2019
GUIDE TO
GREEN MEETINGS
INTRODUCTION

Greenbuild is the world’s largest conference and expo dedicated to green building. For the past 16 years, Greenbuild has been bringing the international green building community together to share ideas and mutual passions. Sustainability has always been a core component of Greenbuild. As we’ve grown over the years so has our understanding of event sustainability, our ability to manage and influence event operations, and our commitment to advancing sustainable event management operations for the event industry.

Being a five-time winner of the IMEX Green Meetings Award confirms our commitment to raising the bar for sustainable events. However, we couldn’t do it alone. To win these accolades and to consistently achieve some of the highest waste diversion rates in the industry we rely on our vendors and partners to get us there.

From the show’s inception, the U.S. Green Building Council established a set of sustainability goals and general best practices for producing Greenbuild that Informa Exhibitions, Greenbuild’s owner and producer, have also continued to embrace and drive forward. Working with many of our vendor partners, we have been able to expand these practices throughout the entire event supply and production chain. We’ve helped vendor partners, new and old, establish and build their operational sustainability performance.

Greenbuild hires event sustainability consultants to help guide us through an ever-changing event industry. For the past five years, we’ve worked with Honeycomb Strategies to lead our sustainable event management operations. Honeycomb shares our sustainability values and believes sustainability is both a great opportunity and responsibility.

Whether you’re just starting your sustainability journey or rebooting your existing program, their approach is simple: Work with clients to go beyond sustainability programs that merely reduce energy and implement recycling. Create programs with purpose, because purpose drives performance.

To help event organizers and event partners from venues and caterers to exhibitors and everyone in between, we’ve compiled and are pleased to release the first edition of Greenbuild’s Guide to Green Meetings. Our best practices started out as goals, and after we achieved them consistently for three years, we moved to our best practice list, which we follow each year. We hope that anyone can use these best practices to improve their sustainable event operations.

Our hope is the information included in this guide will reach other event organizers, inspire change and continue to drive the green meeting industry forward.

Sincerely,

Sherida Sessa
Brand Director, I Greenbuild
BEST PRACTICES

AUDIO VISUAL

Below are a list of activities to consider when planning the AV component of your event, to ensure your team is utilizing sustainable practices:

- Eliminate vinyl in scenic design elements.
- Incorporate biophilia (natural elements) into stage set design whenever possible.
- Minimize electricity consumption through the use of LED lighting fixtures and other energy efficient technologies.
- Properly dispose of on-site electronic waste (e.g., bulbs and batteries).
- Use 100% ENERGY STAR computers, monitors, printers, and laptops.
- Select energy-efficient AV equipment when ENERGY STAR rated equipment is not available. (Computers, some projectors, flat screens).
- Track energy usage of LED screens and other special AV equipment.
- Utilize 90% local AV equipment from local/regional (100/500 miles) facilities and vendors.
- Collect and dispose of 99% of gaffing tape to avoid recycling stream contamination.

CATERING

Carefully selected food and beverage orders can significantly reduce waste, cut down on single-use plastic, and more. Here are a few ideas to get started:

- Order organic and locally-sourced food and beverages when possible. This cuts down on fuel for transporting these items. If these options are not available, challenge the caterer to get them.
- Eliminate individually-packaged items at all catered events and serve these same items in bulk or choose an alternative (i.e. yogurt, cereal, granola bars).
- Serve all condiments in bulk - no individual servings or packets.
- Reduce food waste by simplifying the menu and working with the caterer on quantity ordered. (For example, most sandwich buffets that come with salad, soup, sandwiches, pasta salad, chips, an additional side, and dessert. Simplify to just a soup or salad, the sandwich, one side, and a dessert.) This is also a cost saver as the caterer will likely reduce the cost per person when ordering.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Conference handouts are a huge contributor to on-site paper waste. At Greenbuild, we produce ‘conference proceedings’ which are the powerpoint slides synced to audio/video from the session in lieu of providing handouts in the classroom. When considering this component of your event keep these best practices in mind:

- Choose most sustainable materials where appropriate.
- Eliminate paper receipts; only distribute digital receipts on-site.

EVENT DÉCOR AND MATERIALS

Materials represent a key facet to sustainable event management. At Greenbuild, we review the list of materials we use in the Expo Hall annually to evaluate new materials and ensure transparency with key vendors. Below are a list of helpful best practices to consider as you think through this important element of your next event:
Catalog all signs and build-outs used to create a Materials Summary.
Collect sustainability and sourcing information for all show materials.
Reduce or eliminate printed show programs by driving audience to use the mobile app.
Use 100% recycled paper and vegetable-based inks and limit quantities for all printed material.
Highlight material and disposal considerations during design phase of show décor.
Track disposal/reuse plan and quantities for all small signage.
Use vinyl-alternative tabletops.
Use local potted plants and do not use cut floral or arrangements. Living potted plants naturally remove carbon dioxide and produce oxygen during the day, and have a longer lifespan post-show.
If available, use LED lighting at registration counters.
No new PVC used for show management build-outs.
Remove PVC from any structure/build-out at your event.
Recycle as much carpet and carpet scrap as possible.
Use digital signage in lieu of printed signage when possible.
Source furniture and stage rentals locally or reuse existing general contractor inventory.
Utilize human directionals in lieu of directional signage when possible.

EXHIBITOR ENGAGEMENT

Exhibitors represent a key stakeholder community for a sustainable event program and it’s vital to engage them pre-event with your overall mission. At Greenbuild, we utilize a multi-channel marketing mix to communicate our sustainability program. Below are a few best practices based on our experience with the GMEGG (Greenbuild Mandatory Exhibitor Greening Guidelines) program.

Start early!!!
Communicate sustainability goals to exhibitors prior to arriving on-site.
Implement and enforce exhibitor sustainability requirements.
Provide a marketing-based incentive program for exhibitor sustainability practices to engage exhibitors and motivate them to participate, including blog posts, signage and social media. Consider an overall incentive like a free 10x10 for the most sustainable booth and create an award program to recognize exhibitors who are going above and beyond in their efforts.
Remove individual trash cans from booths. This will eliminate a single waste stream, and all event participants will be using the show waste streams.
Educate local general contractor staff on show sustainability goals, to in turn, educate labor.

HOTEL

Sustainability can extend beyond your event and through to the hotels you choose for your official housing block. Consider engaging your hotel community with an in-person meeting to evaluate their sustainable practices and in turn, market sustainable hotels to your audience.

Incorporate LEED Certified hotels or Trip Advisor Green Leaders into official housing block.
Ensure as many official hotels as possible are within walking distance of the convention center.
Execute on-site audits for all hotels to confirm that sustainability practices are in place.
Recognize the hotels on your event’s website by listing each property’s sustainable practices.
MARKETING

There are numerous ways to incorporate your event’s sustainable practices through your marketing efforts. Sustainability should be included in every message that is distributed about your event and this is one of the easiest, most cost effective areas to begin weaving a message of sustainability through to your audience.

- Print all marketing materials on 100% post-consumer recycled content.
- Print using vegetable-based inks.
- Ensure that over-mailing doesn’t take place to potential attendees.
- Partner with printers who utilize alternative energy (wind, solar) as part of their printing processes.
- Critically examine your overall print quantities for each marketing piece and reduce mailings to one name per address.
- Reduce mailing quantities to only reach those without an email address.
- Avoid producing items that are difficult to recycle, including those with spiral binding and staples. Instead, consider perfect binding or one sheets that can easily be recycled in your paper waste stream.
- Include a sustainability fact about your event in every email/message sent.

MERCHANDISE

As a popular, front-facing feature of many events, official show merchandise can tell a sustainability story and demonstrate your commitment to sustainable event management. Consider these when selecting products for your events:

- No products shall be packed in Styrofoam/polystyrene
- Ask your vendors to remove all styrofoam/polystyrene/packing peanuts from shipments coming to show site and to ship in large boxes and as few as possible.
- Document Sustainability criteria (domestic, organic, fair-trade, water or soy-based ink, biodegradable, compostable, or recyclable).
- Only produce generic show branded merchandise (no year specific merchandise). Leftover merchandise is then still viable for future years and does not go to waste.
- Ask for material transparency from your promotional products vendor when selecting products. Avoid products with vinyl, PVC and those produced/shipped from overseas. Instead, select products made from recycled materials and produced locally in the US (bonus points for products produced regionally from your event!).

REGISTRATION

A participant’s badge is one of the most prominent items at your event that can tell a sustainability story. There are several low-cost ideas that can be implemented to improve the sustainability of this area of your next event.

- Eliminate use of plastic name badge holders.
- Source recyclable, non-vinyl badge stock material.
- Minimize amount of ink waste by working with your registration vendor/partner and evaluating the type of printers used on site.
- Implement a paperless pre-show registration process by emailing registration confirmation letters and eliminating all on-site paper registration forms in lieu of digital registration.
Source ink made out of bio-renewable materials in smaller packaging.

Use 100% ENERGY STAR rated (or equivalent) for all computers at registration.

**SPONSORSHIP**

*Sponsors represent an exciting opportunity to engage key stakeholders in your event’s sustainability program. Consider sustainability practices and goals for your sponsorship program.*

- Include greening requirements in the sponsorship contract.
- Challenge your operations team to reduce your printed signage year over year, only producing what’s necessary.
- Printed material should have a sustainability story (i.e. hotel cards made out of bamboo, t-shirts made from organic cotton, expo guide ads printed on 100% PCW recycled paper, etc.)
- Utilize digital signage opportunities whenever possible, in lieu of printed material.

**TEMP STAFFING**

*The temporary staff/volunteers are often one of the first faces/impressions of your events and can communicate your sustainability program first hand to your event participants. Educating and motivating this group is essential to your program’s success.*

- All temporary staff are trained on-site about basic sustainability practices.
- Motivate temps to go above and beyond with sustainability in an effort to increase participation and engagement in the program through a contest on-site.
- Recycle all training materials pre-show.
- Utilize temporary staff/volunteers in lieu of directional signage wherever possible.
VENDORS

We thank our partners for their commitment to helping us make Greenbuild one of the most sustainable events in the world. Greenbuild would not be successful without the collaborative efforts of the many key partners/vendors we work with each year. We sincerely thank the companies listed below for helping us to make Greenbuild one of the most sustainable events in the world.