

Understanding the EGF Certification Process

A USERS GUIDE TO EVENT CERTIFICATION WITH THE EGF



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Part One Introduction and Programme Objectives

Congratulations on taking your first step towards more sustainable and environmentally-friendly events. By choosing to align your event with the principles of the EGF Sustainable Event Standard – and submitting yourself to independent review, you have started your journey towards more sustainable – and rewarding events.

The EGF Event Certification Programme is a locally developed, independently assessed and developmental initiative designed to ensure that events in South Africa meet and maintain internationally recognised levels of sustainability and environmental responsibility. The standard is based on well-tested and proven criteria which are based on international sources and best-practice, and is aligned and informed by the **ISO 2012.1 2024** standard for Sustainable Event Management.

The overall principle of sustainable eventing is the implementation of responsible practices, which include ensuring a balance between environmental protection, social development and economic impact. This 'triple bottom line' should be practiced to promote equality, participation and education in local communities and to leave a lasting legacy for future generations. Sustainable events are those which are planned and executed based on the following minimum demonstrable set of principles:

- a) the efficient use and conservation of energy and water;
- b) the reuse, recovery and reduction of waste and avoidance of overproduction;
- c) the use of local resources in a responsible and sustainable manner;
- d) the understanding of and sensitivity towards local cultural conditions;
- e) the recognition of environmental, social and economic impacts associated with the event;
- f) the use of and support for environmentally responsible venues and locations;
- g) the involvement and beneficiation of people from the local area;
- h) the monitoring of associated impacts; and
- i) the open disclosure of information.

Our aim to provide you with a benchmark against which this and future events you undertake are both sustainable and financially beneficial. This not only creates new opportunities for your business, but it adds value to your public face by reflecting your commitment to environmentally responsible performance.

This guide will provide additional information on how you can benefit specifically from Certification – and how to achieve it in a sustainable manner. No two events are ever the same and it is generally accepted that the greenest event is the one that never takes place, but through this Programme, we hope to share the knowledge that has been developed globally and which has been proven to reduce the impact of events - while at the same time providing an important opportunity to enhance your brand.

Part Two Common Interpretations

Here is some commonly used terminology used in this document and the industry at large:

- accredited** - Recognition of the skills and competence of an Assessor to evaluate and perform assessment services of an event in accordance with the EGF Standard
- agreement** - A contractual arrangement between the client and Assessor
- assessor** - A person who has been accredited by the EGF to evaluate an event in accordance with the EGF Standard
- baseline** - a minimum or starting point used for comparisons
- benchmark** - a standard or point of reference against which performance may be compared or assessed.
- benefit** - monetary or non-monetary advantage (or both)
- best practice** - the most efficient (least amount of effort) and effective (best result) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves successful over time for large numbers of people.
- carbon credit** - a generic term for any tradable certificate or permit representing the right to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide or the mass of another greenhouse gas with a carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide.
- carbon emissions** - the release of carbon into the atmosphere as a result of the use or consumption of fossil fuel energy sources and carbon dioxide (CO₂) as a result of human activity.'
- carbon footprint** - the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation, or community.
- carbon offset** - a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere.
- certification** - third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons. Recognition of an event that has met the minimum standard of compliance with the EGF Standard
- CEP** - Certified Event Professional
- client** - the contracting party or person/entity on whose behalf the event has been organised or held and who is responsible for the payment of services or products associated with the event.
- conformity assessment** - demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled
- continual improvement** - a continual process by which the effectiveness or results of a process or activity are evaluated and improved upon

- contractor** - a person or firm that undertakes to provide materials or labour to perform a service or do a job on behalf of another.
- Corrective action** - measures taken to eliminate the cause of a detected nonconformity or other undesirable situation
- delegate** - a participant (see 'participant')
- documented** - a formalised recording of information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation
- event** - a temporary gathering that brings people together at a particular time, in a particular place, for a particular purpose. An event may take the form of sporting, entertainment, recreational, religious, cultural, meetings, conference, exhibition, incentive, organisational or any other similar activities hosted at a stadium, a venue or within a prescribed area (including the virtual on-line space)
- (alt) a planned gathering with respect to time and place where an experience is created and/or a message is communicated
- consultant** - A person who is appointed to provide guidance, support, implementation assistance and information on ensuring a sustainable event in terms of the EGF Standard
- EGF** - The Event Greening Forum
- EGF Standard** - the Event Greening Standard **EGF-S01-2015** as published by the EGF
- event greening** - a process by which an event is planned and undertaken by incorporating environmental considerations designed to minimise its negative impact on the environment.
- event cycle** - stages and activities of an event (including products and services involved, from research, conception and planning through to implementation, review and post-event activities
- event organiser** - the person or organisation that produces and/or manages all or some of the activities associated with the event on behalf of the client.
- event owner** - the client or person responsible for the overall event
- event sector** - as defined in the relevant national legislation
- financial boundaries** – any aspect of an event for which the client is financially responsible.
- green event** - an event that has minimised its impact on the environment, local community and resource requirements
- interested party** - any person, organisation or stakeholder that can affect or be affected by a decision or activity
- legacy** - the enduring physical, economic, social or environmental impacts of an event
- local** - pertaining to the local area of the event or facility

monitoring -	a process or activity designed to determine the status of a system, process or activity
objective -	result to be achieved
organiser -	an individual sustainable for the planning, implementation and management of an event, usually as part of the event organising team or organisation
organisation -	any person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives.
outsourced -	any activity which is provided by an external party as part of an organisation's function or process
participant -	an organisation and/or individual that takes an active part in the activities of an event. This may include delegates, speakers, attendees, sub-contractors and suppliers.
performance -	a measurable result
PCO -	Professional Conference Organiser
policy -	the written or published stated intentions or direction of an organisation or body
review -	verification of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of selection and determination activities, and the results of these activities, with regard to fulfilment of specified requirements by an object of conformity assessment
risk -	the combination of the likelihood of an activity and the severity of the consequences associated with the activity
scope -	The range of activities or aspects associated within the financial boundaries of the event which are included in the assessment process
service provider -	an organisation, business or individual which offers service to others in exchange for payment.
standard -	a measure, norm, procedure or model used for common and repeated use of performance or comparative evaluation and approved by a recognised body.
stewardship -	a responsibility for sustainable development shared by all those whose actions affects environmental performance, economic activity and social progress
strike -	dismantling and clearing after the event
supplier -	any person or organisation providing products, services or facilities
sustainability -	use of resources in an environmentally sustainable, socially just and economically viable manner, taking care of present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

sustainable event - an event management strategy in which the organiser and client take responsibility to protect and conserve the natural environment, respect and conserve local cultures and ways of life, and contribute to stronger local economies and a better quality of life for local communities

target - a detailed performance requirement that needs to be met in order to achieve the objective

Part Three Participation in the EGF Certification Programme

Participation in the EGF Certification Programme is completely voluntary. It will require a decision by yourself to implement and comply with the standard published by the EGF.

Certification assessments are merely a measure of how well these standards have been applied and implemented and it provides a benchmark against which future events can be measured.

The EGF Event Certification Programme recognises sustainable events on three levels according to the compliance score achieved. These are:

- **Silver Event Certification** – having achieved between 75% and 84.9% compliance
- **Gold Event Certification** – having achieved between 85% and 94.4% compliance
- **Platinum Event Certification** – having achieved above 95% compliance

In addition to this, your event could be considered as Carbon Neutral should it achieve Platinum compliance and the emissions and carbon footprint of the event are **independently** measured and offset with approved credits from a recognised body.

Please note that applying for certification of your event by the EGF will incur an assessment fee which is payable directly to the selected Assessor under the terms and conditions agreed between yourself and your selected Assessor.

Part Four Applying for Certification

In order to undergo an assessment and receive feedback and possible Certification, you will need to appoint an EGF Accredited Assessor from the list provided by the EGF or as found on the official EGF website (<http://eventgreening.co.za>).

Once you have selected the Assessor, invite them to present a proposal on their costs and deliverables. The costs of assessment will include the professional time taken by the Assessor; travel costs; accommodation and reasonable sustenance costs.

If you are satisfied with their proposal and costing, you would enter an agreement with the Assessor on the terms detailed in their proposal. In most cases, the Assessor will expect an up-front deposit with the balance due on presentation of the final report and decision on Certification.

At the very least, the Assessor must be on-site to assess your event, and he/she must provide a comprehensive report on their findings including identification of shortcomings and recommendations for improvement.

It is very important to understand that payment for the assessment is no guarantee that your event will achieve certification. You are entering into a service agreement with your Assessor and he/she cannot guarantee or influence performance or in meeting the certification score. This decision is taken by the EGF based on the report and findings submitted by the Assessor and their decision is independent of the actual event itself.

In most cases, the selection and retention of an Assessor is undertaken by your event organiser or the PCO you have appointed based on your request for certification. In this way, the negotiations and agreement will be between the parties on your behalf.

Part Five The Role of a Sustainability Consultant

You may decide that your greening journey requires the services of a sustainability consultant who is versed in the requirements of the EGF Standard. These individuals have developed their knowledge and consulting skills over time and are in a position to advise and assist in the implementation of measures or procedures necessary for certification.

The Sustainability Consultant may not also assess your event for compliance - even if they offer both services. This is to ensure an independent measure and assessment of your performance and to provide an unbiased evaluation of the event itself.

A professional conference manager may include this service as part of their overall service to your event, and they could retain the services of the Assessor when the event takes place.

Part Six Our Standards and Compliance Criteria

The EGF has developed and published an internationally competitive green event standard (**EGF-S01-2015**) which is available for download from the EGF website (<http://eventgreening.co.za>). This standard is the basis for evaluating the sustainability of your event and as such, you will need to understand and apply this standard in order to achieve event certification.

All of the compliance criteria are explained and detailed in the Standard and they should be used to guide your decisions when planning your event.

Not all events include every aspect of the Standard – for example, you might not have an exhibition as part of your conference or an exhibition will not include seminars and meetings. Use the Standard as required and try ensure that that which is relevant is applied and practiced.

Part Seven The Assessment Process

Prior to the event, the Assessor will meet with you or your PCO to understand the scope of the event and what will be assessed. While there may be some activities or administrative processes that have no bearing on the outcome of the event (such as an off-site golf day or self-booked accommodation), generally everything on the official programme or within the financial boundaries of the event is considered 'in-scope' for the purpose of the assessment. As an example, here are some of the most regular aspects considered:

- The Administrative processes involved in the event including registration
- The choice and type of venue selected
- The destination selected and the impacts this has on transport and attendance
- Transport of guests and equipment
- Accommodation booked by the client
- Energy, waste and water consumption associated with the event
- Gifting; Goodie-bags; lanyards and nametags; etc.
- Recyclability and waste minimisation
- Exhibition services and materials
- Air quality and emissions
- Staff and local services procured
- Any other service, activity or aspect for which you are financially responsible.

The assessment process begins the day before your event takes place. This will require the Assessor being present at the build-up of the event (sometimes that may be two days ahead depending on the complexity of the event itself) and observing and taking notes of what takes place.

During the actual event, the Assessor will continually access all front- and back-of-house areas of the event (public and service areas) where he/she will observe the actual implementation processes of various services and activities. For example, the Assessor will inspect the waste area of the venue to monitor waste volumes and the extent to which waste separation takes place. The Assessor will also take photographs of aspects of the event both as a means to illustrate a point in the reporting process and to record the operational practices involved.

At no time may the Assessor offer advice or become involved in the operational phase of the event. Their task is to observe and evaluate compliance, and not to interfere or provide consulting advice. Any advice they may wish to give will be included in their event report after the event unless what they find poses an immediate health, safety or security risk.

The Assessor will request certain information from your suppliers and technical partners such as distances travelled for shuttle or transport services; energy and water consumption; waste and recycling volumes; delegate/attendee registration numbers and transport requirements associated with delegates and guests. This may only become available after the event, but he/she will make arrangements for their availability while at the event. It is important that when selecting and contracting your suppliers and service providers, you make clear to them that they will be required to meet your event sustainability objectives and that they are required to make information available to the Assessor on request.

At the end of the event, the Assessor will review his/her findings and evaluate the compliance values of the standards before compiling a report on his/her findings. The report – together with the Assessor's scoresheet, will first be submitted to the EGF for final evaluation and quality control, before being made available to you after the payment of the balance of the agreed assessment fee.

It is very important to understand that payment of the Assessment Fee and contractual obligations between yourself and your assessor are not dependent upon your event being certified as sustainable. In the event of an unsuccessful assessment, you remain liable for the full contracted payment with your Assessor.

Where the standard has been met, you will receive a certificate from the EGF to verify the status of your event (Bronze, Silver or Gold level) which can then be used as you see fit to either announce publicly or for internal use.

Part Eight Reporting – the Roadmap to Improvement

Perhaps the most important outcome of any event assessment is the reporting process. This report will include a summary (and sometimes details) of what was noted and observed, and will provide you with a list of shortcomings noted; recommendations on how to address the shortcomings; examples of good practice or high achievement and recommendation on how to improve your overall performance for future events.

As mentioned elsewhere, not all events will necessarily meet the prescribed standard but that should not stop you undertaking this process. Assessment of the event is perhaps the most important learning tool available in eventing in general. It will provide an independent view of the organisational, operational and planning processes of your event and it acts as a roadmap to long-term improvement and development.

Where the event fails to achieve the minimum for certification, you will be provided with reasons for this and recommendations to improve or correct the shortcomings involved. It will also indicate ways in which you can improve your performance in future events and will serve as a continuous improvement tool that can be incorporated into future events undertaken by your business.

Part Nine Non-Compliance and Corrective Measures

During the event, the Assessor will evaluate over sixty separate aspects of performance. These are all linked to the published standard and scored on a basis of the extent to which the requirement is being met. Where there is no compliance, the score will reflect a 'zero' score and you will be given recommendations of how to address this aspect in future events. Where the aspect is fully met and even surpassed with best practice, you will receive a score of '10'.

Any score between the two poles will carry an observation comment or recommendation, so that you can correct the shortcoming in future events or even improve the overall score achieved.

Obviously, you are entitled to adopt or even reject the recommendations made, but that could undermine your overall commitment to sustainable meetings and events.

Part Ten The Appeals Process

You have the right to appeal any findings that may be included (or omitted) in your final report or in the outcome of the EGF decision.

After the assessment and presentation of the report, you will have a period of thirty (30) calendar days to consider the findings and to either provide evidence that will support a revision of the findings or which will clarify any misunderstandings that may have arisen with the Assessor.

Once you have made such representation, your status will go on revision with a panel of senior Assessors at the EGF who will review your appeal and either adjust the findings where this is appropriate, or confirm the original findings. In either case, you will receive a copy of their decision.

It is important to note that no appeal will be considered unless the Assessor has been paid the balance of the agreed fee and the appeals process cannot be used to justify the non-payment of the Assessment Fee to the Assessor.

Part Eleven Complaints, Comments or Criticisms

If you should have any complaints about any aspect of the Certification process, you are invited to address these to the Chairman of the EGF in writing. All complaints will be investigated fully and where necessary, corrective action will be taken to avoid a repetition of the cause for the complaint in the future.

Should you be dissatisfied with the performance of your Assessor, we urge you to attempt to address this between the parties as you have entered into an Agreement with the Assessor and not the EGF. Where such attempt is unsuccessful, you have the right to cancel your agreement within the terms of such agreement and to notify the EGF in writing of your reasons for such measure. The EGF will conduct an independent review of the Assessor in this event.

Of course, we welcome any comments or criticisms that you may have about our system as every comment received helps us ensure the most effective and globally competitive event certification scheme.

All complaints, comments or criticisms should be directed to:

The Chairman

Event Greening Forum
179 A Jan Smuts Avenue
Parktown North
Johannesburg

info@eventgreening.co.za;