



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES CHECKLIST

For the Conference and Events Industry

Sustainability is a growing trend in all industries and is now finding its way into mainstream tourism. The increasing popularity of sustainability has led to differing understandings of what sustainability really means. To help clarify for industrial professionals, the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University has developed a working definition to include "actions that contribute to a balanced and healthy economy by generating tourism-related jobs, revenues, and taxes while protecting and enhancing the destination's socio-cultural, historical, natural and built resources for the enjoyment and well-being of both residents and visitors."

The following twelve categories are offered for consideration where you might incorporate sustainability within your tourism business, in developing government policy, or in your personal life. Within each category you will also find a list of specific actions in sustainable practices for both lodging and food service.

This list is not intended to be an environmental certification program. It is also not intended to replace a formal sustainability management plan, however it can be a helpful tool though in assessing your current business practices and serve as a spring board in developing your own business' formal sustainability plan. This checklist is a work in progress and businesses are encouraged share best practices not included in this list.

We would like to acknowledge the staff of Sustainable Travel International (STI) for the development of many of these items as well as their permission to use this information for informational purposes. Please visit www.sustainabletravelinternational.org for further information and a list of their services. You can contact Katherine Baucom, East Coast STI /Center for Sustainable Tourism Representative at Katieb@sustainabletravel.com.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Management and Reduction

1. Use renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal;
2. Use passive solar water heating systems;
3. Purchase renewable energy credits and or greenhouse gas offsets;
4. When appropriate, use ultra-low sulfur or biodiesel generators;
5. Plan location and timing of events to reduce the need for transportation during the event;
6. Include information during registration, on web site, and at the event to facilitate the use of mass transit and carpooling;
7. Organize shuttle services for participants for transportation needs;
8. Choose a venue that offers public transportation or that is located in walk-able distances from accommodations;
9. Minimize transportation by scheduling deliveries for multiple items;
10. Provide opportunities for the use of alternative forms of transportation for participants and staff such as carpooling, mass transit maps, bike racks and showers;
11. Offer preferred parking spaces for participants and staff who use alternative fuel vehicles or alternative transportation;

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12. Choose local vendors to reduce transportation of items;
13. Institute fuel economizing programs for company vehicles such as regular inspection of vehicles, reduced idling, and route planning to minimize travel distances;
14. Allow flexible staff schedules to minimize staff travel during heavy traffic periods;
15. Adopt alternative forms of transportation and fuels, such as hybrid-electric, biodiesel, E85 such as shuttle (Ethanol) or electric for business activities services and/or errand and delivery companies,;
16. Minimize the travel needs to attend meetings by utilizing and providing staff and participants with video conferencing or teleconferencing
17. Participate in used cooking oil recycling program for biodiesel processing.

Solid Waste Management, Reduction, Reuse and Recycling

1. Conduct a waste audit to determine a baseline for future waste reductions;
2. Purchase products in reusable, returnable containers;
3. Formally ask suppliers to reduce packaging; Develop a "take back" program with vendors to return crates, pallets, and other packing materials;
4. Provide waste reduction education to staff and routinely inspect trash bins to ensure that best practices are being followed;
5. Reduce and reuse paper by
 - Selecting photocopiers and printers able to print on both sides;
 - Distributing information to participants, staff, and business associates via e-mail and avoid hard copy;
 - Avoiding use of fax cover sheets;
 - Distributing inter-office documents using routing slips, bulletin board, or scan for email distribution rather than printing a copy for individual staff members;
 - Using both sides of printing paper and using the reverse side of printing paper for printing rough drafts
 - Streamlining operational systems that rely on paper or "hard" copies;
 - Reuse envelopes for inter-office mail;
 - Set and use fax and copy machines to copy documents directly to computers rather than printing a new copy;
 - Use reusable methods of informing participants during the event rather than single use printed documents;
 - Use online registration;
 - Offer documents, such as agenda and presentations, online to reduce distribution at event;
 - Ask participants to bring personal pens and paper and provide additional paper only on demand;
 - Encourage exhibitors to limit distribution of documents, such as brochures and handouts. Provide web based or IT distribution methods if possible;
 - Send follow up communication electronically and use based post-event evaluations;
 - If speakers require distributing paper copies themselves, ask that they follow these requirements;
6. Request to be taken off of mailing lists of unneeded catalogs and print advertisements;
7. Routinely inspect internal mailing lists to minimize unnecessary direct mailing to your customers;
8. Email or post company memos to reduce unnecessary copies;
9. Write weekly schedules and prep schedules using reusable products such as a laminate sheet and grease pencil or dry erase board.
10. Avoid providing participants with paper napkins;
11. Provide straws in approved dispensers and avoid use of individually wrapped straws;
12. Provide reusable coasters rather than disposable ones;
13. Donate obsolete or unwanted equipment, electronics, furniture, drapes, and carpeting to charity;
14. Eliminate use of Styrofoam (polystyrene) and other difficult to recycle products; if necessary, develop "difficult to recycle" programs if volumes warrant;
15. Donate left over cookware, silverware, and old linens to charity or local artisans and craftsmen;
16. Donate unused food to a community food bank or compost site;



17. Purchase products, such as condiments, cleaning supplies, and other durable products in bulk and in concentrated form when possible;
18. Offer reusable products such as glass cups, cotton linens, and refillable condiment dispensers. Avoid using disposable products;
19. Distribute condiments and napkins from behind the counter or upon request;
20. Give preference to products with high post-consumer recycled content in purchasing policy ;
21. Ensure that printed materials such as brochures, programs and marketing materials are printed on paper with high recycled content (at least 35%) and print using soy ink;
22. Purchase antiques and furniture from local vendors;
23. Recycle damaged towels and sheets as cleaning rags and craft torn or worn linens into other usable items, e.g., aprons into rags;
24. Reuse newspaper, shredded paper, and incoming packaging materials (bags, boxes, peanuts) for packaging and shipping needs;
25. Institute a composting program for yard and food waste. Mulch grass clippings and avoid bagging; invite staff to bring personal food scraps and compostable items to the work site;
26. When reusable options are not feasible, use disposable products that are compostable such as corn based cutlery;
27. Purchase recyclable toner cartridges;
28. Encourage wait staff to conserve unopened condiment packets;
29. Use non-bleached napkins, paper towels, and coffee filters;
30. Provide alternatives to individual plastic water bottles such as water pitchers and point of use water filters;
31. Reduce waste from expired stock by using effective inventory control, such as just-in-time purchasing, effective labeling systems, and last in/first out;
32. Routinely evaluate serving portion sizes;
33. Use best practices to prevent accidental glassware and china breakage and place rubber mats around dishwashing stations;
34. Install high efficiency air hand-dryers, cloth or roll type to minimize paper towel usage;
35. Provide incentives and discounts to participants who use refillable mugs and to-go containers, and encourage employees to use reusable mugs and cups;
36. Ensure that appointed staff inspect deliveries before accepting;
37. Serve carbonated beverage from a dispensing unit rather than individual bottles or can;
38. Use reusable hairnets or hats;
39. Routinely inspect and clean cooler and freezer to check for fallen food behind shelving that might spoil;
40. Use edible garnish and reusable center pieces;
41. Use rechargeable batteries;
42. Inform attendees of waste reduction efforts before, during, and after the event;
43. Assure that promotional items, if needed, are minimally packaged and made from a high content of recycled materials. Examine using promotional items with green message;
44. Rent or use reusable signage or post staff/volunteers at key location to reduce the need for printed materials;
45. Encourage exhibitors to use reusable and/or recycled components for tradeshow booths. Consider creating a recognition program for participants that exemplify best practices;
46. Provide cigarette disposal bins in smoking areas;
47. Purchase durable goods of sufficient quality to allow reuse, refinishing, and/or reupholstering
48. Ensure proper disposal of hazardous materials such as aerosol cans, solvents, and other potentially hazardous materials;
49. Use preventative maintenance on equipment to reduce risk of replacement;



50. Provide and publicize recycling bins across business facility;
51. Ensure caterers have an accurate number of participants. Work with staff to re-evaluate food needs as event proceeds;
52. Offer box lunches in buffet style to minimize waste;
53. Collect name badges and plastic room keys at the end of the event for reuse or recycling;
54. Collect information regarding waste reduction to conduct an evaluation;
55. Begin or enlarge a recycling program to include:
 - Aluminum
 - Glass
 - Office mix
 - Batteries
 - Yard waste
 - Electronics
 - Plastic
 - Corrugated cardboard
 - Newspaper
 - Ink cartridges and laser toner cartridges
 - Phone books
 - Fluorescent light tubes
 - Electronics such as computers and televisions
 - Carpeting.

Freshwater Consumption Reduction

1. Conduct regular inspections and establish preventative maintenance schedules to ensure maximum efficiency, i.e., ensure that the blow down on cooling towers are at manufacture's specifications;
2. Educate staff on water conservation and best practices;
3. Conduct a water audit with a water conservation professional;
4. Discourage water-based cleanup and use alternatives such as microfiber technology;
5. When purchasing new or replacing appliances or fixtures, purchase water-efficient models such as those certified by EPA WaterSense® and Energy Star®;
6. Install low-flow aerators on sinks (1.5 gal/min);
7. Install automatic shut off sinks in common area rest rooms;
8. Use re-circulating, chilled water loop and temperature control systems in water cooled ice machines, air conditioners, and water cooled refrigeration units;
9. Use air-cooled ice machines rather than water-cooled models;
10. Clean windows on an on-call basis rather than according to an established schedule;
11. Use gray water (from dishwashers, laundry, etc.) and rain water to irrigate landscaping. Check other state and local government-approved uses;
12. Use floor cleaning equipment with high pressure, low volume and recycling filtering systems;
13. Routinely inspect icemakers to prevent overflow;
14. Serve water on request only.
15. Use best management practices in water usage for landscaping/irrigation, including:
 - Establish frequency schedule according to local climate, season and landscaped area (multiple hydro zones) in order to maximize water use efficiency;
 - Raise lawn mower cutting height to cut down on evaporation;
 - Routinely inspect sprinkler system, including heads, nozzles, lines and valves, to ensure efficient settings and proper operation;
 - Limit lawn areas and/or use xeriscaping;
 - Place ornamental water features in shaded areas;
 - Avoid plant fertilizing and pruning that would stimulate excessive growth;



- Use soaker hoses in plant beds;
- Remove weeds and unhealthy plants so that remaining plants can benefit from water saved;
- Water landscapes only when necessary; one inch of water per week is sufficient to sustain established lawns in most circumstances;
- Time watering to occur in the early morning or evening when evaporation is lowest;
- Remove any thatch and aerate turf to encourage the movement of water to the root zone;
- Avoid runoff and make sure sprinklers do not run onto sidewalks paved areas;
- Do not water on windy, rainy, or overly hot days;
- Install rain shut-off or moisture sensors to ensure against over watering;
- Ensure irrigation equipment applies water uniformly;
- Establish drip irrigation systems where feasible;
- Mulch around plants to limit evaporation and discourage weed growth;
- Avoid extravagant uses of water such as hosing down sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots.

Wastewater Management

1. Ensure proper use, storage, and disposal of cleaning products and other potentially harmful chemicals such as fertilizers and paints;
2. Limit the number of chemical products used and stored (minimize stockpiling) on the property and have a management plan for chemical purchasing, such as just-in-time purchasing;
3. Ensure that all chemicals are securely stored and clearly marked;
4. Use best storm-water runoff practices to ensure that wastewater does not enter local waterways. Including:
 - Reduce hard surfaces such as impervious parking lots;
 - Create natural buffers around bodies of water
 - Build bio-swales or ditches near parking lots to reduce runoff;
 - Build natural areas to retain storm water such as rain gardens;
 - Limit use of chemicals, such as fertilizers and pesticides, and ensure they are not used near storm-water drains and/or natural water;
 - Place food scraps into the trash or composting bins prior to washing dishes and other kitchenware;
5. Use environmentally safe cleaning products:
 - MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less for all cleaning chemicals used on property
 - Ensure dishwashing detergents are biodegradable and do not contain nitrilotriacetic acid or chlorine bleach, that they are phosphate and bleach-free, nontoxic, biodegradable, and are concentrated liquid or powder laundry detergents;
 - Use disinfectants only when necessary and in accordance with public health standards;
 - Use environmentally certified cleaning products;
6. Use linen service that uses environmentally preferable cleaning methods or use an Ozone washing machine which has shorter wash cycles, enhanced soil removal and disinfectant capability;
7. Use less harmful alternatives if possible such as organic substitutes for chemical fertilizers;
8. Monitor equipment and products for potential chemical leaks such as aerosols, fire extinguishers, CFCs and HCFCs from cooling equipment refrigerators, and automotive liquids;
9. Use an integrated pest management (IPM) system for interior and exterior jobs;
10. Follow best management practices for fats, oil, and grease;
 - Train dishwashing staff to scrape food scraps and fatty liquids in trash or compost bins and drain grease from pots into bins for recycling or trash –
 - Install filters and screens in kitchen drain
 - Train staff on proper cleanup of grease spills
 - Floor mats, trash cans, and other equipment are only hosed down in area with sewer drain with a grease trap, not outside where water may flow to storm drain;
 - Recycle cooking oils which can be converted to bio-fuels by a rendering service;
11. Use environmentally preferable or certified paints, solvents and coatings (MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less);
12. Reuse paint thinners;
13. Use latex paints rather than oil based paints;



14. Educate staff on proper methods of containment and clean-up of spills, drips, leachings, and conduct regular inspections in relevant areas;
15. When doing exterior cleaning or pressure washing, proper care should be taken to avoid discharge of contaminants such as detergents into rivers, wetlands, and streams

Energy Efficiency, Conservation and Management

1. Conduct an energy audit with an energy conservation specialist to determine your baseline energy use and any improvements that should be made;
2. Monitor, record, and post rates of energy to quickly identify if there is system leakage;
3. Work with an energy expert to develop an energy management system;
4. Develop an energy education and conservation program for your facility;
5. Use a renewable energy heating system (e.g. passive solar or geo-thermal);
6. Use natural light whenever possible;
7. Turn off electronic equipment at the end of each workday. Consider using surge protectors enabled with master switches so that energy is not consumed when electronics are not in use;
8. Ensure that audio-visual equipment and lights are turned off when not in use;
9. Activate sleep/standby or low energy mode on appliances;
10. Maximize central air efficiency by allowing sunlight to enter through windows in the winter and blocking sunlight in the summer. Install heat-control glass and/or sun control window film to windows with heavy sun exposure;
11. Weatherize the workplace by ensuring that doors and windows have tight seals and remain closed when shut; Seal unused windows and doors, and inspect the workplace at least annually for cracks and leaks;
12. Set water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit rather than pre-set 140 degrees;
13. Replace existing light bulbs and/or incandescent lighting with energy efficient or compact florescent bulbs. Replace or retrofit T12 florescent lamps and magnetic ballasts with T8 or T5 lamps and electronic ballasts;
14. Use programmable Energy Star®-labeled thermostats and make sure they are set to appropriate temperature ranges. Also conduct regular inspections to ensure efficient function;
15. Perform regularly scheduled preventative maintenance on equipment and appliances, including replacing and cleaning air filters, cleaning burners and air conditioner coils, and checking duct and pipe insulation for damage.
16. Wrap older water heaters with insulation blankets;
17. Install energy saving equipment, such as timers, motion sensors, master switches, and photocells. Conduct regular inspections to ensure proper function;
18. Purchase and replace existing equipment with energy efficient or Energy Star® labeled electronics, appliances, and heating and cooling equipment;
19. Insulate facilities, including hot water pipes, interior and exterior walls, ceilings, and wall cavities;
20. Use only LED or electroluminescent exit signs;
21. Open windows rather than using central air when possible;
22. Install and use ceiling fans to circulate air in both winter and summer;
23. Install VendingMiser® or similar technology and/or remove unneeded lights on vending and snack machines;
24. Consider installing a "white" or "green" roof to reduce heat island effect;
25. Install variable speed fans where feasible (e.g. grill exhaust hoods);
26. Use ventilation fans with humidity sensors for areas where needed;
27. Operate multiple and individual climate controlled comfort zones;
28. Clean lighting fixtures and lamps regularly to increase illumination;
29. Place coolers, refrigerators, and ice machines away from direct sunlight, ovens, and other sources of internal heat;



30. Plan events to minimize the number of rooms needed to be lit and/or heated/cooled;
31. Work with AV, IT, lighting, and sound technicians to implement most energy efficient equipment;
32. Use Energy Star's® or other similar benchmarking tools for the Hospitality Industry.

Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation

1. Follow the principles of Leave No Trace®: Know before you go; Leave it as you find it; Stick to trails; Be careful with fire; Trash your trash and pick up poop; Keep wildlife wild; Share our trails and manage your pet;
2. Participate in local environmental and conservation efforts either through sponsorship, monetary contributions, or volunteering and supporting employees to do so;
3. Provide environmental education materials and information on local biodiversity conservation efforts to staff and participants;
4. Design landscaping or on-site gardens to incorporate and support "heirloom" and native species;
5. Work with relevant parks and public land agencies to find out how your business might participate in ecosystem and biodiversity conservation efforts;
6. Provide information on how staff and participants can become involved in community volunteer conservation projects. Post project information in common areas and offer transportation assistance when needed. Provide staff incentives to those who volunteer;
7. Rehabilitate or improve waterways on property or in the region;
8. Develop partnerships with local conservation organizations;
9. Avoid purchasing and serving overexploited species, particularly seafood. Consider developing a sustainable seafood policy;
10. Set aside property and/or donate land to a conservation society or consider establishing a conservation easement;
11. Prevent wildlife from accessing trash and food by secure food sources;
12. Ensure that interactions with wildlife is done at a safe and respectful distance;
13. Provide information on local ecology and wildlife to participants and staff;
14. Protect sensitive areas, such as wetlands and large trees;
15. Install glass that has low levels of reflectivity;
16. Establish measures to reduce light pollution;
17. Contribute a percentage of annual net revenues to local non-profit conservation-based organizations.

Land Use Planning and Management

1. Follow standards for development and construction that take into account community values, distinctiveness, and sense of place;
2. Adopt strategies to develop a constructive and collaborative relationship with local community;
3. Direct development towards existing local communities that are already served by infrastructure and utilize the resources they have to offer;
4. Support the integration of mixed land uses and provide local community with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation;
5. Integrate green building design in new construction and remodeling;
6. Assure that property and operations do not cause soil loss, soil contamination, or other negative impacts, such as erosion and sediment pollution to lands and waterways;
7. Participate in community events such as National Arbor Day, Earth Day, Great American Backyard Bird Count, and Take a Child Outside Day with local community;
8. Assure that preference is given to environmentally responsible landscaping, pool, and construction services.



Air Quality Protection and Noise Reduction

1. Avoid use of ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) found in refrigerants and aerosols.
2. Designate your property as a non-smoking establishment or designate smoking areas outside the building and away from air in-take.
3. Address the root cause of odors rather than masking them with the use of artificial air cleaners, refreshers, and cleaning products;
4. Purchase only non-toxic paints or paints with low levels of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs).
5. Maintain "quiet" hours in the evening and early morning for staff and participants. Avoid noise intrusion by scheduling service and repairs at optimum hours.
6. Ensure that your landscaping design includes a noise abatement plan.
7. Place insulation around loud equipment.
8. Design ventilation to exhaust outside of the building and not from roof space.
9. Ensure that dehumidifiers are installed in high moisture areas (e.g., kitchen and laundry), and that these areas are well ventilated. Guarantee that relative humidity is maintained (between 35 percent and 55 percent).
10. Use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters.
11. Conduct regular tests for poisonous gases such as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and radon.
12. Conduct regular tests for particulates such as lead and asbestos.
13. Conduct regular inspections of HVAC system for mold/bacteria, air flow blockages, and clean drip pans.
14. Ensure that Air filtration is installed.

Preserving the Social Norms and Cultures of Local and Indigenous Communities

1. Develop methods of establishing dialogue with local representatives to determine socio-cultural and economic impacts of your organization and to ensure their concerns are recognized in operational decisions;
2. Train staff to ensure they are well-informed on local customs;
3. Develop informative educational materials for participants about the local community and local history;
4. Use appropriate and authentic cultural elements from the local region;
5. Make your property available for community events;
6. Establish policies that restrict commercialization of endangered or protected flora and fauna;
7. Incorporate local arts and crafts in your facility and make information available to customers.

Providing Economic Benefits to Local and Indigenous Communities

1. Provide information to and encourage participants to purchase local products and services;
2. Provide employment opportunities for local community members;
3. Allow local artists to display and sell their handicrafts and art work at your property;
4. Provide information to participants on local attractions and cultural activities;
5. Form partnerships with locally owned businesses (e.g., restaurants and guide services);
6. Use local goods and services whenever possible;
7. Involve your organization in local philanthropic projects and develop a public relations plan that ensures participants, the greater community, and interest groups and others can be aware of your community involvement;
8. Provide volunteer opportunities for participants and staff;



9. Exceed minimum local standards for employee's wages, salaries and benefits;
10. Ensure that operational demands for basic services (water, electricity, roads, food, and other resources) do not compete with local needs;
11. Provide education and training opportunities in your place of business for local community member;
12. Support training for community members for non-competitive tourism-related activities that compliment your business;
13. Provide promotional information on local services and businesses to participants.

Responsible Purchasing

1. Assure that your organization has an environmentally preferable procurement/purchasing program that has a clear mission and distinct purchasing targets;
2. Adopt a "least toxic alternative" purchase policy;
3. Purchase only recyclable or compostable materials;
4. Purchase products and services from local sources whenever possible;
5. Give preference to purchases that are "sustainable" (e.g., local and/or organic), produce, meats, fish, and other food products are given preference in purchases;
6. Ensure that firewood comes from sustainable sources;
7. Use recycled and/or environmentally certified building materials on property;
8. Give preference to vendors and suppliers that are environmentally and socially responsible;
9. Regularly test new environmentally preferable products for effectiveness in operations and evaluate current products used;
10. Ensure that life-cycle analysis is conducted for major investments such as new equipment and construction projects;
11. Incorporate environmental preferences and requirements in RFP's and contracts with vendors and suppliers. Suppliers and vendors can then be held accountable to the environmental commitments made during negotiations;
12. Provide that "Fair trade" purchased for business use as well as for resale to participants.

Training and Education for Employees and Clients

1. Ensure that a formal environmental program is in place that includes all staff participation and input;
2. Make sure that informational signage about your organization's sustainable practices is placed around the facility in appropriate places;
3. Provide an incentive program for staff and participants to provide input on your business's' current sustainable practices;
4. Assure that claims of environmental practices are transparent and verifiable by third party entities (e.x. housekeeping, if asked, must be able to show packaging for environmentally preferable cleaning products if the organization claims it uses such products);
5. Guarantee that notification about sustainable efforts is provided to participants in publications, advertising, and web site;
6. Offer feedback or comment cards to get participants and staff input on further sustainable practices;
7. Educate other businesses about sustainability by speaking at events and conferences and provide tours of facility's sustainable practices;
8. Provide continuing sustainability training for staff and forums for staff input;
9. Include sustainability as part of staff evaluation;
10. Participate in an environmental or sustainable tourism certification program.

