



— cvent —

The Complete Guide to Sustainable Meetings for Hotels

Learn eco-friendly best practices in an era of safe meetings and events



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Chapter 1: Why Go Green? The Case for Sustainability in a Safer Meetings Era



Introduction

Before COVID-19, sustainability was the emerging topic on the minds of event professionals and event attendees. [A PromoLeaf February 2020 survey of event attendees conducted by Censuswide](#) found that 85% of respondents prefer or strongly prefer attending conferences with sustainable practices.

Then the pandemic hit and the world stopped. Now as we approach recovery, event professionals, event attendees, and travelers are picking up where they left off. They're more conscious than ever of how their choices affect the world around them, and they're increasingly concerned about the impact they have on the environment. According to a [Publicis Sapient survey](#), 58% of consumers say that the pandemic has caused them to think more about the environment.

Sustainability and safety are two critical elements of meetings and events as we move past the influence of the pandemic. To meet the needs of event professionals, suppliers can help them craft responsible meetings that take both safety precautions and the environment into consideration.

We compiled this guide with actionable tips and real-life examples of how hotels can operate more sustainably and accommodate green meetings in a world with COVID-19 restrictions. For an inside perspective, we interview sustainable event consultants and hotels that put sustainability at the forefront. Learn how to operate sustainably and support responsible meetings, how to promote safety and sustainability to planners, and why sustainability matters — even now.

CHAPTER 1 Why Go Green? The Case for Sustainability in a Safer Meetings Era

Meetings and events create tons of waste — literally. According to [MeetGreen](#), the typical conference attendee produces 2.6 pounds of landfill waste per day. For a 1,000-person, 3-day event, that translates into the weight of 2.6 compact cars — or 7,672 pounds. That waste comes in the form of food (including packaging and materials), banners and signage, badges, tabletops, packing materials — the list goes on and on. All that waste has a negative impact on the environment.

Sustainability isn't just a benefit for your business and the environment — it's about the bigger picture of operating more responsibly, aligning yourself with the values of today's consumers, and contributing to the overall health of your clients and the environment.

According to a [Publicis Sapient Survey](#), 73% of consumers are taking note of brands that are making a difference during COVID-19. Katie Fallon, EVP of Corporate Affairs at Hilton, noted in [The Future of Travel & Tourism in the Wake of COVID-19](#) report that “greater scrutiny on the sector, including from an ESG perspective, for climate and destination stewardship post COVID-19 is expected, and we will welcome it. The sector has a very important role to play in mitigating climate risk on travel destinations globally, and we will need to work together to ensure that as we reinvent a lot of our businesses, we keep sustainability front and center.”

In this chapter, we cover:

- [The importance of going green](#)
- [Appeal to a wider audience with the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [What planners look for in a sustainable venue partner](#)
- [The hotel perspective: Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Beyond Green Travel](#)

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 **Supplier Tip:** 58% of consumers are thinking more about the environment since COVID-19, so be sure to highlight the ecological benefits of staying at your hotel.



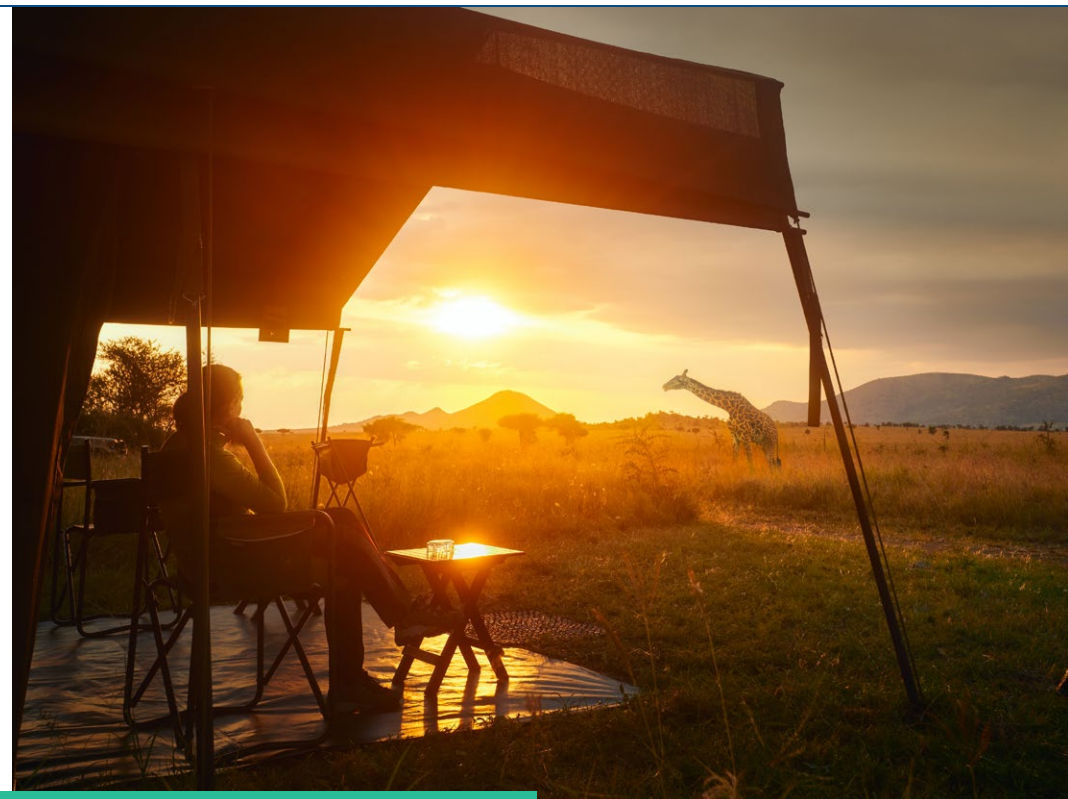


The importance of going green

Sustainability is not just a passing trend — it's here to stay

During COVID-19, [the United Nations conducted the largest-ever survey](#) of public opinion on climate change. The survey spanned over 1.2 million people from 50 countries representing over half of the world's population. Of those surveyed, 64% responded that climate change is a global emergency — even during the pandemic.

[A January 2021 survey of travelers](#) commissioned by IHG Hotels & Resorts found that more than half of respondents said COVID-19 has made them more socially and environmentally conscious about their impact on the world when traveling. For younger Americans, that number is higher, at 78%.



💡 Supplier Tip: COVID-19 has also made consumers more aware of the value of nature and wildlife, and the need to steward these resources. This could lead to a rise in eco-tourism, so consider how you can offer guests a personal or hands-on experience with local nature.

“In four to five years’ time, if you’re not doing [sustainability] you won’t have a business. You need to embrace this right now,” said John Kelly, Senior Director, Marketing EMEA BCD Meetings & Events, speaking in [a Cvent podcast](#). “The next generation of workers want to be engaged with businesses like this. Your clients expect this. Your competitors are already doing it...It will set you apart from the crowd if you start doing it now.”

The same IHG survey found that globally, 82% of adults are committed to maintaining their sustainability habits when they travel, like recycling and minimizing food waste. And, they’d be willing to spend an average of 31% more on [accommodation they know operates sustainably](#).



Sustainability is a multigenerational issue

Millennials and Gen Z are especially driving the conversation, often choosing to use — or work for — companies with sustainable business practices. In their [Global Millennial Survey 2020](#), Deloitte compiled responses from two surveys — one conducted pre-pandemic and another after COVID-19 had emerged. In both surveys, protecting the environment and healthcare/disease prevention were top concerns: “If anyone doubted the importance of protecting the Earth to these generations, the fact it was ranked as a top concern both before and during a global health and economic crisis demonstrates where their priorities lie.”

But it’s not just millennials who want to do business with sustainable companies. “People buy from people who share their values,” said Nicola Stopps, CEO of Simply Sustainable, at [Cvent CONNECT Europe 2019](#). According to the 2018 [Porter Novelli/Cone study on company purpose](#), Americans prioritize companies that advocate for issues (81%), protect the environment (79%), and give back to important causes (73%),

These consumers and travelers include the planners, event attendees, and business travelers your hotel wants to attract. Planners are looking for hotels that are operating sustainably and embody these values because their companies and event attendees prioritize it, too.



💡 **Supplier Tip:** Cvent’s podcast [How Great Events Happen: Sustainable is Attainable](#) shares tips for how to be a more eco-friendly event partner.



Sustainability can lower costs over time

Sustainability doesn't have to be at odds with providing an amazing event and maintaining costs. Whether it's to save water, limit energy use, or reduce or recycle waste — sustainability can lower costs over time.

With sustainability still being a prominent issue among consumers, says Nicola Stopps, CEO of Simply Sustainable, at [Cvent CONNECT Europe 2019](#), "If you're not responding to your stakeholders, your customers, your clients, your employees on sustainability now, it's going to cost you money now. It's much more cost-effective to tackle sustainability now." While it may cost more upfront, there is gradual, [long-term return](#).

That's been the case for MeetGreen, a conference and event management company and sustainability consulting firm founded in 1994. Since MeetGreen started measuring its efforts in 2008, it has saved clients between \$5.3 million and \$7 million.

"Sustainability makes sense on so many levels for hotels and event venues," says [Nancy J. Zavada](#), CMP, founder and president of MeetGreen. "Sustainable initiatives such as environmentally efficient HVAC systems and water-saving fixtures save money on building operating costs and also reduce an event's environmental footprint."



💡 Supplier Tip: Drive growth by aligning to sustainability, and develop KPIs to measure and report your success. [EY Global](#) talks more about the benefits.




Appeal to a wider audience with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

In an [article for Hospitality Net](#), Lisa Xie, École Hôtelière de Lausanne Alumna currently working at UNESCO, wrote that as consumers become more aware of sustainable issues, the demand for sustainable venues and hotels will rise. Aligning your hotel with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), writes Xie, can help drive growth, appeal to a wider audience, and save money in the long-term.

Hotels and event venues should take note of these goals because companies and event professionals — your clients — are implementing them into their own business plans. Twenty-eight companies — including Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Levi Strauss & Co., and AstraZeneca — have committed to [even more ambitious climate targets](#) than what is outlined in the SDGs. Other companies like [Kimberly-Clark](#), [jetBlue](#), and [Nike](#) have plans for how they will contribute to the SDGs. When these companies — and others — look for event venues and hotels, they'll have a mind toward ones that also prioritize and align with these goals.

Review the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#) and consider how your hotel or venue can contribute to this global call to action. It doesn't need to be a huge undertaking or an overhaul of your entire strategy — empowering your employees to volunteer in the community, committing to planting trees, or ramping up your recycling and composting efforts are smaller ways you can contribute to a more sustainable world.

“When companies focus on a purpose that is rooted in creating value for others, improving the world we live in, and inspiring the organization at all levels, they may increase their ability to drive profits and create sustainable value,” [reported Ernst & Young](#), one of the Big Four accounting firms.

 **Supplier Tip:** Planners are looking for innovative venues and SDG-friendly locations. [PCMA gives more insight into what planners want when it comes to sustainable events.](#)

How major hotel brands are implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

For industry examples on the SDGs in action, look to Accor, Marriott, and Hilton.

In 2011, Accor launched “[Planet 21](#),” aligning with 10 of the SDGs. As part of this effort, they've committed to putting [1,000 urban gardens](#) on their hotel grounds or roofs and terraces. The food will be featured in the restaurant menus in dishes, cocktails, and herbal teas.

Marriott has taken on the SDGs with its Serve [360 initiative](#) and 2025 [Sustainability and Social Impact Goals](#). Through a detailed [yearly report](#), Marriott provides transparency into each of its property's efforts.

Hilton's [Travel with Purpose 2030](#) Goals strive to cut their environmental footprint in half and double their investment in social impact. Since 2008, Hilton has reduced water consumption by 22%, waste output by 32%, and energy consumption by 22%. All of their properties worldwide are certified to ISO 50001 (Energy Management).



Julia Spangler

Owner, Ecosystem Events

What planners look for in a sustainable venue partner


Through her sustainable event and consulting service [Ecosystem Events](#), owner Julia Spangler has [helped planners divert thousands of pounds](#) of food and other waste from landfills. We asked her to share her insights into how hotels can be responsible event partners — even during a pandemic and while under budgetary constraints.

Q: For hotels that might not have the budget to pursue LEED certification, what other kinds of things can they do to reduce their carbon footprint and attract planners interested in sustainable events?

Julia Spangler: One low-hanging thing hotels can do is contact their energy utility and inquire about renewable power options. Many utilities offer an optional green power program, where customers can pay a small premium on their energy bill to have some or all of their energy sourced from renewable methods. Find out if such an option is available to your hotel, and if so, consider opting in for 100% of your energy use, or at a minimum, offering planners the option to choose renewable energy for the duration of their event. You can also search for renewable energy providers nationwide at [Green-e.org](#), a third-party certifier of renewable energy.

Another great thing hotels can do is begin to measure the results of any existing green practices you have in place. Having results to share with planners will set you apart from venues that make green claims but can't demonstrate their impact. For example, if you have a recycling program, work with your recycling and trash partners to calculate the recycling rate for your hotel — then set a goal to increase it. Being able to share your current performance, and having a goal to improve, will give you credibility with sustainability-minded planners.



 **Supplier Tip:** Find renewable energy providers and certified carbon offsets through [Green-e.org](#).



Amy Butterfield

Senior Vice President, Group Sales
Preferred Hotels & Resorts



Costas Christ

Brand Leader of Beyond Green and
President of Beyond Green Travel

💡 Supplier Tip: LEED certification isn't the only option. Use this table for identifying other credentials for verifying your sustainable practices.

The supplier perspective: Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Beyond Green Travel

In February 2020, [Preferred Hotel Group](#) acquired Beyond Green Travel, a company specializing in sustainable tourism services and consulting, and in November 2020 launched [Beyond Green](#). This [new hospitality brand focuses on](#) “environmentally friendly practices that go beyond the basics; protection of natural and cultural heritage; and contributing to the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.” We spoke with Amy Butterfield, Senior Vice President, Group Sales, Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Costas Christ, Brand Leader of Beyond Green and President of Beyond Green Travel for their take on sustainability in meetings and events.

Q: Pre-pandemic, sustainability was a focus for the hospitality and events industries. Do planners and travelers still have an interest in being green in a world changed by COVID-19 or have their desires shifted?

Amy Butterfield: We absolutely would say that travelers and planners still have an interest in being green, and in fact anticipate an increase in demand for destinations and hotels that prioritize a commitment to protecting the planet. It's safe to say that 2020 motivated all people to consider their health, community, and environment in a more profound way, leaving humanity with a new sense of responsibility for taking care of the world that surrounds us.


Looking ahead, we foresee a heightened awareness of caring for people and protecting the planet, which will also become increasingly important in how people make their travel decisions. As we consider planners, they are looking to leisure travelers to dictate their planning patterns. So as leisure travelers seek properties that champion and embrace sustainability, planners will ensure those hotels and resorts remain center stage.




Q: What tips do you have for hotels who want to be more green and host sustainable events while still adhering to COVID-19 safety precautions?

Costas Christ: There is a lot that Beyond Green Travel does to help meeting planners and hotels develop top-level sustainable events, which includes providing a menu of sustainable event options that can be shared with clients to select from. Three basic and important steps that an event planner or hotel can and should do to make their events more sustainable include:

1. Ditch the plastic water bottles: Provide all attendees with a refillable steel or aluminum beverage container, ideally insulated for hot or cold beverages. Also make sure the event registration bag itself, if there is one included, is made from recycled and/or biodegradable materials. There are plenty of creative options in this regard, and it is a great way to increase brand awareness after the event because attendees can use these items when they are out and about.
2. Provide biodegradable post-consumer waste paper cups for both hot and cold beverage area. Also provide water pitchers at event tables and water coolers in event areas where guests can refill their water containers or utilize paper recyclable “coffee” cups for beverages.
3. Remove all single-use plastic utensils for food, and instead — if metal cutlery isn’t available — offer single-use utensils made from biodegradable banana, corn, or potato starch and/or recycled post-consumer paper plates and napkins.



 **Supplier Tip:** Provide facemasks unique to your hotel, location, or the event – it’s a great opportunity to offer guests and attendees a memorable amenity that they can reuse instead of disposable PPE.



Takeaways

- Consumers are taking note of companies that are making a difference during COVID-19, and they're more aware of how their choices affect the environment and those around them. When event professionals, event attendees, and travelers look for event venues and hotels, they'll have a mind toward ones that also prioritize and align with their safety and sustainability goals.
- Promote your sustainable best practices to planners and publish the impact of your policies. This will set you apart from other venues that make green claims but don't have the data to back it up.
- See where your hotel has the capacity to support the Sustainable Development Goals. This will help you stand out to planners whose own companies have sustainability goals and requirements. It will also show that your hotel is tapped into the industry and consumer trends.

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Resources

- [The Environmental Footprint of an Event](#) (MeetGreen infographic)
- [The Need for Sustainable Practices in Conference Planning](#) (Promoleaf survey)
- [How Great Events Happen: Sustainable is Attainable](#) (Cvent podcast)
- [To Recovery & Beyond: The Future of Travel & Tourism in the Wake of COVID-19](#) (World Travel & Tourism Council)
- [IHG Hotels & Resorts Reveals Guests' Growing Passion to Travel Better](#)
- [Sustainability in Events: The Growing Need to "Go Green"](#) (Cvent CONNECT Europe)
- [Booking.com 2019 Sustainable Travel Report](#)
- [Green Venue Tips: Save Money and the Environment](#) (Cvent blog)
- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [LEED certification: Why LEED](#) (U.S. Green Building Council)
- [Green Building Rating and Certification Systems](#) (Whole Building Design Guide)
- [Green-e certified renewable energy and carbon offset products](#)

CHAPTER 2 Creating Sustainable – and Safer – Meetings and Events

Heightened safety concerns and an increased awareness of how our behavior affects those around us and the planet are a few of the lessons that derived from living during a pandemic. A [May 2020 survey](#) of residents in Brazil and Portugal found that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had great influence on sustainable consumption, environmental awareness, and social responsibility.

In a [July 2020 survey of Amsterdam residents](#), 24% reported an increased interest in sustainability, as compared to the start of the pandemic: “Many respondents said that the pandemic had been a ‘wake-up call’, prompting the realization that we, as global citizens, should take better care of the environment and each other.” [Data released](#) by NASA indicates that pollution in some of the epicenters of COVID-19 has been reduced by up to 30%, likely a cause of reduction in vehicle emissions and the new way of life brought about by the pandemic.

Expectations of safety and an increased interest in sustainability have migrated into the meetings and events world, and have manifested in the desire for more responsible meetings. In a [survey by PCMA Convene editors](#) in April 2020, suppliers said that if given the chance to rethink their strategy or role as it relates to the business events industry, they would refocus on environmental sustainability services and helping planners and event organizers to understand the supplier costs and impact that live events have.

Hotels can demonstrate dedication to responsible meetings through operating a more sustainable hotel in general and offering greener meeting options, while still adhering to safety measures.

In this chapter, we cover:

- [The hotel perspective: Portola Hotel & Spa’s Reduced Waste Conference Program](#)
- [Sustainability in an era of safer meetings](#)
- [Tips to make meetings and events more sustainable](#)

 [Takeaways and resources](#)





Terri D'Ayon Joyce

Director of Sales


Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay

The hotel perspective: Portola Hotel & Spa's Reduced Waste Conference Program

[Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay](#) in California is an LEED-certified venue dedicated to conserving environmental resources and supporting local and national environmental programs. We sat down with Terri D'Ayon Joyce, Director of Sales, Portola Hotel & Spa, to discuss the hotel's [Reduced Waste Conference Program](#) and tips for hosting safer and sustainable meetings.

Q: Pre-pandemic, sustainability was a focus for the hospitality and events industries. Do planners and travelers still have an interest in being green in a world changed by COVID-19 or have their desires shifted?

Terri D'Ayon Joyce: While sustainability continues to be of significance to Portola, safety is the current and primary focus of our meeting planners booking conferences for the next two years. As such, this shift has given us pause to how we continue to uphold our important

 **Supplier Tip:** Rather than focusing on going completely green during a safer meetings era, try to be more environmentally friendly by recycling, using petroleum-free hand sanitizers, and composting food scraps.



green initiatives and still maintain our commitment to delivering on the highest protocols for the safety and comfort of our guests. Perhaps a more current state of expression and impact to being completely green during COVID-19 would be “environmentally friendly.”


In pre-pandemic times, planners and travelers were accustomed to using the appropriate receptacles between recycled items and trash. With COVID-19 necessitating the need for more individualized packaging and larger conferences typically reliant on buffets, there are time efficient ways to achieve the look and feel of a creative buffet setup while keeping the waste to a minimum; or at the very least, provide a more environmentally friendly event. Buffets have been replaced by plated meals or individual servings, but may also be achieved through the addition of a food service attendant at each station serving food items. Use of recycled to-go products for restaurants and catered events, petroleum free hand sanitizers, composting food scraps, Zoom calls replacing the need for air travel, regional meetings replacing national meetings: These are all viable as we pivot into post COVID-19 and adopt a reduced waste era.



Q: What tips do you have for hotels who want to be more green and host sustainable events while still adhering to COVID safety precautions?

TDJ: Use your resources to educate the entire team and the attendees, not just the Catering, Banquet, Culinary, and Conference Service teams. Successful sustainable events require buy in from each individual. People feel good about doing the right thing.

- Use recyclable materials for disposable items; request and support packaging that is recycled.
- Creatively design meal presentations using “jarcuterie” or washable glass containers and use fewer containers.
- Provide reusable water bottles for attendees to carry for the duration of the meeting(s).
- Convert printed materials into event apps. Send post conference links to all attendees.
- Utilize digital signage and monitors to present information to attendees. Send links of presentations to all attendees, post conference.

 **Supplier Tip: Providing low carbon menu options and using digital signage to reduce paper are a few ways to shrink an event’s carbon footprint.**

Q: For hotels that might not have the budget to pursue LEED certification, what other kinds of things can they do to reduce their carbon footprint and attract planners interested in sustainable events?

TDJ: Hotels don’t need to be LEED certified to make their mark on a carbon footprint. It starts with passionate volunteers from the heart and face of the hotel who share the common goal of wanting to make a difference within the community, our shores, and the earth.

The Portola launched a GREEN LEEDERS committee and appointed a committee Chair and Co-Chair to coordinate volunteer efforts. We conducted bi-monthly beach clean ups by adopting nearby Del Monte Beach and measuring and weighing the waste and recyclables collected. This information was recorded and shared with all employees to raise awareness. It also provided for great team building and a photo opportunity. In addition to recycle and waste collections, the volunteers participated in gleaning harvested fields in nearby Salinas Valley. Our team also started a Ten at 10, on a weekly basis. Buckets and gloves were provided to participants who collected trash, cigarette butts, etc. from the surrounding plaza of the hotel. This allows for fresh air, a little exercise, and camaraderie across departments.

Our sales team joined GMIC (Green Meetings Industry Council) and attended collaborative meetings for educational ideas and information on best industry practices. Purchasing carbon offsets is also an option and your hotel has a lot of choices. Carbon offsets compensate for your emissions by canceling out greenhouse gas emissions somewhere else in the world. The money you pay to buy offsets supports programs designed to reduce emissions. Those might include projects to develop renewable energy, capture methane from landfills or livestock, or distribute cleaner cooking stoves.



Q: What makes Portola Hotel & Spa stand out from other sustainable hotels? Are there any particular unique green initiatives you've undertaken that have had an impact on your community?

TDJ: Portola Hotel & Spa launched Reduced Waste Meetings in 2019. Portola Hotel & Spa defines a Reduced Waste Conference (RWC) as a meeting or event with a collective effort between the hotel and the conference attendees to divert waste from the landfill by executing sustainably conscious efforts and initiatives for groups up to 500. Due to the pre- and post-meeting needs between the planner, the attendees, and Portola Hotel, we are only able to cover Reduced Waste Conferences for self-contained meetings at this time, meaning we do not measure results for meetings with the Monterey Conference Center space.

Reduced Waste Conferences begin with education: education of the Portola team who serve the conference, education of the meeting planner(s) authorizing the partner commitment to an RWC, and education of the attendees in order to maximize their best results.

A successful Reduced Waste Conference requires a commitment between the Portola Hotel, the meeting planners, and attendees of this conference. Messaging is a critical component to our communication with attendees. We utilize [Cvent Passkey](#) as an effective channel of communication to the conference attendees registered at Portola. In addition to our personal introduction informing attendees they are participating in a Reduced Waste Conference, we explain what their participation means.





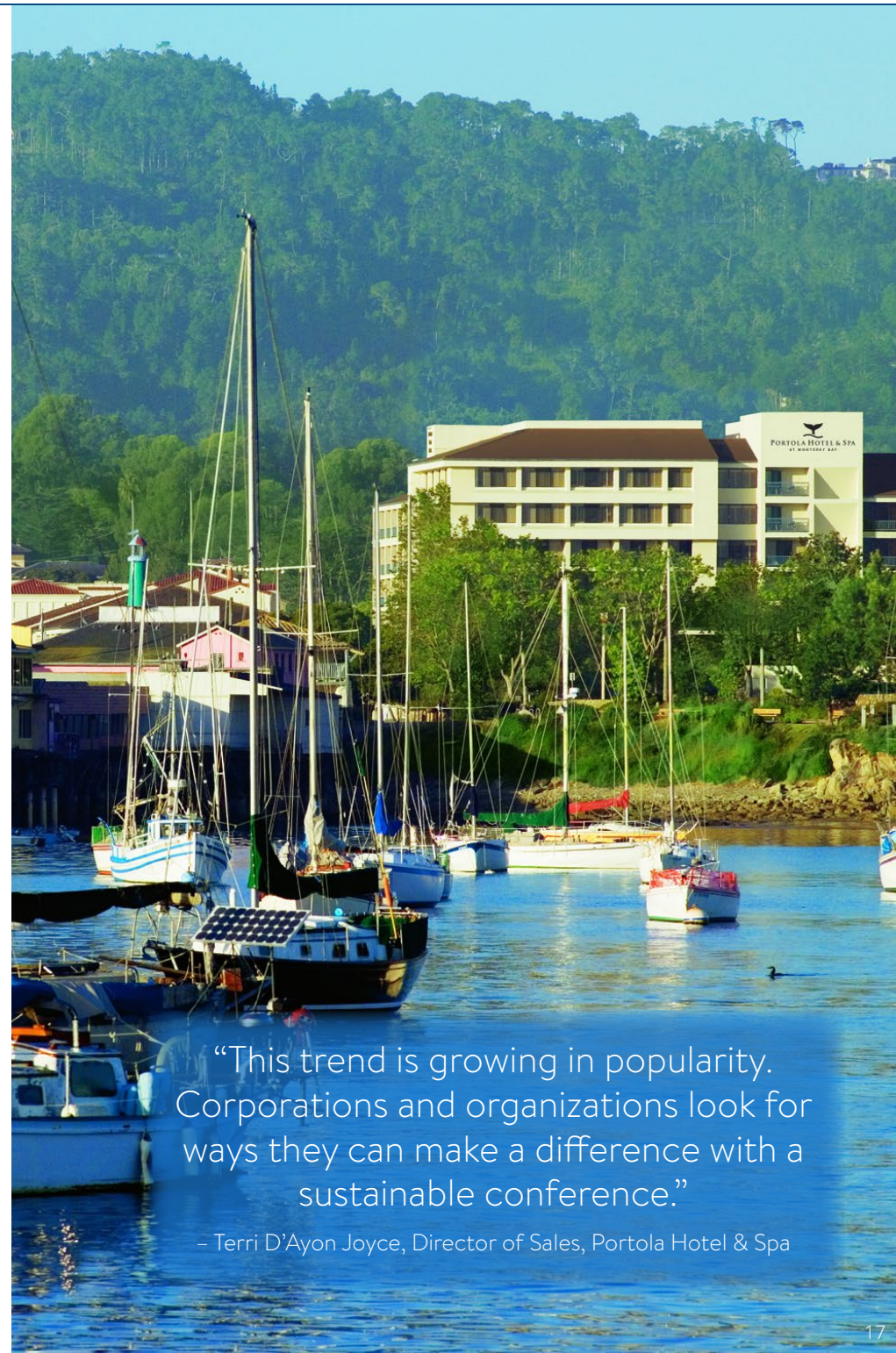
- Source organic and sustainable ingredients from local farmers and vendors throughout Monterey County
- China, glassware, and silverware replacing the use of to-go cups
- Compost pre- and post-consumer waste
- Separate recyclable and compostable materials to prevent them from going to the landfill

All guests attending the conference will receive the Reduced Waste Conference key packet. Operationally, we provide banquet signage. Banquet staff is assigned to stations to help attendees with recyclable, compostable, and trash during the conference. Banquet staff must properly break down all items from tray jacks and deliver trays to the Kitchen Waste Diversion, which is set up behind the scenes. All waste is separated and sorted by trash, food waste, aluminum, cardboard, and plastics. Each item is logged in a tracking sheet.

Housekeeping is equally important to this reduced waste effort. Staff breaks down recyclable, composted, and trash from ten designated guest rooms daily. Weighed waste and recyclables are submitted to Catering at the end of stay. We also track guests who opt out of housekeeping service.

Within 48 hours of the conclusion of the event, our Catering Manager provides the client with an overview of waste diversion and product sourcing. This includes a tracking sheet with final numbers, a Carbon Footprint Analysis, and a farm map indicating where we sourced our ingredients from.

This trend is growing in popularity. Corporations and organizations look for ways they can make a difference with a sustainable conference and Portola is delighted to partner with our clients through this initiative.



“This trend is growing in popularity. Corporations and organizations look for ways they can make a difference with a sustainable conference.”

– Terri D’Ayon Joyce, Director of Sales, Portola Hotel & Spa



💡 Supplier Tip: Touchless water dispensers, bento boxes for appetizers, and QR codes for menus and printouts are a few tips for sustainable events covered in the Cvent podcast, [How Great Events Happen](#).

Sustainability in an era of safer meetings

Implementing sustainable practices does not have to be at odds with hosting safer meetings during a pandemic. It takes educating yourself and the planner about what is possible, and reassuring the safety of your sustainable practices.

Lou Marrocco, founder of Brandywine Events, sat down with us in our podcast, [How Great Events Happen](#), to discuss sustainability during a pandemic. His company promotes sustainability and zero waste, budget-conscious events.

Marrocco noted that a “safe meeting” doesn’t have to mean single-use, disposable items. Touchless water dispensers in lieu of plastic water bottles and bento boxes of appetizers are some alternative serving options. Dishwashers also produce high enough temperatures to kill germs, said Marrocco, so there is no need for using plastic dinnerware. Providing QR codes for menus and schedules instead of having printouts is also an easy way to save paper and be more hygienic.

Julia Spangler, owner of Ecosystem Events, had some tips for us about green event practices during COVID-19. We asked her a few questions about sustainability in an era of safer meetings:

Pre-pandemic, sustainability was a focus for the hospitality and events industries. Are planners today still interested in sustainable events or have their priorities shifted? Will any pre-pandemic green and sustainable practices need to change as a result of COVID-19 and safety concerns?

Julia Spangler: Planners are still interested in sustainability. Event professionals have continued to enroll in educational programs about sustainability throughout the pandemic. However, some planners have made assumptions or been misinformed about what sustainable practices are possible during the pandemic.



One green event practice that needs to be adapted slightly amid the pandemic is the self-serve beverage station. Hotels should switch to staffed beverage stations where a masked staff member operates the dispensers or pitchers, so you don't have lots of people touching those surfaces. Refilling glasses and water bottles is still safe, as long as the beverage station staff are trained to follow a no-contact refill process where a few-inch gap is maintained between the vessel being filled and the dispenser or pitcher. Staff should also not handle any glasses or bottles that have been used by guests — guests should hold their own vessel while it is being refilled.

What tips do you have for hotels who want to be more green and host sustainable events while still adhering to COVID-19 safety precautions?

JS: Check out trusted resources for information about what sustainable practices make the most impact ([Project Drawdown](#) is a great free resource for this information).

Hotels should become experts in concerns planners may have about reusable dishware and glassware. Venues with in-house catering operations have a huge opportunity to prevent one of the biggest sources of event waste by reassuring planners that reusable dishware and glassware are safe, instead of pivoting unnecessarily to disposables. The Sustainable Event Alliance has published a [comprehensive best practices guide](#) for safely implementing reusable serviceware at events and venues. This thoroughly-researched guide should be required reading for all hotels and caterers who want to confidently and safely provide reusable dishware.

💡 **Supplier Tip: Reduce waste by reassuring planners your reusable dishware is safe with these best practices from [Sustainable Event Alliance](#).**



Tips to make meetings and events more sustainable

When evaluating a sustainable event venue, different planners will look for different things, depending on their needs and goals. The following sections outline various ways hotels can operate more sustainably, support responsible and safer meetings, and attract planners, event attendees, and travelers who are looking for a sustainable stay.

Reduce the event carbon footprint

The term “carbon footprint” often arises when discussing sustainability of an event, a business, or a building, for example. [Carbon footprint](#) refers to the total amount of greenhouse gases produced by our actions. A [2018 Green Lodging Trends Report](#) found that nearly half (49%) of hotels measure their property’s carbon footprint.

Hoteliers play a key role in helping planners reduce their event carbon footprint. A few ways to do this are by implementing green and energy efficient practices like composting and recycling on-site, obtaining green credentials, donating leftover food and event items, using locally sourced food, and connecting attendees to public transportation or shuttles. We’ll talk more about these later in the chapter.

In order to shrink your carbon footprint, you first have to measure the typical footprint of an average conference and average conference attendee. The [main sources of an event’s carbon footprint](#) are

transportation, energy use in venues, and meals. According to MeetGreen, air travel is the largest contributing factor to an event’s carbon footprint, [coming in at 70%](#). Eight percent is guest room energy and 4% is venue energy — which will be even lower for energy efficient or green venues. Meals account for 3%, and 10% is car travel and 4% is train travel — which can be offset by shuttle or carpool programs.

For hotels that want the details of how to measure their carbon footprint, Sustainable Hospitality Alliance’s [Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative](#) is a methodology tool to determine the carbon footprint of hotel stays and meetings.

Compensate for emissions with carbon offsetting

“[Carbon offsetting](#)” means estimating your carbon dioxide emissions and then compensating for your carbon footprint by investing in renewable energy developments that create a net positive benefit for the environment. Some examples are wind energy projects and agricultural and waste management projects to reduce methane.

In a [Booking.com survey](#), 56% of respondents said they would choose to offset the carbon footprint of their vacation accommodation if there was an option to do so. Hotels can assist planners and guests by offering consultation services and helping them to estimate their event’s carbon footprint. Then, give them the option to invest in their own carbon offsetting initiative with verified organizations.



 Supplier Tip: Calculate the carbon footprint of hotel stays and meetings at your property with [this free tool](#) from Sustainable Hospitality Alliance.



Connect attendees to eco-friendly transportation

Travel can account for up to [80% of an event's carbon dioxide emissions](#).

Since air travel has a large impact on the environment, planners will likely look for venues that can provide more ecologically-conscious methods of transportation once onsite. If your venue is accessible to public transportation, highlight that on your website. Or, partner with a public transportation provider to offer reduced rates on fares for event attendees. Once COVID-19 has waned, carpooling and a shuttle bus service will again become viable options for shared transportation.

Consider providing electric car charging stations, or connecting attendees with hybrid or electric cars. Let planners know if your hotel is close to bike sharing options, or if it is walking distance to nearby attractions and convention centers. Globally, [nearly seventy percent](#) (69.2%) of hotels provide bike storage, subsidized public transportation passes, shuttle buses, and parking for low emission vehicles. About 48% of hotels in the Americas provide electric vehicle charging stations.

Compost and recycle

The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) reports that landfills are the third-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the U.S. — in 2017, they accounted for 14.1% of these emissions. When food waste is not separated from trash, it can comprise 30-40% of landfill costs. So while there's a cost associated with composting, it can also [save your hotel money on landfill fees](#) and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Even with a good composting and recycling program at the venue, a mid-sized corporate tradeshow with around 5,000 attendees will [still go through tons of waste](#). Recyclables typically make up 35% of the total waste, and 21% is organic waste that includes compostables. Forty-one percent of waste will still go to landfill. As an example of composting onsite, [137 Pillars House](#) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, recycles over 90 percent of its garden and kitchen waste. It is either composted or turned into biochar, which both go right back into the hotel's gardens and grounds.



Supplier Tip: Offer bike storage or bike sharing and highlight your hotel's proximity to nearby attractions or points of interest that are within walking distance. As events and travel resume, people may be more comfortable with these transportation options in the wake of COVID-19.

Because of the pandemic, recycling is even more crucial. "Right now, there is a critical need for raw materials in the manufacturing supply chain, especially paper and cardboard," EPA administrator [Andrew Wheeler said in a statement](#). "Business closures and limited operations means less recycled material for American manufactures, and we all must do our part to recycle more and recycle right to fill this immediate need." When it comes to events, recycling plastic bags is an easy way to reduce your carbon footprint and help the supply chain. Think of all the errant plastic bags that are left at events — collect them and reuse them or take them to a supermarket to be exchanged or recycled.

Sustainability in action: large-scale events

For an example of sustainability at a large-scale event, take the U.S. Open. Sustainability is a major initiative of theirs, and in 2018, [97% of the waste generated at the tournament was diverted from landfills](#) — qualifying it as a zero-landfill event. [Some of their green initiatives](#) include composting more than 70 tons of food, locally sourcing produce and ingredients, donating leftover food to the community, using paper products made of 100% recycled materials, and reducing the amount of waste created. These practices can be implemented by hotels and event venues of any size who are looking to support planners in hosting sustainable meetings.

COMPOST



Reduce waste

Reducing waste in general is another way to lessen an event’s impact on the environment. Recycling and composting both help with this, but there are preventative behaviors planners and venues can use to reduce waste.

Many hotels have gone the route of [eliminating the use of plastic straws](#) and other single-use plastics, which greatly reduces the amount of waste and plastic that finds its way to the oceans. Items made from bamboo or sugarcane, or other compostable types of cutlery, cups, containers, and plates are alternative sustainable options for single-use plastics. Marriott International pledged to replace single-use toiletry bottles with large pump dispensers. This is “[expected to prevent about 500 million tiny bottles](#) annually from going to landfills; that’s about 1.7 million pounds of plastic, a 30 percent annual reduction from current amenity plastic usage.”

To reduce signage at events to save paper, venues can offer electronic options or digital signage. If tactile signs are necessary, venues can connect planners with local printers and vendors to support local businesses and reduce transportation costs. Disposable masks and PPE will continue to be a part of safer meetings for the time being, which adds up to even more waste. Consider offering reusable masks — some hotels are taking this as an opportunity to produce branded, unique, high-fashion, or [luxury masks as amenities](#) for guests. If disposable PPE must be used, look into recycling options like [TerraCycle](#) or reducing waste in other ways. Sangri-La hotels in Southeast Asia have [donated their used linen](#) to be turned into reusable facemasks — a great example of reusing materials to reduce waste.



Supplier Tip: When it comes to waste prevention, the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) suggests starting off small and targeting one or two materials for reduction, and getting all employees involved in your waste reduction efforts.

When it comes to reducing food waste, [about 73% of hotels](#) have food waste prevention strategies. Things like smaller portion sizes, reworking menus to allow for ingredient reuse, and changing the size of the serving vessels or plates to discourage waste are ways to cut back on the amount of food that is thrown away or composted. This [report from the Waste and Resources Action Programme \(WRAP\)](#) outlines strategies for food waste prevention and management.

Reuse and donate

Globally, [40% of hotels donate](#) excess food to community kitchens or other local programs. [Another report](#) found that some convention and exhibition centers help event organizers donate conference materials and donate surplus food locally.

John Kelly of BCD Meetings & Events suggests helping planners to facilitate [reusing supplies](#) from an event being held prior to their event, and planners share the cost — like reusing the A/V kit and the stage set. Or, to assist planners in selecting

local vendors for their supplies instead of flying them in. “It’s a really simple, really effective way to get around that double impact that some events will cause,” says Kelly.

Sustainability in action: donating surplus food

Terranea Resort in California, for example, [partners with Chefs to End Hunger](#) and donates any surplus, unserved food. Through this initiative, they’re diverting food from landfills and helping hungry families in their local area. The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) offers resources and information for hotels and businesses looking to donate excess food.



Sustainable F&B

Sustainability isn't only about things like recycling, green credentials, or reducing waste — it stretches to food and beverage choices, too. A [PromoLeaf February 2020 survey](#) of event attendees found that those under the age of 34 have a notably strong preference for sustainable dining practices.

An article from [Corporate Event News](#) says a sustainable event menu starts with knowing the origin of the food you are serving. [Local, seasonal produce](#) is a better environmental choice: It has less distance to travel from farm to consumer, and since it is in season, it does not require artificial hothouses in order to grow. A [study](#) from Oxford University and the University of Minnesota found that red meat has the highest impact on the environment. “Meat-free Mondays” and offering vegetarian and plant-based options are some ways to create a more sustainable menu.

Consider also making menus from the previous day's meals to cut down on waste and make sure leftover ingredients are used. Any remaining food can be donated or composted. The [Hilton San Francisco Union Square](#) donated over 2,000 box lunches in the aftermath of one of their busiest conferences, and the hotel's composting program saves around \$7,000 per month in landfill fees.

With sustainable F&B, it isn't just about the type of food, but the quantity, too. At events, there's often the “fear of running out of food.” Technology can be used to mitigate this and more accurately determine how many people will be attending the conference, so the right amount of food can be prepared.

Sustainability in action: reducing overproduced meals

For example, Fairmont Washington, D.C., Georgetown [reduced the number of overproduced meals](#) for conferences and meetings by opting for by-the-minute prep adjustments instead of the standard 5% event overage.



💡 **Supplier Tip:** Offering smaller portion sizes or smaller plates can help reduce the amount of food waste at events. For more on how to create a sustainable menu and reduce food waste, read this resource from [Events Industry Council](#).



Utilize the outdoors for rooftop gardens and creating open-air venue spaces

Venues are using their rooftops and surrounding property to boost their green potential by planting urban gardens. It's a practice that is growing worldwide — 34% of hotels have [greenery planted on the roof](#). Urban gardens and green spaces reduce AC costs through the cooling effects provided by plants. In addition to the sustainability factor, creating gardens and appealing outdoor spaces can catch the attention of planners and attendees who might be more comfortable participating in outside activities or open-air, socially distant gatherings.


These urban gardens aren't just for energy-saving or event space purposes — they can be used for growing food locally as well. Growing food onsite means the food goes straight from the garden to the table. The less distance food has to travel, the lower its environmental impact is likely to be. Globally, 42.5% of [hotels grow food ingredients](#), like vegetables and herbs, onsite. This practice is higher in the Asia Pacific region, at 61.5%. About 10% of hotels choose to grow their vegetable gardens on their rooftops.

Sustainability in action: growing food onsite and creating outdoor spaces

[Accor](#), for example, has goals for increasing the number of [urban gardens in across their hotels](#), to shorten the supply chain and help to reduce food waste from its restaurants. [Fairmont Waterfront](#) in Vancouver has a 2,100 square foot herb garden, located on the third floor terrace. The hotel offers rooms with patios that lead directly out to the garden, where they grow over twenty types of herbs, vegetables, fruits, and edible blossoms.

Guestroom green practices

Event attendees are interested in [attending events with sustainable practices](#). This matters for your group business because planners and attendees will be on the lookout for hotels and venues that mirror the

 **Supplier Tip:** The building blocks of a green event are recycling, use of china instead of disposables, and local, fresh food. Get more [green venue tips on the Cvent blog](#).

same sustainable practices. And that desire for sustainability doesn't stop at the event — they want to have a sustainable stay in-room, too.

For in-room green practices, hotels can implement a towel reuse plan, or only provide linen and towel changes upon request or every three days. In the Americas, about [93% of hotels](#) use this kind of model. Globally, 51% of hotels give guests the option to opt out of housekeeping altogether.

Some hotels are eliminating plastic PVC keycards and using ones made from paper, wood, or bio-plastics instead. Other hotels allow guests to [unlock their rooms using their smartphones](#). Providing recycling bins in-room, having water glasses instead of plastic water bottles, and donating bathroom amenities are other simple ways to be more environmentally friendly.

Sustainability in action: eco-friendly key cards and in-room products

1 Hotel South Beach in Miami Beach, Florida [uses reclaimed wood key cards](#), room glasses made from wine bottles, toiletry dispensers in showers, terrariums instead of cut flowers, and hangers made from recycled paper. [Inn by the Sea](#) in Cape Elizabeth, Maine uses nontoxic Green Seal products to clean guest rooms, paper key cards, bamboo towels, and recycled sheet rock.



Takeaways

- Become an expert in concerns planners may have about the safety of reusable dishware. [Sustainable Event Alliance](#) has guidelines for how to implement “reusables” consistently and safely.
- Consider carbon offsetting your own carbon footprint or connecting planners with verified organizations to help them offset events held at your venue.
- Compost food waste whenever possible and reduce waste in general to save on landfill fees and reduce emissions.
- Help planners to reuse supplies from previous events being held at your property to reduce the environmental impact of the event.
- Use local, seasonal produce in menus and reuse ingredients to reduce waste.
- Create green spaces and gardens — they’re good for outdoor event spaces, growing vegetables onsite, and can reduce heat throughout the building if they’re located on the rooftop.

Resources

- [Tips for sustainable events and venues](#) (MeetGreen)
- [Global Best Practice Guidelines: Reusables’ Hygiene at Events](#) (Sustainable Event Alliance)
- [Free tool](#) for hotels to calculate the carbon footprint of hotel stays and meetings (Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative)
- [Carbon Offsets — The Basics](#) (MeetGreen)

- [State of Sustainability in the Events Industry Survey 2019](#) (Events Industry Council)
- [Tips for Green Meetings](#) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
- [Green Lodging Trends Report 2018](#) (Greenview)
- [Green Venue Report 2018](#) (Greenview)
- [Sustainable Hotel Ideas: 25 Ways to Go Green](#) (Cvent blog)
- [Toolkit to help reduce food waste](#) (Hotel Kitchen, with World Wildlife Fund, American Hotel and Lodging Association, and The Rockefeller Foundation)
- [Sustainable Management of Food](#) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
- [Sustainable Food & Beverage Practices for Meetings and Events](#) (Events Industry Council)
- [Information about what sustainable practices have the most impact](#) (Project Drawdown)
- [How Great Events Happen: Reopening Strategies & Sustainability at Live Events](#) (Cvent podcast)
- [How-to Guide for Shrinking Your Event’s Carbon Footprint](#) (Events Industry Council)
- [Food loss and waste, and how to donate food](#) (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

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CHAPTER 3 Promoting Safety and Sustainability to Event Professionals

There's a clear interest in sustainable travel and event venues: [The Pinterest 100](#) — the top searches with sustained, upward growth from 2019 — highlighted [responsible travel](#) and [conscious consumption](#) as rising trends for 2020. Travelers and event attendees want to stay in eco-friendly hotels and partner with sustainable event venues, but they don't always know which hotels fall under that category: [Booking.com research](#) found that 72% of global travelers say they are not aware of eco-labels for vacation accommodations.

[Catherine Dolton](#), Vice President Global Corporate Responsibility at InterContinental Hotels Group, noted on [Hospitality Net](#) in February 2021 that their business customers are increasingly requesting information about sustainable accommodation and meeting options in order to meet their own targets for environmental and social change. To connect with your customers and make them aware of your sustainable initiatives, she suggests taking an easily-digestible, storytelling approach to sharing information.



“Driving awareness at the outset with compelling content across our own platforms is important,” writes Dolton. “Informing booking decisions with information about hotel-specific features; reinforcing how guests can get involved and play a part; demonstrating the bigger picture to show what is being led at group-level; capturing data and feedback...will all allow for further improvement.”

However you choose to tell your sustainability story, make sure that you tell it — planners and attendees want to know what your hotel is doing to help the environment.

In this chapter, we cover:

- [The hotel perspective: Hilton's LightStay, EventReady, and Meet with Purpose](#)
- [Tips for how to share your sustainability story](#)
- [Position yourself as the ideal sustainable event partner](#)
- [Showcase sustainable — and safer — meetings](#)
- [Inform guests and get them involved](#)
- [Create a dedicated section of your website or Cvent microsite](#)
- [Publish case studies, green meeting guides, checklists, and tip sheets](#)
- [Leverage social media to tell your story](#)
- [Support sustainable initiatives in your local community](#)

 [Takeaways and Resources](#)



The hotel perspective: Hilton's LightStay, EventReady, and Meet with Purpose

[Hilton](#) is committed to cutting its environmental footprint in half by 2030 — reducing waste across its portfolio, improving water stewardship, and implementing sustainability initiatives in its supply chain are just a few ways in which Hilton is operating more sustainably. We spoke with Kate Mikesell, Vice President, Global Corporate Responsibility, Hilton, for more insight into Hilton's environmental initiatives, like LightStay, EventReady and Meet with Purpose.

How do sustainability and green practices benefit hotels?

Kate Mikesell: As we think about venturing out to destinations when it's safe to travel, we must work together to reduce the strain it will have on our environment. This is something our guests recognize, and we are seeing more calls for the travel industry to come together to do our part in the fight against climate change.

The vast majority of our guests have expressed how important sustainability is to them. When they stay at our hotels, they want to ensure they're staying at properties that are operating sustainably. At a high level, we know the success of the hotel industry depends on us protecting the beautiful destinations where we operate, so that they can remain vibrant for generations of travelers to come.

How can hotels be the best partner to planners who are looking to host a sustainable event?

KM: A few different things come to mind including:

- **Having a conversation.** Many companies these days have corporate responsibility commitments, and some are looking to their vendors (including their hotel partners) to help them achieve their goals with every interaction.



Kate Mikesell

Vice President, Global Corporate Responsibility, Hilton

- **Researching or asking about your customers' goal.** This is a great way to create an event together that is not only fun and engaging, but also helps to have a positive impact.
- **Leverage industry best practices.** At Hilton, we've shared a few key points in our proprietary [EventReady Playbook](#), which provides planners with tips and advice on how to make their events more sustainable.

What tips do you have for hotels who want to be more green and host sustainable events while still adhering to COVID-19 safety precautions?

KM: As we developed the sustainability elements of the Hilton EventReady Playbook, we thought a lot about how to protect our guests while not forsaking our sustainable efforts. The Playbook provides tips on how to limit waste while ensuring safety — and gives customers thought starters for simple activities they can incorporate into their event to support the local community.

We found that often the best place to start is by thinking about waste or unnecessary items, such as event swag, exhibit furniture, and guest room amenities. For example, by converting materials digitally and using mobile apps, you can limit the use of excess printed items, paper, and pens — which often go to waste — and avoid one more physical touch point.

You can take that a step further by thinking about when single-use items, such as plastic water bottles, are actually needed, and consider alternatives. For example, we found in some cases a sterilized water glass with a paper cap will be just as clean, if not cleaner, than that plastic water bottle.



💡 **Supplier Tip:** Operating more sustainably doesn't have to mean a huge overhaul of your business. Small changes, like switching off lights and fixing leaking taps, can add up to big savings over the course of a year.

For hotels that might not have the budget to pursue LEED certification, what other kinds of things can they do to reduce their impact on the environment and attract planners interested in sustainable events?

KM: It's worth noting the cost of some sustainability related improvements have decreased in recent years, but there are several steps that hotels can take to operate more sustainably that can be implemented with minimal or no budget. While some of these basic steps may seem insignificant on their own, small changes from switching off lights to fixing leaking taps all add up and can save hotels thousands of dollars every year.

At Hilton, we use a proprietary sustainability management system we developed called LightStay to closely track our utility consumption across all of our hotels globally, allowing us to measure everything from the minuscule changes to the big investments.

The implementation of LightStay was a major turning point in helping Hilton to tangibly illustrate for our business leaders, investors, and owners how all our actions were adding up to big savings — both in costs and for the environment.

I'm also proud to say that 100% of our properties are certified to ISO 50001 (Energy Management System), giving us the largest certified portfolio in the world.



💡 **Supplier Tip:** If you have a great sustainability story, incorporate it into your marketing materials and post it on social media. Share, too, how you're prepared to host safer and sustainable in-person events when the time comes.

Tell us more about LightStay and Meet with Purpose.

KM: Since we began tracking our environmental performance through LightStay in 2008, we have reduced our carbon emissions by 36 percent, waste by 44 percent, and water by 22 percent across our managed hotels. We also estimate that through these reductions, our hotel owners have saved over \$1 billion in cumulative utility costs.

As part of our LightStay system, we have developed a Meeting Impact Calculator, which enables us to give our customers a detailed estimate of the environmental footprint for their specific meeting or event planned at any one of our hotels. With the benefit of this information, our customers can make decisions about what other steps they may want to take to further reduce their impact or offset it completely.

Hilton has learned a lot through these efforts, and we're sharing the lessons we've learned to our meeting and event clients. Through our [Meet with Purpose](#) program, we've also provided ideas to get our clients thinking about how they can make their meetings and events even better while also supporting the local community and environment.

Q: What marketing tips do you have for hotels who want to share their sustainability and green initiatives, and reach planners and travelers who are looking for an eco-friendly hotel or venue?

KM: The best place to start is by simply sharing your story and making it easy for potential guests and customers to find. More and more, meeting planners and travelers are looking for what steps your hotel may be taking to be more eco-friendly. The best thing you can do when you have a great story to share is to put it front and center. Incorporate your story in your marketing materials, ensuring hotel teams are equipped with the latest messaging to share with potential guests/customers consistently throughout the hotel. The power of social media is another channel to get the word out, amplify, and promote to an even larger audience.



Tips for how to share your sustainability story


Position yourself as the ideal sustainable event partner

To position yourself as a valuable event partner, find out what a “sustainable event” or a “green venue” means to the planners, and, if possible, meet them where they are. In a discussion at Cvent CONNECT Europe 2019 about the [growing need to go green](#), panelists suggested that venues should find out what measurements are important to the planner and help them to achieve those goals: Is it zero waste, zero plastic, reduced carbon footprint, reduced travel?

Different planners will have different sustainability goals and requirements, but others will have more simple needs, said Nicola Stopps CEO of Simply Sustainable. Think about your events offerings differently and provide different service packaging for clients based on their sustainability needs, she suggests.

Event sustainability consultant Shawna McKinley gives a list of some considerations planners might have when choosing a sustainable event venue:

1. Does the destination, hotel, and venue help me reduce overall travel for my group, particularly by air? This may mean it enables fewer trips and transfers, shorter travel distances, and/or good access to inter-city rail and transit.

 **Supplier Tip:** Use [Cvent’s Quick Guide to Safer Meetings and Events](#) to show planners your ability to host a safer meeting that adheres to COVID-19 health and safety precautions.



Shawna McKinley

Event sustainability consultant and strategist

2. Can the hotel and venue easily provide and support technology that allows streaming content or hybrid event formats for remote audiences?
3. Is it the best clean energy option? Many hotels and venues already benefit from a low carbon electricity grid. Others may have site-specific renewables, such as a solar micro-grid.
4. Is the property verified to practice energy efficiency? This may be demonstrated through a certification, like ENERGY STAR or LEED, or a verified energy management system.
5. What additional sustainability priorities are in place to support zero waste, protect and promote employee well-being, and generate local community benefit?

Keep these points in mind as you choose how and where to market your sustainable capabilities to event professionals. It can help you hone your message and stand apart from the competition.

Showcase sustainable — and safer — meetings

Create messaging around your safer and sustainable meetings and develop a content calendar for when, how, and where you plan to post the information. With Cvent’s [Content Marketing Ads](#), you can promote what you want, when it’s most relevant, and drive planners directly to your Cvent Supplier Network (CSN) profile. Targeted CSN [search and video ads](#) will get your hotel in front of planners who are looking for sustainable venues with green priorities.



Be sure to mention some of your sustainable initiatives and green event options in your [Cvent Supplier Network](#) profile, as it's one of the first places planners will look when sourcing venues on the platform. Venues can submit a case to be marked on CSN as an “[environmentally friendly](#)” venue. Photo-Realistic 3D and Interactive Floor Plans are now integrated into CSN, so planners can visualize their safer meeting layout in your space — right from your profile.

[Microsites](#) are an option for increasing your visibility and sharing your sustainability story — it's like a website for your hotel or destination, right within the CSN platform. [Source Safely](#), a Cvent resource hub for venues to share their latest health and safety protocols, is another way to stand out to planners who are sourcing. Suppliers can post their safer meetings protocols and sustainability practices to the hub. For example, Hilton posts information for their [EventReady program](#) on their microsite, combining safe and socially responsible meetings with their CleanStay standards.

Inform guests and get them involved

Globally, [43% of hotels](#) communicate about local conservation and biodiversity protection to guests and employees. Educate event planners about your sustainable initiatives and the impact they have on the environment. “If you educate them, people will buy into it a lot more,” says John Kelly of BCD Meetings & Events.

Venues can also connect event attendees and guests with sustainable volunteer opportunities and community initiatives they can participate

in while onsite. In a [survey commissioned by IHG Hotels & Resorts](#), 57% of respondents said they now care more about doing their part to help local communities and the planet while traveling than they did 10 years ago. With [Cvent Passkey](#), venues can create customized event websites to provide attendees with the resources and information they need to get involved in your community and have a more sustainable experience at your hotel.

Think about how you can not only inform guests about your own initiatives, but invite them to participate. Maybe that's through opening up space for guests who want to join you for volunteer days in your community, or perhaps organize your own event onsite for cleaning up the beach or hotel grounds.

Sustainability in action: providing transparency and organizing volunteer events

Fogo Island Inn provides transparency to its guests through “[economic nutrition labelling](#),” which tells guests exactly where their money is going. It's structured like a nutrition label and broken down into percentages denoting areas of the world that benefit from the money. In this way, guests are brought into the fold and are informed about how their purchasing decisions affect the local community.

Alila Manggis, Indonesia is a champion for [local coral reef conservation](#). The hotel invites locals, employees, and guests to join them in a monthly beach cleanup where they collect plastic and educate people on the important role of coral reefs, and how the work of Alila Manggis is contributing to the cause.

 **Supplier Tip:** Bring guests into the fold and get them involved in your sustainability initiatives. Read about [how hotels are using conservation efforts](#) to create unique, hands-on experiences for their guests.



Create a dedicated section of your website or Cvent microsite

A [Greenview survey](#) of over 4,500 hotels in the world found that 55% have a dedicated portion of their website for sharing green practices — an increase over previous years' data.

Publish your green policies and environmental impact on your website in an easy to find location. Posting this on your website is great for educational purposes and transparency, but it also benefits your website itself. Using keyword terms like “sustainable event venue” or “green hotel” could boost your website’s SEO and help you to be more easily found by planners who are sourcing venues to host their sustainable events. Or, add the information to your [Cvent microsite](#), giving planners visibility into your sustainability policies right where they source venues.


Incorporate green and compliance logos into your marketing and any other relevant materials so that it's clearly labeled with that visual cue. Write blog posts to provide updates on your ongoing or

upcoming projects, success stories, and the results of initiatives. It's a great opportunity to tell your story, educate guests and planners, and increase the visibility of your website.

Sustainability in action: providing a resource page and boosting SEO

[Hotel Punta Islita](#) in Costa Rica has a section on their homepage linking to their sustainability section, and the homepage features keywords like “eco-adventures” and “eco-luxury.” On their sustainability page, they highlight their conservation efforts, partnerships, and foundation, as well as local education initiatives.

[Proximity Hotel](#) in Greensboro, North Carolina invites guests to “stay in sustainable style” right from their homepage. They also include an LEED Platinum logo, an NPR podcast where they discuss their green practices, and a link to learn more about the [specifics of their sustainability](#). Proximity Hotel also provides a [resource page](#) with links to other reputable websites that supply more information on sustainable practices and certifications, which helps to position them as a thought leader and trusted source.

 Supplier Tip: To avoid greenwashing, be sure to reference the [FTC's guidelines on green marketing claims](#).



Publish case studies, green meeting guides, checklists, and tip sheets

To take it a step beyond communicating your green initiatives and sustainability on your website, consider positioning yourself as a thought leader in the sustainable tourism and meetings and events space.

Publish case studies of past sustainable events you've held at your property and explain how you partnered with the planner to make it a success. Discuss the impact of the event and how you contributed to helping the planner meet their sustainability goals. Create green meeting guides with best practices and ways planners can reduce the impact of their event. Sustainability tip sheets and checklists are quick wins and can also be downloadable gated content, allowing you to capture interested leads.

Sustainability in action: interviewing past clients and creating customizable sustainable events

[Music City Center](#) in Nashville, Tennessee releases a [sustainability newsletter](#), the "MCC Green Times" that provides updates on onsite initiatives and projects about sustainability. They also have a [tip sheet](#) for green meetings and more sustainable travel.

[The Venetian](#) in Las Vegas has a dedicated page for event case studies, where they highlight their experience hosting events that are sustainable, focused on wellness, and incorporate sustainable F&B.

[Marina Bay Sands](#) in Singapore also publishes interviews with past clients and case studies on their website. In addition, they offer a [Sustainable Events Advisory Service](#) with a Green Meeting Concierge to plan and customize a sustainable event. They also publish sustainability highlights in yearly [ECO360 Focus reports](#) available on their website, along with other [green factsheets about the property](#).

💡 Supplier Tip: Position yourself as a thought leader and the ideal event partner by creating your own content on how planners can host a sustainable meeting that adheres to COVID-19 safety protocols.



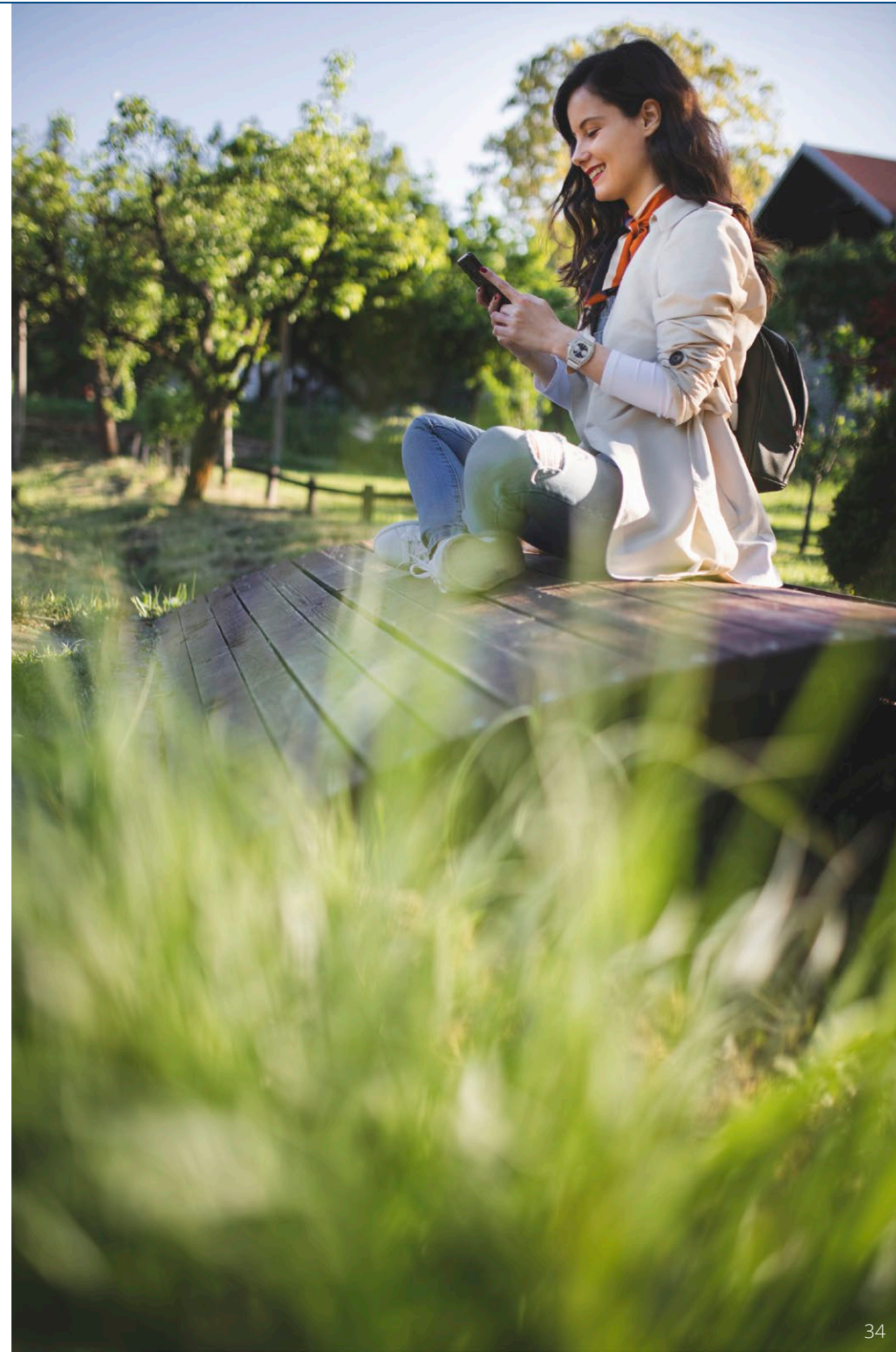
Leverage social media to tell your story

It benefits your hotel to share your green initiatives and your sustainability story on your social media channels. In a [2019 Porter Novelli/Cone Purpose Biometrics Study](#), 80% of Americans said that they'd be more likely to remember purpose-driven content shared by a company, and that same percentage said they'd want to learn more about that company.

Share best practices and information, and educate your followers on how your actions are having a positive impact. If you eliminate single-use plastic or go meat free, explain why you're doing that and craft a social media post around it to share with your followers. Maybe a planner will see the work you're doing and want to partner with you to make their next event a sustainable one.

Assisting planners with making a sustainable event that is also "Instagrammable" is another way to market your venue's green meeting capabilities. "People talk and they share things really quickly on social media," said John Kelly, BCD Meetings & Events. Creating an appealing visual atmosphere or having specific branded hashtags are a few ways to increase the social media appeal. "The limitless PR and social media [associated with sustainable events] will set you apart from the crowd if you start doing it now," Kelly says. "Shout about it. Make a big deal about it, and people will engage with that."

 **Supplier Tip:** For more advice on how to share your sustainability story, read [9 Tips for More Effective Storytelling on Social Media](#).





💡 Supplier Tip: 68% of travelers would like the money they spend to go back into the local community — a perfect opportunity for hotels to highlight local charities and facilitate donations or volunteers.

Support sustainable initiatives in your local community

If you're not sure how to get started with green practices, try helping out your local community and getting involved in local initiatives. In a [Greenview global survey of hotels](#), 57% participate in local conservation or biodiversity protection.

Partner with local organizations and see where your hotel can lend a hand. It's a great opportunity to build your sustainability story and get involved in the local community. Event sustainability consultant Shawna McKinley advises tapping into the local factor to differentiate yourself when sharing information about your sustainability efforts. "As a planner, I want to meet at your hotel because it's efficient and low carbon," she says, "but I also want to feel connected to your community — its food, culture, and people. Tell me about the causes and social enterprises your employees support. Outline menus for me that will allow attendees to get a taste for your delicious, local, sustainable food. Suggest offsite activities that make me feel inspired...Sharing both of these aspects — technical best practices and creative innovations and partnerships — shows how the venue is taking a holistic approach."

Sustainability in action: local conservation and guest education

[Inn by the Sea](#) in Cape Elizabeth, Maine partners with the Department of Conservation and Bureau of Parks and Land to restore the habitat for New England Cottontail Rabbits at the nearby Crescent Beach State Park. The Inn's landscape and gardens contain local plants and create a habitat for local wildlife. Guests can go on a guided tour with a naturalist and learn about beach ecology and the importance of sand dunes for beach wildlife and erosion. For sustainable F&B, their restaurant menu features local and underutilized seafood from Maine's coast.



Takeaways

- Publish case studies of past events, green meeting guides, checklists, planner testimonials, and tip sheets for how you can partner with planners to create a sustainable and safer event that adheres to COVID-19 safety protocols. It will position you as an expert and a thought leader, as well as a valuable event partner.
- Get in touch with Cvent to see if your venue qualifies for the “environmentally-friendly” tag in the Cvent Supplier Network.
- Publicize your sustainability on your website in an easy-to-find place. Use SEO keywords such as “eco-friendly,” “eco-lodge,” “sustainable meeting,” and “green meetings.”
- Utilize [Cvent content marketing ads](#) and [microsites](#) to increase your visibility to planners who are sourcing eco-friendly and responsible event venues.
- Post your health and safety protocols and sustainability efforts to Cvent’s [Source Safely](#) hub to stand out to planners who are actively sourcing on the platform.
- Tell your sustainability story through a local lens — it forges a human connection with your audience, makes the content more relatable, and will differentiate you from other hotels and venues.
- Post your sustainable efforts and safer meetings on social media. It’s good marketing for your hotel, and it raises awareness for the cause: 80% of Americans said that they’d be more likely to remember purpose-driven content shared by a company, and that same percentage said they’d want to learn more about that company.
- Get staff and guests involved in your sustainability efforts. Organize volunteer days and educate guests on your local efforts and how you’re helping the environment.

Resources

- [Sustainable Tourism: Why Should Hotels Lead in This Effort?](#) (Hospitality Net)
- [The Pinterest 100: Responsible Travel](#)
- [Hotels Stay Focused on Sustainability Despite Pandemic](#) (CoStar)
- [Cvent’s Quick Guide to Safer Meetings and Events](#) (Cvent infographic)
- [Cvent Supplier Network](#)
- [Get marked as an “environmentally friendly” venue in CSN](#)
- [Cvent Microsites](#)
- [Cvent Passkey for Hotels and Destinations](#)
- [Content Marketing Ads for Hotels and Destinations](#)
- [U.S. Federal Trade Commission guidance on green marketing claims](#)
- [Green Meetings Made Easy](#) (Cvent infographic)

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CHAPTER 4 Closing Takeaways for Sustainable Events

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused consumers to be even more aware of how their behaviors affect the environment and others around them. Event professionals and attendees are increasingly interested in sustainability in their events and from the venues that host them, but health and safety also play an influential role.

“We’re waking up to the fact we can’t keep sustainability in a bubble where we only considered what was ‘green’ once we arrived onsite: practicing recycling, reducing plastic, and energy use,” says event sustainability consultant Shawna McKinley. “It’s also about health, equality, and innovation that embraces new technology. And fundamentally, how we adapt to be more resilient in a changing world.”

Events produce a large amount of waste, and it’s up to hotels to partner with event planners to reduce it through eco-friendly practices and sustainable initiatives. Sustainability can mean different things to different planners. Find out what metrics are most important to them and what their goals are, and see if you can work together to achieve them.

By providing a safer event experience while still keeping the environmental impact in mind, venues can demonstrate to planners their ability to be a responsible event partner. Educate the planner on your health and safety precautions and assure them that you can host a safe event, while still being environmentally conscious.

Sustainability isn’t just important for the environment or your group business bookings — it’s great for your brand as a whole, too. It’s an opportunity to demonstrate your company values, tell your sustainability story, and educate people about the causes you champion. By not including some kind of eco-friendly practices at your property, you could be missing out on travelers and event planners who are looking for a sustainable hotel or venue.

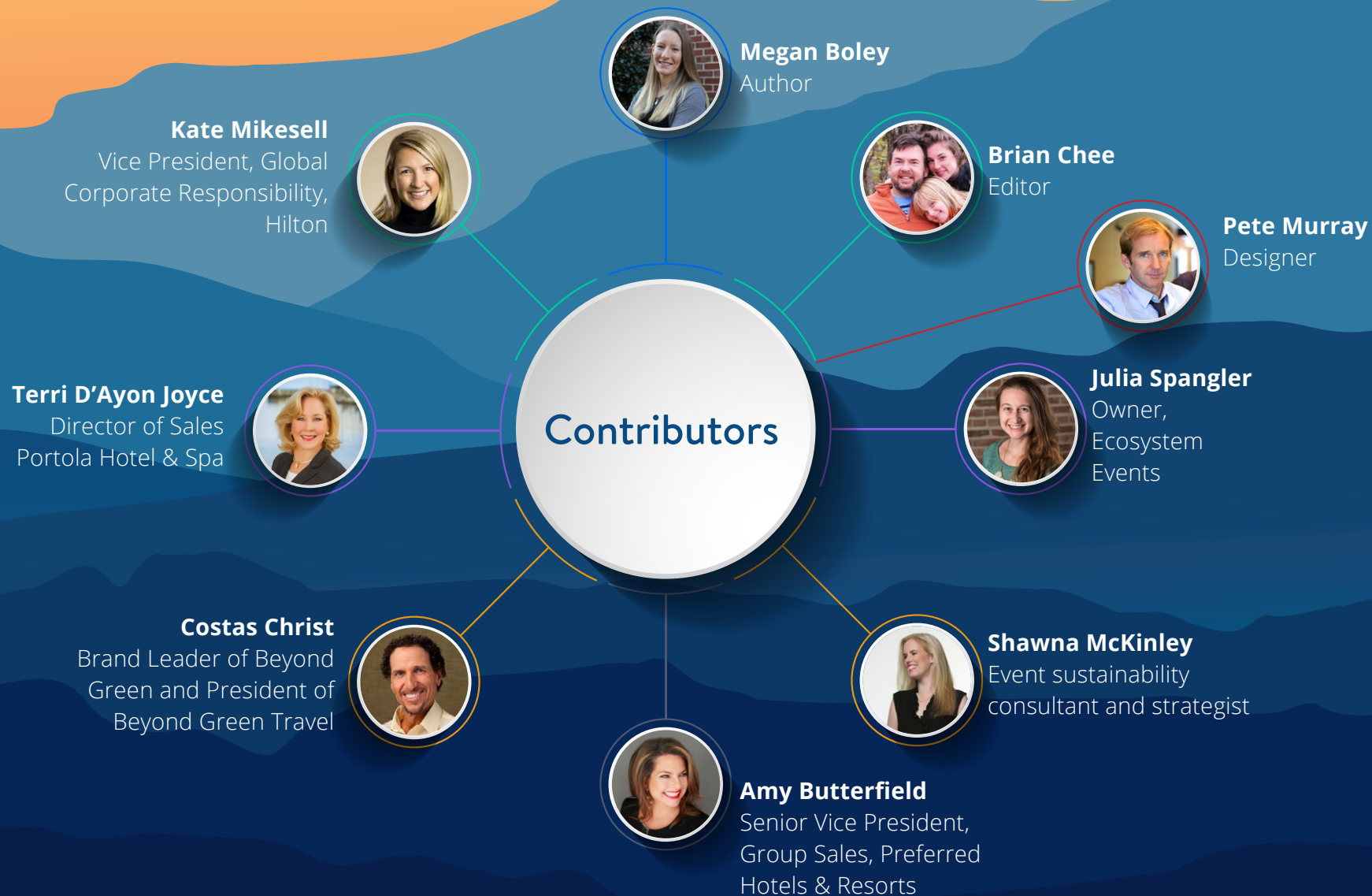




- **Support sustainable events with small steps.** While some hotels go as far as LEED certification and installing renewable energy sources like solar panels, these aren't the only ways to demonstrate your commitment to sustainability. Even taking smaller steps to implement more green practices — like recycling, composting, or using locally sourced food, or reducing waste — can make a difference in reducing your hotel's carbon footprint.
- **Tie sustainability to safer events for a more responsible meeting.** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are not just about preserving the environment — they also focus on good health and well-being. In an era of safer meetings with a heightened awareness of sustainable behaviors, offering responsible meetings that focus on both the health of the attendees and the environment can be a way to show you're an adaptable and agile event partner.
- **Share your sustainability efforts.** Post your green initiatives on your website and highlight how your hotel can support a sustainable and safer event. It'll boost your SEO and put you in front of planners looking for green venues during the sourcing stage. Share your involvement on social media. Include information on sustainability and green meetings in your CSN profile, ads, and microsite.
- **Look to the industry leaders.** For examples on how to align your business to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, look to Accor, Marriott, and Hilton. Portola Hotel & Spa's Reduced Waste Conferences and Preferred Hotel Group's acquisition of Beyond Green Travel are other examples of how hotels are prioritizing sustainability in both meetings and travel.

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Get in touch with Cvent to learn more about how we can help you support sustainable and safer meetings.



ABOUT CVENT

Cvent is the global meeting, event, travel, and hospitality technology leader. Cvent provides easy-to-use, integrated technology solutions to maximize the impact of meetings and events of all sizes. We help organizations plan and market events, execute onsite, engage audiences, and measure and analyze results.



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