



## A Meeting Planner's Guide to Going Green *Tips and Best Management Practices\** Updated July 2009

This guide is offered by the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Sustainable Initiatives. Sustainable initiatives are voluntary, non-regulatory programs that assist Florida industry and citizens in protecting Florida's environment. Sustainable Initiatives programs include the *Clean Marina* Program, the Clean Vessel Act program and the Florida *Green Lodging* Program.

### Selecting a Destination

- Select destinations compatible with the event's purpose and the demographics of the attendees. If a destination requires extensive attendee travel, consider using carbon offset programs.
- Use a list of environmental criteria or the Destination Selection Questionnaire (Attachment A) with each meeting Request for Proposal (RFP). The questionnaire helps you gain 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 your environmental preferences and ask about their environmental practices.
- Include a clause in the contract with the vendor/property that states their commitment to comply with your environmental requests.
- 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.

### Choosing Accommodations and Venues

- Select properties that have earned designation as members of the Florida *Green Lodging* Program. Designated properties are listed at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging/lodges.htm>
- Use a checklist to assist you in determining the venue's/property's environmental practices. A sample checklist is located at: [http://www.ceres.org/our\\_work/ghi/bps\\_survey.pdf](http://www.ceres.org/our_work/ghi/bps_survey.pdf).
- Include a clause in the contract with the venue/property that states their commitment to comply with your environmental requests.
- Consider venues and properties willing to offer some of the following services:
  - Recycling program that includes the collection of materials such as paper, metal, glass and plastic.
  - Staff is instructed to shut blinds, turn off lights and turn down the heat/air conditioning when guest rooms and meeting rooms are vacant.
  - Guest rooms have dispensers for soaps, shampoos and lotions, or the property donates un-used portions of amenities to charity.

- A linen and towel reuse program with placards offering guests the option to reuse linens/towels. Housekeeping staff are fully trained to follow guests' wishes.
- If using multiple facilities, choose locations where the hotel and event venue are within walking distance of each other.

## Transportation

- Inform transportation companies of your environmental preferences and ask about their environmental practices.
- Include a clause in your contract with the transportation provider that states their commitment to comply with your environmental requests.
- Alert attendees to environmentally preferable transportation choices such as mass transit and carpooling for getting to their destination.
- 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*

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

### *Cruise Ships*

- Select 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.

### *Air Transportation*

- Ask airlines if they use reusable or biodegradable service ware.
- Ask if they collect service items used in flight and recycle them.
- Ask if the aircraft is fuel-efficient and low-noise.

## Food & Beverage

- Inform suppliers of your environmental preferences and ask about their environmental practices.
- Include a clause in the contract with suppliers and caterers that state their commitments to comply with your environmental requests.
- Require by contract that the caterer/supplier meet the following standards:
  - Uses reusable cutlery, dishware, linens and decorations. If disposables are unavoidable, make sure they contain a significant amount of recycled content.
  - Use compostable and/or biodegradable products ONLY when they are able to be disposed of in a municipal or commercial facility operated in accordance with best composting management practices.

- Consider using water dispensers/coolers and paper cups made with a minimum of 30 percent post-consumer recycled content in conferences and meetings rather than bottled water, or glasses and pitchers.
- 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
- Allow staff to consume left-over foods and/or donate them to a local food bank or soup kitchen, and compost or donate table scraps to farms where possible. Most states greatly limit the liability of business that donate food items to licensed food handlers.
- 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.

## Exhibitions

- Inform exhibiting organizations of your environmental preferences.
- Include a clause in the exhibitor agreement that ensures their commitment to comply with your environmental request; include the following practices:
  - Minimize the use of collateral materials, and, for any necessary materials, produce them double-sided, with a minimum of 30 percent post-consumer, recycled paper with vegetable-based inks.
  - Minimize packaging and recycle packaging when appropriate.
  - Use products which contain a significant amount of recycled content as giveaways and do not use gift items made from endangered or threatened species.
  - Try to use locally grown/made products.
  - Provide materials electronically on memory sticks or on a Web site for future reference.
  - Bring only what is needed for the event; reuse what is not distributed. Inform facilities and decorators of your environmental preferences and ask about their environmental practices.
  - If leftover materials cannot be returned, work with one of Florida's Educational Reuse Centers in your the areas. See "Resources" at <http://www.wastexchange.org>
- 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.

## Event Communications & Marketing

- Consider opening each plenary session with a green tip of the day. Green tips are located at: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/green/tips/>
- Ensure staff is informed of your environmental standards initiatives for the meeting/event.
- Communicate the event's green initiatives to attendees, stakeholders and the media.
- Reduce paper use by using the Web and e-mail to promote the event. Offering electronic registration and provide the event itinerary and proceedings on-line (including speaker notes and handouts).

- For materials that need to be printed, print on double-sided, post-consumer, recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.
- Reuse nametags made of recycled content and provide 'reuse' collection bins for them.
- Request the hotel/venue provides Banquet Event Orders (BEOs) 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.

### Office Procedures for Meeting Planners

- Establish detailed environmental policies and procedures to implement them. Communicate policies to engage all employees, vendors and clients.
- Encourage low-impact transportation (i.e., walking, biking, mass transit) which reduces energy consumption and emissions.
- Focus on cost-saving, energy-efficient efforts, including:
  - Purchasing ENERGY STAR® products when replacing equipment.
  - Using laptops when possible (on average they use 10 percent 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 (all-in-one fax, printer, scanner, copier). These generally require less energy and space than their individual counterparts.
- Shift written communications (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-consumer, recycled content paper with soy-based ink.
- 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.

\*Information in this guide was compiled from the Convention Industry Council's Green Meetings Task Force 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.

## *Attachment A*

### **Environmental Destination Selection Questionnaire**

Company XYZ is planning a conference to take place [date] for [number] delegates. We are looking for a host city that adheres to high environmental standards. Please complete the following questionnaire to assist us in our selection process.

1. Does your city have a program to recycle and/or otherwise reduce solid waste? Please describe.
2. Does your city have a mass public transit system? Please describe.
3. Does your city have a conference center that will accommodate the number of delegates identified above, and that is situated in close proximity to the airport and a selection of hotels?
4. Does your city have an environmentally sound disposal system for solid and liquid wastes? Please describe.
5. Does your city have a comprehensive environmental, or greening, plan? Please outline the major points of the plan.
6. Does your city have a program to reduce the consumption of water?
7. How does your city derive most of its energy? Does your city have a program to reduce energy consumption in place?
8. Please describe any other environmental initiatives in place within your city.

Source: [www.BlueGreenMeetings.org](http://www.BlueGreenMeetings.org)