Sustainable Event Checklist

Event Location
☐ Select a destination with local, regional, and national investment in environmental, social, and economic sustainability
☐ Pick a destination where participants can feel immersed in and connected to local beauty and culture during the event
☐ Choose a host destination with a nearby airport and other public transportation
☐ Select event locations that are accessible by walking, bicycle, and public transportation to minimize travel during the event
☐ Recommend or arrange local accommodations that reduce travel
☐ Choose venues and accommodations with efficient and accessible infrastructure and sustainable practices; look for LEED-certified buildings
☐ Select a less popular destination or travel to a popular destination during the off-season to minimize the burdens of overtourism
☐ Choose a destination with nearby parks or protected areas and encourage attendees to visit them
☐ Pick a destination that is recovering from a natural disaster to help rejuvenate the local economy

Transportation
☐ Encourage event participants to arrive by train or other ground public transportation or by electric car to minimize carbon footprint
☐ If arriving by air, encourage attendees to choose airlines with commitments to sustainable aviation and select a flight plan that minimizes layovers
☐ Encourage walking, cycling, or using public transport after initial arrival to lower the carbon footprint of travel
☐ Arrange for bicycles to be available
☐ Encourage attendees to extend their trip before or after the event. Traveling to fewer places and staying longer lowers a traveler’s overall carbon footprint and inspires a deeper cultural experience
☐ Offset travel with transportation providers or through carbon offset solutions such as Neutral Together or carbon removal solutions like Tomorrow’s Air.

Food, Beverage, & Purchases
☐ Hire local, sustainability-oriented, and socially underrepresented suppliers and producers
☐ Select a menu that is mostly plant-based, in-season, locally produced, and eco-certified (organic, free-range, fair trade); minimize beef
☐ Avoid ordering too much food through an up-to-date attendee count
☐ Select a caterer based on sustainability criteria:  
  ☐ Provides plant-based and local menu options that support sustainable, regenerative agriculture as well as good health and well-being
  ☐ Supplies or is willing to use reusable serviceware and utensils to cut down on waste
  ☐ Makes efforts to minimize food waste and calculates it
Collaborates with food redistribution organizations to minimize food waste and to support people who are food insecure

- Composts unused food or is willing to collaborate with a local composting program to lessen landfill inputs, create fertilizer, and educate event participants
- Uses techniques to encourage more sustainable dining habits, e.g., a buffet that serves plant-based options first, and then meat if available, to encourage taking more vegetarian components

Serve food in bite-size/finger food style or buffet style, which minimizes food waste
Serve beverages in bulk to avoid the waste of single-serve bottles and containers
Offer a variety of non-alcoholic beverages
Use reusable serviceware, utensils, and kitchenware to lessen the waste of single-use items
Give an option for attendees to take away leftover food
Select reusable, recyclable, and compostable materials, including decorations & tablecloths and avoid using one-time dates or slogans to minimize waste
For materials that must be printed, use FSC-certified, unlaminted (to allow recycling), half/quarter sheets, double-sided paper
Choose consumable giveaways such as edible treats with limited packaging, or gift certificates and avoid unuseful swag or low-quality, plastic items
Ensure giveaways are purchased from vendors who have committed to sustainability, are eco-certified (e.g., climate pledge friendly, Fair Trade), or both
Give attendees the option to choose giveaways to lessen waste

Social Planning and Event Marketing & Communication

- Inquire into event attendee requirements for accessibility (including remote/hybrid needs) and diet to ensure equity and inclusion
- Make appropriate accommodations for any religious or other special holidays during the event
- Sponsor travel industry delegate(s) from underrepresented countries, identities, and communities to increase attendee diversity
- Schedule free evenings when possible to allow socialization, destination exploration, and family time for attendees
- Promote event using digital marketing methods to avoid printing materials and contributing to waste, and use content and imagery that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Make a land acknowledgment at the beginning of the event; many indigenous tribes are recognized at the Native Land website
- Announce how the event is practicing sustainability and how attendees can limit resource use and waste by refusing, reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting
- Install well-labeled signage above waste bins to avoid cross-contamination
- Promote responsible and respectful interactions with nature, including wildlife by avoiding the degradation of sensitive environments, adhering to visitor guidelines, and following Leave No Trace Principles
- Provide event activities that promote good health and well-being by balancing and breaking up sitting during presentations, including outdoor time, destination tours, yoga, or other movement, as well as generous mealtimes and breaks
- Encourage attendees to complete surveys and reviews regarding sustainability practices and let suppliers know if they do not reflect their promises