

Planning Green Events, Offsite Meetings, & Retreats

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GENERAL

- Get consensus among planning team on the environmental goals of the event.
- Communicate with attendees about what has been done to make it a green event.
- Invite feedback on environmental practices, and if possible, compute what was saved.

THE FACILITY

- Choose a facility that requires a minimum travel distance and is centrally located with good mass transit access.
- Ask the facility about its environmental practices and its willingness to work with the team to do a green event.
 - Does it train staff to actively recycle, at a minimum, paper, metals, glass, and plastic?
 - Does it have a program to reduce energy use? (e.g., compact fluorescent light bulbs, instructions to guests about turning down the thermostat, turning off lights, and reusing towels)
 - Does it minimize waste? (e.g., dispensers for soap and shampoo, no disposable cups, newspapers only on request)
 - Does it have a program to eliminate harmful chemicals? (toxic cleaners, pesticides)
 - Does it provide locally grown, organic food with vegetarian options?
- Is the facility certified by Green Seal? www.greenseal.org/programs/lodging.cfm

TRANSPORTATION

- Provide participants and speakers with information on environmentally preferable ways to get to event.
- Provide vans or buses (using alternative fuels, if possible) or offer incentives to travel by public transit or bicycle. Assist registrants in arranging carpools.
- Purchase high quality offsets for CO2 emissions produced by event and/or offer a way for participants to purchase offsets on the meeting website.

FOOD SERVICE

- Ask the Food Service whether the following can be provided.
 - Vegetarian meal choices
 - Menu items that can be prepared with locally grown/in season, organic food
 - Fair trade, shade grown organic coffee
 - Durable plates, glasses, cups, and silverware
 - Cloth napkins

- All condiments in bulk using non-disposable containers (including cream and sugar)
- Water and juice in pitchers rather than single-service bottles.
- Plan snacks that are not individually wrapped.
- Have attendees sign up for meals in advance to get an accurate count.
- Coordinate with a local food bank or soup kitchen to donate unserved meal portions.

RECYCLING

- Survey the recycling containers used by the facility. Are they at the registration desk, near vending machines, and in the conference rooms and kitchen? Ensure that bins are well-marked and visible and that they are used by employees.
- Determine whether any additional containers are needed for items the facility doesn't typically recycle and make arrangements for disposition of the materials.
- Include a bin for food scraps for composting if that is feasible.
- Advertise the availability of recycling at the event.

WASTE REDUCTION

- Minimize handouts. For example, put all presentations on a website.
- Print paper handouts on recycled (at least 30 percent post-consumer) and processed chlorine-free paper.
- Use white boards with "low odor" pens or request recycled flipchart paper.
- Assure that paper handouts are double-sided.
- Ask speakers to print multiple "slides" on each page.
- Put nametags in reusable plastic covers and ask attendees to leave them in a box at the end of the event.
- Avoid promotional gifts that attendees may not want.
- If signs are used, purchase recyclable mounting board rather than foam core.

For more information see the following:

www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/grn-mtgs/chklist.htm

www.vtgreenhotels.org/articles/grnconf.htm

www.conventionindustry.org/projects/green_meetings_report.pdf



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