



Sustainable Events Guide

Chris' commitment to sustainability runs deep, from her home life to sitting on boards of environmental organizations to training and volunteering to help reduce our collective carbon footprint.

As a professional speaker, it was time to be more hands-on in helping to create a more **sustainably focused approach to support the meetings and events industry**.

The good news? It's a win in all directions. **Our industry has the power to influence significant change**, where carbon-neutral events become the norm. Our reach is wide. At the same time, **these shifts help you deliver an aligned and powerful experience for your attendees**.

Doing this will:

- **Create outstanding attendee engagement** and connection by including them in making the sustainability goals possible
- **Increase your brand loyalty** as more people want and expect sustainable practices
- **Support local businesses** and reduce the environmental impact that adversely affects lower income communities
- **Boost your budget**
- **Intrigue, impress, and inspire stakeholders**
- **Align with Millennial and Gen Z values** around conservation and the environment

Research shows that picking a few steps and applying them across all of your events for the year and adding a few more the next year makes sustainability more manageable and results in long-lasting success.

Our Sustainable Speaking Checklist helps you identify some practical ways to make your events more eco-friendly. This activity aims to support you in expanding the toolbox of resources you can use to reduce greenhouse gasses and eliminate waste from your event. It is a "Choose Your Own Adventure" activity where you can build on whatever sustainability efforts you already have in place.

Planners report that the steps were easier than they anticipated, sharing they found it relatively easy to build on their success and add more steps in the following years (Courtney Lohmann - MPI WEC workshop).

Participation in our **"Sustainable Speaking Initiative"** is optional. It is our way of supporting your efforts and partnering with you in designing sustainable meetings and events.



THE **WILD**
INSTITUTE

SUSTAINABLE EVENTS GUIDE

Chris Heeter of The Wild Institute is passionate about the environment and helping the meeting industry convene events that are good for the planet as well as the attendees. She has created a sustainability initiative to support and encourage you to make more intentional choices at your event.

From the checklist below, choose new actions that you will implement that total at least 10 points. This earns you 3% in Wild Buck\$ on Chris' speaking fee. Or choose new actions that total at least 20 points and earn 6% in Wild Buck\$. This is by no means a complete list, so feel free to submit other sustainable actions you will introduce at your event, and we'll determine together the number of points to associate with your action. Save this document and keep it handy. Then as you plan your event, edit it, save, and send it to us to claim your reward.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Reduce and re-use for the highest impact

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Get an accurate head count for your caterers to avoid leftover food.

1

Consider the attendance rate when ordering food. Current recommendations are to plan for 70% participation rather than 100%.

1

Use reusable dishes and silverware instead of single-use food service items.

4

Eliminate single-use bottled water and provide ways for people to fill their own bottles and drinking glasses.

4

Request that water not be pre-poured at tables.

2

if water needs to be portable, and people forget to bring a bottle with them to fill, provide water in aluminum cans (best for recycling) instead of plastic.

2

Serve food buffet style rather than boxed lunches to reduce trash and wasted foods that people have not selected to eat.

3

Pause before re-filling serving plates on buffets and re-fill only to the level needed for the people waiting in line. (Once food leaves the kitchen, it is no longer able to be donated).

2

Provide snacks and meals that are organic, seasonal (when possible), and sourced from local farmers and small businesses.

3

Provide snacks in bulk rather than individually wrapped items.

3

Serve at least 50% plant-based items.

3

Eliminate red meat entrees.

2

Serve condiments and dressings in bulk rather than in individual small packets.

2

Work with the local sanitary district to design a waste-free event. An example of what some districts are offering can be found [HERE](#).

6

RECYCLE great options to reduce what goes to landfills

Know what is acceptable to recycle, compost, or landfill at your venue, and create additional signage that accurately explains what materials are recyclable and where to recycle them.

2

Select a venue that has back-of-the-house sorting for recycling and composting - and let attendees know this is happening.

4

If you must use single-use items (plates, utensils, etc.), use compostable service items if composting is available. However, please note compostable items in landfills are not better.

2

Set up a plan to distribute left-over food to shelters or other charities that accept food in the area.

4

VENUE

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Use a LEED Certified hotel and/or conference center with the highest certification possible (The LEED levels are Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum).

4

If LEED buildings are not available, choose a venue that is committed to sustainability standards and practices. Ask about their use of renewable energy sources; if they routinely recycle and compost; what water-saving practices they use; if there is LED lighting; what are their food and beverage practices.

2

Ask for (and use) a list of recommended sustainable suppliers.

2

Use a venue that has vans or shuttles to and from the airport to reduce rental cars and individual rides to the location.

3

Pick a venue that is centrally located with restaurants and entertainment within walking distance.

2

Choose a venue that provides shuttles to transport groups of people at a time to local attractions.

2

DECOR AND CENTERPIECES

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Use potted, native wildflowers as centerpieces (rather than fresh-cut flowers that typically travel from South America) and then donate them to urban farmers or community gardens.

5

Get creative with the theme and spirit of your event by decorating with reusable items or items that can be donated (this will help eliminate polyurethane balloons, glow sticks, and other short-lived, single-use items that take centuries to degrade).

4

EXHIBITORS

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Create a reusable display or design a PowerPoint that is played regularly with the list of sustainable actions you've taken and the estimated impact.

4

Reuse or recycle materials from exhibitor booths (carpets, signage, etc.).

4

Create a policy to cut down on waste:

- Discourage give-aways.
- Request that any giveaways distributed be green-themed.
- Request that any giveaways are locally and sustainably made.
- Request that any giveaways are something that can be used repeatedly.
- Discourage individually wrapped promotional items, candy, or food.

6

Put your sustainability goals in the contracts with exhibitors, get them on board, and enlist their help in promoting and celebrating the outcomes of the goals.

6

VENDORS

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Ask for the sustainability policies of the vendors and choose those that have the best practices. Ask if they have data and metrics for emissions for the products/services you are considering. This helps not just your event but also moves our industry forward—the more this is requested, the more they will strive to meet the goals.

3

Put your sustainability goals in the contracts with your vendors to ensure they follow the goals you have set.

6

Ensure printers use recycled and recyclable materials for signs.

2

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Choose a destination that is as easy to get to as possible (within public transportation or driving distance for the majority of attendees and has easy direct flights to the location).

3

Provide attendees with information on the most environmentally friendly means of transportation to get to the event.

2

Actively encourage shuttles, carpooling, and public transportation.

2

Off-set the carbon footprint of travel for everyone working the event and make a big deal about it at the event. (This is not a solution, but it does bring awareness and some responsibility for the travel involved in an event. There are several good programs out there, including [Native Energy](#)).

4

Provide a list of ways for attendees to off-set the carbon footprint of their travel.

2

Offer a discount or the ability to attend a special gathering if attendees off-set the carbon footprint of their travel.

4

Research the airline your team will be using and select the greenest nonstop flights possible (Many airlines are beginning to identify the lowest carbon option flight to certain destinations when you search on flight options on their website).

2

COMMUNICATION

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Use all electronic communications before, during, and after the event: digital, QR codes, and projected information.

4

Use an app for attendees to track the schedule and all other communications.

3

Tell attendees why you chose to go 100% digital and your goals to reduce waste.

3

If paper is required, use FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified and recycled paper, double-sided, and print fewer than you think you need.

2

Design banners without specific dates so you can re-use them at other events.

2

If you need signage, use recyclable materials (not foam core).

2

Use reusable name tag holders and design a good system for collecting them at the end.

2

Avoid using badge ribbons as they are not recyclable or reusable.

2

ENGAGE ATTENDEES

Doing Will Do Next Time Points

Communicate your sustainability goals and efforts before, during, and after your event:

- Explain why you've chosen to host a more sustainable event.
- Describe the impact you hope to achieve.
- Use consistent messaging and actions throughout the event.

5

Do an initial self-audit regarding the impact of your event. This will offer a baseline to compare your results as well as highlight where you can make the most impact.

4

Share the results, the measured outcomes of:

- Amount of plastic eliminated (number of water bottles not used, etc).
- Gallons of water saved.
- Pounds of landfill diverted.
- Pounds of CO2 saved.

6

There are companies/websites that help you measure the carbon footprint of your event. See the resources page on the website for options.

YOUR OWN IDEAS

Determined Points

Feel free to list other sustainable actions you will introduce at your event, and we'll determine together the number of points to associate with your action. [CONTACT US](#)

Now add up all your points from the "Will Do" column and your own ideas:

YOUR EXPERIENCE

Let us know how your experience went. From a testimonial to comments on what could be better, we want to hear from you so that we can make our Sustainable Speaking initiative worldclass. Thank you!

IMPORTANT: Please include "proof of reinvestment" documents, i.e. receipts, photos, certifications, etc. [contact us](#) with any questions.

Email chris@thewildinstitute.com