a yellow page directory for each room. Put a small note in each room advising guests that if they need yellow pages, your concierge will be glad to provide it.
- Provide meeting planners with simple solutions for using less paper for their meetings, such as a dedicated TV channel with conference information and updates, and free wireless.
- Educate and train your staff and salespeople about your recycling program and paper-reduction goals.

Green your food service and restaurants.

- Offer local, seasonal and organic food and vegetarian options.
- Identify farms and other food vendors on your menus.
- Use less packaging for food service, and limit or eliminate plastic water bottles.
- Donate excess food to local food banks.
- Recycle and compost in your kitchens.

Reduce energy and water wherever possible and/or find ways to incorporate renewable energy.

- Some examples:
 - Room keys that turn off the power when guests leave, and turn on the power when they return.
 - Low-flow toilets and showerheads.
 - Retrofit your lighting to minimize energy use.

Communicate your Green programs!

- Consistently communicate your environmental policies internally and externally.
- Engage all venue and related employees, suppliers and staff involved in the event, as well as the media.
- Provide clear and measurable information.
- Be careful to avoid “greenwashing” – providing false, exaggerated or misleading information about your Green practices.

Make it easy for meeting planners to plan a Green meeting.

- Create a menu of Green options – and *quantify the impact*, both environmental impact and cost savings.
- Create and publicize a Green network to support Green meeting planners and their clients. Include local Green vendors, suppliers, restaurants, and excursions.

Train your salespeople.

- Your staff and salespeople are your ambassadors. Their knowledge and enthusiasm are essential to closing deals as your customers seek to incorporate more Green features and practices into their events.
- Explain what your facility is doing to be Greener and engage staff in the Greening process. They'll take part and take pride in the effort – and be effective ambassadors.

Make it special – a reason to have an in-person meeting as opposed to a tele-conference.

- In a recent survey where individuals were asked what their companies are doing to reduce their carbon footprint, the top response (66%) was providing conferencing tools to cutback on travel.

- Let people know why your destination or hotel is special – your environmental policies, the natural beauty and conservation policies for the area, availability of farmers markets and local fresh food, ease and availability of mass transit systems (or bio-fueled busses); commitment of local businesses, etc.

Resources

Green Meetings Industry Council (GMIC)

<http://www.greenmeetings.info/>

BlueGreen Meetings

<http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/>

Green Hotel Association

<http://www.greenhotels.com/>

CERES Green Hotel Initiative

<http://www.ceres.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=761>

EPA Green Meetings and Hotel Initiatives and Standards

http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/pubs/current_init.htm

Meeting Strategies Worldwide

<http://www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com/resources/links/#green>

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