

BUSINESS EVENTS SUSTAINABILITY PLAN



Three Isle Lake

Alberta

OUR ROADMAP

Introduction

Sustainability continues to be a top priority across a range of industries. Increasingly, organizations are looking to incorporate measures that will improve local environments, communities and economies – especially when it comes to hosting business events. In a bold move to deliver on these needs and strengthen Canada's broader regenerative tourism ecosystem for years to come, Destination Canada launched its Canadian Business Events Sustainability Plan in May 2022.



Grasslands National Park

Saskatchewan

The global landscape

In November 2021, the UN Climate Change Conference, referred to as [COP26](#), launched the [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#). Through it, some of the biggest players in the tourism industry joined government and destinations in committing to slashing emissions in half by 2030 and achieving Net Zero by 2050. At [COP27](#), the path to Net Zero was further cemented, once again reinforcing the commitment of the business events industry toward climate change with the launch of the event industry’s roadmap to [Net Zero Carbon](#).

Across the tourism industry, environmental and social responsibility have climbed to the top of the agenda. Legislations have tightened, travellers have started paying increased attention, and expectations have heightened for authentic sustainability initiatives among organizations. In short: it’s become clear that change is necessary.

The Global UN SDGs

In 2015, the United Nations shared the world’s blueprint for sustainable development, consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. These goals are a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They recognize that the challenges we face – including poverty, health, education, inequality and climate change – are interconnected and need to be addressed hand-in-hand.



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Business events as a force for good



Sustainability

is no longer a nice-to-have – especially within the meetings and events industry.

Although it's long been on our collective radar, more drastic action needs to be taken if the industry is going to succeed at meeting zero net targets.

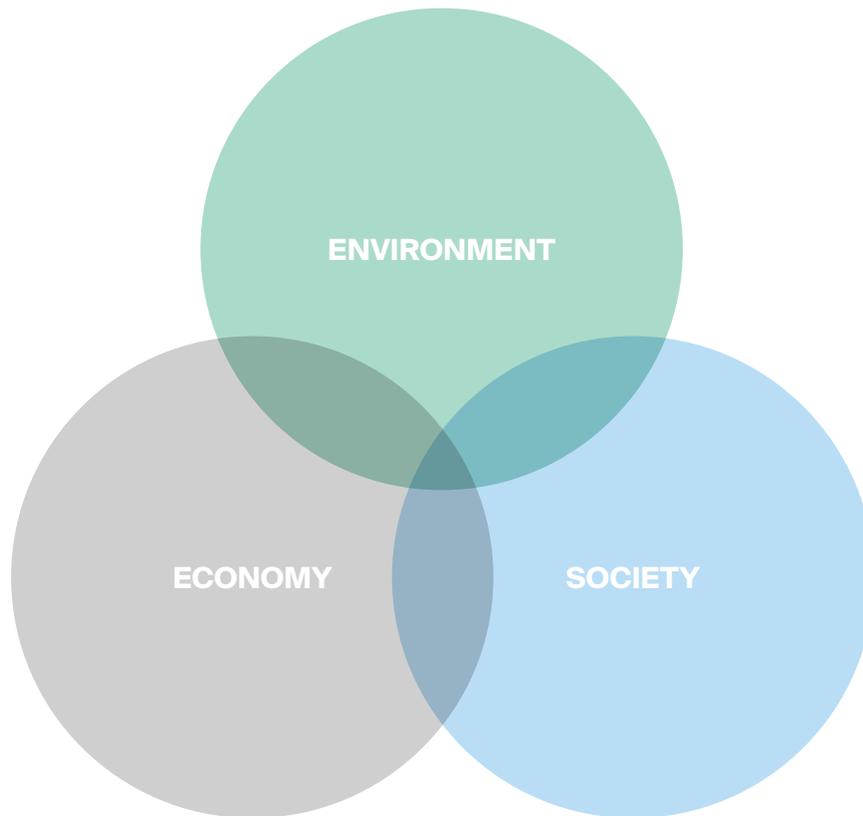
Progress will require a coordinated effort among all of us.

A first-of-its-kind national program

Determined to create real change, Destination Canada has set out to elevate the sustainability of events hosted across the country by launching its Canadian Business Event Sustainability Plan. This first-of-its-kind strategy will focus on each pillar – environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability – in equal measure and through a business events lens.

Three pillars of sustainability

What would a sustainable world look like?



Environmental Sustainability

Ecological integrity is maintained, the Earth's environmental systems stay in balance, and natural resources are consumed at a rate in which they replenish themselves. The environmental footprints of business events are minimized.

Economic Sustainability

Communities across the globe maintain their independence and have access to financial resources to meet their needs. Host communities and local businesses benefit from events.

Socio-cultural Sustainability

Universal human rights and basic necessities are attainable by all. Community members have access to enough resources in order to keep their families healthy and secure. Events hosted in communities help preserve and sustain local cultures – including beliefs, practices and traditions.

Source: <https://www.mcgill.ca/sustainability/files/sustainability/what-is-sustainability.pdf>

The ultimate goal of the Canadian Business Event Sustainability Plan is to help global clients develop business events with sustainability at their core – specifically for international association conferences, trade exhibitions, workshops and seminars, as well as corporate meetings and incentive group events.

This will be achieved by collaborating with industry partners and destinations across the country to offer solutions that allow them to forge ahead in their sustainability efforts. Through the plan, partners will become empowered to act as stewards of sustainability in their communities. They will work with a range of stakeholders to measure their destination’s sustainability efforts – from social sustainability to the certifications of restaurants, hotels and convention centres. By doing so, they will create an environment of change within their destination.

“This plan is meant to inspire and drive change within our destinations – helping them take concrete action to be better stewards of sustainable business events.”

Destination Canada’s role in this plan is to serve as an agent of change. We are helping to shape the future of our industry in Canada and supporting partners in planning for the long term. By providing tourism partners with the tools, resources and knowledge to improve their sustainability offering, we will help propel the sustainability movement forward in Canada.

Our Timeline



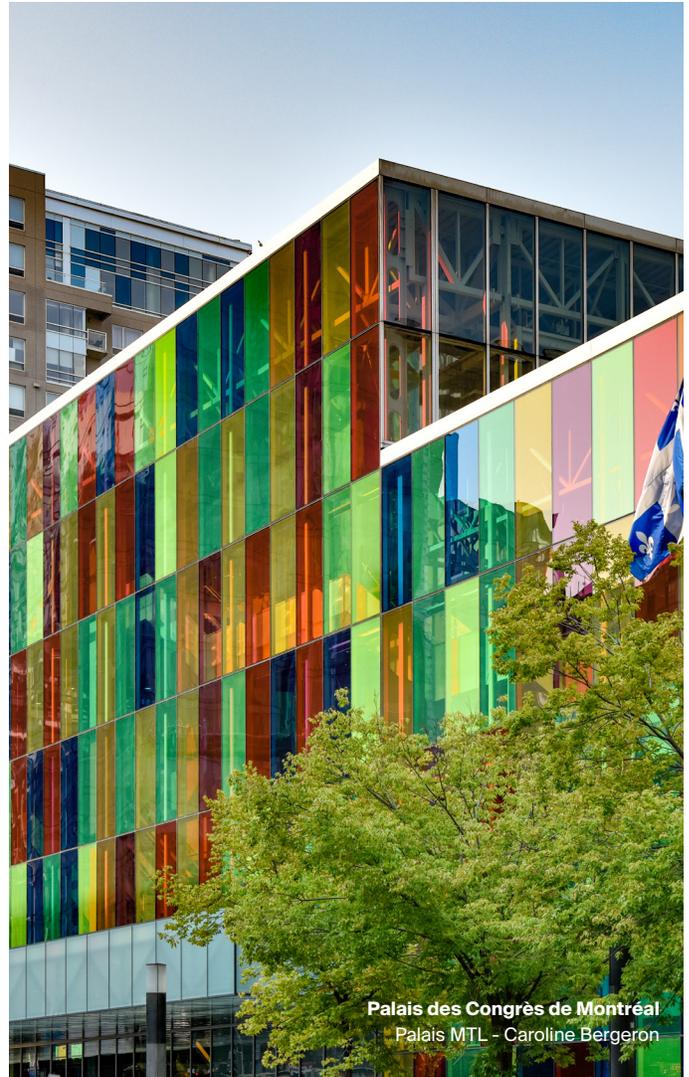
PHASE ONE: Establishing the Foundation

Q1 2023

This first stage of our plan will focus on educating and equipping partners with the knowledge and resources to host more sustainable business events. In order to move forward on their goals, industry partners must have a solid understanding of the various terms and concepts of sustainability. This will help them convey their initiatives to clients and ultimately host more sustainable events.

To achieve this, this phase will provide coaching to Team Canada partners. This includes destination marketing organizations, convention centres, incentive partners, city representatives and hotels. Training will consist of four workshops – an introduction to sustainable destination management; stakeholder engagement; building capacity; and impact management and reporting.

We will also ensure a holistic approach to our plan by creating two task force groups – an external task force comprising leaders across Canada (including industry, academia and tourism partners), as well as an internal task force representing a cross-section of teams at Destination Canada.



Palais des Congrès de Montréal
Palais MTL - Caroline Bergeron

Canadian destinations that have joined the GDS-Index



PHASE TWO: Taking Stock of Sustainability Measures

Q2-Q3 2023



The second phase of our sustainability plan is about measurement. In order to grow and improve on sustainability, destinations must understand where they started from. Setting a baseline for the sustainability initiatives within our destinations can help them elevate them even further.

To achieve this, we will analyze the inventory of business events sustainability options that exist across Canada. Through this step, the 16 destinations, from coast to coast to coast, will take part in the [Global Destination Sustainability Index \(GDS-I\)](#) annual benchmarking process – which is the leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement program for destinations around the world.

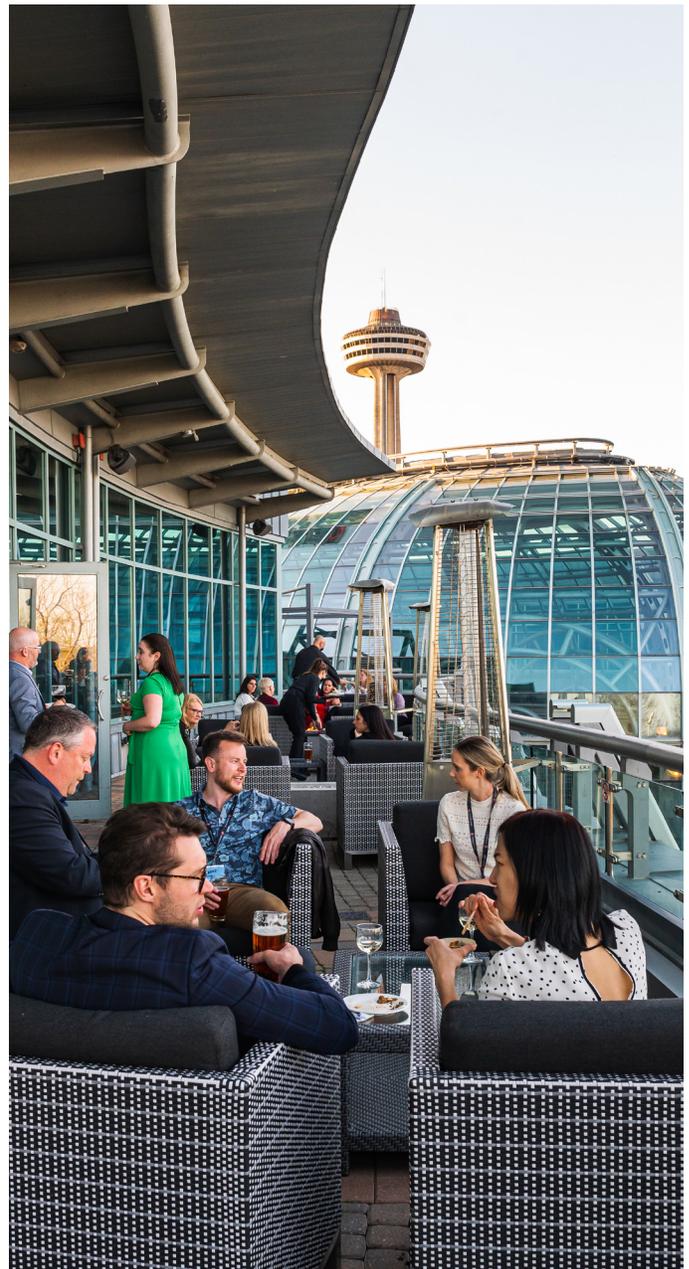
The Index will take a deep dive into their environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability practices. Using 70 indicators as its guide, it will evaluate sustainability efforts and provide a report that identifies strengths and weaknesses, along with recommendations on the unique opportunities within each destination.

Not all destinations will be at the same place on their sustainability journey. While some have more advanced initiatives in place, others are just beginning. Regardless of where they are, there is always room to improve. This step will help them increase their ranking and knowledge of sustainability to raise the bar even higher.

Data collection and training will occur across Q2 & Q3 2023, and results will be published in October - November 2023.

Walking the Talk

Destination Canada's 2023 Innovate Canada program will, for the first time, be a carbon neutral event. Held in Waterloo, Ontario, this year's program will focus on advanced manufacturing, and highlight the groundbreaking work taking place across Canada to attract aligned international business events.



PHASE THREE: Sharing Results

Q4 2023

Once we're aware of the sustainability offerings in our destinations, destinations must be able to promote them. The more this information is shared, the more sustainable future events will be for organizations – and the better off our destinations and communities will be.

In the third phase of our plan, we will tell the story of Canada's sustainable business events possibilities to international clients. Through the Global Destination Sustainability Movement, all partners will take part in a masterclass of storytelling and communications strategies, which consists of four modules. This will equip them with the tools to share and amplify their sustainability story.

In November 2023, the GDS-I dashboard will be released, establishing where the individual city's stand today, as hosts for business events, based on their existing sustainability initiatives.

This is not the end of our work. In 2024, Destination Canada will roll out its collection of actionable sustainability programs for business events hosted in Canada. Building on the data and insights of the GDS-I benchmarking, a tailor-made dashboard will connect clients with the turnkey, purpose-driven sustainability solutions most aligned with their values and business event needs.

“Sustainability is more than a competitive advantage, it is a collaborative one, too – a long-term commitment from the entire business event supply chain is a must-have on the path to sustainability.”

-- Virginie De Visscher
Senior Director, Business Events, Destination Canada

Walking the Talk

Through focus and affinity groups (consisting of global incentive and association experts), we will also continually collect feedback, trends and reactions on sustainability as well as our initiative – so that we can keep raising the bar for sustainable business events in Canada.

Destination Canada has partnered with Greenstep, a leading Canadian-based firm in environmental sustainability, to evaluate our organization's own carbon footprint and propose a plan to reach net-zero carbon emissions.



Vancouver Convention Center
Destination Vancouver / Barbershop Films



Creating a brighter future, together

Sustainability measures are becoming ever more important in the business events industry. Success will ultimately depend on the entire industry – planners, venues, destinations and other suppliers – working together to achieve sustainability and social purpose goals. We can only truly make progress if the entire supply chain believes this and works in partnership to create change and find solutions.

At Destination Canada Business Events, we believe that we can be part of that solution and drive that change for Canada's business events industry. Through this work, we will help contribute to the wealth and wellbeing of all Canadians. Above all, we will lead the charge toward a new era of travel that is regenerative – and that ultimately benefits all.

“As one of the largest sustainability plans for business events of this magnitude due to the sheer size of Canada, this will provide a national support arm to the entire business event supply chain and be the figurative rising tide that lifts all boats. Having destination partners from coast to coast to coast join this journey will propel their efforts to enhance the economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability of business events – while further cementing Canada’s reputation as a global leader in this space.”

-- Chantal Sturk-Nadeau
Executive Director, Business Events, Destination Canada

When successful, this plan will have accomplished the following:

- Canada is considered a global sustainable and purpose-driven business events destination
- Canadian destinations and venues have trained staff on sustainability and use common language and messaging across the country to promote their sustainability initiatives
- Our clients understand and have access to the Canadian business events sustainable turnkey offerings for their future events

“Our ultimate goal is to spark real change by helping to increase knowledge of the environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts that events can have in our destinations.

Beyond driving more sustainable events within Canada, we are also striving to become a model for countries around the world. We want to show clients that sustainable events can be done, while maintaining a positive experience for all.

That’s the collaborative advantage of this plan.”



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT



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