

Sustainable Event Guidelines



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Why Hold a Sustainable Event.....	3
What Does a Sustainable Event Look Like?.....	4
Sustainability Checklists.....	6
Next Steps.....	14
For Further Information.....	15

Introduction

As our Clients become more aware of the positive contributions they can make in holding environmentally friendly meetings, the Vancouver Convention Centre has developed this guide to help event planners organize and hold sustainable meetings and events..

The Vancouver Convention Centre has a strong commitment to economic, environmental and social responsibility. By taking advantage of its existing green facilities and many sustainable programs, the Vancouver Convention Centre is an ideal venue for hosting a sustainable event. Some best practices and unique building features already in place include:

- A “scratch” kitchen specializing in freshly prepared meals using locally produced and grown products and offering locally produced wines from British Columbia’s award-winning wine regions.
- A long-standing and extensive recycling program
- The ability to offer zero-waste events in collaboration with clients and their suppliers
- The West building has received LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. We are the first convention centre in the world to earn the highest LEED® rating.
- A 2.4 hectare living roof contributing to the environmental performance of the expanded building
- A unique marine habitat design built into the foundation of the expanded facility
- Energy management systems to control and reduce energy consumption
- Seawater powered heating/cooling system
- Purchase of green power certificates
- The facility will be carbon neutral by 2010 and is currently able to offer zero-carbon events in collaboration with clients and their suppliers

Sustainability is an on-going process of continuous improvement and The Vancouver Convention Centre looks forward to working with our Clients to maximize the benefits of sustainable meetings and events.

Why Hold a Sustainable Event?

Implementing sustainable practices can reduce the impact of all event activities, while creating an experience that is memorable and enjoyable for everyone involved. Holding a sustainable event has many benefits:

Reduce expenses

Something as simple as reducing paper and using electronic documentation avoids the costs associated with purchasing, printing and distributing event collateral. Several small changes can lead to significant overall cost savings for your event.

Save resources and reduce waste

Eliminating or reducing the use of items such as disposable glass, dishware and napkins saves paper and reduces landfill waste.

Enhance brand and public image

A sustainable event says a lot about the values of your organization. It signals that your organization is aware of environmental impacts and is willing to take action. It also shows that your organization is willing to meet the increasing demands for sustainable options.

Create market opportunity

Experience as a sustainable event planner will keep existing green clients and open the door to new ones.

Showcase environmental technologies and best practices

A sustainable event is an ideal opportunity to get creative and try out cutting edge technologies and practices.

Educate and motivate event participants and employees

Being green not only affects the environment, it also impacts the well-being and experience of everyone involved. Holding a sustainable event may encourage others to implement these same technologies and practices in their own homes and businesses.

Encourage market transformation

As more and more sustainable events are held, the demand for sustainable products and services will increase. This will encourage the development of sustainable industries and may also encourage other related industries to implement these same practices.

Meet and exceed the expectations of event participants

Consumers are beginning to demand green options in all areas of their lives. Many participants may not yet be aware that it is possible and cost effective to implement sustainable practices in a planned event.

And most importantly, HELP SAVE THE PLANET!

What Does a Sustainable Event Look Like?

Overview

It's not always easy to visualize exactly what a sustainable event looks like. Some examples below help to illustrate how sustainability can be incorporated into the major event activities covered in the guide.

Communications and Marketing

Paper consumption can represent significant costs associated with the communications and marketing activities of a planned event. It is often considered a necessary cost of doing business. Yet, when looking at a standard piece of paper, many of us do not consider the true cost of producing it. Conventional paper uses chemicals that produce, along with the paper itself, harsh toxic substances and the living trees used to make the paper provide priceless ecological services. Sustainable communications and marketing practices, such as limiting paper usage or avoiding paper altogether, not only help the environment but also reduce expenditures.

Food and Beverage

The food and beverage menu offers event staff a unique opportunity to showcase local selections. It also provides event participants with the opportunity to indulge in those selections. While this simple practice incorporates the idea of sustainability, it also makes perfect sense and enhances the event; participants from all over the world go to the host city to experience its local culture, not somebody else's. Taking sustainability one step further means eliminating disposable service ware, composting food waste, donating untouched prepared food to shelters and missions, and using non-toxic cleaning products.

Best Practices at the Vancouver Convention Centre

Did you know..... Green food and beverage practices at the Convention Centre recycle approximately 135 – 180 KG of organic food waste per week.

Best Practices at the Vancouver Convention Centre

Did you know..... The Convention Centre has a comprehensive facility-wide recycling program that diverts approximately 180,000 kilograms of materials away from landfills each year.

Event Production

With proper planning, the impact of vendors and cleaning services can be reduced by using sustainable initiatives like creating a no waste policy and using non-toxic cleaning solutions. Even the impacts of energy directly consumed by event participants can be reduced by buying green, renewable power. Plus, sustainable event production manages waste and increases the success of recycling initiatives, which means less garbage in our landfills.

Exhibits and Exhibitors

Depending on the type of planned event, exhibitors can play an important role in the event's overall success, as many participants attend a trade show or convention specifically to see exhibits and interact with exhibitors. Along with interacting with event participants and showcasing their exhibits, exhibitors can also be provided with guidelines that encourage sustainability by reducing waste and using exhibits and collateral made of recycled materials.

Accommodation

When it comes to accommodation for a sustainable event, participants play a larger role than event planners in making their stay a sustainable one. While event planners can select the location of accommodations to reduce any transportation needs, event participants have a responsibility to behave in a sustainable manner by requesting that sheets and towels not be laundered every day, and turning off lights, heating/cooling systems, and electronic devices.

Best Practices at the Vancouver Convention Centre

Did you know..... The Convention Centre is located within walking distance of numerous accommodation providers in downtown Vancouver.

Transportation

Best Practices at the Vancouver Convention Centre

Did you know..... The Convention Centre is at the nexus of mass-transit services, including bus, SeaBus, and SkyTrain.

The impacts of transportation on sustainability can be significant; cars and planes emit carbon dioxide that contributes to climate change, more cars on the road increases gridlock, and travel to/from an event can be a costly component for participants. Fortunately, there are many ways to reduce transportation's impact or eliminate its need altogether using sustainable practices such as purchasing carbon offsets, using mass-transit, and renting a bicycle.

Information Technology

Information technology-related activities might not seem like they would have a big impact at something like a planned event. Personal computers, laptops, projectors, and any other energy-hungry devices, however, can have a big impact on energy consumption. These devices usually stay plugged-in and powered-up for long periods of time. Small changes, such as enabling sleep mode on laptops, posting event materials online, and recycling electronic waste reduce electricity costs and increase your sustainability profile.

Best Practices at the Vancouver Convention Centre

Did you know..... The Convention Centre will arrange web-conferencing for participants that cannot physically attend the event.

Procurement

Procurement is an important activity to consider when planning a sustainable event. Environmentally unfriendly products and services deplete resources and pollute the earth and steps can be taken to avoid using these products and services at your event. Procurement is especially important because it applies to all functions of hosting a sustainable event, from using recycled paper in printed materials to sourcing local, organic food and ingredients.

Checklists & How to Use Them

Now we return to the question of what a sustainable event looks like. This will depend on many factors and no two sustainable events need to look exactly the same. The level of sustainability that an event planner chooses to implement is up to them, and may depend on the incremental costs and convenience of implementing sustainable practices and selecting sustainable product and service providers.

The following section contains a checklist of guidelines created for each event activity. Using these checklists will allow you to determine exactly what your sustainable event will look like.

Communications and Marketing Guidelines

Paper Reduction

- Minimize paper usage by encouraging participants to register online.
- Give preference to electronic documentation over paper or use double-sided copying and printing.
- Provide materials via PDA download or online where possible.
- Format any distribution materials to minimize the amount of printed paper.
- Work with event staff to evaluate past events of a similar scope and size to forecast the amount of materials and handouts needed.

Selecting Recyclable & Recycled Materials

- Use recycled, high (100%) post-consumer content paper where possible.
- Use Forest Stewardship Council certified paper.
- Print materials on an Energy Star certified printer and use vegetable-based inks.
- Limit the use of paper that is difficult to recycle, such as glossy paper, goldenrod, and florescent paper.

Promotional Materials

- Distribute advertising, promotion, and registration materials electronically.
- Request that all banners or place cards are reusable and made from recycled content.
- Give preference to mailing labels that use water-based adhesives.
- Send event confirmations electronically or mail only when requested.
- Limit the number of event program books available on-hand, encouraging participants to access the event program online.

Onsite Event Materials

- Print any event collateral locally rather than printing material and shipping it to the event.
- Reuse plastic name tag holders/lanyards and consider holding a draw to encourage participants to return the tag holder/lanyards.
- Request digital signage over paper signage, or use reusable signage made from recyclable materials.
- Computerize the registration process at the opening of the event.
- Transmit handouts, brochures, and session notes electronically at the end of the event via email and post materials on the website.
- Encourage the exchange of electronic event materials via USB drives.
- Use dry erase white boards instead of paper flip charts.
- Provide pens and notepads only if requested by participants and use pens and notepads with recycled content when requested.
- Ensure that any event sponsors subscribe to the environmental guidelines for promotional materials.

Speaker and Guest Materials

- Encourage speakers/guests to provide electronic copies of handouts and post the materials on the event/organization website, while periodically reminding participants of the website's content.
- When unavoidable, request that speakers/guests subscribe to the environmental guidelines for any promotional materials that must be printed.

Food and Beverage Guidelines

General

- Confirm the guaranteed number of event participants in order to eliminate excessive food waste.

Elimination of Disposable Service Ware

- Give preference to reusable glassware and dishware, including coffee mugs, over disposable dishware.
- Encourage participants to use mugs at water coolers rather than disposable cups.
- Use bio-degradable disposables if disposables are unavoidable.
- Replace plastic/wooden stir sticks with reusable spoons.
- Use cloth napkins, table cloths, or at the very least, compostable napkin.
- Eliminate any additional wasteful usage of glassware/dishware by encouraging participants to drink right out of the can/bottle.

Food Service

- Source locally-grown organic ingredients and in-season vegetables from local farmers.
- Use fairly traded products, particularly fair trade, shade grown, organic coffee, tea, chocolate, and cocoa.
- Avoid bottled water by requesting water served in jugs .
- Avoid excess and throw-away packaging by encouraging suppliers to use re-usable containers.
- Ensure food and beverage packaging is recyclable.
- Give preference to condiments, ingredients, and beverages purchased in bulk.
- Request that all food and beverage condiments are served in bulk containers rather than individual packets.
- Avoid using garnishes or use only edible garnishes.
- Arrange the donation of leftover untouched prepared food to local shelters and/or food kitchens.
- Offer vegetarian meal selections, as vegetables require less energy input compared to meat selections.
- Serve only seafood that was harvested in a responsible manner by asking if the seafood is farmed or fished, how well the operation is managed, and the level of bycatch.

Alcoholic Beverages

- Feature locally sourced alcoholic beverages.
- Give preference to reusable ceramic or cork/wood coasters over disposable paper coasters.
- Replace disposable drink napkins with reusable cloth napkins or compostable alternatives.
- Request alcoholic beverages only from those producers whose packaging and containers can be easily recycled.
- Ensure that all bottles and cans are properly recycled.

Food Composting

- Verify that kitchen waste and prepared food that has been touched is composted.
- Ensure that leftover untouched prepared food is not composted and instead consumed as staff meals in the facility or donated to local food banks, missions, or charities.

Contracts and Suppliers

- Clearly outline and communicate the event's sustainability guidelines to all contractors and suppliers.
- Include all the food & beverage sustainability guidelines in supplier contracts.

Event Production Guidelines

Recycling Initiatives

- Place recycling containers in various easy-to-access areas with adequate signage.
- Arrange for recycling areas to be staffed with advisors that can guide recycling efforts and address any questions/concerns.
- Provide small trash bins at reception areas only if requested, and provide no trash bins if the event's objective is zero-waste.
- Give participants advance notice of the general recycling programs at the event via email or post the information on the event's website.
- Communicate recycling/waste prevention initiatives to event participants at the opening/general sessions and periodically remind participants of the initiatives at intermissions.

Recycling Signage

- Display clear signage indicating the type of recyclable material each container accepts, differentiating from cans, bottles, paper, organics, etc.
- Request digital signage if available, or use paper with recycled content.
- If paper signage is used, follow the same guidelines outlined in *Communications and Marketing*.

Design and Décor

- Request centerpieces and decorations that are organic, such as flowers, or that can be reused for future events.
- If organic centerpieces are used, encourage participants to take the items with them, thereby eliminating waste.
- Request that any other design features or décor items use materials that are both recycled and recyclable.

Food Services Suppliers

- Request that reusable containers are used to transport any items/materials to and from the event.
- Create a no waste policy that places the responsibility of disposing any garbage on the suppliers or vendors.
- Consider charging a fee for excessive waste left at the event.

Cleaning Services

- Ensure housekeeping staff uses only non-toxic, eco-friendly cleaning solutions such as Certified Green Seal products.
- Request that housekeeping staff replace paper cleaning towels with reusable cloth towels.

Energy and Electricity

- Purchase green power (or offset power consumption) during the event and notify participants of the renewably-sourced electricity.
- Make a request to the event facility manager to set the thermostat in the venue to a minimal, but comfortable, temperature in order to decrease energy consumption.

Event Staff

- Communicate the event's sustainability guidelines to staff prior to the beginning of the event.
- Ensure the staff is effectively trained on appropriate environmental behaviour such as sorting recyclables, minimizing waste, and composting organic waste.
- Create a green committee comprised of stakeholders from various parties to oversee the event and monitor the event's sustainability guidelines.
- Develop a reward program that encourages responsible behavior from event participants, staff, and committee members.

Exhibits and Exhibitors Guidelines

Reduced Packaging for Giveaways

- Request that exhibitors not over-package any giveaways; if excessive packaging is used, ensure that exhibitors are held responsible for discarding/recycling the packaging.
- Encourage exhibitors to select giveaways made of recyclable materials or reusable items.

Exhibitor Promotional Materials

- Extend environmental guidelines for communications and marketing materials to the promotional materials of exhibitors.
- Communicate the expected number of participants to exhibitors in order to minimize any additional waste.
- Encourage exhibitors to bring smaller quantities of promotional materials and require that exhibitors offer access to electronic materials on their website as an alternative.

Packaging Materials

- Encourage exhibitors to reuse any boxes or packaging that was used on arrival to the event venue.
- Enforce a pack-in/pack-out policy or zero-waste criteria to ensure exhibitors leave with everything that was brought to the event.
- Discourage exhibitors from using any external chemical substances on-site.

Event Closing Protocol

- Develop check-out procedures that require exhibitors to interact with event staff prior to departure, ensuring that their area is clean and waste-free.
- Enforce fines for exhibitors that leave discarded materials, trash, carpet, or anything that accompanied them to the event.

Recycled-Content in Display Booths and Exhibits

- Encourage exhibitors to use recycled content in the fabrication and assembly of display booths/exhibits.
- Encourage exhibitors to use booths/exhibits that can be reused for future events.

Reward Green Exhibitors

- Reward exhibitors with a "green exhibitor award" at the end of the event, recognizing the exhibitor in front of all participants.

Accommodation Guidelines

General

- Identify any accommodation providers that are certified by an eco-rating program, such as TheGreenKey.
- Highlight any accommodation providers that subscribe to a specific industry environmental code of practice, such as the Tourism of Canada's Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism.
- Request the in-house environmental policies/guidelines of potential accommodation providers and consider eliminating any accommodation providers whose environmental policies/guidelines do not support the event's sustainability guidelines.
- Schedule a site visit with accommodation providers to verify on-site environmental policies.
- Request that the accommodation provider dedicate a channel at the hotel that contains specific information about the event, as well as any important updates.
- Request that hotels change linens and towels every other day unless specifically requested by the guest.

Accommodation Location

- Give preference to hotels within walking distance of the event venue, thereby eliminating the need for transportation and allowing participants to walk from the hotel to the event and back.
- If transportation is unavoidable, consider bundling accommodation and transportation by operating a shuttle from the hotel to the event and back.

Cooperation from Event Participants

- Ask event participants to reuse linen at their hotels rather than use laundry service everyday.
- Remind participants to turn off the lights, television, and air conditioners or heaters when leaving their hotel room for an extended period of time.

Transportation Guidelines

General

- Allow web-conferencing abilities for participants that cannot physically travel to the event.
- Establish an idle-free zone around the event venue.

Low-Impact Air Travel

- Notify event participants of the various airlines that allow passengers to offset their emissions.

Emissions Offsets

- Partner with local offset companies and request them to setup a display booth/exhibit at the event and sell offsets directly to participants.
- Work with offset companies to offer emissions offsets at a discount rate if purchased in bulk.
- Ask a representative from a local offset company to deliver a brief presentation on the importance of offsetting emissions.
- Offer reduced attendance fees to event participants that purchase emissions offsets.

Shuttle to/from the Hotel

- Encourage all participants to travel together to or from the event.
- Work with accommodation providers to develop a schedule of pick-up and drop-off times.

Zero Emission Alternatives

- Partner with local bicycle vendors to arrange bicycle rentals that give participants the option to ride between the hotel and event and explore the city.
- Establish appropriate bicycle storage areas with the facility manager.

Mass-Transit Passes

- For hotels located across town or outside of walking distance, provide participants a bus or mass transit pass and directions on how to travel between the hotel and event.
- Include the cost of a transit pass in the overall fee of attending the event, for delegates who must use transportation to reach the event.

Hybrid Vehicle Rentals

- For participants who require a private vehicle, partner with car rental companies that offer hybrid vehicles.
- Request that hybrid models are on reservation and ready for pick-up before the event.
- Work with parking operators to allocate a certain amount of parking stalls for participants that arrive to the event in a hybrid vehicle.

Hybrid Taxis

- Use taxi companies that have a large hybrid fleet and encourage participants to specifically request hybrid taxis.
- Notify taxi companies of the event prior to the start date and communicate the event's sustainability guidelines.

Car-Pooling

- Encourage car-pooling by dedicating a section of either the event's website or the organization's website that permits local participants and car rental users to make arrangements.
- Work with parking operators to allocate a certain amount of parking stalls for participants that car-pool to the event.

Information Technology Guidelines

Website and Online Content

- Request that the event venue or client organization create a section of its website that contains event materials accessible only by participants or request that the event provides a link on its website to the organization's website.
- Notify and periodically remind participants of the website and its content.

Equipment

- Encourage laptop usage over desktop computers, as laptops typically use less energy than desktops.
- Use liquid crystal display (LCD) monitors instead of cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors.
- Activate sleep mode on any equipment used in the event's production, including projectors, computers in the registration area, and personal computers of participants.
- If purchasing any equipment for the event, give preference to Energy Star products that use less energy.

Recycled Components

- Request that recycled print cartridges are used when printing event-related materials.
- Request that recycled print cartridges contain vegetable-based inks.
- Recycle any electronic waste, such as print cartridges, that is left behind at the end of the event.

Procurement Guidelines

Purchasing or Renting Products/Services from Suppliers.

- Request products certified under established environmental standards, such as the Environmental Choice Program.
- Closely evaluate claims of products that are identified as recyclable, recycled, biodegradable or sustainable.
- Request verification and information from suppliers supporting claims of recycled content, sustainability, and other environmental certifications (e.g. ISO 14001 EMS certification).
- Use local suppliers to reduce the environmental impact of supplies, as local suppliers do not often have the level of emissions associated with importing supplies.
- Give preference to products that are easily reused and/or recycled.
- Request that event-related products are purchased in bulk.

Historical Event Performance

- Evaluate the resource usage of past events of a similar scope and size to anticipate the amount of supplies needed.
- Reduce materials waste by considering the amount of leftover materials from previous events when estimating the amount of materials to purchase.

On-site Materials

- Request that vendors or suppliers take back any non-recyclable materials that were brought to the event.
- Encourage vendors and suppliers to use the event's recycling facilities, while discouraging them from using trash bins.

Next Steps

Now that you have a clearer picture of what a sustainable event can look like, you can decide on what **your** sustainable event will look like. This section describes how to actually host your event and how to work with the Vancouver Convention Centre in implementing your chosen guidelines. With the help of the Convention Centre's team, it's as easy as 1, 2, 3:

1 - PLAN

- Using the checklists provided, select which sustainability guidelines to implement in your event.
- Communicate the identified sustainability objectives and guidelines to your Vancouver Convention Centre Event and Catering Managers. They are well-equipped to handle all your sustainability requests at the Convention Centre.
- Depending on the size of the event, contact either Tourism Vancouver or the accommodation provider directly to inquire about pricing and arrangements for accommodations that meet your sustainability requests.
- If transportation is required, inquire about pricing and coordinate mass-transit needs with Translink, British Columbia's South Coast Transportation Authority, or arrange personal transportation directly.
- After discussing pricing options, finalize the sustainability guidelines that will be implemented during the event.
- Create a communications statement on the selected guidelines and distribute it to event participants and other stakeholders.

2 - DO

- Bring up any additional requests that arise throughout the event with your Event and Catering Managers.
- Incorporate the event's sustainability guidelines into participant communications. This needs to be reiterated at each communication opportunity.
- Work with the Vancouver Convention Centre to measure the impact of any sustainability guidelines that can be measured.

3 - CHECK

- Evaluate the event's sustainability guidelines, identifying successes and any areas that could be improved for next time.
- If any of the selected guidelines were measured, communicate the results to event participants.
- Start planning the next sustainable event at the Vancouver Convention Centre!

For Further Information

Information Source	Title of Work	URL	Brief Description
Concern, Inc	How to Plan a Sustainable Event	http://www.sustainable.org/information/SustainableEvent_2003.pdf	Ideas on how to plan a sustainable event from start to finish.
Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council	International Event Management Standard	http://cthrc.ca/	The IEMS is a comprehensive framework developed by the CTHRC that outlines a preferred method of managing a sustainable event
BSI British Standards	n/a	http://www.bsi-global.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/Industry-Sectors/Environment/BS-8901-case-studies/	BSI British Standards case studies exemplifying proficiency in BS 8901 (specification for a sustainable event) standards.
Convention Industry Council	Convention Industry Council's Green Meetings Report	http://www.conventionindustry.org/projects/green_meetings_report.pdf	Best practices and guidelines for event organizers and event suppliers on running environmentally friendly events and implementing sustainable event policies.
David Suzuki Foundation	How to Host a Sustainable, Carbon Neutral Conference or other Event	http://www.davidsuzuki.org/Climate_Change/What_You_Can_Do/carbon_neutral_events.asp	The David Suzuki Foundation provides guidelines on how to reduce the ecological impact of large events.
Environment Canada – Greening Government	Environment Canada's Green Meeting Guide	http://www.greeninggovernment.gc.ca/F5B1C0BC-741C-4493-B4B7-B0D56BBE6566/Green_Meeting_Guide_07.pdf	The Green Meeting guide identifies major steps for organizing a green event, including checklists of best practices.
Environmental Protection Agency	n/a	http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings	The EPA green meetings site acts as a portal to various sustainable event sources and also includes basic information.
Greenbiz.com	Greening Your Business: A Primer for Smaller Companies	http://www.greenbiz.com/resources/resource/greening-your-business-a-primer-smaller-companies	Biz.com lays a groundwork of initiatives in order to hold a sustainable event with a focus on small companies.
National Recycling Coalition	The National Recycling Coalition's Green Meeting Policy	http://www.fs.fed.us/sustainableoperations/greenteam-toolkit/documents/NationalRecyclingCoalitionGreenMeetingsReference.pdf	The Green Meetings Policy is a handbook of green initiatives that outline the best practices for various event components.
The Icarus Foundation	Green Festivals and Events Guide, a How To...	http://www.theicarusfoundation.com/Images/Greening_Festivals_and_Events.pdf	A detailed "how to" guide on planning and implementing a sustainable event.