

Minimum Standards 2017

SUSTAINABLE EVENT COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING SERVICES

Overview:

These minimum standards are intended for providing and evaluating communications and marketing activities for sustainable meetings, exhibitions, trade-shows, conferences or other events. This will include, but is not limited to, the provision of promotional, marketing, awareness and other communication material and activities associated with the event.

This guideline focuses primarily on the management, reduction or elimination of environmental impacts arising from the provision of communication and marketing activities

Interpretations

For the purpose of this standard, the following interpretations apply:

“biodegradable”	capable of decomposing under natural conditions into elements found in nature
“bio-derived renewable content (BRC)”	material which originated from plants, animals or other naturally derived sources (such as water) that can be replenished in a short time period
“bio-polymer”	all polymers which are biodegradable
“communications materials”	materials associated with the marketing and communications aspect of an event including but not limited to: paper; printed materials; giveaways and promotional items; signage; educational materials; written pre- and post-event instructions to each exhibitor, service provider or participant; registration area apparatus; forms; advertising; organisers and packaging; surveys; exhibitor advertising leaflets; event guides and maps; badges; holders; stickers; ribbons; writing pads; pens; pencils; bags; totes and lanyards.
“compostable”	capable of undergoing biological decomposition in a compost or waste site
“contractor”	a person or organisation hired to perform services on behalf of an organiser
“diversion rate”	the percentage of waste materials diverted from landfill or other traditional disposal methods to be recycled, reused or composted
“environmentally preferable”	products or services that have a reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose.
“environmentally sustainable”	components, functions or systems that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
“exhibitor”	a person or organisation that exhibits a product or service for others to view
“exhibitor contractor”	a person or organisation hired to perform services on behalf of an exhibitor, independently of an organiser

“feedstock”	source material used in the manufacture process
“general services contractor”	the primary contractor selected by an event organiser to implement the provision of general exhibition services to the event
“hazardous material”	any material or combination of materials which because of their quantity, composition or physical or chemical characteristics poses unreasonable risk to the health or safety of persons or the environment, or both.
“independent”	not directly affiliated or associated with the organisation, activity or event itself
“planner”	person whose job it is to oversee and arrange every aspect of an event.
“post –consumer”	products that have been reclaimed or reused from products that have already served the intended end-use as consumer goods
“pre-consumer”	products that have been reclaimed from the manufacturing process which have not served their intended use as a consumer item
“processed chlorine free (PCF) paper”	paper in which no chlorine or chlorine derivatives were used in the recycling process although paper products used as feedstock in this process may have contained such
“recovered materials”	waste materials and by-products which have been recovered or diverted from the waste stream other than those derived from a manufacturing process
“recycle”	recovering or reprocessing materials for use in the form of raw materials (feedstock) in the manufacture of new consumer products
“recycled products”	products that contain pre- or post-consumer materials as all or part of their feedstock
“renewable materials”	substances derived from a living tree, plant, animal or ecosystem which has the ability for self-regeneration
“service provider”	a person or organisation hired to perform services on behalf of an organiser or general services contractor
“stakeholder”	individuals, organisations or other entities that directly affect or are directly affected by the planning and execution of a specific event
“supplier”	a provider or vendor offering facilities, products or services – or a combination thereof
“toxic”	any substance that is likely to produce personal injury or illness to humans when inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin
“verified performance”	independent verification of the sustainability performance of an event
“volatile organic compounds (VOC)”	organic chemicals that have a high vapour pressure at ordinary room temperature resulting from a low boiling point, and which causes large numbers of molecules to evaporate or sublimate from the liquid or solid form of the compound and enter the surrounding air.

Minimum Standards

I. Sustainable Operations and Management

- a) The event organiser shall:
 - i. document a policy that includes definition of the event's sustainability expectations, responsibilities and objectives;
 - ii. ensure that all appropriate personnel are made aware of, and can communicate effectively, about the environmental objectives of the event;
 - iii. distribute a written copy of the event sustainability policy and objectives, and provide exhibitors, vendors and suppliers with such information by at least an exhibitor prospectus or e-newsletter or website;
 - iv. reduce the use of paper through the implementation of at least three of the following strategies:
 - a. processing at least 25% or more of an event's accounting procedures (for example invoices, receipts) electronically or online;
 - b. publishing 25% or more (by volume) of communications and marketing materials online or electronically;
 - c. printing book style or using both sides of paper;
 - d. distributing electronic files and hand-outs rather than printed materials;
 - e. providing online registration as one or the only option;
 - f. conducting pre- and post-event surveys electronically;
 - g. publishing 25% or more (by volume) of communications and marketing materials in other media format (i.e.: flash drives; CD or web-based) rather than print;
 - h. selecting the lightest, functional weight paper or plastic badge stock;
 - i. designing materials with sustainable attributes such as limited- or no-bleed; standard sheet size; light ink coverage; etc.
- b) The event organiser shall not make any claim or inference regarding the sustainability status of an event prior to the actual event itself or without independent verification of such claim or inference during or after the event.
- c) The event organiser may indicate the sustainability objectives of the event prior to the event taking place (i.e.: "we are planning to ensure a Green / Sustainable event") subject to the publication and communication of actual verified performance after the event.

II. Social and Cultural Criteria

- a) The Event Organiser shall ensure that the expected and potential impacts of the event are communicated clearly and fully with all interested and affected communities prior to the event taking place. This will include addressing any social, cultural, religious or other significant impact that may adversely affect the community, visitors, delegates or others involved in the event and should include:
 - i. raising awareness of such potential or actual impacts with all contractors, exhibitors, service providers, delegates and visitors prior to the event taking place;
 - ii. addressing the social and cultural sensitivities of host communities prior to the event taking place;
 - iii. raising awareness of host community cultural norms, practices and accepted behavior with visitors, contractors and others involved with the event;
 - iv. monitoring all impacts of the event and mitigating or avoiding those that could offend or create disagreement or which could result in complaints and disagreements with host communities, delegates and others associated with the event;
 - v. provide full, honest and transparent reporting and communication on all social, religious or cultural impacts and measures taken to avoid and address complaints associated with the event.

I. Economic Criteria

- a) The event organiser shall:
 - i. communicate information about the availability of local suppliers, services and products to all Contractors and Service Providers as part of their commitment to increasing the economic benefit of events at local level;
 - ii. actively encourage support for local businesses where appropriate and acceptable services, goods or products are available;
 - iii. ensure that a minimum of 20% of event marketing and communication materials are sourced locally;

- iv. demonstrate a commitment to the use of local communications and marketing mediums (newspapers; radio stations; brochure distribution services; etc.) during the promotional and communications activity of the event.

II. Environmental Criteria

- a) The event organiser shall reduce waste associated with communicating, marketing and managing the event by:
 - i. Managing event credentials by means of any of three of the following measures:
 - a. reusing at least 25% of lanyards or badge holders from previous events or conserving a minimum of 25% for future use;
 - b. recycling printed name cards;
 - c. offering exhibitors electronic data capture to replace the practice of business card exchange;
 - d. sourcing badges, lanyards, ribbons manufactured from biodegradable or post-consumer recycled materials;
 - ii. Managing event signage by means of any two of the following measures:
 - a. reducing the size or quantity of signage;
 - b. making use of reusable signage (inserts; digital);
 - c. recycling or repurposing signage into post-consumer products (bags; penholders; etc.);
 - d. using signage that is made from recycled materials; or
 - e. eliminating foam core-board unless identified as biodegradable.
 - iii. Managing event bags and carriers by means of any of the following measures:
 - a. encouraging attendees and participants to bring their own carriers or bags;
 - b. encouraging bag opt-out selection through pre-registration communication;
 - c. reusing at least 25% from previous events or conserving 25% for future event use;
 - d. avoiding the use of date-specific branding;
 - e. providing a bag recovery and donation facilities and ensuring distribution of donated bags to relevant causes.
 - iv. Managing promotional giveaways through at least one of the following measures:
 - a. reducing the quantity or range of giveaways;
 - b. eliminating conference and event giveaways altogether;
 - c. encouraging exhibitors to reduce or eliminate giveaways.
 - b. the event organisers shall ensure that paper products or collateral meet at least two or more of the following attributes:
 - i. certified FSC compliant by an independent certification label;
 - ii. containing a minimum of 25% (by content) post-consumer recycled content;
 - iii. certified as processed chlorine free (PCF) by at least 25% by weight;
 - iv. certified environmentally responsible by an independent label.
- b) The event organiser shall ensure that binders, signage and banners have one or more of the following attributes:
 - i. containing at least 25% bio-polymer materials by weight;
 - ii. containing a minimum of 25% recycled post-consumer material;
 - iii. are at least 25% PVC free by content;
 - iv. containing at least 25% organic material (for example jute; cotton; hemp);
 - v. containing at least 25% biodegradable materials by content.
- c) The event organiser shall ensure that other event supplies (bags, bottles, portfolios, pencils, pens, giveaways, promotional items, etc.) have at least two of the following attributes:
 - i. containing wood which has been sourced from sustainably managed forests;
 - ii. does not contain wood or wood products sourced from hardwood or other endangered species;
 - iii. containing post-consumer material such as paper-related; PET; HDPE; PP/PE or PVC or other recycled material of at least 25% by content;
 - iv. containing a minimum of 25% biodegradable materials by content;
 - v. containing a minimum of 25% renewable material by content;
 - vi. containing post-consumer material of at least 25% by content;
 - vii. containing organic material of at least 25% by content;
 - viii. has been independently certified as environmentally responsible by a recognised label.

Part Two – Interpretation Guide for this Standard

Implementing the Standard is in many instances a simple, organisational process, but the following interpretations of the Standard will assist in this regard. In all instances, these are for illustrative purposes and should not be regarded as the definitive practice.

I. Sustainable Operations and Management

Communication, awareness and marketing of events has become an important factor in the success of most events, and whether this communication takes place internally or is intended for a wide audience, the promotion of sustainable events requires an understanding of the perceived message and the actual experience of delegates, guests and clients. The principles of fairness and honesty in any claims that are being made must be considered whenever a sustainable event is planned and executed. This ranges from the products and services that are being provided or made available to the public and to the stated objectives and results of the organisers themselves.

Sustainable events start at the inception stage with the development of a **Sustainable Vision Statement** which outlines and establishes the 'rules of engagement' in respect of the overall sustainability objectives of the event.

- a) The Organiser is the lynchpin around which sustainable events are created. The Organiser usually contracts additional services such as the technical team; the décor and staging company; the artistic team and other specialised services, so establishing the sustainability objectives and 'rules' in advance is critical to the rest of the process.
 - i. The exhibition Organiser is expected to develop a Statement (or Policy) which defines the sustainability objectives of the event, including details on who is responsible for any specific element of the policy and the expectations of the Organisers. This Policy must be made known to all personnel involved in the event, and the Organiser is responsible for ensuring that everyone is aware of the sustainability objectives, and of their roles in achieving these.

Develop and make available published environmental objectives and performance criteria related to the specific event that address all the applicable environmental characteristics as described in this specification (sustainable operations and management; social and cultural; economic and environmental), related to the specific event and include these objectives in the RFPs.

The Policy must be published and accessible (printed or electronic) and it must express the organisers' commitment to managing the impacts of the event and its' activities in a sustainable and responsible manner. The Policy should address the following commitments specifically:

- to the responsible use and management of water, energy, waste and emissions
 - to the use of sustainable and responsible products and services and Service Providers;
 - to the use of local community members and
 - to a process of continual improvement.
- ii. In addition to this, everyone involved in the event must be made aware of the Policy and of the measures that have been (are being) taken to achieve the objectives themselves. Attempting to hold a sustainable event becomes more difficult when those that are in contact with the public (delegates, visitors, guests and others) are unaware of – or unable to communicate, the environmental objectives and measures being taken
 - iii. The Sustainable Vision Statement (Policy) must be freely available and visible as part of the overall event communications and marketing strategy. Whether this is through visible signage and notices in public and general areas, or on promotional websites, e-platforms and other marketing initiatives, the Policy must be visible as it encourages greater compliance by all concerned. For example, having a recycling station for waste in the main event area without some indication of what it is there for; how it interlinks with the event Policy and what is expected of visitors, becomes pointless.
 - v. While the use of electronic marketing and communication continues to evolve in the events space, communicating and marketing events still account for high paper consumption – and this in turn increases the amount of waste generated by an event. Paper consumption is related to internal communications such as memo's; orders; work-sheets; programmes; call-sheets; menu's; minutes and other administrative functions, but also external activities

that range from signage and posters to media releases and press-kits; visitor tags and name-badges; registration forms and cards; specification sheets; order forms; brochures and programmes and others.

Organisers are expected to reduce the amount of paper being used through the implementation of any of the following measures or processes:

- a. processing at least 25% or more of an event's accounting procedures (for example invoices, receipts) electronically or online;
 - b. publishing 25% or more (by volume) of communications and marketing materials online or electronically;
 - c. printing book style or using both sides of paper;
 - d. distributing electronic files and hand-outs rather than printed materials;
 - e. providing online registration as one or the only option;
 - f. conducting pre- and post-event surveys electronically;
 - g. publishing 25% or more (by volume) of communications and marketing materials in other media format (i.e.: flash drives; CD or web-based) rather than print;
 - h. selecting the lightest, functional weight paper or plastic badge stock;
 - i. designing materials with sustainable attributes such as limited- or no-bleed; standard sheet size; light ink coverage; etc.
- b) Sustainable eventing is a process, and while there is a tendency by organisers and marketing personnel to promote an event as 'Green' or 'Sustainable', doing-so before the actual event is dishonest and fraught with challenges. While the best intentions of an organiser or event owner can be communicated ('we aim to make this a green event'), until the event has ended – or is well underway, and the processes, results and operational conditions have been evaluated fully, guaranteeing a sustainable event is a guessing game. There are too many contingencies and unexpected operational challenges to be considered to guarantee any event will meet the standard. Avoid pre-emptively judging the sustainability status of your event until you are absolutely sure that it meets the prescribed and generally accepted standard associated with such. Anything less is 'greenwashing' and can damage the credibility of your efforts because it creates an expectation –preconceived and real, with delegates and visitors that lead to criticism and complaints.
- c) Bearing the above standard in mind, it is quite permissible to communicate and market the sustainability objectives and intentions of the organisers or event owner prior to the event taking place. Setting a public target for sustainability can be a valuable marketing activity, but it also creates levels of expectation that can very quickly pose communication and corporate challenges unless fully managed. By promoting the sustainability objectives prior to an event, very clear and effective measures must be taken to ensure that these objectives are met. It requires everyone involved to understand the objectives and measures that have been incorporated to realise the objectives, and to actively manage the process before, during and after the event itself.

Beware of making claims or creating unrealistic expectations in the minds of visitors, delegates, shareholders and others that are either impossible to verify and meet, or which could be interpreted differently by specialists and those with a good understanding of sustainability in general. For example, don't create an expectation of a 'carbon neutral' event with delegates before the event, unless you have already established a measurement, offset and communications strategy that provides a transparent report-back process. In the same way, avoid creating an expectation of beneficitation with local communities and organisations unless you can back it up with action.

II. Social and Cultural Criteria

Most events take place in what could be termed as a 'neutral environment' – one in which activities are of a general, relatively inoffensive nature, but there are some that due to their very product, views or activities could offend the cultural or social sensitivities of any number of interest groups and individuals.

Sustainable event communication and marketing must take into account the potential for impacts associated with such sensitivities. These range from cultural practices and the way in which Organisers, contractors, clients and visitors interact with local host communities; to religious insensitivity associated with specific beliefs and practices; social impacts related to resource use, donations and other activities and even sexual orientation considerations. Each of the potential impacts needs

to be considered when planning an event, and an effective communications campaign and strategy must be developed to address and mitigate those that cannot be avoided.

If an Organiser is aware of anything that could cause offence when planning or executing an event, it is their responsibility to take measures to avoid these and to communicate effectively with affected or impacted groups or individuals. The following examples could be considered in this process:

- Religiously inappropriate performances, activities or signage;
- Cultural activities that could include sacrificial celebration; music; performance; dance or other activity that is either offensive to host communities or to delegates and attendees;
- Social impacts associated with prostitution; child sex; visitor behaviour; nudity; alcohol consumption; gambling or any other activity that does not conform with the existing beliefs, norms or practices of the host community;
- Political activities that have the potential to create violence and disagreement in a particular community.

For example, if the event is likely to offend the religious 'norm' of a particular community, it is necessary to ensure that the affected community's concerns, objections and position are clearly communicated to all parties, and that measures that are taken to address these are communicated back to the affected parties. Even events such as motor rallies and sport events can have social and cultural impacts such as dust; traffic; safety and others, and these each need to be addressed and communicated in an effort to ensure the least possible disruption or offence to local groups or special interest groups (imagine a motor rally taking place on a local religiously important date and the potential that exists for offence).

3. Economic Criteria

Communicating the economic benefits of events can be difficult in many cases, but where possible, efforts should be made to ensure that information related to the positive impacts that events have at local level should form part of the overall communications and marketing strategy. But in addition to this, encouraging local procurement and support for local services by contractors, clients and visitors to any specific event has long-term benefits for host communities and this needs to be considered.

Marketing events takes many forms, from e-campaigns to poster campaigns, brochure and hand-out drops and local community activations. Sustainable event Organisers consider all these activities not only for their potential to attract visitors, attendees and clients, but also their ability to contribute to the local economy. This includes support for local media such as newspapers; knock-and-drop's; radio stations; advertising opportunities and competitions that contribute to the local economy in general.

Communicating the performance, benefits and results after an event is as important as the work done pre-event, and the sustainability performance and economic impacts of the event must be communicated post-event as widely as possible in order for an event to be considered sustainable.

4. Environmental Criteria

While you probably don't recognise this as a communications or marketing impact, waste (in all forms) attributed to the communications, operations and marketing of events constitutes a large part of the overall waste stream of most events. Therefore, it is important for Organisers to recognise the potential waste in this regard, and to take measures to reduce the amount of waste that either goes to landfill, or which constitutes non-recyclable or non-recoverable waste items in their general waste stream.

- a) Waste associated with the management and operation of the event can be controlled very effectively by simply considering what is being used; where it is being used; and how it can be recovered for reuse through clever and considerate design and material selection. Here are some examples:
 - **Registration Processes:** By encouraging delegates and visitors to pre-register electronically rather than manually with pre-printed forms, a large part of the waste stream is addressed. Electronic registration – even at the venue itself, reduces the need for paper products and the resultant waste. However, using electronic registration and then printing vast numbers of delegate sheets and data is counter-productive, so if you choose to use electronic systems, stick with them across all administrative processes.
 - **Lanyards and Nametags:** By selecting card or recyclable paper nametags (not the self-adhesive or plasticised type), the use of plastics and clips is avoided altogether. However, where name card holders are

unavoidable, establish a means by which to encourage delegates to return them for reuse at later events. The same could be said for lanyards. Avoid branding lanyards with dates for annual events held by the same organisation, or use neutral colours which can be reused for other events in the future.

- **Gifting:** Select gifts that are either made from recyclable materials or which can be recycled after use. Plastic items and products made from endangered species must be avoided wherever possible. Instead of branded plastic pens, use wood or cardboard alternatives and locally produced products and gifts generally consist of recycled materials and these should be considered first when selecting gifts.
- **Signage and Branding:** Avoid the use of non-recyclable or recoverable materials such as PVC and other harmful plastics and man-made fibres. Also avoid creating single-use signage and branding material as this simply increases costs and waste levels. For signage related to toilets; media rooms; restaurants; food courts and other generic (and often used) purposes, consider generic signage that can be reused for subsequent events.
- **Bags, Brochures and Information:** Wherever possible, use electronic brochure distribution systems for delegates and visitors (where they download the material at home after the event) or makes use of marketing systems that provide information on the programme; speakers and other relevant information on TV's, screens or even smart-phones. Limit the number of brochures, booklets and other collateral wherever possible, and do not pre-pack bags and delegate packs – rather let delegates select their material from a rack of items if necessary. Where bags and delegate packs are unavoidable, select products that can either be recycled or which are made from recycled material.
- **Travel and Transport:** encourage responsible travel and transport options for delegates and visitors. Consider offset initiatives that can be used by the guests and where possible, promote and communicate this information as part of the overall event marketing strategy.
- **Accommodation:** Choose your accommodation service providers with due consideration for their own sustainability activities. Joint-ventures and co-operative marketing initiatives between organisations with similar or shared values adds value to any marketing strategy and enhances the credibility and objectives of the organisers, the event and its hosts.
- **Biodegradability:** By selecting products that have been made from recycled material – or which can be recycled, and recovering them after use, the waste stream is bypassed completely.

The key to minimising the impacts associated with the promotional aspects of events is to create awareness of the need to - and a means by which the items that are provided (and which are unavoidable), are recovered for reuse or for recycling. Encourage delegates and visitors to take only what they need by avoiding pre-packed visitor and delegate packs, and rather provide the usual contents on racks from which they can select their own needs.

Encouraging the return of delegate bags after conferences and meetings provides a means to help local schools, while the recovery of pencils, pens, pads and unused paper (even notes and printed papers) often provide PR value and donations to local charities, organisations and groups.

Branded, promotional items are almost always an expectation of conference and trade-show delegates, and they often form an important part in the overall branding and communications objectives. But the selection of product (material and source) should consider the environmental impacts as part of the communications and marketing strategy as well. By avoiding harmful or non-disposable materials and products that are made from endangered materials (plant or animal) - or which involve harmful production or transportation processes, the Organiser can still communicate the brand message (and the objectives of the event) without the resultant waste and impacts normally experienced. Always consider using products and items that can be recycled or that are made from previously recycled materials and don't forget to communicate this fact to your markets.