

Going Green

What Does it Mean to be Sustainable?

Whilst the term “green” in business originally related to environmental issues, it has evolved to embrace all aspects of sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

To be properly “green” a company now needs to incorporate sustainable thinking into its decision making at all levels throughout the organisation.

In the past, corporate philanthropy or “giving back to the community” used to be the way a company looked to enhance its reputation externally. Today, even the most basic practice requires a much more sophisticated approach. Companies are judged on the basis of their accountability, transparency, business ethics, socio-economic awareness and resource efficiency as well as their financial results.

Businesses today are under scrutiny as never before. Shareholders, investors, employees, customers, consumer, environmental and ethical groups and the general public expect companies to be exemplary across the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental management.

As our understanding and knowledge grows about issues such as global warming, climate change, human rights’ injustices and poverty, the world looks as much to the business community as it does to governments to provide leadership and solutions.

Integrating responsible practices into your tourism operation will benefit your business in many ways. Admired companies attract investors and employees and they enjoy better customer loyalty. This helps them improve their market share and position. They are also better placed to manage risk.

Resource efficient operations not only improve their bottom line by eliminating wasteful practices but they also lighten their load on the planet, something we all urgently need to do.

The strategies and approaches outlined in this paper will help increase the sustainability of tourism operators by minimising their negative impacts on the surrounding ecosystems and cultures while increasing their positive contributions to biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage preservation and community development.

These practical steps are intended to guide operators towards a more sustainable operation:

- **Policy and Framework**
- **Staff Training and Awareness**
- **Environmental Management**
- **Purchasing**
- **People and Communities**
- **Destination Protection**

1. Policy and Framework

- Designate a senior member of staff responsible for environmental management; they will need to have the awareness, knowledge and skills to implement best practice to local and international standards
- Set up a “green team” or environmental working party including members from different departments within the company
- Institute ways to measure your progress e.g. through indicators such as water use in litres or cubic metres per guest/night, energy use per guest/night, waste in kg per guest/night
- Draw up a responsible business policy to which the organisation can commit

2. Staff Training and Awareness

- Launch a responsible business program to staff and seek feedback on it
- Maintain staff awareness of the program through meetings, news updates ..
- Encourage motivation through competitions and suggestion boxes; reward staff successes each month
- Include a module on your responsible business policy in staff inductions and refresher training
- Communicate results to staff as the program progresses

3. Environmental Management

- Assess your current environmental impacts and determine potential primary, secondary and tertiary impacts and their significance. List possible improvements and /or management alternatives and determine which ones will be used. N.B much of the information on resource use, waste and use of chemicals can be found in your utility and purchasing bills
- Install meters for departments within the company and for specific items of high energy or water use
- Measure and monitor your progress on a regular basis
- Set measurable short and long term targets and take action when they are not met
- Work with other tourism businesses in the area to improve local environmental standards
- Inform customers, suppliers and other stakeholders about your environmental policy, programs and successes

4. Purchasing

- Source products which are the most sustainable in their manufacture, use and disposal
- Review all products and services purchased and identify where more sustainable alternatives are available
- Examine how your suppliers select their suppliers so that you can help develop a more sustainable supply chain
- Integrate sustainable criteria into your purchasing policy and procedures
- Give preference to locally sourced and seasonal products
- Buy in bulk and reduce packaging where possible
- Challenge suppliers and other businesses to improve their practices
- Recognise suppliers' efforts through special events, promotions and long term contracts
- Give preference to fair trade products or eco-labelled goods

5. People and Communities

- Be fair, honest and transparent in your dealings with staff, customers and suppliers
- Be sensitive to the needs of those you employ and respect their local culture, heritage and traditions
- Identify ways in which your local community can benefit from the presence of your operation
- Develop and support tourism related businesses in partnership with the local community
- Use locally provided services where possible
- Support local community development projects and provide opportunities for customers to participate in any conservation projects
- Train local workers and provide them with opportunities for promotion

6. Destination Protection

- Support conservation and cultural heritage preservation projects through financial and in-kind support
- Use native species for landscaping and natural insect control measures
- Showcase the local culture through produce, craft, and other local items
- Contribute to habitat restoration where possible
- Utilise guidelines to improve behaviour and increase awareness with regard to recreational activities
- Use guides in sensitive areas
- Work with local people to develop cultural attractions
- Educate guests about different cultures and acceptable behaviours
- Design interpretive guest education programs with clear messages relating to local environmental and cultural issues
- Choose efficient modes of transport to decrease energy consumption and emissions
- Train staff in the proper use of boats and vehicles and mandate maximum speeds
- Consider the use of non motorised transportation to decrease pollution and noise

Energy	Water Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key areas of energy use • Identify the fuel sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key areas of water use and how reduction can be achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install meters and sub meters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement immediate water savings e. g reducing washing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate staff person to collect energy use data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check regularly for water leaks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify changes to save energy e.g turning off lights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install sensors, low flow fittings and other water saving devices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that equipment is functioning correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert and capture rainwater for reuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement low cost measures: energy efficient light globes, motion detectors, heat recovery techniques, improved insulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycle grey water for gardens, flushing toilets etc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use bicycles and hybrid cars in the the tourism experiences offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess water use against industry benchmarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculate your energy use and assess it against industry benchmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor your performance regularly
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Waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the different waste streams you create (paper, glass etc) and work out who is responsible for what and how the waste is currently dealt with
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calculate the amount in weight for each waste stream and identify measures for reducing, recycling or reusing it
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw up a waste management plan with specific targets for reduction, recycling or reuse to be met by a specific time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimise packaging and other waste reduction measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that effluent from the waste water treatment system complies with all relevant local and international water quality standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor results continuously, report on progress and take corrective action if necessary