

Toward Green NEERS Meetings

Purpose of this policy: To minimize the environmental footprint of NEERS meetings.

Background

Despite the many benefits of NEERS meetings, they and associated travel create adverse impacts upon the environment. For the sake of estuarine and coastal ecosystems and to lead by good example, NEERS wishes to mitigate that impact as much as possible. NEERS meetings also offer an opportunity to educate local hotels, conference centers, and businesses on the demand for green practices and how to increase them.

A green meeting is one where natural resource consumption is minimized, waste generation is avoided where possible and remaining waste is reused or recycled, and the local community benefits economically, socially, and environmentally (UNEP 2009). Benefits of greener conferences include: saving money, enhancing organization's reputation, promoting environmental innovation, providing local social benefits, and raising awareness (UNEP 2009).

Recommendations

For each meeting, consult the three lists of tips that follow and one or more of the green meeting documents or websites listed in **Resources**.

After due consideration of organizational needs, such as moving the conferences around the NEERS region, look for green hotels and conference centers.

For each meeting, write an article for the NEERS Newsletter and meeting webpages listing the green practices to be followed.

Hand out or sell reusable coffee mugs with NEERS logo at registration. No bottled water. Recycle name tags.

Encourage car-pooling to meetings, either through the registration process (check a box if willing to be contacted or listed as looking for a ride share or a roommate) or through some of the social networking sites.

If seafood is served at a NEERS event, avoid choices on the "Avoid" list of Seafood Watch (2011). Better yet, use seafood listed as "Best Choice" or seafood certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (2011).

10 Easy Tips (from bluegreenmeetings.org)

We understand that turning your events BlueGreen all in one brush stroke may seem overwhelming. Here are 10 easy tips you can apply to any meeting to make it more environmentally responsible.

1. **Put it in writing.** Establish an environmental statement or policy for the meeting, and get buy in for it from the meeting host organization's management. Share the policy with suppliers, delegates and speakers. You'll be amazed at how far they'll go to help you make your event BlueGreen.
2. **Use paperless technology.** Use new media and electronic technology to cut down your paper use. Create a conference web site; offer electronic registration and confirmation; and advertise using the web and/or email.
3. **Meet close.** Reduce distances traveled by speakers and delegates. Choose a host city that's close to as many delegates as possible, and within the city choose a venue and hotel that are close to the airport and within walking distance of each other.
4. **Practice the 3Rs.** Ask your hotel and meeting venue to provide visible and accessible reduction, reuse and recycling services for paper, metal, plastic and glass.
5. **Bulk up.** Have your food & beverage service provider use bulk dispensers for sugar, salt, pepper, cream and other condiments.
6. **Lighten your Stay.** Choose a hotel that offers a linen reuse program and bulk dispensers for shampoos and soaps in guest suites.
7. **Eat green.** Include vegetarian meals, and have meals planned using local, seasonal produce.
8. **Close the recycling loop.** Have all printed materials published on recycled paper [unbleached 100% post-consumer paper], using vegetable-based inks, and on both sides of the page.
9. **Save energy.** Coordinate with the meeting venue to ensure that energy lights and air conditioning will be turned off when rooms are not in use.
10. **Spread the word!** Tell delegates, speakers and the media about your success. You'll be surprised - BlueGreen efforts are contagious.

From EPA's *It's Easy Being Green! A Guide to Planning and Conducting Environmentally Aware Meetings and Events.*

Preventing and Reducing Waste

Use double-sided printing for promotional materials and handouts.
Avoid mass distribution of handouts and allow attendees to order copies.
Provide reusable name badges.

Recycling and Managing Waste

Collect paper and recyclable beverage containers in meeting areas.
Collect cardboard and paper in exhibit areas.
Collect cardboard, beverage containers, steel cans, and plastics in food vending areas.
If reusables are not used, encourage use of recyclable beverage containers.

Conserving Energy and Reducing Traffic

Seek naturally lighted meeting and exhibit spaces.
Publicize mass transportation options.
Provide shuttle service from mass transit stops or hotels to the event site.

Contracting Food Service and Lodging

Plan food service needs carefully to avoid unnecessary waste.
Consider use of durable food service items.
Donate excess food to charitable organizations.
Work with hotel on non-replacement of linens, soaps, etc.

Buying Environmentally Aware Products

Use recycled paper [unbleached 100% post-consumer paper], and vegetable- and soy-based inks for promotional materials and handouts.
Consider selling or providing refillable containers for beverages.
Provide reusable containers for handouts or samples (pocket or file folders, cloth bags).
Where reusable items are not feasible, select products that are made from recovered materials and that also can be recycled.

Educating Participants and Exhibitors

Request the use of recycled and recyclable handouts or giveaways.
Request that unused items be collected for use at another event.
Encourage participants to recycle materials at the event.
Reward participation by communicating environmental savings achieved.

14 Questions for Your Hotel

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2011) asks that potential EPA meeting venues complete a questionnaire about environmentally preferable features and practices in use at their facilities.

1. Do you have a recycling program? If so, please describe.
2. Do you have a linen/towel reuse option that is communicated to guests?
3. Do guests have easy access to public transportation or shuttle services at your facility?
4. Are lights and air conditioning turned off when rooms are not in use? If so, how do you ensure this?
5. Do you provide bulk dispensers or reusable containers for beverages, food, and condiments?
6. Do you provide reusable serving utensils, napkins, and tablecloths when food and beverages are served?
7. Do you have an energy-efficiency program? Please describe.
8. Do you have a water-conservation program? Please describe.
9. Does your facility provide guests with paperless check-in and checkout?
10. Does your facility use recycled or recyclable products? Please describe.
11. Do you source food from local growers or take into account the growing practices of farmers that provide the food? Please describe.
12. Do you use bio-based or biodegradable products, including bio-based “cafeteriaware”? Please describe.
13. Do you provide training to your employees on these green initiatives? Please describe.
14. What other environmental initiatives have you undertaken, including any environment-related certifications you possess, support of a green suppliers network, or other initiatives?

Resources

- BlueGreen Meetings. 2011.
<http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/index.htm>.
- Environment Canada. 2007. Environment Canada's Green Meeting Guide.
http://asi.abelearn.ca/UserFiles/Servers/Server_118790/File/ASI_DataStick_2008/Green_Meeting_Guide_07.pdf
- Greenopia. 2011. <http://www.greenopia.com>.
- Lester, B. 2007. Greening the meeting. *Science* 318:36–38.
- Marine Stewardship Council. 2011. <http://www.msc.org>.
- National Recycling Coalition. 2007. Green meetings policy. Washington, DC.
<http://www.fs.fed.us/sustainableoperations/greenteam-toolkit/documents/NationalRecyclingCollolitionGreenMeetingsReference.pdf>
- Oceans Blue Foundation. 2011. BlueGreen Meetings.
<http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/index.htm>.
- Seafood Watch. 2011. <http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx>.
- Spatrisano, A., and N.J. Wilson. 2007. Simple Steps to Green Meetings and Events: The Professional's Guide to Saving Money and the Earth. Meeting Strategies Worldwide. Portland, Oregon. <http://www.meetgreen.com>. 99 p. [booklet free from TravelPortland].
- TravelPortland. 2011. Green Meetings by Travel Portland.
<http://greenmeetings.travelportland.com>.
- UNEP [United Nations Environment Programme]. 2009. Green Meeting Guide 2009.
<http://www.unep.fr/scp.sun>.
- USEPA [US Environmental Protection Agency]. 1996. It's Easy Being Green! A Guide to Planning and Conducting Environmentally Aware Meetings and Events. US Environmental Protection Agency. EPA530-K-96-002. Washington, DC.
- USEPA [US Environmental Protection Agency]. 2011. Green Meetings.
<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/index.html>;
<http://www.epa.gov/region1/greenconventions/index.html>;
<http://www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/products/meetings.htm>
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