

Convention Industry Council's Green Meetings Report



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INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Convention Industry Council's Green Meetings Task Force was charged with creating minimum best practices for event organizers and suppliers to use as guidelines for implementing policies of sustainability. The task force was composed of individuals from the EPA, the Ocean's Blue Foundation, the Society of Incentive Travel Executive's Green Meeting Group, the World Travel Organization, hotels, convention and visitor's bureaus, convention centers, and meeting-planning organizations. The task force members were:

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The results of the Task Force's work are a series of guidelines for event organizers and event suppliers on running environmentally friendly events. Those guidelines are available in this report.

What is a Green Meeting or Event?

A green meeting or event incorporates environmental considerations to minimize its negative impact on the environment.

What are the Benefits of Green Meetings & Events?

- *The Economic Bottom Line – Green Meetings & Events Can Save Money*
Planning and executing a green meeting isn't just about being environmentally responsible, they can have economic benefits for the event organizer. In fact, many of the minimum recommended guidelines in the Green Meetings Report can actually save money. For example, collecting name badge holders for reuse at an event of 1300 attendees can save approximately \$975 for the event organizer.*
- *The Environmental Bottom Line – Green Meetings & Events are Good for the Environment*
Using recycled materials, recycling materials used, reusing items and reducing materials used can significantly lessen the environmental impact an event has. For example, if a five-day event serves 2200 people breaks, breakfasts, lunches and receptions using china instead of plastic disposables, it prevents 1,890 lbs. of plastic from going into a landfill. That's nearly one ton! Another example is by not pre-filling water glasses at banquet tables during three days of served lunches for 2200 attendees; 520 gallons of water can be saved.*

**Information provided by Meeting Strategies Worldwide.*

BEST PRACTICES FOR EVENT SUPPLIERS

The Convention Industry Council's Green Meetings Task Force was charged with creating minimum best practices for event organizers and suppliers to use as guidelines for implementing policies of sustainability. The task force was composed of individuals from the EPA, the Ocean's Blue Foundation, the Society of Incentive Travel Executive's Green Meeting Group, the World Travel Organization, hotels, convention and visitors bureaus, convention centers, and meeting-planning organizations. For more information, visit the Convention Industry Council online at www.conventionindustry.org.



Convention & Visitors Bureaus/Destination Management Companies

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, clients, members and visitors.
- Survey the city's event venues, hotels, transportation providers, event suppliers and local government departments to discover the environmental programs/services they offer or have undertaken (i.e., energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, hazardous waste elimination, etc.).
 - Compile the information in a database of suppliers of 'green' programs.
 - Make staff aware of these suppliers' efforts.
 - Use the information to help event organizers make their supplier selections.
 - Use the information to recommend hotels and venues with environmental management practices, and/or those that minimize travel by being centrally located or on public transit routes.
- Establish a purchasing policy to buy environmentally friendly products, including ENERGY STAR® equipment¹, remanufactured toner cartridges, post-consumer² recycled content paper, and recyclable plastics.
- If applicable, see the *Transportation* section for additional minimum best practices.

Strongly Recommended Best Practice:

- Have maps of walking trails and local parks available and be ready to suggest off-site events and tours that involve event attendees in the area's natural environment with minimal impact.



Accommodations (Lodging/Cruise Lines)

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, suppliers and guests.
- Develop an energy management program to reduce consumption of electricity, including a plan to phase-in the program. Consider having a third party energy audit to see where energy savings can be generated.
- Establish a purchasing policy to buy environmentally friendly products, including ENERGY STAR® equipment¹, low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds)³ paints and cleaning supplies (MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less), remanufactured toner cartridges, post-consumer² recycled content paper, and recyclable plastics.

¹ ENERGY STAR® is a government-backed program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. Products in more than 40 categories are eligible for the ENERGY STAR. They use less energy, save money, and help protect the environment. Additional information can be found at www.energystar.gov.

² Post-consumer material is an end product that has completed its life cycle as a consumer item and would otherwise have been disposed of as a solid waste. Source is <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?articleid=3369>.

³ Compounds that have a high vapor pressure and low water solubility. Many VOCs are human-made chemicals that are used and produced in the manufacture of paints, pharmaceuticals, and refrigerants. See <http://toxics.usgs.gov/definitions/vocs.html>.

- Start or expand an on-site recycling program to capture paper, cardboard, metals, glass, plastics, and separate organic materials for composting. Contract with a private recycling company if the local government will not collect recyclables.
- Have a linen re-use program. Offer guests the option of using their linens a second night and ensure housekeeping staff are fully trained to follow guests' wishes. Place cards in guestrooms that tell guests how to indicate their preferences.
- If applicable, see the *Event Venues* and *Food & Beverage Providers* sections for additional minimum best practices.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Install dispensers for soaps, shampoos and lotions in guest bathrooms, or donate un-used portions of small bottles to a local shelter or charity.
- Install high quality, water-saving devices for all showerheads, toilets and faucets.
- When creating an energy management plan, consider:
 - switching to energy-efficient compact fluorescent lighting (prioritize 24-hour use areas).
 - installing programmable thermostats in guestrooms and public areas.
 - installing motion sensors for lighting in intermittently used rooms.
 - installing key-activation for guestroom electricity when building or re-wiring the facility.

For more ideas on conserving energy, visit <http://www.energystar.gov/>.



Event Venues

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all venue employees, suppliers and client groups.
- Develop an energy management program to reduce consumption of electricity, including a plan to phase-in the program. Consider having a third party energy audit to see where energy savings can be generated.
- Establish a purchasing policy to obtain re-useable linens, dishes and cutlery and environmentally friendly products, including ENERGY STAR® equipment⁴, low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds)⁵ paints and cleaning supplies (MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less), remanufactured toner cartridges, post-consumer⁶ recycled content paper, and recyclable plastics.
- Start or expand an on-site recycling program to capture paper, cardboard, metals, glass, plastics, and separate organic materials for composting. Contract with a private recycling company if the local government will not collect recyclables.
- If applicable, see the *Food & Beverage Providers*, *Exhibition Service Providers*, and *Accommodations* sections for additional minimum best practices.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- When creating an energy management plan, consider:

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⁵ Compounds that have a high vapor pressure and low water solubility. Many VOCs are human-made chemicals that are used and produced in the manufacture of paints, pharmaceuticals, and refrigerants. See <http://toxics.usgs.gov/definitions/vocs.html>.

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- switching to energy-efficient compact fluorescent lighting (prioritize 24-hour use areas).
- installing programmable thermostats in guestrooms and public areas.
- installing motion sensors for lighting in intermittently used rooms.
- installing key-activation for guestroom electricity when building or re-wiring the facility.

For more ideas on conserving energy, visit <http://www.energystar.gov/>

- Install high quality, water-saving devices for toilets and faucets in all bathrooms.



Transportation Providers

General

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, suppliers and customers.
- Establish a purchasing policy to purchase environmentally friendly products, including ENERGY STAR⁷ equipment, low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds)⁸ cleaning supplies (MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less), remanufactured toner cartridges, post-consumer⁹ recycled content paper, and recyclable plastics.

Ground Transportation Suppliers

Minimum Best Practices:

- Recycle the operation's used oil, vehicle batteries, antifreeze and tires.
- Follow environmentally responsible maintenance and operation practices, including:
 - minimizing idling by drivers through raised awareness and incentives.
 - performing regular maintenance and emissions testing of vehicles.
 - using re-refined oils.
 - minimizing use of air conditioners whenever possible.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Offer and promote fuel-efficient vehicles.
- Contract with a company to provide customers with a carbon neutral travel option (i.e., they plant trees to offset the carbon emissions produced by vehicles). For further information and examples of carbon neutral travel visit Better World Travel's Travel Cool Program at www.betterworldtravel.com/environment/program.html or Manaca at www.manaca.com/partners/ppm/carbon_offset.cfm.

Air Transportation Suppliers

Minimum Best Practices:

- Use reusable or biodegradable service ware.
- Collect recyclables used in-flight and recycle them.
- Use fuel-efficient and low-noise aircraft.

⁷ ENERGY STAR[®] is a government-backed program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. Products in more than 40 categories are eligible for the ENERGY STAR. They use less energy, save money, and help protect the environment. Additional information can be found at www.energystar.gov.

⁸ Compounds that have a high vapor pressure and low water solubility. Many VOCs are human-made chemicals that are used and produced in the manufacture of paints, pharmaceuticals, and refrigerants. See <http://toxics.usgs.gov/definitions/vocs.html>.

⁹ Post-consumer material is an end product that has completed its life cycle as a consumer item and would otherwise have been disposed of as a solid waste. Source is <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?articleid=3369>.

Cruise Ships

Minimum Best Practices:

- Follow environmentally responsible maintenance and operation practices, including:
 - onboard waste minimization including recycling.
 - energy and water conservation.
 - no dumping of anything harmful into the sea.
 - having a spill prevention plan.
- If applicable, see the *Accommodations*, *Event Venues*, and *Food & Beverage Providers* sections for additional minimum best practices.



Food & Beverage Providers

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, suppliers and customers.
- When possible, provide food and beverages that are: locally grown/in-season; organic; fair trade¹⁰; shade grown¹¹; and/or appealing vegetarian alternatives.
- Arrange to have leftover unserved food donated to a local food bank or soup kitchen, or separate it for pick up by a composting operation or local farm.
- Establish a purchasing policy to obtain re-useable linens, dishes and cutlery and environmentally friendly products, including ENERGY STAR® equipment¹², low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds)¹³ paints and cleaning supplies (MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less), remanufactured toner cartridges, post-consumer¹⁴ recycled content paper, and recyclable plastics.
- Purchase and serve water, beverages, condiments and other food items in bulk to minimize packaging.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Ask event organizers to have attendees 'sign-up' for meals. Better attendance numbers will reduce food waste and costs.



Exhibition Service Providers

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, vendors and clients.
- Ask event organizers to inform exhibitors in advance about on-site waste reduction and environmental efforts. This may include encouraging vendors to:

¹⁰ An equitable partnership between marketers and producers that provides low-income artisans and farmers with living wages for their work.

¹¹ Applies particularly to shade-grown coffee which is produced in a manner that conserves rain forest habitat in the tropics.

¹² ENERGY STAR® is a government-backed program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. Products in more than 40 categories are eligible for the ENERGY STAR. They use less energy, save money, and help protect the environment. Additional information can be found at www.energystar.gov.

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- print collateral materials on double-sided, post-consumer¹⁵ recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.
- provide materials via PDA downloads.
- bring only what they need for the event, and take away what they don't distribute at the event.
- Provide on-site recycling for paper, cardboard, metals, glass, plastics, and other recyclable materials.
- Offer exhibitors re-use opportunities for their decorations and display materials. These items may be in demand by local schools or charitable organizations.
- Exhibitors should also refer to the *Event Venues* and *Food & Beverage* sections for additional minimum best practices.



General Office Procedures & Communications

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, vendors and clients.
- Encourage the use of low-impact transportation (i.e., walking, biking, mass transit) which reduces energy consumption and emissions.
- Focus on cost-saving, energy-efficient efforts. These can include:
 - purchasing ENERGY STAR® products¹⁶ when replacing equipment.
 - using laptops when possible (on average they use 10% less energy than desktop computers).
 - using LCD rather than CRT monitors.
 - encouraging employees to turn off equipment and lighting, and turn down thermostats when leaving for extended periods of time.
 - using inkjet printers rather than laser printers as they use less energy.
 - considering equipment that can print on both sides of paper.
 - considering multi-purpose office equipment (i.e., all-in-one fax, printer, scanner, copier). These generally require less energy and space than their individual counterparts.
- Shift written communications (i.e., rooming lists and layouts, event orders, settlement of accounts and other contractual documentation) to e-mail whenever possible.
- When printing is required, use double-sided copies and post-consumer¹⁷ recycled content paper with soy-based ink.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Minimize the use of costly new packing supplies by reusing boxes and packing materials.
- Save directional, food and beverage and other generic signs for reuse.
- Occasionally use regular mail, rather than bulk discounted mail, to ensure that mailing lists are valid which can reduce waste.

¹⁵ Post-consumer material is an end product that has completed its life cycle as a consumer item and would otherwise have been disposed of as a solid waste. Source is <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?articleid=3369>.

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BEST PRACTICES FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS

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Destination Selection

Minimum Best Practices:

- Consider destinations compatible with the event's purpose and the demographics of the attendees. When choosing a destination requiring extensive attendee travel, consider using carbon offset programs.
- Use a list of environmental criteria or the Destination Selection Questionnaire (found at <http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/DestinationSelection.cfm>) with each Request for Proposals (RFP). The questionnaire is a helpful tool to use in gaining information about a destination's environmental practices.
- Ask the destination's convention and visitors bureau (CVB) and local destination management companies (DMCs) to recommend venues and suppliers that have environmental practices in place.
- Inform vendors/suppliers of the environmental strategies the event is considering and ask about their environmental practices.
- Include a clause in the contract with the vendor/property that states their commitment to comply with the event organizer's environmental requests. See a sample "environmental preference clause" to use in a destination selection Request for Proposals (RFP) at: http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/Documents/Preference_Clause_Destinations.doc.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Consider cities with mass transit systems that connect major venues with each other and with major transportation hubs (i.e., airports, train stations).
- Consider off-site events and tours that involve event attendees in the area's natural environment with minimal impact.



Accommodations Selection

Minimum Best Practices:

- Inform vendors/suppliers of the environmental strategies the event is considering and ask about their environmental practices. For a checklist to assist in determining accommodation's environmental practices download the Green Hotel Initiative's Best Practice Survey from the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) at http://www.ceres.org/our_work/ghi/bps_survey.pdf.
- Include a clause in the contract with the vendor/property that states their commitment to comply with the event organizer's environmental requests.
- Consider venues willing to offer as a minimum the following services (include the list in the environmental requests section of the event contract):
 - Recycling program includes paper, metal, glass and plastic products.

- Staff is instructed to shut blinds, turn off lights, and turn down the heat/air conditioning when rooms are vacant.
- Guestrooms have dispensers for soaps, shampoos and lotions, or the venue donates un-used portions of amenities to charity.
- A linen and towel reuse program is in place. Place cards in guest rooms offering guests the option to use linens/towels again. Housekeeping staff are fully trained to follow guests' wishes.
- If applicable, see the *Event Venues* and *Food & Beverage* sections for additional minimum best practices.



Event Venue Selection

Minimum Best Practices:

- Inform vendors/suppliers of the environmental strategies the event is considering and ask about their environmental practices. If no literature is available from the property, ask for any current plan that will lead to such policies/practices to be presented in writing. Or, have the venue complete a 'venue checklist' to detail their environmental performance
(http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/Documents/Venue_Selection_Questionnaire.doc).
- Include a clause in the contract with the vendor/property that states their commitment to comply with the event organizer's environmental requests.
- Consider venues willing to offer as a minimum the following services (include them in the environmental requests section of your contract):
 - Recycling program includes paper, metal, glass and plastic products.
 - Staff is instructed to shut blinds, turn off lights, and turn down the heat/air conditioning when rooms are vacant.
 - Leftover food is donated to a food bank.
- If using multiple facilities, look for locations where the hotel and event venue are within walking distance of each other.
- If applicable, see the *Accommodations* and *Food & Beverage* sections for additional minimum best practices.



Transportation Selection

General

Minimum Best Practices:

- Inform transportation companies of the environmental strategies the event is considering and ask about their environmental practices.
- Include a clause in the contract with the transportation provider that states their commitment to comply with the event organizer's environmental requests.
- Alert attendees to environmentally preferable transportation choices such as mass transit and car-pooling for getting to their destination. Commuter trains and other mass transit systems are preferable to car travel.
- Provide information about the local public transit system, and/or arrange for shuttles to transport attendees to and from the airport and the event venue.

Ground Transportation

Minimum Best Practices:

- Ask providers if they follow environmentally responsible maintenance and recycle used oil, batteries, antifreeze and tires.
- Ask providers if they train drivers to minimize idling and the use of air conditioners, especially when no passengers are in the vehicle.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Provide a public transit pass and map in attendees' registration packets.
- Ask providers if they offer fuel-efficient or alternative fuel vehicles.

Cruise Ships

Minimum Best Practices:

- Consider cruise lines with active and ongoing environmental policies and practices.
- Ask cruise lines if they have spill prevention plans.
- Ask cruise lines if they have responsible waste management policies including no offshore dumping.
- Ask cruise lines if they have shipboard recycling, waste minimization and water conservation.
- See the *Accommodations*, *Event Venues*, and *Food & Beverage* sections for additional minimum best practices.

Air Transportation

Minimum Best Practices:

- Ask airlines about their environmental practices and policies. Specifically, ask if they:
 - use reusable or biodegradable service ware.
 - collect recyclables used in flight and recycle them.
 - use fuel-efficient and low-noise aircraft.



Food & Beverage

Minimum Best Practices:

- Inform vendors/suppliers of the environmental strategies the event is considering and ask about their environmental purchasing and practices.
- Include a clause in the contract with the caterer/vendor that states their commitment to comply with the event organizer's environmental requests.
- Include in the contract that the caterer/vendor do the following as a minimum:
 - Uses reusable cutlery, dishware, linens and decorations. If disposables are unavoidable, make sure they can be composted and/or biodegradable products are used.
 - Has condiments, beverages, and other food items provided in bulk instead of individually packaged and that any packaging is recyclable and recycled.
 - Uses locally produced seasonal and/or organic food and beverages when possible (including fair trade¹⁸, shade grown coffee, tea, chocolate and cocoa¹⁹).

¹⁸ An equitable partnership between marketers and producers that provides low-income artisans and farmers with living wages for their work.

¹⁹ Applies particularly to shade-grown coffee which is produced in a manner that conserves rain forest habitat in the tropics.

- Serves only environmentally friendly seafood and offers vegetarian meal selections. See www.mbayaq.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/sfw_regional.asp for a comprehensive and well-researched list of environmentally friendly seafood.
- Donates left-over food to a local food bank or soup kitchen, and composts or donates table scraps to farms where possible .

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Have attendees ‘sign-up’ for meals on the registration form to indicate their intentions to attend specific meal functions throughout the event. Better attendance numbers will reduce food waste and costs.



Exhibition Production

Minimum Best Practices:

- Inform exhibiting organizations of the event’s environmental strategies. Include a clause in the exhibitor agreement that states their commitment to comply with the event’s environmental requests.
- Include a clause in the exhibitor agreement gaining their commitment to comply with the following:
 - Minimizing the use of collateral materials, and, for any necessary materials, producing them on double-sided, post-consumer²⁰ recycled paper with vegetable-based inks.
 - Minimizing packaging and participating in recycling packaging when appropriate.
 - Using recycled or consumable products as giveaways when possible and not using gift items made from endangered or threatened species.
 - Attempting to use locally grown/made products.
 - Providing materials via PDA downloads.
 - Bringing only what they need for the event, and taking away what they don’t distribute at the event.
- Inform facilities and decorators of the environmental strategies the event is considering and ask about their environmental practices
- Include a clause in the agreement with the facility and/or decorator to:
 - provide recycling for cardboard, pallets, paper, cans, plastic, glass and other recyclable materials that are generated.
 - ensure clean-up crews are trained to keep recyclable and reusable items out of the garbage.
 - choose decorations and display materials that can be reused and/or are made out of recycled materials.
- If applicable, see the *Event Venues* and *Food & Beverage* sections for additional minimum best practices.



Communications & Marketing

Minimum Best Practices:

- Ensure staff is informed of the event planning environmental strategies and initiatives.
- Communicate the event’s “greening” initiatives to attendees, stakeholders and the media.
- Reduce paper usage as much as possible by using the web and e-mail to promote the event, offering electronic registration, and providing the event itinerary and proceedings on-line (including speaker notes and handouts).

²⁰ Post-consumer material is an end product that has completed its life cycle as a consumer item and would otherwise have been disposed of as a solid waste. Source is <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?articleid=3369>.

- For materials that need to be printed, print on double-sided, post-consumer²¹ recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.
- Reuse nametags made of recycled content and provide 'reuse' collection bins for them.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Request the hotel/venue provides Banquet Event Orders (BEO) and rooming lists electronically, in addition to providing electronic check in/check out services for attendees.
- Reduce transportation emissions and support local economies by using local talent and products whenever possible.



General Office Procedures

Minimum Best Practices:

- Establish detailed environmental policies and a strategy to implement them. Consistently communicate the policies in various ways to engage all employees, vendors and clients.
- Encourage the use of low-impact transportation (i.e., walking, biking, mass transit) which reduces energy consumption and emissions.
- Focus on cost-saving, energy-efficient efforts. These can include:
 - Purchasing ENERGY STAR® products²² when replacing equipment
 - Using laptops when possible (on average they use 10% less energy than desktop computers)
 - Using LCD rather than CRT monitors
 - Encouraging employees to turn off equipment and lighting, and turn down thermostats when leaving for extended periods of time
 - Using inkjet printers rather than laser printers as they use less energy
 - Considering equipment that can print on both sides of paper
 - Considering multi-purpose office equipment (i.e., all-in-one fax, printer, scanner, copier). These generally require less energy and space than their individual counterparts
- Shift written communications (i.e., rooming lists and layouts, event orders, settlement of accounts and other contractual documentation) to e-mail whenever possible.
- When printing is required, use double-sided copies and post-consumer²¹ recycled content paper with soy-based ink.

Strongly Recommended Best Practices:

- Minimize the use of costly new packing supplies by reusing boxes and packing materials.
- Save directional, food and beverage and other generic signs for reuse.
- Occasionally use regular mail, rather than bulk discounted mail, to ensure that mailing lists are valid which can reduce waste.

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