



How to Host a Green Event

Sustainable Travel International (STI) provides advisory services to associations and corporate organizations who wish to produce green events and conferences. Practicing environmentally and socially responsible planning is the way we do business, so we're dedicated to making your event or conference as sustainable as possible by using environmentally friendly and other sustainable processes and systems to your advantage.

By definition, carbon neutral represents the point at which carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions have been identified, measured, reduced where possible and 100% of the remaining emissions have been offset through high quality renewable energy, energy efficiency and or reforestation projects. Note that green claims about quality of true carbon offsets and projects that are additional - meaning they wouldn't have otherwise occurred without offset investments - as well as general claims of "100% carbon neutral" and green marketing in general is coming under increasing scrutiny. As such, you must confirm any messaging associated with STI's carbon offset program with us before you may publicize it.

Carbon Offsets

STI has helped to offset the greenhouse gas (GHG) / carbon dioxide emission impacts associated with a number of high profile events and conferences. At a minimum, most event organizers take responsibility for covering the cost to offset the impacts related to the event facility since these fees are usually between US\$250-\$2000 depending on the size of the event. Adding attendee hotel room and air travel related impacts costs a bit more, ranging from US\$25-50 per person but is the only way to become truly carbon neutral.

Given the fact that conference participants should share in the responsibility for mitigating their negative impacts, STI suggests that conference and event organizers take responsibility for offsetting the GHG impacts associated with their events, as well as participant impact, or at least offer a matching or voluntary add-on program for offsetting the impacts associated with participant's hotel stays and air travel.

In terms of implementation, we can include a check-box on the event registration form, so conference participants can voluntary offset their air or land travel. We can also create a custom carbon calculator for the event and co-brand a carbon calculator like the one on STI's website: www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/offset/index.php?c=1. This would have the look and feel of your own web site but be hosted on our server. Please contact STI for detailed options.

In terms of next steps, please provide us with the following information, so we can provide you with an offset quote*:

- Electricity:
 - a) Option 1: Total square footage of the communal space within the event facility and the number of days it will be used for the event. Also, note if the facility is heated and or air conditioned.

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- b) Option 2: Facility electricity consumption expressed in kilowatt-hours or megawatt-hours on a month-to-month or annual basis
- The total number of hotel rooms reserved by event participants and the total number of nights they will be staying in them.
- Demographic data for event participants. Specifically, we will need to know where they're flying to and from i.e., what state and or country.
 - a) Option 1: This information can be broken down in percentages of conference participants' points of origin on a region-by-region basis (e.g., the U.S. can be broken down into four time zones).
 - b) Option 2: Or you can estimate the total number of long-haul flights (over 7000 miles / 11,250 kilometers e.g., round trip New York to London) and short-haul flights (under 7000 miles / 11,250 kilometers) taken by conference participants.
 - c) Option 3: Total mileage traveled by air annually
 - d) Option 4: Actual flights
- Estimated volume of waste generated during the event expressed in pounds or kilograms.
- Estimated volume of recycling generated weekly, monthly or annually expressed in pounds or kilograms
- Average number of miles driven during the program (e.g., from the local airport to the conference facility).

**Please note that STI will accept estimates if exact figures are not available, and if you don't have access to some information, such as waste vs. recycling we can omit that. Also, note that STI may provide a complimentary carbon footprint assessment for quick calculations but for anything over one hour STI charges \$100 per hour. Please request an estimate.*

Custom Carbon Calculators*

Event Planners who want to encourage staff and attendees to offset their personal greenhouse gas emissions as well as their air travel on a flight by flight basis are encouraged to invest in a custom carbon calculator:

- Option 1 (Complimentary). Link to STI's [carbon calculator](#).
- Option 2 (US\$599). This co-branded IFrame calculator features your logo and has the same content as STI's carbon calculator. This option allows you to insert the related code into a web page on your website and control your own content. Although it would be hosted on your website, customer transactions would go through the STI website, enabling us to track the total amount of CO2 offset. Choose between our all-inclusive calculator option (flights, driving, hotel stays, home electricity, and gift offsets), or a combination of the options we offer. The price of any custom modifications will depend on complexity of your web site, programming required, etc.
- Option 3 (Varies – custom quote). Hosted on STI's website or on your website, this calculator computes the carbon emissions associated with each of your individual services and includes the features detailed in Option 2. This option is fully customized and is based on STI auditing your business-related carbon emissions.

Once you've submitted payment for your custom carbon calculator, please follow the directions outlined below, so we can get your carbon calculator up and running on your website as soon as possible:



- Let us know which aspect of the calculator you want to feature on your website i.e., flying, driving, hotel stays, home electricity, and or gift offsets.
- Once we complete the carbon calculator we will send you the iFrame code so that you can incorporate it into your website.
- We can also send you education and training materials, helping your staff to sell the program and educating both attendees and exhibitors about why they should invest in the program.

***Note:** STI can help facilitate offsetting into conference registration or planning processes.

Marketing

- Use 100% post-consumer recycled paper and vegetable- and soy-based inks for promotional materials and handouts and encourage exhibitors and presenters to do the same.
- Provide reusable containers for handouts (file folders, cloth bags, etc.). Also, provide reusable name tags and collect them at the end of the event. Where reusable items are not feasible, select products that are made from recovered materials that can be recycled.
- Request exhibitors provide participants with recyclable giveaways. Request that unused items be collected for use at another event. Also, provide participants with an option to receive exhibitor (and event) information electronically.
- Establish a travel philanthropy program, whereby a small percentage of event fees are invested in projects or programs that support local community-based and or environmental initiatives.
- Promote your efforts to green the event at the event itself and to the media.
- If the investment in offsetting affords an opportunity for the event to become carbon neutral, STI would be willing to send out a related press release to over 8,000 media contacts.

Waste Management in General

- Encourage participants to recycle at the event. Provide convenient recycling bins for collecting paper, cardboard, and recyclable containers (i.e., aluminum, plastic, steel, etc.) in meeting areas, exhibit areas, and food vending areas.
- Offer on-line registration for the event.

Food Services

- Offer locally produced, sustainably harvested, and organic food ingredients for all meals and label them accordingly. Also, offer both a vegetarian and a meat option at each meal.
- Use durable food service items such as reusable dishware, utensils and linens (i.e., napkins and tablecloths). If reusable items are not used, encourage use of recyclable food service items.
- Consider selling or providing refillable containers for beverages during breaks between sessions.
- Reduce packaging e.g., serve condiments such as cream, sugar, ketchup, mustard, etc. in bulk versus serving individually packaged condiments.

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- Plan food service needs carefully to avoid unnecessary waste and plan to compost or donate excess food to charitable organizations.

Lodging and Transportation

- Publicize public transportation options and provide route maps.
- Provide a shuttle service from public transit stops or hotels to the event site.
- Publicize green lodging options and provide a map.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to offset the GHG impacts associated with their hotel stays.

Lodging and Transportation (continued)

- Recommend airline carriers that have an environmental policy.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to offset the GHG impacts associated with their air travel.
- In the future, consider choosing a destination city for the event that requires the minimum travel distance by participants. Additional criteria for selecting a destination city are available upon request.
- Ensure that the event is within walking distance to lodging, restaurants, local attractions, etc.
- Use hybrid vehicles or vehicles that run on biofuels or natural gas if transportation is arranged for participants.

Event Facility

- Offset the GHG impacts associated with the event facility.
- Determine if the event facility has: an indoor air filtration system, in-house program to reduce energy use and manage waste, and a program to reduce the use of toxic cleaning chemicals and detergents.
- Additional criteria for selecting an event facility are available upon request.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Document the effectiveness of each suggestion implemented and track problems encountered by event staff regarding greening the event as well as feedback received from participants.
- Document, track, and communicate environmental, socio-cultural and economic savings achieved to participants and the media.

VolunTourism

According to *The New York Times*, the number of professional organizations setting aside an afternoon or full day while at an off-site meeting, conference or event for community service – to frame a house, build a playground, or paint an after-school center – is on the rise. Hands-on volunteer projects are taking the place of golf tournaments and other team-building activities to



get people motivated and working as a team. For more information on how to set up an Voluntourism experience at your conference or event, [contact STI](#).

Due Diligence

STI is regarded for its due diligence in selecting the 'best in class' offset projects. All of the projects in STI's offset portfolio are verified and certified by independent, third parties.

Specifically, the Green Tags we offer are offered in partnership with the Bonneville Environmental Foundation and are certified by Green-e (www.green-e.org). They support renewable energy projects in the U.S. and Canada.

Our Carbon Offset projects are offered in partnership with MyClimate and are developed in accordance with procedures, criteria and methodologies from the clean development mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto protocol and the criteria of The Gold Standard (www.cdmgoldstandard.org). They support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in Africa, Asia and Central America.

We also offer Conservation Carbon Offsets in partnership with Conservation International, which are designed using the standards set forth by the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Alliance (www.climate-standards.org). They support reforestation, afforestation and avoided deforestation in Africa and South America.

Advisory Services

STI works with businesses of all sizes, helping them to integrate sustainable business practices into their operations and to set up systems for measuring and managing their environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts (e.g., reducing their carbon footprints). This can include setting up recycling and zero waste programs, green product procurement, etc. For more information, [contact us](#).

References

Between STI and its offset partners, most recent notable offset efforts include Continental Airlines, Marriott, the 2006 FIFA World Cup, Coca Cola, G.A.P. Adventures, HSBC, Whole Foods Market, World Resources Institute, World Wildlife Fund, the World Travel & Tourism Council, and many others. Additional references are available [here](#).

Summary

Your organization or company certainly doesn't have to do all of these things to offer a "Green Event." However, the more you enhance the positive impacts associated with your event, the more likely you are to broaden your market reach and attract publicity. Minimizing waste and increasing energy efficiency will also save money.

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